

UNIVERSITY OF RHODESIA

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

HENDERSON SEMINAR PAPER NO. 31

SOME ASPECTS OF COLONIAL OFFICE RELATIONS WITH THE CHARTERED COMPANY

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The thesis and papers of R. Palmer, J. Taylor and P. Stigger convey the impression that the Colonial Office and the Chartered Company were somehow antagonistic to each other, that Directors were constantly either challenging or circumventing the Colonial Office. They seem also to accept without question that the Colonial Office was an altruistic institution cast in the role of defender and champion of native interests and thwarted only by the Company's machinations. This paper attempts to show, from information gathered as a sideline to other research, that far from opposing the Company the Colonial Office agreed in principle with the Company and as far as they could promoted the Company's interests. The grant of a charter to combined London and Cape financial concerns was not an aberration but a deliberate act of policy, and it is unreasonable to assume that having granted it, the government would henceforth deliberately oppose the enterprise of those who had been thus favoured. The only consideration that inhibited the full co-operation of the Colonial Office was public opinion as expressed at Westminster.

A Chartered company had several advantages from the government's point of view. In the first place it avoided, initially, direct annexation. As J.S. Moffat commented on the Rev. John Mackenzie's opposition to a chartered company administering Bechuanaland: 'The British Government cannot take the required position /of keeping mischief-makers out of the country and of advancing the gold-mining industry/ without annexation of some kind, and annexation would be violently repudiated by the Chief and his people.'(1) In the case of the other chartered companies direct annexation might have run the risk of active opposition from Spain and Holland in North Borneo, from France in West Africa and from Germany in East Africa, or have raised the question of compensation for those countries elsewhere. Annexation would also have incurred administration by the imperial authorities, and, considerations of expense apart, government in the nineteenth century was still largely based on the principles of laissez-faire and no state interference. Though the mercantile classes may well have thought it the duty of the state to 'hold the ring',(2) that was as far as they wished the state to go. It was accepted that the government would not attempt to open up undeveloped countries by expenditure from the British Exchequer.(3) The corollary of course was that such work should be left to private enterprise - as long as it was profitable.

A Chartered Company was also useful in concealing strategic designs. All four British chartered companies not only ensured that reputedly valuable areas should not fall into the hands of foreign states, but they were also all strategically placed. The territory held by the North Borneo Company lay on the track of Britain's 'immense trade'(4) with China, Japan and Australia, and contained fine harbours and coaling stations 'which we should scarcely like to see in the possession of a hostile power'.(5) The presence of the Royal Niger Company prevented the advance of France to the mouth of the Niger, and the Imperial British East Africa Company directed its activities to the headwaters of the Nile to secure that strategic area from France and

Germany. The British South Africa Company not only thwarted the designs of Germany, Portugal and the South African Republic in Central Africa, but it would secure the predominance of British influence over that of the Boers in South Africa without the direct interference of the British Government. As Sir Alfred Milner, when High Commissioner, said, 'The successful development of Rhodesia under the Company means we win the South African game all round,' and an Imperial Officer there, as he suggested, would give the Imperial Government 'maximum powers without taking over the whole government.' (6) This was no doubt one powerful reason for not revoking the Charter in 1894 and 1896. Like the other Chartered Companies the British South Africa Company was a political as much as a commercial concern; as Sir John Gorst said of the North Borneo Company, it was 'a means by which Great Britain is to avoid direct responsibility ... in point of fact it is a sort of filibustering by proxy.' (7)

The plea of avoiding expense to the British taxpayer by granting charters was not an entirely honest one. The cost of the defence of the whole Empire, apart from India, was almost entirely met by the Imperial Government, and the chartered companies were well aware that in times of difficulty they could rely on the support of Imperial troops and the Royal Navy. Rhodes' intention to remain under the British flag was not altogether a matter of sentiment. Basil Williams quoted 'a cynic' as saying that if the results of a Chartered company's enterprise were good they could be made the property of the state; if the value were little, the company could be left to its own devices. (8) This is patently untrue. The North Borneo Company, after initial difficulties when an application for government help was considered, went from strength to strength and retained its charter until 1946. The other three chartered companies were supported while they existed with loans (The Royal Niger Company) and railway guarantees (Imperial British East India and British South Africa) without prior reference to Parliament, and were handsomely compensated when their Charters were surrendered, and were left besides with their land, mineral and railway holdings. Sir Henry Loch calculated that from 1890 to 1894 the British Government incurred upwards of seven hundred thousand pounds expenditure exclusive of railway land grants in the interests of the Company in the Protectorate and that though the Government paid a thousand pounds a year to the Company for the use of the telegraph through the Protectorate, the Company paid nothing for the use of the telegraph through British Bechuanaland. (9) Charters, a member of the House of Commons concluded, were an arrangement by which the Treasury was (nominally) protected from expenditure in a country from which the company was to take the profits, (10) profits which could equally well have been a source of revenue to the country's government. (11)

The first application in Britain for a charter was made by the North Borneo Company to Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office in 1878 but it was left to the anti-expansionist Liberals to grant the charter in 1881, with the frank admission by the Foreign Secretary Lord Granville that

'if a case should present itself which promised great advantages to our political and commercial interests with an absence of reasonable ground for apprehending military and financial burdens, it would be the act of doctrinaires not of statesmen, to refuse to go into an examination of such a case.' (12)

None of the Charters was discussed by Parliament before being granted to the companies. Lawyers had found good reasons why they need not be submitted to Parliament, (13) and they were in fact granted by the prerogative of the Crown, (14) a return to such things as were done in the days of the Stuarts, (15) and to which many members of Parliament strongly objected, not only because such

large territories were conferred on commercial companies without the concurrence of Parliament,(16) but also because the Charters did in fact, if not in theory, confer monopolies.(17)

The difference between the old and the new charters was that the new charters did not purport to grant monopolies.(18) But the suggestion to amalgamate all the interested companies in central Africa had come from the Colonial Office.(19) The granting of the charter was defended in the House of Commons by the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies as being the best mode of putting an end to all exclusive and competing concessions in that part of Africa.(20) Sir Hercules Robinson recommended the granting of a monopoly as the best means of avoiding the evils resulting from the opposite course in Swaziland,(21) and Moffat, though admitting with the Rev. John Mackenzie the injustice of monopolies, favoured one as the best means of keeping the peace.(22) In the absence of direct Imperial involvement this was probably true. That the Colonial Office was aware of the possibility of the charge of monopoly, the antithesis of professed free trade principles, is revealed in Clause 33 of the Charter. This, Knutsford explained, provided for the alteration or repeal of the Charter at the end of twenty-five years and of succeeding ten-year periods, thus 'precluding any objection which might be made that the grant of the Charter locks up indefinitely a large portion of South Africa in the hands of a commercial association.'(23)

The Rudd Concession gave the Company the mineral monopoly of Matabeleland and Mashonaland,(24) and the Lippert Concession secured the exclusive right to grant land,(25) but in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, in the field of operations granted to the Charter, other contenders already had claims and concessions. In considering these the Colonial Secretary explained that it had been hoped that the Company would obtain from the Native Chiefs such undertakings as would practically give them 'the control of the whole territory' described in the Charter as forming their principle field of operations.(26) A Concessions Commission was suggested in 1892 to recognise claims as a step towards raising a revenue. No claim subsequent to the granting of the Charter was to be recognised,(27) but Rhodes was not at first in favour of a Commission, as the local officers 'could not be relied on to take such a broad view of the questions at issue' as Loch and Shippard.(28) Both the High Commissioner's views then(29) and the Colonial Office's later(30) were that the Chartered Company would be more likely to develop the country than the original concessionaires, or individual concessionaires with little or no money.

The draft instructions to the Concessions Inquiry Commission included the advice that no inquiry was to be made into the merits of any claim until the Commission were satisfied that sufficient notice of the claim had been given to the Company, and that the Company should be entitled to receive copies of all documents deemed to affect its interests in connection with the inquiry.(31) The Colonial Office adopted the principle that monopolist rights with regard to minerals should be of limited duration as should the pre-emptive right of the Company to obtain new concessions of land and minerals, the period to be arranged between Her Majesty's Government and the Chartered Company, 'with full power of Her Majesty's Government to extend the period should circumstances render that course desirable':(32) the inevitable saving clause. Thus with the sanction of the Colonial Office the Company eventually became the owners of vast concessions in the entire area of its field of operations, outside those areas reserved to the Chiefs in Bechuanaland and Barotseland,(33) but the others who came in to share its rights were subsidiary companies of the British South Africa Company and syndicates under the direction of friends and associates of the parent body.

