

Up to last November, Canada had normal relations with the Rhodesian Government, and the Canadian Government had already sent a confidential message to the Rhodesian Government some time before the 1965 conference pointing out the grave consequences of a unilateral declaration of independence. This warning was repeated again in the succeeding months.

I myself received representatives of the Government of Rhodesia during the last two and a half years prior to UDI and explained our position, as have other governments in and outside the Commonwealth.

After the unilateral declaration of independence, many Commonwealth countries reacted very strongly, as had been generally anticipated. Various African governments argued that Britain should use force in putting down the illegal Smith régime, as Britain had already done in dealing with civil disorders and revolts in other colonies and dependencies. The Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity passed a resolution early in December calling on all member states to sever relations with Britain if the Smith régime was not "crushed" before mid-December. Following this resolution, various countries, including two Commonwealth members, Ghana and Tanzania, withdrew their missions from London. In an attempt to minimize the damage of this breach, Canada assumed the role of protecting power for Britain in Tanzania and for Tanzania in Britain. Ghana has since restored diplomatic relations. It is a matter of great significance to Commonwealth unity when action of this kind takes place.

It was in these circumstances that the Nigerian Government took the initiative in proposing a special Commonwealth conference on Rhodesia. As in the past, one of the purposes of the conference was to discuss differing opinions on how to deal with the Rhodesian issue so that these differing opinions should not result in a split in the Commonwealth along racial lines.

I would not want to disguise in any way our concern as of last December about what the action of countries in withdrawing missions from a Commonwealth country could mean to Commonwealth unity. We are heartened, however, by the fact that President Nyerere did indicate that in withdrawing his mission from London there was no intention on the part of Tanzania to withdraw from the Commonwealth. Our concern about this Rhodesian question was not fully but largely based upon our concern for the continued integrity and unity of the Commonwealth, an organism which we believe plays a very vital role at the present time.

At the Lagos conference, Britain welcomed the proposal of Prime Minister Pearson which led to the establishment of two continuing Commonwealth committees. The most important of these, the Sanctions Committee, now chaired by the Canadian High Commissioner in London, is maintaining a review of the sanctions against Rhodesia and considering ways and means of making them more effective. When he was in Ottawa last week, Mr. Chevrier and I had a very useful discussion and reviewed the work of the Committee. It is due to meet again this week. Its tasks include co-ordinating aid to Zambia, which, of course, is an integral aspect of the Rhodesian situation. A second Commonwealth committee is planning a large-scale programme of training for Rhodesian Africans which will come into effect when constitutional government is restored. This