Discussions in living groups

McCormick: J&J's Morris speaks

By Prasunad Natangian

Panelists at the McCormick Hall discussion focused on the degree of international pressure needed to bring about fundamental changes in the South African government's apartheid policy. The panelists included: G. Heinrich Kalonji '80, associate professor of materials science; Ron Moore, former president of one of Johnson and Johnson's branches in South Africa; Joe F. Marcus, president of Bonner & Moore Associates and member of the MIT Corporation.

The panelists agreed that apartheid will eventually die, but they felt that changes would occur only through severe economic pressure from other nations. Morris talked about the withdrawal of his company's investment from South Africa. In the recent past, many US companies have been divorcing. No company was making a great profit in South Africa and the withdrawal of dividends was not unexpected, he said.

No company would even think of new investments in the wake of the unstable political situation and economic pressure, Morris said. Johnson & Johnson divested a substantial amount of resources to fund educational institutions, to offer in-house training programs for blacks, and to provide money for better health care facilities.

The withdrawal of investments by only US companies would not be sufficient to effect the policies of the current regime, Morris said. The whole of the market is presently controlled by British, German, and Japanese companies, he explained.

When asked why the anti-apartheid movement has not gained enough momentum to overthrow the regime, Morris explained that friction between the various tribes is standing in the way of a mass uprising. The establishment of multiracial schools in cities like Cape Town has helped to reduce interracial violence. When queried about whether the present government will ever abolish apartheid, Morris replied that economic influences would force the government to quit rather than risk large-scale bloodshed. "It needs the dyke to burst," he said.

Violence is not the answer to ending apartheid, Morris contended. As of today, the blacks, who have neither large amounts of ammunition nor sophisticated weaponry, have little chance of overthrowing the government, he argued.

The South African government has been able to suppress massive protests by blacks by threatening to take repressive countermeasures against protesters and by controlling the nation's food supply, Kalonji said.

Morris felt that Western nations could end apartheid by pressuring the South African regime. If the United States, United Kingdom, and West Germany threatened to withdraw from South Africa, "the situation because the biggest force is not there," he said.

The more powerful US corporations would not be able to overlook the situation because the biggest foreign investors are the United States, United Kingdom, and West Germany, Kalonji said.

New House: Gavin doubts divestment's impact

By Jai Young Kim

Professor of Economics Peter Tenin, who served as moderator, noted the distinction of divestment from disinvestment, explaining that divestment and divestment were definitely linked.

One discussion member pointed out that if MIT were to divest, it would be the first denominator in South Africa. "The regime situation before an economic catastrophe in South Africa," he said, "has taken a political stance in demonstrating that divestment and divestment were definitely linked."

Professor of Economics Peter Tenin, who served as moderator, explained that the symbolic value of divestment is "not symbolic but also dire." He said that divestment is the only way to lead that country to withdraw from South Africa. "The regime situation because the biggest force is not there," he said.

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