

REF: 516/227.

CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNCIL, (70)

P.O. BOX 1401, LILONGWE,  
SOUTHERN RHODESIA.

20th May, 1947.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that this Council is investigating on behalf of the Southern and Northern Rhodesia Governments the possibilities of improving navigation on the Zambesi River above the Victoria Falls. It has been suggested that the Katombora and Kasane rapids might be by-passed by canals with a minimum depth of three feet, thus opening the Zambesi River to barges and shallow-draft craft for 110 miles from roadhead near Livingstone, as well as for 12-20 miles on the Chobe above the Kasane rapids. A firm of consulting engineers has been engaged to prepare detailed surveys of the suggested canal sites, to enable the two Governments to reach decisions.

2. In due course an official notification regarding this and other proposals connected with the use of the Zambesi River will be made to the Government of the Union of South Africa.

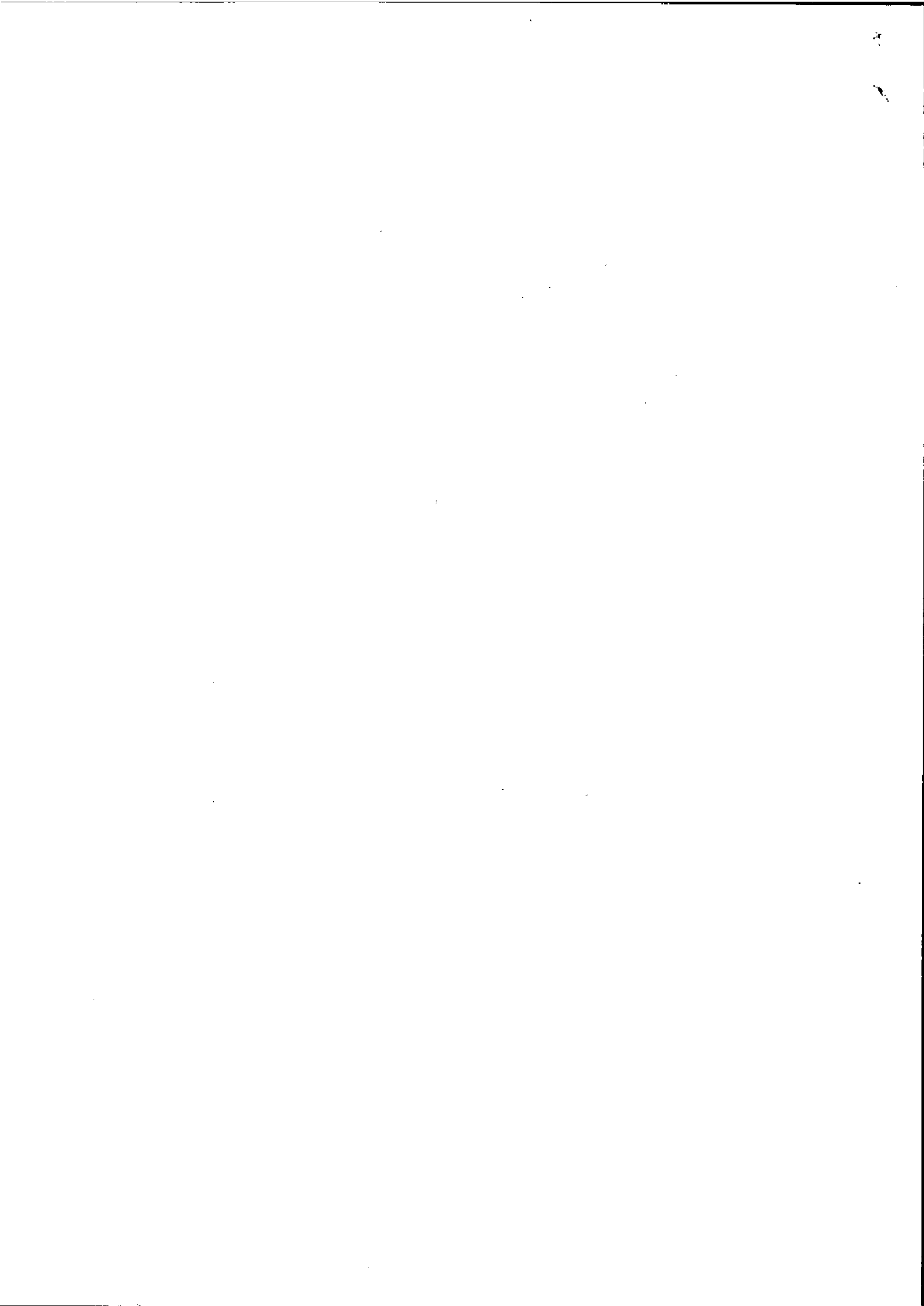
3. In the meantime Mr. W.C. KER of Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, from whose initiative flows the scheme described in paragraph 1 above, is already operating a transport concern on the River. It is understood that Mr. KER has made application to you, seeking permission to use certain Caprivi channels and port of call facilities at Katimo Mulilo. I should be grateful if you would give favourable consideration to his application, as the services he is operating are to the benefit of both Southern and Northern Rhodesia.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

