

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

PBM - 23
Rhodesian University

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New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

How do you found a university? Eleazar Wheelock, according to the song, simply "went into the wilderness to teach the In-di-an." He packed his wagon with a "gradus ad Parnassum", a Bible and a drum--and five hundred gallons of New England rum" and headed for the wilds of New England to begin what was to become Dartmouth College. Nowhere in the song is it recorded what Eleazar offered in the way of research laboratories, dormitories, lecture halls, kitchens, athletic fields and all of the academic flotsam that is considered essential in a modern university. His curriculum, the song states flatly, was the "five hundred gallons of New England rum."

Beginning a new university in Central Africa has not proved so easy. Although the Queen Mother tapped a granite cornerstone into place last July, the University still has no teachers, no students, no buildings and no curriculum. What it does have is approximately \$4,340,000 in cash and promised capital, a principal (president), a secretary-treasurer, an educational vacuum to fill, a 450-acre plot of land in Salisbury, an enthusiastic group of supporters--and the cornerstone.

The story of the Rhodesian University is more correctly a tale of two universities. The first was planned as a small establishment to be supported by the philanthropy of Southern Rhodesians. The students probably would have been largely European and the degrees they would have sought would most likely have been conferred by a South African university cooperating through some special agreement. Although this first university never was created in stone, concrete and lecture halls, the effort that went into its planning was not wasted. For that small-scale embryo evolved into the present university with its big plans, big finance and prospectively big student body.

It has been a long, drawn-out struggle for the University's founding fathers to get this far. What began as a rather casual venture suffered seriously from hardening of the financial arteries and for the first few years no one was quite sure what sort of venture the money was being collected for or how much money it would take to pay for it.

If one man can be singled out as the Central African Eleazar Wheelock, it is L. M. Hodson, a member of the first Federal Parliament and president of the University's Inaugural Board. Hodson looks like a middle-aged Mr. Peepers (of United States television fame). He dresses conservatively, wears glasses and keeps his office in a deceptively neat welter of forgotten bills, correspondence and law papers. He is the main link between the old and new Universities--one of two men still active in University affairs who also served with the innumerable boards and committees that first decided to begin collecting money in 1945.

"As far as I know, the first time anyone conceived the idea of a university in Rhodesia was in 1908 when the Beit trustees toyed with the idea--and then decided there wasn't much need for it," Hodson told me. "Then I remember a Parliamentary budget debate in 1937 or thereabouts. The Minister of Education made a very handsome speech which included some remarks about beginning a university. I'm afraid no one took him seriously." Hodson pulled a dog-eared pipe from beneath a pile of blue-bound government publications and began to prospect in a brass dog-decorated tobacco humidor.

"I don't know of any other serious consideration or mention of a university by what you might call authoritative sources--except, of course, us."

(The following is Hodson's story of the "first" University--a story that begins in October, 1943 and ends June 6, 1953. The paragraphs below enclosed by parentheses contain material obtained from sources other than Hodson.)

"During the war, a Mr. J. F. Kapnek announced that he would give £20,000 (\$56,000 at today's exchange rates) to establish a university in Rhodesia if nine other men would also give £20,000. No one seemed to pay any attention to him and the whole thing looked like it would be a damp squib."

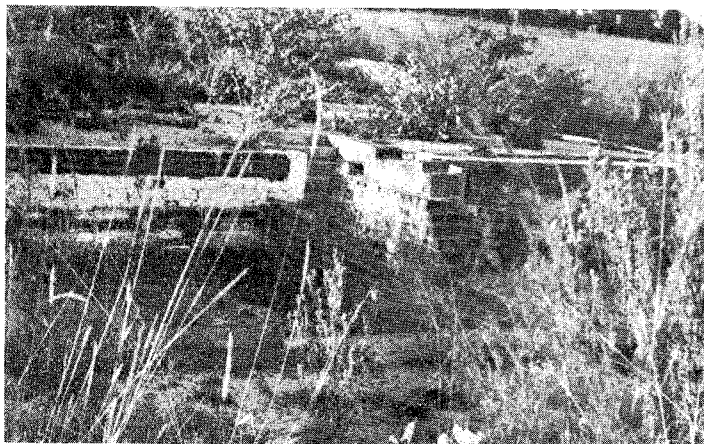
(At that time all Rhodesian university students were forced to study outside Southern Rhodesia. 150 of them attended universities in the Union of South Africa and the Union was such an important factor in Southern Rhodesian higher education that a Rhodesian was serving as member of the joint matriculation board which sets entrance requirements for all South African universities.)

