

Opinion

Open letter to Regents on divestment

We urge you to abide by the recent legislation passed by the State Legislature and signed by outgoing Gov. Milliken, which requires public universities such as ours to divest the monies of Michigan citizens from U.S. companies operating the *apartheid* South Africa.

Since 1978, a broad coalition of faculty, students and community leaders have been urging the Regents and officers of the University to take the lead in divesting the \$35-\$80 million invested in South Africa-related firms. Other leading universities around the country such as the Universities of Wisconsin, Oregon, Massachusetts and Ohio, and Michigan universities such as MSU and EMU have divested.

The Bullard legislation allows for prudent and considered divestment over the next 15 months. Both Wisconsin and MSU claim not to have been hurt in the process, but indeed to have profited from divestment.

For five years now, there has existed on this campus a strong sentiment for divestment from South Africa. The U-M officers and Regents chose to ignore it, and to proceed with the Sullivan Principles. Now the representatives of the people of Michigan and its Governor have sent the leaders of the University the same clear message -- TO DIVEST!

We are disturbed by the University administration's reaction, which is to either counter this legislation in court, or carry on as if there were no legislation and await legal action on the part of the State. We understand the University's

contention that there is a constitutional conflict in the State seeming to interfere with the Regents' right by law to invest University monies as they see fit. On the other hand, the legislation suggests that we at the U-M are in breach of our own Civil Rights legislation which forbids the lack of racial equality and equal opportunity which is the reality of *apartheid* South Africa, and which constrains the activities of U.S. companies there, however well-intentioned.

The Regents argue that the Sullivan Principles are a way of effecting change in South Africa in a responsible manner, keeping our hand in to influence change. In the years since we adopted the Sullivan Principles, there has been scant evidence of such success. Indeed, last March's annual report on our South African investments indicated that 13 of the 42 companies in which we are invested, received low ratings from the independent monitoring service, Arthur D. Little Inc., in complying with the Sullivan Principles.

However, a report from the Motor Assemblers' and Component Workers' Union of South Africa (MACWUSA) -- the equivalent of the UAW in South Africa, disagreed with the conclusion of Arthur Little's report that the Ford Motor Co. is "making good progress." The union characterized the Sullivan Code as a "toothless package" and a "piecemeal reform that allows this cruel system of *apartheid* to survive."

For instance, in terms of Sullivan Principle 3, "Equal pay for equal work," MACWUSA claims that at Ford South

Africa, 98.5 per cent of workers in the top category are white, making the principle "lip service and an empty slogan" (*Cape Times*, Jan. 19, 1982). Furthermore, every prominent black South African leader, internal or external, has called for divestment, regardless of the economic suffering it will cause. It is time for us to end this clever charade, and stop pretending that we can have any impact on *apartheid* from here, and divorce ourselves from complicity in this uniquely legislated and institutionalized racist society.

As to the argument that the State Legislature is hypocritical to require universities to divest, when it has not itself divested its pension fund, we could not agree more and are prepared to work for such divestment. Apparently Rep. Virgil Smith did introduce legislation to this end, but it failed in the pertinent House subcommittee. It will be re-introduced shortly.

Surely, we, as the "flagship university" of the State, as we are so often wont to point out in Lansing, should finally take the lead in this area as well, and show the way for other colleges in the State and elsewhere in the country.

Finally, the argument that in so doing we are saying No rather than YES TO MICHIGAN in these hard economic times by divesting from Michigan companies such as Ford, GM and Dow is also misleading. Some of these companies are saying No to Michigan anyway by diverting car and other production to places on the periphery like South Africa, where they pay produc-

tion-line auto workers one tenth of a Michigan salary.

The issue is to say YES TO EQUALITY, YES TO DEMOCRACY in South Africa, and NO TO RACISM and to a pernicious exploitative system which the University of Michigan community wants no part of!

Divestiture Petition Names:

Walter R. Allen, Sociology; David Schoem, Pilot Program; Lemuel A. Johnson, English; John W. Farah, Dentistry; Robin Barlow, Economics; Richard A. English, Social Work; Ali Mazrui and Pauline Terrelonge, Political Science; David Gordon, Center for Research on Economic Development; Richard D. Mann, Psychology; Allen F. Roberts, Francille Wilson, Niara Sudarkasa, Center for Afroamerican and African Studies; Ben Yablony, Communication; Thomas E. Weisskopf, John D. Reiff, Max Heinrich, Charles Bright, Ann E. Larimore, Residential College; Joel Beinín, Adnan Musallam, Trevor Le Gassick, Center for Near Eastern and North African Studies; Richard P. Mitchell, Thomas N. Tentler, John Broomfield, Terrence J. McDonald, Raymond Grew, Ernest P. Young, History; Murray Jackson, Rudolf B. Schmerl, Joseph E. Vaughn, Percy Bates, Charles D. Moody, Charles Vergon, Terrence N. Tice William R. Medlin, William G. Merhab, Teshome Wagaw, William M. Cave, Education; John Vandermeer, Biology.

Submitted to U-M Record for faculty + staff