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WHITE BUT POOR

Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa 1880–1940

Edited by Robert Morrell

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For Tamarin and Ashleigh

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Preface

This collection had its origins in the environment of the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand. In the early 1980s social history was being encouraged through the History Workshop. Numerous studies, inspired by the pioneering work of Colin Bundy on African peasants, were beginning to appear. Many of these works made use of oral history and most attempted to bring to life the hidden lives of the African 'underclasses'. In contrast to the vigorous efforts made to uncover the history of the black poor, there was a strange silence hanging over the history of the poor whites.

South African history, at least in the liberal and radical traditions, has often been written against a backdrop of intellectual and political opposition to apartheid. The tendency this induced was for writers to focus on the group which laboured under the worst excesses of the South African social order, the dispossessed and exploited blacks. Put bluntly, writers expressed their sympathy for, and political affinity with, the exploited and oppressed members of society via their research. Although things began to change during the second half of the 1980s, few English-speaking writers were inclined, in the climate of ongoing violence and repression, to write empathetically about white Afrikaners, even if historically this group had experienced the deprivations that the development of capitalism entailed.

My own research work in the Eastern Transvaal drew me to examine the plight of unproductive, small-scale white farmers in the early twentieth century. Few other people were at that time focusing their research on this class. In 1985, as I became aware of the increase in research activity on poor whites, I began to collect the essays that appear in this collection. None has been published before. My chapter and that of Albert Grundlingh first saw the light as History Workshop conference papers in 1984 and 1987 respectively. John Bottomley gave a version of his chapter as a seminar paper to the African Studies Institute at Wits in 1982 and covered another angle of the subject in his 1987 History Workshop paper. At least three of the other contributions (Clynick, Parnell and Pirie) were affected by the climate of the History Workshop which pervaded Wits University's academic life in the 1980s.

Unavoidably this collection suffers from omissions. Regionally, the Cape is under-represented. The absence of a piece on the Western Cape particularly, is regrettable. Although I tried to solicit work on Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland I was not successful and the comparative insights such work would

have provided are thus denied us. I am very aware that the collection lacks a gender perspective. During the gestation period of this book it looked as though I would be able to include a piece on poor white women, but this was not to be. Poor whites in literature, poor white culture and the poor white experience (which could be reconstructed via exhaustive use of oral evidence) are all notable absentees. Despite these limitations, I like to think that collectively these essays offer a multi-dimensional and nuanced view of the poor whites.

The production of *White but poor* was a painfully long process. Some of those who offered chapters were unable to complete their contributions. Others found that the demands of academic life interfered with writing and work was thus often produced haltingly. Many of the contributors were separated from me by vast distances and communication was not always easy and invariably slow. Various publishers held on to the completed manuscript for months before declining to publish. In one case the manuscript disappeared in the post and was never recovered!

In preparing this publication I have incurred debts of gratitude to people who have encouraged me and shared their wisdom and level-headedness. Albert Grundlingh was a staunch supporter and it is true to say that without him, this collection might never have appeared, or at least would have appeared much later. Bill Freund never allowed my interest to flag, Mike Morris gave me courage in the initial phases, Vishnu Padayachee helped me to negotiate the middle passage and Doug Hindson helped me to persevere towards the end. I have to thank the contributors for producing their work and having the patience to wait for the act of publication to be completed. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the Department of Education, Natal University, Durban which assisted in a variety of ways when deadlines were very tight.

The concept for the cover of this book was developed with the assistance of Costas Criticos and Alison Gillwald. The artwork was done by Jo Orsmond of the Audio Visual Centre, University of Natal, Durban. I would like to place on record my gratitude to them. The photographs come from the E. G. Malherbe Collection housed at the Killie Campbell Library, University of Natal, Durban. I thank the librarians for their help.

Robert Morrell

Durban

February 1991

Introduction

The poor whites: a social force and a social problem in South African history

Bill Freund

There exists an international stereotype, dearly beloved in anti-apartheid literature, that all South African whites consist of the slave-driving but idle rich who sip sundowners at poolside and exist entirely on the backs of a conquered and abused black proletariat. All of the essays in this volume insist that in fact 'white society', to the extent that it has any meaning at all, consists and consisted of deeply differentiated, sometimes antagonistic classes whose fragile unity under a segregated society represented a difficult political achievement that needs discerning and explaining. Re-examining the 'poor white' issue sets the stage for a reassessment along these lines, particularly as we finally watch segregation and apartheid wane.

In this volume, we get a chance to look at a substantial number of studies of southern Africans located in a variety of regions who were known to their contemporaries, for it is mainly focused on the first third of this century, as 'poor whites'. As Robert Morrell reminds us in his essay, the term 'poor white' is not a natural one but one that has been socially constructed and is elusive. Of what significance is it to distinguish whites from other poor people? What do we really mean by 'poor' anyway? The point is that 'poor white' constitutes in fact a particular ideological construction that cannot be taken for granted or assumed. This collection does not generally concern itself, however, with debating the validity of the concept of 'poor whites'. Instead, it concerns itself primarily with the poor white question in two ways. The first and more obvious is as part of a deeper and wider investigation of the political significance of social class more generally in a period of long-term crisis in South African history. This crisis followed the Mineral Revolution attendant on the development of the diamond and then gold mines from the end of the nineteenth century through to the Great Depression. Older community structures based in the countryside were ruthlessly broken up while a new, often harsh urban environment expanded very rapidly. The 'poor whites', largely Afrikaners, formed in this crucible.

Secondly, this collection is inspired by the development of a school of social history in South Africa concerned with investigating and restoring to dignity the lives of ordinary men and women and the communities that they built. In this project, it cannot be legitimate only to investigate the history of black South Africans. In fact, whites have received some attention from social historians. In his remarkable two-volume social and economic history of the Witwatersrand published in 1982, Charles van Onselen devoted considerable attention both to white immigrants from Europe and to the rural white poor, thrown up onto the Reef vortex by the force of late nineteenth-century capitalism. In the recent (1987) History Workshop collection edited by Belinda Bozzoli, *Class, community and conflict,* no fewer than six out of seventeen essays concern the social history of white South Africans. Whites on the Witwatersrand figure importantly in Luli Callinicos' *Working life 1886–1940*, part of her beautifully illustrated people's history of South Africa. This volume develops a neglected theme much further. White historians are in fact looking here at their own roots and trying to explore their own past in new ways that are intended to illuminate the fabric of historical development. Such an examination may be superficially unfashionable and even painful, more so than the evocation by whites of the struggles of the African victims of the system.

The making of the poor whites

It is clear from the work of such historians as Colin Bundy and Robert Ross that class differentiation and poverty existed within the colonial population at the Cape of Good Hope back into the eighteenth century at least. Recently, in a pioneering and suggestive book called *The African poor,* John Iliffe has proposed a kind of historical watershed. Before that watershed, poverty can essentially be defined negatively in terms of lack of access to resources, particularly land or social networks through which basic economic activities took place. This was poverty in a pre-capitalist context: the poverty suffered by victims of drought or disease, calamitous warfare or extrusion from the social group. After the watershed, 'the new poor, the propertyless and conjuncturally unemployed' become increasingly important.[1] In a capitalist society, poverty is structured and defined differently and the spread of market values in colonial Africa represented a great historic shift.

Iliffe enhances his material with considerable South African evidence. Going back to early colonial times, colonists on the frontier, although they had little in the way of material encumbrances and lived an unendurably simple life by the standards of sophisticated travellers who encountered them, had access to basic resources and were not socially defined as poor or as poor whites. The presence of poverty did not necessarily mean that poor people formed

themselves into, or self-consciously behaved as, a class in any socially antagonistic sense.

Poverty took numerous forms in the South African countryside. In his Transvaal-based essay, Morrell points to one obvious division, that between poor farmers in a poor land, the situation of his northern Middelburg families, notably in Mapochs Gronden, on the one hand and on the other, dependants on the farms of those richer than themselves, which was the position further south in a more fertile and developed region. In an impressively systematic way, Verne Harris, exploring northern Natal (which in fact also formed a part of the South African Republic before the Anglo-Boer War) establishes a typology for no fewer than twelve sorts of white farmers that refines these categories and reveals the complexity of economic differentiation within a small population.

The simplicity of life on the far frontier, especially in very arid countryside where adapting to nature took great foresight and skill, was long ago captured in his Trekboer trilogy by P. J. van der Merwe, who used the contemporary lives of Namaqualanders in the 1930s to try to understand Cape frontier conditions a century and more earlier. Another distinctive community of the poor, that of the Knysna woodcutters of the southern Cape, is assessed in this volume by Albert Grundlingh. Their damp and difficult-to-penetrate living environment had always discouraged African cultivators or pastoralists, few of whom had ever lived there. The forest afforded a simple, largely subsistence existence for a group of colonial people, arriving in the eighteenth century from more fertile ground. They may have appeared extremely poor to outsiders but also had a certain pride and group solidarity that flowed out of their self-reliance. It is also interesting that these old communities practised relatively little colour discrimination and included a rather undifferentiated spectrum from white to coloured in terms of contemporary South African terminology. This was in fact the situation as well in the early towns where poorer single men from overseas who were unable to attract propertied wives from the settler population married or established liaisons with women of colour very frequently well into the nineteenth century. Vivian Bickford-Smith has recently underscored the vagueness of the colour line amongst the Cape Town poor even at the end of the century.[2]

From the eighteenth century onwards, white farmers were present who owned no land of their own but had some relationship of clientage or tenancy with landowners. These so-called 'bywoners' were sometimes younger relations, sometimes overseers of labour, sometimes objects of charity, sometimes victims of exploitation, depending on their resources and relationships. Harris explores the range of possibilities that existed. At times, 'bywoners' and white squatters were extruded from the land but until the Mineral Revolution, their

proletarianisation proceeded very slowly. Gordon Pirie suggests in the course of his essay in this volume on railway workers that until the 1890s when circumstances brought them to work for a wage, their labour was expensive and irregular, unsatisfactory to employers.

The much sharper intrusion of capitalist social relations into the South African countryside from the late nineteenth century dramatically intervened in this situation. The successful farmer began to confront the dependent farmer in a more overt class relationship. The poor farmer who was so largely self-subsistent was forced to meet cash payments for basic needs and relate to creditors, merchants and the state in new ways. Most of the essays in this volume show a developing class antagonism amongst South African whites during this period as the poor came to feel their poverty in a new way in contradistinction to a developing bourgeoisie. In the Knysna forests, systematic capitalist exploitation by the Thesens and others, sustained by a stratum of well-paid white artisans and white-collar workers, changed forest life for the worse. On the Maize Belt in the Orange Free State, the gap between the capitalising, successful farmers and the 'bywoners' yawned.

Especially following the Anglo-Boer War, significant numbers were pushed off the land entirely and sought a new life in the towns. The first decade of the twentieth century, during part of which the mining economy stagnated, was perhaps the most intense one for combining rural and urban poverty as witness the picture painted by the Transvaal Indigency Commission of 1906–1908. In the city, the newcomers encountered immigrant workmen from Europe, often immiserated in times of economic decline, as well as people of colour, competing for the same unskilled jobs. Forced urbanisation brought with it new social problems and an often traumatising pressure to adapt rather drastically to a new way of life. Susan Parnell gives us some graphic descriptions of poverty, of overcrowding and squalor in Johannesburg, under these conditions. However, new opportunities were also thrown up by the increasingly wealthy society at large, opportunities for which competition could be stiff and bloody. At this point, we have crossed John Iliffe's watershed. Poverty has altered fundamentally in character and become linked to direct exploitation and proletarianisation, although older forms of poverty persist. This, he argues, has tended to be the hallmark of African poverty in the twentieth century as elsewhere in the modern world.

Twentieth-century politics and the poor white question

The 'poor whites' were in a sense up for grabs now. The historical possibilities ahead of them were several and the question of how to win them over and

regain their loyalties in a class society exercised all the energies of competitive elites and ambitious politicians. They were as well a potentially dangerous and untamed mob, a threat to the propertied. A series of massive strikes, culminating in the Rand Revolt of 1922, suggested the possibility of a unified working class that could threaten capitalist hegemony in South Africa. Frederick Johnstone, Rob Davies, Dan O'Meara and David Yudelman are amongst those who have written books about early trade unions, workplace struggles and the political battles for the affiliation of workers who, even when they were not badly paid, felt placed in an extremely vulnerable and insecure class niche. The militancy of early twentieth-century white workers is well known and this volume has avoided recapitulating this familiar theme.

However, the question of politics remains a central one to its authors. In 1914, some Afrikaner nationalists took advantage of the outbreak of World War I to rise against the Union government. It was South Africa's equivalent of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. John Bottomley shows the extent to which the 'Rebellie' represented the aspirations of the poor and landless, at least in one region of the Highveld (true as well of Morrell's capital-starved 'boere' of the northern Middelburg district), an interesting revelation particularly given Albert Grundlingh's earlier thesis that linked the resentments of a deprived poor white class rather to the 'joiner collaborationist' phenomenon elsewhere during the South African War of 1898–1902.[3] There was thus no direct, automatic link between Afrikaner revolt and struggle from below. The correlation between class feeling and particular political affiliation was never simple in South Africa. Class oppression made for social antagonisms that various causes could seize upon. Today some of the most deprived black South Africans, residents of shantytowns and migrant hostels, often become the footsoldiers of relatively conservative movements such as Inkatha, in a contemporary parallel.

The ultimate nightmare of the ruling class was a class movement that would transcend the race line and unify the poor and oppressed, white and black, a nightmare that both Rhodes and Smuts expressed at times. Rob Turrell's study of the Kimberley diamond fields suggests that these themes were already being played out by the 1870s and 1880s.[4] Indeed it was a strike supported by both whites and Africans in 1884 that was crucial, in his view, in the decision of a consolidated capitalist mining interest there towards radically separating the working class out between a migrant, compounded black community and a white community able to enjoy a settled family life and reasonable quality housing in a company town setting.

This practically suited important sections of the bourgeoisie and fitted well with the racialist fatalism of social Darwinism that was so much a part of the international intellectual climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. Biology, it was assumed, was history and 'race' determined culture. Grundlingh and Parnell, amongst others, capture some of the rhetoric of those who claimed to fear the peril of racial mixing and degeneration from amongst the writers, the churchmen and the politicians of the age. They were far more effective than the few voices of those who aimed at lowering the racial divide in the name either of a legally colour-blind and incorporative Cape liberalism which had been a powerful inheritance from colonial Victorian days but was increasingly in decline or, more interestingly, working-class socialism, a perspective understood and increasingly urgently pursued by the most far-sighted leaders of organised labour.

However, it is too simple to think that intensified racism was a plot from above. It clearly was part of something constructed as well from below. The relationship between poor white and black could be complex yet for the most part white workers struggled towards the creation of what Stanley Greenberg in his comparative study *Race and state in capitalist development*[5] has termed a bounded working class. Racial exclusion became a class demand as whites felt threatened by the large, alien, increasingly deracinated and potentially politicised black population. Some people that might be classified as 'poor whites', as John Bottomley indicates for the Free State, Tim Clynick for the Transvaal diamond fields and Verne Harris for northern Natal, did rely on the crude exploitation of even poorer blacks. Yet Bottomley, like Tim Keegan before him,[6] shows that there is no straightforward way to explain why the Land Act of 1913, which cut away the rights of black sharecroppers in 'white' South Africa, as well as established a racial division of the land, would inexorably be supported by poorer whites on economic grounds alone. The sharecropping system actually made poorer white farmers more viable under conditions where they alone could be registered as landowners. It is only in far broader terms that a racial ideology of uplifting the 'volk' as a whole made economic sense.

In their struggle to capture the poor whites, political movements were torn between the need to sponsor redistributive, if not socialist, policies, and their continued commitment to capitalist profitability which in turn buttressed the fiscal viability of the state which they meant to control. The Union government of Louis Botha and J. C. Smuts from 1910 to 1924 had its populist side but is usually associated with rather overtly pro-capitalist policies. Thus the growing tendency for unemployed white men to look to the state railway network as a source of unskilled jobs was checked in the post-World War I slump when the railways in the Smuts administration worried about their profits and stopped hiring. The war had brought about enormous demand for South African products and stimulated a boom that benefited the poor. In its aftermath,

however, economic crisis again acutely raised the question of poverty amongst a white voting population.

It is commonly assumed that the Pact government, which brought to power in 1924 Hertzog's Afrikaner Nationalists together with Labour in a coalition aimed at defending the national economy, promoting the interests of the white working man and farmer and championing the poor white, changed all this radically. In reality, the situation was a good bit more complicated. David Yudelman has insisted that both Smuts and Hertzog were leaders of successive phases of a complex historical process of 'capturing' the white working class for a capitalist order in South Africa. Certainly, the Pact government, although eager to reverse Smuts's policies and hire large numbers of whites on railway and public works jobs, was very concerned not to do anything deleterious to capitalist interests generally. This is an important point in the essay Tim Clynick has written about the diamond diggings that were discovered in the south-western Transvaal in 1926 which at first seemed to offer to the desperately poor whites, both urban and rural, a chance to make it as independent diggers. It soon became obvious that the only good living on the diamond fields would be made by a handful of merchants, buyers and landowners. Political rhetoric aside, the Pact government was unwilling to go against the needs of the diamond industry for restricting overall production in the interests of upholding prices.

Similarly, according to Albert Grundlingh, the poor woodcutters of the Knysna forests voted Nationalist but they gained no obvious material advantages as a result. In other sectors, the situation was somewhat different. Thus Robert Morrell believes that state patronage and aid to agriculture genuinely offered something concrete to the poorer white farmer with land in Middelburg even though he too insists that the Nationalists were in no sense the 'organic' party of white workers or farmers. Yet the 'poor whites' never found another political home nor did they join forces with the poor more generally. The failure of the poor whites to cohere effectively as a class rather gave the Nationalists their chance and over time they actively and systematically courted and won the allegiance of poor and working class whites while continuing to promote South African capitalism.

The Pact government – despite its rhetorical support for a so-called civilised labour policy that would force capital to hire workers at wages fit for white men, wages that might provide what a railway worker spokesman in 1918 called, according to Gordon Pirie, 'the liberty of white existence; to thrive and to progress' – actually did little to bring white men into jobs held at low wages by women or children and by those of colour in the private sector. A huge gap continued to exist between the lives of the well-paid skilled male workman and

the unskilled white worker. The 1925 Wage Act, according to an extensive study by Ian Phillips, largely served to retain the existing wage levels although it may have acted against the occasional particularly exploitative firm, rather than to make any qualitative changes in the structure of wages or the labour market.[7] Radical intentions to raise all unskilled wages on the hotly debated Australian model were shelved.

Under the Pact government, many white men got jobs from the state itself. This would include policemen and soldiers, foresters and post office employees but the railway sector was particularly important. The railways after 1924 reversed their earlier policies and radically increased their employment of unskilled whites who often replaced African and Indian workers. As Pirie reminds us, however, they were not exactly labour aristocrats. Their pay was kept sufficiently low as to discourage featherbedding and to prevent the system from becoming uneconomic.

What one expert called the 'American system' for dealing with the poor, that is to say resettlement on the land, was fashionable amongst the uplifters of the 'poor whites' early in the twentieth century. To this end the state created forester communities and agricultural settlements were established by the Dutch Reformed Church to bring the volk back from Babylon, its humiliations, temptations and horrors. Back to the land was the watchword for a campaign to redeem the lost sons and daughters. However, it became increasingly clear that such schemes could not really restore prosperity or independence to those who had already been thrown off the land decisively, nor were they genuinely supported from below. Harris writes that the dependent white farmer virtually disappeared in northern Natal from the 1930s, most vanishing into the urban context apart from a fortunate minority that could parlay state aid into transformation as capitalist farmers. For the rest, the state was less prepared to assist after the demise of the Pact.

Instead, the future lay in the acquisition of skills and education and in the conquering of the city with its distinctive ways, as Susan Parnell shows. That was recognised in the end by the Carnegie Commission volumes, considered the magisterial study of poor whiteism in the 1920s, and the solution that harmonised best with the needs of capitalism in South Africa. In the urban context, moreover, the only way that Nationalist policies actually could carry through proposals to segregate the urban working population and clear out slum conditions was to develop systematic state housing schemes. This in fact largely occurred in the wake of the Great Depression, with its collapse from the moderate prosperity of the 1920s into massive economic crisis, not under the Pact at all but surprisingly under the Fusion government of Hertzog and Smuts (an admirer of the heretical economic reformer Lord Keynes).

From the point where South Africa departed from the gold standard in 1933, local industry quickly recovered from the Depression and boom conditions were under way within a couple of years. Agriculture remained depressed, reinforcing the gap between urban and rural. Of course, the unskilled urban migrant to town could not necessarily take advantage of new opportunities but his sons and daughters could. The private sector could make use of literate white foremen and skilled workmen while the state used education and labour policies to give potential supporters advantages. The long period of uncertainty and struggle gave way, particularly after the arrival of the restructured National Party into office in 1948, to the apartheid years. Apartheid has usually been interpreted by radical scholars in terms of the political economy of control over black workers but it represented as well the triumph of the poor white strategies of the politicians for whom it was a crucial element in the classless white populist discourse of the new era.

Wider perspectives

In this volume, the history of the 'poor white problem' in South Africa can be more clearly delineated by two essays which look at the Rhodesian situation. From the writing of Philip Stigger, it is clear both that the rather precarious existence of the first whites in Rhodesia could have collapsed into poverty and that fear of the emergence of a situation identical to that in South Africa was an important motivating force for the Rhodesian state in British South Africa Company (BSAC) days (1890–1923). Yet Stigger is particularly concerned to emphasise that there really hardly was an equivalent social problem in Southern Rhodesia. This is partly because of the absence of an indigenous (as he calls it) white population attached to agriculture there, by comparison with South Africa, and partly because the BSAC made sure that whites had easy access to cheap land. At the peak of the Depression, Stigger shows that in fact the Southern Rhodesian state adopted policies that parallelled those south of the Limpopo very well, protecting whites through racist legislation and institutions and the introduction of ameliorative measures, even including the provision of public service employment at low pay. He shows that eventually in Rhodesia, too, the real future for the poorer whites lay in the towns.

R. J. Challiss points moreover to the importance, in pursuing this argument, of formal education. He seconds the shrewd judgment of the Southern Rhodesian premier Godfrey Huggins, who wrote that 'I ... admit that although our youth may be able to play Rugby Football and to preserve their white skins with rifles and differential legislation ... if they survive, it will be by nothing except superior education.' Challis traces the growing commitment of settler society to improving the quantity and quality of white education, both in providing

white male youth with particular skills and in helping to form a white Rhodesian culture in which all felt a part. This commitment was not established unconditionally without struggle. In the early years, there was opposition to the idea of spending much public money on education for the hoi polloi and a special problem lay in the existence of a poor Afrikaans speaking rural minority which resisted schooling, especially in English. By the 1930s, the commitment was largely generalised, backed up by the provision of a more and more articulated institutional structure and indirectly by the channelling of schools for Africans into directions that would block African competition for qualifications and nullify their overwhelming numerical majority in the territory. Poor whiteism in Southern Rhodesia lacked the intensity of the South African article but nonetheless the Rhodesian case is salient because it witnessed an even more refined response. It would be interesting elsewhere to look further afield at how poor white and equivalent social strata were dealt with and how they made their way in somewhat more distant but still very relevant circumstances, say in the Portuguese colonies of southern Africa or the sugar islands of the Indian Ocean.

The white bounded working class of South Africa could be fitted into conditions that made for capital accumulation on a very successful basis for a long time. However, from the 1970s, this has been less and less the case. Under the banner of reform, the National Party has abandoned its previous efforts to protect all whites with a racist safety net. If it is true that the creation of this net was vital to apartheid as a system, it must be equally true that this shift marked the beginning of a general shift away from apartheid. On the right end of the political spectrum, the Conservative Party and, even more unequivocally, radicals such as Eugene Terre'blanche of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) and Arrie Paulus of the Mine Workers' Union, attacked the government in the 1980s on exactly these grounds. The AWB run soup kitchens for the white poor and fulminate against the 'Geldmag' (Money Power). Superficially, this might be thought to herald a potentially successful counter-attack in defence of the bounded white working class.

I would suggest that this revival of old-time white populist politics and the intensification of class conflict amongst whites lacks the strength to destroy the dominant state trend. However, F. W. de Klerk has committed himself even further than P. W. Botha to the interests of the middle class of all colours in South Africa and specifically to the interests of business. Even the Conservative Party is anything but anti-capitalist. Still less could protection for all whites on racial lines help to solve the accumulation crisis in the current international economic context. It is perhaps in observing this kind of contrast between then and now, as well as the emphasis this book lays on the complex politics of

class in southern Africa that makes a study of the poor whites most relevant to the present. Moreover, the study of class politics in white South Africa can also illuminate the class politics of a non-racial future South Africa and the way in which a post-apartheid regime tackles the massive problem of poverty in an economically stagnant society, characterised more than ever by drastic economic differentiation.

Chapter 1

The poor whites of Middelburg, Transvaal, 1900–1930: resistance, accommodation and class struggle

Robert Morrell

The eastern Transvaal district of Middelburg hosted a large population of poor whites until 1930 and beyond. They coexisted with strikingly wealthy white landowners, but also with many Africans who suffered similar conditions of poverty as themselves. While Africans over time lost their ability to survive off the land and were condemned to lives of miserable poverty, the district's poor whites for the most part won secure employment and political influence under the wing of the National Party.

The long-run (and sometimes exaggerated) success of the poor whites tends to obscure the processes of class struggle that unfolded as they attempted to carve a life for themselves in the inhospitable capitalist landscape. This chapter attempts to show how the onset of capitalist relations and the actions of the state (particularly before 1924) prevented wide-scale and significant economic improvements. It also argues that such progress as was made was specific to a particular stratum of the poor whites which continued to pursue a life as agriculturalists. This stratum became economically distanced from poor whites occupying positions which became increasingly proletarianised. While the state played a part in this process of class differentiation, the political movement of Afrikaner nationalism tended to conceal these class divisions under an ideological mantle. The major feature of this process was the growth of racism as a code which cemented bonds of ethnic solidarity and racial superiority.

Who were the 'poor whites' and what was the 'poor white problem'?

'Poor white' is an elusive term. Usually used in colonial contexts where blacks were in the vast majority, its most general applicability was to all whites who were poor. To this broad and bland description should be added a narrower

meaning. As Jean Branford points out, the term has a 'derogatory' ring to it.[1] This emanated from among the ruling classes who looked with disdain, dislike and at times alarm at the white proletariat. Yet the poor whites were a fractured group. Charles van Onselen, in his study of the Witwatersrand's poor Afrikaner population between 1890 and 1914, has shown how divided they were. On the one hand, they were self-employed people providing services or involved in petty commodity production (e.g. brick making) and on the other, they were the truly destitute without visible means of subsistence.[2] While our understanding of the processes which marked white proletarianisation has been much improved, our knowledge of similar processes in the countryside remains sketchy. In an attempt to go some way towards rectifying this situation, this chapter aims to analyse the rural poor white population in class terms. In this task the concept of 'labouring and dangerous' classes which Van Onselen employed in the urban context will have to be employed with sensitivity and caution.[3] There is a danger that descriptive categories of this kind will not be able fully to reveal the structural basis of class differentiation.

The poor whites in the countryside differed from their urban brethren in many ways, most importantly in that they retained some access to land. This was profoundly, though not uniformly, to shape their response to the spread of capitalism. While poor whites struggled in various ways to cope with the challenges that changes in agriculture placed before them, the state was itself grappling with what it saw as the 'poor white problem'. There were two aspects of this problem. Agriculture was unproductive and unprofitable. From the Milner administration onward efforts were made to raise productivity with measures that included encouraging poor farmers to produce more and thus pull themselves our of their poverty.[4]

The other aspect of the problem concerned the political threat posed by poor whites. In order to deal with this threat failed farmers were offered new opportunities, jobs were created and relief provided. The intention was to convert 'dangerous' class members into conformist class members. Neither the state nor capital was able to give this problem the attention it deserved because of the other demands placed on resources. The transformation of agriculture and the restructuring of native policy (including the streamlining of the mines' labour recruiting system, for example) both received priority. For this and other reasons the poor white problem was not solved immediately and lingered on for another two decades.

This chapter will attempt to show how a divided poor white population developed, how different poor white strata acted politically, and how the state intervened in these developments.

The period 1875–1907

Although there is a paucity of research on the social composition of the ZAR's Boer population in the mid-nineteenth century, there are indications of early impoverishment. The existence of white poverty and a 'disreputable' class in the ZAR was manifest as early as the 1850s in the Boer settlement of Zoutpansberg. By the 1870s the instances of poverty had become more widespread and by the 1880s there was a significantly large group of landless burghers. The dimensions of the problem continued to increase through the next five decades.[5]

In Middelburg some of the first evidence available on poor whites is to be found in the history of war against the local Africans. In 1876 the ZAR called up a commando to attack Johannes Dinkwanyane, a Pedi convert based at Mafolofolo. There was much reluctance to participate in this campaign. Many reasons have been put forward to explain this, including Boer objections to President Burgers' leadership. More recently Peter Delius has argued that many Boers refused to go on commando because this disrupted their farming. This was probably a pressing consideration but another possible explanation was the existence of many poor farmers who refused to fight because the prospects of loot against the redoubtable Pedi were bleak.[6] When the Boer campaign collapsed in August 1876, Boer soldiers were still needed to man the new forts in the area. Volunteers were only attracted by offers of 2 000-morgen farms in the Leolu Mountains and free ammunition, meat and grain for six months. In addition they received £5 salary a month and horses.[7] Although P. H. Bisschoff does not state so directly, it seems as though the services of poor whites were here being purchased.

In 1883 a Boer commando utterly defeated the Ndzundza Ndebele. This victory, together with the imperial victory over Sekhukhune's Pedi in 1879, left large areas available for occupation. There was also a need to create an armed buffer zone against possible future African attack. In trying to populate Mapochs Gronden, the area concerned, the ZAR sought initially also to obtain revenue by selling off the plots. There was little chance of any sales taking place, given the poverty of the burghers, and so those who had served in the campaign were provided with small plots of eight morgen which, after protests, were increased to twelve morgen in 1884. Once these poor whites had been settled and the chance of an African rising had diminished, they were left to eke out a meagre existence. Instead of providing assistance, the ZAR constantly harassed plotholders. £8 was demanded for registration of ownership and threats of eviction were made against those without title deeds.[8] As with the twentieth-century poor whites, the Mapochs Gronden settlers were regarded as a problem by the state. Stanley Trapido aptly remarks, 'it is incon-

ceivable that burghers with large landed and other interests would have been neglected in the way in which the Mapoch settlers were.'[9]

The settlers went backwards. Few were able to become viable farmers and most increasingly turned to part-time work as transport-riders, labourers, carpenters. Many settlers were unable to pay their 18s annual tax and less than 10 per cent owned more than one or two cows.[10]

While many of the settlers persevered with farming and attempted to expand their holdings, many others began to drop out. Increasingly their lives reflected growing disillusionment. Their houses were miserable shacks and their clothing often in tatters. One settler remarked rather exaggeratedly that they 'walked around naked'. Drunkenness and carousing got so bad that the local store which sold liquor was closed down.[11] Inhabitants looked to the government for rescue. Numerous petitions for assistance were drawn up. None was successful. Dissatisfaction with their lot and anger at the government did not immediately find organisational expression or surface as a coherent social response. It was the development of the Witwatersrand in the 1890s and the creation of urban and industrial job opportunities that provided these poor whites with a focus for their feelings of alienation. No longer would they be forced to remain in the countryside. Johannesburg, the city of gold, beckoned.

The South African War accelerated the spread of poor whiteism. As E. L. P. Stals puts it, the war 'drove the bywoners from the farms to the burgher camps and from the burgher camps to the towns'.[12] According to Stals 15 000 Boers became uneducated labourers or landless 'bywoners'. Those who remained on the land were 'totally ruined'.[13] Although Milner's Reconstruction administration poured money into agriculture, it neglected the interests of poor farmers and those worst hit by the war.[14] Consequently in the years following the war the Transvaal Legislative Assembly was bombarded with petitions most of which complained about hard times and the failure of the British administration to provide aid. Paul Rich has suggested that these measures were part of an attempt to weaken the poor Boer farmers so that they would be 'swamped by large-scale English settlement'.[15] Milner's hopes for an English-dominated countryside never materialised.[16] But a result of his agrarian programme was that more and more Boer farmers became impoverished.

In 1907, when the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) decided to establish its own settlement, the state decided to assist by purchasing the necessary land. The De Lagersdrift labour colony was thus born. Destined to receive only stinting government aid, it became the focus of the 'poor white solution' in Middelburg for the next thirty years.

Agriculture and class differentiation

During the period under discussion the geographical location of poor whites in the district altered. From early on the rugged bushveld on the borders of Pediland was the home of many poor farmers. The flat, rich highveld around the town of Middelburg was the domain of the wealthy farmers. On their farms lived the 'bywoners' who enjoyed various types of lease agreement. Once displaced, these 'bywoners' tended to migrate to Mapochs Gronden and De Lagersdrift in the hope of maintaining their agricultural lifestyle. Even here, though, the areas available to them shrank as capitalised farmers opened up the area with large irrigation schemes. Other 'bywoners' were concentrated in the sandy area around Wolvefontein, to the south of Middelburg town. Here farming was not profitable nor conducive to heavy capital outlay and landowners continued to allow 'bywoners' to remain. A final group that was on the margins of poor-whiteism could be found on the headwaters of the Steelpoort River on plots on the subdivided farm Witpoort. Here simple irrigation techniques allowed many to remain solvent, though there was nevertheless a high rate of failure.

It was difficult in twentieth-century South Africa to be a successful farmer. No longer was a 3 000-morgen farm a guarantee of comfortable life. Capital now was required. New techniques and technology had to be utilised. Credit in the early years of the century was tight and farmers found that without capital they could make little progress. Some farmers like Esrael Lazarus, the mealie and potato king of Kinross, and J. D. Heyns, Middelburg's member in the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and owner of a number of rich Highveld farms, succeeded in overcoming the obstacles. They prospered and were able to expand their operations, buy new farms, employ wage labourers and experiment with hybrid seeds and stock. But many others fell on hard times. They began passing mortgage bonds over their properties. Debts mounted as agricultural prices stayed low and natural calamities bit deep. Some of the first victims of this process were the white 'bywoners'. Rich farmers had no place for them as all available land was used for cultivation or pasturage. The small farmer was also forced to get rid of 'bywoners' in order to remain solvent. The use of 'bywoners' was expensive, especially when compared with African labour tenants, and increasingly 'bywoners' found themselves unwelcome. Discarding 'bywoners' did not always save struggling farmers and before long many were forced to sell up and lease smaller properties. Here too agriculture proved an uncharitable profession and former land owners began to experience poverty. The farmers who became smallholders or sharecroppers were committed to remaining on the land and believed in the chances it offered. There were instances of success to justify their belief in the viability of farming.

In 1920 a cultivator from Mapochs Gronden testified before the Unemployment Commission:

> There is a man here who through the drought has been squeezed out of Uppington [sic]. He lost all his sheep ... that man [now] gets his natives and his draught animals and his men and everything from the owner who lives in Belfast ... the owner is making £400 clear profit and the bijwoner also has about £400.[17]

Success stories such as these bolstered confidence in agriculture and kept near-destitute farmers on the land. But in reality once farmers had lost their land, life was a real struggle. The Witpoort smallholders earned £50 a year, barely enough to cover lease repayments.[18] And many were even worse off than this.

> In the district of Middelburg I made the acquaintance of a very sympathetic type of old Transvaler, 82 years of age and still a good horseman, who had lived practically all his life on the land of other people. He once held a 'burgher-right' farm, but promptly sold it for £6. ('And that for paper money', he added himself.) A little later he owned a few irrigable plots in the village of Nylstroom and cultivated these for several years. But suddenly, when his young orange trees were just beginning to bear, he abandoned this land, and he took no steps when later he learnt that the plots were to be sold by auction for overdue rent. For many years he farmed with stock on other people's land and finally obtained an allotment on Mapochs Gronden. After the South African War he sold this plot and lived for a while on the church colony of De Lagersdrift. When about 60 years of age he decided to try his luck in Rhodesia and bartered his cattle for a span of donkeys, but just before reaching the Limpopo he changed his mind and turned back. Today he is living with his children, who are all poor.[19]

The fortunes of failed farmers varied but by and large they appear to have stayed on the land. Even the impoverished 82 year old mentioned above did not seek refuge in the city.

For 'bywoners' the descent into poverty was also rapid. In the nineteenth century 'bywoners' occupied a respected position within Boer society. 'There were many men, owners of good farms, who were only too glad if you came and stayed with them. You might have well been a wealthier man than the owner and "you were equally boss".'[20] By 1908, however, the Transvaal Indigency Commission reported that 'bywoners' had all but become a 'separate and inferior class of society'.[21] In 1920 the weak position of 'bywoners' was

confirmed. P. Bothma, a Mapochs Gronden sharecropper, gave evidence to the Unemployment Commission:

> Q. If you have not got land here how do you exist, how do you make a living?
>
> A. We have a hard time. One lives this way and another that way.[22]

As Verne Harris shows, the word 'bywoner' refers to people who had very different types of agricultural relationships.[23] In Middelburg it is important to distinguish between discretionary 'bywoners' who were successful farmers even though they leased land, and those who were 'bywoners' out of necessity. The latter category were in subordinate positions in agriculture; they were dictated to by farm owners and were increasingly prone to eviction. For this category of person there was no prospect of landownership. As early as 1914 a farmer offered the opinion that 'many white people now do not have any great expectation of having ground themselves in the future'.[24] Fortunes declined steadily. A Middelburg farmer, Sarel Eloff, vouched for this in 1920:

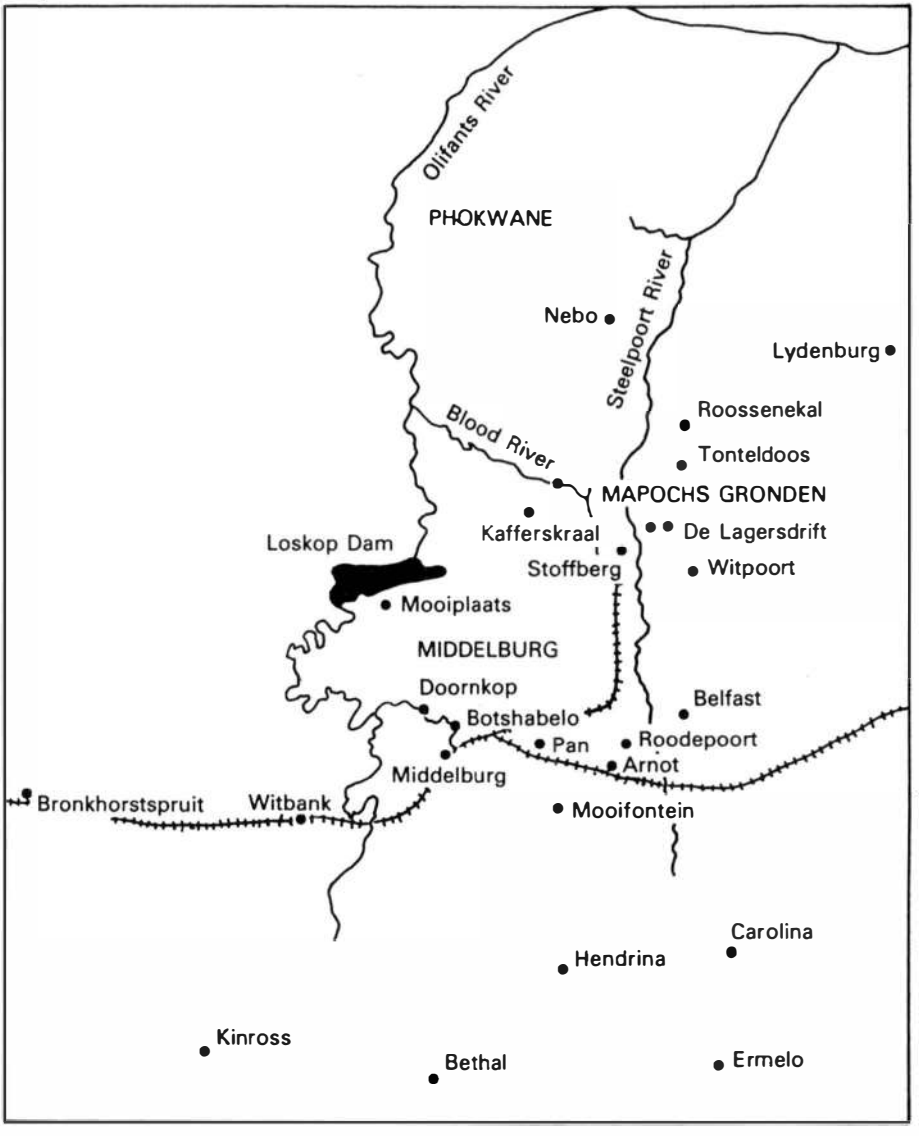
> Q. Do many poor people come into Middelburg for instance from outside areas?
>
> A. Yes, they do come in.
>
> Q. And what happens when they come in?
>
> A. They try to find work and they go backwards more and more, that is all.[25]

Amongst 'bywoners' who were still committed to the soil there were also significant differences. Some of those who had owned farms, who possessed agricultural skills and put their trust in the countryside, managed to make progress. At De Lagersdrift some plotholders accumulated cattle and improved their lands and in this way laid the foundations for a return to full-scale commercial farming.

Other 'bywoners' who aspired to become commercial farmers tried to raise money from the land or commercial banks to buy farms – a thankless task without land to offer as security. Some trekked to the diamond fields of Hopetown and Lichtenburg and yet others took wage employment on the railways or wherever they could find it all in the hope of remitting money to save their threatened agricultural enterprises. Although these tactics were rarely successful many persisted in the vain hope of a windfall or good fortune.[26]

Many others were not prepared to accept the discipline of the De Lagersdrift colony or the confines of a small plot and saw little chance of becoming

Central Eastern Transvaal – 1930



commercially successful. Many such people lived in Mapochs Gronden. Far from Middelburg or any other white town, they practised a mixed economy of hunting, transport riding and sharecropping which allowed them relative independence. They avoided the demands of landlords and the clutches of debtors and tried to rebuild the frontier life of the earlier Afrikaner settlers. Their choice was nothing new in the Transvaal. In 1876/77, for example, the Thirstland trekkers had set off in search of frontier conditions in South West Africa (Namibia). As Neil Parsons notes, 'these trekkers were landless burghers ... who had followed the old trekboer life of hunting and herding which was fast disappearing in the Transvaal as the land passed into private ownership'.[27] When 'pioneer conditions' ceased to obtain in Mapochs Gronden[28] or when the burden of small plot farming or sharecropping became too much, the option of trekking was again considered. Mobility was not a problem; few owned land or possessed many cattle.[29] As late as 1923 therefore there were reports of Middelburgers trekking off to Mozambique in search of pioneer conditions.[30]

In contrast to those who had put their faith in the land, there were many who made little or no progress at De Lagersdrift or Mapochs Gronden. This class was described by a Department of Lands official:

> There is another class – not as a rule the fixed 'bywoner' but the semi-townsman, the transport rider, and the diamond digger who, whatever treatment is meted out will fail and do what they can to outwit the Government ... leniency to this class is wasted: of gratitude there is little; and honour in the matter of keeping promises is almost unknown amongst them.[31]

To this 'class' of person can be added those who had lived in towns and returned, for whatever reason, to the countryside. As we shall see below, efforts were made in the late Reconstruction period to move poor whites out of the towns and into the countryside.[32] There were major problems associated with this. A Lands Department inspector outlined the position:

> The 'poor white' who had tasted town life gave a great deal of trouble ... they seemed in some cases to be quite indifferent as to what happened to the stock [leased from government] and the wrongful disposal of the latter did not seem to be regarded by many of them as a serious offence.[33]

White proletarians resettled on the land were clearly not enamoured with life in the countryside. Nor were they taken in by the state-sponsored country idylls. They did not like the rigours of agriculture nor the discipline enforced by the DRC at De Lagersdrift and the Lands Department at Mapochs Gronden. More often than not the reluctant proletarian settler would defy authority by leaving

his/her allotment and then, by slow degree, would trek back to the city. In the process government equipment and loan cattle would be sold to pay off debts and the pursuing state debtors would be skilfully evaded.[34]

Exact figures concerning the return to the cities are not available, but numerous Lands Department reports testify to white migration. The Rand seemed the most common destination though the Western Transvaal diamond fields were not far behind.[35]

The difficulties of rural life and the experience of the cities had the effect of developing in proletarian settlers and disenchanted 'bywoners' habits that were horrific to the more respectable members of the community. Apart from the lack of respect for property (which manifested itself, among other ways, in the unlawful sale of government goods and theft) some Middelburgers took to gambling and became drunkards. Stols, a Mapochs Gronden resident, for example, 'distilled peach brandy by inverting one "kaffir" pot over another and drank the stuff as it trickled out'.[36] Such anti-social behaviour was probably the result of a disillusionment with country life. Despair and aimless recklessness was paralleled in many cases by a surly and defiant attitude towards authority. C. C. Scheepers, a De Lagersdrift settler, for example, was 'not prepared to obey the regulations of the colony in that he absolutely refused to dip his cattle when he was told to do so. He encouraged other settlers, who had hitherto been obedient, to defy the regulations as he did, and he was therefore an entirely undesirable person.'[37]

In this section I have given a materialist foundation to the description of poor whites by examining their different relationships with the elements of production. Non- or only partial access to the means of production permitted poor whites only a tenuous ability to subsist. Those included in this category would be people still possessing instruments of production, but who either lacked the capacity to use them successfully, or who could not get access to the means of production. We could also include those with access (often limited, but not necessarily so) to the means of production but without the necessary labour, or capital, or instruments of production to make a living. People experiencing these material conditions might float from job to job, trying transport-riding, casual wood-cutting, ploughing, share-cropping, semi-independent cultivation on rented land, or some form of wage labour. Their's would be a twilight existence between the lives of a peasant and a proletarian. The other section of the rural poor white population consisted of people still trying to rescue themselves from poverty, fighting the proletarian option by pouring their remaining resources into the land. These two categories, often hazy and overlapping, were the material basis for the distinction of 'dangerous' and 'labouring' classes.

While one group still believed that their salvation lay in agriculture, the other no longer saw agriculture as a way out of its predicament. The latter group was disillusioned with life and unable to find a niche in society. Increasingly alienated from government and society, these poor whites drifted on the edges of the lumpenproletariat, never quite becoming full-scale criminals and retaining a glimmer of hope that the state would restore to them the fruits of respectability and a place in society.[38]

Poor white policy and rebellion, 1907–1915

In 1907 the De Lagersdrift colony was set up by the DRC. Eight years later a rising broke out among Middelburg's 'dangerous' whites. In between these years, the Union of South Africa was established and a period of drought and depression experienced. Union had little effect on Middelburg's poor whites, but the drought and depression affected them a lot.

In 1907 the DRC's Commission for Poor Whites (CPW) established De Lagersdrift as a partial attempt to remedy the poor white problem. Lord Milner, Governor of the Transvaal, had done very little to address this question, with the exception of setting up some settlements for demobilised soldiers and destitute burghers. These had met with minimal success. In the meantime the problem of poor whites in the urban areas grew worse. This was partially alleviated by an agreement between the Het Volk and the Chamber of Mines after the 1907 strike to permit the entry of poor Afrikaners into the industry.[39] Some 2 000 to 3 000 found immediate employment at the expense of ousted, radical European workers. Nevertheless the urban poor white problem persisted and together with the danger it was perceived to pose for Afrikaner 'volkseenheid' prompted the DRC to involve itself more fully.[40]

Initially the CPW used De Lagersdrift as a solution to the urban poor white problem. Urban Afrikaners were offered plots (rentfree for the first year) and assistance. The first intake of settlers arrived late in 1907 and came predominantly from the Witwatersrand. Before the year was out many had returned to the city. Those who remained found the colony regulations irksome and friction soon developed. The failure of crops gave impetus to desertion.[41]

The initial failure of the colony to tie white proletarians to the land and apparent state apathy saw a rise in anti-government feeling amongst poor whites. Het Volk, the Afrikaner nationalist party, had not received universal support at its inception in 1903[42] and its inability to rescue poor whites after it had taken power in the 1907 election deepened feelings of disenchantment that were already well developed.[43]

After Union things got no better at De Lagersdrift. The new government refused to bail out the DRC. Debts rose and the CPW sought to recover its position by raising rents in 1913. In addition it began to eject unproductive and rebellious settlers since these were deemed to be a threat to the success of the settlement as a whole. From this point on efforts to save the urban poor whites by programmes of rural resettlement were abandoned. Instead energy was concentrated on helping destitute 'bywoners' who had better prospects of success. Although settlers showed little ability to transform themselves into viable small-holding farmers, and the rate of desertion continued to be high, there was a constant flow of new settlers into the colony. These new arrivals were not from the cities but were 'bywoners' who could no longer obtain a 'sitplek'.[44]

The condition of farmers outside De Lagersdrift was no better than inside the colony. Evictions of 'bywoners' continued and struggling smallhold or indebted farmers made little headway in shoring up their positions. Credit was a major problem. A co-operative was established at Middelburg to assist in this regard. An instant flood of credit applications indicated the serious predicament of many farmers. The co-operative was not able to solve the problem of credit shortage: instead, after 1914 the government began putting the brake on the provision of credit which it believed was irresponsibly liberal.

Meanwhile in the cities the flow of Afrikaners into mining was accelerated by the 1911 Mines and Works Act which created a job colour bar that reserved certain skilled and semi-skilled jobs for whites. The gold-mining industry was at this time the scene of rising white labour militancy. In 1913 and 1914 major strikes occurred. Afrikaners were clearly involved in these strikes but it is a matter for conjecture whether their militant worker response to capitalism either had an effect on rural forms of resistance, or, more directly, whether it affected the 1914 Rebellion.

In October 1914 the Rebellion broke out in the northern Orange Free State and western Transvaal after an officer in the Defence Force, S. G. Maritz, had deserted to the German forces in South West Africa. For a long time the Rebellion has been treated by historians as the product of Afrikaner Republicans inspired to rebel by the government's decision to fight the Germans. Recently David Yudelman has argued that the rebels of 1914 shared with the gold-mine strikers a common alienation from both the state and imperial capital.[45] This is an important observation but Yudelman fails to explore it further. Consequently no analysis of the class position of the rebels is attempted.

It might appear strange that research on Middelburg should shed light on this question, because the eastern Transvaal is not normally considered to have been affected by the Rebellion. J. J. Alberts, MLA for Standerton, testified to the Judicial Commission of Enquiry into the Rebellion that 'there was no unrest among the people in these parts. No rising occurred among the people in Standerton and Middelburg, and there was no spirit of rebellion in the eastern parts of the province so far as I know.'[46] Rodney Davenport followed this evidence when his article on the Rebellion omitted any reference to unrest in the eastern Transvaal.[47] In a sense, these interpretations are correct for General C. H. Muller's rebels only penetrated as far as Bronkhorstspruit where they were defeated on 7 November 1914 by government forces.[48]

Yet, scarcely one and a half months later, the police in Middelburg reported 'persistent rumours ... of further trouble when the Lydenburg, Carolina and Middelburg commandos mobilise here'. These rumours were not without foundation. Plans were being made by the Middelburg poor to form a 'Rebel party' of 450 men, 'most of whom are from Middelburg North towards Mapochs Land', and to march on Middelburg where the Dutch flag would be hoisted. A major point at issue was the SWA campaign and the leaders of the agitation threatened to 'shoot any person who volunteers for the front'. On 12 January 1915 a meeting took place at which it was decided to march on the Middelburg Charge Office and release a prisoner there. The march was a shambles and the 200 marchers were broken up by seven armed policemen. The leaders were arrested and eight men were charged with sedition and 107 for refusing to serve in SWA.

Although the Rebellion is normally considered to have ended in December 1914, Eric Rosenthal comments that rebels continued to surrender until February 1915 and that the 'very last man under arms was only caught on March 23'.[49] Under these circumstances it is possible to see the Middelburg rising as a part of the 1914 Rebellion though an account for its late spread is still awaited.

The Middelburg rebels came from the poorest areas of the district – Mapochs Gronden in the north and Gloria/Wolvefontein in the south – and were not the people who longed for a life in the countryside. Rather they were semi-rural proletarians with little prospect of full employment either in the towns or the countryside.[50] This appears to be consistent with the composition of rebel forces elsewhere.[51] Historians have often missed this point by looking too closely at the leadership of the Rebellion and not closely enough at the rank and file.

General de la Rey, one of the planners of the Rebellion, was involved in putting down the miners' strike in July 1913. General Beyers acted against the 1914 strikers. And General de Wet, leader of the OFS rebels, frequently expressed disapproval of strikes and worker militancy. The lack of sympathy for the plight of white workers can be explained with reference to the class position of the generals. They were members of a class of notables who had been unseated in the South African War and replaced by Randlords at the apex of power. While, in the Transvaal, notables gained access to power through their support of the SAP and their inclusion in the Gold and Maize alliance, OFS notables were excluded. They therefore turned to armed struggle to re-establish themselves as part of the ruling power bloc. Their followers, on the other hand, were poverty-stricken men of the soil with an axe to grind against both capitalism and British imperialism. As De Wet said, many of his followers were not 'gentlemen' but 'slumdwellers'. They showed their dissatisfaction with their position not only by joining the rebels but by looting when given the chance.[52] It is not surprising that Johannesburgers, unemployed or marginally employed, should have identified with the struggle of their rural counterparts. Stals points out that they made no secret of their sympathy for the Rebellion though they never actually supported it.[53]

The rebels were for the most part the products of Milner's policy to keep poor whites in the countryside, just as they were the victims of mistaken Afrikaner nationalist belief in the virtue and viability of life in the countryside. They were thus only partially proletarianised and as such possessed a schizoid approach to life – pulled at one moment towards the bright lights of the cities and the next towards the verdant pastures of the platteland. But neither vision materialised and they became disappointed both by the absence of opportunities in the cities and the poor prospects of farming. They were a class in limbo and thus were unable to identify with, or fully support, the interests of striking Rand workers. Although both were oppressed by capital, workers and poor whites had different relationships: workers were engaged in a struggle to secure and strengthen their positions as wage-earners, poor whites on the other hand were struggling to retain their economic independence and avoid becoming subordinated to capital. As Yudelman states, workers and poor whites faced 'capital and the state on separate occasion and alone'.[54] State policy going back to Milner, the uneven development of capitalism and ideological remnants of a country idyll combined to prevent a united and concerted attack on the state in the second decade of the twentieth century.

The failure of the Rebellion did not end the opposition of Middelburg's poor whites to the state, but it did change the direction. Five months after the rising the National Party (NP) held its first meeting in the Middelburg district at

Tonteldoos, the capital of Mapochs Gronden. Two NP speakers, Joubert and Moll, condemned the Botha–Smuts government in particular and the British in general. 'All the rights of Afrikaners are being trampled and destroyed by the government', they alleged, and then harked back to the South African War by reminding their audience how 'the women and children were murdered and forgotten'. Finally they injected a local note by insisting that the rebels had been unfairly punished. This political activity was carefully monitored by the local police especially as Middelburg's magistrate, R. F. Aling, feared that 'harmful results' would arise because of 'the peculiar class of people to whom they [the comments] are addressed'. Aling need not have worried. From 1915 onward the district's poor increasingly looked to the NP and the white Parliament for their salvation.[55]

The NP was not the organic party of poor whites. Far from it. Its leaders were drawn from the former class of notables. Farmers and landlords dominated in the organisation, though later on members of the new petty bourgeoisie began to make an impact. For all this, the NP struck a resonant chord with poor whites. It was committed to 'building a nation with words'. In addition it challenged 'British imperialism' (which crudely translated into opposition to Hoggenheimer, the Unionists and 'Sappe') and appealed to familiar and heroic images derived from the Afrikaner past.[56] In the absence of any rival body to represent their interests, poor whites worked with the NP, seeking through it to express their discontent. Much of their dissatisfaction stemmed from the onset of capitalism and its hard-nosed business ethic which broke down traditional ties of rural community and gave birth to a landless class. Race prejudice shrouded this reality and the NP's identification of blacks as the reason for the poor white problem therefore proved very appealing.

