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Title:

THE BASE MINERAL MINING INDUSTRY OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA:  
(1890 - 1939) PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

by

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The History of Southern Africa has been and is still today intimately connected with mineral production. Gold and diamonds changed the whole course of South Africa's history; Copper made the prosperity of Zambia and in Zimbabwe, gold, asbestos, coal, chrome and many other Base minerals did play a like part. Rhodesia before the advent of the Pioneer Column was considered a mysterious and legendary land. To the Arab traders, it was the hinterland to the Port of Ophir, from where every three years, the navy of Thorshish came to king Solomon bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. To the early Portuguese and other European explorers, it was the golden kingdom of monomotapa. Hunters like Henry Hartley, Karl Mauch, Thomas Baines and many others who came in the later period ventured with tales of the region's great natural wonders of the "ancient ruins" and evidence of early mining.

The region had been a centre of mining operations from an early period and whilst the fables of King Solomon's mines may be unsubstantiated, "ancient" workings for gold, copper and iron everywhere attested the activity of precolonial African miners. The sites were generally shallow and limited to the depth of the oxidised zone, commonly at about forty metres beneath the surface. Research by the Archaeologist, R. Summers indicated the presence of some 4000 workings at the conclusion of the nineteenth century. For gold, it was estimated that at least 21 000 000 fine ounces had been recovered by the precolonial African miners. Further discussions on the gold workings were made by John Hays Hammond as a consulting Engineer to the British South Africa Company (BSACO.), Karl Mauch, Thomas Baines and many others.<sup>1</sup>

Occupation of Southern Rhodesia by Rhodes and the BSACO. was fuelled by the wild promises of a Second Rand and it was this anticipated mineral wealth that led the Pioneer Column to invade the country in 1820 and not Rhodes' dream of Britain's paramountcy from Cape to Cairo. The BSACO. quickly promulgated the Mashonaland Mining Regulations, a set of laws which led to a situation whereby concessionaires eagerly explored the country. Prospectors either employed by companies or acting freelance soon discovered the principal mineral occurrences resulting in speculation soaring. In the majority of cases, optimism overcame business caution.

There is a fundamental difference between mining and other forms of productive activity such as agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry. Whereas policy in the latter cases aims at the preservation and improvement of the productive powers of the basic natural resources of a territory, mining essentially consists of the removal of valuable natural resources which once removed cannot in the nature of things be replaced. The process is therefore in the nature of things not to be replaced. The process is therefore in the nature of the realisation of a capital asset and the general aim of mining policy must therefore be to make the best possible arrangements for realising such an asset. The Mashonaland Mining Regulations of 1890 had been framed on the assumption that fabulous gold

deposits would be swiftly located.<sup>2</sup> The basic structure of the regulations favoured large blocs of capital and this in theory made it practically impossible for an individual to work his claims. Initially the BSACo sought to develop gold mining through the activities of public companies and according to the drafted mining laws, the company was to benefit from these activities by holding a fifty-percent interest in each company engaged in mining.<sup>3</sup>

By 1893, it had become evident that the optimistic views on gold mining in Southern Rhodesia were not being realised in practice, and also that the mining regulations were too harsh to attract capital. In addition to this, it had been realised that most of the gold reefs were small, patchy and not suitable for large company exploitation. This resulted in mining regulations being amended in a manner which allowed claimholders to work their mining locations on a Royalty basis, a development which led to a considerable amount of individual or syndicate work in proving the value of gold claims, thus paving the way for capital to come in on a surer basis than it did in the earlier stages of the country's history.<sup>4</sup>

The promulgation of the August 1895, Mines and Minerals Ordinance and its subsequent amendments of 1895 were aimed at prodding mining companies into continuous development of their properties in order to prove their profitability or otherwise.<sup>5</sup> At this stage, the BSACo. still looked to the companies as the basis on which the mining industry was to be conducted. Since the BSACo., was synonymous with International capital in its administering of the territory, the achievement of the state's objective of a prosperous and expanding industry depended primarily on private enterprise. As observed by D.J. Murray:

The major contribution of the Government itself was to provide a framework of law favourable to the continued operation and further development of mining. The basic laws regulating mining had been passed while the BSACo. still controlled the local legislative and these laws gave miners a preferential position within the colony.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the mining legislation gave advantages to the better capitalised miners in the field, it also gave all miners as a class of producers advantages over farmers. The mining law enabled licensed prospectors to peg claims on land owned by others and that on the other hand, the land so pegged, the prospector could graze free twenty drought animals, take wood for domestic purposes on payment of compensation, take water free when required for domestic purposes and lastly erect temporary buildings within the limits of the area pegged. The law, therefore, placed prospectors and miners in a privileged position and gave them rights which were deeply resented by farmers.<sup>7</sup> Beyond providing mines with this favourable framework of law within which to operate, the government made only a limited contribution to mining operations.

The developments at the legislative level produced a class of smallworkers who were to remain a significant force in the mining industry. The existence

of this class was strengthened by the geological distribution of the ore bodies as they were not good enough to attract large companies. Smallworkers operated their own plants, commanded a small group of African labourers and managed to make considerable profit from their operations. Often, their operations led to the discovery of large ore bodies, a development which led to their demise as a class of producers. This class fulfilled the dual role of small producer and prospector. The history of mining claims, as from 1896, showed a tendency that syndicates acquired claims from individuals and in turn these got absorbed by larger syndicates with adequate capital for development sufficient to show the value of properties and lift them for acquisition by companies specially formed to work them continuously. During this process, it became possible by exchange, sale or purchase to consolidate and group together holdings so that instead of syndicates holding claims in various parts of the country more or less in conflict with one another, they have complete blocs suited for efficient and economical working. The Bulawayo mining commissioner remarked as early as 1896, that he trusted that the advantages of the system will generally be understood and lead to ultimate success of mining in this country.<sup>8</sup>

