

Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting for September 13th 1965

Present: Peter Weiss, Chairman, Nelson Bengston, Robert Browne, Andrew Norman.
Staff: George Houser, James Robinson, Wendell Foster, Collin Gonze, Mary-Louise Hooper.

1. The Chairman reminded the Steering Committee that it is important to start our Committee meetings precisely at 5:30 P.M.
2. The Executive Director reported that he had written a congratulatory letter to the new US Ambassador to the UN, Arthur Goldberg and that a reply had been received thanking us for our good wishes. It was agreed that we should send a delegation to talk with Ambassador Goldberg about a number of items that are due to come up at the forth coming meeting of the General Assembly. It was proposed that the following persons be asked to serve on such a delegation: Donald Harrington, Peter Weiss, Mason Sears, Elizabeth Landis, James Farmer, and George M. Houser.
3. Elizabeth Landis reported that there had been about fifteen acceptances so far from lawyers who had been invited to attend a jointly sponsored conference to be held on October 15th at the NYU Center for International Studies on "Implementing the decision of the International Court on the South West African Cases". The ACOA and the NYU Center for International Studies are the joint sponsors.
4. George Houser reported that a letter had been received from Ronald Segal in London about plans for an International Conference next spring on the South West African case before the International Court. It was agreed that the American Committee on Africa should have a keen interest in this conference and should cooperate in any way we can. We should receive further information on the sponsorship and the program for the conference. The matter will be brought to the Executive Board for further action.
5. Wendell Foster has begun his work as Associate Director of the ACOA as of September 13th. He will be involved in all programs and projects of the ACOA and will give particular attention to relating these projects to Civil Rights Movements and to the Negro community. Initially he will be working with a number of African representatives of Liberation Movements here to see that they have opportunities to meet persons active in Civil Rights, and attempt to arrange radio and newspaper coverage. In as much as this was the first day of his duties, it was felt it was too early to have a lengthy discussion of the immediate projects in which he will be involved.
6. It was reported that press items have discussed the possibility of an early move towards a Unilateral Declaration of Independence of Southern Rhodesia. It was agreed by the Steering Committee that if there should be a unilateral move towards independence by Rhodesia our line should be one of reinforcing our government's position not to recognize an independent government of Rhodesia, to call for an end of trade with Rhodesia and to call back any diplomatic representatives we have in Salisbury.

It was agreed that we had to get up-to-date figures on the amount of trade between the US and Rhodesia with particular emphasis upon the amount of tobacco imported here from there. Furthermore, it was agreed that we should check with some of our congressional contacts about this issue and possibly hearings might be held at an appropriate time before the House or the Senate Committee.

7. Several items were reported on relating to South Africa-
 - a. Prof. Mphiwa Mbatha from SA who has had visa difficulties, has received first preference status under the immigration act. He's presently a Professor at Smith College. The lawyer whom we were responsible for urging to work on the case, Tom Farer, has successfully carried through on the case with the Boston office of US Immigration and Naturalization.
 - b. Elizabeth Franklin of South Africa who was working part-time as a temporary on our staff during the summer, has had to leave for a full time job because she needed more income.
 - c. Mr. Tom Kellock QC, who is chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London will be in the US for a few days in September. It was agreed that some of us ought to get together with him to talk about the work of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and ACOA to see how we mutually can aid one another.
 - d. Collin Gonze reported we are publishing speeches made by Ambassador Achkar Marof on the apartheid issue. Ambassador Marof is chairman of the UN Special Committee on Policies of Apartheid.
 - e. The Committee will sponsor a public meeting on Human Rights Day, December 10th built around the South African situation and our Defense and Aid Fund with Martin Luther King as the principal speaker.
 - f. Collin Gonze reported on a communication from Miss Mary Benson of South Africa who wants to produce some tapes that might be used on radio stations in the US. It was agreed that this ought to be explored further and we ought to cooperate with this if we can.
8. There was a brief discussion about the work of the summer project in which four students did research work, primarily on American investments in South Africa. This will be reported upon at the Executive Board Meeting. Especially important is a proposal which the summer project group would like to put up to the ACOA for action to follow-up on the work that the summer project started. This would involve taking on a person for a three month trial period both to help put in final shape the results of the research and also to work intensely especially among students who are anxious for an action program related to American investments in South Africa. The Committee was keenly interested in the proposal and hope that there might be some way of implementing it. The proposal would be discussed more fully at the Executive Board Meeting in the light of the financial position of the ACOA. Perhaps special funds can be found to make this proposal a reality.

9. George Houser reported that the organization of African Unity is scheduled to have its next Heads of State Conference in Accra, in October. October 21st is the date set at the moment which may be subject to some change. It was felt that it would be desirable to have Committee representation at the meeting if it is possible to arrange this both from a financial and time point of view.

10. Collin Gonze has indicated that he probably will be leaving the staff of the ACOA by the end of 1965. This raises the whole question of the longer look ahead of our publication program and what kind of person we would want to fill in the important position as Publications Director. The Steering Committee proposed that a committee be set up to examine this question and make some recommendations. The Committee will consist of: Elizabeth S. Landis, Robert Browne, George Houser, and Albert McQueen. Prof. McQueen has had long experience in Africa. Al McQueen returned from a period in East Africa early in 1965 and was on the faculty of Howard University. He is just now going to join the faculty at Brooklyn College. He is a Sociologist. If he is willing to serve on this Committee, it was felt that he could bring a fresh look at the literature and the magazine of ACOA and make valuable suggestions.