

Editorial

In an age in which such cries as "freedom," "democracy," "one man, one vote" are being heard all over the world, there was acute indignation when, last November, Rhodesia declared its independence. This act was seen by many as a conspiracy on the part of white Rhodesians to perpetuate their political domination. It was said the circumstances leading to the declaration of independence were motivated by a racist philosophy and a selfish economic interest. But is this criticism justified? Is it really the case that any government not respecting the "one man, one vote" formula is wrong? Could it not be possible that the white government of Rhodesia is actually doing what is right?

No government has the right to rule unless it receives that right from the consent of the governed. But governments exist primarily so that the legitimate aims of the people might be achieved. According to the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* it is the duty of governments to "contribute to the formation of a type of man who will be cultivated, peace-loving and well disposed towards his fellow men." (74) In order to do this it must maintain that degree of peace and economic viability necessary to improve progressively the standards of civilization for all. The great western societies have developed a system of government which can provide the necessary stability while extending the suffrage almost universally, but experience has shown that this type of government is not suited for all peoples. The same constitution says: "according to the character of different peoples and their historic development, the political community can, however, adopt a variety of concrete solutions in its structures and the organization of public authority." (74)

Democracy on the western pattern can only thrive on the basis of a politically conscious and reasonably informed electorate. The Africans have had for centuries their own tribal way of life. It would not be fair to them to force them out of their tribes and into some sort of parliamentary system they do not understand and even less desire to perpetuate. The enshrinement of the "one man, one vote" formula would be impossible today without subjugating the country to the

chaos, despotism and barbarism which have all too often been witnessed in other developing nations.

Nevertheless, these circumstances could never justify the despotic, racist white regime which has been portrayed in much of our nation's press. However, this image seems to be far from accurate. It is true that there are extremist groups which desire the overthrow of the government, but the Rhodesian black nationalists, demanding immediate majority rule, represent a small minority. They are not supported by the fourteen African members of Parliament and have resorted to violence and threats of intimidation in an attempt to obtain popular support for their cause.

The government of Rhodesia has limited the franchise to those inhabitants capable of exercising it with reason, judgment and public spirit, but has placed no restrictions on the basis of race. At the same time it has made every reasonable effort to raise the educational level of the black population. At the present time African education is the largest expenditure on the budget and a greater proportion of African children attend school in Rhodesia than in any nation of black Africa. In view of these efforts the Council of Chiefs, a body which represents about three-fourths of the black population has endorsed independence. The African members of Parliament, while urging that the government make an even greater effort to prepare the Africans for full citizenship, realize that they are not yet in a position to assume the reins of government. P. H. Mkudu, their chief whip, says that his people need much training before they will be in a position to rule the country, requiring an interim period of "not less than five years."

If it is true, as it appears to be, that the lack of universal suffrage in Rhodesia is necessary in this critical period of her development, and that the government of Ian Smith does rule with the consent of the governed, then the prevailing American attitude towards Rhodesia needs some drastic revision. Rhodesia is evolving a sound and democratic system of government which will give the white minority a realistic chance of survival and the black majority an opportunity, almost unique in Africa, of achieving political and economic equality. It is admittedly taking a different approach than those which have been used elsewhere in Africa, but the present state of affairs would seem to indicate that a new approach is necessary. The Rhodesian solution seems to be in the best interest of all, the Africans especially, and will succeed if we let it.