

Fight Over South African Ban Intensifies

Reactions to the recent ban on South African participation in the 11th World Archeological Congress, due to be held in the United Kingdom next fall, continue to gather strength. While some British academics are becoming vocal in support of the ban, arguing that it is justifiable on moral grounds, a growing number of delegates from this country are withdrawing from participation. And, at a meeting on 6 December in Washington, the executive committee of the Society for American Archeology (SAA) drafted a statement to its members, indicating that it "regrets" the decision to ban South Africa and "deplores [its] effect upon scholarly communication internationally."

The SAA also decided to cancel its plans to support a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation, which was for travel funds for American scholars. The president of the society, Don Fowler of the University of Nevada, has resigned from participation in the congress as a matter of individual conscience.

The executive committee of the congress felt compelled to implement the ban when the meeting was threatened with financial deprivation and organizational disruption by a number of groups including the city council of Southampton, which is where the congress is to be located, the local university, the Association of University Teachers, and the anti-apartheid movement (News and Comment, 22 November, p. 921). "... nothing short of a complete ban on participants from South Africa would satisfy them," said John Evans, president of the congress, on 22 October.

News of the ban was slow to reach these shores, owing to "a series of unfortunate occurrences in the mail," explains Peter Ucko, secretary of the congress, but when it did it provoked an angry response. Desmond Clark, of the University of California at Berkeley, immediately resigned, characterizing the ban as an assault on the free exchange of scientists and ideas. Several other co-organizers followed suit and are now pursuing a campaign to urge potential delegates to withdraw. A letter is now on its way to all 600 U.S. delegates pointing out that the British committee has contravened the charge it accepted from its parent organization, the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Science (IUPPS), to accept "all bona fide scientists to its venue, irrespective of nationality, philosophical conviction or religious faith." While affirming that "The system of apartheid in South Africa appalls us all," the letter urges recipients to withdraw from the meeting as an indication of support for the principle of academic freedom, national and international. The letter is signed by 12 session organizers, delegates, and members of the permanent council of the IUPPS who have resigned from the congress.

While supporters of this campaign view mass resignation as upholding important principles of freedom, some U.S. archeologists fear that, whatever the motive, at this stage the gesture inevitably will be interpreted as support for, or at least indifference to, the South African regime. Ucko states that "if the congress were forced to be cancelled, it would be seen as a statement in favor of the policies in South Africa."

In any case, the British organizing committee now feels itself in a stronger position than it did when it initially made its hurriedly formed decision because it received "overwhelming support for the ban" from the full national

committee, which met on 20 November. Both Ucko and Evans said they were extremely surprised, particularly because many people argued that, on moral grounds, total isolation of South Africa, including academic boycotts, is the only way of bringing about the fall of apartheid. "This went far beyond what we felt," says Evans. "We had expected opposition."

As a result of the ban, three of the six vice presidents of the congress resigned: they are Grahame Clark, Glyn Daniel, and Stuart Piggott. Jacques Nequin, secretary general of the IUPPS, who had traveled to London the week before the meeting to try to persuade Evans and his colleagues to abide by their original charge, immediately called a meeting of the international executive of the IUPPS, which will be held 17 January. The executive, via the permanent council, has the power to withdraw recognition of the congress as an IUPPS event. What practical effect this might have is hard to say because the congress derives financial and organizational support from elsewhere. But Fred Wendorff, of Southern Methodist University and a member of the permanent council, suspects that such a decision could be decisive with foundations that are currently considering withdrawing promised funds.

Protest against apartheid conflicts with free scientific exchange.

The tone of exchanges over the issue is becoming ever more tense, with supporters of the ban claiming that their moral arguments are being willfully ignored and critics beginning to see clandestine plots behind it all. The *Times* of London has carried a flurry of letters, in more gentlemanly tenor of course, including a joint communication from the presidents of the Royal Society and the Royal Academy, Andrew Huxley and Randolph Quirk, respectively. They express "profound concern" at the politization of science in these events and warn that "The committee's deplorable decision may well lead to Britain ceasing to be regarded by bodies such as the International Council of Scientific Unions as a fit place in which to hold an international congress."

Now that the national committee has embraced the moral issue in support of its ban, it finds itself faced with some embarrassing contradictions, not least of which is that the disinvited South African delegates are free to submit their papers to the published proceedings if they so choose. And the publisher involved, Allen and Unwin, has representatives in Johannesburg. At least two of the sponsors of the congress have significant financial interests in South Africa, including International Business Machines and Sotheby's. The congress is insured against financial loss through cancellation, and each of the five companies involved in the underwriting does significant business in South Africa—one of them, Legal and General, to the tune of \$500 million in 1984.

Asked how he reconciles the moral stand on the congress with this financial involvement in South Africa, Ucko said, "I don't know. We haven't thought about it."—**ROGER LEWIN**