Dear friends,

Plant closings, layoffs, discrimination in hiring and upgrading, and difficulties in keeping up with the cost of living are directly affecting tens of thousands of working men and women here in Massachusetts. And these problems are worrying almost all the rest of us who have jobs.

In South Africa, Black workers, the majority of the population, have virtually no trade union rights, and they are paid one-eighth (1/8) of the wages of white South Africans.

Though South Africa and Massachusetts are an ocean apart, there is a connection between poor conditions here and worse conditions there. And in one small but significant way we now have a chance to do something about it.

Rep. Mel King and Sen. Jack Backman have recently introduced legislation (Sen. bill 1138, see back of this letter) which, if passed, would require that money from the state employees pension fund, which is invested in banks and corporations that do business in South Africa, be divested (taken out) and reinvested in firms that do business in Massachusetts. $150.8 million of the pension fund is currently invested in South Africa-related companies.

In January, the Massachusetts Coalition for Divestment From South Africa (Mass. Divest) was set up by concerned members and representatives of unions, churches, and community organizations to organize a campaign to ensure passage of the bill. We urge you to join us in this endeavor. Here's why:

Corporations that do business in South Africa are making enormous profits from the "cheap" labor created by the apartheid (segregation) system. Since their taxes and industrial output and regulation of the Black workforce only reinforce apartheid, all major representatives of Black South Africa have called on US corporations to leave.

US corporate investment in South Africa also directly hurts us here in Massachusetts. For, as long as South Africa is a haven of "cheap" labor, businesses will close up shop in Massachusetts, as Firestone, Westinghouse, Borden, and many others have, and "run away" to South Africa, leaving many jobless here. And as long as South Africa is a model for those who advocate racism and repression of working people, we will continue to face strengthened rightwing forces like the notorious Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina, vocal backer of South Africa and advocate of the sub-minimum wage, the end of OSHA, etc., etc., etc.

We in the Massachusetts labor movement owe it to our brothers and sisters in South Africa, and we owe it to ourselves to support this bill.

Here's what you can do: (over)

Mail correspondence c/o Mobilization for Survival at above address.