

COALITION TO STOP RHODESIAN IMPORTS
FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE, PHILA., May 11, 12, 1974

The work session of the conference on Sunday brought out many points, and saw a great deal of constructive discussion on and exchange of ideas. We will try to summarize these by working with the outline for discussion point by point, noting the important points that were brought out at different times during the conference.

I. Summary of developments in cities represented

Boston -- AFSC was the only organization represented. The African Sun was picketed in early March by 150 people; nevertheless the boat was unloaded. No contacts with longshoremen have been made, and a working coalition has not been formed, although groups indicated that they would be willing to picket again. Boston is a declining port, and the only one represented where the vast majority of the longshoremen are white.

New York -- The Coalition has the broadest range of groups affiliated, and is confident that large picket lines can be assembled. As yet no boycott or picket has occurred, as negotiations have been going on between Henry Lieberg of ACOA, and Anthony Scotto, president of ILA local 1814. Mr. Scotto has been helpful in securing important documents for the campaign, such as old ship manifests and copies of the ILA resolution against handling Rhodesian cargo.

Philadelphia -- Work on the waterfront has been notably successful, with some good contacts with the rank and file and successful boycotting of three ships. The working coalition is small and has not turned out the large pickets characteristic of Boston and Baltimore. The Coalition Steering Committee meets regularly between ship arrivals to build support among longshoremen and to educate the public around the areas of southern Africa and Rhodesia. One mass educational meeting has been held and another is due shortly. Two educational efforts in the hiring hall of the ILA have been made, with good response, and more are planned. Union leadership in Philadelphia has been non-committal.

Baltimore -- The Coalition has gotten broad support for picket lines when ships have arrived, and several have been turned away. Nevertheless, the coalition is divided on strategy and ideology. Union leadership has been active in a two-faced manner, making statements to the press and not taking any positive and occasionally sabotaging efforts on the docks. One large educational meeting, featuring Congressman Parren Mitchell, others involved in the boycott, and other movement personalities was not supported by all groups opposing Rhodesian imports. Groups represented at the conference were AFSC, ALSC, RU, OL, Attica Brigade as well as unaffiliated members of the coalition and longshoremen.

Norfolk -- The Tidewater Africans, a black GI group, and the Black Student Union at Norfolk State College have talked with ILA officials, and been assured that no Rhodesian cargo is unloaded, but lacking contact. With the rank and file they have no way of verification. No ships have been picketed. They expect to increase their participation in the project in order to help firm up a network which will close U.S. ports to Rhodesian cargo.

Zimbabwe -- Tapson Mawere, official representative of ZANU in North America reported on the state of the liberation struggle in his country, and of the importance of economically isolating the settler regime. He said that the Zimbabwean people are aware of our efforts and very appreciative.

II. WORK ON THE WATERFRONT -- KEY TO STOPPING RHODESIAN IMPORTS

A. Identifying ships carrying Rhodesian cargo.

Henry Lieberg was asked to distribute instructions on this matter, but briefly: the U.S. has ceased voluntary compliance with UN requests for identification of ships carrying contraband; nevertheless, from the period that reports were issued, a clear picture

of companies and ships involved had emerged. Main carriers are Farrell Lines, Moore-McCormack, Hellencc Lines, and South African Marine. Itineraries of ships may be obtained by reading the Journal of Commerce, for most advanced notice; calling the shipping companies; checking shipping news in local papers; checking postings at the hiring center; getting a call from the coalition in another city. Most Rhodesian goods are originally shipped from Lourenco Marques, and Beira, Mozambique, and occasionally from Durban or Capetown, South Africa.

The problem of mislabeling, and transshipment via other countries, such as South Africa, England, or other U.S. ports is something which needs careful consideration, especially if the Byrd amendment is repealed. It will depend largely on the initiative of the longshoremen and the effectiveness of education around the identification of cargo in the hold, which can be done by longshoremen and other coalition members.

B. Education on the Docks.

Philadelphia is the only city engaged in systematic educational efforts on the docks. Baltimore, with many contacts and discussions among different groups has also been effective. The availability of the hiring hall as a place and the possibility of developing programs to be used simultaneously in different cities was discussed favorably. The question of longshoremen and non-longshoremen and the attitude of the longshoremen as supporting or leading the action was mentioned, and it was felt that strategies should be directed toward developing consciousness of a leading role of longshoremen.

C. Present position of ILA leadership. How do we pressure them.

There was consensus that union leadership will vacillate and take the politically most opportune stance; that pressure on them is effective in educating longshoremen but that they should not be relied upon. It was pointed out by a docker that they are generally afraid of, and tail behind, a mobilized and politically educated rank and file.

D. How to strengthen communications between longshoremen and their supporters?

Not discussed per se. Picket lines, the need for other workers to make sacrifices, and the need for non-longshoremen members of the coalition to do educational work and research was stressed very strongly by Mike Maybank, Phila. docker. In Philadelphia the particular problem of communication between dockworkers and picketers at the time of the picket was mentioned.

