



Australia's Changing Policies Toward Apartheid

http://www.aluka.org/action/showMetadata?doi=10.5555/AL.SFF.DOCUMENT.nuun1985_03

Use of the Aluka digital library is subject to Aluka's Terms and Conditions, available at <http://www.aluka.org/page/about/termsConditions.jsp>. By using Aluka, you agree that you have read and will abide by the Terms and Conditions. Among other things, the Terms and Conditions provide that the content in the Aluka digital library is only for personal, non-commercial use by authorized users of Aluka in connection with research, scholarship, and education.

The content in the Aluka digital library is subject to copyright, with the exception of certain governmental works and very old materials that may be in the public domain under applicable law. Permission must be sought from Aluka and/or the applicable copyright holder in connection with any duplication or distribution of these materials where required by applicable law.

Aluka is a not-for-profit initiative dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of materials about and from the developing world. For more information about Aluka, please see <http://www.aluka.org>

Australia's Changing Policies Toward Apartheid

Alternative title	Notes and Documents - United Nations Centre Against ApartheidNo. 3/85
Author/Creator	United Nations Centre against Apartheid; Sutter, Keith D.
Publisher	United Nations, New York
Date	1985-02-00
Resource type	Reports
Language	English
Subject	
Coverage (spatial)	South Africa, Australia
Coverage (temporal)	1972 - 1975, 1975 - 1983, 1985
Source	Northwestern University Libraries
Description	I INTRODUCTION. AUSTRALIAN POLICY BEFORE 1972. A. Australia and racism. B. Australia and South Africa at the United Nations. AUSTRALIA'S NEW POLICY (1972-1975). Australia's new foreign policy. B. Australia and South Africa at the United Nations. C. Trade with South Africa. MAINTAINING THE NEW POLICY (1975-1983). A. The surprising policy. B. Reasons for the policy. C. Trade with South Africa. D. Domestic Australian opinion. THE CURRENT SITUATION. The Hawke Government. The diplomatic offensive. Sport. Aviation. Trade. Public education. DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION. The New Zealand dimension. United Nations Security Council. Trade. South African Embassy. Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference. NOTES.
Format extent (length/size)	35 page(s)

http://www.aluka.org/action/showMetadata?doi=10.5555/AL.SFF.DOCUMENT.nuun1985_03

UNITED NATIONS

UNITED NATIONS
_CENTRE AGAINST APARTHEID
NOTES AND DOCUMENTS*

3/85

February 1985

AUSTRALIA'S CHANGING POLICIES TOWARD APARTHEID by

Keith D. Sutter

Note: This paper is published at the request of the Special Committee against Apartheid.

Dr. Sutter is Federal President of the United Nations Association of Australia.

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author.

*All material in these Notes and Documents may be freely reprinted.

Acknowledgement, together with a copy of the publication containing the reprint, would be appreciated.

United Nations, New York 10017 85-07509

INTRODUCTION 99 o* go * * .a * * go so ** ** 0* o, ** .. 1
AUSTRALIAN POLICY BEFORE 1972 . go g o. .. ** 2
A. Australia and racism o... .. 2
B. Australia and South Africa at the United Nations .. go go 2
AUSTRALIA'S NEW POLICY (1972-1975) . go ., g. ... go ... 5
A. Australia's new foreign policy g *. ... g 5
B. Australia and South Africa at the United Nations 6 C. Trade with South Africa g.. .. 8
MAINTAINING THE NEW POLICY (1975-1983)...g A. The surprising policy ..g 9 B. Reasons for the policy. *
C. Trade with South Africa go go go .* . D. Domestic Australian opinion go 0* go *.
CURRENT SITUATION The Hawke Government The diplomatic offensive, * Sport . go o. .. 0. o. .9.. Aviation... .. go go
Trade* o o* go 99 go g9 , 9 Public education.. *, 00 *o
* 0 * 00**
9 9 99 99 ** .9 09 99 **
9. 99 * 0a0 0 *0 o* 0 0* o o0 e0 *0 go 0* 09 99 99 . o0
~90 99 *99 9
DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION A. The New Zealand dimension B. United Nations Security Council C. Trade D. South African Embassy E. Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference
NOTES

..11
*.911 ..13
9.16 .18
.20 .20
.23 .23 .25 .25 .26

- 1-

I. INTRODUCTION

Australia's policies towards apartheid have changed considerably during the past 13 years. The turning point came with the election, in December 1972, of the Labour Government headed by Gough Whitlam.

Before December 1972, Australia - though not specifically endorsing apartheid - was one of the few nations to offer any political support for the embattled South African Government at the United Nations and other international organizations. The Government was motivated partly out of a sense of solidarity with "kith and kin" in the white South African community and partly because its own record on racism at home was defective. Also, it had little sympathy for the United Nations generally and viewed its anti-apartheid work as yet another mischievous and misguided project. It had little sympathy for international sporting boycotts of South African teams. It allowed the 1971 Springbok rugby tour to proceed - which resulted in some of the most violent political disturbances in Australia since 1945.

The Whitlam Government set about updating Australia's foreign policy to compensate for the 23 years' stagnation under the Liberal-Country Party Government. This included some dramatic developments concerning apartheid. These were acts of political leadership since, according to opinion polls, there was latent Australian sympathy for the South African Government. By the time it lost power (in November 1975), the Labour Government had probably gone as far as it could without there being a major increase in public opinion opposing apartheid.

The return to power of the conservative Liberal-Country Party (headed by Malcolm Fraser) did not - as was feared by some at the time - represent a return to the pre-Labour pro-South Africa policies. On the contrary, given Australian domestic political considerations, the new Government was even tougher than the Whitlam Government:

"Of all the developments in Australia's changing attitudes to the world since World War II this was the least forced,

the most voluntary, and possibly the most fragile. The contrast can be made this way. In 1971, the Springbok rugby team from South Africa toured Australia. The conservative coalition parties, then led by Mr. McMahon, not only allowed the tour to take place; when trade unions threatened not to service the team's aircraft, the

Government offered the services of the Royal Australian Air Force. Ten years later, when the Springboks toured New Zealand, the Fraser Government would not even allow

the team to transit through Australia." 1/

The Labour Party, headed by Bob Hawke, returned to power in March 1983. It has, broadly speaking, maintained the policy laid down by the Whitlam and Fraser Governments. But there is some impatience that perhaps it could be doing more than just maintaining that policy - it should be expanding its opposition to apartheid.

- 2-

The purpose of this paper is to trace Australia's changing policies towards apartheid - both the changes themselves and the reasons for them. This is a case study of how one nation found it necessary to increase substantially its opposition to apartheid in order to bring its foreign policy more into line with those of most other nations around the globe.

II. AUSTRALIAN POLICY BEFORE 1972

A. Australia and racism

Australia was one of the founding members of the United Nations. Indeed, Australia was one of the most active and innovative of its creators and displayed more faith in it than some of the more powerful nations. Australia was still feeling its way in international relations and this pioneering work helped build its self-confidence in developing its own set of foreign policy priorities, as distinct from those of the United Kingdom.

This work was particularly guided by Dr. H. V. Evatt, the Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs for the Labour Government (1941-1949). Dr. Evatt was later President of the United Nations General Assembly (1948) and took a close interest in the drafting of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

But there has always been another side to Australia's human rights image. For about 40,000 years aboriginals lived largely isolated from the rest of the world, their only external contacts being via some coastal traders. They lived relatively peacefully on the world's oldest, driest, flattest continent. This was destroyed in 1788 with the arrival of British colonialists. Other mariners had visited Australia but none had stayed. The British did. They gravely damaged the existing civilization. Having decided that aboriginals were a "dying race", they were equally concerned to exclude the non-Europeans as far as possible. Hence the "White Australia Policy" was evolved, particularly to exclude Asians. The prevailing policy was to maintain a "British" nation - except when cheap labour was required.

Therefore, Australia's changing policies towards apartheid have to be seen partly in the context of white Australians themselves having to come to terms with their own racism at home. This has meant that Governments in power since 1972 have tended to lead public opinion rather than to follow it. There is still, however, some latent racism throughout the community. Since 1972, Australian Governments have opposed that racism. Before 1972, far less was done about it.

B. Australia and South Africa at the United Nations

In June 1946, the Provisional Government of India had included on the United Nations General Assembly agenda the question of the treatment of persons of Indian origin in South Africa. Australia said that this question was not a proper matter for United Nations discussion since it was

- 3-

"essentially within the jurisdiction" of South Africa. 2/ Ironically, Australia was one of the main authors of this provision. Australia supported Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States in seeking (unsuccessfully) to refer to the International Court of Justice the question of whether or not Article 2(7) prevented the United Nations General Assembly from taking up this matter. Instead, a resolution initiated by India was adopted, criticizing South Africa; Australia abstained.

