

Life Under Occupation: Resist War Profiteering

Divestment: Divestment is a political tool that was developed during the anti-apartheid student movement. In the 80s, students protested their universities' relationship to the racist South African economy and government. They discovered that their universities were investing in companies that both had racist hiring policies in South Africa and funded the white South African government in its attacks on blacks. The divestment campaign became a way to galvanize student support and challenged big corporations that were financing and benefiting from the exploitation and oppression of blacks. (Source: <http://ucdivest.org/FAQ.php#A9>)

What was apartheid?: Following independence from England, an uneasy power-sharing between the two groups held sway until the 1940's, when the Afrikaner National Party was able to gain a strong majority. Strategists in the National Party invented apartheid as a means to cement their control over the economic and social system. Initially, aim of the apartheid was to maintain white domination while extending racial separation. Starting in the 60's, a plan of ``Grand Apartheid" was executed, emphasizing territorial separation and police repression. Race laws touched every aspect of social life, including a prohibition of marriage between non-whites and whites, and the sanctioning of ``white-only" jobs. The Department of Home Affairs (a government bureau) was responsible for the classification of the citizenry. Non-compliance with the race laws were dealt with harshly. All blacks were required to carry ``pass books" containing fingerprints, photo and information on access to non-black areas. (Source: <http://www.students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/apartheid.hist.html>)

Direct Divestment vs. Indirect Divestment: Direct divestment campaigns asks only those investors, groups, and corporations that are directly invested in the target corporation or country to divest. Indirect divestment campaigns asks that those investing in investment pools like mutual funds that include the target corporation or country to also divest.

Wholesale Divestment Campaign vs. Arms Divestment Campaign: Wholesale divestment asks investors and investment groups to completely withdraw all investments in a particular country. This is the type of campaign that was conducted against South Africa in the 1980s, asking that all companies doing business in the country to withdraw. Arms Divestment is not country-specific and instead advocates divesting from all corporations involved in developing and distributing weapons. Voices in the Wilderness is calling for Arms Divestment Campaigns across the country.

What is the INFACT campaign? Since 1977, Infact has been exposing life-threatening abuses by transnational corporations and organizing successful grassroots campaigns to hold corporations accountable to consumers and society at large. Infact started taking on the deadly nuclear weapons industry in 1984. The Nuclear Weaponmakers Campaign targeted industry leader and trendsetter General Electric for its role in promoting and producing nuclear weapons. Over four million people actively participated in the Campaign by boycotting GE. In 1991, Infact released a hard-hitting documentary video that contrasts GE's "We Bring Good Things to Life" image with real-life stories of people harmed by radiation and toxic pollution from GE's nuclear

weapons work. [*Deadly Deception: General Electric, Nuclear Weapons and Our Environment*](#) won the Academy Award for Best Documentary: Short Subject in 1992, spreading the Boycott to over one billion TV viewers worldwide. This caused a publicity nightmare for GE. Growing pressure from the Boycott and over \$75 million in lost medical equipment sales culminated on April 2, 1993, when Infact called off the boycott after GE bowed to overwhelming public demand and moved out of the nuclear weapons business. (Source: <http://www.infact.org/aboutinf.html>)

What are shareholder campaigns? Shareholder activism is a way that shareholders can claim their power as company owners to influence a corporation's behavior. A *shareholder proposal* is a shareholder's (or group of shareholders') recommendation or request that a company and/or its Board of Directors take a particular action relevant to company policy. In the United States, securities laws govern a process by which a shareholder has a right to introduce formal proposals, have the proposal circulated to all of the company's shareholders, vote upon the resolution, and present it in person at company annual meetings. Shareholder rights and the ability of shareholders to offer proposals differ from country to country. Historically, the shareholder activism process is an attempt by investors to get information out of a firm and points of view into a firm that otherwise wouldn't be there. Through shareholder activity, investors are constantly demanding more information from companies, and building on past efforts to gain greater transparency, democracy, and responsibility in Corporate America. (Source: <http://www.foe.org/international/shareholder/toolsfordemocracy.html>)

The successes of Divestment campaigns: Between 1977 and October 1985, 55 universities and colleges across the U.S. had partially or fully divested from South Africa. 30 of those divested between April and October of 1985 due to protest actions. (Source: <http://ucdivest.org/FAQ.php#A9>). The fall of the apartheid regime took place in 1994. Currently, some groups are engaged in wholesale divestment campaigns from Israel.

The advantages of divestment campaigns: Divestment campaigns are more practical and direct than some more symbolic actions. Because universities depend on their reputation and integrity, a campaign that seeks to reveal a university's allegiance to big weapons manufacturers will likely draw attention. The best place to start may be with the university's mission statement, in order to see what ideals weapons investing might violate. For students interested in "getting their hands dirty" divestment campaigns may be the way to go.

The obstacles in a divestment campaign: Gathering information about your university's investment policies and procedures can be difficult. Very large and very wealthy universities tend to be more forthcoming with such information, while smaller universities tend not to publicize it. Because of the bureaucratic procedures generally inherent in institutional investment, divestment campaigns tend to be long struggles. While they do not require a large number of people, divestment campaigns do usually require a few very committed people over several years in order to be successful.

Getting Started: The first step in a divestment campaign is to learn more about the big weapons manufacturers, your school's investments, and your allies in the cause. Begin asking sympathetic students, faculty, Board of Trustees members, and alumni, what they think a

divestment campaign on your campus might look like. Faculty could be helpful in answering historical questions about divestment campaigns against apartheid. Alumni can be helpful in building a sustainable divestment campaign and exerting pressure on the Board of Trustees to divest. Contact alumni involved in past apartheid campaigns to learn from history.

Keep In Touch!: Let Voices in the Wilderness know your plans for divestment and we will try to assist you with information and publicity. 773-784-8065 or luo@vitw.org.