

Land and Race in Rhodesia

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One of the most thorny single issues in Rhodesian society is the question of land distribution. The African, regardless of class or status, is alive to the pros and cons of the land issue. The farmer, the peasant, the businessman, the preacher, the teacher or the farm labourer feels humiliated, degraded and bullied by the brutalizing effects of the Land Apportionment Act which was passed in 1930. But even before this Act became law the policy of land segregation had long been accepted as a necessary aspect of Rhodesian politics. As early as 1894, after the Matebele war of 1893, the first Reserves were created in Matebeleland. In the years that followed, the alienation of most of the land on the highveld to European speculators, necessitated the resettlement of Africans evicted from European land. It was for this reason that the creation of Reserves expanded between 1902 and 1920. When these efforts failed to give finality to the land question, a Lands Commission was appointed in 1925 to attempt to settle the land issue once and for all, but this effort, like the previous ones, failed, and the amendment of the Land Apportionment Act was to become almost an annual activity in the Rhodesian Parliament.

The Land Apportionment Act, however, became the most important law governing land distribution in Rhodesia. It established the principle of possessory segregation between black and white and thus paved the way for differential agricultural production. It is my thesis that the Land Apportionment Act has not only kept the African population in a state of serfdom, but has also retarded the economic development of the country by preventing the majority of its citizens from actively participating in the exploitation of its resources. By giving the settlers more land than they could utilize the Act made it possible for a significant percentage of European land to remain unused, thus contributing nothing to the Gross National Product. Secondly, the Africans evicted from European lands were resettled in arid and uncultivable areas where they have experienced an increasing land shortage and a rapid deterioration of the soil. Unable to engage in profitable farming, they contribute very little to the national economy. Accompanying this monstrosity were various restrictions placed on African products which have dealt an indelible blow to the marketing of the small harvests reaped in the African sector. This was commensurate with the policy of "parallel development" as it came to be known in the thirties.¹

One aim of this artificial creation of poverty in the African sector was to create an inexhaustible labour supply for the farms and mines of the settler community. This it did to the amazement of even its authors. But economic

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¹ G. Arrighi, *The Political Economy of Rhodesia* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), p. 35.

hardships created by the shortage of land, together with other accompanying factors such as differential marketing arrangements, begot despair which translated itself into mass political parties in the late fifties. The land grievance came to be shared by every African regardless of class or status and it is the one issue without whose settlement a solution to the Rhodesian crisis is impossible. But the settlers in Rhodesia have demonstrated their inability to straighten out the land issue. Thus the destiny of the land issue has become tied up with that of the political situation.

This essay will examine the various legislative acts intended to remove the African from agricultural competition. It will also examine the economic effects of the policy of land apportionment on the African population. Finally, it will demonstrate the extent to which the land issue affected the political scene.

The history of land segregation in Rhodesia dates back to 1894 when two Reserves, the Gwai and the Shangani, were allocated to the defeated Matebele by the British South Africa Company.² When the B.S.A.C. arrived upon the Rhodesian scene in 1890, its men carefully avoided a head-on clash with the Ndebele State which was well known for its formidable military machine. But the gold which the pioneers had hoped to find in abundance in Mashonaland was disappointingly scarce and the settlers soon began to cast covetous eyes upon the tempting lands in Matebeleland. On 14 August 1893, Star Jameson, Rhodes' right-hand man in Mashonaland, signed a secret agreement at Fort Victoria for the invasion of Lobengula's kingdom.³ One of the clauses of the agreement read:

That each member of the attacking force will be entitled to mark out a farm of 3,000 morgen [6,000 acres] in any part of Matebeleland.⁴

After the Matebele war of 1893, better known as the "war of dispossession", in which Lobengula's power was broken, the British Government issued an Order-in-Council on 18 July 1894 which announced the appointment of a Land Commission to "deal with all questions in relation to the settlement of Africans in Matebeleland".⁵ As a result of the work of this Commission, two Reserves were carved out for Ndebele occupation. The two, Gwai and Shangani, were described by the British Deputy Commissioner in 1897 as "badly watered, sandy and unfit for settlement".⁶ The 1914 Reserve Commission noted that the 1894 commissioners had not even visited the two Reserves but accepted an opinion expressed by J. W. Colenbrander, a veteran of the 1893 war, that the Reserves were capable of supporting the Ndebele population.⁷ It may be noted here that the two Reserves had a total acreage

2 Rhodesian Institute of African Affairs, *Land and Its Apportionment in Rhodesia* (Bulawayo, 1961), p. 1.

3 J. H. Harris, *The Chartered Millions* (London: Swarthmore Press Ltd., 1920), p. 6.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

6 Southern Rhodesia, *Martin's Report, April 12, 1897*, Colonial Office Confidential Prints, p. 5.

7 Great Britain, Cmnd. 8674, 1915, p. 8.

of approximately 2,480,000 which represented a reduction of about 7.5 million acres from the 10 millions which the Matebele nation used to occupy.⁸ Soon after the war of 1893, settlers poured into Matebeleland alienating most of the land. Dr. T. O. Ranger has observed that within a few months of European occupation practically all the Ndebele's most valued lands passed into private estates and the commercial property of companies.⁹

In 1898 another Southern Rhodesia Order-in-Council made it obligatory upon the Company to assign sufficient land for African occupation.¹⁰ By the Executive Order-in-Council of 1902, the Reserves were given what was regarded as final form. Native Commissioners were empowered to carve out land for the collective use of indigenous peoples. In Matebeleland, land allocations were based on the Glen Grey Act of the Cape Province which allowed nine acres for each African family, while in Mashonaland, fifteen acres were allotted to each family.¹¹ That this was done soon after a war (the Matebele and Mashona rebellions of 1896), which had left much bitterness on both sides, was a factor unlikely to produce a fair policy to govern the interests of the vanquished. As a result, most of the Reserves were created away from market centres and usually in the humid and uninhabitable lowveld. By 1902, most of the land on the highveld had been alienated to European speculators. A classic example of the lavish manner in which land was alienated was the case of the Moodies in Chipinga District. The two Moodies led a number of settlers from South Africa and occupied a portion of the highveld in what came to be Chipinga District. Dunbar Moodie pegged off nine farms totalling 54,000 acres. He then pegged off farms of no less than 6,000 acres each for his entire family including infant children. In all, the family alienated a total of 108,000 acres.¹² His brother Thomas owed Koot Swanepuel, his Orange Free State neighbour, a fair sum of money, and, by way of security, 30,000 morgen were set aside for him and his family in their absence.¹³ A friend in South Africa had merely to intimate that he proposed to come to Rhodesia and a farm was his. The lavish alienation of land in Rhodesia is reminiscent of that in Kenya where settlers like Lord Delamere appropriated as much as 100,000 acres of land.¹⁴ The average size of a European farm in Matebeleland was 6,000 acres, and half that size in Mashonaland.

8 B. Floyd, "Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia", R. M. Prothero, ed., *People and Land in Africa South of the Sahara* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 230.

9 T. O. Ranger, *Revolts in Southern Rhodesia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 103.

10 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Native Affairs Committee, 1910-11*, National Archives, Salisbury (NAS), pp. 10-11. All Government documents referred to in this paper are available in the National Archives in Salisbury. The University Library in Salisbury has a very good collection, especially for the post-1945 period. In the United States, Columbia University has almost all the Chief Native Commissioner Reports as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs Reports.