South Africa's racial policies and the United Nations views on racism both became more solidified in 1948. In the South African general election, the United Party Government lost power and the National Party came to power with a more extreme set of racial policies: apartheid. Meanwhile, later the same year, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, on 10 December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which stated, among other things, that everyone was entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration without distinction as to race. 3/ Because of its racial policies, South Africa abstained from voting for the Declaration.

In the 1949 Australian federal election, the Labour Government was defeated and the conservative Liberal-Country Party began its 23 years of rule. The new Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, had far less enthusiasm for the United Nations. One of his Cabinet colleagues, in his recently published Diary, recorded on 28 September 1965 a late evening social meeting at Parliament House:

"Had a nightcap in the ante-room with PM, etc. At times the PM exhibits a series of violent prejudices. Tonight

these included: (a) Antipathy to psychologists, and arithmetic tests. (b) The United Nations (he hopes it will fold up). (c) He hopes we will never alter the White Australia Policy. (d) He hopes Rhodesia will delay self-government in any form, especially to Africans. (It is no use arguing when he is in this sort of mood.)" 4/

During the period from 1949 to 1972, Australia was one of South Africa's few consistent allies. It did not endorse apartheid but it was rarely as critical of it as, say, the rapidly emerging Third World. Australia initially supported the South African claim that apartheid was not a matter for United Nations debate because of Article 2(7) of the Charter. By 1956, only Australia and the United Kingdom were left supporting the South African interpretation of Article 2(7) - though both asserted their opposition in principle to racial discrimination. A turning point came in 1960, with both the Sharpeville Massacre and the British Prime Minister's own recognition of the decolonization process now under way, which meant that European nations could no longer assume that they were destined to rule the

world. South Africa withdrew - much to Australia's regret - from the British Commonwealth in 1961. Thence forward, Australia and the United Kingdom voted for United Nations General Assembly resolutions criticizing apartheid. But Australia remained opposed to any action which would extend criticism of apartheid into action against apartheid. It opposed any form of economic sanctions against South Africa. It opposed denying the credentials of South African representatives at the United Nations. It opposed severing

- 4-

diplomatic relations with South Africa. It opposed any move which would stop South African sporting teams from taking part in international competitions. It refused to prohibit such teams from visiting Australia. 5/

One reason for Australia's policies during this period was Australia's fear that too much international intervention in South Africa's racial policies might eventually spill over into action against Australia because of its treatment of the aboriginals and the "White Australia Policy". In other words, precedents for international action over apartheid could be established that would lead eventually to a similar campaign against the "White Australia Policy". Additionally, the plight of Australian aboriginals would have shocked international opinion if the facts were made known, for example, that they have one of the world's highest rates of leprosy.

Secondly, there was the prevailing belief - increasingly less articulated but still present - that a white-dominated South Africa was a natural ally of Australia. This was partly due to the continuing view that Europeans were somehow destined to rule the world. Also, according to this perception, both nations in a macabre way had a common geographical factor: both were at the southern ends of regions in which the populations were largely non-European. They represented western civilization amid seas of threatening "black" and "yellow" perils.

Thirdly, both nations saw themselves as threatened by a monolithic communist threat of invasion. Australia, at one end of the Indian Ocean, wanted a reliable ally at the other end of that Ocean, especially given the potential importance of South Africa's Simonstown naval base.

Fourthly, Australia was ambivalent over Southern Rhodesia's illegal declaration of independence on 11 November 1965. Peter Howson attended the Cabinet meeting the day following the Southern Rhodesian decision.

"Cabinet on Rhodesia. Although we have nominally to support the United Kingdom, there was a general feeling that for too long we have been 'swimming with the tide of majority opinion' on the winds of change. The time has now come when we should support our white brethren in Southern Rhodesia even if it means that we are going to suffer at the United Nations. We agree that Smith has been ill-advised to move so soon, but now that he has, we won't move very rapidly to impose sanctions as requested by Britain." 6/

Since South Africa was aiding Southern Rhodesia, Australia had a further incentive to avoid any harsh treatment of South Africa.

Finally, there was a prevailing reluctance to accept that apartheid even if it was a bad policy - was worth all the fuss that other nations were making about it. Other nations had bad human rights records. These were regrettable events but only facts of international life. The Australian Government did not share the perception of most nations about the importance of ending apartheid.

- 5-

III. AUSTRALIA'S NEW POLICY (1972-1975)

The 1972 federal election was a turning point in Australia's post-World War II history. Robert Menzies had remained Prime Minister until his retirement in 1965, at the outset of Australia's military involvement in Vietnam. He was a unique figure: a fervently loyal British subject who did more than anyone else to foster the new military alliance with the United States; and a narrow, parochial person for whom the world consisted of only three nations: Australia, United Kingdom and the United States. After his retirement, the Liberal-Country Party found it impossible to find an adequate successor. The Liberal-Country Party clung on to power until 1972. But by 1972 even some sections of the Liberal-Country Party apparently believed that a period in opposition would enable the Liberal-Country Party to clear itself up, especially by getting a new leader.

A. Australia's new foreign policy

Gough Whitlam's Labour Party came to power on 2 December 1972, because most Australians believed that it was time for reforms. Whitlam stunned the complacent, easy-going nation by the speed and range of the Labour reforms. It was the question of speed and the feeling that the Government was doing too much too quickly, that weakened its electoral support. But, for those who believed that in foreign and social welfare areas the nation had stood still for twenty-three years, the speed was justifiable because there was so much to do.

There was a need to bring Australia up to date with changes which had taken place since Labour lost power in 1949. During the subsequent twenty-three years, most of the colonial empires had been dissolved and many new nations were formed. The Liberal-Country Party Government, however, remained wedded to the idea that the only nations which really mattered to Australia were the United States, United Kingdom and Japan and others about which it had fears for its security, notably the USSR, China and Indonesia. The Government had decided virtually to ignore most new nations outside Australia's immediate neighbourhood. If anything, the new nations were seen as troublemakers. In so far as they noticed Australia's existence, they criticized Australia's "White Australia Policy", they pressed for Papua New Guinea to be given independence from Australia, and they criticized South Africa and Australia's sympathy for it. Australia is both a "Western" nation located in the "East", and a "Northern" nation located in the "South". Only three "Northern" nations are located in the "South". South Africa will eventually become truly "Southern", leaving only Australia and New Zealand. Prime Minister Whitlam wanted to update Australia's foreign policy, including to bring it more into line with the

realities of the Third World and the increased international opposition to racism. For it was clear that Australia could not expect to improve its ties with the Third World without changing its policies towards apartheid.

The opposition of the Labour Government to apartheid was best seen in the context of its unprecedented campaign against racism and colonialism generally. The Government accelerated plans for the independence of its own

- 6-

"colony", Papua New Guinea, which became independent in 1975. It reversed the years of neglect of Australia's own "Third World" - aboriginals - by expanding social welfare programmes for them and introducing some land rights measures. It banned exports of Australian wheat to Southern Rhodesia - thereby tightening up its own implementation of the United Nations sanctions resolutions. It recognized Guinea-Bissau well ahead of its formal independence. It ratified United Nations human rights treaties which had been ignored by the previous Government, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The ratification of this treaty included the creation of the Office of the Community Relations Commissioner and the Labour appointee was Al Grassby, easily one of Australia's leading figures in multiculturalism.

The "White Australia Policy" gradually evaporated. It had been declining for some years. The Whitlam Government took the matter a step further by, in effect, making racism a social sin. By its behaviour, the Government tried to project to all Australians that racism should be a thing of the past.

To overcome Australia's post-war labour shortage, Australia had been encouraging migration. By the early 1970s, Australia had acquired one of the world's most cosmopolitan populations - the third largest "Greek" city, for example, became Melbourne.

Opposition to apartheid in South Africa, therefore, was fully in accordance with the Government's attempts to end racism at home and to build a multicultural Australia.

B. Australia and South Africa at the United Nations

South Africa's Government could no longer rely upon Australian support when it came to debates over apartheid. The Labour Government came to office while the 1972 United Nations General Assembly session was still meeting. This provided an immediate opportunity to signal Australia's new policy towards apartheid.

