Chapter II

FEDERATIONS

While the aim of the newly-formed British Conservative Government in 1951 under Sir Winston Churchill was to help the colonial territories to attain self-government within the Commonwealth, and, at the same time, to promote economic and social development in these territories in order to keep pace with their political development, there were certain other colonies which, the Conservative Government thought, could be grouped together into federations, so that they could become economically viable while becoming politically independent within the Commonwealth. Thus, the Conservative Government was impressed, then, by three major schemes of grouping the colonies into federations. Two of them were in British Africa: Central African Federation and East African Federation, although they were not that enthusiastic about the latter. In fact, it was never on the cards politically. The third was to unite the British islands of the Caribbean into a West Indies Federation. And the new Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton (a business executive of aristocratic background) with full backing of his party, was out to create bigger units out of smaller ones, although to some extent it was an extension of

his predecessor's policy.

(A) CENTRAL AFRICAN FEDERATION

The Conservatives had inherited from the Labour Government the Central African Federation idea, and the Labour Government had gone a long way down the line towards selling the parts of Central African Federation. It was to consist of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Of the three territories, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were Protectorates administered by the Colonial Office. Southern Rhodesia, however, was a quasi-dominion, originally a conquered land, with a responsible cabinet under White leadership and in control of all its own affairs -- subject only to the right of the Commonwealth Relations Office to intervene for the protection of African interests, a right which was, in fact, never invoked. These differences of legal status were not arbitrary, but reflected substantial inequalities in culture and economic strength between the territories.

2 Southern Rhodesia was never a colony by London standard. First, it was ruled by the British South Africa Company and since 1923, it was self-governing.

3 The ideals of Cecil Rhodes who wanted to paint red as much of Africa from Cape to Cairo as possible but who was equally fired by the motto of "equal rights for all civilized men" (although not fully characteristic of Rhodes's philosophy) and the missionary work of Livingstone and his successors were decisive element in introducing the British influence into this part of Africa. And ideas, according to Plato, have their value and weight in public affairs.
History of the Closer Association

The formation of the Central African Federation, in September 1953, under the Conservative administration was the culmination of a long and overdue process which had been set in motion by successive British Governments, ever since the first proposals for amalgamation of these territories had been put forward, some thirty years ago. While there remained, among many Europeans, a strong leaning towards amalgamation, the question was not actively discussed until interest was revived by the publication, in January 1929, of the Report of the Hilton Young Commission on Closer Union of the Dependencies in Eastern and Central Africa.

The Hilton Young Commission had reported against any form of formal closer union and recommended the maintenance of the status quo, i.e. the protectorate status of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

4 Central African Federation:

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<th>S. Rhodesia</th>
<th>N. Rhodesia</th>
<th>Nyasaland</th>
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<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>158,500</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Africans</td>
<td>2,030,000</td>
<td>1,960,000</td>
<td>2,420,000</td>
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<td>Asians</td>
<td>4,700</td>
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<td>Mixed races</td>
<td>6,700</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>2,259,900</td>
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Rhodesia and Nyasaland. "The control of a large black population by the small white community (in Southern Rhodesia) is still in an experimental stage and it would be unwise", they said, "to add to its burdens until its ability to discharge its present task has been tested for a longer period." The Commission's majority report emphatically rejected federation not only as inexpedient but also as impracticable. "It would be difficult" they pointed out, "to devise any stable form of federation between two protectorates and a colony possessing responsible Government. The self-governing colony would naturally aspire to be the predominant partner and the arrangement would be likely to produce such friction between the colony and Colonial Office that the only escape would be either disruption of the federation or complete amalgamation."

Another Royal Commission, appointed in March 1938, while accepting the amalgamation as the ultimate objective to be

6 Ibid., p. 282.
7 Ibid.

The ratio of Africans to Whites was much greater in Nyasaland (607 to 1) and in Northern Rhodesia (47 to 1) than in Southern Rhodesia where the Black-White ratio was 13 to 1. See New York Herald Tribune, 28 December 1962.

8 Cmd. 3234/1929, p. 282.
9 Ibid.
10 Cmd. 5949/1939, Rhodesia-Nyasaland Royal Commission Report.
kept in view on the ground of economy, efficiency and similarity of the many problems facing the three territories, similarly rejected immediate amalgamation as undesirable. It was, however, the native policy of Southern Rhodesia which differed in many respects from that of the two Northern territories with its restrictive tendencies of "parallel development" -- territorial segregation, the exclusion of Africans under the Industrial Conciliation Act etc., -- which prompted the Commission not to recommend amalgamation immediately.

The War, however, enforced a degree of closer cooperation among the three territories and in October 1944, therefore, the British Government announced a proposal to establish a standing Central African Council to secure the closest possible coordination of policy and action among the three Governments in all matters of common interests. The Council which was established in 1945 did useful work, not only in promoting general collaboration among the three Governments but also in showing results in the field of communication, industrial development, research, etc. After some time the Southern Rhodesian Government, however, found it unable to support the Council as it felt that its activities were an encroachment on the powers and functions of the

11 Ibid., p. 215.
12 Ibid., pp. 175-6.
Governments of the respective territories. And in 1950, the Southern Rhodesian Government announced its decision to discontinue its membership of the Council by the end of that year.

The next initiative was taken by the Labour's Colonial Secretary, James Griffiths who accepted the suggestion of the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia of a conference to be called in London to consider the possibility of formulating proposals for a further advance in the scheme of Central African Federation. Accordingly, the Conference of the Officials met in London in March 1951 and carried out a thorough examination of the problem in all its aspects. The Official's Report, published in three documents was discussed at Victoria Falls Conference from 18 to 21 September 1951 by the representatives of the Governments, including African representatives. It was, then, generally agreed that Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland must retain the protectorate status and that economic and political partnership between Europeans and Africans was the only policy under which federation could be brought about. The African representatives, however, differed on this. While the African representatives of Northern Rhodesia expressed their willingness, "after the policy of partnership in Northern Rhodesia had been defined and...put

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13 Cmd. 8233/1951; Cmd. 8234/1951; Cmd. 8235/1951.
14 Southern Rhodesia sent no African delegates.
into progressive operation" to consider federation on these terms, the African representatives of Nyasaland stated that the mandate they had from their people was to reject unconditionally both partnership and federation. As a result, the Conference broke up in disagreement. Its communiqué stated that the African representatives were not in favour of the principle of federation, but it expressed the hope that as a result of further discussion within each territory and exchange of views among the four Governments "the position can be sufficiently clarified to enable the Conference to reassemble in London about middle of next year."

The Conservative Approach

The only question that was open at the time when the Conservatives came to power was the end of the fact-finding mission of James Griffiths and Gordon Walker to find out whether or not African opinion was in favour. In fact, Griffiths said it was not in favour. Gordon Walker was less forthright in his opinion. And so the argument was if the Labour Party came to power, Griffiths said he would recommend


against it.

But the Conservatives had no such inhibition at all. The new Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton, made this plain in the House of Commons on 21 November 1951. He said that the Government were convinced of the urgent need to secure the closer association of the three Central African territories and believed that this would best be achieved by federation on the general lines recommended by the Conference of Officials in March 1951. He acknowledged that African opinion in the two northern territories had declared itself opposed to the proposals in the Official's report but he trusted that, in view of the assurances given at Victoria Falls and of the economic and other advantages of closer association, Africans would be prepared to accept them. The statement went on to quote the important passage from the Victoria Falls Conference communique that land and land settlement questions, as well as political advancement of the peoples of the two northern territories, both in local and territorial Government, be the responsibility of the territorial Government and Legislature and that the Protectorate status of the two northern territories be preserved and that

17 Interview with Colin Legum, Commonwealth Correspondent of The Observer in London, on 6 May 1970.

18 494 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 392-4, Lyttelton, 21 November 1951.
any consideration of the amalgamation of the three Central African territories, unless a majority of the inhabitants of the three territories desired it, be excluded from its purview. It expressed the grave concern over the dangers of any weakening or dilution of the British connexion and British traditions and principles in the territories which the Government regarded as of the utmost importance. Finally, it showed the Government's anxiety in reaching final conclusions without any delay and proposed the resumed Conference to take place about July 1952. It also ensured that the intervening period would be used to the best advantage for necessary discussions in Central Africa.

Thus, Lyttelton as a Colonial Secretary and Lord Salisbury as a Commonwealth Secretary (a man with old-fashioned views who seemed to believe in White supremacy) had no hesitation in going ahead with the scheme of Federation. "It was impossible to say", said Philip Mason, "that there had been a change of policy; there had not. There was nothing in the new statement to which Mr Griffiths could take exception. But there was a change of emphasis. Stress had previously been laid on African objections; it was now laid on the dangers of rejection by the Southern Rhodesian electorate."

Further discussions took place in London in January and

February 1952 between the Colonial and Commonwealth Secretaries and the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia and the Governors of the two northern territories to consider a number of criticism of the proposals to plan the next stage. The meetings were arranged at the instance of Sir Godfrey Huggins, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia who was now confident of the new Government's initiative and who had, therefore, suggested that he should come down to London in the new year to state his views on the subject. A statement issued at the end of the meetings said that the British Government were now proposing that a full conference should be held in London towards the end of April 1952, instead of July 1952, to consider any modifications suggested by the four Governments and to formulate a final draft scheme of federation for the consideration in the territories. In this, The Times rightly saw a change in emphasis in the new Government's policy by referring to the 'secret talks' being "the first serious effort to reconcile the British and Southern Rhodesian stand-points", without any regard for African opinion.

The criticism of the proposal to hold a conference in

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20 According to the Manchester Guardian (21 January 1952) the two Governors were perhaps the safest advisers the Colonial Secretary could select for the talks, since their choice lessened the risk that the contesting parties in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland might fear that their rivals had been given an opportunity.

21 The Times, 22 January 1952.
April, instead of July as had originally been planned, was expressed by James Griffiths and other Opposition members in the House of Commons on 4 March 1952. James Griffiths maintained that this decision, taken after the talks in London in January and February at which Africans had not been present, had greatly alarmed African opinion and had caused it to be rumoured in Central Africa that terms were discussed for "rushing federation through quickly." The Africans, he said, were afraid that the proposed April Conference, brought forward three months without their agreement, without their consent and without their being consulted was not in their interests. Gordon Walker said it was a great blunder to advance the date of the Conference which created the impression that there was something up. But part of the hurry, in the words of Sir Godfrey Huggins was that "the Africans, if nothing is done, with the propaganda they have got going, will become more and more averse to it (federation), and you might have trouble if you did it", and later, in Salisbury he was reported to have said, "The reason for speed is the development of nationalisms of various kinds in Africa."

22 497 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 224-5, 4 March 1952, James Griffiths.
23 Ibid., col. 318, 4 March 1952, Gordon Walker.
In reply to a question in the Commons, Lyttelton said that the purpose of the April Conference was to produce a definite scheme on which public opinion might be fixed and that in its absence all sorts of rumours and ideas would get about. But this could not satisfy the Opposition which argued that the principle of federation must be accepted before details could be discussed. Advancing the date of the London Conference appeared to the Manchester Guardian to override African objections to the scheme before they could be voiced effectively and seemed to "suggest a sharp reversal of the policy, which Mr Griffiths and Mr Gordon Walker followed so painstakingly, of consulting Africans and trying to win

26 497 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 234-5, 4 March 1952, Lyttelton.

27 Ibid., col. 319, 4 March 1952, Gordon Walker.

Commenting on the debate, the Manchester Guardian (6 March 1952) said it served two useful purposes: "It brought clearly the broad extent of common ground between the parties in Britain and also the one point of substance on which they differ. All parties here favour federation in principle; all wish to see it based on a partnership of races and not on the dominance of one race over another. But to Liberals and Labour it seems right that the idea of partnership should extend to the introduction of federation as well as to its administration—that is, it should be introduced as a matter of mutual consent, not as an act of dominance. This principle may be expected to appeal to many people who are not partisans, and the British Government may find itself in some difficulties here if it commits itself to a 'full steam ahead' policy against what turns out to be a widespread and deeply felt opposition on the part of the Africans."

28 Manchester Guardian, 5 February 1952.
their support for federation on its merits. The Government concerned are certainly aware of the general attitude of the Africans in their territory, but a closing date of March 1 hardly gives them time to consult representatives of African opinion before they formulate amendments to the scheme -- if they want to."

Lyttelton later asked the Governors of the two northern territories to approach the two representative bodies, African Representative Council in Northern Rhodesia and the African Protectorate Council in Nyasaland, and arrange to send their deputations to London for discussion with him and his colleagues on African views on federation. While the African representatives of both the bodies were prepared to come to London to discuss the matters with the Secretary of State, they differed on their participation in the Conference. In the minutes of the African Protectorate Council, it was recorded that representatives should go to London and that if they were invited to attend the Conference, they should do so. But the Northern Rhodesian African representatives had made perfectly clear before going to London that they would not attend the Conference. When both deputations arrived in London for informal discussion, i.e., to the private discussions, they were extended the invitation to stay on and attend the Conference with the assurances from the Colonial Secretary that their attendance at the Conference would commit them to
nothing, not even to the principle of federation. However, after informal talks, the Northern Rhodesian delegation declined to come to the Conference and the Nyasaland delegation declined to come as delegates. A little later, Nyasaland delegates asked whether they could come as observers and the Secretary of State replied in the positive. A similar invitation was also extended to the Northern Rhodesian delegation. But then Nyasaland delegates withdrew from that position on the plea that the Press was not going to be present throughout the plenary session. Arrangement was, therefore, made for their return to their respective territories, while the Conference was in session.

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29 A joint letter, addressed to The Times (29 April 1952) by the African delegations, explained the reason for refusing the invitation to the Conference. It inter alia said: "The Secretary of State then invited us to attend the Conference. We asked to see the agenda. He would not accede to that request unless we agree to attend the Conference. We declined to do so, because we understood that the Conference was being held to consider modifications to the federation scheme formulated by Officials in which no Africans had any part...no African has ever been invited to take part in preparing modification to the scheme."

30 499 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 1252-3, 29 April 1952, Lyttelton.

31 On the eve of their departure for home, the African delegates from Northern Rhodesia issued the following statement:

"We are alarmed at the apparent intention of the Government to proceed with the proposed federation in spite of the unanimous opposition expressed by the African people through their official and unofficial..."
The April Conference on Federation

The April Conference on Federation which met at Lancaster House London on 23 April 1952 under the joint chairmanship of the Secretaries of State for the Colonies and for Commonwealth Relations, was attended by delegates from Southern Rhodesia led by the Prime Minister and two northern territories led by their Governors. The African delegates from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, as stated earlier, went to London prior to the Conference for informal discussions, but 32 did not attend the Conference. The only two Africans who attended the Conference were the unofficial members of the Southern Rhodesian delegation, picked up by Sir Godfrey Huggins,

(Previous footnote contd.)

organisations. Nothing which the Secretary of State said has in any way diminished our unanimous opposition to the plan. On the contrary, our fears have been increased by our failure to secure any assurance from the Secretary of State that federation will not be imposed against the wishes of the African people." See The Times, 8 May 1952.

32 In a statement to the Press, the African delegations from two northern territories said that they refused to attend the Conference because, first, Africans in the Northern territories had rejected federation on principle and could not therefore participate in a Conference which was discussing modifications to the draft report prepared by Officials in London the previous year, and secondly, Africans found it most embarrassing to attend the London Conference which was arranged in a private way between the Colonial Secretary, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia and the Governors of two northern territories, this being a repudiation of the Victoria Falls Conference. Manchester Guardian, 24 April 1952.
who were known to favour federation.

During the Conference, there was a debate in the House of Commons on 29 April 1952 in which Opposition speakers criticized the Government for going on with the Conference without African representatives from the Northern territories being present. James Griffiths advanced two reasons for African deputation's refusal to attend the Conference in the end even as observers. First, they were still very apprehensive lest attendance at the Conference should be taken to imply that they accepted federation in principle, while their people in both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were resolutely opposed to even discussing the federation, even in principle. Secondly, they feared that Her Majesty's Government had already decided before the Conference assembled in London to go through with, and to enforce it, notwithstanding their unanimous opposition. He further said, since they were so definitely opposed, they thought, they ought to stay outside and not be parties to it. The Colonial Secretary, however, explained that the April Conference which was being continued

33 The Scotsman (Edinburgh), 23 April 1952.
34 499 H.C. Deb. 5a, col. 1233 f., 29 April 1952.
35 Ibid., cols. 1236-8, 29 April 1952, James Griffiths.
36 Ibid., col. 1249, 29 April 1952, Lyttelton.
even in the absence of African representatives was not a Conference to reach decisions, but one to make a draft document upon which public opinion could be formed. Earlier Lennox-Boyd, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, had stated that Her Majesty's Government, being the protecting Power, had a duty to the two Protectorates and that duty could best be discharged by proceeding with the Conference to come to some recommendations which, then, would be submitted to the three territories.

The Conference concluded its deliberation on 5 May 1952 and produced the Draft Federal Scheme. The Scheme provided for the division of legislative powers between the Federal and Territorial Legislatures and specified a number of other subjects in the concurrent list, but in case of inconsistency, the Federal law was to prevail. Residual powers were to remain within the competence of the legislatures of the territories concerned. With regard to the composition of the Federal Legislature it provided that the Federal Assembly would consist of 35 members, of whom only nine were to represent African interests. Although in theory 26 elected members, not

39 Of these 35, 17 would be from Southern Rhodesia, 11 from Northern Rhodesia and 7 from Nyasaland. For details see Cmd. 8573/1952, pp. 14-16.
specifically charged with African interests, might belong to any race, because of franchise qualification, in practice they would all belong to European race. In legislative procedure, it provided that decision in the Federal Assembly would be determined by a majority votes of the members present and voting and that Her Majesty would have power to disallow a federal law at any time within twelve months after it had been assented, by the Governor-General. But it was doubtful whether Her Majesty would invoke its power to disallow a particular measure approved by a majority of White dominated Federal Assembly.

Most controversial was the provision for the African Affairs Board consisting of a chairman, appointed by the Governor-General with the approval of the Secretary of State and six ordinary members i.e. two from each territory, one African and one European, nominated by Governor of each territory and appointed by Governor-General. It would be the general function of the Board to make to the Prime Minister or through the Prime Minister to the Executive Council such representations in relation to any matter within the legislative or executive authority of the Federation as the Board might consider to be desirable in the interests of Africans. And if the Board considered that any Bill or subordinate law was a differentiating measure, it (the Board) might send to

40 Ibid., pp. 23-25.
the Prime Minister a notice in writing to that effect stating reasons. The Governor-General, in his discretion, might assent to the Bill passed by the Federal Assembly if he was satisfied that it was essential in the public interest that the Bill be brought into immediate operation; but the Governor-General should forthwith send to a Secretary of State the Bill to which he had assented together with a notice of objection and a statement of his reasons for assenting. Whether the British Government could then disallow the Governor-General's consent, the White Paper failed to state.

The Conference decided to refer the question of finance, service and judiciary to the three different Commissions -- Fiscal, Civil Preparatory and Judicial -- respectively. Lastly, it provided for the amendment of the Constitution to be carried by a two-thirds majority of the total membership of the Federal Assembly and be reserved for the signification of Her Majesty's pleasure.

On 13 June 1952, Lyttelton made a statement in the House of Commons on the Draft Federal Scheme in which he said that it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government, after the three Commissions -- Judicial, Fiscal and Civil -- had investigated and reported, to hold a further Conference in Africa later in the year to give final shape to the federal scheme.

41 502 H.C. Deb. 5s. col. 1201, 13 June 1952, Lyttelton.
The British Government and the Central African Governments would then decide whether, subject to ratification in the three territories, the scheme in its final shape should be approved. But before the Conference, he said, the Minister of State for Colonial affairs or he would visit the territories to consult local opinion and hoped that meanwhile the public in United Kingdom and in Central Africa and in particular the leaders of African opinion would study very carefully the details of the Draft Federal Scheme before reaching conclusions about it.

Press comments on the Draft Federal Scheme were critical of its weaknesses. According to the *New Statesman and Nation*, the scheme differed little in form, and not at all in substance, from the proposal ventilated the previous year. The so-called safeguards, after making big concessions to White settlers authority, looked highly questionable in the light of experience in the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia and were, in any event, of a purely negative nature. The *Manchester Guardian* called the Draft "a barrier against reaction" which, it feared, could equally be manned against advance. The more Africans attained or approached European


standards of civilization, the greater would be the temptation of the Europeans to man the barriers; and once Britain had relinquished the power to intervene, there was no way round or over it. Although the African Affairs Board seemed a quite effective device for checking new legislation which would make the position of Africans worse, it could not initiate legislation to make it better. Certainly, the position of a Minister responsible ultimately to the British Government, and not to the local electorate, would be an awkward one; but the arrangement would have kept alive an element of British trusteeship which might be actually missed. The fundamental defect of the Draft Federal Scheme was that it gave overwhelming and permanent weight to the European element in the Federal Assembly. And, therefore, the alleged safeguards were "patently worthless" since they depended for their continued existence on the decision of the Federal Assembly in which the African was in a small minority. "To assert...that such machinery" said Sinclair Shaw, "provides adequate protection for the non-European, is to insult the intelligence of the African, and to endeavour to mislead the British electorate."

During July 1952, the Draft Federal Scheme was debated

in both Houses. Most of the speeches referred to the strength of the African Opposition and Her Majesty's Government's future intentions. In the House of Lords, Lord Ogmore warned the British Government that to force through federation in the teeth of African opinion would be a crime and a tragedy; it would be a justification for the malicious and bitter anti-British feeling expressed in so many quarters. In the Commons, Gordon Walker and James Griffiths, among others, criticized the composition and function of the African Affairs Board, the procedure of Constitutional Amendment, the composition of the Federal Assembly and its election procedure, and the Government's reserve powers. Gordon Walker pointed out that under the scheme, the Board was unable to operate in the executive field while there was good deal of provision for their operation in the legislative field. He doubted very much the ability of the Board to protect African interests in the light of Governor General's discretionary powers even to ignore the Board's recommendation if he was satisfied that the measures were not a differentiating one. He criticized the amendment procedure which made it difficult to introduce even desirable changes because of its requirement of two-thirds majority of


46 504 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 778-81, 24 July 1952, Gordon Walker.
the Federal Assembly. Since the election to Federal Assembly was to remain a matter within the purview of Federal Assembly, he expressed the doubt whether any rapid or considerable political advance for Africans, in the election to the Federal Assembly, could be real. He, therefore, urged that control over the methods of elections should be transferred from the Federal Assembly to the territories. James Griffiths referred to the same points as Gordon Walker pointing out the Board's weakness in two respects compared with the proposal in the original scheme. Firstly, with the abandonment of the Minister for African interests who was to be the Chairman of the Board with power to deal with legislation and to veto executive action, a complete safeguard of African interests against executive and administrative action had been taken away. Secondly, the change in the composition of the Board

47 The point was made clear in the Manchester Guardian (19 June 1952) which said: "The vital question of the franchise will rest with the Federal Legislature after the first election, which will be held under the existing laws of the three territories. At this it is virtually certain that all the ordinary elected members (26 out of 35) will be Europeans. Once they have fixed the qualifications for future elections, these are "entrenched"; they can be modified only by a vote of two-thirds of the Assembly. This provision may be meant to make it impossible to stiffen the terms of the franchise against Africans (as was done recently in Southern Rhodesia). But it would be an effective bar to any attempt to modify the franchise in favour of Africans."

