

**Soil Conservation and the White Agrarian Environment in Colonial
Zimbabwe, c. 1908-1980**

by

Simeon Maravanyika

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**Supervisors: Professor A. S. Mlambo
Professor I. R. Phimister**

September 2013

“Mother earth (is) only a thin skin clothing the naked poverty of the rocky ribs below.” - The Rhodesia Herald, 1 October 1917.

“...seeing him on his farm, I couldn’t decide if the man had shaped the land or the other way round.” - A. Fuller, 2001, Don’t Lets Go to the Dogs Tonight, New York, Random House.

Abstract

This thesis utilizes three theoretical approaches; political ecology, settler culture and community conservation to examine soil conservation and the white agrarian environment in colonial Zimbabwe to evaluate to what extent players in government and the agricultural sector were conscious or concerned about preservation and conservation of the soil. The thesis also examines the role of local and international ideas in the colony's conservationist tradition, and whether the soil conservation movement was identity-forming among the colony's settler farmers.

The history of conservation on settler farms in colonial Zimbabwe can be periodized into three broad timeframes - from the 1890s to around the mid-1930s, between 1934 and 1965 and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) period. In the first three and half decades of the 20th century the history of conservation can best be described as being characterized by a series of "dilemmas." The British South Africa Company (BSA Co.) administration did not pursue soil conservation in any significant, synchronized or sustained manner. In the second period, from 1934 to 1965, there was considerable progress in the construction of conservation works on settler farms. This process was the result of recommendations made by Natural Resources Commission, a body that was appointed in 1938 to investigate the status of the colony's natural resources.

The mid-1940s were characterized by the formation of Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs) in settler farming districts whose mandate was to oversee the construction of conservation works to rehabilitate settler farms. With the support of the Natural Resources Board (NRB), and the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX), formed in 1948 to provide

expertise on conservation-related matters and extension support, all settler farming areas were covered by trained CONEX staff, though in most instances very thinly distributed due to high demand for their service and manpower constraints in the department.

The third period, the UDI era, was characterized by attempts by the minority settler government to forestall majority rule in the colony. Malawi and Zambia (formerly Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, respectively) had been granted their independence by Britain in 1964. As decolonization was taking place in other parts of Africa, black majority rule in colonial Zimbabwe also seemed imminent. To the alarm of the white minority government, Britain had set out to grant majority rule to its African colonies, including Southern Rhodesia (renamed Rhodesia after Zambia's independence). The Ian Smith-led government of Rhodesia, feeling betrayed, declared UDI on 11 November 1965, delaying Zimbabwean independence by another 15 years. With the end of the Federation in 1963, the colony could no longer rely on federal resources as it had done between 1953 and 1963. Sanctions, imposed in reaction to UDI, further put the regime in a tight corner. Their impact was quite significant. Fuel had to be rationed, and general belt-tightening across the board inevitably followed as major Rhodesian exports such as tobacco and minerals were embargoed on international markets. The start of the liberation war at the end of the 1960s further complicated matters.

Key Terms:

Soil conservation, white agrarian environment, community conservation, erosion, natural resources, extension, Intensive Conservation Areas, Great Dust Bowl Disaster, settler farms, environmentalist identity.

Dedication

To the memory of my late parents, Shylet Zadzisai Mutombwa-Maravanyika and Solomon Frederick Maravanyika. And to my wife Dr. Tendayi Mutimukuru-Maravanyika, with love. I am very grateful for all your support and encouragement. I also dedicate this thesis to my children Tafadzwa Mufadzi, Ndatenda Ndanatswa and Paidamoyo Simone.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my Promoters, Professor A. S. Mlambo and Professor I. R. Phimister for their guidance and support. They painstakingly went through several drafts of this thesis and provided invaluable advice. I do not believe any student can remain the same after such excellent mentorship. I would also want to thank them for securing vital financial support for me from the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (EOMT) and a post-graduate bursary from the University of Pretoria. It would not have been possible for me to embark on DPhil studies in the absence of this assistance. Finally, I would also like to express my heart-felt gratitude to my promoters for arranging for me to travel to UK for the “Commonwealth at 60” postgraduate conference at the University of Sheffield in June 2010.

I would also like to acknowledge support from the Historical and Heritage Studies Department. I would like to particularly thank Ms. T. Van Rensburg and Ms. Z. Tsotso for assisting me with administrative matters during my visits to Pretoria.

I extend my gratitude to the EOMT for their generous funding. I would like to mention Ms. Clare Digby who I was constantly in contact with regarding my research and subsistence expenses both in Zimbabwe and in South Africa.

I also want to acknowledge the University of Pretoria for granting me a bursary in the final year of my studies.

I would also like to express my gratitude to members of staff and the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) for their assistance in locating files under extremely difficult conditions and to University of Zimbabwe for granting me access to their libraries.

I would like to acknowledge the University of Zimbabwe's Department of Economic History where my academic journey began. I am grateful to all members of staff, students and colleagues that I have interacted with over the years. Drs. Mtisi, Machingaidze, Kramer, Musiiwa and Nyambara deserve to be mentioned by name. Thanks for the guidance and the inspiration.

At the risk of omitting many names, I would also like to acknowledge a number of a friends for their being friends "in deed." I would like to thank Verengai Mabika and Tapiwa Mukwashi (and the entire DRI team), Dr. Brian Maguranyanga, Ushehwedu Kufakurinani and Kudzai Biri for allowing me to work from their offices in Eastlea, Belgravia and Mount Pleasant as I at one time hoped from office to office to beat load-shedding by the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA). I can only say *gratis vobis ago*.

I would also want to thank my research assistants at the National Archives of Zimbabwe, Godfrey Hove and Tinashe Aldrin Magaya. Thanks for *twuma* 'hunting instincts' *twuye twuye*.

I am also very grateful for the immense emotional and spiritual support from my church. Pastors G. Chitsinde and C. Mavengawenyu, thanks for all your guidance.

My gratitude also goes to my family. Mr and Mrs Maravanyika kuMarondera, Vimbai Albertina Tserere-Nyamukachi and Esther Maravanyika, may our good Lord bless you for all that you have done for me. Baba VaNhomba and Babamukuru Fabian Ruramai Nhengeze, rest in peace. You can only rest, and not die, because you poured so much of what was in you into me and others in the family. Thanks for investing in us.

My last “thank you” goes to my wife, Tendayi, and my children Taffy, Ndate and Paida. *Zvinoda kutendwa.*

I would like to conclude by stating that I bear full responsibility for the arguments, opinions, errors, omissions, short-comings and conclusions in this thesis.

List of Abbreviations

ACM	Adaptive Collaborative Management
BSA Co.	British South Africa Company
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CONEX	Department of Conservation and Extension
FPACs	Food Production Advisory Committees
FPCs	Food Production Committees
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
ICAs	Intensive Conservation Areas
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NRB	Natural Resources Board
PLO	Private Locations Ordinance
RAU	Rhodesia Agricultural Union
RNFU	Rhodesia National Farmers' Union
TGA	Tobacco Growers Association
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UK	United Kingdom
WAP	White Agricultural Policy
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZESA	Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Current discourses on sustainable agriculture (encapsulating issues such as the advantages of organic and conservation farming, action research such as participatory agrarian technology development and adaptive collaborative management, to name a few)¹, environmental management, nature conservation, global warming and climate change, among others, have refocused world attention on the status of African agriculture. This is because it is generally believed by both development practitioners and academics that the continent faces a number of risks owing to severe food insecurity. It is postulated that food production on the African continent is unlikely to increase in the foreseeable future, while the continent's population and food deficit are projected to continue to increase.² Experts also postulate that Africa will, in comparison with other continents, continue to be the most affected by the impacts of global climate change.³ These developments have recently redirected the attention of scholars to African agricultural, demographic and environmental issues.⁴ It is environmental aspects (soil conservation) of this scholarship that this study is mainly interested in.

¹ D. Rigby and D. Caceres, 2001, "Organic Farming and the Sustainability of Agricultural Systems", *Agricultural Systems*, 68, pp. 21-40.

² J. Pretty, 1999, "Can Sustainable Agriculture Feed Africa? New Evidence on Progress, Processes and Impacts", *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 1, p. 253.

³ P. Kurukulasuriya, 2006, "Will African Agriculture Survive Climate Change?", *The World Bank Economic Review*, 20, 3, pp. 367-88.

⁴ See, for example, I. Scoones, N. Marongwe, B. Mavedzenge, J. Mahenehene, F. Murimbarimba, and C. Sukume, C., 2010, *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities*, Harare, Weaver Press, F. Baudron, J. A. Andersson, M. Corbeels and K. E. Giller, 2011, "Failing to Yield? Ploughs, Conservation Agriculture and the Problem of Agricultural Intensification: An Example from the Zambezi Valley, Zimbabwe", *Journal of Development Studies*, pp. 1-28, J. Muzondidya, 2010, "The Zimbabwe Crisis and the Unresolved Conundrum of Race in the Post-Colonial Period", *Journal of Developing Societies*, 26, 1, pp. 5-38, and G. Thompson, 2010, "Pumpkins Just Got in There": Gender and Generational Conflict and 'Improved' Agriculture in Colonial Zimbabwe", *International Review of Social History*, 55, pp. 175-201.

For many historians, the focus on Africa's environmental history has mainly been to investigate whether Africa's condition today is a consequence of her past experience, such as the way production was organized in pre-colonial societies, the nature of her colonial encounters and her post-colonial inheritance. In addition to this, historians have also focused on whether any relevant lessons can be drawn from these past experiences to influence today's policies and practices in relation to balancing human economic pursuits with resource conservation and preservation. While there are a number of different schools of thought on various aspects of Africa's past environmental experiences, two deserve to be mentioned because of the many instances where literature on soil and water conservation in the region shows that both African and European farmers arrogated blame to each other's land-use practices as being responsible for ecological problems.⁵

One school of thought reflects an Africanist perspective while the other is Eurocentric.⁶ The former has focused on the efficacy of indigenous knowledge about the environment. While "the destructive capacity of African agriculture"⁷ was often cited and used by colonial officials and governments on the continent to justify land appropriation and apportionment and agrarian policies, the Africanist school of thought argues that pre-colonial African agriculture was environmentally sustainable, and that even under a restrictive colonial framework, African societies still valued soil and nature conservation and preservation as they

⁵ See, for example, J. R. N. Mlia and R. Ngoleka, 1987, "History of Soil Conservation in Malawi", in History of Soil Conservation in the SADCC Region, Maseru, SADCC Soil and Water Conservation and Land Utilization Programme Report Number 8.

⁶ Africanist responses were often a reaction to "triumphalist" assertions by colonial administrators and officials who, from the tone of their correspondence, viewed themselves as "experts" on African issues. In addition to this they viewed themselves as initiators and implementers of progressive policies whose effect would be to make Africans abandon their "backward" and "environmentally ruinous" policies and embrace "modern" and "scientific" methods. For more on the mind-set of colonial administrators and officials see J. Andersson, 2002, "Administrators' Knowledge and State Control in Colonial Zimbabwe: The Invention of the Rural-Urban Divide in Buhera District, 1912-1980", Journal of African History, 43, 1, pp. 119-143.

⁷ D. Anderson, 1984, "Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography and Drought: The Colonial State and Soil Conservation Policy in East Africa during the 1930s", African Affairs, 83, pp. 321-344. Also see M. Stocking, 1985, "Soil Conservation Policy in Colonial Africa", Agricultural History, 59, 2, pp. 148-161.

carried out their day to day economic activities.⁸ This school of thought further argues that it was, in fact, colonial intervention in Africa that caused environmental degradation. William Beinart, in an article titled “African History and Environmental History”, observed that resource appropriation was at the heart of colonial incursions in Africa. Beinart compares colonial appropriation of land, forests, wildlife and minerals with the actions of Spanish *conquistadores* who appropriated enormous pieces of land in the Americas without much consideration of the needs and welfare of locals.⁹

The second school of thought argues that conservation ideas and programmes introduced by colonial states in Africa were not just framed locally to restrict and limit access to and use of natural resources by Africans for exclusive enjoyment by the settlers, but were directly connected with the Empire. Richard Grove, the main proponent of this school of thought, argues that conservation policies in British colonies were shaped by scientific research carried out at the time.¹⁰ According to Donald Moore, this relationship between scientific

⁸ See M. Leach and R. Mearns, 1996, The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment, Oxford, James Curry, p. 14 and P. Richards, 1985, Indigenous Agricultural Revolution: Ecology and Food Production in West Africa, London, Unwin, p. 41 and, by the same author, “Ecological Change and the Politics of African Land Use”, African Studies Review, 26, 1983, pp. 1-72. Richards has examined the capacity of African farmers to grow wetland rice in West Africa without the use of western technological devices and methods. Also see J. Murombedzi, 1994, “Dynamics of Conflict in Environmental Management Policy in the context of the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE): A Zimbabwean Initiative for Natural Resource Conservation”, DPhil Thesis, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, p. 28. Murombedzi explains how Mzilikazi and his successor, Lobengula, Kings of the Ndebele in colonial Zimbabwe, introduced a permit system to control the activities of white hunters to avoid depletion of game in their kingdom. C. Tobaiwa and P. Jackson, 1985, Shona People: “Totems and Wildlife”, J. A. Mcneely and D. Pitt (eds), Culture and Conservation: The Human Dimension in Environmental Planning, Kent, IUCN, p. 233, show how Shona cultural practices, such as their having animal totems (*Mitupo*) and sacred forests (*Marambakutemwa*) have, since the pre-colonial period, contributed to conservation. J. Giblin, and G. Maddox, 1996, Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania, Athens, Ohio University Press, p. 2 have, while agreeing that aspects of pre-colonial agriculture were in harmony with nature, however, warned against what they term a “merrie Africa” approach, where everything done by African communities in the pre-colonial period is cast in good light as their studies in pre-colonial Tanzania also unearthed evidence of unsustainable farming methods before colonization.

⁹ W. Beinart, 2000, “African History and Environmental History”, in African Affairs, 99, p. 271.

¹⁰ This is not to suggest that Grove is Eurocentric. His work, however, examines and illuminates how colonial government officials, hunters, missionaries and so-called experts’ misunderstanding of the African environment and their desire for the restoration of an imagined “lost Eden” or paradise often influenced conservationist thinking and interventions in the region. See R. Grove, 1993, “Colonial Conservation, Ecological Hegemony and Popular Resistance: Towards a Global Synthesis” in J. Mackenzie (Ed), Imperialism and the Natural World,

environmental research in Europe and dispersion of European environmentalist ideas to the African continent has had the effect of showing the “deep histories of a global environmental discourse, locating particular state ‘conservation’ interventions within the broader circuits of empire, colonialism and capitalism.”¹¹ This body of literature attempts to discount the work of scholars who argue that the enactment of natural resources legislation “to rearrange nature as well as people and land”¹² in the colonies was locally planned and executed mainly for the benefit of the local white minority.

Natural resources legislation in colonial Africa was not designed solely to exclude African participation, but also to provide remedial action for resource depletion and destruction brought about by colonialism. James Murombedzi has, for example, argued that game legislation in colonial Zimbabwe was enacted as a belated response to acute depletion of the colony’s wildlife by the activities of white people.¹³ Roben Mutwira’s research on the evolution of wildlife policy in colonial Zimbabwe has shown how, in the first three decades of colonial rule, the Department of Agriculture worked in concert with farmers to shoot and poison lions, hyenas, jackals, wild cats and baboons, with the result that by the outbreak of the First World War “it had become apparent that the lion, leopard and other stock marauding animals had been eliminated from the European farming areas.”¹⁴ This could not have been the product of imperial science research, but a local agricultural department and farmers’

Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990, p. 19. Also see by the same author, “Conserving Eden: The European East India Companies and their Environmental Policies on St. Helena, Mauritius, and in Western India, 1660-1854” in Comparative Studies in Society and History, 35, 2, 1990, “Scottish Missionaries, Evangelical Discourses and the Origins of Conservation Thinking in Southern Africa, 1820-1900”, in Journal of Southern African Studies, 1989, 15, 2, and Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

¹¹ D. Moore, 1996, A River Runs through it: Environmental History and the Politics of Community in Zimbabwe’s Eastern Highlands, Berkeley, Institute of International Studies, p. 4.

¹² J. Mackenzie, 1991, “The Natural World and the Popular Consciousness in Southern Africa: The European Appropriation of Nature” in P. Kaarshoim (ed), Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa, Harare, Baobab Books, p. 28.

¹³ Murombedzi, “The Dynamics of Conflict in Environmental Management”, p. 27.

¹⁴ R. Mutwira, 1989, “Southern Rhodesia Wildlife Policy (1890-1853): A Question of Condoning Game Slaughter?”, Journal of Southern African Studies, 15, 2, p. 254.

reaction to the abundance of stock-devouring and crop-destroying wild animals on settler farms. Environmental policies appear to have been locally thought out, initiated and driven by local factors, at least until the 1930s, when an international conservation discourse was initiated by a decade-long environmental disaster in the United States of America, the Great Dust Bowl Disaster, which began in 1930.¹⁵

The international environmental discourse which began with the Great Dust Bowl Disaster gained prominence from the mid-1940s following America's atomic bombardment of Japan's cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War¹⁶ and also during the cold war¹⁷ in the aftermath of the Second World War. This was a result of questions provoked in the mid-1940s by Japan's nuclear bombardment, which did not only have a huge human toll, but also continued to affect the cities long after the bombardment as they grappled with radioactive contamination of the soil and water, which had negative implications on the Japanese agricultural sector.¹⁸ Environmentalism gathered more momentum in the 1990s with the rise of what James Roberts termed "ecology conscious consumer behavior", resulting in louder calls by consumers for sustainable production of foodstuffs. Ecological consciousness and human rights issues became an important part of this consumer movement, stressing the importance of environmentally friendly agricultural production, free trade and respect for

¹⁵ The Great Dust Bowl Disaster was characterized by drought and wind erosion in the Great Plains of the United States of America from 1930 to 1940. The Dust storms were severe; resulting in the era being known as "the Dusty Thirties". The most affected states were Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, Wyoming, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. For more see Z. K. Hansen and G. D. Libecap, 2004, "Small Farms, Externalities, and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s", *Journal of Political Economy*, 112, 3, pp. 665-694.

¹⁶ M. Selden, 1989, *The Atomic Bomb Voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, New York, M. E. Sharpe Inc.

¹⁷ For more on the public discourse about nuclear proliferation during the cold war era see D. S. Meyer, 2005, "Framing National Security: Elite Public Discourse on Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War", *Political Communication*, 12, 2, pp. 173-192.

¹⁸ A. H. Westing, 1981, "Environmental Impact of Nuclear Warfare", *Environmental Conservation*, 8, 4, pp. 269-273.

human rights. This manifests itself in opposition to the use of child, prison and other forms of coerced labour.¹⁹

Public concern about agricultural sustainability in Western Europe and North America manifested itself further with an increase in the formation of non-governmental organizations with an agrarian and environmental focus and, according to Anderson and Grove, the spreading of ordinary people's interest in environmental issues became a deeply engrained element of European and American culture.²⁰ Environmental awareness has increased in recent years due to the increasing incidence of technologically-induced disasters as happened in the petroleum sector where oil spills took place in the Gulf of Mexico in the United States in 1990 and April 2011, causing major public concern and anger.²¹ There has also been concern about the safety of nuclear technology, especially in the wake of disasters such as at Chernobyl in Ukraine in 1986 and in Fukushima in Japan in 2011.²² Environmental awareness has, in addition to concern about the safety of nuclear power, also encompassed issues such as forest preservation, wildlife and fisheries management, excessive utilization of fossil resources, and industrial waste management, among others.²³

The growth of interest in conservation has been further generated by the generally held perception that the world is on the brink of a global ecological "crisis." This has been the product of increasing coverage and consciousness of human-induced climate change and its

¹⁹ J. A. Roberts, 1996, "Green Consumers in the 1990s: Profile and Implications for Advertising", *Journal of Business Research*, 36, 3, 217-231 and F. B Cross, 1990, "The Weaning of the Green: Environmentalism Comes of Age in the 1990s", *Business Horizons*, 33, 5, pp. 40-46.

²⁰ D. Anderson and R. Grove, 1987, *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies and Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 6.

²¹ See "The Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Blog", <http://gulfofmexicooilspillblog.com/2011/03>, downloaded on 5 May 2011.

²² For more on public perceptions of nuclear risks see P. Slovic et al, 1979, "Images of Disaster: Perception and Acceptance of Risks from Nuclear Power", *Electric Perspectives*, pp. 8-20.

²³ Several scholars have looked at these contemporary trends in European and North American societies. D. Allen, 1976, *The Naturalist in Britain: A Social History*, London, Allen Lane and P. D. Lowe and J. M. Goyder's 1983, *Environmental Groups and Politics*, London, George Allen and Unwin, are examples of such literature.

consequent impacts such as changes in rainfall patterns, the dwindling of water sources and melting of ice glaciers, an increase in the global food deficit and food prices and the resultant rise in rural and urban poverty and high mortality from preventable and curable diseases, especially in the developing world.²⁴

In Zimbabwe climate change mitigation and adaptation is increasingly becoming a topical subject, though the country is yet to develop a climate change policy.²⁵ The state of the country's agricultural sector is also a topical issue, mostly centering on the combined effects of the Mugabe Government's land reform programme and climate change, which has manifested itself in a sustained food deficit. A comprehensive study of soil conservation on commercial farms in the colonial period at this moment is timely as it makes a contribution to the Zimbabwean land debate and to conservation and sustainable production on the farms by documenting one aspect of the country's past agrarian experience.

A lot of agrarian knowledge was generated in the colonial period which, if documented, can be a useful source of information for policy makers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector. There have been many reports of rampant tree cutting and soil erosion on the appropriated farms.²⁶ Though Zimbabwe's energy challenges and poverty resulting from a high unemployment are contributory to this, lack of knowledge by the pioneering "new farmers" also plays a part.²⁷

²⁴ H. G. Bohle, T. E. Downing and M. J. Watts, 1994, "Climate Change and Social Vulnerability: Toward a Sociology and Geography of Food Insecurity", *Global Environmental Change*, 4, 1, pp. 37-48.

²⁵ *The Herald*, 14 May, 2012, "Zimbabwe: Climate Change Policy Long Overdue", <http://allafrica.com/stories/201205140731.html>, downloaded on 1 August 2012.

²⁶ For example *Africa News*, 25 April 2012, "Zimbabwe: Indigenous Trees under Siege from Farmers", http://www.africanews.com/site/Zimbabwe_Indigenous_trees_under_siege_from_farmers/list_messages/41584, *The Zimbabwean*, 19 November 2011, "No Trees in 50 Years", <http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/news/zimbabwe/54722/no-trees-in-50-years.html>, both downloaded on 1 August 2012.

²⁷ See *The Herald*, 28 April 2012, "Escalating Load Shedding Riles Government", <http://allafrica.com/stories/201204290276.html>, downloaded on 1 August 2012.

Overview of Historical Soil Issues in Africa

Knowledge about the soil on the African continent and in other parts of the world is as old as agrarian production itself. Eric Brevik and Alfred Hartemink have observed;

Civilizations all around the world showed various levels of soil knowledge by the 4th century AD, including irrigation, the use of terraces to control erosion, various ways of improving soil fertility, and ways to create productive artificial soils. Early soil knowledge was largely based on observations of nature; experiments to test theories were not conducted.²⁸

There is evidence, for example, of significant soil knowledge in the Ancient Roman Empire from Roman authors such as Cato the Elder and Mago the Phoenician, among others, dating back to as early as the third century BC.²⁹ Early Roman authors wrote on a number of subjects related to land and soils, among them providing advice to people who wished to buy land concerning the best land to buy or what land not to buy, what crops were best suited for what type of soil, how land could be ruined by being “mistreated” and the “fertilizing effect” of legumes, among other subjects.³⁰

Barbara Williams has examined soil knowledge among the Aztecs in the Americas, and has come to the conclusion that the Aztecs’ utilization of technology was an important aspect of their livelihoods. These technologies enabled their communities “to keep the soil in place... to provide water, to maintain and enhance soil nutrients, to treat problem soils, to reclaim eroded soils and to create new soil for crop production.”³¹ Soil knowledge among the Aztecs had,

²⁸ E. C. Brevik and A. E. Hartemink, 2010, “Early Soil Knowledge and the Birth and Development of Soil Science”, *Catena*, 83, 1, p. 23.

²⁹ W. Winiwarter, 2006, “Soil Scientists in Ancient Rome”, in B. P. Warkentin (Ed), *Footprints in the Soil: People and Ideas in Soil History*, Oxford, Elsevier, pp. 4-5.

³⁰ Winiwarter, “Soil Scientists in Ancient Rome”, pp. 8-14.

³¹ B. J. Williams, 2006, “Aztec Soil Knowledge: Classes, Management and Ecology”, in Warkentin (Ed), *Footprints in the Soil*.

Williams argues, significantly advanced prior to the arrival of Europeans, whose take-over and economic activities, unfortunately, disrupted Aztec agriculture.³²

As was the case with the Ancient Roman Empire and the Aztecs, African agricultural societies also developed a lot of knowledge about their soils, as it was largely from the soil that their subsistence was based. “African soils cannot be separated from African history because they are, in themselves, historical bodies”, that have “interacted with human history since its beginning”, Kate Showers has argued.³³ Early documents about the continent by travellers, hunters and missionaries, among others, Showers further argues, seldom give an accurate picture of Africans and their interactions with their soils as the authors were, in the majority of cases, writing about an environment “quite different from their place of origin and [thus they consequently] judged it to be abnormal.”³⁴

This misunderstanding of African people and their interaction with their environment informed the writing of what Emery Roe has characterized as “crisis narratives”, where local people were blamed without much proof for perceived deterioration and degradation of natural resources.³⁵ Grove’s research on Scottish missionaries in southern Africa highlights the lack of appreciation of physical and climatic conditions, and the consequent fallacious conclusions that resulted. Robert Moffat, an European missionary in parts of Southern Africa

³² Williams, “Aztec Soil Knowledge”, pp. 17-40.

³³ K. B. Showers, 2006, “A History of African Soil: Perceptions, Use and Abuse”, in McNeill and Winiwarter (Eds), Soils and Societies: Perspectives from Environmental History, Isle of Harris, The White Horse Press, p. 118.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 123.

³⁵ E. Roe, 1991, “Development Narratives, or Making the Best of Blueprint Development”, World Development, 19, 4, pp. 287-300.

in the 18th century, was convinced that arid conditions and drought in parts of the region were the product of “a sinful transgression or a condition of sin” by Africans.³⁶

Moffat thought, for example, that Tswana people were culpable for arid conditions in their area of settlement. According to Grove;

Not only were the Tswana destructive, [Moffat] considered, but they had caused permanent damage to a tree dating back to the time of the biblical flood, and conceivably before it. The theme, then, concerns the destroyers of the trees in the ‘neglected Garden’, possibly the Garden of Eden. The destructiveness of the Tswana thus is directly equated with the transgression which led to the Flood and not only that, but with the continuing transgression which has brought about the drought and the arid landscape of divine retribution. The implication was that those who were responsible for such transgression could not be trusted with the ‘garden’, as its continued despoliation served to prove.³⁷

Apart from this faulty reading of the Tswana landscape as having been in a “crisis”, one that was a product of a curse by God for supposed sins of local people, there are other similar examples. In Lesotho lack of trees in grassed plains was wrongly attributed to tree cutting by locals, which was thought to have resulted in deforestation at a large scale³⁸, as was the case in other parts of the continent, such as Morocco in North Africa.³⁹ These views were inaccurate, and it is from such and other inaccurate views and readings of Africans and their soils that colonial land-use and soil conservation policies were crafted by colonial administrations. One truism about African soils is given by Showers; “The only statement that can be made with certainty about African soils is that they are enormously diverse. For every

³⁶ Grove, “Scottish Missionaries, Evangelical Discourses and the Origins of Conservation Thinking”, pp.163-187.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 170.

³⁸ K. B. Showers, 2005, Imperial Gullies: Soil Erosion and Conservation in Lesotho, Ohio, Ohio University Press.

³⁹ D. K. Davis, 2005, “Potential Forests: Degradation Narratives, Science and Environmental Policy in Protectorate Morocco, 1912-1956”, Environmental History, 10, pp. 211-238.

general statement made about African soil conditions, an example to the contrary can be found.”⁴⁰

There is evidence that indigenous farmers in the region were aware of the need to preserve the soil and to enhance its fertility as they carried out their day to day agricultural activities. In colonial Zimbabwe, many communities engaged in extensive farming, where they tilled a certain piece of land for a number of years and, when the land either began to lose its fertility or to erode, they would leave that land idle for a number of years to allow it to recover before either returning to it or finding other fertile lands to cultivate.⁴¹ The Shona were, Wolf Roder has observed, “in many ways excellent agriculturalists” who avoided soil erosion and exhaustion by “thick, mixed plantings of low leafy crops which leave no bare ground between grain stems, while roots of the tree stumps and pollarded trees held the soil together.”⁴² The Bemba people of northern Zambia also practiced shifting cultivation. Called *chitemene* in Bemba, the practice involved

burning on a new field not only the trees cut in the process of clearing, but also branches and bush cut from adjacent land. The resulting intensive burning heated the top 2.5-5 cm of the soil, with the result that soil structure improved. Soil properties were changed in the *chitemene* system for the short and medium term...⁴³

In parts of West Africa African communities utilized fallow rotation. This involved clearing of land, burning it like happened under *chitemene*, and cropping on the cleared land for a few

⁴⁰ Showers, “A History of African Soil”, p. 156.

⁴¹ E. Kramer, 1997, “The Early Years: Extension Services in Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1925-1929”, *Zambezia*, ii, p. 160.

⁴² W. Roder, 1965, “The Sabi Valley Irrigation Projects”, Department of Geography Research paper 99, University of Chicago, p. 57.

⁴³ Showers, “A History of African Soil”, p. 143.

seasons after which the land was left fallow to recover its fertility.⁴⁴ J. Sutton has argued that there was little need for the construction of terraces.⁴⁵ Shifting cultivation was sufficient to ensure that the soil was well preserved because there was plenty of land and very little population pressure on the land.

The nature of soil management activities in Southern Africa in the colonial period changed in a huge way in comparison with the pre-colonial era. This was largely a product of how the colonial agrarian departments perceived the soil, and how agriculture was racially restructured, necessitating subsistence on small pieces of land, usually in congested areas.⁴⁶ This changed again in the post-colonial period, as African farmers were granted greater autonomy from state control in relation to soil conservation programmes. Munyaradzi Manjoro has examined “soil and water conservation behaviour” among small-holder farmers in the post-colonial period in Zaka, southern Zimbabwe, and come to the conclusion that the decision to embark on soil conservation projects at household level in the post-colonial period does not largely depend on what the agricultural ministry has to say about it, but on farmers’ perceptions of factors that cause soil erosion and the availability of credit facilities, among other local factors.⁴⁷

The Development of Soil Conservation as a Discipline

To understand the development of soil conservation as a discipline in the colonial period, it is important to trace it to its origins in the 20th century. The development of modern soil

⁴⁴ P. H. Nye and D. J. Greenland, 1960, The Soil under Shifting Cultivation, Technical Communication Number 51, Harpenden, Commonwealth Bureau of Soils, pp. 71-73.

⁴⁵ J. E. G. Sutton, 1989, “Towards a History of Cultivating Fields”, Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa, 24, 1, pp. 98-112.

⁴⁶ Showers, “A History of African Soil”, p. 165.

⁴⁷ M. Manjoro, “Understanding Farmers: Explaining Soil and Water Conservation Behaviour in Small-Holder Farmers in Southern Zimbabwe” pp. 239-252, downloaded on the 5th of September, 2013, from http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/Spring2006PDF/ARC_Understanding%20Farmers.pdf

conservation ideas began in the United States of America. Hugh Bennett is widely acknowledged as the “father” of the modern soil conservation movement in the United States of America.⁴⁸ Born in 1881 at a farm in North Carolina, “Big Hugh”, as he was called by his colleagues, was employed by the Bureau of Soils, a division that fell under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 1903.⁴⁹ Though there was already an understanding that soil was an important resource which needed to be taken care of as evidenced by the existence of the Bureau of Soils as a stand-alone division in the USDA, Belinda Dodson has argued that soil conservation was still “poorly-understood and under-estimated” at the turn of the 20th century in the United States.⁵⁰

It was in this context that Bennett rose to prominence. While in the late 19th century the main conservation effort in the United States had gone to combating the development of and filling in gullies, Bennett recognized “the significance of sheet erosion – less visible than gully erosion, just as damaging in terms of overall soil loss” and began, especially after the end of the First World War, to “speak and write extensively on the ‘menace’ of soil erosion.”⁵¹ Bennett’s firm belief that if soil erosion, particularly sheet erosion, was not given the attention it deserved it would negatively impact on the American agrarian sector was vindicated in the 1930s. Beginning in 1930, and spanning for a decade, the Great Dust Bowl Disaster, characterised by severe dust storms which stripped farms in the American mid-west of top

⁴⁸ W. Brink, 1951, Big Hugh: The Father of Soil Conservation, New York, Macmillan.

⁴⁹ B. Dodson, 2005, “A Soil Conservation Safari: Hugh Bennett’s 1944 Visit to South Africa”, Environment and History, 11, 1, p. 38.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 38.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 38.

soil, struck. The dust storms, also known as “Black Blizzards”, were so severe that visibility was reduced; “pedestrians could literally bump into each other in the middle of the day.”⁵²

The Dust Bowl, characterised by Russell Lord as “as nearly a literal hell on earth as can be imagined”, had a huge economic impact on states such as Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado, to name a few, particularly the “breakdown of an agricultural system that was the basis of the region’s economy and social order.”⁵³ In response to the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, among other challenges the United States was facing at the beginning of the 1930s, President Roosevelt introduced the “New Deal”, an economic rescue package which encapsulated a programme meant to combat soil erosion.⁵⁴ A new organization, the Soil Erosion Service – with Bennett as its head - was formed in the Department of the Interior in 1933 before it was renamed the Soil Conservation Services (SCS) in 1935.⁵⁵

The Soil Conservation service, under Bennett’s leadership till his retirement in 1951, focussed on;

...the development of conservation plans and provision of technical assistance to individual land owners within designated demonstration projects...[and] the establishment of soil conservation associations in designated soil conservation districts, run by farmers themselves and effectively operating as units of government in rural areas...This model of conservation, decentralized in terms of day-to-day operation yet co-ordinated by a strong national body, became the paradigm that Bennett sought to export around the world.⁵⁶

⁵² W. Lockeretz, 1978, “The Lessons of the Dust Bowl: Several Decades before the Current Concern with Environmental Problems, Dust Storms Ravaged the Great Plains, and the Threat of More Dust Storms still Hangs over Us”, American Scientist, 66, 5, p. 560.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 560.

⁵⁴ W. Rasmussen, 1983, “The New Deal Farm Programs: What they were and why they Survived”, American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 65, 5, 1158-1162.

⁵⁵ D. Helms, 2009, “Hugh Hammond Bennett and the Creation of the Soil Erosion Service”, Journal of Water and Soil Conservation, 62, 2, pp. 68-74.

⁵⁶ Dodson, “A Soil Conservation Safari”, pp. 38-39.

The work of the SCS in the United States from the 1930s and the propaganda which accompanied it resulted in the programme spreading to other parts of the world. Emory Alvord, Southern Rhodesia's "Chief Agriculturalist for the Instruction of Natives" travelled to the United States in the mid-1930s to investigate how the American administration was tackling the problem of soil erosion, especially in the context of the much-publicized Great Dust Bowl Disaster.⁵⁷ Bennett's 1944 visit to South Africa also attracted significant attention in the region. However, as Dodson has observed, the "tour starkly revealed the differential official concern about white-owned farms, catered for by the Department of Agriculture, and the African reserves, under the entirely separate administration of the Department of Native Affairs."⁵⁸ In southern Africa race was a very important consideration in the crafting of soil conservation policies. In this context, it seems that while developments in the United States of America played a role in the dispersion of ideas about soil conservation, implementation in the region was tailor made to cater for colonial racial sensibilities.

Two important points should, nevertheless, be made about the development of soil conservation as an important aspect of colonial policy, especially from the 1930s onwards. As was the case with the United States of America, soil erosion and depletion at the turn of the 20th century in the region was largely understood in terms of what was largely visible to the naked eye; the development of gullies.⁵⁹ The impact of gullies was noticed more quickly; gullies affected cropping, stock keeping, road networks, and were an eyesore. As Showers has observed in the Kingdom of Lesotho; "Europeans first recorded an awareness of soil erosion processes in Basutholand in the late nineteenth century, when the hazards of travel through

⁵⁷ NAZ S2990/1, The Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence.

⁵⁸ Dodson, "A Soil Conservation Safari", p. 36.

⁵⁹ R. Firth and R. Whitlow, 1991, "Patterns of Gullying in Zimbabwe", *Geo Journal*, 23, 1, pp. 59-67 and K. B. Showers, 2005, *Imperial Gullies: Soil Erosion and Conservation*, Ohio University Press.

gullied land were described in correspondence.”⁶⁰ Understanding of erosion as encapsulating more than just the development of gullies generally increased in the region after the First World War, and especially in the 1930s as the white agricultural sector expanded in an environment where the incidence of droughts, economic depressions and declining yields increased, among other factors. Peter Delius and Stefan Schirmer have observed;

From the 1920s, concern over soil erosion took on a new intensity in South Africa. Droughts, perceptions of declining yields and visible damage fuelled anxiety over the impact of both white settler and African farmers on the land. This mounting alarm was also influenced by comparative experiences – especially in the USA – and by the burgeoning body of international scientific and popular literature, which highlighted the prevalence and perils of soil erosion.⁶¹

It is from these developments that soil conservation, as it is understood in this day, progressed in the region.

The second factor is that conservation gathered momentum not solely as a product of events thousands of miles away in the United States of America. While events in America certainly had an influence on conservationist ideas in the region, it was local factors that played a bigger role. As highlighted by Delius and Schirmer it was local events such as droughts and declining yields that necessitated action in South Africa. This thesis provides evidence of this in the case of Southern Rhodesia in chapters 3 and 4. State intervention in soil conservation issues was a response to an acute agricultural crisis which threatened to threaten the very foundations of the colony itself. While ideas such as those propagated by Bennett, especially in relation to the formation of local associations that would, with state support, drive

⁶⁰ K. B. Showers, 1989, “Soil Erosion in the Kingdom of Lesotho: Origins and Colonial Response, 1830s-1950s”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15, 2, p. 264.

⁶¹ P. Delius and S. Schirmer, 2000, “Soil Conservation in a Racially Ordered Society: South Africa 1930-1970”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 4, pp. 719-742.

conservation at a local level, were significant, the implementation in Southern Rhodesia, like in South Africa, was tailored to fit the segregationist imperatives of the colonial system. Such associations were set in place only in relation to settler, not African, agriculture.

Soil Erosion in Southern Africa: a Regional Context

Official concern and discussion about the destruction and deterioration of natural resources in southern Africa, particularly as it related to exhaustion of soil and pastures, had two distinct characteristics in parts of the region where European settlement was high (such as South Africa and Southern Rhodesia). Firstly, ecological concern was raised in reference to European, not African lands. Soil erosion and degradation was directly related to the “great disturbance in the landscape caused by the arrival of new groups of land users from Europe who perceived much of the region as unused and empty, and claimed it for their own purposes.”⁶² The activities of these settlers, particularly “ploughing large acreages of land and planting annual crops in rows” increased the susceptibility of top soil to erosion agents such as rainwater and wind.⁶³ Apart from crop production, animal husbandry, especially as it related to cattle, led to soil erosion because of overstocking, often resulting in stock being concentrated “around corrals and watering holes which caused soil compaction.”⁶⁴ The second characteristic was that the state took lead in seeking to remedy the problem of soil erosion.⁶⁵

Ecological concern in the region began, according to William Beinart, in the Cape where the activities of stock-farmers resulted in exhaustion of the soil and pastures to a point where it

⁶² Showers, “A History of African Soil”, p. 156.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁶⁵ W. Beinart, 1984, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development: A Southern African Exploration, 1900-1960”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11, 1, p. 54-55.

threatened “the future of colonial agriculture as well as many plant species.”⁶⁶ Anxiety about the destruction of grasslands and soils by colonial botanists and officials, which Grove characterises as having gained momentum around the middle of the nineteenth century, was given impetus by the advent of the Cape’s Legislative Assembly in 1854, a development which “transformed the status of the embryonic conservation lobby” and “allowed both pro and anti-conservationist settler opinion to be more quickly mediated and transmuted into legislative action.”⁶⁷

Conservationist ideas of this period, though propagated in response to local developments relating to natural resources - be it the soil, pastures, game and forestry, among others - were largely influenced by ideas about nature conservation and developments in Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom (before American ideas about conservation gained prominence). Beinart has argued that this was a result of the fact that many officials in the Cape, and other territories in Southern Africa, came from Britain, where the majority of them were trained and where “changing aesthetic concepts of the countryside” and the “burgeoning of scientific forestry, botany and agronomy”, among other fields, acquired “inter-related and shifting associations.”⁶⁸

State-led conservation projects increased in the region both in scale and intensity in the post-First World War period and accelerated even further from the 1930s onwards. In South Africa a major benchmark in the conservationist discourse was the findings of the Drought

⁶⁶ Beinart, 1984, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 54-55.

⁶⁷ R. Grove, 1987, “Early Themes in African Conservation: the Cape in the Nineteenth Century”, in Anderson and Grove (Eds), Conservation in Africa People, Policies and Practices, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 25.

⁶⁸ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 55.

Investigation Commission's 1923 report. The Report argued that drought had become a huge problem in South Africa, which needed to be tackled simultaneously on both African and European-held land.⁶⁹ The most important observation of the Drought Investigation Committee was that contrary to the popularly held view in settler circles that African agriculture was backward and unscientific, and therefore more ruinous of soil and pastures, European "land management practices were causing the destruction of the soil and hydrological regimes."⁷⁰ In spite of overwhelming evidence that soil erosion was occurring on both African and European land due to farming methods employed by the two groups, implementation of conservation programmes was segregated. For Africans the Commission recommended the state's utilization of a "firm hand" to force Africans to conserve the soil, while for Europeans a more inclusive approach was advocated for.⁷¹

The South Africa Erosion Conference was convened in 1929 to map a way forward in relation to combating erosion, which culminated in the formation of the Soil Erosion Council in the Union and consequently state-subsidized programmes to fight soil erosion on European land from 1933 onwards.⁷² The state consolidated its power to direct the path soil conservation took on white farms in 1941 when the Forest and Veld Conservation Act of 1941 was enacted. The Act gave the state authority to declare "conservation areas" and expropriate farms that it deemed to be on the precipice due to severe soil erosion.⁷³ The state followed up on this legislation in 1946, when the Soil Conservation Act was enacted. The Act facilitated the organization of farmers into soil conservation committees that would, under the auspices of the Soil Conservation Board, superintend over state-financed projects to combat soil

⁶⁹ Showers, "A History of African Soil", p. 157.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁷¹ Anderson, "Depression, Dust-Bowl, Demography and Drought", p. 327.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 328.

⁷³ Delius and Schirmer, "Soil Conservation in a Racially Ordered Society", pp. 719-742.

erosion.⁷⁴ The 1946 Act was amended in 1969 to give the state more power to “enforce conservation direction more forcefully.”⁷⁵

As was the case with the Cape, it was Europeans who first voiced awareness and concern about soil erosion in Basutoland from the later part of the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ In spite of this awareness, it was not until the 1930s that the British Basutoland administration embarked on a national programme to combat soil erosion. Soil erosion and degradation, like in the Cape, were attributed to the activities of Europeans.⁷⁷ As Showers puts it;

...accelerated soil erosion was relatively rare in Lesotho before the arrival of the Europeans in the 1830s, and only began to be noticeable in the late nineteenth century. Therefore the key to the identification of factors which led to the origin and development of accelerated soil erosion should be found in an analysis of changes in land use activities in the nineteenth century... The Europeans came with the attitude that natural vegetation must be disturbed in order to produce civilisation... The missionaries cut down trees for carpentry, harvested shrubs for fuel, and tilled the grassland for agriculture. Trees did not grow easily or everywhere in Lesotho... The removal of trees, shrubs and their litter exposed the surface soil to moving water, and encouraged the concentration of flowing water. It was reported that the missionaries not only cut down the trees, but also dug up roots, which normally help to stabilise river banks and hilltops.⁷⁸

The British administration’s response to land degradation through two anti-erosion schemes between 1936 and 1955 were, according to Showers,

...based upon an engineering approach to the landscape with the construction of contour banks or terraces across fields to slow the overland flow of water and increase infiltration, and the installation of diversion ditches on very steep slopes to reduce the strain on the counter banks below.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Delius and Schirmer, “Soil Conservation in a Racially Ordered Society”, p. 735.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 741.

⁷⁶ Showers, “Soil Erosion in the Kingdom of Lesotho”, p. 264.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 264, 274.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-274.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

This approach did not solve the problem of soil erosion in Lesotho. As Showers has observed, “an environment is [supposed to be] understood before it is tampered with” as “technological interjections into natural systems can distort previously balanced elements and magnify old problems while creating new ones.”⁸⁰ Apprehension about soil erosion on land utilized by white farmers or as a product of land-use practices of white people was not peculiar to the Cape and Lesotho. In Nyasaland concern about soil erosion first emerged over white tobacco and cotton and tea estates and farms. The implementation of soil conservation measures on these estates, for example in the Shire Highlands was, like in South Africa, till the 1960s, carried out with no coercion, while for Africans it was “harsh.”⁸¹

In Southern Rhodesia, officials were particularly concerned about the man-made degradation of the soil due to erosion on white farms, especially from the beginning of the 1930s after the slump of the tobacco, maize and beef industries from the 1920s.⁸² Concern over soil erosion began on settler-farmed land, not in African reserves⁸³ where, in spite of the general desire for more land, the colonial administration argued that allocated land was “not sufficient, but liberal.”⁸⁴ Vimbai Kwashirai and Muchaparara Musemwa have examined the problem of deforestation and soil erosion in the colony as a result of the activities of miners and farmers.⁸⁵ Miners and farmers competed for resources such as timber, water sources and land. As this happened the administration, a commercial company whose main motivation was the

⁸⁰ Showers, “Soil Erosion in the Kingdom of Lesotho”, p. 286.

⁸¹ W. O. Mulwafu, 2002, “Soil Erosion and State Intervention into Estate Production in the Shire Highlands Economy of Colonial Malawi, 1891-1964”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, 1, pp. 25-43.

⁸² For more on the agrarian conditions of the 1920s in Southern Rhodesia see I. Phimister, 1984, “Accommodating Imperialism: The Compromise of the Settler State in Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1929”, *The Journal of African History*, 25, 3, pp. 279-294.

⁸³ I. Phimister, 1986, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context: Conservationism and Ideas about Development in Southern Rhodesia 1930-1950”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 12, 2, p. 263.

⁸⁴ R. Palmer, 1977, *Land and Racial Discrimination in Rhodesia*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

⁸⁵ V. C. Kwashirai, 2006, “Dilemmas in Conservationism in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1930”, *Conservation and Society*, 4, 4, pp. 541-561 and M. Musemwa, 2009, “Contestation over Resources: The Farmer-Miner Dispute in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1903-39”, *Environment and History*, 15, 1, pp. 79-107.

accumulation of profit for its shareholders ahead of resource management, did little to either stop or regulate practices that produced negative outcomes for the environment.

Though the Company had introduced two pieces of legislation in 1913, the Water Ordinance and the Herbage Preservation Ordinance to regulate use and conservation of public water sources and to prevent indiscriminate burning of vegetation⁸⁶, it was only in the 1930s that the Responsible Government, in response to a crisis in settler agriculture, realized the need for urgent remedial action and, like in Lesotho and in Nyasaland, that it introduced a battery of measures to arrest soil erosion.

Historiography of Resource Conservation in southern Africa

John Mackenzie has categorised literature on the environmental history of the region into four groups.⁸⁷ The first category focuses on the introduction of state forests, game reserves, national parks and other such protected areas. Protected areas were established for two reasons over time. Firstly, interventions to protect wildlife and regulate its exploitation were, Mackenzie has argued, motivated by racial considerations. They were made for the purpose of securing game and forest resources for exclusive hunting, exploitation and enjoyment by the colonial elite, restricting African access in the process. There was a shift in policy with time, as the amounts of game fell drastically. Murombedzi has also argued that colonial game legislation in the region, especially in the second half of the 20th century, was a reaction by colonial authorities to massive depletion of hitherto abundant wildlife, mainly as a result of poorly monitored activities of white hunters.⁸⁸ Mackenzie has, in his examination of colonial

⁸⁶ M. Stocking, 1985, "Soil Erosion Policy in Colonial Africa", *Agricultural History*, 59, 2, pp. 148-61.

⁸⁷ J. Mackenzie, 1988, *The Empire and Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp. 270-273.

⁸⁸ Murombedzi, "Dynamics of conflict in environmental management policy", p. 27.

hunting practices, emphasised that national parks and other protected areas were part of the “final working out of the tripartite division of land use; whites, blacks and game”⁸⁹ which, he argues, “demonstrated that the ruling race had the power to rearrange nature as well as land and people”⁹⁰

The second category of literature gives a global perspective to natural resource preservation and conservation. Resource management in the colonial period is characterised by this literature as having been as a function of imperial dynamics, particularly the advance of imperial science and dispersion of ideas about soil and nature conservation from the United Kingdom to its colonies. Richard Grove has demonstrated the historical relationship and between conservation ideas on one hand and policy formulation and implementation among British colonies on the other. Colonial policies in Africa are thus seen as having been shaped by scientific research and the evolution of conservationist ideas in the United Kingdom.⁹¹

The third category of literature traces indigenous ecological knowledge giving particular emphasis to African agro-ecological knowledge. Paul Richards’ research on indigenous knowledge and rice production systems in West Africa is a good example of such literature. Richards argues that African agro-ecological knowledge, which was impacted on to varying degrees by the colonial system, was environmentally sustainable and that even under current political and socio-economic circumstances, interventions meant to improve agriculture in Africa and other food-deficit regions can only be effective and sustainable in the long term if

⁸⁹ Mackenzie, *The Empire and Nature*, p. 272.

⁹⁰ Mackenzie, “The Natural World and the Popular Consciousness”, p. 28.

⁹¹ Grove, “Colonial Conservation, Ecological Hegemony and Popular Resistance”, p. 19, “Conserving Eden”, “Colonial Conservation, Evangelical Discourses and the Origins of Conservation Thinking”, and Green Imperialism.

they value, respect and take into account African knowledge about their environment and farming.⁹²

The last category of literature examines state land use policies as they related to soil erosion, environmental degradation and agricultural productivity.⁹³ Examples of other such literature in Zimbabwe include E. Punt and JoAnn McGregor.⁹⁴ The literature highlights the fact that colonial conservation policies in southern Africa in general and colonial Zimbabwe in particular often resulted in peasant resistance because of the state's use of coercive methods in their implementation and lack of consultation in their formulation. Anderson and Grove have argued that many development policies pursued by colonial governments in the region, in most cases in response to recommendations by experts, both local and international, have largely been economically unsuccessful and harmful to the environment and to livelihoods – especially in relation Africans.⁹⁵

Literature on soil conservation in southern Africa makes salient points about the outcome of state-led conservation initiatives in the colonial period. The first point is that soil conservation was introduced for different motives in relation to settler and African agriculture, with the result that measures put in place in pursuit of the programmes differed both in terms of the way they were conceived, their implementation and outcomes. While William Beinart has

⁹² P. Richards, 1986, Coping with Hunger: Hazard and Experiment in an African Rice-Farming System, London, Allen and Unwin. Also see, by the same author, "Farming Systems and Agrarian Change in West Africa", Progress in Human Geography, 7, 1, 1983, pp. 1-39 and "Culture and Community Values in the Selection and Maintenance of African Rice", Valuing Local Knowledge, Indigenous People and Property Rights, 1996, pp. 209-229.

⁹³ Moore, A River Runs Through It, p. 4.

⁹⁴ E. Punt, 1979, "The Development of African Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with Particular reference to the Inter-War Years" M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Natal and McGregor, "Conservation, Control and Ecological Change."

⁹⁵ Anderson and Grove, Conservation in Africa, p. 2.

argued that “ideas and prescriptions associated with conservationist thinking” in the region “were evoked, elaborated and applied in specific contexts, first in relation to the settler, then peasant, agriculture”,⁹⁶ a number of scholars have argued that state conservation programmes were put in place first in relation to African, not settler, agriculture.

Eira Kramer’s work has shown that in Southern Rhodesia a rudimentary conservation and extension programme was put in place for Africans in the colony as early as 1927.⁹⁷ Kramer argues that the motive for this had little to do with ecological imperatives;

The Government...was not prepared to take cognisance of the repeated pleas that the reserves were overcrowded, and that more land should be allocated to them. They maintained that existing land should be used more intensively. Hence the idea began to take shape that schemes designed to improve peasant farming methods should be devised. These would then increase the carrying capacity of the reserves... These desires...in part arose from the growing need for a ceaseless supply of cheap [African] labour.⁹⁸

This resulted in a scenario where soil conservation policy was applied differently for settler and African agriculture. Conservation on settler land was applied in a more democratic manner, with a number of incentives for white farmers, while for Africans “it entailed coercion and punitive restrictions on resource use.”⁹⁹ Kramer and JoAnn McGregor’s findings sharply contrast Beinart’s argument that though government conservation programmes “stimulated such hostility” against the state in African communities, “they were apparently conceived in their best interests.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 82.

⁹⁷ Kramer, “Extension Services in Peasant Agriculture”, pp. 159-179.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁹⁹ J. McGregor, 1995, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change: The Politics and Ecology of Colonial Conservation in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe”, *Environment and History*, 1, p. 257.

¹⁰⁰ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, pp. 52-53.

Lawrence Grossman has observed that soil conservation programmes in Southern Africa were generally “met with limited success.”¹⁰¹ This was partly because the implementers of conservation programmes were not able to truly present themselves to African farmers “as they should be, as the farmers’ friend.”¹⁰² David Anderson, Anderson and Grove and McGregor have shown how the programmes were often responsible for catalysing resistance and rebellion.¹⁰³ Victor Machingaidze has demonstrated the extent of peasant resistance to the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 in colonial Zimbabwe; African farming had, from the early 1960s, become “firmly rooted in politics, and politics is expressed in agricultural terms.”¹⁰⁴

Was Soil Conservation a Good Thing?

Does Grossman’s observation that colonial soil conservation programmes in the region did not register much success mean that the programmes were poorly conceived or that the idea of conserving agrarian lands from the elements was itself not good? It should be noted that soil erosion and degradation occurs naturally, what Showers has termed “normal erosion.”¹⁰⁵ Soil erosion can, however, be accelerated due to anthropogenic activities. It is important to note that it was not possible in the period covered by this thesis for scholars, apart from giving their opinion, to conclusively argue that the overriding causes of soil erosion on the farms was

¹⁰¹ L. S. Grossman, 1997, “Soil Conservation, Political Ecology, and Technical Change on St Vincent”, Geographical Review, 87, 3, p. 353.

¹⁰² Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 52, quoting G. Williams et al. (Eds), Rural Development in Tropical Africa.

¹⁰³ Anderson, “Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography and Drought”, Anderson and Grove (Eds), Conservation in Africa and McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change.”

¹⁰⁴ V. E. M. Machingaidze, 1991, “Agrarian Change from Above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Response”, The International Journal of African Historical Studies, 24, 3, p. 583.

¹⁰⁵ Showers, “Soil Erosion in the Kingdom of Lesotho”, pp. 263-286.

a product of human agrarian activity as the science of soil erosion modelling was still in its infancy in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰⁶

Kate Showers has argued that accelerated (anthropogenic) soil erosion in the region was a product of the “great disturbance in the landscape caused by new groups of land users from Europe” who “knew nothing about the soils, vegetation or climates they encountered, and had little idea of ecosystem interactions.”¹⁰⁷ The implementation of conservation ideas thus took place in a context of little understanding of African soils. Apart from the challenge posed by this “new, misunderstood environment”¹⁰⁸, soil conservation programmes were also tailor-made to encapsulate the desire by the colonial establishment to achieve economic segregation between Africans and whites. So, apart from conserving the soil, the programmes also became, as McGregor has observed, “a justification for state intervention” and also a “legitimation for using force.”¹⁰⁹

In the case of colonial Zimbabwe, Centralisation (from 1929), the Land Apportionment Act (1930) and the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA, 1951) were top-down approaches to environmental management in African reserves. These approaches undermined African agrarian and environmental knowledge systems. Moore has noted that colonial conservation policies generally “fuelled rural anti-state sentiments, provoking peasant resistance.”¹¹⁰ They also brought about an ecological crisis in the reserves.¹¹¹ The NLHA, for example, encountered massive resistance. The National Democratic Party, formed in 1961, urged

¹⁰⁶ M. A. Stocking, 1978, “Relationship of Agricultural History and Settlement to Severe Soil Erosion in Rhodesia”, *Zambezia*, 6, 2, p. 129-130.

¹⁰⁷ Showers, “A History of African Soil”, p. 156.

¹⁰⁸ T. Beach, 1998, “Soil Catenas, Tropical Deforestation and Ancient and Contemporary Soil Erosion in the Peten, Guatemala”, *Physical Geography*, 19, 5, pp. 378-405.

¹⁰⁹ McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change”, p. 257.

¹¹⁰ D. Moore, 1996, *A River Runs Through It*, p. 4.

¹¹¹ Murombedzi, “Dynamics of Conflict in Environmental Management”, p. 8, and Machingaidze, “Change From Above”, p. 559.

Africans to disobey the instructions of agricultural demonstrators and engage in “freedom ploughing”.¹¹² Freedom ploughing referred to farming practices that were contrary to what was being advocated by the agricultural demonstrators. This entailed refusal to erect contours, to fallow and to practice crop rotation. At the end of 1962 the Chief Native Commissioner reported;

The chiefs...throughout the country have had a difficult course to steer this year in their efforts to retain the support of their people and to stand up to the kinds of pressure which nationalist parties describe as political.¹¹³

According to Beinart, the NDP also found fertile recruiting ground in the Matopos area, where locals, threatened by removal for the establishment of the Matopos National Park, carried out tax boycotts, destroyed dip tanks and ignored conservation measures.¹¹⁴ While soil conservation was not bad, it is the way that it was conceived, particularly in reference to African reserves that tarnished it.

Scope of Study

This thesis examines the rise of environmentalism - specifically soil conservation in the white agrarian sector - in colonial Zimbabwe from 1908 to 1980. It examines the evolution of environmental awareness in the settler agrarian sector and evaluates whether the presence or absence of environmental consciousness among the farmers influenced their notion of belonging and their agrarian mindset (their attitudes, views and perceptions as a farming class).¹¹⁵ The thesis traces the development of the conservation movement throughout the

¹¹² Machingaidze, “Agrarian Change From Above”, p. 583.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 583.

¹¹⁴ Beinart, “African History and Environmental History”, p. 282.

¹¹⁵ The study examines these issues cognisant of the fact that the settler farming community was stratified. E. Venables, 2003, “Recollection of Identity: The Reassembly of the Migrant”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 77,

colonial period to establish what impact conservation had on land-use, viability of the sector, farming techniques and farmers' perceptions about belonging. The thesis also examines the role of the State in encouraging the settler farming community to embrace conservation ideas and farmers' reactions to such exhortation. This is important because players in a country's economic sectors often do not agree with state policy. Richard Hodder-Williams observed during his research in the Marandellas settler farming district that "Politics looks very different from the vantage point of the rural farmer than it does from the white papers and Government pronouncements which emanate from Salisbury."¹¹⁶

Settler agriculture has been chosen because a similar study of soil conservation and the notion of belonging in the sector is yet to be carried out, while a lot of research has been carried out on aspects of conservation in the African agricultural sector.¹¹⁷ In addition to this, the land reform programme in Zimbabwe has altered the agrarian landscape. It is important for colonial agricultural history to be documented so that some of the knowledge that was generated over close to a century may not be lost, and that new farmers may not have to reinvent the wheel where conservation and good farming methods are concerned by returning

pp. 109-116, examines aspects of white identity and shows that white settlers in Southern Rhodesia were not one homogenous group. In their colonial psychiatry settlers of British stock in the Bromley District, for example, perceived themselves more superior than their Afrikaner counterparts in the Enkeldorn District. Also see A. S. Mlambo, 1998, "Building a White Man's Country: Aspects of White Immigration into Rhodesia up to World War II" in *Zambezia*, 25:2, pp. 123-146 and *White Immigration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to Federation*, University of Zimbabwe Publications, Harare, 2002.

¹¹⁶ R. Hodder-Williams, 1983, *White Farmers in Rhodesia 1890-1965: A History of the Marandellas District*, Hong Kong, Macmillan, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Kramer, "Extension Services in Peasant Agriculture", and "A Clash of Economies: Early Centralization Efforts in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1929-1935", *Zambezia*, XXV, 1998, I, pp. 83-97, J. Alexander, 1993, "The State, Agrarian Policy and Rural Politics in Zimbabwe: Case Studies of Insiza and Chimanimani Districts, 1940-1990", PhD, University of Oxford, E. Punt, "The Development of African Agriculture", J. McGregor, 1991, "Ecology, Policy and Ideology: An Historical Study of Woodland Use and Change in Zimbabwe's Communal Areas", PhD Thesis, Loughborough University of Technology, M. Drinkwater, 1992, *The State and Agrarian Change in Zimbabwe's Communal Areas: An Application of Critical Theory*, London, Macmillan, McGregor, "Conservation, Control and Ecological Change", pp. 257-79 and J. E. G. Sutton, 1984, "Irrigation and Soil Conservation in African Agricultural History: with a Reconsideration of the Inyanga Terracing (Zimbabwe) and Engaruka Irrigation Works (Tanzania)", *The Journal of African History*, 25, 1, pp. 25-41.

back to learning the ropes of sustainable and gainful commercial farming on a trial-and-error basis as settler farmers did.

This thesis examines Zimbabwe's conservation history in the colonial period in four phases. The first time-frame is from establishment of the colony in 1890 to 1934. There is sporadic, but nonetheless sufficiently suggestive, evidence of awareness of the need for conservation for the period 1890 to the late 1920s, but this awareness was not, till the end of the 1920s, matched by much progress in terms of conservation work on the farms. From the early 1930s conservation awareness was quite high, as shown by the formation of Soil Conservation Advisory Councils beginning in 1934.¹¹⁸ The slow pace at which conservation took off was a result of teething problems related to pioneering farming; on one hand most of the farmers were poorly capitalized, there was limited access to credit, most farmers lacked expertise, communications and other infrastructure was poor, while, on the other hand, administering the colony was also a learning curve for the Company. Perhaps one would also say that the focus was predominantly on acquisition of land; the discourse of conservation became fervent later. In 1923 Company administrations came to an end, the settler population chose internal self-rule. In spite of this new status there was more continuity than change till the 1930s.

The second period covers the years 1934-44. Many developments related to conservation took place in this period, including the enactment of Farmers' Debt Adjustment legislation to ensure that the majority of farmers would not lose their farms to financial institutions and other lenders as a result of their high indebtedness. The majority of farmers had, since the post-First World War depression, and especially after the slump of 1928, resorted to loans to sustain their farming operations. The Farmers' Debt Adjustment programme saved farmers

¹¹⁸ R. Whitlow, 1988, "Soil Conservation History in Zimbabwe", Soil and Water Conservation Society, 43, 4, p. 299, pp. 299-303.

from foreclosures and enabled them to reinvest in farming and, to a smaller extent, in conservation work. The period also saw the appointment of Natural Resources Commission in 1938 to look into the state of natural resources in the colony, the enactment of the Natural Resources Act, 1941 - the first legislation of its kind in the colony's history, the creation of the Natural Resources Board (NRB) in 1941, the first NRB Farming Inquiry in 1942 and the launch of the first Intensive Conservation Area (ICA) at Inyazura in 1944, to mention a few. These developments were important in shaping the direction the country would take in terms of conservation.

The third phase examines conservation from 1944 to the first half of the 1960s. This period was characterized by high momentum in conservation. The conservation movement, backed by government institutions such as the Department of Agriculture and Lands, the Department of Irrigation, the Department of Conservation and Extension, the Natural Resources Board and Intensive Conservation Areas Committees, made important advances. The Federal decade (1953-62) saw a peak in conservation work, probably, to some extent, as a result of increased federal funding and increasing interest and awareness among farmers of the importance of conservation. The fact that dam-building was part of the ICAs work acted as a sweetener, as the construction of small farm dams, an integral part of the soil conservation movement, became very popular among the farmers.

The fourth phase is the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) period. The Rhodesian government unilaterally declared independence from Britain in November 1965. This, it was hoped by the Rhodesian Front-led government, would stop the country's transition to African rule, as was happening in other countries on the continent. The British government and the

United Nations responded to UDI by imposing sanctions.¹¹⁹ The impact of these sanctions on the Rhodesian economy, and the start of the liberation war in the early 1970s increased the burden on the Rhodesian treasury, as demonstrated in chapter 7. The majority of able-bodied white men from all sectors of the economy were from time to time called-up to fight in Rhodesian army units. These developments impacted negatively on Rhodesian economic life, including on the agrarian sector and the conservation movement. UDI, though it is not itself a conservation bench-mark, changed the fortunes of the colonial settler agricultural sector and conservation in a fundamental way.

Rationale of the study

The subject

A study of conservation in the colonial period is essential because little research has been carried out on conservation in the settler farming sector in the colonial period, let alone at a micro level as this study does with the Bromley settler farming district. The enactment of the Natural Resources Act, 1941 was a major milestone in the colony's history. This was so because of two reasons. First, the Act laid a strong foundation for conservation and preservation of the colony's natural resources. The Act provided for the formation of a Natural Resources Board (NRB), a statutory body with powers equivalent to the Magistrates Court. Section 17 of the Act stated;

For the determination of any subject under its consideration, the board shall have the powers which a magistrate's court has to summon witnesses, to cause the oath to be administered to them, to examine them and to call for the production of documents [and powers to issue a]... subpoena for the attendance of a witness or for the production of any book, document or record... Any person who fails without

¹¹⁹ For more on this period see R. Hodder-Williams, 1970, "White Attitudes and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence: A Case Study", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 8, 3, pp. 241-264.

reasonable excuse to attend in obedience to such summons, or, subject to the provisions of sub-section 3 of this section, fails to answer fully to the best of his knowledge any question relevant to the matter under investigation, or when required fails to produce any book, document or record aforesaid, shall be guilty of an offence...¹²⁰

This gave the NRB teeth to prosecute people and organizations that got involved in wanton destruction of resources.¹²¹ This established conservation of resources as an important legislative item enshrined in the country's supreme law since 1941.

The second aspect is that the Act provided for community participation in local conservation programmes through the Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs). These were made up of settler farmers in each farming district. Four hundred ICAs covered the country. The farmers in a particular farming area elected their own leadership, an ICA Committee. The ICA received government financial assistance in the form of subsidies, grants-in-aid and loans, and technical support from conservation and extension officers deployed by the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX).¹²² The ICAs were so successful that by 1966 the NRB remarked;

The extent of resource development which has been achieved in Rhodesia over the past 25 years has seldom failed to capture the interest and admiration of its many visitors. To those who travel by air the neat farm layouts, the many glittering dams and the pattern of well-protected lands stand out in testimony to a standard of conservation and resource planning which bears comparison with any in the world....The impact of these advances, particularly in conservation techniques and in tobacco and maize culture, has been clearly reflected in the high level of achievement of the agricultural industry and in the spectacular manner in which the principles of sound conservation planning have been applied.¹²³

¹²⁰ Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1941, The Natural Resources Act, Proclamation 19 of 1941, Section 17.

¹²¹ Ibid., Sections 3 to 20.

¹²² B. Child, "Origins and Efficacy of Modern Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) Practices in the Southern African Region", p. 1, http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/cca_bchild.pdf, downloaded on 1 August 2012.

¹²³ NAZ GEN/NAT, NRB: 25 Years of Progress in Conservation in Rhodesia, The Natural Resources Board, 1966.

Another factor is that sustainable agriculture (encapsulating soil conservation) has gained prominence in current global agricultural discourses because of the current food deficit, especially in the Third World countries, of which Zimbabwe is part.¹²⁴

Zimbabwe, apart from being a food deficit country since the late 1990s, is also at risk because of European Union and United States sanctions which have made it difficult for the country to access external balance of payments and budgetary support that might have helped to fund the agriculture sector.¹²⁵ The country's land reform is still unfinished business, with another Land Audit due to be held before Global Political Agreement (GPA) lapses.¹²⁶ There are reports of a looming ecological crisis on the farms because of widespread cutting down of timber for fuel as well as for commercial purposes.

In this context, this subject is timely, as this research contributes to the country's agrarian question by documenting past agricultural experiences to provide important lessons for agricultural policy formulation and the sector's resuscitation. As already stated, a study of the evolution of colonial agricultural and conservation policies should help inform post-colonial strategies to promote a profitable, sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural

¹²⁴ See Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2011, "The State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2011: How Does International Price Volatility Affect Domestic Economies and Food Security", Rome, FAO. FAO Food Insecurity Reports from 1999 to 2011 can be accessed on <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/>

¹²⁵ R. Nzaro, K. Njanike and E. Munenerwa, 2012, "The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Commercial Services: A case of Commercial Banks in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Contemporary Management*, (in press, Article ID: 1929-0128-2012-01-104-07) and P. Chigora and D. Dewa, D, 2009, "Surviving in a Hostile Environment: An Analysis of Zimbabwe's Foreign Relations in 21st Century International Relations", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3, 3, pp. 92-98.

¹²⁶ The GPA is an agreement between Zimbabwe's three biggest political parties, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU-PF) and the two factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The agreement was reached to provide for the formation of an inclusive government by the three main political parties in the country following disputed elections in 2008. See Parliament (House of Commons, Great Britain), 2010, International Development Committee, "DFID's Assistance to Zimbabwe", 8th Report of Session 2009-10, p. 62, Also see The Global Political Agreement, Article V, "Land Question." A copy of the GPA can be downloaded on <http://www.copac.org.zw/downloads/category/7-government-of-national-unity.html>.

industry and save post-colonial farmers from trying to re-invent the wheel in as far as sound farming methods are concerned.

The Period

This thesis examines conservation on settler farms from 1908. That year is an important benchmark in the colony's white agricultural history. It was in 1908 that the British South Africa Company (hereinafter, the Company) administration launched a White Agricultural Policy (henceforth WAP).¹²⁷ Though from the onset of occupation "African land rights were written off", the Company and the settlers had largely directed their attention to gold mining as they hoped to find a "Second Rand" in the colony.¹²⁸ The launch of WAP in 1908 entailed the Company's "burial of the Second Rand myth"¹²⁹ and the shifting of emphasis from mining to settler commercial farming. A raft of measures were put in place from 1908 to support the settler agricultural sector and to make African agriculture less able to compete against settler farming, including the establishment of Agricultural colleges, provision of finance through the Land Bank (created in 1912), land sales on easy terms, and the development of an agricultural climate in which African farmers would not be able to compete with settler capitalist farmers.

The impact of these measures (together with taxes, conscription of compulsory African labour, pass laws, the Private Locations Ordinance, the Masters and Servants Ordinance, among other measures) was that they supported the rise of settler agriculture while at the same time dealing a devastating blow to African farmers. The Chief Native Commissioner, Herbert Taylor, in his 1918 Report, gave the gist of government policy in relation to Africans; "The

¹²⁷ Palmer, *Land and Racial Discrimination*, p. 80.

¹²⁸ V. E. M. Machingaidze, 1980, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with Particular Reference to the Role of the State 1908-1939", PhD Thesis, University of London, p. 1-3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1-3.

native should be trained not so much as a competitor with the white man in the business of life, but as a useful auxiliary to help in the progress of the country.”¹³⁰

The year 1980 is also an important benchmark in the country’s agricultural history for two reasons. First is the fact that the post-colonial government at independence announced its intention to pursue a socialist transformation of the country’s agricultural sector, and secondly that land reform was its central political programme.¹³¹ There was therefore a break with the past in terms of policy, as the previously marginalized African people could now, at least in theory, also participate in the commercial farming sector.¹³² The white agricultural sector lost the preferential treatment it had enjoyed from successive white administrations over the duration of the colonial era, while ICAs either disbanded or limped on with no government support. In 1987 rural communities were reorganized under Rural District Councils following the enactment of the Amalgamated Rural District Councils Act. The Act amalgamated European rural councils and African district councils.¹³³ In areas where the ICAs continued to operate, such as Virginia, they did so without government funding and recognition.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture”, p. 4.

¹³¹ B. Munslow, 1985, “Prospects for the Socialist Transition of Agriculture in Zimbabwe”, World Development, 13, 1, 41-58. Also see R. Palmer, 1990, “Land Reform in Zimbabwe 1980-1990”, African Affairs, 89, 355, pp. 163-181.

¹³² A number of scholars have, however, argued that the post-independence government did not whole-heartedly pursue a socialist agenda, resulting in there not being a lot of changes in the commercial farming sector at independence. See D. Weiner, 1991, “Socialist Transition in the Capitalist Periphery: A Case Study of Agriculture in Zimbabwe”, Political Geography Quarterly, 10, 1, pp. 54-75 and N. Amin, 1992, “State and Peasantry in Zimbabwe since Independence”, The European Journal of Development Research, 4, 1, pp. 112-162.

¹³³ A. H. J. Helmsing, 1990, “Transforming Rural Local Government: Zimbabwe’s Post-Independence Experience”, Environment and Planning, 8, 1, pp. 87-110.

¹³⁴ See D. M. Hughes, 2006, “Hydrology of Hope: Farm Dams, Conservation and Whiteness in Zimbabwe”, American Ethnologist, 33, 2, pp. 269-87.

The Study Area

Mashonaland has been chosen as it was a prime agricultural region of the country. Though soil erosion was taking place in other parts of the country, it was more marked in Mashonaland – the fertile high-veldt where most settlers chose to farm.¹³⁵ The region was suitable for mixed cultivation and was close to transport routes and markets. By the 1930s, the area had suffered considerable degradation as large chunks of land were exhausted from continuous cropping and were damaged by erosion. Before the ICA programme was launched, the region contained thousands of acres of damaged soil due to increased bush clearing, as acreages put under tobacco increased in the 1930s.¹³⁶ The area registered remarkable progress from the 1940s. Bromley has been selected as a case study for the period 1945 to 1962 to show the dynamics of conservation under the superintendence of ICAs. This helps understand how community conservation became a major pillar of state conservation policy in settler agriculture.

From the 1940s a form of community conservation was introduced, where the farms were reorganized into ICAs under the leadership of elected committees. This was a very important step in ensuring that conservation on settler farms was anchored on the participation of all members of the settler farming community. Top-down schemes are usually exclusionary in decision making and planning, and the exclusion of local stakeholders in these processes means that programmes often do not address local sensibilities and peculiarities. Participatory approaches, on the other hand, motivate people to act out of their willingness to make a positive change, rather than fear of punishment by the authorities.¹³⁷ This study uses Bromley

¹³⁵ Whitlaw, “Soil Conservation History”, pp. 299-303.

¹³⁶ I. Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle, London, Longman, p. 228.

¹³⁷ See M. W. Murphree (undated), “Communities as Resource Management Institutions”, International Institute for Environment and Development (Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme),

as a case study to show in detail how ICAs were formed, and challenges this process faced at a local level because of the different perceptions and interpretations of the farmers. The case also explores what had to be done to satisfy the requirements of the Natural Resources Act, on which intensive conservation was premised. Finally the case study area has adequate documented data to show the challenges the area faced as it sought to make farming sustainable, and to do reclamation work as well as the successes it had registered by 1962.

Objectives

This study investigates;

- the role of the state in promoting soil conservation on settler farms
- settler attitudes to land, farming and conservation and the evolution of these attitudes over time
- development of local and international conservationist ideas
- whether conservation created an “environmentalist form of identity” among farmers.

Research Methodology

The study is predominantly based on documentary sources. Two major sources of information were utilized; primary sources and secondary sources. The majority of primary sources came from the National Archives of Zimbabwe. The majority of records used are classified under Company Records, the Department of Agriculture and Lands, and the Department of Conservation and Extension’s Federal records. The major limitation of these documents for this kind of study is that a huge proportion of them are official in nature. They, therefore, usually portray government policy, and exclude the farmers’ voices.

Gatekeeper Series 36, and The Zimbabwe Trust, 1990, People, Wildlife and Natural Resources - the CAMPFIRE Approach to Rural Development in Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe Trust.

There are four types of such official documents. The first category consists of regulatory notices emanating from government line ministries such as the Department of Agriculture and Lands to its officials and farmers, while the second consists of correspondence between government officials, both in and between government ministries. The third category consists of minutes of committees of enquiry and reports of commissions of enquiry investigations. Their reports, such as the Natural Resources Commission of 1939 and the Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry of 1942, give invaluable insights into the situation that was obtaining in the agrarian sector at the time. The last category consists of minutes of ICA Committee meetings, and the ICAs correspondence with the Department of Agriculture and Lands, the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX) the Natural Resources Board.

Apart from archival sources, the study also utilizes published work. This has been very useful, in the absence of interviews¹³⁸, to bridge the gaps in archival information. The study also used newspaper archives. Because of my interest in Mashonaland, this was confined to The Rhodesia Herald, the daily newspaper published from Salisbury. The newspaper has more coverage of agricultural developments in Mashonaland in comparison with its sister paper, The Bulawayo Chronicle.

Context: Colonial Conservation in Perspective

There is considerable literature on colonial conservation in Zimbabwe. This literature can be divided into a number of categories. First is a body of literature that deals with conservation

¹³⁸ I did not do interviews with white farmers and former farmers due to the nature of the political environment in the country at the time of my research. The few farmers I managed to contact were not keen to give interviews, while the environment in the farming districts is unstable.

of wildlife.¹³⁹ This literature examines massive game slaughter that took place in the early colonial period, with the support of the Department of Agriculture as wildlife was considered a hindrance to settler agriculture.¹⁴⁰ It also examines the evolution of policy, leading to the establishment of protected areas, which effectively demonstrated, according to John Mackenzie, “the tripartite division of land use; whites, blacks and game”¹⁴¹ and “that the ruling race had the power to rearrange nature as well as land and people.”¹⁴² The second body of literature examines forest conservation policies.¹⁴³ Like the literature on wildlife, this literature mostly examines forest destruction in the early colonial period, mostly as a result of the activities of white tobacco farmers and miners¹⁴⁴ and the evolution of forest policies, with the enactment of the Forestry Act in 1948 and demarcation of protected state forests.¹⁴⁵ The third body of literature looks at soil conservation on agricultural land.

