

## THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND AFRICA

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**T**HE Labour Government has taken office at a time when important new problems face Africa. Direct colonial rule has been ended over most of the African continent, but in the remaining territories in Southern Africa the most stubborn resistance to ending white minority rule can be expected. For the independent African states, too, a new phase is opening out, that of defeating the counter-offensive of neo-colonialism, and carrying forward the victory of national independence into the new effort to uproot imperialism, win economic independence and bring a richer life to the peoples.

The Labour Government has a great opportunity to open a new page in our relations with Africa by abandoning the imperialist policies of the Tory Government, and offering sincere co-operation with the African people. The most vital interests of the British people are at stake, for our combined efforts, alongside those of the African people, can put the British monopoly firms down for the count, and so open up entirely new prospects for both our peoples.

One must appreciate, of course, that the Labour Government has inherited some very acute problems from the Tories. Everyone will welcome the speed with which the new Government, almost within hours of taking office, settled the question of the British South Africa (B.S.A.) Company by matching President Kaunda's offer of £2 million compensation with a £2 million offer of its own—and so taking the heat out of the crisis which had arisen on the very eve of Zambia's independence. This is specially welcome, since it was the 1950 Labour Government which signed the agreement on September 14, 1950, granting to the B.S.A. Company the right to 'continue in undisturbed enjoyment' of the mineral rights in Northern Rhodesia up until October 1, 1986. No one can argue that the £4 million now granted to the B.S.A. is insufficient compensation, seeing that in forty years the company received close on £135 million before tax (£70 million after tax) solely because of its alleged claim to dispose of mineral rights. It would have been simple justice if they had not received a penny more—but the 'undisturbed enjoyment' has been brought to an end, and that is the main thing. For the people of Zambia a bigger problem lies ahead, and that is how to stop the tens of millions of pounds profit being taken each year by the actual

copper companies, the Anglo-American and the Roan (late Rhodesian) Selection Trust groupings. If the new Zambia Government should, at any time, decide to take steps to curb or end this robbery, it should receive full support from the British Government.

As regards Southern Rhodesia, now renamed Rhodesia, the strong warning issued to Mr. Smith by Mr. Wilson on the consequences of a unilateral declaration of independence has been warmly welcomed by all progressive people. This public stand by the Labour Government has helped to clear the air. The holding of the farcical *Indaba* of African chiefs could, of course, fool no one. The 'referendum' taken among the European minority was equally an exposure of Smith, little over half the electorate voting 'Yes'. The public slapping down by Wilson of Smith is but the first step. Things cannot be left as they are. The status quo would mean leaving four million Africans under the rule of 270,000 Europeans. It would mean leaving 6 per cent of the population, the Europeans, in possession of 48 per cent of the land, and the best land at that. It would mean leaving the Africans in dire poverty, with an average wage of £6 a month (compared with £86 for Europeans), and a per capita income *per year* of only £3 in the African indigenous agriculture. It would mean retaining a franchise with income, property and educational qualifications that exclude all but a handful of Africans, an annual income of £120 a year being required even to get on the lowest category of the electoral roll. It has been rightly said of the Rhodesian franchise that 'a rough comparison would be a franchise in Britain open only to surtax payers'. And when one takes into account, too, that by the end of 1962 there were only 5,069 Africans in secondary school in Rhodesia, it is clear that even those who manage to squeeze through the needle's eye of the income qualifications would be hard put to it to pass the educational qualifications. And even after all that, it is only to vote for, at the most, fifteen African representatives in an Assembly of sixty-five.

The status quo in Rhodesia also means 5,000 political prisoners or detainees, the jailing of leaders such as Joshua Nkomo and the banning of his party. The African people want the present undemocratic constitution scrapped; the political prisoners released, and the calling of a conference, with the participation of all the political parties, to prepare a new constitution on a democratic basis, *i.e.*, on the basis of one man, one vote. This would be in line with the demands put forward by the majority of Commonwealth Premiers at their Conference earlier this year, and in line, too, with recom-

mendations of the United Nations, as well as decisions of the Organisation of African Unity and the Non-Alignment Conference held at Cairo in October. The Labour Government has an opportunity, and the responsibility, to follow up its first bold step in Rhodesia by actively intervening to end the present tyranny exercised by a handful of white settlers over four million Africans.

Further south, the Labour Government faces a number of serious problems in the High Commission Territories—Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland. All three stand in considerable danger of absorption by the Verwoerd Government. At present, much of their manpower is drained off to work on South African farms and in the mines, and their resources, such as the iron ore, asbestos and cellulose of Swaziland, is taken out to enrich the economies of South Africa, Britain and Japan. Constitutional change has been too slow, full democratic rights are not yet enjoyed, and the people's aspirations for independence and security are being thwarted. Political refugees from Verwoerd who have managed to reach High Commission Territories have not only been harrassed and restricted by the authorities, but in some cases deported or allowed to fall into the hands of the South African police. In Swaziland, British troops have been used to break strikes, and many workers have been arrested. The Labour Government now has the opportunity to end these Tory policies. Internal repression should be ended, essential constitutional changes speedily introduced in consultation with the representatives of the main organisations and parties of the people, and economic measures introduced to stop the drain of manpower and resources. Through co-operation with the independent African States, the British Government could make it possible for these Territories to gain independence without falling into Verwoerd's lap.

