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Demanding Schools: The Umchingwe Project and African Men's Struggles for Education in Southern Rhodesia, 1928-1934*

Carol Summers

From at least 1900 on, Africans in Southern Rhodesia, its successor Rhodesia and today's Zimbabwe, have demanded schools and education, leaving behind evidence of their demands in a wide variety of sources: mission records, government reports and the recollections of former students. Even more than demands for land, higher producer prices or higher wages, demands for education were explicit attempts to negotiate not just economic issues, but also a place within Southern Rhodesia's increasingly segregated culture and society. But what, exactly, did students, parents and would-be students want, and were these demands being met? Fathers petitioned for schools for their sons, sons and daughters actively sought or avoided schooling and missions and the administration offered schools as answers to diverse political, social and economic difficulties. This paper will use a close examination of the life of a single ephemeral school at Umchingwe, in the Insiza district of Southern Rhodesia, to explore how senior men sought a school in an effort to rebuild strained ties with young men and restructure their community in Depression-era Southern Rhodesia, and why they failed.

Studies of education in Southern Africa have generally acknowledged that missions, with the help of state grants-in-aid, built and operated schools not merely from humanitarian impulses but because schools were one of the most powerful ways to attract Africans to a mission station and convince them to become Christians. The government helped fund mission schools and built two flagship institutions of its own as part of an effort to use schools to cultivate a useful, disciplined and controllable class of African workers and leaders. Schools were not merely imposed on a resisting African population, though. From the early years of the twentieth century, with increasing volume, Africans requested schools from missions, and from the government. Yet much of what we know about the development and expansion of the schooling in the region has focused less on what that education meant to students and their parents than on how the state, the white population and the Native Administration,

worked to channel and modify Africans' educational demands through schools which were designed to produce useful subjects and workers for a settler state (Summers 1994a; Challiss 1982; Vambe 1972).

This study examines African men's demands for education during the Great Depression, a period of acute economic, fiscal and educational crisis. Reading the documents about one specific school, its rationale, its problems and its collapse, and placing them in the larger context of Southern Rhodesia's school system and society, I will suggest what various groups of Africans may have meant when they requested education, and explore how these demands were reconfigured and reinterpreted by European policymakers and administrators.

Reconstructing what African men of the early twentieth century wanted from schools and education can not be straightforward. A historical analysis of motives is inevitably more uncertain than an analysis of actions. We must extrapolate and, in some cases, guess. But by looking at the documented record of what education became popular, what unpopular and what produced protests, we may be able to gain insight into some of the various agendas different Africans may have had in going to school, sending children to school or petitioning for better schools.

Education is not unproblematic. In and of itself, a certificate or such knowledge of scripture, math or literacy as one can obtain in school cannot guarantee a job, a wage or new opportunities. Nevertheless, schools were central to both Europeans' and Africans' attempts to shape the future of Southern Rhodesia. Within the context of this restrictive society, African men and women used education to define new roles of respect, and justify cultural, economic and political claims on mission patrons and the white-dominated state (Summers 1995; Ranger 1995). Debates over education in Southern Rhodesia were, ultimately, debates over Africans' identities and the terms of Africans' continued existence.

The Administrative Background

Under the revised Order D of 1907, the British South Africa Company established the first systematic plan to expand and regulate Africans' education. This provision placed African education solely in the hands of the missions, who were offered grants-in-aid in support of three types of schools: boarding schools, staffed by at least some whites, incorporating a substantial industrial education component; central day schools, similar to boarding schools in curriculum and staffing; and "third class" outschools, also known as "kraal" schools. Outschools were the vast majority of schools. They were to meet at least two hours a day during the school year, under an African teacher who kept an attendance register and was subject to the distant oversight of a European missionary school supervisor. This mission-

centered model of education dominated Southern Rhodesia through the 1930s.

The government, however, gradually became increasingly involved in education. It opened government industrial schools at Domboshawa and Tjolutjo in 1920. It established a Native Development program under the Native Department, and then, after the first director, H.S. Keigwin left, upgraded Native Development under the Native Development Act of 1928 to a status nearly equal to that of the Native Affairs Department. Within the new department, officials increased requirements and the intensity of supervision of mission schools.

Even as the Native Development Department, under its activist Director, Harold Jowitt, pushed for expansion, the region suffered economic collapse. The dominant reality of administrative policy during the late 1920s and 1930s was austerity and intervention to protect the region's white population while restricting any flow of resources toward the African population. After a brief expansion of administration grants in aid in the 1920s, the settler government not only increased the regulations placed on missions' educational systems, but also reduced the grants it offered. These across-the-board reductions subjected missions and schools to chronic budget shortfalls. Other segregationist policies intended to protect the white population also increased the difficulties of African life during this period as the Land Apportionment Act led to forced removals and the Maize Control Act affected peasant farmers' ability to sell their maize surpluses for cash. As the economy constricted, unemployment and decreasing opportunities for wage labor also became problems for Africans (Summers 1994a and b).

The Umchingwe School's Rise and Fall

During 1930, as wages continued to drop, producer prices made peasant production of maize remarkably unprofitable, and financially stressed missions began to close schools, the leaders of an African community at Umchingwe formally asked that the government provide the region with a school. This was not just any request. Chief Mdala, leading the group, handed his Native Commissioner a list with the names of 83 men, each of whom was willing to pay 5 shillings per year for local education.¹ These men wanted a school which could solve a variety of community problems. The men's offer of money, the Chief Native Commissioner contended inaccurately, would easily have met the school's expenses.² Mdala made this offer only five years after declaring to the Land Commission that his people would not be able to buy land even if it were offered, as they lacked money.³ The offer to pay money for education was therefore a choice of how to allocate

scarce funds, rather than an effort to conspicuously display a surplus. The offer of money impressed the CNC because "So far as I know this is the first time that natives have made a definite offer to contribute towards the education of their children...."⁴ And the men who requested a school requested a specific type of school: a college which taught English, not religion.⁵ A curriculum focusing on English, they hoped, would facilitate higher education. A good school also could, they believed, provide advanced industrial training for the sons who would have to go off to work in the increasingly hostile employment climate of the Depression, and agricultural extension services to the older men who were trying to make their farms pay.⁶

