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MEMORANDUM ON AN AMERICAN BOYCOTT OF SOUTH AFRICAN GOODS

I. Reasons for considering a boycott in the United States.

- A. The basic reason for considering a boycott is that South Africa's pattern of apartheid has become increasingly abusive and severe over the period of time that the Nationalist Party has been in power. The extension of the pass system to women with the consequent arrest of many hundreds of women and the breakout of violence in certain areas of South Africa, the establishment of Bantustans with its consequent divide-and-rule tactic separating one tribal and cultural group from another in South Africa, the charge of treason against some of the leaders of the trade union movement and the movement for equality simply because these people have opposed the apartheid pattern of the government, the extension of the Group Areas Act and the extension of the pattern of apartheid into the universities systems -- all this and much more has meant an intensification of the injustices in South Africa. The necessity for a clear expression of world opinion in opposition to this pattern of extreme racism has never been more obvious.
- B. African leaders and others who are opposed to the pattern of apartheid, both black and white, in South Africa have urged that a boycott of South African goods be inaugurated where possible. Chief Albert J. Luthuli, President of the African National Congress, has written to key persons in Britain and in the United States urging a boycott. The African Congress and organizations with which it cooperates in South Africa have themselves initiated boycott action within South Africa.
- C. Organized elements in other parts of Africa have called for and have begun a boycott of South African goods themselves. The All African Peoples' Conference at its first meeting in Accra last December called for a boycott of South African goods. Such action has already been initiated in some parts of Africa. Furthermore, the African regional Conference of the ICFTU at its meeting in Lagos in late 1959 called for a boycott.
- D. The boycott has attracted increasing support in other parts of the world, particularly in Great Britain. A month-long campaign with broad political and labor support is to be inaugurated in Great Britain on February 20th.
- E. A growing number of people in the United States are asking about a boycott and have indicated their desire to cooperate with any effort that is begun. A number of organizations have indicated that they would support any movement for a boycott of South African goods. Thus there is a potential of support for such a campaign if it can be started with any degree of effectiveness.

II. The problem of goods to be boycotted. The largest export from the Union of South Africa/^{As gold} but information on this is classified and therefore it is not known what the quantity of this is. Furthermore, figures are not available on the amount of uranium that is exported from the Union of South Africa. The following statistics are available on the amount of imports into the United States from South Africa. These statistics are as of 1958:

A. Animal and animal products -- edible: \$8,270,961.

Note: Frozen lobsters amount to \$6,834, 195.

B. Animal and animal products -- inedible: \$5,644,846.

Note: Persian lamb and karakul furs amount to \$2,996,187.

C. Vegetable food products and beverages: \$181,597.

D. Vegetable products -- inedible -- except fibers and wood: \$2,046,694.

E. Textile fibers in manufacturing: \$15,322,332.

Note: Wools amount to \$13,033,771.

F. Wood and paper: \$381,876.

G. Non-metallic minerals: \$20,509,291.

Note: Diamonds and other precious or semi-precious stones account for most of this.

H. Metals and manufactures -- except machinery and vehicles: \$39,991,417.

I. Machinery and vehicles: \$430,130.

J. Chemicals and related: \$415,514.

K. Miscellaneous: \$1,087,814.

Excluding gold and uranium the total imports from South Africa amount to \$94,282,472.

Perhaps three of the most significant imports from South Africa that must be borne in mind in any boycott campaign are wool, which accounts for some 17 percent of all South African exports, Persian lamb and karakul furs, and frozen lobsters. Only about 10 percent of South Africa's total exports come into the United States.

III. Strategy of a boycott. There are four levels at which boycott action might have some degree of success, taking into account the nature of the imports.

A. The government. Inasmuch as gold is the chief export from South Africa and a major import from South Africa to the United States, if the government were to boycott South African gold, this would be very effective.

B. Business. If it was possible for American business concerns to buy the goods that they bring in from South Africa from other countries, this obviously would have considerable effect.

C. Labor. Trade unions have a direct relationship to South African goods in several ways. The Longshoremen have to unload the ships that are delivering the goods to American ports. Unions such as the Furriers, the Textile Workers, etc., help to process certain goods that come in. A refusal on the part of trade unions to unload or to work certain of the South African goods would have considerable effect.

D. The public. Although there are a limited number of products that the public buys from South Africa, at the very least if there was some wide-spread support for a boycott campaign, there would be some propaganda value in a public campaign against buying South African goods.

It is obvious that at least initially it would be in the ranks of labor and from the public that support for a boycott campaign could be found. If the campaign in other parts of the world mounts, it is possible that this might have an effect on the government and on certain business establishments over a period of time. There is no question about the fact that South African government is increasingly concerned about the adverse opinion of people around the world on her policies. Therefore one of the greatest effects of a boycott campaign would be to impress the South African government with the depth of feeling of peoples elsewhere in the world against the apartheid policy.

IV. Implementation of boycott plan. It would seem to me that a boycott campaign could be initiated on two levels simultaneously, each level in cooperation with the other. The first level would be that of organized labor. At its recent conference in Brussels the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions passed a very strong resolution backing the boycott. The resolution instructed the General Secretary of the ICFTU "to undertake the necessary consultation and to provide the necessary coordination with affiliated organizations and interested consumers and civic organizations to enlist the broadest possible support for a consumers' boycott." Further, the General Secretary was instructed "to explore with the International Trade Secretaries and affiliated organizations immediately concerned the practicability of reinforcing the consumers' boycott by industrial boycotts; and urge all affiliated national centers to establish contact with their respective governments with a view to securing their full sympathy and support for the boycott of South African goods."

Furthermore, at the AFL-CIO convention in San Francisco in September, 1959, a resolution was passed that urged "the AFL-CIO to give careful, serious, and sympathetic consideration to the proposal now being discussed within the ICFTU for a boycott of all South African goods."

The AFL-CIO might very well call a preliminary meeting of some of the major trade unions affected by the import of South African goods in order to discuss an implementation of a plan for the boycott of these goods.

The second level of implementation would be that of public action. Here I would suggest that an ad hoc organization which might be called the American Committee for the Boycott of South African Goods could be organized. I am certain that there would be a significant list of prominent Americans who would give their support and attach their names to such a campaign of limited duration.

It would be important that the campaign be limited to something like a period of a month just as it is initially in Great Britain. Perhaps the public announcement of the beginning of the campaign could be made on or about Africa Freedom Day, April 15th. If both the public campaign and that of labor could be carried on in a coordinated fashion, there could be a maximum effect.

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