

Rhodesia might precipitate a unilateral declaration of independence there, which all Commonwealth member governments naturally wish to avoid. Such a unilateral declaration of independence would undoubtedly create a great deal of trouble throughout Africa, and particularly for the people of Southern Rhodesia, white and black. It could lead to the establishment of an African Government in exile, which many countries might recognize, and to commercial and financial and other difficulties of very serious order. It would probably lead to a United Nations demand for the imposition of sanctions.

As against this consideration that talk in London might precipitate rash action in Rhodesia, however, was the opposite one that frank discussion of the subject by the heads of Commonwealth governments, and a firm expression of their views in the public communiqué, might serve to deter such an illegal and unconstitutional unilateral act, by making the dire consequences known in advance to the public of the territory. Moreover, if the Commonwealth meeting failed to discuss a matter of such far-reaching importance, and of such understandable and justifiable concern to Commonwealth members, including particularly of course the African members, then serious doubt would inevitably be cast on the value of political consultation at Commonwealth meetings, and the association itself would inevitably be weakened rather than strengthened. The whole issue gained added point from the fact that in Britain and several other countries, general elections were in the offing at the time, and that several of the heads of government present planned to attend an African Summit Meeting in Cairo shortly after the Commonwealth Meeting.