48 504 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 866-9, 24 July 1952, James Griffiths.
with the abandonment of the provision of the Secretary for Native Affairs from each protectorate territory to sit on the Board had left the proposed new board much weaker instrument for the Africans than the old Board. It also meant that the Colonial Secretary hereafter could not hold anyone in the cabinet responsible for taking all the steps necessary to safeguard African interests. Further, the change of word from "detrimental" to "differential" had narrowed the powers of the Board in all three fields: executive, administrative and legislative. He pointed out that there was no provision in the new scheme by which the political advancement of the Africans in the Federal Legislature could be ensured except by the will and the initiative of the European elected members in the federation. He cautioned the Colonial Secretary to face the changed situation sometime later when the number of Africans in the Legislative Council in the two northern territories would increase whereas it would remain same unless the 22 Europeans of Federal Assembly agreed. And that was one of the reasons for the break up of the federation later.

Lyttelton, however, tried to justify the two important changes made in the new scheme with regard to the Board. Referring to the point made by Gordon Walker, he said that the general function of the Board was to make representations

49 Ibid., cols. 792-8, 787, 24 July 1952, Lyttelton.
to the Prime Minister in relation to any matter within the
legislative or executive authority of the Federation and as
such it could not have executive functions other than those
given to them by the Legislature. He argued that it was not
possible to carry on a Cabinet Government when one Minister
would not share fully the collective responsibility of his
colleagues -- a Minister who might be dismissed when the
Cabinet remained or who might remain when the Cabinet departed.
He defended the amendment procedure on the ground that the
negative procedure prevailing in United Kingdom would follow
in case objection was raised either by the Board or by any of
the three Legislatures. He justified the Governor-General's
discretionary powers to deal with a situation when the Board
might certify every Measure, advanced by the Government of the
day, irrespective of its nature, as a differentiating one and
would make it difficult, if not impossible, for the Government
to govern. And further, if his judgement was seen to be
faulty, it could be reversed by reference to the Colonial
Secretary. He also referred to the difficulty in ascertaining
African opinion because of the efforts of Congress and other
anti-federation leaders to prevent Africans from even studying
the proposals and administrative officers from being explained.

The debate clearly showed a clash of opinion between the
Labour and the Conservatives on the issue of African consent.
While Gordon Walker treated African consent to federation as
indispensable, Lyttelton did not put it in quite that categorical form. He agreed that no constitution, however beneficent a majority in the House of Commons might think it, could be imposed, if it would lead to strife and confusion; but he also laid stress on their responsibility and said that they should not be acquitted in the eyes of history if because of "some opposition" they shirked or deferred their duty and policies inimical to Africa gained the ascendent. He warned of the dangers of generalising about African opinion, and dismissed as foolish the statement often heard that "African opinion is solidly against the federation."

Hopkinson's Visit to Central Africa

Henry Hopkinson, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, visited the three Central African territories (but primarily the two northern territories) in the last week of July and August 1952 to test African opinion on the question of federation. During his tour, he claimed to have carried out spot checks in public places such as markets and elsewhere and argued that African opposition were because of their being

50 Ibid., col. 797, 24 July 1952, Lyttelton.
51 Ibid., cols. 787, 789, 24 July 1952, Lyttelton.
52 Interview with Lord Colyton, formerly Henry Hopkinson, in London, on 28 April 1970.
"emotionally stirred by world events" and obscured by "the real merits of the scheme." Replying to the argument that there was no need to hurry over federation he said: "if it were to break down now, it is very doubtful whether we should get federation at all. I think people would feel this had been a flop, and, particularly in Southern Rhodesia, eyes would be turned elsewhere." At one gathering he told the Natives who were agitating for self-government that they could not achieve it in a country of mixed communities. This was possible in a country like the Gold Coast, where there were only Natives, but in a country of mixed communities, a different solution must be found. This was particularly true, he said, if the community included sections "which were playing a great part in the development of the country and without whom the Africans would be far worse off."

While giving his impression on his visit to Central Africa, Hopkinson said: "a very large proportion of the population -- I put as high as 90 per cent -- had never heard of federation at all. Of the remaining 10 per cent, the majority

53 Daily Worker (London), 12 August 1952.
54 Manchester Guardian, 12 August 1952.
55 The Star (Johannesburg), 2 August 1952.
56 513 H.C. Deb. 5s. col. 790, 24 March 1953, Hopkinson. There is no word in the African language for a federation.
were opposed to it. They were the literate, vocal Africans, and I agree that the majority of them were opposed to the scheme." He claimed that he had addressed 78 meetings which had left him in no doubt of the strength of African opposition to federation. Yet, he was firm in his belief that by "creating a great new bastion of British power in Central Africa", the British Government could safeguard the Africans in the different territories by giving them a broader sphere of work in which they would develop and become less parochial. He said that it was not a question of the Africans choosing or rejecting federation. The responsibilities of decision rested upon the British Government, which had to take into account all points of view and "future as well as present interests."

However, the impression which the Minister carried with him on his return to London was not shared by the Press and many representative bodies in both Britain and Central Africa. His statement of "creating a new bastion of British power in Africa", without specifying what the future of Africans within it was to be, was questioned by The Observer. Also, his claim that he met a lot of "first class chaps" was refuted, since it did not number this more than "perhaps six" whom he thought

57 Manchester Guardian, 30 August 1952.
58 The Observer (London), 31 August 1952.
could contribute to the political life of their territories.

Reports of the Three Commissions

The final decision on the scheme for Central African Federation was postponed from October 1952 to January 1953, to give time to study the Reports of the three Commissions -- the Judicial, the Fiscal and the Civil Service -- appointed to survey special aspects of the scheme, not fully covered in the Government's White Paper. In October 1952, the Reports of the three Commissions were published and laid before Parliament. Most of them surveyed what one might call consequential problems and raised no question of principle. The Report of the Judicial Commission suggested that there should be no absolute right of appeal but that "the question of appeals should be dealt with in like manner as applies to appeals from Dominions." Special leave to appeal might be granted by the Queen-in-Council, but according to the Manchester Guardian perhaps that was premature. The Report of the Fiscal Commission

59 In a "Press Conference" on T.V., Peter Abraham, African author and journalist clashed sharply with Hopkinson when the former challenged the Minister's statement of 90 per cent Africans "knew nothing and cared nothing." He also disputed the method of arriving this figure. Daily Worker, 6 September 1952.


61 Manchester Guardian, 30 October 1952.

showed that there were no financial obstacles to the establishment of the Federation. But, at the same time, it showed that the Federation was going to hit the European pockets and, in November 1952, Roy Welensky succinctly put the settlers case by saying "Federation will give us eighty per cent self-government and that is worth paying quite a lot for." The most important question before the Civil Service Preparatory Commission was whether the federal civil service was to be open to Africans, if they were qualified to enter it, on the same terms as Europeans. The Commission merely said: "For the time being Africans who are transferred to Federal Departments continue to serve under the conditions of service, including existing rights and avenues of advancement, applicable to them in their respective Territories." But this did not explain whether an African retained his rights only if he continued to work in his country of origin and/or also in a federal capital of Salisbury.

Between the April Conference (the Lancaster House) and Carlton House Terrace Conference held in January 1953, there

63 Quoted by Harry Franklin in Unholy Medlock, p. 76.
65 The Manchester Guardian (30 October 1952) said: "The question may look small today. It may be a very big one in the long run."
was intense political activity in Central Africa. During this period of nine months, while the European leaders wanted to make sure of sufficient support from the White voters and to minimise opposition to it in Britain, the African leaders made every possible attempt to mobilise African opinion against federation.

**Final Conference on the Federal Scheme**

The final Conference which met in London at No. 10, Carlton House Terrace, during January 1953, under the joint chairmanship of the Secretaries of State for the Colonies and for Commonwealth Relations -- Lyttelton and Lord Swinton -- was attended, among others, by the Southern Rhodesian delegation led by the Prime Minister and the Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland delegations led by Governors of those territories. Before the Conference assembled in London, the African representatives from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland had announced their boycott and said that they would not take part.

The Conference gave careful consideration to amendments to the Draft Federal Scheme suggested by the Governments and three delegates of the territories. It also considered in detail the reports of the three Commissions and the comments on them.

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67 *Cmd. 8573/1952, Draft Federal Scheme.*
The Conference agreed upon a number of changes and incorporated them in the Final Scheme.

Most important was the change in the composition of the African Affairs Board. Now the Board was made a standing committee of the Federal Assembly and, instead of six members and the chairman, it would have six members including chairman, three of whom would be Africans and three Europeans. The Board would now be drawn entirely from those members of the Assembly specially representing African interests. No changes were made in the powers and functions of the Board. But a variation had been made to make clearer the exceptional circumstances in which the Governor-General might assent to a measure to which the Board had objected, if he satisfied himself that it was not a differentiating measure and that the reasons given by the Board for considering it to be such a measure were of irrelevant and frivolous nature. Other important changes included one to ensure that no appeal to amend the Legislative lists might be introduced into the Federal Assembly until after the expiry of ten years from the coming into force of the constitution except with the positive resolutions of all the three legislatures agreeing to it; and another to provide that no less than seven or more than nine

years from the coming into force of the constitution, there
should be a conference of all four Central African Governments
and the United Kingdom Government "for the purpose of review-
ing the Federal Constitution." Apart from this, the procedure
for constitutional amendment remained as original. The scheme
also incorporated necessary changes to embody the results of
the three Commissions recommendations. This last Conference,
thus, set the seal on the work began by Officials in 1951.

The final draft, on the whole, followed the general
lines of the previous draft, published as a White Paper in
June 1952. Some changes and additions had been made but none
of them appeared to meet the fundamental criticism made of
its predecessor and none went any way to disarm the mounting
hostility of African opinion. In all these modifications, 69
the Manchester Guardian said: "one sees no sign of any con-
ciousness on the part of the Conference that there is any
need for anything to be done to commend the scheme to
Africans." The Fundamental shortcomings of this, as of the
previous scheme was not that "it deprives the African popula-
tion of existing and established rights and privileges. It
is that if offers no reliable means by which existing rights
(including an appropriate share in the Government) may be
extended in an orderly and constitutional way as African
advancement justifies it if European opinion is adverse." 70

69 Manchester Guardian, 6 February 1953.
70 Ibid.
While The Times doubted the possibility of the Board's members "to stand properly detached from the political climate and the majority opinion in the Assembly to which they would belong", the Manchester Guardian questioned whether the changes in the African Affairs Board would make it any better to fill its peculiar function.

On 24 March 1953, a Government Motion to approve the proposals on Central African Federation as set out in Command Paper Nos. 8753 and 8754, was debated in the House of Commons.

While introducing the motion, Lyttelton said the history of Britain should have taught them in a world of large Powers, the danger of small units looking outside themselves for a large part of their subsistence and for, perhaps, all the means of their defence. The policy aimed in the Federal scheme, therefore, was far-seeing and it was to foster a partnership of the races upon which a great prosperous State would grow. He, however, rejected the idea of domination of one

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71 The Times, 6 February 1953. It added: "All that can be said now is that if the board does not work as it is on paper intended to work, the whole elaborate structure of the federal constitution, with its indispensable safeguards for African rights, will fall to the ground."

72 Manchester Guardian, 6 February 1953. It added: "Their membership of the Legislature may make them less independent and their scrutiny less critical, and their resolution to take and maintain an unpopular stand less firm."

73 513 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 659-76, 24 March 1953, Lyttelton.