Colonial Office support in the establishment of the Company in

Mashonaland was unstinting. As by Clause 30 'Our naval and military officers shall give full force and effect to this Our Charter, and shall recognise and be in all things aiding to the Company and its officers', the Company was assured of Imperial support. From March 1889 when a new site for a Police camp was chosen near the disputed territories and the Grobler pont,(34) the Bechuanaland Police were used by the High Commissioner, with the sanction of the Colonial Office, not only for the ostensible purpose of keeping order in the Protectorate, defending Khama from attack, and deterring Boer freebooters, but also with the unavowed intention of keeping within easy reach of the Company's field of active operations should the necessity for their services arise. Protestations were made about the expense of keeping so large a body of police so far north and the High Commissioner was asked if any reduction could prudently be made.(35) A week later however he was informed that he could tell Rhodes that he need not be alarmed at this despatch as the Secretary of State would do nothing until he had received Colonel Carrington's report.(36) These preparations for the protection of the Company and its eventual entry into its field of operations were further supported by the Colonial Office and the Crown Agents in their expeditious handling of the telegraph contract before the Charter had been assented to,(37) and the co-operation of the Government in the provision of men and equipment for the entry of the Company's column into Mashonaland(38) could hardly have been more complete if the Government had been acting on its own behalf instead of that of a commercial company.

Imperial protection was maintained at the Limpopo Drifts after the occupation until the Adendorff crisis was passed and until the difficulties with the Portuguese in Manicaland were settled and the Company were in a position to take over the frontier defence at Tuli and the Drifts.(39) A considerable Imperial force, however, remained at Makloutsie,(40) waiting for the inevitable collision, which eventually occurred in the middle of 1893. The wire-cutting episode, which was the occasion of the opening of hostilities, took place at the beginning of May,(41) and at once the Makloutsie force was put on the alert.(42)

The Company was unprepared for any forward movement, and in view of the dangers of precipitate action the High Commissioner had prohibited any move without his sanction.(43) The Colonial Secretary doubted whether the interruption of telegraphic communication would constitute ground for an aggressive movement without the permission of the High Commissioner.(44) Until a cause for such a move occurred the provision of horses and ammunition for Khama to the extent of four thousand pounds was approved, the Bechuanaland Police strengthened, and Colenbrander advised that no expense was to be spared in keeping the High Commissioner informed of what was going on in Matabeleland.(45) In August the Imperial Secretary declared the casus belli:

'Impis cannot be allowed to remain in the near neighbourhood of European settlement or mining operations as their presence would prevent the free exercise of those concessions which the British South Africa Company acquired and from which Lobengula received and is receiving large annual payments.'(46)

The decision as to when the proximity of the impis became dangerous was dependent on the probable nearness of the rains, and the arrival of the horses from Transvaal, with a sufficient time allowed for their recuperation from the journey.(47) As the Company could neither stand protracted expense nor lengthened uncertainty, they were to tell Sir Henry Loch of their desire to require the withdrawal of the impis,(48) and the Colonial Office agreed that as prompt action might be necessary in certain eventualities, the High Commissioner should have the authority, without waiting for confirmation from the Colonial Office, to inform the Company that they must exercise their own

discretion as to the best means of securing the safety of the people.(49) In other words, the Colonial Office agreed that when preparations were complete the Company were to use their own discretion as to the opportune time for a forward movement. They continued to proffer men and munitions from Imperial resources in South Africa,(50) and agreed that the Bechuanaland troops could be deployed within the Company's territories to cause a diversion,(51) and that Cape and Natal soldiers should be allowed to engage in the Bechuanaland Mounted Police if operations had to be postponed because of the wet season, in order as Loch put it, 'to finish the whole business'.(52)

A significant footnote to the Victoria Incident was the Inquiry which the Colonial Office arranged - for public consumption rather than as a means of determining the truth. It was to be entrusted to some officer with the necessary professional training but wholly unconnected with the political aspects of the question.(53) The officer selected was F.J. Newton,(54) a member of the staff of the Governor of the Cape, Sir Henry Loch, and friend since Oxford days of Rhodes and Maguire. It was to be made clear to Newton that his mission was merely to inquire into the events at Victoria that preceded the Matabele War; he was to have nothing to do with the conduct of the war itself or other extraneous subjects. The Colonial Secretary reiterated the point that it was desirable that Newton should understand clearly that he should not be led into all the various debateable subjects which had been discussed in the papers and on which witnesses might feel strongly.(55) Not surprisingly Ripon was thoroughly satisfied with Newton's 'clear and impartial' inquiry which 'exonerated Jameson and the officers of the British South Africa Company from the serious charges made against them'.(56)

Henry Labouchère's accusation that the Company being bankrupt 'got up the war' to improve their financial position(57) may or may not contain some truth, but it is certain that the war not only secured to the Company the salubrious, mineralised and fertile high veld in its entirety, but it also solved the difficulty of the Colonial Office with regard to sovereignty and jurisdiction.

Buxton, the Liberal Under Secretary for the Colonies, acknowledged the fact in the House of Commons that hostilities had necessarily altered the position of affairs,(58) which had been very unsatisfactory. The North Borneo Company acquired wide powers of administration before their application for a charter,(59) but Lobengula was a rather different proposition, from the ineffectual 'Brummagen Sultans of Borneo'.(60) The Colonial Office knew from the start that the Rudd Concession conferred no powers of government(61) and that no one could exercise jurisdiction without Lobengula's permission,(62) but the Charter was drafted nevertheless, empowering the Company (in Clauses 3 and 4) to assume such functions of government as Her Majesty's Government might think it desirable for them to undertake. These powers of government would have to be got when a favourable time occurred to approach Lobengula.(63) By way of providing for the contingency of no such favourable time arising in the near future, and grants of jurisdiction from native Chiefs (in Bechuanaland) being unobtainable, the Colonial Office inserted into the final draft of the Charter the debateable Clause 10: (64)

The Company shall ... preserve peace and order in such ways ... as it shall consider necessary, and may with that object make ordinances (to be approved by Our Secretary of State) and may establish and maintain a force of Police.

As Taylor frequently states, without explanation, the Colonial Office maintained for the first few years a rigid policy of non-interference in the

Company's administration, in spite of this lack of legitimate jurisdiction. In 1891 the High Commissioner issued a Proclamation by which he hoped to 'restrain the indiscriminate exercise of Lobengula's sovereign rights' in granting concessions like the Lippert Concession which Loch feared would lead to massive Boer immigration.(65) Knutsford however regarded the Proclamation as the first step towards annexation and as an infringement of the powers granted to the Company by the Charter, and emphasised that the Company should bear all the responsibility of government, that no steps should be taken to supersede the Charter and relieve the Company of its principal obligations, that the Company should legislate and administer as far as practicable, and that the Order in Council which had been passed to render annexation unnecessary should only be exercised where the powers of the Company appeared to be defective.(66)

When the clash occurred between the Company's Police and the Chief Ngomo, in which Loch thought that the Company's local officers had acted somewhat in excess of the requirements of the case, Loch, understanding that it was the Government's wish that he should not interfere in the administration of the Company's territories, asked whether the Colonial Secretary wished him to take notice of such acts.(66a) The Colonial Secretary referred him to clause 18 of the Charter and added that as a general rule 'any interference by the High Commissioner in Mashonaland affairs should be confined within the lines laid down by this clause. It was important that nothing should be done which could tend to relieve the Company's representatives at the Cape from a full sense of their primary responsibility for the policy of the Company in Mashonaland.'(67) He told the Company in London, rather ingenuously in view of his instructions to Loch, that Lendy's report would have justified much stronger terms of remonstrance from the High Commissioner and that 'after making full allowance for the difficulties attending the establishment of European administration in a country such as Mashonaland' he could not avoid the conclusion that Lendy had acted with recklessness and undue harshness. To avoid the risk of such proceedings damaging the reputation of the Company, they should send stringent instructions to the Administration in Mashonaland as to the steps to be taken for the prosecution and arrest of natives charged with offences for which territorial magistrates had jurisdiction.(68) Complaints were made in the House of Commons that Knutsford's censure of Lendy was not strong enough, and in the circumstances the Charter's powers of restraint as exercised by the Colonial Secretary were restrained indeed.

It is curious that, acknowledging as he did, the difficulty of establishing a European administration in a country such as Mashonaland, the Colonial Secretary should have been so adamant on the subject of non-interference by experienced government officials. The Company's men were administratively inexperienced (the only experienced officer, Archibald Colquhoun, had soon been dispensed with), and were acting on behalf of a newly constituted financial corporation, in an extensive and comparatively unknown country. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Colonial Office insisted repeatedly on non-interference by the High Commissioner so as to leave the Company with a completely free hand in order to secure to themselves, when the opportunity should arise, that jurisdiction over the country which they needed, in the surest way they could, by conquest; and without blame to the Colonial Office.