"In 1945 I and some friends got together and decided it was high time someone took advantage of Kapnek's generosity."

(On June 29, 1945, a letter, signed by the "University Interim Planning Committee," appeared in the Rhodesia Herald advocating a fund-raising campaign to establish the University. The cost of getting started was estimated at \$840,000. There was opposition, although vague and unimportant, to the scheme. A. D. Gledhill, Southern Rhodesian Inspector of Schools, voiced the opposition by saying that Southern Rhodesia was incapable of running a university. He recommended increasing the endowment of Union universities, thereby providing additional facilities for Rhodesians.)

"In June, 1947," Hodson continued, "we set up a board of trustees to handle the little money we had collected and all of a sudden we were offered a total of 21 sites in a period of three months. We finally decided on the 250-acre Salisbury site at Mount Pleasant--you've probably seen it."

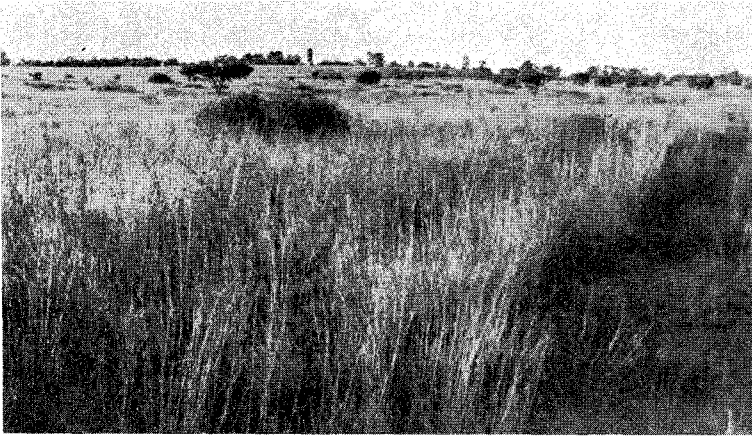
(The University site now consists of 450-odd acres of open veld in northeastern suburban Salisbury. At this time of year, the land is covered by tall, brown grass



Scene of the cornerstone-laying



The cornerstone



As far as the eye can see--The Site

and the sun and wind moving over it make a pretty picture. The site itself--where the Queen Mother laid the cornerstone last July--is almost at the top of a long sloping hill and overlooks a wide field, the route of the old railroad through northern Salisbury and, beyond that, a middle-class suburb. The cornerstone is boarded up--to prevent vandalism, I presume--and the platforms and abortive brick walls thrown up for the benefit of the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret are thickly overgrown with weeds.)

"There's an important thing I seem not to be saying, by the way. It's that no one ever asked us or appointed us to work on the University. I'm not being self-congratulatory--it's just that I'm trying to make it clear to you that we, as a group of unofficial private citizens, decided at an early stage to make no decisions concerning the policy of the University--we would leave all that to the actual Inaugural Board when such a board should be set up. We were just there to collect funds--meeting on an occasional Saturday and doing a healthy amount of grumbling about the golf we were missing.

"None of us was equipped to decide anything about the University, you see. I, for example, know nothing about how a university should look or how it should be run or how much it should cost or what sort of professors are needed--higher education is just a hobby of mine. I visit old universities in Europe like most people visit museums and churches and I have a few relatives in education.

