

S. African apathy dies with divestment

WINNIPEG (CUP) — A South African economist says divestment and boycotts of South African products are working.

"Divestment is forcing big business to pressure the government to start introducing meaningful reforms," said Stephen Gelb, economics lecturer at Johannesburg's Witwatersrand University. "The government has lost control of the situation and big business is the real power."

Gelb said divestment is forcing the business community in South Africa to reconsider its support of the government and its racist apartheid policy. The professor was in Winnipeg on a recent speaking tour.

"Business interests are getting more impatient with the government's attempts to control dissent, and some businessmen have even gone to Zambia to talk to representatives of the African National Congress."

Gelb said the deteriorating economy has hit blacks the hardest, but has just increased dissent and militancy especially among trade unions. Political activism by the black unions has further weakened the economy, he said.

"Trade unions have become much more politically active in the last year," Gelb said. "General strikes like the one in Transvaal last year have increased the pressure on business. Business leaders are in turn increasing the pressure on the government to change its policies."

Gelb said the business community will no longer support repression of dissent because the backlash among black workers will make it even more difficult to get the economy moving again.

"The 'Latin America' option of increasing repression to stifle dissent is no longer acceptable to business interests," Gelb said. "The black trade unions and foreign investors will no longer stand for it."

Gelb said the economic crisis is making it more difficult to stifle

dissent in any case.

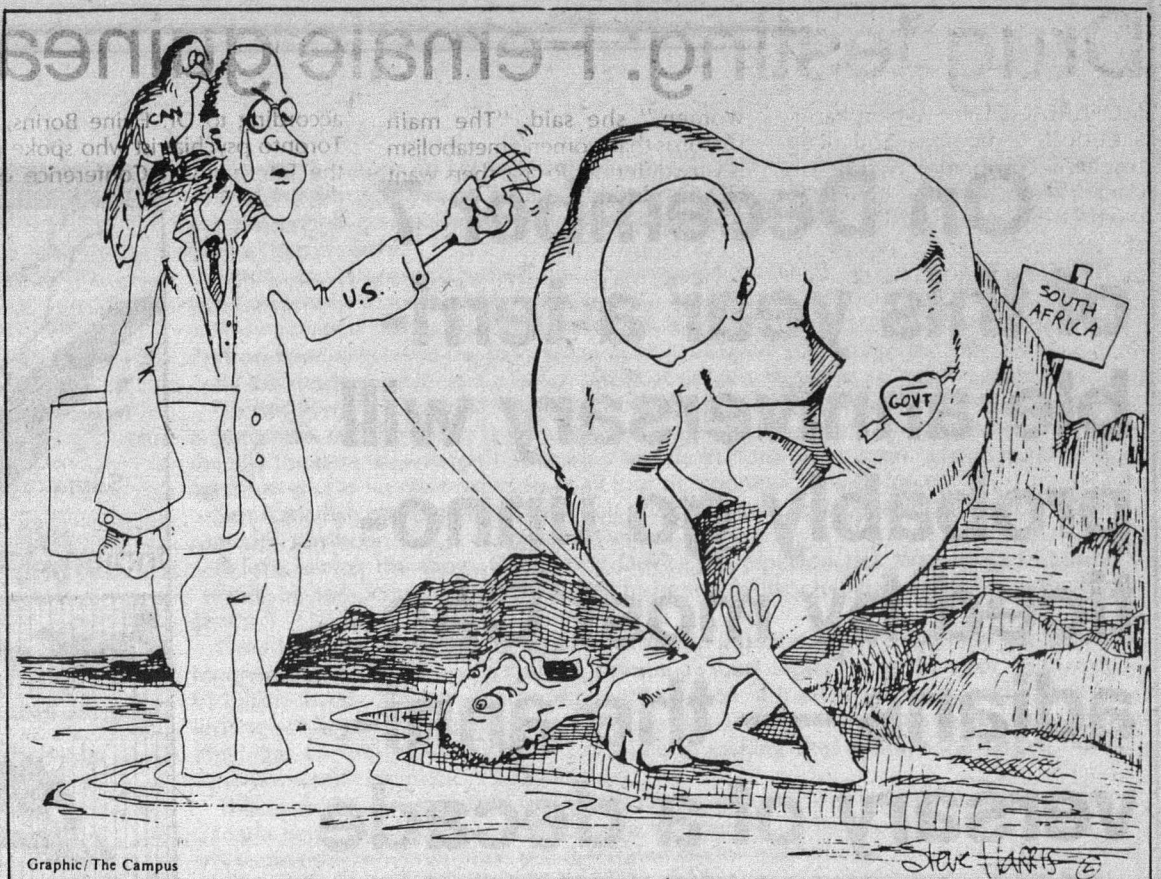
"The youths and students confronting the police in the townships have a solid base of support from the trade unions," Gelb said.