The early stages of capitalist mining in Southern Rhodesia (1890 - 1903) rightly termed by Van Onsalsene the era of speculative capitalism was punctuated by a series of political and military disasters.<sup>9</sup> In particular, the hoped for "Second Rand" failed to materialise and the history of mining was just a story of fluctuating fortunes of speculative capital. It was the collapse of the London market that finally forced a reappraisal of the mining situation in Southern Rhodesia, leading to the announcement of new policies where emphasis was put on maximising production and reduction of costs by all means possible to accelerate the rate of primitive accumulation. It must be pointed out at this stage, that most of these developments were aimed at reviving the gold mining section of the industry as very little could be discussed with regards to the modern Base mineral sector in the early period of colonial capitalism. P.G. Owen, a small worker commenting on the position said that he had spoken to many members of the Pioneer Column who indicated to him, that they had joined the Pioneers either to "get a free farm or go prospecting and look for a gold mine ... Base metals at that stage had no economic value."<sup>10</sup>

The acknowledgement of the existence of leading base minerals in the colony dated as far as back as 1890 in the country's history, ... No serious attention was paid to them until 1908. Right through to 1945, Southern Rhodesia appeared doomed to being no more than a middle rate gold producer given its dependence on the one mineral product gold. Copper mining had been established before the advent of white settlers by the Africans and it was Moodie's group among the Pioneers which first put up claims along the Sabi. These were subsequently sold to W. Maby who purchased them on behalf of the East African Trading and

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Exploring Syndicate. These claims were abandoned in 1899 and the ground got absorbed by Bradleys Copper under Rhodesian Exploration Company limited.<sup>11</sup> Chrome had been simply dismissed by early settlers coming up to Selukwe as a simple ore of no immediate value. Coal claims were first pegged by A Giese, a German prospector, after an African had told him of the presence of some "black" stones that "burn" in an area about 70 miles South-east of the Victoria falls.<sup>12</sup> For asbestos, the first recognition of the existence of chrysotile asbestos appears to have been in 1906 when specimens were brought into the national museum at Bulawayo. These were identified by F.P. Mennell leading to some activity in Mashaba when the Gaths asbestos was pegged by J.N. Gath on June 28, 1907.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1907 and 1939, a total of no less than twenty Base minerals had been put on the claims list and most of these were considered unimportant with the exception of asbestos, Coal, Chrome and copper. In the earliest stages of mining, the world over, it is always the precious metals which are most sought after and the exploitation of less valuable products has to await a later period of development. In early days of capitalist development, emphasis was naturally put on gold both because of its value and a relatively easier method of disposal. From 1899 to 1913, the colony produced a steadily increasing quantity of the precious metal rising from £6 471 worth in 1895 to over £1 000 000 in 1906 and to nearly £300 000 in 1913.<sup>14</sup> The Base mineral industry which was still in its infancy contributed £100 000 in 1907 and this figure had risen to almost £230 000 by 1913.<sup>15</sup>

To facilitate the working of Base minerals in the country, F.P. Mennell a mineralogist attached to the Chamber of Mines, drew up a list in 1907 of base minerals aimed at serving as a guide for Royalty purposes. The first class consisted of minerals such as Antimony, Bismuth, Cobalt, Thorium and its allied substances, Tungsten, Uranium, Vanadium which he felt could stand a five percent Royalty on gross output. The second class consisted of minerals like Aluminium and its compounds, Asbestos, Barium, Chrome, Graphite, Iron, Manganese and mica with a two percent Royalty levied on gross output.<sup>16</sup> The assessment of Royalty represented the most difficult problem to which more attention had to be well directed by the colonial state. The economic value of a royalty is the value of the mineral as it lies underground (i.e. it is the equivalent to the market value of the mineral less the cost of extraction and marketing - the last term including a reasonable return on capital.)<sup>17</sup> It therefore followed that the quantity in which a mineral is found and the conditions under which it is extracted are reflected in the rate of Royalty it can pay.

The percentages suggested by F.P. Mennell were not taken as final in that they could easily be challenged as the margin for profit or loss of a base mineral at this stage was difficult to determine as there was practically no

mine in the two categories which was in operation. In addition, the fixing of these Royalties had to take into cognisance factors such as the grade of the produced ore, facilities for working and the lastly the ever present fluctuations in the prices of metals and minerals in the market.

At a meeting of the BSACo. directors Dr Jameson and Lord Winchester and representatives of the Chamber of Mines Dr Gordon Forbes and Mr Stewart set the stage and tone of interaction in the Base mineral sector. Dr Jameson and Lord Winchester suggested that the BSACo. appoint their representative in Southern Rhodesia specifically to deal with the Base mineral sector as they felt this move would give the "mining industry the best chance of working Base metals at a profit."<sup>18</sup> Mr. G. Forbes had cited that many people were willing to work on Base minerals, but always asked "on what terms"? It had been indicated by Mr Stewart that there was every need to work the Base metals, but at this stage, there was no capital. He went on to remark that:

... there is no money in this country to do it, I therefore think that some arrangement should be given for the inflow of capital, for without capital, we cannot work these Base metals. The small men ... could work those richer base metals.<sup>19</sup>

As a result of this meeting, the Base minerals' Royalty which at one time had been set at five and two percent for A and B classes respectively was put at 3 and 2 percent.<sup>20</sup>

By section 17 of the 1907 Mines and Minerals Ordinance, the twenty-five further named minerals (i.e. including asbestos, chrome and mica) then beginning to come into exploitation were brought under the operation of the 1903 Ordinance. Section 18 of the same, made Royalties for the first time payable to the BSACo. on the gross value, not the total value as in the case of gold, off the total monthly output. Section 27 made changes on the Royalty situation on coal, where the figure was brought down to half. This state of affairs continued until 1914 when the Mining Law Amendment Ordinance number 26 Section 20(4) made Royalties payable to the Company on the value, not either gross or total of all minerals won from alluvial claims. The Secretary for mines was given power to waive Royalty payment in certain cases.<sup>21</sup>

World War One created a demand for Base minerals and this had positive effects on Southern Rhodesian production. At the same time, it gave producers a chance to grapple with the practical problems of the extraction and marketing aspects of production, but encountering these on a greater scale. By 1916, it was quite evident that small workers had opened up many Base mineral mines, but since they were undercapitalised, they had difficulty in disposing the ore they produced. This led to increased calls for increased BSACo. participation in disposing and marketing of product an area which was to be a sore point where small worker interests conflicted with those of larger capitalists.

