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**A vital new book for
British Socialists . . .**

FROM LABOURISM TO SOCIALISM

The Political Economy of Labour in the 1970's

by Michael Barratt Brown

Some fifteen years ago C.A.R. Crosland published *The Future of Socialism*, which did much to influence the Labour Party to accept the thesis of a "reformed capitalism". Since, it was claimed, private capital accumulation was no longer anarchic and anti-social, and the tendency to monopoly and the concentration of private economic power much reduced, governments could henceforth, it was thought, steer the economy in the direction of greater equality and more extended social services for the people. Two Labour Governments, of which Crosland was himself a member, largely accepted this thesis. They not only failed to steer the economy in these directions, but they failed in fact to steer the economy very effectively at all, and so suffered defeat in the General Election of 1970.

Basic poverty was not eliminated, full employment was not guaranteed, inequalities were not reduced, co-operation and social services were not extended as private goods became more abundant, nor even did Labour bring liberty and gaiety to private life, as Crosland promised.

Since all the predictions based upon the Crosland thesis have proved erroneous, those who then criticised Crosland's work should now be heard. One of them is Michael Barratt Brown, who has consistently, in the columns of *Tribune* and in the journals of the New Left — *New Reasoner*, *Universities and Left Review*, *New Left Review*, *The Spokesman* — challenged the Crosland thesis from a standpoint inside the Labour Party. This book is not, however, a merely negative critique. The alternative thesis presented

here is that, while capitalism cannot be reformed, its power — that is, the power of private capital accumulation — can be challenged by reforms. In the process people will begin to make their own society — all those who are making demands now for improved social services, for extended control over their working lives, for husbanding the earth's natural resources, for preserving the whole human environment and for a reformed world division of labour.

Every act of the state to incorporate these demands within the existing system of property relations, short of their fulfilment, creates the condition for renewed demands to transcend the system. This fact escapes the negative critics from the Left. It is equally missed in the Crosland thesis.

The new industrial revolution, the nature and implications of which are studied here in detail, creates both the necessity and the opportunity for an advance towards socialism. This is on the agenda for the 1970s; and presents the greatest challenge for the British Labour Movement. The book argues that a Party committed to social ownership and control and based on the Trade Union Movement, as the Labour Party is, can, with the extension of internal democracy, become an instrument for radical social change. But this, the author insists, implies the pressing of every reform with the fully mobilised power of the people right up to and beyond the limits imposed by capitalism. This book is designed to help prepare the British Labour Movement to meet that challenge.

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"A great many people in this country seem to spend a great deal of their time in saying how much they disapprove of Apartheid. In fact, it has become something of a ritual exercise, performed especially when they are about to say or do something in favour of those who practise it."

(Sir Robert Birley, "The African Worker in South Africa"
— Montague Burton Lecture on International Relations, 1971).

"The discussions (on Council) were in fact wide-ranging, with lay and academic members alike expressing their strong disapproval of the policy of apartheid. But . . . (we feel that) . . . withdrawal of enlightened British interests from South Africa could in the long run do considerable harm to the Africans themselves . . . Reckitt and Colman have over the years been generous and disinterested benefactors of the University. In recent months the company has given a substantial sum for the funding of a Professorship in Genetics . . ."

(Sir Brynmor Jones, Vice-Chancellor, in a letter to members of Hull University, 29th January, 1972).

Introduction

What follows is an account of one campaign in one university, against that university's complicity in apartheid. It does not purport to be a blueprint for further action although lessons that have been learned, or reinforced should prove helpful to others. It offers no recipe for instant success in the struggle against intransigent university authorities. Indeed it is written at a time when no such success seems imminent, when the whole campaign is in suspension ready for a new beginning. It is offered merely as a case study of how a campaign that initially involved very few people was able eventually to call on the support of 2,000 students and staff. And how that support, or rather that level of support was eroded by a shabby compromise that put faith in the university authorities' sincerity to negotiate.

In 1968, when Britain's universities along with their counterparts in Europe and America were first "disrupted" by a hitherto unseen level of militancy among their students, for the first time vice-chancellors and principals had to come to terms with such tactics as the sit-in. In those early days of Student Power with the founding of the RSSF, most of the campaigns were geared to internal issues based around the students' demand for the democratisation of the institution. Student militants refused to accept the official version that a university was necessarily a hierarchical structure because students were a transient population who were there to receive knowledge, but that there was nevertheless no conflict of interest between the governing body and the students. RSSF's demand was for one man one vote on the campus. They counterposed to the sometimes benevolent paternalism of the supposed guardians of the university the startling heresy that they and the staff who worked in it *were* the university. They demanded representation on all governing bodies of the university. Increasingly disenchanted with their role as examination fodder, they went on to challenge the structure of their courses. They made the alarming discovery that the university was an agent of capitalist society, that their education was geared to meet the needs of that society for scientists, technicians and management staffs. Of course, the authorities tried to see this trend of outrageous ill-discipline as a red plot. Just as Wilson had reached for his "reds under the beds" smear when the seaman's strike was beginning to hurt, so too did Education Minister Short blame "Brand X" revolutionaries for the troubles in his institutions of higher learning. But, hoping that the wave of rebellion would die down, the university authorities conceded some of the demands of the students, who for the first time received some degree of representation. To an extent their tactic proved effective. Student unions threw up a new breed of bureaucrat ready and willing to use this representative machinery as an alternative to militant action. In doing so they tended to expose it for what it was—a sham. Certainly students were listened to, but if they became "impertinent", if they demanded change, they were ignored. But the student movement had learned from its early campaigns that it did possess a certain political power. Allied to this awareness was an in-

creasing appreciation of the need to break down the isolation of their institution from the society of which it is a part. More and more students have come to see the need to support the struggles of both the working class at home and those oppressed by imperialism abroad. It is in the light of this heightened political consciousness that the Tory Government's proposals to undermine the mild degree of autonomy that student unions at present possess can best be seen. As a result of this danger the 1971-2 session has seen an acceleration of the tendency of students to look outside their immediate environment. The NUS has in the last year launched a massive campaign to mobilise its membership against the Tory proposals. It has also adopted a more aggressive international policy, and has supported workers involved in industrial action at home. NUS has established close links with the Anti-Apartheid Movement and in July of this year held a joint conference of militants to discuss future policy. The Hull experience was seen as a significant pointer to the way students' bodies could fight against apartheid.

Like most universities, Hull has close links with the local business community. If the penetration of business into the "liberal" academic community is not as pronounced as for example events at Warwick in 1970 showed the situation in that institution to be, the supreme governing body of Hull University, the Council, is nevertheless largely dominated by representatives of local firms. No concern is more intimately connected with the university than is Reckitt & Colman Ltd. The funds that initially helped finance the founding of the university college that became the university were R. & C. shares. The firm has maintained its links throughout the years, financing scholarships, giving assistance to departments, proving, it is maintained by Senate and Council, a highly benevolent benefactor to the expanding seat of learning. As a result of this manifold beneficence the present chairman of Council is one Basil Reckitt, whose connection with the firm of the same name is as obvious as it seems. When the Union Meeting called by the Anti-Apartheid Society called upon the university to divest itself of its shares in R. & C. because of that company's connection with South Africa, it is perhaps hardly surprising in the light of the university council's connection with Basil Reckitt that the demand was ignored then, and was consistently ignored over a period of three months. The much-vaunted representative machinery that had been won as a result of a sit-in in 1968 proved inadequate to deal with an issue that involved ever greater numbers of students and staff. The Vice-Chancellor merely chose to dismiss all discussion of the matter, maintaining that where the university invested its money was none of the students' business. Faced with this blank wall of apparent indifference, the Anti-Apartheid Society intensified their publicity campaign to inform the mass of students about conditions in SA and of British capitalism's major stake in the super-exploitation of the black majority there. When the inevitable confrontation came, about 500 students sat in the Administration Building, at first without the official backing of Union. After four days a Union Meeting of over 2,500 students out of a total population of 4,000 voted overwhelmingly to endorse this action. Yet only a week later a

