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SENATOR NANCY KASSEBAUM ON AMERICAN AFRICAN POLICIES

Senator Nancy Kassebaum is a Republican Senator from Kansas and a member of the U.S. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee. With the Republican Party currently in control of the Senate, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee is a Republican, Senator Charles Percy of Illinois. Senator Kassebaum is Chairman of the Committee's Sub-Committee on Africa. (She succeeded Senator George McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, who was not re-elected in November 1980.) As the House of Representatives is still controlled by the Democrats, its Sub-Committee on Africa has a Democrat as Chairman, Congressman Howard Wolpe.

An article by Senator Nancy Kassebaum, which appeared in the Washington Star of 10 June, 1981, entitled "Pretoria Offends Everything Republicans Stand For", attracted considerable attention, in view of her position in the Senate. Subsequently, an interview with Senator Kassebaum has appeared in the July-August issue of Africa Report (a publication of the African-American Institute in New York). For the information of corporate members, both the article and the interview are reproduced below

WASHINGTON STAR ARTICLE

The euphoria in Pretoria and the despair in black African capitals about the conservative turn in American government originates in a false, but widespread, belief among political commentators that the election signalled an American acquiescence to South Africa's institutionalized system of racial oppression; apartheid.

The commentators focus on people on the vocal fringe of conservatism and overlook the mainstream Republican philosophy, and how that philosophy views the content and practices of apartheid.

We voted in November for principles that are, in fact, in direct contradiction to apartheid. We voted for maximum individual liberty and freedom of choice; for policies that are formulated with the family in mind; for widespread distribution of private property as a cornerstone of liberty; for the right of law-abiding individuals to pursue happiness without undue governmental intervention; and for a party that declared war on governmental over-regulation.

Apartheid is a system that, by law, prevents millions of South African families from living together as a family. Laws separate mothers, fathers and children. There are even inspectors who roam the country looking for families who violate these unconscionable laws. Last year a woman and her

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employer were arrested when government inspectors barged into the house she was cleaning and discovered that the woman's two-year old child was with her as she worked. The employer, the wife of an opposition politician, described the situation well when she told the judge in court, "It sounds as if we are in the days of Herod, marching from door to door looking for 'illegal' children."

It is simply inconceivable that anyone can really believe that the pro-family Republicans are in sympathy with such policies.

Apartheid is also a system that prohibits real home ownership by blacks (some 73 per cent of the population) in the major cities, offering instead perhaps the most pervasive system of government housing outside the Communist states. It is a system that says blacks can be the customers in downtown shops, but never the owners (or even managers) of the shops. It is a system that says that they can work on commercial farms, but never own the farm. Although South Africa is frequently described as "a bastion of free enterprise in Africa" the overwhelming majority of South Africans have never known free enterprise or the benefits in terms of human liberty that it can provide. Such a system holds little enchantment for a party dedicated to free enterprise.

Permits, Permits, Permits

And a party that has declared war on government interference and over-regulation can only be appalled by apartheid. Apartheid is a system of 2,000 laws and regulations that prescribe almost every aspect of daily life. If you are white, you need a government permit to drive a friend home after work, if that friend is black. You need another permit to invite him to dance. And he needs a permit, which is never granted, to actually dance in a hotel or discotheque. There are even regulations on glasses and linens used by blacks in hotels. There is nothing in such a system that can appeal to any American, regardless of party.

The persistence of the belief that Republicans sympathize with apartheid comes from a journalistic lethargy that accepts labels at face value. The term "conservative" is used to describe the Republican Party in the U.S. and the defenders of apartheid in South Africa. Few have bothered to probe beneath the labels to see what is being conserved.

It is ironic that those in South Africa who sound the most like Republicans by demanding the right to private property, the right to be considered for jobs without regard to race, and freedom from government regulation and interference at home, in the schools, and at work are described as "radical left" and even Marxists. It is also ironic that there is more harmony between the 1980 Republican platform and the decision of the "Marxist" government in Zimbabwe to dismantle a comprehensive system of public housing for blacks and to substitute a system of widespread home ownership (on the basis that the public housing system was "racist") than there is with the South African system.

Labels are always misleading, and they are especially misleading in Southern Africa.

Interview/

AFRICA REPORT INTERVIEW

Africa Report: Senator, what led you to accept this subcommittee assignment? What do you hope to achieve in this subcommittee chair? How does it affect your domestic political functioning?

Kassebaum: I've always had an interest in foreign relations: in fact my masters degree from the University of Michigan is in diplomatic history. Senator Charles Percy (R-Ill.), when he became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, asked that I join the committee, and after some deliberation I agreed. One of the things I would like to do on this committee is to enhance popular understanding regarding the domestic importance of a sound foreign policy.

