November 22, 1977

STATEMENT ON POLAROID'S WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH AFRICA

We are pleased to note that Polaroid has confirmed the evidence released by the American Committee on Africa showing sales of Polaroid products to the South African government by the company's Johannesburg distributor. ACOA released a copy of a delivery slip showing that Polaroid film was being sent to the South African government for use in making the hated "passbook", in violation of Polaroid's stated policy announced in 1971.

We are equally pleased that Polaroid has responded to the evidence by deciding to terminate their sales agreement with the distributor, Frank & Hirsch.

Yesterday, Robert Palmer, Polaroid community relations executive telephoned our office to confirm our allegations; and this morning he phoned again to inform us of Polaroid's decision to terminate the sales agreement, prior to the company's public announcement. The American Committee on Africa has long been a vocal opponent of Polaroid's "experiment" in South Africa, and has supported efforts initiated by black workers in Polaroid's Boston plant to boycott Polaroid products.

We believe that Polaroid's decision is an implicit admission that its "experiment" in South Africa was a failure. Seven years ago Polaroid set a precedent--a bad precedent--by adopting a program which held out false hopes of significant changes from within apartheid South Africa. Today, Polaroid has set a new precedent--a good precedent--by recognizing that they should withdraw from South Africa.

Their decision represents a victory for those struggling to overthrow white minority rule in South Africa and for those who support that struggle around the world. The decision is a victory for the African National Congress, whose member, Indrus Naidoo, made the documentation available to ACOA; and to the black workers, Caroline Hunter and Ken Williams, fired by Polaroid, who first raised the issue.

In the absence of total economic sanctions against South Africa, we recognize that Polaroid products may reach South Africa by an indirect route. We urge Polaroid to adopt strict procedures to guard against this--much tighter than their procedures for monitoring their previous agreement with Frank & Hirsch.

We hope that Polaroid's decision will encourage other U. S. corporations to reconsider their involvement in South Africa and withdraw.