

A TORY LOOKS AT FEDERATION

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If the Conservative British Government had not invented the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland it would not exist, and it should therefore be no wonder that the British Government do not reveal themselves as keen to destroy it. Conservatives dislike changing any institution too sharply, and many of them are still eager to couple this dislike with a firm urge now to create a strong multi-racial Commonwealth unit in Central Africa.

The Rhodes dream of British rule from the Cape ever northwards dies hard, but there are even further pressing philosophical reasons for establishing a multi-racial state in Central Africa. At a time when the Commonwealth in Africa is being ground between the nether and upper stones of opposing racist policies, Conservatives genuinely hope that in Rhodesia, even now, a real partnership between the races can be achieved. They are impressed with the strides taken by the Rhodesian economy since Federation. True, without Federation Southern Rhodesia would be worse off and Northern Rhodesia better off, but apart from this redistributive effect, African wages in all three territories have risen dramatically in real terms. To Conservatives, it is idle to argue that such wages might have increased by a similar amount without the Federal association; Conservatives believe in "a bird in the hand" and there is much to be said for that. Looking at race relations, many Conservatives are prepared to accept the word of the established Government of the Federation; and this, perhaps, leads them to take a Panglossian view of race relations and accept, as Sir Roy and Sir Edgar say quite frequently in London, though less often in Salisbury, that all is for the best in the best possible of Rhodesian worlds. But the Rhodesian universe is a very provincial one; perhaps with the exception of the *'Central African Examiner'*—now in reforming hands—and of two African periodicals in the northern territories, its press is owned by and attuned to only one wavelength. The pace of nationalism in Africa did not until recently get adequately reported in Rhodesia. The British Prime Minister's speech, to a virtually all white audience at a cinema in Salisbury in January,

came (albeit slowly, as the true meaning of Macmillan sank in) as a terrible shock. The speech clearly upset those in governmental circles, both in Rhodesia and perhaps in Britain, who thought that given a job of trimming, the Federal boat would be able to survive intact. The immediate reaction from the United Federal Party in Rhodesia was sounded in Sir Edgar Whitehead's speech, when he stated that he would have no truck with nationalists in the northern territories and that Southern Rhodesia would leave the Federation if African nationalist governments came to power in the north. The British Government, in spite of the distaste of some of its members for African nationalism, has released Kaunda and Banda and will give Nyasaland internal African government within twelve months. It appears that the point of departure for a realistic Conservative view about Federation is that H.M. Government is now insistent that no solution for the Federation can work without the European and African politicians of Rhodesia and Nyasaland coming to some terms, or at least a truce, with each other. The most important aspect of British policy during the next twelve months turns on the way in which the Conservative Government tries to bring such Africans and Europeans face to face, and the measures, influence and power which the British Government is prepared to adopt and exercise.

The sanctions available to the Conservative Government are, it is true, limited—not merely by constitutional power, but also by the philosophical framework in which Conservatives see the whole issue of Federation. Unwillingness to break up the Federation is, of course, an attitude which the existing government of the Federation can use as a weapon to persuade the British Government to preserve the 'status quo' for the time being. To counter this, there is the knowledge that the Conservative Government is also a realistic government and would not irrevocably commit itself to a federal structure which was wholly unworkable.

Turning to the sanctions themselves, these fall into several categories—the military, the economic and the constitutional. We can dismiss certain aspects of the military sanction at once. Her Majesty's Government would not use British troops against Europeans in the Federation in an effort to induce them to accept a political system alien to them. The United Federal Party know this; they also know that a 'Boston Tea Party' is a political manoeuvre that is unlikely to succeed. There is, of

course, a chance that such a coup could be better organised than the Jameson Raid; but the circumstances of the 'Tea Party' would constitute an illegal act, and Southern Rhodesians have a strict respect for the law, though there is less of such respect in the Copper Belt. But a coup in the Copper Belt would leave the Europeans in Northern Rhodesia very much at the mercy of the Africans. The government of Northern Rhodesia, which is still largely run by the Colonial Office, would take police steps to prevent such disorder, just as they are now taking steps to prevent African disorder. On the Copper Belt, many of the European employees depend on the mining companies for their livelihood, and these companies would unquestionably give their support to the territorial government against any unconstitutional moves based on violence. It is also likely that, were such a coup attempted, the Africans would walk out of the mines and the economy of Northern Rhodesia immediately come to a standstill. These are all factors which, when brought together, are likely to prevent a coup being seriously planned. This is not to say that in a moment of extreme emotion violence might not break out amongst the Europeans in Rhodesia, but it should be the object of British policy to contain the level of European emotion so that violent solutions do not come to the forefront.

