

TRUTH AND THE BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA COMPANY  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RADICAL'S OPPOSITION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM IN A SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONTEXT

by

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## ABSTRACT

The success of the British South Africa Company's propaganda has been remarkable. Not only did it persuade the Imperial government to permit and support the Company's undertakings, it has also coloured the work of historians of Zimbabwe until quite recently. Some contemporaries were not taken in by the rhetoric of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company, however, and their writings are of great value in the process of re-evaluation of the history of the Company. Henry Labouchere was prominent among the critics of Rhodes and the Company, and the journal which he edited, Truth, provides some valuable insights into the events of the time.

Labouchere was an astute observer, and it has taken modern historians many years to arrive at conclusions which he reached within weeks of events having occurred. He believed that the British South Africa Company was a speculative venture. He developed a theory soon after the Company was founded, which was borne out by unfolding events. He asserted that the Royal Charter granted to the Company conferred on it an aura of respectability which was exploited to induce investors to buy shares in a company without real prospects of success. Potential profits depended on the discovery of gold in the territories under the Company's administration and, when early reports indicated that no rich deposits would be found, the Company embarked on raids into neighbouring territories. These raids were made in the hope of finding richer deposits of gold, but

more particularly in order to bolster the value of shares, to save the Company from bankruptcy. The raids were against the Portuguese, in Manicaland, in 1890-91, against Lobengula in Matabeleland in 1893, and the Jameson Raid against the Transvaal in late 1895. Labouchere supports his theory in Truth, providing information on share dealing, political manipulation, control of information leaving the Company's territories, and the weakness of the Company's administration. He also emphasizes the importance of Cecil Rhodes, who was Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, and director of influential South African companies, as well as Managing Director of the British South Africa Company, and who used the Company to pursue his own personal and political ends.

This thesis is based on an examination of Truth, between 1888 and 1899. The first chapter outlines events in Mashonaland and Matabeleland between 1888 and 1897, and describes some relevant debates in recent historical writing. Subsequent chapters focus on different aspects of material from Truth, revealing some of the insights into the Company's activities which Labouchere provided and which are still of value.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I would like to express my appreciation of the guidance and advice of my supervisory committee, and of the critical perspective provided at the moment when I needed it most. My warmest thanks are due to my supervisor, Professor P. Stigger, for without his unfailing patience and encouragement, this thesis could not have been completed.

The Interlibrary Loans staff were most helpful, in procuring copies of Truth from many locations. Finally thanks to Wim Blok for his help and support through a difficult time.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Cecil Rhodes has been the focus of many studies in the eighty years since his death. However, the influence of sources biased in his favour has been so pervasive, that no serious re-interpretation of Rhodes' role in the British South Africa Company and in the development of Rhodesia<sup>1</sup> has been accomplished. This study demonstrates that the opinions and impressions of that excellent contemporary observer, Henry Labouchere, would be of great value in countering the Company's propaganda and in reassessing Rhodes. He was personally almost as colourful a character as Rhodes, though considerably less powerful, with wide experience in diplomacy and in politics, combined with a lively interest in the affairs of the day. In addition, since he edited his own journal, there is a continuous and detailed record of his observations. Labouchere and Truth are not unknown to historians of Rhodesia: however, there has been no systematic evaluation of his interpretation of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company.

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<sup>1</sup> While Zimbabwe is the correct name for the country today, it seems appropriate to use its colonial name while discussing its colonial origins. The territory was referred to as Mashonaland and Matabeleland until 1895, when the name Rhodesia was adopted formally by Administrator's Proclamation. C.Palley, The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1888-1965. Oxford, 1966. p.155.

Henry du Pre Labouchere<sup>2</sup> lived from 1831 to 1912. He was born and raised in England, in a very wealthy family. His father was 'almost a professional Puritan'<sup>3</sup>, and his family, while still in France in the seventeenth century, had been persecuted because they were Huguenots. Despite his apparent rejection of his Non-Conformist background in his lifestyle, he retained some elements in his way of thinking. In many of the stands he took, there are strong moral and humanitarian strains, and this is certainly true of his criticism of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company. As a young man, Labouchere travelled extensively in Central and North America and in Europe. He served as an attache with the British Diplomatic Service from 1854 to 1862, during which time he was posted to Washington, Munich, Stockholm, Frankfurt, St Petersburg and Dresden. In 1862 he was appointed Secretary of the Embassy in Stockholm, where he

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<sup>2</sup> Biographies of Labouchere do not yield very much information. His nephew, A.L. Thorold published a rather flattering biography the year after his uncle's death. It contains many anecdotes, and gives life to a picture of Labouchere but offers little insight, and no critical analysis of his contribution to English politics. (A.L. Thorold, The Life of Henry Labouchere. London, 1913.) R.J. Hind's biography, published in 1972, gives a more balanced and reliable picture. Hind has noted, that the biography suffers from the paucity of documents concerning Labouchere's life. In addition, most of the biography is taken up by the years 1880-1886, so that Labouchere's duel with Rhodes and the British South Africa Company is discussed only in the initial, survey chapter. R.J. Hind: Henry Labouchere and the Empire. 1880-1905. London, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> T.P. O'Connor, Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian ii, 75. Quoted in Hind, p.1.

remained until he left the Diplomatic Service in 1863.<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Chamberlain he wrote of the influence of the United States of America on his political ideas: "I was caught young, and sent to America; there I imbibed the political views of the country, so that my Radicalism is not a joke, but perfectly earnest. My opinion of most of the institutions of this country is that of Americans - that they are utterly absurd and ridiculous".<sup>5</sup> Truth abounds with examples of his dislike of hereditary institutions, such as the House of Lords, and of his belief in equality.<sup>6</sup>

This experience, and his Non-Conformist education, made it easy for him to espouse Radical political ideas. The Radical members of the Liberal Party were initially strongly supported by Non-Conformist Liberals. The Radical Programme, edited by Joseph Chamberlain and others in 1885,<sup>7</sup> expounded the basic elements of Radical belief and policy. It was perhaps the first

<sup>4</sup> Thorold, pp.42-60.

<sup>5</sup> Thorold op.cit. p.38.

<sup>6</sup> In January 1895, Labouchere commented on the absurdity of a Party protesting against hereditary legislators, and increasing their numbers at the same time.

A knighthood is a personal distinction, but what plea can a Radical put forward for his son, perhaps unborn, being exalted above his fellows? If I had my way, I would put an end, once and for all, to all hereditary distinctions. (Truth, January 10, 1895, p.76.) Other examples can be found in Truth: November 2, 1890, p.1040; February 3, 1896, p.386; May 7, 1896, p.1138. See also Hind, p.13/14.

<sup>7</sup> The Radical Programme by Joseph Chamberlain and others has been reprinted by Harvester Press in the series 'Society and the Victorians', edited and introduced by D.A. Hamer, Brighton, 1971.

political party 'platform' to be produced in England. The Radicals were very conscious of a need for social reform, in order to avoid turmoil and revolution. They were in favour of a classless society based on democratic principles, which would remove the privileges of the landed aristocracy. They sought the redistribution of land, to allow for small allotments, slum clearance, free education, and the promotion of a truly democratic system, with extensive power in the hands of local government. The Radical Programme did not develop a coherent foreign foreign policy, probably because the authors were divided on the issue of imperialism, while they were even more divided - disastrously so - on the Irish Question.<sup>8</sup> Joseph Chamberlain was, in 1885, the rising star of the Liberal Party, and a staunch Radical. Many considered him the future leader of the Party, and some hoped for Gladstone's early retirement, to allow Chamberlain to take over the leadership. Labouchere himself was an ardent admirer of Chamberlain, and also expressed his conviction that Chamberlain was the future leader of the Party. Chamberlain, however, was adamantly opposed to Home Rule for Ireland, and finally left the Liberal Party over the issue. Labouchere had pinned his hopes for Radicalisation of the Liberal Party on Chamberlain's leadership, and never quite forgave him for abandoning the cause by becoming a Liberal Unionist.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.XXIX-XXXI.

<sup>9</sup> Thorold, op.cit. pp.206, 235.

Labouchere thereafter sharply criticised Chamberlain in Truth and elsewhere, before Chamberlain became Secretary of State for the colonies with responsibility for the British South Africa Company from 1895 to 1903. Thus during an 1889 contest between Tories and Liberal-Unionists over parliamentary candidates in Birmingham, Chamberlain's home town, Labouchere remarked that perhaps:

the most funny thing in the speech of the Joseph of the coat of many colours was his complaint that Lord Randolph is the owner of a patchwork quilt. Coat and quilt - pot and kettle. Words fail me to express how amused I am at this cat-and-dog fight for the Birmingham throne. When Tories and turncoats fall out there is some chance of honest Radicals getting their rights.<sup>10</sup>

Six months later, Chamberlain's treachery (as Labouchere saw it) still rankled and he was then provoked to record that:

We are accustomed to the recantations of Mr Chamberlain, and if a cock were to register them all by crowing, the bird would by this time have lost his voice. Still he succeeded in surprising the House of Commons by his speech last Friday.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout Chamberlain's period of office, Labouchere was prominent as the editor of a widely read, if not necessarily respected, journal and Labouchere's opinion of Chamberlain did not change.

Labouchere had various connections with journalism, prior to establishing his own weekly journal in 1879. He had been part-owner of the Daily News from 1868, and contributed articles regularly, even after he was editing Truth. He had become

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<sup>10</sup> Truth, August 15, 1889, p.295.

<sup>11</sup> Truth, February 27, 1890. p.421.

involved in the World when it began publishing in 1874, and this experience inspired him to establish Truth. World and Truth were society journals, written in a much less formal style than newspapers like the Times. They were weekly journals which did not aspire to provide thorough coverage of current events, but rather to provide comments on selected events.<sup>12</sup>

Truth began publication in January 1879, and was owned and edited by Labouchere, who also wrote most of the articles in its early years. It was therefore written from a Radical perspective, with much social commentary. It included sections of general commentary on the Court, clerical notices, legal reports, political events, etc; an editorial column; society gossip; theatre and sporting reviews; and Mammon - the financial section. A special feature of the paper was the regular campaigns it waged against confidence tricksters operating in England. The journal was very successful and had a wide circulation and readership. Hind states that advertising rates were "fifty per cent more for Truth than for any comparable journal".<sup>13</sup> It was believed that there were two grounds for the journal's success: Labouchere's flair, and the managerial skills of Horace Voules, who was officially made editor in 1897, although Labouchere successively passed editorial duties to him much sooner, so that by 1880, Voules was editor in all but name, while Labouchere remained a major contributor to, as well as the

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<sup>12</sup> Thorold, p.445.

<sup>13</sup> Hind, op.cit., p.3.

owner of, the journal.<sup>14</sup> Once Labouchere had been elected to Parliament as member for Northampton, in 1880, his major contribution was political commentary.

Labouchere was a Radical politician, and Truth reflected Radical views. As a Radical, Labouchere was generally opposed to imperialist policies, and was specifically opposed to the use of chartered companies to secure territory for Britain. Since he often aired his antipathy to chartered companies, Truth is a very useful source on Rhodes and the British South Africa Company. At the end of 1890 he stated:

I have no high opinion of any of these Chartered African Companies. Their professions of philanthropic aims disgust me. I regard them as humbug of the most palpable kind. They are monetary speculations, designed to put money into the pockets of their promoters, and I have always thought it a great mistake, and one which may land us in serious trouble, that promoters should be granted charters giving them vast powers over enormous districts of Africa, and allow them to compromise the Empire in their lust for pelf.<sup>15</sup>

These financial attributes were compounded by military risks, as the Jameson Raid was to confirm. That event led Truth to state:

The grant of charters is a device for ensuring to the Government the maximum of responsibility and risk with the minimum of controlling authority, and this for the exclusive benefit of a small band of monopolists. A system at once more iniquitous and more foolish could not be devised.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thorold, p.446. The chapter on Truth in Thorold's biography (pp.444-467) was contributed by a subsequent editor of Truth, R.A.Bennet.

<sup>15</sup> Truth, November 6, 1890, p.924.

<sup>16</sup> Truth, January 16, 1896, p.141.

As the first quotation above indicates, Labouchere was deeply suspicious of the financial schemes of chartered companies in general, and of the British South Africa Company in particular. In 1891, when the Company declined to answer a series of important questions about how it was financed and about the relationship between it and the United Concessions Company, Labouchere considered his suspicions confirmed. Their refusal to address his questions about the Company's finances led him to conduct a campaign to expose the Company's schemes. He was particularly anxious to ensure that prospective shareholders were fully informed of the financial state and prospects of the Company, lest they be beguiled into an unwise investment by the belief that a Chartered Company was guaranteed to be a safe investment. Thus, while he was suspicious initially, events were to convert his suspicions to hostility, and considerable attention must therefore be paid to these events.

His opposition was undoubtedly strengthened by the strong element of Puritan morality which he acquired from his family, and which was perpetuated by his Radical associations. In many of the comments he made, this moral sense is very plain. His was a morality tempered by rationality, however. His comments never reflected on the private behaviour of others. His outrage was directed at those who cheated others by devious behaviour, or who misused public office in order to enrich themselves. While Labouchere was not a philanthropist, and did not believe



Africans should be given special treatment, he certainly was a humanitarian, and was opposed to cruelty and injustice of any kind, regardless of the race or social status of the victim.

Labouchere's attitude is reflected in the nature of the innumerable attacks made on Cecil Rhodes in Truth - for these were not generally of a personal nature. He was criticized in his capacity as Managing Director, with power of attorney for all the Directors of the British South Africa Company.

Labouchere was highly critical, also, of the fact that Rhodes was Prime Minister of the Cape while a Director of three companies active in the interior: the British South Africa Company, De Beers and Consolidated Goldfields of South Africa. Labouchere believed that the dual roles of prominent capitalist and politician would lead to conflict of interest and that, ultimately, the Secretary of State would be placed in an embarrassing position, because of the influence Rhodes wielded. These concerns were graphically expressed over the Mafeking Railway extension in February 1892, when it was noted that:

In the event of Mr Cecil Rhodes, as Managing Director of the South African Company, failing to divide the first 6 000 [square] miles of land with the Cape Government, it falls to Mr Cecil Rhodes, as Premier of Cape Colony, to compel specific performance of the agreement. In the event of the railway extension to Mafeking not being carried out (and a proposal that a line should be constructed in lieu of it from Bloemfontein to Kimberley has been publicly made by Mr Rhodes' chief colleague in the directorate of the De Beers Consolidated Mines), it will fall to Mr Cecil Rhodes, adviser to the Governor of British Bechuanaland to recommend that Mr Cecil Rhodes, private gentleman, be compelled to re-transfer the 6 000

square miles already transferred to him. ...<sup>17</sup>

The theme was to recur in 1893, when Labouchere commented that Rhodes made the position of the Imperial Government difficult by exploiting his position as the Premier of the Cape Colony to try to force the Imperial Government to serve his financial interests as the head of the British South Africa Company.<sup>18</sup>

On a number of occasions, however, Labouchere remarked that that he did not personally dislike Rhodes. Even after the scathing comments which appeared after the Jameson Raid, he stressed that:

I should be sorry were Rhodes seriously ill. I have always made a distinction in my mind between him and the financiers with whom he threw in his lot. Had he merely used them to carry out his Imperial dreams, without sharing in the loot, I should have had a higher opinion of him.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps this ability to separate his opinion of the man himself from his judgement of his actions, explains his campaign against the Chartered Company. There appears to be no evidence that Labouchere had any financial or personal involvement in the Company. He never held shares in the Chartered Company - thus suffered no personal loss. Nor is it likely that he was disappointed that he missed an opportunity to speculate himself.  
<sup>20</sup> While he was well-informed on the financial world, and his criticism of the Company commenced very early, and continued

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<sup>17</sup> Truth February 4, 1892, p.219.

<sup>18</sup> Truth, October 5, 1893, p.689.

<sup>19</sup> Truth, November 11, 1897: p.1222.

<sup>20</sup> Hind, p.35 suggested this possibility.

through several inflations and depressions of its shares, he never chose to become financially involved in the Company.<sup>21</sup> He seems, also, to have been able, once he was elected to Parliament, to step from being a stock exchange speculator to being a guardian of the public, using his prior knowledge of the game to great advantage. He stated often that he had no sympathy for an investor who, in possession of all the relevant facts about the Chartered Company, still invested, and was burned. His concern was to ensure that the public knew that the Government gave no guarantee on the shares of a chartered company, and that they knew as much as possible about the financial background to the Company.

Contemporary historians, if they have considered Labouchere at all, have not given him much credibility. Lockhart and Woodhouse in their biography of Rhodes regarded Labouchere as the representative of opinion hostile to Rhodes, especially in the House of Commons. For example, they comment: "Secure in his own knowledge that gold and diamonds were no more than a means to an end, he did not mind the charges of Labby and his brood

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<sup>21</sup> Hind suggested he had a history of financial speculation, and referred to letters from a victim of Truth's exposure of fraud, which purported to show that Labouchere had used his influence while financial editor of the World to inflate shares artificially, for the purpose of speculation. Hind suggested that this was the reason for his retirement from Parliament in 1905. This deception is not, however, referred to elsewhere, and it is doubtful that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman would have appointed him a Privy Councillor in 1906, if the letters had destroyed his honour. See Hind, p.35.

that his motive was money - and more money."<sup>22</sup> Bemused by Rhodes's apparent probity, they considered Labouchere's inability to prove charges against Rhodes as evidence that the charges were unfounded.<sup>23</sup> However they do acknowledge his sincerity, and his influence: since he "was as sincere as he was able, the House of Commons listened to him, and the chances of 'squaring' him in the usual way were negligible."<sup>24</sup> Philip Mason comments on Labouchere also, noting that, in connection with the Mashona Rising, he was "reckless in his allegations and often disproved as to facts, but a doubt is bound to be raised in any enquiring mind as to whether a substratum of truth did not remain."<sup>25</sup> Mason referred only in very general terms to Labouchere's charges, without giving any references, and then chose to disregard them, in favour of more moderate testimony.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> J.G. Lockhart, and C.M. Woodhouse, Rhodes; London, 1963. p.283.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 270. They comment that Labouchere's charges of atrocities were "groundless". In fact he had relied on accounts of several eye-witnesses, and his charges were not at all groundless - although he could not verify them.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.161.

<sup>25</sup> P. Mason, The Birth of a Dilemma. London, 1958. p.201-202.

<sup>26</sup> The works of L.H.Gann, History of Southern Rhodesia. Early Days to 1934. (London, 1965); R.Blake, History of Rhodesia (London, 1977); and P. Maylam, Rhodes, the Tswana and the British. Colonialism, collaboration and conflict in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. 1885-1899. (Westport, Connecticut, 1980) p.68, refer to Labouchere as a critic of Rhodes, but do not consider his criticisms at all. T.O.Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia. 1996-1897 (Evanston, 1967) does not refer to Labouchere.

J.S. Galbraith<sup>27</sup> has referred more often to Labouchere and Truth. He noted that that "inveterate gadfly of privilege and corruption, Henry Labouchere, made Rhodes and the Chartered Company a special target for his bites ... He did so without malice, he said - he professed to like the man ..."<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, Galbraith used Labouchere to confirm his own opinion: he did not follow Labouchere's argument to see what new insights it might give. Finally, S. Glass cites Labouchere as a critic of the Company, but dismisses his criticism with little consideration.<sup>29</sup>

Contemporary attitudes to Labouchere and Truth were much less dispassionate. Some sense of the outrage he excited in supporters of the Company may be gained from Hugh Marshall Hole,<sup>30</sup> who obviously disliked Labouchere, since he hinted that well informed people would distrust him automatically, and then continued:

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<sup>27</sup> J.S. Galbraith, Crown and Charter, Berkeley, 1974.

<sup>28</sup> Galbraith p.265.

<sup>29</sup> S. Glass, The Matabele War London, 1968.

<sup>30</sup> Hole was born in England in 1865. He read law at Oxford, and went to Kimberley in 1889. He met Rhodes, and took employment in the British South Africa Company's South African office in 1890. In 1892 he became secretary to Jameson, Administrator of Mashonaland, and from that time on, until his retirement in 1928, he was continuously employed by the Company, in various capacities. He began writing books on the history of Rhodesia in 1926. The best known of his books were: The Making of Rhodesia, 1926; Old Rhodesian Days 1928; Lobengula 1929; The Jameson Raid 1930; The Passing of the Black Kings 1932. See R.S. Roberts' introduction to Reprint of Hole, H. The Passing of the Black Kings Bulawayo, 1978 for biographical details.

Among other favourite theories invented, and repeated by him, was the fiction that the Matabele war of 1893 was engineered on account of the collapse of the Mashonaland gold bubble ...<sup>31</sup>

After explaining why he believed this theory to be fiction, Hole commented:

... no more insane suggestion could have been made than that anybody concerned in the country should have desired to provoke such a war. "Labby" was neither insane nor ill-informed, and unquestionably had his tongue in his cheek when he spread the slander.<sup>32</sup>

Part of the reason for this dislike emerged when Hole commented that opponents of the Company had been "stirred into activity" by Labouchere, who never missed an opportunity of "squirting venom" at Rhodes and the Company.<sup>33</sup> He also asserted that Labouchere was unreliable remarking that his reports were "manifestly prejudiced" and based on "tainted evidence".<sup>34</sup> Examination of the issues raised in Truth, the reputation the journal enjoyed, and the respect accorded to Labouchere as a Member of Parliament demonstrates that this was not the general view, although it was certainly one view, of Labouchere.

The sources of information on which Truth was based varied considerably. Labouchere used the Chartered Company's own propaganda and Company Reports extensively: he referred frequently to material appearing in other journals and

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<sup>31</sup> H.M. Hole, Making of Rhodesia. Reprint London 1967. p.289-290.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.291.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 327.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.331.

newspapers - both those sharing his views, and those of opposing viewpoints, while much of his comment was based on correspondence received from people in Southern Africa. The reputation of Truth was such that it was a logical place to send material critical of the Chartered Company. Whatever the source and nature of the material, Labouchere always identified it adequately so that the reader might assess it. He did not attempt to pass off the opinion of one man in Rhodesia as fact - and rarely printed opinions of correspondents if he did not know who they were. If he did print dubious material, it was always with a disclaimer. The credibility of the journal may in part be gauged by its circulation not only in England, but wherever English was spoken, even in Rhodesia, for in April 1896 he noted that:

Although I am frequently reproached with being a Little Englander, I find that I have a personal interest in the present situation in Matabeleland, which probably exceeds that of the majority of Jingoos. Last week my publisher came to me and told me he should require 520 less copies of Truth. On my enquiring the reason, he informed me that the parcel usually sent to the Chartered Company's territory had been stopped owing to the uncertainty about its being delivered at the other end. I fear therefore that our unfortunate countrymen at Bulawayo and other places will have to get on as well as they can for a week or two without Truth. It is a gratifying discovery to me to know how many readers I have in the Chartered Company's territory, and I trust that the seed thus sown may bring forth fruit a hundredfold. On the other hand, as I have never to my knowledge injured a Matabele, I take it a little unkindly that the sins of the Chartered Company should be visited on me to the tune of 520 sixpences per week!

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<sup>35</sup> Truth, April 30, 1896: p.1077.

Labouchere was trusted, as a Pretoria newspaper acknowledged by attacking the British South Africa Company on his behalf in "A MEMO FOR MR LABOUCHERE" in 1894 which stated:

Our special correspondent at Salisbury informs us that 'the police have shot three indunas in the Mazoe district who had been taken prisoner and attempted to escape'. We daresay there will be the regulation "enquiry" and the regulation slap of whitewash, but to the ordinary outsider the killing of the three indunas has a suspicious appearance. The shooting seems to be a trifle too accurate, and one wonders whether the natives in question could not have been caught by a little running.<sup>36</sup>

Labouchere himself enjoyed his renown, and often commented on the adverse comments he drew, as well as the praise. The adverse comments usually questioned the reliability of his information. This probably arose from the casual style of his editorials, for each time a major incident involving the British South Africa Company occurred, he would recite the Company's history to that time, allowing the minor details in such recitations to vary. He obviously did not research these synopses of the Company's activities, but wrote from memory. Despite this, his fundamental points remain constant, and the inaccuracies are never such that they invalidate his charges.

As Truth had a reputation for very plain talking in all areas, and was equally energetic in exposing schemes in England that Labouchere believed to be fraudulent, he had to defend the journal against many charges of libel. He appears to have been successful in all cases which came to trial. On the few

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<sup>36</sup> The Press, Pretoria, August 28, 1894.



occasions when he was unable to prove a charge he had printed, he withdrew it, publishing an apology. Bennet, in his chapter on Labouchere and Truth, mentions "the long series of libel actions that Truth has successfully defended in the course of its existence ..."<sup>37</sup> This indicates that Labouchere was careful about what he published, which makes Hind's suggestion that he was deliberately trying to provoke the Company into a court challenge, in order to procure evidence that he could not obtain any other way, inherently unlikely.<sup>38</sup> Whether Hind's surmise is correct or not, it is interesting to note that the Company never brought a suit against Truth.

Labouchere's reputation was very controversial, in and out of Parliament. Yet some measure of his standing may be drawn from the widespread regret which was expressed upon his retirement in 1905. Thorold quoted from letters from many of his colleagues,<sup>39</sup> and noted that he could only find one article with negative comments in it among press reports, which still acknowledged that:

... Mr Labouchere has done a great deal of good in his life, more good and less evil than many so-called statesmen.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Thorold, op. cit. p.453.

<sup>38</sup> Hind, p.25.

<sup>39</sup> Including Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Lord Selby, J.E. Redmond, Sir Wilfred Lawson, and Lord James of Hereford, among others. Thorold, pp.471-473.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.473. The source of the quotation is not identified further.

P.P. O'Connor assessed him as follows:

... Labby was a far straighter, far more serious, far more effective politician than his own persiflage would allow people to think.<sup>41</sup>

Hind considered that "Labouchere's involvement in many different types of political activities ... reduced his effectiveness" but even he held that "as a critic of imperial policies, Labouchere played an important part in British political life".<sup>42</sup>

The value of Labouchere's comment in Truth lies less in the factual material which he revealed than in the questions that he raised. He could not prove many of the theories that he advanced, but such theories have never been disproved by those who had direct access to Company information. Labouchere was an intelligent, well-informed observer of the time. His opinion was respected by such reputable English politicians as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and his journal was widely read. There seems no doubt that his views of the Chartered Company can contribute to our understanding of the Company, and its activities in Rhodesia.

This study is therefore based primarily on an examination of Truth between the years 1888 and 1899. Over that period, Labouchere developed the view that Rhodes was first and foremost a financier, and a power-monger, and that all the operations of the British South Africa Company were directed, not to the enhancement of Britain, but to the enrichment of Rhodes and the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.471.

<sup>42</sup> Hind, pp.236-240.

major figures behind the Company. Labouchere eloquently presented this view from time to time, as the "plot" unfolded, and it may be summarised as follows:

That the Company originated as a venture in financial speculation which was facilitated by the Royal Charter granted by the British Government, and by the presence of two dukes on its Board of Directors; that only a small part of the nominal capital of the Company represented cash, while the promoters secretly retained special rights to themselves, then sold shares to unsuspecting investors; that the only asset of the Company was a mineral concession in Mashonaland; that it rapidly became obvious that Mashonaland did not contain gold, and so, in order to keep the Company afloat, Rhodes embarked on a series of raids, annexing more land to the Company's territory, to stimulate new confidence in investors; that the first raid was into Portuguese territory, and it was only partially successful, as the Company did secure part of Manicaland, but failed to get Beira, which was its objective;<sup>43</sup> that in 1893, the finances of the Company were in a desperate state, so the Company mounted its next expedition - this time against Lobengula - which operation was successful both

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<sup>43</sup> The raid on Portuguese territory does not fit the pattern perfectly, since Rhodes's objective in Beira was to secure a port, not gold, and was not always mentioned, when Labouchere elaborated his theory.

in gaining Matabeleland, and in boosting the value of shares on the Stock Exchange; that Matabeleland did not yield paying gold either, and so, in 1895, Rhodes embarked on the boldest raid of all - against the South African Republic, which had already proven its value.\*\*

The Jameson Raid was abortive, and it resulted in much closer imperial supervision of the Company, so that from this time on, Labouchere's interest in the Company declined.

Labouchere's interpretation of the Company's motives and actions developed gradually and several themes emerged in due course, against a background first of Mashonaland, then of Matabeleland and finally, from the raid and the 1896 risings, of Southern Africa generally. Thus, this background has to be established up to the formalisation of Imperial Government control in the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council of 1898 which reduced Labouchere's interest in the Company. The order provides a cut-off point, and the form of administration, and the new economic conditions, which followed its enactment will not be addressed.

The background, in Rhodesia and to some extent in Southern Africa generally, is examined in Chapter II. Subsequent chapters deal with Labouchere's interest in various aspects of the Company's activities. These are: the Company's origins, and its financial dealings; Imperial policy and political manipulation

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\*\* One long editorial is presented almost in its entirety, in the Appendix, as a sample of Labouchere's rhetoric at its best, which explains precisely what Labouchere believed the Company was doing in his own words.

by the Company; settlers and the administration; the treatment of Africans; and the Jameson Raid. These chapters cumulatively demonstrate that Labouchere raised many valid questions which have not yet been answered in full, and that his theory concerning the Company's development as a speculative venture cannot be dismissed as a figment of a disappointed man's malicious imagination.

## II. EARLY RHODESIA

A number of themes emerge in the study of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company between 1888 and 1898. Labouchere had identified the problems which these themes reflect early in the Company's existence, and expressed his concerns about the Company and its activities frequently until 1898, when the Imperial Government introduced tighter supervision over the Company's activities.

One area of concern to Labouchere was the disregard for legality and due process which was evident in Rhodes's actions. This was most apparent in his attitude to the administration in Mashonaland. Rhodes's concern was to ensure British Government compliance with his wishes, and whether the administration had a legal foundation or not, or whether Lobengula's rights had been violated, was of no importance to him. A similar attitude prevailed with regard to the methods Rhodes employed to achieve his goals. He was not at all reluctant to engage in deception and subterfuge, as long as his objectives were attained, and he had no regard whatsoever for the rights of any opponents, black or white. In addition his aspirations far exceeded the resources he was willing to devote to their realisation, and the Chartered Company was chronically short of capital. This financial insecurity affected every aspect of its affairs.

The role of the Imperial Government was also a recurrent issue which attracted Labouchere's attention for, in his view,

the Imperial Government bore an equal responsibility for the Company's actions. It chose to employ a chartered company to secure territory for Britain in order to save money, and it failed to exercise effective control over that company for the same reason. Its responsibility went beyond the lack of control over the company, however, for individual members of the Government as well as Imperial Officers in Southern Africa actively assisted Rhodes to achieve his ends.

A third general area of concern to Labouchere was that the rights of Africans were completely disregarded throughout the years which saw the establishment of Rhodesia, for neither the Ndebele nor the Shona were given any consideration. This was so when the Pioneer Column entered Mashonaland against Lobengula's wishes, and when the Company forced war on the Ndebele in 1893. It was also evident in the hut tax which was imposed on the Shona, who were living on their own land, and in the repressive measures taken against those who did not readily comply with European demands.

These three themes recur throughout the period from 1888 to 1898 in various forms in each of the stages which mark the establishment and development of the Company, and of its territory. These stages are examined in the following seven sections.

The first section deals with the Company's origins. Although Labouchere only began to follow the Company after it had been chartered, all the themes which concerned him later

were present in the process of securing a concession over Lobengula's territory, and a charter from the British Government. The granting of the Royal Charter particularly reveals the political manipulation in which Rhodes and his associates engaged. The financing of the Company reflects most strongly the unethical methods employed by the Company, and calls into question the purpose of the Company's creation. This section also shows the inadequacy of the Company's financial foundations. The occupation and establishment of Mashonaland raises the question of the Company's attitude towards the rights of Africans, and of other European powers, and of the dangers implicit in allowing a commercial enterprise to intervene in diplomatic issues. It also emphasises that the role of the British government was vital in this process. The administration of Mashonaland illustrates all three problems, and particularly raises the question of the purpose the Company was intended to serve. That is, whether the promoters of the Company meant it to be a vehicle for developing a new British colony, or a vehicle for financial speculation. The conquest and settlement of Matabeleland clearly demonstrates the violation of Africans' rights, and the British Government's connivance at this abuse. The Jameson Raid once again reveals the absence of morality in the methods employed by Rhodes, and the irresponsibility of the Company's directors. Finally the Risings of 1896 were the result of the administration which was created by a Company operating under such conditions. The causes of the Risings reflect the



problems associated with all three themes: the brutal methods of the Company, the absence of control by the Imperial Government, and the neglect of Africans' rights.

Labouchere's work is of some significance today, because modern historians are examining the same questions which were of concern to him as events unfolded in Rhodesia. The first historian to record the history of Rhodesia in detail was H.M. Hole, and his work set the pattern for interpretation of Rhodesia's history for many years. As he had been employed by the Company from 1890 to 1926, it is not surprising that his interpretation was sympathetic to the Company. His history recounted vividly the excitement of the pioneer days, and imparted a gloss to events which has not been easily removed. Modern historians have begun to re-interpret the colonial history of Zimbabwe, and some of their works will be mentioned briefly here, although specific points of debate will be raised within each section.

T.O. Ranger's Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, published in 1967 was an important work in this process of re-evaluation. Ranger documented for the first time the abuse of Africans which took place under the Company's administration between 1890 and 1896, and showed that this brutality was in part responsible for the Risings. Ranger was still strongly influenced by Hole's writings, however, and attributed an important role to religion, in stimulating the rebellions. Further work in re-interpreting the history of Africans, and their relations with Europeans, in

the first years of Company rule, has been done by Cobbing, Beach and Stigger<sup>1</sup> between 1973 and 1980. In different areas all three have shown that the reports of the Company and of most contemporary writers are not reliable, and they show that contemporary Europeans had little understanding of the African societies into which they were intruding.

The relations between Rhodes and the British South Africa Company and the imperial government have received attention in two recent studies, by Galbraith and Maylam.<sup>2</sup> Galbraith was primarily concerned with the relationship between the Imperial Government and the British South Africa Company, and he emphasized the fact that the Imperial Government and its officers in South Africa played an active role in the early history of Rhodesia, and that one cannot explain events exclusively in terms of Rhodes's actions and will. Galbraith's work is a most useful study on the Company, but it is limited by its sources, since the papers contained in the Rhodes House Library have two drawbacks. They have been purged by Company

<sup>1</sup> See J. Cobbing: The Evolution of Ndebele Amabutho Journal of African History 15,4 (1974); Lobengula, Jameson and the Occupation of Mashonaland, 1890. Rhodesian History, 4, 1973.; The Absent Priesthood, The Journal of African History, 18,1, (1977); D.N. Beach: Ndebele Raiders and Shona Power, Journal of African History, 15,4 (1974); 'Chimurenga': The Shona Rising of 1896-97. Journal of African History, 20,3 (1979); and P. Stigger: The Emergence of the Native Department in Matabeleland, 1893-1899, Rhodesian History, 7, 1976; The Land Commission of 1894 and its Membership, Rhodesian History, 8, 1977; The Land Commission of 1894 and the Land, Historical Association of Zimbabwe Local Series 36, 1980.

<sup>2</sup> J.S. Galbraith, Crown and Charter, Berkeley, 1974; and P. Maylam, Rhodes, the Tswana and the British, Connecticut, 1980.

officials, and they have been thoroughly examined by others.<sup>3</sup> Maylam's focus in his study was on the process of imperial expansion, and on the relationship of the "men-on-the-spot" with "the imperial government and with local African societies".<sup>4</sup> He emphasized still more the role of the "imperial factor" and indicated that this role was played for questionable motives. His assessment of Rhodes was that his motives were not important when it can be demonstrated that the means he used were unscrupulous.<sup>5</sup> However, the focus of Maylam's study was Bechuanaland, and he did not relate his material to the Company's operations in Rhodesia in any detail.

In order to assess the value of Labouchere's comments, therefore, it is necessary to sketch the events of the period under discussion in some detail. The following account is designed to provide the information required to place Labouchere's remarks in context, to illustrate the themes which continued throughout his observations and to provide some continuity in the account. At the same time, issues of concern to modern historians will be reviewed, in order to determine whether a more valid interpretation of the first decade of Zimbabwe's colonial period might have been arrived at sooner, if

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<sup>3</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.11. Woodhouse commented on recently released papers which he had examined: "If they contain any particularly guilty secrets, I have been unable to detect them". (p.14).

<sup>4</sup> Maylam, pp.5-6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.219

more attention had been paid to Labouchere's interpretations.

### The Origins of the British South Africa Company. 1889-1891

This section deals with white encroachment into Mashonaland and Matabeleland and the interest of various European powers in Central Southern Africa. It also relates the process whereby Rhodes secured the Rudd Concession, and subsequently acquired a Royal Charter for the company which was to take up the Concession. This process reveals all the problems which later concerned Labouchere. Rhodes used Imperial officers to deceive Lobengula as to his official standing and to by-pass regulations prohibiting the export of arms from the Cape. His agent, Rudd, probably made commitments to Lobengula which he knew would not be met, as he was not concerned about the fate of the Ndebele once Europeans took over their land. By such means, the Rudd Concession was won. The Royal Charter was secured with the assistance of the former High Commissioner, Sir Hercules Robinson, and of other influential individuals who became interested in the Company.

Earlier historians generally described the process of securing the Rudd Concession as a bold move by an imaginative man, which secured Rhodesia for Great Britain, and denied charges that Lobengula was deceived.<sup>6</sup> The more recent work of Galbraith and Maylam emphasizes different issues. Both authors

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<sup>6</sup> See Hole, Making, pp.1-2;64-75.

consider the role of the Imperial Government to have been important to securing the Rudd Concession and the Charter, and they both assert that Lobengula was deceived when he granted the concession.<sup>7</sup> Thus they present a picture of Rhodes using manipulative means to secure his ends, regardless of Lobengula's opposition.

In the first years of the British South Africa Company many of its actions were determined by conditions in the territory which it took over. The Company's authority derived from the sovereignty which Lobengula was assumed to exercise over Mashonaland. Subsequent relations between the Company and the Ndebele were affected by the relations between the Ndebele and the Shona. In addition, the Company's actions, as well as British government and public support for those actions, were governed by European perceptions of the Ndebele state, and its authority over the Shona. The conditions in the area north of the Limpopo in 1889 will therefore be described briefly.

The Ndebele under Lobengula claimed sovereignty over both Matabeleland and Mashonaland, but the issue of sovereignty was complex. The ancestors of some of the Shona-speaking peoples had been federated under the Rozvi Empire, but the central authority had disappeared,<sup>8</sup> and the Shona people distributed throughout the area owed no allegiance to any central authority. They were

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<sup>7</sup> Galbraith, pp.67-71; Maylam pp.51-54.

<sup>8</sup> D.N. Beach, Ndebele Raiders and Shona Power, Journal of African History, 15,4 (1974) pp.633-635.

organised in small groups, under local rulers. They practiced largely subsistence agriculture, but had long-standing trade links with the Portuguese on the East coast, based on the gold which they had worked.<sup>9</sup>

The European view of the Ndebele and their relations with the Shona is well represented by Hole.<sup>10</sup> He described Mzilikazi's rule as a "reign of terror" during which frequent raids caused "Mashona natives" to lead "the existence of hunted beasts rather than human beings". He continued to describe Lobengula as a despot during whose reign savage raids increased. Recent studies of Ndebele and Shona societies have shown that this picture was far from accurate.<sup>11</sup> The Ndebele state was not organised on military lines, nor was its king a despot. The Ndebele were organized around social and political units, and military groups, or amabutho, were drawn from these units and returned to them after training, being reassembled to fight when needed.<sup>12</sup> The Ndebele King was a powerful central authority, but he could not ignore the Indunas, hereditary leaders of prominent settlements, within the state.<sup>13</sup> Initially the Ndebele avoided

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<sup>9</sup> Beach, Raiders, p.634.

