Meat and Monopolies:
Beef Cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1938

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Preliminary Draft: No portion of this paper may be quoted without permission of Saldru, School of Economics, University of Cape Town.
The history of the meat industry in any country that one cared to consider was a history of trusts. 1

Cattle have long held an important and often emotionally-debated place in the history of Central Africa. Initially, much of this debate focused on the allegedly 'traditional' and 'irrational' attitudes held by various African peoples towards the sale of cattle, 2 but in recent years this 'cattle complex' formulation so beloved of anthropologists has come under increasing criticism and revision. 3 Despite such conceptual advances, at no point has an attempt been made to explore the other side of the coin, that of commercial ranching. An examination of the historical development of the beef cattle industry in Southern Rhodesia not only allows a further implicit re-evaluation of 'traditional' African attitudes when these are seen in the context of the considerable marketing and profitability problems encountered even by white ranchers and farmers, but is undeniably important in its own right. Since its establishment, the capitalist sector has controlled between 30 and 50 per cent of the 'national' herd; by 1950 this represented some 1.1 million cattle out of a total of 2.9 million, and an investment of just over £30 million. 4 Moreover, by situating the analysis within the context of the world meat trade, it becomes possible to examine the ambiguous relationship between local and international capital. It is this relationship which provides a vital key to understanding the cattle industry in the period up to 1938, when the state finally established the Cold Storage Commission in enduring support of local capital.

I

Southern Rhodesia was early recognised by entrepreneurs as a potentially valuable beef cattle country, but full realisation of this
hinged on breaking into the world meat market. As the structure of, and competition for, this market largely determined many of the specific economic constraints associated with commercial ranching, it is useful to outline its main features.

From the turn of the century onwards, the world meat trade was progressively dominated by South America, and in particular by Argentina. Other significant participants included New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America, although after 1910 the bulk of the latter's production was for domestic consumption. And throughout the period under discussion, Britain constituted by far the largest market for this trade. In 1914, for example, Britain imported 694,465 tons of frozen and chilled beef, valued at almost £30 million. Of this total, over 400,000 tons were supplied from South America. Three years later, despite war-time restrictions, British imports totalled 479,000 tons out of an estimated world output of 965,000 tons of frozen and chilled beef, mutton and lamb. This pattern survived post-war dislocations and price slumps relatively unscathed, particularly as lowered prices temporarily turned the United States into an importer of certain grades of meat, thus confirming the predominant position of the low-cost South American producers. By 1924, South America supplied Britain with 6,334,500 quarters of beef and had also captured the bulk of the continental European trade amounting to some 4.5 million quarters of beef. A secondary development at this time was a growing demand for lower-grade beef, especially in Italy, which provided possible openings for less-established producers such as southern Africa. Nonetheless, the demands of the British market continued to absorb over 60 per cent of the world meat trade; in 1927 Britain purchased 608,000 tons of frozen and chilled beef from Argentina alone. In that year, Argentine production reached 770,000 tons and by 1929 she furnished between 50 and 65 per cent of all exports in beef and beef products. Her nearest competitor was Uruguay who contributed about 10 per cent of the total world meat exports.

Argentine dominance of the world meat trade rested on the gigantic scale and efficient organisation of her beef industry. Expressed in simplified terms, profits depended on mass production, and a description of the meat packing industry in the United States in 1917 was equally
applicable in its main characteristics to Argentina:

'...the actual net profit on every pound of meat sold is minute, but the volume of business is so great that the aggregate total of profits runs into high figures. The profits are given as only one-quarter of one cent per pound on an average for all dressed beef sales, and 2.2 per cent upon sales of all products. Yet the largest packing house in America last year made a profit of over £4,000,000. The profit on turnover was ... 3\(\frac{1}{3}\) per cent and was equal to over 16 per cent on the company's capital, for the capital was turned over several times in the year. Their sales reached the ... total of £115,000,000. It is evident that the meat packing industry is run on an extremely fine margin of profit, and the success of any factory must depend upon organisation of the highest efficiency in every department, and particularly in the matter of utilising all waste products.'

Mass production and efficient organisation were also important for another reason, which concerned the differences between the chilled and frozen aspects of the meat trade. Because of the physical properties of the meat itself, 'mutton can be frozen hard and re-thawed without injury. If, however, beef be frozen, it has the effect of bursting a number of the blood vessels, so that when the meat is cooked the quality is inferior. In order, therefore, that the consumer may have beef of the finest quality it must be chilled not frozen.'

The most profitable form of handling meat was thus the chilled state and this category, with its demand for the highest grades of beef, eventually dominated the meat trade. A major problem arising from chilling, though, was that the maximum time which could elapse between the slaughter of an animal and its consumption was 38 days, which normally left only about 22 shipping days. As a shipping magnate explained, this period was 'too short to enable chilled beef to be exported from Australia, while from the Argentine the voyage can just be completed within the time. This fact supplies the principal reason why Australia exports mutton, and the Argentine beef.' Because chilled
beef could not be stored for lengthy periods, this trade had to be carried out with the 'utmost regularity'. Transfer from the slaughterhouse to the consumer had to be continuous. Butchers 'must know that their supplies will arrive without fail ... each week', and to satisfy this imperative in the years before 1914, three ships, each carrying 3,000 short tons of carcasses, arrived in Britain on Monday morning of each week. 14

These general imperatives of large-scale production and careful organisation were expressed internally in the competent use and up-grading of Argentina's favourable natural environment. Extending fan-wise for about 400 miles from Buenos Aires was a temperate zone which formed the heart of the cattle industry. The region was flat, with a well-distributed annual rainfall and rich, easily-worked soil which rarely needed artificial fertilizers. Lucerne pastures were widespread and cost little or nothing to establish, as they were usually planted with linseed as a cover crop which gave an immediate cash return above the cost of planting. 15

Cattle, numbering some 33 million in 1937, were raised in various areas to the south, west and north, but 90 to 95 per cent of high grade 'weaners' were sold to farmers in the central temperate zone for fattening. Ranches (estancias) were large but well-paddocked, and standard practice was to graze cattle on lucerne pasture from September to April, and from then until August on winter cereals such as oats and rye. Young cattle arrived from the breeding areas when 11 to 13 months old and were ready as 'chillers' by age 20 to 24 months, when their dressed weight was 600-650 lbs. 'The growth made by cattle in this zone is simply wonderful,' noted a Southern Rhodesian visitor in 1937, 'and to see mobs of 500, 1½-2 year old steers all dehorned, of the same size, type, colour and breeding is something I shouldn't think seen in any other part of the world.'

Equally impressive was the extraordinary attention devoted to the breeding and quality of cattle; 'great care is taken with the selection of bulls and the breeding stock are regularly culled for type and fertility. The bulls used are good and it is well known that Argentine breeders have for many years consistently imported the best blood from England and Scotland.' Other aspects of the industry received the same close attention; quality cattle were carefully handled in order to avoid bruising which lowered prices, while transport facilities were geared to the requirements
of the cattle trade. The central zone was described as 'absolutely crossed with a network of railways and it is never necessary for cattle to be more than 5-12 miles to the nearest station'. Trans-shipment of cattle was eliminated, as the railways went right up to the freezing and chilling plants (frigorificos).

The frigorificos were worked on a massive scale. Those in Argentina alone annually handled 2½ million head of cattle, 6 million sheep and 1 million pigs, while meat extract and canning plants absorbed another half-million animals. Because the capital so invested was large, overhead charges were usually the same regardless of the weight of meat handled daily. Working to capacity was thus considered the single most important factor in reducing operating costs, and observers were struck by the fact that 'there is absolutely no waste and everything is handled and disposed of'. Costs were further reduced by the use of machinery and other labour-saving devices in all branches of the frigorificos. Some were designed to make use 'wherever possible, of gravitation. Killing is usually done on the top floor so that from there the different parts of the carcasses ... could be thrown down chutes to their respective departments lower down.' And underpinning the entire process of mass production was the conveyor-belt system which increased both the productivity and intensity of labour:17

'The first thing that impressed me was the speed at which the men worked. In ... one frigorifico where over 6,000 are employed I never saw a single one loafing or doing nothing. Everyone seemed to be working at a rush to get through with the work...every employee had only his own particular work and by doing it over and over he became highly skilled. The speed at which the men have to work is either set by the moving conveyors or the machinery.'

The meatpacking industry, organised around mass production, regularity of supply and rigorous control over the breeding and fattening of the cattle themselves, demanded heavy capitalisation and of 'necessity' was controlled by a limited number of international companies. One study has estimated that a single plant required at least £200,000 by the end of the nineteenth century, and that this capital outlay, together with the considerable costs of maintenance and labour, made it 'impossible for someone to start
out with a little packinghouse and, through alertness and clean living turn it into a large packinghouse... From the start, the refrigerated meatpacking business was Big Business.18

Big business was necessary for other reasons as well. Because profitability depended on the rapid and massive turnover of products, the meat trade was especially vulnerable to over-production and lowered prices. This tendency was countered in two main ways, and both expressed and strengthened monopolistic control. The first method was through the vertical integration of the industry to lower costs and rationalise supplies; by 1932 the 'larger concerns' were described as having 'their own ranches - though they are buyers as well; they have their own refrigeration works, their own steamers, and their own wholesale and retail distributing organisation'.19 The second way took the form of price collusion and regulation and the division of the market into quotas by mutual agreement among the companies.20 Neither method achieved absolute success; vertical integration remained incomplete, particularly with regard to control over supplies of cattle, and both the quota system and price collusion sometimes disintegrated into 'meat wars' as the balance of power shifted within the industry.21 But taken together, these various activities did constitute the appearance, and often the reality, of monopoly.

This monopolistic structure, both in South America and on a world scale, was dominated by North American and British capital. Of the British companies, the most important was the firm of Vestey's, a brief description of whose holdings illustrates the wider ability of monopoly capital to undersell and squeeze out smaller, independent producers. Prior to 1914, Vestey's had interests in South America, China and Russia, extensive land holdings in South Africa, and gradually extended its operations to embrace Australia, New Zealand and Madagascar. The company also owned '5 steamers refrigerated and fitted for the carriage of frozen meat which they use largely for their own trade'.22 Major expansion occurred, however, primarily after the war when in 1922 they absorbed the British and Argentine Meat Company. Vestey's had previously owned over 3,000 butcher shops in England, and the take-over added between 800 and 900 shops to that total. Overall, it was thought that the 'deal gave Vestey's control of over one-quarter of the Argentine export trade.23 On the other side of the world, Vestey's leased 20 million acres in Northern Australia where they ran 300,000 cattle. Generally speaking,
these were low-grade animals, but their low cost of production gave Vesteys a competitive selling edge, especially during the Great Depression when beef prices collapsed. There were no rail charges because cattle were 'walked' to the freezing works, and labour costs were the envy even of Southern Rhodesia: 'they employ about 200 aborigines who do not seem to have advanced as far as our natives - at any rate they are only starting to ask for money wages.' Cattle weighing from 1100 to 1300 lbs live weight were sold at £3 per head, a price which, as Southern Rhodesia glumly noted, meant that 'the Rhodesian rancher has got to come down to 5/- per 100 lbs live weight and not to think in terms of 10/-...as he does at present. That is not a very attractive idea, but there is no use blinking at the facts.'

Vesteys in fact exemplified the nature of the world meat market, with its emphasis on volume and low costs, and which was monopolistically structured. Indeed, aspirant beef producers were convinced that they 'were up against the operations of combines and trusts ... [who] brooked no competition in matters of that sort. However small an effort might be, they still thought it worth while to crush such an attempt out of existence.' In the case of Southern Rhodesia, though, near-indifference on the part of the meat giants was to prove almost as crushing as active hostility.

