

SOUTHERN RHODESIA ELECTS

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EVER since the Central African Federation was launched in 1953, the unacknowledged but chief task of all political parties has been to define "partnership" between the races. As defined in daily attitudes and practices, the word is slowly taking on a meaning which places the Federation far ahead of the Union in some aspects of racial affairs. As defined in law, it bears a meaning not very different from that of apartheid. As defined in the recent territorial elections in Southern Rhodesia, it will probably mean an even slower approach to the granting of African advance and opportunities than the slow approach that has existed to date.

To understand these all-important elections, a piece of recent political history must be mentioned. In November of last year, the Federal Party under the Federal Prime Minister, Sir Roy Welensky, united with the United Rhodesia Party (U.R.P.) under the Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister, Mr. R. S. Garfield Todd, to form the United Federal Party (U.F.P.) At the time this seemed like the sensible beginning to a federation-wide "middle of the road" party. However, trouble began almost immediately, since the newly "united" party contained within it men of vastly conflicting views towards the African problem. After the fusion had taken place, a group of political leaders led by Sir Patrick Fletcher and other members of the Cabinet, began to seek ways and means of ridding the party of Mr. Todd. Undeniably, the reason for this revolt was Mr. Todd's liberalism in racial affairs. During his tenure as Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, he increased aid to African schools and hospitals. He raised the basic minimum industrial wage from £4.10.0 to £6.10.0 per month. But above all, he had personally forced through the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly a franchise law creating a special voters' roll with lower qualifications. This roll, it was estimated, would enable some 8 to 10,000 Africans to become voters in Southern Rhodesia, and since there are only 54,000 European voters on the rolls, it can be seen that Mr. Todd's definition of "partnership" was likely to frighten many Rhodesians. Certainly, the

rebels within his own Cabinet and Party felt that he had become a definite political liability. Since a General Election was due in 1958, it seemed to them axiomatic that in the interests of the Party he had to go.

The political manoeuvring against Mr. Todd was persistent from December onwards, culminating in the following specific events:—

On *January 11th* his entire Cabinet resigned, hoping to force him to do likewise. He did not. On the contrary, he found enough supporters to form a new Cabinet and continue to govern, in spite of the fact that he had support from only 11 members of his Party's 24 out of an Assembly of 30. It is important to note that in the quarrel Sir Roy Welensky refused to come to his aid.

On *February 8th*, at a Party Conference, Mr. Todd, while exhibiting remarkable convincing and staying powers, was forced to bow to the demands of the rebels and accept Sir Edgar Whitehead as a compromise Prime Minister and territorial leader of the Party. Sir Edgar, Federation Minister in Washington, flew home to take over Mr. Todd's portfolio and to face two pressing tasks. The first was to heal the breach in his Party, and the second was to win a seat so that he might take his required place in the Legislative Assembly.

On *April 16th*, in a by-election in the "safe" Hillside (Bulawayo) constituency, Sir Edgar lost to the Dominion Party candidate by 604 votes to 691. Thus a General Election became an immediate necessity.

On *April 23rd* a caucus of the territorial Party, with Sir Edgar supporting the rebels against Mr. Todd, forced the latter out. Todd and 6 followers had to resign. They at once set out to revive the recently interred U.R.P. Further, they had to seek candidates, funds and to begin the election campaign, all in 45 days.

A badly shaken U.F.P., now "united" with nothing but what was left of itself, faced the rapidly reviving U.R.P. and a strong Dominion Party (D.P.). The Confederate Party, Constitution Party, and the African National Congress put up no candidates. There were 55,029 eligible voters, including 1,246 Africans, on the rolls, and the manner in which the three contestants fought the election campaign gives a most important clue to the current pattern of Southern Rhodesian politics.