The Bulawayo Resident Mining Engineer indicated to the BSACo. Secretary that several suggestions had been made by prominent miners all pointing to the fact that the Company should help with the marketing of ore produced especially that of smallworkers. In this regard it was pointed out by Mr Maufe of the Geological Survey Department that he had received several enquiries regarding the possibility of contracts with smallworkers. To add onto this, cases had been cited especially for asbestos where the small producers were being robbed by local banks who paid £15 per ton in the Victoria district, but disposing the same product at £30 f.c.b. in Beira.<sup>22</sup> A.H. Arckermann the Resident Engineer felt it "desirable to protect the small-worker and if possible to ensure his well being in funds instead of the local broker in the various towns."<sup>23</sup>

The then acting commercial representative of the BSACo in Rhodesia, Mr. W. Olive opposed the suggestions and pointed out that from the present information, shipment of base minerals would be too risky to warrant the company undertaking the cost of freight and giving advances.<sup>24</sup> The mineral used to support the objection was antimony from Gothic mine. The samples forwarded were not of a grade high enough to bear the cost of shipment. The view expressed indicated an attempt to avoid a repetition of the double trouble which had arisen over the export of tobacco. W. Jenkins, the Chamber of Mines secretary responded to the problem by reiterating the view that only the BSACo currently was in an excellent position to safeguard the interests of producers in this matter. No progress was to be expected unless the company adopted a definite policy of encouraging the industry by offering the most liberal terms for transit by rail and also in the matter of Royalty.<sup>25</sup> At this time, it was felt that a suspension of Royalty for a definite period would have the desirable effect in encouraging the export of test consignments.<sup>26</sup>

The BSACo board in London considered the issue of its involvement in the export of Rhodesian Base minerals and concluded that it did not anticipate that shipments from the colony would not att in substantial dimensions in the immediate future. Whilst company control and organisation was deemed desirable not only in its private interests but also on public grounds, the BSACo directors made it quite clear that their involvement in this trade would be conducted solely in the interests of the British industry.<sup>27</sup> Guaranteeing returns for the producers in Rhodesia would therefore be conditional. In addition to this, the Rhodesian Chamber of Mines was alerted that the BSACo was prepared to deal with buyers of the highest repute and that by the reason of the (BSACo) credit and standing, it possessed facilities in respect of freight and other contracts not perhaps available to other corporations or individuals.<sup>28</sup> And for this reason, most of the Rhodesian base minerals had to find their way into the European market via Britain.

The BSACo proposed that those who wanted to use its facilities in disposing base minerals should notify their Rhodesian commercial representative who was in return going to consult the Resident Engineer Arckermann. This was done to ascertain whether the product would amply repay the freight and other realisation charges before arranging that the railway deal with the consignment on instructions from the BSACo. The product, it was assured, was going to be sold in the best available market in London and after that, the BSACo would be accountable to the producer for the proceeds of sale deducting freight and all out of pocket expenses. A commission of 2½% on the gross price realised in addition of course to Royalty was to be paid by the producer. Before all the above deductions were made, the producer was to get an advance carrying a 6% interest, and this was to be up to about 50% of the estimated net proceeds on the security of the ore. The interest was to accrue until the date upon which proceeds of sale were received by the company in London.<sup>29</sup> The local BSACo was to take great caution when making advance in the case of minerals subject to wide fluctuations in value or those that they may be rendered unsaleable if deleterious substances were present in them. The Directors were keen on feedback and had indicated that asbestos was not to be marketed in this manner as arrangements were specifically for minerals of immediate interest to them i.e. lead, copper, antimony and any other base mineral ores produced but which have a marketable value.<sup>30</sup>

Arrangements were made whereby the Resident mining Engineer could visit mining properties and the only charges to be made could just be actual cost of assays, namely 5/- per assay and travelling expenses including a subsistence allowance.<sup>31</sup> A notice was also put up for prospectors encouraging them to send specimens to the mines department which were to be examined free of charge, but the quantitative determination would be charged for ordinary rates. Whilst specimens were to be sent in duplicate and weighing more than 2 lbs each, accompanied by a statement of locality of the discovery, the department assured prospectors that the results would not be published or made public except with the consent of the prospector.

Since Base minerals were consumed outside the colony, by 1917, the problem in the case of economic minerals discovered was of how to ship and sell products in the best possible market. With regards to the arrangement made by the BSACo, the producers had indicated willingness to deal with the company, but made additional proposals. Firstly, in the case of a mineral value not being apparent to the BSACo commercial representative specimens should be sent to London in the first place. These samples had to be chosen by representatives of mines department Engineering staff, as producers felt that the picked staff would not convey a true impression of the average value of the find. Secondly, before shipment, the product had to be examined by the Resident Engineer or a member of his staff and in the case of minerals with a fluctuating value, cable advices should be exchanged with the London board of the BSACo



before shipment is agreed upon. These remarks were applicable chiefly to the new base minerals in their early stage of development as afterwards the general value of the claims and market value would be better known. Some minerals were already meeting the specified standards especially copper and asbestos. In the case of Asbestos towards the end of the year, a representative of Turner's and Newall had visited all the asbestos producing mines as a buyer and already a representative of Bell's Asbestos company was a buyer in Rhodesia.<sup>32</sup>

Whilst the Base mineral sector was viewed as a field for large capital, smallworkers did manage to survive precariously, but did so with state assistance. Through the Rhodesian smallworker and Tributors' Association which had branches in most mining districts of the capital, they organised themselves and managed to air their grievances as one class of producers. Mr Hogg representing the Salisbury branch wrote to the Under Secretary for Mines in 1918 objecting to the way the BSACo was handling their products. The first object of attack was article 2 of the circular dated 16 April stating that the BSACo should be satisfied as to the value of the sample and at the same time, the smallworker should at his own risk and expense transport the ore to the nearest siding or station.<sup>33</sup>

This appeared unfair to the smallworkers who argued that their ore might not get immediate attention from the Railways, thus running the risk of having a large demurrage charge for the detention of the railway trucks. Beyond this, there was a possibility that it might be found that only 15 to 20% on the value of the ore would be advanced to the producers by the BSACo. The circular actually stated that the company will advance in cash an amount not exceeding 50%.<sup>34</sup> At the end of the day it was argued, some Base mineral producers may find themselves saddled with a loss rather than being in receipt of help. Given the above objections, the Bulawayo Resident mining Engineer remarked that "I am afraid that the Rhodesians are getting more difficult to please everyday."<sup>35</sup> The Rhodesian smallworkers felt that their interests were being subjected to those of bigger producers and the consumers in London. Such feelings were reflected in their fight against the demand that they had to be in a position to guarantee delivery in England despite the fact that they had to pay all costs regarding freight and others until product was handed over to the government. A.E. Ward, a smallworker remarked that,

... what chance has the average smallworker like myself got of turning out Base metals under these conditions ... having to wait getting paid for possibly twelve months.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst settler demands appeared irrational, it must be borne in mind that the BSACo, railway companies and other related organisations symbolized to them monopoly control of their day to day living and their long term prospects in the country. Such sentiments, at key moments constituted an emotive rallying point against charterer rule and the entrenchment of monopoly capital in the sector.