Literature on conservation of agricultural land is basically divided into two groups, focusing on African and settler agriculture. Literature on conservation in African reserves has largely focused on the role of “authoritarianism and discrimination” that characterized government programmes as, according to McGregor, it, on one hand, “entailed coercion and punitive restrictions on resource use” while on the other hand it “provided not only a justification for

¹³⁹ See J. C. Murombedzi, 2003, “Pre-colonial and Colonial Conservation Practices in Southern Africa and their Legacy Today”, Washington DC, World Conservation Union (IUCN) and, by the same author “Dynamics of Conflict in Environmental Management Policy”, T. Masona, 1987, “Colonial Game Policy: A Study of the Origin and Administration of Game Policy in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1945”, Unpublished Dissertation, Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe and Mutwira, “Southern Rhodesian Wildlife Policy”, pp. 250-262.

¹⁴⁰ Mutwira, “Southern Rhodesian Wildlife Policy.”

¹⁴¹ Mackenzie, The Empire and Nature.

¹⁴² Mackenzie, “The Natural World and the Popular Consciousness.”

¹⁴³ See E. Mapedza, 2007, “Forestry Policy in Colonial and Post-Colonial Zimbabwe: Continuity and Change”, Journal of Historical Geography, 33, pp. 833-851 and V. Kwashirai, 2002, “Forest Exploitation versus Conservation in Colonial Zimbabwe with Particular Reference to the Zambezi Teak Woodland of north-western Matabeleland, 1890-1953”, DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford.

¹⁴⁴ Musemwa, “Contestation over Resources”, pp. 79-107.

¹⁴⁵ Mapedza, “Forestry Policy in Colonial and Post-Colonial Zimbabwe.”

state intervention, but also a legitimization for using force.”¹⁴⁶ There is very little literature on conservation in settler agricultural sector in the colonial period.

Kwashirai has examined the conflict between farmers and miners over the utilization of timber resources in the Mazowe district between 1890 and 1930.¹⁴⁷ Kwashirai argues that though the activities of pioneer farmers and mining companies caused harm to the environment, it was “improvident Africans” who got blamed for resource decline.¹⁴⁸ Musemwa has also examined the conflict between farmers and miners and concluded that the dispute was “a struggle by each class to define its relationship to the environment by ensuring unfettered access to natural resources” with no “regard for the protection of the environment” in the process.¹⁴⁹ Kwashirai and Musemwa’s articles both show that conservation was not a major consideration for the colonial administration till the early 1930s.

There is, however, a lot of literature that does not directly focus on conservation on settler farms from which very invaluable inferences about the state of settler farming in relation to conservation can be made. Machingaidze’s doctoral thesis on settler capitalist agriculture has important information about the challenges the sector grappled with till 1939.¹⁵⁰ Hodder-Williams, Palmer and Phimister’s research on various aspects of the colonial agricultural sector has also been very helpful in providing information on major benchmarks in the development of settler agriculture.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change”, p. 257.

¹⁴⁷ Kwashirai, “Dilemmas in Conservationism”, pp. 541-561.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 558.

¹⁴⁹ Musemwa, “Contestation over Resources”, pp. 79-107.

¹⁵⁰ Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture.”

¹⁵¹ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, R. Palmer, 1977, “The Agricultural History of Rhodesia,” in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa, London and, Land and Racial Discrimination, Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, and, by the same author, “Meat and Monopolies: Beef Cattle in Southern Rhodesia 1890-1938”, Journal of African History, 19, 3, 1978, pp. 391-414, “The Reconstruction of the Southern Rhodesian Gold Mining Industry, 1903-10”, The Economic History Review, 29, 3, 1976, pp. 465-481 and “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, pp. 264-275.

Hughes's research on water conservation on settler farms in the colonial period has found that conservation became a major pillar of settler agriculture in the second half of the 19th century. Hughes argues that this was meant to facilitate a sense of belonging to the settler community, whose roots in the country were shallow, and whose possession of vast pieces of land could not be justified on moral grounds.¹⁵² Hughes argues;

White affiliated themselves with the land rather than with surrounding societies... As conservationists, white, large scale farmers sought to belong to the landscape, and they modified it in ways that facilitated that sense of belonging....they manipulated the most manipulable of environmental variables: water... If European-descended farmers could establish mutuality with the land, then all else would fall into place. They adopted something close to the sentiment of New Zealand's high-country sheep herders: 'a discourse of authenticity in which they voice their belonging to the land'... Dams, thus, served as multipurpose fetishes of white belonging – an aquatic fix...¹⁵³

Hydrological interventions (dam building), apart from helping the cause of water conservation, also became a tool with which white farming could carve out their identity.

Hughes' 2010 book¹⁵⁴ has expanded on his earlier published work (such as "Hydrology of Hope" and "Whites and Water"). The book examines how white people attempted to reshape their habitat in ways that would facilitate the creation of a new landscape they could call their home. Hughes uses the examples of Kariba Dam in the Zambezi valley and Virginia, a prominent Mashonaland tobacco district, to show how water conservation through the construction of dams encapsulated the desire to engineer white belonging in the colony. Investment in dam building after independence (among other developments on the farms), Hughes argues, was partly meant to pre-empt land acquisition for resettlement purposes by

¹⁵² D. M. Hughes, 2006, "Whites and Water: How Euro-Africans made Nature at Kariba Dam", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 4, pp. 823-838 and "Hydrology of Hope", pp. 269-287.

¹⁵³ Hughes, "Hydrology of Hope."

¹⁵⁴ D. M. Hughes, 2010, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape and the Problem of Belonging*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

ensuring that the government would not acquire settler farms on account of their level of development and productivity.¹⁵⁵

Mark Nyandoro's research has, however, shown that investments related to harnessing water for agrarian purposes were not confined to white farming areas. There were a few projects that also sought to improve agrarian output on African-farmed lands through promotion of irrigation, such as the Gowe irrigation co-operative society in Sanyati from 1967.¹⁵⁶ Irrigation projects in African areas often collapsed as a result of lack of funding, corruption and management challenges, as was the case with the Gokwe scheme in 1969.

Hughes' book, like David Moore's Suffering for Territory,¹⁵⁷ casts belonging to a certain piece of land as a very important aspect in Zimbabwe. While Hughes focuses on how a minority white population sought to engineer its belonging to the land, Moore examines the case of indigenous people of Gaerezi; known in Zimbabwe as the Tangwena people, where belonging is justified on historical connection to land. Chief Rekai Tangwena and his people are known for their resistance to relocation from their land in the colonial period. Moore traces the Tangwena people's fight for their land in eastern Zimbabwe after independence (that they felt entitled to because of historical connections to it and their struggle for the same in Rhodesia). Though belonging is undoubtedly an important subject, from my research it does seem that the issue is overplayed.

¹⁵⁵ Hughes, Whiteness in Zimbabwe.

¹⁵⁶ M. Nyandoro, 2007, "The Gowe Irrigation Co-operative Society and its Role in Sanyati (Zimbabwe), 1967-1969", The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa, 3, 2, pp. 319-350. Also see by the same author, "Development and Differentiation: The Case of TILCOR/ARDA Irrigation Activities in Sanyati (Zimbabwe), 1939-2000", DPhil Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2007.

¹⁵⁷ D. S. Moore, 2005, Suffering for Territory: Race, Place and Power in Zimbabwe, London, Duke University Press.

The ICAs' primary motivation was to spearhead conservation on settler farms so that they could be more productive. Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis show that there were many cases where the ICAs were, instead of being identity forming, a source of conflict. Chapter 7 also demonstrates how the UDI period was a major reversal for conservation work. UDI was declared only 21 years after the formation of the first ICA; that was certainly not long enough to yield an "environmentalist identity" among farming communities.

While Hughes draws his evidence about the construction of small farm dams in Mashonaland from the post-colonial period, this thesis focusses on developments in the colonial period. There is evidence that it was not only hydrology that was utilized to engineer white belonging, but soil conservation itself.¹⁵⁸ The recently released ICA files at the National Archives of Zimbabwe point to the fact that developments in the soil conservation movement were a result of local factors, there was no major pollination of conservationist ideas from the United Kingdom, as noted in the imperial argument by Richard Grove.¹⁵⁹ This study adds to literature on soil conservation in colonial Zimbabwe by examining in detail the roots, rise and efficacy of the conservation movement in settler agriculture in the colonial period.

Analytical Framework

This study uses three analytical approaches to examine factors that influenced or negated the use of conservation methods on settler farms. The three approaches are political ecology, settler culture and community conservation.¹⁶⁰ Political ecology examines the relationship

¹⁵⁸ See National Archives of Zimbabwe (hereinafter, NAZ) F450, Intensive Conservation Areas Files, 1945-62.

¹⁵⁹ Grove, "Colonial Conservation, Ecological Hegemony and Popular Resistance."

¹⁶⁰ Scholars use different names for community conservation, such as joint conservation, collaborative management, co-management and community-based natural resource management.

between environmental outcomes and politics.¹⁶¹ Political ecologists argue that it is not possible to effectively examine environmental management matters without giving attention to politics. Political decisions determine how scarce resources are governed and their conservation. While the nature of the government is a very important aspect in any resource management set-up, according to political ecologists, community conservation advocates the involvement of local communities/stakeholders in the management of resources to ensure that local interests and knowledge systems are taken on board.¹⁶² Community conservation opposes centralized, top-down, non-participatory natural resources management interventions. Theories of settler culture examine colonialism as a culture; how white people settled in colonized lands, the evolution of white identities, steps taken to construct and facilitate belonging, and actions taken to justify their presence by identifying themselves as locals, not settlers whose presence was illegitimately premised on brutal conquest and injustice.¹⁶³

The three approaches are complimentary. While, according to political ecologists, the nature of government has direct implications on conservation outcomes, the colony's settler culture also had a role in determining processes that lead both to government formation (through elections) and government priorities.¹⁶⁴ It would be wrong, however, to credit these developments entirely to politicians and the electorate. The direction the state took, and the evolution of settler culture did not take place in a vacuum; it also happened as a reaction to broader macro socio-economic, political and intellectual developments. For example, the election of Huggins in 1934¹⁶⁵ and enactment of natural resources legislation in 1941, which

¹⁶¹ See R. Bryant and S. Bailey, 1997, Third World Political Ecology, London, Rutledge.

¹⁶² W. Adams and D. Hulme, 2001, "If Community Conservation is the Answer in Africa, what is the Question", Oryx, 35, 3, pp. 193-200.

¹⁶³ See P. Pels, 1997, The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History and the Emergence of Western Governmentality, Annual Review of Anthropology, 26, pp. 163-83.

¹⁶⁴ Aspects of this are found in I. Henderson, 1972, "White Populism in Southern Rhodesia", Comparative Studies in Society and History, 14, 4, pp. 387-99.

¹⁶⁵ L. H. Gann, 1964, Huggins of Rhodesia: the Man and his Country, London, Allen and Unwin.

provided a framework for joint management under the ICAs was a response to economic developments of the 1930s, i.e., the Great Depression, and not as a result of the Huggins government's or farmers' choices.¹⁶⁶

Huggins swept into power in 1934 on the back of a biting agricultural crisis and general settler discontent with the tepid Moffat/Mitchell governments. The three analytical approaches, political ecology, settler culture and community conservation, help to understand on one hand the dynamics of conservation policy formulation and on the other hand the interplay between government policies and local farmers' demands and responses.

Political Ecology

Political ecology is a growing field that cuts across many disciplines and methodological approaches. It borrows from various academic fields including economic history, anthropology, sociology, geography and political science. Though political ecology has a strong interdisciplinary emphasis, two major disciplines influenced its formation more; political economy and ecology. Political ecology, as opposed to ecology which primarily concerns itself with nature's balance (how eco-systems function),¹⁶⁷ examines the impact of politics on human-environment relations.¹⁶⁸ Political ecology argues that ecological interventions alone are not useful in the long term, as politics is ultimately the major determinant of environmental outcomes. The political climate, from national level down to local politics, determines whether nature conservation takes place sustainably or not.

¹⁶⁶ NAZ S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941.

¹⁶⁷ M. E. Soule and M. A. Sanjayan, 1998, "Ecology: Conservation Targets: Do they Help?", *Science*, 279, 5359, pp. 2060-61.

¹⁶⁸ A. Biersack, 2006, "Reimagining Political Ecology: Culture/Power/History/Nature", in A. Biersack and J. Greenberg (eds), *Reimagining Political Ecology*, Durham, Duke University Press, pp. 3-42.

Critics of political ecology acknowledge the importance of paying attention to the political influences affecting human-environment interaction. They, however, argue that political ecologists over-emphasise political influences. The critics accuse some political ecologists of dealing only with politics instead of politics and its influence on the environment,¹⁶⁹ what Vayda and Walters have termed “politics without ecology.”¹⁷⁰ Political ecology is an interesting approach to use for my analysis because it helps unpack the nature of successive colonial governments (Company administration, Responsible Government and UDI), and how these governments’ priorities influenced conservation. In each case, as all the chapters in this thesis show, the government in power influenced developments in the agrarian sector.

Community Conservation

Community-based conservation is based on the thinking that for conservation and development to take place sustainably, local communities should play a role in the process. As this happens, the local community which “owns” the conservation project, should benefit in tangible ways.¹⁷¹ Community conservation emphasizes inclusion of the “community” and “participation”, to make sure that conservation interventions are “people-oriented” and sensitive to customs, beliefs, knowledge-systems, the local context and other peculiarities of the target community.¹⁷² The approach is a reaction to top-down exclusionary conservation, such as that exercised by governments in the management of national parks, game reserves,

¹⁶⁹ P. A. Vayda and B. B. Walters, 1999, “Against Political Ecology”, Human Ecology, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 167-179.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 168.

¹⁷¹ See F. Berkes, 2004, “Rethinking Community-Based Conservation”, Conservation Biology, 18, 3, pp. 621-630.

¹⁷² M. W. Murphree, 2002, “Protected Areas and the Commons”, Common Property Resource Digest, 60, p. 2 and Berkes, “Rethinking Community-Based Conservation”, p. 622.

state forests and in the fisheries sector, among others, in the colonial era and by most post-colonial administrations till the 1980s.¹⁷³

Exclusion of Africans in the management of resources was always the main thrust of colonial policy.¹⁷⁴ Colonial and even post-colonial correspondence by officials in government forestry, wildlife and fisheries departments, to mention a few, often blamed locals for degradation of areas set aside for resource preservation and conservation, and this view often resulted in conservation interventions being planned and enforced from the top without local input.¹⁷⁵ This bred local resentment. Exclusionary approaches to management led to conflict with local communities who were not allowed to utilize resources in their localities. Local discontent manifested itself in poaching and illegal use of the resources.¹⁷⁶ In some cases this was so rampant that infrastructure (such as fences) put in place for the purpose of preservation of resources was run-down, sabotaged or destroyed.¹⁷⁷

In Zimbabwe there are a number of examples of community-conservation projects. One example is the Community Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) programme, which Murombedzi has called “one of Africa’s most successful contemporary conservation initiatives.”¹⁷⁸ The programme allows African communities to participate in the management of wildlife in their localities, and to have a share in the benefits

¹⁷³ See F. J. Oates, 1999, Myth and Reality in the Rainforest: How Conservation Strategies are Failing in West Africa, Berkeley, University of California Press, C. Gibson, 1999, Politicians and Poachers: The Political Economy of Wildlife Policy in Africa, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and L. Hannah, 1992, African People, African Parks: An Evaluation of Development Initiatives as a Means of Improving Protected Area Conservation in Africa, Washington (DC), Biodiversity Support Program.

¹⁷⁴ See Anderson and Grove, “The Scramble for Eden.”

¹⁷⁵ B. Vallema and H. van de Breemer, 1999, “Natural Resource Management in Africa: Approaches, Constraints and Opportunities”, in B. Vallema and H. van de Breemer (Eds), Towards Negotiated Co-Management of Natural Resources in Africa, Rutgers, Transaction Publishers.

¹⁷⁶ V. Dzingirai and C. Breen (Eds), 2005, Confronting the Crisis in Community Conservation: Case Studies from Southern Africa, Durban, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

¹⁷⁷ Murombedzi, “The Dynamics of Conflict in Environmental Management Policy.”

¹⁷⁸ J. C. Murombedzi, 1999, “Development and Stewardship in Zimbabwe’s CAMPFIRE Programme”, Journal of International Development, 11, 2, pp. 287-293.

that accrue from the project. The Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) in forestry is another example.¹⁷⁹ The project provided a framework for local communities in Gokwe South to co-manage the Mafungautsi state forest with the Forestry Commission, and to benefit from access to non-timber products from the forest such as broom and thatch grass and honey, access to the forest for grazing purposes and revenue from the sale of forest products.

This thesis utilizes the concept of community conservation to examine the Intensive Conservation Areas (chapters 5 and 6). The ICAs were a product of the Natural Resources Act, 1941, which mandated them to superintend over soil conservation in their areas of jurisdiction.¹⁸⁰ Each ICA was made up of between 80 and 90 farmers¹⁸¹, who elected a Committee which looked into soil conservation matters on a day-to-day basis with the help of a Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX) Conservation Officer. These ICAs are seen in this thesis as “communities” as they were set up in existing farming districts, where a sense of community had been fostered by farmers long before the 1940s, for example through their Farmers’ Associations.¹⁸² The ICAs strengthened this sense of community as ICA meetings, field days, farming competitions, sharing of ICA equipment, loans and grants-in-aid, among other factors, all acted as valuable social capital that facilitated and fostered closer community relations. Though the ICAs did not preside over a common-property resource, but farms whose owners held title, they operated on lines that fit the community conservation model, as chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate.

¹⁷⁹ T. Mutimukuru-Maravanyika, 2010, “Can we Learn our way to Sustainable Management? Adaptive Collaborative Management in Mafungautsi State Forest, Zimbabwe”, PhD Thesis, Technology and Agrarian Development Group (TAD), Wageningen University.

¹⁸⁰ NAZ S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941.

¹⁸¹ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, p. 267.

¹⁸² NAZ F450/6, Letter from E. O. Martyn of Danga Lima Farm, Bromley, to the Secretary, the Department of Agriculture and Lands, Salisbury, dated 17 June, 1946

The work of one ICA, Bromley, is examined in the context of design principles laid down by E. Ostrom.¹⁸³ Ostrom's work shows that it is possible to overcome the 'tragedy of the commons'¹⁸⁴, where communities fail to effectively manage common property resources as a result of individual greed. A common property resource is a resource that belongs to, and is utilized by the entire community.¹⁸⁵ Greed results in overharvesting and over-use of resources, leading to resource degradation and consequently depletion and poverty for the community. Though, as already stated, the farms were not common property (they were privately owned), they operated on the same lines as common property to some extent under joint management (ICAs) from the 1940s. Ostrom has argued that for community conservation to be successful there is a need for certain conditions to be met to ensure that institutions responsible for superintending over and enforcing compliance are able to effectively carry out their mandate. Ostrom terms these conditions "design principles."

These "design principles" include the conditions set that rules must be binding to all in the community without exception; they must be clear, the rules should assign costs and benefits and define the rights and obligations of members of the community, for example, who has a right to do what with which resource and when, and who does not have that right; and that rules must be flexible, so that they can be altered as and when there is a need to suit changing conditions on the ground. In addition to this, penalties, punishments and sanctions for offenders should be clear; punishment must also be graduated to give a distinction between first and habitual offenders; there must be consistency in the application of rules and that rules must be recognized by external authorities. Ostrom also says there should be clearly defined

¹⁸³ See E. Ostrom, 1990, Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms", Economic Perspectives, 14, 2000, pp. 137-158.

¹⁸⁴ G. Hardin, 1968, "The Tragedy of the Commons", Science, 162, pp. 1243-48.

¹⁸⁵ See J. S. Gordon, 1954, "The Economic Theory of a Common Property Resource: The Fishery", Journal of Political Economy, 62, pp. 124-142 and G. Hardin and J. Baden (eds), 1977, Managing the Commons, San Francisco, Freeman.

conflict resolution mechanisms.¹⁸⁶ Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the case of one ICA, Bromley to examine the applicability and relevance of Ostrom's "design principles."

There is a growing body of literature which criticizes community-based participatory conservation/natural resources management, advocating for a return to protected areas.¹⁸⁷ Other scholars, such as Dzingirai and Breen and Chaplin have also written about the perceived "crisis" in community conservation.¹⁸⁸

Settler Culture/Settler Post-Colonial Theory

This thesis also uses the theories of settler culture. Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson have distinguished European colonies into two types; "colonies of occupation" and "colonies of settlement." While in colonies of occupation "military power (or its representatives) subdued majority indigenous populations, and the political regimes that followed imposed and maintained rule over them", "settler colonies have relied on the presence of long-term, majority white communities, where indigenous peoples have been outnumbered and removed by colonial policies and practices."¹⁸⁹ Though colonial Zimbabwe was a settler colony, it does not fit Johnston and Lawson's definition as it never attained a majority white population, although that was an abiding wish.

¹⁸⁶ Ostrom, "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms", pp. 137-158.

¹⁸⁷ See J. G. Robinson, 1993, "The Limits to Caring: Sustainable Living and the Loss of Biodiversity", Conservation Biology, 7, pp. 20-28, K. E. Brandon, K. H. Redford and S. E. Sanderson (eds), 1998, Parks in Peril: People, Politics and Protected Areas, Washington DC, Island Press, J. Terborgh, 1999, Requiem for Nature, Washington DC, Island Press and S. Sanderson and K. Redford, 2004, "The Defense of Conservation is not an Attack on the Poor", Oryx, 38, pp. 146-147.

¹⁸⁸ M. Chaplin, 2004, "A Challenge to Conservationists", World Watch, pp. 17-31 and Dzingirai and Breen, Confronting the Crisis in Community Conservation.

¹⁸⁹ A. Johnston and A. Lawson, 2005, "Settler Colonies", in H. Schwarz and S. Ray (eds), A Companion to Post-Colonial Studies, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Limited, pp. 360-362.

In spite of this, Johnston and Lawson's theory of settler culture applies to Zimbabwe (the settler community in colonial Zimbabwe also developed their own distinct culture). Johnson and Lawson have defined settler culture, also known as settler post-colonial theory as "an examination of the process by which emigrant European settlers 'displaced' the indigenous occupants."¹⁹⁰ Settlers displaced local inhabitants, and put in place measures that facilitated and justified their settlement and belonging in the colonies. European settlement was attained, justified and defended by the use of a number of methods including genocide, history, perceived savagery of locals, presence of vast tracts of empty and unused land, backwardness of African farming technologies which made them unable to utilize heavy soils or to stay in certain areas, conservation and development, among others.

Genocide was one method, as happened to Tasmanian Aborigines in Australia in the 1880s. The decimation of Aboriginal populations facilitated the establishment of whites in Australia, as well as white people's sense of belonging to the country.¹⁹¹ History is another factor; where historical narratives are used to justify settler belonging. A good example of this is Goldie's characterization of Bushmen as a dying race: the white settler in South Africa is thus portrayed as not having done anything morally wrong by settling where he did; he simply took the vacant place left by the disappearing, dying out Bushmen.¹⁹² The third factor is emptiness; where the settlers came in to fill vast unoccupied, empty spaces. These empty spaces, given the legal term *terra nullius* in Australia, meaning nobody's land, were consequently transformed to become, as the reasoning went, full of life, people, herds of cattle

¹⁹⁰ Johnston and Lawson, "Settler Colonies", p. 362.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

¹⁹² T. Goldie, 1989, Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures, Kingston, McGill Queen's University Press, p. 13.

and other domestic animals, food and commercial crops and stories that “legitimated” white belonging.¹⁹³ This reason was also used to justify white occupation in some parts of Africa.

Conquest of these ownerless lands is therefore another factor used to facilitate a sense of belonging among the settlers. Sara Berry has observed that, “From Senegal to Malawi, French and British authorities claimed that ‘by right of conquest’ all ‘vacant and owner-less’ land belonged to the colonial state. Vast tracts of land were often judged ‘vacant and ownerless...’”¹⁹⁴ In the case of colonial Zimbabwe some scholars have sought to play down the impact of white settlement and the consequent land dispossession of indigenous people. They argue that settlers did not displace African farmers from their land, as they settled on the red clayey soils locals did not farm. Examples of such scholars include Derwent Whittlesey and Barry Floyd who hold the view that upon occupation there was ‘unused, empty and underused’ land.¹⁹⁵

Conservation and development were also utilized to justify belonging. White farmers in Zimbabwe developed an environmentalist identity over time. “In Zimbabwe, many whites have affiliated themselves with the land rather than with surrounding societies”, Hughes observed in his 2006 study of the Virginia Intensive Conservation Area (ICA) in the post-colonial period.¹⁹⁶ This “environmentalist form of identity”¹⁹⁷ “facilitated” a sense of belonging among settlers. Hughes has singled out one important method they used: conservation. The settler farmers sought to;

¹⁹³ Johnston and Lawson, “Settler Colonies”, p. 363.

¹⁹⁴ S. Berry, 2002, “Debating the Land Question in Africa”, Society for Comparative Study of Society and History, 44, p. 642.

¹⁹⁵ D. Whittlesey, 1956, “Southern Rhodesia: An African Compagne”, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 46, pp. 1-97 and B. N. Floyd, 1962, “Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia”, Geographical Review, 52, pp. 566-582.

¹⁹⁶ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 269.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 269.

Belong to the landscape, and they modified it in ways that facilitated that sense of belonging... Whites justified their land ownership on grounds of both conservation and development – a considerable rhetorical feat. Engineering, then, fostered an unstable, ephemeral feeling of entitlement to belonging.¹⁹⁸

It is this last aspect of settler culture, soil conservation on the farms that this thesis mainly pays attention to. This theory of settler culture – belonging facilitated by an environmental inclination, helps understand developments on the farms from the 1930s, when conservation became a topical subject not only in the colony, but globally. The Dust-Bowl Disaster in the United States in the 1930s¹⁹⁹, ignited, some scholars have argued, a global conservation discourse that resulted in pro-conservation political decisions being made in many countries. Farmers' environmentalist outlook contributed to the progress of conservation on settler farms on colonial Zimbabwe.

Outline of the Study

This study consists of eight chapters. The introductory chapter places the subject of this study, conservation in the colonial settler agricultural sector, in the context of current and global and national discourse to show the necessity of such a study at this juncture. The chapter also justifies the choice of the period and area of study and further outlines the objectives and analytic framework of the study. Finally the chapter gives a review of published work on soil conservation in colonial Zimbabwe.

Chapter 2, titled “A Slow Start: Soil Conservation on Settler Farms”, is the background chapter. It examines the role of the Company in the development of the colony's settler

¹⁹⁸ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 269.

¹⁹⁹ See M. L. Cooper, 2004, *Dust to Eat: Drought and Depression in the 1930s*, New York, Clarion Books, S. T. Philips, 1999, “Lessons from the Dust-Bowl: Dry Land Agriculture and Soil Erosion in the United States and South Africa, 1900-1950”, *Environmental History*, pp. 245-66 and W. Lockeretz, 1978, “The Lessons of the Dust Bowl”, *American Scientist*, 66, 5, pp. 560-69.

agricultural sector. The chapter illuminates the critical role played by the Company in setting up agricultural infrastructure, among its other efforts, to put settler farming on a sound footing. It also explains the contradictions that emerged out of the Company's agricultural policy such as conflict with the people of the colony over governance issues and with its own shareholders, who wanted a return on their investment, and the African labour question. This places soil conservation in settler agriculture in its proper context in the Company period.

The third chapter, "Soil Conservation and the Politics of Transition: Settler Agriculture under Responsible Government, c. 1924-34", examines the transition from Company rule to internal self-rule and evaluates what capacity the Responsible government had to push the conservation agenda. It looks at the inheritance Company rule left the new administration and in that light explores whether the Responsible Government represented continuity or change. The chapter also analyses land segregation in the Responsible government period – the Land Commission of 1925 and the subsequent enactment of the Land Apportionment Act in 1930. It further takes the story of land forward by focusing on the agricultural crisis from the late 1920s, the Great Depression and the work of Conservation Advisory Committees in the early 1930s. The chapter argues that though Responsible government did not intend to pursue a change agenda in its first decade; macro-economic realities forced the government's hand, in the process laying the foundations for major changes in from the mid-1930s.

Chapter 4 is titled "Soil Conservation and State Control, 1934-44." It examines developments of the 1930s; on one hand the rise of international conservationist ideas in the wake of the Great Dust Bowl Disaster in the United State of America in the early 1930s and the Great Depression and on the other the agricultural crisis that began in the late 1920s and increased in severity in the early 1930s due to depressed international conditions. These developments

led to the appointment of two major Commissions of Enquiry in the 1930s; the Commission of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry in 1934 and the Natural Resources Commission in 1938. The recommendations of these commissions led to the enactment of the Natural Resources Act, 1941, the basis for conservation work in the colony from 1941 onwards. The chapter also examines increased government intervention in the agrarian sector in response to the agricultural crisis.

The fifth chapter, “Towards Community Conservation: The Intensive Conservation Areas Movement c. 1944-53”, evaluates government efforts in the 1940s, in the context of the socio-economic conditions during and after the Second World War, to make the settler agricultural sector compliant to the natural resources legislation of 1941. This effort included the formation of ICAs in settler farming districts. The chapter focuses on one farming district, Bromley, to give light to how the process of forming ICAs played out at the micro-level. It examines the farmers’ attitudes towards the ICA model and how these attitudes stood in the way of formation of ICAs, the eventual declaration of an ICA in Bromley and its work, especially after 1948 when the Department of Conservation and Extension was formed to give conservation and extension support to the ICAs.

Chapter 6 examines community conservation in the Federation period. The chapter, like chapter 5, follows the work of the Bromley ICA. It examines whether the formation of the Federation of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland in 1953 brought any changes to the country’s conservation model, as settler agriculture was placed under the superintendence of a federal ministry, while African agriculture remained under the territorial government. Lastly, the chapter explores challenges the conservation movement faced as it carried out its duties.

Chapter 7 examines conservation on settler farms in the UDI period. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) was an attempt by the minority Rhodesian regime to forestall African independence in Zimbabwe. With the “winds of change” sweeping across the continent, yielding the independence of many African nations, including Rhodesia’s former partners in the Federation; Zambia and Malawi in 1964, the Rhodesian government thought declaration of independence would pre-empt Britain’s desire to grant majority rule to the colony. The chapter examines the road to UDI, the imposition of sanctions and their efficacy, the rise of armed conflict from the early 1970s, and the impact of these dynamics on conservation.

The eighth chapter is the conclusion to the thesis. It wraps up the thesis by making an assessment of conservation on settler farms in the period under review. The chapter evaluates whether conservation made a contribution to the success of settler agriculture in the colonial period.

Chapter 2: A Slow Start: Soil Conservation on Settler Farms under Company Rule

Introduction

“Of all the expedients that can well be contrived to stunt the natural growth of a new colony,” Adam Smith observed, “that of an exclusive company is undoubtedly the most effectual.”²⁰⁰ Leroy Vail’s research on chartered companies in colonial Mozambique gives useful insights into their operational weaknesses. Vail has characterized company administration in Mozambique as having been “the rule of the feeble.”²⁰¹ Their feebleness manifested itself in the acute lack of financial resources and a deficit in their administrative capacity which impacted on their ability to develop areas under their jurisdiction.

John Galbraith’s research on the operations of the British South Africa Company (hereinafter, the Company) has also come to the conclusion that though devolving the administrative function of colonial Zimbabwe to a chartered company meant its colonization, administration and development in the formative years would take place at no or little cost to Britain, undercapitalization, lack of experience in civil governance, lack on manpower and prioritization of the profit motive over service delivery, among other limitations, often slowed growth.²⁰² Cecil John Rhodes, the colony’s founding father, acknowledged at his death that he had not been entirely successful in his pursuits and that putting the colony on a sound footing,

²⁰⁰ A. Smith, 1910, *The Wealth of Nations*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., p. 73.

²⁰¹ L. Vail, 1976, “Mozambique’s Chartered Companies: The Rule of the Feeble”, *Journal of African History*, 17, 3, pp. 389-416.

²⁰² S. Galbraith, 1974, *Crown and Charter: The Early Years of the British South Africa Company*, Los Angeles, Berkeley.

among his other grand plans, was still work in progress. This was reflected by his last recorded words; “so little done, so much to do.”²⁰³

This chapter examines soil conservation on settler farms in colonial Zimbabwe under Company rule in light of Smith, Vail and Galbraith’s indictment on the efficacy of such an administrative arrangement. The chapter utilizes available published work on resource conservation in the early colonial period, particularly by Vimbai Kwashirai and Muchaparara Musemwa, to highlight the feeble nature of the colony’s early conservation policy. It also goes further to examine blindsides relating to soil conservation; in particular the lack of a conservationist framework in the colony’s land settlement policy and its programmes put in place to promote settler farming. The chapter further examines the Company’s relations with its shareholders and settlers and the African labour question to see how these issues impacted on resource conservation policy. Finally the chapter examines the rise of ecological concerns in the settler agrarian sector in this early period.

The major contribution of this chapter is to place Kwashirai and Musemwa’s findings about the conflict between the major pillars of the economy – agriculture and mining – over resources such as land, timber and water in the context of the colony’s governance matrix. Company rule was fraught with contradictions. These ranged from the relations between the administration and people of the colony who viewed the Company as being more concerned about making super-profits for its shareholding than good governance and development, Company shareholders who thought the Company was expending much of its effort on developing the colony rather than making money for its investors, the colony’s economic sectors who felt the Company was not doing enough to mobilize labour for the colony’s nascent businesses, to mention a few.

²⁰³ Galbraith, *Crown and Charter*, p. 1.

Richard Hodder-Williams has observed that the Company had by 1900 switched its mode; from high expectations that had characterized the first decade of conquest to a place where it questioned the financial wisdom of its investment in the colony.²⁰⁴ This introspection was justifiable, considering that on the eve of the occupation there had been a general belief that “everybody was going to make money quickly” from the anticipated “several new Johannesburgs”, with their “hundreds of miles of mineralized (gold) veins.”²⁰⁵ The mining sector did not yield the expected windfall. The slow take-off of the sector prompted the Company government to consider diversifying the colony’s economic activities. From 1903 the Company embarked on a clear-cut programme to reconstruct the gold mining industry and to support settler agriculture.²⁰⁶ This was because, apart from mineral rights, the Company also regarded land as its asset.²⁰⁷

The measures taken in relation to settler agriculture culminated in the launch of a White Agricultural Policy (WAP) in 1908. WAP was a reorganization of the Department of Agriculture to reflect the Company’s new agricultural thrust to promote settler agriculture. As this chapter shows, there was no programme to ensure that soil conservation was an integral part of WAP. Though there is evidence of awareness of the need for soil conservation in some segments of the settler sector during the Company period, there was no corresponding effort to make this a central aspect of agricultural policy. Because of the absence of a clear-cut soil conservation framework, there was limited progress on the soil conservation front during Company period. As a result of that this chapter focuses more on the reasons for limited

²⁰⁴ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 43.

²⁰⁵ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, pp. 6, 7, 11.

²⁰⁶ Phimister, “The Reconstruction of the Southern Rhodesian Gold Mining Industry”, pp. 465-481 and Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture”, pp. 5-7.

²⁰⁷ See NAZ ZG2 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, 1906. There were a lot of debates in the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council from 1906. Disagreement between the Company and the settlers over land ownership culminated in the matter being referred to the Privy Council for determination in 1914.

progress in soil conservation work on settler farms rather than on soil conservation work itself.

A major limitation in examining the Company period is the absence of adequate agricultural statistics. The Company needed agricultural statistics from farmers for planning purposes and for marketing the colony abroad. At the opening of the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council in 1908, the Company Administrator, Sir W. H. Milton, reported;

The full statistics that are so easily rendered in regard to mining give all the information that can be desired by those who are interested in this industry. I regret, however, that the Administration is still unable to secure reliable information in regard to agricultural and pastoral operations. The Report on the Agricultural Department shows that, in spite of every effort to obtain complete returns, the response has not been such as to enable the Government to place before the public of this and other countries the true condition of these all-important industries...all those engaged in agricultural pursuits should assist the Government in every way to prove the value of the industry upon which the country should always so largely depend.²⁰⁸

The absence of statistics in regard to the industry continued, with the results that the Estates Department could only refer to the prospects of agriculture in general terms when marketing the colony abroad. Farmers considered it “an unreasonable request on the part of Government to ask the farmers to disclose particulars of their businesses, and did not know any country in the world where they could get such statistics that way.”²⁰⁹ Unwillingness by farmers to co-operate in this regard may have contributed to lack of any information on conservation on settler farms in the period under review. It is, however, possible to make important inferences about soil conservation from the literature available.

²⁰⁸ Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, Monday 5 June 1908, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ NAZ ZG2, Robert Fletcher (Representing Western District), Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, 21 May 1909, p. 57. Also see The Reports of the Director of Agriculture from 1909 to 1921.

Background: Towards a White Agricultural Policy (WAP)

T. W Baxter has described the condition of the majority of settlers who had composed the pioneer column that marched into Mashonaland in 1890 three years after their arrival; their high hopes of becoming successful had, for the majority of the settlers, given way to “unyielding travail”,

The first three years of the Company’s administration were marked with hardship and disappointment. After the enthusiasm of adventure had passed, daily unyielding travail, sickness and fear was the lot of the settlers. Communications were practically non-existent and the high hopes of striking rich deposits of gold gradually receded.²¹⁰

As already noted, the Company and the settlers had, from 1890, focused their attention on finding a second or “even richer” gold Rand as that found at Witwatersrand, South Africa, in 1886.²¹¹ This fixation with minerals superseded every other economic activity. Giovanni Arrighi has observed that, “the most important single element that determined the nature of economic and political development” in the newly-established colony for its first 15 years was the “persistence of this overestimation” of its mineral resources.²¹² The settlers anticipated to get rich quickly and to embrace lavish lifestyles befitting of the expected wealth: “everybody was going to make money quickly and everybody meant to meet everybody else at Chicago (Trade Exhibition) – Chicago ‘93’!”²¹³

Apart from over-estimation of the colony’s mineral wealth, a handful of other factors impacted on economic progress in the new colony. First was the Ndebele war of dispossession

²¹⁰ T. W Baxter (ed), Guide to the Public Archives of Rhodesia Volume 1 1890-1923, Salisbury, National Archives of Rhodesia, 1969, p. XVII.

²¹¹ Phimister, “The Reconstruction of the Southern Rhodesian Gold Mining Industry”, p. 465.

²¹² G. Arrighi, 1967, The Political Economy of Rhodesia, p. 35 (www.newleftreview.net), downloaded on 18 April 2011.

²¹³ Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, p. 7.

in 1893.²¹⁴ The Jameson Raid followed in 1895. This was a military onslaught on Paul Kruger's Transvaal Republic in South Africa led by Leander Starr Jameson, the Company administrator.²¹⁵ The raid, which began on 29 December, 1895 and ended on 2 January 1896, presented the Shona and the Ndebele with an opportune moment to rise against Company administration as most of its troops and armaments had been committed to fighting the Transvaal Republic.²¹⁶

The net impact of the raid and the risings, which ended in October 1897, was that the colony's infant mining industries were brought to a verge of collapse. The impact was also felt on the London Stock exchange, where share values of twenty-two Rhodesian mining companies plummeted between 1895 and 1898.²¹⁷ Incompetent Company administration, expensive management, the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War, low profitability of Rhodesian mining enterprises and another collapse of the London market for the colony's mining shares in 1903 prompted the Company government to restructure the mining industry in 1903.²¹⁸ The Company began to moot diversifying the colony's economic activities. The establishment of a white agricultural sector became a major priority on the Company's agenda.

A lot of work needed to be done to make settler farming a viable commercial proposition. There were very few farmers on the land. In addition to this, farming at the turn of the 20th century meant very little to the majority of the new settlers; "(it) meant only cutting down trees and selling the wood, or cultivating a small patch of mealies."²¹⁹ There was no settler farming business culture from the 1890s because of the expectation that mining would be the

²¹⁴ S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007, "Rethinking the Colonial Encounter in Zimbabwe in the Early Twentieth Century", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33. 1, p. 177.

²¹⁵ G. Blainey, 1965, "Lost Causes of the Jameson Raid", *Economic History Review*, 18, 2, pp. 350-366.

²¹⁶ T. O. Ranger, 1967, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7: a Study in African Resistance*, London, Heinemann.

²¹⁷ Phimister, "The Reconstruction of the Southern Rhodesian Gold Mining Industry", p. 466.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 465, 468.

²¹⁹ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 58.

major driver of the colonial economy. The majority of farmers were poor both in terms of their agrarian knowledge and capital possession, with the result that the few farmers who ventured into agriculture were in most cases not producing much for the market. Settler farmers faced stiff competition from African producers. As Hodder-Williams observed in relation to Marandellas, most of the “so-called” farmers were actually “store-keepers or small time prospectors” who did not do much with their land.²²⁰

Giovanni Arrighi has noted that it is the African peasant agricultural sector that experienced growth from the 1890s in response to market opportunities created by the establishment of mining centres and other white settlements. These new centres, in the absence of an accompanying white farming sector, had to rely on African produce.²²¹ In spite of the impact of land alienation, indigenous farmers in many parts of the country generally seized the opportunity offered by the opening of new markets. The farmers considerably benefitted from supplying the food requirements of these new establishments. Robin Palmer has referred to this early period as an “era of peasant prosperity.”²²²

The white agricultural sector of the 1890s was very small. Companies were more interested in acquiring land in this period than in venturing into actual production. Most of the companies belonged to Cecil John Rhodes’ associates, and were speculative in their land purchases; they purchased land “as an investment for mineral finds when communications improved and development became widespread.”²²³ The companies bought land from the Company and from members of the pioneer column who, in the absence of the anticipated mining boom, found themselves unable to sustain themselves, a situation that resulted in the majority of

²²⁰ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 24, 25.

²²¹ G. Arrighi, 1970, “Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: a study of the Proletarianization of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia”, *Journal of Development Studies*, 6, 3, p. 207.

²²² Palmer, “The Agricultural History of Rhodesia.”

²²³ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 13.

them sinking neck-deep into debt. Though a lot of land was taken up in the first five years of occupation, the majority of it remained untilled. In the case of Marandellas, Richard Hodder-Williams has observed; “(it) may have seemed well occupied to the cartographer, but on the ground there were barely 10 white residents.”²²⁴ Because of this small population effectively occupying the land, the contribution of settler agriculture was, till 1908, not very significant. Consequently, there was no government programme targeting soil conservation on land held by white people, neither was there a farmers’ movement clamouring for it.

Awareness of the need for Conservation before 1908

Because of the nature of land settlement and settlers’ limited agrarian knowledge and capital, the question of conservation did not arise in very stark ways prior to 1908. Jenipher Elliot has argued that, in spite of the small white population on the land in the early years of European encroachment, ignorance and a desire to get quick returns from the land, which resulted in negligent farming practises, resulted in soil erosion and the destruction of forests.²²⁵ Elliot attributes this state of affairs to the conduct of the Company and the colony’s farmers – both settlers and Africans - what she terms “rapacious settler farming”, “ignorance and apathy among the indigenous population” and a “minimal and essentially cosmetic” response by the Company government.²²⁶

Kwashirai has argued that the mining sector and, later, settler agriculture “directly caused a fundamental transformation in soil and forest use” whose outcome was forest degradation and

²²⁴ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 14.

²²⁵ J. A. Elliot, 1989, “Soil Erosion and Conservation in Zimbabwe: Political Economy and the Environment”, Loughborough University of Technology, DPhil Thesis.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 54, 56. Elliot uses the work of colonial authorities such as Lionel Cripps, W. Martin Watt, P. H. Haviland and E. D. Alvord, among other sources, to make this evaluation.

erosion of the soil.²²⁷ Miners received what Kwashirai calls “preferential treatment” from administration because their activities in the early colonial period contributed more to the treasury than any other economic sector.²²⁸ Miners were given almost unlimited access to timber and water resources, even on privately-owned farms in the gold-belt, to enable them to meet the energy needs of their mines.²²⁹ This apparent favouritism and prioritization of mining needs ahead of agriculture was the source of a “long-drawn out controversy” between the two sectors.²³⁰

The need for resource conservation in colonial Zimbabwe was first expressed by forest conservationists in relation to the colony’s indigenous timber resources. In 1898 the administration hired a forest conservator from South Africa, James Blocker.²³¹ Blocker’s brief was “to assess the commercial potential of indigenous trees” in the colony.²³² While the Company’s interest was exploring how it could make money out of the colony’s vast indigenous forests, Blocker’s report also covered the urgent need for conservation to curb soil erosion and to conserve indigenous trees.²³³ The Director of Agriculture, Eric Nobbs, in response to Blocker’s findings, instructed all Native Commissioners in to report on soil erosion and the state of indigenous trees in their areas of operation.²³⁴

Soil erosion on settler farms was thus not considered in these investigations; their focus was on indigenous trees, from whose exploitation the Company sought to profit. Settler farming did not, in any case, amount to much in this period both in terms of its contribution to the

²²⁷ Kwashirai, “Dilemmas in Conservationism”, p. 541.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 541.

²²⁹ Musemwa, “Contestation over Resources”, p. 85-86.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²³¹ V. C. Kwashirai, undated, “Poverty in the Gwai Forest Reserve, Zimbabwe: 1890-1953”, downloaded from <http://www.globalenvironment.it/kwashirai.pdf>, pp. 151-52.

²³² Kwashirai, “Dilemmas in Conservationism”, p. 549.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

fiscus. This should not be taken to mean that the Company did not value settler farming. Since 1906, following the report by C. D Wise, a British agricultural expert brought into the colony to give advice on land settlement issues, on “current and future prospects of the agricultural industry, the opportunities for new settlers, and the methods by which cultivating owners could best be established upon the soil”, settler farming had received more attention from the Company administration.²³⁵

Apart from the Wise Report, there were five other developments which, though totally excluding soil conservation, supported the development of settler agriculture; the visit in 1907 by Company Directors, with Henry Birchenough as the head of delegation, to investigate the prospects of settler success in agriculture and mining, the revamping of the Company’s Department of Agriculture with Eric Nobbs as its Director in 1908, the promulgation of the Private Locations Ordinance (PLO) in 1908 to help poor farmers secure African labour, creation of Company ranches, estates and farms such as Rhodesdale and Mazoe from 1906, and, perhaps the most poignant, the establishment in 1912 of the Land Bank to finance the settler agrarian sector on easy terms.²³⁶

A little over a decade after the Blocker report, a second investigation was undertaken in 1910. Another South Africa expert, only identified as J. Sim in his “Report on Forestry in Southern Rhodesia” of 1910, was hired to investigate the status of the colony’s indigenous timber resources and to recommend measures for their conservation and preservation and, secondly, for their sustainable exploitation for commercial purposes.²³⁷ The second motive is telling; the Company was a commercial enterprise whose major motivation was to make money for its

²³⁵ V. Machingaidze, 1979, “Company Rule and Agricultural Development: the case of the BSA Company in Southern Rhodesia, 1908-1923”, in *Collected Seminar Papers: Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, Number 24.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²³⁷ NAZ GF/3/3/1, 1910, J. Sim: District Officer, King Williams Town, South Africa, “Report on Forestry in Southern Rhodesia.”

investors. Conservation was thus framed in this commercial context. It is no surprise therefore that the colony's first legislation on conservation of timber was passed in the colony only six years after Blocker's investigation in 1903.

Kwashirai has observed that the Ordinance of 1903 was a verbatim replication of the South African Forest and Herbage Preservation Act of 1859, perhaps an indication that the administration was a green-horn – lacking both experience and competence and expertise – to craft its own legislation for the preservation of indigenous timber.²³⁸ Though the Ordinance sought to provide a basis for preservation and conservation of forests, in the eyes of the Company it had a twin objective; a commercial motive, which was probably the most important as shown by the fact that authorities often turned a blind eye to uncompliant miners. The Ordinance of 1903 sought to put in place a framework for setting timber aside for exploitation in a way that would profit the Company's commercial branch.

Settler agriculture was not given attention by the 1903 Ordinance and its amendment in 1913. This meant that both the 1903 and 1913 Ordinances could not be enforced in respect of settler farmers. Conservation of the soil was not a priority for the Company government in the first decade of occupation because the Company did not, till around 1902, see the colony's future in agriculture, but in the mining industry. This meant that it gave more of its attention to mining interests. While miners needed huge access to timber resources for fuel and construction on the mines, the Company also saw a potential to make money out of commercial exploitation of this resource. This explains the preferential treatment given to miners and, on the side-lines, an attempt to preserve timber and make money out of it. Soil conservation thus did not emerge as an important component of the settler farming framework before 1908, both at policy level and in practice. Having said that, it is important to note that

²³⁸ Kwashirai, "Dilemmas in Conservationism", p. 546.

even in relation to mining, enforcement of the 1903 and 1913 Ordinances among white miners was lax. Kwashirai has observed that while the Ordinances were “dead letters” in respect to white interests; they were only “vigorously applied on the indigenous population.”²³⁹

The Role of the Company in Promoting Settler Agriculture from 1908

In 1908 there was a reorganization of the colony’s Agricultural Department. Eric Nobbs, an agriculturalist from the Cape in South Africa, was the founding Director of the Department, and was at its helm till 1924. Reorganization entailed two things; improving the Department’s administrative capacity and increasing its involvement in scientific activities to ensure the colony’s agriculture was abreast with modern methods and technologies. The first object meant increasing its staff complement in relation to tobacco, maize, cotton and beef cattle. The increase in staffing of scientists in the agricultural and veterinary sections enabled the Departments to conduct surveys and experiments.²⁴⁰

The major challenge for the colony’s agricultural sector in 1908 was that the majority of white farmers, in Nobbs’ words, “newcomers, many of them without any agricultural knowledge.”²⁴¹ This state of affairs was hardly surprising, as members of the Pioneer column, consisting of 200 men and 180 police officers, were of little means. The attraction for them had been the prospect of acquiring their own gold claims, from which they thought they would be able to catapult themselves out of poverty into lives of grandeur. Because of this, many of them did not desire to venture into farming. While every member of the column could “stake out a farm and fifteen gold claims”, Ian Phimister has observed that a good number of them, realizing their lack of capacity to farm, sold their land to companies as soon

²³⁹ Kwashirai, “Dilemmas in Conservationism”, p. 546-47.

²⁴⁰ Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture”, p. 13.

²⁴¹ Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1921, p. 21.

as they acquired it, their eyes firmly fixated on an anticipated windfall from the gold mining industry.²⁴²

While the white population in the colony increased between 1891 and 1911 from 1 500 to 23 606 in 1911,²⁴³ the majority of the settlers were not only poor, they also lacked farming expertise. In Machingaidze's words;

Most of the settlers who came to farm in Southern Rhodesia had little or no farming experience whatsoever; they were operating in an ecological and climatic situation very different from temperate Europe and even the few settlers who had had some farming experience in Europe were growing crops that were new to them...there was no proper institution for the first 22 years of Company rule to enable farmers to borrow money on easy terms for use in a wide range of agricultural activities.²⁴⁴

Though beef, maize and tobacco promised to become pillars of the agricultural sector, producers had, prior to 1908, proved to be incapable of producing for the world market without state assistance.²⁴⁵ The State embarked on a programme to import seed for tobacco, maize, cotton, wheat, sorghum, groundnuts and sunflower cultivation.²⁴⁶

The state also sought to encourage settler farmers to produce tobacco and maize for export. Successful participation in the export market required a certain level of expertise. The fact that most of the settlers on the land were not of the "right stamp", as both their capital possession and their agricultural knowledge were inadequate meant that the Company had to home-school them to become good farmers. As already stated, even the few farmers with experience had to battle with a climate vastly different from the temperate climate of

²⁴² I. Phimister, 1977, "White Miners in Historical Perspective: Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1953", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 3, 2, pp. 187-206.

²⁴³ A. S. Mlambo, "Building a White Man's Country", p. 125-126.

²⁴⁴ Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture", pp. 15, 20-21.

²⁴⁵ Phimister, "Meat and Monopolies", p. 413.

²⁴⁶ Kwashirai, "Dilemmas in Conservationism", p. 544.

Britain.²⁴⁷ The new settler farmers largely recognised their inadequacy in relation to their limited competency. At the Rhodesia Agricultural Union Congress of 1909, for example, they recommended the establishment of a school of agriculture to offer them training.²⁴⁸

In response to this need, the State embarked on a programme to create institutions to train white farmers. The first two experimental farms (also called Central Farms) were established at the Salisbury Commonage and in Marandellas.²⁴⁹ The state also created agricultural research schools; Salisbury and Gwebi in 1909 and Rhodes, Inyanga and Matopos Estates in 1917.²⁵⁰ The Botanical Experiment station was set up in Salisbury devoted to plant breeding and plant introduction work, the Gwebi Experimental Farm was devoted to research and demonstration work with all crops suitable for heavy and more fertile soils, while the Lochard Experimental Farm was set up 30 miles north of Bulawayo for experimental and demonstration work with tobacco and other crops suitable for granite soils.²⁵¹

The demonstration and experimental farms became major vehicles for research and farmer training. In August 1913 Nobbs stated; “It is no longer popular to decry agriculture, and the time is past for saying that the fool of the family can be a farmer. As now understood, agriculture ranks as a science.”²⁵² Nobbs kept himself abreast with the curriculum offered in other agricultural colleges outside Southern Rhodesia to make sure that the standards at local training institutions were in line with what was taking place in other territories.²⁵³

²⁴⁷ Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture”, p. 45.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9, quoting C. Wise, Report on Land Settlement in Southern Rhodesia, BSA Company: Preparatory Note by the Directors, London, 1906.

²⁵⁰ Kwashirai, “Dilemmas in Conservationism”, p. 544.

²⁵¹ NAZ A1/4/1, Letter to the Consulat de Belgique, from the Director of Agriculture, dated 23 October 1912.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, Article by Dr E. A Nobbs, Director of Agriculture, dated August 1913, in a bulletin issued by the Department of Agriculture.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Acting Principal, School of Agriculture, Natal, to the Director of Agriculture, Rhodesia, dated 18th August 1912.

The Company also constructed railways. Railways were important for taking farmers' produce to markets. Railways from Mozambique were surveyed between 1894 and 1902, and settlers took up land in their proximity. By 1913 a significant proportion of white farmers had been settled close to these railways, with four fifths of white farms being within 40 kilometres of railway lines.²⁵⁴ The Company also tackled the issue of agricultural financing by opening a Land Bank in 1912 to offer capital to farmers. The Bank was critical to settler success as it availed the undercapitalised farmers with cheap loans with which to purchase land, equipment and inputs.²⁵⁵ Loans could only be granted to farmers who had been in occupation of their farms for at least two years, and the amount they could successfully apply for depended on the permanent improvements of their farms. Loans granted could not exceed 60 percent of the value of permanent improvements on the farm.²⁵⁶

Though these measures were very important in making settler agriculture a viable commercial proposition, it is important to note that they did not encapsulate soil conservation. This situation was due to the nature of Company government. Apart from having a business thrust, the Company had no prior experience in governance. Administration of the colony was thus carried out on a trial-and-error, day-to-day ad hoc basis. Company officials, from the early 1890s, were appointed not because of their qualifications or experience. According to Hodder-Williams;

Those who were appointed, by chance more than anything else, had to carry out experiments in the field on methods of native administration, amateurs attempting to undertake tasks which really demanded experienced professionals...the manpower available for the administrative posts was limited to those who trekked

²⁵⁴ P. Mason, 1958, *The Birth of a Dilemma*, London, Oxford University Press, p. 259.

²⁵⁵ NAZ LB2/1/7, Land Bank, 1912.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Director of Land Settlement to the Acting Manager, titled "Loans to Farmers Holding Land under P/O", dated 8th August 1913.

north in search of adventure and personal fortune, not always the best pool from which to draw disinterested bureaucrats.²⁵⁷

Though the quotation refers to staffing in the Native Affairs Department, other government departments faced the same challenges. Even after the restructuring of the Agricultural Department in 1908, soil conservation and management in the entire colony was left in the hands of just one official in the Irrigation Department. W. Martin Watt was the first such official from 1910. Watt was replaced by A. C. Jennings in 1921.²⁵⁸ These officers lacked the resources and capacity, and perhaps the drive, to champion a sound soil conservation programme on settler farms.

Company Land Settlement Policy

The Company's land policy provides another example of how soil conservation was completely excluded from land settlement. Land settlement was a priority for the Company from the onset of occupation. This was because the Company sought to generate revenue from land sales, rather than from commercial agriculture. The need to generate revenue was more important for the Company government than making soil conservation part of land settlement terms. In 1894 the Company was already selling land to settlers at the cost of one shilling and six pence per morgen.²⁵⁹

The land was sold on condition that the buyer owned only the purchased land, not precious stones, minerals and mineral oils in the event of their discovery on the land. The administration also had the right to build roads and railway lines on such land without compensation and that grantees were to occupy their purchased land within five months after

²⁵⁷ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 22.

²⁵⁸ Kwashirai, "Dilemmas in Conservationism", p. 546.

²⁵⁹ NAZ A11/2/3-7, Mashonaland, Land Settlement, The British South Africa Company Notice, dated 8 August, 1894.

being allocated the land.²⁶⁰ Conservation was not made part of the terms of land purchase. What was important to the Company was that it retained access to land it had parcelled out in case precious minerals were discovered on it. The settlement of white farmers on the land continued to be a priority for the Company Government after the turn of the century. A number of steps were taken between 1902 and 1908 to boost land settlement. In November, 1902, the Company took the first major step by directing that all companies and individuals whose grants of land were issued under “occupation titles” could, by ceding a third of their land to the British South Africa Company, be issued with permanent “Pioneer” title deeds.²⁶¹

The catch for the companies and individuals who agreed to surrender portions of their land was that the Company would then not apply the “Compulsory Occupation Clause” to that particular company or individual as occupation titles required.²⁶² The “compulsory occupation clause” was meant to force companies to effectively occupy their land or risk forfeiting it to the Government. The directive for companies or individuals whose land had been issued under ‘occupation titles’ to surrender a third of their land for Pioneer title deeds, which did not demand effective occupation of the farm by its owner, was meant to redress what had happened in the first decade of occupation. Speculative companies and individuals had rushed in to grab huge pieces of land, which the Company now required to sell to new settlers to keep revenue flowing into its coffers.

By mid-1892 all farms around Salisbury, for instance had been pegged, with the result that individuals and companies who wanted to take up farming were in most cases shown land that was either marginal or far away from transport networks or local marketing hubs. Even

²⁶⁰ NAZ A11/2/3-7, Mashonaland, Land Settlement, The British South Africa Company Notice, dated 8 August, 1894.

²⁶¹ NAZ L2/2/93, Land Surrenders, Letter from the Secretary, The Rhodesian Land Owners and Farmers Association, to the Acting Civil Commissioner, dated 29th February 1902.

²⁶² Ibid.

missionaries such as Isaac Shimmin of the Methodist Church felt the impact of such a state of affairs as they found it difficult to lay their hands on land for mission stations.²⁶³ Apart from buying land on their own account, the companies had also bought land rights from the first immigrants. This had the effect that by 1891, more than half of land rights belonging to members of the pioneer column had been bought by the companies, most of which had links to Cecil John Rhodes.²⁶⁴

Table 2.1 below shows companies that had purchased land in the Marandellas area by 1913;

Table 2.1: Land Purchases by Companies in the Marandellas Area by 1913.

Name of Farm	Acreage owned	Owner
Rhodesdale	29 631	Willoughby's Consolidated Limited.
Carruthersville	36 815	Rhodesia Consolidated Ltd.
Waltondale	4 042	Mashonaland Agency Ltd
Elmswood	3 894	Rhodesia Consolidated Ltd.
Wenimbi	53 854	Rhodesia Lands Ltd.
Doctor's Gift	3 757	Mashonaland Agency Ltd.
Holton	3 153	Rhodesia Consolidated Ltd.
Percyvale	20 798	Amalgamated Properties of Rhodesia

Source: Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 15.

²⁶³ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 14.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

The fact that companies held huge chunks of land did not mean that they occupied them and undertook agrarian activities. The expectation, for most companies, was for minerals to be discovered on their land, increasing its value and therefore yielding quick returns without putting a plough to the ground.²⁶⁵ It was in this context that the Company sought to have the companies surrender portions of their land from 1902, so that farmers could be attracted to the colony and be settled on such lands.

African land needs were completely disregarded as the process of land settlement took place. Some scholars have sought to play down the impact of white settlement and the consequent land dispossession of indigenous people. They argue that settlers did not displace African farmers from their land, as they settled on the red clayey soils locals did not farm. They also argue that African reserves were created in areas that had been traditionally settled by locals. Examples of such scholars include Whittlesey and Floyd. This view of there having been “unused, empty and underused”²⁶⁶ land is premised on the argument that African farmers did not have the appropriate agricultural technology to till certain types of land in the colony.

Floyd has argued that; “the indigenous farmer, equipped only with a primitive short-handled hoe, found the red-earth soils difficult to work and, despite their greater fertility, avoided using them.”²⁶⁷ Philip Mason has also argued that, “it would be untrue to suggest in general terms that the Europeans had banished Africans to the lighter soils, the hotter regions, the areas remote from communications with markets.”²⁶⁸ Whittlesey, another proponent of this school of thought, has argued;

²⁶⁵ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 15.

²⁶⁶ Murombedzi, *Pre-colonial and Colonial Conservation Practices*.

²⁶⁷ Floyd, “Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia”, p. 569.

²⁶⁸ Mason, *The Birth of a Dilemma*, p. 260.

The soils weathered from the basic rock were too heavy to be worked by the implements available to Africans before Europeans came to settle in the country. If used at all, these choice High Veld soils served as occasional pastures. The contact between the two main types of soils found on the High Veld is dramatically sharp in many places, especially where a stream or a bog has developed on the line between the contrasting bedrock formations. Where the land traditionally farmed by Africans has been set aside as reserves, and Europeans have settled upon the adjacent heavier soils, the contrast in productivity is painfully apparent. The juxtaposition is common because of the way European occupancy was guided by natural resources.²⁶⁹

Whittlesey thus views African farming technology as having been rudimentary, with the result that African production was not possible in certain regions of the country, and that consequently there had been no evictions from the land, but reserves had been established in areas traditionally settled by Africans, and that settler agriculture was more scientific and, therefore, yielded more than African agriculture. Proponents of this school of thought argue that there was plenty of unoccupied land, and that indigenous people were nomads without any specific abode, and therefore could not have been evicted from “their” land. Sara Berry has observed that the view that there were vast empty pieces of land Africans could not lay claim on was not confined to southern Africa. “From Senegal to Malawi, French and British authorities claimed that ‘by right of conquest’ all ‘vacant and owner-less’ land belonged to the colonial state. Vast tracts of land were often judged ‘vacant and ownerless.’”²⁷⁰

Wolf Roder has, in an article published in 1964 titled “The Division of Land Resources in Southern Rhodesia”, has questioned the traditional view of soil preference in Mashonaland that the Shona preferred to work sandy soils while settlers preferred red soils by arguing that there was “no technical barrier” to use of clayey red loams. He further argues that oral

²⁶⁹ Whittlesey, “Southern Rhodesia: An African Compage”, pp. 24-25.

²⁷⁰ S. Berry, 2002, “Debating the Land Question in Africa”, Society for Comparative Study of Society and History, 44, p. 642.

evidence and colonial records show that the Shona had, in fact, utilized red soils.²⁷¹ The fact that the Shona also utilized red soils, according to Roder, negates the perceived lack of conflict of interest between the Shona and European settlers over agricultural land in Mashonaland and the notion that it was in Matabeleland that both Europeans and the Ndebele preferred the heavier red soils.²⁷²

Robin Palmer, in his PhD thesis, titled “The Making and Implementation of Land Policy in Rhodesia, 1890-1936” attempts to discredit Roder’s findings.²⁷³ Palmer questions some of Roder’s evidence, and asserts that the debate is only an “academic one precisely because European land grabbing in Mashonaland was by no means confined to the red clay soils...”²⁷⁴ While Palmer questions Roder’s evidence, he does not do the same with other scholars he uses in his work, and his view that this debate was only academic overlooks the fact that his argument implies that very few Shona communities were affected by evictions from their land. It also implies that the majority of the Ndebele were predominantly reliant on pastoral sources.

J. M. MacKenzie has also weighed into this debate in support of Roder. He observed that in his refutation of Roder’s evidence, “Palmer was particularly imprecise about soil types and geographical location.”²⁷⁵ Mackenzie utilizes evidence from Robinson, whose research on Iron Age sites in Matabeleland shows that the Ndebele preferred red soils, Garlake, whose work shows that a similar situation obtained at Maxton farm in Mashonaland, which only had red soils. His other work on two Iron Age sites, Mount Hampden and Tafuna Hill also shows

²⁷¹ W. Roder, 1964, “The Division of Land Resources in Southern Rhodesia”, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 54, 1, pp. 41-52.

²⁷² Roder, “The Division of Land Resources”, pp. 41-52.

²⁷³ R. Palmer, 1968, “The Making and Implementation of Land Policy in Rhodesia, 1890-1936”, PhD Thesis, University College of London.

²⁷⁴ R. Palmer, 1970, “Red Soils in Rhodesia”, African Social Research, 10, pp. 747-758.

²⁷⁵ NAZ GEN- P/MAC, J. M Mackenzie, Red Soils in Mashonaland: A Re-Assessment.

Shona preference for red soils.²⁷⁶ Mackenzie also observes that since the Ndebele and the Kalanga utilised their red soils for cultivation purposes, it follows that the Shona also did, as they, in some instances, had better hoes than the Ndebele. He has further argued;

It is even possible that such Matabeleland soils were being cultivated with poorer hoes – metallurgically – than those available in much of Mashonaland, where the Wedza hoe, manufactured primarily by the Njanja, was noted for its higher quality, its few impurities and great strength.²⁷⁷

Mackenzie uses this evidence to question Palmer's view that Shona had technical limitations that made working red soils difficult because of their short handled hoes.²⁷⁸

Mackenzie has also questioned Palmer's use of Emory Alvord's work as evidence. Alvord was an American Agronomist who became the first Agriculturalist for the Instruction of Natives. He dismissed this work on the basis that Alvord's work in the colony was "characterised by extreme prejudice against African agriculture, and is notable more for its mistakes than for its achievements."²⁷⁹ He numerates examples of Alvord's mistakes as his "failure to see the value of rotational grazing, his attack upon African inter-cropping which helped to prevent erosion, his insistence upon stumping, which also furthered erosion in some areas and his failure to see the social and political consequences of his village 'lines' system."²⁸⁰ Mackenzie's work utilises oral evidence to show that the Shona in places such as Gwelo, Mrewa and Bikita utilised red soils. In his view the "myth that the Shona only used

²⁷⁶ NAZ GEN- P/MAC, J. M Mackenzie, Red Soils in Mashonaland: A Re-Assessment, p. 2, quoting K. R Robinson, 1967, "Iron Age Occupation Sites Immediately North of Bulawayo, Rhodesia, their Distribution and Significance", *Arnoldia*, 3, 9; P. S Garlake, 1971, An Early Iron Age Site Near Tafuna Hill, Mashonaland", *Southern African Archaeological Bulletin*, 26, pp., 155-163; "Iron Age Burials at Mount Hampden, Near Salisbury, Rhodesia", *Arnoldia*, 3, 10, 1967 and "Excavations at Maxton Farm, near Shamva Hill, Rhodesia", *Arnoldia*, 3, 9, 1967.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2

²⁷⁸ NAZ GEN- P/MAC, J. M Mackenzie, Red Soils in Mashonaland: A Re-Assessment, p. 2.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2, 7.

sandy soils was based upon the fact that in 90 percent of the region the Shona only had sandy soils available” as opposed to notions of Shona cowardice or laziness.²⁸¹

While the settlers were successful in sequestering land from locals, the administration’s dream to attract and settle huge numbers of farmers in the colony was not realized as the colony was never able to attract the preferred calibre of settlers in adequate numbers. Mlambo gives the statistics, “A full 50 years after the British occupied Zimbabwe, there were only 68 954 whites in the colony!”²⁸² There were several reasons why many Britons did not migrate to colonial Zimbabwe. Many were ignorant of the existence of the country, relocating to the country was expensive and the Company imposed high capital requirements on would-be immigrants. In addition to these factors, there was also an unwillingness in the new colony to admit settlers of non-British stock, the country was perceived abroad to be infested with dangerous wild animals and ‘strange and terrible’ diseases and there were more attractive destinations such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada.²⁸³

In the case of the few immigrants who came to the colony, the majority of them trekked on to other places. According to Richard Hodder-Williams (in reference to the Marandellas farming district);

The years before 1918 were marked above all by an air of impermanency. There were a handful of exceptions, but the vast majority of immigrants to Marandellas arrived, put a few short roots down, and then moved on, more often than not back to South Africa or the United Kingdom.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ NAZ GEN- P/MAC, J. M Mackenzie, Red Soils in Mashonaland: A Re-Assessment, p. 6.

²⁸² A. S. Mlambo, 2000, “Some are more White than Others: Racial Chauvinism as a Factor in Rhodesian Immigration Policy, 1890 to 1963”, *Zambezia*, XXVII, II, 139-160 and White Immigration into Rhodesia.

²⁸³ Mlambo, “Some are more White than Others”, p. 140.

²⁸⁴ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia.

This was the trend in the whole country as Mlambo observed;

One intriguing issue relating to White demography in Rhodesia, for instance, is the extent to which Rhodesians were really a society of immigrants and transients, most of whom did not stay long enough to establish roots in the country. Indirect evidence does indicate that there was a high turnover of population throughout the colonial period.²⁸⁵

R. Roberts has classified the whites who came to the colony as having not been settlers at all, “for every hundred migrants arriving,” he observed, “between sixty and eighty were always leaving.”²⁸⁶ It was not possible to pursue a soil conservation programme with such a transient population.

Between 1909 and 1914 many English-speaking South Africans, who were largely disillusioned by the post Anglo-Boer war settlement trekked to Southern Rhodesia, attracted by cheap land and their conscious attachment to Britain.²⁸⁷ The Rhodesian colonial mind-set from the early days was of building a white man’s country on the basis of a huge settler population. The preferred settlers, however, were clearly British whites with capital. As early as 1903, the Rhodesian Surveyor General wrote that he opposed the idea of settling any white person who could not afford to pay for the land in the colony, as this would result in the settlement of an Afrikaner “bywoner” class as opposed to whites of a “good class”.²⁸⁸ There was a fear among settlers that if Afrikaners were allowed into the colony in huge numbers they would dominate the colony in terms of numbers and consequently political and economic

²⁸⁵ Mlambo, “Building a White Man’s Country”, p. 124.

²⁸⁶ R. S. Roberts, 1979, “The Settlers”, *Rhodesiana*, XXXIX, pp. 55-61.

²⁸⁷ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 59.

²⁸⁸ Mlambo, “Some are more White than Others”, p. 144, quoting NAZ S2371/1/1, Land Settlement Policy, 1902-1903; 1925-1236, Surveyor General, “Attracting Bona Fide Settlers”, 22 January, 1903. Also see Venables, “Recollection of Identity”, pp. 109-116.

power. This was after the Jameson Raid and the Anglo-Boer War, and suspicion of Afrikaners was high.

Although land was sold at low prices, in many cases it was located far away from railways. Land in close proximity to railways and road networks was a huge attraction as railways and good roads provided access to markets. In 1909, the Inspector of Lands for Salisbury observed that, of the prospective farmers he had taken around to view land in his jurisdiction;

At least 75 percent expressed dissatisfaction or rather disappointment. This expression has usually taken the form of the wish that the settlers had come up two years earlier as at present there was so little good arable land attainable with easy reach of the market.²⁸⁹

The Estates Manager also shared the view that many farmers were not happy with the land because of its distance from roads and railways. He wrote in 1909;

There is no denying the fact that there is no available land to satisfy those who say that they definitely want good land not more than 15-20 miles from the railways, and in a district we can recommend as healthy...the best (land) is held by private companies...²⁹⁰

This discouraged settlement in the colony.

For those farmers who chose to settle in the country, it was comparatively more expensive to start farming in Southern Rhodesia than in South Africa or the Dominions. In 1908 it was estimated that the capital needed to successfully venture into farming in the colony was 'three

²⁸⁹ NAZ L2/2/92, Land: Reports on Settlers, Letter from the Inspector of Lands, to the Director of Land Settlement, Salisbury, dated 18 November 1909.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

times that which would suffice in other South African colonies.’²⁹¹ Contrary to Wise’s 1907 Settlement Scheme Report which stated that a new farmer needed capital in the range of £700 to launch a farming career in Southern Rhodesia, the cost was much higher than that because of the cost of implements and machinery needed on the farms. The cost of implements and machinery was estimated to be double the cost in the South African colonies.

Without adequate financial resources, it was difficult to successfully venture into farming, especially if the farm was located far away from railway lines. As a Company official put it in 1909;

A man with limited capital has to depend mainly on agriculture for a living, and to succeed he must have good land within some 20 miles of the railway. If he has sufficient capital to combine agriculture with stock breeding to farm 20 to 40 miles from a railway is not too far, and there is ample suitable land available and all who have come up and been in a position to go in for this class of farming have been very favourably impressed by the country.²⁹²

The other challenge was that there were limited facilities in the colony in comparison to better established places such as South Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. As an editorial in the Rhodesia Herald put it;

At present and for some time to come there are few places one would wish to bring a woman to in Rhodesia. It means exile in a greater or less degree, there being no ‘grand trunk expenses’ to civilization, only long, tedious and costly journeys to the coast even when you reach the crawling train.²⁹³

Many new farmers considered the colony to be an ‘exile’ as its conditions did not suit family life. The situation for the Rhodesian farmer was further worsened by the fact that the internal

²⁹¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday January 14, 1908, p. 2.

²⁹² NAZ L2/2/92, Land Reports on Settlers, Letter from the Estates Manager, to the Director of Land Settlement, Salisbury, dated 13 October 1909.

²⁹³ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday January 14, 1908, p. 2.

market was very small in 1908, while freight charges for overseas markets and South Africa were also exorbitant.²⁹⁴

The Company land settlement policy had blindspots in relation to soil conservation. It did not make it mandatory for farmers who bought land to construct soil conservation measures on their farms. Another weakness of this policy was that it made it possible for individuals and companies to buy land for speculative purposes, without settling on it. Though early “occupation titles” had a “compulsory occupation clause” that required buyers to effectively occupy their land, many individuals and companies who had purchased land ignored this condition. The transient nature of the settler population, as well as the discrimination against settlers of Afrikaner origin also hindered effective occupation.

Conflict: Contradictions in Company Policy

There were other contradictions in the colony that hindered effective development of the agricultural sector and, therefore, slowed the development of a framework for conservation work on settler farms. The 1908-1923 period was characterized by the fight between the Company and, on one hand, its shareholders - who with each day got more and more desperate to get a return on their investment, and on the other hand with settlers resident in the country who felt that their rights and needs were, on many occasions, being sacrificed on the altar of profit-making by the Company administration.

The settlers had a number of grievances such as over availability of African labour; the Company was not able, in their view, to come up with policies that would ensure adequate

²⁹⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday January 14, 1908, p. 2.

labour supplies on the farms.²⁹⁵ There was also a generally held view by the farmers that the Company exhibited favoritism in its dealings with mining interests, with mining getting preference over agriculture. Another grievance was over land ownership in the colony. While the Company claimed that it exclusively owned the land, settlers disputed it. There were also conflicts over settler representation in the legislative assembly and use of finances by the Company, among other points of disagreement.

The Company had problems with its shareholders, whose patience grew thinner with each year due to the Company's failure to declare dividends. The early 1890s had been a period of great expectation for the Company's shareholders. When Cecil John Rhodes and Leander Starr Jameson visited England at the end of 1894, crowds of excited shareholders turned up in numbers so huge that they blocked traffic; Rhodes and his Chartered Company was the talk of town. Rhodes' and Jameson's time was pleasantly spent "divided between whipping up the froth of speculative capital and receiving honours."²⁹⁶ Only a decade and half later, the situation had changed drastically. Rhodes had died, while Jameson sat on the Company's Board of Directors which was subjected to yearly heckling at the annual meetings by shareholders who desired to see the Company they had invested in registering for them huge profits.

"We come and listen to your remarks year after year," a shareholder told the Directors at their Annual Meeting in 1911, "but do you consider really whether you are ever going to give us anything by way of return? We have put our money into this Company, and year by year

²⁹⁵ This section narrows these contradictions to interests of the farming sector. For more see M. E. Lee's PhD thesis titled "Politics and Pressure Groups in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1923", (1974, University of London). Lee examines the various "sectional interest groups" (such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Mines, Farmers' Associations and their umbrella body, the Rhodesia Agricultural Union and workers' Unions) and their various interests in the Company period.

²⁹⁶ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 11.

we go on and get nothing.”²⁹⁷ Back in Southern Rhodesia settler agitation was also increasing. It was partly because of this agitation that the number of elected members in the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council rose from 4 against 7 Company-appointed representatives to 7 (out of 13 seats) between 1908 and 1913 and 12 (out of 20 seats) after 1914.²⁹⁸ It was elected members who always questioned the Company’s claim that it owned the colony’s land and demanded more transparency regarding the apportionment and use of the colony’s finances.

‘We are not Philanthropists!’ The Company vs. its shareholders

The Company never declared a dividend for its shareholders from its formation to 1908. The shareholders’ enthusiasm of the early days, for a good proportion of the investors, began to evaporate. “We have acquired on behalf of our shareholders a vast territory...which is a valuable liquid asset”, Cecil John Rhodes had told shareholders at the Company’s Annual General Meeting in 1895.²⁹⁹ Less than a decade later, Company Directors were singing from a different hymn book. It was “only natural for those who have invested their money in various enterprises in our country (to) be anxious to receive returns upon their capital as early as possible”, they told shareholders, urging them to bear with the Company and to be patient.³⁰⁰ The shareholders needed a lot of patience indeed, as the Company had still not paid any dividends to its shareholders at the end of its rule in 1923.

