In the summer of 1984, when the South African government granted token political representation to the "Asian" and "Colored" population in South Africa (through a tricameral legislative assembly), it set in motion currents of anti-apartheid activity at home and abroad.

Since the beginning of this year, when the Rhode Island General Assembly convened for its 1985 duties, the racist apartheid regime has unleashed its repressive forces in the form of:

- raiding, banning meetings, then arresting leaders of the United Democratic Front, a multi-racial group in S. Africa that is trying to press for a peaceful dismantling of apartheid
- torturing and killing trade union leaders who are under police custody
- firing upon civilians at funeral processions
- invading sovereign countries such as Angola and Botswana and killing their citizens
- refusing to play or sell the music of Stevie Wonder because he saluted and dedicated an award to imprisoned African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela

Meanwhile, back in Rhode Island, our legislative response began with a strong bill in the form of H-5617, but over time and in spite of the increasing repression in South Africa, (that even forced the Reagan administration to recall its ambassador to South Africa), ended with a diluted bill -- S-425 Sub B -- that is most adequately described as "unfinished business".

It should be made clear that from the outset R.I.Divest never thought that it could, or should, control the legislative process. Instead, the Coalition attempted to fulfill its mandate of educating the public and the legislature about the nature of apartheid in South Africa, so that some action could be taken on the state level, particularly the passage of strong, meaningful divestment legislation.

For those folks who were not as close to this process as Divest's lead activists, yet want to know what happened "overall" in the General Assembly with H-5617, we have outlined a diagram of the path that the bill(s) took:

-labor donated-
Feb. 14 - Rep. Ray Fogarty introduces H-5617 calling for total, phased divestment from US companies operating in S.A.

May 10 - The House Finance Committee holds a hearing on H-5617 and over 20 organizations came out to testify in support, with the exception of Treasurer Begin and 2 others. Subsequently, the Committee postponed any vote on this measure until it got the full support of the Treasurer.

June 6 - Rep. Fogarty negotiated with the Treasurer and reached a compromised, milder version of the original bill called H-5617 Sub A, which included the top category of the Sullivan Principles and excluded divestment from the strategic industries of energy and transportation. The House Finance Committee passed this version by an 11-3 vote.

June 12 - After 1½ hours of debate, H-5617 Sub A passed on the House floor by a vote of 77-11.

June 19 - In a compromise measure, Rep. Fogarty took Sen. Carlin's bill and substituted the language, word-for-word, from his H-5617 Sub A version (which was considerably stronger than S-425 Sub A) into it, thus creating S-425 Sub B with Sen. Carlin's "apparent" authorship. The House Finance Committee then embarrassingly voted to pass this House measure in Senate clothing.

June 21 - With time quickly running out, S-425 Sub B went to the House floor for a vote and passed 75-11.

June 24 - On to the Governor. He signed the bill on June 27th.


March 28 - Sen. Carlin accepts State Treasurer Roger Begin's objections and places an even weaker version (S-425 Sub A), with even more Sullivan categories added, before the Senate Finance Committee, where it passes after much critical debate.

June 13 - Although H-5617 Sub A was on its agenda, the Senate Finance Committee refused to act on it without Sen. Carlin's approval. Since the House Finance Committee had ignored Sen. Carlin's bill (S-425 Sub A), the Senate Finance Committee was ready to reciprocate by ignoring H-5617 Sub A even with just 1 week of the Assembly proceedings left.

June 21 - S-425 Sub B went immediately to the Senate Finance Committee where it passed by a majority vote. With less than a few hours to go before the General Assembly recessed, S-425 Sub B made it to the Senate floor where it passed by a vote of 37-3.

July 1: S-425 Sub B goes into effect.
But the story doesn't end there, because R.I.Divest is still here.

In spite of R.I.Divest's objections, this "normal" wheeling and dealing took place over important divestment legislation, while women, men and children were being tortured, harassed and killed in South Africa. By many legislators, we were told to play by the rules of the legislative "game". Since R.I.Divest was never an official player in this game, we attempted to stand fast and keep the pressure on for total, phased divestment. After all, to accept partial divestment through use of the Sullivan Principles would give credence to the notion that U.S. corporations are "agents of social change". Since these same transnational corporations don't make this pretense and quite boldly admit that they are not in South Africa to reform or abolish apartheid, but to make profits, it would be hypocritical to support the Sullivan Principles in the present situation.

Among the many players in this game, we would like to commend Rep. RAYMOND FOGARTY, for being an outstanding anti-apartheid "Rookie of the Year"; LT. GOVERNOR RICHARD LICHT and his staff for their support thru ongoing communication and dialogue; Rep. NICK TSIONGAS for his heroic efforts during the final days of the session; and the other legislators, especially Sen. WALTON and Reps. CASTRO and METTS who worked quietly behind the scene to get a meaningful divestment bill passed.

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KEY FEATURES OF S-425 Sub B (H 5617 Sub A)

TIMETABLE....commencing July 1, 1985 and implemented over a 4 year period
SCOPE.......affects all state and retirement (pension) funds under the State Treasurer and Investment Commission's control
TARGETS.....during the first year, requires divestment from all companies supplying the SA police and military with equipment and computers
EXCLUSIONS...Sullivan category I signatory companies
OVERSIGHT....Review Commission established after July 1988
SAFEGUARDS...Contains "prudent man" wording and "no loss" provision
OTHER FEATURES
DEPOSIT BANKS: Prohibits utilization by State of any bank which sells or promotes the SA Krugerrand, or which lends to the SA government or private sector.
NO NEW INVESTMENTS: No new or further investment in any SA-active company, regardless of Sullivan rating
REINVESTMENT POLICY: Gives reinvestment priority to New England and Rhode Island based companies needing capitalization
PURCHASING POLICY: Prohibits the State from buying any goods wholly produced in the Republic of South Africa
ACTIVISM: The State must vote anti-apartheid stockholder resolutions with other institutional investors committed to a FREE S.AFRICA
IMPACT.......Estimates vary from 15-19 companies. Total securities affected at market value: $145 million (May 1985) per Treasurer's Off.
In the coming months, R.I. Divest will conduct mailings and try to maintain contact with all supporters, but there will not be a newsletter published for awhile. Enclosed is a summary of the legislative campaign that was waged in the '85 General Assembly. If you want a copy of the text of the bill that was finally passed, contact R.I. Divest at the address below. At the end of the summer, R.I. Divest will hold a major fundraising event that will probably feature a representative of Athletes and Artists Against Apartheid. As this event firms up, more details will be sent out. If you have any ideas or would like to get involved in planning and carrying out this function, don't be afraid to volunteer - we need your assistance and so do the struggling masses in South Africa... A luta continua.

Joseph Newsome - Co-chairpersons
Prudence Mashile

Sally Mendzela - Communications Coordinator
Atiba Mbiwan - Newsletter Editor