When resolution 2979 (XXVII) of 14 December 1972 entitled "Activities of foreign economic and other interests which are impeding the implementation of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples in Southern Rhodesia, Namibia and Territories under Portuguese domination and in all other Territories under colonial domination and efforts to eliminate colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination in southern Africa", and resolution 2981 of 14 December 1972 entitled "United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa" were still at the committee stage, the Liberal-Country Party Government abstained on them. By the time they reached the plenary meeting on 14 December 1972, the Whitlam Government was in power and Australia voted in their favour. As Mr. Whitlam later pointed out:

"The timing and nature of these actions were deliberate. They were intended to emphasize the priority which the Government would be giving to the question of race in formulating its policies and to initiate the visible process of ridding Australia of its racist image and enhancing its general international image and respectability." 7/

- 7-

This new attitude was also symbolized by some financial assistance. For example, in 1973-1974, Australia contributed \$A15,000 to the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa, \$A5,000 each to the Trust Fund for South Africa and Trust Fund for Namibia, and \$A30,000 to the Special Commonwealth Programme for Assisting the Education of Rhodesian Africans. Given Australia's wealth, the amounts were minute, but their significance arose out of their origin rather than out of their size. Australia was one of the few Western nations to be making such contributions.

Australia continued to demonstrate its opposition to apartheid by voting, in late 1974, for South Africa's expulsion from the United Nations. Australia by this time was also a member of the Security Council and resolutions on this subject arose in both organs. The resolution on this matter in the Security Council was vetoed by the United States, United Kingdom and France.

All these developments, however, were perceived by most Australians as somehow distant and peripheral to mainstream Australian affairs. Australia has one of the world's highest material standards of living and, generally speaking, is more interested in the pleasures of life rather than in political struggles. The Whitlam Government's anti-apartheid policy became more obvious when it hit at one of Australia's greatest collective pleasures: sport.

During the 1960s, as international opinion continued to swing against South Africa's racial policies, Australia remained one of the few of South Africa's supporters in wanting it to remain in international sporting activities. Moreover, as South Africa found itself increasingly isolated, it shared with Australia two common national sports: cricket and rugby. Abraham Ordia of the Supreme Court for Sport in Africa said in May 1971:

"Whereas South Africa has been condemned, denounced and excluded by almost every international sports federation, whereas South Africa has been expelled from the Olympic movement, some countries, notably Australia, continue to defy world opinion and the efforts of all anti-apartheid elements, by inviting several sports teams - always all white - to tour their country ...

The United Nations declared 1971 as the International Year for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. In blatant disregard of this, Australia openly constitutes itself in the eyes of the sporting world as South Africa's white friend and greatest ally." 8/

In his 1972 federal election policy speech, Mr. Whitlam made a specific promise that a Labour Government would give no visas to or through Australia to racially-selected sporting teams. Within days of his becoming prime minister, Mr. Whitlam announced that the promise would be honoured. The United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid sent a telegramme congratulating the Government for this decision. In so far as opinion polls are any accurate guide, the Committee's view was not shared by most Australians. But with so many other issues jolting Australia's body politic, this issue was not a major factor in generating hostility towards the Labour Government. Indeed, South Africa's apartheid has not been a major issue at any federal election.

C. Trade

When the Whitlam Government came to power, Australia had diplomatic personnel in nine African cities: Accra, Cairo, Dar es Salam, Lagos, Lusaka, Nairobi - and Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg. 9/ The deployment of staff alone would indicate the extent of Australia's close ties with South Africa vis-a-vis the rest of the continent.

The link was manifested in three ways: political co-operation - such as Australia's role at the United Nations, sporting contacts and trade. The Whitlam Government made considerable progress on the first two but little was done about trade. It is notable that the two later Australian Governments have had the same pattern. No Government has ever contemplated an economic boycott. All three have lived with the contradiction of opposing politically and socially a nation with which they were willing to trade.

Ironically, Australia and South Africa are not natural trading partners. Both nations produce similar primary products and both have extensive mining and industrial sectors. If anything, they would appear to be natural competitors rather than partners. Consequently, the trade between them has meant that each is a mirror market for the other.

Although the level of trade in comparison with each nation's total imports/exports was small, it was increasing. The Whitlam Government had four options: to ban all trade through economic sanctions; to discourage trade actively, by measures such as closing down of its three trade commission offices in South Africa; to discourage trade passively by leaving the commissions in place but emphasizing via speeches that it would be better to trade elsewhere, or to encourage trade. The Government was therefore presented with a range of options. Even though it decided against unilateral economic sanctions, it could have followed two other options which would have restrained trade. On the contrary, the Government opted more for the final option. Trade increased between the two nations during the period of the Whitlam Government. 10/ The Government's trade policy may be explained in four ways. Firstly, the Government had indicated its willingness to have economic sanctions against South Africa - providing these included South Africa's major trading partners, notably the United Kingdom and United States. The Government shifted the onus off itself to the international community - safe in the knowledge that multilateral sanctions would not be introduced in the foreseeable future.

Secondly, as a consequence of no international agreement or sanctions, the Whitlam Government's Minister for Overseas Trade - ironically one of the Government's most left-wing members - said:

"You cannot stop trade with countries because you don't like their policies. If we did that, we would stop trading with just about every country except Sweden and Switzerland. Southern Rhodesia is still the only country with which Australia does not trade, because it is the subject of a United Nations resolution." 11/

- 9-

Thirdly, although South Africa was a minor market for Australia in aggregate terms, in terms of specific locations a unilateral boycott would have a noticeable impact. In October 1973, for example, the Government spent \$A100,000 on a four-day trade fair in Johannesburg. When it was reported that some members of the Parliamentary Labour Party would try to block the trade fair, Australian trade diplomats responded:

"The diplomats have pointed out to the South Australian Premier, Mr. Dunstan, that his State would be severely hit if Australia banned trade with South Africa.

A large proportion of Australia's \$90 million annual exports to the Republic are car parts and components from South Australian factories.

Mr. Dunstan has been warned that South Australian employment would be hit if trade ties were severed." 12/

Incidentally, that same article went on to provide information on why Australia's exports to South Africa were increasing:

"The possible Caucus move has also been sparked by the increasing number of multinational corporations using their Australian subsidiaries to penetrate the South African market.

The subsidiaries then establish plants in the Republic to exploit the advantages of the cheap black labour.

A senior ALP senator, who supports the move, said this week that many United States companies operated in South Africa through their Australian subsidiaries to avoid troubles back home.

He said: "The manufacturers operate that way to avoid trouble with black workers in plants in the United States.

"There have been several cases of companies withdrawing from South Africa after pressure by black workers in America.

"Now, by operating through Australia, they can enter South Africa by the back door.

"We don't think that the Australian Government should be aiding in that process." 12/

Finally, the Government tried to neutralize some of its anti-apartheid critics by assuring people that it was at least concerned about the conditions of employment in Australian-owned companies operating in South Africa. It was revealed that in September 1974, for example, Foreign Minister Don Willesee

-10 -

"released a statement called Australian companies and South Africa in which he announced that he had written to 'the leaders of Australian companies with subsidiaries or associates in South Africa' asking them to improve the pay and conditions of their non-white employees in South Africa. The idea apparently came from talks Whitlam had had with delegates from the British Trade Union Congress; both Britain and Canada have taken the same course, with some small measure of success." 13/

In the House of Representatives Hansard on 22 May 1979 the Liberal-Country Party Government Minister for Trade and Resources provided the following figures on Australian imports from and exports to South Africa for the period from 1972-1973 to 1977-1978:

Thousands Of Australian dollars 1972-1973 1973-1974 1974-1975 1975-1976 1976-1977 1977-1978

Imports 20,621 36,629 43,930 36,890 56,374 58,051

Exports 95,102 90,280 97,861 90,958 69,415 65,654

This indicated that although there was a gradual decline in Australian exports to South Africa, there was a faster increase in imports from South Africa.

Ironically, the Australian imports from South Africa provided one of the few specific coatpegs for Australia's small but active anti-apartheid groups to hang their campaigns. With the ending of sporting tours, these groups were, ironically, robbed of a direct way of drawing attention to the evils of apartheid.

Woolworths ("Woolies") imported fish processed by exploited black South African labour. In 1975, the Campaign against Racial Exploitation (CARE) mounted a campaign against one of Australia's household names:

"CARE is mobilizing union, church and student support and as a spokesperson said in Canberra: 'Woolies cannot deny the facts of exploitation. They are too widely known. If

they do not stop selling the fish we are geared to a new degree of mobilization that will hit them where it really hurts - decreased sales. We can hurt them very badly but that's the way they seem to want it.'

Woolies would like the campaign just to go away. They have asked if they give in on fish what will be next?