Part of the reason for the Company’s failure to pay dividends lay in the fact that, apart from undertaking commercial activities, it also carried the burden of administering the colony on its shoulders. W. H. B Dudgeon, a shareholder, noted at the Company’s annual meeting in 1910;

²⁹⁷ NAZ S/BR 503 Proceedings at the First Annual Meeting of the BSA Co., (hereinafter, just Proceedings and date of meeting), 27th February, 1913, p. 23.

²⁹⁸ See NAZ ZG2 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates for 1903, 1908, 1913 and 1914.

²⁹⁹ Proceedings, 19 January 1895.

³⁰⁰ Proceedings, 15 July 1903.

If the sole object of the establishment of the Chartered Company has been to try and develop a prosperous Colony the Directors have succeeded most admirably. But the vast bulk of the Shareholders, of whom I am a representative, are commercial men, who subscribed the money – millions – for the Chartered Company and its vast number of subsidiaries throughout Rhodesia in the hope and full expectation that we should get a very handsome return for our money after waiting a certain time...But now it appears that the surplus is still spent in Rhodesia...³⁰¹

It was in this context that Starr Jameson sought to explain to shareholders in 1913 that it was possible for Southern Rhodesia and the shareholders to mutually benefit from the involvement of the Company in the colony's day to day administration;

You must remember that we are not only a large commercial enterprise, but we are also a Government, and although one of this morning's newspapers reminded me not to talk politics but to talk dividends, what I want to point out to you is that dividends - that is the financial success of the Company - absolutely depend on the good administration of Rhodesia - not merely of the Company here, but of Rhodesia; and what I feel is the best way to approach the subject is on the lines of a Governor's speech - that is, to divide the two aspects of Chartered affairs - the administrative and the commercial....you in this room are interested in the commercial, and the people of Rhodesia are specially interested in the administrative; but I would point out to you here that without good government your assets would be worth very little.³⁰²

Jameson's explanation was not satisfactory to many investors who felt that they were likely to die of old age while still waiting for the Company to fulfil its promises unless they forced the Company to declare a dividend.

"The majority of the shareholders will be in their graves if we do not have it pretty quick", Humphreys, a shareholder, protested at the Company's Annual General Meeting in 1913.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Proceedings, 28 February 1910.

³⁰² Proceedings, 27 February, 1913, p. 7.

³⁰³ Proceedings, July 1913.

Such sentiments by shareholders became a yearly occurrence, as they pushed for payment of dividends, without success. Bridges, another shareholder, complained in 1916;

Those people who subscribed their money and put it into this company for the development of Rhodesia did so with the hope of one day getting a return on their money. This money has not been contributed on a philanthropic basis to help the Company, but it was contributed as a matter of business, and we want to look at it from the revenue and expenditure point of view... Time goes on, and we pass away one by one, and I am afraid none of us will ever live long enough to get a dividend. Our sons will come along and it will be the same with them, and in time we shall forget all about it.³⁰⁴

Other shareholders began to question the competence of the Company's Board of Directors.

One Hedges had advice for his fellow shareholders in 1916;

Co-operate together, and see that you get men on the Board who understand business. Do these gentlemen on our Board understand agriculture? Did they ever put a hand to the plough? Did they ever milk a cow? No. We want gentlemen to control our affairs who understand the subjects with which they have to deal.³⁰⁵

"I have been a shareholder for 18 years," A. Neville told shareholders at a meeting in 1913, "and I have £8,000 invested in the Company... My opinion is that you will never get a dividend out of this Company until you get some men on the Board with business knowledge."³⁰⁶

'This Country is not your Private Property!': The Company vs. the Settlers

The Company also had a lot of differences with settlers in the colony. The first major bone of contention was about the Company's claim that it was the owner of all unalienated land in the

³⁰⁴ Proceedings, 6 April 1916, p. 16.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ Proceedings, 27 February 1913, p. 25. For more on see K. Chitofiri, 2007, "Hopes and Expectations: The Relationship between the British South Africa Company Directors and Shareholders, 1890 to 1923", Master of Arts Dissertation, Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe.

colony. Charles Coghlan and Gordon S. D. Forbes, both members of the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council, summed up the opinion of the majority of settlers in the colony. “It is imperatively necessary,” Coghlan observed in June 1908,

that there should be an immediate settlement of the differences outstanding between the British South Africa Company and the inhabitants of Southern Rhodesia, particularly in regard to the claim of the British South Africa Company to be the private owners of all unalienated land in Southern Rhodesia...the British South Africa Company (claims) the unalienated land, and the opinion (is) held by a large number of people in this country that it (does) not belong to the Company, and the only power which (is) able to settle the question is the Imperial Government.³⁰⁷

The bone of contention was not only about the land, but also spilled to the management of revenue generated in the colony. Gordon Forbes also observed;

...no title had ever been submitted by the BSAC which could conclusively prove that the country is their private estate. It was only natural that they (the settlers) should have some difficulty in agreeing that certain revenues they claimed were its private property.³⁰⁸

The Company did not agree with the settlers’ position. When the debate on the ownership of the colony’s land was first brought up in the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council in 1906, the Company treasurer defended the Company’s claim to ownership by stating that the Company owned land in Matabeleland by the authority of the Rudd Concession it acquired from Lobengula, King of the Ndebele, by which he effectively ceded ownership of mineral rights to the Company. The Company had further bought the Lippert Concession in 1891 by which Lobengula ceded his land, and Company ownership of land had further been buttressed by conquest of the Ndebele in the 1893-4 risings, and of the Ndebele and Shona in the 1896-7

³⁰⁷ NAZ ZG2 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates (First Session, 4th Council), 24 June 1908, p. 85.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

war. The Company also had a Charter given to it by a 'high legal authority', and legislation of the country confirmed that both the land and minerals belonged to it.³⁰⁹ The Company's Directors had reiterated this position during their visit to the colony in 1907.

Apart from the land question, settlers were also not happy with the way the country's finances were being managed. The Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council always had difficulties dealing with the budget as it was often not clear whether some funds belonged to the administrative side or the commercial side of the Company. In 1907 the Treasurer admitted that he had experienced difficulties in preparing the budget as he did not know what belonged to the administration and what did not.³¹⁰ Land sales, for example, were claimed by the Company as their private property, a situation settlers found unacceptable. Charles Coghlan stated in the Legislative Council in 1908 that it was common cause to all parties that there were certain assets the property of the commercial side of the Company, and others the property of the Administrative side;

Take for instance, taxes such as customs and so on, although the company held them as private property, it could not declare dividends out of them, the company had to hold these assets for administrative purposes. There was other property over which there was dispute as to whether it was the private property of the company or whether they held it for the administrative side.³¹¹

The settlers demanded that the matter be dealt with by the Imperial Government in the United Kingdom.

³⁰⁹ NAZ ZG2 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, 1906.

³¹⁰ Ibid., NAZ ZG2 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, First Session, 4th Council, 24 June 1908, pp. 85-86.

³¹¹ Ibid.

The Company was reluctant to follow this path in 1908. Starr Jameson, a member of the Company's Board of Directors in 1913 dismissed the settlers concerns as being motivated by jealousy. He stated;

we had better be frank- there has been a tendency to [be] jealousy on the part of the people of Rhodesia at many of the commercial transactions of the Chartered Company in the interests of the Shareholders...there is no cause at all for the jealousies I have mentioned - that as we - the Chartered Company - on our commercial side succeed, so will the people of Rhodesia.³¹²

This was contrary to the real belief of the settlers, whose position was not motivated by jealousy of the commercial success of the Company, but by their desire for their country to develop as, in their view, there were “funds which constituted a considerable portion of revenue of this country which could not be put to the vote at all because it was claimed it was the private property of the Company.”³¹³

‘Provide Adequate Labour!’ The Native Labour Question

The labour question was a foundational element to the quest to make settler agriculture a success. There was always labour shortage in the Company period, and this was of great concern in all sectors of the colonial economy, especially agriculture. The situation was particularly dire for settler agriculture because the sector was not in as strong an economic position as mining, which tended to offer relatively higher wages. Writing to the Secretary to the Treasury in 1908, the Secretary for Agriculture complained that labour was a “big question with the farmers who are very much handicapped by not having a continuous supply of native labour for carrying on their operations”, as the farming industry “(could) not pay the same

³¹² Proceedings, 27 February 1913, p. 7.

³¹³ NAZ ZG2 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates (First Session, 4th Council), 24 June 1908, pp. 85-86.

wages for labour as the mining industry.”³¹⁴ As will be shown in succeeding chapters, it was this shortage of labour in the agricultural sector that partly contributed to lack of progress in relation to the erection of conservation works on settler farms. Nearly all the available labour on settler farms was utilized on the immediate needs of agricultural production, with little effort put into the construction of conservation works.

The shortage of labour left many farmers in a very difficult position as they had to toil to get their subsistence. One farmer, who only identified himself as Jelliman, wrote to the Rhodesia Herald in 1909;

Many of us have to herd our own cattle and do everything ourselves. Man, wife and children have to work like slaves...I have had to do all sorts of trades, but the hardest job ever I fell in for is looking after baboons, trying to keep them out of the lands. I am sure my black brother often has a quiet smile when he knows I have to be up at dawn, running about the hills, shouting like a madman up to my neck in wet grass.³¹⁵

What made the situation unacceptable in Jelliman’s eyes was that there was untapped labour in the reserves. As he put it,

...here adjoining us is a native reserve with hundreds of able-bodied men, and perhaps five times as many youngsters, and yet for goods and money, we cannot get one. All intelligent boys go to the mines and towns, where there is more pay.³¹⁶

The disparities in remuneration on mines and farms meant that many Africans preferred to offer their labour on the mines than on farms.

³¹⁴ NAZ T2/2/12 Farms and Farming Labour.1890-1923. Letter from Secretary for Agriculture to the Secretary to the Treasury, 20 July 1908.

³¹⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Letter to the Editor from A. R. Jelliman, Friday March 12, 1909, p. 5.

³¹⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

Conflict between Farmers and Miners over Timber

There was no forestry legislation in the country at the launch of WAP in 1908, except for regulations governing the harvest of timber in close proximity to stream banks promulgated under the Mining Ordinance of 1903. Mapedza views the Commissioning of a South African expert in 1910, J. Sim, as the year from which Rhodesian forestry policies began to evolve.³¹⁷ Comprehensive forestry legislation was, however, only enacted in 1948, culminating in the formation of a parastatal, the Forestry Commission, to oversee the use and preservation of the colony's timber resources in 1954.³¹⁸

Regulations giving miners and prospectors permission to exploit timber on private property such as farms were a source of irritation in the agricultural community in the early colonial period. This was because a farmer who owned land under the Gold Belt titles, for example, could never become the owner of timber resources on his farm, and could not control or limit its exploitation. Gold belt titles were a special type of titles that were issued by the Company in areas where gold was in significant quantities. These titles were meant to ensure that farming would not stand in the way of profitable mining ventures in the event that minerals were discovered and a mining company wanted to commence operations.

The two major pillars of the settler economy - mining and later commercial agriculture – from the onset, operated in a way that caused forest degradation and soil erosion. Largely because miners often received preference in timber and energy use from the government because of their bigger contribution to state revenue, a conflict between miners and farmers over forest exploitation inevitably erupted in the colony. One large scale farmer in the Cape Colony, Herbert Dale, observed on his visit to the country in January 1908;

³¹⁷ Mapedza, "Forestry Policy in Colonial and Postcolonial Zimbabwe", p. 841.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 841.

I venture to think that among all the varied complaints it is the settler who has the greatest real grievance against the Company. It has apparently been the policy of the Chartered Company to regard mining as the premier industry of the country, with the result that privileges have been accorded to those interested in this class of work at the expense of the settler proper; so that at present the title to the land is such that no practical man would accept it, and is thus anything but an inducement to the most valuable class of settler, i.e. the man who means to cultivate the land.³¹⁹

The preference for the mining industry had its roots on the envisaged colony in 1890. Upon colonization the Company and the settlers thought that they would make their money from a second Witwatersrand in the colony. Even after it became apparent that the colony would not get an extraordinary windfall from the colony's mining enterprises, the Company's policies remained heavily tilted in favour of the mining industry.

Ecological Concerns in the Settler Agricultural Sector

Ecological concerns over diminishing natural resources in colonial Zimbabwe emerged originally over European-owned land. Soil erosion was reported as early as 1908. Erosion was largely due to inappropriate cultivation methods and uncontrolled use of forest resources, mainly by mining interests, motivated by short-term economic interests and also as mining enterprises strived to keep expenses and overheads low as the majority of them were under-capitalized.³²⁰ The Company's rudimentary conservation policy was not enforced. This situation was worsened by the fact that, during the early days of occupation, most settler farmers were still settling down and were generally new to the Southern Rhodesian ecological environment. This, in addition to the fact that the local environment was misunderstood, meant that resource conservation and preservation was not on top of their priority list.

³¹⁹ *The Rhodesia Herald*, Thursday January 30, 1908, p. 3.

³²⁰ Kwashirai, "Dilemmas in Conservationism."

Jacks and Whyte put it that the “white man’s burden” in the early years was “to come to terms with the soil and plant world, and for many reasons it promised to be a heavier burden than coming to terms with the natives.”³²¹ Were the settlers interested in coming to terms with the environment and to preserve and conserve the colony’s resources? Conservation was overshadowed by commercial interests of the Company and of players in mining and agriculture. The settlers were so pre-occupied with maximizing agricultural productivity and to earn their livelihood without paying due attention to the long term condition of the soil. There is no evidence that conservation was seen as essential on settler-owned land.

Under pressure from white settlers and in pursuance of its own economic interests, the Company government appropriated more and more prime land and made investments in the railway and road infrastructure to promote tobacco, maize and cotton production for export, in the absence of a conservation framework. Kwashirai has observed that Company, and later Responsible government officials, largely ignored the advice of their agricultural officials. This was probably because taking such advice would have had financial implications of the Company; any programme would have required the government to increase its agricultural staff to give it the capacity to implement government schemes. The Department of Agriculture, which was composed of 13 branches “responsible for various agricultural matters including soil and water conservation”, was always understaffed and underfunded.³²²

As early as 1908 Lionel Cripps, leader of the influential Rhodesia Agricultural Union and first speaker of the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Council, drew attention to the evils of the erosion that was already taking place on settler land. Writing in The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal in 1908, Cripps stated that;

³²¹ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 54, quoting from G. V. Jacks and R. O. Whyte, 1939, Rape of the Earth: A World Survey of Soil Erosion, London, Faber and Faber.

³²² Kwashirai, “Dilemmas in Conservationism”, p. 546.

Tilling of the land is one of the chief causes of the loss of much valuable soil, and it is for us to think out ways and means for preventing this...it is better to get a smaller crop and save the soil than by thorough cultivation to endeavour to secure a larger return and lose soil that can never be replaced. We have the experience of other countries where former fertile pastures are now howling deserts, and where the ever recurring cry of drought is the direct result of bad systems of farming, and of overstocking, causing a reckless waste of natural resources.³²³

Cripps went on to suggest a number of ways through which the land could be worked with minimal damage to the soil. He said that it was recommended that farmers;

Cut trenches on the upper side of cultivated areas to carry off storm water before it can reach loosened soil. Speaking from experience, I would suggest that the land be cultivated in narrow strips, 30 to 100 yards in width, according to the slope of the ground, and that, at least six feet of virgin veldt be left on each strip.³²⁴

Cripps held the view that it was not proper for farmers to blame the weather for erosion, as it was their methods that the elements acted on, resulting in erosion;

it is by overstocking and improperly tilling his land that man lends his assistance to the rains and wind, and to save himself from the ruin that can be wrought, it is necessary that he take time by the forelock and realise the truth of the old saying that 'prevention is better than cure'.³²⁵

The need for immediate conservation remedies in this early period was, however, overshadowed by the Company's desperation to restore the value of its depreciating shares on the London Stock Exchange.³²⁶

³²³ The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1908, p. 670. Also see Elliot, "Soil Erosion and Conservation in Zimbabwe", p. 54 and NAZ S482 291/39, The Natural Resources Commission, quoting from the Rhodesia Agricultural Journal.

³²⁴ The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, p. 670.

³²⁵ Ibid, p. 670.

³²⁶ Phimister, "Reconstruction of the Rhodesian Gold-Mining Industry."

In 1913, another agrarian official in the colony, W. Martin Watt, raised concern about the impact poor farming activities of settler farmers was having on the soil. Watt was an agricultural engineer who also contributed to the colony's most important agricultural publication, The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal. Among the poor methods cited by Watt were rampant tree-cutting and grass-burning, overstocking, and erosion caused by stock.³²⁷

As the next chapter shows, although ecological concerns over diminishing natural resources originally emerged over settler land, African farming areas were the first to be targeted for conservation programmes. State regulation of the reserves was not simply to control environmental degradation. According to Mackenzie it was also meant to control soil erosion in African areas as largely a consequence of “segregationist imperatives” to ensure on one hand that African Agriculture would not collapse and on the other hand to ensure that the African peasant sector would subsidize the capitalist sectors which paid low wages.³²⁸

End of Company Rule

With the end of the First World War in 1918, European migration, which had declined sharply during the war period, began to increase with the number of immigrants coming to the country rising from 1 828 in 1918 to 2 542 in 1919 and 4 093 in 1920.³²⁹ Though this should have been good news for the Company because of profits accruing from land sales, the Company had been dealt a major blow in 1918. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had passed a judgement on the ownership of the colony's land, that it belonged to the Crown,

³²⁷ NAZ S482 291/39, The Natural Resources Commission. Also see William Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservation and Ideas about Development”, p. 56.

³²⁸ Mackenzie, The Empire and Nature, p. 271.

³²⁹ Mlambo, “Building a White Man's Country”, p. 127.

not to the Company.³³⁰ This meant that the land could not be sold to enhance the Company's profits.

This scenario had a double impact: the Company lost interest in governing the colony and, therefore, the future governance of Southern Rhodesia had to be decided. Following the judgement of the Privy Council the Company lost interest in continued administration of the territory as land had accounted for a good part of profits. The Company Directors made the decision that they would not seek to extend the Company's Supplementary Charter on its expiry in 1924. With this scenario the Buxton Committee was appointed on 7 March 1921 to look into how the colony would be administered in a post-Company period. The Committee proposed a referendum to determine whether the electorate wanted Responsible Government or accession to the Union of South Africa as its fifth province. The settlers chose Responsible Government.

Conclusion

Soil conservation was not a priority for farmers and the administration during the Company period. This was because of the status of the majority of land owners. Many individuals and companies had purchased land for speculative purposes, hoping that rich mineral deposits would be found on their land, which would raise its value. As for farmers who ventured into farming, the majority did not have requisite agricultural knowledge and capital to fund their operations. This meant that the little resources available were committed to production, not conservation. A number of factors militated against the colony's development in general; there was conflict between the Company and its shareholders on one hand, and settlers on the other. The shareholders pressed for a return on their investment while the settlers fought the

³³⁰ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 93.

Company over perceived favouritism of the mining sector, labour shortage and ownership of land. The settlers were successful on the land ownership wrangle, as the determination by the Privy Council proved. After the ruling by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Committee in 1918, the Company lost interest in administering the colony.

This chapter has shown the reasons that stood in the way of soil conservation in the Company period. Though there was not much progress in that regards, the basis for a soil conservation framework in the future was nevertheless laid. The settler population on the land increased in the Company period, WAP went a long way in establishing a relatively sound white agrarian sector in the country and the ruling by the Judicial Committee laid the foundation for the Company's exit from administering the colony. As the next chapter shows, the settlers chose Responsible Government over becoming a fifth province of South Africa. The next chapter examines this development and assesses whether this move represented continuity or change, and whether Responsible government brought a change of fortunes as far as soil conservation on white farms is concerned.

Chapter 3: Soil Conservation and the Politics of Transition: Settler Agriculture under Responsible Government, c. 1924-34.

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the critical role played by the Company in setting up agricultural infrastructure such as experimental farms, research stations, railways and a Land Bank after the launch of the White Agricultural Policy (WAP) in 1908. This infrastructure was strategically deployed to deal with two major shortcomings of the colony's pioneer white farmers; lack of requisite agricultural knowledge and undercapitalization. The railways were vital for agricultural marketing. Soil conservation was, however, not integrated into the Company's agrarian policy. A few lone voices by individuals such as Lionel Cripps, one of the founder members and leaders of the Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU) and also the first speaker of the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council and Martin Watt, an agricultural engineer by training, clamoured for the Company and settler farmers to swiftly address the problem of soil erosion on the farms. Their advice did not find many takers; the Company's hands were full, as it focused on other issues such as dissatisfaction from its two major constituencies; its shareholders and the colony's settler population.

The Company's shareholders grew more and more impatient with each year as the Company failed to declare a dividend, while the settler population had an array of grievances over the way the Company was executing its governmental functions. The grievances ranged from dissatisfaction with their representation in the all-white legislative council (which required to

be increased to reflect the rising white population³³¹), Company monopoly of the railways, perceived favouritism of the mining sector over white agriculture, African labour shortages, land ownership and the Company's handling of finances, to mention a few.

The question of land ownership, which had been put before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 1914, was brought to finality in 1918. The Committee ruled that land in the colony did not belong to the Company, but to the Crown.³³² This determination had a direct bearing on the colony's future. The Company lost interest in administering the colony as land had constituted one of its major assets from which it expected to profit. The majority of settlers welcomed the verdict, as they had also aspired to be weaned off Company administration. Britain gave the colony the right to choose how it wanted to be governed at the expiry of the Company's Charter in 1923. The two options on the ballot were to either accede to the Union of South Africa as its fifth province or to opt for internal self-rule, more commonly known in the colony as Responsible Government status. The settlers, a small population numbering around 35 000,³³³ chose self-rule.³³⁴

This chapter examines the road to self-rule in the colony and progress of soil conservation in the first 10 years under Responsible Government. It also explores whether the Responsible Government represented continuity or change. Land segregation in the Responsible government period is also given attention. Only a year after it came to power, the Charles Coghlan-led government appointed a Land Commission (1925) and subsequently enacted the Land Apportionment Act in 1930. Land apportionment in the colony is important as it

³³¹ This chapter deals with these grievances as they affected farmers. It is, however, important to note that settlers, and indeed farmers, were not a homogenous group. For more on this see C. Leys, 1982, European Politics in Southern Rhodesia, Westport, Greenwood Press.

³³² Lee, "Politics and Pressure Groups", p. 189.

³³³ For more on white demography in colonial Zimbabwe see Mlambo, "Building a White Man's Country."

³³⁴ M. Chanock, 1977, Unconsummated Union: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1900-45, Manchester, Manchester University Press, p. 158.

determined the direction the soil conservation movement took in each land category from the 1930s and 1940s onwards. This is because conservation programmes were not uniformly applied in African farming areas and on settler farms. McGregor has observed; “the history of its (conservation) implementation in Zimbabwe is one of authoritarianism and discrimination. For settlers, conservation entailed financial and other incentives: for Africans, it entailed coercion and punitive restrictions on resource use.”³³⁵

Secondly, this chapter examines the agricultural crisis from the late 1920s and the rise of the international conservation discourse in the early 1930s. The chapter argues that the Responsible government did not pursue a change agenda in its first decade. Though a little progress in relation to construction of anti-erosion works such as contour ridges was made on settler farms from the late 1920s, there was no attempt by the government to include soil conservation, either in its land apportionment policies in the 1920s, or in its landmark land apportionment legislation of 1930. On the contrary, it is in the African reserves that conservation was first vigorously pursued, starting in 1926, with Emory Alvord’s appointment as “Chief Agriculturalist for the Instruction of Natives.”³³⁶

Finally, the chapter argues that macro-economic realities, beginning with the tobacco and maize slumps of the late 1920s and the Great Depression from 1929, forced the government’s hand in relation to conservation as, by the early 1930s, it became clear that in the absence of a soil conservation programme, settler agriculture would not survive. This chapter examines soil conservation in the first decade of Responsible government. The agricultural crisis in the

³³⁵ McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change”, p. 257.

³³⁶ D. A. Mungazi, 1998, *Colonial Agriculture for Africans: Emory Alvord’s Policy in Zimbabwe*, New York, Peter Lang and NAZ, E. D. Alvord, 1958, “The Development of Native Agriculture and Land Tenure in Southern Rhodesia.”

period laid the foundation for major changes in soil management from the second half of the 1930s.

Lost Years: Transition from Company rule to Responsible Government

Prior to 1918 the Company held that the colony's land belonged to it. It justified its ownership on three premises; conquest (of the Ndebele in the 1893 war of dispossession and of the Ndebele and Shona in the 1896-7 uprisings), treaties signed by Lobengula, the King of the Ndebele (the Rudd Concession of October 1888, by which he ceded mineral rights to the Company and the Lippert Treaty obtained by Edward Amandus Lippert in April 1891 and sold to the Company that same year by which Lobengula ceded his land rights)³³⁷ and, finally, the Royal Charter (granted to Rhodes by the Imperial Government in April 1889).³³⁸ The colony's white community, on the other hand, argued that the company held the land;

...only as Administrator for the benefit of the settlers; that is, that the values created by the Company belonged to the public revenue, and that whenever (Company) administration should cease, the land then unsold would vest in some future government, so that the proceeds of sales and rent would no longer accrue to (the Company) as just compensation for past expenditure.³³⁹

The 1918 verdict of the Judicial Committee noted above had serious commercial implications for the Company, principally that land could not be used to produce resources for payment of a dividend to its long-suffering shareholders. This decision did not go down well with the Company and its shareholders.

³³⁷ For more on these treaties see A. Keppel-Jones, 1960, "The Occupation of Mashonaland", Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, 39, 1, pp. 74-82.

³³⁸ NAZ ZG2, Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, 1906.

³³⁹ Proceedings, 7 August 1918, p. 2.

“Now we are told,” complained John Hedges, a shareholder, at the Company’s Annual Meeting in London in 1922;

...that the land does not belong to us. That appears to me to be a scandalous state of affairs. The Charter was granted to the Company by the Government, and if the spirit of Cecil Rhodes were to appear among us today, he would be, I feel sure, scandalized to think that the land which we acquired at such heavy cost and have developed at our own expense should be taken from us.³⁴⁰

The Company began to reconsider whether to continue with its administrative role in the colony. It found that future administration of the colony, in the context of the Judicial Committee’s determination, would not be a profitable enterprise. With the removal of “the grounds on which the Company had based its administration”, the Company “lost its incentive to continue in an administrative capacity.”³⁴¹ The Company had not been able to declare a dividend for its shareholders from 1890, when it could accumulate revenue from land sales. Prospects for this to happen clearly became even dimmer in the wake of the ruling. “(The) judgement has fundamentally modified the Company’s position in regard to the land of Southern Rhodesia, and, therefore, our future policy of expenditure on development,” the Company’s Board of Directors announced to shareholders in July 1922.³⁴² The governing of the colony had, according to the Directors;

...caused a regular deficit in (the Company’s) accounts, which absorbed all of whatever profits were made elsewhere. There was no doubt in Company circles at London Wall that the time was coming when its activities must be confined to commerce, industry and finance.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ Proceedings, 28 July 1922, p. 14.

³⁴¹ Lee, “Politics and Pressure Groups”, p. 189.

³⁴² Proceedings, 28 July 1922, p. 2.

³⁴³ A. J. Wills, 1985, An Introduction to the History of Central Africa: Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 243.

The Company lost interest in continued administration of the colony. The Directors made the decision not to seek an extension of the Company's Supplementary Charter (granted at the expiry of the Royal Charter in 1915) after its expiry in 1924.³⁴⁴ Their immediate reaction to the Judicial Committee's determination was that they began to seek ways of getting compensation to the tune of close to £8 million for administering the colony since its occupation in 1890.³⁴⁵ The Company's loss of interest in administering the colony from 1918 meant that, in addition to the slow-down caused by the First World War, the colony had to endure another six years without a committed administration, as, on one hand, the Company wound up its governmental operations, while, on the other, attention in the colony was fixated on governance in the post-Company period.

The majority of the settlers, like the Company's Board of Directors, were also not in favour of continued Company administration. One settler's letter to the Editor of the Rhodesia Herald in 1919 encapsulated most settlers' reaction to the Privy Council determination. He wrote;

There is no denying the fact that the whole country is calling out for a change of Government, and I think that the British South Africa Company is also fully alive to the fact that Rhodesia has arrived at that stage in her history when it is no longer desirable to have a commercial company as a governing body.³⁴⁶

A small number of settlers had, from the first decade of occupation, exhibited their disapproval of the colony being administered by a commercial company. The settlers "reasoned that the private interests of the shareholders necessarily must outweigh the public ones", with the result that as early as 1901, a candidate stood in the Legislative Council

³⁴⁴ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 93.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 93.

³⁴⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday August 28, 1919, p. 6.

elections on a ticket advocating the end of Company rule.³⁴⁷ A cornucopia of factors informed settlers' resentment of Company rule. As B. Mtshali puts it;

What particularly irked the settlers was their failure to quickly find the rich and long-promised gold deposits. Furthermore, in their grim struggle to eke out an existence, they had to pay taxes to the Company, which acted both as ruler on behalf of the Crown and as a money-making enterprise with primary responsibility to its shareholders. This situation was unacceptable but tolerable as long as the Company made no profit... When the Company began to balance its books in 1907 and to show a profit, the situation became intolerable. The Company ploughed the profits back into its public and commercial activities so that money raised through taxation thus served a double purpose: it not only paid for Government but also provided revenue for the Company.³⁴⁸

In addition to these grievances, settlers were also not happy with their representation in the Legislative Council. This improved in 1914 when the Company increased the number of elected members from seven to twelve, while the Company's appointees were reduced from seven to five. This was a major improvement in comparison with the period prior to 1908 when the settlers only had four elected members against seven Company appointees.³⁴⁹

Resentment of Company administration had progressively increased among the settler population over the years. Ethel Tawse Jollie, an eloquent legislator with the distinction of being the first elected female parliamentarian in Britain's overseas colonies, was one of the most vocal critics of Company rule. Jollie articulated settler sentiments in her publications, which are important for the light they shed on the interface between the local socio-political and economic environment during and after Company rule and the evolution of settler perceptions, attitudes and responses.³⁵⁰ Similarly, Charles Coghlan, a Jesuit-educated

³⁴⁷ B. V. Mtshali, 1967, Rhodesia: Background to Conflict, New York, Hawthorn Books, Inc., p. 60.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 60.

³⁴⁹ See NAZ ZG2 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates for 1903, 1908, 1913 and 1914. The issue of settler representation in the legislature is a recurring subject in legislative sessions.

³⁵⁰ The most notable of these publications by Jollie are The Future of Rhodesia (Bulawayo, 1917), "Britain's Youngest Colony" (The National Review, 1923, London, 2, 489, pp. 447-459), The Real Rhodesia (London,

Bulawayo and, later, Salisbury lawyer, was among the most outspoken advocates of self-government. Coghlan had started in 1902 to denounce the dual role of the Company (as the administrator of the territory and as a commercial undertaking seeking to make profits for its shareholders) as “repugnant to anyone of British stock.”³⁵¹ In 1917 a Responsible Government Association was formed, with Coghlan as its Chairman, to press for the end of Company administration and for self-rule. The determination of the Privy Council, and the Company’s position that “under [that] situation [Privy Council ruling] ...it is practically impossible...to get money for capital expenditure...[which] obviously creates very considerable difficulties”³⁵², gave, according to Marguerite Elaine Lee, “the young responsible government movement a strong case for early termination of Company rule.”³⁵³ The movement (Responsible Government Association) had, by the 1920 election, transformed itself into a political party.³⁵⁴

The fact that both the Company and settlers in the colony desired a new administrative arrangement for the colony necessitated the appointment of another Commission in February 1921, led by Lord Buxton, to recommend to the Crown the best option for effective governance of the colony in a post-Company period. The question of the colony’s administration in a post- Company era was not a new question; it had been considered as early as 1915 when the Company’s Royal Charter, which had been granted for twenty-five years in 1890, expired. Though the Company was given a supplementary nine-year charter, the document contained a clause providing for settler self-rule in the future in the event that the colony’s legislature overwhelmingly supported the proposition and that it could be proven

Hutchinson and Son, 1924) and “Europeans in Africa: Some Thoughts on the Hilton Young Report”, The Countryside, 1929.

³⁵¹ Mtshali, Rhodesia: Background to Conflict, p. 60.

³⁵² Lee, “Politics and Pressure Groups”, p. 197, quoting a statement from a Company official at the Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU) Congress of 1919.

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 197.

³⁵⁴ Wills, An Introduction to the History of Central Africa, p. 242.

that such a status would be tenable in financial and other respects. It stated that self-rule would be seriously considered;

If at any time after 29 October, 1915, the Legislative Council of Southern Rhodesia shall, by an absolute majority... pass a resolution praying the Crown to establish in Southern Rhodesia the form of Government known as Responsible Government, and shall support such resolution with evidence showing that the condition of the territory financially and in other respects is such as to justify the establishment of such Government.³⁵⁵

The Buxton Commission was asked to examine this issue and make appropriate recommendations. The Commission reported its findings on 7 March 1921, recommending that a referendum was the best way to solve the question of the colony's future.³⁵⁶

Liberty in Rags or Well-fed Tutelage? Self-Rule versus Accession

There were four seemingly feasible possibilities: putting the colony under the domain of the Colonial Office (as was the case with Nyasaland), amalgamation with Northern Rhodesia (which was also administered by the British South Africa Company), internal self-rule and, finally, accession to the Union of South Africa as its fifth province. The Commission narrowed down these options to just two, self-rule and accession. This was because the Commission realised that both amalgamation and the Colonial Office option were not popular with settlers in Southern Rhodesia.³⁵⁷ Of these four possibilities self-rule and accession were clearly more popular in the colony. The Union of South Africa's constitution had a clause that provided for the absorption of the colony and the Union Government, led by General Smuts, "was anxious that Southern Rhodesia should join it, and was prepared to offer generous terms

³⁵⁵ Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*, p. 242.

³⁵⁶ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 93.

³⁵⁷ Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*, p. 306.

– far more generous than the Company could hope to obtain from the British Government.”³⁵⁸

According to Robert Blake;

Smuts had by this stage become very keen indeed on securing Rhodesia. Party politics played their part. His long-term as opposed to his immediate political position was none too safe. His advances in the 1921 election had been at the cost of the Labour party. His real enemies, the nationalists, actually gained one seat and obtained 6 000 more votes than in 1920. A bloc of Rhodesian seats bound to vote on his side would be a great help, as his opponents naturally pointed out.³⁵⁹

A large number of settlers in the colony were anti-Union. As the Rhodesia Herald put it, “many Rhodesians (were) intensely loyal to the British connection, and they (viewed) the headway made in recent years in the Union by the Nationalist Party with apprehension no less than disgust.”³⁶⁰

Many settlers had, according to Willis, a “common political creed” whose essence “compounded of a desire for self-government, a dislike of Crown Colony status, and a feeling that Union with the south would mean loss of individuality.”³⁶¹ Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, one of the colony’s founding fathers mostly remembered for his disastrous ‘Jameson Raid’ on Paul Kruger’s Transvaal Republic in 1895, energetically opposed Union. In one of his anti-Union speeches before his death in 1917, he asked;

What is going to happen to this young, vigorous Rhodesian child when it gets into the bed of that large corpulent mother, the Union? What always happens? In this case at all events all your aspirations are going to be killed, and at the inquest next morning, the verdict will be ‘overlaid by the Union.’³⁶²

³⁵⁸ Wills, An Introduction to the History of Central Africa, p. 243.

³⁵⁹ R. Blake, 1977, A History of Rhodesia, London, Eyre Methuen, p. 182.

³⁶⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday July 17, 1919, p. 3.

³⁶¹ Wills, An Introduction to the History of Central Africa, p. 244.

³⁶² Jollie, The Real Rhodesia, p. 64.

There were, however, also many settlers who thought that their economic welfare and that of the colony in general would significantly improve if they joined the Union. To start with, there were many anti-British Afrikaner farmers in farming areas such as Enkeldoorn, who, according to Ethel Tawse Jollie, constituted only a “numerically inconsiderable enclave.”³⁶³ This small Afrikaner community had a good reason for their preference for the Union; they were largely treated as second class and exposed to a lot of prejudice and xenophobia by settlers of British extraction.³⁶⁴

Apart from Afrikaner farmers, there were other farmers who felt that joining the Union was a logical step purely for economic considerations. These farmers believed that accession would benefit the colony’s agricultural sector. One settler catalogued the benefits in the Rhodesia Herald, stating;

Agriculture would benefit by the cheaper rates under the Union Railway Administration as it would in numerous other directions – we would have the direct assistance of the technical staff of the Union and the advantage of their agricultural schools and colleges. The facilities of the Union Land Bank would be placed at the disposal of the rural community of Rhodesia, who would also be able to make direct use of the Union’s overseas organisation to assist them in opening up new markets for their products.³⁶⁵

According to Ian Phimister, the majority of ranchers and tobacco growers, whose industries so much depended on the South African market, overwhelmingly voted for Union while Mashonaland maize farmers mostly voted for internal self-rule.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday July 17, 1919, p. 3.

³⁶⁴ See F. Clements, 1969, The Course to Collision, London, Pall Mall Press and R. Hodder-Williams, 1974, “Afrikaners in Rhodesia: A Partial Portrait”, African Social Research, 18.

³⁶⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday October 20, 1922, p. 20.

³⁶⁶ Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, p. 116.

The pro-self-rule lobby led by Coghlan, however, felt that “liberty in rags” was better than “well fed tutelage.” “He (Smuts) wants more votes in the parliament,” Coghlan observed after a meeting with General Smuts in Cape Town in 1921;

I must say my mission to see him was a failure. I had hoped I might get him to stop the Union business, but he cannot understand the psychology of Rhodesians... I failed to make him understand that the question of Rhodesia was not a matter of the ins and outs of an ordinary contested election, but the matter of a people with a soul to be saved as well as a body to be kicked...³⁶⁷

Nationalist and pro-British Empire sentiments were invoked in the debate for either self-rule or accession to the Union. “Rhodesia for Rhodesians, Rhodesia for the Empire” became the rallying slogan used by Coghlan and other proponents of self-rule.³⁶⁸ While the Company and the two daily newspapers of the territory preferred accession, their influence in the territory in terms of financial resources for the campaign and ability to disseminate pro-Union propaganda could not drown the voices of settlers who advocated for self-rule.³⁶⁹ As Coghlan wrote in a letter to his sister, Bella, on 22 June 1921;

We have so far triumphed all along the line in the fight to manage our own affairs, and this in spite of great odds. The reptile press, the influence of the Chartered Company, the machinations of the non-Rhodesian capitalists and politicians, with their local satellites, have all been against us. We have had no friends but the ‘man in the street’, but in Rhodesia he is not quite the fool that some people think. ..The Unionists here are still trying to make people believe how wonderfully well off financially we shall be when once we are in the fold; but it takes a lot of argument to convince people that a state which has a deficit in its revenue of six millions, about twenty-five percent of its total annual income, and has no money to spend on capital development...can be of much use to a smaller state which is paying its way and which can spend a little extra on the progress of the country...³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ J. P. R. Wallis, 1950, One Man’s Hand: The Story of Sir Charles Coghlan and the Liberation of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia Publishing Co., p. 180.

³⁶⁸ Blake, A History of Rhodesia, p. 186.

³⁶⁹ A. J. Hanna, 1965, The Story of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, London, Faber and Faber, p. 160.

³⁷⁰ Wallis, One Man’s Hand, pp. 177-8.

The stakes were further upped in August 1922 when General Smuts visited the territory, ostensibly on a “non-political” visit, to officially open the country’s agriculture and cattle show.

Smuts offered the Company £5 million as compensation for expenses incurred in governing the territory. This was more than the Imperial Government eventually paid. To the settlers he “dangled the prospects of loans for irrigation schemes, land settlement and general development, apart from ten seats in the South African Parliament, four in the Senate, a Provincial Council of twenty members, and for Coghlan, a Cabinet post.”³⁷¹ This visit may have backfired, and what he had to offer may not have been tempting enough to make the electorate change their perceptions of the Union, as in Smuts’ own words there were many in Southern Rhodesia who were “afraid of our bilingualism, our nationalism, [and] my views of the British Empire.”³⁷²

For the Company, the money offered was bait, leading to its supporting accession. White farmers who supported joining the Union had different interests from the Company. The question about which of two options would result in the colony’s best interests being served in terms of conservation was neither asked nor salient in the decision whether to vote for accession or self-rule. The settlers chose Responsible Government in the October 1922 plebiscite. Close to nine thousand (8 774) votes were cast for Responsible Government, while 5 989 were for accession to the Union. Southern Rhodesia was “formally annexed to the Crown” on 12 September 1923 and on 1 October 1923 the colony acquired a new constitutional status, namely; self-rule.³⁷³

³⁷¹ Mtshali, *Rhodesia: Background to Conflict*, p. 62.

³⁷² Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 186.

³⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 161.

Whither Jameson's 'Young, Vigorous Rhodesian Child'?

The Company's loss of interest in continued administration of the colony had implications on conservation. Between 1908 and 1918 the Company had been pre-occupied with other matters, with the result that very little took place in relation to conservation and, as the colony became absorbed in debates and campaigns about its future after 1918, this situation persisted. Conservation was, again, relegated to the backseat. The only two significant events in relation to conservation took place in 1917 and in 1921.

In 1917 the Water Court carried out an investigation of the hydrological condition of the Mazoe River. The court was established after the promulgation of the Water Ordinance of 1913, with Robert McIlwaine as judge, to regulate the use of public streams and other water bodies in the colony. The investigation drew attention to the increasing problem of soil erosion, which, the Court feared, was having a big effect of water supplies. This culminated in the introduction of new regulations under the Mining Law to protect timber located in proximity to public streams.³⁷⁴ In 1921 an official government pamphlet, "Soil Washing", was launched by the Irrigation Engineer, A. C. Jennings to equip farmers with information regarding soil conservation.³⁷⁵ The pamphlet was advisory, not regulatory, in nature.

The new settler Government, with Coghlan as its Prime Minister, did not embark on a vigorous programme of change. It seems Coghlan chose to unite the country following a polarized political fight over the direction the country was to take post-1923. Because of the significant stake held by the Company in the Southern Rhodesian economy, and the significant levels of expertise and experience former Company employees in the

³⁷⁴ S. Chinhara, 1985, "The Natural Resources Board: Origins and Activities up to 1987 in Colonial Zimbabwe with Special Reference to Charter District", Bachelor of Arts Honours Dissertation, History Department, University of Zimbabwe, p. 4.

³⁷⁵ NAZ S432 921/9, The Natural Resources Commission.

administration were expected to make in the new administration, Coghlan also chose to effect gradual change, especially in relation to Company monopolies in the railways and its significant stake in mining. In terms of staffing, a number of office bearers in Coghlan's administration had links with the Company; the former Company Treasurer, Francis Newton, became Colonial Secretary before his promotion to High Commissioner in London in 1925, P. D. Fynn, (a Unionist who had campaigned for accession) who succeeded Newton as the Company's head of the Treasury, kept his job at the Government Treasury in the Responsible Government.³⁷⁶ Howard Unwin Moffat, a former employee of the Bechuanaland Exploration Company who was branded a "Company man", because of his close links with the Company, became the Minister of Mines and Public Works, a position he held till he became Premier in 1927 after Coghlan's death.³⁷⁷ Coghlan included people who had campaigned for accession to the Union, such as Fynn, in his cabinet. It was his view that burying the hatchet would be in the best interests of the country. Pursuant to this, Coghlan's party, the Responsible Government Party, changed its name to Rhodesia Party in the hope that this would help reduce polarization created by the pre-referendum campaign.³⁷⁸

There were no major changes to the agricultural sector either. According to D. J. Murray, "the transition from Chartered-government to Responsible settler government involved no fundamental change either in the policy towards agriculture or in the administrative system."³⁷⁹ Agriculture was treated the same way it had been treated by the Company, "as the second pillar - after gold mining - on which the economy of the colony would be erected."³⁸⁰ The Coghlan government's policy in relation to agriculture was that its agrarian agenda would

³⁷⁶ Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, pp. 65-6.

³⁷⁷ Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture", p. 49.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³⁷⁹ D. J. Murray, 1970, *The Governmental System of Southern Rhodesia*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 59.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

be “achieved through the operation of private enterprise.”³⁸¹ This approach, as the section on maize and tobacco will elaborate, resulted in the country’s tobacco and maize lands being ruined. Government restricted its role to agricultural research and giving farmers information in relation to farming, such as rainfall patterns.

The Department of Irrigation, which oversaw conservation matters, was understaffed. Management of the soil had, from the Company period, been left in the hands of one official at a time, namely, Martin Watt from 1910 to 1920, Jennings from 1921 to 1924, P. H. Haviland from 1925 to 1929 and D. Aylen from 1930 to 1942.³⁸² The Department of Irrigation had no capacity to roll out a big campaign on the farms. Because of this it confined itself to giving advice through its pamphlet “Soil Washing”, and giving advice at farmers’ gatherings such as at Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU) congresses.³⁸³ The Department had no clear-cut soil preservation policy. According to N. Hudson, the Department’s work was on a “trial and error” basis.³⁸⁴

A good proportion of settler farmers who had looked forward to the end of Company’s monopolies in the mining sector and the railways were left disappointed. This was because settler farmers had for a long time perceived the Company as giving preferential treatment to the mining sector over agriculture, while they also viewed the Company’s monopoly of the railways (whose tariffs were generally considered too high) as an impediment to agricultural marketing. The expectation that the Responsible Government would deal with the Company’s monopoly did not quickly materialize. The Company regarded its rights over the railways and

³⁸¹ Murray, The Governmental System, p. 60.

³⁸² Kwashirai, “Dilemmas in Conservation”, p. 546.

³⁸³ NAZ GEN/NAT, The Natural Resources Board (NRB): 25 Years of Progress in Conservation in Southern Rhodesia, Salisbury, NRB, 1966.

³⁸⁴ N. W. Hudson, 1963, “A Historical Background of Soil Erosion and its Control”, Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 60, pp. 54-72.

minerals as its “perks” for “having opened up the country.”³⁸⁵ Many sections of the settler community were further disappointed by the government’s purchase of mineral rights from the Company for £2 million in 1933, almost ten years after transition to self-rule.³⁸⁶ There was a general consensus that the amount paid could have been used to ameliorate the impacts of the Depression. This thinking was premised on the generally held view that the Company’s mineral rights were supposed to be transferred without a financial payment as the Chartered Company had accrued profits from the rights for over 40 years.³⁸⁷ The Company, in fact, continued to wield its commercial influence on the Responsible Government with the effect that “many settlers increasingly felt that the Rhodesia Party had sold out to Company monopolies and other large interests.”³⁸⁸

Land Settlement and Land Legislation in the Responsible Government Era

The Responsible Government, like the Company, aimed to settle more white people in the colony. The “hunt” for the settler of the “right stamp” – with adequate capital and sound agricultural know-how and sufficient endurance to start a new life in a relatively young colony, was, according to Ethel Tawse Jollie, like groping in the dark. “No one knows who will prove a good settler,” she observed, “Our High Commissioner and Emigration agents are always after the elusive quantity.”³⁸⁹ Josiah Brownell has put white emigration in its correct premise; Southern Rhodesia had a hole in its bucket, which meant that immigrants who came to the colony seldom developed roots in the territory before they moved elsewhere.³⁹⁰ Much as it was difficult to get good settlers, it was equally difficult to keep the settlers in Rhodesia.

³⁸⁵ Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 213.

³⁸⁶ Murray, *The Governmental System*, p. 132. Also see L. H. Gann, 1965, *A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1934*, London, Chatto and Windus, p. 292.

³⁸⁷ Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*, p. 252.

³⁸⁸ Murray, *The Governmental System*, p. 51.

³⁸⁹ Jollie, “Europeans in Africa”, p. 5.

³⁹⁰ J. Brownell, 2008, “The Hole in Rhodesia’s Bucket: White Emigration and the End of Settler Rule”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3, pp. 591-610. Also see, by the same author, *The Collapse of Rhodesia, Population Demographics and the Politics of Race*, (London, Tauris, 2011), p. 123.

Because of this “transience of the white population”,³⁹¹ Brownell argues that the colony’s whites had “shallow national loyalties.”³⁹² It is against this background (transience of the colony’s population), that the Responsible government pursued its immigration and land settlement policies.

For the Responsible government that “hunt” began in 1924. That year, the Empire exhibition was held at Wembley. This exhibition was the first opportunity for the Responsible Government to market the colony to would-be settlers. The colony’s tobacco “created tremendous interest...among British manufacturers and stimulated British interest in Rhodesia as an area of settlement.”³⁹³ The exhibition stimulated a “tobacco rush” between 1925 and 1928, resulting in several settlers migrating to the colony. In 1926 alone 2 568 settlers came to the colony, “of which no less than 1 298 were British home born, 990 British South Africa born and 280 South Africa Dutch born.”³⁹⁴

Apart from the perceived bright prospects of the Rhodesian tobacco industry, post-First World War economic dynamics, such as high levels of unemployment in Britain, were another important push factor for farmers such as C. Taylor, a Major in the British army during the war, who later became President of the Rhodesia Empire Settlers’ Association.³⁹⁵ The problem of unemployment in the post-war period was, however, not limited to Britain. In Southern Rhodesia the problem persisted right into the 1930s. The Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the Problem of Unemployment in the Colony (1932) highlighted the extent of the unemployment problem; the colony needed to intervene in labour issues to

³⁹¹ Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia*, p. 2.

³⁹² *Ibid*, p. 3.

³⁹³ V. E. M. Machingaidze, 1982, “Bankrupt Settler Farmers, Unemployment and State Response in Colonial Zimbabwe in the 1930s”, Conference on Zimbabwean History: Progress and Development, Harare, University of Zimbabwe, p. 1.

³⁹⁴ Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture”, p. 80.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 79.

ameliorate the problem.³⁹⁶ The British Government was keen to deal with the issue of unemployment by encouraging overseas emigration. In 1922 the Imperial Government passed the Empire Settlement Act which gave authority to the Colonial Secretary to set aside financial resources for the purpose of assisting Britons to emigrate to the Empire.³⁹⁷ Though such an exercise would be expensive, it was, in the eyes of the British government, a better evil than keeping the bulk of unemployed ex-servicemen reliant on state welfare schemes.

Three Empire Settlement Schemes were arranged in the 1920s. Under Scheme A (1925-1931), the Imperial Government and the Responsible Government jointly financed, on a 50-50 basis, the settlement of 100 Britons per year. Those assisted had to have at least £500 for single men, £1 000 for married men and an additional £100 for every additional child. Scheme B and C were operationalized in March 1928.³⁹⁸ Under scheme B the new settlers received agricultural training for 12 months under an experienced farmer before they were allocated land, while under scheme C established farmers in the colony were given the opportunity to nominate and recommend relatives and friends in the United Kingdom to come to the colony to work on farms on agreed terms.³⁹⁹ A major defect of the settlement schemes was that the majority of settlers who came to the colony with their own capital were of the professional and officer class who had been “accustomed to a higher standard of living and comfort than their capital (could) be expected to provide in Southern Rhodesia.”⁴⁰⁰

This fact was clearly shown by the rate at which the new settlers bought vehicles. Whereas capital requirements under Empire Settlement Scheme A, for example, provided only for the

³⁹⁶ See the Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the Problem of Unemployment in the Colony, 1932.

³⁹⁷ Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture”, pp. 79, 80, quoting The Empire Settlement Act, 1922, London.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-98.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91, 93.

⁴⁰⁰ NAZ S1193/L4, Letter from J. W. Downie, to the Prime Minister H. U. Moffat, titled “Land Settlement and Immigration”, dated 1 February, 1927.

purchase of mechanical and other equipment for farming purposes, the majority of the new settlers bought cars with part of the money. “I was surprised recently going round visiting new settlers,” J. Downie wrote to Sir F. Newton, the High Commissioner in London in September 1927, “to find that pretty well every one of them had bought a car and looked upon it as part of the ordinary equipment of farming.”⁴⁰¹ Clements and Harben have characterized the majority of settlers who came to the colony from the 1920s as “tactless”, “easy-going”, “of good background and with an expensive education but nothing else”, and “men who cultivated their farms from the veranda of Meikles Hotel, the great social gathering place in Salisbury.”⁴⁰² Like Company settlement schemes, the Empire Settlement Schemes of the 1920s did not integrate soil management at all.

By 1934 the general view in the colony was that state-assisted settlement programmes had to be stopped in favour of sponsoring and increasing the capacity of settlers already settled in Southern Rhodesia. The Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry reported in 1934; “your committee considers that no steps should be taken to encourage any further settlement by State-aided schemes, except to the extent of assisting sons of Rhodesian farmers to take up land.”⁴⁰³ The recommendation of the Committee to stop State-assisted passages for prospective farmers from the United Kingdom must be seen and understood in the context of the financial difficulties the colony was facing in the 1930s. Many settler farmers were on the brink of bankruptcy, many were debt-ridden while many

⁴⁰¹ NAZ S1193/L4, Letter from J. W. Downie, to the High Commissioner, Sir F. Newton, titled “Land Settlement and Immigration”, dated 23 September 1927.

⁴⁰² F. Clements and E. Harben, Leaf of Gold: The Story of Rhodesian Tobacco, London, Methuen and Company, p. 97-8.

⁴⁰³ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1934, p. 29.

were closing shop.⁴⁰⁴ In such an environment it made little sense to keep bringing people with little experience into the colony. The Committee recommended support for local farmers.

Towards Land Apportionment Legislation

Colonial authorities did not mince their words about their intention to pursue land apportionment on racial lines in the Responsible Government period. N. H. Wilson of the Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department stated in 1925: “We are in this country because we represent a higher civilization, because we are better men. It is our only excuse for having taken the land.”⁴⁰⁵ The colony’s Premier, Charles Coghlan, echoed this view when he addressed the all-settler Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly in 1927, saying: “This is essentially a country where the white man has come and desires to stay, and he can only be certain of doing so if he has certain portions of the colony made his exclusively.”⁴⁰⁶ As the government and the settlers soon found out, acquisition of land on its own, in the absence of environmentally-friendly and sustainable land-use practices was not adequate.

Responsible Government status gave settlers a perfect opportunity to proceed with their desire to have settler and African land demarcated into separate areas. Though Responsible Government status meant that the responsibility for African affairs was transferred from the Company to the new government, final authority in relation to decisions affecting Africans was vested in the Crown. This provision in the new constitution was meant, according to Gann, to protect Africans from possible abuses.⁴⁰⁷ In theory, the new constitution protected the interests of Africans from legislative excesses by the Responsible Government. In

⁴⁰⁴ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1934, pp. 28-32.

⁴⁰⁵ N. H. Wilson, Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department, 1925, as quoted by Floyd, “Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia”, p. 566.

⁴⁰⁶ Machingaidze, “Agrarian Change From Above”, p. 559.

⁴⁰⁷ Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia, p. 249.

practice, however, in spite of the requirement that all laws affecting the African population were supposed to receive the King's assent, it was difficult "to conceive of a case where the King would be advised to withhold his assent. In practice, the will of the local parliament may be said to be the dominant factor."⁴⁰⁸

The Morris Carter Land Commission (also known as the Land Commission) was set up by the settler government in 1925 to deal with the question of land segregation in the colony. Many factors informed settlers' desire for land segregation. As Henry Moyana puts it;

It was felt within the settler community that if Africans continued to enjoy the privilege of purchasing land anywhere they would soon pose a serious economic threat to would-be European farmers who would have to compete with the new class of African farmers....the South African Land Act of 1913 had a strong impact on settler thinking North of the Limpopo... But perhaps a factor which did much to arouse a deep feeling of insecurity among the settlers was their increasing consciousness of race as the ultimate determinant of human character. They then conceived themselves as a "white island" surrounded by a "sea of blacks" which would one day respond to the inevitable winds of change and swallow them in its fury. The war might have been instrumental in bringing about this feeling but whatever its causes, the settlers built around themselves walls of racial prejudice, buttressed by vested self-interests.⁴⁰⁹

Hodder-Williams also subscribes to this school of thought. According to him, the Land Commission was necessitated by the fact that in the years following the First World War there was, "a general feeling among articulate white leaders that some form of segregation between the races should be institutionalised."⁴¹⁰ Barry Floyd has characterized the Commission as having been established "for complete separation of races in respect to landholdings."⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ H. M. G. Jackson, 1934, "The Natives of Southern Rhodesia: Their Position after Ten Years under Responsible Government", *The African Observer*, 1, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁹ H. V. Moyana, 1984, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe*, Gweru, Mambo press, p. 57-8.

⁴¹⁰ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 121.

⁴¹¹ Floyd, "Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia", p. 577.

Ian Phimister has distinguished between what settlers were thinking when land apportionment legislation was conceived and their views at the time of its promulgation in 1930.⁴¹² The 1920s were characterized by a lot of confidence among successful farmers and fear among struggling farmers.⁴¹³ Confidence (among successful farmers) stemmed from two main factors; there was a boom in the white agrarian sector and emigration into the colony was at a peak as immigrants, attracted by the agricultural, especially the tobacco boom, took full advantage of the window of opportunity presented by the three Empire Settlement Schemes.⁴¹⁴ African advancement was not seen as a huge threat to these farmers in terms of its ability to compete on the markets; it was African tenancy on land held by speculative companies and individuals (and Africa land purchase in areas designated for white use) that threatened well-established farmers. Undercapitalized farmers feared getting “ousted” if African farmers were given the same access to land and the franchise.⁴¹⁵ African farming in European areas presented two threats, according to evidence given to the Morris Carter Commission; “bad methods of native farming” would cause a “depreciation of the value of neighbouring land” while African cattle was feared to potentially “spread disease among [their] crops and cattle.”⁴¹⁶

The settler mind-set changed drastically after the collapse of the markets for the colony’s three major agricultural commodities (maize, tobacco and beef cattle) in 1927.⁴¹⁷ While by the time the Land Commission was appointed in 1925, some African farmers were experiencing relative success in spite of restrictions imposed by the colonial system⁴¹⁸ and an apparent

⁴¹² Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 193-95.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 193, 194.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴¹⁸ I. R. Phimister, 1986, “Commodity Relations and Class Formation in the Zimbabwean Countryside, 1898-1920, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13, 4, pp. 240-57.

white poverty problem, which resulted in a few farmers selling their land to Africans,⁴¹⁹ this situation was tolerable as long as the maize, tobacco and cotton boom was in full swing. With the crush of the market for settler commodities, there were louder calls in white quarters for the swift introduction of a “pattern of physical separation of the races.”⁴²⁰ If this was not done, a legislator told the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly in 1939, “European farming... [would be] eliminated...and then there would be very little room for Europeans in Rhodesia.”⁴²¹ Land Apportionment legislation was viewed in a different way by settlers by the time of its promulgation in 1930; it had “assumed a new significance. As well as strengthening the imperatives of accumulation, it would underpin the exigencies of white survival in the countryside.”⁴²²

Recommendations of the Morris Carter Commission were incorporated in the 1930 Land Apportionment Act, which Pollak has characterised as the “white man’s bible” and a “Rhodesian form of apartheid”.⁴²³ Eira Punt has characterised the Act as an “attack on the African peasantry in order to safeguard (the settlers’) position.”⁴²⁴ The immediate effect of the Act was that it “marginalised African competition by dividing land along racial lines and preserving the best land in the colony for white settlers, while denying permanent and secure tenure to Africans living in urban areas.”⁴²⁵ Table 3.1 below shows the land categories under the Act.

⁴¹⁹ A. K. Shutt, 1997, “Purchase Areas and the Middle Class of Southern Rhodesia c. 1931-1952”, The International Journal of African Historical Studies, 30, 3, p. 558. It is, however, important to note that the Commission considered such land sold to Africans small, though “appreciable”.

⁴²⁰ O. B. Pollak, “Black Farmers and White Politics in Rhodesia”, African Affairs, 74, 296, p. 264.

⁴²¹ Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, p. 195, quoting the Southern Rhodesia House of Assembly Debates, 2 May 1929.

⁴²² Ibid., p. 195.

⁴²³ Pollak, “Black Farmers and White Politics”, p. 264.

⁴²⁴ Punt, “The Development of African Agriculture”, p. 44.

⁴²⁵ Shutt, “Purchase Areas and the Middle Class”, p. 560.

Table 3.1: Land Categories under the Land Apportionment Act

Land Designation	Size in Acres
European area	49, 149, 174
Native Reserves	21, 600, 000
Native Purchase Areas	7, 464, 566
Unassigned area (reserved for future allocation)	17, 793, 300
Forest area	590, 500
Undetermined area (also available for future allocation)	88, 540
Total	96, 686, 000

Source: Punt, “The Development of African Agriculture”, p. 54.

The Rise of Ecological Concerns, 1924-34.

In the Company period not much progress took place in relation to soil conservation on settler farms. This was because the Company did not encapsulate conservation in its overall land settlement and agrarian policies. This was because the Company focused more on activities that would yield a profit for its commercial branch than on pushing through a conservation programme which would not yield tangible financial benefits in the short-term. The second reason was that the majority of farmers lacked agricultural knowledge and financial resources to embark on conservation programmes. Farmers needed the guidance of the state to embrace conservation.

The First World War also contributed to the slow uptake of conservation. Many farmers went bankrupt as the prices of agricultural commodities slumped. The impact of the war on the country’s settler agrarian sector may be succinctly illustrated by the case of one farmer whose fortunes had suffered due to the slump in prices and ran an advertisement in a local daily

newspaper, The Rhodesia Herald. It read; “Farm for sale in Marandellas or would exchange for a bicycle, must have light, capable of taking owner to Cape Town.”⁴²⁶ The Responsible government period was equally characterized by hardships for the colony’s settler farmers. The attainment of Responsible Government status came at a time when the colony’s maize farmers were grappling with a post-war depression which had started in 1921.⁴²⁷

Notwithstanding the few good seasons during the early and mid-1920s, the period was generally punctuated by low profits and uncertainty, especially for maize growers. In a letter to the Editor of the Rhodesian Herald in August 1924, one farmer from the Bromley area lamented; “a good year is almost invariably discounted by an unfavourable season...cattle diseases, insect pests and other troubles demonstrate that no man’s capital is so exposed to risk as that of the farmer.”⁴²⁸ Though settler farming boomed from 1924 to 1927 after the post war depression, especially in relation to maize and tobacco, this was short-lived. Another crisis hit the agricultural sector from 1928. Conservation in the first 10 years under Responsible government period had to be examined against this background of a depressed economic environment. While farmers and the Irrigation Engineer, A. C. Jennings, raised their concern about soil erosion to the newly formed government in 1924, there was a slow response in terms of coming up with either a legal or policy framework for implementation of conservation works in settler farming districts. Farmers were the first to voice concern about soil erosion in the 1920s.

In February 1924, the Bindura Farmers’ Association made a resolution to approach the government with a request for it “to appoint a Committee to investigate the matter of soil

⁴²⁶ Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia, p. 170.

⁴²⁷ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 98.

⁴²⁸ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday 22 February, 1924, p. 5.

erosion, with special reference to wasting of agricultural lands.”⁴²⁹ Jennings also informed the Department of Agriculture that the problem of erosion was becoming more and more evident with each year, with the effect that areas that had been opened up only a few years before 1924 were eroding fast. In the Mazoe Valley, Jennings noted in February 1924, land that had been “only cleared in the past five years” was already being “thrown out of cultivation” as a result of soil erosion.⁴³⁰ The situation in the maize belt, the Irrigation Branch warned the Department of Agriculture, had;

...already become so serious on many farms...that nothing can prevent their ultimate ruination except by either throwing the land out of cultivation or taking immediate steps to construct efficient contour ridges across the lands and the provision of storm water drains around the toe of the adjacent hills.⁴³¹

A Rhodesia Herald editorial in January 1925 highlighted the extent to which erosion was impacting on agricultural land. Soil conservation had become “a matter that individual farmers and probably also the government will have to face and deal with in an active and serious manner”, the editorial warned;

In some instances the arable portions of farms have been in great measure washed away into the spruits, streams and rivers. When the rivers have been in flood the consistency of the water has been that of peas soup, and it is saddening to think that the thickening matter is the rich soil of our arable lands.⁴³²

Some farmers, with the help of the Irrigation Department, began to construct contour ridges and storm drains on their farms in the late 1920s as they witnessed the fast pace of deterioration.⁴³³ Table 3.2 shows the amount of conservation work that was done by farmers;

⁴²⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday 18 February, 1924, p. 18.

⁴³⁰ Ibid, p. 18.

⁴³¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday 28 November, 1924, p. 16.

⁴³² The Rhodesia Herald, Friday 30 January, 1925, p. 9.

⁴³³ NAZ GEN/NAT, Natural Resources Board (NRB): 25 Years of Conservation in Rhodesia, Salisbury, NRB, 1966.

Table 3.2: Ridge Terracing, 1929-1934.

Year	Miles of Ridge Terracing	Acreage of Land Protected
1929	76	2, 280
1930	103	3, 090
1931	150	4, 500
1932	108	3, 240
1933	132	3, 960
1934	126	3, 780

Source: Source: Report of the Commission to Enquire into the Preservation, etc., of the Natural Resources of the Colony, April 1939, p. 18.

The above statistics show that some conservation work was carried out from 1929. Phimister has, however, observed that the figures are misleading in the sense that they give the impression of significant progress while most of the work was half-heartedly done.⁴³⁴ In the absence of a clear-cut soil management policy their efforts were, however, only a drop in the ocean. Soil conservation in the Responsible government period was thus, like in the Company period, affected by the lack of a clear-cut soil conservation policy. Some farmers were only in farming for a “quick buck”; they did not view themselves as permanent landowners, but transients who would relocate once they had lined their feathers. Such farmers found no incentive for embarking on soil conservation programmes on their lands.

As a result of government inaction, very few farmers constructed soil conservation works such as contours and terraces to protect their lands. Uncontrolled grass burning on settler farms was, according to the Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU), “as common a practice

⁴³⁴ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, p. 265.

among settler farmers as the natives” before the onset of rainy seasons.⁴³⁵ This exposed top soil to erosion by wind and rain. In 1924 A. C. Jennings, the Irrigation Engineer observed that some agricultural lands had been abandoned in the Mazoe Valley due to erosion, one of which “was only cleared in the last five years and which has been thrown out of cultivation because it..[is] so badly eroded.”⁴³⁶ Jennings warned; “unless the matter is taken in hand, some of the best land in the maize belt is going to be washed away, so that within ten years its value will be practically nil.”⁴³⁷ The deterioration of land became a concern even among the farmers themselves. At the Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU) Congress of 1924, the Bindura Farmers’ Association sent the following resolution;

...[that] the government be requested to appoint a committee to investigate the matter of soil erosion, with reference to the wasting of agricultural lands. The question of soil erosion is becoming evident every year... the best land... is deteriorating in a rapid manner.⁴³⁸

This proposal was strongly supported by many delegates. One delegate, only identified as A. R. Morkel, told the congress that prevention of soil erosion lay at the core of the colony’s economy. Though all appeared to be normal in the absence of a strategy to prevent soil erosion, the colony was “going to pay heavily for it later.”⁴³⁹

These calls were not immediately taken heed of. The state did little else to address farmers’ concerns about erosion beyond what was already being done by the understaffed Irrigation Department. It was only in 1932 that the Soil Conservation Advisory Committees were formed, by which time Morkel’s warning was proving to be prophetic – maize and tobacco

⁴³⁵ NAZ ZAZ4/1/1 Natural Resources Commission, Written Evidence from the RAU Soil Erosion Committee Report, p. 28.

⁴³⁶ The Rhodesian Herald, Tuesday, 5 February, 1924, p. 5.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ NAZ S1193/C8/1 Rhodesia Agricultural Union. Correspondence. Excerpts of the Resolutions of RAU at the 1924 Congress, p. 5.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

yields had tumbled partly as a result of soil exhaustion. Soil erosion and exhaustion had been ignored for too long. The remedy for this lay in finding a “cure” for this disease, an exercise which, as the next chapter shows, turned out to be much more costly than would have been the case had soil conservation been part of the agrarian package from the launch of a White Agricultural Policy (WAP) in 1908.

The colony’s agrarian sector was in a severe crisis by 1928. From the 1928-29 to the 1933-34 seasons, the acreages put under the plough were considerably reduced due to the collapse of the international market for agricultural products. The depressed international prices made farming largely unviable.⁴⁴⁰ The agricultural crisis brought soil conservation to the fore. In November 1932 the Soil Erosion Committee of the Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU) presented a detailed damning report on soil erosion in the colony. The Committee, set up in response to a resolution by the 1931 RAU Congress, read;

...this Congress urges on the Government the importance to the country generally of the adoption of a national policy as regards soil wastage from whatever cause, and requests that, at the earliest possible opportunity, steps be taken to enunciate such a policy.⁴⁴¹

The Committee, whose terms of reference were “to enquire into the factors causing soil erosion and to formulate suggestions for the prevention thereof”, recommended, among other things, the urgent need for concerted national remedial action, including financial and legislative intervention, to address soil erosion and its negative environmental impacts.⁴⁴²

In 1933 the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry was appointed to investigate the impact of the Depression on agriculture. The Committee

⁴⁴⁰ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, pp. 127-57.

⁴⁴¹ NAZ ZAZ4/1/1, The Rhodesia Agricultural Union, The Soil Erosion Committee Report, Written Evidence.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

found out that most farmers were on the verge of bankruptcy and recommended immediate measures to assist them to remain in business. The Committee reported in 1934 that;

There can be no doubt that the farming community is facing a crisis...it is only because bond-holders and merchants have refrained from action that many farmers are in production. The issue that has to be faced is whether it is possible to build up a white colony on any basis other than a white agricultural population.⁴⁴³

Turning to soil and water conservation, the Committee reported;

Soil erosion is a national question and must be treated as such...What thirty years ago was good land and grew good crops...is now desert country, where white farmers can no longer make a living...the question of water conservation and the prevention of soil erosion should be in the forefront of the government's agricultural policy...⁴⁴⁴

The Government responded in October 1934 by appointing two Soil Conservation Advisory Councils in Matabeleland and Mashonaland. Advisory Councils were mandated to recommend to the Minister of Agriculture the necessary measures that needed to be taken in their areas of jurisdiction and to prepare draft legislation for consideration and to carry out propaganda work to lobby for a national policy on soil conservation.⁴⁴⁵ The following section examines the problem of erosion as it related to European maize and the tobacco sector. Giving these two crops more prominence helps to highlights the extent to which maize and tobacco farmers fixated their attention with increasing yields at the expense of the soil.

⁴⁴³ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, 1934, p. 1.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁴⁵ NAZ ZAZ4/1/1, The Rhodesia Agricultural Union, The Soil Erosion Committee Report, Written Evidence.

European Maize: A Combination of Poor Methods and Monoculture

Since the early years, maize was the settlers' main crop. As early as 1906, G. M. Odum, an officer in the Agricultural Department, described maize as "the Rhodesian farmer's friend".⁴⁴⁶ Even "under the crudest system of culture," he observed, "the cultivator never starves."⁴⁴⁷ Odum's observation aptly explains the major shortcoming of maize cultivation from the early days of occupation. Maize cultivation did not require a lot of financial start-up capital, in comparison with tobacco growing and cattle ranching. It also did not require a lot of expertise. Settler maize was not better than African maize. The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal observed in its editorial comment in its 1908 edition; "The successful occupation of the white race rests... upon producing more and better grain..."⁴⁴⁸ Most farmers focused their efforts on increasing the quantity, rather than quality, of their maize yields. This trend, where farmers were fixated with output, resulted in a scenario where the soil got exhausted in many settler farming districts.

By the second half of the 1920s the impact of soil degradation was beginning to be felt by farmers; yields began to diminish.⁴⁴⁹ The impact of this was far-reaching as declining yields coincided with falling maize prices on the export market. This situation resulted in serious viability problems for many farmers and triggered an agricultural crisis that stretched into the mid-1930s.⁴⁵⁰ The crisis was two-pronged; maize yields were, on one hand, declining while, on the other, the colony struggled to sell her maize on international markets because of the international depression that began in the late 1920s.

⁴⁴⁶ NAZ G1/1/4, G. M. Odum, Agricultural and Pastoral Rhodesia, 1906, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁴⁸ Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1908, Editorial, 6, p. 1.

⁴⁴⁹ Report of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture for the year 1927, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁰ See Report of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, for the Years 1927-34. Also see the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, 1934 (also called the Danziger Report). The Committee was appointed by the government at the end of 1933 to review and report on the condition of the colony's farming industry. The Committee's report, presented in March 1934, revealed that, in the absence of a bailout from the government, many farmers would either lose their land to debtors or not be able to farm on a commercial basis.

It could not have been possible to predict the slump of the late 1920s a decade earlier. This is because maize production had expanded in the post-First World War period, both in terms of acreage and output. This increase was neither a result of better methods nor increased yields per acre. It was a result of the increase in the colony's farmers due to migration, which consequently resulted in an increase in acreages put under the plough. While the total area put under maize was 186 246 acres in the 1920/21 season, it increased to 267 354 acres during the 1926/27 season.⁴⁵¹ Similarly, total maize output increased from 1 220 786 bags in the 1920/21 season to 1 659 597 bags in 1926/27 season.⁴⁵² The bulk of maize was produced in Mashonaland; particularly in the Mazoe, Salisbury and Lomagundi districts. These three districts supplied 65 percent of the total crop.⁴⁵³ Fifty-five percent of maize in the above-mentioned districts was produced by large-scale farmers who cultivated 300 acres and above.⁴⁵⁴ The majority of these large-scale growers solely relied on maize monoculture. The Maize Enquiry Committee reported in 1930;

In the majority of cases these growers have no other line of farming of any importance and are, therefore, practically solely dependent for a living upon maize. This is a most significant factor. A few supplement their incomes by fattening cattle for the market and a few do a little dairying, but the proportion is so small that it is insignificant.⁴⁵⁵

Monoculture contributed to soil impoverishment. In addition to this, there was also a combination of little investment in soil improvement and poor farming methods. A. R. Morkel, member of the Maize Association, told the Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU) congress of 1928 that maize growers were not farming "on correct lines; they were trying to farm in a cheap way and that (the) cheap way was leading to the depletion of the fertility of

⁴⁵¹ NAZ S881/181/3979 Report of Professor Forrester and Professor Clay on the Maize Enquiry Committee's Report. p. 2.

⁴⁵² Ibid

⁴⁵³ NAZ S1180/251 (5), The Maize Enquiry Committee Report, 1930, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

the soil.”⁴⁵⁶ The RAU Secretary, E. Noaks, reiterated this point. Referring to Mazoe, Noaks told the congress that the district had been ruined beyond repair by unsatisfactory farming methods, which he termed “soil mining.”⁴⁵⁷

According to Victor Machingaidze, agricultural advice was sometimes not embraced by farmers because it presented “economic difficulties.” Take green manuring for instance, because the rainy season in the colony extended over a period of close to five months, it was not possible to produce green manure in the course of a single year.”⁴⁵⁸ The fields being green manured would have to go for the entire season without maize. This made it unpopular with farmers. The Secretary for Agriculture observed in his report for 1929 that green manuring “is not generally adopted”⁴⁵⁹ as a soil conserving method. Many farmers did not like having to suspend cultivation to carry out green manuring. Farmers preferred to utilize artificial fertilizers. Evidence gathered by both the Maize Commission shows that farmers increasingly applied artificial fertilisers from the 1920s onwards.

“Large sums have been expended on artificial fertilisers”, the Maize Commission stated in its report.⁴⁶⁰ This increased the cost of maize farming. H. G. Mundy, the Chief Agriculturist, reported in 1929 that, in spite of the high usage of artificial fertilizers, “crop returns continue to be unsatisfactory.”⁴⁶¹ It appears artificial fertilisers were not generally very effective in maintaining soil fertility on maize fields. The Countryside, a magazine published by RAU, confirmed this fact in 1929 when it stated that maize output per acre in the colony per acre in

⁴⁵⁶ NAZ S1193/C8/1, Rhodesia Agricultural Union, Correspondence, Excerpts of The Resolutions of RAU at the 1928 Congress, Letter to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture from the Secretary, RAU, dated 21 August, 1928.

⁴⁵⁷ Cited from Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture”, p. 438.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 438.

⁴⁵⁹ Report of the Secretary for Agriculture, 1929, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁰ NAZ S881/181/3979, Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Maize Industry of Southern Rhodesia, p. 6.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

Southern Rhodesia “[compared] very unfavourably with that obtained in other countries.”⁴⁶²

While there may have been other factors contributing to Southern Rhodesia’s comparatively poor low yields such as inadequate disease and pest control measures and undercapitalisation,⁴⁶³ farming methods played a significant role.

The case of Charles Southey, a Mazoe Valley farmer, highlights what happened to the majority of maize farms. While Southey’s farm “represented one of the most fertile stretches of land in the whole of Southern Rhodesia”⁴⁶⁴ in the first half on the 1920s, by the end of the 1920s it had fallen. At its peak the farm;

...had a crop of 15 000 bags of maize. Southey was thoroughly well satisfied with himself because so far as he could see he was going to be able to continue on that scale. Now Southey, during that period, had not practised any form of rotation farming... because he did not realise there was any necessity for it....Well, his farm was at its zenith as a producer at that time and had a very high cash value and that enabled Southey to borrow money on it...So that, during that period he not only spent what he had got from the farm, but he had also spent a considerable part of what was the appreciated value of the farm...From then on the crops started to fall [and] Southey was faced with a considerable load of debt and with fallen crops.⁴⁶⁵

The drop in yields and mounting debt did not make Southey seek remedial action. He decided against green manuring, a practice which, he must have reasoned, was not in his best interest as it would mean that he discontinued maize cropping on portions of his fields. The fall in the price of maize made the situation more difficult. The Natural Resources Board was told;

In Southey’s case there were various factors against that (green manuring). Firstly he had got into this groove of planting maize year after year and he felt it very

⁴⁶² Cited from Machingaidze, “The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture”, p. 443.

⁴⁶³ Southern Rhodesian farmers were largely undercapitalised when compared with their counterparts in Argentina, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, among other countries, whose farming industries were by far more advanced unlike Southern Rhodesia which, during the 1920s, was still facing “teething problems.”

⁴⁶⁴ NAZ S987/1 Oral Evidence of the Food Production Committee to the Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

difficult to change his ideas on the subject...and furthermore he did not have the financial resources with which to do it. As a result Southey continued for another period of years cropping every available acre with cash crops. During that period the price of maize dropped and the result was that each year the value of the maize was less than what was required to run a farm which was giving diminishing returns. Southey succeeded in continuing by increasing borrowing, so that the debt which he had on his farm when we took it over two or three years ago bore a relatively large relationship to the cash value. By that time the debts on the farm exceeded the cash value of the farm.⁴⁶⁶

Southey's situation highlights the fact that, while the Depression led to the fall of maize prices, farming methods prior to the Depression were a key contributing factor.

