

Statements by Ministers

are the ones with the surplus. It is the other side wanting to reduce the surplus. I would rather see the Government going, perhaps less spectacularly, but much more efficiently, on a one to one, problem by problem basis into these negotiations. The method used over the last 20 years has resulted in a large surplus for Canada and unfortunately for America, a large deficit for that country.

I am happy to have this occasion to welcome back the Prime Minister. After the glory of world travelling, I think that he will now deal daily with the banks, the tunas and so on—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chrétien: —and we will make sure that the Prime Minister has as good a time in Canada as he had abroad.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I too join in welcoming back the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney). At the outset, I want to commend him on behalf of members of my Party for the generally quite constructive approach he took at his meetings while outside of our country representing the people of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: The Prime Minister dealt with many important subject matters in his statement to the House. He talked about the United Nations as an organization, the Commonwealth, the IMF meetings in Seoul, trade discussions with the United States, and the importance of dealing efficiently and promptly with the acid rain problem among other matters.

Like the Prime Minister I want to concentrate on, and indeed in my case restrict my comments to, two important matters that he dealt with at greater length than he allocated to other subject matters. Specifically I shall speak about the situation in South Africa, the Commonwealth response to that, and the forthcoming meeting between President Reagan and the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mr. Gorbachev.

First, I want to say something about the situation in South Africa. Without belabouring the points in terms of rhetoric, I do want to say that I share totally, as do the overwhelming majority of Canadians, the noble sentiments expressed by the Prime Minister in his address to the United Nations about the moral abomination of apartheid. Whatever one may say about other regimes in the world, and there are many for which Canadians have no high regard in terms of what they do to civil liberties in particular, there is no other regime in the globe of which I am aware that divides human beings in terms of their rights on the basis of race. Opposition to racism is something that ought to have, by this point in human history, united all men and women, however else they may differ in political and economic policy matters, in attempting to rid the world of it. I commend the approach which the Prime Minister took in his statement at the United Nations on this important question.

I understand the important situation of the Prime Minister as head of a key Government in the Commonwealth and the difficult situation with which he was confronted in trying to work toward building a consensus among Commonwealth nations on this important issue, and the fact that a consensus was achieved at all is a positive sign. Given the importance of the Commonwealth continuing in the future, it was an understandable top priority goal of the Prime Minister.

At the same time, any consensus that includes Margaret Thatcher on this important question has to be a consensus, in my judgment, that is not likely to be very effective. I say that frankly. I suspect perhaps that the Prime Minister, if he could say so publicly, might even agree with what I have just said. His task was to work for a consensus, which the Commonwealth obviously ended up producing. It would have been good to see Commonwealth leaders, perhaps in some kind of circumstance and in some kind of way, openly taking on Margaret Thatcher in this issue. I am not, of course, doubting Margaret Thatcher's opposition to racism. That is not the issue. I do not think her credentials in that regard are any worse or any better than those of anyone in this House or any worse than those of other members of the Commonwealth. I totally deplore her unwillingness in policy matters to take the kind of tough action that ought to have been taken. Had she moved, I am sure the rest of the Commonwealth nations would have been prepared to accept her move. I regret that. We now have the consensus that has been produced, and we will be looking to see what will happen with it.

The real test, as everyone in the House knows, as the people in South Africa know and particularly the black majority in South Africa knows, will come after watching the regime in South Africa over the next six months to see if there is a response that is constructive, positive and that moves in the direction of removing apartheid. The initial response by the Government of South Africa has not been encouraging. It has said, rather like the Soviet Union when such matters are being discussed, that discussion of fundamental rights and human liberties is an internal matter.

One of the great accomplishments that began somewhere in the seventeenth century and has gradually evolved in the thinking of most politicians and most people in most states is that fundamental rights are not matters to be restricted to particular nation-state Governments. Fundamental rights are human rights and they ought to concern us all. We have a moral right to be discussing them, not only as they affect our citizens, but as they affect human beings anywhere in the globe.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prud'homme: And not to be selective.

Mr. Broadbent: Of course not to be selective. The Government of South Africa has already responded to the Commonwealth declaration by saying that, in effect, it was not going to take the declaration seriously because it was an infringement on the rights of the South African Government to deny