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Coalition for Illinois Divestment from South Africa

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CIDSA Coalition for Illinois' Divestment from South Africa

UPDATE

NOVEMBER, 1983

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No. 1

FIRST STEP VICTORY!

On Oct. 17th, the first step towards divestment of Illinois state pension funds from apartheid South Africa was accomplished when the Illinois House Executive Committee passed House Bill 0569, sending it to the House for consideration.

If passed by the legislature, HB 0569 will require Illinois pension funds to be divested from corporations doing business in South Africa, and make banks ineligible for State funds if they make loans to South Africa or to corporations for the purpose of doing business in South Africa.

Thanks to all CIDSA members and friends for your help. The letters, calls, testimony and attendance at the public hearings this

fall made a significant impact on the legislators. Also important was press coverage, in particular the Oct. 20th article in the Chicago Defender.

The vote by the full House is scheduled for Spring of 1984. This leaves us a lot of work in a short time. Rep. Carol Moseley Braun, a sponsor of the bill, encourages the lobbying of all legislators, especially Republican House leader Lee Daniels and Speaker Michael Madigan, whose last minute support was crucial in the bill's passage on the 17th.

Passage from the committee was our first step toward ensuring that Illinois money will no longer be used to support apartheid in South Africa.

250 ATTEND HEARINGS

Three public hearings on House Bill 0569 were held in September with over 250 people in total attendance and more than 35 people offering testimonies.

The first hearing was held at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. Among those who testified was Prof. Dennis Brutus.

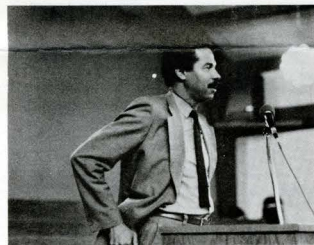
Rep. Saltsman chaired the second hearing held at Bradley University in Peoria. One of the testimonies was presented by Mike Newman of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

The Champaign-Urbana Coalition Against Apartheid organized the last hearing held in Champaign. Over 130 people filled the room where they heard testimonies given by members of the Champaign Co. Federation of Labor and Urban League among many others.

Although these hearings were not posted as "official", they provided a good forum to increase public awareness of HB 0569 and the need to divest Illinois public funds from apartheid South Africa.



The hearing on HB 0569 held in Champaign.



Randall Robinson of TransAfrica stating at the Chicago hearing that US loans and investments "prop up" the South African government and give "the aura of respectability to the most heinous regime the world has seen since Nazi Germany."

MORE VICTORIES

The US House has approved legislation prohibiting new US investment in South Africa. This is a key setback for the Reagan administration which has pursued a policy of "constructive engagement" with the Pretoria government. This is the first time that national legislation on South Africa has passed since 1978. The legislation now faces a vote in the Senate.

Another victory to celebrate is the Oct. 4 passage of a divestment bill by the Washington D.C. City Council.

Apartheid, Inc.

In 1982, the United States replaced Britain as South Africa's largest source of corporate investment, according to a recent article in The Nation. These corporations include such giants as Burroughs, Control Data, I.B.M., N.C.R., as well as Ford, General Motors, Chrysler and American Motors.

American banks also play a prominent role in South African finances. The Nation article reports that in recent years, twenty-six American banks have lent more than \$1 billion to public and private borrowers.

The conclusion has been that all this U.S. investment has not significantly improved the living standard of black workers relative to whites. This conclusion drastically points up the deficiency in President Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" towards South Africa. The Nation article notes that in some sectors of the economy, the income gap between whites and blacks has actually widened.

Many American corporations have tried to justify their presence in South Africa and quell the tide of criticism by adopting the so called Sullivan Principles. These Principles call for U.S. corporations to integrate work facilities, provide equal pay for equal work and train blacks for supervisory and technical jobs.

However, the Nation article reveals that this voluntary code is adhered to by less than half of the American firms there, and that the code does not attempt to deal with the key issue of equal opportunity for blacks. Finally, it points out that most American companies have steadfastly opposed the unionization of black workers. For example, Caltex, Coca-Cola, Firestone, I.B.M., Goodyear, Johnson & Johnson, to name a few, are among the American firms with a high proportion of black employees that neither recognize nor negotiate with any of the black trade unions.

The Nation October 8, 1983 (pp.292-292)



CIDSA

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BENEFITS



Come to a party and help put an end to Illinois support of apartheid. CIDSA is hosting two cash-bar benefits: the first is Sat., Nov. 19th beginning at 9 pm at the home of John Dunham, 8747 S. Cornell; the second is Sat., Dec. 3rd at 8 pm at the home of Carol Thompson, 2021 W. Hutchinson (2 blocks north of Irving Park). Tickets are \$2.50 in advance from any CIDSA member, or \$3.00 at the door. Bring all your friends. For more information call Carol at 327-0545.

S.A. NEWS BRIEFS

- ~South Africa bombed the offices of the African National Congress (ANC) in Maputo, Mozambique injuring five people. 10/17/83
- ~The US government has opened a new trade promotion office in Johannesburg. The aim of the office is to increase annual trade between the US and SA by one billion dollars. 10/3/83
- ~The South African government has again moved to extinguish non-violent black political opposition by banning meetings of the new United Democratic Front, the Azanian People's Organization, the South African Allied Workers Union, and the Transvaal Indian Congress--the latter founded by Mohandas K. Gandhi. 10/12/83
- ~Bishop Desmond Tutu has again been barred from traveling overseas by the SA government--this time to a UN meeting in Geneva and to a seminar in the USA. 10/5/83
- ~South African security police in Namibia have detained two church workers working on an English language education project for the Council of Churches in Namibia. Their whereabouts are unknown. 10/30/83
- ~Outstanding US bank loans to SA totalled 3.7 billion as of December, 1982. A New York banker said it could be more but "we are worried about lack of progress in dismantling apartheid." 10/6/83
- ~The Roman Catholic Church and six black homelands ("bantustans") leaders have rejected South Africa's proposed new constitution which disregards entirely the country's majority black population. 9/26/83

SOURCES

The Guardian(London) 10/23/83; The Times (London) 10/3/83; Christian Science Monitor 10/12/83; Rand Daily Mail(South Africa) 9/30 & 10/6/83; The Guardian(London) 10/5/83.

JOIN CIDSA

Rob Van Drimmelen of the World Council of Churches Program to Combat Racism recently wrote: "I would like to comment on the important work of CIDSA. We know your type of work is difficult indeed, but we also know about the success which was achieved in the US on this subject. We would like to wish you a lot of courage, strength and strategical insight."

Your support is needed to continue the work of CIDSA. You can help by letting your legislators know that passage of HB 0569 is important to the people of South Africa and the people of Illinois. For more information on how you can join the Coalition, phone CIDSA at 312/660-8671. **This is the first issue of CIDSA UPDATE. Your contribution will help ensure that there is a CIDSA UPDATE NO.2. **