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COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN AFRICA

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Five years have passed since we produced our first newsletter in the Spring of 1991, and it is thus appropriate to mark this anniversary by a review of the work that we have done, to see what we have accomplished and what remains to be done. Although in our name we stressed the concept of Academic Freedom, those who have followed our work know that CAFA's main objective has been to expose the policies that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have imposed on Africa, through the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), and in particular those directly affecting its educational systems. In these policies we have identified one of the main threats to academic freedom in Africa, both insofar as structural adjustment deprives Africans of the right to self-determination, and because much of the repression carried on by African governments on the campuses is rooted in this policy which students and teachers have vehemently resisted.

Our goal in organizing CAFA was to challenge the ideology by which the World Bank has promoted its plans for African education and build support for the anti-SAP movement that has grown in Africa in and out of the campuses. In pursuit of these goals, over the last five years, we have documented the struggles of African students and teachers, built connections with their organizations, and contributed our work to that of the growing number of organizations (e.g., the 50 Years Is Enough Campaign) that have made it their task to delegitimize the World Bank as a would be global Philosopher King. In this respect, our efforts have been fairly successful. Nevertheless, our hopes for a broad mobilization of North American academics in solidarity with our colleagues in Africa have been disappointed.

To this day, concern among North Americans for the misery the World Bank has created in Africa is very limited, even among Africanists. Exemplary, in this context, was the statement by Philip D. Curtin on the alleged ghettoization of African History (ASA News, October/December 1995). By suggesting that U. S. African Studies Departments are guilty of reversed discrimination because they hire Africans to teach African history, Prof. Curtin has not only questioned the validity of the knowledge produced in African universities, at the very time when World Bank policies are conspiring to devalue it on the global academic market, but he has also demonstrated a supreme disinterest in the conditions of academic work of our African colleagues and African students. In the midst of the most devastating attack on African academic institutions—an attack that for most teachers involves poverty, marginalization, police repression, emigration—Curtin has found nothing better

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