Small Group of Activists Puts Pressure On Big Firms to Get Out of South Africa

By Derek Burnham

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NEW YORK—Anti-apartheid posters and pamphlets were being hung along every wall of the unkempt mid-Manhattan office. Its seven rooms are cluttered with research reports, literature and pamphlets— and visitors.

This is the headquarters of the American Committee on Africa. Here on a recent day could be found a Canadian television producer seeking contact with South African exiles, a Canadian newspaper reporter researching corporate investments in South Africa, a Chase Manhattan Bank official explaining his bank’s policy on loans to that country and a Hunter College student selecting posters for a campaign against apartheid.

In recent months, the conferences and confrontations, the committee’s 21-person staff, many of them part-timers, manages to turn out a steady stream of pamphlets and visitors, the distributor and the executive assistant in New York. Mr. Irish drafted by the Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, a

On Big Firms

One of ACOA’s principal goals is to get the major U.S. corporations to cut their operations in South Africa to shut up shop and walk away from investments estimated at $10 billion. The organization is attacking the U.S. banks to forgo loans to South African companies and government security worth about $2.2 billion. The general effect of these loans and investments is to subordinate apartheid in South Africa, ACOA believes. ASlim Budget

ACOA has been in existence for 23 years and for most of that time has been the "only voice, small as it may have been, to raise South African issues" for discussion and action in the U.S., according to Sen. Dick Clark, Democrat of Iowa, who is chairman of the Senate subcommittee on African Affairs.

The immensity of the task that ACOA has set for itself is indicated by the fact that Moro Corp., alone has South African sales of $50 million and Ford and General Motors each do better than $200 million a year.

Pitted against giants like these, ACOA has an annual budget of $264,000, raised largely through donations, speakers’ fees and the sale of booklets and posters, which it shares with a tax-exempt affiliate called the Africa Fund. These funds are dwarfed by the reported $6 million that South Africa is spending on advertising and public relations in the U.S. just to sell its Krugerrand gold coins to U.S. investors. And they are only a fraction of the public-relations budgets of the U.S. corporations that are the principal targets of ACOA’s stinging broadsides.

Nevertheless, in the last year or so ACOA has scored some notable victories in its long-running battle with the South African regime. And it has succeeded in gathering important allies for its cause among church groups, labor unions and student organizations.

One major coup occurred late last year when Polaroid Corp. terminated its relationship with South African photographers Frank & Huth Pry, in a move for which it gave the anti-apartheid organization major credit. Mr. Pry is a director of the African dinner at a Hunt-