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CABINET

SOUTHERN RHODESIAMemorandum by the First Secretary of State

My colleagues will realise that the elaborate exchanges which we have been having with the Southern Rhodesia Government and Sir Roy Welensky have cost us two valuable months of delay in proceeding to wind up the Federation.

2. The exchanges and the delay have in fact been inevitable since our objective has been to summon a Conference on dissolution and future links. The Southern Rhodesia and Federal Governments have refused to attend unless Southern Rhodesia gets the assurances she wants about independence. Without their attendance there could not be a Conference since there would be nobody there except Northern Rhodesia. On the other hand, if we go too far in meeting Southern Rhodesia and the Federation, Northern Rhodesia will not attend. If we try to dissolve the Federation unilaterally we are in for a period of non co-operation and obstruction for which I would not like to be responsible.

3. We have therefore been trying to seek a via media and we have made some progress. The Southern Rhodesia Government have agreed that their independence should coincide with the dissolution of the Federation. They have also agreed that talks prior to independence should be held to settle the terms of independence. We have agreed that these talks should take place at an early date starting on 27th May provided the invitations go out for a Dissolution Conference.

4. We are therefore in sight of an orderly Dissolution Conference provided we can get through at any rate the first round of the pre-independence talks. I say the first round because we have deliberately warned the Southern Rhodesia Government that we may have to resume the talks at a later date. Mr. Field on his side has warned us that his Government may have to break and not attend the Dissolution Conference if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the pre-independence talks.

5. The purpose of this paper is to describe how best to get through this next immediate round. I should be deluding my colleagues if I gave the impression that we could get out of Mr. Field a promise of future representative government such as could satisfy the Pan-African movement. The Rhodesian Front was elected on a definite mandate and they are unlikely to wish or to be able to depart widely from it. All we can hope to obtain is an indication of progress - and the more immediate and effective it can be made, the better - along the lines of greater representation for the Africans and of a wider degree of non-discrimination, such as would appeal to the majority of our Party in the House and to the more moderate members of the Commonwealth.

6. Let me take first greater representation of the Africans. There are two methods:-

First by enlarging the 'A' (i. e. Higher) Roll franchise

Second by increasing the number of 'B' Roll (African controlled) seats.

(i) Enlarging the 'A' Roll franchise.

At present the 'A' Roll consists of 37,500 Europeans, 1,100 Asian, 1,300 Coloured and 2,600 Africans. Sir Edgar Whitehead estimated that it would take fifteen years for enough Africans to qualify for the 'A' Roll to enable them to command its elections. We might now propose that the qualifications be lowered to include more Africans. This could not operate before another election but it might then have a material result in returning African members, while others would depend on African votes for election, thus reducing the gap between the pro-European and pro-African element in the Legislature.

(ii) Increasing the number of 'B' Roll seats and/or widening the franchise for these seats.

What public opinion would welcome would be an increase of these seats to a "blocking third" that is twenty-two out of the present sixty-five, but, if this is not to be done at the expense of the 'A' Roll seats the size of the Assembly would have to be increased. Importance is attached to this since certain constitutional amendments can be carried and the delaying powers of the Constitutional Council set aside by a two-thirds majority. But a major difficulty in getting the Southern Rhodesia Government to agree is that they have a majority of only five and this increase combined with the Whitehead Party's votes would defeat them. Mr. Field is said to be ready to widen the franchise for the 'B' Roll seats so this can be discussed.

7. Mr. Field has also suggested abolishing the cross-voting by which electors on each roll influence elections of candidates for seats on the other roll. This system was intended to encourage all candidates to broaden the basis of their appeal in order to attract votes from both rolls. Candidates campaigning on a non-racial platform thus have an advantage over those seeking support on purely racial lines. Had, for example, the Africans participated in the last elections it is likely that Sir Edgar Whitehead's non-racial party would have attracted sufficient African votes to have swung the result away from the less liberal Rhodesia Front party. It is not perhaps surprising therefore that Mr. Winston Field should favour the abolition of cross-voting. The elimination of the cross-voting system would be contrary to the spirit of the new Constitution since it was intended to be a means of ensuring an increasingly non-racial approach in Southern Rhodesian life and politics. It would mean the end of the built-in advantage at present given to moderate political parties and might well result in the death of Sir Edgar Whitehead's broadly-based party and the multi-racial ideal.

3. In addition to political representation and the franchise there is another consideration which might be taken into account in negotiating an acceptable settlement. That is the future policy of the Southern Rhodesia Government. If Mr. Winston Field were prepared to make a helpful declaration of intention in regard to such matters as racial discrimination, the Constitutional Council and the Constitution itself, it would be unreasonable to expect this to do more than assist us to dress up a deal based on some franchise concession.

9. We may have great difficulty in these negotiations, but it is at any rate worth trying to make some progress along the lines of this paper since the stakes are high. I cannot at present guarantee how far we shall get.

R. A. B.

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