74 In his Memoirs Lord Chandos says: "Opposed to the idea of (footnote contd....)
race by another and said that Federation would open to Africans a wider field of political advancement. He pointed out the economic advantage of federation with the reliance of Northern Rhodesia: copperfields for their coal upon the Wankei colliery in Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland being over-populated finding easy to send its surplus labour to earn its living in the two other territories. Regarding the abandonment of the post of the Minister of African Affairs, he said he was convinced of the need to abolish this post as the incumbent was entirely removed from the theory and practice of collective responsibility upon which alone Cabinet government could be carried on. He alone would not have to seek re-election if the Government were defeated. It was for these reasons that he came to be known, rather disrespectfully, as 'the Cuckoo Minister'. With regard to the African Affairs Board, he said there was a feeling that the divorce of the Board from the life of the Legislature as provided in the earlier scheme would have something

(Previous footnote cont’d.)

partnership are the 'arithmetical' statement: one man one vote. In a highly educated, literate and sophisticated society, this may well be an ideal, but in Central Africa it would be plainly a disaster if brought about too quickly."


Henry Hopkinson called it "a constitutional monster like a calf born with two heads" during his tour of Central Africa. Manchester Guardian, 11 August 1952.
to do only on comparatively rare occasions when they were able to show or to claim that legislation discriminatory to Africans was before the Legislature. In other words, the extra-mural body would have remained in a state of honourable vegetation for a large part of its life, and such a body would have been very vulnerable to public opinion. He said the now set-up of the Board which brought the Board within the life of the Legislature was most workable as the Board now had a forum, the floor of the House. Referring to the amendment procedure, he said the constitution could not be changed unless a two-thirds majority in the Federal Legislature agreed. But this could be subject to objections by any Government or by any Territorial Legislature or by the African Affairs Board and in that case, the Order-in-Council would have to be laid upon the Table of both Houses of Parliament for 40 days and be brought to the negative resolution procedure. He admitted that there was a wide measure of opposition among some Africans but said that it had largely been worked up by the Congress element which included high proportion of educated classes, using intimidation and misrepresentation and encouraging the Africans to believe that their opposition would kill the plan. He wound up his case for the federal plan by calling, "with all sincerity", it a "liberal" document capable of establishing a firm basis for partnership between the two races. Even if there was some opposition, he argued, a protecting Power could
not abdicate and abandon a policy which it considered in the best interests of those protected. "To reject or defer it now", he said, "is to resign our responsibilities as a colonial Power; it is to sink into inglorious inaction and to hope that, contrary to every lesson of history in these matters, inaction will lead to peace. It will not; it will lead to discord."

Thus, as late as 1953, the British Parliament was hearing the voice of British Empire.

James Griffiths, the Opposition's chief spokesman later moved an amendment which, while recognising "the advantages which may be expected to accrue from the federation of the three Central African territories" went on to say that the scheme "does not contain adequate safeguards for African interests" and therefore could not be approved which involved "the imposition...against the will of the African people."

In his speech Griffiths pointed out the Conservative Government's defaults in going back on the specific undertakings. He said while the safeguards for Southern Rhodesia had remained unchanged and undiminished in the slightest degree in the

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513 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 675-6, 24 March 1953, Lyttelton. While Lyttelton thought that to reject federation was "to resign our responsibilities as a colonial Power", Sir Roy Welensky saw that "our best chance of breaking with Colonial Office lies in Federation."

Ibid., cols. 676-92, 24 March 1953, James Griffiths.
final scheme, the safeguards provided for Africans had undergone considerable changes. He regretted the absence of the provision of the Minister for African interests and said: "There is not a single colonial Constitution...which does not provide for representation in the Executive of the indigenous people." Further, the change of word from "detrimental" to "differential" had made it possible to conceive of legislation or of action that would be detrimental to African interests, without of necessity being differential. Also, the powers of the Governor-General to override the Board were widened from those in the first proposals. All these changes, he said, had seriously weakened the safeguards for the Africans and diminished the hold which Her Majesty's Government would have upon the Federal Government and Federal Parliament. Thus, in the final scheme, he said, the British Government was handing over the substance of power over six million African people, not for seven years or ten years, but until such time as the European minority in Central Africa agreed to any advancement

78 Ibid., col. 681, 24 March 1953, James Griffiths.

79 Ibid., col. 684, 24 March 1953, James Griffiths. James Griffiths referred to the speech of Greenfield, Minister of Internal Affairs in the Southern Rhodesian Government, on 23 October 1952, in which the latter said: "one of the principal reasons for having this federation at all is to get as much power as possible out of hands of people far away in London." Ibid., col. 685, 24 March 1953, James Griffiths.
of the Africans. He ended his speech with a warning that the Conservative Government "shall be building a house on a volcano" if they went on with this federation while the racial tension existed.

Among others who pointed out the weaknesses in the final scheme were John Dugdale, Sir Lynn Ungeed-Thomas and Sir Frank Soskice, Labour M.Ps. While John Dugdale charged the Colonial

Ibid., col. 688, 24 March 1953, James Griffiths. At this stage Lyttelton interrupted in the debate and said that this was not true in respect of territorial responsibilities though it might be true of federal responsibilities, but added, the federal responsibilities were strictly circumscribed. Ibid., col. 689, 24 March 1953, Lyttelton.

Ibid., col. 692, 24 March 1953, James Griffiths. James Griffiths quoted the speech of John Moffat (made in the middle of July 1952) who was appointed by successive Secretaries of State to represent Africans on the Executive Council in Northern Rhodesia. Speaking in Northern Rhodesian Parliament, John Moffat then said:

"... If these men [advanced Africans] are at any time to be treated as inferior because they are African, then inevitably they will band together because they are African, and that is the danger I wish particularly to emphasise."

"... for the first time in our history, Africans are banding together in opposition to this proposal [proposal of Federation] and for the prime reason that they are African."

"... but, what is certain is that for the first time a major issue will have been settled on this racial basis. An issue that the African people will lose because the Europeans have the power to force it through ... These persons will never forget this matter, nor will they ever forgive you." Ibid., col. 690, 24 March 1953, James Griffiths.

Ibid., cols. 699-700, 24 March 1953, John Dugdale.
Secretary with grossly exaggerating economic advantages of federation and contended that no improvement of economic conditions could justify a moral wrong being done by giving political power to a European minority, Sir Lynn Ungoed-Thomas argued: "Life is not just economics... What men are concerned about more than their economic well-being is their status as human beings. We cannot even have a successful economy based upon racial distinction and upon colour bars." Earlier Sir Ungoed-Thomas had pointed out that the Board could not come to a decision at all unless at least one European voted in favour of it. It also meant that the decisive voice was not with the Africans at all but with the Europeans on the Board. In other words, he said there was nowhere in this Constitution a provision for a purely African point of view to reach the Secretary of State. Sir Frank Soskice even argued that to say that everything which concerned the Africans was a part of the territorial Legislatures' jurisdiction, was almost to deny that Federation was to take place at all.

In the end, the motion approving the proposals set out in Cmd. 8753 and 8754 was carried out by 304 votes against 260 in the face of solid Labour and Liberal Opposition.

83 Ibid., cols. 718, 711, 24 March 1953, Sir Lynn Ungoed-Thomas.

84 Ibid., col. 783, 24 March 1953, Sir Frank Soskice.
During the debate each side clarified its position, but none of the main speakers produced fresh evidence about the facts on which their position was based. Nevertheless, it brought out a clear conflict on the facts between Lyttelton and James Griffiths about the nature and the extent of African opposition. And the debate, according to the Manchester Guardian, "remained for the most part on a nebulous level, floating like a cloud over the rocky peaks, and stony gorges through which the new State seems destined to travel if it follows the course marked out for it."

Referendum in Southern Rhodesia

The next step in the timetable was the submission of the issues to the electorate of Southern Rhodesia. Accordingly, a referendum on Federation took place on 9 April 1953 and the result was announced the following day. This showed that of a total of 40,614 votes cast, 25,570 were in favour of federation and 14,739 against. But it is worth noting that of the total electorate 46,735 on the roll, only 380 were Africans. There was, however, no referendum in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, because these two were Protectorates and as the Protectorate Power, Hopkinson said Britain considered it her moral duty to do what they thought was right in the long

86 513 H.C. Deb. 5s. col. 736, 24 March 1953, Hopkinson.
term interests of those protected. He ruled out the referendum in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland because, he said, referendum did not as a rule play any part in the political life in Britain.

**Final Approval by the British Parliament**

All now appeared set to bring the scheme before Parliament in legal form: but a further delaying action was taken when the Labour Party put down a Motion on 4 May 1953, asking the House that addresses from chiefs and other representatives of Africans in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland against federation should be referred to a Select Committee. Their request was, however, not granted and the Motion was lost in the division.

Finally, on 6 May 1953, federation moved nearer to its final stage when Lyttelton moved the Second Reading of the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Federation Bill in the Commons. The debate over the Bill was one of the bitterest and most emotional ever heard in the House. Speaking in the debate, Lyttelton once again admitted that there was a vocal opposition which represented the greater part of educated and

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89 Ibid., cols. 411, 419, 6 May 1953, Lyttelton.
influential African opinion, but added that the great bulk of the population were unaware of the issues, and at least the vast majority of people could not be described as being opposed to federation and most of them, if they had heard of the subject, would not be able to grasp the niceties of constitutional balance in law which federation involved. He asked the House to vote for the Bill since, in his opinion, it represented "a British solution of the racial problems...at the turn of the half century." Many Conservative M.Ps believed that Government in the European, that is "civilized", hands was the right way ahead. This was particularly true of those M.Ps who had investment interests in Central and South Africa. And the Conservative backbenchers could do little in this regard because of party whip. Among the Labourites too, there were differences. While some members were known to be in favour of federation "in principle" they considered the constitutional safeguards as inadequate. There were others who even refused to accept federation in principle, because they had seen how all paper safeguards incorporated in the South African constitutions had successfully done away with by that Parliament.

C. R. Attlee, speaking for the opposition on the subject for the first time, pleaded for an interval in which tangible

90 Ibid., cols. 494-5, 6 May 1953, James Griffiths.
91 Ibid., col. 425, 6 May 1953, C. R. Attlee.
proof could be given of a new relationship between Europeans and Africans. He said his party could not agree to the second reading of the Bill because they believed the scheme was being rushed and starting "under bad auspices and with bad feelings", but if, he added, it became the law of the land "it is the duty of all of us to try to make it work to the best of our ability." James Griffiths once more pointed out that economic development did not take place in a vacuum, but depended upon the mood and attitudes of the Africans towards it as much as anything else. He agreed with Attlee but said: "if the Bill goes through, this will be a challenge to all the people in Africa. I hope that they will be equal to the challenge."

At the end of the debate, the Bill was passed in its second reading by 247 votes to 221. It was then considered in committee by the Commons and later read for the third time on 24 June 1953 by a straight party vote of 188 to 165. In the House of Lords, the Bill got its third reading on 14 July 1953 without a division. The Royal Assent was given on the same day.

92 Ibid., cols. 492, 499, 6 May 1963, James Griffiths.
93 He added that, in the last analysis, it (economic development) depended upon the men "who use the machines, who hew the coal and extract the copper.
94 516 H.C. Deb. 5s. col. 2051, 24 June 1953.
95 517 H.C. Deb. 5s. col. 1939, 14 July 1953.
Later, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Constitution) Order-in-Council 1953 was made on 1 August 1953 and Federation became an accomplished fact on 1 September 1953 when certain transitional provision of the constitution were brought into effect.

**Appraisal**

Thus, the Conservative Government had no hesitation in going ahead with the scheme of Federation which was under the active consideration of the previous Labour Government. The argument then was that if the Labour Party came to power in 1951, Griffiths said, he would recommend against it because of African opposition. But the Conservatives had no such inhibition at all. For them, the Central African Federation was the grand design -- this was the way one could get the progress, constitutional/economic progress, and maintain White leadership. This was what they wished for and pushed with vigour, and there was no division of opinion on this among Lyttelton, Lennox-Boyd, Hopkinson, Churchill and rest of them.