The separation of poor whites from blacks

Becoming a poor white meant not only becoming poor, it also involved a change in class position and world view. Contemporary observers described this transition as people 'losing their self-respect and their characters'. This in turn led to the spread of 'lazy sickness', a 'disease' which well-to-do farmers disparagingly accused poor whites of suffering from.[57]

Changes in the world view of poor whites contained two potential threats. Those who bucked authority and failed to work conscientiously challenged the state's efforts to install a work ethic in the growing labour force. Secondly there was a danger that poor whites would continue to defy or challenge the state. This might take at least four forms: a rural rising of dispossessed whites, a white proletarian revolt in the cities, a combination of the two, or a non-racial

class alliance against the state. The first two scenarios were acted out in 1914 and 1922, the third came close to realisation in both those years, yet the fourth and potentially most serious was avoided. An explanation for the absence of an alliance between impoverished blacks and whites in the countryside is the purpose of this section.

A development that greatly worried state officials was cohabitation between different races. In 1909 some English settlers in the Waterberg established themselves among Africans and, according to a Sub Native Commissioner (SNC) began 'breeding a tribe of half-caste children'.[58] Such instances were in fact rare but they invoked, in the mind of the official, images of black–white co-operation which could lead either to a joint uprising or to the long-term destruction of the white race.[59]

In the late 1910s poor whites began moving into areas previously occupied exclusively by Africans. They were forced to do this as the frontier of capitalist farming in the district began expanding northward, eroding as it did the last havens of poor white occupation. Although poor whites, like whites in general, regarded Africans as inferior, there was the danger that some who had been thoroughly alienated from the white community would countenance some sort of social or political co-operation to add to the already substantial economic interaction with Africans that existed.[60] Alternatively there was the possibility of poor whites aggravating relations with Africans. Cases were, for example, reported of poor whites employing Africans and then, to avoid paying them, treating them so badly that they ran away. This kind of behaviour was consistent with notions held by the 'Bushveld community' which Leipoldt described as 'at heart imbued with the same sentiments towards the natives as their forefathers who were slave-owners ... the native is a chattel to be treated as such'.[61]

Whites, but particularly poor whites, liked to blame their agricultural failure on African competition. In 1913 the Natives Land Act had in part been motivated by such arguments.[62] After 1913, with the supposed threat of peasant competition removed, poor white farmers continued to battle. There were obvious reasons for this. South African agriculture was inefficient and farmers in general experienced severe profitability crises. In attempting to overcome this, farmers became more market conscious and competitive. This led to the eviction of 'bywoners' and small plots became less profitable. Poor whites blamed some of their misfortune on big farmers and the SAP, but they reserved their major grievance for blacks with whom they now earnestly began to compete for resources.[63] They argued that the platteland was undergoing 'verswarting'. A typical example of this is to be found in the Carnegie Commission (1932). 'In Pretoria and Middelburg, Transvaal, "bywoners" and also

government officials stated that the Kaffirs on bushveld farms (who have to work only 90 days) are often more prosperous than most of the poor white farm population but that a white man never gets a chance on these farms.'[64]

Ernest Stubbs, influential Rustenburg Magistrate and Native Commissioner (NC), and the Native Affairs Department (NAD) played upon white fears and advocated segregation in the 1910s and 1920s.[65] Rejecting arguments for gradual racial integration, Stubbs warned South African whites of the 'tightening coils' of African society which would ultimately crush white civilisation if Africans were allowed to share in the system.

Parallel to Stubbs's view of segregation was the state-sponsored idea that settlement in the countryside was the best available means to solve problems of dislocation or, to put it another way, the poor white problem. While Stubbs urged that rural areas be set aside for exclusive African occupation, other government officials argued the need for rural areas to be freed for the resettlement of whites. There was of course competition for land between white capitalist farmers and poor whites, but there was some agreement on the need for pure white zones of settlement. Although many poor whites were not interested in a life in the countryside, the state persisted with its plans to solve the poor white problem in the rural areas.[66] As Barrington Moore points out, this was a not uncommon state response to social crisis. In the early 1930s, for example, the Nazis sought to prevent peasants from uniting with workers by presenting 'the romantic image of an idealized peasant, "the free man on free land" ... stressing the point that, for the peasant, land is more than a means with which to earn a living; it has all the sentimental overtones of Heimat to which the peasant feels himself far more closely connected that the white collar worker with his office or the individual worker with his shop'.[67]

In the urban areas Colonel Stallard was pushing a similar line.[68] As Sue Parnell shows, the supposed corrupting influence of Africans on whites was here too one of the reasons for the intensified attention paid by urban authorities to end integrated urban areas in the 1920s and 1930s.[69] It should not be forgotten, however, that a vigorous campaign for racial legislation (job colour bar) was also being waged by white miners. This together with poor white demands for protection from black competition in the countryside must also have influenced state policy.

Policy towards poor white and African in Middelburg followed the trend set in the cities. NAD officials monitored race relations and only permitted white entry into the reserves where the applicant was deemed not to be an 'undesirable person'.[70] In some cases, where the NAD had doubts about the calibre of an applicant, limitations were imposed. In 1925, for example, a prospector was

'expressly forbidden to trespass in Native kraals and lands'. NAD officials in the district were particularly concerned about the effects of poor white–African interaction and did all they could to prevent it. In 1927 a blacksmith was refused a licence on the grounds that it was 'undesirable for Europeans verging on Poor Whites, to settle permanently in Native Areas'. In 1928 a similar ruling was made when a group of poor whites attempted to buy a farm cheaply in the reserve. The NC advised against the sale saying 'it was bound to lead to friction sooner or later as has been proved over and over again in these parts'.[71]

The efforts of the NAD were successful. Their administrative barriers to the reserves were reinforced by ideological barriers. Racist beliefs amongst rural Afrikaners in such things as telegony – that is, sex with an African could leave the blood of a white tainted forever – discouraged most whites from pursuing closer relations with blacks.[72]

Another reason for the failure of an alliance between black and white to emerge was the role played by the NP in emphasising racial differences. In 1913 Tobie Muller, an Afrikaner Nationalist, made this typical statement: 'Against the natives every white man was one, no matter whence he came.' The NP's first Programme of Principles in 1914 echoed the same theme: 'The foundations of our welfare rest on the unity of the European population.'[73] Support for the NP and its policies was cemented when General Louis Botha called out the citizen force against the rebels in 1914. Botha's action was seen as 'rank treachery to the Afrikaner cause' and served to detach Afrikaner support from the SAP. This support was retained by the emotive commitment to keeping the 'white man from becoming a white nigger'.[74]

In the town of Middelburg the racial issue that attracted most concern was the 'Asiatic menace'. In October 1919 a branch of the Transvaal Whites' Protection League (TWPL) was established which brought together both NP and SAP supporters. Its object was to protect 'the natural rights and legitimate interests of all persons of the Transvaal against Asiatic encroachment'. Its support came largely from white traders in competition with Indian traders. The effect of the movement was, according to the *Middelburg Observer* commentator, 'Wireless Whispers', to render 'political differences as dead as the proverbial doornail'. There were Middelburgers who did not support the TWPL. Some of these people shared houses with Asians and coloureds and, according to 'Wireless Whispers' subscribed to Bolshevism. They were a 'threat to the prosperity of the country', he wrote. While a minority of poor whites resisted the racist overtures, most did not. By the early 1920s the racial problem had become a rallying point for the vast majority of whites. In 1923 a weapons display was greeted deliriously by the district's white inhabitants because it

would 'be an object lesson to the native population who out number us here by 50 to one'. In March 1924 the NP and SAP decided to act jointly against the 'racial menace'. The obsession of local whites rose to fever pitch in July when a white nurse was raped. The 'Black Peril' was on everyone's lips and the local newspaper reported 'an intense craving for revenge'. Revenge was duly obtained when a month later an African, protesting his innocence to the last, was sentenced to death.[75]

The 'Black Peril' was much exaggerated.[76] In Middelburg there were few other instances of open opposition to white supremacy that could be construed as 'Black Peril'. In the north Africans engaged in incendiarism against the intrusion of white farmers (December 1924) and to the west African coal miners went on strike (September 1927). It was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa (ICU), however, that engendered the greatest panic. Farm workers belonging to the ICU began to challenge white authority and in the township the ICU urged Africans to ignore the racist laws which, for example, prohibited African use of the sidewalks. The *Middelburg Observer* reflected the feelings of townspeople by asserting that the ICU was 'plainly Anti-White'.[77]

African defiance of labour demands, increased instances of crop and stock theft, and competition for resources (grazing and wood) led to the blame for all ills being placed on Africans. In 1927 poor white property owners in the reserve complained that 'the influence of natives on our volk is extremely injurious'. In 1928 De Lagersdrift settlers called for the establishment of a police station because of 'difficulty with natives'.[78] It is perhaps not coincidental that these complaints came at a time of heightened ICU activity and during the African National Congress presidency of the communist-leaning J. T. Gumede.[79]

It was on the issue of race that white farmers, white workers and poor whites found a common way to articulate their otherwise diverse class interests. White miners had made their most dogmatic statement on race in 1922 when their slogan was 'Workers of the World unite for a White South Africa'. In Middelburg's coal mines anti-black sentiment based on a struggle over jobs was equally present.[80] At least on this issue the NP and South African Labour Party could feel close. The result was the Pact's election victory in 1924. Just as important was the emasculation of white labour and the taming of poor whites. With Africans presented and perceived as enemy number one, capital was able more freely to mould a compliant supportive class.[81]

The Rand rebellion and the Pact period

There have been few instances in South African history of dominated classes organising across the town–country divide. The ICU managed it in the late 1920s and the ANC arguably managed it in the 1950s, but by and large, organisation has been basically either urban or rural. In retrospect it can be seen that rural and urban poor whites failed to unite. Yet there were times when the chasm between the two fractions seemed bridgeable. The question is thus raised: what was the relationship between rural poor whites and urban white workers and the unemployed? Immediately one frames the question a host of problems crop up. As has been pointed out, there were deep divisions amongst rural poor whites. The same was true for the urban proletariat where the original divide between skilled and unskilled workers became blurred to be replaced by other divisions reflecting different sectoral and political positions. So one has to beware of making generalisations that gloss over these differences. One also has to avoid the mistake of assuming two hermetically sealed spheres of town and countryside.

Despite these qualifications there are hints of a closer relationship between urban and rural poor whites. This was based on similar class interests which in turn led to a shared antipathy for the SAP. While both rural and urban poor whites were committed to a white-dominated state neither was satisfied with the economic grip of the Randlords or the political power of the SAP. The NP capitalised on this and began drawing enthusiastic support from the white poor who had hitherto only expressed intermittent interest in party politics. In 1921 Smuts toured the Transvaal rural areas in an attempt to garner support. He was met with considerable hostility, which he put down to the fact that 'the landless bywoner is very definitely attaching himself to the Nationalist cause'. There were good reasons for this tendency. The agricultural policies of the Smuts government did not help poor or landless farmers. The government-supported co-operative scheme in which the rural poor placed great hope proved a big disappointment. In Middelburg the co-operative could not and would not meet the credit demands of its poor members. There were other dissatisfactions too – over the price of maize offered to producers and over 'middlemen' costs. The local NP MLA, J. D. Heyns, exploited these grievances when he visited De Lagersdrift to campaign for the 1921 election. He increased his majority in that election.[82]

As poor whites consolidated behind the NP there were also moves to narrow the gap between the NP and the SALP which was strong in the coal-mining areas around Witbank. In January 1920 the NP and LP discussed the possibility of a joint candidate to stand against the SAP and although the parties eventually put forward their own candidates, these negotiations did suggest

that there was common ground between them.[83] Whether such commonality was enough to dispose supporters of the two parties to ally only the crisis of 1922 would determine.

At the end of 1921 Witbank's white coal miners went on strike. Since 1919 they had been in constant conflict with management and the deteriorating economic climate heightened tension. A general strike was called on 1 January 1922 and in anticipation of violence police patrols were called out. Scab labour was threatened by the strikers and in February there was an attempt to sabotage the Witbank rail bridge. By the end of that month the prospect of open and armed defiance on the coalfields as well as on the Rand looked likely. A huge cache of dynamite was discovered in Witbank and the number of attacks on scab labour grew.[84]

On 10 March martial law was declared. The Middelburg district, which until 1925 included Witbank, was one of the affected areas. It is not clear whether troops were used against the coal miners but by 16 March the rebellion had been crushed.

The state's military response to the 1922 rebellion is clear in general terms: the citizen force and commando units were mobilised and deployed against the strikers. What is less clear is which units the state utilised and the problems associated with this choice. In Middelburg the loyalty of poor whites to the SAP government was questionable. Given the experience of 1915 it was not inconceivable that they might join the strikers. It is not surprising therefore to find that the Middelburg commando was absent from the list of commandos which served. Yet men in Middelburg, who may have belonged to other units, were called up to serve. At least eight of these men were charged for refusing to serve. Six were discharged on technicalities.[85] The government was not inclined to be lenient to strikers and their supporters and these discharges may have been prompted by a desire to avoid acting against those who had wide-ranging support among poor whites. Local discontent with government military policy was most clearly obvious in the case of a 'farmer' from the poor Hendrina area who attempted to raise a commando to help the Rand strikers. The general dissatisfaction of the district's population with government action was expressed in parliament by J. D. Heyns shortly after the 1922 rebellion. 'He hoped the Minister would not always be calling up the people from the country districts adjacent to the Rand to deal with disturbances there.'[86]

There are also signs that the district's poor had sympathy for the strikers' stand against authority, though it is unlikely that they knew enough about the conditions in the mining industry to specifically identify with the strikers. Furthermore their struggles were in basic ways quite different and without a

Above: Transporting wood for sale in Potgietersrust. Below: This 'bywoner' supplemented his income by taking local children to school (E. G. Malherbe Collection, Killie Campbell Africana Library, University of Natal)

strong organisation to link these, it was unlikely that they would specifically be related to the 1922 Rand upheaval. At De Lagersdrift some settlers, described by disapproving government officials as 'the other kind of man', were active in the first three months of 1922 defying the DRC management. C. C. Scheepers, one of those involved, was expelled in February 1922. He was described as an 'entirely undesirable person'. Inspired possibly by the climate of unrest at the time, Scheepers resisted his removal though eventually moved to a smallholding in Rustenburg. Scheepers was not alone in his stand and Nilant, the official historian of De Lagersdrift, observed that unco-operative behaviour was common at this time.[87] It is difficult to determine whether settler fractiousness at the colony was merely a spontaneous development arising out of a long history of dissatisfaction or whether it had some organisational base. A government report at the time suggested that this was possible. It stated that 'commercial travellers and hawkers are known to be employed in exploiting the country side (by spreading "Bolshevism")'. Whether this was the case in Middelburg is not clear, but what is important is that there was sympathy for strikers amongst rural poor whites, particularly those who appear to have belonged to the 'dangerous classes'. Equally importantly, sympathy was not translated into concrete action.[88]

There are a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon. The national structures of the NP refused publicly to commit the party to support the strikers and therefore deprived its rural supporters of an organisational link with the strikers. Its leadership, Afrikaner notables, had little sympathy for the strikers. And NP membership which was drawn from many classes, both urban and rural, dictated that it could not openly side with the strikers. Nevertheless it did initially contemplate some form of support and later on actually provided food and other necessities. A. G. Oberholster, who has documented this, argues that the NP stood back from unconstitutional protest but that some Afrikaners, particularly those who had rebelled in 1914 and were involved in the stillborn second and third rebellions (1916, 1918), were intimately involved in 1922. J. J. Pienaar, a former rebel, for example, met and planned military strategy with leaders of the strike commandos, many of whom were NP supporters. There were even rumours of an attempt to raise a commando in Lichtenburg to come to the aid of the strikers.[89]

Another explanation should be sought in the lingering suspicion that the city harboured 'volksvreemde elemente' and Bolshevism.[90] Before the establishment of the NP in Middelburg, the district's poor whites had no organisational focus. Traditional explanations for the aversion of 'the Afrikaner' to any type of co-operation or organisation have frequently referred to the strong spirit of individualism created by frontier conditions. There is an alternative

explanation. Middelburg's poor had shown interest in, and support for, rural organisation in the district. The early Farmers' Association and the co-operative had both attracted a poor white following, yet neither was the organic creation of the poor whites (both were inspired and dominated by big farmers) and both failed. They were therefore not inherently opposed to organisation per se. The stumbling block was the divided nature of the poor white population. Small plotholders, successful sharecroppers and those still believing in the viability of a country life were scornful of their poorer and disenchanted colleagues. They called them the 'irresponsible' ones and accused them of 'losing their self-respect and their characters'.[91] Such conflict bedevilled organisation-building. A better-off Mapochs Gronden resident said in 1920, 'I cannot see a chance of co-operating ... I cannot work with a lazy man.' And party-political differences, possibly founded on the same class divisions, also came to the fore. In 1930, when an attempt was made to establish an agricultural co-operative in Mapochs Gronden, E. de Souza of the NP objected to the involvement of a Mr Op't Hof. 'We ... don't want anything to do with Op't Hof ... that man is secretary of the SAP's district organisation ... and works entirely in his own interests and towards his own goals.'[92]

The district's organisational void was filled by the NP. The party was able to accommodate the radical demands of its poor white constituency up to a point. It stressed the racist aspects of poor white dissatisfaction and toned down or diverted the class aspects. This was evident after the 1922 strike when the NP branches in Middelburg and Witbank came out strongly in support of the strikers. They demanded that both the strikers and those who had refused to bear arms against them be treated leniently. The pragmatic politics which led to the NP/SALP election Pact and general election victory in 1924 concealed the consolidation of NP electoral support and the ossification of class lines. The NP bound its supporters more and more tightly to itself and conversely reduced the likelihood of either rural support for the SALP or the emergence of an alternative organic political party representing the dispossessed. By mid-1924 De Lagersdrift and Mapochs Gronden were NP strongholds.[93]

Even as support for the NP grew, reminders of the past cropped up to colour the relationship between party and supporters. Middelburg's poor were not blind followers of NP policy and frequently pressed their MP, J. D. Heyns, to act on their behalf when they felt their interests to be threatened. In 1926, for example, the SA Police began cracking down on illegal stills in Mapochs Gronden. The inhabitants approached Heyns who took up the issue in parliament. 'They are arresting poor people and although they are not innocent yet they have been brought into temptation.' Heyns relied on the poor white vote and ensured that this dependence was translated into a defence of their

Residents of Mapochs Gronden (above) and Tonteldoos (right). Many of these people earned cash by working for neighbouring Africans (E. G. Malherbe Collection, Killie Campbell Africana Library, University of Natal)

interests. This had the effect of putting him into a position where he often criticised his own party.[94]

The growing support for the NP[95] was paralleled by state efforts to rid the countryside of the 'dangerous classes'. At De Lagersdrift the Pact government attempted to stamp out non-agricultural activities like transport-riding which were regarded as the preserve of the 'dangerous classes'. The CPW was given power by the state to evict 'anybody who wantonly spreads a revolutionary spirit in the settlement or who is guilty of agitation'. These measures succeeded for between 1928 and 1929 nobody was brought for disciplinary action and settlers were described at last as 'desirable citizens'.[96]

Punitive measures against poor whites in the countryside were softened by the state's civilised labour policy which extended white employment opportunities in the cities.[97] Up to 1924 industrial employment of whites had been dropping. The 1923 Hildick-Smith judgement had consolidated the move away from the job colour bar. The Pact government turned this trend around. The 1925 Wage Act, the 1926 Mines and Works Amendment Act and the 1927 Customs Tariff Act all helped to entrench white workers in their jobs.[98] Rural poor whites could now look far more optimistically to the cities. In a sense the civilised labour policy brought the 'dangerous classes' out of the twilight and for the first time gave them a firm footing in the cities.[99]

The NP also assisted co-operatives, provided credit, streamlined the marketing system and expanded agricultural support services. Aid to agriculture had its political rewards. In 1927 when General Kemp, the Pact's Minister of Agriculture, addressed a meeting in Middelburg, there was a 'conspicuous absence of opposition'. Two years later, when General J. B. M. Hertzog visited the town, he was greeted by 'a very large number of his supporters, hundreds of whom were unable to attend because the venue was packed out'. By 1930 the NP had attracted support from the big farmers as well and was speaking authoritatively for the district's entire white population.[100]

The entrenchment of the NP was to some extent made possible by the transformation of the poor white population. The development is not easy to show as most of the evidence is impressionistic. One indication is the rate of 'bywoner' ejections recorded in the Civil Judgement Book of Middelburg's magistrate.

Table 1[101]

	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
No. of evictions	1	3	2	8	9	2	3	2	1	10	1	3

What these figures show is that the rate of ejectment did not rise uniformly. Indeed, with the exception of 1927 the Pact years show few evictions. These figures are significant when one considers the rise of the poor white problem (300 000 in 1932) and a rising rural population, despite the flight to the cities.[102] If more people were getting poor, it is reasonable to suppose that more were being evicted, yet these figures suggest that this was not so. In fact two things were happening. The Pact made it possible for more people to own smallholdings and thus convert themselves from 'bywoners' into landowners.[103] These smallholdings, however, were not profitable and many became poor all the same. Secondly, the definition of poor was changing. 'Bywoners' obviously continued to exist but instead of constituting the bulk of the poor white population, in the late 1920s and early 1930s – the period of severe drought and depression – it was the smallholder that swelled the number of poor whites.[104] And, as I have argued, these smallholders were very different from the 'bywoners' and the 'dangerous classes'. This is reflected in the decline of white rural unrest. At De Lagersdrift, for example, settlers became less troublesome. An 'irresponsible spirit' still prevailed in some quarters in 1926. The secretary of the settlement described this acidly as 'a general attitude of "not wanting to pay" [rent] rather than "not being able to pay"'. Evictions, however, tapered off and by 1927 there was little evidence of the presence of 'dangerous classes'. Some elements of these classes had moved on, while others had been transformed into a 'labouring class'.[105]

The reasons for these changes are to be found in the slow development of capitalist agriculture. While rich farmers like Darras and Patrojohn (wheat) and Lazarus (maize and potatoes) expanded their operations and displaced 'bywoners', there still remained many farms which offered 'sitplekke'. W. J. Grobler, for example, owned ten farms. He allowed white sharecroppers on these farms and used white labour for construction work on his property. In addition much state land was made available for smallholders and this gave those committed to an agricultural future a stake in the land.[106] For those disillusioned with farming there were urban job prospects, a fact confirmed by a 1925 Lands Department report. 'The settler who has a value in the labour market quite apart from farming is ... the one to give up [farming] first.'[107]

For many who remained on the land it was clear that the bounty of farming was limited. There was little prospect of their children finding a future in agriculture. Education thus became a symbol of hope.[108] A Mapochs Gronden 'bywoner' commented, 'For the poor man there is nothing to do but to see that their children are taught all the trades in the world.' The state was keen to promote education particularly as it believed that this would help to solve the poor white problem. J. D. Kleynhans, Secretary of the Transvaal Agricultural Union and

part of a government delegation to Middelburg, said in 1922: 'To prevent farmers drifting to towns, this could only effectively be accomplished by education ... What they [farmers] wanted was "School Farms".' He argued further that only education could 'ensure the predominance of the white race'. Between 1909 and 1921 three schools were erected in northern Middelburg. In addition the DRC erected an industrial school at De Lagersdrift in 1917 though it was only staffed in 1925.[109] Education may have provided the recipient with skills and better employment opportunities, but in all likelihood it also contributed to the hold of the NP over the rural population. As Dan O'Meara has pointed out, the Broederbond controlled the Afrikaner Teacher Association in the 1920s and used it 'to influence the cultural lives of many Afrikaans-speakers'.[110]

By 1930 an alliance based on opposition to the capitalist state between rural poor and urban workers had ceased being possible. The Pact between the NP and SALP ended the year before and a wedge had been driven between the rural 'dangerous classes' and the white urban wage-earners. This development was consolidated during the 1929 'swart gevaar' election when white workers and poor whites were conditioned 'into believing that the Africans and not capital were their real enemy'.[111]

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to insert class into the heart of an analysis of the poor white problem. It argues that poor whites were divided into 'dangerous' and 'labouring' classes and that these divisions had a basis in different relations of production and differing experiences of the onset of capitalist agriculture. Although it is important to realise that such class divisions were not rigid and that there were shifts in class position, it is equally important to stress that these divisions were real and manifested in the political behaviour of the actors. For the 'dangerous class' this involved opposition to the state on a number of levels; from individual defiance to collective resistance. Despite sharing much in common with unemployed urban poor whites and something in common with white wage earners, rural poor whites never managed to forge an anti-state alliance with their urban counterparts. Changes in rural class structure brought on by the spread of capitalist class relations and by state intervention (aid to productive or potentially productive farmers and mild sanctions against unproductive quasi-proletarians) undermined the chances of a wide-ranging alliance. As important was the role of the NP in attracting poor white support, in converting class antagonism into race antagonism[112] and finally, after 1924, in assisting poor whites in the country to become land owners and in the cities to become wage earners.[113]

Chapter 2

The Orange Free State and the Rebellion of 1914: the influence of industrialisation, poverty and poor whiteism

John Bottomley

Die sprinkaan en die droogte
is swaar op onse land
en wat van ons moet worde
is bowe my verstand

Die geld is ook te danig skaars
en die koffie word so duur
die vreemde banke is ons baas
en die 'intres' vreet soos vuur[1]

But already in the long drought many of these people had lost what little they had and rebellion does not seem such a serious thing to desperate men.[2]

The first armed insurrection by whites in South Africa in this century took place in 1914. The 1914 Rebellion has been widely attributed to the influence of Afrikaner nationalism. This chapter, however, suggests that burgeoning rural poverty and dissatisfaction with the government amongst poorer agriculturalists provided a strong class basis for the Rebellion. It does not claim that a class explanation is sufficient in itself, only that this dimension is important and until now has been largely ignored.

By the late nineteenth century a crisis was already looming in the lives of many agriculturalists. We now know that the economy of the Orange Free State had reached a crisis point in the 1890s.[3] Widespread dispossession had occurred as a result of a sustained process of capital accumulation in agriculture. This

accumulation followed the opening of the diamond field markets during the 1860s, and the corresponding crystallisation of classes and development of state structures. By 1896 there were already 2 363 heads of families too poor to purchase their own weapons.[4] The South African War (1899–1902) was both to reveal just how far societal dislocation had progressed and to accentuate that process. During the latter part of the war, some of the landless, particularly in the Transvaal, enticed by inflated Imperial promises that they would be given farms after the conclusion of hostilities, flocked to fight under the banner of the Union Jack. These 'joiners', as they came to be called, are to be distinguished from the 'hendsoppers' who merely remained neutral, and in many cases were drawn from a wealthier class.[5]

In 1907 Milner's post-war reconstruction came to an end. In that year the republican *Oranje Unie* party won the first election of the century in the Orange Free State. Interpretation of this event has tended to stress the ease of the electoral victory, and by extension, the homogeneity of the OFS population.[6] Yet here too, recent research has provided new insights. It has been shown that the 1907 election was not the easy victory it appears, with the republicans merely resuming their task of governing. Instead, the republicans only succeeded in creating a power base once the reconstruction government was seen to have failed either to relieve the distress of the people or to provide acceptable compensation for war damage. The republicans initiated intensive efforts at reconciliation. Those targeted were English-speakers, poor whites and 'protected burghers'. The latter were Free Staters who had been provided with British army protection during the South African War, either because they remained neutral or because they actively fought for Britain. The *Oranje Unie* portrayed itself as non-racial and non-partisan and promised job-creating programmes and labour colonies for poor whites.

It appears that the creation of an Afrikaner anti-republican party was made impossible by the intensity of feeling in the post-war Free State. In terms of contested seats in that election the republicans secured 59 per cent of the vote, whilst the opposition Independents and the Constitutional Party took 41 per cent of the vote. This election was far from a walkover. It confirms the advanced state of political, and by implication economic, differentiation amongst the white population of the Free State.[7]

In 1910 the Union of South Africa came into being. The new Botha–Smuts government proved over-eager in the eyes of many to co-operate with imperialism and the Randlords against the 'have-nots'. Whilst political rhetoric continued to focus on the war fought between two nationalisms, the precarious existence of many agriculturalists focused antagonism on the government. The South African Party (SAP) appeared to place agriculture low on its

list of priorities. In 1912 came the Botha–Hertzog split. The views of these politicians conflicted on imperial association. They also diverged on the slogan 'South Africa First', which encapsulated rural dissatisfaction and perceptions of government neglect. The following year burgher commandos were mobilised to deal with a strike of mineworkers on the Rand. This served to confirm the impression among poorer white farmers that the SAP government favoured mining capital at the expense of urban and rural poor whites.

The Rebellion and subsequent interpretations

It is against this background that the Rebellion occurred. The first phase began on 9 October 1914 when Lieutenant-Colonel S. G. (Manie) Maritz, district staff officer of the frontier region with German South West Africa, went into rebellion. The 'Maritz Rebellion' was relatively unsuccessful, and Maritz was unable to generate much support for his cause in the Cape. He was considering disbanding his forces when rebellion broke out in the two former republics and convinced him to continue the struggle. The rebellion by Maritz influenced the second phase of the Rebellion which began on 22 October 1914. The leaders of this phase were C. R. de Wet, who mobilised rebel commandos in the Free State, and C. F. Beyers, former Commandant-General of the Union Defence Force, who led rebel forces in the Transvaal. Another important rebel leader in the Transvaal was Major J. C. G. Kemp, officer commanding the 1 400 men in the defence force camp at Potchefstroom.

During November 1914 rebel resistance in the Free State collapsed. The following month government forces overran the Transvaal and in January of the following year, rebel resistance in the Cape was overwhelmed. It was subsequently revealed that 190 rebels and 132 government troops had been killed. The official estimate (which is probably too low) of the number of men who went into rebellion was given as 11 472, of whom 7 123 came from the Free State, 2 998 from the Transvaal and 1 252 from the Cape.[8]

The established interpretation of the Rebellion clings to a homogeneous vision of the *volk*, and sees the 'imperial connection' as being responsible for the aberration of Afrikaner fighting Afrikaner. According to this viewpoint, when the First World War broke out, thousands of patriots, still deeply bitter at the South African War and anxious for a true Afrikaner republic, shrewdly judged their chances against a weakened Britain, and rose against a government which no longer reflected their interests.[9]

Yet, even at the time of the Rebellion there were those who believed that the motives for the Rebellion were more base and less idealistic, as in two letters Merriman wrote to Smuts in December 1915: 'I refer to the question of the *Poor*

White ... this question constitutes a great and growing evil ... recent events both in the rebellion, and in the elections that followed, must have convinced even the dullest of us ... of the dire possibilities that lie before us from this course.' In a further letter written on the same day he expanded on the theme: 'These wretched folk are the rank and file of a Nationalist brigade ready for any mischief. They are the raw materials in which the Predikant, the country attorney, all the carpetbaggers and Graeculi esuventes of the Bar work.'[10]

Many of the magistrates agreed with Merriman. A. M. Baumann, a law agent in Winburg, noted that very few of the larger landowners joined the rebellion, and that the rebels were mainly people heavily in debt and youngsters, 'but not men of substance and standing'.[11] A. J. Brand, son of the late president of the Free State and magistrate of Lindley, was even more forthright; 'the class of people who joined the rebels did not bother much about politics they were on the "loot": that was their object. They were not people of standing or responsibility.'[12] Similarly, Raymond Harley, the magistrate of Winburg, told the Judicial Commission on the rebellion that 'Conroy [a rebel leader] had been canvassing very acutely for recruits in the northern part of the district ... most of his recruits were gentlemen whom he found it necessary to equip with new clothes and boots ... At that time he had half a dozen men with him who could be called wealthy and influential, but the great majority of his followers were of the bywoner class.'[13]

The established interpretation resolutely ignored evidence that the rebellion was also a class response to societal dislocation. In terms of available evidence it is possible to view the rebellion as the reaction of marginal farmers, 'bywoners' and poor whites to the ruinous post-war economic environment, and to the very real threat of dispossession and the forced trek to the cities.

Some contemporaries were aware, if only at the rudimentary level revealed above, that the existing economic environment was a major factor in the rebellion. The process of white rural impoverishment, which had already reached crisis proportion prior to the South African War, was exacerbated in the post-war period. Landownership became increasingly insecure. Those farmers who were left with neither purchasing nor borrowing power to make a fresh start were frequently forced to sell their farms. The high incidence of bonded property also left farmers vulnerable in a post-war climate of economic depressions, poor seasons, low prices and a depleted stock population.

The position facing the landless 'bywoners' and poor whites was even more precarious. Land had become a scarce resource in the Free State and the option of acquiring land was only available to those with substantial capital resources. The landless were therefore forced into competition with black

workers, either as sharecroppers or labourers on the land of others. Being a less profitable and tractable workforce, this was a losing struggle with only eviction ahead.[14] Fears of proletarianisation and forced migration to wage labour in the towns, therefore, coincided amongst marginal landowners and the landless. It was this ubiquitous fear together with growing resentment against the government for failing to ameliorate the situation which was to play an important role in the rebellion.

Ecological diversity: Why the southern and eastern Free State remained neutral whilst the north went into rebellion

After the fighting had ended Hertzog noted that the rebellion had been confined to 'those six of seven districts' in the north-eastern Free State; to a few districts in the north-western Transvaal including Lichtenburg and Wolmaransstad, and to the north-western Cape.[15] An explanation for this phenomenon is to be found in the regionally uneven process of rural transformation.

Burghers from Ladybrand during the Rebellion of 1914. Back: C. J. Muller, P. Muller, G. Delport, Joubert, E. Kriel. Front: Lourens, –, Joubert (Transvaal Archives Depot, Photograph 21592)

The Free State is divided into three specific regions distinguished by greatly differing rainfall rates, broad changes in soil fertility and widely divergent agricultural utilisation. The three regions are the pastoral southern Free State including such districts as Bethulie, Boshoff, most of the Bloemfontein district, Edenburg, Fauresmith, Jacobsdal and Philippolis. The second region is that area in the east, along the Caledon River, the so-called 'Conquered Territory'. Included in this region are the districts of Ficksburg, Ladybrand, Rouxville, Smithfield, Wepener and Thaba 'Nchu.[16] In contrast, the third region, the northern Free State, is a primarily arable region and includes such districts as Bethlehem, the other parts of the Bloemfontein district, Frankfort, Harrismith, Heilbron, Hoopstad, Kroonstad, Lindley, Senekal, Vrede, Vredefort and Winburg.

The most pronounced distinction between the three regions was to be found in the eastern Free State. Here the fertile grainlands presented some farmers with the opportunity to generate and accumulate capital, whilst others were rapidly dispossessed. In the 'wheat granary' of the republic, agricultural land was the most expensive, and consequently farms were smaller and more closely settled than elsewhere in the Free State.

In his work *De ondergang van een wereld* (1903) J. Visscher, the Dutch socialist who was subsequently to become editor of *The Friend*, described the process of class formation in this region. He pointed to the emergence some thirty years before the South African War, of a class of wealthy farmers whom he called *heerenboeren* or gentlemen farmers. According to Visscher, the wealth and security conferred by fertile landholdings in the east led to the growth of a class distinguished from the other Free Staters. He pointed to the acculturation of this class, to their overseas education and to the adoption of the English language in their homes, as a reflection of a more sophisticated and cosmopolitan outlook.

By the time the South African War broke out, societal transformation was so advanced in this region that it had little in common with either the pre-industrial past or its politics, in the form of republicanism. As a result, the highest percentage of 'protected burghers' during the war was to be found amongst the burghers in this region attempting to protect their assets. Of the six eastern districts some 53,1 per cent or over half the population fell into this category.[17] The east was to remain to a large extent an observer in the rebellion.

The southern Free State was also a region which experienced profound social dislocation prior to the war. Here the close proximity of the diamond fields and the opening up of large internal markets led to far-reaching social transformation. The collapse of the hunting/trading/trekking economy by the 1890s,

together with the pastoral nature of farming in the region which required greater investment to succeed, led to differentiation in status and wealth, and to landlessness becoming 'a decisive determining factor in the process of class differentiation'.[18] In the south the larger capitalised farmer was favoured over his poorer brethren. This was because of the pastoral nature of farming which is both capital intensive and risk laden. The Free State was subject to recurrent droughts which, in this type of agriculture, 'destroy not only the cost of labour of one year, as in arable farming, but also a considerable part of the capital'.[19] The smaller farmers whose capital was wholly tied up in their stock were particularly vulnerable to natural depredation, and to the loss of their land should they lose their animals. In addition, the pastoral nature of agriculture in this region meant that only wealthier farmers, capable of affording the relatively high stock prices, were able to expand their operations to take advantage of the Kimberley and Witwatersrand markets.

Rural transformation was an ongoing process in the southern Free State. As early as the 1850s the economic boom in sheep farming encouraged accumulation and dispossession.[20] In later decades the process was hastened by the influx of wealthier farmers from the Cape and eastern Free State, attracted by the market potential of pastoral agriculture in the wake of the mineral revolution.[21] Dispossession thus occurred over a long period. Prior to the 1890s the availability of cheap land elsewhere meant that resistance to the process of rural transformation was minimised by the out-migration of marginal farmers. Looking back over the process of rural transformation and dispossession in the southern Free State, the census of 1920 noted 'the decrease in population ... could only be attributed to the fact that certain of the more prosperous farmers have bought up all the farms coming into the market during the past few years and used them as cattle farms, thus displacing one or more European families ... the chief factor was the tendency of farms to change hands at high prices and to come under the control of progressive farmers.'[22]

Following the war, the process of accumulation and dispossession accelerated in the south. Land hunger encouraged a new wave of settlers, whilst speculation and government land purchases drove up prices. Between 1904 and 1911 the Free State as a whole experienced a 29,6 per cent increase in white rural population, and a 9,12 per cent increase in urban population.[23] Yet after 1911, even this enormous influx could not mask the exodus of farmers from the southern districts. Between 1911 and 1921 each of the southern districts recorded a decrease of more than 10 per cent in their white population.[24]

During this period many marginal farmers, 'bywoners' and poor whites were forced to move into the peripheral and more arid regions of the country. The pull of lower land prices and the harsh conditions in these less fertile regions

led to their becoming pools of discontented Free Staters, nurturing grievances against a government which they believed had failed them. It was these areas, along with the northern Free State, which were to go into rebellion. Between 1904 and 1911 the population of Kenhardt in the north-western Cape increased by 78,29 per cent, whilst the population of the south-western Transvaal including such areas as Lichtenburg and Wolmaransstad increased by 40,43 per cent.[25] Discussing the influx of Free Staters into the Lichtenburg District, the postmaster told the rebellion commission: 'About that time a number of Free Staters trekked into the Lichtenburg district, and greatly influenced political opinion there. That was in 1914. Ground was then being sold at unprecedented high prices in the Free State, and they were selling out and buying twice as much land with the money in Lichtenburg as they had in the Free State. They also brought their Free State ideas with them of course ... I think the influx of Free Staters brought the people over to the rebels' side. Of course every Free Stater brought into the district was against the Botha government.'[26]

Resistance to social transformation did not surface in the southern and eastern Free State, this process having taken place gradually during the fifty years of white settlement prior to the South African War. In the north, however, the unfavourable consequences of capitalist development emerged suddenly and starkly after the war and were magnified by a threatening economic environment.

The northern Free State with its largely arable agriculture was the most backward region prior to the South African War. Neither the discovery of diamonds nor the Rand goldfields had shaken the area out of its lethargy. In the 1890s much of the produce arriving on the Rand 'was still in fact the produce of Basutoland' despite the fact that the northern Free State was the closest Free State region to the Witwatersrand.[27]

The capitalisation of agriculture which occurred in the rest of the Free State was more limited in the north. This was because prior to the 1880s there was only a small market, at Harrismith, for the arable produce of the north.[28] Poor roads and competition from black producers in Basutoland, and white producers in the 'Conquered Territory', limited the opportunities offered by the diamond fields. This, in turn, restricted societal dislocation and provided the landed and landless in these districts with a more secure environment. This meant that while a class of *heerenboeren* did not emerge, neither did a class of white proletarians. The region's class composition was somehow frozen but the most common member was the poor 'bywoner'. The resident magistrate of Lindley, when discussing the population of his district, wrote, 'There is no doubt that this is one of the poorest districts in the Colony, the majority of the population being 'bywoners'.'[29] Those who lived in the Wilge River subdivi-

sion, for instance, which included parts of the Frankfort, Bethlehem, Vrede and Harrismith districts were referred to as 'Riemlanders', a term which was synonymous with their being 'Takhare', or poor backwoods people.[30]

The fact that this region was less sundered by societal transformation is also revealed by the greater commitment amongst northerners to republicanism during the war. Vredefort had the smallest number of 'protected burghers' in the republic, some 9 per cent of the population were of this class – thereafter Kroonstad with 16 per cent, Lindley 17 with per cent and Vrede with 17,5 per cent 'protected burghers'. Three districts had higher proportions of 'protected burghers': Harrismith 19 per cent, Bethlehem 25 per cent and Winburg with 28 per cent.[31] However, the reasons for the higher percentages in these districts was due to the presence of the 'Prinsloo surrenderers'. On 29 July 1900 General Marthinus Prinsloo surrendered to the British along with some 3 000 burghers, mainly northern Free Staters. Ordinarily these men would have been classified ex-combatants or 'ex-burghers', but they fell within the terms of an amnesty offered by Lord Roberts, and thus became entitled to consideration as 'protected burghers'. Their position being unique does nothing to undermine the view that the north showed a greater commitment to the republican cause in the South African War, than the rest of the Free State.

Rural transformation and social dislocation in the OFS; the growing post-war crisis in the northern Free State

In the twelve years from the end of the war to the Rebellion, the northern Free State became subject to intense pressures as rural transformation accelerated. The capitalisation of this arable region, made possible by the potential of the Witwatersrand market, led to a rise in land values, to the crystallisation of classes and to increasing dispossession. At the same time a conflux of factors specific to the nature of arable farming in the north also undermined existing society. In the past under-capitalised farmers and the landless had long found their means of survival in land-subdivision and black sharecropping. Following the war, however, these former societal supports were to evolve into factors precipitating dispossession.

In the post-war period subdivision amongst heirs according to Roman Dutch law increased, despite the repeal of such legislation in 1901. Impetus was given to subdivision by deaths of landowners during the war, and by the need for liquidity after the war.[32] Yet, more often than not, subdivision in the post-war economic climate was a short-term expedient purchased at the cost of long-term security. Smaller units were frequently uneconomical for those marginal farmers unable to move away from traditional extensive farming methods. The

final step on the road to dispossession was often the bonding of subdivided properties. This left farmers dependent on the prevailing economic climate, which became increasingly harsh during this period. As landownership became more insecure, sharecropping turned into a means of survival for marginal farmers. With the intense need for capital and labour in the post-war period, sharecropping offered a modicum of income for a minimum of effort and expense. It was now that white 'bywoners' were being dispossessed to make way for black labourers, their families and stock. During this period, however, a labour shortage threatened many of the smaller farmers, because the larger farmers and land companies were in a better position to attract and retain labour.

The situation intensified after Union, when political agitation began for legislation to restrict the independence and prosperity of black peasants. This agitation was initiated by larger farmers, who sought to pry loose the reserves of black labour tied up on the extensive holdings of land companies. This agitation, however, also posed a threat to the great mass of little men; the smaller landowners on subdivided farms, the tenants and 'bywoners' for whom a supply of labour meant their security, social standing and survival on land. The 1913 Land Act with its ambiguities and inequitable application only served to add to the sense of grievance focused on the government, for failing to provide an adequate supply of labour for all.[33]

A variety of other pressures were to assail farmers in the north. A continuous period, from 1910 onwards, of prolonged drought, severe hailstorms, loss of crops and stock, left agriculturalists unable to meet their debt repayments. The distressed economic climate, which developed as a result of the 1913/14 labour unrest and fear of war in Europe, led to the money market calling in unserviced bonds. Concurrently, produce prices slumped and consumer prices escalated. The rapidly deteriorating conditions led to pleas for government support. A state moratorium on debt was called for, and the government was warned that 'people who are in debt and cannot pay become quite desperate when sued'.[34]

The government was not prepared to intervene at this stage, although Parliament was set to discuss the situation during the disrupted 1914 session. In denying any tangible form of assistance to farmers with only mortgage foreclosures ahead, the government was ensuring that they had little to lose in rebellion. The escape route of selling up and migrating elsewhere was also denied to struggling farmers once the money market crashed in 1913. Thereafter buyers were unable to obtain bonds. Plummeting land prices resulting from the credit squeeze meant that sales would not realise the capital to cover existing bonds. These costly bonds had been negotiated during earlier years

of land hunger and price inflation. It was now that starvation became visible and labourers were for hire at 2s 6d per day, where poor whites had formerly refused to work for 5s per day.[35]

In their desperate search for some form of political support large numbers of Free Staters turned to the English-dominated Labour Party which was forcefully promoting economic grievances. 'Remarkable progress' was achieved in the Free State, and in the Transvaal, where Labour gained a majority in the provincial elections.[36] The appeal of this party was to wane, however, when it dropped its 'bread and butter' focus, in order to reassert its pro-Imperial sentiments following the outbreak of the First World War. The political success of this predominantly English-speaking urban party on the Free State platteland reveals the desperation of Afrikaners alienated from the government and threatened with dispossession by a deteriorating economic environment.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that the established interpretation, portraying the Rebellion as the patriotic response of a homogeneous republic, united by a hatred of all things British, is largely monocausal. According to this interpretation the rebels were people prepared to sacrifice everything for their ideals. Yet, closer examination of the regions which went into rebellion reveals that the predominant motive was not only self-sacrifice but also self-preservation. The rank-and-file rebels were largely motivated by a determination to preserve their very existence against the destructive effects of societal transformation. They were people forced into rebellion by desperation, trying to avoid losing a hold on the land, and being forced to migrate and become labourers in the towns. As contemporaries noted, many had lost what little they had, and rebellion did not seem such a serious thing to desperate men.

Chapter 3

'God het ons arm mense die houtjies gegee': poor white woodcutters in the southern Cape forest area, c. 1900–1939

Albert Grundlingh

This chapter focuses on a particular group of 'poor whites' who eked out an existence in the southern Cape forest belt. Although their history goes back to the eighteenth century, this overview concentrates mainly on the first four decades of the twentieth century. An attempt is made, in the first place, to outline the material conditions under which the woodcutters lived, and secondly, to analyse those forces which to a large measure shaped the socio-economic environment and context of their lives.

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The indigenous forest of the southern Cape, located along a narrow coastal strip and stretching for about 200 kilometres between George and Humansdorp, was the main source of income for generations of woodcutters. Knysna, between George and Humansdorp, was the principal centre of the timber industry. Despite high rainfall, poor quality soil militated against agricultural and pastoral diversification. Consequently, until well into the twentieth century the economic life and structure of Knysna revolved around the timber trade. Deep valleys and gorges, nearly impenetrable forests and the steep Outeniqua Mountains rendered access difficult and contributed to the relative isolation of the area in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was only with the construction of a railway line in 1928, and tarred roads during World War II, that this situation changed markedly.

From the earliest days of the Dutch East India Company and white settlement at the Cape, there was a demand for timber. Once the forests in the vicinity of the Peninsula had been depleted, attempts were made to obtain timber from further afield. The eastward movement of the Dutch colonists facilitated this

search and in 1711, with the initial settlement of the Outeniqua Mountain area, news of vast forests in the area was relayed to the authorities in Cape Town. The inaccessibility of the area handicapped trade, but after the completion of a road from Swellendam and the establishment of an official 'timber post' in 1772, the situation began to improve and there was a gradual influx of settlers intent on making their living from the forests. The founding of towns in the Cape interior during the nineteenth century increased the demand for wood for the construction of buildings, and the trade also benefited from the Great Trek which boosted demand for oxwagons. The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and gold on the Reef as well as the expansion of the railway network acted as a further powerful stimulus, since timber from the George–Knysna area was used for mining props and railway sleepers.[1]

The timber trade was intimately connected with the general growth of the South African economy, and the twentieth-century industrial expansion of the country ensured an increasing market for timber – especially during the First World War, when South Africa was cut off from foreign imports and local manufacturing developed rapidly. Subsequently the timber industry experienced serious fluctuations, particularly during the depression of the early thirties, but there was always the demand, albeit limited, for railway sleepers to fall back on.[2]

The favourable market for timber during the First World War coincided with the increase of the white population in the George–Knysna–Humansdorp districts from 18 623 in 1911 to 23 179 in 1921. Many of the newcomers to the area were evicted 'bywoners' from the semi-arid neighbouring Karoo districts across the Outeniqua Mountains. These districts (Prince Albert, Willowmore, and Oudtshoorn in particular) experienced a severe economic crisis after the ostrich feather slump of 1913/14 and a crippling drought in 1916 so that the surviving larger landowners were disinclined to keep 'bywoners' on their farms. The forest and coastal belt was a haven for such poor whites from the Karoo.[3]

Moreover, besides the opportunity of earning a living as woodcutters, it was also in another way relatively easier for the poverty-stricken fugitives from the Karoo to survive in this area than in the unyielding territory across the mountain. As a local notable testified to the 1920 unemployment commission:

> George is a poor man's district, it is the home of the sweet potato on which the poor generally live ... The poor can live on sweet potatoes which cost them very little, and the result is that people are apt to flock in from the poorer districts in times of drought for that reason. At present we are, I might say, almost full up with people who have come in during the last few years owing to the severe droughts in the Karoo districts.[4]

The sweet potato was easy to cultivate in the sandy soil, and it became the staple diet of the destitute classes in the area who were unable to afford more nutritional food.[5]

There were various, and at times overlapping categories of poor whites in the forest region. Some were in state employ on forest settlements such as Jonkersberg and Bergplaats in the George district, and Karatara in the Knysna district, while others worked the forests independently and only occasionally assisted on the plantations as casual day-labourers. The forestry settlements were started during and shortly after the First World War as relief schemes for the urban unemployed and the rural casualties of drought. In January 1926 there were 1 865 white men, women and children on these settlements. The men, totalling 363, were used mainly in the construction of roads to open up plantation areas and in preparing the ground for afforestation schemes. Married men received 7s 6d per day and single men 5s 10d. These wages were somewhat higher than the approximately 5s that white day-labourers obtained in the area.[6]

Woodcutters working an assegai tree into pieces from which spokes were prepared (Millwood House, Knysna)

The establishment of these forestry settlements was not simply inspired by humanitarianism. Karatara and Bergplaats were founded in 1922 in direct response to the strike of that year on the Rand. Removing the 'dangerous classes' from the 'pernicious influences' in Johannesburg and resettling them elsewhere was a deliberate state strategy to assist in blunting the strong challenge from the white working class on the Rand. In Parliament, General J. C. Smuts clearly explained his objectives:

> I think it will ... be to the advantage of the country to move away from the Witwatersrand, at any rate, part of the population that has accumulated there in recent years. I think we are all agreed that the Rand is not the best environment for the thousands of people who have flocked there from the country side ... The best kindness, the greatest service the Government could do to these people would be to take them away. Take them away to irrigation works elsewhere, settle them on afforestation colonies ... Get them away from surroundings which have been very bad for them and worse for the country.[7]

Officially the forestry settlements were considered the ideal environment for the 'rehabilitation' of 'misguided' and 'fractious' elements on the Rand. On these settlements, which were 'off the beaten track and amidst the most beautiful scenic surroundings', the settlers were placed under the 'guidance of persons interested in their welfare'. Under these 'idyllic' conditions it was hoped that they would make a fresh start with 'a healthy outlook on life'.[8] It is doubtful whether disgruntled ex-urban dwellers found their new rural setting quite as congenial, and it is equally unlikely that they 'reformed' according to the wishes and desires of the state. The regular flouting of regulations and instances of abscondence seem to indicate that the wishes of the state remained unfulfilled.[9] Others who stayed might also have found the discipline and strictly controlled work environment irksome and even oppressive, but were prepared to tolerate these as the price of security and a degree of permanency.

However, the majority of poor whites in the area found themselves outside the plantation settlements. They constituted the bulk of the woodcutting population and were largely dependent on the indigenous forests for their livelihood. Many of them viewed the forests as a providential gift; one woodcutter expressed this general sentiment simply and evocatively: 'God het ons arm mense die houtjies gegee.'[10] Some of them were descendants of the early eighteenth-century Dutch pioneers, while others were relative newcomers who, having failed to make a living elsewhere, turned to woodcutting as a last resort. Among the woodcutters there were also a few descendants of British immigrants who had been unable to succeed on the land, as well as a small

number of Italian immigrants and their descendants. The latter had originally been brought out by the Cape government from Turin in 1879 as part of an ill-conceived scheme to start a silk industry near Knysna. The scheme had failed, mainly because of a lack of mulberry leaves to feed the silkworms, and in course of time some of these immigrants drifted into the ranks of the woodcutter community.[11]

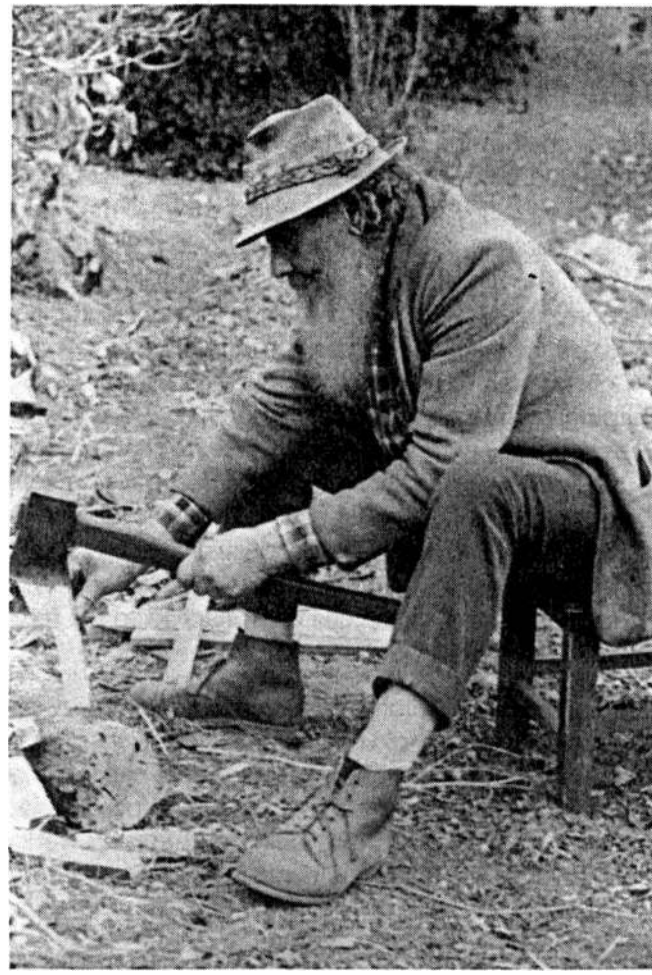
In 1913, the Forest Act required that all woodcutters working in the indigenous state forests had to be registered. Some 1 200 men did so and no new names were allowed on the list. A registered woodcutter was officially supposed to derive his main source of income from working the timber allotted to him by the state, else his name could be deleted from the list and his licence revoked. A woodcutters' board, consisting of the magistrate and a number of local luminaries, closely monitored the situation in co-ordination with the Forestry Department. In addition, any woodcutter found guilty of contravening one of the numerous forestry regulations could be deprived of the right to work in the forests. Natural attrition, and the actions of the board, meant that the number of registered men had dwindled to 557 by 1929.

