

Canadian policy on human rights in South Africa follows a tradition of special involvement and concern which dates back to the early sixties. When John Diefenbaker returned from the meeting in London which resulted in South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth, in 1961, he told the House:

"I took the position that if we were to accept South Africa's request unconditionally our action would be taken as approval, or at least condonation, of racial policies which are repugnant to and unequivocally abhorred and condemned by Canadians as a whole."

Canadians are aware that no country's record is without blemish on questions of race and colour. Our own approach cannot be a vindictive or self-righteous one: we must lament all instances of prejudice.

There are flagrant violations of human rights in countries other than South Africa - and Canada has protested against them in clear and forceful terms. But we surely cannot ignore a situation, in a country once close to us, where the principles of equality and justice are so grossly denied. South Africa stands alone in continuing to pursue an official and avowed policy of separation and discrimination based on race and colour.

The fundamental changes in South Africa we had hoped for - during the past quarter century - have not come about. One tragic incident follows another - almost 400 South Africans have lost their lives in the past year, reflecting growing frustration at exclusion and rejection. In these circumstances the persistence - the enormity - of institutionalized racism can only cause a widening gulf between our two countries.

We regret that. But the time has come for basic change - for the repudiation of apartheid as a concept and a policy.

Let me address a brief word, in this context, to the Government of South Africa and its supporters. We believe a change of direction is possible within South Africa and in South Africa's relations with other countries. Though it may seem frightening to some, it is surely better to abandon conflict and to enter into partnership with all South Africans than to persist in the present course. If the Government of South Africa continues to proceed timidly and grudgingly at each step, and continues to put down non-violent opposition, even the most moderate may reach the end of their patience,