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Settler Worldmaking: Reconfiguring the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1953–62

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Abstract

As soon as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was formed in 1953, disgruntled white settler politicians in the new polity pushed for the reconfiguration of its borders. Driven by decolonisation struggles across Africa and a surge of anti-colonial nationalism in Nyasaland in particular, these debates were particularly vibrant among the political establishment in Southern Rhodesia, the Federation's dominant constituent. The question of Southern Rhodesia's relationship to the Federation became divisive in right-wing circles as African decolonisation unfolded. However, as the pattern of imperial retreat solidified, the right wing abandoned interest in a reconstructed Federation and unified around a "Southern Rhodesia First" mantra. The "centrist" ruling party, entangled by the Federation's extant scaffolding, was forced to eventually embrace a partition plan which closely resembled the ideas traditionally espoused by the opposition. The process of this ideological realignment had important ramifications for Southern Rhodesian politics. In particular, it facilitated the reunification of the right wing and the embrace of unilateralism that manifested most dramatically in Southern Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965.

Keywords: colonialism; race; Zimbabwe; Roy Welensky; borders

The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (hereafter "the Federation"), came into existence in 1953, the culmination of decades of sub-imperial expansionist lobbying by local white settlers.¹ Linking Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi), the body was dominated by the former territory and primarily the result of its white inhabitants' long-standing pressures. However, the creation of the long-sought political and economic union failed to lay schemes of further territorial realignment to rest among settler elites. This lack of local white political consensus denoted the precarious nature of the entity, which dissolved at the end of 1963.

From the Federation's inception, proposed reforms to its boundaries became the subject of vigorous dispute on the new entity's political scene. Unsettled by broader signs of African decolonisation, dissident white Rhodesian political leaders (Nyasa officials rarely featured in these debates) pushed plans to reconfigure the body, primarily with the aim of establishing a territorial bloc that more rigidly connected Southern Rhodesia with the

¹ Philip R. Warhurst, "Rhodesia and Her Neighbours" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1970), chap. 5, passim; H. Iden Wetherell, "Settler Expansionism in Central Africa: The Imperial Response of 1931 and Subsequent Implications," *African Affairs* 78:311 (1979), 210–27.

largest areas of white settlement in Northern Rhodesia. However, within the space of a decade, the impetus for this call veered from emanating within the right-wing opposition to originating from the Federation's ruling party. The year 1960, a key marker in Africa's wider liberation trajectory, constituted a similar inflection point for views on the Federation's future viability among the white political class.

This transposition reveals the inherent instability of the body and why the decolonisation of the two Rhodesias diverged so significantly. More narrowly, it helps illustrate how Southern Rhodesia's right-wing opposition reunified after a period of turmoil and became the white electorate's party of choice in late 1962, resulting in the colony's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in 1965. This work focuses on partition debates in white politics, particularly in Southern Rhodesia where they were most vibrant. However, Harry Nkumbula and Hastings Kamuzu Banda, African nationalist leaders in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, respectively, both expressed support for efforts to remake the Federation.² While these signals encouraged white politicians to pursue partition schemes, nationalist groups in the Federation never seriously engaged with their hypothetical proposals, preferring to focus on tangible injustices.

This study centres on four successive (unsuccessful) attempts to recast the Federation by white Rhodesian politicians. Virtually concurrently with the establishment of the unit in September 1953, the months-old Confederate Party, standard-bearer of the right-wing opposition, released a policy statement that called for "the ultimate creation of separate native [all-black] states within the Federation."³ The Confederates were trounced in the federal and Southern Rhodesian elections in December 1953 and January 1954, respectively, and collapsed soon thereafter. However, the basic elements of their idea were resurrected until early November 1962, when the Federation's Prime Minister, Roy Welensky, was informed by the British government that Nyasaland would be allowed to leave the body and obtain full self-government under the control of the anti-colonial nationalist Malawi Congress Party (MCP).⁴ In 1955, Guy van Eeden, a Northern Rhodesian federal parliamentarian, broke with the ruling Federal Party over its failure to back his cry to partition the Federation, primarily via the extraction of Nyasaland, the constituent territory with the smallest white population.⁵ With the Federal Party dominating the legislature, van Eeden's call failed to gain traction. However, when a more substantial opposition on the right, the Dominion Party (DP), gained legislative seats after a federal election in late 1958, it resuscitated a partition scheme, marketed as the Central African Alliance Plan (CAAP), early in the following year.⁶ With the DP in the minority, CAAP similarly floundered. The desperate, last gasp effort to partition the Federation came in early 1962, amidst an explosion of international pressure for Africa's decolonisation. The ruling establishment, which rebranded as the United Federal Party (UFP) in 1958, saw its leadership agitate for a reconfiguration much along the lines their opponents had previously (but no longer) advocated.⁷

This shift of views concerning the realignment of the Federation illustrates the rapidity of imperial withdrawal and underscores the abrupt retreat of white Rhodesia's political ambition. Most prominently, it explicates Southern Rhodesia's 1962 transfer of political power and the accompanying ideological shift that set the colony on the road to UDI.

² Nkumbula: "Partition Instead of Federation," *Manchester Guardian*, 29 April 1953; Banda: University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Winston Field Papers, Mss.Afr.s.2344, Banda to Field, 29 January 1959, Box 1; Robert Rotberg, *Black Heart: Gore-Browne and the Politics of Multiracial Zambia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 285–6.

³ No author, "Rhodesia and Nyasaland," *Chronology of International Events and Documents, Supplement to The World Today* 9:18 (1953), 551–82, 573.

⁴ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859–1966* (Woodbridge, U.K.: James Currey, 2012), 390.

⁵ "Racial Policy in Rhodesia," *Manchester Guardian*, 12 June 1955.

⁶ "Central African Alliance Is DP Plan for 1960 Talks," *The Rhodesia Herald* [hereafter *TRH*], 21 January 1959.

⁷ "Whitehead Did Put Forward 'Suggestions,'" *TRH*, 7 March 1962.

Context

Ronald Hyam dubbed Federation “the most controversial large-scale imperial exercise in constructive state-building ever undertaken by the British government.”⁸ John Darwin concurred that it was London’s “most ambitious experiment in multiracial government, for Central Africa was to be the counter-poise to Afrikaner Republicanism in South Africa, and an important and dynamic trading partner for Britain.”⁹ Assessments that situate the Federation as a bold British imperial “experiment” (per Hyam) and/or highlight the South African and economic justifications for the association (per Darwin) continue to typify scholarship on the body.¹⁰ This approach obfuscates the reality that white Southern Rhodesians, like their South African counterparts, had for decades pursued expansionism or some variant of Federation as a security buffer against black African anti-colonial nationalism, well before the postwar electoral success of Afrikaner nationalists, or even the consolidation of large-scale copper mining in Northern Rhodesia.¹¹

This paradigm has led to an emphasis in the historiography on the motivating factors behind the creation of the Federation itself.¹² The scholarship continues to devote significant attention to deliberating the extent to which the role of the emergent Apartheid state in South Africa or the economic benefits of linking the three territories played in the creation of the body.¹³ An emerging direction of current scholarship on the Federation’s formation focuses on how it mobilised nationalist opposition.¹⁴ A largely absent consideration, observed only in passing, if at all, is how local white politicians, during the Federation’s existence, sought to enhance their security by modifying the boundaries of the alliance.¹⁵

The stagnant horizons of scholarship on central African settler “worldmaking,” or geopolitical strategies by white elites to preserve race-based privileges, is in stark contrast to

⁸ Ronald Hyam, “The Geopolitical Origins of the Central African Federation: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1948–1953,” *Historical Journal* 30:1 (1987), 145–72, 145.

⁹ John Darwin, “British Decolonization since 1945: A Pattern or Puzzle?,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12:2 (1984), 187–209, 200.