W. CLARK

CHIEF SECRETARY.

The Magistrate,  
Eastern Caprivi Zipfel,  
KATIMO MULILO.



[Source: National Archives of Zimbabwe]

[transcription from original]

REF: 516/227.

CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNCIL  
P.O. BOX 1495, SALISBURY,  
SOUTHERN RHODESIA  
20th May, 1947

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that this Council is investigating on behalf of the Southern and Northern Rhodesia Governments the possibilities of improving navigation on the Zambesi River above the Victoria Falls. It has been suggested that the Katambora and Kasane rapids might be by-passed by canals with a minimum depth of three feet, thus opening the Zambesi River to barges and shallow-draft craft for 110 miles from roadhead near Livingstone as well as for 12-20 miles of the Chobe above the Kasane rapids. A firm of consulting engineers has been engaged to prepare detailed surveys of the suggested canal sites, to enable the two Governments to reach decisions.

2. In due course an official notification regarding this and other proposals connected with the use of the Zambesi River will be made to the Government of the Union of South Africa.

3. In the meantime Mr. W.C. KER of Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, from whose initiative flows the scheme described in paragraph 1 above, is already operating a transport concern on the River. It is understood that Mr. KER has made application to you, seeking permission to use certain Caprivi channels and port of call facilities at Katimo Mulilo. I should be grateful if you would give favourable consideration to his application, as the services he is operating are to the benefit of both Southern and Northern Rhodesia.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

[Initials illegible] CLARK

CHIEF SECRETARY

The Magistrate  
Eastern Caprivi Zipfel,  
KATIMA MULILO

Reply at (143)

REF. 1166/227

GENERAL AFRICAN COUNCIL  
P.O. Box 100  
SALISBURY,  
SOUTHERN RHODESIA

Dear Sir

14/11/47.

Clark has asked me to consult you on the following knotty problem.

As you will remember, a lad called Ler started running river transport from Katima Mulilo down the Zambezi to near Livingstone some time ago. He is full of initiative and energy, and has had some success. He is now using five landing craft towing dumb barges, and running a shuttle service between the rapids at Kasama and Katambora. His costs are about threepence per ton mile and he is carrying about 40-45 tons per weekly trip, mostly, I gather, timber from Sesheke. He is hoping eventually to get a large contract from the Chobe Concessions in Bechuanaland, but this depends on whether it proves possible to by-pass the rapids with canals.

Ler has done a lot of the preliminary investigation in connection with the possibility of by-passing the rapids, and so opening up the river for over 100 miles. As a matter of fact, the Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia Governments are refunding his £400 for his expenses in the investigations. Debenham, as you know, considered the scheme feasible and recommended an accurate survey. This has now been done by a firm called Crinklers - at a cost of £900 - who have put up two alternative schemes costing respectively about £82,000 and £32,000. The more expensive scheme covers the construction of canals, and the cheaper, mechanical portage. The Upper Zambezi Canals Committee of this Council will shortly be considering the economic justification.

