

Of course when you mention the word "time" you really get to the heart of the difficulty, because it is a problem not of objective but of timing. I think we all appreciate that rash and premature action in these matters can cause trouble. We have had some experience of that in recent years. But it was the feeling of the Conference (and I shared the feeling after listening to the views expressed) that the greater danger was not speed but delay, and that unless some early progress is made in Southern Rhodesia the African majority might be driven increasingly to despair and to the acts of desperation that despair can engender.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed by the warning given by one of the most moderate African leaders that the continued imprisonment of Mr. J. Nkomo and Rev. N. Sithole and many of their associates would weaken the control that the more responsible African leaders have over their followers and would drive the latter toward increasing extremism. I therefore put forward the suggestion that the Commonwealth Conference should issue a reasoned appeal that the African leaders in Southern Rhodesia be released as a contribution toward the holding of those discussions that must take place soon, and on which the hope for agreed and early achievement of independence must inevitably be based. Most of the other prime ministers associated themselves with this idea, and this appeal is included in the communiqué.

At the same time we called upon all leaders and their supporters of both races to exercise moderation and abstain from violence. In this connection I was very impressed by the emphasis placed by the African representatives at the Conference on the importance of allaying the fears of the white minority in Southern Rhodesia, perhaps by saying something in our communiqué to reassure them about their security, and to let them know that their co-operation would be essential in the development of an independent state. We agreed to the inclusion of this point in the communiqué.

I have gone in some detail into this question of Southern Rhodesia because, as I suggested at the Conference, it is of importance far beyond the interests of its people. What is done about it has now become a symbol, and the stand the Commonwealth leaders decide to take on this matter is likely to be, and I am sure will be, considered a test of the seriousness of the Commonwealth members about a principle which we have all adopted and on which we now stand.

Perhaps I should mention also, Mr. Speaker, that, on behalf of the Government, I stated we would be glad to provide technical facilities or resources to help in the training of Africans from Southern Rhodesia to take on the new responsibilities of administration, if that should be desired and if those concerned wished to make arrangements with the Canadian Government. This can be done out of existing appropriations that will be before Parliament or in some cases have been before Parliament, if Parliament approves of them. It can be done, if necessary, by the transfer of some of these appropriations to Southern Rhodesia. We are already doing a good deal in this regard, but I suggested we might do more.

I have taken a good deal of time, Mr. Speaker, in reporting on this question of race relations because at this Conference it was crucial to the success of the Conference. I think the communiqué represents a considerable achievement in regard to the handling of this very explosive and difficult matter.