II

'From a ranching point of view,' explained the British South Africa Company in 1919, 'Rhodesia is exceptionally well favoured in three important respects. Land is plentiful and cheap, grazing is abundant ... and in the native herds there is a good foundation stock available at a low price.' And, the Company might have added, black labour was cheap. Here were the classic elements of primitive accumulation; land was extensive and cheap as a result of colonial conquest and expropriation, labour power was produced and reproduced outside the capitalist sector, and there were stocks of indigenous cattle which could be seized or purchased cheaply. Off-setting these 'natural' advantages, however, were problems concerning undercapitalisation, the poor beef qualities of indigenous cattle, ranch and cattle management generally, disease and transport facilities. Each of these will be discussed before turning to a description of the development of Southern Rhodesian ranching and its search for markets.
Land was rapidly alienated during the early years of colonial rule; by March 1899 almost 16 million acres were held by companies and settlers and with the passage of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 the total reserved for Europeans rose to 48 million acres. Access to extensive, cheap land was central to the profitability of ranching which 'by its very nature can only return a low income per acre'. In 1955, for instance, cash income from ranching averaged 5/3d. an acre in the highveld and about 2/9d an acre in the lowveld. Land suitable for ranching purposes could be bought in 1921 for 3 - 10s. per acre, and where it was rented, land accounted for only 2.5 per cent of annual production costs as late as 1959-62. Unfortunately, equivalent figures for the period before 1938 have not been found, although it is unlikely that proportionate rent costs were significantly higher, and certain that cash income was even lower.

The fact that would-be ranchers either were granted outright or later could purchase extensive land holdings on favourable terms, itself went a considerable distance in establishing the conditions for the acquisition of cheap labour. By taking up a large section of the land resources, ranches, like plantations in general, served as a mechanism for inducing and 'sustaining agrarian underdevelopment in the /African/ peasant economy'. The supplies of cheap labour generated in this and other ways were vital for ranching for two related reasons. Unlike certain other branches of agricultural production, ranching was not amenable to mechanization and, as a later survey precisely established, black labour constituted the single largest item in cattle production costs. And because of the extremely competitive nature of the world meat market, it was imperative that these costs be kept as low as possible.

On plantations, and ranches this was achieved and expressed through a particular system of labour relations involving a 'considerable degree of
non-cash or non-wage commitment on both sides of the contract. The
canonical character of the worker's relationship to the plantation was all-encompassing. His links with the employer were not simply economic but also involved a high degree of (personal) socio-political subordination and dependence... The low proportion of cash payments to payments in kind reflected this paternal (client-patron) pattern in labour policy. These quasi-feudal labour relations thus minimised cash expenditure on labourers, while multiplying the services extracted from them.
Evidence for agricultural wage rates in the years between 1890 and 1938 is extremely fragmentary and unsatisfactory. There is, for example, no distinction made in available figures between wages paid in the cattle industry and those in other agricultural sectors, although it does seem reasonable to conclude that they were not sufficiently different to evoke separate comment. Monthly African cash wages on farms in 1903 varied between 10 and 20s., and over the next 25 years these rose marginally (declining substantially in real terms) to between 18 and 23s. Expenditure on labourers' rations was similarly meagre; in the early 1920s these consisted of '2 lbs. of meal a day with the occasional addition of beans, ground nuts, sweet potatoes and meat'.

Although stockmen (herd or cattle 'boys') probably received higher than average wages, the number and range of tasks they were expected to perform was formidable:

'Each boy must be responsible for the general welfare of his particular herd; for the maintenance of fences surrounding that paddock, in which his herd happens to be situated... and he must act as a farm policeman. He must check strangers walking in his paddock, because if this is allowed various malpractices, including even the killing of cattle, can occur. He must notice and report any bicycle or motor car spoor, the latter may indicate the activity of poachers. The removal, handing in and reporting of snares is important... Each cattle boy must be equipped with a native axe and a pair of fencing pliers, so that he can maintain the fences round his paddock, whilst he is going round his herd.'

Multiple services were expected not only from the labourers themselves but also from their families. One rancher explained with satisfaction the manner in which he obtained a high protein feed for his cattle:

'I give the wives of my employees a certain sum of money per 100 kg. (200 lbs.) bag to collect them. They knock down the ripe beans from the trees with a long stick. They and their children then collect them and put them into bags, which they leave near some track for collection and riding to the hammer mill. The women are satisfied to make some pocket money and, with their children, always seem to enjoy the "outing".'
In much the same ways as the 'cheapness' of land and labour were secured, so was access assured to supplies of African-owned cattle. Land theft was paralleled by cattle theft; between October 1893 and March 1896 between 100,000 and 200,000 cattle were seized from the Ndebele by the B.S.A. Company and settlers. Most of these 'loot' cattle, however, were promptly sold on the Kimberley and Johannesburg markets, while many of those cattle remaining in the country were decimated by the rinderpest epidemic of 1896-8. It was only after 1898, when the Jameson Raid, the African Risings and the share market collapse had combined to dispel any lingering euphoria concerning the territory's gold mining prospects, that a number of settlers and companies began to give serious attention to ranching. Although outright theft was still occasionally practised, as with the cattle seized from Mpezeni's Ngoni in Northern Rhodesia in 1899, it now became customary for ranchers to buy cattle from Africans.

Initially, this growing demand had the effect of pushing up the price of such cattle, from £1-£2 per head around 1905-6 to £4-£7 by 1909, and also of contributing to a period of peasant prosperity and independence from wage employment in the capitalist sector. Both of these effects, though, were only temporary. As the number of European-owned cattle grew, so the earlier massive demand for African cattle slackened, with the result that falling prices devalued the last major source of peasant income. Thereafter prices remained low because of the twin factors of increasing livestock numbers and declining carrying capacity of land in the African reserves. The continued availability of cheap cattle, especially when this supply was later augmented by the imposition of compulsory de-stocking policies in some African areas, was of immense importance both for new entrants into ranching and for established producers who wished to expand their herds. In the early 1950s the Cold Storage Commission, too, was buying 'African cattle at knock-down prices during the dry season when the owners lacked pasture for the animals. The cattle were then passed to European farmers who were paid handsomely for fattening the cattle for slaughter'. The B.S.A. Company itself was to admit grudgingly that in 'the early days of ranching in Rhodesia, and even up to as late as 1919, it was economically impossible to stock any large ranching proposition without starting on a foundation of native cows'. Later ranchers would have queried only the first part of this statement.
All of these 'natural' advantages thus attracted a growing amount of attention, but many settlers and companies who turned to cattle ranching were severely handicapped by undercapitalisation. Undercapitalisation, which came to characterize most branches of commercial agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, was exacerbated and given a particular twist in cattle ranching by the fact that the 'stock of all cattle is an inventory of invested capital, but it is also an inventory of consumer goods. Cattle production in any year depends on the size of the calf crop, the rate of gain of growing steers and heifers, and on weight changes in breeding animals. Production is therefore closely related to the size of the stock of animals resulting from the previous level of investment. Unlike most goods, however, consumption of beef is not restricted to current production because the stock of capital and the final product are, in the last analysis, one and the same. Each decision to increase the stock of capital out of current production reduces current consumption; each decision to slaughter unfinished animals reduces the stock of capital. Inasmuch as the price of cattle for slaughter is determined by the quantity supplied in relation to consumer demand, investment demand may be said to compete with demand for consumption.'45

Because of this constraint of exceptionally long-deferred returns on investments, ranching clearly required more capital than other spheres of agricultural production. Belatedly, the B.S.A. Company recognised this fact and, where they had once simply advised all intending settlers that a starting capital of £700 was advisable,46 later warned those 'who contemplate embarking on ranching enterprises in Rhodesia ... not to do so on a small capital. Competent judges put the minimum amount that is required at £3000'.47 More modern estimates, even when trying to show how low costs were in the 'early days', still arrived at a basic figure of £8000.48 The Chartered Company's revised estimate, which represented the absolute minimum necessary, in fact came too late to alter a pattern which was already entrenched in Southern Rhodesian ranching by 1919. By that date there were a multitude of 'small', undercapitalised ranches, together with a few large concerns financed by international capital.
The major surge of company interest and investment in ranching came between 1910 and 1914. Some companies, such as Willoughbys, had been involved in ranching since the 1890s, but in 1912 the Director of Agriculture was commenting on the 'new feature ... that several ranching companies have been formed during the year, and these and others are embarking upon operations on a large scale'.

Eight companies were listed by the Director, including Liebigs and the B.S.A. Company itself. All of them possessed at least several hundred thousand acres, while a few had well over one million acres each. Within one year of large scale operations commencing, Liebigs had over 11,000 cattle, Alamgamated Properties possessed about 10,000 head, and the Chartered Company had collected 4,000 on their Rhodesdale estate.

Over the next twenty years the cattle holdings of certain companies expanded markedly; in 1934 the London and Rhodesian Mining and Land Company (Lonrho) had 30,000 head of cattle on 800,000 acres, while on the three million acre Nuanetsi ranch there were approximately 100,000 cattle. A newcomer, the Congo and Rhodesian Company, ran about 40,000 head of cattle on a 500,000 acre property.

Impressive as these figures were, they nonetheless disguised the structural reality of Southern Rhodesian ranching. This was the preponderance, accentuated after the mid-1920s, of comparatively small-scale cattle owners. In 1924, 1,738 farmers had cattle herds of 500 or less, as opposed to 17 large ranches owning herds of over 5,000 head. Although no strictly comparable figures have been found for subsequent years, Table I does indicate the growing proportion and importance of small owners.

### Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CLASS I 250 and under</th>
<th>CLASS II 251 to 1000</th>
<th>CLASS III 1001 to 5000</th>
<th>CLASS IV Over 5000</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owners</td>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>Owners</td>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>Owners</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>193,703</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>283,017</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,906</td>
<td>195,620</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>289,033</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2,048</td>
<td>207,819</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>290,980</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>2,054</td>
<td>209,198</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>305,231</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>2,145</td>
<td>228,724</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>284,734</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>2,236</td>
<td>230,058</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>269,802</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>2,340</td>
<td>243,463</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>246,487</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>2,298</td>
<td>237,024</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>253,380</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>2,326</td>
<td>237,429</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>251,742</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>2,322</td>
<td>237,981</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>259,506</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from an increase in cattle numbers up to 1932 (paradoxically, due mainly to the cessation of exports following the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 1931), and a small recovery in 1938, the general trend was downwards. That this trend was at the expense of larger producers is clearly shown by Table II.

Table II
Index of European cattle ownership, 1929-1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CLASS I</th>
<th>CLASS II</th>
<th>CLASS III</th>
<th>CLASS IV</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expressed in percentages, the diminution in numbers of cattle by groups between 1929 and 1938 was Class II, 9; Class III, 30; and Class IV, 52.57

Small producers, as section III of this paper discusses, were both a cause and a consequence of Southern Rhodesia's failure to establish itself in the world meat market. Always lacking capital and often without sufficient experience, such cattle owners were singularly unfitted to meet the exacting requirements of the world market. As late as 1950, it was claimed that in Rhodesia "farming" equipment cost capital that men had not got, and it was not worth anyone financing such a thing for a rickety market... What has been called a farm or a ranch has often been a large piece of ground, with or without beacons on its corners, and someone living on it.58 The same writer went on to stress that the ranching business should be treated as 'a factory for beef. The only way to do that means to find out exactly what it needs to take your beef calf crop all the way through from its birth to its sale (as early as possible) to the meat factory.' But the taking of a 'calf crop ... from its birth to its sale as early as possible' was far from simple, especially in circumstances of inadequate capital.

