

BIKO PLAZA NEWS

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DAY 27



IS THE SIT-IN OVER ?

THE SIT-IN SHOULD CONTINUE

It is hard to do full justice to the many strong reasons to stay 'on the steps'. On the one hand, "the whole world is watching," i.e. both students and the local community, and especially the national press, have been more excited by this action than by any other. The Regents and the administration have never felt so much pressure, and although it is not always acute, it is always there, and the embarrassment grows with every additional day that we stay. On the other hand, we are being forced to engage with the apart-heids within ourselves and our movement. We gain both a moral victory and understanding by dealing with the most disenfranchised members of our society.

It is strange that the people actually sleeping on the steps seem the ones least eager to end the sleep-in, while the ones with the greatest distance are the ones who say it's exhausting. All the activities that might normally be considered energy-consuming--picketing, blockading buildings, and holding rallies--everyone agrees to continue, while the activities that are supposed to be suspended--sleeping and eating--are normally seen as giving energy.

Since we are working on a number of fronts at once, it does not seem to make sense to call off the sleep-in just because not everyone wants to devote energy put it. As one woman put it, "If I am fixing the car, do I tell Michael not to wash the dishes?" There seem to be 3 groups at issue: (a) those people who are putting a lot of energy into the sleep-in and who would put it elsewhere if this was called off; (b) those who give energy only to the sleep-in and would go home if it was called off, and (c) those who are attracted by the sleep-in to also give energy to other activities and who would be turned off and do nothing if it was called off. The question is whether group (a) is larger than groups (b) and (c), espec-

ially if the sleep-in is called off in the midst of confusion and infighting. Columbia at least arrived at a consensus before ending their sit-in. Although the organizers of the Columbia protest report that after the initial shock (despite a very up-beat ending), their energy level for other activities actually improved, when we phoned an uninvolved Columbia student and asked how the protest was going, she replied "Oh, they're not out there any more" and thought that that was all there was to be said on the matter.

There is a lot of unease over the process that is being used by supporters of the 'moratorium'. Since the committees are self-selected, all political decisions are supposed to be approved by the larger membership. Yet there seems to be a real reluctance by committee members to provide the information needed for full participation by the general meeting. Some feel that it's a question of a group of "organizers" upset at having to share their power with a spontaneous movement outside their control.

At this point, it seems as though the dispute over ending the sleep-in is taking so much time and causing so much bad feeling that it is more of an energy drain than the sleep-in itself. Despite a surprising consensus two days ago against the moratorium, at which even the people who presented the proposal came around against it, it was brought up again and wasted another entire meeting before being roundly rejected once more. Some feel that if the energy that had been devoted to engineering a 'moratorium' had been devoted to tackling substantive problems, everyone might now be happy with the sleep-in. If a shortage of energy is the real concern, the committees should gracefully begin to step aside and allow the proposed new Steps Maintenance workgroup to take over. If it's a question of maintaining their personal power . . .

THE SIT-IN SHOULD END

The Biko Plaza Sit-in began as a political action, making a statement concerning UC investment policy in South Africa. Another purpose was to educate the campus community about UC economic collusion with the white supremacist police state. Biko Steps became a symbol, and focal point of resistance to this policy.

Although the action was student initiated, broad segments of the community were invited to participate. Individuals and groups concerned not only about Apartheid rallied to the steps, and expended vast amounts of energy to promote the struggle. However, this open invitation brought with it all the problems of America: racism, sexism, mental illness, the homeless and the hungry.

Consequently, the issue broadened, and these problems became unmanageable. On day 25 the steps were feeding the hungry, clothing the homeless, dealing with mental and emotional problems. These are all real problems, but too many and vast to be reasonably dealt with in our limited capacity.

Hunger, homelessness, racism, and sexism, are not quiet problems, they are not peaceful preoccupations, they are laid to bed and forgotten. While it is clear that the problems have existed prior to our action, it is not clear that since they have become attendant to our action that they should be our sole responsibility. And just because the problems have been traditionally ignored right up to the present, does it not mean that the call for alternative action means abandonment of these problems?

Putting sentimentality aside, and placing idealism in its place (as a conglomerate of goals to be attained), the steps must be considered for the tactical

and strategic value in the struggle for UC divestment. But the divestment issue has been muddled in a quagmire of name calling, fighting, and calls to the police. The actions--not the politics--of the steps have become the issue and not Apartheid. Problems that one month ago could be ignored, or walked away from are now staring us in the eye balls.

In short, what was once a well defined action, has become an uncontrollable social organism, that in panic reaches backwards for reactionary solutions. Campus organizations which supported the sit-in have withdrawn their support, women fearing for their safety have left, and those with no patience have called in the police.

And so, we have come full circle, and with it we have found the world unchanged, but the tactics for dealing with them changed.

Without control, there is no rational direction; and energy that is not constructive, is negative. Political acts that ignore the surrounding conditions are irresponsible, and therefore alienate support.

The decision to adjourn the sit-in is not a surrender, and certainly not a betrayal. The university and its client media will hail it as a victory for themselves, but for us it is literally a broad step forward in this struggle. As for betrayal, one must consider the implicit materialistic motivations behind that claim, and question as well their unwillingness to face political realities. The steps have created two things: a launching arena to escalate the struggle for divestment, and conditions that make responsible political support suicidal.

MONDAY'S SCHEDULE

- 7:30 Breakfast
- 12:00 Noon Rally
- 1:00 Sit-in by Gray Panthers, UC Hall
controlled arrests.
- 2:00 Committee on Committees (honest)
Meeting in ASUC Senate.
- 5:00 Womens Meeting-North Biko steps.
- 7:00 Nightly General Meeting. Very
important, please come.
- 7:30 Livermore Action Group (LAG),
General Meeting in Barrington
Hall
- 8:00 Defendants legal meeting. Place
to be announced on information
board.
- 11:00 Outreach Committee Meeting. 4th
- 11:45 Sleep-in continues as exhausted
students collapse into their
sleeping bags.



BREAKTHROUGH AGAINST APARTHEID

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PARK (prow)
SUNDAY MAY 12 1-7pm
MUSIC, PERFORMANCES, SPEECHES
ZULU SPEAR
TERRY GARTHWAITE
FROM THE BLUES PROJECT
SCOOP NISKER
VICKY SUE ROBINSON ("turn the beat around")
MAPENZI
AND VERY SPECIAL GUESTS



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