A "Hands Around the Capitol" demonstration to show public support for South Africa divestment is proposed to take place in Lansing in mid-September. The goal of the demonstration is to put pressure on the Michigan Senate to adopt strong divestment bills (House Bills 4770 and 4771) before the end of the year.

PURPOSE

A public demonstration is needed to call for Senate action that is (1) quick, and (2) strong.

Urgency of vote: Senate consideration in the Committee on Economic Development, Trade, and Tourism has proceeded slowly thus far, and additional delays have already been hinted at. Committee chairman Harry DeMaso has said that he hopes the bill will be reported out by the committee before the Senate reconvenes in September, but the committee failed to report it out at its meeting on July 15. Some Senators want the bill to be forwarded to the Appropriations and Retirement Committee before being considered by the full Senate, and Senate majority leader John Engler has said — even after four lengthy committee hearings — that this issue needs additional study.

The favorable House vote on these bills that took place in December 1985 will be lost unless the Senate concurs during the 1985-86 legislative session, at the end of which all incomplete legislation dies.

Contents of the bill: Corporate representatives have attempted at every opportunity to make the divestment bill ineffective by exempting those companies that implement the "Sullivan Principles" fair employment code. This effort has already been made in the House, the Governor's Implementation Commission, and the Senate Economic Development Committee. If it does not succeed in Senate committee, it will surely be attempted again in the full Senate. We need to demonstrate that people who care about South Africa are calling for the strongest and most effective legislation, without any additional weakening amendments.

TIMING

We propose that the demonstration be held on Tuesday, September 16, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. This will be the beginning of the second week of the fall legislative session. (The Legislature returns on September 9.) Although we do not yet know the legislative calendar, we can expect this session to be very brief, lasting perhaps two to four weeks, so that legislators can go back to their districts to campaign until the November election. The only other opportunity for a Senate vote will be in a "lame-duck" session after the election. This is why the demonstration is planned for the earliest reasonable date in the fall.
FORMAT

Because so many political actions are held at the Capitol, a special form is being proposed for this demonstration — a "Hands Around the Capitol" reminiscent of the "Hands Across America" action against hunger. We estimate that 350 to 400 people would be needed to link hands around the Capitol building.

To highlight the uniqueness of the action, we propose that the human circle of protesters be the main focus, and that other elements — such as speakers and placards -- be kept to a minimum. We suggest that one or several identical banners and one leaflet be used to explain the reason for our presence. We suggest a very brief rally at the end of the event with one or two speakers to thank people for participating and provide information and encouragement for continued support of the divestment bills.

ORGANIZING

In addition to general publicity for the event in the Lansing area and through the statewide network of supporters of the divestment campaign, organizations will be asked to make a commitment to how many people they can bring to participate. This is needed to ensure that we succeed in forming a ring all the way around the Capitol.

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