CONTROL DATA RESPONDS WITH "SOME FACTS": MICSA ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE

Some Facts About Control Data, South Africa and the "Minnesota Committee" opens with a reasonably factual first paragraph, then rapidly deteriorates into a feeble attempt to simultaneously discredit the position of MICSA and gloss over the glaring inconsistencies and contradictions created by Control Data's articulated policy of "social responsibility" and its presence in South Africa.

In paragraphs two and three of "Some Facts" MICSA's analysis of Control Data in South Africa is labelled "laboriously contrived," and MICSA advocates are charged with resorting to "innuendo, guilt-by-association and outright misinformation."

An innuendo is a "hint" or a "sly remark." We do not believe that innuendo has been used in our analysis, nor do we believe that innuendo is necessary to make our case. We now know, however, that innuendo is part and parcel of Control Data's arsenal, so perhaps this kind of transfer is to be expected. For example, innuendo was used by Vice President Jim Bowe at our meeting with him and Roser Wheeler on Wednesday, March 30th. When Bowe failed to convince Isaacman, Kaba, Nimtz and Rogers that MICSA should stop focusing on Control Data, and in particular, should call off the April 2 demonstration, he indicated that Control would have to act and respond. He did not specify what kind of response, but the innuendo was that we might regret our decision. Innuendo was also a primary device used by Bowe in his telephone conversation with Allen Isaacman on Friday, April 1 at 8:00 a.m. (see specifics).

As for "guilt-by-association" we are indeed charging that Control Data computers serving any industry in South Africa today are part and parcel of the apartheid system. By its very presence in South Africa, Control Data which is servicing white-controlled industry is an accomplice and an accessory to the crimes of the apartheid system. Had Bowe attended the April 2 forum at Martin Luther King Center, he would have heard Khotso Setlholo articulate precisely this position - a position that for South Africans comes not out of books but out of the reality of growing up Black under apartheid.

Control Data also charges MICSA with "outright misinformation." But nowhere in "Some Facts" do they specify which of our data are incorrect, nor do they offer "correct" information about Control Data. On only one fact have they at any point corrected us. Because our documentation is slightly dated, we have, in the past, used the number twelve for Control Data's Black employees. That the figure is now nineteen only reinforces the reality - that Control Data's "progressive impact" is totally nullified by the minute population they can impact on.

Control Data's three point "refutation" of MICSA's position has been dealt with elsewhere. Perhaps further elaboration on point three, however, would be useful. It is here, that Control Data is at its most self-serving and self-righteous best. Sounding like a T.V. advertisement for used cars, Control Data talks of "pioneering" in "never-before-attempted hiring, training and assignment of Black engineers..., equal pay, special arrangements for health care, education," etc. etc.

This inflated self-image is the product of policy which impacts on nineteen workers and their families. It is possible for Control Data to "pioneer" and seek image mileage, precisely because it employs so few Blacks. Its activities are therefore extremely limited and as Roger Wheeler pointed out at our March 30 meeting, undertaken discreetly, so as not to directly confront or annoy government officials who see to it that the letter of the law is followed. But Control Data trips itself up when it admits that it must make "special arrangements" in order to provide health care, education and transportation for its Black employees equal to that provided automatically for whites. Control Data can hardly deny that the need to make "special arrangements" means that they are operating in a system where totally inadequate health care, education, and transportation for Blacks is the norm. That Blacks in South Africa ultimately demand change, not "special arrangements" should be equally clear to Control Data executives.

Not surprisingly, "Some Facts" both misrepresents and misreports statements made by MICSA representatives at the March 30 meeting with Bowe and Wheeler. At no point was Control Data's "successful leadership" in South Africa acknowledged by
MICSA spokespeople. What was articulated was that we were not calling into question Control Data's "good intentions." We acknowledged their efforts in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and indicated our approval of their desire to act in a socially responsible way. But time and again, we came back to the fundamental point: that in South Africa, their "socially responsible acts" are irrelevant.

As for misreporting, no one told Bowe that the Selby plant had been chosen because it was close to our "West Bank offices." And August Nimtz was interested to learn that he had become Mintz.

As indicated in "Some Facts," Control Data, like other U.S. corporations, has fastened on with great pleasure to a statement by Vernon Jordan, head of the National Urban League. Khotso Seatloho spoke to this issue in some detail on April 2nd, noting that the Black South African's Jordan met would be carefully selected (as for all visitors) for the occasion, with the not unexpected Jordan-type result. The Jordan quote was not news to us, nor will we be surprised to see others like it. The Urban League depends heavily on funding from U.S. corporations, so that the accord between Jordan and Control Data is quite understandable. Fear of "a bloody race war" is likely to figure heavily in corporate arguments for remaining in South Africa. Those who are in favor of the withdrawal of U.S. corporations from South Africa will be labelled as wanting a bloody race war. The corporations, whose contribution to the strength of the apartheid system makes that system all the harder to tear down, will seek identification as advocates of "peace." The self-serving nature of this position is obvious. Logic tells us that the degree of force that will be necessary to bring down apartheid depends and will continue to depend on the stability and strength of that system. By leaving South Africa, corporations weaken that system. By staying, they support it and hence contribute directly to the likelihood that war will be required to end white minority control in South Africa.

A final, but crucial point about "Some Facts," and about the gulf which separates MICSA and Control Data, and Control Data from a "socially responsible" position in South Africa. Having quoted Vernon Jordan at length, "Some Facts" concludes with the statement, "Control Data is doing its utmost to assist constructively in the realization of Mr. Jordan's goals." (emphasis needed) However flattered Jordan may be, such a statement smacks of an insidious kind of double paternalism; the assumption that it is Vernon Jordan's goals that are at stake and to be achieved in South Africa is in itself quite amazing. We were treated to this kind of perception quite recently, when the American public was taught to assume that what was at stake in Zimbabwe was Henry Kissinger's plan.

It is for the South African majority to determine goals in South Africa.