

## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No 55/38

### THE QUESTION OF RACE CONFLICT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Statement by Dr. R.A. MacKay, Permanent  
Canadian Delegate to U.N., made in  
the Ad Hoc Political Committee November 9, 1955

The Canadian Delegation has been hesitant to intervene in this debate because Canada is a country without wide experience of the problems of a multi-racial society. It has seemed to us that in a question as grave and as complex as the present item, the members should, as far as possible, confine their efforts to the promoting of practicable solutions. The problem facing us is not one which can be solved by rhetoric. The Canadian Delegation is not at all sure whether the discussion of this subject, session after session at the General Assembly, has advanced or retarded the cause of the inhabitants of South Africa, whose interests should be our only concern in raising the issue.

Canada's attitude toward the question now before the Committee, and toward other questions of human rights, has been stated on more than one occasion during the debates at previous sessions of the General Assembly. This attitude has been one of firm support for practical efforts designed to win universal respect for human rights without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. It has long been a matter of Canadian policy and indeed an essential part of the Canadian way of life to adhere to practices in keeping with that general principle. This is not to say that prejudice in the matter of these human rights has been eradicated in Canada, nor that the manifold problems of populations of mixed origin have been solved in my country. Racial prejudice is one of the most deeply rooted of human emotions and by no means confined to persons of European origin. In Canada we have had our own failings of a private and public nature, and we have not yet attained perfection, but we believe that we are moving steadily in the right direction.

In speaking in this debate we are humbly aware that Canada is more favourably placed than many other countries. The vast majority of Canadians are of one race even if they differ in language, religion and custom. Distinctions of race, however, pose the most difficult and complex problems. We can easily imagine how acute these problems must be in areas, like the Union of South Africa, where a relatively small and advanced population finds itself in the midst of a large and relatively backward majority of another race. In these circumstances it seems to us that speedy solutions are clearly out of the question and that the scope and nature of the problem must be borne in mind by all those who offer solutions.