



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

Department of History
614 Social Sciences
267 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

October 13, 1981

Bill Minter
209 1/2 West Trinity
Durham, NC 27701

Dear Bill:

I have just returned from the Conference in Solidarity with the Oppressed Peoples of Southern Africa and I want to share with you some of my impressions as well as the contact which I made on behalf of ACAS.

The Conference itself was unique in two respects. Most impressive was the size. There were about 1,200 people attending representing community groups, civil rights organizations, labor unions, political action groups, and peace groups. The progressive wing of the labor movement was there in particular strength and Cleveland Robinson's presentation was, I think, the best critique of U.S. foreign policy presented. In any case, representatives from organizations throughout the country all emphasized the need to create a national coalition and many were critical of their past tendency to separate national from international issues and to focus narrowly on the particular problem which faced their membership. Time and again reference was made to the linkages that existed between the loss of jobs and runaway firms opening up in South Africa and between reduction in school food programs and increases in the military budget--some of which may end up in Savimbi's hands.

The sense of concern and need for coalitions provides a unique opportunity for ACAS. In conversations with Randell Robinson (TransAfrica), Jeanne Sinebad (The Washington Office on Africa), Jennifer Davis (ACOA), Bill Southerland (American Friends), Prexy Nesbitt (The Program to Combat Racism), and Timothy Smith (Divestment Campaign) all emphasized the important role we as committed Africanists can play both as a "resource bank" and an influential political action group. They were all extremely receptive to my suggestion that we provide them with a "background paper" and short analysis of crisis situations which they would either use internally or distribute to their membership. In the near future I will be in contact with them to work out some of the details. Both ACOA and The Washington Office have also agreed to enter into a reciprocal arrangement whereby they provide us with their publications (at cost) so that we can help keep our membership informed of the most recent events. We also discussed joint research projects. A similar type of arrangement will be worked out with TransAfrica once a senior fellow is hired, early in November. In short, our effort to become part of a national coalition is off to a good start.

October 13, 1981
Page 2

Our other immediate need is to reactivate and increase our membership. Toward this end I am sending out a four page letter outlining our objectives to all ACAS members this week and we are hoping to secure the A.S.A. mailing list free of charge within a week or two. James Turner is contacting the A.H.S.A. Board to determine if we can get their mailing list or if they would be willing to send out our letter in their next mailing. We are also holding an ACAS session at the A.S.A. on Friday, October 23rd, where we hope to create enthusiasm and gain new members.

Finally, I have written to Prexy Nesbitt seeking a grant for \$2,500 to help us defray some of our costs and have indicated by telephone to the organizers of the Dennis Brutus Defense Campaign that we support and endorse their efforts. I indicated that a letter from the entire ACAS Board will be forthcoming.

Let me just note that I have found the first month both very demanding and rewarding. I want to thank those of you whom I have called to discuss various issues or to resolve administrative problems for all your help as well as those Board members who have sent me important information.

With best wishes,

Allen Isaacman MRB

Allen Isaacman
Executive Secretary
ACAS

AI:mrB