March 4, 1988

Dear HRAAA Supporter,

We are excited and pleased to give you an update on recent events. From South Africa to Cambridge, February was an eventful month. We've summarized the happenings below (they are listed chronologically, but the most important items are at the end, so please read on), and enclosed a few of the many recent articles.

* We held a small press conference outside the Office of the Governing Boards on February 11, and immediately afterwards handed in 4,617 petition signatures for the HRAAA sponsored candidates. Our thanks and congratulations to you all who collected the signatures. We have since then confirmed that Ephraim Isaac, Evelyn Fox Keller, Ruth Messinger, Neil Irvin Painter, and Michael Tanzer are all officially on the ballot. The election booklet itself will go out along with the ballots in the first two weeks in April. Now is the time for all of us to contact fellow alums and tell them about the importance of the upcoming election—we need to talk to people before they absent-mindedly throw the ballot in the garbage.

* Our February 21 and 22 benefit concert "Songs for a Free South Africa: HarvAid" was an overwhelming success. Sanders Theater was filled with sell-out crowds for two nights of folk music and inspiration. All five of our candidates travelled from out of town to be there; Overseer Gay Seidman spoke at the Sunday show, and Overseer Peter Wood on Monday. The political message was powerful, and the media coverage was tremendous. The show won us appearances on six radio shows, at least 15 articles in various newspapers—including an entire issue of the Harvard Crimson magazine What is to be Done? devoted to the anti-apartheid movement at Harvard. I have enclosed a copy of perhaps the most important coverage, a Boston Globe editorial, and the most amusing coverage, a Crimson cartoon. Financially, too, the concert was successful; while our fundraising needs continue because the concert proceeds will be used to retire outstanding debts from the 1987 campaign, it did raise about $15,000, a quarter of which will go as direct aid to South Africa through the Fund for a Free South Africa. For those of you who missed the concert, it will be rebroadcast locally on WGBH on April 9 and 10.

* The most exciting news, however, comes directly from the Board of Overseers. As the enclosed Crimson articles and editorial indicate, the Harvard Corporation went to extraordinary lengths to insure that divestment not be voted on at the February Overseers meeting. As it now stands, the Institutional Policies Committee will meet on March 20 and then recommend to the full Board whether or not to vote at their April 10 meeting.

In response to the ongoing efforts to keep the Board from voting on divestment, students have started and HRAAA has joined an "Adopt-An-Overseer" campaign. The Harvard Corporation has told
the Overseers how it feels--now we felt it was time that the Harvard community made its views known as well. Student organizers have each taken one of the 16 committee members, and are asking fellow students to write letters to that Overseer explaining the importance of the upcoming committee meeting, the necessity of a Board vote, and the strong student commitment to divestment. At the concert 900 people signed pre-printed letters to Board members and added their comments. Now we ask you, too, to adopt an Overseer. We the alumni/ae elected the Overseers, and we the alumni/ae have a right and an obligation to request that they act on our behalf. Your Overseer is:

Jerome Wiesner
61 Shattuck Rd.
Watertown, MA 02172

Please write to him before the March 20 meeting asking him to affirm his guardianship of the University's best interests by acting to end Harvard's complicity with apartheid. Through these letters, we have an unprecedented opportunity to influence the Board to take a stand for justice and equality.

Student and alumni/ae leaders also decided to have a welcoming committee at the March 20 committee meeting, and again at the April 10 Board meeting. We will welcome the Overseers to Cambridge for their noon meeting on March 20 and encourage them to make the right decision for South Africans, and the right decision for our University. If you live in the Boston area, please join us at noon on March 20, and again on April 10. Both meetings will be held at 17 Quincy Street in Cambridge.

Most importantly, the situation in South Africa has worsened dramatically in the last week. On February 24, the South African government banned 17 anti-apartheid groups, including the nation's largest, the United Democratic Front, and prohibited the major labor federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, from all political activity. On February 29, the government arrested Archbishop Tutu, Rev. Boesak and 150 other clergymen as they marched to Parliament to deliver a petition protesting the bannings. It is clearer now than ever that the government is shutting off all avenues of non-violent change. It is clearer now than ever that the only hope to minimize bloodshed and hasten justice is an economic boycott by the international community.