<sup>10</sup> Hole, Making, pp.31-49

<sup>11</sup>D.N. Beach, 'Chimurenga': The Shona Rising of 1896-97, Journal of African History, 20,3(1979); and J. Cobbing, The Evolution of Ndebele Amabutho, Journal of African History 15,4 (1974).

<sup>12</sup> Cobbing, Amabutho, pp.629-630.

<sup>13</sup> Cobbing, The Absent Priesthood, The Journal of African History, 18,1,(1977).p.64.

direct conflict with the Rozvi, and contact between the two was largely on an economic basis.<sup>14</sup> Once the Ndebele state had been consolidated, they did attempt to dominate the surrounding peoples, but their raids "were limited in extent and duration",<sup>15</sup> and some Shona groups were too strong to be overcome.<sup>16</sup> Those groups which had been successfully raided and defeated by the Ndebele paid regular tribute to Lobengula, and others occasionally paid tribute to avoid being raided.

In the 1880s, this territory became the object of attention as various European powers wished to add it to their "spheres of interest". Potential contenders were Britain, Germany, Portugal and the South African Republic, and Rhodes was determined that Britain should win. Labouchere was concerned about the difficulties which the British South Africa Company might cause in Britain's foreign policy, and gave considerable attention to the Company and its role in foreign policy. For this reason it is necessary to outline the various interests in the area.

The cornerstone of British policy in Southern Africa was always the security of the Cape Colony. Gladstone's Liberal government was reluctant to become involved in territory north of the Cape Colony. However, both Germany and the South African Republic showed interest in the area, and the Cape Government, in which Rhodes was prominent, put pressure on Britain to act. A

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<sup>14</sup> Beach, Raiders, p.636-637.

<sup>15</sup> Beach, Raiders, p.651.

<sup>16</sup> Beach, Chimurenga, p.402.

British protectorate was finally declared over Bechuanaland in 1885, after British authority had been established by a military expedition under Sir Charles Warren.<sup>17</sup>

Germany's interest in the area was very recent, and she had surprised Britain by declaring a protectorate over South West Africa in August 1884. Britain was concerned that Germany and the South African Republic might co-operate, and block any northward expansion of British territory, threatening the economic dominance of the Cape Colony.<sup>18</sup> The South African Republic was convinced that its independence rested on expansion and access to the sea, and waged a long struggle, beginning in the 1870s with President Burgers, to secure these ends. Britain enjoyed some measure of control over the South African Republic's foreign policy under the Pretoria Convention and under the London Convention which superseded it in 1884.<sup>19</sup> In 1887, the South African Republic sent a party to Matabeleland and claimed to have concluded what has become known as the Grootfontein Treaty with Lobengula. This alleged treaty guaranteed Lobengula's independence, but bound him to be an ally of the South African Republic.

The British, alarmed at the possibility of Boer expansion into the area, pursued a treaty of their own with Lobengula.

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<sup>17</sup> Galbraith, p.12-13.

<sup>18</sup> Galbraith, pp. 8-10.

<sup>19</sup> M. Wilson and L. Thompson, (eds.) The Oxford History of South Africa. v.2, p. 273.



John Moffat, son of the missionary Robert Moffat,<sup>20</sup> was chosen to negotiate, and in 1888 the Moffat Treaty was concluded, which guaranteed peace would obtain between the Ndebele and British, and ensured that Lobengula would not enter relations with any foreign state without Britain's consent.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Lobengula repudiated the Grobler Treaty. After some dispute, the South African Republic unwillingly accepted the expansion of Britain's sphere of influence into Mashonaland and Matabeleland.

A challenge had meanwhile developed from Portugal, which had the longest history of intervention in central Africa. As early as 1875 she considered her African territories to consist at least of the east coast between Delagoa Bay and Cape Delgado (north of 11 degrees south) and a strip along the west coast from Cape Frio to Ambriz, and believed that she had priority over the belt across Africa in between these provinces.<sup>22</sup>

Diplomatic activity amongst colonial powers resulted in the Berlin Act of 1885, which stipulated that in order to claim a territory on the basis of occupation a power must be able to

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Moffat first met Mzilikazi, Lobengula's father, in 1829, when the Ndebele occupied land in the Transvaal. They became friends, and Moffat was the only European whom Mzilikazi truly trusted, and he considered Moffat a close friend. Lobengula therefore accorded a special relationship, and trust, to Moffat's son, John. John Moffat played the difficult role of mediating between Lobengula and the British Government, and later also the British South Africa Company, until 1892. See R.U. Moffat, John Smith Moffat. London, 1921. pp.240-261.

<sup>21</sup> Palley, C.: The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1888-1965. p.29. Oxford, 1966.

<sup>22</sup> E. Axelson, Portugal and the Scramble for Africa, Witwatersrand University Press, 1967, p.1.

demonstrate effective exercise of authority.<sup>23</sup> The Portuguese began an attempt to protect their territory soon after the Berlin Conference, and concluded treaties with France and Germany recognising the area between Angola and Mozambique as their sphere of interest. Britain, however, protested. Not only were Mashonaland and Matabeleland involved, but Nyasaland, in which British missionaries had been active since Livingstone's time, was also being claimed.<sup>24</sup> A long round of negotiations between the Portuguese and British began, with Britain insisting on the premise that only effective occupation could be considered a basis for a claim to the territory.<sup>25</sup> These negotiations culminated in the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 1891.

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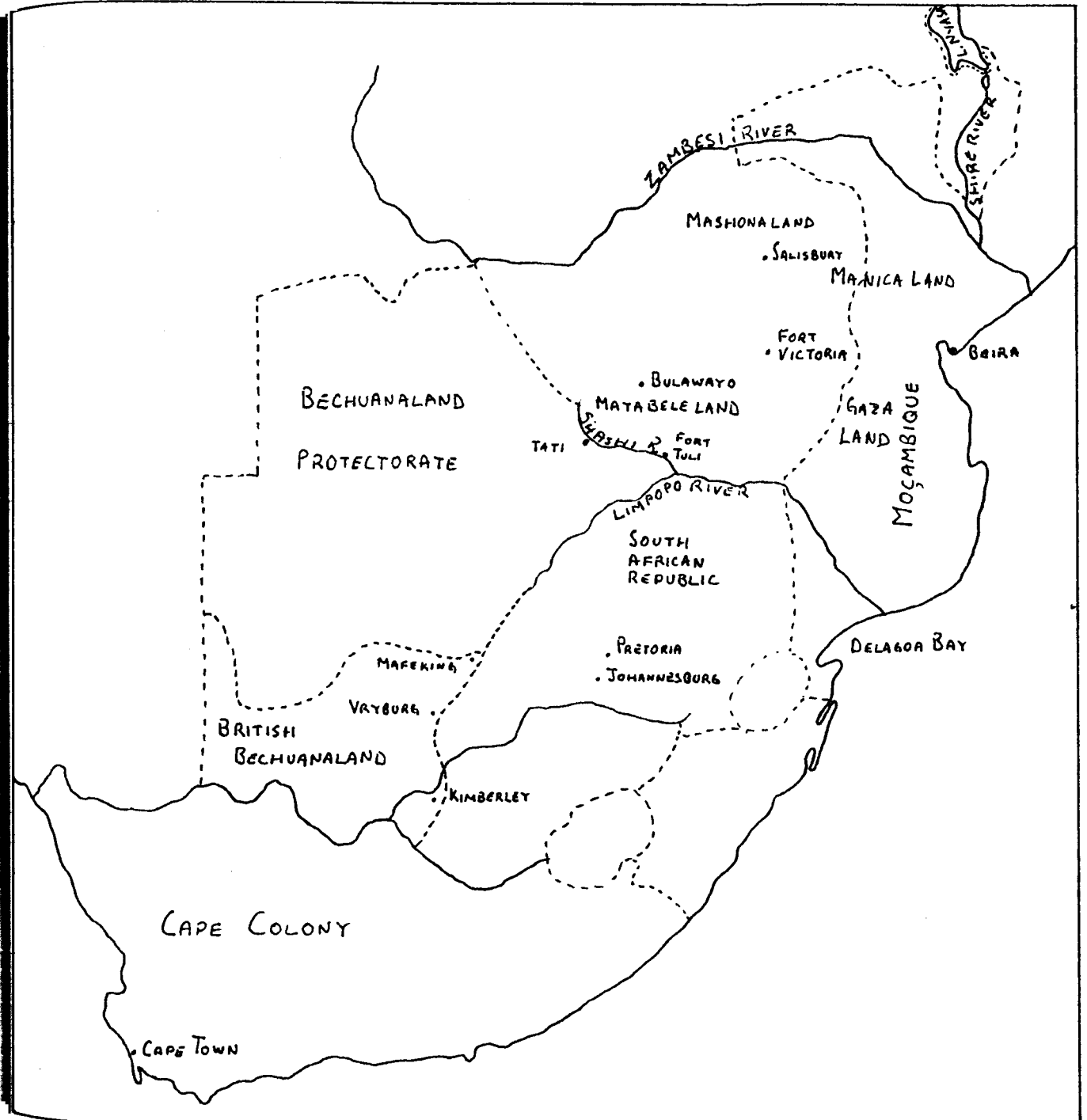
<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* p.81.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p.81.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 187-200.

FIGURE 1

A Sketch Map of Southern Africa. 1890.



By this time Cecil Rhodes<sup>26</sup> considered the territory to the north of the Cape Colony an essential part of his plans for a vast British Empire in Africa, controlled by the Cape Colony.<sup>27</sup> He began working to ensure that the territory would remain British in the 1880's, when he pressured the Cape Parliament, the High Commissioner, and the British Government to prevent German or Boer infiltration into Bechuanaland.<sup>28</sup> His interest in Mashonaland and Matabeleland arose both from their geographical location, which necessarily involved them in his plans, and from their reputed wealth in gold. The presence of mineral wealth was essential to attract capital, which could be used in the development of the territory, and which would bring wealth to the promoters of the Company.

Rhodes's wealth and power in South Africa was based on De Beers Mining Company, which eventually became De Beers Consolidated. Rhodes and his associate, Charles Dunnell Rudd, began to work towards consolidating the Kimberley diamond mines in 1873 when he acquired an interest in De Beers Mining Company.

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<sup>26</sup> Cecil Rhodes came from a wealthy though not elite, English family. He was the third son of an English vicar, and was schooled at Bishops Stortford. He left England for reasons of health in 1870, and joined his brother, Herbert, in South Africa, when he turned seventeen. He soon demonstrated sharp business acumen, and began to prosper. He returned to England periodically, where he completed a degree at Oxford, over a number of years. However his interests and activities for the rest of his life centred on Southern Africa. (Lockhart and Woodhouse, pp.36-44)

<sup>27</sup> P. Maylam, Rhodes, the Tswana, and the British, Connecticut, 1980. p.65.

<sup>28</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, pp.93-105.

Amalgamating many of the smaller companies was easily achieved by the acquisition of blocks of shares in the company to be taken over. Only the Kimberley Central Company had presented a formidable obstacle to his plans. It was a larger and richer group than De Beers, and one of its leading directors, Barnett Isaacs (Barney Barnato) was adamantly opposed to the amalgamation. Rhodes, with the assistance of Alfred Beit, eventually succeeded in obtaining a controlling interest in Kimberley Central Company, however, and the amalgamation was formalised in 1889.<sup>29</sup> De Beers Mining Company and De Beers Consolidated brought Rhodes the greatest wealth and power, which was, however, further strengthened by his control of the Goldfields group of companies.

Goldfields of South Africa was established in 1887 on the Witwatersrand by Rudd and Rhodes and, after being strengthened by amalgamations became Consolidated Goldfields in 1892.<sup>30</sup> De Beers Consolidated Mining and the Consolidated Goldfields of South Africa formed the base on which Rhodes built his empire. When the amalgamation of De Beers was completed, Rhodes exerted his power over fellow directors to ensure that the Trust Deeds of both Goldfields and De Beers gave the directors extensive powers outside those necessary for conduct of normal business,

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<sup>29</sup> H.A. Chilvers, Story of De Beers, London 1939, pp.47-66.

<sup>30</sup> Galbraith, p.58

to permit the development and government of countries.<sup>31</sup>

These powers were formulated specifically to assist Rhodes in the development of the North, and many of the same powers were granted, with more legal force, to the British South Africa Company under its Royal Charter.

The first step towards securing the North was to obtain a concession from Lobengula to mine in his territory. The way Rhodes secured this concession was an early indication of his methods. He employed devious tactics, supported by Imperial officers, to persuade Lobengula to grant the concession, and even more underhanded methods to secure it against repudiation.

There were a number of rival groups competing for concessions. In order to ensure that his group, led by Rudd, would appear prestigious to Lobengula, Rhodes enlisted the aid of Imperial officials. Rudd was given a letter of introduction by the High Commissioner, Sir Hercules Robinson, while Sir Sydney Shippard, the Deputy Commissioner of British Bechuanaland, paid a timely visit to Lobengula to offer assurances that the British Government looked with favour upon Rhodes's group, and to discredit rival groups. Lobengula granted a concession to the Rudd Group on October 30, 1888, immediately after Shippard's departure.<sup>32</sup>

It appears that two factors influenced Lobengula in granting the concession: the advantages of letting one powerful

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<sup>31</sup> Chilvers, p.66.

<sup>32</sup> Galbraith, p.68.

group have a concession, to settle disputes between competing Europeans; and the apparent favour with which Shippard, as representative of the Queen, regarded Rhodes and his emissaries. The Induna, Lotje, the missionary Helm,<sup>33</sup> and Shippard are the three individuals credited with influencing Lobengula to grant the concession - and also charged with corruption.<sup>34</sup> Charges of bribery have not been proven against any of the three, but Galbraith remarked that Shippard and Rhodes were close friends,<sup>35</sup> and Maylam noted that Shippard was suspected of holding British South Africa Company shares, although there is no evidence that he did.<sup>36</sup> It is true that these three were persuaded to support Rhodes's cause, and that his group created a false impression of official sanction, but no more can be proven. However, it appears likely that Rudd misled Lobengula with verbal assurances and promises, particularly in limiting the area to which the concession would apply, which did not appear in the actual document signed.<sup>37</sup>

The terms of the concession were very favourable to Rhodes and his group since, for

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<sup>33</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.144, suggest that the former argument was put forward by Helm and Lotje, and that both had been promised rewards for their support.

<sup>34</sup> Galbraith, p. 71-73.

<sup>35</sup> Galbraith, p.44.

<sup>36</sup> Maylam, p.130.

<sup>37</sup> J.Cobbing, Lobengula, Jameson and the Occupation of Mashonaland, 1890. Rhodesian History, 4, 1973. p.39.

... £100 per month, 1000 Martini-Henry breech-loading rifles and 100,000 cartridges; an armed steamboat on the Zambesi or £500 cash Lobengula granted 'the exclusive charge over all metals and minerals situated and contained in my kingdoms, principalities and dominions together with full power to do all things they may deem necessary to win and procure same.<sup>38</sup>

Imperial officers further assisted Rhodes in fulfilling these terms. As the export of arms from the Cape Colony was illegal, Shippard issued a special permit allowing the rifles to pass through Bechuanaland, and Robinson ignored it, until the arms had been delivered.<sup>39</sup> Ownership of the Rudd Concession was vested in the Matabele Syndicate - which was comprised of Rhodes, Rudd and the Goldfields of South Africa.<sup>40</sup> Having obtained a suitable document, Rhodes still had two important tasks: to secure his position against rivals, and to obtain a Royal Charter for the company which was to take up the Concession.

The Rudd Concession was by no means a water-tight document, and was challenged by Lobengula, and by rival concessionaires. Rhodes dealt with such threats by buying them out, frequently at very high prices.<sup>41</sup> Two groups, however, presented real difficulties: Lippert and his associates, and Gifford and Cawston's Exploring Company.

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Palley, p.29.

<sup>39</sup> Maylam, p.56.

<sup>40</sup> Maylam, p.56.

<sup>41</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse p.150.



Edward Lippert was a German and a cousin of Rhodes's associate, Alfred Beit.<sup>42</sup> Lippert took advantage of the weakness of the Rudd Concession with regard to land rights to advance his own interests. He instructed his agent, E.R. Renny-Tailyour, to obtain a concession of surface rights in the area of the Rudd Concession. Rhodes exerted all his influence in an attempt to prevent Renny-Tailyour from reaching Lobengula. He had him arrested when Renny-Tailyour entered British territory, and the High Commissioner threatened to have Lippert arrested "in the event of my crossing the frontier of Matabeleland".<sup>43</sup> However, Renny-Tailyour did reach Lobengula, and claimed to have been granted the concession he sought. The validity of Lippert's concession was dubious, but Rhodes finally preferred to negotiate a settlement with Lippert to having the question of land rights in the Rudd Concession tested in a British court. Thus Lippert himself went to Matabeleland in 1891 and persuaded Lobengula to confirm the concession before witnesses. Despite Lobengula's explicit understanding that he was granting the land concession to an enemy of the Chartered Company, it was passed on immediately to Rhodes by arrangement. Lippert was paid with United Concessions Company and British South Africa Company

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<sup>42</sup> Lippert had established himself in South Africa in the 1880s, and had dealings both in Kimberley and on the Rand. His interest in Matabeleland began in 1887 and, after an initial attempt at co-operation, he and Rhodes became enemies and rivals. E. Rosenthal, (ed.), The Matabeleland Travel Letters of Marie Lippert. Cape Town, 1960.pp. v-vi.

<sup>43</sup> Lippert, quoted in Rosenthal, p.vi.

shares, plus 75 square miles of land in Matabeleland with all mineral rights, and £5000 cash.<sup>44</sup>

Lippert was a relatively minor irritant, for the group which represented the most serious threat to Rhodes was a London syndicate formed by Lord Gifford, who had a long history of dealings in South Africa, and who had been interested in Matabeleland since 1880. With George Cawston, a London stockbroker, he formed the Exploring Company in 1884, and by 1888 this group was represented in the bid for a concession from Lobengula by Lieutenant Edward A. Maund, who had visited Lobengula in 1885, on a mission from Sir Charles Warren.<sup>45</sup>

Maund had considerable influence with Lobengula and was instrumental in convincing him that he had been deceived as to the contents of the Rudd Concession, and that it had been a mistake to sign it. As Rhodes's representatives had all left Matabeleland, there was no-one to counter Maund's arguments. In 1888/9 Lobengula entrusted Maund with the task of escorting two indunas to England in order to protest against Portuguese encroachments and to repudiate the Rudd Concession.

In the resulting panic, pressure brought together the two groups who were pursuing very similar goals. Rhodes and his associates bought a large block of Exploring Company shares, and Gifford and Cawston were to be on the Board of Directors of the company formed to represent the amalgamated interests.

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<sup>44</sup> Galbraith, p.275.

<sup>45</sup> Galbraith, pp.40;60.

Lobengula's mission was then politely received, but the repudiation of the Rudd Concession was disregarded, so that Maund was able to exploit the trust of Lobengula in order to convince him that he could not repudiate the concession after all.

Dr Jameson<sup>46</sup> was sent to renegotiate the concession. Lobengula was still willing to stand by his verbal agreement "that Rudd and his men could dig one hole somewhere between the Ramagabane and Shashi Rivers", but would offer no more.<sup>47</sup> However, as there was to be no further written agreement, Jameson was able to manipulate Lobengula's words to give the impression, outside Mashonaland, that he had agreed to the occupation of Mashonaland.<sup>48</sup> In the end, Rhodes was able to use the Concession as a valid document regardless of Lobengula's attitude: it was not questioned by the Imperial authorities or any other prominent party or group, and Lobengula did not

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<sup>46</sup> Leander Starr Jameson, a Scot, arrived in South Africa in 1872, at the age of 25. He was by then a trained doctor, and left a good practice in London. He left England for reasons of health, and for the adventure. He established a flourishing practice in Kimberley, where he met Rhodes in 1878. In 1889 he left Kimberley, to work with Rhodes in establishing the British South Africa Company's territory in Mashonaland. After six years in Rhodesia, he embarked on the Jameson Raid, and in consequence was obliged to resign his position as Administrator. He later became involved in Cape Colony politics, serving as Member of Parliament for Kimberley from 1900-1912, and as Prime Minister from 1904-1908.

<sup>47</sup> Cobbing, *Occupation*, p.40. This territory was in dispute between Lobengula and Kgama, and Lobengula therefore felt it was relatively safe to grant permission for white men to work in that area.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* pp.40-41.

challenge it by force.<sup>49</sup>

The amalgamation also helped Rhodes in securing a Charter for the company which was to be formed. While his connections in Southern Africa could not be surpassed, Rhodes did not have good connections at the Colonial Office in London. Thus, to obtain a Royal Charter, he had to have the support of those who did have influence. Gifford and Cawston had London connections, but they did not have the concession, so co-operation became essential to both parties. Before granting a charter, the Colonial Office required assurance that control of the Company would remain British, that its founders were 'respectable', and that the Board would include "men of character and social standing who would represent the public interest".<sup>50</sup> The Dukes of Abercorn and Fife were persuaded to accept appointment to the Board. They seemed well-qualified to meet the Colonial Office's stipulations: the Duke of Abercorn had large estates in Ireland, enjoyed very good court connections and had served in the House of Commons for twenty years; the Duke of Fife had the right social and political connections, and was married to a daughter of the Prince of Wales.<sup>51</sup> However, this did not ensure control over the Company's activities as neither peer took his

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<sup>49</sup> Cobbing explains that Lobengula was reluctant to challenge the Column because it was well armed, and because he had no outside allies on whom he could call for help. *Occupation*, pp.53-56. See pp.61-62 below for details on the Pioneer Column.

<sup>50</sup> Galbraith, p.113.

<sup>51</sup> E.P. Mathers, *Zambesia*. London 1891. p.300.

responsibilities as director seriously. Sir Horace Farguhar, a prominent banker, was added to the Board of Directors shortly after the Company had been incorporated. The Charter was agreed to in record time, owing to the political connections enjoyed by the Company's promoters,<sup>52</sup> and in October 1889 the British South Africa Company was incorporated by Royal Charter.

The Company began as Rhodes's project, and continued thus throughout his life. The contributions of others to running the Company in various ways were indispensable, but it was Rhodes's aims and ambitions which defined its operations. He was given Power of Attorney to act on behalf of the Directors in May, 1890,<sup>53</sup> which gave him freedom to act as he saw fit in Southern Africa without the approval of the Board of Directors, indicating his fellow-directors' lack of concern about restraining his ambitious plans. At the same time, the Northern boundary of the Chartered Company's territory was not identified, which demonstrated that the Colonial Office, on behalf of the Imperial Government, was willing to allow Rhodes to indulge in his own schemes in the hope that they could further imperial interests also. Thus a form of imperial self-interest matched the financial self-interest of the directors to concentrate power in Rhodes's hands.

The unethical methods employed by Rhodes have been illustrated here in the tactics employed to obtain the

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<sup>52</sup> Maylam, p.54.

<sup>53</sup> Galbraith, p.133.

concession from Lobengula, and then to secure it against rival concession-hunters, particularly with regard to Lippert's concession. The important role played by Imperial officers has been evident also in securing the concession, and in obtaining a royal charter, while the flagrant disregard for the rights of the Ndebele has been apparent throughout this section.

### The Financing of the British South Africa Company

This questionable background to the way in which the Chartered Company emerged does much to explain why Labouchere was very interested in the way in which the Company was financed, and in the dealings which took place between various Companies with interlocking directorates. He believed that the Company's promoters were engaged in dubious financial schemes, deceiving the British Government and public with regard to the financial status of the Company. The following section will describe the formation of companies closely related to the British South Africa Company, and of that company itself. It will show the connections between the directors of the companies, which permitted them to enrich themselves, through secret agreements. It will show that the British government and public were deceived, that the finances of the Company were insecure throughout the period under discussion. The manipulation of shares and the shortage of real capital will also be discussed.

The financial affairs of the Company received little attention before Galbraith's and Maylam's recent studies.<sup>54</sup> Galbraith suggested that the financing of the British South Africa Company involved very questionable methods, but he provided relatively little detailed information on the Company's finances, and shareholders. He raises questions about the motives and ethics of the Company, but provided few answers. Maylam examined the List of Original Shareholders of the British South Africa Company in the House of Lords Record Office, and Correspondence relating to British South Africa Company and other companies' shareholders, presented to the House of Commons.<sup>55</sup> His study has provided some valuable new material on the financial schemes of the Company, but also leaves many questions unanswered.

The intimate connections which existed between the companies associated with Rhodes and the British South Africa Company is demonstrated by their interlocking directorates. Rhodes, Beit, Gifford and Cawston were all directors of: the British South Africa Company, the Central Search Association, the United Concessions Company and the Exploring Company. Rudd

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<sup>54</sup> J.S. Galbraith, Crown and Charter, Berkeley, 1974; and P. Maylam, Rhodes, the Tswana, and the British, Connecticut, 1980. General studies of Southern Rhodesia, such as those of L.H. Gann and R. Blake, have ignored the financing of the Company almost entirely; works devoted to Rhodes, such as Lockhart and Woodhouse's, have a little information, but no real detail. S.G. Millin's 1933 biography has more information, but is still not satisfying.

<sup>55</sup> LXXI, 467, 1893-1894. Maylam, pp. 25-226.

was a director of: the Central Search Association, the United Concessions Company, and De Beers, and he and Rhodes were the Managing Directors of Goldfields. Beit and Rhodes were both also Life Governors of De Beers Consolidated.

Before its incorporation, business associated with the British South Africa Company had been handled by the Central Search Association Limited. The purpose of the creation of the Central Search Association and its successor, the United Concessions Company, was first questioned by Labouchere in 1892, and answers remain speculative today. Galbraith suggested that the Central Search Association was needed to accomplish the amalgamation of interests of the two groups, and to secure the Charter. This does not explain the continued existence of the company after the British South Africa Company was incorporated, however.<sup>56</sup> Maylam also addressed the question, and suggested that the Central Search Association was needed to satisfy rival claims to Ndebele concessions, and to protect the owners of the Rudd Concession, in the event of the Chartered Company being liquidated.<sup>57</sup> The directors of the Central Search Association were Rhodes, Gifford, Cawston, Beit, Maund, Rudd and his brother Thomas Rudd.<sup>58</sup> This Company "bought" the Rudd Concession from the Matabele Syndicate, that is, from Rhodes and Rudd. When the British South Africa Company was formed, ownership of the

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<sup>56</sup> Galbraith, p.126.

<sup>57</sup> Maylam, pp.57-58.

<sup>58</sup> Mathers, p. 421.



Concession remained in the hands of Central Search Association, and the British South Africa Company was granted complete use of the concession in return for a fifty per cent share in all its profits, but this arrangement was not publically known for several years. When the Charter was granted, the Colonial Office believed the Rudd Concession would be owned by the British South Africa Company although, as Maylam has remarked, Sir Hercules Robinson, as a shareholder of Central Search Association, must have known the truth.<sup>59</sup> When the Central Search Association was incorporated it had a nominal capital of £120,000 - most of which was distributed as fully paid shares amongst its founders and directors, and rival concessionaires. This capital was increased to £121,000 in 1889, by the issue of 1000 shares to Jameson, in recognition of his services.<sup>60</sup>

In 1890, the Central Search association was liquidated and transformed into the United Concessions Company, which held the same assets as the Central Search Association, that is, the Rudd Concession, but had a nominal capital of £4 million. An agreement was made between the British South Africa Company, the Exploring Company, Goldfields and the United Concessions Company that the British South Africa Company would buy the Rudd Concession at the end of 1890. However, it was extended for one year on no less than three occasions before a propitious moment arose for approaching shareholders with a proposal forcing the

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<sup>59</sup> Maylam, p.58.

<sup>60</sup> Galbraith, p.85.

transaction in such a way as to further the ends of the inner cabal.<sup>61</sup> This occurred in 1893 when the Rudd Concession was bought up by the British South Africa Company and the four million United Concessions Company shares were converted into one million £1 shares in the British South Africa Company. Comments which appeared in Truth in 1893 make it apparent that this agreement had not been revealed to shareholders. The purchase of the Rudd Concession was publically justified on the basis of the agreement, negotiated by the same group, to pay fifty percent of the British South Africa Company profits to the United Concessions Company.<sup>62</sup> Since the value of United Concessions Company shares was only ten shillings, and unlikely to increase, while British South Africa Company shares were above £1 and rising, it was a profitable transaction for United Concessions Company shareholders.

The Exploring Company, which Gifford and Cawston had formed in 1884, with a nominal capital of £12,000, had undergone a similar transformation in 1889. The original Exploring Company was dissolved, and a new company, still named the Exploring Company was formed, with a capital of £35,000. By 1891, the capital of the Exploring Company had been increased again, to £70,000.<sup>63</sup> Its directors were Gifford, Cawston, Rhodes, Beit and

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<sup>61</sup> Maylam, p.57.

<sup>62</sup> Truth, November, 1893, p.1155; December 7, 1893, pp.1223-1224.

<sup>63</sup> Truth, January 1, 1891, p.14.

Maud. <sup>64</sup>

The initial capital of the British South Africa Company was nominally set at £1 million. It was obviously undercapitalised in terms of the scope of the undertaking, yet at the same time £1 million was an optimistic estimate of its assets, which at that time were a half share in a mineral concession of unproven value, and a Royal Charter. Rhodes used the press and Company propaganda to create the illusion of valuable assets in order to attract capital to his company.<sup>65</sup> The initial paid-up capital of the Company was considerably less than £1 million. For the first two years no public issue of shares was made, and transfer of shares was prohibited for one year after the charter was granted.<sup>66</sup> At first only 250,000 shares were issued and fully paid at their par value of £1. A further 500,000 were distributed for a payment of three shillings per share, the balance to be called up later, and the remainder were not released immediately.<sup>67</sup> De Beers subscribed for 210,000 of the original shares, 70,000 fully paid, and 140,000 on which three shillings was paid.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Information on Central Search Association, United Concessions Company and Exploring Company is from Mathers, pp.460-461; Galbraith, pp.84-86,126; and Maylam, pp.56-58.

<sup>65</sup> Truth, January 1, 1891, p.14.

<sup>66</sup> Truth, January 15, 1891, p.124.

<sup>67</sup> Maylam, p.59.

<sup>68</sup> Chilvers, p.93.

The distribution of shares was questioned by Labouchere, who noted in 1892 that quite large numbers of shares were distributed at par by Rhodes and Beit to "influential men" who could be useful to the Company, at a time when their stock market value was between £4 and £5.<sup>69</sup> Galbraith and Maylam are the only authors who have provided information on the subject since then. Maylam has the most detailed information, and has described the way in which British South Africa Company shares were used to secure the support of imperial officials, Cape politicians, and financiers.<sup>70</sup>

The nominal capital of the Company was increased several times between 1890 and 1897 - without any particularly solid base for expecting increased revenue. After the Matabele War, when the price of Chartered Company shares was high, the Company's capital was doubled. One million new shares were issued, in order to purchase the Rudd Concession from the United Concessions Company in accordance with the 1890 agreement: these were distributed amongst the shareholders of the United Concessions Company. At the same time, in order to meet Company debts, £750,000 was raised in debentures to be repaid with interest on January 1st, 1896.<sup>71</sup> As the Company's financial state was no better in 1895, a new issue of 500,000 shares was prepared for January 1896. Later in 1896, a further one million

<sup>69</sup> Truth, January 4, 1894.

<sup>70</sup> Maylam, pp.126-132.

<sup>71</sup> S.G. Millin, Rhodes, London, 1933. p.205.

shares were issued. The Company proposed a scheme of underwriting, which was rejected by shareholders, and the shares were thus issued directly to the public. The Company's nominal capital therefore stood at £4,500,000 by the end of 1896.<sup>72</sup>

The initial occupation of Mashonaland drained the Company of its initial capital, and it was only because Rhodes could call upon the backing of Consolidated Goldfields and De Beers as a result of the Trust Deeds he had created, that the British South Africa Company managed to survive. In July 1891 the Company's available resources were £280,000, but by December 1891 they were reduced to £144,000, and the value of the Company's shares had dropped below par.<sup>73</sup> Emergency measures had to be taken. The balance owing on partially paid shares was called in, and various loans were arranged. Goldfields, Beit and Rhodes each agreed to lend £500 per month,<sup>74</sup> and, although De Beers had already lent the Company £70,000, it agreed to lend a further £3,500 per month. These payments continued for forty-three months. In addition, when De Beers paid a dividend in December 1891, a bonus was paid in British South Africa Company shares.<sup>75</sup> Hedley Chilver's comments:

Without the original investment of £210 000 (original

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<sup>72</sup> Millin, pp.319-321.

<sup>73</sup> Maylam, p.87.

<sup>74</sup> Galbraith, p.263.

<sup>75</sup> Each investor received in British South Africa Company shares one-fifth the number of De Beers shares held. H.A. Chilver, The Story of De Beers. p.102.

paid-up outlay £91,000) by De Beers, the assistance given the pioneer column, and the loan of £220,500, together with other support, it seems problematical whether the British South Africa Company would have survived its early difficulties.<sup>76</sup>

Aspects of the financial dealings of the British South Africa Company were thus highly suspect. Rhodes used British South Africa Company shares to achieve his own ends - politically and financially. Shareholders of the Company were deliberately misled as to the value of the Company in which they were investing. The Company's promoters retained ownership of the Rudd Concession secretly and by this manoeuvre, brought wealth to themselves. The continued existence of the Central Search Association and its conversion into the United Concessions Company indicated an intention to retain ownership of the concession until a favourable moment for "selling" it. The dramatic inflation of capital in the United Concessions Company and the Exploring Company similarly suggested underhand dealing. Examination of the financing of the British South Africa Company stimulated Labouchere's interest, and his suspicion that the Company's promoters were engaged in speculative financing struck a raw nerve, so that the Company's financial structure and management became a matter of continuing concern for him.

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<sup>76</sup> Chilvers, p.93.

## The Occupation and Establishment of Mashonaland. 1890-1893

The relationship between the British Government and the Chartered Company, the legal basis for the administration of Mashonaland and Matabeleland, the occupation of Mashonaland and the establishment of territorial boundaries will be discussed in the following section. The Government's failure to exercise control over the Company is an important theme in the early history of Rhodesia, and it is therefore important that the reasons for this failure be understood. The way in which the legal foundation of the Company's administration was laid reveals the willingness of the British Government and its officials to employ a mixture of subterfuge and facade in order to establish the Company in Rhodesia. The occupation of Mashonaland shows the influence of financial restraint on the Company's operations, and the Company's disregard for African's rights. Finally the process of establishing the Company's boundaries again demonstrates the Company's unethical methods, and illustrates Labouchere's concern over the implications of the Company's activities for Great Britain.

The relationship between the British Government and Imperial officials was important in determining the course of events. The Charter invested significant theoretical control in the Imperial Government, but this control could not be effected, as there was to be no Imperial Government officer resident in the Chartered Company's domain. The local Imperial Government

representative with authority over the Company was the High Commissioner for South Africa, resident in the Cape and entirely dependent on the Company for information about the territory. The High Commissioner was also Governor of the Cape Colony with extensive responsibilities in that capacity. The Imperial Government refused to spend the money necessary to employ a Resident Commissioner in Mashonaland in 1891; thus, the closest imperial officers were the Administrator and Chief Magistrate of British Bechuanaland, Sir Sydney Shippard, and Assistant Commissioners J.S. Moffat and W.H. Surmon of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, where Maylam has shown that Rhodes had great influence, at least initially.<sup>77</sup> Sir Henry Loch, High Commissioner from 1889 to 1895 had inadequate information because he had no local official; and for the same reason he was unable to enforce any changes in policy that he may have wished to bring about, initially in Mashonaland and subsequently in Matabeleland.

A second issue of importance in the early years of the British South Africa Company was the legal basis of its government. The Chartered Company's claim to Mashonaland ultimately rested solely on the concession granted by Lobengula to the Rudd group in 1888. This concession granted full mineral rights, but no land rights or rights to govern Europeans or Africans in the area. The Royal Charter in turn only empowered the Company to "acquire by any concession agreement grant or

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<sup>77</sup> Maylam, pp.130-131.



treaty, all or any rights interests ... whatever, including powers necessary for the purposes of government and the preservation of public order ...".<sup>78</sup> Although the Charter then proceeded to stipulate terms and conditions of the Company's administration, all details rested on the proviso that the Company had secured the agreement of the African ruler within whose territory it wished to establish an administration. Lobengula, however, utterly refused to grant any governing rights to the British South Africa Company. He repudiated the Rudd Concession as a written document and attempted to confine the Company's mining operations to the Shashi river area, and he never gave permission for the occupation of Mashonaland by the Company.<sup>79</sup> Thus, when the British South Africa Company began to plan its first moves in Mashonaland, it had no legal basis for sending in pioneers, or for establishing any kind of administration. In fact, the Company did not acquire a secure legal footing in Mashonaland until Lobengula was defeated in war. Between September 1890 and November 1893, the Company and the British Government employed various stratagems to create the illusion of legality, while the Company created a different reality.

The legal illusion developed since, when the Company claimed to have got Lobengula's consent for a party to enter Mashonaland, it was not required to produce evidence. Once the

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<sup>78</sup> C8773; clause 3.

<sup>79</sup> Cobbing, Occupation, p.54.

occupation had taken place, the Imperial government did not allow any system of courts and ordinance-making to be set up, but it did allow the Company to issue "regulations". This the Company did, utilising applicable sections of Cape Colony law. Settlers who rebelled would be warned to obey, or they would be expelled from the country.<sup>80</sup> This tactic was adequate while there was no challenge to the British South Africa Company's authority. However, as the numbers of settlers increased, and when it was feared that Boers from the Transvaal were planning a trek to establish a new republic in Mashonaland, the British Government decided to place the weight of more direct British authority behind the Company and reluctantly declared a British Protectorate over the whole of Lobengula's territory.<sup>81</sup> The Protectorate was proclaimed by Order in Council of the 9th May 1891. The Order vested extensive powers in the High Commissioner, subject to instructions from the Secretary of State, to appoint all administrative officers, issue proclamations etc. However, the Colonial Office wrote to the British South Africa Company reassuring them that the Order was to support Company powers, and that the High Commissioner was

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<sup>80</sup> Palley, pp.39-43.

<sup>81</sup> Palley, pp.87-89 has a detailed explanation of the intricate web of legalities involved in this step. It was decided that the Protectorate could be declared on the basis of sufferance, since Lobengula had not actively opposed the exercise of authority by Britain over British subjects in his territory.

not expected to exert all his authority.<sup>82</sup>

After the Order was proclaimed, Sir Henry Loch issued a Proclamation on 10th June 1891 giving effective control of the Protectorate to the High Commissioner. The Proclamation established a Resident Commissioner in Mashonaland who would control the administration and finance of the territory. The Imperial Government honoured its undertaking to the Company, and the only provisions it allowed to be effected were those dealing with law and its administration.<sup>83</sup> Since Loch had already appointed Colquhoun Resident Commissioner, his title was changed to Chief Magistrate, and Company ordinances were issued to replace other necessary provisions. Thus the Order in Council applied a facade of legality but the Company's administration continued to operate much as it had done before, while the question of the Company's ownership of the land was deviously solved, with the aid of Edward Lippert's concession, almost contemporaneously with the machinations surrounding the Order.

Questionable as these measures were legally, they were never challenged in a court of law in the 1890s.<sup>84</sup> Lobengula was reluctant to challenge the Company by force. Therefore the

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<sup>82</sup> Palley, pp. 87-89 cites H.C.1893/94, LXI,505, ... Correspondence ... Mashonaland ... (C7171) No.1,p.1, May 1891.

<sup>83</sup> Palley, p.91. Palley notes that these provisions specified that the law of the Cape Colony was to be applied.

