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CIDSAs Update, No. 5

Coalition for Illinois Divestment from South Africa

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SUMMER '84 #5

CIDSA UPDATE

Coalition for Illinois' Divestment from South Africa



House Bill #0569

458

() A fiduciary with respect to a retirement system or pension fund established under this code shall not:

() Invest or deposit any pension funds in any firm, corporation, agency, association or unit, bank or financial institution, or in any stocks, securities or other obligations thereof, which invests in, has any ownership interest in property of, or has any outstanding loan to: (1) the Republic of South Africa; (2) a national corporation of or other corporation organized under the laws of the Republic of South Africa, or (3) a company for the purpose of investment in the Republic of South Africa, until such time as the United Nations certifies that the system of racial discrimination, commonly known as apartheid, is abolished.

Summary: Here's What Happened-

THE VOTE-

37 Yes
48 No
13 Present
20 Absent

H.B. #0569, which charted new ground for the Illinois antisapartheid movement, came to a vote on May 25th. Friday, May 25th was the last possible day that this legislation could have been considered by the House of Representatives, during the present legislative session. While the bill could have been called for a vote much earlier, its introduction was delayed while CIDSA, the bill sponsors and different legislators attempted to find the best formula for guaranteeing the bill's eventual passage. Throughout the period following our April 4th Lobby Day there were also many efforts to amend the bill. In the final analysis CIDSA and the bill's sponsors presented the original divestment bill for the consideration of the legislators.

Beginning with last fall when Representatives Braun and Bowman introduced the divestment bill into this session there were ten documented attempts to amend HB #0569. Many of these amendments came from downstate legislators. In some cases the proposed amendments constituted little more than blatant attempts to destroy the bill. Amendments in this category sought to attach additional countries such as Israel and the Soviet Union to the divestment legislation. Other proposed amendments were more subtle. For instance an amendment by Representative Satterthwaite of Champaign would have made future investments in South Africa-related corporations illegal and provided a monetary incentive to encourage (?) individual pension fund systems to divest. A bill by Rep. Saltsman of Peoria would have amended the original bill with the following additional restriction: "Provided, however, that the limitations in this amendatory act of 1984 do not apply to investments in effect on the effective date of this amendatory act of 1984, in corporations organized under the laws of the US or any state for purposes of their domestic operations until Jan. 31, 1994." More simply put - pass divestment legislation now but only have it take effect ten years from now.

Realizing that the anti-apartheid movement needed some help from the downstate legislators to pass the bill, CIDSA's legal workers submitted, on behalf of the organization, a much stricter version of the 'no future investment' bill. This flexibility was not enough, however, to convince many of the downstate legislators to vote for 569 and against apartheid.

Many of the above-mentioned facts were brought to the CIDsA general membership in early May. The decision was made that if the 'bottom-line' No Future Investments Bill would not pass then we should go with the full bill and force the members of the Illinois House to choose.

The legislative vote on the bill took place after 40 minutes of sharp and heated debate, as the session wound down to its deadline. (Official transcripts of the debate are available from CIDsA.) Speaking for the bill were Reps. Braun, Bowman, Huff, Bullock, Brookins and Dunn. Speaking against were Vinson, Frederick, Johnson, Friedrich, Terzich, Ewing and Tate. A typical exchange follows.

Rep. Friedrich: "I have a great deal of respect for the sponsor of this bill, and I know she's sincere, but I would like to relate that a partner of mine just got back from South Africa. He spent three weeks there, and on his own, without any government leadership or anything else, he went through the Black neighborhoods and took pictures which he brought home and showed to me, and I can tell you that most of those Blacks are better housed than alot of Blacks in Chicago, and I can tell you their kids are cleaner and better educated than some of ours...I don't like to see us getting to this kind of legislation on the floor of this House."

Rep. Brookins: "My colleague from the other side of the aisle stated that as he traveled to South Africa what appears to be nice to him. Let me remind him that the Black folks in South Africa cannot even travel around freely in their own country, and if I, a Black legislator who comes from the inner city and the ghettos of Chicago, were to go to South Africa today, I myself could not travel freely in South Africa. I think that's enough."

On May 25th CIDsA found out where the Illinois House stood on divestment. Unfortunately, but not totally unexpectedly, we lost this battle by the vote 48-No to 37-Yes. Nevertheless everyone in this struggle learned an incredible amount about how to interface a grassroots movement with the sincere efforts of progressive legislators, such as the sponsors of HB #0569, Reps. Carol Moseley Braun and Woods Bowman.

This brief synopsis is only intended to summarize in bare-bones fashion what happened with HB #0569, in a fashion suitable for now framing the next important question, where do we go from here? As was decided at the June CIDsA general meeting the steering committee has the responsibility this summer to formulate a more detailed analysis of our struggle over this past year. In addition, also in response to a decision of the general membership, several proposals will be made at that time to consider in what direction(s) the Illinois divestment movement will now move.

All of our anti-apartheid friends and activists should make sure that they can attend the Sept. CIDsA meeting on Sunday, Sept. 9th (Note - second Sunday of the month.) at UE hall, 37 S. Ashland, at 6pm.

MEMBERSHIPS-

Add your name to the growing list of individuals and organizations who have become members of CIDsA. As members, you will receive our newsletter and other announcements by mail.
JOIN US TODAY!