Harvard's divestment is one small but important part of that critical economic pressure. A vote by the Board of Overseers for divestment is a crucial step, and the election of five more Overseers committed to holding Harvard to a standard of social responsibility is another. Please help now by writing to your Overseer, by spreading the word about the HRRAA candidates, and by sending a check made out to HRRAA to help cover the costs of the campaign.

Sincerely,

Dorothee Benz

P.S. Please call the office at (617)623-1065 for more information, for copies of articles, or to volunteer. Please also send us a copy of the letter you write to your Overseer.
Harvard's divestment dilemma

If Pete Seeger had not dropped out of Harvard, he would have graduated with John F. Kennedy in 1940. But drop out he did, and thus does not get to participate in many university events.

By way of compensation, Seeger was the draw at this season's major counter-university event, hosting two evenings of "Songs for a Free South Africa." The concerts were designed, according to their sponsors, the Harvard and Radcliffe Alumni/ae Against Apartheid, "to inspire Harvard to divest" itself of its estimated $250 million in holdings in companies doing business in South Africa.

It is an issue that comes and goes in the consciousness of Harvard students. The shanties that defied the 1986 commencement were nowhere to be found last June; the activists who erected them had gone on to mainstream politics or to the university workers' union-organizing campaign.

But whatever the vagaries of student attention, for Harvard divestment is an issue that refuses to go away, despite the university's numerous attempts to rationalize its position.

Anti-apartheid (and pro-divestment) candidates have been elected to the Board of Overseers in the past two elections, and another slate is running this year. The new twist in that insider game suggests why the issue remains so troublesome for Harvard.

The three anti-apartheid overseers, and their allies on the board, had hoped to bring the issue to a vote early this year. Their efforts have been stymied by the Harvard administration. In a move reminiscent of the efforts to block the election of anti-apartheid candidates two years ago, Harvard administrators have lobbied the board members — not on the merits of non-divestment, but on the perils of voting on the issue.
The Board of Overseers should not present a formal vote on divestment to the Harvard Corporation, President Bok said yesterday.

Bok said in an interview that taking a formal poll of the Board on the divestment issue would not facilitate communication between the Board and the seven-man Corporation, which has final say over the University's investment policy.

"Referring issues in formal ways to the Corporation rather than exchanging information informally decreases the chances of coming to a really important understanding," Bok said.

The president's comments come in the wake of a decision by the executive committee of the Board of Overseers to move consideration of the divestment issue to a smaller committee rather than to take a vote of the full 30-member Board.

While Bok said the vote has not been cancelled, the decision to move it into committee came as a surprise to some overseers who expected a vote at the Overseers' meeting last weekend. Overseers President Samuel C. Butler '51 had said in the fall that a vote on divestment would almost certainly be held at that meeting.

Bok: Board Should Not Present Vote

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Divestment Vote Delayed

By EMILY M. BERNSTEIN

Following the removal of divestment from last weekend's agenda of the Board of Overseers, a committee of the governing body has been charged with deciding whether the Board will take a vote on the issue, the president of the Board said yesterday.

In the Board's meeting last weekend, the executive committee, which sets the Board's agenda, also announced the appointment of Vice President and General Counsel Daniel Steiner '54 as staff assistant to the 16-member standing committee on institutional policy. Steiner will serve in this role only at the March 20 committee meeting at which divestment will be discussed.

Although the full Board was slated to vote on a divestment resolution last weekend, the issue was removed from the agenda because overseers did not agree whether they should present a formal Board opinion without being asked by the seven-man Corporation.

The Board traditionally rubberstamps Corporation decisions, and its unsolicited votes are not binding on the University.

Overseer President Samuel C. Butler '51 said the executive committee decided to remove divestment from the agenda after Steiner and Secretary to the Governing Boards Robert Shenton made unusual visits to two-thirds of the overseers over the past month to discuss the proper role of the Board in dealing with the divestment issue. When no consensus seemed apparent, the executive committee decided to send the issue to a smaller forum than the 30-member Board, Butler said.

