

May 12, 1976

Mr. Ray Gould

American Committee on Africa, 305 East 46th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Ray:

Enclosed you will find a letter that I wrote to Dr. LeRoy Walker. This letter was my protest of the change of policy by the AAU Track and Field Committee.... he read my letter... to the Committee... the Committee reversed their decision... no travel permits in Track and Field are to be issued for travel to South Africa by the National AAU office.

Please feel free to use this letter in any way you wish.

Stanley V. Wright
Track and Field Committee
Athletic Director

January 22, 1976

Dr. LeRoy T. Walker, Chairman
Men's Track & Field Committee
Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, Inc.
Post Office Box 1087
Durham, N.C. 27707

Dear LeRoy:

Thank you very kindly for your letter of January 8, 1976. I am sorry for the slight delay in answering, but as you know, I had to attend the NCAA Convention in St. Louis last week.

I also received a letter dated January 13, from Bob Lafferty, confirming with you that I would write a letter regarding the vote taken in New Orleans. I was both shocked and appalled at the vote, although I knew the issue would reach the floor in the Men's Track and Field Committee; but it was impossible for me to understand the impetus behind the move for the AAU to send track and field athletes at this time to South Africa, I will give you just a brief report that you can present to the Track and Field Committee in New York at the National Convention in February.

My trip to South Africa in April, 1973, was enlightening, stimulating, and at the same time, degrading. My main purpose in going to South Africa was to see it myself and to get the inner feeling of what was really going on in sports there. I must say that I entered South Africa with an open mind, and left South Africa with an open mind, and I will express my feelings and opinions.

No matter how you look at it, apartheid is still the king of the day in South Africa, and no matter how you spell or dissect apartheid, in my opinion it is racism. As I said before, the South African Games were presented by the South African government as a multi-racial event. I refute this concept 100%. The South African Games attempted to present the South African government in a good light, and, in my opinion that attempt failed - especially in track and field.

The terms "multi-national" and "multi-racial" which were used during the Games are still being used by the South African government to fit the historical significance of the South African Games into political terms. The terms multi-national and multi-racial are convenient terms to use in South Africa, depending who you are talking to. Multi-racial is used, for example, when you are talking to the liberals and want to stimulate them. Multi-national is used when you are talking to the conservatives and do not want to stimulate them.

There are three points that I think the Committee needs to understand, and these will have a definite effect on any track and field athlete, be he Black, white, yellow, or green.

One is that none of the athletes in track and field at the South African Games in 1973, 1974, and 1975 were selected through an open championship in track and field, based upon merit. There still exist in South Africa today championships for Black, championships for white, championships for colored, championships for Indians, and championships for Asians. You can really see and understand how ludicrous this gets to be, how degrading, and how inhuman. There were some black athletes who participated in track and field in South Africa, but they were a select group which came from a small mining town, and there were no qualifying championships for participation in the meet. Therefore, what I am saying is that none of the Black athletes chosen to represent South Africa in track and field were selected through an open championship based on merit.

Second, I witnessed the humiliating and degrading experience of rigid segregation throughout the Games, although I was not segregated myself because I represented the United States and the Amateur Athletic Union, so I was a "Special Excluded (Black-White) Situation." There was also segregation in the seating at the track and field stadium throughout the Games, where Blacks and non-whites sat in an area unattached from the main stadium, in segregated seating. Transportation was also segregated, with Black buses and taxis.

Third, I think you would have to consider the so-called Black Townships on the outside of the big cities of Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Cape Town, which I had an opportunity to visit. These so-called Townships are indescribable, and are worse than any ghetto that I have ever seen in this country, in Europe, Africa, or Asia. They are dehumanizing; and they are an important part of apartheid.

As a member of the Track and Field Committee, I am protesting vehemently against the vote that was taken by the Track and Field Committee in New Orleans, and I would ask the Committee to reconsider that vote and to hold in abeyance all travel permits for track and field in South Africa, until this can be brought not only to the floor of the Track and Field Committee, but to the Convention itself.

If travel permits are issued, where does that put us with the track meets and commitments that we have had in the past in Dakar and in Durham with the Black African countries? Where does it put us in relation to the IAF and the IOC, who have barred South Africa from inter-country competition and the Olympic Games, charging them with not abiding by the rules of the IAF or IOC?

Last, but not least, I think that if travel permits are issued we would be capitulating to pressure groups who want to participate in the name of sportsmen, while ignoring the principles of compassion, dignity, and respect for human beings.

I would appreciate it very much if you would present this report to the Committee in New York in any manner you may choose.

Sincerely yours,

Stanley V. Wright
Member, Track and Field Committee

(Mr. Wright is a member of Administration, United States Olympic team at the Olympic Games to be held in Montreal in 1976; Former Coach U.S. Olympic Track Team - Munich, 1972; Member-National Committee, American Committee on Africa)