The financial and engineering problems saddling the sector retarded anticipated progress. The case of the Edmondian mine would illustrate this point very well. Mr Kapnek the mine owner had approached the BSACo enquiring as to whether the company would take over the shipment of 1 000 tons of 20% copper in South Africa. He also possessed a smelting plant which he argued enhanced the chances of more profit if smelting was done in Rhodesia. Lower grade ores would also be mined and treated at a profit which under normal circumstances would not pay if shipped in their raw state. His plant was capable of dealing with 11 000 tons of ore monthly and he had proposed that the BSACo assist him financially to work the plant.<sup>37</sup> The proposal was turned down by the acting BSACo commercial representative on the grounds that technical staff and experience in smelters was lacking. In addition, the question of a smelter had to remain in abeyance until something was known more about local deposits and where they are situated. The proposal was considered premature at this stage as outside the Falcon output, the output from other copper propositions were too small to justify expenditure for a customs Smelting plant.<sup>38</sup>

The outbreak of World War One had a positive effect on the local production. The imperial government indicated to the Chamber of Mines that it was desperately in need of base-minerals. It was pointed out that it was of the utmost importance that the minerals should be supplied with the least possible delay to the extent that the existing sources of supply should be developed to their fullest capacity before steps are taken to discover new deposits.<sup>39</sup> Because of the war situation, mica, tungsten, wolfram, chrome ore, manganese, French chalk and graphite were indicated to be of greatest importance and urgently needed by the British Ministry of Munitions. All the minerals in demand existed in Rhodesia at this time, but prospecting work for them was still going on to determine their extent and further locations.<sup>40</sup>

Despite all these incentives, the industry suffered from the railway situation and Royalty payment, problems which were to bedevil the industry for some time to come. Royalty remained a burning issue as its fixing was debated right from the moment an ore was extracted through to the time it reached consumer as the final value of the product would be known. L. Manochis, a chrome miner remarked that

...I have had very considerable experience of mining both here and abroad, but I have not yet met a mining royalty which followed an ore literally from its cradle to its grave.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the royalty question, smallworkers alleged that some companies got preferential treatment when it came to dealing with the railways. In reality, this complaint was, directed at larger capitalists in the mining sector and R. Nairn's (a smallworkers) remark aptly sums up the position.

... The bar to progress is the railway rate granted to the chrome company whose destinies to a great extent are steered by Edmund Davis, the internationalist...<sup>42</sup>

The rate granted by the transport authorities to the chrome company was 10/- per ton loaded on trucks, an additional 10/- per ton upon shipment from Beira and a further commission of sale of ore as and when disposed of. The rate at which producers like Naim operated on was 48/9- per ton for a like distance.<sup>43</sup> The difference in one crucial item of cost was so great that competition, the healthy agent of production was made most difficult making operations for the smallworker most difficult. Any increases in the railway freight charges were not welcome to producers in the base mineral sector.

The other point of conflict was the differential treatment of the ores, especially minerals that were sold in different grades, like chrome ores. The majority of base minerals carried high rail costs as they underwent some processing which enhanced their value as opposed to chrome ores which were sent to Europe in an absolutely crude state. Producers demanded that arrangements should show scales which would cover both ores and concentrates.<sup>44</sup> The London Board of the BSACo quickly provided a schedule which was hoped would be of material assistance to the establishment of a base mineral industry. Base minerals were certainly being more sought after, but in the case of prospectors being successful in finding a mineral of economic value, the trouble that arose was of how to ship and dispose the product in the best markets. Most producers in the first instance could not easily obtain information as to the value of the mineral and whether it was advisable to continue the work or not.<sup>45</sup> If it happened that the discoverer was a man with small means, the lack of capital meant that he had to part with a large interest in his find and this discouraged most of them to continue the work.

The smallworkers suffered most and in most instances they often challenged the involvement of the bigger companies whenever their interests were at stake. For e.g. in 1921 L.H. Hutton a smallworker pointed out that 5/- had been added on railage charges on all chrome not belonging to the chrome Trust and strongly believed that this was apparently being done to crush the smallworker or force him to sell his ore to the Chrome Trust at a price the Trust wished to offer.<sup>46</sup> Whilst the imposition of such fees was scandalous, it was explained that the Rhodesian Chrome Mines had for many years arranged with the Railways to have the whole of the railage charges on their shipment paid in London.

As far back as 1920, this issue had been brought to the attention of Lord Milner the Secretary of State for Colonies, and consequently all Rhodesian producers other than Rhodesia Chrome Mines commonly known as the Trust had been granted the same rate of railage. Whilst there was obviously a gross irregularity in rail rates R.J. Heckshaw of the Mashonaland Railway Company, pointed out that the existing railway arrangements had come about, because up to 1918, the whole chrome exported from Rhodesia had been produced from the deposits at Selukwe. By special arrangement with the

then only producer, railway rates were fixed according to a sliding scale based upon the selling price of the ore overseas, a minimum rate being paid in the first instance. Owing to the higher prices for Chrome obtaining during the war, other producers had applied for a railway rates quotation which they got, but had to be adjusted in 1920, because of high working costs.<sup>47</sup>

The Railways argued that the terised method of payment had been introduced owing to the difficulty experienced by them in obtaining payment of excess railrage dues under the sliding scale of rates. Whilst the measure would guard against risking a serious loss of revenue, it obviously had its negative effects on the producers.<sup>48</sup> In one case, L.H. Hutton had to abandon 16 blocks of chrome claims which he held for some time as a result of this move.<sup>49</sup>

