

Diggs 123 F18-07-02

2 H. Diggs
Aug 1971

1077

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE CHARLES C. DIGGS, JR.,
AT THE UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE CENTER
IN JOHANNESBURG August 19, 1971

Good morning. When we saw you gentlemen in Pretoria last Friday, we said we would be happy to meet with you again before our departure and take as many questions as time permits. Welcome.

We realize of course that some of you have been critical of our not holding a sort of running press conference as we proceeded through our tour of South Africa. At the same time, Congressman Vander Jagt and I hope that you will understand that in following such a jam-packed schedule, it would have been extremely difficult to do so. In any case, we preferred to wait until we had completed our visit rather than simply to give fleeting impressions to you as they occurred to us along the way.

Congressman Vander Jagt, myself, and the members of our staff have spent the past eight days traveling extensively in South Africa. We have been in Pretoria, Soweto, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Alice, Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg. We have covered ~~4,000 kilometers~~ ^{7,000 kilometers}, and I would not even attempt to guess the number of people with whom we have talked.

We are very gratified at the unfailing courtesy with which we have been received by South Africans from all racial groups and all walks of life. We appreciate as well the understanding afforded us in those instances when we were unavoidably delayed and arrived late to our engagements.

Our purpose in coming here, as you know, was to extend our personal acquaintance with the African continent and to learn as much as we could in the short time we had -- in my case I have now been to nearly every country in Africa. We have been able to move around quite freely and to talk with whomever we wished. The only exceptions were our proposed visit to Namibia, a point discussed in our statement of August 13, and our inability to visit the Dimbaze resettlement near King William's Town because we had not obtained some permit.

Congressman Vander Jagt and I are unalterably opposed to racial injustice wherever it occurs -- whether in your country or ours. Let there be no mistake about this. Our visit here has lent further confirmation -- that there is an appalling amount of racial injustice in South Africa -- a blatant, ever present, and all pervasive discrimination, based on race, color and creed which is deeply and personally offensive to us. It is also clear that much of this discrimination

is found in the laws of the country.

Nevertheless, we have learned that there are large numbers of South Africans who are acutely sensitive about this injustice and are working to eliminate it. We have been impressed by the ferment we have observed here on this subject. We leave South Africa hopeful that efforts to improve the lives of the non-white population of this country will continue. If South Africa should repeal its repressive laws and change its apartheid policies, it would have one of the greatest potentials of any country in the world of comparable area and population.

We continue to believe as well that our American firms doing business in South Africa must do a great deal more than they are now doing in this connection. Our subcommittee on African Affairs will continue in its efforts in the United States to persuade these firms to adhere in South Africa to the Fair Employment standards they follow in the United States. We believe American firms should take the lead and set an example for other firms doing business in South Africa. We have made these points to a number of managers of U.S. firms during the course of our visit and intend to pursue these points vigorously with the home offices, in the United States.

We are especially grateful to Ambassador Hurd and his staff for arranging our productive schedule. To all those South Africans, who received us so cordially and who talked with us so candidly, we thank you. We have learned a great deal from our visit, and we trust that many people have learned from us.