

A MAJOR COMMONWEALTH CRISIS

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any time with bitterness, virulence or in the manner described in some of the articles written by persons who must have secured their information from sources not present at the meeting.

COMPASSION WITH PRINCIPLE

"I said, and I repeat, that it was a time for the exercise of the utmost compassion, and I have no apology to offer for that. That does not mean an acceptance of what is wrong; and I have found through life that if you follow that course you do not too often have to look back on events and say 'If only I had acted otherwise'. Compassion does not mean sacrifice of principle. It is based on a seriousness of purpose and a desire for accommodation. Though viewpoints were diametrically opposed, there was a determination to explore every possibility of a solution. If that attitude had not been followed the meetings might well have ended in an angry outburst of mutual recrimination.

"Last night at the hour of 11.30 there were gathered in London the Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth—and South Africa is still a member of the Commonwealth—and you could not have detected there the tremendous effect of what had taken place a few hours earlier.

"We tried to do whatever was humanly possible to avoid a break without making a sacrifice of basic principles. South Africa sought consent on the ground that continued membership was a virtual formality. I took the position that, if we were to accept South Africa's request unconditionally, our action would be taken as approval or at least condonation or racial policies which are repugnant to and unequivocally abhorred and condemned by Canadians as a whole. Speaking for Canada—and I do not have to say that this attitude represents no recent conversion—I pointed out that we were opposed to racial discrimination, and made it clear that I could not approve any formula or solution which did not maintain beyond any doubt that non-discrimination in respect of race and colour is an essential principle of the Commonwealth association.

"This was not a stand which was taken then and not before; I have followed that course over the years. All but the Prime Minister of South Africa were in agreement that no expression of consent to South Africa's continuing membership was possible without an expression of the strongest views on their part regarding *apartheid*.

CANADIAN ATTITUDE

"I shall not go into detail in this connection. We spent a long time on this. The general attitude we took was to criticize strongly and deplore the racial policy of the Union Government and the anxiety which we felt it

was arousing in the hearts and minds of millions of people throughout the world. We expressed our deep concern about its impact on the relations among the member countries of the Commonwealth and on the cohesion of the Commonwealth itself as a multiracial association. I took the stand then, and I have taken it before, that the United Nations answers to these principles, and that the Commonwealth cannot do less.

"The Prime Minister of South Africa stressed strongly the positive aspect of the Union Government's policy. He deplored the accusations of racial discrimination and contended that the other Prime Ministers did not understand the situation as they should. As I have already said, there was a patient and exhaustive search for a formula which would encompass frank criticism of *apartheid*. Somebody said 'We do not want compromise'. Well, the countries which feel discrimination most strongly, and which were the most outspoken critics, showed a desire and readiness at all times to come to agreement without sacrifice of principle, and I say in no bitter sense that there was no corresponding readiness on the part of Prime Minister Verwoerd. When I say that, I do not want Hon. Members to conclude that he was lacking in forbearance. He is a wonderful personality; he is a kindly burgher. In the face of strong and sometimes provocative criticism he maintained throughout an impressive courtesy and calm.

BASIS FOR COMPROMISE DISSOLVES

"Was there ever a prospect of a constructive outcome? There might have been. There was a time when discussions seemed to give promise of a mutually acceptable solution. Dr. Verwoerd seemed ready then to acquiesce in a formula which would have been coupled with a declaration of principle by the cumulative conscience of the other Prime Ministers. That formula might have been accepted. But as discussion proceeded the basis of the compromise dissolved and it was impossible to find language capable of bridging the gulf. Again I say this; it is a lesson to those in this House who sometimes speak about what they would do if they were there. Those who belonged to non-white races showed an attitude of endeavouring to bring about some compromise.

"When that hope ended, criticism continued. With some evident regret and without any advance notice—although he read from a document which I observed was somewhat dog-eared—Dr. Verwoerd formally withdrew South Africa's request to continue membership. In the tense drama of that moment little remained to be said. The true depth of the cleavage between him and the things he represented and the other members of the Commonwealth was revealed, stretching to the breaking point the will to bridge it.

"As I said a moment ago, South Africa remains a member of the Commonwealth until May 31. Dr. Verwoerd made it clear that tradi-