The Acting General manager of the Mashonaland Railway Company, H. Chapman saw the matter from a different angle and remarked that,

... I have no desire to handicap your export chrome business in any way, and if instead of paying railrage in the first instance at a rate of 25/- per ton, you can arrange to furnish the Railways with a satisfactory bank guarantee, that the latter will be responsible for any excess rail charges in the event of your failing to pay... I should consider such an arrangement.<sup>50</sup>

Sir Abe Bailey once on visit to Rhodesia in remarked that cheap coal, cheaper transport, both rail and roads would mean cheap working costs, and these laid the base of prosperity in agriculture, mining and industry in all countries. In the case of Rhodesia "... coal and railway rates are ridiculously high ... they have the prosperity of Rhodesia by the throat ... The government should tackle these at once..."<sup>51</sup>

The inability of the Railways to carry the extracted base minerals especially from 1904 was to remain a burning question in the industry until the early 1950's. In 1917, the Directors of the BSACo indicated that the real difficulty was the shortage of locomotive power owing to the abnormal conditions as a result of the war. Difficulty had been met in meeting the rail transport requirements for the export especially the iron ore, chrome, copper, maize and even the export of fuel for the copper industries in the Congo.<sup>52</sup> The BSACo had since 1914 ordered twenty-seven new locomotives, delivery of which was still being delayed. This led to a situation whereby the existing stock was from time to time overworked. Whilst spares could not be available, a further number of skilled mechanics had left for the armed forces and the Engines taken out of work to undergo repairs could not be put into service as promptly as it was before. The table below illustrates the position.

<u>Class</u>	<u>No of Engines</u>	<u>Looped for Repairs</u>	<u>£</u>
7th	29	8	22,56
8th	7	1	14,29
9th	24	6	25,00
9A	6	0	-
10th	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>25,00</u>
Total	70	17	22,86

- \* The percentage of Engines excludes those used exclusively for shunting purposes which are under repair or withdrawn from service awaiting repair during the week ended July last.<sup>53</sup>

By the end of 1921, it was quite clear that Rhodesia exported reasonable quantities of base minerals to Europe and the United States of America (USA) namely copper, chrome, Asbestos, Mica, Arsenic, Tin and Tungsten ores. In response to the accruing enquiries on the Base mineral situation in Rhodesia, the Secretary for mines made a summary of important operations and these were made available to Messrs Rose Brothers.<sup>54</sup> Briefly the situation was that there was no current output for manganese, magnesite, molybdenite and sulphur. Magnesite and Molybdenite had no registered claims at this time. Manganese claims were located in Lomagundi and currently owned by J.M. Gordon. Special grants for sulphur were being held by Mr. W. Souther of Bulawayo and claims on which bodies of pyrites ore containing a high percentage of sulphur had been located to the Mazoe district. These were owned by W. Huddleton and C.E. Wells who was a manager of Willoughbys consolidated.

There was no direct production of phosphates and nitrates, but two companies were operating from Gatooma and the other in the Lomagundi districts. Chrome production was well underway with Rhodesia Chrome Mines, Bechuanaland Exploration Company, Rhodesia Metals Syndicate, United Chrome Prospecting Syndicate, A.N. Tyrell of Lalapansi, F.R. Spring, P.F. Wood of Barbados Mine in Selukwe being the major producers. Asbestos operations were under Willoughby's Consolidated, African Asbestos Mining Company (Ltd), Rhodesian and General Asbestos Corporation, Manager Stip Syndicate of Shabani Union and Rhodesian Trust Ltd., King Asbestos, Hoole and Dures and lastly J.S. Hancock in Shabani.

Gelena production had ceased in 1915 and that of tin was done on an intermittent and smallscale by J. Holdsworth of the Banga mine in the Victoria district. Production of mica was carried out mainly in the Lomagundi district and this was an exclusively smallworker activity. The leading producers on record were the Ivanhoer Mica Company, Phoenix Mica Ltd, J.J. Bowler, F. Gibond, A.L. Dalton, J. Goldberg, Anglo-American Explorations and Naested Henle Syndicate. By 1921, no wolfram had been produced in the country.<sup>55</sup>

From 1920 onwards, the mining community increasingly looked forward to the state for more financial assistance. In an annual Chamber of Mines meeting in Bulawayo in March 1923, the Governor, Sir Johnson Chancellor compared the mining and farming communities as horses pulling the chariot of state together and insinuated that the mining industry drew the greater burden in doing so. He remarked that

therefore it is necessary for the horse pulling the greater load to be fed carefully and wisely in order that it should continue to take its proportionately larger share of the burden lest it sicken and slack the work giving the farming horse an impossible load to pull and no doubt our farming friends who are accustomed to working with such animals will realise the necessity of this and give the greater share of the corn to the animal drawing the greater load...<sup>56</sup>

With the appointment of H U Moffat as the new Minister of Mines, miners felt that the state would go a long way to alleviate the problems of the industry. Colonel Grey expressed concern that mining interests were not represented in the new Assembly (except for E. Montagu) and suggested that the mines organise themselves. The suggested format stood thus (a) mineowners or their representatives (b) European mining employees and (c) lastly the smallworkers.<sup>57</sup> In domestic politics, there were various differences amongst the singled out groups, but these three classes were mutually dependant for their prosperity of the industry and for that reason alone, it was necessary for them to combine in order to protect the industry. As far as Colonel Grey was concerned, this combination was aimed at obtaining from the government and the country, their just rights in order to protect themselves and the industry they represented.

