for release
Monday, April 18, 1977

New York, N.Y. April, 1977 --- A "Statement of Principles" by twelve major U.S. corporations doing business in South Africa was severely criticized today.

Justice William H. Booth, president of the American Committee on Africa, (ACOA) released the text of a five page response to the principles titled "Too Little, Too Late". ACOA is a non-profit organization supporting African independence since its formation in 1953.

The Committee's response was sent to the 12 corporate signatories to the "Statement of Principles" and to the Rev. Leon Sullivan, a member of the General Motors board of directors, who released the principles last month.

"Twenty six million people live in South Africa today. Only four million, all of them white, are citizens." the statement begins.

"Africans cannot vote, buy or sell land, own factories, or mobilize their strength as workers in recognized trade unions...They have no control over their lives or their future," the response continues.

"Thus the issue of power is at the core of the black demand for change in South Africa...To propose change in any lesser terms is trivial and irrelevant," the report charges.

The statement notes how far the principles fall short of challenging apartheid by the fact they were endorsed by the South African government! Prior to their release, they were presented by corporate representatives to the South African ambassador in Washington, Roelof Botha. Critical wording calling for changes in South African apartheid law were watered down at his suggestion. In Pretoria, South African Minister of Information Cornelius Mulder welcomed the statement of principles by the companies.

"The corporations have deliberately avoided confronting apartheid by treating it primarily as a problem of work-place racial discrimination". the ACOA response charges.

The statement also details how "even within their own narrow limits, the principles are subject to a wide range of interpretation within the South African context....The slogan of equal and fair employment must inevitably ring hollow in the ears of a black worker in South Africa."

The statement also charges that the principles ignore another major issue, namely, the active role played by the companies "in providing capital, technology, skills and knowhow to South Africa."

The statement concludes that "It has become clear that change in South Africa will not come from some superficial tinkering with employment practices." "It is time for all Americans to tell the corporations, loudly and clearly - "Out of South Africa - NOW."

The response was prepared by Jennifer Davis, an exiled South African economist who is research director for ACOA. Copy of the ACOA report is enclosed.