

## INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JCB-25 Southern Rhodesia

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November 10, 1963Mr. Richard Nolte  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
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Dear Mr. Nolte:

In many ways Southern Rhodesia is an extension of South Africa. It was carved out of Central Africa by White men from South Africa, English and Afrikaner, recruited by the British South Africa Company, who conquered the African tribes in the 1890's and settled on what is now the best land. In 1923 the White settlers considered becoming a fifth province of South Africa but decided instead to be a self-governing and virtually independent British colony. However, the ties between the two countries have remained close. South African business houses, banks, insurance companies, merchants and mining companies also serve Southern Rhodesia. Southern Rhodesia imports many South African products, uses South African ports and the South African Railways as well as the holiday facilities of Durban and the Natal coast.

Europeans in both countries have grown up talking a similar language about race; they have looked upon the African as a "boy" who cannot really be trusted to do the right thing unless the White man is there to tell him. Today it is estimated that 75% of Southern Rhodesia's 220,000 Europeans have some South African relationship and that 40% of these come from Afrikaner stock. It is not surprising that Southern Rhodesia is considered, along with South Africa and the Portuguese territories, "Whitest Africa".

But there is a difference...

What is surprising is that across the Limpopo River from South Africa there is such a difference in racial tension. The difference could perhaps be compared with going from Birmingham to Atlanta. For instance, the most startling indication we had of change was a radio program we heard on our first night in Southern Rhodesia. A White Northern Rhodesian was explaining to an interviewer why he had joined the African National Congress - an explanation which would never be allowed within the borders of South Africa.

It is not that all discrimination has been removed in Southern Rhodesia or that it is about to be. But there is much more freedom and opportunity for communication among Africans and Europeans even though it is not greatly used. Also the Whites in Southern Rhodesia have a reluctant realism unacceptable to the White South Africans. They think in terms of African control generations hence; the South Africans can't think of African control at all.

If Africans in South Africa were given as many rights as Africans in Southern Rhodesia now have the change would be revolutionary. Although greatly limited

in countless ways, Africans in Southern Rhodesia can vote, run for office and serve as elected members of the country's legislature. They can be employed and advance without discrimination (on paper) into the senior ranks of the Government's civil service. Many towns have offered Africans seats on town management boards. Africans can be served in some of the country's leading hotels, restaurants and bars. They can attend the same theatres as White people and swim in the same swimming pools. They can participate in sporting events with Whites and even be represented on the country's athletic teams. If they have a first or second class railway ticket they are served in railway dining cars. They can attend the integrated University College in Salisbury.

Most of the restrictive South African-type pass laws have been eliminated and it is still possible, within limits, for Africans to form national political parties. An African in South Africa showed me a letter from a friend interned in Southern Rhodesia for political activity. The letter was a tirade against the unjust practices of the Whites in Rhodesia. But my South African friend shrugged, "He thinks he has something to complain about...do you think we could write such a letter in this country?"

The greater part of these advances for the African have come in the last few years and seem quite fast to most Europeans. No matter how much Southern Rhodesia looks like an oasis of liberty and opportunity when looking from the South, however, to Southern Rhodesian Africans, who look for comparison to the many independent states to the North, their advances have come too hard, too slow and too late.

Could it ever be "partnership"?

Sir Edgar Whitehead, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia until his party was defeated in December of 1962, calls the African advances fruits of his "partnership" policies, his plan to make the African gradually an equal partner with the White man in the running of the country. African leaders see these changes as the result of expediency rather than sincerity, made to quiet the growing demands of English political leaders that Africans be given more rights. They are quick to point out that these advances were made reluctantly and only after considerable internal and external pressure had been applied. They have been no more satisfied with Sir Edgar's policy of White paternalism than they would be with a White dictatorship. Neither, as far as they are concerned, gives them any significant power or place in the country's affairs. The contrast between their standard of living and that of the Europeans, one of the highest in the world, is so great that the improvements which have been made are not as significant as they might first appear.

The present Constitution which gave Africans representation in the legislature for the first time also made it virtually impossible for the small African representation (15 out of 65 seats) to increase without the consent of the White parliamentary majority. The Constitution created two voters rolls; the higher one, the "A" roll, elects 50 MPs and the lower one, the "B" roll, 15. To vote on the "A" roll a person must be literate and have a yearly income of about \$2000; on the "B" roll, literacy and \$355 a year are the qualifications. The average annual income of Africans in 1962 was only \$283, for Europeans, about \$3400. These figures pretty well explain the racial distinctions of the two voters rolls.

