

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, MARCH 18, '99

# Axworthy warns oil company not to fuel Sudan war

## Calgary firm condemned by church groups for its part in 15-year battle

BY BOB HARVEY

Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy is putting pressure on a Calgary oil company condemned by church groups for fuelling the war in Sudan.

Mr. Axworthy yesterday told a seminar on religious persecution, held in Ottawa, that he spoke to officials of Talisman Oil last week and reminded them of the strategic place they occupy in Sudan, and their need to abide by the International Code of Conduct for Canadian Business. That code calls for businesses to demonstrate ethical leadership and to do business throughout the world in the same way they operate in Canada.

The foreign affairs minister also said he told company officials "we should begin looking at how we can work directly on problems (in Sudan) like child slavery and social breakdown."

Mr. Axworthy said the long-running war in Sudan and the increasing problem of religious persecution around the world "will be a major area of concern to myself and the government."

He said Canada has already begun canvassing fellow members of the UN Security Council in an attempt to find solutions to a war that has taken almost two million lives in the last 15 years.

Three weeks ago, the Interchurch Coalition on Africa asked Mr. Axworthy to screen Canadian private investment in Africa and ensure that Canadian firms do not strengthen the capacity of the northern Sudanese government to wage war against secessionists in southern Sudan.

Senator Lois Wilson, a former president of the World Council of Churches, spoke on behalf of the Interchurch Coalition and said Talisman Energy is helping to provide oil that the Sudanese government may be using in a war of genocide.

The Interchurch Coalition said it believes the oil is being used to fuel tanks, personnel carriers and planes that bomb hospitals and displaced persons camps in southern Sudan.

Last week, Ms. Wilson represented Mr. Axworthy as head of a Canadian delegation at Sudan peace talks conducted in Norway.

She also attended yesterday's seminar on religious persecution and said she agreed with Mr. Axworthy that the peace talks are making progress, and it is the wrong time to threaten sanctions against Sudan.

However, Ms. Wilson said that if no progress is made by April 15, Canada should consider putting pressure on Talisman to refuse to turn on the flow of oil until peace is achieved.

Talisman is in partnership with the Sudanese government and Chinese and Malaysian organizations in a development in southern Sudan that includes oil wells, a 5000 million refin-

ery and a \$1 billion pipeline to Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

The refinery is expected to begin delivering 150,000 barrels a day this June and free up \$450 million a year that Sudan is currently spending on oil imports. Sudanese government officials have said they expect the additional revenue to finance an end to the war in the south, which is costing it about \$1 million a day.

Mr. Axworthy told yesterday's seminar that Canadian legislation does not currently allow the government to take economic action against Sudan or other countries unless it is in conjunc-

tion with an international group like the United Nations.

More than 40 academics, government officials and members of religious groups attended the seminar on religious persecution.

Held at the foreign affairs headquarters in the Lester B. Pearson Building, the seminar was organized by the Canadian Jewish Congress. Congress chairman, Rabbi Reuven Bulka, said Canadians need to co-ordinate their efforts with others and work toward ending a problem that takes about 200,000 lives a year in countries like Sudan, Pakistan and Tibet.