In his *Memoirs*, Lord Chandos (formerly Oliver Lyttelton) remembers saying to Alan Lennox-Boyd, then the Minister of State, on becoming Colonial Secretary: "Central African Federation is a very difficult matter to get right and we

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96 Lord Chandos, n. 74, p. 384.
shall have a lot of trouble with Europeans as well as African opinion. It will take us eighteen months or so to negotiate it, and more to get the legislation on the statute book, but at least we ought not to get too much trouble in the House of Commons, because the Labour Party is already committed to federation." But, in fact, the Conservatives actually had much more trouble in the House of Commons than over the negotiations. They had to face eleven debates, in which the Labour Party members attacked the policy with great bitterness.

Difference between the Labour and the Conservative over the issue of Federation was not that of principle but of procedure. While the Labour made African consent a prerequisite for introducing federation, the Conservative did not. The negotiations which lasted over a period of eighteen months during the Conservative rule, clearly showed that the Conservative, right from the beginning, did not share the Labour's contention that federation was against the wishes of the majority of Africans. On the contrary, they took the line that the African opposition was not to be taken seriously. They believed in and endorsed the impressions of Hopkinson's visit to Central Africa that the majority of Africans as high as 90 per cent did not know what the federation was about and the remaining 10 per cent who knew and opposed the federation were a small group of vocal townsmen and "disgruntled intelligentsia", but not true
representatives of the people. It was the standard argument of the White settlers and was accepted by the Conservatives because it supported their policy of "gradualism." The Conservatives argued that as a protectorate Power, Britain had a duty to take a decision on what was good for the people who were ignorant and did not understand the niceties of the federal constitution. Even if many Africans were against the scheme, then, it was thought that their opposition would fade away when they were confronted by the accomplished fact, and would leave no legacy of obstruction or insurgency.

The real motives behind the federation, according to The Observer were not hostility to the Union of South Africa but the oft-stated wish of the White settlers of the two Rhodesias to control all Central Africa before normal British colonial policy would have given the Africans of the two Northern territories still under control, too much political

But the Whites made these confident assertions about the political indifference of 'the great bulk of the African people' without having the slightest means of ever knowing what Africans really thought. There was no ordinary human contact between the Whites and the Blacks. The Whites had to rely on the official reports of White officials in the Native Affairs Department, who worked chiefly in the rural areas and who had an obvious vested interest in sustaining the belief that all Africans were backward primitives who needed taking care of by the Native Affairs Department. Interview with Cyril Dunn, Correspondent of The Observer in London, on 14 May 1970.

The Observer, 8 February 1953.
advancement for them to fit into the Southern Rhodesian pattern. The economic argument -- that these three territories could attract adequate capital and be quickly developed only if politically united under one authority -- ignored the possibilities of economic development by joint action that had been used in East Africa, but deliberately not used by the Rhodesias, presumably not to weaken the arguments for federation. The European minority which built their whole position, including their economy, upon the situation they found, that of African backwardness and subordination, were obliged, according to Margery Perham, not by any moral defects, but by the difficult position they had inherited, to believe that their future was bound up "with the preservation of the status quo or, at best, that only the most gradual and cautious changes should be allowed." This also suited the Conservatives' thinking and their policy of "gradualism." It might have appeared to the Conservatives then that a federation of the three territories would delay independence, particularly of

99 In a letter to The Times (26 February 1953), Miss Margery Perham said: "people who feel their human dignity injured cannot be soothed by material palliatives. The Union shows that even a booming economy, if built upon the basis of black, colour-barred labour and a disintegrated peasantry, cracks at the foundations."

100 A letter to The Times, 23 July 1952, from Miss Margery Perham.
two northern territories, which had made considerable advance towards self-government and where the granting of independence, with African majority rule, could not be long delayed. Thus, they found out the mechanism of "partnership" by which the Africans would steadily acquire more political power. But this was a myth that was being preached by the Conservatives to retain White supremacy and White leadership. And this policy could safely be called as self deception, if not "fraudulent."

What the White settlers really wanted, and what they intended one day to bring about, was a White-dominated unitary state, in close alliance with South Africa and Portugal. In fact, they were promised dominion status -- they were promised it verbally -- which in turn was going to lead to independence under White minority rule which everyone knew, was the plan. These were the men -- Lyttelton, Churchill -- who by tempera-

101 The Manchester Guardian (9 January 1952) defined "partnership" as: "broadly that all members of the community are alike citizens (though not necessarily of equal status) and that policy must attempt to reconcile their interests or, where that is not possible, to compromise between them. Within these limits there is clearly room for many variations favouring one element or another." European spokesmen, in accepting the principle of partnership held the view that Africans must remain the junior partners until education and experience of affairs qualified them for a more responsible position. And the Conservatives generally endorsed this.

102 Interview with Cyril Dunn, Correspondent of The Observer in London, on 14 May 1970.
is White, hands was the right way ahead.

With this in mind, the Conservatives proceeded with the negotiations over the federation and advanced the date of the next conference so that April became the promised "middle of next year." This was done in consultation with, and at the instance of Sir Godfrey Huggins, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, who was now sure that the new Government in Britain wanted federation almost as much as he did. This raised a row in the British Parliament. In spite of this, every facility was made possible to the White settlers and nothing was put in their way. All points were met at meetings and Conferences. The April Conference which prepared the draft of the Federal scheme, was not attended by African representatives from the two northern territories. Even the final Conference which prepared the final draft of the Federal scheme -- which later became the federal constitution -- was boycotted by the African representatives. The Federal Constitution -- in which rights depended on race -- which was the product of the negotiations, with Africans out, was to be amended only by two-thirds majority of the Federal Assembly which then consisted of majority of Europeans, because of tough franchise

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103 Interview with Patrick Keatley, Diplomatic Correspondent of The Guardian in London, on 1 June 1970. He told me: "Welensky in the later 50's made it clear that he expected this promise (of dominion status i.e. of independence) to be fulfilled in 1960."
qualifications. Even the so-called safeguards provided by the African Affairs Board seemed quite ineffective for any political advancement of Africans in the face of the Governor-General's reserve powers. Thus, in the final scheme, the British Government were handing over the substance of power including military power to the White settlers, over six million Africans, not for seven years or ten years, but until such time as the European minority in Central Africa had agreed to any such advancement.

The Federal scheme was opposed in Parliament by the Labour and the Liberal Parties. The Labour Party was, however, divided on the issue and remained so till the end. The Conservatives, front and back-benchers alike, supported their party's Government stand on Federation, throughout the numerous parliamentary debates. Outside the Parliament, there were groups like the Africa Bureau and the Fabian Colonial Bureau and academicians like Miss Margery Perham, Sir Keith Hancock, and the religious bodies like the London Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland, who all appealed the British Government not to impose federation in the face of African opposition. In spite of this, Lyttelton went ahead, pushed ahead,

104 Lord Brockway told me: "The greatest mistake was in handing over the military forces, Air forces entirely to the Federal Government which finally led to the U.D.I. in Southern Rhodesia." Interview with Lord Brockway in London, on 14 April 1970.
Lord Salisbury and Lord Swinton chaired the Conference, and the Prime Minister Churchill gave his blessing.

Thus, the Conservatives, ignoring all the evidence which had been piling up since the Hilton Young Commission of 1929 against federation, had no hesitation in launching the scheme of Federation which looked "floating like a cloud over the rocky peaks and stony gorges" through which the new State seemed destined to travel. They considered the federation issue as the great issue of imperial policy and were successful in creating a powerful British bloc in the heart of Africa.

(B) WEST INDIES FEDERATION

The British West Indies, which consisted of ten colonies embracing thirteen islands -- Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and two groups, the Windward and the Leeward Islands -- was another group of territories, which, the Conservatives thought, could form a federation to become economically viable and politically independent unit of the

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105 It is interesting to quote Winston Churchill who had, half a century ago, said: "...It will be an ill day for native races when their fortunes are removed from the impartial and august administration of the Crown and abandoned to the fierce self-interest of a small White population." Winston Churchill, My African Journey (London, 1908), p. 38.

106 Historically and politically, British Guiana and British Honduras -- two mainland colonies -- are closely associated with the West Indies and considered to fall in this group.
Commonwealth. The main physical facts of the region are the large areas over which these colonies are scattered in a roughly triangular fashion, and the smallness of most the individual units. In the absence of adequate inter-colonial communications, physical separation of the islands assumes formidable proportions. It is, therefore, no wonder that this should have helped to strengthen and deepen the isolation and insular outlook of the island communities.

History of the Closer Union

Historically, federation or closer association was not a new idea in the West Indies. The Colonial Office was often interested in some kind of closer union as a way of simplifying its own administrative burdens; but it had always been realized that the initiative for political unity must come from within and not from outside. As early as 1922, Major the Hon. Edward Wood, Under Secretary of State (who later became Lord Halifax) said: "The establishment of West Indian political unity is likely to be a plant of slow and tender growth. If any advance in this direction is to be achieved, it can only be as the result of a deliberate demand of local opinion." In the years that followed, there was a certain political restiveness for constitutional reform, due mostly

107 The Times, 13 April 1953.
to the effect of the First World War and the economic depression of the 1930's. In 1932, there was an attempt by an unofficial West Indian Conference, in Dominica, to examine proposals for a federal constitution. Six years later, the idea of a West Indian union was again reviewed by a West Indian Labour Congress which actually produced detailed proposals.

This led to an appointment of the West Indian Royal Commission which visited the islands in 1938-39 to examine economic and social conditions. The Commission was able to report: "Our general impression...is that...local opinion has made a considerable advance in the direction of political unity." They said that federation should be an object of policy but not an immediate object, partly because of existing difficulties, including lack of transport, and partly because they found that opinion was not unanimous. It was the considered opinion of the Koyne Commission that the initiative and drive for Federation should come from the peoples themselves.

But it was not until the Second World War that it (federation) was made a practical political study. It began, more precisely, in March 1945 with a memorable despatch of Colonel Oliver Stanley, then Conservative Colonial Secretary,

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to the West Indian Governments inviting their views on the subject of Federation. Reaffirming self-government as the aim of British policy, he pointed out the difficulties in the way of small units maintaining full and complete independence under modern conditions. In his dispatch he, therefore, suggested that the development of self-governing institutions in the individual British Caribbean colonies should take place keeping in view the larger project of their political federation as the aim to which policy should be directed. He believed that federation alone -- may be two federations, one of the eastern and one of the western groups, while the Bahamas remaining outside federation for some time -- would make feasible the building up of a nation, politically independent and economically prosperous in the West Indies. But the demand for federation, he said, must come from within and not from outside area. Stanley's despatch, thus, was a step forward to Edward Wood's proposals in that the former, not only regarded it desirable but also promised to give lead by His Majesty's Government in this matter. The despatch provided a positive impetus from London, to which the Legislatures duly responded and all, except Bahamas, expressed readiness to participate into discussion or conference but retaining complete freedom of action in relation to any proposals which might result from such discussions.

In 1947, Arthur Creech Jones, Labour Colonial Secretary,
followed up his predecessor's action by proposing a conference in that year. In the Memorandum attached to his dispatch he emphasized the fact that in the modern world it was "clearly impossible...for the present separate communities, small and isolated as most of them are, to achieve and maintain full self-government on their own." The Conference which met at Montego Bay, Jamaica, recognized "desirability of a political federation of the British Caribbean territories" and accepted "the principle of a federation in which each constituent unit retains complete control over all matters except those specifically assigned to the federal government." It also called for "the immediate constitution of a Standing Closer Association Committee" to consider and make recommendations on "form of a federal constitution and federal judiciary."