Individual Membership \$10 _____
Organization Membership \$15 _____
Additional Contribution \$ _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP _____

Phone:(Days) _____ (Eve.) _____

Please return this form to CIDsA
PO 578413
Chicago, Il 60657

SUMMER PHONES

To contact CIDsA during the summer, you may leave a message at either of the two numbers. (Try the top number first.)

924-9475

660-8671

North American Anti-Apartheid Conference³

CIDSA was invited to participate in the North American Regional Conference for Action Against Apartheid held at the United Nations June 18-21st. The conference was convened by the United Nations Centre Against Apartheid and was the fourth in a series of regional conferences that have been held around the world. This conference brought together government, education and community activists from the United States and Canada for four days of discussion and working sessions. Among the major invited speakers at the opening session were the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Senator Edward Kennedy, Angela Davis and Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the South-west African People's Organization (SWAPO).

The conference included workshops on Trade and Investments in South Africa, Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa, Sports, Cultural and Consumer Boycotts of South Africa, Assistance to Liberation Movements and Frontline States in Southern Africa, and Action Against Apartheid by Trade Unions, Religious Bodies and Students.

Organizations such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC), and the Southwest African People's Organization were represented along with many diplomatic representatives from several of the frontline states. In addition the conference also garnered participation and support from the Organization of African Unity, The Organization of African Trade Unionists, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab League. Over seventy-five US-based anti-apartheid groups, eight Canadian groups, and one British group were in attendance and were represented by one or more participants.

The functional work of the conference was embodied in many of the resolutions which were adopted. Representative resolutions called for greater support of the liberation movements, more coordination and networking between anti-apartheid groups and the need for massive educational campaigns aimed at the general public. Additionally the conference called for a nationally coordinated March Against Apartheid to take place in Washington, DC.

All participants were asked to publicize the facts that the African National Congress has declared 1984 the year of the Woman in South Africa, that October 11th (1984) is International Day in Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners and that in July 1985 the Arab League has planned a conference in solidarity with Southern African Liberation Movements. The Arab League conference will take place in Tunis.

CIDSA was privileged to be an invited participant to the conference and we have derived a considerable amount of inspiration, and a further renewal of our commitment, by being able to spend time with so many friends, organizations and movements dedicated to the abolition of the system of apartheid. Indeed the struggle still continues!

South Africa News Briefs

A majority of the trustees of the NYC Employees' Retirement System have agreed on a plan to withdraw city investments from companies doing business with the South African government.

The plan would be implemented in two steps. The first requires immediate divestiture of holdings in companies doing business with the government of South Africa. The second requires complete divestiture in five years from all American companies doing business in South Africa, "except for those firms which meet a strict standard of active opposition to apartheid."

Mayor Koch, a trustee of the pension fund, has recently reversed his opposition to divestment legislation. He now 'favors' the implementation of legislation based on the increasingly discredited voluntary 'Sullivan Code.' City Council President Carol Bellamy says the plan will come to vote before the pension fund trustees in the near future. (New York Times, 5-31-84)

Sun., Sept. 9th, 6pm
UE hall
37 S. Ashland

The Next CIDSA Meeting

Boston Divests: Another major city, Boston, has joined the ranks of American localities that have decided to remove their public finances (retirement funds, housing authority funds and general public funds) from any banks or financial institutions that have outstanding loans or credits to the governing bodies of South Africa or Namibia. Additionally the bill mandates that the above-mentioned public monies cannot be invested in private companies that do business in or with the apartheid republic.

As constructed, the Boston bill threatens the offending institutions with a complete divestment. The Boston victory thus continues the momentum for strong divestment legislation that was generated by divestment victories in other cities and states.

The bill passed in the Boston city council by a vote of 10-3.

"The Southern Africa Support Committee of Massachusetts, which supports the divestiture ordinance says that as of January the city has \$10.3 million of retirement fund holdings invested in eight companies doing business in South Africa."

"The group, in a March letter of Yancey, listed the companies as Gulf Oil (\$997,500); Citicorp (\$1.3 million); DuPont (\$710,000); Ford (1.3 million); General Motors (\$1.4 million); Wells Fargo (\$2.8 million); Continental of Illinois (\$968,750); and Bank of Boston (\$969,680)."

To become law the bill must be signed by Mayor Raymond Flynn before it goes to the State Legislature for final approval (due to home rule considerations). No more obstacles are expected, however, because the state of Mass. has already passed similar legislation. In fact, Mass. governor Michael Dukakis has stated that

"It has been our experience that divestiture makes not only a strong moral statement against apartheid but divestiture has proven to have had no significant impact on our pension earnings."

Our thanks go out to bill sponsor District Councilor Charles C. Yancey for guiding the legislative activities. (Boston Globe, 7-12-84)

South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha's visit to Britain catalyzed the largest outpouring of anti-apartheid sentiment ever in London. Over 40,000 people took part in marches and rallies in Hyde Park and on the south bank of the Thames River. It was the first visit by a South African 'leader' in 23 years. (New York Times, 6-3-84)

P. W. Botha also paid a visit to the Vatican during his European tour. After he met with the Pope, the Vatican released a statement reiterating the position of the Roman Catholic Church that apartheid was considered contrary to christian principles and human dignity. (The Times (Br.), 6-12-84)

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While European politicians remained 'aloof' European businessmen responded readily to Botha's call for greater investment in South Africa. A business seminar in Rome on the last day of Botha's trip, which included American banker David Rockefeller, was regarded as the most successful aspect of the apartheid prime minister's trip. (Sunday Times (Br.), 6-17-84)

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