STUDENT ACTIVISTS FACE DEATH THREATS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

At the University of Texas at Austin the Steve Biko Committee has been spearheading a strong movement for divestment and in support of the liberation struggle in southern Africa. This effort has been led by students from the Black Student Alliance who have been stressing the importance of linking the struggle to racism in this country. In response a well organized, anonymous racist group has been waging what one organizer termed "a constant, detailed psychological warfare against black students, particularly Randy Bowman, head of the Black Student Alliance." This warfare has taken the form of break-ins and physical assaults by thugs wearing Ronald Reagan masks. In the latest incident two such thugs broke into Randy Bowman's room and attempted to push him out his window, from the 8th floor. Earlier a pitcher of lemonade in his refrigerator had been poisoned. As Derrick Eugene of the Steve Biko Committee put it: "The Administration response to this intimidation campaign has been minimal. There have been no public statements abhorring this racist violence. We need all the support we can get."

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BERKELEY STUDENTS PREVENT UNLOADING OF SOUTH AFRICAN CARGO

At 8.30am on March 10, 200 Berkeley campus activists began a blockade of a dock in San Francisco harbor where South African goods were due to be unloaded. Despite police efforts the protesters held their ground and were able to prevent any of the cargo from being unloaded that day. This was an important act of solidarity with anti-apartheid Longshoremen who last year had refused to unload South African cargo for 11 days but due to a court injunction are not able themselves to maintain pickets at the San Francisco docks. The Longshoremen respected the blockade which had been organized by the UC Berkeley Campaign Against Apartheid. The blockade was maintained through the night, but early next morning 300 policemen surrounded the protesters and arrested 60 in the course of clearing the dock. By preventing the cargo from being unloaded for a whole day, the protesters cost the shipper a considerable amount of money. Beyond that the action set a precedent for future blockades of South African cargo, and has given momentum for City Council initiatives to bar any unloading of South African cargo in San Francisco. Escalated protest is planned at the Berkeley campus for the National Anti-apartheid Weeks of Action, March 21-April 6. For information call: (415) 653 8251.

TOTAL DIVESTMENT VICTORIES CONTINUE

Responding to growing student pressure, Seattle University trustees voted on February 28 to sell all holdings in firms that do business in South Africa. The stocks, valued at $2.5 million, will be divested within one year. "I am really happy," said 23-year-old James Gore, a black student who helped lead the campaign to rid the school of the investments. "This shows that students can get together and really do something." On the day of the Trustee vote 200 students rallied for divestment.

At Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, students recently won the battle for total divestment on February 21 when the Trustees voted to sell $5 million in South Africa linked stock. Before the vote over 100 students had braved a rainstorm and held a mock funeral procession and rally outside the Trustees' meeting. This year the University of Minnesota Foundation ($5,000,000) and Roosevelt University have also adopted total divestment policies, making it 24 schools that have moved to total divestment since April 1985 - with over $230 million being affected.
CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST PROTESTERS

School administrations appear cautious about passing legal and disciplinary charges against students who have engaged in civil disobedience action. Despite the increased use of threats and bulldozing of shantytowns, actual punishment of anti-apartheid students seems to be bad public relations. For example, at Cornell University, where over 1200 students have been arrested, all legal and disciplinary charges have been dropped against protesters. Similarly, at UC Berkeley, site of militant sit-ins and 400 arrests, legal and disciplinary action has also been halted this year. This in contrast to the State University of New York students who were jailed for a week - a key development in the successful struggle for total divestment as SUNY last Fall.

CAMPUS ACTION UPDATES

On February 25 200 students at Smith College (Northampton, Mass) began a blockade and sit-in at College Hall, the main administration building, demanding total divestment. The blockade lasted five days, and ended when protesters got an agreement for a moratorium of classes on March 6 and reconsideration of policy by the Smith trustees. In the course of the action and its aftermath 20 students engaged in a nine-day divestment fast. Though the trustees did not agree to total divestment, the action was successful. According to activist Allyson Cole "This political activity at Smith was a victory itself." Students are convinced that such direct action protests directly help discourage U.S. investment in South Africa.

At Brown University, following a day-long sit-in for divestment on February 25, four students began a fast that lasted nine days and helped set the stage for escalated activity. Students reported that the Administration attempted to intimidate private physicians into not monitoring the fasters' health. In addition, a final year medical student was ordered to "cease and desist" assisting the monitoring effort. These actions were significant because the Administration threatened to remove the fasters from school on health grounds. In March 7 Brown students organized an all-day rally criticising the Administration and calling for full divestment that was attended by several hundred protesters including representatives of the American Committee on Africa, New England Student Coalition and the American Friends Service Committee. The fasters ended their fast the next day and began preparing for further escalation.

