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Coalition for Illinois Divestment from South Africa

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CIDSA Coalition for Illinois' Divestment from South Africa

UPDATE

JANUARY, 1984

No. 2

ORGANIZING FOR ILLINOIS' DIVESTMENT

Saturday, December 3rd was a day full of shared ideas, strategies and inspiration for members of the Coalition for Illinois' Divestment from South Africa. 75 people from throughout the state came together at the Chicago Temple to hear experienced divestment campaigners speak and to find energy in the charged words of South African activists. The purpose of the conference was to organize for Illinois' own divestment campaign.

The morning began with dynamic speeches from Bernard (Ben) Magubane, author and activist, Dumasani Khumalo of the American Committee on Africa, Christy Hoffman from the Connecticut Anti-Apartheid Committee, and Willard Johnson, a MASS (Massachusetts) Divest activist. From their words came the knowledge that the Illinois divestment campaign, too, can be a successful struggle. Illinois residents are not alone in their effort to divest state pension and personnel funds from corporations doing business in South Africa. Conference goers learned that pursuing this cause will definitely contribute to the long fight to end apartheid. As Willard Johnson emphasized, it is possible to wage moral battles in an immoral society. And the accumulation of battles fought and won is a viable counterweight against that immorality.

After a lunch spent in getting to know the panelists, fellow Chicago CIDSA members and those from around the state, the afternoon became a joint planning session. Cheryl Johnson and Prexy Nesbitt, CIDSA co-chairpersons, outlined what had been accomplished so far and what is left to be done. Small group discussion meetings suggested details and strategies for organizing voters to lobby their legislators to pass HB 0569. This bill, sponsored by Reps. Carol Moseley Braun and Woods Bowman, was brought out of committee by Rep. Michael Madigan and has been introduced onto the floor of the House for consideration



Conference panelists Christy Hoffman, Willard Johnson, Bernard (Ben) Magubane, Dumasani Khumalo and CIDSA co-chair Cheryl Johnson.

sometime after the first of the year or in the early spring. CIDSA efforts were responsible for keeping this bill before the attention of the Personnel and Pension Fund committee.

In sharing the ideas expressed by the four groups of discussants an agenda emerged. It is imperative that CIDSA work rapidly to organize interested voters in Illinois to urge their congresspersons to vote for this bill. A strong, state-wide coalition which includes black community organizations, organized labor, church and civic groups must be formed. The conference goers of December 3rd must act as a core of volunteers to gather this coalition and move it forward to victory.

The vital importance of this work was underscored by the concluding remarks of the panelists and CIDSA co-chairs. As Ben Magubane stressed, we are facing a brutal and ruthless opponent who will not shrink from using all methods at hand to defeat this effort to divest corporate funds from South Africa. Our will must be as strong as theirs. The confidence, courage, honesty and ardor of the closing statements did much to inspire the participants to commit themselves to succeed in this first of many steps.

The day ended with a fund-raising supper and party. It was a twelve-hour day filled with so many things—energy, youth, experience, wisdom and the courage of all those who have gone before. CIDSA will draw strength from this day for the months to come.

By Marilyn Boyd, BANAA
(Bloomington and Normal
Against Apartheid)



S.A. NEWS BRIEFS

With this issue we are beginning a new column in which members of CIDSa will review new reports, books, documents and articles which discuss either the situation in S.A. or the world-wide anti-apartheid movement.

CHILD LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA

By the Anti-Slavery Society (London, 1983)

Book Review by Prexy Nesbitt

In the mid 1950's various liberal journalists in South Africa (led by the late Ruth First, killed by a letter bomb in Maputo Mozambique in August, 1982) uncovered what has become known as the Bethal potato scandal of the 1950's. Essentially, one chapter of an extensive pattern of farm labour abuse, Bethal was a case where some Afrikaaner farmers killed several of their black labourers and then plowed their corpses under the soil as fertilizer for that year's potato crop.

The British Anti-Slavery Society has recently documented yet another saga, a continuing one, of the apartheid system. In a new publication entitled Child Labour in South Africa (Anti-Slavery Society, 180 Brixton Road, London SW96AT, 1983) the Society states that "a junior workforce, unprotected and exploited, exists within the borders of the Republic [of South Africa]."

This new study makes various valuable observations. It points out that in the major cities and towns children between the ages of nine and thirteen are often involved in highly visible service-type jobs as carpark attendants, errandboys, and street vendors. All of these are highly exploitative situations. But it is in the agricultural sector, on remote farms where the "white Baases" run their farms as feudal estates and where little can be observed, that the most vicious levels of exploitation can be found. It is the parts of this study which cite what the children themselves had to say that are the most revealing (and moving):

"The children did not know their ages but they could not have been more than nine. they said that they had been working on cotton, orange or vegetable farms...for three years, and that they worked 'from sunrise to sunset'. This can mean 10 to 12 hours in average summer temperatures of 35°C(95°F)...Daily child workers were paid in tomatoes or potatoes. Weekly and monthly child workers were paid between R6 and R18 per month...[W]e spoke to a group of children carrying buckets of damaged tomatoes which they had received as wages." (p.33)

**Illinois Representative Philip Crane (Rep.) has introduced into Congress a resolution of disapproval of the divestment bill passed by the D.C. City Council and Mayor Barry. 11/17/83

**Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig will visit South Africa in February. He will be the guest of South Africa's Manpower and Management Foundation. 12/12/83

**Led by companies like Control Data Corporation and Digital Equipment Corporation, U.S. sales of dual use (civilian-military), nuclear-related computers are currently booming. Computer exports to South Africa doubled between 1980 and 1982 and in early 1982 the Reagan administration lifted the ban on computer sales to the South African police or military. 12/12/83

**South African troops have invaded Angola in a major military operation designed to stop SWAPO guerrillas from entering Namibia. 12/26/83

Anti-Apartheid Actions

**A coordinated campaign against pension fund investment in South Africa has been launched in Britain according to a trustee of the Post Office and Telecom Superannuation Plan. Voluntary Organizations, unions, churches and local authorities are being urged to work together to divert Britain's £80-100 billion pension funds from being invested in S.A. 11/29/83

**The Greater London Council (GLC) has voted to sever all ties with S.A. and to declare London an anti-apartheid zone. The GLC will discourage the advertising of South African products and will encourage naming streets and buildings after prominent opponents of apartheid. 12/1/83

Sources

The Washington Post November 19, 1983;
Africa News (Durham) December 12, 1983;
New York Times December 27, 1983;
Guardian (London) November 29, 1983;
Rand Daily Mail (South Africa) Dec. 1, 1983.



Frontline, (London)

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Coalition for Illinois' Divestment from South Africa

P.O. BOX 578413

Chicago, Illinois 60657