¹⁰ Andrew Cohen, *The Politics and Economics of Decolonisation in Africa: The Failed Experiment of the Central African Federation* (London: IB Tauris, 2017), 1; Prosser Gifford, “Misconceived Dominion: The Creation and Disintegration of Federation in British Central Africa,” in Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940–1960* (London: Yale University Press, 1982), 387–416, 389; Julia Tischler, *Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation: The Kariba Dam Scheme in the Central African Federation* (New York: Springer, 2013), 2; Robert Rotberg, “The ‘Partnership’ Hoax: How the British Government Deprived Central Africans of Their Rights,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 45:1 (2019), 89–110, 90.

¹¹ Robrecht Declercq, “From Cape to Katanga: South African Expansionism, White Settlers and the Congo (1910–1963),” *South African Historical Journal* 72:4 (2020), 604–26, 606; Robert Rotberg, “The Federation Movement in British East and Central Africa, 1889–1953,” *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 2:2 (1963), 141–60, 141–2; Colin Leys, “The Idea of Amalgamation, 1915–1939,” in Colin Leys and Cranford Pratt, eds., *A New Deal in Central Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 1–9, 6.

¹² John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 198; Gifford, “Misconceived Dominion,” *passim*; J. D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (London: Longman, 1988), 134–7; Hyam, “Geopolitical Origins.”

¹³ Walima Kalusa, “The Killing of Lilian Margaret Burton and Black and White Nationalisms in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) in the 1960s,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37:1 (2011), 63–77, 66–7; Philip Murphy, “‘Government by Blackmail’: The Origins of the Central African Federation Reconsidered,” in Martin Lynn, ed., *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 53–76.

¹⁴ Rob Power, “The African Dimension to the Anti-Federation Struggle, ca. 1950–53: ‘It Has United Us Far More Closely than Any Other Question Would Have Accomplished,’” *Itinerario* 45:2 (2021), 304–24.

¹⁵ Declercq, “From Cape to Katanga,” 623; Matthew Hughes, “Fighting for White Rule in Africa: The Central African Federation, Katanga, and the Congo Crisis, 1958–1965,” *International History Review* 25:3 (2003), 592–615, 598–9; Miles Larmer, “Nation-Making at the Border: Zambian Diplomacy in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 61:1 (2019), 145–75, 153.

the dynamic studies of roughly parallel attempts by black nationalists to pursue east African integration or federalism in west Africa.¹⁶ By assessing the impact of debates on the Federation's prospective reconfiguration, this study heeds recent calls to appraise how movements around federalism and territorial consolidation in Africa, even if unrealised, informed political dynamics of the late colonial and early independence era.¹⁷ Innovatively, it moves beyond the traditional focus on black anti-colonial nationalists to incorporate a consideration of the position of pro-imperial white settlers. The insights of this approach extend beyond the region once known as "British Central Africa." The general unwillingness of the United Kingdom to engage with these calls, despite their ubiquitous local [white] backing, underscores the extent of the imperial shift unfolding during the 1950s. The push for modification also demonstrates some similarities with the "bantustan," or black homeland agenda promulgated by Apartheid South Africa, despite vigorous attempts by Southern Rhodesia to distance itself from that programme.

In a federal-era analysis, the political scientist Colin Leys emphasised that a desire to blunt the surge of postwar anti-colonial nationalism was the primary push factor behind the body's formation.¹⁸ Colony-wide nationalist movements were launched in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, in 1944 and 1948, respectively. This anti-nationalist, settler security justification for federation receives fleeting mention in a handful of later studies, but has lost ground to the South African and economic factors.¹⁹ However, the Federation's inauguration was ensconced in the milieu of heightened anti-colonial activity.²⁰ Kenya saw the outbreak of Mau Mau violence in 1952 while Kwame Nkrumah became prime minister of the Gold Coast (colonial Ghana). The previous year, a group of Southern Rhodesian diplomats recorded that one of federation's greatest strategic advantages was that increased control over Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland would "eliminate the possibility of a "Gold Coast" territory being created to the North of us."²¹ Yet as the lingering debates on partition indicate, federation failed to alleviate unrest. Instead, Southern Rhodesia's enhanced ties with what whites called "the Black North" deepened entanglements with black African nationalist currents.²² Varying perspectives on this relationship animated recurring debates in white political circles on the Federation's reconfiguration.

¹⁶ Ismay Milford, "Federation, Partnership, and the Chronologies of Space in 1950s East and Central Africa," *Historical Journal* 63:5 (2020), 1325–48; Chris Vaughan et al., "Thinking East African: Debating Federation and Regionalism, 1960–1977," in Matteo Grilli and Frank Gerits, eds., *Visions of African Unity: New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unification Projects* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 49–76; Frederick Cooper, *Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). The concept of "settler worldmaking" is loosely inspired by Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

¹⁷ Michael Collins, "Decolonisation and the 'Federal Moment,'" *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 24:1 (2013), 21–40; Chris Vaughan, "The Politics of Regionalism and Federation in East Africa, 1958–1964," *Historical Journal* 62:2 (2019), 519–40.

¹⁸ Colin Leys, "Southern Rhodesian Isolation and the Weakening of British Opposition, 1940–1950," in Leys and Pratt, *A New Deal*, 10–19, 11.

¹⁹ L. J. Butler, "Business and British Decolonisation: Sir Ronald Prain, the Mining Industry and the Central African Federation," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35:3 (2007), 459–84, 461–2; Rotberg, "Partnership Hoax," 95.

²⁰ Brooks Marmon, "Bogey Bogey Stuff: Gold Coastism, Federation, and White Backlash in Southern Rhodesia, 1951–56," *The Round Table* 111:2 (2022), 214–26.

²¹ Stanford University, Hoover Institution [hereafter HI], "Confidential Report by the Southern Rhodesian Officials to the Prime Minister," Gann-Duignan Papers, 10 April 1951, Box 1.

²² Harry Franklin, *Unholy Wedlock: The Failure of the Central African Federation* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963), 160; Frank Clements, *Rhodesia: The Course to Collision* (London: Pall Mall, 1969), 113–4.

Before federation was consummated, there was an extensive tradition of local whites advancing alternative political unions. In the late 1920s, Max Danziger, a Southern Rhodesian parliamentarian, advocated a division of the colony into black and white states.²³ The long-serving Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister, Godfrey Huggins (1933–53), supported amalgamating the two Rhodesias throughout most of his tenure.²⁴ However, the genesis of this thought is generally attributed to Stewart Gore-Browne, a London-born member of the Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council. Gore-Browne was a mentor to Welensky before drifting to Welensky's left in the postwar period.²⁵ Since the 1930s, Gore-Browne advocated for the reconfiguration of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland.²⁶ Gore-Browne revived his old designs as the path to federation coalesced. He enunciated his vision in a newspaper column in 1952:

The root idea is to form three new and independent states out of the existing area which makes up British Central Africa. [. . .] One of the three states would be predominantly European and would consist of Southern Rhodesia, with the Copperbelt and the European farming area along the railway line in Northern Rhodesia added to it. The other two states would be African. One of them would consist of Nyasaland as at present, with the old North-Eastern Rhodesia added to it. The other would be made up of Barotseland and the rest of North-Western Rhodesia, less the Copperbelt and the European farming area.²⁷

This call formed the basis of the partition plans that would cycle throughout the Federation for the next decade.