Seven weeks after they were erected, right wing students attacked the shanties at Dartmouth College in late January. The campus Administration ordered them dismantled on the grounds of their "divisive" effect on the campus. In response, activists moved on of the shanties from the main green to the front of President McLauughlin's office and left the other in place. In mid-February the Administration moved in on the shanties, and in the course of seeking to prevent their removal 18 students were arrested (the charges have since been dropped). To kick off the weeks of action March 21, the Dartmouth Coalition is planning to place a shanty in front of Phelps Dodge headquarters. Phelps Dodge chairman, George Munroe, is a Dartmouth trustee. The rally is being co-sponsored by the United Steel Workers of America who will join the students in calling for Munroe's resignation from Dartmouth College and other boards because of Phelps Dodge's anti-union practices.

This semester students at the University of Chicago have picketed and rallied outside their trustee meeting, and plan to escalate their activity during the Weeks of Action. At Brandeis University students had maintained a shanty for over five weeks before the school tore it down in early March. In response students blockaded the main administration building for several hours.

REGIONAL STUDENT CONFERENCES HELD IN THE SOUTH, MIDWEST AND NORTHEAST

Beginning February 28 a historical Southern Regional Student Conference was held at Atlanta University. Atlanta Students Against Apartheid and Racism organized the event which brought together 80 activists from over 10 southern states. The conference established an ongoing anti-apartheid network and campaign against Coca-Cola. A Northeast Regional Conference attracted 175 participants to Trinity College in Hartford and along with discussions on racism focused on coordinated spring action. On February 8 a Midwest Material Aid Conference was held at the University of Michigan, and on April 19-20 there will be a Midwest Conference on Namibia at Purdue University. For information write:

PAN PURDUE, UNIVERSITY CHURCH, 320 NORTH STR, W. LAFAYETTE IND 47906.

PROTESTS AGAINST US AID TO UNITA IN ANGOLA

In late January Jonas Savimbi, head of the South African sponsored UNITA grouping in Angola, came to the United States to drum up US support, many students joined protest demonstrations to greet him in New York City and Washington DC. Further demonstrations against US aid to UNITA, ($15 million has been sent) will occur between March 20-23 to kick off the Weeks of Action in Washington DC, New York City, Austin, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Honolulu and Desmoines.
ADMINISTRATION STRATEGIES AGAINST STUDENT ANTI-APARTHEID ORGANIZING

In response to intensified student protest, campus administrators and Trustees have been developing more sophisticated approaches to undercutting our movement. These policies have been developed with the support of US corporations and the US State Department and parallel their efforts to prevent an end to corporate economic dominance in a post-apartheid South Africa.

There have been two basic components to the counterstrategy being deployed on campuses: 1) promotion of scholarship programs for Black South Africans and 2) conditional "total" divestment.

1) Scholarship Programs

Across the country school administrations have been actively promoting scholarship programs for Black South Africans to study in South African or American universities. The Rand Corporation helped organize a Fall 1985 conference to launch the concept of such "positive" action and in January 1986 the Johnson Foundation (funded by Johnson & Johnson, an investor in South Africa) attempted to enlist student and further Administration support through another conference. While invited students denounced the effort, the New England Board of Higher Education has taken it up and Texas schools are linking into the programs.

What could possibly be wrong with what appears to be a well-intentioned effort?

First of all, these "positive" programs are often explicitly promoted as an alternative to "negative" divestment demands. State Department representatives have been publicly stressing this view, and corporate investors in South Africa have pointed to their scholarship contributions as evidence of their positive role in "ending apartheid". Secondly, the effort is geared to developing a small Black elite which will be sympathetic to American and general corporate interests. It does not begin to address the overall question of ending apartheid and the deliberate denial of education to millions of black South Africans.

For example, though "Africans" account for 71% of the population they represented a mere 11% of the university student population in 1982. Whereas, whites, who constitute 18% of the population had 76% representation at the university level. Access to higher education is hampered by the deliberately inferior elementary and secondary education for blacks in South Africa. Behind the inferior curriculum, buildings, equipment and teacher training is low Government expenditure rates on black education - on the average ten times less than on white education. This general disadvantage reflects itself in the progressively declining success rates at the twelfth grade level, despite Government claims to provide equal educational opportunity for blacks. Scholarship programs affecting a tiny percentage of black students do nothing to end the structural inequality of education at all levels under apartheid. It does not begin to address the overall question of ending apartheid and the deliberate denial of education to millions of black South Africans.