An essential part of profitable cattle ranching was getting a steer to the necessary weight and quality in the shortest possible time. In Argentina, as earlier noted, 600-650 lb. 'chillers' were ready by age
20-24 months, but this kind of achievement eluded Southern Rhodesia. 'Rhodesia is often spoken of as one of the best cattle raising countries ... and yet we can only produce a 400-lb. beast in 4 to 5 years' cautioned a local rancher in 1911. Yet 25 years later, British experts found the situation basically unchanged. One of them reported that most of the 'bullocks killed for chilled beef are of five to six years and some are older', and gently pointed out that if 'a raiser has to keep his bullocks until they are six years old, I am afraid that the prospects of continuing as a serious competitor in the chilled beef business would be rather small'.

Part of the problem lay in the poor beef qualities of the 'indigenous' African cattle. Their 'cheapness' made them economically essential for European ranchers, but many of these same ranchers at first lacked the experience and always the capital to successfully up-grade such animals. Mashona, Matabele and Angoni cattle were prized for their 'extreme hardiness and ability to rustle for a living, and also great length of life', but offsetting these useful qualities were their 'slowness in maturing,' their rather light build and preponderance of beef upon parts producing the lower priced cuts'. Initially, it was thought that the foundation stock of indigenous cattle could be upgraded simply through the importation of exotic bulls. Many ranchers, however, could not afford to do this. The 'special' cattle exhibit by a 'large Land and Mining Co.' at the Mashonaland show in 1908 was severely criticised: 'As beef animals they were poor specimens. It was quite obvious that where pure bred bulls should have been used, mongrels took their place, with the natural result that in this third cross they had thrown back to very nearly the original animal.'

Shortly after the turn of the century, following the ravages of rinderpest and East Coast Fever, the B.S.A. Company had supplied over 1000 breeding cattle to ranchers on easy terms, and in 1909 the Department of Agriculture initiated a further scheme 'to purchase stud animals for farmers, meeting all risks in transit, including the tuberculin test, and giving easy terms of repayment by instalments'. In 1912 the scheme was amended to make it even more favourable to undercapitalised ranchers. The value of stock which could be purchased on extended terms of repayment was increased from £75 to £200, and the deposit was reduced from £5 and £1 to £1 and 5s. respectively for large and small stock.
Thus bolstered by Government assistance, cattle imports between
1911 and 1913 reached about 16,000 head. But even as cattle imports
grew, so a number of problems became apparent. Crosses between imported
bulls and indigenous cattle at first achieved 'quite remarkable' results
in growth and configuration. With subsequent crosses, though, 'increasing
signs of degeneration crept in. They had a larger proportion of unthrifty
stock; cows failed to breed regularly ... and with unthriftness came
diseases and the beasts increasingly felt the effects of parasites, both
internal and external. During much of the 1920s and 1930s the blame
for this state of affairs was usually attributed to the wrong breed having
been used, and 'it became an era of plunging about rather wildly looking
for the "right" exotic bull'. What was happening was that the infusion
of exotic blood, irrespective of breed, demanded a 'higher plane of
nutrition to allow it to develop to its norm in European countries, and
the lack of that nutrition in the hard winter months stunted their growth
and made them generally unthrifty'.

As far back as 1908 a warning had been sounded that 'any attempt to
breed animals above the quality of the veld is sure to end in disaster'.
In the event, louder voices, not least of whom were Professor Wallace
of Edinburgh University and Richard Walsh, the experienced Texan manager
of the B.S.A. Company's ranches, prevailed in the debate over the country's
grazing qualities. 'The grasses,' insisted Walsh, 'are very good indeed.
They must have great sustaining and fattening qualities.' Wallace was
rather more cautious in his appraisal; he conceded that pasture had 'run
wild', but entertained no doubts about its inherent quality and lent his
authority to the well-publicised claim that as a grazing country 'during
the period of rainfall and luxuriant growth "Rhodesia has no equal in
South Africa, and it would be difficult to find her superior in any part
of the world".'

It was only considerably later, after repeated failures, that
realistic appraisals received widespread recognition. By the 1950s and
1960s it had been known for some time that 'when on natural veld only,
the growth of cattle is strictly seasonal and positively related to the
nutritive value of the grazing which, in turn, is controlled chiefly by
rainfall and temperature'. Briefly summarized, Southern Rhodesian
pasture could be split into two main categories; the sweet veld of Matabele-
land which was nutritious but usually deficient in quantity, and the sour
or mixed veld of Mashonaland which, apart from the months of growth, was fibrous and 'in-nutritious'. Supplementary feeding of cattle was therefore essential. Government agricultural experts in the late 1930s explained that while the 'natural veld is the cheapest feed available ... experience has shown that cattle in this Colony raised on grass alone do not get fat enough to reach the standard of quality required ... until over the desired age for chilling. It has been found essential to supplement the natural grazing at certain stages of the animal's growth and at certain periods of the year. An increasing number of experiments were conducted in an attempt to discover a satisfactory balance between production costs and the quality of the 'finished product' through supplementary feeding, but while considerable progress was made, several questions remained unresolved.

Although the basic problem had been identified, its resolution effectively revolved around capital and markets. 'One should not scorn the stockmen of that time for insufficiently realizing that superior stock required superior nutrition,' commented one writer. 'Many of them did; but with the price of contract meat for the mines and railways standing at ten shillings per 100 lb. it was entirely out of the question to put any money into capital improvement of the ranches or to purchase machinery to make hay or silage.' Only supplementary feeding would produce cattle of sufficient quality to compete on the world meat market, but it would also entail higher production costs for at least three or four years for a highly competitive and uncertain market, before any returns would be seen. Many of Southern Rhodesia's small ranchers had neither the means nor the desire to take this risk, particularly in the 1930s when world meat prices were depressed. The colony's premier thought that pasture 'can undoubtedly be improved, but it requires money, initiative and hard work, and how are our farmers going to provide these? ...in the meantime the cattle industry will, I am afraid, be a poor one. The worst of it is ... the progressive men who will produce the type of cattle to give a decent return ... are handicapped, as it is export in quantity that is required to get cheap rates, freight, etc.' And in 1935 the circle was completed when the Chief Animal Husbandry Officer warned that to 'provide the feed and care necessary to overcome ... under-nutrition is generally not an economic proposition under ranching conditions at present'.
Lack of capital was also manifest in other areas of ranching and cattle management and contributed, to a certain extent, to the general inability of producers to raise quality cattle. 'To begin with,' stressed a contributor to the Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 'no man can expect to keep his cattle under the same conditions as a kaffir, and at the same time introduce good blood.' The widespread practice of kraaling cattle at night was criticised because it encouraged disease and inefficient range utilisation, and the erection of fencing and the establishment of paddocks were advocated. But in 1908, a 'first-class' fence cost £40 per mile, a figure well beyond the pocket of almost every rancher in the country. Ranchers sought to economise by using wooden poles cut on their properties and only three strands of barbed wire, at a cost of £11 per mile for the wire. Even when treated against termite attack, though, wooden poles had to be replaced every eight or so years, a not insignificant recurrent expenditure. As with the importation of breeding stock, state assistance was forthcoming in the form of a Fencing Ordinance in 1911 whereby some of the costs of boundary fences were met with public funds, and by 1913 fencing was described as 'extending rapidly'.

Because fencing helped to control the spread of cattle diseases, state assistance in that sphere grew directly out of close Government involvement in disease control. This involvement had initially been necessary to rescue the cattle industry from the disastrous impact of the rinderpest epidemic which swept through Southern Rhodesia between 1896 and 1898. An estimated 95 per cent of the total cattle population was lost and, as previously mentioned, the B.S.A. Company assisted in re-stocking the country. No sooner had this been begun, however, when East Coast Fever made its appearance in 1901 and subsequently resulted in the death of approximately 19,000 cattle. The Chartered Company issued regulations to control the movement of cattle in an attempt to stop the spread of the disease, and brought in an expert from Germany to investigate the outbreak. Progress was slow and it was only towards the end of the decade that it was realised that East Coast Fever was transmitted by ticks and could be treated through regular dipping. Dipping tanks were erected throughout the territory with the help of a Government grant of £50 towards the construction of each tank, and in 1914 provision was made for compulsory dipping. By 1917 'there were close on 1000 dipping tanks in the Territory,
covering 78 per cent of the European farms', and including a number of tanks built in African reserves. These measures were highly successful and East Coast Fever did not again cause cattle losses on a similar scale.

Surprisingly, despite this inauspicious start, no other major epidemics affected the cattle industry. The one exception was an outbreak of foot-and-mouth in the early 1930s, and although its impact was magnified by the Great Depression, it was relatively quickly brought under control by inoculation and quarantine measures. Quarter-evil was also experienced, but losses ran at 'probably less than a third of 1 per cent', and it was regarded 'as not worth serious consideration'. Much more serious was the problem of internal parasites. For most of the period under consideration, though, this was not even recognised as a problem: 'the fact that they are so rarely fatal has tended to their being ignored or only partially and irregularly dealt with.' But while there was some justification for the claim that 'compared with conditions in other cattle raising countries the health of cattle in Rhodesia is remarkably good', the early epidemics left a damaging legacy. Neighbouring states reacted with alarm to any fresh outbreaks of cattle diseases in Southern Rhodesia, and although these tended to be minor and were speedily controlled, their recurrence in the 1920s and 1930s was to prove extremely damaging to the export trade.

By contrast to the way in which cattle diseases were fairly early brought under control, there was little ranchers or the state could do to overcome the problems attendant on the country's remoteness from world or even regional markets. Inside the territory, about 33 million acres were within 25 miles of a railway; about 26 million acres were between 25 and 50 miles from rail transport; and roughly 39 million acres were beyond the 50 mile line. The nearest port was Beira, some 200 miles from Umtali, but in fact on the 'wrong' side of the country from the point of view of the ranching industry. In the south and west, where the bulk of the ranches were concentrated, Plumtree was over 1,000 miles from Durban, and Messina, just over the border in the Northern Transvaal, was 430 miles from Lourenco Marques. Stock drawn from the Midlands and Mashonaland had to travel 100-300 miles to reach Bulawayo, and from there 681 miles to Johannesburg.

Theoretically, cattle owners had three possible forms of transport open to them; trek, truck or train. The relative costs of these different
forms of transport have been studied in detail for Mali in West Africa, but the general conclusions also apply to Southern Rhodesia. 'First, the actual transport cost of walking cattle is relatively low, but the cost when this method is used of tied-up capital and of lost weight is high in relation to transportation by truck or railroad. Secondly, although the cost of truck transport is relatively high, it is also quite variable and can be fairly low when trucks are available and cattle can be used as return freight. Finally, transportation by railroad is relatively inexpensive, but there is some weight loss, cattle must be walked long distances to the railroad, and delays may outweigh other advantages.' Trucks were rarely used in Southern Rhodesia in the years before 1938, and the usual form of cattle movement was a combination of trek and train, with all the disadvantages that this incurred over the enormous distances which had to be covered.

Unlike the compact rail network which served the cattle breeding and fattening areas of Argentina, the situation in Southern Rhodesia was one of long distances, sparse and scattered cattle centres, and a small volume of traffic. All of these factors meant comparatively high railway rates; in 1921, for example, the cost of railage alone from Bulawayo to Johannesburg was over £2 per head. Naturally enough, spokesmen for the cattle industry regarded the question of railway rates as 'always a burning one', and to some extent the railway administration tried to meet their grievances. When meat prices fell on the Johannesburg market in 1922, railway rates were reduced for distances beyond 500 miles.