In 1892 in reply to Labouchère's question regarding the Crown's authority and the right to legislate, de Worms had asked for notice of the question,(69) but following the hostilities of 1893, in reply to Labouchère's question 'by what right is jurisdiction being exercised by the Chartered Company or the High Commissioner?' Buxton was able to answer unhesitatingly, 'By right of conquest'.(70) As Chamberlain later admitted: 'That the authority provided

for by these instruments /the Charter and the Orders in Council of 1891 and 1894/ has in the past proved ineffective may be ascribed to the (perhaps necessarily) great latitude given at first by the Board of Directors to their Officers in South Africa. It would have been nearer the truth to have referred to the great latitude given by the Colonial Secretary.(71)

There was a similar problem of jurisdiction in Barotseland, but as the development of Northern Rhodesia was slow and the white population, apart from officials, almost non-existent for many years, the problem was not urgent. The policy adopted was to whittle away Lewanika's jurisdiction in stages, and as the military organisation of the Barotse could not compare with that of the Matabele or of the Company, there was little difficulty. In 1903 the question arose of what to do with a native arrested for murder; strictly speaking he should have been handed over to Lewanika but that involved two unpleasant results, 'first to the Company, in that it will be putting a stumbling block in the way of jurisdiction which they are seeking to usurp from Lewanika', and second for the native in that Lewanika might put him to death. It was argued that in fact 'we have exercised and do exercise jurisdiction and powers of government with the tacit consent of Lewanika' and that 'by "usage and suffrance" we have jurisdiction in his territory.' The policy to be pursued, the Colonial Office advised, was that 'his assent should be obtained to whatever is done, in that his wishes should be met so far as is consistent with peace, order and good government', (72) and in the years that followed, the Company obtained all that it wanted in Barotseland with the assent, willing or not, of the Paramount Chief.

The attitude of the late nineteenth century Colonial Office to native land followed the principle laid down by the Colonial Secretary, Earl Grey, in 1846:

'The opinion that the original inhabitants of any country were the proprietors of every part of its soil of which they had been accustomed to make any use, or to which they had been accustomed to assert any title, was a doctrine, whether it was maintained on the grounds of religion or morality or of expediency, from which he entirely dissented. He subscribed to the principle laid down by Dr. Arnold that men were to make the earth by their labour what it had not been by itself. With labour so bestowed on it came the right of property in it, and so much did the right of property go along with labour, that civilised nations had never scrupled to take possession of countries inhabited only by tribes or savages.' (73)

Thus the Charter authorised the Company 'to improve, develop, clear, plant, irrigate and cultivate any lands included within the territories of the Company and to settle any such territories and land ... and to aid and promote immigration'. (Clause 24 vi & vii). Within a short time of arriving with the pioneer Column, Frank Johnson had formed a company with his friends Heany and Borrow to buy up pioneer farms and claim rights and had secured a hundred thousand acres 'of the best farm land in Mashonaland'. (74) In Matabeleland the farms of the Bulawayo Syndicate, whose manager was George Gray, cousin of the Administrator, Earl Gray, comprised 'some of the richest agricultural land in the country', and other private owners 'owned the most fertile stretches of corn-growing land'. (75) The Administrator later claimed that this land had been conveyed by the government subsequent to the selection by the Land Commission of the Shangani and Gwaai Reserves, but Sir Richard Martin stated that according to the Commission these districts were the only ones in which the Commissioners could assure themselves that no grants had been made to Europeans.

Lord Ripon wrote after the war of 1894 that the aim must be to induce the Matabele to settle down peaceably, and that for this purpose it would be necessary that 'good and habitable land, water and cattle adequate to their subsistence' should be secured to them.(76) A draft agreement was prepared by the High Commissioner for the administration of the country and the security of the natives, in which this phrase 'good and habitable' land never appeared again but became 'sufficient and suitable' land.(77) Rhodes was consulted and his comments carefully considered, and an amended version was prepared.(78) Palmer writes (79) that in these negotiations Rhodes consistently and in many cases successfully resisted attempts to limit the Company's freedom of action and that the negotiations are illustrative of the 'gradual withering away of Imperial assertiveness', and that Rhodes successfully 'demanded, in defiance of Loch's earlier proposals, that the Commission's provisions should be confined to Matabeleland'. But there is no evidence that Rhodes had to 'demand' anything or 'defy' anyone. The memo was only a draft prepared by Loch for discussion. The Imperial Government was not in a position to be 'assertive' since by the Charter it had granted certain powers to the Company regarding land, which did not include the provision of reserves for the native population, and it could not legally dictate what the Company should or should not do in the allocation of land; it could only require some show of concern for native needs - without going too deeply into the matter. In nineteenth century thought native interests were of secondary importance compared with those of Gray's 'civilised nations'. Reserves for natives satisfied humanitarian principles, but they were used in southern Africa to mask European encroachments on good land. The negotiations show that there was give and take rather than demands and defiance, and that the principle of the paramountcy of white interests was observed by both Colonial Office and Company. The Colonial Office told the Directors that they would see that comparing Loch's amended clauses with the corresponding clauses of the final version in the Colonial Office Memorandum,(80) Rhodes' views in most cases had been met by the additions and omissions desired by him, or by omissions and modifications which rendered his criticisms no longer applicable. Ripon would be glad to be favoured with the Directors' views and thought that the early settlement of the question was highly desirable; the papers were to be treated as 'strictly confidential'; a necessary precaution in view of the collaboration of the Government and the Company evident in them, and the watchfulness of the Aborigine Protection Society.

Loch suggested in his clause 20 that land, sufficient and suitable, should be assigned wherever 'application was made for European settlement within near proximity to lands occupied by natives'. This was omitted in the final version, clause 27, presumably because it was always claimed that no land with a large native population was ever taken for white settlement and as it stood the clause could be taken to imply that natives were being moved to make way for whites. In the next clause Loch stipulated that 'if the land assigned to the natives were insufficient for their just and proper requirements, an additional and sufficient portion should be allotted'. Rhodes objected that the Land Court would have already made a careful examination and allotted what in their opinion was a sufficient area for the natives at present existing in the country; as the clause stood he thought that it would make the Company liable to find free land for the natives as they increased in numbers, and he felt sure that that was not meant. Loch agreed that it was not his intention that the Company should be held liable for all natives as they increased in numbers. In the Colonial Office memo this section of the clause was left out and the final version (clause 28) merely arranged for an exchange of land if the reserve was required for mineral development. On the question of the right of natives to acquire land, Rhodes wanted to omit that section of the clause (23) which provided protection for a native wishing to mortgage his



property, but this the Colonial Office would not allow and the provision remained (clause 33). There was little likelihood of Africans being in a position to buy land for some years so the Colonial Office could afford to be firm on this particular aspect of native protection. With regard to the appointment of a Land Court (clause 25) they again agreed with Rhodes, who objected that the decision of a Court would be final. By the new clause (24), a Land Commission was appointed, because as Loch pointed out, its recommendations would be subject to the approval of the Secretary of State and the final decision would then 'be more within the control of Her Majesty's Government'.(78) It could also be more easily and less expensively changed. One other small alteration was made at Rhodes' suggestion. Loch stipulated (in clause 25) that if a portion of land allotted to natives should be required for townships, railways or public works, fair compensation should be made 'of equal value' elsewhere. Rhodes thought that as the mineral value of such land might be raised for consideration the clause should read fair compensation 'of equal arable and grazing land elsewhere'. In the Colonial Office version this became 'just compensation in land elsewhere, convenient as possible and of equal suitability to their requirements'.

'Suitability' was another name for Yudelman's 'dual standard of need': allocations apportioned according to the vastly superior need of the 'civilised' European compared with that of the 'primitive' African,(81) a principle in line with Earl Gray's statement of 1846. All subsequent exchanges between native reserve land and European owned land were requested, and granted, on the premise that the land was either 'suitable' for Europeans, or 'suitable' for natives. There was no need to be specific about the quality of the land to be exchanged, as the criterion of suitability for black or white was understood by both the Company and the Colonial Office.