"That is why when you ask 'Was the idea at that time to establish a multi-racial university?' I can only give a foggy answer. The answer is this: We didn't consider ourselves qualified to make such a decision. Our problem at the time was the number of returning servicemen. We had been warned that there would be no room for them in outside universities and one of the reasons we began in the first place--and one of the reasons Kapnek made the initial offer--was to build a place for them to finish their education. I think you might say that at the time the idea was to establish a European university to which, in time, non-Europeans of special talent might be admitted in limited numbers."

(In reports in the Rhodesia Herald until the end of 1948 no mention was made that the University might be planned as an inter-racial institution. It was taken for granted that only Europeans would attend and the various boards and committees made no public announcements to alter that impression.)

"By 1948 the population of Southern Rhodesia had reached 100,000 and there were 250 Rhodesian university students studying outside the colony. It was then we decided a charter for the new University was a necessity--then the Inaugural Board could get cracking and arrange for a staff and for some sort of arrangement with another university so that we could give degrees."

(In December, 1948, came the first public mention of an inter-racial university.

Several high school children, competing in an essay contest sponsored jointly by the Sunday Mail and the University Association, commented on what they considered the "ultimate place of Africans in the educational scheme of the colony." The Mail hastened to add "though at the moment these opinions are not germane to the objects of the competition--the need or otherwise of a university for European students." It was, however, an indication that the need for higher education facilities for Africans was becoming recognized--children often reflect parental opinion. At that time the few Rhodesian Natives attending universities were doing so outside Southern Rhodesia, mostly in the Union.

(On September 5, 1950, the Umtali Debating Society held a debate on: Resolved that this Society is in favor of the Southern Rhodesian University being open to all races. The voting at the end of the debate resulted in a tie. On September 14 the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference at Umtali passed a resolution supporting the entry of non-European students into the Rhodesian University. By July, 1951, the University fund stood at \$506,800--the initial goal, however, had been raised to \$1,400,000.)

"In 1951 there was serious talk of establishing a university college for Natives in Lusaka (Northern Rhodesia). The governments of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland held discussions and it was generally assumed that if such a university college were formed it would be affiliated with us in Salisbury. Mr. Kapnek liked the idea so well that he agreed to go overseas for talks about it. He also said he would donate \$70,000 towards its establishment provided it would bear his name."

(During 1952 Rhodesians at South African universities formed an association in order to present student opinion to the University Association. On July 11, 1952, the association held a meeting at Salisbury at which they passed the following resolution: We wish to insure "that there is no discrimination of members at any university in the Rhodesias on the grounds of race, color, creed or sex."

(On July 22, Hodson commented on the above resolution. He pointed out that in the University Charter, which had just been passed, it was stated that there would be no discrimination on the ground of religious or political belief and, as far as he was concerned, there was nothing in the Charter that would exclude anyone on the grounds of race either. This is the only statement of racial admission policy I could find that was issued by a responsible spokesman before June 6, 1953.

(The University Charter and Inaugural Board (Private) Bill was passed without difficulty by the Southern Rhodesian Parliament. It provided for an Inaugural Board consisting of two persons nominated by the Governor of Southern Rhodesia, four persons nominated by the municipalities of Salisbury, Bulawayo, Gwelo and Umtali respectively, one person nominated by two other Southern Rhodesian towns and two persons nominated by Northern Rhodesia. For nine other posts, donors of more than \$140 to the University fund could present nominees and vote for them. Donors of from \$140 to \$1400 had one vote, donors of from \$1400 to \$14,000 had two votes, donors of from \$14,000 to \$140,000 had three votes and donors of more than \$140,000 had four votes.)

"Towards the end of 1952 we heard that the Queen Mother was coming to Southern Rhodesia in 1953 and might be able to lay the cornerstone. So we got to work and began real plans. By the beginning of January (1953) we had \$644,000 and we planned to build a two or three-story building to house offices, lecture rooms and a library. We were going to spend \$280,000 on it.

"At the first meeting of the Inaugural Board in February, 1953, we planned to get started on the establishment of a Faculty of Arts. We even went so far as to outline the courses we would offer"--(English, Latin, Afrikaans, Nederlands, French, History, Mathematics, Economics, Geography, Physics and Chemistry)--"and we were hopeful of entering into a special relationship with London University.