There was even less that could be done in other spheres. Before the late 1920s, virtually all of Southern Rhodesia's cattle exports went 'live'. Because of the long distances and delays on branch lines, however, these lengthy rail journeys involved 'suffering to the animals and risk of death and bruising, besides certain loss of weight and condition, and deterioration of the flesh through nervous fatigue and physical exhaustion'. A test conducted by the Government around 1920 revealed staggering and dangerously uneconomic weight losses suffered by cattle in transit. The cattle were railed from near Salisbury to Bulawayo, which took 117 hours, including a 24 hour 'rest' in Bulawayo. A further 53 hours without break was needed to reach Johannesburg. The average weight loss, even after watering and feeding at their destination, was 115 lbs per head, which was calculated as a loss of 43s. on each animal.
One way of eliminating these losses was to slaughter cattle within the colony and export chilled or frozen meat. After freezing works were built in Bulawayo in 1928, this was done to an increasing extent, although it involved difficulties 'connected with control of temperature and storage at the coast pending shipment'. Refrigerator cars themselves were expensive, and the railways and the cattle industry were always handicapped by inadequate rolling stock. For most of the 1920s, Southern Rhodesia only had three small refrigerator cars with a load capacity of 30,000 lbs, and in 1933 the state was once again called to the rescue. Nine railway trucks were fitted with refrigeration plant at a cost of about £1,300 each. The Government accepted responsibility 'for the guarantee of interest on that amount at the rate of 6% per annum, and the refund of two-thirds the capital cost, should the trucks ... be withdrawn for any reason'.

Even when cattle or meat exports reached the coast, they were still thousands of miles from British and European markets. Freight rates for live cattle varied from £9 per head in 1931 for the Cape Town to Birkenhead journey, and this did not include the cost of feeding or handling. At best, these charges offered Southern Rhodesian producers the prospect of a marginal profit, but usually they were uneconomic. As far as chilled and frozen meat were concerned, Cape Town was closer than Buenos Aires to Britain (5987 as opposed to 7800 miles) and so shipping time was not a problem. But this advantage was dissipated by the small quantities southern Africa was able to export, and costs were comparatively high.

III

'Our policy,' explained Southern Rhodesia's Premier, 'is to make friends with these Meat Kings, Vestey, Bovril, Lemco, etc., and endeavour to work in with them, both in regard to the supply of the English market and also contracts such as the Italian. We will be very "small potatoes" for a very long time to come and it will cost them very little to allow us to come in on their market. In the case of the English market we of course desire to come in under them and not to compete with them.' This modest aspiration, voiced in 1931, was a far cry from the confident expectation of 20 years earlier that Southern Rhodesia was destined to play a major role in the world meat trade. There were several reasons for this reappraisal, apart from the important factors discussed in the previous
section, and all combined to draw the state into increasingly close participation with the cattle industry in its search for markets.

In 1911, European-owned cattle had totalled some 371,000 head, and from 1914 onwards had increased at an average annual rate of about 14 per cent, until by 1925 they numbered over one million head.^{100} Before 1916, Southern Rhodesia had been a net importer of meat products, but from that date a growing proportion of surplus cattle were exported. This was greatly facilitated by the large and fairly indiscriminate demand for meat created by the First World War. When the post-war boom collapsed in 1921-2, however, cattle prices fell drastically, and Southern Rhodesian producers were especially hard-hit because the great majority of their cattle were low-grade animals. The tiny internal market of the colony was quite unable to absorb significant numbers, and all the time the growing cattle surplus further depressed prices. The need to find cattle export markets was thus a matter of great urgency.

Responses of local producers to their expanding cattle surplus took three main forms. Two of these were cooperative, and the third and by far the most important was the winning of state assistance to assure markets.

After 1914, two factors encouraged local ranchers to consider financing a canning factory; their surplus of low-grade cattle and growing world demand for canned meat— for which 'scrub' cattle were ideally suited and otherwise virtually unsaleable. The idea was first publicised in the Rhodesia Agricultural Journal in 1915, when a nominal capital of £100,000 was suggested. It was proposed that £50,000 'be called up on flotation, the balance remaining in reserve for future members and contingencies. Of the £50,000, practically half would be required for the erection of the factory and machinery, the rest being working capital.' In order to spread the financial net over as many cattle owners as possible, the share call was to be payable 'in half cash and half stock, with a minimum subscription of fifty shares'. The project apparently did not involve any of the larger ranching companies and, indeed, its sponsors warned that if 'farmers cannot raise the necessary funds, and outside capital has to be employed, it will mean that we have to place our stock, as regards value, in the hands of a financial corporation over which we have no control'.^{101}
The decision was made to establish the factory at Odzi, near Umtali. This site offered the advantages of cheap water power (the Odzi River was one of the largest permanent rivers on the line of rail); it was thought to be 'excellently situated for receiving cattle by road from Gutu, Charter, and other stock raising districts'; and was close to Beira. In every other respect, though, it was a curious decision; it placed the canning factory on the other side of the country from the main ranching areas, as well as away from South Africa, thus increasing railage costs on exports. Nevertheless, in 1917 the Rhodesia Meat Packing Company was successfully floated and construction began on the factory. Operations commenced in 1919, but in August 1920 it temporarily closed, and was finally liquidated in 1922.

Part of the reason for its failure was the familiar problem of undercapitalisation. According to the company's chairman, 'they had never had enough capital to carry on the business of the concern. The share capital, which had been put up, had been absorbed in the erection of the Factory and they had run on capital borrowed from the bank.' He also complained of 'the lack of interest in the Factory on the part of the farmers,' and pointed out that over £12,000 of the share capital was still unpaid. But a more important reason for the canning factory's failure was its inability to compete on external markets. At the end of the war, the British and American Governments had large surplus stocks of canned meats which they were anxious to dispose of. These stocks depressed the entire canning industry and it was reported that the big American packing houses 'were selling corned beef to Germany at a low price and giving 12 to 18 months credit, so that they could get rid of their stocks and cut their losses'. The Odzi factory was even undersold on the South African market by Australian canners who were helped by an export bounty from their Government. The first cooperative exercise by local capital thus ended in failure; all they had to show for their efforts were debts amounting to £38,000 and a nominal 9,000 cattle absorbed by the enterprise.

The second cooperative enterprise involving Southern Rhodesian ranchers was not a purely local affair, and instead embraced cattle owners elsewhere in southern Africa. For all of them, the Johannesburg market was the most important, but the organisation of that market was a source of concern to producers. In 1920, at the request of the newly-formed Cattle
Owners' Association of Rhodesia, an investigation was conducted which discovered that in

'the relatively small trade which exists in Johannesburg in cattle and sheep...there were 27 firms of auctioneers, ...approximately 40 firms of wholesale butchers, and ... some 300 retail butchers, besides hundreds of outside speculators. Well, it was very obvious, when one ascertained the volume of that trade (Johannesburg needs roughly 500 head of cattle a day), that there were rather more men in it than could make a living under normal conditions; that is to say, if the producer were getting his fair share of the price which the consumer pays. It is quite obvious that these auctioneers, wholesale butchers and retailers are too numerous...and consequently there was at that time approximately 10d. a pound difference between what the producer got and the consumer paid. Each auctioneer had one or two wholesale butchers dependent on him for their financial arrangements in buying cattle, and dependent on each wholesaler were from two to ten retail butchers, 'and in order that the too numerous retailers can each make a living out of ...the small volume of trade which he has ...it seems to have become the fixed practice ...to maintain this big difference between the price paid to the producer and the retail price of beef. Without this big difference, more than half of the distributors would have to go out of business.' In brief, the situation had arisen

'through so many men entering the distributing trade without capital, with nothing but their services at stake. They are financed by friends in another branch of the distributing trade, who in turn are financed by others in a higher branch, until distribution has become a huge intricate gambling game, in which producer and consumer pay the losses, but have no other part in it. These circumstances play absolutely into the hands of the big buyers.../Because a high price to the consumer and a low price to the producer is the ideal position for any big wholesaler.'
These facts led to a meeting in Johannesburg in March 1921 of cattle owners from throughout southern Africa. As a result of their deliberations, a cooperative Meat Producers' Exchange was set up two months later, with a share capital of £1000 (later increased to £5000) subscribed by 16 shareholders. Its primary objective was to secure 'fair' prices for producers by eliminating dealings with middlemen, and by controlling the supply of members' cattle allowed to reach the market. 'Scrupulous' attention was to be given to avoiding competition with the 'big buyers'.

At first, the Exchange enjoyed a reasonable amount of success, but eventually survived for a mere two years and four days. On the 25th May 1923, it was placed in final liquidation. From its inception the Exchange had, of course, encountered enormous hostility from auctioneers, wholesalers and, more discreetly, from the large cold storage companies. This opposition was able to attack the Exchange on its most vulnerable aspect; because it was a 'multi-national' cooperative, some of its members were susceptible to claims that it favoured one section over another. For example, in September 1921, the chairman of the Exchange reported that 'every obstacle has been put in the way, and there has been a persistent campaign against it. Some auctioneers have circularised their farmer clients saying that the Exchange is depressing the market and ruining Union farmers by dumping floods of Rhodesian cattle.' In March 1922, cattle belonging to the Meat Producers' Exchange were boycotted on the Rand, and in January of the following year the Southern Rhodesian managing director of the Exchange was forced to resign. By February 1923, the Exchange was reportedly riven with dissent, as South African members objected to the number of Southern Rhodesian cattle being handled.

Damaging as this internal dissension was, it was completely overshadowed by the financial collapse of the Exchange. Although the evidence is ambiguous on some points, it seems clear that the Exchange was deliberately wrecked by the Imperial Cold Storage Company and its subsidiaries. In doing this, they were able to rely on a large measure of naivety, ignorance and inexperience on the part of the Exchange.

From the beginning the organisers of the Meat Producers' Exchange had realised the importance of the 'compound trade' of the Rand. Compound contracts totalled roughly 50 million pounds of meat each year and 'for the success of our organisation, we must get a share of these contracts'.
This was in fact achieved, but at a substantial hidden cost. Contract distribution was placed in the hands of the Rand Cold Storage Company. These 'close relations', explained the Exchange, were only possible 'owing to the good will of the mines', and it congratulated itself for thereby having removed 'that most powerful competitor from the trade'. The Exchange gave no indication of being aware that the Rand Cold Storage Company was 'closely connected' to the Imperial Cold Storage Company which dominated the South African meat industry and was heavily financed by mining capital.114 Thereafter, events moved to a predictable conclusion. In November 1922, an employee of the Rand Cold Storage Company was appointed business manager of the Exchange, doubtless assisted by the 'close relations' enjoyed between the two concerns. On his advice, the Exchange promptly borrowed over £30,000 from his former employer, but even so, 'there was great delay in paying for stock received from members'. The following March, a new draft agreement with the R.C.S. Company was presented to the Exchange's shareholders, and when certain of its terms were amended, the management of the Exchange, by this time apparently in collusion with the R.C.S. Company, issued a blunt caution to shareholders. If the agreement was altered 'or the then management interfered with, the Cold Storage Company would cease its financial support and distribution service, the mines would take away their contracts, ...and...the Exchange would be completely ruined'. The shareholders ignored this threat, and in mid-May the R.C.S. Company pulled the rug out from under the Exchange. It announced that it was stopping its distribution service, following which two large mining groups cancelled their meat contracts with the Exchange. This action cost the cooperative almost half their trade and 'as was, no doubt, intended, this effectively broke the back of the Exchange'. On the 25th May, the Exchange was liquidated, leaving the Imperial Cold Storage 'group' in control of the field.115

Both cooperative attempts by Southern Rhodesian ranchers to secure a place in the sun thus ended ignominiously, and the result was to highlight the role of the state in the search for markets. As previous sections of this paper have indicated, state intervention was nothing new. It had been involved in the control of cattle diseases since the turn of the century, and had provided financial assistance for the importation of breeding stock and the fencing of ranches. And at all times, the state had taken a keen interest in the efforts of cattle owners to establish
themselves in regional and overseas markets. Under B.S.A. Company rule, although large capital was usually encouraged and favoured, this policy was tempered by appreciation of the fact that international capitalism, and within its fold the Chartered Company in particular, had to rely on the development of a national white bourgeoisie in order to recover its initial investment in the territory.\textsuperscript{116} The changeover to responsible government in 1923 therefore did not mark a decisive break with past policies; it meant 'a greater share of power for the national white classes and by no means their undisputed rule'.\textsuperscript{117} At the same time, however, control of the administrative and legislative apparatus of the state potentially enabled the national bourgeoisie to influence economic development in directions more favourable to its class interests.