The Maize Commission of 1930 reported that the maize crisis had its origins in "the reduction of soil fertility in the earlier stages of maize growing, when no rotation or fertilising was practised."⁴⁶⁷ The farmers admitted to this fact. Giving evidence to the Natural Resources Board Farming inquiry in 1942, Duncan Black, a maize grower from Mazoe, reflected on the events of the 1920s;

The Mazoe farmers thought they were in paradise at one time, but I think they lost their heads when they kept on growing maize and did not worry about anything else...They did not look for anything else as they thought maize was the only thing they could grow. When the price of maize went down...they tried to grow a larger acreage to make up for the low price.⁴⁶⁸

This sentiment was also echoed by Herman Maritz, a maize grower from Bindura, who bemoaned the farmers' apparent reluctance to engage in cattle rearing, given its symbiotic importance with maize. In accounting for the parlous state of the maize by the 1940s, he noted that "cattle and maize go together...I do not think one can do well in one without the other. You will have a very anaemic farm without cattle...this is one of the principal reasons maize

⁴⁶⁶ NAZ S987/1 Oral Evidence of the Food Production Committee to the Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942.

⁴⁶⁷ NAZ S881/181/3979 Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Maize Industry of Southern Rhodesia, p. 6.

⁴⁶⁸ NAZ S987/1 Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942, Oral Evidence, p. 32.

farming is in such a bad condition”⁴⁶⁹ The Maize Enquiry Committee, set up by the government in 1930 to investigate the economic position of the maize industry, found that “many maize growers (were) handicapped with a large amount of floating debt.”⁴⁷⁰ The only feasible remedy, the Committee recommended, was to implement measures for the restoration of soil fertility, stopping monoculture by introducing a second farming activity on every maize farm - such as dairying or cattle fattening for the market - and “a policy of the strictest possible personal economy, so that every penny that can be spared can be devoted to the farm.”⁴⁷¹ The crisis the farmers found themselves in was a result of the ecological disaster that had been slowly looming from the foundations of settler maize farming.⁴⁷² The problem became visible in the mid-1920s.

European Tobacco: From High Hopes to Disaster

The Company had sought to promote tobacco from the launch of the WAP. Tobacco relied on external markets, particularly the South African market, from the early days of its cultivation. This was because of the limited consumption levels in the colony due to the small size of the settler community. The post-1908 era was characterised by speculative growing of the crop, as farmers sought to make quick profits. Tobacco came to be regarded as the new gold.⁴⁷³ The danger of relying on the export market, however, suddenly manifested itself in a big way in 1913 when the Union of South Africa was unable absorb the three million pounds of tobacco the colony had produced, resulting in a crash in prices in 1914.⁴⁷⁴ This left many growers on the verge of bankruptcy. The position of growers was worsened by the outbreak of the First

⁴⁶⁹ NAZ S987/1 Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942, Oral Evidence, p. 32, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁷¹ NAZ S1180/251 (5), The Maize Enquiry Committee Report, 1930, p. 7.

⁴⁷² For information on maize control regulations put in place to fix the maize crisis see C. F. Keyter, 1975, “Maize Control in Southern Rhodesia, 1931-41: the African Contribution to European Survival”, M. A. Thesis, University of Rhodesia.

⁴⁷³ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 58.

⁴⁷⁴ See NAZ G1/2/5/2, Correspondence between the Tobacco Planters’ Association and the Government, 1910 - 1914.

World War. At the end of the war, however, there was renewed interest in tobacco growing among the burgeoning settler population. This was buoyed by the announcement by Britain that certain products, including Rhodesian tobacco, would be granted Imperial Preference. As Hodder-Williams puts it, as post-war reconstruction began;

...more settlers did arrive and with them the enthusiasm for growing tobacco increased. This was encouraged by the British Government to grant a tariff preference to certain products of the Empire, in the case of tobacco amounting to 1/4d a pound.⁴⁷⁵

This development encouraged farmers to venture into tobacco growing. The emergence of an assured market overseas gave the Rhodesian tobacco industry the stimulus it needed after the crash of 1914. Tobacco production doubled in the first two seasons after the war. In the same vein, tobacco production in Marandellas, where the bulk of the country's tobacco was grown, increased from 424 854 bales in the 1918/19 season to 1 0278 248 bales in the 1920/21 season.⁴⁷⁶ It is against this background that the Responsible Government came to power.

The post-war tobacco boom, like the maize boom, was a result of more farmers taking up land and putting it under tobacco. Output per acre was quite low. H. W. Taylor, the government tobacco expert warned in the mid-1920s that the country's average yield ranked among the lowest in the world.⁴⁷⁷ Growers were pre-occupied with increasing acreage than increasing output on land already under the plough. The quality of the colony's leaf was relatively poor. Imperial preference made growers to focus their attention on the quantity – rather than the quality - they produced. The increase in acreages put under tobacco was not met with a

⁴⁷⁵ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 107.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 107.

⁴⁷⁷ NAZ S1193T1, Tobacco Marketing: Correspondence. Tobacco Expert to Secretary for Agriculture and Lands.

corresponding increase in tobacco curing facilities.⁴⁷⁸ Because of the quality of the colony's tobacco, producers received low prices.⁴⁷⁹ The Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Development of the Colony appointed in 1934 urged the government to "bring to the notice of the producers the serious effect on the industry the continued production of low-grade quality tobacco, which has a most detrimental effect on the marketing of the product."⁴⁸⁰ Behind this tobacco boom lay a cornucopia of problems which were to significantly affect the industry from 1928 onwards. High hopes placed upon the British market were premised on wrong assumptions. Although there was high demand for Rhodesian tobacco in Britain, the Rhodesian leaf was only used as a blend with varieties from other countries.⁴⁸¹

The majority of migrants who entered into tobacco production in the post First World War period sought to make a quick buck. J. M. Moubray, a prominent farmer and tobacco analyst, bemoaned this get-rich-quickly mind-set. He opined in 1930;

From the start we must recognise two classes of tobacco growers: those who intend to settle to in the country and who look to tobacco to make a good living for them, and those who expect to make a fortune in a few years and then [bid] good-bye to Rhodesia for good. For this latter class we have no use – the sooner they leave the country the better.⁴⁸²

Besides contributing to the production of low grade tobacco, farmers with a get-rich-fast-and-leave attitude as well as farmers with inadequate capital and agrarian knowledge did very little to maintain the soil in a good condition. Obsessed with the idea of increasing acreage, they seldom practised any soil conservation measures such that by the 1930s, the condition of the soil on tobacco lands was poor. Contour ridging, which is central to reducing erosion and

⁴⁷⁸ Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture", p. 151.

⁴⁷⁹ Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1921, p. 10.

⁴⁸⁰ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural industry of Southern Rhodesia, p. 8.

⁴⁸¹ Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture", p. 180.

⁴⁸² NAZ S1193/T3/1, J. M. Moubray, 1930, "The Tobacco Crisis and How To Tide It Over."

therefore ensuring successful long-term tobacco growing, was hardly practised. J. P. De Kok, an old Marandellas tobacco farmer warned;

I am afraid that unless steps are taken to compel tobacco farmers to contour their land and to go for practical farming methods, the tobacco districts within a few years will be in the same position as Mazoe is in as regards to maize. I am afraid tobacco farmers have been mining their land. I have been in the district for 23 years now and I have seen what happened here. I would prevent any farmer, if I had the power, from planting tobacco unless the soil was contour-ridged. Also I would make him plough the land after the crop is reaped. We grow tobacco mostly on ridges. The crop is reaped and the tobacco stalks are pulled out but the land is left unploughed for years afterwards and naturally that encourages erosion. I have preached that among tobacco farmers for years...[but] they just want to make as much money as possible with no eye to the future.⁴⁸³

From the above statement one can decipher that De Kok partly blamed the government for the absence of a soil conservation policy prior to the 1930s.

Tobacco farmers were destroying the colony's timber resources as they sought to cure the ever increasing amount of tobacco they produced. J. D. Lamb, a tobacco farmer, stated in his evidence to the NRB Farming Enquiry in 1942, that "weak" timber legislation had contributed to the high rate of deforestation by tobacco farmers. Lamb told the Board;

The depletion of natural timber at the rate it is going is serious, quite apart from any possible effect it has on rainfall. No effort is made to encourage tree planting – in fact the opposite is the case. For example, if one plants Eucalyptus to replace natural timber for tobacco curing the income tax authorities disallow all expenditure so incurred; yet if one sells some of the gum trees so grown they tax the proceeds. I approached the income tax people about this, but was told only cost of replacing gum trees felled would be allowed. They feared people might use the profits to plant trees. To mind any conceivable profits devoted to tree planting would do more good than the amount the tax would bring in.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸³ NAZ S987/1 Oral Evidence Given to the Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

Regarding miners' "free access" to timber, Lamb suggested that "the law allowing miners to cut wood should be amended" because it made little sense for one to plant 10 to 20 acres of trees when "a miner can come along and cut down 100 acres."⁴⁸⁵ These sentiments were also echoed by Moubray, who advocated for the establishment of forestry commission that would, among other things, champion the reforestation scheme in the country.⁴⁸⁶ Tree planting would, according to Moubray, "benefit the whole community...than just the production of tobacco..."⁴⁸⁷

The fall of tobacco prices in 1928 had a huge impact on farmers and on the economy. While tobacco accounted for 42.7 percent of the colony's exports in 1928, it only contributed 17.1 and 17.4 percent in 1929 and 1930 respectively.⁴⁸⁸ Many farmers were left bankrupt. According to Machingaidze;

After the disaster of the 1929 crop, which eliminated 700 growers in 1930, production fell to five and a half million pounds [weight]. The problem of overproduction had indeed been solved but at a cost to the exchequer and to the farming which seemed crippling. Nearly all the progress of the previous ten years was wiped out in one season. Many of the hopefuls who had immigrated returned to the United Kingdom with all their capital lost, and all but a score of those who remained abandoned tobacco.⁴⁸⁹

The unemployment that followed the tobacco slump was so high that the government, which had been actively pursuing a policy of European immigration into the country, soon found itself having to repatriate numerous immigrants who had nearly been rendered destitute by the slump.

⁴⁸⁵ NAZ S987/1 Oral Evidence Given to the Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942.

⁴⁸⁶ NAZ S1193/T3/1, J. M. Moubray, 1930, "The Tobacco Crisis and How To Tide It Over."

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸⁸ Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture", p. 183.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 183.

Conservation in African Reserves

William Beinart has characterized “conservationist ideas” in Southern Africa in the colonial period as having been deeply embedded in the official mindset to a point where they “perhaps amounted to an “official ideology.”⁴⁹⁰ These ideas were “a deeply rooted element in Southern African official thinking about agrarian society”, as evidenced, according to Beinart, by their being “invoked, elaborated and applied... first in relation to the settler, then also peasant, agriculture”.⁴⁹¹ A growing body of literature on conservation in colonial Zimbabwe has shown that conservation policies were first applied to African, not white, agriculture.⁴⁹² Unlike Beinart’s view that conservation policies were “a deeply rooted element in... official thinking”, that they were applied first in relation to white agriculture and finally that they were “apparently conceived in (African) best interests”,⁴⁹³ Ian Phimister has argued that “the roots of conservationism were far shallower in Southern Rhodesia than Beinart implies” and that conservation programmes were put into application in African, not settler, farming.⁴⁹⁴ Phimister has also disputed the importance of conservationism in “shaping the pattern of state intervention” in the reserves.⁴⁹⁵ Beinart and Phimister’s views on conservation in the first half of the 20th century are mutually exclusive.

Phimister and Eira Kramer’s research shows that African policy in the Responsible government period was crafted to deal with land shortage.⁴⁹⁶ Conservation was meant to ensure that Africans would be able to sustain themselves on small pieces of land, without

⁴⁹⁰ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 82.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴⁹² See Kramer, “A Clash of Economies”, pp. 83-98 and “Extension Services in Peasant Agriculture”, pp. 159-179, McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change” and Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context.”

⁴⁹³ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 52.

⁴⁹⁴ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, p. 263.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁴⁹⁶ Kramer, “A Clash of Economies”, p. 86.

additional land allocation. In 1915, the Southern Rhodesia Native Reserves Commission recommended that African requests for more land could no longer be tolerated;

The native of the country must not assume that he can demand as a right the immense areas of land which would be necessary if he were to continue to practice his primitive methods of agriculture and pasture while his numbers are increasing. If that was granted, he would soon come to need the whole of the territory...any desire to set aside areas quite unnecessarily large for future needs should not be in the truest native interest...⁴⁹⁷

Because of this reason conservation in African communities “entailed coercion and punitive restrictions on resource use.”⁴⁹⁸ The move towards conservation in the peasant agricultural sector began in 1924, when Native Commissioners were asked to select 21 men who were that year sent for demonstrator training at Domboshawa and Tjolotsho agricultural schools.⁴⁹⁹ The government moved a step further in 1926 when it appointed Emory Alvord “Chief Agriculturalist for the Instruction of Natives.” Alvord’s brief included organizing “better agricultural training for Natives” and “agricultural instruction and development in the reserves by means of Agricultural Demonstrators and demonstration plots.”⁵⁰⁰ His work culminated in the Centralization Programme from 1929 where Africans were forced to relocate to specified pieces of land for settlement, as their land was “divided into permanent arable and grazing areas... separated by the village which was built in a long line through the middle.”⁵⁰¹

The programme aimed at transforming the traditional system of shifting cultivation, and replacing it with permanent grazing and cultivation areas where crop rotation would be practiced. Africans were, in Alvord’s mind, being taught a new gospel; the “gospel of the plough.” “The gospel of the plough,” he wrote;

⁴⁹⁷ NAZ ZAD4/1/1, Report of the Southern Rhodesia Native Reserves Commission, 1915, pp. 47, 50.

⁴⁹⁸ McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change”, p. 257.

⁴⁹⁹ Kramer, “Extension Services in Peasant Agriculture”, p. 167.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵⁰¹ Kramer, “A Clash of Economies”, p. 83.

Means working together with God, in order to get good crop yields while at the same time we take good care of the soil. In order to bring this about, a spirit of reverence for the soils must be created, which is...a sort...of religion...The heathen African dug his land while standing trees, skeletons, stumps and fallen trees were scattered all about...he planted the seed and trusted witchdoctors, rainmakers, ancestral spirits and demons to do the rest...if those people could only be taught the gospel of the plough.⁵⁰²

For Alvord, ‘the gospel of the plough envisioned “a new form of modern, civilizing agriculture” whose aim was to correct the perceived “backward and destructive systems of the past.”⁵⁰³ His programme “for the enrichment of African life” was, in his opinion, “a policy pregnant with meaning.”⁵⁰⁴ The pace of the programme was largely determined by African receptivity. African resistance resulted in the programme staggering on at a snail’s pace, till Native Commissioners began to compel people to implement it.⁵⁰⁵

The programme was generally a failure as, by 1937, Alvord himself admitted that there had been a “sixty percent increase in badly eroded lands in the last eight years.”⁵⁰⁶ Having said that, the notion that conservation programmes began with the African areas needs to be further probed. Ian Phimister has observed that the “logic of white survival” negated the implementation of conservation methods.⁵⁰⁷ In 1931 Alvord “was obliged to deny that his teaching encouraged peasants to grow maize in competition with white farmers” and in 1934 “the recruitment of demonstrator staff was suspended.”⁵⁰⁸ A programme of the magnitude of Centralisation was only introduced on settler farms after the promulgation of the Natural Resources Act, 1941. Even then, as the following chapter will show, groups of farmers voluntarily joined the Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs), unlike the case of Africans where

⁵⁰² NAZ, E. D. Alvord, 1950, “The Gospel of the Plough or A Guided Destiny.”

⁵⁰³ I. Scoones, 1997, “Landscapes, Fields and Soils: Understanding the History of Soil Fertility Management in Southern Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23, 4, pp. 615-634.

⁵⁰⁴ NAZ, E. D. Alvord, 1950, “The Gospel of the Plough or a Guided Destiny.”

⁵⁰⁵ Kramer, “A Clash of Economies”, p. 98.

⁵⁰⁶ NAZ S1542 A4, Letter from E. D. Alvord to the Chief Native Commissioner, dated 20 September 1937.

⁵⁰⁷ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context.”

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 270.

force was used against the will of locals, such as Chief Nhema of Shurugwi. The Chief wrote a letter to the Superintendent of Natives in Bulawayo complaining that his reserve was too small, and what people in the reserve needed was not a programme of the magnitude of Centralisation, but more land.⁵⁰⁹ This earned Chief Nhema the derogatory description of being the “conservative reprobate steeped in superstition, witchcraft and taboos.”⁵¹⁰

Centralization was not a product of any ‘deeply rooted’ thinking or policy by the government. Conservation of the soil was a by-product of a programme meant to deal with the carrying capacity of reserves. Needless to say, its purpose in the end was to work hand-in-glove with the Land Apportionment Act, passed in 1930, a year after Centralization had commenced, to deal with land apportionment between the races. JoAnn McGregor has examined Centralization in the Shurugwi Reserve, where it was first forcibly pioneered in the face of resistance from Africans in the area.⁵¹¹ McGregor came to the conclusion that conservation processes in colonial Zimbabwe in the African sector were largely a mere justification for intervention in the reserves. The state’s motive was neither developmental nor ecological.⁵¹²

International Factors: The Dust Bowl Disaster

William Beinart has characterized official concern about soil erosion in Southern Africa as having begun before the nineteenth century. There was, according to Beinart, an international, particularly British, flavour to this concern as “many Southern African officials (had) originated and trained” in Britain.⁵¹³ “Officials also drew their experience of, and information about (soil erosion)”, Beinart has also noted, from other parts of the world

⁵⁰⁹ NAZ S1007/7, The Native Commissioner, Selukwe, to the Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo, 17 July 1930, Centralization of Lands, Selukwe Reserve.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo, to the Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury, dated 3 February 1931.

⁵¹¹ McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change”, pp. 257-79.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*

⁵¹³ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 55.

“...India, Australia and especially the USA under the Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (1900-1908...”⁵¹⁴ This section explores the extent to which official concern about soil erosion had grown in the Responsible Government period, and evaluates whether developments in the period were driven by international conservation discourses or local developments.

The Great Dust Bowl Disaster struck in the early 1930s. Because of this, the 1930s are often cited as the period when the contemporary global conservation discourse began, spearheaded by conservationists in the United States. The Great Dust Bowl Disaster courted world attention. Donald Worster has argued that the Disaster’s impact was economically more far-reaching than that of the Great Depression;

In no other instance was there greater or more sustained damage to the American land, and there have been few times when so much tragedy was visited on its inhabitants. Not even the Depression was more devastating, economically...in the decade of the 1930s the dust storms of the plains were an unqualified disaster.⁵¹⁵

The disaster was a product of a combination of poor methods of farming and over-cropping. Farmers had increased the amount they put under the plough during the First World War in response to increased food demand in war-ravaged Europe. There was an acute decline in food production in Europe during the war, which presented American farmers with an opportunity to penetrate the European market.⁵¹⁶ This increase in acreages under the plough, and consequently in harvests, took place in the absence of soil conservation and preservation programmes. Over-ploughing did not stop after the First World War; Midwest farmers continued to expand production throughout the 1920s. This trend continued till 1932, when a severe drought struck. The drought dealt a huge blow to farmers as the farmers were already

⁵¹⁴ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 56-7.

⁵¹⁵ David Worster, 1979, Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s, New York, Oxford University Press, p. 24.

⁵¹⁶ C. Musser, 2007, “Environmental Disaster: Dust Bowl, Great Plains, Great Depression”, www.suite101.com, downloaded 27 November, 2009.

feeling the squeeze brought by the Great Depression, which began in 1929. The combination of the Depression and the drought of 1932 pushed many farmers out of production. The drought took longer than the Midwest farmers had anticipated; the region was still suffering from drought conditions in 1936 for some areas, while in other places the drought continued till the early 1940s.⁵¹⁷

Another phenomenon hit the farms during the 1930s; dust storms. With the drought, most of the farms were laid bare, exposed to the elements, with no grass cover. The dust storms were so severe that the 1930s were referred to in the United States as “the Dusty Thirties” while the storms themselves were called “Black Blizzards” and “Black Rollers.”⁵¹⁸ The storms caused dust clouds which reached far-off places such as the East Coast cities of New York and Washington DC. The impact of the dust storms was severe. Hundreds of people and domestic animals lost their lives as a result of suffocation and dust pneumonia, while several hundred thousand people were forced to leave their houses and to trek to other cities. It is estimated that half a million people were rendered homeless by the dust storms.⁵¹⁹ The impact of the dust storms was that top soil was eroded, dealing a major blow to dry land wheat farming, and enormous damage to,

...livestock, buildings, household goods, and merchandise, and health problems associated with inhalation of dust particles. Claims of greater incidence of pneumonia, asthma, influenza and eye infections were reported from Dust Bowl counties in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ J. Hakim, 1995, A History of the US: War, Peace and all that Jazz, New York, Oxford University Press.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ J. Steinbeck, 1991, The Grapes of Wrath, Dramatists Play Service.

⁵²⁰ Hansen and Libecap, “Small Farms, Externalities, and the Dust Bowl”, p. 668.

The Dust Bowl disaster is estimated to have affected over 100 million acres of land in the States of Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Colorado. In his 1939 book The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck described the way people moved from the Midwest;

And then the dispossessed were drawn west - from Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico; from Nevada and Arkansas, families, tribes, dusted out, tractored out. Car-loads, caravans, homeless and hungry; twenty thousand and fifty thousand and a hundred thousand and two hundred thousand. They streamed over the mountains, hungry and restless - restless as ants, scurrying to find work to do - to lift, to push, to pick, to cut - anything, any burden to bear, for food. The kids are hungry. We got no place to live. Like ants scurrying for work, for food, and most of all for land.⁵²¹

Around half a million people moved from the Great Plains, unable to continue with their lives in a climate characterized by drought, dust storms and poor soil conservation and preservation practices. The severe damage brought by the 1930s led to a number of interventions by the F. D. Roosevelt government as part of his New Deal programme.⁵²²

The Roosevelt Government introduced Soil Conservation Districts with the authority to force farmers to comply with the requirement to implement conservation works. President F. D. Roosevelt submitted guidelines to Governors for legislative adoption in 1937;

for the discontinuance of land use practices contributing to erosion and the adoption and carrying out of soil conservation practices and to provide for the enforcement of such programmes and regulations...The failure by any land occupier to conserve the soil and control the erosion upon his lands causing a washing and blowing of soil, of water from his lands on to other lands, makes the conservation of soil and the control of erosion of the other lands difficult and impossible.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath.

⁵²² H. L. Cole and L. E. Ohanian, 2004, "New Deal Policies and the Persistence of the Great Depression: A General Equilibrium Analysis", Journal of Political Economy, 2004, 112, 4, pp. 779-816.

⁵²³ Hansen and Libecap, "Small Farms, Externalities, and the Dust Bowl", p. 684.

The disaster featured prominently on President F.D Roosevelt's priorities during his first 100 days. The Soil Erosion Service was established in August 1933. The Service was reorganised and renamed the Soil Conservation Service in 1935.⁵²⁴ Several countries responded to developments in America by dispatching teams to go there to learn about the conservation initiatives the Roosevelt government was putting in place in response to the disaster. In the case of Southern Rhodesia, Alvord was sent to inspect programmes that were being implemented in response to the crisis.⁵²⁵

In Kenya, from the 1930s the government increased the budget allocated to conservation work. In addition to this budget, £39 000 from the Colonial Development Fund was set aside for soil conservation works, as was the case in Lesotho, where £160 000 was also set aside from the same fund to finance a ten-year anti-soil erosion plan.⁵²⁶ In South Africa the Union government set aside £2 500 00 for soil conservation programmes between 1935 and 1937. A lot of the degradation in the Union was caused by the mines, whose methods in many cases were not friendly to the environment as they sought to maximize profits. It is worth mentioning that a lot of the money set aside for soil conservation work was spent on dam building, not soil conservation works. Other changes were also made, such as the placing of mountainous areas and sources of rivers under the Forestry Department to ensure their preservation and conservation.⁵²⁷ What cannot be disputed is that conservation became one of the issues of the Union's agenda. With the country being very absorbed in politics, as many political developments were taking place, such as the increasing popularity of the

⁵²⁴ F. Steiner, 2008, The Living Landscape, Second Edition: An Ecological Approach to Landscape Planning, Washington, Island Press.

⁵²⁵ NAZ S482 291/39, The natural Resources Commission.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.* Also see S. Maravanyika, 2004, "The Origins, Activities and Impact of Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs) with particular reference to the Bromley ICA, c. 1934-1962", M.A Dissertation, Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe, pp. 15-16.

⁵²⁷ NAZ S482 291/39, The Natural Resources Commission.

Nationalists, General Smuts was at one time quoted saying, “Erosion is the biggest problem, not politics.”⁵²⁸

Does this mean that the Dust-Bowl disaster had a role in influencing the path that Southern Rhodesia took from the 1930s? The Southern Rhodesian settlers do not seem to have been much influence from the events in the United States. To start with, the agricultural crisis in the colony preceded the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl Disaster. Its causes, admittedly, were both local and international: local because the crisis in the maize-belt and tobacco farming regions was partly a result of farming without observing sound agricultural practices and international because of marketing issues, as maize farmers got less and less returns on their maize on international markets and also as the tobacco market collapsed in 1928. As shown above, many agricultural experts had warned the Company government about the dangers of soil erosion, but the warnings fell on deaf ears. The state paid little attention or mere lip-service to measures designed to counter erosion.”⁵²⁹ What the Great Dust Bowl Disaster did was that it made it possible for the government to utilize the conservationist discourse of the 1930 to further its object; to intensify the use of force as it sought to implement its own form of land apartheid as promulgated in the Land Apportionment Act. As Joann McGregor has observed, “Conservationist alarm provided not only a justification for state intervention, but also a legitimation for using force.”⁵³⁰

From Moffat to Huggins

Premier Moffat, who succeeded Coghlan in 1927, lost support after the 1928 agricultural crisis. Murray has observed that; “Opposition to Moffat became particularly virulent when the

⁵²⁸ NAZ S482 291/39, The natural Resources Commission

⁵²⁹ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, p. 265.

⁵³⁰ McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change”, pp. 257-79.

tobacco and maize markets collapsed in 1927 and 1930 respectively and the Government was accused of ineptitude over the agricultural crisis. The Rhodesia Party Government was swept out of office in 1933...⁵³¹ Continuity, especially as it related to Company commercial interests, and failure by the Moffat Government to effectively deal with the agricultural crisis, first in 1928, and from 1930 onwards, cost Moffat the Premiership in 1933. Moffat's deputy, George Mitchell, succeeded him. Mitchell's Premiership only lasted a few months; he lost the General Election of October 1933 to Dr. Godfrey Huggins' Reform Party.⁵³² The rise of Huggins ushered in a new era in the colony's conservation history. By the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, only five years after Huggins' rise, a number of developments had taken place, with the effect of consolidating the colony's economic position.

The mining sector expanded; gold output trebled, and the government got a windfall from gold revenue as a result of the Gold Premium Tax, production in the base minerals sector significantly improved partly because of the rearmament programmes in Europe, while output of coal from Wankie also increased as the copper mines of Northern Rhodesia demanded bigger quantities of coal.⁵³³ There were also significant changes in the agricultural sector as the Huggins Government dealt with the agricultural crisis and with what Huggins termed "spineless, spoon-fed and inefficient farmers."⁵³⁴ On the legislative side the most notable changes were the enactment of Forest and Herbage Act, 1936 and the Water Amendment Act, 1938 to enable the state to prosecute offenders who wantonly destroyed trees and to tighten the Water Act to ensure sources of public streams were preserved. Not much was, however,

⁵³¹ Murray, *The Governmental System*, pp. 51, 52-3.

⁵³² Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*, p. 252.

⁵³³ Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, p. 122.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 122.

done in terms of enforcing these pieces of legislation prior to the Natural Resources Act, 1941, mostly because of the Second World War.⁵³⁵

Conclusion

The Responsible government period witnessed significant progress in soil conservation efforts in comparison with the Company period. Contour ridges were constructed on some farms, a clear indication that knowledge about the importance of conservation in agricultural was increasing among white commercial farmers. This progress was, however, only a drop in the ocean if looked at in the context of all land held by white farmers. Conservation was also introduced in the African sector, where coercion was used to ensure that African farmers were in compliance with state requirements. Conservation in African areas was meant to ensure that Africans could sustain themselves in their designated reserves without requiring more land. The first ten years of Responsible government were characterized by continuity rather than change, both in terms of government policies and staffing of government departments. The agricultural crisis is, as this chapter has argued, what laid the basis for the massive strides in conservation that took place from the time Godfrey Huggins assumed the premiership.

⁵³⁵ The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1941, 38, p. 539.

Chapter 4: Soil Conservation and State Control, 1934-44

Introduction

“Huggins, what is this rot about paying farmers’ debts?” a farmer asked Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins at the Salisbury Club in the mid-1930s. In response to the agricultural crisis, the Huggins government had, in 1935, enacted the Farmers’ Debt Adjustment Act to tackle farmers’ indebtedness. The Act was one of a range of measures put in place by the Huggins administration in the mid-1930s to rescue settler agriculture from the brink of collapse. “Well, Fred, the idea is to keep those people on the land. We don’t want them to go away”, Huggins responded. “Oh, is that it?” the farmer retorted, before proceeding to give his unsolicited opinion on the subject, “I reckon if a bugger can’t earn his own living, let him starve!”⁵³⁶

The farmer’s suggestion, to let failed farmers “starve”, was out of the question for Huggins. There were three reasons for government support and intervention in the settler agricultural sector from the mid-1930s. The first was that the resuscitation of the sector would ease the problem of unemployment. A committee appointed in 1932 to enquire into the matter found that white unemployment, particularly as it related to youths, had reached alarming levels.⁵³⁷ If the problem was allowed to fester on unchecked, it would result in a youth exodus from the colony. The committee recommended that government departments be instructed to prioritize employing white youths whenever there were vacancies and, where possible, to retrench their African employees for whites.⁵³⁸ In 1934 another committee of enquiry⁵³⁹ advised the

⁵³⁶ Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 222.

⁵³⁷ The Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the Problem of Unemployment in the Colony, 1932.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1934.

government to stop state-aided land settlement programmes, “except to the extent of assisting sons of Rhodesian farmers to take up land.”⁵⁴⁰

The second reason had to do with the survival of the colony itself. Settler agriculture had to be bailed out because it, together with mining, constituted the major pillars of the colonial economy prior to the rise of manufacturing in the 1940s.⁵⁴¹ If it faltered, the sector would not be able to retain farmers. The Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry did not mince its words about this critical matter; “There can be no doubt that the farming community is facing a crisis... The issue that has to be faced is whether it is possible to build up a white colony on any basis other than a white agricultural population.”⁵⁴² The Committee put the task of rescuing the sector on the government’s doorstep; it had to be one of the core aspects of agrarian policy. “Soil erosion is a national question and must be treated as such,” the Committee stated;

What thirty years ago was good land and grew good crops...is now desert country, where white farmers can no longer make a living...the question of water conservation and the prevention of soil erosion should be in the forefront of the government’s agricultural policy.⁵⁴³

The third reason was Huggins’ own political survival. The agricultural crisis had claimed the scalps of two premiers in 1933; Howard Moffat and George Mitchell. The election of October 1933 ushered Huggins and his Reform party into office.⁵⁴⁴ In the absence of tangible reforms, his Premiership would be on precarious grounds. In a space of the next ten years, therefore,

⁵⁴⁰ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1934, p. 29.

⁵⁴¹ L. Tow, 1960, The Manufacturing Economy of Southern Rhodesia: Problems and Prospects, Washington, National Research Council and A. S. Mlambo, E. S. Pangeti and I. R. Phimister, 2000, Zimbabwe: A History of Manufacturing, 1890-1995, Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications.

⁵⁴² Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, 1934, p. 1.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁴⁴ For more on the elections of 1933 see Murray, The Governmental System, pp. 50-54.

the agrarian landscape had gone through a huge transformation, largely due to the leading role of the state.

The previous chapter has examined the Responsible Government's agrarian policies between 1924 and 1934 and found that there was more of continuity than change. Soil conservation was neither incorporated into the Empire Settlement Schemes nor made an important aspect of the landmark Land Apportionment legislation of 1930. Many settler farming enterprises were brought to their knees by the severe agricultural crisis that hit the country from the 1927/1928 season. The crisis was a culmination of four decades without a soil management strategy on one hand, and "soil mining"⁵⁴⁵ carried out in the name of commercial farming on the other, and the collapse of commodity prices on international markets. Developments of the previous five years ensured that, unlike in 1924 when Coghlan took office, it would not be business as usual for the agricultural sector under Huggins' Reform Party-led administration.

This chapter examines settler agriculture between 1934 and 1944. It draws the conclusion that the decade was an important benchmark in the colony's agrarian and soil conservation history. By 1944 the state had directly intervened in four aspects of settler farming; farmers' indebtedness, African labour shortage, agricultural marketing and soil conservation. Farmers' indebtedness was tackled by the enactment of Farmers' Debt Adjustment legislation in 1935 to enable the state to, through the Land and Agricultural Bank, provide loans to farmers for paying off their debts. The labour question was addressed by entering into the Tripartite Labour Agreement in August 1936 with Northern Rhodesia (hereinafter, Zambia) and Nyasaland (hereinafter, Malawi) and by promulgating the Compulsory Labour Act on 1 August 1942 to coerce Africans to provide labour to settler farms during the Second World War. This was done to satisfy high domestic demand for food as a result of the rise of

⁵⁴⁵ Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture", p. 438.

manufacturing and increasing urbanization and to supply food for the war effort. Agricultural marketing challenges were addressed by the creation of key parastatals to spearhead marketing of all the colony's major agricultural products, including tobacco, cotton, beef and milk, among others. Finally, conservation was tackled by the promulgation of the Natural Resources Act in 1941. The Act was a historic piece of legislation on which natural resources management in the colony was anchored for the rest of the colonial period. The legislation provided for the formation of the Natural Resources Board, an institution that had the same powers as the Magistrates' court, to ensure that there was compliance. The Natural Resources Act laid the basis for an important development in settler culture as the following chapters on the soil conservation movement from 1944 to the 1970s reveal; conservation increasingly became a highly ingrained aspect of white identity on the farms.

Settler Agriculture, 1934-44: Background and Context

The 1920s and 1930s were, as the previous chapter has shown, a momentous period for the colony's agricultural sector. The 1920s were characterized by two major economic depressions. The first was a post-First World War slump, with the 1921-2 season being the most severe for the majority of farmers.⁵⁴⁶ This was a major blow to farmers, the majority of who had not been able to farm profitably during wartime as a result of liquidity constraints and harsh maritime conditions which made international export of commodities difficult.⁵⁴⁷ Before the sector had had adequate time to recover from this depression, it was again struck by another slump in the 1927/28 cropping season. The Great Depression also set in in 1929, effectively ensuring a gigantic, long-drawn crisis, from which farmers were still smarting in

⁵⁴⁶ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 98.

⁵⁴⁷ For the general climate in the First World War see D. Stevenson, 2004, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy*, New York, Basic Books.

the mid-1930s.⁵⁴⁸ The majority of farmers had fallen into bankruptcy; in the absence of a government bail-out the bigger proportion of the farmers neither had the knowledge nor the means with which to extricate themselves from their debt trap.⁵⁴⁹ Because of this, the over-borrowed farmers risked losing their assets and farms to the Land and Agricultural Bank and other creditors. The Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry had this to say about this situation; “it is only because bond-holders and merchants have refrained from action that many farmers are in production.”⁵⁵⁰ The majority of farms in maize-belt areas such as Mazoe and Lomagundi were, as noted, impoverished by soil erosion, a direct outcome of poor farming methods.⁵⁵¹ In such an environment, it was difficult for the farmers to secure adequate labour⁵⁵² and to market⁵⁵³ their produce.

Government intervention in settler agriculture in the 1930s should be placed in the context of the agricultural crisis and the prevailing racial segregation. Segregation in the 1930s was first exhibited in the 1930 the Land Apportionment Act. Though, from the onset of settler colonial rule, land alienation had favoured the settlers over Africans, the 1930 Act effectively relegated African participation in the country’s agrarian affairs to a subservient status by formalizing the division of land in the country along racial lines. The Act allocated the colony’s one million Africans 29 million acres of land, while 50 000 settler farmers got 49 million acres. Africans could not hold or purchase land in areas designated for settlers.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁴⁸ Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 222.

⁵⁴⁹ For more on this see Machingaidze, “Bankrupt Settler Farmers, Unemployment and State Response.”

⁵⁵⁰ Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, p. 1.

⁵⁵¹ NAZ S1180/251 (5), The Maize Enquiry Committee Report, 1930.

⁵⁵² For more on labour dynamics in the country and in the region see B. Paton, 1995, *Labour Export Policy in the Development of Southern Africa*, Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications and J. Mtisi, 1994, “The Political Economy of Labour in Southern Africa”, Harare, Department of Economic History Seminar, University of Zimbabwe.

⁵⁵³ NAZ S1193/C8/1 Resolution 10, RAU Agenda, Gwelo Congress, September, 1927. Marketing was such a contentious issue that in the late 1920s the Mashonaland Farmers’ Association toyed with the idea of forming their own political party.

⁵⁵⁴ M. Meredith, 1979, *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia 1890-1979*, Norfolk, Andre Deutsch Limited, p. 21. For a more detailed examination of the Land Apportionment Act see Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe*.

Land Apportionment legislation effectively relegated to the dustbin the clause stipulated by Article 83 of the Order-in-Council of 1898 that Africans had a right to “acquire, hold, encumber and dispose of land on the same conditions as a person who is not a native”, as.⁵⁵⁵ The Act was a big step-forward “towards fuller segregation” as it effectively “(curtailed) the advancement of Africans in any area that might threaten white predominance.”⁵⁵⁶

The state also sought to preserve and extend white predominance to other sectors of the economy, other than agriculture. In 1934 The Industrial Conciliation Act was enacted to restrict African industrial workers from “qualifying for apprenticeships or skilled work and from joining trade unions.”⁵⁵⁷ Separate development was openly justified by Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins in 1938 when he stated;

The Europeans in this country can be likened to an island of white in a sea of black, with the artisan and the tradesman forming the shores and the professional classes the highlands in the centre. Is the native to be allowed to erode away the shores and gradually attack the highlands? To permit this would mean that the leaven of civilization would be removed from the country, and the black man would inevitably revert to a barbarism worse than before.⁵⁵⁸

Segregation was, thus, extended in the 1930s till it pervaded all facets of Rhodesian life. It is in this general context that State intervention in settler agriculture should be understood.

Government Intervention from the 1930s

This section examines government intervention in three aspects of settler agriculture; farmers’ indebtedness, African labour shortage and agricultural marketing. These three aspects were not unrelated to soil conservation. As the previous chapter has shown, the agricultural crisis

⁵⁵⁵ Official Yearbook of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia, Number 2, 1930, p. 286.

⁵⁵⁶ Punt, 1979, “The Development of African Agriculture”, p. 42.

⁵⁵⁷ Meredith, The Past is Another Country, p. 21.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 22.

was a direct outcome of poor farming methods. This is not to imply that there were no other factors such as depressed conditions on international markets. The crisis, as the example of Southey's Mazoe farm in chapter 3 has demonstrated, in turn, led to a situation where farmers had to rely on credit to keep their farms in production. This way, farmers got entangled in a web of debt, a situation that the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Act sought to reverse to ensure there were no foreclosures on the farms. The agricultural crisis also impacted on the attractiveness of the farms from a labour point of view. As section 4.2.2 demonstrates, the mines offered more attractive wages in comparison with the crisis-hit farms. The crisis also affected marketing on two levels; capital for cropping and low output as a result of poor methods.

Farmers were left by the crisis in a situation where they could not finance production on their own. Even in cases where they sourced the finances from lenders, low output per acre meant that agricultural production was done at higher costs. More land had to be put under the plough to boost output. While this required more labour and inputs, depressed domestic and international markets did not yield enough for farmers to break even. Government intervention was intended to bring back profitability to farming. This could only be realized if production was carried out in an efficient, cost-effective way, to ensure that the colony's produce was competitive in international markets. In addition to this, produce had to be sold under the most ideal market conditions. It is for this reason that the government created marketing boards.

The Farmers' Debt Adjustment Programme

The settler agrarian sector was in serious trouble by the mid-1930s. The majority of the farmers had "saddled themselves with mortgages, the interest on which combined with

instalments of capital, they (could) not pay.”⁵⁵⁹ The industry was in such a state because of four major reasons; by 1935 there had been low commodity prices both on the domestic and international markets for seven years, production costs continued to rise until they out-paced market prices, crop yields continued to diminish as a result of soil exhaustion and poor farming methods and outbreaks of foot and mouth disease and East Coast Fever impacted on cattle production.⁵⁶⁰ The Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia, which was appointed by the government at the end of 1933 to enquire into the status of farming in the colony, reported in 1934 that “few farmers would be solvent if the present market value of their assets were taken as a true index.”⁵⁶¹

It was because of this Commission’s findings that the government began to consider ways to rescue settler agriculture. The situation was considered to be so dire that the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands tried not to publicly apportion blame to farmers for the crisis they found themselves entrenched in, in order to ensure their cooperation. The Minister’s position, often communicated in his official correspondence, was that the majority of “good and well-meaning” farmers did not deserve to be blamed as they had incurred debts in their endeavour to advance the nation’s agriculture, while others, who he perceived to be beyond redemption, had no place in the agricultural sector. He referred to the latter group as, “quite unsuitable as farmers” that would “never succeed as such.”⁵⁶² The Minister observed in 1935, “in a number of cases it will be found that farmers through no fault of their own have endeavoured to develop their farms too rapidly and have saddled themselves with mortgages, the interest on

⁵⁵⁹ NAZ S1215/1085/4, Farmers’ Debt Adjustment Act, 1935, Correspondence: Memorandum by Minister of Agriculture and Lands, dated 13 March, 1935.

⁵⁶⁰ Report of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, for the Year 1931, p. 3 and also for the years 1932, p.1, 4, and 1933, p. 1, 3-5.

⁵⁶¹ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, 1934.

⁵⁶² NAZ S1215/1085/4, Farmers’ Debt Adjustment Act, 1935, Correspondence: Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture, 1935.

which, combined with instalments of capital, they cannot pay.”⁵⁶³ The Ministry began to work on the Farmers Debt Adjustment Bill, under the auspices of the Land Bank and Agricultural Bank, to provide the sector with a financial package of £50 000 to operate on the lines of a revolving fund for clearing farmers debts.⁵⁶⁴

It was proposed that the programme should run for two years, from 1935 to 1937, when it was expected that the most deserving cases would, by then, have been addressed. To allay the fears of the Treasury that the fund could be wasted on a futile project that would not yield tangible results, the Ministry of Agriculture stated;

It is suggested that the not unwarranted fears of the Treasury in regard to the financial repercussions of the proposed Bill might be met by enacting it in the first instance for perhaps two years...If at the end of that period it became apparent that the expenditure involved greater than the colony could bear the Act would be allowed to lapse, but it is believed that in the meanwhile a large number of efficient farmers would have been placed on their feet, and a considerable number of inefficient removed...⁵⁶⁵

Though identification and removal of inefficient farmers was desirable, it would not entirely solve the problem as a solution would still need to be found to deal with the excluded poverty-stricken farmers and their families. Two solutions for such a scenario were proposed; the first was to have,

...these persons and their families becoming a charge upon the state until such time as they can be absorbed in other walks of life. In the meantime they would form a charge against the Votes of the Department of the Interior, ‘Relief of Destitutes’⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶³ NAZ S1215/1085/4, Farmers’ Debt Adjustment Act, 1935, Correspondence: Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture, 1935.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, C. L. Robertson to the Office of the Prime Minister, 19 January 1935.

⁵⁶⁵ NAZ S1215/1085/4, H. G. Mundy to Secretary to The Treasury, 27th of March 1935.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The second was to “arrange that they remain as unpaid caretakers of the farms on which they are now resident, pending re-alienation.”⁵⁶⁷ The Draft Bill proposed the creation of a Farmers Debt Adjustment Board (hereinafter, the Board) to receive and, in collaboration with the Land and Agricultural Bank, either approve or reject farmers’ applications for debt relief. Farmers on the verge of losing their land to creditors were top priority in the selection process.⁵⁶⁸

The Bill sailed through the Legislative Assembly in mid-1935. This development gave hope and a lifeline to many desperate landowners who were on the verge of losing their farms. The Board imposed stringent conditions on successful applicants for loans. They were required to hand over authority over their estate, including the title of the farm, to the Land and Agricultural Bank until the debt advanced had been fully settled.⁵⁶⁹ This meant the Bank literally owned and ran the farms till the farmers settled their debts. Farmers resented the Bank’s oversight at first, but began to warm up to the idea as time passed and interaction with its officers increased. The Adjustment Board’s Chairman observed in his report for 1937;

...in the first instance the farmer is frequently averse to... supervision, but subsequently finds that this arrangement is to his advantage. In one or two cases farmers have approached the Board with a view to having their affairs placed under supervision, and others have intimated that they will continue with supervision after they have cleared themselves of all liability to the Board, as they feel they are better able to concentrate their energies on conducting their farming operations, leaving the supervisor to take care of the finances.⁵⁷⁰

The Debt Adjustment Scheme rescued many farms from foreclosure. The programme ensured that a lot of farmers did not lose their farms to lenders.

⁵⁶⁷ NAZ S1215/1085/4, Farmers’ Debt Adjustment Act, 1935, Correspondence.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

The major shortcoming of the programme was that, while it saved many farmers from losing their farms, which was very important for the colony's white agricultural sector in the depressed 1930s, its mandate did not go beyond debt relief. While institutions such as the Land and Agricultural Bank offered credit to farmers, most farmers were, either because of debt or inability to prove that their operations were viable enough to afford repayment, not credit-worthy. What the sector needed were easy loans, such as those provided for debt repayment under the auspices of the Board.

One Trelawney tobacco farmer, T. Barton, wrote to the Governor to register his dissatisfaction with the Debt Adjustment programme's limited scope in relation to what it could fund. "All that the Farmers Debt Adjustment Board could do was to enable me not to lose land," he wrote, "yet I might still leave the farm because I do not have sufficient wherewithal to keep the boys paid and fed...I need new barns and sheds..."⁵⁷¹ Lack of funding for operations was a weakness even the Board recognized, as between 1935 and 1938 it appealed to government a number of times to make available funds for special loans to enable farmers to make economic use of their land, and not merely to retain them. The Board's chairman bemoaned the lack of working capital among farmers in August 1935, saying:

Lack of funds has prevented most farmers maintaining a full complement of working oxen, many of which by reason of age, poverty and mortality have needed replacing. The result is that the sound oxen have been subjected to overwork, which has also led to deterioration in the quality of the work performed on the farm.⁵⁷²

Turning to the loss of soil fertility and lack of soil conservation measures on the farms, the Chairman added;

⁵⁷¹ NAZ S1215/1085/4 Farmers Debt Adjustment Act, Correspondence; Letter from R. T. Barton to the Governor, Sir Herbert Stanley, 27th of August 1935.

⁵⁷² NAZS3292/1/6/1, Report of the Farmers Debt Adjustment Board, 1937/1938.

Land which was already decreasing in fertility due to the practice of successive cash cropping, lack of fertiliser and green manure crops and erosion was allowed to deteriorate further during the years of depression. Where this has occurred the original assistance granted for adjustment of debts would be wasted unless accompanied by seasonal advances to enable the farmer to bring back his land into good heart again.⁵⁷³

It soon became apparent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands that repayment of farmers' debts on its own would not bring back prosperity to the agricultural sector.

The Farmers Debt Adjustment Act was amended in 1938 to enable the Board's financing criteria to go beyond debt repayment. Extra resources, amounting to £90 000, were provided to the Board by Treasury to fund farmer' operations. This development was very important in enabling farmers to increase production. Proof of this was shown by evidence given by the farmers to the Natural Resources Board (NRB) Farming Enquiry in 1942. In his evidence to the NRB Enquiry, the Manager of the Farmer's Co-op said the following about the Board: "It has been very useful indeed. I think it has done extremely good work... there are a great many men who have passed through the Farmers Debt Adjustment Board and are now completely rehabilitated."⁵⁷⁴

The African Labour Question

From the early colonial period, Settler agriculture was bedeviled by labour shortage. The government was often blamed by farmers for failure to put in place a system that would ensure adequate supplies of cheap African labour.⁵⁷⁵ Until the 1920s, the main reason for labour shortage in the colony was what Robin Palmer has termed the "era of peasant

⁵⁷³ NAZS3292/1/6/1, Report of the Farmers Debt Adjustment Board, 1937/1938.

⁵⁷⁴ NAZ S987/1 Oral Evidence given to the National Resources Board Farming Enquiry.

⁵⁷⁵ Mtisi, "The Political Economy of Labour."

prosperity.”⁵⁷⁶ With the opening up of farms and new mining centres in the early period, many Africans found supplying the new centres with food more profitable than offering their labour to the farms. In response to the internal labour deficit, the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau was formed in 1903 to recruit labour from outside Southern Rhodesia for the colony’s mines and farms; at first recruitment targeted labour from Zambia and Malawi.⁵⁷⁷ In 1909 and 1913 the government entered into agreements with the Portuguese in the Modus Vivendi and the Tete Agreement, enabling recruitment from Mozambique.⁵⁷⁸ While the Bureau was relatively successful in recruiting labour for the mines, its efforts were not as successful in relation to the farming sector, with the result that there were big farmers’ demonstrations against the Bureau in 1911, 1917, 1919 and 1925.⁵⁷⁹ Farmers’ opposition, administrative challenges, and the impact of the Depression led to the demise of the Bureau in 1933.⁵⁸⁰

With the collapse of the Bureau, the government entered into labour talks with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The talk culminated in the Tripartite Labour Agreement of August 1936. Negotiations with her northern neighbours were quite complex as both territories were not interested in continued supply of labour to the colony mainly because of their own economic interests; mining was expanding itself in Northern Rhodesia, while tobacco production was rapidly growing in Malawi.⁵⁸¹ In addition to the increasing prospects of Nyasaland’s agricultural sector as a result of the tobacco boom, the Committee of Enquiry into Emigrant Labour, which had been put in place in 1935 by the colonial office to enquire into whether labour migration was yielding any tangible economic benefits to Nyasaland (also known as the Lacey Report), reported that extra-territorial labour from Nyasaland was, apart

⁵⁷⁶ Palmer, “The Agricultural History of Rhodesia.”

⁵⁷⁷ Mtisi, “The Political Economy of Labour”, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁸ Paton, *Labour Export Policy*, pp. 17, 144.

⁵⁷⁹ See NAZ S235/398, The Future of the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau.

⁵⁸⁰ D. Clarke, 1973, “Black Contract Labour and Farm Wage Rates in Rhodesia”, Salisbury, University of Rhodesia Seminar Paper Number 2, p. 1.

⁵⁸¹ Mtisi, “The Political Economy of Labour”, p. 23.

from undermining family units, not ameliorating, but increasing, poverty.⁵⁸² The Committee said in its report;

As our investigations proceeded we became more and more aware that this uncontrolled and growing emigration brought misery and poverty to hundreds and thousands of families and that the waste of life, happiness, health and wealth was colossal...Something must be done at once to remedy a state of affairs which, viewed from any standpoint, constitutes a flagrant breach of that ideal of trusteeship of native races.⁵⁸³

Apart from the growing perception against providing the colony with labour, there was also a growing preference for the Union of South Africa over Southern Rhodesia in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

This preference was because South African mines offered better remuneration than their Southern Rhodesian counterparts. The Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), South African Chamber of Mines' recruiting arm, was also on a massive recruitment drive in the region.⁵⁸⁴ It was in this context of competition from the Union that the Tripartite Labour Agreement of August 1936 was signed. Southern Rhodesia was left with no option but to institute a voluntary remittance system, where part of the foreign workers' wages was remitted to their home country.⁵⁸⁵ The Tripartite Labour Agreement of 1936 did not help for long as the outbreak of the Second World War dealt a major blow to external labour supplies. Even before the outbreak of the war, it was increasingly becoming difficult to recruit labour from Nyasaland. As Peter Scott describes the labour situation in Nyasaland since 1935;

⁵⁸² D. Johnson, 1992, "Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1936-1946", *Journal of African History*, 33, 1, p. 113, quoting "The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Emigrant Labour" (also known as The Lacey Report, 1935).

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵⁸⁴ Paton, *Labour Export Policy*, pp. 117-119.

⁵⁸⁵ G. C. Phiri, (undated), "Migrant Labour as a by-Product of Colonial Driven Civil Discord: Of Labour Crossings and Obstructions: The 1948 Migrant Workers' Act: A Solution to Southern Rhodesia's Labour Problems or a Self-defeating Exercise", Harare, Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe, p. 9.

Despite an intensive campaign, including the dropping of propaganda leaflets from aircraft over remote villages, the Commission (Native Labour Supply Commission, which was put in place after the RNLB was disbanded in 1933) has obtained less than one-third of its annual Nyasaland quota. ...Although this is due partly to a decline in migration resulting from the development of the native tobacco and cotton industries, it stems mainly from the desire to migrate covenanted. Recruits are often separated from their friends, are invariably sent to employers unable to attract the free labour available, cannot give notice if dissatisfied, and cannot leave employment for fear of punishment for desertion....⁵⁸⁶

On several occasions during the Second World War, the Nyasaland Government froze labour migration as it sought to make its contribution to the war effort by recruiting for the King's African Rifles, an African regiment formed to fight on Britain's side on the war front.⁵⁸⁷ The impact of this move was quickly felt in the Mashonaland maize belt. In the case of Lomagundi, the number of new migrant labourers declined from 14 794 in 1935 to 4 319 in 1940.⁵⁸⁸ The Native Commissioner for Lomagundi area reported in 1940 the changing nature of immigrant workers; they organized into "semi-trade unions" that insisted on shorter working hours.⁵⁸⁹

There had been a drop of over 3 000 in the number of non-indigenous Africans in Lomagundi District between 1937 and 1940. The registers for Africans from Northern Rhodesia showed that, while in 1937 the colony had received 28 799 migrants, the figure dropped to 12 449 in 1938, and to 10 200 in 1939. This equaled a decrease between 1937 and 1939 of 18 599, and Lomagundi farmers were hard hit by this decrease.⁵⁹⁰ Soil conservation on the farms from the mid-1930s should be understood partly in this context of labour shortage. Farmers needed more hands on their farms to remain in production. The Tripartite Labour Agreement of 1936 did not yield adequate labour supplies. This situation made it impracticable for most farmers

⁵⁸⁶ P. Scott, 1954, "Migrant Labour in Southern Rhodesia", *Geographical Review*, 44, 1, p. 32.

⁵⁸⁷ Johnson, "Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour", p. 114.

⁵⁸⁸ NAZ S1563, The Native Commissioner for Lomagundi, Annual Report, 1940.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ NAZ, Records Centre, unprocessed, S1561/1, Letter from the Acting Secretary of Native Affairs (Salisbury) to the Secretary to the Prime Minister, dated 12th of January 1940.

to commit themselves to soil improvement programmes in the absence of adequate labour. The nature of the labour-force had changed by the end of the 1930s, as evidenced by activism by migrant workers; demanding shorter working hours. There were calls in the local press for employers to take note of this change, and to accordingly respond to it by improving workers' wages and labour conditions. One such call came from the Rhodesia Herald in June 1939;

All facts, if faced squarely, as they must be, point inexorably in one direction. The development of the colony cannot advance on a basis of continued expansion of the native labour supply. As far as the native labour supply is concerned improvement cannot be by any large increase in numbers; it must therefore, be in the quality of work done. That means, in other words, better pay, better conditions, better supervision, and better work with less waste of labour.⁵⁹¹

This advice was not heeded by most employers. In 1940 the Salisbury Conference was held where Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland sought to plug loopholes in the implementation of the Tripartite Labour Agreement of 1936. The major loophole was clandestine migration to the Union of South Africa. Most workers from the northern territories considered Southern Rhodesia a half-way station where they could rest and earn some money before they embarked on the final leg of their journey to the Union. At the conference, Southern Rhodesia noted that it could not spare any labour, and it was contemplating creating a "native-free belt" adjacent to the Union of South Africa's border if the Union continued to receive labour from the territory without heeding its calls for intervention.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹¹ The Rhodesia Herald, 2 June 1939.

⁵⁹² NAZ Box 41007, Ministry of Labour File, 1941 (Unprocessed, Records Centre), Record of Proceedings at a Conference held at Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia on the 6th and 7th of March, 1940.

Farmers responded to “the changing conditions of the labour supply by continuing to press for state coercion to break the independence (local) of Africans.”⁵⁹³ In their eyes, acute labour shortages were partly because local men did not want to work. David Johnson has examined this mind-set and observed;

The image of the African who sat in his kraal all day drinking beer while hard-working Europeans searched for labour to develop the colony is not to be seen only in terms of a manifestation of the racism of white settlers...the stereotype of the lazy African was a clue to the inability of colonial capitalism to dominate the work rhythms of African labourers. Labeling the African worker as lazy was a way of acknowledging the limits of dominance while attributing these limits to the basic nature of the dominated, rather than the contradictions of exercising power. The real problem for the farmers, which they often acknowledged, was the fact that Africans were not completely dependent on wage labour for their reproduction. .. (this) meant that there was some scope for exercising choices as to whether one did or did not engage in wage labour, and if one did, at what time of the year, and for how long.⁵⁹⁴

As farmers’ calls for government to find a way to ensure there was adequate labour increased after the outbreak of the Second World War, the government was forced to act by war-time economic realities. The country faced a food deficit, necessitating maize rationing. Food production had plummeted, partly as a result of poor farming methods and lack of soil conservation measures on the farms, the country was hit by droughts, domestic food consumption was on the increase as manufacturing expanded and the urban population increased and the colony had to meet its obligation to supply food as its contribution to the war effort.⁵⁹⁵ The Government promulgated the Compulsory Labour Act on 1 August 1942. The Compulsory Labour Act empowered the state to forcibly recruit African men between the age of 18 and 45. Forcible recruitment applied to men who had been unemployed for more than three months. Compulsory conscription commenced before the Act was promulgated; 2

⁵⁹³ Johnson, “Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour”, p. 118, quoting The Rhodesia Herald, 3 April 1942 and 15 May 1942.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

⁵⁹⁵ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, pp. 264-275.

000 African men had been forcibly conscripted from Mazoe, Mtoko, Mrewa, Darwin and Lomagundi before August 1942.⁵⁹⁶ There was rampant ill-treatment at work places for the conscripts;

...[they] were sometimes subjected to beatings by managers of gangs for ‘malingering.’ Despite early signals from officials of the inadequate accommodation for the first food-production gangs and the consequent need for gangs to be supplied with accommodation, by the (Food Production Committees) FPCs, the housing of conscripts remained in the charge of farmers. Those labourers who could not be accommodated in existing housing were allowed to construct make-shift grass huts. Conscripts were meant to work from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Saturday, and sometimes on Sunday, for an initial wage of 15 shillings plus rations for each thirty-day ticket...⁵⁹⁷

The forced recruitment of Africans ended four years later in August 1946. D. Johnson has put the number of recruits in 1943 at 10 245, 11 495 in 1944 and 11 405 in 1945.⁵⁹⁸ In the absence of forced labour, many farmers would not have been able to produce the amounts of maize they harvested; they would have been “compelled to curtail their maize crops...and would have had to neglect the crops they did manage to plant.”⁵⁹⁹ Government intervention in labour issues was meant to ensure that settler farmers were able to remain productive. The failure to source adequate labour from outside the territory, and the use of coerced labour during the war all pointed to a crisis; soil erosion and absence of proper farming methods.

The Creation of Control/Marketing Boards

The Government responded to agricultural marketing difficulties during the agricultural crisis by creating agricultural parastatals, known as Control/Marketing Boards to regulate production and marketing of specific items in the colony, such as maize, tobacco, beef, milk,

⁵⁹⁶ Johnson, “Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour”, p. 121.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

pork and cotton, to name a few. This intervention, Mandivamba Rukuni has observed, was a reaction to unsatisfactory commodity prices and farmers' precarious financial position during the depression;

With the onset of the world depression in the 1930s, large-scale agriculture was virtually bankrupt and government policy shifted from laissez-faire to direct intervention in order to channel assistance to white farmers. The Price of beef had fallen since World War 1, and the price of maize was at an all-time low. Tobacco was in one of its cyclical slumps. Practically all the white farmers were bankrupt.⁶⁰⁰

The creation of marketing enterprises was as important as the provision of finance for paying off farmers' debts and attempts to provide adequate labour for the settler agrarian sector.

The idea of Control Boards did not begin with the Huggins' government, but in 1931, when Moffat was still premier. In 1930, following the maize slump, the Moffat government set up a committee to investigate the economic position of the country's maize industry. The Maize Enquiry Committee interviewed government officials, bankers, representatives of financial institutions and other stakeholders who were well-placed to shed light on what had happened to the maize industry. The majority of people interviewed were, according to the Committee, "unanimous in stating that the position is more than critical and that the continuance for another season of existing conditions can only result in driving large numbers of farmers off the land."⁶⁰¹ The Committee found that a cornucopia of factors had caused the maize slump;

Lack in many cases of sufficient initial capital, resulting in heavy bonds with correspondingly heavy charges against the land, exhaustion of soil fertility in the early stages of the industry, necessitating heavy expenditure in later years in measures for its restoration, losses on ventures in the production of tobacco and cotton, heavy charges in the production of the crop, comparatively low yields during the last few seasons (having in view the amounts expended in production),

⁶⁰⁰ M. Rukuni, 1993, "The Evolution of Agricultural Policy 1890-1990", in M. Rukuni and C. K. Eicher, *Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution*, Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, p. 23.

⁶⁰¹ NAZ S1180/251 (5), The Maize Enquiry Committee Report, 1930, p. 7.

the extra-ordinarily depressed condition of the market this year, which under any circumstances must entail a heavy loss on the season's crop and, finally, the fact that with the majority of growers in the maize area the maize crop is practically the only revenue producer.⁶⁰²

The Maize Enquiry Committee recommended that the situation could not be remedied by giving the farmers more loans and other forms of financial support.

The Committee's evidence showed that the majority of the farms were bonded more heavily than was "compatible with the financial soundness of the owners, and there is every reason to believe that many maize growers are further handicapped with a large amount of floating debt."⁶⁰³ The only feasible remedy, according to the Committee, was the implementation of measures for restoring soil fertility, stopping monoculture by introducing a second farming activity such as dairying or fattening cattle for the market and "a policy of the strictest possible personal economy, so that every penny that can be spared can be devoted to the farm."⁶⁰⁴ The Committee also recommended the formation of a marketing body for the colony's maize. This recommendation led to the promulgation of the Maize Control Act in June 1931. The Act provided for the formation of a Maize Control Board to preside over the marketing of the entire colony's maize.⁶⁰⁵ The Dairy industry was also put under a control board in 1931. The Dairy Industry Control Board was empowered to;

coordinate as far as possible the primary production, manufacture and marketing of dairy produce; to take such measures as may in its opinion be necessary to stabilize the prices of dairy produce in the Colony and to advise the Minister in regard to the renewal of the registration of any creamery, cheese factory or cream depot and the registration of any new creamery, cheese factory or cream depot...⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰² NAZ S1180/251 (5), The Maize Enquiry Committee Report, 1930, p. 7.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶⁰⁵ NAZ ZG1, Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia 1930-31, Maize Control Act, June 1931.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, The Dairy Industry Control Act, 1931, p. 121.

The creation of marketing boards continued after Huggins came to power. Table 4:1 lists the number of Boards that were formed between 1931 and 1937.

Table 4: 1: Control Boards created in the 1930s.

Agricultural Parastatal (Control Board)	Year Created
Maize Control Board (Reconstituted as the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) in 1950).	1931
Dairy Industry Control Board	1931
Tobacco Marketing Board	1936
Cotton Research and Industry Board	1936
Cold Storage Commission	1937
Pig Industry Board	1937
Dairy Marketing Board	1937

Source: Rukuni, “The Evolution of Agricultural Policy”, p. 23. Information presented by Rukuni in the last row of the table is not accurate, though. The Dairy Marketing Board was formed in October 1952, not in 1937.

As the Table shows, the Maize industry was placed under the Maize Control Board in 1931, the same year the Dairy industry was placed under the Dairy Industry Control Board.⁶⁰⁷ The Tobacco industry was placed under the Tobacco Marketing Board in April 1936, following the enactment of the Tobacco Marketing Act in 1936.⁶⁰⁸ The cotton, beef and pig industries were also put under marketing parastatals.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁷ For more on the Dairy Industry see NAZ S1216/SC27/136/32, The Dairy Industry Control Board: General.

⁶⁰⁸ NAZ S/NE 80, *New Rhodesia*, 16, 15 August 1947, p. 16.

⁶⁰⁹ See NAZ RG1, Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia: The Cotton Research and Industry Act, 1936, p. 303, The Cold Storage Commission Act, 1937, p. 353 and NAZ S1215/1326/3, The Pig Industry Act, 1937.

State Intervention in Soil Management

Apart from intervention in unsaddling farmers from their debt burdens and attempts to regulate the supply of labour and agricultural marketing, the state also intervened in soil management. State intervention was a response to the crisis. As observed in chapter 2, in the Company period conservation was not prioritized both as policy and in practice on the farms. A few lone voices by agricultural officials, such as Martin Watt and Lionel Cripps, advocated a change in attitudes towards soil conservation. This situation continued in the Responsible Government period. There were very few official voices raising concern about soil erosion. A. C. Jennings, the Irrigation Engineer responsible for soil management, is the most notable of such official voices. Jennings' Department published, from 1921, a pamphlet informing farmers of the need for soil erosion, and methods they could use to reduce soil denudation. As already stated in Chapter 3, Jennings used such opportunities to inform farmers about the evils of erosion, and the way it was impacting on farmlands across the country. Many farmers also began to talk about the need for erosion control. This increase in awareness among farmers resulted in individual farmers, with the assistance of the Irrigation Department, constructing soil conservation works on their farms from 1929. By 1934 over 20 000 acres of land had been protected by terraces.⁶¹⁰

While this represented a major departure from the past in terms of the scale of soil conservation work carried out, it came too late for the settler agrarian sector. As the Commission of Enquiry into the Preservation of Natural Resources of the Colony (hereinafter, just the Commission) observed in its 1939 report;

In an effort to maintain or increase their output, some farmers ploughed up natural hollows, hillsides and narrow valleys between hills and, in a very short time, many

⁶¹⁰ Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Preservation, etc. of the Natural Resources of the Colony, April 1939, p. 18.

acres of valuable pasture and woodland were converted into a donga-scarred waste.⁶¹¹

The most affected lands were on maize and tobacco farms. For the maize sector this was a result of the farmers' fixation with increasing their yearly harvest, regardless of quality. As this trend continued, in the absence of green manuring and soil conservation works, soil exhaustion accelerated, leading to diminishing returns.⁶¹² A similar situation obtained in the tobacco sector; growers focused on increasing their acreages as opposed to raising output per acre. Soil conservation was not prioritized. This situation resulted in a scenario where output kept increasing each year in the 1920s, but the quality of the tobacco was poor.⁶¹³ The Commission observed that this situation was also a product of farmers' indifference;

The best of the Colony's land is in the maize belt. A large area of it had been impoverished by soil erosion, and some of it ruined beyond repair, before remedial measures in the form of green manuring and anti-erosion works were adopted... speaking generally, anti-erosion measures have made slow progress amongst tobacco farmers (also). This want of progress has been attributed by some witnesses to the fact that after two successive crops the land is not used for some years for tobacco growing. A certain amount of indifference as to what happens in the meantime might result in the case of a careless farmer or in one attempting to plant an excessive area...⁶¹⁴

This led to the crisis that began with the 1927/28 farming season. The crisis festered on to a point where, in the absence of government assistance, the sector was collapsing.

Jennings continued to raise awareness about the parlous state of the colony's agricultural lands, as he had done in the 1920s, in the 1930s. His voice was more audible in the 1930s as, unlike in the early 1920s when he was only an Irrigation Engineer, he had risen in rank to a

⁶¹¹Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Preservation, etc. of the Natural Resources of the Colony, April 1939, p. 18.

⁶¹² The Report of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, for the year 1927, p. 1.

⁶¹³ Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1921, p. 10.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

more senior position; Assistant Director of Native Lands.⁶¹⁵ “For some years past, I have been greatly concerned about the deterioration I have seen going on from one end of the country to the other,” he wrote in August 1937, “consisting of the destruction of timber, the misuse of natural vleis or sponges, overstocking and general denudation of pasturage.”⁶¹⁶ More authoritative voices spoke out about the need for the colony’s natural resources. One such voice came from Robert Mcllwaine, the Water Court Judge. Mcllwaine was appointed the Chairman of the Natural Resources Commission when it was constituted in 1938. “I have lived in this Colony for nearly forty years”, Mcllwaine wrote in August 1937;

...and one of the most painful experiences has been to witness the wicked waste of the natural wealth of the country. This wealth must, in my view, be regarded as a trust belonging to the country as a whole and should not be destroyed or impaired by those into whose temporary charge it comes.⁶¹⁷

Jennings and Mcllwaine’s views on the status of the colony’s natural resources reflect the evolution of the official mind-set with regard to degradation of the country’s natural resources in the 1930s. As already noted, while in the Company period and early in the Responsible government period only a few officials talked about the need for conservation in the colony, it gained more attention in the 1930s.

State intervention in agriculture, including soil conservation, gained momentum under the Huggins government primarily because of the agricultural crisis.⁶¹⁸ Settler agriculture was an important sector in the colonial economy, and in addition to its economic importance, farmers formed the biggest political constituency that, if any premier needed to remain at the helm,

⁶¹⁵ NAZ ZAZ1/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, General Correspondence, Letter from A. C. Jennings, Assistant Director of Native Lands, to Robert Mcllwaine, the Water Court Judge, titled ‘Conservation of the Colony’s Natural Wealth’, dated 23 August, 1937.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁷ NAZ ZAZ1/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, General Correspondence, Letter from R. Mcllwaine to the Minister of Justice titled ‘Conservation of the Colony’s Natural Wealth’, dated 24 August 1937.

⁶¹⁸ For more on Huggins and his government see Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*, p. 252.

had to be pacified.⁶¹⁹ True to his promise, resuscitation of the agricultural sector was an important item on his itinerary as preceding sections have shown. The government put in place measures to clear farmers' debts, to reorganize agricultural marketing and to ensure increased supplies of labour to the sector. This should not be taken to mean that the government was the first to initiate and lead the fight against soil erosion. Farmers did.

RAU, the umbrella body of settler Farmers' Associations, and individual Farmers' Associations, had, from the mid-1920s, made resolutions at their congresses and meetings urging the government to take action to address the problem of soil erosion.⁶²⁰ RAU, in response to its members' calls for action to be taken to combat erosion, constituted a Committee after its Congress in 1931 with a mandate to investigate soil erosion in all settler farming districts. Specifically, the Committee's terms of reference mandated it "to enquire into the factors causing soil erosion and to formulate suggestions for the prevention thereof."⁶²¹ The Soil Erosion Committee of the Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU) presented a detailed report on in November 1932. The Committee recommended immediate action, resolving that:

...this Congress urges on the Government the importance to the country generally of the adoption of a national policy as regards soil wastage from whatever cause, and requests that, at the earliest possible opportunity, steps be taken to enunciate such a policy.⁶²²

⁶¹⁹ For more on white politics in the colony before 1965 see Leys, European Politics in Southern Rhodesia.

⁶²⁰ See The Herald, Friday 18 February, 1924, p. 18 for a report of a resolution by the Bindura Farmers' Association urging the government to "appoint a Commission to Investigate the matter of soil erosion, with special reference to the wasting of agricultural lands", also see NAZ ZAZ4/1/1, Natural Resources Commission, Written Evidence from the RAU Soil Erosion Committee Report, p. 28.

⁶²¹ NAZ ZAZ4/1/1, The Rhodesia Agricultural Union, The Soil Erosion Committee Report, Written Evidence.

⁶²² Ibid.

The Committee recommended, among other things, the urgent need for concerted national remedial action, including financial and legislative intervention, to address soil erosion and its negative environmental impacts.⁶²³

Apart from the local agricultural crisis, developments thousands of miles away in the United States and in Canada also fed into the local conservation discourse.⁶²⁴ Government officials, such as Jennings, began to talk and write about these international developments. Jennings observed in 1937,

There must be an awakening of the national conscience and much more concerted effort, if many areas are to be saved from ultimate destruction. We have before us the creation of the Arabian Desert which many claim today was brought about by overstocking and destruction of the tree growth largely by small stock and goats. Then in more recent times the terrific loss of soil due to wind erosion in both the western States and the prairies province of Canada. I gathered when visiting the later area some three years ago that the opinion now held is that much of the land should have remained as prairie under its virgin grass cover and not brought under cultivation.⁶²⁵

The government had, after the Great Dust Bowl Disaster occurred in the United States, dispatched a high-level team composed of agricultural officials such as Jennings and Emory Alvord on a look-and-learn tour. This was because the Roosevelt government had, in response to the crisis, rolled out a massive programme to rehabilitate land in the affected areas.⁶²⁶

Back in the colony, the Huggins government appointed a Commission at the end of 1933 to enquire into the economic position of the agricultural sector. The Commission found that most farmers were on the verge of bankruptcy and recommended immediate measures to

⁶²³ NAZ ZAZ4/1/1, The Rhodesia Agricultural Union, The Soil Erosion Committee Report, Written Evidence.

⁶²⁴ Discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

⁶²⁵ NAZ ZAZ1/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, Correspondence, Letter from A. C Jennings, Assistant Director of Native Lands, to Justice Robert McIlwaine titled, "Conservation of the Colony's Natural Wealth" dated 23 August 1937.

⁶²⁶ NAZ S482 291/39, The Natural Resources Commission.

assist them to remain in business.⁶²⁷ Turning to soil and water conservation, the Committee reported; “the prevention of soil erosion should be in the forefront of the government’s agricultural policy.”⁶²⁸ The Government responded in October 1934 by appointing two Soil Conservation Advisory Councils in Matabeleland and Mashonaland. The Councils were tasked to recommend to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands necessary measures for soil conservation in their jurisdiction and to assist the government in compiling draft legislation for possible adoption as the colony’s natural resources law. The Councils were also tasked to carry out propaganda work in their areas to increase interest among farmers in conservation issues while at the same time lobbying for support of a national policy on soil conservation.⁶²⁹

The Huggins government began, in 1936, to put in place legislation that it deemed essential for the conservation and preservation of the colony’s natural resources. In 1936 the Native Trust and Land Act was promulgated.⁶³⁰ The Act was mainly targeted at combating overstocking in African areas. The Act empowered the Department of Native Affairs to assess the number of cattle and other small stock such as goats and sheep each African area could carry and to cull to eliminate excess stock. Chiefs, headmen, councillors and other people with positions of authority in the reserves were allowed to have more cattle.⁶³¹ The Forest and Herbage Act was enacted in 1936 to ensure conservation of indigenous timber.⁶³² The Act was an expansion of the Native Reserves Forest Produce Act of 1929 which was promulgated to control exploitation of forest products by Africans. The Act permitted Africans to exploit forest products such as honey, wild fruit, broom and thatch grass, among others, only for their

⁶²⁷ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, 1934, p. 1.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶²⁹ NAZ ZAZ4/1/1, The Rhodesia Agricultural Union, The Soil Erosion Committee Report, Written Evidence.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter from (Sgd) H. H. D. Simmonds, Secretary for Native Affairs, to the Secretary, Department of Justice, titled “Preservation of the Natural Resources of the Colony”, dated 16 May 1938.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*

⁶³² NAZ S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941.

use, not for commercial purposes.⁶³³ The Water Act was amended in 1938 to safeguard the colony's water and to ensure that individuals with water rights did not utilize water resources in an environmentally unfriendly manner.⁶³⁴ This was an amendment to the Water Act of 1927 which, according to Emmanuel Manzungu, was set up to facilitate apportionment of water rights to landowners who held title deeds. This criterion relegated Africans as they did not hold title for their land in the reserves.⁶³⁵

Evidence given to the Commission

In spite of the promulgation of legislation and information from Soil Conservation Councils, the government felt in 1938 that more needed to be done for it to fully comprehend the actual state of natural resources in the colony. This was partly because the work done by the Department of Irrigation from 1929 (helping farmers to construct contour ridges and terraces) and the work of the Conservation Councils was far from perfect. Ian Phimister has observed;

Although the Department of Agriculture began constructing contour ridges in 1929 and provincial Soil Conservation Advisory Councils were established in 1934, neither initiative was energetically pursued. The councils had no statutory authority and by 1938 only about 125 000 acres, approximately one-quarter of the total area under cultivation on white farms, were protected by contour ridging.⁶³⁶

The Natural Resources Commission was appointed to investigate the actual extent of damage, and to recommend appropriate remedial action. The Commission's mandate was to investigate,

⁶³³ Mapedza, "Forestry Policy in Colonial and Post-Colonial Zimbabwe", p. 842.

⁶³⁴ NAZ S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941.

⁶³⁵ E. Manzungu, 2001, "A Lost Opportunity: The Case of the Water Reform Debate in the 4th Parliament of Zimbabwe, *Zambezia*, XXVIII, p. 100.

⁶³⁶ Phimister, "Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context", p. 265.

...how the resources of the colony (were) being wasted through soil erosion, destruction of trees, grasses, other vegetation, whether taking place in the course of farming and mining operations or otherwise, overstocking and improper or undesirable methods of farming or treatment of the land.⁶³⁷

The Commission carried out extensive interviews with interested parties and officials throughout the colony.

