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Real Constructive Engagement

By Jean Mayer

BOSTON — The Reagan Administration's re-examination of its policy toward South Africa is encouraging, but it should stop clinging to the concept of "constructive engagement." Clearly, that policy has not worked. If anything can be done to prevent a bloodbath in that unhappy nation, the United States must now become both more constructive and more deeply engaged.

The Administration needs to do something drastic, positive and highly visible — and do it soon — both for South Africa's sake and for our own. Perhaps President Reagan should become personally involved to help start a dialogue, using such incentives as removal of some trade restrictions to reward progress and the threat of more economic sanctions to punish intransigence.

As a university president, I am concerned that we facilitate the peaceful evolution of South Africa into a multi-ethnic democratic society without causing a rift between a large part of our youth and our Government.

Universities are caught in the mid-

Jean Mayer is president of Tufts University.

dle. Students, who believe that the Reagan Administration is not speaking with a decisive, unambiguous voice, express their dissatisfaction by demonstrating for divestment of university holdings in companies that do business in South Africa. None of the constructive steps that universities have tried to take are seen by the students as addressing the problem of the Administration's lack of action.

University administrators have tried to devise more effective ways of contributing to a solution than divesting — a onetime, definitive demonstration that takes from our hands a tool, a stockholder's vote, that may help dismantle apartheid. The chairman of the Tufts Medical School's department of pediatrics, for instance, has visited South Africa to suggest how we might be helpful to black physicians. The chairman of the trustees investment committee also spent several weeks in South Africa to review university holdings.

The university has started a scholarship program for nonwhite students to attend the largely white South African universities. We have also maintained contacts with university presidents in South Africa and with black leaders.

Still, our students see divestment as the most important dramatic

With South Africa

statement that American universities can make to emphasize that the Federal Government is not doing its part. Universities are doing what they can, yet they suffer the backlash of the Government's inaction.

It is time for the Administration to take the lead. We can use incentives as a carrot and the threat of more sanctions as a stick to encourage dialogue. By not taking decisive steps, such as calling for the release of the jailed African National Congress leader, Nelson Mandela, Mr. Reagan is quickly losing influence over events in South Africa and at home.

The threat of economic sanctions is only one of the tools available to the President. Economic sanctions may not be appropriate at this time, even though many of the blacks who will be most affected seem willing to accept sanctions if it means long-term gains. But the fact that the United States ef-

fectively applies economic sanctions against Nicaragua, Libya, Cuba and a number of other countries, including Soviet satellites, weakens the Government's argument that sanctions may not be an appropriate response for South Africa.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that somehow the South African Government must be brought to comprehend our strong repugnance for its present course. Unless the United States takes a more active role, the South African Government is unlikely to meet with the black majority.

Mr. Reagan should call on President P. W. Botha in the strongest possible terms to release Mr. Mandela, who appears to be an accepted spokesman for the majority of blacks. Mr. Reagan should encourage the two to meet, possibly in the Oval Office or at Camp David.

This meeting would be the first in a series of discussions, with President Reagan serving as host and facilitator. A special American envoy could be assigned to help with subsequent meetings in South Africa.

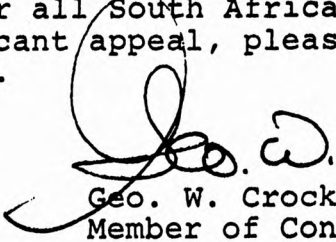
Surely, it would be difficult for Mr. Botha to publicly refuse an invitation from the President of the United States. We would also be giving him a reason to set free the one man with whom he ought to be negotiating. □

Dear Colleague,

The article above, written by Dr. Jean Mayer, president of Tufts University, urges President Reagan to become more personally involved in the national effort to get South Africa to end its repressive system of apartheid and to begin meaningful political talks with its Black majority.

Those are also the objectives of House Resolution 373, which I introduced on February 5, 1986. The resolution calls on Mr. Reagan to use his influence to persuade the Pretoria Government to grant unconditional freedom to Nelson Mandela and to recognize the African National Congress as a legitimate representative of the Black South African community.

I invite you to join me and 98 of our colleagues as a cosponsor of this resolution which seeks to encourage South Africa to work for justice and peaceful change for all South Africans. If you wish to join us in making this significant appeal, please contact Ted Jones of my staff at extension 52261.


Geo. W. Crockett, Jr.
Member of Congress

July 14, 1986

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