

STUDENT ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT NEWSLETTER

December 1979
American Committee on Africa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....page 1

1) Western Michigan University.....2

2) Oberlin College.....3

3) Harvard University.....4

4) Princeton University.....5

5) Williams College.....5

6) University of Tennessee.....6

7) Tufts College.....6

8) Rutgers University.....6

9) Berea College.....7

10) Cornell University.....7

11) University of Pennsylvania.....7

12) Haverford College.....8

13) American University.....8

14) Brandeis University.....8

15) Georgetown University.....9

16) University of Kansas.....9

17) Colby College.....9

18) Macalester College.....10

19) Northwestern University.....10

20) Brown University.....10

21) Black College Conference on Africa.....10

CONCLUSION.....page 11

American Committee on Africa

Resurgence in Student Anti-Apartheid Movement

Over the past six weeks there has been a resurgence of anti-apartheid activity on American campuses. This resurgence is part of the rebuilding process that has taken place in the student movement this fall. Since the Soweto Rebellion of 1976, almost an entire 4-year cycle of students has graduated, a major factor in the movement's earlier "slow-down". This factor and Administration "stonewalling" have forced campus committees to reevaluate their work and take new approaches to grass-roots organizing.

In the process of reevaluation, many activists have come to see their work in a broader context and thus avoided frustration over Trustee intransigence. They have come to understand that stock divestment and the process of organizing for divestment are not ends in themselves, but means to support the liberation struggle in southern Africa and build a strong movement of student activists in this country. With this understanding, organizers have had the patience to engage in essential and pain-staking educational work while broadening their political focus.

Though divestment has remained the cutting edge of the movement, many successful campus committees have developed material aid campaigns for the liberation movements, and have linked their work to anti-racist struggles. On several campuses strong ties have also been forged with the anti-nuclear movement, and divestment activists have recently taken an active role in combatting the reactionary hysteria over Iran. Almost every campus group that has not organized protest activity this fall, is planning to do so next semester. These groups feel that their educational/rebuilding work of the past months has set a solid basis for future actions.

This newsletter aims to facilitate the rebuilding process taking place in the movement. Many activists I've spoken to over the past few months have stressed the importance of inter-movement communication. Knowledge that one is not alone in the struggle and concrete examples of strategy are big boosts to individual campus committees. In fact, this newsletter was conceived following a UN session on divestment in October that involved nearly twenty schools. We plan to put it out regularly (at least every two months) and get more input from campus committees as it develops. This initial issue is mostly a summary of campus activities, and in future we hope to have opinion articles from activists. Feel free to send in any comments and criticisms you might have.

In solidarity and friendship,

Josh Nessen

Josh Nessen, Student Coordinator

Note: This newsletter can only succeed if you regularly send in newspaper clippings and summaries of your activities. Send material to:

Josh Nessen
American Committee on Africa
198 Broadway NY NY 10038 (212)962-1210

There are some expenses involved in producing a newsletter and any contributions you can make will be helpful.

1) Western Michigan University (WMU), (Kalamazoo, Mich.)

Perhaps the hottest spot in the movement this fall has been WMU in Kalamazoo, Michigan where 11 protesters were arrested at a Board of Trustees meeting.

When the Trustees appeared on campus in late October they were met by a protest rally of 200 people. Following the rally between 50-60 demonstrators entered the Board meeting, and demanded that the divestment issue be placed on the agenda. The only Black trustee, Julius Franks, supported this demand but was overruled by the rest of the corporate-connected Board. When protesters continued to call for a hearing, the Trustees voted to recess and headed for the doors. At this point protesters peacefully obstructed the room's exits, asking: "Why won't you discuss this with us?" Eleven of the protesters, including the campus chaplain, were then dragged off by local police and charged with "disrupting a lawful meeting".

In a strong show of solidarity students and faculty raised \$1200 for jail bonds in just two hours and all but one of the protesters were released that day. Elaine Burns, an intern with the United Methodist Church, decided to stay in jail over the weekend "to help dramatize the fact that there are people all over the world who are in prison unjustly."