Under the slogan "*Not Left, Not Right, but Straight Ahead*",

the U.F.P. fought the campaign as a moderate, realistic Party of political experience. Lord Malvern was brought out of semi-retirement to use his great prestige in favour of the Party's candidates. He was at his best in vigorously attacking the D.P. as being "the same old gang I have been fighting for 25 years". Sir Roy Welensky and other Federal office-holders found no difficulty in intervening, this time, on behalf of the U.F.P. candidates, and a great deal of political capital was made out of the value of sending Sir Roy and Sir Edgar to London as a team for the 1960 Constitutional Conference.

According to Party orators, the African would be artificially pushed along too fast by Mr. Todd. U.F.P. speakers frequently alleged that although African Nationalism could not be stopped, it had to be guided by those political leaders who for the past 30 years have shaped the destiny of Southern Rhodesia. The Party stood by the franchise bill and its lower special roll, put through when Mr. Todd was Prime Minister. In so doing, it alleged firmly that the franchise standards were not in reality lowered by the new qualifications. It cast angry and frightened eyes on the policies of the Colonial Office in the two northern territories. And, above all, it spent a great deal of time attacking the D.P. as a Party of fear and inexperience. Sir Roy frequently assured audiences that the D.P. was actually the Party of apartheid, while Sir Edgar Whitehead, taking a moderately active role in the campaign, promised job reservation and protection for those Europeans who could never become sufficiently skilled to meet competition from the African. The American school system was pointed out by Sir Edgar as proof of the failure of educational integration. All achievements since Federation, were, of course, credited to the wise management of the U.F.P. (before the split!).

This type of campaign, veering from right to left and back again, tended to make the Party appear to be all things to all people, and, as in political contests the world over, this was described as being "middle of the road". Doubtless this type of campaign was politically necessary, since many of the U.F.P. candidates were just as frightened of African advance as candidates of the D.P. Indeed it seemed, as the campaign progressed, that the U.F.P. was incapable of taking an imaginative and constructive stand on the basic issue. It is probably fair to say also that dropping Todd did strengthen the Party with the electorate. The danger remains, however, that such an amal-

gamation of points of view and policies as are held by the U.F.P. can become meaningless and aid only the political extremes of the right or the left.

The D.P.'s campaign was likewise so great a mixture of conservative and moderate positions that only time can tell what the Party's actual policy would be if ever it were voted into power. It received the support of the Afrikaans farmers of the rural areas, aristocrats recently fled from the British welfare state, and lower income groups frightened by African competition. The Party is the direct heir of the old "Liberal Party" of pure apartheid policy. It further profited greatly by the Confederate Party's convenient unwillingness to place candidates in competition with it. However, the Confederate Party, by its speeches and publications, strongly stated a great many of the apartheid concepts, and by so doing, allowed the D.P. to forego such propaganda and present itself to the electorate as a moderate Party. Accordingly, a great deal of D.P. support came from people in urban areas who were convinced during the campaign of its basic moderation and decency towards the African.

From its platforms the D.P. candidates frequently stated that "we will not be swamped" by the "debasement" or "Africanisation" of Mr. Todd's franchise. The Party pledged itself to eliminate the special roll and to stop the "nibbling process" whereby European standards were being lowered to meet African standards. "The government must be kept for all time in civilized hands", was a most frequent campaign comment. In the rural areas, Africans were prevented from attending meetings of the Party. The famous word "partnership" was to be eliminated from the Constitution and "co-operation" put in its place. Franchise qualifications were to be placed high in terms of education and income. Mr. Todd's special roll allowed the vote to anyone who (1) has an income of £150 p.a. and ownership of property worth £500, or, (2) an income of £120 p.a. for two years and Standard 8 education. The D.P. would have eliminated this roll and set the qualifications at: (1) an income of £750 p.a. or ownership of property worth £1,500; or (2) income of £480 p.a. or property worth £1,000 plus primary education; or (3) income of £300 p.a. or property worth £500 plus four years of secondary education. These are the qualifications of the general roll now in existence; and the D.P. promised in addition to apply a "civilization test" to Africans who might obtain even these high qualifications. Influx control

was promised to rid Rhodesian cities of loafers, and labour camps for Africans who would not work or go back to their Reserves. Poor whites, unable to meet skilled African competition, were to be protected in their jobs.