The Native Department and Native Development Department had excellent reasons for supporting Chief Mdala's request. By 1930, the two departments were in direct conflict over jurisdiction and resources. The Native Department was gratified that the request had come through the proper channels—through the chiefs to the Native Commissioners—rather than being stated as a political demand by young men, or advocated by troublesome missionaries or school inspectors. Furthermore, the request indicated a desire for industrial and agricultural education rather than a purely academic school. As the Native Department read the request, it was training, rather than academics, that the local men wanted: the officials went so far as to delete the request for a high school which taught English as they passed the Umchingwe file from the Native Department to the Native Development Department. And these officials hoped that this request for industrial training indicated a newly realistic attitude toward appropriate knowledge on the part of the program's African sponsors.⁷

Finally, the Native Department sought to use the program to buy political peace. A school was not the only request the administration faced from the leaders of Umchingwe. Umchingwe men also wanted good land within the Insiza district. They rejected the reserves, Shabani and Sabi, proffered by the Land Apportionment plan, condemning Shabani as unhealthy, sandy and uninhabitable, and Sabi as too remote. Unsettled and uncertain over the community's future, Umchingwe block was an area where the ICU [Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union], widely perceived by Europeans as a dangerously communistic and revolutionary organization, had been active. Governmental responsiveness, a school and the prosperity that they might bring, could divert attention from requests for land, and make the ICU less appealing to local leaders.⁸ Despite the Native Department's long record of ambivalence toward schools and educated Africans, the proposed school, with its focus on industrial education under the guidance of senior men, served the Native Department's political needs.

The Director of Native Development (DND) was less immediately enthusiastic about the local proposal—possibly because he received it secondhand from a rival department. He also viewed it as somewhat impractical given his Department's resources and budget cuts.⁹ But Africans' willingness to pay was itself a powerful inducement. A successful school might provide a model for community development, and ultimately offer new possibilities for the development that DND Jowitt wrote about so verbosely and passionately.¹⁰ The government's human resources for the kind of educational outreach the chiefs were requesting were minimal. The DND's first protest had been that the teaching of English could not expand until more fluent teachers were available, and that their training could not be hurried.¹¹ And industrially and agriculturally skilled men, trained as teachers and willing to work for teachers' low wages, were rare.¹²

Economic resources, too, were scarce and becoming scarcer as the Depression became more severe. In 1930, missionaries on the advisory board for Native Development petitioned the government to "give sympathetic consideration to the difficult financial position of Kraal schools."¹³ By 1931 the decrease in educational funding for Africans under the administration's economy proposals was at the top of the board's agenda, and the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference was recommending drastic action—the complete shutdown of the government's second industrial school, Tjolutjo—to preserve funds for the more numerous mission educational programs.¹⁴ In 1931, the number of students at Domboshawa, the government's popular flagship school, briefly dropped as pupils failed to collect enough money for tuition, boarding fees and taxes and in outlying areas more schools folded than could be opened (DND 1932). The year 1932 was, if anything, even worse as more outschools shut down. "It can no longer be claimed," the Director of Native Development acknowledged, "that this merely reflects desirable consolidation of effort. It also indicates that in many areas the educational effort of years has been rendered abortive..." (DND 1933).

In 1931, in response to local demands and Native Department pressure, the Director of Native Development decided to go ahead with an experimental program at Umchingwe. The Umchingwe school was an attempt to develop an inexpensive, community-based state sponsored school which substituted African teachers and African sponsors for European teachers and mission and administrative sponsors, without admitting to either economizing or substitutions. The Director selected George Mhlanga, a relatively young man who had attended American Board schools, taught in Dutch Reformed mission schools and acquired some industrial work experience before his accelerated training at Domboshawa as an agricultural demonstrator (Summers 1995). And he sent Mhlanga into what he knew would be a

difficult situation, ordering the principal of Domboshawa, where Mhlanga had been trained, to inform him that "this work is unique in Southern Rhodesia and that it has a most important bearing upon community life and community education....If he should succeed in this difficult venture, it may make possible the development of this activity in other suitable areas in the future."¹⁵ In laying out the rules for the Umchingwe project, Jowitt placed a heavy emphasis on Mhlanga's responsibility to "sympathise with the local community" and lead it to believe that the project was "done for them, and was worthwhile."¹⁶ For Jowitt, the Umchingwe project was an opportunity to emphasize *community* education and needs over *individuals'* education and ambitions.¹⁷

The Umchingwe program had problems. The project officially opened in May of 1931 with a meeting between E. Alvord, the visiting supervisor of demonstrators, and 250 local men, including those who had initially requested the school. The meeting was not a success. Alvord had to report back that:

After we had fully explained our scheme for the establishment of the Industrial Demonstrator and the development of the Community Industrial School, outlining the instruction to be given, we gave them the opportunity to ask questions.... No questions were asked but several men spoke. The gist of their remarks was that they wanted a regular school with instruction in literary work, were not keen for the industrial demonstrator alone, and were quite reluctant to accept our proposition as outlined.¹⁸

Alvord was not sympathetic to this demand for a "regular school with instruction in literary work." He reminded them that the Anglican mission operated an outschool nearby, and explained that the government was not prepared to spend scarce funds to compete with the mission.¹⁹ When the men went on to complain that it would be impractical for students to go back and forth, attending two schools at the same time, Alvord admitted that the complainants had a problem, but suggested they resolve it in favor of sending the youngest children to the mission and allowing the older boys and men to attend the demonstrator's lessons. When this proposal did not receive an enthusiastic welcome, Alvord compromised further, suggesting that the demonstrator might be willing to offer some lessons in English to the older boys and men, teaching them to read and write, and using English in the course of industrial instruction. Even after this compromise, however, when the NC asked the 250 men for a show of hands indicating how many wanted the industrial demonstrator, only one, Chief Mdala himself, raised his hand. "[I]n view of the attitude shown by the Natives," Alvord concluded, "I cannot feel very

enthusiastic and in fact am somewhat dubious as to the possible success of the enterprise."²⁰

The NC Insiza, who had been one of the most enthusiastic of the plan's early sponsors, attempted to reawaken local enthusiasm for the industrial scheme, but found, to his dismay, that what the men really wanted was not the industrial training, but "a teacher who would give them instruction in English and general higher education."²¹ They were willing to accept Alvord's compromise, of a man who would also teach industrial skills, but they were uninterested in the type of self-help plan the government had contemplated, in which they would do most of the work, make monetary contributions and receive only that education that the community could support and use. Asked to help make bricks and cut grass to thatch a school building, these men talked about hiring someone to do the work with their 5 shilling per year contribution.²² These men had been willing to pay for an academic and industrial school which delivered high level education. But they were unwilling to work for the simplified money-saving program the government offered, a program which in practice met none of their social and economic goals.

