Discussions in living groups continue

Senior House

By David B. Oberman
Professor of Political Science

Willard R. Johnson called for immediate economic sanctions against South Africa as a Senior House discussion of apartheid continued last week, held as part of the Institute Colloquium on Apartheid.

Associate Provost Samuel J. Keyser was also present at the discussion.

Johnson said that sanctions would cause a great economic crisis there. He added that President Ronald Reagan's token sanctions caused little change to the South African government and that America's acceptance of them as effective measures against apartheid proved more potent actions from being taken.

Johnson commended US banks for refusing to renew $12 billion in loans to the South African government, which has been severely stricken economically by the price of gold like recent years.

South Africa is also trying to borrow $1.1 billion from the International Monetary Fund. The US Congress has resolved to vote against these loans, largely due to the persuasive efforts of MIT Economics Professor Richard S. Eckels '54, according to Johnson.

But US corporations operating in South Africa are not exercising their considerable power to bring about change in the South African government, Johnson said. Corporations shying by the South African government would probably end its "constructive engagement" policy if their accounts for only $93 million in South African business each year, which is not enough to change anything, he said.

"The threat of withdrawal [from South Africa] is sometimes worse than withdrawal," Johnson said. He warned that the outright withdrawal of American corporations from South Africa would accomplish little. If South Africa's survival economy, it would stand on stronger ground than ever before, he added.

Next House

By Earl C. Vay

John Parsons, professor in the Sloan School of Management, and Kenneth R. Manning, professor in the Science, Technology, and Society program, discussed whether American companies should step down business in South Africa. Over 40 students attended that discussion at 50 Memorial Drive.

Parsons said that if American companies withdrew from South Africa, the South African government would probably end its apartheid policy.

"The US government is the real threat to South Africa, but under the table it's saying that we're not really going to do anything," Parsons said. "If the United States really threatened South Africa, it might happen that the American companies in South Africa would be severely hurt by the South African government and that America's acceptance of them as effective measures against apartheid proved more potent actions from being taken.

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Bexley Hall

By Michael J. Garson

Should MIT students work for companies which operate in South Africa? About 20 Bexley residents discussed this issue with faculty and administration members last week.

The Institute Colloquium Committee sponsored the discussion, which was moderated by Judith L. Schwartz, Bexley housemaster and Concourse professor, and Richard O. Atkinson, professor of Science, Technology, and Society. Dues for Students Affairs Shirley M. McBey, John Hildebidle at Baker, and Alice H. Weiner also participated during the second half of the meeting.

"How does apartheid affect you, here at 77 Massachusetts Avenue?" Weiner asked. One student said apartheid caused "an ache" in his mind. Several persons stressed their support of MIT, which has investments in companies in South Africa.

Participants discussed the differences between indirect and direct investment, noting that MIT's investment is all indirect. Weiner added that there may be heavy government pressure on companies like Citicorp to stay in South Africa and maybe even pay good dividends. Several people questioned the circle: "If MIT divests, will we have more indirect influence with the companies, but if we do not divest, influence may not be effective.

Weiner asked for the group's views about other companies, which MIT students might work for. Several students agreed that political pressure should be made, others thought that action might be effective, and it would influence companies without requiring MIT students to work against political action.

Johnson concluded that, "If we are going to work for a defense company," he said. "Then we should ask MIT to divest. Then we can say we are working for a company that is not helping to maintain apartheid.

Bexley residents also said that the situation here at MIT, which looks "very white," a student said, was probably almost surely not here but in the primary and secondary educational system.