Besides the registered woodcutters in state forests, there were those who worked in privately owned forests. Estimates of the number of these unregistered men vary, but in the late twenties they probably slightly exceeded the registered woodcutters. Whereas the average annual income of registered woodcutters in the twenties was between 30 and 40, unregistered woodcutters were generally even poorer. At times they were obliged to act as assistants for those working in the state forests.[12]

Very few woodcutters actually owned fixed property. Most of the registered woodcutters rented small plots at a nominal fee from the state. Unregistered woodcutters on private estates usually had to work the surrounding forests on behalf of the landowner, and they were liable to be evicted if they tried to dispose of the wood on their own. In general the woodcutters did very little in the way of cultivating other produce for the market. The smallness of their plots, the poor quality of the soil, lack of capital, and the limited local market (which was in any event supplied by the larger farmers) meant that they resorted to subsistence farming, with sweet potatoes as the staple product. For their cash income they remained entirely dependent on the forests.[13]

The woodcutters' inability to farm commercially, and the seasonal nature of the forestry activities, often led to accusations of laziness and indolence, qualities which were sometimes regarded as endemic to poor whites in general.[14] In reality, however, the work the woodcutters performed and the conditions under

Old woodcutter plying his trade (Millwood House, Knysna)



which they toiled were most arduous. 'Their work, be it felling, slipping or sawing is laborious in the extreme,' a sympathetic observer wrote in 1911:

> ... hard, rough, exhausting work, for the most part in a damp cold forest where the rainfall is excessive, where the paths are pools of mud and slush, where the undergrowth is forever damp and wet, where the sun is forever hidden. In sweat besodden clothes they toil and sleep and sleep and toil. A more fatiguing work, a more unhealthy occupation cannot be imagined. It is often in the most inaccessible places that the woodcutter has to conduct operations: along the slopes of steep mountains, in the bottom of deep kloofs, he has to fight his battle with the sturdy, unmanageable monsters of the woods. To see a heavy log slipped out of a deep gully

and dragged to the sawpit, inch by inch, by long teams of crawling, groaning oxen, along slippery, slushy, almost impassable slip paths, is a never to be forgotten sight.[15]

After a spell in the forest, the woodcutter came home to little more than a corrugated iron or wooden shack, consisting of two rooms with a clay floor and a kitchen. His large family – in the thirties the average family consisted of eight children – meant unhygienic, overcrowded living conditions and often hunger. The woodcutter nevertheless considered his male off-spring as an economic asset who, after a rudimentary schooling, could at the age of 14 or 15 years, or even earlier, assist him in the forest. The main task of the elder daughters was to help their mother with the burden of childcare and housekeeping. In the early twentieth century very few women accepted wage labour – they usually married early and remained part of the woodcutter community – but in the twenties, in the era of the Pact government, an increasing number of daughters left home either for domestic service in town, or for factory work in the larger and expanding industrial centres such as Port Elizabeth. In general, though, the woodcutter families lived an isolated and insular life, cut off from 'civilising' influences and attached to the forest and their particular life-style.[16]

It is important to emphasise that desperately poor as the woodcutters undoubtedly were, they did not represent the lowest stratum of the contemporary poor white population. They were not in the same category as the 'dangerous lumpenproletariat class' which existed on crime, handouts or both. The woodcutters were self-employed, willing and able to work, but often lacked the necessary capital, training and, most important, the opportunity to benefit from their labours.[17]

Although the 'woodcutter problem' was comparatively small in relation to the overall 'poor white question', which involved some 300 000 people in the early thirties, the woodcutters were nevertheless a distinct feature of the social composition of the area. In the early twentieth century three classes can be discerned amongst the whites in the forest belt: firstly, the landowners, forest-owners, merchants and professional men; secondly, and below them, those in permanent employ as artisans, clerks and other intermediate functionaries; and thirdly at the bottom of the social pyramid ('at a judicious distance and knowing how to keep their place') the poor whites. There was a considerable social distance between the underprivileged and the more well-to-do, the latter often treating the poor with contemptuous disdain.[18] The wealthy and the destitute lived in two worlds as if they had nothing in common, but in a historical-materialist sense the social relationship between the two was inti-

mately intertwined and riven with conflict. There was, in fact, as will be seen, a direct correlation between the riches of the one and the poverty of the other.

If there was a growing gap in conventional social terms between the wealthy and poor in white society, there was much less of a racial divide between poor whites and the coloured population in the area. Of the total number of registered woodcutters in 1913 (some 1 200 men), about 195 men (17 per cent) were considered coloured. There was no difference in the material conditions between the coloured and poor white woodcutters. Independent coloured woodcutters worked under the same circumstances and regulations as whites in the forests and shared the same physical privations as well as outlook on their work and environment.[19] Occasionally, whites might have employed coloureds to help them, but the reverse also occurred. In the immediate aftermath of the South African War, for instance, discharged coloured muleteers from the British army moved into the Knysna area from mission stations at Bredasdorp, Mossel Bay and Bethelsdorp, and in an attempt to benefit from rising timber prices at the time, hired local poor white woodcutters to assist them in collecting wood.[20] Admittedly some white woodcutters might have resented this fact,[21] but ultimately hard material realities blurred and undermined attitudes of presumed superiority. One expression of this communality is to be found in a petition of 1907 to the Cape government calling for a greater allocation of trees, and signed by 118 woodcutters of whom 63 were coloured. Significantly the petition closed with an appeal for assistance, 'whether we are English, Dutch or Coloured'.[22]

Coloureds and poor whites furthermore shared the same residential areas. At Suurvlakte in the George district, at Ouplaas and Soutrivier close to Knysna, and at the Crags, Harkerville and Kraaibos deeper in the forest, both groups occupied their smallholdings on the same conditions, and according to an investigation in 1933, lived 'cheek by jowl' and regarded each other as 'complete equals'. Under these conditions marriages across the colour bar might, at times, have meant social advancement for whites. In 1933 it was reported 'that there are white girls who are only too glad to become the wives of coloured men, whom they have known since childhood and who were more prosperous than the girls' own white parents'.[23]

This situation was viewed with considerable alarm by the moral watchdogs of the Afrikaner *volk*, such as *dominees* and others who involved themselves in the issue. Their concern about the 'fallen fellow-Afrikaners' became an important element in the general response to the poor white question in this region. Testifying before the select commission on white unemployment as early as 1913, the Rev. A. D. Luckhoff, who was particularly interested in the woodcutters, considered the coloureds a major obstacle in the advancement of the

Tree shelter or 'skerm'. Bushcutters went out on Sunday evening or Monday morning to work, returning on Friday afternoon. They lived in 'skerms' made of corrugated iron built into a tree in case of prowling elephants (Millwood House, Knysna)

poor whites. 'The question would not be so urgent if we did not have the coloured population here,' he argued, 'but the fact of our having the coloured population here and the fact that they are advancing in every direction ... makes the situation so very serious. If we did not have that question, the poor white problem would not be so serious. It would almost solve itself.'[24] As a response, the Dutch Reformed Church initiated various relief schemes, including church settlements for the white poor only.[25] These settlements, however, only accommodated a small minority of the impoverished whites, and in the thirties the issue of the poor and their relations with the coloureds in the forest belt became part of the broader Afrikaner economic mobilisation aimed at, amongst other things, the eradication of white poverty. In particular, Dr H. F. Verwoerd, at the time professor in psychology and sociology at the University of Stellenbosch and a prominent academic during the economic 'volkskon-

gres' of 1934, emphasised the 'grave danger' of 'racial mixing' in the area and the necessity of 'racial separation' as a prerequisite for the 'upliftment' of the woodcutter population.[26] However, neither the white poor nor the coloureds were particularly perturbed about the situation, and although some of the whites moved away after they had improved their financial position, it was only in the fifties, after the advent of National Party rule, that these mixed residential areas were destroyed by official decree.

Timber merchants and woodcutters

In trying to account for the poverty of the woodcutter population, it is of little explanatory value to adopt the notion that they were 'prisoners of their culture', which implies 'that once a people has acquired a pattern of behaviour more suited to the past, once they have been imbued with values and norms of a bygone age, they can simply not adapt themselves to a modern economy'.[27] On the contrary, the impact of 'modern economy', and more specifically merchant capital in the area, had more to do with the poverty of the woodcutters than their supposed innate 'backwardness' and 'laziness'.

While accepting that merchant capital differs qualitatively from industrial capital and is involved at the level of exchange rather than the level of production,[28] in the southern Cape forest region it was, in the absence of any significant local industrial economic base, powerful enough to exert a decisive influence on social relations. Indeed, if the early Randlords on the Witwatersrand were central in the shaping of the socio-economic environment in the Transvaal and beyond, the timber merchants, sawmill owners and general dealers (often rolled into one) were the financial giants of the forests and, though on an obviously smaller scale, of comparable importance in determining the contours of the social landscape in the area.

By far the most prominent timber merchant was the firm of Thesen and Company. The Thesen family came to South Africa in 1869 from Stavanger in Norway after their shipping business in Norway had suffered badly because of the Danish–German war of 1864. Originally they had intended starting anew in New Zealand. However, after they had docked their ship, the *Albatros,* for repairs in Cape Town they came into contact with the Swedish-Norwegian consul and merchant C. A. Akerberg, who informed them about the shortage of ships along the South African coast. The interest of the head of the family, Arnt Thesen, was aroused. Akerberg put the Thesens in touch with some Cape merchants who wanted cargoes delivered along the coast, including the port of Knysna at the time. Knysna, a small town of some 200 whites at that time, is situated on a lagoon protected by a narrow channel with towering cliffs on

either side. The scenery, which is reminiscent of Norway and its fjords, appealed to the Thesens. But more importantly, the economic potential of the large forests close by attracted them and in April 1870 the family decided to settle in Knysna. They established a profitable relationship with Akerberg who handled the timber carried from Knysna, and in turn supplied the Thesens with general merchandise for the area.

When Arnt Thesen died in 1875, the leadership of the company passed to the fourth son, Charles Wilhelm, who vigorously expanded and diversified the business: a whaling venture was established, additional ships were purchased, large tracts of land suitable for farming and tree-planting were acquired, and a short railway line was built into the Knysna forests for the transportation of timber. Charles Thesen also extended his influence in other directions. At the age of twenty-five he became a member of the first municipal council of Knysna and later served as mayor for two periods (1890–1893 and 1921–1924) and at times also acted as a justice of the peace as well as chairman of the local chamber of commerce. In addition he served on the divisional council for many years, and between 1925 and 1928 was chairman. He also had a brief spell as member of the Cape Provincial Council.[29] Under Charles Thesen's direction, and especially through his combination of extensive interests with an array of public positions, the company became a powerful and dominating force in the region. Not without reason it was asserted in 1939 that the Thesens had 'the district in the hollow of their hands'.[30]

Charles Thesen pursued profits single-mindedly and relentlessly. 'As a timber merchant', he frankly stated in 1920, his sole concern was 'to turn over the money as quickly as one can'.[31] Not surprisingly, he was noted for his 'shrewd mastery of detail and money'.[32] More research needs to be done on the financial growth of the Thesen company, but in the early 1970s it was a multi-million rand concern.[33] However, the accumulation of such wealth, with the timber trade as its main and original base, was not accomplished without casualties. Much of the wealth which accrued to the Thesens and other smaller timber merchants did so at the expense of the woodcutter population. Between 1776 and 1939 the forests yielded timber to the value of at least £50 million and the bulk of this amount was obtained in the period 1880–1939, which coincided with the emergence of the timber merchants.[34] Very little of this money found its way into the pockets of the woodcutters, and the timber merchants and other middle-men were the main beneficiaries. In 1911, in an unusually candid statement, H. Ryan, assistant district forest officer at Knysna, made the connection between capital accumulation and indigency in the forest region abundantly clear. Charles Thesen, according to Ryan, was 'the principal member of a class which, by its absorption of the profits attending

the timber industry, has been chiefly responsible for the impoverishment of the woodcutter'.[35] Equally pertinent was the observation, 27 years later, of A. J. Werth, National Party member for George, that the 'firm of Thesen are people who want to buy the timber as cheaply as possible. They are the people who throughout the whole history have never yet done anything to help these people [woodcutters] out of the forest. Their object is to get rich out of timber and they have, as a matter of fact, succeeded.'[36]

There were considerable profits to be made in the timber trade. In his evidence before the unemployment commission of 1920 R. Burton, chief conservator of forests in the area, explicitly stated that 'the profit of the merchant is a most substantial one'. He further explained that 'if you would take in Johannesburg the price of wagon wood sold there, and contrast that with the prices paid to the woodcutter here, you would see that there is a very large margin of profit'. Upon being asked whether he had made sufficient allowance for the transportation and other costs incurred by the merchant, he replied: 'I have taken that all into consideration, and I still consider that the profit made by ... the timber merchant is a most substantial one.'[37] In 1929 it was calculated that the timber merchants worked on a profit margin of at least 400 per cent.[38]

The established timber merchants like the Thesens had a virtual monopoly over the timber trade, and went to great lengths to protect their dominance. Attempts on the part of others to break their stranglehold met with uncompromising opposition. For instance, in 1927 J. van Reenen, a local farmer, erected a sawmill on his property and planned to bypass the merchants by organising the woodcutters into a co-operative society, encouraging them to sell their wood to him instead of to the established merchants. The woodcutters would have benefited in that a percentage of the profit would have been distributed amongst the members of the proposed co-operative. This scheme, which had the potential to erode the interests of the established merchants, ran into formidable problems even before it could be launched. Through the 'powerful influence' of Thesen in particular, the threat of competition was swiftly eliminated. Van Reenen found that his credit at the Standard Bank suddenly dried up, and that the manager of the other bank in town, the National Bank, also refused him credit facilities. It later transpired that the established merchants had closed ranks and exerted such pressure that the two bank managers, not wishing to antagonise their largest clients, were disinclined to assist Van Reenen.[39]

It is also necessary to look at the system of exchange which enabled the merchants to keep the woodcutters in perpetual bondage. Although the licensed woodcutter was entitled to buy standing timber from the government,

he had to compete with the agents of timber merchants and mill owners who obtained concessions to buy timber at the annual auction sales.

This resulted in the agents regularly outbidding the woodcutter. In order to acquire trees the woodcutter then had to turn to the merchant who only ceded his right to the timber on the stiffest conditions. Usually these conditions meant that the merchant was not only compensated for the auction dues and license fees which he incorporated into the agreement, but that the woodcutter was also bound to deliver the timber (either in log form or processed into required articles like felloes, spokes or naves) to the merchant. In addition the timber merchants often doubled up as shopkeepers. By making cash advances or allowing credit for general merchandise in return for a substantial supply of timber, the shopkeeper-cum-merchant's hold over the woodcutter was further strengthened.[40]

The way in which merchant capital operated on the ground clearly left the woodcutter in a most vulnerable position. Rev. Luckhoff vividly (if somewhat ungrammatically) described in 1911 how the merchants benefited at every turn:

> The woodmerchant and millowner are the parties for ever on the safe side, which ever have a big pull over the competing woodcutter. They have the pull over the woodcutter when the latter comes to them for advances with which to buy timber in the forest, and when they can make their own conditions. They have the pull again when the woodcutter comes to them with his finished and worked up wood as to the only market. They have the pull a third time when, after deducting the advances, or the licences and auction dues taken over from them by the woodcutter, they can give the balance in retailed foodstuffs that have been bought at wholesale rates.

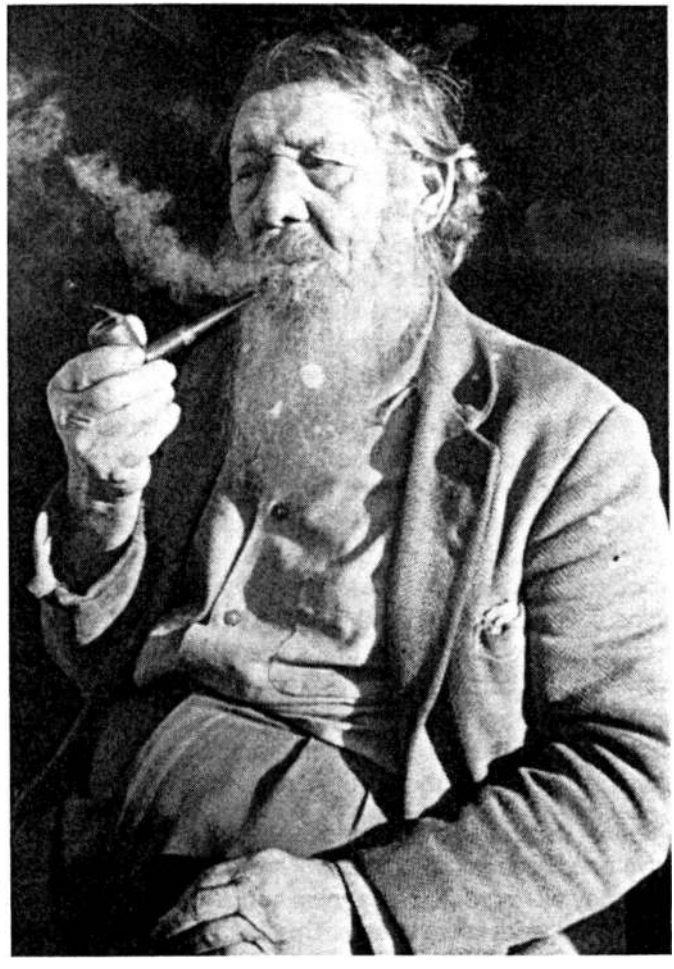
The effect of this relationship was, Luckhoff continued,

> ... that the woodcutter is for ever under, and under he must remain so long as the existing conditions remain. He is continually in debt, he falls deeper and deeper into debt, he is forever in the power of the merchant and there is little or no prospect of getting out of bondage.[41]

It is abundantly clear that the material conditions of the woodcutters were largely determined and shaped by the operation of merchant capital in the area.

This was, in the main, a development which occurred after the discovery of minerals in the interior and the subsequent growth of industrial South Africa. To a great extent woodcutters did their own marketing before diamonds and gold transformed the South African economy. During that period they had

been correspondingly better off. An elderly woodcutter remembered in 1933 that in earlier days, before about 1886, they used to load their wagons with wood which they sold at Riversdale, Swellendam and as far afield as Worcester. 'One wagon brought in £50, and a trek of 18 wagons thus meant £900. Those were the days,' he recalled.[42] However, few woodcutters possessed sufficient capital and resources to meet the increased demands and higher distribution costs which accompanied the changing economic order after the 1870s and 1880s. Although some of them did try, even as late as 1913, to market their own wood,[43] the emerging timber merchants who had the necessary means and contacts rapidly displaced those woodcutters who marketed their timber independently.



Old woodcutter (George Museum. Photograph: Dr F. le Roux)

Despite the debilitating effect of merchant capital on the woodcutter population, they showed a marked resistance to wage labour. They 'proudly declined to accept employment, preferring to continue work in their beloved forests with ... a very small income – but as independent operators'.44 Through their spirit of independence, however tenuous this might have been in objective terms, they managed to stave off proletarianisation. 'Forest workers love the forest and are proud of the fact that they are not daily-paid men. That is the ... one thing which still makes them strong in the midst of poverty,' A. J. Werth observed in 1939.[45] Similarly, they spurned state-initiated attempts to relocate them on the various land-settlements developed for poor whites during the twenties.[46]

The merchants were not the only group with whom the woodcutters had to contend. Throughout the four decades under review the Department of Forestry was responsible for the conservation of the area, and it exerted considerable pressure to displace the woodcutters, claiming that the forests were incapable of supporting the existing number of woodcutters and that their uneconomical methods were rapidly depleting the indigenous forests. The struggle between the state and the woodcutters can be dated back to at least 1913 with the introduction of the Forest Act. One clause, mentioned already, determined that all woodcutters had to be registered and that no new names could be added after the initial registration. Since the number of people on the list declined annually and additional registrations were disallowed, the registration clause marked the beginning of the end for the woodcutter population working in the indigenous forests.

Another clause introduced a lottery system which replaced the existing auctioning of trees and this meant that each woodcutter would be assured of at least one tree. It was hoped that the lottery system of allocating trees might increase the woodcutters' income, but in actual fact it had little effect on the powerful hold of the merchants over the woodcutters.[47] In effect then, the woodcutters failed to benefit from either clauses of the 1913 Act. Any possible gains they might have made through the new allocation system were quickly eroded through the power of the merchants, and the registration system also worked to their detriment. In real terms, a slow war of attrition was being fought against the woodcutter community. The intention of the 1913 Act was subsequently made clear by a former director of forestry when he wrote that 'the ultimate object was the eventual extinction of the woodcutters'.[48]

The final demise of the woodcutters came in 1939 when the number of those registered had dwindled to 256. Through the Woodcutters' Annuity Act of that year they were granted an annual annuity of £25 and at the same time forfeited the right to work in the forests. This Act, A. J. Werth noted in Parliament in 1939,

'was the end of a chapter of history in those parts, and it terminates an old established settlement of people ... They are an interesting class of people with a highly developed sense of independence and self-respect. But now ... they are placed in the humiliating position, according to their conception, of labourers.'[49]

The Department of Forestry, however, rejoiced that the 1939 Act brought to 'a close the long drawn out struggle between the forest service and the woodcutters'. It was not an easy victory though; through the 'ballot box', as forestry officials ruefully admitted, the woodcutters had for three decades successfully politicised their own interests.[50] The woodcutter community was a sufficiently important interest group in the constituency for politicians to take note of their demands. In the 1915 election, for example, the woodcutter vote was seen to be a crucial factor which assisted the National Party in winning the seat from the South African Party.[51] The woodcutters had, not surprisingly, very little conception of broader national issues and were almost exclusively concerned with 'bread and butter' issues. On these issues the woodcutters did not hesitate to make politicians aware of the interests of the community. Thus after the advent of the Pact government in 1924, M. Bouwer, a woodcutter from the Knysna district, expressed the hope that they would not be disappointed in the new administration and that the Woodcutters' Board, controlling registration, would be more lenient. 'We always take the trouble to walk long distances to vote,' he informed General J. Kemp, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, in 1925, 'because we have always heard that things would be better if we had another Government. I hope that will be the case.'[52] Despite the fact that the woodcutters consistently voted for the National Party, their support could not be taken for granted. In the 1930s they even considered putting up an independent candidate to protect their interests.[53] This idea failed to materialise, but it emphasises their recognition of the power of the vote and their readiness to act accordingly.

The fact that the woodcutters toyed with the idea of an independent candidate also demonstrates that the National Party was not necessarily the organic representative of poor whites in the area. At best the National Party merely mediated on behalf of the woodcutters. Seen in the broader context of the thirties and the mobilisation of Afrikanerdom during these years, the National Party needed the poor whites just as much, if not more, than the poor whites needed the party. As P. le Roux has argued in a recent paper on poor whites, whatever sympathy the Nationalists might have had for poor Afrikaners, it was decidedly also in their material interest 'to be seen to be fighting the cause of the poor white'.[54] In this sense there was a degree of validity in claims of United Party spokesmen during the debate on the Woodcutters' Annuity Act of 1939

that the Nationalists who vigorously opposed the act wanted 'to pose as champions of the poor' and 'want to use the forest workers not to satisfy the needs of the workers, but ... because they [the Nationalists] have the assurance that they can depend on the support of these people'.[55]

Beyond that, it is true that the National Party accused the United Party, in the debates on the Act, of serving the 'big capitalists' in the area,[56] and that these accusations were essentially valid. However, this does not mean that the National Party was really anti-capitalistic. As both R. H. Davies and D. O'Meara have demonstrated, the National Party's espousal of 'status quo anti-capitalism' was little more than rhetorical and cynical, and the 'left face' of the party was deliberately turned to attract the 'small man' and the poor.[57]

And finally, the significance of the National Party's failure to save the woodcutters independence should not be exaggerated. Ultimately the woodcutters, despite their resilience, could not hold out indefinitely. The contours of their lives and work were shaped by potent forces which, in the final analysis, were as unstoppable as they were inimical. Indeed, 'God might have given the poor the wood', but it was a gift which others more powerful coveted in the service of Mammon.

Chapter 4

Time to trek: landless whites and poverty in the northern Natal countryside, 1902–1939

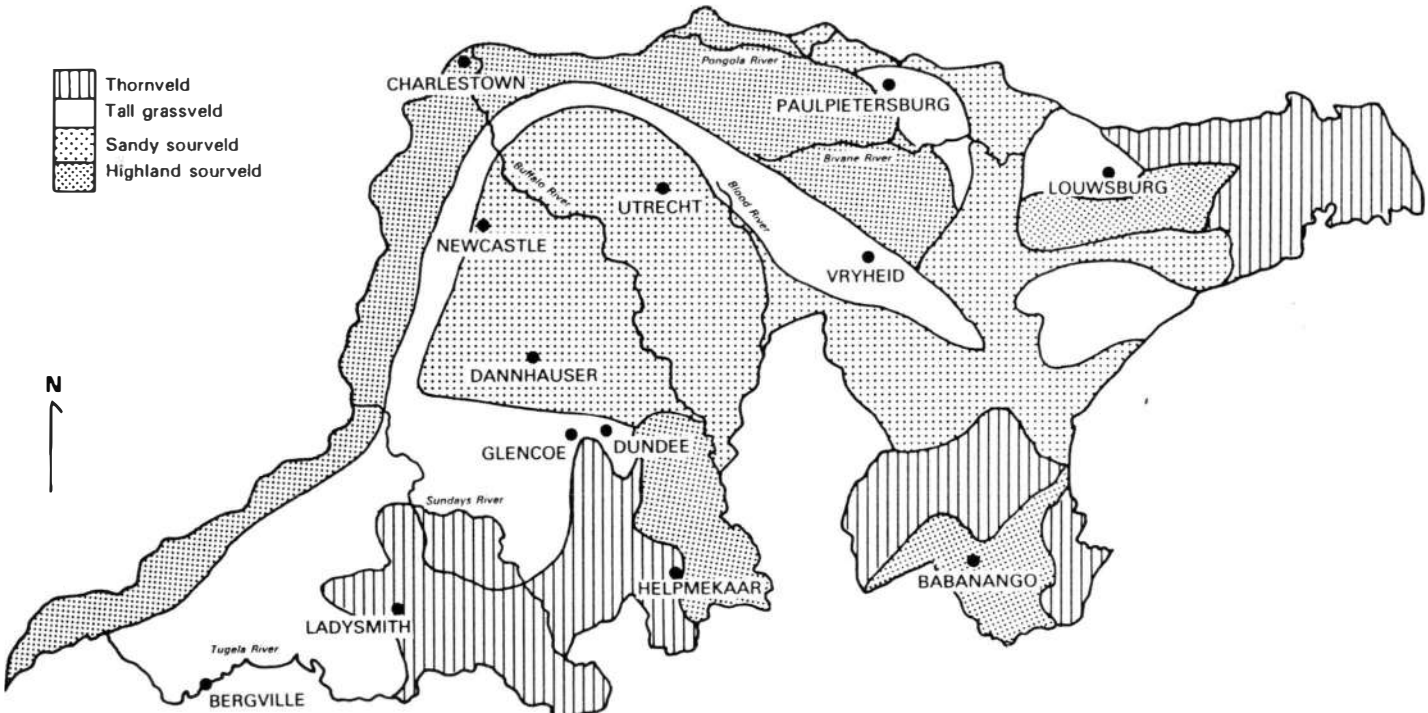
Verne Harris

Writing in 1919, W. M. Macmillan made the following statement concerning white poverty and social relations in the South African countryside: 'Neither Natal nor the Western Province, where native and coloured labour respectively are so prominent, has either much of the *bijwoner* tradition or of the peculiar "Poor White" problem ...'[1] While this might have been true of Natal as a whole, what he called 'the *bijwoner* tradition' was strong in northern Natal during the first half of this century. And, as in most parts of South Africa, northern Natal experienced acute white impoverishment in the 1930s.

The subject of whites in the early twentieth-century South African countryside presents the researcher with at least two terms which resist easy definition, namely 'poor white' and 'bywoner'. These terms have been variously defined in both popular usage and the literature. For this study I have decided not to formulate a definition of the term 'poor white' and have avoided using it as far as possible. As the Second Interim Report of the Unemployment Commission warned in 1921, 'The term "poor whites" ... is not capable of brief and comprehensive definition. It can be better described than defined.'[2] I have endeavoured to broaden its description by examining the people to whom it was applied in northern Natal. The term 'bywoner' I have avoided using altogether. This is because, like the term 'peasant', the looseness of its parameters makes it a clumsy tool for most purposes. In preference I have chosen to distinguish between twelve categories of closely defined white rural dwellers,[3] all but one of which have been incorporated into definitions of the term 'bywoner'.

In what follows I have attempted to trace the experience of both the white landless and the white poor (for the landless were not necessarily poor nor the poor necessarily landless) of northern Natal's countryside between 1902 and 1939. Of necessity I have also paid some attention to the position in the towns,

Northern Natal: veld types



to which so many rural dwellers moved in order to escape destitution. My focus is limited by the fact that the primary sources I have consulted are almost exclusively official. Few insights are given by these sources into issues like the political sympathies of the landless and the poor and the ways in which they viewed themselves, their wealthier neighbours and landlords, and the state.[4] In this chapter I have addressed two central questions: precisely what ties to the land were enjoyed by landless whites, and how did these change in the period between the end of the South African War (1902) and the start of World War II?

The land and the farmers

Northern Natal, or the northern districts of Natal, has been variously defined by administrators and scholars in this century.[5] For the purpose of this study it is regarded as that region comprising Klip River County and the territory ceded to Natal after the South African War; in other words, Natal north of the Thukela River but excluding Zululand.[6] Before considering the people who worked the land in this region, it is important to examine briefly its agro-ecology,[7] for the environment people seek to exploit always shapes them in a variety of ways.

Four veld types are to be found in northern Natal: highland sourveld, tall grassveld, sandy sourveld and thornveld. Highland sourveld is restricted to the highveld areas, which are situated in the Drakensberg foothills, the Biggarsberg range and parts of Utrecht, Paulpietersburg and Vryheid. The rainfall in these areas is good and the soils poor but deep. The vegetation is primarily a dense grass cover the nutritive value and palatability to livestock of which decreases as it matures. It is useful for grazing for only four or five months of the year. Consequently, winter grazing in the lowveld areas was important to farmers in the period under review. The tall grassveld areas, to be found primarily in the Klip River, Bergville and Utrecht districts, are characterised by a poorly distributed rainfall, soil possessing a shallow topsoil and an extremely erodable subsoil, and a grass cover of 'mixed' veld. By 'mixed' veld is meant a grass cover which is useful for grazing for about eight months in the year. Sandy sourveld, predominant in Newcastle, Dundee and Vryheid, is suitable for extensive farming only. The low rainfall is ill-distributed and unreliable. The soils are sandy and erodable, while an underlying layer of laterite causes poor drainage. Although most of its grasses are sour, burning of the veld in late summer and autumn enables it to carry livestock throughout the year. The thornveld areas of Klip River, Babanango and Ngotshe[8] are the driest in northern Natal. The rainfall is even more unreliable than in the sandy sourveld areas, while the greater intensity of its fall (thunderstorms are prevalent and

rain occurs as sharp showers), the hilly nature of the terrain (greater run-off), and the intense heat in summer all reduce its effectiveness. Frequent hailstorms are a great menace to crops, and the soils though chemically rich, generally tend to be impervious and readily eroded. These factors, together with the facts that the thornveld's sweet grasses maintain their palatability and feed value through the year and that certain other plants provide good browsing, make pastoral farming a far more attractive proposition than the growing of crops.

In terms of farming potential, the striking feature of northern Natal is its marginal nature. Predominantly suitable for only semi-intensive and extensive operations, it promises disaster as the consequence of heavy grazing and cultivation without irrigation, fertilisation and the implementation of soil conservation methods. Even today, farmers utilising advanced farming methods are frequently balked by the environment when trying to intensify their operations. Added difficulties are presented by periods of drought and locust invasion. The region experienced acute drought in 1902/03, 1913 and 1930–1936, while large areas were invaded by locusts in 1904 and again in the early 1930s. Between 1902 and 1939 much of northern Natal's soils and grasses were exhausted by the region's farmers, both white and African. The phenomenon was serious enough for the Natal Regional Survey, 1(1951) to comment that 'many of the current farming practices will have to be modified if the area is not to disappear altogether as a farming region'.[9] This was particularly true of the tall grassveld and thornveld areas. In the former, the main culprits seem to have been more 'progressive' white farmers expanding their operations to meet growing markets.[10] In the latter, they were African tenant farmers crowded on primarily white-owned land over-grazing the low carrying capacity sweet grasses.[11] The narrowness of the limits laid down by nature in this region, together with the fact that markets were small and access to outside markets limited, ensured that the capitalisation of agriculture, vital to the development of rural social relations, was a gradual process.

In 1902 the vast majority of the region's white farmers conducted pastoral farming operations, primarily for beef and wool. Maize, sorghum, oats and wheat were grown for feed and labourers' rations. The period 1902–1939 saw two major developments in white livestock farming. Firstly, owing largely to the prevalence of East Coast Fever in the sandy sourveld areas, sheep ranching expanded at the expense of cattle ranching.[12] And secondly, increasing numbers of ranchers, particularly in Bergville and Klip River, switched to dairying.[13] Both developments represented a squeeze on tenant farmers, white and African. With better quality herds to sustain and protect, landowners sought a tighter control over the size and movement of tenant herds. A large

number of northern Natal's white ranchers were Free State and Transvaal farmers who had purchased farms in the region for winter grazing and as a source of labour. In addition, many wealthier white farmers in the highland sourveld and tall grassveld areas of northern Natal owned farms in the lowveld for the same purposes. At the beginning of every winter thousands of cattle and sheep were driven down into the lowveld. Some indication of the scale of this annual migration is given by the Ngotshe Magistrate's 1912 estimate of between sixty and seventy thousand sheep being moved into this district annually.[14] And George Pringle, a retired northern Natal farmer, remembers bringing his father's eight thousand sheep down from Wakkerstroom into Klip River County annually in the 1920s.[15]

The great majority of tenant farmers in northern Natal were Africans living on private white-owned land in the absence of 'reserves' and with the scarcity of company, mission and African-owned land. In the period under review these labour and rent tenants experienced growing inroads into their rights in land and livestock as well as growing demands to provide landlords with labour. Nevertheless, and despite the operation of the 1913 Natives Land Act, a significant proportion was able to avoid more than slight labour obligations up until 1939. Only on the few wattle and cotton plantations in the region were white farmers reliant on cash labourers with no rights in land and livestock.

But African labour and rent tenants were not the only landless farmers in the northern Natal countryside: it is the aim of the following section to examine in depth the range of white tenant farmers to be found in northern Natal. It is worth pointing out at this stage that the precise quantification of landless whites is difficult. The only figures I was able to trace were from the Vryheid Repatriation Commission, which categorised the white farmers of Vryheid in November 1902 as follows: 168 'landed proprietors', 178 *'bijwoners'* and 20 'lessees'.[16] It is plain from these figures that in Vryheid, at least, landless whites were a significant proportion of the white population in the first decade of the twentieth century. And it is probable that this holds true for the other districts in the ex-South African Republic territory, where the *'bijwoner* tradition' was equally strong. The position in Klip River County is not as clear, though the high proportion of Dutch/Afrikaans-speakers (two in five according to the 1904 Population Census) and the large number of farms owned by absentee Free State and Transvaal farmers ensured a fertile soil for the tradition.

The landless whites

In his study of poor whites in North Middelburg, Rob Morrell has emphasised the often deep divisions amongst these rural dwellers.[17] What follows rein-

forces the need for careful differentiation between the various categories of landless whites to be found in the South African countryside during the first half of this century. In attempting to do so for northern Natal, I have drawn extensively from magistrates' records, especially the files dealing with administration of state aid and relief schemes in the late 1920s and 1930s. These files often provide detailed information on the precise nature of tenants' conditions of occupation and their material and other circumstances. They are less helpful in establishing gradual changes over time, and provide little detail for the early period.

Two broad categories of landless whites can be identified: those who dwelt on the same property as their landlords and those whose landlords were absent. The most common arrangement in the former instance was for the tenant to provide the landowner with labour and a share of the crops in return for access to land. Found throughout northern Natal, this arrangement varied considerably in detail: access to grazing land ranged from no provision to unlimited; the provision of arable land ranged from 20 morgen to as much as the tenant wished to plant; and the share of crops kept by the tenant ranged from a tenth to a half. It is important to note that whereas some landlords put the sharecropper/labour tenant in charge of all cultivation on the farm, others provided him with arable land which he worked only for himself as well as requiring him to work arable land elsewhere on the farm on a shares basis. An example of the latter is provided by a certain S. L. Landman, tenant on a Paulpietersburg farm in the 1930s.[18] He was required to assist in all the farming operations and to provide his landlord with a half share of a tobacco crop reaped from 15 morgen. In addition, he was given six morgen of arable land for his own use. In every instance examined for this study, the sharecropper/labour tenant enjoyed access to the landlord's African labour, implements and draught animals, and was given free housing and seed. Sometimes free meat was also provided. Extremely rare was the landlord who only required a share of the crops from a tenant living on the same farm. I was able to trace only a single reference to such an arrangement, a Bergville farmer providing his sharecropper with arable land, free grazing for an unrestricted number of cattle, seed, and the use of implements and three African labourers in return for one tenth of the crop.[19] Also rare was the labour tenant, who in return for access to land, was required to provide his landlord with labour services. An example of this category of landless white is George Boshoff, who lost his own land in the early 1930s and was taken on as a labour tenant by his son-in-law in the Newcastle district.[20] In return for his services he was given 30 morgen of arable land, unlimited access to grazing, free seed and the use of implements and African labour.

Categorisation of landless whites in northern Natal

Landlord	Form of payment	Designation
Resident	Labour	Labourer (1) Labour tenant (2)
	Management	Manager (3)
	Labour and share of crops	Sharecropper/labourer tenant (4)
	Share of crops	Sharecropper (5)
	Nothing	Free tenant (6)
Absentee	Nothing	Free tenant (7)
	Share of crops	Sharecropper (8)
	Labour and share of crops	Sharecropper/labourer tenant (9)
	Labour	Labour tenant (10)
	Kind or cash	Rent tenant (11) (12)

Three categories of landless whites resident on the same property as their landlords remain to be described. First, the free tenant, who enjoyed access to land without being required to render payment in any form. In every case examined for this study, the tenant was Dutch/Afrikaans-speaking, resident on a relative's property and given access to land as an alternative to impoverishment. For example, in 1938 M. S. Heyns took on his brother-in-law as a free tenant after the latter had lost his temporary job on the railways and incurred a debt of £80.[21] Second, the farm manager, to be found throughout the region and representing a less independent standing than those of the categories described thus far. Farm managers, both English- and Dutch/Afrikaans-speaking, were usually paid at least partially in cash and frequently lived in the same

house as their employees. Nevertheless, I was unable to find reference to a farm manager who did not retain certain rights in both land and livestock. White farm labourers, on the other hand, did not enjoy these rights and received payment in the form of cash, accommodation and food. They were English-speaking and, like the farm managers, to be found on the farms of relatively wealthy and rapidly capitalising farmers.

Far more common than the tenant dwelling on the same farm as his landlord was the tenant of an absentee landlord. In most instances the absentee landlord was a highveld farmer who owned a farm or farms in the sandy sourveld and thornveld areas for winter grazing or as a source of African tenant labour. White tenants were engaged for one or a combination of the following reasons: to supervise farming operations, especially in the winter months; to fulfil beneficial occupation requirements on land bought from the state (although it seems that these requirements could be circumvented easily); and as a source of income.

Five categories of tenant having an absentee landlord can be identified. Least common were the rent tenant (paying in cash or in kind for the right to occupy) and the free tenant. The latter, as with his counterpart on land occupied by its owner was, as far as one can tell from the sources consulted for this study, always Dutch/Afrikaans-speaking, usually resident on land owned by a relative, and usually given a place after falling on hard times. Not surprisingly, this practice became relatively widespread in the 1930s. Most common were arrangements involving payment in the form of labour, a share of the crops or both. Of the former, most involved labour tenants caring for the livestock of absentee landlords during the winter months in return for rights in land and livestock. In some instances tenants also received a cash wage – for example, W. A. de Witt of Newcastle district received £6 per annum in addition to 25 morgen arable land and grazing for ten head of cattle from his landlord in the mid-1930s.[22] However, most landlords using lowveld farms for grazing purposes required their white tenants to provide both labour and a share of the crops. This arrangement was to be found throughout northern Natal's lowveld, the share of the crops required ranging between 15 per cent and two thirds (although half and two thirds shares were the most common). Finally, there was the sharecropper who had no labour obligations. To be found almost exclusively in the ex-South African Republic territory, they were expected to provide their landlords with either a half or three quarters of their harvest. In rare instances sharecroppers also received a cash wage – I was able to trace only one such arrangement, a Paulpietersburg sharecropper receiving £1 a month in addition to one quarter of his harvest, free grazing for 17 head of cattle, a two-morgen arable plot, and the use of African labour, wagons, oxen,

implements and six dairy cows.[23] It is worth noting that most white tenants falling into the last three categories enjoyed the free use of their landlords' implements, oxen and African labour. And the vast majority, if not all, were Dutch/Afrikaans-speaking.

As was pointed out in the introduction, all but one of the twelve categories of rural dweller outlined above have been incorporated into one or other definition of the term 'bywoner'. The exception is the rent tenant paying in cash for the right of occupation. Contemporary popular usage incorporated categories 2 to 11,[24] while the Carnegie Commission into the Poor White Problem in South Africa incorporated only categories 1 to 6, namely those landless whites dwelling on farms occupied by their owners.[25] In administering the Rural Rehabilitation and Housing Scheme in the late 1930s, the state attempted to distinguish between 'bywoners', 'overseers' and 'assistants', the name 'bywoner' being applied to my categories 2 and 4 to 10, 'overseers' to category 3 and 'assistants' to category 1.

Very few white tenants, whatever their category, enjoyed security of tenure; it is probable that none had written contracts with their landlords. Of the verbal contracts details of which I was able to trace and where a specified period of time was laid down, most were of five years' duration. But even seemingly secure verbal contracts could be fragile. The case of J. H. Steenkamp, free tenant on his neighbour's unoccupied farm, illustrates this point.[26] In 1935, having lost his own land, he was given 20 morgen of arable land, 500 morgen of grazing land and the use of a span of oxen and a kraal of African labour tenants, guaranteed for a period of ten years. But in the same year the neighbour died, and his daughter changed the terms to seven morgen arable land, two morgen grazing land and a half share of his crops. The harmful consequences of lack of security have received eloquent comment from the 1921 Unemployment Commission and the Carnegie Commission. As the latter observed:

> The bywoner or share tenant usually has no security of tenure, and consequently makes no effort to be careful in his use of pasture or arable land, nor does he aim at improvement. This in turn reacts unfavourably on the landowner. Many bywoners complained that, after receiving notice to quit, they received no compensation for permanent improvements. Only too often purely personal bickerings, or disagreements about the rights and obligations of either party, led to the cancelling of the contract.[27]

Northern Natal magistrates in the period under review also identified what they saw as a lack of endeavour on the part of 'bywoners'. And the cancelling of

contracts was a frequent occurrence. Despite what O'Meara calls 'a strong sense of community' amongst Afrikaners,[28] the evidence shows that Afrikaner landlords in northern Natal often felt little restraint when ejecting unwanted fellow-Afrikaner tenants. In consequence, the degree of movement amongst landless whites, especially the poor, was high. I discovered few references to tenants who had stayed in one place for any great length of time and many to tenants who had changed locality repeatedly. This pattern seems to have grown during the 1930s, although by the close of the decade it had been subsumed by a stronger movement, that of a drift off the land. As the Report of the Economic and Wage Commission warned in 1925, 'the bywoner has security neither of tenure nor of status. The system has no power to hold him to the land when other forces are tending to drive him off the land.'[29]

Time to trek

Although ravaged by the South African War and crippling drought immediately after it, the northern Natal countryside was able to sustain a relative increase in the white population dependent on it between 1904 and 1911.[30] The population of the region's towns and villages stagnated. The rate of growth was sustained between 1911 and 1921, but fell away markedly thereafter: landless whites in northern Natal were beginning to succumb to the growing pressures attendant on landowners switching from cattle ranching to sheep or dairy farming. But a drift from the land was less marked in the region than in Natal as a whole. This is probably explicable in terms of the relatively slow emergence of capitalist agriculture in the region and a commensurately slower squeeze by landlords on their tenants, white and African. But the 1930s were years of crisis for South African agriculture, thousands of white farmers, both landlords and tenants, succumbing to the dual blows of depression and drought. The population figures for northern Natal reflect this in striking fashion. Between 1931 and 1936 the region's white rural population showed an absolute decrease for the first time, while its white urban population increased more rapidly than ever before. By 1936 there were fewer whites in the countryside than in the towns and villages. It was in this time of crisis that the ties to the land enjoyed by white tenant farmers in northern Natal were irrevocably loosened. The trickle had become a flood.

The origins of the trickle are to be found in the outbreak of rinderpest in the late 1890s and the differential impact of the South African War on northern Natal's white farmers. All had seen their herds ravaged by rinderpest. All had suffered grievous material loss during the Boer invasion, Buller's ponderous northward drive and the guerrilla warfare which endured until the Peace of Vereeniging. And all experienced the depredation of drought, disease and locust invasion

White population of northern Natal, 1904–1946

in the two years following the cessation of hostilities. The position in 1904 was described as follows by the Vryheid Magistrate:

> Though the farmers have striven hard to face their difficulties, most of them being ruined during the war, they have met with little success, owing entirely to the bad seasons which have unfortunately prevailed since peace, and to the depredation of locusts, cattle disease, and other calamities over which they had no control; and now, to make matters worse, the dreaded Tick Fever has appeared in this district.[31]

The position was equally bleak elsewhere in the region. But the potential for recovery varied greatly. In Klip River County Dutch/Afrikaans-speakers enjoyed little hope of state assistance, most of them having disqualified themselves by assisting the invading Boer forces in one way or another.[32] The Natal government was prepared to pursue a conciliatory policy towards them, imposing relatively light sentences on convicted rebels, ensuring their right to their immovable property (in the face of strong opposition from English-speaking colonists) and assisting the destitute by admitting them into refugee camps. But it was unwilling to provide financial assistance. Applications for this kind of assistance were rejected, even after the granting of free pardon in 1905. And the claims for compensation made by the Klip River Dutch to the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission were more often than not rejected. This body was appointed by the Imperial government and was directly responsible to the government of Natal. Its working principle was that compensation was 'to be

awarded only as an act of grace to those who were loyal and had suffered through adherence to their loyalty'.[33] The claims of convicted rebels, the wives and children of rebels, and 'those who had traded in any way with the enemy ...' were not entertained.[34] Those who were merely suspected of disloyalty had 75 percent of their claims 'held back'.[35] Quite clearly the war's impact was felt more acutely by the Dutch/Afrikaans-speakers, and most acutely by those of their number less well-equipped to weather this kind of blow, namely the tenant farmers.

Better prospects were enjoyed by ex-burghers east of the Buffalo River in the ex-South African Republic territory. Their immediate post-war interests were placed in the hands of two Repatriation Commissions, the responsibilities of which were to supervise the return of ex-burghers to their dwellings, deal with claims for losses sustained in the war, distribute rations to the needy, administer low-interest loans and make seed, implements and provisions available to farmers on a repayment system. As in the rest of South Africa, and especially because it was characterised by African tenant resistance to the return of Boer landowners and tenants, the ex-South African Republic territory experienced the rural reconstruction programme's bias in favour of white agriculture.[36] Nevertheless, in practice, the commissions were shackled by Imperial parsimony. As the Utrecht Repatriation Commission reported in 1902:

> A good deal of suspicion and uncertainty has arisen amongst the Burghers owing to the refusal of applications made under section 10 ... for loans free of interest for 2 years and repayable over a period of years at 3 per cent. This refusal has, I am afraid, raised doubts as to Britain's intentions to carry out the terms of the treaty in full ...[37]

Moreover, only landless farmers were required to give security for loans and items received on the repayment system.[38] As in Klip River County, it was the poorest who had to struggle hardest to recover. Although no mass exodus from the countryside followed the war – quite the contrary in fact was pointed out above – nevertheless the war inflicted a body-blow from which many white rural dwellers never recovered.

But maintaining a place on the land did not mean working the land profitably. As the Ngotshe magistrate reported in 1919, in the midst of what he called 'a forward movement' in farming operations:

> ... the only people who appear to be incapable of sharing in the movement are the people who form the indigent classes. They somehow cannot make headway. They could if they would but try and it is here where they fail: They do not try. It is a mystery how they live.[39]

Certainly the evidence suggests that ignorance, an unwillingness to change, and the depressing effects of hardship played their part in entrenching poverty. But the difficulties in working a marginal farming area, the repeated blows dealt by nature in the form of drought, livestock disease and locusts, and the obstacles posed by poverty in securing state assistance, ensured that even the best will in the world on the part of landless whites could not look much beyond mere survival. For all but a few the prospect of eventually purchasing land was impossibly remote. In addition, their access to land was increasingly threatened by the emergence, albeit more slowly than elsewhere in Natal, of a class of capitalist farmers. The latter, whether dairy farmers, cattle ranchers or sheep ranchers, sought a more efficient use of their land and the conversion of labour tenants into wage labourers. All tenants, white and African, on land owned by them began to feel the squeeze. But it was the African tenants, their labour cheaper and more easily exploited, who proved to be more resilient.[40] Moreover, white farmers expanding their operations could no longer afford the drain on African labour resources constituted by the presence of white tenants.

Strong as the squeeze was in certain parts of northern Natal, especially in the 1920s, the access to land of most white tenants was only severed in the 1930s. During this decade many, lacking the state support enjoyed by the landed, in the face of acute economic and natural crises were unable to make a living on the land; others were evicted by landlords no longer able or willing to carry tenants doing little more than exhausting their soils and pastures; yet others decided to try for a better life through local relief works funded by the state.[41] Most tenuously placed were the sharecroppers, sharecroppers/labour tenants, labour tenants and free tenants whose landlords dwelt on the same property. Concentrated mostly west of the Buffalo River in Klip River County, they all but disappeared in the decade before World War II.[42] And it is probable that this decade also saw the rights in land and livestock enjoyed by farm managers finally undermined. White tenants who worked the lowveld properties of absentee highveld farmers proved to be marginally more resilient. Some were able to weather the 1930s and maintain ties to the land until as late as the 1950s. Thus Hurwitz was able to point out in 1957 that 'Farms on the "shares system" are mostly concentrated in the northern districts, especially Utrecht, Vryheid and Newcastle. This is mainly due to sharecroppers, who have not entirely disappeared.'[43]

But the vast majority of northern Natal's white tenant farmers were catapulted into a new set of social relations during the 1930s: whether swelling the ranks of the region's farm labourers and managers or becoming part of South Africa's white urban labour aristocracy, their access to the means of production had been severed.

State assistance and relief on the land

In the period under review, and especially after the assumption of political power by the Pact government in 1924, the South African state displayed a growing sensitivity to the interests of white farmers.[44] However, white farmers made widely differing demands on the state. The interests of farmers practising labour tenancy both willingly and reluctantly (confronted by labour tenant resistance to being transformed into proletarians) diverged in important ways from those successfully converting to wage labour. The latter's labour needs were greater and they found themselves in more direct competition for labour with the mines and cities than the former. Consequently, the pressure they exerted on the state to mobilise and control labour was far greater, and increasingly they pressed for the restriction and ultimate abolition of labour tenancy. Caught between these pioneers of capitalist agriculture in South Africa and the African labour and rent tenant population were the landless and rural whites, who strove to maintain their access to the land. While the political voice enjoyed by them ensured that their interests could not be entirely ignored by the state, advancing capitalist agriculture, especially in the 1930s, determined that state assistance would never be sufficient to sustain white tenant farmers as a class.

In the first two decades of Union, limited assistance was given in various forms to white tenant farmers by the state. Firstly, would-be purchasers of land were assisted. The 1912 Land Settlement Act laid down that a candidate need put down only 20 per cent of the purchase-price, the balance being met by the state and repayable in 40 half-yearly instalments at 4 per cent per annum interest. It also empowered the state to offer extremely cheap leases to run for five years, at the end of which the lessee had the option to purchase. Secondly, subsidies were granted to landowners who took on approved families as tenants. And thirdly, advances were granted to 'satisfactory' candidates who wished to make a start in farming. In practice, these measures made little impact, their inadequacy being condemned by both the 1925 Economic and Wage Commission and the Carnegie Commission. The former suggested the extension of the measures, the granting of greater security of tenure to 'bywoners' and the overall upgrading of South African agriculture.[45] Reporting for the latter, J. F. W. Grosskopf commented as follows:

> On the whole South Africa has mostly evaded the real problem and tried to remedy the evil by charity or by local and temporary measures of relief. The easy ways out of the difficulty were chosen. But our social policy was also based too much on the assumption that the poor ought to be kept out of the town, without doing much towards improving conditions in the country itself.[46]

Quite clearly the state was not prepared to commit funds to enabling white tenant farmers to maintain merely a toehold in the countryside. It gave generously to the more well-to-do and able, those capable of eventually purchasing land and working it profitably. The rest it preferred to 'field' through various rural projects (probation settlements, afforestation schemes, irrigation works, etc.) and the promotion of a policy of 'civilised labour' in urban areas after 1924.

In the face of escalating rural exodus and massive urban unemployment in the 1930s, the state introduced several schemes designed to stem the flood of white tenant farmers from the land. In 1931 the Land Settlement Act of 1912 was amended to allow purchasers to repay their state loans over forty years instead of twenty. And lessees under the Act in certain districts had their rents substantially reduced. One such district was Ngotshe in northern Natal. In 1932 the Tenant Farmers Scheme was introduced. Initially administered by the Land and Agricultural Bank, it was taken over by the State Advances Recoveries Office in 1935. In terms of the scheme, white tenant farmers were given loans at 5 per cent per annum interest in order to purchase livestock. Funds were made available on receipt of a certificate from a local livestock inspection committee stating that the livestock concerned had been approved and branded. The scheme was discontinued in 1938, but was resurrected towards the end of World War II. Another scheme was the Rural Rehabilitation and Housing Scheme, also known as the Bywoners', Farm Overseers' and Farm Assistants' Rehabilitation Scheme. Operative from 1935 to 1939 and administered by the Department of Labour and Social Welfare (redesignated Department of Social Welfare in 1937), it made funds available for subsistence allowances, the rail transport of tenant farmers and the building and improvement of tenant dwellings. But as with the earlier measures, those of the 1930s were aimed primarily at redeeming the 'progressive' few. I traced numerous instances of applications for assistance from tenant farmers being turned down on the grounds that their chances of making a success of farming were slim. As the Secretary for Social Welfare informed one such applicant in 1938:

> The Department's information is that you have had good chances and opportunities to make a success of farming, but that you did not do so. In the circumstances the Department has decided to refuse your application on the grounds that there is serious doubt that you would be able to make a success of farming in Natal, so that the granting of public funds in this regard would be unjustified.[47]

A state more unwilling than ever before to sustain them, and the crushing impact of economic depression and natural disasters, broke the back of northern Natal's class of white tenant farmers.

