

Urgent Need for Peaceful Reform in South Africa

Speech by the Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
to the Royal Commonwealth Society,
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I am here in two capacities. The first is that it is now my honour to lead Arnold Smith's old Department, and there is a particular Canadian pride in the anniversary and success of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

My second credential is as a reformed sceptic about the Commonwealth -- made sceptical originally by a suspicion that a club of old colonies would be better at talking than acting; and reformed by the best teacher -- the experience of seeing the Commonwealth at work. I represented Canada at the Heads of Government Meeting in Lusaka, when the prime ministers of Great Britain, Tanzania and Zambia, with encouragement from the rest of us, worked out the agreement on Zimbabwe. That was action, not talk -- historic action reflecting great courage and skilful compromise. Many leaders contributed to that result, but I think it appropriate to note the particular determination and vision of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, in choosing the right time to move her country and our Commonwealth forward on a crucial issue. The example should remind us that the Commonwealth can be an instrument of profound change, if its members work steadily together.

A determination to work together that way is more important now than ever -- not simply in the face of urgent current issues, but also because the world needs international institutions that work. If I may be immodest on my country's behalf, Canada is well placed to make that observation. Through 40 years and governments of both our parties, Canadians have been unusually active