

Mr Alan Savory

I believe you cannot come to a place like this and meet the people who are here and not be changed in some way. Undoubtedly I will try to send my children here. I cannot think of a better place in the world to change the typical attitudes of us white Rhodesians.

In Rhodesia we are in a civil war which is escalating. It is a war that neither side can win, and particularly my own side, the white Rhodesians. You have the answer to our problem. We do not. We whites are a small minority, but our position in Rhodesia is such that we can pour petrol on the flames and go up in conflagration and have an adverse effect on the whole of Southern Africa. On the other hand, if we white Rhodesians can change and through this black Rhodesians can change and we can find a peaceful solution to our problem, I believe we will have an immense effect for good, right out of proportion to our size in Rhodesia.

The initiative for change has got to come from us white Rhodesians. I feel this very deeply as a typical white Rhodesian. My attitudes were as hard as any in Rhodesia. I went over half my life without even being able to shake hands with a black man. I was brought up on a master-servant basis. It is difficult for people to understand. I had black men working with me who were quite prepared to give their lives for me and I for them. We slept in the mud together. We fought together and we shared what little food we had together, but still there was a gap between us. We could not shake hands. These were men I loved and respected, but still there was an enormous gulf between us, a paternalistic relationship.

I have had to do an enormous back somersault and change my attitudes. I have tried to change other white Rhodesians - clumsily, badly and full of mistakes. I have made many mistakes in trying to change the situation. It has never occurred to me to apologise to the other side. I am glad that there are black Rhodesians here today. I would like to apologise to them for my past attitude. The same energy I put into the struggle in the past I will put into the future. There are two needs, to change the attitude of white Rhodesians like myself and to help black Rhodesians towards good government. We will get a black government sooner or later, I hope without violence. But what we Rhodesians really fear is bad government. We have prided ourselves as a small community on our standard of administration and on our technical achievements.

We have associated black government with bad government, and we whites fear to lose everything under black government. To the best of my ability I want to help black Rhodesians towards good government, which will remove the fear from the whites.

I have heard here stories from people high and low. I realise the tremendous courage in the moves that have produced the changes I see here. All this has helped me and I go back a lot better for having come here.