11 Great Britain, *Papers Relating to the Southern Rhodesia Native Reserves*, Cmnd. 8674, p. 7.

12 See section III, "The Acquisition of Gazaland, 1893", (NAS), Mo. 11/4/1.

13 H. Burrows, *The Moodie Trek* (NAS), p. 147.

14 Communication from Mr. Robert Chamberlain, South Africa, to the High Commissioner, 2 February 1905, CO 533/1.

By 1908 it was clear that the golden 'eldorado' which the settlers had hoped to find on the Rhodesian plateau was a matter of imagination rather than of fact. The B.S.A.C. thus began to direct its initiative towards agricultural development. And, any shortcomings the farmers suffered were blamed on the Africans. They complained that the total acreage held by Africans was too large. The various categories of land at that time stood as follows:

Table 1. LAND APPORTIONMENT IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1911¹⁵

Category	Acres	% of Country
European Area	19,032,320	20.7
Native Reserves	21,390,080	23.2
Unassigned	51,628,800	56.1
Total	92,051,200	100.0

The many issues that were raised by Rhodesian farmers necessitated the appointment of a Commission in 1914 to settle the land question once and for all. From the composition of the Commission which was thus appointed to examine this thorny question one could accurately have guessed the outcome of its findings. The three men appointed were all either employees or ex-employees of the British South Africa Company and the chairman, Robert Coryndon, was actually one of those entitled by Jameson's infamous secret agreement of 1893 to take from the Matebele his share of 6,000 acres of land, his gold claims and the loot thereof.¹⁶ The second member of the Commission was the Company's treasurer, Francis James Newton, who was to serve alternately with the Company's surveyor general, William Atherstone. The third member was Major C. Garraway, formerly of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Police and the South African Constabulary, and, until 1914, military Secretary of the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa.¹⁷ Clearly such a Commission could not have been expected to deal impartially with the issues which were the subject of its investigation.

In their interim report the commissioners observed that it could not be assumed that every unborn native was to enjoy an indefeasible right to live on the soil under tribal conditions and by the primitive and wasteful methods of cultivation practised by his forefathers.¹⁸ They further contended that the settlers had brought with them a civilization that would break down "the old tribal system" and that this would remove the need for additional Reserves. For this reason the aggregate area of the Reserves in Southern Rhodesia was "more than sufficient for the present and for the future needs of

15 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Native Affairs Committee, 1910-11*, op. cit., p. 11.

16 Harris, *The Chartered Millions*, op. cit., p. 193. See also, Great Britain, Cmnd. 8674, p. 2.

17 Letter from the Colonial Office to the B.S.A.C., Cape Town, 18 April 1914, in Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers Relating to the Reserves Commission, 1915*, Cmnd. 8674.

18 Great Britain, Cmnd. 8674, paragraph 39 of the *Native Reserves Commission, Interim Report, 1915*.

the African population".¹⁹ It was not stated how the breaking down of the "tribal system" would replace the need for more land by Africans or why if civilization destroyed this need, European settlers, who indeed epitomized this civilization, displayed such an insatiable appetite for land. Furthermore, the Commission reported that they had not examined African chiefs. "We considered that we might do more harm than good by questioning the Natives upon a matter of which they were very likely to misunderstand the real scope", they wrote.²⁰ When the Commission released its final report it recommended a reduction of the Reserves by 1,062,460 acres.²¹ This was done in spite of the fact that of the 5,002 surveyed farms owned by European settlers in Rhodesia in 1914, 2,082 were unoccupied.²² Interestingly enough, the Commissioner did not hesitate to point out the impartiality of their judgement. They wrote: "If we err at all, it is on the side of generosity to the people who lived in this country for generations before the whitemen came".²³ By the Order-in-Council of 1920 the Reserves were given finality and most of the recommendations of the Native Reserves Commission were adopted.

The land divisions stood as follows in 1921:

Alienated Land	31,484,095 acres
Native Reserves	21,203,498 acres
Unalienated Land	43,529,880 acres

It is clear that the Commission made ethnocentric and normative judgements which some scholars have condoned on rather unsound grounds. Professor Lewis Gann, for example, has written:

They [the commissioners] were convinced that man must master nature and use her for his own betterment. In Coryndon's universe there was no room for sacred shrines and groves; spirits did not speak through mediums. . . Land had an economic but not a spiritual value, cattle were raised for the abattoir not for the sacril act of giving bride-wealth for a wife.²⁴

Gann's misconception of the traditional land tenure system has led him into this gross distortion of history. What do spirits and mediums have to do with the need for land among the African population? Were cattle raised primarily for ritualistic reasons and not for their meat, hides and milk? The answer is no.

The institution of the Reserves was the first major step towards land segregation in Rhodesia. It was a step designed to consolidate a social and economic system which had been founded on an exaggerated estimate of the country's wealth. The creation of the Reserves was partly inspired by a desire on the part of the settlers to eliminate the African from competition

19 Ibid., paragraph 41.

20 Ibid., paragraph 53.

21 R. McGregor, "Native Segregation in Southern Rhodesia", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1940), p. 90.

22 Ibid., p. 88.

23 Southern Rhodesia, *Papers Relating to the Southern Rhodesia Reserves Commission*, p. 23.

24 L. Gann, *A History of Southern Rhodesia; Early Days to 1934* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), p. 82.

in the economic field. In his annual report in 1918, the Chief Native Commissioner was mindful of this fact when he said: "The Native should be trained not so much as a competitor with the whitemen in the business of life but as a useful auxiliary to help in the progress of the country".²⁵

The work of the Commission stands condemned because not only did the commissioners consign the Africans to remote and uninhabitable areas but they also dispossessed them of their most cherished value—the right to land. Indeed the work of the Commission was a manifestation of the aspirations of the new order in Southern Rhodesia, reflecting its abandonment of the nobler values of enlightened humanity and of those fundamental principles of justice which are part of the common heritage of all mankind.

THE LAND APPORTIONMENT ACT

By 1921, European settlers had purchased a total of 31 million acres of land in Rhodesia while African farmers had bought only 40,000 acres.²⁶ But the settlers regarded these relatively small purchases of land as the beginning of a massive influx of advanced Africans into the European area. It was felt within the settler community that if Africans continued to enjoy the privilege of purchasing land anywhere outside the Reserves, as provided under Section 83 of the 1908 Order-in-Council, they would soon pose a serious economic threat to would-be European farmers, who would have to compete with the new class of African farmers. Demands were thus made by the settler community for the complete separation of African and European areas.

As has already been mentioned, the South African Land Act of 1913 had an effect on settler thinking in Rhodesia. But perhaps a factor which did much to generate this deep feeling of insecurity among the settlers was their increasing consciousness of race as the ultimate determinant of the destiny of any society. Their views rested upon the dogma that, race being immutable, the racial element in man is the determinant of human character. They then conceived of themselves as a "white island" surrounded by a "sea of blacks" which would one day respond to the inevitable winds of change and swallow them in its fury. The war might have been instrumental in bringing about this feeling, but whatever its causes, the settlers built around themselves walls of racial prejudice buttressed by vested self-interest. The Morris Carter Commission, commonly known as the Lands Commission, heard scores of witnesses enunciating their fear of the "invariable racial conflict" which would ensue if a policy of land segregation was not adopted.

Perhaps the most representative evidence was that of Mr. D. M. Stanley of Chipinga. In a long letter to the Commission Mr. Stanley expressed the view that a fierce clash between the two races would follow if total segre-

²⁵ Southern Rhodesia, *Chief Native Commissioner's Report*, 1918, p. 4.
²⁶ *Lands Commission Report*, 1925, paragraph 3875, NAS, ZAH 2/1/1.

gation was not instituted. To support his view he quoted Lonthrop Stoddard, author of *The Revolt Against Civilization*, who had espoused a theory of what he termed "Congenital Barbarism". Stoddard's theory held that "barbarism" is the natural or "congenital state" of the man of colour and that even if civilized, he will again revert to this state at a later date. He wrote:

Deceptive veneers of civilization may be acquired but reversion to congenital barbarism ultimately takes place. To such barbarism stocks belong many of the people of Asia, the American Indians and the African Negroes.²⁷

Citing the Maroons' Revolt of the West Indies, Mr. Stanley concluded that the black race had strong atavistic tendencies. "If not", he asked, "why after 200 years of association with Europeans and Christianity did the Maroons revert at once to their rites of ancient Vodoo with its human sacrifice and minor cannibalism?" He then argued that the influx of the lower races into civilized society would be an unmitigated disaster. It would upset living standards, would sterilize the higher stocks and "if as usually happens, interbreeding occurs, the racial foundations of civilization are undermined".²⁸ For these reasons he urged the introduction of land segregation as a matter of urgency. Only a decade later, when Hitler propounded similar views, the same people took up arms against him.