110 In his despatch dated 14 February 1947 Arthur Creech Jones said: "It is not...practical politics to suppose that communities of two hundred thousand souls, or in some cases even less, should play an independent part in international discussions. On the other hand, a community of well over two million people in the Caribbean area, with much that is homogeneous in their culture, could reasonably hope to achieve real self-government, and to be strong enough to stand against economic and cultural pressure and to formulate and carry through a policy and way of life of its own." Ibid., para 11, p. 9.


112 Ibid., Resolution 6, pp. 8-9.
In 1950, the Standing Closer Association Committee (hereafter called the SCAC) under the chairmanship of Sir Hubert Rance produced a draft constitution which recommended the creation of a federation on the Australian model in which the Federal Government enjoyed only such powers as specifically allotted to it, the residual powers remaining with the units. The Rance report proposed: a bicameral legislature, with a House of Assembly elected by universal adult suffrage, reflecting though not precisely corresponding to the populations of the constituent units, and a nominated Senate, representing those units as equals, with a preponderant role of the elected chamber, particularly as regards finance; a Council of State or executive authority composed of a Governor-General along eight members to be appointed on the nomination of the Prime Minister but other six to be appointed by the Governor-General, three being officials and with a Governor-General retaining the power to reserve for the approval of the British Government all bills relating to defence, foreign affairs, financial stability and public safety of the federation;


114 The strong local loyalties and inter-colonial suspicions and jealousy of the island communities prompted the Committee to recommend a loose federation, with a weak Centre.
and an independent judiciary.

**The Conservative Approach**

When the Conservatives took over the administration after the General Election in 1951, they found a large file before them on the subject of West Indies Federation. And the new Colonial Secretary, Lyttelton, was prompt in saying that there was no difference on the subject between the political parties in Britain and that changes of Government in Britain involved "no changes of attitude or policy towards the question of West Indian federation." He also emphasized the point that the British Government had no wish to impose its views. "If a federation comes into being", he said, "it must be by the spontaneous and willing decisions of the Governments and legislatures concerned."

The SCAC proposals were debated in territorial legislatures during 1951 and except the two mainland colonies -- British Guiana and British Honduras -- and the British Virgin islands, all legislatures accepted federation in principle. These debates, however, showed several basic points on which

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116 Daily Telegraph, 14 April 1953.

117 Although Barbados's House of Assembly had accepted federation in principle, its Legislative Council had rejected it.
there were disagreement and required modification in the SCAC Report. With this in view, in February 1952, Lyttelton sent a despatch on the subject to all the Governments concerned, including the Governments of British Guiana and British Honduras. In his despatch, he expressed willingness to hold a conference in London, in June 1952, of delegates from the territories which had accepted federation in principle, to discuss details and points of difference between them, and between them and the United Kingdom Government and reach agreement on the main features of the Federal Scheme, taking the proposals in the SCAC Report as a basis for discussion. He, however, suggested that if the necessary preliminaries had not been completed, it might be preferable to hold it later. His despatch pointed out that the success of any conference depended very largely on the extent to which the ground had been prepared in advance and hoped that the West Indian Governments would do that.

Reactions to the Rance Proposals

Although Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Windwards and Leewards groups of island had accepted federation in principle, they were having extensive second thoughts about the Rance

118 The Times, 28 February 1952.
119 "The Rance" is used synonymous to "the SCAC" as Rance was chairman of the committee.
proposals. Their hostility to the federal scheme stemmed from different causes in different colonies. Being heavily populated and on the verge of industrialization, Jamaica and Trinidad rightly saw in federation new possibilities of emigration and of trade. But they were also the richer colonies and did not, therefore, like to share their wealth with the poorer ones. The majority of Windwards and Leewards groups of islands were then grant-aided by the British Treasury with consequent loss of independence. Barbados, therefore, feared that she might be asked to share her revenue for the upkeep of more backward zones and thereby reduce her to their level. On the other hand, Barbadians being very proud of their "little England", with over three centuries of representative government, also saw the danger of being "swamped out by the combined voices of islands which have lost the representative institutions they formerly possessed." She further found it humiliating to get only four seats in a proposed Federal Assembly of fifty, the Windwards and Leewards islands getting five and eight respectively, not to mention nine of Trinidad and sixteen of Jamaica.

120 Trinidad being the most prosperous of the colonies and perhaps the only one that never required Crown aid feared to be burdened financially in Federation. See New York Times, 19 January 1953.

121 Quoted by A. F. MacMohan from Advocate (newspaper in Barbados) in an Article — "West Indian Federation: (1) What Barbados Thinks?" in Manchester Guardian, 7 April 1953.
This proposed representation which gave Trinidad and Jamaica a dominant position made Barbados feel that her interests and those of smaller islands would be subordinated.

There were doubts on constitutional front too. While Barbados felt the powers to be surrendered to the federal legislature were too great, Jamaica and Trinidad did not. On the contrary, they wanted the proposed federal Government to get more powers than the islands had, to achieve Dominion Status more quickly than Jamaica might hope to do on its own. They also objected to the nominated character of Senate, the inclusion of officials in the Council of State and wide powers of Governor-General which, most of them feared, would be used by the Governor-General to delay the steps towards independence.

Also, there were criticisms that the draft federal constitution was not democratic enough and in the words of Grantley Adams of Barbados, it (the proposed federation) was "not...more than a glorified Crown Colony." It drew fire from all shades of

122 Barbados wanted the Federal structure weaker than her.
124 There was the general suspicion, felt everywhere, that federation might mask an underhand return to some form of Crown colony government, in fact, if not in name. A. F. MacMohan, "West Indian Federation: (II) Opinion in the Smaller Islands", Manchester Guardian, 8 April 1953; Rita Hinden, "Federating the West Indies", Corona (London), vol. V, no. 3, March 1953, p. 99.
opinion in the islands, from extremists to moderates -- in Jamaica, from Bustamante to Manley alike -- in condemning "the spirit of colonialism" which was alleged to have run through the Rance proposals. The Rance proposals also failed to satisfy British Guiana who was to get, then, its new constitution with wide measure of self-government and British Honduras who had a peculiar fear of being swamped by nearby Jamaica an over-populated island.

The 1953 London Conference

The purpose of the proposed London conference was, thus, to consider all these points of views, as stated above, and evolve a federal scheme acceptable to all. The Conference, 

125 A. F. MacMohan says:

"I believe that in England few realise how deep and widespread in the West Indies is the dislike, the suspicion, and in some cases the hatred of 'government from London' -- called colonialism by the sedate elements and the imperialism by the extreme Left. 'London' means the Colonial Office, perfidious Albion, the big firms in the City, the big local traders with offices in England, the incompetent official sent from London, the foolish snobs, with the haw-haw accent; in short, everything and anything might dislike which is not home-made." A. F. MacMohan, "West Indian Federation: (I) What Barbados Thinks?", Manchester Guardian, 7 April 1953.


127 Commenting on the Rance proposals, Guianese spokesmen asked: "Why give us a liberal constitution with one hand and take it away with the other by making us slaves to the islands of the Caribbean?" Ibid., p. 70.
accordingly, met in London from 13 to 30 April 1953. It was attended by delegates from Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom, and observers from British Guiana and British Honduras. In his opening speech, Lyttelton referred to the advantages of the territories working together on common economic and social problems and pointed out that an earlier Conference had concluded that this was best secured by political federation. He further said if the Conference agreed upon a form of federation which, in his opinion, provided "the means by which the British West Indies can travel most hopefully and most speedily towards economic strength and ultimately responsible self-government", Her Majesty's Government would support that decision, but it was entirely for the Governments and Legislatures of the territories concerned to make the proposal and Her Majesty's Government had no desire to impose their views. He, however, warned the delegates that every

128 Cmd. 8837/1953, Report by the Conference on West Indian Federation held in London in April 1953, p. 3.

Lyttelton referred to the dangers of attempt by small units in Europe to maintain an equilibrium with powerful neighbours by compromise out of weakness. The dangers were not the same at the West Indies side of the world, because they were under no menace from Canada or America; on the contrary they were firm friends. Manchester Guardian, 14 April 1953.

(footnote contd....)
scheme of federation involved some sacrifice, some loss of sovereignty by its members, and hoped that a spirit of compromise would animate the Conference.

In response to Lyttelton's welcome address, Grantley Adams of Barbados assured the full cooperation of his delegates, deprecating any suggestion that Barbados had come to wreck the Conference. But he added: "We are realists. We realise the difficulties that concern federalism, and in fact, we go so far as to wonder whether federalism has not been in human experience a mistake." He declared: "Our Legislature is extremely jealous of its rights, and we are the most critical people in the world."

There were others more enthusiastic like Albert Gomes (Trinidad) who was hopeful of the success of the Conference. The West Indies, he said, were capable of raising to a great occasion and this was one. Anything short of federation would certainly not meet the desires of the Trinidad delegation and most of the other delegates of the Conference. There was an assurance from Jamaica delegate that she was not a whit behind Trinidad in its

(Previous footnote contd.)

In the Commons Lyttelton said: "There is no question of enforcement. This is a Conference among the principal West Indian Colonies to decide whether they wish to federate."

514 H.C. Deb. 5s. col. 199, 15 April 1953, Oral Answer, Lyttelton.

129 Manchester Guardian, 14 April 1953.
aspiration and would do whatever was possible to make federal-
tion an accomplished fact. The views of the delegates of the
Windwards and the Leewards groups of islands were even more
encouraging. While the former thought the federation to be
the only highway on which they could travel to political and
economic independence, the latter hoped that they would take
back a constitution that would bring not only unity but sub-
stantial benefits for the peoples of the Caribbean. These
sentiments underlined what was already known, namely, that
the principle of federation was generally accepted by the
Caribbean territories with the exception of British Guiana
and British Honduras, and only financial and constitutional
details were to be worked out by the Conference.

The Conference discussed the federal scheme set out in
the SCAC report and agreed to certain modifications in it.
The addition in the preamble to the effect that "there shall
be greatest possible freedom of movement of persons and goods
within the Federation" was made. The subject of "immigration,
emigration and deportation" was put under exclusive federal
power to legislate and was provided that these legislative
powers might not be used to restrict the movement of West
Indian nationals on economic or any other grounds. The

130 The Times, 14 April 1953.
131 Cmd. 8837/1953, p. 4.
132 Ibid., para 10 (C), p. 5.
allocation of these powers to the Federal Government was protested by the Trinidad representative because his colony had long been a Mecca for unemployed Barbadians and Grenadians who could be excluded or admitted conditionally under existing Trinidadian law. It agreed that "the power to levy income tax should be added to the concurrent list with a provision not to levy an income tax by Federal Government within the first five years and that the position then be reviewed."

The most important alteration was in the composition of the Council of State, "the principal instrument of policy" in the federal Government. This was still to have fourteen members, including the Prime Minister, seven members to be appointed on the nomination of the Prime Minister but the method of choosing the rest had been altered. There was to be three officials nominated by the Governor-General at his discretion and three Senators nominated by the Governor-General in Council. However, there was to be no change in the composition of the Senate, a body entirely nominated at the discretion of the Governor-General, except reducing the total number of seats from 23 to 19 to allow for the absence of two mainland colonies -- British Guiana and British Honduras.

133 Differences over the issue were settled at another Conference.

134 Cmd. 8837/1953, para. 10 (g), p. 5.
Similarly the total number of seats in the Federal House of Representatives were reduced to fortyfive viz., Jamaica 17, Trinidad and Tobago 10, Barbados 5, and other islands two each, except Montserrat with one. The Conference reversed the SCAC Report's recommendations that members of local legislatures should not be eligible to sit in the federal chambers, with a provision that during the first five years of the Federation, a member of unit Legislature or Executive should not be disqualified for appointment as a Senator or member of Federal House of Representatives.