The situation grew increasingly tense through the winter, as Mhlanga sought to finish constructing a house and school before the growing season, and the local people remained uninterested in working without pay on a project which had ceased to be what they wanted. Mhlanga asked for help. Chief Mdala, enlisted to prevent the sinking of the whole enterprise, went around from house to house telling people to go to school. He and Mhlanga were invariably told "yes we shall come," but the workers and students did not arrive. Frustrated, Mhlanga wrote "I do not know what will be done as no one is willing to learn."²³

By mid August, Mhlanga was dubious about the project entrusted to him, finding that even when men did arrive to help with the work, they explained that they were there to work, not learn, and drifted away quickly. Facing the prospect of failure, and determined to find out why a project that had begun with community and official support appeared to be failing so thoroughly, the NC held another meeting. The older married men who attended the meeting all claimed to support the school, but said that "their sons, youths and boys, although exhorted by them to attend school, preferred loafing at the Kraals." The NC did not accept this excuse, but "advised them to use a firm hand in making their children attend school, as is done by European parents."²⁴ A project which had begun as a community effort to provide older men with the agricultural extension services they wanted, and younger men with a school providing the industrial training and English skills they needed to secure good jobs, had become a divisive issue which had the NC demanding that elders require the younger

men and boys to attend school. Fifteen pupils showed up, all between the ages of 13 and 20. The NC ordered them to attend regularly, they said they would, and the school was launched.²⁵

Launched, it wobbled. When he visited Umchingwe in September, Alvord found a school which was only marginally alive. People were suspicious of the school's intentions, attendance was highly irregular and the school building was far from complete—the roof was not thatched, the walls not bricked up and the "students" only wanted to learn English, as opposed to brickmaking, bricklaying and thatching. Mhlanga was trying in the best traditions of his training: working as an agricultural demonstrator, holding an industrial period of 5 hours each day, and proposing to tutor in English for 35-45 minutes a day. But even the normally optimistic Alvord could merely suggest that the Department suspend judgment a bit longer.²⁶

During October, the NC himself held another meeting to attempt to determine what was causing the difficulties. This time, instead of the more than two hundred who had attended earlier meetings, or the eighty who had promised money, only 40-50 parents of former and present pupils showed up.²⁷ And even these numbers were an achievement as there were only 10 pupils on the school's roll, and average attendance was less than five pupils per day.²⁸ The NC reproached these parents, inquiring into their pledges of money, and asking why they did not send their sons. The men of the meeting responded that they wanted the school, they wanted the agricultural demonstration work, and they did try to get their sons to go to school, but the sons were lazy. Nevertheless, they asserted that when the school was built, more students would come. The NC's explanation that building the school was, itself, a part of the training, did not impress them, as they explained that walking long distances to work all day without pay was not something their sons would voluntarily do.²⁹

By the end of 1931, Umchingwe school had become a problem for the parents, the teacher, the Native Department and the Native Development Department, rather than a solution to the difficulties brought on by the Depression. Alvord was the first to publicly conclude that the school should be abandoned. Parents' lack of enthusiasm and belief that students must get English training *before* they studied industrial subjects, rather than as they built, undermined the school's reason for being, and strategy for teaching. Furthermore, he argued, Umchingwe block was not terribly suitable for an industrial school, an industrial demonstrator or even an agricultural demonstrator. The training of the agricultural demonstrators had been paid for through the Native Trust fund. This was justified by the argument that the demonstrators, after training, would do extension work in the "Native Reserves."³⁰ But under Land Apportionment, Umchingwe was not actually a reserve. It was an area with a population of about 400, in the

midst of a large European-designated zone. Instead of working in such an area, Alvord argued, the industrial demonstrator should spend his time working for a larger population on a reserve.³¹

By 1932, the only problem was how to end the project gracefully. Clear failure alone was not sufficient grounds to call a halt to a program the government had invested in (Summers 1994a). The NC who had actively promoted the project concluded by March of 1932 that the community's young men rejected the school. The older men, he argued, were interested, restrained only by the local shortage of cash. The young men, though, he considered fundamentally lazy.³² Mhlanga himself was equally willing to admit that the industrial program had failed. Unlike the NC, however, he complained that even the community's older men resisted his suggestions:

the people do not give a definite answer they simple say they want school, but when I asked them why don't you send your sons to school if you want it they kept quiet. They were 66 on Sunday and today were 63 men... The time wasted showing them better farming they did not believe and I can[not] teach them better farming for they thought [they] know farming better than I do...³³

Any successes Mhlanga could report were small: one man, Sibezwile, a former independent preacher,³⁴ came to be a student, but one student was not enough to finish thatching the school, let alone hold a respectable class. And even when Mhlanga managed to convince the local men "that they do not know better farming at all," and began to receive requests to remain as an agricultural demonstrator, that success did not spread to his industrial work.³⁵

Accepting failure, the Director of Native Development ironically turned to the ICU, which it had sought to thwart, and the Church of England. Director Jowitt held a meeting with Masoja Ndlovu, and other delegates of the ICU, and labeled them unrealistic and irresponsible in their demands. The ICU, he argued

was largely responsible for the pressure brought to bear upon Government...[to establish] an Industrial school at Umchingwe, andsubsequently they were largely responsible for advising the Natives that what they required was not an Industrial school but a 'college'.³⁶

The Umchingwe school, Jowitt implied, was entirely a political rather than a humanitarian or educational project, and it had emerged out of African political pressure rather than the standard, agreed upon conventions regarding budgets, fiscal responsibility and European priorities. But while, within Southern Rhodesia's bureaucratic politics, the ICU was able to push, and to destabilize, it proved unable to sustain a constructive outcome. And the Church of England, in the

midst of a budgetary crisis, was unwilling to take on the responsibility of a failing industrial school. In the end, Jowitt and Alvord removed demonstrator activity from the area and shut the school down, leaving none of the original demands of Chief Mdala, his supporters or the ICU, met.