State participation in the development of the cattle industry and its search for markets from the 1920s onwards, took a number of forms, some of which had roots stretching well back into the period of Chartered Administration. In May 1909, the B.S.A. Company was approached by solicitors acting on behalf of an important firm engaged in the manufacture of Meat Extracts which wanted to acquire 'large tracts of land in Rhodesia for ranching purposes in connection with their business'.\textsuperscript{118} The Chartered Company fell over itself in its efforts to accommodate this interest expressed by the large and famous firm of Liebigs, and offered them over one million acres at a nominal price. Liebigs accepted with alacrity, sent a representative out to Southern Rhodesia to select suitable areas, and by February 1911 had signed an agreement with the B.S.A. Company. In return for 1,200,000 acres at 1s. per acre, Liebigs merely undertook to place 'upon at least one half of all land' one head of livestock per 100 acres within five years. The Chartered Company also promised to 'use its best endeavours' to secure favourable railway rates, and to make available a further 10,000 acres should Liebigs build a factory inside the five-year period.\textsuperscript{119}

Once the dust had settled, the B.S.A. Company was able to repent its haste at leisure. Given more or less carte blanche, Liebigs had spent over £20,000 in carefully selecting their acreage.\textsuperscript{120} The results were described by an astounded Director of Agriculture in 1913:

'The Liebig Company seem to have been allowed to take to a preposterous degree the best parts of the country... [They] have had extreme liberty in their choice and have... run most
erratic boundary lines to embrace the better spots and to exclude less desirable portions... The extraordinary configuration of the blocks must exert a harmful influence on the development of the district and is calculated to prove a serious hindrance to future ranching enterprise in that neighbourhood. Access in many directions is interfered with; almost all available surface water is taken in...

Had 'the sellers been as aware as were the buyers of the potentialities of the region', concluded the Director, 'a higher figure might have been obtained ... it is quite apparent that in the sale of this land the British South Africa Company made a very bad bargain.'

And because the land concession was in the far south of the country, 'abundant indications' were discovered 'of a tendency for the Liebig Company to establish and strengthen commercial relations with ... South [Africa] rather than with Rhodesia'. Liebigs headquarters at Mazunga were only 43 miles from the railway at Messina in the Transvaal, as opposed to almost 70 miles from the West Nicholson branch line inside Southern Rhodesia. In addition, railway rates were lower on the Messina-Delagoa Bay line than those to the Cape and Beira, and the South African Government was quick to build a drift across the Limpopo to facilitate Liebigs' traffic.

The Chartered Company sought to take comfort from the 'advertisement and sense of industrial security gained from the fact of the Liebig Company commencing operations in Southern Rhodesia'; from the prospect of a new market for surplus cattle and the possible establishment of a meat extract factory, and from the capital Liebigs were investing. But comfort, when it came, was rather small. For a while it seemed as if Vestey's might follow Liebigs' lead, but nothing developed beyond a few tentative enquiries. Some cattle were bought from local ranchers for breeding purposes, but Liebigs decided against erecting a factory in the foreseeable future. They did, however, energetically develop part of their holdings and were investing about £50,000 annually before the First World War. By November 1913, Liebigs already had approximately 12,400 head of cattle, and employed 50-70 Europeans and over 200 Africans. Liebigs then argued that they had fulfilled their part of the agreement, and although the B.S.A. Company felt that the 'Stocking clause' had been intended to oblige Liebigs to
develop all their holdings and not just one area, they were reluctant to press the issue. 123

There was in fact little that the Chartered Company could do. It came to the unhappy conclusion that the

'Liebigs Company estate partakes somewhat of the nature of an imperium in imperio within Rhodesia, a highly undesirable state of things from our point of view. Having in the main issues of selection and sale of land, allowed such extraordinary advantages to the Liebig Company and driven so very poor a bargain with them it only remains to abide by it and try to secure better terms in certain future negotiations which will come up for consideration later on... To offer now any obstruction to the legitimate and commendable enterprises of the Liebig Company would serve no good purpose and is likely to only react harmfully. Our only policy can be to turn the Liebig Company's enterprise, wherever possible, to the advantages of Rhodesia as a whole.'

No further developments took place until near the end of B.S.A. Company rule, when in 1922 Liebig's proposed to build the long-awaited factory if Southern Rhodesia would construct a railway to Mazunga. 124 Nothing came of this proposal, and in November 1923 Liebig's tried again, this time with the newly-elected settler Government. The idea now, in return for 'certain privileges', was to erect 'a "Frigorifico" at Messina'. Liebig's wanted '50,000 acres from the Union Government, a bridge at Limpopo, a telephone from the bridge to Mazunga, and it is proposed that we [The Southern Rhodesian Government] should supply the telephone and take a share in the cost of the bridge'. 125 Neither side, however, negotiated seriously, because 'during the conversation it was admitted that 'it really did not matter much as there is no market for beef in Europe and the thing could very well wait'. 126

Matters rested there for almost a decade. Liebig's made no further demands on the Government, which for its part, thought that 'they are a very powerful people doing splendid work. They go about their business diligently, and we seldom, if ever, hear of them, and altogether they are
worthwhile encouraging. The moment for encouragement came in 1932-33 when foot-and-mouth disease stopped cattle exports, and the country once again faced the prospect of a rapidly expanding cattle surplus. A meat extract factory seemed to offer a solution both to the problem of surplus cattle and to the marketability of low-grade animals. Liebigs proved receptive, and after protracted negotiations, an agreement was reached between the two parties which was confirmed by the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly in 1934.

The Government proved to be rather better bargainers than the B.S.A. Company had been, but Liebigs still emerged with most of its conditions intact. The Company agreed to erect a factory capable of treating 25,000 head of cattle each year, for which it received full remission of all customs duties, a 10,000 acre 'depasturing' farm for the factory at a rental of £1 per annum, free veterinary services from the Government, and a subsidy for as long as chilled and frozen meat exports received bounties. The agreement was to run for ten years. Despite the many concessions made to Liebigs, the arrangement 'proved of great benefit, and succeeded in removing very large numbers of scrub and inferior cattle... Up to 31st December 1953, the Company had dealt with approximately 420,000 head of cattle.

But throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the main area of Government involvement in the cattle industry lay elsewhere. In December 1921, the Director of Agriculture had drawn the attention of the Administration to the 'critical position' of the industry arising from the cattle surplus, limited markets and falling prices. He argued that 'both the Government and local private resources are powerless by themselves to establish a meat freezing and packing industry or by any direct means to provide the necessary facilities for exporting meat. Hence the only course is to induce those who are able and have the capital and skill to come into the country and take up this work.' Inducements were to include a ten-year remission of income tax on profits and exemption from customs duties on machinery and supplies for the same period. Response to this suggested policy was lukewarm; the Treasurer thought that 'demand... was the crux of the whole question, and is this likely to right itself until conditions of trade in Europe improve? Some action was necessary, though, and later in 1922 the Director of Agriculture entered into correspondence with the Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Company, even as that organisation was busily
destroying the cooperative Meat Producers' Exchange.

The I.C.S. Company had enjoyed a somewhat chequered career. Cold storage operations had begun in South Africa after the rinderpest devastations had made large-scale meat imports necessary. Facilities were established in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, and in 1898 about 5 million pounds of meat were imported. A tremendous boost to this fledgling industry was delivered with the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war in 1899, when British War Office contracts were issued calling for supplies to troops. The contract was won by the South African Supply and Cold Storage Company, formed in May 1899 and controlled by Sir James Sivewright and David Graaf. Its profits were phenomenal. Between July 1899 and June 1900 profits reached £462,784 on a capitalisation of about £500,000; for the year ending June 1901 profits soared to £1,071,168, dividends of 105 per cent were paid, and the company's reserve fund was raised to £1,000,000.

Success of this magnitude did not go unnoticed. The British War Office itself was eager 'to get some new blood into this particular cold storage supply', and Cecil Rhodes, always happy to combine patriotism with profit, was willing to oblige. De Beers had previously set up cold storage plants in Cape Town and Kimberley, and these were now expanded. In February 1902 the Imperial Cold Storage Company was registered, with De Beers as its main shareholder, an intermediary having already secured the army contract for Rhodes.

With the early termination of the war, however, the army contract soon fell away, and in its first year of operations the Imperial Cold Storage Company lost almost £200,000. Similarly, the South African Supply Company had seen its largest source of income disappear, and in March a new company was floated, the South African and Australasian Supply and Cold Storage Company. It was formed 'to acquire certain assets of the old South African Company and to provide working capital for developing the Australian connections and a civilian business in Africa'. But both groups appreciated that competition in the restricted post-war South African market would be mutually destructive, and in August 1902 Imperial 'merged with the South African and Australasian Supply and Cold Storage Company and the parent South African Company in a queer sort of arrangement for such heavily capitalized concerns - "books unseen and with no representations made as to profits, good-will, or assets".'
In subsequent years, the I.C.S. Company placed its finances on a sounder basis by divesting itself of foreign assets and concentrated on monopolising the southern African market. By 1917, the I.C.S. Company and its subsidiaries dominated South Africa's export cattle trade and were the only company which could supply a full ship's cargo. All other firms put together could raise only half a cargo, and because the I.C.S. Company was 'desirous of controlling the whole trade ... they have until recently refused to combine with any of the smaller firms to make up a shipment and thus ship more frequently'. By the time the company was approached by Southern Rhodesia, it already had a monopoly concession over cattle exports from South-West Africa.

Early in January 1923, the Assistant General Manager of the I.C.S. Company jotted down 'thoughts that have crossed my mind' in response to the Director of Agriculture's query concerning 'possible inducements' necessary for the erection of cold storage works in Southern Rhodesia. The three main thoughts were that 'your Government should give a bonus of say 4d per lb. on Beef exported', railway rate should be low and guaranteed, and lastly 'it would obviously not be fair for them [the I.C.S. Co.] to risk their money without some assurance or undertaking that competitors in the same line of business would not be allowed to profit by the money we had spent'. Southern Rhodesia was pointedly reminded that the I.C.S. Company's 'contract in South West provides that we have the exclusive right to export for a certain period of years'. During the transfer to responsible government, negotiations were temporarily suspended, but were rejoined in 1924.