Off the land

What awaited those who were no longer able to cling to the land? For a few, work, but for the great majority a measure of state relief and grinding poverty. As a Newcastle tenant farmer said to the landowner evicting him in 1936, it was "n slegte tyd ... om te trek'.[48] The Natal Provincial Administration, through the Department of Labour, offered relief work on road maintenance and building gangs in northern Natal. Relief work was also available in the towns and on locust fighting units. Other work was hard to come by. Aside from temporary jobs to be had in the railways, the towns offered little hope of employment. And the coal industry, in a depressed state owing to uncertain market conditions and fierce foreign competition, could provide little employment for whites, especially the unskilled. Nevertheless, most of northern Natal's displaced white rural dwellers remained in the region. Those who did not ended their trek in Durban, Pietermaritzburg or on the Rand.

But precisely how was white impoverishment dealt with in northern Natal's towns? As early as February 1927 a Joint Unemployment and Relief Committee, with representatives from the Department of Labour, the Natal Provincial Administration and the Durban and Pietermaritzburg Corporations, had been established in Natal. It was designed to promote the policy of 'civilised labour' and to co-ordinate the provision of relief aid.[49] The magnitude of the task which lay ahead is indicated by the rapid growth in numbers of 'paupers and needy persons' who received assistance in two northern Natal towns between 1927 and 1936: in Babanango 36 between 1927 and 1931, 230 between 1932 and 1936; in Louwsburg 56 in the former period, 148 in the latter.[50] The assistance was in the form of rations, monetary grants and free medical and hospital treatment, and was funded by the Department of Labour and Social Welfare, the Department of Public Health and the Natal Provincial Administration. A large proportion of the latter's expenditure on poor relief was earmarked for the subsidisation of charitable organisations, which, rather than local authorities, acted for the state in distributing direct poor relief in Natal's urban areas. The role of these organisations was acknowledged by the Ladysmith Mayor in 1934:

> The two societies which deserve special recognition and mention are the Ladysmith Benevolent and Child Welfare Societies. As is well-known, these Societies, while not being strictly speaking, Municipal Institutions, are to a large extent, responsible for the relief of distress and the care of the poor people of the Borough ...[51]

As was pointed out by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Poor Relief and Charitable Institutions in 1937, the lion's share of the Provincial Administra-

tion's subsidy was given to the Durban and Pietermaritzburg Benevolent Societies: £7 310 out of £7 890 in 1936/37.[52] Subsidies were also granted by local authorities: for example, in 1933 the Ladysmith Benevolent Society received £195 from the Borough and £147 10s from the Provincial Administration.[53] But while northern Natal's local authorities were prepared to contribute towards poor relief, they were reluctant to promote the state's 'civilised labour' policy by dismissing African employees and replacing them with unemployed whites. This despite the subsidisation of the latter's salaries by the Department of Labour and Social Welfare. The evidence suggests that there were two reasons for this: fear that the availability of jobs would spark an influx of unemployed, and the opinion that such a development constituted the replacement of efficient by inefficient labour.[54]

Conclusion

The period 1902–1939 saw white tenant farmers in northern Natal confronted by several threats to their access to land and livestock: expanding capitalist agriculture, exhausted soils and pastures, natural disasters, economic depression and an unsympathetic state. The crisis faced by all white farmers in the 1930s proved to be the turning point, the state throwing its weight behind the rapidly expanding capitalist section of white agriculture. In northern Natal white tenant farmers all but disappeared; only east of the Buffalo River were some, probably all the tenants of absentee landlords (my categories 7 to 12), able to cling to the land. The great majority joined either the urban labour aristocracy or were accommodated in my categories 1 and 3. A very few were able to join the ranks of the landed.

To what extent the traumatic experiences of the period under review shaped the consciousness of northern Natal's white tenant farmers is not addressed in this study. Potentially fruitful questions which remain to be answered include the following: How cohesive, as a class, were they? Were their political sympathies distinct from those of landlords? Was the return of Nationalist candidates in Newcastle, Klip River and Vryheid in the 1948 general election due in part to dissatisfaction with state assistance on the part of displaced white tenant farmers? I suspect that the answers to these questions, as with my attempt to categorise the region's landless white rural dwellers, will reveal a significant measure of diversity. Certainly it is probable that the consciousness of a more prosperous tenant farmer, receiving state assistance and looking to the day when he could purchase land, would diverge in important ways from that of an impoverished tenant unable to secure state assistance; as would that of the tenant under threat of eviction from that of the tenant feeling little or no pressure from his landlord, and that of the tenant only

recently having joined the ranks of the landless from that of the tenant brought up in the 'bywoner tradition'.

Chapter 5

'Digging a way into the working class': unemployment and consciousness amongst the Afrikaner poor on the Lichtenburg alluvial diamond diggings, 1926–1929[1]

Tim Clynick

> ... *experience over many years has proved that the non-professional digger is not prepared to exchange an indolent, carefree existence for one demanding regular work under supervision.*[2]

Afrikaner proletarianisation has prompted a number of studies on the diamond diggers on the alluvial diggings near Lichtenburg.[3] These accounts draw on the classic exposition of impoverishment outlined in the path-breaking 1932 Carnegie Commission:

> After an initial period of boom, the richer fields became more and more exhausted and many diggers who went there became further impoverished, and their families were all subject to the psychological influences of the general conditions of life on the diggings and the type of mentality which developed there.[4]

The commission's investigations concentrated on the collection of local case studies of poor white families, describing the social conditions on the diggings, the poverty and squalor of white digging families. They described the moral failings of 'the poor whites', their 'lack of initiative', and their failure to adapt to the 'progressive' spirit of modern industrial life. Grosskopf attributed their impoverishment, for example, to 'the whole atmosphere of the diggings, with their cosmopolitan population, their lack of community feeling or recognised moral standards, and their all-pervading sense of gambling, recklessness and instability ...'[5] And Wilcocks repeated the well-known aphorism about the poor whites' unwillingness to undertake manual labour:

> ... the digger ... carrying out his own operations, employing natives to do the hard manual work, was unwilling to surrender his position and mastership. The man who had formerly been an underdog felt that here 'he was his own master and not the rich man's dog'.[6]

The Carnegie investigators offer a superficial analysis of the historical process which created impoverishment on the diggings. They explain the success and failure of diggers purely in terms of market rationality and the economic resourcefulness of individual diggers. They do not explore the relationship between white poverty and the broader economic structure of the diggings. Class interests and class structure on the alluvial diggings, which this chapter contends are of vital importance in understanding the persistence of white poverty and the political consciousness of the diggers, have therefore remained unexplored. The explanation offered by the Carnegie Commission also reflected a belief about the involvement of the state with white poverty during the period of the Pact government. It is asserted that the Pact, which replaced the South African Party, was sympathetic to the needs of the Afrikaner rural poor in this period. This focus, it is implied, transcended the concern of the South African Party government with Afrikaner impoverishment. No evidence is offered of this benevolence however, and, as recent studies have suggested, the Pact was unable to mould the political economy in its own image, without an accommodation with capitalist interests in the market place.[7] This relationship has, as yet, not been explored for the alluvial diamond diggings.

This chapter explores the fortunes of the diamond diggers, therefore, by focusing on the themes of class structure, economic and class interests, and political mobilisation and consciousness amongst the most vulnerable and seemingly powerless section of the white digging community between 1926 and 1929.

The Lichtenburg alluvial diggings

In January 1926 two Du Plessis brothers discovered diamonds whilst prospecting on the farm Klipbankfontein, twelve miles to the north of Lichtenburg, where they farmed. On Elandsputte, an adjoining farm, Dr Harold Harger, prospecting under contract with the landowner, Kosie Voorendyk, located one of the richest deposits of alluvial gravel in the sub-continent. This farm, situated on the so-called Klipveld – a barren, desolate and unproductive stretch of country separating the western Highveld from the rich Marico River valley – was unremarkable in appearance or agricultural potential and had been subdivided (in 1921) in an effort to sell it. But by August 1926 scarcely a farm in the Lichtenburg and adjoining Ventersdorp districts could be acquired whether it

carried gravel or not.[8] From this barren dusty corner of the Western Transvaal there sprang into being a local industry producing over a million carats of diamonds in 1926 and over two million carats in the following year. This represented a total money value of five million pounds. The new industry had its economic foundations firmly rooted in the world's demand for diamonds, and supported a local population of over 150 000 people.

From June 1926 till August 1927 forty-five public alluvial diamond diggings were proclaimed on seven farms in the Klipveld, and from January 1928 to December 1928 a further fifty proclamations followed on six farms.[9] For a brief moment the small village of Lichtenburg blossomed into the noisy hub of the alluvial diamond industry where 'everybody seemed to be making money'. These discoveries sparked off an astonishing local migration:

> From all parts of the Transvaal, men, women and children, were wending their way to Elandsputte [the centre of the diggings] ... Many people are transporting their entire homes ... Cows, sheep, donkeys, goats and even pigs are being driven along behind the wagons – just like the moving of the tribes described in the Bible.[10]

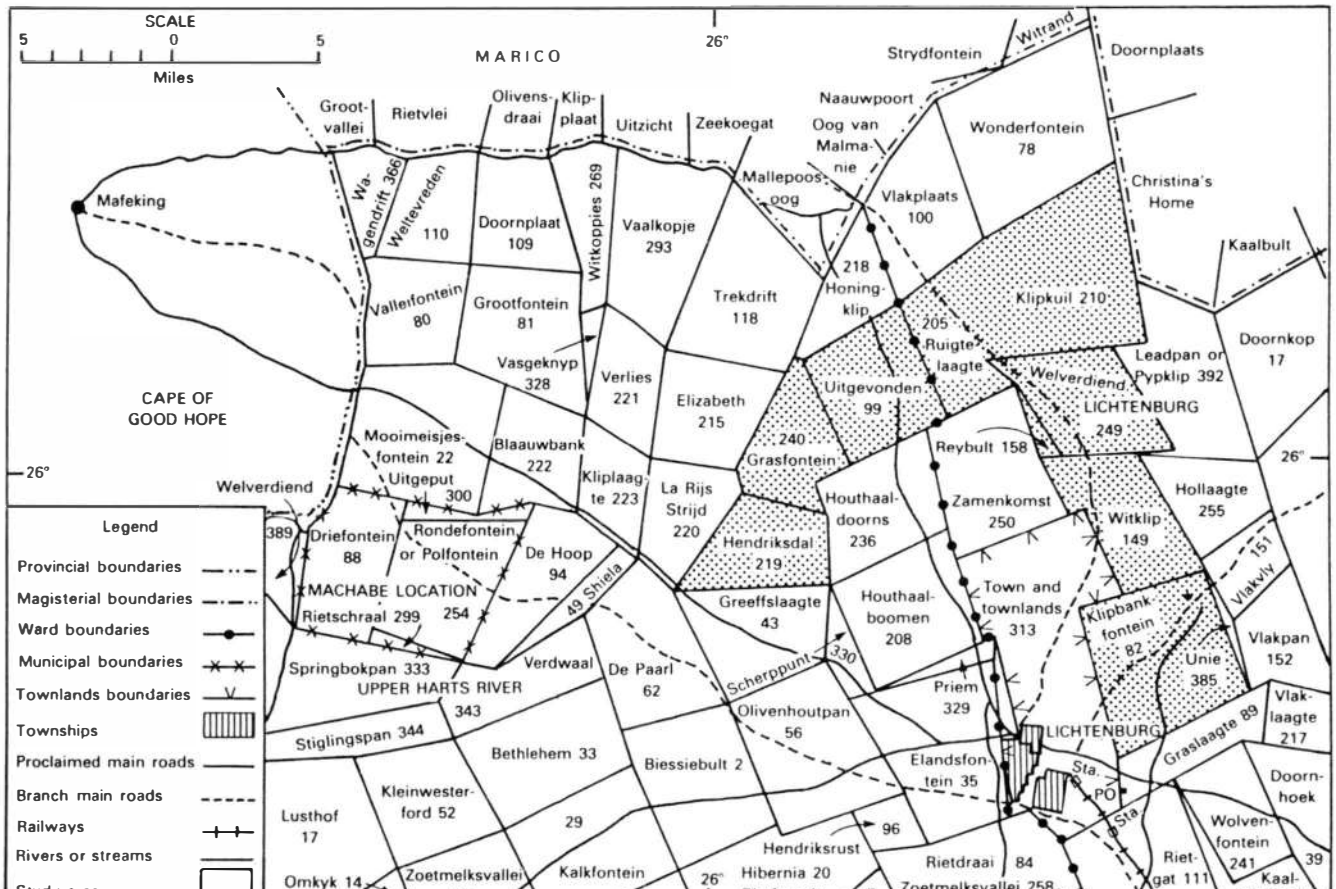
Professional people, civil servants, white workers, and altogether the flotsam and jetsam of the towns and cities were drawn towards this vortex of the alluvial diamond world.[11]

An average of some 60 to 75 per cent of farmers from the Western Transvaal districts of Lichtenburg, Ventersdorp, Zeerust, Wolmaransstad and Potchefstroom trekked to these diggings in 1926, and farmers as a category constituted some 60 per cent of the total diggings population in 1927.[12] The unemployed from the Witwatersrand and the smaller Transvaal towns and villages constituted the next largest percentage (10 per cent) of white diggers. Professional diggers formed only the third largest portion of the population. The old established diggings on the Orange and lower Vaal rivers and at Bloemhof and Wolmaransstad were like cemeteries, 'the old guard' of diggers having trekked to Lichtenburg 'to the last man'.[13]

Voorendyk's farm, Elandsputte, formed the hub of the diggings:

> It is here that all the diggers are congregated, living in their huts not far from the ground which has proven to be so rich in diamonds; here we have the Hatton Garden of the diggings; here we have the 'Piccadilly' – the street of shops and bars and cafes which runs along the edge of the ridge; here we have the police barracks and the magistrates court; here we have the pumping station ... which gives water to all the inhabitants of the diggings.[14]

Map 1: Part of the magisterial district of Lichtenburg



(Adapted from Union of South Africa, Province of Transvaal, magisterial district of Lichtenburg, sheet M7. Lithographed in January 1925)

The central feature of Elandsputte was the spacious square with its four cafes, a bioscope and dance halls, and many stores. All along the main street of the camp there were stores occupied by grocers, bakers, butchers, jewellers and watchmakers, clothing merchants, bootmakers and hairdressers. The township formed the social centre of the camp. Here the tempestuous diggers meetings were held, with the speakers addressing the milling crowds from the safety of a raised platform or the tailgate of the nearest truck.

The township at Elandsputte was the economic nucleus of the diggings. On Saturdays work ceased in the claims, and diggers flocked to the 'Piccadilly' – the diamond buyers' quarter of the camp – to dispose of the week's finds. This cash flowed out to the traders, merchants and hawkers:

> Eloff Street shopkeepers would gnash their teeth in envy at the roaring trade done by the 250 traders who have set up their tin shops in the streets. There are traders of every conceivable kind, and each one appears to be prosperous ... Round the shops were hordes of white men and natives, eager to buy.[15]

The source of all the wealth on the diggings, though, was produced on the 45 foot square claims. Here labour commenced at sunrise and ceased at sunset, the long unending, monotonous process of digging, sieving and washing going on for hour after hour, from Monday to Friday. The descriptions of this largely unmechanised process takes us back to the 1870s and the working of the Kimberley mines:

> ... huge stones are hurled, laboriously and dangerously – only to be shovelled back when the space they occupy is required ... At others, picks rise and fall, wrestling with the solidly packed gravel and stones. Everywhere cradles are rocked and gravel and water carried to the puddling troughs. Puddle boys handling short wedge-shaped spades, combine gravel, sand and water into a mixture capable of passing through the revolving circular machines which separate and eject the valueless light pebbles from the 'heavy stuff'...[16]

Lichtenburg's brief flowering attracted considerable commercial interest. The gamble of diamond digging provided quick and ready profits to the owners of the farms, the hotel and canteen keepers, the merchants and the diamond buyers. One digger cynically remarked that 'the owner of a proclaimed farm, the nearest hotel, the storekeepers, and the diamond buyers, in about that order named, are the only sure profit-makers from the gamble of diamond digging'.[17] The opportunity for diggers to accumulate capital was limited, and their capacity for independent economic activity was severely curtailed by a

capitalist class that owned the farms and held the commercial rights over trading, and hawking. It is to this class that we now turn.

Capitalists on the diggings

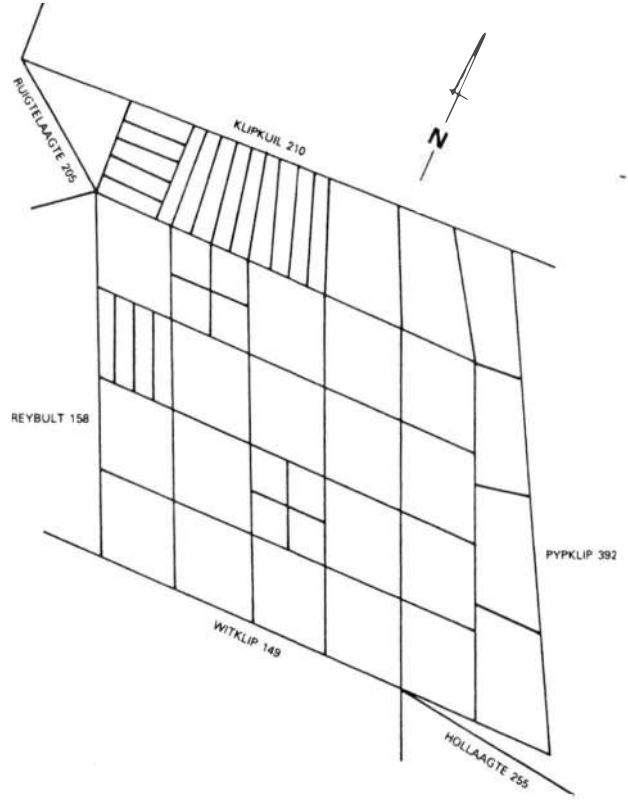
The landowners of the eight Lichtenburg farms on which alluvial diggings were proclaimed included four private owners and four companies. They were the first to extract a surplus from the diggers, who were the direct producers. As owners of property they were entitled to certain rights, including that of prospecting their property to prove the deposits, and the right to compensation following the public proclamation of their property (taken in the form of Reserve claims). In addition, the landowners retained their surface rights on the proclaimed farm, from which they received rent from the digging population for residing on the property, utilising the grazing, and drinking the water. Finally, all commercial rights on the property were held by the landowner, who could lease out trading stands on the property.

These property rights placed landowners in a good position. On Elandsputte, for example, Voorendyk sold his 235 Reserve claims to professional diggers at an average price of £35 per claim, as compared to the 5 shillings licence fee required for pegging a claim on the public areas of the farm. The population of 40 000 that congregated on Voorendyk's farm to rush the 7 000 public claims there made possible a second financial windfall, for merchants paid up to £100 per month for stands in the township. Finally, Voorendyk sold water on the farm at 4 pence per digger's barrel of 64 gallons and within six months he netted over £40 000 from this activity.[18]

Similarly, the owners of Uitgevonden (Bakerville) took full advantage of their property rights for financial gain. David Russell, a diamond buyer and speculator from Kimberley, and Henry Clarke, his partner, purchased the farm from A. W. Baker in June 1926 for £30 000 and in September 1926 they floated a public company, the Treasure Trove Diamonds Syndicate Limited (Treasure Trove), to work it. Their revenue from water sales alone realised £80 to £200 per day. They let their trading stands at prices ranging from £50 to £100 a month from which the company received over £3 000 in six months. In October 1926, just one month after proclamation, some 30 000 diggers and 50 000 black claim workers resided on Treasure Trove. Diggers pegged 10 000 claims at the rush and the company received a monthly revenue of 2s 6d from each claim. Treasure Trove was very successful, paying a dividend of 40 per cent from June 1926 to November 1927.[19]

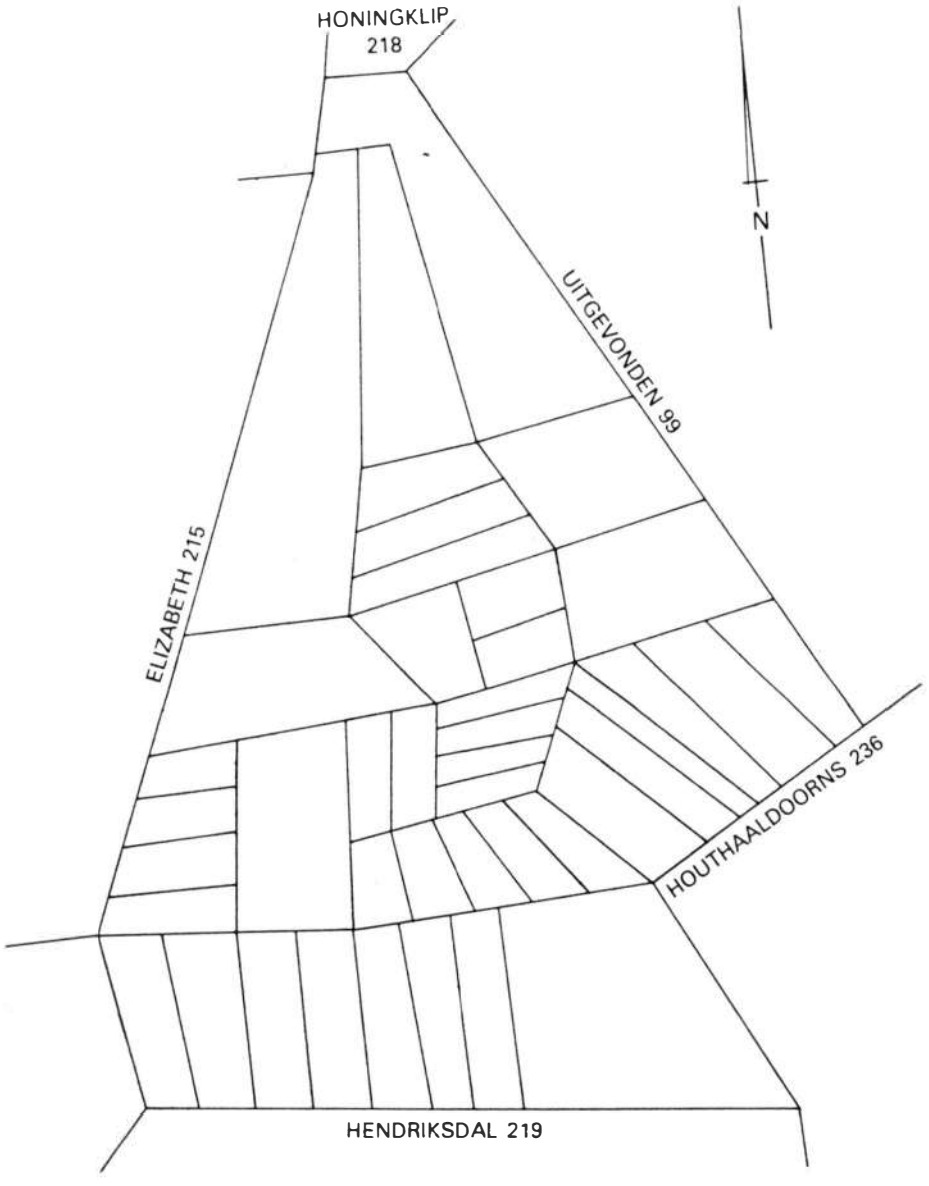
Yet the most dramatic examples of unfettered capitalist enterprise took place on the farms Grasfontein and Welverdiend. These farms were owned by Isaac

Map 3: Welverdiend 249
3 900 morgen, 187 roods



Lewis and Sammy Marks and formed part of the portfolio of the African and European Investment Company Limited (A&E). Welverdiend was sold in October 1926 to Colonel James Donaldson and Woolf Carlis, for £30 000.[20] Lewis and Marks, and Donaldson and Carlis, extensively subdivided their properties, in anticipation of rich diamond discoveries, for the run of gravel snaked its way across the A&E farms of Grasfontein, Welverdiend, Hendriksdal, La Rijs Strijd, Kliplaagte, Blaauwbank, and Mooimeisjiesfontein.[21] The subterfuge of subdivision was necessary in order for the owners to evade the provision in law which prevented the owner of a farm from claiming more than 235 claims in compensation for allowing proclamation of his property. By subdividing the property *before* proclamation owners could claim 235 claims on *each* subdivided portion of their properties, as opposed to being satisfied with one grant of 235 Reserve claims.

Map 2: Grasfontein 240
3 315 morgen, 395 roods



Grasfontein and Welverdiend proved to be the richest farms proclaimed at Lichtenburg and digging operations on them attracted the most intensive capitalist investment. Both farms were extensively subdivided, Grasfontein (in October 1926) into an initial 15 portions and Welverdiend into an amazing 30 portions, some portions being only 5 morgen in extent. On each of these portions the owners could legally claim 235 owners' Reserve claims and 60 discoverers' claims. Thus the A&E claimed over 7 500 Reserve claims on the subdivided portions of Grasfontein, whereas if they had not subdivided they would have received (like Voorendyk on Elandsputte) 235 Reserve claims.

The value of these claims was exceptional. The sale of eight portions of Grasfontein by the A&E alone realised £1 000. On the other portions of the farm the A&E received some £61 000 from the sale of the Reserve claims by April 1927, and there were still 1 133 claims unsold. In addition to the subdivisions and the sale of Reserve claims, the A&E was entitled to half of the claim licences paid by the diggers on the 60 000 claims pegged by the diggers after the farm was proclaimed. The A&E also let its trading strands at exorbitant monthly rates, and sold water on the farm.[22] Similarly, on Welverdiend Donaldson and Carlis turned their ownership of the property to good advantage, subdividing the farm into 30 portions.

The sales of the subdivided portions of the farms, and the Reserve claims themselves, created opportunities for other entrepreneurs to invest in digging. The eight portions of Grasfontein sold by the A&E were snapped up by eager investors, such as Israel Cooper and Benedictus Krige, two local Lichtenburg businessmen, who paid over £5 000 for one of these portions (portion 'E').[23] The Reserve claims were the centre of great financial dealing, and a veritable jungle of syndicates, companies and partnerships blossomed on them.

One of the most spectacular examples of this was seen on portion 'L' of Grasfontein, where a company called the Carrig Diamond Company Limited (Carrig) was floated on 1 November 1926 with nominal capital of £25 000 ('more than twice the required capital being offered within a few hours of its inception'). F. K. Webber, the chairman of Carrig, was the Government Surveyor at the Deeds Office at Pretoria.[24] The company was registered on 1 November 1926; ten days later the transfer of the property from the A&E to the Carrig was completed. On 15 November prospecting was begun. In December 1926 the Carrig declared a 50 per cent (10s) interim dividend. By the end of December Carrig's prospectors had found over 3 000 carats. The company then subdivided portion 'L' into a further six portions. Following the example of other companies, the Carrig allowed its prospectors first options to purchase the Reserve claims on these six new portions of the property. These prospectors put up over £13 000 in just four hours, the price per claim going

up to £1 000. By February 1927, the Carrig had sold 883 Reserve claims on portions 1 to 4 of the property (the original portion 'L') for £64 085. It kept the Reserve claims on portions 5 and 6 for itself, and diggers working these claims paid tribute (20 per cent of the total finds) to the company. The Carrig also leased the water rights on the property, and trading sites on each of the subdivided portions. In March 1927, the property was proclaimed, and 4 000 claims were pegged, of which the company received a 2s 6d monthly fee per claim. Carrig declared five interim dividends within the first six months of its operations, a return of over 475 per cent per share, or £4 15s returned on a £1 share. Very soon the company began to expand, purchasing other alluvial properties – in March 1927, for example, they bought the farm De Paarl in the Lichtenburg district immediately subdividing it into nine portions, and began prospecting operations there.[25]

Other investors soon snapped up claims on the Carrig's property on Grasfontein. The Reserve claims on portions 1 to 4 were sold to three syndicates and two companies. One of these, the Eldorado diamond Company Limited (Eldorado) represented a consortium of Johannesburg businessmen 'well-connected in mining circles'. It purchased 150 of these claims, working them through the services of tributers. So successful was the Eldorado that these same businessmen floated another syndicate to purchase 97 more of the Carrig's Reserve claims.[26]

On Welverdiend the position was, if possible, as frenetic. Donaldson and Carlis floated two companies, the Welverdiend Diamonds Limited with a capital of £70 000 (the second largest company on the diggings), and the Lichtenburg Diamond Gravels Limited, to take up the 30 subdivided portions of the farm. These two companies employed the services of 349 prospectors (who in turn employed their own diggers) to work their Reserve claims. These tributers produced over £89 000 worth of diamonds by October 1927, and the company received as its share £14 114 of this total. Portion 'P' of Welverdiend, the richest deposit on the farm, was worked by the company as a mine, such was the depth and richness of this deposit. Some 500 white workers were employed by the company on wages to work 'P Kopje'. The trading rights for the entire farm were retained by Donaldson and Carlis. By February 1927 there was 'little but flags to be seen' on Welverdiend as a result of the subdivisions.[27]

It is thus clear that the landowners, syndicates and companies dominated the economic skyline on the Lichtenburg diggings. There was a clear distinction between 'company land', on which lay the Reserve claims, and the public diggings on which all white diggers, over the age of eighteen, were entitled to peg a claim on proclamation day. As we have seen, the companies and syndicates which were floated sought to monopolise the richest deposits on

the diggings. Individual diggers had to come to terms with these capitalists in order to gain access to the rich Reserve claims. Indeed, the term 'digger' was recognised as a descriptive title having little analytical meaning, given to those whites who simply made a living from the diggings. In June 1926, for example, although 6 681 diggers had taken out licence to dig at Lichtenburg, almost four times that number were digging without licences, in various contractual ways with licensed diggers, or with the companies. Most of them worked in partnership with three or four other diggers under one licence. Others who lacked capital to attract partners, worked on shares for wealthy diggers who acted as their backers. A further 1 670 of these diggers were employed on wages by the companies on the Reserve claims.[28]

Prospecting was another avenue for employment. Independent diggers, using their own capital and machinery, and paying their own expenses, worked for companies and syndicates in prospecting the properties before proclamation, in return for paying a fixed percentage of their finds -- as tribute — to them. Some paid as much as 25 per cent of their finds, so confident were they of these rich deposits.[29] Thus diggers were clearly stratified, and divisions between them blurred with their changing fortunes. Professional diggers with capital tended to work on the Reserves as prospectors on company ground; individual diggers with limited resources worked on their own or in partnership with other diggers of a similar status on the public diggings. It was amongst those diggers with little but their labour to exchange, and who worked on shares, and who constituted the majority of diggers at Lichtenburg, that impoverishment became a major theme almost from the inception of digging in the balmy days on 1926.

Poverty on the Lichtenburg diggings

The domination of the local economy by a flourishing capitalist sector resulted in a great deal of local poverty which was not directly related to agricultural collapse. The diggings were 'for those possessed of considerable capital'.[30] The successful digger was a professional, with life-long experience, up-to-date machinery, and money to see him over the bad patches. Or he was a speculator with reserves of capital with which to buy up Reserve claims, to set up companies and to engage wage workers.[31]

> 'Why not make the diggings as unattractive as possible for the moneyed element', enquired one of the marginalised diggers. 'Under present conditions syndicates, rich farmers, moneyed speculators who can afford to pay runners and unscrupulous diggers get the plums and the poorer and older diggers get nothing.'[32]

Nevertheless, the 'New Eldorado' attracted the unemployed, the down-and-outs, from all over the Union, to such an extent that one observer complained that Lichtenburg was becoming 'a happy hunting ground for life's failures and unfortunates'.[33] Whilst some of these Afrikaner proletarians began digging by pegging claims in the public rushes on proclamation day, others found a livelihood indirectly by working as supervisors and foremen for professional diggers, sorting the castaway gravel of larger operators, bantom-sorting, and transporting water from the wells to the claims. There were also opportunities for employment in the retail sector of the economy, as shop assistants and waiters, petrol-pump attendants and barmen. Informal sector employment was also common, with a thriving shebeen traffic for both white diggers and black location dwellers, because the sale of liquor on a digging was prohibited.[34]

The economic fortunes of these Afrikaner proletarians was fully dependent upon the state of the local digging economy. Within the first year of digging observers noted general prosperity amongst the diggers, and a conspicuous absence of large-scale unemployment. 'Everyone seemed to be making money', stated one of these reports, as the local economy remained buoyant and boom conditions ensued.[35] Even in the midst of such optimism there was some general poverty for children of unfortunate diggers, as well as low standards of living on the public diggings. A soup kitchen was, for example, necessary at Welverdiend in the winter of 1927 which was kept going throughout the summer because of need. Reports from the schools in 1926 and 1927 noted low levels of nutrition, whilst scurvy and rickets were common, and many children could not attend school owing to a lack of suitable clothing.[36]

Initially the Pact government provided ample livelihood for the community in 1926 by proclaiming as public diggings all farms which had been prospected and proved to be carrying diamonds. The government was in fact compelled by legislation to proclaim those farms on which prospecting had been successfully completed. Many impoverished diggers were able to peg claims in the rushes, and thus temporarily joined the ranks of the independent diggers in these balmy months. The rank and status of these small producers, who constituted the bulk of the diggings community, were transient, and their production was simply extractive and low-budget. By October 1926 the shallow deposits at Uitgevonden and Elandsputte were exhausted by these diggers. They cast around for more shallow, rich gravel, and their eyes fell upon the last remaining deposits on the Reserve claims owned by the companies and syndicates on the surrounding farms.

Popular resentment at the activities of 'the moneybags' began to grow from the close of 1926.This resentment was couched in the rhetoric and imagery of

the 'small man', the 'bona-fide' digger who was opposed by the unprincipled exercise of money-power. It resulted from the growing scarcity of shallow gravel on the public diggings and from a feeling that there would be little ground left for the vast crowds of diggers. Many diggers feared that there were no rich deposits left for the small man, and this fear was compounded by the failure of the Witklip and Klipkuil proclamations in November 1926.

Eyes were eagerly focused on the activity on the subdivided portions of Grasfontein and Welverdiend, which adjoined these farms. Questions were asked as to why Grasfontein, 'which was next door' to Elandsputte, was not proclaimed earlier. Rumours quickly circulated that 'all the best claims' on Grasfontein had, through subdivision, been secured by the owners of the farm, the companies and syndicates, and the professional diggers.[37]

This groundswell of popular opposition quickly gathered momentum. Rumours circulated in November 1926 that certain diggers were illegally going to rush and peg the Reserve claims on Grasfontein to preserve the publics's rights. Other issues contributed to this opposition: resentment was felt at the maladministration of the diggings by the Mines Department, and Native Affairs officials were criticised for not enforcing pass regulations and residential segregation. It was also felt that the police presence of 26 was totally inadequate for the size of the community. These social problems meshed rather explosively with the fear of gravel running short. In November 1926 some observed that Bakers (Elandsputte) would be worked out within the month, and the diggers would have to find new propositions.[38]

With ranks rapidly closing and battle lines being clearly drawn between the 'moneyed elements' holding the Reserve claims and the hastily congregated and cosmopolitan community thrown together in the tin and sacking town, the Pact began to edge itself, rather reluctantly, into the position of mediator in the looming conflict. The Pact proposed that the alluvial diggings be reserved for the 'small man', and that the Reserve claims of the local capitalists be expropriated, because they had flouted the 'spirit of the law', and monopolised 'public property'. There were a variety of reasons why the Pact decided upon this particular strategy, perhaps the most compelling being the need to circumscribe the magnitude of alluvial diamond production in order to shelter the diamond mining industry from the effects of this unregulated diamond production. The Pact had indeed secured a large interest in the diamond mines through the controversial Diamond Control Act of 1925. It is also clear that the diamond magnates – Sir Ernest Oppenheimer and Solly Joel of the Diamond Syndicate in particular – put pressure upon the Pact to limit the production of independently produced alluvial diamonds.[39]

Diggers meeting at Bakersville (c. 1927/28) (Private collection, Tim Clynick)

The resulting diamond legislation, the Precious Stones Bill, had a lengthy and protracted passage through Parliament in 1927. Marginalised small diggers therefore resorted to more direct action to secure gravel. Illegal rushes of company and syndicate ground were organised by these diggers, and some semblance of a popular movement coalesced around two remarkable individuals, A. H. Ireton and W. P. Thom. They became known as the 'Diggers' Advocates' for their frequent testing of the rights of the companies and syndicates to the Reserve claims on the subdivided portions of the farms. The Pact unwittingly fuelled the conflict by not proclaiming any new digging farms between March and August 1927. This was compounded by the collapse of the prices paid for local Lichtenburg stones in mid-1927, and a sharp check in the trajectory of the local economy was noted.[40] Digging operations were shut down, shopkeepers closed up, numbers of the unemployed men, their wives and children, took to sorting bantoms as an informal livelihood, and petty crime associated with illicit diamond buying and liquor dealing increased significantly.[41]

Growing unemployment and the shortage of shallow gravel accelerated the growth of the diggers' movement. This movement had no clear class basis, for its constituency shifted with the availability of new ground. Yet at its base lay this residue of impoverished and marginalised producers, which grew extremely impatient with the failure of the government to cater for their narrow, particular interests. The Diggers' Union of South Africa (DU) arose in late 1927 to attempt to channel this sentiment, by drawing upon these poor diggers' political support. At this juncture the diggers' movement had no fixed organisational structure, no constitution and depended upon the rough and tumble of open-air discussion and public protests for its functioning. Throughout 1927, the DU was overshadowed by the advocates of direct action – like Ireton and Thom – and the situation amongst the marginalised small independent producers was extremely unstable. At the conclusion of 1927, according to Colonel de Beer, officer commanding the Elandsputte SAP, there was a feeling that class warfare could break out at any instant on the diggings, with the marginalised diggers ranged in opposition to the companies, the syndicates and their tenants.[42]

The Precious Stones Act, December 1927

The Precious Stones Act was meant as the Pact's political and social testament to the small diggers, but when the Act was passed, in December 1927, it thrust many of the Afrikaner proletariat on the diggings immediately and traumatically into the ranks of the unemployed. The Afrikaner workers at the base of the diggings' occupational pyramid were thrown out of employment by the provi-

sions of the Act which prevented companies from holding individual claims on a digging, as companies were forced to shut down their operations. The Act also expropriated those Reserve claims 'illegally' gained through subdivision of the farms. As a result, from the end of December 1927, the Welverdiend Diamonds Limited, A&E, and all of the smaller syndicates and companies which had blossomed on their Reserve claims, closed down their activities, 'discharging hundreds of white men and thousands of natives'. The Afrikaner workers on these claims were ironically the first victims of the Pact's legislative programme – an effect which appears to have been overlooked by the legislature. Some 500 to 600 white families were affected, with the closure of Welverdiend Diamonds – 'P Kopje' – alone throwing into the streets 111 white (and 500 black) workers.[43] In addition, the Act outlawed bantom-sorting by these workers, because of the close association between it and illicit diamond buying, thus depriving these families of a temporary livelihood.[44]

For the small, independent digger, as opposed to the wage worker, the Act was also disastrous, albeit unwittingly. Already by November 1927 the shortage of shallow gravel was critical, and there had been a noticeable proliferation of a number of partnerships. shareworking, and even wage work, between diggers of this class, in attempts to pool resources and to cut labour costs.[45] Many of these partnerships and most of the shareworkers approached local diamond buyers and storekeepers for backing who took a percentage of the profits in

Mrs L Kotze (right) with mother and two grown-up daughters at their diggers' shack built of corrugated iron, canvas and hessian (Private collection, Tim Clynick)

return for putting up working capital. The Act outlawed this practice, once again because of the fear that this practice provided a conduit for illicitly obtained diamonds, by preventing the lender from holding an interest in the claim. On company ground, where Reserve claims owned by the companies and syndicates were worked on tribute by diggers, wholescale terminations of contracts resulted.[46]

The effect of the Act on the professional digger was not as deleterious as that on the small, independent producer and the wage workers. These professional diggers who had purchased Reserve claims on portions of the farms were unaffected by the Act, which only expropriated those claims held by companies, and not by individuals.[47] Mobility and capital resources allowed this class of diggers some shelter from the immediate effects of the Act.

Following the Act, an immediate increase in the general level of distress on the diggings was noted. The number of paupers on the Mining Commissioner's list increased significantly in these months, to 235 in January 1928, 300 in February, and 530 in March. The former wage workers at 'P Kopje' – Donaldson and Carlis's mine on Welverdiend – constituted 140 of the 530 paupers in March.[48] Early on in that month in 1928 *Die Burger* estimated that 25 per cent of the diggings population 'ontbeer die allernodigste'. This was due, so ran the report, to the growing shortage of ground: 'Ons vra nie onderstand nie,' stated a small digger, '... ons wil grond hê wat ons kan werk.'[49] This shortage of gravel, which was clearly a problem before the Act was passed, was exacerbated by the provisions of the Act which closed down the companies, and expropriated their Reserve claims. Some two-thirds of the diggers prior to the Act had worked on these claims under a multitude of contractual arrangements with the owners. Almost three months were to elapse before the first batch of these expropriated claims were thrown open only to a select group of impoverished diggers who could prove that they had no ground to work, or that they had earned less than £300 in the previous six months.

The small, independent diggers were irate at this enforced period of unemployment. 'Die gevoel,' ran a report on poverty at Welverdiend, 'is oor die algemeen baie verbitterd, want die mense redeneer dat die Regering die delwerye wil doodruk deur die delwers uit te honger.'[50] F. D. Devine, a professional digger and member of the DU, related a pitiful account of this poverty:

> He described pitiful scenes of families living in squalor and misery: emaciated children in rags which would be despised by houseboys, and careworn mothers trying to cook from scraps a frugal meal to enable dejected husbands to wrest precious stones from the earth with inadequate equipment.[51]

Devine attributed the poverty to the shortage of gravel: 'As far as the eye can see,' he wrote, 'the machinery is standing idle,' but still the government did not come to the aid of the thousands of out-of-work diggers.[52] Precise estimates of this unemployment are rare, but the DU estimated in April 1928 that over 8 000 diggers at Lichtenburg were unable to dig because they could not obtain ground. This meant that almost 25 000 white diggers, and dependants 'practically all of whom are unemployed, and many of whom are in abject poverty [were] on the verge of absolute starvation'.[53] The DU was also providing relief to over 700 digger families in April 1928, in addition to the activities of the Mines Department and the Lichtenburg Magistrate.[54]

The shortage of gravel was not the creation of the Mines Department, although the Act had exacerbated the shortage in the short term for the small independent digger. The diggers working for the companies, and on the public areas of the farm had themselves exploited the deposits extensively, whilst the companies and syndicates had also worked out their Reserve claims before the Act became law. In December 1927 it was common knowledge that 'owing to the long period having lapsed since the granting of [the Reserve] claims on [the] farms, all claims of any value in the names of Corporate bodies have been disposed of or worked out'. The government ban on prospecting throughout the Union for the year beginning 31 December 1927, in the long term, and the six-month ban on any new proclamations, put a premium on new gravel, the shortage of which is vital in understanding the context within which the political consciousness of the diggers was moulded.

Consciousness and political response amongst the Afrikaner poor

The case of the small digger was taken up by the DU. As we have seen, the DU was launched on the diggings in August 1927. Its early history is stormy and confusing. It was launched after the statutory diggers' representative body – composed of claimholders only – was abolished because of fears that it would be taken over by radical diggers in mid-1927. The DU was always overshadowed by the advocates of direct action – like Ireton and Thom – before the passage of the Precious Stones Act in December 1927. It was initially supported only by claimholders, the professional diggers, who constituted about 25 per cent of the diggers in November 1927.[55] The DU called simply for the orderly proclamation of more ground, and for 'more government' on the diggings. The message of direct action was far more attractive to the marginalised digger at this time, and the DU languished in the backwaters of local political life, distinguished only by occasions on which their meetings were broken up by more popular leaders. From December 1927, when the Act

was passed and popular anger mounted, the DU was reorganised, a constitution drawn up, branches set up on the diggings, and collections of membership fees began.[56] Its programme now explicitly addressed the interests of the small man, which the Act had ignored.

The new President of the DU, F. J. Rheeders, a former member of the old Orange Free State Volksraad and prominent NP member as well as a well-known farmer digger at Lichtenburg, saw the need for the diggers to organise and speak with one voice: 'If we approach Mr Beyers [the Minister of Mines] as one man,' he stated, 'he must listen to us.' 'Therefore,' he said, 'let us form a big body in order that we may make our influence felt.'[57] Rheeders felt that the NP had been misinformed regarding the 'diggings question' by interested parties and merely needed guidance from an organisation of diggers. The DU called for the immediate proclamation of more ground and the throwing open of the newest and richest alluvial field in the Union – Namaqualand – to the diggers. This explicit support for more ground was the DU's biggest drawcard. The DU was ably assisted in its endeavours to unite the diggers by the incompetence of the Pact government and the ministerial representative, F. W. Beyers, whose record was a comedy of political errors and bad timing. The DU increasingly drew upon the support of a wide range of diggers, for, as an acute observer noted, it was an organisation of producers drawn together by common interests, and 'therefore all diggers were members of the Diggers' Party'.[58]

The DU recruited the marginalised small digger with quiet deliberation. In early February 1928 it set up a 'Poor White's Relief Committee' (RC), with Max Theunissen, a former prospector and shareworker on the A&E's property, as its chairman.[59] The RC aimed to capture the support of the marginalised digger and it demanded relief for these diggers from the government in the form of more ground. Theunissen stated that the increase in poverty in 1928 was structural and not casual, and was exacerbated by the Pact's alluvial policies: '... the position is now assuming such huge proportions that it would call for some drastic action on the part of the authorities, to avert a serious calamity.'[60] White poverty was the most important drawcard of the DU which enabled it to drag itself back into the limelight of popular politics on the diggings in early 1928. The Relief Committee's first communication to the authorities by its chairman and benefactor, Max Theunissen, clearly betrayed this aim: 'I cannot refrain from expressing the view, that apparently the same policy of drift, which was attributed to the Smuts government ... is now being worthily carried on by the present Government.' He pointed out the potential radicalism which an organisation of the poor possessed to counter govern-

ment intransigence: after all is said and done, he noted, of the two evils a man would certainly rather be shot, than be starved, to death'.[61]

The RC and Theunissen (who used that committee to forward his own political ambitions)[62] undoubtedly exaggerated reports of starvation and poverty amongst the diggers as 'a handle against the Government for not throwing open more ground, especially Namaqualand'.[63] The Pact 'had turned off the tap' – by restricting new proclamations, banning prospecting, and finally by declaring Namaqualand out of bounds to individual diggers – and was thus using the power of the law against the unemployed which it had attracted to the diggings.[64]

The DU wanted nothing to do with relief schemes which offered wage work, although the unemployed themselves were not averse to taking this form of relief if circumstances warranted it.[65] Nevertheless the DU claimed a membership of 25 per cent of all diggers at Lichtenburg in March 1928, and 40 per cent by May of the same year, and we can surmise a fair degree of support for their plans for 'relief' from these figures. The DU was hugely influential amongst the small diggers, and even Beyers implored the President of the DU to use his influence to encourage diggers to take up relief work at 2s 6d per day.[66]

The question of opening new ground for the diggers was a complex issue for the Pact. The first strand in this was the failure of the expropriated company claims to provide a livelihood to the diggers. The distribution of these claims, on Grasfontein by ballot in March 1928, was disappointing.[67] Of some 4 000 applications, all of whom had no ground, only 1 000 were successful in drawing lots for claims.[68] This, and the unimpressive results obtained from these claims, lent substance to rumours that the Reserve claims on Hendriksdal, Ruigtelaagte and La Rijs Strijd were equally worked out and would not provide a livelihood for the diggers.[69]

The second strand was that of prospecting. The question of allowing prospecting was tied up with that of Namaqualand, for if Beyers 'permitted prospecting to go on in the Western Transvaal he would have to allow it in Namaqualand with the result that diamonds would become practically unsaleable'.[70] The DU was unconvinced by the Minister's logic. First, it claimed that the government's year-long prohibition on prospecting throughout the Union would not affect production because the syndicates and companies which had dug under the guise of prospecting at Lichtenburg had already exhausted the gravel before the regulations were published. The argument about overproduction was thus flawed, and this claim was reinforced by plummeting production figures for the fields from November 1927. When Beyers promptly suspended the publication of these monthly production figures, the DU became deeply suspicious.[71] On

27 March 1928 a telegram was despatched to Roos protesting at the prospecting prohibition and the Precious Stones Act in general by the 'largest ever gathering seen on the fields, exclusive of rushes'.[72] Clearly the government's handling of the shortage of ground was beginning to have unpleasant political consequences for it, and for the local parliamentary NP representative, the prominent Cabinet Minister Tielman Roos.[73]

Because of the shortage of shallow, rich gravel in the Lichtenburg district the DU focused its thoughts of relief on Namaqualand, which 'Providence [had] indicated as a solution to the poor white problem'.[74] But the Pact and the DU had a fundamental disagreement as to how the area would be exploited. The Pact announced that Namaqualand would be reserved 'as a sphere of labour for poor whites', in terms of the Pact's commitment to a 'white labour policy' as enunciated by the Department of Labour.[75]

The DU had a different view. This was best represented by the scheme of M. C. Brink, a DU member, and a small farmer from Coligny.[76] The Namaqualand fields, he felt, should be used as a solution to the poor white question by settling poor diggers there as independent producers; the fields were to be reserved exclusively for the needs of the poor man, who would work there independently under state protection, and not be employed as a relief worker by the state. He was not in favour of the proposed state diggings 'as this would only mean that the poor white would always be a poor white'.[77] Namaqualand belonged to the diggers and should be exploited on a sliding scale of profits for the state.[78] Dr D. P. Steenkamp, the Independent Nationalist candidate who stood for Namaqualand in 1929, also agreed with Brink's plans for the solution of the poor white question. The absorption of poor whites into the railways 'offered little future prospects' for the solution of the 'poor white question' and he preferred the 'American system' whereby poor whites were rehabilitated through back-to-the-land schemes. In Namaqualand this could be achieved by throwing open the state diggings to poor diggers where they could work as producers.[79] Wage labour at 'kaffir rates of pay' was, therefore, not the solution to the poor white question for Steenkamp and Brink.

The DU adopted Brink's scheme as their own and, over time, reformulated and embroidered upon it. The DU leaders, noted a police report, 'confined themselves to whetting the imagination of the diggers with wonderful tales of the richness of the diamond fields of Namaqualand'.[80] These tales included the suggestion that the state should provisionally take over the diamonds produced which would then be 'sold when the time is most opportune'; the state should allow these poor whites to take out £5 000 worth of diamonds, before revoking their licences, for this sum was deemed sufficient to 'put the digger on his feet' and allow him to shake the diggings' dust off his feet. The state

should receive no revenue from the diamonds themselves and it should revoke the 10 per cent export tax on rough diamonds. Trade on the diggings should be entirely in the hands of whites; the state should appoint independent diamond valuators for the diggers; and finally, no Africans should be allowed on the Namaqualand diggings.[81]

Beyers was unconvinced by the DU's alternative scheme and in his abrupt, abrasive manner informed the DU so. The proposals, he said, were impracticable and the Namaqualand diggings would be worked in the interests of the state by poor whites from Namaqualand, who would receive a good wage.[82] This was not acceptable to the majority of diggers: 'We won't have that. All diggers should be allowed to go to Namaqualand. We don't want a State diggings, as we are not going to work for kaffir wages, as they do on the railways,' they complained.[83]

Battle lines were clearly demarcated when the Pact Cabinet officially rejected Brink's scheme on 24 February 1928.[84] The tone of this announcement alienated everyone:

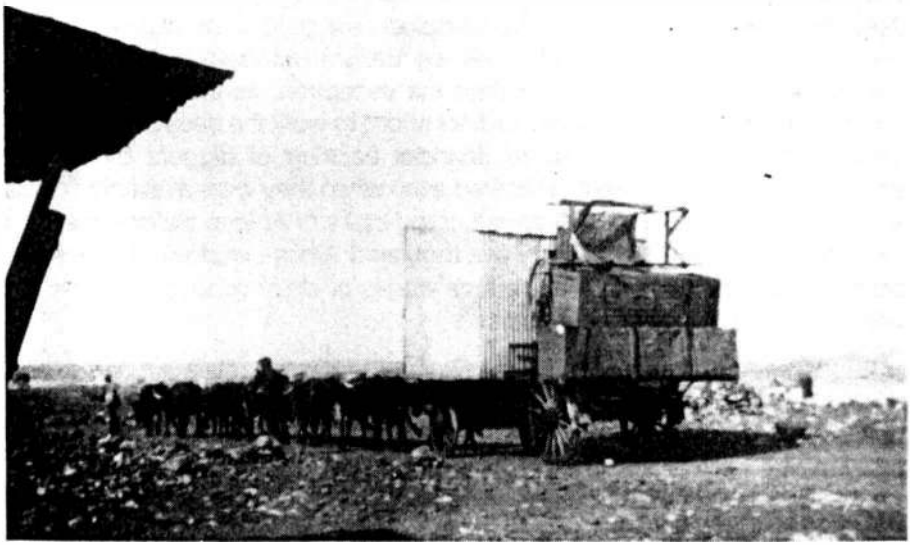
> The decision of the Government in regard to the Namaqualand deposits was arrived at after full consideration, including the scheme submitted by poor whites and diggers, and is final. The Minister is, therefore, unable to discuss this matter further with the diggers ...[85]

The tone of this pronouncement was somewhat diluted by the simultaneous proclamation of certain diggings in Lichtenburg as restricted alluvial diggings in terms of the Precious Stones Act. The Pact, however, was clearly determined to work the riches of Namaqualand in the interests of the state and not on behalf of one section of the people.[86]

At the end of March 1928 a 30 per cent drop in the price of Lichtenburg stones was attributed to the sale of diamonds produced by the Namaqualand State Diggings to the Diamond Syndicate:

> The Diggers are asking if this is what Mr Beyers calls looking after the interests of the small man. The general feeling amongst the digging population is that the Government's policy is intending to entirely squash the digger and kill the alluvial industry.[87]

There seemed to be many examples of this intention: the barrenness of the new ground given by Beyers to the diggers by the new ballot system, at Grasfontein, at Ruigtelaagte ('given up by prospectors and others as unpayable'), La Rijs Strijd and Hendriksdal ('it has all been worked out ... there is little or no gravel left for new claimholders'); and the fiasco surrounding the publication of the figures of the monthly diamond production.