Most Africans can't even get on the lower roll, much less the higher one from which the majority of MPs are elected. It is possible to get on either roll with less income if you can meet a higher educational qualification: you can make the "A" roll with \$840 a year and a 12th grade education and the "B" roll with a 10th grade certificate. However, this doesn't materially effect the number of qualified Africans. Out of 570,000 Africans enrolled in schools in 1962, only slightly more than 1% were in the last years of secondary school (beyond the 8th grade) and only 17% were beyond the 5th grade.

The African's great needs - employment and education...

Europeans use the factors of income and education as their yardstick of African ability and these are also the two areas about which the Africans are the most critical. Europeans say that Africans need more education to get higher income jobs. Africans claim that if they are fortunate enough to make their way through secondary school and even through the University they usually find they are still only eligible for the lower paying jobs at a salary which no European, no matter how poor his qualifications, would ever have to receive. Even in the civil service, highly touted as an example of non-discrimination, Europeans are automatically moved into the higher grade where few Africans are allowed. Job discrimination is only slowly disappearing.

And Africans find it very difficult to get a higher education. While the Government has helped to improve facilities to take care of the larger number of children who want to begin school there is still great need for more class rooms and more schools for children above the first four grades. Although more African children begin school today than ever before (The Government claims more places for Africans beginning school than in any other African country - over 90%) most are forced to drop out by the time they have completed three or four years, either for economic reasons or lack of schools to accommodate their further education. Africans feel deeply the unfairness of \$290 worth of education a year for European children while the African child gets less than \$25. Government officials explain that this happens because there are so many more African children and because it is the European who must carry the tax load.

African leaders reply that if Africans were allowed to compete with Europeans and get the same salary for the same job qualifications, Africans would be pleased to pay the small taxes which Europeans now pay. Africans are heavily burdened with indirect taxes on most of their basic commodities - matches, candles, clothing and maize. The Government maintains an artificial maize price above what it would normally cost. In addition, when an African maize farmer brings his crop of the same quality to the same market as the European farmer he usually gets about 2/3 of the price the European farmer gets. Africans must pay a direct head tax which only they have to pay. Commensurate to their income the Africans pay considerably more taxes, direct and indirect, than do the Europeans. Yet every European child has a place in school guaranteed to him; the African child does not. Africans must pay school fees varying from \$5 to \$150 which European children in Government schools do not have to pay.

In the last five years the earnings of African workers in Southern Rhodesia have increased about 12%. This is promising until compared to the low wages they initially received. Today, even with the increase, 95% of African workers receive

cash wages below the minimum needed to keep a family above the bread line (\$504 a year). It must, in all fairness, be stated that workers often receive free housing and/or free rations, but these are usually for himself alone. And obviously a man would rather receive an adequate wage and pick his own home and provisions. The radical gap between African and European wage scales remains. Africans make less than 9% of what Europeans earn, and this is an increase of 1% in the last three years.

And the greatest need of all, land.

The lack of land and European control over it are matters even more deeply felt by the Africans. Over the years Europeans have legislated land into separate African and European areas. Until 1961 Europeans, with 1/12 the African population, held over 50% of the land. Now slightly more than half the land is allocated for African use but there still remains enforced territorial segregation. African land includes most of Southern Rhodesia's poorest soils; the European land contains most of the best. About 3/4 of the African's land is not easily accessible to major roads or railways; the opposite is true of the European's land. With the expansion of the African population the pressure for land has increased geometrically. The Government has from time to time allotted more of the unallocated land to African use but now all of that land is gone. Any more land granted to Africans must come from land classified as "European" and Europeans are not happy about this. They emphasize that Africans should learn how best to utilize the land they now have before they are given more. It is true that better use of the land would help, but the Africans still could not support themselves on what they now have.

At present Europeans use very little of their land. If they had more capital and skilled labour they would use more; as things are the land lies fallow, held for future settlers and for speculation. Africans find it hard to understand why, with so much unused land available, the Government is so reluctant to give them more, or even to allow them to buy additional land from Europeans who are willing to sell (JCB-28).

In addition Africans can't buy or lease land in an European area, nor can Europeans in an African area. This is discriminatory against the Africans since all Southern Rhodesian towns are "European" areas and Africans can't even own land in the so-called "Native" locations bordering the towns. In a few townships it is now possible for Africans to buy homes if they can afford it, but generally they must rent quarters already built by the municipality. As little security as they have as rural farmers, they have even less in the townships. The townships are relatively clean and decent but they are over-crowded and present quite a contrast to the 3 to 10 acre plots around European homes. (Out of Greater Salisbury's 66,000 acres, only 8,600 acres has been allotted for the 141,000 Africans in the townships. The rest is used by the city's 88,500 Europeans for commercial and residential areas.)