Since the arrests the campaign at WMU has grown stronger. After the arrests, the University had sought an injunction against the protesters to prohibit them from raising the divestment issue at Trustee meetings. Judge C.H. Mullen ruled that the protesters had a constitutional right to be heard and squashed the injunction.

Following this ruling the Committee on South Africa held a South African Solidarity Week that climaxed in a rally of 200 people and an evening program which raised \$600 towards a defense fund for those arrested. Since the arrests, the Committee has also made a strong effort to do outreach and in January will begin a newsletter to educate both campus and non-campus communities.

The trial of those arrested will start on January 10 and is seen by organizers as a forum to dramatize their demands. Telegrams of support will help their cause, and can be sent to:

Don Cooney
701 Norton Drive
Kalamazoo, Mich 49001
Tel. (616) 349-3027

2) Oberlin College (Oberlin, Ohio)

This past spring the Oberlin College administration sponsored a joint corporate/university forum on South Africa at the Ford Foundation headquarters and since then has continued to be in the forefront of a well-funded battle against the divestment movement. However, they haven't been as successful in convincing their own students.

From November 12-17 the Oberlin Coalition for the Liberation of Southern Africa held a week of activities dealing with Southern Africa that ended in a showdown with their "liberal" Trustee Board.

In order to avoid confrontation, Oberlin's trustees cancelled a scheduled "open forum" and transformed it into a genteel "wine and cheese" party. This maneuver failed to divert the students. An anti-apartheid rally of 100 students was joined by over 150 members of ABUSUA (the Black student organization) and together they entered the party. The room was hushed as J.D. Turner of ABUSUA read a statement demanding action on divestment, women's studies, and minority recruiting. A heated dialogue ensued which further revealed the Trustees' intransigence.

The next day the Board refused to place the divestment issue on their agenda and shut themselves up on the 4th floor behind a wall of security guards. Once again their strategy failed. Approximately 75 sign-carrying students descended upon the "ivory tower", and outmaneuvered security guards by going up a back stairwell. Though they could not actually penetrate the trustees' inner sanctum, wall-banging and loud chanting made it impossible for the trustees to hear themselves. The Board's response was to accuse activists of "emotionalism", a charge answered by Coalition member Laura Taylor: "I won't apologize for being emotional at being part of a college which makes money from companies operating in South Africa."

3) Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.)

The Harvard South Africa Solidarity Committee (SASC) has continued its multi-faceted approach to anti-apartheid work.

SASC played a pivotal role in a successful referendum to prohibit the City of Cambridge from investing public monies in banks and other financial institutions doing business with or in South Africa. The referendum passed by a 2-1 margin with large student participation being a decisive factor.

On campus SASC has made an effort to work closely with Black and Puerto Rican organizations. An important event was a jointly sponsored showing of "Last Grave at Dimbaza" and a film on the threatened Afro-American studies program. As part of its work SASC has consistently urged students to take Afro-Am studies courses, and more are doing so this year.

Throughout the semester SASC has also been staging "flying-squadron" actions against corporate recruiters on campus. The first one was a militant protest against a Morgan Bank Guaranty representative which was followed by actions targeting Chase Manhattan Bank and Hewlett-Packard (a computer firm) reps. At each of the actions, from 30-40 picketers would hand out leaflets and then go into the recruitment meetings with polite but embarrassing questions.

Harvard activists also gave a warm greeting to white South African Helen Suzman. Suzman, a member of parliament, is often noted in the press as a critic of the ruling Afrikaner Nationalist party, though her own party (the Progressive Reform Party) is officially opposed to giving Blacks full democratic rights. She has recently traveled to a number of U.S. campuses defending the role of foreign corporate investors in South Africa. At an evening forum, Suzman was aggressively questioned by students and exiled black South Africans. She contemptuously dismissed the black South Africans as unfit to voice their opinion on South Africa even though they are in exile from risking their lives in opposition to apartheid.