<sup>84</sup> In 1918 a Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, appointed to determine the rights and liabilities of the British South Africa Company, decided that the Company had no right to the land in Southern Rhodesia, but was "administering them for the crown". Palley, p.206.

measures succeeded, and the Company's administration was provided with a quasi-legal foundation.

A further step in establishing a more formal legal administration was taken on 10th September 1894, when the Matabeleland Order-in-Council was issued, giving the Company's administration well-defined legislative and judicial authority over almost all the area of what became in due course Zimbabwe. The chief official was the Administrator and Chief Magistrate, appointed and paid by the Company, with the approval of the Secretary of State. A High Court was created, with one or more judges to be appointed and paid by the Company. The Administrator was to be assisted by a Council consisting of the Judge, plus three other members appointed by the Company, with the Secretary of State's approval.<sup>85</sup> The 1894 Order in Council gave the illusion of increased Imperial Government control, but the Crown still had no local officers, and the situation became only superficially more formal. In practice control could not be implemented, and the administration of Rhodesia was left in the hands of a profit-oriented commercial enterprise.

Such was the legal and, at times, largely theoretical, position.

The reality was different, for the presence of the British South Africa Company in Mashonaland was established by an operation which was organised and carried out under contract by Frank Johnson in partnership with Maurice Heany, Henry Borrow

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<sup>85</sup> C8773.

and Frederick Selous.<sup>86</sup> Johnson undertook to occupy Mashonaland with a force of 250 men, for less than £95,000, whereas an experienced British army officer believed he needed 2,500 men to accomplish the same task.<sup>87</sup> The occupation was carried out by the Pioneer Column which was made up of a Pioneer Corps, escorted by two troops of British South Africa Company Police. Upon the insistence of the High Commissioner, three additional troops of British South Africa Company Police had been recruited, and were close at hand, in case difficulties arose. The Pioneer Corps<sup>88</sup> consisted of 21 officers and 168 troopers, accompanied by about 40 civilians. An artillery troop was formed, well-armed with maxims and field guns. Some of the artillery was on loan from the British Navy in Simonstown, which allowed the Company to buy the discharge of five trained

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<sup>86</sup> Frank Johnson was a young adventurer with some local experience. He arrived in South Africa in 1862, aged sixteen. In 1884 he went to Bechuanaland with the Warren Expeditionary Force, then served in the Bechuanaland Border Police until 1887. He then formed a syndicate with three friends, Borrow, Heany and Ted Burnett, and obtained a concession from Kgama. They joined forces with Gifford and Cawston, and the Bechuanaland Exploring Company was formed to exploit it, under Johnson's management. However, as a result of the amalgamation of interests between Gifford and Rhodes, the concession lost its importance, and Johnson felt he was not duly rewarded by Gifford and Cawston for his efforts. Because he refused to be employed by a concern in which they were directors, he and Rhodes agreed that he should plan and lead the Pioneer Expedition as a contractor. F. Johnson, Great Days, reprint, Bulawayo 1972. pp.7-11; Blake, pp. 62-63.

<sup>87</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, pp.176-177.

<sup>88</sup> Information on the Pioneers is found in K. Cary, Charter Royal, Cape Town, 1970; and R. Cary, The Pioneer Corps, Salisbury, 1975.

gunners.<sup>89</sup> In the initial phase of the journey, the column was accompanied by about 150 Bamangwato, who were to assist in cutting the road, and by a large number of African wagon drivers.<sup>90</sup> The calibre of the Pioneers was questionable. Hole claimed: "no finer corps d'elite than the British South Africa Police and the Mashonaland Pioneers has ever been raised".<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, an officer of the British South Africa Company Police described them thus: "Such a mixed lot I never saw in my life, ... peers and waifs of humanity mingling together like the ingredients of a hotch-potch",<sup>92</sup> while Labouchere called them "a lot of buccaneers".<sup>93</sup>

The route chosen was a cautious one, skirting Matabeleland, so as to enter Mashonaland without risking direct confrontation with the Ndebele. Lobengula had given his consent for prospecting to begin, but not for the entry of an occupation force, thus the occupation did constitute a challenge to his authority. There was a real concern that the Ndebele might attack and, at least while in the low bushveld country, the column might have had difficulty defending themselves. However Lobengula was unwilling to engage in battle with the Europeans. He hoped to find some means of co-existence with the Chartered

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<sup>89</sup> Cary, Charter, pp.68-69; Pioneers, pp. 125-126.

<sup>90</sup> Johnson, 129/30.

<sup>91</sup> Hole, Making, p.133.

<sup>92</sup> A.G. Leonard, quoted in Galbraith, p.147.

<sup>93</sup> Truth, August 1890, p.435.

Company, since it was obvious he was not likely to be rid of it.

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The Pioneers collected in the Bechuanaland Protectorate at Macloutsie, and entered Mashonaland on July 10, 1890, at the Shashi River. They built a stronghold at the site, which became Fort Tuli, and built two more forts as they advanced, at Fort Victoria and Fort Charter. On September 12, they reached their destination and created the town of Salisbury, now Harare.

The Charter defined the principle field of operations of the British South Africa Company as "the region of South Africa lying immediately to the north of British Bechuanaland and to the north and west of the South African Republic and to the west of the Portuguese Dominions".<sup>95</sup> The Company's aspirations extended beyond Mashonaland and Matabeleland. It hoped to include as well Manicaland, Gazaland, Barotseland, the Lake Nyasa area and the Katanga. One of the people working for

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<sup>94</sup> Lobengula had sufficient contact with other Africans to know what kind of force he was up against. He knew the history of his own people, who had been unable to hold their land in the Transvaal against the Boers. He had seen the Swazi Kingdom eaten away, as a result of the concessions granted to white men; the much-feared Zulu of Natal, who had tried to resist white authority had been defeated; and he had seen Kgama, chief of the Nkwato come to terms with the white men, retaining some dignity and authority over his people. While he cannot have hoped to emulate Kgama's settlement specifically, he knew that he would lose his country altogether if no accommodation with the white men could be found.

<sup>95</sup> C8773, p.588.

Rhodes was Sir Harry Johnston.<sup>96</sup> When in an agreement with the British Government, Johnston became Consul for East Africa, with his salary paid by Rhodes, he was expected to advance Rhodes's interests. He signed treaties in the Lake Nyasa area, and successfully eliminated the Portuguese threat, although the Lake Nyasa area was only formally secured when the British South Africa Company took over the African Lakes Company in 1893.<sup>97</sup>

Action was necessary elsewhere, however, and the Company's administrator, Archibald Colquhoun's, first task once the Pioneer Column was safely in Mashonaland was to sign treaties with local African chiefs who were not Lobengula's tributaries. Agreements were signed with Umtasa in Manicaland, with Gungunyana in Gazaland, and with petty chiefs in the area. Other missions were sent out to secure territory in Barotseland, and if possible, in the Katanga as well. In Barotseland Lewanika granted a concession to an agent of the Company in 1890. The Katanga, known to be rich in minerals, was the desirable prize for the Company, and three separate parties were despatched to attempt to secure a concession to the area.<sup>98</sup> The parties were ill-equipped and lacked co-ordination, however, and the attempt failed. Locally signed treaties were of limited significance as

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<sup>96</sup> Johnston was an explorer, naturalist and artist, with an interest in East Africa. He went on exploring expeditions in Central Africa, and rapidly won a reputation in Britain for his extreme imperialist plans for Southern Africa. He was appointed Consul-General in Portuguese East Africa in 1889. Blake, p.78.

<sup>97</sup> Galbraith, pp.226-231.

<sup>98</sup> Blake, pp. 81-82.



in most cases they merely provided support for negotiations between Europeans, and the final decisions were made in Europe.

The Chartered Company's attempts to secure territory in Manicaland and Gazaland involved it in conflict with Portugal. Rhodes wanted to secure access to the sea for his territory, and the Portuguese controlled the East Coast, north of Delagoa Bay, and he was determined to influence the outcome of Britain's negotiations with Portugal in his favour. Barotseland and Nyasaland were still under discussion, Mashonaland and Matabeleland were recognised as Britain's sphere, and the Portuguese possession of the coast of Mozambique was undisputed. Rhodes was most interested in the territory between Mashonaland and the East Coast, Manicaland, and Gazaland, and in the Portuguese port of Beira. He believed that if he took quick and decisive action, he could defeat the Portuguese, if necessary, and that Britain would accept a fait accompli.

The British Government, however, was wary of confrontation with Portugal. Lord Salisbury had to ensure that the delicate balance achieved at Berlin was not upset by forcing an unreasonable settlement on Portugal.<sup>99</sup> While their diplomats negotiated, both Portuguese and British South Africa Company agents were active in Central Africa, trying to obtain treaties, and to establish a presence. Rhodes succeeded to a limited extent in forcing Salisbury's hand in negotiations, by acquiring proof of British South Africa Company presence in areas claimed

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<sup>99</sup> Galbraith pp. 158-159,

by the Portuguese, but his hopes of acquiring Beira or another port on the East coast were not met. Salisbury would not be pushed too far, and insisted that Portugal's claims to the east coast were incontrovertible. A treaty concluded in August 1890 conceded most of Manicaland, Gazaland and Barotseland to the Portuguese. This agreement was approved by the British South Africa Company Board of Directors in London before it was signed,<sup>100</sup> but the Portuguese declined to ratify it. This gave Rhodes his opportunity. He encouraged his agents, who had his unwritten permission to create incidents with the Portuguese if necessary. So it was that, between August 1890 and July 1891, when a treaty was finally concluded and signed by both parties, Rhodes's agents deliberately created several incidents with Portuguese agents in Portuguese territory. It seems clear that Rhodes's intention was to seize Beira by force,<sup>101</sup> and his agents' dubious tactics generated substantial public support. The terms of the final treaty were more favourable to the Company, even though the Imperial Government resisted all attempts to force the Portuguese out of Beira. The treaty placed most of Manicaland in the British South Africa Company's hands, while the question of Barotseland was postponed, and Gazaland and the East Coast remained under Portuguese control.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Galbraith, p. 172.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p.177.

<sup>102</sup> Axelson, p. 296; Galbraith p.197.

The way in which Mashonaland was occupied and the company's boundaries secured reveals both the scope of the Company's aspirations, and the questionable methods they employed in pursuing their ends. Johnson's Pioneer Column was a risky manoeuvre, and violated Lobengula's prohibition against the occupation of Mashonaland. In their confrontation with the Portuguese over Manicaland, Gazaland and Beira, the Company showed no concern for Britain's diplomatic standing, nor respect for Portugal's rights. These activities justified the fears which Labouchere expressed about the policy of using chartered companies to achieve imperial ends.

#### The Administration of Mashonaland

The Company's early record of questionable financial deals, and flagrant disregard for the rights of others led Labouchere to report details of the Company's administration which came to his attention. The letters and comments which he printed sometimes revealed serious misdemeanours by Company officials. The following section therefore describes the administration established by the Company in some detail, showing that all three of the problems which concerned Labouchere affected the kind of administration which was established in Mashonaland. The information available on the administration established in Mashonaland is scarce. Company reports give only partial information, and cast that which is provided in a most

favourable light. Hole gives a little information, but does not describe the administration in detail, and no recent historians have examined the Company's initial administration in Mashonaland in detail either.

In considering the British South Africa Company's activities between 1890 and 1896, it is hard to escape the conclusion that it did not devote serious attention to developing its territories in those years. The Company lacked capital, and this affected every sphere of its operations. Its aspirations were boundless, and widely publicised, but it did not have the means to give substance to such dreams: the means of access to the territory improved very slowly, and few incentives were given to settlers. The attitude of Company officials - from its Managing Director, Rhodes, down - towards legality and conventional forms was extremely casual, the rights of Africans were disregarded, and every possible means of raising money was seized. The Imperial Government not only failed to exercise control over the Company's administration, they co-operated with it to find a legal base for administering Lobengula's territory without his consent.

While the dispute with the Portuguese was in progress, the Company was also active in Mashonaland. The dubious legality of administering Lobengula's territory did not deter Rhodes from doing it and, once the occupation of Mashonaland had been accomplished, the work of setting up an administration was begun immediately.

In order to understand the administration established by the Company, it is necessary to understand its limitations and its objectives. The British South Africa Company was a financial venture which was expected to produce a profit within a reasonable length of time. The directors and Company employees responsible for running the country had little experience of, or interest in, territorial administration. Their first concerns were to preserve law and order, to provide for gold prospecting, to establish mechanisms for collecting revenues, and to prevent conflict with local Africans. Other concerns were to avoid imperial intervention by presenting an appearance of effective administration, the provision of minimal services to settlers and prospectors, and to keep costs as low as possible.

Colquhoun had worked as an administrator in India and did attempt to establish a regular administration within the limits imposed on him by the Company's finances. The initial administration established was very basic. Hugh Marshall Hole, a member of the administration after 1890, commented:

"Mining and revenue officers were ... chosen from the material at hand, and ... by the time the first settlers began to enter from the south a rough-and-ready system of administration was ... in existence."<sup>103</sup> An example of this practice is the appointment of L.A. Vincent. A member of the Pioneer Corps, he was made Mining Commissioner and Justice of the Peace for the Lomagundi district in February 1891, at the age of 26. Cary's

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<sup>103</sup> Hole, Making, p.277.

biographical notes on the Pioneers reveal no relevant experience, merely that he was a "noted cricketer".<sup>104</sup>

The Company's financial status was an important factor determining the kind of administration to be established. The role of the British South Africa Company was not to be directly involved in mining: it was to police and administer the territory, and sell or lease claims or land to those who wanted to mine, farm or set up businesses. Its revenues were to be derived from a share in the profits of other companies operating in its territory. However, no revenues could be gathered initially, so that a substantial proportion of the available capital was rapidly exhausted. The Report of the British South Africa Company's Directors which was presented to shareholders on 29th November 1892,<sup>105</sup> gives some idea of early costs, although it does not present complete financial statements. The Pioneer Column cost almost £90,000. The cost of establishing communications was substantial. Railway costs were deferred until after 1890, when the Kimberley-Vryburg section, to be undertaken by the British and Cape Governments, had been completed. However, the Company was responsible for the telegraph extension, and by 1892 had spent nearly £93,000 to extend telegraph wires to Salisbury. Road building was not a

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<sup>104</sup> Cary, Pioneers, p.105.

<sup>105</sup> The British South Africa Company Report on the Company's proceedings and the condition of the territories within the sphere of its operations, 1889-1892. Presented to Shareholders 29th November, 1892.

direct cost, as it was contracted out to private companies.<sup>106</sup> The Company's territorial ambitions, together with the need to protect a small white community from surrounding Africans, led it to form a police force of 650, which was in effect a private army. The Report acknowledged that the Police Force had been very expensive, but did not detail costs. Galbraith gives the annual cost in 1890 as £300 per member, or £195 000 for the year.<sup>107</sup> Such expenses rapidly consumed the cash available to the Company and, without the prospect of immediate returns from gold findings, it was faced with the necessity of borrowing money, and of drastically curtailing its expenditure. Despite advances from De Beers and others, it was necessary to reduce the police force, first to 100, then to 40 in 1892.<sup>108</sup>

The British South Africa Company Report for 1889-1892 lists twenty-four members of the administration, filling thirty-five positions. A thin layer of men was spread unevenly over a large area, many fulfilling a range of functions. There were five magistrates all of whom also served as marriage officers, and the Chief Magistrate was also the Administrator. One of the five Justices of the Peace was also Public Prosecutor, and there was a Master to administer estates of minors, lunatics, deceased and absent persons and insolvents. All the above officials were appointed by High Commissioner's notice. There were also seven

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid. pp.3-7.

<sup>107</sup> Galbraith, p.262.

<sup>108</sup> Galbraith, p.263.

Field Cornets, five mining commissioners (three of whom were also Justices of the Peace), five district surgeons, and a Surveyor-General and Acting Post-Master General (who also served as a Field Cornet). All the latter officials were appointed by the Company.<sup>109</sup> All members of the administration had extensive duties and frequently exercised authority beyond that normally associated with their positions. Magistrates were responsible for maintenance of law and order between Europeans, and between Europeans and Africans, over very large areas. The Field Cornets were responsible for the security of the territory and, after 1891, when the Company began cutting back the British South Africa Company Police, their importance greatly increased. They were in charge of forming a group of local settlers into a commando for defence, when the need arose - following the system employed by the Boers in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. The commandos were often used for policing purposes as well.<sup>110</sup>

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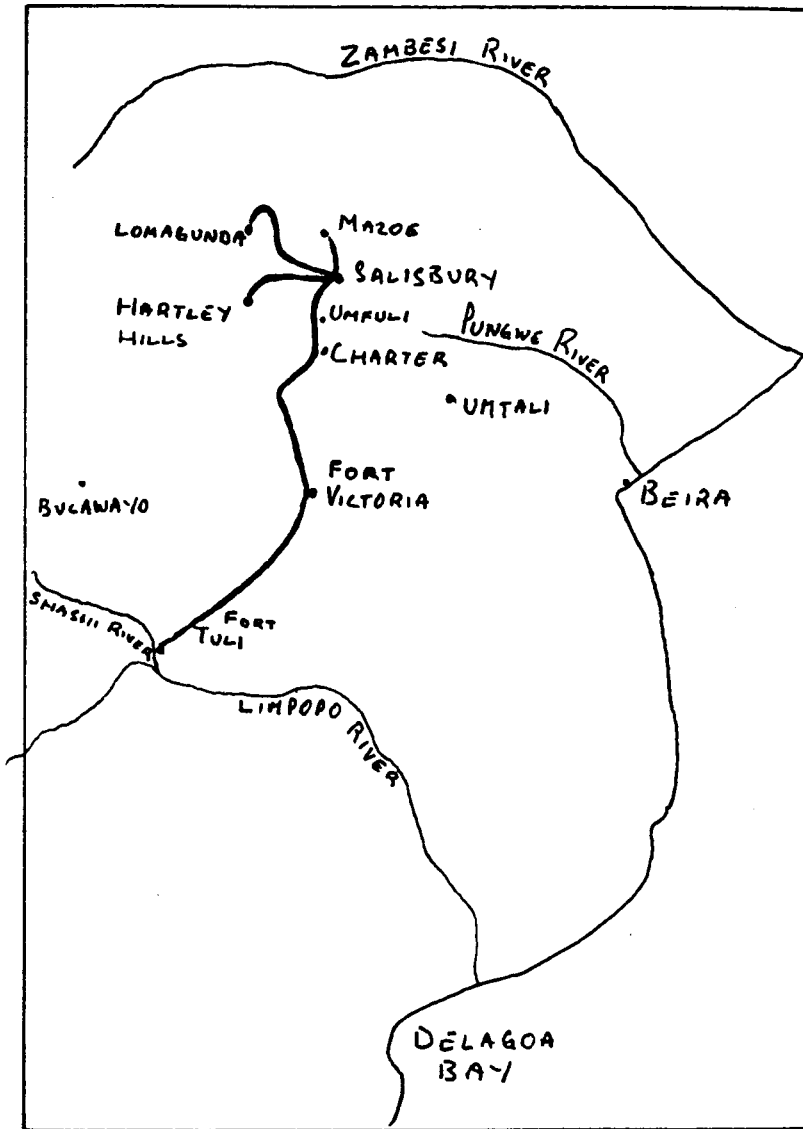
<sup>109</sup> British South Africa Company Report, 1889-1892. pp.7-8.

<sup>110</sup> Ranger, pp.60-61.



FIGURE 2

A Sketch Map of Mashonaland



This structure indicates the sparseness of the

administration. In 1890 three official districts were created,<sup>111</sup> but by 1892, there were four major settlement areas: Tuli, Victoria (now Nyanda), Umtali and Salisbury, each of which had a magistrate, and a district surgeon. Five mining commissioners were responsible for somewhat different districts: Victoria, Umtali, Mazoe, Lomagundi and Umfuli. Placing these sites on a map reveals that their rationale was not administrative efficiency. With the exception of Tuli, which is about 430 miles from Salisbury, all districts are within a 200 mile radius of Salisbury. Mazoe, Lomagundi and Umfuli are all west or north-west of Salisbury, and are all within 100 miles of Salisbury. One magistrate covered both Salisbury and Hartley Hills, while the Hon. C.J. White was mining commissioner for Umfuli, and Justice of the Peace for Hartley Hills. The districts of Field Cornets appear to be based upon their own farms or residences. The positions of Administrator, and Surveyor-General and Acting Postmaster General covered the whole territory.

According to the Company's report, in 1890 there were an estimated 1000 whites in Mashonaland. By Oct 3, 1892, when the Surveyor-General's report was compiled, this had increased to an estimated 3000. Five hundred farms had been granted and 300 people were estimated to be occupying farms, but titles had been issued to only 13, and 69 Certificates of Land Rights had been issued. No information on town plots was recorded. There is

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<sup>111</sup> Johnson, p. 155.

scattered information on the issue of trading and professional licences, but it is not sufficiently complete to allow any conclusions to be drawn.<sup>112</sup>

Telegraph links with Mashonaland were established rapidly, but other aspects of communications were developed very slowly. Railways were built simultaneously from Kimberley and from Beira. The 126 miles from Kimberley to Vryburg were completed by December 1890, in just over a year. The next section, to Mafeking, was not commenced until 1893, and was completed in 1894. Work did not commence on the extension to Matabeleland until the end of 1895, and the railway only reached Bulawayo at the end of 1897.<sup>113</sup> The Beira railway was built on a narrow gauge, and work commenced in 1892. It passed through difficult, fever-ridden terrain, and made very slow progress. The line reached Umtali only in 1898.<sup>114</sup> Until rail links were established all passengers and goods had to be transported from the railhead by wagon, and the journey was slow and difficult.

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<sup>112</sup> For example, information on Salisbury only covers January 1 to September 30, 1892, and the report does not clarify whether it includes only new licences, or whether renewals were included; nor did it state the period for which licences were valid, nor how many licenses, if any, lapsed in that time period, so it is impossible to assess how many tradesmen and professionals there were in Salisbury.

<sup>113</sup> A.H. Croxton, Railways of Rhodesia. The Story of the Beira Mashonaland and Rhodesia Railways. Newton Abbot, Devon, 1973. pp45-46.

<sup>114</sup> Croxton, p.30.

George Pauling<sup>115</sup> remembered receiving a deputation in 1895 complaining that mails had been delayed, during the wet season, because the Company had not kept the roads in good order, nor provided wire ropes so that mail could be moved across the flooded rivers.<sup>116</sup>

Onerous burdens were placed upon prospectors and miners. A prospector's license cost one shilling, and claims had to be registered for a half crown, while an alluvial claim cost £1 a month. A shaft had to be sunk on any claim within four months of registration, and an Inspection Certificate issued, for fifteen shillings. If claims were payable, the Company claimed fifty percent of the shares in the company floated to exploit them, and after flotation a claim fee of 10 shillings was to be paid. In addition anyone holding a prospector's licence was obliged to assist in the defence of the territory, if required to do so by the Company.<sup>117</sup>

Conditions for occupying a lot in Salisbury were not more attractive. A ten shilling occupation fee, plus a ten shilling fee to the Sanitary Board had to be paid, and the tenant was given no security of tenure, as the Company reserved the right to resume possession of the lot "if required for mining or other

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<sup>115</sup> Pauling was a railway contractor, and a civil servant in the Chartered Company's administration from 1894 to 1897.

<sup>116</sup> G. Pauling, Chronicles of a Contractor Reprint, Bulawayo, 1969. 1st edition, 1926. pp.144-145.

<sup>117</sup> Mathers, pp.461-462.

purposes, without compensation".<sup>118</sup>

The somewhat meagre information on the number and distribution of officials, the burdens on prospecting and mining, and the reservations on urban lots serves to identify the Chartered Company's priorities. Officials were appointed to ensure the maintenance of law and order, the registration and regulation of mining claims, and minimal security for those seeking or working minerals. Other essential aspects of the administration were neglected, and no attempt was made to make the country attractive to settlers.

The Company's administration was initially very casual with regard to Africans as well. We have seen that Lobengula's protests were ignored, and the Pioneer Column entered Mashonaland without his consent. The administration continued to show a complete lack of concern for Africans' rights. Colquhoun did not establish a Native Department when he was setting up the administration, because he felt there was no legal authority for it. When Jameson took over as Administrator, he did not consider it necessary to have formal machinery controlling the relations between whites and Africans in Mashonaland, and relied on the Field Cornets to maintain order. An American settler in Mashonaland described field cornets as "a sort of magistrate in the district".<sup>119</sup> When problems did occur between Europeans and

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<sup>118</sup> The Occupation Certificate was published in Truth, November 12, 1891, p.994.

<sup>119</sup> W.H. Brown, On the South African Frontier. Reprint, New York, 1970. p.243.

Shona, it was very often the Field Cornets with their local burghers who "dealt" with them, generally in a summary fashion, with more concern for setting an example than for meting out justice.

In 1894, after several years of asking, the Company was allowed by the Imperial Government to pass an ordinance requiring Africans, but initially only the Shona, to pay a hut tax.<sup>120</sup> The imposition of a hut tax in Mashonaland created many grievances. The right to impose the tax was important to the Company both as a source of revenue, and as an inducement to Africans to work for Europeans. The collection of hut tax necessitated some formalisation of African administration, and the result was the appointment of officers to extract hut tax.<sup>121</sup> By the end of 1894, it was evident that this ad hoc method was no longer adequate, and in September 1894, a Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) was appointed, with eleven Assistant Native Commissioners (ANC). As the calibre of those appointed to the Native Department was low, this formalisation resulted in more effective tax collection, but not in equitable treatment of the Shona.<sup>122</sup> In the first few years of Company rule, aside from minor incidents of theft, contentious issues were labour and land. After 1894, hut tax became a major issue between the Company and the Shona.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. pp.102-103.

<sup>121</sup> Ranger, pp.69-70.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. pp.74-77.

Relations between Europeans in general and the Shona were further marred by a lack of respect for the Shona on the part of settlers which is reflected in numerous contemporary writings. In commenting on white security after the British South Africa Company Police were disbanded, Hole remarked that the Shona presented no danger to settlers, who regarded them with contempt. They were useful servants, and settlers could trade for "their miserable produce", but they were thought to be of no danger, militarily.<sup>123</sup> Ranger explains further that settlers had no hesitation even in provoking them, despite the numerical superiority of the Shona. The following comments of Brown support this contention:

Mashonas cannot conceive of bravery unless there is power behind it and when one or two men present a bold front, these natives will often desist from violence, believing that a large force may be lying concealed in the bushes near at hand.<sup>124</sup>

After further dangerous encounters, Brown states: "I had begun to fancy myself almost invulnerable".<sup>125</sup> Thus settlers fearlessly engaged in 'policing' activities as described by Ranger,<sup>126</sup> and even interfered in tribal disputes.

One of the activities of the settlers was the pressing of Shona into the service of Europeans. Ranger quoted newly appointed Native Commissioners in 1894 reporting that Africans

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<sup>123</sup> Hole, Making, p.282-283.

<sup>124</sup> Brown, p.243.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. p.288. The comments are quoted by Ranger, p.63.

<sup>126</sup> Ranger, pp.60-67.

simply deserted their villages on the approach of white men, and that white employers had been in the habit of abusing their labourers shortly before the first pay day, causing them to "bolt" without pay, with the result that it had become very difficult to get labourers at all.<sup>127</sup> Ranger discusses other irregularities in which settlers were involved, with regard to the Shona: involvement in inter-tribal raids, takeover of land occupied by Shona tribes, rape of African women.<sup>128</sup> If the Company was not directly involved in such activities, it was certainly not ignorant of their occurrence, and made no attempt to control the Europeans living in Mashonaland.

The administration established by the Company showed a similar disregard for Europeans and Africans. It was designed to present a facade of effective government which it achieved, despite the attempts of critics to demonstrate its failings. Opponents in England and in Mashonaland severely criticised the Company, and Labouchere frequently reported complaints about conditions in Mashonaland, which will be considered in more detail below. The information gleaned suggests that the purpose of the Company was not to establish a new British colony but, rather, merely to manufacture money for those who controlled it.

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<sup>127</sup> Ranger, p.68.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. pp.62-62;59;67.



The Conquest and Settlement of Matabeleland. 1893-1896

When war broke out between the Ndebele and the British South Africa Company, Labouchere's experience of the Company's operations caused him to be highly suspicious of the Company's motives, and of the way in which the war would be waged. He asserted that the Company was close to bankruptcy, that Mashonaland had failed to produce paying gold, and that the Company therefore created a war with Lobengula, in order to occupy Matabeleland, and so revive confidence in British South Africa Company shares on the London Stock Exchange.

Historians' attitudes to the Matabele War have varied since then. Hole attributed the war to the savage practices of the Ndebele, whose raids against the Shona threatened white security in Mashonaland.<sup>129</sup> Ranger stated that in 1890 Rhodes and Jameson "planned the eventual conquest of Matabeleland ... but were happy to postpone it ..."<sup>130</sup> Once a minor clash had occurred, close to European settlement, Jameson resolved that the moment for the settlement of Matabeleland had arrived, and created a war.<sup>131</sup> Ranger did not refer to any financial motive for the war.

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<sup>129</sup> Hole, Making, pp.283-298.

<sup>130</sup> Ranger, p.91.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. pp.94-98.

Glass,<sup>132</sup> disputed suggestions that the Company deliberately engineered the war for financial reasons, although he acknowledged the financial weakness of the Company. He suggested that a clash between the Ndebele and the Company was inevitable, since both looked upon the Shona as their subjects, and that the Victoria Incident provided the spark, which began real conflict. <sup>133</sup> Glass emphasized the active role which Sir Henry Loch, the High Commissioner, played in the war. The more recent work of Galbraith explained that the war was the result of a variety of factors, that it was pursued by Jameson, and stated that the finances of the Company were a consideration in his decision to create a confrontation with the Ndebele.<sup>134</sup> Maylam emphasized the role of the High Commissioner, and explained that war with the Ndebele to secure dominance over the Shona was inevitable, and that the failure to find gold in Mashonaland led Jameson to escalate the Victoria Incident into a war.<sup>135</sup>

The following section outlines the events leading to war with the Ndebele, and the seizure of their land and cattle by the Company and its troops after Lobengula's defeat. It then describes the administration established over the Ndebele, and the problems which were created. All Labouchere's concerns are represented in this section. The Company's methods in provoking

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<sup>132</sup> S. Glass, *The Matabele War*, London, 1968.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* pp.269-273.

<sup>134</sup> Galbraith, pp.287-289.

<sup>135</sup> Maylam, p.119.

the war and in taking over Ndebele land and cattle after the war were ruthless, and showed a total disregard for their rights, and the connivance of the Imperial Government is plain.

During the first few years of Company rule in Mashonaland there was an uneasy peace between Lobengula and the Company, since neither was willing to test the other. The Company's financial difficulties, and the lack of gold in Mashonaland, made a contest necessary, while the issue which ostensibly sparked the conflict was Lobengula's sovereignty over the Shona. Jameson at first did not challenge Lobengula's right to raid and extract tribute. For example, in 1891 an impi was sent to punish Lomagundi, a Shona chief, for refusing to pay tribute, and Lomagundi and others were killed. Jameson did not complain to Lobengula, and commented that the raid was "in accordance with Lobengula's laws and customs".<sup>136</sup> He established a border,<sup>137</sup> and kept Europeans on their side of it. Lobengula never acknowledged the existence of a border<sup>138</sup>, but he did ensure that his warriors kept away from Europeans when on raids.<sup>139</sup> Then the Company's telegraph wires were twice cut by Shona tribesmen. On the first occasion Lobengula was urged both by the

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<sup>136</sup> quoted in Ranger, p.28.

<sup>137</sup> S. Glass, *The Matabele War*, London, 1968. pp.39-40.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* pp.156-158.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.* p.129.

Company<sup>140</sup> and by Sir Henry Loch, High Commissioner,<sup>141</sup> to keep control of his people, and particularly to protect the telegraph line. On the second occasion, in May 1893, the Shona responsible paid a fine demanded by the Company with Lobengula's cattle, which were in their charge, and told Lobengula that the Company had seized them. The resulting misunderstanding raised tensions substantially, but was ultimately resolved, and directions were given that Lobengula's cattle should be returned to him.<sup>142</sup> In June 1893 a small impi sent on a raid encountered Captain Lendy, magistrate of Victoria. Lendy warned the Ndebele not to interfere with the whites, but he reported "as it was an intertribal dispute, it was not my business to interfere in the matter".<sup>143</sup>

In July when a large impi was sent to raid a Shona tribe near Fort Victoria, the official response was quite different. Lobengula gave warning notice of the raid to the European authorities in Mashonaland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and in the Cape Colony, and gave his impi strict instructions not to interfere with whites - which instructions were obeyed.<sup>144</sup>

However, when Shona servants appealed to whites for protection,

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p.61. The letter also suggested he should punish the offenders.

<sup>141</sup> Mason, p.165.

<sup>142</sup> In fact Jameson delayed returning them until the war had begun, and the cattle never reached Lobengula, but became part of the loot cattle. See Glass, p.65.

<sup>143</sup> Quoted in Glass, p.67

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. pp.70-71;81-82.

they were taken into Fort Victoria. The Ndebele impi requested that their subjects be released to them, and became angry when the whites refused. Jameson came to Fort Victoria to negotiate and met the Indunas of the impi on July 18th. When they continued to insist that the Shona be handed over to them, Jameson gave the impi about an hour to cross the border into Matabeleland. Details of the meeting, instructions given and subsequent action are variously recorded, but the effect was that the impi was pursued after an hour and a half or two hours by a mounted patrol, led by Captain Lendy.<sup>145</sup> The patrol fired on the Ndebele without provocation, killing a considerable number (accounts vary from ten to thirty).<sup>146</sup> The fear such a raid excited in whites, and the disruption caused by the scattering of their Shona servants, caused intense feeling against the Ndebele, and Jameson apparently either yielded to, or decided to take advantage of, such feelings, and began to prepare for war against Lobengula.<sup>147</sup>

Jameson's preparations had two aspects. First he had to make physical arrangements. Secondly, he set about creating the illusion of Ndebele aggression, to induce the Imperial Government to support the war. Physical preparations for war were relatively easy. A volunteer force of about 500, the Mashonaland Horse, had been formed in Salisbury in October 1892.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid pp.112-113.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. pp.116-118.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. pp.94-105.

All licensed prospectors were bound to assist in the defence of the Company's sphere, and Field Cornets were able to organise such men into burgher forces.<sup>148</sup> However, residents generally required little coercion to volunteer for the Company's forces, and two well-armed columns were rapidly formed, at Salisbury under Captain Forbes, and at Fort Victoria under Captain Lendy, lacking only horses.<sup>149</sup> A third column formed at Fort Tuli under Captain Raaff was largely recruited in the Transvaal - where Raaff also apparently purchased horses.<sup>150</sup> The Victoria Agreement signed between Jameson and the troops collected, promised volunteers gold claims, land and a share in the loot, in return for their services beyond the area the Company claimed to administer.<sup>151</sup>

In preparing the Imperial Government for war, Jameson was assisted by the attitude of Loch. While he was not willing to condone an unprovoked massacre, Loch agreed with the Company that eventually the Ndebele would have to be conquered, and he hoped to be able to use imperial forces as a decisive element in the war, and to bring Mashonaland and Matabeleland under more direct British control after the war.<sup>152</sup> Thus while Jameson prepared the Company's troops, Loch built up the imperial forces

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<sup>148</sup> Ranger, pp.91-92.

<sup>149</sup> Glass, p.146.

<sup>150</sup> Glass, pp.146-147.

<sup>151</sup> Ranger, p.96.

<sup>152</sup> Glass, pp.122-129; Galbraith, pp.302-303.

in the Bechuanaland Protectorate under Colonel Goold-Adams.<sup>153</sup>

While military preparations were being made, reports of a build up of Ndebele impis on the border and the aggressive intentions of the Ndebele were carefully manufactured. Lobengula emphatically denied any aggressive intent in numerous letters to Loch. John Moffat, Assistant Commissioner in Bechuanaland, who knew Lobengula well, clearly expressed doubts about the veracity of the reports to the Imperial Government. Nonetheless, Loch made no attempt to verify them, and the Secretary of State relied on Loch's judgement.<sup>154</sup> Lobengula desperately tried to prevent war, and sent a deputation to Cape Town to visit Loch, to which Loch gave little weight, as the Company had discredited them before their arrival.<sup>155</sup> Experiencing last minute doubts, Loch asked Lobengula to send a second deputation, which Lobengula did, though puzzled by the request. The three Indunas comprising it were caught by the war, and two of them were shot at Tati, in a Bechuanaland Border Police camp, in an unfortunate incident, which was never fully unravelled.<sup>156</sup>

Once the horses had arrived Imperial permission to declare war was secured in October after two reports, neither of which could be verified, of the Ndebele having fired on British South

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<sup>153</sup> Glass, p.135-143.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. pp.163-170.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. pp.152-162.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. pp.199-201.

Africa Company troops,<sup>157</sup> and on a Bechuanaland Border Police patrol along the Shashi River<sup>158</sup> had been received.

The actual fighting was brief. The European troops were mounted, well-trained in the use of fire-arms, and equipped with Maxim guns; the Ndebele were armed with some fire-arms and spears and clubs. When they tried to attack, they did so in a solid formation, and were so badly decimated by the maxim guns, that they rapidly withdrew, permitting two columns to advance from the East upon Bulawayo. Lobengula fled from his capital to the North, with some followers. He was pursued and it was while pursuing Lobengula that the only significant European losses occurred. As a result of bad planning, bad discipline, and bad luck, a small detachment of men under Captain Wilson was trapped on the wrong side of the Shangani River with insufficient ammunition, and all thirty-three men were killed.<sup>159</sup>

While fleeing, Lobengula sent several peace messages, which were ignored,<sup>160</sup> and finally sent a message accompanied by £1000 in gold. This was intercepted by two unscrupulous troopers, and never reached the Company, and no peace negotiations were attempted.<sup>161</sup> Lobengula died in flight, in January, 1894 - and the war was over.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p.171.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p.178.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. pp.228-229.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p.257.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p.245.



Sir Henry Loch's attempt to gain control of the post-war settlement through the use of imperial troops failed, and it was clear from the start of discussions on the future of Matabeleland that the Company would retain control of the administration. The Company's troops had clearly been in control when Bulawayo had been taken, and the Imperial troops had become important only when the British South Africa Company's troops began to melt away from Christmas 1893 onwards.<sup>162</sup> The result of negotiations between Rhodes, Loch and Lord Ripon, the Colonial Secretary, was the Matabeleland Order in Council of July 18, 1894, recognising Matabeleland as British territory and granting the Company the right to administer the territory according to its Charter and the provisions of the Order.<sup>163</sup> The Order did provide some protection for Africans, under the law. It prohibited the enactment of discriminatory legislation, except with regard to arms, ammunition and liquor, without the Secretary of State's approval. It sought to protect the rights of the defeated Ndebele by requiring the appointment of a Land Commission to oversee the redistribution of land and cattle, and ensure that sufficient cattle were assigned to the Ndebele for their needs.<sup>164</sup> The controls written in, however, were not effective without supervision, and the Order gave the Company increased authority, without effectively increasing control by

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<sup>162</sup> Maylam, pp.124-125.

<sup>163</sup> Palley, p. 115

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. p.118.

the Imperial Government.<sup>165</sup>

The Ndebele were ruthlessly stripped of cattle and land. Although the Imperial Government repeatedly insisted in letters that the Company must ensure that the Ndebele be left with sufficient cattle, and that no land settlement should be implemented before the Land Commission had met, in fact it had no idea what was happening in Matabeleland and accepted Company reports at their face value. Jameson had a free hand in deciding how land and cattle should be distributed. As Stigger has made clear, by the time the Land Commission met, the actual land settlement had already begun to be implemented, and the Land Commission, far from protecting the rights of the Ndebele, assisted the Company in obtaining sufficient land to satisfy all the potential claims against it.<sup>166</sup> Jameson had placed himself and the Company in difficulties by committing too much Ndebele land to volunteers during the Matabele War. Two reserves were created for the Ndebele. However, they were not large enough, and only small portions of each were suitable for intensive agriculture or pastures. The Land Commission completely failed to exercise its power to ensure that adequate land was allocated to the Ndebele.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Palley, p.123, comments: "Colonial Office approval [of appointments] was merely a rubber stamping of Company patronage ..."

