

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN
49008

March 28, 1980

To: Friends of SASO II
From: South African Solidarity Organization
Western Michigan University

Dear Friends:

We want to provide you with an update of the South African Solidarity Organization's (SASO II) activities at Western Michigan University, and also inform you about the University's continued attempts to prosecute eleven of us for "Disturbing the Peace" at the October 19th Board of Trustees Meeting.

We are deeply appreciative for your support of our efforts here at Western Michigan University. Many of you have called, written, and also contributed financially to our work. Without your help, we would have been living under a University-initiated court injunction which could have kept us from publicly speaking about South Africa at the Board Meetings. With your support, we presented arguments in Circuit Court and the University was instructed to honor our constitutional rights of speech.

The University and the Prosecuting Attorney are continuing the criminal charges against us. We have asked for a "Bill of Particulars". This would require them to specify the charges as they apply to each individual. The court has so far denied this request, and the trial date has been set for May 15th. We will pursue our appeal, asking for a Stay of Trial. To us, the University's interest in pressing charges is questionable. However, for us to seek legal action against them, we would need several thousand dollars. We could win, but the funds for the trial are not available. Yet, they can use the taxpayer's money to charge us with "Disturbing the Peace". In this case, it does not appear as though the University is interested in serving the best interests of justice. Repression of dissent seems to be the more obvious motive.

Our struggle with the Board continues. We have about half of our potential legal fees donated. The Circuit Court case cost us \$1,300. The Criminal Case may amount to \$1,500. As we have only \$1,900, we will have to wait and see what happens.

We are grateful to our attorneys: Mr. Tom O'Brien, (Circuit Court Case) of Ann Arbor; and Mr. Fred Royce, (Criminal Case) of Kalamazoo. Mr. Zolton Ferency, of Michigan State University, remains close to our court defense also. They have been gracious with their time and most helpful in our defense.

The University has resolutely refused to reconsider its policy of continued financial ties to South Africa. Recently, we questioned their use of banks and brokerages that provide economic support for South Africa. The question has been referred to the Advisory Committee of the Board.

While we have met informally with a few members of this committee, they have closed their committee meetings to the public. On March 20 the University's security officer barred us from attending the Budget and Finance Committee meeting, stating that the Open Meetings Act allows them to keep the public out of committee meetings. We believe that this interpretation is further evidence of the University's unwillingness to be accountable to the citizens. It is interesting to note that the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners, existing under the same law, allows the public to attend their committee meetings.

The University is presently involved in a capital funds campaign, "Partners in Progress." It will result in a closer tie between the University and the corporate interests. This concerns us because it is this relationship that has heavily contributed to the University's backing away from taking a clear position of moral leadership on this issue. When the University increasingly accepts the controls and ethics of the corporation, its mission will be muted and its inquiry dulled.

There is much that is being done. Many community organizations have appeared before the Board asking the university to break its links with apartheid. People are writing the Board and the Prosecutor expressing their opinions. We are continuing our community educational efforts through an April 12 Midwest Conference on anti-apartheid strategies.

Nationally, the movement is growing. The State of Nebraska has passed legislation prohibiting public agencies from investing in South Africa. Michigan's legislature is presently debating similar bills sponsored by Rep. Perry Bullard of Ann Arbor. These bills have been approved by the Civil Rights Committee of the House and are scheduled for full debate. Letters of support are needed.

We will keep you informed of our progress and our needs. Obviously, we will be needing more financial assistance, and your checks can be made out to Ecumenical Campus Ministry: Kanley Chapel, W.M.U.

The April 12 conference will be an important place to learn more about the very explosive conditions of South Africa and how we can be advocates for peace. We hope to see you there.

With much appreciation,
Sincerely,

Ann and Brian

Ann Martens
Brian Rosencrans
Chairpersons, SASO II

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Enclosure