

Who are these people . . .

By LEONARD BERNSTEIN
A Daily News Analysis

The highly organized effort to prod the University Regents to divest from corporations doing business in South Africa is led by a loosely-knit group from around the University community—the Washtenaw County Coalition Against Apartheid.

WCCAA spokespersons say the group is actually a network of loosely-affiliated campus groups, including the Black Students Union, the Afro-American Students Association, and the Young Socialists Alliance. Representatives say the WCCAA itself has a core of approximately 80 students, faculty, and local citizens who strongly favor divestment.

THE PRO-DIVESTMENT demonstrators who have packed the last two

Regents' meetings share a similar leftist approach to a variety of campus political issues. Many of them can be found among other politically active campus organizations like the People's Action Coalition (PAC) and the (Political Science Prof. Joel) Samoff Student Support Committee.

While their particular interests vary, the demonstrators have come together around the issue of divestment. Their strong commitment to ending the University's association with corporations that do business in South Africa is demonstrated by weekly strategy sessions and carefully orchestrated protests of the last two Regents' meetings.

And while other groups — like those supporting tenure for Samoff and opposing consolidation of Hill-area dining facilities — have shown the ability to mount such demonstrations, the WCCAA is distinguished by the loud persistence it has been able to sustain in its pro-divestment activity. The coalition may be the nearest thing to an important political movement on campus because it has been organized for more than a year's time.

WCCAA MEMBERS say they are sure their actions are having an effect on the University Regents.

"We're definitely going to win. It's just a question of how long it takes," said WCCAA spokesman Mike Taylor.

"They (the Regents) do respond if the pressure's big enough. But you've really got to push them," he said.

"When you have a meeting like this, when the Regents are forced out of their normal pattern, they can't help but feel that pressure," said WCCAA member Jemadari Kamara.

REGENT PAUL Brown (D-Petoskey) cautiously assessed the coalition's contribution. It is "perhaps making us realize more fully than we otherwise would, how strongly they feel about it (divestment), or how strongly

... and what will they do next?

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some people feel about it," Brown said, however, that the failure of the South African government and corporations with operations in South Africa to improve the situation for blacks is exercising more influence on him than the vocal and disruptive activity of the WCCAA.

Regent James Waters (D-Muskegon) —who said publicly for the first time Thursday he is "definitely leaning towards divestiture"—agreed with Brown.

"At this point, after looking at everything again, I don't think much significant change has happened in South Africa and I don't think it's going to," Waters said.

WHILE THE WCCAA's public clashes with the Regents receive much attention, the group is quietly working behind the scenes to help its cause. While 150 demonstrators were marching on the Diag and on Regents Plaza, a group of black students were meeting discreetly with Waters to ask

former Senate Advisory Committee for University Affairs chairman. "Why that is, I couldn't say."

The reason could be that faculty members have felt the divestment issue does not affect them enough to deserve thought. Another possibility, of course, is that faculty members have considered the issue and think of divestiture as the wrong route. University's governing faculty body, the Senate Assembly, voted to condemn the tactics used in last month's disruption of the Regents meeting.

THE WCCAA and its supporters could also increase their credibility if more black students and community members showed up at their demonstrations. While Kamara said he felt black students were adequately represented at yesterday's protest in the Union ballroom, Taylor conceded, "a large percentage of the coalition is not black," and Weiss said the small proportion of black members is "something we're working on." Taylor added, however, that the WCCAA's affiliation with black organizations is

probably not have addressed these issues. They would have been content to rest on the "review" they conducted in October.

But whether or not the Regents will totally divest from corporations doing business in South Africa, and when, if they do, are still open questions. Demonstrator Geoff Cox paraphrased a comment by University economist

Daniel Fufeld to describe his own opinion of the task ahead.

"Whatever bus comes along, the Regents will be the last ones to catch it," Cox said.

And while most coalition members seem convinced the Regents will catch the bus, none of them is quite sure how much prodding will be necessary to make them do so.

The WCCAA is 'perhaps making us realize more fully than we otherwise would, how strongly they feel about it (divestment), or how strongly some people feel about it.'

—Regent Paul Brown



for his support on the issues of black enrollment, attrition, recruiting, and divestment. Taylor mentioned the WCCAA will be soliciting support in other parts of the state this summer. And according to WCCAA spokeswoman Judy Weiss, the coalition will soon concentrate on cementing its contacts with larger regional anti-apartheid groups, elected officials and pro-divestment efforts at other colleges and universities.

Such efforts are important to the coalition right now. With the end of the academic year, the vast majority of the University's students will leave Ann Arbor for the next four months and they will likely leave consideration of the divestment issue behind them. The WCCAA is now faced with the problem of sustaining the momentum it has created in the past two months.

Coalition members say they can do this. Taylor explained that some representatives will be in Ann Arbor this summer to publicize the issue as they have for the last two months. He also said that many coalition members are underclass students and will thus be able to continue to push for divestment in the next few years if necessary.

IT IS ALSO important for the coalition to increase its support among the University's faculty. An important lesson learned by the student Left in the 1960's was that student demands carried added weight when accompanied by faculty support. And 110 faculty signatures on a petition—while significant—is not enough.

"I would just perceive that there has not been a great faculty participation in at least the formal actions of the coalition," said Prof. Shaw Livermore,

evidence that blacks are represented in the group.

Despite these minor difficulties, it is clear that the demonstrators who have brought their case to the Regents in the last two months, have won several significant victories. The pressure brought on the Board seems to have prompted Friday's public discussion of University divestment from two corporations, Black and Decker and G.D. Searle, which refuse to comply with the Sullivan Principles. The entire divestment issue is currently under review for a second time by the Senate Advisory Committee for Financial Affairs (SACFA), and will be considered by the Regents when that group makes its report to the Regents (See related story, Page 2). Without pressure from the demonstrators, the Regents would