

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

801 Second Avenue • New York 17, N. Y. • MU 6-7263 • Cable AMCOMMAF



CO-CHAIRMEN

Donald Harrington
A. Philip Randolph

VICE-CHAIRMAN

James A. Pike

PRESIDENT

Peter Weiss

VICE-PRESIDENTS

Sophia Yarnall Jacobs
Frank C. Montero
Hope R. Stevens

SECRETARY

Farrell Jones

TREASURER

Nelson Bengston

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

(partial listing)

Sadie T. M. Alexander
Victor L. Anfuso
Thurman Arnold
Stringfellow Barr
Roger N. Baldwin
Richard Bolling
Mrs. Chester Bowles
Van Wyck Brooks
James B. Carey
Marguerite Cartwright
Allan Knight Chalmers
Max Delson
Peter De Vries
Charles C. Diggs Jr.
Harry Emerson Fosdick
Lewis S. Gannett
Carlton B. Goodlett
Arthur N. Holcombe
Elmer J. Holland
Mrs. Mary-Louise Hooper
Hubert H. Humphrey
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Rayford W. Logan
Eugene J. McCarthy
Robert J. McCracken
John A. Mackay
Will Maslow
Alexander Meiklejohn
Reinhold Niebuhr
F. D. Patterson
Clarence Pickett
Sidney Poitier
Paul A. Porter
A. Philip Randolph
Ira De A. Reid
Jackie Robinson
Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
Robert St. John
Francis B. Sayre
George W. Shepherd
Ralph W. Sockman
Edward J. Sparling
William E. Stevenson
C. Sumner Stone, Jr.
Rex Stout
Norman Thomas
Howard Thurman
Mark Van Doren
J. Waties Waring

EXECUTIVE BOARD

James Baldwin
Daniel J. Bernstein
Winifred Courtney
James Farmer
Joseph Jablow
David D. Jones
Stanley D. Levison
John V. Murra
Victor G. Reuther
Cleveland Robinson
James H. Robinson
Bayard Rustin
William X. Scheinman
Adelaide Schulkind
Hugh H. Smythe
Percy Sutton

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

George M. Houser

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

James R. Robinson

PROJECTS DIRECTOR

Hazel H. Gray

PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR

Collin Gonze

STAFF ASSOCIATES

Catharine Raymond
Emma Thomas

GENERAL COUNSEL

Robert Delson

C O P Y

October 25, 1962

Dear Ambassador Plimpton:

I read with greatest interest your recent speech before the Special Political Committee on South Africa's apartheid policy. I would like to make several observations about the speech.

First, I would like to note with appreciation that this was the strongest statement which a United States representative has ever made on apartheid at the United Nations. This is the first time the United States has, I believe, ever specifically "condemned" apartheid. Our Committee appreciates the fact that our Government not only has committed itself, but urged other states, "to exert as much influence as they can on the (South African) Government." Furthermore, I think it is important that the United States has announced its intention of requesting the Security Council to maintain a close watch on developments in South Africa, presumably on the grounds that South African policies may lead to "bloodshed, war, and disaster for all races."

Second, I was glad to note that you stated that the United States "has already adopted and is enforcing the policy of forbidding the sale to the South African Government of any arms, whether from governmental or commercial sources, which could be used by that Government to enforce apartheid either in South Africa or in the administration of South West Africa." But I would like to ask what kind of a distinction can be made between arms given to the South African Government for the enforcement of apartheid or arms that could be used for any other purpose? Do the qualifying words mean that some arms might be sent to the South African Government which would presumably not be used for enforcing apartheid? If it is assumed that some arms might go to South Africa for other than the purpose of enforcing apartheid, what check would the United States have on how these arms would be used by South Africa? For example, what assurance would there

H.E. Mr. Francis T.P. Plimpton
Permanent Mission of the United States
to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York 17, New York

be that any arms South Africa has might not be used against other African states?

Finally, I am concerned about that section of your speech referring to sanctions. You stated that the adoption of a program of sanctions would be "inherently doomed to failure." Why would such a measure necessarily be a failure, especially if the United States itself was committed to sanctions? Is this statement not tantamount to saying that the United States itself could not back economic sanctions? The United States is second only to the United Kingdom in volume of trade with South Africa. In 1960, approximately 20 per cent of South Africa's imports came from the United States and approximately 10 per cent of her exports went to the United States. Even if the United States unilaterally and on principle decided on a program of sanctions, would this not have an appreciable effect upon the South African Government? Such a course of action by the United States would inevitably have great effect upon other countries trading with South Africa.

Furthermore, sanctions are not to be judged only by their immediate and direct effect on the economy of South Africa. Sanctions can have an important psychological effect as well. They can undermine confidence in a regime enforcing such blatantly unjust racial practices. They therefore can have an effect on political unity behind the white supremacy regime. In the same way, they can have great influence on overseas investors. Investments in South Africa fell off, for example, directly after the Sharpeville massacre of two years ago when confidence in the South African regime was seriously questioned.

There now is an accepted policy in United States courts in relation to our race problem here at home that the Government will not support public institutions practicing segregation. Why can this principle not be applied internationally in relation to South Africa? For example, does the Department of Commerce give information to United States firms on investment possibilities in South Africa? Is this a proper use of public funds in view of South Africa's racial policies? Also, if our Government is granting export risk insurance for companies trading with South Africa, or granting investment guarantees for investors in South Africa, should this not be withdrawn? There are undoubtedly many ways in which private investments in South Africa can be discouraged by the Government until a change of policy has been effected.

The American Committee on Africa, favoring a program of economic sanctions, has tried not to minimize the difficulties of implementing such a policy. Because we recognize that sanctions are difficult to implement, we have proposed that a resolution be passed which would call for a study of the trade relations between South Africa and all the rest of the countries of the world, with a view to working out alternative trade relations for those countries carrying on the most substantial trade with South Africa at present.

Undoubtedly it is true that apartheid will be weakened by the "steady and repeated impact of the mobilized conscience of the world community." But this mobilization of the conscience of the world must take specific forms of action. Both white and non-white South African opponents of apartheid have appealed to the rest of the world to impose economic sanctions. They do this knowing that their own suffering will be great. The time must come when the appeal of these people must be answered through action as well as through words.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) George M. Houser

GMH:dk

cc: Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, G. Mennen Williams
Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations,
Adlai E. Stevenson