

Minister's Report on Visit to Africa

I was impressed too with the non-reference to the freeing of the inhibitions on our aid. When the minister was in Africa I read that he said to the President of the Ivory Coast, I believe it was, that Canada would adopt a more flexible attitude on the question of tied aid. However, I saw nothing in his announcement and heard nothing in the television programs over the weekend to indicate this.

I agree wholeheartedly with what the minister said in his statement—indeed, he made this point twice—about the Canadian volunteers, the CIDA-CUSO people. He did not mention the CESO people who are sometimes called the “paunch corps”, which of course is most unkind! These are the people who, in my opinion, are the real ambassadors of this country, and I am so glad that the minister reported on their behalf. Many of these people, young and old, before they go out to foreign fields are briefed by the minister's department, I believe quite well, but I have never heard of any of them being debriefed when they come back. When we send hundreds of young people to various parts of the world, are they not a magnificent store of information, a group of sensitive and informed people? I believe that the minister's department should make contact with them and thereby broaden their knowledge and Canada's capacity for doing good work. That is a suggestion I would make.

There may be, indeed there are, many questions which should be gone into, this having been a very important tour on the part of the minister. Therefore I hope he will be with us in the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence so that we may have time to discuss these questions. We have had too many months elapse without an external affairs debate in the House, and I might say I am very upset about that. Perhaps at least in committee we can look more fully into the visit to this great continent, a continent that has been silent for so long and which only in our own time has moved into the international scene. It is a vital part of the world, one massive in its geography, immense in its problems and magnificent in its possibilities. Let me assure the minister that I, and I am sure I speak for my colleagues, agree with him that we must continue our partnership with the people of this great continent from which he has just returned.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I should also like to welcome the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) back to the House from his trip to Africa. We are very pleased that he is the first Canadian minister of external affairs to visit Africa. We think his visit coincides with a growing interest in Canada in the problems of Africa. I am certain that the minister's visit to that continent will enable the Canadian government to formulate policies which will be of benefit to the continent of Africa.

We support the minister in his statement that we must both continue and increase our contributions to the economic development programs of our African friends. We also agree with his statement that we in Canada look with abhorrence upon the inhuman policies of the white minority governments in Africa.

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

While the minister has made these statements, with which we all concur, there are a number of things that happened during his trip about which I hope the minister will make a statement; they are not included in the statement he made today. I might make reference to the plea of Mr. Kaunda of Zambia that a Canadian mission be opened in Lusaka. I know that the minister could not make a statement to that effect while he was in Africa without the concurrence of the cabinet. I think we will all await with great interest the result of the minister's consultation with his colleagues, which I hope will be a decision to have a Canadian High Commission in Zambia.

I would also have welcomed a statement from the minister on Mr. Kaunda's plea in regard to the Canadian government trying to persuade the Aluminum Company of Canada to stop supplying material for the Cabora Bassa dam in Mozambique. One Swedish firm has already withdrawn because it had some reason to believe that this aluminum would be processed in Rhodesia and consequently might violate Sweden's commitment to observe the economic boycott of that country. I hope the minister will look into this matter and, if he finds that this aluminum is going to be processed in Salisbury, Rhodesia, that Canada will not allow the Aluminum Company of Canada, or any other company, by subterfuge make Canada violate its commitments regarding the boycott of Rhodesia.

One of the matters that disturbed some of us who followed the reports of the minister's visit was the somewhat equivocal stand that he took with respect to the white minority governments in Africa. It is true that he spoke out with plenty of rectitude about the inhuman policies that they are pursuing, but I noticed that after agreeing with the president of the Ivory Coast he ran into some difficulty when he was in Nigeria. The press reports General Yakubu Gowon as saying:

Gowon gave Sharp a hard line on southern Africa yesterday, rejecting the “dialogue” approach to solving the racial issue.

In an interview shortly after an hour long meeting with Sharp, Gowon said the white minority government of South Africa wants to “lure” top black African leaders into a dialogue over the racial question.

South Africa would treat these leaders well and offer them “chicken-feed economic aid,” he said. But having pacified its neighbours, South Africa would then do nothing about the plight of its own black subjects.

“To me, that thinking stinks,” Gowon said.

I hope we will not be equivocal in our stand with respect to the white minority governments in southern Africa but will make it abundantly clear, not only by the platitudes uttered by the minister but by our actions, that we stand with the black people of Africa who are seeking to obtain democratic rights for their people without relation to race, colour or creed.

● (2:50 p.m.)

The only other thing I should like to say is that I notice the minister said that Canada stands ready to help fly maize into Zambia if the white minority governments in Africa continue to block imports of that country's staple food. This, of course, would require a very heavy expen-