<sup>166</sup> See Stigger, The Land Commission and the Land for the details of this complicated arrangement.

<sup>167</sup> Stigger, Land, p.30.

The Land Commission was no more effective in controlling cattle looting. In order to settle the claims of volunteers under the Victoria Agreement, a Loot Committee was established to administer the claims, and cattle were collected into Loot Kraals. However, it is apparent from the way cattle were collected, and from the numbers involved, that far more cattle passed into white hands than is reflected in the transactions of the Loot Committee. Similarly, although the Company claimed that it was taking only cattle which had belonged to Lobengula, it is obvious from descriptions of cattle raids that in fact cattle were quite indiscriminately collected.<sup>168</sup> Not only were the Ndebele left with very few cattle, they were also uncertain of when they would lose those beasts which remained to them.

The way in which the distribution of land and cattle was effected was symptomatic of the Company's administration between 1894 and 1896. Mashonaland and Matabeleland were separately administered. J.W. Colenbrander was given specific responsibility for Africans in Matabeleland, and was appointed Native Commissioner early in 1894. His primary responsibilities were controlling the distribution of Ndebele land and cattle to Europeans, and he was assisted by European Police.<sup>169</sup> After the report of the Land Commission had been prepared in October 1894, Assistant Native Commissioners were appointed to six districts, to assist in the work. None of the ANCs appointed had relevant

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<sup>168</sup> Ranger, pp.105-112.

<sup>169</sup> Stigger, Native Department, pp.41-42.

training or experience,<sup>170</sup> and in general relied on force to elicit response. The most important tasks of the ANCs in Matabeleland and Mashonaland were to locate African kraals, in order to extract their cattle; enumerate the huts for hut tax purposes, and to procure labour. The demand for labour was much greater with new companies and increased capital available for mining after the Matabele War. An African police force, the Matabeleland Native Police, was recruited to assist ANCs in procuring labourers for Europeans.<sup>171</sup> This did not ameliorate conditions, however. In fact grievances of Africans against the native police were most bitter.

The way in which the war against Lobengula was engineered reveals the despicable means which Rhodes was willing to employ to achieve his ends. While it is hard to prove that Labouchere was right in asserting that the war was provoked to save the Company from financial collapse, there is no doubt that it did have this effect. The value of shares on the Stock Exchange increased, and new shares, and debentures were issued. Labouchere's fears about Imperial Government involvement were also borne out, as the Government not only failed to prevent the war, but allowed imperial troops to help defeat the Ndebele, and to maintain security afterwards. The administration of Matabeleland again showed that the Company was not interested in establishing a secure, efficient colony of settlement.

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid. pp.45-46.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p.48.

## The Jameson Raid

Labouchere's strong moral convictions had led him to wage a campaign against the Company from its inception and his reaction to the Raid was outspoken. Once he had agreed to serve on the Committee of Enquiry into the Raid, however, his ability to comment effectively was destroyed and, from the time he was appointed to the Committee, in January 1897, his commentary was reduced in volume and in intensity. Thus while he began a devastating attack on the Company, and on Rhodes, reviling their complicity in the Jameson Raid, his campaign lost its impact before he was aware of the involvement of the Imperial Government. The fact that the Jameson Raid could take place at all reveals the Company's disregard for legality and for the rights of other powers. The British Government's failure to prevent the Raid in the first place, and to exact retribution after it, reveals that a similar carelessness had prevailed on the part of the Imperial Government, who had hoped that it would benefit from the Company's filibustering.

The Jameson Raid, which drew on the resources of the British South Africa Company, with no regard to the propriety of the actions to be taken, was a dramatic example of the Company's disregard for legality. The Raid also demonstrated the complicity of the Imperial Government in the Company's activities - in their failure to stop the Raid, and in the

handling of the conspirators and the Company after the Raid.

The Jameson Raid<sup>172</sup> was a conspiracy between Rhodes, Jameson, and others connected with the British South Africa Company, the administration of Rhodesia, and members of the financial community of Johannesburg who formed the Reform Committee. The details of the whole affair have been so shrouded in mystery, that it is difficult to say precisely what was planned. Probably different people actually involved in the conspiracy did not agree on what was planned, and they certainly did not agree on the outcome desired.<sup>173</sup> In general terms, however, the plan was probably to use Uitlander grievances to foment a revolution in Johannesburg against the Boers. The Chartered Company was to collect an armed force close to the border, under Jameson's command which would, at an agreed time, ride into the Transvaal to assist the revolution, on the pretext of saving the women and children from the Boers.<sup>174</sup> The Boer state would then be overthrown, and a new government, under Jameson as Administrator, sympathetic to financial and mining interests, would replace it. Whether the Transvaal was to be British, or independent, remained a matter of controversy, although Rhodes gave his word that he would not insist on

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<sup>172</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse; Hole, Raid; and Colvin are all useful sources on the Jameson Raid, and have been extensively drawn upon in the following account. H. Hole, The Jameson Raid. London, 1930. I. Colvin, Life of Jameson vol. 2, London, 1922.

<sup>173</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, pp.307-308.

<sup>174</sup> Jameson had an undated signed letter in his possession, calling for his aid.

raising the British flag.<sup>175</sup> There is no doubt, however, that he envisaged a country under his own control, and an ultimate union of all South African territories.<sup>176</sup>

The execution of the conspiracy required considerable planning. In order to have territory under Chartered Company control close enough to Johannesburg to make the dash feasible, some of the Bechuanaland Protectorate had to be ceded to the Company.<sup>177</sup> Chamberlain was visited by the Chartered Company's Cape Town secretary, Rutherford Harris, and finally agreed to cede a narrow strip of territory for the railway to the Company in October 1895. In agreeing to make the cession as rapidly as he did, it is almost certain that Chamberlain knew why Rhodes was pressing so urgently for the cession, and that he was willing to facilitate his plans.<sup>178</sup> Much of the force which Jameson collected near Mafeking was drawn from the British South Africa Company Police, but it was supplemented by some members

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<sup>175</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.308.

<sup>176</sup> Maylam, p.64.

<sup>177</sup> Initially, the Imperial Government had intended the Chartered Company to assume responsibility for the Bechuanaland Protectorate - and to this end the Charter included it in the Company's potential sphere of operations. The Company's financial instability prevented it from taking on this responsibility between 1890 and 1893, when the Imperial Government was anxious to get rid of it. By 1895, when Rhodes wanted the Protectorate, Chamberlain was Colonial Secretary, and was less willing to hand it over. The Africans in the Protectorate were protesting against the possibility of being included in the British South Africa Company's territory. See Maylam pp.62-71 for details.

<sup>178</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, pp.303-305; Palley, p.131.

of the Bechuanaland Border Police, which had just been disbanded, and by troopers recruited in the Cape.<sup>179</sup> He also intended to use the Rhodesian Horse Volunteers as an auxiliary force, but they received the call to mobilise too late, and did not participate in the Raid.<sup>180</sup> The combined force was finally about 500 men.<sup>181</sup>

In Johannesburg, a Reform Committee was established to co-ordinate the rising, and rifles and ammunition were smuggled into the town.<sup>182</sup> Jameson met the Committee in September 1895 to discuss and confirm plans for the rising. He was then given the open letter of invitation. However, the enthusiasm of the reformers was much less than that of Rhodes and Jameson. Although they had genuine grievances against Kruger, and wanted to work for reform, the mines were doing well, business was booming and they still hoped it would be possible to negotiate a settlement. It was hoped also that discussion and plans for a rising might make Kruger take their grievances more seriously.<sup>183</sup> The Rising was planned for December 27, but never took place. Concern over Rhodes's intentions for the future state were cited by the Reform Committee as an excuse - but in fact there was a complete absence of the revolutionary fervour

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<sup>179</sup> Hole, Raid, p.94-95;155.

<sup>180</sup> Hole, Raid, pp.105-108.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p.164.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. pp.98-101.

<sup>183</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, pp.314-315.



needed to set things in motion.<sup>184</sup>

Despite messages telling him to stay where he was, Jameson decided to take his chances, and invaded the Transvaal anyway, with pitiful results. His small force was armed with three field guns and eight maxims<sup>185</sup>, but could not withstand the attack of an organised force of Boers. The parties despatched to cut the telegraph wires to Pretoria both failed to accomplish their mission, and the Boers learned of his departure in ample time to prepare for his arrival.<sup>186</sup> Jameson lacked experience, and was ill-equipped to meet such a formidable enemy, and the situation was aggravated by the failure of the Reform Committee to send a force to meet him, as promised.<sup>187</sup> After a brief resistance, Jameson and his men surrendered to a force of Boers outside Johannesburg.<sup>188</sup>

Once the Reform Committee learned Jameson was on his way, they made some preparations to assist him, but no armed force was formed. On invitation from President Kruger, a Johannesburg deputation went to Pretoria to negotiate. Kruger gave no concrete promises, but did agree to consider their grievances, if properly presented. The Reform Committee gave him a list of their members and agreed to an armistice. They then felt unable

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<sup>184</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.315.

<sup>185</sup> Hole, Raid, pp.155;160.

<sup>186</sup> Colvin, pp.60-61; Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.320.

<sup>187</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.310.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p.320.

to send aid to Jameson, as it would have violated the armistice.  
189 The whole affair fizzled out miserably, leaving all parties to the conspiracy in a very bad way. Members of the Reform Committee were arrested and tried. Initial heavy penalties were later commuted to fines of up to £25,000 each for the leaders of the conspiracy.<sup>190</sup> Jameson and other Company officials were allowed to be tried in London. Six of them were convicted of having organised an armed expedition against a friendly country and sentenced to short prison terms.<sup>191</sup>

A Parliamentary Committee appointed to investigate the Raid in Cape Town found that Rhodes had not been responsible for the Raid itself, but condemned his involvement in the conspiracy.<sup>192</sup> Since Rhodes had already resigned as Prime Minister of the Cape, however, no further action against him was recommended. A Select Parliamentary Committee which was appointed in London to investigate the Jameson Raid confirmed Rhodes's involvement in the conspiracy, but did not recommend any punishment for Rhodes - nor did it reveal the extent to which the High Commissioner and Secretary of State were implicated.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, there

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid. pp.327-329.

<sup>190</sup> Hole, Raid, pp.265-268.

<sup>191</sup> Colvin, pp.148-155.

<sup>192</sup> Hole, Raid, p.272.

<sup>193</sup> Labouchere was appointed to this Committee, but was unable to influence its operations. His participation, and the reasons for the Committee's failure to pursue the issue of imperial involvement are discussed below, in Chapter VII.

were considerable repercussions for Rhodes. The Chartered Company was allowed to continue to administer its territory, but its freedom was immediately curtailed, and an Imperial officer appointed to watch the territory. Rhodes's political career in the Cape was destroyed. He had resigned as Prime Minister and his credibility with Afrikaners had been irreparably damaged. A surprising amount of public support was mustered to him, but he never fully regained his former position of power. He was obliged to resign as Director of the Chartered Company in June 1896. He continued to play an active role in the affairs of the Company, however,<sup>194</sup> and was re-appointed to the Board of Directors in 1898, with the approval of the Imperial government.

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#### The Ndebele and Shona Risings, and Aftermath. 1896-1898

Within Rhodesia, too, dramatic events followed the Jameson Raid. The Ndebele rose in rebellion against the Company in March 1896, and the Shona rose in smaller groups from June 1896. The Risings illuminated the defects and abuses of the Chartered Company's administration. They also forced the Imperial Government to face the cost of its negligence with regard to the British South Africa Company. Having encouraged the Company to pursue an unethical course, both by neglecting to control it,

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<sup>194</sup> Hole, Raid, p.365; Palley, p.154.

<sup>195</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.395.

and at times by assisting it, the British Government was obliged in 1896 to shoulder the responsibility for defending the lives of Europeans living in Rhodesia during the Ndebele and Shona Risings.

The causes of the Risings have been the subject of considerable debate among historians recently. The common belief, arising out of a report written by Hole, to explain the Risings<sup>196</sup> has been that there was a religious inspiration behind the Risings. Cobbing<sup>197</sup> and Beach<sup>198</sup> have shown how Ranger, an Africanist, was influenced by the writings of the Company's apologist. They show conclusively that the Mlimo cult played no role in the Ndebele or the Shona Risings. Ranger's work is very valuable, however, in demonstrating the harsh conditions to which Shona and Ndebele were subjected, between 1890 and 1896 in Mashonaland, and between 1894 and 1896 in Matabeleland.<sup>199</sup>

In Matabeleland the power of the Ndebele had not been entirely broken during the Matabele War. The loss of land and cattle caused hardship, and being forced to perform menial labour for Europeans caused rancour. The Native Police, who were responsible for many abuses, were also deeply resented. Their harsh and unjust treatment under the Company was exacerbated by

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<sup>196</sup>See Beach, Chimurenga, p.395

<sup>197</sup> Cobbing, The Absent Priesthood, pp.81-82.

<sup>198</sup> Beach, Chimurenga, p.395.

<sup>199</sup> Ranger, Ch. 2 and 3.

the decimation by rinderpest of the cattle which remained to them. The disease killed many cattle, and the Company's officials slaughtered many more, in an attempt to stop the disease from spreading.<sup>200</sup> Thus there was ample cause for discontent amongst the Ndebele and, since they retained the basis of their military organization and had concealed arms, circumstances made a rebellion possible.

The inspiration for rebellion appears to have been the wish to re-instate the Ndebele kingdom under a new king, while overthrowing their European conquerors.<sup>201</sup> Between 1894 and 1896, the Ndebele had engaged in the process of selecting a new king. The candidate chosen, Nyamanda, was widely accepted, and was in fact installed in June 1896.<sup>202</sup> The Rising was directed by Nyamanda with the support of most Ndebele chiefs. A few defected to the Europeans, and as they commanded crucial strategic territory, straddling the white road to South Africa, their loss seriously affected Ndebele ability to defeat the Europeans.<sup>203</sup> Most Shona tributaries within the Ndebele state joined the Rising, although a few did take the opportunity to

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<sup>200</sup> Ranger, pp.101-120; V.Stent, A Personal Record of Some Incidents in the Life of Cecil Rhodes. Reprint Bulawayo, 1970. pp.39-47.

<sup>201</sup> Cobbing, Priesthood, p.84.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. pp.65-66.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. pp.71-72

break away from the Ndebele state.<sup>204</sup>

The rebellion began at a bad moment for the European community. Almost the entire Police Force had left Matabeleland to join in the Jameson Raid.<sup>205</sup> The Matabele Regiment of the Rhodesian Horse Volunteers were still in Matabeleland, although some of their officers had also joined in the Raid. Nonetheless, the military forces were considerably reduced, and the Europeans were quite unprepared for the Rising, which began in March 1896. Relatively large numbers of Europeans lost their lives during the Shona and Ndebele Risings. For a time, at the start of the Ndebele Rising, the rebels held the upper hand. However, the Imperial Government came to the assistance of the Company, and sent a well-armed relief column to Bulawayo,<sup>206</sup> and once the resources of Europeans outside Rhodesia were engaged, the defeat of the Ndebele was inevitable, and African casualties were high.

Some Shona groups did also rebel but, except for Ndebele tributaries, they were not in collusion with the Ndebele. Chief amongst their grievances were the payment of hut tax, and forced labour, because the means of collection and recruitment were often so brutal. Conditions in Mashonaland had deteriorated, because of rinderpest and locusts, and the pressure of European

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. pp.68-71.

<sup>205</sup> Palley p.128 states that 5 members of the police were left in Matabeleland, two of whom had broken legs.

<sup>206</sup> Ranger, pp.163-174.

presence was increasing.<sup>207</sup> The Shona Rising was not a co-ordinated, pre-planned rebellion: "... different Shona dynasties joined the Rising, opposed it, or stayed neutral as the news reached them".<sup>208</sup> The means employed to put down the Risings were brutal, particularly in Mashonaland<sup>209</sup> and they succeeded in totally demoralising the conquered, which the Matabele War had failed to do.

The Ndebele Rising was ended on Rhodes's initiative. After the Rising began, he went to Matabeleland, and personally took part in campaigns against the Ndebele, assuming the rank of "Colonel". Pressures of famine, combined with divisions in their own ranks, obliged the Ndebele to seek negotiations. Rhodes was afraid that the cost, both in the lives of settlers, in a small community, and in cash to the Company, would jeopardise the future of the country, and when supplies into Matabeleland began to run dangerously low, it was agreed that Rhodes should meet the Ndebele leaders.<sup>210</sup> During the meeting Rhodes gave his personal assurance that their major grievances would be met. The Ndebele gave up their arms, and those who co-operated with Europeans were given salaries as official chiefs. Terms of the settlement were worked out in a series of meetings between

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<sup>207</sup> Ranger, p.81.

<sup>208</sup> Beach, Chimurenga, p.410.

<sup>209</sup> See for example Ranger's (pp.276-277) description of the dynamiting of caves in which Shona rebels were hiding.

<sup>210</sup> Stent, p.33. Stent was present, and wrote a graphic account of the meeting.

August 1896 and November 1897, and Rhodes played an important role, despite the fact that he had no official standing in the Company at the time.

The Risings which took place in Southern Rhodesia in 1896 provide a fitting climax to the early years of the Company's rule, as they were the culmination of all the problems inherent in the Company's operations, which Labouchere had perceived as early as 1890. Rhodes's lack of concern for legality and due process led to the appointment of Jameson as administrator, and together they created an administration which was casually assembled, and lacked formal structures, which the Imperial Government allowed to operate almost unchecked. As a result, the rights of Europeans were not protected, and the rights of Africans were frequently violated. A further result of the combination of Rhodes's methods and the negligence of those who ought to have controlled him, was the Jameson Raid, and the vacuum left when the Administrator and most of the police force were withdrawn, was filled by the Ndebele Rising.

The settlement following the Risings was also more closely controlled by the Imperial Government, at least superficially. The Jameson Raid had provoked imperial intervention in the affairs of Rhodesia and, after the Ndebele and Shona Risings, it was apparent that significant changes in the administration of the territory were needed. After the Raid, the Imperial government had removed control of the Police from the Company, and Sir Richard Martin was appointed Deputy Commissioner and



Commandant General in Southern Rhodesia in April 1896.<sup>211</sup> Martin wrote a report on the causes of the Risings, which was very critical of the British South Africa Company's administration.<sup>212</sup>

Changes which resulted in more direct Imperial control were embodied in the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council, in 1898.<sup>213</sup> Two permanent Imperial officials were to reside in Southern Rhodesia, the Commandant General, in charge of the Company's volunteer forces and police, and the Resident Commissioner, who was to serve as Imperial watchdog. Both officials were responsible to the High Commissioner.<sup>214</sup> A Legislative Council was created with four elected representatives, and five members nominated by the Company. The Administrator sat on the Council with voting power, and the Resident Commissioner sat with no vote. Thus the Company was given a clear majority on the Council.<sup>215</sup> The administration of Africans was substantially changed, on paper. A Native Department was created under a High Commissioner's Proclamation in 1898, and clear policy and regulations were established.<sup>216</sup> The Order also stipulated that strict financial accounting procedures were to be observed by

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<sup>211</sup> Palley, p.145.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. p.146.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. p.128.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. pp.147-148.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. p.133.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. p.138.

the Company.<sup>217</sup>

The Imperial Government was still determined to keep its financial commitment to a minimum<sup>218</sup> and the Company retained considerable latitude. Control by the Imperial Government could only be effective if the Resident Commissioner was strong. In practice most Resident Commissioners were content to let the Company have its own way in most things, largely because they still lacked the staff to exercise meaningful control.<sup>219</sup> Nonetheless, the 1898 Order in Council did formalise the machinery of government. Palley comments: "By the end of 1898 the future structure of government had been laid down ..."<sup>220</sup> The years 1896 to 1898 were an important formative time, for the early days of casual muddling along were over, and the country was entering a new phase. This new phase of apparently effective imperial control meant the Rhodesia was of no further interest to Labouchere, and so the territory must be of no further interest to us at this time.

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid. p.135.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. pp.129-130

<sup>219</sup> Stigger, Native Department, pp.60-61.

<sup>220</sup> Palley, p.155.

## I. LABOUCHERE, SHARES AND SHAREHOLDERS

Labouchere's general concern about chartered companies led him to watch the founding of the British South Africa Company carefully, and when he developed doubts about the way in which the Company was financed, he began a campaign to expose "the wheel within wheel of South African speculative financing, and how each wheel grinds corn for the intelligent Mr Rhodes and his financial gang ..."<sup>1</sup> His specific concerns were that Rhodes and his associates were exploiting the aura of respectability bestowed upon the Company by its Royal Charter, in order to fleece British investors; that the directorates of all the companies associated with Rhodes and the British South Africa Company were interconnected; and that secret agreements existed between them. In addition these financiers were inflating the capital of their companies beyond reasonable levels, speculating in the shares thus created, and using them to win the support of influential people in Britain and South Africa.

Labouchere's concern about the fleecing of investors is supported in two ways: by showing that Mashonaland and Matabeleland held no promise of great wealth in gold and that the Company's propaganda "puffing" of the area had no base; and by pointing out the financial trickery in which the Company

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<sup>1</sup> Truth, October 22, 1891, p.840.

engaged, having created the illusion of valuable shares. He did not reprint puffs in Truth before 1893, but did remark on their appearance in other newspapers on several occasions.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Truth printed a multitude of letters and comments, pointing out the absence of gold in Mashonaland between 1891 and 1894. Late in December 1891, Labouchere used a letter from "An experienced miner", who claimed to have spent over a year in Manica and Mashonaland, who stated:

... My own firm conviction is that were one ten-stamp battery at work for six months on any one of the many reefs I have visited and examined, the claims and pretensions of Mashonaland to being a gold-producing country, in payable quantities, would be ruthlessly dispelled.<sup>3</sup>

This view was repeated again in 1893, before and during the Matabele War, and in August 1893 Labouchere argued that, because Mashonaland was a failure, the finances of the Company were in a desperate state, and he stated:

... the Company has not only spent its capital of one million, but owes large sums of money to other Companies under the control of Mr Rhodes and his gang. On this point a new light is thrown by a letter, emanating, apparently from a well-informed source, which appeared in the Financial News of the 28th inst. The statements therein made as to relations between the Chartered Company and the De Beers Company are very curious, and if they are well-founded the former Company has not given credit to De Beers Company in its accounts for advances which have been made regularly for some time at the rate of £3,500 per month, and which are apparently still going on.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Truth November 20, 1890, p.1039; January 1, 1891, p.14; January 8, 1891, p.67.

<sup>3</sup> Truth December 31, 1891, p.1391.

<sup>4</sup> Truth, August 31, 1893.

In October 1893, Labouchere supported his contention that Mashonaland had not yielded the spectacular gold deposits which the Company had hoped for and, after quoting from a speech made in Salisbury, in which Mr Rhodes had stated that "Mashonaland is equal in size to France, and its sparse population has pegged out 400 miles of gold-bearing claims". Labouchere commented that he had

... never doubted that there is gold in Mashonaland, and I have no doubt that the sparse but speculative population have pegged out many claims. What I have denied is that the gold is in such paying quantities that these claims can be worked so as to cover interest on outlay, sale price to British investors, and the royalty of fifty per cent on profits claimed by the Company. ... Mr Rhodes seems to forget that the puffs of Matabeleland have already commenced, and that we are already being told that its gold reefs are richer than the Mashonaland reefs.<sup>5</sup>

He furthered this argument when a week later he suggested that the war with Lobengula was deliberately engineered to permit speculation similar to that which had occurred in Mashonaland in 1891, to be repeated in Matabeleland, so as to rescue the British South Africa Company from bankruptcy. He provided evidence for this view by reproducing some examples of the Company's propaganda, including one from a letter to Pall Mall Gazette:

Lobengula and his people have the best country in South Africa in every way. They say it is even richer than the Transvaal in gold. At Bulawayo itself a missionary whom I know, and who has lived in the country as long as any

<sup>5</sup> Truth October 19, 1893, 801. Further comments appeared in 1891 on: April 9, p.749; July 9, p.80; July 30, p.242; October 22, p.840; November 12, p.995; and on: December 6, 1892 p.1243; April 19, 1894, p.896; July to December 1894, p. 1380.

Englishman, has seen a reef of simply marvellous richness. On the latest map published by the Chartered Company you will see they speak of the "banket" reef near Bulawayo ... So you see there is something to fight for.<sup>6</sup>

Labouchere's assertion that investors were being cheated was strengthened by his observation of the financial deals of the Company, which led in December 1892 to the publication of a list of questions for a suggested Committee of Inquiry which roughly summarised his continuing concerns:

1. How the capital of the Chartered Company was subscribed and by whom.
2. What purchases and sales of shares have been effected by and for those connected with the promotion and by and for the Directors?
3. How the money has been expended and what shares - if any - have been given to individuals?
4. What is the precise monetary relation between the Chartered Company and the Concessions Company?
5. Who constitutes the Concessions Company?
6. How the capital of this latter Company has, from practically nothing, been swollen into the huge sum of four millions sterling? <sup>7</sup>

As will be shown, Labouchere himself had provided partial answers to many of these questions by 1898, and little of substance has been added to his information since. Most of Labouchere's information was derived from statements of the companies themselves, in reports to shareholders, speeches by directors and, in one instance, in a long response to Labouchere's criticism, which was printed in Truth.

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<sup>6</sup> Truth, October 26, 1893, p.864. Other examples can be found in 1893 on: October 19; November 16; and December 21; and on February 8, 1894.

<sup>7</sup> Truth, December 8, 1892, p.1244. The list included two additional questions which did not relate to finance. They asked what the conditions for working claims were, and how the Africans in Mashonaland were being treated.

The first questions to be examined concern the relations between companies which had interlocking directorates, that is, the British South Africa Company, the Exploring Company and the Central Search Association, which became the United Concessions Company. Interest in the Central Search Association and its successor, the United Concessions Company, was expressed frequently, and was succinctly stated on August 28, 1890, in Truth. In this issue, the Agreement between the Central Search Association and its liquidators was printed, which named the liquidators, specified the terms of liquidation, and provided for the transfer of the responsibilities of the Central Search Association and all its property and assets to the newly incorporated United Concessions Company. The liquidators were Gifford, Beit, Cawston, Wm. Mortimer Farmer, Leigh Baskings, Maund and Thos. Rudd. Labouchere noted that "several of the gentlemen connected with these two Companies are also connected with the Chartered South African Company".<sup>8</sup> Labouchere described the incorporation of the Central Search Association, with a capital of £121,000, and assets which consisted of half of the Rudd Concession, and commented that no money appeared to have been paid for the shares. He further remarked that, since the registration of the new company cost £4,000, "we may ... reasonably suppose that the ultimate object of the promoters is to foist off this four million pounds of capital upon the British public." He then posed three questions for Lord Gifford:

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<sup>8</sup> Truth, August 28, 1890 p.435.

1. What are the assets of the United Concessions Company?
2. How property only alleged to be worth £121,000 last year can now be worth four million?
3. Why the conversion of the Search Company, with a capital of £121,000 into the Concession Company with a capital of four millions, took place at a cost of £4,000 for registration<sup>9</sup>

When the interests of the Exploring Company and Rhodes's syndicate were merged, the Exploring Company acquired a one-fourth interest in the Rudd Concession, and it developed close links with the British South Africa Company. For this reason, Labouchere paid attention to the Exploring Company, and his concerns about the Exploring Company will be examined next. On January 1, 1891, Truth published an account of the Exploring Company, with an enquiry into its capital, and relations with the British South Africa Company, and United Concessions Company. It explained, on the basis of a report of a meeting of the Exploring Company Limited, that the Exploring Company and Goldfields of South Africa were both seeking a mining concession from Lobengula, that Goldfields got it, but agreed to give one quarter of the profits to the Exploring Company, and continued:

Neither Company appears to have had much loose cash, for a third Company, called the Central Search Company, was formed to provide funds for the immediate expenses in connection with the concession.<sup>10</sup>

The passage then described the liquidation and re-constitution of both Central Search Association and Exploring Company, with inflated capital, the granting of the charter and relations

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.432.

<sup>10</sup> Truth, January 1, 1891, p.14.



between the Exploring Company and British South Africa Company. The Exploring Company held 29,400 shares or 24.5% of the initial Central Search Association capital of £120,000. When the United Concessions Company was formed, with a nominal capital of £4 million, the Exploring Company's share holding was thirty per cent. The Exploring Company also held shares in the British South Africa Company: 25,000 fully paid shares and 50,000 on which 3 shillings had been paid.<sup>11</sup> Finally Labouchere commented:

This is all in connection with the financing of the Mashonaland companies that I can gather from the speech of Mr Causton [sic]. But what I want to know is this: What is the exact amount of cash that has come into the coffers of the Chartered Company, the Exploring Company, and the United Concessions Company, and what is the nominal capital of these three Companies?<sup>12</sup>

Since the directors of the Exploring Company were Gifford, Cawston, Rhodes, Beit and J.O. Maund, four of whom were also directors of British South Africa Company,<sup>13</sup> it was not unreasonable for Truth to be enquiring into the precise relations which existed between the Companies. Although Lord Gifford himself never formally responded to Labouchere's queries, on January 15, 1891, "One who knows" wrote, giving what amounted to the British South Africa Company official account of the origins and financing of the British South Africa Company, the Exploring Company, the Central Search Association and the United Concessions Company. The reconstitution of the Central

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>13</sup> Mathers, p.460.

Search Association as the United Concessions Company was explained thus:

... many persons in South Africa and in England, though not shareholders, were by agreement with shareholders and otherwise entitled to fractional interests in its asset, the Matabele Concession, and desired scrip.<sup>14</sup>

It was asserted that it had always been obvious that £121,000 was nothing like the true value of the Matabele Concession, and was merely a nominal figure set. The assets of the United Concessions Company were half the net receipts of the British South Africa Company and in setting their value at four millions the United Concessions Company was guided by the market value of the shares of the Exploring Company and the British South Africa Company. With regard to share dealings, "One who knows" claimed: "The shareholders in the Company [United Concessions Company] are relatively few in number, and, so far there have been no dealings in the shares which are entirely unknown in the public market."<sup>15</sup> He described the relationship between the United Concessions Company and the British South Africa Company as that

... of landlord and tenant, though it will not be forgotten that here the tenant has powers far larger than could be given ordinarily by a landlord to his tenant - namely, to develop the Matabele Concession in its discretion, and, where thought fit, to turn it to account by sale, lease or in any other way.<sup>16</sup>

Finally he denied any relationship between the Chartered Company and either Goldfields of South Africa or the Exploring Company

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<sup>14</sup> Truth, January 15, 1891. pp.124-125.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.125.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.125.

beyond the fact that those Companies were shareholders in the United Concessions Company.

The picture painted by "One who knows" was of a group of ambitious and far-sighted men who had employed their own considerable talents and fortunes to develop Mashonaland, in the firm belief that the wealth of Mashonaland and Matabeleland would justify the investment, and that at that time (January 1891) the risk was restricted to the promoters themselves. Labouchere, on the other hand, questioned their belief in the wealth of Mashonaland, and implied that their intention was to exploit gullible British investors, not the mineral wealth of Mashonaland and Matabeleland. The Company's glib explanations are superficially satisfying - they appear to show that Labouchere was wrong, since the shares of the United Concessions Company were not unloaded onto the Stock Exchange. However, they do not account for the fact that in two years, the shares of the United Concessions Company, which by then were considerably below par, were exchanged for British South Africa Company shares of much greater value. The response makes no attempt to address the key issue: why did the ownership of the Rudd Concession not vest in the British South Africa Company, despite the fact that the original owners of the Concession were directors of the British South Africa Company?

Labouchere provided information on the initial and inflated capital of all these companies, and remarked on connections

between directorates, although he did not list them.<sup>17</sup> He also referred to the existence of secret agreements between the companies and, in 1893, when the United Concessions Company was finally bought out, he expressed the opinion that the reputed agreement, giving half the profits of the British South Africa Company to the United Concessions Company, was a trick to force shareholders to give a million shares to the Company's promoters.<sup>18</sup> Commenting on a report published by the British South Africa Company in December 1891 proposing the issue of one million shares to purchase the Rudd Concession from the United Concessions Company, Labouchere stated:

Whether Government assent is required for this watering I do not know, but money has been invested by the public in the Chartered Company because, being a Chartered Company, it is supposed that the Government is in some indirect way responsible for what takes place, and if power exists to hinder this watering that power ought unquestionably to be exercised. Unfortunately, however, the Tory government does not dare to interfere with the wondrous financing of a Company which numbers the Duke of Fife and the Duke of Abercorn among its Directors, and which has Mr Rhodes for its Managing Director. Rather than do so, it would see any number of honest investors ruined.<sup>19</sup>

He continued with a speculation that the motive behind such a proposal at a moment when Chartered Company shares were below par was that Rhodes was contemplating having the Government buy

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<sup>17</sup> The directorates of British South Africa Company, Central Search Association, United Concessions Company, Exploring Company, and Goldfields of South Africa were all listed in an appendix to E.P. Mathers, Zambesia, which was published in 1891.

<sup>18</sup> Truth, November 30, 1893, p.1153.

<sup>19</sup> Truth, December 24, 1891, p.1344.

out the Chartered Company. If that were the case, if United Concessions Company shareholders had half the British South Africa Company shares, they would receive half the purchase price. While this remains in the realm of speculation, since the shares were not issued at that moment, it is nonetheless an interesting possibility - perhaps representing an alternative which was considered but not pursued by Rhodes and his associates. Maylam has offered a two-fold explanation of the creation of Central Search Association and United Concessions Company. The Chartered Company used shares in these companies to satisfy the claims of rival concessionaires, and it protected the Rudd Concession, in the event of the Company being liquidated.<sup>20</sup> Maylam's explanations do not account for the agreement made to buy the Concession in 1890, however.

Neither Maylam nor Galbraith have added significantly to our understanding of the relations between the British South Africa Company and related companies. Galbraith refers to the creation of the Central Search Association to buy out rival concessionaires, and to its inflation into the United Concessions Company.<sup>21</sup> He does not add to the picture Labouchere painted, however. Maylam has added specific information on the secret agreements which Labouchere only suspected and has provided some possible answers to the question of why the Central Search Association and United Concessions Company were

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<sup>20</sup> Maylam, pp.57-58.

<sup>21</sup> Galbraith, pp.84-85.

created, but most of the information he used had been printed in Truth between 1890 and 1894, and the relationship between these companies has been clarified only slightly.

The second issue of concern to Labouchere to be examined here relates to the early share dealings of the British South Africa Company. The questions posed on November 6 and 13, 1890 addressed this issue:

Who were the original shareholders in the South African Chartered Company, who in the Central Search Association, and who in the United Concessions Company?  
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What is the capital of the Chartered Company? How much of this capital is paper; and how much is represented by cash? ... To what Company does the Concession belong?<sup>23</sup>

In more detail, the questions pursued by Truth with regard to the capital of the British South Africa Company were how many shares were issued by the British South Africa Company, to whom were they initially sold, what prices were paid, and were they fully paid at the time of purchase. Secondly, how was the sale and transfer of shares manipulated by those who held power in the Company.

Labouchere provided much of this information himself, over the next three years. In November 1889, he had already stated that the nominal capital of the British South Africa Company was £1,000,000 and that, according to a Goldfields of South Africa report, that Company held seventeen sixtieths, or more than

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<sup>22</sup> Truth November 6, 1890, p.924.

<sup>23</sup> Truth, November 13, 1890, p.983.

70,000, of the shares issued. He also reported that a correspondent had "guessed" that De Beers' interest was £70,000 to £80,000.<sup>24</sup> On January 15, 1891, information published in Truth (from "One who knows") stated that 350,000 fully paid shares had been issued at par, and 550,000 at three shillings paid, and gave the shareholdings in both categories of De Beers, "South African Residents", Goldfields of South Africa, the Exploring Company and "Others". The informant stated that no more than 15,000 shares had been given away, none of which went to Company promoters.<sup>25</sup>

On January 7, 1892, Labouchere described in some detail the share manipulation which he believed was taking place. Shareholders had just been informed of the arrangements with the United Concessions Company, granting it a moiety of British South Africa Company profits, and some shareholders protested against this arrangement, and against the watering of shares, by the issue of fully paid-up shares, which they claimed had depressed shares. Labouchere reviewed the evidence to show the manipulation which had occurred. Early in 1891, based on information in "Kindrell's African Market Manual" for 1891 and

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<sup>24</sup> Truth November 21, 1889, p.950.

<sup>25</sup> Truth, January 15, 1891, pp.124-125. Most of the information provided appears to be accurate. One discrepancy was apparent, however. The Exploring Company was said to hold 25,000 fully paid, and 25,000 three shillings paid, shares, whereas two weeks earlier Truth had quoted the Exploring Company Report as stating that the Company held 50,000 three shillings paid shares. (Truth January 1st, 1891, p.14.) Neither Galbraith nor Maylam give details of the Exploring Company's holdings in British South Africa Company shares.

in De Beers Consolidated Reports, investors believed that only a limited number of fully paid shares were available, and the price remained high. Later in the year, the British South Africa Company Report revealed that nearly three times as many shares had been made available. In addition, 280,672 shares had been issued at par, when the market value of the shares had been much higher. Therefore those who bought at a premium, paid "much more than £1 to persons who had just paid £1 to the Chartered Company for the shares issued by them silently, and in the face of an understood, but perhaps tacit, agreement that fully paid shares in excess of the original issue would not be issued".<sup>26</sup>. He acknowledged that some three shilling shares might have been paid up in full - but in that case, the Company owed shareholders timely notice "that payments for partly paid-up shares were being completed so extensively that on March 31, 1891 the fully paid-up shares numbered 613,388."<sup>27</sup> He referred to the agreement to grant half the Company's profits to the United Concessions Company, then concluded by remarking that, since no list of shareholders had been published:

... the concessionaires may have been mostly, or, perhaps, altogether, the very same persons who were permitted to pay up in full their partly paid shares. If then they sold these shares at a premium, will they not have realised an outrageous profit, besides securing for themselves half the dividends which the Company may earn?<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Truth, January 7, 1892, p.25.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.25.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 25.



Further evidence of share manipulation came to light in the case of the Matabeleland Company versus the British South Africa Company. Truth cited part of Alfred Beit's testimony. Beit admitted having sold "a few" shares at a premium on his own account, and for "people who had to be satisfied on this Charter", and for the Company. He also admitted that "a few" deals were made, through Trust Deeds, before shares were publically released. Asked: "Will you undertake to say there were not some thousands..." Beit refused to say anything "without referring to my books"<sup>29</sup> Beit's evidence also revealed that 9,000 shares were allotted to each Director of the Company. Since the British South Africa Company was a chartered company and not bound to publicise all share transactions annually, it was difficult to ascertain who the share-owners were. It is still difficult to obtain complete information, as in some instances shares were never registered in the names of their owners.<sup>30</sup>

Published information on the original share issues and who received them remains scattered. Galbraith discusses the sources of £700,000 committed to railway and other development,<sup>31</sup> but does not discuss the original share capital. Maylam gives the numbers of shares first issued as 250,000 fully paid and 500,000 partially paid, but does not give any information on the

<sup>29</sup> Truth, January 4, 1894, p.28.

<sup>30</sup> Galbraith, p.125.

