

LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE TO THE THIRD BIENNIAL CONFERENCE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID, HELD IN THE CITY CHAMBERS GLASGOW, 19-20 FEB. 1987.

INTRODUCTION

The first conference on local authority action against Apartheid, held in Sheffield on 25 March 1983, was attended by 100 delegates representing 55 local authorities. In the four years since, many more Councils have declared their opposition to the racist system in South Africa and called for an end to the illegal occupation of Namibia by the Apartheid regime.

In their declarations and resolutions, local authorities have also highlighted the need for building links with independent African states and to promote a positive understanding of the liberation struggles in that continent.

Today, we can confidently state that Councils representing well over 60 per cent of Britain's population have adopted anti-apartheid policies. The United Nations Survey that was published in 1985 listed 123 authorities as having taken steps in this field. A further survey is currently being conducted and from the response so far it is clear that at least 64 more Councils have now adopted policies.

This increase in local authority action against Apartheid is part of a growing international movement to isolate South Africa in line with repeated calls by the people of the region for mandatory comprehensive sanctions.

Local authorities firmly believe that it would be hypocritical to pursue anti-racist policies in their own areas if, at the same time, they ignored the appeals of the black community in South Africa and Namibia for all links with the Apartheid system to be severed. Therefore, Council action on this issue is entirely in line with their duty under Section 71 of the 1976 Race Relations Act to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations when discharging their functions.



RELEASE NELSON MANDELA

At its meeting on 29 March 1985, the NSC agreed to prepare a model resolution for local authorities calling for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and to ask the Lord Provost of Glasgow to organise a Mayoral procession to Downing Street 11 June, the anniversary of Mandela's sentencing.

Over 60 civic leaders participated in the procession wearing their ceremonial robes and chains of office. At a press conference to publicise this event, the Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, Chief Anyaoku, described the initiatives by local authorities in Britain as "genuine acts of solidarity". "I salute you and wish you every success" he said.

Despite steps that are being taken to further erode the ability of local government to fulfil its moral and legal duties, the national steering committee is confident that Councils will continue to play an important role in the campaign against Apartheid and all forms of racism.

The situation in Southern Africa itself shows the need for positive action in Britain. As the Apartheid regime's crisis deepens, it is relying increasingly on internal repression and external aggression to sustain itself. In South Africa itself some 25,000 people are in detention while in Mozambique millions

face starvation as a result of the Apartheid regime's economic and military actions. Massive suffering throughout the region could be avoided if South Africa's life lines to countries like Britain were cut.

This is the challenge facing us. And I am sure the Glasgow Conference will identify what further steps are needed to secure peace and liberation for the people of Southern Africa.

*Cllr Mike Pye
Chair, National Steering Committee
Local Authority Action Against Apartheid*



TOIVO JA TOIVO

The 20th anniversary of the Apartheid regime's illegal occupation of Namibia was marked in 1986 by an international week of solidarity with SWAPO from 27 October to 3 November.

Full support was given to this initiative by the NSC and many local authorities. During the week SWAPO's General Secretary, Andimba Toivo ja Toivo, visited Britain and his programme included a visit to Sheffield, where he met Council Leader, David Blunkett and NSC Chairperson, Councillor Mike Pye. The three of them are seen above with Sheffield's Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress.

Unfortunately, an NSC seminar on Namibia that was due to be held on 24 October was cancelled at the last minute by the hosts, Birmingham City Council. Following consultations with SWAPO, the event is now being re-arranged and Edinburgh District Council has agreed to become the host authority.

NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

The Sheffield Conference in 1983 established a National Steering Committee on Local Authority Action Against Apartheid (NSC). At the second biennial conference hosted by the London Borough of Camden in 1985, a new committee was elected and in the period since it has met on eight occasions with Cllr Mike Pye (Sheffield) as its chairperson. The following local authorities are currently represented on the National Steering Committee:

Metropolitan Districts:

Sheffield, Leeds, Calderdale, Rotherham and Birmingham

County Councils:

Cumbria and Derbyshire

District Councils:

Basildon, Bolsover, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Harlow, Methyr Tydfil, Stirling, Stoke-on-Trent, the Wrekin and Yeovil.

