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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1898-1923

by

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In 1923 Southern Rhodesia, a country with a population of 33 000 white settlers and approximately 1 000 000 African inhabitants, gained responsible government. This was a highlight in the history of the country's white settlers, and an event of considerable significance generally for the future of the country. It was achieved in the face of opposition from the Colonial Office, the existing government of the British South Africa Company, and the South African government, and can only be understood in the light of internal political developments. From the earliest date of white settlement, it had been generally supposed that the country's future would be linked with that of the South African States. The hostility that developed in Southern Rhodesia towards such a course (in view of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and other factors considered later) obliged the Colonial Office to consent to the alternative of responsible government, which had been first proposed by the settlers themselves, and had been incorporated in the terms of the Supplemental Charter of 1915. Had the demand for this form of government been delayed, it is possible that it might have been subject to the later change in Colonial Office thinking towards its colonies in terms of the Devonshire Declaration and Passfield Memorandum, in view of the small number of white settlers in the country. It is therefore essential to analyse the reasons for the demand for a change of government earlier than the expected 1924, and to re-examine the usual treatment of the course of events. Typically, the sequence of events in Rhodesia has been seen as a purely natural political development of a British colony, from gaining the franchise to achieving self-rule. This is a great simplification of the issues involved and ignores the vital factor of the demands of the settlers themselves, whose dissatisfaction with existing conditions and the rule of the British South Africa Company were not simply the outcome of 'British' instincts, but the result of internal conflicts over economic conditions.

The role of the settlers has usually been overlooked or underestimated. The granting of the franchise to qualified persons in 1898 was in fact the outcome of a series of demands, public meetings, and representations to Rhodes, requesting the vote. Such demands had been ignored before 1896. The circumstances after the risings of 1896, in the face of the possible revocation of the Charter, caused Rhodes to propose settler representation on the Legislative Council to the Colonial Office, whose assent can be taken as recognition of the check this would provide on the Company's government. (1) The increases in the number of elective seats in the Council in 1902, 1907, and 1912 were similarly the outcome of popular demand, rather than gratuitous concessions by the authorities. In the elections of 1920, the success of the candidates supporting responsible government led to the referendum of 1922, and the earlier termination of Company rule than might otherwise have been expected at the end of its ten year period in 1924 or even later.

These political demands and achievements cannot, however, be seen in a purely political light, and can only be understood in terms of the economic situation in the country.

(1) While the Company maintained a majority in the Council, this was in fact not a particularly effective check, for the Company's nominees invariably voted together to pass government proposals. A more effective check from the Imperial point of view was provided by the appointment of a Resident Commissioner.

The type of government established in Southern Rhodesia excluded the possibility of a normal development of political parties, contributing to a situation whereby pressure groups wielded considerable political power as a result of their direct representation in the Legislature (see Table I). The Charter given to the British South Africa Company in 1889 vested in the Company the right of administering the territory it acquired in central Africa for an initial period of 25 years, after which such rights were renewable for ten year periods. There was no serious challenge to this right of administration until the end of the first 25 year period in 1914, when an attempt by the settlers to oppose renewal for a further ten year period failed. The 1915 Order in Council therefore renewed this privilege, but in recognition of the demand for self rule by a substantial minority of voters (1), allowed for an earlier termination of Company administration in favour of responsible government should it be requested by an absolute majority in the Council. Company rule was efficient, and there was no general reason for supposing that it should not continue for the full ten year period. That this did not occur results from the under-representation of farming interests in the Legislative Council. A movement started by white farmers seeking to replace Chartered rule by responsible government was supported by a majority at the 1920 elections and the referendum of 1922; and the Rhodesian Responsible Government Party finally replaced the Company as the country's government in October 1923.

Although the achievement of self-government has previously been studied in considerable detail, the political and economic developments culminating in the formation of this party has been neglected, and lay in the failure of the Company to adequately protect and represent the interests of all sectors of the electorate.

The influence of pressure groups was paramount in the Legislative Council, and party politics did not emerge before 1920 (since the essence of the 'party' system is that the successful party should form the government) but certain embryo political movements existed at times and exerted significant influence for short periods, which contributed to the general form taken in the country's political development. They cannot be classified as 'parties' ('a voluntary society of propaganda and agitation, seeking to acquire power in order to procure chances for its active militant adherents to realize objective aims or personal advantages, or both' (2)), and may best be defined as 'factions', groups formed to stand for or against some matter, lacking continuity or regularity, organisation or agreement. Such factions, based on conflict between the country's major industries, led finally and more speedily than expected to the establishment of a settler government.

The achievement of settler representation in the Legislature in 1898 was the work of such a faction, led primarily by members of the commercial sector, who organised and addressed public meetings from 1891 to 1897 with the object of securing political rights such as the franchise. The Chambers of Commerce and their individual members were also involved in later agitations which secured equal settler representation in the Legislative Council in 1903, and a majority of settler members from 1908. However, from this date the political role of the Chambers of Commerce declined, and the more effective roles were played by farmers and farming organisations (and later Labour

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- (1) Of the 5057 effective votes cast, 2140 were in favour of termination of Company rule, and 1883 in favour of responsible government.
 - (2) A. de Grazia, The Elements of Political Science : Political Behaviour, New York, Free Press, 1965, p.190, definition by Weber.