The new Southern Rhodesian Government, knowing that the I.C.S. Company were 'virtually arbitors of the Stock industry' and 'with Rhodesia added to their already strong hold their position unless controlled might become a menace instead of an assistance', initially tried to interest other meat packing and cold storage companies in the proposed venture. Enquiries were made in Britain, but drew an absolute blank. Lord Vestey, although 'kind and courteous', 'would not consider working in Africa, much less Rhodesia, under any circumstances. Lord Vestey has made an extended tour of Africa and Rhodesia, and told me most emphatically that we had not the cattle or the country to compete with South America.' At the end of February 1924, contact was once again made with the I.C.S. Company who proceeded to demand a ten-year monopoly on exports of
frozen and chilled meat and a grant of 400,000 acres. This second demand was soon afterwards reduced to a claim for an acreage based on the value of £40,000 (about 160-200 'thousand acres'). The Southern Rhodesian cabinet hesitated for several months, but by May feared that 'to do nothing and to break off negotiations ... would lead to great objections from the cattle owners of this country and would probably be disastrous'. Its resolve was strengthened by the final report of the Committee of Enquiry into the cattle industry which supported the proposals of the I.C.S. Company, and by similar support from the Cattle Owners' Association. Other pressures came from the export restrictions imposed by the South African Government, and the brutal fact that 'it is hopeless to expect any other freezing concern to come into this country and make an immediate start on any better terms'. One Government Minister was convinced that 'we are extremely fortunate in having the I.C.S. Company ready and willing to put up works here ... otherwise our position would be hopeless ... we are not in a position to refuse to deal with them'. As far as the I.C.S. Company was concerned, it was now anxious to see negotiations concluded, so that by drawing on Southern Rhodesian cattle supplies it could take full advantage of price rises in Europe. It dropped some of its demands, including that of an export bounty, and in September agreement was reached. After a certain amount of acrimonious debate, this was confirmed by the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly in November 1924.

By the terms of the agreement under the Chilled and Frozen Meats Export Act, the I.C.S. Company received a monopoly on the export of frozen and chilled meat, a grant of land of unspecified size for the erection of freezing works, a pledge by the Government to 'use its influence' to secure low railway rates, exemption from customs duties on machinery and supplies needed for the freezing plant, and a guarantee that if in any year its profits fell below ten per cent of its capital, the Government would make up the difference, to a maximum of £15,000. In return, the I.C.S. Company agreed to register 'with all convenient despatch' a local subsidiary company with a capital of not less than £200,000. Pending the registration of the local company and the commencement of its operations, the I.C.S. Company was to 'proceed with the development for its own benefit of an overseas export trade in the cattle and beef of Southern Rhodesia by purchasing cattle and exporting them overseas or by
chilling and freezing their carcases at the Imperial Company's refrigeration works ... in South Africa'. The freezing works to be erected locally were to be capable of dealing with a minimum of 20,000 head of cattle each year. If profits exceeded ten per cent, the difference was to be divided equally between the company and the Government, who had the right to appoint a board director and had access to the company's books. The monopoly was to last for ten years once the local works were built, although after seven years the Government could give six months notice of its intention to expropriate at a mutually agreed price or, failing that, arbitration. 144

Initially, all went smoothly and the colony's Premier described the agreement as 'working very well and everyone in the country seems satisfied with it'. 145 A built-in source of conflict, though, was the provision calling for the development of an overseas export trade in local cattle and beef. As early as 1916, trial shipments had been sent to Britain, and though some had been favourably received, 146 on the whole the quality of Southern Rhodesian cattle was too poor for that market. The effect of the provision, therefore, was to draw the Government even more closely into the thankless task of encouraging local ranchers to produce better quality cattle, while simultaneously urging the I.C.S. Company to find suitable markets.

To a certain degree, this step had been forced on the Government because of difficulties which had become apparent in the southern African cattle market. This market had seemed to offer the easiest prospects of success to local producers; for once Southern Rhodesia's geographical position would work in her favour, while the quality of meat required was well below the exacting standards of the British market. But the market was limited in size, prices were lower, and even more important, Southern Rhodesian ranchers were in direct competition with local South African producers. South Africa itself was a cattle-exporting country, and in 1920 took 'from Rhodesia approximately 30,000 head ... thereby liberating a corresponding number of their own to be exported from nearer the coast'. 147 Southern Rhodesian exports to this market were thus in a vulnerable position as their volume largely depended on the 'gap' created by South Africa's own cattle exports. Additionally, Johannesburg as the region's biggest market, determined prevailing cattle prices in Southern Rhodesia, and as in so many other respects, any slump on the Rand had immediately unpleasant consequences for its small northern neighbour. When the post-war slump occurred in 1921-22, South African
cattle owners saw their overseas markets evaporate, and powerful agitation developed to prevent Rhodesian cattle from 'flooding' the domestic market. The South African Agricultural Union called for a complete embargo on Southern Rhodesian cattle in 1923, and although this was averted, consultations between the two Governments still resulted in weight restrictions being imposed on Southern Rhodesian cattle. In the event, these restrictions on cattle weighing less than 800 lbs. live weight helped to place the Southern Rhodesian industry on a somewhat more efficient basis and did not significantly affect exports. Friction between the two countries was never entirely eliminated, though, and was always in inverse proportion to the profitability of the world meat market. During the Great Depression, for example, Southern Rhodesian complaints ranged from allegations that her meat exports were being delayed because of South African monopolisation of available shipping space, to accusations that South African meat inspectors were deliberately down-grading Rhodesian export beef.

Southern Rhodesian hopes were therefore pinned on the development of overseas markets, but by 1926 the first signs of difficulty had already appeared. The I.C.S. Company was 'getting more difficult to please as time goes on, and we shall have considerably to improve the quality of our cattle ... if we want to continue the markets which have already been explored'. Matters grew worse during 1928 when the I.C.S. Company operated at a loss, partly because of the 'very limited' nature of export markets, nor was the position eased when the local freezing plant was completed the same year. Some relief seemed possible when an Italian contract for the supply of 8,000 tons of beef during 1929 was put out to tender. The company asked the Government for an export bounty as the only way it could successfully tender for the contract, and after some delay this was agreed to. Imperial won the Italian contract, but even with the bounty (worth £25,000), lost heavily. It was later explained that the company 'undertook the Italian contract well knowing no profit could be looked for at the prices ruling in 1929, which were substantially lower than 1928 ... the position was a difficult one, a loss was inevitable, but to decline the contract would have meant sacrificing the footing our Beef had gained in an important market, which once abandoned might not be recoverable'.
Because the export bounty was payable to anyone, not just the I.C.S. Company, who sent cattle overseas, a number of cattle owners were tempted to try their hand. In mid-1929 some 600 head of cattle were shipped to Britain, where Southern Rhodesia's High Commissioner was instructed to give every assistance and report his findings. His report turned out to be a veritable catalogue of the cattle industry's shortcomings. Quite apart from the fact that 'a number of these animals should never have been allowed to leave' Southern Rhodesia, he was convinced that the

'fitful exportation of a few hundred head once or twice a year, each consignment having a very bad "fail" as has generally been the case, does more harm than good. I doubt very much whether the bulk of these cattle will show a profit, and am convinced that half of them will show a dead loss. The outstanding objection ... is that we have not yet got the numbers to keep up a supply of uniform quality in appreciable numbers... A Number of the animals were old and could be properly classed as aged. Rhodesian cattlemen must realise that in sending animals to Birkenhead they are up against keen competition ... only first class quality stands any chance at all.'

These observations were coupled with criticisms concerning the branding, lack of de-horning, and the appalling conditions under which the cattle had travelled. Generally speaking, expert opinion was 'that the best outlet for our stock in the future ... lies in the direction of exporting meat in chilled or frozen form'.

Failure in this sphere was partially felt because of the collapse of the tobacco industry in the same period: 'We have had the experience of antagonising the big buyers in tobacco and our policy in regard to our cattle must be the very opposite.' Moffat, the Southern Rhodesian Premier, by this time was thoroughly pessimistic about the cattle industry's future and was grasping at straws. Because 'we have tried to fight our way on to the English tobacco market and have failed miserably, our only hope with cattle is that we have the assistance of men like Vestey'. The High Commissioner in London was ordered to 'cultivate Vestey and other men like him ... you might win Lord Vestey's sympathy from the "Buy British" point of view'.

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Moffat's pessimism was seemingly confirmed when a further shipment of cattle in March 1931, although of reasonable quality 'met a disastrously low market',^157 and the gloom was absolute when the same month foot-and-mouth disease broke out in Southern Rhodesia, bringing a complete halt to all meat exports. In these circumstances, the negative result of the High Commissioner's 'cultivation' of Vestey was almost superfluous: 'The Vesteys cannot be persuaded to interest themselves in ranching in Southern Rhodesia. Lord Vestey said that they would not even be prepared to take land for nothing if there were any obligations attached.' The High Commissioner persuaded himself that this 'must not be read as being unfriendly to the industry in Africa, or to us. The present market position does not permit of any other attitude.' In fact, Vesteys attitude was well short of being friendly; they impressed upon their listener how their Australian holdings alone could undercut Southern Rhodesia, and although they denied that they had any interest in the Italian market,^158 this was contradicted by the I.C.S. Company's manager.159

During 1931-32, the fortunes of the cattle industry were at their lowest ebb; all live exports were banned, which led to an accumulating surplus and further depressed prices, and South Africa had even refused to allow the transit through her territory of chilled or frozen beef. Moffat fretted that 'we simply have not got sufficient cattle of the right type to chill... I sometimes despair that our farmers will ever rise to this. They are so accustomed to breeding "compounds" by simply running the stock on the veld with "scrub bulls" that they cannot turn to the production of the better class animal which means improved bulls and more trouble and work generally.'^160 But however bleak the outlook, only meat exports in the chilled or frozen state had any prospects at all, so long as foot-and-mouth persisted. The Government made tentative enquiries about the possible erection of cold storage works at Beira, and redoubled its efforts to get the South African Government to lift its ban.161

Towards the end of 1932, the South Africans relented and chilled and frozen meat were allowed through in sealed trucks to Cape Town for overseas export.162 The first consignment reached Britain in December, and much to the Government's relief, 'our friends at Smithfield were very well pleased with it. It had the advantage too of meeting a good market on account of the recent restrictions on South American meat.'^163 Subsequent shipments,
however, were less successful, and the Government resignedly conceded
that the 'lesson we are learning all the time is to get down to the
lowest basis of working costs possible; this is essential if we are going
to compete at all'. 164 These sentiments were echoed by the High Commis-
ioner who urged ranchers 'that the right thing to do is to look for
markets and not be too meticulous about a return. If you do not get
into this market with your cattle, you cannot get into any other market.
It is very important to remember that, and in doing so to remember that
all the other producing countries long established are confronted with the
same low prices as Rhodesia.' 165

Neither the Government, who were still doling out export bounties,
nor local ranchers, however, could sustain losses indefinitely. During
1933, 12,875,711 lbs of chilled beef, representing 22,501 head of cattle,
were exported, but the prices they received were less than their general
cost of production. Nor were significant price rises anticipated in
the near future. 166 Many ranchers abandoned the struggle entirely, and
between 1925 and 1938 'anything from one million to two million pounds
sterling' was 'lost or withdrawn' from the cattle industry. Of particular
concern to the Government was the fact that it was large producers who
were leaving the industry; by 1939 'some 40 odd large owners' had liqui-
dated their holdings and with them had 'gone 180,000 head of cattle'. 167
The competitive marketing edge of the cattle industry was thus blunted
even further, and the now increasingly predominant small producers, who
provided the Government with valuable electoral support, 168 expected con-
tinual subsidies for the cattle trade. 169 It was this structural shift,
concern over the financial losses of the past, and growing public and
state dissatisfaction with the practices of the I.C.S. Company which
caus ed the Government to consider expropriating the freezing works and
establishing a local Cold Storage Commission.