The mining community voiced sentiments to the effect that the prosperity of Rhodesia had been built so far entirely on mining. To it alone, Rhodesia owed every mile of railway in the country and given its contribution, it therefore should receive the most generous treatment at the hands of the state. J.C. Macdonald in a speech to the 33 Annual General meeting of the Rhodesia Chamber of Mines pointed out that the sector only received about one-fifth of the amount voted annually to agriculture. For the year ending December 31, 1927, the estimated approved expenditure for the agriculture and Veterinary Department was over £170 000 whilst that for the mines was only £37 000.<sup>58</sup>

The remarks in the Chamber of Mines had reverberations in all corners of the industry. Whilst most of those who responded to the speech applauded more government assistance, they had different opinions on the small worker. The Salisbury Mining Commissioner, said that plants should not be made available to smallworkers because of their immobility. He argued that an average smallworker was from necessity, nomadic and the cost of taking down and re-erecting plants would be prohibitive even if the plant could stand constant shifting.<sup>59</sup> The Gatooma commissioner felt that smallworkers had very little or no experience with machinery and most of them ran their plants to a standstill for want of little adjustment and proper tools to do small repairs.<sup>60</sup> It was alleged that most smallworkers prided themselves as running the mines single handed always claiming to be working very hard, yet results owing to insufficient supervision, were far below what could be reasonably called for. E. Empson of Owl Mine said:

They could not actually be worked until the ore was actually required for export, but without these forward contracts could not be made. These were some of the cases where unfairness might arise out of drastic amendment of the law. Cases of claims being forced without a few months of a close down and repegging by other parties, it was felt would give the colony a bad name with the investing public. This would do more harm than the throwing open of a few long held claims. <sup>63</sup>

All the above demands by the settlers proves the fact that responsible government had meant a greater share of power for the national white classes and by no means their undisputed rule. Despite the advantages the local Base metal producers gained, there was every evidence that the domestic bourgeoisie was fragmented, making their position extremely vulnerable to the deliberate process of penetration instituted by capital from 1923 onwards. International capital had favoured amalgamation with the Union of South Africa because of the viability of Smuts as an upholder of imperial interests. The uncertainty surrounding the proposed changes in the mining laws clearly demonstrates the dependence of the industry on foreign capital. As G. Arrighi rightly observed, foreign capital forced the state to adopt middle-of-the road policies, compromising between the interests of the national bourgeoisie and international capital on the other. <sup>64</sup>

This situation found expression in an institutional framework strongly biased in favour of the interests of white national classes, which was to regulate the future class relations. The social formation inherited by the domestic bourgeoisie in 1923 was further distinguished by a uniquely concentrated pattern of ownership. 'The peculiarity of the Rhodesian economic field,' wrote a contributor to the Round Table magazine 'is that it contains practically only one capitalist - the powerful financial group which comprises the B.S.A.Co. and its subsidiary companies. <sup>65</sup>

In addition to the colony's mineral rights and railway system, both of which enjoyed Imperial protection, through the constitution's reserved clauses, the BSACo had fingers occasionally, a whole had in many pies. In 1925, it held approximately 70 per cent of the shares in the Wankie Colliery Company, and owned the Mazoe Citrus Estates and a huge 2.5 million-acre cattle ranch at Nuanetsi. The Company was also significantly interested in Rhodesia Chrome Mines Ltd, in the Proccasian and General Asbestos Corporation, in Goldfields of Rhodesia, and in other mining and exploration companies. <sup>66</sup>

The settler government made many attempts to challenge the entrenched position of international capital in the economy, but met with little success especially in the Base mineral sector. Invariably, it emerged from confrontation rumpled or perhaps clutching a new agreement which on close inspection revealed yet another compromise in big capitals favour. This conflict was most evident when Senior became the Minister of Mines. He succeeded in building up a new administrative system for the small working industry founded on an association between the small-workers and the government. The greatest task he undertook was that of forcing the mining companies to play a more active part in exploiting the colony's resources,

and this applied in particular to those in the Rhodesia Chamber of Mines. In part Senior's aim was to destroy the monopoly position - or near monopoly position occupied by certain companies: Wankie Colliery Company as the sole coal-mining company; De Beers exclusive rights in diamond prospecting within the colony; the near monopoly held by the Rhodesia Chrome Mines limited and African Chrome Mines Limited over chrome mining; and the Rhodesia and General Asbestos Corporation Limited over asbestos mining.<sup>67</sup>

This grip of international capital in the Base mineral production was symbolized in the bulky figure of Sir Edmund Davis who occupied a commanding position in the Base mineral world. E. Davis was considered an outstanding figure in the opening up of Rhodesia's vast mineral wealth. He was virtually the founder and organiser of the industry including the asbestos mines at Shabani, the Chrome Mines at Selukwe, Coal at Wankie, lead-zinc vanadium at Broken Hill and the great copper deposits on the Congo border.<sup>68</sup> Of each of the above mentioned companies with De Beers as an exception, Sir Edmund Davis was either Chairman or Chairman and Managing Director, and Davis' interests went much further; he had a major role in the Northern Rhodesian copper and other minerals,<sup>69</sup> on the transport of which depended the profitability of Rhodesia Railways; and among the many other companies active in Southern Rhodesia of which he was chairman, managing director, or director were Rhodesia Railways and the British South Africa Company.<sup>70</sup> He also controlled chrome and asbestos companies with operations elsewhere in the world,<sup>71</sup> and these extensive and interlocking interests gave Davis power to make or break the Rhodesian economy. Davis was an Australian who had made a fortune from guano deposits off the coast of the Cape Colony, railway construction, and the cynical amalgamation in 1889 of the Bechuanaland Exploration Company with Rhodes and his backers in order to ensure that a Royal Charter was granted to the BSACo. At the time of his death in 1935, he was sitting on boards of more than fifty companies and was

Chairman and managing director of Wankie Colliery Co Ltd, Rhodesian Broken Hill Development Co Ltd, Chairman of Bechuanaland Exploration Co Ltd, Rhodesia Chrome Mines Ltd, Rhodesia and General Asbestos Corporation Ltd, Rhodesia Copper and General Exploration and Finance Co Ltd, African Chrome Mines Ltd, African Manganese Co Ltd, Beluchistan Chrome Co Ltd, Deputy Chairman of Rhodesian Anglo-American Ltd and Rhokana Corporation Ltd; and a director of the British South Africa Co, Mufulira Copper Mines Ltd, Northern Rhodesia Power Corporation Ltd, Southern Rhodesia Metals Ltd, the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa Ltd, and of other enterprises.<sup>72</sup>

In a Legislative Assembly debate, Senior indicated that these extensive interlocking interests kept profits for corporate business high. For example, when political pressure had mounted for Rhodesia Railways to reduce its profits by lowering its charges, the Railways had increased the price paid to Wankie Colliery for its coal, and thus, while reducing its own profits, preserved the group's overall profits, by in effect transferring them from the railways to the colliery. Chrome production provided a second example.



