

American Committee on Africa



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No Deal on Rhodesia

Britain has honorably accepted the Pearce Commission's verdict that Rhodesia's black majority emphatically rejects the proposed settlement worked out by British negotiators with the white minority Government in Salisbury last November. This means that Britain will continue to maintain the mandatory sanctions invoked against Rhodesia by the United Nations Security Council.

In accepting defeat for a project on which he had expended great effort, British Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas-Home warned that the stark choice in Rhodesia lies between a compromise settlement and "a rapid and complete polarization of the races and the prospect of conflict." This grim assessment may be accurate, for Rhodesia's white rulers have already taken the country far along South Africa's road to apartheid.

Once Rhodesia's five million blacks were free to express their views, however, there was scant chance that they would approve a settlement legalizing their inferior status far into the future and leaving the long-run possibility of majority rule dependent on the goodwill of white politicians. The most impressive aspect of the Pearce Commission canvass in Rhodesia was the manner in which blacks—including chiefs on the white Government's payroll—boldly denounced the proposals.

Sir Alec tried to keep alive the possibility of future negotiations; but Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith flatly asserted in a broadcast that "there will be no negotiations with a view to changing any of the terms of the settlement." So the sanctions will continue and the black African governments will undoubtedly press in the Security Council for expanding them and tightening enforcement. The rejection of the settlement and the renewed focus on sanctions will be especially embarrassing to the United States, which has openly breached the U.N. Charter by importing Rhodesian chrome ore.

Congress can relieve that embarrassment and atone for its own unwise action last year by backing Senator Gale McGee's drive to repeal the Byrd amendment which, by allowing Rhodesian chrome imports, placed the United States in violation of the sanctions for which it had voted at the U.N.

Fortunately, the Nixon Administration has finally nailed the spurious arguments that helped get the Byrd bill through and has come out strongly for the McGee repealer. Its passage would be the most effective way to restore the validity of this country's longstanding commitments to the U.N., the rule of law and the principle of self-determination for all peoples.

Dear Friend,

As this letter is written, the British government has just released the report of the Pearce Commission, verifying the rejection of proposed settlement terms with the Smith regime by the African majority which had not been consulted. It seems evident that the British still have no intention of consulting or negotiating with that majority.

We must now prepare to extend as much help as we can to the African National Council which organized the opposition in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and now faces repression by the Smith regime. And we must insist that the United Nations embargo against the illegal regime be strengthened and enforced.

The United States shamefully followed South Africa and Portugal as the three open violators of the embargo, though other nations were indirectly involved. The McGee bill to reverse the Byrd amendment which permitted importation of chrome was defeated in the Senate on May 31 by four votes. More Administration interest could have changed the vote.

The Zimbabwe situation is only one of the crucial areas of southern Africa discussed in the enclosed midyear report from ACOA, which is sent for your information. I hope it will tell you, also, how much your assistance in the past has been needed, and how much it is appreciated.

Won't you renew your support for ACOA, to change U.S. policy and to aid the struggle for freedom, today? We count on you.

Yours sincerely,

George M. Houser
Executive Director