meeting of the same size withdrew that support and the sit-in ended. The mass of the students had ignored those sitting-in who had called for the continuation of a policy of disruption that after 13 days was showing signs of taking effect on the administration. Instead they gave their support to a shabby compromise, engineered by union bureaucrats who at no time had given support to the campaign, and whose single-minded devotion to the *status quo* had led them to use not only the red scare, but also the amazing argument that militant action would lead to higher beer prices. The militants maintained at the time, and as a description of events will show, maintained correctly, that the committee that was set up at this time to discuss how the university could aid the struggle against apartheid would prove a travesty. But the experience proved extremely time-wasting and costly to the intensity of the campaign. The authorities effectively placed the issue on ice for several months before coming out with their non-report in the summer vacation. The campaign for divestment continues but a great deal of fresh work has to be done to reawaken the interest and support of the mass of the student population.

Chapter One

BRITISH CAPITALISM AND SOUTH AFRICA THE CASE FOR DIVESTMENT

" . . . the excessive unsimplicity (which) crops up whenever anyone makes a proposal which opens up a prospect, however distant, of new action. It involves a skill which all conservative functionaries are masters of, as they ingeniously protect the status quo; it is called the 'technique of the intricate defensive'."

(C. P. Snow).

Everyone knows about South Africa. Everyone agrees that apartheid is evil, just as everyone is against sin. But what counts is not what people say, but what they do. To quote an African proverb: "I can't hear what you are saying because what you are is drumming in my ears."

During the campaign to sever the link between Hull University and South Africa by way of Reckitt & Colman, a veritable flood of rhetoric was precipitated. Much of this was from people unwillingly forced to think of the problem for the first time, and was accordingly naive and uninformed: "Apartheid is none of our business", "What about Russia?" "British firms in South Africa are helping to undermine apartheid", "Industrial development in South Africa will destroy apartheid", and so on. Some, mostly from those whose main concern in life is their position in the power structure, was much more along the lines of Snow's intricate defensive: "The university has negligible influence on Reckitt & Colman", "The university is not a political institution", "Reckitts are already working as near to the law as they dare, and you will only harm the Africans by bringing the attention of the South African government to this", "It is impossible/illegal for us to sell our shares in Reckitts".

Some of these views do not merit discussion. Even the more honest ones bear little confrontation with the facts, whether of the actual situation in South Africa, Reckitt's activities there, or the university's position as a shareholder. But there is one thing that the proponents of these diverse arguments held in common: whilst accepting that apartheid was evil, **they advocated doing nothing**. Now not all these people were secret supporters of apartheid. But they shared a perspective on it very different from the one we hold (see below). They felt that apartheid was a moral problem, but that it was nothing much to do with us. That our influence on South Africa was slight and in any case might prove counterproductive. That the trade and investment relations existing between Britain and South Africa are somehow "normal", independent of apartheid, and therefore irrelevant. And finally that the situation would sooner or later resolve itself 6,000 miles away, without troubling us in Britain any more than, say, the war in Vietnam does.

The Future

Most people who have been concerned with the problem of apartheid take a bleaker view: the situation has been allowed to develop through the unenlightened (and mainly short-term) self-interest of the West in general, and of Britain in particular, and we therefore hold a share of the responsibility. The present situation is both morally and materially the most extreme example of oppression in existence, unsurpassed since the fall of Nazi Germany. But the bleakness of future prospects both for South Africa and for ourselves gives equal cause for concern. **There is real danger that we shall be drawn into the approaching war in Southern Africa — on the wrong side.** This may seem alarmist, until one realises that the war has already begun on three fronts, and the freedom fighters are receiving increasingly meaningful support from Africa and beyond. Meanwhile, Britain increases its stake in the *status quo* by more trade and more investment.

The interests of British capitalism in South Africa (which are discussed in the next section) are considerable. They are more substantial than their interests in any other part of the "Third World" (with the possible exception of Middle Eastern oil), and they are also qualitatively different. The weak bargaining position of most poor countries means that any system they adopt (short of a thorough-going social revolution) can be influenced for the benefit of neo-colonial exploitation. But the strength of the South African whites has enabled them to narrow the options available to the West to commitment either to the *status quo*, or to its revolutionary overthrow. No "middle ways" have been left. The logic of this is becoming more and more obvious, with the Scandinavian countries moving towards support of the guerrilla movements, and with Britain and France (more recently followed by America) moving firmly in support of the apartheid regime, and Portuguese colonialism. This support ranges from trade and investment, to arms supply and the financing of military budgets. Recent experience in other parts of the world suggests that it would be unwise to assume that

more direct involvement will be avoidable once the system and our stake in it come under effective attack from the increasingly militant blacks.

What Britain has to lose in South Africa

Britain's interests in South Africa can be discussed under four main headings: investments, the market for our exports, our imports (particularly minerals) from the area, and the use of South Africa as a base for general penetration of Africa.

Investments

The total foreign investment in South Africa is now worth around £3,000 million. About 60 per cent of this is British (America being far behind with under 15 per cent), representing about 10 per cent of our total foreign assets. (Only Australia, Canada, and Western Europe as a whole are more important to us, and America is comparable.) Britain owns far less in the whole of the rest of Africa. By contrast barely one per cent of America's assets are in South Africa, and this is only one-fifth of her African total. The assets are also very profitable to us, yielding between 10 and 15 per cent on the capital employed (about 50 per cent above our world average rate, and consistently exceeded only by Malaysian investments). So with something of the order of £200 million annual earnings (although this is roughly halved after allowing for new investments and re-investments), South Africa is plainly of some importance to British capitalists, the City of London, and the Balance of Payments.

Exports

By contrast, the South African market is relatively unimportant for Britain, taking only about £300-400 million worth of goods a year, or some five per cent. of the total. About ten other countries are of comparable or greater importance, as is the rest of Africa. In the unlikely event of a complete cessation of trade with SA, an average year's export growth would more than make up the difference. On the other hand, the trade contributes almost a quarter of SA's total imports.

Imports

The overall pattern is similar to exports (thanks in part to Commonwealth preferences still in operation ten years after SA left the Commonwealth), Britain taking over a quarter of SA's goods. However, this amounts to only a small proportion of our total imports. In the case of certain minerals, however, South African supplies may be more crucial. In 1969, more than half our imports of antimony, platinum, and silver came from SA. A quarter or more of asbestos, diamonds, and manganese and chromium ores were also supplied, and a similar situation may be expected with regard to uranium following the deal made between RTZ, the Atomic Energy Authority, and SA to exploit the Namibian deposits (with the blessing of Harold Wilson before the 1970 election). In fact SA produces a significant proportion of world production of these minerals, as well as of vanadium and, of course, gold.

The Strategic Base

South Africa is the richest, most-developed country in Africa. With its variety of minerals, and its potential as a supplier both of goods and of capital, it is casting an increasingly long shadow northwards. South African capital is involved in mining and industrial enterprises as far north as the Congo. Even Zambia is obliged to rely heavily on trade with SA, although making valiant efforts to realign its relations. Southern and Central Africa is of growing importance, both as a market (many times larger than that of SA alone), and as a supplier of crucial raw materials (many outside SA itself). SA, with its developed infrastructure and communications, its commercial experience, and its large supplies of very cheap, but skilled labour, is rapidly becoming the base for the exploitation of the whole region (and to some extent the whole of Africa) by Western capital. Many British subsidiaries in Africa are in fact "sub-subsidiaries" of South African ones. For much of Africa, SA is the nearest source of capital goods, skilled workers, and capital. Through its 'outward-looking policy' to the rest of Africa it hopes to blunt the criticism of apartheid, and through joint ventures with Western capital make itself indispensable in the exploitation of the continent.