The major concern raised by the majority of white stakeholders to the Commission was the lack of or inadequate regulation. Farmers could ruin their land and get away with it due to the absence of either a punitive or correctional framework to address such cases. This situation obtained, according to the Commission, in both African and European farming areas. As Jennings put it;

As things stand here at present a man can acquire or occupy a piece of land and literally ruin it in his own life time. If we allow this to continue, particularly in the Native Reserves and Native Areas, the whole of Southern Rhodesia will not suffice to contain the native population...apart from European requirements. A considerable part of Southern Rhodesia is, at the best, poor land so it behoves us to conserve to the utmost the best portions...It appears to be a case where the rights of the individual will have to be curtailed in the interest of national well-being...⁶³⁸

The concept of ownership and what a landowner could do with his property had come to be viewed by many government officials as having its limits once the owner began, by omission or commission, to ruin it. While a landowner could do what he desired with his land in terms of choosing land use patterns and crops or livestock he could raise, he could not ruin it on the strength that it was his.

⁶³⁷ NAZ S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941, p. 2.

⁶³⁸ NAZ ZAZ1/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, Correspondence, Letter from A. C Jennings, Assistant Director of Native Lands, to Justice Robert McIlwaine titled, "Conservation of the Colony's Natural Wealth" dated 23 August 1937. Though the Natural Resources Commission was appointed in 1938, the evidence it utilized included government officials' correspondence about soil erosion and land degradation from 1937.

Robert Mcllwaine, referring to settler farmed land, asked in August 1937; “Why should a person who may only have paid a few shillings per acre of land have the right to leave a trail of destruction behind?” He proceeded to state;

It is sometimes said that a man may do what he likes with his own, but there is an overruling principle contained in the legal maxim *sic utere tuout alienum non laedas* (use your own rights so that you do not hurt those of others). Those who abuse the gifts of nature most certainly do irreparable damage to the whole community... It may be contended that the existing legal rights of miners and farmers should not be interfered with, but, after all, the maxim *salus populi suprema lex* (regard for the public welfare is the highest law) is an acceptable principle...⁶³⁹

Most of the Commission’s interviewees advocated for the enactment of a law that would give wide powers to a body that would implement and enforce conservation. The mention of farmers and miners by Mcllwaine was very appropriate; from the beginning of the colonial period farmers and miners had a conflict over the use of timber. Farmers held that the state showed favouritism with its dealings with the mining sector by giving miners more access to timber resources; mines were even permitted to harvest timber from settler farms. This led to massive destruction of indigenous timber in areas in close proximity to mines. Farmers, on their part, particularly tobacco farmers who logged timber for flue-curing, were also responsible for degradation of indigenous timber.⁶⁴⁰

The Commission found that the major cause of soil erosion on agricultural land in the colony was poor farming methods. The destruction of trees, grass burning, and African tenancy were also cited as the major causes of erosion on settler land, among, in Mcllwaine’s words, “many other ways well known to anyone who has his eyes open to what is going on.”⁶⁴¹ As noted, on

⁶³⁹ NAZ ZAZ1/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, Correspondence, Letter from Judge Robert Mcllwaine to the Minister of Justice titled “Conservation of the Colony’s Natural Wealth” dated 24 August 1937.

⁶⁴⁰ Musemwa, “Contestation over Resources”, pp. 79-107.

⁶⁴¹ NAZ ZAZ2/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, Written Evidence, Letter from Judge Robert Mcllwaine to the Minister of Justice titled “Conservation of the Colony’s Natural Wealth” dated 24 August 1937.

tobacco farms there was rampant cutting down of timber as farmers utilized the resource in flue-curing. The majority of tobacco farmers did not grow their own exotic trees for flue-curing, which left their land vulnerable to erosion. The Commission, however, also took note of the progress that had been made by a section of the settler farming community who, the Commission reported, heeded the advice and guidance of agricultural officials. Their efforts, however, only touched the fringe of the evil of erosion and “hardly (struck) at the root of the trouble and (did) little more than correct damage already done to their arable land.”⁶⁴² Farmers who strove to erect conservation works on their farms were in the minority. Some farmers voiced their concern to the Commission about the rate at which vast swathes of land were being allowed to be destroyed by “mercenary farmers who (have) no conservation conscience.”⁶⁴³

The Manager of the Farmers Co-op, J. S. Brown, informed the Commission that while the issue of agricultural prices had played a role in the failure by farmers to conserve land, the major problem was that, over the years, some farmers, especially the tobacco growers, were mercenaries that sought huge financial rewards at the expense of the land. He stated;

At Inyazura you will see an outstanding example of what I call ‘the get rich quick’ tobacco grower. You will see it from the Clare Estate to the Inyazura River. Every one of these farmers has acquired more land and the same thing is happening there. There is no doubt that it has to be stopped otherwise this country has only another five or six years of tobacco life in front of it...the finest tobacco producing district of Rhodesia is going to be devastated in six years’ time...the reason why they grow only tobacco for two years on the same piece of land is that it produces a fine leaf, which is very much in demand,...and also at the back of their minds is the thought that the tobacco market may collapse anytime and therefore the policy is to get rich quick.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴² NAZ ZAZ2/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, Written Evidence, Letter from A. C Jennings, Assistant Director of Native Lands, to Justice Robert Mcllwaine titled, “Conservation of the Colony’s Natural Wealth” dated 23 August 1937.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter from Judge Robert Mcllwaine to the Minister of Justice titled “Conservation of the Colony’s Natural Wealth” dated 24 August 1937.

As a remedy, Brown suggested that tobacco farmers be licensed to “grow a certain acreage of tobacco and that for every 100 acres of tobacco grown they must do approximately 30 percent of conservation work, which means rotational crops, contour-ridging, re-afforestation and permanent pastures.”⁶⁴⁵ For him, the promulgation of a law to this effect would ensure that the tobacco farmers would carry out conservation work on their own with no financial assistance from the state.

The Commission’s evidence pointed to the fact that soil erosion was not only a product of poor farming methods by farmers. Miners’ activities were also responsible for massive soil erosion. “There are many places once richly wooded and a joy to the eye where livestock could get shade and streams had their sources which have now become barren wastes of no use to men or beast,” McIlwaine observed,

Enormous destruction has been caused for the purposes of mines, many of which have even been a loss to those who invested capital in them, a loss not so much to be deplored as the ruin they have left in their trail. I know of a district where, up to now, the well wooded hills have been a thing of beauty and the source of streams valuable for the irrigation of good land. I thought that distance from towns would save this area from depreciation, but, on a second visit, I found an enormous stack of poles, obtained by the destruction of fine trees, being transported some thirty miles by road and seventy miles by rail for use on mines. Apart from the loss to the colony, the undertaking could not have been of much economic value.⁶⁴⁶

Robert McIlwaine was widely travelled in the colony because of his work at the Water Court, and his observation showed that even the mines needed to take part in the soil conservation drive as their prosperity was being purchased at a great ultimate cost. “A case has just come to my notice”, continued judge McIlwaine,

⁶⁴⁵ NAZ ZAZ2/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, Written Evidence: Letter from Judge Robert McIlwaine to the Minister of Justice titled “Conservation of the Colony’s Natural Wealth” dated 24 August 1937.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

...where a mine in a remote district is burning valuable wood, such as the native mahogany. There is no real necessity for burning good wood for domestic purposes; if wood must be used there is plenty of inferior wood available.⁶⁴⁷

The activities of the mines thus had a great downstream impact not only on soil erosion, but also on water preservation and farming.

The Commission's major finding in relation to land occupied by settlers can be summarised by the following quotation from the Commission's 1939 Report;

The expansion of the general activities of the country and a profitable market for maize had led to ever-increasing areas of rich, virgin land being brought under the plough. Gradually the yield began to decline and, as this was attributed to the diminution of the natural fertility of the soil, recourse was...the use of artificial fertilizers. Little account was taken of the loss of organic matter and the breaking down of the soil structure, which led to the dissipation of the essential elements by the ever-present...action of sheet erosion.⁶⁴⁸

Maize and tobacco farmers were largely responsible for soil erosion in the Mashonaland region because of their continuous cultivation and expansion in the absence of conservation.

Table 4.2 below shows the Commission's recommendations regarding the conservation work that needed to be carried not only on settler farms, but also in the reserves.

⁶⁴⁷ NAZ ZAZ2/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, Written Evidence: Letter from Judge Robert McIlwaine to the Minister of Justice titled "Conservation of the Colony's Natural Wealth" dated 24 August 1937.

⁶⁴⁸ Report of the Commission to Enquire into the Preservation, etc., of the Natural Resources of the Colony, April 1939.

Table 4.2: Recommendations for Improved Soil and Water Conservation in the colony.

Land Type	Recommendations
A. In Veld	a) The maintenance of a good natural cover by the restriction of timber cutting, controlled grazing and prevention of veld fires. b) The limitation of stock in order to prevent overgrazing of the area. c) Improvement of the natural cover by the planting of pasture grasses or trees in plantations. d) The proper alignment and drainage of roads and the elimination, as far as possible, of by-paths and cattle tracks.
Notes:-	- control of grazing involves the installation of fencing to provide paddocks of suitable size and the development of water supplies in the paddocks, either by boreholes or small storage dams. - The prevention of veld fires involves the construction of suitable fire-guards and the maintenance of fire rangers during the latter end of the dry season.
B. In Arable Lands.	a) The construction of storm drains of adequate size about all cultivated lands and the provision of natural outlet channels at frequent intervals. b) The construction of contour ridges of adequate height and base width on all lands which have a slope of more than 1 in 100. c) The working of all land on the contour irrespective of whether it has been contour ridged or not. d) In the case of lands on a gentle slope which are not contour-ridged, the land should be sub-divided into blocks of small extent and belts of natural vegetation left between each block or alternatively strip cropping may be adopted. e) The proper working of the land in order to maintain and improve the soil structure.
Notes:-	- in order to keep the size of storm drains to reasonable dimensions and thus limit their cost it is essential that the water from them should be discharged into natural drainage channels as soon as possible, and this involves utilizing all natural depressions which should remain unploughed and in their virgin condition. - as a general rule it may be said that a natural outlet channel should be provided for the disposal of surplus water from each 100 acres of arable land, i.e. no single block of arable land should be more than 100 acres in extent. - The proper working of the land involves deep ploughing, proper crop-rotation, and the increase of the humus content in the soil by compost or green manuring.
C. Gully Control	a) The grading off the banks to a stable slope of about 1 in 3 and the planting of the banks with grasses or shrubs. b) The construction of check dams of wire and stone bolsters, masonry, concrete or earth and grass turfs. c) The construction of drops paved with masonry or concrete.

d) The construction of fences to keep out cattle and prevent them from damaging the banks.

D. Pastoral Lands.	- In natural or improved pastures in areas of low rainfall the grazing will be improved by the construction of contour furrows or contour ridges to increase the amount of water absorbed in the soil. - The cover will be improved by the gradual introduction of better grasses and by controlled grazing, mowing and paddocking. - In certain cases also conditions may permit of storm water being delivered and utilized for the irrigation of the area by a system of drains and ridges.
D. General Conservation.	- a general conservation policy must embody the construction of a series of small storage dams on each river system, and the providing of an adequate number of dip tanks to prevent unnecessary lengthy movement of stock. - All roads should be properly aligned with properly graded road drains and culverts of proper design. - the number of roads should be restricted to as few as possible and in particular some control should be exercised over the roads made by wood cutters. - a policy for the more general use of electric power or fuels other than wood or charcoal should be instituted in order to limit the amount of timber cutting and the damage caused by the tracks made for the purpose of transporting the timber, and in particular, the provision of the law prohibiting the cutting of timber on stream banks should be enforced.

Source: Report of the Commission to Enquire into the Preservation, etc., of the Natural Resources of the Colony, April 1939, pp. 66-7.

The Natural Resources Act, 1941

The Natural Resources Commission's report of 1939 stated that the colony's prime agricultural land had been "impoverished by soil erosion, and some of it ruined beyond repair."⁶⁴⁹ The Commission recommended the enactment of requisite legislation, and the formation of a statutory board to superintend over natural resources in the colony. As a result of the Commission's report, the Natural Resources Act was promulgated in August 1941 "to make provision for the conservation and improvement of the natural resources of the colony

⁶⁴⁹ Report of the Commission to Enquire into the Preservation of the Natural Resources of the Colony, April 1939.

and other matters incidental thereto.”⁶⁵⁰ The Act provided for the formation of The Natural Resources Board whose mandate was;

to exercise general supervision over natural resources, to stimulate by propaganda and such other means as it may deem expedient a public interest in the conservation and improvement of natural resources, to recommend to the Government the nature of legislation by it deemed necessary for the proper conservation, use and improvement of natural resources.⁶⁵¹

Prior to its enactment, many farmers were not happy with Natural Resources legislation. While farmers has pushed for the government to put in place legislation to govern soil conservation on farms, there was a feeling among a sizable proportion of the settler farming community that the Act would be used to force farmers to undertake costly measures from their own pocket. While farmers agreed with having resource conservation legislation in principle, they feared that it could potentially become a heavy cross they would be forced to carry by the government. The government was however, in spite of farmers’ reservations, determined to have the law promulgated.

The Minister of Agriculture told the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly on 8 May 1941, as he tabled the Bill in Legislative Assembly; “I make no apologies whatsoever for having brought (this Bill) whilst the Empire is at war... I think that it is legislation which is long overdue. And Sir, the whole and sole object of this legislation is to maintain, develop and increase production from the soil.”⁶⁵² The Minister further told the legislative assembly that conservation on farms was a top priority for the government as it was the only way to bring agriculture back on track. If this matter was handled in the correct manner, the Minister argued, it would also solve the question of pricing of agricultural commodities. Demands by

⁶⁵⁰ Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1941. The Natural Resources Act, 1941, Proclamation Number 19 of 1941, p. 349.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid, p. 350.

⁶⁵² Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates, The Natural Resources Bill, 8 May, 1941.

maize farmers for a better price for their product from the Maize Control Board, was an illustration of what was wrong in the colony; prices needed to be raised for farmers to remain in business because their yields kept declining as a result of poor methods and declining soil fertility. The situation would not improve unless the question of farming methods and declining soil fertility was addressed. Concerning agricultural prices, the Minister argued;

At the present time the maize farmers in several parts of the colony are in great difficulties as they are asking for a bigger price for their product, but I am convinced that a bigger price by itself will not solve the difficulty. Because whatever price you gave these farmers they still could not come out, because the fertility of the soil has been so much impaired and when they were formerly producing 15 bags per acre they have fallen to 10 and in some cases as low as 4 bags per acre.⁶⁵³

Turning to the need for conservation, the Minister told the Legislative Assembly;

It is only by soil conservation and putting back something into the soil, by contour ridging and similar measures that these formerly valuable tracts of country can be brought back to big scale production. I believe that it is possible to do this, and I also believe that it is the duty of the government to see that these results are brought about.⁶⁵⁴

While many farmers did not disagree with the Minister's views, they feared that the Bill would, if it became law, take away their right to make their own decisions regarding what to do and what not to do with their land. They suspected that the government was bent on "(taking) away the ownership of the land from the man who has bought it and that he (would be reduced to) a trustee", a thing that, in farmers' view, made the Bill "generally wrong."⁶⁵⁵

As already stated, farmers feared that they would be required to fund exorbitantly expensive soil conservation projects from their own pockets. This fear was justified as the majority of

⁶⁵³ Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates, The Natural Resources Bill, 8 May, 1941.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

farmers had teetered on the brink of bankruptcy from the time the crisis hit the colony's agricultural sector in the late 1920s. Many farmers were not adequately capitalized. They had had to rely on the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Board to pay off their creditors, and, from 1938, for capital to finance their work.⁶⁵⁶ There was a general feeling that if the government thought soil conservation was an issue of national importance, then "out of the national exchequer the work which the Board recommends to be done should be carried out by the government."⁶⁵⁷ There was also a feeling that the penalties gazetted by the Natural Resources Board for lack of compliance in the new law were too high and that "if the government wanted to go mucking about with people's land, the people concerned should have the right of selling their land to the government and clearing out."⁶⁵⁸

Commodity prices had significantly improved during the war; however, farmers had to grapple with other adverse factors, such as droughts. Drought, for example, was a setback for both Mashonaland and Matabeleland farmers. In these circumstances, it was quite logical for some of the farmers to reason that it was not in their best interest to expend resources on conservation works. In spite of farmers' reservations because of the mentioned economic environment (characterized by droughts), the Bill was, however, passed into law on 1 August 1941. Drought continued to be an enormous challenge even after the promulgation of the Natural Resources Act.

Matabeleland cattle farmers, for example, faced an acute shortage of water and grazing for their herds. This problem continued right into the 1940s. With Matabeleland being predominantly a cattle area, cattle owners were advised to immediately;

⁶⁵⁶ See NAZ S1215/1085/4, Farmers' Debt Adjustment Act, 1935, Correspondence and NAZS3292/1/6/1, Report of the Farmers Debt Adjustment Board, 1937/1938.

⁶⁵⁷ Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates, The Natural Resources Bill, 8 May, 1941.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

...cull and cull heavily, and dispose of all culls, feeders and other saleable stocks as soon as possible. Don't wait for two or three months until these animals have eaten grazing which may help the rest of your herd later in the season. Do not take any risks by leaving weak...animals on the farm. A few pounds for each of them now are worth more than their hides in December. Remember if you sell, say 20 percent of your stock now, you may save the rest. If you sale none you may lose 40 percent. Secondly, if still short of grazing after you have disposed your culls, etc., don't hesitate to look for better grazing elsewhere. Do it right away, before your animals are too thin to trek.⁶⁵⁹

The drought spawned other problems for farmers, for example, maize and fuel had to be rationed.⁶⁶⁰ These circumstances bred disgruntlement and resentment. Similar problems in the 1930s had stood in the way as the state sought to enact the Natural Resources Act. Maize control and depressed conditions of the 1930s characterized by a situation where the majority of farmers either lacked liquidity or were highly indebted to creditors.

The Natural Resources Act of 1941 provided for the establishment of the Natural Resources Board to;

...exercise general supervision over Natural Resources; to stimulate by propaganda and other such means as it may deem expedient a public interest in the conservation and improvement of natural resources; to recommend to the Government the nature and legislation by it deemed necessary for the proper conservation, use and improvement of natural resources.⁶⁶¹

Through its Chairperson, the Board had direct access to all Government Ministers. The Board had vast powers; it had the same powers as the magistrate's court to summon witnesses, "to cause the oath to be administered to them, to examine them and to call for the production of documents."⁶⁶² The Chairman of the Board could sign and issue "a subpoena for the attendance of a witness or for the production of any book, document or record before the

⁶⁵⁹ Vuka Magazine, (The Official Organ of the Matabeleland Farmers' Union), C. Murray, Specialist, Animal Husbandry Experimental Station, Matopos, February 1942.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ The Natural Resources Act, 1941, Proclamation Number 19, 1941, p. 351.

⁶⁶² Ibid., p. 353.

Board” and anyone subpoenaed had “the same privileges and immunities as if he were subpoenaed to attend or were giving evidence at a trial in a magistrates court.” People who “(failed) without reasonable excuse to attend in obedience to such summons, or, ...fails to answer fully to the best of his knowledge any question relevant to the matter under investigation, or when required fails to produce any book, document or record as aforesaid, shall be guilty of an offence.”⁶⁶³ This also applied to people who gave false evidence to the Board. The Board was empowered to give orders to any land owner in the colony to take measures to conserve natural resources in the colony.

The Natural Resources Board (NRB) Farming Enquiry of 1942

The colony experienced a food crisis in 1942 because of drought. This was at a time when demand for food in the colony was rising due to increasing urbanization in response to the expansion of the colony’s manufacturing industry. Food was also required to feed Italian prisoners of war who were held in the colony. Apart from local demand for food, the colony also had international obligations; it had a commitment to contribute food for the war effort.⁶⁶⁴ Something had to be done to address the food shortage immediately. Consequently, the government formed Food Production Committees (FPCs) to coordinate increased food production. To provide the committees with the relevant information to enable them to effectively discharge their duties, in 1942, the Natural Resources Board carried out a Farming Enquiry to ascertain the problems that were bedeviling the agricultural industry and hampering the production of adequate food in the colony.

A number of important points were raised by the farmers on the state of the agricultural climate in general and food production in particular. This was, like the Committee of Enquiry

⁶⁶³ The Natural Resources Act, 1941, Proclamation Number 19, 1941, p. 353-4.

⁶⁶⁴ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, pp. 264-275.

of into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of 1933-4 and the Natural Resources Commission of 1938-9, an important development as it gave more evidence about the state of the agricultural industry. It helped the colony to, on the basis of this evidence, come up with a food production strategy from 1942 and a soil conservation strategy for settler agriculture from 1944 when the first Intensive Conservation Area (ICA) was inaugurated in the Inyazura District in 1944.⁶⁶⁵

Like the Enquiries of 1933-4 and 1938-9, the NRB enquiry was again confronted with massive evidence about poor farming methods and poverty, which made it difficult for farmers to make much headway with conservation work. “The percentage of good farmers in this country is very low indeed”, D. A. Wilson, the Agricultural Advisor and Inspector of Farms to the Land Bank told the Enquiry Committee;

There are few really practical men... I would say 15 percent (of settler farmers) at the very most. A lot of (the remaining 75 percent) should not be on the farms at all, and it is a matter of education. They should be educated up to the proper methods of farming. A great deal of trouble here is due to the fact that farmers do not understand how to plough. Good farming is the real foundation of successful farming... Under past and present day conditions the farmers whose properties are in urgent need of conservation works are unable to afford to rehabilitate their land because they lack capital, labour, and implements and they have not the experience to carry out a planned programme of storm draining or contour ridging.⁶⁶⁶

Wilson recommended that provision of government machinery and trained staff was the only way to ensure that conservation projects were carried out properly on the farms. He stated;

These factors have led me to the conclusion that mechanically operated units under a trained engineer are the only hope of any real progress being made in this direction. It means that the laying down of drains, ridges and other construction

⁶⁶⁵ NAZ NAT/GEN, The Natural Resources Board (NRB): 25 Years of Progress in Conservation in Rhodesia, 1966, Salisbury, NRB.

⁶⁶⁶ NAZ S987/1, Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942, Oral Evidence, Interview with D. A. Wilson, the Agricultural Advisor and Inspector of Farms to the Land Bank, 26th of June 1942.

work could be done in one operation. Farms treated in this manner could then be known to be protected and green cropping and fertilization programmes could be laid down with some prospect of achieving success.⁶⁶⁷

Many stakeholders who gave evidence to the Enquiry reiterated that the majority of settler farmers were not good farmers. This situation clearly pointed to government support if the sector was to be lifted out of the crisis it was in.

A key point raised was the issue of monoculture. One farmer, Duncan Black, told the Enquiry that farmers' who practiced maize monoculture had "very anemic" farms;

I think Mr. Chairman you must know that both cattle and maize go together. They work very well together and I do not think one can do well without the other. That is one of the biggest points – you will have a very anemic farm without cattle and vice versa...The maize farmers thought they were in paradise at one time, but I think they lost their heads when they kept on growing maize and did not worry about anything else. None of them seem to be keen on cattle. They did not look for anything else as they thought maize was the only thing they could grow. When the price of maize went down and the Maize Control Board took possession of the bigger growers, they tried to grow a large acreage to try and make up for the low price. I think the fact is that they have gnawed to the bone.⁶⁶⁸

In addition to the problem of monoculture, there was also overuse of artificial fertilizers. "People are inclined to continually use artificial fertilizer to a certain piece of ground," Duncan Black observed, "well, even the ground gets sick of fertilizer. I find that you must rotate it in some way and not perpetually grow maize with artificial fertilizer."⁶⁶⁹ This was made worse by the fact that as a lot of inexperienced farmers took up land with high hopes of making it, their initial investment was usually too big for beginners. This was because they would get to the newly acquired land and invest in a house or a vehicle. Duncan informed the

⁶⁶⁷ NAZ S987/1, Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942, Oral Evidence, Interview with D. A. Wilson, the Agricultural Advisor and Inspector of Farms to the Land Bank, 26th of June 1942.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., Interview with Duncan Black, 24th of June, 1942.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

enquiry that he always advised farmers seconded to him never to overspend on non-farming projects;

...in every case I advise them not to spend too much money until they are a bit experienced. They all agree, but in many instances I hear afterwards that they have taken up a farm and immediately start building a huge house. I think it is a mistake for a man to come out here and start farming with a lot of money, he spends it and gets a little experience, that's all.⁶⁷⁰

This did not help the cause of increased food production.

Lease arrangements between the farmers were also not good for soil conservation. People who cultivated on leased farms did not care about what happened to the soil as a result of the nature of their short agreements. As T. B. Simpson, a Mt Pleasant farmer, told the Enquiry;

One of the reasons for the deterioration of land is that farms are leased for short periods. When I was at Bindura there were a number of farmers there who had leased farms for one year. There was a lot of leasing going on then and people were paying high rents for two years and there were no clauses at all about green cropping and contour ridging – a man could do what he liked...I think that is one serious matter, leasing with no restrictions. Another is lack of labour. Most farmers cannot afford labour, or they have not got it, for drainage and ridging or the establishment of pastures.⁶⁷¹

The NRB teams discovered that the question was broader than food production because even farms that did not produce food, but tobacco, were on a steep decline. There was a need for sector-wide reforms, because even in the case of tobacco there was a real threat that tobacco lands would go the same way as the maize-belt district of Mazoe. As Jacobus Petrus De Kok, a tobacco farmer, told the Enquiry Committee on the 16th of July, 1942;

⁶⁷⁰ NAZ S987/1, Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942, Oral Evidence, Interview with Duncan Black, 24th of June, 1942.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid*, Interview with T. B. Simpson, a Mount Pleasant and formerly Bindura Dairy farmer, 25th June 1942.

As an old tobacco grower, I want to give my views on it. I am speaking not from the tobacco market point of view but from the tobacco soil point of view. I am afraid that unless steps are taken to compel tobacco farmers to contour their land and to go for practical farming methods, the tobacco districts within a few years will be in the same position as Mazoe is in as regards maize. I am afraid tobacco farmers have been mining their land. I have been in the district for 23 years now and I have seen what happened here. I would prevent any tobacco grower, if I had the power, from planting tobacco unless the soil was contour-ridged. Also I would make him plough the land after the crop is reaped. We grow tobacco mostly on ridges. The crop is reaped and the tobacco stalks are pulled out but the land is left unploughed for years afterwards and naturally that encourages erosion. I have preached that among tobacco farmers for many years, but it does not carry much weight with them. They just want to make as much money as possible with no eye to the future.⁶⁷²

The majority of farmers interviewed told the Committee that poor farming methods were one of the major contributors to the maize crisis of 1942. “Whatever is wrong with farming has been caused by the lack of, or the loss of, fertility of the soil”, J. S. Brown told the Committee on the 24th of June, 1942.⁶⁷³

Some farmers blamed this situation on the prices offered for agricultural produce, which they felt were too low to leave the farmer with any resources to carry out conservation works. The Chairman of the Beatrice Food Production Committee, told the NRB Enquiry;

The basic requirement of good farming is finance. Good farming cannot be practiced unless adequate prices are paid to the farmer for his produce. The prices of farm produce should be fixed at an economic level, and should not be left to the buyer to fix. The wishes of the consumer should have no bearing on this subject... In this way, and in this way only, will the farmer be able to conserve the natural resources of the land, Otherwise this will have to be undertaken by the state...⁶⁷⁴

The Enquiry clearly showed that settler farming needed reorganization. By 1944, Intensive Conservation Areas were being set up, to deal with soil conservation issues in every settler

⁶⁷² NAZ S987/1, Natural Resources Board Farming Enquiry, 1942, Oral Evidence: Interview with Jacobus Petrus De Kok, a tobacco farmer, 16th July, 1942.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, interview with J. S. Brown, Manager, the Farmers’ Co-op, 24th of June, 1942.

⁶⁷⁴ NAZ S987/2 The Natural Resources Board (NRB) Farming Enquiry, 1942, Written Evidence, Letter from T. C. L. Howard, Chairman, Beatrice Food Production Committee, to the Secretary, NRB, dated 23 June 1942.

farming area. The next chapter examines the dynamics of this reorganization between 1944 and 1953 when the colony and the two northern territories of Zambia and Malawi federated. Federal agriculture was moved from the territorial Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and placed under a Federal Ministry.

Conclusion

The period 1934-1944 is a very important period in the country's conservation history. After the colony had gone through its first 40 years without a comprehensive soil conservation strategy, the chicks came home to roost in the late 1920s. Farmers were hard hit as yields plummeted and international markets tumbled. The crisis claimed the scalps of two premiers, Moffat and Mitchell, in 1933. Godfrey Huggins, who rose to power on the back of a change agenda, pursued a programme of change between 1934 and 1944. He came up with programmes to deal with farmers' indebtedness, agricultural marketing, labour shortages on farms and conservation. These were vital developments that set the tone for conservation from the 1940s. Marketing Boards have been an important factor in Zimbabwe's agricultural marketing history, as have been the Natural Resources Act and the Natural Resources Board in the case of conservation. Huggins' intervention had transformed the colony in a space of ten years. The colony had by 1944 enacted a ground-breaking piece of resource conservation legislation and, through the Food Production Committees, came up with a strategy for increased food production.

The next chapter examines the work of Intensive Conservation Committees (ICAs), which also doubled up as Food Production Committees (FPCs), between 1944 and 1953. This was significant in that conservation and food production were no longer driven by government on a top-down basis as was the case between 1934 and 1944.

Chapter 5: Towards Community Conservation: The Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs) Movement c. 1944-53.

Introduction

“In Zimbabwe, many whites have affiliated themselves with the land rather than with surrounding societies”, David McDermott Hughes observed in his 2006 study of dam construction in the Virginia Intensive Conservation Area (ICA) in the Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe in the post-colonial period.⁶⁷⁵ This “environmentalist form of identity”⁶⁷⁶ had, according to Hughes, developed from the colonial era as a response to a question many sections of the settler community, particularly farmers, often asked themselves as they went about their day to day business; whether their future was secure in Southern Rhodesia.⁶⁷⁷

As has been shown in previous chapters, farmers had in many instances contended with a hostile agrarian environment - as was the case during the First World War and the Great Depression. These negative experiences had varying impacts and implications on each individual farmer and in some cases for each farming region or sector (be it maize, tobacco or cattle, among others). The net consequence of these depressions, wars, marketing difficulties, liquidity crunches, and labour shortages, was that they put farmers into a place where, on one hand, they reflected on sustainability and profitability of their farming enterprises in the short to medium term and, on the other, they pondered over their prospects, potential and security in the long term; whether they really belonged (or could over time belong) to Southern Rhodesia. This question was important, as its answer in every case often determined whether

⁶⁷⁵ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 269.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

the particular farmer stayed and made a home in the colony or moved on in pursuit of better fortunes.

Apart from the sometimes hostile socio-economic environment, a constant reminder of their circumstances was their demography; they were a tiny minority - their total population amounted to only (and never went above) five percent of the African population.⁶⁷⁸ Alois Mlambo has observed that; “A full 50 years after the British occupied Zimbabwe, there were only 68 954 whites in the colony!”⁶⁷⁹ In spite of their demography, Mlambo has argued that the minority settler government successfully managed to “(arrogate) to (itself) the right to determine the pace and direction of the nation’s development at the expense of the (African) majority”.⁶⁸⁰ The administration “(perpetuated) white privilege and control”, by dominating “access to all resources, such as land, education, health, training, the road and rail networks and loans for farming.”⁶⁸¹ A parliament in which African interests were not adequately represented buttressed this economic and socio-political segregationist framework; an all-white legislature that could change the rules of the game at will (in the majority of cases to the detriment of Africans and their livelihoods) to adjust the flow of play to the vicissitudes of the local and international economic and socio-political climate as it altered from time to time to suit settler interests.

A good example of when this happened was during the first ten years of Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins’ tenure. The government made key interventions meant to rescue settler farmers from a long agricultural crisis. The rescue package covered many aspects of settler agriculture; a programme was put in place to pay off farmers’ debts to ensure that farmers did

⁶⁷⁸ Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 243.

⁶⁷⁹ Mlambo, “Some are More White than Others”, p. 140.

⁶⁸⁰ Mlambo, “Building a White Man’s Country”, p. 123.

⁶⁸¹ R. Palmer and I. Birch, 1992, *Zimbabwe: A Land Divided*, Oxford, Oxfam, p. 8.

not lose their farms to lenders and, from 1938, to provide capital for farming operations. The government also negotiated an extra-territorial labour agreement with the northern territories of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in an attempt to improve labour supplies on the farms. The government further intervened in agricultural marketing. While the Responsible Government's agricultural policy, from 1924 till the early 1930s, was for agricultural investment and marketing to be carried out on a laissez faire basis, the government changed course and introduced marketing parastatals for all the colony's major agricultural crops, including maize, tobacco, beef, pork, milk and cotton. The government also enacted the Natural Resources Act in 1941 to govern the utilization of the colony's resources, including the soil. These measures were designed to prop up the white agricultural sector in the aftermath of the agricultural crisis. African agriculture did not receive the same kind of attention.

Having said that, it is important to note that in spite of white domination of all facets of the colony's life, the ruling class found itself in a situation that was a sharp contrast to what had happened in countries such as Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America where the white population increased phenomenally over time until it surpassed that of local inhabitants. The white population's demographic superiority in the United States combined with its military and political might and a vibrant, diversified economy, for example, enabled the creation of what Alfred Crosby has characterized as a "neo-Europe."⁶⁸² Southern Rhodesia's whites were well aware that they would always be in the minority. "White Rhodesia does not mean making all (Rhodesia) white," the White Rhodesia Association, an organization whose agenda was to propagate for increased white emigration to the colony and the furtherance of white minority interests, stated in 1929, "It

⁶⁸² A. Crosby, 1986, Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

means...gradually making a large part of the colony a white man's colony.”⁶⁸³ The Association's views were not far removed from official thinking, as its membership included many legislators and other government functionaries.

How was the young colony going to deal with this chronic, evidently incurable and insurmountable malaise; a small settler population? K. Wagner has described how white people in South Africa, Southern Rhodesia's southern neighbour, also had problems in coming to terms with what he terms “emotional and moral unease with the fruits of conquest.”⁶⁸⁴ In Southern Rhodesia unease with the “fruits of conquest” manifested itself in various forms, such as land apportionment legislation (for example, the Land Apportionment Act discussed in Chapter 3) and “Black Peril” legislation. The Land Apportionment Act was, regarded in white circles as “something of a *magna carta*, guaranteeing the preservation of their way of life against encroachment from the black hordes”,⁶⁸⁵ while “Black Peril” legislation was put in place to deal with the perceived threat to white women (and therefore by extension to white society in general) by African men.⁶⁸⁶

It is no wonder that “Rhodesian-ness”, as Schutz puts it, in many cases, exhibited itself, in addition to xenophobia against Afrikaners and other non-British Europeans, as a “reaction to Africans.”⁶⁸⁷ “Unease” with non-British groups was a product of two major factors; first, what Mlambo has termed “racial chauvinism”⁶⁸⁸ and second, the criteria by which settler presence and domination had been attained – by annexation; by use of brute, lethal military force.

⁶⁸³ NAZ S1232, White Rhodesia Association, Correspondence from Inskipp to Malcom, dated 19 June 1929.

⁶⁸⁴ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 269, quoting K. Wagner, 1994, Rereading Nadine Gordimer, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

⁶⁸⁵ Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, p. 193.

⁶⁸⁶ See J. Pape, 1990, “Black and White: ‘The Perils of Sex’ in Colonial Zimbabwe”, Journal of Southern African Studies, 16, 4, pp. 699-720.

⁶⁸⁷ Mlambo, “Some are More White than Others”, p. 143, quoting Schutz, “European Population Patterns.”

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 139.

David Hughes has observed that in places where conquest has been used, “the process of appropriation (moved) from diffidence to entitlement – and sometimes back again.”⁶⁸⁹ Diffidence in this context means lack of confidence that they were really entitled to their ownership of the colony, and lack of certainty that such entitlement was secure and undisputable - a fact that constantly behooved the settlers to ask themselves continuously, “Do we belong here?”⁶⁹⁰ Lack of confidence in the prospect of successfully establishing themselves, and making the colony a permanent home was significant because, as studies have shown, the majority of immigrants to the colony were not able to answer the question affirmatively, as evidenced by their not staying for long.

There were many reasons for this, among them failure to see the success of the colony because of prevailing hardships, depressions and other such impediments, or failure to see themselves as part of the colony’s future due to hardships and challenges that pervaded aspects of their daily lives. Some settlers were attracted by greener grass elsewhere, such as in the dominions of Canada and Australia. This made the colony a “society of immigrants and transients”⁶⁹¹ where “for every hundred immigrants arriving, between sixty and eighty were always leaving.”⁶⁹²

The settlers’ lack of confidence in the colony’s and their prospects could only be reduced, and, probably, removed if they found a way to deepen their roots and to buttress their sense of control, ownership and belonging by modifying Southern Rhodesia in ways that “facilitated” such belonging. Hughes has singled out one important method; water conservation through the construction of small farm dams. The settler farmers sought to;

⁶⁸⁹ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 269.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 269.

⁶⁹¹ Mlambo, “Building a White Man’s Country”, p. 124.

⁶⁹² Ibid., p. 124.

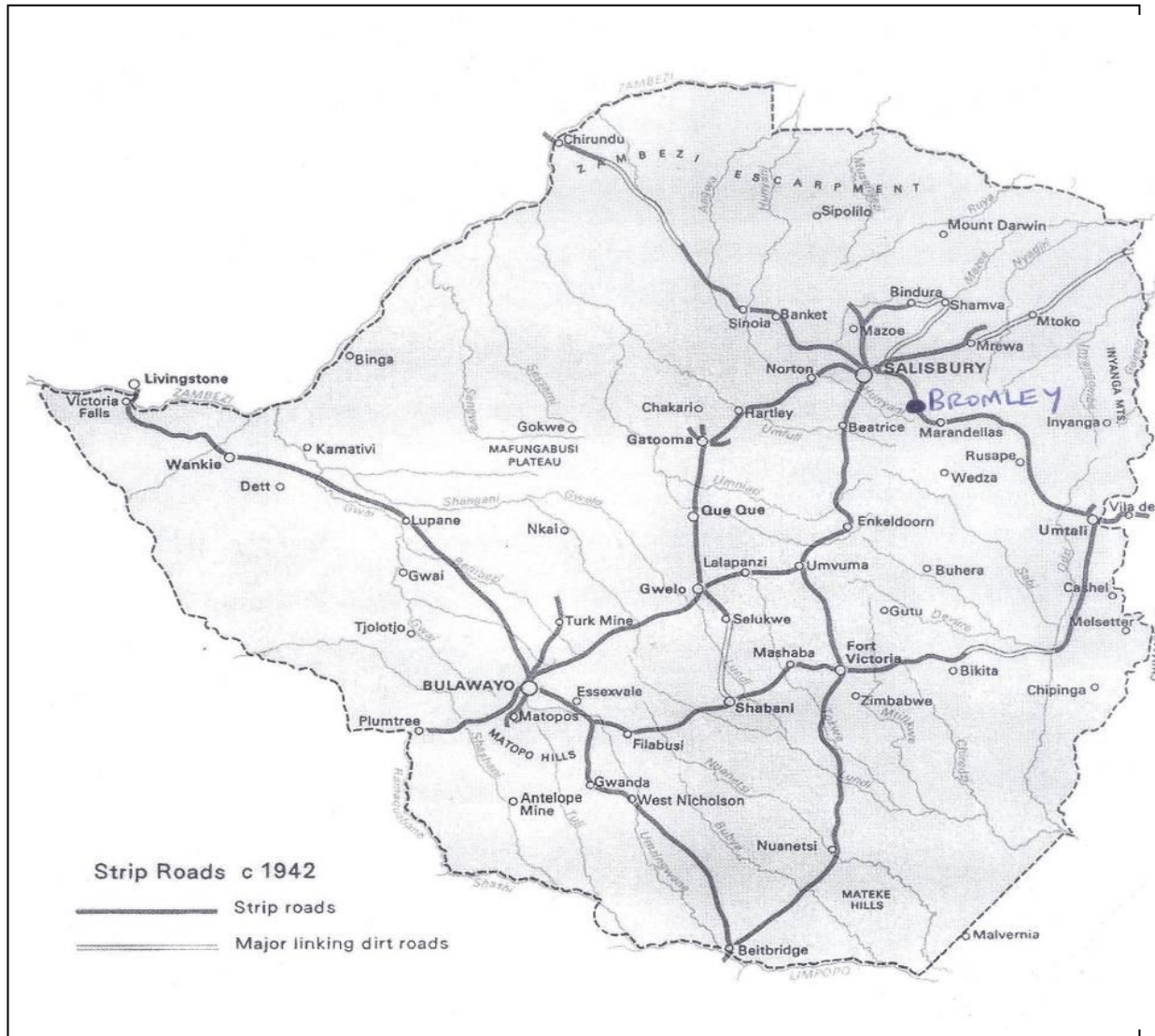
...belong to the landscape, and they modified it in ways that facilitated that sense of belonging... Whites justified their land ownership on grounds of both conservation and development – a considerable rhetorical feat. Engineering, then, fostered an unstable, ephemeral feeling of entitlement to belonging.⁶⁹³

The previous three chapters have examined soil conservation from the launch of the White Agricultural Policy (WAP) in 1908 and found that there was very little progress till the mid-1930s. This chapter examines another phase in Zimbabwean conservation history; the post 1941 era.

In 1941 the Natural Resources Act was enacted. This was the basis upon which conservation would be tackled for the rest of the colonial period. The Act provided for the formation of Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs) to superintend over soil management in settler farming districts. The ICAs were an important vehicle for the transformation of white farms. This chapter uses the case of Bromley, a farming area located between Salisbury and Marandellas in Mashonaland, to examine the processes that led to the birth of ICAs and to unravel their operations. The chapter also evaluates the role of community conservation in strengthening ties in farming districts. It concludes by evaluating whether the ICAs laid the basis for the change of settler attitudes towards conservation and the birth of what Hughes has termed an “environmentalist identity”. Maps 1 and 2 below show the location of Bromley in Southern Rhodesia and the Bromley ICA.

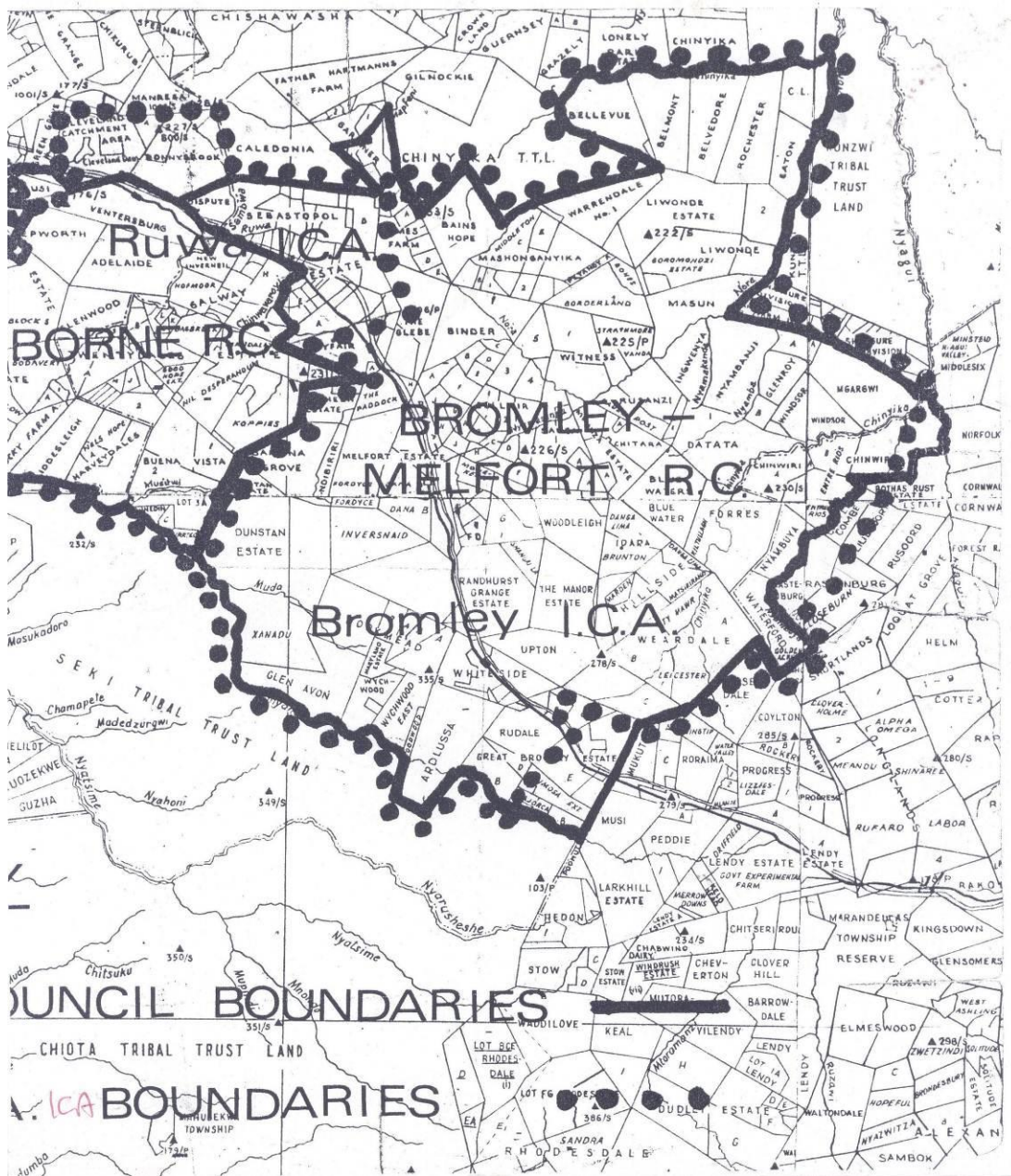
⁶⁹³ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 269.

Map 1: Location of Bromley on the Southern Rhodesian Map, c. 1942.



Source: Adapted from www.Britishempire.co.uk/maproom/Rhodesiamap1942.htm, Rhodesia Road Map, 1942.

Map 2: The Bromley ICA



Source: National Archives of Zimbabwe, NAZ F450/6, Bromley ICA.

Background: The Agricultural Environment, 1939-1940s

The period between 1934 and 1939 was characterized by slow growth in the colony's agricultural sector. The sector was, with massive government support, gradually beginning to recover from the depression that had hit the colony from the 1927/8 cropping season. The

colony's agricultural fortunes began to turn with the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. Britain's devaluation of the Sterling⁶⁹⁴ after the outbreak of the war resulted in a rise in the price of the colony's products, principally gold and tobacco. Farmers seized this opportunity, and immediately began to "concentrate their efforts on tobacco in preference to the much less remunerative maize crop."⁶⁹⁵ This effectively ensured that tobacco farmers received handsome prices for their products throughout the war. The dollar crunch at the end of the war, resulting in United Kingdom (UK) buyers being unable to purchase huge volumes of tobacco from the United States of America, was a further incentive to the colony's tobacco sector. Buyers continued to purchase the bulk of their tobacco from the sterling areas, pushing up the price of the colony's tobacco.⁶⁹⁶ Table 5.1 below shows tobacco production statistics for 1939-1948.

Table 5.1: Tobacco Production, 1939-49.

Crop year	Acreage	Yields -000 lb.	Average per Acre lb.	Number of Growers.
1938/9	60 926	22 862	375	638
1939/40	61 283	35 067	572	638
1940/1	64 870	35 582	549	693
1941/2	75 893	47 517	626	756
1942/3	63 597	31 657	498	741
1943/4	62 127	32 104	517	713
1944/5	72 147	47 523	659	796
1945/6	75 500	42 360	561	862

⁶⁹⁴ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 219.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225-6.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

1946/7	92 259	58 896	638	1 158
1947/8	113 967	76 230	669	1 600

Source: Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, p. 225.

As the statistics above show, acreages put under tobacco continued to increase between 1938 and 1948, as did yields and the number of growers. This increase was, according to Ian Phimister, so “pronounced” and “the expansion of the domestic economy so rapid that the colony lost its previous self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs.”⁶⁹⁷ Tobacco production boomed, while food (maize) production declined.

The outbreak of the war in 1939 and the expansion of the domestic economy exacerbated shortage of farm labour. The Acting Governor of Malawi informed his Southern Rhodesian counterparts in 1940 that Nyasaland was unable to meet its obligations to export labour to the colony as agreed in the Tripartite Labour Agreement of 1936 as her attention had shifted to recruiting Africans for the war effort.⁶⁹⁸ The reduced flow of labour from the northern territories continued to fall drastically in the maize belt. The reduction in the volume of labourers from the northern territories had begun well before the Tripartite Labour Agreement. The Agreement was not very useful in remedying the situation. Take, for example, Lomagundi, a top maize-producing district. The number of new migrant labourers to the district declined from 14 794 in 1935 to 4 319 in 1940.⁶⁹⁹ The Native Commissioner for the area estimated in 1940 that, since 1937, there had been a drop of over 3 000 in the number of non-indigenous Africans in the district. The registers for Africans from Northern Rhodesia showed that, while in 1937 the colony had received 28 799 migrants, the figure dropped to 12

⁶⁹⁷ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, p. 263.

⁶⁹⁸ NAZ Box 41007, (Records Centre, Unprocessed), Ministry of Labour File, 1941, Record of Proceedings at a Conference held at Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia on the 6 and 7 March, 1940.

⁶⁹⁹ NAZ S1563, The Native Commissioner for Lomagundi, Annual Report, 1940.

449 in 1938, and to 10 200 in 1939. This equaled a decrease between 1937 and 1939 of 18 599, and Lomagundi felt the impact of this decrease, resulting in reduced maize production.⁷⁰⁰

The dire labour situation on the farms resulted in the government resorting, through the promulgation of the Compulsory Labour Act on 1 August 1942, to coerced labour.⁷⁰¹ Forced recruitment only ended in August 1946.⁷⁰² In the absence of forced labour, many farmers would not have been able to produce the amounts of maize they harvested between 1943 and 1946. As David Johnson has put it, they would have been “compelled to curtail their maize crops...and would have had to neglect the crops they did manage to plant.”⁷⁰³ The post-war economic environment was characterized by acute labour shortages on the farms. With the end of Compulsory conscription, the colony again turned to her northern neighbours, a move that culminated in the enactment of the Migrant Workers’ Act in 1948.

The legislation was meant to regulate the recruitment of labour from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland and to provide a mechanism for remittances to be paid to the labour-sending governments and families of the migrants.⁷⁰⁴ Labour shortage continued, in spite of massive recruitment from the northern territories. By 1951 Africans from outside the colony constituted 50 percent of African employees in Southern Rhodesia, with 56 percent of them working in Mashonaland.⁷⁰⁵ Southern Rhodesia’s labour deficit had still not been met at the formation of the Federation with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953. The combination of labour shortage and the tobacco boom meant that farmers did not have adequate labour with which to construct anti-erosion measures on their farms.

⁷⁰⁰ NAZ S1561/1, (Records Centre, unprocessed), Letter from the Acting Secretary of Native Affairs (Salisbury) to the Secretary to the Prime Minister, dated 12th of January 1940.

⁷⁰¹ Johnson, “Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour”, p. 121.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁷⁰⁴ Phiri, “Migrant Labour as a by-Product of Colonial Driven Civil Discord”, pp. 23-33.

⁷⁰⁵ Scott, “Migrant Labour in Southern Rhodesia”, p. 42.

The Birth of Intensive Conservation Processes

Sections 27 to 33 of the Natural Resources Act provided for the formation of Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs) in the colony's settler farming districts.⁷⁰⁶ The first ICA, Inyazura, was declared in 1944.⁷⁰⁷ The ICAs were mandated to;

...inaugurate and undertake the construction of works and other measures for soil and water conservation and improvement of soil and water supplies in its area, generally to cooperate with and assist the Board in carrying out its objectives and purposes of (the) Act, construct and maintain such works as it may deem necessary for soil and water conservation and improvement and to superintend or perform, or enter into contracts for the superintendence or performance of all such acts, matters and things as are incidental to soil and water conservation, maintenance or improvement.⁷⁰⁸

An ICA was declared in a particular farming district once at least two thirds of farmers in that district had agreed in writing that their farms needed rehabilitation work. Joining the ICAs movement made the farmers eligible for state subsidies, loans, grants-in aid and other government support. ICAs also received preferential treatment from conservation officers. Conservation officers were provided by the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX). CONEX was formed in 1948 under the Directorship of Charles Murray.⁷⁰⁹ Each ICA usually comprised between 80 and 90 farmers,⁷¹⁰ though there were cases where some ICAs comprised over 100 farmers. African farmers were excluded from the ICAs. The programme was tailor-made for the benefit of settler farmers (and later, though in a limited way, African purchase areas).⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁶ Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1941, Salisbury, "The Natural Resources Act, Proclamation Number 19 of 1941", p. 359-360 (or NAZ S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941). Also see Maravanyika, "The Origins, Activities and Impact of ICAs."

⁷⁰⁷ NAZ GEN/NAT, The Natural Resources Board (NRB): 25 Years of Progress in Conservation in Rhodesia, Salisbury, NRB, 1966.

⁷⁰⁸ The Natural Resources Act, Proclamation Number 19 of 1941, p. 359-360.

⁷⁰⁹ Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX), Annual Report for the year 1949, p. 1.

⁷¹⁰ Phimister, "Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context", p. 267.

⁷¹¹ A. K. Shutt, 2002, "Squatters, Land Sales and Intensification in Marirangwe Purchase Area, Colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-65", The Journal of African History, 43, 3, pp. 473-498.

Land held by settler interests in African areas, such as farms belonging to churches, church-run boarding schools and hospitals, could not be included in the ICAs.⁷¹² The thinking behind the exclusion of such land was that it was being utilized for the benefit of Africans, not settlers farmers the ICAs were designed to benefit. In addition to this, because of its location, the land could not be sold to white people. It could, however, change hands and be apportioned to Africans who would then, by default, benefit from the investment that would have been made on it using state funding intended for white agriculture in the form of subsidies, loans and grants-in-aid and enhanced conservation and extension services provided by CONEX.

This happened in the Gutu reserve in Victoria Province in 1951, in relation to Gutu Mission farm. The farm was owned by the Dutch Reformed Church. Apart from the farm, the Church also ran a hospital and a school. The Gutu ICA, requested by some of its members who belonged to the church, desired to have the mission farm included in their intensive conservation community. Pursuant to this, the Secretary of the Committee wrote to the Natural Resources Board (NRB) in 1951 asking for the inclusion of the farm in spite of its location. The request was declined on grounds that, topographically, the farm belonged to neither a white farming area nor a Native Purchase Area as required by RNB regulations.⁷¹³

Belonging to the ICA movement was made voluntary for settler farmers mainly because the Huggins Government, which to a large extent comprised people with vested interests in agriculture, did not want to be on a collision course with the settler farming community. The Natural Resources Bill was presented to parliament at a time when the world had plunged into

⁷¹² NAZ S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941, p. 7.

⁷¹³ NAZ F450/18, Gutu Mission Farm, Gutu Intensive Conservation Area. Also see Maravanyika, “The Origins, Activities and Impacts of ICAs”, p. 29.

the Second World War. Southern Rhodesia joined the war on the side of United Kingdom and the Allied powers. Among its other contributions - such as “(feeding) Italian prisoners of war”⁷¹⁴ - the colony was also assigned to provide food for the war effort.⁷¹⁵ Because the government was mobilizing farmers to produce more food to meet increasing domestic demand (and for the war effort), government officials did not want conflict with the farmers. In addition to this consideration, farmers also constituted an important political constituency in the colony.

The Act stated that;

If the owners of land in any area wish on their own initiative to undertake the construction of works and other measures for the conservation or improvement of natural resources in such area, they may petition the Minister in writing to declare such area to be an intensive conservation area. Such petition shall clearly describe the boundaries of the said area and shall contain such other particulars as may be prescribed by regulation. The Minister shall, upon the receipt of the petition, cause notice of the same to be published in the manner which he may deem best calculated to reach all owners of land in the area mentioned in the petition.⁷¹⁶

JoAnn McGregor has observed that the implementation of conservation policies was not uniformly applied in African-farmed areas and on settler farms. She noted;

Though the appeal of conservation lies in invoking mutual benefits, the history of its implementation in Zimbabwe is one of authoritarianism and discrimination. For settlers, conservation entailed financial and other incentives: for Africans, it entailed coercion and punitive restrictions on resource use.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁴ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, p. 263.

⁷¹⁵ For more on the Allied powers and Southern Rhodesia’s contribution see A. Jackson, 2006, The British Empire and the Second World War, London, Hambledon Continuum.

⁷¹⁶ The Natural Resources Act, Proclamation Number 19 of 1941, p. 358-9.

⁷¹⁷ McGregor, “Conservation, Control and Ecological Change”, p. 257.

The case of ICAs gives further evidence to McGregor's point. Unlike in African reserves such as Shurugwi where Africans were forced to embrace Centralization,⁷¹⁸ for settler farmers joining the ICAs programme was voluntary. If farmers in a certain farming district "(wished) on their own initiative" to participate in the programme, they were required to petition the Minister of Agriculture and Lands in writing to declare the area an ICA.

Upon receipt of an application for the declaration of an ICA, the Minister was required to publish that petition in the media for the public to examine it. This was done so that, in the event that the petition had been prepared and sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands without adequate consultation in the concerned farming district, landowners whose farms were located in the area described in the application but did not wish to be part of the proposed ICA could disagree in writing and give reasons for their not being satisfied with the petition for their inclusion in the programme. An ICA could only be declared if two thirds of the farmers consented to their farming district being designated an ICA. When this happened the Minister was required to, by Notice in the Government Gazette, declare the ICA.⁷¹⁹ This process was a big contrast from the Centralization programme under which land degradation was utilized by the state as a "justification for state intervention...a legitimization for using force... Officials came to use the interest of 'conservation' to justify centralization after it had already been introduced for other reasons..."⁷²⁰

Because of the procedure stipulated above, it took a few years, for the majority of country's settler farming districts to be covered by the ICAs movement. The first ICA was declared in 1944, and six years later, in 1950, some farming districts were still yet to be covered by the programme. Though some districts were still not in the programme, the majority of farming

⁷¹⁸ Kramer, "A Clash of Economies: Early Centralization Efforts", pp. 83-98.

⁷¹⁹ NAZ S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941, p. 7.

⁷²⁰ McGregor, "Conservation, Control and Ecological Change", p. 257, 272.

districts in the colony had become ICAs in 1950.⁷²¹ Table 5.2 below shows the ICAs that had been declared in Mashonaland, where most of the colony's maize and tobacco were produced, by 1950.

Table 5.2: Mashonaland ICAs, 1950.

CIRCLE	REGIONAL GROUP	ICA
Mashonaland	1. Mazoe	1. Umvukwes 2. Marodzi-Tatagura 3. Glendale 4. Bindura 5. Shamva
	2. Salisbury	1. Salisbury West 2. Salisbury South 3. Gwebi-Hunyani 4. Norton 5. Arcturus
	3. Lomagundi	1. Darwendale 2. Trelawney 3. Banket 4. Eldorado 5. North Maquadzi
	4. Lower Hunyani	1. Angwa North 2. Angwa South 3. Karoi
	5. Marandellas	1. Sabi Catchment 2. Bromley 3. Wenimbe-Ruzawi 4. Virginia 5. Marandellas North

Source: Adopted from Department of Conservation and Extension, Annual Report, 1950. pp. 1-3.

Apart from showing the names of Mashonaland ICAs that had been declared by 1950, the Table also shows how the ICAs were organized. The country was divided into four Circles; Mashonaland, Matabeleland, Eastern and Midlands. Each Circle had a number of regional groups of ICAs, five in the case of Mashonaland. Each Regional Group had a number of ICAs; in Mashonaland's case Marandellas had 5, as did Lomagundi, Salisbury and Mazoe,

⁷²¹ Department of Conservation and Extension, Annual Report, 1950, p. 1-3.

while Lower Hunyani had three.⁷²² ICAs, led by their elected Committees, presided over conservation matters in areas of their jurisdiction. The Committees would interact with their counterparts in their Regional Group (such as at Regional Group ICA meetings) to deal with common grievances and interests. Sometimes they would share equipment. Above that structure was the Circle, which brought together all Regional Groups in an area.⁷²³

The delay in the declaration of ICAs was because in almost all farming districts there was resistance from some of the farmers. The major reason for resistance was that farmers were not satisfied that the programme would be carried out without, at some point, the state turning around to coerce them to use more and more of their own resources to finance conservation work. This concern was understandable, considering that this programme was introduced in a context where, less than a decade before 1944, the majority of the farmers were bankrupt and saddled with debt. Such a situation resulted in farmers fearing for a return to the crisis years where, in the absence of a government bail-out, a vast number of farmers were on the brink of either losing their farms to creditors or closing shop altogether on their own accord because of viability challenges.

While the Act stated that joining the programme was entirely voluntary, the government eventually resorted to a number of underhand methods to make farmers consent to having their areas declared ICAs. These methods included, in some cases, pressure and blackmail. A number of landowners in Gutu, for example were threatened that if they did not sign the petition for the Gutu ICA to be declared, the government would immediately call in loans and balances owed on farms. Farmers who could not afford to settle their indebtedness were thus

⁷²² NAZ F450/6, Bromley ICA File 1: Mashonaland ICAs, 1950.

⁷²³ NAZ F450. The files cover the activities of different ICAs across the country.

blackmailed into joining the programme against their will. This contradicted the letter and spirit of the concept of voluntary integration as stated in the Act.⁷²⁴

Apart from fearing that they would be forced to embark on a costly soil conservation programme, many farmers also questioned the ability of conservation officers in the country. The farmers were well aware of the fact that the Department of Agriculture and Lands had for many years experienced shortage of staff.⁷²⁵ Soil conservation had, from 1910, been under the Department of Irrigation, one of the 13 Departments that constituted the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. The small Department had one officer responsible for all matters to do with soil erosion. Martin Watt was the first such officer, serving in that capacity between 1910 and 1920. Jennings took over from Watt in 1921 till the end of 1924. Haviland became the Irrigation Engineer till 1929, and then, from 1930 to 1942, D. Aylen.⁷²⁶ The farmers' perception was justifiable, considering the history of soil conservation in the country. The government had not really shown leadership in this regard. Farmers were only acting true to their nature; "the farmer is naturally a conservative person who, before he spends any money wishes to see with his own eyes that the proposed remedy is a certain cure and, therefore, worthwhile."⁷²⁷

The government attended to the question of extension and conservation staff to service the farms in 1948 when the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX) was set up. Its function was to provide conservation and extension staff to farmers, and to carry out research on various topical issues in the agricultural industry. Table 5.3 below shows work done by CONEX in its first year of operation.

⁷²⁴ NAZ F450/18, The Gutu ICA File. Also see Maravanyika, "The Origins, Activities and Impact of ICAs."

⁷²⁵ NAZ F450/6, The Bromley ICA, File 1.

⁷²⁶ Kwashirai, "Dilemmas in Conservationism", p. 546.

⁷²⁷ NAZ A1510/32, D. Aylen, Erosion Policy, The Dangers of Soil Erosion and Methods of Prevention.

Table 5.3: Work Done on ICAs in 1948 and 1949.

	1948 (in Miles).	1949 (Miles)
Contour Ridges	3 348	5 296
Contour Drains	36	31
Drains	164	286
Pasture Furrows	232	139
Terraces	30	77
Irrigation Furrows	63	-
Total	3 875	5 929

Source: CONEX Annual Report, 1949, p. 2.

As shown in the Table, total area covered by conservation works in miles had significantly increased from 3 875 to 5 929 in just one year. There was a shortage of conservation and extension officers in the Department as Table 5.4 below shows:

Table 5.4: Staffing in CONEX, 1949 and 1950.

	1949	1950	Required Number
1. Administration	11	14	14
2. Senior Extension Officers	4	4	4
3. Extension Officers	4	8	16
4. Animal Husbandry Officers	1	1	1
5. Group Conservation Officers	8	8	14

6. Conservation Officers	60	60	82
7. Agricultural Engineers	1	1	1
8. Farm Managers	4	4	6
Total	93	100	138

Source: CONEX Annual Report, 1950. Also see Maravanyika, “The Origins, Activities and Impact of ICAs”, p. 46.

This section has explained the procedure for the formation of ICAs in accordance with the Natural Resources Act, 1941. The following section takes the example of one Mashonaland ICA, Bromley, to shed light on these intensive conservation processes at a micro-level.

Intensive Conservation Processes in Bromley

The Bromley farming area is located along the Harare-Mutare road (Salisbury and Umtali in the colonial period), about fifty kilometres from Harare and 30 kilometres from Marondera (Marandellas). By the 1940s Bromley was a relatively prosperous district, thanks to the tobacco boom, first in the mid-1920s and from 1939 onwards. Though successful as a tobacco growing district, it had not prospered at the same level as other districts in the Marandellas regional group such as Virginia and Wenimbe-Ruzawi.⁷²⁸ Bromley was comprised of both big and small farms; the small farms being a product of sub-divisions as many farmers cut up and sold portions of their farms during the agricultural crisis to remain afloat. Most big farms were located north of the Salisbury-Umtali railway line, while the majority of subdivisions were on the south of the railway line. There were 33 sub-divisions south of the railway line, all of them not exceeding 500 acres in size.⁷²⁹ Because of Bromley’s proximity to the capital,

⁷²⁸ Unless otherwise stated, all references in this section are from NAZ F450/6, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area (ICA), File 1.

⁷²⁹ The Conservation Officer, R. K. Harvey’s Report for 1946.

the majority of these small-holdings were held by people who were not involved in agriculture to any significant scale, but who desired to stay out of the capital. Some of the buyers worked in Salisbury, while others held the properties as country homes where they could go to rest during vacations. As for the holdings where farming was being carried out, it was small-scale because of the size of the farms.

Tobacco had become the prominent crop in Bromley in the second half of the 1930s. As the crop increased in popularity among farmers, more and more land was cleared and put under tobacco. Tobacco production increased, while maize production declined. Increased production of tobacco was because of two reasons; firstly as the economy began to recover from the depressed conditions that had characterized the agricultural sector since the 1927/28 cropping season, and, secondly, there was a general belief among farmers that prospects of making it big lay in tobacco, not maize.⁷³⁰ In 1931, Britain left the gold standard. This resulted in the devaluation of the sterling in the second half of the 1930s.⁷³¹ The depreciation of the sterling fuelled Southern Rhodesia's tobacco boom. The maize industry, which had, like the tobacco industry, been depressed since the 1927/8 season, did not thrive as tobacco did. With the genesis of maize control from 1931, there was general dissatisfaction among farmers with maize pricing policies.⁷³²

Apart from the sterling devaluation, the Second World War brought with it a huge market for the colony's tobacco. Tobacco consumption naturally increased because men fighting for the

⁷³⁰ The Conservation Officer, R. K. Harvey's Report for 1946.

⁷³¹ For more on this see B. Eichengreen and P. Temin, 2000, "The Gold Standard and the Great Depression", *Contemporary European History*, 9, 2, pp. 183-207 and J. D. Hamilton, 1988, "The Role of the International Gold Standard in Propagating the Great Depression", *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 6, 2, pp. 67-89.

⁷³² For more on developments in the maize industry from 1927 see NAZ S881/181/3979, Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Maize Industry of Southern Rhodesia, NAZ S1180/2/51 [5], Maize Enquiry Committee Report, 1930 and NAZ S1180/1, Oral Evidence to The Maize Enquiry Committee and the Maize Control Amendment Act, Number 17, 1934.

Empire consumed more and more tobacco on the front.⁷³³ Another dynamic was that the war brought with it a dollar crunch which necessitated the Empire to be more inward looking in terms of its trade. It became a priority for Britain to confine the bulk of her trade within the Sterling area. This meant that the colony's tobacco had a ready market in Britain, regardless of its quality.

Tobacco farming in Bromley took place without much attention to conservation measures. This was not peculiar to Bromley, but to other tobacco-producing districts. Because of poor farming methods on tobacco lands, hundreds of tobacco farms in the late 1930s and early 1940s were infested by nematodes, while production had been “gravely reduced.”⁷³⁴ The farmers' attitude towards the soil was also negative; they “did not care what happens... as long as [they] can get as much wealth out of the land as quickly as possible.”⁷³⁵ Farmers' disregard for soil conservation on their tobacco lands generally resulted in a scenario where Mashonaland farms “contained thousands of acres of wreckage by the start of the 1940s.”⁷³⁶ The nature of tobacco cultivation demanded the application of soil conservation measures, and setting up timber plantations on their farms to ensure a source of wood for flue-curing. In the absence of these measures soil erosion and depletion and massive deforestation took place.

By August 1941, when the Natural Resources Act was promulgated, soil erosion in the Bromley district was high.⁷³⁷ A few farmers had initiated soil conservation measures on their farms, but the percentage of land under the plough that had been protected was low. Urgent

⁷³³ See Table 5.1 for tobacco output and export figures from 1939 to 1949. For more on dynamics of the colony's tobacco see P. Scott, 1952, “The Tobacco Industry of Southern Rhodesia”, *Economic Geography*, 28, 3, pp. 189-206.

⁷³⁴ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, p. 264, quoting *New Rhodesia*, 18 October, 1940.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 264-5, quoting Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates, I June, 1938.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁷³⁷ The Conservation Officer, R. K. Harvey's Report for 1946.

soil conservation measures were needed on the majority of farms in the area. The conservation officer's Report for 1946 reveals that almost all of the district's tobacco lands needed protection. The district also required better pasture management practices to be put in place and for paddocking to be undertaken on a bigger scale.⁷³⁸ Tree planting was also necessary as by 1941 only four percent of the total area under cultivation was covered by trees. This situation was worsened by the fact that the area did not have any forest reserves.⁷³⁹ This means that there was need for afforestation work on the farms, better animal husbandry methods and, more importantly, soil conservation work.

A number of Bromley farmers, through the Bromley Farmers' Association, showed their interest in the early 1940s to have their area declared an ICA. This was because they anticipated that their farms would benefit considerably from subsidized work done by government tractor and road construction units and also from government funding in the form of subsidies, grants-in-aid and loans. The farmers thought that their farms would also benefit from provision of equipment by the government for the improvement of their lands. Most of their information about the benefits of joining the ICAs programme came from agricultural officers who, in a bid to market the ICAs programme, utilized every opportunity to market the programme every time they came into contact with farmers. Apart from the publicity given to the ICAs in newspapers, particularly The Rhodesia Herald, rapport with farmers at individual and community levels (such as at Farmers' Association meetings), was the most effective tool. This was because personal contact with farmers enabled the government officers to respond to farmers' questions, to clarify misconceptions and to allay farmers' fears about the financial cost of the programme.

⁷³⁸ The Conservation Officer, R. K. Harvey's Report for 1946.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

As noted, the Natural Resources Act stipulated that an ICA could only be declared in any settler farming area after two-thirds of landowners in the proposed ICA had given their consent in writing. In the absence of signatures of two-thirds of landowners, such a petition would be thrown out by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands. Farmers in Bromley sent their petition to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands in June 1946 to meet this requirement. A copy of their petition is presented in Box 1 below;

Box 1: Petition for the Declaration of the Bromley ICA under the Natural Resources Act, 1941.

Petition for the Declaration of an ICA under the Natural Resources Act, 1941.

To the Minister of Agriculture
Salisbury

Sir,

The owners of the land whose signatures are attached hereto have the honour to petition you to declare as an ICA, in terms of section 27 of the Natural Resources Act, 1941, the area which is demarcated on the attached map.

Should this petition be granted, the said owners undertake to adhere to the following principles for the conservation or improvement of natural resources within such intensive conservation area, which principles, it is agreed, shall be enforced by the Conservation Committee appointed in terms of section 28 of the Act:-

- a) To protect all land by such works and measures, including minor gully control works and measures, as may be approved by the Director of Irrigation within a period of ... years from the date of the declaration of the intensive conservation area.
- b) To avoid cultivating any land within fifty feet of the bank of a public stream or the centre line of any major drainage depression except with the approval of the Natural Resources board.
- c) To avoid interference with any swamps or marshes which form the sources or which constitute the feeders of a public stream, or where such swamps or marshes are at present cultivated, within... years, to cease such cultivation and take all necessary measures to restore them to their natural conditions, or to undertake such measures, as approved by the Director of Irrigation, to avoid interference with the normal flow of such public stream.
- d) To avoid the unnecessary destruction of all natural trees and vegetation, and not to fell or remove any trees within 100 feet of high flood level of a public stream, except under the authority of the Natural Resources Board.
- e) To take all reasonable precautions to prevent and control the occurrence of grass fires, including where practicable the construction and maintenance of adequate fire-guards, and to undertake only controlled grass-burning in accordance with approved practice.

- f) To avoid over-grazing and to practice such methods of farming, as approved by the Conservation Committee, as will conserve the soil.
- g) Where tobacco is grown requiring wood fuel for flue-curing, for every 100 acres of tobacco grown to plant trees approved by the Conservator of Forests on the basis of eight acres of trees per annum on an eight year rotation, or to maintain for fuel purposes a given acreage if indigenous woodland the yield of which may be taken into account to allow a reduction in the area of plantations.

.....

Signature of Chairman of Investigating Committee:

.....
 Date.....

NOTE : Here insert any further principles subscribed to.

INFORMATION ACCOMPANYING PETITION

1. List of signatures to the Petition.
 2. Map of Area.
 3. List of all owners of land within the area, giving name and approximate area of each holding.
 4. Report on the area by the Director of Irrigation.
- ED.

Source: Petition for the Declaration of an ICA under the Natural Resources Act, 1941.

Upon receipt of the petition, the Department of Agriculture and Lands published the petition in The Rhodesia Herald on 19 July 1946. A number of farmers responded to the petition, objecting to their area being declared an ICA. Four reasons were given for the objections. Some farmers were unhappy with the fact that there had not been adequate consultation prior to the submission of the petition. There were also doubts among farmers about whether the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands had the capacity to roll out a programme of the magnitude envisioned by the Natural Resources Act. Some farmers needed more time to familiarize with the Act and to understand what it implied for them while others objected because of the exclusion of their farms in the proposed ICA.

The first reason had to do with inadequate consultation between farmers and the Bromley Farmers' Association, which had authored and submitted the petition. E. O. Martyn of Danga Lima farm is one of the two farmers who wrote to the Department of Agriculture and Lands,

complaining that he had not been consulted prior to the preparation of the petition. He informed the Secretary for Agriculture and Lands, C. L. Robertson;

I object to being included in the 'Bromley ICA.' I have not been consulted in any way about the formation of this conservation area, like many other persons in this district. The Bromley Farmers' Association are not truly representative of the district. All landowners to be included in the area should have been asked to attend a meeting to discuss the matter. It is apparently intended to force the matter through, hoping that few people will see the notice in the paper, (and) send in their objection.⁷⁴⁰

A similar objection was made by B. J van der Berg of Rudale farm. He wrote to the Secretary of Agriculture and Lands and stated;

I did notice in the Rhodesia Herald on the 19th of July that you have received a petition from certain land owners in the Bromley district that they wish to declare certain boundaries of land as Bromley ICA including subdivision A and A/B of Great Bromley Estate which are my farm called Rudale. And I ... do object to grant any permission to include my area as an ICA. That must be very clearly understood.⁷⁴¹

Lack of adequate consultation with all farm owners was, thus, one of the reasons for some farmers' objections.

A group of 40 landowners also wrote to the Secretary of Agriculture and Lands objecting to the petition. Their reason for objecting was that they did not understand what the Natural Resources Act said and implied and they did not have confidence in conservation officers. They wrote;

⁷⁴⁰ Letter from E. O. Martyn of Danga Lima Farm, Bromley, to the Secretary, the Department of Agriculture and Lands, Salisbury, dated 17 June, 1946.

⁷⁴¹ Letter from B. J van der Berg, Rudale Farm, Bromley, to the Secretary, the Department of Agriculture and Lands, Salisbury, dated 20 July, 1946.

We the undersigned landowners in the proposed Bromley ICA hereby beg to lodge our protest. We are of the opinion that the petition for the formation of an ICA has been presented to the Department concerned without the ‘Act’ having been properly studied, with all that it implies. We feel that the formation of a conservation area should be postponed until such time as the whole matter is more fully understood, and especially until all land owners have had the opportunity to hear the matter explained at a public meeting which they have not done.⁷⁴²

In addition to this the group was also of the impression that conservation officers were not able to take on the work proposed by the Act. The farmers stated;

After our experiences, we also consider that there are few if any conservation officers in the country fully qualified to take on the work and the salary being offered by the government is quite inadequate and will never encourage the right type of man for such a post.⁷⁴³

The 40 objectors, as was the case with farmers Martyn and van der Berg, were not happy about lack of consultation among the Bromley farming community about whether it was in their best interest to join the ICA or not before the petition was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture.

