UNION LEADERS SUPPORT CHURCHES ON STOPPING BANK LOANS TO SOUTH AFRICA

NEW YORK, JULY 6 ----- National and local trade union leaders issued a statement today supporting U.S. churches efforts to end bank loans to South Africa. "Apartheid will not end until the financial support from the U.S. which keeps it alive is ended," said the fifteen labor leaders.

The American trade unionists specifically called upon Citibank, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Morgan Guaranty, Chase Manhattan, Continental Illinois, First Chicago, and Bank of America to "cease immediately all further loans to the South African government or its agencies. We join with U.S. churches, representatives of the black community and the United Nations," the statement continues, "in urging these banks to develop a policy that will prohibit further loans to South Africa until apartheid is ended."

The labor leaders' statement was released through the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, an agency related to the National Council of Churches. Earlier this year I.C.C.R. announced that 15 Protestant and Roman Catholic groups had filed stockholder resolutions aimed at stopping loans to the South African government with several of the same U.S. banks mentioned by the trade unionists. While management did not accept these resolutions, the issue did receive wide debate by the stockholders at the annual meetings of five banks. The move marked the first time church investors had taken banks to task for their South African involvement.

Commenting on the trade union statement, Timothy Smith, head of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, said, "This is the first time that U.S. trade union leaders have supported an action by U.S. churches on South Africa and it comes precisely at the right moment when worldwide attention is focused on the continuing repression in South Africa and the role foreign financing plays in bolstering the racist system of apartheid. Some banks," Mr. Smith said, "such as Chase Manhattan, have moved to discourage loans to South Africa, but many banks remain open to making further loans to apartheid." The I.C.C.R. official stated that given the intransigence of major lenders, "this union initiative contributes significantly to the movement against U.S. banks' support for South African racism." Mr. Smith also stated that it was his understanding that a number of churches and trade unions are considering the withdrawal of their accounts from banks making such loans.

In stating their reasons for issuing their statement at this time, the trade unionists said that they deplored the current situation in South Africa where the system of apartheid "exploits black workers and their families through legislation that denies them the right to organize, to collectively bargain and strike, the right to vote, right to land, and forces the majority of the population into inhuman working and living conditions."

Among the leaders who signed the statement were the president of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, the president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, president of the United Paperworkers International Union, president of the Distributive Workers of America, president of the Associated Actors and Artists of America, president of the Joint Board Fur, Leather, and Machine Workers Union, and the vice-president of the Communications Workers of America.
THE STATEMENT BY UNION LEADERS SUPPORTING CHURCHES ON STOPPING BANK LOANS TO SOUTH AFRICA

As trade unionists, we are deeply concerned about the lives and well-being of working people around the world. We deplore the current situation in South Africa where the racist system of apartheid exploits black workers and their families through legislation that denies them the right to organize, to collectively bargain and strike, the right to vote, right to land, and forces the majority of the population into inhuman working and living conditions.

As American trade unionists, we wish to protest the recent massive loans from U.S. Banks to the South African government. These loans support a government that denies basic human rights to the black majority. Many of us, individually and through our unions, have deposits, investments or commercial dealings with these banks. We call upon Citibank, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Morgan Guaranty, Chase Manhattan, Continental Illinois, First Chicago, and Bank of America to cease immediately all further loans to the South African government or its agencies. We join with U.S. churches, representatives of the black community and the United Nations in urging these banks to develop a policy that will prohibit further loans to South Africa until apartheid is ended.

Under apartheid black workers are stripped of the basic human rights which we enjoy. Apartheid will not end until the financial support from the U.S. which keeps it alive is ended.

The following people have signed the South Africa statement:

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Alvin E. Heaps, President
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Joseph P. Tonelli, President
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Jack Stone, Assistant to the President
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David Livingston, President
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Frederick O'Neal, President
The Associated Actors and Artists of America
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Henry Foner, President
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Leon Davis, President
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John Lawe, President
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