

S.O. 29

They they have felt completely closed out of their society, completely excluded by a system that is so comprehensive, so systematic, so buttressed by every form of law, that it deserves the special attention that we give it, because no other place in the world has so vicious a division of people which has been systematically enforced on the basis of race, no place else in the world, and I have seen a lot of other parts of the world, places where viciousness does exist. No place else has such systematic viciousness enforced on the basis of race.

It deserves our attention because that racism ultimately could destroy our entire societies if it itself is permitted to continue, if we practise tolerance rather than the kind of urgent opposition of which those of us on this side of the House have talked today.

I thought Soweto was bad, but then in 1983 I had a chance to go from Johannesburg to Maseru in Lesotho across country in South Africa. It was part of a trip which I was making for the IDRC, a Canadian supported organization to help eventually establish some projects in Lesotho itself. We drove across South Africa and we saw something of rural South Africa and how the black person is treated in rural South Africa. It makes Soweto, frankly, look like something posh.

The rural parts of South Africa, the huge white farms, farms that stagger even the imagination of people from our west where farms are large, included generally in some small remote corner a set of grass thatched huts where, in the most abject poverty that you can possibly imagine, the black people who work those farms were living out their lives. That kind of inequality, that kind of economic exploitation is something that I think is unimaginable to us in this country.

We in this Party often talk of economic exploitation in Canada. I have never in my life seen contrasts of this kind that existed, contrasts between the most superb, well appointed, affluent farms, and the viciousness, the meanness, the closeness, the degradation of life for black people who work those farms.

Then I think, because one might get the impression from these vignettes that there can be no hope for a society that has lived like this for some generations, I think of a symposium, which again was organized by IDRC in Botswana, yet another of the countries which South Africa has attacked in recent months.

There in Botswana we saw brought together at that symposium both black and white South Africans, young South Africans of 16, 17, 18, up to 22, to talk together about education and to find suddenly in microcosm something that they had never experienced before, a multi-racial experience in which everybody was equal.

Instead of apprehension they felt a sense of true human liberation which is the only way to describe it, a true human liberation which, frankly, I felt tremendously privileged to be able to see in action.

Or I think of times I spent myself in the Lusakas and the Harares and the Maseru, and the Maputos of Africa, the places that have tried to develop, despite their poverty, which persists despite African independence in these countries, because we are talking of countries that for years endured the most difficult forms of colonialism. Yet they have tried to build societies for themselves, and have had some success. Despite the poverty that persists, they have become the targets of direct brutal attack by South African airplanes, South African soldiers and South African high technology. These attacks have, in many ways, devastated those cities. It is a tragedy when one considers their slow and difficult efforts to build themselves up from a tough past.

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I believe the situation in South Africa today is a human tragedy that is sad and dramatic because it is so systematic, so structured and so organized. That is the difference that makes the sadness and tragedy so particularly powerful to one's feelings as a human being when one visits that society to try to interact with non-whites who live there.

That is why I believe we must move so urgently. That is the call from the Eminent Persons Report. That is a report which, surprisingly and incredibly, is full of hope. Believe it or not, the foreword by the Commonwealth Secretary-General begins the report by saying:

—both change and peace are within the grasp of its people. For a brief moment, the world—and pre-eminently South Africans of all races—glimpsed a path of negotiation to a more worthy future.

Even more remarkably, the report goes on to say that:

—those so long oppressed in South Africa, the victims of apartheid, are ready even now to join in a peaceful process of building a new South Africa in which all its people, black and white, coloured and Indian, will share in fairness and with dignity.

That is incredible hope after generations of oppression.

Yet, at the same time this report expresses better than any of us can, that urgency is absolutely crucial to achieve change while that hope still exists. As the report says, the concerns in South Africa are about the black people. The concerns of the Commonwealth:

—are about the inhumanities of the apartheid system and the even more terrible human suffering that lies not far ahead if a way is not found urgently to compel the dismantling of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial representative Government in South Africa.

That is the challenge that I fear Canada has not taken up in the past but which we must take up now, in 1986. That is why we are having to express not just a hope for the future for South Africa but an anger about the inadequacy and lack of urgency which our Government has expressed in the face of these incredible indignities. That is what forces us to ask these tough questions and what forces us to call for an emergency debate, so that we can somehow convey to the Government the sense of urgency that I felt in Soweto in 1969, even more so in 1983 in rural South Africa, and which I feel even more today as I listen to the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall) say that it is not a time for boldness and heroics.