There can be no doubt that the first three factors just discussed provide Britain with a powerful incentive to maintain, if not strengthen, the economic relationship with SA. As with other areas, the competitive struggle between the main capitalist powers for control of profitable markets and vital mineral supplies dictates the course. But because of our past support it is a course that means a shoring up of apartheid, even though we have no interest in white domination as such. In most respects a reliable black-ruled neo-colony would be just as acceptable, if not preferable (what we lose in higher labour costs is more than compensated for in the growth of the market). But the risks involved in the process of replacing apartheid deter us; our past mistakes contribute to present injustice and future catastrophe. The fourth strategic factor sews it up: a white South African base for the full neo-colonisation of the whole continent might just help capitalism snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. The stakes are being raised: Southern Africa could confirm the permanent underdevelopment of Africa or the final discrediting of neo-colonialism in a long and bloody war.

The Intensification of Apartheid

The above analysis is, in broad outline, accepted by a growing number of students of South Africa. It is not possible in a pamphlet of this length to justify every point by reference to original sources, but the critical may consult the short bibliography appended. However, the detail of our perspective is less important than the central premise: **that apartheid is an intolerable affront—moral, political and economic—to the black people inside and outside South Africa and that it will not be tolerated much longer.** Those who are opposed to taking such action either have honestly to defend their sectional short-term interest, or to pretend that apartheid is not really as bad as we know it to be, or to maintain that economic forces are rendering it less objectionable and

will ultimately change SA peacefully into an acceptable society. Only the last of these standpoints requires consideration here.

"If South Africa continues to become richer, the worst of the poverty, deprivation, and exploitation will be removed", runs one variant of this theory. It is not concerned with the economic, social and political discrimination that will remain, and has racialist undertones in its assumption that blacks will indefinitely remain content with a subordinate position in their country. A stronger variant of the theory is that apartheid itself will break down under the impact of capitalism, with its "colour-blind" marketplace, and that the development of the country will grind to a halt unless this happens. If there is any truth in the first variant there should be signs of rising standards of living already. If the stronger variant is true, this should be accompanied by decreasing inequalities, widening opportunities for non-whites, and breaches in the colour bar (not just upward shifts). Such a theory is clearly very attractive, for it offers the satisfaction of moral qualms at the cost of no effort or thought to its proponents. Unfortunately the evidence against it is devastating.

The most favourable place to look for evidence of rising standards is in the manufacturing sector. The evidence is that real wages declined over the period 1946-59, but that in the 'sixties they rose around 5.8 per cent a year in money terms. This was slightly higher than the rise in the prices index, which, however, is commonly understood to underestimate the cost of living of Africans. The workers concerned are in any case only 10 per cent of the total labour force. In mining, real wages have been falling steadily since about 1935, and are now actually below the level of 1911. There seems to have been a similar trend in the wages paid by white farmers to their labourers. Total cash incomes over the period 1958-70 rose 65 per cent or barely 25 per cent in real terms, but this was shared amongst 22 per cent more workers. So even on the suspect official statistics the average African wage earner barely held his ground. However, over this period the total population increased by 40 per cent, so *per capita* income plainly fell, unless other sources of income increased. In fact, estimates of subsistence income in the reserves, where 40 per cent of the people live, show a decline from £15 a year in 1954 to £13 a year in 1969, which in real terms is a drop of about 30 per cent. So despite the great industrial boom of the 'sixties, during which the GNP roughly doubled in real terms, giving a *per capita* increase of about 60 per cent, the average black personal income actually declined. With SA's economic outlook now much less rosy, it would be foolish to look for a reversal of this trend.

Black incomes have been falling, white incomes rising. Both variants of the theory have therefore been disproved for the recent past. Independent evidence provides many confirmations: over the last six years the ratio between white and black wages has increased from 5.1 to 6.1 in manufacturing industry and from 17.5 to over 19.4 in mining. Any hope that this trend might be reversed by a breaking down of the colour bar is disappointed similarly: although non-whites are increasingly being employed in what used to be white skilled jobs, it is only as the

whites no longer want them, as the general shortage of skilled labour gives them a buyer's market. Reclassified jobs are frequently divided into shorter operations (in the pretence that only thus can non-whites master them) or often their wage rates are simply reclassified to a third or a quarter the level at the same time. The colour bar remains sharp, and moves upwards much faster in skills than in wages. All this means that whereas the whites have an income of over £1,000 per head, the average black income has declined to £53. Blacks form 68 per cent of the population and receive less than 20 per cent of all income. Whites number less than 19 per cent but take 74 per cent. Only in Rhodesia (where it is the top 5 per cent only who are concerned) is income distribution so unequal. White South Africans used to claim that "their" blacks were better off than those in the rest of Africa. This was plausible, given that the proportion of wage earners was 30 per cent (next is Zambia with only 10 per cent). Now, despite this huge advantage, *per capita* income in SA has been overtaken by a dozen or so African countries, and many are catching up fast. In a recent series of letters in the **Financial Times** it was disclosed that many manufacturers and exporters are very pessimistic about the chances for growth in the South African market, which is effectively limited to under four million whites, the other 17 million offering little purchasing power. Only three per cent of advertising is directed to this potential market of 81 per cent of the population.

No hope of any automatic breaking down of apartheid can therefore be held out. Even if average white and black incomes were increasing at the same rate, the **absolute** growth in white income would still be far larger than the black, because of the extreme inequality of the starting point. So the extra purchasing power would divert more resources into luxury goods and services for whites. Lower profits would repel investment from those lines needed by the Africans, resulting in a reinforcement of the distortion of the economy. Only with black incomes growing faster than white could even a slow start be made towards modifying these distortions. As we have seen, the opposite obtains, and it can only be concluded that the market is strengthening the effects of apartheid.

Many well-meaning people are surprised when confronted with this situation. Why is it developing in this way? Why is the competitive market economy not breaking down apartheid? The answer lies in their interpretation of apartheid as merely super-racialism. In reality apartheid is much more than that. Its purpose is to ensure an abundant supply of cheap labour to the white economy. It is **designed to produce these results**. For over sixty years liberals have been predicting that economic development would break down racialism. From the mine owners in the 'twenties, to Harry Oppenheimer in the 'seventies, some industrialists, wanting to use black labour to force down inflated white wages have uttered dire warnings about apartheid's inhibiting effect on economic development. No doubt they are right, but they miss the point. Few white South Africans make the highest possible South African GNP their first priority. It comes a bad second to the **white** GNP. The

Afrikaner attitude 80 years ago was openly expressed as "Better to be poor and white than rich and multi-racial". Now that it has become rather a question of: "Better to be rich and white than very rich and multi-racial" the second option is even less likely to induce a mending of ways.

