



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

6 September 1979

Dear Mr. Carson,

Thank you for your letter of 21 August about Mr. Ian Smith's attendance at the Constitutional Conference on Rhodesia.

As you know, Bishop Muzorewa and the leaders of the Patriotic Front were invited to bring delegations to London for the Conference. As is usual on such occasions the composition of the delegations was left to the discretion of the leaders concerned. Attempts by the Government to indicate who should or should not be included in the respective delegations would not have helped us to make progress at the Conference.

Bishop Muzorewa has now appointed a delegation which includes representatives of the various parties included in his administration. It is not surprising therefore that he should have chosen to include the leader of the Rhodesian Front.

In common with the members of both delegations, who will be staying in London as our guests, Mr. Ian Smith will benefit from immunities analogous to those enjoyed by diplomatic agents attached to foreign and Commonwealth missions in London. It was considered, when the Southern Rhodesia (Immunity for Persons attending Meetings and Consultations) Order 1979 was made last July that such a measure would be required, if both parties to the tragic conflict in Rhodesia were to feel at liberty to attend a constitutional conference in London without running the risk of arrest. Had the Order not been introduced it is likely that some of those,

/both black and white

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both black and white, whose presence is essential if the Conference is to produce a lasting solution, would simply have stayed away. This would clearly have served the best interests neither of this country nor of Rhodesia.

Yours sincerely
Dennis Canavan

Dennis Canavan, Esq., MP.