

July 7, 1986

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PRESIDENT'S
OFFICE

Dear :

We wish to express our deep concern about the situation in South Africa and our support for imposing legislative sanctions on the South African government. We offer our views in our individual capacities and do not purport to speak on behalf of the institutions we serve. But our work has caused us all to give many hours of thought to the injustices of apartheid and to the various ways in which this nation's government and its citizens and private institutions can respond.

Many of us wrote to you in July of last year expressing our belief that legislation directed against the South African government was an effective way to undermine apartheid and hasten its end. Thereafter, as you know, the President issued an Executive Order containing some of the provisions of the legislation which then seemed virtually certain to be enacted by Congress. Since then, however, the crisis in South Africa has worsened so dramatically that we believe that our country must do much more to express a rejection of the apartheid system.

Our conclusions find support in the recent findings of the Commonwealth mission known as the Eminent Persons Group. Their report expresses little hope that the South African government will voluntarily enter into meaningful negotiations that could lead to a peaceful end to apartheid. As they point out, effective concerted action by the international community seems to offer the last opportunity to bring about such negotiations and avert massive bloodshed.

As the Commonwealth report reached the public, the South African government instituted new repressive measures which offend fundamental principles of human rights. Censorship has limited the available information on the effects of the new measures, but press reports indicate that they have failed to stem the violence and the number of deaths. Indeed, during the last three months, the weekly death toll has more than doubled.

Against this backdrop, sanctions legislation offers a critical opportunity for the United States to make a forceful, bipartisan statement against apartheid. We do not attempt to state the precise

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features that should be included in the legislation. We do urge that the measures adopted conform to the following criteria:

1. Sanctions should be sufficiently strong to demonstrate the depth and sincerity of this country's disapproval of apartheid.
2. The primary target of the sanctions should be the source of apartheid: the South African government itself.
3. Sanctions should avoid harming nonwhite South Africans to the extent possible.
4. The legislation should hold forth the prospect of additional measures if certain prescribed forms of progress are not achieved by a specified date.

We speak most effectively as a nation when we speak with one voice through laws enacted by our elected representatives and signed by the President. Legislation will convey more effectively than anything else the breadth and depth of national feeling against apartheid. Such action at this time offers the best prospect of inducing other nations to follow suit, thus placing strong pressure on the South African government to pursue a different course.

If we do not take this step and the violence continues to mount in South Africa, will we be able to say that we did everything possible to forestall further losses of life? Although no one can state with certainty what steps will bring justice and peace to South Africa most quickly, we believe that legislated sanctions offer the best chance we have of encouraging peaceful change and avoiding increased violence and bloodshed.

Sincerely,

David Alexander, President, Pomona College
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IMMEDIATE

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95 COLLEGE PRESIDENTS URGE SANCTIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

The presidents of 95 U.S. colleges and universities today urged Congress to impose strong legislative sanctions on the government of South Africa. In a letter to all members of the Senate and leaders of the House of Representatives, the presidents said such legislation would express "the breadth and depth of national feeling against apartheid."

"If we do not take this step and the violence continues to mount in South Africa, will we be able to say that we did everything possible to forestall further losses of life?" the presidents asked.

Without specifying details of the proposed legislation, the presidents called for sanctions strong enough to "demonstrate the depth and sincerity of this country's disapproval of apartheid." The sanctions, they said, should be aimed at the South African government itself and avoid, as much as possible, harm to nonwhite South Africans. A provision that additional measures would be implemented if progress were not achieved by a certain date was also advocated by the group.

The presidents' letter cited a recent report from the Commonwealth mission known as the Eminent Persons Group which found little likelihood that the South African government will voluntarily end that country's apartheid system. The presidents noted that, since the Commonwealth report was issued, the situation in South Africa has dramatically worsened.

"Against this backdrop," they wrote, "sanctions legislation offers a critical opportunity for the United States to make a

forceful, bipartisan statement against apartheid.

"We speak most effectively as a nation when we speak with one voice through laws enacted by our elected representatives and signed by the President.

"Although no one can state with certainty what steps will bring justice and peace to South Africa most quickly, we believe that legislated sanctions offer the best chance we have of encouraging peaceful change and avoiding increased violence and bloodshed."

One year ago 20 of the presidents had written to the Senate urging the enactment of sanctions legislation. Last September President Reagan issued an executive order containing some features of the legislation approved by the Congress.

" Since then," the new letter points out, "the crisis in South Africa has worsened so dramatically that we believe our country must do much more to express a rejection of the apartheid system.

The presidents said they were speaking as individuals and did not purport to speak on behalf of their institutions.

(Editors: A list of signers of the presidents' letter follows: