

## “Voice and Vision” – The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland’s Public Relations Campaign in Britain: 1960-1963

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At present the picture of the white Rhodesian in Britain is still largely compounded of Sanders of the River, hard drinking and easy living; and the impression of the African population is of downtrodden labourers, rioting mobs and innocent men in gaol\*\*

By the late 1950s, favourable British press coverage of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland<sup>1</sup> was waning. African protest against the formation of the Federation was initially disregarded by Whitehall, due to a combination of geopolitical considerations and perceived economic benefits of a closer association of British territories in central Africa.<sup>2</sup> However, a downturn in the federal economy brought on by sharply falling copper prices in 1956, and the Federal government’s failure to fully implement its racial partnership policy, brought underlying tensions to the surface. Furthermore, the announcement in April 1957 that a review of the Federal constitution would be undertaken during 1960, heightened anxiety, as many settlers and Africans realised that if dominion status was granted, there would be no turning back.<sup>3</sup> Negative coverage of the Federation by the British press increased in the wake of the British government’s decision in 1957 to overrule the African Affairs Board’s complaint regarding the Constitutional Amendment Bill, and in particular the settlers’ handling of the Nyasaland emergency in 1959. As a consequence of this, the Federal government led by Sir Roy Welensky recognised the need for an efficient public relations campaign in Britain to boost the chances of securing the Federation’s future. To this end he employed Voice and Vision, a London public relations company. This was the first time that a public relations campaign had been undertaken not merely to promote a political party or a government, but to preserve a whole political and economic system holding power over eight million people.<sup>4</sup>

In recent years social scientists have investigated the role played by the media in influencing the political attitudes of the British public.<sup>5</sup> However, the historical foundation of political media advertising has been overlooked. This study helps to

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\*\* Report on Federal Public Relations, January 1961. Rhodes House Library, Oxford, Welensky Papers (hereafter WP) 274/2, Public Relations Proposals (no date) attached to D. Cole – J.M. Baines, 1 February 1960.

1 Commonly referred to as the Central African Federation.

2 R. Hyam and P. Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003), pp 224-225; P. Murphy, “Government by Blackmail”: The Origins of the Central African Federation Reconsidered”, in M. Lynn (ed), *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2006), pp 53-76.

3 J. T. R. Wood, *The Welensky Papers* (Graham Publishing, Durban, 1983), p 532.

4 Rhodes House Library, Oxford, MSS Afr s 2152, D. Hobson, “The Last Gasp” (1991), p 6.

5 D. Sanders and P. Norris, “The Impact of Political Advertising in the 2001 U.K. General Election”, *Political Research Quarterly*, 58, 4, 2005, pp 525-536.

redress this imbalance by examining the campaign launched by Voice and Vision on behalf of the government of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in London. The contemporary commentator Patrick Keatley discussed the Federal government's use of Voice and Vision in his book *The Politics of Partnership* (1963), however as this work was published before the Federation was disbanded, it does not offer a full assessment of the campaign.<sup>6</sup> David Goldsworthy built somewhat on this with his *Colonial Issues in British Politics*.<sup>7</sup> Richard Wood mentioned the campaign in passing in *The Welensky Papers* and again in *So Far and No Further!*<sup>8</sup> Only Philip Murphy has provided a more satisfactory study, dedicating several pages of his work, *Party Politics and Decolonization* (1995), to examining the Federal government's campaign.<sup>9</sup> These accounts, although offering a tantalising glimpse of the campaign, fail to establish its significance.

This article does not propose to account for the final years of the Central African Federation, or provide a detailed account of African nationalist lobbying in the United Kingdom. It will however provide a detailed account of the formation and execution of the Federal government's public relations campaign. It sheds light on how the Federal government misunderstood British politics, and did not grasp the erosion of the ties that might previously have secured the Federation in British public sympathy only ten years earlier. The campaign's failure to garner sufficient support in Britain reinforces the claim by many recent scholars of decolonisation that, by the late 1950s, colonial policy was strongly influenced by the desire to forge closer connections with Western Europe through membership of the European Economic Community.<sup>10</sup> This article demonstrates Welensky's personal belief that Britain's changing relationship with Europe was crucial in explaining its policy in central Africa.

### Origins of the campaign

The late 1950s saw widespread criticism of settler and governmental policies in much of the British press. Emergencies in Kenya and Cyprus, in conjunction with the Suez debacle earlier in the decade gave credibility to anti-colonial critics' claims that colonialism depended on repression. The Nyasaland emergency of March 1959, the Hola camp revelations in July 1959 and the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 further brought home to the British public the harsh face of colonialism.<sup>11</sup> The British public was more uneasy with the policies adopted in Nyasaland than Kenya. Andrew Thompson has demonstrated that public awareness of both situations was quite high – 90 per cent of people knew of troubles in Kenya, while 80 per cent were

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- 6 P Keatley, *The Politics of Partnership: The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (Penguin, London, 1963), pp 446-450
  - 7 D Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971), p 365
  - 8 Wood, *The Welensky Papers*, p 371; R Wood, *So Far and No Further! Rhodesia's bid for independence during the retreat from empire, 1959-1965* (Trafford Publishing, Johannesburg, 2005)
  - 9 P Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995), pp 73-87
  - 10 J Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1988), p 235; J D Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (Longman, London, 1996), p 200; R Holland, *European Decolonization 1918-1981* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1985), pp 206-210
  - 11 N Owen, "Critics of Empire in Britain", in J Brown and W M R Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire IV* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), p 206

aware of the Nyasaland emergency – however support for the authorities’ actions differed markedly. The government’s treatment of the Mau Mau was approved of by 40 per cent of people polled, and opposed by 23 per cent. In this and all other polling data mentioned here, the views of the remainder of the sampled population were not given. Only 25 per cent backed the handling of the Nyasaland emergency, while 23 per cent did not. Arguably of more importance to the Federal government was the fact that British sympathies were directed more towards the Africans (30 per cent) than the settlers (18 per cent).<sup>12</sup> This shift in opinion was noted by an employee of the Rhodesian Selection Trust (RST) mining company who was in Britain during the Nyasaland emergency. He recognised the danger of unchecked negative press coverage in Britain and commented:

you will no doubt have seen the outpourings and headlines appearing in the U K Press, which seems to have gone a little hysterical about the whole thing [the Nyasaland emergency] Whatever may be the feelings of the people in Rhodesia and Nyasaland, current events have not done the Federation’s cause any good at all<sup>13</sup>

The United Federal Party (UFP), and its predecessor, the Federal Party, had received organisational assistance and funds for public relations in Britain from the region’s major copper mining companies during the early 1950s.<sup>14</sup> Initially the funds had been used to campaign for the creation of a Federation; however after 1953 they were used to cover general party expenses. The copper companies’ willingness to provide economic assistance later changed as the febrile political landscape caused the RST to stop its financial contributions by 1959. The Anglo American Corporation also publicly withdrew financial contributions to the UFP during 1959, though, unlike the RST, they refrained from directly criticising the Federation. They secretly continued financial contributions anyway.<sup>15</sup>

The loss of funding from the RST and the difficulty in obtaining funds from the Anglo American Corporation led the UFP to reassess the way that their public relations were managed. At this point, the Federal government’s public relations were handled by the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Committee in London. Although the Committee had good contacts with the Colonial Office, Commonwealth Relations Office and church leaders, it was judged to be unable to extend its range of activities to deal with newspapers and Members of Parliament (MPs) “of the more aggressive or controversial sort”.<sup>16</sup> The assessment was carried out by David Cole, the head of a Salisbury public relations company, who had been employed by the Federal government since 1955. Cole reserved particular criticism for the Director of the Committee, remarking that he found him

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12 A Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Longman, Harlow, 2005), p 212

13 WP 600/4, J Thompson – D Cole, 5 March 1959

14 The Federal Party represented mainstream settler opinion in the Federation during the early 1950s, and was renamed the United Federal Party in 1957, after its merger with the United Rhodesia Party in Southern Rhodesia. For more detail on the UFP, see: J Greenfield, *Testimony of a Rhodesian Federal* (Books of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, 1978)

15 A Cohen, “Business and Decolonisation in Central Africa Reconsidered”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 36, 4, 2008, pp 641-658

16 WP 600/3, D Cole – R Welensky, 3 October 1958

a stiff, rather pompous unspectacular little man ... such characteristics – while they might be alright in the C[ommonwealth]R[elations]O[ffice] – they are nothing like as welcome in Rhodesia and seem positively incongruous when they are attached to a man whose job is to put the Federation over in England<sup>17</sup>

He concluded that the government's public relations campaign would have to be reorganised in Britain. He first suggested that they should follow a campaign similar to that of the Kenyan government, who gave their public relations man in London a lavish budget to entertain MPs and opinion makers. He spent little time wooing right-of-centre Conservative MPs or established gentlemen already sympathetic to the cause, instead choosing to spend most of his time in clubs like the Reform Club "because they tend to be frequented by people like the staff of the Economist and up-and-coming but serious minded Labour and Liberal MPs".<sup>18</sup> The result of this was that Kenya, once regarded "as a place where white settlers were beating up the natives or drinking themselves to death with other people's wives, is now treated seriously and sympathetically".<sup>19</sup> Cole's belief that Kenya's image in Britain was a success story is indicative of how out of touch with British opinion many Federal officials were. Even at this early stage of their campaign, his plan did not receive unqualified support. Another of Welensky's advisors suggested that it "over simplifies the problem" and attributed the change in British perceptions of Kenya to the murder of Europeans and the "fact that Mau Mau oaths and practices were so obviously evil".<sup>20</sup> Cole's next move was to approach Sydney Wynne, Managing Director of Voice and Vision, regarding Federal public relations.

Initially Cole argued that the Federal government should provide "tacit approval" to the campaign, rather than direct support.<sup>21</sup> He believed an "independent" campaign would be more effective in defending the Federation in Britain. However, Welensky rejected the idea of a "secret" campaign, believing that "the allegiance which would be shown by the consultants to the Federation would inevitably be linked to the Federal government [and] as such it would be better to openly employ them".<sup>22</sup> Welensky's fear would prove prophetic in the case of South Africa during the 1970s.<sup>23</sup>

The need for the Federal government to appoint professional public relations consultants in Britain demonstrates the weakness of its existing connections to the British establishment. Philip Murphy has demonstrated that the settlers in central Africa differed markedly from their east African compatriots. The Kenyan settlers exploited their "close links" with the British elite and preferred to "exert pressure directly through informal contacts". This was possible in the Kenyan context due to

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17 WP 600/4, D Cole – J Thompson, 12 March 1959

18 WP 600/4, D Cole – R Welensky, 10 April 1959

19 WP 600/4, D Cole – R Welensky, 10 April 1959

20 WP 600/4, P Brownrigg – J Thompson, 30 April 1959

21 WP 274/2, Memorandum regarding public relations, 25 January 1960

22 WP 274/2, Memorandum regarding public relations, 8 March 1960

23 See: M Rees and C Day, *Muldergate* (Macmillan South Africa, Johannesburg, 1980), for details regarding the South African government's misappropriation of public funds to finance a secret propaganda campaign. The operation included an attempt to buy the *Washington Star* newspaper in the United States, and the foundation of *The Citizen*, an English language South African newspaper favourable to the National Party. The scandal eventually led to the resignation of the South African State President, B J Vorster, as he had been Prime Minister when the campaign was approved and had known about the corruption.

the social composition of the settlers in each colony. Kenya had a large proportion of civil servants, farmers and businessmen. Central African settlers, on the whole, lacked a significant number of upper-middle-class settlers and therefore could not pursue their interests through the same channels as the Kenyans.<sup>24</sup>

### Tactics and development

The appointment of Voice and Vision appeared to offer an excellent opportunity for the Federal government to bolster its faltering image. The company was a subsidiary of Colman, Prentis and Varley, a leading public relations firm which was fresh from securing a surprise victory for the Conservative Party in the 1959 British general election.<sup>25</sup> The company was a purely commercial venture, and possessed no ideological incentive to work towards the maintenance of the Federation. Its only concern was to make a profit. Cole recognised that under Colman, Prentis and Varley, the election campaign had been “brilliantly handled”.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, he argued that the fact that they handled the Conservative Party account “means that they already have contact with every Conservative MP, with every Conservative Party organisation and all eight fingers on the pulse of the British electorate”.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, its Managing Director, Sydney Wynne, was married to Ernest Bevin’s daughter and it was rumoured that the company was involved in the personal public relations of Harold Macmillan.<sup>28</sup> Voice and Vision’s institutional connections have been highlighted by scholars, particularly by Goldsworthy, who contends that the company “gave Welensky not only a medium for public campaigning in Britain but also an excellent institutionalised link with the parliamentary party”.<sup>29</sup>

The campaign proposed by Voice and Vision encompassed a total reorganisation of the Federation’s existing arrangements in London. The estimated cost for implementing these changes was £40 000 and it was expected that results would begin to be seen after three months.<sup>30</sup> Overall, the initial aim of the campaign would be to improve background knowledge in Britain of the Federation’s achievements and its leading personalities.<sup>31</sup> The idea that knowledge of the progress the territories had made under the Federation would woo public opinion was not new. This concept had first been put to Welensky by Alec Douglas Home, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, as early as 1957. Home later recalled how he had “urged them to try and sell their case”.<sup>32</sup> However, his suggestion was not well received and he remarked how “they weren’t impressed, they thought they were doing pretty well and it was self-evident”.<sup>33</sup>

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24 Murphy, *Party Politics*, pp 58-59

25 The Colman, Prentis and Varley campaign is covered in D Butler and R Rose, *The British General Election of 1959* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1960); and M Rosenbaum, *From Soapbox to Soundbite: Party Political Campaigning in Britain since 1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1997)

26 WP 274/2, Memorandum regarding public relations, 8 March 1960

27 WP 274/2, Memorandum regarding public relations, 8 March 1960

28 WP 274/1, D Cole – R Welensky, 30 December 1959

29 Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, p 367

30 WP 274/2, Public Relations proposals, 25 January 1960

31 WP 274/2, P Brownrigg – R Welensky, 18 February 1960

32 Rhodes House Library, Oxford, MSS Brit Emp s 527/2, Interview with Lord Home, December 1984 Transcript from the Granada End of Empire series

33 Rhodes House Library, Oxford, MSS Brit Emp s 527/2, Interview with Lord Home, December 1984 Transcript from the Granada End of Empire series

A series of advertisements placed in *The Guardian*, *The Scotsman* and *The Times* illustrate how Voice and Vision approached its task. They all shared the heading “GOOD NEWS FROM AFRICA: Let facts have a hearing”. The first in the series appeared in September 1960 and concentrated on the increased educational opportunities for Africans under the Federation. Referring to the newly opened University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, it proclaimed “it is Federal policy that Africans who can make good use of a higher education shall have it”.<sup>34</sup> Conveniently, no reference was made to the difficulties faced by Africans in obtaining a sufficient level of schooling in order to “make good use of a higher education”. The pictures chosen to accompany the piece all included Africans and Europeans talking together and were meant to send the message that partnership in central Africa was working.

The second advertisement appeared the following month and opened with the sentence “Much of the news from Africa nowadays is bad news, but there is good news too”.<sup>35</sup> In many ways this sentence provides a perfect illustration of the sentiment behind the initial campaign. It was unlikely a coincidence that the Monckton Commission’s findings were due to be published the day after this article appeared.<sup>36</sup> The Federal government had been sent the principal findings in September and according to Blake, they had “produced apoplectic symptoms in Salisbury”.<sup>37</sup> If Federal officials had known Monckton’s recommendations as early as September, it seems probable that these advertisements were planned as a pre-emptive rebuttal. The second advertisement moved away from highlighting education and concentrated on the benefits that the Federation had brought for African healthcare, particularly in Nyasaland where “health expenditure has trebled in the last seven years”.<sup>38</sup> The photograph with the piece conveyed the same message as the pictures in the previous advertisement. It showed European and African doctors treating an African child and the underlying message was that the Federation had brought a great improvement in Africans’ standard of living. Nyasaland featured heavily in the campaign as it was the territory which had attracted the most negative press for the Federation in Britain. Publicity from the Devlin Report into the handling of the 1959 Nyasaland emergency, and other incidents had “reinforced the wave of sympathy for African nationalist aspirations” in Britain, and it was deemed necessary to show how far living conditions had improved for Africans in the territory.<sup>39</sup> However, as with the previous advertisement, less media-friendly aspects had been omitted – namely the disparity of pay between African and European hospital workers and the racial segregation of patients.<sup>40</sup>

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34 *The Times*, 16 September 1960, p 7

35 *The Times*, 7 October 1960, p 17

36 The British government dispatched a Commission, led by Lord Monckton, to the Federation in early 1960 to aid the Federal constitutional review which was scheduled for later that year. Welensky was adamant that the Commission’s terms of reference did not give it the right to recommend the dissolution of the Federation. In the event, the Commission concluded that although it would damage their economies, the individual territories should have the right to secede from the Federation, if they so wished. This led Welensky, not for the last time, to accuse the British of breaking their promises to the Federal government.

37 R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (Eyre Methuen, London, 1977), p 331

38 *The Times*, 7 October 1960, p 17

39 J. Barber, *Rhodesia: The Road to Rebellion* (Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, London, 1967), p 35

40 Keatley, *Politics*, p 448

A final advertisement was published in November 1960 in an attempt to portray the economic benefits of the Federation. The Kariba Dam received particular attention and it was claimed that “without Federation, a project of this scale would hardly have been undertaken ... a strong basis now exists for developing the Federal economy for the benefit of all races”.<sup>41</sup> Like its predecessors, this advertisement contained pictures of Africans and Europeans working together and further stressed that the potential for central Africa’s future “exists in the combination of increasing African skills and European knowledge and capital”.<sup>42</sup> The construction of the Kariba Dam created the largest man-made lake in the world and was undoubtedly a striking advertisement for the Federation.<sup>43</sup> However, Franklin has questioned the validity of stressing its success, arguing “of all the propaganda designed to bolster up the Federation none is more misleading than that concerned with the Kariba hydro-electric project”.<sup>44</sup> This line of attack was used in the Commons on 3 November 1960 by John Stonehouse, a renowned critic of the Federation and a Labour MP.<sup>45</sup> Stonehouse had read Voice and Vision’s advertisement in *The Times* regarding the benefits that Federation had brought to central Africa and disputed the piece. He argued that a dam had previously been created between Uganda and Kenya to service the needs of the people of both countries and therefore “it did not need a Federation to achieve a friendly understanding between the three territories”. He concluded by criticising Voice and Vision’s “attempted brainwashing of the British public, in particular the ‘top people’ who read *The Times*”.<sup>46</sup>

The findings of the Monckton Commission were published during the Conservative Party Conference in October 1960. Voice and Vision actively tried to foster opposition to its more negative findings by distributing a selective summary of its contents two hours before the report was officially released.<sup>47</sup> Welensky received word of the Conservatives’ reaction through Patrick Wall, who summarized that, although most people considered that the Federation was an economic success, “it has been a political failure and that there is now little hope in preserving it in its present form”.<sup>48</sup> The conclusion of the Monckton Report and the reaction it received in Britain delivered a debilitating blow to Voice and Vision’s campaign almost immediately after it had begun. Nonetheless, Voice and Vision followed its range of newspaper articles with the publication of a magazine highlighting life in the Federation called *Inside the New Africa*. The editors clarified the importance of the Monckton Report to the publicity campaign, claiming that:

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41 *The Times*, 10 November 1960, p 5

42 *The Times*, 10 November 1960, p 5

43 At the time the loan received by the Federal government for the construction of the Kariba Dam was the largest ever awarded by the World Bank. Initially the decision had been taken to construct a smaller, cheaper hydro-electric dam on the Kafue in Northern Rhodesia, but this was overturned in favour of the Kariba project

44 H Franklin, *Unholy Wedlock, The Failure of the Central African Federation* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1963), p 105

45 See: J Stonehouse, *Prohibited Immigrant* (Bodley Head, London, 1960)

46 *Hansard Debates* (hereafter *HD*), 3 November 1960, column 429

47 Keatley, *Politics*, p 457

48 WP 679/3, P Wall – R Welensky, 17 October 1960

with the publication of the Monckton Commission's Report the spotlight on Africa focuses on the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Here is a word-and-picture portrait of that unique Federation. It makes no attempt to analyse the Commission's findings; but if it helps in an assessment of those findings, its purpose will have been achieved.<sup>49</sup>

The message contained within its pages represented a glowing endorsement of the Federation. It argued that if a "true" picture of life in the Federation was reported, British politicians and the people as a whole would continue to have faith in the Federation. This portrayal focused on a series of points, the first of which regarded the advancements that Africans had made in the work-place. It claimed that "in the Federal Civil Service, an African can now hold a job at any level, at the same rate of pay as a European" and "on Rhodesia Railways the European trade unions have agreed that Africans may now take any job from the general managers downwards".<sup>50</sup> In theory this was true, as in recent years changes had been made to allow Africans into these positions. However, in practice there were very few Africans educated to a sufficient level to take on higher-paid positions. A further aim of the Voice and Vision campaign was to portray the Federation as a suitable location for British business investment. They secured advertisements in the magazine from major businesses already operating in the Federation, for example, The British South Africa Company, British United Airways, Imperial Tobacco and Shell. Each of these advertisements carried alongside its general message explicit support for the Federation. The Shell advertisement is indicative of this approach, boldly declaring that "Shell has faith in Federation".<sup>51</sup>

*Inside the New Africa* emphasised the Federation's role in the development of Nyasaland, asserting that "the protectorate has gained most, materially and relatively from Federation".<sup>52</sup> This gives an indication of how essential it was to portray Nyasaland, the home of the most disruptive anti-Federation protests, as ungrateful for the benefits it had obtained since 1953. The publication freely admitted that, with or without Federation, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland would become African states – though it crucially failed to give any time frame for this, claiming that Nyasaland without Federation would, in the words of *The Economist*, "be condemned to an existence as a 'rural slum'".<sup>53</sup> The citation of an *Economist* quote by Voice and Vision was clever use of a publication normally critical of the Federation to campaign in its favour. The value of this quote is underlined by its being the only publication directly cited in the magazine.

The need to attract economic investment and support from business continued to play a key role in the campaign. Wynne contacted the Federal Prime Minister's office during March 1961 to suggest that Welensky should address the annual meeting of the Institute of Directors at the Albert Hall that November. The event would be attended by leading British businessmen, and the other scheduled speakers included the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, himself. "I cannot emphasise too much the value of appearing at their Annual Conference," urged Wynne.<sup>54</sup> Welensky

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49 *Inside the New Africa* (London, 1960), p 3  
50 *Inside the New Africa* (London, 1960), p 6  
51 *Inside the New Africa* (London, 1960), p 45  
52 *Inside the New Africa* (London, 1960), p 18  
53 *Inside the New Africa* (London, 1960), p 19  
54 WP 274/3, S. Wynne – S. Parker, 28 March 1961



agreed and duly spoke. He focused on the dangers of African nationalism and urged that caution and stability were required to achieve “partnership” in the Federation. The *Times* reflected that Welensky “had at least spoken his mind however violently it may have upset their [the directors] share prices”.<sup>55</sup> Following this, he “sat down to an ovation which vibrated the Albert Hall”.<sup>56</sup> *The Economist* also remarked upon the “frequent applause” during Welensky’s speech, although they credited the frequent “hear, hears” solely to Lord Salisbury. The article went on to muse that what the “sentimentally bald heads and red gin-and- tonic faces” liked most was

the “sound common sense” of Sir Roy From him they learned of the dangers of communisms [sic] victories in Africa: these were the result of the tragic reversal of colonial policy after the war It was bad for the country, it was bad for all the peoples of Africa, it was bad for business.<sup>57</sup>

In some respects this illustrates the key problem the Federation faced during its campaign. Welensky’s arguments appear to have attracted sympathy in some business circles and the centre of the Conservative Party. However, opinion on African affairs had shifted sufficiently that this could not be transformed into outright support. This corresponds with Thompson’s argument that by the end of the 1950s, support for the “highly privileged” settlers in Africa was beginning to wane. Settlers and their supporters were often the butt of contemporary satire, as the “sentimentally bald heads and red gin-and- tonic faces” of *The Economist*’s article suggests. Furthermore, the “kith and kin” sentiment had little appeal “for an emerging group professional middle class Tory MPs”.<sup>58</sup> Indicative of this new approach to colonial affairs was the Bow Group. Consisting of around fifty members who were interested in colonial matters, the median age of the group was twenty-eight years in 1960 and Murphy observes that they “represented a young and ambitious section of the party”.<sup>59</sup> As such their comments did not come from extreme positions on either side of the party, as they had their future career prospects to consider. Their criticism was manifested with the release of a memorandum on the Federation’s future called *Africa – A New Year 1960*. Like the Federal government, they recognised 1960 to be a crucial year in deciding the Federation’s future and concluded that:

if some Africans doubt the word of HMG, that doubt can best be put to rest by showing Africans that Federation has not set back their political development in their own territory ... the passing of power in Africa is no dishonourable process, nor must it become a shabby game.<sup>60</sup>

Voice and Vision sought allies to counter such attacks by organising trips to the Federation for MPs of all parties. It was hoped that the visitors would express favourable opinions of the Federation through television and the print media, put down questions in the House of Commons, participate in debates and finally influence their colleagues and constituents.<sup>61</sup> The MPs were chosen based on both their parliamentary connections and their “special sphere of influence”.<sup>62</sup> These extra-

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55 *The Times*, 9 November 1961, p 8

56 *The Times*, 9 November 1961, p 8

57 *The Economist*, 11 November 1961, p 547

58 Thompson, *Empire Strikes Back*, p 213

59 Murphy, *Party Politics*, p 212

60 Bow Group, *Africa – New Year 1960* (Bow Group, London, 1960), p 4

61 WP 274/2, S Wynne – Acting Secretary of Home Affairs, 6 October 1960

62 WP 389/3, McWhinnie – Matthews, 13 September 1960

parliamentary activities included access to publishing, trade unions and “a fondness for public speaking”.<sup>63</sup> Voice and Vision also chose MPs who were sympathetic to the Federation, or at least open-minded.

The visits did not go unnoticed in Britain and a Complaint of Privilege was raised in the Commons by Frank Bowles, Labour MP for Nuneaton. Bowles saw the trips as an attempt “by improper means to influence members in their parliamentary conduct”.<sup>64</sup> He had been made aware of the trips through an article in *Reynolds News* which led with the headline “Beware the PR men as they invade the shrinking world of hard news!”<sup>65</sup> The article revealed how Voice and Vision “offered free trips to MPs of all parties to see for themselves the wonders of partnership”, after which “they warmly backed the Federation and deplored any talk of secession”.<sup>66</sup> Bowles concluded by remarking “I suspect that this is as gross and grave a breach of privilege as I can imagine”.<sup>67</sup> The following day the matter was raised again and two of Voice and Vision’s guests defended their visits. One likened it to that of the Monckton Commission, stating that through Voice and Vision, he and other MPs had been “afforded an opportunity, at no expense to themselves except in time, hard work and inconvenience to their own affairs at home, to see for themselves on the spot what is happening in the Federation”.<sup>68</sup> While a further felt no particular need to explain his motives, curtly commenting “if anyone thinks my advocacy is bought by a free trip to Africa, he seriously under-rates the price of my corruption”.<sup>69</sup> Although the Complaint of Privilege was not upheld, featuring on the news rather than dictating it certainly did not work in the favour of Voice and Vision.

Back in the Federation the spiralling cost of the campaign began to draw criticism from within the Federal government. Wynne’s request that funds be set aside for further journalistic trips to the Federation after the unfavourable Monckton Report, exacerbated the criticism. Wynne estimated the cost of these trips at £5 000 each.<sup>70</sup> The Minister of Home Affairs, Malcolm Barrow, wrote to Welensky during November 1960, drawing to his attention to the fact that the campaign was already £200 000 over budget. The precarious financial position of the Federation was at the forefront of Barrow’s mind. He warned Welensky that “we are faced at the present time with the most serious financial difficulties; I just do not know how we are going to find the money to pay for even the essential expansion of ordinary services”.<sup>71</sup> In his experience, consultants would exploit any opportunity to make more money and so he warned Welensky “that publicity consultants, being more than usually well endowed with the ‘gift of the gab’, need to be especially carefully watched”.<sup>72</sup> Although there was concern over the rising cost of the trips, they continued and were judged to be a resounding success by both Voice and Vision and the Federal government. However, their impact back in Britain was slight at best. Although MPs and journalists often wrote and spoke favourably about their experience in the

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63 WP 389/3, McWhinnie – Matthews, 13 September 1960

64 *HD*, 25 October 1960, column 2157

65 *Reynolds News* cited in *HD*, 25 October 1960, column 2157

66 *Reynolds News* cited in *HD*, 25 October 1960, column 2157

67 *Reynolds News* cited in *HD*, 25 October 1960, column 2157

68 *HD*, 3 November 1960, column 406

69 *HD*, 3 November 1960, column 462

70 WP 274/2, S. Wynne – Acting Secretary of Home Affairs, 6 October 1960

71 WP 274/2, M. Barrow – R. Welensky, 7 November 1960

72 WP 274/2, M. Barrow – R. Welensky, 7 November 1960

Federation – the Labour MP for Rochdale, Jack McCann, was reported to have given approximately forty talks on his visit to the Federation – their message was only received by a limited audience, and regional rather than the national press tended to carry their reports.<sup>73</sup>

British television also featured in the campaign. Voice and Vision arranged a series of interviews for Welensky, which they hoped would help garner support. A booklet was published detailing Welensky's BBC interview with John Freeman.<sup>74</sup> A further interview was given in 1961 to Granada Television, which filled Wynne with optimism over how the campaign was progressing. Wynne commented on how well the interview had been received and reported that he had arranged for further showings in the Grand Committee Room of the House of Commons and in Rhodesia House. By July 1961, the campaign had become increasingly focused on the personality of the Federal Prime Minister. Indicative of this approach was Wynne's observation that "with increasing frequency people are commentating on how much we need a Churchill at this time".<sup>75</sup> He proposed that Welensky was "the one outstanding Commonwealth figure in the Churchill tradition" and suggested that Welensky include "Churchillisms" that he had drafted in future speeches.<sup>76</sup> This suggestion illustrates how the nature of the campaign had changed. The decision to focus on Welensky rather than to build up the reputation of other leading cabinet figures may indicate how quickly events were overtaking the campaign and how little time there seemed to be to turn back the tide of negative press.

### **Press and parliament**

At the start of the 1960s, it was apparent that Welensky had misjudged political realities and British attitudes towards settler colonialism. He retained faith that the British public could be persuaded that the Federation was a success. He suffered a defeat by Iain Macleod, the Colonial Secretary, with the release of Doctor Hastings Banda, leader of the Nyasaland African Congress, during April 1960; however he still maintained the belief that Banda's "efforts on T.V. and with the newspaper men will begin to bring home to the great British public the kind of fellow he is".<sup>77</sup> Whilst his supporters may have agreed with him, the influential *Times* had already decided that "Dr Banda is not an evil man, he honestly works for the good of his people".<sup>78</sup> This impression of Banda was to remain consistent throughout press coverage, though Welensky's remark reveals his continuing faith that the British people would inevitably come round to his point of view.

Macleod significantly misjudged the mood of settlers during June 1960. He thought that in view of events in the Federation, the Congo and South Africa, the majority of settlers "are willing to see pretty rapid constitutional advance in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland and that they would be reconciled to see African governments there within ten years".<sup>79</sup> This was certainly not the view of Welensky

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73 WP 274/3, S Wynne – S Parker, 18 May 1961

74 *Face to Face: Sir Roy Welensky with John Freeman* (V&V, London, 1960)

75 WP 274/3, S Wynne – R Welensky, 18 July 1961

76 WP 274/3, S Wynne – R Welensky, 18 July 1961

77 WP 665/2, R Welensky – Lord Salisbury, 12 April 1960

78 *The Times*, 2 April 1960, p 7

79 All file references are to the National Archives, Kew, London (hereafter NA): DO 35/7620, I Macleod – A Home, 27 June 1960

or his supporters in the British Parliament, led by Lord Salisbury in the House of Lords, and illustrates why Macleod became the figure toward whom their wrath could be directed. Press coverage provided the focus of Welensky's anger during August 1960. He wrote to Lord Salisbury, declaring:

I feel that I am almost alone these days in speaking up for what I believe to be right  
The extent to which Hollywood influences public opinion and the way the press,  
aided by the B B C , on every occasion they can, see nothing else but virtue in every  
leftist movement, shocks me<sup>80</sup>

Shortly after this outburst, Voice and Vision released the newspaper advertisements discussed above. This does not appear to have had much effect on the perception of the Federation, as a later report highlighted. This report noted how "the press and the B.B.C. are increasingly adopting the rather nauseating attitude that we must save the white Rhodesians from themselves".<sup>81</sup>

Macleod's attempt to get Welensky to agree to an African majority in the negotiations over constitutional reform in Northern Rhodesia, has been seen as the "definitive trial of strength" of the future of the Federation.<sup>82</sup> Holland, agreeing with this, suggested that after the Monckton Report, the Federal government were resigned to losing Nyasaland and, subsequently, Northern Rhodesia became "the focus of Central African Affairs".<sup>83</sup> Macmillan also appeared to recognise the importance of Northern Rhodesia. He feared Welensky would refuse to attend the Northern Rhodesia Constitutional Conference as the Federal Prime Minister had declined to make any amendments to the proposed opening speech by Macleod, instead calling for a postponement altogether. Macmillan supposed that if the UFP withdrew, they would publish Britain's proposals for the conference and concentrate on the "rallying of press and public opinion" in both Rhodesia and Britain against any outcome.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, if Macmillan conceded to Welensky's demands and postponed the Conference, he feared there would be "consequent danger of serious riots or clashes between the two sides".<sup>85</sup> The key was therefore to make sure everyone actually attended the start of the Conference as "once proposals are made and discussions are joined adjournments from time to time are tolerable".<sup>86</sup> This philosophy was typical of Macmillan's approach to negotiations between Britain, Welensky and the African nationalist groups, and contributed to the ineffectiveness of the Federation's public relations campaign. While all the parties were involved in the dialogue over the Federation's future, it was easy to fend off any criticism from Welensky or his supporters in Parliament. However, if the negotiations were to break down and Britain was shown to be at fault, Macmillan's support from more moderate MPs would be threatened.

By the beginning of 1961, Lord Salisbury formed a Watching Committee to "keep an eye on developments in Africa".<sup>87</sup> The committee was modelled on the

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80 WP 665/2, R. Welensky – Lord Salisbury, 18 August 1960

81 WP 679/3, P. Wall – R. Welensky, 27 February 1961

82 Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, p 367

83 Holland, *European Decolonization*, p 230

84 NA: PREM 11/3485, H. Macmillan – I. Macleod, 27 January 1961

85 NA: PREM 11/3485, H. Macmillan – I. Macleod, 27 January 1961

86 NA: PREM 11/3485, H. Macmillan – I. Macleod, 27 January 1961

87 NA: PREM 11/4608, Lord Salisbury – H. Macmillan, 18 February 1961

Watching Committee his father had founded in 1940 of which Macmillan himself had been a member. Salisbury assured Macmillan that “there is no intention of opposing or even criticising government policy as such”.<sup>88</sup> This however seems unlikely, considering the nature of the MPs, who were mainly drawn from the old Suez Group,<sup>89</sup> and the fact that Welensky had previously asked Salisbury to launch an attack on Macmillan.<sup>90</sup> The Watching Committee remained in place for the rest of the Federation’s life. Rather than appearing formidable to Macmillan, however, its reliance on the “usual suspects” in its composition ultimately rendered it “a little comical”.<sup>91</sup>

