

ANTI-APARTHEID HEALTH COMMITTEE for liberation in Southern Africa

Like every other aspect of life in South Africa, the health of the people is ruled by apartheid. White South Africans enjoy a high standard of health while blacks suffer and die on a massive scale from preventable diseases. The infant mortality rate for whites is 12/1000, for Africans in urban areas it is at least six times as high, and in rural areas it is over 20 times the white rate. The average life expectancy for Africans is 20 years less than that for whites.

The same situation prevails when it comes to the provision of health care. The entire health service is segregated – hospitals, clinics, even ambulance. The apartheid regime provides whites with almost six times as many hospital beds per head of population as it does for blacks, and spends nearly three times as much on each white patient in hospital as it spends on each black patient. In the bantustans mortality figures indicate that health care is almost non-existent: in QwaQwa in 1980, for example, there were two doctors for a population of 250,000 people.

THE ANTI-APARTHEID HEALTH COMMITTEE was set up to perform three principal tasks:

1. To inform people in Britain, especially health workers, about apartheid and its consequences for the health of South Africa's people.

The brutal exploitation and oppression of black people in South Africa is directly responsible for their suffering disease and disability on such a large scale. The huge incidence of diseases like malnutrition and tuberculosis amongst the black population is a necessary result of the conditions in which blacks are forced to live and work under apartheid. Only when apartheid is destroyed will all South Africans enjoy a high standard of health.

Information on several aspects of health under apartheid is available: on malnutrition; occupational health; disability; the training of doctors. The committee also produces a bulletin, *HEALTH & LIBERATION*, which discusses various aspects of health in South Africa and which has details of our campaigning work. We also send speakers to meetings about health under apartheid.

2. To break the links that exist between Britain and South Africa in the health field.

Just as there are extensive economic and trade links with South Africa, so there are extensive links in the health field. There is a regular exchange of academics to and from South Africa, and every year health workers are recruited in Britain to work in South Africa. South Africa also remains a member of numerous international health organisations, and both attends and hosts their international conferences.

Just as the economic links with South Africa have supported and strengthened the apartheid system, so the links in the health field have helped maintain the inequalities and injustices of health care in South

Africa. While South Africa remains an accepted member of the international health community, the apartheid regime is encouraged to continue providing adequate health care only to whites, while ignoring the health needs of the black majority. It is for this reason that black South Africans, both individuals and organisations, have repeatedly called for the isolation of South Africa from the rest of the world, in all areas including the health field.

The Anti-Apartheid Health Committee campaigns to break links in the following areas:

- recruitment of health workers to South Africa, particularly nurses, doctors and laboratory technologists
- medical students undertaking electives in South Africa
- to exclude South Africa from the international disabled sports movement
- to exclude South Africa from various international health organisations
- visits by academics to meetings and seminars in South Africa.

3. To campaign for material and medical aid for the liberation movements fighting for freedom in Southern Africa.

Both SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) of Namibia and the ANC (African National Congress) of South Africa are engaged in a bitter struggle to liberate their countries from the tyranny of apartheid. As well as confronting the apartheid regime militarily, both ANC and SWAPO care for thousands of refugees who have fled from South Africa and Namibia to escape the terror of the racist regime. The daily increasing number of refugees are in urgent need of material and medical aid such as clothes, blankets and medical supplies.

THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

The Anti-Apartheid Health Committee also campaigns to involve people in the work of the Anti-Apartheid Movement as a whole. Health is only one area of work – the AAM also campaigns to expose both the big multinationals who support and profit from apartheid and the policy of successive British governments of collaboration with the apartheid regime in South Africa. With over 60 local groups throughout Britain, the Anti-Apartheid Movement works with trade unions, political organisations, churches, students and community groups to win support in Britain for the growing international campaign for sanctions against South Africa. We also work to win support for the liberation movements and for the many political prisoners and detainees incarcerated in South Africa's jails.

The Health Committee is part of the Anti-Apartheid Movement as a whole and is therefore responsible to the democratically elected bodies of the AAM, ie, the National Committee and the Executive Committee, and to the Annual General Meeting of the organisation. Major initiatives and questions of finance and policy are discussed with the Executive Committee. Membership of the Health Committee is open to anyone wishing to assist in the work of the committee, particularly people working or studying in the health service.

I am interested in the work of the Anti-Apartheid Health Committee. Please get in touch with me at the address below:

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

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(Tick box(es))

I would like to receive the latest copy of the committee's bulletin
Health & Liberation

Please send me more information about the work of the Anti-Apartheid
Movement

Return to:
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