After three uncomfortable days on campus Suzman later wrote to the Harvard Crimson, lashing out at the "damned nerve" of those who dare to challenge her role in South African politics. When she returned to South Africa, she reportedly warned the government not to dismiss the divestment movement as a thing of the past.

4) Princeton University (Princeton, NJ)

The People's Front for the Liberation of Southern Africa continues to be active this year.

One of its major events this fall was a protest against Princeton's South Africa/Nuclear ties which the Front planned with the campus anti-nuke group. 100 students took part in the demonstration, which called for divestment of stocks and the resignation of trustees on the Boards of Westinghouse and GE, the leading constructors of U.S. nuclear reactors and large investors in South Africa. Another key component of the Front's political strategy has been to link divestment to domestic anti-racist struggles, and this December a large forum was held under the title: "Black South Africa/Black America...Same Struggle, Same Fight".

Perhaps the most successful event held this fall was the second annual "Run For South African Liberation" which took place on November 11. The event began with a rally addressed by the liberation movement representatives and Judge William Booth (president of the American Committee on Africa). Afterwards approximately 25 students ran as far as 20 miles raising \$5300 in pledges to be sent to the liberation movements.

A co-sponsor of the Run was the New Jersey Coalition of Black Students which was initiated last spring by Princeton students. Early next year the New Jersey Coalition will hold a state-wide conference, dealing with "International and national struggles against racism".

5) Williams College (Williamstown, Mass)

Activists at Williams College have been quite effective this semester.

When the trustees arrived for their fall meeting 100 students held a candlelight vigil and then marched inside to confront the trustee finance committee, which agreed to discuss divestment with them after two years of refusals.

Since that encounter, the Williams Committee has gone on to picket a Morgan Guaranty recruiter and hold a dinner benefit with Afro-Am help to raise material aid for the liberation movements. Following a strategy session of 15 schools in October, Williams activists have also begun coordinating a national campus material aid drive. The Williams Committee has sent out leaflets stressing the political importance of material aid and outlining some of the steps necessary to carry on a campaign. Their future plans include a large demonstration at the next trustee meeting on January 21.

6) University of Tennessee (Knoxville, Tenn)

Last year three Black activists at U of Tenn were arrested for an anti-apartheid protest at a trustee meeting. In a major victory this November, all charges against them were dropped for lack of evidence. This fall activists initially focused on the heavy-weight boxing match between black American John Tate and white South African Gerry Coetzee. Tate is a resident of Knoxville and for 17 straight days students and community people picketed the local NBC affiliate which was televising the bout. Through their actions, activists generated intense local pressure and promoter Bob Arum rushed Tate to South Africa many weeks before the fight.

After the fight (which Tate won), U of Tenn organizers continued to forge links with the Knoxville community by initiating a solidarity fund for an ANC school in Tanzania. They have done most of their organizing among local workers and feel the fund is a good educational tool and way to support the liberation struggle.

7) Tufts College (Medford, Mass)

The Tufts Committee has also engaged in a variety of activities this semester.

Their major educational event was well-attended forum involving a speaker from the Patriotic Front and a prominent South African exile. In its aftermath the group held a 50-person picket of the trustee finance committee, and has picketed the Administration building every week. This consistent organizing paid off in November when a campus-wide referendum strongly supported divestment, and overwhelmingly called for the trustees to reopen the issue.

8) Rutgers University (New Brunswick, NJ)

After several years of organizing, activists at Rutgers scored a notable success when their trustees sold stock in six companies involved in South Africa. Rather than tone down their struggle, students continue to call and organize for total divestment of stocks linked to apartheid.

9) Berea College (Berea, Kentucky)

The Berea College Committee was founded on September 12 this year, the second anniversary of Steven Biko's death. Since then the Committee has initiated an effective educational and material aid drive with the help of the American Friends Service Committee. The Berea Committee has been able to make the South Africa issue a part of a mandatory Freshman course on "Issues and Values", and its latest event was talk by Zimbabwean Dr. Don Mutambara attended by 75 people.