As you will see from the attached copy of a letter from Ler (together with my reply), he is having some difficulty with the Magistrate at Katima Mulilo over part of call facilities, and the use of certain Zambezi and Chobe channels in the Caprivi Strip. His requirements are reasonable, but the Union argues that the Strip is native reserve and therefore a closed area.

I have consulted the Attorney General's Department here, but have been advised that they do not possess the necessary authorities on the subject, and so cannot help. Would it be possible for you to ask the legal adviser to the C.O. (shared with the C.R.O.?) for an opinion on the rights of river traffic on the Zambezi and its channels, including part of call facilities in the Caprivi Strip and Bechuanaland. If the Union is going to be - and has a legal right to be - difficult, then another promising idea may have to be indefinitely postponed pending discussions at the most exalted levels!

I believe... /

J.H. Wallace, Esq.,  
Colonial Office,  
LONDON.

NATIONAL ARCHIVE

(104)  
(105)

I believe the Barcelona Treaty of 1921 is relevant, but so far as I can discover neither the Union nor the High Commission territories ratified it. The 1891 treaty mentioned by Kap appears to apply only to Great Britain and Portugal.

Sorry to sling this at you, but there is nothing more we can do here.

I am sending a copy of this to Zeit at the C.R.C.

*Handwritten initials/signature*

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ZIMBABWE  
Friedrich Heppelmannstr. 11, 9000 Harare, Zimbabwe  
P.O. Box 177, Harare, Zimbabwe  
Telephone: +263 92 222222

[Source: National Archives of Zimbabwe]

[transcription from original]

REF. 1166/227

CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNCIL  
P.O. Box 1403  
SALISBURY,  
SOUTHERN RHODESIA.

13/11/47 [hand-written]

Dear John [hand-written]

Clark has asked me to consult you on the following knotty problem.

As you will remember, a lad called Ker started running river transport from Katima Mulilo down the Zambesi to near Livingstone some time ago. He is full of initiative and energy, and has had some success. He is now using five landing craft towing dumb barges, and running a shuttle service between the rapids at Kasane and Katambora. His costs are about threepence per ton mile and he is carrying about 40-45 tons per weekly trip, mostly, I gather, timber from Sesheke. He is hoping eventually to get a large contract from the Chobe Concessions in Bechuanaland, but this depends on whether it proves possible to by-pass the rapids with canals.

Ker has done a lot of the preliminary investigation in connection with the possibility of by-passing the rapids, and so opening up the river for over 100 miles. As a matter of fact, the Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia Governments are refunding him p/s 400 for his expenses in the investigations. Debenham, as you know, considered the scheme feasible and recommended an accurate survey. This has now been done by a firm called Grinakers – at a cost of £ 900 – who have put up two alternative schemes costing respectively £82,000 and £32,000. The more expensive scheme covers the construction of canals and the cheaper, mechanical portorage. The Upper Zambesi Canals Committee of this Council will shortly be considering the economic justification.

As you will see from the attached copy of a letter from Ker (together with my reply), he is having some difficulty with the Magistrate at Katima Mulilo over port of call facilities, and the use of certain Zambesi and Chobe channels in the Caprivi Strip. His requirements are reasonable, but the Union argues that the Strip is native reserve and therefore a closed area.

I have consulted the Attorney General's Department here, but have been advised that they do not possess the necessary authorities on the subject, and so cannot help. Would it be possible for you to ask the legal adviser to the C.O. (shared with the C.R.O.?) for an opinion on the rights of river traffic on the Zambesi and its channels, including port of call facilities in the Caprivi Strip and Bechuanaland. If the Union is going to be – and has a legal right to be – difficult, then another promising idea may have to be indefinitely postponed pending discussions at the most exalted levels!

I believe the Barcelona Treaty of 1921 is relevant, but so far as I can discover neither the Union nor the High Commission territories ratified it. The 1891 treaty mentioned by Ker appears to apply only to Great Britain and Portugal.

Sorry to sling this at you, but there is nothing more we can do here.

I am sending a copy of this to Tait at the C.R.O.

Yours, [hand-written]

Hugh. [hand-written]

J. M. Wallace, Esq.,  
Colonial Office,  
LONDON