Confederate Party's Separate States Plan

Gore-Browne's scheme attained new resonance when it was embraced by the Confederate Party in advance of the first federal election. However, Gore-Browne was motivated by a desire to increase the rights of black Africans and facilitate their access to revenues hitherto controlled by whites. Conversely, right-wing advocates of partition disapproved of the Federation's commitment to vaguely articulated but reformist-sounding principles of "partnership" and "multi-racialism." White officials struggled to define these terms, but their meaning was clear. They aimed to provide an internationally palatable alternative to anti-colonial nationalism, pan-Africanism, and other currents that threatened settler supremacy. The Confederates and the DP rejected this concessionary language, but they pragmatically supported partition out of a desire to maintain dominance in their spheres of greatest influence. The right-wing opposition was perturbed by the postwar imperial retreat and interpreted "partnership" as an undesirable acquiescence to African empowerment. In July, CJW Fleming, a Northern Rhodesia-based official of the weeks old Confederate Party, declared that the impending Federation would need to be divided into six or seven different race-based states.²⁸ He stated:

²³ Richard Gray, *The Two Nations: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 51.

²⁴ L. H. Gann and Michael Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia: The Man and His Country* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), 116.

²⁵ Rotberg, *Black Heart*, 173.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 194; Stewart Gore-Browne, "The Federated States of Rhodesia," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36: 142 (1937), 2–7.

²⁷ Stewart Gore-Brown, "Sir Stewart Reaffirms His Faith in NR Partition," *Northern News*, 1 May 1952. Barotseland was a protectorate with special legal status within Northern Rhodesia.

²⁸ "Dividing Central Africa," *Manchester Guardian*, 14 July 1953.

We cannot have in Central Africa a Gold Coast or an India. Both Europeans and Africans are here to stay. Partnership between the two racial groups does not resolve the problem of racial fears nor does it satisfy the aspirations of either race. The African fears domination, and the European realises that he will be swamped in the long run.²⁹

The extent to which wider African events were injected into the federal parliamentary election in December 1953 was unprecedented in Southern Rhodesia's electoral history. Newspaper advertisements by the Federal Party proclaimed the Federation would usher in "a land of contentment, free from racial strife, in the troubled African scene."³⁰ The then interim federal Prime Minister, Godfrey Huggins, exploited anti-Afrikaner sentiment among the electorate. He linked Confederate policies to those being implemented in Apartheid South Africa.³¹ Confederate Party bulletins responded by showcasing quotes from Northern Rhodesian nationalists and warning that federation "will lead to black rule in Central Africa."³² However, the Confederates were hamstrung by the reality that federation was popular among Southern Rhodesia's white electorate. In an April 1953 referendum, 63 percent of the electorate backed federating with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Of thirty electoral constituencies, only four voted against federation.³³ The Confederate leader, John Richard Dendy Young, an attorney who entered Southern Rhodesia's parliament in 1948 as a Huggins supporter, broke with his former allies over federation, opposing it prior to the referendum.³⁴ After the referendum demonstrated the Federation's popularity, he reversed course and jumped back aboard the pro-federation bandwagon. As the first federal election neared, Young wrote, "the Confederate Party is NOT out to destroy the Federal State; but to make a success of it."³⁵ Confederate Party principles proclaimed "the desirability for consultation and co-operation between all South, Central and East African States in the solution of common problems."³⁶

However, the bedrock of Confederate support came from conservative whites who either favoured closer ties with South Africa ("the White South") or were concerned that "partnership" would, as P. Hansen, the party's National Secretary, wrote, make "the whole of Central Africa inevitably go black and in all probability be lost to Western civilisation."³⁷ In an attempt to build on this core base of support and disguise their intrinsic unease with federation, the Confederates emphasised their plan to "establish [black-administered] provinces which would be part of the Federation and controlled by the Federation," as a journalist paraphrased Young.³⁸ Confederates claimed their imprecise call was simply an extension of segregationist policies backed by Huggins prior to his embrace of "partnership."³⁹ The bedrock of legal segregation in Southern Rhodesia was the Land Apportionment Act (1930), which divided the colony into race-

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Federal Party advertisement in *TRH*, 2 December 1953.

³¹ "Sir Godfrey on Segregation," *TRH*, 12 December 1953.

³² Confederate Party advertisement in *TRH*, 14 December 1953.

³³ J. D. C. Drew, "The Four Southern Rhodesian Referendums," in *Occasional Papers of the National Archives of Rhodesia and Nyasaland*, Vol. 1 (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1963), 42-57, 54.

³⁴ "European Leaders on Federation," *Bantu Mirror*, 14 March 1953.

³⁵ J. R. Dendy Young, "Success of Federation," letter to the editor, *TRH*, 14 October 1953.

³⁶ The National Archives, Kew, U.K. [hereafter TNA], "The Confederate Party of Southern Rhodesia: Principles and Policy," 22 December 1953, DO 35/7491.

³⁷ P. Hansen, "Confederate Party Policy Implications," letter to the editor, *TRH*, 14 October 1953.

³⁸ "Confederate Policy on Reserves," *TRH*, 3 December 1953.

³⁹ "Mr. Young Speaks in Salisbury," *TRH*, 2 December 1953.

based zones of occupation and use. It eventually came under attack from the UFP in the latter years of the Federation.⁴⁰

In an effort to appear forward thinking and vaguely in alignment with the spirit of “partnership,” the Confederates supported “providing an outlet for the ambitious politically conscious African to develop his own people,” as Andrew Skeen, federal parliamentary candidate, declared.⁴¹ This empowerment provided for the creation of “tribal councillors controlled by a Central State Council, which would in turn have representation in the Federal Government.”⁴² However, the Confederates failed to offer a coherent roadmap to implement their vision. As one Federal Party candidate noted, the Confederates were unable to demarcate the territorial boundaries of the envisaged black-run “states” or delineate the extent of the powers they would exercise.⁴³ Huggins denounced the unclear Confederate Plan as “half-baked.”⁴⁴ The Federal Party mounted a vigorous assault on the proposal, arguing that federation represented a genuine extension of British imperial power. Federals turned Confederate attacks on federation as a conduit for increased anti-colonial activity back on the party. Welensky and other candidates claimed that the creation of African-controlled areas would, contrary to Confederate claims, exacerbate African nationalism.⁴⁵

Days before the election, as the Confederates floundered about in an effort to convey the essence of their plan, Young backtracked. He declared:

Our policy does not visualise that we will create these autonomous Bantu [black] areas over a definite period. It visualises that we will create them *as and when* the Bantu is in a position to exercise the privileges that will go with them.⁴⁶

Young’s retreat was significant. The lack of urgency to implement what had hitherto been propounded as key party policy indicated that Southern Rhodesia’s white electorate did not (as it did by 1962) believe that the decolonisation pressure gathering in the “Black North” was an imminent threat to the Federation. This confidence underwrote the Confederate’s abysmal electoral performance. Young was the lone victor of the party’s twenty-four candidates for the federal parliament. The following month, not a single Confederate candidate prevailed in the Southern Rhodesian territorial elections. The party effectively disbanded by mid-1954.⁴⁷ The Federal Party’s view that “partnership” under white tutelage would defray anti-colonial nationalist action remained in the ascendancy until about 1960. This ensured that the remaining attempts to promote partition in the 1950s emanated from the opposition, which remained sceptical of federation, “partnership,” and racial integration.

Van Eeden Proposal

With right-wing opposition in the federal parliament confined to Young, the next proponent of reconfiguration came from a disgruntled member of the Federal Party in Northern Rhodesia. Guy van Eeden, born in Northern Rhodesia to a South African missionary family, originally supported federation.⁴⁸ J. R. T. Wood suggested that van Eeden’s conversion

⁴⁰ “The Story of the Land Apportionment Act,” *Ukuru*, February 1962.

⁴¹ “Plan for Native States,” *TRH*, 19 November 1953.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ “Confederate Party’s One Useful Purpose,” *TRH*, 11 November 1953.

⁴⁴ “Sir Godfrey on Segregation.”

⁴⁵ “Confederate Party’s One Useful Purpose,”; “Federation Must Convince World,” *TRH*, 14 November 1953.

⁴⁶ “Separation Policy Explained,” *TRH*, 10 December 1953. Author emphasis.

⁴⁷ Colin Leys, *European Politics in Southern Rhodesia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 167.

