The Reagan Administration has nominated Herman Nickel to be the new U.S. Ambassador to South Africa. Mr. Nickel is the former editor of Fortune Magazine. This nomination is coming at a crucial time for Blacks in South Africa. There has been a frightening and brutal upsurge in repression in that country over the last year. At the same time, the U.S. has continued to move even closer to the racist regime encouraging it in its aggressive behavior. Consequently, the Reagan Administration is being watched for signals that it is sensitive to the growing concerns being expressed by both the international community and domestic human rights groups about the horrors of apartheid. Unfortunately, the Administration has chosen to send the wrong signal with the choice of Herman Nickel. We must send a signal to the Reagan Administration by strongly and actively opposing the appointment of Herman Nickel for all of the following reasons.

Nickel was the central character in the controversy concerning Dr. Ernest Lefever and the funding of his Ethics and Public Policy Center. Nickel was hired by the Center to do a study of the Nestle Infant Formula boycott. Although he never received money or completed the study, he wrote a scathing article about the boycott and its church organizers, labeling them "Marxists marching under the banner of Christ." He gave Lefever permission to reprint the article with full knowledge that Nestle had contributed $25,000 to the Center. Nickel's involvement with Lefever raises legitimate questions about his professional and ethical behavior.

Human rights violations are increasing in South Africa. Mass arrests, bannings and deaths in detention are evidence of growing repression. Nickel's appointment would signal U.S. acquiescence in this repression. He has characterized human rights as "a lofty goal." In his writings he has never explicitly condemned apartheid. When discussing its possible elimination, he does so within the framework of corporate pragmatism, stating: "Institutionalized racism is plainly incompatible with the functional requirements of an expanding industrial society." He criticizes apartheid's critics for "unleashing their moralistic rhetoric."

One of the leading institutions advocating social change in South Africa today is the church. This moderate voice of change should be supported and its activism encouraged by the U.S. and its representative. Herman Nickel is hardly the person to do that. He is totally unsympathetic to the genuine efforts on the part of the religious community to challenge the unjust and immoral policy of apartheid. Instead, he questions the moral imperative which generates church activism, stating: "the religious connection provides respectability and legitimacy. What better way to challenge the existing system than to brand it as an offense to the will of God?" For him, apartheid is not a simple moral issue. He asserts: "church activists have chosen to present business-related issues as morally clearcut and simple - when in fact they are usually complex, morally ambiguous and involve difficult policy trade-offs. What is morally ambiguous about an institutionalized system of racism which denies 24 million people their basic democratic right to vote and the basic human right to live together as a family unit with dignity and respect? Both in South Africa and the U.S., the role of the church in struggling against apartheid is increasing. To appoint an Ambassador who is hostile to that struggle is the height of insensitivity and indicates support for the status quo in South Africa.

For Nickel, the key U.S. objective should be to ensure and protect its economic and strategic interests. He declares "the Saudi Arabia of strategic minerals happens to be South Africa." He opposes the U.S. playing a key role in working for the elimination of apartheid by applying pressure to the regime. He cites as a "blatant example of counter-productive pressure" Vice President Mondale's call for one-person, one-vote.
Nickel has staunchly defended corporations against political activists who raise the issue of their social responsibility. He is in favor of continued U.S. investment in South Africa. He argues that the indictment by the churches and anti-apartheid activists that U.S. corporations thrive on racist suppression in South Africa is "too simplistic an analysis." Nickel charges that U.S. corporations contribute to "an evolutionary process of change" in South Africa. It is clear that Nickel will be sympathetic and supportive of the corporations in South Africa and indifferent to their maintenance and support of the apartheid system.

The Reagan Administration has continued to send positive signals to the South Africans. The latest was the lifting of export controls permitting the sale of non-military goods to the military and police. We must take action to prevent the administration from sending an even stronger signal of its support for apartheid. Herman Nickel's appointment would be further proof of the administration's eagerness to ally itself with the racist regime of South Africa. If the U.S. is to have diplomatic relations with South Africa it should at least appoint a representative who will convey a strong message of opposition to apartheid.