Digger leaving the Lichtenburg area with his house (Killie Campbell Africana Library, University of Natal)

These fears were added to by reports of growing poverty: Theunissen of the RC reported '791 applications in one day in early April, and many of the applicants were starving diggers who simply could not earn a livelihood because of the shortage of gravel'.[88] Between February and April the RC received 2 400 applications for food, and 1 954 for medical attention.[89] The essence of the RC's relief programme was simple: 'We want sufficient ground at the earliest possible date for at least 8 000 diggers.'[90] In April Rheeders articulated the substance of this digger ideology: 'We must serve ourselves [because] unless we get what we are entitled to we shall see created in South Africa two classes of people, the masters ["die base"] ... and the hirelings. Surely we cannot tolerate that?'[91] Beyers understood the implications of these demands, whilst disagreeing with them: 'Your scheme amounts to this: That you wish to make a small capitalist of every poor white or unemployed; and, furthermore, the State must be troubled with the administration of their capital ...'[92] What was wrong with that? countered the new President of the DU, A. J. Swanepoel. 'The diggers want to be independent and they want to remain independent. They do not want to work for others.' And, he continued, 'if the Government remained obstinate they would use their organisation to compel

the Government to take note of their grievances and to remedy them ... the ballot box will show.'[93]

The shortage of shallow gravel remained acute throughout mid-1928. The *Star* described how 'diggers who have sampled new ground proclaimed by the Minister are returning to their 'old loves' eg. Bakers and Vaalboschputte'. Deep claims were now the rule rather than the exception, as the shallow gravel simply ran out.[94] Many diggers could not afford to work the deeper claims, and because the state had outlawed financial backing of diggers by outside lenders, deeper claims went unworked even when they were available.[95] This was an important contributory cause of the strike of African claimworkers on the diggings in June 1928. Thirty five thousand African workers struck when branches of the DU decided to reduce wages of claimworkers from 25s per week to 15s 6d in order to cut costs.[96]

In August the government decided to ballot the Reserve claims it had expropriated on Welverdiend. The rush for claims was phenomenal and from the Lichtenburg diggings alone 6 078 applications were received, although only 1 000 claims were available for distribution.[97] This indicated the acuteness of the position on the fields. Diggers' grievances were summed up by one digger:

Africans working on the diggings (Killie Campbell Africana Library, University of Natal)

> Recently I read in the *Star* a report of a speech by General Hertzog, in which he said that when the NP came to power there were over 24 000 poor whites, but today there are practically none. I do not agree with the Minister, as if he visited the diggings in the Western Transvaal he would find those 24 000 poor whites gathered in one place.[98]

Economic need and bread-and-butter issues drove the diggers out of the ranks of the NP. Three DU executive committee members announced their intentions to stand against Roos because of this: A. J. Swanepoel,[99] M. Theunissen, and M. C. Brink. They all based their actions on the fact that 'Mr Beyers, Mr Roos, the Cabinet and the whole of the Nationalist Party' were responsible for the impoverishment of the diggers.[100] 'The time had come for the diggings to send their own representative to parliament,' stated Theunissen, and 'their representative should be a man independent of all parties'.[101] All were dissatisfied at the Pact's relief programmes and all contended that Roos's promise to the unemployed diggers 'was purely a political move to satisfy the party in regard to the promises made in connection with the poor white question'.[102] It is in this context that we must situate the campaign of Tielman Roos, the NP member for Lichtenburg, and Minister in the Pact Cabinet in August 1928, to win back the 'hearts and minds' of the small diggers.[103] On 17 August Roos visited his constituency, and the DU presented him with a 13-point list of demands, all of which he accepted. 'So far as words go,' noted the correspondent, 'Mr Roos capitulated to all the diggers' demands.'[104] He promised to proclaim the remaining portions of Welverdiend, Goedgedacht and Holfontein (in the Krugersdorp District), La Rijs Strijd, Hendriksdal and Ruigtelaagte.[105]

These promises of relief were sufficient for Roos to be given a full vote of confidence from the diggings branches of the NP, and probably resulted in his nomination as official NP candidate by the district committee in late August. Theunissen for one was not impressed by his promises: 'The diggers were bluffed into [voting for Roos] by promises which would never be fulfilled, and by the slaughter of a few fat oxen, which provided a meal for hundreds of hungry diggers, who became Mr Roos's supporters for the day.'[106] 'Not one of Mr Roos's promises has materialised,' he noted in September, 'and as soon as he is nominated they will probably vanish in smoke.'[107]

Roos was as unsuccessful as Beyers in providing long-term relief to the diggers on their terms. The Welverdiend ballot was a failure: only 1 000 out of the 7 000 diggers who applied received a claim; he did not throw open the remaining 19 portions of that farm which belonged to a Lichtenburg syndicate as promised;[108] the proclamations of Hendriksdal and La Rijs Strijd were failures, both farms having few traces of gravel.[109] The Holfontein proclama-

tion of 29 December 1928 failed to satisfy Lichtenburg diggers who were prevented from taking part in the ballot at Holfontein in the Ventersdorp district because of the limitations imposed by the Precious Stones Act on those who could participate in lotteries in different mining districts.[110]

Some diggers were determined not to let their claim to the Namaqualand gravels rest. In late December 1928 and early January 1929 a group of 300 'radical Lichtenburgers', headed by the ubiquitous W. H. Thom, gathered at Port Nolloth on the Namaqualand coast to protest against the inroads made into the rights of independent diggers to dig on Crown land.[111] In protest against the nationalisation of the Namaqualand diamond deposits they threatened to 'rush' the state diggings to peg claims there on the rich deposits. They were not there, Thom explained, to stir up strife but rather to make a living: 'Since they could not do so, it was not surprising that they resorted to other measures.'[112] Theunissen's explanation for the Port Nolloth affair was that the Minister had not fulfilled his promises to give ground to the diggers.[113] Officialdom and government remained unmoved, and when rumours began to circulate that these diggers were preparing to rush the state diggings illegally, police reinforcements were rapidly despatched to Port Nolloth to maintain 'law and order'.

Conclusion

The Port Nolloth affair, which brought to an end militant digger politics, and the nomination of Swanepoel as the 'diggers' representative' for the NP in the 1929 general election, concluded this brief moment of revolt of the Lichtenburg poor which has formed the substance of this chapter. Clearly class issues were of great importance in the creation and persistence of the 'poor white problem' on the Lichtenburg alluvial diggings. This class dimension was also of great moment to the response of the Pact government to the 'alluvial diamond digging question'. And class issues were clearly central to the political consciousness of the Lichtenburg poor. It is hoped that this chapter has therefore contributed to our understanding of the nature and impact of the 'poor white question' on the politics of the Union during the period of the Pact government.

Chapter 6

White railway labour in South Africa, 1873–1924

Gordon Pirie

Poor whites have worked as railway labourers in South Africa for practically the entire history of train transport in the country. Certainly they were very much in evidence before their contribution was extended and formalised under the Pact government's 'civilised labour' initiative of 1924. Notwithstanding their lengthy record of service, strikingly little is known about even how many destitute whites were engaged and how their numbers fluctuated. Similarly, there is scant knowledge about the kinds of labour which whites performed, their wages and their conditions of employment. The development of policy as regards white recruiting is largely unknown as well. Ascertaining something about these elementary details is the task undertaken in this chapter.

Intrepid analysts doubtless will wish to move from the narrative to more profound discussion of the hidden agenda of poor white recruitment, and the implications for working class consciousness and action. Such documentary evidence as there is ought not to be ignored, however. As the following presentation aims to show, it offers interesting insights and intriguing challenges. For example, the written record indicates a diversity of official attitudes to poor white labour, beginning before the turn of the century with a decidedly negative impression of the cost-effectiveness of white workers and an unwillingness to absorb the added expense. This position altered dramatically, coinciding, it appears, with government insistence that the Railways employ impoverished war refugees, and with the Railways' own perception that it could write off the extra cost as part of the expense of searching for and training labourers who could be engaged in superior grades of work. The evidence also points to the existence of a charitable motive in the hiring of at least some poor whites. Other material concerning their subsequent treatment indicates the limits of that philanthropy and raises doubts about the sincerity of government's concern for poor whites and its anxiety about their politically disruptive potential. Printed sources also suggest that poor white labour was not seen simply as a 'back-up' for black labour shortages: hiring and working arrangements were anything but haphazard and *ad hoc*. Generally speaking,

the impression left is that the early employment of poor whites as railway labourers was an infinitely complex phenomenon which does not yield to any straightforward interpretation. What follows is merely a preliminary empirical contribution to a potentially fascinating debate.

The period 1873–1910

White labour was used from the very outset of large-scale railway construction in the Cape Colony, generally forming between a quarter and a third of the railway labour force. In the first frantic phase of building (1873–1877) a large proportion of white labourers were navvies imported from Europe. They were joined by a smaller number of colonial whites. In 1877 some 3 500 whites in total were employed as railway labourers on Cape Government Railway (CGR) lines. After the initial flurry of construction, a halt was called to importing white labour and untrained and unskilled white colonists were engaged in increasing proportion. This occurred despite their being paid considerably more than black labourers (on the Grahamstown line in 1877 the lowest white wage was 5s per day; average black wages during the year ranged between 2s 9d and 3s 2d). The arrangement suited all colonial interests: white labourers cushioned fluctuations in black labour supply for the railways and, by 'releasing' black labour for other work, helped keep the lid on black wage demands in all economic sectors. Furthermore, railway labour was a channel for giving work to whites who became unemployed and impoverished during drought and depression.[1]

Given these good reasons for engaging whites for railway work, in both the Cape and Natal in the early 1890s official enquiries were made about the prospect of engaging more unskilled white labourers, even to the extent of recruiting them so as to replace blacks. In light of its disappointing experiment with labour substitution, the Natal Government Railways (NGR) was not very keen on further employment of whites. As NGR's General Manager explained, the men who had been hired were socially undesirable characters and were reluctant to work alongside black labourers.[2] Whites, it appeared, could survive the indignity of grinding manual labour on earthworks, but only if they felt they were not doing work ordinarily consigned to black muscle. Matters were no different on the CGR. Mindful of the added expense of white labourers, and being loathe to dismiss black employees of long standing, the CGR's General Manager was disinclined to turn his Railway into an unemployment relief agency. Saying he was 'only too glad to get decent white men ... at reasonable wages', he nonetheless stressed that productivity counted more than pigmentation.[3]

In Natal a harder attitude had emerged toward employing white labour in railway construction and maintenance, in freight sheds, or as porters, pointsmen or gatekeepers. On financial grounds alone, NGR's Labour Superintendent expressed himself 'distinctly adverse' to replacing black labour with white labour. Speaking in the early 1890s, a matter of three years after successful recruitment of African labour from Zululand,[4] he estimated it would cost some £50 000 per annum in extra wages and £20 000 in barracks. The Chief Engineer and the Superintendent of the Locomotive Department likewise spoke out against labour substitution, the former claiming it was 'very doubtful' if whites were the most effective workers. The Superintendent of the NGR's Black Labour Department commented further that any white labourers who would lift a finger in the presence of blacks were simply unaffordable.[5]

In 1899, two years after the Railway administration in the Orange Free State unsuccessfully offered employment to poor whites as railway porters,[6] work was found for war refugees from the Transvaal as relief labour on the CGR's Port Elizabeth–Avontuur line. Even at daily wages in the range 2s 6d to 3s 6d, this gesture was said by the Resident Engineer to double the cost of the works.[7] These whites were lucky. Earlier there had been considerable reluctance among railway engineers to give work to poor whites whose livelihoods had been devastated by the scourges of rinderpest, locusts and drought.[8] Past experience on the Graaff-Reinet line with 'numbers of the poor Dutch', as well as in the East London and Indwe districts, had shown that the men were inept, indifferent to their work, and disliked working among Africans.[9] A government request that about 150 whites from the Barkly West region be given work on the Queenstown–Tarkastad line got an especially chilly reception. In the opinion of the railway engineer at Queenstown, poor whites were undisciplined, indolent and unwilling to work as underlings. Taking into account also that African labour was plentiful and that supervision on light earthworks would be required over an extensive length of track, he declared that he would 'much prefer not having anything to do with the employment of poor whites'.[10]

In the aftermath of the South African War, the subject of white railway labour was revived in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony. Reconstruction there exerted rapacious demands on African labour and, as part of its policy not to employ unskilled white labour, the mining industry in particular called on the Central South African Railways (CSAR) to hire more white (and Indian) labour and thereby release Africans for mine work. The attitude of the Railway management, however, was that any such labour substitution could only be temporary: it was estimated that the railway wage bill would be inflated by some £50 000 per annum. In a generally unsympathetic atmosphere, a member of the Inter-Colonial Council's Railway Committee drew attention to the

imperative of keeping white and black labourers separate, to the way in which the CSAR was being bludgeoned into employing workers whom even mining interests were reluctant to hire, and to the outcry which would occur when whites were eventually retrenched in favour of Africans.[11] Finally, the point was made that if the CSAR's complement of African labour was curtailed, supervisory white gangers would be made redundant; indeed, in June and July of 1903, 650 were dismissed.[12]

While the CSAR was being urged to limit recruitment of Africans and to substitute white labour, the organisation had in fact already embarked on two schemes to increase its unskilled white labour force. The first, which formed part of Lord Milner's plan to introduce 'more English blood into the country',[13] involved the importation of about 500 English navvies. At least one firm of engineers and contractors knew of this scheme by early March 1903, several weeks before mining and commercial interests launched their campaign to have the CSAR employ fewer Africans.[14] After considerable recruitment effort and expense, the navvy experiment was terminated hastily. In the view of the CSAR's General Manager, not only had the experiment been financially calamitous (using navvies on the Braamfontein–Krugersdorp line had doubled the cost), it had also confirmed that black and white labourers did not work well together and that instead of helping blacks, the practice demeaned white men. The CSAR's Chief Engineer added that it was a myth that navvies did more work and that they were easier to supervise than Africans.[15] Fortunately for poor whites resident in the colonies, the dismissal of foreign navvy labour provided them with extra job opportunities.

The second scheme of white labour employment which emerged in the CSAR in 1903 was relief work. Possibly as early as March, the Railways were obliged by government to absorb some 3 000 whites impoverished by war. The men were engaged on earthworks for the Klerksdorp–Fourteen Streams, Kimberley–Bloemfontein, Krugersdorp–Zeerust, Rustenburg, Kroonstad–Bethlehem and Breyten–Ermelo railways.[16] In October 1903 some 200 whites (mostly Boers) were 'intermittently employed' on the Klerksdorp line. As many as 700 had worked simultaneously on the Bloemfontein line. Payment was on a piecework basis, deductions being made for the hire of tents and equipment and for medical services. Those employed in this fashion included 'bywoners' as well as farm owners, the latter using their own ploughs, oxen and scoops to assist them with earthworks.[17]

Financial embarrassment that it was, the employment of navvies seemed to confirm the prejudice that developed in the 1890s against white labour. Indeed, in October 1903, 300 representatives of scientific and technical societies denounced permanent employment of large numbers of unskilled white la-

bourers as unaffordable.[18] Soon, however, the fault was placed at the door of imported labour rather than white labour per se: bungled navvy contracts had set a premium on idleness.[19] Once this distinction had been made, white relief labour came to be looked upon more favourably by the CSAR's General Manager and Chief Engineer. This was so even though it cost between two and three times as much as black labour, that is, between £1 500 and £2 000 extra per mile of railway constructed. 'I prefer to work with white labour always,' said the Chief Engineer: 'the class of work ... [is] very superior.'[20]

The desire expressed by some to employ white labourers in preference to blacks extended beyond the humbler category of earthmovers, ballasters and platelayers, and embraced porters, pointsmen and firemen. In 1904, at a time when some 7 000 Indians and 6 000 Africans worked for the NGR, the Natal Legislative Assembly heard objection about whites being excluded from work which it was said they did efficiently 'all the world over in any white man's country'. By all accounts it was particularly galling to have blacks working as station porters, allegedly in double the number necessary. Also offensive was the sight of 'filthy' Indians handling the personal travel garb of women passengers. 'Can we wonder,' it was asked, 'that many valuable things go amissing in our railway carriages when we have Indian porters?' Although a vain effort had once been made to employ whites instead, government declared itself ready to try again 'to render every assistance to the white man'. By 1906 employment of white porters was pronounced a success, 'greatly appreciated by the travelling public' despite an increased wage bill of between £2 000 and £3 000 annually. The matter of white railway labour was not fully resolved however, and in 1907 and 1908 the Natal Legislative Assembly continued to hear argument that it was in the public interest not to employ blacks in tasks which whites could perform: engine cleaners, clerks, train guards and gatekeepers.[21]

While the Natal authorities persisted in their reluctance to hire unskilled white labour,[22] matters began to follow a rather different course in the Transvaal in 1907. Although whites had for several years been employed on new construction projects, it was at Volksrust that poor whites were first engaged to work in a railway depot in posts previously occupied by Africans. The measure was a response to representations from the local Dutch Reformed Church minister about destitute whites in the district. As is so often the case with temporary arrangements, the distinctly charitable one at Volksrust acquired permanence, and was copied at other depots in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony. A second phase in the relief employment of whites as railway labourers had begun. Now, as whites took cleaner and easier work in railway yards and were increasingly employed as maintenance crews on existing track, most were engaged as temporary wage labourers; piecework payment applied only to

construction gangs on new track. In order to administer the new arrangements, the CSAR created its own White Labour Department and Inspectorate, a step which suggests that the employment of white labourers came to be viewed very quickly as a long-term project. Whites were not hired spontaneously at wages and conditions negotiated *ad hoc* simply to compensate for black labour unavailability.[23] At the end of 1907 the Railway employed approximately 300 white labourers at rates ranging from 2s 6d to 3s 4d per day.[24]

The CSAR had made significant strides with its so-called 'white labour policy' by the end of 1908. Nearly 1 900 white labourers had been recruited, some two thirds in the Transvaal. Overall, nearly three quarters of the labourers worked on railway line maintenance. Unemployment among whites had been eased, but in the Transvaal alone, 2 000 poor whites remained on the waiting list for Railway work. They doubtless waited eagerly to take the place of blacks who resigned or were dismissed from Railway service; engagement of the 1 900 poor whites had occurred because of vacancies left by 2 800 black labourers. Whether or not this number had been fired or had left Railway service voluntarily, other black people were not appointed to their positions. The morality of the substitution presented no difficulty to the White Labour Inspector who expressed his prejudice unashamedly. Conceding that the families of former black employees might suffer, he nevertheless reported that white women and children deserved more sympathy.[25]

The expendability of trained black railway workers was a crucial matter, and not just in the Transvaal: poor whites were not just 'back-up' labour. In the Cape in 1910 a dozen or so black labourers who had not long been in Railway service were dismissed from the Uitenhage workshops to make way for poor whites. According to government officials, the blacks would suffer no great hardship as they could easily obtain alternative work; woolwashing and agricultural labour received specific mention.[26] However, at a time when the General Manager was investigating the possibility of employing more poor whites, not all CGR staff approved the suggestion that black incumbents be replaced. As regards the locomotive workshops, warning was given that costs and productivity would be adversely affected.[27] And, following efforts to place poor whites at Steynsburg (where, in another charitable gesture, one father of ten was given trial employment in a black gang while his 'underfed' son of 18 was offered work at 1s a day), the station master stated that he was quite content with his three black assistants. In his own words, they were family men, 'respectable, honest and quiet', men who could speak three languages and who were also good shunters. It would be 'a crying shame' he said, 'to turn them away to make room for inexperienced men of any colour'.[28] Evidently poor whites were more acceptable as railway builders, and some were offered

work on the Graaff-Reinet line midway through 1909. By September CGR had employed some 500 white railway labourers.[29]

In the Cape, white labourers on the Graaff-Reinet line were paid 4s 8d per day and had free use of vacant platelayers' cottages. In the Salt River workshops the white labourers earned 2s 4d per day, 2d more than the blacks they replaced. As casual workers they were not entitled to holiday leave, sick pay or family medical benefits. In the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies the wages of the first 2 000 or so white railway labourers were 3s 4d a day. That these payments were far less than the subsistence wages which had been calculated privately and by government as minimal places a question-mark over the sincerity of the poor white programme. It should be noted, however, that the privileges which were granted effectively increased the rates and were a tangible expression of CSAR's concern to attract white labourers, to retain them and to improve their conditions. An amount of £2 was given to each construction gang to enable ploughing of a plot of railside ground; maize seed was distributed free; during winter one free bag of coal was allocated monthly to each labourer; bricks for lining the interior of wood and iron shanties were supplied; labourers were awarded a free second-class rail ticket each year, as well as one free ticket for local travel monthly. At places where houses were available, labourers were accommodated rent free. At Volksrust an evening school was started for labourers, as well as a day school for their children.[30] The benefits stamped the so-called white labour policy as a radical departure from the practices known to the 5 000 or so black labourers who worked for the CSAR.

Even if their privileges made them a labouring aristocracy on the Railways, poor whites were not exactly cosseted and their experiences were not always pleasant or tolerable. For example, there was some resistance from white gangers who either forgot that whites were supposed to be treated better than Africans, or who felt their own jobs were threatened by labourers whose shared skin colour and language appeared to erode the superiority they had previously enjoyed. On the CSAR reports were filed of newly recruited white labourers being bullied, sworn at, and inadequately instructed.[31] Even in the direst circumstances some labourers clung to their self-respect and a proportion of those who left the CSAR did so on account of harsh treatment. Others left because they refused transfer to other districts, because they secured better paid work, or because they were physically unable to withstand the gruelling manual labour. Some were dismissed for idleness and dishonesty, while yet others were discharged or switched from branch to main lines so as to reduce expense.[31]

When the white labour policy became better known, new unskilled recruits received a warmer welcome from their white superiors. Certain problems persisted, however, most notably with housing and pay. As regards accommodation, the point was made year after year that inadequate provision of housing was a powerful brake to further recruitment of white labourers. It was also a common reason for the resignation of those who could no longer afford to rent in the private market and/or those who could not tolerate the SAR's derelict, primitive and overcrowded shelter. In both 1912 and 1913, it was estimated that were it not for a shortage of more than 2 000 housing units countrywide, the Railways could readily appoint an additional 3 000 poor whites in place of blacks. It seemed hardly to help at all that by 1910 more than £10 000 had been spent on white labourers' accommodation, nor that by 1913 the figure had leapt to £90 000, some of it being spent on the purchase of old military quarters.[33]

Wages were every bit as problematic as housing. From the very first, the CSAR's White Labour Inspector recommended increasing the wage of 3s 4d daily to a maximum of 5s daily depending on length of service. As one Bloemfontein resident wrote, failure to pay a living wage made it difficult for poor whites to differentiate themselves from blacks, and impossible to feed and clothe their children. In the end, he warned, they would be driven to stealing, would fill the prisons and would cost the state considerably more than a general wage increase.[34] From the Railways' point of view it was also desirable to nurture a stable workforce: time and money were wasted if poor whites could not be induced to remain in Railway service. Accordingly it was not long before wage scales were revised so as to discourage short service and encourage some degree of permanence. Beginning in April 1910, from a lowered starting wage of 3s daily for one month, white labourers could progress to a ceiling of 5s daily after two years. The package of fringe benefits which white labourers received included sundry train travel concessions, free medical aid and four public holidays annually. The free monthly bag of coal and free plouging were discontinued. In the view of the CSAR's Chief Engineer, this formalisation of wages and service conditions had become necessary to cope with an anticipated increase of poor whites applying for railway work. It was not that the work itself was popular, but that as railways sprawled across the landscape fragmenting farms and undermining transport riding, men would simply have to take to manual labour on the Railways.[35]

The period 1910–1924

After Union in 1910 and the amalgamation of the three colonial railway organisations into the newly styled South African Railways (SAR), the programme for

employment of poor whites as unskilled workers continued with ministerial approval.[36] In December 1910 the SAR had some 3 400 white labourers on its payroll. A minority of these were employed on new railway construction. The balance (2 000) worked at stations, depots and workshops and in maintenance gangs on lines which were already open to train traffic. Geographically speaking, most (2 300) were employed in the Transvaal, the Orange Free State rating second (850). The porters apart, white labourers had yet to be employed in Natal, a situation which triggered emotional appeals in Parliament for the retrenchment of the Indians who formed the majority (60 per cent) of the workforce.[37]

The SAR's white labour scheme received a boost late in 1911 when improved pay scales were announced. The official explanation was that revision would allow full advantage to be taken of the shortage of African labour to encourage white workers. At the same time, the White Labour Superintendent also highlighted the need to pay more if the Railways were to attract better applicants and stem desertion and resignations. In the Transvaal and Orange Free State the starting wage was raised to 3s 6d and the period of qualification for the maximum wage of 5s was shortened to 13 months. In the Cape, due to an allegedly lower cost of living, daily wages were pegged 6d lower at each service notch.[38]

Having announced improved wages, the SAR sought publicity for its attempt to recruit white men who were 'of good character', physically fit, aged between 18 and 40, and able to use pick, shovel and barrow on earthworks. With the help of magistrates, ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, field cornets, members of parliament and senate, almost 1 400 applications were soon received, mostly from single men. Some two thirds of the 1 000 unmarried applicants were enrolled. Indicative of the shortage of suitable housing, only one third of the 386 married applicants were offered work. Nearly 400 of the 750 newly hired labourers replaced whites who had been promoted between June 1911 and April 1912 to positions such as learner fireman, learner shunter, cleaners and gangers (in the same interval 346 whites acquired jobs at the expense of blacks who, contrary to the SAR's avowed policy, were deliberately dismissed to create vacancies).[39] This was not the first time that white labourers had been promoted. During the years 1908–1910 there had been some 500 promotions. However, it was only in 1911 that a definite policy was adopted of turning to the white labourer category first when seeking to fill vacancies higher up the job ladder (at Union it also became policy not to elevate black labourers beyond labourer grade).[40] Thereafter promotions were commonplace: by 1913 more than 1 000 poor white labourers had been moved into permanent positions. Although more promotions were made than

before to positions as painters, signal fitters, ticket examiners, messengers and checkers, the categories of fireman, shunter and ganger still accounted for over half.[41] By 1916 more than 3 000 promotions had been made, all of them in turn replaced by fresh white recruits. The plan to use the pool of poor whites as a reservoir from which to recruit labour for superior grades of work had borne some fruit.

As part of its intention to advance white labourers, the SAR began evening classes at major railway centres, namely Johannesburg, Germiston, Pretoria and Cape Town. The intention was eventually to have schools at Volksrust, Waterval Boven, Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp, Kroonstad, Joubertina, Noupoort, Springfontein and East London. Excepting in the Transvaal, provincial administrations helped bear a portion of the costs of Dutch and English instruction in arithmetic, reading, writing, grammar, dictation, composition, railway geography and SAR rules and regulations. In the event, the burden was never crippling. The number of schools operating simultaneously reached a maximum of seven in 1912, in which year a fraction more than 200 labourers were promoted as a direct result of attending classes (more than 300 failed to pass examinations). Lack of enthusiasm among labourers meant that certain schools never opened or that they only functioned sporadically. Classes were terminated because men were 'too old', 'too backward', or 'hopelessly unsuitable for promotion'. At the close of 1915 evening classes were offered only at Cape Town, Germiston and Johannesburg. Of the 425 white labourers who sat examinations, 175 passed, most graduating to superior railway jobs.[42] Although the SAR did not become directly involved in the education of white labourers' children, schooling was problematic, especially in regard to families stationed in remote districts. Where possible, arrangements were made to transfer fathers to work gangs or stations near to schools.[43]

In the early years of Union, the SAR's white labour policy continued to be pursued vigorously and included study of the possibility of increasing the November 1911 total of 500 white labourers in SAR workshops.[44] Applications for railway jobs were plentiful, numbering almost 2 500 in 1913 and 3 000 in 1914. Demand for work far outstripped the number of positions offered, and in both years only one third of the workseekers were placed. White recruitment was slowed by the SAR's reluctance to allow racially integrated work gangs, and even to have a white gang flanked by two black gangs.[45] This meant that whites could generally only be hired in batches, not singly. Mostly, however, the slow rate of white recruitment reflected the shortage of suitable accommodation. As early as 1913 it was estimated that there was work for 5 000 additional whites on track maintenance countrywide, barring the harsh environments of Northern and Western Transvaal, the Karoo and parts of Natal.

Fifteen thousand whites were estimated to be awaiting offers of railway employment. A housing budget exceeding £400 000 was proposed but was never forthcoming. In part the outbreak of war was to blame: despite recommendation in 1913 and 1914 that 340 houses be built, only 140 were completed.[46]

Notwithstanding the SAR's inability to absorb all those who applied for work as white labourers, the thousands of men who were fortunate to obtain work kept the white labour policy respectably successful. December employment totals for the eight years between 1909 and 1916 never dropped below the 1909 figure of just over 3 000, peaking at some 4 600 in 1912, and tailing off to 4 100 in 1916. How many of these men had joined SAR for the first time, and how many for a second or subsequent time, is not known. Nor is it known for certain how long most white labourers remained on the railways. As an indication, however (and excluding those who were promoted or transferred, those who died and those who withdrew at the end of an assignment), the white labourers who left the SAR in 1913, 1914 and 1915 totalled approximately 2 700, 2 000 and 1 300 respectively.[47]

As already indicated, the SAR's failure to keep all its recruits hinged in part on inadequate pay; the dilemma was to avoid raising wages so high that the purpose of the poor white policy was defeated by people other than the poorest whites being attracted to Railway service. On the one hand the perennial wage problem was eased by wartime allowances which were intended to compensate in some measure for inflated prices,[48] and by geographical allowances which were aimed at smoothing out regional variations in cost of living – rent and food especially. On the other hand the wage problem was aggravated by reported incidents of construction gang leaders absconding with wages, by the hated system of tool and tent hire, and by the iniquitous arrangement whereby men were not paid for the time and cost incurred in moving camp.[49] And, it was not until 1914 that white labourers were allowed to rail their tools at contractors' reduced rates. The concession hardly harmed the Railways. On the contrary, labourers were ultimately paid out less for the depreciated tools which they returned; they did not drink away their depreciation receipts between assignments; work on new projects was not delayed for want of equipment.[50] Depreciation deductions on rented equipment, tent hire and tool conveyance costs were not the only sources of dissatisfaction. Whites who had laboured on a piecework basis for contractors on the Vierfontein–Bothaville and the Bethal–Volksrust lines grumbled about the charges for water barrels and about the suspect way of estimating volumes of earth moved. They also complained about the lack of work at contract sites and the resultant obligation to purchase their own return train tickets (or walk home), this under a regulation pertaining to men who remained on site less than three months.

Said the *Transvaal Chronicle* in June 1914, sweated labour was rampant. In some cases men were earning net amounts of 3 15s after 46 days work, £1 after 21 days.[51]

The desperate circumstances of some white railway workers on construction projects said very little for the existence of a truly caring state policy, and still less for state paranoia about working class revolt. Not all the SAR's poor whites suffered equally, however. In April 1913 the average daily wage earned by white construction labourers on piecework was said to exceed 8s in the Transvaal, 6s in the Orange Free State and 5s in the Cape. Wages for the majority of poor white railway workers were lower, being more in line with white farm and industrial wages of 3s 6d and 5s per day.[52] In 1912, 51 per cent of the SAR's white labour force earned in excess of 4s 6d daily. Corresponding figures for the ensuing three years were 57, 74 and 70 per cent.[53] Even taking into account the wage increases of May 1917, however, many white wage workers fell short of the 7s daily (inclusive of benefits) which Parliament recommended in 1917. The discrepancy was the subject of a protest meeting called by the Johannesburg branch of the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants (NURAHS) in 1918. With 1 100 white labourers still renting their own shelter in the private housing market, SAR management quickly agreed to a daily allowance of 1s for married men who, having served for a minimum twelve months, were still without free housing.[54]

For a time the interests of poor whites continued to be paid attention after the white railway labour programme was hived off from the SAR to the Department of Mines and Industries in June 1917. In the view of the government, the Railways still had a role to play in soaking up unemployed whites, including war veterans.[55] The sum spent on housing continued to grow (by February 1918, it reached £150 000).[56] Furthermore, approximating the *annual* number of placements made by government labour exchanges (excluding 1921), the employment figures for March for the period 1917–1922 consistently exceeded 4 000, reaching nearly 4 700 in 1921. By then, the minimum daily wage for a white labourer over the age of 21 had increased to 8s. The free housing privilege had been withdrawn, but in its stead white labourers were placed on the permanent staff with superior medical, superannuation and job termination conditions. Simultaneously, as from November 1920, the SAR once more started an unemployment relief programme at government's behest. This time a portion of the wages paid was recovered from the state's Unemployment Vote. By July 1923, 8 000 men had been engaged for relief works.[57]

In the interim, the wholly SAR-subsidised white labour policy had faltered. Not only was the opinion growing that the SAR's contribution to permanent white upliftment could only ever be slight,[58] but the grim reality of a five-year

operating deficit (and consequent pressure to lower freight rates so as to attract more business) obliged the Railways to enact economy measures. White labourers were transferred from branch to main lines where they could be more productively employed, and those who resigned were not replaced by whites.[59] In some instances transfers were merely a prelude to dismissal under some 'reorganisation' plan. Reports surfaced of blacks being hired in place of whites as gangers, engine cleaners, waiters, cloakroom attendants and parcel office assistants. But a quarter of a century of privilege had made certain grades of work 'white-by-custom', and in 1922 NURAHS castigated the Smuts government for hypocrisy, insensitivity and greed which, in its view, resurrected the 'black peril' and threatened white living standards.[60] The culmination of the fading white labour policy was that as from April 1923, new white recruits were graded as casual labourers, thereby losing leave, medical and train travel privileges. By March 1924 the number of white railway labourers had returned to the 1909 figure of 3 000, a state of affairs which the Pact government moved to correct swiftly in its 'civilised labour' programme.

Conclusion

Assessment of the Railway poor white policy before 1924 is difficult. This is so even when the policy is considered only on its own terms and its broader ramifications are ignored – for example, its effect on white labour policy generally, and on the formation of the white working class. Assessment is also difficult in the absence of oral testimony and any comparative study of 'civilised labour'. Research into these dimensions of white railway labour is imperative. In the meantime, some general observations may be ventured. Numerically speaking, the poor white railway labourers were far from being a majority (there were 12 500 black railway labourers in 1909, and 24 000 in 1916) and the white labour policy itself was far from absorbing more than a small share of the 27 000 heads of poor white households.[61] Nonetheless, some officials were pleased with the Railway contribution. The General Manager found something positive to say about the experience up to mid-1914, even though the programme was reckoned to be costing £90 000 per annum more than if black labour were employed, even though an equivalent amount had been spent on housing, and even though the number of whites hired had been only fractionally less than the number of blacks they replaced (higher wages had not been compensated by enhanced productivity). The experiment on unskilled work, he announced, had not been an end in itself: '... the object was to utilize this work as a training ground and to reclaim the best of the labour.' As such, he concluded, the trial had been 'conspicuously successful' and had 'rendered great service to the country'. An official inquiry endorsed this posi-

tive view of the white labour policy on the railways: '... as an experiment ... with the object of giving work to those who have no trade or means of livelihood, and raising many who had entirely lost their self-respect ... it has been an entire success.'[62] The White Labour Superintendent was less enthusiastic, noting in 1915 that 'much more could be done' for poor whites.[63] And, in 1917, the railway engineer at Harrismith went further still, saying that the policy had been of little consequence. Far from disapproving of the scheme, however, he emphasised that it should be put on a more permanent footing and extended for the purpose of 'consolidating the position of the white race'.[64] Others would have shared this opinion. For example, the Johannesburg branch secretary of NURAHS was to complain in 1918 that poor white railway labourers were 'denied the liberty of white existence; to thrive and to progress'.[65]

Precisely how much white advance and prosperity would have satisfied critics of railway 'poor whiteism' is difficult to gauge. Equally, however, it is difficult to gainsay that advantages did accrue to many whites. Disregarding the many thousands of men who found temporary labour on the Railways between 1910 and 1924, 6 000 were promoted to permanent positions where they obtained unprecedented remuneration and security. These individuals (and their families) were all eligible for housing, and this in other than the 959 units which had been constructed specifically for white labourers by 1919.[66] And it bears stressing that apart from work and housing, poor white railway labourers also benefited from the SAR's educational, health care and welfare facilities.[67] In the very nature of the Railways as a geographically diffuse employer, work, housing and other benefits were neither concentrated in any particular place, nor were they confined to urban areas. Railway labour presented itself to the white poor in cities as well as in platteland settlements. In rural districts localised work on the railway supplemented seasonal earnings and postponed the trek to towns. In the same way, Railway provision of work over a wide area diffused the pockets of disgruntled, agitated poor whites in cities and helped defuse any threat they presented to the social order. Poor white railway workers exacted their price economically, but the Railways, and white society at large, frowned more than they protested. It was the poor whites contribution relative to black labourers which was really the point of contention and which had to be resolved if they were to continue in unskilled, menial railway labour after 1924.

Chapter 7

Slums, segregation and poor whites in Johannesburg, 1920–1934

Susan Parnell

From its inception Johannesburg incorporated housing conditions that ranked amongst the worst in the world.[1] Tents and tin structures that formed the built environment for gold diggers on the Rand encouraged a climate in which poor housing conditions proliferated.[2] In the first part of the century the sanitation problem provided the official *raison d'être* for the removal of people of colour from the city limits. Yet, in Johannesburg, as many as one third of the 5 651 people enumerated in the first survey of slums were white.[3] In response to the outbreak of plague in 1904 and influenza in 1918 the council acted on a racially selective basis to remove large numbers of black slum residents from the inner-city.[4] The provision of only 300 houses in the location in no way adequately redressed the critical accommodation shortage, however, and rent racketeering in the city increased.[5] Growth in the urban African population and the persistence of white poverty saw the proliferation of a working class housing problem. The state sought new solutions to the accommodation crisis, a rubric that came to include the absolute shortage of housing stock and the perceived threat of race integration, first by application of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act and later rehousing of the impoverished electorate.

Increases in the number of poor whites living in slums moulded the state's approach to the issue of working class residential segregation. In this chapter it is shown that once whites formed a major racial component of the slumyards, the policies and action of the central and local states shifted to accommodate the white working class. The imperative of ensuring a minimum standard of living for whites culminated in continued residential segregation of blacks, and also in the introduction of subsidised municipal housing for whites.

The genesis of Johannesburg's housing problem

The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand prompted almost unlimited investment in the extraction of the precious metal. By contrast, despite the rapid growth in the numbers working on the mines, capitalists were reluctant to

invest in costly construction of working class accommodation. In these early years a further distinction between the spheres of work and home was evident. While on the mines racial division was strictly adhered to, in the town residential segregation was not immediately entrenched. Especially in the poorest quarters of the town the pressure of inordinately high occupancy levels took its toll on the inadequate physical structures and the quality of the built environment deteriorated. While the local state was visibly concerned about incipient disease, water, sewerage and other essential services were not installed.[6]

As the city grew and became more permanent, deteriorating wood and iron houses close to the city absorbed increasing numbers of the urban poor. The disgusting conditions which resulted were perhaps less extensive than they might have been had mining companies not housed their contract employees in compounds. The permanence of Johannesburg not only saw an increasing non-mining sector, but also witnessed the arrival of women and families of the early pioneers. The changing population structure of the growing town was accompanied by a demand for housing which could not be met by hostel facilities. Thus, while the Randlords constructed elaborate colonial mansions for their brides,[7] poorer folk sought out a room in a slumyard of the city in which to establish their family residence.[8] By World War I Johannesburg had a slum legacy that cut across the colour bar.

Activity and interest in white housing after the First World War was predicated on the belief that an accommodation crisis of significant proportions existed in Johannesburg. There was a fear that the white housing crisis would be exacerbated by demolition of wood and iron structures, more especially as there was no alternative accommodation available for displaced people. Establishing the validity of concern over the amount of housing available to whites was difficult. On the one hand Dr Porter, the Medical Officer of Health, was of the opinion that there was 'a very great shortage' of dwellings for the enormous influx' of poor whites.[9] In the same month, however, Dr Porter's evidence to the Housing Commission was more cautious in the assessment of the problem. Porter conceded readily that cheap rental accommodation was not easily available, and quoted the example of Symonds & Co., estate agents active in Fordsburg and Vrededorp, who were unable to meet the requests for accommodation to £12 10s a month. Dr Porter argued, however, that the housing problem for whites was much less serious than it was often made out to be. In support of this new position the Medical Officer quoted the findings of his enquiry into further properties likely to be affected by closures. Of the 2 000 people likely, in his estimation, to be affected by council efforts to clear insanitary properties, only 250 were white.[10]

Ambiguity over the nature and extent of a housing crisis for whites did not prevent the issue becoming a major item on the local political agenda. The municipal election of 1919 focused unambiguously on the pressing accommodation requirements of white labour in post-World War I Johannesburg. The Labour Party, which took up the issue vigorously, urging subsidised housing for whites, won that election. Its victory on the 'housing for whites' ticket reflected the acute crisis in the position of white workers in the mining town of Johannesburg. Conflict over wages in the struggling mining sector spawned the strikes of 1920 and 1922.[11] The importance of the housing question in these developments has never been developed. The idea that the high cost of shelter in Johannesburg may have exacerbated the already fierce competition between the workers of the city has, however, been mooted.[12]

The connection between work and residential conditions is significant. In theory white wages were not only considerably higher than those of blacks, but on the official £1 per day wage a white man could afford to

> ... own a comfortable, electrified, well appointed bungalow in grounds with a garden and support a small family well. He could in fact hire the services of a black man to do the menial work. His diet compared well to that of virtually any workingman in the world. Putting aside the threat of personal injury (which was of course not a small one for the miner), he had by any international standards a very reasonable wage indeed.[13]

The reality of the job market for many whites differed dramatically from the £1 per day ideal. On the Rand whites were only able to earn the equivalent of farm wages which ranged between 17s 6d and 25s per week.[14] By comparison wage rates for black labour varied between 15s 8d and 23s 9d per week.[15] These barely differentiated wage rates meant that white labourers, particularly newly urbanised Afrikaners, enjoyed little additional income elasticity in acquisition of shelter than did the average black worker. Prior to World War I, reductions in living costs had allowed the establishment of family life in Johannesburg, but protection of white living standards required the assurance of housing of a better quality than that offered by slumlords. In the workplace the white working class fought for protection of their skilled position by demanding that wages be decided on the basis of 'rate for the job'. In the domestic sphere they flexed their political muscle by demanding state assistance in obtaining housing that would distance them from the black population of the slums.

White labourers could never have afforded shelter of this standard without state patronage. This demand was taken up together with the call for segregation by the Labour Party which, within weeks of gaining control of the Johan-

provided by the local authority, 'so that the mixing of poor whites and blacks together could be remedied'.[16]

Only a month later a Johannesburg Council decision recommended the Provincial Council support a draft ordinance, drawn up by the Labour Party, that would give local authorities in the Transvaal the powers necessary to implement a white housing scheme.[17] Whereas Transvaal local authorities held extensive power over, and even responsibility for, the provision of African housing, no attempt had been made prior to this initiative to legislate such provisions for whites. The outcome of the Labour Party drive for housing assistance to whites was the 1919 Transvaal Housing Bill. Although this Bill was never passed by the Provincial Council the authority required by Johannesburg Town Council was made law by national acceptance of the 1920 Housing Act.[18] Following the creation of the Central Housing Board under the new Act the Johannesburg Council was in a position to implement their stated commitment to housing for poor whites.

It seems that the desire of the authorities to initiate a white housing scheme related only in part to the need for housing. As a member of the Johannesburg Parks and Estates Committee pointed out, it would have been foolish of the city not to avail itself of government money, 'whereby the needs of the town could be met with practically no risk to the council'. Provision of a white housing scheme, it was argued, would not only create employment opportunities, but would also generate revenue for the council by taxing the developed property.[19] Whatever the motive of council support for initiating a public housing scheme, the proposal was endorsed by Johannesburg residents. An announcement by the Parks and Estates Committee that it had decided to apply for a £490 610 loan for the erection of 500 cottages at Cottesloe immediately drew 1 220 applications.[20]

As it happened the closing date for applications to the Central Housing Board for funding was missed by two days, and the proposed scheme came to nothing.[21] It was alleged that the chairman of the Finance Committee, who was a prominent estate agent, had neglected to put in the application despite receiving specific instructions to do so.[22] Even when the omission was rectified, the Johannesburg Council was apparently told by the Central Housing Board's representative that the city was wealthy enough to raise its own money, and should not approach the government for advances.[23] The council, however, was firm in its resolve to obtain a white housing scheme, and in 1923 applied for £200 000 from the Central Housing Board.[24] The outcome of this application was particularly significant as, for the first time, the extent of the housing crisis for poor whites was assessed. The Central Housing Board held

that, as it had no knowledge of the white housing shortage, it would require the enumeration of empty dwellings in the poorer areas where unskilled workmen and less prosperous artisans would seek housing before a loan could be granted.[25]

Dr Porter, the Medical Officer of Health for Johannesburg, was assigned the task of conducting the survey. He found that, other than within the area one mile from the city, there was a 'reasonable sufficiency' of working class dwellings. Although some families were found to be sharing the same dwelling, empty houses were available. In an interview with the Rent Board the inferior quality and general disrepair of available houses were emphasised. Both the Rent Board representative and Dr Porter strongly criticised 'the close housing association of poor whites with Native and Coloured persons' and unreservedly expressed the view that the necessity for assisted white housing was relatively negligible compared with the urgency for the segregation and decent housing of 'Natives'. The Medical Officer of Health concluded that there was little or no public health necessity or justification for state-aided housing for 'Europeans' in Johannesburg. The conditions of 'European' housing in certain of the poorer central districts would be greatly improved by the provision in locations or 'native-villages' of adequate housing for 'natives'.[26]

No money was allocated to Johannesburg for white housing,[27] ostensibly because of the Medical Officer's report to the Central Housing Board, but possibly because funds were not available.[28] Attention to the working class housing question was subsumed in efforts to get the Natives (Urban Areas) Act proclaimed and enforced in the city. The proposed provision of a white housing scheme was dropped as the most important item on the council's agenda, and replaced by the drive to rid the inner-city of all blacks. The focus on the removal of Africans from the slums, however, was not inconsistent with the council's concern for white housing needs. For the council, the white housing problem had been defined as a problem of residential integration, and could therefore be solved by the removal of the 'native menace'.[29]

Contrary to this intention, in the years following 1923 racial mixing in the inner-city working class suburbs increased and slum conditions proliferated. Industrial developments resulted in an influx of whites, mainly women, who could not afford 'suitable accommodation' and therefore rented rooms from coloureds or Indians.[30] In an attempt to house young workers 'properly' the provisions of the 1920 Housing Act were amended in 1925 to allow for construction of hostels for whites.[31] Despite concern about mixing of races, the Johannesburg Council did not apply for hostel funding. These facilities were provided by charitable bodies such as the Catholic Women's League.[32] In the same period a series of court orders declared *ultra vires* attempts to

implement the Natives (Urban Areas) Act,[33] thereby rendering the council impotent in their attempts to remove the African population.

By 1927 both public and civic opinion was such that despite the fact that more than a quarter of all whites in Johannesburg lived with more than two people to a room,[34] the council did not consider it necessary to apply for a housing loan. Instead the energy and finances of the local authority were centred on ridding the slums of all blacks. Attention focused on the re-housing schemes of Western Native township, various hostel facilities, and Orlando. Even if whites were present in slum areas, the city's housing problem was understood to be about re-housing 'natives'. During the 1920s neither the Labour Party in Johannesburg, nor the Pact government, had any impact on the built environment of the white working class despite the prevailing political climate of sympathy for poor whites. It was not until the 1930s, once thousands of Africans had been removed from the inner-city, that official attention turned to address the necessity of alternative public accommodation for whites.

Poor whites and the housing crisis

The closing years of the 1920s saw a transformation of inner-city areas of Johannesburg which meant that slums could no longer be construed as merely a 'native' problem. The transition was marked by increased urban decay and a shift in the racial composition of the slumyards. In the four years following the proclamation of the city under the Natives (Urban Areas) Act (1923–1927), the Native Affairs Department forcibly removed 30 000 African people.[35] The majority of the displaced families sought accommodation in unproclaimed remnants of the city, namely the suburbs of Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale.[36] Established after the First World War it was intended that these suburbs would cater for 3 000 families; by 1933 the population had swollen to 26 000 people.[37] Other relocated Africans were housed in municipal hostels or locations.[38] Despite these removals the African presence in slums was not eradicated by the segregationist efforts of the Johannesburg Council. Some of those affected by the Natives (Urban Areas) Act returned to slum areas, and there were always new migrants seeking accommodation.[39] One noticeable trend was for coloureds, over whom local authorities had no power, to take occupancy of the houses and rooms vacated by Africans.[40]

More significant for the persistence of slums than the reflux of blacks, was the dramatic increase in the number of poor whites in the city. The number of people the government defined as poor whites increased nationally from 106 000 in 1916 to 120 000 in 1921 and 300 000 in 1933, and a large proportion of these newly urbanised poor sought a niche in Johannesburg.[41] By 1933 the

Johannesburg authorities deemed it necessary to conduct a survey of white housing needs in which they found 1 121 families to be unsatisfactorily accommodated.[42] Clearly the situation had changed dramatically from that of 1923 when 322 houses in working class suburbs stood empty.[43]

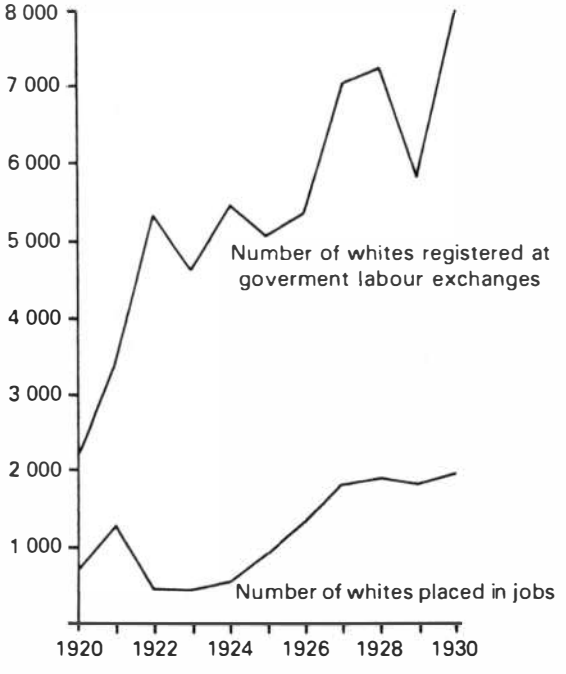
The early years of the 1930s saw a transformation of working class residential areas of Johannesburg because of the dramatic increase in the number of poor whites in the city. At the most obvious level, one ramification of the increased urban population was to reduce the number of buildings available for shelter. Ironically this problem was made worse by the Pact government's 'civilised labour' policy which was designed to assist the poor white. The imperative of employing more expensive white labour in construction meant that it was difficult to provide houses at costs low enough for affordable rents.[44] Capitalists faced with the prospect of not being able to profit from construction for the lower income groups did not erect new buildings. As a result the character of Johannesburg's slums differed from those of other large cities, as the poor were forced to find shelter in buildings never intended for domestic use.

The impact of the civilised labour policy which extended beyond restricting available housing stock. One of the most important repercussions of the civilised labour policy was the large increase in the number of poor whites in urban areas.[45] Between 1924 and 1929 the number of white railway labourers based in Johannesburg trebled.[46] By 1931 nearly 25 000 poor whites had been absorbed into state jobs.[47] A specific problem generated by the government's white labour policy was housing those unskilled people who could not afford rents asked in the city. For example, by 1934 the number of married railway labourers requiring housing in the city was 351.[48] The Johannesburg Council felt that government should be prepared to make a much more substantial contribution towards re-housing these people than it had done in the past, particularly as the white labour policy lacked any proper mechanism of preventing an influx from the impoverished rural areas. The promise of work, it was argued, drew 'bywoners' 'away from their natural environment' by enticing them with wages which appeared high, but which under urban conditions, could only provide subsistence at a very low standard of living.

In the worsening depression not all new migrants to Johannesburg benefited from state efforts to create employment for whites. The limited success of the civilised labour policy is emphasised by Department of Labour figures for the number of unemployed per thousand of the white male population (see also figure 1):

For the worst depression years 1932 and 1933 the Department calculated that there were 17 and 31 unemployed males per thousand of the white population respectively. The Department managed to find subsidised labour for 3.7 and 14.8 per thousand respectively, leaving 13.3 and 16.2 per thousand wholly out of work.[49]

Figure 1 White males registered at government labour exchanges, and white males placed in jobs, 1920–1930[50]



In April 1930, 3 000 white males were reported to be unemployed in the city, and over 200 new employment requests were received each month by the Rand Aid Society, mainly from those who had been living in the area for less than three months.[51] The cumulative impact of the policy of 'civilised labour', depression and drought, which struck in 1930,[52] increased pressure among whites for inexpensive shelter. Conditions of overcrowding and insanitation had resulted in white slum conditions in the poorer class districts such as Fordsburg, portions of Jeppestown, Doornfontein, and Newlands. The posi-

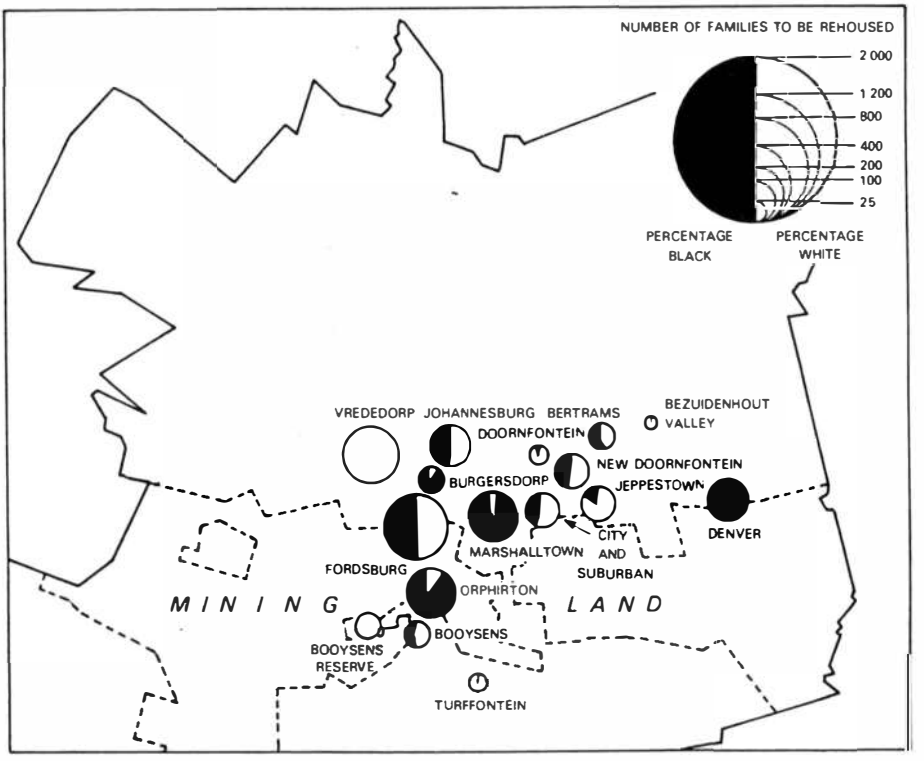
tion had changed entirely from 1927 when slums had been 'largely a native problem which has since been energetically tackled'.[53]

By 1933 the new Medical Officer of Health, Dr Milne, reported to the Public Health Committee that a white housing problem had been created in Johannesburg by the influx of poor whites, the bulk of whom were unable to afford to house themselves decently. The Medical Officer of Health's assessment is important for the material shift he identifies, and also the ideological perception it reflects. Certainly by the late 1920s significant inroads had been achieved in clearing Africans from the city. For Dr Milne to assert that the 'native' slum problem was over would, however, have been false. On his own admission, on eviction under the Natives (Urban Areas) Act the African practice was to move to the neighbouring yard in the inner suburbs where the Act had not yet been enforced. Far more important in the Medical Officer's statement is the recognition that in addition to the 'native menace' in the slum, the problem now embraced all sections of the population, including whites.