Tea? Coffee? Where will it end? It might just end with Woolies exercising some corporate responsibility. And for Australia's 23rd biggest corporation that would be a major step - even if taken unwillingly. For CARE and the cause of consumer action it would be a major victory and would

- 11 -

open up a front for consumer action against other corporations and in respect of other commodities. The stakes are high on both sides. Meanwhile the word from South Africa itself is that the boycott campaign has put the heat on Woolies' suppliers Irwin and Johnson who have discovered that their workers are aware of it. The result? I & J are reported to be much more attentive to workers complaints and demands and conditions for the workers are improving, particularly their bargaining position. Whatever Woolies reaction may be in Australia, the pressure of the boycott is being felt inside South Africa." 14/

IV. MAINTAINING THE NEW POLICY (1975-1983)

A. The surprising policy

Malcolm Fraser became Prime Minister at the end of 1975, when the Liberal-Country Party returned to power. At first sight, it seemed that the progress on anti-apartheid matters made under the Whitlam Government would be quickly negated by the new Government. Mr. Fraser was a protege of Sir Robert Menzies. He was easily one of the most conservative of Liberal-Country Party leaders since the Party was formed during World War II - and the most ruthless as well. He promised a return to the "old values" espoused by the Menzies Government, which implied a re-emphasis on white conservative allies, and a turning away from the new links formed with Third World nations.

The South African Government would have been most pleased with the 1975 Liberal-Country Party election victory. Relations with the Whitlam Government had reached an all-time low. Mr. Fraser was bound to be better. After all, his past record had contained no evidence of hostility towards apartheid. The South African Government was wrong. Relations have been even cooler. Although, as will be shown later, the Fraser Government's record on trade had its faults, the Government's overall anti-apartheid record represented a distinct continuation of the policy initiated by the Whitlam Government. Indeed, the South African Government could have consoled itself with the knowledge that from its point of view, the Labour Government had acted as badly as it could expect a Labour Government to do. The Whitlam period should have presented no surprises. The Fraser Government, by contrast, was a surprise. That Government was not acting as one would have expected a conservative Government to do. The policy of the Fraser Government consisted of the following three components. The core of the policy has been described in an official publication: "Australia's relations with South Africa are correct but cool. Central to the Government's policy is the total rejection of the policies of apartheid and the belief that continuation of these policies threatens peace and stability not just in South Africa, but in the entire region. Our opposition to apartheid is based on

- 12 -

humanitarian, political and strategic considerations. It is a discriminatory and exploitive system which oppresses 70 per cent of South Africa's population, denying to them the most basic rights and freedoms. As Sir Robert Menzies first judged in the 1950s, in political terms it is a system doomed to failure and which cannot work. It is inconceivable that apartheid will ever be accepted by the black majority. As their frustrations increase, so will the temptation to turn to violent means of securing change. The depressing scenario, therefore, is for an ever-increasing spiral of violence and repression, and a corresponding increase in racial tension, bitterness, hatred and extremism.

This has serious implications for the entire international community. Apartheid remains one of the major items on the international agenda. Until the Africans achieve their major diplomatic objective of seeing apartheid eliminated, then racism will continue to infect international politics, and could hinder efforts to achieve the rational, co-operative relationship between developed and developing countries essential to the maintenance of global peace and stability, in both the economic and political spheres.

There are, for Western countries like Australia, also important strategic considerations at stake in the South African situation. A major factor shaping Australian policies towards southern Africa is our broad concern to see peace, stability and economic development in the region. We are deeply apprehensive that the situation in South Africa threatens the stability of the entire region. By promoting frustration, violence and political conflict, apartheid creates opportunities for the growth of extremist ideologies and for the intervention of outside powers in the affairs of the region. Far from being a bulwark against 'communism' - as it frequently asserts - South Africa is inviting the spread of 'communism' in the region. Its current policies are inimical to Western interests.

Australian government policy is that normal economic relations with South Africa are allowed to continue but without avoidable official assistance. In 1980/1981, Australian exports to South Africa were valued at \$132 million and imports at \$110.6 million, comprising only 0.64 per cent of Australia's total trade for 1980/1981." 15/

Secondly, there was no return at all to the previous Liberal-Country Party policy of regarding apartheid as an "internal matter" and

- 13 -

therefore beyond the scope of official Australian criticism. On the contrary, the Fraser Government, via public statements, maintained a critical attitude towards apartheid. This has included the rejection and non-recognition of the so-called independence of the Transkei:

"Australia takes the view that the policy of separate development as it is currently being applied in the case of the Transkei and the other designated homelands does not provide a realistic solution to South Africa's racial problems. Inherently, such a policy is neither socially and politically satisfactory nor economically feasible and demographically plausible. Given that the bantustans in concept are a direct and unequivocal application of the premises of apartheid, Australia cannot extend recognition to the Transkei without risking compromising its opposition to the apartheid system and according that policy an unjustified respectability." 16/

Thirdly, the ban on sporting contacts was reaffirmed and even somewhat expanded - sports persons en route to New Zealand were denied landing visas. It banned individuals from competing in South Africa and discouraged Australian-South African competition in third nations. It banned foreign sports persons from competing in Australia if they had also played in South Africa. This policy caused tension with the then equally conservative New Zealand Government, headed by Sir Robert Muldoon, which did not have the same policy towards sporting ties with South Africa. But the Fraser Government was willing to tolerate this trans-Tasman tension in the interests of demonstrating Australia's opposition to apartheid.

B. Reasons for the policy

There are five main reasons for the new policy. Firstly, the Whitlam Government was one of the most reformist governments Australia had since federation in 1901, and it achieved a great deal in only three years. Its successor to some extent was carried along by the momentum of the 1972-1975 reforms and had great difficulty in reversing the flow of changes initiated by the Whitlam Government. Secondly, Mr. Fraser learned on the job. He arrived in office with certain preconceived ideas, but learnt that politics was the art of the possible. He recognized that governmental opposition to apartheid was now a fixed fact of international life and could not be ignored, let alone reversed.

Thirdly, Mr. Fraser - like Sir Robert Menzies - was a supporter of the British Commonwealth and valued it as an international forum. But Commonwealth opinion on apartheid had moved on from where it was in the 1950s, and if Mr. Fraser wanted to play an active role in Commonwealth affairs then he needed to update his views on apartheid. Thus, for example, he hosted the 1981 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne. In the 90-paragraph Final Communique of this meeting, apartheid was high up in its list of concerns and there was a strong condemnation of it:

- 14 -

"11. Heads of Government stressed that at the core of these problems is the apartheid system which the white minority regime in South Africa continues to sustain and strengthen in a variety of ways, including the brutal internal repression of the African majority, the persistent refusal to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions providing for Namibia's long-delayed independence, the pursuit of policies of destabilization against neighbouring States, the repeated threats to and violations of their territorial integrity and the expansion of South Africa's military capability. They considered that these developments not only threatened the stability of the region, but also gravely endangered international peace and security. They therefore called on the international community to strengthen its collective resolve to eradicate apartheid.

12. Recalling their Declaration on Racism and Racial Prejudice proclaimed at Lusaka in 1979, Heads of Government reaffirmed their total and unequivocal condemnation of apartheid as a crime against humanity and their total rejection of all policies designed to perpetuate this inhuman system. They accepted that it was the solemn and urgent duty of each of their Governments vigorously to combat the evil of apartheid by the adoption of effective measures against it and to assist those struggling to rid themselves of it. 17/

Fourthly, more generally, Australia was boosting its links with the Third World and this had to include opposition to apartheid since the Third World had made this such a major concern. Even conservatives accepted the need for opposition to apartheid - if only as a way of stopping the spread of Soviet influence in the Third World (since the USSR could gain Third World support through being more opposed to apartheid than were Western nations). 18/

Finally, there was the question of Mr. Fraser's own personality.

Although he had had the Defence and Army portfolios in the Liberal-Party Government in the 1960s, his rapid rise to becoming Prime Minister had not included much political apprenticeship in the field of international relations. Having become Prime Minister he soon acquired a taste for this work (as had happened with Gough Whitlam), and he took a close interest in foreign policy. Being Prime Minister, for energetic "workaholics" (like Whitlam and Fraser) is a frustrating experience since so much domestic policy is bedevilled by Australia's federal political system. Tension between the national and state governments has been the major theme in Australian politics since federation. Foreign policy, by contrast, gives a greater possibility to operate on the world scene.

During Mr. Fraser's term as Prime Minister, Australia was not involved in any armed conflict. Other than some political tensions with the USSR (over Poland and Afghanistan) and Indonesia (over East Timor), Australia enjoyed fairly tranquil relations with all the world's nations. One of the few areas of crisis in which Australia could play a role was southern Africa. Besides South Africa, there were Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and Namibia. As to Zimbabwe:

- 15 -

"On a number of occasions Fraser has said that he regards his role in the Rhodesian settlement as one of the more important achievements of his time in government. But why did Africa, and southern Africa in particular, come to take such a high priority for an Australian prime minister?

