"No Greater Moral Issue in the World Today than Apartheid"

On June 3, 1987 Leon Sullivan, pastor of the Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia and author of the Sullivan Principles on fair employment practices in South Africa, called for sweeping economic and political sanctions against South Africa. The Rev. Sullivan, a member of the board of directors of General Motors, advocated withdrawal of all U.S. companies from South Africa and a total U.S. embargo against South Africa until apartheid is ended and blacks have received a clear commitment for equal political rights.

About 125 U.S. companies have adopted the Sullivan Principles since they were first proposed in March 1977, frequently touting them as a means to bring about the end to apartheid.

This Corporate Examiner "Brief" presents Rev. Sullivan's statement along with reactions from corporate executives and the churches:


Part II is excerpts from a statement by the U.S. Corporate Council on South Africa, "concerned about the South African issue."

Part III presents comments from leaders of the churches.

PART I
REV. SULLIVAN'S STATEMENT

I have reached a decision the time has come for American companies and the United States of America to take a definitive stand against the evils of apartheid.

I am calling for the withdrawal of all United States companies from the Republic of South Africa and for a total United States embargo against that country until apartheid is ended and blacks have a clear commitment for equal political rights. I am calling on the President of the United States to end diplomatic relations with South Africa until atrocities against black people end and apartheid is dismantled.

As of May 1985 I stated if in twenty-four months statutory apartheid was not ended and there was not a clear commitment of the vote for blacks, equal to whites, I would call on companies to leave South Africa and call for an American embargo. The conditions have not been remotely met.

Catalyst for Change

This action comes after years of effort with the Sullivan Principles to help, along with other threats, to bring about fundamental change in that country. I want it clearly known, I am proud of the work of the Sullivan Principles and of the efforts of those companies who . . . . followed them. The Sullivan Principles have been a tremendous force for change in South Africa.

The Pillars of Apartheid Remain

In spite of these and other efforts, the main pillars of apartheid remain and blacks are still denied simple basic human rights in their own country and are still deprived of the right to vote.

In spite of appeals, protests and cries for change and justice within South Africa, repression grows: thousands are jailed without trial, including little children; people are brutalized, beaten and killed; dissent is ruthlessly suppressed and the press is muzzled. Intransigence to fundamental change continues and today the government pushes back even minimal progress and reform. South Africa has become a nation of oppression and a police state and the continuation of apartheid and its inhumanities against blacks goes on. There is no greater moral issue in the world today than apartheid.

Apartheid Must Be Ended Now

Somewhere, somehow, it must be said as loudly and clearly and as firmly as possible, that what is happening in South Africa to black people is immoral and it is wrong and it must be brought to an end.

South Africa is at the crossroads. Either South Africa can go the direction of a unitary free South Africa or the direction of a chaotic revolution, with the killing of millions of people, and the devastation of the entire Southern region of Africa, leading to the possible confrontation of the world's great nuclear powers at that strategic point of the world, as a race war would certainly become an ideological war.

. . . . In the Interest of Peace

It is in the interest of peace in South Africa, peace in the world and peace in America, that apartheid must be ended. The evils of apartheid are broader than South Africa. Apartheid is against the will of God and the humanity of man, and like Nazism and fascism, it must be stopped. America and the world must draw a line and speak out and act against it.

It is clear the South African government does not intend to end apartheid on its own. Since the recent elections, the government has become more defiant to further change. Therefore, every moral, economic and political force must be brought to bear to help influence the South African government to move towards dismantling the apartheid system while there is still time.

My Message

Therefore, as the strongest possible American nonviolent protest against the continuing existence of apartheid and with the maximum nonviolent use of moral, corporate and governmental force against that inhuman system, I call on all American companies to withdraw from the Republic of South Africa until statutory apartheid has been abolished and there is a clear commitment of the vote for blacks in accordance with agreements reached with authentic and representative black South African leaders.

I call on the United States to enact with urgency, a total United States economic embargo against South Africa, all exports and imports, including gold and diamonds and to seek South African-sourced, vitally-needed materials elsewhere or to seek alternatives or to stockpile or to recycle or to do without.

I further call on the Congress to consider stringent penalties against United States trading partners who assume markets left by departing United States companies and who continue to do business in South Africa such as the Japanese.

An ICCR Brief appears in each edition of The Corporate Examiner, a monthly newsletter on corporate social responsibility. Each brief highlights a particular social area and focuses on one or more corporations. It also provides information about action options and resources for issues studied.

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South Africa until atrocities against black people end and apartheid is dismantled.

This call for withdrawal excludes philanthropic and educational initiatives and the rights for blacks, to black labor, representation and apartheid is dismantled.

Companies should end all business relationships with buyers including logo, trademarks, components, materials, consulting services and other supporting contracts. 

Companies should end all business relationships with buyers including logo, trademarks, components, materials, consulting services and other supporting contracts, excluding certain special consideration for support to undeniably black-owned and initiated businesses.

Emergency medical supply needs should be dispensed through recognized world humanitarian organizations.

Companies should favorably consider relocating in neighboring nations such as Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia or Zimbabwe, thereby helping strengthen regional and local economies with industrial development, growth and jobs.