E. Money and the refusal to work.

In general it was felt that this has not been a problem to far, except in terms of the strategy of the companies, sometimes with union collaboration, to pay double or triple time to work contraband cargo. It may become so if systematic boycotts develop or if we attempt to extend the boycott to other racist colonial southern African regimes. Avoidance of the problem will largely depend on the level of consciousness of the longshoremen and the ability to discriminate among contraband and legitimate goods on the same ship, avoiding the need to refuse to work a ship altogether. Specific problems of cleanheads and young workers with little seniority was mentioned, and conceded to be relatively more important in the declining ports of Boston and Philadelphia than in the expanding ports of N.Y., Baltimore, and Norfolk.

F. Health issue -- Asbestos is a particularly dangerous substance and this issue should be exploited, particularly in Philadelphia and Charleston, main ports of entry for that particular item.

How best to support the refusal of longshoremen to unload contraband?

This has been mentioned in many contexts above. Adequate media coverage is essential. Baltimore has received Sunday essay type coverage in major papers, and radio coverage by a black DJ. Philadelphia has had some coverage by the city's black newspaper, and one talk show on educational radio. The need for a press agent, advance and post facto reports delivered to media, and the exploitation of radio and TV talk shows was emphasized for all cities. To a certain extent newspapers are receptive and labor or waterfront

reporters should be contacted. Specific actions to attract publicity, such as claiming of cargo by ZANU were mentioned.

Winning of support from other parts of the community and the role of mass educational efforts are more profitably discussed with the question of building a joint strategy.

III. National Legislation -- REPEAL OF THE BYRD AMENDMENT

Chris Root, of the Washington Office on Africa gave a comprehensive report on the state of the Byrd Amendment in the House. Overall, passage is by no means certain, and if action is to be taken, it must happen in June, otherwise impeachment and elections will push into a closet and nullify the Senate action. Thomas Morgan, a western Penna. representative is responsible for bringing it up in committee and is under a very intensive lobbying effort by Steel not to do so. The Black Caucus in Congress, some liberal democrats, and other congressmen representing largely black districts are supporting repeal, as well as several large church groups, the American Bar Ass'n., and some unions, including steelworkers. Positions taken in international union offices have not been communicated to the rank and file, as industry campaigns to have employees write letters, and propaganda about loss of jobs if sanctions are imposed has been successful in some areas. The industry is lobbying for chrome stockpiles for civilian use, recognizing to a certain extent the temporary nature of Smith's control of Rhodesia. Any action which generates significant publicity, as well as direct congressional pressure is important.

Repeal will force importation underground, but by no means stop it. Four countries officially import Rhodesian goods; many do so unofficially. The importance of this campaign and the way to go about it relate directly to the question of national strategy.

IV. BUILDING A JOINT STRATEGY AND COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK AMONG LONGSHOREMEN AND THE VARIOUS COALITION AND SUPPORT GROUPS

Several important strategic questions were raised, which can be grouped as follows Do we recognize the raising of consciousness among rank and file longshoremen as the primary goal and the most effective way to stop the imports? If so, what importance do we attach to soliciting the support of prominent political and community leaders and labor bureaucrats? How can we use the UN sanctions and the Byrd amendment campaigning for effective education without relying on them for our political and moral justification? How much effort should we put into the repeal campaign and how can we use it to expose the duplicity of the government? Should we form a national coalition, and how strongly should an advanced anti-imperialist line be put forward? Should we become a mass organization and not a coalition?

It was generally agreed that the rank and file are the primary, leading actors, and that bureaucrats cannot be relied upon. It was pointed out that a strong anti-imperialist line might hamper efforts at winning support from a broad variety of public groups which can be useful in educating about general conditions in southern Africa, and on the picket lines. These groups are objectively anti-imperialist and should not be alienated.

With the workers a more progressive stance should be taken; the question of export of jobs is one which needs careful handling to avoid national chauvinism and to point out that job export only happens because multi-nationals with state backing can oppress people more strongly abroad, and that our struggle is the same.

In terms of broadening the coalition, the feeling was expressed that many different types of groups should be brought in but that it is particularly important to involve other workers, particularly steelworkers and truckers and that the struggle should be linked to the development of class consciousness and the struggle within the unions, particularly the ILA, between progressive rank and file and reactionary officials.

Do we encourage individual groups to work politically apart from the coalition or do we attempt to unite as broad a group as possible around a minimum acceptable demand, stop Rhodesian imports, whether the basis be moral, political, or narrowly legal?

The need for expansion to other ports, particularly Newark, New Orleans, and Texas ports was stressed.

Several concrete steps to improve intercity communication were taken:

- 1) Phone tree -- a phone tree between the different cities was established, so that the arrival and departure of ships can be communicated immediately to the next ports. The phone tree should be used regardless of the efficiency of the individual city's means of finding out arrival dates. ZANU representatives in N.Y. will also be kept informed.
- 2) Monthly newsletter -- Each city coalition has been asked to forward to Simeon White in Philadelphia, by the last day of each month, a report on that month's activities along with several copies of any agitational material which has been used. Simeon will prepare a report and collate educational material for distribution to other cities.
- 3) Dockers communication -- The conference provided an opportunity for longshoremen from Philadelphia and Baltimore to get together and discuss their common problems and ways to develop support for rank and file reform in other cities.

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