

No. 61/19 Race Conflict in South Africa

Statement by Mr. Paul Tremblay, Canadian
Representative on the Special Political
Committee of the United Nations, on November
10, 1961

Mr. Chairman:

In order to set forth the position of the Canadian Delegation on the item before this Committee, I propose to deal with the problem of apartheid on two planes. One concerns the attitude of my Government toward the apartheid policy practiced by the Government of the Republic of South Africa. The other involves decisions which this Committee and the United Nations General Assembly may take, in the face of continued pursuit of this policy by the South African Government.

Mr. Chairman, over the many years that this vexatious problem has been before the United Nations General Assembly, the Canadian Delegation has made abundantly clear Canada's irrevocable opposition to racial discrimination. We oppose racial discrimination wherever it may be practiced. It represents the very negation of the equality of man, and of human dignity and freedom. It is contrary to letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, and to universally accepted standards of human values. As the distinguished representative of Japan so aptly observed, racial discrimination, no matter when or where practiced, tends to weaken the international fabric of freedom, peace and justice.

It has been emphasized in the course of debate in this Committee that racial discrimination is by no means confined to any one nation or continent, but is a widespread problem. The practice of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa, however, surely constitutes a unique record of discrimination and prejudice; for there, not only has the practice of racial discrimination been enshrined in the legislative and legal structure of state but the theory has been consecrated as a philosophy of government. The Government of South Africa, far from devoting itself to eliminating this unhappy practice, is rather the deliberate and determined agent for promoting and consolidating discrimination between the inhabitants of its territory on grounds of colour. As the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Diefenbaker, has remarked, the apartheid policy of the South African Government has become the world's symbol of discrimination.

Canada deplores the suffering and frustration which the apartheid policy has imposed upon the non-white population of South Africa. Those who have sought to make a case for apartheid have referred to the physical benefits which it provides, or is intended to provide, for the non-white population - low-cost housing, hospital and medical facilities, economic improvements, and educational facilities. Mr. Chairman, I have no wish to disregard or minimize the importance of any alleged benefits that may have accrued to the non-white population of South Africa. Good as they may be in themselves, however, in the Canadian