

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS
MINUTES OF MEETING
MAY 5, 2003

[In these minutes: Divestment from Israel, Recycling Resolution, Printer Resolution, Proxy Voting, Mount Graham Resolution, Essential Medicines Resolution]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Mark Pedelty, chair, Judi Linder, Jennifer Oliphant, Ruth Taylor, Roger Beck, Karen Holtmeier, Yvonne Redmond-Brown, Greg Schooler, Julie Sweitzer, H. Jeanie Taylor, Robert Blair, Susan Craddock, Kenneth Heller, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Ben Senauer, Kara Ferguson, Joel Helfrich, Melissa Williams

ABSENT: Albert Cooper, Sheri Huerd, Susan Von Bank, Brandi Linderman

OTHER(S): Martin Dworkin, Amy Olson, Julie Swiler, Ted Helgl, Koby Nahmias, Samir Nassar, Summer Smith, Brian Wachutka, Stephanie Nygard, Sanna Towns, Katie Bonn, Erika Zurawski, James Nelson

I). Professor Pedelty called the meeting to order, welcomed those present and asked that introductions be made.

II). DIVESTMENT FROM ISRAEL RESOLUTION: Professor Pedelty reminded members that there is a motion on the floor from the April 7th meeting sponsored by Melissa Williams.

Melissa Williams read a prepared statement responding to the presentation at the April 7th Social Concerns meeting opposing the University's divestiture from Israel. Additionally, she read a statement that addressed an alternative divestment resolution drafted by Professor Ken Heller. Ms. Williams noted the major difference between these resolutions relates to human rights and international law violations.

Next, Ms. Williams made a motion to amend the original resolution in light of input from Professor Heller. In accordance with 'Roberts Rules of Order', the committee unanimously voted to allow the drafters of the original divestment resolution to replace it with an amended version. Additionally, it was noted that this action would in no way impact the status of this resolution before the committee. Discussion highlights:

- A reluctance to pass or even consider this resolution without getting input from the University community and additional information from a variety of sources on the issue at large.

- This is a huge issue. How should members educate themselves on an issue of such gargantuan proportion?
- Establish a subcommittee to immerse themselves in this issue and report back its findings to the parent committee.
- Establish a committee that only looks at investment issues without singling out or targeting specific countries.

Ms. Williams made a motion to table voting on the amended resolution until approximately December 2003. In the meantime, she added that she would like the committee to continue to discuss and learn more about this issue. The committee passed this motion unanimously.

A member asked that as the committee continues to research this issue that dates be put on all future handouts to help avoid confusion about which documents are being referred to.

Next, Professor Heller made a motion that the alternative one page resolution he drafted continue to be considered by the committee. Additionally, he made the motion that his draft be tabled until the committee is ready to call the vote. The committee passed these motions as well.

To summarize, Professor Pedelty noted there are two contending divestment resolutions before the Social Concerns Committee. He further noted it would probably be a good idea to establish a subcommittee in the fall to deal with this matter.

III). RECYCLING RESOLUTION: A motion was made to consider the recycling resolution brought forward by Ecowatch. A majority of the committee's discussion focused on wordsmithing the document. A member asked who would monitor compliance of this resolution. The committee unanimously passed this resolution.

On a side-note, Joel Helfrich, encouraged the two Ecowatch students that brought this resolution forward to consider becoming members of the Social Concerns Committee.

IV). PRINTER RESOLUTION: A motion was made to consider the printer resolution brought forward by Ecowatch. Again, the committee spent a considerable amount of time wordsmithing this resolution. Members unanimously adopted this resolution.

V). PROXY RESOLUTIONS:

Lowes Companies Inc., American Eagle Outfitters Inc., Wal Mart Stores Inc. – “Implement ILO Standards and Third-Party Monitoring” – the committee passed the resolution.

Wal Mart Stores Inc. – “Report on EEO” – the committee unanimously passed this resolution.

Bed Bath & Beyond Inc. – “Report on EEO and Plans Against Glass Ceiling” – the committee unanimously passed this resolution.

Wal Mart Stores Inc. – “Report on Gene-Engineered Food” – the committee passed the resolution.

Intel Corporation – “Report Using GRI Guidelines” – the committee abstained on this resolution.

VI). MOUNT GRAHAM: Joel Helfrich highlighted developments that have happened since March of 2002 when Professor Robin Brown drafted the Social Concerns Committee’s position statement on the Mount Graham issue:

- The University of Minnesota joined the Mount Graham International Observatory on October 11, 2002.
- Other groups that spoke out against the University joining in the Mount Graham International Observatory included the President’s American Indian Advisory Board, Department of American Indian Studies, Metro Urban Indian Affairs Council, all 11 federally recognized tribes in Minnesota, the Minnesota Daily and various student groups on campus.
- The mountain has received eligibility as traditional property to the western Apache people.
- The University of Arizona’s Astronomy Department received its largest gift ever from Lockheed Martin to conduct research on military technology.
- There remains a ‘disconnect’ between the University of Arizona and the western Apache tribes of San Carlos and White Mountain.
- Troubling comments from the University of Minnesota’s Board of Regents.

Discussion highlights:

- Can the University renege on its agreement with the University of Arizona? In the contract it stipulates that if the telescope is not operational by 2005 the University of Minnesota can back-out.
- Why did last year’s committee draft a letter to the President versus passing a resolution for action in the Senate? Timing was a factor as well as the fact that the committee wanted to express its point of view in a letter format. In hindsight, the committee believes the letter was virtually ignored.
- A member was concerned that in light of the fact no scientific case was made for this initiative, why the University joined the Mount Graham International Observatory. According to Mr. Helfrich, other puzzling questions remain unanswered when it comes to why the Mt. Graham site was chosen. For example, numerous astronomy organizations rank the Mount Graham site as 38 out of 52; meaning 37 sites would have been better suited for an observatory. Additionally, the University of Arizona’s own studies in the early 1990s ranked the Mt. Graham site as a 1 out of 8 in terms of visibility. Professor Pedelty explained that the statement that referred to no scientific case being made alludes to the fact

- Professor Kuhi, on behalf of the Astronomy Department, did a very poor job of making a scientific case to the committee for moving forward with the initiative.
- Construction has already begun on the telescope. Originally, the project was to have been completed in 1992 and it was originally called the Columbus Project.

The Committee passed the Mount Graham resolution. Professor Ken Heller voted against the resolution and Jennifer Oliphant voted to abstain.

VII). ESSENTIAL MEDICINES RESOLUTION: Professor Craddock provided the framework for this resolution by noting that the University will put best practices in place in dealing with the issue of essential medicines. The goal is that essential medicines will reach those that need it rather than only those that can afford it. The resolution gives flexibility to the University in its negotiations when patenting drugs, etc. Essentially there will be no financial loss to the University because the University currently does not receive monetary compensation for essential medicines from low-income countries anyway. It was further noted that the University is a public institution and products that come out of a public institution are supposed to be for the public good. Senior Vice President Dr. Frank Cerra also plans to write a letter of endorsement of this resolution.

The committee unanimously passed the resolution.

VIII). Hearing no further business, Professor Pedelty adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate