

BOOK REVIEWS

The Story of Rhodesian Sport: Volume 1 1899-1935 By J. de L. Thompson. Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1976, 423 pp., illustr., Z\$7,20.

Rhodesian Sports Profiles 1907-1979 By G. Byrom. Bulawayo, Books of Zimbabwe, 1980, 256 pp., illustr., Z\$22,00.

Rhodesian Rugby: A History of the National Side 1898-1979 By J. Winch. Salisbury, The Zimbabwe Rhodesia Rugby Union, 1979, 151 pp., illustr., Z\$6,00.

Works on the social history of this country are surprisingly few, and so these books, however slight, are welcome. Thompson's general survey of European sports, originally published in 1935, was a useful book in its time but this reprint unfortunately has no analytical introduction, merely a new foreword by Ian Smith. The review of this book was deliberately held up pending the publisher's planned sequel to it but, in the changed conditions of the country, that is probably remote now, unless an author can be found who will widen his approach from purely European sporting activities to include African sport, notably, of course, soccer. The same publisher's more recent *Sports Profiles* is clearly not such a sequel; it is a mere listing of some fifty prominent personalities in twenty different sports, of whom only three are Black (one soccer player and two runners). The third book by virtue of its subject, rugby football, also deals only with Europeans. The process by which Europeans were brought to Rugby, in imitation of English Public Schools, and then largely gave up soccer, to avoid racial mixing, is in itself a study that would be well worth scholarly attention; African soccer, luckily, is now receiving attention from one of my research students.

R.S.R.

Ragtime Soldiers: The Rhodesian Experience in the First World War By P. McLaughlin. Bulawayo, Books of Zimbabwe, 1980, 159 pp., Z\$12,90 (Z\$3,50, p/b).

War has traditionally spotlighted two consistently courageous groups of people: the frontline soldier and the conscientious objector. The stark antithesis between the actual fighting in Flanders and the chairborne warfare of the women at home brandishing white feathers is one of the dominant motifs of McLaughlin's *Ragtime Soldiers*. Although the book is about White Rhodesians banging the imperial drum during the Great War, interwoven are many subtle comments on the futility of other wars. Eerie parallels with the bush war of the 1970s abound, especially when the author deliberately uses modern phrases such as 'take-out' to describe an action in 1914. Sometimes the analogy is explicit: 'Patriotism took many forms, but doing one's bit became an obsession with the patriots, not for the last time in the century' (p. 84), or 'The mining industry was the key sector in the survival of sanctions-bound Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s, and played the same role during the Great War' (p. 104).