

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

Executive Board
Annual Meeting

March 16, 1964

MINUTES

Present: D. Harrington, Chairman; E. Carrington; W. Courtney; J. Farmer; S.Y. Jacobs; C. Jones; F. Jones; S. Levison; A. Norman; A. Schulkind; H. Stevens; P. Weiss.

Staff: C. Gonze; G. Houser; D. Kallen; C. Raymond; J. Robinson.

1. Reports on projects

a) Consultative Council on South Africa: George Houser reported that a meeting of organizations held on January 30 on the South African situation had been very successful and that a Continuation Committee was appointed to draw up a statement of purposes for a Consultative Council on South Africa. To date, more than 20 organizations of the 40 or so present at the initial meeting had affiliated with the Council, including CORE, NAACP, SNCC, UAW, IUE, United World Federalists, and the U.S. National Student Association, and a number of church groups. \$500 was contributed by the United Church Board for World Ministries to defray initial expenses. Organizational questions such as frequency of meetings will be decided by the affiliated organizations at their first meeting, but no new staff or office is envisaged. It is probable that the Council will meet when the South African question comes before the Security Council and is discussed by the General Assembly, and when specific crises occur in South Africa.

Further in connection with South Africa, the Executive Director announced that the staff had submitted a document to the UN Special Committee on Apartheid concerning torture of political prisoners. In addition, a letter had been sent to the International Red Cross urging an investigation into the matter, and a press release had gone out. Organizations concerned about the South African situation will be asked to send their own letters to the Red Cross.

b) International Conference on Economic Sanctions Against South Africa: Peter Weiss announced that a conference on economic sanctions against South Africa, held under the auspices of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and sponsored by seven African Heads of State and 130 internationally-known persons will take place in London from April 14 to 17. Background papers exploring all aspects of the sanctions question have been prepared and are scheduled to be published in book form by the Penguin African Library in the fall. It is hoped that the Conference will stimulate and encourage international coordination of action on South Africa. The Board unanimously approved a resolution to send the Executive Director, and former Board members Elizabeth Landis and Daniel Bernstein to represent the ACOA at the Conference.

c) ACOA Africa trip: James Robinson announced that a group trip to Africa, costing \$1,750 per person, was being organized, and 15 deposits had been received. The required minimum number of persons for the tour is 25.

The Board approved a resolution clarifying the term "member" of the ACOA: "Any person who gives \$1.00 or more to the American Committee on Africa or one of its special funds shall thereby become a member-contributor of ACOA unless he specifically states that he wishes to be considered a non-member contributor."

d) Dr. Gilchrist's speaking tour in the United States: Mr. Robinson announced that Ian Gilchrist, whose work among the Angolan refugees we have been supporting through our Emergency Relief to Angola program for more than a year, will arrive in the States on April 17 for a one-month fund-raising speaking tour. He is scheduled to be the featured speaker at a nation-wide conference of the Collegiate Council for the United Nations in Chicago.

e) Theater benefit: Mr. Robinson further announced that a theater benefit, offering tickets to two plays, *The Blood Knot* and *Sponono* was being held on the evenings of April 8 and 30. The Executive Director explained that the decision to include *Sponono* in the benefit plans was made because of Alan Paton's desire for us to do something.

2. Board elections: N. Bengston, J. Jablow, S.Y. Jacobs, A.E. Norman, V. Reuther, C. Robinson, J.H. Robinson, W.X. Scheinman, and A. Schulkind were re-elected to the Board for two-year terms. In addition, the following persons were elected to the Board for the first time: Robert Browne, Elmer Carter, Mark Cohen, Forrest Johnson, Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., and Mason Sears.

3. Annual Report:

a) James Robinson reported that the 1964 budget card mailing had brought in \$15,000 in the first 18 days, reducing the debt to \$9,204.55, excluding taxes and the March 19 payroll. Last year the budget appeal netted \$31,000 through December 31.

Collin Gonze reported that Africa Today brought in more money in 1963 than it has in the past. The number of subscriptions is now just under 4,000.

b) Report of the Executive Director on "African Dynamics and ACOA Direction": George Houser summarized his report which had been mailed to Board members prior to the meeting. He reviewed developments in Africa and ACOA policy in the last decade, and pointed out that we had never naively assumed, as had many Americans unfamiliar with Africa, that there would be no difficult problems to face after independence had been achieved. He said that a new era in African affairs had been ushered in with the Congo crisis, and that the recent events in East Africa and in Gabon were part of this.

In thinking about future program, we have to ask ourselves three basic questions: 1) should we shift our emphasis to a program related to basic economic and educational problems of independent Africa?; 2) will our membership expand sufficiently to support a growing program based on the struggle for freedom in southern Africa?; and 3) in view of the number of independent African states, increased activities on the part of the UN and the formation of the Organization of African Unity, are we as important to those fighting for liberation as we have been in the past?

The Executive Director was optimistic that the Committee would continue to receive support for its important work, but said it was difficult to assess accurately at this time what effect the continuing crisis on the civil rights front would have. The fact that this is a Presidential election year would probably not affect our work greatly.

The Board felt that the work of the Committee was more important than ever. ACOA was the only group in the States actively supporting the freedom movements in southern Africa. It is also best qualified to interpret events in Africa to the American public. Despite our inability to counteract fully the barrage of criticism and negative attitudes toward Africa spread by the mass communications media, we do reach out to a large constituency which is influential.

The Board was agreed that one of the prime tasks of the ACOA at the present time is the achievement of greater identification with the Negro community.

The staff reports were accepted with thanks.

4. Frequency of Board meetings: It was agreed to hold Board meetings quarterly instead of bi-monthly as in the past. The format of future meetings will be decided by the Steering Committee.