WE URGE YOU TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS TO OPPOSE THE APPOINTMENT OF HERMAN NICKEL. We expect the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to hold confirmation hearings on the nomination within the next thirty days. So please take immediate action!!

1. Write letters to the following members of the Committee asking them not to confirm Nickel as Ambassador:

   Senator Charles Percy (R-ILL)       Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD)
   Senator Charles Mathias, Jr. (R-MD)  Senator Edward Zorinsky (D-NE)
   Senator Caliborne Pell (D-KI)        Senator Paul Tsongas (D-MA)
   Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE)          Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA)
   Senator John Glenn (D-OH)            Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT)

2. Activate your networks to also write letters opposing the nomination.

3. Try to stimulate media stories on Herman Nickel.
WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA Launches Campaign Against Nickel Appointment

The Washington Office on Africa, a church and union-sponsored organization, today announced its intention to launch a campaign to oppose the appointment of Herman Nickel who has been nominated by the Reagan Administration to be the new U.S. Ambassador to South Africa. Nickel is a former editor of Fortune magazine and has been a strong critic of church anti-apartheid activities. Jean Sindab, Executive Director of the Washington Office on Africa, said: "This nomination is one more example of Reagan appointing the fox to guard the chicken coop. Nickel in all his writings has never explicitly condemned the apartheid system, but has, instead, directed his criticism at its opponents."

Nickel was one of the central characters in the recent controversy around Ernest Lefever, the Reagan Administration's former nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. Lefever was forced to withdraw his nomination after serious questions of impropriety were raised regarding the funding of his institute, the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Nickel was the person contracted by the Center to write a study on the Nestle infant formula boycott. In March, 1980, the same month Nickel was to receive a $2,500 payment, Nestle made its first $5,000 contribution to the Center. Although he never completed the study for the Center or received any funding, Nickel subsequently wrote an article harshly criticizing the boycott and its church organizers, labeling them, "Marxists marching under the banner of Christ." The article was reprinted by the Center and widely distributed.

Jean Sindab noted that Nickel's close relationship with Lefever, whose pro-South Africa and anti-human rights sentiments are well-known, raises serious concerns among the church and anti-apartheid activists in this country. Nickel's comments and views suggest that he shares much of Lefever's thinking. He has sharply chastized critics of apartheid for "unleashing their moralistic rhetoric" against South Africa. He further accuses them as presenting "business-related issues as morally clear-cut and simple-- when in fact they are usually complex, morally ambiguous, and involve difficult policy trade-offs." Ms. Sindab asserts: "There is nothing morally ambiguous about a legalized system of racism which denies 20 million people their basic democratic right to vote and the basic human right to live together as a family unit. To appoint as ambassador someone who has that view is appalling!"

The nomination of Nickel comes at a critical time for blacks in South Africa struggling against apartheid and represents the Reagan Administration's insensitivity to those growing protests. It also comes at a time of rising repression in South Africa. During the last three months, two people have died in detention--
the first publicized deaths since the brutal slaying of Steve Biko in 1977. Ms. Sindab noted: "Trade unionists and church leaders are being systematically repressed by the apartheid regime. Nickel's pro-corporate and anti-church activist background make it highly unlikely that he will oppose this brutal repression. His appointment will only encourage the regime's officials."

The Reagan Administration's latest response to the growing terror in South Africa was not to protest but to loosen trade restrictions which permit the sale of non-military goods to the South African military and police. Ms. Sindab noted: "It is totally unbelievable that the Reagan Administration response to the increasing repressive brutality taking place in South Africa would be the lifting of these controls. In effect this says to South Africa, 'keep up the good work, we support your system of apartheid and your means of maintaining it!'" She went on to point out that the recent sales of aircraft and computer equipment "could quite easily be used for repressing the South African black population."