When British Bechuanaland was taken over, the natives were immediately placed in beacons reserves which they held under inalterable tribal rights.(82) When the Colonial Office was preparing to hand over the Protectorate to the Company in 1895 land was secured to the Chiefs, disappointingly generous according to the Company,(83) but only the two reserves, the Gwaai and the Shangani, were demarcated in Matabeleland; no others were assigned or ratified by legislative enactment, a course which the Company always maintained would be highly detrimental to European settlement and to the general interests of the Company.(84) The Colonial Office was aware that the Company claimed all the land, including that which had always been in native occupation, by right of conquest,(85) and they were also aware that the Company did not favour the idea of reserves,(86) as they did not wish to tie up the land until its possibilities had become apparent. The attitude of the Colonial Office was that native taxation and native reserves were to be regarded as 'set-offs' against each other.(87) Nevertheless they did not press the Company unduly, they reminded the Resident Commissioner several times of the desirability of approving and proclaiming reserves in Mashonaland,(88) but the matter was not regarded as urgent: 'It appears that large numbers of natives are settled on private owners' land, and that the owners like to have them there.'(89)

While European settlement in the early years was not actively promoted as the emphasis was on mining, the natives were encouraged to remain on the most fertile land in order to grow food for themselves and the white mining population.(90) Until the White farmers and their cattle increased in number in the years immediately before the first World War, pressure on the good land was not excessive. At a private interview at the Colonial Office in 1910, Birchenough raised the question of native reserves and was met 'in a most sympathetic spirit by Hopwood and Just', who both agreed that the closer settlement which was taking place in Southern Rhodesia made a rearrangement of the Reserves necessary, and they suggested that Milton should discuss the

subject with the Resident Commissioner so that the proposals of the Company might be forwarded to the Colonial Office, proposals which would be 'sympathetically and favourably received'.(91)

The Resident Commissioner in 1912 raised the question of a final demarcation with some urgency. As the mineral resources of the country had not come up to the high expectations of the Company, settlers were being encouraged to take up land, but large tracts of the best land were held by companies, 'the Chartered Company allegedly being directly interested in some of those which were averse to opening their holdings to settlement', and other suitable land adjacent to the railways had to be found. The number of readjustments and curtailments of the reserves began therefore to increase. Settlers accused the Company of lopping off as much of the good land from the Reserves as they could before the review of the Charter in 1914, a policy they complained, which would leave the new government with only worthless land to curtail. The Resident Commissioner considered that such a tinkering with the problem was unwise and was likely to irritate the natives.(92) The High Commissioner, Lord Gladstone, agreed that the Company should submit their proposals en bloc for a final decision.(93)

His own proposals were quite specific. Land forming reserves which ought not to be encroached on should be regarded as 'final reserves', that would obviously refer to land not suitable, as to soil, climate or accessibility, for Europeans; land forming part of the reserves which was in excess of native requirements or was 'more suitable for European occupation' should be termed 'temporary reserves', exchanges of which could be empowered by the High Commissioner for land in the third category 'provisional reserves', that is land which was not already in native reserves but which was 'suitable for native occupation and not for European'. A certain measure of finality might thus be reached.(94) The Company, however, were reluctant to commit themselves to a final decision, but after much correspondence and several private interviews the Board finally agreed in January 1914 that they were disposed to favour the appointment of a commission and to accept Harcourt's view that native reserves must be regarded as a permanent institution.(95)

In one such interview in South Africa, the High Commissioner had explained to D.O Malcolm of the Company that the constant exchanges requested by the Company might leave him open to attack by radicals in the House of Commons if it were found that the natives had, in fact, suffered in the deals, but a commission could obtain more information independently of the Administration than either he or the Resident Commissioner possessed, and it would remove the responsibility for making decisions from his shoulders.(96) From the point of view of the Government, a Commission's decision could always be more easily defended than the decisions of an individual, especially if the selection of its members were confirmed by the High Commissioner.(97) Gladstone's final advice to the Company, Malcolm wrote, amounted to a recommendation that the Company should agree to a final settlement as the liability of clause 81 of the Order in Council 1898, requiring the assignment of land to natives 'from time to time', would pass to the new administration and might impinge on their own land holdings, but a final settlement would have to be accepted by the new government and the Company might be recognised 'as having clean title' to the rest of the land.(96)

Of these negotiations, Palmer writes that 'it was basically the Company's frustrations and the Colonial Office's fears which drove them to support a final settlement. The Company, having failed in its attack on the reserves, saw in the commission a chance to renew the attack, while the Colonial Office though recognising the advantages of its powers under the existing elastic system,

was afraid that these would be diminished as the political power of the settlers increased and as Rhodesia headed towards union with South Africa.' There is little evidence in the London Office papers that the Company were unduly frustrated over the question of reserves in Southern Rhodesia, or that the Colonial Office ever made any difficulty over the numerous exchanges of native- and white-owned land requested by the Company. As no reserves other than the Gwaai and the Shangani had been legally demarcated, there was nothing to 'attack' - the Company had itself demarcated provisional reserves, and exchanges could have continued for some time, as the settlers realised. It was the finality of the settlement that the Company opposed, not the principle of reserves; the natives after all had to be accommodated somewhere. As for the 'fears' of the Colonial Office, why should they, when they had surrendered the administration of the native population to a commercial company in the grant of a charter, 'fear' the political power of the settlers? Why should they wish to retain responsibility for native affairs, which they had assumed in a limited and negative fashion by the Order in Council of 1898 only because of the misdeeds of the Company, not because of an overwhelming desire to promote native interests?

Palmer refers to the South African Land Act of 1913 as having some influence on the attitude of the Colonial Office to native reserves, but in the quotation above, he writes of the fears of the Colonial Office that its powers would be diminished 'as Rhodesia headed towards union with Africa'. But it had been assumed from the beginning that Rhodesia would eventually become part of a British union of South African states, and the Company's ordinances relating to native affairs were always reviewed by the Colonial Office with South African legislation in mind.(98) The pre-war Liberal Government, says Hyam, clearly intended that Rhodesia should become a constitutional part of South Africa.(99) It is more than likely that it was this Land Act of 1913 that persuaded the Colonial Office to seek a final settlement of reserves in Southern Rhodesia to bring it into line with the rest of southern Africa. In reply to protests against the Land Act by black South Africans, Harcourt maintained that he was unable to interfere, (100) and the High Commissioner, Lord Buxton tried to persuade the African Congress to accept land segregation,(101) as in their best interests, thus indicating the definite commitment of the Colonial Office to the provision of permanent reserves.

The Company asked that the commission should be given wide powers 'in the direction of recommending alterations, diminutions and increases in the areas of the reserves as at present constituted, since it is particularly important in a permanent settlement of the nature proposed, to ensure that the land reserved for natives and that allocated for occupation by European settlers shall be as suitable as possible to their requirements.'(102) In a friendly letter to the Company the Colonial Office enclosed a rough draft of the Commission's terms of reference.(103) Harcourt, in a subsequent despatch, stated that he believed that the Company might wish for the insertion of words enabling the Commissioners, if they thought fit, to make recommendations for any 're-adjustments of the reserves that may be necessary'; and to meet the point Harcourt was willing to make certain insertions and substitutions. The relevant paragraph (with the insertions underlined) finally read:

'in case any Reserve shall appear to be insufficient as aforesaid or to be in any way unsuitable to examine such other areas as may be indicated by divers authorities as suitable and to recommend the assignment in addition to or in substitution for existing reserves such portions thereof as you may consider to be desirable and necessary.'(104)

This despatch would have been in reply to the letter from Malcolm to Lambert at the Colonial Office which Palmer mentions (p.129, Malcolm to Lambert, 26 March 1914), in which, says Palmer, Malcolm 'challenged the proposed terms of reference and substituted terms which allowed the commission to readjust the reserves as it thought fit', but the tone of the letter from Lambert with the draft terms and the opinions expressed earlier by the High Commissioner show that there was no need to 'challenge' the Colonial Office as if they were opponents of the Company with different views on the subject. The Government were pursuing a certain political course in the wider sphere of imperial politics and the agreement of the Company, as the effective authority in Rhodesia, was essential. The many private interviews indicate lengthy discussion but there is no reason to suppose that it was conducted in anything but a quiet atmosphere of compromise. Palmer says that the Colonial Office wanted provision made for all possible future African needs (p.152), a questionable proposition, but African needs were of slender importance in the Imperial Government's wider schemes, as is shown in their whole policy towards South Africa.

Various undertakings given by the Colonial Office to the Directors were carried out in the Order in Council giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission, but with regard to the railway strip through the Sabi Reserve the Colonial Office made one reservation. A twelve-mile strip was allowed in place of the usual fifty yards because 'the white settler needs the railway more than the native' because he has goods brought and sent, and as he uses it more 'his contribution to the revenue is greater', (105) but nowhere was it to be wider than twelve miles even though in some places, to avoid native settlements and burial places, the strip would be narrower than twelve miles. There was to be no compensation for the loss of width in the more densely settled areas. (106) This, the only concession to native interests, was made in response to the vigorous protests of the missionaries. The projected railway line Umvuma and Odzi has never been built, but a fertile stretch of country was secured by the Company.