The Umchingwe experiment, from beginning to end, was a single project which encapsulated the demands, policies, ideologies and struggles of ten years of educational policy making. This program—initiated by Africans, reinterpreted by Europeans, boycotted by its original sponsors as alien to their demands and ended by an administration with words about African laziness—described a common trajectory. And in doing so it undermined the settler population's assertions that segregation and mutually beneficial development programs were possible.

Why Africans Called for Schools

The Umchingwe case was a single incident where politically active men clearly sought education for their sons. But in officials' characterization of the school as a response to African requests rather than government or mission pronouncements of what would be good for Africans, the Umchingwe experiment was well within the mainstream of educational expansion in Southern Rhodesia.

By the late 1920s, missions were legally required to have the permission of all relevant government-recognized headman and the approval of the Native Department and the Native Development Department before they could open new schools on reserves, or on any other land not owned outright by the mission. Thus all schools were, at least in theory, the result of acquiescence, or even demands by the government-appointed leaders of African communities—not missionary evangelical coercion.³⁷ And by the late 1920s, few mission societies were in a position to push for additional schools. Instead, they were cutting back, fighting bankruptcy and closing schools as revenues from donations dropped under the economic pressure of the Depression.

The petition that led to the Umchingwe experiment, though, was striking for several reasons. Senior Umchingwe men made specific, politicized demands not merely for a school, but for education with a specific content. Most other early stories of the role played by Africans' role in school establishment tended to follow a plot line in which the community decides on a school, and petitions the missionary for a teacher, without specifying anything about what, exactly, is to be taught, or how qualified a teacher they wanted. Reports on these petitions indicate that they may have been made experimentally, after a debate within the local community. Some of these requests were pleas for patronage or protection. The Church of England missionary

Christelow, for example, found that Poshayi's village was "frightfully keen" about a school when people feared that their land would be designated for Europeans and taken away from them. Reasoning that with a school the land would become mission land and the mission would protect them, they built a school and requested a teacher. Once the teacher arrived, though, people felt more secure and were much less interested in attending, or sending children to attend school (Christelow 1915).

Some requests for new schools, or protests at school closures, may have been attempts to improve a particular chief or headman's standing in a bid for government recognition and higher salary, or for greater prestige among his peers. A Department of Native Development Inspector accused Chief Muroyi of wanting schools to satisfy his concept of what he was due as an important man but refusing to push children to attend and then complaining when they did not learn.³⁸ Some demands may have been opportunistic attempts by contenders in local power struggles to develop a new system of community ties. The Native Board in Gutu, for example, was split into hostile camps by a division between those who claimed to represent the people, and those who others accused of representing the mission.³⁹

But the common feature of this genre of requests, reported primarily in mission literature, is the missionary's paternalism. The missionary presumably knew what the education would be, and would freely provide it and the goods which accompanied it, books and materials. African men's petitions for schools were appeals to the missionary's beneficence, rather than to a sense of justice, citizenship or taxpayers' rights.

For the Church of England, which operated the other school in Umchingwe, this sort of demand had peaked in the early 1910s, a time when the mission could offer few qualified teachers but was constantly being besieged, sometimes by young men, sometimes by older men, sometimes by workers already at compounds, with demands to open schools. Chief Mawoko asked Etheridge, the missionary in charge at St. Augustine's, for a school in 1907, "not, indeed, that he had any keen desire for instruction himself, but, being a shrewd old man, he thought it was wise to move with the times...[saying] 'if I do not have a church here, I know that all my boys and young men will leave me, and then who will pay my taxes for me?'" (Etheridge 1907). And Mawoko was alone neither in his ambivalence, nor his decision that teachers and schools were necessary: Etheridge received two other requests within a three month period, a dramatic change from earlier years (Etheridge 1907). This change was not unproblematic. Lloyd, another Church of England missionary, reported the debate in Makoni's territory over whether the mission should establish schools. Those opposed to the schools argued that schooling would make girls

disobedient, and lead to a loss of reverence for the dead. Makoni, though, accepted the necessity of schools once they had been defended by an evangelist, reportedly saying "we do not know what they are doing. Their teachers must know more than we do" ("EWL" 1909). Schools, though, were clearly an issue which separated older and younger men. Older men expressed reluctance to give up beer and polygyny (Etheridge 1911; Lloyd 1914). These issues were less troublesome for the young men who could afford neither drunkenness, a privilege generally reserved for older men and festivals in customary culture, nor more than one wife. Older men, when asking for schools, asked for schools for these young men, and they asked under pressure from the young men. Four "big chiefs" in the Shangani Reserve, a missionary reported, "are ready to receive us with open arms. They told me 'The young men and the girls demand God and education much against our wishes, so we might just as well make the best of it.'"⁴⁰ Missionaries initially accepted this stipulation that their work would be primarily, if not exclusively, with children and youth. They told older men that while restrictions on polygyny applied to church members, elders could stay outside the church. And missionaries and evangelists assured older men that Christianity taught respect for parents and husbands (Lloyd 1914; Etheridge 1911; "EWL" 1909; Etheridge 1907).

Only after establishing a school and beginning the process of developing a Christian community did missionaries begin to pressure older men to at least come to church on Sunday, and consider becoming Christians. Persuasion was not particularly effective. "You have had all my children and you can keep them, but I am not coming," one headman reportedly stated during a missionary's evangelical visit (Etheridge, November 1914).

When records of debates over the establishment of schools exist, they generally exist because a European missionary was present, called in as a participant or, perhaps, a partisan for the young men. European missionaries clearly enjoyed the prospect of expanding into new areas, but they also felt somewhat ambivalent when they lacked the resources and trained teachers to build and staff new schools. The motivating force for the rapid expansion of schools was less the evangelizing missionary than the young men. Faced with the prospect of an entirely new region, Etheridge admitted that during 1914, "I have been trying to put off repeated deputations of boys from this district [Mrewa] with vague promises that we would do something for them. At last they took the matter into their own hands, and began to put up a building, and then triumphantly came down and demanded books and a teacher" (Etheridge, August 1914). And well into the 1930s, the Church of England was notorious for its inadequately trained teachers.⁴¹

Leaders such as Mawoko, Makoni, Chaparadya, the chief of Mashanedza and others, were in some ways indiscriminating consumers of education. They were interested more in its sociology than in its curriculum. Repeatedly, they demanded education which would come into the community under their sponsorship, recognizing their authority, but they made few stipulations about the content of that education. And they frequently negotiated for that education by asserting that while it was not something for themselves, their young men wanted it, and they had to distribute it to satisfy these young men who could bring wages and purchased goods home to rural communities.

