

American Committee on Africa
4 West 40th Street
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STATEMENT ON CRISIS IN CENTRAL AFRICAN FEDERATION

During recent days the attention of the world has been attracted to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. A state of emergency has been proclaimed in Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia. The Nyasaland African Congress and the African National Congress in Southern Rhodesia have been proscribed. In Nyasaland it is estimated more than 60 Africans have been killed and more than 100 wounded in clashes with troops. In addition leaders of the Congress, including Dr. Hastings K. Banda, the President, have been exiled to a point in Southern Rhodesia. In Southern Rhodesia leaders of the Congress have been arrested -- from 250 to 500, according to the Governor. One person arrested is Guy Clutton-Brock, a white person who is agriculture adviser to St. Faith's Mission Farm. Clutton-Brock is one of the five European members of the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress.

These developments are the beginning of the fulfillment of a prophecy made by many people when the Central African Federation was created in 1953 against the wishes of most of the Africans, particularly in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. How can the Federation stand when it has the opposition of the great mass of people, the Africans? Nothing has happened since the Federation was formed six years ago to give Africans confidence that the European minority who control the economic and political life of the three territories intend to implement effectively the clause in the Constitution which calls for "partnership" between the races. Rather the opposite seems to be the case. As the time for a review of the Federation Constitution comes close, the Europeans talk of achieving Dominion status by which controls on European domination would be essentially removed. African leaders particularly in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia call for secession. To the Africans, Federation is simply a means of extending European influence into the northern territories of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland and creating another apartheid society such as exists in the Union of South Africa.

Europeans completely dominated life in Southern Rhodesia prior to the coming of Federation. There they represent about 175,000 people out of a total population of 2,500,000. Whereas Southern Rhodesia is a self-governing colony, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland are British Protectorates and the African population has had the same ambition there to achieve self-government as fired the imagination of the people of Ghana and Nigeria. Out of 2,200,000 population in Northern Rhodesia only 65,000 are European. And in Nyasaland there are only 7,000 Europeans in a total population of 2,600,000.

In order to have gained the confidence of the Africans in the Federation, a courageous and imaginative program toward equality would have to have been pursued. Although there have been one or two hopeful developments which have received public notice such as the creation of an interracial university in Salisbury on the whole there has not been a progressive trend. Therefore suspicions have deepened. Perhaps the final act which convinced the Africans that they could not trust the intentions of the Europeans was the passage of a new Electoral Bill and a Constitution Amendment Bill. Under the new franchise voters were divided into two rolls, a general roll and

a special roll. To qualify for the general roll a person must have an income of 720 pounds annually and literacy in English; or 480 pounds and primary education; or an income of 300 pounds and a Cambridge School Certificate. To qualify for the special roll a person must have an income of only 200 pounds a year and literacy in English. One could qualify regardless of race for either roll, but only a small handful of Africans could qualify for the general roll.

Under the Constitution Amendment Act, membership in the Federal Assembly was raised to 59. Forty-four of this number are to be elected by only those on the general roll, thus effectively excluding Africans from being elected, and eight specially designated seats for Africans are to be chosen by a combined vote of the general and special rolls. Only four of the 59 members are to be elected by the special roll voters made up primarily of Africans. Under the previous constitutional provision Africans elected four out of 35; now they can elect only four out of 59. The African Affairs Board, established to safeguard African interests at the time of Federation, counselled against the passage of this legislation, the only time it took such action. But its advice was cast aside by the Conservative majority in Parliament.

Several factors have combined to bring this issue to a head now:

1. The great increase in power of the Dominion Party in Southern Rhodesia elections last June. This party, standing on a platform of white supremacy, won 13 out of 17 seats in the Territorial Legislative Assembly and actually led in the popular vote. Garfield Todd, the voice of the moderates, went down to a resounding defeat.
2. The organization of the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress. For many years there was no nationalist organization in Southern Rhodesia as a counterpart of groups in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. But now nationalists in Southern Rhodesia gained a voice.
3. The return of Dr. H. K. Banda to Nyasaland. This event within the last year gave dynamic leadership to the Africans to the north strongly opposed to Federation.
4. The upsurge of nationalism in Africa. The rapid developments in the Belgian Congo and in French Africa, the organization of the All African People's Conference, have all influenced the speed of events in the Federation.

It seems to us that the Federation is doomed, for the European minority apparently are bent on a policy of indefinite domination whereas the African majority will in the long run accept nothing short of the democratic principle of "one man, one vote." In our approach to the problem of the future of the Federation and of working out a plan for relations between Africans and Europeans in Central Africa, we record these items:

1. That in preparing for the Constitutional discussion in 1960, Africans be well represented by delegates of their choice not excluding representatives of the Congress movements.
2. That immediate steps be taken by the British Colonial Office toward ending racial discrimination in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

3. That Britain make no compromise on granting Dominion status to the Federation while European control is dominant and that before any such move is contemplated the desires of all the "inhabitants" -- not just the "electorate" -- be sought.

4. That the proscribed organizations be re-enstated and discussions take place between government representatives and African organizational leaders to define the problems which exist, and a plan for achieving both equality and democracy.

Short of some such program as this, the Federation will inevitably disintegrate.

We urge our State Department in private discussions with British and Federation officials to present a program such as this.