The answer is simple. The British Commonwealth was meeting in Lusaka. If the right answer wasn't found in Southern Rhodesia, the Commonwealth would probably fall apart.

Now there may have been people who said 'So what? What does it matter?' and some who liked the old Commonwealth of white Governments probably had that view. But it wasn't my view.

The Commonwealth is a multiracial group from every continent. In many ways it is a microcosm of the world. It's an organization capable of much good. If it were going to fall apart on the question of Southern Rhodesia, then tensions around the world were only going to mount. If the Commonwealth failed there would be even more disenchantment with other international organizations. So it was not a deliberate choice that made Africa important. It was the Commonwealth meeting in Africa, Southern Rhodesia on the agenda, wanting the Commonwealth to continue. Once those three things were put together it was inevitable that we would take the lead because if we didn't nobody else was going to do it." 19/

On Namibia, the Government opposed its continued occupation by South Africa. The Government pledged Australian troops to help any United Nations observers' force to help implement a settlement.

Mr. Fraser was a deeply conservative person who, like Mrs. Thatcher and President Reagan, feared Soviet involvement in the Third World. But he was different from them in his method of resisting the USSR. He believed that the Third World could be won over to a Western point of view if Western nations were more sympathetic to Third World views - including opposition to apartheid. This element of self-interest was also bolstered by his Party's financial interests, which believed that the Third World would become a more important trading area for Australia:

"Another basic objective of our policies towards Africa is

to develop Australia's economic and trading ties with Africa (with the exception of South Africa where the Australian Government opposes the active promotion of trade). Although many African countries confront serious economic problems, others have significant resources and considerable potential for economic development. Australia's interests lie in maintaining and developing its current economic relationships with African countries and in keeping open the prospects of developing these further, as and when African countries are able to realize their full economic potential.

- 16 -

Australia currently exports to African countries some \$725 million worth of goods while importing goods to the value of \$171 million.

The bulk of this Australian trade (just under \$448 million) is with the Arab countries of North Africa, particularly Egypt, with which Australia has had an important, long-standing trading relationship.

Australia's exports to the rest of Africa are modest, amounting in 1980/1981 to some \$60 million to West Africa and just under \$217 million to southern Africa, East Africa and the Indian Ocean. Total imports from West Africa in 1980/1981 were approximately \$20 million and from southern Africa and Eastern Africa, \$150 million. In the past, the lack of adequate shipping services has posed a major barrier to the expansion of trade between Australia and Africa. Foreign exchange restrictions and strict import licensing procedures have limited and will continue to limit Australia's trade prospects with many

African countries. More encouragingly, the recent establishment of two new shipping services to East Africa has greatly enhanced Australia's trade prospects in that region's markets. In this regard, there are improving prospects for Australian exports of foodstuffs to Mauritius, the Seychelles and Kenya (also agricultural equipment). Nigeria could also become an increasingly important market for Australian goods, especially in the agricultural sector, once a direct shipping service is commenced between Australia and West African ports." 20/

C. Trade with South Africa

The Fraser Government - in line with the Whitlam Government - did not introduce a unilateral trade embargo against South Africa. On the other hand, it did not actively seek to promote trade with South Africa. This ambivalence was set out in Mr. Fraser's reply to a Parliamentary Question:

"For a long while the Government has not actively encouraged trade with South Africa but it has not sought to prevent trade with South Africa by any positive means.

I think it is also worth noting that trade figures of many countries within Africa and South Africa are also of some significance, perhaps of much more significance to their economies than ought to be understood, because of the racial policies of South Africa, that the international community has taken certain decisions. This country has applied assiduously and conscientiously certain decisions made within the Commonwealth in relation to sport and it will continue to do so. But there would be no point in Australia adopting an attitude in relation to trade, as a one-off example, even if it were an appropriate mechanism to use. It would have to be something taken as a result of international action, not just action by a country such

- 17 -

as Australia. I hope that the honourable gentleman is not suggesting that Australia, of all nations in the world, should conduct trade embargoes against South Africa." 21/

Reviewing Australian-South African trade less than a year after Mr. Fraser became Prime Minister, an Australian newspaper noted:

"A curious legacy of the Whitlam Government continued by the Fraser Government is the policy of letting Australian exports to South Africa run down.

Australia's share, always minuscule, fell from three to less than one per cent between 1973 and 1976. As a market for Australian exports, South Africa has slipped from fourth to sixth position over the same period.

Today it lies behind New Zealand, the United States, Japan, Papua New Guinea and Singapore. 22/

Throughout the period of the Fraser Government there were contrary pressures on the Government over trade. Some non-governmental organizations, such as the Campaign against Racial Exploitation (CARE), pressed for a complete embargo. Moreover, in a resolution adopted at the 1980 general meeting, the Australian Council of Churches also called for an end to economic relations between Australia and South Africa:

"(4) Calls on the Australian Government to increase pressure aimed at achieving a redistribution of power in South Africa, including

closure of the Australian Trade Commissioner's Office in Johannesburg;
cancellation of Australian landing rights for South African Airways;

encouragement for Australian companies to withdraw investments from South Africa and from banks making

loans to South Africa;

support through the United Nations for effective boycotts of arms and oil sales to South Africa.

(5) Requests Australian churches to withdraw investments from companies and banks commercially involved in South Africa.

(6) Requests Australian Christians as a sign of their protest against apartheid to refrain from supporting Australian companies and banks commercially involved in South Africa, and to refrain from buying the products of South Africa."

23/

A third source of non-governmental pressure came from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which had broader mandates than the anti-apartheid NGOs but which recognized that their own work programmes had to include

- 18 -

anti-apartheid activities. One such organization is the United Nations Association of Australia. 24/

Additionally, it was argued that imports from South Africa were hurting the Australian workforce since they were being produced by cheap African exploited labour. Among the South African imports were wines and fish - both of which were being produced in Australia. But the cheaper South African brands were undercutting Australian produce at a time of increasing Australian unemployment. On the other hand, there were arguments made in favour of increasing trade with South Africa. One example was the claim that such an expansion could help ease Australia's economic difficulties. I have never seen that spelt out clearly, since the two economies tended to compete with each other rather than complement each other; also, Australia's growing export market with the rest of Africa could be jeopardized.

Moreover, the Liberal-Country Party had always been very pragmatic over political principles and trading agreements. It preferred to separate politics from trade. For example, despite the cool political relations Australia has had at various times since 1945 with the USSR and China, the Liberal-Country Party has rarely sought to have those tensions hinder Australian flourishing trade with those nations.

Faced with both these competing pressures and the arguments advanced over trade during the Whitlam Era, the Fraser Government opted for a gradual scaling down of trade. It evidently believed that it could reduce the trade without any controversy it would have to face with its own parliamentary members if it did introduce a formal sanctions policy.

D. Australian domestic opinion

Both the Whitlam and Fraser Governments had policies on apartheid that were well ahead of Australian domestic opinion. It is, of course, a reflection of the political courage of both Governments (and especially Mr. Fraser personally) that the Governments were willing to have such policies. On the other hand, it could

also be argued that their problems would have been eased if both had done more to educate Australian public opinion on the evils of apartheid and why the Governments were acting in the way they were.

An opinion poll taken at approximately the end of the Fraser Government's period in office noted:

"While rumours continue about Australian rugby union players being offered big money to tour South Africa, the Morgan Gallup Poll has found that 77 per cent of Australians feel that sporting teams of Australians and South Africans should be allowed to play against each other.

- 19 -

Other findings of the recent poll were:

"Eighty-one per cent of Australians feel that sporting authorities here should allow individual Australians to play sport in South Africa.

Sixty-six per cent would approve of a team of Australian cricketers touring South Africa.

Eighty-three per cent believe the attitude of Australian sporting authorities against our sportsmen playing in South Africa infringes the rights of the individual.

Sixty-five per cent feel that Australia should trade with South Africa." 25/

Alan Renouf was Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs during the Whitlam era and since his retirement from the Civil Service has written several books critical of Australian foreign policy. While being far from the conservative supporters of apartheid, he has nonetheless complained about Australia's opposition to apartheid. He is opposed to apartheid but does not believe that it should be a major focus of Australian foreign policy:

"So many Australian politicians fail to understand that Australia is not a great power and that it is barely a middle power. It is natural and proper for Australia to be active in world affairs, but it is the breadth and degree of activity which has to be carefully established.

