

Interview: Reverend Houston Anderson



Alabama's anti-IMF resolution

On April 30, the Alabama House of Representatives passed a resolution, "Immediate Actions Related to Emergency Food Relief to Africa," which memorializes Congress and President Reagan "to initiate action to end the International Monetary Fund system because of the connected economic collapse, through a new development-based international monetary program." The state Senate had passed the resolution unanimously on April 11.

The measure was initiated by Rev. Houston Anderson, who has been pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Selma, Alabama for three decades. He is a leader in a national network of farmers and civil rights leaders of the Schiller Institute, collaborating for emergency measures to meet Africa's food needs and save American farmers.

Reverend Anderson, a veteran of World War II and Korea, went to Washington, D.C. the week of VE-Day to lobby for this outlook, and spoke at a 3,000-person rally against the IMF. By the end of May, the "Alabama resolution" is expected to be introduced in Illinois and several other farm states. He was interviewed by Lydia Cherry on April 30.

EIR: The Alabama Senate passed an emergency resolution to end starvation in Africa that includes "ending the International Monetary Fund system." I understand that you were a key figure in its passage. How do you explain this?

Anderson: First, I should explain that I lobby in Montgomery regularly; I'm there at least one day out of every week when the state legislature is in session. I'm not a lobbyist, understand; I just show up.

EIR: How long did it take you to get this resolution passed?

Anderson: It took me just three days, but it was a long three days. I think you could say, I had almost a "sit-in." It worked though; they passed it unanimously. Normally what they would do is to give something like this to a committee, so what I did was corner the man who would be the chairman of that committee and I explained why it shouldn't go to committee and he backed me.

In those three days, I explained to the senators the objec-

tives of the Schiller Institute and how the institute, which I am widely known to be a part of, had formulated a plan for encouraging the economic development of Africa, and that this was the only way the starvation in Africa question could be posed. I explained that it was a plan which, if followed, would ensure the continent's economic independence. I also explained how this plan that I'm talking about would positively improve unemployment in the United States; that in Alabama itself it would make a dramatic change in reviving the state's steel production; it would open the mills back up. Birmingham, you know, is the Pittsburgh of the South, or used to be called that: the second-largest steel-producing area in the nation. We talked about how Alabama has the natural resources for the manufacture of iron and steel: We have iron ore; we have coal. We have everything objectively we need to manufacture steel, and yet the steel and related industries in Alabama are closed right now. If there is one thing the people down here want, it's to open them up again.

EIR: Senate Resolution No. 168 calls upon the U.S. Congress and the President to ensure food production by doing such things as freezing farm debt, issuing low-interest production credits at interest rates of 2-4%, federalizing the Federal Reserve, and initiating international action to end the International Monetary Fund—fairly hot subjects. Did you get it passed as it was, or were there changes?

Anderson: They passed it just as we had it. It has some important things in it. I told them I wanted it just as it was written. It was jointly introduced by a white and a black senator, Goodwin and Sanders—normally, or at least a good part of the time, they are at odds with each other.

I think citizens should show their faces more when these state legislatures are meeting. I have a certain amount of political clout in Alabama because I feed people. I feed an average of 125 people a day; these are people who are told to find jobs, but there aren't any. Out of my church, we serve 33,000 meals per year. The people I feed are all registered voters; this is the only requirement I have.

EIR: Your ministry, then, is very much a combination of a political focus with a Christian ministry?

Anderson: It has to be that. The realms of politics and Christianity are so closely entwined and related; there is no way you can do one without doing the other.

EIR: Alabama's governor, George Wallace, I understand, has been supportive of some of the things you have been doing in connection with the Schiller Institute. I can vividly remember as a kid watching on TV the scene of federal marshals at the University of Alabama who were there to make sure that James Meredith was let in and how George Wallace had blocked the door so that Meredith couldn't enter. Who is George Wallace and what is the basis for his support there?

