HOUSE PASSES ANTI-APARTHEID SECTION OF IMF BILL

The U.S. House of Representatives last night passed the funding bill for the International Monetary Fund, and retained in the bill the anti-apartheid section inserted last May 9 by the House Banking Committee.

However, the House adopted an amendment adding "communist dictatorships" to the anti-apartheid section, greatly complicating the issue.

We still feel confident about holding the anti-apartheid section in conference committee with the Senate and perhaps even shedding the communist dictatorships language, which is both vague and unworkable and misses the point of the anti-apartheid section: that apartheid is a system unique in the world in its gross irrationality, and that the irrationality extends across the board from morality to the economy.

The Gramm Amendment

Rep. Phil Gramm, the Democrat-turned-Republican from Texas, may have intended that House passage of his amendment on communist countries would lead to the ban on loans to both apartheid and communist countries being dropped in conference. However, Gramm did not attack the anti-apartheid language directly. Instead, he said that its economic basis was important and should be extended to communist countries as well. The Gramm amendment was initially defeated by voice vote and then by a 35-to-12 show of hands of those members currently present on the floor. Then he succeeded in organizing twenty-five members to demand a recorded vote. On a vote that could well end up on conservative voting records, members feared being cast as soft on communism and the Gramm amendment passed by 242 to 185. Gramm won by a comfortable margin, despite opposition to his amendment from the Chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee, Reps. Fernand St. Germain (R.L) and Chalmers Wylie (Ohio), and the Republican leader of the House, Rep. Robert Michel (Ohio).

The House Vote on the IMF

Despite the disappointing adoption of the Gramm amendment, the proponents of the anti-apartheid provision ended the evening with strong leverage for keeping their original language in the final version of the bill. The administration badly
wanted this bill to pass, and the House adopted it by the very slim margin of 217 to 211. The Congressional Black Caucus, whose chairman, Rep. Julian Dixon (Calif.), has valiantly spearheaded this campaign, has put a high priority on winning this fight on South Africa. The Caucus had informed House Speaker Tim O'Neill on July 18 that its votes on the IMF quota increase would be contingent on retention of the anti-apartheid provision. Now, the eleven members of the Black Caucus and a few white allies who provided the critical votes for passage of the bill are in a position to insist that they will switch their votes and defeat the final conference report unless the Senate conferees agree to accept the anti-apartheid language.

The larger principle at stake here is the proper role for enlightened members of Congress who have always supported more generous American foreign assistance. Over the years, successive administrations have come to assume automatic support from this sector. The Center feels this group ought to insist on minimum humanitarian conditions before it gives it support.

The Conference Committee

The next step is a conference committee between the House and Senate to iron out differences between their two bills, so they can send one bill to the president to sign. The conference committee will meet after September 12, when Congress returns from recess.

The Reagan administration had always planned to defeat the anti-apartheid provision in the conference, by having the Senate members refuse to accept the House-passed language. However, the House has established a strong legislative record on behalf of this provision that will be difficult for the Senate to turn back. The House Banking Committee held excellent hearings, adopted the provision in subcommittee and debated it favorably in full committee. The full House adopted the provision as part of the committee-passed bill, and the Black Caucus has made its retention an important priority.

House Banking Committee chairman St. Germain has promised the Democratic members of his committee that he will insist in conference that the anti-apartheid language be saved; he told the New York Times that "the Senate will just have to swallow it."

The Senate passed its IMF bill in early June by a much wider margin of 55 to 34, so House conferees are in a good negotiating position. While the Senate never considered the issue of South Africa, it did reject two amendments introduced by Senator Gordon Humphrey of New Hampshire to require opposition to loans to communist countries. Therefore, the House conferees can suggest that the House drop the language on communist dictatorships and that the Senate accept the anti-apartheid language as it originally stood.

What You Can Do

Although the conferees have not yet been formally appointed, it is likely that the following Senators will be among them — from the Foreign Relations Committee: Chairman and ranking minority member Charles Percy of Illinois and Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, plus International Economic Policy Subcommittee Chairman Charles Mathies of Maryland; from the Banking Committee: Chairman and
ranking minority member Jake Garn and William Proxmire of Wisconsin, plus
International Finance and Monetary Policy Subcommittee Chairman John Heinz of
Pennsylvania.

The Senators' decisions will be based largely on representing the actions taken
by the Senate in negotiating with the House on the many issues in disagreement.
And, since the Senate is led by Republicans, its conferees will also be sympathetic
to requests from the administration on the final version of the bill.

Supporters of the anti-apartheid provision have set a goal of getting
100 postcards and letters to each Senate conferee from their states by September
15. Please encourage your constituents in Illinois, Rhode Island, Maryland, Wisconsin
and Pennsylvania to write immediately to their Senator. A sample postcard is
available on request. This will give public support to the position requested by the
House conferees.

This is the final step in the U.S. campaign to insure that our country's 19.64
percent-vote in the IMF will not again be available to support a loan request from
apartheid South Africa. Please give one last push to insure our success.