

Nov. 24, 1978

Dear 7-Days, please find enclosed some material on the recent protests here in California against the BANK of America. We certainly hope you can carry something on it especially in light of your excellent coverage of the recent CDE report detailing the exact role of U.S. banks in supporting apartheid.

Actually there have been all sorts of important developments in the Southern Africa support movement here in the U.S. such as the recent conferences in the Midwest and the Northeast. We certainly hope they can be covered as well.

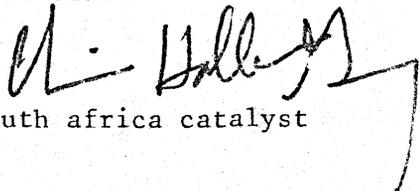
With the deepening crisis in Southern Africa (and not accidentally with U.S. foreign policy for that region) we can only expect the movement here in the U.S. to grow larger and more significant.

Optimistically we've written a short article on the Nov. 17 leafleting in what we consider to be a rough approx. of your style. If you choose to use it credit it to C.H. Gray of the West Coast South Africa Catalyst Project.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help you improve your coverage.

For information on west coast organizing contact the West Coast South Africa Catalyst Project at (415) 494-0355). For the east coast the best sources are the ACOA (212) 838-5030, IPS , and the East Coast South Africa Catalyst Project at (413) 549-1916 ask for Josh, or (413) 586-5304 or 586-3611 ask for Karl.

take care


south africa catalyst

1- Day

BANK OF AMERICA, BANK OF APARTHEID

Statewide protests hit 400 branches of the B of A in 111 California cities and towns.

Robin stood outside the main Bank of America branch in San Jose California and started handing leaflets to the patrons waiting for the doors to open. "Attention Bank Customers!" it said at the top. The body of the leaflet went on to explain the important role the Bank of America plays in supporting the white South African government with over \$200 million in loans. "South Africa needs Bank of America loans...but do you need Bank of America?" ends the leaflet. Most bank customers were shocked by the B of A/South Africa connection and many said they would do something about it. The branch manager wasn't shocked by the direct loans the Bank of America makes to South Africa however, he was shocked that anyone would dare leaflet outside his bank. A "cuban revolutionist" is what he called Robin who is a young black woman in her mid-twenties and the San Jose Co-ordinator for Stop Banking on Apartheid. He called the cops on her. The cops made her leave the bank property but that was all.

On November 17 these little dramas took place at over 400 Bank of America branches; from Arcata on the Oregon boarder to Imperial Beach a few miles north of Mexico. Almost two thousand people gave out over 200,000 leaflets to bank customers urging them to join a boycott of the Bank of America until it ceases making loans to South Africa. Hundreds of people walked right in and took out their money. In Oakland one branch averaged ten withdrawals an hour, in Berkeley the student Co-op system withdrew accounts totalling \$4 million, and in L.A. one lawyer took his money out and wore the check pinned to his suit his whole day in court.

The long term effect on the Bank of America will be hard to gauge; the short term effect was pretty dramatic. Police were called again and again but no arrests were made. Regional managers from the East Bay and Fresno contacted the Stop Banking on Apartheid Headquarters in San Francisco to ask what was happening. And the bank gave out tens of thousands of their prepared statement defending their South African loan policy.

Stop Banking on Apartheid is the California branch of a world-wide movement that seeks to cut off western loans to South Africa. Such loans are crucial to South Africa's economy and to the maintenance of apartheid. U.S. banks have lent South Africa over 43 billion--most of it to the government and its state-owned industries. (see the article in the Oct. 27, 1978 issue) In 1977 (when loans were less), the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations found that this investment had the net effect of "strengthening the economic and military self-sufficiency of South Africa's apartheid regime."

Stop Banking on Apartheid choose the Bank of America because not only is it a major lender direct to the South African government, but it is also the world's

largest retail bank and is therefore vulnerable to consumer boycotts and pressure. If the B of A were forced to stop making loans to South Africa the affect would be world-wide. In South Africa it would ^{be} front-page headline news.

Impressive as the November 17th leafleting was, it is only the beginning of the kind of campaign that will be necessary to force ~~some~~ multinational giants such as the Bank of America to stop their support of South Africa.

§BOA drew its support from the growing numbers of student, community, church, and labor groups that are organizing around the escalating crisis in Southern Africa and the U.S. economic and political support for the besieged white regimes there.

In Fresno a young white printer organized the leafleting of four branches. It was Fresno's first anti-apartheid protest in anyone's memory. After reporting on the day's leafleting to the §BOA office Rich added his own analysis of the liberation for South Africa support movement in the United States: "You know if it happens in Fresno its really happening!"