

For too many years the General Assembly of the United Nations has had on its agenda the question of Rhodesia, where a repressive regime has illegally exercised its authority. The hold of the white minority is, however, clearly slipping and it has become increasingly evident that major changes must take place soon.

The fact that change now seems a realistic possibility and the degree to which the plight of the oppressed majority is known to the world is, of course, primarily due to the courage and tenacity of the people of Zimbabwe. Their sacrifices and the intensity of their struggle to achieve independence and majority rule have served to attract world opinion in their cause.

Ever since Mr. Smith's unilateral declaration of Rhodesian independence in 1965, Canada has been deeply concerned with the search for an end to the mockery of world opinion which the illegal minority regime represents. When Canada was last on the Security Council in 1968, we joined with our colleagues in passing by unanimous vote Resolution 253 which represented the first time the United Nations had used its authority to impose economic sanctions. Canada has enforced these sanctions at home and striven to encourage all members -- and, indeed, non members -- of this Organization, to do likewise.

While it is true that the economic sanctions imposed to date against the illegal regime have not had the immediate and conclusive effect that their architects had, perhaps optimistically, envisaged, they have nevertheless taken an important toll. The sanctions and the fact that ever more scarce human and material resources are being devoted to a constantly widening war which the white minority knows it cannot win, has created a climate of strain and uncertainty in Rhodesia which has resulted in sharply increased levels of white emigration.

It must be remembered, however, that the effectiveness of economic sanctions has been greatly enhanced by the closure of the Zambian and Mozambiquian borders but the resulting economic burden on all the surrounding African states has been extremely heavy. Canada, for its part, has provided economic assistance to these countries to help offset some of the sacrifices they have made.

The conference which was held in Maputo in May of this year, in support of the peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia, will be remembered as a significant milestone on the road to independence and majority rule in both countries. Uniting, as it did, all major elements concerned with bringing about majority rule in Zimbabwe, the Maputo Conference clearly demonstrated an international solidarity of purpose in its reaffirmation that progress towards majority rule must involve the full participation of all the people of Zimbabwe. The Conference served to remind participants of the painstaking search for a negotiated settlement, the continual frustration of which had given rise to armed struggle, and concluded that the combination of this pressure and the efforts of the international community were creating positive conditions for a negotiated settlement based on majority rule.