

An Open Letter to Hanna Gray, President, University of Chicago:

President Gray:

As you will recall, I met you on August 28, 1985 as a member of this University's Student Government, and as an anti-apartheid activist, to discuss the divestment of the University's funds from corporations and banks that do business in South Africa. During that meeting you told me that the University only invests in corporations in South Africa that have signed the Sullivan Principles and continue to receive a favorable rating of II or better for their adherence to those principles. In subsequent discussion we disagreed strongly on the merit of adherence to the Sullivan Principles as a method of promoting racial change in South Africa and also on the effectiveness of divestment and disinvestment as a strategy for putting pressure on the apartheid regime. However, you assured me that the University would use all its influence on companies and banks in which it is invested to promote racial change in South Africa.

In order to verify some of the claims that were made during that conversation I then investigated the behavior of these companies as presented in (IRRC) the Investor Responsibility Research Center Report for 1984. To my surprise I found that, contrary to your claims, six of the companies in which the University is invested--Chesebrough-Pond's, Dun & Bradstreet, General Foods, General Signal, Illinois Tool Works, and Parker-Hannifin--are not even signatories of the Sullivan Principles. Further, another six corporations--American International Group, Cooper Industries, Motorola, Nalco Chemical, and Squibb--received the unsatisfactory rating of III which indicates that they have made no acceptable progress towards ending racial discrimination in their work facilities. Since, in your letter to the Chicago Maroon on May 17, 1985 you claimed that the University uses the evaluations of the IRRC to guide its investment policy in South Africa, I find the discrepancy between your statements and the IRRC Report quite shocking. It ill befits any representative of this University with its reputation for academic integrity, to provide false and misleading information about the University's investments.

Once again I call upon you to join student, staff, and faculty anti-apartheid activists on this campus, and work with us to divest all of the University's holdings from banks and companies that do business in South Africa. In order to press our demand for divestment, and to protest the false and misleading information supplied to us, I and several other anti-apartheid activists will begin a hunger strike on Wednesday October 9th. Starting at 12:30 p.m. we will be continually present in front of the Administration Building to inform the University community of our efforts. We invite you to come and meet with us at that time and respond to the questions I have raised in this letter. We invite your help in generating free and democratic debate throughout the university on these issues. The hunger strike will culminate with a rally on the Main Quads at 12:00 noon on Friday, October 11th. We also invite you to attend that rally.

Sincerely,

*Sahotra Sarkar*

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