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CANADA AND AFRICA

Address by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario, Toronto, February 19, 1966.

I am very pleased, Madame President, to have been asked to speak at the annual conference of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario. I understand that you have based your discussions on the theme "The World -- Your Neighbourhood" and that you want to hear something of Canada's role in world affairs. It is always a pleasure for me as Minister of External Affairs to meet Canadians of various professions with whom I can share a deep interest in other countries and in our own country's international activities.

I am particularly aware of your responsibility in explaining developments in the contemporary world to children. I know, from meetings with many of the people concerned, how many Canadian teachers are making a contribution to education elsewhere by taking part in programmes of economic and social assistance in developing countries. I have, therefore, chosen to speak on Canada and Africa, because I consider this to be a major theme of current interest.

Developments in Africa provide some of the most startling examples of political and social change which we have witnessed in this century. Some of this change was foreseen. Jan Christian Smuts, the eminent South African leader of an earlier period, said in 1929:

"The peoples of Africa are infected with the vague unrest which has universally followed the Great War. For better or worse the old Africa is gone and the white races must face the new situation which they have themselves created in this continent. Africa is going to be one of the major problems of the twentieth century, and the repercussions of that problem on the rest of the world may be very far-reaching yet."

Even to mention Smuts is a vivid reminder of how much has changed in Africa generally and in its relations with the rest of the world. Thirty-two nations have achieved independence in the continent since 1945. If our thoughts are still coloured by the memories of empires and colonies, then we must make a particular effort to rid ourselves of old assumptions. There are new voices to listen to and to understand.

Smuts spoke of problems. Perhaps we use the word too often. It is scarcely fair to African nations, considering the crises and conflicts elsewhere, to present only the difficulties and dangers of political change in the continent. Haile Selassie, the monarch of the proud and ancient land of Ethiopia, has said:

"Africa, together with the rest of the non-aligned world, has emerged as a positive force for peace and harmony in our planet."

There can be no doubt as to the desire of African leaders to contribute to the welfare of the world community as a whole through the United Nations and other agencies of international action. Much as they welcome co-operation with nations elsewhere, they do not wish to have their continent become again a focal point for rivalries or for foreign political involvement because of some remaining colonial and racial problems.

Leaders of newly-independent states assert an African destiny. Kenneth Kuanda, the President of Zambia, has pointed out:

"We definitely shall want to learn from both the West and the East. But we shall reject in them that which we shall consider unsuited to our way of life; for, although we hunger and thirst for modern knowledge, we consider it only as a useful tool to help us rediscover and rebuild our own."

Sékou Touré, the President of Guinea, has given equal emphasis to this point:

"What must be constructed harmoniously and rapidly is an Africa that is authentically African. Africa has her own needs, concepts and customs. She does not seek to deck herself out in borrowed clothing that does not fit."

These are some of the voices of contemporary Africa. Perhaps the declarations and actions of these and other leaders explain the impression made on the former United Nations Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, of "the vitality of the present generation and the present leaders of the African world". Hammarskjöld, who was a perceptive and deeply-cultured observer of nations, spoke of an African renaissance.

In view of the very great differences between various parts of this immense continent, one cannot speak easily in general terms about Africa. We can only select developments or difficulties which are central in the concerns of some or most nations and which will serve as background to what is said about Canadian activities or about the currently dangerous situation in Rhodesia.

Economic development is probably the greatest and the most widely felt need. An average per capita income of about 33 cents a day can never support the aspirations of African leaders for justice, political stability and cultural expression. There is also the need to develop political institutions in the light of experience. Recent

dramatic developments in Africa, including a number of military coup d'états, should not conceal the considerable achievements of independent African countries in the few years of their existence. The Organization of African Unity is a striking achievement of the African aim of unity and diversity.

There are the continuing international tensions arising out of the maintenance of colonial control in some areas. There are the specially difficult problems presented by conditions in South Africa and Rhodesia. There are problems of national unity within states where traditional groupings scarcely fit within boundaries laid down by colonial powers. The President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, has referred to the independence movement having begun "to put the flesh of emotional unity on the skeleton of legal unity". He has warned that "our boundaries are so absurd that they must be regarded as sacrosanct".

I have tried to provide a few interesting glimpses into a vast subject, in the hope of stimulating curiosity about something new. We have to experience some of the excitement of rediscovery. We have to develop an interest in studying a new relation between Africa and other continents. We must feel some sympathy with the patience, gaiety, cheerful courage and ability of the African peoples as they re-create their societies. Otherwise the facts of Canadian relations with African nations and the political intricacies of a crisis become dull or confusing.

Canadian Activities

Against that background, the significance of the steady growth of Canadian relations with African nations in recent years may become clearer. It was not so long ago that, except for activities of the churches, one could point to few examples of sustained or general contacts in this field. Now we can point to significant contacts in several fields.