Anderson: I remember it, too; I was there. What's important is that here in Alabama we learned how to forgive. We have to forgive; it's the only way you can move on. Wallace asked the people of Alabama, obviously particularly the black people, but also others, he asked us to forgive him.

In the more recent period, Wallace has entertained black dignitaries from all over the world. I might add that he never did that prior to the assassination attempt on his life. Governor Wallace recently wrote a personal letter to Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche welcoming the institute to the state. I know Helga wrote him back.

EIR: Do you see any hope in sight with respect to the economic situation there?

Anderson: Right now, the jobs are just not available here. You do have the Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway that's going to be coming through. This will mean some jobs in the near future, but they aren't here now. Places like here in Selma—the Alabama River runs through here—we are going to build a dock. The Tenn-Tom is crucial for the economic growth and development of the state. It will be running from St. Louis into the Gulf of Mexico.

It is this type of thing that can be a significant push forward; but it's also a question of whether Alabamians can seize the opportunity to be productive with relationships to the steel industry and whether they will really fight for it. I think it boils down to whether the people of this state can really get behind the policies of the Schiller Institute. I think this could happen here. The kind of treatment that [African Schiller Institute leader] Reverend Mpolesha got here on April 26 in Uniontown is one example. The mayor of Uniontown, Andrew Hayden, made Reverend Mpolesha the honorary mayor of the city, at an event in which Mpolesha was the guest speaker and Mayor Hayden attended. I think Hayden has some understanding of what we are trying to do; it wasn't just ceremony. The specific occasion was the annual meeting of the Carey County Civic League and it was held at the Uniontown Community Center. Mpolesha delivered a good speech; he talked about why we must do away with the International Monetary Fund. He talked about what was happening to agriculture. Uniontown is predominantly an agricultural area. The people in the audience knew exactly what he was talking about. He even talked about the spinoff effects, the economic development that would come from President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. He was beautiful; he got a standing ovation.

EIR: How did you get involved with the Schiller Institute?

Anderson: I was invited to Washington to a State Department meeting on the food emergency in Africa. At this meeting, Sheila Jones from the Schiller Institute was present. Alabama Sen. Howell Heflin, whom I supported for his election, had given me the use of a desk and a telephone for several days while I was in Washington to do some lobbying

to feed the folk in Africa. I was thinking about how to do this at the time Dennis Speed from the Schiller Institute called me in Heflin's office.

We had the children's march around Africa, right after Thanksgiving. A few weeks later the President began to do something about Africa. I give the credit to the Schiller Institute's demonstration. The United States did not have a policy for aiding the recovery of Africa until after that demonstration. It made a shift. It's not what we need it to be, but it's a beginning.

Target: state legislatures

The Alabama resolution calls for a package of emergency measures to expand U.S. farm output, and to initiate "grand-scale" infrastructure projects in Africa to create the basis for vast increases in agricultural output on that potentially rich continent. It also calls for investigating the food-cartel interests that dominate world food trade and food-aid flows.

A resolution similar to the Alabama measure has been introduced in Texas and Maryland, and circulated for introduction in many other farm states.

This approach has run into a brick wall of opposition in several state capitals, from the same quarters who are pushing anti-technology policies in the United States. The Oklahoma case is the most extreme.

In early April, a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives agreed to introduce an anti-IMF resolution modeled on the Alabama memorial, at the urging of Oklahoma farm leader George Gentry, and Rev. David Watts, representing the state's black constituency. The legislator sent the draft text to the legislative research department for final rewriting. It disappeared.

On the last day of the legislative session, Schiller Institute representatives demanded an explanation. The research director, George V. Moser, explained at length why he was stalling the resolution until, as he intended, it would die when the session ended April 20. Said Moser, "Technology is just a 'culture shock' for blacks, and would not be helpful to American blacks, nor to blacks in Africa." He had written his master's thesis on the "dangers" of technological development, and he attributed Khomeini's revolution to forced technological growth under the Shah.

Hearing of all this, state legislators are maneuvering to reintroduce the bill this month, when the legislature resumes.