

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

Steering Committee

Minutes: January 4, 1965

Present: P. Weiss, N. Bengston, D. Jones, Mrs. E. Landis, A. Norman,  
H. Smythe

Staff: G. Houser, C. Gonze, J. Robinson

1. George Houser announced that Henry Lieberg, a student from Goddard College, would be doing research work and helping in other ways in the office for a period of eight weeks, ending February 28. This is his co-op job period and it is costing the Committee virtually nothing.
2. Gladstone Ntlabati, a South African now studying at Yale Divinity School, has offered to speak on behalf of the Africa Defense and Aid Fund and to have any money raised go through the Fund. Several members of the Steering Committee and the staff have become well acquainted with Mr. Ntlabati since he arrived here last April. The Steering Committee expressed confidence in Mr. Ntlabati and agreed upon a wording for a letter to authorize him to speak on our behalf. It was agreed that a time limit should be set until June 30 for this, and at that time it should be evaluated before being extended.
3. Senate Sub-Committee on Refugees (of the Judiciary Committee) under the Chairmanship of Senator Philip Hart is holding hearings on refugees in Africa. The ACOA received a call from the Sub-Committee asking if we would be willing to testify. The Steering Committee agreed that we should testify. Peter Weiss will represent the Committee. The hearings will be held on January 22.
4. The subject was again opened up of finding a Negro who could take a position on the executive staff of the Committee. George Houser pointed out the importance of not just looking for a person in general, but of having some particular job assignments in mind. Among the possibilities listed were:
  - a. A Washington representative who either would be located in Washington or would spend considerable time there working in both the executive and legislative branches of the government.
  - b. Work primarily with the Defense and Aid Fund and the various cases that it is dealing with.
  - c. Work primarily with civil rights organizations to aid them in taking more emphatic and knowledgeable positions on Africa.
  - d. Public relations activities in radio, television, the press, etc.

A committee composed of Hope Stevens, Stanley Levison, and Andrew Norman was set up to explore this further and to begin the search for the kind of a person we want.

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5. On the Congo it was agreed that it is important to find out what the latest thinking in Washington is. Peter Weiss will look into it when he is there. George Houser will be attending a meeting of the Advisory Council on Africa on the 15th which should give some indication of the tendencies in government thinking.

The Executive Director was asked to see that copies of G. Mennen Williams' letter to him, a response to the one that went to Secretary of State Rusk, are sent out to all members of the Board.

6. A number of suggestions have been made by members of the Executive Board of Congressmen and Senators who might be added to the National Committee. The office was asked to type up the names already suggested and send them to Nelson Bengston and Peter Weiss who will consult with some persons close to the Congressional scene, not only about these persons but others who might be suggested.
7. George Houser reported on his discussions with Waldemar Nielsen and George Loft of the African-American Institute regarding the Ford Foundation and its apparent agreement to consult the Government of Portugal before engaging in any project relating to Portuguese Africa. It was reported that not only telegrams had been sent to the Ford Foundation and the Bureau of Internal Revenue, but to Congressman Patman who is making an investigation of foundations. It was suggested that perhaps Jim Farmer, who is currently in Africa, might be able to make a statement from Dar es Salaam on the withdrawing of support by the Ford Foundation for the Mozambique Institute.
8. Collin Gonze reported on the deportation case against several members of the cast of Sponono. The case is in the hands of Rowland Watts of the Workers' Defense League and with whom we are cooperating. Hearings are being held before the Department of Immigration, the next one on February 17. We are trying to establish the fact that it is persecution for an African to be forced to return to South Africa and that therefore the United States should grant political asylum.
9. The next meeting is Monday, February 1.