Africa Report: Senator, before asking you the more detailed questions, I would like to know what your position is on the difference within the foreign affairs community between those who tend to interpret international developments in terms of U.S.-Soviet rivalry and those who see that as one among many factors.

Kassebaum: While there are those policymakers with a cast of mind that emphasizes U.S.-Soviet rivalries, I do not believe that they are unmindful of more comprehensive considerations. Obviously, the importance of U.S.-Soviet rivalries in a given situation would depend primarily on the particulars of that situation. A concern for Soviet and Soviet surrogate actions in Africa is a valid field of interest for American policymakers. It would be foolhardy to minimize our concerns about Soviet expansionism and intervention in Africa.

Africa Report: How do you see that issue affecting United States policy toward Africa?

Kassebaum: The Soviet Union and the other Eastern bloc nations have a right to engage in normal diplomatic and commercial relations with African states, and the United States should not seek to prevent such relations, nor should we view them with particular concern. However, the de-stabilizing presence of Soviet surrogates in a military role in Africa should be a matter of concern to Africans and to their friends in the West.

Africa Report: Senator, do you think the U.S. should do more to help African refugees? Would you consider calling hearings on this?

Kassebaum: I believe the United States should engage with its allies in a more intensive search for the political solutions that will make it possible for the African refugees to return home and reconstruct their lives. We plan to hold hearings this summer on the general subject of African refugees to determine what the United States should be doing in addition to the already considerable aid we are providing. If I am not mistaken, the United States is already providing 40 percent of all African refugee aid. Perhaps we should be encouraging other nations to provide aid at a level more in line with their own economic status.

Africa Report: Will you work for increased aid for Africa? What criteria should govern our aid programs there?

Kassebaum: Foreign aid is one of the most politically unpopular and least understood programs in the United States. As a member of the Budget Committee I have been forced to make difficult decisions about budgetary priorities, one of which was to vote to reduce foreign aid. The present economic climate is one in which our finite resources are outstripped by our humanitarian impulses. Foreign aid had to be reduced along with domestic programs. At the same time, I believe it is important to complement our diplomatic and military strengths with a positive foreign policy that necessarily includes foreign assistance.

Africa Report: Should the United States help African states to counter Libya's active role? How?

Kassebaum: Although I have not yet come to a firm conclusion on particular approaches to take in meeting the challenge of Col. Qaddafi's expansionist notions, it would seem to me that we should seek ways to co-operate with the Organization of African Unity's efforts to maintain the sovereignty of African nations.

Africa Report: Is it the business of the United States to promote change in South Africa - or to stand in the way of change? What principles and what interests should guide American policy toward that country?

Kassebaum: The United States has a substantial interest in the business of fostering progressive change in South Africa - although we too often overestimate our ability to do more than influence events there. There is considerable truth in Dick Moose's statement last year that no amount of political action from overseas can overshadow the solution to be worked out by South Africa's own people. It seems to me that in encouraging a more just society in South Africa we are protecting our national interests as well as being true to our national ideals. Given the economic, political, and strategic importance of southern Africa, it would seem to me that a South Africa with whom we could have close relations - which means a South Africa that is a democratic and just society for all its people - would be a high priority for any administration.

Africa Report: Would you back a democratic settlement in Namibia, even if that leads to a SWAPO victory?

Kassebaum: A truly democratic and independent Namibia is certainly an essential objective of our African policy, and a democratic Namibia is by definition a country in which its people have freely chosen their government. The choice of that government is for the Namibian people to make.

Africa Report: What should be our attitude toward the Savimbi insurgency and the MPLA government in Angola?

Kassebaum: Ideally, there will be a democratic election in Angola so that we can determine who are the legitimate leaders of the Angolan people. Since there has been no election, the debate in the United States about whether the MPLA or UNITA movements represent the Angolan people is only a matter of opinion among the international supporters of the movements. I would certainly expect that should the MPLA win in a free and fair election, the United States would recognize the choice of the Angolan people.

Africa Report: Would you support a policy of confrontation in the Horn; for example, by arming Somalia with offensive weapons, or by backing insurgents opposed to the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia?

Kassebaum: It would seem to me that the United States should encourage reconciliation between the various competing factions in the Horn of Africa, and as part of encouraging reconciliation we should work to give all parties in the disputes the confidence to work towards peace. The massive aid the Soviet Union is providing Ethiopia certainly undermines such an effort. The very important role the Sudan is willing to play in encouraging the Ethiopians to seek an end to their civil war should be encouraged. The Sudanese experience gives them a voice of some authority on the issues of effective political participation as a solution to internal warfare.