Schools and education were double-edged for older men. Acquiring them could demonstrate a leader's ability to attract patronage and opportunities, but once schools were in place, their existence and what they taught could be highly disruptive. Unwilling to attend school or accept any form of Christianity for themselves, these older men frequently felt no commitment to support the schools once they were established, especially if faced with teachers who were providing alternative sources of authority within the community or seducing their daughters or wives. Teachers who rejected chiefly authority could recruit younger men and become dangerous rivals to seniors' authority. And older men whose authority rested at least partially on their ability to control daughters and wives frequently opposed opportunities for girls and women to attend schools, fearing seduction by teachers and students and the breaking of long-standing, sometimes polygynous, marital agreements (Summers 1996; Schmidt 1992).⁴² As heads of household who had to allocate daily tasks, senior men were also reluctant to lessen the workloads of children and youth, leaving missionaries to complain that all too often children might come only three days a week, dropping out altogether at critical points in the agricultural cycle, when it was important to scare birds from the ripening harvest, look for wild foods and animal fodder during droughts or move seasonally with the cattle to alternative grazing areas (Reynolds 1991; Dunley-Owen 1911). Furthermore, a chief or headman might request a school, or accept one, and then become opposed to it when he actually realized the effect of the mission on the community. Mawoko, who in 1907 had requested a teacher under pressure from his young men, evidently thought better of the idea when a teacher actually arrived, and was remembered years later for his opposition and resistance to mission and school rather than his initial, reluctant, request (Etheridge 1907; Broderick 1914).

Young men could be enthusiastic consumers of education who initially had little sophistication as to what, exactly, they were consuming and how it might be useful. Immediately before the first world war, education was something of a fad in certain areas of Mashonaland. Young men had several very good reasons, however, for

pursuing some kind of education. First, young men were entwined in the new, European-dominated economy of wage labor. Unlike older men, who could sell cattle, or grow crops for sale, unmarried men without independent access to land and the labor of wives and children had few choices but to go out to work to make tax payments and earn money for bridewealth. And men very quickly discovered that not all jobs were alike. Unskilled labor on neighboring farms paid poorly and sometimes left workers subject to the abusive whims of their employers. Unskilled labor on mines and in towns was not much better. Conditions remained poor. It was easy to break pass laws—even accidentally—and find oneself sentenced to unpaid hard labor. And saving money for various consumer goods, taxes, cattle and bridewealth could be difficult. But workers who could acquire some knowledge of English and a familiarity with construction work or basic craft skills, could become relatively prosperous as servants, clerks, assistants to European craftsmen or even as independent craftsmen or storekeepers.

But, as with the older men, it was frequently the sociology of education—the role of being an educated African—rather than specific knowledge which transformed both the young man, and his economic and social opportunities. An Anglican Director of Missions observed “a tendency on the part of the people to consider secular education the open sesame to the comforts and riches of the world.”⁴³ Such critics imagined education as a way for young men to avoid the honest physical effort of manual labor, and at the same time acquire the money and goods necessary for a ‘civilized’ way of life. Graduates of the government’s school at Domboshawa, skilled in building, farming and carpentry, took jobs as clerks or interpreters rather than putting their new manual skills to use. The messengers, native policemen, teachers and ministers who pedaled hundreds of miles on their bicycles, or the builders who sought out contracts and coordinated construction, might not avoid physical effort or use any specific knowledge or skill from their education, but they wore uniforms or suits, and their work marked them as important community leaders. European employers, while hardly disinterested observers, also ignored the specific content of Africans’ educations when they categorized men as “mission boys” or “raw natives” without acknowledging the enormous variations in quality and quantity of different individuals’ schooling. Even missionaries, the region’s primary providers of education for Africans, were slow to attend to the specific content of education, improving the academic quality of education only very slowly and being reluctant in many cases to phase out older teachers of good moral character, but little knowledge, in favor of book-educated younger men with more dubious loyalties.

The Umchingwe demand for a school was unusual because the petitioners specified the content of the education they wanted. They

wanted higher education, as opposed to the increasingly plaintive requests for even a rudimentary outschool which the Native Board in Gwaai put forth, or the requests for a school sponsored by the government rather than the mission at Plumtree and Gutu.⁴⁴ As the men requesting the education—and volunteering to pay substantial sums for it—had never, themselves, experienced such a “higher” education, it is worth asking where the idea came from, and why they insisted on such a content in the face of official attempts to steer them toward a more socially appropriate and immediately useful curriculum.

Officials blamed the idea of higher education on the ICU. In associating Masoja Ndhlovu’s speeches with the request, and ICU opposition with the school’s failure, they may have been accurate. But merely assigning blame does not explain why the men of Umchingwe listened and were then prepared to devote their own resources to the new schooling. Furthermore, the NC Insiza reported by the end of 1931 that the ICU had become less popular rather than more so over the previous year, and attendance at ICU meetings declined as individuals had paid subscriptions, failed to receive the results they wanted and begun to ask where the money went.⁴⁵ ICU involvement was a symptom, rather than the underlying cause, of the economic, social and political difficulties which led the men of Umchingwe to request a government college.

A more complex possibility is that Chief Mdala and his colleagues were not being revolutionary in requesting a school, but were instead attempting to meet long-standing obligations and responsibilities in an unstable and complex environment, where it remained important to establish a son as a mature farmer and father, but where older men no longer had the cattle, money or land to help provide bridewealth and a farm. It has become common, in assessments of the social tensions brought on within the African communities of Southern Africa with colonialism, migrant labor and market agriculture, to argue that the new system promoted generational conflict, pitting fathers against sons as relationships within patriarchal families were challenged by sons’ ability to earn money for their own bridewealth, move away from a father’s control, acquire knowledge from mission schools rather than from elders and marry as individuals, without the mediation of a family (Harries 1994; Jeater 1993; Summers 1994a; Bozzoli 1991). Assessments of fathers’ reluctance to allow children to attend schools are frequently part of this argument. This may be a factor in the Umchingwe case, but if so, the fathers pursued a peculiar strategy indeed to retain or gain control of their sons. Instead of fighting a school capable of promoting individualism and outward migration, they asked for it, and offered to finance it.

