



VANCOUVER SUN

AUG. 08/89

MEDIASCAN

VANCOUVER

THE PROVINCE / FINAL
THE SUN / FIRST
THE VICTORIA TIMES-COLONIST / FINAL

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OVERNIGHT CANADA. DU JOUR AU LENDEMAIN

8/12/89

More teeth, less talk

Once again a Commonwealth meeting on South Africa has come up with more rhetoric than substance but, if adopted, a proposal to put the country in a financial squeeze could have interesting results.

The idea is that next year, when South African foreign debt comes due, the world banking system should set extraordinarily stiff terms, including high interest rates. Foreign ministers in Canberra passed it along to their bosses who will meet in Malaysia in October.

Such a move would turn the South African economy increasingly inward, and might eventually force a fiscal crisis. But there is also the possibility that South Africa would refuse to pay its debts.

The always controversial Commonwealth Games were also discussed. A boycott is possible next year because greedy British cricketers are planning a South African tour. The Games are almost always held in richer coun-

tries, often white — New Zealand in 1990, Canada in 1994. There might be greater support for the Games if more developing countries were allowed to play host. (Jamaica was the last one in 1966.) Canada says it supports special assistance to such countries. If money matches mouth, that might be a good idea.

But the ministers were unable to recommend any specific advance in economic sanctions, also left for the Kuala Lumpur meeting in October. Canada, with External Affairs Minister Joe Clark in the chair, earns a special prize for hypocrisy in criticizing other countries, including Japan, the United States, and West Germany, for not doing enough. Canadian trade with South Africa has increased greatly in the past two years, with big gains in imports by Canada of South African goods.

Big talk and contradictory action make Canada look sanctimonious and silly. If we want to bite South Africa we should make it hurt.