<sup>31</sup> Galbraith, p.122.

recipients.<sup>32</sup> Neither author has discussed the impact of the kind of underhand manipulation described by Labouchere on the value of the Company's shares on the Stock Exchange.

The final example of the manipulation of shares for the profit of the Company was the exchange of four million United Concessions Company shares for one million British South Africa Company shares. The secret agreements which led to this transaction have already been discussed. The way in which it was accomplished so angered a formerly complacent shareholder, that he wrote to Truth in December 1893 explaining that he had not been

... in accord with your general condemnation of the proceedings of the Chartered Company of South Africa and ... attended the great meeting of the Company last week fully prepared to find the Directors would give sound reasons for inviting the shareholders to present the Rudd Concessionaires with a million shares in the Company's capital. I came away, however, entirely disappointed. ... All opposition was ... shouted down, and the resolution carried with apparent unanimity after one or two feeble protests. I venture to say that when the shareholders apply their minds instead of their prejudices to the matter, they will be surprised at their own want of judgement. ...<sup>33</sup>

Labouchere extended the comments of the shareholder by pointing out that the agreement was made between "Rhodes, Rudd and Co. of the Chartered Company, and Rhodes, Rudd and Co. of the United Concessions Company, Limited".<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Maylam, p.59.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Truth, December 7, 1893, p.1223.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.1224.

The third issue into which Truth probes can hardly be separated from the first two - that is the use made of British South Africa Company shares by its promoters. There are two aspects to these questions, first the general question "who were the beneficiaries?"; the second, more delicate one, "were Colonial or Foreign Office employees included?".

Truth provided significant evidence of the manipulative use made of British South Africa Company shares distributed, again citing evidence from the case of the Matabeleland Company vs. the British South Africa Company, in July 1893. Truth noted the following questions and Beit's response to them:

Q. What was done with the 40,000 shares which there appears for distribution in South Africa? A. 34,000 were distributed in England by me. Q. ... distributed to whom? A. Distributed to people who wanted to enter the Company at par. Q. They were not members of the Beit Syndicate? A. They were given to people outside the Beit syndicate who it was considered in the interest of the Company should be interested in the undertaking, and also promises were made.

One list referred to in the same excerpt mentions the distribution of 40,000, 4,500 and 2,000 shares by Beit, Rhodes and Eckstein, while a second mentions 80,000, 9,000 and 4,000 distributed by the same people and, in both instances, Beit testified that the shares were distributed partly in England and partly in South Africa.<sup>35</sup> No information on the recipients of the shares was given. However, Labouchere commented, in the same article, on the List of Shareholders presented to the House of

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<sup>35</sup> Truth, January 4, 1894, p.28. The two lists mentioned by Beit appear to refer to the holdings of fully paid and three shillings paid shares held by the same recipients.

Commons. He stated that, although the list was incomplete, it showed that "Almost everyone ... who has puffed the Company and sung the praises of its Land of Goshen, is pecuniarily interested in the Company's financial success, or rather in its shares going up in the markets." He cites the Bishop of Derry as an example.<sup>36</sup> Galbraith added a little to this information, and Maylam has addressed these questions too. He has shown that shares were widely distributed in Britain and South Africa, in order to interest influential men in the British South Africa Company, and has provided information on who some of the men in South Africa were.<sup>37</sup>

In an editorial on October 19, 1893, as the Company's columns began their advance into Matabeleland, Truth called for an investigation into the British South Africa Company, asking particularly

whether ... important personages have been 'squared' with either free shares or shares give at par when they could be sold at a premium. Let us know precisely what connection exists between Sir Henry Loch, the High Commissioner and the Company, on the directors of which he is supposed to exercise a check, on behalf of the Imperial Government.<sup>38</sup>

At all times, however, even Truth was very cautious about suggesting an improper relationship between Imperial officials and the Company, as Labouchere did not have access to share registers, and could not prove his assertions with regard to

<sup>36</sup> Truth, January 4, 1894, p.29.

<sup>37</sup> See Maylam, pp.126-132.

<sup>38</sup> Truth, October 19, 1893, p.801.

share distribution. Maylam has produced proof that Labouchere was quite correct in his suspicions. He reveals that Robinson, the High Commissioner, Newton, Colonial Secretary and Receiver-General in British Bechuanaland in 1889, and Carrington and Goold-Adams of the Bechuanaland Border Police all held shares in the British South Africa Company, without the Colonial Office's knowledge. Members of the Cape Parliament, including members of the Afrikaner Bond, were also shareholders.<sup>39</sup>

Truth again exposed dubious financial operations on the part of the Chartered Company in 1896, after the Jameson Raid. In March 1896, Labouchere suggested he could demonstrate that the organisers of the Raid not only potentially stood to gain financially, but actually took steps to ensure that if the Raid failed, they would not lose. He stated that:

I am told on what I believe to be excellent authority, that several of the heroes as a preliminary to their exploits, telegraphed home to sell "Chartered Shares". If this be so, I almost think that the most devoted admirer of their glorious deeds will find cause to modify his opinion in regard to them.<sup>40</sup>

A further comment appeared two months later, with a more confident assertion:

But it was obvious that on the first news of the Raid the shares of the Chartered Company and of the mining companies in the Transvaal were likely to fall. Now, I am prepared to prove that, just previous to the Raid, a syndicate was formed including a leading director of the Company and one of its chief officials, for the purposes of making large "Bear" sales of these Companies [shares] in London. The seed having thus been sown for securing

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<sup>39</sup> Maylam, pp.128-132.

<sup>40</sup> Truth, March 12, 1896, p.644.

at once a profit by the immediate fall in the shares, and an ultimate profit by buying them back when the Raid had proved successful and a rich slice of the Transvaal had been added to Charterland, steps were taken to carry out the conspiracy.<sup>41</sup>

He never did prove this, and the reason why came to light later, during the hearings of the Parliamentary Committee appointed to investigate the Jameson Raid. While giving evidence, Rutherford Harris complained about the unproven charges that Labouchere had made against him. Labouchere stated that he had based his charges on information from the Company's share registers, but his informant had subsequently refused to allow him to publish the information he had been given. He therefore unconditionally withdrew his allegations against Harris, and apologised to him. But he commented:

If the registers of the Company show what I suggest they do, my accusation against the promoters of the Company holds good, though neither Mr Harris nor anyone else connected with it may have speculatively sold one share that they did not possess with a view to secure the difference between the selling and buying back price in the event of a fall in value.<sup>42</sup>

During the Committee hearings, Labouchere tried to put questions to the Directors of the British South Africa Company on their share dealings. Such questions were not allowed by the Chairman of the Committee, who asked instead about dealings which might have taken place six months before the Raid. Some time after the Committee of Inquiry concluded, Labouchere finally published a long editorial, entitled "How Chartered Shares were Sold Before

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<sup>41</sup> Truth, May 7, 1896, pp.1138-1139.

<sup>42</sup> Truth, June 10, 1897, p.1467.

the Raid", on January 13, 1898. In this he gave details of the original holding; allotment of shares in July 1895, if any; and holding on March 31, 1896 for the following individuals and groups: the Duke of Abercorn, (Director); the Duke of Fife, (Director); Earl Grey (Director); Lord Gifford (Director); Sir Horace Farquhar (Director); Rhodes (Director); Beit (Director); Maguire; Goldfields of S.A.; Thos Rudd; C.D. Rudd; F.R. Thompson; Lord Rothschild; George Cawston; Beit Syndicate; Beit & Rhodes; Beit & Cawston; Rhodes & Beit; Rhodes, Rudd & Beit. The list included three other groups, with less complete information, who are not referred to here. The list showed that in almost every case either the majority or all the shares held had been sold by March 31, 1896. The sum of the shares held in July 1895 had been something over 900,000. On March 31, 1896, the sum of their holdings was 61,457. Thus over 800,000 shares had been sold. Rhodes still held 29,463 shares, a much higher number than any one else, but he had sold more shares than anyone else, too - 136,594. Labouchere commented:

It is of course exceedingly difficult to say whether the shares were sold speculatively for the account. But it is only reasonable to suppose that some of the "patriots" who were unloading their holdings in this wholesale fashion on the public, did also pick additional money by "Bear" sales.<sup>43</sup>

This does not prove conclusively that the Raid was organised for financial gain, but it does prove that those involved in the Raid took advantage of the opportunity potentially to profit,

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<sup>43</sup> Truth, January 13, 1898, p.80.

and also to protect themselves from the losses suffered by less well-informed shareholders, when the value of shares dropped after the Raid.

Three useful items emerge from the material about financial dealings which was published by Truth. The first arises from Labouchere's emphasis on the Central Search Association and the United Concessions Company, demonstrating that there was no structural reason for the existence of these Companies, other than to provide a mechanism for exploiting the stock market. The second contribution arose from Beit's testimony in the Matabeleland Company case. This testimony provided concrete evidence that Rhodes and Beit did make use of Company shares, distributed at less than their market value, to procure support for the Company. The third issue concerns the potential profits accruing to the British South Africa Company directors, from the expedient sale of Chartered Company shares. Labouchere showed that the directors of the Company, and their friends, disposed of Chartered Company shares, at high prices, before embarking on the risky enterprise of the conspiracy in Johannesburg, and the associated raid. This much increased the credibility of Labouchere's assertions that the Company existed for financial gain, and its activities were directed to that end.

Generally stated, the questions raised by Truth were: What were the relations, financial and other, between the British South Africa Company, the Exploring Company, the Central Search Association and the United Concessions Company? How was the



capital of the British South Africa Company subscribed, and by whom? How were shares distributed? Labouchere himself was able to answer these questions in part and, as we have seen, Galbraith and Maylam have added very little new information. There is still no published source which give the dates and numbers of shares issues, nor which details who the original shareholders were. Maylam has provided more information on the various inter-related companies, but has not shown what the financial relations between the British South Africa Company and the Exploring Company and the United Concessions Company were. Galbraith details the shareholders of the Central Search Association and United Concessions Company,<sup>44</sup> but gives little information on the British South Africa Company shareholders. He does state that the "main promoters held about seventy percent of the shares in 1889, and only about fifteen percent in 1893, and that Beit profited substantially from such transactions".<sup>45</sup> Neither author has supplemented Labouchere's material on manipulation of shares on the stock exchange, but both have added to the information Labouchere provided on the distribution of shares to influential men.<sup>46</sup>

Labouchere's interest in the Company as an instrument of imperial policy led him to watch the early financial operations

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<sup>44</sup> Galbraith, pp.84-85;283. Details for CSA differ in two locations, although the reference cited is the same.

<sup>45</sup> Galbraith, p.284.

<sup>46</sup> Galbraith, pp.123-125; Maylam pp.126-132.

of the Company, and he did not like what he saw. He therefore continued to scrutinise the financial operations of the Company as closely as possible over the next eight years and, in doing so, he raised a series of important questions. He could not answer all the questions he raised, and it may never be possible to answer some of them: nonetheless, knowing what the right questions are is still the key to understanding Rhodes and the British South Africa Company today.

IV. LABOUCHERE, OFFICIALS AND POLICY  
IV. LABOUCHERE, OFFICIALS AND POLICY

By 1890, when Labouchere began following the activities of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company, his observations were influenced by two factors. The moralistic attitude he retained from his puritan upbringing led him to be concerned about any abuse of public office. In addition, he had been a Member of Parliament since 1880 and one of his major political interests was the curtailment of imperial expansion. With this background, it is not surprising that the British South Africa Company stimulated his interest: Rhodes, who filled the dual roles of politician and capitalist, led the way, and British politicians and imperial officials were all of interest to him, as were the Company's directors. Also, the implications of Britain's responsibility for a commercial enterprise with such vast power, over which the Government had so little effective control, worried him. He feared that, by political manipulation, Rhodes and his associates were able to achieve ends contrary to the interests of the British public. Therefore, his moral attitudes and his politics combined to focus his attention on Rhodes, his Company and those associated with it.

As a Radical, Labouchere's objection to imperialism was well-known, and his opposition to chartered companies was expressed repeatedly in Truth. In November 1890, he expressed doubts about the morality of chartered companies, remarking that:

From the very first I have protested against (these) expeditions into the interior of Africa got up by chartered companies. In every case they are marauding expeditions made for the benefit of speculators. What has civilization gained by the raid through Africa after Emin and his ivory? What is civilization likely to gain by the advance through Matabeleland and Mashonaland with the avowed purpose of seeking whether gold can be found there, or whether fools can be found in England to put money in the pockets of promoters on the chance of its being found?<sup>1</sup>

In August 1893, as Loch was building up the Bechuanaland Border Police, these concerns were again voiced, and extended to include the possible long-terms consequences of the policy, for:

It is really a little too outrageous that we should confer on speculators the right of life and property in a vast area, and that when their folly and greed bring them into difficulties with the natives, they should require us to get them out of these difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

A month later, as the columns prepared to march, he categorically denounced chartered companies, noting that:

From the South and from the West of Africa demonstrations are at present being offered to the British public of the mischief of the system of colonisation by Chartered Company promoters, against which I have so long protested to the best of my ability.<sup>3</sup>

The British Government was willing to employ Chartered Companies because they would establish a British presence in territories which might otherwise fall as colonies into the hands of another European power, at no direct, or obvious, cost to the British taxpayer. Labouchere believed this policy to be morally reprehensible and politically unwise and held that, in allowing

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<sup>1</sup> Truth, November 6, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Truth, August 31, 1893.

<sup>3</sup> Truth, September 28, 1893.

the Company so much unfettered power, the British Government was neglecting its duty to protect the interests of the British public.

Labouchere's belief that the British South Africa Company was dangerous became stronger as he perceived how powerful a position Rhodes held in Southern Africa. On several occasions Labouchere drew attention to the questionable morality of Rhodes's occupying so many roles. On February 19, 1891, he remarked on the influence which "that financing genius, Mr Cecil Rhodes, Cape Premier, manager of the South African Company, and manager of the De Beers Company"<sup>4</sup> exercised over Lord Salisbury. Two years later, during the Matabele War, a stronger comment appeared, when Labouchere expressed his belief that:

What renders the position in South Africa difficult for the Imperial Government is the duality of Mr Cecil Rhodes. He is at once the Premier of the Cape Colony and head of the South African Company. This is as though Mr Gladstone were British Prime Minister and the Chairman of the East African Company; and I need hardly say that such a duality would not for a moment be tolerated by British public opinion.<sup>5</sup>

Labouchere considered this duality to be a betrayal of the trust of public office, and was constantly suspicious of Rhodes's activities.

There are many examples in Truth of Labouchere's charges that people in positions of trust had abused them to assist the operations of the Chartered Company. Such charges were directed

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<sup>4</sup> Truth, February 19, 1891.

<sup>5</sup> Truth, October 5, 1893, p.689.

at three levels of government. Most criticism was aimed at the British Government, and at individual politicians. The Dukes, who were taken to represent the Queen indirectly on the British South Africa Company's Board of Directors, were also targets, and so were the individual representatives of the British Government in South Africa: the High Commissioners. At each level Truth assumed varying degrees of guilt: that honest officials were deceived by the deceit and trickery of unscrupulous Company officials; that in some instances ignorance led individuals to favour the Company - in which case they were guilty of culpable negligence; and that some officials deliberately betrayed their positions of trust. At each level Truth also imputed different motives for abuse at different times. Initially no malicious intent was attributed, and the accused were taken to be acting in good faith - assisting the Company because they believed in it. However, as time passed, Labouchere assumed increasingly that the Company was assisted for financial or personal gain, or for political reasons. Thus, it is possible to see a chronological development of the accusations made, from assumed innocence to a conviction of guilt. However, the tendency should not be overstated.

Early expressions of Labouchere's concerns were theoretical, but as the Company became more active, the objections raised against it became more specific. Labouchere expressed general concern about the influence of the Chartered Company on foreign relations, finance, and fiscal policy.

The first of these, a fear that Britain might be drawn into conflict with another power as result of the Company's actions, was given reality very soon after the British South Africa Company had been given its charter, when Rhodes tried to wrest Beira from Portuguese control. When Rhodes's agents began operations in that area, Truth protested against the outrageous activities of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company, and prophesied dire results for Britain, both in diplomatic relations with Europe and financially, if a war with Portugal were to be brought about, and there are three interesting aspects to his comments. First he was concerned that the British government would be injured by the Company's filibustering, since the Government was responsible for its chartered companies. Then, he questioned the Company's motives for pursuing Manicaland so energetically. Finally, he questioned the role of the British government. Labouchere commenced by condemning the

... attempt of the Company to lay its hands upon Manica, which (according to South African International Law) most unquestionably belongs to Portugal, was nothing but buccaneering. The Chartered Company coveted this Naboth's vineyard. They therefore calmly, *vi et armis*, dispossessed the Portuguese Naboth who owned it, and laid hands on it. More outrageous conduct never came under my notice, ... the action of the Company should be submitted to investigation. They may, however, console themselves with the certainty that the Tory Government will refuse this investigation, for if it were entered into, it would redound very little to their credit.<sup>6</sup>

Thereafter, he also printed letters from others supporting his

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<sup>6</sup> Truth, December 25, 1890, p. 1320.

views, notably by republishing a letter, which first appeared in the Scotsman, from Mr Arnold Forster, a leading Liberal, who explained that

... with regard to the Chartered Company itself, we are in a position in which we retain entire responsibility, with a total absence of effective control. How serious are the consequences which this arrangement may entail are shown by the recent kidnapping incident in Manicaland. I do not pretend to know the exact rights and wrongs of the Manica boundary question. But one thing I do know - namely, that such a high-handed proceeding as kidnapping an officer, disarming his escort, and hauling down a national flag would not have been attempted by the servants of a Company if the officer had been a German or a Frenchman, and the flag the ensign of Germany or France. ... Already Stanley and his crew have done immeasurable injury to the good name of England in Africa, ... We were not responsible for Stanley, but we are responsible for this gold-hunting Company, which has the privilege of flying our flag, and of using the Queen's officers as its recruiting sergeants.<sup>7</sup>

Labouchere then carried Forster's views forward, giving them his own twist as regards financial opportunism, stating

If Mr Rhodes's gold-hunting Company had treated a German as it treated a Portuguese, we should either have been at war with Germany, or have had to humbly apologise for the act of our chartered freebooters. ... A more wanton act of filibustering, in order to bolster up the shares of a financing Company with a fictitious capital, never took place. Our good name is disgraced. ...<sup>8</sup>

Labouchere was not only concerned with the implications of the Company's activities, he also questioned its motivation. The generally accepted motive for the Chartered Company's campaign to secure Manicaland was to gain direct access to the sea, so as

<sup>7</sup> Truth, February 19, 1891, p.376-377. The letter refers to an incident in which a Company agent took two Portuguese officers prisoner in Manicaland, without any authority to do so.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.376-377.



to open up the territory for active economic exploitation, since Portugal had neglected it for so long, and thereby extend the British Empire. Labouchere casts doubt on all these motives, and started by casting doubt on the viability of the Beira-Pungwe access route by publishing a letter from the Transvaal, in which a correspondent reported that:

Out of a party of twelve seasoned men who lately explored the Pungwe district, only three came out alive, and those three have had the fever. People who know anything of this part of the world may judge the character of that region when I tell you that men have been known to come from it to Delagoa Bay for the benefit of their health! Were this the only method of reaching the supposed Eldorado, many people would, no doubt chance the risks. But there are other, and healthy routes in existence.<sup>9</sup>

Labouchere then asserted that the most important reason for the takeover of Manicaland was to bolster flagging shares, and in January 1891, Truth summarised the reasons for the Company's seizure of Manicaland as follows:

1. That Mashonaland has been found (so far) to have no gold in workable quantities, and the owners of eight million pounds' worth of shares that represent this gold on the London Stock Exchange are obliged to look for it elsewhere if it can be hoped that more fools will purchase any of these "fancy" shares. 2. That Lobengula is much too astute to part with his land, and so a less civilized chief has had to be found further North, who can be humbugged out of a land concession, in order to enable the Company to keep its promises to its employees in Africa, and to justify the assurances in regard to land which have led to the purchase of its shares by fools in England. 3. That the high plateau, respecting the salubrity of which so much has been asserted, hardly begins in Mashonaland, but stretches out beyond it in Portuguese territory.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Truth, March 12, 1891, p. 540.

<sup>10</sup> Truth, January 22, 1891, p.171.

Labouchere then turned his attention to the attitude of the British Government, for he believed that, if not actually complicit in the Company's activity, the Government deliberately allowed the Company to get away with violating Britain's treaty with Portugal. Such allegations are carefully expressed, but the implications are clear. In the article on February 19 quoted above,<sup>11</sup> Labouchere complained that Britain's reputation was harmed, and Portugal wronged, because Lord Salisbury was unwilling to quarrel with the two Dukes who were political supporters, or with Rhodes.<sup>12</sup> A few months later, Labouchere commented in strong terms on the government's failure to control the Company. The passage began with a comment on conflicting reports from the British South Africa Company and Portuguese regarding the incident at Macequece, and continued:

... I attach very little credence to anything that emanates from the officials or friends of the Company. Its entire action on the Portuguese frontier of Mashonaland has been a disgrace to our name, and to our flag, and it is a further scandal that our Government either winks at or covertly supports such doings.<sup>13</sup>

Truth's attention next turned to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. Lord Salisbury has been construed both as actively opposing and obstructing Rhodes and his schemes and, alternatively, as being cowed by Rhodes' obvious influence over

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<sup>11</sup> See p.136.

<sup>12</sup> Truth, February 19, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> Truth, May 28, 1891, p.1116-1117. This passage shows how rapidly Labouchere realised that Company reports were not reliable.

both English and Afrikaners in South Africa.<sup>14</sup> Truth suggested that more control remained in Salisbury's hands than many commentators believed and that he deliberately allowed the Company freedom. Salisbury apparently was able to resist pressure from the British South Africa Company when he chose to do so, since his negotiations with the Portuguese continued on the lines he wanted, and he insisted upon recognising their clearly established rights. Truth suggested that he "covertly" supported the activities of the British South Africa Company - and this is possible. The activities of the Company did enable Salisbury to demand further concessions from the Portuguese after the initial agreement of August 1890, with the unspoken threat that he could not control the Company, implying that after the Modus Vivendi had expired, matters might be settled by force.<sup>15</sup> By allowing the Company a little room, Salisbury was able to conclude negotiations with a treaty quite favourable to British interests, especially in the Zambesi and Shire valleys.

A further general concern of Labouchere's was the financial liability which the Company could represent. He warned that despite protestations that the British South Africa Company was saving Britain money, it would probably end up causing the British taxpayer expense, while any profits remained with the Company. Demands that the taxpayer be protected appeared

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<sup>14</sup> Gann, p.101, suggests the former; Galbraith, pp.159-160, the latter.

<sup>15</sup> Axelson, pp.290-292.

regularly. The first appeared as early as November 1890, when a letter was published which asked whether it was:

intended to send British troops to enforce the claims of the South African Company, and if so, why are the British taxpayers to be burdened with this expense, seeing the Chartered Company has paid nothing whatsoever for its privileges to the Imperial Exchequer, not even for the purpose of promoting "state-aided emigration or colonisation", which was one of the lures held out to beguile us into the original annexation of Bechuanaland?  
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Labouchere returned to this theme ten months later, when he remarked that:

Sooner or later, in all human possibility, we, the taxpayers of the United Kingdom, shall be called upon to assist Mr Rhodes and Sir Henry Loch in maintaining sovereign rights which they already assume to exercise in Lobengula's country. It is ... possible that ... the Chartered Company may prove strong enough to defend themselves against Lobengula ... It is infinitely more likely however, that ... they will ... invoke the aid of the Home Government. It will then be for us to say whether we are going to defend by force what Messrs Rhodes and Company have obtained by fraud. In view of the patronage hitherto afforded by Lord Salisbury to Rhodes' Company promoting schemes, it is necessary that the merits of this question, as between Loch and the Company, should be understood by the British elector without loss of time.<sup>17</sup>

The first charge that the Chartered Company was costing the British taxpayer money appeared after the Matabele campaign of 1893 ended, when Labouchere noted that:

the astute Rhodes seems to be throwing the cost of the war upon us. He is disbanding his filibusters, after paying them for their services out of the conquered country, while the British taxpayer is required to pay for the Imperial Force that aided in the raid, and that is now doing the greater part of the work of securing

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<sup>16</sup> Truth, November 20, 1890, p.1083.

<sup>17</sup> Truth, August 20, 1891, p. 381.

the country for the Company. If the Chartered Company is to have the spoils, why are we to pay for securing it?<sup>18</sup>

Similar admonitions to protect the interests of the taxpayer continued to appear from time to time, <sup>19</sup> with justice, since there is no doubt that the Company did cost British taxpayers money for, as Maylam has noted, Loch estimated in 1895 that the Company had cost the British government over £700,000 between 1890 and 1894.<sup>20</sup> Thus, less than a month after Company troops in Rhodesia were being disbanded, Labouchere had pointed out one instance where the Company did cause the taxpayer expense, although it is only recently that historians have recognised the significance of this.<sup>21</sup>

Labouchere's most sustained attack on the British Government in its dealings with the British South Africa Company, focussed on the general issue of responsible public spending. His attacks were not limited to this subject, however, and more specific criticism against the Government arose from specific incidents, and generally focussed on the Secretary of State for the Colonies. This meant that Lord Ripon, from 1892 to 1895, and Joseph Chamberlain, from 1895 to 1899, were the objects of most of Truth's attacks. In 1893, during the Matabele War, the tone

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<sup>18</sup> Truth, January 25, 1894, p.184.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see Truth August 19, 1897, p.479.

<sup>20</sup> Maylam, p.126, cites C.O. 879/42/484 p.197.

<sup>21</sup> Stigger noted the use of Imperial troops in Land, pp.7-8; and Maylam has also commented on the cost of the Company's operations to Britain. p.120-124;195. Both authors' comments were published eighty-six years after Labouchere's remarks.

of criticism became sharp, despite the fact that the Government was Liberal, and that Labouchere generally supported the Liberal Party. He recognised the difficulty which the Government faced in dealing with Rhodes, who exercised power both politically and as a financier, but did not accept that as sufficient explanation for their policy in Southern Africa.<sup>22</sup> On November 16 Labouchere gave his interpretation of the Liberal Government's behaviour during the Matabele War:

In the treatment of Africans by border ruffians, I have always found that a Liberal Government is too much inclined to avoid Parliamentary friction, ... They therefore look on, whilst black men are murdered and financiers are making money out of the murders. This is called "recognising the responsibilities of office".<sup>23</sup>

Truth allowed Ripon the benefit of good intentions, but condemned his lack of judgement in failing to control the Company. Labouchere's considered opinion on Ripon's actions following Lobengula's attempt to appeal to him in 1893 was that:

Lord Ripon was cowed by Mr Rhodes, and the herd of ruffians and speculators whom the Company had got together advanced into Matabeleland. They found no Matabele force in the neighbourhood of the frontier (the statement that there was one having been a falsehood designed to hoodwink Lord Ripon), ... Lord Ripon, who seemed to have entirely lost his head, on this ordered the Bechuanaland Police Force [sic] to enter Matabeleland, with a view apparently, of hindering the further advance of the Company's expedition. But ... the Police Force ... aided and abetted the Company's expedition.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Truth, October 5, 1893, p.689.

<sup>23</sup> Truth, November 16, 1893. There were similar accusations on May 31, 1894, regarding the settlement of the war.

<sup>24</sup> Truth, January 16, 1896, p.143-144.

A more direct and serious criticism of Ripon concerned the official report of the Victoria incident,<sup>25</sup> which exonerated the Company from blame, despite published reports from independent sources, contradicting the Company's story. In 1894 Labouchere remarked:

One of my South African correspondents tells me that the Mr Newton who so beautifully whitewashed the Chartered Company in his report on the 'incident' which began the Matabele War is an intimate personal friend of Mr Rhodes. ... As much might have been inferred from the report itself. What I do not understand is how Lord Ripon could have supposed that such a report would have any value; or if he knew the truth, how he could have offered the report to the public as anything more than a partisan verdict on the facts.<sup>26</sup>

This connection which Labouchere pointed out in 1894 was only elaborated upon in 1980. Maylam has shown that Rhodes and Newton were close friends.<sup>27</sup> Stigger<sup>28</sup> has given the background to Newton's appointment to conduct the enquiry. The High Commissioner generally made such an appointment, subject to Colonial Office approval. Labouchere had recently objected in Parliament to the appointment of Loch's secretary to an enquiry, and when Ripon objected to Newton's appointment, Loch insisted on the appointment, lest replacing his candidate gave credence

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<sup>25</sup> H.C.1894, LVIII, 545 (C7555).

<sup>26</sup> Truth, December 13, 1894, p.1388.

<sup>27</sup> See Maylam, pp.52;130, for the extent of Newton's connections with the Company.

<sup>28</sup> P.Stigger, The Land Commission of 1894 and its Membership. Rhodesian History, 1977, 8. pp.105-106.

to Labouchere's charges.<sup>29</sup>

Labouchere's concern with the abuse of offices representing public interest was not limited to elected government officers, but embraced the Directors of the British South Africa Company, and appointed imperial officers as well. As the two Dukes and Earl Grey were on the Board of Directors to satisfy imperial government conditions, he considered that they had a public responsibility to protect the interests, not only of shareholders, but also of the British Government and British public. Thus the Dukes of Abercorn and Fife, Earl Grey, and occasionally Farquhar, were all targets of attack from time to time, throughout the period 1889-1899.

There is no doubt that, among the conditions established by the British government for granting a Royal Charter, was the demand for a prestigious Board of Directors. Salisbury is quoted as having "authorised Rhodes and his allies to go ahead and draft the Charter they wanted, but warned them that they would be wise to include among their directors men of 'social and political standing'".<sup>30</sup> When the Charter was granted, Article 29 named the Directors, and specified that the three public members, the Duke of Abercorn, the Duke of Fife, and Albert Grey (later Earl Grey), would remain Directors for life, or until

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<sup>29</sup> The Jameson Raid also sparked criticism of the Secretary of State, who was at that time, Chamberlain. Since Chapter VII below is devoted to the Jameson Raid, criticism of Chamberlain will be considered there.

<sup>30</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.170.



they became incapacitated, or resigned.<sup>31</sup> That is, they could not be removed from office by the other Directors of the Company. The government's desire to protect their position was explained by Lord Knutsford, Secretary of State for the Colonies, who suggested to the Foreign Office that the government intended to exercise some control over the Company's operations by ensuring that it had a responsible Board of Directors, for:

... in consenting to consider this scheme in more detail, Lord Knutsford has been influenced by the consideration that if such a Company is incorporated by Royal Charter its constitution, objects and operations will become more directly subject to control by Her Majesty's Government. ... In Lord Knutsford's judgement such a Company ..., if well conducted, would render valuable assistance to Her Majesty's Government in South Africa.<sup>32</sup>

These gentlemen made no attempt to live up to these great expectations of them for, as Galbraith remarks:

Of the three public members of the Board ... two devoted little time and effort to the affairs of the Company, and the third was converted to the religion of Rhodes. They consequently were worse than useless, for they gave a sheen of respectability to the operations of a company over which they exercised no control.<sup>33</sup>

This failure to do more than sit on the Board aroused Labouchere, and a clear development emerges in the comments in Truth: Labouchere moved from pointing out the financial interest of the Dukes in the Company, and their obligations to the

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<sup>31</sup> C8773, p.8.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Mathers, pg. 278-279. The note was dated April 30, 1889.

<sup>33</sup> Galbraith, p.116.

public, to direct charges of negligence, and eventually to probable active misconduct in connection with the Jameson Raid.

It is true that Rhodes was not easily controlled, but the extent to which the Directors allowed him control was extraordinary. He was given a power of attorney for the Company in 1891 and, until it became apparent that he was spending with reckless abandon, he was given complete freedom over the budget. The Directors made no objection to the private agreement made for the purchase of the Rudd Concession for one million British South Africa Company shares. Equally, whether they were aware of the Jameson Raid or not, they showed great reluctance to penalise Rhodes, or any other Company officials involved. Labouchere first demanded that the Directors meet their obligations to the public in 1890-1891, by releasing information on who the original shareholders were, and what financial arrangements had been made between British South Africa Company, United Concessions Company and Central Search Association.<sup>34</sup> By 1893, his tone had become sharper, and he accused the Dukes of being "decoy ducks", and of allowing the public to be misled into a worthless investment.<sup>35</sup> However, in 1896, after the Jameson Raid, comments rapidly became more damning. Labouchere's initial response was to assume the directors ignorant, for:

That this raid was not pre-arranged, and that Mr Rhodes was not perfectly aware what was going to take place is simply incredible. ... It was, however, probably not

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<sup>34</sup> e.g. Truth November 6, 1890.

<sup>35</sup> See Truth, November 16, 1893, p.1048.

known to the ornamental Jummy Board, with its Dukes and its Earls in London.<sup>36</sup>

More mature reflection caused Labouchere to modify his opinions and, by August, Truth's tone had changed, and he asked:

What is the precise legal meaning of 'culpable negligence'? As a condition of granting a Charter in South Africa to "our well-beloved" Rhodes and Beit and Maguire, the Queen insisted upon "our well-beloved" Fife, Abercorn, Grey and Farguhar [being made co-owners of the Charter, and] being placed on the Board of the Company. ... It appears that £61,000 of the Company's money was expended in Johannesburg, and that further monies were spent in expenses connected with the Jameson Raid. The London Directors plead that they knew nothing of this until after the raid. Would not this amount to culpable negligence? ... When half the City knew that the raid was about to take place, when the Company's money was being expended, and the Company's forces being collected for the raid, these innocents knew absolutely nothing of what was occurring!<sup>37</sup>

Finally in December 1897, after the Parliamentary Committee had found Rhodes guilty of complicity in the Jameson Raid conspiracy, and after the Risings had taken place in Rhodesia, and the Company had been somewhat discredited, Truth condemned the negligence of the three directors, and called for their removal from the Board of Directors:

Three directors - the Duke of Fife, the Duke of Abercorn, and Earl Grey - were appointed by the Government as a condition of the Charter being given. They were specifically appointed to see that nothing wrongful was done. According to the evidence submitted to the Parliamentary Committee, Earl Grey was more or less cognisant of the contemplated raid. The Dukes of Abercorn and Fife pocketed their salaries, and exercised no sort of control over the Company... These three noblemen ought to be replaced by three real directors, able and skilled men of business, and prepared to allow nothing to be done without their

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<sup>36</sup> Truth, January 16, 1896, p.145.

<sup>37</sup> Truth, August 6, 1896, p.354.

knowledge and approval.<sup>38</sup>

How much was actually known of the Jameson Raid is not certain - many of the people who might have prevented it probably knew a little, and tried not to find out any more. Nonetheless, Labouchere's accusations against the British South Africa Company Directors were fully justified. They were not interested in the operations of the Company, and made no attempt to control Rhodes. Even so, they were not removed from the Board of Directors.

The last set of public officials to be scrutinised by Labouchere were the officers appointed to represent the Imperial Government in South Africa. The most sensitive position was that of the Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner for South Africa, as this official served as the link between the Imperial government and the Chartered Company in Southern Africa. Sir Hercules Robinson, later Lord Rosmead, held the position for two periods, 1881 to 1889 and 1895 to 1897, Sir Henry Loch serving in the intervening years. Both Loch and Robinson came under Labouchere's scrutiny, and both were criticised. Robinson was from early on a firm supporter of Rhodes,<sup>39</sup> and therefore of the Chartered Company, and was influential in the process of securing the charter.<sup>40</sup> He was later known to have owned shares in the British South Africa Company, and became a Director of De

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<sup>38</sup> Truth, December 16, 1897, p. 1571.

<sup>39</sup> Lockhart and Woodhouse, p.81.

<sup>40</sup> Lockhart & Woodhouse, p.161-162.

Beers after resigning as Governor and High Commissioner in 1889.

<sup>41</sup> Loch, on the other hand, was never an ardent supporter of Rhodes. When he did assist him, it was because they shared common goals, or because Loch lacked sufficient support to oppose Rhodes.<sup>42</sup> Loch wanted Mashonaland and Matabeleland to be under British control and, while his preference would have been to extend more direct Imperial control over Rhodesia, as this was impossible without the support of the Imperial Government, he was obliged to work with the British South Africa Company to accomplish his end. He was helpful to Rhodes in establishing a claim to the land in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. When Lippert sought a concession covering land rights from Lobengula, Loch first assisted Rhodes in trying to obstruct his efforts. He even had Lippert's agent, Renny-Tailyour, arrested in Bechuanaland for being a threat to the peace, and so prevented him from entering Matabeleland.<sup>43</sup> When it was later decided that the most expedient course was to buy Lippert's concession, Loch was again influential in persuading Lippert to visit Lobengula, in order to have the concession confirmed, and was instrumental in having the concession recognised also by the British Government. In 1893, during the Matabele War, Loch made some attempts to restrain the Company from unprovoked aggression but, since he was in agreement with the Company that co-existence with the

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<sup>41</sup> Lockhart & Woodhouse p.285.

<sup>42</sup> Blake, p.149.

<sup>43</sup> Rosenthal pp.vi;3.

Ndebele state was not possible, he was not unwilling to support the Company in a war. In addition, as discussed above, he hoped to gain additional power over the Company by adept handling of the war. Once he had received reports of Ndebele aggression, he exercised the authority reluctantly given him by the Colonial Office, and gave Jameson permission to "take whatever action he may deem necessary for the protection of the life and property of the residents in Mashonaland".<sup>44</sup> After his attempt to control the post-war settlement failed, relations between Rhodes and Loch became difficult.

Labouchere's comments on Loch were restrained. He accused Loch of having used his authority to advance Company interests, but not of deliberate misdeeds. On October 19, 1893, Labouchere wanted to know:

whether, as stated in South African newspapers, important personages have been "squared" with either free shares, or shares given at par when they could be sold at a premium. Let us know precisely what connection exists between Sir Henry Loch and the Company, on the directors of which he is supposed to exercise a check on behalf of the Imperial Government.<sup>45</sup>

Loch's responsibility for allowing the Company to engage in a war against the Ndebele was more seriously asserted. In October 1893 Truth quoted a Johannesburg correspondent as follows:

Mr Rhodes is using Sir Henry Loch as a stalking horse, to cover an advance into Amandebeli country while Chartered people are massing troops, and Sir Henry Loch

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<sup>44</sup> Press, October 5, 1893. Galbraith (p.306) quotes the same instruction thus: "to adopt any measures necessary to ensure the safety of the company's posts."

<sup>45</sup> Truth, October 19, 1893, p.801.

is allowing his position as Her Majesty's High Commissioner to be used as a mask to cover this advance. While he is negotiating and palavering, the Chief whose subjects have been wantonly murdered is being stealthily stalked.\*6

For once, Labouchere was following, rather than leading, for the Pretoria Press had made similar accusations against Loch, stating:

We regret that Sir Henry Loch should have been induced to look at the situation through Rhodesian spectacles, but we are not surprised, for the personal magnetism of the great amalgamator is such that few can withstand him. He has, however, done what he has done, and the consequences will be one of the most unjust wars of modern times.

... we contend that the Imperial Government in allowing the Chartered Company to attack Bulawayo is sanctioning an act of gross injustice in order that a number of influential and powerful English speculators may make money.\*7

Loch was probably more actively involved in the process than is assumed by the editor of the Press, since he hoped that by engaging imperial troops in the war, he would gain control of the peace settlement, and extend more direct imperial control over Rhodesia. Thus, while he was certainly guilty of trying to manipulate events to achieve his own ends, Loch's goals were political and imperial, not financial and personal.

Loch was fortunate enough to leave the Cape before the storm of the Jameson Raid broke so that, although he almost certainly knew about the plans which were brewing, he was never implicated in the scandal surrounding the Raid. Sir Hercules

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\*6 Truth, October 26, 1893, p.853.

\*7 Press, October 5, 1893. Another example can be found on September 29, 1893.

