

TESTIMONY
Ohio House Bill 22
June 4, 1985

Good afternoon. I am Gordon Welty, Associate Professor of Sociology at Wright State University in Dayton, and Co-chair with Deborah Archie of the Ohio Coalition Against Apartheid. Constituency groups most central to our Coalition's efforts are trade unions, churches, Black organizations, community organizations, and the students, faculty and staff of colleges and universities throughout Ohio. We have affiliated local coalitions in the major cities of Ohio, including Cleveland, Youngstown, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati.

The Ohio Coalition Against Apartheid fully endorses House Bill 22, as introduced by Representative McLin, and strongly urges you to pass this legislation.

This afternoon, I would like to speak about the nature of apartheid, and briefly address several questions about divestiture.

Let us define "apartheid." This is an Afrikaaner word which means "racial separateness." But that dictionary definition doesn't fully bring out the nature of apartheid. The Nationalist Party, which came to power in South Africa in 1948, and has remained in power to this day, has indicated that the Black people of South Africa - by which it meant both Africans and 'Coloured' people - should be held "under the trusteeship of the European race." The Party went on to say that "It is strongly-opposed to any attempt that might lead to the mixing of European and non-European blood." Allow me to quote further; the Party "declares itself in favor of territorial and political segregation between Europeans and non-Europeans in general and in residential, and as far as practicable, in the industrial spheres." These policies of the enforced racial, territorial, residential and political separation of the peoples of South Africa were institutionalized in a series of laws, commencing in 1949, as well as in the Constitution of 1961.

As a result of such constitutional and legal provisions, twenty-five million Black South Africans are virtually slaves in their own land. They cannot vote, they cannot own land, they cannot seek employment where they choose, they cannot travel without permission, they have labor unions which cannot strike, and they face the threat and reality of arrest and confinement - without benefit of bail or official charges against them - if they so much as criticize their treatment by the apartheid regime.

Black Africans are forced to live in ten (10) "homelands" designated so by the Pretoria government. These reservations are in the most undesirable areas of South Africa - barren, parched, inhospitable land. The four and a half million whites live on 87 percent of the land - the fertile, resourceful part of South Africa, when Blacks enter any part of the 87 percent of South Africa which is "white" territory, they must carry a pass issued by the Pretoria government. The pass provides permission to enter that particular area. Blacks have a 11:00 PM curfew. Black median income is less than 18 percent what white South Africans earn. While the standard of living of white South Africans is thereby one of the highest in the world, the infant mortality of Blacks there is also one of the highest in the world. Since January 1984, hundreds upon hundreds of unarmed Blacks have been killed in cold blood as a result of South African police action enforcing the policies of apartheid.

The United Nations General Assembly has condemned apartheid as "a crime against humanity," and has declared that it "constitutes a serious impediment to economic and social development" and that it is an "obstacle to international cooperation and peace." The outrage of apartheid obviously requires a response, and a stronger response than merely an expression of moral outrage.

One response Americans can make to apartheid - and we believe it is a very effective response - is divestiture of public funds from U.S. enterprises which do business in South Africa.

Let me pose several questions which we frequently encounter in our discussions of divestiture, and briefly address each one. We are prepared to answer these questions in more detail later.

The first question is: Why is divestiture necessary?

On the one hand, U.S. enterprises occupy key positions in South African industry - petroleum, automobiles, and computers, to mention a few. The maintenance of apartheid would be much more difficult without these crucial products.

On the other hand, with a few notable exceptions such as Polaroid and Chrysler, U.S. enterprises will not disinvest themselves from apartheid. There have been many victories for divestment of state and local treasuries, university endowments, pension funds, etc. from banks making loans to, or corporations doing business in South Africa. Examples of these include the state of Massachusetts, Ohio University in Athens, etc. Only the pressure of divestiture will suffice.

The next question is: Will divestiture hurt Blacks in South Africa?

On the one hand, it has been suggested by some prominent Black personalities in South Africa, for example Rev. Simon Farisani when he spoke recently in Cincinnati, that the situation of Blacks under apartheid cannot become much worse.

On the other hand, the U.S. enterprises doing business in South Africa tend to employ a predominantly white labor force, so the direct effect of divestiture would not harm Blacks.

The final question is: Are the Sullivan Principles an alternative to divestiture?

On the one hand, there is no evidence whatever that these Principles have done anything to improve the condition of Blacks in South Africa at large; indeed, there is little evidence that the signatories have conformed to the Principles regarding their own labor forces.

On the other hand, the main significance of the Sullivan principles seems to be their cosmetic role - their usefulness in pacifying the American critics of apartheid - to the point that Rev. Leon Sullivan renounced the Principles in April 1984.

Let me conclude on a personal note. I am enrolled in the State Teachers' Retirement System, and I and many university faculty and staff I know object to having our pension fund portfolio include U.S. enterprises which do business in South Africa. At the most crass level, such a portfolio appears to be less and less prudent as social unrest against apartheid increases. Passage of House Bill 22 would send a clear signal to Pretoria to begin serious negotiations to end apartheid and to establish the principle of one person, one vote. Thank you.