

No. 162/11 RACIAL POLICY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

Statement to the Special Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on November 1, 1962, by Mr. Heath Macquarrie, the Canadian Representative.

...Questions of race relationship in South Africa constitute not only one of the most difficult and complex issues with which the United Nations is concerned, but also one of the most frustrating. Despite repeated exhortations of successive Assemblies, the Government of South Africa has not seen fit to alter in any way the deplorable policy known as apartheid; in fact...far from ameliorating this harsh and repressive policy, the Government of South Africa, in the face of ever-increasing criticism, has enacted even more stringent legislation. Let me say at the outset, then, in clear simple terms, that the Government of Canada is irrevocably opposed to any form of racial discrimination regardless of where it is practised and that we condemn, without any qualification whatever, the South African Government's policy of apartheid. I do not think that I need dwell on this point which my Government has made abundantly plain in the United Nations, in the Commonwealth and on every appropriate occasion at other international meetings. When he returned from the Commonwealth prime ministers' meeting in 1961, our Prime Minister, Mr. Diefenbaker, in his report to the Canadian House of Commons on March 17, 1961, spoke about South Africa's request for continued membership in the Commonwealth in the following terms:

"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, of racial policies which are repugnant to and unequivocally abhorred and condemned by Canadians as a whole -- 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 Commonwealth association."

The Canadian Parliament has itself enacted a Canadian Bill of Rights, one of the main parts of which provides that there shall be no racial discrimination in Canada. We have also...made the South African Government aware of our attitude toward apartheid and of our increasing concern about fearful consequences which may ensue if the South African Government continues to pursue its present course. It has been apparent for some years that nearly all member states of the United Nations regard apartheid as a most reprehensible policy and that they fear that the results of that policy may lead to tragic situations which might endanger preservation of peace in Africa. That mutual concern is reflected in many resolutions on this issue which have been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and in the draft resolution now before this Committee. It is fair to say that all member states here share the same convictions, both that

apartheid is unjust and that it is unworkable. In this context, we all wish to do what we can, within the realm of practicality, to bring this policy to an end. We differ only as to the best means of doing so and, in essence, as to what is practicable. While there is much in the resolution before us with which my Delegation agrees, we regret that there are some parts of it which we must oppose because we do not think the measures recommended are practical or desirable.

My Delegation is opposed to the application of sanctions in this situation for a number of reasons. First of all, we have grave doubts about the appropriateness of the use of sanctions by the United Nations in a situation which does not include external aggression or a question of peace or war. Second, we doubt that, even if they could be applied, sanctions would have the desired effect of causing the South African Government to change its apartheid policy. Third, it may well be that sanctions would hurt most the non-white population of South Africa -- the very people we most want to help. We intend, therefore, to vote against operative Paragraph 4 of the resolution.

It is, in our view, urgently necessary that we bring to bear upon South Africa, the full pressure of world public opinion by taking such practical steps as may be at our disposal. One such forward step would be the establishment of a special committee to keep the racial policies of South Africa under review when the United Nations General Assembly is not in session. We would, in this way, impress once again upon the South African Government the fact that the United Nations is resolutely opposed to its policies. We intend to support Paragraph 5 of the resolution.

If it is the common purpose of the great majority of members to bring to bear the full power of world opinion on South Africa in order that it may be influenced to abandon its policies of racial discrimination, this cannot be achieved by expelling that member. The United Nations will have more opportunity to influence South Africa so long as it remains in the organization. Secondly, it should be our purpose to maintain the comprehensive nature of the United Nations as a world forum which has proved to be our most effective bulwark in the troubled times in which we live. My Delegation intends, therefore, to vote against operative Paragraph 8.

It follows from what I have said that my Delegation would not be able to support a resolution which contained paragraphs asking for application of sanctions against and recommending expulsion of South Africa.

Finally, my Delegation now joins those who have urged the Government of South Africa to heed the urgent appeals which have been made in this debate. We earnestly hope that the South African Government will reconsider its policies in order to end the growing isolation of their country. There should be no place in the modern world for apartheid. South Africa has much to contribute to the economic development of Africa and can, if it chooses to do so, continue to play a significant role in the development of that great continent. As many of those who have spoken before me in this debate have pointed out...time is growing short. The forces of history and the pressure of world opinion are much too strong to be long resisted by any nation.