That the slums had become an issue affecting whites was clearly revealed by the council's resolution of 28 November 1933. A special committee was appointed whose objective it was to alleviate unemployment, eliminate disease centres, act for the amelioration of social and economic conditions of certain classes, and generally encourage improvement of economic moral and hygienic conditions of the city. This committee would consider and report on 'the advisability of immediately embarking upon a comprehensive slum clearance programme and white housing scheme'.[54]

As already noted, the early 1930s, ravaged by depression, saw a dramatic increase in the extent of the slum problem, and of the number of whites living in these unsatisfactory conditions. The visible increase in the concentration of the poor in the inner city led one Johannesburg citizen to enquire where a 'decent person of average means' could live. In his own words every suburb near to town was becoming 'a haunt of kaffirs and half-wild white hooligans'.[55] The most significant dimension of the growing accommodation crisis was the changing racial composition of slumyards. The Johannesburg Council's 1934 survey of slums and insanitary properties for the Central Housing Board showed that 928 of the 1 922 families needing re-housing from the slums (i.e. 48 per cent) were white.[56] These poor whites were not only concentrated in the racially pure suburbs of Vrededorp and Booysens Reserve, but were scattered all through the working class neighbourhoods of the city (figure 2).

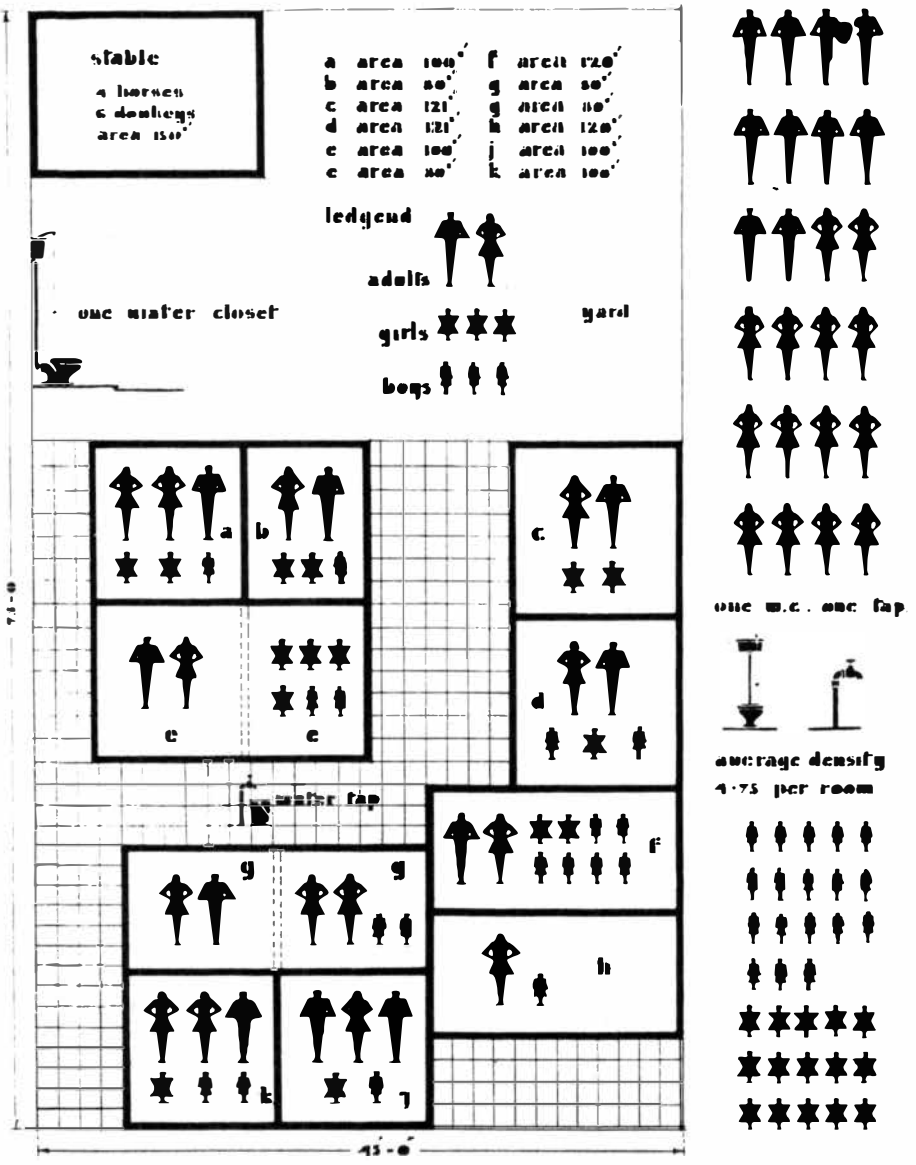
Figure 2 Racial geography of the slums of Johannesburg, 1934[57]



The slums of Johannesburg

Conditions in the slums, where the dwellings were often remnants of wood and iron structures from 'gold rush' Johannesburg, were appalling. The council's own 1933 survey of white housing showed 157 cases of overcrowding in single rooms. Sometimes more than one family shared the same quarters.[58] The same report identified 873 cases of social overcrowding (that is where adults who were not of the same sex, and who were not partners, shared the same room). Social overcrowding was also held to occur if the dining or kitchen areas doubled as sleeping accommodation. Problems of overcrowding were exacerbated by concentration of 'rooms' in yards, where facilities such as outside taps and toilets were shared by all the occupants of the yard (figure 3).

Figure 3 Schematic representation of a slumyard in Fordsburg, 1933[59]



Circumstances of white people embroiled in the housing crisis of the 1930s varied tremendously. At least three distinct experiences can be sketched. The first group, the 'new poor' as they came to be identified in the press,[60] found that in the deepening depression they were increasingly unable to meet the costs of urban life. In an attempt to reduce living expenses by cutting their rent, part of the house was sub-let. Ideally, extended kin could be found to share the house but, failing this, one or more new young migrants would be taken in as part of the family.[61] Where this was not possible, a 'room to let' sign would appear in the window. Even if the quarters were small, someone, even a stranger, was needed to help pay the rent.[62] This practice of sub-letting was not racially exclusive. In his report for 1931 the Director of the Native Affairs Department commented that he had quite frequently found that white families, 'in order to eke out an existence', were letting either part of their own premises, or outside rooms, to 'natives'.[63] In many cases it appeared that black sub-tenants were preferred, their record of payment being better than that of the poorest whites.[64]

The second group of poor whites whose lives were moulded by their inability to afford any but the most abject housing, were residents of slumyards. One such yard in Fordsburg, allegedly not an isolated case, had one tap, measured 500 square meters, and housed 57 whites. The value of the site and buildings only amounted to £330, but the slumlord received an annual rent of £150, a 45 per cent per annum return on capital invested.[65]

Finally, there were those who could not even afford the rent for these slum rooms. The plight of this third group of poor whites was highlighted when in September 1931 the Unemployment Association alerted a local newspaper to one of twenty 'bad cases' they had considered during the month. An ex-serviceman and his family of seven had been evicted from their Johannesburg residence for failing to pay the rent and had been found at their new accommodation: the hollow of a disused slimes dump.[66] Faced with a growing number of impoverished whites, the cry to rid urban areas of slums grew progressively louder from 1930 until official action on behalf of the white slumdwellers was finally taken in 1937.[67]

State responses to 'white slums'

Concern over the plight of whites living in slum conditions elicited response unprecedented in the 1920s. Before any official comment on the white housing crisis had been formalised, however, the Johannesburg Housing Utility Company was launched in 1933. Two extracts from their publicity booklet *To hell with slums* capture the emotion of the new concern. The Johannesburg

Housing Utility Company pointed out that the nation could not afford 'the moral and mental degradation which slum conditions create in those who inhabit them'. If there was any doubt left over why action was required, the company's booklet continued to explain that the slum could become a fertile field for 'subversive propaganda'. Slums, it was argued, could be quoted as 'convincing evidence of how a capitalist society failed to provide good homes for the very poor, and for this reason were a problem'.[68]

In Johannesburg, as in many other parts of the world, slum conditions were both a threat and an embarrassment to the authorities. Unlike slum clearance programmes launched in British cities, in Johannesburg the slum question embraced not only legal and financial considerations, but also hinged on race. The significance of this racial dimension was apparent in the shift in council policy and action which came about in the early thirties once slums were commonly accepted as a 'white problem'.

Faced with extensive white poverty it was apparent that the state's policy on 'the slum problem', as it had evolved in the 1920s, was no longer appropriate. In 1923 the Medical Officer of Health had been able to conclude that conditions under which poor whites were living would be most satisfactorily solved by the segregation of, and increased housing provision for, Africans.[69] Eight years later the council's focus on African housing led to the accusation that locations were being constructed at the expense of whites, many of whom it was alleged were now forced to live in quarters 'more miserable than those provided for natives'. In support of the argument the complaint was levelled that '10 000 neat kaffir dwellings have been erected, but for poor whites nothing is done'.[70]

Solving the slum problem by re-housing Africans was no longer sufficient. Something had to be done for the rest of the slum population, especially the poor white. Even if the entire black population could be removed from the slumyards (which they could not, not least because many, particularly women, did not qualify for municipal housing),[71] slums would not disappear. A significantly large proportion of the slum population was white.

From 1930 the demand for white housing schemes was self-consciously political, forming an integral component of national and municipal party campaigns. Concern to see the segregation of the inner-city continued but now added to this was the desire to guarantee living standards of white labour. In the 1920s this had been achieved through the creation of protected jobs. A decade later assisted housing provision was an additional means of subsidising wages and ensuring a minimum standard of living. Nationally this translated into the introduction of extended housing finance for poor whites. In Johannesburg the city fathers geared themselves to accept responsibility for

providing accommodation for the poor, even where this entailed unavoidable cost. Councillor Leveson, chairman of the Public Health Committee, and prime mover in the demand for a council-provided scheme, motivated for the initiative on the grounds that whites were not 'inveterate or hereditary slum dwellers', and that there existed some responsibility to ensure their rehabilitation.[72]

The Johannesburg Council decision to provide housing 'under proper conditions' through the establishment of a sub-economic housing scheme based on the Octavia Hill system of management[73] was made possible by changes in national housing legislation. In 1930 the Central Housing Board was given the authority to grant sub-economic loans for white housing schemes. The low rate of interest (1,5 per cent) facilitated charging low rents, and was intended to encourage slum clearance. The second change was the passing of the Slums Act in 1934. This gave local authorities power to expropriate whole areas even where not every stand was a slum. In addition the Act reduced costs of obtaining a closing order from the courts, which was particularly useful as eviction orders were often refused on grounds that there was no alternative accommodation available to the inhabitants.[74] The Slums Act, because of these additional powers, was also critical in ensuring the availability of land close to the city. In the case of the clearance of the Bertrams area, the Glenesk Housing scheme was built on the newly expropriated land.[75] The council's policy of removing all slum dwellers and re-housing only the whites had been made explicit.

Conclusion

In the early part of the century, as now, conditions for the poorest whites were in general better than those of many African workers in Johannesburg.[76] Nonetheless, during the 1920s and 1930s, there was a large group of whites who did not share all privileges usually associated with the 'elite' racial group of South African society. The presence of poor whites living in slum conditions highlights the low standard of living these people endured. It has been argued in this chapter that the failure in the 1920s to clear the slums by the removal of the African population highlighted the plight of inadequately housed poor whites. The genesis of a white public housing scheme stemmed in part from an increased national political concern to ensure the support of the white working class. It was also motivated by unacceptable persistence of racially integrated slum conditions in Johannesburg. The heritage of abysmal poor white housing conditions, and recognition of the inadequacy of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in removing slum housing, combined to justify the search for new means of dealing with housing requirements of the franchised poor. Encouraged by economic recovery, and spurred on by political necessity, the

state expanded its commitment to white public housing. Introduction of sub-economic funding spawned a white public housing movement in most major urban areas, including Johannesburg. From 1930 council housing was adopted by both central and local housing officials as the pivot for urban segregation.

In the 1920s, when the population of the slums of Johannesburg was predominantly black, the major concern of the authorities was to rid the inner-city of its housing blight by forcibly removing the black population. Relocation of these unfortunate people beyond the jurisdiction of the council, and beyond the public eye where housing standards would be subject to less critical evaluation, was the major strategy adopted by the council to deal with the city's desperate housing problem. Although this programme of removal in no way adequately addressed the crisis situation, official moves to segregate the black population do seem to have appeased anti-slum campaigners and those whites calling for racially separated facilities, including housing. By the end of the decade even extensive repressive action under the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act was insufficient to stop the growth of slum areas in Johannesburg. Furthermore, the nature of the housing crisis had altered so that provisions of the 1923 legislation were incapable of addressing urban problems. Solving the slum problem of the 1930s demanded that specific attention be given to whites, who by then inhabited the slums in large numbers.

The most difficult aspect of ridding slums of whites proved to be finding suitable alternative accommodation. Political imperatives of wooing poor whites, combined with elitist notions of the inherent superior potential of whites as opposed to blacks, made it essential that whites be provided with housing that would encourage their social upliftment. As the private sector was unlikely to initiate housing of the standard required at a cost within the means of poor whites, the state intervened to make available funds for public housing schemes. In this way, the establishment of council housing for whites was seen as crucial in eliminating racial mixing in cheap quarters of the city.

Chapter 8

Minute substance versus substantial fear: white destitution and the shaping of policy in Rhodesia in the 1890s*

*Philip Stigger***

What is obvious about poor whites in Rhodesia is that they were not numerous. Whereas some 300 000 largely Afrikaner poor whites existed in South Africa in 1929,[1] the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia could talk of about only between 100 and 150 such individuals subsisting in the colony in 1934.[2] On the basis of the most proximate census figures, poor whites comprised 1 in 6,68 of all whites in South Africa as against 1 in 369,89 of those in Rhodesia.[3] These relative numbers at first sight amply support Hailey's assertion that there was no poor white problem of any importance outside South Africa,[4] and the temptation to trust his judgement and dismiss the matter out of hand is strong. However, the wide discrepancy between the relative number of poor whites in two adjacent states that have been – and in many quarters still are – regarded as forming an entity known now as 'southern Africa', is in itself challenging.[5] In responding to that challenge, the significance of the poor white problem in colonial Rhodesian history emerges, for it becomes apparent that it was the fear of a poor white problem developing – rather than any developed problem – which conditioned the policy pursued in the colony virtually from the inception of the colonial state.

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* Poor whites are associated with colonial states: therefore, 'Rhodesia' has been retained, together with its place-names, to emphasise that it is an aspect of colonial history which is being examined.

** I am indebted to J. R. D. Cobbing and R. Morrell for their helpful comments, and to R. J. Challiss for allowing me to view an initial draft of his chapter.

To determine what that policy was, to identify how far it was shaped by fear and to establish why the policy was significant, it is necessary to concentrate on certain events which began to emerge before the colonial state was a year old. In order to achieve these ends, it is essential to establish the extent to which the colonial Rhodesian problem was not representative of 'white' South African experience. That demands clarification of the degree to which the Rhodesian poor white question resembled that in South Africa. Therefore, in order to determine such similarities, it is necessary first of all to outline the salient features surrounding the emergence of the poor white problem in South Africa itself.

That problem has been held, until recently, to have emerged only in the 1890s. Two older commentators have suggested that it would have developed earlier had not easy access to land allowed trekkers to continue practising subsistence agriculture.[6] Such a level of cultivation became increasingly impossible, as the acquisition of land by companies combined with rural poverty, uneconomic land holdings, and the commercialisation or capitalisation of agriculture forced Afrikaner 'bywoners' or tenants-at-will off the land.[7] In the Transvaal where the impact of mining was strongest, this process was the most marked. Natural scourges such as drought, locusts, and cattle diseases contributed to the process which was in turn accelerated by the upheavals and bitterness generated by the South African War.[8] Whites who were forced from the land were compelled ultimately to attempt unsuccessfully to compete against blacks, who were able to accept lower wages.[9] Having been divorced from the land against their will, poverty-stricken Afrikaners still aspired to return to it – an aspiration supported by governments until the 1920s, probably because it was judged politically advantageous to do so since almost half the white population still lived upon the land at that time.[10]

There are thus eight readily identifiable features surrounding the poor white problem in South Africa. First, land was accessible even to indigent whites initially, although it was not permanently so. Second, subsistence agriculture was common in the early years. Third, land passed into the hands of companies. Fourth, once this had happened and once the expansion of the mining industry encouraged the commercialisation of agriculture, whites began to be forced off the land. Fifth, such whites encountered black competition. Sixth, such whites wished to return to the land. Seventh, governments countenanced such a desire among the white urban poor. Finally, governments supported such aspirations because a high proportion of whites lived upon the land.

Some if not all of these features ought to recur in Rhodesia, especially as the concept of a rolling nineteenth-century South African frontier is *prima facie* applicable to the territory.[11] Rhodesia was subjected to mounting intrusions

by white hunters, traders and missionaries from the 1850s. International mining capital undoubtedly added a powerful new dimension from 1889, operating as it did through the agency of Rhodes and Beit and their tool, the British South Africa Company (BSAC), otherwise known as the Chartered Company, a commercial institution chartered by the Crown to supervise and, where appropriate, administer the area. Land grabbing contributed to the upsurges in black resistance which in their turn led, through black military defeats, to the consolidation of colonial power throughout Rhodesia c. 1898.[12]

The decade of the 1890s in Rhodesia was clearly one of intense white activity. Whites were actively acquiring title to land. Access to land was a key issue in the development of the poor white problem in South Africa. Therefore, it is desirable to commence any discussion about the nature of the Rhodesian poor white problem by establishing how accessible land was as the colonial state itself emerged.

A white person obtained access to land in Mashonaland, Manicaland, or Gazaland by receiving a grant in one of four forms. The first was a pioneer grant. It was intended originally that each embodied member of the 1890 Pioneer Column should draw by lot for a 1 500 morgen surveyed farm which he was to occupy on military tenure for the first two years.[13] In practice those who qualified were allowed to select land for themselves, while the occupation clause was withdrawn in October 1891.[14] Subsequently, grants free of the occupation clause were made to men whom the Chartered Company wished to reward or to influence, so that the term 'pioneer' came to refer to the type of land grant rather than the background of its recipient.[15] The second form was a police grant to a 1 500-morgen farm. Such grants were restricted originally to men who had served for two years in the BSAC's police, who were required to peg out and personally occupy their farm within a year of the date of their discharge. The qualifying period of service was reduced to one year as the original military police force began to be disbanded from August 1891 onwards, while the time allowed for pegging farms was extended in August 1892 to three years from the date of a man's discharge.[16] Even that period might be extended, while the occupation clause was never consistently applied.[17] The third form of grant was a civilian one to a farm of from 1 500 to not more than 3 000 morgen. These were made to any white applicants prepared to occupy the land within a reasonable period, the larger grants generally being restricted to Gazaland.[18] The fourth and final form consisted of special grants made by the Chartered Company to those whom it wished particularly to reward or to entice.[19]

The position in Matabeleland was at once more straightforward, yet equally complicated. It was more straightforward since the available rights to land

exceeded the demand for land for some years after the occupation. The Chartered Company had used a right to a 3 000 morgen farm as one inducement to settlers in Mashonaland and to others specially recruited in the South to serve as volunteers in its forces in 1893 on the invasion of Matabeleland.[20] By 1899, the Chartered Company had recognised 948 'Victoria Agreement' rights, although 42 had not yet been used to obtain a farm. By that date also 56 special grants had been assigned, apart from a number of special rights and an additional 78 rights to 100 acres of land awarded to 'non-whites' who had accompanied the invading forces in 1893.[21]

The Chartered Company's policy on land alienation became more restrictive from 1894. In June, one syndicate in Mashonaland forfeited the farms granted to it because it had failed to comply with a requirement to occupy its farms, amongst other reasons.[22] In August, the holder of a pioneer farm was threatened with forfeiture unless he paid the amounts he owed for quit-rent and for survey and other fees.[23] In September, an award of 12 farms each of 1 500 morgen to some Afrikaners a month earlier was rescinded, apparently because the Chartered Company felt that it had been tricked.[24] In that month also, the Chartered Company realised that it was likely to experience difficulty in providing land in Matabeleland in the quantity required to honour its commitments to its volunteers under the terms of the Victoria Agreement.[25] Against this background it is not surprising that it sought counsel's advice on its power to expropriate land while insisting that companies outside Matabeleland should meet their obligations by beneficially occupying all the farms to which they held title.[26] However, it was only in December 1896, as African resistance began to be overcome, that individuals began to be stripped of title to land which they once occupied because of a failure to continue to do so.[27] Shortly after confirmation that forfeiture of land for such cause would be insisted upon,[28] and as railway construction began to make exploitation of the land more feasible, pressure began to be exerted upon companies.[29] By April 1898, all landholders who were required to occupy land beneficially had been reminded of their obligation to do so.[30] This did not prove to be the prelude to vigorous action to cause companies to disgorge land which they were not using, for the Chartered Company in 1900 made provision for the beneficial occupation clause to be struck out either following occupation for a term of three years or through payment of a fine for non-compliance for ten years.[31] However, its actions did induce companies to begin to exploit their holdings from 1901, to the extent to which that was possible.

The extent to which land was available to any white in Rhodesia clearly varied. It could be obtained generally in Matabeleland only by those who had served the Chartered Company in the 1893 invasion or by those who were prepared

to purchase a volunteer's right. In the remainder of the territory, land was readily available until 1894 so that even indigents might hope to acquire title.[32] The position then changed because the Chartered Company was either unable or unwilling to make land freely available. From mid-1894 therefore, an individual with only limited resources was unlikely to acquire title. It follows that potential Rhodesian progenitors of poor whites could acquire land only within the period between September 1891 and c. June 1894, largely outside Matabeleland. However, the Chartered Company's inability or unwillingness to provide land also stimulated activity by individuals and companies wanting land to secure title by acquiring existing rights.[33] Since the earliest official statement of actual land holdings dates only from c. 1900 and not from 1894, it follows that the number of farms secured by the poor cannot be determined accurately.[34]

What can be established is that individuals entitled to occupy land under Pioneer, Police, Victoria Agreement or civilian grants were unlikely to achieve title. Twenty-three out of 189 officers and men enrolled in the Pioneer Corps in 1890 are known to have farmed in Rhodesia, but seven did so half-heartedly while one grew potatoes for a season as a squatter.[35] One hundred and ninety five titles to farms had been obtained through the exercise of Police rights by 1899: however, the entitlement of 499 ex-policemen had been cancelled by that date, largely because no attempt had been made to secure land.[36] At the end of December 1893, no fewer than 156 men entitled to a farm in Matabeleland left in a single party for Johannesburg and, by 1899, only 464 farms or rights out of the 948 original entitlements remained in the hands of individuals.[37] The wastage in respect of civilian grants in the eastern portion of the territory was equally high: large numbers had lapsed before the end of 1896 and, while individuals still held 456 such grants in 1899, no fewer that 576 in all had lapsed by that date.[38]

Individuals were clearly not very successful, if and when they sought to exercise their claims to land. Companies were more skilful, as their accumulation of Victoria Agreement farms and rights in Matabeleland reveals. Elsewhere in Rhodesia, their title stemmed very largely from the special grants in vogue to 1894, which gave companies control of no less that 1 752 290 morgen, or the equivalent of 1 168 standard 1 500-morgen farms. Companies had also secured 127 farms subject to Pioneer, Police or civilian terms, together with rights to peg out a further 104 Pioneer farms.[39] Thus, one outstanding characteristic of alienated land in Rhodesia even in the 1890s was that it was more likely to be owned by a company than by an individual.

This was the case because, notwithstanding the lack of adequate markets, many individuals who had access to land were either uninterested in seizing

any opportunity presented to them or judged themselves unlikely to succeed since they lacked capital. Most members of the Pioneer Corps either lacked an appropriate rural background, or were townsmen.[40] Most ex-policemen were also townsmen. Both groups lacked the means to survive merely by 'farming'.[41] Some pioneers and some ex-policemen participated in the 1893 invasion of Matabeleland, in which it was said that some 650 Rhodesian settlers were involved. Those settlers who became casualties had little connection with the land.[42] Those volunteers specially recruited came largely from Johannesburg.[43] Thus, the 1893 volunteers were no more capable of settling on the land than the majority of the members of the Pioneer Corps or the Chartered Company's military police had been. Indeed, the most likely group of settlers to succeed on the land before the 1896 crisis were those who sought or acquired civilian grants: at least they wanted to live on the land. Even among this group, more men failed than won through: mere commitment was not enough.[44] Some people who possessed capital or who had access to it were building up farms by June 1896.[45] Others, including the 108 Afrikaner single men and heads of households who attempted to settle in Gazaland, had enough enthusiasm to survive for a while practising subsistence cultivation, but they lacked the resources to do more.[46]

Subsistence cultivation was all most whites engaged in throughout the 1890s, for 'farming' customarily meant no more than this, with the exceptions merely proving the rule.[47] A 'farm' was but an area of land, about 1 500 morgen in extent, with some buildings upon it, with five acres broken to the plough, and with an even smaller area actually under crops.[48] To satisfy the demands of the Chartered Company that a 'farm' should be occupied, it was necessary for a white to live on the land. To this end, whites began to physically occupy 'farms' from the beginning of the 1891/92 season.[49] Sometimes a man was expected to labour for nothing, euphemistically described as working for his own benefit.[50] More commonly, an Afrikaner might be engaged for £3 a month, presumably on the assumption that, as a rural South African he would have some ability to break the soil.[51] The end result was that the average area cultivated on each 'farm' was minute, whether those who worked the land did so to secure it for themselves or for their employers. Thus, in the first quarter of 1895, about six acres was being cultivated on each of 150 occupied farms in the Bulawayo magisterial district, an average which fell by half an acre on the seventeen farms in the Fort Victoria district.[52] Two years later, the Afrikaner families around Melsetter on the eastern frontier were more energetic, each family cultivating about ten acres.[53] Afrikaners around Inyanga to the north went to the other extreme, for at the end of the decade they lived on 'farms' which lacked fields and livestock. These people lived by hunting augmented by whatever else came up.[54] Other whites did the same, 'being by turns farmer,

transport rider, trader, or labourer'[55] – a cycle of activity which was to be repeated by others until 1914 at least.[56]

White subsistence cultivation continued unabated until railway construction first facilitated the development of mining and then combined with mining to open up a more viable internal market for farmers, while at the same time giving them access eventually to external markets. A territorial railway network was established between November 1897 and June 1904.[57] The completion of the line to Bulawayo allowed gold production to expand in Matabeleland and, in the first full year after that event, production exceeded £125 000, no less than six times the value of all white-produced gold to 31 March 1898. The gold returns increased yearly thereafter, surpassing £1 million in 1905, £2 million in 1907 and £3 million in 1914, in part because of the rapid growth in the number of small workers after 1903.[58] The response in the agricultural sector was less pronounced. The number of whites engaging in agriculture rose from 1 029 in 1904 to 1 174 in 1907, when such individuals formed 8,17 and 8,38 per cent respectively of all white adults.[59] The Chartered Company then adjusted its agricultural policies.[60] The changes made soon bore fruit, for livestock holdings increased, maize farming expanded, a European export market for maize emerged in 1909, and tobacco became a viable crop by 1910.[61] By 1911, white adults engaging in agriculture formed 13,27 percent of the white population, a figure which rose to 18,38 per cent in 1921 when 3 626 agricultural income earners were involved.[62]

The movement of whites onto the land which began to manifest itself between 1907 and 1911 reflected the commercialisation of agriculture, which was becoming increasingly obvious from 1909. From that point onwards, the emergence of a South Africa-style poor white problem was inevitable once whites were forced to compete against blacks, after the less capable rural whites had been forced off the land. Fear of an imminent poor white problem on South African lines began to be voiced as World War I broke out.[63] The problem did not materialise because of the disruption caused by the war and its aftermath.[64] So it transpired that it was not until the world depression of the 1930s that blacks and whites came into direct and unconcealed competition in a manner apparently conforming to South African precedents. They did so because economic conditions restricted opportunities for everyone at a time when an increasing number of blacks were ceasing to be relatively inefficient migrant workers.[65] Some blacks had acquire sufficient skills to be able to retain their position as permanent urban workers even as the depression deepened. The existence of this group, numbering at least 455 adult males, ensured that whites who lacked any skills would be forced into direct compe-

tition with unskilled blacks and so become identifiable as poor white unemployables.[66]

The limited value of the South African model

All the prerequisites for economic conflict between blacks and displaced whites appeared to be met in Rhodesia in 1933. Therefore a poor white problem on the South African model materialised – at least superficially – in that year. When it did so, it generated three distinct responses. First, a Police Cadet Corps was established in the financial year 1933/34 to absorb unemployed white youths.[67] Second, other whites were set to work on the roads, out of which evolved the initial three years' programme to lay bitumen strips on territorial main roads.[68] Finally, to the long-term political detriment of the territory, wide-ranging additional legal obstacles to black enterprise were legislated.[69]

A minute but actual poor white problem in Rhodesia manifested itself against a background which in five respects resembled that against which the South African problem had developed. In the early years of settlement, land was accessible to all. Subsistence agriculture was practised widely. Land did pass into company hands. The commercialisation of agriculture was related to the development of the mining industry. Whites did come into economic conflict even with migrant black labourers. Only one South African feature was not replicated. In South Africa, whites moved off the land until by 1921 they had ceased to be primarily dependent upon it. In Rhodesia, whites moved onto the land, and were to continue to do so,[70] without agriculturally-based whites ever becoming the dominant group numerically.[71]

This is so marked a difference that it is necessary to reconsider the five respects in which the Rhodesian experience of the poor white problem apparently repeated that of South Africa. When this is done, four 'similarities' are transmuted. First, land was accessible to all whites initially only in Mashonaland, Manicaland and Gazaland for but four short years, during which it was not of all-consuming interest to many whites: in Matabeleland, land was accessible to individuals without purchase only in consequence of participation in the 1893 campaign. Second, land which was accessible to whites began to pass into company hands as soon as it became available and not forty or so years after the treks, which had been the case in the Transvaal.[72] Third, mining was not the stimulus to capitalist agriculture in Rhodesia that it had been in South Africa. There, mining stimulated capitalist agriculture before the railway system developed. In Rhodesia, mining itself did not develop until the railway reached Bulawayo, while the expansion of mining and the develop-

ment of capitalist agriculture took place only after the Chartered Company amended its policies in 1903 and 1907. Fourth, it was the urbanised black who provided the catalyst in the chain of circumstances which forced the existence of a Rhodesian poor white problem to be recognised in 1933, whereas it was the migrant black labourer who lay at the heart of the South African problem at the turn of the century. Thus, Rhodesia's historical experience resembled that of South Africa closely only in that white agriculture in newly settled areas for many years involved primarily subsistence cultivation: otherwise, Rhodesia's experience differed, specifically because whites continued to move onto the land into the 1920s.[73]

Whites did so in part in the early 1890s because the Chartered Company not only made land readily available to all whites under minimal restrictions but also publicised its willingness to do so.[74] In addition, it helped potential settlers to reach the settlement areas and to maintain themselves there. The Van der Byl trekkers at Marandellas received considerable financial support.[75] The Moodie trekkers at Fort Victoria were given three months' rations, land and a rifle to help them on their way to Gazaland.[76] The Somerset East trek was assisted from its inception.[77] More significantly, the members of the Pioneer Column were paid to enter Mashonaland;[78] the Chartered Company's police were paid to serve there and in Manicaland, while the invasion of Matabeleland was carried out by what amounted to three company-sponsored super-treks. Thus, many actual and potential white settlers were at least partially subsidised by the Chartered Company into 1894.

The Chartered Company assisted white immigrants notwithstanding its own financial weakness. When it was launched, it had a mere £250 000 available to it.[79] Despite calling up capital outstanding on partially paid-up shares, the Chartered Company required considerable financial assistance from Consolidated Goldfields, De Beers, Beit, and Rhodes by February 1892.[80] The financial weakness meant that money alone could not be expended to induce whites to do what the Chartered Company required of them. The company's only other available and expendable asset was land. Therefore, as the Chartered Company's financial crisis deepened, so land was disposed of ever more rapidly to whites, to such an extent that no more accessible land was available to the company by 1896.[81]

The reason why the Chartered Company was so ready to dispose of land while spending what amounted to other people's money was simple. It expected to profit from gold-mining. To this end, it framed its mining law so as to allow it, on the flotation of any mining company, to receive shares without payment equivalent to half the value of the mining assets of the company concerned.[82] Earlier, the BSAC's police had been brought into being to support the Pioneer

Hans Shrader, prospector in the Victoria gold district, 1893. He travelled alone with his donkey which carried all his worldly possessions, and used to try and link up with a wagon at night for protection (Negative 2800, National Archives of Zimbabwe)

Column, which itself existed to support the fourteen prospectors who accompanied it.[83] Later, on the invasion of Matabeleland, the invading columns were followed by prospectors, whose number soon proliferated.[84] They continued to do so, even after the Chartered Company's belief in the large scale revenue-generating potential of gold mining was destroyed by John Hays Hammond's report of 5 November 1894 on the industry's prospects throughout the territory.[85]

The Chartered Company in effect gambled land against anticipated imminent profits from gold-mining. To enable ore-bodies to be sought out and mines to be brought into production, whites had to be induced to occupy Mashonaland and Manicaland, then consolidate the company's claims in Gazaland, and finally seize Matabeleland. Since the company could not offer much in the way of financial inducements, it proffered land to whites to enable it to achieve its preliminary and associated subsidiary objectives. These subsidiary objectives included creating a white community which would be prepared to assist white capitalists to develop and exploit gold mines. To this end, white farmers were necessary, although white agriculture was but one of the sectors which had to be created in order to satisfy potential mining needs. Clearly, the Chartered Company did not require, and so did not set out to create, a predominantly agricultural white-dominated colonial state.

It is not apparent that any systematic attempt was made to create any particular form of colonial state. Half a century after the event Frank Johnson, the contractor who recruited and led the Pioneer Column in 1890, claimed that his task had been to deposit at Salisbury an embryonic civilian community including not only farmers and miners but also professional men, such as clergymen, doctors and lawyers, and tradesmen, namely a butcher, baker, tailor, blacksmith, and others of that ilk.[86] As the men of the Pioneer Column were discharged on 30 September 1890, so a civil administration came into being on 1 October 1890. It consisted at first only of an administrator having under him, apart from the members of the large military police force, three clerks and, more remarkably, two registrars of mining claims, one registrar doubling as postmaster.[87] These civil servants were joined in due course by mining commissioners, justices of the peace, district surgeons and field cornets.[88] The field cornets controlled the able-bodied men who, as burghers, were liable to serve in defence of the company's territory. The burghers were regarded in November 1892 as having the potential to support, through their own liability to military service, 'about 500 men trained to arms' and enrolled in the Volunteer Force. That body had been created earlier in 1892 to assume primary responsibility for the defence of the territory because, the Chartered Company maintained, circumstances had permitted the large military police

force to be replaced by a much smaller and purely civil one.[89] Already in August 1891 the colonial state had imposed fees and licences upon auctioneers, chemists, bakers, billiard table keepers, general dealers, pawnbrokers, advocates, dentists and hawkers, amongst others, while on 1 October 1891 the first proceedings in a civil court had taken place.[90] Thus, an apparently normal and possibly balanced civil community seemed to exist when some whites began to farm late in 1891.

'Farming' at that time, however, was a euphemism for subsistence cultivation when practised by whites.[91] It is not surprising, therefore, that the component parts of the small white community were not necessarily what they were made out to be in the early 1890s. Johnson's butcher was a failed solicitor's clerk.[92] The smaller civil force did not replace the large military police contingent because circumstances permitted the substitution, but because the Chartered Company's mounting financial difficulties demanded it.[93] The Mashonaland Horse, which then became the lynch-pin of the company's defence force, was neither well-equipped nor thoroughly efficient for, while it did acquire some horses, it consisted of men attracted by free whisky who were generally unwilling to parade.[94]

Thus, the existence of mining commissioners and district surgeons or provision for the imposition of all the usual fees and licenses should not be taken to imply that a balanced white community necessarily was springing to life.

The white community was in fact distinctly abnormal, especially in the early 1890s, because of the high proportion of white males recruited to keep arms. Rhodes indicated that there were about 1 500 whites in the territory c. September 1893, most of whom had been there for less than two years.[95] In November 1891, the population of Salisbury was estimated to include between 230 and 250 whites, while a hundred or so others were said to be either in Fort Victoria or on the goldfields near that centre.[96] Others were prospecting around Umtali and Hartley Hills, and in the Lomagundi district. On 16 April 1891, there were 595 military policemen in the territory under the Chartered Company's control.[97] Thus, it is more than probable that one in every two whites was a policeman in the early dry season of 1891. Seven years later, the white population was more normal, for then only one white in every thirteen was a policeman, a position which in part reflected the advent of the railways.[98]

The small number of whites, combined with the peculiar features of the community they formed, presented the Chartered Company with a problem. This became obvious from August 1891, when the Chartered Company began to disband the military police force. The background to the company's problem was simple. It needed sufficient whites under its control to sustain the

illusion that it was administering an economically viable and settled territory. The illusion was projected in part through the *Reports on the company's proceedings* and in the *Directors' report and accounts*, documents requiring some facts to give credence to their propaganda content. Whites had to create these facts by taking out licences to trade or to prospect, just as they had to fall ill in order to be treated by the district surgeons. Also, they had to do these and other things so as to appear to be engaging in sufficient economic activity to imply that they were willing and able to support mining operations. Thus, the Chartered Company needed enough suitable whites in Rhodesia. The root cause of its problem was equally simple: the economy was stagnant.[99] It could not offer alternative employment to and so support the 550 policemen whom the Chartered Company discharged.[100] The problem that the company faced was that the territory would acquire what the Chartered Company did not need, if the company merely discharged men locally who could not be absorbed into the territorial economy; and what the company did not need was too many unemployable, and therefore unsuitable, whites. To eliminate the problem late in 1891 and early in 1892, the Chartered Company had no choice but to encourage as many men as possible to leave for the South, while providing rations for those who would not or could not leave.[101]

The necessity for the illusion stemmed from the condition of the economy in 1891, which determined how the Chartered Company treated indigent whites. The company's treatment of such whites was bound to change once the territorial economy began to gather some momentum. In practice, it could not gather much momentum until railway construction resolved the transportation problem. It followed that the 1891 solution of encouraging superfluous men to leave was adopted in 1893 to return unwanted volunteers from Bulawayo to Johannesburg, just as useless white civilians were removed from Bulawayo in August 1896 and troopers were marched back to the South for discharge in October 1896 as military campaigning petered out.[102] Once railways arrived and whites began to flow into the territory, the Chartered Company sought at first to provide relief to indigents by offering them either work in public parks at five shillings a day or a free pass to travel back to the South.[103] However, at the end of 1898, the company resolved to cease offering passes and to pay indigents only four shillings a day, the minimum daily sum required to keep a white alive, in the hope that such men would leave the territory of their own volition and, by their suffering, presumably discourage others from venturing up from Johannesburg.[104] In association with the gradual expansion of the economy from the early years of this century, the policy succeeded until the worldwide depression struck. It was necessary to assist the unemployed while communications with the South were cut during the South African War, but the Chartered Company assisted only those likely to reciprocate by assisting it in

the future. These included men with some capital wanting to farm, or youths prepared to meet some of the costs of teaching them to do so.[105]

Rumblings of discontent

The Chartered Company manipulated whites by encouraging some to enter the territory and others to leave it. However, its power to manipulate was qualified since it had to accommodate those whites whose presence was necessary by alleviating their fears and concerns to the best of its ability. Four interlocking cases in 1891 occurred which forced the BSAC to confront the problems associated with the particular composition of the white settler population.

As early as July 1891 whites in Rhodesia began to express concern about the adequacy of food supplies. In September 200 whites assembled in Salisbury and formed a vigilance committee which protested against the high cost and scarcity of imported foodstuffs.[106] The Chartered Company responded by committing itself to hurrying food supplies forward from Tuli.[107] Some relief was achieved at the end of October, when the Chartered Company announced the prices at which it was prepared to make a range of supplies available to the public at its commissariat stores.[108] By December, the crisis had been surmounted; foodstuffs were available in wholesale quantities and, by mid-January 1892 at the latest, one independent retailer was offering a range of supplies at competitive prices.[109]

Concern about food supplies was aggravated by the declining economic fortunes of whites. In September 1891 whites in Salisbury became aware that one policeman in three was going to be discharged, and consequently one white in six would be thrown out of employment at a time when the economy was already stagnant.[110] As if this was not bad enough, more and more policemen were discharged as the ability of whites to support themselves began to be challenged by 'non-whites', generating two further crises.[111] On 3 November 1891 William Mbenya, a Colonial African, was paid £10 in respect of a public works and building contract while, within another four days, Asians began selling vegetables which some whites were merely growing.[112] The payment to William Mbenya led to a petition of protest signed by sixty whites being submitted to the Chartered Company, which responded by announcing that no similar contracts would be awarded to blacks in future.[113] The vegetable sales caused the newly elected Sanitary Board, believing itself to be a board of management and behaving like a municipal board, to resolve that the Chartered Company be invited to impose hawkers' licences on Asian market-gardeners. In the event, all that happened to Asians at this stage was

that they, and others, were required to sell vegetables at the market which the Sanitary Board had approved as it sought licencing.[114] However, as opportunities for commercial enterprise increased, the Chartered Company was moving to restrict black economic activity: on 22 February 1891, a Registrar of Natives was appointed who, two weeks later, had recorded the terms of service of some 500 blacks engaged to work for wages within the Sanity Board area while, by the end of March, some blacks had been forced to live in a location and pay for accommodation there.[115]

The existence of the location determined the white response to the second Asian challenge, which was delivered when 'Sawery Nyajani' purchased a stand in Salisbury on 11 August 1891.[116] An immediate press campaign began for the 'business-like treatment' of two issues by the Sanitary Board: the Pound laws and the locating of 'non-whites'.[117] The Sanitary Board appointed a sub-committee which reported only on the question of locating Africans and, when it did so, an attempt was made under the leadership of H. J. Deary to extend its recommendations so as to include Asians.[118] After an initial success, whites had to give way in face of the rights which Asians enjoyed as British subjects.[119]

The issue of the Asian threat next arose at Bulawayo when the impending election of Sidney Redrup and two other popular representatives to the Sanitary Board in May 1894 was discussed in terms of the need to locate 'non-whites'.[120] Within days of the election, a sub-committee had 'fixed upon suitable sites for the Native and Coolie locations, Slaughter Poles, and Night-soil and Rubbish Deposit sites, about a mile to the N.W. of the N.W. corner of the new Township ...'.[121] Nine months later there were about twenty huts in the Bulawayo Asian Location, a measure of success which encouraged the Salisbury Sanitary Board to try again.[122] That board soon discovered that, whether they liked it or not, white residents and workers had to associate with and compete against Muslims, Hindus, Goans, Cape coloureds, and Chinese, who could not be confined and controlled like Africans.[123]

Even before the attempt to legislate against Asian residential use of town stands had failed in Salisbury, the local Chamber of Commerce under Deary's leadership attempted to mobilise the Bulawayo Chamber and the Sanitary Boards at Umtali and Victoria in a campaign against the entry of Asian traders into the territory. This developed into a demand to prevent Hindus trading at all, an issue which was discussed by the Administrator-in-Council on 19 February 1895, when the demand was rejected. Deary and the Salisbury Chamber pursued the matter, while a newspaper suggested that the expedient of refusing to issue licenses to Asians should be adopted.[124] An official at Bulawayo so refused. An Asian took legal action and, because there was no

law to prevent him from doing so, received a general dealer's licence with Judge Vintcent's blessing.[125]

There the matter rested while blacks attracted white attention until April 1897, when Redrup once more raised the threat of 'the Asiatic parasite' to white pockets and health.[126] Redrup's cry was echoed in Salisbury in 1898, and taken up in Umtali, where violent demonstrations in January 1899 led to a public declaration of Asian rights by the Chartered Company.[127] This was followed from the early 1900s onwards by the adoption of more covert methods to restrict Asian activity, both by the Chartered Company and by whites at large.[128]

The white campaign against 'non-whites' was an on-going one which focused on different race and class enemies over time. This is most clearly revealed by white attacks on Asians. At first, in November 1891 and in August 1892, Asians were regarded as a threat to all whites. The first Rhodesian Asians were former indentured workers, or free Indians, from Natal who lacked resources but who might accumulate some by hard work, as Savery Nyajani, otherwise known as Charley, must have done in order to pay £25 for his stand in Salisbury.[129] Whites with no resources and those with limited resources feared any Asian who might compete, even in a hostile environment from which some free Indians deliberately withdrew.[130] The assaults led by Redrup and Deary from 1894 were fundamentally different. Redrup was a general merchant who claimed in March 1894 to have 'absolutely the finest and largest stock in Matabeleland'.[131] Deary was associated at various times with the Tuli Trading Association; with a company in his own name; with Hill and Paddon; and with the Scottish African Corporation, generally doing business involving anything and everything at Salisbury, Umtali and Victoria.[132] Redrup and Deary's concern was not the free Indian but the passenger Indian, who from 1894 was beginning to move into the territory, who had trading skills and financial resources, and who was the primary target of the Immigration Restriction Ordinance, 1903.[133]

This ordinance, once proclaimed, was only one aspect of a renewed anti-Asian campaign. Another was the directive issued on 16 February 1904 by the Treasurer to the Civil Commissioner at Victoria, instructing him not to renew leases for trading sites held by Asians.[134] The renewed crusade in effect involved the Chartered Company in a somewhat indirect attempt to achieve in 1904 what it had declined to do in 1895: deny entry into the territory to any further Asians while refusing trading licenses to those already there. However, such activity did not reflect a sudden desire on the part of the Chartered Company to appease those settlers whose co-operation it required so much

as its willingness to act provided it did not offend the British imperial authorities, whose legal surrogate it was and whom it had to appease also.

Changing position of the Colonial Office

The position of Asians became increasingly threatened in 1904 as the result of changing constitutional arrangements. In 1904, the Colonial Office was responsible for the Transvaal, whereas in 1895 the Transvaal was an independent country, the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR). This status had allowed the Transvaal authorities to discriminate against British Indians in terms of the Transvaal's Law 3 of 1885 as amended, while that legislation and Indian court challenges to it between 1888 and 1898 required the Colonial Office to appear to be supportive of British Indian rights.[135] The occupation of the Transvaal, however, made British officials responsible for the administration of the Republic's laws and so caused them to cease to be supportive of British Indian's rights, especially since these British officials applied Law 3 to Asians from May 1901 at the latest. Thus, the Chartered Company had become free to respond to its settlers' wishes, particularly as the Law itself was not challenged successfully in the Transvaal until well after the anti-Asian campaign in Rhodesia had been renewed.[136]

The Chartered Company had been unable to act freely in the 1890s because its activities were subject to the scrutiny of the High Commissioner in Cape Town. The High Commissioner was responsible for the execution of British policy in and towards the South African territories also. He had been implementing the Colonial Office's wishes in respect to portions of the Chartered Company's sphere of operations in 1888 before that body came into being. He became responsible formally for the Chartered Company's sphere of operations not later than April 1891.[137] In consequence, Colonial Office officials in London and the High Commissioner in Cape Town habitually viewed Rhodesian issues from a South African perspective. It followed that any legislation applicable to 'non-whites' in Rhodesia had to conform to imperial needs in the South African territories. In the light of the position in the Transvaal, those needs in the 1890s demanded that the only legal discrimination permissible against Asians in Rhodesia should be qualified ones governing access to liquor and to arms and ammunition, not residential stands, trading sites, or licenses to trade.[138] British imperial priorities equally allowed more vigorous action being taken against Africans, for the Chartered Company was permitted to impose any restrictions it wished upon their access to liquor, arms and ammunition, while allowing it to discriminate in other instances where the Secretary of State saw 'fit to authorise an Ordinance or Regulation'.[139] Thus it was that Africans generally, but not Asians, might be confined to urban

locations with British imperial approval, for the action taken against them from March 1892 did not require the High Commissioner to pursue diametrically opposed policies in the different regions within his charge.[140]

Otherwise, the British imperial authorities were content to publish platitudes about allegedly 'traditional' African religious observances, laws and customs[141] while making minimal gestures towards the protection of the interests of those Africans held to be discarding 'traditional' ways.[142]

Recognition of the nature of British imperial interest in the treatment of 'non-whites' in Rhodesia makes it possible to assess the significance of the four crises which developed in Salisbury in 1891, initially in isolation and in local terms.

The significance of the first crisis over food supplies which began to develop from July 1891 was that the Chartered Company had to respond to white pressure. Thus, white residents exerted some political power through the mechanism of a mass meeting eight years before a Legislative Council met.

The Chartered Company aspired to be a commercial enterprise, not an unemployment philanthropic body. When, therefore, in August 1891 a second crisis (this time over unemployment) developed, the company responded in terms of its own needs. The local territorial economy was manifestly incapable of supporting a large number of potentially indigent whites.[143] The company's self-interest demanded their removal if it was to maintain an illusion of growth and prosperity. Military policemen were consequently discharged and encouraged to leave for Taung in British Bechuanaland. Self-interest motivated the Chartered Company to behave in the same way in 1893 and in 1896, and to a more limited extent early in 1898. It then amended its policy, on the assumption that the limitations on the assistance offered to indigents from Johannesburg would force men who would be regarded as poor whites in that city to return to it. The Chartered Company as an administrative entity, responsible for an emerging colonial territory with a primarily subsistence economy and an extremely limited 'modern' or capitalist sector, and mindful also of its own commercial interests, repeatedly treated white indigents as an exportable problem in a society where whites were overwhelmingly immigrants.[144]

The black economic challenge of November 1891 which generated the third crisis confirmed that whites exercised some political power virtually from the inception of the colonial state, in this instance initially through petitioning and subsequently through the activities of sanitary boards. The specific significance of the black challenge, however, was that it exposed the lack of British imperial interest in the well-being of most blacks.[145]

The Asian economic challenge, delivered a few days later, provoked a fourth crisis which revealed that white demands might not always be gratified, for the Chartered Company had to conform to British imperial policy requirements. These were conditioned by changing British needs in the South African territories, so that British policy towards Asians in Rhodesia varied as British responsibilities in the Transvaal altered. Neither was the Asian economic challenge itself immutable for, by 1894, it was maintained by passenger Indians who imperilled the prosperity of white merchants, rather than by free Indians threatening the well-being of many more financially insecure whites.

The four crises clearly have a wider significance. The Chartered Company's response to the employment crisis merits attention on four counts. First, it suggests that any emerging colonial state had to protect an embryonic capitalist sector in any territory where subsistence cultivation was the primary economic activity. Second, it implies that no poor white problem of any significance existed outside of South Africa in the 1930s, also in part because white indigents might be re-exported from African territories having small white immigrant communities.[146] Third, this in turn indicates that South Africa had a poor white problem in part because it could not either successfully or continuously export indigent whites from what amounted to an indigenous white community.[147] Fourth, the reason why South Africa could not dispose of its indigents reflected one which impelled the Chartered Company to do so: the zone of white settlement in Rhodesia was far beyond the South African frontier, however, much that frontier may or may not have been a rolling one within South Africa.[148]

The crises over food supply and the 'non-white' economic challenges share one common characteristic: the ability of resident whites to exert political pressure upon the Chartered Company. In general terms, the recurrent feature implies that whites not employed by governments but resident in embryonic colonial states exerted political power beyond that merited by either their numbers or their economic activity. In light of South African conditions, it suggests that displaced 'bywoners' who could not leave the Transvaal became poor whites in part because they could not exert any political influence, at least not until the introduction of Responsible Government in the Transvaal Colony attracted Het Volk's attention to their plight.[149]

It is, however, the cumulative effect of all four crises upon resident whites in Rhodesia late in 1891 that is of particular significance, in part because the pride with which they first faced the food crisis was soon eroded and destroyed. Whites did not expect to be fed for nothing when they demanded an adequate supply of imported foodstuffs at reasonable cost early in September.[150] After the employment crisis deepened and half the military police force or a quarter

of the white population had been thrown out of work by November, many whites faced a threat of imminent destitution as all became aware of developing 'non-white' competition. The threat of destitution became a reality for some whites when the Chartered Company finally disbanded its military police force on 31 December 1891 and threw some 250 men out of work, for it only provided free rations for four months to men who would not or could not leave the territory.[151] Thus, whites moved against blacks and Asians initially when they faced destitution, while subsequently burdens were placed upon blacks as some whites began to experience actual destitution.

The controls placed upon blacks at Salisbury in February and March 1892 were not relaxed for generations: rather, they were reinforced and extended. The appointment of an Inspector of Native Locations in every area falling under the Cape Village Management Act of 1881 was authorised in October 1893.[152] Bulawayo acquired a legally regulated Black location in January 1895.[153] The registration and pass system already in vogue in Salisbury was extended to Bulawayo, Umtali, Victoria, and Gwelo in February 1896 by the Registration of Natives Regulations 1895.[154] These were replaced in November 1902 by the Natives Registration Ordinance 1901, which applied the measures to Enkeldoorn also.[155] Then in June 1904 a notable step was taken when the Native Pass Ordinance 1902 went into effect, extending the registration and pass system to all black males throughout the territory, albeit while allowing the British imperial authorities to pay lip-service to the protection of atraditional blacks through the provision made for some to receive certificates of exemption from the pass provisions.[156] Thereafter, the legislation controlling blacks was consolidated or amended on numerous occasions until the Natives Registration Ordinance 1901 was replaced by the Natives Registration Act 1936.[157] Thus the threat of destitution which faced most whites in November 1891 and the actual destitution of some whites from January 1892 generated legislation which discriminated immediately against urban blacks and subsequently against rural blacks. These measures were maintained and further extended into and beyond the 1930s.[158]

The maintenance of legal burdens inhibiting the ability of blacks to compete against whites implies that the black economic threat was a continuing one from November 1891 onwards.[159] From this perspective, the Great Depression in the early 1930s merely accentuated an existing crisis and provoked a customary response: the consolidation or extension of existing legislation. There was some legislation in a new field, responding to newly perceived threats. One was that by black maize producers to white farmers.[160] It led to protection being extended to white farmers, initially over maize and then over

a wider field, after the existence of a group of poor whites had been acknowledged.[161]

Conclusion

Recognition of the existence of Rhodesian poor whites occurred as the colonial state passed legislation to protect white farmers and white industrial workers. This coincidence of events has caused discussion of the poor white problem in Rhodesia to be conducted in South African terms.[162] It cannot be denied that some Rhodesian farmers may have become poor whites because they were unable to adjust to the requirements of commercial agriculture, even after obtaining access to land for next to nothing upon which to practise subsistence cultivation. Farmers who first obtained and then retained land in this way were few in number. The period during which whites might acquire land without purchasing it was extremely limited. Therefore, the group of whites in Rhodesia from among whom poor whites on the South African model might emerge was small. It follows that South African precedents are valid only in respect of this small and unrepresentative group which itself forms a small portion of the wider but still limited white farming community that had obtained access to land either by purchase or by managing it for others.

Most whites in Rhodesia, even in the 1890s, laboured in towns and on mines, as they did in the 1930s. These non-agricultural whites had been protected continuously from black competition from February 1892 onwards. Thus, the legislation passed in the 1930s amounted not to a radical new departure but rather to a consolidation or extension of legislation reaching back to 1892.

Measures were also taken in the 1930s because some whites faced destitution, which is why burdens were initially placed upon blacks in and after 1892. Whites who faced destitution in the 1890s, as in the 1930s, were assisted by the colonial administration. Even in 1892, this was in response to political pressure. Thus, in any discussion of the poor white problem at any time in Rhodesia, it is necessary to consider the impact upon whites of impending or actual destitution and white political response to perceived economic threats.