Robinson attracted much more direct criticism from Truth, which sharply rebuked him, and challenged his assertion that he had no personal interest in the Company, when it noted that:

Sir Hercules Robinson, who was Governor of the Cape when the Ruid Concession was obtained from Lobengula, and who advised that it should be confirmed, writes a letter to the Times singing the praises of the South African Chartered Company, which he concludes by saying that his views are not influenced by any personal interests, as he has sold at a loss the few shares that he held in Mr Rhodes's ventures. Sir Hercules figures amongst the shareholders of the Concession Company as a holder of 2500 shares, when that Company was brought into existence with a paper capital of four millions. Are we to understand that between what he paid (if he paid) for these shares and the price at which he sold them, he was a pecuniary loser? Sir Hercules was also a shareholder in the De Beers Company, which is one of Mr Rhodes's ventures, and he sold these shares. Did he lose money on this transaction?<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, in 1895 Labouchere made a strong statement, opposing Robinson's re-appointment as High Commissioner, holding that:

The appointment is an astounding one, for if there is one man who ought not to be sent to the Cape as Governor and Chief Commissioner, that man is Sir Hercules Robinson. He had, on leaving the Cape Colony apparently a considerable holding in the United Concessions Company, which was exchanged for Chartered Company shares, and also in De Beers Company. On his return to England, he became a Director of the latter company which has a secret service fund of £10,000 per annum for political and other purposes, and of the Standard Bank, another Rhodesian undertaking. The Cape Colony is now "run" by three powerful Corporations - De Beers, the Chartered Company and the Consolidated Goldfields, in all of which Mr Rhodes's will is absolute. This is humiliating, but surely it is a mistake to accentuate this state of things by sending out a Governor who has been closely connected with two of these Companies?<sup>49</sup>

Maylam has provided evidence that Robinson had extensive

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<sup>48</sup> Truth, November 9, 1893, p.981.

<sup>49</sup> Truth, April 4, 1895, p.837.



financial interests in the British South Africa Company and the United Concessions Company. He held 2,100 of the original shares issued by the British South Africa Company and 6,250 United Concessions Company shares in January 1892.<sup>50</sup> Thus Labouchere was not wide of the mark in his criticisms.<sup>51</sup>

Labouchere's comments on political manoeuvring are cautious, but revealing, nonetheless. He clearly demonstrated that the Government's policy of employing a chartered company for imperial gain was a mistake. The Company jeopardised Britain's negotiations with Portugal, although the final settlement was favourable to Britain. In addition, the Chartered Company did not save the British treasury money. Labouchere pointed out the cost of the Matabele War, particularly after December 1893, when the Company's troops were disbanded, and security was maintained by Imperial troops. With regard to the role of individuals Labouchere's comments were less conclusive, but still useful. He was obviously aware of the political manipulation which was taking place, although he could not prove his allegations. He was convinced that abuse of office had taken place, but such political accusations are most difficult to prove. He was able to demonstrate Robinson's connections with

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<sup>50</sup> Maylam, p.129.

<sup>51</sup> It is known that Robinson was aware of the planned Jameson Raid, and made no attempt to prevent it. (See Lockhart and Woodhouse, pp.299-300.) However, he did not testify at the Cape or the British Parliamentary Enquiries into the Raid, and avoided being publicly disgraced. He died a few months after the Raid had taken place.

the Company, and to cast suspicion on Newton's Victoria Incident Report. He also raised the general question of how Rhodes exerted his power. After the Jameson Raid, again, he raised the question of how closely the Secretary of State had been involved, although he could not prove any connection. Maylam has brought evidence to light, which demonstrates that Labouchere's suspicions were well-grounded, with regard to Rhodes's patronage. However, the leads which Labouchere's commentary provided have hardly been pursued, and recent historical work is rediscovering links which Labouchere pointed out before 1900.

## V. LABOUCHERE AND SETTLERS

Labouchere's growing belief that the British South Africa Company was a fraudulent enterprise caused him to develop an interest in the details of the administration of Mashonaland and Matabeleland, because he wished to establish what the reality was behind the Company's propaganda. By presenting the unsatisfactory conditions which faced Europeans who went to Mashonaland and Matabeleland, he was able to argue that the objective of the Company was not the extension of Britain's empire but financial speculation. This led him to conclude that it was not fit to be responsible for the administration of its territory. He was uniquely well-qualified to arrive at this conclusion, since he was well-supplied with informants on conditions in the territory. As a result of his interest and the quality and number of his informants, whose comments on the administration and on conditions faced by white residents peppered Truth, his conclusion was not surprising. Equally his judgement was sound.

The issues which Labouchere particularly pursued in this regard were improper conduct by Rhodes and Company officials; distortion of information about the Company and its territory; disregard for legal procedures; treatment of the Company's police; and the state of communications between Mashonaland and the rest of the world. His general criticisms of the Company's

administration will be examined first, followed by the more specific charges since, until the Jameson Raid, almost all references were to the lack of organisation in the running of the country.

Labouchere began in October 1891 by writing of the discomforts faced by visitors and settlers in Mashonaland, noting that they continued to send

... accounts of their experience in the El Dorado of the South Africa Company. ... There can be no doubt ... that the future of this territory depends entirely on the digging up of gold which has not yet been seen, and that until that desirable result has been arrived at, prospectors may reckon on having about as bad a time of it as in any uncivilized country, with the additional inconvenience of having to submit to the despotism of an irresponsible officialdom.<sup>1</sup>

These remarks heralded regular criticism of Company officials for their casual attitude towards the authority which they exercised, and for the disregard for due process which is apparent in many incidents.

The informality of Company officials is well illustrated by "certain extraordinary proceedings which occurred on the return of Mr Cecil Rhodes from Mashonaland",

... He reached Mafeking in British Bechuanaland, on Sunday, November 22, travelling by the mail coach from Mashonaland. He had, however, ordered the mail bags to be left behind en route in order to expedite his progress, and they followed by a passenger coach in which Lord Randolph was travelling, thus missing the outgoing English mail. This autocratic proceeding appears to have taken place within the British Protectorate, where, I take it, neither a managing director of the South Africa Company, nor a Premier of

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<sup>1</sup> Truth October 15, 1891, p.770.

Cape Colony is more than a private individual.<sup>2</sup>

Minor Chartered Company officials were no more responsible for, in 1892,

At Christmas the Chief [sic] Commissioner and Resident Magistrate, under the influence of the festive season, suspended each other, but the latter got the better of the former by arresting him. The next day, however they made up their differences at a smoking concert, and spent the rest of the year in festivity. This Resident Magistrate was a man of resources, if not humanity. Having ordered a man into prison, he made him safe every evening by tying his thumbs together behind his back.<sup>3</sup>

Neither of these accounts give evidence of either malice or gross misconduct but both demonstrate a careless attitude.

Malice was present, together with dishonesty, in a case which came to light in Truth in April 1892. A Mr Cutler had performed well-sinking work for the Company, and found it difficult to obtain payment. The Company had issued vouchers, signed by the Inspector of Works, payable at 75% of their face value in Mafeking, where some of the vouchers in the same series had been honoured. However the Company refused to honour further vouchers presented by Mr Cutler, and he attempted to sue the Company, whereupon

... the Company fell back upon the technical plea ... that they had no domicile in Bechuanaland, and that their registered office was in London, where they must be sued. A more preposterous contention could hardly be

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<sup>2</sup> Truth December 31, 1891, p.1391.

<sup>3</sup> Truth December 7, 1893. The account is taken from published experiences of two nurses, Rose Blennerhasset and Lucy Sleeman, in Mashonaland. The excerpts from Miss Blennerhasset's book are not quoted out of context, but in fact are further embellished. See R.B. Blennerhasset and L. Sleeman: Adventures in Mashonaland. London, 1893. pp.203-214. The magistrate in question was Captain H.D. Graham.

raised, since it denies to all who do business with the Company in South Africa the right to sue them in the local courts. But, in the face of the facts that the Charter expressly provides that the Company may be sued in any Court of the United Kingdom or Colonies, that the agent in Mafeking had an office there, where the summons had been delivered, and that this agent made the contract with Mr Cutler, the plea looks such a flagrant piece of pettifogging dishonesty that I am curious to hear what Mr Rhodes has to say in defence of it.<sup>4</sup>

The Company's officials were clearly becoming convinced that any successful ruse was acceptable, so that Labouchere's assertion that the Company was a fraud was becoming more tenable. This led him to criticise it in more depth, especially by giving attention to the Company's attempt to control public information on its territory, the administration of justice and the Company's Police, amongst other matters.

The Company exercised strict control over the information on its territory which reached the rest of the world, through newspapers, private mail, and undisguised propaganda.<sup>5</sup> The mounting distrust surfaced in a quotation from an unspecified South African newspaper which appeared in Truth in June 1891, which held that:

Everyone now sees through the sordid objects and

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<sup>4</sup> Truth April 21, 1892, p.813.

<sup>5</sup> This Rhodes achieved in part by winning journalists over to the Company, by paying them, if necessary. For example, Reuters special commissioner in Matabeleland was Norris Newman, whose independence was suspect for some time, and who finally severed connections with Reuters, and became openly employed by the Company. Accusations against Newman, and his relations with the Company are described in P. Stigger, The Land Commission and the Land, p. 23, note 102, Historical Association of Zimbabwe, Local Series No. 36, p. 23, note 102. In addition, the Company had control of the telegraph wires and mails, thus any reports leaving the country had to pass through Company hands.

unscrupulous methods of this organisation that, were it to succeed, would extinguish the political and civil liberties of every white man through the length and breadth of the southern portion of this continent. Already they have nobbled a portion of the Cape Press; ... they have misled South Africa by monopolising the Mashonaland mails and controlling the Bechuanaland wire; ...<sup>6</sup>

The focus of attack was the deliberate deception of the British and South African public as to the state of affairs in Mashonaland, and comments on this subject recur in Truth throughout the period from 1891 to 1899. Thus, in 1893, Labouchere wondered:

... who on the Westminster Gazette has been "got hold of" by the South African Chartered Company? This newspaper, alone amongst Liberal journals is in perfect ecstasies over the Company's doings, and evidently considers that it matters nothing how many Africans are slaughtered and robbed, if the slaughter and the robbery enabled financing adventurers to make money out of British investors.<sup>7</sup>

By 1896, experience led him to hold that:

The public should look with an eye of suspicion on all news that comes from South Africa. A little while ago the astute Mr Rhodes had a financial interest in every newspaper published in Cape Town. The case is not quite so bad now; still Mr Rhodes has much money, and his boast has always been that he can buy any man. In the Transvaal it would seem that the Times is represented by a brother-in-law of Mr Lionel Phillips, the President of the Reform League. With all respect, therefore, to this gentleman, I shall not attach any importance to his telegrams or his letters.<sup>8</sup>

South African suspicions that Rhodes's officials were tampering with the mails were first confirmed by Labouchere in -----

<sup>6</sup> quoted in Truth June 25, 1891, p. 1330.

<sup>7</sup> Truth December 7, 1893, p.1215.

<sup>8</sup> Truth May 14, 1896, p.1203. Lionel Phillips was then awaiting trial for his actions during the Jameson Raid.

August 1891, when he accused the Company of abusing the "sovereign" function of managing the Post Office which it exercised by

... opening letters for the purpose of obtaining any information of value to the Company, or suppressing any intelligence, the transmission of which does not suit the officials and directors. ... The matter has become so notorious that formal complaints on the subject have been addressed to Sir Henry Loch ... Certain of [the Company's officials] have openly boasted, in the presence of witnesses that no letter of importance is sent to or from the Company's territories the contents of which they do not know.<sup>9</sup>

It was matched by a letter received in December 1891, from a correspondent who, while thanking Labouchere for his support and reporting that "the community here are with you to a man in your criticism of the Chartered Company", complained about "the tampering with letters by the Company's agents". This provided Labouchere with the opportunity to publish his own unique evidence, for

Many as are my correspondents in Mashonaland, I have not found one among them who dares to address a letter to Truth office, except under cover to somebody else. A pretty state of things in a territory nominally British.  
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Four years later, matters had clearly not improved, for Truth quoted at length from the Johannesburg Star of June 1, 1895, reporting that

A resident in Bulawayo, Matabeleland, has forwarded to a

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<sup>9</sup> Truth August 27 1891, p.428. No record of such complaints occurs in the Confidential Print Series which reveals, not that no complaints were made to Loch, but that Loch chose not to report such complaints to London.

<sup>10</sup> Truth December 24, 1891, p.1334.



member of the Star staff a letter addressed to the editor of Truth, with a request that it may be forwarded. He says 'I am afraid to post any letters to Truth in this country, as the Chartered Company would, I believe, stop them'.<sup>11</sup>

Labouchere then exercised his usual caution when he commented that

... Whether the Company really tampers with the correspondence that passes through their hands I cannot say; but those who live under their jurisdiction are firmly of opinion that they do, and it is an imputation of which, I think, the Directors would do well to clear their agents.<sup>12</sup>

There is no evidence that the Directors ever responded, but

Truth had cause to return to the issue in 1898 by writing that:

Immediately after the conclusion of Mr Rhodes's famous "Indaba" in the Matoppo, an officer of the party ran off to the signalling officer and got him to heliograph to Bulawayo a message to his broker there to wire home and buy "Chartered". Others of the party subsequently did the same thing, ... It was later on discovered by these enterprising gentlemen that all private telegrams from Bulawayo had been kept back on this occasion until others from more influential quarters had been got through. This story may belong to the ben trovato order, but it is due to the officer who contributes it to state that he actually gives the names of the parties concerned.<sup>13</sup>

Labouchere frequently charged the Company with deliberately misleading the public. While it was only to be expected that information published by the Company would cast their operations in a favourable light, nonetheless the British South Africa Company was a master of the art, and Truth frequently commented

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<sup>11</sup> Truth, June 13, 1895, p.1450;

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.1450.

<sup>13</sup> Truth, January 27, 1898, p.201. The episode is described by Stent, pp.58-61.

on their endeavours. Two examples among many suffice.<sup>14</sup> The first, which demonstrates a desire to mislead widely differing audiences by fundamentally similar methods, was published in 1891, and drew attention to telegrams

...apparently from Mr Rhodes - announcing that alluvial gold districts had been found in Mashonaland. This was presumably for English consumption, for, making a speech in Mashonaland (which has been published here, but which probably was for Mashonaland consumption), Mr Rhodes says "The alluvial deposits appear to have been worked out to a great extent by some ancient people". In regard to gold reefs, he observes, that "no one could tell what you will find in the future" ... Mr Rhodes boldly stated that "the Company" had spent more than six millions in opening up this Paradise. This statement could not have been intended for England, as the Company has never had one million in cash subscribed and, therefore, six millions cannot have been spent.<sup>15</sup>

The second demonstrates a desire in 1895 to mislead people outside Mashonaland, and arose when Labouchere proclaimed that he did

... not envy anyone who endeavours to evolve the financial position of the South African Chartered Company from the accounts which have now been made public. They consist of a balance sheet, in which capital and revenue are muddled up together, for the year ending March 31, 1895; of a report on the balance sheet, which renders confusion more confounded by dealing not only with the balance sheet, but also incidentally with statements as to financial operations since March 1895; and of a report of the Company's proceedings for the year ending December 31, 1895.<sup>16</sup>

Information was being manipulated, and Labouchere raised the important question of why it was so necessary for Rhodes to

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<sup>14</sup> For further examples see Truth December 10, 1891 pp.1234-1235; December 24, 1891; January 11, 1894; April 21, 1898.

<sup>15</sup> Truth December 10, 1891, p.1218.

<sup>16</sup> Truth March 6, 1896, p.577.

conceal the true state of affairs in Rhodesia.

Labouchere also received reports which suggested that the Company was responsible for miscarriages of justice in its territories, and he published this information also in an effort to show that the Company was not fit to administer its territories. Some of the causes for complaint arose from the Company's evident belief that any successful measure was acceptable, some from ignorance of the law but others suggest deliberate misuse of the law to achieve Company ends, as the well-sinker, Cutler's difficulties suggest. On May 3, 1894, Truth reported another case which suggests deliberate miscarriage of justice.

Labouchere held that a report of 'An Umtali cause celebre' in the Diamond Fields Advertiser "gives us a glimpse at the curious judicial method in vogue under the British South Africa Company". The case concerned the refusal of Chickongee, a daughter of Umtassa, a paramount near Umtali, to provide native labour for the Company. The Acting Resident Magistrate shot her husband, while visiting her kraal. A Mr W.M. Taylor, resident in Umtali, was charged with causing Chickongee "to ignore the authority of the Resident Magistrate, and refuse to send native labour to him". The case was heard by the Assistant Resident Magistrate and, despite inconclusive evidence, Mr Taylor was convicted. His sentence was that he was bound over to keep the peace and required to undertake that

"neither he nor his brother, Mr Herbert Taylor" would go near Umtassa's kraal or hold communication with the chief or his indunas for one year. Of course it was not without purpose that the defendant was thus made his

brother's keeper. Mr Herbert Taylor is the agent of a syndicate which claims to have a concession from Umtassa over part of Manicaland dated two years earlier than that said to have been granted to the Chartered Company. ... to prohibit Mr Herbert Taylor access to the chief was an excellent stroke of business for the Company. The fact that he had not been arraigned was of no importance to a Charterland Court.<sup>17</sup>

A case which suggests a similar misuse of magisterial authority was reported in June 1895, in which

... a young farmer was charged with buying stolen cattle from the natives, the basis of the charge being that the cattle which had been bought really belonged to the Chartered Company. The cattle in question had not been branded, and the natives who sold them to the prisoner gave evidence that they had no idea that they were not their own adding that they were compelled by hunger to sell the animals. Nevertheless, the prisoner was found guilty, and sentenced to a £50 fine or six months.<sup>18</sup>

Another, involving careless application of the law resulting in excessive punishment, soon followed, and Truth reported that

Not long ago a Kaffir was charged at Salisbury, Mashonaland with unlawfully wearing some articles of police uniform. For this crime the Resident Magistrate passed sentence of three months hard labour and thirty-five lashes, which sentence was confirmed by the Administrator. [When the Judge of the High Court arrived in Salisbury it] transpired that it was not within the jurisdiction of the Resident Magistrate to inflict, nor within the authority of the Administrator to confirm, such punishment for such an offence. The judge accordingly quashed the conviction, but unfortunately,

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<sup>17</sup> Truth May 31, 1894 p.1006. The syndicate which Mr H. Taylor represented was the Benningfield Syndicate. The conviction against Mr W.M. Taylor was later quashed on appeal. However, the Company and the Taylor brothers apparently managed to work things out. Later in 1894, Herbert Taylor was appointed Assistant Native Commissioner in Matabeleland, while William Taylor was appointed Native Commissioner in Mashonaland in 1895. See P. Stigger, *The Emergence of the Native Department in Matabeleland, 1893-1899. Rhodesian History*, 1976, pp.45-46.

<sup>18</sup> Truth June 13, 1895, p.1450.

without much benefit to the kaffir, who had already undergone the illegal flogging and served two months of imprisonment.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, Truth commented on September 24, 1896, on the illegal courtmartial and execution of the Shona chief, Makoni. The terror inspired in the rebels by such summary proceedings was doubtless of great value to the Company. However, in this instance, after having been assured repeatedly that if he surrendered he would not be killed, the chief came out of his stronghold and surrendered, unarmed. When seized at gunpoint, he struggled, and Company officers used this as an excuse to label his arrest capture, instead of surrender. They set up a court martial, which none of the officers concerned had the authority to do, found Makoni guilty of treason, and executed him, before having any communication with the High Commissioner. Even under the conditions of rebellion, this was an inexcusable miscarriage of justice.<sup>20</sup>

Labouchere's comments concerning the recruitment of police and the treatment of the men recruited, arose out of a concern with the integrity of the Company, and its suitability to govern a territory. Thus, in 1890 Labouchere noted the recruitment of a police force, and queried it, holding that

The Chartered Company obtained the aid of her Majesty's representative in Bechuanaland to recruit a lot of buccaneers, and it has now sent these buccaneers into Lobengula's country to defend the agents of the Company

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<sup>19</sup> Truth August 29, 1895, p. 483.

<sup>20</sup> T.O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia North Western University Press, 1967, gives an account of the episode, pp.278-281.

in looking after gold. Against whom the buccaneers are to defend the agents, except Lobengula, is not clear.<sup>21</sup>

Once the police force was in existence Labouchere's focus shifted to the terms of recruitment, and conditions of life of the members of the British South Africa Company Police, and in 1891 he frequently published letters and comments in Truth denouncing their usage. A correspondent writing in April 1891 remarked that members of the British South Africa Company police he knew

... sincerely regretted that they had ever joined the force, the work of despatch riding through all sorts of weather, roads and rivers, with the constant fear of being a fair target for an assegai, is not compensated for by three shillings per day... Tommy Atkins' lot and pay are much superior to those of an unfortunate trooper in the British South Africa Company police.<sup>22</sup>

In 1896 and 1897 similar complaints were received from recruits to the Rhodesia Mounted Police, who claimed to have been drawn in under false pretences. Some complaints were reported from Cape Town recruits, in August 1896 and then, in March 1897, Truth recorded that

... a number of troopers ... enlisted at Kimberley in September... they were not allowed the expenses which they were promised for the journey to Bulawayo; ... contrary to the understanding upon which they joined their pay only commenced from the date of their arrival in Bulawayo, instead of from the date when they were first sworn in at Kimberley, several weeks previously; and ... when their pay did commence the railway fare to Mafeking was deducted, though they had been led to

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<sup>21</sup> Truth August 28, 1890 p. 435.

<sup>22</sup> Truth April 23, 1891, p.854. Further examples were published in 1891 in Truth: August 13, p.325; October 15, p.770; November 21, p.990; December 3, p.1159.

believe that it would be borne by the Chartered Company.

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Other complaints show that pay was not the only grievance of the recruits for in 1894 it was stated that

Many enlist under a complete delusion as to the real nature of the duties they have to perform, and the conditions of the life they have to lead. This appears to be particularly the case with those who join the Chartered Company's Police in Mashonaland. Complaint after complaint is received that the men are not only ill-paid, but ill-clothed, ill-fed, ill-sheltered, and generally ill-treated...<sup>24</sup>

The number of complaints received, and the timespan covered suggest that the Company's police forces were subject to unnecessarily harsh conditions.

Labouchere also directed his attention to communications which, since Mashonaland and Matabeleland are landlocked, was an issue of great importance. Labouchere's major purpose was to demonstrate that until communications' problems were overcome, the territories could show no prospect of profit, at least in the short term.<sup>25</sup> He had a subsidiary point also, in that the Company was bound to be inefficient in supplying the territory while no easy means of access existed. The initial access routes were from the Cape or from the Transvaal, on long, slow journeys by ox wagon or coach. The first train to reach Rhodesia did not arrive in Bulawayo from Mafeking until October 1897. The Beira

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<sup>23</sup> Truth, March 18, 1897, p. 648. Similar stories were told on February 18 and April 22, 1897.

<sup>24</sup> Truth, March 24, 1894, p.717. Another example complained particularly of health care. November 3, 1898, p.1095.

<sup>25</sup> Truth November 26, 1893, p.1103

line did not reach Umtali until 1898. Travelling by road from Beira was not feasible. Thus before the railway lines were complete, imported goods had to travel overland from Cape Town via Kimberley and Mafeking, or from Pretoria. Between 1893, when construction on the line from Mafeking to Bulawayo commenced, and 1897, the railway line made very slow progress, gradually shortening the distance to be travelled overland. Throughout the early years of the territory, farmers, miners and all European settlers alike had to contend with transport difficulties. The transport of goods was very costly, and uncertain, and personal travel very inconvenient. The Company's initial hope of rapidly opening an access route from the East coast to Umtali via the Pungwe river was not realised. The leader of the Pioneer Column, Frank Johnson, was optimistic about building a road from Mpanda, on the banks of the Pungwe to Umtali, and on to Salisbury, but this proved impossible.<sup>26</sup> It was perhaps as well since:

In addition to other objections to the South Africa Company's attempts to secure a short cut to the sea via the Pungwe River, I am told by people who know the country that it is one of the most deadly spots on the globe...<sup>27</sup>

Company propaganda led Rose Blennerhasset and her companions to expect that they would travel on a wagon road from the Pungwe River to Umtali in June 1891. When they arrived at Mpanda, several miles up the Pungwe River from Beira, which was the alleged departure point of the road, the nurses discovered and

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, pp.197-200.

<sup>27</sup> Truth, March 12, 1891, p.540.



subsequently recorded that:

... the "road" making consisted of setting fire to the tall grass, neither more nor less. We lit some of it ourselves, and felt as if we were materially advancing that "opening up of Mashonaland", which was in everyone's mouth. ... We had now been some days at Mpanda's, and had seen enough to know that coaches and wagons to Salisbury were the least substantial of airy myths. Major Johnson had indeed assured us that the first coach had started for Mashonaland, but had omitted to add that it had arrived nowhere, and was stationary on the veld not far from the Punqwe camp, ... unable to move either backwards or forwards on account of the condition of the fly-stricken oxen, most of which had died."<sup>28</sup>

Despite the fact that Beira remained in Portuguese control after the Anglo-Portuguese treaty was signed in 1891, the British South Africa Company did control the Beira Railway Company, which purchased the concession to build the railway line from Beira to Umtali.<sup>29</sup> This did not mean, however, that rapid progress was made. In order to cut costs, the Beira Railway Company accepted a tender for a two-foot gauge 'steam tram line'. The tender was offered by George Pauling, who had never seen the territory to be traversed.<sup>30</sup> It took seven years to complete the 220 miles to Umtali, although a train service was operated to points en route as it progressed. The railway rapidly proved inadequate for the work it was required to perform as it was built on sub-standard foundations, and the

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<sup>28</sup> Blennerhasset, pp.98-99.

<sup>29</sup> A.H. Croxton, Railways of Rhodesia, Newton Abbot, Devon, 1973. p.16

<sup>30</sup> Croxton, p.17.

gauge was too narrow.<sup>31</sup> The difficulties of the railway were the subject of correspondence in Truth indicating that

... things were at a complete standstill. The engine-drivers and carpenters have all left on account of the fever, and all other white men as soon as their contracts are finished clear off as quickly as possible. The floods have swept away part of the line on the flats ... and the bridge across the Menda River has also been swept away. ...

I have a very poor opinion of the railway and its usefulness, even when completed to beyond the "fly" belt. It is only two foot gauge, and a regular tin pot affair at that ...<sup>32</sup>

The alternate routes were preferable to the Beira one even though, in 1891, they were not much better. The Capetown correspondent of the Times was quoted to the effect that

... a distance of eight hundred miles has to be traversed to Fort Salisbury, over roads presenting almost insuperable difficulties to locomotion" whilst the "transport of machinery occupies several months, without counting on the probabilities of rain and the difficulties of crossing rivers".<sup>33</sup>

On November 12, 1891, a more detailed account described the road as heavy sand, made hazardous by tree stumps and boulders, and littered with abandoned wagons and dead oxen. This correspondent remarked that the road was being improved at that time, in preparation for Lord Randolph Churchill's visit. Churchill, however, did not appreciate these efforts, for his

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<sup>31</sup> Croxton, pp.20-30.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Truth, July 6, 1893, p.13, from a letter to "a friend of mine". Within two years of the completion of the Beira line, reconstruction of the railway to higher standards, and with a three foot six inch gauge began, and it was rebuilt in fourteen months, between May 1899 and August 1900. (Croxton, pp.38-40).

<sup>33</sup> Truth, October 29, 1891, p.881.

... last letter from Mashonaland bears out all that I have said about the Rhodian Empire. If, he says, Mashonaland is rich, another route than that from the Cape Colony will have to be established, for the character of the country to be traversed, and its climactic and hygenic conditions, offer insuperable obstructions to commercial enterprise from the base of Cape Colony or the Transvaal.<sup>34</sup>

The effects of poor access were most severely felt during the rainy season in 1890-91, when flooded rivers made the roads impassable for several months, and the settlers suffered severe shortages, because the Company had made no provision for such an eventuality, although the difficulties of travel through the rainy season were certainly not unknown before the occupation of Mashonaland. Hole described the effects of that first rainy season. Travellers were stranded between rivers, which flooded and became impassable, and no fresh supplies reached Salisbury between November 1890 and April 1891. The only reserve supplies available were those which Frank Johnson had provided for the Pioneer Column. A little food could be obtained from Africans, but their surplus was small. All commodities became scarce, and prices soared. Mail links were maintained for as long as possible, by having a man on horseback swim the rivers, but even mail was stopped between December and February. Shortages were never again as severe as they were in that year, but travel in the rainy season remained difficult, and supplies costly, until the railway reached Bulawayo.<sup>35</sup> The consequence was that, before November 1891, provisions were

<sup>34</sup> Truth, November 26, 1891, p. 1103. Churchill, pp.299-300

<sup>35</sup> Hole, Making, p.177-179.

... at famine prices: Meal 1s3d per lb., bacon 3s; corned beef, in tins, 2s 3d per lb. ... The news here about gold is conflicting ... No machines are at work, nor is any mine developed far enough to form an estimate of its value ... Mining material is also very dear. Added to this is the heavy tax imposed by the Chartered Company. "The game is not worth the candle".<sup>36</sup>

Six weeks later, a correspondent remarked that

"It reflects little credit upon the Chartered Company that they have been in possession of this country so long and have done nothing towards making a cheap and quick way of ingress and egress ..."<sup>37</sup>

This comment was perhaps premature but it ought not to have remained valid until 1897.

The conditions faced by settlers in Mashonaland were much influenced by transportation difficulties, and by the Company's financial constraints. Labouchere published letters and comments complaining about life in Mashonaland throughout the early years of the Company to demonstrate that it was unlikely to show a profit in the near future, and to reveal the Company's failings, in order to discourage investors from buying Chartered Company shares. A further indication of the weakness of the Company in the way in which it tried to meet some of the expenses of administering the territory by extracting revenue from the settlers, in every conceivable way, without regard for the consequences. When white residents were required to take out licences for their guns in 1893 Labouchere commented:

... I am under the impression that the government has the right to tax any of its subjects in whatever manner and to whatever extent it pleases. It is however a very

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Truth, November 12, 1891, p.995.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Truth, December 24, 1891, p.1334.

novel and remarkable state of affairs that while the white man in the region may not carry arms without a licence, the natives may arm themselves to the teeth at their own sweet wills.<sup>38</sup>

Since the Company relied on volunteers to defend the country a few months later,<sup>39</sup> it is apparent that this measure was not intended to restrict gun ownership, but rather to exploit a source of revenue.

The Company also established arduous terms and conditions for those occupying plots of land, or taking out mining claims.<sup>40</sup> Mathers published the Company's terms and conditions for prospectors, the first of which stated that any "person may take out a licence on binding himself in writing to obey the Laws of the Company and to assist in the defence and maintenance of Law and Order, if called upon to do so by the Company ..."<sup>41</sup> Licences, and the registration of claims, all required revenue stamps to be affixed, and in order to retain a registered claim, the claimholder was required to have sunk a 30 foot shaft into or across a reef within four months of registration. The terms applying to flotation of companies were most rigorous:

On claims being ascertained to be payable, the Company have the right to float them into either a joint stock company or into a syndicate. The Company shall therefore within a reasonable time either make a proposal or decline to do so. If the proposal is accepted by the Claimholder he shall on flotation be

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<sup>38</sup> Truth March 16, 1893. p.577.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter II.

<sup>40</sup> See Truth November 12, 1891 for terms and conditions for occupying a town lot.

<sup>41</sup> Mathers, p.461.

entitled to half the vendors' scrip in the shares of the Company so floated. If the Claimholder is not satisfied with the Company's proposals, he has the right within one year to prove to the Company that he is in a position to float on better terms, and he shall, on the flotation of the claims, give the Company half the vendors' scrip.<sup>42</sup>

The Company was adept at raising money but, as Labouchere pointed out in 1895, when he published the following letter on Matabeleland, his information

... up to date is that no paying gold has been seen outside the four corners of a prospectus; that the settlers are few and far between, and are cursing the Company and drinking spirits; that the only persons who are growing rich are the liquor vendors; that the climate is such that it is impossible that Europeans can permanently reside in that country without serious danger to their health...<sup>43</sup>

By 1899 nothing had really improved, for then it was recorded that

A paper at Bloemfontein publishes a statement by some Boer farmers at Bulawayo who were drawn there by Mr Rhodes invitation to Africanders to come and take farms. They assert that the promises which were made have not been fulfilled, and they give a very discouraging account of the state of things at Bulawayo. It is said that work cannot be obtained, that people depart daily, that shops and places of business are being closed, and that there are already empty houses for more than 1000 people.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Mathers, p. 461-462.

<sup>43</sup> Truth January 24, 1895, p.206-207. The cost of licences as quoted in The British South Africa Company Report on the Company's proceedings and the Condition of the Territory within the sphere of its operations, 1894-1895, p. 62 suggests that liquor licences must have been lucrative. Whereas licences for sale of liquor wholesale, in bottlestores or retail cost £100 each, no licenses which did not involve the sale of liquor cost more than £20 - these being for pawnbrokers and agents of foreign firms, while licences for other merchants, such as butchers and bakers, cost £10.

<sup>44</sup> Truth March 16, 1899, p.656.

The material Truth published demonstrated the casual behaviour and impropriety of British South Africa Company officials. It demonstrated that the Company controlled the information which the public received about Mashonaland and Matabeleland to the best of its ability, in an attempt to protect its financial standing. It revealed why the Company needed to control the flow of information, for the complaints against the Company were legion, and many appear to have been well-grounded. No serious effort was made by the Company, before the crisis precipitated by the Jameson Raid attracted Imperial Government attention, to develop an effective administration or the infrastructure necessary to develop the country as a colonial settlement. The attention which Labouchere devoted to the administration of the Chartered Company's territories established two main points. First, he showed that the Company was not a viable financial concern at that time; and second, he established that the Company did not take the responsibility of governing its territory seriously. He used these points to warn settlers off and investors against buying British South Africa Company shares, while attempting to convince the Imperial Government that the Company was not fit to govern Rhodesia. To Labouchere, the evidence available to him exposed the Company as first and foremost a speculative venture, while its reputed patriotic motives were mere window-dressing.

## VI. LABOUCHERE AND AFRICANS

Labouchere's first interest in the British South Africa Company arose from its political and financial activities. Once he had taken note of the Company, and observed its mode of operating, however, he watched every aspect of its affairs with deep suspicion, and the Company's treatment of Africans in its territory was no exception. Labouchere made no pretence at being a philanthropist, but he was a humanitarian, and his strong moral convictions led him to oppose injustice in any form. Thus he frequently exposed the violation of Africans' rights in the British South Africa Company's territory, and the treatment meted out to them which he considered inhumane.

His attitude toward Africans was clear, for he maintained that he would never

... join an expedition either to the North Pole or to Central Africa. They are both such thoroughly uninteresting places to me that if I could go to them in half an hour by a penny 'bus I would not invest the penny. ... I did once dwell for some time with the Red Indians; I do not think that I ever so thoroughly bored myself. In my childhood, I remember weeping copiously over the tales of African Princesses who had been reduced to slavery. ... The journeys of the Stanleys and the Parkes, and the many others who have visited the native homes of the Princesses have entirely suppressed her.<sup>1</sup>

However, while not prepared to indulge in romantic notions about

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<sup>1</sup> Truth, November 12, 1891, p.980. Labouchere did spend nearly six months with the Chippeway Indians, near Minneapolis, when he was in America, in 1835. Thorold pp.37-38.



"savages", he did not believe them to be anything less than human, and vigorously defended their rights to be treated as such.

"Do you really regard Lobengula and his Zulus as worthy of approval?" writes a correspondent ... No, I do not. I regard them as most objectionable savages. I have no doubt, however, that if they had a Rider Haggard among them, he could compile an authentic catalogue of atrocities committed by white men in Africa which would make every Zulu's blood boil. Even granting that Mr Rider Haggard's picture of Lobengula as a sort of Coloured combination of Frankenstein and Jack the Ripper is fact, not fiction, I see no reason why the Matabele should be massacred wholesale by a band of Company-promoters, simply because gold is to be found in their territory, ...<sup>2</sup>

With this attitude, it is not surprising that the coverage of Africans in Truth was limited to issues which achieved a high profile in South Africa, and in England; and to issues which Labouchere could use to attain his own political goals. For example, he was aware of the questions surrounding the Rudd Concession and the Company's right to land in Mashonaland, and referred to the issue from time to time, but he placed no particular emphasis on it. Typically, in 1890, he remarked that

... the Chartered South African Company ... declared itself to be the possessor of certain concessions granted by an African Chief, named Lobengula, ... Lobengula has always denied that he ever gave these concessions. Be this as it may, ... If really one-half of the concessions is worth four millions when secured by a British charter, it is evident that either Lobengula or the British Government has been robbed, for the property which the promoters seem to assert is worth eight millions was obtained for comparatively nothing. If the property belonged to Lobengula, ... he was deceived and most unfairly treated; if the property did not belong to Lobengula it belonged to the British

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<sup>2</sup> Truth, October 26, 1893, p.864.

Government ... If it be not worth eight millions, then the British investors are to be pillaged ...<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, when he commented on the negotiations between Lippert and Rhodes, while he expressed sympathy for Lobengula, his concern was that Sir Henry Loch had assisted in the machinations, and that prospective investors and prospectors in Mashonaland were deceived as to the Company's rights to land.<sup>4</sup> His concern was not particularly with the ownership of Mashonaland, but with the general conduct of the British South Africa Company, and the protection of other people's rights. Labouchere's fight against chartered companies was thus stimulated both by his belief in the folly of the policy of using chartered companies, and by the abuse by chartered companies of their privileged positions. The issues which he took up with regard to Africans related to the second of these concerns.

Occasional comments only were made on Africans in Truth before July 1893, because contacts between Africans and Europeans were limited, and generally unexceptional.<sup>5</sup> Then from July 1893, relations between the Ndebele and the Company began to deteriorate rapidly, and Afro-European relations became news at the British South Africa Company's insistence. From that

<sup>3</sup> Truth, August 28, 1890, p.435.

<sup>4</sup> See Truth August 20, 1891, pp.380-381; November 12, 1891, pp.994-995.

<sup>5</sup> See W.H. Brown describing a meal shared with Shona women and children, pp.195-201; and Hole describing the trading which took place, for Shona produce and cattle. H.M. Hole, Old Rhodesian Days Reprint, London 1968, pp.46-51.

moment on, copious attention was paid in Truth to the Company's conduct of the war: its motives for provoking the war; the treatment of enemy wounded; the treatment of Ndebele after the war; and the distribution of Ndebele land and cattle. In addition there is comment on forced labour, the Company's hut tax, justice for Africans, and the risings of 1896.

The interesting aspects of Truth's coverage of the Victoria incident and the Matabele War arise from Labouchere's lack of reverence for Rhodes and his suspicion of the British South Africa Company, which allowed him to analyse events in a totally different way from that of most of his contemporaries. He also argued convincingly that the war was deliberately provoked to rescue the Company from bankruptcy. This theory was supported by material demonstrating that the conflict with the Ndebele was unnecessary; that it was provoked by the Company; that it revealed the Company's financial weakness; and that the Company capitalised on the war. He showed that the Company deliberately provoked the war by pointing out that the Victoria Incident was unprovoked, that Company military preparations proceeded without any aggressive movements by the Ndebele, and that Loch was deliberately deceived.<sup>6</sup>

Labouchere's lack of reverence for Rhodes and suspicion of the Company are evident in a review he wrote as the pressure for war against the Ndebele mounted, in which he concluded that:

Something, therefore, has to be done, otherwise the  
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<sup>6</sup> The evidence is presented and discussed below. See pp.183-190.

