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Divestment Vote Delayed

By EMILY M. BERNSTEIN

Following the removal of divestment from last weekend's agenda of the Board of Overseers, a committee of the governing body has been charged with deciding whether the Board will take a vote on the issue, the president of the Board said yesterday.

In the Board's meeting last weekend, the executive committee, which sets the Board's agenda, also announced the appointment of Vice President and General Counsel Daniel Steiner '54 as staff assistant to the 16-member standing committee on institutional policy. Steiner will serve in this role only at the March 20 committee meeting at which divestment will be discussed.

Although the full Board was slated to vote on a divestment resolution last weekend, the issue was removed from the agenda because overseers did not agree whether they should present a formal Board opinion without being asked by the seven-man Corporation. The Board traditionally rubber-stamps Corporation decisions, and its unsolicited votes are not binding on the University.

Overseer President Samuel C. Butler '51 said the executive committee decided to remove divestment from the agenda after Steiner and

Secretary to the Governing Boards Robert Shenton made unusual visits to two-thirds of the overseers over the past month to discuss the proper role of the Board in dealing with the divestment issue. When no consensus seemed apparent, the executive committee decided to send the issue to a smaller forum than the 30-member Board, Butler said.

Neither Steiner or Shenton is a member of the Board of Overseers.

But Butler said the two high-ranking officials made these calls because there was "a general idea that we were getting nowhere with the discussions and that we should get a general feeling for how we should come to grips with the these subjects."

The lobbying trips came at a time when many University officials are questioning whether the Board is overstepping its bounds as an advisory body.

Every standing committee is assigned a regular staff assistant to take minutes and advise the committee members and chairmen about rules and proper procedure. There are four permanent assistants to the governing boards. Steiner is not a member of this staff.

But Butler said Steiner was chosen because he had "an enormous amount of experience and wisdom" in the area of divestment, having, among other things, traveled to South Africa with President Bok. Although Steiner has long been a close advisor of Bok's, Butler said the vice president would not be representing Bok's views.

Steiner could not be reached for comment.

Consuela M. Washington, one of three overseers elected to the Board on a pro-divestment platform, said Steiner's presence could be seen as a source of pressure from the University administration to prevent the full Board from voting on divestment.

"Mr. Steiner carries a different role and tenor than Shenton or a member of his staff staffing the committee," she said. "He may carry or appear to carry the weight of the president."

Washington also said Butler instructed the standing committee to keep in mind the traditional function of the Board. Butler would not confirm whether he gave the committee such instructions.

Another pro-divestment overseer, Duke University Professor Peter H. Wood '64, presented a report on divestment at the December Board meeting, prompting a two-hour debate and an expected vote at the February 7-8 meeting.

A month later, however, concerns among some members of the Board, the Corporation, and the administra-

tion about the Board's proper role led to Steiner and Shenton's lobbying visits to about 20 overseers. Butler said the committee on institutional policy, of which Wood is a member, will consider Wood's report along with other viewpoints.

Butler said that the Board spent most of its Sunday meeting hearing reports from the chairman of the standing committee on humanities and Dean of the Faculty A. Michael Spence. Spence's report was the second in a two-part series begun in September discussing vital issues for the College such as the future in education and renovations to the physical plant, Butler said.

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