

editorial

Apartheid protests will continue to grow

The 1984-85 school year began with pronouncements that America had changed. In the words of Newsweek magazine, "A new conservatism has taken over college campuses." All around the country, newspapers reported that the era of student activism was over. The "landslide" reelection of President Ronald Reagan seemed to put the icing on the cake. According to the Oregon Commentator, "liberal activism is all a part of Woodstock history."

Right-wing publications had scarcely finished praising the "new campus conservatism" when a sudden wave of student protests began. The demonstrations were centered on events in South Africa.

Between November and March, more than 300 blacks were killed by South African police during anti-apartheid protests. As more violence erupted in South Africa, Nobel Peace Prize recipient Bishop Desmond Tutu and other prominent South African black leaders called on the United States to cut economic and military ties with the apartheid government. On March 16, the South African police opened fire on a crowd of unarmed black protesters in the town of Uitenhage. Nineteen blacks were killed and dozens more wounded. It was the 25th anniversary of the famous Sharpville massacre, in which 69 unarmed blacks were gunned down by South African troops, and blacks had gathered in Uitenhage to commemorate the day. Reagan responded to the "unfortunate" incident in Uitenhage by saying that the South African government "had to maintain law and order."

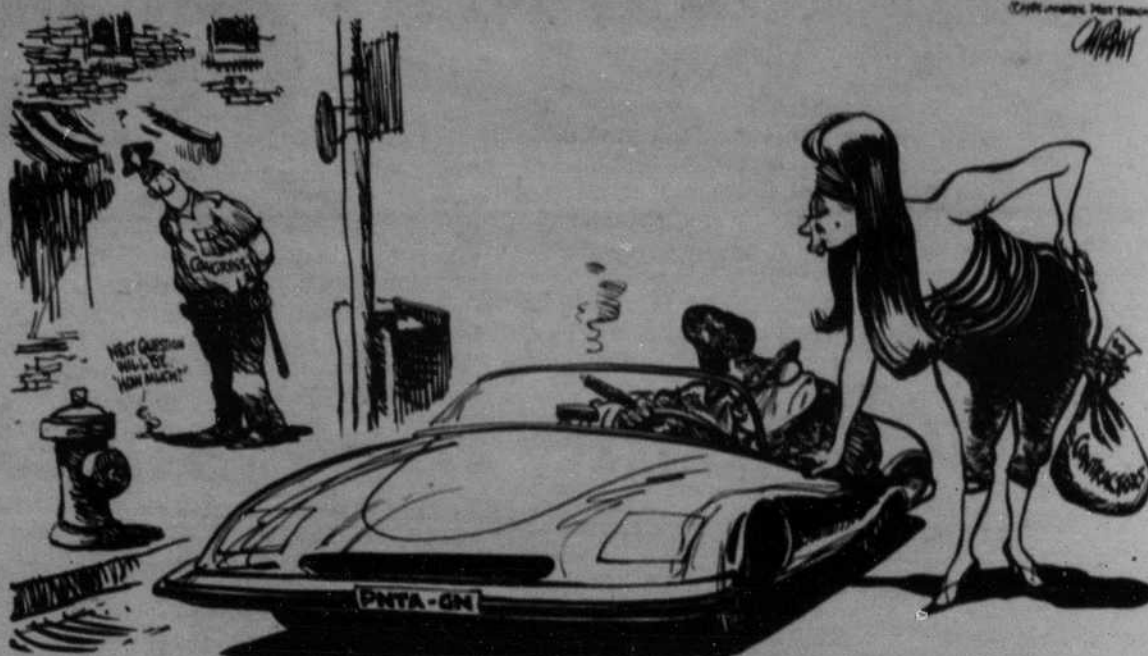
For many American university students, Reagan's statement on the Uitenhage killings was the final straw. Students began to stage massive acts of civil disobedience, protesting apartheid and U.S. cooperation with South Africa. At Cornell University, police were called in to break up a student sit-in at an administration building; 1,200 people were arrested. At the University of California at Berkeley, student protests against Reagan's policy of constructive engagement with South Africa led to 400 arrests. The list goes on. In every region of the country, student opposition to U.S. economic and military cooperation with the South African government has led to large demonstrations. Since March, more than 4,000 students have been arrested at universities throughout the nation.

