

Minister's Report on Visit to Africa

since it is said that improvements will be made where French is normally used.

Mr. Speaker, all this goes to prove that this is a very timid step. This is a beginning, a very slow evolution, and in fact the core of the problem does not really involve linguistics but an active participation of French-speaking Canadians not only in legislative debates, but also in drafting these pieces of legislation and administering this country that one would wish bilingual and bicultural.

The time has now come to stop procrastinating on this matter and start acting. Action will have to be stepped up considerably if these objectives are to be realized before Quebecers decide to do so themselves without the help of the nine other provinces.

* * *

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

REPORT BY MINISTER ON VISIT TO AFRICA

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I should like to report to the House briefly on my recent African trip, in the course of which I visited the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Zambia.

This was the first series of visits by a Canadian foreign minister to Africa south of the Sahara. It enabled me to learn something, but all too little, of the countries visited. It gave me an opportunity to emphasize to the various governments the depth and continuing quality of the Canadian commitment to Africa, of which I saw convincing evidence through my meetings with more than 1,000 Canadians actively engaged in co-operative development projects—missionaries, CIDA people, CUSO volunteers and, of course, the personnel of our diplomatic missions. I also arranged for our ambassadors and high commissioners in the countries I could not visit to join us at various places in Africa in order that I might profit from their advice.

● (2:30 p.m.)

Development assistance is and will remain the largest element in our activities in Africa. This is at once a measure of the need of the developing countries there and of the opportunity Canada has to contribute its resources, human and material, operating equally in English and in French. In certain of the countries visited, I was able to give formal effect to aid arrangements worked out over the last year or so, some of which will have an immediate beneficial impact on our domestic economy.

I also visited the headquarters of the East African Community, which is a form of common market composed of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. I learned at first hand of development plans from the African leaders, and saw how Canadian assistance programs fit into these plans and the part they may be expected to play in the future. In all five countries, I was assured that Canadian involvement in black Africa is welcome and expansion of our present efforts is sought. African leaders in the coun-

[Mr. Matte.]

tries I visited told me that the Canadians there were doing an excellent job and that the countries concerned could not get enough Canadian manpower. In Tanzania, for example, President Nyerere indicated that he would be delighted to receive thousands of Canadians, compared to the few hundreds there now. The Canadians I saw confirmed, for their part, the need for continued Canadian presence in Africa. It became clearer to me from day to day that our involvement has raised the expectations of our African friends and that we must continue and strengthen our partnership with them in the development of their countries.

During my two weeks in Africa I found the governments preoccupied with the intractable problems of Southern Africa. These issues have been fully explored in Commonwealth conferences, most recently at Singapore in January. I urged upon the African governments our view that the Commonwealth is an essential forum for discussing the difficult matter of racial discrimination and its repercussions.

In all five countries, Canada's stand on Southern African issues was well understood and accepted. African leaders I met expressed their satisfaction with Canada's position on these problems as expressed by our public statements and our voting record at the United Nations.

In my discussions with African leaders, I emphasized the need for a peaceful solution to the problems of Southern Africa. Large-scale hostilities in Africa could only bring about the ruin of the economy of the black nations and destroy any hope for the betterment of the life of their peoples. Such hostilities would inevitably involve outside powers and threaten a new conflict equal in magnitude to the tragedy of the Middle East or Viet Nam.

I think we should realize and accept that our capacity to influence the white racist minorities in Southern Africa is limited and can best be exercised multilaterally through the United Nations and the Commonwealth. What we can do ourselves is to offer economic and political support for the developing countries of black Africa. In this way, we can make a positive contribution to the solution of the deep-seated problems of Africa, and it is here that our energies should be focused. This is bound to be more rewarding for Africans and Canadians alike than wasting our energies in empty gestures designed to tell the world of our moral rectitude on racial questions.

[Translation]

I discussed the question of La Francophonie with members of the governments in the Congo and the Ivory Coast, and explained Canada's position concerning this group of countries which are united by the French language and culture.

I assured them that Canada was completely committed to co-operation with French-speaking countries in general and particularly to the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation of which we are full members. I took this occasion to express our hope that the African countries would be participating equally fully in this organization to promote understanding and mutual assistance. In my opinion such full participation will permit more