⁴⁸ *Advisory Commission Report on the Constitution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland—Appendix VIII, Evidence, Volume II* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1960), 72–5; H. I. Wetherell, “Continuity and Change in Opposition Politics in Southern Rhodesia, 1923–62” (M.Phil thesis, University of Rhodesia, 1974), 163.

to the “time-worn partition proposal” emanated from personal frustration over his failure to receive a post in Huggins’s federal cabinet.⁴⁹ In November 1954, van Eeden announced his support for partition, contrary to Federal Party policy. He was expelled from the party early in the following year, but convincingly won a by-election in October 1955 to retain his seat.⁵⁰

Like the Confederates, van Eeden’s plan to reconstruct the Federation was not well-defined, despite his composition of a forty-four-page pamphlet, *The Road to Sanity*, which excoriated Federal Party leadership and sounded an urgent call for reform “before it is too late.”⁵¹ Van Eeden was concerned by signs of diminishing imperial control across the continent. He wrote, “everything points to the fact that time is not on the side of the European in Africa, that we must tackle our problems quickly or be overwhelmed.”⁵² Van Eeden’s overriding anxiety in this regard was the linkage of the two Rhodesias with Nyasaland. He observed, “Nyasaland is daily becoming a more dubious participant in the Federation.”⁵³ Van Eeden noted that due to Nyasaland’s inclusion in the Federation, the rise of a local Gold Coast [black ruled territory] would not be “on our borders,” but rather, “within our borders.”⁵⁴

The dissident MP was likely mindful of intense anti-Federation protests throughout Nyasaland around the time of the association’s inauguration, which resulted in about a dozen fatalities.⁵⁵ The Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) appeared to be in ascension. It cultivated a significant organisational presence in the two Rhodesias, from which it derived substantial financial support.⁵⁶ The colony’s two black MPs in the federal parliament were NAC members.⁵⁷ Like the Confederates, van Eeden found partition the best means to obviate the perceived adverse impacts of African nationalism on whites in the Federation. He proclaimed:

Partition seems to be the only method of removing our [. . .] worries. [. . .] Should the Federation be divided in such a way that the predominantly African areas are partitioned off, and gradually disintegrated from our economy, a situation would be created in the predominantly European part offering far greater scope for immigrants, for the building of a large European population, and for generally strengthening the hold of Western civilisation on this part of the African continent.⁵⁸

These comments underscored the right wing’s simultaneous desire for stricter segregation and less restrictive white immigration.⁵⁹

The Road to Sanity examined a series of political problems that van Eeden believed confronted whites in the Federation. Spanning a range of areas, including the franchise, outside interference, immigration, and dominion status, van Eeden perceived partition as

⁴⁹ J. R. T. Wood, *The Welensky Papers: A History of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (Durban: Graham Publishing, 1983), 426.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; “The Kafue Election,” *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1955.

⁵¹ G. F. M. van Eeden, *The Road to Sanity* (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing & Publishing, 1955), 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* My emphasis.

⁵⁵ Joey Power, “Building Relevance: The Blantyre Congress, 1953 to 1956,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28:1 (2002), 45–65, 42.

⁵⁶ Zoë Groves, “Transnational Networks and Regional Solidarity: The Case of the Central African Federation, 1953–1963,” *African Studies* 72:2 (2013), 155–75.

⁵⁷ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, 77.

⁵⁸ Van Eeden, *Road to Sanity*, 16.

⁵⁹ Josiah Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia: Population Demographics and the Politics of Race* (London: IB Tauris, 2011), 14.

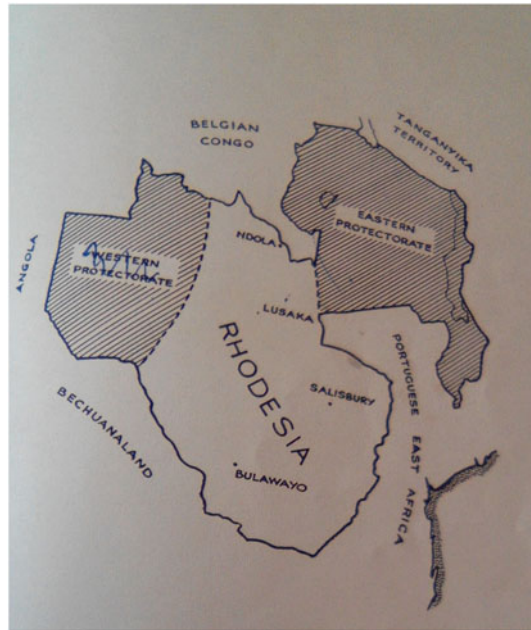


Figure 1.1 “Partition diagram as featured in *The Road to Sanity*”

G. F. M. van Eeden, *The Road to Sanity* (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing & Publishing, 1955), no page given.

the best means to provide security for Europeans in the Rhodesias.⁶⁰ While the contours of his vision were imprecise, van Eeden’s efforts garnered “wide publicity,” according to Vernon McKay, a contemporary Johns Hopkins University academic analyst.⁶¹ Van Eeden’s easy reelection against a creditable Federal candidate indicated that calls to realign the Federation could make a potent electoral strategy.⁶²

While van Eeden’s indeterminate partition plan had no chance of serious consideration in the federal parliament, it reverberated across the region’s political scene. Around November 1955, the Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister, Garfield Todd, began to launch broadsides against federal Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins, and his successor, Roy Welensky.⁶³ A correspondent for the *Guardian* believed Todd’s criticism of the Federal stalwarts emanated from his fear that Young and van Eeden could conceivably wrestle control of the federal government at the next election.⁶⁴ In early 1958 Todd was deposed following a cabinet revolt as his party was on the precipice of a merger with the Federal Party to form the UFP. Todd then launched his own political movement. This marked the beginning of the UFP’s decline. His defection would have cost the UFP control of the Southern Rhodesian parliament at elections in June 1958, but the party was rescued by a newly introduced ranked voting system.⁶⁵ Shortly after Todd’s attacks on

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, passim.

⁶¹ Vernon McKay, “Conflicting Views in the New Rhodesia,” *Africa Special Report* 3:1 (January 1958), 15.

⁶² “Racial Policy in Rhodesia,” *Manchester Guardian*, 13 June 1955.

⁶³ “Central African Controversy,” *Manchester Guardian*, 7 November 1955; National Archives of Zimbabwe [hereafter NAZ], H. G. Quinton, interviewed by E. G. Gibbons, various dates, May 1977–May 1978, Oral/QU 2, 75; NAZ, Patrick Fletcher, interviewed by D. Hartridge, June 1971, Oral/FL 1, 95.

⁶⁴ “Central African Controversy.”

⁶⁵ Jon Fraenkel, “‘Equality of Rights for Every Civilised Man South of the Zambezi’: Electoral Engineering in Southern Rhodesia, 1957–65,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41:6 (2015), 1167–180, 1173.

Huggins began, Young left parliament for a seat on the High Court of Southern Rhodesia.⁶⁶ A leading Rhodesian politician subsequently implied that Huggins consciously aimed to remove the attorney from the political scene, a view shared by Young's family.⁶⁷

Ironically, Young's departure paved the way for a revitalised opposition. In February 1956, the Dominion Party was established in Lusaka, the Northern Rhodesian capital. The group became the new vehicle for right-wing opinion in the Rhodesias. Several prominent members, such as Angus Graham, John Gaunt, and Ian McLean, were former Confederates.⁶⁸ It won the first election it contested, securing Young's vacant seat. The defeated Federal Party candidate, Morris Hirsch, made attacks against van Eeden a core plank of his campaign. He authored a twenty-page pamphlet condemning the "childlike simplicity" of van Eeden's scheme.⁶⁹ Hirsch maintained that the Federation as constituted represented the best hope for the maintenance of white rule in the region amidst increasing pressure from pan-African nationalism:

Partition, one concludes, will not bring about the idealistic dream of pure European survival in its own state, but threatens the very existence of the European remaining here, his standard of living and civilisation and portends the step of his withdrawal from southern Africa as he did from Asia—an historical [*sic*] first retreat.⁷⁰

Hirsch's narrow defeat by the DP in a three-way contest provided further evidence that calls for partition were a viable campaign strategy, particularly as the electorate became more attuned to anti-colonial activity across the continent.

