

CROSS CANADA CURRENTS

Action against Apartheid



Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark led a candlelighting ceremony in support of the victims of apartheid.

The Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa recently turned the ever stronger international spotlight of opposition onto South Africa and its system of *apartheid*. Meeting in Toronto for two days during August, the

committee examined reports on the impact of existing sanctions against South Africa and that country's international financial links, took steps to widen and tighten economic sanctions, and discussed a Canadian strategy to combat South African censorship and propaganda. The committee also looked at ways to assist victims and opponents of apartheid, help the front line states, and press for Namibian independence.

At the meeting, the eight foreign ministers from Australia, Canada, Guyana, India, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe agreed to take action to press Commonwealth countries and other governments to widen trade bans. Governments were called on to consider several measures to improve existing sanctions, including stricter customs scrutiny, heavier penalties for violations, and prohibitions on technology transfers designed to circumvent sanctions.

The ministers also agreed to increase restrictions on new lending and new investment, and to try to further internationalize such restrictions. They asked their countries' financial institutions to not expand trade financing and to press for even more restrictive loan rescheduling arrangements. These concrete proposals, if widely adopted, will significantly increase pressure for change on Pretoria.

In addition, committee chairperson and Canadian Exter-

nal Affairs Minister, Joe Clark, presented a Canadian strategy to counter South African censorship and propaganda, which was adopted as a basis for developing a practical Commonwealth response to the challenge. Several ministers indicated their intention to implement specific proposals. For its part, Canada will spend \$1 million to put the proposals into action, including contributing to a legal action fund against censorship; providing journalism scholarships, fellowships and awards for South Africans; and helping groups of concerned citizens to blunt the effects of propaganda.

The Toronto conference was the second meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Committee, founded at last October's Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver. Responsible for providing impetus and guidance to Commonwealth efforts on Southern Africa, the committee first met in Lusaka, Zambia, in February 1988. Harare, Zimbabwe, will host the next meeting in early 1989.

In conjunction with the Foreign Ministers' meeting, the Canadian government also sponsored a public forum on South African censorship and propaganda, which drew participants from Africa, the United States, Britain and Canada. A parallel arts festival featured anti-apartheid concerts, exhibits, films and a symbolic candlelighting ceremony.