With inadequate and unproductive land, more and more Africans have come to the towns and cities for jobs. There aren't enough to go around, especially for the majority who come with little education and no qualifications. This rootless overcrowding, combined with unemployment and an existence below the bread line is

creating a climate of unrest, the volatile material from which explosions of one kind or another can be easily ignited. Actually it is surprising that there haven't been any great emotional flare-ups recently.

In an effort to keep things from getting out of hand the Rhodesian Front Government introduced a bill on October 1st to allow multi-racial areas to be created in towns where Africans and Europeans alike would be allowed to buy or lease land for housing or business. Previous to this exceptions had been granted for a non-White lawyer to have an office in the city, for non-White students to live at the University College and for multi-racial organizations to operate in towns, but until the whole problem of land apportionment is solved there can be no basis for tranquility.

### When "partnership" failed...

Sir Edgar Whitehead's United Federal Party had resolved that if they won the last election they would repeal the hated Land Apportionment Act and outlaw all racial discrimination. Yet this grandiose promise failed to bring out the African voters and his party went down in defeat to the racial reactionaries in the Rhodesian Front. Why did African voters boycott the party which seemed to offer them so much?

For most Africans the resolution came too late to be fully believed and was too grand and sweeping to be carried out against the wishes of an European electorate. African leaders had found again and again that the promises of European leaders were slow to be fulfilled and that African discrimination was only lessened when the Government seemed fearful that the Africans might get out of hand. Whitehead stressed that the solution to the Southern Rhodesian race problem existed in giving the Africans economic equality but African leaders had discovered from experience that only with political equality would they ever really enjoy the other equalities. Without political equality their country would remain a European state with Europeans making the rules and setting the limits of African opportunity.

These feelings of mistrust were mirrored in a statement to the press by Jasper Savanhu, the African Junior Minister in the Federal Government to whom Sir Roy Welensky liked to point with pride as evidence of the good intentions of his "partnership" program. Mr. Savanhu resigned in August, 1962, in disillusionment over the lack of responsibility given to him. At a press conference he said, in part, "Europeans are quite incapable of treating other races fairly. No African who thinks he can influence events can continue to hobnob with a European party which has no intention of practising what it preaches. Only an African-dominated government would put partnership into practice."

Thus, since the Africans reactivated their first national political party, the African National Congress, in 1957, their emphasis has not been on Sir Edgar's "partnership" but on complete political emancipation for Southern Rhodesia's Africans. While the Whitehead Government cautiously pushed ahead implementation of partnership and talked of good things to come on the political side, it also banned the African National Congress and its successors. Political leaders

were also banned, African meetings raided and Africans jailed, actions not conducive to convince African voters that the United Federal Party had their interests at heart. Legislation which it passed to curtail African political activities parallels in harshness that passed in South Africa: the Preventive Detention Act gave the Government power to detain anyone without trial as long as it wishes and to restrict people to a particular place; the Vagrancy Act gave the police power to arrest anyone who appeared to be a vagrant, and magistrates the authority to send such a person to a farm or mine to work for three years; the Unlawful Organizations Act and the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, passed initially in 1960, under which 1220 Africans had been convicted in the first 18 months of its operation, were amended to be even more severe.

This tough policy was no more able to convince the European electorate that Whitehead was on their side than his promises convinced the Africans. With lack of adequate support from either side his party lost the election.

Actually the election of a tougher Government has been to the advantage of the Africans. When the Federation floundered and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were granted independence, White Southern Rhodesians also demanded complete freedom from Britain. If Whitehead's more liberal Government had retained power with African backing he might have been able to convince Britain to give Southern Rhodesia independence. With those most reluctant to give Africans any advance in control of the Government, Britain feels she must retain some influence in Rhodesian affairs until African rights are greatly improved. By boycotting the election Africans probably saved themselves from subjection to an independent White Government over which Britain would have had no powers of persuasion and which would be as free politically as South Africa to take action to preserve its particular way of life.

#### The aftermath of "partnership"

Britain's powers of persuasion today are only as strong as White Southern Rhodesia's fears of breaking economic ties between the two countries. So great is the White's fear of the African and so convinced are they that Africans are far from ready to lead responsibly that they have toyed repeatedly with the idea of breaking away from England in spite of the economic and social consequences (a letter to the editor of a Salisbury newspaper suggested that the country leave the Commonwealth but keep the Queen).