This suggests that Chief Mdala and his colleagues may have, instead, been emulating Chief Mawoko, or the four “big chiefs” of

Shangani, who asked for schools in order to retain young men (Etheridge 1907; Williams 1914). Unlike such earlier requests, though, Chief Mdala and the others knew enough to specify the content of education that they wanted. Their request reflected their specific goals for the young men of the region—not the simple education of an outschool which, as they already had had a chance to observe, was of limited usefulness, but higher education in English, in a government college. Discussing a more recent time period, Angela Cheater has argued that farmers on Native Purchase areas in Rhodesia could follow one of two strategies—“idioms of accumulation.” They could follow a “traditional” pattern, investing in wives, farming with family labor and avoiding expensive capital improvements. Or they could pursue a more modern pattern, investing in technology and paid labor, marrying monogamously and sending children to school, rather than to the fields (Cheater 1984). The Umchingwe request for a government college, occurring as the depression deepened, in an area of insecure land tenure, may have been the “traditionalists” acknowledgment that though they might have “traditional” goals of setting their sons up in life, they would have to use novel means. Chief Mdala and the others were preparing for the sort of paradigm shift Cheater suggests, from prosperity defined through agricultural and paternal success, to prosperity achieved through education and paid work.

In addition to seeing education as an important resource for their sons’ success, Chief Mdala and the others may have seen a *government* education as a critical source of future patronage in an economic, social and political climate where the administration’s effective power had increased dramatically over their lifetimes, even as the resources of the missions had proven regrettably fickle (Summers 1994b). As jobs became increasingly difficult to find during the Depression, some senior Africans informed the administration that it was the government’s responsibility to provide suitable jobs for educated Africans. Mbizo, speaking before the Native Board in Gwaai, asked that the government provide all educated natives with suitable work as storekeepers or office clerks.⁴⁶ Hotsha, speaking before the Native Board of Shashani and Semokwe, provided a concrete example of the difference between mission and government education and patronage. Those who had paid £5/ a year to be educated at the mission college, qualifying as teachers, might be paid as little as £1/10/ a month, less than a common laborer. Tjolutjo government school graduates who had paid less in tuition, on the other hand, who built a hospital at Fort Usher, earned six to six and a half pounds a month.⁴⁷

Umchingwe was not typical. But in the request, the administration’s response to that request and the failure of its industrial demonstration project, it may have marked out the limits of consensus-based development policies. Later demands, from older men,

educated Africans, officials, missionaries and settlers, acknowledged increasingly real conflicts of interest and the impossibility of meeting all needs simultaneously.

Consequences of Africans' Demands for Schools

Umchingwe failed because the young men refused to attend, and could not be talked—or pressured—into attendance. Officials and some of the older men attributed this refusal to laziness. Accusations of laziness fit well into a social picture of Southern Rhodesia as a region increasingly characterized not by cooperation between generations, but by intergenerational conflict. “Laziness,” or slow and ineffectual work was an important, non-confrontational, resistance strategy, a way of protesting conditions and a lack of incentives without challenging the potentially useful relationship of patronage and even affection between worker and employer, son and father. Older men asserted that young men not only refused to attend schools which demanded physical labor, but were migrating away from the rural areas to avoid manual work and seek higher wages.⁴⁸

Older men also found themselves less and less able to control junior members of their communities and make them do anything which the juniors did not choose. As juniors departed, older men lost access to key resources, and the government blocked resort to force and familial violence. Young men who went to work in the towns, mines or even in South Africa, left the old men responsible for the entire family's taxes, a responsibility which became increasingly onerous as cattle and corn prices dropped, and the older men had less and less money available.⁴⁹ In areas such as the Umchingwe block, everyone, old and young, was uncertain about continuing access to land, and the older men's knowledge and experience became less critical to young men's success than schooling or knowledge of Europeans. Evasion and lack of resources left senior men with few options other than force. But with increased levels of official oversight, force was becoming problematic as a way of controlling wayward women and juniors. The image of a native commissioner suggesting that parents at Umchingwe compel their sons to attend this school is therefore deeply ironic, as it can be juxtaposed with the voices of some native commissioners chiding old men for their desire to brand, beat, rape or otherwise punish disobedient daughters and wives.⁵⁰

The officials who suggested forcing pupils to come to school were, however, leaders in a minority, but increasingly vocal group among the most “progressive” or educated Africans and officials, who asked that the government use force to compel universal education for African children.

For the Europeans of the region, the idea of forcing children to attend school was not new. Many discussions of compulsory education,

indeed, refer to European parents forcing their children to attend even when the children would rather play. But in the Southern Rhodesian context, school only became compulsory for European children in 1930, despite decades of complaints about white parents who did not ensure the education of their children. And education became compulsory for Europeans within a context of publicity about white degeneracy and illiteracy, Melsetter farmers asking mission-educated Africans to read letters for them and the graduation of one of the country's earliest Standard VII classes of Africans at Mt. Selinda mission. Compulsory education for white children was a matter of racial pride, and racial solidarity.

Africans' motivations in the cases where they requested compulsory education were apparently quite similar. In some cases, the requests used traditionalist imagery but saw compulsory education as a rational response to changing social conditions. Advocates of compulsory education, though, ultimately condemned themselves and their own communities for the difficulties Africans were having as segregation intensified. And in advocating compulsion, they threatened to increase the levels of violence within African communities. Solomon Zwana complained to the Plumtree native board that when school was voluntary, boys deserted, leaving only the girls in class. "The root of the tribal tree is dead; the people as a community will perish owing to the disregard of tribal institutions," he argued, and Chief Mpini, listening, suggested that boarding school might substitute for some of the traditional forms of tribal discipline as a way of keeping young men under control.⁵¹ In other cases, the demand for compulsory education was led by individuals fully convinced that Africans needed to learn to work within a European world, and that that could best be done through schooling. Philip Dube told the Chipinga board that education was at least as necessary for blacks as for whites, and should be compulsory for both, as he informed the meeting that "Ignorance was the greatest enemy of mankind, and the only way to destroy that enemy was to compel all parents to send their children to school."⁵² Mission-dominated Gutu, however, may have been the region closest to a compulsory school system and in Gutu, the violence, controversy and stagnation of the school system showed that, far from producing a strong and successful African community, compulsion could cleave the region into mission adherents and mission enemies, leading to arguments at the native board meeting and ongoing conflict in the local community.⁵³

Unsuccessful Demands and the Limits of Compulsion

Education was a compromise and an attempt at peaceful, or superficially peaceful, mediation of extremely real social conflicts

between settlers and Africans. Africans' demands for schools were attempts to achieve a respectable and responsible position within the new Southern Rhodesian society, attempts with the potential to unite older and younger men who sought to ensure the survival and prosperity of their communities. But these attempts to ensure communal survival could also pit old against young when older and younger men disagreed over what sort of negotiated settlement would be acceptable.