TABLE I

SECTOR REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL 1899 - 1923*

Year	Mining	Farming	Commerce	Independent/ Political	Labour
1899- 1902	Grey Sauer		(Hutchinson)	Grimmer Hutchinson	
1902	Grey Holland (Frames)			Frames Wylie	
1903- 1905	Grey Heyman Holland	Meikle Napier	Haddon (Meikle)	Wylie	
1905- 1908	Forbes (SW) Grey Homan (Longden)(SW)	Myburgh Napier	Haddon	Longden	
1908- 1911	Forbes (SW) Grey (Brown)(SW) (Coghlan) (Longden)(SW)	Brown Myburgh Fletcher	(Coghlan)	Coghlan Longden	
1911- 1914	Forbes (SW) Grey Heyman Mitchell (Coghlan)	Eyles Myburgh	(Coghlan)	Coghlan	
1914- 1915	Begbie (SW) Bucknall Collings Forbes (SW) Grey Heyman Mitchell (Coghlan)	Cripps Edmonds Napier	Cleveland (Coghlan)	Coghlan	
1915- 1920	Begbie (SW) Bucknall Collings Grey Heyman Mitchell Stewart (Coghlan)	Cripps Garvin McChlery	Cleveland (Coghlan)	Coghlan (McChlery)	
1920- 1923	Macdonald (SW) Moffat (Coghlan)	Cripps Fletcher Gilchrist Jollie Leggate McChlery	Boggie (Coghlan)	Coghlan (Boggie) (Cripps) (D.Jones) (Fletcher) (Gilchrist) (Hadfield) (Jollie) (Leggate)	Hadfield Douglas Jones Stewart <hr/> (McChlery) (Macdonald) (Moffat) (Stewart)

* 'Independents' indicated by brackets
Small Workers indicated by (SW).

representatives), although with continued support from members of the commercial sector.

It could be said that the two 'parties' in Rhodesia were the settlers and the Company, since it was at times the object of the settlers to replace the Company as the government, but the settlers cannot be seen as a united body in this respect. Unanimity did not always exist even within the two major groups (farming and commerce) forming an opposition to Company rule. The principal differences, however, were between farming and commercial groups on the one hand, and mining representatives on the other. This divergence was apparent from an early date, and was reflected on a political level as well as in the Legislature. The Chambers of Mines opposed the 'abrogation of the Charter' movements of 1902, 1904 and 1906, which were supported by many commercial men (before the farming community took over the role from 1907 as leading opponents to continued Chartered rule), but the opposition between mining and commercial interests was based on purely political differences rather than economic differences such as underlay the later political antipathy between mining and farming groups. Once coherent expression of farming grievances was formulated, conflict between mining and farming interests dominated events at both a legislative and political level, resulting from the serious challenge of the farmers' platform to the privileged position of mining groups, and the Company itself. The factions formed were composed almost entirely of members from one or other of the main sectors. (1)

Since the expectation of both Company and settlers in the 1890s had been that Rhodesia's future would be based on the mining industry, this sector was favoured by legislation and other benefits at the expense of the rest of the community. Mining representatives in the Legislative Council after 1898 ensured the continuation of this privileged status, and the high incidence of this representation reflected the awareness of the mining bodies of the need to protect their position from challenges and threats to their acquired rights; this was particularly so after 1903, by which date it was becoming apparent that the premise on which the policy of the administration was based was false, the gold resources of the country having proved inadequate as a foundation for a permanent policy of favouring mining capitalist companies in order to promote general development and settlement. Somewhat reluctantly, in view of the close links that existed between mining capitalists and the British South Africa Company, the administration began to encourage the growth of the farming industry from 1904.

Previous political agitation had been rooted in general economic conditions, the failure to find gold in Mashonaland in the 1890s, the post South African war depression of 1902, and the collapse of confidence in the London Market in 1902-3. It had been in the Company's interest to restore market faith in the country by alleviating local discontent as far as possible. Amelioration of the royalty system satisfied the mining interests and small workers; reductions in railway rates restored the goodwill of the commercial classes. The majority of the settlers had no other acute objections to Company rule, and such concessions were followed by the collapse of factions formed to oppose it. It was less easy, almost impossible, however, to satisfy the demands made by farmers. The position established by the mining industry had been primarily at the expense of landowners. Although several different

(1) By 1920, when white artisans and clerical workers formed a substantial and well-organised proportion of the community, their alliance with the rural bourgeoisie aided the success of the responsible government movement; but once the issue had moved from 'responsible government versus Charter' to 'responsible government versus Union' the structure of support for the Responsible Government Association altered radically.

forms of land title existed, all were subject to reservations and restrictions imposed by the mining laws. The 'Mines and Minerals' Ordinance, No. 1 of 1895, gave holders of prospecting licences the right to prospect and search for minerals on any government or private land subject to a mineral reservation. Prospectors had the right of free grazing for 20 draught animals, provided no horned cattle were taken upon occupied land without the consent of the occupier; the right to take for domestic use or for mining purposes indigenous wood or timber, unless otherwise reserved by a Mining Commissioner, on payment to the owner of the land such price as fixed by regulation; and the right of taking free of charge water required for domestic use from any land open to prospecting. (1) All ground was in fact open to prospecting unless notice was given by the government of reservation against pegging. The only areas restricted from pegging were land within 200 yards of any inhabited house, land under actual cultivation, or areas set aside for townships, building purposes, roads or dams.

The holder of a registered block of claims had the right of grazing upon land open to prospecting for such draught animals, including horned cattle, as were necessary for the working of his location, upon payment to the occupier of 1/- per head per month; and the same right to timber and water, subject to the same conditions, as possessed by the holder of a prospecting licence. If necessary, and requested by the occupier, he would have to fence off an area sufficient for the grazing of his stock, the occupier to pay half the costs.

Of the actual land titles, the Victoria Agreement Title, issued in Matabeleland to members of the 1893 columns, gave the proprietor of the surface half of any claim licences or rents that accrued to the Company from any registered mining location or site, the holder of which had the right to cut any timber for bona fide mining or domestic uses, on payment according to the tariff for timber on private ground. All other land titles contained a full reservation of minerals, mineral oils and precious stones to the Company. The title deed of Pioneer Grants entailed the loss, without compensation, of any portion of the land covered by a registered mining location or site, the holder of which had the exclusive right to cut any indigenous timber on land covered by his location or site. Permits of Occupation, in common use after 1900 for long-term purchase of land, contained clauses debarring tenants from granting store sites and from carrying on trade without permission of the Company. Sale or removal of indigenous wood was also prohibited, although tenants were entitled to cut such ^{wood} as they required for building, fencing and domestic purposes.

The most controversial title, however, was that applied to land on the Gold Belt, and this was to be the main source of conflict between the mining and farming communities. In the 1890s the generally accepted view was that mining and farming could not thrive side by side, and there had been a universal prohibition against the selection of land on the Gold Belt (once such areas were known - they were never fully defined), although it was possible to lease such land. By the early 1900s, much of the best land away from the Gold Belt had been alienated, and there was therefore a demand for farms on the Gold Belt, which contained rich soils suitable for agriculture. In 1905 the British South Africa Company Board approved the granting of title to land on the Gold Belt, with substantial reservations in favour of the miner, including the complete reservation of timber and water, in addition to the clauses of the Permit of Occupation debarring trade and the granting of store sites.

(1) These terms replaced the 1890 Mining Regulations, which gave prospectors the right to timber, water and grazing on payment of 1/- per day to the occupier of the land.

In addition to the disabilities inflicted by land titles and the mining laws, the vast acreages alienated to mining companies in return for their investments in the country were often sited conveniently close to the main centres, restricting the availability of farming land, and hampering access to markets. As well as these disadvantages resulting from the Company's mining policy, farming suffered from the successful response of the African peasantry to demands for produce after 1890. Despite increasing numbers of active white farmers after the turn of the century, (1) African and Asian producers continued to dominate the local market for some years, and forced settlers to turn to crops more suitable for export, such as tobacco and cotton, for which there were no marketing facilities. Shortages of labour resulted from the ability of the peasantry to meet the financial demands made of them by the administration by means other than sale of labour; this increased the difficulties of white farmers, who blamed the Company for its inability to secure labour supplies. The doubly disadvantageous position of white farmers, thwarted by miners and Africans, was on both counts thought to be attributable to Company policy.

The promotion of land settlement by the Company from 1904 resulted in increased numbers of white farmers, and assisted the development of farming associations and the formation of the Rhodesia Agricultural Union, but did not otherwise materially affect the situation. Failure to aid farming development was partly a result of the weak financial position of the Company. Early in 1904 the Administrator had advised senior officials that:

The receipts of the Administration during the past twelve months shew a great falling and that the estimate framed at the beginning of the financial year has not nearly been realised. The unsettled condition of public affairs in England and abroad and the general restriction in trade and production in South Africa make it improbable that any marked improvement will take place during the present year. Under these circumstances it is imperative that expenditure should be restricted in every possible way. (2)

However the Company attempted to overcome its financial problems and promote land settlement by the introduction of a Loan Ordinance in 1905. The object of the loan of £250 000 was the assistance of farming, which would thus not be at the expense of its shareholders. Although the objects of the ordinance were approved, there was some objection to the fact that the country was expected to finance the scheme; it was felt that the Company was evading its responsibilities under the Charter to provide for good government. The Colonial Office similarly objected to the proposal, and the Ordinance was disallowed on the grounds that the Treasury could not allow the creation of a public debt with a charge on the revenue of Rhodesia whilst the Company remained responsible for finances.