"It was then that the report of the Carr-Saunders Commission inquiring into higher education for Africans in Central Africa was released. It was a tremendously important document--and we decided that we owed it to ourselves as well as the country to seriously consider its implications. At the same time Federation had gone through and we were committed, as a Federation, to partnership between races."

(On May 8, 1953, Hodson announced that the Inaugural Board would meet June 6 to decide on racial policy. Giving his personal opinion, he told a Rhodesia Herald reporter that some system of permitting students of all colors to attend the Rhodesian University would have to be evolved--that had been made clear during the Federation campaign.

(Up until this point I could find no serious, hard-shell opposition to the University. But when the possibility of creating a multi-racial university was raised, opposition was raised with it, mostly among opponents to Federation.¹

(On June 6, 1953, the Inaugural Board met and decided to change the plans for the University so as to comply with the recommendations of the Carr-Saunders Report. Thus ended the little Rhodesian University for European students, planned on an erratic financial shoestring. And thus began the British-backed multi-racial University which has become the butt of abuse by segregation-minded whites and the pride and hope of liberal men of all races.)

THE SECOND RHODESIAN UNIVERSITY

The need for a university for approximately 6,000,000 Africans in Central Africa was emphasized on November 2, 1950, when the Union of South Africa decided that, due to overcrowding in Union Native Universities, "foreign" Natives would no longer be allowed to attend them. The Union government gave three years' notice and the ban is now in force. Because of this and other reasons the 1949 report of the special committee set up by the old Central African Council² to investigate the need for higher education facilities for Africans was revised in 1951. This committee, headed by Sir Harold Cartmel-Robinson, gave a rather high estimate of potential African students and recommended that a commission be appointed to advise in detail on the steps necessary to implement the establishment of a University for Africans.

As a result of this recommendation, the Carr-Saunders Commission was set up. Headed by A. M. Carr-Saunders (Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science and Chairman of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies) and made up of educators from Great Britain and South Africa, the Commission conducted its inquiry in Central Africa from October 31 to November 28, 1952, again under the auspices of the Central African Council.

Its findings, significantly, were not published until after the Federation campaign last year. Since its recommendations are, to a large extent, the second

1. For samples of opposition, see PBM-6, Page 15, and Ned Munger's ESM-55, Pages 3 & 4.

2. An unofficial organization, set up before Federation to coordinate dealings between the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland.

University, I shall mention some of them:¹ (1) A connection with London University was recommended. (2) The Commission disapproved of the system whereby membership of the Inaugural Board was acquired by election--the electors being donors of money (see Page 4). Representatives of the donors might not know anything about education and therefore make unwise decisions binding on the University for decades. (3) The Commission disapproved of the fact that, according to the Charter, every statute or change in a statute must be approved by the Minister of Education of Southern Rhodesia. (4) The Commission recommended an autonomous, inter-racial university in Salisbury, beginning with Faculties of Arts and Sciences. (5) The Commission shrewdly pointed out that the first Rhodesian University was still a project--no capital had been invested in buildings and no decisions had been made that could not be reversed. If, the Commission continued, as a result of further thought, it were decided to incorporate in the plans for the Rhodesian University our recommendations, this would provide a most acceptable solution.

(6) The Commission estimated that the cost of establishing the University along inter-racial lines would be \$3,500,000 and said that "since Central Africa is now the only large colonial region not directly served by a University . . . Her Majesty's Government might be able to . . . (provide) the capital for the establishment of this college. We recommend that application should be made for a capital grant of £1,250,000 (\$3,500,000) from Colonial Development and Welfare Funds." (7) The Commission also estimated that about \$504,000 would be needed to cover recurrent expenses for the first five years. This would have to be provided by the Federation. (8) The Commission recommended that secondary schools in Central Africa give Cambridge Higher School Certificates.

