

October 26, 1977

President C. Peter Magrath
Office of the President
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160 Church Street, S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Dear Peter:

First of all, congratulations on your great football game over Michigan last Saturday. I heard portions of the game, and it was obvious that your team completely dominated ours from beginning to end. There are a great many crushed spirits here in Ann Arbor at this point, but if one can look at the larger picture it was, I am sure, a good thing for Big Ten football.

As to your letter about the South African issue, I am in complete agreement with the motives behind it, and I think we could swing our Board of Regents into line behind the Sullivan resolutions. We have, however, two problems. The first is that we are committed to a series of open forums on the subject which will take place in the course of the next two months, and it will be difficult for us to take any action during that period without preempting the purpose of the forums. The second is that the worsening situation in South Africa is already making the situation more difficult. If we had acted last spring, and perhaps we could and should have, I am sure there would have been no difficulty putting the Sullivan resolutions through. Perhaps this was true up to as recently as a month ago. Right now, following the recent very restrictive actions of the South African government, I am sure our constituencies will want to insist on more severe action. Our Regents are likely to reject that because they do not see divestiture as a very effective action in terms of South Africa and they are afraid of its consequences here. My own concerns are also twofold, although not quite identical with theirs. The first is the question of whether divestiture is an effective measure, but the other is whether it will do anything for human rights, broadly conceived. I have had lunch with a series of our African specialists here on campus, all of whom tell me that except for the symbolic nature of the act, divestiture will do nothing to affect the situation. They also agree that if there is a revolution, it is unlikely that the human rights, whether of Blacks or Whites, will emerge in better shape than they are right now, although the controlling interests may be different. There seems to be little in the South African experience of developing countries which suggests that democracy is going to triumph following a revolution. One of our Black professors, who is intimately

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familiar with that area of the world and who comes from there, is urging on me that though my analysis of the human rights situation is accurate, I should view it much more narrowly as simply a Black-White issue. In which case the immediate problem in his view becomes clearer. I am not sure that is a contribution to the cause.

In any event, I guess I am saying that I suspect we would be prepared to take the Sullivan action, but I am not sure it is going to satisfy anyone on our campus at this point in time. I would be interested in what further developments come to you.

Sincerely,

R. W. Fleming

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