

Mr. Speaker, I have been away from the House, and wanted to take the first opportunity available to me to report to Parliament upon recent events in South Africa, and discuss what Canada should do. Canada's position in the international fight against apartheid is both important and well-known. Part of our strength is that we have taken our decisions deliberately, and generally kept this issue beyond the normal divisions of domestic Canadian partisanship. I report today in that spirit.

One week ago the Government of South Africa banned political activities by seventeen organizations, including trade unions, and the major coalition committed to nonviolence. Three days ago, it arrested peaceful marchers. Yesterday, it introduced legislation to prevent foreign funding of anti-apartheid activity, and to restrict peaceful dissent still further. Pretoria seems intent on closing the door to peaceful change. Its actions invite violence, because they leave nothing else.

Those actions are perverse and brutal. One might hope that they are designed merely for temporary electoral advantage, but we feel they reflect a policy of deepening repression. A situation already bad has been made much worse.

In these circumstances, countries like Canada, which oppose apartheid, must review the nature and effect of all our relations with South Africa. We hope that will happen in all countries that prize democracy.

This Government of Canada, under the Prime Minister's leadership, has assumed a leading role in the fight against apartheid. Former Canadian governments followed Western consensus; this Government has tried to lead it, because of our extensive interest in Africa, our role in the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, our commitment to human rights. We believe this to be an issue where we have both influence and power, and we have tried to deploy our political influence and our economic power to have the most effect in the fight against apartheid. Certainly we are disappointed by the response of the Government of South Africa, and certainly we have had to consider again whether there is any point continuing our economic and diplomatic relations with a Government which seems determined to act like an outlaw.