In Northern Rhodesia the attitude of the Colonial Office was governed by different considerations. In 1910 the Company was still opposed to reserves: any proposal from the Government was to be strongly resisted as not being necessary in Northern Rhodesia in the absence of any pressure of European population, (107) but by 1913 applications for land began to increase in number especially in the Fort Jameson area, and the Company therefore requested the Government to sanction their proposed reserves. (108) The land in north eastern Rhodesia could not be claimed by conquest but was held under H.H. Johnston's Certificates of Claim and under the provisional title of Weise's concession, under both of which no native village existing at the date of the Certificate could be moved without the consent of Her Majesty's Government. (109) No land could be alienated to Europeans, therefore, without the sanction of the Government to the removal of natives, and as the Administration had no power to move them but could only persuade, land settlement was held up. At first the Colonial Office was prepared to consider the question of reserves. In 1915, Buxton thought that though the acreage allowed for each person did not seem sufficient, proposals appeared to be formulated 'with due regard to the reasonable requirements of the natives'. (110) The subject was then postponed until after the war. The Buxton Committee, however, in its Second Report of 1921 recommended (clause 19) that 'it may be desirable later on to delimit reserves in certain districts' but that 'until the position has further developed we do not recommend any action in this direction'. (111) The position referred to the ultimate ownership of the land; it was conceivable that the Privy Council would judge in favour of the natives being declared the owners of the land. In spite of repeated

requests from the Company and their subsidiary, the North Charterland Exploration Company, the Colonial Office refused to appoint the desired commission. (112) As in Southern Rhodesia, the question was not one of native interests but of the Administrative deficits. (111) If the Reserves were finally demarcated and sanctioned, the Company could sell or lease the remaining land, and if on the review of the Charter in 1924 the Country became a Crown Colony, the Imperial Government would have deprived themselves of a revenue to pay off the deficit.

In the provision of land for immigrant natives in Southern Rhodesia, the Colonial Office made clear its attitude to one purpose of reserves. In January 1900 J.F. Perry wrote in a minute on the subject, 'Of course the Company in settling these bodies of natives in Southern Rhodesia do not desire to give them a large enough reserve to support them in idleness - which is I suppose the standard of the ordinary native reserve - that would defeat the object of importing them i.e. to get them to work on the mines', and he added, 'I am not sure that the Resident Commissioner is alive to this point of view.' (113) Chamberlain therefore wrote of the Resident Commissioner's doubts as to the sufficiency of land provided as reserves for the immigrants: 'I consider that in encouraging native immigrants into Rhodesia with the object of supplying a force of labour for the mines, care should be taken that prospective immigrants are made aware that they will not be able to live entirely on the land allotted to them.' (114) The size of reserves was thus among other considerations, an important aspect of the labour question.

The provision of sufficient labour for the Company's enterprises was a perennial problem, but one on which the Colonial Office were unable to be as accommodating as on the question of land. They sympathised with the Company's difficulties and invited them to submit proposals on the lines of the Glen Grey Act, (115) which had been welcomed by the humanitarians, for while it provided for a form of labour tax, it also provided for individual land tenure in the Reserves, which was thought to be a step forward in the civilising of the natives. The Colonial Office also suggested the regulating of *lobola* as furnishing another form, besides taxation, of 'indirect inducement' to labour. (116) They took great exception to the Chief Native Commissioner's words to the Indunas around the country, that as salaried officials of the Government they were expected to supply labour. This, wrote F. Graham, was likely to lead to a form of compulsion, 'but how are they to get labour except through the Indunas?' (116) However understanding the Colonial Office was and however willing to consider any other scheme of indirect inducement, (117) they could not countenance any suspicion of compulsory labour. Sir A. Hilner, the High Commissioner, was in favour of some pressure on the natives to induce them to work, he had no objections 'to a well-regulated system of state compulsion' (118) and he allowed a compulsory labour clause to stand in the draft Regulations of 1898. (119) Chamberlain refused to consider it 'because strong opposition would be excited in Parliament, especially in view of the past action of the Native Commissioners on which Sir Richard Martin's Report was based'. (120)

After the Parliamentary Inquiry following the Raid and the Risings, the Imperial Government undertook to exercise a closer control over the Chartered Company especially with regard to native policy, and a new Order in Council was issued for this purpose. If it became known, Graham wrote, that Native Commissioners, appointed under this Order in Council 1898, with the intention that they should be the protectors of the natives, (121) were being employed by the Administration to bring pressure 'only short of force' on the natives to work, as Sir Marshall Clarke reported, then the Colonial Office, responsible to Parliament for the actions of the Administration, would also be held responsible by Parliament for any disturbance of the peace in Rhodesia. 'This Department,' wrote H. Just, 'must take some action in

self-defence,'(122) and a strong letter protesting against the use of Native Commissioners as recruiting and distributing agents was sent to the Company. The great concern of the Colonial Office not to be found guilty of condoning compulsory labour may well have been influenced by an active campaign being waged at that time, both in and out of Parliament, by the Aborigine Protection Society, greatly strengthened by ardent free traders, for Foreign Office and Colonial Office support in reforming the Administration of the Congo.(123) The Society was gravely concerned with reports and allegations of ill-treatment and forced labour among British West African recruits in the Congo, and the free traders were anxious to break Leopold's monopolies granted in contravention of the fifth Article of the Berlin General Act of 1886. Together they were able to turn the Congo question from a 'proliferation of sensational stories' to an 'academic discussion of colonial principles' and the observance of treaty obligations.(124) Hence the sensitivity of the Colonial Office to charges of forced labour and its firmness with the Company.

This concern is clearly illustrated in the Macnamara episode in Northern Rhodesia. After an inquiry the District Officer Macnamara had been found guilty of flogging natives without trial to induce them to pay hut tax, and of compelling natives to go to work for the Native Labour Bureau.(125) He was eventually dismissed for concubinage with an African woman. The whole correspondence between the Colonial Office and the Company reveals a somewhat indulgent attitude on the part of the Colonial Office to the Administration's coercion of natives whose labour was so essential to the profitability of the Company's commercial enterprise, and the dismissal of an administrative officer because of his personal way of life was less damaging to the reputation of either the Company or the Colonial Office than dismissal for flogging natives and compelling them to labour.

It is clear that the Congo question had some influence on the actions of the Colonial Office. The suspension of Macnamara became dismissal only after the letter from the Aborigine Protection Society with its reference to criticism of this country's policy 'in contrast with that of others'.(126) In February the Foreign Office sent to the Under Secretary for the Colonies a report from the Belgian Minister about the 'graves méfaits' of a British recruiter of labour in the Congo.(127) Lord Crewe wrote to the High Commissioner, 'you will appreciate the importance of a complaint of this description against a British subject in the Congo Free State.'(127)

On one other question was the Colonial Office equally firm with the Company and that was on the intention of the Administrator of Southern Rhodesia to raise the Hut Tax from ten shillings to two pounds in 1903. They were prepared for a proposal to that effect 'the revenue will probably be greater in view of the proposed increase of native taxation.(129) Chamberlain promised the Company that he would not object to the raising of the hut tax if the High Commissioner and the Resident Commissioner agreed.(130) To a deputation from Rhodesia which he received in Johannesburg, he said he saw no objection to increasing the tax to the same amount as was imposed in Transvaal, two pounds, but that he would not pledge himself, 'he would have to satisfy himself that the increased taxation would not cause serious trouble, as I do not want an insurrection'.(131) In the considerable correspondence from those in favour of the increase to two pounds and those against it, the Colonial Office found it difficult to get at the truth; they thought that all the positions taken up were purely selfish, but that the balance of evidence was against the expediency of exacting two pounds at that particular time, and that the Administration would have been well advised to content itself with one pound,(132) a ten shilling increase. What finally decided them against the new hut tax ordinance was the report from the Resident Commissioner, which stated that two pounds was too high for Southern Rhodesia, that the time was not opportune as the harvest was poor, and that the natives had only just had a new hut tax ordinance in 1901 after paying the original tax for barely

three years; he was therefore unable to recommend it 'as he feared that the rapid rise proposed would unsettle the natives and may endanger the security and good order of the country'.(133) The Colonial Office decided that it would be a serious matter to override Sir Marshal Clarke's views: 'if the papers were published the case would not look strong enough should there be trouble.'(134) The governing consideration, as pointed out by G. Fiddes, 'was that they should run no risk of a native disturbance'.(135) The main issue, as in the provision of Reserves, was not primarily the protection or consideration of native interests, but the security of the Company and the settlers, and the peace of mind of the Colonial Office.