This can only be based upon a realistic view of Australia's power and capacity for influence and on how other countries see Australia's role. A role commensurate with power is respected, an incommensurate role is resented. President T. R. Roosevelt once said: 'Walk softly but carry a big stick.' Australian Governments

often have the habit of doing precisely the opposite. To illustrate, there is no good reason why Australia should be in the forefront of South Africa's critics (a fault of both Whitlam and Fraser Governments). This is of little consequence for Australia's national interests. Australia

must voice her distaste of apartheid and join in all reasonable international efforts to end it. However,

Australia has no valid ground for being one of apartheid's most vociferous critics." 26/

Mr. Renouf's opinion is midway along the public opinion spectrum. At one end (if opinion polls are to be believed) are most Australians who would like to see a resumption of some links with South Africa. At the other end, having a prophetic role, are anti-apartheid non-governmental organizations. Mr. Renouf is opposed to apartheid but does not believe that opposition to it should be a major issue.

A major failure - perhaps the major failure of the Whitlam and Fraser Governments in the anti-apartheid context was their lack of attention to

- 20 -

broadening the base of popular opposition to apartheid. There was not enough - indeed hardly any - public education on apartheid.

The commitment of the Liberal-Country Party to an anti-apartheid policy was revealed as being very thin when Mr. Fraser left office. After he lost the 1983 federal election, Mr. Fraser resigned as leader of the Party and soon after left the House of Representatives entirely. He was succeeded by Andrew Peacock, at one time the Foreign Minister. He had a generally more liberal image than did Mr. Fraser, but lacked Mr. Fraser's personal grip over the Party. Without the personal control of a strong leader, the Party's factional splits became more obvious and the conservative wing tended to set the Party's priorities.

In April 1984, the Liberal-Country Party (now more widely known as the Liberal-National Party) published its Policy on Foreign Affairs. The leaders-writers on Australia's major (and conservative) newspaper were highly critical of the new policy, especially on its virtual lack of attention to South Africa:

"And with Mr. Fraser gone, so has the priority given to South Africa and apartheid. Mr. Fraser both abhorred apartheid and made his opposition to the South African Government's policies the cornerstone of his attempts to play a constructive role in North-South diplomacy. But in their new foreign policy, the coalition parties scarcely acknowledge a role for Australia in bridging the gulf between the West and the Third World." 27/

V. THE CURRENT SITUATION

A. The Hawke Government

Robert J. Hawke (Bob Hawke) became Prime Minister on 5 March 1983. It had been a startling rise to power: only two years as a Member of the House of Representatives and three weeks as Leader of the Opposition. But as President of the Australian Council of Trades Unions (ACTU) from 1969-1981, he had become Australia's most popular public figure (exceeding by the late 1970s both Prime Minister Fraser and Labour Leader Bill Hayden, who had replaced Gough Whitlam). During his first period as Prime Minister, from March 1983 to December 1984, he was one of the most popular Prime Ministers in Australian history.

During his career in the Australian Council of Trades Unions, Mr. Hawke had two crises over apartheid. During the 1971 Springbok crisis, the Liberal-Country Party Government (headed by William McMahon) tried to use the anti-apartheid demonstrations for political gain. The Australian Council of Trades Unions and the Labour Party both opposed the tour. The Australian Council of Trades Unions - unlike the opposition Labour Party - was in a position to do something practical to stop it. Fearing (quite correctly) the widespread community unrest that would be generated if the tour went ahead, the Australian Council of Trades Unions called upon the Government to cancel

- 21 -

the tour or else member-unions would be advised to withdraw their services. The Government and the mass media turned the issue away from one of apartheid to the more general one of "who runs the country?". Within the trade union movement there were also differences of opinion and some unions said they would provide services for the visiting Springboks. The tour went ahead and the Springbok riots were as bad as Mr. Hawke predicted. Mr. Hawke's own anti-apartheid stand made him unpopular with some Australians and all his family received some abuse.

As President of the Australian Council of Trades Unions, Mr. Hawke took a keen interest in the work of the International Labour Office. In 1978, the United Nations Council for Namibia requested that Namibia be admitted as a full member of the International Labour Organization. The Legal Counsel of the International Labour Organization, however, advised that Namibia could not be admitted as a member of the organization until it attained full independence. This recommendation, which was correct in law, was politically unacceptable, especially to Third World members of the International Labour Organization. Mr. Hawke got himself elected to a small working group to find a solution. Francis Wolf, the Legal Counsel of the International Labour Organization recalled: "He got himself elected to a small sub-committee of the Selection Committee, which organizes the work of the International Labour Conference, and there he produced a draft proposal of great ingenuity: it did not refute the ILO's formal legal opinion, but stepped around it. The crux of Bob's draft was that the ILO 'should not let the illegal action of South Africa frustrate the aspirations of the Namibian people'. It was a masterstroke! From the abstract legal point of view there was no solution, but Bob had the imagination to break the impasse. His formula was one of the best examples of constructive imagination we have seen in an international body. What he had done was to change the question around: instead of being asked to vote for an illegality (violation of the ILO constitution, by calling a non-State a State), the Conference would be asked to vote against an illegality (South African occupation)." 28/

The Conference overwhelmingly voted for the Hawke formula. Mr. Hawke's anti-apartheid stand over the years has been clear. The International Labour Organization has been his major international platform for airing his views. As a South African newspaper reported in 1983: "Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Robert Hawke, yesterday attacked what he called 'the monstrous edifice of apartheid' at the International Labour Organization's annual meeting here. The former president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) said nations around the world denied workers the right to organize and form independent trade unions one of the most serious examples being South Africa.

- 22 -

'In that country, the repression of trade union rights is a keystone in the monstrous edifice of apartheid', he said. Mr. Hawke said he gave his 'fullest personal support and the support of my government' to any action taken by the workers' group at the ILO conference concerning South Africa." 29/

With this background, then, it would have been reasonable to expect the Hawke Labour Government to have stepped up Australia's anti-apartheid policy. But this has not been the case.

On 5 June 1983, Foreign Minister Bill Hayden announced the results of a governmental policy review on South Africa:

"Mr. Hayden said that the Government will continue to totally reject apartheid. South Africa is the only country in the world which explicitly enshrines racism in its constitutional provisions and its structures of Government.

The Government will not be diverted from speaking out against apartheid by the proposals for constitutional change within South Africa. These changes provide for the most limited power sharing at the national level by the coloured or mixed races and Indian segments of the population. They do nothing for the black population, the overwhelming majority of South Africans. The Government rejected them as an exercise in attempted deception. Australia will continue to maintain correct diplomatic relations with South Africa.

In the absence of comprehensive economic sanctions approved by the United Nations Security Council, and observed by South Africa's major trading partners, economic links will be maintained.

In the meantime, the Australian Government will provide no assistance for the development of commercial relations

between Australia and South Africa. The issue of employment standards applied by Australian companies operating in South Africa will be further reviewed for the purpose of exploring the appropriateness of a code of conduct applying to the industrial practices of such firms in South Africa.

Australia will continue to implement an arms embargo against South Africa consistent with United Nations Security Council resolution 418 of November 1977.

Mr. Hayden said that the policies of the Labour Government followed the same path as that followed by the Whitlam Government and by the previous Liberal/National Party

- 23 -

Government. This generally bipartisan approach was due in no small part to the efforts of the former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, whose commitment to and achievements in African policy generally were and are applauded by this Government." 30/

The basic policy, therefore, remains unchanged from that laid down by the Whitlam and Fraser Governments. The diplomatic offensive has remained. There have been problems over sporting visits and aviation. There will not be a unilateral trade boycott. But the Government is working a little harder to build up a domestic consensus to support its anti-apartheid policy.

B. The diplomatic offensive

The Government, especially the Foreign Minister, has made various public statements critical of apartheid. In September 1984, for example, within a few days of each other, there was criticism of both the detention of political leaders and South Africa's new constitutional arrangements:

"The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bill Hayden, MP, today deplored the continuing detention without trial of prominent South African community leaders opposed to elections held over the past two weeks in South Africa.

Mr. Hayden also expressed concern over incidents of police violence directed against those people demonstrating peacefully outside polling stations..." 31/

"Both Prime Minister Hawke and Mr. Hayden have commented on the new constitutional arrangements in Parliament. Mr. Hayden on 4 September referred to the changes as 'nothing more than a shabby manipulation of the electoral processes' that completely excluded 70 per cent of the population - the blacks - from participation. Mr. Hawke on 13 September deplored the violence and loss of life in the townships, describing the major factor in the situation as growing black frustration and anger at their exclusion from participation in the government of their

own country. Australia's diplomatic representatives did not attend the ceremonies for the opening of the racially-based new parliament in Cape Town on 14 September, although they were present at the inauguration of the new State President." 32/

C. Sport

The Hawke Government started badly on sport and aviation. These were both omitted from the findings in the initial policy review and held over for further consideration. For some months it seemed that the policy of the Hawke Government would be weaker than the policy of the Fraser Government. The reasons for this private debate are still not clear. Presumably the Labour Parliamentary Caucus Committee would have been aware of the limited public support for the sports ban. Also:

- 24 -

"the committee apparently was swayed by dire warnings that Australia would lose major international sporting events, as well as other catastrophic consequences for the body politic, if people like golfer Gary Player and tennis player Kevin Curran were barred". 33/

However, anti-apartheid non-governmental organizations and concerned individuals were also active in their lobbying during this tense period.