But South Africa has changed enormously since the 'twenties, when it was based on mining and farming and little besides. The rise of manufacturing industry has required more cheap labour in the urban areas. Undoubtedly a threat to white supremacy could have arisen with an influx of blacks into the cities, competing for jobs, houses, services, and ultimately political power. But this was **not** where apartheid began to end: it was where it really began. Before, the native policy merely had to control the reserves, the mining compounds, and the labourers on white farms. Far more controls were needed as Africans were drawn into urban employment. Hence we can understand the rapid rise in prosecutions under the pass laws (from 174,000 in 1947 to over 600,000 a year now), the growth of barrack-like townships for workers (but not always their families) 15 and 20 miles from the "white" cities where they are needed, the "endorsing out" of "superfluous" women, children, and old people to barren "homelands" (whose populations have doubled since 1954, when they were judged badly overpopulated). Apartheid is the instrument used by the whites to maintain their supremacy and promote their wealth. How could it be imagined that the wealth would ever be allowed to undermine the system which sustains it?

British Companies in South Africa

If foreign companies have, as a whole, exerted any favourable influence on SA, the results are not evident. The intensification of apartheid, the declining black *per capita* income, and above all the widening gap between white and black wages in manufacturing industry have all occurred in the very period (since 1948) when the inflow of foreign capital, and increasingly **manufacturing** capital has been most marked. There is of course no reason why foreign capital should exert any special influence: by increasing the total level of investment, particularly in the most technologically advanced manufacturing sectors, it has contributed to industrialisation, and thereby, as we have seen, the changing character of apartheid. But until recently no companies have even pretended to try to behave differently from South African ones. In fact this is usually a matter of principle, especially where local conditions, as in South Africa, are advantageous. Why pay more than the market rate for wages, even if your workers' children starve? Why risk trouble with your white workers by improving the blacks' conditions? Why risk government displeasure by helping your workers' children with their education? Only when job reservation, coupled with shortage of skilled white labour, leaves factories understaffed, whilst adequately competent non-whites queue up, do managers begin to complain. But as Harry Oppenheimer and Sir Frederick Seebom of Barclays Overseas have stated, foreign firms show less courage, in general, than domestic

ones in circumventing the law. The close similarity in wages and conditions between British and South African firms shows that the claim of the former to be building bridges between the races is not yet beyond the blueprint stage. Where companies have been in South Africa for 80 years (like Reckitts) there can be little argument but that they never intended to do more than reap a share in the benefits that apartheid was established to provide.

So as foreign companies do little more than fill the gaps in the apartheid economy and (as we have seen) economic development offers no prospect of any erosion of apartheid, there are unlikely to be any significant benefits to non-whites from foreign companies. Benefits proclaimed are the provision of jobs to those who would otherwise be unemployed, with better conditions than would be available in South African firms. The better conditions are largely mythical, but even if they existed would be entirely within the apartheid framework and subject to its approval. For instance, it is illegal to give educational help to Africans without the approval of the Minister of Bantu Education, who may withdraw it at any time without giving reasons. (Bantu Education Act of 1953.) The penalty is a fine up to £100 or up to six months' jail. So in providing any such benefits, foreign firms could only in fact provide the type of help that the upholders of apartheid judge would help it, rather than contribute to any supposed erosion. It is because they realised a similar character in Britain's £50 million offer as part of the settlement proposals that the Rhodesian Africans said "No" to Pearce.

Which leaves the extra jobs themselves: certainly they allow some workers to get jobs off the Bantustans, although the overall significance is small as foreign firms only account for about 20 per cent. of the total employment. But an averagely profitable firm in South Africa pays a similar amount in taxation to support the apartheid system as it pays in non-white wages. This may be one reason why Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Luthuli in calling for an economic boycott of SA said that "it would entail undoubted economic suffering for Africans. But if it is a method which shortens the day of bloodshed, the suffering to us will be a price we are willing to pay. In any case we suffer already".

One other possibility is that foreign firms produce goods of great benefit to Africans. Historically there is nothing to support this — early foreign investment concentrated on mining — the product of which was not even used by white South Africans. The recent swing to manufacturing investment has concentrated on the technologically most advanced products — which Africans cannot afford. Indeed, even in simple consumer goods the main reliance is on the white market, because after deduction of housing, travel, and staple food expenses from the mere 20 per cent of the National Income available to blacks, little remains for expenditure even on such essentials as fuel and clothing (in which foreign companies are not prominent). Reckitt and Colman produce many foods, toiletries and pharmaceutical products — very largely for the white market. Most blacks cannot afford milk, let alone baby foods, baths let alone bath cubes, aspirin let alone Codis, and we need make no further comment on such products as disposable underwear, face

packs, depilatories, hair toner, men's toilet water and pet foods. If all foreign companies ceased production tomorrow, about 20 per cent. of Africans in manufacturing (only 5 per cent. of total wage earners) would lose their jobs, but hardly any important products would become unavailable.

The concentration of spending power in white hands gives all firms, domestic and foreign, no choice but to produce for the whites — for the benefit that is, of the upholders of the system. In this respect SA is not unlike other countries with rich élites, where foreign investment caters mainly for the needs and ambitions of the rich, distorting the economy away from a path that could lead to overall development. SA, though, is worse economically because of the uniquely unequal distribution of income. The United Nations Committee on Decolonisation has documented in some detail the ways in which the operations of foreign companies are impeding the transition to independence of former colonies, and there are striking similarities in cases of internal colonialism like South Africa.

There is no doubt that foreign (or domestic) firms in South Africa could greatly improve the conditions of their black workers, subject to official approval. Laurence Gandar, ex-editor of the **Rand Daily Mail**, and Dennis Herbststein, in articles in the **Sunday Times** last year effectively exposed the extent to which British firms in particular take advantage of apartheid, not making improvements that they would be allowed to, and discriminating against non-whites beyond even the **requirements** of apartheid. Conditions in American firms are uniformly better, even before the "Polaroid Experiment" (see below). But British firms, with one or two exceptions, were "dragging their feet". Herbststein and Gandar suggested such improvements as a minimum wage of £14 a week, promotion of Africans on merit, payment of the wage for the job, recognition of black unions, free medical aid for the whole family, non-contributory pension schemes, free high-protein canteen meals, grants for improving township houses (which lack floors, ceilings, internal doors, inside lavatories, usually electricity, and often even water), cultivation of better race relations, provision of libraries, clinics and crèches, and educational aid of various kinds. The length of this list is itself an effective indictment, few British firms satisfying more than one or two of its provisions already. But even if all were implemented throughout British firms, the effects would be (1) to produce a small, relatively privileged group amongst the African workers (themselves a minority on the whole) (2) to take over the responsibilities of some types of provision from the South African authorities, so transferring some expense from the white taxpayer to the British shareholder. The net result would be further financial aid to the system of apartheid. The law, and the white trade unions, would step in as soon as any measures seemed to be threatening white supremacy, or the colour bar in particular. Quite recently Jeremy Thorpe has talked about "slave conditions" in SA, urging British M.P.s to buy shares so as to influence British companies — one can only assume to be kindlier slave-drivers.

