

No. 61/6

Apartheid

Statement by Mr. Arthur Smith, Canadian  
Representative on the Special Political  
Committee, April 5, 1961.

... Canada, as a sister nation of the Commonwealth,  
has had a long and close association with South Africa. It is  
an association which was cemented by joint effort and sacrifice  
of our people in two world wars - such ties ... are not forgotten  
or severed by the fact that we are compelled to speak out in  
protest against the unnatural policy of apartheid followed in  
recent years by the Union Government.

The Canadian Delegation has participated in previous  
discussions of this item often enough to make very clear our  
position on the question of racial discrimination. We have no  
sympathy with policies of this sort, wherever they may be  
practised, and consider them contrary to the letter and the  
spirit of the Charter, contrary to the spirit of our times.  
The Canadian record of opposition to racial discrimination is  
clear and consistent. This position was reaffirmed recently by  
our Prime Minister during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers'  
meeting in London. Mr. Diefenbaker has reported to the Canadian  
Parliament on his stand in London, and I quote the following  
brief excerpt:

"Speaking for Canada ... I pointed out that we were  
opposed to racial discrimination and made it clear that  
I could not approve any formula or solution which did not  
not maintain beyond any doubt that non-discrimination in  
respect of race and colour is an essential principle of  
Commonwealth association."

As an illustration of Canadian concern for the rights  
and opportunities of indigenous people, the present Government  
of Canada has extended the franchise to all people of North  
American Indian origin. Canadian Indians now enjoy the rights  
and privileges of citizenship to the same degree as all other  
Canadians and there is nothing to prevent members of this or any  
other race from sitting as members of either House of the Canadian  
Parliament. Indeed, in 1958, the first Canadian Indian was  
appointed as a member of the Canadian Senate.

As a further protection for the rights of the indigenous  
population as well as for all other citizens, the Canadian Parliament  
recently enacted a Bill of Rights which, inter alia, reinforces the  
common law safeguards against any form of racial or religious  
discrimination.

Canada is itself a multi-racial state to some degree;  
therefore, although we have had some problems of racial discrimina-  
tion to solve in our own country, we can appreciate the difficulties  
which have troubled many lands. As the distinguished Delegate  
from Afghanistan so usefully reminded us during the debate on the  
previous item, racial discrimination and denial of fundamental  
rights has not been confined to people of any one nation or  
continent, but is a tragically widespread phenomenon. However, we  
are convinced that the problems of a multi-racial society, whatever  
complications may exist, can never be solved by policies and practices  
which are based on the idea of racial superiority of one group of  
that society over another.