And then there is the major problem of South Africa. The detestation of the British labour movement towards the hated régime of Verwoerd has been expressed repeatedly. It is probably no exaggeration to say that, with the possible exception of Franco's government, the South African régime is more hated by the British labour movement than is any other régime in the world. There will be a warm welcome for the government's decision to ban arms to South Africa, and it is hoped that further steps along these lines will be taken.

On economic sanctions too, there is deep anxiety in the British labour movement and a desire that the Labour Government should act differently from its Tory predecessor. The organised workers

have already expressed their opinions at this year's T.U.C. at Blackpool, held shortly before the General Election. The following composite resolution based on those placed on the agenda by the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Watermen, Lightermen, Tugmen and Bargemen's Union was adopted unanimously:

This Congress condemns the vile system of apartheid in South Africa based on mass repression, large scale arrests, the banning and exile of national and trade union leaders, and the imprisonment of people without charge or trial, and calls on the British Government to implement a diplomatic, economic and arms boycott of South Africa in accordance with the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly.

It further calls on the General Council to use their influence to ensure that an international boycott of South African goods be carried out by organised workers until the South African Government concedes the principle of free speech and a franchise which allows all men and women to vote freely for their chosen representative to Parliament, and allows the African workers to organise trade unions and negotiate wage agreements and conditions.

Speaking in support of this resolution, Mr. Frank Cousins, on behalf of the Transport and General Workers' Union, declared: 'My members will turn their backs on the handling of ships at any time they are satisfied that this is what the working class section of Britain thinks they should do'. Backed by such strong feeling, the Labour Government would win wide support if it now instructed its U.N. representatives to vote in support of all resolutions and proposals which call for economic sanctions against Verwoerd.

Among the more interesting appointments made by Mr. Wilson was that of Mr. Anthony Greenwood as Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Mrs. Barbara Castle as Minister of Overseas Development, a new post. Both have been active in progressive causes associated with colonial and overseas questions, the former as Treasurer of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, and the latter as Chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The selection of Sir Hugh Foot (now Lord Caradon) as Britain's representative at the United Nations, has also aroused comment, in view of his earlier resignation from his U.N. post under the Tory Government, in protest against Government policy on Southern Rhodesia.

The Ministry of Overseas Development is of special interest, since it embraces the whole field of aid to developing countries, and could easily get snarled up in the more underhand manoeuvres of the neo-colonialist smoothies who have been operating for three years in the Department of Technical Co-operation, and who are now taken over by (or taking over) the new Ministry. This previous Department was

directed by Sir Andrew Cohen, who has served British imperialism as head of the African Department at the Colonial Office, as Governor of Uganda, and as British representative on the Trusteeship Council at the United Nations. Sir Andrew remains as practical director under the new Ministry.

When the Department of Technical Co-operation was set up by the Tory Government in 1961, its main function was 'the provision of experts, administrators and the supply of advisory, technical and consultant services' to developing countries. In commenting on the setting up of the new department and the proposed appointment of Sir Andrew Cohen, with the simultaneous appointment of Sir Hugh Foot as Britain's spokesman on the U.N. Trusteeship Council, *The Times* (April 24, 1961) wrote:

The colonial empire may shrink and the Commonwealth may change its form, but Britain's overseas responsibilities to the underdeveloped countries go on, changed but undiminished. These changes mean redeployment of manpower, not only at the bottom and in the middle ranges but at the top. And if Britain is to hold her place in the world, this redeployment is a matter for the exercise of the highest skill in fitting the man for the job.

And it then commented that 'No two men have played a greater part' (than Sir Andrew Cohen and Sir Hugh Foot) 'in their two ways in turning a now outdated colonial empire into an association of free peoples'. It is of significance that it has been boasted that the Department gets on well with Ministers of the developing states, since it 'does not have the taint of neo-colonialism'. The whole of this Department is now within the new Ministry of Overseas Development which will have the added function of responsibility for *financial* aid to developing countries, as well as continuing to provide technicians and advisers. No one would deny that there is need for financial and technical assistance to developing countries, but the antecedents of the new Ministry naturally give rise to misgivings.

The biggest help that the Labour Government could give the developing countries of Africa would be to take the British monopolies off their backs. As long as British companies dominate the economy of these countries, control their trade and possess their natural resources, the new Governments are terribly handicapped in trying to get their countries off the ground and build up their economies. A decisive break with Tory economic policies towards Africa would be of advantage both to Africa and to Britain. African economic growth demands African economic independence. The Labour Government will be judged by the people of Africa to the extent to which it assists them to reach these goals.