

# **EQUITY MEMBERS:**

## **Take A Stand Against Apartheid**

In the next few weeks Equity members will have the opportunity to vote in a referendum relating to the Union's policy on Southern Africa. Here we set out the case of Performers Against Racism, a group of concerned Union members, for an extension of the existing policy. We hope that you will consider the points we raise here when you come to cast your vote.

### **VOTE "APPROVE" IN THE REFERENDUM**

Over 300 blacks in Soweto and other townships in South Africa have been killed over the summer. The jails are full. Repression has intensified even as the "Kissinger initiative" proceeds. For apartheid, a policy which British investment and trade helps maintain, can tolerate no opposition. Yet the people of South Africa, showing great courage, have not been deterred in their attempts to throw off their economic, political and cultural subjugation. And they have a great deal to protest against.

### **Apartheid and the black population**

In South Africa, blacks are subject to vicious laws restricting every freedom we enjoy and denying most—even the vote. They are discriminated against in every aspect of their lives: work, travel, housing, land allocation, family relations, education and trade union activity. Four million whites, owning 87% of the land, dominate 20 million blacks. The apartheid regime is condemned by many countries and organisations, including the United Nations, for its "continued violation of human rights"

### **Rhodesia**

Rhodesia's illegal regime also practises a form of apartheid. A quarter of a million whites dominate 6½ million blacks, and there are many laws and restrictions on blacks in common with South Africa's—including pass laws.

## **Apartheid and entertainment**

Black performers, playwrights and poets are persecuted and imprisoned under the laws of apartheid. Blacks and whites cannot meet and perform together. Audiences are segregated. There are no black professional theatres or drama schools. Blacks have to rehearse in private homes, garages, or in the open, and perform in halls, and for short periods only. Their work is usually banned. In the last two years three black groups—TECON, PET and MDALI—have been forced to disband, and Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley of TECON have been held under the Terrorism Act since September 1974. Susan Rabkin, a white member of Space Theatre, is the most recent victim of the attack on the theatre.

The *Black Mikado* was stopped due to its mixed cast. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* was refused permission for performance because of one black role, which constituted a mixed cast. Brenda Arnau, a black Equity member, was refused a visa although she had a contract for work in South Africa, and many other artists have been stopped from playing to multiracial audiences. British artists who are assured that they will perform before multiracial audiences are finding a "change of mind" when they get there because of a ruling by the South African authorities, and find themselves forced to perform before segregated audiences.

## **What positions have other trade unions adopted?**

Last month, the TUC Congress, meeting in Brighton, adopted its strongest policy yet on South Africa. In an Emergency Resolution, it agreed unanimously to press for a cessation of all new British investment in South Africa, a complete embargo on all direct and indirect military help to South Africa, and support for the liberation movements in South Africa. This came after successive TUC resolutions on the subject and is clearly a rallying call to the trade union movement to isolate South Africa at a time when Vorster is looking to Britain for increased help.

Individual unions too have strong policy, especially in the cultural field. The Musicians Union has a complete embargo on members working in South Africa or Rhodesia. The Association of Cinematograph, Television and allied Technicians similarly instruct members not to work in South Africa (unless involved in current affairs or TV news) and bans the use of members in the transmission or processing of material emanating from South Africa or its agents. In both cases, disciplinary action may be taken against those who do not comply with these policies.

## Equity?

We too must do all in our power to isolate South Africa's apartheid regime. The Equity Council supports the ban on the sale of television programmes but allows live performances. The former policy has been adopted to safeguard the employment of black Equity members. Yet the partial nature of this ban ignores the fact that this employment will, in like manner, be jeopardised by not also having a ban on live performances. We say that such an open door policy will not succeed in introducing liberalising material to South Africa, that the mere fact of links with Britain will encourage apartheid. Proponents of bridge-building should ask themselves:

- 1) What material of a liberalising nature, critical of apartheid, has been allowed into South Africa? *Stringent censorship laws ensure that NONE is allowed. Only "non-controversial" productions have been sent there.*
- 2) What has maintaining links over the last ten years done to bring relaxation of apartheid? *Apart from a few surface concessions, the situation has worsened.*
- 3) Apartheid can only be changed from above by laws passed by the regime, which it is not willing to do. The pressure of more liberal white elements has achieved no real change. By bridge-building then, the Council is conceding to the white minority the right to determine by how much, if at all, apartheid should be relaxed, to the exclusion of black involvement. *They wish to operate within the terms set by the racists.* And, of course, even if such a relaxation of apartheid were to occur, it would remain fundamentally intact.
- 4) **DOES THE COUNCIL THINK THEY KNOW BETTER THAN BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND RHODESIA WHAT IS BEST FOR THEM?**

## What do blacks want?

The only way to help black performers here and in South Africa and Rhodesia and the black populations as a whole, is through the policy they themselves want. That is, a *complete boycott* on sales and live performances, which will directly aid them and their white supporters, the actual victims of apartheid. Only this offers active disapproval of apartheid, by severing economic and cultural links with it.

*However much people say they oppose apartheid, to maintain links with it is to give it support and to isolate the blacks. To sever links is to actively oppose it and to support the blacks in their fight against apartheid.*

## Individual conscience?

As a trade union we should have policies which help fellow workers here and abroad. To invoke conscience against an extended ban, when set against the present situation in South Africa and Rhodesia, regimes with an openly declared racist policy, is to invoke individual irresponsibility and indifference as a morally valid standpoint, and to reject the principles of trade unionism.

## **SAY NO TO APARTHEID!**

The Referendum Questions are as follows. We indicate after each question the way in which Performers Against Racism hopes that those who agree with the stand we have taken will vote.

### **1) Recorded Performances**

i) the 1976 AGM passed a resolution which "instructs the Council to adhere to the Union's policy of no sales to South Africa of television programmes".

**Please vote "approve"**

ii) the AGM also adopted an amendment with the resolution which demands that "Council put a ban on the sale to South Africa of all recorded, filmed or taped material (eg TV, Film, Radio, Records, Cassettes, etc) using Equity members".

**Please vote "approve"**

iii) the AGM resolution extends the policy on South Africa to cover Rhodesia.

**Please vote "approve"**

### **2) Live Performances**

iv) the AGM Resolution calls on the Council "to issue a standing instruction to members not to work there" (ie South Africa).

**Please vote "approve"**

v) in the event of question (iv) (above) not being approved the present Council policy of inviting members to sign a declaration that they will not perform in South Africa if they are forbidden to play before multiracial audiences, and of the Council not approving contracts will be maintained.

**Please vote "approve"**

vi) the AGM Resolution calls on the Council to issue a standing instruction to members not to work in Rhodesia.

**Please vote "approve"**

### ***VOTE "APPROVE" TO ALL QUESTIONS***

As far as the South African Government is concerned, white Equity members can perform in South Africa. Black Equity members, however, cannot perform in South Africa. The ban we seek, then, is not only in protest at the obscene and racist policies of the Vorster regime. It is also in defence of members of our own Union who are discriminated against in South Africa. The apartheid policy, that is, is an offence not only to principles of human dignity, but also to the principles in which Equity is itself based.

We urge all Equity members to stand by these principles. Take a responsible and effective stand and help black performers here and in South Africa and Rhodesia. Support the extended ban.

### **VOTE FOR A COMPLETE BAN IN THE COMING REFERENDUM**