The Commission concluded: If our recommendations are accepted the timetable of action required to carry them into effect would be as follows: The governments of the three Central African territories might draw the attention of the University Inaugural Board to the Report and ask for its comments; the governments would then decide where to establish the college. They would then ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies for the \$3,500,000 grant from funds available under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts. The three governments would decide the proportions in which they would share among themselves the recurrent grants to the college for the first five years. The next step would be the appointment of a principal and the selection of the first Council. The Council would take the necessary steps to petition for a Royal Charter (to make the University as independent as possible).

Pause for a moment and put yourself in the position of Hodson and the other members of the first University's Inaugural Board. Here, presented to you on a garnish of hundred-thousand pound notes, is the sort of University any man would be proud to be associated with. It would be a liberal institution, free from any control by local governments, well supplied with cash, awarding degrees of high repute and in keeping with the principles of Federation still fresh in your mind.

After your struggle for money over the past eight years to finance a University

1. It is significant, I think, that the Report of the Commission specifically mentions that both Hodson and Dighton Stammers, president and secretary of the first University's Inaugural Board respectively, testified before the commission. This testimony apparently came early in the Commission's inquiry and, judging by Hodson's comment on July 22, 1952 (See Page 4), I feel he must have encouraged the Commission to expect a good chance of making the University inter-racial.

never clearly visualized in your mind wouldn't you be quick to accept the concrete concept of a multi-racial University comparatively rolling in money?

I asked Hodson this question during our talk and he sat silent for a minute considering his answer. "It was a temptation," he answered, slowly. "In fact, more than a temptation. I practically had a definite offer that if the University were declared multi-racial I would get the one-and-a-quarter million pounds.

"But there was the other side of the question to consider. Whether, in view of the racial set-up in the country, it would be wise to allow Africans and Europeans to attend the same University. It was bound to meet with opposition, we knew. We had to decide whether the idea of a mixed university was fundamentally good or bad.

"The meeting was scheduled for June 6, 1953. I contacted all the members of the Board beforehand and asked them to do their best to forget the money and decide the question on its merits or demerits. I think they did put the money out of their minds--I know I did. We debated all day--we had viewpoints put forward from both sides and we got outside people to give us their views.

"We didn't dwell on the question of possible mixed marriages or the consequences of social intermingling--I think we were all agreed that it wasn't a reasonable approach. The biggest problem, I think, was whether the presence of Africans at the University would discourage a good attendance by Europeans and whether there was a possibility of Africans outnumbering Europeans in the foreseeable future. The latter situation, you see, might conceivably lead European mothers and fathers to refuse to send their children to the University--with the result that the University would become entirely Native.

"One of the best arguments in favor of the multi-racial University was the situation at Wits (University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg) where, although there were inter-racial classes, there never had been any serious difficulty. We finally agreed that the exchange of viewpoints that would come about as a result of mixed University classes far outweighed the disadvantages and would benefit the students as well as the country. When, at last, we put the question to a vote, it was decided emphatically that the University would be multi-racial--and that we would follow the recommendations of the Carr-Saunders Report. Specifically, it was decided that admission to the University would be solely on the basis of educational attainments and character and living accommodations would be separate."

On August 6, the Inaugural Board announced that Prof. William Rollo of the University of Cape Town had been appointed principal and Langham D. Murray, former registrar of the University of South Africa, had been named secretary and treasurer. In September, 1953, a delegation from Southern Rhodesia went to London for talks with the United Kingdom Government, the Inter-University Council and London University. Two weeks later it was announced that the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund would advance \$3,500,000 to the Rhodesian University, provided that the 250-acre site be expanded, the governing body of the University be independent of the Southern Rhodesian Government and recurrent expenses be met from other sources.

In the face of the slanderous opposition that was being expressed by the Confederate Party in the heat of election battle (Do you want your daughters to go to dances with Natives?) Professor Rollo assured everyone that social functions would be separate and attendance at University functions would be by invitation only to

avoid embarrassing people who object to meeting others on racial grounds. The Confederates' propaganda availed them nothing, witness the recent election results.

