

take place means the return of Rhodesia to the Commonwealth. This is not so. This is a matter which must be decided by the member states of the Commonwealth and not by the United Kingdom alone.

There is one aspect of this which interests me. Although the British, since this is their constitutional right and, indeed, their problem, and it has been a difficult one, have chosen to appoint a commission of British subjects or native nationals, I think it might have been more imaginative if they had broadened the scope of that commission and appointed a Commonwealth commission. I can think of some outstanding African statesmen who could have served on it with distinction. I can think of some Canadians who could have made some important contribution to that commission. The name of former Prime Minister Pearson was mentioned. I also say that another former prime minister, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), who did a great deal in bringing about a colour-blind Commonwealth, could have made a great contribution. I think that Howard Green, whose services have not been sufficiently used by the government of his own country, could have been very valuable on such a body. The Commonwealth could have been involved in this very important matter.

Canada made an important contribution 50 years ago in establishing the equality of states within the Commonwealth. A few years ago one of our prime ministers made a great contribution toward establishing the principle of equality of peoples within the Commonwealth. So there could be a Canadian role although, as I say and admit, the constitutional problem is one for Britain to deal with. We all realize that this situation, which we must study very carefully before we become too definite or final in our judgment, falls far short of the ideal. However, for the first time Mr. Smith has signed an important document which says:

The Rhodesian government have intimated to the British government their firm intention, within the spirit of these proposals, to make progress toward ending racial discrimination.

That has been admitted, and while there may be some concern as to how long this will take, at least that intention is something. Of course, I agree with the minister that Canada cannot and must not desert its concern for the attainment of full democracy and justice in Rhodesia. That must be our goal. That must be our value judgment. However, I think that at this stage it might be prudent, it might be pragmatic and, in the long run, sensitive, to allow for development of the commission which, after all, has set out to elicit the views of the Rhodesian people. They must entertain the views of as many Rhodesians as possible, especially those who are politically activated and politically concerned.

• (2:20 p.m.)

The minister's statement—the best part of it in my opinion—was that no matter how concerned we are we cannot in the long run substitute our judgment for the judgment of the Rhodesian people. We hope and pray that every effort will be taken to ascertain fully and thoughtfully the judgment of these people.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) was

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faced with a difficult task in commenting on the proposals for the settlement of the Rhodesian constitutional problem. The proposals are complicated and the dilemma is excruciating. I find it, therefore, rather difficult to blame the minister for the vagueness and ambiguity of his statement. None the less I wish the minister had felt himself able to take a more unequivocal stand in favour of self-rule for the black majority of Rhodesia—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brewin:—and against the inadequacy of the present proposals we are discussing. The principle of what has become known as NIBMAR, no independence before majority rule, in our view is the only basis for a satisfactory settlement of the Rhodesian question. The Canadian government repeated this principle as recently as November 23 without prejudging the proposals of the British government.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home claims that the proposed settlement is fully within the five principles to which the British government has constantly adhered. We do not agree.

The fifth principle, and perhaps the key to the question now facing the world, is that any basis proposed for independence would be acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole. If in fact the present proposals were acceptable to the people of Rhodesia this country and the world community might, whatever its misgivings, have to accept the proposals. But under the present proposals this test of acceptability is to be determined by a commission headed by a judge from Britain, Lord Pearce, supported by two other commissioners who will tour Rhodesia.

There are a number of reasons this test may well be unsatisfactory. There is no proposal for a referendum. The present state of emergency in Rhodesia is continued until after the lifting of sanctions. Normal conditions do not prevail in Rhodesia. Radio and television time to discuss the proposals is available only to political parties represented in the House of Assembly. This effectively excludes some of the most important national African leaders from the discussion of the proposals. At the time the test of opinion is under way only 54 of the 116 political detainees will have been released. In these circumstances the most careful scrutiny must be insisted on before the conclusions of the commission could be accepted by world opinion.

Principle one of the five principles is that the principle and intention of unimpeded progress to majority rule would have to be maintained and guaranteed. The proposals do include the removal of the provision in the 1969 Rhodesian constitution which precludes any possibility of progress beyond parity. But this provision is specious. It means that the 100 per cent impossibility of going beyond parity is changed to something like a 95 per cent impossibility. Progress to majority rule can be impeded by a handful of white Members of Parliament. It is by no means assured or guaranteed.

There are some 250,000 white people and some five million black people in the country. The parity proposed is parity between 250,000 whites and five million blacks. As the blacks increase their literacy and their role in the economy, their representation may slowly move upward.