Company would go into liquidation. This something has taken the form of a proposal to wipe Loben and his nation out of existence, in order to lay hands on Matabeleland, where it is hoped that gold may be discovered. With this view, a wolf-and-lamb dispute has commenced between the Company and Loben. That monarch sent some of his troops into Mashonaland. The Company denies that he has any rights there, although as they derive their own rights from him, if the one does not exist neither does the other. To punish him, he is to be deprived of Matabeleland and his people are to be shot down with breechloading rifles and machine guns.<sup>7</sup>

Specific references to the Victoria Incident did not appear in Truth until October 19, when eyewitness accounts contrary to the Company's report were published. These reports, reprinted from a South African newspaper, were sufficiently credible and alarming, that they were quoted by the Secretary of State in a despatch to the High Commissioner calling for an enquiry.<sup>8</sup> The substance of the reports was to the effect that the Company was the first to fire; that the Ndebele had already begun their retreat; and that shooting continued with almost no resistance from the Ndebele. Truth commented: "It thus appears that every attempt was made to provoke the Matabele into conflict with the Company's forces, but without success".<sup>9</sup>

Between July 20 and November 3, 1893, when Bulawayo was reported captured, the Pretoria Press commented almost daily on the conflict between the British South Africa Company and the Ndebele, carrying reports on the Company's military preparations

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<sup>7</sup> Truth, August 31, 1893, p.443.

<sup>8</sup> Glass, p.109

<sup>9</sup> Truth, October 19, 1893, p.802. Other examples can be found in the following issues: August 31, September 14, October 19, October 26, January 18, 1894.

and rumours of Ndebele aggression. On August 12, The Press noted that all telegrams from Mashonaland were suppressed, "... therefore it is difficult to obtain any information, the publication of which would not be in accordance with the policy of the Company".<sup>10</sup> The first mention in Truth of a build-up of Ndebele troops on the borders of Mashonaland was quoted from a letter to The Press, of October 7, 1893, which stated:

Large numbers of Matabele have been watching the border for many weeks, but there has never been the slightest evidence of an intended attack on the Europeans. It is the opinion of men who know the Matabele that if they are left alone they will never enter Mashonaland again.

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In October, after hostilities had begun, The Press and Truth both suggested that the Company had manipulated Loch to obtain imperial assistance in the war against Lobengula,<sup>12</sup> and it has been shown that Jameson, aided by Colenbrander and other Company agents, deliberately created the impression of Ndebele war preparations.<sup>13</sup>

Labouchere also destroyed the explanations for the war which were offered by the Company and its supporters. These included saving the defenceless Shona from Ndebele brutality; the spread of Christianity; civilizing the Ndebele; and saving

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<sup>10</sup> The Press, Saturday August 12, 1893.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Truth, November 2, 1893, p.932.

<sup>12</sup> See The Press October 13, 1893; Truth October 26, 1893.

<sup>13</sup> Glass, pp.163-178. Moffat immediately expressed his doubts that Lobengula would embark on a campaign of aggression against the Europeans. It is also highly questionable whether the reported border incidents ever took place: *Ibid.* pp.179-180.

settler homes from being overrun. None of these explanations were accepted as convincing by Truth, and they provoked the general response that

... the worst feature in our South African buccaneering is the hideous hypocrisy beneath which we veil our greed for gold.<sup>14</sup>

One veiling explanation was that, when the Shona appealed to the British for aid, honour demanded that the British protect the Shona against the raiding Ndebele. Truth gave a colourful sample of this "artless" argument, from a believer in it, who stated that:

... When the Charter was granted, the British South Africa Company pledged themselves to protect the Mashona from further annoyance, and today the Company has been brought face to face with the fact that the Matabele must be humbled. ... Were we to allow the Matabele to hunt down the Mashonas without interference, no doubt we could live alongside of them in comparative safety for some years to come. Fortunately, we are British born and descended, and abhor atrocities of this nature.<sup>15</sup>

It was also said that Matabele savages prevented the spread of Christianity, and its civilizing influence. The following letter was written by Rev. A. Sylvester to the Times and quoted in Truth:

We are determined to make a way for the spread of the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. ... All Englishmen should remember that the introduction of civilisation and successful Christianity into Matabeleland will redound to the honour and glory of the great British Empire, and all nations and creeds will eventually rejoice that the Chartered Company is

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<sup>14</sup> Truth, August 24, 1893, p. 379.

<sup>15</sup> Truth, September 28, 1893, p. 637. The letter continues with a description of the enthusiastic response to the call for men to "defend the country of their adoption".

prepared to settle at once and forever the future welfare and prosperity of heathen Matabeleland.<sup>16</sup>

It provoked Labouchere to respond that:

Read by the glowing picture of the reference to the blanket reef near Bulawayo, and the allusion to the success of the Gold Companies in the Transvaal more offensive and sickening cant than this was never penned.  
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Rudd was a little more candid than the Reverend Mr Sylvester

... in an "interview" which is published in the Daily Chronicle. The war, he opines, is a philanthropic undertaking. "It is the old story" observes the philanthropist Rudd, "of Satan finding mischief for idle hands to do." His panacea for this is simple. "Let them work in the mines." The mines happen to be theirs, but they are to be deprived of them, and their future connection with them is to be limited to working in them, in order that benefactors of the Rudd kidney may have their reward for civilising these unpractical savages.<sup>18</sup>

However, the intrinsic hypocrisy of the settler position was revealed by a telegram

... from Matabeleland which ought to open the eyes of the investing public. The Burgbers of Mashonaland declare that this country was so rich that they only went to Matabeleland in order to hinder the Matabele from doing them out of their El Dorado. The telegram now announces that they intend to remain in Matabeleland. What, then, becomes of the fabled wealth of Mashonaland? What, too of the statement that they only made war against Lobengula because they feared that he would drive them out of that country?<sup>19</sup>

The general humanitarian cry raised by the Company and its supporters over the alleged behaviour of the Ndebele at Fort

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<sup>16</sup> Truth, October 26, 1893, p. 865.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 865.

<sup>18</sup> Truth, November 2, 1893, p.931.

<sup>19</sup> Truth, December 21, 1893, p.1334.

Victoria raised a wiler issue. Labouchere judged these supporters' sentiments to be

Very noble ... doubtless; but let us take the measure of them a little more accurately. "Atrocities" of this nature - the raiding of weak tribes by strong - are in progress throughout the length and breadth of Africa. ... if "atrocities" are to be put down in one place, they must be put down in another".<sup>20</sup>

This point was amplified by a letter describing the atrocities of slave raids against inhabitants of Sierra Leone which had been taking place over a period of sixteen months, where the

... tribes which commit the above-mentioned atrocities are not, like Loben's people, operating in a country which is theirs by right of conquest. They are raiding within the limits of one of the oldest British colonies. Why then, is there no cry for "teaching a lesson" in this instance? The answer is simple. There is no gold in the region inhabited by these savages.<sup>21</sup>

Further refutation of these claims of philanthropy and humanity occurred on November 16, 1893, and was supported by quotations from Blue Books, describing raids of the Company against the Shona. Labouchere cited three occasions when the Company was responsible for killing Shona and burning their kraals without justification, two cases occurring in February 1892. One took place against an unspecified group, on the suspicion that a Frenchman had been killed, when six Shona were killed and three kraals burned. The second was against Moghali, to protect another chief; Moghali was killed and his kraal burned. A third case in March 1892 resulted from thefts from a

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<sup>20</sup> Truth, September 28, 1893, p. 637.

<sup>21</sup> Truth, November 9, 1893, p.980.



Mr Bennett's farm, in which Ngomo's kraal was suspected. Captain Lendy went to arrest him. He was "impertinent", so Ngomo, his son and twenty-one others were killed. In each of these cases, there was official protest from either Loch or Lord Knutsford, the Secretary of State, or both, against the brutality of the Company.<sup>22</sup> Truth admonished its readers to note these facts well "and then tell me whether it is possible to believe that Rhodes and his gang advanced into Matabeleland because their righteous souls were vexed at Loben's mode of treating his subjects".<sup>23</sup>

In all his remarks about Company propaganda and the war, Labouchere emphasized the same major points: the Company was a speculative enterprise; the first concern of its directors was profit; and they would stop at nothing to achieve their goals for, when it was necessary, war was provoked with the Ndebele to rescue the Company from bankruptcy.

Having made much money by palming off worthless shares to idiots who fancied that Mashonaland was a Land of Ophir, they now want to lay hold of Matabeleland in order once again to play the same game.<sup>24</sup>

Such action was necessary because it was becoming increasingly clear that Mashonaland did not contain exceptional gold reefs. In an editorial on August 31, 1893, Labouchere showed that the Company was in debt to De Beers, the value of

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<sup>22</sup> Labouchere did not remark on the incidents earlier, because the Colonial Office had protested the actions already, and he did not, therefore, need to publicise the incidents.

<sup>23</sup> Truth, November 16, 1893, p.1049.

<sup>24</sup> Truth October 5, 1893, p.689.

its shares had fallen, and its finances were in a desperate state, and asserted that this was the reason for the war.<sup>25</sup>

Labouchere supported this contention in November 1893 when he pointed out that

... no sooner did they invade Mashonaland, than they called a meeting of the shareholders of the Chartered Company and forced the Company to double its capital by an addition of one million to it, which was issued to the gang as fully paid up shares, as payment of half profits of the venture.<sup>26</sup>

The Company's expectation of financial profit was confirmed also by the fact that newspapers which favoured the Company began "puffing" the value of gold reefs in Matabeleland as soon as the war was commenced for, as Truth reported, the correspondent to the Daily News had discovered that

... our fighting force are delighted with Matabeleland. The country ... is full of reefs rich in gold, and the pasturage is described as splendid.<sup>27</sup>

Labouchere was not alone in the opinion that the Matabele War was provoked for speculative financing purposes, and he cited several other editors who shared his opinion. While editors of South African newspapers might not carry any more weight than Labouchere himself, their comments do indicate that he had some support, while, in addition, the opinion of

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<sup>25</sup> Truth August 31, 1893, p.443.

<sup>26</sup> Truth November 30, 1893, p.1155. Other examples of Truth's comments: November 16, 1893; January 4, 1894; February 22, 1894; November 22, 1894; January 24, 1895.

<sup>27</sup> Truth November 16, 1893. Other examples of such 'puffing' occurred on October 26, October 19, November 16, and December 21, 1893 and on February 8, 1894.

prominent Liberal party members certainly added credence to his assertions. Thus, the Standard and Diggers Times in Johannesburg stated:

... But your Chartered official and your Chartered shareholders have become impatient with the peaceful process, and now desire ... realisation of that yellow tinted dream of plunder that fills the imagination of the Imperial shareholder. Accordingly he courts a crisis,...<sup>28</sup>

The Editor of Pretoria Press spoke out on October 7, 1893, holding that it

... must be remembered that the war now being entered upon has nothing to do with England. It is a mere buccaneering sally after loot and land engineered by a private Company.<sup>29</sup>

Mr Evelyn, an Irish Liberal, wrote to the President of the Deptford Branch of the Irish Native League that:

strongly disapproving, as I do, of the policy of the present Government of sanctioning and co-operating in the present sanguinary war in South Africa, carried on for the benefit, as it seems to me, of unscrupulous adventurers, to the great detriment of this country's reputation for justice, humanity, and morality

he could no longer support Liberal candidates. The President responded with regret, but stated:

... we fully appreciate your motives, and are unanimous in agreeing with you that the present conflict being carried on in South Africa is a disgrace to this country, and to the present Government.<sup>30</sup>

The effect of all the material accumulated by Labouchere, and printed in Truth, is to demonstrate quite clearly that the war

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Truth, September 14, 1893, p.545.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Truth, November 2, 1893, pp.931-932.

<sup>30</sup> Truth November 30, 1893, p.1154.

was provoked by the Company, for their own advantage, and that it had motives other than patriotic fervour and humanity.

Labouchere was also concerned about the way in which the war was waged. He believed the Company was guilty of brutality against the Ndebele, and that its handling of the war demonstrated that it should not be allowed to govern a territory. He attacked the behaviour of the troops used; the barbarity of using maxim guns against Africans; the death of the indunas; and the treatment of enemy wounded. He referred to the Company's troops as "a crew of buccaneers", "frontier riff-raff", and "border ruffians", at various times. In an editorial defending himself against attack, he said:

I have no doubt that there were perfectly honourable men amongst the Company's forces, although personally I have no sympathy with honourable men who go forth to shoot blacks as though they were partridges, at the bidding of a financing Company. Of what sort of men these forces were mainly composed may be estimated by the agreement that the Company signed with them to secure their services, which I published last week. They went into Matabeleland with no higher motive than to obtain land, mining claims, and "loot" from its murdered inhabitants. Such a thing may possibly have occurred before, but never that I know had it been so cynically admitted, and never has the British flag been so disgraced. All these "heroes" remind me of the words of a Judge when pronouncing sentence. "Prisoner," he said, "you have been proved to have a most excellent character, and also to have stolen a pair of trousers."<sup>31</sup>

Although the only grounds Labouchere had for judging the calibre of volunteers recruited by Captain Raaff was by their behaviour, he was well-supplied with information by correspondents on the spot, as the following letter from Pretoria reveals:

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<sup>31</sup> Truth, March 15, 1894, p.596.

... Commandant Raaff was here calling for volunteers to attack Loben. ... The men who volunteer are the very scum of the goldfields, totally unfit for any campaign. They have already started looting stores on their way up. The State Artillery were sent out after one draft to bring the looters back, which they did. The volunteers are deserting, finding that the Company only find them arms and ammunition; their pay they must steal from Loben. ...<sup>32</sup>

The opinions he formed were reinforced by the letters of recruits themselves. After noting that it "would seem that Mr Rhodes has recruited his free-booters from all nationalities", Labouchere republished a letter in the Los Angeles Times from a Californian volunteer to his friends at home which stated that the man would:

... take military service with the Company and go to the war. It will be a hard service but full of adventure. There will be five Americans - hardy, restless, and nervy men. We expect the war to be open [sic] within five months. These blacks fight in masses. Praise God for the smart Yankees that invented Maxims and Gatlings, and that can keep a horde of niggers at bay!<sup>33</sup>

Numerous reminiscences of the Matabele War make it clear the the volunteers from within Mashonaland did not enter the war with more noble sentiments than Raaff's troops, for Victoria volunteers reported

... a merry little skirmish. The Maxims played the devil with the Matabele. They cleared off after fighting for about an hour, and we found we had killed and wounded 2,000 of them. Our loss was again very trivial. Was it Providence? ... Lobengula has retreated to the bush country, and has now to be routed and brought out dead or alive. ... I am sure of getting a good price for my farm and gold rights.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Truth, October, 1893 p.863.

<sup>33</sup> Truth, November 30, 1893, p.1155.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Truth, January 11, 1894, p.74.

On October 26, 1893, Truth reported that the volunteers were being promised loot and land, and in March 1894 Truth published the actual terms and conditions under which they were recruited. These terms showed that Labouchere's concerns were real. He asserted that:

... special interest attaches to the offer of land and gold claims to volunteers against Lobengula. ... Let us hear no more of the cant about protecting "the defenceless Mashonas" ... What these "brave pioneers" are fighting for is Matabeleland.<sup>35</sup>

Marshall Hole has explained that such terms were not unusual for South Africa.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that in engaging fighting men for service beyond its borders by the promise of loot, the Company showed irresponsibility. The inevitable results were that the Ndebele were despoiled of the cattle and their land, and that the calibre of the Company's forces was low. It shows also that the Company's first priority was to make war as cheaply as possible.

Labouchere made the point repeatedly that this war required no personal heroism, as the struggle was so uneven. His position was graphically expressed when he wrote that:

Mr Rhodes computes the killed and wounded Matabele at 3,000, against a loss amongst his own crew of border ruffians of five men. It is explained that this is in the nature of wars between Europeans armed with Maxim guns and African natives. Precisely. And this is why such a war is a battue, with men instead of pheasants.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Truth, October 26, 1893, p. 864.

<sup>36</sup> Hole, Making, p.302.

<sup>37</sup> Truth, November 16, 1893.

The calibre of the troops is important in considering the atrocities which occurred during the war, and in the looting after the war. It is well-illustrated by the fact that Lobengula's last desperate bid for peace was lost, owing to the greed of two Imperial troopers, who stole the gold he sent, suppressed his message, and were no better than their company peers. One undoubted atrocity involved the death of Lobengula's Indunas at Tati, an incident to which Labouchere frequently referred. In one early reference, he wrote that

... if the telegram respecting the fate of Lobengula's mission to Sir Henry Loch be true, the war is being carried on by the Chartered Company in a fashion which sets at nought the rules which mitigate hostilities even amongst savages. We are told that Lobengula's brother, accompanied by two chief Indunas, entered the lines of the Company's forces with Mr Dawson. They stated that they had come from Lobengula as envoys to Sir Henry Loch. On this they were imprisoned, and, surprised at this treatment, naturally sought to escape. The two Indunas were at once shot. The plea put forward for this outrage was that it was suspected that they might be spies.<sup>38</sup>

This was essentially an accurate report of the occurrence, and little more need be added beyond the fact that it was eventually established that one man was clubbed, and the other bayoneted, to death.<sup>39</sup>

There were several general points which Labouchere addressed: the callousness of the Company and its troops; the lack of heroism in fighting poorly armed Africans with maxim

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<sup>38</sup> Truth October 26, 1893.

<sup>39</sup> H.C.1893/94, LXII, 317. (C7284) Correspondence respecting the death at Tati of two Indunas.

guns; and the ignominious death of Lobengula. Some examples have already been given, and one more suffices, to illustrate Labouchere's opinion of the attitude of the troopers. He quoted extracts from a trooper's diary, published in Pall Mall Gazette, which demonstrated the extreme callousness of most of those involved. The trooper referred to attacks on Ndebele villages in which the Ndebele were shelled in "beautiful style", and the maxims turned on them with "excellent results", and in which 300 Ndebele on one occasion, and 500 on another, were killed. Labouchere found that nothing

... is more sickening than the accounts which the "heroes" of Matabeleland publish of their own and each other's exploits. Bullets are as thick as hail around them, and yet these bullets hardly ever injure them. They bear indeed, like Achilles, a charmed life.<sup>40</sup>

This explains why the treatment of the wounded Matabele during the war was a topic of especial concern to Labouchere, which he pursued ruthlessly. His charges were never satisfactorily answered by Company spokesmen, nor by the Imperial Government. He first questioned the fate of the wounded in Truth on November 16, 1893, after a report to Parliament on the progress of the war and, on December 7, 1893, he made a powerful statement on the subject, in which he wanted to know

... the number of Matabele who were brought into Bulawayo by the victors in the previous engagements, and the number of them that are now being treated. I in no way exaggerated when I said that we have been officially informed that at least 3000 Matabele were killed and

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<sup>40</sup> Truth February 15, 1894, p.362. Other examples of the atrocities of the war can be found on December 28, 1893; and in 1894: January 18 and 25; March 22; May 31; and January 16, 1896.



wounded in those engagements. Nor did I exaggerate when I said that only 1000 (and probably far fewer) of these could have been killed by the fire of the Company's forces; for this is the exact estimate of Mr Rhodes himself in a telegram. ... I will allow that 500 were so slightly injured that they escaped, although as the cavalry charged them after their onset had been repulsed, this is doubtful. What then has become of the remaining 1500?

If the Company had replied that its European soldiers were few in number; that they were accompanied by a horde of Mashonas eager for revenge on their former masters; and that the force had to advance rapidly and was without the means either to protect or tend the wounded Matabeles; this would have been intelligible. But they neither deny nor admit. The Mashonas, they say, only left the laager after the cavalry had scouted some miles. Very probably; but what did they do when they did emerge from the laager, and the wounded were lying about? Some wounded, continues the Secretary, were taken into the laager and tended. This too, is probable. Some, he says were carried on to Bulawayo. A few may have been, but it is evident that it would only have been a very few. After all these fogging evasions, the Secretary throws them all over by asking how many wounded were treated in the hospitals of the Imperial forces during the Zulu campaign? If, as the Secretary hints, the wounded in the Zulu campaign were left to die by a disciplined Imperial force, does it not stand to reason that this would be more likely to occur in the case of an undisciplined force, collected together by promises of a share in booty, which could only be obtained by its owners being slain.\*1

He later supported his charges by publishing a portion of a letter from Bishop Knight-Bruce to the Times in which Knight-Bruce, after stating that "amongst the wounded is one Matabele", goes on to say "I hope the Matabele take away their wounded. I can find nothing about them". Labouchere remarked that

... The Bishop on the spot seems to have much the same opinion respecting the fate of the wounded Matabele as that which I have been told it is scandalous for me even

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\*1 Truth December 7, 1893, p.1215.

to suggest.<sup>42</sup>

His charges were substantiated later by a number of men involved in the war. For example an interview with Captain Lloyd Francis, in the Pretoria Press, sparked considerably controversy, and charges and counter charges were made. Truth quoted from The Press interview with Captain Lloyd Francis:

"Did you take any prisoners during the war?"

"Speaking for myself, my orders were to shoot every native person we came across. Some native wounded were shot off hand. A well-known officer told me he saw this."

"Were they actually disarmed, wounded and helpless when they were shot?"

Captain Francis replied in the affirmative. "I have seen wounded men killed. I myself shot two native prisoners - shot them with one bullet; but they were not wounded men. I also saw six prisoners shot. The British Bechuanaland Police shot one of these."<sup>43</sup>

Captain Francis' charges were substantiated by reports of several other people, including Mr Vere Stent, who was also interviewed by The Press, and stated that the Matabele wounded had "disappeared in a most mysterious manner".<sup>44</sup> A Mr Lionel Cohen wrote to Labouchere offering him information on the wounded. Labouchere responded that he doubted that Mr Cohen could add much to the large volume of material already printed. Mr Cohen replied with a statement, on which he was prepared to testify under oath, giving details of prisoners who were promised their lives in return for information, then shot the next day; on bayoneting of Matabele wounded, despite their pleas

<sup>42</sup> Truth, December 21, 1893, p.1334.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Truth, February 15, 1894, p.363.

<sup>44</sup> Truth, March 22, 1894, p.654.

for mercy; and on Mashona 'boys' being ordered to assegai (stab) all the wounded on one occasion. He ended his letter by stating:

I was a witness of all these things that took place. I can positively swear that not a wounded Matabele was attended either by the Salisbury or Victoria Columns, our only wounded being Makalakas and Mashonas of our native contingent who were shot by our own Maxims. I have got the names of these and can positively swear to this as I was in charge of all the wounded up to the third week in Bulawayo, and there was not a wounded Matabele amongst them.<sup>45</sup>

The statements of all these individuals were denied by the Company, but it was plain that Labouchere had hit a weak spot. The Company was unable to produce any evidence to show that wounded Matabele, or any prisoners of war, had been humanely treated.

The last aspect of the Matabele War of interest to Labouchere involved immediate post-war activities: the looting and raiding which took place. From early in the campaign Labouchere had emphasized the terms of the volunteers and, as soon as the fighting was over, even before Lobengula's death was confirmed, reports of looting and of cattle raids appeared. In December 1893, telegrams from Matabeleland indicated that

... by order of Mr Rhodes, a force of burghers (would not burglars be the right word?) left Fort Victoria to liberate some Mashona women and children who some time ago had been carried off by the Matabele. The expedition suffered no losses; the women and children were restored to their people, and 800 head of Loben's cattle were brought away. Whether any women and children were released is, I should say, doubtful. The expedition appears to have been organised to capture cattle belonging to Matabele who were living in their villages, and did not even form part of the fighting force of the

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<sup>45</sup> Truth, April 26, 1894, 946.

nation.<sup>46</sup>

In January 1894, Truth quoted from a letter written to The Times by a filibuster who, with Major Forbes, pursued Lobengula and recounted that

At 3.30 on the 16th [December] we commenced our attack, the enemy fled at our first fire and we never saw them again. Only a few were killed, but we took all their cattle.

At 5 a.m. on the 18th we took a large kraal after a sharp skirmish, and captured 500 cattle and a few of the enemy. .... My syndicate has got 90,000 acres of the best grazing land in the country. We are going to stock it at once ... I have got twenty miners claims, which a prospector is going to peg out for me on the main reef below Bulawayo. My ten claims in Mashonaland will be pegged out before Christmas, and all these things point to the fact that the year has not been wasted. There are great fortunes to be made in Mashonaland and Matabeleland.<sup>47</sup>

The manner in which some of the cattle thus collected were disposed of can be seen in the following reports from The Press:

Salisbury Tuesday. 2000 loot cattle are coming from Matabeleland to be sold here.<sup>48</sup>

Salisbury: The first consignment of Matabele loot cattle was sold today by Messrs Saville and Company, auctioneers, realising close upon £900. This is considered most satisfactory. Further sales will be held shortly, the proceeds in toto going to the volunteers in the late campaign.<sup>49</sup>

The final distribution of the loot fund takes place at the end of the month. It is expected that the amount to be distributed will be £40 per share, which, with the

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<sup>46</sup> Truth, December 7, 1893, p.1215. This expedition, under Captain Meikle, was not referred to again until 1967, when it was discussed by Ranger, pp.109-110.

<sup>47</sup> Truth, January 25, 1894, p.184.

<sup>48</sup> Press, April 11, 1894.

<sup>49</sup> Press, June 4, 1894. There are similar reports of cattle sales during June, in Salisbury and in Bulawayo.

£70 - the average price obtained for farms after the completion of the campaign - makes £110 per volunteer for three months service.<sup>50</sup>

Labouchere then turned to the question of the ownership of cattle, noting on June 13, 1895, that

It has been generally understood in this country that the Matabele who made their submission after the conquest of their country were left in possession of their cattle, or at any rate a portion of it. I hear, however, from a correspondent at Bulawayo who gives his information at first hand, that the Chartered Company lay claim to all the cattle in the country - except what was handed over to the Loot Committee as compensation for the claims of the freebooters who served in the army of invasion - and that they are enforcing this claim strictly. The whole of the cattle left in the hands of the natives are being branded with the Company's mark, and the natives are forbidden to sell any of the animals, whether branded or not.<sup>51</sup>

Labouchere then remarked on the Company's ownership of cattle, and on the absurdity of the Company's frequent assertions that the Ndebele themselves were well satisfied with the arrangement, finding that

The report of the Land Commission of Matabeleland ... shows that, when the Chartered Company conquered Matabeleland, it assumed the proprietorship of all the cattle.

In December last it was decided that a portion of them should be returned to the Matabele; and it was explained to them that the Company would retain 32,000 and return 40,930. ... Earl Grey states that when this arrangement was explained to the Matabele they expressed "themselves

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<sup>50</sup> Press, November 16, 1894. P. Stigger, 'Volunteers and the profit motive in the Anglo-Ndebele War', Rhodesian History Vol 1, 1971. pp.22-23 gives almost the same figures of the final share of the loot fund. Since the remuneration for Police after the war was 5 shillings per item plus rations, this was a handsome reward.

<sup>51</sup> Truth June 13, 1895, p.1450. In fact, the report was true, for nothing could be known generally until the Report of the Land Commission was presented to Parliament in June 1896. 1896 LIX,903: Report of the Land Commission of 1894 (C8130).

well satisfied". This satisfaction seems to have been doubtful in view of the fact of the outbreak that occurred.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, not later than July 1896, Labouchere had identified a connection between the Matabele War, cattle seizures and the subsequent Ndebele revolt.

In all Labouchere's commentary on the war it was apparent that he received little information on the actions of the Ndebele themselves, and that his concern was with publicising the behaviour of the Europeans whom he believed to be misusing them. The same is true of the scattered comments which occur on the Company's administration of Africans. The only question which is followed consistently throughout the post-invasion period is that of forced labour. Labouchere's interest led him to comment frequently on the means employed by the Company to induce Africans to enter European employment, suggesting that the system amounted to little less than slavery. He was critical of the Company's intentions as early as 1894, when he remarked:

Mr Rhodes now explains that his mission is to civilize those Matabele who have not yet been killed. The first step was to steal their cattle; the second step was to deprive them of their land; the third step was to distribute the people themselves amongst the Company buccaneers; for if, he says, they were left to themselves on land reserved to them, they might grow rich, and would not work, whereas if distributed they could not grow rich, and would have to work for their taskmasters.<sup>53</sup>

This concern about forced labour was re-iterated after the Report of Sir Richard Martin on the Chartered Company's

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<sup>52</sup> Truth, July 16, 1896, p.150.

<sup>53</sup> Truth, November 22, 1894, p.1189.

administration in Rhodesia had been presented to Parliament in 1897, as the Risings were being suppressed. Eventually, Labouchere commented in 1898 on Rhodes's attitude, when he stressed that

Since [Sir Richard Martin's] report was issued, Mr Rhodes has publicly stated that the country cannot thrive - by which he means that he and his speculative friends cannot thrive - unless "Exeter Hall fads" in respect to the treatment of natives are ignored. Yet in Mr Chamberlain's new scheme of partnership in the government of Rhodesia, between the Colonial Office and the Company, there are no guarantees that the natives will be protected against forced labour ... Those who hold the views of Wilberforce as to the right of Africans to be free are jeered at as Exeter Hall faddists: to such a pass have the Anglo-African financier-politicians brought the England of the Anti-Slavery movement.<sup>54</sup>

And, once more, as recent work has demonstrated,<sup>55</sup> Labouchere was right.

A number of general comments on the calibre of administration and of justice appeared in Truth over the years, and the tenor of Labouchere's comments is supported by the work of both Ranger and Stigger, who demonstrate the weakness of the ANCs appointed, and the methods they employed.<sup>56</sup> However, Labouchere beat both into the field for, in 1896, Truth cited Rev. C.D. Helm's revelations of Company misconduct, and "needless brutality", and the cruelty of settlers, and commented: "If the Uitlanders of the Transvaal had a right to

<sup>54</sup> Truth, April 7, 1898, p.851.

<sup>55</sup> See C. Van Onselen, Chicago London, 1976, pp.74-114.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter V p.165 for an example of the administration of justice to Africans.

rebel because they were not given votes, and the Chartered forces were justified in aiding them, assuredly the Matabele, in their own country are justified in rebelling to prevent their cattle being stolen and their ears chopped off".<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, in 1899 Labouchere acquired correspondence between a former Native Commissioner and his superiors which was revealing of administrative practices. He explained that a conflict had developed between the Commissioner and the Chief Native Commissioner over flogging, and quoted from a letter to the Chief Native Commissioner from the Native Commissioner, who could not

... understand how you can justly reprove me for acting "illegally and ultra vires", as I hold your written instructions to flog the natives under certain conditions; and you have repeatedly given me verbal instructions to do so. ...

My astonishment was unbounded when you told at Plum Tree Siding on Wednesday last that it is the policy of the Chartered Company not to officially recognise such actions on the part of Native Commissioners, but that we are to continue them privately, paying in all fines to the Treasury; also that you could not inform me whether the Chartered Company would support us if the legality of our actions be questioned.<sup>58</sup>

The double standards employed by the Company to create the illusion of a just and orderly administration, which Labouchere publicized in 1899, were not noticed again until 1976, when Stigger commented on the practice.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Truth April 9, 1896, 9.897.

<sup>58</sup> Truth, May 25, 1899, p.134. The incident clearly took place in Matabeleland.

<sup>59</sup> Stigger, Native Department, pp. 57-61.



It is now necessary to consider briefly Labouchere's comments on the Ndebele and Shona risings. In general his concerns were the same as those expressed about the Matabele War and he devoted less attention to the risings in 1896. He commented on causes, and on the atrocities during the course of the war. He concluded that the risings were the result of the Company's abuse of Africans, and expressed this opinion in April 1896:

To the Chartered Company alone is due the Matabele Rising. Its creed was a policy of spoliation. It found pretences to attack its neighbours whenever it thought that these neighbours might possess the golden soil that it was without, and that the ownership of the soil was likely to maintain its shares at the huge premium to which they had been forced by Stock Exchange manipulation. ... The Matabele who have not been slaughtered by this bloodstained Company thought that they too might have recourse to the sword ...<sup>60</sup>

In July 1896, he drew a definite connection between Loot Cattle and the Ndebele rising.<sup>61</sup> In September 1896, referring to a speech of Mr Rhodes's, he said:

... The scheme of the Company seems to have been that a hut tax was to be imposed upon [Ndama's people], and they were to be deprived of their cattle. This, it was thought, would force them to work for the white man at a low wage. That they should have rebelled against this usage, and that they should be unwilling to surrender unless in future secured against it, is hardly surprising.<sup>62</sup>

Most comments on the atrocities perpetrated during the war are also from men on the spot. Some comments are similar to

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<sup>60</sup> Truth April 2, 1896, p.836.

<sup>61</sup> Truth July 16, 1896, p.150.

<sup>62</sup> Truth September 24, 1896, p.765.

those which appeared during the Matabele War, and on June 11, 1896, Labouchere noted that in a recent "battue" it was reported that "the rebels suffered severely, losing quite 300" while three European troopers were wounded.<sup>63</sup> On June 18, Truth emphasized the callousness with which whites exterminated their enemies, quoting a letter which enthused "It is grand fun potting niggers off, and seeing them fall like ninepins..."<sup>64</sup> Other charges were that women and children were killed in indiscriminate shelling of villages,<sup>65</sup> and that women were raped.<sup>66</sup> The following more general comment on the methods of the war appeared in April:

The latest news from Matabeleland is that a farmer left dynamite fuses in his homestead, which killed 100 Matabele, and that a storekeeper in the same fashion killed 200. Is it surprising that the Matabele should take their revenge whenever they get the chance?<sup>67</sup>

He also commented that Mr Chamberlain had condoned the barbarism of the war, confessing that he did not understand

Mr Chamberlain's doctrine that there are two "usages of war" one for Europe and the other for Africa ... The Matabele are, I presume, to be regarded as British subjects. They have rebelled. Therefore we burn their villages, and Mr Chamberlain justifies the settler who left his house full of dynamite with fuses attached, ... If we act as savages, can it be surprising that they

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<sup>63</sup> Truth, June 11, 1896, p. 1492.

<sup>64</sup> Truth June 18, 1896, p.1564. Another example was cited on September 3, 1896.

<sup>65</sup> e.g. Truth, October 22, 1896.

<sup>66</sup> e.g. Truth, January 6, 1898.

<sup>67</sup> Truth, April 16, 1896, p.948.

should do so?<sup>68</sup>

The Shona Rising was suppressed with great brutality. Shona rebels retreated into strongholds in caves, and in many instances the caves were dynamited when they refused to surrender, sometimes with results similar to those which took place at Makoni's stronghold.<sup>69</sup> Labouchere had no comment on these incidents, however, perhaps because the Company was successful in suppressing this information, since the Shona Rising was put down largely by men specially recruited for the purpose.

Labouchere demonstrated the Company's complete indifference to the welfare of the African people in the territory it assumed, and that the Matabele War was ruthlessly engineered in order to satisfy the Company's financial needs. He showed the inhumanity of Company troops and officers in comments on the war and on the disappearance of enemy wounded. In his comments on the administrative practices of the Company, Labouchere revealed a similar indifference on the part of the Company for the welfare of the Africans. In his comments on forced labour and Company policy on flogging, he shows the tricks employed by the Company to conceal the nature of their administration. His comments on the Risings again point out the curious nineteenth century morality which did not require Africans to be treated with humanity. He utilized these points to drive home the danger

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<sup>68</sup> Truth, April 23, 1896, p.1017.

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter V, p.166.

involved in granting the power of government to a commercial enterprise with no responsibility either to the British Government, from which it derived its authority, or to the inhabitants of its territory. He expressed this point very effectively as early as October 1893, when he did not hesitate to declare that

It is a disgrace to the good name of England that such a Company should continue its course of blood and plunder under a Royal Charter.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Truth, October 19, 1893, p.802.

## VII. LABOUCHERE AND THE JAMESON RAID

The shock to many Englishmen of the Jameson Raid was considerable. Labouchere, who had always been critical of the Company, was outraged, and devoted a great deal of attention to the subject over the next year. As always, his major concern in this affair was to demonstrate that the Company was not a reputable concern. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that he argued strongly that the conspiracy was organised to prevent the collapse of the British South Africa Company, and that the Company should either be much more tightly controlled or deprived of its charter. The points which concerned Labouchere most were the irresponsibility of the Company; the manipulation of public opinion through the press; and the failure of both the British Government and the Board of Directors to control the Company's illegal activities. These aspects of Truth's coverage of the Raid will be discussed in light of Labouchere's appointment to the Committee investigating the Raid. Truth's coverage of the Jameson Raid breaks down into three sections. The story of the conspiracy, and information on the conspirators, will be dealt with first. The manipulation of public opinion through the press, the Company's responsibility for the Raid, Rhodes's involvement in and motives for the Raid are discussed next. Finally the future of the Company, the Select Parliamentary Committee, and Chamberlain's role in the conspiracy are considered.

The story of the conspiracy in Johannesburg, and of the Raid itself were told and retold many times in Truth, with varying degrees of colour and warmth, and Labouchere's comments on some aspects of the tale are of interest. The elements which he emphasized in recounting the story were that the Raid was planned in advance, that it had no possible justification, and that the Company was clearly involved. In the first few months after the Jameson Raid, every issue of Truth commented on some aspect but, because the coverage was less specifically focussed than was the case for most of Truth's comments on the British South Africa Company, only a few items will be referred to here. The scope and intentions of the conspiracy were outlined on January 16, 1896, when Labouchere maintained:

... recent disclosures point distinctly to  
A WIDESPREAD FINANCIAL CONSPIRACY  
which had been in progress for some time, both in London and South Africa, and which culminated in Dr Jameson's Raid into the Transvaal. ... the dash of Dr Jameson for Johannesburg was not undertaken on the spur of the moment, but ... it had been carefully prepared for months; ... some of the cables, which gave particulars of the Outlander movement in Johannesburg were actually drawn up in London. The following is, according to an authority possessing exceptional means of information, the programme which had been decided upon by the sponsors of the syndicate, towards which a number of well-known men subscribed sums of from ten thousand pounds upwards. The Outlanders in Johannesburg were to rise against the Boer government; Dr Jameson was to cross the frontier and throw himself into Johannesburg, easily defeating the Boer forces; Jameson was to become Administrator of Johannesburg; the Transvaal was to be taken possession of, and, if the English Government objected, South Africa was to proclaim its independence. In fact, it is reported that some of the men connected with the movement on this side had already been

quarelling over the spoils.<sup>1</sup>

It was only gradually learned who was actually involved in the conspiracy. Nonetheless, from the first moment the story broke, Labouchere was convinced that Rhodes was implicated in it, and repeatedly commented on the fact, while:

With Jameson, or any who act like him, I have no sympathy... nothing will convince me that he acted in this business without the knowledge of or approval of his chief and patron, Mr Cecil Rhodes.<sup>2</sup>

In March evidence of Rhodes's involvement began to appear and, once the cipher telegrams produced before the Cape Parliamentary Enquiry were known, he was obliged to resign as Managing Director. Comments on other individuals from the Reform Committee soon after the Raid took place made it clear that the men behind the conspiracy in Johannesburg were the powerful and wealthy members of the mining community - with Consolidated Goldfields and other companies on the Rand involved. This became apparent by January 23, when Truth reported:

It is stated that Messrs Lionel Phillips, George Farrar, John Hay Hammond, and Colonel Rhodes are not allowed to communicate with each other or with the other prisoners at Pretoria; from which one would gather that these are suspected by the Boers of being the ring-leaders. The two first-named are leading financiers. Mr Phillips is the managing partner in the firm of H. Eckstein and Company, the Johannesburg representatives of Wernher, Beit and Company, and he is the Chairman or Director of twenty-four companies. Mr George Farrar is a member of the firm of Howard Farrar and Company, identified more particularly with the East Rand Pty. Company, and he beats the record as he directs thirty-three companies. Mr Hammond is an eminent American mining engineer; and Colonel Rhodes is Mr Cecil Rhodes's brother ... Amongst

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<sup>1</sup> Truth, January 16, 1896, p.155.