Ever since its completion in 1928, the I.C.S. Company had been unable
to operate the freezing works at Bulawayo to capacity, and consequently its
profitability had been seriously jeopardised from the beginning. In
part this stemmed from managerial inefficiency and inadequate appreciation
of the technical difficulties involved in exporting chilled beef over
lengthy distances, 170 but in fairness to the I.C.S. Company, also from the
poor quality of local cattle, limited overseas markets and, later on,
restrictions on exports. However, the I.C.S. Company aggravated rather
than helped the situation. The Bulawayo factory was run on 'sidelines such as ice, bacon, etc', and surplus capacity was used in an attempt to capture the Belgian Congo market, where the I.C.S. Company became entangled in bitter competition with one Bongola Smith, a shadowy but influential and powerful entrepreneur. By the terms of the 1924 agreement, the I.C.S. Company had a monopoly in frozen meat exports, and it tried to use this to squeeze out live cattle exports to the Congo. The Government considered that this action was a breach of the agreement which called for overseas exports, and also noted that 'if the Cold Storage Company can control the price to the Congo it would naturally be in their interests to keep it down or they would be unable to buy cattle at a low enough price for the Italian Contract'.

Relations were further strained when the I.C.S. Company was suspected of trying to 'capture the whole of...[The local] dairy business', as it had done in South Africa, and as the company's losses mounted, conflict began to be centred on interpretation of the 'guarantee clause'. The I.C.S. Company put the widest possible interpretation on the clause, suggesting that it covered 'all the business carried on by the Company'. This was just as strenuously denied by the Government, who argued that 'the guarantee can only extend to the business contemplated by Clause I of the Agreement, that is the chilling, freezing and storage of beef... and other meat foods for export'.

By January 1931, the Government's patience was almost exhausted, and the company was informed that if frozen meat was not exported overseas, the agreement would be broken 'and that we will not be liable for the subsidy and can cancel the whole agreement'. The response of the I.C.S. management was to plead that 'the whole outlook is very bad. The Company is only carrying on with the Bank's help and... unless... [The Government] will assist... will have to close down, at any rate the Rhodesia Cold Storage Company and put it into liquidation'. This gave the Government pause for thought, especially as shortly afterwards foot-and-mouth appeared, which made the survival of the freezing plant imperative. With its bargaining position unexpectedly strengthened, the management of the I.C.S. Company 'turned very nasty' and would 'do nothing re. Cold Storage trucks or anything else until the question of...[The Government's] liability... for the guarantee "up to £15,000" is settled'.

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At first the Government stood firm, but then tried to break the log-jam by being conciliatory over an order for a number of special refrigerated railway trucks. The original scheme had envisaged the Government guaranteeing one-third of any potential loss; this guarantee was now upped to cover two-thirds of any losses. Finally, in November 1932, a compromise was reached: 'it has been decided, without prejudice, to pay over a sum of £5,000, but the Government do not admit any further claim.' A working arrangement was patched over and shipments of chilled beef began.

Within three months, though, there were more problems; 'there is a good deal of dissatisfaction here amongst cattle owners regarding the attitude of the Cold Storage Company.' It was discovered that 'the farmers in the Union received payment for the cattle sent forward within ten days of the meat being sold; in our case the farmers have had nothing so far, and they are anxious to know what the actual returns are to be, particularly as they would be a guide to them in their future operations. The Cold Storage people are rather difficult to deal with.' Even more alarming to the Government were renewed demands by the I.C.S. Company for their 'guarantee', failing which they threatened to 'make up their losses out of the "ox"... The price of the Company quotes to Stockowners is 16/8 per 100 lbs... This means £5 per ox; a price... unpayable to the small farmers.'

Dependent as it was on the electoral support of small cattle owners, the Government clearly could postpone action no longer. Indeed, if the ten-year period was allowed to expire without anything having been done, the terms of the original cold storage agreement would prevent the Government from offering better terms to anyone else, including itself. Steps were taken to investigate the cattle industry thoroughly and, for once, Vestey's cooperated by supplying two experts to conduct the investigation. Evidence was also gathered which indicated 'unnecessary' financial losses in the operations of the I.C.S. Company, and in 1938; after typically bitter arbitration proceedings; the Bulawayo freezing works were taken over by the local Cold Storage Commission at a cost to the Government of £286,930.
In an uncharacteristically pensive moment, the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal* once admitted 'that among the farming industries that have been established, there is nothing new to Rhodesia. Grain, cattle and sheep, and tobacco are the industries that are indigenous to the country. The successful occupation of the white race rests not so much on the introduction of new and different industries as upon producing more and better grain, more and better cattle and sheep, more and better tobacco.'\(^{185}\) As this paper has indicated, however, the 'successful occupation of the white race' came to rely increasingly on state assistance, as the great majority of Southern Rhodesian producers proved incapable of rearing quality cattle for the world market.

The limited resources of the state obliged it to try and attract, or seek partnerships with, international capital. To some extent, this step was taken reluctantly in the 1920s because the Government was always sensitive to criticism that its policy was 'equivalent to handing over Rhodesia, bound hand and foot, to the mercies of interests that ... in other countries are regarded as the enemies of cattle producers',\(^{186}\) but the collapse of cooperative ventures by local capital left it with little choice. Although Southern Rhodesia's 'natural' advantages had been sufficiently attractive for small, undercapitalised producers and even a number of ranching companies, they were apparently never good enough for the giant meat processing companies. Symbolically, the country's one major 'catch', Liebigs, were primarily involved in meat extract, which only required low grade cattle. Instead, Southern Rhodesia had to settle for the I.C.S. Company, and even then considerable inducements were necessary to bring it into the country. This move essentially conferred all the disadvantages of a monopoly on the local cattle industry, with little, if any, of the market strength of the meat giants. While of overwhelming regional importance, the I.C.S. Company was insignificant on a world scale.

Exposure to severe competition on the world meat market, coupled with at best indifference and at worst occasional outright hostility\(^{187}\) on the part of the largest cold storage companies, fairly speedily brought contradictions to the surface in the Government-I.C.S. Company relationship. In brief, the state was committed to supporting small cattle producers, while
the I.C.S. Company's operations were dependent on low cattle prices. The establishment of the Cold Storage Commission in 1938 was thus an attempt to resolve the contradiction permanently in favour of local capital; the monopoly remained, but under state control.

June 1976

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FOOTNOTES


2. See the classic study by M.J. Herskovits, 'The cattle complex in East Africa', American Anthropologist, 1926, 28, 230 onwards.


5. Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1915, 12, 141.

6. Ibid, 1921, 18, 510. British dependency on Argentine meat supplies heightened during the war; for example, the Board of Trade even leased the Las Palmas freezing plant to ensure supplies for Allied troops; see P. Smith, Politics and Beef in Argentina (New York, 1969), 68-9.


8. Ibid, 1929, 26, 764-5. In 1938, even after the Great Depression and British imperial preference policies, Argentina still supplied 58 per cent of the world market for canned beef; see G. Wythe, Industry in Latin America (New York, 1949), 107.


11. Between 1909-13, frozen beef constituted 88 per cent and chilled beef 5 per cent of the total volume of beef exports; by 1936-8, the proportions were chilled 68 per cent, frozen 15 per cent; see Wythe, 107; Smith, 34-5.

12. This was the estimated time in 1912, but it remained substantially the same throughout the period considered.


14. Ibid.

15. Unless otherwise indicated, this and the following sections are drawn from S 1215/1325/19, 'Report on the cattle and chilled beef industries in South America', by C.A. Murray. Parts of this report were later published in the Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1939, 36, 179-193. All file references are held in the National Archives of Rhodesia, Salisbury.

16. See, for example, the lengthy article on 'Handling Cattle: where South America excels', in the Independent, 30.vii.1920. But see also the Murray Report on careless handling on the railways.


20. To some extent, the quota system was also related to the limited availability of refrigerated hulls for shipment to Britain; see Smith, 41.

21. For examples and discussion, see Smith, 40, 60-1, 112-13; S.G. Hanson, Argentine Meat and the British Market (Stanford, 1938) 172-85, 243-9.

22. L 2/1/201, 'Notes of interview with Mr. William Vestey of Vestey Bros.', 12.iii.1913.

23. Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, 25.vi.1923, cols. 281-2. By 1925, Vesteyes were the world's largest retailers of meat; Hanson, 246.


29. 'Memorandum on the Cattle Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1921', Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1921, 18, 249.


33. Clark, 312.


36. BSAC, Information for Intending Settlers (London, 1921), 16.

37. A. Dunlop, A Practical Rancher's Ramblings (Salisbury, 1974), 23-4. Where stockmen were not paid 'well', observers saw 'so often the favourite ant-heap with its fire on top, surrounded by a well worn and well fed down patch of grass, which is visited day by day until the cattle themselves are trained to stand in a bunch, and when hungry feed close around, any movement in the direction of new ground being arrested by a whistle or stone'; Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1911, 9, 194.
38. Dunlop, 30.


42. G. Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective: a study of the proletarianization of the African peasantry in Rhodesia', Journal of Development Studies, 1970, 6, 216. For further examples of cattle prices, see R. Reynolds (ed.), 'The British South Africa Company's Central Settlement Farm, Marandellas, 1907-1910', from the papers of H.K. Scorror, Rhodesiana, 1964, 10, 2-3. These prices were usually significantly lower than those pertaining in neighbouring territories; see BSAC, Memorandum by Mr. H. Wilson Fox containing Notes and Information concerning Land Policy (London, 1912), appendix IV(B), 146-7.

43. D.J. Murray, The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia (Oxford, 1970), 107. Murray laconically noted that 'certain members of the Cold Storage Commission used their positions to gain for themselves the major share of.../This/ lucrative business which European farmers expected to be shared more widely'. African cattle owners also suffered under the various cattle levies which were passed to help subsidise the export trade.

44. Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1924, 21, 706.

45. J.O. Bray, 'Beef productivity increases in the Southeastern United States since 1920', Food Research Institute Studies, 1966, 6, 72. See also, L.S. Jarvis, 'Cattle as capital goods and ranchers as portfolio managers: an application to the Argentine cattle sector', Journal of Political Economy, 1974, 8, 491: 'The cattle sector presents an interesting feature insofar as the slaughter of animals responds negatively to a price increase in the short run. This behaviour contrasts with the supply response of most other agricultural products... Although actual output for these crops is expected to adjust only gradually to the long-run desired output, there is never reason to expect output to fall when its price increases. But, because cattle production can be increased only by increasing the size of the breeding herd and/or withholding animals for further fattening, producers must bid animals away from consumers to increase the capital stock which is the source of higher future beef production. And the slow rate of biological reproduction causes the negative supply response to persist for some time.'


47. Ranching in Rhodesia, 9.

49. Investment in ranching may have been related to the successful reconstruction of the gold mining industry in the same period, as cattle owners could now expect a reasonably stable demand for their product from the mines. Alternatively, the comparatively modest prospects of the mining industry may have encouraged entrepreneurs to explore other investment opportunities.


51. Liebigs are discussed in detail in section III of this paper; for the B.S.A. Company’s operations, see Memorandum by ... Wilson Fox... concerning Land Policy.

