

Statement

on

The Rhodesian Situation

adopted by

The Executive Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.

December 16, 1965

.....Mindful of anomalies in our own national history, especially the dispossession and widespread destruction of many Indian nations by our own forebears (whom we now call heroes), and the forced importation into this country of African people as slaves;

.....In a spirit of penitence for our failure adequately to correct the results of these injustices within our own borders; and

.....Mindful of the great problems and difficulties in our national history caused by these misdeeds and failures;

We deplore the illegal assumption of power in Rhodesia by Ian Smith and his associates. It is a scandal to the Gospel of reconciliation that a fearful minority of 220,000 people seek to erect a society which excludes from human and political selfhood over four million people, and to do it, as Mr. Smith maintains, "in the name of Christianity, justice, and civilization". Almost alone in the situation, the Anglican Bishops of Mashonaland and Matabeleland, the Christian Council of Rhodesia, and the Roman Catholic bishops of the country, seek to keep alive the hope of justice and equality in a multi-racial society.

How can Christians in America support the Church and the people of Rhodesia? The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church believes that our principal assistance at this time is to help create the conditions which will bring about the rapid restoration of constitutional government to that land. This will involve finding ways to apply economic as well as political pressures against Mr. Smith's regime. We call on Churchmen to take steps in their business dealings and communities to curtail economic transactions with Rhodesia. Whatever sacrifice this may mean on a temporary basis pales alongside the witness our brothers are called on to make within the country itself. We urge vigorous joint action to demonstrate to our government and to the United Nations that we support the imposition of whatever political and economic measures are necessary, nationally and internationally, to bring a speedy end to the regime.

Only after the removal of the illegal Smith regime can the groundwork be laid for a multi-racial society based on full participation in the affairs of government and an end to gross denials of human dignity.

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