Members of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations may be aware chiefly of technical, educational and some other types of assistance to African nations. Canada began a separate programme of assistance for Commonwealth countries in Africa in 1961. The funds allocated for this assistance last year were almost three times those available at the beginning; 752 Commonwealth African students have received or are receiving training in Canadian institutions and 573 Canadian teachers and technical advisers have served or are serving in African assignments. Although the main emphasis has been on educational and technical assistance, some work has been done on capital projects, of which an irrigation and land-reclamation project in Ghana is one example. For the first time, there has been an allocation of special development loans on easy terms.

There is a separate programme for countries in Africa which were formerly French or Belgian dependent territories and in which French is still used as a language. Such assistance began in 1961, with an allocation of \$300,000 for educational work only, and now has an allocation of \$7,500,000 for a more extensive programme. There

are 156 French-speaking Canadians in 13 French-language countries of Africa, and 54 trainees and students from these countries are in Canadian educational institutions. Capital projects are under study in these countries also.

It is not necessary to provide you with more facts and figures to establish the relevance of these programmes to your main theme "The World - Your Neighbourhood". Many African children will have been educated for life in their own communities and will have learned about other countries because of the help given by some of your colleagues in developing educational facilities.

Many African communities will eventually feel the benefits of economic development in which Canadian specialists have played a part. At senior levels in African countries, there will be men and women who have been trained in and influenced by Canada. An important part of our relations with Africa now consists of these contacts, which have a continuing human value over and above any monetary or technological value.

You will have noted that our two programmes of economic assistance in Africa are based on links of particular importance in Canadian external policy - in the first place with Commonwealth nations, in the second with nations using French. We have close links with Commonwealth nations apart entirely from economic assistance. We have been deepening our relation in recent years with France, which continues to have a close association with former colonies. These programmes should help, therefore, to create lasting ties of some importance with a majority of African states.

I have, of course, been referring to assistance given under official programmes. One very important sector of our relations with Africa consists of activities by private organizations. I have already mentioned the churches. No doubt many of you here tonight are also familiar with the devoted effort of other organizations. I am referring, for example, to the Canadian University Service Overseas, to "Operations Crossroads Africa", and to other private organizations operating abroad or helping African students here in Canada. They are doing work of the greatest importance for Africa and for Canada.

As Canadian interests have expanded in Africa, it has been necessary to establish or plan new diplomatic missions. Two years from now, we shall have 13 missions in Africa; five of these will be in the French-speaking nations, five in Commonwealth countries and three in other countries. These offices will have aid, consular, trade, cultural and political responsibilities. In addition to the interests and activities I have already mentioned, we are also attempting to expand trade and we are giving some assistance in military training to several Commonwealth countries.

The political necessity of expanding our relations with African nations is clear. It is in the interest of Canada and other free nations that Africa should pursue its own destiny free of authoritarian ideologies, of a direct great-power clash of interest and of access to nuclear weapons. The African nations command many votes

in the United Nations. They have taken a close interest in its possibilities for peace and have rapidly become experienced in the collective diplomacy and in the development of world-wide contacts which the organization affords. Political interests demand effective means of diplomatic consultation for Commonwealth purposes also.

In the course of a few years, Canada has assisted in the United Nations operation in the Congo and is now taking part in the "oil-lift" to Zambia, necessitated by the Rhodesian situation. We have accepted involvement in operations taking place in Africa which have world-wide political significance. The Canadian interest in contemporary Africa is many-sided and permanent.

Rhodesia

In the concluding section of my remarks, I shall make some comments on the Rhodesian situation. It occupies a central position in our consideration of Canada and Africa. It is an African crisis, a Commonwealth crisis, and could easily develop into a major world crisis. It has all the elements of fundamental importance, in a much wider sense, for many parts of Africa - race relations, transition from colonial to independent status, economic, educational and political problems.

I shall assume that you know from the fairly detailed accounts which have appeared in the press what we have done since the Smith Government in Rhodesia issued its illegal declaration of independence in November. We now have a total ban on Rhodesian imports and exports, with certain very limited exceptions. We have acted with Britain and other nations to exert sufficient economic pressure on the supporters of the Smith Government to bring about a return to constitutional government.

We opposed the unilateral declaration of independence because it was designed to perpetuate a system of racial inequality and discrimination wholly inconsistent with Canadian ideals. It was also wholly inconsistent with the basic principle of the new multi-racial Commonwealth.

Canada opposed the illegal declaration because we believed that Rhodesia should not become independent on the basis of a constitution which had been drawn up in 1961, unless that constitution were to be changed in a number of ways. In theory, this constitution could eventually produce majority rule in the country when sufficient Africans reached the required property and educational level to obtain the franchise for election to 50 out of the 65 seats in the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly. In fact, the educational and property qualifications are very high in terms of conditions in Rhodesia and very few Africans can qualify to vote for these 50 seats.