Limited practical assistance was therefore given to farmers. The Experimental Station, promised in 1903 and vital for development, proved a disappointment. Only 200 acres and the small sum of £500 was provided for its establishment. The appointment of an officer to assist prospective farmers with information regarding land available for sale was the only concession to land

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- (1) A census in 1905 showed an increase in holdings occupied by white farmers from 317 in 1903 to 948 in 1905. The numbers of farmers had increased to 2 067 by 1911.
 - (2) Administrator to Treasurer, 2.iv.04, T 2/2/3 (National Archives of Rhodesia). The Estimates were reduced by £15 000.

settlement, despite an advertising campaign in England to promote immigration. The budget for the Agricultural Department was reduced in 1904, and again in 1905 to a sum of £6 015, of which over half, £3 860, was administrative. (1) In 1905 the small grant to the Rhodesia Agricultural Union was withdrawn. In 1906, although the young tobacco industry was aided by the construction of a warehouse, the administration advocated the imposition of a tax on locally manufactured tobacco. The proposal was dropped after strong opposition from the farmers' Union. Despite the increased numbers of farmers, the industry was not a prosperous one - in 1906 the country was still importing maize to the value of £20,221, and the Secretary for Agriculture pointed out that even the land companies who were engaged in farming were in every instance making a loss. (2) The publication of the Rhodesian Agricultural Journal by the government from 1903 was of assistance in improving methods of cultivation, but in the main, government aid to agriculture was limited to loans for fencing and the purchase of stock. No effort was made to overcome the main farming grievances in regard to the mining laws, and only minor amendments were made after a conference between miners and farmers in 1904.

Increased numerical strength meant, however, a louder voice for farming spokesmen from this date; the policy of the Agricultural Union reflected the prevailing dissatisfaction with the status quo in its constant attempts to secure amendment of the mining law. Discontent was not limited to the farming community, and by the time the High Commissioner visited the territory in October 1906 there was a widespread demand for an investigation into past and present administration, for a separation of commercial from administrative revenue and for the elimination of the commercial interest from public affairs. A resolution demanding representative government under the Crown found popular support. Representatives from the various public bodies made demands for reforms, including a request for improved title to land and water from the farming associations. As a result, the Company decided to send out a commission of Directors to investigate the situation.

The Directors did not visit Rhodesia until July 1907; as a result political discontent increased. Lord Selborne's Memorandum on South African federation, in which he included a discussion on the future prospects of Rhodesia, revived the issue of federation. Demands were made for immediate representative government and eventual unification with South Africa. This was opposed by Colonel Raleigh Grey, a leading figure in the Salisbury Chamber of Mines and a close associate of the Directors, who warned the Company of the strength of the movement. Depression had given way to prosperity in Rhodesia, and he warned that the country was no longer dependent on the Company, which should institute more liberal and popular methods in place of the 'silent and cast-iron form of government here'. If this was not done, 'the result will inevitably be that the Chartered Company will be a failure administratively and politically, and you are quite sharp enough to know what it will be commercially if things are hurried in this way'. (3) Grey formed a 'Mashonaaland Progressive Association' to advocate 'representative government under the

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- (1) Proceedings of the Rhodesia Agricultural Union, 1905, p.56, and Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, 4.v.05.
 - (2) Annual Report of the Agricultural Department, 1905, p.23.
 - (3) Grey to H. Wilson Fox, 3.iii.07, Memorandum on the Position, Policy and Prospects of the Company by Mr. H. Wilson Fox, London, 1907, p.14.

Chartered Company' in opposition to the Crown Colony government proposed by the Constitutional League (formed a week earlier, in May 1907). However, hostility to the Company increased when the visit of the Directors was preceded by the announcement that the primary purpose of their trip was not the redress of grievances, but the development of their commercial interests. In fact the thirteen week visit of the Directors resulted in substantial concessions. The elected members were to be given a majority by the reduction of nominated members in the Council from seven to five. (1) The validity of the farmers' complaints were recognised by the Directors, who promised to simplify land titles. However, the Company found it difficult to give expression to this sympathy in practical form by reversing the earlier trends in legislation. Proposals for amendments affecting mining rights were contested by the Chambers of Mines and Smallworkers Associations, and a hard fight was needed to secure each concession won. Although the Directors had promised a reform of the land titles, this was to be based on agreement between the mining and farming communities. A series of meetings was therefore held, and in February 1908 a special meeting of the Agricultural Union was called to discuss the terms and alterations required by farmers. The resolutions passed at this meeting were used as a basis for discussion at a conference in March between all major mining and farming institutions. The representatives of the Rhodesia Chamber of Mines (Bulawayo) proved most conciliatory, partly because Gold Belt titles were not issued in Matabeleland where the Victoria Agreement title was more common, but also as it represented principally the large capitalist companies, who were less affected by the small financial sacrifices that were entailed by concessions. The Salisbury Chamber of Mines and the small workers' associations, however, fought each proposal. The farmers' suggestions were modified, but the conference recognised the landowners' inherent right to timber, grazing and water. Permission was to be sought from owners of land for grazing, and a fee of 1/- per head of horned stock per month was agreed. Land users were entitled to the water, and terms for the use of 'surplus' water by the miners were to be agreed, or submitted to a Water Board for decision by the government. No agreement was reached on the terms for timber.

