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SOUTH AFRICA

Extracts from the statement by the New Zealand Representative,
Mr. F.H. Corner, made on 31 October 1961 in the Special Political
Committee:

Once more we are obliged to discuss in this Committee the racial policies of the Government of the Republic of South Africa. Once again we have heard from the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs no hint that his Government intends to modify those policies, and once again we have listened to delegates from other countries who have voiced the world-wide opposition to apartheid.

On international issues, no matter how acute the differences of view, how heated the feelings, New Zealand has always tried to take a calm and considered approach. We have done this in matters involving human rights in different parts of the world because we are persuaded that progress is born from reasoned argument whereas violence begets violence. We must confess in this particular case our dismay that over the years the South African Government has not shown any inclination, despite the appeals that have been made to it, to discuss any modifications in its racial policies that would satisfy, or even temper, the opposition of Africans, Whites, or Asians in its own country or go some way to allay an outraged world opinion. On the contrary we have watched with growing anxiety since the National Party Government assumed power in 1948 the deliberate intensification of its apartheid programme which has brought with it deepening despair to all in South Africa who are opposed to it and has hardened the hearts of governments and people everywhere. As a result, the South African Government has become the outcast of the world and in many fields the people of South Africa have lost their associations with people elsewhere.

Of all the international consequences of the South African Government's obstinate adherence to its racial policies, it is its withdrawal from the Commonwealth which has most shocked the people of New Zealand. We believe in the Commonwealth as a great force for promoting peace and unity in the world. It is the greatest association of free and equal peoples of many races, creeds, and differing ways of life. It was, of course, clear that a Government which represented only about one-half of the white voters of South Africa and none of the other 13 million inhabitants, was ill fitted to play any constructive role in the multi-racial Commonwealth. But, with its withdrawal, the Commonwealth has lost not only the Government of South Africa whose policies were an embarrassment to us all, but all those people - black, white and brown - who under wiser guidance could have made a most significant contribution to the further development of that multi-racial cooperation of which the Commonwealth is the most striking example in today's world.

It was for this reason that the New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr. Holyoake, tried so hard, at the Prime Ministers' Conference in London earlier this year, to influence the South African Prime Minister to consider some changes in his Government's racial policies....

The fact that the present Government of South Africa is opposed by its non-white population is taken for granted. But it should be emphasised, I think, that it has never commanded the votes of appreciably more than half of the white voters in general elections. Indeed, when the National Party assumed office in 1948 under Dr. Malan it was supported by less than half of the white voters, and under a system of unweighted voting it would not have come to power. It is still today solidly opposed by over one million people of British descent as well as by many Afrikaans-speaking citizens.

The gallant men and women who are resisting apartheid in South Africa - be they Africans like Chief Luthuli, English speaking like Alan Paton, Afrikaans-speaking like Laurens van der Post, Asians or Coloureds - deserve at least the warmest sympathy of this Committee. It is they who are fighting in the front line. Their opposition has to be expressed not where it is welcomed, as in the favourable climate of this Committee, but in South Africa itself under the eye of the South African Police.

I indicated earlier that New Zealand has tried consistently to have a calm and reasoned approach to our discussions of international problems. We share in the condemnation of apartheid and we understand fully the special indignation felt by the new African States at the degrading treatment accorded to their fellow-Africans. When one's mind dwells on the indignities and injustices being done to some of South Africa's citizens, it is understandable that some will become impatient and call for extreme measures to put an end to these ills. Our aim in dealing with this problem, however, should not be to counter the ugly racism of the present South African Government with an inverted racism, not to take any action which could bring about a disastrous civil war between black and white South Africans. Rather, we should do our utmost to encourage the voice of sanity among all races in that unhappy country.

Several speakers in this debate have hinted that a violent solution is inevitable in South Africa, and while the South African Government continues on its present course who would disagree? But this Organisation - the United Nations - of all bodies should surely be dedicated to exploring every possible path to a peaceful solution rather than act as if civil strife is inevitable. We must be careful that any international action proposed will not lead to even greater suffering by those we

wish to help, perhaps even to bloodshed greater than a thousand Sharpevilles. We have also to ensure that our concern for human rights is equally strong wherever similar violations of them occur, whether in Africa in Eastern Europe, in Asia, or in any other part of the world.

New Zealand has never favoured extreme sanctions as a means of influencing Governments of whose actions we have disapproved. This is our general view and, as it applies to the South African Government whose racial policies we are discussing, our particular view. In the case of South Africa we feel that we have reached this position in a completely disinterested way. New Zealand has no diplomatic relations with South Africa - it never has had. Our trade with South Africa is so small as to be negligible. We are so remote from the African continent - as indeed we are from other continents - that we may be regarded as not directly involved. But we have the greatest sympathy for all those - of whatever race - who are prisoners of the apartheid policies of the present South African Government. We can do little to help, save indirectly, but our voice will always be strong for those who seek to establish multi-racial cooperation in that country as in the wider international community.

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