The second sanction is economic. The protagonists of this argument always bring forward the example of the Development and Welfare Grant, a sum over £1,000,000, paid towards the establishment of the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, on the implicit condition that the University was to be truly multi-racial. It can be seen from the circumstances that this was a special case. The Copper Belt Technical Foundation set up by the two mining groups, in spite of all the goodwill exercised, has failed up till now to become at all multi-racial. The loans for Kariba were without any political conditions, save for a recommendation that the immigration intake into Rhodesia be geared more realistically. Rhodesia is an important market for United Kingdom goods, and it is doubtful whether, in general, it would be of any advantage for British consumers to boycott Rhodesian goods. The British companies are doing what they can to influence race relations, and every new investment by a British company in Rhodesia helps to enlarge the economic opportunity for Africans. Companies like Lever Bros., Barclays D.C. & O. and Dunlop have all, of late, by their work in the Federation, helped to provide opportunities for Africans to do

higher clerical and skilled work. If there is a sanction in the economic field it can only lie with the British Government, not so much in connection with the conditions for new capital investments, but arising out of the economic problems flowing from a possible break-up of the Federation. The British Government have helped to guarantee certain federal loans, including that for Kariba, and the British Government would, in theory, use the possibility of withdrawing guarantees from some of those loans, if threats were made by European or African alike to break up the Federation. One cannot, however, see the British Government withdrawing any such guarantees if the present 'status quo' continues. To sum up, therefore, it appears that the scope for economic sanctions is very limited; and, for that reason, the desirability of any such sanctions is not argued here.

This leaves two weapons in British hands—constitutional power and the state of African opinion in the Federation. There is a great deal of talk about the Federal Constitution and its Preamble, and the starting point for a Conservative, who readily recognises what is not practical, is that the Federal Constitution was the most that could be got in 1953. "Amalgamation" was, and is still, an untouchable matter. Expressed African opinion has, in general, since the Bledisloe Commission of 1959, been opposed to the political association of the three territories on the terms stated by the Europeans in Southern Rhodesia; and that opinion has both hardened as well as grown far more articulate since 1953. It seems clear that there will, at the very least, have to be changes in the Federal Constitution, and such changes can finally and lawfully be brought into force only by Westminster. The British Parliament and its majority party can revoke or amend the Federal Constitution without the agreement of, or any legislation by, the Government in Central Africa. There is a 1957 Convention under which the British Government agreed, amongst other things, not to extend domestic United Kingdom legislation to the Federation without the consent of the Federal Government, but clearly a unilateral review of the Constitution is not debarred by the Convention, as the Convention pre-supposes that the present federal structure will be sustained and only applies in such circumstances.

The principal object of the Federal Government in agitating for the Convention was to prevent any Labour Government from extending legislation on racial discrimination to Rhodesia; and one cannot help wondering whether this object, in itself,

was not self-condemnation by the United Federal Party.

Of course, the British Government is interested, at the many conferences of British African territories taking place in 1960 and 1961, to obtain the highest common factor of consent for constitutional revision. It is known that the Federal Government, having agreed not to press amalgamation, and knowing that dominion status is not available at present, is arguing strongly for the maintenance of the 'status quo' in terms of the exclusive Federal legislative list and franchise. They are proposing the dismantling of the African Affairs Board and its replacement, either by an Upper House or by executive machinery such as could be provided by an extension of the Government Office on Race Affairs. The Africans in the Northern Territories are arguing strongly for the dissolution of the Federation, and several of them will be included amongst the territorial delegations to the Review Conference. On the face of it, Monckton or no Monckton, the prospects at present are marginal of the Conference's agreeing or even acquiescing in a solution, as did a majority of the Kenya delegates at their Conference in January, 1960.

The Colonial Secretary is striving hard to get abreast of African nationalism in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. If he can retain the goodwill of Kaunda and Banda up to the Conference, he may be able to induce them to accept a temporary political solution which keeps *a*, not *the*, federal political structure in being. Clearly the price of this would be twofold. First, an undertaking that the 'status quo' would be changed and second, an assurance that there would be fairly rapid changes internally in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. MacLeod knows that once elected Africans concentrate on taking part in the government of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, they will be well occupied for a few years. Mr. Macmillan is taking on the Europeans. His task is the most difficult of all. Having told them the very opposite of a bedtime story about African nationalism, he must now assure them that the wind, though it will be fresh, will not blow with too violent a force of change. To achieve this he must get the support of some members of the Government Party (U.F.P.) in the Federation. He must cajole them by squarely putting before them the choice between their continuing their authority in Southern Rhodesia and associating with predominantly African governments in the north, or of challenging the authority of the British Government in an

attempt to break the constitution unilaterally. Such a choice may be a harsh one, but in certain circumstances it can be one which the Europeans need not fear. These circumstances are that Mr. Macmillan must assure the Europeans that the British Government are going to be responsible for internal security in the northern territories until independence, and, futhermore, that the British Government will see that a considerable contribution, both financial and otherwise, is made to the improvement of agriculture in the Federation, since in this way the momentum of the economy can best be secured. The British Government know full well, as happened in the Belgian Congo in 1957, that once the economy takes a down-turn political confidence is almost impossible to maintain.

No mention has been made so far of the response of the Conservative Party to the future of the Federation. There is considerable sympathy in the Conservative Party for African political advancement, and there is no sign that the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary have not got the support of almost the whole of the Party in Parliament. In addition, the Labour Party is largely supporting the Conservative Government at the present time on African affairs; and there is a real chance, though one must not mention the word 'bi-partisanship' at Westminster, that the House of Commons would be largely united and not divide on the future of the Federation or even that of Southern Rhodesia.

Knowledge of Africa, amongst Conservatives, has grown rapidly in the last twelve months, and members of the Conservative Party are eager to be assured that considerable political thinking is going on in Rhodesia about its future. The most important thing to be recognised, both in Britain and Rhodesia, is that there should be frank and open public discussion of the proposals to amend the constitution of the territories within the Federation itself, so that public support can be established for the moderate solutions which may well still be possible in Central Africa.