

Business community

The government has tried to work with the Canadian business community. The outcome is that Canadian exports to Nigeria in the first half of 1997 exceed the total for 1996 and 1995 more than doubled the export performance of 1994.

A business forum was convened last November and, under leadership from Canadian Occidental, has decided to adopt a code of conduct.

Conclusion

There are concerns about the transition process in Nigeria but Canada must work with that process because there is no alternative. CHOGM must call for release of political prisoners and an opening up of the political process.

Joe Stern

CMAG has been a tough process but there has been real progress. The high quality of presentations in July impressed the Ministers. The draft report has been prepared and it is very strong, in its language and its analysis.

The Commonwealth is beginning to pay attention to the real quality of democracy and not just its form. CMAG's press releases have been categorical in drawing attention to the sham transition process, political exclusion and lack of respect for fundamental human rights. The Hon. Lloyd Axworthy is taking the lead in consulting with his colleagues on CMAG to decide the next course of action.

II The Situation in Nigeria

Ayo Obe

The economic, social and political life in Nigeria is decaying.

Economic

Human rights advocates are always faced with the argument that Abacha has brought stability and that human rights don't feed people.

However, in Nigeria today the overall picture is one of scarcity and collapse:

- about 40% of vehicles are idle because of the fuel shortage. This results in widespread lateness and absenteeism and consequent decline in productivity. (Lagos is well supplied with fuel but the rest of the country faces scarcity and high prices.)
- Power outages are common: most firms that have generators use them 6 hours a day.
- industrial capacity utilization has gone from 32.4% in 1996 to 25% in the first half of 1997.
- unemployment is exacerbated by retrenchment in both the private and public sectors.
- in Kaduna, 30,000 workers were fired for striking to obtain a package that had already been promised to them.
- road construction and repairs are merely cosmetic.
- telephone service is sporadic and expensive; internet access is still being debated.
- there is no accountability for government expenditures: ECOMOG expenses in Liberia are reported as being "between 3 - 4 Billion Naira".
- the Petrol Trust Fund is run by a sole administrator with no accountability and no benefit accruing to the people.
- business planning is risky because of the arbitrariness of government decisions.

Social

Corruption is rampant. Transparency International ranked Nigeria tops for perceived corruption.