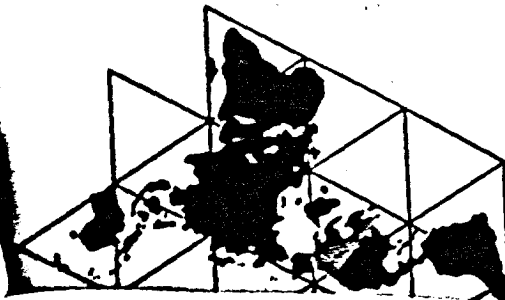


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OVERNIGHT CANADA/ DU JOUR AU LENDEMAIN

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South Africa could feel financial pinch

Nothing pinches quite so tightly as money.

The Commonwealth committee of foreign ministers on southern Africa wants that sort of strategy applied to Pretoria for a renewed effort to squeeze apartheid out of South Africa.

The eight-member committee's three-day meeting in Canberra last week noted that billions of dollars worth of South African foreign debt must be renegotiated by next June. If banks respond to Commonwealth urgings for tougher terms in rescheduled loans (the highest possible interest rates and repayment limited to not more than 10 years), it would give added impetus for Pretoria to hasten the pace of ending its segregation of the majority black population, and to give blacks a fully participatory status in government.

Trade sanctions have been one of the Commonwealth's primary, albeit controversial, weapons in this cause. Declared by many nations, including some outside the Commonwealth, they are applied in indifferent or selective ways. Canada's External Affairs Minister Joe Clark reminded the committee that the United States, Japan, Brazil and West Germany have imposed trade sanctions but are not adhering to them completely.

Canada, too, has been faulted for not having a more complete ban on trade with South Africa, but the controversial aspect of a sanctions policy may serve to explain this. There is a conten-

tion, if not firm evidence, that sanctions tend to hurt black workers as much as the nation's commerce.

Clark refused to let the South African ambassador to Australia address the committee, although guerrilla group representatives were heard.

However, in a letter to Clark timed for the foreign ministers' meeting, South African Foreign Minister Roelof "Pik" Botha urged rejection of a report claiming that sanctions are effective and, in fact, have helped create jobs for blacks. Botha also reminded the Commonwealth group of his nation's commitment to regional peace by assisting Namibia toward independence.

Pretoria's attempted input from a distance prompted

Clark to remark: "Well, it's a curious fact that while South Africa tries to discount the importance of the Commonwealth, every time we hold a meeting they turn their ambassadors into stunt men."

For their part, the foreign ministers agreed to send a team to Namibia to assist in its move toward self-rule. They also urged that there be no boycott of the next Commonwealth Games, to be held in New Zealand in January. The fear was raised because of British and Australian plans to send cricket and rugby teams on tour to South Africa.

With national elections coming next month and an ambitious package of reforms, including full civil and political rights for all South Africans, Pretoria has a chance to prove the truth of its new promises before the pinch is applied.

P.W. Botha, the retiring president, could yet sabotage such hopes. On Friday, he bridled at word of a meeting between his heir-apparent, F.W. de Klerk, and President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. Botha said no such meeting had been authorized.

The dispute in Pretoria could reinforce the importance of the Commonwealth group's actions. The economic pressure may not appear markedly different from past tacks, but it is certain to be felt.

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