As the Umchingwe program ended, with admonitions of force, it testified to the inability of this community, led by senior men, to convince young men with words. And it showed the power young men were acquiring to re-negotiate their position within their home communities. The young men won. Whether their refusals to work at the school were lazy or resistant, their refusal to accept the school on the terms the government offered led to the school's closure. But the community also lost as, divided, it was crippled in its efforts to resist the government's enforcement of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930.

The Umchingwe story did not end happily. By 1934, the school was gone and the agent for the railway company that owned the land had given the African community notice that it must leave the area as rents, effectively increased from 20 shillings per year to 35 shillings,⁵⁴ had gone unpaid. The native commissioner could offer no local land as a replacement; the community would have to travel. Chief Mdala and others protested, asking for land, explaining that they could not pay for it and pointing out how very little they could do when the price of mealies was only four shillings a bag, and maize control regulations limited their marketing. Chief Mzamane agreed with Chief Mdala's complaints, argued that the older men were losing control over the people and asked for "land where we can reside, where there are no Europeans."⁵⁵ The community's bid to remain on private land, educate its sons and allow a new, well-educated generation to be upwardly mobile within an integrated society failed, leaving the old men to negotiate the terms on which they would accept a segregated society.

Notes

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1. Woods (NC) to SoN Bulawayo, 4-12-30, National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) S1561/59.
2. CNC to DND 27-2-31, NAZ S1561/59. Mission teachers—qualified ones—generally earned at least £25/year. He may have been assuming that more revenue could be earned through the sale of produce from student-worked farming projects or products and services from an industrial shop, both of which were steady contributors to many mission schools' finances. Or he may simply have assumed that once started, the school would continue to expand. In any event, the industrial demonstrator who was eventually placed in the region earned a government salary of £48, plus a £5 cycle allowance, during 1933. Accounts of Expenditures, NAZ

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S170/1171. Even during 1927, wages for reasonably skilled African teachers qualified to teach industrial subjects ranged between £4 and £7 per month. Not even counting equipment and building expenses, contributions of 5s each from 83 sponsors could not pay most or all expenses of the enterprise they proposed.

3. Mdala, testimony before Land Commission, 1925, NAZ Z1/1/1.
4. CNC to DND 27-2-31, NAZ S1561/59. The CNC was mistaken in this contention as well.
5. Quoted by Jowitt to Colonial Secretary, report of meeting with leaders of ICU and memorandum re Umchingwe Industrial Block, 15-7-32, NAZ S1561/59.
6. Most of the African requests emerge in discussions of meetings. As I will point out later, Native Department officials tended to focus on the requests they approved of, and downplay or drop those—like higher education—that they considered misguided and appropriate. For evidence of the meeting's explanation of the desired curriculum, see Jowitt to Colonial Secretary, 10-6-30; Woods (NC) to SoN Bulawayo, 4-12-30; Alvord to DND, 4-6-31; and Acting DND to Inspector, NDD Matabeleland South, 19-6-31 all from NAZ S1561/59.
7. CNC Carbutt to DND 16-12-30, NAZ S1561/59.
8. Regarding land, see the minutes, Native Board Meeting, Insiza (Fort Rixon) 27-3-31 and CNC to sec to premier, 13-3-31, NAZ S1542/N2 H-I; regarding ICU, see Woods (NC) to Supt. of Natives, Bulawayo, 9-7-31, NAZ S1561/59.
9. H. Jowitt to Colonial Secretary, 10-6-30, NAZ S1561/59.
10. For examples of his rhetoric, see any of his annual reports as Director of Native Development from 1928 through 1933. His desire to get involved in community development led him to push to change his department's name from the Department of Native Education (as it was in 1927-8) to the Department of Native Development.
11. Jowitt to Colonial Secretary, 10-6-30, NAZ S1561/59.
12. Alvord to DND 8-12-31, NAZ S1561/59.
13. J. White (Wesleyan) and Neville Jones (LMS), "Minutes of the Southern Rhodesia Advisory Board for Native Development, 1930," NAZ S235/484.
14. Statement from the SRMC executive, Minutes of the Native Advisory Board, 1931, NAZ S235/484.
15. DND to Principal Domboshawa, 27-4-31, NAZ S1561/59.
16. DND to Principal Domboshawa, 27-4-31 NAZ S1561/59.
17. Jowitt consistently emphasized the power of education as a communal rather than an individual phenomenon. See his annual reports, for example: "the native community...however inarticulate they are...must ever be bourne in mind in prescribing for the educational needs of their children" (DND 1929, 11).
18. Alvord to DND, 4-6-31, NAZ S1561/59.
19. Alvord to DND, 4-6-31, NAZ S1561/59.
20. Alvord to DND, 4-6-31 NAZ S1561/59.
21. Woods (NC) to Supt. of Natives, Bulawayo, 9-7-31, NAZ S1561/59.
22. Woods (NC) to Supt. of Natives, Bulawayo, 9-7-31, NAZ S1561/59.
23. Mhlanga to NC 14-8-31, NAZ S1561/59.
24. Woods (NC) to Supt. of Natives, Bulawayo, 25-8-31, NAZ S1561/59.
25. Woods (NC) to Supt. of Natives, Bulawayo, 25-8-31, NAZ S1561/59.
26. ED Alvord to acting DND 3-10-31, NAZ S1561/59.
27. GSB Woods (NC) to Supt. of Natives Bulawayo, 29-10-31, NAZ S1561/59.