What do these protests mean? Critics have been quick to label the recent wave of anti-apartheid demonstrations as nothing more than the "latest college fashion," and a case of "spring fever." The protests are neither. What America is witnessing in the current wave of demonstrations is the surfacing of sentiments that have been building in this country for several years.

Since the 1976 student uprising in Soweto, South Africa, university students in America have watched events in that country more closely. The same year that black student leader Steven Biko died during police interrogation in a South African prison, the ASUO filed a petition with the State Board of Higher Education to divest all stocks from companies doing business in South Africa. Students at other universities filed similar petitions. In the process, many students made the jump from passive observers to active participants in the struggle against apartheid.

For nearly a decade, university students in the United States followed a path of teach-ins, letter-writing campaigns and petitions, all geared towards pressuring the U.S. government to cut economic and military ties with South Africa. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, despite student demands for divestment over the years, "the overwhelming majority of U.S. colleges and universities have taken no steps to get rid of their South African holdings." Civil disobedience in the name of divestment was not the first choice by students in the anti-apartheid movement; it was the last resort. It was only after student demands for divestment were repeatedly ignored by university governing boards that students adopted the tactics of civil disobedience to make their voices heard.

The current wave of anti-apartheid demonstrations is not an example of "spring fever." It is an example of a strong student movement that has been maturing for nearly a decade. It is a movement that will continue as long as the U.S. government continues to give economic and military support to a nation that denies 22 million people the right to vote just because they were born with black skin. Such a nation is South Africa.



letters

Divest now!

Divestment is an important opportunity for Oregon to resist involvement in the apartheid system of black oppression.

In South Africa, 4 million whites enslave 22 million blacks and "non-whites" (75 percent of the people), denying them basic human and civil rights including the right to vote and to own property.

While Reagan's administration refers to the government of South Africa as our friends, many states and cities have refused to participate in this friendship with the brutal government of South Africa. The Governor of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis, said, "It has been our experience that divestiture makes not only a strong moral statement against apartheid but has had no significant impact on our pension earnings. Careful divestiture can result in net increases in earnings."

The current policy of investment and the "Sullivan Principles" are intended to ensure U.S. corporations participate in improving employment conditions for blacks. Unfortunately, this cannot correct the broader social inequities of apartheid because U.S. corporations employ less than 1 percent of South Africa's workforce. Sadly, our financial involvement directly supports the surveillance and control of the black population.

Divesting Oregon's public

monies is necessary to end our support of the racist South African government. Because those who are oppressed in South Africa have no legal means to effect change in their society, the divestment trend is a meaningful message. Divesting is not breaking new ground, but acknowledging that continued participation with apartheid cannot be justified.

Rebecca Roby
Eugene Free South Africa

Tense situation

It has been several weeks since our government, with virtually no international support, imposed an embargo on the people of Nicaragua. This bullying act provokes the already tense situation caused by the permanent presence of 2,000 U.S. troops in Honduras, a U.S. naval task force stationed off the Nicaraguan coast, and CIA-trained contras who terrorize civilians along Nicaragua's border.

The Sandinistas overthrew the dictatorship of Somoza in 1979, after 30 years of popular struggle. In addition to paying Somoza's debts and rebuilding from the destruction of an earthquake and civil war, programs were instituted to provide literacy, health care, and land for the disenfranchised poor.

This is now threatened by the economic and covert military aggression our government is waging against Nicaragua. The U.S. has forced the Inter-American Development Bank to

deny Nicaragua critically needed loans (shades of Chile). It has mined Nicaragua's harbors. It has flaunted international law by disregarding the authority of the World Court.

Nicaragua has repeatedly stated its readiness to sign and abide by the Contradicta Peace Proposal. Our government has blocked signing of this proposal and has unilaterally ceased indirect talks with Nicaragua.

I believe that we have thus far delayed the direct invasion of Nicaragua by U.S. military forces through our self-education, the education of neighbors and colleagues, and vocal opposition to the interventionist policies of the Reagan administration. We need to redouble these efforts now to prevent a tragic slide towards open regional war in Central America.

Aguan Wei
Biology

Please return

To the person who mistakenly lifted my green backpack off of the rack at the bookstore Wednesday at 1:25 p.m.

Could you please at least place my class notes in a paper bag and turn them in at the bookstore?

I figure counting the books, the pack, and my tape recorder, your're still getting away with at least 100 bucks.

I need the notes for my finals! Thank you.

Stan Talbott
Slightly pissed off

oregon daily emerald

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