The bulk of these provisions were incorporated in the Mines & Minerals Amendment Ordinance of 1908, but the mining representatives, Grey and Coghlan in particular, took the opportunity of opposing the Ordinance on the grounds that the administration had made alterations to the agreed terms. These were in fact minor; the only addition of importance was that requiring miners to pay for expropriation of farms should no agreement be reached on water. Coghlan condemned the Ordinance. It made 'for uncertainty, it interfered with vested rights ... a measure which was not directly in the interests of the miner, nor the ultimate interests of the farmer'. (2) Grey felt that consideration had been given entirely to the landowner. Although the Ordinance was passed, miners' rights to grazing, water and wood on the Gold Belt were confirmed, and it was acknowledged that existing claims and licences were to continue in their rights. The farmers were not satisfied with the

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- (1) Fox was later to admit that this concession was in advance of what the majority of the settlers had asked for (presumably discounting the views of the Constitutional League); for 'owing to faulty drafting, the Declaration went considerably beyond what the Company intended to give', Memorandum on Constitutional, Political, Financial and Other Questions by H. Wilson Fox, London, 1912, p.89. The delay, that resulted from this error, in confirming the settler majority by the issue of an Order in Council later added further to the settlers' grievances.
 - (2) Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, 18.vi.08. The conference had resolved that the government should be responsible for such expropriations.

Ordinance, and objected especially to the continued issue and terms of Gold Belt titles. Resentment was felt against the Company, which had failed to ensure full implementation of the decisions of the conference, and this resentment increased with the labour problems experienced by farmers after 1909.

In fact the Company was obliged to tread warily between the two groups, introducing reform at the request of the farmers, later compromising and reducing the concessions at the demand of the miners, for despite the failure to find a 'second Rand', Rhodesia continued to be dependent on gold revenue for its principal income and could not afford to discourage mining development and investment - a situation which mining groups warned would result from any interference with their 'title'. Any amelioration of farming grievances was therefore necessarily slow, prolonging the issue past 1923. The farmers resented the refusal of the mining industry to meet their demands, but in fact the majority of miners worked on a margin of profitability as low as that of most farmers; each concession represented possible financial loss. Hostility far greater than would otherwise have existed between the two groups was created, which in itself contributed to the failure of attempts to conciliate their interests. The extremism bred by this situation would not permit of compromise.

The failure of the Company to satisfy farming demands meant that this hostility was extended to the government, which the farmers considered had not only prepared the ground for the conflict, but also fostered it by its continued alliance with the influential, London-based mining companies, in support of capitalist development and its own and other companies' interests, at the apparent expense of the individual landowner and settler. A policy of concessions to companies, high railway rates, and slow land settlement were thought to be the natural attributes of a commercial administration, the first consideration of which had to be their shareholders. Demands were made for the reversal of such policies, for increased expenditure on public works, and for government assistance in the recruitment of labour and restriction of African competition. To be just to the Company, it attempted to implement aspects of this programme at various times, especially as demand for land would raise the price and improve returns from their investments not only in land but in the railways, but such policies were not necessarily effective, and failed to placate the farmers and other critics. Concessions were invariably 'too little and too late'.

Failure in attempts to amend the mining legislation satisfactorily resulted in the reflection of discontent in a purely political form, for a change of government was considered necessary in order to effect the desired reforms. Before the war, political movements had been short-lived, terminating with concessions from the Company or a general improvement in economic conditions. The more enduring conflict that arose between miners and farmers after the emergence of a powerful farming organisation in 1904 resulted in a more deep-rooted political discontent which found expression first in the Rhodesian League of 1912, and later in the Responsible Government Association.

It was to be expected that the mining interests would oppose movements antagonistic to continuation of Chartered rule, since a premature termination of the Company government, which, after the tumultuous 1890s, had proved stable and conducive to investment, endangered their own existence and profits. In particular a government controlled by politically inexperienced settlers favouring the farming industry was to be avoided, since financial mismanagement could be expected, in addition to exorbitant taxation of companies and termination of existing benefits such as the timber and grazing rights of miners. Political movements prior to 1907 were overcome largely

by Company policy, but it had been aided by the mining interests, either by direct opposition from the Chambers of Mines, or by the infiltration of the movements by their members, who exercised a moderating restraint. The tactics of Colonel Grey were equally effective; the moderate parties he formed tended to attract support from, and thus undermined, the more radical groups. The opposition offered to subsequent farming movements was not new therefore, although the farmers represented a more direct challenge to mining interests as well as to Company rule.

