

CANADIAN DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(EIGHTEENTH SESSION)

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STATEMENT BY
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
IN THE SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1963

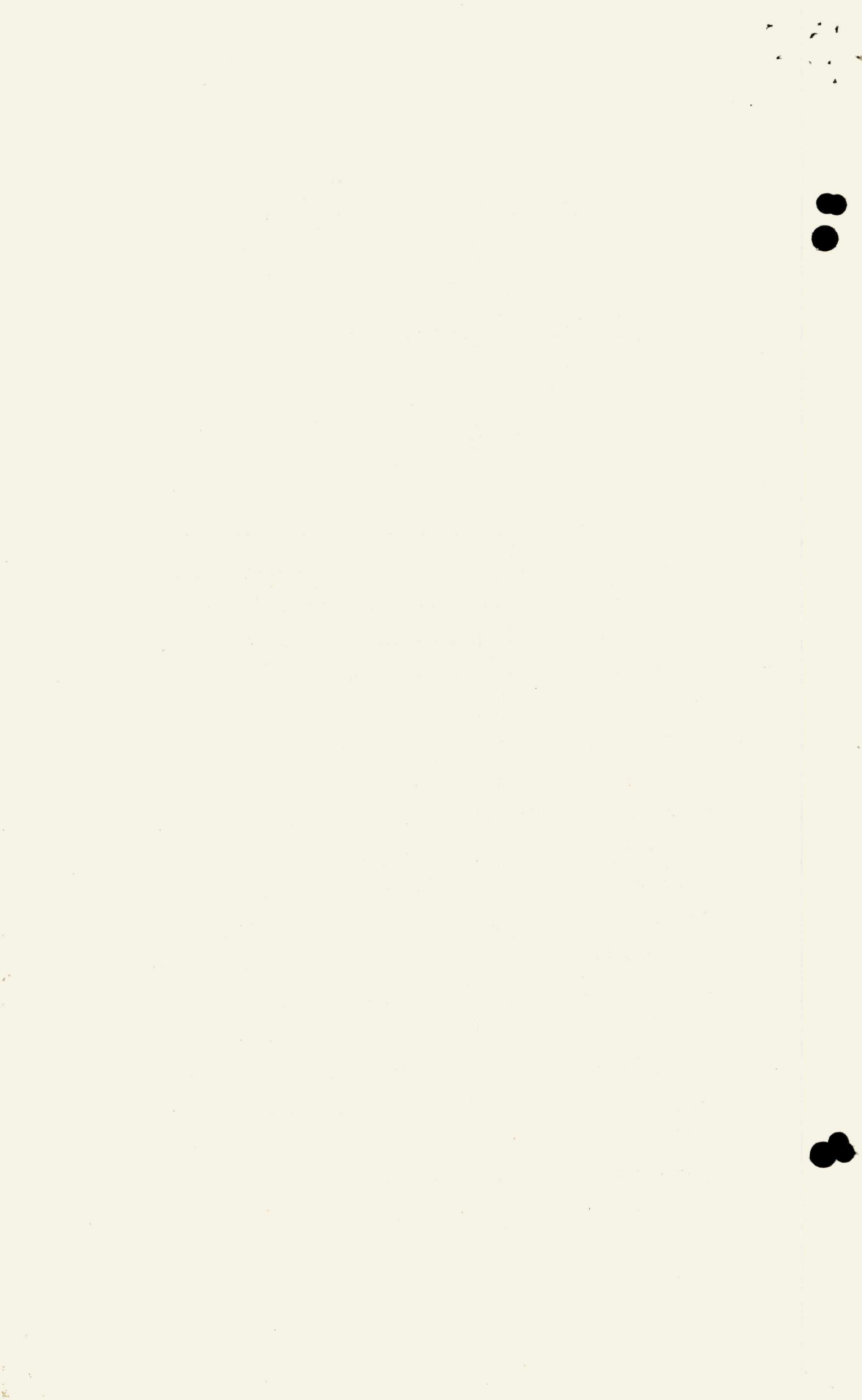
ITEM 31:
THE POLICY OF APARTHEID
OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Chairman,

The progress of the debate and the overwhelming vote in favour of the resolution 1881 of last Friday can have left no doubt of the desire of every member of this Assembly to induce the South African Government to change its racial policies. However, while we are all agreed upon the objective which we wish to achieve - the realization of a free society in Southern Africa with equal rights for all individuals and races - there is no agreement on the means to this end.

There have been demands from some members that South Africa should be expelled from the United Nations or that the Security Council should impose other sanctions on South Africa in order to force its Government to change its policies. Because we believe that the South African Government's racial policies are abhorrent and degrading and offensive to human dignity, does not mean that the best remedy is to force South Africa outside the boundaries of the world community. Expulsion would make it even more difficult to persuade the white population of South Africa to seek a way out of their present untenable position and could conceivably intensify the difficulties of the non-white population. (In this context, a reminder of Prime Minister Pearson's statement in Plenary on September 19, 1963, was made here.)

