

# STATEMENT DISCOURS

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87/15

Notes for a statement to be given by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the House of Commons on the occasion of Commonwealth Day

OTTAWA

March 9, 1987.

Mr. Speaker, today, March 9, is Commonwealth Day, which has particular significance this year for Canada. In October, in your own city of Vancouver, we will host the next meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government.

In that same internationalist tradition, Canada will welcome the second Francophone Summit to Québec City in September. These are both family meetings for Canada, taking us back to the roots and traditions which shaped our unique country, but also, as strong and vital families do, helping us reach out to new influence and opportunities in a changing world.

It was once the style to be nostalgic about the Commonwealth. Today it is one of the most relevant and effective associations to which Canada belongs. Under its auspices, we are involved in ocean development in the Caribbean and the South Pacific; technical cooperation in Asia and Africa; scholarships and research on all six continents; cooperation at Geneva on international trade; and continuing dialogue among countries whose conditions range from the poorest to the most advanced. In Chittagong, in Bangladesh, last month, I met a Canadian who had been involved in the first Canadian project under the Colombo Plan. That was the beginning of our program of external aid, and the beginning also of Canada's reputation in the developing world as a trusted modern power.

In the last two years, the Commonwealth has also been the principal forum in which Canada has been able to help build effective pressure against the evil of apartheid in South Africa. I want to take the occasion of Commonwealth Day to report to Parliament upon the Prime Minister's most recent conversations in Africa, as well as my own meetings with Commonwealth partners in Britain and in Asia, and consultations between the Minister for External Relations and the Minister of State for Immigration, with representatives of several governments of Southern Africa.

Canada was particularly active in launching the work of the Eminent Persons Group, and then in fashioning the first Commonwealth package of sanctions against South Africa. We have implemented all of the sanctions and measures agreed by the Commonwealth at Nassau and at London. Among the Heads of Government, the Prime Minister, personally, and as chairman of the Vancouver meeting, is playing a leading role.

In that spirit, he met, at Victoria Falls, in January, with three Commonwealth leaders of the Front Line States, President Kaunda of Zambia, Prime Minister Mugabe of Zimbabwe, and President Masire of Botswana. He saw for himself the threat posed to fragile economies by the violence rooted in apartheid. He heard unanimous concern that violence would increase as South African intransigence and aggression caused more of the victims of apartheid to lose hope of a negotiated settlement.

The Prime Minister affirmed the Canadian commitment he gave to the United Nations on October 23, 1985, when he said: "... if there are not fundamental changes in South Africa, we are prepared to invoke total sanctions against that country and its repressive regime. If there is no progress in the dismantling of apartheid, our relations with South Africa may have to be severed absolutely".

The Front Line States understand that Canada does not seek, through sanctions, to bring the South African government to its knees, only to its senses. Our approach is steadily to build international pressure on South Africa, as we restrict its trade. Canada will invoke further measures when we consider that they will have the most impact. We have told the Front Line leaders we think that being on the front line itself means economic sacrifice and political risks. They should not be held to a rigid timetable on the question of sanctions, costly as they would be to them, and vulnerable as they are to South African retaliation.

In the Nassau Accord, the Commonwealth has called for a suspension of violence on all sides. Our Commonwealth partners and the Front Line States understand Canada's position that we cannot support violence, although we can understand the feelings of those who have felt the full effect of the violence of apartheid. Indeed, part of the Prime Minister's purpose in going directly to the Front Line States, was to demonstrate again that they are not alone in this fight against apartheid, nor in their work to build and maintain their own economies.

Canada is determined to provide material as well as moral support to South Africa's neighbours. At Victoria Falls, the Prime Minister signed an agreement to build a \$50 million electrical interconnector line, which will permit Botswana to tap into the electrical resources of Zimbabwe and Zambia. This is only one of many ways in which Canada is helping South Africa's neighbours to reduce their vulnerability to South African sanctions. Over the next five years, we expect to contribute approximately \$30 million annually to the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference. That is in addition to the

\$400 million we will be providing in bilateral assistance to Southern Africa over the same period. In New Delhi, I discussed with Prime Minister Gandhi means by which Canada might work closely with the Fund for Africa, established by the Non-Aligned Movement, particularly in the work of ensuring secure transportation routes. The Minister of State for Immigration was in Botswana for the most recent SADCC meeting, and discussed similar projects.

At the same time, we have been working to assist the victims of apartheid in South Africa. In the current year, \$1.5 million is being disbursed for assistance to the families of political detainees, and we have mounted a \$7 million education program. Nine days ago, in Montreal, Dr. Alan Boesak suggested to me other ways in which Canadian humanitarian help could be effective in South Africa.

The Prime Minister is the only leader of an Economic Summit country to have been to Southern Africa since the pressure for change has built against apartheid. He has discussed the issue regularly with our Summit partners, and will put the question on the agenda of the Venice Summit.

Since the African National Congress plays such a major role now in Southern Africa, and will be closely involved in any resolution, the Prime Minister and I look forward to meetings with the President of the African National Congress, Oliver Tambo, in the next few months. Mr. Terence Bacon, our former high commissioner to Zambia and Zimbabwe, has been seconded to the Commonwealth Secretary-General as special adviser on Southern Africa.

Mr. Speaker, as was noted in the Standing Committee of this House on human rights last week, by the NDP member for Windsor-Walkerville, the issue of the fight against apartheid has risen above normal partisan considerations in Canada. It is a common commitment of this Parliament and country.

In a broader sense, so is our commitment to the Commonwealth. What was once a connection to our past has now also become a principal instrument of contemporary policy, and a symbol of the breadth of spirit, and the breadth of alliances, which this special country Canada will require to achieve our interests in the future.