

Idealism must prevail in debate over apartheid-tainted gifts to NIU

We're a pretty tightly-knit group here at The Northern Star. We work together. We play together. We sometimes even study together.

But that doesn't mean we always agree on everything. The issue of apartheid donations to The NIU Foundation is one where I must take exception with my boss.

Kathy Orr, editor of the Star, last week wrote that we should not criticize the foundation for accepting donations of stock in companies that practice apartheid policies.

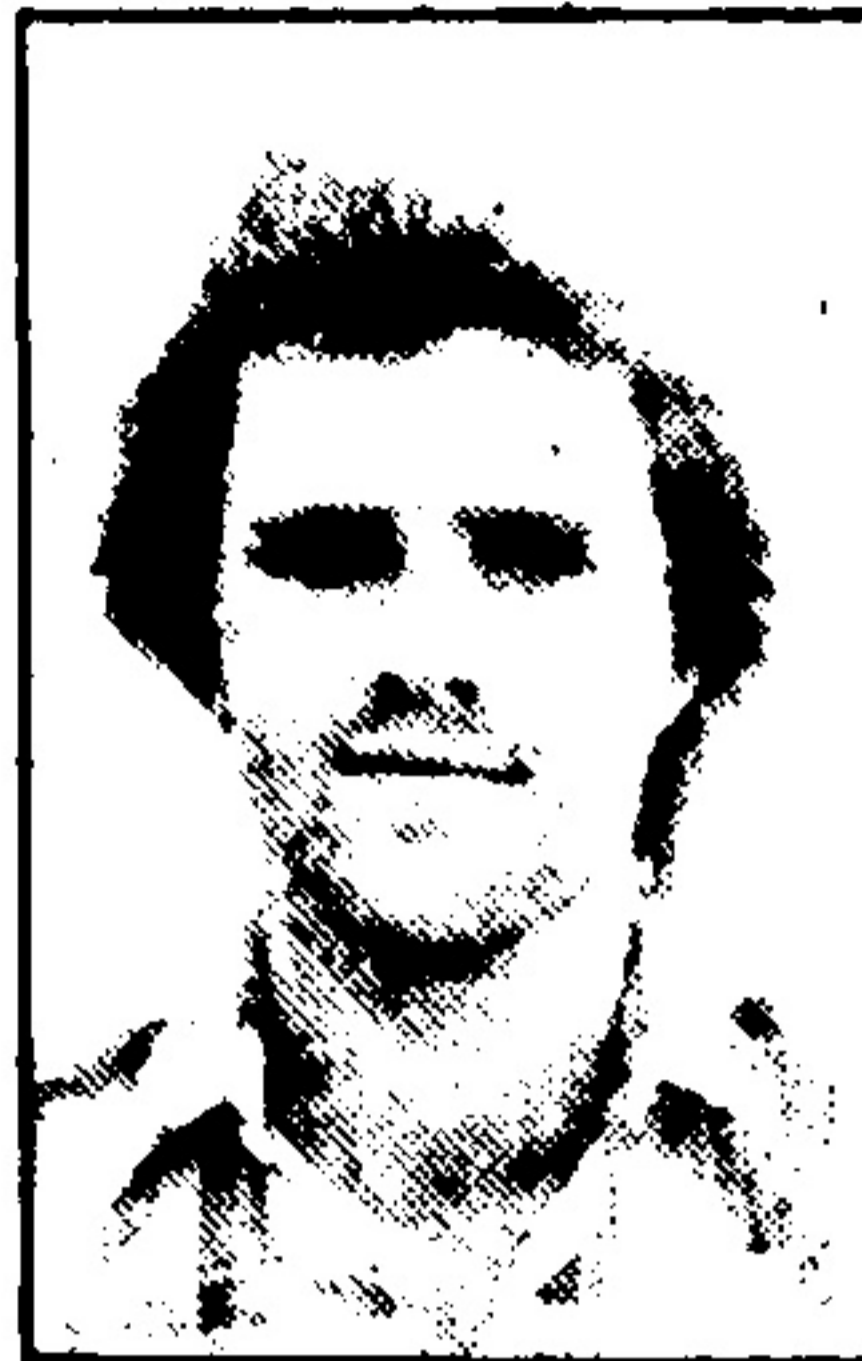
Over the past three years, the foundation has accepted gifts of stock in an apartheid-operated South African goldmine. The stock has been liquidated, and the money used for NIU student scholarships.

Under apartheid rule, the black majority of South Africa is subjected to severe racial discrimination legalized by the country's white minority. The apartheid way of life represents everything that is unethical, immoral and illegal in the United States.

Unfortunately, some American companies are exploiting the cheap black labor created by apartheid rule. I guess those American corporate executives believe our nation's ideals do not have to extend beyond our nation's borders.

My boss wrote last week that there is no difference between the foundation's acceptance of apartheid-tainted gifts and patronage of American companies that conduct business in South Africa.

She suggested that, because companies like Inter-



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national Business Machines and Coca-Cola have connections in South Africa, those of us who oppose apartheid rule should not buy an IBM computer or a can of Coke. And she went even further to say we should try to get the United States to stop importing products from South Africa.

She is right. On all counts, she is absolutely right.

Companies like IBM and Coca-Cola should be boycotted until they end all relations with South Africa. And, yes, the federal government should join the boycott.

Equality is such a basic element of this country's foundation we should do everything we can to promote it in every corner of the world.

Ideally, national boycotts of companies like IBM and Coca-Cola would put such pressure on the nation's economy that Congress would have to enact a law prohibiting corporate links to South Africa. Un-

fortunately, the anti-apartheid movement in this country is not yet strong enough to bring about such a sweeping change.

But simply because that is not going to happen in the next few months does not mean we should throw up our arms and succumb to apartheid rule.

Until the anti-apartheid movement becomes a national concern, those of us who are idealistic—instead of pragmatic—about eliminating racism are left to efforts like that initiated by the NIU Student Association.

Members of the SA last week announced plans to try to persuade all NIU Foundation contributors to boycott the foundation until an anti-apartheid policy is adopted.

Sure, it's impractical to try to stop donations to an organization that provides so much financial aid to NIU students. But the SA officials working on the boycott show character in their willingness to sacrifice tangible goods for intangible principles.

Other students could show character, too, by joining the boycott and returning any financial aid they have received from the foundation.

Sometimes, if you really sit down and think about an issue, you realize you cannot turn your back.

On with the boycott!

Scott Williams is campus editor of The Northern Star.