

C-U CAA

CHAMPAIGN - URBANA COALITION AGAINST APARTHEID

We are the Champaign-Urbana Coalition Against Apartheid - a group of students, faculty and townspeople united in our opposition to apartheid, the brutal system of racial oppression and white minority rule in South Africa.

Over a year ago, a referendum was held in which students at the University of Illinois voted that the University should divest itself of stocks in corporations that do business in South Africa. Not wishing to give up its stocks, and at the same time wishing to avoid further pressure from students and faculty, the University decided to adopt a policy of "opposition" to apartheid. This token gesture only obscures the fact that the University continues to profit through their holdings from the extraordinary exploitation of black South Africans. Furthermore, the "sincerity" of their "opposition" seems questionable since they have acquired an additional 10,000 shares in corporations doing business in S. Africa and another \$250,000 of bonds in Gil Acceptance Corp. (South Africa has threatened to seize Gil plants for military production in the event of an arms embargo).

In Spring 1977, the C-U Coalition Against Apartheid formed and committed itself to research, education, and action on the apartheid issue and specifically on University divestiture. Following a number of educational efforts including films, speakers, leaflets, and rallies last spring, two marches were held in attempts to get the University to publicly defend its South African policy. The first march to the U of I Foundation was met by closed doors. The second march to President Corbally's office culminated in a five hour sit-in with the demand for an open debate on University divestiture. Although Corbally refused this challenge, declaring that such an open forum would be "unproductive", other administrative staff agreed to arrange a formal debate with the coalition. Despite continual contact with this staff throughout the summer months no definitive action has yet been taken by the administration concerning the debate.

APARTHEID: SYSTEMATIZED RACIAL OPPRESSION

Apartheid is a legal, political and economic apparatus designed to maintain white minority rule in South Africa and ensure a continued supply of cheap labor for the owners of capital. Black South Africans, about 80% of the population, are assigned to reservations (called Bantustans or homelands) which amount to 13% of the most arid, and unfertile land in the country, and include no major cities, no ports, and no valuable minerals. The reserves are hopelessly overpopulated with 110 persons per square mile as compared to 34 per square mile in the rest of South Africa. Disease and malnutrition are widespread. Among children aged 10-12 in Soweto, a black township, 45% suffer serious malnutrition. On some reserves more than half the children die before the age of five.

Because there are almost no jobs in the reservations, Africans who live there must enter the "white" areas of South Africa to seek employment. They must leave their families behind on the reserves. Two-thirds of the people who live in the reserves have no source of livelihood at all and are forced to depend on the wage-earners. In the "white" areas, black Africans have no rights. They cannot vote, own property, join political parties, form unions or hold large gatherings without police permission. Every black South African must produce on demand a passbook which contains the name, birthplace, history, and work he/she is allowed to do. Over a thousand people are arrested each day for violating the many passbook laws. Even those Africans who are able to find employment are paid extremely low wages. More than 80% of the black population of South Africa lives below the poverty line. Laws effectively limit black workers to low wages, while whites earn, on the average, more than fifteen times as much. The cheap labor of African workers has been of benefit not only to the apartheid regime, but also to foreign investors.

THE ROLE OF U.S. CORPORATIONS

U.S. corporations play a major role in supporting the racist South African regime. For U.S. corporations the conditions of semi-slavery add up to a rate of return of about 19%, well over the 11% world average. Total investments now amount to about \$1.6 billion, 17% of all foreign investment in South Africa. One third of South Africa's loans are obtained from U.S. banks; in addition, U.S. representatives on the International Monetary Fund have helped the Vorster regime obtain \$463 million in loans, in 1976-1977 alone.

U.S. corporations have often argued that their presence has been a force for progressive change in South Africa, stressing the creation of jobs, black wages generally above the local average, job training programs, etc. The evidence, however, disputes this corporate claim.

First, these corporations ignore that the whole structure of the society is carefully designed to prevent generalized equal opportunities for black and white. Even if the U.S. corporations wanted to, they could not introduce reforms for black workers without violating South African law. Furthermore, they benefit from the effects of apartheid by way of a cheap, intimidated reserve of labor.

Second, historically, foreign investment in South Africa has helped promote economic growth within a framework which maintains white power and privilege. The last ten years have shown rapid economic growth with intensifying political repression and land dispossession. The wage gap between white and black workers in absolute terms is still growing. Although American companies pay their black workers wages that are generally above the local average, the wages are often still well below the "basic minimum level" necessary to get rid of poverty and malnutrition.

Finally, for corporations to continue profitable operations in South Africa, continued maintenance of the status quo is required. The black population in South Africa in contrast seeks the total destruction of the system as it now exists.

U OF I INVESTMENT IN APARTHEID

The University of Illinois holds at least \$3 million dollars worth of stock in companies that do business in South Africa, including \$290,000 worth of IBM, the company responsible for computerizing the hated passbook system. Other corporations include U.S. Steel, Weyerhaeuser, General Electric, General Motors, Caterpillar Tractor, Minn. Mining and Mfg., and Texaco. After finance committee hearings in which all of the groups and individuals giving testimony spoke in favor of divestment, the Board of Trustees adopted a policy agreeing to vote for shareholder's proposals in support of terminating further investment and "prudent withdrawal" of current investments. Such a policy is essentially meaningless because shareholder proposals such as these rarely get more than a fraction of the vote. This is due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the shares are owned by large banks and other corporations which benefit from the exorbitant profits to be made in South Africa.

President Corbally has repeatedly defended the University policy as being influential on corporate business practices to oppose apartheid. Yet what effective influence does the University have, given that 1) their stock holdings are too small to have an effect on stockholder balloting, 2) the only "leverage", so-to-speak, the University has at all with the corporations is the threat of divestiture and the publicity related to its ideological base, which they have not used, and 3) this new policy only commits the University to voting on proposals initiated by others; it has no responsibility to initiate its own proposals.

Divestment alone will not bring down the apartheid regime. It is one step toward the growing public opposition to U.S. corporate investment in South Africa and hence another mark against economic stability in that country. In the last analysis, the main force which can bring apartheid to its knees is the black majority itself. Our support is necessary, but it is their own struggle that will liberate the African peoples. Black organizations on record in support of divestment include the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the Black People's Convention, the South African Student Movement, and the Colored Labor Party. This support is particularly impressive in light of the fact that calling for divestment in South Africa is considered a terrorist act, punishable by death.

SOUTH AFRICA/BLACK AMERICA: SAME STRUGGLE, MANY FRONTS

The focus of this coalition is opposition to apartheid in South Africa. However, we see obvious parallels between the blatant forms of systematized racial oppression in South Africa and the insidious forms of racism in the U.S., which although not sanctioned by law as under apartheid, are nonetheless prevalent. We oppose racism and all forms of racial oppression here in the United States and elsewhere in the world. We see that the systematized, legalized racism of apartheid and the widespread institutionalized racism here in the U.S. are perpetuated by the same forces and economic relations. We point to the examples of widespread black unemployment, the disproportionate number of blacks in penal institutions, the virtual exclusion of blacks from professional fields, the low average black family income, the ghettos which confine black people to areas of poor housing and inadequate education and healthcare. What is this if not an apartheid system without the legal code, a system of racism masked by formal legal equality?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Only in response to strong student mobilizations have universities such as Tufts, Princeton, Harvard, U. of Massachusetts, Hampshire College, Ann Arbor, and U. of Michigan moved towards divestiture.

- 1) Join us in demanding that the University officials face the students in an open debate.
- 2) Come to our organizational meeting: 3 p.m., Sunday in 284 Illini Union.
- 3) Come to the Steven Biko Memorial Rally on Sept. 12 -- ARMBAND DAY.