On 26 October 1983, the Foreign Minister announced the new policy:

"Mr. Hayden said that the Government, after carefully reviewing the question of sporting contacts had also decided that South African sporting teams would be allowed entry to Australia;

Australian sportsmen and women would be discouraged from competing in South Africa;

'third country' contacts, in which Australians compete against South Africans in other countries, would be opposed the Government would seek to persuade Australian sports bodies to bring pressure to bear to have South Africa expelled from international sports federations and competitions; and

the Government would seek to persuade other Governments to discourage South African participation in sporting competitions in their country. 34/

Opinion remains somewhat divided as to whether this represents any advance at all on the policy of the Fraser Government - or whether there is a retreat from it. For example:

"The only strict ban is on South African amateur sportsmen and women. The reality is that the majority of South African sportspeople coming here are professionals. This means that the tennis players, surfers, golfers etc. will be faced with no restrictions at all. They are all

Ambassadors of the Racist Police State and to date not one of them has issued any public reservations about the apartheid sport that is practised in South Africa. In fact, two years ago four surfers participated as individuals in a tournament in Sydney and erected a South African flag on the beach after completion of the competition. There is nothing to stop recurrences of this nature. Recently Gary Player, a known golfer and open Ambassador of the Apartheid State, was given special expropriation by the Government to play in Australia. Gary Player admitted publicly that he uses South African

- 25 -

Government funds to entertain influential visitors as a means of canvassing them to support apartheid." 35/

D. Aviation

The Australia-South Africa aviation link has been a recurring controversy in the anti-apartheid debate. It consists of two facets: the QANTAS (Australia's national airline) flights to southern Africa and the landing rights in Australia for SAA (South African Airways).

The Fraser Government stopped QANTAS flights to South Africa in 1977. The South Africa-Australia journey is one of the most profitable long-haul routes in the world. Given the financial problems of QANTAS, this was a costly decision, and one bitterly resented by QANTAS. The Government was under constant pressure from QANTAS to lift the ban, especially since other nations (including African ones) maintained their links. This was bordering on a unilateral economic boycott. QANTAS's problems were eased when Zimbabwe became independent and QANTAS could fly into Harare - where there was a connecting service by the South African Airways to South Africa. But QANTAS still hoped for the reintroduction of the direct route.

On 25 March 1984, the Minister for Aviation Kim Beazley announced that there would be no change to this policy.

The 1977 Government's ban on QANTAS direct flights to South Africa did not affect the flights of the South African Airways to Australia. But the Government was under pressure from anti-apartheid non-governmental organizations to stop the flights by the South African Airways by refusing them landing rights in Australia. The pressure on the Hawke Government was increased.

However, the Government eventually decided against the complete withdrawal of landing rights. Instead, it has opted for a policy of reducing the flights by the South African Airways to Australia from two flights per week to one.

E. Trade

The Hawke Government has ruled out a unilateral economic boycott - but it is also not promoting trade.

On 5 April 1984, Senator Walsh, representing the Minister for Trade, was asked about the current situation regarding trade:

"(1) The total value of Australia-South Africa trade was \$229.4m in 1982-1983 made up of \$144.5m of exports and \$84.9m of imports.

(2) The major imports and exports in \$million in 1982-1983 were as follows:

Imports

Fish, fresh, chilled or frozen	11.1
Fish, dried salted or in brine; smoked fish	5.1
Textile yarn	3.8

- 26 -

Other crude minerals	3.5
Fertilizers, manufactured	3.4
Pig iron	3.3
Glass	2.7
Inorganic chemical elements	2.6

Exports

Parts and accessories for motor vehicles	9.5
Crustaceans and molluscs fresh, chilled or frozen	7.5
Internal combustion piston engines and parts	7.2
Motor vehicles for the transport of goods	7.3
Animal oils and fats	6.5
Crude vegetable materials, n.e.s.	4.2
Agricultural machinery and parts	3.6

(3)The honorable senator will be aware that the Government has expressed total opposition to the apartheid policies of the South African Government.

The Government will also continue to co-operate in moves in international fora designed to bring pressure on South Africa to end apartheid. The Government would support comprehensive economic

sanctions approved by the United Nations Security Council and implemented by South Africa's major trading partners. In the meantime, in the absence of international obligations to the contrary, the Government's policy is to permit normal commercial relations to continue but without avoidable official assistance. Consistent with this policy, trade is permitted to continue but there is no Government promotion of trade with or investment in South Africa."

F. Public education

The Hawke Government has, however, sought to do more regarding public education on the evils of apartheid. This work has included

(i) the establishment in Australia of information offices run by national liberation movements;

(ii) the bringing to Australia of key Africans as official guests of the Australian Governments; and

(iii) the prohibition of South Africans in official positions (outside the diplomatic corps) from visiting Australia to promote apartheid.

The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) is one of the two major national liberation movements fighting for South African freedom. In July 1983, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania opened an Information Office in Canberra, with the full approval of the Australian Government, bringing the total of the external missions to 16. The office is charged with the responsibility to disseminate information on the activities of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and on the struggle currently waging in South Africa. Other activities include lobbying the Australian Government and those

- 27 -

of other countries in this region to support African efforts for change towards a non-racial society, through implementation of sanctions in trade, investment, sport and cultural exchanges. 36/

On 26 October 1983 the Minister for Foreign Affairs decided that the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the South West Africa Peoples' Organization (SWAPO) would be allowed to establish information offices in Australia. The Minister has decided that the establishment of an office of the African National Congress of South Africa in Australia should be on the following basis: the purpose of the ANC office in Australia should be for the dissemination of information only. It should not advocate violence as a means of achieving political objectives. The office of the African National Congress of South Africa in Australia and its staff would not have any privileged status and would be subject to Australian law. The Australian Government would not provide any financial support to the office. 37/

Although both organizations have only recently been established in Australia, and their activities are restricted by limited finances, both appear to be set to be very useful in explaining the full story of apartheid to the Australian community. Since 1972, the mass media have been increasingly opposed to apartheid. They may even be running ahead of Australian public opinion. But they are more concerned to report events rather than to mobilize people to take particular actions. These organizations will help provide specific ideas on what could be done, such as providing funds for refugee projects.

A second initiative by the Government has been to invite Africans from South Africa to visit Australia to explain their point of view. In May 1984, Bishop Desmond Tutu arrived as the official guest of the Government. In November 1984, Rev. Dr. Allan Boesak arrived, also as the guest of the Government. Both trips were very successful. The two guests were very articulate and forceful speakers. They were also sufficiently senior to ensure that even conservative Christians had to pay some attention to what they said. They not only explained the evils of apartheid but they helped justify to Australians why the Australian Government felt it necessary to oppose apartheid. It is a pity that this technique was not used more by the Whitlam and Fraser Governments.

The South African Government, by contrast, has had fewer problems explaining its point of view to Australians. One of its techniques is to permit its apologists to leave South Africa (as distinct from its critics) to justify apartheid to foreign audiences.

In early 1984, Kent Durr, Member of Parliament of the South African National Party, and Mahmoud Rajab, an Indian member of the South African President's Council applied for visas to visit Australia. They were to have been guests of the Liberal-Country Party. The visas were refused on the grounds that they would have used their trip as an opportunity to justify apartheid.

This decision, which was heavily criticized by the Liberal-Country Party, prompted a policy review. On 6 April 1984, Mr. Hayden said that from now on Australia would not permit South Africans holding official positions to enter

- 28 -

Australia if the principal purpose of the visit was to promote apartheid doctrine or policies. 38/

As a final point, it is a pity that the Prime Minister did not make far greater use of his vast personal prestige in the campaign against apartheid. Given his very high standing throughout the community, Mr. Hawke could have made a significant contribution to rectifying one of the consistent weaknesses of Australia's anti-apartheid work: the lack of an active majority support for it. This does not imply that most Australians still support apartheid. It is more a matter of most of them not regarding it as a high priority issue. Mr. Hawke should have tried to change that. After all, he has been on public record for several years in his opposition to apartheid. But he did not attempt this.