The continuing deadlock over the Northern Rhodesian Constitution only reinforced Welensky’s wish for “a little bit of guts in the British Government”.<sup>92</sup> Macmillan feared that Welensky’s frustration would inspire an attempt by the Federal government to secure control of the northern territories by force.<sup>93</sup> Whilst the Northern Rhodesian Constitution had become the focus of Federal efforts in London, Macleod was the target of their personal attacks.<sup>94</sup> Welensky could scarcely contain his antipathy towards Macleod by this point, labelling him “completely and utterly dishonest politically”.<sup>95</sup> This comment clearly shows Welensky’s frustration with developments, which was likely exacerbated by news received from Patrick Wall on the same day that “Rhodesia is presented in much the same light as South Africa”.<sup>96</sup> At this time, Lord Salisbury also provided troubling news regarding the Government’s intentions. A day earlier he had written, observing that the “rank and file” of the Conservative Party “is becoming more and more worried” with Macmillan’s handling of Central African affairs.<sup>97</sup> Salisbury went on to bemoan that his offer to pen an article expressing this view had only been accepted by the *Sunday Express*. He mourned, “it is not the paper I should have chosen above all others, but it is the only paper to have asked me to write!”<sup>98</sup> Salisbury’s inability to publish in a newspaper other than the Federation-friendly *Express* supports Wall’s assessment of how the campaign was progressing.

Newspaper circulation figures for the period between 1959 and 1964 show readership for the *Express* newspapers to vary between 4,1 to 4,2 million copies per annum. The *Daily Mail*, which had a circulation of between 2,1 and 2,4 million, was also Federation-friendly. Combined, these numbers compare favourably to the 4,5 to 5,1 million copies of the *Daily Mirror*, which held an anti-colonial stance. Unfortunately for the Federal government, the section of society that was influenced

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88 NA: PREM 11/4608, Lord Salisbury – H Macmillan, 18 February 1961  
89 The “Suez Group” refers loosely to MPs on the “right” of the Conservative Party who backed Anthony Eden’s decision to use force against Egypt in 1956. They also predominantly supported the cause of European settlers in East and Central Africa  
90 R Welensky – Lord Salisbury, 27 January 1961, cited in S Ball, *The Guardsmen* (Harper Collins, London, 2004), p 354  
91 Ball, *Guardsmen*, p 352  
92 WP 665/2, R Welensky – Lord Salisbury, 18 August 1960  
93 H Macmillan, *Pointing the Way 1959-1961* (Macmillan, London, 1972), p 311  
94 D Horowitz, “Attitudes of British Conservatives Towards Decolonization in Africa during the Period of the Macmillan Government 1957-1963” DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1967, p 102  
95 WP 665/3, R Welensky – Lord Salisbury, 27 February 1961  
96 WP 679/3, P Wall – R Welensky, 27 February 1961  
97 WP 665/3, Lord Salisbury – R Welensky, 25 February 1961  
98 WP 665/3, Lord Salisbury – R Welensky, 25 February 1961

by the former publications, was not in a position to alter British policy. *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, with circulations of 0,3 and 1,2 million respectively, were far more influential, hence Salisbury's dismay at not being able to publish his article in either of these papers.<sup>99</sup>

February 1961 saw Welensky come close to achieving a break-through in the British Parliament. Robin Turton, Conservative MP for Thirsk and Malton, tabled an Early Day Motion demanding that Macleod adhere to the principles in a White Paper drafted by then Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox Boyd, in 1958. Within a few days, 101 Conservative MPs had signed the Motion, which equated to over one-third of the party's backbench membership.<sup>100</sup> This was the first time a pro-Federal motion had attracted significant support in the centre of the party.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Gallup polling demonstrates that an important breakthrough was made in attracting support from the British people at large. Between 1960 and 1964, respondents were asked which of twelve responses, including "colonial affairs", was the most important problem facing the country. During this period, "colonial affairs" was consistently chosen by 1 to 6 per cent of the sample. However, it jumped to 18 per cent in January, February and April 1961 and 19 per cent in March.<sup>102</sup> Ideally, this poll would have provided a more accurate appraisal of the relative importance of colonial affairs by asking people to rank the issues in order of importance. However, even the results above indicate that the British public's indifference towards its colonies was disrupted during a time of increased pressure from Conservative MPs, unrelated to the Voice and Vision campaign. No evidence has been found to suggest Turton was operating under the aegis of Voice and Vision. Ultimately, Macleod defended his proposals in Parliament and in two meetings of the Colonial Affairs Committee. Gradually Turton's moderate supporters withdrew their signatures and by the end of February, it was estimated that only forty members would still support Turton if it came to a test of strength.<sup>103</sup> Consequently Macleod was able to ride out the storm, though the damage to his personal reputation over this incident would return to haunt him.

Lord Salisbury continued to campaign on behalf of settlers in both the Federation and Kenya. However, the effectiveness of his personal intervention is questionable. At least one Colonial Office was in no mood to be influenced by Salisbury's complaints, and wrote to Macmillan stating "it is rather tiresome if Lord Salisbury acts as an intermediary in this way".<sup>104</sup> Salisbury was by far the most public face of Welensky's support in Conservative Party during the early 1960s. Ball cites his support of the Federation as the issue which turned Salisbury's relationship with Macmillan "from one of mutual distrust into one of open hatred".<sup>105</sup> This deterioration was borne out in his failure to gain any concessions from Macmillan. Goldsworthy has argued that, to Welensky's supporters in Parliament, the fight to save "British Africa went hand in hand with a task much closer to home – the fight to

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99 All figures from D Butler and G Butler, *Twentieth Century British Political Facts* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2000), p 536  
 100 Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, pp 368-369  
 101 M Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France, The Domestic Consequences of International Relations* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984), p 146  
 102 A King (ed), *British Political Opinion 1937-2000, The Gallup Polls* (Politico's Publishing Ltd, London, 2001), p 262  
 103 Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, p 369  
 104 NA: PREM 11/3414, Pearson – H Macmillan, 1 March 1961  
 105 Ball, *Guardsmen*, p 344

save their party from its leaders".<sup>106</sup> This certainly appears to be a key motivation for Salisbury, although he could not sufficiently exert influence on the moderate core of the party, particularly the younger MPs who had been elected to power after the Second World War.

Welensky had the opportunity to speak to the Commonwealth Affairs Committee in Parliament during March 1961. His speech was firmly rooted in *Voice and Vision's* campaign as it focused on the new opportunities available to Africans at Salisbury's new university and in the workforce as a whole. He claimed that "in the past 70 years there had never been such progress on economic and political matters as there had been during the last seven years".<sup>107</sup> Welensky also used the opportunity to attack Macleod for excluding the *Daily Express* from newspaper briefings. Although it transpired that this was not the case as no other mass circulation newspapers were invited either, it did, as Macmillan was informed, show how "the most absurd matters can fan the flames".<sup>108</sup> Patrick Wall, Chairman of the Commonwealth Affairs Committee, reported that Welensky "undoubtedly made a great impression", and noticed that his plea to reach a compromise that gave Africans advancement, but fell short of giving Northern Rhodesia an anti-federation majority "carried two thirds to three quarters of the meeting".<sup>109</sup> Macmillan received two independent reports of the meeting. The first, an unnamed observer, reported that his reaction was to "doubt Welensky's willingness to co-operate with Iain [Macleod]".<sup>110</sup> The second, Knox Cunningham, an Ulster Unionist MP, noted that "Sir Roy had a very good reception ... he certainly went all out to get support from the Conservative Party for his policy. I think he succeeded in doing so at this meeting".<sup>111</sup> No record exists of Macmillan's reaction to these reports, however this is perhaps indicative of a lack of concern in the government for scare-mongering from two well-known right-wing backbenchers. The anonymous report was perhaps given more weight by the Prime Minister, and possibly assisted Macmillan in his future decision to remove Macleod from the Colonial Office during the following October.

