

## Memorandum on American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa

I write this memorandum for two reasons. As the Executive Director of the American Committee on Africa I have been keenly interested in the ANLCA from the beginning. As a matter of fact, it was the ACOA which called the first two meetings of various organizations which finally led to the formation of the Conference and to the holding of the first meeting at Arden House. Second, the political position which the ANLCA takes on African issues is one which is just about identical with that of the American Committee on Africa. We are convinced that there is an important political role for the ANLCA to play.

Because there is a great identity of position and even of potential program between the Leadership Conference and our Committee, there is a necessity to think through, at least from ACOA point of view, exactly what the relationship between the organizations ought to be. Partly to clarify my own thinking and to share this thinking with a few others I am, in brief outline form, putting down a few of my thoughts on paper.

The Leadership Conference seems to be at some kind of a crossroad. Will it continue to be in the future what it has been in the last three or four years - a part time operation which has had a bi-annual conference and occasional meetings in between? Can support be found for it? Is there enough real concern among the logical constituents for the Conference to make it organizationally viable? The answer to these questions should be found in the near future.

There are three key questions which must be answered in order to clarify what the organizational structure of the Leadership Conference should be:

- 1) Is the ANLCA a membership organization for individuals or a body composed of a coalition of organizations joined because of their mutual concern about American policy towards Africa? It was originally set up to fulfill the latter role. There might be some rough analogy between the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa in line with the original concept which the organizers of the Conference had. There is obviously a great deal of difference between an organization serving as a clearing or coordinating agency and one which is going out after individual members.
- 2) How is the phrase "Negro Leadership" to be defined? If the ANLCA was to be opened for individual members does this mean that only Negroes could join? If it is to be an organization coordinating other organizations, then which organizations would have the right to be affiliated? The policy in practice so far seems to be that interracial organizations would qualify for affiliation. The American Committee on Africa from this point of view would fall in about the same position as the Steelworkers, the UAW or Crossroads Africa.
- 3) How is policy to be set in ANLCA? If it is a membership organization, the policy might be set one way. If it is a coalition of organizations, then obviously the policy making body should be one that is representative of the key organizations making up the Leadership Conference.

I am working on the assumption that the American Negro Leadership Conference should be complementary to existing organizations and not competitive. Of course, the American Committee on Africa is more deeply affected by the Leadership Conference probably than any other organization inasmuch as our constituency is somewhat similar and in some cases is the same, and our point of view is pretty much the same and our ways of working are likely to be very similar. It seems to me that this problem ought to be faced in any discussion of the future of the Leadership Conference.

To outline some of my own thoughts on the organization and program of the Conference I would suggest the following:

### 1. Organization

- a) The basic grouping of the Leadership Conference should be a national conference composed of representatives of organizations affiliated with the Conference. This conference should be held every two years, and should be the basic policy-making body for positions of the organization.
- b) There should be a Council of organizations within the Conference. This Council should meet perhaps twice a year or more frequently if necessary. All of the organizations affiliated with the Conference would have one or two representatives on this Council.
- c) There should be a Steering or Executive Committee which would be chosen by the Council of organizations and would meet frequently enough to take action on any issues demanding action.
- d) Staff should be responsible to the policy-making body of the organization. Whether this would be through the Executive Committee, the Council or by direct vote of the Conference would be a constitutional detail which it is not necessary to spend time on here.

### 2. Program

- a) It would seem to me important that the Leadership Conference not try to duplicate what is being done by other organizations. The Leadership Conference has a particular role to perform. I am not suggesting at this point what would be absolutely unique and what would be duplicating in the program of the Leadership Conference. I am suggesting that there ought to be careful examination of the relationship of the program of the Conference with other organizations carrying on similar work such as ACOA.
- b) Certainly an important function of the Conference would be to distribute literature and to acquaint its constituent groups with major policy questions.
- c) Both national and regional conferences should be held focusing on the most current issues.

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- d) There ought to be policy positions taken on pressing current issues relating to southern Africa or to American AID program.
- e) There should be emphasis particularly on the Washington scene in contact with both the Executive and Legislative branches of government.

### 3. Finance

I am not prepared at this point to suggest what the budget of the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa ought to be. Essentially, it seems to me that the budget should be raised from the constituent organizations. It would seem to me that there should be a limited rather than a large staff unless a very expansive program is adopted. If such an expansive program is adopted and it is proven that money can be raised for it, then again there should be very serious consideration of the relationship between the American Committee on Africa to the Leadership Conference. Otherwise, they will find themselves in a competitive relationship which would be harmful to both organizations.

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