In light of this, these programs have not been supported or initiated by the main progressive black student organizations, the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) (the high school level organization, AZASO and AZASUM (the university level groups) or NUSAS, the principal white university organization. Such scholarship programs foster false solutions to the problems confronting black South African students. For example, COSAS is a banned organization and its priority is on ending the repression in the schools and townships generally. For COSAS members university scholarships are irrelevant not only till the organization is unbanned, but till the conditions necessitating student protest activity are abolished. If COSAS members and other activists refuse to participate, who but the most "moderate" students would be selected for scholarships? In addition, such programs will not be administered by progressive student groups themselves, but in South Africa by mostly white school administrations. Corporations are particularly interested in these efforts, given the vocational stress of the programs.

Recognizing the inadequacy of these academic /corporate plans, students are developing alternative approaches. Sending aid to educational projects administered by the African National Congress and sponsored by the United Nations is a possible alternative to the scholarship approach.

In terms of specific projects, there is the ANC's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania and in Angola SWAPO projects for thousands of young refugees.

Student groups have found that asking the university to fund liberation movement projects helps political initiative since it challenges their paternalistic approach to change in southern Africa. This paternalism is also expressed through the argument that corporations can be a force for change in South Africa. Apart from challenging the universities' political approach, even the partial achievement of this demand can raise significant amounts of money desperately needed for these progressive educational projects.
Scholarship Programs (cont.)

Many student groups also feel it essential to independently support material aid projects of the liberation movements. Divestment campaigns are fundamentally designed to aid the liberation struggle by helping deprive the white minority regime of resources. Direct support of these movements is another way to do so, while strengthening the healthy political view that divestment is not an end in itself.

2) Conditional "total" Divestment

Numerous schools have been following a similar strategy in countering demands for total divestment of South Africa linked stock. The general approach has been to:

a) Make a firm commitment to divest of companies not in the two highest categories of Sullivan Code signatories;

b) To state a general commitment to divest the remaining companies, contingent on developments in South Africa (in some cases by a given date).

Such an approach poses a challenge to organizers, since at first it might seem that total divestment has been achieved. Student groups are taking a firm and precise response to these policies:

i) First of all, there is ample evidence that partial divestment based on Sullivan Code compliance is ineffective. The companies rated in the top two Sullivan Code categories are the most strategic supporters of apartheid, including IBM, General Motors, Ford, Mobil, Fluor, Control Data and Citibank. The logical place to start a phased divestment plan is with these companies, not with non-compliers to a public relations code that hasn't stopped the sale to the regime of a single computer, truck, or drop of oil.

ii) There are differences in the policies of schools which have made a conditional commitment to total divestment. Regardless of these differences students have taken the position that they want an unconditional commitment to total divestment to be implemented in a specified time frame (at most three years). The problem with a policy contingent on developments in South Africa, is that it is always subject to interpretation. Such a policy can put a check on student organizing, while still leaving the critical decision of divestment in Trustee hands.

For example, At Vassar College the trustees agreed to immediately divest of companies not achieving high ratings under the Sullivan Code. Divestment would occur of the remaining stocks (the most strategic investors in South Africa) in three years in the absence of "significant change". This formulation leaves undefined what is meant by significant change and seems designed to cool student protest for several years by giving the appearance of victory.

At Swathmore College the Trustees at their March 1 meeting enunciated support for total divestment but only if it can be accomplished prudently and if apartheid has not been ended. There was a commitment to set a timetable at their May meeting. First of all, there is no definition of what it means to "end apartheid" and the setting of a timetable awaits the end of the school year. In addition, the President was quite upset over press reports that implied an unconditional divestment and has continually stressed its conditional character ever since. While some students initially felt that divestment had been won, the mood has changed and Swathmore activists are gearing up for protest during the Weeks off Action.

At Bryn Mawr the Trustees unequivocally committed the school to divest poor performers under the Sullivan Code, while continuing to hold onto the most strategic investors who, it is claimed, are "actively opposing apartheid". Students responded by blocking the trustees into their February 25 meeting, forcing them to exit through the windows. The students were unsatisfied with a commitment to divest remaining holdings beginning December 1986 if "the Board finds no evidence that apartheid is being dismantled". In making this determination the Board is to examine whether these "active" companies are being effective in dismantling the "pillars" of apartheid: influx control, group areas act, denial of universal franchise.

There are more specifics here than at Swathmore, but there is still ample room for interpretation especially since one might find some evidence of dismantling and blacks would still not have full political rights. In addition, students question the seriousness of a divestment policy that not only leaves the largest investors untouched for a year, but even claims that these companies are actively opposed to apartheid.

But there is a more fundamental political reason why any conditional divestment is unacceptable:

Above all, divestment is not an end in itself but simply a means to help force corporate withdrawal from South Africa. Student protests, irrespective of Trustee decisions, have directly helped force a 10% drop in US corporate investment over the past year, and the announced withdrawal by 28 companies. That is why student protests are likely to escalate unless Trustee commitment is to unconditional divestment, and implementation begins immediately and must be completed within a fixed time (at most two or three years).