

BACK TALK!

In the current Zimbabwe debate the media has been crucial. The importance of having our views seen, heard and read can't be over-emphasized.

Demand equal time. The Fairness Doctrine obliges radio and TV to give the public access to airwaves to present opposing views. We should use this to our best advantage.

Conservative access to the print media has over-shadowed the limited coverage the anti-apartheid movement has received. We can counter this with paper, pen and facts, and encouragement to prominent people such as church and civil leaders to speak out on the issues properly and forcefully.

Good editorials, articles, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor deserve their day in the sun. If you see a good piece write the newspaper or magazine. Let people know that other folks and publications support the people of Zimbabwe. Bad editorials must get an immediate response -- there's a good sample on the back.

One of the biggest battles is about to begin on the sanctions issue and we need all the allies we can get to win this one. Effective use of the media will play a very important part. While we may not agree with everything the editorial below says, it's the best we've got until we begin to generate something better. We've got to give the opposition some back talk!

Facing Up to Failure in Rhodesia

There is to be an election of sorts in Rhodesia next month by which the white minority regime hopes to make itself appear a black regime, thus finding acceptance in the West but running things pretty much as before. This cozy arrangement between Prime Minister Ian Smith and some cooperative black leaders is being challenged by two separate guerrilla forces. With the help of neighboring African states and Soviet-bloc arms, the guerrillas have undermined the Government's control over much of the land and people.

It looks now as if the Smith regime's cosmetic transformation will not be prevented by the civil war. But neither will more bitter warfare be prevented by the transformation. The long-shot American policy for avoiding both these developments -- by negotiation among all the Rhodesian factions -- is therefore close to failure. If the Carter Administration does not acknowledge this failure in time, Congress may choose the worst possible response.

Many Americans look with sympathy on Mr. Smith's belated formula for "majority rule." Put off by the revolutionary rhetoric and guerrilla terror, they think the United States should support an arrangement that appears biracial and constitutional and is ratified by elections. Impressed by these arguments, Congress will send observers to report on the fairness of the vote. If the report is favorable, Congress may demand an end of United States sanctions against Rhodesia and insist on supporting the new government against the guerrilla challenge.

But there is no persuasive evidence that this would contain the violence. The "internal agreement" be-

tween Mr. Smith and his black collaborators reserves far too much power for the white minority. It was ratified by a referendum in which only the 90,000 white voters were allowed to participate. Two and a half million eligible blacks will be urged and cajoled to vote in next month's parliamentary election but that will hardly make it a test of their support for the new structure. The guerrilla leaders, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, reject the new constitution and are running no candidates. The neighboring "front line" black states support the guerrillas mainly because they see no hope for stability until the regime formed by Mr. Smith is either displaced or forced to yield real power to blacks.

The American bid for compromise was noble so long as there remained the slightest chance of heading off civil war. There is little hope for compromise now and the Administration should admit that as it weighs the unappealing choices that remain.

Backing Mr. Smith's scheme would be a serious mistake. That would only undo the credit the United States has thus far earned in Black Africa without resolving anything. It would tie the United States to an ally that offers neither majority rule nor the prospect of peace. Backing the guerrillas is inconceivable as long as they refuse to assure a fair division of power and to protect white minority rights. Yet standing aside could permit the Soviet Union and its Cuban allies to gain the benefits of yet another successful African insurgency.

While Rhodesia reaps the violence that is Mr. Smith's true legacy, the United States can only wait for a new opportunity to bring it fairly to an end. That opportunity will not arise if Mr. Smith is led to believe that the West will ride to the rescue.

a negative editorial

Let's see for ourselves

Chicago Tribune, March 13, 1979

Will the national elections scheduled for April 20 in Rhodesia be a white-managed farce in which nobody dares go to the polls except a handful of voters who will give their resounding approval to the diluted form of black majority rule worked out by Ian Smith's biracial interim government? This is what his critics predict. Or will it be a reasonably fair and representative election in which the blacks are able to express themselves without fear of retaliation, as the Salisbury government assures us it will?

These are crucial questions which Britain and the United States are going to have to face as they decide what to do about Rhodesia once the results of the election are in.

If the election proves a farce, it will strengthen the position of people like Andrew Young, our ambassador to the United Nations, who have written the Salisbury government off as a failure. They want to rule it out of any future arrangement and to speed its collapse by maintaining and even expanding the United Nations economic sanctions against it. The result, in effect, would be to turn the government over to the only organized alternative, the rebel guerrillas.

If, on the other hand, the election is run reasonably fairly and honestly [which is more than can be said of elec-

tions in most Third World countries], it will strengthen the government's pleas that it be given a chance and that the sanctions be relaxed or withdrawn.

In both Britain and the United States, there are proposals to send bipartisan observers to watch the election and report back to their countries. The British Conservative Party plans to do so on its own if the Labor Party doesn't join it. In our own Senate, Sam Hayakawa, the conservative California Republican, and George McGovern, the liberal North Dakota Democrat, have jointly called on Congress to send a bipartisan team of observers. It is being discussed this week in committee.

Given the importance of the decisions that hinge on the conduct of the elections, it's hard to understand why so many liberals in both countries oppose the idea.

They say it implies recognition of the Smith regime. But Ambassador Young himself has dealt with the Salisbury government; did that imply recognition?

They say that the army, which controls much of the country under martial law, will intimidate voters. If so, what could please them more than to have a bipartisan team of respected observers report this intimidation?

They say that the observers will be hamstrung by government restrictions

and propaganda. Surely the Senate can find observers intelligent enough to know when they are being deluded or denied the opportunity to see what they want to see. And if they should report that this has happened, it, too, would seem to prove what the liberals want to prove.

They cite previous evidence of intimidation, torture, unjust imprisonment, and harassment by the Smith regime. And we don't doubt that some of their charges are true. But this doesn't convince us the guerrilla leaders are any more just or humane. On the contrary, their actions have been more conspicuously abhorrent than those of the government. Why shouldn't we be given every chance to find out how things actually are?

In short, the critics of the Salisbury government ought to welcome the chance to prove that they are right. Their eagerness to prevent us from sending observers makes us wonder whether their real fear isn't that there will be a conscientious effort to conduct an honest election; and that if there is intimidation, it will be on the part of the guerrillas who have demanded that blacks boycott the election and support the war.

It's silly to think that we can pursue a realistic policy on Rhodesia without bothering to find out the facts.

... a positive response

Rhodesian 'whitewash'

CHICAGO—Your editorial March 13 supporting the forthcoming elections in Rhodesia calls for "finding out the facts." Unfortunately, the editorial lacks some major facts, such as the following.

The elections are based on a constitution which:

- Was approved by a whites-only referendum. About one per cent of the population voted. Africans trying to express their views were arrested.

- Assigns 28 per cent of the parliamentary seats to four per cent of the population solely on the basis of race.

- Provides that the white minority continue to control for at least ten years the civil service, police, armed forces, courts, and prisons. These are the very institutions which presently oppress the black majority.

- Guarantees white minority control of the economy.

Chicago Tribune,

March 26, 1979

In addition, the elections themselves lack a democratic character. There is no registration of African voters. Africans will not be able to vote for a person but only a party. The administrators and supervisors of the elections are the same people responsible for the current racist policies of the Smith regime as well as its murder, torture, and imprisonment of large numbers of Africans.

And if all this were not enough to discredit the election, certainly the exclusion from participation in the elections of the oldest and most well-known African parties should be.

The facts indicate, contrary to your editorial, that the U. S. should lend no support, not even observers, to this white-wash election.

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