Under pressure, **but only then**, foreign firms will put on a show

of improving conditions. They are in South Africa not to weaken apartheid, but to exploit the exceptionally favourable opportunities for profit-making, and to use the strategic base SA provides for penetration of the continent. These are benefits worth a little expenditure on window-dressing, maybe even some genuine but marginal improvements. A test-case has been provided by the Polaroid Corporation, which like many other American companies, has been under severe pressure from black employees in America, and from shareholders, led by some churches, to withdraw from South Africa altogether. A study of Polaroid's efforts to justify its continuing involvement in SA has just been completed for the United Nations by Sean Gervasi. The corporation launched an expensive and subtle advertising campaign, sent a fact-finding team to SA, and announced that it was setting up "an experiment in South Africa" to "oppose the course of apartheid". This "experiment" which was described in detail in another advertising campaign (believed to have cost about \$100,000) involved plans to "improve dramatically the salaries and other benefits of our non-white employees", and a programme to "train non-white employees for important jobs within our companies" costing less than the advertising campaign. The company promised to withdraw from SA within a year if the "experiment" was not successful. Before the year was up, success was proclaimed. This "success" includes wage rises which still leave a quarter of black workers below even the officially calculated poverty line, £38,000 given to government-approved educational organisations, and promotions of half a dozen blacks to supervisory positions—supervising other blacks. In this way, Polaroid believes it is "opposing the course of apartheid". It is one of the ways that firms — and governments — are increasingly using to buy off criticism of deepening commitment to SA. It depends on confusing the disease, apartheid, with one of its economic symptoms, poverty. By treating the symptom with aspirin, we are invited to accept that the cancer is being treated. The South African government has been most understanding of Polaroid's "dilemma", swallowing its howls of dismay at such a profound threat to its system. Under the glare of world-wide publicity it provided full facilities to the fact-finding commission, and took no action against the experiment. A little flexibility was clearly called for to avert the possibility of an unwelcome precedent and the deep psychological shock attendant on the public withdrawal of a major company from SA. Apartheid has resources enough to contain a hundred such "experiments" without fundamental damage, and its leaders sufficient intelligence to recognise its friends and ease their difficulties.

Reckitt & Colman

The Polaroid workers have so far been unsuccessful, despite the pressure they have been able to exert on their company. Many similar campaigns, mostly led by church shareholders, are continuing in America, and, at a lower level in Britain (despite the much greater importance of British investment, and the even worse conditions they offer). The Reckitt & Colman campaign has been even less successful

because the authorities of Hull University have openly expressed their lack of interest in what effect the company is having in SA. What counts is that it is very profitable to them. With the university's refusal to concern itself with the responsibilities entailed in owning 600,000 shares (over 1 per cent of the total), attention turned to exerting indirect pressure on the company by demanding that the university sell the shares. This campaign is described elsewhere in this pamphlet, but one of the lessons of its failure to date is the need to apply direct pressure wherever possible. With the university cheerfully protecting Reckitts from any trouble, the company has not as yet even had to indulge in any window-dressing. Its response to the original demands were that they were preposterous, and that "we have nothing, absolutely nothing to be ashamed of in our operations in South Africa".

What then are these operations? In 1970, R. & C.'s South African assets were about 5 per cent of its total at £5.85m. Sales were £9.84m. (5.7 per cent of world total). The trading profit was £1.51m. (7.8 per cent. of world total). It was calculated that as world trading profits were 11.1 per cent. of sales as compared with 15.4 per cent. in SA, £430,000 excess profit was made there from the benefits of cheap labour. (In fact, because nearly a third of the South African employees are white, and therefore paid inflated wages, this figure probably greatly underestimates the exploitation of non-white labour that apartheid makes possible.) Average black wages are under £10 a week (compared with over £40 for whites). Estimates by the South African Institute of Race Relations suggest that the minimum income on which a family of five could be at all secure in an African township such as Soweto, where some of the Reckitt's employees live, was £61. Plainly, therefore, wives were obliged to work, usually as nannies to white children, leaving their own untended at home (schooling is illegal for black children under eight and grandmothers have mostly been "endorsed out" as "unproductive"). Their wages add perhaps £10 a month, so Reckitt's workers are probably still among the 68 per cent of families that various surveys conclude are living in poverty in the townships (i.e. the richest areas for blacks). It was charged that Reckitts applied job reservation over and beyond the requirements of the law, that their contributory pension scheme was a burden on the inadequate wages, that no grants were paid for improvement to township houses, that no crèches were provided for workers' children, and that medical and educational schemes were only nominally of use to non-whites. It was also charged that films made in Britain and sold to the medical profession all over the world take care to exclude coloured doctors, so as to ensure large sales in SA, which is the largest customer.

Apart from the general statement quoted above, Reckitts disputed only one of these charges: they said that it was absurd to ask for crèches, because they did not employ any black women! There were, of course, the expected ritual noises all companies make about not wanting to publicise all the good things they were doing, for fear of bringing the wrath of the government down on their heads. This is usually taken to signify that shortage of white labour has required sur-

reptitious employment of "coloured" workers on a "temporary" basis with inducements to minor officials to turn a blind eye. It was calculated that Reckitts, if they wanted, could double black wages without reducing the profitability of their South African operations below their world average, or of course that they could drastically improve conditions in many ways. It was also clear that the university was implicated in £12,000 of profit from SA every year, of which a large part was paid to the South African government in taxation, more was re-invested in SA, and about £3,000 was actually received by the university in dividends. Of this, about a third, or £1,000, was directly attributable to the apartheid-arranged cheap labour of SA. Although Reckitts have not been induced even to indulge in Polaroid type window-dressing, a dubious success of this type has been achieved with the university, which has announced its intention of contributing money for African education and establishing a Scholarship for a South African student to attend Hull University. The threat to our connection with apartheid has been (temporarily) averted, but some of the proceeds are being ploughed back to sustain what has been a most profitable relationship.

Other universities have broken their connections with SA. Other companies (like Booker McConnell) have withdrawn, or avoided involvement (like Wates and Bovis). A dozen highly profitable giant British firms have no subsidiaries in SA, but apparently offend the moral sense of the university authorities because they are breweries, or for similar reasons. Reckitts are exploiting the blacks, and paying some of the proceeds to their white workers, some to the South African government and its forces of repression, and some to its shareholders including us. Sir Frederick Seebom, of Barclays Overseas, thinks that a Polaroid type experiment is "wishful thinking" so far as denting the job reservation act is concerned. We think it is more like window-dressing. We require that Reckitt & Colman end its collaboration with apartheid altogether, and that the university authorities join us in this demand. This is our part in the jigsaw. Shareholders and workers in other companies are conducting their own campaigns. Similar activities are widespread abroad — in America, Holland, Scandinavia in particular. It is a large job. But an effective economic boycott of SA can only be viable if it grows from the grass roots. It must not fail for want of our effort.

Chapter Two

THE CAMPAIGN FOR DIVESTMENT

Opening Moves

The campaign that was to culminate in a 13-day sit-in began modestly when a handful of A-A supporters began their investigation of Reckitt & Colman Ltd's interests in SA by researching at Companies House* during the summer vacation. Details have already been given of just what their interests are. As a result of these investigations it was decided to wage a campaign to sever the University link with apartheid.

*Further information on how to use Companies House is available from Anti-Apartheid.

- 10th Oct. 1971** The beginning of the autumn brought the usual fresh faces and 120 members for the A-A Society, attracted perhaps by the promise in the A-A handouts of "doing something about the university's Reckitt & Colman shares". Things were still vague. First moves were strictly constitutional.
- 27th Oct.** A Student Union meeting on 27th October made an encouraging start: It **requested** the university to exploit its position as a major shareholder in R. & C. and demand the company's divestment of its Southern African interests. Failing this (if R. & C. did not oblige) it **requested** that the university should divest its shares in the company within three months — that meant by 26th January, 1972.
- A letter to this effect was sent to the University Council the next day from the Union Executive, acting on the instructions of its members. The letter suggested that the university had a "moral obligation" to divest itself of its Southern African connections, and added that the Union would exert "maximum pressure" in support of these requests.
- 28th Oct.** Reaction to these mild advances was swift and predictable: "... we have to abide by the law of the land".
 "I think they (black R. & C. workers) are treated **very well**".
 "We have nothing to be ashamed of, absolutely nothing". — R. & C.'s spokesman to the local evening newspaper.
 He finished: "I would hope the University Council absolutely ignores this resolution, it's preposterous."
 The University Council "absolutely" did just that — and sought legal opinion in support of its lack of response.
- 5th Nov.** It continued to **ignore** all moves including a friendly reminder from about 150 staff and students who picketed a University Council meeting on 5th November and from 40 members of staff who submitted a petition supporting the Union. **No response.**
- 1st Dec.** Continuing with the constitutional approach, another Union meeting was held on 1st December, and, gathering support as it progressed, passed (by an overwhelming majority of the 600 or so present) a motion re-iterating previous requests, and again committing the Union to exert maximum pressure in support of the requests. On a more practical note, it also elected five people to organise the stepping up of the campaign, and reached into its pockets to find thirty pounds for that purpose. By now the petition carried 1,000 signatures — almost 1 in 3 undergraduates.
- 3rd Dec.** Two days later — 3rd December — another University Council meeting was held. **Absolutely no response.**
- 11th Jan. 1972** As students left for the Christmas vacation they were beginning to get the message. They returned three weeks later to find the message in black and white. At no little expense the Vice-

Chancellor had sent a printed letter to each and every member of the university — his first official comment on the affair (after two-and-a-half months).