What is the situation today? "At present we are negotiating with the Central African governments to provide funds for recurrent costs," Murray told me over the ubiquitous cup of tea. "We have been given an additional 200 acres by the Salisbury Municipal Council. And we're planning to get our Southern Rhodesian Charter revoked--replacing it with a Royal Charter. The Citizen (the mouthpiece of the Confederate Party) is still hinting darkly that Natives will be sleeping with Europeans in the hostels, but that sort of smear campaign doesn't seem to have any effect."

I asked Murray whether he had any doubts at all concerning the future of the University. He quickly said no--then, in the course of later conversation began to indicate feelings suspiciously like doubts. "The Welfare Fund people were quite right to insist that we detach ourselves from the apron strings of the Southern Rhodesian Government. But in doing so I'm afraid we've attached ourselves rather more firmly to the benevolent apron strings of the Colonial Office in London. Right now, it's the best thing, financially, that could happen to us. But the fact that we will be getting all our money from them means that in effect they will choose all our professors, approve or disapprove our buildings and have the power to cut off funds if we do something that displeases them. I suppose every University man cherishes an ideal of being completely independent--free to teach how and what he likes, where he likes and when he likes--"

I interrupted to tell him about the Eleazar Wheelock song. Murray laughed heartily--then asked, "and how does this University--Dartmouth--get along now?"

"The money comes from three sources," I said. "Tuition fees, endowment and alumni gifts."

"Aha," said Murray, "and how much control over policy do the alumni have?"

"As far as I know, none," I answered.

"It's a shame we can't start Universities today the way your Eleazar did--completely free, not afraid of small beginnings and willing to grow into something big. In order to accomplish anything today a university has to begin at the spot other universities have reached after years of development. And to do that more money is needed than any university can reasonably hope to raise on its own. Of course, getting our funds from overseas as we are, we're better off than many universities that are supported and eventually controlled by the local government." I gathered he was referring to South African universities (PBM-16).

As far as the actual University buildings are concerned, the University architects are now in London consulting with British university authorities and other architects who had a hand in the building of Makerere and Ibadan Universities. Building is slated to begin early next year and the first classes of the Faculty of Arts are scheduled to start in March, 1956. The Faculty of Science should begin classes shortly thereafter. Murray expects a total of 65 students (20 European males, 20 European females and 25 Africans) during the first year. To teach them, a staff of 15 professors, one senior lecturer and a librarian is planned.

1. The Rhodesian University has agreed to allow the Inter-University Council in England to advertise for its teaching staff. The Council will do a preliminary weeding out, then send a list of approved applicants to Rhodesia for final choice.

The comparatively low number of students is partly explained by the fact that entrance requirements will be considerably higher than those for entrance to South African universities. Simplified, they are both the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate and the Cambridge Higher School Certificate. Which means that most students will have to pass extra, university-standard courses during an extra year in secondary school. This is stiffer than the matriculation exams required of applicants to South African universities. Both Rollo and Murray approve of this--they point out that 35% of all students entering South African universities leave during the first year because of their inability to do university-standard work. The higher qualifications will weed out a large portion of the 35% before they even reach the university level.

Prof. Rollo, with whom I talked in Gwelo on the way back to the Union, is the personification of confidence. He is now on a speaking tour through the Federation, "getting to know my new country better and getting the country to know the University better." He boomed at me for quite some time before it registered that I was not writing for publication. Then he lowered his voice and spoke in confidential generalities. He refused to agree with Murray that there is any danger of interference from Great Britain. In fact, he refused to admit there were any stumbling blocks at all in the path the University must travel in spite of the fact that it is a new experiment in Central African race relations.


He began to boom again. "In my opinion, the University is the biggest thing to happen in Central Africa in this century."

"Oh," I said. "And what do you think of Federation?"

"Well," came the answer, "of course Federation is the most important advancement. But the University is the first concrete example of partnership as applied to everyday life. If partnership is to work, things like the Rhodesian University are absolutely essential--proof that the whole idea isn't just a hollow collection of words."

That comment, or Ned Munger's--"This decision (to make the University multi-racial) was a crucial one in building the new partnership of Central Africa"--seems a fitting way to end this letter.

Sincerely,



Peter Bird Martin

Received New York 6/7/54.