The most disturbing thing of all is that the Lands Commission took these views seriously and used them to defend their recommendations for land segregation. In their report they wrote:

. . . wars of extermination between the races will take place unless every effort is made to secure a better understanding between them. . . . However desirable it may be that members of the two races should live together. . . . we are convinced that in practice, probably for generations to come such a policy is not practicable or in the interests of the two races and that until the native has advanced very much further on the path of civilization it is better that the points of contact between the two races be reduced.²⁹

Race was therefore used by witness and Commission alike as an instrument with which to create among the Africans a landless class which would be obliged by its social status to work for those who controlled the means of production. The wars of extermination which featured so prominently in the evidence heard by the commissioners could not be avoided by creating a landless class of peasants among the Africans. In fact the deprivation of the African of his lands has come to threaten the very security the settlers hoped to preserve by implementing the policy of land segregation.

The Land Apportionment Bill, which resulted from the deliberations of the Lands Commission, became law in 1930 but did not take effect until April 1931. Under the terms of the Act, the rights of the African to purchase

²⁷ Cited by D. M. Stanley in the *Lands Commission Report*, 1925, ZAH/1/1/3, p. 4, taken from Lonthrop Stoddard, *The Revolt Against Civilization* (New York: Scribner and Sons), p. 5.

²⁸ *Lands Commission Report*, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

land anywhere were rescinded. The Africans could now only purchase land in the Native Purchase Areas which were placed adjacent to the Reserves. A number of categories were created, as indicated in the table below.

Table 2. LAND APPORTIONMENT IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1930³⁰

Category	Acres
European Area	49,149,174
Native Reserves	21,127,040
Unassigned Area	17,793,300
Native Area	7,464,566
Undetermined Area	88,540
Forest Area	5,905,500
Total	96,213,120
Total for African use	<u>28,591,606</u>

It may be pointed out that in 1930 the African population was estimated at 1,081,000 while there were less than 50,000 Europeans. The latter, however, received 51% of the land while the former got only 29.8%. One does not need special glasses to see the iniquities brought to bear upon the African population by the Land Apportionment Act. The viciousness of the Act is further demonstrated by the fact that as late as 1957 a Select Committee reported that out of 31.7 million acres which constituted European farm land then, only one million was under cultivation.³¹

Amendments were made to the Act in 1936, 1941, 1944 and in 1945. Between 1945 and 1960 the Act was amended no fewer than ten times. The 1936 amendment was the first open admission by the Government that the provisions of the Land Apportionment Act had been ill conceived. The eviction of Africans from European land could not be accomplished by the date originally anticipated. The period of grace was thus extended to 1941.³² Until the fifties the amendments made to the Act tended to tighten up its provisions, a factor which militates against the civilization argument of 1925. As more and more Africans acquired education and other western values, the policy of segregation was tightened rather than relaxed. It seems strange that the settlers should have so responded to the Africans' emergence from traditional culture into the arena of western values when the same people had advocated segregation on the grounds that the latter lacked such values. Furthermore, the best way to advance the African along the path of civilization was not, as the settlers contended in 1925, to reduce the points of contact between the two races but to apply the reverse and increase such contact.

It was in 1954 that the Land Apportionment Act was amended to enable

30 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of Native Production and Trade Commission, 1944*, p. 12.

31 Southern Rhodesia Assembly, Votes and Proceedings, 23 April 1957, *Report of the Select Committee on the Development of Unimproved Lands*, p. 110.

32 *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 September 1937.

a multiracial University to be built in a European area.³³ Many saw this event as a hopeful sign that might mark the dawn of the era of land reform. But this was not the case. During the fifties racial tension was heightened by the implementation of the Native Land Husbandry Act. The endemic food shortages in the Reserves was, according to Government officials, caused by African bad methods of farming.³⁴ As a result of the economic hardships experienced in the Reserves many Africans were compelled to supplement their harvests by seeking employment in the urban areas or on European farms during the summer months, and returned to their lands during the rainy season. Government officials reasoned that the part-time farmer was a bad farmer whose frequent and prolonged absence reduced his farming skills. In passing the N.L.H.A., therefore, the Government hoped to curtail the mobility of the Africans with the hope that permanency would result in better farming methods and better yields. Secondly, for the first time, individual allocations of land were made to African families. Unfortunately there was not enough land to go around but the authors of the scheme expected those who did not have enough land to dispose of their holdings and move either to the urban areas to look for employment or to under-populated areas where they could acquire sufficient land.³⁵ At this time there were no under-populated areas in Rhodesia. The only alternative for the African was to move to the urban areas. In 1964 the Minister of Law and Order estimated that in Highfield township alone in Salisbury, there were at least 30,000 excess people who were lodging illegally.³⁶

He then set up a mechanism whereby these people were either arrested and detained or driven back to the Reserves. Since the Minister of Law and Order regarded these people as undesirables it stands to reason that many Africans were denied existence in both town and country from which they were directly or indirectly expelled. By compelling the landless to move away from the Reserves and driving them to seek refuge in the equally hostile environment of the urban centre where jobs were either non-existent or offered low wages hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together, the N.L.H.A. was creating new crises rather than alleviating existing ones.

The N.L.H.A. did much to generate racial tension and political activity during the fifties. Only people who were actually working a piece of land at the time of its implementation received that land. Over 111,000 families who were entitled to holdings could not get any because there was just not enough land to go round.³⁷ When the landless looked across their borders and saw millions of acres of unused land in the European area, they understandably considered it a racial insult of the first degree that they should be so deprived

33 M. L. Rifkind, "Land Appointment in Perspective", *Rhodesian History*, Volume 3, 1972, p. 57.

34 A. Pendered and W. Momerty, "The Native Land Husbandry Act", *Journal of African Administration*, Volume 7, No. 1 (1955), p. 102.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

36 *The Central African Examiner*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (September 1964), p. 4.

37 E. Haddon, "Good Ground for Reform", *The Central African Examiner*, Volume 5, No. 1 (June 1961), p. 17.

in their own motherland. It is therefore not surprising that the political parties which sprang up in the late fifties swelled their ranks within weeks of their formation. A glance at the sizes of European farms during this period is appropriate here.

Table 3. 1962 EUROPEAN FARMS—ANALYSIS BY SIZE³⁸

<i>Acres</i>	<i>No. of Farms</i>	<i>Area of Farms in Acres</i>
Under 51	87	3,309
51-100	186	16,036
101-250	371	65,204
251-500	326	118,730
501-1,000	541	429,772
1,001-2,500	1,853	3,212,052
2,501-5,000	1,621	5,580,606
5,001-7,500	545	3,350,500
7,501-10,000	212	1,841,827
10,001-15,000	244	2,937,016
15,001-20,000	108	1,877,620
20,000 and over	243	13,693,485
Total	6,337	33,162,157

A report made in 1962 on the Agricultural Production of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland showed that of these 6,337 farms, 1,134 grew no crops at all but were solely used for ranching. The total area devoted to arable farming in 1962 was only 1,002,910 acres out of the 33,162,157 acres held by European farmers, and the farms on which no agricultural activity was carried on in 1962 amounted to 3,840,000 acres, i.e., an area equal to half of the total acreage set aside for purchase by Africans. The late Dr. Parirenyatwa estimated in the same year that there were 16 million acres of European farmland which were not being used at all or being used to a minimum degree, held by absentee landlords living abroad.³⁹

Even without taking the other political issues into consideration, the land issue alone was sufficient to make conflict inevitable unless substantial reforms were made. It was its awareness of this potential danger that led the Select Committee on the Resettlement of Natives to recommend the repeal of the Land Apportionment Act.⁴⁰ The Act would have been repealed had the Rhodesian Front not won the general election of 1962. Pledged to uphold the Act, the Front stood by their promise and even went further to introduce the iniquitous Land Tenure Act in 1969. As for the Native Land Husbandry Act, the Government abandoned its implementation in 1962 as a result of the

38 Republic of Ghana, *A Memorandum in Regard to Southern Rhodesia Submitted to the Security Council on August 2, 1963*, p. 54. Note: Farms on which no agricultural activity was carried on in 1962 are excluded.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

40 Southern Rhodesia, *Second Report of the Select Committee on the Resettlement of Natives*, 1960, p. 143.

violence that flared up in both town and country, a manifestation of the despair evoked by its provisions.