The Conference succeeded in getting the assurance from Lyttelton that the British Government would continue to supply needed financial assistance through the Federal Government which would allocate it to the units. He agreed to make an annual grant to the federal government for the first five years following federation equal at least to the average of the deficits experienced by the various units during the three preceding years. However, he assumed that "this exceptional interim assistance would...become unnecessary after ten years"

135 Antigua, St. Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Dominica.
136 The smaller territories were given a weight of representation more than proportionate to their population.
137 Cmd. 8837/1953, paras. 13, 17 and 22, pp. 5-7. But later it was restored by the 1956 Conference.
and warned that more aid would be provided during the first five years only if Parliament could be "fully satisfied" that it was "unavoidable", and if the question of what sort of financial control the British Government should exercise over the federal government were opened. The attachment of these provisions to the commitment seemed to confirm the hypothesis that "one of the major reasons prompting Britain to support federation was the hope that it would enable her to curtail her financial obligations in the West Indies."

Finally, the Conference agreed that there would be no constitutional changes for the first five years and then a constitutional convention would be called to consider revisions. Thereafter, changes would be made by a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives and the assent of at least six unit Legislatures by a smaller majority, followed by reference to the British Government for signification of Her Majesty's pleasure.

The London Conference, thus, went off "remarkably and even unexpectedly well." That it reached an agreement on a

138 Ibid., pp. 10-11.


141 Manchester Guardian, 1 May 1953.
federal draft scheme which represented a compromise was "a personal triumph for Mr Lyttelton as well as a tribute to the good sense of the delegates." But this apparent unanimity, the Daily Telegraph said, "should delude no one into supposing that the scheme will have an easy passage. It has yet to pass some notoriously explosive legislatures. What can be said is that its merits deserve success." Certainly, the Conference was a welcome relief and change from the over-hasty approach to colonial problems which had seemed to be the characteristic of British Conservative Government in Central Africa. It also showed that the Conservative Government was keen to enlist the cooperation and collaboration of the local peoples by a free and frank exchange of views.

Approval of the London Plan by the Legislatures

The London Plan was debated and adopted by the Legislatures of Grenada and St. Vincent and accepted in principle by

142 Daily Telegraph, 2 May 1953. The Observer (3 May 1953) said: "Mr Lyttelton must be congratulated on his part in bringing about a solution which, in this instance, has the support of all parties concerned. The West Indian politicians, on their side, showed a welcome lack of parochialism, and by implication a willingness to risk their reputations in a bigger arena -- a courageous step for men who enjoy such undoubted prestige and influence in their present smaller communities as Mr Albert Gomes in Trinidad, Mr Grantley Adams in Barbados, and Messrs Manley and Bustamante in Jamaica."

143 Daily Telegraph, 2 May 1953.
the Legislatures of the other West Indian territories which
sent delegates to the 1953 Conference. The debates in the
Legislatures revealed the fears among the minority, particu-
larly in Trinidad, of the dangers of political union which
would place them in a permanent minority position.

In a statement in the House of Commons on 2 February
1955, the new Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, welcomed
the agreement which had been reached by the West Indian
Governments and announced the measures he was putting in train
to establish the federation. It included a proposal for a
Conference of representatives of West Indian Governments, in
accordance with the suggestion made in the West Indies, to
consider the question of control of the movement of persons
between one member territory of the proposed British Caribbean
Federation and another, the setting up of three Commissions to
work out the fiscal, civil service and judicial arrangements
for the federation, and the change in the designation of the
Comptroller of Development and Welfare in the West Indies as
Commissioner for the Preparation of the Federal Organization.
A final plan, he said, would be drawn up on the results of the
work done by the Commissioner, the three Commissions, and the

144 Cmd. 9489/1955, The Colonial Territories 1954-55,
p. 23.

145 536 H.C. Deb. 5s. cols. 1093-5, 2 February 1955,
Lennox-Boyd.
Conference on Movement of Persons. The plan, then, would be laid before a final West Indies Conference to which the Governments of the territories would be invited to send delegates with full powers. Only then would the necessary United Kingdom legislation be introduced. Lennox-Boyd's announcement was received with cheers on both sides of the House and James Griffiths, his Labour predecessor, quickly took the opportunity of welcoming it on behalf of the Opposition.

The Conference on Movement of Persons

A Conference on Movement of Persons, held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, from 14 to 17 March 1955 under the chairmanship of Lord Lloyd, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, reconsidered the question of control of the movement of persons between one member territory and another. The differences between the units on freedom of movement, with Trinidad hesitant about it and Barbados insistent upon it were resolved at this Conference, with the agreement that immigration based on health and security precautions would remain in the hands of the unit Governments but that restrictions on any other grounds would fall within the concurrent powers and

146 Lennox-Boyd acknowledged the "conspicuous and most helpful part" played by the Labour Government in the early stages of bringing federation about. Ibid., col. 1095, 2 February 1955; Lennox-Boyd.
that after five years the Federal Legislature would have a veto power over unit immigration legislation. The recommendations of the Conference on the Movement of Persons within a British Caribbean were subsequently endorsed by the Legislatures of all the territories concerned.

Meanwhile, three Commissions headed by Sydney Caine, Hilary Blood and Allan Chalmers Smith examined respectively the fiscal, civil service and judicial aspects of Federation and published their reports in the same year. These reports had to be tentative in some respects, because although the main lines of power allocation were established, the precise need for particular administrative agencies, for example, would have to await the actual functioning of federation to see whether or not the federal government chose to legislate in all the fields covered by the concurrent powers.

The 1956 London Conference

It was time now to take final decisions on all major


outstanding issues concerning federation and agree on the procedure for settling all minor and less controversial issues for taking the necessary administrative steps. But during the three-year period from 1953 to 1956, much water had flowed in the British Caribbean political river. The effects of Manley's entry into Jamaica politics as a Chief Minister after the general election in 1955, of one who had rejected the 1953 conclusions in several respects, together with Dr Eric Williams' vigorous public campaign in Trinidad against the 1953 decisions, were felt at this Conference. The Manley-Williams criticisms were readily accepted by most of the delegations and this part of the Conference gave little trouble.

The Conference met in London from 7 to 23 February 1956 under the chairmanship of Lennox-Boyd. It was attended by delegates from the Governments of Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom, and the observers from British Guiana and British Honduras which had reached no final decision on participation in the Federation but which had an interest in various regional developments associated with the Federation.

In his opening speech at the Conference, Lennox-Boyd referred to two considerations: that full Dominion status could not be hoped for by any single West Indian territory (this aroused some resentment in Jamaica) and that the British Government realised fully that financial assistance would need to be given to the West Indian federation for some time to come. He pointed out how Federation would facilitate the eventual achievement of self-government within the Commonwealth, by drawing the attention to the implication of that "status". "Self-government", he said, "meant something more than the formal relinquishment by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of constitutional powers of control. It meant that a country must be able to stand on its own feet, economically and financially, that it could finance its own administration and that it was able and prepared to assume responsibility for its own defence and its own international relations to the extent that either was involved by its geographical or international standing." But he said, in these days, "no country was independent in the sense of being entirely self-contained and self-sufficient. Mutual help was one of the great principles of the Commonwealth." So there was "nothing derogatory to a country's dignity in accepting help of other partners to improve its economic situation and develop its resources to the general advantage of the partnership." He was, thus, able

152 Ibid., para. 8, pp. 4-5.
to point out that it was chiefly on its economic progress (which the West Indies lacked then) that the speed with which the West Indies should move towards full independence as a member of the Commonwealth depended. And it was primarily for this reason that the West Indies, although in many ways more advanced than either Malaya or the West African colonies, was to achieve full dominion status later than them.

The Conference agreed, broadly, to the plan for a British Caribbean Federation put forward by the London Conference in April 1953, and subsequently endorsed by the Legislatures of all the territories concerned with some constitutional variations. It provided for the amendment of the Constitution by Order-in-Council as proposed in paragraph 78 of the SCAC Report, subject to the deletion of the provision in that paragraph for a referendum and to the substitution therefore of the provisions in paragraph 92(3) of the 1953 plan. The

153 Financial Times (London), 8 February 1956. Lord Boyd told me that full Dominion Status and continuance of grant to these territories from British treasury were not possible because one could not justify the British Parliament and the people for doing so. Interview with Lord Boyd, formerly Lennox-Boyd, in London, on 26 March 1970.

154 The agreed Federal Plan (endorsed by the Legislatures of the territories) together with the Reports of the London Conference of 1953, the Trinidad Conference of 1955 and the three Commissions referred earlier constituted the documents before the Conference.
It further provided that federal election should be held as soon as practicable after 1 January 1958, and in any event not later than 31 March 1958.

On the Customs Union issue, there was a protracted debate which revealed the differences between Jamaican and Trinidadian delegates. Jamaican's plea for the Caine proposal, with a quick approach towards a Free Trade Area, and slower movement towards Customs Union, because of its few possible export markets for manufactures but a large internal market with some of its industries existing only as a result of the tariff wall, was opposed by Trinidadian's demand for quick movement towards Customs Union and a Free Trade Area because of its great potential export market for oils and manufactured goods. The rest of the small islands rallied their support either to Jamaican or Trinidadian delegates depending on the nature of the respective island's economy. An agreement was, however, reached on this complex issue, to incorporate, in the preamble of the Constitution, a recital of an integrated trade policy for the Federation and inclusions of Customs

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(Previous footnote contd.)


John Mordecai, n, 150, p. 56.
Union including internal free trade for the economic strength of the area. There was also an agreement on the method to be adopted initially for securing Federal revenue which represented a compromise between the recommendation of the Fiscal Commissioner and the method envisaged in the 1953 Federal Plan.

The Conference further agreed to set up a Commission on Trade and Tariff to examine and report to the Federal Government on the economic, fiscal and other technical problems involved in the establishment of a Customs Union for the Federal area, bearing in mind the possible accession of British Guiana and British Honduras, and to work out a scheme for a Customs Union to be implemented if necessary by stages. Another Commission composed entirely of non-West Indians was entrusted with advising on the ticklish issue of the federal capital site -- the issue on which no agreement was reached by the delegates of the Conference -- but the final decision to remain with the Standing Federation Committee.

Finally, the Conference was in no mood to dillydally in putting its historic decisions into effect. It decided to remain in being as a Standing Federation Committee to carry out constitutional and administrative work until federation

159 Cmd. 9733/1956, para. 25, p. 8.
160 Ibid., para. 26, p. 8.
became a reality. It was to prepare a complete draft constitution covering the points of details not covered by the 1953 plan or the conclusions of the 1956 Conference and take administrative measures both before the appointment of a Governor-General and between his appointment and the elections for the first Federal Legislature.

The Conference was important in two ways. Firstly, it reached decisions on a small number of constitutional variations in the 1953 Federal Plan and agreed to set up the Standing Federation Committee to carry necessary constitutional and administrative work to bring federation into being. Secondly, it advanced the constitutional status of the Federal Government beyond what was proposed in the 1953 Federal Plan, bringing it nearer to the goal of self-government. However, an agreement was not reached on all main points, but rather on enough points to make it possible to proceed with the Federation Plan. That it was "the unanimous agreement" of those who represented British Caribbean Colonies to bind together in Federation, had not been without its conflicts and dangers and Lennox-Boyd was certainly right in warning the West Indies not to be under any illusion about what precisely had been achieved. What had

Lord Boyd told me: "It was considered to be a gloomy send off but the history would certify that what I had said. There were already signs of disunity, mutual suspicion... So I said it was entirely in their hands to make it a success."

emerged, he said, was the product of "inevitable compromise" of patient negotiations over a period of many years to resolve the conflicting interests so that the position of each party to the Federation might be safeguarded. But he added: "Compromise produces often its own weaknesses and its half measures and, like all other federations, the Caribbean Federation will inevitably suffer from them. It cannot be said that its governmental power will at the outset be strong, nor its field of activity very large." In fact, several of the most important issues had had to be left unresolved after more than fortnight's give and take, and had been put off to a remote day. He, therefore, said: "All we can say is that the document to which we have put our hand will set up Federal Government with enough powers initially to establish itself firmly if it has will to do." What seemed to have happened was that a general determination to get started on the Federal scheme triumphed over the individual reservations of the various delegates.