Dominion Party's Central African Alliance Plan

Despite their unease with federation, throughout most of the 1950s Southern Rhodesia's right-wing leadership remained committed to the existing geopolitical union, particularly with Northern Rhodesia. After van Eeden joined the DP in 1957, party leader Winston Field informed a pro-Welensky journalist that his caucus did not support altering the Federation's composition.⁷¹ Ahead of the Southern Rhodesian election in 1958, Field affirmed his support to partisans in Northern Rhodesia, noting that he would not leave the federal parliament for a territorial seat. He declared, "I wish to assure all of you, the Dominion Party in the South will never let the North down."⁷² This commitment waned after the DP failed to make headway following the introduction of its partition proposal, the Central African Alliance Plan (CAAP), in January 1959. In 1962, Field, along with all but one of his Southern Rhodesian colleagues in the federal parliament, declined to stand for reelection. They resolved to focus on the Southern Rhodesian parliamentary contest later that year.⁷³

CAAP was the last major attempt by Southern Rhodesia's right wing to shore up white dominance in Northern Rhodesia. CAAP was announced approximately half a year after NAC was boosted by Hastings Banda's leadership ascension, a month after Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana hosted the monumental All-Africa Peoples' Conference (with nationalist

⁶⁶ "Opposition Leader Becomes Judge," *Manchester Guardian*, 22 November 1955.

⁶⁷ NAZ, Fletcher interview, Oral/FL 1, 102; Michael Dendy Young, interview by author, Delaplaine, Virginia, U.S., 31 August 2021.

⁶⁸ Leys, *European Politics*, 167.

⁶⁹ Morris Hirsch, *The Roads Offered: Partnership, Partition, and Pretence* (Que Que: Midrho Press, 1956), 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷¹ University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Welensky Papers, Mss.Welensky, Hess to Welensky, 7 March 1957, Box 510, Folder 8.

⁷² "North's Protest Launched," *The Rhodesian*, 2 May 1958.

⁷³ NAZ, Clifford Dupont, interviewed by R. W. S. Turner, various dates, June 1976–January 1977, Oral/DU 4, 31.

representatives from the Federation in attendance), and days after lethal unrest in Leopoldville, in the Belgian Congo on the Federation's border.⁷⁴ In an apparent nod to these developments, a shiny pamphlet promulgating CAAP declared, "the Dominion Party believes that recent events [. . .] require that a completely new and practical approach be made to the future political systems of [the Federation]."⁷⁵

Humphrey Wightwick, a Southern Rhodesian DP MP in the federal parliament who previously backed Huggins and federation, was the mastermind behind this not quite so "new and practical approach."⁷⁶ Wightwick publicly unveiled CAAP in an article published weeks before the Plan's formal release. He invoked the impending imperial retreat across Africa as the context for the need to remake the Federation. He espoused the view that it was inevitable that black majority rule states would appear on the borders of the Federation and possibly within it as well.⁷⁷ After a lengthy discourse on the prospects of the Federation attaining Dominion status at its scheduled constitutional review in 1960, Wightwick suggested the Federation could only continue to function if it was "reconstructed."⁷⁸ The proposal differed little from van Eeden's scheme, but its geographic boundaries were demarcated more clearly. Before the federal parliament, Field succinctly outlined his party's plan:

The creation of the Dominion of Rhodesia consisting of Southern Rhodesia and those parts of Northern Rhodesia which have a European way of life and have reached higher standards by virtue of a larger European population settlement and subsequent development there. North-Eastern Rhodesia to continue to be part of this Dominion with the opportunity to leave it after a suitable trial period, if the people wish this. I do not believe they will wish to leave. Nyasaland to continue as a protectorate for the time being, but to achieve self-government as soon as possible and to remain within the economic structure that I have referred to [the Alliance]. Barotseland to continue as at present.⁷⁹

The party calculated that the changing environment within the Federation, Africa at large, and British colonial policy made CAAP a viable prospect. Its support for genuine self-government in Nyasaland (Banda and Field had recently struck up a friendship) attempted to situate the plan within the Federation's "partnership" parameters.⁸⁰ This distinguished CAAP from the Confederate Separate States policy, which more closely mirrored the black homelands discourse in South Africa. J. R. T. Wood, in one of the few scholarly works to mention CAAP, correctly diagnoses that it failed to gain traction because "the Federal electorate had not yet realised how endangered the Federation was"; many whites still believed Africa's "wind of change" was remote.⁸¹

⁷⁴ John Day, *International Nationalism: The Extra-territorial Relations of Southern Rhodesian Nationalists* (New York: Humanities Press, 1967), 55.

⁷⁵ Bodleian Library, Welensky Papers, "The Central African Alliance: A Blueprint for YOUR Future," undated [but January 1959], Box 530, Folder 5.

⁷⁶ University of Stirling, Stirling, U.K., Mackay Archive, United Central Africa Association, "Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive Committee," 23 April 1953, MK 1s.

⁷⁷ Humphrey Wightwick, "Where Do We Go from Here?" *Central African Examiner* [hereafter CAE], 3 January 1959.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Debates of the Federal Assembly* (Salisbury: Government Printer), 22 April 1959, col. 562.

⁸⁰ Frederick Cleary, *Kamoto: The Life of Winston Joseph Field, 1904-1969* (St. Arnaud, Victoria: Private Publication, 1998), 10.

⁸¹ J. R. T. Wood, "So Far and No Further!" *Rhodesia's Bid for Independence during the Retreat from Empire, 1959-1965* (Victoria: Trafford, 2005), 16.

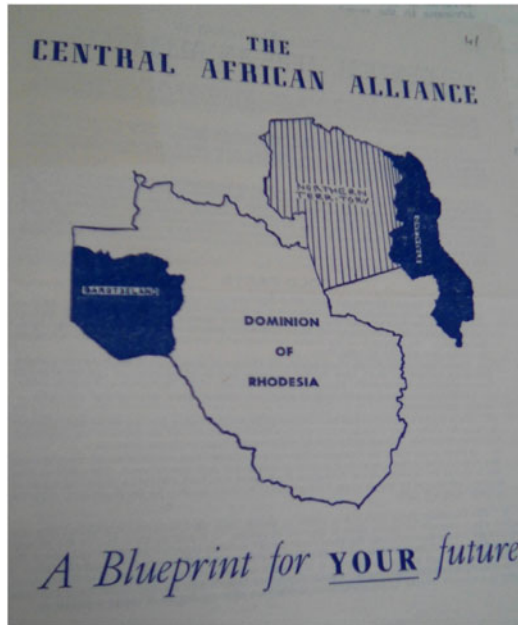


Figure 1.2 “Diagram of the Central African Alliance Plan”

“The Central African Alliance: A Blueprint for YOUR Future.” Consulted at: Bodleian Library, Welensky Papers, Box 530, Folder 5, undated but January 1959.

Field invoked the idea that the Federation had been formed as a multiracial “experiment” in a motion to form a parliamentary committee to consider CAAP.⁸² Asserting that the very word “federation” had accrued a sinister meaning in Nyasaland as a result of the hostility to the body, Field urged parliamentarians to seriously consider the Plan: “If you do not obtain the result you want by one experiment because that method does not appear to be sound or successful, you cast around for another method of obtaining your object.”⁸³ The DP controlled just eight of fifty-nine parliamentary seats and the motion was soundly defeated. In early 1959, the DP was a federal-wide party which believed white dominance could be salvaged via repackaging and rebranding. The Southern Rhodesian right wing soon began to abdicate this perspective.

