

Editorial

Impose sanctions, end U.S. hypocrisy

Restrictions on news coverage may prevent the world from seeing the South African government's brutality, but the violence continues just the same. Black opposition to apartheid has not diminished, nor has the violence against this protest.

Shortly after the South African Parliament reconvenes at the end of this month, President P.W. Botha is expected to announce reforms in the laws that regulate the daily lives of blacks. In all likelihood few, if any, meaningful changes in that nation's racial laws will be proposed.

Last August, Botha announced several measures that were touted beforehand as the beginning of the end of apartheid. The hype, however, failed to match reality.

Pass laws still regulate the movements of blacks. Education continues to be segregated and funded disproportionately in favor of white children. Political opposition groups are banned from meeting. A state of emergency exists in most areas, bringing with it curfews, government arrests and detentions without charge and a ban on gatherings and political speeches at funerals. In short, more than 70 percent of the South African population continue to be treated as non-citizens by a government that advocates racial superiority.

Botha's August speech and subsequent remarks follow one line of thinking — South Africa will resist outside pressure and reform at its own pace, if at all. After meeting with Botha in South Africa last week, a group of U.S. congressmen voiced their skepticism at the prospect of major changes in apartheid. One member of the delegation called Botha "totally closed and unwilling to be responsive."

For South Africa's blacks, the time for peaceful change may already have passed. Reacting to increased government violence against black dissent, the leader of the African National Congress recently called for an increase in the group's guerrilla war against the white regime. Thus, the cycle of violence will escalate and further hinder the prospects of a peaceful solution to the political and social polarization.

While far from laudable, the reaction of the ANC to an intractable government is understandable. Bishop Desmond Tutu, while retaining his opposition to all forms of violence, recently stated his equally firm conviction that injustice must be combated.

"There comes a time," the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner stated, "when it is justifiable to overthrow an unjust system by violence."

Tutu's remark is significant in that it acknowledges the limits to black patience with apartheid. While it may be argued that the Afrikaner government will abolish the more significant aspects of apartheid over time, it is just as likely that civil war will erupt beforehand. The potential cost in human life would be great, given the sophistication of the South African military. And as past events have shown, the government has not shied away from the use of force to quell unrest.

Given the increasingly dim chances for reconciliation, what role should the United States play? There are those, including President Reagan, who have resisted meaningful U.S. economic sanctions against South Africa. Supporters of the U.S. administration's policy of constructive engagement claim the United States can bring a quicker end to apartheid by increasing business ties. U.S. businesses operating in South Africa, they argue, provide blacks with jobs and promote so-called progressive employment practices.

This argument is flawed. First, it ignores the history of U.S.-South African relations. Despite increased business investment over the last 37 years, apartheid has become more entrenched and resistant to change.

In fact, the rise of the South African economy and the subsequent high standard of living for most whites is a direct result of apartheid. The exploitation of a readily available supply of cheap, surplus black labor is the essence of this brutality. Those who argue that sanctions would cause suffering for black South Africans ignore the past and current pain blacks have already endured and the call by many blacks themselves for U.S. sanctions.

Further, Reagan's eagerness to impose economic sanctions against Nicaragua and, more recently, Libya, ring hollow given his timidity to impose sanctions on South Africa. There is no doubt about whether the South African government is a terrorist nation. Its daily brutalization and treatment of the black population is terrorism on a scale equal to that of Nazi Germany. Thus we urge the president to speak with one face, and hit South Africa where it is most vulnerable to U.S. pressure — its economy. U.S. business interests cannot be placed above the immorality of apartheid.



Room tax: improper strategy to finance airport expansion

Eugene Mayor Brian Obie unveiled a plan to raise the tax on hotel and motel rooms from 6 percent to 9 percent at his annual state-of-the-city address last Monday. He said the tax would raise nearly one third of the cost to expand Eugene's Mahlon Sweet Airport.

Airport expansion is a worthy goal. Economic progress will be hindered unless the airport's capacity is increased. But a room-tax increase would be an inappropriate method of generating the necessary funds.

Obie argues the tax is justified because those who use the airport for business trips stay in hotels and motels. True, some of those who fly into Eugene visit on business, but they usually opt for larger facilities such as the Hilton. The smaller motels and hotels still would be forced to raise their rates. And because the increase would be imposed only on Eugene hotels and motels, consumers would be attracted to nearby Springfield's lower rates.

Obie also contends the increase would not divert convention business to Portland because Portland's rate is already 9 percent. This may be true, but it seems ironic to raise rates charged to the very people Eugene is trying to attract.

And even with the \$3 million generated by the tax increase, officials will be \$7 million short of the region's \$10 million share of the project's price tag. Obie referred to additional federal or state grants and indicated the airlines

would be required to cough up a greater portion of the costs. Whether or not these measures will raise \$7 million is unclear.

Other questions remain unanswered. The proposed city income tax, which would have financed airport expansion and other projects, was rejected by a 4-1 margin in November in part because the entire bill for enlarging the airport would have been paid by Eugene. Under the proposed room-tax increase, Eugene still would pay for a service that residents throughout the county would enjoy.

Obie asked Springfield and the rest of the county to match the increase, but county officials are likely to be unenthusiastic about the request because they recently announced plans to seek a 1 percent county room-tax increase to fund tourism promotion.

Also, voters will be denied the opportunity to vote on the proposal. The tax can be implemented following City Council approval. Obie probably particularly supports this feature because voters rejected the city income-tax proposal in November and Oregonians as a whole have greeted property tax increases with hostility, witnessed by a substantial increase in school levy failures last year.

Most of these problems would be solved if airport expansion was funded by a countywide property-tax increase. Voters may be less hesitant to approve a property-tax increase if they are convinced airport expansion is a necessity.

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