
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY R E P R I N T

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, JULY 14, 1983

Letters

Time for a Firm U.S. Stand Against Apartheid

To the Editor:

When I saw the headline of your June 15 editorial "Doing Business With Racists," it didn't occur to me that you would wind up recommending we continue doing just that.

The primary purpose of legislation I have introduced regarding U.S. policy toward South Africa, legislation that you seem to oppose, is precisely to make clear that we will not continue doing business-as-usual with South Africa in the absence of meaningful progress toward the elimination of apartheid.

You neglected to mention that the bill also bans the importation of krugerrands into the U.S. and prohibits American bank loans to the South African Government, except for health, education or housing facilities that are available on a nondiscriminatory basis.

These provisions carry significant substantive and symbolic value, as they will deny financial support to the apartheid regime and demonstrate our affinity with the legitimate aspirations of nonwhite South Africans.

You contended that the legislation "may dismiss the voluntary [Sullivan Code] program too readily." Yet that statement overlooks two serious problems with the present approach: (1) half of the American firms in South Africa refuse to sign the Sullivan principles and (2) at least one-third of the Sullivan signatories have failed to implement the code effectively. Recognizing the inherent limitations of voluntarism in this context, the Rev. Leon Sullivan himself has testified several times to the Congress in support of my bill.

You also expressed concern about the State Department's ability to monitor compliance with mandated fair-employment standards. In fact, our diplomats already perform this function in South Africa, pursuant to the 1978 Evans Amendment, which bars the extension of Export-Import Bank assistance to any South African applicants who do not carry out fair-employment practices.

You asserted that a problem could arise if the South African Government refused to allow U.S. subsidiaries to

comply with the bill's requirements. But it is exceedingly unlikely that a Government which seeks to shed its pariah status and attract more international investment will take any action that would trigger fines and other penalties so as to make it unprofitable for U.S. firms to continue doing business in South Africa.

I share your view that the Reagan Administration's "constructive engagement" approach has been "unfruitful." Constructive engagement has neither significantly altered South Africa's repression at home nor ended its illegal occupation of Namibia. At the same time, it has made the United States look at best indifferent and at worst sympathetic to apartheid.

The time has come for the U.S. to make it clear that we oppose apartheid, by deed as well as by word, and to establish a new policy which reflects our commitment to individual freedom and recognizes the reality of eventual majority rule in South Africa.

STEPHEN J. SOLARZ
Member of Congress, 13th Dist., N.Y.
Washington, July 8, 1983