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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OCTOBER 2, 1979. "The future is a moving target," states a recent IBM South Africa ad. "Improve your aim with new IBM processors": a fitting claim since IBM itself acknowledges that it sells computers to the South African Department of Defense. As 1976 and 1978 Congressional Hearings document, this is only one of many private and public uses of IBM computers which support and maintain South Africa's racist system of apartheid.

Other South African users of IBM equipment include the Departments of Interior, National Education and Prisons, as well as the National Institute of Defense and the Atomic Energy Board. In 1965, IBM bid for -- but lost -- the contract to supply computers for the notoriously racist "passbook" system, which seeks to control every aspect of the lives of Black South Africans. And this does not even include the private industries that are essential to the functioning of the apartheid economy.

But what does IBM claim? IBM Chairman Frank Cary said at the 1977 annual meeting of IBM that: "We would not bid any business where we believe that our products are going to be used to abridge human rights. However, we do not see how IBM or any other computer manufacturer can guarantee that they will not be. The facts of the matter are that we do not and cannot control the activities of our customers. . . ." Given IBM's history of sales to the apartheid regime, it is thus impossible to claim, as IBM management does, that the users of its computers are limited to those applications consistent with human rights.

IBM further contends that withdrawal from South Africa would mean the abandonment of the hope of progress for their few Black employees. In fact, however, the only way that there will be any true hope for the advancement of Black workers and a solution to South Africa's problems is through the complete elimination of apartheid.

IBM, by allowing their products to be used under apartheid, is acting to strengthen apartheid, and by so doing intensifies the violence and suffering that lie ahead on the road to freedom in southern Africa. It is for this reason that the Committee on Southern Africa is here today protesting IBM's role in supporting the apartheid regime in South Africa. By so doing the Committee joins many other groups, including IBM Workers United, in calling for an end to U.S. business involvement in South Africa.