

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

Steering Committee

July 18, 1962

MINUTES

Present: Peter Weiss, Daniel Bernstein, Frank Montero, Hope Stevens

Staff: George Houser, James Robinson, Collin Gonze

1. The American Leadership Conference on Africa: George Houser reported that a planning committee for this conference had been formally constituted. A letter has been drafted which will invite some 30 or more primarily Negro organizations to join in the sponsoring of the conference. Those who have agreed to sign the letter include A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young and James Farmer. The Steering Committee agreed that A. Philip Randolph should sign on behalf of the American Committee on Africa. If he signs on behalf of one of the other organizations with which he is associated, then Hope Stevens should be the signer for the Committee.

The two current possibilities for staff director for the conference are Theodore Brown, formerly with the Civil Rights Department of the AFL-CIO, and Robert Browne, formerly an economic adviser with the United States Aid program in the Far East. Since it seems likely that Bob Brown may accept a position overseas soon, it was not likely that he could be staff person for the conference except on a very temporary basis. The Steering Committee agreed that if the other organizations involved were ready to accept Ted Brown, they were also. It was pointed out that it was essential to start working immediately on the details of the conference if it is to be held in late October or early November.

2. The Financial Situation: Memorandum prepared by James Robinson after a staff meeting (this is enclosed with these minutes):

Daniel Bernstein suggested that larger contributors who have not contributed this year should be written to and that perhaps, to give an idea of current work and projects of the ACOA, minutes of the June 20th meeting of the Steering Committee might be enclosed. It was agreed that, if this was done, the minutes should be edited and re-worded.

In the discussion of large contributors, it was suggested to the staff that they carry more data on the cards of the large contributors --such as how they got on the list of the Committee; what their interests are, who knows them, etc.

Most of the discussion revolved around AFRICA TODAY. The staff pointed out what was obvious, that the only places that significant amounts of money could be saved would be either on the publications program or on staff and personnel. Peter Weiss made three points: first, it probably costs the Committee a net of somewhere between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars per year. Although the magazine has improved tremendously, and the subscription list has grown a great deal in the last year, not enough has been done yet to have it spread nearly as far as it should be either in the United States or in Africa. Therefore, the question should be raised again whether AFRICA TODAY should be continued indefinitely. Second, the tax exemption problem. Is it possible that part of our work, perhaps AFRICA TODAY itself might be turned over to some tax deductible agency and yet could be closely associated with the Committee and its work. Third, it is important we get a Negro executive and a Projects Director on our staff as soon as possible.

The final suggestion of procedure as far as AFRICA TODAY is concerned was that Collin Gonze for the staff should draw up a memorandum outlining content and format for a briefer kind of publication. Other alternatives might also be included in this analysis. This would be discussed in the next meeting of the Steering Committee and then a final decision could be made by the Board at its next meeting in September. In further discussion of specific recommendations in the staff memorandum, the Steering Committee accepted the first point under the recommendations regarding AFRICA TODAY. Decision was postponed on the next points since this would depend on what the future for the magazine might be. The three points under salary recommendations were accepted by the Steering Committee with the proviso on the third point that this money would be refunded to the staff members should the Committee later be able to do so.

3. Robert Ruark's book, "Uhuru": George Houser reported that he had written to Tom Mboya and to Mbiyu Koinange asking them to explore whether they had grounds for legal action against Ruark for the manner in which they are mentioned in the book. Because so many of the staff are out of the office for short periods of vacation during the summer, it was reported that it would be difficult to put on a real campaign in relation to the book. George Houser will try to send out a communication to a number of organizations urging protests to the Book-of-the-Month Club for choosing it as their book for July.

Next meeting on Wednesday, August 15, 1962.

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