South African precedents open up useful avenues of enquiry into the poor white problem in Rhodesia, even if subsequently the validity of most of the precedents must be discounted. This suggests that what needs to be done now is to look at the poor white problem in South Africa in the light of Rhodesian precedents, namely the response of non-agricultural whites to actual or threatened destitution and their ability or inability to exercise power and influence at all levels of government.

Chapter 9

Education and Southern Rhodesia's poor whites, 1890–1930

Bob Challiss

> *A considerable percentage of children were receiving no education at all. It was exceedingly important in this country, where they had a black population and an inferior race side by side with them, that the white children should have some sort of education. They saw the results of the neglect of giving white children education in the Union at the present time. In the Union they had a considerable population known as poor whites – they were unemployed and unemployable. It was a penny wise and pound foolish policy for this country in any way to starve the education vote at present. They would only be laying up for themselves very great trouble in the future (B. I. Collings, MLC, 20 May 1914. Southern Rhodesia, Debates in the Legislative Council. First Session of the Sixth Council, 15th to 17th April, 4th to 26th May, 8th to 10th June and 5th to 22nd October, 1914, p. 455).*

In 1897, the Administrator of Mashonaland bluntly outlined colonial policy for the region: 'Where white man and black man had to live side by side, it was necessary for every government to ensure the supremacy of the former.'[1] To achieve this aim, successive Southern Rhodesian governments relied on armed force, white settler privilege in the occupational structure of the territory and a racially segregated educational system which greatly favoured whites. Difficulties encountered in the implementation of this educational policy soon gave rise to fears about the emergence of a large class of poor whites. These fears exerted increasingly powerful influences on the nature of the white settler educational system by 1930, when it was at long last possible to enforce compulsory attendance at school of all white children between seven and fifteen years of age.[2] Largely as a result of the nature of this white settler educational system, it was necessary to impose constraints upon the education of blacks which retarded their social, political and economic progress.

Educational policy, 1890–1930

Thanks largely to the vigorous efforts made by the numerous Christian religious bodies that were encouraged by Rhodes to participate in the conquest and white settlement of Southern Rhodesia during the 1890s, remarkably swift progress was made in the establishment of schools for all races in the territory. Under the Education Ordinances of 1899 and 1903, state expenditure was channelled almost entirely to schools under the management of the religious bodies. White settler education received the lion's share of state aid.[3]

Large contributions made by blacks to the public revenues of the territory promoted missionary criticism of the racial inequity of government expenditure on education. However, in 1901 the superintending Inspector of Schools, George Duthie, defended the policy on the grounds that the education of blacks in the territory had been 'much more looked after than the education of whites' largely as a result of philanthropic endowment, mainly by overseas benefactors. Consequently, although the government was not 'against educating the natives', it felt obliged to do as much as it could to assist with the education of whites. This was considered to be particularly necessary if further white immigration and the development of the territory was to be encouraged.[4] Of course, when overseas philanthropic benefaction of black education diminished particularly after the First World War, it became much clearer that white supremacism was the chief purpose of persistence with racially discriminatory public expenditure on education.

Racially differentiated curricula also functioned to serve the white supremacist aim. Schools for whites were expected to offer primary and secondary courses directed at university entrance. Schools for coloureds and Asians had to place less emphasis on the academic side and greater attention to practical subjects like needlework, sewing and carpentry. As for black pupils, the small minority of them in attendance at schools where whites gave instruction could obtain an almost complete primary education, although the government encouraged instruction in spoken rather than written English. These pupils were also required to receive at least two hours of industrial training daily. It was to be a 'simple' kind that could not result in competition with skilled white artisans, but which emphasised the inculcation of 'habits of discipline and cleanliness'. State aid was only granted to schools which fell into line with these expectations. The great majority of black pupils, however, attended single-teacher kraal schools where instruction by very elementarily educated black catechists was confined to the three R's in the vernacular.[5]

In the first decade of the twentieth century news of the poor white problems of the Cape began prompting fears that, for want of adequate education, many

white settler children in Southern Rhodesia might become socially undesirable and politically dangerous. At that time only about 600 of the 1 406 white settler children aged between five and fifteen years attended schools.[6] An important reason for this situation was that private bodies could no longer cater for the educational needs of a white settler population that had begun to change rather rapidly in its nature at the turn of the century.

The rapidly changing nature of white settlement, 1890–1930

It became evident during the pioneer decade that Southern Rhodesia was not another Eldorado. Consequently, the Chartered Company (BSAC), anxious to obtain quick returns on its considerable investment, sold exclusive mineral concessions and extensive areas of land to large mining and development companies. When it became clear that these companies had acquired their assets mainly for speculative rather than development purposes, the BSAC began to pay greater attention to the stimulation of immigration of individual farmers, prospectors and small mining investors who were likely to get on with the job of exploiting the economic resources of the territory more rapidly.[7]

Although the majority of white settlers resided in towns during the pioneer decade, the new impetus given to immigration at the turn of the century, but particularly after the South African War had ended, soon resulted in a much greater proportion of white settlement in rural areas. The number of whites working on the territory's scattered mines rose from 949 in 1904 to 2 255 in 1911. Similarly the white farmer population rose steadily. In 1897, only 250 farms were actually occupied. In 1904, the figure had risen to 900 farms and by 1914 to about 2 000.[8]

By 1921 it was estimated that 27 per cent of the white working population was engaged in agriculture, whereas commerce accounted for 16 per cent, mining 15 per cent, railways and communications 12 per cent, public services 12 per cent, industry 11 per cent, commercial services 4 per cent and the professions 3 per cent.[9]

Afrikaner 'apathy' about education

The proliferation of white settler children on distant, widely dispersed mines and farms, and the roving nature of the population during the early years of rural white settlement, led to low school attendance before 1905. However, there were also special reasons why in these early and even in subsequent years, Afrikaners were conspicuous amongst those who either failed to attend school at all or did so only very briefly. Although Afrikaners never constituted

much more than 20 per cent of the white populace, and probably less than this at the turn of the century, they usually came to the territory in large family units and with generally more children than settlers of British stock.[10] More importantly, many Afrikaners, but particularly those who trekked to the territory during the pioneer decade to acquire farms at virtually no cost, were Trekboers, frontier folk, who placed very little value on the formal education of their children.

Described by Duthie in 1904 as being 'far from industrious and ... content to subsist on mealies and game',[11] the Trekboers felt that the acquisition of sufficient knowledge of Dutch required for confirmation in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and elementary literacy in *die taal* (Afrikaans) sufficed for the educational needs of their children. Fiercely independent in their outlook, Trekboers feared that too much formal education might inspire their children with yearnings for a town rather than a farming life. Moreover, school attendance prevented the utilisation of child labour on family farms, particularly when adult males were engaged in transport riding in order to raise a bit of money.[12]

In 1895 the Rev. P. A. Strasheim, a Predikant acting on behalf of the Cape Synod of the DRC, with the encouragement of Sir Cecil J. Rhodes made an agreement with Dr (later Sir) Leander Starr Jameson whereby the BSAC offered grants towards the salaries of teachers and building costs for schools conducted by the DRC. This agreement lapsed in 1902, when DRC schools were expected to conform with other bodies for state aid under the Education Ordinance, 1899. However, even before this happened, attendance at the DRC schools was all too often brief and far from universal.[13] Matters were aggravated by the advent of the South African War and a requirement under the Education Ordinance that English should be the sole medium of instruction in state-aided schools. This requirement was retained under the Education Ordinance, 1903, because white settlers felt that they formed an essentially 'English community and as such should be assisted'. Indicative of Afrikaner resentment of this was the fact that in 1906 only one of the five schools under DRC direction in the territory qualified for state aid. In the others, Afrikaans was the medium of instruction. However, many Afrikaner children also failed to attend school at all, simply because of the 'deplorable apathy of parents, especially in the case of farmers of Dutch origin'.[14]

Mindful of how the poor white problem was being dealt with at the Cape and keen to create conditions likely to stimulate white farmer immigration, the BSAC decided in 1906 to introduce a system of farm and mine primary schools.[15] The government appointed and paid the salary of a teacher wherever parents provided him or her with suitable board and lodging for rental, erected a schoolroom and gathered together a minimum number of ten

fee-paying pupils. English was retained as the sole medium of instruction in these schools, a requirement that the Resident Commissioner, after consultation with the High Commissioner for South Africa, Lord Selborne, regarded as 'absolutely essential', for Afrikaner children spoke only *die taal* at home, so would otherwise be 'handicapped for life' if they did not learn the official language of the country at school. However, the Resident Commissioner also recommended that any inducement that might have the effect of persuading Afrikaners to accept this view of the matter was 'evidently desirable'. Various inducements, such as some Dutch-medium instruction and school fee remission, were offered to encourage DRC schools to come into the government system. By 1911, all DRC schools had joined the government farm and mine system.[16]

White settler agitation and educational progress, 1906–1914

It was not so much the plight of the rural uneducated but the nature of educational facilities in towns that engaged the closest attentions of the majority of white settlers in 1906. Of special importance in this regard was growing dissatisfaction with continued reliance upon mainly religious bodies for the voluntary establishment and conduct of schools for whites.

In Bulawayo, the Roman Catholics and Anglican Church authorities shared a virtual monopoly of primary and secondary school provision. American and Wesleyan Methodists respectively enjoyed similar positions in Umtali. There was a government school for whites in Salisbury, but many parents objected to it because it was co-educational, had an unfortunate history of unsuitable teacher appointments, and gave free tuition to pupils of inferior social status.

White Rhodesians also complained of declining government expenditure on education in the post South African War depression (1906). Agitation for reform originated in Bulawayo but soon spread to other main centres. An education committee representing the main centres argued that prolonged failure by the BSAC administration to rectify matters warranted Imperial government intervention. Eventually, the Legislative Assembly decided to appoint a public committee of enquiry into white settler education. In the meantime Alfred Beit, financier and close friend of Rhodes, had died, leaving a large endowment to white settler education.[17]

Government accepted the 1908 recommendations of the Committee of Enquiry to transform education from a voluntary to a state system. With better funding, intervention rapidly achieved results. By 1911 only 935 of the 2 262 white children between seven and fourteen years of age failed to attend

school,[18] a situation that compared favourably with the one that had arisen when reforms were demanded in 1906. However, a variety of difficulties soon strengthened rather than weakened fears that, for want of adequate education, a large class of poor whites might soon emerge in the territory. Most importantly, anxieties were to be aroused by rapidly increasing numbers of blacks in attendance at mission schools.

After the suppression of the Ndebele-Shona risings (1896–1897), blacks began to attend mission schools in steadily increasing numbers. By 1914, when over 21 000 black but only 3 000 whites attended schools, the fact that many white settler children still grew up with little of no education at all became a special cause for concern.[19] It was considered to be a matter of the 'highest importance' that all white settler children, 'brought up as they were, in the midst of uncivilized natives, should have the best possible education'. Whites could retain power only 'by maintaining the distance ahead which divided them from the native races'.[20]

In 1913 Duthie found it particularly deplorable that even in Salisbury, where there was no excuse for non-attendance at school, there were children who could 'hardly avoid the ultimate destiny of adding to the criminal classes'. In one such instance a white girl was 'daily employed along with natives' by her parents. In another case, Duthie suspected that the parents lived on the immoral earnings of their daughter. But the problem was most pronounced in rural areas where Duthie knew of white girls 'clad more or less like natives' and 'quite at home' amongst them. Uneducated whites, Duthie lamented, 'tended rapidly to the status of the native' which was 'not good for the white race or the future of Rhodesia' and hindered quests for 'a solution to the difficult native problem'.[21]

By 1914 government was responding more purposefully to the perceived need for a state-controlled education system. All voluntary schools, except for four Roman Catholic schools (three of which were state-aided), were either taken over or closed down. Government schools increased in number to 58 in 1914. Over half of these were farm or mine schools.[22]

Rural white settler agitation for reform and compulsory education

By 1914, in the context of growing anxieties about the capacity of white settlers to maintain their supremacy, particularly in the face of increasingly positive black responses to mission education, the BSAC and settler leaders were in agreement about the vital need to introduce compulsory education as quickly as possible.[23] However, there were two major impediments to the immediate

achievement of this objective. The British majority of farmers baulked at compulsory education because of dissatisfaction with the existing structure of the white settler educational system and the Afrikaner minority of farmers became increasingly averse to the anglicising influences of government schools.

The British farmers wanted their children to have the 'best possible' education, but the quality of instruction given in the small, usually single-teacher farm and mine schools rarely matched what was offered by their larger urban counterparts. There was also a rapid turnover of farm and mine school teachers, mainly because they were usually single woman who soon married and gave up teaching. Well qualified teachers prepared to face the rigours of rural life were hard to find. Afrikaner farm life was often particularly primitive, to the extent that one school mistress complained of having to subsist on only 'dry bread, biltong and coffee'.[24]

Farmers were particularly disadvantaged with regard to secondary education. Many of them were struggling to establish themselves and were financially far less well-off than the majority of white settlers resident in towns. This meant that it was often impossible for farmers, even with state aid, to undertake the relatively heavy expenditure on travel and boarding costs necessary to send their children to the centralised high schools. Consequently, it was observed in the Legislative Assembly in 1915 that if 'the younger sons of well-to-do families and men of Public School education' were to be attracted to the territory as farmers, they should not have to face the tragedy of seeing their children 'growing up in ignorance'; a tragedy all the 'greater' in the case of 'a public school man'.[25]

The Administrator of Rhodesia, W. H. (later Sir William) Milton, was not always very sympathetic to the high educational aspirations of rural parents. His own children attended expensive English public schools. He castigated government expenditure on boarding grants to assist rural white pupils to attend high schools as 'excrescences on national education'.[26]

Origins of Afrikaner nationalist opposition to the state system of schools

Although Afrikaners constituted a minority in rural areas, they nevertheless contributed to the rapid increase in white settlement after the turn of the century. Consequently, in 1920, when Afrikaners retained majorities in the Melsetter, Chipinga and Enkeldoorn constituencies, they also formed large minorities in the rural Marandellas, Salisbury, Victoria and Western District constituencies. The substantial increase in the numbers of children attending

school by 1911 resulted largely from the success of efforts made by the government to induce Afrikaners to participate in the farm and mine school system from 1906 onwards. However, Afrikaners were again conspicuous when the numbers of children who failed to attend school began to rise again after 1911. An explanation for this deterioration in the situation can be found largely in the relaxation of strictures imposed upon Afrikaner immigration and influences exerted in the territory by Afrikaner nationalists from South Africa.[27]

By 1914, the fact that many of the Afrikaner children tended to receive little or no education at all gave rise to fears about more than merely the emergence of a large class of poor whites. With reference to the Afrikaner nationalist rebellion of that year in South Africa, the warning was given in the Legislative Assembly that 'a large proportion of the future white settler population of Southern Rhodesia might be supplied by those very people who, through ignorance and misleading', had been persuaded to take part in that rebellion.[28]

The direct influence of South African Afrikaner nationalist agitation in Southern Rhodesia would appear to have begun when the future Nationalist Party premier, Dr D. F. Malan, visited the territory in 1911. When he returned to the Cape he published criticism of allegedly widespread neglect of Dutch instruction in Southern Rhodesia to the extent that most Afrikaner children were growing up without any knowledge of the official language of their church. In July 1913, the Rev. C. R. Kotze, who had recently left the Cape to take up the post of DRC Predikant in Salisbury, led Afrikaner delegates from Melsetter, Umtali, Felixburg, Headlands, Somabula, Marandellas, Bulawayo, Salisbury and the Charter District, to present the Administrator, Milton, with petitions that they had gathered. They demanded the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools, the teaching of Dutch in the ordinary curriculum, and local control of schools by parental committees with full powers of appointing teachers. Rejection of these demands prompted Kotze to embark upon the establishment in the territory of a separatist system of schools of the kind favoured by the Christian National movement in South Africa. Pending the establishment of separatist schools in some areas, some parents did not send their children to school at all.[29]

The Education Commission, 1917

Growing anxiety about problems affecting white settler education was revealed at the biennial conferences of the Rhodesia Agricultural Union, and in prolonged Legislative Assembly debates on education in 1914 and particularly in 1915. Eventually, the government commissioned a second public enquiry into white settler education in 1916, whose main concern was the fact that over

a third of white settler children between seven and fourteen years of age failed to attend school. The commissioners had to ask whether primary education should be made compulsory, and if so, how this should be implemented, particularly with regard to costs and the special difficulties of parents in rural areas.[30]

The commissioners recommended that compulsory education should apply to all white settler children between seven and fifteen years of age, for only by 'the education of all [white] children within the territory' could 'the present danger be averted of a large number of poor whites growing up uneducated'.[31] However, it was felt that fees should continue to be charged, except in necessitous cases, for the majority of white settlers, most of them resident in towns, could easily afford to pay them. Small as the total contribution of fees was to the cost of white settler education, they helped to maximise funds available for expansion.

Special recommendations for the improvement of rural educational facilities included increases in the number of boarding schools in smaller centres of settlement, better salaries for farm and mine school teachers, insistence upon improvements in their living conditions, and where insufficient numbers could be assembled for farm and mine schools, the appointment of governesses by the government for the instruction of small numbers of very young children in their own homes.[32]

Action on recommendations made by the commissioners was confined largely to the appointment of governesses. Compulsory education could not be adopted mainly because of unexpectedly strong Afrikaner nationalist opposition to the government system of schools and the inability of the government to raise funds necessary to build additional classrooms and hostels. By 1923 both of these obstacles were in large measure removed, but it is necessary to closely examine what happened between 1914 and 1923 because prolonged obstruction of educational efforts to avert the creation of a large class of poor whites resulted in important changes in white settler attitudes to education.

Afrikaner nationalist opposition to the state system of schools, 1914–1922

Kotze relied heavily on Afrikaner nationalists in South Africa for financial support and teacher supplies, but this source was greatly reduced after the failure of the South African rebellion of 1914. Only a handful of rather small separatist schools had been established in various remote parts of Southern Rhodesia when the education commissioners confidently reported in 1916 that the separatist movement would soon collapse completely. However, a visit to

the territory by another South African Afrikaner nationalist leader, the Rev. P. S. van Heerden of the Orange Free State, was followed by a vigorous revival of the separatist movement in 1917.[33] By 1921 eight separatist schools catered for 240 pupils. The largest school was in Salisbury, where 100 pupils were enrolled, 40 of them boarders. Some pupils defected from government schools, as did at least one teacher. In Melsetter, where a local Predikant was a particularly ardent supporter of the separatists, defections from local government schools eventually led to the closure of the government school hostel in 1922. By then, however, financial difficulties and an undertaking that Afrikaans would soon be taught in all government schools tended to weaken the separatist cause.[34]

Certain prominent Afrikaner leaders, notably the Rev. Liebenberg of Enkeldoorn and Louw of Morgenster Mission, always remained steadfast in there co-operation with the government in white settler educational affairs. Another influential leader, the Rev. A. J. Botha, who was in charge of the DRC orphanage which he had transferred from Bulawayo to Daisyfield in 1915, wavered in his allegiances. To help retain his loyalty the Department of Education invited him to assist with the experimental teaching of Afrikaans at the government school attended by the orphans in 1919. In 1921 Afrikaans replaced Dutch, which had been accepted as an alternative to French in the normal school curriculum of government schools in 1918.[35]

In 1921 the separatists appealed as far afield as Holland for financial aid. This alarmed the Colonial Secretary, Churchill, who had succeeded Milner in that year. Evidently he feared that they might prejudice his and Smuts's plans for the incorporation of Southern Rhodesia with South Africa.[36] A number of Southern Rhodesian Afrikaners were likely to share in such trepidation. On the eve of the Referendum in 1922 the separatists agreed, after some months of negotiations, to let the government assume responsibility for their schools in the following year. The agreement included an undertaking by government to retain the services of the separatist schools teachers and hostel matron, who wished to remain at their posts.

Financial obstructions to the introduction of compulsory education for whites

Lack of funds was the major obstacle to the implementation of compulsory education in 1917. Legal difficulties continued to prevent the full use of the Beit bequest until 1922. Normally, the BSAC might have assisted with building loans, as it did in 1910, but it baulked at doing so after 1915 because of a dispute with white settlers over the ownership of unalienated land in the

territory. When a judicial committee declared in favour of Crown ownership of the land in 1918, the company felt even less generously disposed towards the settlers.[37] Consequently, a policy of persuasion instead of compulsion was adopted. Large increases in public expenditure from the annual revenues catered for the expansion that resulted from this policy and the influx of white settler children after the end of the First World War. However, the reservation of many skilled occupations for only a limited number of white settler artisans aggravated difficulties by greatly inflating building costs. Indeed, inability to erect a sufficient number of buildings during and shortly after the war meant that the Department of Education had to hire private premises, mainly for additional hostel accommodation at the high schools in Bulawayo and Salisbury.

As a result of special pleas made by elected members of the Legislative Assembly early in 1920 the Colonial Secretary recommended that the Imperial government should break with colonial policy precedent by authorising the granting of loans for public building needs in Southern Rhodesia, which would be repaid after the advent of responsible government in 1923. When Churchill succeeded Milner in 1921, he delayed granting these loans in order to sharpen white settler awareness of the financial advantages likely to be derived from Union with South Africa. Only when Churchill was made fully aware of the difficulties faced by many white settlers, and particularly the struggling farmers, as a result of economic recession in the early 1920s and stagnation in the development of public amenities generally, did he finally relent. Consequently, the 'Milner loans' were not utilised before 1922, when the lion's share of their first instalment was devoted to the erection of mainly white settler school buildings and the provision of costly teaching equipment.[38]

The Milner loans and cessation of active Afrikaner nationalist opposition allowed the white settler system of schools to enjoy unprecedented progress from 1922 onwards. By 1928, only 591 of the 8 647 white settler children between six and fifteen years of age failed to attend school.[39] However, anxieties arising from prolonged inability to deal effectively with the problem of inadequate school enrolments from 1914 onwards would appear to have exercised important influences on white settler educational policy and attitudes. The animosities between Boers and Britons, which had so strongly informed policy before 1914, tended to diminish in strength, mainly as a result of sharpened white settler perceptions of their collective interests in the racial context.

Anxieties about poor whites and trends towards the creation of an egalitarian system of white schools

An important element in changing white settler attitudes to education was the fact that the majority of them were socially 'on a fairly general level' and financially 'in medium circumstances'.[40] Really poor whites were found mainly in rural areas, particularly amongst Afrikaners. Although many white farmers of British stock could be counted amongst the ranks of the rural poor, they usually had more positive attitudes to education than did their Afrikaner counterparts in general. These struggling, rather than poor, white farmers had largely accounted for the rising tide of dissatisfaction that led to the public enquiry into white settler education in 1916. Their plight subsequently did much to prompt egalitarian trends amongst white settlers.

The struggling farmers were often prepared to make considerable sacrifices in order to send their children to the distant high schools. However, they strongly resented the 'stigma of pauperism' associated with the declarations of poverty that had to be made, usually before local magistrates, in order to qualify for the award of boarding grants and remission of tuition fees. Also, there arose a growing resentment amongst settlers in town and country alike of the 'invidious distinction'[41] made between free and fee-paying schools in Bulawayo and Salisbury.

Poverty amongst white settlers became particularly acute after the First World War when the territory was afflicted by the influenza pandemic (1919), drought and economic recession. Farmers were particularly hard hit. Many of them resorted to the indignity of signing 'promissory notes' in lieu of fee payments in order to avoid the premature withdrawal of their children from boarding schools. Pupils at these schools often had only tattered clothes on a scale that sometimes necessitated the special employment of seamstresses to supplement the duties of hostel matrons. It was not the sunshine but poverty that promoted some white pupils to go shoeless to school.

The advent of war and the influenza pandemic certainly helped to draw the small white settler community closer together, but white settler egalitarian trends were even more strongly promoted by consciousness of a privileged status amidst a vast majority of blacks. Prolonged difficulty affecting white settler education tended to arouse extreme aspirations in the racial context. It began to be felt that white settler children should not merely receive the 'best possible education', but that this should be 'at least in every case' superior to that received by the 'inferior race'. Schools should help to mould 'the peoples of Rhodesia into one united race', but in doing so, aim at the development of 'a good type of child'.[42] Such children should not rely on 'a purely artificial'

difference between the races, but genuinely be worthy of their membership of the white community of 'aristocrats'. Only if these educational objectives were achieved could 'white civilization' hope 'to hold its own' in Southern Rhodesia.[43]

Egalitarian trends amongst white settlers of British stock soon had to embrace the by no means insignificant minority of Afrikaners. If dominance in the territory by the white racial minority was to be sustained, class and ethnic divisions would also have to be removed with regard to the educational opportunities of Afrikaner children. The Afrikaners could not realistically expect acceptance of bilingualism and Christian National principles of education in a community of predominantly British settlers. Even so, government inflexibility on the language question provided ample opportunity for South African Afrikaner nationalist exploitation of the situation in Southern Rhodesia. Persistence of Afrikaner dissidence after the war rendered recognition of the need for rapprochement between Boers and Britons in the territory increasingly evident. Afrikaners who had always been loyal to the government undoubtedly facilitated this rapprochement by winning the confidence and respect of white settler leaders.

In the end only compulsory and free education could overcome the intransigence of a small number of usually poor but stubbornly backward Afrikaners who could not be persuaded, even by their own DRC ministers, to have their children properly educated. In 1921 a case involving two Afrikaner girls aged twelve and fifteen years who were found guilty of sexually seducing blacks underlined what was perhaps the most compelling reason why the formal education of all Afrikaner children had become a matter of supreme importance in the eyes of white settler leaders by 1930. The girls did not attend school and their parents were admonished from the bench as follows:

> Mr Justice Tredgold ... remarked that the cases were the most scandalous he had heard during the course of his career as an advocate. 'You people,' he said, 'by the way you neglect your children, not only disgrace your race [sic] but bring the whole of the white people into disrepute. Two cases have been dealt with of attempted rape on white women, and I am confident that the cases are connected. If girls allow themselves to go with Kaffirs, then Kaffirs will try to take advantage of other White girls.'[44]

Poor whites and curriculum development in white settler education

Educational strategies for the prevention of the emergence of a large class of poor whites were for long confined almost entirely to securing better attend-

ance at schools. It became evident, however, that a mere primary school education could hardly suffice in a situation where there was little or no scope 'for the white labourer as such as there was in other countries'.[45] After the turn of the century uneducated Trekboers could no longer freely acquire farms, and cheap black labour quickly replaced white labour in all spheres of menial employment. With few exceptions, notably where railway workshops engaged a small number of apprentices, white youngsters who left school after learning little more than the three R's had little opportunity to obtain on-the-job training. Most of these youngsters had attended farm and mine schools, but hardly any farmers could afford to take them on as learner-assistants. Consequently, it was recommended by Duthie in 1914 that the government should establish farm and trade schools for the post-primary vocational training of rural white youngsters.[46]

The First World War and financial stringency prevented the implementation of the farm and trade school scheme before 1922. In that year the Primary School of Agriculture was established on the Matopos Estate bequeated to the nation by Rhodes. The school aimed to provide at small cost to poorer rural parents a practical training for a 'civilized life' and 'earning a living on the land' for youths from farm and mine schools.[47] A second farm and trade school was founded by the DRC orphanage authorities at Daisyfield in 1924. The Matopos school closed down in 1930, mainly because the introduction of compulsory education in that year meant that free tuition could now be obtained at the more prestigious high schools. The DRC school eventually developed into a private high school for Afrikaners who favoured the education of their children under DRC influences.

More sophisticated vocational training was offered at the Technical High School established in Bulawayo by the government in 1927. The school was intended for pupils unsuited to the academic education given at ordinary high schools where, with the exception of certain commercial subjects, the curriculum was restricted to English, French or Afrikaans, Latin, Geography, History, Mathematics and the General Sciences. Evening classes were also offered at the Technical High School for the large number of pupils who left high schools prematurely to take up 'dead end occupations'[48] as clerks, shop assistants and the like. It was lamented in 1925 that many of these 'untrained youngsters [were] able to command very considerable salaries and in consequence they [did] not see the need for binding themselves down to work hard at nights'.[49] In this regard, matters were evidently rectified to some extent, at least in Bulawayo, for by 1930 there were 250 pupils in attendance at the Technical High School evening classes. However, only 100 pupils were in daily attendance at the school.

Egalitarian trends tended to have adverse effects on efforts made to broaden the scope of the curriculum. Many parents were averse to the low level of training that was offered at the Primary School of Agriculture and were sensitive even to the association of the institution's name with the Bulawayo Primary, or free, school. For similar reasons, the Technical School in Bulawayo was poorly attended. Parents were wary of premature vocational training and feared that the general educational value of the school would be inferior to what was imparted at the ordinary high schools. As members of the white settler aristocratic elite, parents tended to be strongly prejudiced in favour of the high schools that had for long been held in great esteem. Many parents were unwilling to believe that their children might not be suited to the academic curriculum offered in the schools. However, for many years very few pupils remained long enough at the schools to sit for the South African matriculation examinations. Among the reasons were the lack of aptitude and ability of pupils, the financial straits of parents and the ease with which white youngsters could obtain well paid jobs even without completing their secondary education. The performances of those who did sit for the examinations was not always very good. In 1928, for instance, only 25 of the 52 candidates were awarded certificates.[50]

The 1929 Education Commission

Of course, mere attendance at primary schools of virtually all white settler children went only part of the way towards averting the emergence of a large class of poor whites. Mere attendance at high schools by many pupils who failed to obtain certificates hardly augured well for the future of white supremacy in the territory. Growing concern about needs to maximise the effectiveness of white settler education and the large sum of money now available for expenditure upon it, prompted a decision to appoint yet another public enquiry. Under the Chairmanship of an eminent educationist of international repute, Frank Tate, the Education Commission of 1929 was concerned mainly with the curriculum and general nature of white settler education instead of the ways and means of ensuring that all children attended schools. Indeed, in the words of a Southern Rhodesian MP, the Tate Commission enquired into what was 'perhaps the most important question ever considered in [the] country, namely the education of future citizens, legislators, and even ... the future Premier'.[51]

The Tate Commission strongly criticised the academic bias and recommended the establishment of a decentralised system of junior high schools where special attention should be given to the individual aptitudes of pupils and local needs. However, the decentralised system of primary and secondary schools

advocated in 1916 had already begun to make way for a more equitable distribution of educational facilities between town and country. Despite efforts made to widen the scope of the curriculum in these schools, parental pressure and preference tended to restrict it to rather narrowly academic lines. Moreover, the very high standard of white settler education that was to be a much vaunted feature of later years developed slowly.[52] Favourable climatic conditions, the nature of white rule, particularly with regard to leisure time afforded by domestic servants, and the recruitment of teachers from English public schools, meant that athleticism, the attractions of outdoor life in the wilds and militarism in the form of compulsory cadet corps training distracted attention from studies and the pursuit of academic excellence. Whites were often slow to heed the words of their premier, Huggins: 'I ... admit that although our youth may be able to play Ruby Football and to preserve their white skins with rifles and differential legislation ... if they survive, it will be nothing except by superior education.'[53]

The key to success: black education and the poor white problem in the 1920s

It was not the creation of a particularly superior system of white settler schools so much as the retardation of progress in the education of blacks that most effectively helped to prevent the emergence of a large class of poor whites in Southern Rhodesia. In 1920 it was asserted in the Legislative Assembly that:

> They had heard a great deal of race supremacy, and the only means they had of retaining race supremacy was not by keeping the native in ignorance, but by efficiently educating the white. (Hear, hear.) They could not afford to leave that great asset, the native, undeveloped, and certainly, they could not afford to allow that great asset, the white child, to remain undeveloped in such a way that he was not able to maintain the directive power ... He had never heard it contradicted that there were 30 per cent of white children who were illiterate. Under these conditions they had no claim to call themselves a civilised country.[54]

For long, as Huggins had lamented, whites were not 'efficiently' educated. Indeed, only the protection afforded by such measures as land apportionment and job reservation saved many whites of average and below average abilities from having to compete for their livelihoods on equal terms with blacks. In the 1920s an educational policy was to be devised for blacks that, in essence, had the effect of 'keeping the native in ignorance', and thereby greatly serving the purpose of those other racially discriminatory measures that helped to entrench white settler power and privilege. Indeed, implementation of the new

policy of the education of blacks by 1930 was to have the effect of greatly delaying the emergence of skilled and well-educated blacks in sufficient numbers likely to threaten white settler dominance. It is necessary to consider this new policy on the education of blacks in some detail, for, although it greatly assisted with the prevention of the emergence of a large class of poor whites in Southern Rhodesia, its formulation and implementation was as much the responsibility of the Imperial government and Anglo-American missionary and philanthropic bodies as it was the result of any white settler and Southern Rhodesian government initiatives.

Policy on the education of blacks in southern Rhodesia was for long undertaken entirely by Christian missionaries[55] along lines that loosely conformed with what Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth had advocated on behalf of the Imperial government in 1847 in his memorandum entitled 'Practical suggestions as to day schools of industry, model farm schools and normal farm schools, for coloured races of the British colonies'.[56] Inter-denominational competition for black converts, and limited missionary resources for the establishment of large, mainly white-staffed normal and industrial training centres of the kind advocated by Shuttleworth, resulted instead in a proliferation of small kraal schools. To raise standards in these humble schools, the Department of Education encouraged missionary teacher education centres, mainly by means of increased state aid between 1903 and 1921.

However, by 1914, the Department of Native Affairs had become particularly alarmed by fears that the widely dispersed, weakly supervised proliferation of kraal schools might all too easily allow for the dissemination of subversive ideas. Rapid progress in teacher education, it was feared, would soon create a class of potentially troublesome black intellectuals. The Chief Native Commissioner, H. (later Sir Herbert) Taylor, felt that kraal schools should be reduced in number and that greater emphasis should be placed on the establishment of well-equipped industrial training centres for the stimulation of economic, and particularly agricultural, development in native reserves. The Director of Education, L. M. Foggin, strongly opposed this policy. He felt that the kraal schools constituted a vital element in the sound development of a universal educational system for blacks. Foggin also believed that emphasis on industrial training instead of teacher education constituted confusion between educational and general economic development.[57]

The policy favoured by Taylor began to prevail by 1920, mainly because it conformed with Imperial government views on how to handle race relations in Southern Africa. Very influential in this regard was the Director of Native Education in Natal, Dr C. T. Loram. In his book *The education of the South African native,* published in 1917, Loram argued that blacks were a backward

race who needed special protection in the context of escalating racial friction. Loram opposed white 'repressionists' who wished simply to exploit blacks as cheap, unskilled labourers, and rejected as impractical and undesirable the view of 'equalists' who felt that well-educated blacks should be fully integrated with whites on a basis of racial equality. Instead, Loram favoured the views of 'segregationists' who believed that competition for jobs between whites and blacks should be minimised by trying to encourage blacks to develop gradually 'along their own lines' in native reserves.[58]

The reports of the Phelps-Stokes Commissions in 1922 and 1924, sponsored by American philanthropic bodies and keenly supported by the Imperial government and the International Missionary Conference, strongly endorsed racially segregated development in Africa. The Phelps-Stokesists, propagandist rather than investigative in their work, were mainly inspired by the apparent success of the late black leader Booker T. Washington in his promotion of racially differentiated education for separate development in the southern United States. The Phelps-Stokesists claimed that this should serve as the model for black African education and development.[59]

A Native Commissioner and apostle of Phelps-Stokesism, H. S. Keigwin, spearheaded implementation of the policy on the African continent in 1920 by establishing the first government schools for blacks in Southern Rhodesia at Domboshawa. Industrial training based on the development of agriculture and traditional African craftsmanship rather than skilled artisan work and low-level instruction was undertaken at Domboshawa and at a similar centre founded by Keigwin at Tjolotjolo in 1921. The aim was to produce blacks capable of promoting schemes for the general economic and social development of recently re-constituted native reserves.[60]

After official endorsement of Phelps-Stokesism by the Imperial government for adoption in all parts of British Tropical Africa in 1925,[61] the policy was vigorously promoted in Southern Rhodesia. A keen Phelps-Stokesist, Harold Jowitt, was recruited from Natal to take charge of a newly created Department of Native Education in 1927. The proliferation of kraal schools was immediately curbed in favour of the establishment of industrial training centres. The training was on traditional lines for the promotion of development in native reserves, instead of skilled training likely to result in black competition with white artisans in towns. State aid to missionaries was devoted mainly to industrial training instead of raising literary standards in teacher education.[62]

The trends towards white racial solidarity were greatly strengthened by the 'liberal' Anglo-American educational policy for the promotion of separate black development in native reserves. Phelps-Stokesism gave what amounted to an

international seal of approval for white racial privilege and power. Indeed, the widely applauded Chairman of the Phelps-Stokes Commissions, Dr Thomas Jesse Jones, even recommended that special efforts should be made to increase the rate of white settler population growth for the promotion of general progress under white settler control in Africa. Delayed black educational development, particularly after the introduction of Phelps-Stokesism from 1920 onwards, provided time for the rectification of matters with regard to the inadequate education of white settler children.[63]

Conclusion

An important consequence of locally devised educational strategies for the prevention of the emergence of a large class of poor whites in Southern Rhodesia is to be found in their contribution to white settler solidarity. The authoritarian basis of this solidarity and its contribution to the estrangement between the races greatly helps to explain the inclination and ability of Ian Smith and his Rhodesian Front government to command strong white settler support for defiance against the world in the 1960s. Ethnic solidarity was particularly significant. For a long time educational disputes of the kind that characterised tensions between Afrikaners and the state before 1920 tended to persist.[64] However, by the 1950s, when Afrikaners shared in the general prosperity enjoyed by whites, particularly in the farming sector, and when Afrikaners had generally adopted more positive attitudes towards the formal education of their children, ethnic animosities began rapidly to subside. Whites in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa also began to acquire a closer identity of interests in the face of the rising tide of African nationalism and British government policies on the 'winds of change.' The Rhodesian Front government was more widely representative of all sections of white settler society, but Afrikaners were disproportionately well represented in Parliament.[65]

In addition to the white solidarity trend, niggardly government expenditure on the education of blacks can also largely be explained by prolonged fears about the emergence of a large class of poor whites in Southern Rhodesia. Although the adoption of Phelps-Stokesist policy in the 1920s involved a comparatively large increase in public expenditure on the education of blacks in the 1920s, the restrictive nature of this policy gave rise to little cause for concern amongst white settlers. However, the decision by Milner to depart from colonial policy precedent by offering Imperial government loans before the advent of responsible government would also appear to have partly explained white settler acceptance of increased expenditure on the education of blacks.

The adoption of Phelps-Stokesism was probably the most significant aspect of what happened in the period up to 1930. The policy undoubtedly provided ready relief with regard to problems arising from prolonged difficulties affecting white settler education. Even so, Phelps-Stokesism was informed as much by internationally prevalent white racial prejudices about blacks as it was by any particular local interest and concerns of whites in Southern Rhodesia. White settler educational problems and fears about poor whites, therefore, provided only an incidental explanation for the adoption and consequences of repressive policy on the education of blacks from 1920 onwards.

In 1938, Professor W. M. Macmillan warned with specific reference to increasingly well-informed black opinion and aspirations generally in Africa that it was 'dangerous political expediency to try to check the process of "detribalization," or to even give the appearance of seeking to put the clock back'.[66] However, this was precisely what the Phelps-Stokesists had being trying to do for nearly two decades in Southern Rhodesia and elsewhere in British Tropical Africa. By 1930 all white settler children were granted considerable opportunity to obtain the best possible educational preparation for whatever their choice of career might be. Under Phelps-Stokesism, on the other hand, the numbers of blacks in receipt of a formal education was, for a short while in the early thirties, actually reduced. At the same time, the curriculum in schools for blacks was confined to what whites considered to be most appropriate for the gradual and orderly process of blacks 'along their own lines'. Consequently, deliberate steps were taken to retard the development of secondary, technical and tertiary education for blacks.[67] Ultimately, then, white education could not be separated from black education.

Notes

Introduction: The poor whites: a social force and a social problem in South African history

1 B. Iliffe, *The African poor,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 142.

2 V. Bickford-Smith, 'A "special tradition of multi-racialism?" Segregation in Cape Town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', in Wilmot James and Mary Simons (eds), *The angry divide,* David Philip, Cape Town, 1989.

3 A. Grundlingh, 'Collaborators in Boer society', in Peter Warwick (ed.), *The South African War*, Longman, Harlow, 1980, pp. 258–278.

4 R. Turrell, *Capital and labour on the Kimberley diamond fields 1871–90,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.

5 S. Greenberg, *Race and state in capitalist development*, Yale University Press and Ravan, New Haven, Conn., and Cape Town, 1983.

6 T. Keegan, *Rural transformation in industrialising South Africa,* Ravan, Johannesburg, 1986.

7 I. Phillips, 'The "civilised labour policy" and the private sector: the operation of the Wage Act 1925–37', PhD thesis, Rhodes University, 1984.

Chapter 1: The poor whites of Middelburg, Transvaal, 1900–1930: resistance, accommodation and class struggle

Some of the ideas expressed here were first included in a paper to the 1984 History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand. This version has benefited much from the perceptive comments of Rob Davies and Mike Morris for which I am most thankful.

1 J. Branford, *A dictionary of South African English,* Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1980, p. 222.

2 C. van Onselen, 'The main reef road into the working class', *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914, New Nineveh,* Ravan, Johannesburg, 1982; E. Koch, '"Without visible means of subsistence": slumyard culture in Johannesburg 1918–1940', in B. Bozzoli (ed.), *Town and countryside in the Transvaal,* Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983.

3 C. van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914, New Babylon*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1982, p. 27.

4 State aid was given chiefly to big, progressive farmers. Helping the poorer, small farmer was only a secondary consideration. S. Marks and S. Trapido, 'Lord Milner and the South African state', *History Workshop Journal,* 8(1) 1979, pp. 68–72; R. Morrell, 'Competition and cooperation in Middelburg, 1900–1930', in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds), *Putting a plough to the ground*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1986.

5 H. Giliomee acknowledges the shortage of research and tentatively suggests the presence of poor whites in Transvaal from 1890. Ross and Bundy suggest respectively that the Cape origins of poor whiteism go back to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. 'Processes in development of the South African frontier', in H. Lamar and L. Thompson (eds), *The frontier in history. North America and South African compared,* Yale University, Yale, 1981, pp. 88, 111; 'The origins of capitalist agriculture in the Cape Colony: a survey' and 'Vagabond Hollanders and runaway Englishmen: white poverty in the Cape before poor whiteism', in Beinart *et al.*, *Putting a plough.* Information on poor whites in the ZAR is gleaned from R. Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg: the dynamics of a hunting frontier, 1848–1867', in S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds), *Economy and society in pre-industrial South Africa,* Longman, London, 1980, p. 316; S. Trapido, 'Reflections on land, office and wealth in the South African Republic, 1850–1900', in Marks and Atmore, *Economy and society*, pp. 356–358; S. Trapido, 'Aspects in the transition from slavery to serfdom, the South African Republic, 1842–1902'; Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, *Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries,* 6, 1976, p. 28; P. Naude, 'Boerdery in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1858–1899', DL thesis, University of Pretoria, 1954, chapter 7.

6 P. Delius, *The land belongs to us,* Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983, pp. 205–206; P. H. Bisschoff, 'Die rol van die Middelburgse en die Lydenburgse Vrywilligerkorpse in die oorlog teen Sekukuni', MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 1954, pp. 3–4.

7 Bisschoff, 'Die rol', pp. 8–9, 22.

8 F. S. Cillié, 'The Mapochs Gronden. An aspect of the poor white question', MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 1934.

9 Trapido, 'Reflections', p. 358.

10 Poverty was not confined to Middelburg. When the South African War broke out many burghers in the adjacent district of Carolina were so poor they did not possess horses. Cillié, 'Mapochs Gronden', pp. 80, 83; F. J. Grobler, 'Die Carolina-Kommando in die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog (1899–1902)', MA thesis, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1960, p. 9.

11 Cillié, 'Mapochs Gronden', pp. 87–98.

12 E. L. P. Stals (ed.), *Afrikaners in die Goudstad,* HAUM, Pretoria, 1978, p. 35.

13 Evidence of Rev. A. P. Burger to Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1287.

14 After the war burgher land settlements were established to put former 'bywoners' back on their feet, but were conspicuously unsuccessful in staunching the flow of poor whites to cities. Marks and Trapido, 'Lord Milner', p. 70.

15 Transvaal Archives Depot, Pretoria (TAD). Legislative Assembly Papers, LA Vol 25, Petition 343, 1907, Vol. 2; P. Rich, 'The agrarian counter-revolution in the Transvaal and the origins of segregation, 1902–1913', in P. L. Bonner (ed.), *Working papers in Southern African studies,* Vol. 1, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1977, p. 63.

16 D. Denoon has documented this failure in *A grand illusion: the failure of imperial policy in the Transvaal Colony during the period of reconstruction,* Longmans, London, 1973.

17 Evidence of I. W. van Wyk to Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1201.

18 J. F. W. Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment and rural exodus,* Vol. 1, Carnegie Commission Report, Stellenbosch, 1932, p. 119.

19 Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment,* p. 38.

20 Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment,* p. 38.

21 *Report of the Transvaal Indigency Commission and Minutes of Evidence,* TG 13–08, p. 74.

22 Evidence to Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1141.

23 See V. Harris's chapter in this volume.

24 *Minutes of Evidence to the Natives' Land Commission,* UG 22–14, p. 407. Evidence of H. P. de Jager.

25 Evidence to the Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1254.

26 There is a growing body of literature which shows that 'wage labour was often the royal road to kulak rather than proletarian status' (G. Clarence-Smith, 'Thou shalt

not articulate modes of production', *Canadian Journal of African Studies,* 19(1), 1985, p. 21). William Beinart, for example, shows that wage labour was an option for those seeking to avoid full incorporation as workers in capitalist society. Wages earned in the capitalist sector were invested by rural dwellers in their agricultural production to prevent the complete severance of ties with the soil. (*The Political Economy of Pondoland*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1982.)

27 N. Parsons, *A new history of Southern Africa,* Macmillan, London, 1982, p. 151.

28 In 1918 capitalist farmers began investing in Mapochs Gronden. Evidence of SNC B. P. Dodd, *Majority Report of the Eastern Transvaal Natives' Land Committee*, UG 32–1918, p. 19.

29 There were few constraints on mobility either. Before 1900 only 5 per cent to 10 per cent of Mapochs Gronden residents owned more than two head of stock, and after the South African War, this percentage declined further. Since few owned land there were few bonds which tied people to any particular area.

30 *The Middelburg Observer,* 10 August 1923. As has often been observed, trekkers were normally poor and looking for a way out, they were not the rich investing venture capital (W. K. Hancock, 'Trek', *Economic History Review,* X(3), 1958, p. 334).

31 Central Archives Depot, Pretoria (CAD), Department of Lands (LDE), 7223/26, Official memo, 29 May 1926.

32 TAD, LD 1581/811/08. I would like to thank Albert Grundlingh for drawing my attention to this source.

33 LDE 7223/26, Lands Department memo, n/d (c. 1920).

34 Many seem to have settled for periods as short as a fortnight before moving on to avoid being caught. F. G. E. Nilant, *Lagersdrift,* NG Kerk-boekhandel, Pretoria, 1966, pp. 15–16; LDE 4174/12; LDE 4699/12.

35 See chapter by Tim Clynick, pp. 77, 85.

36 Cillié, 'Mapochs Gronden', p. 86; Evidence of Commandant Vercueil to Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1265.

37 LDE 4174/101, De Lagersdrift Superintendent to Secretary of Lands, 22 February 1922. All translations are my own.

38 A vivid description of this condition is provided by S. Patterson, *The last trek. A study of the Boer people and the Afrikaner nation,* Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1957, p. 141.

39 A. Jeeves, *Migrant labour in South Africa's mining economy. The struggle for the gold mines' labour supply 1890–1920,* Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1985, pp. 66–72.

40 Stals, *Afrikaners,* 178. For an impressive account of the Afrikaans working class in Johannesburg, see Van Onselen, 'Main reef road'. The danger that Afrikaners believed poor whites posed is described by Deneys Reitz when referring to the influx of poor whites into his commando during the South African War. Describing

them as people of 'inferior quality', he said 'their presence among us was a source of weakness rather than strength'. Patterson, *Last trek*, p. 139.

41 Nilant, *Lagersdrift*, p. 13; Evidence of Rev. A. P. Burger to Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1301.

42 N. G. Garson, 'Het Volk: the Botha–Smuts Party in the Transvaal, 1904–1911', *The Historical Journal*, IX(I), 1966, p. 107.

43 Evidence of R. Colson, Acting Assistant Resident Magistrate, Belfast, TG 13–08, p. 362.

44 Nilant, *Lagersdrift*, pp. 20–21.

45 D. Yudelman, *The emergence of modern South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1983, p. 83.

46 *Judicial Commission of Enquiry into the causes of an circumstances relating to the Recent Rebellion in South Africa. Minutes of Evidence*, UG 42–16, p. 124.

47 T. R. H. Davenport, 'The South African Rebellion, 1914', *English Historical Review*, 77(306), 1963. On page 80 for example, East Transvaal is significantly absent from the plans of the rebel leaders.

48 I have been unable to find evidence of the 'earlier trouble' referred to. UG 42–16, p. 275; Commissioner of the South African Police (SAP) Vol. 1/1/23, Conf. 6/245/14/280, A. Maitland to District Commandant, 29 December 1914; Statement by P. F. J. Steenkamp, 3 January 1915; Statement by S. C. J. Vermaak, 5 January 1915; A. Maitland to District Commandant, 14 January 1915.

49 E. Rosenthal, *General de Wet: a biography*, CNA, South Africa, n/d, p. 158.

50 The hopelessness of incomplete or partial proletarianisation is illustrated by, among others, W. Roseberry, 'Peasants as proletarians', *Critique of Anthropology*, 1978 and I. Wallerstein, *Historical capitalism*, Verso, London, 1983, pp. 36–37, 52.

51 See John Bottomley's chapter, p. 32.

52 It should be noted that even those burghers who eventually engaged in combat with the rebels had ambivalent feelings. It is recorded that some of the commandos contemplated arresting Botha and Smuts while in some districts commando members fraternised with the rebels. B. Hirson, J. Wells, and J. Jancovich, 'Whatever did happen at Jagersfontein or Diamonds are forever – but gold is for now!', unpublished paper, History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987, pp. 17–18.

53 Rosenthal, *General de Wet*, pp. 159–160; Stals, *Afrikaners*, p. 105.

54 Yudelman, *Emergence*, p. 83.

55 CAD, Department of Justice (JUS) 216, 3/578/15, Veld Cornet Ferreira to Middelburg Magistrate, 17 June 1915; JUS 216, 3/578/15, R. F. Aling to Secretary of Justice, 21 June 1915.

56 I. Hofmeyr, 'Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902–1924'', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth century South Africa*, Macmillan, London, 1987.

57 Evidence of P. H. Ferreira and Rev. A. P. Burger to Unemployment Commission, 1920, pp. 1164, 1294. For strong parallels in the case of the OFS's 'lapsed whites' see Keegan, *Transformations*, pp. 180–182.

58 LDE 4666, SNC Driver to NC Nylstroom, 15 July 1909.

59 Poor whites were seen as a threat to white security and segregation was seen as the only way of 'regenerating' the white race. P. Rich, 'The origins of apartheid ideology: the case of Ernest Stubbs and the Transvaal Native Administration, c. 1902–1932', *African Affairs*, 79(315), 1980, pp. 190–191; R. Davies, D. Kaplan, M. Morris and D. O'Meara, 'Class struggle and the periodisation of the state in South Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, 7, 1976, p. 11. For an assessment of the Native Affairs Department and segregation, see S. Dubow, 'Holding "a just balance between white and black": the Native Affairs Department in South Africa c. 1920–1933', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 12(2), 1986.

60 Whites had worked for blacks in Middelburg for a long time and as late as 1920 some were still ploughing for Africans. The practice of illegal liquor selling by poor whites to Africans was also very common and regarded as a major 'evil' (Evidence of B. P. Dodd, UG 32–18, pp. 17, 188, 213; Evidence of P. Bothma to Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1145; Cillié, 'Mapochs Gronden', p. 76). During the South African War there was substantial black/white military co-operation and Albert Grundlingh has suggested that the rebels of 1914 attempted to recruit black assistance from Lesotho as well (Personal communication; P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983).

61 Evidence of A. J. Mathewson, TG 13–08, p. 217; C. L. Leipoldt, *Bushveld doctor*, London, 1937, p. 338; Keegan, *Transformations*, pp. 180–183.

62 C. Bundy, The rise and fall of the South African peasantry, Heinemann, London, 1979, p. 200. Keegan, *Transformations*, p. 183. In Middelburg, a farmer, Colonel Airey, explicitly blamed his failure on African competition. R. Morrell, 'Rural transformations in the Transvaal, the Middelburg district 1919–1930', MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1983, p. 121. In 1907 the Transvaal Agricultural Union suggested that white survival was threatened by African land purchase in 'white' areas. A decade later Henry Rose-Innes, Magistrate of the adjacent Pretoria district, came to similar conclusions in evidence to the Stubbs Commission (SNA 372, 2150/07, Members of the TAU Committee to Minister of Lands, 13 June 1907; UG 32–18, pp. 188–189).

63 See, for example, competition for wood. LDE, 53/238, J. C. van Ganswijk to Secretary of Lands, 18 April 1919.

64 Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment*, p. 168. This is not a novel point and is made, for example, by M. Legassick, 'Gold, agriculture and secondary industry in South Africa, 1885–1970: from periphery to sub-metropole as a forced labour system', in

R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The roots of rural poverty*, Heinemann, London, 1977, p. 178. Stanley Greenberg identifies 'verswarting' as a major point of concern for white 'bywoners', small landowners and labourers as late as the 1950s. He explains this as a result of the demand by white farmers for black, rather than white, labour and the willingness of the state to meet these labour demands. Indirectly, therefore, it was the state and big capitalist farmers who were really behind the threat to poor white agriculture *(Race and state in capitalist development,* Ravan, Johannesburg, 1980, p. 95).

65 See Rich, 'Origins', and Davies, *Capital state and white labour,* p. 161.

66 Later on this included providing poor whites with railway and forest work, out of harm's way in the countryside. See chapters by Grundlingh and Pirie in this volume.

67 Barrington Moore, *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy,* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966, pp. 449–450.

68 This resulted in the 1923 Native Urban Areas Act. See T. R. H. Davenport, 'The triumph of Colonel Stallard: the transformation of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act between 1923 and 1937', *South African Historical Journal*, 1970.

69 See Sue Parnell's chapter, pp. 117–118.

70 Movement into the reserves was monitored through the issue of trading and prospecting licences issued through the NAD. NTS 39/162, SNC Pokwani to NC Middelburg, 3 September 1909.

71 NTS 67/319, NAD memo, 17 April 1925; NTS 260/162, Detached Clerk to NC Middelburg, 6 December 1927; NTS 429/308, ANC Pokwani to NC Middelburg, 10 December 1928.

72 Leipoldt, *Bushveld doctor,* p. 316.

73 T. D. Moodie, *The rise of Afrikanerdom power, apartheid and the Afrikaner civil religion,* University of California, Berkley, 1980, pp. 78–79.

74 Hertzog's speech, 17 December 1925, quoted in Moodie, *The rise,* pp. 82, 97.

75 *The Middelburg Observer,* 10 October 1919, 17 October 1919, 12 December 1919, 11 May 1923, 15 June 1923, 11 July 1924, 29 August 1924, 25 March 1924.