Macleod attempted to dissipate the increasing criticism he received from Welensky's allies both to Macmillan and the country at large. He wrote to the Prime Minister with regard to Northern Rhodesia and stressed that "the real situation ... is clearly utterly different from the one that is being put through various Federal channels to the Tory Party in the House".<sup>112</sup> Macleod was clearly worried about the effect of this discrepancy and asked for permission to release a selection of documents to MPs who supported Welensky in order to inform them of the "real situation". He was acutely aware that there was "a great danger if we do nothing in letting a formidable attack build up in Parliament which is based on inaccurate premises".<sup>113</sup> Macmillan however vetoed this idea, giving the reason that if "Northern Rhodesia does go sour the argument might be used that the Government had deliberately misled opinion in the Houses of Parliament". Instead he suggested "there were attempts at

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106 Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, pp 366-367

107 NA: PREM 11/3495, K Cunningham – H Macmillan, 17 March 1961

108 NA: PREM 11/3495, Briefing for H Macmillan, 22 March 1961

109 NA: PREM 11/3495, P Wall – H Macmillan, 17 March 1961

110 NA: PREM 11/3495, M R – H Macmillan, 17 March 1961

111 NA: PREM 11/3495, Letter from K Cunningham – H Macmillan, 17 March 1961

112 NA: PREM 11/3490, I Macleod – H Macmillan, 10 May 1961

113 NA: PREM 11/3490, I Macleod – H Macmillan, 10 May 1961

persuading Lord Salisbury and his supporters orally”.<sup>114</sup> Macleod’s public comments clearly demonstrated that he saw Voice and Vision’s hand behind the criticism he had received, and he went as far as to state on the BBC’s “Gallery” programme on 15 June 1961 that “one does get a little worried about the influence of some firms who have particular interests in Africa, public relations firms”.<sup>115</sup> Macleod’s removal from office and subsequent replacement by Reginald Maudling can be seen as a somewhat *pyrrhic* victory for Welensky’s campaign in London. Both Welensky and Salisbury believed during early 1961 that if Macleod could be removed, Macmillan would be damaged for having backed Macleod so strongly.<sup>116</sup> This proved not to be the case and even Patrick Wall grudgingly admitted:

once again the Prime Minister has proved himself to be a master of political strategy. He has given Iain Macleod possibly the only job he would have accepted and, while apparently promoting him, has removed him from a position that was rapidly becoming untenable.<sup>117</sup>

However, Wall’s confident comment that “Maudling is more human and less ruthless than Iain Macleod” would prove to be misplaced.<sup>118</sup> Within a few months in office, Maudling showed himself to be even “more progressive, more difficult and intransigent than his predecessor”.<sup>119</sup>

### The final curtain

It is somewhat ironic that after all the venom directed at Macleod it was his replacement that swiftly guaranteed an African majority in the legislature of Northern Rhodesia. Much to the fury of Welensky and his allies in London, Maudling tore up Macleod’s proposals for Northern Rhodesia and pushed through a new Constitution that would allow for an African majority to gain power in the election of October 1962.<sup>120</sup> Again Welensky had suffered a defeat, yet his public relations campaign continued unabated with the February 1962 release of *The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland Newsletter*. The newsletter was four pages long and aimed to convince British businesses to invest in the Federation. It detailed investment in the Federation during 1961 and set out plans up to 1970. Details of the increasing rate of immigration were also expounded with claims of up to one thousand emigrants a month moving into the Federation. It was asserted that these immigrants were primarily from Britain, or British colonies, Belgians from the Congo and Germans from South West Africa.<sup>121</sup> This effort marks a shift in the campaign away from general advertisements in newspapers to specifically targeting business. This policy change may have been a reaction to the loss of confidence in the economic future of the Federation. During April 1962, the Institute of Directors in Salisbury wrote to Welensky, revealing that “far from there being a surge of confidence in the Federation, for which we had planned and hoped, we find it has in fact gone the other

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114 NA: PREM 11/3490, Note regarding H Macmillan’s attitude to I Macleod’s suggestions, 11 May 1961

115 Weller, “Pressure Politics”, *Encounter*, August 1962, p 11, cited in Horowitz, *Attitudes*, p 116

116 Ball, *Guardsmen*, p 353

117 WP 679/3, P Wall – R Welensky, 10 October 1961

118 WP 679/3, P Wall – R Welensky, 20 October 1961

119 A Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986* (Macmillan, London, 1989), p 408

120 Blake, *Rhodesia*, p 337

121 *The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland Newsletter* (V&V, London, 1962), located in WP 274/4



way”.<sup>122</sup> Although the Federal treasury refuted these claims, the Institute’s reply found “with regret ... we do not find ourselves in agreement with your views”.<sup>123</sup>

Through the contacts made from Voice and Vision trips, Welensky managed to cultivate opportunities to ask questions of the British government in Parliament. In July 1962, Welensky asked for a parliamentary question to be asked in the Commons:

specifically on the fact that the British taxpayer is to provide the sum of 5/- out of every £1 Nyasaland spends on Current Account. Perhaps the questioner might enquire whether it is normal practice for the British taxpayer to subsidise the purchase and running of Government-owned newspapers.<sup>124</sup>

Wynne promptly made arrangements and on 19 July 1962, one week after the request had left Salisbury, Roy Mason tabled a written question identically phrased.<sup>125</sup>

The creation of the Central African Office and R.A. Butler’s subsequent takeover of responsibility for Central African Affairs, was greeted with optimism by Wynne. He wrote to Welensky advising that “the feeling around the town suggests increasing confidence in the view that he is our friend”, and remarking that “he [Butler] is clearly not going to turn somersaults to advance the cause of African nationalism”.<sup>126</sup> Wynne took the opportunity to say a few words regarding African nationalism, reporting that it was a subject with which “more and more people here are becoming disenchanted”.<sup>127</sup> This optimism was to prove short-lived as events gathered momentum during 1962. By the end of the year, Welensky’s continuing support for Federation was out of step with the majority of both African and settler opinion. There were now African majority governments in both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and the Rhodesian Front had come to power in the Southern Rhodesian election of December 1962 campaign on a platform of independence free from Federation.<sup>128</sup> In London, Voice and Vision’s campaign continued to receive criticism from the Bow Group, a Conservative think-tank whose members were drawn from the more liberal wing of the party.<sup>129</sup> Its activities were described as having “reduced the constitutional consideration of the future of Rhodesia to a vicious dog fight”.<sup>130</sup> Wynne felt it necessary to repudiate the growing criticism of Voice and Vision, and in a letter to the Federal government commented “thank goodness you know that we aren’t really a disreputable collection of chaps who in some sinister way attempt to manipulate public opinion for improper purposes”.<sup>131</sup>

