TESTIMONY OF ALFRED KAGAN, REPRESENTING UCPEA, 24 MARCH 1986

The University of Connecticut Professional Employees Association (UCPEA) is part of the Connecticut State Federation of Teachers (CSFT) which in turn is part of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the AFL-CIO. The UCPEA fully endorses Proposed Bill 5265, an act to divest state funds invested in corporations doing business in South Africa.

We take this action in solidarity with our union colleagues in South Africa who have called for our support. Last December 1st, the South African labor movement took a major step when 36 unions with more than 500,000 members formed a new non-racial federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In its very first statement, COSATU called on U.S. and British corporations to divest their South African holdings. This was a particularly brave statement because just voicing such an opinion is a crime under South African law.

As other speakers will no doubt note, the call for economic sanctions is generally endorsed by the South African population. Again, even though it is a crime to say so, a recent Gallup affiliated poll found that 77% of South African blacks believe other countries should impose economic sanctions. Of course, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations General Assembly have long supported this position.

As part of the CSFT, we are proud that our state union supported the original limited state divestment bill currently in force. However, that bill based investment decisions on the Sullivan Principles. But these guidelines only address civil rights in the workplace for less than 1% of South African workers; they do not address the central question of political power, that is the end of apartheid and the beginning of majority rule. I am submitting a fact sheet that shows how the Sullivan Principles have failed to even meet the limited goals that they addressed.
We note that at least eleven states have already taken some kind of economic action against apartheid in South Africa. Massachusetts, our neighboring state, was the first to totally divest its pension funds. Governor Dukakis has stated that not only was it a moral statement, but that divestment had no financial impact on the funds. Furthermore, he stated that "Timely and careful divestiture can result in increases in pension earnings."!!

In this year of the first national holiday to honor the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. -- a strong labor unionist -- we must also note his call for an "international quarantine" of South Africa in 1962. Twenty-four years later, we are still seeking to carry on his work.

In addition to this bill, UCPEA also calls upon the State to stop buying any goods and services from corporations doing business in South Africa. Another bill should follow to accomplish this and further help "quarantine" South Africa.