

SANCTIONS NOW!

The people of South Africa believe that they will liberate themselves but they also feel that disinvestment and the application of economic sanctions would help to weaken and to isolate the South African government. In a Sunday Times opinion poll *in 1986*, black South Africans overwhelmingly supported international sanctions against South Africa. Against the tense atmosphere of unrest in which close to a thousand people had been killed, 77% oppressed blacks voted for economic boycott and sanctions against South Africa.

S. Bhengu

Extract from a paper presented to the International YMCA Conference in
Zimbabwe 1986

THE link between the racist apartheid policies of South Africa and the capitalist economies of the West has become even more apparent as we seek ways of dismantling apartheid. The countries of the West, the USA, West Germany and Britain have become the strongest opponents to the imposition of economic sanctions as a peaceful way of forcing the Afrikaners to abandon apartheid. For years the representatives of foreign business in South Africa have argued that they were in South Africa for purely business purposes — to develop the country and not to support apartheid. We now have evidence that foreign investments and loans have been used to support prevailing patterns of power and privilege in South Africa.

Over and above the usual business gains resulting from cheap labour which is secured by government policy, foreign companies pay a special defence tax which supports the South African army.

You will recall that this is the same army which terrorises freedom seekers in South Africa and Namibia. It is the same army that raids frontline states like Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Lesotho and Botswana under the pretext of defending South Africa.

The provision of separate facilities for the different ethnic groups with budgets for nine homeland governments instead of having just one government and one budget, the segregated school and university facilities, the training and maintenance of a large army and the military raids of the frontline states, all make apartheid an expensive policy which cannot be run with a weak economy.

The financial crisis is evidence of the political impact economic sanctions have. The drastic fall in the value of the rand is an indicator that economic pressure would be successful in South Africa. Even before mandatory comprehensive economic sanctions are

imposed the threat of sanctions alone had begun to show some results.

In seeking to hide their own vested interests, some of the individuals, institutions, including churches, and governments, argue that it is the black people who will lose most if foreign companies were to disinvest from South Africa.

There is, of course, no logic in this argument since it is that segment of society that gains most through investments and cheap labour that would lose most in the event of a pull out by foreign companies.

No scientific studies have been conducted to support this false argument. For all we know the business sector — foreign or South African — has not shown any serious interest to address the problem of structural unemployment in black communities.

