

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

Steering Committee

May 12, 1964

MINUTES

Present: Peter Weiss, Chairman; Nelson Bengston. Staff: C. Gonzo, G. Houser, J. Robinson.

1. South African items: A number of items on South Africa were considered.

a. An announcement was made of plans for a demonstration on June 4th to protest political trials, and particularly the Rivonia trial, in South Africa. About a dozen organizations are cosponsoring the demonstration. It will begin at the South African consulate, and will include a walk to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza at 47 Street and First Avenue, where it will conclude with an outdoor meeting. It is hoped that several hundred people will participate.

b. George Houser reported on the possibility of Mary-Louise Hooper's coming to join the staff in a volunteer capacity, beginning in late August or early September. She would come on a trial basis for several weeks, and if it seemed to work out satisfactorily, would stay on more indefinitely. Her area of operation would be South African issues, where she could help prepare background material, help put out a bulletin on South African developments, help with speaking tours relating to South Africa, etc. The Steering Committee approved this idea.

c. The idea of an open letter to corporations doing business in South Africa, signed by prominent church, civil rights and labor leaders was approved. A draft will be circulated on this soon.

d. The idea of a national conference on US policy toward South Africa to be held in Washington was also approved. Such a conference would have to have the backing of labor, student, civil rights and church organizations. A possible time for it would be in December around Human Rights Day if there is sufficient time for preparation. It was suggested that papers prepared for the conference might be put out in separate printed form by some such magazine as the Nation or the New Republic, if the ACOA itself did not do it. A more detailed memorandum on plans for the conference will be presented.

e. Peter Weiss reported that Arthur Miller had sold the rights to his play, "After the Fall" to a South African producer. It was agreed that we should write to Arthur Miller inquiring about this. An announcement made earlier this year had indicated that he would not allow his play to be performed before segregated audiences.

f. There was discussion of the announcement that Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor were considering going to South Africa to make a film. It was agreed that Burton and Taylor should be contacted about this, and groups such as the NAACP and the Association of Artists for Freedom ought to be alerted for possible action. One form of action if the facts seem to warrant it, would be a picket line outside the theater where Richard Burton is starring in Hamlet.

2. Gilchrist in New York: Jim Robinson announced that Dr. Ian Gilchrist would be in New York from the 23rd to the 28th of May. There will be a number of interviews with newspaper people, some radio and television spots. A special gathering of

potential donors will be held at the home of Mrs. Sophia Yarnall Jacobs. A public meeting will be held in the Church Center at the United Nations on May 27th. Dr. Gilchrist's tour has been going very well.

3. The next meeting of the Executive Board is scheduled for Monday, June 15th at 5:45 p.m. It was hoped that Room 2H at Ten Park Avenue would again be available.

4. The next meeting of the Steering Committee will take place at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 3rd.