It read :

RECKITT & COLMAN

As some members of the university are no doubt aware, the Students' Union has asked the university to consider its shareholdings in this company . . .

After pointing out that the shares had been given by the late Rt. Hon. T. Ferens (a onetime managing director of R. & C.) he got to the heart of the matter.

The (legal) Opinion which the University has received makes it clear that its responsibility at all times is to act in monetary matters in the best interests of the trusts imposed upon it, and that in relation to its shareholdings it must do so in the financial interests of the University . . .

It went on :

. . . the Opinion of Counsel also makes it abundantly clear that the UNIVERSITY . . . MUST IGNORE any representations . . . made on MORAL or other grounds, which suggest that a particular shareholding should be disposed of. (Emphasis added.)

It couldn't have been clearer than that, and many people were stunned to discover that the finances of the university (of which they considered themselves to be members) were quite above moral (or other) considerations. Legal opinion had decreed that the university was an amoral institution. For a large number of students, this was the first real insight into the callousness of high finance and the deviousness of those with only financial interest at heart (whatever the implications of those financial interests).

For many others who had long known these things, it was almost the last straw—they felt both anger and shame that the "university" (in which the Administration did not appear to include them at all) which was in such a good position to set an example of concrete opposition to apartheid, apparently cared so little, preferring to hide behind a blatantly amoral investment policy. In arguing that they couldn't take a stand, they were taking the strongest possible stand in support of economic ties with apartheid.

The Administration no doubt felt that this letter was the end of the matter. They had badly misjudged its effect on students and staff alike, including many who had previously seemed uncommitted and unconcerned. The Administration had made assertions which could not go unchallenged, and those who had been responsible for the campaign were now more determined than ever that the impetus should not be allowed to subside. Efforts were now focussed on yet another Union meeting, called for 26th January, the third in three months.

11th-
26th
Jan.

The motions were now more specific :

1. The Union requested the Vice-Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor designate and the University Treasurer to accept, on behalf of the University Authorities, that the university was in no respects an amoral institution and that those Authorities will take moral arguments into account at all times.
2. It called on the University Authorities to declare that
 - (a) they recognise that in the light of R. & C.'s involvement in the apartheid systems of Southern Africa it is immoral for the university to hold shares in that company;
 - (b) they will seek to sell those same shares at the first available opportunity.

If the wording was different, it still had much the same meaning as before, and no one was predicting with any confidence what the outcome of the apparently impending confrontation would be. In the meantime an intensive publicity campaign was waged in all corners of the university in the hope that, by 26th January, no one would be in ignorance of the issues, and that a large meeting would consolidate previous support and perhaps increase the pressure.

It was also hoped that the Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor designate would attend the meeting to give an unequivocal statement on their position. Personal invitations were sent to them. Before the meeting, however, the V-C designate had written to say that he knew nothing of the issues and would neither attend the meeting, nor comment.

The V-C himself also declined to address the Union — a refusal which seemed to many indicative of his indifference to the requests of the student body.

Thus on 26th January the student body was faced with a crucial decision. After three months of polite representation to the Administration, the students had not only seen their demands ignored, but they had also been treated with total contempt by the Vice-Chancellor and Council. If their campaign was not to fade away, further escalation was essential. By the end of the afternoon they were to have asserted dramatically their right to be regarded as members of the university, and to have a **right** in reaching decisions affecting that university. They would assert that right, at the centre of power on the campus, the Administration Building.

Deadline Day

26th
Jan.

The meeting attracted 600 students. Its first question was to mandate the Chairman of Anti-Apartheid, Mike Goss, to renew, in person, the invitation to Brynmor Jones to address the students present. This mission was fruitless; the V-C was "not available". The meeting then voted overwhelmingly in support

of Anti-Apartheid's motions. The unanimous support and the rising feeling of frustration, precipitated the suggestion that the meeting be adjourned to the Administration block. If Mohammed would not go to the mountain then the mountain must come to Mohammed.

Locked doors proved to be little deterrent and the meeting of about 200 students reconvened in the Council Chamber which was conveniently vacated by a meeting of the Arts Faculty Board. Brynmor Jones left the building that evening still refusing to address the student body as a whole, which then felt that there was no alternative but to stay out until machinery was put in motion to sell the shares.

The Occupation

26th-
31st
Jan.

This decision to remain, however, was taken after the Union meeting had been formally closed. It therefore became necessary to call yet another Union meeting in order to obtain "official" Union backing. For the next five days the main preoccupation was to mobilise the active support of the majority of students who were not yet fully involved in the battle. The occupiers dedicated themselves to intense leafleting, publicity and personal canvassing of people in their own homes. Although an important advance had undoubtedly been made, success hinged upon indisputable commitment of the whole student body and "official" support. For many students this was the first occasion which demanded a personal decision on the question of the university's role in the fight against apartheid. In the midst of this hive of activity the complacent Union Executive awaited the defeat of the residents of the Administration block.

Counter Arguments

30th
Jan.

Once again, at the eleventh hour, Brynmor Jones endeavoured to retrieve his position, as his "First letter had not been fully understood", by producing a second letter which now entered into discussion about the ethics of investment. While claiming that both "lay and academic members of Council" expressed "their strong disapproval" of the policy of apartheid, he suggested that "Withdrawal of enlightened British interests from South Africa could in the long run do considerable harm to the Africans themselves". (Emphasis added.)

No evidence to support this was brought forward and no explanation given as to why holders of Reckitt & Colman shares would know better than the Africans themselves what was good for them. On the contrary, time and again black South Africans have called for an economic boycott of the Vorster régime. John Gaetsewe, a representative of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, had personally come to Hull on the 18th January, and spoken of his support for the campaign "Because (divestment can really help my people".

The V-C's letter continued: "Reckitt & Colman have over the years been generous and disinterested benefactors of the university", implying that the university's gratitude to its patron should over-rule fundamental moral issues. Even slave-owners have been benevolent benefactors to their mother country. The letter concluded: "The differences which divide members of the university on the question of apartheid certainly cannot warrant, even less justify, the occupation of the Administration building nor the serious disruption of the work of the university . . .

. . . All attempts by such a minority to involve the university in direct political action are an alienation of its aims and purpose: they are also a challenge to law and order, and a violation of constitutional government".

This was the central issue for the university authorities. For them, a minor disruption in their paperwork was of far more importance than the sickening cruelty inherent in South Africa's social system.

Victory at Union Meeting

This crucial Union meeting numbered 2,500 students. It reacted strongly to the Administration's letters and voted almost unanimously for a continuation of the sit-in—thought to be the largest ever vote in support of a sit-in in Britain. Unfortunately this verbal support was not for the most part translated into action, but remained a pious gesture.