Davis had reputedly secured a bounty of two shillings a ton on chrome exported by threatening that unless this was forthcoming, production would be discontinued in Southern Rhodesia in favour of production elsewhere, and indeed between 1929 and 1932, Southern Rhodesia's share of the total world chrome production had dropped from 45 to 8 percent.<sup>73</sup> Moves by the Minister of Mines, Senior were aimed at shifting the burden of taxation in the colony so that it would fall more heavily on the profits made by the larger companies especially the Davies group. Secondly he intended to end the exclusive rights of Wankie Colliery and De Beers, and to introduce measures designed to force those owning mining concessions to exploit the minerals.<sup>74</sup>

Despite all these moves against capital by the settler government, international capital remained unchallenged in its possession of Base minerals. With the appointment of Huggins as the Minister for Mines in 1933, there was every assurance that the mining industry was to have a sympathetic ear from the government. G. Huggins, it was felt, realised the superlative importance of the mining industry to the country. At this moment, public sentiment was increasing becoming hostile against control of the industry by huge and often foreign capital. It was pointed out that what could be done by the small owner to provide a remedy should be done by the government.<sup>75</sup> The extent of this hostility was seen in the way local producers pointed out that they were not to content to be mere puppets in the hands of financiers alien or nominally British.<sup>76</sup> Those in the asbestos field made it apparent then they wanted their interests considered first and not of those of the market rigging financiers.<sup>77</sup>

By 1936, the sector had displayed spectacular growth, but gold still remained the dominant activity in the mining industry right up to the outbreak of World War II. Base minerals had a greater area of claims pegged compared with that of precious metals. Only 310 square miles had been pegged for gold as opposed to 430 square miles for Base minerals. (coal excluded because a total of its area exceeded that of base minerals put together).<sup>78</sup> The relative issue of gold clearly demonstrated its dominance as it accounted for 76% of the total mineral value whilst asbestos was next with 9%, coal 5%, chrome 5%, copper 2% and the rest only 3%.<sup>79</sup>

The mere fact that gold and other precious metals were sold directly through the banks, which meant a faster realisation of the products value, gave that industry an organisational structure fundamentally different from that of the Base mineral sector. Base minerals took almost six months to realise their value in the overseas markets where they were disposed. Faced with this situation, it was strongly felt that only capitalists would work base minerals in the colony, a situation which was most evident in asbestos, chrome, coal and copper. For much of the 1970s, asbestos production was dominated by the Rhodesian and General Asbestos Corporation, a Subsidiary of the large British Asbestos manufacturing and marketing combine.<sup>80</sup> Chrome production was dominated by the Davis group i.e.

the Chrome Trust, comprised of what had been the territory's leading producers who had amalgamated their interests in June 1908 in an attempt to fight against established competitors in the world.<sup>81</sup> Coal was exclusively a BSAC monopoly area as they had an exclusive prospecting area of 880 square miles and this grant was to last for thirty years, practically eliminating the possibility of a rival colliery being started.<sup>82</sup> These minerals were chiefly if not entirely in the hands of four large companies. It was assumed that these companies were capable of looking after their own interests in an industry which was to be regulated chiefly by the world market situation.

The story of Base minerals would be incomplete without mentioning the role of African labour. Whilst most of the problems encountered could not be immediately resolved, the attitudes of the mineowners created what was to become a perennial problem which most entrepreneurs and investors called the labour question. Briefly, this meant that capital wanted three things from labour -

- (1) It had to be regular and adequate
- (2) efficient and reliable and lastly
- (3) it had to be one that was willing to work for the wages offered.

I.R. Phimister, Van Onselen, G. Arrighi, R. Palmer, V. Machingaidze and D.G. Clarke, have demonstrated clearly that through a variety of politico-economic mechanisms, sometimes through undisguised force (Chibharo) and through labor recruitment and control, the state managed to obtain cheap ultra-exploitable African labourers, the bulk of whom retained access to at least some land in the rural areas, not only for the mines, but for the farmers too.<sup>83</sup> African labourers were hit strongly by the cost minimisation and profit maximisation drive and this undisputedly is one area where conflict between international capital, the settler state and smallworkers was relatively insignificant as they all shared concern and cooperation in implementing the policy.

Thompson an MP and president of the Chamber of Mines in 1936 indicated that for Base minerals whilst markets were unlimited after highlighting the problems associated with Rhodesia's geography and geology, he remarked that

... to bring about production in this area, we have to live to our pledges and moral obligations, which embrace decent and fair treatment of the African and giving him opportunity for higher development ... In the case of many people, this necessitates a new orientation of view for instance, it entails giving high wages as possible, not the meaniest possible ... But owing to the weakness and varieties of human nature, the fundamental conditions of the African will have to be made a state affair, even to the question of minimum wages and food rations. It has to come ...<sup>84</sup> The sooner the better for the future of this colony.

In conclusion in all stages of the industry's development, the demand for Base minerals was fickle and owing to Rhodesia's remote position from the market, certain minerals could only come into the world markets when prices were high. Given these constraints, it did not become a question of determining how the industry could develop on export market, but rather a question of how it could

survive and prosper in the international markets on which it depended. By the end of World War Two, one could afford to talk of a Base mineral industry as opposed to the myth that Southern Rhodesia was a gold mining industry. Notwithstanding these problems, it is important to highlight the fact that even within the Base mineral industry, it is possible to discuss the history of an industry, within an industry given the fact that asbestos, chrome copper, coal and mica (to a little extent) dominated the sector. For all above minerals except for mica, the production and marketing of ores tended to fall within the hands of monopoly capital. Smallholders were responsible for the initial development phase, but by the 1930's it was becoming increasingly evident that as a class of producers, they were fast losing the ground to monopoly capital.