Paramountcy of native interests was largely an ideal of the post-Great War period, and then in the predominantly black countries, not in the white settler countries of southern Africa. A glimmer of this idea of paramountcy occurred during Lord Elgin's term at the Colonial Office in the Liberal Government of 1906. The 1901 concession from Lewanika gave the Company the right to make grants of land in Barotseland-North West Rhodesia with the exception of the Barotse Valley, but it gave the Company no express right to retain any money from such grants to third parties.(136) Two further concessions were therefore sought and obtained in March 1905 and January 1906 enabling the Company to retain any money received from the disposition of the land. Neither of these concessions was ratified by the Secretary of State. In July 1906 Lord Elgin was doubtful about ratification as the concessions seemed to amount to the grant of the whole North West Rhodesia except Lewanika's own reserve.(137) The following year the Colonial Office sent to the Company a draft of the conditions on which they were prepared to approve the concessions. The Company complained with some spirit that entirely new features were being introduced into the subject, the effect of which would be to destroy the commercial value of the Company's land concessions in North Western Rhodesia, which, as the Company's Counsel pointed out, they had acquired like any other commercial company as an asset for its shareholders and this aspect of the Company's undertaking had been repeatedly recognised by the British Government.(138) The conditions were that the proceeds from the land thus acquired should go towards defraying the cost of the administration and its deficits, and that five per cent of the proceeds should be spent for the benefit of the natives.(137) Wilson Fox, the Manager of the Company, at an interview with the High Commissioner at Johannesburg, declared that the Company had every right to expect that under its Charter every concession which it obtained properly should be ratified as a matter of course and that the recent attempts of the Colonial Office 'to whittle away the Company's commercial rights ... was an act of high-handed injustice'.(136)

The desire that the natives should derive some benefits from the Company's revenue was rather a new idea. When an amended hut tax was introduced in 1901, the Resident Commissioner pointed out that the natives in Rhodesia derived little benefit from their contribution to taxation compared with Basutoland, and Zululand when under Imperial rule, but G. Grindle did not think, in commenting on the Commissioner's despatch, that they need press the point on a hut tax which was regarded as the natives' contribution to the cost of government, and the Secretary of State had indicated clearly, he wrote, that any labour tax should be spent for the good of the natives.(139) As a labour tax was never assented to, as Chamberlain had decided that the four pound labour tax proposed by the Rhodesian deputation that called on him in Johannesburg could not be allowed as it exceeded native taxation in the Transvaal,(140) this was the first clear suggestion from the Colonial Office that the Company should set aside some money specifically for advancing the interests of the natives. Following the receipt of Elgin's despatch of June 1907, Fox had a private interview at the Colonial Office with Alex

Harris ('he is a friend of ours and will do what he can for us')(141) who said that the Company could regard the despatch as a 'ballon d'essai', a 'try-on'. Both Harris and another friend of the Company at the Colonial Office, Sir Francis Hopwood, advised the Company to act with caution and let the matter stand over for a time, and Hopwood was sanguine that the decision of the Law Officers of the Crown would be in favour of the Company. The ballon d'essai failed to leave the ground as the Company were within their rights according to clause 3 of their Charter, whereby the Company was authorised and empowered to acquire land by concessions, grants or treaties and to hold, use or exercise such territories, lands and properties 'for the purposes of the Company'. The country's revenues having once been given away by the Charter could not legally be reclaimed. In 1908 the new Colonial Secretary, Lord Crewe, was prepared to waive the conditions objected to by the Directors of the Company, and with certain innocuous conditions the concessions were ratified.(142) In their cable announcing the ratification the Company instructed the Administrator to approach Lewanika for yet another concession(143) which would give the Company the remaining land to the east of Lewanika's reserve in the Barotse Valley. The Colonial Office had no objection to the endorsement of this grant, and at a private interview between Hopwood and Sir Henry Birchenough, H. Just, at the request of Hopwood, agreed to expedite the matter as much as possible,(144) and no controversial conditions were imposed.

Of the advantages of imperialism through chartered companies, not the least was the avoidance by the Imperial Government of native administration. The claims of the civilised communities and justice to the natives were in the circumstances almost irreconcilable, since the cost of exploiting the resources of a large continent could only be made profitable on the basis of cheap and landless labour.(145) As the object of late nineteenth century government was to promote the commerce and industry of their people in all parts of the world, it was better that Government should not, where avoidable, concern itself with the possibly conflicting interests of native rights. Having surrendered the administration of natives to a chartered commercial company, the Colonial Office could not properly interfere on behalf of the natives without curtailing the commercial opportunities which they had granted the Company in their Charter.

The Company realised that on the whole it was better off under a Conservative Government. When the Liberals took office in 1906 and the new Under Secretary for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, spoke in the House of Commons for a more liberal policy towards native affairs in Africa, Fox wrote to Milton, the Southern Rhodesian Administrator: 'We are all shocked at the attitude of our new masters... it is quite evident therefore that we must walk warily in regard to this question, and for the moment lie low.'(146) A month later, however, he was writing of the semi-official talks he had had at the Colonial Office: 'I may add that in all my recent interviews with the Colonial Office I have noticed a marked improvement in tone, and that the various officials appear to sympathise with the work of the Company and desire to help it.'(147) Although some Liberals admitted that they were not very much in favour of government by chartered companies, like Buxton, who also pointed out that his Government was tied by the acts of their predecessors,(148) the Company did not suffer unduly under Liberal Governments. Lord Ripon withheld his consent to the amalgamation of the companies interested in the Shashi-Nakloutsie area, not on a question of principle but because he feared that Baron d'Erlanger's Company had been left out.(149) He was prepared to hand over the Bechuanaland Protectorate to the Company(150) though Harcourt was not.(151) It was under a Liberal Government that the negotiations with the Company, begun under the previous Conservative Government, for a guarantee of twenty thousand pounds for the Bechuanaland railway,



was agreed to, without the previous consent of Parliament.(152) Harcourt wrote very sharply in 1912 that he proposed taking proceedings unless the Company made an early settlement of the taxes due to the government of Nyasaland(153) and he refused the Company's request for Imperial assistance in the Company's extraordinary war expenditure (154) which his Conservative successor, Bonar Law, immediately acceded to,(155) but when the British Government were contemplating a commercial treaty with Portugal, he consulted the Company confidentially, stating that he would be glad to learn whether there were any special matters of importance that they would desire to be borne in mind.(156) And he was nothing if not co-operative on the question of native reserves.

On the native franchise, the Liberal attitude differed little from that of the Company. The Elected Members and the people of Southern Rhodesia were unanimous, Milton claimed in 1906, in wishing to prevent any large addition to the native vote, and Milton, thinking the subject should be dealt with before the growth of large vested interests, consulted the High Commissioner privately.(157) The High Commissioner, Lord Selborne, was of the opinion that Her Majesty's Government would not approve any suspension of the right of natives to the franchise, but he agreed that raising the qualifications generally would meet the case.(158) The Colonial Office concurred, Lord Elgin pointing out that there was no constitutional objection to making a change in the Southern Rhodesian franchise by an ordinance passed by the Legislative Council. The change in the qualifications for voters was a matter entirely for the decision of the Legislature. Elgin's main concern was that no change would be made without consideration of its bearing on the ultimate solution of the problem for a uniform franchise to be adopted by South Africa, of which Rhodesia was likely soon to become a part.(159) Elgin, Hyam says, was not very enthusiastic about the Cape franchise: 'are we prepared to subordinate whites to native rule under such circumstances?'(160) The Conservative Under Secretary for the Colonies heartily approved the recommendation of the Buxton Committee that the right of the native to the franchise should be protected.(161) Both parties were agreed on this as long, it seems, as it constituted no threat to white supremacy.

It was the same with discriminatory legislation. In the draft Agreement of 1894, Rhodes had wished that clause 17 which stipulated that no restrictive legislation should be imposed on natives which did not equally apply to persons of European descent, save in respect of arms, ammunition, liquor and title to land (in the Reserves) should be omitted as they might find that there were some exceptions not named which the High Commissioner might approve of but which the Company would be debarred from dealing with.(162) The High Commissioner in his amended draft therefore added 'an important proviso' which became in the Batabeleland Order in Council of 1894 (section b of clause 23) 'or any matter in respect of which the Secretary of State upon the recommendation of the High Commissioner thinks fit to authorise an ordinance or a Regulation'. This enabled the Company's Administration to have Ordinance 11 of 1904 assented to, which conferred powers on local authorities to pass discriminatory bye-laws regulating the use of public streets by natives. The saving clause belied the claim that there was no discriminatory legislation in the Company's territories, and it was inserted by a Liberal Government.