In a policy statement, the Reagan Administration noted that it would not be forced to choose between black and white in South Africa. However, these recent policy decisions—Nickel's nomination and loosening the export controls—are clearly sending a positive signal to the white minority regime. Unfortunately, these policies are sending a negative signal to Africa and to black Americans, both of whom are increasingly questioning President Reagan's commitment, interest, and sensitivity to their plight.

The Washington Office on Africa intends to mobilize a large number of church, anti-apartheid, and human rights groups to oppose the Nickel appointment. It is also endorsing the national two weeks of action (March 21st, the anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre to April 4th, the anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination), designated to show united support for those struggling against racism here and in South Africa.
The Reagan Administration's obvious moves toward increased relations with South Africa underlines a definite need for unified support and participation in the anti-apartheid movement. In order to send a definite signal to the Reagan Administration and the Congress that further US/South African relations cannot be tolerated, we are announcing the designation of March 21st to April 4th as "Two Weeks of National Anti-Apartheid Action in Support of Southern African Movements". During these "Two Weeks of Action", we are urging university groups, churches, and community organizations to either sponsor a lecture series, a film, open discussions of Southern African and racial equality or any other public activity to signal to the Reagan Administration and the Congress your support for the anti-apartheid movement and racial justice everywhere.

March 21st and April 4th were chosen as dates for the "Two Weeks of Action" because of their particular relevance. March 21st marks the 22nd anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre where 69 black civilians protesting non-violently were killed and 180 were wounded by South African police. April 4th is the 14th anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These two dates were chosen to spotlight the link between the struggle against racial oppression taking place here in the US with the battle for Human Rights and racial equality in Southern Africa. Several blatant moves by the Reagan Administration recently, have sent positive signals to the South African government and negative signals to the US Black community. These signals make it necessary for a united front against US support for racial injustice.

The Reagan Administration's claim of "some movement" forward toward modification of the apartheid system is false. During 1981, there has been a rise in detentions, arrests, tortures, and bannings. Among many other offenses against the majority population, the South African government has attempted to destroy Black journalists, trade unionists, lawyers, and church supporters in an attempt to annihilate all hopes of increased Black leadership and participation in the struggle for freedom. In spite of this, the Reagan administration's policy of "constructive engagement" towards South Africa has led to a
closer alliance with that country. Its latest policy initiative is the loosening of export controls permitting the sale of non-military goods to the South African police. Yet, at the same time, the Reagan Administration has lobbied hard for sanctions against Poland because of human rights there.

Hand-in-hand with these positive signs of support for the South African government with its racist policies, the Reagan Administration has begun a systematic attack on advances of Civil Rights and racial equality in the US. The Administration has chosen to abandon support of busing to achieve desegregation and support a bill which has passed in the Senate, that seriously weakens the original busing legislation. Prior decisions in several voting rights cases have been attacked as "unconstitutional". The Administration has also attempted to abandon the policy to denying tax-exempt status to discriminatory private schools. Affirmative action hiring requirements and job training programs have been eased substantially through pressures for the Reagan Administration. All of these actions are sending definite negative signals to the US Black community.

The US government's continued relations with the repressive South African government and refusal to voice forceful opposition to apartheid and racial injustice everywhere must not go unchallenged. The Reagan Administration's record on racial issues is already poor and steadily getting worse. The continued move towards an alliance with South Africa while simultaneously moving away from positive relations with US Blacks, makes the need for unified action imperative. Through "Two Weeks of Action", you can become an active participant in the struggle against racism.

Further information about the Washington Office on Africa or assistance in planning any activities can be obtained by contacting our office. We will be happy to help in any way that we can. Again, we urge you to take the following action:

1. During the "Two Weeks of Action", organize either a lecture with a guest speaker, sponsor a film, or open discussion on anti-apartheid and racial justice issues.

2. Alert your community and action networks about "Two Weeks of Action" and urge their active participation in some event.

3. Alert the media and local political leaders about the activities of your organization and enlist their assistance through public statements of support and/or personal appearances.

4. Churches should designate March 21st as "Racial Justice Sunday" with a planned activity.