International Seminar on
The Role of Transnational Corporations in Namibia

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Southern Indiana United Methodists Support Southern Africans
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Organized by the American Committee on Africa
198 Broadway
New York, NY 10038
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with the support of the United Nations Council for Namibia
SUMOSSA (South Indiana United Methodists and Others in Support of Southern Africans) was organized in 1981 by a group of South Indiana United Methodists out of a conviction that the apartheid system is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ and out of the belief that Christians around the world must demonstrate the unity of the church in their rejection of apartheid.

The members of SUMOSSA are, therefore, committed to supporting South Africans and Namibians in their struggle to eliminate this unjust and evil system. Persons who become members of SUMOSSA are expected to become involved in one or more of the following actions:

1. Organizing direct assistance to meet the needs of people in Southern Africa.
3. Organizing for U.S. institutional disassociation with South Africa's apartheid system (corporate disinvestment in South Africa, campaign against bank loans to South Africa, support for international sports boycotts, etc.);
4. Informing people in South Indiana about South Africa's apartheid system and providing up-to-date news on current issues, especially in relation to the role of the church.

THE PANTY PROJECT

SUMOSSA'S first material assistance project has been the Panty Project, an effort to provide 35,000 panties for the women in Namibian refugee camps in Angola.

This project was chosen after contacting the SWAPO office in New York and the American Committee on Africa to determine needs.

Publicity about the project has gone to approximately 600 churches in South Indiana through notices in the conference mailing and in the newsletter of the United Methodist Women, through distribution of flyers at the South Indiana Annual Conference and through displays at the conference School of Christian Mission, at the annual meeting of the South Indiana United Methodist Women, and at district meetings. Included in the display promoting the Panty Project were books, pamphlets, posters and current articles regarding the situation in Namibia and South Africa. The sets of posters from International Defense and Aid have been used frequently.

When persons have written inquiring about the project, they have been sent a background article on Namibia written by Congressman Lee Hamilton, a United Methodist and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives; an article provided by the Africa Fund and written by Jennifer Davis about her visit to a Namibian refugee camp; and information about SUMOSSA. It also was suggested to United Methodist Women that they read For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears as well as articles in RESPONSE and NEW WORLD OUTLOOK regarding Namibia and South Africa.

Local churches have used different methods to participate in this project. Some have sent financial contributions from their treasuries; some have asked members of their congregations to bring panties to the church on certain Sundays; some have designated the loose offerings received in the worship service during a particular month; some are asking parishioners to purchase panties as they purchase their Christmas presents and bring them as a special offering to the church; one woman gave a dinner and made every person bring a pair of panties in order to eat.
A member of the Aurora United Methodist Women wrote the following statement which has been copied and used by a number of churches:

"We encircle the waists of our sisters in Southern Africa with the elastic of our love and the fabric of our hearts, laced with understanding."

In addition to the parcels, some children are bringing in school supplies (pencils, paper, erasers, pencil sharpeners) and soap. One church has sent dictionaries.

Our first shipment of over 1800 pairs of panties is now on its way to Angola.

INVESTMENTS TASK FORCE

SUMOSSA's Investment Task Force met in October 1982 with the South Indiana Conference Board of Pensions. A representative from the General Board of Pensions also attended this meeting and discussed the principles and procedures which guide pension investments.

The Investment Task Force raised the following concerns: (1) They requested the conference board to form a study group or to join the SUMOSSA Task Force in investigating current investment patterns and in promoting some positive alternatives; (2) They encouraged the board to become familiar with the new statement on divestment made by the Lutheran Church in America and to become familiar with the concerns of Black Methodists and other Christians in South Africa and to seek out new investment ventures in the core-cities of the U.S.; (3) They indicated that SUMOSSA's study and reflection was rooted in interest in finding non-violent ways to effectively oppose apartheid.

Considerable discussion regarding possible alternatives to present practices followed. The president of the conference board indicated that he welcomed the opportunity for study and recommendations around the question of divestment and alternative investment. Several members of the board asked to be included in the formation of such a group.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Two seminars have been held regarding South Africa and Namibia. The first one in early 1982 was for members of SUMOSSA and other interested persons. The second one, which was held in November, was sponsored by the Indiana Interreligious Commission on Human Equality to learn of the efforts of the various religious communities and to find ways to coordinate efforts. It was held at the request of SUMOSSA.