The final death-knell for the Federation came in March 1963, with the British Government’s decision that no country should be kept in the Federation against its will. This cleared the way for Northern Rhodesia to follow Nyasaland’s lead and secede from the Federation, leaving the organisation obsolete. By this point even Wynne conceded defeat and apologised to Welensky: “I think it’s being strictly

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122 WP 589/3, Institute of Directors – R Welensky, 3 April 1962

123 WP 589/3, Institute of Directors – R Welensky, 4 May 1962

124 WP 274/4, S Parker – S Wynne, 12 July 1962

125 *HD*, 19 July 1962, column 89

126 WP 274/4, S Wynne – S Parker, 6 July 1962

127 WP 274/4, S Wynne – S Parker, 6 July 1962

128 Darwin, *Decolonisation*, p 277

129 Murphy, *Party Politics*, p 71

130 Bow Group, *The New Africa*, p 46

131 WP 274/4, S Wynne – Eden-Greene, 25 May 1962

accurate to say that many of us feel that we have failed you".<sup>132</sup> Welensky refused to blame Voice and Vision's campaign, replying: "if anyone is to blame, I am to blame because I allowed myself to accept the views of men like Macmillan and Butler and by now I should have learnt that these men just cannot be trusted".<sup>133</sup> Voice and Vision continued a low-key campaign during this period, arranging for its friends in Parliament to harass Macmillan and Butler.<sup>134</sup> It was to no avail and the final details regarding dissolution were decided at the Victoria Falls Conference during June. The date was set for 31 December 1963. After this, Wynne continued to work for Welensky, organising the publication of Welensky's memoirs, *4000 Days*,<sup>135</sup> in which Welensky acknowledged him as "my friend Sydney Wynne".<sup>136</sup>

## Conclusion

The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland's public relations campaign failed as it was unable to reach beyond the die-hard Conservative core, both in Parliament and Britain in general. This echoes Andrew Thompson's conclusions on the influence of the Diehard Movement in the Conservative Party in the late 1910s and early 1920s. As with the Diehards, support for the Federation was "a minority if passionately held view", the influence of which should not be exaggerated as it was ranged against "a phalanx of more liberal and progressive sentiment".<sup>137</sup> The Federal government's initial decision to employ Voice and Vision appeared sound, as the company had extensive contacts in the Conservative Party through their association with Colman, Prentis and Varley. The early campaign promoted the advancements and improvements made to Africans' standard of living during the first seven years of Federation. Their arguments were compelling; however, the limited polling data available indicates that they misjudged the mood of the early 1960s. Ten years earlier, the creation of a Federal franchise based on race had been acceptable to British government and whilst the majority of Africans had opposed its creation, they were initially prepared to work within its constitution to achieve equality. However, Federal policy since 1957 had shown the settlers' promises of partnership to be hollow. Additionally, the wider context of European decolonisation in Africa inspired the Federation's Africans to refuse to settle for anything less than "one man, one vote". The transfer of power to Africans was now viewed by London to be the best way to secure co-operation from the newly independent countries.

The Federal government's campaign could not succeed in this milieu. Welensky's speech to the Institute of Directors in 1961 provides a prime example of how his views received sympathy, though not outright support, in Britain. Welensky's supporters in Parliament consisted predominantly of Conservatives from the right of the party and several Labour MPs who had experienced the Federation courtesy of Voice and Vision's tours. The campaign's failure supports the observation that by the early 1960s, "the British regarded their 'imperial' interests as quite distinct from the local interests of their kith and kin, the white settlers".<sup>138</sup> This

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132 WP 686/7, S Wynne – R Welensky, 11 April 1963

133 WP 686/7, S Wynne – R Welensky, 16 April 1963

134 WP 215/2, P Brown – S Parker, 10 May 1963

135 WP 687/7, S Wynne – R Welensky, 18 July 1963

136 R Welensky, *4000 Days* (Collins, London, 1964), p 11

137 Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back*, p 137

138 Darwin, *Decolonisation*, p 278

article, therefore, corroborates recent claims by scholars regarding British public opinion towards empire in this period, namely, Thompson's assertion that between 1959 and 1964, there was a "third implosion of empire", as people were less likely to hold any opinion about empire, never mind offer it outright support.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, Shipway has argued that public and political opinion "started to perceive the maintenance of empire as an obstacle to the growing prosperity of a post-war society".<sup>140</sup> Porter also highlights the indifference of the British public and politicians towards Britain's remaining imperial legacy. He notes, as does this article, that MPs of all parties "mostly accepted the general principle of colonial [African] self-government and went along with the unexpected pace of it with no great qualms".<sup>141</sup> In the words of a former employee of the Federal Information Service:

the campaign was designed to sell a product which was, in modern parlance, already past its sell by date. It was a product flawed in its conception, not a little hypocritical in the presentation of its qualities, and condemned by market research which confirmed that only a privileged minority wanted it.<sup>142</sup>

### Abstract

By the late 1950s, the future prospects of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland were increasingly portrayed in a pessimistic light in the British press. The Federal government chose to counter this coverage by undertaking a comprehensive public relations campaign in the United Kingdom. This article examines their decision to hire the London public relations company, Voice and Vision, and this company's subsequent attempts to rehabilitate the Federal image between 1960 and 1963. It will be argued that although the campaign achieved limited success in some quarters, it revealed that the Federal government had misunderstood British politics, and did not grasp the erosion of the ties that might previously have secured the Federation's future in British public sympathy only ten years earlier.

### Opsomming

#### **"Voice and Vision" – Die Federasie van Rhodesië en Njassaland se Publisiteitsveldtog in Brittanje: 1960-1963**

Teen die einde van die 1950's is die toekoms van die Federasie van Rhodesië en Njassaland in 'n toenemend pessimistiese lig deur die Britse pers uitgebeeld. Die federale regering het besluit om hierdie negatiewe mediadekking teen te werk deur 'n omvattende publisiteitsveldtog in die Verenigde Koninkryk te onderneem. Hierdie artikel ondersoek hulle besluit om die dienste van die Londense publisiteitsmaatskappy, Voice and Vision, te bekom, en hierdie maatskappy se daaropvolgende pogings van 1960 tot 1963 om die Federasie se beeld te rehabiliteer. Daar word aangevoer dat hoewel die veldtog by sommige beperkte sukses behaal het, dit bewys het dat die federale regering Britse politiek misverstaan het en nie begryp

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139 Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back*, p 216

140 M Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: A comparative approach to the End of Colonial Empires* (Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2008), p 203

141 B Porter, *The Absent Minded Imperialists: What the British Really Thought About Empire* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004), p 2

142 Hobson, "The Last Gasp", pp 30-31

het tot watter mate die bande, wat slegs 'n dekade tevore nog Britse openbare simpatie vir die Federasie se toekoms kon verseker het, verskiet het nie.

**Key Words**

Africa; Britain; Butler; Central African Federation; colonial history; decolonization; Macleod; Macmillan; Maudling; Public Relations; Rhodesia; Salisbury; Voice and Vision.

**Sleutelwoorde**

Afrika; Brittanje; Butler; dekolonisasie; koloniale geskiedenis; Macleod; Macmillan; Maudling; publisiteit; Rhodesië; Salisbury; Sentraal-Afrikaanse Federasie; Voice and Vision.