

Routine Proceedings

Liberals are pleased with the process to bring about a democratic transition in South Africa. The process known as CODESA, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, was started five months ago and consists of representatives from 19 South African political parties. This multiracial approach to solving the problems of South Africa is the key to the future, but many other obstacles stand in the way.

Tomorrow, May 15, CODESA will hold its first crucial plenary meeting. What can Canada do to help? Canada should express its willingness to provide assistance at the practical level through international organizations and bilateral relations. I notice the minister mentioned that she is willing to look at multilateral and bilateral ways of helping South Africa. I have already mentioned our offer to help in their police forces, et cetera.

Last, the minister is aware of the spectre of drought across the entire region of southern Africa. I would encourage her and her government to provide whatever assistance is necessary and to work closely with all international partners to address this emergency and relieve potential human suffering. I am glad the minister is addressing that because unless the international community comes to the assistance of that part of the region to make sure we do not again see thousands, if not millions, of Africans starving then the whole movement to a free democratic government will be meaningless. I am glad she emphasized that part of it.

I think it is time for straight talk with South Africa. It is time to recognize the great strides that President de Klerk is taking. When I came back to the House of Commons in 1988 after a four-year absence I contacted the former ambassador to South Africa, Mr. de Klerk, and he shared with me a five-year plan which President de Klerk had in mind. Following the report of the member for Kingston and the Islands when he returned from South Africa, we are now seeing this five-year plan falling into place.

But again I remind our government: no more double talk. Canadians want clear messages. As an example, I draw to the attention of the Secretary of State for External Affairs a statement of the Prime Minister on March 18: "We would not want to break ranks now, but we will be communicating with members of the Commonwealth to urge them to take some actions now

which would send a very positive signal to the President of South Africa".

• (1030)

Then the secretary of state went on to say on March 18: "I will be asking them", meaning the Commonwealth foreign ministers, "to take some action that signals to President de Klerk how pleased we are with the added momentum we now see in the process. I think the time is certainly coming very soon when we will see the lifting of sanctions".

Now and very soon was the message given on March 18. On April 6 the same secretary of state announced that the European Community's decision to lift its oil embargo against South Africa was premature. She went on to say: "We think that the process is not far along enough to be wholly sanguine about removing sanctions".

In one forum the government wants to remove the sanctions now. Then a couple of weeks later we hear: "Oh, no, we cannot remove sanctions". That is not helping South Africa or any country to abandon apartheid and move to a free, democratic system.

The secretary of state has to learn that she cannot give double messages around the world when she is representing this country. She must be giving the same message as the Prime Minister of Canada, because she is representing the government, she is representing this Chamber and she is representing this country. I leave that message with the secretary of state loud and clear.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Madam Speaker, I too want to thank the Secretary of State for External Affairs for having given the House an opportunity to discuss on the eve of the resumption of the CODESA negotiations the very important developments that are taking place in South Africa.

While encouraging progress has been made and the minister has outlined a number of the respects in which that progress has been made, it is fundamental that this House recognizes that many serious challenges still remain. There are many hurdles to be overcome before Canada and the Commonwealth of Nations can join in lifting economic and trade sanctions.