Special IMF Alert

The anti-apartheid community scored a major victory this summer. On August 3, 1983, the US House of Representatives passed the International Financial Stability and Recovery Act (HR 2957, commonly referred to as the IMF Authorization Bill) which contains a strong anti-apartheid provision. Section 303 of the bill directs the US representative to the IMF to "actively oppose" any IMF loans to "any country which practices apartheid." This section was originally adopted in the House Subcommittee on International Trade, Investment and Monetary Policy and the full Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs as an amendment offered by Rep. Jerry Patterson (D-CA) and Mike Lowry (D-WA) in cooperation with Rep. Julian Dixon (D-CA), chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. There were no attempts to strike this section during the floor debate. However, Rep. Phil Gramm (R-TX) offered an amendment to Section 303 extending the mandatory "no" vote to "communist dictatorships" in addition to countries which practice apartheid. The Gramm amendment does not do any actual harm to the South Africa amendment, although it does add another controversial provision to the already unpopular IMF authorization. When the final vote was taken on the entire IMF bill, it passed the House by only six votes, 217 to 211.

Before the IMF authorization with the South Africa provision becomes law, however, it must go through the House-Senate conference committee which will meet soon after the August recess to iron out differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. The Senate version (S 695) does not contain the South Africa provision, and there is some chance that it will be lost in the conference. However, the provision has some strong support from the House side going into the conference. Rep. Fernand St. Germain (D-RI), chairman of the House Banking Committee, stated in an August interview with the New York Times that the Senate "will just have to swallow it." Many Democratic House members, led by a Black Caucus initiative, have indicated that they will withdraw their support for the IMF bill if the South Africa language is removed.

It is extremely important that we reinforce this position. Therefore, we are asking you to participate in a postcard campaign to show the Senate conferees the concern for this anti-apartheid legislation in their home states. The probable Senate conferees are: Charles Percy (R-IL), Claiborne Pell (D-RI), Charles Mathias (R-MD), Jake Garn (R-UT), William Proxmire (D-WI), and John Heinz (R-PA). Our goal is to have 100 postcards supporting the anti-apartheid provision to each of the Senate conferees by September 15. If you live in one of these states please send your senator a postcard below and organize a campaign to generate many more. This is the last effort needed to ensure that Congress will move against the apartheid regime in South Africa by denying it US support for any future IMF loans.

(Senate's address: The Honorable ______, US Senate, Washington, DC 20510)