In the aftermath of CAAP’s thwarted unveiling, the DP’s constituency began to fracture. Several small conservative parties that never attained electoral representation sprang up in the first half of 1959. While their following was limited, they accelerated the erosion of white Rhodesia’s confidence in “partnership” and federation. A resuscitated Confederate Party called for closer association with South Africa as the only hope for “permanent white settlement.”⁸⁴ It warned, “go south or go black.”⁸⁵ The sentiments that came to dominate whites in the colony were, however, embodied by the short-lived Separate

⁸² *Debates of the Federal Assembly*, 22 April 1959, col. 560.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ National Archives of South Africa [hereafter NASA], Taswell to Secretary of External Affairs, 20 May 1959, S20 Vol. 5, Box 37.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Constitutional Development Party (SCDP), launched by disgruntled ex-DP members, who rejected CAAP due to the belief that it would effectively bring about majority black rule.⁸⁶ The SCDP draft Programme of Policies and Principles committed it to a “spirit of a national feeling of ‘Southern Rhodesia First.’”⁸⁷ At roughly the same time, the Southern Rhodesia Association (SRA) pressure group was launched. SRA was concerned by the advance of African nationalism in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia and sought to extricate Southern Rhodesia from the Federation.⁸⁸ It subsequently morphed into one of the constituent parties that merged to form the Rhodesian Front (RF) in early 1962.

However, the greatest threat to the Rhodesian right wing came from dissent within the DP. The SCDP breakaway was reflective of rising Southern Rhodesian white discontent with federation. Wightwick prophetically wrote to British Conservative MP Patrick Wall:

If this plan or something very near it is not accepted, it will be impossible to restrain our Territorial Members from advocating outright secession for Southern Rhodesia [. . .] quite frankly they have accepted this plan as a “last throw.”⁸⁹

Two weeks after CAAP was launched, the DP’s most experienced political hand, Ray Stockil, announced he was relinquishing leadership of the party in the Southern Rhodesian parliament to focus on business activities. However, Stockil made it clear that his withdrawal reflected a loss of confidence in the Federation. He called the “experiment” a “failure” and declared that it had prevented Southern Rhodesia from attaining independence.⁹⁰ After a brief interregnum under the leadership of Stewart Aitken-Cade, William Harper, a postwar immigrant from India, wrested control of the territorial division of the party. Whereas Aitken-Cade was at pains to note that CAAP “has not been put forward as a hard and fast formula from which there shall be no departure,” Harper was more rigid.⁹¹ He wanted the colony out of the Federation and was one of the first to push for a unilateral seizure of independence.⁹² He believed “no Southern Rhodesia Government can take full cognizance of Southern Rhodesia[n] needs if it has to worry about the Bandas and the Kaundas.”⁹³ Under Harper’s leadership the territorial division of the party adopted the slogan “[Southern] Rhodesia first, last, and always.”⁹⁴

Harper’s “Southern Rhodesia First” emphasis drove him into conflict with Winston Field, the party’s leader in the federal parliament who was still committed to regional unity. Harper won the battle with relative ease, indicating that visions of negotiated partition were quickly giving way to the pursuit of unilateralism. At a congress of the territorial division of the party in June 1960, Harper and Field released a joint statement of cooperation, noting, “the country is more important than the party.”⁹⁵

⁸⁶ Bodleian Library, Welensky Papers, “Separate Constitutional Development Party: Newsletter No. 3,” undated [but 1959], Box 513, Folder 6.

⁸⁷ NASA, “The Separate Constitutional Development Party Programme of Principles and Policies,” undated [but 1959], Box 37 S30 Vol. 5.

⁸⁸ “Permanent White Rule,” *Rhodesia & East Africa*, 30 April 1959.

⁸⁹ TNA, Wightwick to Wall, undated [but January 1959], C01015/2639.

⁹⁰ “SR First, Says Dominion Party,” *CAE*, 14 February 1959.

⁹¹ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (Salisbury: Government Printer), 17 February 1960, col. 2549.

⁹² NAZ, Dupont interview, Oral/DU 4, 33.

⁹³ “White Drumbeats in the South,” *CAE*, 18 June 1960. Kenneth Kaunda was a leading nationalist in Northern Rhodesia and Zambia’s first president.

⁹⁴ Larry Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia: White Power in an African State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 33.

⁹⁵ TNA, Metcalf to Lord Home, 29 June 1960, DO 35/7532.

This demonstration of unity was undermined by a resolution at the Congress which declared that “the territorial leader . . . be enabled to conduct the affairs of the division in a manner compatible with the best interests of Southern Rhodesia.”⁹⁶ The Field-Harper rapprochement collapsed just one month later when it was announced that the federal and territorial divisions of the DP would separate into distinct parties.⁹⁷ Field duly announced that his Federal Dominion Party (FDP) remained committed to CAAP.⁹⁸ Untethered, Harper, now leading the Southern Rhodesian Dominion Party, remarked that the Plan had been “forced” upon him, but that it established the “principle that a country whose inclusion in the Federation was no longer tenable, must be left to go on its own.”⁹⁹

The split within the Dominion Party has not received significant attention in the historiography. It was critical, however, as Harper’s emergence marked the ascendance of anti-federal unilateralism and steered Southern Rhodesia’s right-wing politics onto an isolationist course. Less than two years later the parties reunified. In December 1962 they accrued state power under the RF banner. Unsuccessful cooperation under the umbrella of the United Group, an association organised to oppose a new UFP-backed constitution in 1961, was probably the single most important step on the path to unification.¹⁰⁰ However, the FDP’s decision to abandon CAAP after October 1960 when it was rejected by the Monckton Commission, a body established by the British to review the future of the Federation, also smoothed the way.¹⁰¹ Right-wing unity was restored when the two parties, along with the Rhodesia Reform Party and the SRA, fused to create the RF in March 1962.¹⁰²

While Field led the new party, the amalgamation happened on the “Rhodesia First” terms established by Harper in 1960. As Field and Harper’s joint submission to the Monckton Commission asserted, “if the Central African Alliance Plan is not accepted, there is no alternative except complete independence for Southern Rhodesia.”¹⁰³ This position was realised when Harper became one of the signatories to UDI in 1965. Field’s ouster as prime minister the preceding year to make way for that move can in part be traced to the legacy of his commitment to the federal idea and his association with CAAP. Similarly, the two DP members most closely associated with plans to partition the Federation, van Eeden and Wightwick, left the DP and rejoined the UFP by the end of 1961.¹⁰⁴

CAAP’s unveiling was major news locally and it attracted more attention in the U.K. than previous plans to remake the Federation.¹⁰⁵ Lord Angus Graham, a DP federal parliamentarian, held a seat in the U.K. House of Lords as a hereditary peer. In his maiden speech to the latter assembly he pitched CAAP as the Federation’s last hope.¹⁰⁶ An analysis of CAAP was prepared for the British foreign secretary and forwarded to the colonial

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ “Split in Dominion Party,” *TRH*, 6 July 1960.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, 27 October 1960, cols. 2571–2.

¹⁰⁰ “Winston Field Is Leader of ‘United Group,’” *Central African Daily News* [hereafter *ADN*], 2 June 1961.

¹⁰¹ National Archives and Records Administration [hereafter *NARA*], College Park, Maryland, U.S.A., “Views of a Conservative Member of the Federal Parliament,” 11 January 1961, Record Group 59, Box 1691, 745c.00/1–361.

¹⁰² Larry Bowman, “Organisation, Power and Decision-Making within the Rhodesian Front,” *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 7:2 (1969), 145–65, 159.

¹⁰³ *Advisory Commission Report—Appendix VIII, Evidence, Volume IV*, 309.