A discussion of the Land Apportionment Act in Rhodesia is incomplete without an assessment of its economic effect on the African population. For that reason we shall now examine those effects which alone can lead to a fuller appreciation of the viciousness of the Act.

THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF LAND APPORTIONMENT ON THE AFRICAN POPULATION

Agricultural Production

A glance at the table below will reveal that in 1923, before the provisions of the 1920 Order-in-Council were enforced with vigour, and before the days of the Land Apportionment Act, Africans produced more grain, kept more sheep, almost as many cattle and more goats than they did sixteen years later when the effects of the Land Apportionment Act were being felt.

Table 4. AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION 1923-1939⁴¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>Goats</i>	<i>Yields in Bags</i>
1923	927,343	262,432	779,614	3,483,650
1924	1,005,277	269,049	813,395	2,740,450
1925	1,095,841	280,849	725,749	2,892,833
1926	1,197,466	265,458	750,768	2,707,680
1927	1,270,567	282,241	791,769	2,835,864
1928	1,420,913	271,678	792,440	2,675,503
1929	1,495,863	268,251	771,011	3,050,001
1930	1,558,075	288,880	752,295	2,034,692
1931	1,628,299	288,770	761,583	2,659,679
1932	1,755,610	288,958	785,409	3,298,062
1933	1,748,621	249,876	734,866	2,123,656
1934	1,708,465	245,778	742,778	2,781,371
1935	1,653,462	245,546	745,192	2,610,845
1936	1,547,623	234,769	756,624	2,991,630
1937	1,582,062	243,816	757,703	3,270,222
1938	1,555,806	233,391	734,965	2,935,747
1939	1,570,310	234,748	647,569	3,160,990

The figures above show that the total yields of grain actually fell from 3,483,650 bags in 1923 to 3,160,990 bags in 1939. After the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act, they rose above the three million mark only three times—in 1932, 1937 and 1939. The figures for sheep and cattle reveal the same trend. Although the figure for cattle rose from 927,343 to 1,570,310, the latter was not much higher than the 1924 figure of 1,005,277. Between 1923

41 Taken from Chief Native Commissioner's Reports, 1923-1939 (Salisbury: Government Printer).

and 1939 the African population figure rose from about 870,000 to 1,081,000.⁴² During the same period the land under African cultivation showed a very insignificant increase. In 1922 Africans cultivated a total acreage of 1,187,924, but in spite of their considerable population increase, by 1938 the area under cultivation had only increased to 1,613,773.⁴³

After the war the situation in the Reserves continued to deteriorate. R. W. M. Johnson's study of the Chiweshe Reserve shows that in 1960-61 manured fields in that Reserve yielded 4.16 bags per acre while unmanured fields yielded 1.9 bags.⁴⁴ On the average each family yielded 1.91 bags while many got less than one bag per acre.⁴⁵ Sister Aquina has calculated that in the Chilimanzi Reserve the average yield per acre during the same year was 4.5 bags.⁴⁶ If these figures are a fair sample of the maize yields in the Reserves it is clear that the vast population of these areas were leading a precarious existence.

A census taken by the Agricultural Officer in 1956 showed that 2,861 men in Chilimanzi District were landless.⁴⁷ In the Zimuto Reserve, out of a total population of about 11,690 in 1962, 3,200 were taxpayers. Of these only 37% were registered as landholders. The remaining 63% or 2,300 depended partly on other people's land or on migratory labour.⁴⁸ It may be pointed out here that between 1954 and 1965, the total rural African household income grew at 3.9% per annum while the de facto rural population grew by 6.4% per annum.⁴⁹ The economic implications of the policy of land apportionment are obvious. In the Sabi Valley in Chipinga District, the situation was so bad in 1931 that the Government had to ship in a total of 1,000 bags of mealie-meal to relieve the food shortage.⁵⁰ Ever since the Land Apportionment Act became law, Africans driven into the Reserves have experienced untold hardships as a result of the inherently natural infertility of the soils there and the effects of over-population.

Overstocking has become another of the evils produced by land apportionment in the Reserves. In 1943 the Commission on the Development and Regeneration of the Reserves reported that there were 38 Reserves which were definitely over-stocked in which the total area of both arable and grazing land was 10 acres or less per beast. Eighteen of these Reserves had less than 7 acres to a beast and nine had 5 acres or less per beast.⁵¹ Since arable lands could

42 Based on *Official Year Book—Monthly Digest of Statistics* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1921-1939).

43 Rough estimates taken from the C.N.C.'s Annual Reports, 1921-1939 (NAS).

44 R. W. M. Johnson, "An Economic Survey of Chiweshe Reserve", *Human Problems in Central Africa*, Vol. 36 (December 1964), p. 93.

45 Ibid.

46 Sister O. P. Aquina, "The Social Background of Agriculture in Chilimanzi Reserve", *Human Problems*, Vol. 36 (December 1964), p. 37.

47 Ibid., p. 17.

48 J. R. Jordan, "Zimuto Reserve: A Land Use Appreciation", *Human Problems*, Vol. 36 (December 1964), p. 67.

49 See Southern Rhodesia, *National Accounts and Balance of Payments of Rhodesia*, 1965 (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1966), p. 30.

50 Collection of Rent, 1931 (NAS, S1542/R4).

51 *Commission on the Development and Regeneration of the Colony's Reserves* (Annexure No. 4, 1943), NAS, S235/483.

only be used for grazing during the winter months it meant that during the planting season when these lands were used for cultivation there were 34 Reserves with 5 acres or less for grazing land per beast and 13 Reserves with less than 13 acres per beast. Two years later the Native Production and Trade Commission arrived at the following estimates of overpopulation in the Reserves:

- 9 Reserves were more than 150% overpopulated;
- 10 Reserves were 100% to 150% overpopulated;
- 19 Reserves were 50% to 100% overpopulated;
- 21 Reserves were 10% to 50% overpopulated;
- 3 Reserves were 1% to 10% overpopulated;

It is, therefore, no wonder that at the end of 1943 European cattle totalling 918,538 were valued at £5,511,228 while twice the number of African cattle, totalling 1,824,521 were valued at only £7,298,084⁵² African cattle graded in that year were classified as follows:

- 0.8% were Grade A;
- 12.3% were G.A.Q.;
- 30.5% were F.A.Q.;
- 56.9% were compound.⁵⁴

Thus more than half the African cattle belonged to the lowest grade (compound) while only 0.8% were classified Grade A. As late as 1957 it was reported that the percentage of African cattle bought by the Cold Storage Commission in the grades G.A.Q. and below was in excess of 99% of all the slaughtered cattle sold by Africans. The G.A.Q. grade comprised 17% of the total, the F.A.Q. 21% and the compound and lower grades 62%. These gradings were compared with the pattern of the Cold Storage Commission's purchase of Europeans' cattle for the same year which showed that 32.8% were in the Grade A, 40% were in the G.A.Q. grade and the remaining 27% were in the F.A.Q. and lower grades.⁵⁵

That African cattle should have fetched so little in comparison with European cattle is not surprising when one considers the extent of overstocking in the Reserves. Mr. J. R. Prescott has calculated that in Matebeleland alone there was an excess population of 100,000 people and 111,000 stock in 1959.⁵⁶ The table below shows the extent of overstocking in Rhodesia in 1955 and in 1963.

