



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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VISIT TO AFRICA

A Statement by the Secretary of State
for External Affairs, the Honourable
Mitchell Sharp, in the House of Commons,
March 22, 1971.

I should like to report to the House briefly on my recent African trip, in the course of which I visited Ivory Coast, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, and Zambia.

This was the first series of visits by a Canadian foreign minister to Africa south of the Sahara. It enabled me to learn something, but all too little, of the countries visited. It gave me an opportunity to emphasize to the various governments the depth and continuing quality of the Canadian commitment to Africa, of which I saw convincing evidence through my meetings with more than 1,000 Canadians actively engaged in co-operative development projects -- missionaries, CIDA people, CUSO volunteers, and, of course, the personnel of our diplomatic missions. I also arranged for our ambassadors and high commissioners in the countries I could not visit to join us at various places in Africa in order that I might profit from their advice.

Development assistance is and will remain the largest element in our activities in Africa. This is at once a measure of the need of the developing countries there and of the opportunity Canada has to contribute its resources, human and material, operating equally in English and in French. In certain of the countries visited I was able to give formal effect to aid arrangements worked out over the last year or so, some of which will have an immediate beneficial impact on our domestic economy.

I also visited the headquarters of the East African Community, which is a form of common market composed of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

I learned at first hand of development plans from the African leaders, and saw how Canadian assistance programs fit into these plans and the part they may be expected to play in the future. In all five countries I was assured that Canadian involvement in Black Africa is welcome and expansion in our present efforts is sought. African leaders in the countries I visited told me that the Canadians there were doing an excellent job and that the countries

concerned could not get enough Canadian manpower. In Tanzania, for example, President Nyerere indicated that he would be delighted to receive thousands of Canadians, compared to the few hundreds there now. The Canadians I saw confirmed, for their part, the need for continued Canadian presence in Africa. It became clearer to me from day to day the extent to which Canada is already committed in Africa. It became clearer from day to day that our involvement has raised the expectations of our African friends and that we must continue and strengthen our partnership with them in the development of their countries.

During my two weeks in Africa I found the governments preoccupied with the intractable problems of Southern Africa. These issues have been fully explored in Commonwealth conferences, most recently at Singapore in January. I urged upon the African governments our view that the Commonwealth is an essential forum for discussing the difficult matter of racial discrimination and its repercussions.

In all five countries, Canada's stand on Southern African issues was well understood and accepted. African leaders I met expressed their satisfaction with Canada's position on these problems as expressed by our public statements and our voting record at the United Nations.

In my discussions with African leaders, I emphasized the need for a peaceful solution to the problems of Southern Africa. Large-scale hostilities in Africa could only bring about the ruin of the economy of the black nations and destroy any hope for the betterment of the life of their peoples. Such hostilities would inevitably involve outside powers and threaten a new conflict equal in magnitude to the tragedy of the Middle East or Vietnam.

I think we should realize and accept that our capacity to influence the white racist minorities in Southern Africa is limited and can best be exercised multilaterally through the United Nations and the Commonwealth. What we can do ourselves is to offer economic and political support for the developing countries of Black Africa. In this way, we can make a positive contribution to the solution of the deep-seated problems of Africa, and it is here that our energies should be focused. This is bound to be more rewarding for Africans and Canadians alike than wasting our energies in empty gestures designed to tell the world of our moral rectitude on racial questions.

I discussed the question of La Francophonie with members of the governments in the Congo and Ivory Coast, and explained Canada's position concerning this group of countries, which are united by the French language and culture.

I assured them that Canada was completely committed to co-operation with French-speaking countries in general and particularly to the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, of which we are full members. I took this occasion to express our hope that the African countries would be participating equally fully in this organization to promote understanding and mutual assistance. In my opinion such full participation will permit more rapid and complete development of all the people concerned.

I also remarked that, although our assistance to French-speaking African countries had begun slowly and modestly, it was our intention, now that it has reached the same level as our assistance to the Commonwealth

African countries, to continue it, not only for the benefit of the receiving countries but also to reaffirm Canada's bicultural character.

My tour of Africa, while all too brief, left me with a number of warm and deep impressions.

First, Canada is highly regarded and its name stands very high in Africa. Africans have given us their confidence, and it is this trust which creates an obligation on our part to share with them some of our resources by participating as partners in their programs for economic and social development. This can be achieved by offering to Africa the best in Canada from those fields where Canadians have achieved excellence and special expertise.

Such a joint venture will benefit not only Africans but Canadians. The Canadians serving in various capacities over the continent, old or young, missionaries or volunteers, CIDA personnel or businessmen, are engaged in useful, constructive and essential projects. On their return to Canada, what they have learned about the common human condition will stand them in good stead and will help us all to a better understanding of the world we live in. If one is seeking economic justification for external aid, as development proceeds, African countries will become markets for Canadian products, particularly capital goods, and mutually beneficial trade should increase. Already, in some of the larger countries like Nigeria and the Congo (Kinshasa), interesting commercial prospects are arising.

Our co-operation with and assistance to Africa can become among the best and most realistic expressions of our national character. Canada and Africa have been enriched by two great European cultures and languages. Both Canada and the African countries I visited are engaged in the strengthening of their national unity and sovereignty. Like the countries of Africa, Canada is still in the course of development, and, along with our African friends, Canadians abhor the immoral and inhuman policies implemented by the white minority regimes of Southern Africa.

I return from my tour with the conviction that we must continue and increase over time our contribution to the economic development programs of our African friends. Our co-operation with *anglophone* and *francophone* countries of Africa reflects our own national personality. Our participation in the harmonious economic development of African countries constitutes, I believe, the best way of promoting peace through social justice and the most effective response to the challenge of racial inequality in Southern Africa.

On my way through London to Africa, I met with the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Arnold Smith, and on my return journey I gave him some of my impressions that I thought might interest him in his official capacity.

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