52. The African World, 1.xi.1913, 643.


56. Committee to enquire into the costs of distribution of imported goods and local products in Southern Rhodesia: Interim report on Livestock and Meat with special reference to cattle and beef, December 1936, 8.

57. Committee of Enquiry into ... Economic Development, 21.


61. One authority has estimated that Mashona and Matabele cattle only reached full size when 8-10 years old; see L.T. Tracey, Beef on Ranch and Farm (Salisbury, 1963), 1.


63. Ibid, 1908, 5, 505.

64. H. Weinmann, Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia under the rule of the British South Africa Company 1890-1923 (Salisbury, 1972), 107.


66. Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1912, 9, 642. For details of assisted importation schemes in the 1920s and 1930s, see Weinmann, Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia, 1924-1950 (Salisbury, 1975), 150.

67. Weinmann, Agricultural Research ... 1890-1923, 110.

68. Ibid, 2.

69. Ibid; see E.T. Jollie, The Real Rhodesia. (London, 1924), 136-7; wherever a number of /cattle/ men are gathered together you may be sure that the Battle of the Breeds is being waged.../It/ rages round the point of the suitability of certain breeds to Rhodesian conditions. Shall we vote for the hardy (but not very heavy) Devon as a dual purpose animal, or for the, perhaps, equally hardy Hereford... or for the Aberdeen Angus ... or for the Shorthorn ... or the Sussex, coarse meat but heavy? Or shall we remain faithful to the ugly, hump-backed Afrikander...?
70. Tracey, 2. A second problem was that very little was known about
the heat tolerance of different breeds.

71. Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1908, 6, 5.

72. Ranching in Rhodesia, 5.


74. Ranching in Rhodesia, 5.

75. T.H. Vorster, Factors influencing the growth, production and reproduc-
tion of different breeds of beef cattle under range conditions
in Southern Rhodesia (Salisbury, 1964), 15.

76. Tracey, 1.

77. A.E. Romyn and C.A. Murray, 'Cost of fattening Bullocks of various
ages in Matabeleland', Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1938, 35, 850.

78. Cattle fattening experiments had been conducted at Gwebi between
1915 and 1923, and Weinmann, Agricultural Research...1890-1923, 113,
has argued that they 'proved conclusively that the fattening of
cattle by stall-feeding and using feeds produced on the farm was a
paying proposition'. Contemporaries do not seem to have been
similarly convinced and in 1951 it was still admitted that the
'question of whether relatively heavy winter feeding is economically
justified by heavier weights, better grades and quicker finishing,
is one which demands further study'; see 'Report on the cattle
cost investigation...', 527.

79. Tracey, 3.

80. H.Mss. DO 1/1/6, Moffat to Downie, 24.iv.1932.

81 Romyn, 'Cattle improvement and a cattle breeding policy in Southern
Rhodesia', Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1935, 32, 100.

82. Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1911, 9, 194.

83. Ibid, 1908, 5, 413-4.

84. Ibid, 1919, 16, 130.

85. Report of the Director of Agriculture for the year 1913, 7. In this
connection, see also W. Robertson, Rhodesian Rancher (London, 1935),
97-100.

86. For wider discussion of rinderpest, see C. van Onselen, 'Reactions
to rinderpest in Southern Africa 1896-97', Journal of African History,

87. The disease was at first mistakenly diagnosed by the local Veterinary
Department as a virulent form of Redwater; for this and the reaction
of cattle owners, see H.Mss. 50 5/2, 'Reminiscences of an Early
Settler in Rhodesia', by C.W. Southey, 20.

88. Weinmann, Agricultural Research...1890-1923, 111.

89. 'Memorandum on the Cattle Industry', 275.

90. Tracey, 5. Parasitic infestation was a major cause of 'unthrifty',
low-weight animals.

91. 'Memorandum on the Cattle Industry', 275.
92. **Ibid, 247.** Unless otherwise indicated, the following sections on transport are also drawn from this source.


94. The B.S.A. Company, who controlled the railways, were themselves large cattle owners.

95. **Report of the Director of Agriculture for the year 1923, 1-2.**

96. H.Mss. MO 13/1/1, 'Assistance given to the Farming Industry by the Government during the five years 1928-29 to 1932-33 (Estimates Voted)', 5.


98. H.Mss. LE 3/1/1, 'Marketing of Chilled Beef in the United Kingdom'.

99. H.Mss. DO 1/1/6, Moffat to Downie, 28.i.1931.


102. Rhodesia Advertiser, 10.ii.1916.

103. **Independent, 27.viii.1920.** Farmers' disinterest was attributed to the high cattle prices then prevailing.

104. Ibid; Weinmann, Agricultural Research...1890-1923, 113-14.

105. For details, see Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1920, 17, 111.

106. Meeting of Representatives of the Cattle Industry of the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia, Swaziland, Bechuanaland and South-West Protectorates, Johannesburg, 24 March 1921 (Johannesburg, 1921), 2.

107. **Ibid, 3.**

108. Ibid, 6, 19; Independent, 22.vi.1923.


110. Ibid, 10.iii.1922.


112. Meeting of Representatives of the Cattle Industry..., 6.

113. Independent, 22.vi.1923.


115. Independent, 22.vi.1923.


117. Ibid, 30.

118. L 2/1/134/1, BSAC, Memorandum, 17.vii.1909.
119. Ibid, 'An Agreement made the 2nd day of February 1911, between the British South Africa Company ... and Liebig's Extract of Meat Company...

120. L 2/1/134/4, 'The Liebig's Extract of Meat Company's Properties', 17.xi.1913. Unless otherwise indicated, following sections are taken from this source.

121. L 2/1/201, 'Notes of Interview with Mr. William Vestey of Vestey Bros.'.

122. Most of Liebigs' black labourers came under the Private Locations Ordinance of 1908, whereby Africans resident on European land provided three months paid labour in lieu of rent. Liebigs' agreement with their workers included a clause that 'natives shall treat with civility and in proper manner any European who may reside upon, or travel through the land'; see L 2/1/134/2, 'Agreement', 10.v.1911.

123. L 2/1/134/4, Secretary, Liebigs Extract of Meat Company to Directors, British South Africa Company, 12.vi.1913; ibid, Commercial Representative, BSAC, to Secretary, BSAC, 19.vii.1913.

124. Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1922, 1g, 553.

125. H.Mss. NE 1/1/1, Newton to Coghlan, 8.xi.1923.

126. Ibid.

127. H.Mss. NE 1/1/2, Downie to Newton, 8.ix.1925.

128. Details of the negotiations can be found in H.Mss. DO 1/1/6, Downie to Moffat, 6.ii.1933; H.Mss. DO 1/1/5, Downie to Mitchell, 11.v.1933; S 1671/4506, Department of Agriculture to High Commissioner, 12.vi.1933, and subsequent correspondence.

129. S 1671/4506, 'Memorandum of an Agreement ... between ... the Government of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia ... and Liebig's (Rhodesia) Ltd.', 22.v.1934.

130. Report ... on cattle and beef prices, 20.

131. S 1193/M5, Director of Agriculture to Treasurer, 20.xii.1921.

132. Ibid, Treasurer to Director of Agriculture, 19.vi.1922.

133. This section on the early history of the I.C.S. Company is taken from Hanson, 122-30.

134. The South African Supply and Cold Storage Company had controlled the La Plata Cold Storage Company in Argentina; this was later sold off by the I.C.S. Co. to the large American packing house of Swifts; see Hanson, 134, 143, 149.


136. S 1193/M5, Assistant General Manager, Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Co. Ltd, Cape Town, to Director of Agriculture, Salisbury, 13.i.1923.

137. Ibid, memo by O.C. Rawson, attached to 'Cold Storage Works in Rhodesia', 23.v.1924.


140. See p. 34, this paper.
141. S 1193/H5, 'Cold Storage Works in Rhodesia'.
142. H.Mss. NE 1/1/1, Newton to Coghlan, 2.x.1924.
144. 'Agreement with Imperial Cold Storage'.
145. H.Mss. NE 1/1/1, Coghlan to Newton, 9.ii.1925.
146. See, for example, 'Rhodesian Beef on Smithfield Market', Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1917, 14, 196-201.
147. 'Memorandum on the Cattle Industry', 292.
148. The Star, 24.viii.1923; Bulawayo Chronicle, 4.ix.1923; H.Mss. MO 13/1/1, Downie to Moffat, 5.x.1924.
149. H.Mss. DO 1/1/6, Moffat to Downie, 21.x.1932.
150. H.Mss. DO 1/1/5, Mitchell to Downie, 10.vi.1933.
151. H.Mss. NE 1/1/2, Downie to Newton, 23.iii.1926.
152. From the beginning of 1929, operations were conducted by the subsidiary Rhodesian Export and Cold Storage Company.
153. For the lengthy correspondence on this subject, see H.Mss. LE 3/1/1, T. Haddon to Minister of Agriculture, 20.iii.1930; ibid, 'Memorandum summarising discussions with the Directors of the Rhodesia Export and Cold Storage Company', 30.x.1928; S 1193/02, Attorney General to Premier, 5.x.1928.
154. H.Mss. LE 3/1/1, T. Haddon to Minister of Agriculture.
156. H.Mss. DO 1/1/6, Moffat to Downie, 14.x.1930.
157. H.Mss. DO 1/1/1, Downie to Fletcher, 1.iv.1931.
158. H.Mss. DO 1/1/6, Downie to Moffat, 14.v.1931.
159. Ibid, Moffat to Downie, 23.i.1931; 'Vesteys and the Anglo American companies which practically control the South American trade, have come to an arrangement and in quoting.../the I.C.S.Co.7 has also to fight them. They refuse to go in with him.'
160. H.Mss. DO 1/1/6, Moffat to Downie, 14.iv.1932.
162. H.Mss. DO 1/1/5, Department of Agriculture to Downie, 14.xi.1932; Ibid, Mitchell to Downie, 14.ii.1933.
163. Ibid, Downie to Mitchell, 15.xii.1932.
164. Ibid, Mitchell to Downie, 4.v.1933.
165. H.Mss. LE 3/1/1, Downie to Moffat, 17.iii.1933.
Committee of Enquiry into ... Economic Development, 21, 23.

Murray, 84.

Romyn, 'Export of Chilled Beef', 173.

H.Mss. DO 1/1/3, Attorney General to Downie, 6.x.1932.

Ibid.

Lack of space precludes discussion of this trade, or the role of Bongola Smith. A rather fragmentary picture of Smith's activities can be pieced together from the Downie papers (H.Mss. DO 1/7).

H.Mss. LE 3/1/1, 'Memorandum summarising discussion with the Directors of the Rhodesia Export and Cold Storage Company'.

S 1193/02, Attorney General to Premier, 5.x.1928.

Ibid.

H.Mss. DO 1/1/6, Moffat to Downie, 23.i.1931.


Ibid.

H.Mss. DO 1/1/5, 'Memorandum of Interview with Mr. Woolff Davis, 14.xi.1932'.

Ibid, Mitchell to Downie, 14.ii.1933.

Ibid, Mitchell to Downie, 25.ii.1933.


H.Mss. SM 4/1/1, D. Burnett to Acting Minister of Agriculture, 13.i.1938.

Details of the arbitration are contained in S 1217/11, 'In the matter of an Arbitration between the Rhodesian Export and Cold Storage Company Limited and the Government of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia', 30.vi.1938.

Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1908, 6, 1.

Bulawayo Chronicle, 15.ix.1923.

H.Mss. DO 1/1/5, Downie to Mitchell, 20.vi.1933.

Bulawayo Chronicle, 15.x.1938.