FOOTNOTES

1. See also R. Summers, Ancient Mining in Rhodesia (Salisbury 1969), Huffman, "Ancient Mining and Zimbabwe". Journal of the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, 1974 74 p238 - 242, H.H.K. Shila "The Manyika and the Portuguese 1575 - 1863" University of London PhD Thesis 1971 and I.R. Phimister, "History of Mining in Southern Rhodesia to 1953. University of Rhodesia PhD Thesis 1975.
2. I.R. Phimister, "History of Mining in Southern Rhodesia" to 1953, University of Rhodesia PhD Thesis 1975
3. Mines and Mineral Ordinance, 1895.
4. 1909 Annual Report for the Secretary for Mines, p2.
5. I.R. Phimister op cit. p84.
6. D.J. Murray, Governmental Systems in Southern Rhodesia (Oxford Clarendon Press) 1970, p120.
7. Mines and Minerals Ordinance, Southern Rhodesian Handbook for the use of Prospective Settlers on the Land (Salisbury) 1974.
8. MB/6/1/1 Bulawayo Mining Commissioner - Mines Dept Report September 30, 1896.
9. Van Onslene, Chibhoro, African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933. (Pluto Press London) 1976, p13.
10. Chamber of Mines Journal June 1959 p22.
11. Seventh Commonwealth Mining and Metallurgical Congress - "The Mining Industry of Southern Rhodesia," p64.
12. Ibid., p46.
13. Geological Survey Bulletin number 45.
14. Chamber of Mines Journal June 1959, p72.
15. Ibid.
16. M3/7/1/1 Resident Engineer to visiting BSACo directors 18/10/1907.
17. S482/7/43 Memc on Colonial Mining Policy 19/12/1946.
18. M3/7/1/1 Resident Mining Engineer to BSACo directors 19/10/1907.
19. Ibid.
20. Bulawayo Chronicle 26/10/1907.
21. Mines and Minerals Ordinance 1907.
22. M3/7/1/1 Resident Mining Engineer to the Secretary Mines Dept, 4/11/1906.
23. Ibid.
24. M3/7/1/1 Mr Olive - BSACo Commercial Representative to London BSACo Secretary 3/10/1906.
25. M3/7/1/1 Jenkins to BSACo Commercial Representative - 24/7/1916.

26. Ibid.
27. M3/7/1/1 Assistant Secretary BSACo London (A.P. Miller) to BSACo Commercial Representative (Rhodesia) 27/5/1916.
28. The BSACo held the Railways as its private property to the effect that it dictated overall policy in transport matters in the country.
29. M3/7/1/1 Mines Secretary to F. Drummond 24/1/1917.
30. Ibid.
31. Bulawayo Chronicle 20/4/1917.
32. M3/7/1/1 Mines Secretary to Administrators 9/3/1917.
33. M3/7/1/1 Hogg to Undersecretary for Mines 12/5/1918.
34. Ibid.
35. M3/7/1/1 Arckermann to Bagshaw 4/11/1918.
36. M3/7/4/1 A.E. Ward to Govt. Mining Commissioner 10/10/1918.
37. M3/7/1/1 BSACo to Secretary For Mines 18/5/1917.
38. M3/7/1/1 BSACo Commercial Representatives to Secretary For Mines 9/6/1917.
39. M3/7/4/1 High Commissioner (South Africa) to J.D. Norton 20/2/1918.
40. M3/7/4/1 See notes on the Despatch by Director of the Geological Survey.
41. A3/17/10 Vol. 1 - L. Manochie to BSACo Secretary 29/9/1918.
42. A3/17/10 Vol. 1 - R.M. Nairn to Lord Milner - Secretary of State for Colonies 16/1/20.
43. Ibid.
44. A3/17/9 Secretary, Dept of Administration to D.B. Maufe - Director of Geological Survey 1917.
45. A3/17/9 Montagu - Secretary For Mines to H.H. Administrator 8/3/1917.
46. A3/17/10 Vol 1 Annexure - L.H. Hytton to Secretary for Mines (undated).
47. A3/17/10 Vol 1 R.J. Hackshaw - Memo - Rates for Chrome ore August 1923.
48. A3/17/10 Vol 1 A.V. Tyrell - From Chapman - Acting General Manager - (BSACo) 13/10/22.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. M3/4/1 Abe Bailey on Rhodesia's prospects.
52. A3/17/10 Vol 1 - To Undersecretary of State - Colonial Office 15/9/1917.
53. Ibid.
54. M3/7/1/1 Secretary For Mines to Rose Brothers 29/6/1921.
55. Ibid.

- 56. -M3/3/11 Newspapers Cuttings - Herald 30/5/24.
- 57. Rhodesia Herald, 30/5/1974.
- 58. Bulawayo Chronicle 28/3/25.
- 59. S480/1
- 60. S480/1 From Empson to Mining Commissioner(Sby) 10/9/28.
- 61. S480/1 Gatooma Mining Commissioner.
- 62. Rhodesia Mining Journal Vol 1 No 2 July 1927.
- 63. S482/346/1939 See p16.
- 64. I.R. Phimister, "Accommodating Imperialism: The Compromise of the Settler State in Southern Rhodesia 1923-1929", in J.A.H.(25) 1984 p281.
- 65. Round Table December 1923.
- 66. D.J. Murray - op cit p138.
- 67. Ibid.
- 68. Herald 27/8/87.
- 69. J.L. Parpart Labour and Capital on the Zambian Copperbelt (Temple University Press - Philadelphia 1983) p19.
- 70. D.J. Murray op cit
- 71. Rhodesia Mining Journal July 1983.
- 72. For a full list of the companies - see also East Africa and Rhodesia 23 February 1938 and J.S. Galbraith, Crown and Charter (erkeley 1974) p48 - 56;
- 73. Senior-Legislative Assembly debates 25 May, 1938 Col. 1161
- 74. ibid Legislative Assembly Debates 14 May 1934 Col 1612.
- 75. S2120/1 New Rhodesia 15/12/33.
- 76. Ibid.
- 77. Ibid.
- 78. B. Lightfoot, "Base Metals of Southern Rhodesia", in Proceedings of the Rhodesian Scientific Association 1938 No 35 Part 2 March 1935 p75.
- 79. Ibid p76.
- 80. See Remarks in A3/171/8 Chairman - Charterland and General Exploration and Finance Company Ltd to H.U. Moffat 27/3/1917.
- 81. M3/17/10 E. Davis to Secretary BSACo 11/2/1915.
- 82. See ZCB 2/2/1 Capital History of Wankie Colliery Co Ltd from 1899 to 1948.
- 83. See I.R. Phimister - The History of Mining in Southern Rhodesia to 1953 and Van Onselen, Chibharo.
- 84. Chronicle 4/4/36.



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