The Committee's most creative idea has been to set up a large Bulletin Board in the main campus building that lists the latest events in Southern Africa. In January, activists have also arranged for a school-wide convocation on the student anti-apartheid movement that will feature Princeton organizer Adimhu Changa.

10) Cornell University (Ithaca, NY)

This fall Cornell was privileged to host a lecture by the vice-president of Exxon. With the help of anti-nuke activists, the Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa organized a militant picket of his talk and a day-long series of workshops dealing with Energy and Anti-Apartheid issues. The Committee has also shown a series of films on South Africa and written regular columns attacking the "Sullivan Principles".

In conjunction with other progressive campus groups, the Committee recently organized several Anti-Shah demonstrations calling for an end to both harassment of Iranian students and preparations for U.S. military intervention.

Next semester, the Committee is planning to work closely with the campus anti-nuke group, and in January will co-sponsor a showing of "Nuclear File", a film on US-South African nuclear ties.

11) University of Pennsylvania (UPENN), (Philadelphia, PA)

UPENN trustees were greeted by a demonstration of over 125 students and faculty calling for immediate divestment of all South Africa-linked stocks. The protest attracted significant media attention, notably a front-page article in the Philadelphia Enquirer, and was made possible by 4 earlier teach-ins of 50-75 people each. Along with the stock issue, activists have been protesting University deposits in First Pennsylvania Bank which financed the sale of 53,000 artillery shells by Space Research Corp to the South African Government.

12) Haverford College (Haverford, PA)

At Haverford this fall exiled South African journalist Dumisani Kumalo gave a talk on the "Sullivan Principles" to 100 students, and then attended a meeting of the Investment Responsibility Committee which was mysteriously "boycotted" by its trustee and administration members. Following Dumisani's visit Chris Ioffo of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility made a presentation on Namibia and the exploitative role of the Newmont Mining Company in that country.

The Haverford Committee has also been involved in the fight against cutbacks in financial aid. Part of this struggle involved a blockade of the school's business office for two days and an all-college meeting to discuss the cutbacks. In addition, members of the Haverford Committee have been participating in the Philadelphia Bank Campaign, and were at a picket of the Philadelphia National Bank which involved 50 activists this November.

13) American University (Washington, DC)

The trustees at this university have resolutely refused an open hearing on divestment this fall. In response, divestment activists have been organizing educational forums and a campus endorser campaign for their demands. In addition, student organizers took part in a protest November 30 against the Washington-based Riggs Bank, a notorious redliner and lender to the South African Government.

Given the many Iranian students on campus, a major effort has also been put into organizing around the Iranian crisis. Progressive groups have been holding a teach-in a week on Iran, and the last one involved over 200 students. Moreover, a petition in support of the rights of Iranian students in the USA garnered 115 signatures within the first few hours, and there was a large demonstration against Immigration officials when they appeared on campus in December.

For next semester, the divestment group is planning a series of events for Black History month and has met with the campus Black Student Union to coordinate activities.

14) Brandeis University (Waltham, Mass)

Brandeis is another Boston-area campus where divestment work has been strong. In November, the Brandeis Committee held a three-day Seminar on southern Africa that also focused on domestic anti-racist struggles. The seminars involved presentations by local activists from Harvard and Tufts and featured a slide show on Zimbabwe by the Boston Coalition. All told, over 3000 students had some contact with the event and many new students have become involved in the divestment struggle.

Meanwhile to avoid conflict, Brandeis trustees unloaded one-third of their portfolio over the summer and continued an informal "moratorium" on new stock purchases involving top investors in South Africa. The Brandeis Committee remains unimpressed, and is organizing an "Activism Weekend" with progressive student groups in preparation for a spring trustee meeting.