By 1911, the rapid increase in the white farming community combined with an acute labour shortage to result in the most serious political crisis faced by the Company to date, the refusal of farmers to pay a labour tax. The increased interest in tobacco contributed to a deteriorating labour situation (exports of tobacco increased from £2 892 in 1906 to £27 028 in 1910), for a large labour force was required for this crop. (1) The Labour Bureau established in 1906 was the most effective the country had known, but since farmers had objected to the monthly tax of 1/- per head on labour employed, they had not participated in the scheme, although in 1907 the Bureau agreed to provide farmers with ten per cent of their recruits. By June 1908 the Mashonaland farmers were complaining that the activities of the Bureau had diverted their voluntary supply of labour, and the Rhodesia Agricultural Union decided to make their own recruiting arrangements in Nyasaland. The success of this endeavour united the white farmers; the Bulawayo Landowners & Farmers Association joined the Union in 1909, since labour was supplied for a wage of 10/- per 30 working days compared with the 15/- wage required by the Bureau. However, the hostility of the Bureau to the independent recruiting activities of the R.A.U. resulted in the ultimate failure of the scheme, and the Union 'was practically forced by the Administration into the Bureau' in 1910, although they did manage to secure more favourable terms than those pertaining to mines. (2)

Late in 1910, the Bureau's financial difficulties resulted in a proposal for the reformation of the Bureau as a Joint Stock Company with a capital subscribed in England, but with continued assistance from the labour tax on employees. The financial crisis was partly a result of inherited liabilities exacerbated by the decision of the Nyasaland administration to end the Bureau's recruiting operations there as a result of the high death rate prevailing on Rhodesian mines. An acute shortage of labour resulted, the Director of Agriculture reporting that the labour situation had resulted in the discouragement of prospective settlers, and considerable losses owing to the lack of labour for the harvesting of crops. The farming community gave its reluctant support to an Ordinance constituting the reformed Native Labour Bureau in May 1911, but became indignant when a special session of the Legislative Council was called in December to introduce a new Labour Fees Ordinance by which payment of the 1/- monthly tax was made compulsory on all employers, regardless of whether or not labour was obtained from the Bureau. Despite heated opposition from the R.A.U., the Ordinance was passed. The single farming representative in the Legislature had initially opposed it, but his conversion was secured by the administration's argument that this was essential to provide adequate financial support to an organisation which would ensure a sufficient labour supply. The majority of farmers, however, particularly in areas which did not rely on a labour force supplied by the Bureau, strongly resented this measure which resulted, it was felt, from their lack of representation in the Legislative Council. The R.A.U. made its first entrance into

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- (1) Newton, the Treasurer, estimated that 70 labourers were required for 50 acres of tobacco, Minute, 25.iii.08, A 11/2/2/9.
 - (2) Proceedings of the R.A.U. Congress, 1911, pp.4-6. Capitation fees to farmers were £1.10. Od., as against the normal £4.10. Od.

the political field as a result, with a demand for a new constitution (based on the Transvaal or Lyttelton constitution of 1905), and representative government under the Crown. A Defence Committee organised farmers into a 'passive resistance' movement, and increasing opposition to the tax (the 1 600 employers, out of approximately 4 500 liable, who did not pay the tax in January 1912, increased to 1 800 in February) obliged the administration to reconsider its policy of prosecuting defaulters and resulted in a request to the Colonial Secretary in May to disallow the Ordinance. The Administrator recognised that in part the movement resulted from inadequate representation of rural areas, and introduced proposals for redistribution and an increase in elective seats. The strife and rural unrest had brought home to the Company its reliance on the co-operation of the settlers not only for continued progress but for continuation of Chartered rule. Concessions were made to the farming community in an attempt to win its sympathy, and the farmers resumed their privileged position of not paying the tax, while continuing to pay reduced capitation fees.

The Passive Resistance movement was followed by the formation of the Rhodesian League, a party dedicated to ending Company rule with the termination of the first period of the Charter in 1914. The R.A.U.'s proposals had stimulated consideration of the possible political changes in 1914, and the League was formed in Bulawayo in May 1912 by men largely unconnected with the farming sector. However, within a short period, it was adopted as a more adequate outlet for political views by members of the R.A.U. executive and members, and the majority of the signatories of the League's Manifesto of November were farmers. The League was vigorously opposed by both the press and leading mining figures, whose accusations that it secretly supported absorption of Rhodesia by the South African Union were given widespread publicity. The attempt of the administration to win farming support by increasing rural representation had not initially affected the popularity of the League, but the intentions of this electoral reform were in fact negated by the 1914 elections. Members of the League stood on a 'Common Platform', but were defeated, partly as a result of their failure to reflect the views of a wider section of the community, but largely because of the considerable pressure exerted by the Company and mining interests to ensure the return of candidates supporting the continuation of the Charter.