It is estimated that overstocking represented 12% on the average in Af-

52 *Report of the Native Production and Trade Commission, 1945* (NAS, S235/474), p. 35.

53 Ibid., p. 28.

54 Ibid. Note: G.A.Q. = Good Average Quality, F.A.Q. = Fair Average Quality, compound = lowest grade there is.

55 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Beef and Cattle Industry of Southern and Northern Rhodesia, 1961* (NAS), p. 91.

56 J. R. V. Prescott, "Overpopulation and Overstocking in the Native Areas of Matebeleland", *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 127, Part 2 (June 1961), p. 223.

Table 5. LIVESTOCK CONCENTRATION IN RESERVES, 1955 AND 1963⁵⁷

	1955			
	<i>Stock Carried</i>	<i>Stock Carrying Capacity</i>	<i>Overstocked</i>	<i>% Stocked</i>
Mashonaland	277,145	357,630	19,515	105.5
Matebeleland	267,759	212,148	56,611	126.6
Midlands	274,855	256,932	17,922	109.0
S. Mashonaland	294,290	275,001	19,289	106.6
Manicaland	111,794	102,812	8,979	108.9
Total	1,256,843	1,204,526	122,316	110

	1963 ⁵⁸			
	<i>Stock Carried</i>	<i>Stock Carrying Capacity</i>	<i>Overstocked</i>	<i>% Stocked</i>
Mashonaland N.	148,533	247,871	-99,338	60
Mashonaland S.	215,434	218,846	- 3,412	98
Matebeleland N.	338,294	291,685	+46,609	116
Matebeleland S.	338,764	271,499	+67,265	125
Midlands	157,502	141,442	+16,060	111
Victoria	371,776	226,397	+145,379	164
Manicaland	269,750	246,191	+ 23,559	110
Total	1,839,653	1,643,931	+9,195,772	112

rican areas. It was worst in Victoria District where it reached 64% by 1960.⁵⁹ Overpopulation and overstocking resulted in serious soil erosion in the Reserves. The economy of the African sector was thus incapacitated from the agricultural standpoint. It is little wonder that in 1961 the 5 million Africans in Rhodesia contributed only 6.5% to the Gross Domestic Product from agricultural produce while the few thousand European farmers contributed 14.5%.⁶⁰ The validity of the thesis that the Land Apportionment Act has retarded the economic development of the country is obvious.

Rents and Labour

It has been mentioned earlier that the creation of artificial poverty among the African population was one of the objectives of the Land Apportionment Act. The increasing shortage of land experienced by the African was accompanied by increasing demands for, for example, schoolfees, clothes, western

57 Based on data in the Report of the C.N.C., 1955 (Salisbury, 1956).

58 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs, 1963* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1964), p. 31.

59 K. Chihambakwe, "The Land Husbandry Act of 1951 as a Land Reform in Southern Rhodesia", (Masters thesis, The Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, August 1968).

60 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Advisory Committee of Southern Rhodesia* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1962), p. 9.

foods, etc. In the early years of European settlement, the African could depend upon his cattle and his grain from which he realized a modest income to defray such expenses. But as time went on and the effects of the policy of land apportionment became acute, the landless peasant was compelled to give up his liberty and seek employment in the mines or on European farms where he received token wages hardly sufficient to meet his expenses. At this stage the 'proletarianization' of the African was complete and the settler economy came to be assured of a lasting labour supply.

In the early years of settler rule African response to what Arrighi calls "unfamiliar opportunities" for increasing their real income was slow.⁶¹ There was no motivation for seeking employment under the new order so long as land was abundant. The British South Africa Company thus experienced an acute labour shortage at the beginning of the century. It was during this time that direct compulsion was used to procure such labour.⁶² Another effort made to induce Africans to work was the introduction of numerous taxes. By 1910 one third of the total revenue of the colony came from African taxation.⁶³

This practice was borrowed from South Africa where the deprivation of the African of his lands and the imposition of countless taxes were planned to stimulate labour supply. The Glen Grey Act of 1884 was intended to accomplish this goal.⁶⁴ By depriving the African of adequate lands and by driving him into inhospitable reserves Rhodes hoped, in his own words, "to supply to the surplus population a gentle stimulant to go forth and find out something of the dignity of labour".⁶⁵ Under the terms of the Act any African who was not in possession of land was expected to pay a tax of 10/- a year unless he could prove that he had been in employment for three months out of every twelve in a European area. The creation of the Reserves in Rhodesia was in part intended to boost labour supply. Arrighi has observed: "As the African peasantry began to be affected by a shortage of land the production of a market surplus on their part tended to become impossible".⁶⁶ The decrease in the productivity of land in the African area assured an expanding labour supply. Upon the appropriation of land by a European farmer, the Africans on it could move into the Reserves, or remain on the land and pay rent, or enter into contracts with the farmer. In many areas such as Chipinga District it was not uncommon to find farm labourers who were not paid even token wages.⁶⁷ In other areas a practice borrowed from the Ame-

61 G. Arrighi, "Labor Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianization of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia", G. Arrighi and J. Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 181.

62 Great Britain, Cmnd. 8574, 1897, p. 6.

63 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the African Affairs Committee, 1910-11*, p. 25, (NAS).

64 Lord Hailey, *An African Survey Revised* (Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 638.

65 Ibid.

66 G. Arrighi, "Labor Supplies in Perspective", Arrighi and Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, op. cit., p. 208.

67 Letter from N. C. Mr. Nielson, Chipinga, to C.N.C., 13 August 1935 (NAS, S235/356).

rican South known as "delayed payment", was common. Under this practice farm workers were not paid until after the harvest season to ensure that labour was tied to the soil when it was most needed.⁶⁸ "Delayed payment" meant that the families of the labourers went without the means to buy basic needs for the better part of the year. The African was thus reduced to the status of a chattel labourer and almost to that of a slave.

Statistics on European farm labour are scarce. A case study of Bedale Farm made in 1953 by Edwin S. Munger shows that the wages of the average farm worker were \$14 per month. Of this \$7.5 were received in cash and 15 pounds of mealie-meal during the course of the month. The farmer also provided salt, four pounds of peanuts, two of beans, and 2½ lbs of meat during the month. A "generous" amount of beer was also provided. The wives of the labourer worked for the farmer as well, receiving half rations, while their children worked too, for 7 cents per day.⁶⁹ The standard wage for farm labourers during the sixties was 18 shillings per month. A recent survey, known as the Poverty Datum Line (PDL) Report, shows that in 1974 the average monthly wage for each of the estimated 362,000 farm workers in the country is approximately \$12. The report has given a PDL of \$48.5 for a family of six.⁷⁰ Clearly the predicament of the farm worker in Rhodesia is unenviable.

Another development resulting from the implementation of the Land Apportionment Act was that of squatting, generally known as "Kaffir Farming". As a result of the Private Locations Act of 1908 Africans could pay rent to a landowner in exchange for the right to remain on such land. By the 1920s this system had degenerated into a hideous 'rip off' by the landowners. After the occupation many companies had acquired large estates for speculative purposes. The landowners, who, as a rule, resided in the metropolis, rented these estates out to Africans at exorbitant rates.⁷¹ It was estimated that each of these landlords extorted no less than £30,000 in this manner annually.⁷² The exploitation of the African has become the economic security of the settler. Walter Rodney suggests that the moment one group appears to be wealthier than others some enquiry must take place as to the reasons for the difference. His conclusion that the difference is a result of the exploitation of one group by another is readily applicable to the Rhodesian situation where such exploitation has and is still taking place.