Both Liberal and Conservative Governments shared the Company's attitude to native education. In considering the education provided by the London Missionary Society for natives in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Grindle minuted, 'There can be no doubt that the education of African natives ought to include the more technical than the purely literary instruction ... express general concurrence with his Milner's preference for industrial training,

which certainly ought to be combined with any purely literary education.' H.W. Just agreed.(164) Elgin too laid great stress on the encouragement of industrial education amongst the natives; hitherto their education had been 'too exclusively literary'(165) and, like the Company, the Colonial Office did not like the idea of Lewanika's sons being educated in England.(166)

It was Buxton, the Liberal Under Secretary for the Colonies, who defended the Company in the House of Commons in 1893, reminding the members that whatever the Company might have done in a wrong direction, 'if it had not been for their existence this country would have lost the large part of Africa, which is a place of the future'.(167) The Colonial Office was as keen as the Company 'to get all we can' in defining the boundary of North Western Rhodesia with Portugal,(168) under a Conservative Ministry, and the Liberal Colonial Secretary Walter Long consulted the Company confidentially for their views on the Anglo-Congolese boundary.(169) Whatever their political party, Secretaries of State were 'anxious to avoid injuring the commercial interests of the shareholders', (Chamberlain in 1896),(170) 'anxious not to interfere in any way with the reasonable freedom of the Company' (Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office in 1912),(171) and 'would not do anything to injure the position of the Company'.(W. Long in 1917).(172)

Thus in the main, the Colonial Office saw eye to eye with the Company, but the Company, having been given an inch, were always prepared to take an all. They resented any restrictions being placed on their activities because of the need to make concessions to the opinions of Westminster. On some issues the Colonial Office were indulgent. Sir Richard Martin, 'a plain soldier without guile',(173) had to be removed from his post of Deputy Commissioner of Southern Rhodesia because of his strained relations with the Chartered Company in consequence of his report on the native labour question',(174) suitably rewarded with a thousand pounds from the Company at Chamberlain's request(175) and a C.B.E. from the Imperial Government. The Colonial Office also met the Company as far as it could on the subject of the supplemental charter, that was insisted on after the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Raid. The Colonial Office realised that not only did the Company dislike it, but that they were trying to smuggle it through at an annual general meeting(176) when an extraordinary meeting was required, and were even hoping to 'give it the go-by'. They could not acquiesce in the Company's wish to have the Supplemental Charter made less public by including it in an Order in Council,(177) 'as the scheme had been laid before Parliament and the withdrawal of any of its provisions would be a breach of faith with Parliament'. The Colonial Office however made verbal alterations to meet the objections of the Directors, and were willing to indulge the Company to the extent of waiving the formality of a Petition which should precede the Charter, but to the Gazetting of which the Company so objected.(178)

On two other issues the Company seemed to get their own way. The 1898 Order in Council required (clause 79.i) that the Administration shall appoint a Secretary for Native Affairs; but the Company had appointed Milton as Administrator particularly because of his experience in the Native Department in the Cape Colony, and as the Administrator was responsible in the first place to the Company, it was from their point of view advantageous to have the posts of Administrator and Secretary for Native Affairs combined in one person. From the point of view of the Colonial Office, a separate Secretary whose appointment and dismissal were both subject to the assent of the Secretary of State, would have given them rather more control of native affairs, but the Company insisted on Milton's appointment as Secretary. Chamberlain agreed, and Harcourt agreed to the arrangement as long as Milton held office. After Milton had retired, and when a new Order in Council was being contemplated,

Harcourt thought that the time had come for the appointment of an official of high standing and special qualifications to represent the Native Department in the Administration and in the Legislative Council.(179)

With regard to the question of the revenues from land in Northern Rhodesia, the Company refused to be moved by the Colonial Office. Harcourt in 1910 endorsed Crewe's statement of April 1909 that he 'would not admit that land revenues could be treated as an asset accruing to the Company absolutely irrespective of any provision being made for meeting the expenses of the Administration'. The Company protested strongly that any asset of the Company or revenue from assets should be regarded as in any way earmarked for future provision of administrative revenue.(180) On both these issues, the Company could affirm the law. The Charter (clause 3) protected the Company's revenues; and although the Colonial Office thought it was undesirable that the Administrator should also be Secretary for Native Affairs, there was little they could do about it, because, for the Administrator so to appoint himself, did not contravene the Order in Council.(181)

The Colonial Office was quite alive to the various subterfuges of the Company. The controversial Hut Tax Ordinance was 'complicated by the fact' that it had been passed before the Administration knew whether the Secretary of State would agree, 'it was distinctly bad management ... and I cannot help suspecting that it was done partly with the idea of forcing his hand.'(182) The Company particularly disliked the heavy burden of the Police which the Imperial Government had placed on them, and they made several attempts to evade the issue, but the Colonial Office was aware of their intentions: 'The Company would like to abolish the B.S.A.P. or to reduce them to the lowest number for two reasons (1) they would like to throw the responsibility for native disturbance on the Imperial Government, and (2) they want to have control of an armed constabulary for service anywhere in the country, in the direction of which they will in no way be hampered by the Commandant General and the Resident Commissioner.'(183) Although they admitted that the attitude of the Government to the Southern Rhodesian Administration on this question was a purely political one, their principle was that 'it would not be consistent with the public undertaking which has been made to allow the British South Africa Company itself to control a large body of armed police'.(183)

Attempts by the Company to circumvent the Colonial Office and to rouse public opinion on important issues like these were resisted by the Colonial Office. Native Commissioners were forbidden to recruit and direct labour, they were only to advise, the duty of the Administration was to take no part in recruiting but to prevent abuses; the Hut Tax Ordinance of 1903 was disallowed, and the Police remained under the control of an Imperial Officer. And in 1901, for instance, the Colonial Office disallowed the Administrator's dismissal of a native commissioner by abolishing his post, as a means of avoiding submission to the Secretary of State for his approval, as required by the Order in Council of 1898:(184) required the amendment of the Master and Servants Ordinance 50 of 1901 where it departed seriously from the Cape laws up to 1891, which was the original law of Southern Rhodesia;(185) refused to allow the Administration to re-enact Native Regulations by Ordinance in order to provide for a chief of staff or 'preambulatory Secretary for Native Affairs' instead of by Proclamation: 'if this is done we shall lose control of native affairs. It is an extraordinary suggestion having regard to the position of the Imperial Government in relation to the natives.'(186) A Volunteer Ordinance of 1903), 'the object and aim of which was to do away with the close control required in the Order in Council' was disallowed unless amended. It was obvious, the Colonial Office minuted, that 'a very tight hand would have to be kept on Southern Rhodesian legislation';(185) 'the Secretary of State cannot allow the Administration to drive a coach and six

through the Order in Council'.(185) This was the crux of the relations between the Colonial Office and the Company.

The Charter gave extensive powers to the Company, but the Order in Council 1898, though abrogating none of the provisions of the Charter, reserved to the Secretary of State certain powers of control. All legislative enactments of the Company were to be judged in the light of these instruments, and as long as their provisions were not infringed the manoeuvrings of the Company were irrelevant and immaterial. Initially the Charter had given the Company almost complete sovereignty, reserving to the Secretary of State slight powers of restraint: he could advise or remonstrate, but little more; but he could if he saw fit, advise the Crown to revoke the Charter (clause 35), or he could threaten to do so, 'though that threat could only be legally justified by the failure of the Company to conform to the provisions of the Charter'.(188) In 1894 and 1896 the Colonial Office had the legal right to revoke the Charter because of the Company's failure to preserve peace and order (clause 10), but for political reasons of their own they chose not to enforce it. The power was there, however, for any other government to use, and this knowledge was sufficient to keep the Company within bounds. The powers of control given to the Colonial Office by the Order in Council of 1898 referred only to native affairs and the Police. On these subjects the Colonial Office could and did intervene, not only by disallowing Ordinances, but also by insisting on the better treatment of native labourers on the mines, and on their welfare while travelling to and from their place of work, by the threat of the Colonial Secretary to disallow recruiting north of the Zambezi.(189) Williams' "cynic" might have said with some truth, that this was largely self-interest on the part of the Colonial Office and the Company, since natives refused to recruit for mines where the rates of mortality and sickness were high; and in fact the provision of medical and hospital services for natives was good in Southern Rhodesia where the mines were, but almost non-existent in Northern Rhodesia where the labourers were.

The Government's control of the Company was, as Earl Grenville said of the Borneo Company, 'of a negative character'.(190)

'It was first proposed ... to provide that the Company should obey the directions of the Secretary of State. But we decided that the power should be confined to a power of objection and dissent on matters affecting foreign powers and the treatment of natives - confined in fact to certain limited matters in which the conduct of the Company might conflict with the view- and policy of the Government, or with the public opinion in this country.'

Thus the Colonial Office could not initiate policy. They could only control or veto it. They had no power to insist that some portion of land revenues should be set aside for the benefit of natives, nor could they, even had they wished, forbid the alienation of land in freehold, or undertake the development of a peasant economy, as the British Government did in Uganda, since all were contrary to the letter and spirit of the Charter.

The establishment of the Chartered Company in south and central Africa resolved the Imperial Government's problem of what to do about the reputedly rich interior. The amalgamation of Cape and London financial concerns enabled the Government to promote British commercial interests and at the same time to keep foreign powers out of the area, and to maintain, they hoped, British predominance in southern Africa. Though they fulfilled political and strategic aims of the Government in the wider sphere of foreign and imperial affairs in Africa, the Company administered Rhodesia, not as Amery

claimed, as agents of Her Majesty's Government,(191) but as agents 'under the Crown',(192) of their shareholders.

