FREE SOUTH AFRICA MOVEMENT UPDATE

The Free South Africa Movement spearheaded by Transafrica, the Black American lobby group for Africa and the Caribbean, has now reached at least twenty cities (including Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston and Philadelphia), which are engaged in protest activity at consulates, kruggerand dealers, federal buildings, port associations and American investors. The movement has been able to sustain national attention and develop real momentum for the pursuit of divestment legislation at all levels of government. It is very clear that at a national level legislators have been put in a position in which they simply cannot ignore the issue of South African Apartheid. The pressure is increasing dramatically and South Africa has become a fashionable foreign policy issue.

At the National level, the strongest legislation ever introduced is now being considered by Congress. Called the Anti-Apartheid Act and introduced on March 7th in the House, the Bill calls for no bank loans, no new investments, a prohibition on Kruggerand sales and the sale of computers to South Africa. The Bill has the support of 100 members of the House.

Over 2500 arrests have occurred nationwide. There have been several kruggerand victories as well. In Pittsburgh; Gimbels, David Weis and Kaufman's have agreed to end the Sale of the South African gold coin. In Seattle, Frederick and Nelson agreed to stop sales. In Minneapolis the First Bank of St. Paul has ended the sale of the Kruggerand and in
Miami and Indianapolis, the Southeast Bank of Miami and L.S. Ayers have ended their Kruggerand sales. Honorary Consulates in Boston and Portland have resigned, closing those South African Consulates. In Portland the resignation occurred after five weeks of demonstrations twice a week and twenty-six arrests. Those demonstrations were organized by the Black United Front, POSAF, the Rainbow Organizing Committee, American Friends Service Committee and endorsed by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

The South Africans are obviously meeting our efforts with a public relations campaign of their own. Recently they promised to investigate the conditions surrounding the death of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko, they offered Nelson Mandela a release if he would sever his ties with the African National Congress, they promised to end temporarily the forced removals of Blacks to the homelands, they implied that limited property rights may be extended to certain Blacks and they have promised new dialogue with Black leadership. All of these promises are attempts to diffuse the international pressure mounting against them and to help conservative legislators excuse the issue of sanctions. Another example of this South African public relations campaign is the South Africa Foundation, which is set up to promote trade and good relations with Foreign countries. It has offered the thirty-five Senators who recently challenged President Reagan to take a stronger stand against South Africa, free trips to that country. Only four of these Senators have accepted to date. The best way for us to dismiss these stunts is to continue our protest activity and to expand it.