The Africans who resided on European land also suffered much abuse when the time for their eviction came. In 1934, for example, in the Selukwe District, the Assistant District Commissioner, Mr. H. A. Cripwell, went to the

68 Letter from N.C., Fort Victoria, to C.N.C., 15 July 1935 (NAS, S235/256).

69 See letter from S. Munger, 26 May 1953 in Central and Southern Africa Series, Vol. 2. Note: these are Rhodesian dollars.

70 M. Holleman, "Wages—Report on Rhodesian Africans", *The Daily Gleaner* (Monday, 29 April 1974).

71 M. C. Steele, "The Foundation of a Native Policy in Southern Rhodesia, 1923-33", (Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University of Ontario, 1972), p. 421.

72 R. H. Palmer, "The Making and Implementation of Land Policy in Rhodesia, 1890-1936", (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1968), p. 155.

Selukwe Commonage where African tenants had been served with a notice of eviction. As the date of the deadline had passed Mr. Cripwell destroyed by fire the houses of the squatters who were on the commonage. When the Native Commissioner was informed of this action he declined responsibility on the grounds that the Assistant District Commissioner had acted on his own. The action was actually hailed by the Superintendent for Africans who, in a letter to the Chief Native Commissioner, wrote: "The method of clearing the Commonage of unauthorized persons by burning their huts is undoubtedly very effective".⁷³

Tenants living on Crown Lands also had their difficulties. They were expected to pay rent although most of the unalienated Crown Lands were very often in the lowveld where the adverse environmental conditions significantly reduced productivity. They lived a precarious existence because of endemic droughts in the lowveld and scarcity often compelled them to leave the area in search of food. It was wrong for the Government to regard these people as contractual tenants because they had no choice in the matter. Perhaps the harshness of the rent paying system is best demonstrated by the arrears that accumulated in the areas where rents were collected:

Table 6.⁷⁴

District	Outstanding on 31/12/33 £	District	Outstanding on 31/12/33 £
Belingwe	111	Matobo	1,192
Bubi	1,889	Ntontenga	3,854
Bilima-Mange	Not available	Marandellas	20
Chilimanzi	609	Melsetter	179
Charter	259	Nuanetsi	309
Chibi	779	Nyamandhlovu	214
Chipinga	3,954	Selukwe	3,176
Gutu	826	Shabani	517
Gwanda	2,026	Umtali	343
Gwelo	556	Umzingwane	96
Hartley	425	Victoria	1,576
Insiza	1,467	Makoni	1,062
Inyanga	1,494		
Total			27,309

The arrears are a reflection of the economic hardships borne by the African population in general. In this connection one cannot comprehend the Chief Native Commissioner's suggestion to the Prime Minister in 1934 that it would be necessary to sue a few Africans and eject others from the Crown Lands in order to demonstrate to the rest the consequences of failure to pay rent. Ad-

73 Letter from Superintendent of Natives to C.N.C., 4 March 1934 (NAS, S1542/R3).

74 Letter No. 193/3. 608. 15 from Accountant Division of Agriculture and Lands to C.N.C., 1933 (NAS, S1542/R4).

mitting that he was aware of the fact that Africans were not affluent, the Chief Native Commissioner insisted that it was not impossible for them to pay if they made a serious effort.⁷⁵

While the collection of taxes and rents are manifestations of the ruthless exploitation that accompanied the implementation of the Land Apportionment Act, arrears stand as silent witness to the economic deprivation to which the African peasantry was subjected by the settlers.

THE IMPACT OF THE LAND APPORTIONMENT ACT ON THE URBAN SCENE

It has already been suggested that the policy of land apportionment was adopted partly to create an inexhaustible labour reservoir. Both the Land Apportionment Act and the Land Husbandry Act brought Africans to the urban centres by the thousands. As early as 1945 the Committee of Enquiry into urban conditions in Southern Rhodesia reported:

Segregation has not only tended to suppress family life but to place most strenuous obstacles in the way of those who have sought to set up homes in the urban areas and the consequences ramify into every field of the economic, industrial, moral and social fibre.⁷⁶

Under the terms of the Land Apportionment Act, urban workers lived a purely temporary make-shift existence. The very words "Location" and "compound", which described African residential areas, were expressive of the theory which visualized African homes and communities as something to be associated only with the Reserves. But men who went to town did not always return to the countryside where economic conditions made life impossible for them. Young women, with little to do in the Reserves, flocked to sample the glamour of city life. Children, legitimate and illegitimate, were born and bred under the most disagreeable conditions in the urban centres. Traditional standards of family life were uprooted and a social chaos replaced the one-time tranquility and orderliness of the countryside. Wages were meagre. It was reported in 1945 that of the estimated 26,494 workers in the urban centres, 15.7% of them were being paid less than £1 per month and that 5% of them were not receiving food and accommodation.⁷⁷ In the building industry in Salisbury and Umtali, the minimum rate under the Industrial Conciliation Act was 26 shillings per month or 1½d per hour. At the end of the month the employers deducted 8 shillings for the rations they supplied. In 1943 it was estimated by the Reverend Ibbotson, who made a survey of urban conditions in the territory, that the average minimum monthly requirement for a man and his wife living in the urban areas was £4. 5s.⁷⁸ The figures we have cited above all fall below this estimate. Rents for rooms averaged 15/- per month. Thus, a

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Southern Rhodesia, "Report on the Urban Conditions", *African Studies*, March 1945, p. 20 (NAS).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Southern Rhodesia, *Reverend Percy Ibbotson's Report* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1944).

man earning 26/-, from which 8/- was deducted for rations, and who paid 15/- for rent, remained with only 3/- to feed and clothe his family. These conditions had a very serious effect upon life. Juveniles began to roam the streets in an undisciplined fashion, young girls became 'self employed', malnutrition and deficiency diseases became rampant, overcrowding became a factor in the spread of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. It is no wonder, therefore, that three years after these bewildering facts were brought to light the country was paralysed by a series of strikes. Reporting on the 1948 strikes, the Chief Native Commissioner observed:

I am convinced that in the unrest which has been and still is apparent among Africans in employment there is a close connection with the problems of housing, land shortage and insecurity of tenure and of the African worker.⁷⁹

The 1948 strikes heralded a new era in the annals of Rhodesian race relations. Within the space of ten years following these strikes, industrial protest crystallized into political action, and for the first time in the country's history mass political parties emerged and dominated the national political arena. The tensions of the decade could have been averted (as, indeed, they could be today), or at least reduced, had those who held the reins of power been prudent enough to introduce at least land reform. But they continued to bury their heads in the sand.

R. W. M. Johnson has estimated that in the Chiweshe Reserve during the early sixties, only 36% of the men between the ages of 20 and 30 were living there. In January, during the planting season, the percentage rose to 50 and in June it fell to 20.⁸⁰ The absentees migrated to towns or to European farms to sell the only commodity in their possession, their labour. Is it any wonder that Rhodesia had a total of 602,000 unemployed Africans in the urban areas in 1963, the peak having been reached in 1960 when 637,000 Africans were unemployed?⁸¹ In 1963 it was estimated that less than 5% of Southern Rhodesia's Africans earned a living wage in cash. While his European counterpart averaged £1,171 a year the African averaged £101 a year.⁸² Over half of the African labour force earned less than £14 per month, and less than one sixth of the total African labour force earned more than £28 per month.⁸³ Although the African population increased between 1956 and 1961 by 12%, there was a drop of 1.2% in the total Africans employed.⁸⁴ Meanwhile food prices were soaring during the same period. Between 1949 and 1969, food prices rose by 87%, and accounted for 46% of the total African expenditure in the urban areas in 1959.⁸⁵ Two surveys carried out in Salisbury in 1948 and

⁷⁹ Southern Rhodesia, *The Chief Native Commissioner's Annual Report, 1948*, p. 1.

