

External Affairs  
Supplementary Paper

No. 62/8 Southern Rhodesia

Statement by W.H. Barton, Chargé d'Affaires  
a.i., in Plenary Session of the United  
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Before expressing the position of the Canadian Government on the matter before us today, I should like to acknowledge the diligence and vigour with which the Special Committee of Seventeen has been carrying out the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. It is a particular pleasure to my Delegation to recognize the service of the Chairman, Ambassador Jha, in view of his forthcoming appointment as High Commissioner for India in Canada.

I think that all members of this Assembly agree that the political situation in Southern Rhodesia is an extremely difficult one. At a time when the principles of democratic freedom have been adopted throughout most of Africa, a minority of 200,000 obviously cannot expect to exclude a majority of two and one-quarter million people indefinitely from participating in the political life of the country. Moreover, we do not believe that the present leaders of Southern Rhodesia intend to do so. Even under the 1961 constitution, accepted by a two-to-one majority of the present electorate, it is anticipated that effective participation in the electoral process by a substantial majority of the population will be achieved within the next decade. The real issue is not whether Southern Rhodesia is moving in the right direction, but whether it is moving fast enough.

The Assembly has before it a report of the Seventeen Member Committee which expresses the view of the majority of that body that the trend of constitutional development is not satisfactory and advances a number of drastic recommendations which it believes should be given immediate effect.

The first question which the Committee considered in its discussion of Southern Rhodesia was whether or not the territory is self-governing. The British Government has pointed out, patiently and repeatedly, that Southern Rhodesia has been a self-governing colony since 1923 and that Britain cannot interfere in its internal affairs or legislate for it without the consent of the Southern Rhodesian Government. The Special Committee, on the other hand, has concluded, and the Assembly will be asked to support its conclusion, that because the majority of the people are not yet included in the franchise, Southern Rhodesia has not attained a full measure of self-government.

It seems to my Delegation that the reality behind these two contradictory positions has an important bearing on the question of whether the Assembly can take any constructive action at this time. In the first place, since the present government of Southern Rhodesia has full control of its internal affairs, the Assembly must realize that the political changes which it desires can be brought about only with the cooperation of that government. Secondly, it is not only pointless, but against the interests of