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28. GSB Woods (NC) to Supt. of Natives Bulawayo, 29-10-31 and Alvord to DND 8-12-31, NAZ S1561/59.
29. GSB Woods (NC) to Supt. of Natives Bulawayo, 29-10-31, NAZ S1561/59.
30. Agriculturist [Alvord] to DND 8-3-32, NAZ S1561/59 and Steele, 1972.
31. It seems remarkable that a population of 400 could have produced 80 men willing to sign a petition and pledge money for a school, so Alvord may have been mistaken in his population estimate. Or the area may have been undergoing a rapid change as, in the aftermath of land apportionment, families were forced off land and off to reserves. If, indeed, Umchingwe was experiencing rapid depopulation, that would explain both the difficulties the school experienced, and the sense of urgency expressed by Chief Mdala and the school's original sponsors. None of the materials, however, provide any evidence of depopulation. Alvord to DND 8-12-31, NAZ S1561/59. For discussion of some of the region's complexities, see Alexander, 1994.
32. S.S. Woods (NC) to Agriculturist NDD, 3-3-32, NAZ S1561/59.
33. G.M. Mhlanga, Industrial Demonstrator, to Agriculturist, 2-3-32, NAZ S1561/59.
34. Sibezwile had arrived in Umchingwe after being forced to leave his post as a preacher for the unofficial Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, where he had acquired a reputation for sleeping with the married women of his congregation. NC Insiza, annual report for 1927, NAZ S235/505.
35. G.M. Mhlanga, Industrial Demonstrator, to Agriculturist, 2-3-32 and G.M. Mhlanga to NC, 2-3-32, NAZ S1561/59.
36. Jowitt to Colonial Secretary, report of meeting with leaders of ICU and memorandum re Umchingwe Industrial Block, 15-7-32, NAZ S1561/59.
37. The extent to which these government-appointed headmen represented popular African views has been, and is likely to remain, moot. By virtue of their position, however, they represented the most stable parts of the community, while the more volatile young men, without access to land, wives or agricultural means of production, were likely to have the ability to move to places with schools or better jobs, rather than being forced to pull schools into any specific area.
38. Chief Muroyi complained about the schools in his area of Ndanga reserve during the Ndanga Native Board meeting 25-4-32 (Minutes). Subsequent correspondence between the Native Department, Native Development Department, and missionary, ended up concluding that his complaints were not justified. The Inspector, Mather, argued that the schools were relatively good, and Muroyi's complaint was only being attended to because of his senior political position. DND to CNC 14-6-32, NAZ S1542/N2 W-Z.
39. NC Gutu to Superintendent of Natives Victoria, 19-1-33, and Native Board Minutes, Gutu, 12-4-33, NAZ S1542/N2 G.
40. The 'big chiefs' were Sivalo, Ndabambi, Tshoko and Mazwi. They were nervous, having recently experienced substantial immigration to the reserves as Africans on land designated for Europeans were increasingly pushed off that land and relocated in their Reserve (Williams 1914).
41. In 1929, only 17.4 percent of its 258 African teachers had passed Standard IV or higher. Standard IV was the Native Department's notion of a minimally qualified teacher. Of major mission societies, only the Roman Catholics (8.6 percent) and the Dutch Reformed Mission (9.3 percent) had lower percentages of Standard IV and higher teachers (DND 1931, 56). The Anglican teachers' problems were so severe that, with government approval, the denomination began an intensive program of vernacular certificate training at Saint Faith's in short courses which were described by some as designed to either bring older teachers up to Standard III or kill them in trying (DND 1931, 17-18).
42. These older men had cause. Christian girls were frequently offered shelter by missionaries who opposed polygyny. Girls would be directed to central stations, such

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as St. Monica's, or St. Faith's (Rusape) for the Church of England, where they could be removed from home, educated and married off monogamously in Christian marriage to Christian men. (For example, Mother Annie, 1907 and 1915.) For more general discussions of this problem, see Summers 1996; Schmidt 1991; and Schmidt 1992.

43. Report of the Director of Missions 1936, NAZ ANG 1/1/19 v.2.
44. Note that no secondary education was available for Africans within Southern Rhodesia until the late 1930s, when St. Augustine's opened up an independent secondary school. The first government secondary school, Goromonzi, did not open until the 1940s. For examples of demand for *any* education, or for government schools, see Minutes, Native Board of Gwaai Reserve, 26-2-36; and DND to CNC 7-7-34 (re Plumtree Native Board Meeting), NAZ S1542/N2.
45. NC Insiza (Woods), annual report for 1931, NAZ S235/507.
46. Gwaai native board minutes, 23-9-35, NAZ S1542/N2 G.
47. Shashani and Semokwe reserve native board minutes, 15-12-32, NAZ S1542/N2. This criticism appears to have been leveled at Tegwani, a central school under the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. This difference does not merely reflect gaps in pay between artisans and teachers. Even within the teaching profession, those who could acquire work at the government schools received steady wages substantially higher than the pay at most missions. For evidence of the paltry and sporadic pay missions offered teachers, see (for example) the correspondence in NAZ S2307/2. For examples of the more substantial pay at Domboshawa and Tjolotjo, see NAZ S170/ 1169; and NAZ S1542/S3.
48. For example, Mpini, Bulalima-Mangwe (Plumtree) Native Board minutes, 12-12-35.
49. For examples, minutes of native boards of Bikita (9-5-33) and (6-5-35); minutes of native board, Bulalima-Mangwe (at Plumtree, 12-12-35; minutes of native board, Shabani reserve (13-5-37) NAZ S1542/N2. There were, however, more complaints about runaway women than runaway sons.
50. Branding was a popular proposal at the Plumtree Native Board meeting, 13-5-37. The role of other punishment was most extensively discussed at the meeting of the Mazoe Native Board, 28-4-31, NAZ S1542/N2.
51. Minutes, Plumtree Native Board 12-12-35, NAZ S1542/N2 M.
52. Philip Dube to Native Board meeting, Chipinga, reported in Nielsen to CNC 28-2-31, NAZ S1542/N2.
53. Minutes of the Gutu native board, 12-4-33, NAZ S1542/N2. For a more complete treatment, Summers, 1994b and Davis and Doepcke 1987.
54. Rents were 20s/year when Umchingwe was a government-owned block. Transferred to private owners, however, rent was increased to 30s/year, plus a 5s/year private locations fee. NC Insiza to Superintendent of Natives, Matabeleland, 26-2-30, NAZ S138/32.
55. NC Insiza to SoN Bulawayo 11-9-34, on native board meeting, Insiza, NAZ S1542/N2.

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