

Show of strength as workers converge on diplomat's home

About 2 000 workers and Inkatha supporters converged on the stately home of the US Consul-General in Durban recently to give him part of a 10 000-signature protest against US disinvestment in South Africa.

They arrived in 34 buses and cars — singing and carrying placards — from throughout Natal and KwaZulu.

They were led by Mr Winnington Sabelo, a member of the central committee of Inkatha.

The Consul-General, Mr Harry Geisel, said the protest was "very impressive" and showed the seriousness of the situation.

"If people are to lose their jobs we have an obligation to think very carefully before we do anything," he said. "We are talking about the lives of very poor people."

The demonstration was widely reported in the Press and on television.

The demonstrators arrived in Durban North's "millionaire row", Monteith Place, carrying placards that read: "We want jobs for subsistence," "When did the masses call for disinvestment?," "Jobs are our weapons," "We can speak for ourselves," "Uproot the international sell-outs," "The clergy are not the workers nor political leaders," (a reference to Bishop Desmond Tutu and his pronouncements on disinvestment) and "No! to disinvestment."

Others stated: "Away with colonial arrogance" and "The struggle is ours. We have a right to wage it ourselves."

The protesters marched in front of the Consul-General's house and were then ushered into the grounds where they sang freedom songs and raised clenched fists while advocating their stand against disinvestment.

The protesters presented some of the signatures, as the complete list was too cumbersome.

While handing over the petition, Mr Sabelo asked Mr Geisel to send it to the US President Ronald Reagan with a plea to encourage Americans to keep investing in South Africa and in so doing create job opportunities.

"We want jobs, help us to get them.



The scene at the residence of the US Consul-General. Senator Edward Kennedy, after his much publicised trip to South Africa, has been reported as saying in the US: "Only Whites in South Africa oppose disinvestment..."



Mr Harry Geisel, United States Consul-General in Durban, stands in the garden of his Durban North home where 34 busloads of Inkatha supporters gathered to protest against US disinvestment in South Africa.

Disinvestment will kill us — to hell with disinvestment," said Mr Sabelo.

Mr Geisel replied that he was, in fact, leaving that day for Cape Town where he would discuss the matter with US Ambassador Mr Herman Nickel.

You can be sure that we will do all we can to help. I will never forget this

day. All the American people want is what is best for all South African people..."

Mr Sabelo, in reply to a question from the Press people present, said Bishop Desmond Tutu, who was known to have urged disinvestment abroad, did not speak on behalf of millions of Black workers.