

TO THE EDITOR: ON THE BOYCOTT

WHEN I was a schoolboy, a friend of mine took me to the tailor one day and had me measured for a pair of shorts. We were great friends. His was mine and mine was his. He knew I needed a pair of shorts very badly. A few days later I got my pair of shorts, well made, fitting perfectly. I was proud of myself and proud of my friend. But it was not long before I discovered how my friend had obtained the money with which he had bought that pair of shorts for me. I returned it to him immediately. I could not disapprove of the manner in which the money had been obtained and still enjoy what the money had bought for me.

It is this same principle which makes me now support the boycotting of South African goods. We in Africa hate the policies of the South African Government. We abhor the semi-slave conditions under which our brothers and sisters in South Africa live, work and produce the goods we buy. We pass resolutions against the hideous system and keep hoping that the United Nations and the governments of the whole world will one day put pressure on the South African Government to treat its non-European peoples as human beings.

But these resolutions and prayers to the United Nations are not enough in themselves. Governments and democratic organisations grind very slowly. Individuals do not have to. The question then is what an individual can do to influence the South African Government towards a human treatment of its non-white citizens.

Can we honestly condemn a system and at the same time employ it to produce goods which we buy, and then enjoy with a clear conscience? Surely the customers of a business do more to keep it going than its shareholders. We who buy South African goods do more to support the system than the Nationalist Government or Nationalist industrialists.

Each one of us can remove his individual prop to the South African system by refusing to buy South African goods. There are millions of people in the world who support the South African Government in this way, and who can remove their support by the boycott. I feel it is only in this way that we can give meaning to our abhorrence of the system, and give encouragement to sympathetic governments of the world to act.

It is most fitting that Jamaica, that island which has solved its

racial problems so well, should have taken the action it has in support of the boycott. It is equally fitting that the Trade Union Congress of Ghana should immediately have given its support. I was personally happy to participate in a meeting in London where the boycott was launched. Already the authors of apartheid are beginning to feel the sharp effect of the boycott. But they cannot feel it fully until every person in the whole world who disapproves of the South African system withdraws his support of it by withdrawing his contribution to its upkeep.

I must emphasise that the boycott is really a *withdrawing of support* which each one of us gives to the racialists in South Africa by buying their goods. There is a very real sense in which we are part of the system we despise, because we patronise it, pay its running expenses.

We are not being called upon to make much of a sacrifice. We are not being called upon to go hungry and court imprisonment. That is the lot of our brothers and sisters inside South Africa. We are being asked to substitute other goods for South African goods, however much of a sacrifice this may mean to our suffering brethren in South Africa itself. We are not being called upon to support or not to support the oppressed in South Africa. We are being called upon to stop supporting those who oppress them.

The issue is as simple as that. Let every man and woman who disapproves of the South African system search his or her conscience, and decide to support or not to support the racialists of South Africa.

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