During the campaign, the D.P. came up with a solution for the increasingly vexing problem of what to do with Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. Strongly attacking Colonial Office influence in the two northern territories, the Party pledged itself to press in 1960 for independence for Southern Rhodesia and a Northern Rhodesia minus Barotseland. The latter, along with Nyasaland, would be established as a Protectorate under joint Federation and Commonwealth Relations Office control, and the Colonial Office, allegedly far too liberal in its racial attitude, would be removed from the scene.

As has been noted, the D.P. posed in urban constituencies as yet another "middle of the road" Party. It tried desperately to produce African members (indeed it did find one, who needed police protection whenever he got near an African crowd!). It alleged that it would never stand in the way, and indeed would aid, African advance. It frequently stated that it would not forbid the establishment of inter-racial schools by any private or religious group. It promised not to interfere with the African National Congress, unless it became subversive. It even tried, unsuccessfully, to hold meetings for and speak to African audiences. One D.P. speaker went so far as to state that after 5 years of D.P. rule, there would be more Africans on the electoral roll than now.

Frequently the Party stated that it did not believe in discrimination because of colour. It denied vehemently that it was pro-apartheid: that it wished to take Southern Rhodesia into the Union. It was very sensitive about charges that it would make Afrikaans a second language and denied them vigorously. Often from the platform it denied receiving funds from the Confederate Party or receiving policy directives from Pretoria (!). How much of this moderation was the result of the Party's assessment of the U.R.P.'s strength is impossible to ascertain.

To sum up the aggressive, strong and yet contradictory D.P. campaign is most difficult. Again one should be reminded that its support came from many different groups of people. One may hazard a guess that the Party, particularly in the urban areas, attracted so many voters on the basis of its moderation and

decency towards the African, that it could not afford to turn its back on those newly found, moderate adherents. Because it does contain such diverse elements, it may have a difficult time remaining united. Further, having no strength at all in Nyasaland and little, so far, in Northern Rhodesia, the chances are heavily against its ever winning a Federal General Election. In conclusion one may say that the D.P., should it ever obtain power, might not be able to set the clock back even if its conservative wing should wish to do so.

Mr. Todd's Party, the U.R.P., fought the campaign under the banner of liberalism and morality. "*We mean what we say!*" and "*Forward without Fear*" were its Party slogans. During the campaign, Todd alleged that it was his group alone which supported cautious African advance, and he and his 23 candidates frequently voiced the hope that the Southern Rhodesian public would understand and approve of such a moderate policy. Needless to say his organization was amateurish and weak. He had a very difficult time in getting able candidates, although he did have enough funds. It is probably also true to say that in reality he entered the campaign hoping only to be able to hold the balance of power at its conclusion.

He was clear in calling apartheid a fraud from the public platform. He stressed the need for confidence between African and European, and hammered hard at the D.P. for its policies based on fear and at the U.F.P. for its meaninglessness. He was quick to stress the importance of the word "partnership" and, as well, world opinion of the Federation and its conduct of racial affairs. His support came not only from many earnest and thoughtful people, but from a good number of old Rhodesians of impeccable pioneer stock as well. The U.R.P. was the only Party to talk "democracy" in the racial climate of Africa. Todd frequently tried to prove that he, too, was a moderate. He went so far as to suggest that Africans should be required to pay increased income taxes, and, while stressing the absolute necessity of giving the African a stake in the country and of guiding him sympathetically as he enters industrial life, he also stated that the government should be kept in the hands of responsible people. For these reasons he was labelled by the African National Congress as the least of three evils.

