

Oral Questions

APPLICATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN LAWS TO CANADIAN COMPANIES

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, as the Secretary of State knows, some of the companies in violation of the voluntary Code of Conduct are required, pursuant to South African segregationist laws, to segregate black workers from white workers at on-site accommodations. What advice would he offer to those companies which are faced with this inconsistency between the Code of Conduct and South African racist laws?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we would urge Canadian companies to follow Canadian standards and the Canadian Code of Conduct. If they are seeking information as to how they can do that in a way that is consistent with South African law, we certainly are prepared to aid them in resolving that particular problem. However, we believe that there is a Canadian standard that is very clearly at variance with the practice of the Government of South Africa. We think that the practice of the Government of South Africa, in following an apartheid regime, is abhorrent, and we want to see Canadian practice conform to our standards, not South African standards.

REQUEST FOR MANDATORY APPLICATION OF CODE OF CONDUCT

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, if a Code of Conduct can be expected to work effectively, would it not make a good deal more sense to make it mandatory and require those corporations which do not adhere to the Code of Conduct to remove themselves from South Africa?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, that is clearly an option. The point I made to the Hon. Member earlier is that the step that the Government has taken is to have moved the question of compliance into the public domain so that the country and Parliament are in a position to exert influence upon those Canadian companies now. That is my preferred option. There is another.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT HOLD DISCUSSIONS WITH COMPANIES

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were certainly ashamed to learn that five of our companies were breaking the Code of Conduct and treating blacks like cheap labour. I am glad that the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Government, for that matter, are not happy with the situation. We have yet to hear what concrete steps the Government is willing to take to bring this exploitation to an end. Is the Government at least willing to meet with the companies and persuade them to respect this voluntary Code of Conduct? If they do not want to do that, will the Government make it mandatory?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think the publication of this Code of Conduct is supported by all Parties in the House, although it was not the practice of former Governments to require that publication. The Hon. Member has asked me whether I am prepared to meet with the representatives of the Canadian private sector that are active in South Africa. I have met with them. We did that early in the evolution of our process. We are prepared to meet with them again.

The point I want to make is that we have now secured a situation where these facts are in the public domain. I believe that the companies in question are, among other things, subject to public opinion. I hope that public opinion will be strong and clear.

[Translation]

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, personally, I think these Canadian companies should withdraw altogether from South Africa, just like the U.S. House of Representatives said in its motion last night.

INQUIRY WHEN GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE ACTION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): However, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs when he is going to show he has some backbone and stop waiting for public opinion in Canada to have some impact on these companies. When is the Government going to take concrete action instead of waiting for these companies to make up their minds to follow a voluntary code?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal Government, the companies concerned were not required to publish a record of their performance. Under the Liberals, they could hide those details. But that is history, and now companies must provide disclosure.

I hope there will be a strong reaction from the public, because our present option is the one we prefer. But I repeat that there is another option.

[English]

STERNSON COMPANY'S FAILURE TO REPORT

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Two of those companies mentioned in the report are located in my constituency. They are Massey-Ferguson, or Massey Combines as it is now known, and Sternson Ltd. Sternson Ltd. has not even taken the opportunity to report. What specific action will the Secretary of State take against Sternson Ltd. to make certain that it reports immediately on its financial undertakings in South Africa?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to work very closely with the Hon. Member, as the Member of Parliament for the region, to try to encourage that company not only to report,