London Boroughs:

Hackney, Camden and Southwark

Observers from the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) have attended every meeting and, following consultations with AAM's trade union committee, representatives from the NUT, NALGO, and GMBATU have also been co-opted onto the NSC.

At its meeting on 7 November 1986, the NSC agreed that the committee to be elected at the Glasgow conference should be re-structured as follows:

Counties and Regions (including at least one each from Wales and Scotland)	6
Metropolitan Districts	4

Non-Metropolitan Districts (including at least one each from Wales and Scotland)	8
London Boroughs	3

There will continue to be up to five co-opted places for representatives from local authority trade unions and the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

For most of the period since the Camden Conference, the NSC has not had any officer support. The implementation of decisions has therefore relied entirely on the efforts of individual members and the support given by those authorities that have taken initiatives on the NSC's behalf.

In October 1986, Sheffield appointed an Assistant International Affairs Officer who is now servicing NSC meetings. Progress is also being made with the establishment of a Research and Information Unit as a company limited by guarantee. The unit will provide information and advice to local authorities on the implementation of their anti-apartheid policies. At its last meeting, on 30 January 1987, the NSC agreed the annual membership subscriptions for the unit: (*see table on back page*) A prospectus memorandum and articles of association are currently being finalised and will be circulated to local authorities in the near future with a letter inviting them to become members. An interim report giving details of the unit's structure, role and services is being presented to the conference separately.

NATIONALLY CO-ORDINATED ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID

As a national focus for local authorities, the NSC organised a 'week of action' from 18 - 25 March 1985 and 'ten days of action' in 1986 that linked the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising (16 June) with South African Freedom Day (25 June).

On both occasions, briefing papers were sent to local authorities outlining the kind of activities that could be undertaken, including new policy initiatives, public ceremonies, cultural events and the promotion of the boycott of South Africa. In 1986 a letter was also sent to all education authorities urging them to encourage schools and colleges to mark the 10th anniversary of the Soweto massacre by showing a film, arranging a conference for older pupils or holding meetings for teachers.

A highlight of the 1986 programme was the mass lobby for sanctions against Apartheid on 17 June. The National Steering Committee supported this event and participated in the organising committee, which also had representatives on it from the British Council of Churches, the Trades Union Congress and the United Nations Association.

COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT

At its meeting on 4 July 1986 in Glasgow, the National Steering Committee discussed the report on South Africa by the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons. The NSC welcomed the report and Andrew Puddephatt, Leader of the London Borough of Hackney, wrote on its behalf to over 200 local authorities asking them to write to the Secretary General of the Commonwealth to urge that comprehensive and mandatory sanctions be imposed on South Africa.

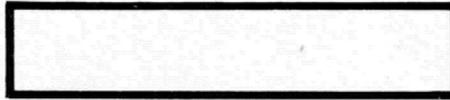
Recognising the urgency of the situation in Southern Africa, councils throughout Britain responded very positively and their letters made a big impact on Commonwealth leaders attending the special meeting in London on 3 - 5 August, most of whom took note of the fact that the authorities involved represent a majority of Britain's population.

The summit agreed, with Britain as the only dissenting voice, on a package of measures to be taken against Apartheid regime. However, these fall short of the call by the ANC and SWAPO for comprehensive mandatory sanctions. The NSC will therefore give priority to the campaign around the Anti-Apartheid Movements "Manifesto for Sanctions". It will also continue to encourage and assist local authorities that wish to implement "people's sanctions" of the kind outlined in the "Model Declaration on Southern Africa" that has been adopted by dozens of local authorities.



DISINVESTING FROM THE APARTHEID ECONOMY

While the Shell boycott will provide a national focus for the divestment campaign, the NSC in co-operation with AAM will continue to press for disengagement from South Africa and Namibia by all the transnational corporations that have assets there.



▲ The street in Glasgow where the South African Consulate is situated was re-named 'Nelson Mandela Place' as part of the ten days of local authority action in 1986.

British investments in the Apartheid economy remain greater than those of any other country. Local authority reserves and pension funds are often invested in companies that have major interests in South Africa and Namibia.