¹⁰⁴ Bodleian Library, Field Papers, Wightwick to Field, 3 November 1960, Box 1; Untitled, *Confidential News Report* [hereafter *CNR*], 9 March 1961.

¹⁰⁵ “New Grouping in Central Africa,” *The Times* (U.K.), 21 January 1959.

¹⁰⁶ “Seeking a Remedy for Nyasaland Fears,” *The Times* (U.K.), 25 March 1959.

secretary.¹⁰⁷ However, regional black nationalists, as with previous iterations of proposals to remake the Federation, scarcely deigned to offer comment. Dauti Yamba, a black anti-colonial federal MP from Northern Rhodesia likely echoed wider nationalist views when he dismissed CAAP as “just a scheme that could be thrown into the waste-paper basket.”¹⁰⁸ The UFP was more outspoken. It portrayed any reconfiguration of the Federation as inherently defeatist and in alignment with nationalist aims. A hard-hitting opinion piece in *Federal Outlook*, the party organ, stated, “the plan, despite its high phrasing is appeasement in one of its most virulent forms.”¹⁰⁹ It described CAAP’s language on the inevitability of black rule in Nyasaland as “knuckl[ing] down to the clamorous demands of African Congress agitators.”¹¹⁰ Rupert Cecil Bucquet, a UFP MP from Nyasaland (who previously resided in Southern Rhodesia) received hurrahs from his colleagues in the federal parliament when he declared that African nationalists “were in this particular matter [CAAP] [. . .] the blood brothers of the Dominion Party.”¹¹¹ A year after CAAP was unveiled, it remained the subject of significant debate in the Southern Rhodesian parliament. Hirsch, elected on the UFP territorial ticket in 1958, condemned the Plan as endorsing British policy and seeking “to take the Northern Territories out of the sphere of civilised, orderly government and to hand them over to African nationalism.”¹¹² This statement, from early 1960, reflected a growing recognition of the U.K.’s declining support for empire. As that trend became increasingly clear, the UFP was forced into a major volte-face that contributed to its precipitous decline.

UFP Volte-Face

The UFP’s lingering commitment to federation and the regional orientation associated with that fidelity contributed to its electoral defeat by the RF in Southern Rhodesia’s December 1962 election. Unlike the UFP, stretched across the Federation’s four governments, the RF was solely focused on Southern Rhodesia. The election was fought, in no small part, over the colony’s continued association with the Federation. Under the heading, “Is Federation Finished?,” an RF campaign advertisement asked:

- How can there still be Federation once Nyasaland has seceded—and if UNIP and ANC [two nationalist parties] have branded themselves together in Northern Rhodesia?
- Why has the electorate not been fully informed?¹¹³

UFP campaign material hit back by praising the party as having “consistently opposed African extremism at every turn in all the Territories of the Federation.” It contrasted this defence with an attack on the RF which “ran in Nyasaland” and “scuttled in N [orthern] R[hodesia].”¹¹⁴ The electorate’s decision to bring Field to power indicated that the right wing’s proactive attempts over the past decade to maintain Southern Rhodesian influence vis-à-vis its northern neighbours instilled more confidence in voters that it could effectively preserve a more insular white privilege in what was rapidly becoming a postcolonial world.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, illegible to Secretary of State, 29 January 1959, C01015/2639.

¹⁰⁸ *Debates of the Federal Assembly*, 27 April 1959, col. 735.

¹⁰⁹ “DP Latest: A Policy of Appeasement,” *Federal Outlook*, February 1959.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Debates of the Federal Assembly*, 22 April 1959, col. 566.

¹¹² *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, 17 February 1960, col. 2564.

¹¹³ Rhodesian Front advertisement in *ADN*, 3 December 1962.

¹¹⁴ United Federal Party Advertisement in *Umtali Post*, 12 December 1962.

NAC's successor, the MCP, gained control of Nyasaland's local government infrastructure following an August 1961 election. This vividly marked, as van Eeden warned, the rise of a "Gold Coast" state within the Federation. The UFP did not immediately produce any substantive face-saving plan following this development. However, around March 1962, the party began to lobby the British government to preserve the Federation via partition. A likely consequence of its long-standing opposition to efforts to remake the Federation, it did so furtively. This was a boon for the RF, formed the same month. The UFP's discreet approach weakened the party's ability to claim that it was actively opposing Britain's decolonial push and was a missed opportunity to showcase an initiative to preserve white dominance.

In a press conference following a ten-day visit to London, Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister Edgar Whitehead cryptically admitted that in discussions with British officials he floated "certain rather vague suggestions that included altering the territorial composition of the Federation."¹¹⁵ Whitehead refused to discuss specifics, but as the Rhodesian press reported, his propositions resembled ideas the UFP had once ardently opposed. A. J. Levin's *Confidential News Report*, a political newsletter, noted that Whitehead called for:

The break-up of Northern Rhodesia into a Copperbelt area, Barotseland, and two further areas which would consist of the provinces respectively controlled by the UNIP and ANC. The Copperbelt area would be joined to Southern Rhodesia [. . .] [and] Southern Rhodesia would accept that she has special financial responsibilities towards the other territories [. . .] if the rump of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland then still wish to secede from Federation, they would be allowed to do so.¹¹⁶

After years of advocating for Federation and political control over the "Black North" as a protectionist measure against African nationalism, this was a drastic policy reversal. It entailed significant loss of face for the UFP. The party accused the DP of appeasement when it promoted a similar programme. A liberal white member of the Northern Rhodesian legislative council, Harry Franklin, wrote, "it was a measure of Sir Roy Welensky's realisation that he might well fail in his attempts to hold the Federation together, that he could have ever considered such a plan."¹¹⁷ When CAAP was launched, Whitehead had criticised the prospect of forming "a unitary government from the Copperbelt down the railway strip [. . .] to include Southern Rhodesia and the central portion of Northern Rhodesia," on the basis that a unitary system would dilute Southern Rhodesia's influence.¹¹⁸ Harper delivered a hard-hitting parliamentary speech attacking Whitehead's inconsistency. He chided the territorial prime minister for not "having had the grace to admit quite frankly that this was a scheme that the Opposition had. It was a scheme that he ridiculed in the past, but one which for the lack of any better thinking he has been forced to turn to now."¹¹⁹ Harper added that recent events in Africa made clear "the futility of presenting this particular plan."¹²⁰

However, there were indications, as Franklin wrote, that "the British Government was giving it [the UFP plans] some serious attention."¹²¹ Franklin viewed a February 1962 visit

¹¹⁵ "Whitehead Did Put Forward 'Suggestions.'"

¹¹⁶ Untitled, *CNR*, 3 March 1962.

¹¹⁷ Franklin, *Unholy Wedlock*, 216.

¹¹⁸ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, 28 July 1959, col. 855.