The point was explained by Albert Gomes of Trinidad who wryly said: "I am sure this is an excellent constitution, for it does not please any of us entirely."

162 The Times, 24 February 1956; also Times Review of the British Colonies (London), no. 21, First Quarter, 1956, p.2. Grantley Adams of Barbados consoled himself with the thought that politics, especially higher politics, were essentially a matter of compromise. The Times, 24 February 1956.

163 Manchester Guardian, 24 February 1956. Albert Gomes said: (footnote contd....)
One of the subjects on which an agreement could not be reached at the 1956 Conference was the site of the Federal capital and the subject was entrusted to a Commission, headed by Sir Francis Mudie who toured the federating territories and British Guiana between June and August 1956 and published its Report early in September 1956. The Commission’s recommendation was that capital should be a "twin" town to an existing town of some size, and standing and that it should be located in Barbados, Jamaica or Trinidad, placing the islands in that order of preference. The Commission in preferring Barbados to Jamaica gave it as the view that the capital ought to be on a small island. The two large islands of Jamaica and Trinidad, they said, would, because of their size and wealth, have very great influence in federal affairs, and it was feared that if the capital were placed in one of them "the influence of that island would be so great as almost to amount to domination."

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"We are voluble people, with almost a genius of quarreling, but underlying all these is a firm belief that we have a common destiny that we belong one with the other, and that inexorably we must come together if we are to achieve anything in this world. It is that dominant thought which has guided us through...the perils of the last ten years...to this happy occasion."
Quoted by John Mordecai from the Lancaster House Conference Record in The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations, p. 60.

Trinidad was put last because of "stability of that island's politics and the low standard accepted in its life." The Commission's Report was considered by the Standing Federation Committee at its meeting in Jamaica in February 1957 and finally, Trinidad which had been the Site Commission's third choice, was chosen.

The British Caribbean Federation Bill

In accordance with the desire expressed at the 1956 London Conference which authorised the British Government to enact necessary legislation for the establishment of the Federation, a Bill to that effect was introduced in British Parliament. On 29 June 1956 the Bill received a Second Reading in the House of Commons. It was welcomed on both sides of the House and many tributes were paid to those, both in the West Indies and in Britain, who had had a share in bringing federation about. Speaking on behalf of the Labour Party, Arthur Creech Jones said: "It is a federation which has been built up from below. It is not a constitutional conception which has been imposed on the West Indies, and it, therefore, has the value that what is now coming to fruition is largely the result of discussion and the desire of the West Indian people themselves." But there were some critical and constructive

165 555 H.C. Deb. 53. col. 878, 29 June 1956, Arthur Creech Jones.
comments in the course of it. Arthur Creech Jones was alarmed at the decision taken in the West Indies that no person might serve both in the Federal Government and in the Government of his own island. Nigel Fisher, Conservative M.P., in sharing that view felt that that restriction would deprive the Federation of its most able leaders at the crucial initial stage of its development. He thought that it was a mistaken decision. Leather, another Conservative M.P., criticised the proposed retention by the Governor-General of reserve powers. He said: "They set up risks which can do harm, and they achieve no positive good, because in the remote possibility of our wanting to use them, we should give way because, I repeat, we could not do anything else." The only safeguard which he thought was worth-while was "the goodwill of the West Indian politicians", which Britain already enjoyed. John Hare, the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, in reply pointed out that much the same arrangements existed in the advanced Constitutions in colonial territories and that the West Indians themselves had readily assented that the Governor-General should have them.

166 Ibid., col. 881, 29 June 1956, Arthur Creech Jones.
167 Ibid., col. 916, 29 June 1956, Nigel Fisher.
168 Ibid., cols. 904-5, 29 June 1956, E.H.C. Leather.
169 Ibid., col. 929, 29 June 1956, John Hare.
The Bill became law as "The British Caribbean Federation Act 1956" on 2 August 1956, which provided for a federation of Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago, and enabled the establishment of Federal Government, a Federal Legislature, a Federal Supreme Court and other federal authorities by an Order-in-Council.

The Standing Federation Committee

The Standing Federation Committee whose job was to work out necessary constitutional and administrative details held its first meeting in Barbados, in May 1956, and approved a structure for the Federal Government with its departments and functions. The Committee held its second meeting in Jamaica from 22 January to 13 February 1957. As pointed out earlier, it considered the Report of the Capital Site Commission and chose Trinidad as the site of the capital. It also considered proposals for a draft Order-in-Council under the British Caribbean Federation Act, 1956 which was to embody the Federal Constitution. It further decided to establish a Federal Economic Planning Unit to provide the Federal Government with studies and basic plans which would assist in formulating policy affecting the economic development of the region and suggested some changes in the existing Regional economic bodies for better coordination.

With the third meeting in Port-of-Spain, 6-17 May 1957,
the Standing Federation Committee settled a number of administrative and constitutional matters in accordance with its terms of reference and made all necessary arrangements for the establishment of the Federation. The Order-in-Council embodying the Federal Constitution was made in July 1957, after it had been approved by a resolution of each House. And Federation under the name "The West Indies" became an accomplished fact on 3 January 1958, when Lord Hailes was sworn in as Governor-General and the interim provisions of the Constitution were brought into effect on the authority of the West Indies (Federation) (Compensation) Order-in-Council made in December 1957.

Appraisal

Thus, the idea of the West Indies Federation which had been the dream of Caribbean visionaries for nearly 100 years and a practical political study since 1945 saw its fulfilment in January 1958, under the Conservative administration. However, it was not an easy task for the Conservatives to group together these small islands in the Caribbean, scattered over thousand of miles into a federation to form a self-governing unit in the Commonwealth because of the insular outlook of the island communities.

When the Conservatives took over, Lyttelton found a large file before him on the subject of West Indies Federation.
And the new Colonial Secretary was prompt in saying that there was no difference on the subject between the political parties in Britain. In fact, the Colonial Office was always interested in some kind of grouping for administrative convenience as they found some of these islands a burden on the British taxpayer. So the motivation was entirely from the British side in the sense that it was always the determination of administrators, departmental heads of the Colonial Office to enlist the support of the Ministers and politicians whether the Labour politicians were in charge or the Conservative politicians in charge to put the West Indies together in some way. Looking at the map, one finds that these islands have enormous patrolling and security problem. To save this ever increasing military cost of policing the West Indies was a problem and the Conservatives after coming to power soon discovered it. The Treasury was continuously pressing for this and asking to do something about this non-productive expenses. Also, Kenya cost the British Exchequer, then, £71 million for the period of Mau Mau. "So the whole test of it", according to Patrick Keatley, "was: Can

170 The Conservative Party had repeatedly pressed the previous Labour Government to expand Colonial military forces, particularly the reformation of the West Indies Regiment. And after coming to power, the new Conservative Government was able to raise early in 1952 the two local regular infantry battalions in the West Indies for patrolling the area. See A bi-monthly Survey of Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs (The Conservative Political Centre, London), no. 2, 26 March 1952, p. 10.

the Colonial Secretary reduce cost? Can he reduce the expenses incurred on troubles in Kenya?" And therefore, to the Conservatives, federation became an obvious financial attraction. The motive behind the West Indies Federation was officially stated to be a political one -- that only by combining into a larger community with a population of about two million, could West Indians hope to advance a reasonable claim to full self-government and eventual independence because by doing so they would be able to stand on their own feet financially and economically -- but the force which had ultimately prevailed in getting the territories together was primarily economic. This was stated in Lyttelton's warning at the 1953 Conference that more aid would be provided during the first five years of the Federation only if Parliament could be "fully satisfied" that it was "unavoidable" and if the question of what sort of financial control the British Government should exercise over the federal government were opened. This condition attached to the commitment seemed to confirm the belief that one of the major reasons prompting Britain to support federation was the hope that it would enable her to curtail her financial obligations in the West Indies, bringing an early end to grant-in-aid.

The idea of the West Indies Federation was different in kind from that of the Central African Federation. Here, there was no problem of sizeable white settlers like Central Africa.
Also, the underlying motive was to form a larger, and therefore more viable, economic and political unit, particularly for reasons of administrative tidiness. The Conservatives were further faced with the problem of how to stop the movement of West Indian immigrants into Britain for employment. But the proposal for a West Indies Federation had not aroused the same strong emotions as those respecting Central Africa. This was partly because the British Government had no desire to impose its views on the islands communities and London's Colonial Office always left it to the colonies to decide whether to federate or not, with the initiative coming from London, rather than from the colonies themselves, and partly because West Indians themselves were convinced of the advantages of the Federation in principle. It was Lyttelton's father who, as early as 1905, as a Colonial Secretary said in the Commons that the Government favoured federation but would not impose it on reluctant colonies. Since then, it remained the official policy. But it was essentially a White-hall concept adopted by the British Government without perhaps sufficient appreciation of the conditions and opinions in the territories that were to be linked together in the new Federation. Also, in the 1950s there was no common aspiration among the West Indies for a West Indian nationhood; they did not mind forming a West Indian Cricket team but they had no sense of belonging to each other, or a desire to join to form a political community with
a common government. In fact, some of the politicians of the islands had met, for the first time, in the London Conference only. There was again a basic conflict between the desire to federate and become independent, and the desire not to lose identity, and the two things were diametrically opposed. This was one of the difficulties the West Indies had to face, and is also one of the reasons for the collapse of the federation later. It was this aspect that was overlooked to a considerable extent at the time the federation was set up.

However, the federal scheme had the blessings of both the political parties in Britain unlike the scheme of Central African Federation. Negotiations had continued under both the Labour and the Conservative administration, but saw their fulfilment under the Conservatives. As the scheme of federation was accepted in principle by Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, the Windwards and the Leewards groups of islands with the exception of British Guiana and British Honduras, the Conservatives, after coming to power in 1951, had little difficulty in going ahead with the scheme. All they had to do was to modify the scheme proposals to which most of the islands had objected. But the Conservatives were successful at both the Conferences -- 1953 and 1956 -- in which delegates from all the concerned islands participated, in patching up their differences, and hammering out a scheme agreeable to all. During the Conservatives' time, there were three Conferences
and five Commissions. So, it could not be said that the federation was brought into being hurriedly, and without a full and careful consideration. What seemed to have happened was that a general determination to get started on the federal scheme triumphed over the individual reservations of the various delegates, particularly at the 1956 Conference. But

the Times Review of the British Colonies remarked: "it should not be forgotten that the forward step had been brought about not by pressure by the islands upon Britain but by pressure, gentle and sensitive pressure, from the Colonial Office upon the islands." And here reasons and politics went together. However, Lennox-Boyd was right in calling the federal scheme a product of compromise and compromise, in his own words, "produces often its own weaknesses and its half measures and, like all other federations, the Caribbean Federation will inevitably suffer from them." And it was a great pity that some of the politicians on whom one could rely to run the federation preferred to remain in their islands and did not

172 Times Review of the British Colonies, no. 21, First Quarter, 1956, p. 2.

173 Nigel Fisher, Conservative M.P., even went to the extent of saying that the British Government really tried to impose the federation from the top without making adequate preparation at the grass-root level so that it would be really acceptable to everybody. Interview with Nigel Fisher, M.P., in London, on 12 March 1970.
regard themselves to be associated directly with the federation. Thus, there were already signs of disunity, mutual suspicion, reservations on free movement of persons and other related issues when the federal scheme was launched. And optimists still considered the scheme to have grown then into a sturdy plant almost ready to flower. It was certainly in the position of a ship that had been launched in spite of a number of unusual hazards by the Conservatives, and "once at sea, must sail by rocky shoals before passing into the tumultuous sea of virtual independence."
