



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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QUESTION OF RACE CONFLICT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Statement by Mr. Robert Ford in the Special Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, January 16, 1957.

My Delegation's views on the question of race conflict in the Union of South Africa have been stated fully at previous sessions of the General Assembly. On this occasion, I should like only to restate briefly the Canadian attitude to the question before us, in order particularly that new members of the organization, joining in the deliberations of this question for the first time, may not be left with any misunderstanding of our views.

I should first like to make very clear to members of the committee that we have no sympathy with policies of racial discrimination wherever they may be practised. In reference to the racial situation in South Africa, we have always endeavoured to keep in mind that the Government and people of South Africa are faced by a formidable and difficult racial problem to which there is no quick and easy solution. We in Canada, however, have grave doubts about policies and practices adopted to meet the problems of a multi-racial society which are based on notions of the racial superiority of one group within the society - notions which we believe to be false. It seems to us that discrimination is more likely to aggravate than to solve the underlying problem. We cannot ignore the fact, furthermore, that policies of racial discrimination are inconsistent with the basic principles of human rights which underlie the Charter of the United Nations.

Having said that, I must also explain that, while we have never objected to discussion of the question of race conflict in South Africa by the General Assembly, we have in the past expressed strong doubts regarding the competence and usefulness of action taken by the General Assembly in its efforts to solve this problem. As consideration of this issue continues from session to session without any progress towards the solution of the problem, my Delegation becomes more and more of the opinion that this kind of intervention by the United Nations into matters

of domestic concern of a member country not only has grave constitutional implications for this organization, but has little practical value.

As far as we can see, far from bringing about a change in the attitude of the South African Government to its policy of apartheid, United Nations action over the past several years has tended only to harden the attitude of the South African Government and has led to no amelioration of the situation in South Africa, which has surely been the aim of these discussions. United Nations action has, as well, caused the South African Delegation to withdraw from our deliberations. In his statement yesterday, the distinguished representative of Japan reminded us that - to use his words - "The situation thus created is not only harmful to the prestige of the United Nations, but also is paralyzing the peaceful and friendly discussions and jeopardizing as well a sober solution of this particularly delicate problem." We fully endorse the view of the distinguished representative of Japan, that - and again I quote - "This is certainly not conducive to the creation of international conditions propitious for the furtherance of the principle we stand for."

The moral opinion of the world may yet have some influence on the Government of the Union of South Africa to moderate its racial policies, but it is evident to us that an organization of sovereign states, which does not respect the sovereignty of a member state, will make little impression upon a government which chooses to attend to its own affairs without need to the advice of other governments.

Mr. Chairman, we have carefully examined the draft resolution sponsored by Iran, Iraq, Haiti, Greece and Ceylon which is now before the committee, with full appreciation and sympathy for its sponsors' concern with the continuation of discriminatory policies in a multi-racial world. At the same time, however, my Delegation does not find it possible to disregard its doubts regarding the constitutional implications of the resolution before us nor its doubts regarding the usefulness of this Committee's approving such a resolution. In these circumstances, Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Delegation will be unable to support the joint draft resolution when it is put to the vote. We shall be pleased to study the Philippine resolution carefully and may express our views on it later.
