

No. 53/61

RACE CONFLICT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Text of a statement made on November 27, 1953, by the Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, Mr. Alcide Côté, in the Ad Hoc Committee of the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, on agenda item 21 - Question of Race Conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid.

Note: Voting results and the text of the resolution adopted are given at the end of the statement.

We are faced with a great and complex human problem and at the same time with a legal problem of no little difficulty and great importance to the work of the organization.

As to the human aspect of the problem I must express at the outset the concern which is felt by the Canadian people in respect to racial discrimination in any form. We do attach very great importance to those parts of the Charter which relate to the encouragement of respect for human rights and international co-operation for the achievement of this aim. Policies based on racial discrimination anywhere in the world are contrary to the spirit of the Charter and are contrary to human progress. We do not believe that such policies can accomplish their purpose.

As to the legal aspect of the problem, we have to consider in particular the resolution introduced by South Africa (A/AC.72/L.13 of 23 November). This resolution is, we understand, intended to deny the competence of this committee to deal with the matter before us. It is true that social security, liquor traffic, workmen's compensation, and numerous other matters detailed in the resolution and dealt with in the report of the commission, are matters which seem, when regarded in isolation, to be essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of a member state. It is likewise true that paragraph 7 of Article 2 is a provision of the Charter. It is there and cannot be ignored. We cannot vote it out of existence, nor do we need to vote a resolution which re-states its terms. On the other hand, it is not, we think, true to imply as the preamble to the resolution seems to do, that the agenda item with which we are dealing is primarily or solely concerned with all these various matters which have been detailed. It is primarily concerned with race conflict, with human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are clearly matters of concern to the United Nations. Because of the possible international repercussions of the racial policies of South Africa and because of the obligations resting upon the United Nations to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Canadian Delegation has had no doubt that the United Nations is competent to discuss the question of racial conflict.