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FCS/79/180

CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ry

Prime Minister

Planning is going ahead
on the basis of getting
the Bill through by Christmas
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16/11
PWB

Southern Rhodesia: Independence Bill

1. Now that the Enabling Bill and the Constitutional Conference on Rhodesia has moved into its final phase, we need to consider the likely timing of the Southern Rhodesia Independence Bill which will soon be needed.
2. We envisage that the Bill will give the Government power to set the date of independence by Order in Council. The earliest practicable date for Rhodesia to achieve independence is the end of December, and our contingency planning should take this as a target. This would mean that the Independence Bill would need to receive the Royal Assent before the Christmas recess. If the ceasefire negotiations succeed, it is unlikely that Rhodesia will become independent until the end of January; but we cannot count on success in these negotiations, or await their outcome before commencing work on the Bill. It would in any case be prudent to have the Independence Bill enacted well before the end of January, in case of a breakdown in the ceasefire or some other contingency which required us to bring forward the date of independence.
3. We wish at all costs to avoid the disruption caused by the introduction at short notice of the Enabling Bill, and should give Parliament adequate time to consider the Independence Bill. But if we are to be sure of having it through by the Christmas recess we ought, I suggest, to aim to introduce it not later than 26 November.
4. Your minute of 19 September gave authority for the issue of instructions to Parliamentary Counsel to draft the Bill. With some issues already dealt with in the Enabling Bill and others likely to be settled by Orders in Council made under it, the Independence Bill itself should be a less formidable piece of legislation than

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at one time seemed likely. I have no doubt that Parliamentary Counsel have a great deal of pressing business. But if the Bill is to be tabled by 26 November - which I think essential to avoid further inconvenience to Parliament - its drafting will obviously have to be treated as a priority. I should be grateful for your agreement to this.

A handwritten signature consisting of a large, stylized letter 'C' with a diagonal line extending downwards and to the right from its base.

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

15 November 1979

This minute is copied to:
Prime Minister
Lord Chancellor
Chief Whip
Members of L Committee
Sir R Armstrong

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