The function of Mr. Todd and his Party in this campaign was, of course, a long-range educational one. He awoke a good many people to the inevitability of African advance and its creative

political and economic possibilities. He certainly helped hold the heterogeneous U.F.P. on a more moderate course than it would otherwise have pursued, and he probably affected the D.P. campaign in a similar way. The choice he provided between a cautiously liberal policy and "discrimination with justice" (more or less) was certainly the most important one ever offered in Southern Rhodesian politics since responsible government was voted for in 1922.

The 39,712 Southern Rhodesians who went to the polls on June 5th recorded their total rejection of Mr. Todd's Party, which did not win a single seat. As a matter of fact, if it had not been for the workings of the preferential (single transferable) vote system, the D.P. would have won. As it was, the U.F.P. won 17 seats to 13 for the D.P. In five constituencies, the transfer in the second count of the eliminated U.R.P. votes was responsible for giving to the U.F.P. a victory which would otherwise have gone to the D.P.

The tabulation is as follows:—

			<i>votes</i>	<i>percentage</i>
U.F.P.	16,840	42.5
D.P.	18,142	45.7
U.R.P. (eliminated)	..		4,663	11.8

In 1954, the last territorial election, the Confederate Party and its like-minded allies gained 44% of the total vote.

African reaction to the defeat of the U.R.P. was quick. Congress leaders made the following statements—'Europeans have shown themselves determined to keep the Africans in subjection. They have no intention of implementing a policy of partnership. After Dominion status the country will have a South African form of government, if it does not become a fifth province of South Africa. The days of the African looking to the White for salvation are gone for ever. The White electorate has slapped the African in the face.' Applications for membership of the Congress have reportedly risen rapidly.

The victorious Sir Edgar rushed, in all sincerity, to promise the Africans that there would be no reaction, stressing that his most important task was to prepare for Dominion status in 1960. Perhaps the gravest casualty of the election was that small group of conscientious Africans who have participated in the U.R.P. and U.F.P. organizations. They are thoroughly dis-

couraged by the election result and will increasingly find it difficult to avoid the label of "stooge". Sir Edgar will have to go a long way to prove to these and all other Africans that he understands their attitude and is willing to look with favour upon their legitimate demands.

Searching for crumbs of comfort from the election results, one may say that the total of first votes given to the U.F.P. and the U.R.P. together produces a majority of Southern Rhodesian voters opposed to the D.P.'s conservative and frightened colour policy. The fact that 11.8% of an almost wholly White electorate, in Africa, voted for a liberal racial policy is too important to be ignored. One may also point to the African voters already playing a normal political role in a number of constituencies. Both the U.F.P. and the D.P. pledged themselves not to remove them from the rolls. Pressure of public opinion in the United Kingdom and the world at large may keep the U.F.P. true to its more moderate elements. Its constructive record, even though written under the rejected Mr. Todd, will not be erased. The dangers are that the Party will stand still while events hasten to overtake it; or will find it difficult to attract able young leaders to replace the well-worn triumvirate of Malvern, Welensky and Whitehead; or, finally, in an effort to buy off what it feels to be an increasingly anti-African wave of public opinion, may move gradually towards that opinion. It contains many who would favour such a move. If it does so, it will automatically produce just that African extremism which it does not wish, and will not placate the extremists within the D.P. Between June 5th and the Federal elections in September or October, the U.F.P. will have to labour very heavily in the vineyards. Not only liberalism, but moderation as well, has been placed on warning by the elections. The ability of the Federation to hang together as a political unit remains an unknown factor.

When all is said and done, elections do not solve basic human problems such as those that confront Southern Rhodesia. Nor, for that matter, can they stop the inevitable march of affairs. Even though the Southern Rhodesian electorate has firmly rejected a moderately liberal approach to African issues, there still remain in that young country vast areas for constructive public and personal actions. These, alone, can lay the foundations for a harmonious multi-racial community in the future. Southern Rhodesia still has time.