



DURHAM STUDENTS' UNION
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PRESS STATEMENT

Publication embargoed until a.m. Tuesday, November 26, 1974.

At the beginning of this term Durham Students' Union Council passed a motion whose aim was to sustain and give added impetus to the campaign the Union has been running since March to get the University to withdraw its investments in firms with South African interests.

Part of that motion called for an extraordinary General Meeting of the Union. (A General Meeting is a vote in all JCRs, Junior Common Rooms, and is the sovereign body of the Union). Although the Union already had extant policy on the matter (passed by student representatives in DSU Council) it was decided that it was necessary for DSU to be seen to have a clear mandate from its members to continue with the campaign.

Accordingly, all Junior Common Rooms held meetings at which there was discussion followed by a vote - show of hands or secret ballot, depending on the wish of the meeting. DSU Steering Committee can now make public the vote on the motion:

"This JCR supports and welcomes DSU policy on South African Investment and calls on the Students' Union to press this Investments Committee to continue pressurising the relevant firms in the University's investment portfolio. This JCR also gives full support to the DSU campaign for disinvestment".

which was -	Votes cast for:	1227	(63.2%)
	Votes cast against:	545	(28.1%)
	Abstentions:	169	(8.7%)
	<u>Total Vote:</u>	<u>1,941.</u>	

The figures in brackets indicate the % of the votes cast.

DSU President, Adrian Dorber, said:

"It is now clear that the vast majority of Durham students who are concerned one way or another on this issue not only condemn the apartheid system but also want their University to disinvest. As we have tried to show there is no long term alternative to disinvestment. If the University really is concerned to help remove the moral and financial support its investments confer then it will respond to the wishes of its student members as quickly as possible. We have been discussing this matter with the University since March and related matters for over two years. It is clear that we have the full support of our members in asking for action soon".

Trevor Haughton, of the Durham University Anti- Apartheid branch said:

"Now the University knows that disinvestment is the policy not simply of a group of troublemakers in the Student Union but of the broad mass of interested Durham students. If they do not act soon everyone will know that the University is acting in direct opposition to the clearly stated view of their students. The vote shows that Durham's students are no longer prepared to see their University condoning and actively supporting a repugnant cheap labour system and the policy of apartheid on which it is based. We do not want to have to consider direct action to reinforce this unequivocal statement of the views of over 60% of interested Durham students."

DSU has repeatedly stressed that ^{alone} Durham's disinvestment is futile. It is seen as part of a wider, national campaign to shake the morale of the whites on which apartheid is based. Disinvestment by prestigious Universities like Durham and by churches and other institutions. Accordingly, DSU has submitted a motion to the NUS Conference at Margate next week calling for similar action throughout the U.K.

NOTE ON GENERAL MEETING

Steering Committee, who control DSU meetings and elections, state that

1. This is not a referendum.
2. There is no quorum figure for a General Meeting.
3. The decision as to whether the motion has been passed does not depend upon the JCR meetings all being quorate - what matters is the aggregate total of votes from all the colleges.

BACKGROUND TO THE VOTE

In 1972 DSU decided not to book any group which has played to segregated audiences in South Africa, moved its own funds from Barclays bank and suggested that the University and JCRs and Colleges should do the same, attempted to get a boycott of South African produce and requested that the literature of firms with investments in South Africa on the files on the Careers Advisory Service be marked as such. We also decided to try to press the University to withdraw its investments in South African firms, and in those firms with South African interests. It emerged that the university had sold its shares in South African companies (e.g. Consolidated Goldfields) but retained investments in 14 firms with South African subsidiaries or other substantial interests. The student newspaper estimated the value of these shares to be £100,000.

THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN

The Investments Campaign proper began in February of this year with a paper produced by the University Anti Apartheid Group, entitled "Our Responsibility and Our Goal". A petition with approximately 1,200 signatures was gathered together by Anti- Apartheid and submitted to the University Council that month. A Joint Committee of DSU and Council was held to discuss the possibility of the University disinvesting. University Council subsequently agreed to set up a special committee on which DSU has four representatives. At the meeting of this committee on May 3rd a further paper was submitted by the students outlining the kind of assurances we would want from firms in which the University invests. The next meeting of June 26 rejected these suggestions. On consideration of the Select Committee Report on wages and conditions of African workers employed by British firms in South Africa, Council agreed that a letter signed by the president of DSU and the Vice Chancellor should be sent to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry urging that legislation be promoted to give the recommendations of the report the force of law.

A reply was received from Mr Shore indicating that the Government did not propose to introduce legislation and that in his view the right course was for such shareholders as Durham University to exert their influence on companies to adopt the Select Committees recommendations voluntarily.

At the beginning of this term it was agreed to recommend to Council that a further letter be sent to Mr Shore urging stronger government action on the subject and that we should use our influence as shareholders in the companies concerned by pressing for information about how far the recommendations of the Select Committee have been adopted and by urging, if possible in conjunction with other shareholders, that companies should go further in the same direction.

However, the Committee did not advise to University Council that the University should disinvest.

Now that the students have voted the matter will be discussed at the end of term Joint Meeting of DSU and Council. The University staff will vote in the New Year.

For further information please ring Durham 3404 and ask for Chris Child, DSU Information Officer.

For the University view please ring Mr Ian Graham, the Registrar, on Durham 64466. He is also the person to ask about matters of fact as he has all the relevant figures.

OUR VIEW:

- (i) It is morally wrong to profit from investments whose high yield depends upon a cheap labour system.
- (ii) That the policy of using investments to pressurise South Africa has failed and will not be adopted by the firms since it is precisely because of that system that investment in South Africa is so attractive.
- (iii) That disinvestment asked for by African leaders such as Chief Lutuli (Nobel Peace Prize winner) is the only weapon we have.

It will shake the economy upon which Apartheid is based.

It will shake the morale of the whites on which Apartheid is based.

WE ARE:

- (i) Making money from Apartheid.
- (ii) ~~Containing~~ ^{CONDONING} and actively supporting Apartheid.
- (iii) Not using our ability to bring about the downfall of the Apartheid system.