<sup>2</sup> Truth, January 9, 1896, p. 81.

the other prisoners, Mr H.J. King is a partner in S. Neumann and Company, and Mr Fritz Mosenthal is a cousin of Mr Henry Mosenthal.<sup>3</sup>

The role of Goldfields is of interest because it demonstrates more clearly than anything else the importance of Rhodes's role in the whole conspiracy. A letter to Truth drew attention to the key role played by the Consolidated Goldfields, for:

It is interesting to notice how carefully those who are anxious to make out that the Chartered Company was not in any way responsible for Dr Jameson's Raid avoid any reference to the part taken by the Consolidated Goldfields Company in the proceedings. The offices of the Goldfields were, as all accounts agree in stating, the headquarters and the pay-office of the Johannesburg Revolutionary Union. Recruits were enrolled there, the Cycle Corps mustered there, and it was from the Goldfields office that the despatches to Dr Jameson and the different camps were sent. And to all intents and purposes in this connection the Chartered Company and Consolidated Goldfields Company are merely two departments of one concern.<sup>4</sup>

It was probably this evident assertion that led Labouchere to hold that:

The Jameson Raid was a counsel of despair. But its object has not yet been given up. The men at the bottom of it have almost unlimited funds; they are energetic and able; and a large portion of the press over here is with them. They are ready to masquerade as patriots or missionaries, or anything else that may serve their purpose. They are the curse of South Africa, and until they are suppressed with a firm hand, there is no likelihood of that portion of the globe peaceably settling down.<sup>5</sup>

In fact peace was only possible once the conspirators had won control, as the second Anglo-Boer War and its aftermath were to

<sup>3</sup> Truth, January 23, 1896, p.220. Mosenthal was a leading merchant, especially in arms and explosives.

<sup>4</sup> Truth February 13, 1896, p.388.

<sup>5</sup> Truth, April 16, 1896, p.948.



reveal.

A few comments appeared, from time to time, on the punishment of the conspirators. On February 6, Labouchere dismissed remarks, published in the St James Gazette, that it was unfair to lock away such important men who were responsible for so many companies, because their shareholders would suffer. The same column also remarked that Consolidated Goldfields had lost nearly all its chief men. The imprisonment and trial of Jameson, and other Company officers, was given more attention, but comments did not follow any particular theme, nor did they make any dramatic revelations. Labouchere expressed the belief that it was important that England should honour the commitment to the Transvaal, and bring the conspirators to trial; and he noted the widespread public sympathy for Jameson, and a petition for the release of Jameson and his fellow-prisoners.<sup>6</sup> It was his opinion that the conspirators had played for high stakes, and must now bear the consequences of having lost.<sup>7</sup>

An interesting letter was published, in November 1896, which was an early intimation that imperial officers had been more closely involved than was admitted, but Labouchere did not pursue this issue, for he expected it to be dealt with by the Select Committee. The writer indicated that, although he could not vouch for its truth, he had been told that:

...when Sir John Willoughby received an intimation that

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<sup>6</sup> Truth, January 23; March 5; and November 19, 1896.

<sup>7</sup> Truth February 6, 1896.

he had forfeited his commission for having taken part in the Transvaal Raid, he wrote a letter to the War Office, in which he said that, for the first time, an officer had been dismissed from the Queen's Service for having carried out the wishes of his superiors, and that ... he felt it his duty to state that he had informed the officers engaged in the Raid who were his subordinates, that it had been undertaken with the approval of the authorities. I presume Sir John Willoughby will be one of the witnesses before the Parliamentary Committee; if so, and if he really did write such a letter, his explanation of it will be interesting.<sup>8</sup>

The attention focussed on the manipulation of public opinion by the pro-Rhodes Press was very effective. In numerous accounts, Truth showed how the Press favourable to Rhodes and Jameson was presenting partial information, or twisting facts, to stimulate public sympathy for Rhodes and Jameson, as they faced the consequences of the failure of their conspiracy. This, Labouchere argued, demonstrated the methods which the Company had always employed to mislead the public and the British Government. In support of his contention he printed a letter sent by the editor of "a new and 'pushful' monthly magazine" to a man known to have been at University College with Jameson. The editor was writing an article on Jameson, and asked:

... if you could assist me by giving me the address of  
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<sup>8</sup> Truth, November 26, 1896, p.1362. Labouchere did press both Jameson and Willoughby on the issue, but received no satisfactory answer. Willoughby initially refused to answer him. Jameson was therefore recalled, and questioned about the letter. He testified that he had approved Willoughby's letter in outline but had not considered its contents in detail. He disagreed with the details because he had told Willoughby only that the High Commissioner was aware that a Rising might take place, and that he believed that his own actions, once successfully accomplished would be forgiven. (Colvin, p.165) Willoughby still refused to commit himself, but merely confirmed what Jameson said, and stated that he had written the letter hastily, in order to save his subordinates.

anyone who has the knowledge, and who would be willing to write a short article on the subject I should be indebted. ... I think that a reminiscent article of this nature, which would be allowable when nearly everything else would be sub judice, would not be without its value in turning public opinion to those phases in Jameson's character that must popularise him with all, no matter what they may think in connection with recent events.<sup>9</sup>

There are innumerable examples of similar occurrences, of which the following is a good illustration:

On Monday morning, under the heading of "Cape Sympathy with Mr Cecil Rhodes", the Daily Telegraph gave a report of a "mass meeting of citizens" at Cape Town, where a resolution of sympathy with the fallen Colossus in his apple-cart misfortune was unanimously carried. "The enthusiasm" said the ingenuous reporter, "manifested by those present is without precedent in the history of the colony". A telegram in very similar terms, including the unanimity and enthusiasm, was published by the Times; but with the addition of the following somewhat important sentence:

Mr Anderson, a merchant, presided, but nearly all the leading and influential people held aloof from the movement.<sup>10</sup>

Labouchere had already committed himself, writing in plain terms on January 9 exactly that:

... even were the Boers ever so deaf and so blind to their own interests as to meet the Uitlanders case with an obstinate non possumus, what pretext does this afford for armed interervention by the Chartered Company? A pretence, it is true, has been made that, before commencing their Raid, Jameson and his men resigned their positions under the Company; but even if such a form were gone through, it is obviously only a colourable pretence. The invading force was drilled, armed, and maintained by the Company. At its head was the Administrator of the Company. On his staff was the Company's generalissimo. It took with it the ammunition, equipment and horses of the Company. ... For such unscrupulous treachery, whether hatched with the

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<sup>9</sup> Truth, February 27, 1896.

<sup>10</sup> Truth July 30, 1896, p. 285. Emphasis in Truth. Other examples of press manipulation, in 1896: February 6, 13; March 12; April 9, 16; May 14, 28; June 4, 25; July 9, 23; August 6.

complicity of the Dummy Directors at home or not, the Company must pay the penalty.<sup>11</sup>

Once Labouchere had adopted this position, it should engender no surprise that his attacks on Rhodes himself were equally direct, although Labouchere initially retained some respect for Rhodes. This respect soon vanished. On May 14 and 21, 1896, Labouchere devoted the full space of his two or three page "Scrutator" editorials to discussing Rhodes' career and accomplishments, in less than flattering terms.<sup>12</sup> Each editorial emphasized different aspects of Rhodes' activities, but the tone and general import was the same. He explained how Rhodes had misused his public office as Prime Minister to make money, and denied that his motives were patriotic. He recounted the activities of the Chartered Company in Rhodesia against Lobengula, and the share-boosting associated with it. He described Rhodes's political opportunism in having espoused the cause of Afrikaners in order to secure political power in the Cape, but turned against Afrikaners in the Transvaal when it was necessary, for the financial well-being of his Company. He discussed Rhodes's obvious involvement in planning the Raid, and his cowardly denial that he was involved, which obliged Jameson and others to bear the full brunt of punishment. And he commented on the fact that Rhodes was avoiding having to resign, by his activities in Matabeleland. In the process, he stressed

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<sup>11</sup> Truth, January 9, 1896. Other examples: January 16; January 30; May 7, 1896.

<sup>12</sup> Truth 1896: May 14, pp. 1204-1206; May 21, pp. 1273-1276.

on May 14:

Between Rhodes and Beit I draw a wide distinction; the former disgraced the traditions of British Statesmanship, the latter was avowedly a speculator and made no pretence of being anything else. Of the two I prefer Herr Beit ...

I am aware that I use strong language in respect to Mr Rhodes. The occasion demands strong language. ...

The latest incarnation of Mr Rhodes is that of a "Colonel" desperately fighting with almost superhuman courage against the Matabele, and hourly risking his life to save those of the dupes he has led to settle in Rhodesia ...

I am sick of all these swashbucklers of society and finance masquerading as warriors and asking us to take them on their own estimate ... If Mr Rhodes does not actually run away, I expect that his friends will call upon us to make him a Field Marshal at least.<sup>13</sup>

A week later, he concentrated more on Rhodes, maintaining that the

... reputation of the purest statesman could not have survived the publication of the ciphered telegrams, which showed Mr Rhodes a traitor to the Empire for which he had boasted his love; to the colony that had accepted him as its Prime Minister; and to the instruments whom he left to their fate by denying all complicity with them. The man, greedy, unscrupulous, mendacious and without even that sense of honour which, according to the proverb, is found amongst thieves, now appears in his true colours. But a myth dies hard, particularly when many are interested in accrediting it. We are now asked to believe that, if this demi-god was betrayed into baser courses, this ought to be condoned on account of the vast services that he had previously rendered to the Empire.<sup>14</sup>

Thus did Labouchere do his best to ensure that the myths surrounding Rhodes were debunked in Truth.

Public accounting for the Raid took several forms: the official version, of the revolution in Johannesburg and a call

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<sup>13</sup> Truth, May 14, 1896, p.1204-1206.

<sup>14</sup> Truth, May 21, 1896, p.1273-1274.

to Jameson for aid, could not be maintained for long. The focus soon shifted and it was then asserted that the grievances of the Uitlanders justified intervention on their behalf. The next justification was that of patriotism: the Raid was one part of a glorious plan to unite the whole of Southern Africa under the British flag and, although the Raid failed, the motivation was good and the conspirators should not, therefore, be punished.

All these notions were dispelled by Truth. Labouchere countered the notion of patriotism by pointing out three facts: Rhodes stood to profit by the venture; one of his major partners in the scheme was not even British, nor were many of the Johannesburg conspirators; and while he himself recognised the importance in Southern Africa of harmonious relations between Afrikaners and British, yet he damaged, perhaps permanently, the trust established between the two groups.<sup>15</sup> The idea that Rhodes was deeply concerned about the Uitlander grievances was easily dealt with by Labouchere, who compared conditions in the Transvaal with those in Chartered Company territory. He described the contrast by recognising that, in the Transvaal,

... taxation is not excessive, and the position of the mining industry is infinitely better than it is ever likely to be under the Chartered Company. ... The Government charges on every mining claim a ground rent and royalty of 10s per month. To a Company owning fifty claims this means a ground rent of £300 a year - a very reasonable charge when from 30-60% can be earned on the capital of the Company. As against this, what do the Chartered Company charge? One half the net profits of

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<sup>15</sup> See Truth, May 21, 1896, p.1274.

all mines worked under their jurisdiction. This alone should teach shareholders of Transvaal mines how little they have to gain from the overthrow of Boer Government by the Rhodes gang, and how thankful they may be for the course of events last week.<sup>16</sup>

Three months later, he returned to this theme by acknowledging that

... the Transvaal Government is not perfect ... few governments are. But were I engaged in some industry in the Transvaal, I certainly should prefer to be under Boer rule than under that of an oligarchy of Company-mongers.<sup>17</sup>

The defence of the Uitlander grievances was further undermined when Truth published the following reference two months later still:

In the letter of the President of the Reform Committee to his "dear Beit", he reveals to this German gentleman, who with Mr Rhodes seems to be at bottom of this whole trouble, that the community is not "anxious in respect to political rights", nor do "any care a fig for the franchise", and he suggests that a fund should be subscribed for the general purposes of corruption.<sup>18</sup>

The underlying theme here reinforced information which Labouchere had already disseminated by publishing a statement which pointed out that the way in which

... the financialists of Johannesburg recruited their army receives some light from the evidence given by Mr John Keith before the court trying the members of the Reform Committee. Mr Keith is, it would appear, an American citizen. He was induced to join a corps styled the George Washington Corps, on the pretext it had been formed for the protection of life and property. Hearing that it was to be sent to Pretoria to fight the Boers, he and others tore off the colours. On this they were arrested. Mr Keith was handcuffed, knocked about, and

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<sup>16</sup> Truth, January 9, 1896. p.79.

<sup>17</sup> Truth, April 9, 1896, p.897.

<sup>18</sup> Truth, June 4, 1896, p.1428.

locked in the Chamber of Mines Office.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Labouchere presented information about the conspiracy, and revealed both the involvement of Rhodes and the Company and the attempt to conceal it, while at the same time discussing the Company's motives.

It was Labouchere's belief that the true motive underlying the Raid was a desperate wish to stave off the Chartered Company's bankruptcy by gaining access to the proven wealth of the Transvaal. Matabeleland had proved to be no richer in gold than Mashonaland, and it was apparent that it would be many years before the territory bore significant profit - and the precarious financing of the Company required instant dramatic success. Labouchere considered the Jameson Raid to be just another step in the series of raids undertaken by the Company to enable Rhodes and his associates to engage in stock exchange speculation with British South Africa Company shares. The sequence he described was straightforward in its allegations. The Company acquired rights to Mashonaland, and immediately began to promote it. Mashonaland rapidly proved not to be as rich in gold as hoped, and Lord Salisbury prevented the Company from securing the territory it desired in Matabeleland. After a few years, the Company's financial position was so weak that a raid became necessary. The Company therefore escalated a quarrel with Lobengula into a war; brutally defeated the Ndebele with maxim guns, and took over their whole country. Despite financial

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<sup>19</sup> Truth, February 13, 1896, p.389.



puffs of Matabeleland, it proved not to be rich in gold either, so once again, by 1895, the Company was in search of richer territory. On this occasion, they chose territory known to be rich ... The editorial quoted in the Appendix tells the story, in Labouchere's own words.<sup>20</sup>

Labouchere's assertions gained credibility merely because the pattern has been repeated so many times, and because the Company was as close to bankruptcy after six years of operation as it had ever been. The most convincing proof that Labouchere produced, however, concerned the sale of Chartered Company shares which is described in Chapter III above.

From the moment news of the Raid reached London, Truth urged the removal of Rhodesia's administration from Chartered Company hands. Labouchere stated that, if the government would not revoke the Charter, the minimum precaution that should be taken to prevent further abuse was to change the Board of Directors, and provide for direct Imperial administration of Rhodesia.

Our aim must be to reduce the Company to the mining enterprise which is the only real basis of its financial existence. It must be deprived of all governing powers. We must sell or let land, charge for trading licences, and collect the hut tax, the Company remaining with its rights over minerals. If we find that our expenditure is not covered by incomings, the Company must be responsible for the deficit, as a consideration for having a royalty on the minerals. ... Whether the Charter is abrogated or not is a matter of mere detail, provided that the above arrangement, or something in its

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<sup>20</sup> Truth, February 20, 1896, p. 451-453. Other versions of the story occur on January 9, January 16, and May 7, 1896.

nature is carried out.<sup>21</sup>

His insistence that the Directors of the Company should be replaced has already been discussed in Chapter IV. It was perhaps in part a response to such pressure, that the future administration of Rhodesia was made part of the mandate of the British Committee of Inquiry, although the Committee never addressed the issue.

The Parliamentary Select Committee appointed to enquire into the Jameson Raid provides a very interesting example of successful political manipulation. By 1895, Labouchere's reputation as a severe critic of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company was firmly established, and the scandal of the Jameson Raid added grist to his mill. He spared no effort in exposing the conspiracy, as far as he was able to, while at the same time exploiting the incident to advance his campaign against Rhodes and the Company. As soon as evidence of the conspiracy began to leak out, he began calling for an inquiry, not only into the Raid, but into all aspects of the Company's administration.<sup>22</sup> After it was announced in July 1896 that there would be a Committee of Inquiry appointed, he congratulated Chamberlain on his resolution in overcoming the resistance among members of his party to an investigation. It is apparent, in retrospect, that Chamberlain used the Parliamentary Committee to smother the inquiry altogether. It was inconceivable that there

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<sup>21</sup>January 30, 1896, p.264.

<sup>22</sup> See Truth February 20, and July 2, 1896, for examples.

would be no official inquiry in Britain. Chamberlain therefore ensured that the Enquiry would be under his control, and that the most vocal and publicly known critic of Rhodes and the Company was included in the Committee. Thus Labouchere was invited to participate. He could not refuse and, by his participation, was severely restricted in his ability to comment upon the course of the enquiry. Chamberlain's tactics were entirely successful. During the hearings Labouchere was in a minority, and could be prevented from asking embarrassing questions. Yet his membership of the committee compromised his ability to criticise it, despite the fact that he dissented from the majority. He wrote his own Report on the hearings, but the Committee refused to endorse it.<sup>23</sup> He could do nothing more.

Chamberlain's role in the whole affair remains unclear. Despite his open antagonism to Chamberlain from time to time, Labouchere absolutely rejected the idea that he might have been implicated, and clung to this position until he was forced by the outcome of the Committee of Inquiry, and Chamberlain's subsequent behaviour, to revise his opinion. Thus we have a record in Truth, from January 23 1896, to August 24, 1899, of the increasing suspicion which accumulated around Chamberlain, although he was never proven guilty of complicity. In January, Labouchere did not even refute the possibility that Chamberlain was implicated - apparently the thought had not even occurred to

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<sup>23</sup> See H.C.1897 IX, xlvi-lxii. Report of the Select Committee on the Jameson Raid.

him. On May 14, Labouchere commented that it was unfortunate that Chamberlain had not insisted on Rhodes's removal from the Board of Directors of the Chartered Company. In July the first suggestion that Chamberlain was implicated appeared, and was contested. Future remarks were similarly defensive of Chamberlain:

One of the statements put forward by the friends of the Company is that Mr Chamberlain knew of the Raid before it occurred, and tacitly encouraged it. For this I have not seen the shadow of a shade of evidence. I believe it to be absolutely untrue, and that the charge has been made is additional ground for investigation.<sup>24</sup>

Lockhart, in commenting on the failure of the Committee to press Rhodes to produce the telegrams, suggests that Labouchere did not push Rhodes because he was not interested in Chamberlain, but "he wanted only to destroy Rhodes"<sup>25</sup> However, Lockhart also comments later on that Rhodes was allowed by the Committee to avoid Labouchere's questioning on his relations with Chamberlain "again and again by invoking his self-adopted rule about not 'getting into third parties'".<sup>26</sup> In fact, Labouchere did not have the power in the Committee to push Rhodes to produce the telegrams. When he realised that Chamberlain was blocking the admission of the cables, he was unable to force the Committee into decisive action. Labouchere explained why he was unable to do so when he noted that there

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<sup>24</sup> Truth, July 16, 1896, p.150. Similar examples occur regularly: Nove 26, Dec 3, Dec 10 1896. February 4, April 8 1897.

<sup>25</sup> Lockhart & Woodhouse, p.371.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.373

... has been a good deal of stricture in the Press on Sir William Harcourt, respecting his action on the Committee. I took the liberty of disagreeing with him in regard to that action; but I quite understood it. His intention was excellent, but I never believed that he would succeed in his aim by the tactics he pursued. He wanted a strong unanimous report against Mr Rhodes. ... But I was certain that ... those who thought that Mr Rhodes had acted in a fashion that rendered it imperative that all connection between him and the Imperial Government should be cut off, would only achieve their aim by making it as clear as noonday that either he or Mr Chamberlain had not spoken the truth.<sup>27</sup>

In an earlier editorial on July 22, 1897, Labouchere had discussed the relations between Rhodes and Chamberlain, and concluded that they had common political goals, and that each recognised the importance of the other with respect to Southern Africa. "The bond of agreement between them was that President Kruger had been too much for either of them, and that neither of them would be particularly averse to turning the tables on him."

<sup>28</sup> After the Committee's failure to get to the bottom of the Jameson Raid, when Chamberlain continued to support Rhodes and the Chartered Company, Labouchere's attitude hardened into an assumption, though one which could not be proven, of Chamberlain's complicity in the Raid. Remarks made in August 1899 epitomise his attitude, which he embodied in a fable involving

a wolf who, wishing to eat a lamb, accused it of troubling the stream. Mr Chamberlain and Mr Rhodes are the South African wolves. How far they were connected in the occurrences that led to the Jameson Raid, we shall never know, for the Parliamentary investigation was at once brought to an end when the solicitor of Mr Rhodes

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<sup>27</sup> Truth, August 5, 1897, p.349.

<sup>28</sup> Truth, July 22, 1897.

offered to prove what the connection was by documentary evidence.<sup>29</sup>

While the Committee was in session, Truth published occasional comments on the meetings, and a long editorial on the value of the evidence submitted by Schreiner,<sup>30</sup> but the substance of Labouchere's comments on the Committee is conveyed in an editorial appearing after the report of the Committee had been presented to Parliament. He felt the inquiry was Burked since, for

... thirty long days the South African Committee obliged the country with an object lesson in the game of "how not to do it". I must congratulate it upon its success. Never did men more effectually succeed in bringing themselves and Parliament into ridicule and contempt ... I was not in agreement with the majority of my colleagues, but still I could not help admiring their skill of fence.<sup>31</sup>

He then went on to explain that Mr Rhodes was "frankness itself" on matters already known, but when asked about the telegrams from Harris, reputed to implicate Chamberlain, he refused to say anything. When Labouchere tried to have the telegrams produced, he was obstructed by the Committee. It was only after Labouchere made a public motion to that effect, that Hawksley, Rhodes's solicitor, was finally summoned to give evidence. Hawksley swore that the telegrams implicated Chamberlain, but refused to produce them. The Committee dismissed him for the day, but then

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<sup>29</sup> Truth, August 24, 1899.

<sup>30</sup> See Truth, April 1, 1897. W. Schreiner was a Cape politician who had worked closely with Rhodes and with the Afrikaner Bond, but who had not been a part of the conspiracy.

<sup>31</sup> Truth, July 22, 1897, p.216-219.

refused to report him to the House of Commons for contumacy, and refused to recall him for further questioning. Thereafter the Committee was rushed through to complete its hearings within that session of Parliament. The question of the future administration, though included in its mandate, was never addressed. Labouchere believed that the suppression of Hawksley's evidence and the missing telegrams made it impossible to conduct a proper inquiry, which explained why the

... questions that everyone is asking are why did not the Committee do all in its power to make its investigation of real value; and why did Mr Rhodes refuse to produce the cablegrams? ... Mr Chamberlain, I take it, believes that Mr Rhodes will remain an important factor in South Africa. He is unwilling to force him into personal antagonism. This explains his attitude throughout the inquiry. Facts have been too strong for him, but he sought ... not to accentuate these facts more than was absolutely necessary, or to make it a direct question of his word against that of Mr Rhodes. The reason that Mr Rhodes declined to allow the cablegrams to be produced is that he, too, does not wish to come into direct antagonism with Mr Chamberlain, whom he recognises as an important factor in Imperial politics and likely to remain so for the next two or three years. Assuming that he can really prove Mr Chamberlain's knowledge of his plans, it is obviously to his advantage to have the whip hand over him.<sup>32</sup>

Other conclusions that Labouchere reached were that Chamberlain was not "quite so blissfully ignorant as he would have the world believe", since he ceded the "jumping-off ground" in Bechuanaland to the Company;<sup>33</sup> that Earl Grey had been

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 217.

protected;<sup>34</sup> and that the Committee was obstructed from obtaining information on the financial dealings of Company directors.<sup>35</sup> He also commented that:

I did not believe that the Committee would make itself so ridiculous as it has done, ... But on the other hand, I had no great expectations of their doing any useful work... [The British South Africa Company] is a great deal too powerful to be dealt with on its merits.<sup>36</sup>

The Parliamentary Committee represented the only possible danger to Chamberlain and Rhodes. Rhodes feared that, if Chamberlain's involvement became known, and his career was destroyed, the Charter might be lost following a thorough investigation of the Company's activities whereas, while Chamberlain remained in power, he could be relied upon to protect the Company. The Committee failed to press Chamberlain, and to have the missing telegrams produced: thus, the opportunity to uncover the extent of the involvement of Chamberlain and other government representatives was lost.

Much of the material Labouchere reproduced concerning the story of the Raid and the conspirators is known, but he did effectively demonstrate the Company's irresponsibility, and the failure of those in charge of it to control its operations. The most useful aspects of his coverage of the Jameson Raid were his demonstration of press manipulation and his assessment of the Company's motives for the Raid. The material on press

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.218.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.218.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.218.



manipulation did not introduce any surprises, but it did show the extent to which Rhodes controlled the press, and the use he, and his friends, made of his influence. His contribution to an assessment of the motives for the Raid was two-fold. First he effectively demolished the smoke-screens erected by Company supporters. Secondly he put forward very convincingly the argument that the Raid was planned for financial motives. He supported this argument by showing the weakness of the Company's finances, and by producing evidence eventually of the substantial sale of shares by Company promoters before the Raid took place.

Labouchere gave a slightly different insight into the workings of the Select Committee, having served on it. However, his failure to realise Chamberlain's guilt before the Committee met prejudiced his ability to influence the Committee's hearings, and also rendered his judgement of Chamberlain less valuable.

After the Jameson Raid Labouchere never resumed his crusade against the Company with the same intensity. His involvement in the Select Committee had inhibited his ability to comment while the Committee was in session, and compromised his credibility on the issue more permanently. In addition, the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council which was proclaimed in 1898 resulted in much tighter imperial control over the Company, at least in theory, while the focus in Southern Africa moved away from Rhodesia. Thus Labouchere felt able to relax his vigilance, as an

important part of his objective had been accomplished.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to examine Truth, in order to discover what insights into the machinations of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company Henry Labouchere had. What has emerged quite clearly is that Labouchere very rapidly arrived at conclusions about Rhodes and the Company's activities which were fundamentally correct, as recent research is confirming. The three problems which concerned him in every aspect of the Company's activities - the unscrupulous methods of Rhodes and his associates; the failure of the Imperial Government and its representatives to control them; and the violation of Africans' rights - continue to be major issues in the study of Zimbabwe's early colonial period. The questions which Labouchere raised between 1890 and 1898 are critical to our understanding of the British South Africa Company's operations, and many of them remain unanswered today.

Although work critical of Rhodes has been written, he has managed to retain his reputation as pure in motive, if devious in method. Labouchere succeeded in demonstrating that the Chartered Company was not founded in the interests of the British Empire, nor even in the interests of developing new goldfields. The hope of finding new goldfields provided the excuse for a group of financiers to found a company, which would become a vehicle for development, if gold were indeed found, but

which, with or without gold, would be a source of wealth on the stock exchange.

On the subject of the financial dealings of the Company and of its major promoters, Labouchere had asked the most crucial questions by December 1892 - and the issues raised by the questions were not addressed seriously again until 1974, when Galbraith examined the financing of the Company. The work of Galbraith and Maylam, while it has advanced our knowledge of the underhand financial schemes behind the British South Africa Company, has to a large extent only raised the same questions that Labouchere did in the 1890's. Answers remain elusive.

Labouchere raised questions in three areas. The first area concerns the way investors were deceived by the Company into investing in a Company which had no immediate prospects of financial success. The second area concerns the relations between the Central Search Association, the United Concessions Company and the Exploring Company, in their various forms, and the British South Africa Company. It is apparent that DeBeers and Consolidated Goldfields also played a considerable role in the affairs of the Company. The financial arrangements which were privately made between the interlocking directorates of these companies have a very dubious appearance, and have not yet been satisfactorily explained. The third area concerns the manipulation of shares by Rhodes and Beit. This included both the use made of shares to advance the Company's interests, and the dubious speculative deals in which the Company's promoters

engaged. Labouchere showed that Rhodes and Beit distributed shares to men in influential positions, both public and private, in order to interest them in the Company. Maylam has produced much information which was not accessible to Labouchere, and has unconsciously shown that Labouchere was absolutely correct in his assertions, both that the practice was widespread, and that imperial officials were implicated. As some individuals almost certainly protected themselves by keeping their names out of Company registers, the full truth of these transactions may never be known. The dubious manipulation of shares was shown both in the early days of the Company, and through the speculative sale of Chartered Company shares prior to the Jameson Raid. He shows that by the end of 1895 the wealthy and influential people involved in the conspiracy which gave rise to the Raid who were Chartered Company shareholders had sold all, or most, of their shares before the rising in Johannesburg was due to commence. All these matters make it impossible to consider the British South Africa Company as an honourable enterprise dedicated to winning greater glory for Britain, as Labouchere so clearly indicated.

In the area of politics, Labouchere was equally perceptive, although again he was unable to substantiate his assertions. From its inception, he warned that the Chartered Company would sooner or later cost British taxpayers money. When the Bechuanaland Border Police supported the Company, first in 1890, and again in 1893, he instantly brought the fact to public

attention. Similarly, when he suspected abuse of public office, he flew to the attack. Labouchere's strongest case was that against Sir Hercules Robinson, when he was re-appointed Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner for South Africa. Labouchere was a dedicated Member of Parliament and served the public as a moral watchdog to the best of his ability, which explains his concern over Robinson and the Bechuanaland Border Police responsible to him.

Some of the material accumulated in Truth concerning the administration of the Company can be found in other scattered contemporary sources.<sup>1</sup> However Labouchere adds useful comment, and provides a cumulative record throughout the period. From this continuing themes emerge, the most useful of which are perhaps the mail tampering and the Company's control of information about the territory. In general Labouchere shows clearly the casual attitude of the Company officials, and the lack of due process in conducting the administration. The material he published demonstrates the Company's failure to provide for the future of the country as a colonial settlement. Vital elements such as the access routes were neglected, as the emphasis of the administration - such as it was - lay in economy, security and the search for revenue, pending the anticipated discovery of gold.

Many of Labouchere's comments on the Company's treatment of Africans are similar to those on the Company's administration in

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<sup>1</sup> For example, W.H. Brown; Frank Johnson; R. Churchill.

general - responsibility was not taken seriously enough, with the added dimension that Africans were not treated with the consideration due to human beings. In its dealings with Africans, the Company was also shown to display a lack of concern for the future of the territory. It made no effort to provide adequate machinery for the administration of Africans until problems arose which made some structure essential. Similarly, it gave no forethought to the problems which would result from its greed in dealing with Africans. The material Labouchere published reveals the Company's brutality toward and lack of interest in Africans, except as a source of labour or cattle.

On the Matabele War, Labouchere made three useful points. He questioned the Company's motive for engaging in the war. He argued that the war was deliberately provoked, to enable the Company to raise capital. He also recognised, as no-one else was prepared to admit at all until the 1930s, or accept until the 1970's, that cattle looting was a major factor in the Ndebele Rising. Finally he raised the question of the fate of the enemy wounded, which could not be answered.

Labouchere also demonstrated an early awareness of the tricks employed by the Company to obscure the true nature of its administration. This was shown in remarks on forced labour, and in a Native Commissioner's correspondence concerning the Company's "policy" on flogging after the rebellion.

Study of the volume of material on the Jameson Raid adds little to our present knowledge, because the Raid has been subject to close scrutiny for so long. However, Labouchere did once more display a rapid understanding of part at least of what occurred. His failure to see that Chamberlain was implicated was a disadvantage, explained by his own morality. His most useful contribution in this regard was the clear articulation of the motive he perceived for the raid. He debunked popular myths, and suggested a credible explanation. By the end of 1896, his theory that the Company was a speculative operation without a secure financial basis, which had embarked on three successive raids in order to prevent bankruptcy, had become quite credible, as it remains.

The political manipulation which made it possible for Rhodes to get away with as much as he did, and the use that was made of all available means to influence public opinion in favour of the Company are legacies which have affected the history of Rhodesia. The image created of Rhodes and the Company was so solidly built, that it has been accepted, almost intact, even by his critics. Because Labouchere was an acute observer and sharp analyst his questions and comments on Rhodes and the Company, suggested an image very different from that usually presented. He refused to be convinced by Rhodes's glorious imperial rhetoric, and was therefore able to perceive events in a clear light. His major contribution was not to provide facts, or answers, but to suggest the right questions. The final word



on Rhodes and British South Africa Company here belongs to Labouchere, for no-one has yet got beyond his assessment, generated by the shock of the Raid, that:

Mr Rhodes is a curious personality. He is not a money grubber in the sense that some of his associates are; but he seeks to combine the acquisition of a huge private fortune with political ambition. This is contrary to all the honourable traditions of British public men. .... It is impossible to look into a man's mind, but I know of no reason why we should not judge Mr Rhodes as we do others, and, judging him by that standard, he cannot be regarded as a man actuated alone by patriotic motives, but rather a man who makes his patriotism subserve the acquisition of money by very questionable means.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Truth, February 20, 1896, p.452.

## APPENDIX

(Footnote 44, p.20 and footnote 20, p.217 refer.)

The following editorial is reproduced from Truth February 20, 1896, pp.451-453, giving Labouchere's theory in his own words.

### THE CHARTERED COMPANY IN PARLIAMENT

The discussion which took place upon the Address in regard to the South African Chartered Company has made it clear that public opinion will insist upon a full investigation into the doings of that Company, financial and otherwise. Charters are not granted in order that a Company should become a huge gambling establishment, and seek to bolster up its shares on the Stock Exchange by means of raids on countries in the neighbourhood of its territory "under Royal patronage." There is a strong prima facie case against this Company, and this in itself is sufficient to justify the demand for investigation. Not only has it a Royal Charter, but this Charter was granted to (amongst others) a grandson of the Queen, a leading Conservative Duke, and a leading Tory banker, on the express ground that they were men of such position that nothing wrong could occur.

Sir Horace Farquhar, the leading Tory banker on the Board, seized the opportunity of the discussion to interpolate a financial puff of the Company, and I almost expected him to finish his own observations by a recommendation to all and several to buy its shares. The Company, he said, will have £600,000 in cash when it has paid off all its debentures, and he pointed to the railroads that it has made as evidence of its wealth. Now, what are the facts? When the Company was formed it had a nominal capital of £1,000,000 in £1 shares. Of this, we may take it that about two-thirds consisted of promoters' free shares, and one-third of shares for which cash was paid. This £250,000 in cash seems to have been speedily exhausted, on which the Company borrowed large sums of the De Beers Diamond Company, of which Mr Rhodes was the leading spirit. This, too, was exhausted, and Mr Rhodes and his gang made advances to the Company in order to stave off collapse, which would not have suited them, as they had not yet been able to unload their free shares on the public, notwithstanding the puffs of their vast value. Finding no gold in Mashonaland, where alone they were allowed to mine, after an abortive but expensive attempt to steal territory from Portugal which was prevented by Lord Salisbury, they forced a quarrel on Lobengula, and seized on Matabeleland. At once the capital of the Company was doubled by the simple process of giving to Mr Rhodes and his gang one

million of shares in consideration of certain promoters' rights that they had reserved to themselves. This, of course, produced no money. The shares, which had stood at about two-thirds their par value before the acquisition of Matabeleland, were forced up to a huge premium, and then 500,000 new £1 shares were issued at £3,10s. per share. This gave the Company £1,750,000. With this sum it paid off its debt to the De Beers Company and to the Rhodes financial gang, and, as would appear from Sir Horace Farquhar's statement, it has in hand £600,000, these repayments and costs of administration since the Matabele War having absorbed £1,150,000. As regards the railroads, there has been no expenditure of the Company on them. They are separate concerns, and have been made with money procured ad hoc from the public.

The nominal capital of the Company being, therefore, £2,500,000, in £1 shares, of which alone 750,000 represent any cash payment, they were forced up by means of puffs and Stock Exchange manoeuvres to £9 per share, i.e., to £22,500,000. They now stand at £5 per share, i.e., they are supposed to represent a capital of £12,500,000. Obviously, both figures are absurd. No paying gold has been discovered in Matabeleland in such quantities as to make it a valuable asset. Only pocket gold, and this in a very refractory ore, has been found. In a territory larger than France and Great Britain, it is impossible to assert that there may not be paying gold. But from the miners' standpoint de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio in respect to precious metals. Mr Rhodes has published his views in the Daily News. I gather from them that he practically is of the opinion that paying gold is not likely to be found, for he dwells upon the agricultural value of Charterland. It is very doubtful whether its climate will not always be against settlement by European farmers. Apart, however, from its climate, it is distant from markets, and is hardly likely to be a field for agriculture for many a year, as in many of our colonies there is better land to be had almost for nothing. Taking all these facts into consideration, I should say that the maximum value of Charterland is, on a somewhat high estimate, about one million pounds. But as all costs of administration, police, &c., have to be borne by the owning Company, the probabilities are that expenditure will for a very long time exceed receipts. Up to now the Company has been an assemblage of freebooters. Owing to Mr Rhodes's political position, it was supposed that, if neither Mashonaland nor Matabeleland proved auriferous, it would be able to rob its neighbours. Shut up within the four corners of Charterland, and deprived of the power to steal, its shares are, so far as I can perceive, a very doubtful investment at any price.

Mr Rhodes has taken himself to Charterland, where he is still Managing Director of the Company. It is impossible to doubt that he was connected with the raid into the Transvaal. Dr Jameson went to see him twelve days before the raid took place. Mr Fairfield, at the Colonial Office, as Mr Chamberlain tells us, became convinced that some coup was contemplated. The Goldfields Company and Dr Jameson were admittedly acting

together. Mr Rhodes is to all intents and purposes the Goldfields Company, and his brother is its Managing Director, whilst he himself is the Managing Director of the Chartered Company. Under these circumstances, Mr Rhodes ought to have been provisionally suspended by the Directors of the latter, and President Kruger has some right to complain of his having been allowed to return to Charterland as Managing Director. My estimate of his connection with the raid is this: he had, conjointly with his brother and with Dr Jameson, organised the coup, but his part was to keep as much as possible in the background until it had proved successful, in order that he might then, as Cape Premier, recognise an accomplished fact. Probably it had been intended that there should be first an outbreak at Johannesburg. Then the letter of the Uitlanders to Dr Jameson was to have been published, and he was to go to their aid. A provisional Government was to have been established; and ultimately, the auriferous district of the Transvaal was to be annexed to Charterland. ....

Mr Rhodes is a curious personality. He is not a money grubber in the sense that some of his associates are; but he seeks to combine the acquisition of a huge private fortune with political ambition. This is contrary to all the honourable traditions of British public men. .... It is impossible to look into a man's mind, but I know of no reason why we should not judge Mr Rhodes as we do others, and, judging him by that standard, he cannot be regarded as a man actuated alone by patriotic motives, but rather a man who makes his patriotism subserve the acquisition of money by very questionable means.

I confess I am not in the throes of indignation over the wrongs of the Uitlanders. ....

The case of the Uitlanders, however, has nothing to do with that of the Chartered Company. ... The provisional arrangement made by Mr Chamberlain is a reasonable one. But it concerns the honour and good name of the country that the entire circumstances connected with the Company should be investigated, and this is all the more needful as it has the support of the Court, of the aristocracy, of "Society", and of wealthy financialists. ... We shall never know who has received bribes and who has not. That many have, directly or indirectly, I have no doubt. That influence has been used to nobble the Press is most probable. The great mass of the community has had nothing to do with these doings. They have looked on with disgust and reprobation. If the Company has nothing to conceal, if the Charter has not been abused, then an investigation will give it an opportunity to triumph over its censors, and to prove to the most sceptical that it is as pure as the driven snow. If, on the other hand, one-tenth of what is reported about it be true, every day that it is allowed to continue to exist, with a Royal Charter, and with a grandson of the Queen and a leading Tory Duke figuring on its Board as guarantors of its respectability, is a day too many.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Truth February 20, 1896: pp.451-453.

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