The impression that agricultural officials were not competent enough to carry out a soil conservation programme of the scale envisioned by the Natural Resources Act was a result of poor staffing in the Irrigation Department. In addition to past omissions, a government Tractor Unit deployed to the area to carry out soil protection work between May and September 1946 had carried out unsatisfactory work, adding to the notion that the Ministry of Agriculture could not carry out the programme. The work done by the tractor unit was not up to standard, leaving many farmers unhappy with both the unit and Harvey, the conservation officer

⁷⁴² A Petition by 40 Bromley Landowners, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 10 July, 1946.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

assigned to the area.⁷⁴⁴ This development reduced farmers' enthusiasm to joining the ICA programme as Harvey, the man who had made the recommendation to the Bromley Farmers Union that their district stood to immensely benefit from the ICAs programme, had proven his inability to supervise such work.⁷⁴⁵

What had happened was that the government tractor unit, under Harvey's supervision, was deployed to Bromley in May 1946 to carry out soil conservation works in preparation of the rainy season. This was meant to act as bait for the farmers, to show them that they could benefit even more from government infrastructure set aside for such work once they were part of the ICAs programme. At the onset of the rains in September 1946, many contour ridges constructed by the government tractor unit between May and September were destroyed, resulting in disgruntlement by farmers. The most affected farms were Datata, Danga Lima, Windsor and Nyambaji.⁷⁴⁶ The farmers, in response, passed a resolution at a Bromley Farmers' Association meeting held on 11 December 1946 stating that;

The Bromley Farmers Association views with grave concern the damage caused during the recent heavy storm to a block of farms in the district, by the breaking of numerous contour ridges built by the Government Tractor Unit... the Association considers that storms of this nature are likely to occur every (rainy season) and ...the Department concerned (must) provide adequate supervision to the construction of protective storm drains and exit drains for contours...⁷⁴⁷

To the farmers, this occurrence pointed to the fact that the Department of Agriculture and Lands was not able to provide adequate supervision to its staff. The Secretary to the Bromley Farmers' Association wrote to the Department of Agriculture and Lands on the 12th of December 1946 describing the Government Tractor Unit's work as "most unsatisfactory (the

⁷⁴⁴ Letter from the Secretary, Bromley Farmers' Association, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 12 January 1947.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁶ Bromley Farmers' Association Resolution, 11 December 1946.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Association severely criticizes the official concerned) and further considers that bad work is due to the total lack of any supervision..”⁷⁴⁸ The letter concluded: “the Association is of the opinion that efforts of the Government to form ICAs will fail completely!”⁷⁴⁹

The Bromley Farmers’ Association’s assertion that there was little or no supervision of the tractor unit’s work was correct. The conservation officer, Harvey, had actually written to the Chief Soil Conservation Officer when the work began, informing him that he was overwhelmed by other commitments. He wrote;

As you know, tractor unit number 9 has been engaged in carrying out repair work in the Bromley area on farms Nyambanji, Datata, Mgargwi and Windsor, also a certain amount of new work on the above-mentioned farms, and has also carried out new work and rebuilds on farms Blue Waters, Rusanzi, Chitara, Eton and Bain’s Hope. Due to my various other duties, I have been unable to carry out the necessary checking work, except at Eton and partly on Chitara, on farms serviced by myself, and have not even inspected the remainder...I therefore ask, either that I may be relieved from other duties until I can carry out the necessary checking work, or, alternatively, that a competent officer be sent to do the work in my place.⁷⁵⁰

His request to be allowed to reschedule some of his duties so that he could focus on supervising the unit’s work was without success and by December farmers were already complaining that the work done by the tractor unit was not good. In January 1947 the Department of Irrigation dispatched a fact-finding team to investigate what had happened, the extent of the damage and the general implications on the plan to declare an ICA in Bromley. The team, headed by the Chief Soil Conservation Officer, K. J. Mackenzie, found that the damage had only been confined to 300 acres, in spite of the complains the Bromley Farmers

⁷⁴⁸ Letter from the Secretary, Bromley Farmers Association, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 12 December 1946.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁰ Letter from the Conservation Officer, to the Chief Soil Conservation Officer titled “Soil Conservation Works Bromley Area”, and dated 21 September 1946.

Association was making about the subject.⁷⁵¹ The team noted that the damage had been a result of a combination of faulty layout, careless tractor operation and also neglect or insufficient completion of work by the farmers themselves.

Though the farmers were partly responsible for the damage because of their insufficient completion of work as found by Mackenzie's team, the Chief Soil Conservation Officer recommended that the tractor unit had to be dispatched again to re-do the work at government expense. This, it was thought, would remove the bad impression this matter had formed on farmers in the prospective ICA.⁷⁵² The incident does show that there was, to an extent, limited capacity on the part of the government to carry out a programme as ambitious as envisaged by the ICAs. In this case objections to the declaration of an ICA by Bromley farmers, citing the poor work of government conservation officers, was an embarrassment as it turned out that the work done was, indeed, not up to standard.

An investigation team, chaired by H. S. Andrews, was set up in 1946 by the Department of Irrigation to speed the declaration of an ICA in Bromley. The investigation team had to make sure that two-thirds of landowners in the area consented to the declaration; it was not to be an easy task. The investigation team decided that the best way to proceed was to make sure that owners of small sub-divisions were not given questionnaires, with the result that only established farmers were given the opportunity to fill in the questionnaires. Questionnaires were given to every prospective ICA asking the farmers questions about their farms. This information would then be compiled and used, together with conservation officers' reports, to form a sketch of the area's needs in terms of conservation staff and resources. This

⁷⁵¹ The Chief's Conservation Officer's Circular, titled "Recommendations in Connection with damage on farms in Goromonzi area", dated 13 February 1947.

⁷⁵² Ibid.

information was vital for officers who talked to farmers about writing the petition to join the ICAs, as they would have up to date information about how to market the ICA programme. Of the 131 farms and subdivisions in the areas, the questionnaires were issued to only 22 percent farms.⁷⁵³ This meant that from the onset the results that they got, the basis upon which the ICA was later established, were flawed, and not truly representative of the farming district.

Writing about this, P. H. Haviland, the Director of Irrigation stated their reason for the decision not to issue questionnaires to all landowners in Bromley;

...questionnaires have been completed by farmers representing only 22 percent of the farms in the area. A number of questionnaires were not sent out to persons on the west side occupying very small holdings, and the feeling of the Investigation Committee is that, many of these, if given a questionnaire, would probably refuse to fill them in, or endeavor to prevent the declaration being effected. This is a rather difficult problem, but the protection of the headwaters of the rivers within the area is of very great importance...⁷⁵⁴

This opinion was held by a chain of people, obviously to the disadvantage of the 73 landowners whose voice they sought to silence on this matter. The Chief Soil Conservation Officer, Mackenzie, was informed of this position (not to issue questionnaires to some landowners) by his investigating committee, which he accepted and forwarded to his superior, the Director of Irrigation, who in turn communicated the position to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands. Mackenzie informed the Director of Irrigation;

The abovementioned area is only covered by 33 questionnaires (out of a possible 106) submitted by farmers who are old and well established farmers on a large scale. This only represents 22 percent of the farms on the area... The farms south

⁷⁵³ Bromley Investigating Committee, Proposed Bromley ICA, Analysis of Position Disclosed by Questionnaires.

⁷⁵⁴ Letter from the Director of Irrigation, P. H. Haviland, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, titled "Intensive Conservation Area: Bromley", dated 11 March 1946.

of the (railway) line are of small acreage, and include 16 subdivisions of the Great Bromley Estate. The (Investigating) Committee states that most of these are occupied by small land owners, some of whom are not farming at all, but merely in residence, and it is felt that if they were directly contacted with a view of completing questionnaires then they might combine and attempt to prevent the area from being declared... The position, therefore, is that...the matter be left as it is, and the existing 33 questionnaires (be) accepted as the basis for a Director's report for the whole area.⁷⁵⁵

The State began to deliberately scheme to push the programme through, in this case, as shown by issue of questionnaires to only a few landowners to try to prevent farmers with small holdings from blocking the proposed ICA. The Secretary of Agriculture and Lands "agreed to accept the questionnaires as they (were) with the provision that after the declaration of the area a copy of the government notice will be sent to every land owner in the area."⁷⁵⁶ This situation was not peculiar to Bromley. In Chatsworth, in the Victoria Province, as had also taken place in Gutu, the Department of Agriculture and Lands, having failed to get the support of two thirds of farm owners which was requisite for the declaration of the ICA, resorted to coercive methods. They compelled farmers who had not yet paid for their farms to sign the petition in support of declaration of an ICA, which left many farmers with no option as such action would automatically mean the majority of them had to close shop.⁷⁵⁷

It goes without saying that the petition from Bromley was based on half-baked research as the questionnaires did not reach 73 landowners in Bromley. The petition for the declaration of an ICA in the area was signed by only 24 landowners, fewer than the 33 who had filled in the questionnaires. Even then, though the 33 questionnaires filled in by 22 percent of landowners in the area covered 87 000 acres, which was 40 percent of the total area, the Director of Irrigation reported that "the response to the questionnaires (was) somewhat disappointing."

⁷⁵⁵ Letter from the Chief Soil Conservation Officer to the Director of Irrigation, titled "Bromley Proposed Intensive Conservation Area", dated 5 March, 1946.

⁷⁵⁶ Letter from the Chief Soil Conservation Officer, Department of Irrigation, to the Secretary, Bromley Farmers' Association, dated 19 March 1946.

⁷⁵⁷ NAZ F450/18, A. R. Boucher, Soil Conservation Officer, Fort Victoria.

The Director attributed this to “the small number of small farms and holdings in the area”,⁷⁵⁸ and not the fact that close to 80 percent of landowners in the area had not been given the questionnaires. The Government Gazette showing the boundaries of the proposed Bromley ICA was published in May 1946. Box 2 below shows the original notice in the Government Gazette.

Box 2: Government Notice Number 29, 24th of May 1946.

Government Notice Number 29, 24th of May 1946

APPLICATION FOR DECLARATION OF INTENSIVE CONSERVATION AREA IN TERMS OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES ACT, 1941.

Bromley Intensive Conservation Area.

It is hereby notified that the Minister of Agriculture has received a Petition from certain owners of land in the area the boundaries of which are described hereunder, situated in the Salisbury and Marandellas native districts, to declare such area as an Intensive Conservation Area in terms of section 27 of the Natural Resources Act, 1941:-

“Bounded by a line drawn from the north-east beacon of North Field, down its eastern boundary to the Nora River to its junction with the Nyamasanga River, then in an easterly direction along the northern boundaries of Nyambanji Glenroy ‘A’ and Mrargwi to its eastern beacon, up the Chinyika River until it meets the boundary of Forbes and then east along its northern boundary to its north-eastern beacon, then down the eastern boundaries of Forbes, Liemba, Essexdale and Roraima, then south-east along the railway line to the north-east beacon of the Government Experimental Farm, and west along the southern boundaries of the Government Experimental Farm, Keid Head, Merrow Downs and Shrewton, to the south-west point of Jenje (portion of Canwick) then up its western boundaries of Chomwedzi, and Great Bromley Estate, sub-division ‘A’ of sub-division ‘B’ to south-west point of Ardlussa, then up that western boundary until it meets the Hunyani River, follow up the river in a north-westerly direction until it intersects the southern boundary of Dunstan Estate, then along that boundary and north along the western boundaries of Dunstan Estate, Banana Grove, Lisheen, to where the western boundary of Lisheen Extension meets Mayfair, and then along the southern and northern boundaries of that farm along western boundary of the Glebe to northern point on James Farm, down its eastern boundary to north-west beacon of Bain’s Hope, along northern and down eastern boundaries of Bain’s Hope to where it joins the north-western boundary of Middleton, along that boundary to its north-eastern beacon, then north-west along the southern boundary of Bellevue to the Chinyika River, then down this river which bounds to the

⁷⁵⁸ Letter from the Director of Irrigation, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, titled, “Petition for the Declaration of Intensive Conservation Areas, Bromley”, dated 27 March 1946.

north Bellevue, Belmont, Belvedere, Rochester and Northfield, to the starting point.”

Any owner or owners of land situated within the above-mentioned area who objects to the granting of this petition are hereby called upon to lodge in writing, within thirty (30) days from date hereof at the Office of the Secretary, P. O. Box 387, Salisbury, their objections to the granting of this petition, together with a full statement of the grounds for such objections.

Printed for the Government Stationery Office by the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd., Salisbury.

Source: Government Gazette, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area: Government Notice Number 29, 24th of May 1946.

The publication of this notice was met by a number of objectors, who either thought that the declaration would not be in their best interest or that there was a group within their ranks that was pushing for an agenda that did not have the collective consent of all land owners concerned.

There were some farmers, however, who sent objections to the Department of Agriculture and Lands because they wanted to be members of the ICA and were unhappy over the exclusion of their farms from the proposed ICA. One such farmer was Major F. H. R. Maunsell. Maunsell's farm was topographically in the Bromley area, but had been excluded by boundaries described in the Government Gazette. This was also the case with G. L'Ange, on whose behalf Maunsell was also acting. Maunsell wrote to the Secretary of Agriculture and Lands;

With reference to the Government Notice No. 289, Application for Declaration of Intensive Conservation Area in terms of the Natural Resources Act, 1941, Bromley ICA, I wish on behalf of Mr. G. W. R. L'Ange, who is now out of the country, and for whom I am acting, to make the strongest protest against the farm Nyambuya being left out of the above quoted area. The farm Nyambuya is both politically and topographically part of the Bromley area, and its inclusion in any other area would be absurd.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁹ Letter from Major F. H. R. Maunsell (written on behalf of G. W. R. L'Ange), Forres, Bromley, to the Secretary of Agriculture and Lands, Salisbury, dated 9 June 1946.

Major Maunsell also wrote another letter in which he protested;

I wish to make the strongest possible protest against the granting of this petition on the following grounds: - The Farms Chinwiri, Entre Rios, Nyambuya and Waterford have been left out of the defined area. These farms are both politically and topographically part of the Bromley District and their exclusion would make any attempt at conservation works on my farm valueless.⁷⁶⁰

The notice given in the Government Gazette of the 24th of May 1946 had to be cancelled in response to these complaints, and a new notice was subsequently published on 5 July, 1946. The fact that some areas were left out is directly related to the lack of adequate consultation prior to filing the petition and, consequently, the flows in the Gazette. As the Secretary, Department of Justice, noted in his letter to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, the information that had been furnished by the Director of Irrigation was “incorrect” and “somewhat misleading.”⁷⁶¹ This left the Department of Agriculture with no option, according to the legal opinion given, but to republish the original notice with corrections, “the correction being to give the correct description of the area for which the petition was received.”⁷⁶²

The petition had to be redone, as was the case with the government gazette. It is in this context that the Minister of Agriculture and Lands informed the Department of Irrigation that he was not satisfied with the way the issue had been handled, and was not sure the petition had adequate support. The Minister asked for sufficient evidence that there was support for the application.⁷⁶³ Agricultural officials went on a new offensive to make sure they got the required margin, two thirds of land holders in Bromley, in support of the ICA. The effort

⁷⁶⁰ Letter from Major F. H. R. Maunsell (different from the one cited above), to the Secretary of Agriculture and Lands, Salisbury, also dated 9 June 1946.

⁷⁶¹ Letter from the Secretary, Department of Justice to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands titled “Application for Declaration of Intensive Conservation Area in terms of the Natural Resources Act, 1941”, dated 27th of June, 1946.

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*

⁷⁶³ Letter from Acting Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, to The Director of Irrigation, titled “Proposed Intensive Conservation Area: Bromley”, undated, but most probably sent at the beginning of August, 1946.

registered a few successes as they visited the objectors individually trying to persuade them to withdraw their objections, and giving them more information on the proposed ICA in a bid to dispel their fears, especially relating to the financial implications of the programme. S. Green, Colonel Maynard and H. W. Nicholson wrote private letters to withdraw their objections. They had been among the 40 landowners who petitioned the Department of Lands on 10 July 1946 arguing against the proposed ICA. Their reason had been that they had not had ample time to adequately study the provisions of the Natural Resources Act and to digest what those provisions meant for each of the farmers, and how they would impact on their farming enterprises. They had also questioned the competence of conservation officers.

Maynard withdrew his support for the petition, his reason being that “the petition ceased to be valid after a public meeting had been held at Bromley.” An about turn was apparent in his letter. “At no time was I opposed to this area being declared an Intensive Conservation Area”, he stated.⁷⁶⁴ Green changed his stance on the matter and wrote the to the Department of Agriculture and Lands to state his new position;

I put my signature to a petition brought around by Mr. Wm. Draper of Bromley, asking for a postponement of the proclamation of the Bromley area. I have now had further information and so would like to withdraw my signature if the petition is received by you, as I am now in favour of an intensive conservation area for Bromley.⁷⁶⁵

H. W. Nicholson of Upton farm also withdrew his objection; “I, rather a new hand in the district, signed the petition”, he wrote. “Having had the matter explained to me, I wish my name to be deleted from the petition.”⁷⁶⁶ Seven more farmers withdrew their objections on the

⁷⁶⁴ Letter from C. A. Maynard, to the Chief Soil Conservation Officer, dated 30 August, 1946.

⁷⁶⁵ Letter from S. Green, Broakmead Farm, Bromley, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 27 August, 1946.

⁷⁶⁶ Letter from H. W. Nicholson, Upton Farm, Bromley, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 26 August, 1946.

3rd of September 1946.⁷⁶⁷ The withdrawals of the objections were good news for the Department of Agriculture and Lands. This is because although Bromley comprised 151 registered farms, with 106 owners, partnerships or companies, the Department only needed 71 landowners to consent to the declaration of the ICA to meet the two-thirds threshold. Of the 106, 43 had registered their objections; three by private correspondence and 40 by a joint petition on 10 July 1946. Of the 43 objectors, 10 withdrew their objections, leaving 33 objectors. The Department of Agriculture and Lands began to investigate the ownership and registration status of each farm in the district, which nullified seven more objectors. Twenty-six acceptable objections remained; a figure that was less than a third of the owners in the farming district.⁷⁶⁸ The constitutional requirement that two thirds of landowners had to agree to the declaration of an ICA had been met.

The Director of Irrigation informed the Chairman of the Investigating Committee that the only way forward, after the refusal by the Minister to grant the first petition, was to make sure they managed to get signatures from two thirds of owners in the area.⁷⁶⁹ A new investigation showed that there were 140 farms in Bromley, eight of which were unoccupied. The remaining 132 farms had 96 owners. Of the 96, 64 signed the petition, while 23 objected.⁷⁷⁰ The change in the number of farms and owners was owing to the fact that the second petition strictly defined an owner as someone who was “registered at the deeds office as the proprietor of a specified piece of land, any person lawfully occupying land or his representative.”⁷⁷¹ The petition was accepted by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, and a meeting was held at the

⁷⁶⁷ Letter from the Chairman of the Investigating Committee, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 3 September, 1946.

⁷⁶⁸ Letter from the Director of Irrigation, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 20 January 1947.

⁷⁶⁹ Letter from the Director of Irrigation, P. H. Haviland, to S. T. G. Andrews, the Investigating Committee, dated 11 October 1946.

⁷⁷⁰ Letter from the Director of Irrigation, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 20 January 1947.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Bromley Farmers' Hall on the 31st of May 1947 for the election of Bromley's first Intensive Conservation Committee, in terms of section 28 of the Natural Resources Act, 1941.⁷⁷² L. C. E. Collingwood was appointed the first secretary of the Bromley Soil conservation Area Committee. On 2 August 1947 the Committee was given its first grant-in-aid, to the tune of £100, to meet its initial expenses.⁷⁷³

Intensive Conservation in Practice in Bromley

The Bromley ICA was duly declared on the 11th of April 1947 and its first Committee inaugurated on 2 August, 1947.⁷⁷⁴ The Department of Agriculture and Lands continued to work with farmers in the various farming districts across the country to make sure all farming areas were covered by the intensive soil conservation programme. At the end of 1950 the programme had spread to the majority of settler farming areas in the country. Eighty ICAs had been declared by the end of 1950. The ICAs were administratively under four 'circles' (regional groupings): Matabeleland, Midlands, Mashonaland and Eastern. Each 'circle' had a number of regional groups under its supervision, while every regional group had a number of ICAs under its jurisdiction.⁷⁷⁵

The ICA Committees were empowered to;

Enter into contracts for superintendence and performance of matters relating to natural resources, to make arrangements with any other conservation committee for undertaking on a joint or cooperative basis any works in their respective areas and from their own funds to contribute towards the cost of such conservation works.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷² Notice: Election Of Committee, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area, undated.

⁷⁷³ Letter from the Secretary, Natural Resources Board, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, titled "Allowance of Grant-in-Aid: Bromley Intensive Conservation Area", dated 2 August, 1947.

⁷⁷⁴ NAZ F450/6, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area File 1.

⁷⁷⁵ The Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX) Annual Report, 1950, pp. 1-3.

⁷⁷⁶ NAZ F450/18, Letter from the Acting Magistrate, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands dated 8 November, 1948.

The issue of financing was a major subject from the beginning for farmers in Bromley. Farmers had to meet costs of works performed on their farms and this created a number of problems. Although subsidies, and sometimes grants-in-aid, were provided, farmers had to settle the balance, which in the majority of cases was more than the subsidy or the grant-in-aid. The Table below shows how this worked out;

Table 5.5: Subsidies and Grants-in-Aid, Bromley, August to October, 1947.

Date	Farm Owner	Name Farm	of Value of Work (£)	Subsidy (£)	Grant-in- aid (£)
12/8/1947	A. C. de Lano	Bluewater	141. 3. 4	47. 1. 1	15. 13. 8
28/8/1947	C. A. S. Greenhill	Chitara Extension	44. 13. 4	14. 17. 9	4. 19. 3
17/09/1947	R. Wiggill	J. Eton	49. 6. 8	16. 8. 11	5. 9. 8
17/19/1947	J. A. G. Hughes	Bain's Hope	59. 11. -	19. 17. -	32. 14. 11

Source: Bromley ICA Secretariat, £100 Advanced 8 September 1947.

The table shows the value of work done and the break-down of how the work was to be paid for. For example, at Bluewater Farm work worth £141. 3. 4 was carried out on 12 August 1947. A subsidy worth £47. 1. 1 was given, while the grant-in-aid provided was £15. 13. 8. What this meant for the owner of Bluewater Farm, de Lano, is that he had to pay for the difference of about £78 from his own resources.⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷⁷ Director of Irrigation, A. R. Kerr, to I. C. E. Collingwood, Secretary, Bromley ICA Committee, titled, "41/3/C/4, Subsidies and Grants-in-aid, £100", and dated 10 May 1948. The Director wrote, "I certify that the

Apart from grants-in-aid, the government also advanced loans to ICAs. This proved to be another burden to farmers, as they had to repay the loans. The elected Committee could make such decisions, and all members were included in contributing towards repayment. For example, the Bromley ICA was given a loan of £4 000 in January 1949 for the purchase of machinery for conservation work. The farmers had to secure the loan by an acknowledgement of debt and had to pay the loan back in five annual installments, beginning not later than three years after receiving the loan.⁷⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the ICA scored a number of successes in terms of projects. By February 1949 the Bromley ICA had purchased a dam building unit, which by July 1949 had built eight small dams, with a capacity of three million gallons of water.⁷⁷⁹ This, in the ICA Committee's view, was very important. In its September 1949 Newsletter, the Committee stated;

The need for water conservation is becoming obvious. Small dams in vleis not only provide water for stock, but by raising the water table and holding back run off, immensely benefit the vleis and the water supplies of the country as a whole.⁷⁸⁰

At the end of 1949 the Unit had built 13 dams.

The district also did well in terms of pasture management, this being a result of its being close to the Grasslands Government Experimental Station in Marandellas.⁷⁸¹ The district's pasture management efforts were aided by J. A. H Hughes, a farmer in the district who donated a portion of land at his Farm, Bain's Hope, to the ICA for the establishment of a grass nursery. The ICA Committee encouraged all farmers to utilize the piece of land to sharpen their knowledge, and to get seed for planting grass on their farms. The ICA Committee encouraged

Bromley ICA...is entitled to the annual payment of £100 in terms of Treasury Authority No. 59557 of the 28th of October, 1947.

⁷⁷⁸ Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, titled, "Loan: Bromley ICA Committee."

⁷⁷⁹ Bromley ICA and Food Advisory Committee, Newsletter, 29 July 1949.

⁷⁸⁰ Bromley ICA and Food Advisory Committee, Newsletter, 12 September 1949.

⁷⁸¹ NAZ F450/6, Bromley ICA, File 1.

the farmers, “plant grass to restore the soil and at the same time turn it into milk and beef!”⁷⁸²

The ICA also employed African fire rangers to patrol the district and to give an account for how every fire started. The rangers, attested as Special African Constables, only had jurisdiction over African farm workers on the farms. Their main task was to;

...warn the natives about veld fires, cultivation of stream banks, digging out holes in contours and other conservation matters. They are to report veld fires, and to give assistance in putting them out. They are to arrest any native found unlawfully setting fire to the veld...⁷⁸³

The ICA Committee encouraged the preservation of natural timber through disseminating propaganda in its newsletters. Farmers were encouraged to avoid indiscriminate cutting down of trees and to plant exotic trees such as gums for tobacco curing, as well as a transition from the use of wood by converting to use of coal in their furnaces.⁷⁸⁴ In spite of these successes, the ICA also had to contend with a number of challenges, among them poor operation of its equipment by the operators and lack of adequate attention by the Conservation officer for the area. The area under the conservation’s supervision was rather too big for one official. The ICA was also affected by challenges whose solution was out of their control such as denudation of the Nora and Chinyika rivers, which the ICA Committee blamed on practices by Africans in neighbouring African reserves.⁷⁸⁵ The ICA could not solve this problem on its own, as the Goromonzi reserve fell under the supervision of the Native Department.

The Food Production Drive

The Bromley ICA Committee also doubled up as a Food Advisory Committee (FAC), with the task of encouraging increased food production in the district. The FACs were also called

⁷⁸² NAZ F450/6, Bromley ICA, File 1.

⁷⁸³ Bromley ICA and Food Advisory Committee, Newsletter, July 1951.

⁷⁸⁴ Bromley District Intensive Conservation Area and Food Advisory Committee Newsletter, November 1950.

⁷⁸⁵ NAZ F450/6, Bromley ICA File 1.

Food Production Committees (FPCs). They were launched in response to increased food demand in the 1940s. Increased urbanization as a result of the growth in the colony's industries, particularly the manufacturing sector, and drought such as the devastating 1942 drought, the obligation to house and feed Italian prisoners of war and to feed Empire forces during the Second World War. With increased production of tobacco at the expense of maize in the 1940s as tobacco got "the main agricultural effort",⁷⁸⁶ the government sought to put in place measures that would encourage food production. One was the requirement under the Land Settlement Scheme of 1944 to have ex-servicemen produce food on a certain percentage of their land.⁷⁸⁷

With the formation of ICAs, ICA Committees were also tasked, apart from the conservation drive, to also push for more food production. The Bromley ICA Committee encouraged every farmer in Bromley to produce adequate food to satisfy their requirements on their farms. In September 1949 the Committee encouraged farmers as follows;

Your Committee hopes that everyone, whether owning an estate, a farm or a plot will make every endeavor during the coming season to produce enough food for their own requirements. This should not prove a very formidable task since it has already been found in this area that maize grown on land that has been properly green manured or composted and with adequate fertilizer yields of over 15 bags per acre have been obtained....By growing your own food, not only are you helping yourself but also the country as a whole. One of the factors that will assuredly retard the development of this colony is the use of Dollars (or even Sterling) for the purchase of food grown beyond our borders – food that can be grown here.⁷⁸⁸

Apart from spreading awareness to farmers that it was not in the best interest of the country to import food, the Committee also talked about the role of food production in the

⁷⁸⁶ Report of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, 31 December 1946, p. 13.

⁷⁸⁷ Phimister, "Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context", p. 267.

⁷⁸⁸ NAZ F450/6, Bromley ICA File 1.

industrialization of the colony. In its newsletter of April 1950, the Committee informed the farmers;

It is hoped that all farmers will have at least sufficient maize for their own needs so that the colony's sizable maize may be available to productive industries and essential services. You are all aware of the tremendous mineral and industrial expansion envisaged in the colony and it would be disastrous if such expansions were hampered by the lack of food...⁷⁸⁹

The food production gospel was an integral component of the conservation movement, as the ICAs worked to promote sound farming methods and to protect soil from erosion, they also encouraged increased production.

The cost of food imported from dollar countries increased in 1949 after the sterling devaluation and, in response to this, the FACs increased their calls for the production of more food. At the 1949 annual congress of the Rhodesia National Farmers' Union, farmers were encouraged to produce "more food, more food, and still more food."⁷⁹⁰ In Bromley there were notable increases in food production, with the result that in 1951 the district got the first prize at the Agricultural Show's Inter-District Exhibit Competition.⁷⁹¹

Community Conservation at Work

As already stated, conservation in African reserves took the form of a forced top-down approach, where African farmers were neither consulted to give their input in the formulation of the policy nor flexible to make changes to the policy to make it suit their local conditions. An example of this is in sizes of land apportioned to Africans under Centralization. Each family would be able, according to Alvord's logic, to make a living on 10 acres in areas that

⁷⁸⁹ Bromley ICA and Food Advisory Committee, Newsletter Number 5, 26 April 1950.

⁷⁹⁰ NAZ F450/6, Bromley ICA, File 1.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

received enough rain. This was in spite of individual farmers' productivity margins and number of minor dependents one had. "Mr. Alvord was of the opinion that a man and his wife, if efficient and hardworking, could farm up to ten acres of arable land in the high rainfall area", A. Pendered, an official in the Native Affairs Department (NAD) and a member of the Native Production and Trade Commission of 1944, stated in his report on marketing of African crops.⁷⁹² People were not given adequate information about the programme, leading to some African communities opposing Centralization "because they were firmly convinced that they were being moved into lines for the purpose of taxation."⁷⁹³

The ICAs, on the contrary, were introduced along the lines of community-based conservation. Community conservation is the management of natural resources premised on the thinking that for conservation to be carried out in a sustainable way, with outcomes being sustained, local communities must be given the opportunity to play a central role in the process. If the community identifies with the project as its own, and understands that benefits accruing from the project are for the community's benefit, the community is most likely to commit itself to the success of the project. The top-down management style and community conservation are two distinct management methods; under a top-down management regime government, through the Ministry implementing the programme, owns the project, while in the later the community own the project.⁷⁹⁴

Top-down management breeds resentment and resistance. Community conservation emphasizes, on the other hand, emphasizes inclusion, "community" and "participation", to make sure that conservation interventions are "people-oriented" and sensitive to customs,

⁷⁹² NAZ S235/474, Marketing of Native Produce, A. Pendered, 24 March, 1945.

⁷⁹³ NAZ S1542 A4/3, 1937-1939, Inspector, Salisbury Circuit to the Director of Native Education, Mondoro Reserve, 5 June, 1937.

⁷⁹⁴ Berkes, "Rethinking Community-Based Conservation", pp. 621-630.

beliefs, knowledge-systems, the local context and other peculiarities of the target community. This, unlike top-down enforcement, enhances collective community participation and co-operation.⁷⁹⁵

Development researchers argue that resource management programmes in Africa, be it in forest, wildlife, soil, water or fisheries management were, till the 1980s, top-down in nature.⁷⁹⁶ Participatory management began, Vupenyu Dzingirai has argued, in the 1980s, fuelled by the fall of dictators and the Soviet Union and a rising tide of people power.⁷⁹⁷ This analysis cannot stand a historical test as evidence presented in this chapter on the ICA movement shows that it had all the traits of participatory management. This is best illustrated by utilizing Elinor Ostrom's "design principles" (conditions that influence sustainable community resource-management) set out in her book, Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action.⁷⁹⁸ This book has for many years been very popular among institutions, researchers and practitioners that advocate for participatory management, especially in recent years after the author was honoured as a co-winner of Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for 2009 for her ground-breaking research in collective action.

This should not be taken to suggest that Ostrom's work is a panacea; a number of scholars have criticised her "design principles" for being inflexible and for assuming that resource-

⁷⁹⁵ Murphree, "Protected Areas and the Commons", p. 2 and Berkes, "Rethinking Community-Based Conservation", p. 622.

⁷⁹⁶ Mutimukuru-Maravanyika, "Can we Learn our Way to Sustainable Management?", M. Hauck, and N. A. Sweijd, 1999, "A Case Study of Abalone Poaching in South Africa and its Impact of Fisheries Management, ICES Journal of Marine Science, 56, 1024-1032 and A. Kiss, 1990, "Living with Wildlife: Wildlife Resource Management with Local Participation in Africa", Washington DC., World Bank Technical Paper Number 130.

⁷⁹⁷ Dzingirai and Breen, Confronting the Crisis in Community Conservation. Also see Oates, Myth and Reality in the Rainforest, Gibson, Politicians and Poachers and Hannah, African People, African Parks.

⁷⁹⁸ E. Ostrom, 1990, Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action, Cambridge University Press.

users are homogenous.⁷⁹⁹ Ostrom's argues that, if local communities are given the opportunity to participate and play a leading role in development and resource management programmes, in it is possible to overcome the "tragedy of the commons",⁸⁰⁰ where individual greed, selfishness and the profit motive impede collective management of common property resources (resources that belongs to and are used in common at community level).⁸⁰¹

Though commercial farms in Zimbabwe were clearly not common property resources, but commercial entities owned by individuals and companies that held title, chapter three has demonstrated that the majority of maize and tobacco farmers were motivated by the profit motive. They did not care about what happened to the soil, as long they could squeeze every dollar out of it. Ian Phimister has aptly captured this attitude;

Many farms had an air of impermanence. When they changed hands, 'windows...and everything that could possibly be turned up' were removed from them. Land was simply abandoned after two successive crops, stripped of tree cover and exposed to the elements, with the result that Mashonaland contained 'thousands of acres of wreckage by the start of the 1940s'.⁸⁰²

As happens with common property resources, greed on privately-owned properties like farms also results in over-use, leading to degradation, depletion and poverty for the owner. The farms operated on the lines of common property 1944, when the first ICA was declared at Inyazura. Ostrom has argued that certain "design principles" need to be met for community conservation to successfully take place. Table 5.6 lists some of Ostrom's design principles;

⁷⁹⁹ A. Mandondo, 1997, "Trees and Spaces as Emotion and Norm Laden Components of Local Ecosystems in Nyamaropa Communal Lands, Nyanga District, Zimbabwe", *Agriculture and Human Values*, 14, pp. 352-372.

⁸⁰⁰ Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons", pp. 1243-48.

⁸⁰¹ Gordon, "The Economic Theory of a Common Property Resource", pp. 124-142 and Hardin and Baden, *Managing the Commons*.

⁸⁰² Phimister, "Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context", p. 265.

Table 5.6: Elinor Ostrom’s “design principles.”

Design Principles
Rules that clearly define who has rights to use a resource (clarity of rules)
Congruence between the rules that assign benefits and costs
Possibility/ flexibility to modify rules
Monitoring and conformance (a monitoring mechanism)
Graduated sanctions for offenders
Conflict resolution mechanisms using clearly defined rules
Recognition of rules by external users
Application of rules, both across and up and down hierarchical levels

Source: Ostrom, “Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms.”

ICAs fit into Ostrom’s framework in a number of ways. The Natural Resources Act clearly defined how an ICA could be formed. Joining the programme was voluntary; two-thirds of farmers in a particular farming district had to agree to have their area declared an ICA. Once declared, the procedure concerning the appointment of an ICA committee, its functions, the nature of assistance and loans it could get from the state was also clearly stated. The presence of legislation meant that the process could be enforced utilizing legal instruments. Rules were clear and enforceable, offenders could be referred to the NRB, which had magisterial powers, and monitoring mechanisms were also present in the form of conservation officers and the NRB and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. The ICAs fit into the description of “communities” as they were set up in existing farming districts, where a sense of community had been fostered by farmers long before the 1940s, for example through their Farmers’

Associations.⁸⁰³ The ICAs strengthened this sense of community as ICA meetings, field days, farming competitions, sharing of ICA equipment, loans and grants-in-aid, among other factors, all acted as valuable social capital that facilitated and fostered closer community relations.

The Birth of a Conservationist Identity

The requirement by the Natural Resources Act to have farmers who wanted their areas to be declared ICAs petition the Minister of Agriculture and Lands was the doorway to a new identity. The majority of farmers needed a change in the way things were being done in the colony; Farmers' Associations had, since the 1920s called for the state to take more action to ensure that there was sound soil management on the farms. As shown in chapter 4 (section 4.3, p. 13-14), farmers' concerns culminated in RAU appointing a Soil Erosion Committee at its 1931 Congress. The elections of 1933, and evidence given to the Committee of Enquiry into the Problem of Unemployment in the Colony in 1932, the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, 1934, The Natural Resources Commission, 1938 and the NRB Farming Enquiry, 1942, all pointed to the fact that farmers desired state assistance to put agriculture back on a sound footing. The ICAs provided that opportunity.

Some farmers, as noted in an earlier section, resisted to be included in the programme. Of the farmers who put up resistance, there is no evidence of any farmer who explicitly said that they did not want to construct conservation measures on their farms. The resistance was because of lack of clarity about what the Act stipulated, and what such stipulations implied to the farmers. Resistance was also out of fear that the programme could involve pumping out huge amounts of money from farmers' coffers. Farmers, having reeled on the edge of bankruptcy

⁸⁰³ NAZ F450/6, Letter from E. O. Martyn of Danga Lima Farm, Bromley, to the Secretary, the Department of Agriculture and Lands, Salisbury, dated 17 June, 1946

and indebtedness in the 1930s, did not desire to countenance other financial uncertainties. Other farmers were worried about the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture's capacity to carry out a programme of the magnitude envisioned in the Act. The ICAs programme marked the beginning of a new era in Zimbabwean settler culture.

Johnson and Lawson have defined settler culture as “an examination of the process by which emigrant European settlers ‘displaced’ the indigenous occupants.”⁸⁰⁴ Settlers used various methods and excuses to displace locals, ranging from genocide⁸⁰⁵, history⁸⁰⁶, perceived savagery of locals⁸⁰⁷, presence of vast tracts of empty and unused land⁸⁰⁸, backwardness of African farming technologies which made them unable to utilize heavy soils⁸⁰⁹, conservation and development, among others. Conservation became a justification for settler farmers from the 1940s. As the next chapter shows, there was a lot of progress on the farms because of ICA processes. As Hughes put it, “Whites justified their land ownership on grounds of both conservation and development. Engineering then fostered “...(a) feeling of entitlement to belonging.”⁸¹⁰ The seed for this to happen was planted in 1941 when the NR Act, with its provision for the formation of ICAs, was promulgated.

⁸⁰⁴ Johnston and Lawson, “Settler Colonies”, pp. 360-362.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 363. Johnson and Lawson use the example of what happened to Tasmanian Aborigines in Australia in the 1880s as an example of genocidal methods to attaining dominant status.

⁸⁰⁶ Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, p. 13. Goldie argues that Afrikaners did not embark on any illegal means to displace people. The Bushmen were a naturally dying race, and Afrikaner farmers simply moved into empty spaces left by these dying Bushmen.

⁸⁰⁷ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, p. 21. Meredith quotes Prime Minister Huggins saying in 1934, “to permit (African competition with white tradesmen and, artisans and professional classes) this would mean that the leaven of civilization would be removed from the country, and the Black man would inevitably revert to a barbarism worse than before.”

⁸⁰⁸ Mason, *The Birth of a Dilemma*, p. 260. Mason argues that there was a lot of vacant, unoccupied and therefore unutilized land, and as a result that, “it would be untrue to suggest in general terms that the Europeans had banished Africans to the lighter soils, the hotter regions, the areas remote from communications with markets.”

⁸⁰⁹ Whittlesey, “Southern Rhodesia: An African Compag”, pp. 24-25.

⁸¹⁰ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 269.

Conclusion

The period from 1939 onwards is a very important era for soil conservation in the colony. The 1939 Report of the Natural Resources Commission strongly recommended the promulgation of legislation for the preservation of the colony's natural resources. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 did not stop this momentum, as two years later, in August 1941, the Natural Resources Act was enacted. This legislation laid the basis for resource conservation and preservation in the colony. The Act provided for the formation of the Natural Resources Board to oversee the protection of the colony's natural resources. The Board instituted an enquiry into the state of farming in the colony in 1942, and this further unearthed the rut that agriculture in the colony was in. Though most of the information had been reported by the Natural Resources Commission in 1939, the farming enquiry brought urgency to the conservation agenda.

This chapter has examined the road that led to intensive conservation processes on settler farms. Though the process was supposed to be completely voluntary, officials sometimes tried to cut corners to speed their declaration. ICAs were a form of community conservation; an ICA elected its committee to lead it in the rehabilitation of farms in its area. This process, led to better interaction among farmers, and the development of social capital among farmers as they worked together more on soil conservation projects. This led to the growth of a conservationist worldview on the farms. The next chapter will shed more light on the operations of ICAs from the early 1950s to the 1960s.

Chapter 6: The ICAs in the Federal Period, 1953-63.

Introduction

“I have never come across a body of farmers keener on research. Our farmers are so interested in conservation work that we cannot cope with the demand”, Charles Murray, the Director of Conservation and Extension (CONEX), remarked in June 1956.⁸¹¹ “We have to evolve a Rhodesian type of farming and ranching”, R. H. Greaves, a member of the Natural Resources Board (NRB) told Essexvale farmers at a luncheon in May 1956.⁸¹² The Essexvale ICA had, by the mid-1950s, earned itself the distinction of being one of the most mechanically conserved farming districts in the country.⁸¹³

The progress of soil conservation work, only a little over a decade after the launch of the first Intensive Conservation Area (ICA) in 1944, made NRB and CONEX officials optimistic that an agrarian paradise was in the making in all settler-farming districts of the country as a result of the programme. Murray and Greaves’ assessment of the farmers’ attitude towards conservation, and the future of the colony’s white agrarian sector appear at first glance to be an enormous overstatement of the extent to which white farmers in Southern Rhodesia perceived conservation and research. Though it is true that CONEX could not cope with farmers’ demand in the first few years after its formation in 1948, this seems to have been a product of a combination of staffing (the Department only had 74 Conservation Officers in the whole country and 18 in Northern Rhodesia) and funding constraints more than the farmers’ keenness on research and conservation work.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹¹ The Rhodesia Herald, 27 June 1956, p. 15.

⁸¹² The Bulawayo Chronicle, 11 May 1956.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

⁸¹⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, 27 June 1956, p. 15.

As chapter 5 has shown, several farmers had resisted the formation of ICAs in their districts, suspecting that the ICAs would open the door for unprecedented government interference. The ICAs would, they thought, result in the government forcing them to embark on costly soil conservation projects. This, they reasoned, would result in farmers involuntarily incurring unplanned deficits. The fear of sliding into debt was not completely unjustified; many farmers had gone bankrupt in the 1930s, and had experienced first-hand the stress, pain, and agony of daily grappling with the prospect of foreclosure. The majority of farmers had been bailed out by the state, thanks to the debt adjustment programme (discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

The suspicion that the government wanted to use conservation as a vehicle to further tighten its grip on the agrarian sector was also not unreasonable – the government had, from the 1930s, tightened its control of the agricultural sector. An example of such control was the creation of agricultural parastatals to oversee marketing of the colony's produce in all sectors; maize, beef, milk, tobacco and cotton and pork, among others. Farmers were, in some cases, not happy with the Boards' pricing policies. This was especially true of the Maize Control Board which was unpopular for under-pricing maize.⁸¹⁵

This chapter examines the conservation movement in the federal period to evaluate Murray's appraisal of settler attitudes towards conservation. Did the federal decade bring with it a change in the attitude of farmers to a level where they became, in Murray's words, "keener on research" and "so interested in conservation work?" Did farmers' demand for conservation rise to a level where the colony's conservation officers were unable to "cope with the demand?" The chapter also examines Hughes' observation that conservation was not only about improving the state of the farms and making them more productive and profitable, but

⁸¹⁵ Oral Evidence to The Maize Enquiry Committee and the Maize Control Amendment Act, Number 17, 1934 and Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 225-6.

also about settler identity.⁸¹⁶ Did settler farmers modify their farms and farming districts in ways that “facilitated... (a) sense of belonging” to the colony?⁸¹⁷ The chapter further evaluates soil conservation work on settler farms in the light of the federation, to see whether settler agriculture benefitted in any tangible ways from its being under the auspices of the federal agricultural ministry and, therefore, funding from a bigger purse than that of the territorial Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.⁸¹⁸

Background: Overview of Settler Agriculture in the 1940s

If the colony’s farmers became keener on research and conservation in the 1950s, this was certainly a product of the dynamics of that decade. It had not been the case from the early colonial period. At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the colony’s agrarian sector was grappling with the problem of soil erosion, and attempts were being made by the State, through the Department of Agriculture and Lands and the Natural Resources Board (NRB) to set up ICAs across the country’s settler farming districts to oversee the construction of soil conservation and preservation works on farms. Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins concisely described the state of the white agricultural sector in September 1946 at the Rhodesia National Farmers’ Union (RNFU) Congress when he told the farmers that the majority of them had dismally failed to adequately invest in their lands, with the result that the majority of farms had been “ploughed up, cropped and ruined”, while grazing lands were similarly ruined by cattle tracks, “each track becoming a drain to carry off rainwater.”⁸¹⁹

⁸¹⁶ Hughes, 2006, “Hydrology of Hope”, pp. 269-287.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁸¹⁸ Murray, *The Governmental System*, p. 356.

⁸¹⁹ Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, p. 195.

Ian Phimister has captured the despair and hopelessness of the early 1940s. Many farms in Mashonaland were on the decline, and many farmers were forced to close shop.⁸²⁰ The condition in which the farms were in was a combination of a number of factors; most of the farmers who ventured into farming from the early days did not have requisite agricultural knowledge. The few farmers who had engaged in agriculture in Europe had to grapple with different climatic conditions. The majority of the farmers did not have adequate capital to farm on a big scale. Because of their low capitalisation most of the farmers grappled with the impact of a major depression and two World Wars, both characterized by difficult marketing conditions and low prices for agricultural commodities on international markets.⁸²¹

Though the conditions of the farms were, to an extent, clearly a result of farmers' neglect, poor farming methods and failure to adequately invest in their enterprises, the poor state of the farms cannot solely be blamed on the farmers. It was certainly not their fault that they lacked agricultural knowhow and that they were poor. Although there were farmers who deliberately "mined" their lands, engaged in monoculture, or "cultivated their farms from the veranda of Meikles Hotel"⁸²², it was, in the majority of cases, largely a net result of either their financial standing or level of agricultural literacy. Some farmers' operations had fallen victim to macro-economic circumstances they themselves were neither responsible for nor able to weather without a wider bail-out initiative by the state. The United Kingdom was partly to blame for agricultural conditions in the colony during the two World Wars. This is because she bought;

the choicest products from overseas for a mere song; she thereby kept her own agriculturalists hard up and indirectly caused soil devastation in other countries

⁸²⁰ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 228.

⁸²¹ Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture" and Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*.

⁸²² Clements and Harben, *Leaf of Gold*, pp. 97-8.

where governments all too often introduced the disastrous remedy of export subsidies. The prices offered for Rhodesian meat by the United Kingdom were still below the local selling price and far less than the British paid in their home market...⁸²³

Low international prices for the colony's agricultural exports had a negative impact on the colony's agricultural sector. The state of the country's farms was thus a result of an array of factors, ranging from farmers' neglect of and lack of investment in their farms to local and international macro-economic factors.

The post-Second World War period brought good tidings for the colony's tobacco farmers. Most of the farmers had feared that the end of the war would see Rhodesian tobacco sliding on international markets as a result of twin factors; the anticipated decline in post-war tobacco consumption and the expectation that Britain would revert to the American market for its tobacco requirements.⁸²⁴ This did not happen. On the contrary, there was an increase in the number of growers, in acreages put under tobacco and in the average price of tobacco per pound, thanks to the post-war dollar crunch. The shortage of dollars effectively meant that Britain continued to buy the bulk of her imports from the Empire.⁸²⁵ Table 6.1 shows tobacco growth in the colony in the post-war period.

⁸²³ Gann and Gelfand, Huggins of Rhodesia, p. 195.

⁸²⁴ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 189.

⁸²⁵ Ibid, p. 189.

Table 6.1: Tobacco Growth in Southern Rhodesia, 1945-6 to 1951-2.

	Number of Growers	Acreage Grown	Total Sales (in pounds).	Average Yield Per Acre	Average Price Per Pound
1945-6	862	74 420	40 641 086	560	32.28
1946-7	1 158	90 757	57 438 350	633	29.59
1947-8	1 460	112 605	74 680 149	663	32.53
1948-9	1 842	129 838	83 397 747	642	31.86
1949-50	2 218	159 326	107 219 347	673	37.68
1950-51	2 560	180 121	95 736 218	532	34.80
1951-2	2 799	204 750	101 996 418	498	42.27

Source: R. Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 189.

The Table shows increases in the number of tobacco growers, from 862 in the 1945-6 season to 2 799 in the 1951-2 season. The increase in growers resulted in a corresponding increase in acreages put under tobacco. Tobacco yields also increased, as did prices.

The growers got another sweetener in 1948, when the London Agreement was reached between representatives of the local tobacco industry and cigarette manufacturers in Britain, guaranteeing a market for the colony's tobacco. The Agreement, according to Hodder-Williams, stipulated that;

British manufacturers would purchase annually two-thirds of Southern Rhodesia's flue-cured tobacco crop up to 70 million pounds for the next five years. When the agreement was renewed in 1950, the amount to be purchased over the next five years was set at 140 million pounds...⁸²⁶

⁸²⁶ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 190.

The prosperity that was being experienced by tobacco farmers was a different script from what was taking place among maize farmers and in the beef cattle sector. Higher tobacco prices enabled tobacco farmers to pay more wages than their maize-growing counterparts. This resulted in labour shortages, and, consequently, a sharp decline in maize output between 1945 and 1949.⁸²⁷ The colony was forced to import food as the farmers' main agricultural thrust was channelled to tobacco cultivation.⁸²⁸ The beef cattle sector was also limping. According to Ian Phimister;

Although the number of white-owned cattle increased every year after 1938, the rate of expansion did not keep pace with the huge increase in domestic meat consumption. During the war and immediately afterwards, however, the difference between demand and supply was satisfied at the expense of the export trade and by slaughtering younger cattle each year...⁸²⁹

The food situation in the colony deteriorated to a point where, in spite of food imports, food-rationing was introduced in 1948.

As observed in chapter 5, turning the agricultural sector around increasingly became a top government priority in the 1940s. This was especially true in relation to conservation (when it came to food production, the government was reluctant to intervene between 1946 and 1948, till, after the introduction of food rationing, the government could no longer hope that the food deficit would fix itself on its own). In 1948 CONEX was set up to give support to farmers. Other institutions, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and NRB also had in place programmes aimed at increasing the capacity of farmers to farm profitably, and in an environmentally friendly manner. By 1953, when superintendence of white agriculture was

⁸²⁷ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 231-232.

⁸²⁸ Secretary of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Lands, Annual Report for 1948.

⁸²⁹ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 233.

transferred to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, the majority of the colony's farming districts had been covered by the ICAs programme.

The Politics of Unity: Amalgamation or Federation?

The three central African countries; Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, federated in December 1953 and became, till December 1963, an entity commonly known as the Central African Federation or the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This was in spite of the fact that these territories had, according to Robert Blake, “developed on very different lines in terms of racial balance, economic structure and economic status.”⁸³⁰ The union of these three territories was mainly a result of external developments; “regional associations” were taking place in many parts of the Empire. The thought that the inhabitants of the territories would “benefit from administrative co-ordination and the pooling of information, whilst Nyasaland in particular would stand to gain from aid supplied by its neighbours” was secondary to Imperial considerations.⁸³¹ Imperial authorities thought that a larger federal entity would stop the perceived continued,

...infiltration of Afrikaners into the copper belt, arguing that the Dutch-men – more politically minded and apt to breed larger families than Britishers – would one day dominate the country's narrow electoral roll, where a few hundred disciplined votes might carry a seat. The move towards closer association owed much to British fears, fears not so much of Africans but of Afrikaners whose activities – right down to the late 'forties – seemed more dangerous to the British hold over Central Africa...⁸³²

The idea of merging Southern and Northern Rhodesia into one administrative unit was not, however, a product of socio-economic and political dynamics of the 1940s.

⁸³⁰ Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 243.

⁸³¹ Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, p. 209.

⁸³² *Ibid*, p. 209.

A merger of these territories had been contemplated as early as 1915 by the British South Africa Company. The motive of this was purely economic; it would drastically reduce the Company's administrative budget.⁸³³ A reduction in administration-related expenses would augur well for the Company as this would improve the outlook of its balance sheet. Making savings on administrative and other expenses, no matter how small in the final analysis, was made imperative by the fact that the Company's shareholders were becoming more and more frustrated with the Company's performance with each year. On the expiry of its twenty-five year Charter in 1915, the Company had still not been able to declare a dividend. For the majority of the shareholders, this was not because the Company was loss-making, but that the Company misplaced its priorities, choosing instead to continue to expend whatever surplus it generated in the Rhodesias.⁸³⁴

The Company sought to sell its idea to amalgamate the Rhodesias by depicting Northern Rhodesia as a territory that was endowed with vast natural resources which could be utilized to the benefit of Southern Rhodesia (this was before the discovery of copper). Southern Rhodesia had a bigger white population than her northern counterpart. This demographic superiority would naturally translate, the settlers of Southern Rhodesia were told, into an increase in their legislative representation, and therefore a bigger say in the political and economic affairs of the amalgamated entity.⁸³⁵ In the Company's eyes, this argument was attractive to Southern Rhodesian settlers, as the administration, from 1906, had to contend with increased clamouring for more representation in the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council. In 1907 the settlers were only represented by four members, while the Company

⁸³³ Hanna, *The Story of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland*, p. 243.

⁸³⁴ NAZ S/BR503, *The British South Africa Company: Reports of General Meetings Vol. 2, 1910-1941*.

⁸³⁵ Hanna, *The Story of the Rhodesias*, p. 243.

appointed seven representatives. By 1915 settler representation in the Legislative Council had increased to seven, while the Company had reduced its appointees from seven to five.⁸³⁶

The Company's bait was not good enough for the majority of the settlers, as clearly shown by the Buxton Commission's investigation in 1921. The Commission had been appointed to advise on Southern Rhodesia's future in the wake of the impending expiry of the Company's Supplementary nine year Charter, which had been extended in 1915. The Buxton Commission reported in 1921 that internal self-rule and accession to the Union of South Africa were more feasible options than amalgamation.⁸³⁷ As A. J. Willis puts it, the idea of self-government

...not only became more important than that of amalgamation, but conflicted with it... (amalgamation) would postpone indefinitely the coming of Responsible Government in Southern Rhodesia.⁸³⁸

These developments effectively meant that by 1924, when Southern Rhodesia was given Responsible Government Status, the idea of amalgamation was dead in the water. This was so especially because the idea of amalgamation was also unpopular in Northern Rhodesia.

Opinion in Northern Rhodesia on whether to amalgamate with Southern Rhodesia or not depended largely on the part of the country you were in, and the economic activities of that area. As A. J. Hanna has observed;

In the railway belt it was, on the whole, favourable to amalgamation, though some doubted whether Northern Rhodesia could hope for enough representation in a joint legislature to safeguard her special interests. In the Fort Jameson area, where the

⁸³⁶ NAZ ZG2 Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates (1908 and 1914).

⁸³⁷ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 93.

⁸³⁸ Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*.

tobacco-planters relied on the Nyasaland Railway, it was opposed to any union with Southern Rhodesia unless Nyasaland was included.⁸³⁹

The idea of amalgamation did, however, resurface in the 1930s largely as a consequence of altering socio-economic and political conditions on the ground. Unlike in 1915, copper had been discovered in Northern Rhodesia, and this was an attraction in Southern Rhodesia. In addition to this, Southern Rhodesia also eyed African labour in the Northern territories, as shortage of labour, especially on settler farms, was becoming such a big subject in the early 1940s that the government had to enact legislation, the Compulsory Labour Act (of August 1942), to enable it to forcibly coerce Africans to provide labour to the farms.⁸⁴⁰ Southern Rhodesia also saw amalgamation as a step towards full dominion status.

Amalgamation was considered in January 1936 at the Victoria Falls Conference, attended by legislators from Northern Rhodesia and representatives of Southern Rhodesian political parties. The delegates resolved that “early amalgamation...conferring the right of complete self-government” was in the best interests of the two territories.⁸⁴¹ This position led to a lot of deliberations in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, as well as in the United Kingdom, which culminated in the appointment of a royal Commission in March 1938, led by Viscount Bledisloe, to consider whether amalgamation was “desirable and feasible.” The Commission reported in March 1939 that the three territories were “fundamentally similar” and as a result would all benefit from closer union. The Commission, however, stated that amalgamation was not possible at the time because of Southern Rhodesia’s “restrictive” native policy which, in its view, would “limit the opportunities open to Africans.”⁸⁴²

⁸³⁹ Hanna, *The Story of the Rhodesias*, p. 244.

⁸⁴⁰ Johnson, 1992, “Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour”, p. 118, quoting *The Rhodesia Herald*, 3 April 1942 and 15 May 1942.

⁸⁴¹ Hanna, *The Story of the Rhodesias*, p. 246.

⁸⁴² *Ibid*, p. 247.

The outbreak of the Second World War stalled further progress in regard to negotiations for amalgamation. It was only after the end of the Second World War that the subject was back on the table. The context had greatly changed in the post-War period. The United Kingdom needed massive post-war reconstruction, and unified federal markets would make easier the logistics of tapping and shipping raw materials abroad, as would they provide access to a bigger market. This was because there was a Dollar crunch in the post-war period, and the United Kingdom sought to confine her commerce to Sterling areas – hence the need for federations such as the Central African Federation, the Nigerian Federation, the East African Federation and the Federation of the West Indies, among others.⁸⁴³ Locally, a manufacturing boom was taking place, while Northern Rhodesia was enjoying favourable market prices for her copper. Down south, the National Party was growing in popularity, resulting in its victory in the 1948 elections. A federation in the north would act as a buffer to stop the Afrikaner economic and political influence from spreading. These factors made the case for union stronger.⁸⁴⁴

Southern Rhodesia was the most powerful of the three territories in economic terms. According to Richard Blake;

Southern Rhodesia, with a gross domestic product of £54 per head in 1954 (the first year of Federation), was the richest, but Northern Rhodesia with £51 ran it close. Nyasaland at £11 was far the poorest. The Southern Rhodesian economy was the most diversified: various types of mining which included gold, chrome and asbestos; agriculture which constituted the biggest single sector of the economy (25 per cent), and in which tobacco was one of the principal crops; also an increasing element of manufacturing industry in Salisbury and Bulawayo. The Northern Rhodesian economy, apart from African subsistence agriculture, depended almost

⁸⁴³ D. Rothchild, 1970, “African Federations and the Diplomacy of Decolonization”, The Journal of Developing Areas, 4, pp. 509-524.

⁸⁴⁴ C. Leys and O. Prah, 1960, A New Deal in Central Africa, London, Heinemann.

exclusively on copper, of which it was among the world's major producers... Nyasaland was economically in a much worse condition than the Rhodesias.⁸⁴⁵

Politically Southern Rhodesia was also more powerful, this being a result of it having self-rule, which gave it more legislative autonomy in comparison with her two Northern counterparts who had "protectorate" status. In the protectorates the Governors had effective power, unlike in Southern Rhodesia where he was, to some extent, only a figurehead.⁸⁴⁶

These differences were reflected in the federal government; Southern Rhodesia had 17 members in the Federal legislature, while Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland had 11 and 7 respectively.⁸⁴⁷ Southern Rhodesia's economic, political and demographic position was important because it ensured that the Federation would neither bring with it a drastically new administrative structure to the territory, nor did it transform the governmental system in any radical way. Two reasons account for this fact; firstly the Federal government was structured more or less on the same lines as the Southern Rhodesia government. As Murray has observed;

Matters affecting Africans remained territorial, certain of those relating to Europeans became federal; thus while the Native Affairs Department stayed territorial, various departments concerned with the European community – the departments, for instance, of health, education and agriculture – became federal. Other assignments similarly corresponded with existing administrative arrangements, and in all the existing administrative organization were little disturbed. The division of powers consequent on the adoption of a federal constitution did not involve a reorganization of individual ministries.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁵ Blake, A History of Rhodesia, p. 244.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 245.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 253.

⁸⁴⁸ Murray, The Governmental System, p. 356-7.

Secondly, though the Federation was meant for the three territories, it was Southern Rhodesia that was both the major client and beneficiary of the arrangement.

Southern Rhodesia had the biggest number of white farmers, and more land in Southern Rhodesia was under white commercial farming in comparison with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the majority of white schools were in Southern Rhodesia, as was the case with factories. This is especially true in relation to manufacturing. As a result, Salisbury was made the seat of the Federal administration. Naturally, the biggest chunk of staff in federal departments was drawn from Southern Rhodesia, especially from the existing civil service. Because of this, “the system of administration used to administer those affairs which became federal was fundamentally the one which already operated in Southern Rhodesia.”⁸⁴⁹

It was during the federal decade that strong nationalist sentiments were nurtured, both among whites and Africans. This was evidenced by the rise of radical white parties - the Dominion Party, followed by the Rhodesian Front seeking “not simply to replace the existing party in the established governmental system but to subordinate the government to itself”⁸⁵⁰ and African nationalist movements, in the case of Southern Rhodesia such as the City Youth League, led by James Chikerema, Edson Sithole and George Nyandoro in 1955 and The African National Congress, led by Joshua Nkomo in 1957.⁸⁵¹

Continuity: Land Settlement Policy in the 1950s

Alois Mlambo has observed that from the onset of colonial encroachment in Southern Rhodesia, the colony “cherished the dream of building a white man’s country and made every

⁸⁴⁹ Murray, *The Governmental System*, p. p. 357.

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁸⁵¹ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, pp. 24-42.

effort to entice White, particularly British, settlers...”⁸⁵² This dream remained an important aspect of the colony’s immigration policy, as shown by an official memorandum quoted by The Rhodesia Herald in March 1939; “It is the definite policy of the government,” the Memo stated, “to maintain a British population in the colony...”⁸⁵³ A contributor to the New Rhodesia Journal wrote in 1946, contributing to the debate on whether settlers of non-British extraction should be allowed to emigrate to Southern Rhodesia;

...we want Britishers in Rhodesia, and not until every British man, woman and child who wants to come out here and settle has arrived, we do feel like considering the question of permanent settlement, however desirable they may be, or however much they may desire to acquire British nationality.⁸⁵⁴

The 1944 Land Settlement Act, which was put in place to provide for the settlement of ex-servicemen, envisaged settling people from Britain, as the shown by the enactment of the 1946 Immigration Act which, according to Hodder-Williams, was “restrictive as to who was an acceptable and who was an undesirable immigrant.”⁸⁵⁵

This is evidence that up to the end of the Second World War, the colony had not changed its preference in terms of the calibre of immigrant it was prepared to welcome into her borders. Table 6.2 shows immigration patterns between 1946 and 1950.

⁸⁵² Mlambo, “Building a White Man’s Country”, p.125.

⁸⁵³ The Rhodesia Herald, March 16, 1939.

⁸⁵⁴ Mlambo, “Some are More White than Others”, p. 145, quoting Gardenia, August 1946, “The Fascination of the Thriller: Our Alien Problem”, The New Rhodesia.

⁸⁵⁵ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 188.

Table 6.2: White Immigration to Southern Rhodesia, 1946-50.

	Born in the UK	Born in South Africa	Other	Total	% with last residence in Africa
1946	3 631	4 654	835	9 120	67.1
1947	6 924	5 104	1 489	13 517	49.5
1948	11 018	4 410	1 504	16 932	38.3
1949	7 641	5 173	1 282	14 096	55.4
1950	6 469	8 499	1 211	16 179	70.2

Source: R. Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 189.

The Table shows the large number of people born in the United Kingdom who migrated to the colony after the Second World War. The peak was attained in 1948 when over eleven thousand immigrants moved to the colony. Hodder-Williams has attributed this to British servicemen “who had visited the colony for training purposes and had fallen in love with it and others who felt the drab, Labour-dominated post-war Britain”,⁸⁵⁶ the majority of immigrants coming in from South Africa were also most likely of British extraction, who may have been forced to migrate by the tempo of South African politics, namely the fame of the National Party and its consequent victory in the 1948 elections.⁸⁵⁷ This was a good development for the colony, as this was the type of people it yearned for from its foundations.

In spite of the huge flow of immigrants of British extraction after the Second World War, one thing was very apparent to the Federal Government; the white population was very small in comparison with that of Africans. In 1945 Southern Rhodesia had 80 500 whites and 1 640

⁸⁵⁶ Hodder-Williams, White Farmers in Rhodesia, p. 188.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 188.

000 Africans, Northern Rhodesia had about 20 000 whites and about 1 250 000 Africans while Nyasaland had 2 300 whites and 2 100 000 Africans respectively.⁸⁵⁸ According to a report compiled by H. G. Weizmann, an expert of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Migration, these figures translated to only three and half percent of land under settler cultivation, while in Northern Rhodesia the figure stood at only five percent.⁸⁵⁹ Southern Rhodesia held 5 985 European farms, a majority of these (90 percent) ranging between 2 000 acres and 20 000 acres. While these settlers occupied almost 31 million acres of land in the colony, only around one million acres had been put under the plough.⁸⁶⁰

These statistics were the basis of Weizmann's conclusion that the territories of the Federation needed more white settlers on the land. With only a thirtieth of the land under settler occupation in Southern Rhodesia under the plough, and seeing that Southern Rhodesia was the political and economic giant of the Federation, how competitive would the Federation hope to be against the National Party-led South Africa? Would the Federation survive in the event that it was not able to compete in all her economic spheres? This was quite a compelling case for inviting more white people to take up land in the Federation. Southern Rhodesia did not, in principle, have a problem with settling more white people on the land. It had been one of the colony's objectives from when it was founded, to have more people on the land (though her preference was settlers of British extraction, as shown in the earlier section).

The Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, which had been appointed in 1933 to investigate the impact of the depression on agriculture stated

⁸⁵⁸ Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 243.

⁸⁵⁹ Weizmann, as reported in *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, Friday 4 May, 1956. Also see Maravanyika, "The Origin, Activities and Impact of ICAs", p. 62.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

without equivocation in its 1934 Report, that it would not be possible to “build up a white colony on any basis other than a white agricultural population.”⁸⁶¹ Alois Mlambo has argued that the whites the colony wanted were from Britain; that Cecil John Rhodes, the colony’s founding father, and successive colonial administrations sought, from the onset, to create an entity that mirrored Britain in terms of its social, political and economic complexion. Settlers of British stock, who were in the eyes of the administrations “more white” than other whites, were clearly preferred ahead of everyone else.⁸⁶²

The Weizmann Land Settlement Programme differed with Southern Rhodesia’s earlier settlement policy in that it proposed to settle whites from the whole of Western Europe; Germany, Italy, Holland and Belgium, among others, in the Federation, not just from Britain.⁸⁶³ Southern Rhodesia had, according to Mlambo, clearly failed to create a “British White man’s country.”⁸⁶⁴ Did a “British white man’s country” have any prospects in Federal Central Africa? In the post-Second World War period white emigration to the colony had been predominantly by settlers born in the United Kingdom and in South Africa.⁸⁶⁵ The Federation brought a change to that, as beginning in 1956, farmers were brought into the Federation from all over Europe and allocated 100 acre farms. Fifty farms were allocated in 1956 alone.⁸⁶⁶ Weizmann envisaged that bringing in white people from Europe into the Federation would benefit the Federation in four ways; it would “increase the settler population”, “balance its social structure”, “develop backward areas”, and result in more efficient and profitable usage of the Federation’s land and water.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶¹ The Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry Report, 1934, p. 1.

⁸⁶² Mlambo, “Some are more White than Others”, pp. 139-160.

⁸⁶³ *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, Friday 4 May, 1956.

⁸⁶⁴ Mlambo, “Building a White Man’s Country”, p. 141.

⁸⁶⁵ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, p. 189.

⁸⁶⁶ *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, Friday 4 May, 1956.

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Also see Maravanyika, “The Origin, Activities and Impact of ICAs”, p. 62-63.

But did the Weizmann Scheme change Southern Rhodesia's attitude towards immigrants of non-British extraction? The colony had only agreed in principle to Weizmann's proposal, but it remained fixated at getting more people of British extraction into the colony, in preference to everyone else. In 1957 the Economic Advisory Council appointed by the Federal government to examine immigration policy in the Federation reported that the Federation advocated for the continuation of the current policy (which favoured immigrants from Britain), the reason given for that being the need to maintain and preserve "the British way of life" and to "(build up) a stable European population."⁸⁶⁸

The Bromley ICA in the Federal Period

This section examines the work of the ICAs during the Federal period. There are gaps in information in this period, as most of the federal archives at the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) are incomplete. Data on the Bromley ICA goes up to 1961. While the section looks at developments in Bromley more, it also relies on newspapers, particularly the Rhodesia Herald to show what was happening in other places for the sake of making issues discussed clearer, and placing them in their specific national context. The Bromley ICA was formed in 1947. At the start of the Federation in 1953 the ICA was led by a Committee comprising H. H. Troughton, the Chairman, Arthur Cooper, the Secretary, and N. S. Wingfield, R. R. Deary, W. T. E. Fitzsimons and L. Culliman as the committee members. The Committee worked with the Conservation Officer, F. White (who was later replaced by Geoffrey Westbury in 1952). The Committee's mandate was to ensure that farmers in the farming district constructed works on their farms such as contour ridges to prevent soil erosion on the farms.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁸ NAZ F170/18 Report on Immigration Policy, The Economic Advisory Council, 1957.

⁸⁶⁹ All references in this section, unless otherwise stated, are from NAZ F450/7, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area File 2, 1953-1957.

In the post-Second World War period, many farmers sub-divided their farms in Bromley for sale to incoming immigrants. This was a golden opportunity to cash in after six years of war, whose beginning was a cap to a decade that had been characterized by Depression and massive bankruptcy for the majority of farmers. Of the 146 farms in Bromley at the formation of the Federation, only four exceeded 5 000 acres in size, 23 were between 2 500 and 5 000 acres, 38 between 1 000 and 2 500 acres, and 27 were between 500 and 1 000 acres, while 54 were below 500 acres.⁸⁷⁰ Most of the sub-divisions had been made after 1945, as farmers cashed in on post-war immigration. Utopia farm, for example, was cut up into 15 acre plots. The Bromley ICA Committee and the Conservation Officer for the area were inundated by applications for sub-division.⁸⁷¹ While many farmers wanted to subdivide their land and sell off portions of it, the NRB, CONEX, the ICAs and conservation officers for the area were of the opinion that the small units that resulted from such sub-division were sub-economical, and increased the problem of soil erosion.⁸⁷² This problem was not peculiar to Bromley, but obtained in all farming areas in the colony in the post-second World War period.

Concern about small farms being sub-economic was also not peculiar to Southern Rhodesia. It was equally a topical issue in South Africa in the 1950s. South African authorities reported in 1955 that it was not “land barons” who conservationists in South Africa were most worried about, but farmers who held small farms.⁸⁷³ “About one fifth of the farms in South Africa are too small to enable their owners to make a decent living without ‘squeezing’ (the soil) too much”,⁸⁷⁴ conservationists were, according to The Rhodesia Herald, told at the end of their Annual Congress in November 1955. “On such farms,” the newspaper added, “it was generally agreed farmers had to resort to robbing the soil to make a decent living, instead of

⁸⁷⁰ NAZ F151/ICA/BROM, Bromley ICA, 1958-61. Also see Maravanyika, “The Origin, Activities and Impact of ICAs”, p. 64.

⁸⁷¹ NAZ F450/6, Minutes of the Bromley ICA Committee Meeting held at Jamaica Inn, 4 July 1947.

⁸⁷² Ibid., Farm Subdivisions.

⁸⁷³ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday November 18, 1955.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid.

practicing good farming methods.”⁸⁷⁵ ICAs in Southern Rhodesia were unanimous in their opposition to such sub-divisions which, in their opinion, created sub-economical units. Farms between Fort Victoria and Beitbridge provided a good illustration of non-viability of small sub-divided farms; it was considered that the economic minimum in terms of land size for ranching purposes was 20 000 acres.⁸⁷⁶

Challenges to Effective ICA Work

ICAs faced a number of challenges in their operations. Among the challenges was the problem of labour tenancy. African “squatters”, as they were commonly called, were blamed for causing soil erosion and degradation on the farms. Ideally, farmers would have preferred to stop Africans from farming on European farms. This was, however, almost impossible to implement, especially since poor farmers relied on such tenancy arrangements for their operations, and they would not be able to remain viable without tenants. In addition to the problem of tenancy, there was an acute shortage of conservation officers. For example, Bromley had 146 farms, serviced by only one conservation officer at any given period during the federal period. Apart from slowing the progress of conservation work, this situation bred frustration among farmers and undermined the ICAs programme.

The work schedule of the conservation officer was always packed, which made it difficult for him to adequately supervise all projects on time. A combination of this, together with lack of experience or carelessness by machinery operators, often resulted in shoddy work, to the disappointment of farmers. What made them even more disgruntled was that equipment was expensive to hire, making shoddy work even more unacceptable. In addition, on many instances farmers refused to co-operate with the ICAs. The biggest challenge to ICA work,

⁸⁷⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday November 18, 1955.

⁸⁷⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday June 20, 1956, p. 11.

however, was inadequate funding. The government was almost always accused of not allocating adequate resources to conservation. This section examines these challenges in detail, to show their impact on the ICAs.

The Question of Labour Tenancy

Apart from the subdivisions, which resulted in more people entering the farming areas and rendering the small farms that were a product of these sub-divisions sub-economical (which in turn meant that the owners would neither be able to finance conservation projects nor to get good margins of profit), there was also the problem of African tenancy. The NRB, CONEX and ICAs were unhappy about African tenancy. All ICA Committees in Southern Rhodesia, particularly, blamed Africans for soil degradation in the areas they cultivated. These so-called African “squatters” were, in fact, legitimately on the farms in most cases, as they would enter into agreements with farmers to stay and farm in exchange for their labour.⁸⁷⁷ This put the ICA Committees in a dilemma; ejecting them would not be supported by many landowners, as this would mean loss of labour. In areas such as Bromley, Marandellas, Wenimbe-Ruzawi, Virginia-Macheke and Mazoe this would have had massive implications for the farmers, as the farming districts’ proximity to Salisbury gave Africans alternative working places. This was a period when Salisbury was undergoing a construction boom.⁸⁷⁸

ICAs blamed African “squatters” for causing erosion on settler farms as a result of poor farming practices; an attribute the majority of settlers generally saw in African agriculture. This view was held by many settler farmers long before the creation of ICAs. The view that African agriculture was unscientific and ruinous to the soil was also popularly held by agricultural officials, with one Land Inspector describing some areas occupied by Africans as

⁸⁷⁷ The Bulawayo Chronicle, Friday May 4, 1956.

⁸⁷⁸ The Bulawayo Chronicle, 4 October, 1957.

having been ruined to a level where they bore a “pathetic similarity” to “war pictures of Deville Wood after the battle of the Somme.”⁸⁷⁹ The Select Committee on Native Production and Marketing, appointed in 1953 to enquire into African agriculture and marketing of African produce, reported to Parliament in May 1953 that African reserves were so devastated that “there is a grave danger of the Native areas becoming uneconomical units incapable of supporting man or beast.”⁸⁸⁰ The Committee further reported that it would take 44 years to protect all African areas from the damage poor African methods had wrought over the years.⁸⁸¹ The implication of this attitude for African “squatters” on settler land was clear: namely, that, if left unchecked, they would similarly ruin settler farms.

The word “squatter” was very loosely used to describe Africans residing on land demarcated for European settlement, with the result that even Africans under either labour or rent agreements were considered squatters.⁸⁸² While the Private Locations Ordinance of 1908 provided for Africans to enter into rent or labour tenancy agreements (helping many poor settlers to establish and sustain themselves in the process), as a result of the recommendations of the 1925 Land Commission, the state sought to abolish this system from 1930 onwards.⁸⁸³ Between 1930 and 1941 around fifty thousand Africans had been removed from settler land (under the Land Apportionment Act, 1930) and resettled in the reserves. This did not solve the problem of tenancy, as more Africans remained on the farms in comparison with those that were removed.⁸⁸⁴ The evictions of the 1940s created a lot of anxiety and uncertainty among Africans on settler farms. This, according to the Native Commissioner for Umtali, William

⁸⁷⁹ NAZ S1246/S56587/2, Natives Occupying Crown Land, Letter from John Scott, a Land Inspector, to the Under-Secretary, Department of Lands, dated 20 April 1936.

⁸⁸⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday May 15, 1953, p. 4.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁸⁸² E. Kramer, 1999, “Tenant Farming and State Labour Policies: Erosion and Conservation Measures in White Farming Areas”, Economic History Seminar Series, Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe, p. 1.

⁸⁸³ See NAZ S1561/25, The Land Commission Report, 1925.

⁸⁸⁴ Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, p. 236.

Bazeley, resulted in more damage taking place on farms, especially those where rental agreements were made between the farmers and absentee land owners. The African tenants “(produced) as much as they possibly (could) for sell as well as for food. They (did) not think of tomorrow, for tomorrow they (could be) turned off.”⁸⁸⁵

With the creation of ICAs from 1944, this matter became more topical as each ICA had to deal with the question of African cultivation on farms under its jurisdiction. “The natives are allowed to cultivate these lands year after year without any system of rotational cropping, control of tillage practices or mechanical protection,” the ICAs complained, adding, “The inevitable result is a grim picture of localized soil erosion on each farm and increasing siltation of all rivers in the area.”⁸⁸⁶ The major challenge for ICA Committees was that some poor farmers needed tenancy agreements; they found it profitable and probably the only way they could remain in farming. They did not have capital to finance their operations, and to pay wages. “There are quite a number of landlords who are very poor and they cannot afford to pay wages”, the Natural Resources Commission was told in 1938, “...they employ natives on this system (the mavhiki system, where tenants gave their labour one week every month for the whole year) because it is the only way they can get natives to remain as tenants on their farms.”⁸⁸⁷

This became a major challenge to the ICAs. R. Fitt, the Regional Conservation Officer for the Midlands told the Que Que Group of ICAs in April 1956 that 400 000 acres of land in the Gwelo area alone were being cultivated by African “squatters.”⁸⁸⁸ The Chairman of the Gwelo East ICA Committee told a meeting of the Gwelo Group that due to the size of the area

⁸⁸⁵ NAZ ZAZ, Evidence to the Natural Resources Commission, p. 181. Also see NAZ S1188/3 Natural Resources Commission, Conservation on Land Occupied by Natives.

⁸⁸⁶ NAZ F454/7/1 Intensive Conservation Areas Reports, 1950-1963.

⁸⁸⁷ NAZ ZAZ 2/1, Volume 2, Natural Resources Commission, Oral Evidence by Douglas Coley, p. 211.

⁸⁸⁸ The Bulawayo Chronicle, Friday May 4, 1956.

under African cultivation, it was difficult for his Committee to stop labour tenancy. “African farmers should be farming in the native areas where their farming methods can be controlled,” he told the meeting, “My Committee, operating in a European area, feels it is not here to deal with Africans!”⁸⁸⁹ In Shangani the problem was more pronounced than in Gwelo. The Shangani Group comprised the Shangani, Insiza, Mchingwe and Essexvale ICAs. In Mchingwe alone Africans were cultivating 8 000 acres. African tenants even owned 6 100 herd of cattle, 1 000 donkeys and 1 800 sheep and goats.⁸⁹⁰ The Shangani Group was one of the first ICAs to realize that it could not stop African cultivation. The Group resolved to employ African demonstrators at its own expense to work under the Group Conservation Officer and his staff to help African farmers to crop in ways that did not ruin the soil.⁸⁹¹

In Gutu, in the Victoria Province, the issue of labour tenancy was contentious. There were differences among farmers over how much land could reasonably be allocated to tenants, with some farmers such as Bradshaw unhappy with their colleagues who allocated their tenants up to 10 acres of land each. This resulted in some farmers losing labour to those who could offer bigger pieces of land for cultivation by their workers.⁸⁹² This situation meant that farmers who were considered too strict or demanding, such as those who tried to ensure that their workers farmed sustainably, lost their labourers to those considered by the labourers to be more liberal. The problem with ejecting African tenants was that it would deprive poor settler farmers of labour, and therefore disrupt their farming activities. The affected farmers would not be able to carry out conservation work on their farms without labour. More importantly, the farmers would not support such a move. This created a dilemma for the NRB, which it could not immediately solve.