Rumours of injunctions and police raids were constantly circulating in the Administration block. Nonetheless, it seemed unlikely that the V-C would act against the residents in the face of the overwhelming support of Union. At the same time he refused to make any concessions on selling the shares. The occupiers felt, therefore, that pressure must be increased and it was decided to call for a boycott of all lectures for one week. This would re-emphasise student support for the campaign and also protect those members of staff who wished to support it but who were facing departmental opposition.

Despite the first overwhelming vote, many students, while anxious to show their verbal opposition to apartheid were not prepared to fulfil their commitment in the face of increasing pressure from both the Union Executive and the Administration. The victory of the first Union meeting aroused the Executive from their stupefied state and precipitated them into launching anti-strike propaganda. In the same way that the Administration used the argument that we should not bite the hand that feeds us, i.e. R. & C., so the Executive also constantly reminded students that the Union was dependent on the Administration for financial assistance.

**31st
Jan.**

Renaissance

**1st
Feb.**

A somewhat familiar pattern of events emerged. The strike had to become Union policy. The occupiers had to work once again

towards this end by canvassing, publicity and leafleting. But this period was the Renaissance of the campaign. Fresh support and encouragement came from new sources all over the country. From university unions and societies, from eminent individuals, among them Trevor Huddleston, and Michael Foot, who personally addressed a meeting in the Administration block. The NUS Executive passed an emergency resolution, pledging full support for the sit-in and also sent one of the Executive members, Mike Terry, to address a Union meeting as a gesture of solidarity. The campaigners also gained great encouragement and new incentive from the visit of Wilfred Brutus, a black South African who had escaped from detention in SA after imprisonment on the notorious Robben Island, South Africa's prison for political offenders. He gave much inspiration and reassurance that this was the type of action that he and his fellow South Africans wished to see: "As soon as apartheid ceases to be profitable it will cease to exist". And he confirmed that our activities would be heard of by the black South African people. Although the movement received this very strong support and solidarity from outsiders, unfortunately there was not such unswerving commitment from within their own community. Despite the first overwhelming vote many students, while anxious to show their verbal opposition to apartheid, were not prepared to fulfil their commitment in the face of increasing pressure from the Administration, who in turn, were being pressurised by the University Council, a body dominated by local business men. Their chairman, Basil Reckitt, sent out yet another letter. The message, in essence, was of the necessity to restore order should "disruption" continue and a re-iteration of their inability to see the connection between the selling of the shares and the struggle for liberation of the South African people.

Defeat?

The final Union meeting, again attended by over 2,000 students, debated the continuation of the sit-in. A motion tabled by, but apparently not inspired by, a former Union President, became the main focus of discussion. After making the by now customary noises about opposition to apartheid, it stated that the sit-in had out-last-ed its effectiveness and that the time was ripe for negotiations. It suggested the setting up of a committee consisting of two representatives each from Council, Senate, LASA and the Students' Union, to discuss the university's position in relation to apartheid. The motion laid down, as suggested terms of reference, various actions the university could take. Although these included divestment of the R. & C. shares it was apparent that, by offering various other alternatives, an attempt was being made to let the Administration off the hook. Those involved in the sit-in argued vehemently against these proposals, asserting that accepting them would entail a retreat, and that the com-

**7th
Feb.**

mittee would prove a costly waste of time. The vote, however, went decisively against them. The same Union that a week before had given its support to an indefinite sit-in had now withdrawn it. The irony was that many hundreds of the students who had voted for the sit-in to be made official had never once set foot inside the Administration building. Many were willing to let others take action for them. Faced with this very definite vote against them, the minority involved in the occupation had no alternative but to withdraw. That evening the remaining 400 marched out of the Administration building, very sceptical of the committee but powerless to take further action until their mistrust of the University Administration had been proved well-founded.

Chapter Three

THE RECKITT & COLMAN COMMITTEE

With the end of the sit-in and the establishment of this committee the next predictable phase of "operation keep the students quiet" began. Publicly it was essential for the University Authorities to create an appearance of "negotiation and conciliation" in response to the Union decisions; thus complementing the by now unambiguous threats about the consequences of a repetition of the confrontation. This strategy earned the Vice-Chancellor much criticism from the Senate hardliners, who wanted punishment to be the only response to the students' action. They need have had no fears, however: in the privacy of the committee the gloves came off with a vengeance. The merits of the cases for or against divestment were never intended for discussion — the issue was seen as a simple threat to the power of the Council. As in 1968, "impertinence" ranked high among the evils with which students were afflicted.

The very composition of the committee militated against a discussion of the issue: two members each of Council, Senate, LASA (Lecturing and Administrative Staff Association), and Union. The Registrar as Secretary to the committee, kept notes of the discussion. Initially the sole representative of the divestment campaign was Mike Goss, who as chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Society had to be tolerated on the committee — and who had to face personal attacks throughout. The President of the Union, Phil Morris, had consistently opposed the campaign; the LASA members were initially neutral, but after an internal election one of them was replaced by a supporter of divestment.

The Council members were Basil Reckitt, and Lionel Rosen, now Lord Mayor of Hull (who acted as chairman), and Senate was represented by the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. There was little doubt where they stood: for them the case for keeping the shares had been presented in the V-C's second open letter.

But what we can glean from the actual discussions is illuminat-

ing (the actual discussions were "confidential" and Mike Goss was reprimanded for publishing his account of the second meeting, so our information is not as complete as we would wish).

The four main points of the argument against divestment were, once again as follows :

1. Legal opinion had been sought earlier in the year as to whether it was legally possible to sell the shares for "moral" reasons. The opinion of counsel was that it was not possible, so that must be the end of the matter. (The fact that this implies that Reckitt's must be and must have been the best thing on the stock market for the past 50 years, is irrelevant, as was the takeover bid at the time, which sent Reckitt's shares up to £1 above their earlier level).
2. It must be remembered that the university as a corporate institution cannot make political pronouncements unless directly threatened, for this would infringe the rights of its individual members.
3. Actually the legal argument is irrelevant, since Council has no wish to sell the shares. This would be meaningless in terms of opposing apartheid (which we abhor); but more important is the effect this would have on the university's "valued relationship" with the company, which is, after all, the company of our Founder and is our greatest commercial benefactor, providing Chairs, research grants and scholarships.
4. The best way of fighting apartheid is not through boycott, but to undermine it from within through the liberalising influence of British companies — especially one like Reckitt's with their long tradition of humane treatment of workers. (The high profits are, of course, purely incidental and irrelevant to the argument). Of course Reckitt's are doing all they can to help their African employees — but you must not expect them to jeopardise this by telling you exactly HOW they do it.

These arguments — regarded as outmoded even by today's advanced capitalists like Polaroid — have been answered in this booklet and we need not do so again. But their peculiar logic is surely only explicable as the reasoning of men who see their power threatened.

A new element which emerged — after attempts to initiate informed discussion (with expert witnesses giving their views) had been pooh-poohed — was the consideration of the university's investment policy in general. And with the spectre of pressure from inside and outside the university on this much thornier issue, the Authorities were prepared to negotiate. It was accepted that while the university as an educational institution might be apolitical, its Council as a shareholder did not enjoy this freedom from responsibility. For once the Union and LASA members were united and pressed for machinery through which discussion of investment policy with the (newly discovered) Investments Committee can take place. The present committee was not fulfilling this purpose, and the V-C had clearly failed to act as intermediary in the Reckitt's case, so could new

machinery — perhaps on the lines of the Garnett-Rees proposals (parallel committees) — be established?

