

## Boot Bata off York's board demands CCSA protest group

By DAVID BYRNES

A representative from Bata International, a branch of the Toronto-based Bata Shoe Corporation, was confronted last Thursday by a group of about 30 students protesting the company's business practices in South Africa.

"Boot Bata," they chanted.

The speaker, Bata International counsel Tom Drucker, who had been invited by the Osgoode International Law Society to speak about his career, was questioned by the protesters about Bata's alleged exploitation of black workers in South Africa.

The demonstration was largely organized by law student Lyal Sunga.

Sunga refuted a rumor that Drucker was escorted to his car by the protesters. "I think he decided to leave," Sunga said. "He had no real choice but to leave if he wanted to save face."

Asked to comment on the incident, Drucker would only say "the less said about that the better."

Sunga said that he is disappointed with the attitude of law students towards the exploita-

tion of South African blacks by multinational corporations.

"I am sad to say that for the most part, law students at Osgoode seem terribly ignorant and apathetic about issues involving basic human rights and freedoms," Sunga said.

"That apartheid is a racist regime, condemned by the United Nations as a crime against humanity and as genocide was the matter to which the political statement of student protest was directed," Sunga said.

Sonia Bata, a director of the Bata Shoe Corporation, is also one of York's Board of Governors. A group called Canadians Concerned about South Africa (CCSA) is presently soliciting student signatures to support Bata's removal from the Board.

A recent *Globe & Mail* article strongly criticized the Bata Shoe Corporation for refusing its workers a union and paying them less than standardized poverty levels. The article said that at Bata's KwaZulu plant workers are only paid the equivalent of \$140 per month Canadian currency.



**Sonja Bata:** Group wants her off York University board.

## Group seeks to oust York governor for South African ties

By Sterling Taylor Toronto Star

More than 1,000 York University students and staff are demanding the resignation of Sonja Bata from the institution's board of governors, because she is a director of a company that "invests extensively" in apartheid South Africa.

Bata is "a director of Bata shoe company (Bata Ltd.), which invests extensively in apartheid South Africa and pays poverty wages to black

workers," says a petition, presented yesterday to university president Harry Arthurs.

"We think that it is a moral outrage that the university . . . is connected with, or seen to be supportive of" the racist regime, it continues.

Bata is currently out of the country and was not available for comment.

But Basil Baker, company secretary and a Bata employee for 33

years, said: "I fail to understand why anyone should be criticized in any way for providing jobs for 3,500 black Africans.

"Can these students tell me how putting 3,500 Black Africans out of work can help give black Africans the economic independence they need in order to successfully dismantle apartheid, to which we are as completely opposed as the students at York University?"

Baker, who said his statements were his own personal opinion, said Bata Ltd. is "caught in the middle because we are one of the few Canadian companies there."

The petition, presented to Arthurs by the York Student Movement Against Apartheid, also asks the university to issue a statement categorically condemning the apartheid system in South Africa, and all other forms of discrimination.

Arthurs, who said he will present the petition at the next board of governors' meeting later this month, commended the students' participation "in this very important cause."

Student Lyal Sunga later said the petition is "only the beginning."

Bata, who is a director of several corporations, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

# The Globe and Mail

## Sonja Bata cuts tie to York U

Sonja Bata, who recently became the subject of a 1,000-signature petition from York University students demanding her resignation from the university board of directors because of the Bata shoe company's business interests in South Africa, decided last February not to serve again, the university said yesterday.

Mrs. Bata has served on the board of Bata Ltd. since 1981.

On May 7, York University president Harry Arthur was presented with a petition by the two-month-old group York University Students Against Apartheid.

The students felt Mrs. Bata should not be on the board of the institution because Bata is the largest direct Canadian employer in South Africa, employing 3,500 workers.

A letter sent to the university, dated Feb. 25, 1985, said Mrs. Bata did not wish to stand for re-election because she had served for nine years, the university said.

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## Bata resigns from board of York University

By Janice Turner Toronto Star

Sonja Bata, wife of shoe magnate Thomas Bata and a director of the Toronto-based multinational giant, is stepping down from York University's board of governors after nine years.

The announcement was made yesterday in a terse press release from the university headed "regarding recent media coverage" concerning Bata's involvement at York.

Pressure on Bata to give up the post mounted this week when more than 1,000 York University students and staff members demanded she resign. They condemned her as a director of a company that "invests extensively" in apartheid South Africa.

The petition, which grabbed the headlines, was presented to university president Harry Arthurs. It said it is "... a moral outrage that the university ... is connected with, or seen to be supportive of" the racist regime.

In mid-February, the apartheid issue was hotly debated in the House of Commons after a report from South Africa said

the Bata Shoe Co. is violating the Canadian government's voluntary code of conduct at plants in the KwaZulu black homeland.

The shoe company operates in more than 90 countries.

But Bata last night told The Star her decision not to seek reelection to the board had been made last fall and been widely known since Feb. 25.

"As the press release indicates, it was a rather non-issue," Arthurs said. "I can certainly understand the desire of the anti-apartheid group to make their point, but it really wasn't a live issue. She (Bata) had already given her decision."

The university's release said Bata met with board chairman Bruce Bryden in January and confirmed her decision in writing the next month.

"Frankly, I'm delighted that these students have the freedom to express themselves," Bata said. "I have no bad feelings about that."

She said she has "a full plate" of commitments to juggle and can no longer give the post time it requires.

"I felt that it was time that I should get off," Bata said.

She said the public statement was intended to clear the air after this week's petition was forwarded to university officials by the York Student Movement Against Apartheid.



Sonja Bata

## *What will it take for firm to quit S. Africa?*

The public resignation of Sonja Bata from the York University board of governors gives the hundreds who supported the York Student Movement Against Apartheid cause to celebrate. No university should support, or appear to condone, the racist apartheid South African regime.

The scheme of the government of South Africa to attract investment by offering financial incentives to corporations (such as Bata), while providing a political climate which facilitates union busting, the payment of poverty wages, and the denial of basic human rights and freedoms to the non-white majority, is grotesque in the extreme.

It took over 1,000 signatures and public protest to make Bata quit the board of governors. What would it take for Bata to quit South Africa?

LYAL SUNGA  
Downsview