The Rhodesian Front Party, now in power, is striving to hold the line against more concessions to Africans and, if necessary, to get tougher. In the first session of Parliament after the election it succeeded in passing further restrictive laws and the lines between Blacks and Whites were more clearly drawn than ever. It seeks to perpetuate this separation through a Community Development program which will allow each community to keep and determine its own cultural way of life (JGB-28), an altered form of South Africa's separate development.

It isn't that White Southern Rhodesians aren't prepared to accept Africans' demands for political power "in time", meaning "sometime beyond my life time". As the increase in African power in the rest of the Federation has raised the aspirations of the Africans it has had the opposite effect on most Europeans. Dubious to begin with, they look on every mistake in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia as further evidence as to why Africans in their country are not ready (JGB-22).

On the other hand, their other neighbor, South Africa, presents them with the picture of a country which has put the non-Whites in their place against world opinion and has prospered from it. In the last two years South Africa has enjoyed an economic boom which is very evident to her dissatisfied White neighbors to the North. Some White Rhodesians have moved to South Africa to avoid what they are convinced will be catastrophe in their own country. Others have contended that the Southern Rhodesian Government should emulate South Africa: if South Africa is enjoying such success, why can't Southern Rhodesia at least better itself somewhat by the same means? There is a hard-core group within the present cabinet of the Southern Rhodesian Government who are working to bind the two countries more closely, hoping for help from South Africa when and if a crisis should come.

Members of the other group within the cabinet (headed by the Prime Minister), while distressed at the thought of giving Africans control, do not believe that Southern Rhodesia is in a position to be as independent as South Africa. They are willing, if really necessary, to make some concessions in order to keep Britain's much needed blessing. Their biggest problem is how far they will have to go. If they concede enough to satisfy British leaders will they antagonize the White electorate as well as their neighbor to the South? And, more important, will a concession satisfactory to Great Britain pacify Southern Rhodesian African political leaders? (African leaders have said they will accept nothing less than a 50% representation in Parliament: Southern Rhodesian European leaders have intimated that they might go as far as 1/3 of the seats plus 1 for the Africans, but no more.)

One thing is sure. The Government must step one way or the other soon. The Federation will be dismantled by January. At that time the legislature will have to pass legislation concerning schools, health and other items which have in the past been under the Federal Government. According to the Constitution and its Declaration of Rights which came into effect last year no new discriminatory legislation can be passed. A Constitutional Council was established to review all proposed legislation and is empowered to hold up any which it considers discriminatory (JCB-26) .

In the past segregation has been maintained by leaving African services under the territorial governments while the Federal Government looked after the needs of the White man. New legislation will have to take care of these services on an integrated basis unless the Government can find an out which will get by the Constitutional Council. It can get around the Council by subterfuge but in doing so will incur the wrath of the British Government and the United Nations. And Southern Rhodesia will desperately need these friends in 1964. A good part of her prosperity came from the fact that Salisbury was the Capital of the Federation and the country was the economic center of the three Central African territories. As this center is moved from Southern Rhodesia the economy is becoming increasingly shaky, unemployment is increasing and the business community is becoming desperate. When the Federation is gone completely Southern Rhodesia will have to depend on Great Britain to survive. South Africa might give them some help but it has too many racial problems of its own to be interested in taking on the complex problems of Southern Rhodesia.

At the same time political agitation is again building up among the Africans. Two African political groups, vying for leadership, will increase their harassment

of the Government. If the British should hold an election soon after the first of the year and the Labour Party gains control, Britain will push for even more drastic changes in Southern Rhodesia. Thus, both internally and externally the pressures are likely to increase against White control, and this pressure is almost sure to cause a split within the Rhodesian Front Party between those who want to compromise to ease the situation and those ready to become more tough and hang the consequences.

The old "if" game again!

It is widely predicted that such a split will create a new political alignment with the conservative Europeans in the majority looking to Sir Roy Welensky as the strong man who can best lead the country through its crisis. Sir Roy would probably accede to a draft. And he could probably convince his supporters eventually that there is no other alternative than to make some concessions, but whether he would try or not is another question.

One can as easily argue that most of the hard-heads will have left for greener fields in South Africa when the pressure becomes too great and that the moderate Europeans will gain control of the Government, easily make the necessary concessions to satisfy both the British and the Africans and restore economic balance to the land. It is difficult to predict just what course events will take, but one thing is sure. Starting in January Southern Rhodesia will be a fascinating place for a political observer!

Sincerely yours,

  
James C. Brewer