But even this was too much to swallow. After all, finance matters are reserved business and cannot be discussed with students. So when the final report of the committee appeared, even this proposal was seen to be defeated. Instead, we are told that we may make our representations to the Investments Committee *via* the V-C. We should be grateful for small mercies; after all, the committee admits that in the past ethical considerations have influenced decisions about shares, and apparently this policy will be continued.

So: no change. The report — which was to be circulated to all members of the university — has three other recommendations, all of them attempts to window-dress on the Polaroid model. There are to be scholarships for African students at Hull (like the ones we have already established, but apparently the university will also waive residence fees. The report is ambiguous on the question of the student's actual living expenses). There are to be contacts with various universities and student organisations in South Africa — what these will lead to is unclear, but if the Authorities' attitude so far is a guide, the contacts are likely to be fruitless. Finally, a fund is to be set up to aid education in SA. Just how, we are not told. So the university extends the "valued relationship" by doing Reckitt's window-dressing for them.

The tragic suicide of Mike Goss, on the night after these "proposals" had been mooted at the last meeting of the committee, was a terrible blow to many in the university and temporarily halted the campaign, but also rocked the majority, who had "supported" the sit-in with their votes but not their presence, and also some who had opposed the campaign all along, out of the tranquillity into which the existence of the committee had lulled them. But for many the resurgence of interest was short-lived, and when the report of the committee failed to appear before the Summer Vacation, South Africa again receded into a 6,000 mile distance.

So after a year-long campaign, thousands of leaflets, Union resolutions and a 12-day sit-in, we are back to square one. And that was exactly the theme of the sit-in supporters in their opposition to the committee. All that the committee itself achieved, was to highlight the nature of Authority in the university. Whether this lesson is learnt remains to be seen.

It did not need miraculous foresight to predict the outcome of these events so correctly — it is a logical corollary of the attitude taken by the University Authorities (who refer to themselves as "The University") from the start. They have consistently adhered to this attitude, since they know that in the present system they have complete power to control events — unless the student body as a whole is willing to rebel. And this is why sit-ins frighten them so much.

Finally, it has not escaped them that an attack on apartheid — or on profits made from apartheid — entails an attack on capitalism in its most basic form. It strikes at the profit motive — which underlies both

†See "Students at Hull" by Alistair Kee (BRPF Pamphlet, 1969).

capitalism and its most foul by-product, apartheid. This realisation serves to harden reaction and strengthen the will of all institutions of a capitalist society to resist campaigns such as this one.

The "other side" realise this — and once it is understood by everyone in Union, the Reckitt campaign gains significance far beyond its immediate aims; and paradoxically, its only chance of success.

Chapter Four

WHAT NEXT?

This then is the situation as a new university year begins. The committee has taken nearly six months from its inception to the production of its recommendations. That these recommendations in ignoring the main issue of the R. & C. shares are exactly what the supporters of the sit-in had expected when arguing against the committee is hardly surprising. The blow was softened somewhat when it was agreed that a minority report would be added as an addendum to the non-contentious section of the committee's recommendations. That this merely restated the campaigners' original position on the R. & C. issue, is perhaps a sign of how little real dialogue or negotiation there had been on the committee. But from the administration's point of view, the committee had served its purpose. It had taken the steam out of the initial campaign and had kept further action on ice until the end of the academic year, a critical time in any struggle on a campus. It had ensured that if the divestment campaign was to continue — and it is certain that the authorities felt that it shouldn't — then a new beginning would have to be made, new impetus would have to be given. It had also seen the Vice-Chancellor into a quiet retirement and left the problems — if there were to be any — to his successor. The administration had once again successfully used the tactic of negotiations to prevent continued confrontation with the student body.

Negotiation, in their terms, means very definitely negotiation from a position of strength. All too often students have failed to grasp this essential point. The university authorities only need to negotiate when their power is threatened. This threat is at its most potent when large numbers of students are united in militant action. It is their unity that is a threat; their unity and their militant action that is their only real bargaining point. By exchanging an occupation, which is a real source of disruption to the authorities, for the conference table, students are entering negotiations from a position of weakness. Vice-Chancellors and Senates realise this. They realise that a sit-in once abandoned is very difficult to restart. It is tragic that the Hull experience merely served as another example of this all too often repeated point.

Positive gains have, however, been made. Initially the campaign for divestment was begun by only a handful of Anti-Apartheid Society members. Almost until the time of the sit-in the issue had received little but token support from the Left in the university, which was in any case dispirited and deeply divided amongst itself. The occupation forged a new unity of purpose on the Left that has rarely been seen in Hull

since the 1968 sit-in. Undoubtedly this involvement by the Socialist Student Societies was of great benefit to the campaign. It extensively widened the basis of its support and led to a rapid upsurge in the militancy of its actions.

This unity has not evaporated since the sit-in. Incensed by the timid actions of the existing Students' Union bureaucracy and having seen how little they chose to ally their interests with the mass of the students, a new coalition was formed to fight for democracy in the university and indeed within the Union itself. "People First" as this coalition was named, attracted most of the people, both staff and students, who had actively supported the sit-in. By challenging the current Union executive it sought to prevent a repetition of the sell-out from within that had occurred in February. It would ensure that the issue of divestment would not be shelved, but would extend the struggle to other campaigns and would fight for a consistently more aggressive policy towards the administration. Having inferred from the position of the Vice-Chancellor over the issue of the R. & C. shares that students were not regarded as part of the university, these non-members were determined to fight for the right to have a say in determining future policy, not only on investment but on all other matters. The struggle to force the university to divest its shares will continue, but it is a struggle that already has a great deal of active and well-informed support. New tactics will have to be adopted, a new publicity drive will have to be launched but the situation at the beginning of the new session is far from comparable with the situation at the same time last year.

The campaign will have added strength from the support it received from outside. Not only other university unions but also the T&GWU branch at R. & C. itself passed motions of support for the aims of the Hull students. The July conference between the Anti-Apartheid movement and the NUS saw great potential in similar campaigns waged in other universities as the beginnings of a massive national campaign to end British complicity in apartheid. Every new action is of significant propaganda value. Every new campaign is of great assistance to those who follow in its footsteps. It is hoped that many other universities will also investigate where the companies in which they invest have interests, so that 1972-73 may see a wave of similar demands elsewhere. The events at Hull as described in this pamphlet may prove of some assistance to them. Certainly they should not underestimate the resistance of the university authorities to any demand that they should divest themselves of any particular shareholdings. Such a demand strikes at the very roots of power in the university. Inevitably the initial campaign will broaden out as students learn the political lessons of their superiors' intransigence. On such an issue there is no real room for compromise. Thus it is essential that once achieved, a position of open confrontation should not be surrendered until an undertaking is received that the shares will be divested. Almost certainly, continued militancy will provoke victimisation by the other side. Indeed, here in Hull had the sit-in continued it is almost cer-

tain that an injunction would have been taken out against the supposed "ringleaders". Even after the setting up of the committee a motion to take disciplinary action against leading militants was only narrowly defeated on Senate. For the campaign to succeed it will be necessary to actively involve the many hundreds who gave moral support but never found it incumbent upon themselves to translate that support into action. Only by gaining the active collaboration of the majority on the campus, can the aim of divestment be achieved. That majority will be achieved. A large number of students and staff are now irrevocably committed to that aim. The brutish indifference of the authorities to their demands has left them opposed to any further compromise. The campaign will continue until the university has divested itself of all its holdings in R. & C. If this aim is not achieved in the next session, then the new Vice-Chancellor will have to contend with a deeply divided campus until such time as it is.

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