Individual and institutional stockholders are asked to support this call for withdrawal with the selling of holdings in non-cooperating companies or votes on disinvestment stockholder resolutions.

Government bodies, municipal, state and otherwise, are asked to support this call through the disapproval of purchase agreements or contracts for goods or services to companies choosing to remain in South Africa as well as through the sale of investments or securities held in those companies.

PART II
U.S. COMPANY SIGNATORIES PLEDGE INCREASED EFFORT ON BEHALF OF SULLIVAN PRINCIPLES IN SOUTH AFRICA

On June 3, 1987 twelve chief executive officers of U.S. corporations, who form the Steering Committee of the U.S. Corporate Council on South Africa, responded to Rev. Sullivan's call for withdrawal from South Africa. Three of twelve companies represented on the Steering Committee have completed or announced plans for sale of their South African assets. For more information contact, Bill Koplowitz, Citibank vice-presdient (212) 559-8607. Excerpts follow:

The signatories to the Sullivan Principles will continue to comply with that ten-year-old code of corporate practices as long as they remain in South Africa.

Reacting to Rev. Leon Sullivan's announcement calling upon all U.S. companies to cease operations in South Africa, the Council's executive body is asking the signatory companies to renew and increase their efforts to end the apartheid system and to support the efforts of dedicated individuals and organizations in South Africa to bring about a non-racial and democratic society.

The council, consisting of 104 chief executive officers of companies concerned about the South African issue, expressed profound regret that Rev. Sullivan has recommended U.S. company withdrawal from South Africa. While sharing the frustrations of Rev. Sullivan and others - particularly South Africans - who are properly impatient to see freedom and equality of opportunity prevail in South Africa, the council stated its belief that U.S. companies must continue to be a force for fundamental and rapid change, that the decisive arena of this historic struggle is inside South Africa itself and that U.S. corporate resources can be most effectively brought to bear through a U.S. presence there.

"We owe a great debt to Leon Sullivan," said Allan Murray, one of the Council's three co-chairmen and CEO of MOBIL Corporation, "but we will now have to carry out the Sullivan Principles without Sullivan."

According to Mr. Murray, steps will be taken to strengthen incentives to improve the quality and quantity of programs supporting the South African black community. "The highest priority will be given to actions designed to demonstrate to the South African Government that South Africa's national interests will be best served by addressing the country's social and political problems through negotiation and conciliation rather than repression."

The Council's Steering Committee emphasized that the decisions by individual companies to withdraw from or remain in South Africa must be taken by management and directors acting on the basis of each company's overall interests and concerns. While continuing to oppose the call for wholesale disinvestment as an ineffective means to force the end of apartheid, the Council takes no position on the merits of individual company decisions, stressing only the responsibility of the companies remaining in South Africa to carry out the Sullivan Principles.

PART III — CHURCHES REACT

Church antiapartheid leaders applauded Rev. Sullivan's decision to call for corporate withdrawal from South Africa and sweeping U.S. economic and political sanctions. ICCR Executive Director Timothy Smith said Rev. Sullivan's announcement has pulled the moral rug out from under the feet of U.S. corporations with operations in South Africa. No longer can Mobil, Texaco and Chevron, who sell to South Africa's police and military, or Control Data, IBM and Unisys, who supply South Africa's computers, hide behind the Sullivan Principles, obscuring the specific concrete ways in which they support apartheid and white minority rule.

Rev. Patrick J. Tony, provincial superior of the New York Province of the Marianists Brothers and Priests, wrote to Rev. Sullivan, saying "I thank you and hope that your influence and leadership will continue in the struggle for the freedom of all people in South Africa."

Donna Katzin, director of ICCR's International Justice Work Group, explained, "Corporate efforts and involvement in South Africa have failed to end apartheid. New strategies must be used."

Religious and community antiapartheid groups together with ICCR-member religious investors, public and private pension funds, unions and conscientious investors plan to step up pressure on apartheid South Africa's corporate allies. Their immediate focus will be Royal Dutch/Shell and the Shell boycott as well as the call for a special Shell shareholders meeting to vote on withdrawal from South Africa. Citibank and IBM will remain targets until they have completely cut ties to South Africa. Recent corporate withdrawals from South Africa have invigorated the churches' campaign against the nine other companies on the churches' intensive focus list.

Immediately after Sullivan's announcement, ICCR sent letters, signed by forty ICCR-member groups, to the chief executive officers of all companies which have signed the Sullivan Principles, calling on them to end all business with South Africa.

Next year's shareholder resolutions and divestment activities will press for authentic withdrawal from South Africa, including termination of purchases, sales and servicing of products or parts and licensing, management or franchise agreements. Selective purchasing will be added to the repertoire of antiapartheid strategies to be pursued by institutions and individuals who wish to use their power as consumers to pressure companies to withdraw.

Individuals may wish to start your own campaign against U.S. corporate support for apartheid or join in church-sponsored campaigns.

Write for ICCR's Sullivan Action Packet, $6. Inside are suggested actions, texts of letters to write and other strategies as well as the names and addresses of Sullivan Principles signers, still in South Africa.