

TO: ACAS Steering Committee

February 1, 1984

FROM: Chris Root

RE: Report from political action committee meeting and a conversation with Ann Seidman

Henry Bucher tells me that he will probably organize a conference call among us soon, so I wanted to report in on a few things that I think would be useful to get your ideas on.

(1) The political action committee would like the steering committee to be involved in deciding on our priorities for political action this year. Assuming that the work in support of the Wolpe campaign and on the DIA funding issue will be handled outside of Washington, we focused our attention on helping with the Latin America liaison work, the southern Africa campaign statement and its political use, and support for a major conference on South African destabilization. There was a good deal of support for the destabilization and the Central America comparison work (more on the former below). We concluded, however, that the political action committee alone would not be able to take on the campaign statement project.

In discussing the campaign statement project, we recognized two goals: one, to affect the political climate in which southern Africa is debated in this election year, and two, to help build ACAS as an organization. The "plus" of doing this project is that it would involve broad outreach to scholars, and this is the only one of the projects that we've considered that has this characteristic. (Probably the strongest approach to scholars would not be under the banner of ACAS, but rather in a cover letter signed by some ACAS folks and some more centrist folks. So this isn't necessarily an explicit ACAS outreach and recruitment project.) The other projects would probably involve a much smaller pool of scholars in active work.

The political action committee would be prepared to arrange for the drafting of the campaign statement, but cannot take on all the work involved in circulating it (to the ACAS, ASA, and AHSA networks) for signature, in producing the final document and in carrying out all of the political outreach that we would want to do to make use of the document. We can do all this only if ACAS as a whole thinks it's an important enough political priority to give some labor and resources to it beyond the political action group. We also need to be aware that this project involves some pretty high mailing costs.

(2) The political action committee recommends that ACAS agree to be involved as one of the "core" groups putting on the proposed 1985 tribunal and conference on South African destabilization. The attached concept paper lays out the idea for the conference and sketches out how it will be organized. The southern Africa workshop at the ACAS meeting discussed the idea for this event at some length and Bill Minter and I have been doing a good bit of work on it at Washington planning meetings thus far. We need to determine within the next several weeks whether there is a sufficient core of commitment and interest for this event to take off.

(3) Ann Seidman and I had a good meeting last night about the Central America liaison project. We think it might be feasible to organize either one meeting or two meetings (one on the east coast and one on the west coast) in the late spring or summer for people to get together and begin to explore these comparisons. This could provide a good basis for putting together high-quality panel(s) at ASA and perhaps a book might come out of this process in addition.

To make this happen, we'd need to decide whether we can do something on both coasts or just one (or also in the midwest, if there is the impetus for it there as well), and to put together a planning committee of a few southern Africa and Central America scholars. Any comments?

I look forward to talking with you all soon.

cc: political action committee members