

I should like to report to the House briefly on my recent African trip, in the course of which I visited the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, and Zambia.

This was the first series of visits by a Canadian Foreign Minister to Africa south of the Sahara. It enabled me to learn something, but all too little, of the countries visited. It gave me an opportunity to emphasize to the various governments the depth and continuing quality of the Canadian commitment to Africa: of which I saw convincing evidence through my meetings with more than 1,000 Canadians actively engaged in co-operative development projects -- missionaries, CIDA people, CUSO volunteers, and, of course, the personnel of our diplomatic missions. I also arranged for our Ambassadors and High Commissioners in the countries I could not visit to join us at various places in Africa in order that I might profit from their advice.

Development assistance is and will remain the largest element in our activities in Africa. This is at once a measure of the need of the developing countries there and of the opportunity Canada has to contribute its resources, human and material, operating equally in English and in French. In certain of the countries visited, I was able to give formal effect to aid arrangements worked out over the last year or so, some of which will have an immediate beneficial impact on our domestic economy.

I also visited the headquarters of the East African Community, which is a form of common market composed of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

I learned at first hand of development plans from the African leaders, and saw how Canadian assistance programmes fit into these plans and the part they may be expected to play in the future. In all five countries, I was assured that Canadian involvement in Black Africa is welcome and expansion in our present efforts is sought. African leaders in the countries I visited told me that the Canadians there were doing an excellent job and that the countries concerned could not get enough Canadian manpower. In Tanzania, for example, President Nyerere indicated that he would be delighted to receive thousands of Canadians, compared to the few hundreds there now. The Canadians I saw confirmed, for their part, the need for continued Canadian presence in Africa. It became clearer to me from day to day the extent to which Canada is already committed in Africa. It became clearer from day to day that our involvement has raised the expectations of our African friends and that we must continue and strengthen our partnership with them in the development of their countries.

During my two weeks in Africa I found the governments preoccupied with the intractable problems of Southern Africa. These issues have been fully explored in Commonwealth Conferences, most recently at Singapore in January. I urged upon the African governments our view that the Commonwealth is an essential forum for discussing the difficult matter of racial discrimination and its repercussions.