There is no evidence that the Colonial Office differed in principle from the Company, or attempted in any way to inhibit the Company's enterprise. Rather, as this paper has tried to show, the reverse is true; as far as was consistent with public opinion as expressed at Westminster, and with the legal limitations imposed on them, they did their best to promote the Company's interests. Personal dislike of the Company is sometimes evident. Wilson Fox took particular exception to Just,(193) but it is quite evident that whatever his personal feelings, he, like the rest of the Colonial Office, shared with the Company, the same attitude to Imperial affairs.

This close co-operation between the Colonial Office and the Chartered Companies is understandable. Civil servants of the higher ranks, government ministers and the Companies' directors all shared the same educational background, and came largely from the same social class, which was still, at the end of the nineteenth century, the governing class, with a strong social cohesion. It is noticeable throughout the official documents and the British South Africa Company's London Office papers how constantly controversial issues and policies were discussed in private interviews between Government Officials and senior Company officers. It was also the class with money to invest. Aristocrats were selected, some with royal connections, to decorate the Boards of Directors in order to impress the public, who in a spirit of hopeful patriotism bought shares in the Chartered Companies, and were kept waiting for their dividends by both the North Borneo and the British South Africa Companies. The profits were to be made in the manipulation of shares and in the subsidiary companies. Since wealth was a sure entré into society and since it was also, as Rhodes realised at an early age, power, the two classes - governing and financial - combined for their mutual benefit in the opening up of the undeveloped areas of the globe. This upper class with few and unpopular exceptions, like Goldwin Smith and Wilfred Blunt, believed firmly in the superiority of the white peoples, especially the British, and in the eventual disappearance of the primitive peoples. In the spirit of their time the Colonial Office, however humanitarian, and the Company never seemed to question that the role of the native was to be a labourer, and that the manifest duty of the whites, especially the British, was to develop and administer the undeveloped and 'waste' places of the earth.

## APPENDIX 1

Companies associated with the BSA Company:-

- Bechuanaland Exploration Co: Johnson, Heany, Borrow in Cape Town.  
Lord Gifford (Chairman), George Cawston (Director).
- Bechuanaland Trading Co: with Rosenthal of Port Elizabeth as managers.  
Subsidiary of Bech. Exploration Co.
- Bechuana Exploring Co: Subsidiary of Exploring Co. J.Oakley and G.Cawston  
Directors in London; Johnson, Heany and Borrow in Matabeleland; joined  
by Rhodes and Beit.
- United Concessions Co: Gifford and J.O. Maund.
- Shashi and Makloutsie Exploration Company: Amalgamation of Bech.Exploration  
and Exploring Companies, United Concessions and Owners of the Wood, Francis  
and Chapman Concession - Baron d'Erlanger & Co.
- Gold Fields of South Africa Co: Rhodes, Rudd, Beit.
- De Beers Amalgamated Diamond Mines: Rhodes, Beit.
- Frank Johnson & Co.: Johnson, Heany and Borrow with capital from Rhodes and  
the Gold Fields of South Africa Co.
- Zambezi Exploring Company: Robert Williams; among original subscribers:  
Lord Wantage, Lord Rothschild, Earl Grey of Howick, Robert Williams, Rhodes  
and Beit. Parent company of Robert Williams Group and responsible for  
forming Tanganyika Concessions Co.
- African and General Exploring Co: understood to be more or less in alliance  
with the Chartered Co. (Afrn (S) 426, No.D6, C.O. to BSA 21 June 1892).
- Beira Railway Co: Subsidiary of BSA Co. and promoted by them. BSA a con-  
trolling interest in the four railway companies.
- North Charterland Exploration Co:
- Tati Concession Co: taken over by BSA. Beit.
- Land Companies and Syndicates: BSA alleged to be directly interested in several  
of the companies who stated to be averse to opening their holdings to  
settlement. (Col. Burns Begg in RC 3/3/29).
- Bulawayo Syndicate: manager George Grey, cousin of Administrator Earl Grey.
- Mashonaland Development Co: concession of 600,000 acres to Sir John  
Willoughby, military adviser to Dr. Jameson.
- Liebig's Co: BSA large shareholders.
- African Lakes Co:

Companies and private individuals whose interests included in the  
Amalgamated BSA Co:

- Goldfields of South Africa  
Austral African  
Bech. Exploring  
Baron d'Erlanger's Syndicate  
Beit (Messrs. Jules, Parges and Co.)  
Leask of Klerksdorp: Rhodes, Rudd, Beit, Maguire, Haggard, Ivy, Thompson.
- Ware Concession in Barotseland bought by Rhodes.
- G. and A. de Worms: Baron de Worms, Under Secretary of State for the Colonies  
connected with this firm, which fought hard for grant of a Charter for the  
BSA Co. - some evidence that this firm was involved financially in Rhodes'  
schemes. (The Cape to Cairo Dream: Lois Raphael, 1936, p.79).
- Wilson Fox writes of 'the subsidiary companies' reports I receive' (A 1/5/1  
& A 1/5/3), and of Admiral Markham 'our representative on the Board of the  
Globe and Phoenix Mine'. (A 1/5/3). Fox and Birchenough were directors  
of the Victoria Falls Power Company, and Wilson Fox was a director of at  
least one of the mining companies.

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163. " " No.55, Loch to Ripon. Confid. Amended draft of memo, 17 Jan 1894.
164. CO 417/319, H.C.123. 6 Feb.1901. Mins. G. Grindle & H.W.Just, 6 Mar.1901.
165. Hyam, op.cit., p.393.
166. CO 417/320, Tel. 245. 28 June 1901. Mins. G. Grindle, 29 June 1901,  
F. Graham, 29 Aug.1901. LO 1/1/128, Ag.34. NMR. F.V.Worthington,  
25 June 1901.
167. Parl.Dec. 18, c.589, Buxton, 9 Nov.1893.
168. CO 417/284, Confid. 28 Nov.1900. Mins. Sir F. Omanney, 11 Dec.1900.
169. LO 1/1/172 Ag.2 for 23 April 1919, C.O. to BSA Co. Confid. 14 Dec.1918.
170. Afrn (S) 517, No.13, Chamberlain to Robinson, 24 Jan.1896.
171. LO 1/1/146 Ag.9 for 3 Oct.1912. H.W.Just to BSA Co., 13 Sept.1912.
172. LO 1/1/168, Ag.4. C.O. to BSA Co., 17 Dec.1917.
173. R. Williams, op.cit., p.161.

174. CO 417/319 Tel. No.204. 7 April 1901. Min. F.Graham, 18 June 1901.
175. Afrn (S) 559 No.141, C.O. to Sir Richard Martin.
176. CO 417/241 H.C. 638, 29 Nov.1898. Min. F. Graham, 26 Dec.1898.
177. Afrn (S) 559 No.323, BSA Co. to C.O., 23 August 1898.
178. Afrn (S) 552, No.336, C.O. to BSA Co. [Copy to H.C. Confid.] 3 Sept.1898.
179. LO 1/1/158 Ag.2 for 21 Jan.1915. Part 2. Ex.Com. Report C.O. to BSA Co., 9 Jan.1915.
- ✓ A compromise must have been reached eventually as the Company 'received a half interest in the proceeds of land sales in N.W. Rhodesia until 1965'. Pollock, Nyasaland and N.Rhodesia, 1952, p.353.
180. LO 1/1/139 Ag.2 for 6 April 1911. Part 2. C.O. to BSA Co., 3 April 1911.
181. CO 417/276, BSA Co., 12 April 1899. Mins. H.B. Lambert, 24 April 1899.
182. CO 417/373. Confid.(2), 17 Aug.1903. Mins. Sir H. Omanney, 9 Sept. 1903.
183. CO 417/284, H.C. 927, 5 Dec.1900. Min. H.W. Just, 11 Mar.1901.
184. CO 417/372. Confid., 30 May 1903. Min. A.J. Harding, 26 June 1903.
185. CO 417/320 H.C.478, ? May 1901. Min. H.W.Just, 26 June 1901.  
" /321 H.C. 977, 8 Nov.1901, Draft, C.O. to BSA Co., J.Chamberlain,  
1 March 1902; 28 Feb.1903.
186. CO 417/319, H.C. 146, 13 Feb.1901. Min. G. Grindle, 5 Feb.1901.
187. CO 417/371, H.C. 389, 20 Apr.1903, Mins. H.W.Just, 25 May 1903.
188. CO 417/276, BSA Co., 19 Jan.1899. Min. F. Graham, 25 April 1899.
189. A 1/5/9, Milton to Jameson, January 1908.
190. Parl.Deb., 267, c.717, Earl Granville, Foreign Secretary. House of Lords, 13 Mar.1882.
191. Parl.Deb., 118, c.2231, Lt.Col.Amery, Under Sec. for Colonies, 30 July 1919.
192. Privy Council Judgement: '...so long as the BSA Co. continues to administer S.R. under the Crown...'
193. A 1/5/8, Wilson Fox to Milton, 29 April 1910.



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