Neither Steiner or Shenton is a member of the Board of Overseers.

But Butler said the two high-ranking officials made these calls because there was "a general idea that we were getting nowhere with the discussions and that we should get a general feeling for how we should come to grips with the these subjects."

The lobbying trips came at a time when many University officials are questioning whether the Board is overstepping its bounds as an advisory body.

Every standing committee is assigned a regular staff assistant to take minutes and advise the committee members and chairmen about rules and proper procedure. There are four permanent assistants to the governing boards. Steiner is not a member of this staff.

But Butler said Steiner was chosen because he had "an enormous amount of experience and wisdom" in the area of divestment, having, among other things, traveled to South Africa with President Bok. Although Steiner has long been a close advisor of Bok's, Butler said the vice president would not be representing Bok's views.

Steiner could not be reached for comment.

Consuela M. Washington, one of three overseers elected to the Board on a pro-divestment platform, said Steiner's presence could be seen as a source of pressure from the University administration to prevent the full Board from voting on divestment.

"Mr. Steiner carries a different role and tenor than Shenton or a member of his staff staffing the committee," she said. "He may carry or appear to carry the weight of the president."

Washington also said Butler instructed the standing committee to keep in mind the traditional function of the Board. Butler would not confirm whether he gave the committee such instructions.

Another pro-divestment overseer, Duke University Professor Peter H. Wood '64, presented a report on divestment at the December Board meeting, prompting a two-hour debate and an expected vote at the February 7-8 meeting.

A month later, however, concerns among some members of the Board, the Corporation, and the administration about the Board's proper role led to Steiner and Shenton's lobbying visits to about 20 overseers. Butler said the committee on institutional policy, of which Wood is a member, will consider Wood's report along with other viewpoints.

Butler said that the Board spent most of its Sunday meeting hearing reports from the chairman of the standing committee on humanities and Dean of the Faculty A Michael Spence. Spence's report was the second in a two-part series begun in September discussing vital issues for the College such as the future in education and renovations to the physical plant, Butler said.

Harvard and Radcliffe Alumni/ae Against Apartheid
Lobbying One's Own

ONCE again, President Bok and the Corporation have tried to influence the Board of Overseers. In the third of an ongoing series of clumsy Mass Hall maneuvers, it was revealed last week that Board members were subject to an extraordinary lobbying effort on the part of top Administration officials.

Two of President Bok's right-hand men—Vice President and General Counsel Daniel Steiner '54 and Secretary to the Governing Boards Robert Shenton—journeyed to several cities to "discuss governance questions," according to Steiner. Steiner and Shenton pressured overseers to seek non-confrontational, "informal" channels for expressing their discontent about campus unionization, tenure battles, and the University's failure to divest.

This was an attempt to sway overseers from voting to recommend that Harvard divest of its holdings in companies that do business in South Africa. The Board is elected by alumni to represent them, and advises the Corporation mainly through its visiting committees which evaluate the University. The Corporation's sudden interest in governance shows its concern over the Board's movement toward an activist role in the University.

MASS Hall fears the public embarrassment that would come from a formal Overseer vote for divestment and is willing to go to some lengths to prevent it. Two years ago, President Bok blatantly tried to influence the Overseer election by asking Overseer head Joan T. Bok '51 (no relation) to mail a letter to all alumni criticizing the campaign of three pro-divestment candidates. And last year, the University fielded an unusually strong slate of Overseer candidates in order to prevent the Harvard-Radcliffe Alumni Against Apartheid from winning any more seats. The victory of three pro-divestment candidates in the last two years should have told Bok and the Corporation that divestment as an issue will not disappear, and that activism on the Board will grow unless such issues are addressed.

Instead, the Corporation's latest hijinks demonstrate their complete disregard for the opinion of alumni and students and their overriding fear of public embarrassment. The Board of Overseers is charged only with giving advice when it is solicited. Last week's revelation shows that Bok wants advice that confirms his policies, or none at all. The University's fear of public criticism means that we will have to bear with more administration heavy-handedness until alumni and student criticisms force it to listen.