The NSC's model declaration on Southern Africa, states that "Councils will... whenever possible and appropriate, having regard to the Council's legal powers and duties, pursue vigilant practices to... withdraw investments held by the Council in companies with South African interests or companies with investments in South Africa and Namibia".

On 10 December 1985, a conference was organised by the Greater London Council on behalf of the NSC to discuss the implementation of this aspect of the declaration. Attended by 150 delegates, the conference discussed the case for divestment, the situation in Namibia and South Africa and the implications of divestment for Race Relations in Britain. The conference also received a paper by Robin Allen QC, on the legal constraints on divestment by local authorities, especially in the light of two important cases: *Cowan v Scargill* (1984) ICR 646 and *Wheeler v Leicester City Council* (1985) 3 WLR 335. Introducing his paper Robin Allen stressed that the most important point he wanted to make was that there was "no doubt that divestment by local authority pension funds can lawfully be done". Following the conference the NSC wrote to 35 local authorities that were known to have adopted divestment policies seeking information on what procedures they had established to monitor their investments. Twelve replies were received providing some useful details about existing monitoring procedures.

On 20 September 1986 Lewisham Borough Council hosted a second conference on divestment which was attended by 14 local authorities. The conference agreed that initiatives on divestment should be aimed at the 20 UK companies with the highest number of employees in South African associates or subsidiaries. Cllr. Mike Pye addressed the conference on behalf of the NSC and the participants agreed that there should be close liaison between the NSC and Lewisham about future work in this area.

The proposed Research and Information Unit for Local Authorities taking action against Apartheid will ensure that there is greater access to advice on how to proceed with divestment initiatives and the production of a briefing paper on this matter will be a high priority for the unit once it is established.

CULTURAL BOYCOTT

In the last year a growing number of top performers have joined the cultural boycott of South Africa.

In Britain, local authorities have played an important role in promoting this aspect of the campaign against Apartheid. The NSC's Model Declaration on Southern Africa states that Council's will withhold facilities from any event involving people who appear on the United Nations Cultural Register.

As a result of two meetings with representatives of the UN Centre Against Apartheid in 1985, procedures have been established for the operation of the boycott and the register is now updated twice a year. The NSC is also notified of people who have been withdrawn from the register following commitments they have made not to go to South Africa.

On 24 June 1986, Hull City Council convened a meeting attended by representatives from four cities to co-ordinate their approach to the cultural boycott. Various problems were discussed and it was agreed that a joint approach would prevent artists from playing one venue off against another.

A combination of local authority action and the deepening crisis in Southern Africa itself, has persuaded a large number of internationally known stars to join the cultural boycott. Amongst them are Rod Stewart, Shakin' Stevens, Robert Powell, Cliff Richard, Liza Minnelli, Queen, Elton John, Shirley Bassey, Nana Mouskouri and Kim Wilde.

Liza Minnelli's letter to the UN explained that she had previously performed in South Africa "in the belief that it was to the benefit of the people living in the homelands". "I now believe", she went on, "that they are

virtual prisoners of the homeland system... I consider it my duty as a performer whose basic beliefs are contrary to Apartheid, never again to appear in a nation where Apartheid is enforced in any form".

The UN register is currently being updated to take account of the latest pledges by performers. To ensure that the new edition is as accurate as possible, the NSC has kept the UN informed of developments in Britain and has also written to several artists asking them to contact the UN to clarify their position.



▲ Edinburgh's Lord Provost, Dr. John McKay, lays a wreath at the "Woman & Child" sculpture on 8 January 1987, to commemorate the estimated 2,000 teenage children detained by the authorities in South Africa, and also to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the African National Congress.

SHELL BOYCOTT



target for two trial months of boycott in July and November 1986.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement is now campaigning for a total boycott of Shell products pending the company's complete withdrawal from South Africa and Namibia, following the adoption of a resolution to this effect at its Annual General Meeting in January 1987.

On 8 December 1986, the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the NSC circulated to all local authorities a joint letter seeking their views on the possibility of a total boycott of Shell products.

For some time, Councils have been taking steps to ensure that their funds are not invested in Shell and other companies with major interests in South Africa and Namibia. The letter pointed out, however, that "in special cases, such as Barclays, the Anti-Apartheid Movement has called for a total boycott of a company's products alongside the disinvestment campaign because of the scale of support for apartheid which that company provides".

