

Letter

I hope a few belated comments on Professor Ross Baker's stimulating but ultimately misleading analysis of U.S. African policy constituencies (*Issue*, vol. III, no. 1, Spring 1973) is still in order. His crucial mistake is basing his typology on pseudo-psychological types rather than the history of organizational efforts to influence U.S. policy. That history, focusing on southern African policy, has been the subject of my research for the last few years. So I feel confident in suggesting some basic conclusions to be drawn from it.

1. Only two organizations served as continuing focal points for southern African interests and pressures on policy from the late 1950s until 1969—the American Committee on Africa and the African-American Institute—at which time the Diggs subcommittee became the pivotal pressure group.

2. The rest—trade unions, church groups, even Black organizations—have taken only formalistic and/or fitful interest in southern African policy.

3. Both the ACOA and the AAI have been well-informed and generally sophisticated in their use of public media and in their efforts at direct influence of the Executive.

4. Both have generally failed to influence the administration of southern African policy. The ACOA at an early stage in the Kennedy Administration acquired within the Executive the reputation of being radical and unreliable. The AAI, because of the close personal ties between Waldemar Nielsen and the State Department's Wayne Fredericks, continued to have access, but it was more often the recipient of Departmental interests and programmatic priorities than the initiator.

5. Baker may be right in his assessment of failure by the first Black pressure group — AMSAC — that its emphasis on cultural ties weakened its political focus, but the subsequent failure of the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLC) cannot be so explained, given its specific policy orientation.

6. In general, the failures of all four organizations rest in the almost-endless capacity of the Executive to avert, avoid, and nullify pressures brought to bear on the administration of ongoing policies.

7. The intrinsically fascinating case of the Byrd Amendment will have almost no wider explicatory power, as long as Congress has few opportunities to act on southern African policy. The other focal point for congressional initiative, the sugar quota, will be of minimal importance, as long as the world price of sugar is higher than the quota support price. And the other prospects for congressional legislative action remain hypothetical and unlikely: economic and/or military aid to either Black or White governments in the region.

8. As Baker himself suggests, and as I have pointed out in a previous correspondence, the crucial factor may be the disposition of the President toward southern African issues. But to take the Kennedy involvement as a model for preferred future administrations would be disheartening, given his intermittent focus on the region. On the other hand, expectations of greater presidential preoccupation are naive, given the nature of presidential and NSC decision-making.

9. In the absence of presidential initiatives on policy, the bureaucracy becomes all-important. To suggest (as Spiro has done in the pages of *Issue*) that its processes are all-inclusive of rational policy alternatives is misleading. The personal values and unwritten agenda of individual bureaucrats often come into play, not so much in initiatives, for the system allows little room for such actions, but in the

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manner and timing of their reactions to demands for decisions.

10. I believe the most immediate programmatic implications of these conclusions (which hold for all groups with special interest in southern African policy) are *not* in the realm of interest group organization and activity which Baker emphasizes but instead in "capturing" the presidency for a sympathetic individual and in encouraging sympathizers to join the Executive bureaucracy.

11. Baker's article, as Aaron Segal's earlier article, makes an appeal for greater citizen participation which is morally uncontroversial. Unfortunately, the appeal does not gain strength from the realities of policy formulation on southern African issues.

John Seiler
Grahamstown, South Africa

— Correction to *Issue*, vol. III, no. 4 (Winter 1973) —

"Cultural Relations and Exchanges Between South Africa and the United States" by Leslie Rubin

Page 17, second column should be altered as follows: in the first line of the second paragraph, "exchange" should read "change;" the sentence beginning on line ten should read, "The conflict within the ranks of Afrikanerdom of which we hear so much — between the *verligtes* (the enlightened ones) and the *verkramptes* (the conservatives) — is not a disagreement about the validity of apartheid; it is a disagreement about the methods and techniques which should be used to ensure continued white domination;" the first sentence of the third paragraph should read, "I stated that the belief in voluntary change in South Africa was a dangerous illusion."