VI. DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

A. The New Zealand dimension

The conservative New Zealand Government, headed by Sir Robert Muldoon, lost office in 1984. The Labour Party, headed by David Lange, returned to power after a gap of nine years.

The Muldoon Government had been much more sympathetic to the South African Government than was the Fraser Government. It paid the price for this by allowing the 1981 Springbok tour to go ahead. It caused as much disruption in New Zealand as did the 1971 tour in Australia. However, the Government decided that the New Zealand All Black Tour of South Africa in 1985 should go ahead - and it was willing to risk being ostracized at other international sporting fixtures in order not to back down.

The Lange Government wasted no time in displaying its opposition to apartheid. It announced that it hoped to dissuade the All Blacks from touring South Africa in 1985. Given the prevailing public opposition to such tours, it is unlikely that it will go ahead.

Equally significantly, Mr. Lange foreshadowed the closure of the South African Consulate-General in Wellington. The South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha, took the hint and closed the office in August 1984.

The Lange Government has, therefore, made some great changes in a very short time. As in other matters concerning the arms race in the South Pacific, the

Government is to some extent now setting the running for the Australia's Labour Government. In so far as public opinion can be adequately gauged, the New Zealand Government enjoys far greater public sympathy for its anti-apartheid work than Australia's does. This may be due to the bitter impact of the 1981 Springbok and the way in which New Zealanders learnt much more about the evils of apartheid.

This would again suggest the need for the Australian Government to step up its public educational work. This should involve the Prime Minister himself making this more of an issue. Also, since anti-apartheid non-governmental organizations could achieve much more with greater funds, then attention should be given to making donations to these non-governmental organizations tax-deductible. 39/

- 29 -

B. United Nations Security Council

Australia takes up its seat on the United Nations Security Council for a two-year term beginning on 1 January 1985. 40/

It is premature to make any specific recommendations about Australian action in the Council. But it is to be hoped that the Government will make the most of its term on the Council to further anti-apartheid causes. The Labour Party is particularly sensitive to the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. 41/

There is also a challenge here for Australian and overseas anti-apartheid non-governmental organizations. The Australian Government is sympathetic to their cause. It is up to them to make proposals for how Australia can maximize its anti-apartheid work on the Security Council.

C. Trade

The Australian Government is unlikely to introduce unilateral trade sanctions. But with the nation's continuing economic problems, there may be scope for selective trade boycotts - the exclusion from the Australian market of those South African items which compete against similar Australian items, such as Kruggerands/Australian gold coins, wine, fish, coal and steel. All Australian Trade Commission officials could be withdrawn from South Africa they are currently under-employed.

D. South African Embassy

This author admits to some confusion over whether or not there should be a renewed campaign to close down South Africa's diplomatic presence in Australia. On the one hand, the closure would demonstrate Australia's increased opposition to apartheid. On the other hand, the author has advocated that Australia initiate and maintain as many contacts as possible with those countries with which Australia has some political tension. For example, this author has advocated that Australia seek ways to improve its diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries.

On balance, the author believes that the Embassy should remain. But limitations should be placed upon its capacity to distribute material to schools and other educational institutions. Currently the Embassy distributes extensively glossy

magazines and the "South African Digest", all of which justify apartheid. This material should be restricted.

Similarly, some limitations have been placed upon representatives of nations with which Australia does not have cordial relations, such as a limitation upon travel within Australia. These restrictions should also apply to the South African Embassy. For example, Embassy staff make regular appearances at meetings of Rotary Clubs and other organizations. These should be restricted.

- 30

E. Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference

The Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference was formed in 1980 and consists of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, United Republic of Tanzania, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The main aim is to reduce the economic dependence of these nations upon South Africa.

It is perhaps too early to assess the success of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference. However, it has a fine objective and Australia should support it. Ironically, a recent Australian enquiry into foreign aid foreshadowed a reduction of Australian aid to African countries (with an increase for Asia and the Pacific). On the contrary, Australia should step up its aid to the member nations of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference, not only in terms of finance, but even direct technical assistance since, for example, Australia can be of assistance in research into dry land farming.

- 31 -

NOTES

i_/ Bruce Grant *The Australian Dilemma* Sydney: Macdonald Futura 1983, p. 247

2/ Article 2(7) of the United Nations Charter states that "nothing contained in the Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any nation".

3/ Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 2.

4/ Peter Howson *The Life of Politics: The Howson Diaries* Viking, Melbourne 1984, pp. 175-176.

5/ The 1971 Springbok Rugby Union tour was so controversial that the state government in Queensland declared a state of emergency to cope with all the unrest.

6/ Peter Howson, *op. cit.* p. 185

7/ Gough Whitlam "Australian Foreign Policy: New Directions, New Definitions" Twenty-fourth Roy Milne Memorial Lecture, Australian Institute of International Affairs, November 1973, p. 13.

8/ Quoted in: Neil Brown "Africa and the Indian Ocean Area" in Claire Clarke (Editor) *Australian Foreign Policy: Towards a Reassessment* Cassells, Melbourne 1973, p. 78.

9/ Australian Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence *Some Observations on Australia's Diplomatic Representation in Africa and Adjacent Indian Ocean Island States: Australian Government Publishing*

Service, Canberra 1983, pp. 4-5.

10/ For a survey, see: Brian Noone Australian Economic Ties with South Africa Australian Union of Students, Melbourne 1973.

11/ Quoted in The Australian (Sydney) 2 July 1973.

L/ "Caucus move on South African trade ties" The Sun Herald (Sydney) 21 October 1973.

13/ "Who is foreign trade really working for?" Nation Review (Sydney) 27 September 1974.

14/ "The Woolies fish war hots up" Nation Review (Sydney) 24 October 1975.

15/ "Australia and Africa" Australian Foreign Affairs Record (Canberra) November 1982, p. 668.

16/ "The Transkei" Backgrounder Department of Foreign Affairs, 22 October 1976, p. 6.

- 32 -

.L/ Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Melbourne, 30 September 7 October 1981 Final Communique.

18/ For example: Australia and the Third World Report of the Committee on Australia's Relations with the Third World, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1979, p. 1984.

19/ "Multiculturalism a unifier, says Fraser" The Bulletin (Sydney) 3 May 1983, p. 34.

20/ "Australia and Africa", op.cit. pp. 665-666. 21/ Hansard, 15 September 1981. /"Australian Exports to South Africa still falling" Australian Financial Review, 15 October 1976.

23/ Texts of resolutions are available from the Australian Council of Churches, 199 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW 2000.

24/ Michael Gorton Corporate Trading with South Africa and Corporate Morality UNAA, Melbourne 1982.

25/ "Most approve of ties with South Africa" The Bulletin 22 March 1983, p. 46.

26/ Alan Renouf The Frightened Country Macmillan, Melbourne 1979, p. 532.

27/ "The Opposition's foreign policy" The Sydney Morning Herald 1 May 1984.

28/ Blanche d'Alpuget Robert J. Hawke Schwartz, Melbourne 1984, p. 344. 29/ "Aussie PM slams SA's 'monstrous apartheid'" The Star (Johannesburg) 11 June 1983.

30/ "South Africa - Policy Review" Minister for Foreign Affairs News Release (Canberra) 5 June 1983.

31/ "South Africa - Detention of Political Leaders" Minister for Foreign Affairs News Release 2 September 1984.

32/ "South Africa: Recent Political Developments" Backgrounder 19 September 1984, p.5.

33/ "Status quo" The National Times (Sydney) 9 September 1983. 34/ "Sporting Contacts with South Africa" Australian Foreign Affairs Review October 1983, p. 647.

5 "New Australian Foreign Policy on Sporting Contacts with South Africa"

PAC News Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, Canberra: November 1983, pp. 1-2.

- 33 -

36/ For further details, contact Maxwell Nemadzihanani, Representative to Australasia and the Pacific, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, P.O. Box 1715, Canberra City ACT 2601.

37/ For further details, contact Edwin Funde, African National Congress, Room 23 (Box 49) Trades Hall, 4 Goulburn Street, Sydney NSW 2000.

38/ "Entry of South African officials" Australian Foreign Affairs Record April 1984, pp. 395-396.

39/ The Government decided a few years ago to make donations to foreign and non-governmental organizations tax deductible and some educational non-governmental organizations are now tax deductible.

40/ Australia has been a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council from 1946 to 1947, from 1956 to 1957 and from 1973 to 1974.

41/ It is notable that although the Labour Party has only been in Government for nine years in the period 1945-1985, three out of of Australia's four terms on the Security Council have been during the Labour Governments.