⁸⁸⁹ The Bulawayo Chronicle, June 21, 1956.

⁸⁹⁰ The Bulawayo Chronicle, October 4, 1957.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid.

⁸⁹² NAZ F151/ICA/Gutu, Gutu ICA File 2.

The NRB hoped that the problem would eventually solve itself. R. D. Spitteler, the Secretary of the NRB, told farmers in 1956 that though it was clear that African farming methods were not friendly to the environment, the NRB could not do anything conclusive about it in the short term as any measures taken would have implications on the labour supply situation – except to hope that the “problem would solve itself with time as settler farming intensified and expanded.”⁸⁹³ That driving off tenants would trigger a huge labour problem was especially true of areas in Mashonaland, located near Salisbury, such as Bromley, Mazoe and Marandellas, among others. Salisbury in the 1950s was expanding, and there was a construction boom which absorbed much African labour. Huge sky scrapers were being erected, and there were many other construction projects under way, as the manufacturing industries expanded. These projects offered what Africans regarded as better employment conditions and wages than working on farms. The option to eject tenants was never really pursued in Bromley, as it was thought that it would trigger the flight of labour.⁸⁹⁴

The ICAs attempted, without success, to have legislation enacted for the control of African cultivation on settler farms. At a Conference of ICAs in July 1956 the Committees were told by the Director of CONEX, Charles A. Murray, and by the Assistant Chief Native Commissioner, H. A. K. Simpkins, that prevention lay in the hands of the landowners themselves and not through legislation.⁸⁹⁵ The problem of tenant farming did not “solve itself with time”, it increased even though at yet another conference in 1961, the ICAs continued to clamour for “the introduction of legislation for the protection of agricultural land farmed by tenants.”⁸⁹⁶ At the dissolution of the Federation in 1963, the settler farming sector was still reliant on tenant farming.

⁸⁹³ The Bulawayo Chronicle, June 21, 1956.

⁸⁹⁴ The Bulawayo Chronicle, October 4, 1957.

⁸⁹⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday July 20, 1956, p. 15.

⁸⁹⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday July 21, 1961, p. 7.

Shortage of Conservation Officers

Apart from the problem of African tenancy, CONEX also grappled with manpower shortages, which prevented it from adequately servicing the colony's white farming areas.⁸⁹⁷ Charles Murray, the Director, had to travel across the world in search of staff. For instance, he travelled to the United States in 1956, but succeeded in recruiting only 20 men, which was, in his words, "not as successful as I had hoped."⁸⁹⁸

The Bromley ICA, like all the other ICAs in the country, had to contend with challenges created by manpower shortages. In 1953, six years after its establishment, the ICA was grappling with the fact that the conservation officer for the area was finding it difficult to offer his service to the farmers on time because of a big backlog. This hindered the ICA's desire to expand the programme to cover plots and small farms between Bromley and Salisbury.⁸⁹⁹ The establishment of an ICA for peri-urban farmers required the CONEX to investigate whether the concerned landowners were willing to be incorporated into the ICA programme, and their exact requirements in terms of conservation projects. CONEX did not have adequate manpower to steer peri-urban plots and farms into the programme. On the 19th of January 1953 J. J. Duvenage, an official in CONEX, wrote to the Secretary of the Bromley ICA on behalf of the organization's Director, Charles. A. Murray, informing him that;

Investigation and sorting out of the peri-urban area between Salisbury and Bromley I.C.A. has not yet been carried out owing to an acute shortage of staff. We have not only not had staff to spare to carry out this investigation but we have not and during the next 12 months will not have the staff to work in this area even if it were declared...until then it is not considered advisable to declare the area, have a committee elected and not be able to assist them...⁹⁰⁰

⁸⁹⁷ See F151/ICA/Gutu/ Gutu ICA File 2.

⁸⁹⁸ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 27 June, 1956.

⁸⁹⁹ Letter from Arthur Cooper, Secretary of the Bromley ICA, to the Director of CONEX, titled "Peri-Urban ICAs", and dated 14 January, 1953.

⁹⁰⁰ Letter from J. J. Duvenage, Department of Conservation and Extension, to the Secretary, Bromley District Intensive Conservation Area, titled "Peri-Urban I.C.A.s", dated 19 January, 1953.

The shortage of manpower in CONEX slowed the pace and limited the scope of conservation work in Bromley.

In many instances, conservation officers were not able to cover all the farms under their jurisdiction. In Bromley, for instance, the conservation officer, F. White, and officials from CONEX, were for a long time not able to visit Borderland farm.⁹⁰¹ In addition to the conservation officer's inability to cover all the farms that needed his attention on time, his vehicle was only allocated fuel to cover 900 miles per month, meaning that he could not continue to do his work beyond this limit, unless he made arrangements directly with farmers to cover his transportation expenses.⁹⁰²

Faulty and Poor Construction of Works

Sometimes the Bromley ICA Committee had to deal with faulty construction of works on farms. This was a source of embarrassment for the Committee and the conservation officer. In 1953, for instance, five years after the establishment of the ICA, the dam on Blake and Daines' farm was constructed "to faulty specification."⁹⁰³ This was not the first time dams had not been properly done; it had happened before at Nicholson and Culliman's farms and at the dam at Msuri-Sana. In response to this shoddy work, the Committee passed a resolution in November 1952 stating that, thereafter, dam plans were to be drawn up by Irrigation Engineers from the Department of Irrigation. In addition to this, all instructions to the operator of the dam building equipment in the ICA were to be in writing.⁹⁰⁴ Faulty

⁹⁰¹ Minutes of the Bromley Intensive Conservation Area Committee Meeting, held at Jamaica Inn on the 8 January 1953. (Hereinafter, cited as Minutes, and the date of the meeting. All citations of Minutes of Meetings, correspondence and official communication are from NAZ F450/7, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area File 2, and 1953-1957).

⁹⁰² Minutes, 7 January 1954, p. 3.

⁹⁰³ Minutes, 6 November, 1953, p. 2.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid.

construction of dams was largely a result of lack of adequate co-ordination between the ICA and the Circle Engineer, who was often too busy to attend to all projects in the Mashonaland Circle on time, resulting in Operators usually proceeding with work without his approval, as waiting for their turn for inspection meant that the dam building team would be idle for long periods of time, while inconveniencing other farmers who would be waiting for their turn.

In January 1953 the dam-building unit was not able to complete work at Miskins' farm, citing "bogging conditions."⁹⁰⁵ The Operator had moved to the site with his team and attempted to construct a dam at the height of the rainy season in January. The team abandoned the project soon afterwards because of wet conditions.⁹⁰⁶ The Committee resolved that they could not submit a bill to the farm owner for incomplete work. Despite such problems, many the ICA dam units had completed 45 farm dams, while individual landowners had also constructed 43 dams by March 1953, a remarkable feat by all standards.⁹⁰⁷

Faulty dam construction could not only be blamed on the Operator and the ICA's dam-building unit. There were instances where farmers themselves embarked on their own dam-building initiatives, as was the case at Brookmead Estate, owned by Leftin and Green. Leftin and Green was a farming partnership whose company was based in Johannesburg. The partners had by 1953 constructed a number of dams which the Committee describes as "small and unsuitable" which allegedly broke during rainy seasons, leading to silting up of local rivers."⁹⁰⁸ The ICA wrote a letter to Leftin and Green in February 1953 asking them to consider building a big, permanent dam on the Estate, rather than continuing with small low-cost, sub-standard dams. Faulty construction was not limited to the dams. At Mashonganyika

⁹⁰⁵ Minutes, 5 February 1953, p. 2.

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁹⁰⁷ Minutes, 5 March 1953, p. 2.

⁹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

farm faulty ridges were constructed in 1953. This problem had started in the 1940s, when the former owner of the farm chose not to take heed of the conservation officer's advice on how to properly construct ridges. By 1953 a new owner, Geake, had bought the farm⁹⁰⁹, but was, fortunately for the Committee, bound by the agreement with the previous owner to carry out conservation work on the farm, which made it possible for the Committee to make him undertake corrective action. In January 1954 the ICA Committee reported that the rains had caused havoc at Borderlands farm; another result of poor and faulty conservation work.⁹¹⁰

Challenges Relating to Equipment

Bromley farmers had yet another grievance; government equipment, which they usually hired for the construction of works on their farms, was expensive. In 1953 the Bromley ICA Committee decided not to hire the unit anymore for a while, "in view of the high charges for hire of (the government ridging unit) and the fact that very few landowners appeared to require it..."⁹¹¹ The decision by the majority of farmers not to hire the government ridging unit because of its cost meant that farmers who needed it decided not to go ahead with the construction of works related to the unit on their farms, or to improvise. Equipment was often a challenge for the Bromley ICA, including equipment that belonged to the ICA. Over time, the ICA had acquired loans from the government for the purchase of its own tractor units, which it hoped to hire out to farmers at cheaper rates in order to generate money for the ICA Committee's operations. Problems ranged from the fact that the equipment was expensive to service and maintain to the inconveniences caused by its breakdown. Another challenge was that parts for the ICA's equipment sometimes had to be imported from the United States of

⁹⁰⁹ Minutes, 5 February 1953, p. 4.

⁹¹⁰ Minutes, 7 January, 1954, p. 1.

⁹¹¹ Minutes, 8 January, 1953, p. 1.

America, with deliveries taking up to two months, which slowed down the Committee's work.⁹¹²

Sourcing finance for the purchase of equipment and its maintenance was difficult. Although the government provided loans through the Department of Agriculture and Lands, sometimes funds were simply not available. For example, when the Bromley ICA Committee applied for a loan in order to acquire a Caterpillar D.6 in February 1952, the Natural Resources Board informed it that the possibility of a further loan in 1953 was not certain because of financial bottlenecks.⁹¹³ Moreover, the government charged farmers an annual interest for loans advanced for the purchase of equipment. To service the loans, ICAs often hired its equipment out to farmers in the district, and, where possible, to other ICAs and schools for an hourly charge of 50/-. For instance, in April 1953, the ICA hired out its unit to Springvale School for £300, and in May to Peterhouse School where it earned approximately £200.⁹¹⁴

In spite of the requirement that farmers had to pay for use of ICAs equipment, the ICA sometimes found itself in a difficult situation where a choice had to be made between receiving payment in advance and doing the work. In such instances where damage was considered to constitute an emergency and the farmer concerned was unable to pay for the work, the ICA often went ahead to do the work and then wrote off whatever it was owed.⁹¹⁵ Many farmers who were not able to pay for work carried out on their farms from their own resources benefitted from having their debts written off by the ICA after the Committee had satisfied itself that they were unable to pay, and that their failure to pay was an impediment to the possibility of more soil conservation-related projects being carried out on their farms. This

⁹¹² Minutes, 6 January, 1955, p. 2.

⁹¹³ Minutes, 5 February 1953, p. 3.

⁹¹⁴ Minutes, 7 May, 1953, p. 2.

⁹¹⁵ Minutes, 8 January, 1953, p. 2.

intervention was very essential because farmers were not keen to have the work done on credit, which would over time see their debts to the ICA accumulate. The farmers also feared losing their land or portions thereof if their debts went over the top and the ICA Committee decided to seek legal recourse to recover money owed.

Lack of Co-operation from Landowners

In many cases, the ICA Committee had to contend with lack of co-operation from some of the farmers in the district, such as was the case at Belmont Farm. Problems at Belmont began well before the federation. In November 1953 the Committee was informed by one of its members, Wingfield, that J. Nel of Belmont Farm had not taken kindly the suggestion that it was necessary for Nel to construct contour ridges on his farm urgently. Nel had responded that Wingfield had to keep away from his farm because he was neither a trained extension nor a conservation official and that he would only consider construction of such ridges if his farm was checked by a conservation officer, and only upon his advice.⁹¹⁶ The conservation officer told the meeting that he had also been to the farm, and had informed Nel of the urgent need for conservation measures at Belmont farm. Taking advantage of the fact that the conservation officer was too busy servicing the entire district to closely monitor his farm, Nel had done nothing about the contour ridges.

In an attempt to deal with this problem the conservation officer had then reached an understanding with the ICA Committee for Committee members to help him with some of his tasks, such as inspection of the farms. By January 1953 the conservation officer had further visited Belmont farm, with no success in getting the landowner's co-operation. At the ICA Committee's meeting of January 1953, the conservation officer informed the Committee that

⁹¹⁶ Minutes, 6 of November 1952, p. 1.

no co-operation had been shown by the farmer. The conservation officer had informed J. Nel that 300 acres needed protection urgently, but Nel held a different view. The meeting resolved to take this matter to the Natural Resources Board (NRB) to make them issue an order that all land on Belmont farm was supposed to be protected as a matter of urgency.⁹¹⁷ At its February 1953 meeting the Committee was informed that the secretary, Arthur Cooper, had written to the NRB. The meeting, however, observed that this had been a procedural mistake on their part, as in all their dealings with J. Nel, they had not written him a formal letter informing him of the need to protect his land. As a result, they did not have any formal letter from the farmer exhibiting his lack of co-operation. This was a reflection of the fact that in almost all cases, there were no people with much legal knowledge or an in-depth understanding of the Natural Resources Act on the ICA Committees.

The Committee then resolved to write a letter to Nel,

...reminding him of the repeated verbal requests for co-operation made by various members of the Committee since the inception of the Committee and the consistent visits made and advice given by the Conservation Officer and members...⁹¹⁸

The letter was also to inform J. Nel of “the Committee’s reluctant duty to hand the matter over to the NRB.”⁹¹⁹ The secretary was informed to send a copy of this letter to the NRB, and to inform the Board that Belmont farm was located in close proximity to the main road where it consequently gave “a bad example to all passers-by.”⁹²⁰ These letters did not resolve the matter immediately, as the NRB requested the ICA Committee to describe all the work that needed to be carried out at J. Nel’s farm “in clear and specific terms.”⁹²¹ By the end of 1953,

⁹¹⁷ Minutes, 8 January 1953, p. 1.

⁹¹⁸ Minutes, 5 February, 1953, p. 1.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹²¹ Minutes, 5 March, 1953, p. 1.

the Belmont Farm still needed attention, as the Conservation Officer reported to the ICA Committee that there was a huge gully crossing on the farm, and the gully needed urgent attention.⁹²²

In 1954, Nel, finally decided to yield to the Committee's continued pressure, and to co-operate and, in January of that year, began to carry out repair work and to plant grass on portions of his farm.⁹²³ This seems to have been a pre-emptive move, as the farmer was aware of the possible intervention of the NRB, whose decisions and directives he would not be able to brush aside the way he did instructions from the conservation officer and the Bromley ICA Committee. When the conservation officer suggested a visit by his Department to Belmont Farm, however, Nel refused to grant his permission since he had hoped that his pre-emptive action would prevent just such a visit. He argued that, since he was in compliance with the wishes of the Committee, it was no longer necessary for the NRB/CONEX to visit his farm. Frustrated by Nel's obstructionist actions, the ICA Committee decided at its April 1954 meeting to request CONEX to carry out an inspection of Belmont farm "irrespective of the wishes of the landowner."⁹²⁴ Relations Nel and the ICA Committee deteriorated even further after that, resulting in Nel telling the conservation officer during the officer's routing visit to the ram in January 1955 that he needed not to bother himself with inspections on his farm in future as Nel would "communicate with the conservation officer should he come across any erosion" on his farm.⁹²⁵

The Committee did not always encounter uncooperative farmers like Nel. In 1953 the farm was in urgent need of soil conservation and protection measures, more so because of

⁹²² Minutes, 5 November, 1953, p. 1.

⁹²³ Minutes, 7 January, 1954, p. 1.

⁹²⁴ Minutes, 1 April, 1954, p. 1.

⁹²⁵ Minutes, 6 January, 1955, p. 1.

extensive wood cutting at the farm, leading the ICA Committee to intervene. The Committee wrote to the owner, A. M. MacDonald, calling upon him to “protect all his lands before the 1953/54 rainy season” and suggesting that if he needed funding, he could apply for a Conservation Loan in order to carry out the required work.⁹²⁶ In October 1953 the Committee received a report that the farmer was complying with the ICA Committee’s instruction. The Conservation Officer was visiting the farm every week to make sure that the farmer continued doing soil conservation work, which included construction of contour ridges and repair of existing ridges that were not up to standard.⁹²⁷

The co-operation of farmers, however, did not mean that soil conservation projects went smoothly all the time. In the case of Borderland farm in November 1953 the Conservation Officer reported that though the farmer was carrying out protection work, he faced huge challenges in getting adequate labour to work on his farm. In addition, work carried out was not always up to standard. The Conservation Officer reported that contours that had been constructed on the farm “were not safe and without early attention would in all probability be destroyed this year.”⁹²⁸ His observation was correct. In January 1954 the rains “caused more damage than ever” and this was attributed to faulty conservation work.⁹²⁹ Because the farmer’s financial position was known to be unsound, the Committee sought to get money from the NRB as stipulated by section 26 of the Natural Resources Act. To their disappointment, they were only allocated £100, which fell far short of what they had anticipated to get.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁶ Minutes, 5 February, 1953, p. 1.

⁹²⁷ Minutes, 1 October 1953, p. 1.

⁹²⁸ Minutes, 5 November 1953.

⁹²⁹ Minutes, 7 January, 1953, p. 1.

⁹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1.

In June 1955 the Committee heard, to its dissatisfaction, that A. M. MacDonald had subdivided his farm and sold a portion of it.⁹³¹ The ICA Committee frowned on land sales, as this often meant that a new farmer with no experience would come in. This would reverse progress made over time, as the new land owner would have to learn the ropes in relation to soil conservation work. Another farm, Lasheen, was also sold at the time. The Committee was of the opinion that the sale of Lasheen would result in damage being caused on the farm through unprotected land. As a result, the Committee agreed that, as soon as the new owner was known, the conservation officer would arrange a meeting and “inform him of requirements to protect the land.”⁹³² In light of the fact that there was no satisfactory progress at Borderlands farm, the Committee resolved to ask the owner, McDonald, “that he grows just sufficient for the farm consumption; as he intended leasing the tobacco section it could be presumed that this could meet his financial needs.”⁹³³ This suggestion was brought about by the fact that a good portion of his farm was unsuitable for cropping because of soil erosion.

The Committee also had attended to indiscriminate cultivation at Idara farm. The Committee was of the view that the farmer’s indiscriminate cultivation was endangering the headwaters of a stream. The conservation officer had sought the co-operation of the landowner from 1950, and the Committee decided to finally “write in support of the conservation officer seeking the co-operation of the landowner.”⁹³⁴ Soil degradation was also taking place at York farm, where for a long time the landowner had ignored the conservation officer’s advice that the farm needed soil conservation work to prevent erosion. In 1953 the Committee also wrote the farm owner, requiring his co-operation.⁹³⁵ By March 1953 the farmers had responded to

⁹³¹ Minutes, 2 June 1955, p. 1.

⁹³² Ibid.

⁹³³ Ibid.

⁹³⁴ Minutes, 5 February 1953, p. 4.

⁹³⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

the letters, indicating that they were willing to co-operate with the conservation officer and the ICA Committee.⁹³⁶

Funding Constraints

In 1956 the Makoni Watershed Conservation Group reported that it was on the verge of bankruptcy, and was considering closing shop as a result of lack of funding. Though the Group had invested in dam-building equipment, no farmers or neighbouring ICAs came forward to hire the machinery.⁹³⁷ This example tells the story of ICAs that were keen to fulfil their mandate, but could not because of indebtedness and bankruptcy. By 1957 the government was in fact cutting NRB votes, due to unavailability of financial resources to fund the NRB's programmes. The financial allocation for conservation in white farming areas was reduced from £21 500 to £7 153.⁹³⁸ This dashed hopes that farmers had in 1953. Farmers had expected that funding for conservation work would drastically improve because of the formation of the Federation. Settler agriculture was placed under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, while African agriculture remained under the territorial government.

The federal government was not able to generate adequate revenue for all its plans. Because of this it resorted to cutting its spending on line ministries and borrowing. The British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and for colonies, Duncan Sandys, told the House of Commons in December 1963 that the Federation owed the British government £246 million. Part of this amount had been borrowed for the construction of the Kariba Dam and hydro-electric power project and for refurbishment and expansion of the railways and general

⁹³⁶ Minutes, 5 March, 1953, p. 1.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹³⁸ *The Rhodesia Herald*, Thursday July 25, 1957, p. 7

infrastructural development.⁹³⁹ The cutting of NRB votes for conservation work prompted J. H. Quinton, the legislator for Mazoe, to tell the Southern Rhodesia Territorial Assembly in the Budget debate in July 1957 that the cutting of votes for conservation work was a clear sign that both the Federal and Territorial governments did not appreciate the urgency with which conservation programmes needed to be carried out in the colony.⁹⁴⁰ Quinton invited the Minister of the Treasury, C. J. Hatty, to take a ride with him around some of the areas that needed urgent attention, adding; “I will give him the ride of his life and a clear picture of what devastation really means.”⁹⁴¹ The NRB, like the farmers, was also unhappy with the reduced funding it was receiving from Treasury to carry out its mandate. The Chairman of the Board, P. Gordon Deedes, told the Annual conference of ICAs in Gwelo in July 1957;

The government’s policy seems to indicate that it considers conservation can take its turn, or, if need be, wait... (The government says) ‘Health services must not be cut’, little realizing that without a healthy soil you are not going to have healthy people.⁹⁴²

Funding became a constant bone of contention between the NRB and ICAs on one hand, and the government on the other.

In Bromley the ICA Committee intervened in many instances to cancel defaulting farmers’ debts in order to assist farmers facing financial difficulties. Apart from this assistance from their Committee, farmers also benefitted from government grants-in-aid. The ICA received a grant-in-aid of £100 per annum.⁹⁴³ The ICA could also apply for a special grant-in-aid if it

⁹³⁹ The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and for the Colonies, Duncan Sandys, “Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Dissolution)”, Commons, Hansard 1803-2005, 17 December 1963, (vol. 686 cc1064-173), <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1963/dec/17/federation-of-rhodesia-and-nyasaland>

⁹⁴⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday July 25, 1957, p. 7

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹⁴² *The Rhodesia Herald*, Thursday July 25, 1957, p. 13.

⁹⁴³ NAZ F450/6, Bromley ICA, Volume 1.

carried out work in its area that it felt could not be afforded by the concerned landowner alone. Farmers also got the grants. Though the grants were usually just small amounts, they went a long way in motivating farmers, and sending through the message that the ICAs movement was not just a government scheme to saddle them with debt. In February 1953, for example, farmers Fitzsimons and Phillips were given grants-in-aid to the tune of £11.9.6 and £3.10.9, respectively, while farmers Parks and Pratt were informed that they too would receive £9.12.7 and £7.7.5, respectively.⁹⁴⁴

Sometimes Department of Agriculture and Lands regulations regarding grants-in-aid were not fully understood by the ICAs. The Department's Notice 21 of 1951, section 13 (b), stipulated that grants-in-aid could only be paid to ICA Committees on work done by landowners in their ICA, unless the approval of the Ministers of Agriculture and Lands and Finance was first obtained before the work was carried out.⁹⁴⁵ At the end of 1952 the Bromley ICA hired its tractor units to work at Msuri-Sana and Ruwa Estates, located in the peri-urban area between Bromley and Salisbury.⁹⁴⁶ This work was carried out at the request of the two landowners, Blake and Daines of Msuri-Sana and C. R. Niven of Ruwa Estate. The ICA carried out work (280 hours' work constructing a dam on the Ruwa River, which was the common boundary between the two farms) to the value of £700.⁹⁴⁷

The Department of Conservation and Extension asked the Department of Agriculture and Lands whether the ICA was eligible for a grant-in-aid for this work. "I think it is highly unlikely that this payment will be granted," the Director of CONEX wrote to the ICA Committee,

⁹⁴⁴ Minutes, 5 March, 1953, p. 2.

⁹⁴⁵ Department of Agriculture and Lands, Notice 21, 1951.

⁹⁴⁶ Letter from the Secretary, Bromley ICA, to the Director of Conservation and Extension titled "Peri-Urban and Bromley I.C. Areas", dated 28th of January, 1953.

⁹⁴⁷ Letter from the Bromley Conservation Officer, to the Group Conservation Officer titled, "Grant-in-Aid: Conservation Works Constructed Outside I.C.A", dated 3 February, 1953.

...but I would, however, suggest to your Committee that when doing work outside your ICA that you charge a sum equal to your normal hourly tractor unit charges plus one ninth. This has the effect of giving a financial return to the ICA in keeping with what they normally obtain. As far as a farmer is concerned he is able to accept Tractor Unit charges plus one ninth as a total cost of his work and is therefore in a position to claim subsidy on the total cost.⁹⁴⁸

This was unsatisfactory to Bromley farmers as they had hoped that hiring out their equipment outside the ICA would entitle them to grants to augment the amounts they secured from hiring such equipment. The grant-in-aid issue was only settled in April, 1953, when the Secretary to the Treasury wrote to the ICA, informing them that the Minister of Finance had approved the payment of a subsidy “on the understanding that the Bromley I.C.A will reduce their charge for the work carried out from 50/- per hour to 45/- per hour.”⁹⁴⁹

Over time, the ICA became highly critical of reduced financing for conservation projects. In response to the Natural Resources Board’s announcement in August 1957 that it would provide £70 000 for dam building, the Bromley ICA resolved that;

The Bromley Intensive Conservation Area whilst wholeheartedly supporting the scheme envisaged at (the Gwelo ICAs) Conference, would suggest that the sum of £70,000:0:0 if it is to encourage conservation work is most inadequate. The suggested subsidies on dams should be based on a long-term policy and that a sum of £150,000:0:0 minimum should be made available for such a scheme. The decision taken at Conference was done so without allowing sufficient time in which to consider and discuss in full the many implications involved.⁹⁵⁰

By the end of 1957, funds were evidently beginning to dry up as the Natural Resources Board informed the Committee that it was, in the Committee’s words, “reluctant to make any further

⁹⁴⁸ Letter from the Director of CONEX (ICA/BRO/03), to the Secretary, Bromley ICA Committee, dated 6 of February, 1953.

⁹⁴⁹ Letter from D. G. Hallas, for Secretary of the Treasury, to the Controller and Auditor General and the Secretary for Agriculture and Lands, titled, “Grant-in Aid: Conservation Works: Constructed outside I.C.A.”, dated 21 April, 1953.

⁹⁵⁰ Minutes, 8 August, 1957, p. 1.

statement until the question of availability of funds had been settled”, while the Minister of Agriculture and Lands also “denied that the government had agreed that funds would be made available in the future.”⁹⁵¹

Progress of ICA Work

The challenges mentioned above affected conservation work seriously. In spite of the challenges, the ICA made important strides in areas such farm surveys and farm planning. Though the conservation officer was never able to respond to all applications submitted to him by farmers for farm planning, he did his best to meet the requests. The ICA also made important strides in dam building and control of veld fires and played a key role educating the people in the area about the need for conservation. Meanwhile, the ICA’s collaboration with the Bromley and Melfort Road Council helped to ensure that farm roads in the ICA were properly serviced.

Farm Planning and Aerial Surveys

Aerial surveys and farm planning became major tools in the intensive conservation movement from the 1950s. As the Conservation Officer for Bromley described the process in 1955,

Stage one planning comprises the compilation of three maps. 1. Present land use – shows all details of the farm as it is today, 2. Land classification. 3. Farm plan map showing recommended modification to existing protection layouts and future layout for virgin lands – also potential dam sites etc.⁹⁵²

⁹⁵¹ Minutes, 5 December, 1957, p. 1.

⁹⁵² Minutes, 5 April 1956, Conservation Officer’s Report, p. 3.

This process was meant to make sure that the correct piece of land was used for the activity best suited to it. Such proper land use would, hopefully, help in the fight against soil degradation.

As for the aerial surveys, according to Hughes, they “revealed all secrets” – whether the land was being utilized in a productive manner;

A broken contour, said one ICA member, ‘sticks out like sore thumbs’... ‘Fly over it’ explained one farmer with reference to the maize crop, ‘and you can see immediately that it’s not as great as you thought it was.’⁹⁵³

In Bromley talk about farm planning began in 1953. Many farmers at the time did not exactly understand what it was about. To learn more about farm planning, the ICA invited J. J. Duvenage - an official in CONEX who had been to the United States of America in the second half of 1953 to study this subject - to visit Bromley to give up to date data on farm planning and its benefits.⁹⁵⁴

Farm planning began in Bromley in late 1954.⁹⁵⁵ Farm planning was, however, implemented at a very small pace, with farmers being informed that it could not be done at a faster pace because of the limited availability of the conservation officer.⁹⁵⁶ This was because the conservation officer was overwhelmed by work. The Bromley ICA, with over 100 farms, only had one conservation officer. This was not the only project that was limping along in Bromley; in 1953 a programme to have the soil analyzed at all farms in the district could not be completed because of a backlog.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵³ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 276.

⁹⁵⁴ Minutes, 1 October, 1953, p. 3.

⁹⁵⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday January 1, 1954, p. 6.

⁹⁵⁶ Minutes, 3 December, 1953, p. 1.

⁹⁵⁷ Minutes, 3 September, 1953, p. 3.

With regard to farm planning the ICA Committee noted in February 1955 that the conservation officer could not cope with the huge amount of work in the district, which effectively “precluded him from becoming involved in Farm Planning work at the present time.”⁹⁵⁸ The Committee resolved that, “until all contours were pegged, dams built etc., Farm Planning to be put on one side until staff is available.”⁹⁵⁹ CONEX’s response was that the ICA Committee was responsible for allocating the Conservation Officer’s work and that

...there are periods in the year in which the Conservation Officer cannot peg contours or design dams, and it is during this period in which we consider that farm planning could take place. I would also like to emphasize that this Department has no intention of forcing of farm planning in any area. Farm plans will no doubt be prepared for those farmers who wish to have their farms planned, and we are prepared to co-operate unto the full. The plan must be the farmer’s plan with Officers of our Department acting as his consultant.⁹⁶⁰

By June of 1955 some farmers like Kotek, who had previously applied to have their farms planned, were deregistering, telling the ICA that they no longer wished to participate in the programme because of the huge backlog.⁹⁶¹

In spite of this backlog, some farmers, such as Count de Olano and Stirrup of Glen Avon farm still vigorously pursued the matter. Their farms, however, had still not been planned by December 1955 owing to the conservation officer’s tight schedule.⁹⁶² In February 1956 more farmers, such as A. F. Green of Masun farm, Hughes of Middleton farm and Fingland of Zwipadzi, had submitted their applications for farm plans. Their chances of getting their farms

⁹⁵⁸ Letter from P. A. Henderson, the Secretary of the Bromley ICA, to the Director, Department of Conservation and Extension titled “Farm Planning”, and dated 26th of February 1955.

⁹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁰ Letter from C. K. Thomson, Acting Assistant Director of Conservation and Extension to P. A. Henderson, Secretary, Bromley ICA, Titled “RE: Farm Planning”, and dated 12th March 1955.

⁹⁶¹ Minutes, 2 June, 1955, p. 2.

⁹⁶² Minutes, 1 December 1955. p. 1.

planned were dim, as Stirrup's farm had still not been planned.⁹⁶³ Stirrup's Glen Avon farm was only planned in June 1957, a good two years after he filed his application.⁹⁶⁴ More farm plan applications were submitted in 1957.⁹⁶⁵ By June 1957 nineteen farmers had applied to have their farms planned, a figure that represented 25 percent of the District.⁹⁶⁶ In December 1957 the conservation officer, who had spent most of his time in the second half of the year attending to farm planning, announced that the exercise had to be stopped once again because he needed to concentrate on other matters, as the rainy season began.⁹⁶⁷

Aerial surveys in Bromley were sometimes hindered either by unavailability or the cost of hiring aircraft.⁹⁶⁸ By 1957 farmers' interest in having their farms photographed had increased. A third of the farmers had expressed interest in having their farms photographed. In March 1957 farmers were told that it would require £520 to photograph their whole area, and the farmers decided to make contributions to raise part of the amount, and to request the NRB to finance part of the cost.⁹⁶⁹ The Committee set out to collect signatures from all farmers who wanted to contribute, as the Committee was unwilling to commit itself to an expenditure of £520 without a written commitment from the farmers that they would honour the agreement to contribute towards the project.

By April 1957 the farmers had pledged £400,⁹⁷⁰ and aerial photography commenced in June that year.⁹⁷¹ In his Annual Report for 1957, the Chairman of the ICA Committee told the farmers that the number of farm planning applications stood at 22; far beyond the capacity of

⁹⁶³ Minutes, 2 February, 1956, p. 1.

⁹⁶⁴ Minutes, 4 July 1957, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁵ Minutes, 7 March 1957, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁶ Minutes, 4 June 1957, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁷ Minutes, 5 December 1957, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁸ Minutes, 7 May, 1953, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁹ Minutes, 7 March, 1957, p. 2.

⁹⁷⁰ Minutes, 11 April 1957, p. 2.

⁹⁷¹ Minutes, 4 July 1957, p. 1.

the conservation officer to handle in a short period of time. The start of aerial photographing, he further told the farmers, would speed up the conservation officer's work.⁹⁷² There were some farmers who, however, did not see the benefit of farm planning at all, saying it was the farmers themselves who knew their land and what to do with it, not conservation officers.⁹⁷³

Dam Building

Dam construction was an important aspect of the intensive conservation movement from 1950. On the 28th of August, 1953, the Rhodesia Herald reported;

Many dams, only a few weeks from a new rainy season, are still quite full. Rivers are flowing quite strongly, and many of the lesser waterways are gurgling and laughing with a joy not seen in Rhodesia for years. Conservation work, it seems, is beginning to pay rich dividends. Given a reasonable fall of rain, it is clear, say many conservation farmers, that the country can come through the winter with cattle in good heart and with water supplies never under so much as a threat.⁹⁷⁴

This was, by all standards, a very optimistic story. The ICAs programme was still in its infancy, with the majority of the ICAs having been declared well after the Second World War. In the case of Bromley, the ICA was just six years old; yet by 1953 there was a general feeling that conservation work, in this case water conservation, was beginning to pay dividends. This section examines the progress of water conservation, with a specific focus on dam construction as this was done on a huge scale in ICAs across the country in the federal decade.

Water conservation, dam building to be specific, became very popular among the colony's farmers because it was generally thought that this would solve challenges brought by the

⁹⁷² Minutes, 13 September 1957, p. 1.

⁹⁷³ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday August 14, 1958.

⁹⁷⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday August 28, 1953, p. 6.

generally low rainfall the country received. Water conservation was thus appealing to farmers in all categories; from those who were only concentrating on cropping to stock-owners. Many farmers took advantage of conservation officers provided by the government to seek advice on which parts of their land were most suitable for dam construction as well as for access to equipment provided by the government and by ICAs.⁹⁷⁵ The enthusiasm for building dams was so high that some farmers, such as Philip Hapelt of Grasslands Farm, Somabula built a huge dam using their oxen.⁹⁷⁶ The number of dams constructed continued to increase each year, as farmers sought to conserve water on their farms. In the 1950s an average of 400 dams were constructed each year. These numbers rose in the 1960s, with 778 dams being built in 1961 with a capacity of over 20 million litres.⁹⁷⁷ From 1950 to 1956 about 4 000 dams with a combined carrying capacity of close to 60 million litres had been built by the farmers and CONEX.⁹⁷⁸ The Chairman of the NRB proudly told the nation in November 1956, “Fly north, south, east or west from Salisbury and all times you will be within sight of water!”⁹⁷⁹

Water conservation became a very important aspect of the work of the ICAs. This was because soil conservation’s logical motive was to ensure that the farms were in a good condition, a condition that would enable them to produce profitably. This position was clearly articulated in the 1940s when the ICAs were formed; they were also named “Food Production Committees” and “Food Advisory Committees” as increased food production in the post-Second World War period was a huge priority for the colony.⁹⁸⁰ Water became part of the conservation programme, as it was important for irrigation. Many farms in Bromley constructed small dams in the 1950s. David Hughes’s study of the Virginia ICA in the 1990s

⁹⁷⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Monday February 8, 1954, p. 6.

⁹⁷⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Saturday August 15, 1959.

⁹⁷⁷ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday July 20, 1961, p. 15.

⁹⁷⁸ The Rhodesia Herald, November 13, 1956.

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁰ See NAZ F450/6, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area File 1: Minutes of the Bromley ICA and Food Production Committee 1947-1952.

has attributed this fixation with small dams to farmers' choice to affiliate with the land, and dams, rather than with the African majority. He argues;

Dams, thus, served as multipurpose fetishes of white belonging – an aquatic fix to whites' political dilemmas. And they are particularly a Zimbabwean phenomenon....In another sense, however, whites were investing in identity, and dams bore a heavy symbolic load. Whites I met in 2002 and 2003 described themselves as farmer-dam builders. They held onto their dams nearly as tightly as they did the land itself.⁹⁸¹

A tourist article in the 1960s (exact date unknown) said of this dam-building;

Rhodesia's countryside is a panorama spangled with the flashing mirrors of a thousand lakes and dams...every one of them is a legacy of ingenuity and enterprise of generations of Rhodesians.⁹⁸²

Hughes attributes the construction of farm dams to identity-building in the post-independence period. While this might be true, there were concrete short-term gains from having such dams on one's farm.

The water was very important for irrigation purposes, thereby effectively ensuring that farming was not reliant on the rain season, but could now be carried out throughout the year.

An article in the Rhodesia Herald of August 30, 1961 illustrates this point by stating:

...the past decade has seen a phenomenal increase in the number of water conservation and water storage dams built for diverse purposes. This activity continues and particularly in areas of low and uncertain rainfall, adequate insurance against drought is being secured by intensive programmes of dam construction...⁹⁸³

⁹⁸¹ Hughes, "Hydrology of Hope", p. 270.

⁹⁸² Ibid., p. 277, author of the tourist article is unknown.

⁹⁸³ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday August 30, 1961, p. 3.

Apart from their important function in providing water for agricultural purposes, dams also became important from a nutritional point of view, as farmers were encouraged to breed fish in their dams. Referring to the dams, an editorial in the Rhodesia Herald observed;

The bodies of water formed are able to fulfil important functions in addition to those for which they were primarily created. A water reservoir or dam is in its own right a producer of food and through the application of correct and suitable management techniques, can be made to yield considerable quantities of high protein food....no dam should be without its fish.⁹⁸⁴

At the end of the federation over a hundred dams had been constructed in Bromley.

Fire Control

The second half of 1954 witnessed a number of dangerous fires raging in the Eastern Districts of the country, a development that worried ICA bodies in the area. A report in the Rhodesia Herald of 2 November 1954 described the situation as follows:

Umtali has been ringed with fires. At various times during the past two months the Rifle Range kopjes, the Lower Vumba and Cecil Kop have been burnt out. The town ranger has spent many nights up in the hills with the native gangs putting out fires. Altogether he has dealt with 65 veld fires since the season began. Europeans and natives have both been to blame in causing the fires.⁹⁸⁵

This was not good for conservation. Something had to be immediately done to stop the fires, as they threatened farms. Veld fires destroyed timber and grass, exposing soil erosion to water and wind erosion. Only one District, Inyanga, had taken action to prevent fire outbreaks by employing a Native Fire Ranger in 1954. Farmers in the area contributed towards his rations

⁹⁸⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday August 30, 1961, p. 3.

⁹⁸⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday November 2, 1954.

and salary of £48 per year. The government provided the area with a second ranger. The two African Fire Rangers were attested as special constabularies by the Inyanga police.⁹⁸⁶

In 1955, three ICAs in the Que Que area also came out with a plan to combat veld fires. They employed a central fire officer who was stationed in the town of Que Que, from where he would receive all reports of veld fires in the three ICAs.⁹⁸⁷ By April 1956 the Salisbury branch of the Mashonaland Farmers' Association was finalizing a recommendation that it desired to put before the National Congress of the Rhodesia Farmers Union in June, 1956.⁹⁸⁸ The recommendation was a call for permanent fire rangers to be employed in all settler farming areas to ensure that Africans on the properties did not start fires. The fight against fires became one of the roles ICAs played. Africans were in most cases blamed for fires on settler farms. It was on the property of absentee land-owners that most of the fires started, one ICA warned, ostensibly because African tenants on such lands did not have close supervision.⁹⁸⁹

Though Africans settled on the farms started fires at some times, accusations against Africans were at times not fair. One example is that of J. R. Marshall, the Secretary of the NRB, who stated in 1961 that the chief culprits were Africans out hunting and at beer parties; "They light fires for the sake of lighting them. They like to see stuff burn."⁹⁹⁰ Settler farmers were rarely blamed. The verdict was always that most of the fires started by settler farmers, unlike those started by Africans, were unintended fires that got out of hand as landowners burnt unwanted grass on their farms.⁹⁹¹ By 1963 the NRB was reporting an improvement in the fire situation in the colony as farm owners were commended for ensuring there were no fire outbreaks on

⁹⁸⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday November 2, 1954.

⁹⁸⁷ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday April 8, 1957, p. 7.

⁹⁸⁸ The Rhodesia Herald, Saturday April 7, 1956, p. 1.

⁹⁸⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday May 8, 1958, p. 8.

⁹⁹⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday October 18, 1961, p. 11.

⁹⁹¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday April 25, 1957, p. 15.

their farms “Most of them (fires recorded) are controlled fires, deliberately started by the landowners for veld management purposes”, the NRB reported in October 1963, also crediting farmers for being able to “deal with (fires) quickly and effectively” when they occurred.⁹⁹²

Meanwhile, in spite of financial bottlenecks, the Bromley ICA also put in place measures to reduce the incidence of veld fires in the district. The Committee employed African fire and conservation rangers to patrol the farms in the area under the supervision of the Committee and farm owners. The rangers were given log sheets, where they recorded the hours they spent doing their work and the number of fires recorded in the district. The Committee would then use this information to prosecute offenders.⁹⁹³ The ICA Committee worked closely with the British South Africa (B. S. A.) Police, Goromonzi Station, to ensure successful prosecution of Africans who were accused of starting fires in the area. In February 1953 the Committee reported that in the previous year, only two fires had been reported in the district, and in both instances the Africans who were accused of starting the fires were successfully prosecuted.⁹⁹⁴ This was regarded as a huge success, and in 1953 the Committee wrote to the B. S. A. Police, Goromonzi, to thank them for the “satisfactory position” with regards to the fire situation in the area.⁹⁹⁵

Dealing with the fire rangers was not, however, always rosy for the Committee. This was because in the 1950s there was still an acute shortage of labour on the farms. Because of this shortage, rangers could just leave without notice and get employed in a different district, or in Salisbury where rapid industrialization was underway. The rangers would just leave without

⁹⁹² The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday October 15, 1963.

⁹⁹³ Minutes, 8 January, 1953, p. 2

⁹⁹⁴ Minutes, 5 February 1953, p. 2.

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid.

notice or absent themselves from work without permission. In 1954 one of the fire rangers in Bromley was dismissed for absence without official leave.⁹⁹⁶ There were also incidents when rangers acted in a truant manner, they would not do the work but keep all the paperwork in order. One farmer, who was also a member of the committee, Wingfield, told the Committee about one such ranger whose work was, unlike his two other colleagues, reported to be unsatisfactory, while all his log sheets were always in good order.⁹⁹⁷ Fire rangers sometimes behaved the way they did because of the feeling that they were not adequately remunerated.

Apart from the problem of absenteeism and desertion, the rangers sometimes engaged in misconduct. Using their new-found power as “police officers”, the rangers would sometimes overstep their mandate. They would, for example, enter into people’s premises on farm compounds, purportedly to “investigate” crimes. In reality the most common reason for these illegal searches was for ‘skokian’, an illicit brew that was made on most farm compounds. The ‘skokian’ was sold to farm workers. The rangers would demand bribes from those caught, or confiscate the beer. The ICA Committee decided to deal with this issue decisively by instructing that the rangers neither had the authority to enter into people’s premises nor to confiscate ‘skokian.’⁹⁹⁸ The rangers were instructed to stick to their core business; patrolling to ensure farm workers did not start fires, to investigate any fire outbreaks and to ensure that there was no wanton cutting down of timber.

African farm workers did not suffer the humiliation of having their homes searched and their beer confiscated in silence. It is possible that they responded by hitting back at the system. Though there is no concrete evidence of this, veld fires increased after the employment of fire rangers. Though the Bromley farming district had had only two veld fires in the previous year,

⁹⁹⁶ Minutes, 5 March 1953, p. 4.

⁹⁹⁷ Minutes, 3 September 1954, p. 1

⁹⁹⁸ Minutes, 7 of May, 1953, p.2.

many farmers were reported in the second half of 1953. “Reports were received of many fires having occurred in the area, some of them deliberate”, the Committee was informed at its meeting of 1 October, 1953. Apart from the fires, the number of people who were prosecuted for wood-cutting also increased in the period.⁹⁹⁹ The Committee responded to this situation by employing more African fire rangers. In 1955 ten Africans were employed under a European’s supervision “to burn (fire) breaks in the area in conjunction with landowners.”¹⁰⁰⁰

The Committee also began to look into “the possibility of utilizing the Royal African Rifles to clear fire breaks on the verges of the main roads.”¹⁰⁰¹ Although the Committee claimed that Africans caused most fires in the area, it, nevertheless, also increased anti-fire preparedness awareness campaigns among land owners in the district at farmers’ meetings and through the Committee’s monthly newsletter. Its newsletter of December 1954, for example, carried the following message;

You all must have noticed the amount of grass fires in our area... and these are a matter of grave concern to your Committee...we earnestly ask all farmers or farm managers in our area to treat the matter very seriously and by co-operation with your neighbours ensure much better protection from fires next winter.¹⁰⁰²

The Committee took, in its own words, “every opportunity” to “publicize the laws relating to joint fire-breaks, and the need to burn fire-guards at this time (around June) of the year.”¹⁰⁰³

⁹⁹⁹ Minutes, 1 October, 1953, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Minutes, 6 January, 1955, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰² Bromley ICA Newsletter, December 1954.

¹⁰⁰³ Minutes, 2 June 1955, p. 2.

Propaganda Work

Propaganda to raise the farmers and young peoples' awareness about conservation matters was an important aspect of the soil conservation effort. Targeting the young people was in line with CONEX's determination that they should be taught to, "appreciate the value of conservation and proper use of natural resources."¹⁰⁰⁴ Thus, a day was set aside each year as 'Conservation Day' during which conservation educational activities at schools was promoted in order to teach pupils the importance of preservation and conservation of the colony's natural resources. Tree planting was carried out on the day, with the Forestry Commission providing the trees free of charge.¹⁰⁰⁵ According to P. Gordon Deeds, the Chairman of the NRB, Conservation Day;

...sowed the seed of conservation in the young minds of our future citizens. How successful this has been can be judged by the requests from many schools for follow-up visits, and the interest taken by school teachers themselves in vacation conservation courses.¹⁰⁰⁶

The day, he added, also "served to remind Rhodesians of the natural law that a country could not be prosperous unless it developed its natural resources wisely."¹⁰⁰⁷ The NRB sought to have conservation included in the school curriculum. "There is no better place for this than in History," Deedes observed, "as the subject is often a chronology of greed for and waste of natural resources."¹⁰⁰⁸

By 1957 Conservation Day had been turned into Conservation Week. Each week was given a theme that conservation officers and NRB staff spoke on in schools throughout the country.

¹⁰⁰⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday September 8, 1953, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Monday January 31, 1955, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

Short films about conservation were shown, in addition to the speeches and lessons by CONEX and NRB staff.¹⁰⁰⁹ In 1957 the theme for Conservation Week was “The value and need for grass”¹⁰¹⁰; in 1958 it was “Conservation is my duty”¹⁰¹¹, while in 1960 it was “Water is vital. Do your share – use it with care.”¹⁰¹² Conservation Week ended with Conservation Sunday. Churches in the colony were requested to recognize the day, and preachers were requested to choose the subject of natural resources conservation as the theme of their sermons.¹⁰¹³ In addition to Conservation Week, short vacation courses were offered to school teachers to equip them with knowledge about conservation, and methods they could utilise to teach to their pupils about conservation in schools.¹⁰¹⁴ In 1957 the course was extended to African teachers, with the inaugural course, attended by 30 teachers from schools in the Salisbury District, taking place at Domboshava School from 24 April to the 1st of May 1957.¹⁰¹⁵ In 1962 a three-day practical farm course for young Rhodesians was carried out at Gwebi College of Agriculture as part of the Gwebi-Hunyani ICA’s efforts to increase interest in farming among the colony’s young.¹⁰¹⁶

Encouraging farmers to pursue conservation vigorously required carrying out a lot of propaganda work. Such propaganda manifested itself in events such as Conservation Day, which were meant to stimulate interest among the whites, to catch them young. In 1953 the Committee unanimously approved a poster competition at Diggelford School in order increase interest in conservation issues among pupils. The pupils were required to make two posters, each with two pictures – one depicting good farming practices on the right, while the other depicted poor methods. Prices were set aside for the competition; £2.2.0 for the winner, £1.1.0

¹⁰⁰⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Monday February 11, 1957, p. 9.

¹⁰¹⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday February 12, 1957, p. 9.

¹⁰¹¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday February 6, 1958, p. 2.

¹⁰¹² The Rhodesia Herald, Saturday July 30, 1960, p. 11.

¹⁰¹³ NAZ F450/7, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area, ICA File 2.

¹⁰¹⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Monday January 31, 1955, p. 9.

¹⁰¹⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday April 24, 1957, p. 4.

¹⁰¹⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday July 12, 1962, p. 12.

for the second best and 10/6d for third best.¹⁰¹⁷ Unfortunately for the Committee, there was not sufficient interest among pupils at the school, leading the Committee to “reluctantly (agree) to withdraw the offer of prizes in the future as it was clear that these could not be competed for.”¹⁰¹⁸

Propaganda was not only meant for the young, but also for the farmers themselves. The Bromley community was, for example, encouraged by the ICA Committee to support the magazine Rhodesian Homes and Gardens, whose circulation was, reportedly, increasing the time.¹⁰¹⁹ In addition, the Committee also had a monthly newsletter, which kept farmers informed about developments in the district.¹⁰²⁰ The newsletter was not only meant to foster a sense of belonging and community, but also to make every farmer want to contribute to the well-being of his community.¹⁰²¹

The Bromley ICA and the Road Council

Apart from farm plans, the ICA Committee also participated in road construction on the farms even though this function was primarily the responsibility of the Bromley/Melfort Road Council, especially when it was felt that existing roads had not been properly constructed. Thus, for instance, the Committee instructed its conservation officer to assist the Road Council with “practical and technical advice on road drainage.”¹⁰²² At its meeting of 5th March 1953 the Chairman, Troughton, stated that the season had proved to the farmers in the area and the ICA Committee that the road council had in the past constructed roads without planning “and the current state of roads in the area was due to this and also due in many cases

¹⁰¹⁷ Minutes, 8 January, 1953, p. 3.

¹⁰¹⁸ Minutes, 5 November 1953, p. 2.

¹⁰¹⁹ Minutes, 4 February, 1954, p. 3.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰²¹ Minutes, 4 March 1953, p. 3.

¹⁰²² Minutes, 4 July, 1957, p. 4.

to lack of drains.”¹⁰²³ The Committee, however, also “noted with satisfaction that the roads in the area were comparable if not better, as far as construction was concerned to any other Road Council in the country.”¹⁰²⁴

In spite of this positive appraisal of the Road Council, the ICA Committee strove to contribute towards rehabilitation of farm roads, such as the road through Nyarungwe and Ardlissa farms where soil erosion was caused by poor road drainage.¹⁰²⁵ The poor drainage at Ardlissa, caused a build-up “down to the Hunyani Bridge”, prompting the ICA Committee to approach the Native Department. This was because the Native Department was responsible for the African area.”¹⁰²⁶ With regard to Nyarungwe, the Committee demanded that the Road Council, either to “take immediate steps to control the erosion to the satisfaction of the Committee” or else the Committee would request the NRB to get an Order compelling the Road Council to repair the badly constructed road.¹⁰²⁷ Thereafter, the Road Council informed the ICA Committee that it would co-operate, as it was increasingly alarmed at “the increasing remonstrance of landowners to NRB.”¹⁰²⁸ In September 1953 it was reported that progress was being made towards repair and prevention of soil erosion caused by faulty roads in Bromley.¹⁰²⁹

Evaluating Conservation Work in the Federal Period

The Bromley ICA also benefitted from the work of Road Councils, in this case the Bromley and Melfort Road Council whose mandate was to ensure that farm roads were built and maintained in the farming district to ensure accessibility of the farms and that the roads were

¹⁰²³ Minutes, 4 July, 1957, p. 4.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 4.

¹⁰²⁵ Minutes, 4 January, 1954, p. 3

¹⁰²⁶ Minutes, 4 February 1954, p. 3.

¹⁰²⁷ Minutes, 4 July, 1957, p. 4.

¹⁰²⁸ Minutes, 7 May 1953, p. 2.

¹⁰²⁹ Minutes, 3 September, 1953, p. 1.

well drained, and did not cause erosion.¹⁰³⁰ The ICA was able to significantly reduce the incidence of wild fires in the district. This was achieved by the employment by the ICA Committee of African fire rangers who patrolled the farms. The rangers also spread awareness to Africans who resided on farm compounds about the undesirability of veld fires. Apart from the reduction of fires, the ICA was also able to reduce the rate at which timber was cut in the area. Because regulations required farmers who needed to cut timber on the farms on a big scale to apply for permission from the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, the ICA was able to utilize this requirement to stop wanton cutting down of timber.

The ICA also managed to force farmers who neglected conservation on their farms, such as at Belmont and Borderlands farms, to implement measures to prevent soil erosion. In addition, it also presided over farm planning in the district, aerial surveys, and the protection of streams, while also disseminating propaganda through its monthly newsletter and an annual “conservation week” where Ministers of Religion were asked to preach about the need for soil conservation in their church services, while teachers were also expected to teach their pupils about the importance of soil conservation in helping the country’s quest for food security.¹⁰³¹ One of the ICAs major successes was dam construction, contour ridging and the filling of gullies and dongas. At the end of the Federation, one 110 dams, with a holding capacity of one and half billion litres, had been constructed in Bromley. As a result, livestock breeding expanded, while the maintenance of soil conservation works significantly improved.¹⁰³²

The Bromley ICA Committee also tried to influence conservation work in areas outside its jurisdiction. In the early 1950s the ICA increasingly tried to influence – and to give assistance to - conservation work in neighbouring areas, such as Goromonzi area. The ICA’s work in

¹⁰³⁰ Minutes, 3 September, 1953, p. 3.

¹⁰³¹ NAZ F450/7, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area File 2, 1953-1957.

¹⁰³² Minutes, 13 September 1957, p. 2.

Goromonzi was done in collaboration with CONEX and NRB officials. In February 1953 two members of the Committee, Troughton and Wingfield and the conservation officer for Bromley toured the Goromonzi Reserve. The Committee reported;

The astonishing results in that all lands that had been contoured were tabulated in the office where the allocation of maintenance was organized. A good system of crop rotation was being practiced and areas that had been seriously eroded eighteen months ago had been healed with evacuation of Africans and declaration of protected areas and animal destocking. One feature of the work being done was that the labour force available comprised women and children, all the able-bodied men being employed in Salisbury. Very strict measures were taken to prevent uncontrolled cultivation and stream bank cultivation etc.¹⁰³³

The ICA's influence was therefore part of the reasons for success in Goromonzi.

It is worth noting that the work of the ICA in the 1950s did not translate into increased production in all cases. The ICA Committee reported on February 1955 that maize yields in the Federation were below the anticipated targets. The Committee observed;

The yield of maize on many of the Federation's farms is sub-economic and there is no necessity for it. Very high yields have been obtained on experiment stations and on some private farms on sandveld. Heavy fertilizer applications, more especially of Ammonia combined with sound cropping rotations are doing the trick. Up to 30 bags per care have been produced on our sandy soils so why are we producing low yields on 4 or 5 times the necessary acreage?¹⁰³⁴

The farmers blamed the low yields on a hostile agricultural environment, characterized, for example, by acute shortages of labour.¹⁰³⁵ The ICA had achieved a lot in other respects by July 1963 when the federation was dissolved.

¹⁰³³ Minutes, 5 February 1953, p. 3.

¹⁰³⁴ Bromley District Intensive Conservation Area Committee, Newsletter February 1955.

¹⁰³⁵ See Bromley ICA Committee, Newsletters, 5 April 1956, p. 1 and 3 May 1956, p. 1.

The Fall of the Federation

The Second World War brought with it an enormous dollar crunch, which made it preferable for Britain to undertake most of her trade with her colonies as this was cheaper in comparison with trading outside the sterling area.¹⁰³⁶ Combining the markets of the colonies into bigger units, as happened with the Central African Federation in the post Second World War period, enhanced British commercial interests as the bigger economic units would help Britain's post-war reconstruction. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, for example, provided a huge market for British wares, and raw materials to the Empire cheaply. The Empire's economic needs did not take long to shift, as evidenced by The British Prime Minister's "Winds of Change" speech in 1960, and this shift marked a big change in British foreign policy as it showed that the Empire was prepared to grant independence to its colonies.

"The wind of change is blowing through this continent and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact," British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan said in South Africa in 1960 while on his tour of Britain's African colonies. "We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it", he added.¹⁰³⁷ The process of decolonization of Britain's African colonies was already in motion; by 1960, Ghana had already gained her independence in March, 1957. This put the Federation on the wrong side of history. It had come a bit too late, and its days had been numbered from its birth.

Apart from what was taking place in Britain, the Federation was unpopular in some circles in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. While there had been an expectation in those territories

¹⁰³⁶ Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, p. 209.

¹⁰³⁷ http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eraindependence/p/wind_of_change2.htm (downloaded on the 23 April, 2012). For more on this also see Frank Myers, 2000, "Harold McMillan's 'Winds of Change' Speech: A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Policy Change", *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 3, 4, pp. 555-575.

that “administrative coordination”¹⁰³⁸ would be of mutual benefit to all three territories, Southern Rhodesia benefited more from the federal arrangement. Apart from having more representation in the Federal legislature, which gave the territory a bigger say in the administration of the entity, it also had a bigger white population which, naturally, benefitted from the bigger federal purse. European health, education and agriculture were put under Federal Ministries; the bulk of white schools, settler farms and health institutions were in Southern Rhodesia.¹⁰³⁹ Salisbury, being the seat of the Federal government, got a bigger chunk of the federal pie.

The federation did not result in equitable distribution of resources in the three territories. Discontent over the operations of the federation was best highlighted in June 1956 when the governor of Northern Rhodesia, Arthur Benson, wrote a letter to the government in the United Kingdom criticizing the federation, especially the new constitution that was being prepared and the way the Federal Prime Minister, Sir Roy Welensky, was handling the affairs of the Federation.¹⁰⁴⁰ In 1958 Godfrey Huggins, who by then had been knighted as Lord Malvern, got the top secret letter and disclosed its contents to Welensky, resulting in considerable conflict and suspicion among officials, depending on where their allegiances lay.¹⁰⁴¹

Lastly, the federation came to an end because of increased African calls for independence in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. For Northern Rhodesia there was an element of resource nationalism as well, as it was generally believed that it was the copper belt that was financing the bulk of federal operations. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, leader of the African National Congress (which he later renamed the Malawi Congress Party) returned from abroad in July

¹⁰³⁸ Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia* p. 209.

¹⁰³⁹ Murray, *The Governmental System*, pp. 356-58.

¹⁰⁴⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_of_Rhodesia_and_Nyasaland#Rise_of_African_nationalism (downloaded on the 14th of May 2012).

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*

1958 to lead the resistance against the federation in Nyasaland (renamed Malawi after independence in 1964) while in Northern Rhodesia (renamed Zambia) Kenneth Kaunda rose to prominence, ascending to the helm of the Zambian African National Congress as it wrestled power from the Northern Rhodesia African National Congress.¹⁰⁴² In Southern Rhodesia the nationalist movement was also growing, as evidenced by the formation of the City Youth League, led by James Chikerema, Edson Sithole and George Nyandoro in 1955 and The African National Congress, led by Joshua Nkomo in 1957.¹⁰⁴³ These groups clamoured for the end of federation. In July 1963 the federation was dissolved.

Conclusion

The Federal decade witnessed a number of important strides taking place in Southern Rhodesia's agricultural sector. The ICA embarked on a number of important soil and water conservation projects. Many dams were constructed across the colony's farming districts, contours were built and gullies filled. Roads were constructed on the farms, making the farms more accessible, and considerable effort was put into controlling outbreaks of fires on the farms. In the event of fires breaking out, measures were put in place to ensure that they were quickly brought under control and damage minimised. There were also efforts to reduce wanton cutting down of trees on the farms.

Farm planning and aerial surveys became very important tools in determining what activities could be carried out on what piece of land in a sustainable way, without much damage to the soil. The ICAs, together with CONEX and the NRB embarked on a lot of propaganda work to ensure that the conservation gospel was spread as much as possible. The effort even targeted

¹⁰⁴² J. K. Van Donge, "Kamuzu's Legacy: The Democratization of Malawi: Or Searching for the Rules of the Game in African Politics", *African Affairs*, 94, 375, pp. 227-257 and K. D. Kaunda, 1968, *Zambia Towards Economic Independence*, Lusaka, Cabinet Office.

¹⁰⁴³ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, pp. 24-42.

pupils in schools, hoping that a new generation of conservation-conscious farmers could be bred from a tender age. Interaction between farmers as they carried out conservation projects strengthened community ties in the ICAs.

There were many challenges to conservation work. The major one was African “squatters” who were accused of employing methods that ruined the soil. This problem was complex to solve as several farmers could not do without tenant labour. Poor farmers entered into contracts with African labourers, such as the Mavhiki system mentioned in this paper. This ensured that the farmers had access to cheap labour. . This arrangement was also an important cushion for the farmers in periods of poor yields, as they would not have to deal with huge wage bills. African workers offered their labour in exchange for land to farm, subsidizing farmers’ labour bills in the process.

Apart from this challenge, CONEX was never able to adequately supply staff for the ICAs. Conservation and Extension officers were always in short supply. This had the effect of slowing down conservation work in the farming districts, and in some cases frustrating farmers who wanted services on their farms. The Conservation officers’ huge backlogs meant that farmers in some cases had to wait for months before they got the conservation officer’s attention. This problem was also experienced in relation to equipment. Sometimes the equipment was not available due to demand, while in some cases farmers complained about the huge costs and, in other instances, about shoddy work. There were also major funding problems, as the government did not allocate adequate funding to conservation work. The government, in fact, slashed conservation votes from the late 1950s. Grants-in-aid remained paltry and this caused a lot of disgruntlement among the ICAs. Some farmers did not share the

vision of the ICAs, and refused to fully co-operate with ICA Committees. The ICAs do not seem to have benefitted very much from the anticipated bigger federal purse.

There is evidence to support Murray's notion that the majority of farmers became keener on conservation in the federal period. It, however, seems that there was a sweetener to this: dams. Farmers got the opportunity to construct dams on their farms and, because this was part of a broader intensive conservation programme, most farmers embraced it. There is, however, no evidence at all that conservation benefited from bigger funding of agriculture by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. The ICAs' major grievance at every annual conference was funding. Funding affected every aspect of the conservation effort: the number of conservation and extension officers, the pace at which works could be constructed, the amount of machinery at their disposal, and loans and grants-in-aid. The farmers were able to modify the landscape on the farms, but in a context of shortage mentioned above.

Chapter 7: ‘Mud Pies and Msasa Leaves’: UDI and Soil Conservation, 1965-1979

“Glazier [presumably, a farmer] voices a truism when he says farmers are given the smell of an oil rag and wants to know if farmers don’t eat but go out to graze and live on mud pies and dress on Msasa leaves. No doubt this will be the case if prices of everything the farmer needs keep on reaching sky-high prices while everything we produce fetch prices almost below cost.” Que Que Farmer, The Rhodesia Herald, 25 May 1966, p. 7.

Introduction

On the 11th of November 1965 at 13:15 hours Ian Douglas Smith, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia, announced to the nation and the world, in a speech aired on Rhodesian radio that his country was, with immediate effect, independent from British rule.¹⁰⁴⁴ The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), as the move came to be internationally known, marked a new phase in Rhodesian history, which also happened to be the closing chapter of settler colonial dominance of the territory. In April 1980 the country attained majority rule, and was renamed Zimbabwe.

This chapter examines conservation in the UDI period in light of international economic sanctions from November 1965 and the war of liberation in the 1970s, which all impacted on the agricultural sector. A major limitation of this task is the lack of archival sources, as the National Archives of Zimbabwe is yet to process the majority of UDI documents. In addition, in the aftermath of Zimbabwe’s land reform programme, which displaced the majority of white farmers from their farms, and Zimbabwe’s polarized political environment created by

¹⁰⁴⁴ A. Cohen, 2011, “Lonrho and Oil Sanctions against Rhodesia in the 1960s”, Journal of Southern African Studies, 37, 4, p. 715.

political and electoral developments from the late 1990s, it has not been possible to contact former commercial farmers who were on the land from the mid-1960s.¹⁰⁴⁵ Because of this limitation, this chapter relies largely on published articles and The Rhodesia Herald, a state controlled daily newspaper which was one of the government's major propaganda mouthpieces in the UDI period. There is no published work that specifically tackles conservation on settler farms in the UDI period; most scholars who have written on the UDI have focused on the impact of international sanctions on the country's economic and socio-political life, and Rhodesia's ability to bust the sanctions, with South African complicity.¹⁰⁴⁶ Although these articles and The Rhodesia Herald do not specifically deal with soil conservation on settler farms, they both provide insights into the agrarian environment in that period from which important deductions can be made about soil conservation in the UDI period.

This chapter examines whether the momentum generated by the ICAs from 1945 to 1963, when the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was dissolved, was sustained in the UDI period (1965-79). The chapter shows that sanctions and the liberation struggle impacted negatively not only on conservation work, but also on settler agriculture in general. As the title of the paper states, farmers were forced to tighten their belts in many ways, as the economy was run under austerity conditions. Most farmers' incomes dwindled and their

¹⁰⁴⁵ For more on these issues see E. Lahiff and B. Cousins, 2001, "The Land Crisis in Zimbabwe viewed from South of the Limpopo", Journal of Agrarian Change, 1, 4, pp. 652 – 666, A. Hellum, 2004, "Land Reform and Human Rights in Contemporary Zimbabwe: Balancing Individual and Social Justice Through an Integrated Human Rights Framework", World Development, 32, 10, pp. 1785-1805 and A. Hannar, 2008, "In the Name of Sovereignty: Displacement and State Making in Post-Independence Zimbabwe", Journal of Contemporary African Studies, 26, 4, pp. 417-437.

¹⁰⁴⁶ See R. Porter, 1977, "Economic Sanctions: The Theory and the Evidence from Rhodesia", Centre for Research and Economic Development, Discussion Paper 68, T. R. C. Curtain, 1968, "Rhodesian Economic Development under Sanctions and 'The Long Haul'", African Affairs, 67, 267, pp. 100-110, R. T. McKinnell, 1968, "Assessing the Economic Impact of Sanctions against Rhodesia: A Note on T. R. C. Curtain's Article", African Affairs, 67, 268, pp. 227-232 and J. Galtung, "On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions: With Examples from the Case of Rhodesia", World Politics, 19, 3, pp. 378-416. See also A. S. Mlambo, 2008, "We Have Blood Relations over the Border": South Africa and Rhodesian Sanctions, 1965-75", African Historical Review, 40, 1, pp. 1-29.

future - especially after the beginning of the war - became uncertain. Staying on the farms became unsafe, as liberation fighters often found white farmers to be easy targets. From the mid-1970s, as the war intensified, many white people began to leave the country. The majority of farmers who remained on the land were forced by the political and economic environment to tighten their belts, hoping that the situation in the country would improve so they could continue farming without the uncertainty wrought by a combination of sanctions and the war. As Glazier asserts figuratively, some farmers increasingly faced the unpleasant prospect of being reduced to a state where they would have to “(eat) mud pies and (dress on) Msasa leaves” for their daily sustenance.

Did Soil Erosion Worsen During UDI?

Michael Stocking observed in 1978 that the degree to which anthropogenic activities were responsible for increased soil erosion in the colony was unknown, and could not be conclusively ascertained. Referring to “alarming” gullies that were developing in African reserves only one hundred kilometres from Salisbury, the Rhodesian capital, Stocking observed that while the gullies were “cutting roads, destroying vegetation, draining an already parched landscape and generally disrupting rural life”¹⁰⁴⁷, it was not, on one hand, possible to say this represented an increase in soil erosion in the colony and, on the other, to blame the activities of African farmers for it. He argued;

One is tempted, as others have been, to point to the local population to lay the blame for this severe erosion. Is this fair? Can the erosion and contemporary rates of advance of gullies be linked to the population and the way it utilizes the land? ... Against this view of man’s over-riding influence on his soil resources must be set the fact that quantitative evidence is lacking. The degree to which man causes increased soil erosion is not known and, indeed, the exact mechanism by which the

¹⁰⁴⁷ M. A. Stocking, 1978, “Relationship of Agricultural History and Settlement to Severe Soil Erosion in Rhodesia”, *Zambezia*, 6, 2, p. 129.

erosion takes place is little understood. Erosion modelling is in its infancy...there remains the real need to test emotive assumptions such as man's ubiquitous influence on erosion. Already evidence appears to favour a mixture of man and climatic change as being responsible in parts of the United States for severe gullying, but local natural circumstances may still be of significant importance.¹⁰⁴⁸

Utilizing the Umsweswe catchment as a case-study, Stocking came to the conclusion that;

There is neither firm historical evidence nor contemporary experimental and statistical evidence to support the contention that man has largely brought about the severe erosion in the Umsweswe catchment. Historically, it has been shown that the population has remained fairly static over recent years, having risen gradually from the mid-nineteenth century. Cattle and livestock populations likewise have little changed. There are some documented agricultural difficulties, such as locust swarms, administrative neglect and unwise conservation treatment of the gullies, but these cannot solely account for the formidable erosion manifest today.¹⁰⁴⁹

It is difficult to ascertain, as was the case with Stocking's research in Umsweswe, whether soil erosion and exhaustion on settler farms increased or not in the UDI period due to the unavailability of archival data [and failure to generate data from interviews of participants in agrarian processes in this period].

Even if such data was available, its reliability in terms of ascertaining whether there was a decrease or increase in the amount of eroded lands would still be questionable in light of Stocking's revelation that erosion mapping at the end of the 1970s was only in its infancy, while erosion itself and the extent of the relationship between culpability of man and natural processes in causing it was little understood. Because of this, this chapter does not seek to demonstrate whether soil erosion increased or not in the UDI period, but to show that the momentum and infrastructure that had been put in place to deal with erosion and soil exhaustion on the farms from the 1940s began to wear off. This disintegration is understandable, as the white agrarian sector had to trudge on under the weight of a cornucopia

¹⁰⁴⁸ Stocking, "Relationship of Agricultural History and Settlement to Severe Soil Erosion", p. 129-130.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 145.

of factors in the UDI era such as reduced state funding and other support to the agricultural sector, insecurity brought about by the war of liberation, a fragile economy characterised by biting fuel rationing and marketing difficulties on the international arena, among other factors.

Background: From Dissolution of the Federation to UDI

Richard Coggins has characterized the Federal period as having been a period of economic consolidation for Southern Rhodesia. The colony's economy had begun to expand at a phenomenal pace after the Second World War, resulting in a big immigration wave into the colony. The economic boom continued in the Federal period.¹⁰⁵⁰ Robert McKinnell has observed;

Gross domestic product increased by 85 percent, while the contribution of manufacturing more than doubled, partly to supply the new, expanded, 'domestic' market. The growth of the whole Federation was mainly attributed to expanding exports and to the inflow of external capital.¹⁰⁵¹

The expansion of the economy, however, was not accompanied by corresponding political successes. As argued in Chapter 6, whites in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland felt that the lion's share of Federal benefits was going to Southern Rhodesia at their countries' expense, while Africans in the three colonies clamoured for the end of the Federation and for independence. These developments culminated in the dissolution of the Federation in 1963 and, consequently, the independence of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi)

¹⁰⁵⁰ R. Coggins, 2006, "Wilson and Rhodesia: UDI and British Policy towards Africa", Contemporary British History, 20, 3, pp. 364.

¹⁰⁵¹ R. McKinnell, 1969, "Sanctions and the Rhodesian Economy", The Journal of Modern African Studies, 7, 4, pp. 573-4.

in 1964. Britain was agreeable to the independence of the two territories, and also supported the aspirations of Africans in Rhodesia for a transition towards majority rule.¹⁰⁵²

Rhodesian Front politicians were not open to the idea of majority rule in Southern Rhodesia. They argued that the 1961 Constitution provided the basis for African participation in the country's politics. The Constitution provided that, over time, as the economic and educational position of Africans in the colony improved, more and more Africans would become eligible to vote. According to Coggins, the 1961 Constitution;

...somewhat liberalized the nominally non-racial franchise. Black Rhodesians were not legally barred from voting; the lower property, income and educational qualifications on the new "B-roll" of the electoral register were intended to allow 15 black MPs to sit in the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly while 50 white MPs were elected on the higher qualification A-roll. As time went on and economic prosperity for blacks increased, the theory went; they would progressively gain the franchise...¹⁰⁵³

The British Government did not agree with this position. Politicians in Rhodesia tried, without success, to convince Britain that the question of majority rule would be settled by the application of the 1961 Constitution which, they argued, provided a roadmap for broader African participation in the colony's affairs in the future. Winston Field, who had been elected to the Premiership in the 1962 elections on a Rhodesian Front ticket, was elbowed out in an internal coup for his alleged failure to reach a favourable agreement with the British Government on the matter. He was replaced by Ian Douglas Smith in 1964. Smith immediately began to steer the country towards UDI.¹⁰⁵⁴

¹⁰⁵² I. D. Smith, 1997, *The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Africa's Most Controversial Leader*, London, Blake Books, pp. 53-54.

¹⁰⁵³ Coggins, "Wilson and Rhodesia", p. 364.

¹⁰⁵⁴ For more on Smith's rise see P. Joyce, 1974, *Anatomy of a Rebel, Smith of Rhodesia: A Biography*, Salisbury, Graham Publishing.

UDI was, in the eyes of the minority government, a necessary step to preserve white rule in the colony in the face of increasing African demands for independence. The change in British policy had largely become evident after the significant 3 February 1960 “Winds of change” speech in South Africa by Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, during his tour of South Africa and British colonies in Africa. Macmillan stated;

...the most striking of all the impressions I have formed since I left London a month ago is of the strength of this African national consciousness. In different places it takes different forms, but it is happening everywhere. The wind of change is blowing through this continent and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it. Well you understand this better than anyone; you are sprung from Europe, the home of nationalism... As I have said, the growth of national consciousness in Africa is a political fact, and we must accept it as such. That means, I would judge, that we've got to come to terms with it.¹⁰⁵⁵

The speech not only signalled British intentions to grant independence to her colonies, but also gave legitimacy to African nationalist demands for independence.

The government of Southern Rhodesia was familiar with nationalist sentiments on the continent as many African countries were gaining their independence. By November 1965 African demands for independence had already yielded independence in a number of countries: Ghana on the 6th of March 1957; Guinea on the 2nd of October 1958; Cameroon, Senegal, Togo, Mali, Madagascar, Zaire, Somalia, Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, Nigeria and Mauritania in 1960; Sierra Leone and Tanzania in 1961; Burundi, Rwanda, Algeria and Uganda in 1962; Kenya in 1963; Malawi and Zambia on 4 July and 24 October 1964, and the Gambia in

¹⁰⁵⁵ African History: Era of Independence, http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eraindependence/p/wind_of_change2.htm (downloaded on the 23 April, 2012). For more on this also see F. Myers, 2000, “Harold Mcmillan’s ‘Winds of Change’ Speech: A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Policy Change”, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 3, 4, pp. 555-575.

February 1965.¹⁰⁵⁶ Locally the settler administration had crushed/suppressed various protest actions by nationalists.¹⁰⁵⁷ Smith and the Rhodesian Front chose not to yield to the nationalists and to British pressure.

UDI and Sanctions

From 1964, the British government had tried to use diplomatic channels to stop Rhodesia from declaring independence after it became apparent that Ian Smith and his party were mobilizing the country's populace for it. A referendum was carried out in 1964 to determine whether the white electorate was ready for independence under the 1961 Constitution. An Indaba was also held in 1964 with African Chiefs to get them to support independence, as the purported legitimate representatives of African people, as opposed to the African nationalists.¹⁰⁵⁸ On October 27, 1964, the British Prime Minister issued a stern warning that unilateral declaration of independence would be met with biting economic sanctions.¹⁰⁵⁹ This advice was not taken by Smith and his government, as a year later – on November the 11th 1965 - the colony declared its independence.

UDI did not get international recognition; the colony had set itself for confrontation with the United Kingdom and the international community.¹⁰⁶⁰ Smith was convinced that Britain had changed, and going along with the British would yield African rule in the territory, which, he argued, would destroy everything the white minority had toiled for in 75 years. "If Churchill were alive today," Smith, an admirer of former British Prime Minister Churchill, said in 1965;

¹⁰⁵⁶ See African History: Timelines, <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/timelines/blIndependenceTime.htm> (downloaded on 23 April 2012).

¹⁰⁵⁷ See T. H. Mothibe, 1996, "Zimbabwe: African Working Class Nationalism 1957-63", *Zambezia*, 23, 2, pp. 157-180, W. W. Nyangoni, 1978, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe*, Washington, D. C., University Press of America and M. Nyagumbo, 1980, *With the People*, Salisbury, Graham Publishing.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Coggins, "Wilson and Rhodesia", p. 365.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 365.

¹⁰⁶⁰ R. Hodder-Williams, 1970, "White Attitudes and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence: A Case Study", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 8, 3, pp. 241-264.

