

STATEMENT OF MR. CHARLES HIGHTOWER
WASHINGTON DIRECTOR
AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA
BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS
COMMITTEE
JUNE 11, 1970

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee

My name is Charles Hightower. I am the Washington Director of the American Committee on Africa.

I have requested time before this Committee to state the opposition of our organization to the confirmation of Mr. John G. Hurd as United States Ambassador to South Africa by the Senate. I appreciate very much being accorded that opportunity.

Before stating the reasons for our opposition to this confirmation, may I, Mr. Chairman, state for the record, something about our organization and its purpose.

The American Committee On Africa was established in 1953 in New York by our present Executive Director, Mr. George Houser.

Today, ACOA is a national committee with some 18,000 Americans affiliated.

The national committee and executive board include many prominent men and women from the intellectual community, from labor, religious institutions, and the arts.

The basic purpose of the American Committee On Africa is to build a constituency in this country to support African expressions for freedom and equality.

In this regard, our Committee supports the African liberation struggles currently underway against Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and in Mozambique.

And we have earned the reputation of being one of the leading anti-apartheid organizations in the United States.

In addition, and this is why I am appearing today before this committee, we have consistently worked for a policy by the United States government which reflects the goals of freedom, justice and equality for the peoples of Africa.

In the view of ACOA, the most critical problems in Africa have become centered in the southern-most portion of that vast continent of some 300 million persons. And in that southern area, characterized by the life-

and-death struggle for liberation in the wars being waged in Angola and in Mozambique, is the most critical problem of human development and social justice in the world today: the existence of the iron-tight, racist and repressive police state that we call South Africa.

At this late date in the history of such discussions, I feel certain that we need not describe further the nature of the horror which is South Africa. South Africa, the name itself, has become a synonym for human degradation and social repression.

What ought to be the most profoundly important points to discuss in regard to South Africa, are our responses to the serious problems she poses to the peace of the world, and United States policies to counter that threat and the nature of the men we shall depend upon to design and implement those policies.

Sadly, the nomination you have before you as members of the United States Senate, is not one whose public record or political background could be trusted with the post as ambassador to Pretoria.

Although Mr. Hurd was President Nixon's campaign manager in Texas during the 1968 elections, he has no professional experience in foreign affairs.

While this nominee has become a successful businessman in oil and cattle investments, a previous nomination of Mr. Hurd to an ambassadorial position, specifically as United States Ambassador to Venezuela had to be withdrawn last year by the nominee himself after revelations of conflict of interest, based on some of his oil investments, became known to the public.

The United States Embassy in South Africa is not a training ground for perspective diplomats. Pretoria is one of the crisis centers of the planet. And there is the pressing need for the Senate to pay closer attention to the entire diplomatic posture in South Africa.

This has been illustrated by the bizarre case of the United States naval attache, Lt. Colonel Walter Limbach, who was recently kidnapped in Cape Town.

In May, Lt. Colonel Limbach disappeared for 20 hours. When he returned, Ambassador William Roundtree insisted that he had been kidnapped. The South African police initially denied there had been a kidnapping. However, there is some evidence that anti-apartheid students in Cape Town tried to kidnap the naval officer to hold as a hostage for the 22 black political leaders jailed without trial. This account was printed on May 27, 1970, in the Cape Town newspaper, Argus.

Clearly, this is a serious matter; one that has to be probed. This fiasco demonstrates the need for professional diplomatic representation

in South Africa after the departure of Mr. Roundtree from that country.

Mr. Hurd has described his appointment as "a great challenge." There are reports that the South African government is very pleased with this appointment.

We are extremely concerned about the implications of this nomination. If American foreign policy toward the most troubled nation in Africa--South Africa-- is going to reflect an interest in assisting a solution to those crucial human problems, to express a concern for the non-white majority there and the escalating concern of America's black citizens for Africa, this nomination can only be seen as a callous disregard for just solutions and human interests.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, we think this nomination ought not to be approved by the Senate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