Support was also undermined by a visit to Rhodesia by the Company's directors in January 1914. At a conference held with mining and farming representatives it was agreed that the areas of protected land around permanent buildings should be increased, while fallow land was to be included in areas protected from prospecting. The sympathetic response of the Directors to the settlers' demands generally contributed to the success of those candidates who claimed that the country was not yet ready for self-rule.

Despite the fact that the farming sector now formed approximately 20 per cent of the white population (see Table II), their numerical increase was not reflected in the new Council, in which over-representation of mining interests continued. Moreover, considerable dissension arose over the draft mining ordinance, for although in principle both miners and farmers agreed on moderation and the equal importance of their industries, in practice they were a little less considerate. The bitter attack on the Bill by mining representatives, and the minor amendments made to its provisions, renewed discontent in the farming organisations, whose original demands had been modified considerably at the conference. (1)

(1) Although there were 3 Farming representatives in the new Council, none had supported earlier farming movements; Edmonds was soon to take up a government post, Napier was Manager of the Willoughby's Consolidated Company's Central Estates and closely associated with mining figures.

TABLE II (1)

ANALYSIS OF THE 1914 VOTERS ROLL

Industrial	1 921
Farming	1 824
Commerce	1 811
Mining	1 533
Railways	634
Government Service	625
Professional	458
Police & Volunteers	431
Religious Orders	107
Others	158

Without an effective voice in the legislature (although the later reversion of the Marandellas seat gave the 'Common Platform' one spokesman) the farmers remained isolated and unexposed to the moderating influence of the parliamentary atmosphere. Unable to bring financial pressure to bear on the government in the same way as the mining companies, their representative organisation, the R.A.U., could only advise the administration of their resolutions, and had few means of ensuring that action would be taken. This bred increasing frustration; and unreasonable resolutions were passed which were not conducive to action being taken.

Reaction to this situation was again at two levels. After the post-war depression, the R.A.U. attempted to reform itself on a more political basis with the specific object of achieving direct representation in the Legislative Council, but in fact this aspect of its reorganisation did not receive the required two-thirds support and was suspended. An earlier reaction, however, was not directly associated with the R.A.U.; it took the form of a response to the Company's attempt to enforce amalgamation of Southern with Northern Rhodesia by way of the formation of the Responsible Government Association after the R.A.U. Congress of 1917. Its leaders, as with the Rhodesian League, were mainly farmers, and it attracted widespread support from rural areas. (2) In view of the predominantly farming support for the Association, it can be seen as a continuation of the anti-Charter feeling amongst farmers which had led to the formation of the Constitutional League in 1908 and the Rhodesian League in 1912. It would perhaps have fared little better than its predecessors had it not been for the decision of the Privy Council in favour of the Crown in the land case. The Company had always believed the land to be its principal asset, and had maintained this stance from the earliest questioning of its ownership, by virtue of the Lippert Concession and the conquest of the Ndebele in 1893. All income from land had been treated as commercial revenue, and since this position had not been challenged by the Colonial Office, this was considered to be tacit acceptance by the Crown. While it had been to the Imperial Government's advantage not to question the rights of the Company before 1913, the land settlement scheme proposed by the Company in that year brought the question to the fore, for it entailed recognition of their ownership. In view of the possible constitutional changes in 1914, it became necessary to resolve the issue of land ownership in the face of the persistent challenge of the Company's claim by the settlers, in particular the Rhodesian League and R.A.U., which petitioned the Crown for an investigation in 1913.

(1) The 1911 Census showed 2 058 farmers, 2 255 miners.

(2) The Secretary (also Secretary to the R.A.U.) maintained that 90% of rural residents had joined the Association.

The loss of the land resulted in the Company's decision to avoid further financial commitment in Rhodesia. At the annual general meeting of the Company's shareholders in August 1918, Gell announced that 'It is obvious that since the land is not yours, capital for its further development must be sought elsewhere than from you'. This meant that a change of government before the due date of 1924 became a viable object for the first time, and thus attracted support to the Responsible Government Association. The elected members of the Legislative Council (elected on a pro-Charter basis in 1914) commented that:

... it follows that the country will be administered in future from its own resources, which, if the B.S.A. Company administration continues, of necessity involves that the people will have all the disadvantages of Responsible Government without the corresponding advantages. If the country is to be administered on its own resources and credit ... it might as well have the management of its own affairs. (1)

Support for the Responsible Government Association increased further in 1919 after the election as its president of the most eminent settler politician, Sir Charles Coghlan, who had previously opposed the farmers' parties. A second factor relating to the success of the R.G.A. in the elections of 1920 was the support of the large white artisan class, who supported responsible government in preference to the continuation of administration by a capitalist organisation, or incorporation with the Union of South Africa, a country dominated by the Rand 'lords', which was the course favoured by Rhodesian employers. Labour combined with the rural bourgeoisie vote to result in the return of R.G.A. members to 12 of the 13 seats, with the one seat lost only as the outcome of a split vote.

