

14 March 1969

Dear Friend,

Next Friday, March 21st, is the 9th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, an event which was commemorated last year as an International Day for the elimination of racial discrimination. In this year of racial unrest here in the United States it is easy to forget the existence of institutionalized racism in its most evil form, the apartheid system of South Africa. It is also easy to forget that many of the American institutions involved in the fight against racism in the United States are deeply involved in supporting racism in South Africa. This is only one reason why what happens in South Africa is of importance to us here.

The struggle to free Southern Africa from the rule of tyrannical, discriminatory, police-state regimes is one in which we can play very little part. It is a struggle that will take several years. Perhaps all we can hope to do is to ensure that it is not forgotten, to publicize its successes, and to bring pressures upon American Government agencies, private industry etc., to abstain from support for the present regimes. Another Vietnam in Southern Africa seems unlikely at this point, but in ten years? If American interests in Southern Africa are increased, in fact if they are not very drastically reduced, it seems highly probable that great pressure will be exerted to ensure that there is no "instability" in the area.

There is much a Madison-based organization, similar to groups in other parts of the country, can do to organize concern for Southern Africa. Many Wisconsin-based firms, as well as the University of Wisconsin, have growing involvements in Southern Africa. There is a great need for information on events in Southern Africa which have no outlet here. There are a number of Congressmen and Senators from Wisconsin whose opinions are important in Washington and who may be open to new interpretations of events in Africa. There is a growing body of "awakened" students, of Africanists, African students, American blacks and whites, who are seeking outlets and channels for their concerns.

You are invited to participate in a discussion on the possibility of forming such a community-wide organization in Madison, on Saturday 22 March at 2 p.m. at the Wil/Mar Neighbourhood Center, 953 Jenifer Street (in the Pilgrim Congregational Church). A background paper presenting some reasons for such an organization and suggestions as to its realm of activities, has been prepared and will be available before the meeting. This paper will merely be a basis for discussion and is in no way intended to exclude other directions of action.

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday.

on behalf of the ad hoc committee for
Action on Southern Africa.