

Stevens

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

Steering Committee

February 16, 1962

MINUTES

Present: Peter Weiss, Chairman; Hope Stevens, Nelson Bengston. Staff: George Houser, Hazel Gray, James Robinson, Debby Kallen.

It was decided to start discussion with Item 3 of the agenda.

3. Informal meeting of the Executive Board on policy toward independent African states: In view of the decision of the Executive Board to hold such an informal meeting sometime in March, the Steering Committee chose March 12 and the alternate date of March 26 on which to hold such meeting. It was agreed that Harold Isaacs be invited. It might, however, be difficult to have Sinclair Drake attend since he was in Chicago, but he would at any rate be asked if he intended to be in New York at that time. John Murra and John Marcum could, if necessary, present Drake's viewpoint.

Mr. Houser reported briefly on his two-day trip to Washington where he and John Marcum had addressed the Africa Luncheon Group which is composed of approximately 125 people in government who are concerned with African affairs. They had, in addition, spoken with two people from the Senate Sub-committee on Refugees, with eight or ten State Department people working in the African section, including Wayne Fredericks, and for a short period of time, Gov. Williams. They had also talked with people in the Labor Department about the trade union situation and what American labor could do to aid the new movement in Angola. They also had an opportunity to meet with Senator Gore. On Tuesday, Mr. Houser spoke at a luncheon for people in a special training program at Johns Hopkins University, met with another group of people in the State Department (those primarily concerned with Mozambique), and met with Jim Thompson, Chester Bowles' assistant.

2. Pamphlet on COMMUNISTS AND ANGOLA: Mr. Houser reported that people in Washington were not at all worried by this pamphlet. Nevertheless, the Steering Committee felt that there was sufficient cause for concern, and asked the staff to write Congressman Diggs to see if it were possible for him to make a statement from the floor of the Houser or read something into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

1. Question of schedule for Steering Committee meetings and membership of the Committee: Although much staff time was devoted to arranging meetings, attendance had not been very good. The Committee pointed out that all members had many commitments, and suggested that a memo go out indicating meeting dates for the next two months and requesting members to tell the staff if any of those dates would be impossible for them. In addition, a bi-weekly reminder would go out with reply cards.

It was decided, in view of the fact that Cleveland Robinson was unable to attend Steering Committee meetings, to invite Daniel Bernstein. His appointment to the Committee would be brought up at the next Executive Board meeting.

4. Local chapters of the ACOA: After talking with Lew Carliner it was decided that George Houser would go to Washington on March 6th to attend the organizational meeting of the future Washington chapter. The Steering Committee noted with approval plans to proceed with a Washington chapter. They asked the staff to send Lew Carliner a copy of the memorandum on Affiliations and thought that in wording their charter they might use the same phrasing as is being used in California: "an autonomous group affiliated with the ACOA." The formation of both these groups will be discussed at the next Board meeting.

It was suggested that Victor Reuther become a member of the National Committee and that Lew Carliner become a voting member of the Executive Board. The Steering Committee decided to refer any decision until Mr. Houser had taken up the matter with Lew Carliner himself.

5. Medical relief to Angola: On Saturday evening there would be a meeting at the home of Elsie Carrington with Afro-Americans who are in the medical profession and who could assist greatly in organizing and making successful the medical project. In addition, there had been a meeting with Dr. Melady of the Africa Service Institute and a meeting would be held sometime next week with Medico which was now merging with CARE.

The Steering Committee felt that although we might organize ad hoc committees for the medical relief project, the ACOA should not be lost. Organizing a sub-committee might be, therefore, a better idea for the Committee.

We might think in terms of sending, for a limited period of time, a doctor or doctors, and nurses who could train Angolans to be medical technicians.

6. Speakers

a. Basil Davidson: Mr. Davidson has been invited to make a speaking tour sometime this spring or in the early fall.

b. Kenneth Kaunda: Mr. Kaunda had indicated that he could only come to the United States for a period of ten days. However, a great deal would depend, even for this period of time, on the development of the political situation in Northern Rhodesia.

7. Progress reports

a. Sendwe trip: The urgency of this trip was no longer a factor since Tshombe would not be issued a visa. However, George Houser would discuss the possibility of arranging a trip for Jason Sendwe with Wayne Fredericks.

b. Afro-American leadership conference: Mr. Randolph would be out of New York until mid-March, but the draft call and list of proposed sponsors would be mailed to him. The next step after securing Mr. Randolph's agreement to sign the letter would be the setting up of a planning committee. The date for the conference would be left to this committee. The Steering Committee felt that ACOA should remain in the background.

c. APPEAL FOR ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID: Both Martin Luther King and Chief Lutuli had agreed to sign a letter calling upon international figures to join them in signing the APPEAL. Although Mrs. Roosevelt had originally felt that she could not sign because her name was being used so frequently, she would be approached again. There still remained the question of what date the APPEAL should be issued.

d. Africa Freedom Day: The staff had not yet had an opportunity to discuss this in detail. The Steering Committee felt that whatever funds might be raised on an Africa Freedom Day event could go to the medical relief project for Angola.

e. Marcum-Houser meeting on March 1: John Marcum and George Houser would address a public meeting on March 1 at the Community Church. The Steering Committee felt that a contribution of \$1.00 (\$.50 for students) should be collected at the door, in addition to any contributions that might be called for after the meeting.

8. Open items:

- a. Memo from the staff on the administration of the Defense and Aid Fund
- b. Visitors' program
- c. Regional conferences
- d. Aid to refugees in Dar es Salaam
- e. Angola Commission
- f. Work with Negro students in the South