¹¹⁹ "Harper on the Future of Southern Rhodesia," *Gatooma Mail*, 15 March 1962.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Franklin, *Unholy Wedlock*, 217.

to Barotseland by Duncan Sandys, the Secretary for Commonwealth Relations, as “most unorthodox.”¹²² Sandys would normally have been expected to defer to the Colonial Office, which oversaw Northern Rhodesia. In Franklin’s view, while the plan was “manifestly absurd,” Sandys’s travels indicated that he was sounding out support for what the former termed Whitehead’s “carve-up” plan.¹²³ Shortly after this voyage, Welensky wrote that he felt the prospects for an unspecified settlement were “better.”¹²⁴ In his memoir, the British High Commissioner to the Federation, Lord Alport, claimed that he planted the seeds of the “carve-up plan” amongst UFP officials who then regurgitated it to the British government during Sandys’s visit as their own original thinking.¹²⁵ Alport implied his support for such proposals, noting:

If the “wind of change” was blowing away the colonial regimes, which had created these [artificial] frontiers, there was much to be said for allowing it to remove some of these artificial obstacles to the natural political and economic organisation of the new Africa which was beginning to emerge.¹²⁶

Further complicating matters, Welensky discretely floated a parallel plan. In his memoir he obliquely referred to his government “making practical proposals for a readjusted and rebuilt Federation, which would imply the cession to African control of large areas of Northern Rhodesia and the retention of the Copperbelt and the line of rail—the main areas of European settlement—in a non-racial Federal partnership,” in advance of Sandys’s February 1962 visit.¹²⁷ He added bitterly, “these constructive ideas, which would have saved the essence of the Federation, were ruthlessly disregarded.”¹²⁸ According to Welensky, the difference between his plan and Whitehead’s was that while the latter called for outright territorial amalgamation, Welensky sought an “indissoluble federation” of Southern Rhodesia and the “Central Block” of Northern Rhodesia with its more substantial white presence.¹²⁹ He dubbed this association “United Rhodesia.”¹³⁰

Welensky confided to the Federation’s High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, A.E.P. Robinson, that he was unhappy with statements from Whitehead which indicated the latter was resigned to Nyasaland leaving the Federation.¹³¹ As early as May 1960, Welensky was aware that Whitehead was amenable to the Federation’s partition, a prospect then anathema to the federal UFP cabinet.¹³² In private correspondence, Welensky opined that Whitehead’s proposals were unrealistic and presented “insurmountable difficulties to the British.”¹³³ The U.S. Consulate concluded in August 1962 that there were “sharp differences of opinion on issues of fundamental importance between Sir Roy

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Franklin, 217, 219.

¹²⁴ University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, A. E. P. Robinson Papers, Mss.Afr.s.2164, Welensky to Robinson, 16 March 1962, Box 2, File 3.

¹²⁵ Cuthbert James McCall Alport, *The Sudden Assignment: Being a Record of Service in Central Africa during the Last Controversial Years of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1961–63* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 168.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 165.

¹²⁷ Roy Welensky, *Welensky’s 4000 Days: The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Collins, 1964), 318.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Bodleian Library, Robinson Papers, Welensky to Robinson, 16 March 1962, Box 2, File 3.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Bodleian Library, Robinson Papers, Welensky to Robinson, 1 April 1962, Box 2, File 3.

¹³² Wood, *Welensky Papers*, 782.

¹³³ Bodleian Library, Robinson Papers, Welensky to Robinson, 16 March 1962, Box 2, File 3.

and Sir Edgar.”¹³⁴ Thus, just as divisive debates on Federation were resolved within Southern Rhodesia’s far right, they began to stoke discord within the UFP. The pace of change in Africa engendered turmoil within the UFP, then swiftly rendered it obsolete. When it became clear that a UFP government could not effectively negotiate with Whitehall, Southern Rhodesia’s electorate opted for leadership that would be more resolute.

Conclusion

Rhodesian efforts to remake the Federation provide essential context on intra-white political competition as well as rising white anxieties and settler perceptions of their position in the subregion. Prosser Gifford remarked in the opening of a retrospective assessment of the Federation, “we can [now] sense in ways denied to contemporaries the irony of the Federation as a construct for the transfer of power from metropolitan to local control.”¹³⁵ However, this study has shown that a substantial group of right-wing white Rhodesians were long apprehensive of the prospect that enhanced association with the “Black North” might accelerate African nationalism. These ideologues proposed reconfiguring the Federation to obviate that risk. However, by the time seventeen African states became independent in 1960, a fractured far right began to shift away from a commitment to regional leadership. The rapid pace of African decolonisation prompted a more pragmatic right wing to abandon partition plans and unify around a “Southern Rhodesia First” mantra. This eased the pathway for the Federation’s dissolution at the end of 1963 and Zambia’s independence in October 1964.

The ruling UFP, more thoroughly embedded in the architecture of the Federation, found it difficult to accept territorial modification. However, the wave of change across Africa was so seismic that it forced the party to embrace the traditional right-wing position in early 1962. This shift had important ramifications: the UFP’s credibility was undermined by this drastic reversal. In championing partition, the UFP aligned itself with aspects of the South African ideology of segregation and “bantustan-style” self-government that the architects of “partnership” ostensibly repudiated. Furthermore, with anti-colonial nationalists securing control of the Nyasaland legislative council, their effort was too late to receive serious consideration from Britain. The discredited party was voted out of power within a year by Southern Rhodesia’s overwhelmingly white electorate.

This narrative offers new insights on the dynamics behind Southern Rhodesia’s 1962 political power transfer. It also recovers a dimension of the Federation’s origins, the anti-pan-African settler security justification, that has been marginalised in the historiography in favour of South African and economic factors. While none of the initiatives discussed here were realised, this examination of thwarted settler worldmaking in southern Africa addresses rising calls to acknowledge the complex nature of decolonisation and its multiple trajectories. It advances Frederick Cooper’s edict to recognise the importance of “moment[s] of ambiguity” during decolonisation and the openings political actors tried to exploit amidst a dynamic period.¹³⁶ A range of white Rhodesian settlers believed their partition plans were viable. They struggled to grasp the rapid shift in Britain’s colonial policy. Nevertheless, when the UFP finally embraced reconfiguration in early 1962, the reception among British officialdom was not entirely cold. Settler partition schemes

¹³⁴ NARA, AmConsul, Salisbury to Department of State, 6 August 1962, Record Group 59, Box 1694, 745c.00/8–262.

¹³⁵ Gifford, “Misconceived Dominion,” 387.

¹³⁶ Frederick Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of African History* 49:2 (2008), 167–96, 196.

formed a significant backdrop to intra-white political competition, especially in Southern Rhodesia, for virtually the entire life-span of the Federation. This recurring discourse demonstrated the lack of white commitment to the body as constructed, weakening it. Critically, in Southern Rhodesia, the failure of settler worldmaking spurred a recourse to unilateralism.

Inquiry on the reconstitution of the Federation illuminates areas for further research. White enthusiasm for partition as a means to preserve settler privilege may partially explain why much of Africa's postcolonial leadership, once in office, adamantly opposed redrawing imperial borders. Terence Ranger noted the widespread but fleeting interest among early Zimbabwean nationalists for reconfiguring colonial borders.¹³⁷ The case for dismembering colonial confines is particularly relevant in Northern Rhodesia, where the existence of semiautonomous Barotseland, preserving the structures of a pre-colonial kingdom, had, at least on paper, one of the stronger cases for secession from the colonial polity upon independence.¹³⁸ Elsewhere in the Federation, allegations of Hastings Banda's territorial designs on northeastern Zambia and northern Mozambique, which vexed his key lieutenants, remains understudied and potentially offers insights on Malawi's friendly relations with white minority regimes.¹³⁹ In the late 1970s, Lord Alport updated his reconfiguration rhetoric, arguing that an independent Zimbabwe should be divided into two separate states as a means to reduce ethnic tensions.¹⁴⁰ Muted calls for Matabeleland separatism continue in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

Debates on partition constituted some of the clearest policy differences among the major white political groups in the Federation. Even prior to the massive surge in African nationalism around 1960, the longevity and prevalence of this discourse denoted the Federation's inherent precarity. By December 1962, the wrangling was resolved in favour of the RF. That party took a more decisive, narrow, and reactionary view about the best means to preserve white privilege. This realignment paved the way for Southern Rhodesia's subsequent isolationist trajectory.

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¹³⁷ Terence Ranger, "Afterword," *Critical African Studies* 4:6 (2011), 114–17, 115.

¹³⁸ Jack Hogan, "What Then Happened to Our Eden?: The Long History of Lozi Secessionism, 1890–2013," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40:5 (2014), 907–24.

¹³⁹ Alport, *Sudden Assignment*, 165; Kanyama Chiume, *Kwacha: An Autobiography* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), 247.

¹⁴⁰ "Lord Alport's Divided State," *Zimbabwe Times*, 18 November 1977.

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