I believe he would probably immigrate to Rhodesia. I believe that all those admirable qualities and characteristics of the British we believed in, loved and preached to our children, no longer exist in Britain.¹⁰⁶¹

Britain, with the support of the international community, would not accept Rhodesian independence if it did not embrace African aspirations for majority rule.¹⁰⁶² The British response to UDI was swift; on the day UDI was announced Britain announced an embargo on Rhodesian sugar and tobacco, an immediate withdrawal of British aid, removal of credit facilities on Rhodesia's exports and Rhodesia's immediate removal from the Sterling area and Commonwealth trade system.¹⁰⁶³ These measures were given legal effect by the passing of the Southern Rhodesia Act, 1965.¹⁰⁶⁴

On the 1st of December 1965, the British government expanded the number of Rhodesian products on its embargo list to include two more agricultural products, namely, maize and beef. It further embargoed copper, asbestos, chrome, iron and steel and the sale of petroleum and petroleum products. Assets of the Rhodesia Reserve Bank, worth, approximately, £10 million were frozen, as was the disbursement of pensions to Rhodesians.¹⁰⁶⁵ These restrictions had huge implications on the Rhodesian economy as, according to Morris Bornstein, they prohibited "95 percent of the value of Rhodesia's normal exports to the United Kingdom."¹⁰⁶⁶

Apart from British sanctions, Rhodesia was also slapped with UN sanctions. On the 12th of November 1965, a day after Smith announced UDI, the United Nations Security Council

¹⁰⁶¹ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁶² W. Minter and E. Schmidt, 1988, "When Sanctions Worked: The Case of Rhodesia Re-examined", *African Affairs*, 87, 347, p. 211.

¹⁰⁶³ H. R. Strack, 1978, *Sanctions: the Case of Rhodesia*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶⁴ S. A. De Smith, 1966, "Southern Rhodesia Act 1965", *The Modern Law Review*, 29, 3, pp. 301-6.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Strack, *Sanctions: the Case of Rhodesia*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶⁶ M. Bornstein, 1968, "Sanctions and Rewards in Support of Arms Control Agreements", *The American Economic Review*, 58, 2, p. 421.

requested all members of the United Nations not to recognize Rhodesian independence and to withhold all their assistance to the country. This paved the way for the imposition of UN voluntary sanctions on the 20th of November 1965. The United Nations urged its members to stop sales of arms and military hardware and petroleum products and to cut economic ties with Rhodesia.¹⁰⁶⁷ A little over a year later, on 16 December 1966, the UN followed up on its voluntary sanctions with mandatory sanctions (an embargo on petroleum and petroleum products, arms, military hardware, aircraft and motor vehicles). UN sanctions were stepped up on 29 May 1968 to “comprehensive mandatory sanctions” which put a blanket ban on all imports from and exports to Rhodesia and on loans, immigration and investment.¹⁰⁶⁸ Sanctions on Rhodesia were in four categories covering; exports to Rhodesia, imports of Rhodesian goods, transportation and financial controls.¹⁰⁶⁹

In 1973 Rhodesia closed its border with Zambia, citing increased guerrilla activities as the reason for the closure.¹⁰⁷⁰ Zambia retaliated by telling the Rhodesian authorities that reopening of the border would not be left to the Rhodesians, as the Zambian government wanted the border permanently closed. This move hurt the two economies, with Rhodesia losing railway revenue to Tanzania, as Zambian copper exports were rerouted via Tanzanian railway routes.¹⁰⁷¹ Three years later Mozambique also closed its border with Rhodesia. This had a significant impact on Rhodesia as the Mozambique port of Beira was nearer in comparison to Durban, South Africa. Apart from the distance and the greater transport cost, South African ports were congested, which resulted in higher shipping costs and delays.¹⁰⁷²

¹⁰⁶⁷ Security Council Resolution 217, 20 November 1965, from Minter and Schmidt, “When Sanctions Worked”, p. 212.

¹⁰⁶⁸ D. L. Losman, 1979, International Economic Sanctions: the case of Cuba, Israel and Rhodesia, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, p. 95. Also see Security Council Resolution 232, 16 December 1966 and Security Council Resolution 253, 29 May 1968.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Bornstein, “Sanctions and Rewards”, pp. 421-423.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Minter and Schmidt, “When Sanctions worked”, p. 226.

¹⁰⁷¹ R. Renwick, 1981, “Economic Sanctions”, Harvard Studies in International Affairs, p. 46.

¹⁰⁷² Ibid, p. 46-7.

The closure of the Mozambique border also gave the South Africans more leverage over Rhodesia.

Conservation under UDI Sanctions

In May 1966 the Natural Resources Board (NRB) celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Ministry of Agriculture utilized the Annual ICA Conference for 1966 to catalogue the ICAs successes from the 1940s and to pledge continued support for conservation work. “Regrettably, we cannot give all the financial support that all would wish,” the Minister of Agriculture told the ICA Conference, “and many essential and worthwhile projects and even much needed support such as subsidies on water conservation schemes and expanded extension services have had to be (postponed) by the Board.”¹⁰⁷³ The ICAs responded to the Minister’s pledge for continued support by requesting him to ensure that the Government immediately increased the amount of fuel allocated to conservation officers to enable them to cover more farms and to increase funding for the NRB.¹⁰⁷⁴ While the ICAs had indeed done a lot of conservation work on the farms, the previous chapter has examined a range of challenges they faced throughout the Federal period. These challenges included the question of African tenancy on settler farms, the cost of hiring government equipment, faulty construction of works, lack of cooperation by some landowners, shortage of conservation officers and inadequate government for ICA work, among other challenges.

On the 11th of November, 1965, the same day UDI was declared, The Rhodesia Herald reported that the Natural Resources Board (NRB) had scheduled a meeting for all farmers in the Mtoko ICA on the 18th of that month. The meeting was prompted by the resignation of the ICA committee for the area and the subsequent decision by farmers in the district not to elect

¹⁰⁷³ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday May 19, 1966, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday 20 May, 1966, p. 36.

a new committee, but to dissolve the ICA.¹⁰⁷⁵ The ICA committee resigned at the end of October, 1965, citing frustration over “unsatisfactory conservation and extension services in the area”, particularly “the limitation of 750 miles placed on monthly official monitoring by extension officers.”¹⁰⁷⁶ As shown in chapters 5 and 6, the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX) grappled, from its formation in 1948, with a shortage of conservation and extension officers. As a result of this shortage, CONEX staff was overstretched; one conservation officer often had to cover a vast area on his own. In the case of Bromley, one conservation officer covered 132 farms.¹⁰⁷⁷ This meant that the 96 landowners who owned these farms had to queue for his services. The Bromley conservation officer also had a monthly mileage limit, as was the case with the officer for Mtoko; his vehicle was allocated enough fuel to cover only 900 miles per month.¹⁰⁷⁸ This was not sufficient to adequately cater for the needs of all 110 farmers in Mtoko.¹⁰⁷⁹ The Mtoko ICA Committee resolved to discontinue ICA work.

Though farmers eventually rescinded their decision to disband the ICA after the intervention of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, L. B Smith, CONEX and the NRB¹⁰⁸⁰, attempts to have the ICA de-proclaimed pointed to broader dissatisfaction in the settler farming community with the ICA programme. All ICAs in Mashonaland, such as Glendale, Bindura, Shamva, Bromley, Salisbury West and South, Gwebi-Hunyani, Norton, Trelawney, Angwa North and South, Wenimbe-Ruzawi, Virginia and Marandellas North, to mention a few, were all

¹⁰⁷⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday November 11, 1965, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷⁷ NAZ 450/6, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area, File 1: 1946-52, Letter from the Director of Irrigation, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, dated 20 January 1947.

¹⁰⁷⁸ NAZ 450/7, Bromley Intensive Conservation Area, File 2: Minutes of Bromley ICA and Food Advisory Committee (FAC) held at Bromley Country Club, 7th January 1954, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Saturday November 20, 1965, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 3.

dissatisfied with CONEX's failure to provide adequate staff, and with perceived poor funding of ICA programmes.¹⁰⁸¹

UDI compounded the ICA movement's problems. After the declaration of UDI in November 1965, farmers were encouraged to cut down their production of export crops. In the case of tobacco, by the end of November, 1965, only three weeks after the declaration of UDI, the Minister of Agriculture, Lord Graham, had issued the third warning to tobacco farmers to plant less tobacco.¹⁰⁸² The Tobacco Association backed the Ministry of Agriculture's position by informing its members not taking heed of the advice to grow less tobacco would "not only be foolish but would be doing the country a disservice."¹⁰⁸³ From 1967, the government introduced tobacco production quotas for every farm to ensure there would not be overproduction.¹⁰⁸⁴

As production fell, the number of Africans employed on the farms also declined. Between September 1966 and September 1967 the agricultural sector shed 28 336 jobs.¹⁰⁸⁵ Low production on the farms was exacerbated by lack of fuel as a result of fuel rationing, itself a product of the embargo.¹⁰⁸⁶ Fuel rationing forced farmers to reduce acreages they put under the plough. The UDI period was also characterized by low commodity prices;¹⁰⁸⁷ rising

¹⁰⁸¹ NAZ F450, Department of Conservation and Extension, ICAs

¹⁰⁸² The Rhodesia Herald, Saturday November 27, 1965, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸³ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁰⁸⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday May 5, 1967, p. 1, "Tobacco control plan – Quotas will be tied to farms" and Friday June 16, 1967, p. 2, "Growers given two months for quota decision."

¹⁰⁸⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday September 8, 1967, p. 3, "Employment on farms shows decrease" and Saturday September 16, 1967, p. 3, "Days of plentiful labour on farms over – McLean."

¹⁰⁸⁶ See the following articles in The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday December 9, 1965, "Farmers must pay cash for their fuel", Tuesday 4 January, 1966, p. 1, "Farmers have their allocations of Bulk fuel cut in half", Tuesday February 1, 1966, p. 3, "Farmers seek more petrol", April 5, 1966, "Farmers need more petrol", Friday December 7, 1966, p. 1, "Farmers criticized on saving petrol" and Thursday July 29, 1976, p. 4, "Inequalities in fuel ration say farmers."

¹⁰⁸⁷ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday 3 May, 1966, p. 7, "Civil servants, not only farmers, should help the exchequer", Monday May 30, 1966, "Farmers hit hard by drop in maize, rise in fuel, prices", Wednesday May 25, 1966, p. 7, "Farmers must get a better deal to carry on", Friday May 5, 1972, "Grain price disappoint,

fertilizer and coal prices¹⁰⁸⁸ and high operational costs.¹⁰⁸⁹ One farmers' wife, in a letter to the Editor in May 1965, bitterly complained;

How many Rhodesian merchants have had their turnovers cut by anything up to 50 percent with no warning at all just as they have set up their new production line by the crass stupidity of the Government? This is what happened to scores of tobacco farmers in 1965...November, which ushered in the lunacy of UDI, also marks the start of the planting season which, like any well-organized business operation, has to be planned many months in advance... Many farmers' wives are sick to the death of watching their husbands over-working year after year just to keep going if they don't go bust, which appears highly likely, they may decide the game just isn't worth the candle and pack up and go.¹⁰⁹⁰

Conservation was closely linked to the issue of productivity and profitability of the farms. If the farms were productive and profitable, farmers would be able to plough back some of their profits into soil conservation work.

With the fortunes of Rhodesian agriculture declining under sanctions, attention given to soil conservation and rehabilitation work also declined. "Politicians are playing political football with the country's environment," Allan Savory, an MP in the legislative assembly, noted in 1972, "even to the extent of controlling appointments in such supposedly political watchdog bodies as the NRB", he continued.¹⁰⁹¹ Savory, who was also an ecologist, had begun his advocacy for conservation to be prioritized on the colony's settler farms from 1965. At a meeting of the Umtali Museum Society in 1967, Savory warned that everywhere one looked on the farms there were very visible signs of land decline. He listed drought, the high

groundnuts men happy", Friday May 2, 1970, p. 13, "Serious situation if the farmers have to retreat and get deeper in debt" and Thursday March 20, 1975, p.2, "Farmers call for a pledge on prices."

¹⁰⁸⁸ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday March 6, 1975, p. 5, "Tobacco hit by fertilizer, coal costs."

¹⁰⁸⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday June 22, 1966, p. 1, "Restoration of Profitability for Agriculture is urged by President of the RNFU", Friday March 13, 1970, p. 15, "Farmers will eat sadza if necessary, but would also enjoy cake" and Friday March 4, 1977, p. 3, "Farmers seek confidence to plant again."

¹⁰⁹⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday 14 May, 1969, p. 5, Letter to the Editor from Gavelle Wyndham Baker of Bindura titled "Business does not suffer same disabilities as Rhodesian farmers."

¹⁰⁹¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday June 23, 1972, p. 5.

incidence of floods, diminishing wildlife in the countryside and abandonment of land by farmers as the major symptoms of this decline.¹⁰⁹²

Rhodesian farms also faced the challenge of overgrazing. The Director of the Agricultural Research Council, H. C. Pereira, told the inaugural Rhodesia Science Congress that the ICA system, with its high numbers of conservation and extension staff, had failed to yield “steady progress of well-ordered scientific land use.”¹⁰⁹³ The evidence of this, according to Pereira, was that land in 73 percent of the settler ranching industry and 95 percent of African areas had been severely damaged as a result of “chronic overgrazing.”¹⁰⁹⁴ “We cannot allow or tolerate production to take place at the expense of one of the country’s most valuable resources – the natural veld,” J. H. H. Louwrens, the Director of CONEX, told a meeting of Matabeleland beef farmers in October 1967, “I maintain that any farmer who has overstocked and misused his land...should be barred from all forms of financial assistance...”, he continued.

As a result of poor management of resources in the colony, J. J. Duvenage told a Salisbury East Rotary Club luncheon in 1968, the country was on the verge of facing the “revenge of nature.”¹⁰⁹⁵ The country’s farming areas were in need of sound veld management practices,¹⁰⁹⁶ many farms were facing degradation (sometimes due to abuse) and in need of urgent contouring and rehabilitation¹⁰⁹⁷, some farmers were polluting rivers¹⁰⁹⁸, while massive timber cutting was also taking place on some farms.¹⁰⁹⁹ Farmers, under the brunt of UDI

¹⁰⁹² The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday May 11, 1967, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹³ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday May 17, 1967, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 1

¹⁰⁹⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday February 14, 1968, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday July 1969, p. 13 and Wednesday May 26, 1976.

¹⁰⁹⁷ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday June 14, 1968, p. 14, Friday, July 31, 1970, p. 2, Friday January 25, 1974, p. 18, Wednesday August 13, 1975, Wednesday November 5, 1975, p. 3, and Tuesday November 18, 1975, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹⁸ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday July 9, 1971, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday June 3, 1976, p. 3 and Monday July 5, 1976.

sanctions whose impact manifested itself through high production costs, marketing challenges and low prices for farmers' produce, in many cases, failed to spare resources for conservation.

The government-appointed Farm Assistance Board did not do much to assist farmers who failed to cope with the difficult economic situation. The Board's Chairman, John Foster stated in 1968 that his board "did not so much relieve debt as remove the mental stress of pressing creditors."¹¹⁰⁰ The government was not able to give much financial assistance to help farmers who were neck-deep in debt. Such assistance would have trickled to soil conservation work. Lance B. Smith, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture told various gatherings of farmers and stakeholders in the farming industry that government's contribution to restoring viability in the farming industry was going to be small, in the region of two percent, while farmers themselves were supposed to contribute 98 percent.¹¹⁰¹ Lance also told farmers to adapt themselves and the way they farmed to the economic and socio-political climate prevailing under UDI conditions¹¹⁰², an adjustment that often encapsulated shelving conservation projects. While the financial factor was often a very important determinant of whether farmers carried out conservation projects on their farms or not, conservation efforts often succumbed to the effect of droughts. The 1967-8 drought is an example, which was invariably described by the press as "the worst crisis" and "a national disaster."¹¹⁰³ Commenting on the impact of this drought on farming operations, a farmer wrote to The Rhodesia Herald in December 1968, "Sir, drought and slumps are far more dangerous than sanctions..."¹¹⁰⁴

Calls for more financial aid to ICAs were often ignored by the government. One such call was made by J. L. D. Nicolle, the Chairman of the NRB, in 1970. "My contention is that (the

¹¹⁰⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday July 3, 1968, p. 9.

¹¹⁰¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday January 26, 1967.

¹¹⁰² Ibid.

¹¹⁰³ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday March 28, 1968, p. 1.

¹¹⁰⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday December 17, 1968, p. 9.

government) should pay at least \$700 or \$800 a year to each individual ICA (in comparison with around \$500 that the government was providing),” he said. “Soil conservation work is now more important to Southern Rhodesia than ever before because there is more soil erosion than in the past”, he added.¹¹⁰⁵ Though the NRB took a tough line on farmers who refused to carry out its directives to carry out conservation works on their farms, its work was made difficult by the financial situation that many of the farmers were in.¹¹⁰⁶ In spite of the lack of resources, the NRB tried hard to carry out its mandate. Among its efforts was the launch in 1970 of the “Sons of the Soil” programme. The programme sought to increase interest in commercial farming and conservation among the youths.¹¹⁰⁷ The Mashonaland Conservation Education Committee of the NRB also organized exhibitions to educate pupils about soil conservation. One such exhibition took place at the Salisbury Showground in November 1969 on the proper use of the veld. Over 7 000 pupils from Mashonaland schools attended the exhibition.¹¹⁰⁸ This exhibition was consistent with CONEX’s plan “to get every farmer to adopt and apply a more advanced system of veld management” from 1969.¹¹⁰⁹

To understand why the progress of soil conservation work stalled in the UDI period, one has to comprehend the socio-economic environment in Rhodesia from November 1965. The imposition of sanctions had a direct impact on the agricultural sector, especially in relation to commodity prices and markets. “We are willing to undergo all necessary hardships to gain our independence,” one farmer stated as he complained about the escalating inputs costs and poor prices for agricultural commodities, “but don’t make it impossible to pay our way and make a living.”¹¹¹⁰ The Rhodesian agricultural sector was at a huge disadvantage because of its reliance on exports. The colony’s tobacco was its major agricultural export, accounting for 30

¹¹⁰⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday October 15, 1970.

¹¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁷ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday January 23, 1970.

¹¹⁰⁸ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday November 21, 1969, p. 9.

¹¹⁰⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday July 25, 1969, p. 13.

¹¹¹⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, 25 May 1966, p. 7.

percent of the country's exports.¹¹¹¹ There was uncertainty whether they would be able to sell their crop in the 1965-6 season. Most Mashonaland farmers had either completed tobacco planting or had planted the majority of their crop. The 1965-66 and 1966-7 selling seasons turned out to be catastrophic for the tobacco sector. As Morris Bornstein has put it;

The 1965-66 tobacco crop was 250 million pounds, but only 120 million pounds could be sold in the government's secret auction, with the remainder purchased by the government at the support price for stockpiling. The 1966-67 crop was about 200 million pounds, with about half being stockpiled.¹¹¹²

The optimism that the colony's tobacco industry would be able to survive sanctions and recover over time was not shared in the United Kingdom.

Lord Hastings, a Conservative legislator, predicted in November 1965 that the immediate impact of the sanctions would be "massive (African) unemployment."¹¹¹³ Hastings, who had lived and even owned a farm in Rhodesia, further stated that African unemployment would further ferment revolution in the colony, which would become the colonial regime's downfall. He stated;

The lower the economy runs down, the more miserable will become the condition of the Africans. More certainly will it bring about revolution and bloodshed because there will not be employment for the Africans.¹¹¹⁴

True to his prediction, by December 1965 farmers were already considering the fate of their workers in Mashonaland. A survey by the Rhodesia Herald showed that many farmers were

¹¹¹¹ E. G. Cross, "Economic Sanctions as a Tool of Policy against Rhodesia", The World Economy, p. 70.

¹¹¹² Bornstein, "Economic Sanctions and Rewards", p. 424.

¹¹¹³ The Rhodesia Herald, Monday November 15, 1965, p. 4.

¹¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 4.

considering cutting their African workers' wages. It was, however, white farm managers and assistants whose jobs were more threatened in the early days of UDI.¹¹¹⁵

Apart from the loss of jobs, Rhodesia had entered into an era of austerity. An Editorial in the Rhodesia Herald of December 10, 1965, captures the economic climate of the period in a very concise way. It states;

The era of easy credit to Rhodesia farmers has ended. From now on the man who has the cash to pay for his needs will be able to get what he wants, but only if it is available. The farmer who asks for extended credit is unlikely to get it. Rhodesia had entered a period of shortage of money and goods, and this will inevitably mean that the trade will give preferential treatment to the farmer who can pay...Traditionally at this time of the year the money from overseas for the purchase of the next tobacco crop begins to flow in strongly, but to date the flow has not yet started and... it is unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.¹¹¹⁶

This comment, made just a month after UDI, shows that the colony had put itself in a difficult situation and was facing great uncertainty. Farmers were not certain either that they would be able to sell their produce such as tobacco on international markets, or that they would get enough to be able to remunerate their workers at existing wage levels. They were not able to access credit as the Land Bank and other banks' capacity to lend was conditional on their getting deposits from private enterprise, something that was not happening at a significant scale at the end of 1965, according to the quoted Editorial.

In April 1966 the Rhodesia National Farmers' Union (R.N.F.U) reported that the agricultural sector needed to be subsidized. R. S. Truscott, the vice-president of the R.N.F.U, noted that such a subsidy would improve the farm incomes and productivity on the farm, and benefits of

¹¹¹⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday December 31, 1965, p. 3.

¹¹¹⁶ The Rhodesia Herald of December 10, 1965.

such a programme would be enjoyed by the whole country because, as things stood, farmers' indebtedness was "frightening".¹¹¹⁷ Truscott added;

To my knowledge there is no country in the world that does not subsidize agriculture. We have always been proud of the fact that we can maintain ourselves and so we don't want subsidies. This is because credit facilities have been big enough to let people carry on – but now I think we must consider the possibility of subsidizing agriculture, particularly where there are export possibilities.¹¹¹⁸

The inability of the financial system to give credit to farmers meant that everything needed to be paid for in cash. This, from December 1965, became the case in relation to fuel.

Marketing of agricultural goods on international markets became cumbersome for the colony. One farmer complained in 1970 that prices "farmers receive for their milk, and tobacco are considerably lower (than they were ten years ago), but machinery, fuel spares etc. cost more...Farmers will eat sadza if necessary, but would also enjoy some cake."¹¹¹⁹ Rhodesia grappled with marketing challenges. In the case of tobacco, a quota system was put in place from 1967.¹¹²⁰ This was meant to ensure that the colony produced only what it could be able to market. This situation continued to obtain till the 1970s.¹¹²¹ Tobacco marketing in the UDI era was characterized by secrecy, as the Smith regime sought to bust/evade sanctions. Farmers were urged to maintain secrecy as "experts in espionage had a way of collating small pieces of information from various sources and making them into something worthwhile", H. W. Freeman, the Chairman of the Tobacco Corporation told farmers in 1973.¹¹²²

¹¹¹⁷ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday April 5, 1966, p. 4.

¹¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

¹¹¹⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday March 13, 1970, p. 15.

¹¹²⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday May 5, 1967, p. 1.

¹¹²¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday April 13, 1973.

¹¹²² The Rhodesia Herald, Wednesday July 18, 1973, p. 6.

Pricing of agricultural commodities was a major grievance among farmers. Farmers had no control over their input costs, and they also had no say in the determination of the end price of their products. One farmer wrote to *The Rhodesia Herald* about this situation in 1968;

Since UDI, if the cost of living has increased in the towns, it has well been disguised by the general air of prosperity. But on the farms our cost of production has been increased immensely, by, among other things, higher fuel prices, transport costs, upwards of 100 percent increase in spares costs, and above all the general “farmers are fair game” attitude of commerce and industry. It must be obvious to everyone that a reduction of twenty one and half percent in the gross return to the grower makes production impossible to everyone without large capital reserves, a rare thing nowadays. The tobacco farmers originally financed the Rhodesian Front to power. Perhaps this is just retribution.¹¹²³

With the fall of the tobacco price from 26d per pound in the pre-UDI period to 22d in 1968, growers felt it was they who bore “almost the entire brunt” of the burden of sanctions.¹¹²⁴ It was time for Prime Minister, Ian Smith, the Chairman of the Umvukwes’ Farmers and Tobacco Growers’ Association (TGA) stated at a TGA meeting in April 1968, to;

...tell us categorically whether or not it is the present Government’s intention to sacrifice the tobacco growers of Rhodesia for the good of the country and if so, what possible good does he see coming from such sacrifice... and I will remind (him), that it was this present Government that got Rhodesia into the mess we are in, and it is this Government that must get us out of it or resign...¹¹²⁵

Government bureaucrats thought that low tobacco prices would make farmers diversify. In January 1969 the Minister of Agriculture, David Smith stated that diversification was taking

¹¹²³ *The Rhodesia Herald*, Monday March 18, 1968, p. 5.

¹¹²⁴ *The Rhodesia Herald*, Saturday March 23, 1968, p. 1.

¹¹²⁵ *The Rhodesia Herald*, Friday April 5, 1968, p. 1.

place “at a good rate”, as 28 000 acres formerly under tobacco had been replaced by other crops.¹¹²⁶

Fuel shortages and rationing had a huge impact on agricultural viability. Just five months from November 1965, for example, many farmers could no longer get the same amount of petrol and diesel as before UDI. While in the past farmers had been able to access fuel from fuel companies on credit, the companies began to insist on payment when farmers placed their order. “The rule (to pay cash in advance) was always applied to commerce and industry, and no exceptions have been allowed in these two sectors,” stated a Rhodesia Herald Editorial on December the 9th, 1965, “but its strict application to agriculture, I understand, has not always been possible.”¹¹²⁷ The Editorial continued;

Sometimes fuel tankers travel many miles to district farms to deliver bulk orders of petrol and diesel fuels, only to find that either the farmer is either away in the lands or in town. To save time and costs in these cases...the fuel would be delivered and payment collected on the return round, or later. But any concessions of this nature, and others, to farmers are now to be stopped. The rule will be applied equally to fuels delivered to farmers by bulk lorries or tankers and those collected in drums from drum filling points at depots.¹¹²⁸

The requirement for farmers to pay for fuel in advance was not a reaction to the method of payment mentioned above which obviously resulted in oil companies getting their money from the farmers late. It was a result of a fuel shortage which the country began to experience.

From January 1966 farmers who bought petrol in bulk had their allocations reduced by half as a result of the colony’s inability to secure adequate fuel. A statement issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on 3 January 1966 stated that fuel rationing would be applied to all,

¹¹²⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday January 3, 1969, p. 1.

¹¹²⁷ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday December 9th, 1965.

¹¹²⁸ Ibid.

including diplomats and consular officials.¹¹²⁹ Farmers could, however, still access their normal allocations of diesel. A Spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry stated;

It is appreciated that diesel fuel is the basic fuel used by farmers and there is no intention at the moment to reduce their supply of this. But it is considered that the farming community can afford to make their contribution to the conservation of fuel supplies by curtailing their use of petrol. Naturally, any farmers who find his reduced fuel ration inadequate can apply in the ordinary way for an extra allocation.¹¹³⁰

The shortage of fuel naturally affected farmers. For example at the end of January 1966 the Chairman of the Ploughing Championships, E. R. Linnel, announced that the National Ploughing Championships which had been scheduled to take place in April 1966 in Karoi had been cancelled. Fuel shortage was given as the reason for the cancellation.¹¹³¹ “The fuel shortage has made this decision inevitable,” Linnel said, adding;

We have also been informed that many of the local competitions have been cancelled for the same reason. The cancellation of the National Championships will mean that we will be unable to nominate any competitors for the World Ploughing Contest to be held in New Zealand in May next year.¹¹³²

Local competitions such as the Barwick Ploughing Match held by the Barwick ICA Committee (Concession) were also cancelled due to constraints in finding adequate fuel.¹¹³³ Though the cancellation of the championships would not have a major impact on Rhodesian farming life, it was small things such as these competitions that contributed to building closer

¹¹²⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday 4 January 1966, p. 1.

¹¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 1.

¹¹³¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday January 27, 1966, p. 14.

¹¹³² Ibid, p. 14.

¹¹³³ Ibid, p. 14

relations and community in the several farming districts over time, and fostered a spirit of healthy competition, which was good for the colony's agrarian sector.

Farmers' desperation for fuel was exhibited when The Rhodesia National Farmers' Union (R.N.F.U) reported at the end of January 1966 that their office was "inundated with requests from farmers and smallholders for additional supplies of fuel."¹¹³⁴ This was despite the fact that the R.N.F.U did not deal with applications for fuel. This was the brief of local District Commissioners, who were the designated issuing authorities and petrol rationing officers. In April 1966 the R.N.F.U criticized government petrol rationing regulations. The Rhodesian Farmer, the official publication of the R.N.F.U and the Rhodesia Tobacco Association asked in its Editorial, 'Does Government want agricultural production to be cut?' whether the government understood the importance of fuel in farmers' operations. The Editorial reported that a lot of harm was already being done by the fuel shortage; farmers had had problems with harvesting their tobacco while ploughing was behind schedule.

Rise of Armed Conflict

Apart from the difficulties experienced by farmers as a result of the sanctions, white agriculture was also disrupted by growing African militancy and the liberation struggle. Declaration of UDI effectively shut the door for a peaceful transition to majority rule, as had happened in Zambia and Malawi. Sanctions against the Smith regime created conditions necessary for the prosecution of the liberation struggle. ZANU supported the sanctions as they created conditions fertile for African disgruntlement and consequently made it easier to recruit cadres to fight the Smith regime. ZANU support for sanctions was also because, according to Eddison Zvobgo, they hurt the Smith regime more than they impacted on the

¹¹³⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday February 1, 1966, p. 3.

African population. Giving evidence to a US Congressional hearing in February 1973, Zvobgo stated;

It is not us who need sheets to sleep on or cars to come into the city, or spare parts to run the industries. We do not own the economy. Those comforts which have been siphoned off by sanctions are totally irrelevant to the African people. Over 90 percent of the African people live on the land... They are fed by the very soil. So to suggest that sanctions hurt the Africans and therefore in the interest of the African we ought to drop sanctions is nonsense.¹¹³⁵

Zvobgo's position seems to have been politically expedient for him and his ZANU but, in reality, sanctions also impacted negatively on Africans. The sanctions led to massive unemployment, and a general increase in African poverty. Between 1965 and 1972, Losman observed, the gap in average wages given to white and black employees grew by 40 percent, while farm income also tumbled by 16 percent in the same period.¹¹³⁶

In December 1965, only a month after the declaration of UDI, farmers in Raffingora and Karoi were employing the services of guards to ensure security of their crops and barns. This followed incidents of arson, where the tobacco crop and barns on some farms in the area were set on fire by disenchanted Africans.¹¹³⁷ One farmer told The Rhodesia Herald; "There is a general feeling in the district that something peculiar is going on and quite a few farmers have decided to protect their barns in addition to the patrols on the lands."¹¹³⁸ At the end of December, 1965, three African men were arraigned before the Salisbury Regional Court for uprooting three acres of maize at Frascati farm in Goromonzi.¹¹³⁹ By 1966 these actions had taken on another dimension; a white couple was murdered at a farm near Hartley. The Farmer

¹¹³⁵ Minter and Schmidt, "When Sanctions worked", p. 232.

¹¹³⁶ Losman, International Economic Sanctions, p. 116.

¹¹³⁷ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday December 14, 1965, p. 3.

¹¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 3.

¹¹³⁹ The Rhodesia Herald, Saturday December 25, 1965, p. 7.

Johannes Hendrik Viljoen and his wife, it was reported, were killed by an “African terrorist gang” which left “pamphlets published in the name of the Zimbabwe African National Union” calling for “violent action against Europeans in Rhodesia.”¹¹⁴⁰ The pamphlets left by Viljoen’s killers had been also been found on seven Africans killed in the Battle of Sinoia on April 29, 1966.¹¹⁴¹

The state’s reaction was to step up security on the farms, and to try to get more settlers on the land. The Minister of Justice, Desmond Lardner-Burke, explained the logic of trying to put more settlers on the farms at the official opening of the Fort Victoria Agricultural Show in September 1971; “It (is) only when you have vacant farms that you are liable to suffer from squatter problems,” he said. “This could lead to infiltration of terrorists or their supporters and could undermine the security of the country.”¹¹⁴² The government was not able to stem the problem of farm murders. On January 24, 1973 a farmer’s wife, Ida Kleynhans, was killed while the husband was seriously injured in a grenade attack at Ellan Vannin farm in Centenary. The incident was “the forth attack on civilian targets in the north-east border area since Christmas and marked a swing of terrorist activity back to the Centenary area following a move east to the Mt Darwin area.”¹¹⁴³

In March, 1973 another farmer, Andries Hendrick Joubert, was killed in Wedza.¹¹⁴⁴ Next was the killing of Louis Couve of Paridon farm, Mt Darwin, marking the 8th farm killing in 1973.¹¹⁴⁵ In December 1974 an African was charged at the High Court in Salisbury for a grenade and rocket attack at a Sipolilo farm, to which he pleaded guilty.¹¹⁴⁶ This prosecution

¹¹⁴⁰ The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday May 19, 1966, p. 1.

¹¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 1.

¹¹⁴² The Rhodesia Herald, Saturday September 18, 1971, p. 5.

¹¹⁴³ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday January 26, 1973, p. 1.

¹¹⁴⁴ The Rhodesia Herald, March 11, 1973, p. 1.

¹¹⁴⁵ The Rhodesia Herald, Saturday June 9, 1973, p. 1.

¹¹⁴⁶ The Rhodesia Herald, Tuesday December 4, 1973.

did not deter the attackers, as from 1975 the attacks increased.¹¹⁴⁷ The farm attacks brought insecurity on the farms, which was detrimental to both productivity of the farms and construction of conservation works. The liberation war affected agricultural productivity and conservation on the farms in a number of ways. To start with, the Rhodesian army relied on military call-up; all men under the age of 50 had to go to the front. The call-up has been characterized by Tony Hawkins, an academic at the University of Rhodesia during UDI, as “relentless” and “devastating.”¹¹⁴⁸ The call-up impacted on the morale of many people, as they had to leave their families and farms. According to John Graylin, “People got very fed up with having to go into the army for longish periods very frequently (often six weeks at a time, four to five times a year).”¹¹⁴⁹ This impacted on productivity and conservation work on the farms.

In 1976 the colony’s immigration patterns changed, more people left the colony in comparison with those who came to settle in Rhodesia.¹¹⁵⁰ More than 7 000 people left the colony in that year.¹¹⁵¹ The white exodus has to be understood in the context of insecurity on the farms and what was happening in the industrial sector. From 1951 the manufacturing sector had overtaken agriculture as the most important sector in the colony.¹¹⁵² Though the sector had managed to remain vibrant in the wake of sanctions, it began to feel the impact of the combination of sanctions and the war in the mid-1970s. The government made it mandatory for employers to pay salaries and wages of employees on call-up, giving the industrial sector a huge burden. Though the government later subsidized this, the burden was

¹¹⁴⁷ See for example The Rhodesia Herald, Thursday June 26, 1975, p. 1, Tuesday October 19, 1976, p. 1, and September 30, 1976, p. 1.

¹¹⁴⁸ Minter and Schmidt, “When Sanctions Worked”, p. 233, quoting their interview with Hawkins, 19 May, 1986.

¹¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 234, interviews with Eddie Cross and John Graylin.

¹¹⁵⁰ Strack, Sanctions: the Case of Rhodesia, p. 89.

¹¹⁵¹ Losman, International Economic Sanctions, pp. 135-6.

¹¹⁵² A. G. Irvine, 1959, The Balance of Payments of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1945-1954, London, pp. 309-17.

huge for the colony's industrial sector.¹¹⁵³ Call-up also affected the settler agricultural sector, as farmers were called up to fight on the front. The combination of sanctions and the war forced the regime to agree to transfer of power. Some scholars have argued that it was not the war that yielded independence. Matthew Preston has argued that the war got to a stalemate, with no side winning, and this led to a situation where it became necessary for both sides to reach a settlement at the negotiating table.¹¹⁵⁴ But had the war reached what William Zartman has called a "mutually hurting" stalemate?¹¹⁵⁵ There are scholars who, however, argue that the Rhodesians were on the brink of losing the war in 1979. Faced with such a situation, they were left with very few options, hence their willingness to negotiate at the Lancaster House Conference. John Stedman has argued that the Rhodesians were facing a "desperate crisis"¹¹⁵⁶ by 1979; they had lost the war.

Conclusion

The UDI period still needs more study, as there is little information on many aspects of the Rhodesian economy then, including conservation. Literature on the UDI mostly focuses on the dynamics of sanctions, and how the Rhodesians managed to hold on for 14 years under the sanctions. This chapter argues that with the imposition of sanctions, the conservation agenda lost the momentum it had gathered from the 1940s. Economic sanctions and the war effectively ensured that the state and farmers' attention became fixated on survival in the short to medium term, and not conservation. Having said this, the ICAs continued with their work in the UDI period. This chapter has shown the factors that stood in the way of conservation work, such as the sanctions and the war.

¹¹⁵³ Minter and Schmidt, "When Sanctions Worked", p. 234.

¹¹⁵⁴ M. Preston, 2004, "Stalemate and the Termination of Civil War: Rhodesia Reassessed", The Journal of Peace Research, 41, 1, pp. 65-83.

¹¹⁵⁵ W. I. Zartman, 1983, "The Strategy of Preventive Diplomacy in Third World Conflicts", in A. George (ed), Managing U.S.- Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention, Boulder, Westview, pp. 341-363.

¹¹⁵⁶ J. S. Stedman, 1991, Peace-making in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe 1974-1980, Boulder, Lynne Reiner.

The imposition of economic sanctions on the colony by the British government and the United Nations disrupted settler agriculture in a number of ways. The colony's tobacco lost access to the traditionally important United Kingdom market. Farmers' focus largely shifted to survival, resulting in very little new investments taking place in the agricultural sector. The pace of conservation work slowed. The liberation struggle further complicated this situation by making the farms unsafe.

Chapter 8: Assessment and Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has examined the politics and economic history of soil conservation in the white agrarian sector in colonial Zimbabwe from 1908 to 1980. The evolution and development of environmental consciousness in the colony, particularly as it pertained to settler farming, has been categorized into four historical time zones; the Company, Responsible government, Federal and Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) periods.

The Company period, from 1890 to 1923, was generally characterized by a lack of clear environmental awareness and, arguably, commitment by both the administration and settler farmers not only to combat, or at least to reduce, soil erosion, but also to good farming methods and practices in general. The Responsible government period, from 1923 to 1953, is in two phases. In its first decade, under Premiers Coghlan, Moffat and Mitchell, there was more of continuation of Company agrarian policies than change. From 1934 the colonial administration, under Huggins' extended premiership which continued uninterrupted right into the 1950s, gave top priority to the agrarian success of white farmers, while African agriculture was undermined by a cornucopia of mostly deliberately imposed non and extra-market and legal measures in relation to land-ownership, agricultural marketing and financing and labour policies, among others.

The period prior to 1934 cannot, however, be discounted in colonial Zimbabwe's environmental and soil conservation history; successive colonial governments' settler agrarian and, indeed, soil conservation policies from 1934 onwards built on the foundation laid by the

Company from 1890 and the Responsible government in the mid-1920s and early 1930s. Of particular importance under Company rule was the implementation of racialized land settlement policies and a systematic programme to boost settler agriculture following the launch of the White Agricultural Policy (WAP) in 1908, at the expense of African agriculture. Even more poignant was the swift move by the Coghlan and Moffat governments between 1924 and 1930 to provide the white agrarian sector with unimpeachable security in land tenure as evidenced by the appointment of the Morris Carter Land Commission in 1925 to inquire into the question of land ownership in the colony and, five years later, the enactment of the legal cornerstone of land apartheid in Southern Rhodesia, the Land Apportionment Act. The Act provided a vital template for future settler administrations' land and agricultural policy formulation.

The Federal period, like the Huggins-led segment of the Responsible government era before it, witnessed an advance in Southern Rhodesia's settler agrarian policy. This was inevitable considering that Salisbury was the federal capital of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, with the consequence that the majority of the staff in federal ministries were Southern Rhodesian because of the entity's proximity to the federal seat of power and its white population's superiority in terms of numbers in comparison to its two sister states. Apart from this demographic dynamic, infrastructure for the establishment and growth of Southern Rhodesia's soil conservation movement had already been laid in Southern Rhodesia prior to the birth of the federation. The legal framework in the form of the Natural Resources Act of 1941 and key institutions such as the Natural Resources Board (NRB), Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs) and the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX) were already functional, and were expanding in terms of their staffing, capabilities, experience and reach.

In addition to the legal and institutional arrangements for soil conservation, progress on other fronts had also taken root by the early 1950s. Labour agreements with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1936 and 1948 ensured an improvement in the agrarian labour situation by augmenting local supplies with extra-territorial labour from the two northern territories. The fruits of enhanced agricultural financing (such as under the farmers' debt adjustment initiative) and marketing mechanisms under control/marketing boards outlined in chapter 4, among other such programmes put in place to lift farmers from poverty and usher into gainful capitalist production, had become quite evident on farms, especially in the context of the tobacco boom of the 1940s.

The fourth period, under UDI, had a deleterious impact on the fortunes of the colonial settler agrarian sector and, consequently, the soil conservation movement. UDI was characterized by, on one hand, international sanctions which reduced the state's capacity to fund settler agriculture, to provide adequate fuel for farming and other economic operations and to market crops that had traditionally been produced for international markets, such as tobacco. On the other hand, increased radicalization of Africans, the war of liberation whose impact was to disrupt settler farming as farming areas were soft targets for liberation fighters, and military call-up which kept male farmers, among other sections of the Rhodesian society, away from their farms for long periods and at the war-front also undermined agriculture and conservation programmes. Outbound migration of farmers and desertion of farms as the war intensified also impacted negatively on settler farming.

In view of the above, this chapter summarises four major aspects of soil conservation in settler agriculture, namely, the role of the state in each period in exhorting and facilitating uptake of soil conservation as an integral part of colonial white farming, the evolution of

settler attitudes to land, farming and conservation, the development of local and international conservationist ideas in the colonial period and their impact on conservation policy-making and outcomes. The fourth aspect, already partly explored by David Hughes, examines the extent to which the three factors stated above (the roles of the state and farmers and their evolution over time, as well as the role of domestic and international factors in the colony's conservationist tradition) culminated in the birth of what Hughes terms "an environmentalist form of identity" in settler farming communities.

The Role of the State

As noted, existing studies on soil erosion in colonial Zimbabwe have predominantly focused on state intervention in African reserves. Such interventions, in almost all cases without much African input in policy formulation and implementation, were often characterized by the utilization of brute force by colonial authorities to ensure compliance. The administration's approach to African agrarian issues generally led to two predictable results. The first is that there were negative outcomes in African production and, consequently, livelihoods. The second result, which stemmed from African impoverishment and apparent limited avenues for upward economic mobility, was increasing consciousness among workers and farmers, especially in the post-Second World War period. Calls for decolonization on the subcontinent not only become louder after 1945, but also increasingly gained international support, in part because of a unipolar global environment characterized by the cold-war. As was the case with other colonial programmes, opposition to state-initiated conservation programmes increased and took more militant and radical forms.¹¹⁵⁷

¹¹⁵⁷ Kramer, "Extension Services in Peasant Agriculture" and "Early Centralisation Efforts in Colonial Zimbabwe", Elliot, "Soil Erosion and Conservation in Zimbabwe", Alexander, "The State, Agrarian Policy and Rural Politics", McGregor, "Conservation, Control and Ecological Change" and Beinart, "Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development."

Apart from research by Kwashirai and Musemwa (on the farmer-miner conflict over access to natural resources such as timber and water),¹¹⁵⁸ the majority of studies on settler agriculture in the colonial period have focused on various other aspects of settler capitalist farming such as the development of the maize, tobacco and beef sectors and the agrarian labour question, to mention only a few, to the glaring exclusion of soil conservation.¹¹⁵⁹ This section focuses on the role of the state in promoting soil conservation in the Company, Responsible Government, federal and UDI periods.

The Company Period

The second chapter of this thesis has built on three arguments put forward in existing scholarship on the Company period to show why soil conservation was not encapsulated as a major component of the government's agrarian programmes prior to 1923. The first argument is that the birth and growth of the settler agrarian sector was largely the result of the role of the State. After it had become clear to the Company at the turn of the 20th century that the expectation to find a Second Gold Rand in the colony would not materialize, the administration came up with a clear-cut programme to boost and bolster settler capitalist agriculture. An array of measures, discussed in detail in chapter 2, were put in place in pursuit of this goal, including increased efforts to settle more white people on the land, creation of infrastructure such as central farms, agricultural training institutions, the Land Bank to avail financial resources to under-capitalized farmers, railway lines to enhance marketing, among other measures.¹¹⁶⁰ Because the administration was a commercial company, its main thrust was on promoting activities that would yield profits for its commercial branch as quickly as

¹¹⁵⁸ Kwashirai, "Dilemmas in Conservationism", pp. 541-561 and Musemwa, "Contestation over Resources", pp. 79-107.

¹¹⁵⁹ Arrighi, 1970, "Labour Supplies in a Historical Perspective", pp. 197-234, Phimister, "Meat and Monopolies", Palmer, Land and Racial Discrimination and, and "Afrikaners in Rhodesia", Clements and Harben, Leaf of Gold and Keyter, "Maize Control in Southern Rhodesia."

¹¹⁶⁰ Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture", Palmer, "The Making and Implementation of Land Policy" and Phimister, "Meat and Monopolies."

was possible. While promotion of settler capitalist farming would inevitably yield profits, one may deduce from the absence of attention to soil conservation, the pursuit of a soil conservation policy was mistakenly seen as neither requiring both prominence and urgent attention nor as a pathway to increased agricultural profitability in the short to medium term.

The second argument, which examines the limitations of Southern Rhodesia's Company-led administrative arrangement in its first 33 years, has received considerable scholarly attention.¹¹⁶¹ Kwashirai and Musemwa's research on the farmer-miner dispute sheds light on how the way the administration was structured impacted on the conservation of the soil as well as timber and water. The Company, unwilling to sacrifice commercial interests on the altar of sound resource-management, gave miners preference over farmers in relation to access of timber and water resources ahead of farming interests, which triggered a long-standing conflict between the two main pillars of the colonial economy.¹¹⁶² As already mentioned, commercial considerations were, in the eyes of the Company, more poignant than environmental considerations. Even when the Company hired timber conservation experts such as Blocker and Sim from South Africa, one of its major interests - which exceeded conservationist imperatives - was to establish how it could profit from commercial exploitation of indigenous timber resources in the colony.¹¹⁶³

The third argument is about the role and importance of conservationist ideas in shaping agrarian policies in the region and in Southern Rhodesia in the Company period.¹¹⁶⁴ Beinart argued that "conservationist thinking" in the region was generally a "deeply rooted element in official thinking about agrarian society in the first half of the twentieth century" which

¹¹⁶¹ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia* and Galbraith, *The Early Years of the British South Africa Company*.

¹¹⁶² Kwashirai, "Dilemmas in Conservationism" and Musemwa, "Contestation over Resources."

¹¹⁶³ Kwashirai, "Dilemmas in Conservationism."

¹¹⁶⁴ Beinart, "Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development" and Phimister, "Conservationism and Ideas about Development in Southern Rhodesia."

“perhaps amounted to an official ideology.”¹¹⁶⁵ Conservationist “ideas and prescriptions” were, Beinart further argued, “invoked, elaborated and applied...first in relation to settler, then also peasant, agriculture.” Beinart’s appraisal of the importance of state-initiated conservation programmes in the region is that they “became a reference point in wider debates about soil erosion.”¹¹⁶⁶ Phimister, in his response to Beinart’s article, argues that in Southern Rhodesia, “the roots of conservationism were far shallower” than implied by Beinart.¹¹⁶⁷

This thesis has added to understanding of soil conservation issues in the Company period in three ways. First, it has examined the Company land policy in detail to show that though the Company did not vigorously encapsulate a clear-cut soil conservation thrust in the policy, it unwittingly laid, by its land settlement policy, a strong basis upon which the soil conservation movement was to be premised long after Company administration. Land segregation on racial lines effectively ensured that large portions of land in the colony were taken over by white people. The state deliberately set out to ensure that land was acquired on easy terms, and that settler agrarian production took place with state assistance in areas such as facilitating access to capital, labour, markets and cheap African labour. Company land settlement policy was a foundational element to the colony’s future conservation policies; settlement of white and African people was done in a way which enabled successor governments to implement a two-pronged approach to resource conservation. It was easier to give incentives to the white agrarian sector while coercion was utilized in relation to Africans because the ground had already been prepared by the Company’s segregationist land settlement policy (which settled the two races in different zones). In addition, a lot of knowledge was generated by the Company through its Land Committee of 1910 and the Native Lands Commission of 1915.

¹¹⁶⁵ Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development”, p. 82.

¹¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹¹⁶⁷ Phimister, “Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context”, pp. 263-75.

Apart from segregated land settlement policies and generation of important information about the colony's agrarian sectors and land, the Company also home-schooled the settlers till they were able to carry out farming as a viable commercial proposition. Without this foundation, it would not have been easy to roll out a soil conservation programme of the magnitude described in chapters five and six of this thesis.

The second contribution of the study has been to show that the lack of significant progress with regard to soil conservation on settler lands in the Company period was not necessarily a product of ignorance on the part of the Company and farmers. There is sufficiently suggestive evidence, especially from the NRB Farming Enquiry of 1942, that the problem of erosion was appreciated in the corridors of power and among some sections of the settler farming community from the early days of settlement. To begin with, two state-bankrolled high-profile investigations had, by 1910, been held (by Blocker and Sim) with a view to conserve and reap profits from commercial exploitation of indigenous timber resources. Chapter 2 shows that the government was well aware of the need for a programme to combat soil erosion as shown by the fact that a number of Company officials raised concern about the need for soil conservation on settler farms. Cripps, Watt, MacIlwaine and Jennings, to name a few, are among officials who informed the government about the dangers of soil erosion that was taking place on settler farms. True to Phimister's observation, conservationism was not deeply engrained in Company thinking in Southern Rhodesia but neither was it, as implied by Beinart, a major factor in the colony prior to the late 1920s.

Another contribution of the second chapter has been to show why soil conservation remained a peripheral matter on the Company's agrarian development agenda. The Company focused on other matters that it perceived to be of more importance than putting in place a programme

to combat erosion on settler farms. First, as already argued, the Company focused on issues that would quickly bring a financial yield to its treasury. This made sense in light of the huge injection of capital into the Company by shareholders who, naturally, expected to reap handsome returns from their investment. Pursuant to this, the Company reorganized its agricultural department in 1908 to improve the capacity and effectiveness of its administrative and research units. This, the Company anticipated, would result in an increase in revenue as scientists in the agricultural and veterinary sections came up with methods to improve the colony's stock and crops. Secondly, the Company focused on land settlement. Land sales were a quick way to generate revenue. Bringing profitability from the land, following the failure to get anticipated profits from the gold-mining sector, was an urgent matter as the Company had, by 1908, still not been able to declare a dividend for its shareholders. In addition to this, the Company also invested in key infrastructure such as Central farms and agricultural training institutions to home-school pioneer farmers, the majority of whom lacked capital and requisite farming know-how.

Chapter 2 has contributed to scholarship on conservation by showing blindspots that plagued the administration in relation to the implementation of a soil conservation programme. The Company government was seized with balancing different settler interests and handling conflict. There were a number of conflicts; on one hand, after waiting for a return on their investment for many years, the Company's shareholders grew more impatient and began to press for the Company to declare dividends, while, on the other hand, settler farmers felt that the Company gave mining interests preferential treatment ahead of agriculture, especially in relation to apportionment of the colony's indigenous timber resources. The colony's settlers were also unhappy with their representation in the Legislative Council and Company administration in general. Settlers felt that the Company put its commercial interests ahead of

its governance obligations. There were also conflicts over land ownership; whether the colony's land exclusively belonged to the Company or would vest in a new government at the end of Company rule. Lastly, farmers also contended with the state over the supply of African labour. Apart from the internal conflict, the colony also focused on the war-effort during the First World War. Because of these factors, conservation was overlooked.

The Responsible Government Period

In 1924 the Responsible Government took over administrative functions in the colony. This period is divided in this study into three different timespans in order to highlight the different developments and dynamics of the time in relation to soil conservation as they unfolded. These are discussed in detail in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

As shown in chapter 3, there were no major changes in the government's soil conservation policy in the first decade under Responsible government. In 1918, the Judicial Council of the Privy Council made its determination on the issue of land ownership in the colony, and resolved that land in the colony did not belong to the Company, but to the Crown. In the wake of this ruling, the Company lost interest in governing the colony. The following five years were dominated by the question of how the colony would be administered after the expiry of the Company's Supplementary Charter in 1923. Of the two options, accession to the Union of South Africa as its fifth province or self-rule, the settlers elected the later in the October 1922 plebiscite.

The Responsible government, with Charles Coghlan as its Premier, did not embark on a programme of change. Many office bearers in the new administration had links with the Company government. As D. J. Murray has observed, there was "no fundamental change

either in the policy towards agriculture or in the administrative system.”¹¹⁶⁸ Two developments are worth mentioning though in the first decade of Responsible Government. First is the Land Commission of 1925 to deal with the question of land ownership and segregation in the colony. The Commission’s recommendations culminated in the promulgation of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. The second developments was the introduction of Centralization in African reserves from 1929, beginning with the Selukwe Reserve. Centralization was introduced to partition land occupied by Africans in the reserves into three categories; settlement areas, farm land and grazing zones. This would, it was envisaged, increase the carrying capacity of the reserves to accommodate people who were evicted from Crown land and areas designated for white people. It was also expected that Centralization would avert an ecological crisis in the congested reserves.

Centralization did not represent a major development in terms of soil conservation as it was conceived for other motives other than ecological concerns. The state was more interested in ensuring that Africans were able to produce more food on small pieces of land to pre-empt demands for more land by Africans in the future. Conservation in the colony was only introduced in response to the unprecedented agricultural crisis the colony’s agricultural sector experienced from the 1927/28 farming season. The agricultural crisis claimed the scalps of Premier Moffat and Prime Minister Mitchel in 1933 and ushered in Godfrey Huggins into power in 1934.

While the decade between 1924 and 1934 has generally been characterized by scholars such as Gann and Gelfand, Machingaidze, Murray, Hudson, Blake and Willis as having been an era of continuity rather than change, far-reaching changes were introduced in the colony’s land

¹¹⁶⁸ Murray, The Governmental System”, p. 59.

laws during that period.¹¹⁶⁹ The Coghlan and Moffat governments, respectively, provided settler agriculture with secure land tenure. Premier Coghlan's administration appointed the Land Commission, led by Morris Carter, in 1925 to make investigate and make recommendations to the government settlement could be improved in the colony. The Moffat government, in response to the recommendations of the Commission, enacted the Land Apportionment Act in 1930.

Chapter 4 examined the role of the state in bailing out the crisis-hit settler agrarian sector. It is from the mid-1930s that the role of the State in soil conservation issues becomes very visible and well-synchronized. Government intervention was meant to ease the problem of white unemployment, which, according to The Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the Problem of Unemployment in the Colony, 1932¹¹⁷⁰, had reached alarming levels. It was feared that unemployment would result in an exodus of white people from the colony. In addition to unemployment, many farmers were highly indebted and on the verge of bankruptcy. Agricultural production, consequently, was low. The second reason was to save the colony itself, as, according to the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1934, it was impossible to sustain the colony "on any other basis either than a white agricultural population."¹¹⁷¹

Chapter 4 also examined the important steps taken by the Huggins government to return settler agriculture to profitability. As noted, the Huggins government made important interventions in settler agriculture. Though some of the interventions (such as payment of farmers' debts and establishment of marketing parastatals) were not directly related to soil

¹¹⁶⁹ Gann and Gelfand, Huggins of Rhodesia, Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture", Murray, The Governmental System, Hudson, "A Historical Background to Soil Erosion and its Control", Blake, A History of Rhodesia and Willis, An Introduction to the History of Central Africa.

¹¹⁷⁰ The Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the Problem of Unemployment in the Colony, 1932.

¹¹⁷¹ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1934, p. 1.

conservation, they were very significant as it would not have been possible to put in place any soil conservation and management programme in the absence of broader measures to deal with the depression-hit settler agrarian sector of the mid-1930s. First, the government enacted the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Act in 1935 to create a framework for the Land and Agricultural Bank to provide a £50 000 revolving fund for clearing farmers' debts. In 1938 the fund's mandate was extended beyond debt relief. An extra fund of £90 000 was provided to fund farming operations. The second intervention had to do with the African labour question. Government talks with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland culminated in the Tripartite Labour Agreement of August 1936. In 1940 the Salisbury Conference was held to plug loopholes such as clandestine migration of labour from the two northern territories to the Union of South Africa. In August 1942 the Huggins government further promulgated the Compulsory Labour Act to enable the State to forcibly recruit Africans in the colony. Forced recruitment of African labour for the farms only stopped in August 1946. The government also reorganized agricultural marketing in response to unsatisfactory prices for the colony's agrarian commodities, which had affected profitability of the industry. Parastatals, known as either Marketing or Control Boards had, by 1937, been put in place to market all the colony's agricultural commodities including maize, tobacco, beef, milk and cotton, among others.

The government also put in place the Natural Resources Commission in 1938 to enquire into the status of the colony's natural resources. The Commission's 1939 Report recommended the enactment of legislation to tackle resource degradation. This culminated in the promulgation of the Natural Resources Act in 1941. The Act provided for the formation of the Natural Resources Board (NRB) to superintend over the utilization of all the colony's natural resources, including the soil. The Act also provided for the formation of the Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs) to oversee soil conservation programmes in every settler farming

district. The ICAs were a major driver of conservation work on settler farms from the mid-1940s. The Natural Resources Act, 1941, like the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Act of 1935, the Tripartite Labour Agreement of 1936, the Compulsory Labour Act of 1942 and the creation of marketing parastatals must all be seen in the context of the agricultural crisis which began in the late 1920s. The role of the state in soil conservation did not spring out of the government's voluntary initiative. It was forced by an agricultural crisis whose impact threatened to rock the very foundations of the colony. The roots of conservationism in Southern Rhodesia prior to the early 1940s were, indeed, shallow, as the state only intervened in reaction to an agricultural downturn.

Chapter 5 examined the establishment and role of ICAs in settler farming districts, with a focus on Bromley. It showed that the state was very instrumental in facilitating intensive conservation processes on settler farms. By 1953, when the colony came together with Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia in the Federation, the majority of the colony's farming districts had joined the ICAs programme. It was also demonstrated that government departments, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Department of Justice, played a role in facilitating the establishment of ICAs and that the government promoted ICAs through the provision of loans, subsidies and grants-in-aid. Through the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX), government also provided conservation officers to the ICAs. This was very important in ensuring good soil management on the farms. The ICA Committees doubled up as Food Production Advisory Committees (FPACs) whose role was to encourage settler farmers in their areas of jurisdiction to produce more food. This was a clever move, as the democratic nature of the ICAs made farmers participants in government agrarian programmes.

Chapter 6 examined soil conservation work during the Federal period. The chapter showed how the government continued to give support to the ICAs movement through its organs such as the NRB, CONEX and the Department of Irrigation. . The ICAs faced an array of challenges ranging from the problem of African “squatters” and tenants, who were accused of employing ruinous land-use practices, shortages of conservation officers, faulty and poor construction of conservation works by mechanical units, challenges relating to availability and cost of equipment, to the lack of cooperation from some land owners and financial constraints. Unlike in the Company period where the government did not put much effort into conservation projects, the problems outlined above were a result of the fact that the ICAs programme, covering all settler farming districts in the country, was so huge that it stretched government resources. However, while it is true that the government was never able to address all the grievances of the ICAs, the mere fact that it managed to keep the ICAs programme going, with no single ICA pulling out during the Federal period, was an achievement. The ICAs registered a number of successes, especially in relation to farm planning, dam building, fire control and construction of farm roads.

Chapter 7 examined the role of the State in the UDI period. UDI was an attempt by the minority settler government to forestall African majority rule. Britain had granted Malawi and Zambia their independence in 1964, following the dissolution of the Federation of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland. As decolonization was underway in other parts of Africa, black majority rule in colonial Zimbabwe also seemed imminent. To the alarm of the white minority government, Britain was prepared to grant majority rule to its African colonies, including

Rhodesia.¹¹⁷² Feeling betrayed,¹¹⁷³ the Ian Smith-led government of Rhodesia, declared UDI on 11 November 1965, delaying Zimbabwean independence by another 15 years.

With the end of the Federation, the colony could no longer rely on the bigger federal purse as it had done between 1953 and 1962. Sanctions put the regime in a tight corner. Fuel had to be rationed, and general belt-tightening across the board inevitably followed as major Rhodesian exports such as tobacco and minerals were embargoed on the British market. The start of the liberation war at the end of the 1960s complicated matters further. Defense spending had to be increased, while whites from all sectors of the Rhodesian economy were called up from time to time to serve in the army. An increase in the defense budget and call-up, described by Eddie Cross as “relentless” and “devastating”¹¹⁷⁴ impacted not just on agriculture and conservation, but also on every other aspect of Rhodesian economic life. The ICAs began to decline in response to these developments. Conservation work declined as a result of UDI, as Rhodesia went under international sanctions and the state found itself with insufficient resources to fund programmes. In spite of challenges, the ICAs movement limped on and survived the sanctions and the war.

The role of the state was very important in putting the colony’s settler agricultural sector on a sound footing in terms of soil conservation, especially from the second half of the 1930s. With the enactment of landmark natural resources legislation in 1941, which provided for ICAs, the colony entered into a different epoch. From 1944, when the first ICA was launched at Inyazura, the ICA movement registered huge success in settler farming districts. The inheritance of the post-colonial government included structures and institutions built in the

¹¹⁷² The ‘Winds of Change’ speech by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in 1960 represented a major shift in British foreign policy. For more see Myers, “Harold Wilson’s ‘Winds of Change’ Speech”, pp. 555-575. Also see Coggins, “Wilson and Rhodesia”, pp. 363-81.

¹¹⁷³ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, pp. 53-4.

¹¹⁷⁴ Minter and Schmidt, “When Sanctions Worked”, p. 234, Interview with Eddie Cross.

colonial period such as marketing institutions, financial arrangements for commercial farming, and ICAs, which, even without government support and recognition, continued to carry out significant conservation work, as Hughes' work on the Virginia ICA has demonstrated.¹¹⁷⁵

Settler Attitudes to Land, Farming and Soil Erosion

This study has also examined settler attitudes to land, farming, and soil conservation from the early colonial period. To understand settler attitudes and their evolution over time, it is important to understand the nature of colonial Zimbabwe's occupation. Chapter 2 has examined the general mind-set of members of the Pioneer Column. The majority of the pioneers were not well to do and did not have prior farming experience. Farming was not a major motivation for joining the Pioneer Column, but the lure of gold. As Ian Phimister has observed, the general belief was that "everybody was going to make money quickly" from the mining industry.¹¹⁷⁶

Because of the failure to realise this dream and because of the resultant economic hardships, many pioneers sold their land to speculative companies and individuals. For those settlers who got into farming, the vast majority did not have adequate capital and knowledge about farming. In addition to lack of agrarian knowledge and lack of capital, the majority of farmers in the early period were not able to compete with their African counterparts. As argued in chapter 2, it is against this background that scholars such as Alois Mlambo have observed that many early settlers did not have plans to stay in the colony for too long.¹¹⁷⁷

¹¹⁷⁵ Hughes, "Hydrology of Hope."

¹¹⁷⁶ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 6.

¹¹⁷⁷ Mlambo, "Building a White Man's Country", p. 124.

Many farmers in the early period had a get-rich-quickly attitude, which resulted in them only focusing on increasing their yields to maximize their returns. As shown, agriculture only became a sustainable proposition because of massive government support. Without the support of the state, it is doubtful that most farmers would have survived. As Hodder Williams has argued, as late as 1918, farms were “marked above all by an air of impermanency”, save for a few exceptions.¹¹⁷⁸ As chapter 3 has shown, the agricultural sector was in crisis in the second half of the 1920s. For maize farmers, poor farming methods and little investment in the soil were major causes of the decline. Farmers did not adopt green manuring and resorted to the use of artificial fertilizers, instead, which was unsustainable because of the cost.

A good case in point is that of Southey’s Farm discussed in chapter 3 where the Mazoe Valley farmer was, at one time, able to get a harvest of up to 15 000 bags of maize from his farm, but because of poor farming methods and monoculture, yields began to diminish to a point when he was saddled with debt.¹¹⁷⁹ This same situation obtained on tobacco farms as many farmers ventured into tobacco cultivation, attracted by high prices in international markets. Farmers were fixated on making quick returns, although yields per acre and the quality of the tobacco produced remained low. The quality of the soil on tobacco land continued to deteriorate, while trees were decimated as farmers cut down trees to use for tobacco flue-curing.¹¹⁸⁰

As argued in the previous section, while many studies have focused on the role of the state in various aspects of settler farming, this study contributes to Zimbabwe’s agrarian history by examining the previously unexplored, yet vital, role played by settler farmers in steering the

¹¹⁷⁸ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Marandellas*.

¹¹⁷⁹ NAZ S987/1, Oral Evidence of the Food Production Committee to the Natural Resources Board (NRB) Farming Enquiry, 1942.

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, evidence given by J. P. de Kok to the NRB Farming Enquiry.

state towards a clear-cut soil conservation programme. Paradoxically, it was the farmers themselves who, through their Farmers' Associations and the Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU), began to call for government to do something about soil erosion on the farms, especially in the wake of unsatisfactory yields, increasing soil loss due to erosion, and difficult international marketing conditions in the mid-1920s.

As shown in chapter 3, for example, the Bindura Farmers' Association came up with a strongly-worded resolution at one of its meetings in February 1924 urging the government to "investigate the matter of soil erosion, with special reference to wasting agricultural lands."¹¹⁸¹ Calls by Farmers' Associations got louder, and culminated in the Rhodesia Agricultural Union appointing a Soil Erosion Committee in 1931 to investigate the extent of erosion of settler farms and to lobby government to move swiftly to take remedial action.¹¹⁸²

The Actions of Farmers' Associations and RAU, in addition to the depressed agricultural conditions of the early 1930s whose impact on settler farming was deleterious, were an important factor in influencing the direction government took in relation to soil conservation. In October 1934, the government appointed two Soil Advisory Councils for Mashonaland and Matabeleland. With government intervention in the 1930s (in marketing, farmers' indebtedness, provision of labour on farms and soil conservation) the agricultural sector slowly began to recover. From 1941, agriculture was regulated by the Natural Resources Act. The product of extensive consultation between government and farmers under the auspices of the Natural Resources Commission, the Act, which provided for the formation of ICAs on farms.

¹¹⁸¹ The Rhodesia Herald, Friday 18 February, 1924, p. 18.

¹¹⁸² NAZ ZAZ 4/1/1, The Rhodesia Agricultural Union (RAU), The Soil Erosion Committee Report, Written Evidence.

Apart from showing the important role played by farmers in influencing the adoption of natural resources legislation, this study also makes another important contribution to scholarship on soil conservation in colonial Zimbabwe. Chapters 5 and 6 examined the settler farmers' ground-breaking work, under the leadership of their ICA Committees in different farming districts. Farmers' attitudes towards the land and conservation from the 1940s should be understood in the context of the ICAs movement, which went a long way in making settler commercial farmers support soil conservation.

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, much of the contemporary literature on rural development emphasizes community participation in projects as a panacea to sustainable development. From the 1980s, community conservation, which in essence is the opposite of top-down management, where the government is in charge, has become an increasingly popular method of natural resources management. . In the case of Zimbabwe two examples of such organizations come to mind; the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management and the Forestry Commission. Communities on the margins of demarcated areas did not have a role in the management of the resources in the past, and community members caught poaching for small game and cutting down trees in the zones demarcated for game or forests respectively were apprehended and prosecuted. Community Conservation takes into account the input of locals, and gives a framework for them to benefit from proceeds accruing from the sale of the resource.¹¹⁸³

This study has gone back into history to show that the concept of community development is not a contemporary, post-colonial invention. The ICAs rank among the first examples of

¹¹⁸³ For more on these issues see R. Wade, 1987, "The Management of Common Property Resources: Collective Action as an Alternative to Privatization or State Regulation", Cambridge Journal of Economics, 11, pp. 95-106 and K. A. Hill, 1991, "Zimbabwe's Wildlife Conservation Regime: Rural Farmers and the State", Human Ecology, 19, 1, pp. 19-34.

community-led development projects. Because of this, significant lessons emerge from their experiences not only for academic purposes, but also for the development sector, which has come to be mainly associated with non-governmental organizations.

The argument that important lessons can be drawn from the operations of ICAs for today's soil conservation projects, among other development programmes, should not be taken to mean that ICAs did not have their challenges. The fifth chapter has focused on some of the challenges and limitations. These included, among others, the question of labour tenancy, and shortages of conservation officers, as the colony never had enough conservation officers, and attempts to recruit from overseas did not yield the required numbers.

In spite of the challenges, the ICAs registered a number of successes. The first success was that a farming-business culture was born on the farms. Unlike in the period prior to 1938, farming began to mean more than just putting the land under the plough, planting and harvesting produce. Planning became a central aspect of the farming business. Farm planning involved making an analysis of the soil types on a given farm and examining its topography in order to help plan which piece of land was best suited for which activity. Aerial surveys were also used as part of the farm planning drive.

In addition, the ICAs presided over a hydrological revolution in the countryside. Many small dams were constructed on the farms. Dams became an important part of the soil conservation movement. The construction of small farm dams helped ensure water availability for irrigation and for stock. This all combined to make the farms better than they were prior to the launch of the ICAs.

More importantly, the ICAs put every farmer in the spot light. Even those who were reluctant to participate had to comply, as the ICA body had the power to deal with those who did not comply. Offenders could be reported to the Natural Resources Board, something that farmers wanted to avoid, as the Board had a court that could try and penalize them. The ICAs managed to force farmers, even those who were not keen on conservation, to undertake conservation works. Government would have found this difficult to do in the entire country, without the support of the ICAs. Local monitoring improved the farms in every settler farming locality.

Settler attitudes to land and farming clearly evolved over time in the colonial period. While the first few decades of colonial rule were mainly characterized by a “get-rich-real-quick” attitude, this began to change in the 1920s. Farmers’ associations were the vehicles through which farmers’ calls for changes in the way soil conservation were channeled, Farmers’ participation increased in the 1940s with the formation of ICAs. The ICAs became a major characteristic of colonial farming in all settler farming districts. David Hughes has argued that the ICAs added another dimension to settler culture in the colony; they represented the birth of a new identity, a “conservationist/environmentalist” identity which became a new form of belonging. The next section briefly interrogates this view.

The Development of and Role of Local and International Ideas

Beinart has also argued that conservation programmes in Southern Rhodesia were influenced by British ideas about soil and nature preservation. Other scholars such as Brink, Dodson and Helms have attributed the development of modern soil conservationist thinking as a discipline

in the first half of the 20th century to events in the United States of America.¹¹⁸⁴ At the turn of the century, the US already had established a Bureau of Soils under the Department of Agriculture, with a mandate to ensure soil preservation and improvement. Following the Great Dust Bowl Disaster in the 1930s, the US government rolled out a massive soil conservation programme, which received world-wide attention.¹¹⁸⁵ But to what extent did developments in Britain and America influence the path Southern Rhodesia took in relation to conservation?

Chapters 2 and 3 have shown that international factors were not very significant in determining the direction that the colony took in terms of conservation. As shown in Chapter 2, Company land settlement policy, for example, was guided more by Company commercial interests than by international political or socio-economic trends. Conflict between the Company and its shareholders, on one hand, and various segments of the colony's residents on the other, were mainly over local developments rather than international dynamics. Chapter 3 has examined developments in two important sectors of settler agriculture, maize and tobacco. In both cases, it was because of how production was carried out locally that by the second half of the 1920s, the land could not yield a profit for the majority of farmers.

Chapter 4 has examined in details the array of measures put in place by the state to rescue settler farming. Chapters 5 and 6 have examined local initiatives, the ICAs, and their role in tackling soil erosion, while chapter 7 has examined the reversal that took place because of the imposition of UDI sanctions. This thesis has shown that international factors did not play a major role in determining the colony's path in terms of crafting and implementing its soil conservation policy.

¹¹⁸⁴ Brink, Big Hugh: *The Father of Soil Conservation*, Dodson, "A Soil Conservation Safari" and Helms, "Hugh Hammond Bennett and the Creation of the Soil Erosion Service."

¹¹⁸⁵ Dodson, "A Soil Conservation Safari."

Did Community Conservation result in a “Conservationist Identity” among Farmers?

Hughes’ argument that white farmers in colonial Zimbabwe affiliated themselves with the environment – the land – rather than surrounding societies needs to be examined.¹¹⁸⁶ While it is true that the minority white community in the colony did not “reconstruct it (race) in a more complex fashion. Europeans married other Europeans, breeding ‘whites’ whose population never exceeded five percent of the national total”¹¹⁸⁷, did white farmers attempt to justify their ownership of land by pursuing sound conservation farming methods? Were the developments on the farms, such as the network of small dams, a source of hope to the farmers that they had anchored themselves on the land? It appears that such attitudes did not exist prior to 1941. The enactment of enabling legislation in the form of the Natural Resources Act, and the establishment of ICAs seems to be what gave farmers hope. For instance, ICAs fostered close relations and a sense of community closer in settler farming districts.

Clearly, community conservation was an important building block to settler identity in the post-Second World War period. While UDI took the State and its farmers back to the era of “dilemmas”, as was the case before 1941, farmers were able to face the storm of sanctions partly because of social capital built around the conservation areas movement from 1944. Though community conservation (through the ICA movement) clearly brought farmers closer, and resulted in a lot of ground-breaking work taking place on the farms, there is no evidence that a very strong “conservationist identity” developed. ICAs began in the mid-1940s. For about 20 years they did much to transform the areas in which they operated. However, this was disrupted by the declaration of UDI and the consequent international economic sanctions.

¹¹⁸⁶ Hughes, “Hydrology of Hope”, p. 269.

¹¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

The liberation struggle further disrupted activities on the farms. As chapter 7 has shown, by the mid-1970s there was an exodus of white people from the farms and from the country as the socio-economic and political climate worsened. Though this study does not deny that conservation work built bonds among farmers, there is no evidence that these ties amounted to, and led to “an environmentalist form of identity” in the colonial period. Perhaps, as Hughes suggests, this was a phenomenon of the post-colonial period, as highlighted by his study of the Virginia ICA in the 1990s. Even then, the political environment in the post-independence period has altered significantly.

It is possible that the ICAs, with no government support, had altered by the 1990s. In any case, the ICAs were introduced only about three and half decades before the end of the colonial period, which appears to be too short a time for identity-formation. The ICAs certainly brought farmers closer together, and gave farmers a platform from which common challenges and grievances could be aired and resolved. It would be rather a long-short to agree with Hughes that they amounted to the formation of a new identity among the colony’s white farmers.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined conservation and its absence from 1908 to 1979. The history of conservation can be categorized into three broad phases; the period prior to the setting up of the Natural Resources Commission, the period from 1941, when the Natural Resources Act was enacted, to about 1964, and finally the UDI period. The earlier period was characterized by “dilemmas”, farmers had their own dilemmas, as did the Company government and the Responsible government, which had the net effect of slowing down the rate at which farmers took up conservation on their farms.

In the second period there was a sea-change in relation to the attitude towards conservation. This change did not have much to do with international developments such as the Great Dust Bowl Disaster in the United States of America. It had to do with economic dynamics in the colony, largely from the second half of the 1920s when there was a major tobacco slump. This was followed by the Depression. Faced by depressed economic conditions in the 1930s, which saw many farmers saddled with debt, the government intervened to rescue the sector by pursuing certain policy decisions; especially in relation to farmers' indebtedness, agricultural marketing, the labour question and conservation. The role of the state is critical; the state promulgation ground-breaking legislation to support conservation. In addition to this it also provided financing to ICAs in the form of loans, subsidies and grants-in-aid. The state, through the Department of Conservation and Extension provided technical staff to support conservation work in settler farming areas throughout the country.

This situation changes in the UDI period; the state's capacity to give support to agriculture is reduced by UDI sanctions which resulted in many challenges, such as shortages of fuel and marketing difficulties. UDI was an attempt by the Rhodesian Front-led government to resist the inevitable; winds of African liberation were sweeping across the continent. UDI only managed to delay independence, but not without paying a heavy price for it. Though attempts were made to sanctions-burst and to diversify the economy to reduce its vulnerability to sanctions, the 1970s frustrated this with the beginning of the liberation struggle.

The struggle forced the regime to introduce military call-up. Call-up did not spare farmers. This affected the agrarian sector. Other factors, such as the closure of the border with Zambia, the independence of Mozambique which opened a huge front that needed to be defended (border with Mozambique) and an increasing big brother attitude by the South African

government all imposed different dynamics to the regime's struggle for survival. These factors hampered the agrarian sector's productivity, along with conservation work.

Zimbabwe is currently going through huge economic challenges. Inability to attain food self-sufficiency since the land reform programme is one of the country's major challenges. Though a number of current studies seem to show that newly resettled farmers are growing more food and tobacco in comparison with the first five years after land reform, the country still produces less than it did in the 1990s.¹¹⁸⁸ There are reports of massive tree cutting, increased land degradation and utilization of poor farming methods.

This study has looked at how successive colonial governments managed to make the settler agrarian sector a major pillar of the colonial economy. The role of the state was important in attaining this feat. In Zimbabwe's case there is need for a land audit to determine who is occupying what land, and their capacity to produce. On the basis of this information the government should come up with more targeted programme to support the sector. The colonial government put in place an efficient system to support its farmers, covering the provision of African labour for the farms, marketing of agrarian crops, agricultural finance and soil conservation. The participation of the farmers, as was the case with the ICAs, in any programme meant to improve their fortunes, is also an important dimension.

¹¹⁸⁸ J. Chaumba, I. Scoones and W. Wolmer, 2003, "From Jambanja to Planning: The Reassertion of Technocracy in Land Reform in Southeastern Zimbabwe", Research Paper 2, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/wrp02.pdf>, downloaded on 12 February 2013, I. Scoones, N. Marongwe, B. Mavedzenge, J. Mahenehene, F. Murimbarimba and C. Sukume, 2010, Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities, Harare, Weaver Press.

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