

## Letter from Saville Garner to Arthur Snelling on the unilateral declaration of independence by Southern Rhodesia (18 November 1964)

**Caption:** On 18 November 1964, Saville Garner, Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Commonwealth Relations Office, sends a letter to Arthur Snelling at the Commonwealth Office in which he deplores the fact that Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith seems set to make a unilateral declaration of independence for Southern Rhodesia. He is particularly concerned that this will lead to the country's economic collapse.

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**Last updated:** 01/03/2017

CONF.

Sir A. Snelling

Copies to:-

Private Secretary  
Minister of State  
Mr. Watson

Rhodesia

In the course of a talk at lunch with Sir Ronald Prain he expressed the view that there was ultimately no hope of avoiding a unilateral declaration by Southern Rhodesia. He was not sure that Mr. Smith himself wished to take this drastic step, but he knew that he would be replaced if he did not do so. Admittedly the timing was uncertain and could be any time either in the immediate future or perhaps some months ahead. His information was that Mr. Smith positively did not intend to come to London.

Sir R. Prain said that he wished he could see some possibility for negotiation, or some prospect of the Southern Rhodesia Government dropping an immediate demand for independence. Unfortunately, he saw no prospect of either since "the tough boys held the whip hand".

In his view, if a unilateral declaration were declared, the future economy of Southern Rhodesia would depend far more on its relationship with Zambia than on any action in the economic field taken by Britain. (He said he was not expert in this field, but was sceptical whether a refusal on our part to purchase tobacco would really have the major effect that was expected in London). But if the economic links with Zambia were cut, then the whole economy of Southern Rhodesia would collapse. (Admittedly, the economy of Zambia would be in an even worse plight).

On Kaunda's attitude he said he understood that, in his talks with Ministers here, the President had indicated that he was prepared to go the whole way,

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if necessary, against Southern Rhodesia in the event of a U.D.I. Sir R. Prain admitted that, of course, the Zambia Government would be under very strong pressure, but he had had private talks with Kaunda and thought there was a strong prospect that Kaunda, while being forced to make loud noises against Mr. Smith's action and to deplore trading with "rebels", might nevertheless take the line that what private enterprise did was its own affair, and that he could not interfere. This would mean, in practice, that the companies would be able to obtain their supplies from Southern Rhodesia and to export their products through the Rhodesia railway system. Sir R. Prain commented that if they were given five years, no doubt alternative plans could be worked out for the supply of power to the copper belt and for the export of its products, but that it was "moonshine" to think that practicable alternatives would be possible in a shorter period.

S. G.

(SAVILLE GARNER)  
18th November, 1964.

8. Note of Pres Kaunda's meeting — 18-11-64  
at the Min of December

Ms Chetty

1. Wdya please arrange for letter enclosed to be despatched tomorrow morning.
2. R. also arrange for copy of SA letter sent to Washington in volume 6, para 5 of let 3878.
3. Wdya also make a short note of our talk with Sir G. Jones today → resolved with a brief for Sir G. to speak to Dr. Banda on 11<sup>th</sup> December. (Wd 26/11)