Shell's major role in defying the United Nations oil embargo on South Africa and as a supplier of fuel to the Apartheid state's military forces have already made it a

Many local authorities have substantial contracts with Shell for the supply of fuel for heating schools, homes and other Council premises. Though there are legal and financial constraints that make it difficult for some Councils to take immediate action, it is possible to transfer to alternative suppliers once existing contracts have expired. Clearly, the prospect of losing orders worth many millions of pounds is likely to have an impact even on a giant firm like Shell.

From this conference, therefore, the National Steering Committee is calling on local authorities to support the boycott of all Shell products.

Table of annual subscriptions for Local Authority Resource Unit on Apartheid

CATEGORY		RATE
London Boroughs		£750
Countys/Scottish Regions	0 - 500,000	£750
	500,000+	£1,000
Non-Metropolitan Districts	0 - 75,000	£150
	75,000+	£300
Metropolitan Districts	0 - 300,000	£500
	300,000+	£750
Scottish Districts	0 - 100,000	£200
	100,000 - 300,000	£500
	300,000+	£750

SURVEY OF COUNCIL ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID

In June 1985, Sheffield Metropolitan District Council published a survey of local authority action against apartheid on behalf of the NSC.

Commissioned by the United Nations, the survey showed that 123 councils had anti-apartheid policies. Of these, 44 had implemented sports or cultural boycotts and 39 had sold their investments in companies operating in South Africa and Namibia, while 71 councils and 3 joint purchasing authorities were boycotting South African and Namibian goods.

The NSC is currently conducting a further survey to find out what action has been undertaken in the last 2 years. A letter was sent to all local authorities in December 1986. By the end of January 1987 107

positive replies had been received, including 64 from councils that were not amongst the 123 authorities that were listed as having adopted anti-apartheid policies in the original survey.

This increase in the number of councils taking action, including many that have adopted the NSC's model declaration, is very encouraging. When more replies are in, the results of the survey will be analysed and published.

For further information about the work of the National Steering Committee, please write to:

**International Affairs Office,
Publicity Department,
Town Hall, Sheffield 1.**

PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTES

On 1 November 1985, the NSC was informed by Glasgow City Council that the Institute of Waste Management had links with South Africa. It was subsequently reported that the Institute's Annual Conference in June 1986 was to be addressed by a speaker from South Africa.

The NSC took this matter up and several local authorities decided not to attend the conference unless the invitation was cancelled. In May 1986 the Institute of Waste Management sent a circular to all Councils informing them that "following representations from a number of local authorities it has been decided to withdraw its invitation" to Mr R J Lawrence, Secretary-General of the Institute of Waste Management, Southern Africa.

Meanwhile, the NSC sent a letter to 35 other professional institutes to find out what links they had with South Africa and Namibia and, if there were any, to terminate them. Of the 15 institutes which replied, nearly all of them said that they did not have any *formal* links with South Africa. However, the British Institute of Management's letter admitted that "it did have links with the South African Institute of Management". The Institute of Acoustics merely noted the contents of the NSC's letter "with interest" and three institutes indicated that they did have some members who worked in South Africa.

Of the more positive replies, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy said that it had broken its connections with South Africa ten years ago and now has "no links at all with that country".

The reply from the Royal Institute of British Architects explained that in January 1986 the Council of the RIBA withdrew recognition from the architecture courses at the Universities of Cape Town, Natal and Witwatersrand on the grounds of insufficient progress in the admission of non-white students and said that recognition had previously been withdrawn from the courses at the Universities of Pretoria and Orange Free State.

A similar approach was taken by the Royal Town Planning Institute which said that it had "phased out" its recognition of two courses in the 1970s and unilaterally terminated an agreement with the equivalent organisation in South Africa. RTPI now offers an annual scholarship to a non-white South African student and had recently transferred its account from Barclays Bank. Assessing the replies at its meeting on 4 July, the NSC took the view that local authorities should not allow officers to attend Professional Institute conferences in working time if the Institute concerned had failed to sever its links with South Africa.