Neo Mnnumzana, ANC representative to the United Nations, discusses apartheid with students at New House.

DKE: Nteta encourages student pressure on MIT

By Niraj S. Desai

"The only times South Africa has moved [toward liberalization] has been when we have made to feel like a pariah," declared Chris Nteta, a black South African, at an informal discussion on divestment and apartheid at East Campus Wednesday night.

Besides the danger of financial loss, MIT would also run the risk of losing corporate support and alienating its alumni, Nteta explained.

"Alumni are quite unsympathetic" toward the divestment movement, Nteta said. These risks have to be weighed against divestment's perceived benefits, he said. He was skeptical that divestment would have a positive effect.

"Institutions can't assume every role," Nteta said. "MIT is an educational institution, not a civil rights institution. MIT is not particularly well suited to making political statements." But Nteta said MIT's investment policy is not based solely on "sanitary grounds. When a student asked why MIT had divested of companies with South African operations, he如实 that those were not Sullivan stipulations or were in Category III of the Sullivan Principles. Nteta confessed that there was no threshold of behavior that MIT expected from its investments.

"Apartheid still exists because of decisions made at MIT and in companies that are dragging their feet," Nteta said.

Corporations in South Africa

Companies move into any country for market opportunities, said Al Cooper, director of public affairs at Johnson & Johnson.

But he noted the Sullivan Principles have helped make small changes in South Africa, including integration of bathrooms, job training, advancement, and fighting apartheid outside the workplace. Cooper said Johnson & Johnson has taken on in newspapers condemning apartheid.

"We're not talking about divestment, we're talking about an attitude change," Cooper declared.

Students and the Corporation

"I don't think students can have a major role in determining Corporation policy," Nteta said. While the Corporation has to "not delegate their authority" to students.

"We are talking about a monolithic government, both in apartheid and in South African universities. MIT, as an educational institution, has a particular interest in "enhancing the training of professors in the black universities," he said.

Nteta was not impressed with MIT's efforts to improve the education of blacks in South Africa, and he felt that MIT's efforts to improve the education of blacks in South Africa have been "merely pious gestures," he said.

"We're not talking about institutionalism into the black classroom," Nteta said. "We're talking about an attitude change, with people all over the world." Apartheid still exists because of decisions made at MIT and in companies that are dragging their feet," Nteta said.