The case for Union was fought more vigorously in 1922; not only did mining companies and employers generally prefer this course, but the B.S.A. Company stood to gain a more satisfactory financial settlement with the South African government than with the parsimonious Imperial government. The support attracted to the Rhodesia Unionist Association was principally from representatives of the mining companies and other international capitalist groups, although it also secured the railwaymen's vote by virtue of the better terms and prospects offered to them by the Union. (2) Also, surprisingly, it now had the support of the majority of farmers, not only Afrikaans but English-speaking as well, since the depression and insecurity following the slump in agricultural produce prices from 1920 meant that the prospects for farmers under Union seemed to be more favourable than thought possible with responsible government. (3) Farmers had consistently opposed Chartered government, once its termination was ensured, economic considerations reversed their earlier support for the R.G.A.; however, they had yet again chosen an unsuccessful course, and under responsible government failed to secure the benefits that had once been expected of it. This was due partly

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- (1) Rhodesia Herald 18.x.18, Statement by the Elected Members.
 - (2) It has usually been assumed that the railwaymen supported the R.G.A., but an analysis of the voting in Raylton and other districts with a high proportion of railway workers shows a large majority in favour of Union.
 - (3) Afrikaans farmers had supported responsible government in 1920 (partly at the request of the South African Nationalist Party) but favoured Union in 1922 as a result of the 'racialism' shown by British supporters of the R.G.A.

to the antipathy of Coghlan to the leading farming spokesmen; he commented:

I have never liked the Congress; they have always been against the government of the day, and are always out to get something out of it. Their resolutions year after year are a long string of demands on the Government to do this, or to build that, or to pay so much ... (1)

But it was also due to the fact that in order to ensure moderation and 'good' government, former Unionists wasted no time in changing their sympathies and political coats. The R.G.A.'s alliance with Labour was abandoned in favour of the ex-Unionist mining interests. The structure of support for the Party was generally altered, but determination to make responsible government succeed, and loyalty to the party that had won it, ensured continued and in fact increased support for Coghlan after 1923 from many groups which were otherwise disappointed in its results. The governmental system that succeeded Chartered rule was therefore in many respects essentially similar to it, being based on co-operation with the mining industry, with slow and grudging concession to farming demands until the late 1920s. Economic pressures in the 1930s meant that the original requirements of the agricultural sector were finally met, with the abolition of the Gold Belt title, and restriction of African competition.

Although the achievement of responsible government has usually been attributed to the natural desire of the white settlers to replace the rule of a commercial organisation by a traditionally British form of self-government, it is apparent that the issues were more involved, and that economic factors lay behind the political evolution. Dissatisfaction with their commercial form of government was not an inherent or a necessary aspect of the situation as long as that government provided 'good government' and satisfied the needs of the settlers. Rather, it is believed that the inability of the Company to meet the needs and demands of a part of the electorate, which by 1922 represented the largest single occupational sector amongst the white settlers, (Table III) resulted in the formation of a political party which felt it necessary to change the form of government in order to achieve its objects. It is often said that 'the difference between a political party and a pressure group is that the former has general purposes and seeks to control governmental policy, while the latter has specific purposes and seeks merely to influence governmental policy'.(2) Unlike the mining and commercial sectors, the farming group was unable to 'influence' governmental policy by the means available to them, and sought instead to change the government. Like the Labour movement by which they were later supported, farmers lacked the personal contact and financial influence of the mining or even the commercial interests. Even more important, given the comparative willingness of the Company to meet just demands, the circumstances prevailing in Southern Rhodesia before 1923 resulted in a situation whereby the Company was not able, by virtue of its ties to and dependence on the mining industry, to satisfy the aims and objects of the farming sector.

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- (1) Sir Charles Coghlan to Sir Francis Newton, 4.xi.25, NE 1/1/1, H.Mss., National Archives of Rhodesia.
 - (2) A. Potter, Organized Groups in British National Politics, London, Faber & Faber, 1961, p.17.

TABLE III

ANALYSIS OF THE 1922 VOTERS ROLL

Public Services	1 784
Professional	540
Mining	1 586
Agriculture	3 050
Industries	1 248
Commerce	2 075
Commercial services	620
Railways	1 370
Independents	<u>80</u>
Males	12 353
Females	<u>6 457</u>
Total	<u>18 810</u>

Without the long-standing opposition of the farmers to Company rule, it is unlikely that the post-war depression would have resulted in the well-organised campaign to establish responsible government, and although the R.G.A. lost its farmers label, without the earlier campaign challenging the land rights of the Company, no reason to terminate its administration would have created the same convincing appeal as did the judgement of the Privy Council. Despite the small size of the white population, and the large African population which required unusual safeguards in the new constitution, the Imperial Government was obliged to concede responsible government in place of the preferred course of either maintaining Company rule, or incorporation with South Africa, in view of the vociferous and prolonged campaign for settler self-government. A few years delay in such a campaign might not have yielded the same result.



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