Dear Coalition Members and Friends,

At the recent African Studies Association Conference held in Boston November 3-5, members of several coalition groups and others working in southern African liberation took an unusual opportunity to gather together and talk informally about the Coalition and its work. Sixteen people were present, including members of 7 Coalition groups. We discussed briefly what the Coalition has done, its purpose, its present difficulties, and what we might do to strengthen it. People recently back from Africa, or recently involved in Southern African liberation work in their areas, shared new thoughts with us on their impressions of the national attention now focused on Southern Africa. We would like to share some of the suggestions that came out of this discussion with other Coalition members, and offer these as concrete suggestions to be taken up at the next Steering Committee Meeting.

1. We felt strongly that the intensity of recent developments in Southern Africa -- the liberation of Mozambique and Angola, and the mounting struggles in Zimbabwe and in Southern Africa itself -- has created intense interest in Southern Africa among people in the U.S., and necessitates an intensification, broadening and increased coordination of our solidarity work.

2. On the other hand, the experience of the Coalition over the last year, points up the inadequacy of our present coordinating structure in meeting this new need. In particular, the decentralized character of the Coalition has had the following weaknesses: in giving different functions to different local groups, many of whom do not have the staff to adequately carry out Coalition work as an on-going priority, Coalition work has continued to be secondary in importance; in subdividing the coordinating structure, even basic communication with other Southern African liberation groups, so essential to our goal of broadening the network of the Coalition, has suffered. (The Boston Solidarity Committee illustrated this in noting that they were unable to get a response to their inquiries from the Coalition.)

The informal meeting therefore made the following suggestions:

1. That the Coalition consider seriously the creation of a Full-Time Staff Person in order to deal adequately with the coordinating needs of the Coalition. Programmatic decisions, however, would still rest with the Steering Committee.

2. That this staff person would best strengthen the Coalition's work if he/she were not located in the East. Chicago was suggested as a viable possibility, because a strong base of support exists there for Southern Africa work, including a new coalition of Blacks and Whites presently getting off the ground, and because there is a strong possibility that AFSC could offer office space. (There was a generally expressed concern that the centralization of information and resources thus far in the East has left many non-East groups cut off, and there should be an effort to change this).

3. That funding for such a staff person might come from the following:
   --An appeal letter to Africanist scholars (Allen Isaacman, Minnesota Coal.)
   --Methodist Conference
   --Catholic Church Office for Justice and Peace (Marie Augusta Neal, 3rd and 4th World Notes)
   --National Presbyterian Church
   --Lutheran Church
   --World Mutual Services, YWCA (which has a focus this year on South Africa)
Seed funding by some groups in the Coalition

-A new HEW grant which my soon be available to groups doing public outreach
(Allen Cooper, MACSA)

It was thought that at least $10,000, and probably more, would be needed to get
such a staff person set up.

4. That the next Steering Committee Meeting should be held soon to consider,
among other things, this suggestion for a full-time staff person for the Coaltition

5. That Coalition member groups submit their ideas of what such a staff
person could and should do, and suggestions for funding possibilities, to
Chris Root (Wash. Office on Africa) to present to the next Steering Comm. Mtg.

In concluding, the group felt that the Coalition is an important mechanism
for strengthening our Southern African Solidarity work, that the Wash. Office
(Chris Root) has done an excellent job so far in coordinating some Coalition
work, despite limited resources, and that the Coalition must now be put on a
more solid footing by providing a full-time staff person to carry out some of
the goals we have already established for ourselves.

Present at the meeting:

William Winter, Africa News
Allen Cooper, MACSA
Esther McCarthy, SND, 3rd and 4th World New Notes
Merle August Neal, SND, "
Eileen Hanson, CCLAMC
Bud Day, CCLAMC
Allen Isaacson, Minnesota Coalition on Southern Africa
Susan Rogers, "
Jennifer Davis, ACOA, SAC
Carol Thompson, Southern Africa Support Committee, Pasadena
Barbara Barnes, SAC, MPLA Solid. Comm.
George House, ACOD
Bill Demen, SACL, East Lansing
Wendy Simmons, Boston Coalition for the Liberation of S.A.
Diana Ellis, Syracuse C.O.S.A.L.
Member of Campaign for Global Justice, MNS