15) Georgetown University (Washington, DC)

Georgetown University is the site of a Riggs Bank branch where all school funds are deposited. In response to this situation students and faculty have formed a Coalition For Responsible Banking, and regularly leafletted the Bank. On November 30 they also took part in a downtown picket organized by the DC Bank Campaign, and are planning a series of campus actions culminating in a day of withdrawal from Riggs Bank.

Like other "responsible" institutions in the Washington area, Georgetown recently hosted a talk by Jonas Savimbi, leader of the South Africa-backed UNITA which operates in Angola. 125 people heard Savimbi spend the night ducking questions about South African support of his organization and raids into Angola.

16) University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS)

If your Trustees won't divulge what stocks your school owns, perhaps you should do what activists from U of K did. They obtained their school's 1977/8 portfolio from the Internal Revenue Service. Besides solid detective work, the KU-Y Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa has done a film series on South Africa and a program with SAMRAF, the South Africa military deserter support group. This semester a legal victory was also won, when a student arrested for unfurling a pro-divestment banner at Graduation had all charges dropped against him.

Most recently, the Committee participated in a picket against a discriminatory private club near campus, and began organizing for a school-wide debate on divestment.

17) Colby College (Colby, Maine)

Activists at Colby have held a series of varied educational forums this fall. The first one involved Walter Carrington of the African-American Institute who denounced current South African "reforms" before an audience of 50 students. The next visitor was John Chettle of the South African Foundation, a leading propoganda group for corporate investors. He smoothly argued that investment was the "moral" thing for U.S. corporations to do, but lost his cool when faced with harassing questions from activists. Immediately following Chettle, a representative of the ANC condemned the activities of the South African Foundation and spoke about the growing level of armed struggle in South Africa.

The final forum this fall featured a representative of the Salisbury Government and a member of ZAPU.

18) Macalester College (St. Paul, Minnesota)

This semester the main activity at Macalester was a week-long symposium on Southern Africa. The week was strong. After a film showing there was a panel involving the South African Consul, a spokesman for Rev. Leon Sullivan, and a representative of Clergy and Laity Concerned. Following this event, there were smaller workshops on divestment and a showing of "Controlling Interest" a film on multi-national control of global resources.

In December the Trustees finally arrived on campus and were met by demands to adhere to their own guidelines on banks. A major contributor to the College has threatened to end his contributions unless the school maintains its account at Chemical Bank--one of the top ten lenders worldwide to South Africa.

19) Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois)

Northwestern has continued to be the site of strong anti-apartheid work. Throughout the semester there has been a material aid drive and the student divestment group has worked closely with AGENISA (a faculty-staff group). Next year Northwestern will host an Administration-sponsored conference on Southern Africa, and activists are formulating plans to deal with this propoganda showcase.

20) Brown University (Providence, Rhode Island)

The Brown Committee recently organized a forum with speakers from ZAPU and the PAC at which 120 people attended and money was raised for the liberation movements. The Committee has also had events dealing with Angola, and recently did a forum on Iran that stressed the connections between anti-imperialist struggles. Next semester they plan to continue emphasizing liberation support work while dealing more directly with the school's investment policy.

21) Black Colleges Hold Conference on Africa

Twelve Black schools, located primarily in the South, assembled at Morgan State University in Baltimore to actively explore common concerns related to Africa. The Conference was sponsored by the United Methodist Church and was both an educational and organizing-oriented event.

Panels and workshops dealt with such subjects as, 'Imperialism and Revolution in Africa' and 'The U.S. Role in Southern Africa' and were actively participated in by representatives of the Patriotic Front, ANC and PAC. Student organizers felt the Conference was a success and are pressing ahead with their African Liberation support work.

CONCLUSION

From the above summary of campus activities, it is clear that the student anti-apartheid movement has successfully adjusted to sophisticated administration responses and rapid activist "turnover". The rebuilding process and the political analysis that accompanies it sets a solid basis for a spring offensive to kick off the Eighties. With South African military and propoganda efforts intensifying, along with continued U.S. cooperation, such an offensive will be eminently timely.