

Trade and Sympathy

The Canadians
against Apartheid

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WITH A GIANT NEIGHBOUR along their continent-wide southern border, the Canadians are more involved with their relationship with the United States, its 200 millions (more than 10 times their 19 millions), and its dominating way of life, than with that world even newer than their own—the emerging independent states of Africa and the East.

To a South African the Canadians' lack of concern for events in South Africa is disappointing: South Africa is a very long way away, and a feeling of joint responsibility for South Africa does not seem to have been formed in the Canadians by their Commonwealth or United Nations experience. Outspan oranges, K.W.V. wine, fishmeal, even corn starch, and much more, flow into Canada from South African ports, and \$50 millions worth of lumber, plus newsprint and lesser products, go the other way. The relationship does not go much deeper. In the Department of External Affairs, a posting to South Africa is considered a piece of rotten bad luck, more likely to fall to a bachelor, who won't have the excuses of a family man to get out of the assignment.

Canadians are remote even from the present concerns of England, since the United States is their culturally, economically dominant big brother, not Western Europe. There is cause for involvement in the affairs of Europe through Canada's rôle in NATO, and there is a rather detached interest in the Commonwealth, when the Prime Ministers' conference comes round, if not so much at other times. But South Africa—a theme for regret, sympathy, and a rapid change of subject.

NOT THAT CANADIANS ARE UNAWARE of the situation, or unfearful of the consequences of apartheid. Everyone will tell you that the ordinary Canadian man in the street has a clear knowledge that apartheid is wrong, and that Canada should side with those nations trying to do something to set the country to rights. Why otherwise should the then Prime Minister, Mr. John C. Diefenbaker, leader of the Conservative Party, have joined Ghana, Nigeria, India, Pakistan and the other Commonwealth countries of Africa and the East in opposing South Africa in the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in 1961, and causing Dr. Verwoerd to withdraw South Africa's membership? Mr. Eric Louw's disgusted references at this time to the machinations of the "Afro-Asian-Canadian bloc" gave momentary life to a new nonracial political line-up which was most cheering to the hard-pressed campaigners for nonracialism in South Africa.

In the 1964 conference, Mr. Lester Pearson warmed the hearts of Canadians by his important rôle in drafting the key sentences of the final *communiqué*, dealing with race relations. "Mike" Pearson, the Liberal Prime Minister, recently returned to power after six years of unexpected Conservative rule, represents the best in Canada's rational, intelligent, liberal and humane attitude to politics both national and international. Yet this very liberality of thought and policy causes great disappointment to those who would look to Canada for a sterner front against apartheid. Canadians themselves volunteer the excuse which

has so long been hurled at Britain by the Afrikaner Nationalists: if we had a black population of comparable size we would probably behave as the whites do in South Africa, they say. Or, look what we did to the Indians—how can we tell others what to do? Or even, look at the Civil Rights problem in the States, where the Negro numbers are so small—the South African situation could hardly be otherwise.

POLICY-MAKERS, CONSEQUENTLY, though they have the clear view of the electorate to keep before them, that apartheid is wrong, are not impelled to institute action in the diplomatic field, because of this self-effacing charitableness of the Canadians. In other words, they could not lay down policy which would conciliate the White supremacists too markedly, even if very great trade benefits were to result to Canada; yet they are not required to lead Canada into a forward position in the Cold War against South Africa. Their position is noticeably similar to that of the liberal-minded South African industrialist who will support the Progressive Party with money and even with his name, yet who constantly seeks to evade responsibility for action by adopting new theories assuring him that apartheid can be got rid of painlessly.

"We played around with partition for a while," I was told, but, with a mocking tone, "we were told it was a dirty word and anything short of full multi-racialism was not respectable." What they are playing around with now is the Oppenheimer-Hobart Houghton tactic about letting economic expansion make a dead letter of apartheid. It was nice to know that the policy-makers were aware that the electorate disapproved of apartheid: they didn't seem to do so very feelingly themselves. There was a certain regret that they couldn't play around with the Bantustans, and I was even told not to forget the question of the White man's survival in Africa.

