

THE CASE FOR DIVESTMENT

Brief to the University of Toronto Governing Council
Submitted by the U of T Divestment Committee
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Report to Governing Council on South African Investments

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Among the individuals who make up the University community, a great many, probably an overwhelming majority, deeply deplore the prevailing political doctrine in South Africa and the consequences for the blacks of South Africa. It is likely that a substantial number of these conduct themselves in a way which avoids involvement in South African affairs. Some are engaged in deliberate political action directed to bringing about change in South Africa. Such actions on the part of individuals are, in my judgment, admirable. They are free to make their personal judgments and to engage in such political action as they choose, within the limits prescribed by law.

Whatever the beliefs and attitudes of the individuals who make up the University community, the position of the University as an institution is fundamentally different in nature. This Council, and various bodies and individuals acting in its name, are constantly engaged in moral judgments. There are clearly values held by the University, in common with almost all those who live and work in it, which are given expression in our policies and which guide our conduct. Such values apply in our internal governance and conduct; they also come into play in our interactions with the world around us. We cannot avoid moral judgments in the conduct of our affairs, nor should we.

I would distinguish, however, between the exercise of moral judgment in our transactions and engagement in political action. I would define political action by the University as a deliberate effort on the part of this Council, or in its name, to change political structures, governments and policies in this country or elsewhere. The University does have a voice in political matters which are directly relevant to its interests; it has normally refrained from political action in matters not relevant to university affairs.