⁸⁰ R. W. M. Johnson, "An Economic Survey of Chiweshe Reserve", *op. cit.*

⁸¹ J. Deary, "The Economics of Unreality", *The Central African Examiner*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (July 1964).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Southern Rhodesia, *Government Statistics, Year Book*, 1961.

⁸⁴ Republic of Ghana, *Memorandum Presented to the United Nations Security Council on Southern Rhodesia*, 2 August 1963, p. 58.

⁸⁵ Reports: Urban African Budget Surveys, Bulawayo and Salisbury, 1958 and 1959 (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1960-61), pp. 21-23.

in 1958 revealed that real wages hardly improved during the period under consideration. In 1958, 76% of all the African families was below the poverty line and 57.1% below what the report called the "extremely impoverished datum line".⁸⁶ Writing in the *Central African Examiner* in 1963, an African worker warned:

In Southern Rhodesia, thousands upon thousands are unemployed and move with empty stomachs. Thousands of Africans have been left landless by the Native Land Husbandry Act, the purpose of which was to create cheap labour pools. The landless and those who cannot get enough crops to live on from the poor light soils allocated to them are forced to try for employment in the industries in urban areas, thus fulfilling the government policy of supplying cheap labour. The government forgets the warnings of history that when the majority of the people continue to live without means they are bound to resort to demanding control of the key to existence, the taking over of government.⁸⁷

It was in this mood that the first mass political party was launched in Rhodesia. The African urban worker was aware of the fact that he was the object of exploitation because he possessed no land which could offer an alternate source of income. Equally aware were the unemployed who saw themselves being denied existence by a policy that forced them out of the rural areas and yet offered them no alternative source of income in the urban centres. Under these circumstances the urban workers embraced the political sentiments of the age with considerable appetite for action. Significantly, the first mass political party was led from 1957 by a former trade union leader, Masoja Ndhlovu.⁸⁸

LAND AND NATIONALISM

It is our contention that the land issue did more than any other single issue in generating political consciousness among the masses in Rhodesia. Having realized the futility of attempting to achieve reform without political power, the masses soon clamoured for the overthrow of the settler Government. It is difficult to conceive of any other grievance that could have been so commonly shared by Africans of every class and every creed. Land was the source of discontent among the African elite; land was the prime cause of despair among the Reserve Africans; the shortage of land compelled many to seek contract labour on European farms where they received token wages hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together; land forced many Africans out of the rural areas into the urban centres where the social and economic conditions were brutal. The final significance of the land question is that it led to the dramatic political awakening of the masses and to the eventual explosion of pent-up forces in violence.

The African middle class, which had mushroomed in the urban centres

86 E. Baston, *The Poverty Line in Salisbury* (Cape Town, 1948). Southern Rhodesia, *The Plewman Report* (Salisbury, 1958).

87 K. S. Mhizha, "To Unemployed", *The Central African Examiner*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1963), p. 14.

88 Masoja Ndhlovu had been a trade union leader in the thirties.

at this time, embraced the current political sentiments as readily as the peasant farmers and the urban workers. This group had the means with which to purchase land, to initiate business enterprises in the city centres or to purchase decent property within the vicinity of the urban areas. But under the terms of the Land Apportionment Act, they could not purchase more than 400 to 600 acres of land in the Native Purchase Areas; they were not allowed to own property in the so-called European areas; nor were they allowed to open up businesses in city centres which were considered European areas. In 1961, for example, in the European suburb of Southerton, 20% of the houses were vacant because many Europeans were fleeing from the area. It was recommended that the rent should be reduced from £18 to £15 per month to attract tenants.⁸⁹ The Salisbury municipality was worried about not getting any tenants to take up these houses, yet less than a mile away in the African township of Highfield, there were many people who could have afforded them who were compelled to rent slums at £2 or £3 per month simply because of their colour.

Furthermore, the African landowners were discontented over the marketing of their produce. Market centres were so far away from the African areas that severe hardships were created with regard to the disposal of African produce. In the thirties and forties, Africans were compelled to sell their produce to European traders who usually declined to buy with anything but goods.⁹⁰ They bartered their maize with such items as salt, a practice which provided no incentive whatsoever to Africans to sell. In 1931, of the 793,100 bags reportedly reaped by the Africans, only 283,580 were sold to traders.⁹¹

Marketing difficulties were exacerbated by the imposition of control measures such as the Maize Control Act of 1931⁹² and the Cattle Levy and Beef Bounty Act of 1934,⁹³ which seriously affected prices for African commodities. About this differentiation, the Native Production and Trade Commission wrote in 1945:

In our opinion the differentiation is one which if made at all should only be made on grounds of national and not of sectional expediency. Such grounds should be so convincing that no reasonable African should refuse to accept them. No such grounds were submitted to us and we have no reason to suppose they exist.⁹⁴

In 1948 a Native Development Fund Act was instituted. It provided for the establishment of a fund to be used for the production and marketing of African livestock and produce.⁹⁵ A levy was to be charged on African produce for the purpose of supporting this fund. Apart from this levy, transport and

89 E. Haddon, "Good Grounds for Reform", *The Central African Examiner*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1961), p. 16.

90 Southern Rhodesia, *Chief Native Commissioner's Report, 1931*.

91 *Ibid.*

92 1931 Maize Control Act (NAS, S1561/38).

93 1935-36, Vol. 2 (NAS, S1547/A4). See also N.C. Reports, 15 January 1935 (NAS).

94 *Report of the Native Production and Trade Commission, 1945*, paragraph 173 (NAS, S235/474).

95 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Beef and Cattle Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1962*, p. 474.

handling charges were imposed on all African produce so that in 1948 out of a bag of maize selling for 30/- an African producer actually received 22/-. This was arrived at as follows:

Selling Price	=	30/- per bag
Trader's Handling Margin	=	2/- per bag
Flat Transport Deduction	=	3/- per bag
Levy	=	3/- per bag
Paid to the Producer	=	22/- per bag. ⁹⁶

Twenty-two shillings was the price for Grade A maize. Most trader-producers who collected maize from Africans did so at the D rate and then sold it to the Grain Marketing Board at the B price.⁹⁷ The rate of the levy was 10%. By 1961 the Government had collected £2.7 million from the levy on cattle alone. The Select Committee on the Resettlement of Natives, 1960, pointed out that between 1949 and 1959 at least £1,300,000 collected from the levy fund was used for the construction of roads and bridges in African areas. The Government contribution for this purpose amounted to £600,000.⁹⁸ This is particularly outrageous when one takes into consideration the fact that between 1936 and 1959 the Government spent an estimated £30 million removing Africans from European areas to the Reserves.⁹⁹ The Central Statistical Office Survey of African Agriculture (1959-60) showed that the 1959 yield of African maize was 4,230,300 bags. Of this 728,000 bags were sold to the Grain Marketing Board. Of the total revenue 17% went to the Native Development Fund Levy.¹⁰⁰ The effect of the levy was to discourage the marketing of African produce. In 1959 the total value of African agriculture was estimated at £14,700,000. Only £3,400,000 of this reached the market. On the other hand, of the £52,000,000 worth of crops produced on European farms £49,900,000 reached the domestic market.¹⁰¹

The idea behind the marketing charges would be noble if applied to European farmers as well. After all the development of roads, etc., takes place in both sectors. As late as 1973, European producers were being charged only 2d per bag of grain while Africans were being charged 22d per bag.¹⁰² The levies do attract considerable criticism because they are a form of forced saving made by Africans who have no control whatsoever over their disposal. Furthermore, they have made it possible for the Government to avoid expenditure in public services because the line between levy-fund and Government contribution is unclear.

