

Interim Supply

The Chairman: Shall I dispense with the reading of the resolution?

Some hon. Members: Dispense.

The Chairman: Shall the resolution carry?

Mr. Argue: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Vancouver East just before ten o'clock last night raised the question of racial discrimination in South Africa. I do not think there is any division among Canadians in their attitude toward this very difficult problem. I think Canadians, and I think political parties represented in this house, believe that a mistake is being made by the government of South Africa in giving less than equal treatment to the coloured people in that great nation.

I think, however, there is a difference of attitude in Canada as to what steps should be taken by the government and as to what Canada's general approach should be to this great problem. It is not a problem that is based solely on the essential principle that there should be equal treatment to the people of all races. It is based also on the practical world situation today. As we see the growth and development of many new independent nations, particularly in Asia and Africa, it is of the utmost importance that the democratic nations, and that the white race, should not appear to be in opposition to these important and welcome developments. If the democratic nations, if a country like Canada, should appear to be opposed to these natural developments, it will jeopardize our democratic system in the future, and it will certainly weaken the western world, including the commonwealth of nations.

So, for many reasons, it is essential that the voice of Canada should ring out strong and clear in opposition to apartheid in South Africa. The Prime Minister's statement this morning showed that this government does not support the racial policies of the government of South Africa. But I think it confirms a belief that we in the C.C.F. have, and we think can be substantiated, that the government's policy on this question is unnecessarily soft; that the government has not taken, in the past, a forthright stand of opposition to the policies that are being followed. I have looked over the record of the discussions and the votes at the United Nations. I have in my hand the terms of the resolution which was presented to the general assembly last year, and the vote on this resolution. The resolution reads as follows:

Recalling its resolution 1248 of 30 October 1958 on the question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the government of the Union of South Africa,

Deeply convinced that the practice of racial discrimination and segregation is opposed to the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Considering that government policies which accentuate or seek to preserve racial discrimination are prejudicial to international harmony,

Noting with concern that the policy of apartheid is still being pursued,

1. Expresses its opposition to the continuance or preservation of racial discrimination in any part of the world;

2. Solemnly calls upon all member states to bring their policies into conformity with their obligation under the charter of the United Nations to promote the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

3. Expresses its deep regret and concern that the government of the Union of South Africa has not yet responded to appeals of the general assembly that it reconsider governmental policies which impair the right of all racial groups to enjoy the same fundamental rights and freedoms;

4. Appeals to all member states to use their best endeavours as appropriate to achieve the purposes of the present resolution.

I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that this is a very moderate and well considered resolution, and that it is a resolution about which there should be no equivocation so far as Canada's position is concerned, and that in voting on a resolution of this type the government should be prepared to vote in favour.

What has been the result of this discussion and this vote? The result has been Canada has abstained, and the argument as to why Canada has abstained has been that Canada would not wish to do anything that might lead to South Africa leaving the commonwealth. I want to hasten to say I do not want to see the government of South Africa leave the commonwealth. I like to see the commonwealth strong and as influential as it can be. But I think there are greater and more important considerations than that very question. A more important consideration is the question of racial discrimination. Canada should not hesitate, and should not have hesitated for any reason, to support the resolution to which I have referred.

What has been the attitude on the part of other nations? There were 67 nations who supported this resolution; three nations opposed it and seven nations abstained. Canada abstained. Canada was the only commonwealth nation that abstained. I am sorry, I am mistaken. Canada and Australia were the only commonwealth nations that abstained. The United Kingdom voted against the resolution. All the other commonwealth countries, Ceylon, Malaya, Ghana, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, stood by their principles and voted in favour of the motion. They voted to condemn or to criticize racial discrimination.