Mr. Smith and his followers have made it plain that they do not expect Africans to become the majority of the electorate in their lifetime. In other words, they wish to see perpetuated a system of racial inequality whereby one-sixteenth of the population exercises effective political power over the remaining fifteen-sixteenths of the population.

Here is the heart of the Rhodesian problem. Our integrity as an independent nation committed to certain ideals in human affairs, our position in the United Nations and our position in the Commonwealth required us to take a stand. We did take a stand on behalf of racial equality and political justice. How could we proclaim to the new leaders of Africa and to others our belief in political freedom and racial justice everywhere if we ignored the flagrant breach of these principles in Rhodesia?

The Rhodesian situation is, of course, a complicated one. There are questions of means to obtain the final objectives. There are points on which there have been dissension and misunderstanding, both in Canada and elsewhere.

In the first place, there should be no misunderstanding about the fact that the declaration of independence made by the Smith Government was illegal. It was not within the powers of the Rhodesian Government to make such a declaration. Such a declaration could not be made without the agreement of the British Parliament. From the beginning, when the Smith régime first threatened to make an unilateral declaration of independence, the Canadian Government made its opposition to an illegal declaration very clear.

Then there have been suggestions that Britain did not do enough to avert the declaration and the ensuing crisis. In fact, successive British Governments explored every possibility of compromise. The Smith Government did not take the final step because of a British failure to negotiate but because they were unwilling to accept the basic British position. The British position was that independence could only be granted on a basis which would assure the majority of the population of political representation within a reasonably short period rather than the very long and indefinite period desired by the Smith Government. That government knew that the consent of the people of Rhodesia as a whole required by Britain would not be given to independence based on the 1961 constitution as it stood.

It has been suggested by some critics that Commonwealth or other countries do not have the right to tell Britain what to do about Rhodesia since it is solely a British constitutional responsibility. I agree. We do not have the right to tell Britain what to do. We are not telling Britain what to do. At the Lagos conference of Commonwealth prime ministers in January, the communiqué describing the discussions made the essential point clearly and forcefully:

"The Prime Ministers reaffirmed that the authority and responsibility for guiding Rhodesia to independence rested with Britain but acknowledged that the problem was of wider concern to Africa, the Commonwealth and the world."

We have acted as a member of the Commonwealth in concert with Britain and other members of the Commonwealth and through Commonwealth institutions, including two new ones which are the result of Canadian initiative. In our economic measures we have acted, together with other trading countries, including the U.S.A. and Western European nations, in compliance with the Security Council resolution of

November 20. This is in accordance with the basic Canadian policy of strong support for the United Nations in situations with grave international repercussions.

Our desire to help create the practical conditions for effective action by Britain is also clearly manifested in the airlift of oil to Zambia in which we are now participating. Zambia's economy is closely linked to that of Rhodesia and economic measures against Rhodesia have had to be taken with an eye on the consequences for that country.

There has also been much debate over the relative merits of economic sanctions and force as means of settling the problem. The British have not precluded the use of force to restore law and order in Rhodesia but they are unwilling to use force in existing circumstances. We agree with them. Force should always be avoided if this is at all possible and, in this situation, the use of force could have explosive effects on the whole of Africa and grave international repercussions. The question of using force will not arise if economic sanctions can be made to work.

Some people suggest that the life of the illegal régime is being unnecessarily prolonged because the white population fear that the restoration of constitutional government will lead to an ill-prepared and unstable African majority in Rhodesia. British assurances make it clear that these fears are unfounded. Prime Minister Wilson has pledged his Government to the attainment of a "just and democratic society in which full equality of opportunity is assured, racial discrimination is removed and the rights of Europeans and Africans alike are safeguarded". On this and other occasions, Mr. Wilson has made it plain that a very careful, step-by-step period of preparation would be undertaken before majority rule and independence, to ensure a successful launching of the new state, in which there would be an important role for white as well as black Africans. Instead of a government based on discrimination, there would be a government based on racial co-operation.

Conclusion

There are some of the questions currently of concern to the Canadian Government and relevant to your theme "The World - Your Neighbourhood". I have tried to preserve some balance between the complex issues of a situation such as the Rhodesian one, which can change from day to day, and the broader perspective of African developments and our relations to them.

I have many opportunities to meet African leaders and diplomatic representatives, particularly at meetings of the United Nations. I have great sympathy for their idealism, their generous commitment to good causes in the world. There is no doubt in my mind that Canadian relations with African nations will prosper. We shall, I hope, play a useful part in the economic development which they so ardently desire. We shall work with them in the Commonwealth and in the United Nations to achieve the peace, goodwill and understanding between nations and races which we all desire.