The Rhodesian African Farmers union is suspicious of the many un-

96 Southern Rhodesia, C.N.C. Report, 1948, p. 99.

97 Southern Rhodesia, *Commission of Enquiry into the Beef and Cattle Industry*, 1962, p. 474.

98 Southern Rhodesia, *Legislative Assembly, Second Report of the Select Committee on the Resettlement of Natives*, p. 295.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

100 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Maize and Small Grains Industry*, p. 226.

101 Southern Rhodesia, *Second Report of the Select Committee*, 1960, p. 84.

102 Evidence from the Grain Marketing Board in Umtali during an interview I conducted in August 1973.

clear practices surrounding the marketing of African produce. According to their investigation in 1969, a bag of maize in grade A sold for \$2.50 while the B, C and D grades sold for \$2.35, \$2.15 and \$1.50 respectively. The bulk of African maize fell into the B and C grades. Having bought this maize, the Grain Marketing Board mixed grades A and B and called it A for the export market. But the bulk of African maize bought by the Board as grades B and C was mixed and graded A and B for the local market. It was sold to the millers at an average price of \$4.50 per bag. The millers took out the 'yolk' of the maize which represented 20% of a bag of 200lbs. and converted it into cereal to be sold at 15 cents per lb. Since the 20% of the bag is the equivalent of 40 lbs, the yolk realized a total of \$6. The remainder of the bag totalling 160 lbs. was sold for \$5.50. Thus a bag bought for \$2.35 ultimately brought \$11.50.¹⁰³ To make it worse, it is the very Africans who sell the maize who are the chief buyers during drought years. They therefore purchase their own maize in mealie-meal form at five times the rate at which they sold it. The African Farmers Union plausibly contends that the African farmer will never be viable so long as his efforts are undermined by differential pricing on the market and by the denial of Government loans and subsidies extended to his European counterpart. For our purpose, the significance of these marketing difficulties experienced by all sections of the African community is that they brought all classes of Africans together. The dramatic emergence of nationalism in the fifties could not have taken place without mass participation. The support of the African middle class demonstrated the gravity of the situation. A contented middle class could have cushioned mass agitation and reduced the effectiveness of nationalist activities.

There were two principal issues which became popular themes of nationalist attack. These were land and the franchise. But it was initially the land issue which was uppermost in the minds of the masses. When the first mass political party, the African National Congress, was launched in 1957, one of its objectives was to repeal the Land Apportionment Act and to reallocate the land on a non-racial basis.¹⁰⁴ The *Central African Examiner* reported in 1958 that within nine months of the ANC's formation it established as many as forty branches throughout the Colony. It added that "Town membership consists mainly of younger educated Africans but in the rural areas membership is solid in all the age groups".¹⁰⁵ It is also significant that when the first arrests of ANC members were made, 40 out of 49 arrested were farmers from the Sipolilo area.¹⁰⁶

In its policy statement, the African National Congress devoted considerable space to the land issue:

Congress believes that this country must become self-supporting in all agricultural produce. . . It may well become an exporting country. It recognises the need for

103 Interview with the African Farmers Union, August 1973.

104 See "A.B.C. to the African National Congress", *The Central African Examiner*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (August 1958), p. 10.

105 *Ibid.*

106 *Ibid.*

large scale agriculture but does not believe that this should be confined to a particular racial group. A rural economy for the country must be founded primarily on the small farmer. Government must, therefore, support the peasant farmer strongly with land settlement schemes, research and the provision of capital so that his farming may develop along modern lines. Agriculture will benefit greatly if racial restrictions are removed and the large and small farmers are permitted to farm side by side to their mutual advantage. Agriculture must become increasingly intensive and underdeveloped land in any area must be found for economic use. The Land Apportionment Act stands in the way of these developments and must be repealed.¹⁰⁷

With this programme the ANC was able to appeal to all sections of the African community cutting across ethnic lines and religious affiliations and moulding a coherent and effective movement to spearhead the cause for national liberation. At political rallies people came by the thousands and responded to the speaker's message in a manner that dramatized the need for reform. In the rural areas, men and women, weary with age, walked distances of up to twenty miles to attend political rallies;¹⁰⁸ and very often by the time they arrived they were so exhausted that they promptly fell asleep as soon as they sat down. But let the speaker mention the magic word "land" and the wrinkles of the eyes unfolded and piercing eyeballs fixed upon the speaker. Some simply shouted "Amen" or "hallelujah" as they woke up. When the speaker told them that if only the settler Government could be removed all the European farms nearby could become their land, they understood the meaning of oppression more clearly. Those who had never thought that life in this world could be anything other than sweat and toil for a white master began to stretch their imagination into the new world of freedom. They lived the new life in their visions. Many who went to political rallies calling themselves by their usual names returned with new titles. They referred to themselves as *Vana Vevu* which literally means "children of the soil",¹⁰⁹ thus signifying their closeness to the land. The term also symbolized what they righteously regarded as their inalienable right to land, implying their common grievance against the regime. The significance of the term is that it was associated with land rather than with some other aspect of Rhodesian political life.

When the African National Congress was banned, its successor, the National Democratic Party, inherited the land issue as one of its major themes. Young men who had drifted into the town in search of employment had little patience with the *status quo*. Violence flared up in practically every town and even in the countryside. Dipping tanks were destroyed, "arson" became a household word and the slogan "Freedom Farming" incited people to plough where they were prohibited from doing so.¹¹⁰

Under this pressure the Government made some alteration in the Land

107 The African National Congress, "Can Land Apartheid Work in 1958?" *The Central African Examiner*, Vol. 2, No. 11 (October 1958), p. 26.

108 Eyewitness account of the author in Chipinga District, 1958.

109 Ibid.

110 Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1961*, p. 3.

Apportionment Act. In 1961 the Act was amended to permit freehold tenure in the townships, thus heralding the opening of the door for permanent urban Africans to develop with security of land tenure. But this affected only a small group of the African middle class. A further amendment was made to set aside a category of land to be known as unreserved land for acquisition by farmers of any race, and to add two million acres of European land to the Special Native Area, a category created in the early fifties.¹¹¹ At this time the implementation of the Native Land Husbandry Act was suspended.

It was this pressure which led the then Prime Minister, Sir Edgar Whitehead, to wage his election campaign on the Land Apportionment Act repeal issue, which resulted in his ruling party losing that election, and brought into power the right-wing Rhodesian Front Party.¹¹²

Mass nationalism in Rhodesia arose as a result of causes large and small, but without the land issue the development of political consciousness on a mass scale would have been a more gradual process. One can hardly disagree with Dr. Ranger when he says, "The grievances of a rootless urban working population were added to those of the tribesmen".¹¹³ Under these circumstances it was possible to weld together the divergent elements divided by social status and by custom into a viable movement for political action. Land reform in Rhodesia has never been achieved by negotiation and probably will not be in the future. For this reason the language which the Government understood so well in 1962 may be the only one left for future reform.

In its report, the Land Commission of 1925 recommended land segregation on the grounds that: "In the world generally, the relationship between white and coloured races tends to become embittered and that wars of extermination will follow", unless "points of contact between the two are reduced".¹¹⁴ Time has proved the Commission's assessment unfounded, because greater separation in Rhodesia has increased racial tension rather than decreased it. Today a significant portion of Rhodesia is a scene of battle. Government figures show that approximately 305 freedom fighters have lost their lives in action while more settlers have been killed than in the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. The rural population in such areas as the Chiweshe Reserve, who have for so long experienced the hardships created by the Land Apportionment Act, have surely been a factor in the successful operations of the freedom fighters. The Land Commission of 1925 thus sowed the seeds of the very conflict it intended to prevent. It set a time bomb which is now going off half a century after it was planted.

111 See Amending Act, No. 37/61, 1961.

112 W. D. Gale, "Mistakes Made by Whitehead", *The Rhodesia Herald*, 19 December 1972.

113 T. O. Ranger, *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), p. 229.

114 Lands Commission Report 1925, p. 24 (NAS, S1561/25).