"Although most people are still apathetic, the situation is improving, especially among students," Gelb said. "There are about 1300 black students at Witwatersrand, whites are seeing their black fellow are starting to allow and being harrassed by the police, so they're starting to become more aware of what's going on."

Gelb said even the Afrikaans universities are starting to allow black students.

Gelb said the political impact of boycott campaigns is more important than their economic effects.

"Boycotts de-legitimise the government and show activists in South Africa that they have support in the world," Gelb said. "Boycotts also encourage disinvestment by foreign companies because they get bad press in their own countries."



Graphic: The Campus

Biological theatre

by Bill Doskoch

Art will meet Science this Friday when Biology 415 students present the play "A Microscope on Leeuwenhoek."

The play is one component of the course which is called "a history of biology."

"It's just another learning experience," said course instructor Dr. J. Mahrt.

"They (the students) are putting on a play depicting an early historical character. This particular man (Anton van Leeuwenhoek) was involved in the development of the microscope."

Rather than just having them sit in a lecture, they get a chance to get really involved."

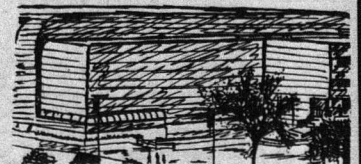
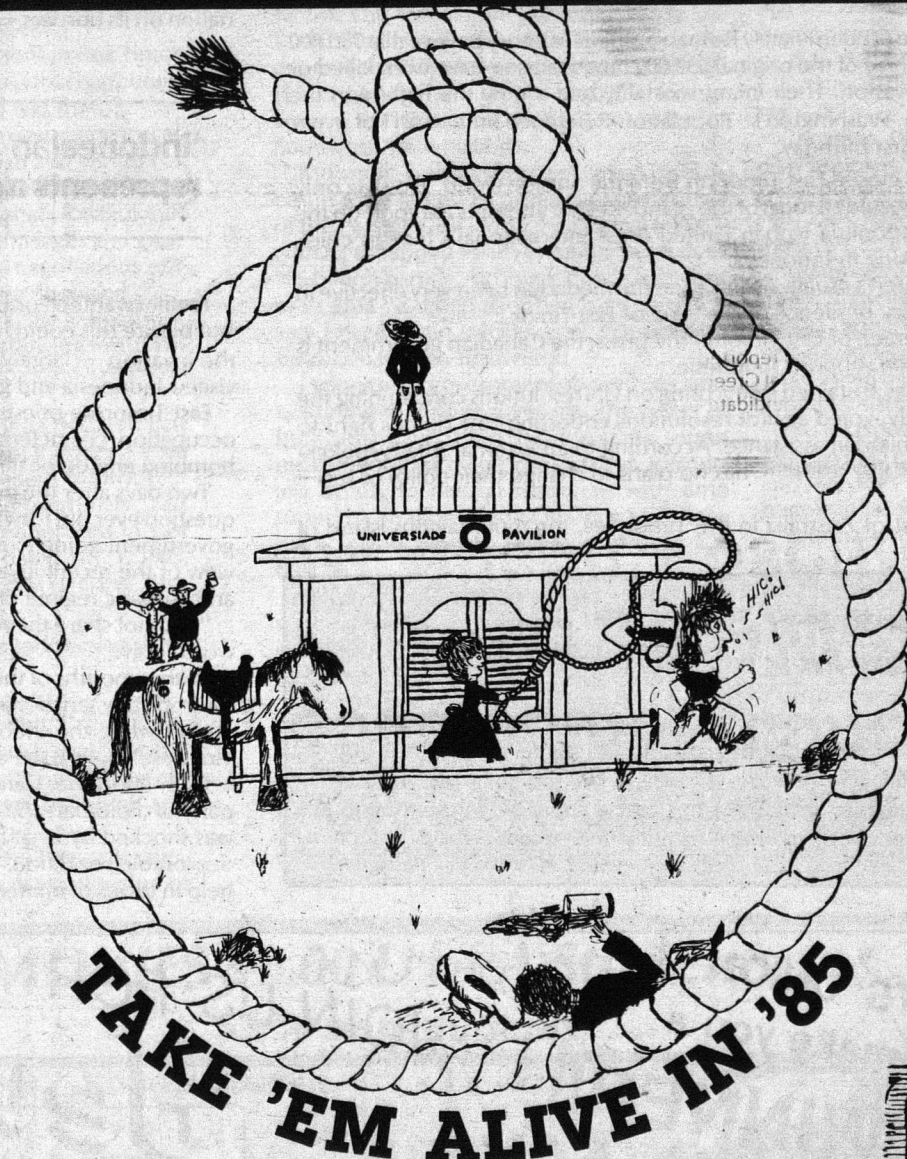
The play will be presented in the Humanities Centre Lecture Theatre 1 at 8:00 pm on Nov. 22.

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