BUT THIS IS THE WAY OF POLITICS, and my friend who played around with partition and the rest is probably not typical of the group of Canadians who think about Africa and are personally involved with their country's attitude to Dr. Verwoerd's regime in the south. The Canadians seem a highly moral, religious people; certainly in day-to-day conduct across the counter or at the street corner, they are courteous, relaxed and friendly in a way that has been forgotten by tense and unhappy white South Africa. They have come down fair and square against discrimination, and a moral attitude on this issue is to be found at all levels.

They have their own race relations problem, though it is not complicated by the colour factor. The six million French Canadians are resentful of the power and position of the rest, and from the confinement of their beautiful province of Quebec, which they find it hard to leave, they call for separatism, over a front ranging from the violent extremism of the young men whose acts of sabotage echoed round the world a few months back, to the group of French M.P.s who ceaselessly assert the rights of Quebec—and of the other nine provinces—over the hated machine of Federalism, so largely driven by English Canadian operators.

Hearteningly, the response of English Canadians seems to be more one of seeking the cause of French disaffection—"Where did we go wrong?"—than of counter aggressiveness and malice on the Boer-British pattern in South Africa.

English Canadians still hold primitive views about their French Canadian fellow-countrymen, especially if they do not live among them. A television street interviewer in Vancouver, 2,000 miles west of the French cities and farmlands of Quebec, asked a dozen passers-by the Canadian form of an old South African teaser: "Would you like your sister to marry a French Canadian?" The eight who said "yes" or "no objection" mostly gave answers which showed their awareness of the world-wide issue of inter-racial harmony—"people are all the same; you

shouldn't discriminate", "we've all got to live together, let's get on with it". The four who said "no"—"they're uncivilised . . . rough and tough", "she'd have to adopt their religion, I wouldn't like that", "maybe in a few generations when they have advanced to our level", "people should stick to their own kind, I'm against this mixing, people are best off with their own"—showed a frankness which the raw, taut atmosphere in South Africa would not allow.

THIS POINTS TO GROWN-UP ATTITUDES on the part of ordinary Canadians to the question of inter-race relations. For another thing, the floods of immigrants since the end of the First World War have not challenged the Canadian Government to "canadianise" the offspring of the immigrants in one generation. This has partly been a defence mechanism against the all-American mass-produced product of large-scale immigration to the United States. The U.S. produces an American in one generation. Canada produces a Belgian Canadian, an Italian Canadian, a Portuguese Canadian, celebrating annually with a get-together with his former European compatriots and their relations, aware of his distant origin, with a proper pride in its traditions, yet first, foremost and all the time a Canadian. The colour factor is admittedly almost absent: a few thousand Negroes, some Chinese, the disappearing American Indian (the difference here is cultural rather than of colour). Yet the Department of Immigration is letting in a quota of British West Indians, mainly for labouring and domestic work, despite a considerable unemployment problem in Canada.

Though the Press has reported the snubbing of two Ghanaian visitors at a Halifax, Nova Scotia, hotel, where they were refused accommodation—"they said the hotel was full but it was because we were black"—a visitor's impression is of almost absolute absence of colour bars in such places. Montreal's Mount Royal-Sheraton Hotel over a recent long weekend accommodated what looked like more than a hundred Negro guests from the U.S., mostly on a convention visiting a Catholic shrine, and in streets and cafés parties of Negro tourists were everywhere to be seen. Perhaps this seemed to them a more peaceful place than home.

INDEED IT IS A MORE PEACEFUL place than home, and more so if home is South Africa. "What can we do to help?" is the inevitable difficult question put by sympathetic Canadians everywhere. Freedom forces in South Africa must ponder this. Here are an adult and a virtuous people, aware of our problem, decided on the rights and wrongs of it, only holding back from a stronger identification with the OAU and Asian attack on apartheid by their feeling of remoteness, and for lack of encouragement. This is not to overlook the vital trade factor. Somehow the latent force of mass Canadian feeling against apartheid must be harnessed, the politicians impelled thereby to take a stronger stand in the U.N., and in Canada's direct relationship with South Africa. An "Afro-Asian-Canadian bloc" would bring inestimable benefit to the freedom forces in South Africa, and to the cause of nonracialism in international affairs.



A Yoruba equestrian figure in polychrome wood from Dahomey. It is one of some 180 photographs which illustrate a collection of African Folktales and Sculpture chosen by the late Paul Radin and James Johnson Sweeney. (Secker & Warburg, London, £5.5.0.)