This Assembly has a most serious responsibility in this matter. My Delegation believes that only if we act with restraint is there any



possibility of convincing the present Government of South Africa of the necessity to come to terms with the great movement of independence and freedom which has swept through the continent of Africa during the past 20 years. If we pass a resolution condemning South Africa's policies but calling for action which, because of lack of unanimity regarding the means to be employed, in practice will not be carried out, we will be no closer to a peaceful solution to this problem.

There have been a number of ideas expressed in this debate which, if developed further, might show the way towards the solution of this problem. Of particular interest has been the suggestion that a means must be found to reassure the white minority that if they grant political rights and, ultimately, political power to the black majority, they will not in turn themselves become the victims of racial discrimination. Perhaps we should be asking ourselves - why does the Government of South Africa persist in a policy which is universally condemned? There is clearly no ready, single, answer. But one can ask - is fear one of the principal reasons? If this is so, we should be concerned that the motives which impell us to speak on behalf of those now deprived of human rights will have equal application in relation to any violation of human rights for which provision is made in the Charter. It is in this sense that the Danish proposals are particularly perceptive. Canada, it will be recognized, has played a role in the past in enabling the membership of this Organization to be more universally representative. Our action then has made it possible to bring to the table many new countries whose representatives are participating in the discussion today. The representatives of those States are responsible statesmen in whose wisdom and sense of justice we must have confidence.

Without going further into the details of the Danish proposals, my Delegation agrees that they are wise in suggesting that the responsibility for considering steps suitable to influence the South African Government lies with the Security Council. While there is a need to modify the structure

of the various United Nations Councils, the fact remains that the permanent members of the Security Council, because they have greater responsibility in many aspects of international affairs, are often able to exert decisive influence. Many States, notwithstanding their opposition to the policy of apartheid, do not believe that in the present situation the Security Council would be wise to impose sanctions under Article 41. Nevertheless, the Security Council is the body of the United Nations specifically empowered under Chapter VII of the Charter to decide upon action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression. It also has a responsibility under Chapter VI for making recommendations in respect of situations the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security. The division of responsibilities between the Council and the Assembly was carefully considered at San Francisco and the balance set forth in the Charter is the result of exhaustive negotiation. My Delegation believes that this balance is one which we should all seek to preserve in the interest of the Organization and of peace itself.

Emphasis has also been given to the need for more study of alternative possibilities for the future in South Africa. One such alternative, which, in the view of my Delegation, it would be unwise to reject out of hand, is a solution in South Africa based in some measure on a federal approach. To succeed, the scheme would have to be divorced from the apartheid philosophy of white supremacy which is rightly rejected by all other members of the United Nations. It would have to be in terms which do not offend human dignity and are equally acceptable to all segments of the population. It would also be necessary for the South African Government to consider an equitable division of the great natural resources of South Africa.

It could be that out of a serious re-examination of the pattern for the future there could emerge a strong and united Southern Africa which, by combining the abilities of four distinct races on the basis of equality

and respect, could be accepted as a welcome and strong member of the African community of nations and could resume its place as a member in good standing of these United Nations.

Mr. Chairman, the views I have expressed are the result of the most searching review of all the conflicting considerations involved in this difficult problem. Last Friday Canada voted with the overwhelming majority on a resolution dealing with a specific aspect of the apartheid problem. We did not do so lightly, for a principle was at stake which could have incalculable consequences if applied to other States in which the concern of this Organization about the domestic policies of one of its members was less clear and less justifiable. We were aware that other examples exist of similar shortcomings in the practices of other member States. We voted to join in the condemnation of South Africa because we wished to reaffirm our total opposition to a policy which is an affront to human dignity. In short, we concluded that this was a situation in which the conscience of mankind was so aroused that no other honourable course at this juncture was open to the 106 members who expressed their condemnation of this policy.

All problems which are of concern to the members of the United Nations cannot be resolved merely by the votes we cast in this Assembly. Indeed this is not the way to resolve many of the problems which arise between States. The peoples of the continent of Africa should be full of hope for the future. Are there not countless examples in the history of the nations represented here where problems of a seemingly intractable nature have ultimately been resolved by discussion and negotiation? Is it too much to expect that South Africa and the other African States will agree to meet to discuss and seek solutions to their problems in the common interest. If there is anything my country could do to assist in this connection we would only be too happy to do so. The Canadian Government will make known shortly the action it has taken in response to the resolution passed on August 7 by the Security Council.

Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Government has demonstrated the deep concern with which it views the problem before the Committee, and its strongest disapproval of the present racial policies of the South African Government. My Delegation will continue to judge on their merits proposals brought before this Committee which are directed towards the peaceful solution of this important and difficult problem.