76 The Police acknowledged this. JUS 387, 3/1208/24, District Commandant's report, 9 December 1924, p. 6.

77 JUS 368, 2/10/23; *The Middelburg Observer,* 30 July 1926.

78 NTS 530/308, Petition, 29 January 1927; JUS 551, 331/30, A. S. de Beer to Minister of Justice, 16 August 1928.

79 See H. Bradford, '"A taste of freedom": capitalist development and response to the ICU in the Transvaal countryside', in Bozzoli, *Town and countryside.*

80 JUS 368, 3/10/23.

81 This is the argument of R. Davies, *Capital, state and white labour.*

82 *The Star*, 3 January 1921; *The Middelburg Observer,* 4 February 1921.

83 *The Middelburg Observer,* 30 January 1920. See also Bottomley's chapter, p. 39.

84 CAD, Secretary of Mines and Industries (MNW), 461, MM 1382; *The Star,* 2 January 1922, 29 January 1922, 11 February 1922, 24 February 1922, 25 February 1922.

85 Defence Force Archives, Pretoria, DC Gp 1, Box 500, DC 15/52454; A. Oberholster, *Die mynwerkerstaking Witwatersrand 1922,* HSRC, Pretoria, 1982, p. 172; *The Middelburg Observer,* 7 April 1922; CAD JUS 367, 1/554/23, Annual Report for 1922–1923. N. Herd suggests that 'conscientious objection' was widespread during the strike (*1922 The revolt on the Rand,* Cape Town, 1966, p. 54).

86 *Hansard,* Vol. 7, 1922, p. 200; *The Middelburg Observer,* 12 May 1922.

87 LDE 4174/101, Superintendent of De Lagersdrift to Secretary of Lands, 22 February 1922; Nilant, *Lagersdrift,* p. 29.

88 The question of whether rural poor whites were in touch with urban poor whites is an open one. As Freund observes, such ties were common amongst the developing African working class and Hirson shows that migrant workers in South Africa did involve themselves in the struggles taking place in the rural areas from whence they had come. Elsabe Brink, however, cautions that white workers and the white unemployed appear to have made a much sharper break with their country brethren. Bill Freund, *The making of contemporary Africa,* Macmillan, London, 1984, p. 147; B. Hirson, 'Rural revolt in South Africa: 1937–1951', *Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries,* ICS Collected Seminar Papers, University of London, 8, 22, 1977; E. Brink, personal communication.

89 That this was primarily located amongst poor whites is a point missed by Oberholster who ignores class issues by focusing exclusively on the volk. Oberholster, *Mynwerkerstaking,* pp. 39–42, 49, 133–135; Herd, 1922, pp. 31–35, 200; F. A. Johnstone, *Class, race and gold: a study of class relations and racial discrimination in South Africa,* Routledge, London, 1976, p. 135. For a review of Oberholster, see R. Davies, 'A new Afrikaner historiography', *Journal of African History,* 25, 1984, pp. 492–494.

90 Rural support dwindled when rumours that the strike was a 'Bolshevik plot' began to circulate. Johnstone, *Class, race and gold,* p. 135.

91 CAD, Department of Agriculture (LDB), 1702/1, Vol. 3, Report by J. D. Kleynhans, 28 July 1930; Evidence of Rev. Burger and P. N. Ferreira to Unemployment Commission, 1920, pp. 1294, 1164.

92 Evidence of P. Bothma to Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1146; LDB 1702/1, Vol. 2, De Souza to J Kleynhans, 13 June 1930.

93 *The Middelburg Observer,* 5 May 1922, 13 June 1924. The combined presence of class cleavages among rural whites and the perpetuation of the robust political traditions of the poorer strata is shown by Helen Bradford in her analysis of the white gangs who attacked the ICU offices in Greytown, Natal in 1928. She found that most were 'poorer whites partially or completely proletarianised'. 'Lynch law and labourers: the ICU in Umvoti, 1927–1928' in Beinart *et al., Putting a plough,* p. 441.

and labourers: the ICU in Umvoti, 1927–1928' in Beinart *et al., Putting a plough,* p. 441.

94 *Hansard,* Vol. 7, col. 1926, 2620, 2810.

95 From 1915 to 1929 the NP increased its support in the district from 43,5 per cent to 54,6 per cent of the electorate. B. M. Schoeman, *Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid-Afrika, 1910–1976*, Pretoria, 1977.

96 Nilant, *Lagersdrift,* pp. 3–39.

97 This is not meant to suggest that the Pact supported Labour wholeheartedly. Both Davies and Yudelman have argued that the white working class was emasculated in this period. This chapter nevertheless does argue that the Pact assisted poor white cultivators and worked more in the interests of the white poor than Yudelman and Davies are prepared to admit, though this is not to say that Pact solved the poor white problem. The solution came in the mid-1930s with accelerated industrialisation and white employment. See R. Morrell, 'The South African state in 1924', *Transformation,* 4, 1987.

98 Johnstone (*Class, race and gold*, p. 61) and Davies (*Capital, state and white labour*, pp. 227–228) agree on this.

99 This interpretation is supported by Parnell's figures on the rapid rise in the poor white population in Johannesburg between 1923 and 1933, p. 121. My argument is that employment opportunities in the cities got much better and attracted poor whites there though it is equally possible to argue that 'push' factors account for this rise.

100 *The Middelburg Observer,* 14 October 1927, 10 May 1929; JUS 551, Secretary of NP's Draaikraal Branch to Minister of Justice, 12 February 1930. The NP captured big farmer support in this period as well. See R. Morrell, 'Competition and cooperation' and R. Morrell, 'The disintegration of the gold and maize alliance in South Africa in the 1920s', *International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 22, 1988.

101 These figures could be incomplete as many evictions may not have been recorded. Since they are all we have, these figures have to be used, but used cautiously. One noticeable feature is the fact that certain individuals were evicted time after time. N. J. Stols, for example, was evicted four times from 1921 to 1922. This kind of person would in all probability have constituted a member of the 'dangerous class'.

102 From 1918 to 1921, Middelburg's white population rose by 14 per cent. Much of this population located itself in Mapochs Gronden. *Union Bureau of Census and Statistics Report*, UG 15–23, p. 42; *Hansard,* 1926, col. 1418.

103 Davies estimates that 11 000 poor whites became land-owners under Pact. *Capital, state and white labour*, p. 227.

104 A similar development in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France is remarked on by E. Le Roy Ladurie, *The peasants of Languedoc,* University of Illinois Press, Urbana/Chicago, 1976, pp. 92–97.

105 Poor whites did not entirely disappear. A white criminal element remained visible and isolated instances of defiance were still to be found. JUS 440, 1/82/28, Annual Report for 1928; LDE 4174, Vol. 8, Advances to settlers of De Lagersdrift Labour Colony, c. September 1926, p. 5; LDE 4174/33, Secretary of De Lagersdrift to Secretary of Lands, 2 January 1926.

106 *The Middelburg Observer,* 21 March 1930, 20 April 1928; State aid did not transform poor whites into the intended models of agricultural productivity. As late as 1931 settlers were still seeking manual work to earn cash wages and evidence suggests that many of them found employment in the construction of Loskop Dam, Middelburg, in 1934.

107 LDE 12450/137, Draft Annual Report for Department of Lands, 1 April 1926 to 31 March 1927.

108 For a similar response in Pondoland, see Beinart, *Political economy,* p. 137. See also S. Gray, '"Piet's progress". Douglas Blackburn's satire on capitalist penetration in the Transvaal in the 1890s', in Bozzoli, *Town and countryside,* p. 404.

109 Evidence of P. H. Ferreira to Unemployment Commission, 1920, p. 1176; Department of Public Works (PWD), Vol. 4077; Vol. 1461, 5015; Vol. 3181, 3176; Nilant, *Lagersdrift,* p. 25; *The Middelburg Observer*, 3 November 1922.

110 D O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, p. 74; Moodie, *The rise*, p. 106; I. Hexham, 'Christian National Education as an ideological commitment', *Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries.* ICS Collected Seminar Papers, University of London, 1976.

111 M. Lacey, *Working for Boroko,* Ravan, Johannesburg, 1981, p. 273.

112 S. Marks, *The ambiguities of dependence in South Africa,* Ravan, Johannesburg, 1986, p. 4.

113 By 1929 the Pact had provided 25 000 industrial jobs for poor whites (J. Lewis, *Industrialisation and trade union organisation in South Africa, 1924–1955,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Table IV on p. 69, p. 76). The importance of the Pact's contribution in this regard is argued in R. Morrell, 'South African state'.

Chapter 2: The Orange Free State and the Rebellion of 1914: the influence of industrialisation, poverty and poor whiteism

1 The following is a loose and personal translation of the passage of Afrikaans poetry by 'anonymous' written in the early twentieth century in D. J. Opperman, *Groot verseboek* (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1951), p. 26:

The locusts and the drought
are thick upon our land
and what will result
is beyond my comprehension

Money is also so scarce
and the coffee has become so expensive
The foreign banks rule us
and their 'interest' consumes like fire

This chapter is the condensed and reworked result of two earlier papers: John Bottomley, 'The Rebellion of 1914; the influence of industrialisation, poverty and poor whiteism', paper presented to the African Studies Seminar, University of Witwatersrand, 1982, and 'Political resurgence in the Orange River Colony and the Brandfort Congress of 1904', paper presented to History Workshop conference, University of Witwatersrand, 1987.

2 Patrick Duncan to Lady Shepstone, 9 December 1914, quoted in Albert M. Grundlingh, 'Die Rebellie van 1914: 'n historiografiese verkenning', *Kleio*, 11, 1 & 2 (1979), p. 29.

3 For the republican dimension of the rebellion see for instance J. D. Kestell, *Christiaan de Wet* (Cape Town, 1920); G. D. Scholtz, *Die Rebellie, 1914–1915* (Johannesburg, 1924); J. C. G. Kemp, *Die pad van die veroweraar* (Cape Town, 1946); S. G. Maritz, *My lewe en strewe* (1939); C. H. Muller, *Oorlogsherinneringe* (Cape Town, 1936). The economic crisis of the 1890s in the Orange Free State is discussed in Timothy Keegan, 'Trade, accumulation and impoverishment: mercantile capital and the economic transformation of Lesotho and the Conquered Territory 1870–1920', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 12, 2 (1986).

4 A. Kieser, *President Steyn in the krisisjare* (Cape Town, 1951), p. 42. See also H. J. S. Weidemann, 'Die geskiedenis van die ekonomiese ontwikkeling van die Oranje-Vrystaat met verwysing na die ontstaan van armblankedom 1830–1970', (MA dissertation, Unisa, 1946) and D. J. Jacobs, 'Die ontwikkeling van landbou in die Vrystaat, 1890–1910', DLitt et Phil thesis, Unisa, 1979.

5 Transvaal Archives Depot (TAD): List of the *Archives of the Central Judicial Commission (1903–1906),* compiled by W. J. Retief and B. Kriek (1979) and Albert M. Grundlingh, *Die 'Hendsoppers' en 'Joiners': die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad* (Pretoria, 1979). The greatest percentage of 'protected burghers',

'handsuppers' as opposed to 'joiners', came from the wealthy eastern districts along the Basutoland border and surrendered in an effort to protect their wealth.

6 A. P. J. van Rensburg, 'Die ekonomiese herstel van die Afrikaner in die Oranjerivier-kolonie 1902–1907', *Archives year book for South African history,* 2, 1967, and A. H. Marais, 'Die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van partypolitiek in die Oranjerivier-kolonie 1902–1912', *Archives year book for South African history,* 2, 1970.

7 Bottomley, 'Political resurgence in the Oranje River Colony'. See C. J. P. le Roux, 'Sir Hamilton John Gould-Adams se rol in die Oranjerivier-kolonie 1901–1910', MA dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, 1977, and the efforts of such English-speaking republicans as Dr Ramsbottom as reported in *The Friend,* 19 April 1907 and Marais, 'Partypolitiek in Oranjerivier-kolonie', p. 32 for attempts to co-opt poor whites.

8 *Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Causes and Circumstances relating to the Recent Rebellion in South Africa, Minutes of Evidence,* UG 42–1916, p. 298.

9 The most recent reiteration of the traditional interpretation of the Rebellion is to be found in Trewhella Cameron and S. B. Spies (eds), *An illustrated history of South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1986), chapter by S. B. Spies entitled 'Unity and disunity, 1910–1924', pp. 236–237. Spies acknowledges that the rebellion in the Free State was largely a northern phenomenon, without attempting to explain why this should have been so.

10 TAD, Smuts Papers, Merriman to Smuts, 20 December 1915, 190/101/1915 and 190/102/1915.

11 UG 42–1916, p. 313.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 298.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

14 This trend and its cause were noted by the magistrate of Winburg in the census of 1918: 'With regard to the district of Winburg it is very noticeable that in the rich and fertile parts of the district the number of people to the square mile is half and even two-thirds less than on the western side of the district where land is cheap. Farmers paying [high prices] in better parts of the district cannot afford to keep *bijwoners* and these latter with their families have consequently moved elsewhere. The abnormal rise in the price of farmland with the consequential cutting up of farms has left no room for the *bijwoner* with his usually large family. It is interesting to note that in the year 1902 'there were 1,365 farms in the Winburg district which then included the district of Senekal. With a combined area of 1,651 miles less than in 1902 there were 1,555 farms and an additional 50 awaiting registration,' *Census of the European or white races of the Union of South Africa,* UG 56–1920, p. 20. See also *Third census of the European or white races of the Union of South Africa,* UG 37–1924, p. 41, which noted the same trend in the Kroonstad district: 'the number of farms owing to subdivision has increased by about 300. This has a tendency to eliminate the bywoners who with their usually large families generally move to urban areas.' Also Stanley Trapido, 'Landlord and tenant in a colonial economy: the Transvaal 1880–1910', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 5, 1 (1978) and Timothy Keegan, 'The restructuring of agrarian class relations in a colonial econ-

omy: the Orange River Colony, 1902–1910', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 2 (1979).

15 *Select Committee on the Rebellion*, SC 1–1915, p. 247.

16 C. C. Eloff, *Oos-Vrystaatse grensgordel: 'n streekhistoriese voorstudie en bronneverkenning* (Pretoria, 1981).

17 List of the *Archives of the Central Judicial Commission (1903–1906)*.

18 Timothy J. Keegan, *Rural transformations in industrializing South Africa: the southern Highveld to 1914* (Johannesburg, 1986), pp. 2–25.

19 J. F. W. Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment and rural exodus:* vol. 1 of the Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa*, 5 vols (Stellenbosch, 1932), p. 12. For further information on the ecological diversity of the Free State and its regional subdivision, see D. J. Jacobs, 'Landbou en veeteelt in die Oranje-Vrystaat 1864–1888', *Archives year book for South African history*, 1, 1965, and his 'Ontwikkeling van landbou' and H. D. Leppan, *The agricultural development of arid and semi-arid regions with specific reference to South Africa* (1928).

20 Timothy J. Keegan, 'Dispossession and accumulation in the South African interior: the Boers and the Bathlaping of Bethulie, 1833–1861', *Journal of African History*, 27, 3 (1986) and Weidemann, 'Ekonomiese ontwikkeling'.

21 Keegan, 'Dispossession and accumulation'.

22 UG 56–1920, p. 19.

23 Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment*, pp. 65–67.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 66. As the magistrate of Lichtenburg, one of these dry areas, noted in 1912: '[T]he cry "northwards" was manifesting itself,' *Annual Report of the Justice Department for Calendar Year 1912*, UG 44–1913, p. 143.

26 UG 42–1916, p. 201.

27 Keegan, *Rural transformations*, p. 16.

28 Free State Archives Depot (FAD), reference 159/16/1, Van Riebeeckfees Collection, Frankfort: 'Die ontwikkeling van handel en nywerheid'.

29 *Ibid.*

30 FAD, DLS 142, file A4951. See also FAD, ORC CO 325, particularly reference 7616/03, and ORC CO 471 and ORC CO 475.

31 List of the *Archives of the Central Judicial Commission (1903–1906)*.

32 UG 37–1924, and Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment*.

33 General C. de Wet, a leader of the Rebellion in the Free State, frequently used labour grievances to garner support for the Rebellion. For example at a meeting at the Kopjes 'poor white' settlement of 22 October 1914, he 'referred to the question of the natives being allowed to roam about and not being controlled as they used to be controlled', SC 1–1915, p. 295.

34 Central Archives Depot, JUS 199, file 3/848/141, J. C. Juta, Magistrate of Lichtenburg, to Secretary of Justice, 25 August 1914, and JUS 199, file 3/844/14 J. de V. Roos, Secretary of Justice to J. C. Juta, 29 August 1914.

35 *Land and Agricultural Bank Report*, UG 20–1915, 1914, p. 177.

36 D. Ticktin, 'The war issue and the collapse of the South African Labour Party', *South African Historical Journal*, 1 (1969).

Chapter 3: 'God het ons arm mense die houtjies gegee': poor white woodcutters in the southern Cape forest area, c. 1900–1939

Abbreviations

CAD – Central Archives Depot, Pretoria

FOR – Department of Forestry Archives

LDE – Department of Lands Archives

SC – Select Committee

UOD – Unie Onderwys Departement Argiewe

UWL – University of the Witwatersrand Library

Notes

1 N. L. King, 'The Knysna forests and the woodcutter problem', *Journal of the South African Forestry Association*, 3, 1939, pp. 7–8; F. von Breitenbach, 'Indigenous forests of the southern Cape', *Journal of the Botanical Society of South Africa*, 58, 1972, pp. 34–36; A. Nimmo, *The Knysna story,* Cape Town, 1976, pp. 94–96. Whereas relatively little was written before the early eighties about the dynamics of the woodcutter community, the novelist Dalene Matthee has done much since to popularise the topic (*Kringe in 'n bos*, Cape Town, 1984; *Fiela se kind*, Cape Town, 1985; *Moerbeibos,* Cape Town, 1987). Her work reflects some sensitivity to the historical forces at work, but understandably, given her medium, these are not her main concerns.

2 M. Grut, *Forestry and forestry industry in South Africa* , Cape Town, 1965, pp. 7–8; J. Phillips, *The forests of George, Knysna and the Zitzikamma: a brief history of their management*, Bulletin no. 40, Department of Forestry, Pretoria, 1960, p. 61.

3 P. F. S. J. van Rensburg, 'Oud-boswerkers en nakomelinge van boswerkers in die Middellandse bosstreek met besondere verwysing na Knysna: 'n sosiologiese ondersoek', DPhil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1949, pp. 39–40; W. M. Macmillan, The South African agrarian problem and its historical development, reprint of 1919 edition, Pretoria, 1974, pp. 45–46; P. Buirski, 'Aspects of material life in Oudtshoorn, 1860–1927 – with particular reference to the labouring poor', BA Hons dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1983, p. 76.

4 UWL, AG 1280, Minutes of evidence before the Unemployment Commission of 1920, T. Searle, 3 December 1920, p. 2364.

5 *De Kerkbode,* 5 January 1922, 'Het arme blanke vraagstuk in de ring van George'.

6 *Annual report of the Department of Forestry,* 1921, p. 269; *Social and Industrial Review*, January 1926, pp. 24–25, 'Afforestation settlements'; UWL, AG 1280, Minutes of evidence before the Unemployment Commission of 1920, R. Burton, 6 December 1920, p. 2676. See W. M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: an econ-*

omic footnote to history, London, 1920, p. 99 for the approximate average wage in the area.

7 *Cape Argus*, 23 May 1922, 'Gen. Smuts on the Budget Debate' (newspaper cutting in CAD, FOR 187/310). See also CAD, FOR 187/310, Chief Conservator of Forests to Chief Clerk Department of Labour, 26 May 1922; *Social and Industrial Review,* January 1926, p. 24, 'Afforestation settlements'.

8 *Social and Industrial Review,* January 1926, p. 25, 'Afforestation settlements'.

9 *Social and Industrial Review*, February 1928, p. 91, 'Welfare work on a forestry settlement'.

10 CAD, FOR 259/446, M. Bouwer to Gen. J. Kemp, 11 December 1925.

11 King, 'Woodcutter problem', pp. 8–9; W. Tapson, *Timber and tides: the story of Knysna and Plettenberg Bay*, Cape Town, 1973, pp. 107–112.

12 J. D. M. Keet, 'Historical review of the development of forestry in South Africa', unpublished manuscript, Department of Forestry library, Pretoria, 1970(?), pp. 11–13, 264; J. F. W. Grosskopf, 'Rural impoverishment and rural exodus', *Carnegie Commission report on the poor white problem in South Africa,* I, Stellenbosch, 1932, pp. 146–147; CAD, UOD 1944/180/II, Transcript of an interview between J. F. W. Grosskopf and R. Burton, Conservator of Forests, 1929; UWL, AG 1280, Minutes of evidence before the Unemployment Commission of 1920, R. Burton, 6 December 1920, p. 2696.

13 CAD, UOD 1944/180/III, 'Rapport van 'n komitee oor die maatskaplike wantoestande in die George–Knysna–Zitzikamma bosstreek' (henceforth Stals Report), 1935, pp. 30–32; CAD, UOD 1944/180/II, 'Ondersoek na maatskaplike toestande in die Knysna bosstreek deur E. Theron en M. E. Rothmann (henceforth Theron and Rothmann memorandum), 1933, unpaginated.

14 Cf. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa,* pp. 47–48.

15 LDE 3718/1848 , 'Enquiry into the poor white question as affecting the Cape Province', 1911 (Rev. A. D. Luckhoff), pp. 1–2.

16 Van Rensburg, 'Boswerkers', pp. 147–151, 188, 199, 212, 214–219; M. E. Rothmann, *A comparison between Leslie county, Kentucky, USA and Knysna district, South Africa,* Pretoria, 1940, pp. 15–17; H. O. Terblanche, 'Die trek van die Afrikaner na Port Elizabeth', *Historia*, May 1977, pp. 26–29.

17 Cf. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa,* pp. 47–48.

18 Tapson, *Timber and tides*, p. vii; CAD, UOD 1944/180/III, Stals Report, 1935, p. 13. The quotation is from Tapson.

19 Van Rensburg, 'Boswerkers', pp. 103–104; CAD, UOD 1944/180/I, Theron and Rothmann memorandum, 1933.

20 W. R. Nasson, 'Black society in the Cape Colony and the South African War of 1899–1902: a social history', PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1983, p. 266.

21 See for example CAD, FOR 259/446, M. Bouwer to Gen. J. Kemp, 11 December 1925 complaining about coloureds being on the registered list.

22 CAD, FOR 58/56, G. van Rooyen and 117 others to Prime Minister, 4 March 1907.

23 CAD, UOD 1944/180/II, Theron and Rothmann memorandum, 1933. Quotations translated from Afrikaans.

24 *Report of the Select Sommittee on European Employment and Labour Conditions*, SC 9–13, p. 267.

25 CAD, UOD 1944/180/III, Stals Report, 1935, pp. 30–31.

26 CAD, UOD 1944/180/II, 'Memorandum deur H. F. Verwoerd oor die Knysna bosstreek vir die Ekonomiese Volkskongres', 1934. Quotations translated from Afrikaans.

27 P. le Roux, 'The poor white problem – an economist perspective', *Social Work*, March 1978, p. 11. Le Roux provides a critical perspective of this notion.

28 Cf. S. Dubow, *Land, labour and merchant capital in the pre-industrial rural economy of the Cape: the experience of the Graaff-Reinet district, 1852–1872*, Communication no. 6, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1982, pp. 6–7. Dubow follows G. Kay, *Development and under-development*, London, 1979, in this argument.

29 For the material on the Thesens see A. H. Winquist, 'The impact of Scandinavians on the cultural, social, and economic development of pre-1948 South Africa', DPhil thesis, New York University, 1976, pp. 211–216; W. Tapson, 'C. W. Thesen', *South African biographical dictionary*, II, pp. 739–740; Nimmo, *Knysna story*, p. 94.

30 *House of Assembly Debates*, 33, 14 February 1939, col. 402 (A. J. Werth, National Party MP for George–Knysna).

31 UWL, AG 1280, Minutes of evidence before the unemployment commission of 1920, C. W. Thesen, 6 December 1920, p. 2626.

32 Tapson, 'C. W. Thesen', p. 740.

33 Winquist, 'Scandinavians', p. 216.

34 Cf. Von Breitenbach, 'Forests of the southern Cape', p. 39; Grut, *Forestry industry*, p. 4.

35 CAD, FOR 58/56A, H. Ryan to Assistant Conservator of Forests Knysna, 15 February 1911.

36 *House of Assembly Debates*, 33, 16 February 1939, cols 410–411.

37 UWL, AG 1289. Minutes of evidence before the Unemployment Commission of 1920, R. Burton, 6 December 1920, pp. 2689.

38 CAD, UOD 1944/180/II, Transcript of an interview between J. F. W. Grosskopf and R. Burton, 1929.

39 CAD, FOR 350/14225, C. Legat (Conservator of Forests) to Chief Conservator of Forests, 9 May 1927 and W. Rode (Inspector of Co-operative Societies) to Assistant Chief Division of Agricultural Economics and Marketing, 11 April 1927.

40 CAD, LDE 3718/1848, 'Enquiry into the poor white question as affecting the Cape Province', 1911, p. 11; *Report on European unemployment and labour conditions*, SC 9–13, pp. 80–81 (Rev. B. P. J. Marchand), pp. 469, 483, 485–486 (Rev. P. R. McLachlan); *Annual report of the Chief Conservator of Forests*, 1011, pp. 2–3.

41 CAD LDE 3718/1848, 'Enquiry into the poor white question as affecting the Cape Province', 1911, p. 12.

42 CAD, UOD 1944/180/II, Transcript of an interview between M. E. Rothmann and unnamed woodcutter, 1933.

43 SC 9–13, p. 218 (Rev. A. D. Luckhoff).

44 Von Breitenbach, 'Forests of the southern Cape', p. 39.

45 *House of Assembly Debates,* 33, 10 February 1939, col. 235.

46 Phillips, 'Forests of George, Knysna and Zitzikamma', pp. 61–62.

47 King, 'Woodcutter problem', p. 10; Phillips, 'Forests of George, Knysna and Zitzikamma', p. 61; *House of Assembly Debates,* 28 May 1913, cols 2845–2846; D. L. Berger, 'South African government policy and white poverty, 1890–1935', PhD thesis, Temple University, 1983, p. 106.

48 Keet, 'Historical review of forestry', p. 266.

49 *House of Assembly Debates,* 33, 2 March 1939, col. 1113.

50 King, 'Woodcutter problem', pp. 7, 9. See also Phillips, 'Forests of George, Knysna and Zitzikamma', p. 62.

51 R. J. Bouch, 'The South African Party and the National Party in the Eastern Cape, 1919–1924', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1979, p. 68.

52 CAD, FOR 259/446, M. Bouwer to Gen. J. Kemp, 11 December 1925. Quotation translated from Afrikaans.

53 Bouch, 'The South African Party and the National Party in the Eastern Cape', p. 65.

54 P. le Roux, 'Poor whites', Carnegie Conference Paper no. 248, Cape Town, April 1984, p. 7.

55 *House of Assembly Debates,* 33, 13 February 1939, col. 276 (J. H. Viljoen, United Party MP for Hoopstad).

56 *House of Assembly Debates*, 33, 16 February 1939, col. 411 (A. J. Werth, and P. Sauer, National Party MP for Humansdorp).

57 R. H. Davies, *Capital, state and white labour in South Africa, 1900–1960; an historical materialist analysis of class formation and class relations*, Sussex, 1979, pp. 281, 284; D. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934–1948* , Johannesburg, 1983, p. 163.

Chapter 4: Time to trek: landless whites and poverty in the northern Natal countryside, 1902–1939

1 W. M. Macmillan, *The South African agrarian problem and its historical development*, Pretoria, The State Library, 1974, p. 95.

2 UG 34/1921, p. 1.

3 See table 'Categorisation of landless whites in northern Natal'.

4 A weightier study addressing these aspects would have to rely heavily on private papers and oral evidence. Other sources which would have to be consulted for such a study are local newspapers, church records, the records of the Christelike Maatskaplike Raad, political party records and Deeds Office farm registers (to gauge the extent to which subdivision of property was a factor in impoverishment).

5 For a review of these definitions see V. S. Harris, 'Land, labour and ideology: government land policy and the relations between Africans and whites on the land in northern Natal, 1910–1936', *Archives year book*, I (1991), Pretoria, Government Printer, 1991, p. 173.

6 See map 'Northern Natal: veld types'. Klip River County is that portion of northern Natal west of the Buffalo River; the ex-South African Republic territory is that portion east of it.

7 In this examination I rely heavily on Natal Regional Survey, 1, *Archaeology and natural resources of Natal*, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1951; Natal Regional Survey, 13, *Agriculture in Natal: recent developments,* Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1957; and J. P. H. Acocks, *Veld types of South Africa,* Pretoria, Department of Agricultural Technical Services, 1975, second edition.

8 The Ngotshe district covers the eastern extremity of northern Natal, the seat of its magistracy being at Louwsburg.

9 *Natal Regional Survey,* 1, p. 51.

10 *Natal Regional Survey*, 13, pp. 35–36.

11 *Natal Regional Survey*, 1, pp. 69–70.

12 *Natal Regional Survey,* 13, pp. 36.

13 N. Hurwitz, *Agriculture in Natal 1860–1950,* Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 88 and T. J. D. Fair, *The distribution of population in Natal*, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 51.

14 Central Archives Depot, Pretoria, Archives of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 280 (7396/F 684): Ngotshe magistrate to Chief Native Commissioner, 13 March 1912.

15 Correspondence with G. Pringle, 13 February 1986.

16 Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg, Archives of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1/1/298 (4213/1902), p. 2.

17 See Rob Morrell, 'A community in conflict: the poor whites of North Middelburg, 1900–1930', Paper presented to University of Witwatersrand History Workshop, January–February 1984.

18 Archives of the Magistrate and Commissioner, Paulpietersburg, Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg (hereafter cited as 1/PPB), 3/3/1/4 (29/1/2/13).

19 Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg, Archives of the Magistrate and Commissioner, Bergville (hereafter cited as 1/BGV), 4/3/1/22 (33/7/4).

20 Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg, Archives of the Magistrate and Commissioner, Newcastle (hereafter cited as 1/NCS), 5/1/1/1/12 (33/7/4/24).

21 Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg, Archives of the Magistrate and Commissioner, Babanango (hereafter cited as 1/BGO), 3/1/2/5 (33/7/4/33).

22 1/NCS 5/1/1/1/12 (33/7/4/35).

23 1/PPB 3/3/1/3 (8/8/2/4)

24 See table 'Categorisation of landless whites in northern Natal'.

25 J. F. W. Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment and rural exodus,* p. 136.

26 1/PPB 3/3/1/3 (8/8/2/2).

27 Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment and rural exodus,* p. 136.

28 D. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934–1948,* Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983, p. 54.

29 UG 14/1926, p. 106.

30 See graph 'White population of northern Natal, 1904–1946', constructed from official population census figures. It must be noted that the compilers of these figures defined an urban area as one possessing a local authority, many obviously farming communities being categorised as urban in consequence.

31 Magistrates' Annual Reports, 1904: Report of Vryheid Magistrate.

32 See V. S. Harris, 'The reluctant rebels: the impact of the Second Anglo-Boer War upon the Klip River Dutch community, with special reference to the Dutch community of Dundee', BA Hons dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1982.

33 Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg, Government House Archive 1707, p. 17.

34 *Ibid.,* pp. 17–18.

35 *Ibid.,* p. 17.

36 P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899–1902,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 161–165.

37 Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg, Archives of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1/1/298 (4213/1902), p. 3.

38 *Ibid.:* Report, Repatriation Commission, Vryheid, August–November, 1902, p. 2.

39 Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg, Archives of the Magistrate and Commissioner, Ngotshe, Correspondence File 17/3/20.

40 This resilience is examined in depth by me in 'Land, labour and ideology'.

41 See, for example, 1/BGO 3/1/2/4 (17/14/2, Part 1).

42 Interviews with M. Z. J. Pringle, Dundee, 18 January 1984; C. Henderson, Balbrogie near Wasbank, 18 January 1984; and H. Langley, Langleydale near Dannhauser, 19 January 1984.

43 Hurwitz, *Agriculture in Natal*, p. 24.

44 In making this point I do not mean to identify social classes with specific political parties. As has been stressed by Belinda Bozzoli, the relationship between class hegemony and the form and activity of state apparatuses is complex and frequently contradictory. B. Bozzoli, *The political nature of a ruling class: capital and ideology in South Africa 1890–1933*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, pp. 142–143.

45 UG 14/1926, pp. 113–114.

46 Grosskopf, *Rural impoverishment and rural exodus*, p. 15.

47 1/BGO 3/1/2/5 (33/7/4/31). This extract is a translation from the original Afrikaans.

48 1/NCS 5/1/1/1/11 (33/7/4/14). 'A bad time to move.'

49 D. R. Owen, 'White unemployment and poor relief in Pietermaritzburg from 1919 to 1934 with special reference to the Depression period', BA Hons dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1982, pp. 22–23.

50 Magistrates' annual reports contained in correspondence files. These figures refer almost exclusively to whites.

51 Ladysmith Mayor's Minute, 1933–1934, p. 11.

52 UG 61/1937, p. 12.

53 Ladysmith Mayor's Minute, 1932–1933, p. 8.

54 See, for example, the response of the Vryheid local authority. Natal Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg, Archives of the Town Council, Vryheid, 1/1/1/21, p. 3 and 1/1/1/24, p. 221a.

Chapter 5: 'Digging a way into the working class': unemployment and consciousness amongst the Afrikaner poor on the Lichtenburg alluvial diamond diggings, 1926–1929

1 This chapter is constructed from material contained in my MA dissertation, 'Political consciousness and mobilisation amongst Afrikaner diggers on the Lichtenburg diamond fields, 1926–1929', University of the Witwatersrand, 1989.

2 Department of Social Welfare (hereafter VWN), volume 511, file No. SW79/1, 'Alluvial diamond diggings. Removal of diggers from the diggings', Memorandum by Under-Secretary for Social Welfare to Secretary for Social Welfare, 'On Memorandum prepared for Cabinet re: removal of Diggers from the Diggings', 23 October 1940.

3 See for example *The Report of The Commission on the Poor White Problem in South Africa,* 5 volumes, Stellenbosch, Pro Ecclesia, 1932; Union Government Commission, unpublished Report of the Committee of Investigation into the Conditions on the Alluvial Diamond Diggings (Du Toit Commission), 1937.

4 R. W. Wilcocks, 'Rural impoverishment and rural exodus', volume 3 of the *Report of The Commission on the Poor White Problem,* p. 100; see, for comparison, the *Second Interim Report of the Unemployment Commission,* UG 34–1921, p. 4 and the *Select Committee on European Unemployment,* SC 9–1913.

5 J. F. W. Grosskopf, volume 2 of *The Carnegie Commission,* pp. 103–104.

6 R. W. Wilcocks, volume 2 of *The Carnegie Commission,* p. 100.

7 See in particular the work of D. Yudelman, *The emergence of modern South Africa: state, capital and the incorporation of organised labour on the South African goldfields, 1902–1939,* Westport, Connecticut, 1983, for a detailed discussion of the relationship between the Pact government and the white mine workers on this theme.

8 For early prospecting on Klipbankfontein (Manana) see Lichtenburg Museum, manuscript, J. W. du Preez, 'Die ontdekking van diamante op Manana, January 1926', 26 September 1976. *The Star,* 21 July 1926.

9 These farms were Klipbankfontein No. 82, Uitgevonden No. 99, Ruigtelaagte No. 203, Klipkuil No. 210, Witklip No. 149, Grasfontein No. 240 and Welverdiend No. 294.

10 *The Star,* 5 June 1926

11 'Alluvial diamond diggings. Analysis of population types', *The Social and Industrial Review,* 3 (15), March 1927, pp. 231–233; A. A. van Wyk, *Report on Lichtenburg digging schools in Transvaal Province,* TP 9–1929; Department of Education, *Annual Report for year ending 31st December 1929,* p. 62; *The Star,* 17 July 1926.

12 'Abnormal distress considerable in all districts,' wrote the Secretary for Labour in 1926, '... primarily due to drought and locusts during the last 2 or 3 years. Many farmers from districts in the vicinity of diggings have drifted thither, and have

generally met with little success' (ARB 200, Ref. LB555, Part 1, 'Unemployment. General', Memorandum, 'Abnormal Distress. Transvaal, 1925'). See also TPS 60, TA 2/13857, Memorandum from CHO to the Acting Provincial Secretary, Ref. LB511/4, 7 July 1926.

13 *The Star,* 9 June 1926.

14 *The Star,* 28 August 1926.

15 *The Star,* 27 October 1926

16 *The Star,* 28 August 1926.

17 *The Star,* 21 July 1926.

18 See Lichtenburg Museum, letter K. Voorendyk to 'Fiena', 4 May 1956; MNW 886 mm 525/27, 'Comments on the Precious Stones Bill', letter E. M. Bradshaw to Minister F. W. Beyers, 20 April 1927.

19 MNW 886, mm 525/27, 'Comments on the Precious Stones Bill', 'Treasure Trove', Reference 85J; *The Star,* 19 August 1926, 25 October 1926, 7 April 1927, 22 November 1927; 22 December 1927, 29 December 1927; *The Mining and Industrial Magazine,* 3 November 1926, 8 September 1926, 12 May 1928, 1 December 1928; *The Mining Journal,* 5 February 1927, 4 May 1928; *The Rand Daily Mail,* 2 May 1928, 10 May 1928.

20 *The Mining World and Engineering Journal,* 3 July 1926.

21 These A&E farms were Blaaubank (into 15 portions), Houthaaldoorns (into 5), Mooimeisjiesfontein (into 17), La Rijs Strijd (into 15), Kliplaagte (into 8), Zamenkomst (into 9), and Grasfontein (into 22 portions). See MNW 898, mm 379/27, Van Eyssen to F. W. Beyers, 4 May 1927; *The Star,* 11 December 1926.

22 *The Mining Journal,* 29 January 1927.

23 Deeds Office, Pretoria, Grasfontein No. 240; MNW 898, mm 2370/27, 'Precious Stones Act 44/1927, Section 23. Holdings of interest by corporate bodies, syndicates and associations of persons', Schedules A1 and A2 B1 and B2, Statements showing number of owners and discoverers' claims held by corporate bodies, syndicates, and partnerships, 22 November 1927.

24 He was accused of illegally expediting the passage of the diagrams of the Carrigs property holdings at Grasfontein through the liberal offering of batches of 100 shares to various officials.

25 MNW 886, mm 525/27, 'Comments on the Precious Stones Act', 'Carrig Diamonds Limited', Reference 85E; *The Star,* 7 December 1926, 5 February 1927, 31 March 1927, 11 April 1927, 14 April 1927; MNW 898, mm 2370/27, 'Precious Stones Act', Memorandum Acting Mining Commissioner Klerksdorp to Under-Secretary Mines, 3 December 1927.

26 *Ibid.* 'Bonanza Syndicate (H. A. Dawson) Application to work claims on Grasfontein in partnership under section 73(4) of Act 44/1927', letter H. A. Dawson to Mining Commissioner Klerksdorp, 30 November 1927; *The Star,* 15 November 1927.

27 The 'flags' referred to here were used to indicate the boundaries of the claims on the portions of Welverdiend. MNW 886, mm 525/27, 'Comments on the Precious Stones Act', Memorandum F. J. Mathews, 'Returns of diamonds won on Welver-

diend 249, Lichtenburg district, by prospectors, under agreement with Lichtenburg Gravels Ltd. and Welverdiend Diamonds Ltd.', and Memorandum, 'Lichtenburg Gravels Ltd.', Reference 85G, no date. See also *The Star,* 28 January 1927, 26 February 1927, 4 August 1927, *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 30 March 1928.

28 *The Star,* 30 July 1926.

29 *Ibid.* Thus on Ruigtelaagte there were two licenced diggers (the two farmowners) under whose licences worked over 800 prospectors each paying 10 to 15 per cent of their finds to the owners.

30 *The Star,* 22 January 1927.

31 *The Star,* 31 December 1926.

32 *The Star,* 31 December 1926.

33 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 2 July 1928.

34 See, for example, *The Star,* 1 September 1927, 'The shebeen menace', 15 July 1927, 8 December 1927, 'Life at the diggings'.

35 *The Star,* 5 June 1926.

36 MNW 918, mm 496/28, 'Lichtenburg diggings (poverty on the diggings), Ref. mmct 654/30, Memorandum Lichtenburg Mining Commissioner to Secretary for Mines, 26 March 1928; See also E. Krause, 'Maatskaplike toestande op die Lichtenburgse alluviale diamantdelwerye, 1926–1929', *Contree*, 19, 1986, pp. 16–24.

37 *The Star,* 3 November 1926, 13 November 1926, 31 December 1926.

38 *The Star,* 3 November 1926, 13 November 1926.

39 In fact the large diamond capitalists were most concerned at the discovery of this unregulated diamond source and attempted, by a variety of stratagems, to circumscribe and control the Lichtenburg production. These ranged from the floating of a dummy company, High Level Gravels, to purchase and hold up production from portions of Grasfontein and Welverdiend, to the financing of a local digger movement which was opposed to the local diamond capitalists. For details of the responses of these large diamond capitalists, see Clynick, 'Political consciousness and mobilisation', chapters 3 and 4.

40 *The Star,* 5 July 1927, 6 July 1927.

41 MNW 898, mm 2332/27, 'Report of meeting', 'Notes on meeting held in the Minister's Office', 18 November 1927, Opinion of Lieutenant Colonel De Beer.

42 MNW 898, mm2332/27, 'Report of meeting', Notes of meeting held in the Minister's Office', 18 November 1927, Opinion of Lieutenant Colonel De Beer.

43 The Star, 31 December 1927; MNW 901, mm 2515/27, Commissioner of Police to Secretary for Mines, Ref. SAP 1/179/27, 'Precious Stones Act No. 44 of 1927', 29 February 1928.

44 MNW 918, mm 496/28, 'Lichtenburg diggings. Section 76(2) of P/S Act', 'Memorandum Mining Commissioner Klerksdorp to Secretary for Mines, Ref. mmct 654/30, 're Conditions on Lichtenburg Diamond Diggings', 1 April 1930.

45 *The Star,* 1 December 1927; MNW 901, mm 2520/27, 'Precious Stones Act No. 44/27. Section 73(4). Partnerships' Minute, Mining Commissioner Barkly West to Minister of Mines, 'Partnerships', 21 February 1928.

46 *The Star,* 21 November 1927, 23 November 1927, 24 November 1927, 31 December 1927; MNW 903, mm2604/27, 'P/S Act, 44/1927 – Forfeited claims under section 73', Acting Secretary for Mines to Mining Commissioner Klerksdorp, 'Forfeited claims under section 73', 15 December 1927.

47 *The Star,* 31 December 1927.

48 MNW 918, mm 496/28, 'Lichtenburg diggings', Lichtenburg Magistrate to Provincial Secretary, ref. 105, Minute, 23 March 1928.

49 *Die Burger,* 1 March 1928.

50 *Die Burger,* 1 March 1928, 2 March 1928.

51 *The Star,* 10 March 1928.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 27 April 1928.

54 *Ibid.; The Star,* 9 April 1928.

55 MNW 898, mm 2332/27, 'Report of meeting Mining Commissioner Klerksdorp. Question of proclamation of new ground', J. Senekal, President of DU, to Minister of Mines, 17 November 1927; MNW 892, mm 1866/24, 'Dissension of Diggers' Committee/Union, October 1927, over deputation to Minister of Mines', 'Memorandum of interview with Mr Z. J. Senekal, House of Assembly, 18 October 1927', Ref. mmct 811/27; *The Star,* 3 December 1927, 12 October 1927.

56 *The Star,* 29 December 1927.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 28 February 1928; *The Star*, 29 December 1927.

59 MNW 918, mm 496/28, 'Lichtenburg diggings', M. Theunissen, Chairman DU Relief Committee to Chief Magistrate Lichtenburg, 're pauper relief', 29 February 1928; *The Star,* 5 April 1928, 9 April 1928.

60 MNW 918, mm 496/28, 'Lichtenburg diggings', M. Theunissen, Chairman DU Relief Committee to Chief Magistrate Lichtenburg, 're pauper relief', 29 February 1928.

61 *Ibid.*

62 Theunissen ran as an Independent digger candidate for the 1929 general elections until, in November 1928, he was charged for illegally carrying out the functions of an attorney and committing theft. He subsequently withdrew his candidacy. The case against him was dismissed in June 1929 (*The Star,* 9 November 1928, 26 June 1929).

63 MNW 918, mm 496/28, 'Lichtenburg diggings'. Memorandum Lichtenburg Mining Commissioner to Under-Secretary for Mines, 12 March 1928.

64 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 3 March 1928.

65 For example, see *The Star,* 10 March 1928.

66 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 27 March 1928; *The Rand Daily Mail,* 23 March 1928.

67 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 27 March 1928.

68 See footnote 36 above.

69 *The Star,* 10 March 1928; *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 27 March 1928.

70 *The Star,* 23 December 1927.

71 *Ibid.*

72 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 27 March 1928.

73 See Clynick, 'Political consciousness and mobilisation', chapter 4.

74 *The Star,* 13 December 1927.

75 *The Star,* 14 December 1927.

76 *The Star,* 15 December 1927, 20 December 1927.

77 *The Star,* 21 December 1927.

78 *The Star,* 12 December 1928

79 *The Star,* 17 September 1928.

80 MNW 930, mm 2424/28, 'Report on M. C. P. Brink: member of the newly formed Diggers' Union in the Western Transvaal', Detective Head Constable R. E. White, Office of the Diamond Detective Department, Ventersdorp, to Senior Inspector, Diamond Detective Department, 6 February 1928.

81 See for example *The Star,* 3 December 1927, 13 December 1927, 20 December 1927, 21 December 1927, 22 December 1927.

82 *The Star,* 31 December 1927; *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 6 March 1928, 30 March 1928.

83 *The Star,* 20 December 1927.

84 MNW 898, mm 2332/27, 'Report of meeting', Telegram Minister for Mines to M. C. Brink and F. Rheeders (President DU), Grasfontein, 24 February 1928.

85 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 30 March 1928.

86 MNW 898, mm 2332/27, 'Report of meeting', Telegram Minister of Mines to M. C. Brink and F. Rheeders (President DU), Grasfontein, 24 February 1928.

87 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 27 March 1928.

88 *The Star,* 5 April 1928.

89 *The Star,* 9 April 1928.

90 *The Star,* 19 April 1928.

91 *The Potchefstroom Herald,* 24 April 1928.

92 *Ibid.*

93 *The Star,* 18 June 1928.

94 *The Star,* 28 June 1928.

95 *The Star,* 10 March 1928.

96 JUS 421, File No. 3/978/26, 'Faction fight at alluvial diggings Transvaal 1926. Native strike at diggings, June 1928' ('Report of meeting held in South African Police Office, Elandsputte', 20th June 1928.) See also H. Bradford, 'The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa in the South African Countryside, 1924–1930', PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985, pp. 239–246.

97 *The Star,* 2 August 1928.

98 *The Star,* 22 August 1928.

99 For biographical details see Clynick, 'Political consciousness and mobilisation', chapter 4.

100 *The Star*, 3 August 1928.
101 *Ibid.*
102 *Ibid.*
103 See Clynick, 'Political consciousness and mobilisation', pp. 93–121.
104 *The Star*, 18 August 1928.
105 *Ibid.*
106 *The Star*, 6 September 1928.
107 *Ibid.*
108 *The Star*, 20 September 1928.
109 *The Star*, 24 December 1928. These proclamations took place on 9 January 1929.
110 *The Star*, 29 December 1928.
111 *The Star*, 3 January 1929.
112 *The Star*, 8 January 1929.
113 *The Star*, 4 February 1929.

Chapter 6: White railway labour in South Africa, 1873–1924

1 A. J. Purkis, 'The politics, capital and labour of railway-building in the Cape Colony, 1870–1885', DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1978, pp. 337–354.

2 Sessional papers of the Natal Legislative Council, 1890. *Report and evidence to the Select Committee on Railway Matters*, LC 20, items 795–798. In the 1880s whites replaced Indians as ticket-collectors and there was also pressure for substitution of clerks and gatekeepers. D. H. Heydenrych, 'Indian railway labour in Natal, 1876–1895', *Historia*, XXXI, 1986, p. 18.

3 Cape (Colony), *Labour Commission, 1893. Vol. 1: Minutes of evidence and proceedings*, G 39–1893, items 2519, 2520, 2534, 2544, 2545, 2559.

4 J. Guy, 'The destruction and reconstruction of Zulu society', in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds), *Industrialisation and social change in South Africa*, London, 1982, p. 177.

5 *Sessional papers of the Natal Legislative Council, 1891. Report and evidence to the Select Committee on Railway Matters*, LC 34, p. 263, and items 167–182, 956, 1672–1699.

6 'Most declined, stating that they were not kaffirs, although a few went into the locomotive works to learn locomotive cleaning.' C. Hassard, 'Orange River Colony relief works', p. 2 (unpublished manuscript, document accession no. 416, Orange Free State Archives, Bloemfontein – hereafter, OFSA).

7 Cape Archives (Cape Town) (hereafter, CA), CGR 2/1/4/6 (A12/28238): Mayor and Chairman of the Port Elizabeth Relief Committee to Commissioner of Public Works, 31 October 1899; General Manager to Engineer-in-Chief, 10 November 1899; Engineer-in-Chief to General Manager, 15 January 1900.

8 *Ibid.*: Commissioner of Public Works to General Manager, CGR, 12 May 1899.

9 *Ibid.*: Replies to Engineer-in-Chief from District Engineers at Queenstown, East London, Kimberley and 'Midland System', 25 May, 3 and 9 June 1899.

10 *Ibid.*: Acting Resident Engineer to Engineer-in-Chief, CGR, 23 May 1899.

11 *South African Mines, Commerce and Industries* (23 May 1903), 245: Acting Secretary, Transvaal Chamber of Mines and Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Johannesburg, to Commissioner of Railways, 12 May 1903; South African Transport Services Library, Johannesburg (hereafter, SATSL), Railway Board Minutes, no. 84, 26 May 1903; ICC 26/03: General Manager to Commissioner of Railways, 19 August 1903; Member of Railway Committee to Committee Secretary, 21 September 1903; Orange River Colony Representative, Railway Committee, to Committee Secretary, 22 September 1903.

12 *Report of the Transvaal Labour Commission* (hereafter, *Labour Commission*), 1903, items 2639 and 7682.

13 *Mining Industry Commission* (hereafter, *Mining Commission*), Minutes of Evidence, TG 2–1908, p. 334.

14 OFSA, CO 237 (1759/03): Lyell to Colonial Secretary, Orange River Colony, 7 March 1903.

15 *Labour Commission,* items 7434, 7501, 7654. The General Manager also noted (item 7448) that some of the navvies 'did not seem to be desirable white men from the point of view of making this a white man's country'.

16 *Report of the Indigency Commission, 1906–1908* (hereafter, *Indigency Commission*), TG 13–1908, 348, 391; *Mining Commission,* p. 336. Five miles of railway were laid at Tweespruit by poor whites. A. P. J. van Rensburg, 'Die ekonomiese herstel van die Afrikaner in die Oranjerivier-kolonie, 1902–1907', *Archives year book for South African history,* 1967, p. 279.

17 'Further correspondence relating to the affairs of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony', Cd 1895 (1904), p. 160; *Indigency Commission,* p. 348.

18 *Ibid.,* p. 116.

19 *Ibid.,* pp. 159, 161; *Mining Commission,* p. 335.

20 *Indigency Commission,* pp. 347–348, 390; *Labour Commission,* items 7652 and 10093–10097. Much smaller labour cost differentials were reported at times (cf. *Report of Select Committee on European Employment and Labour Conditions* (hereafter, *Select Committee*), SC 9–1913, Appendix M, p. xl).

21 Natal Legislative Assembly Debates, 1904, pp. 348–355; 1906, p. 214; 1907, pp. 478–484; 1908, p. 472.

22 'If the [NGR] is forced on account of men being out of employment to engage them to do work which would otherwise be done by Natives, then this House must take the responsibility on its own shoulders of that work having to be done at five or six times the cost.' Minister of Railways, Natal (Colony), Legislative Assembly Debates, 1904, p. 472.

23 *Select Committee,* Appendix E, p. xxv; *Supplement to Annual Report of SAR General Manager,* UG 46–1914, p. 66.

24 *Report of the Economic and Wage Commission* (hereafter, *Wage Commission*), UG 14–1926, p. 223.

25 OFSA, PWD 139 (C 17/09): Half-yearly report of White Labour Inspector, 15 January 1909. In 1916 a Transvaal Commission went even further in arguing the importance of extending white railway labour: 'There is no poverty among the natives. Therefore our first duty is towards the white man.' *Report of the Grants-in-Aid Commission,* TP 5–1916, p. 103.

26 CA, CGR 2/1/4/6 (A12/28238): Berrange to Robb, 22 March 1910; Locomotive Superintendent to Chief Locomotive Superintendent, Salt River, 6 April 1910; Chief Locomotive Superintendent to General Manager, 26 April 1910.

27 *Ibid.*: Locomotive Superintendent to Chief Locomotive Superintendent, 23 March 1910.

28 *Ibid.*: Steynsburg Petitioners to Commissioner of Public Works, 6 April 1909; Chief Traffic Manager to General Manager, 13 April 1909; General Manager to Commissioner of Public Works, 27 April 1909.

29 *Ibid.*: Engineer-in-Chief to General Manager, 30 June 1909; Cape (Colony), Legislative Assembly Debates, 2 November 1909.

30 OFSA, PWD 139 (C 17/09): Half-yearly report of White Labour Inspector, 15 January 1909. On minimum subsistence wages see R. H. Davies, *Capital, state and white labour in South Africa, 1900–1960*, Brighton, 1979, pp. 58–59.

31 *Ibid.*; SATSL, CSAR Weekly Notice no. 365, 17 April 1909.

32 OFSA, PWD 139 (C 8/09): Traffic Manager, Bloemfontein, to Minister of Public Works, Bloemfontein, 9 February 1909.

33 *Select Committee*, item 4696; SATSL, Annual reports of departmental officers (hereafter, ARDO), 1911–1913: Annual reports by the White Labour Superintendent. His 1911 report observed (p. 4) that there was 'a considerable number of men living in mud huts, old kaffir and indian huts, tents etc., married men with three or four children living in two rooms 9 feet by 9 feet, unlined, unceiled, unfloored, with one small window or none at all, and as a rule no kitchen accommodation. The occupants are frozen in winter and grilled in summer.'

34 OFSA, PWD 140 (2031/1): Poelakker to Legislative Assembly, Orange River Colony, 22 October 1909.

35 *Ibid.*: Chief Engineer to General Manager, 10/16 March 1910, with enclosure; notice reprinted in Annual Report of the CSAR General Manager, 1909, pp. 91–92.

36 *Hansard,* 29 March 1911, col. 2138.

37 *Hansard,* 29 November 1910, cols 711 and 717. In 1909 the NGR had been granted permission to enlist mechanics from the Orange River Colony. OFSA, CO 992 (1987), Colonial Secretary to Harding and Freeman (Labour Agents), 5 May 1909.

38 SATSL, SAR General Manager's Special Notice no. 539, 23 November 1911.

39 *Hansard,* 20 February 1912, col. 511. Later, in 1937, the SAR's General Manager spoke of the 'high rate of wastage' among African labourers, particularly those who had not 'detribalised'. The phenomenon apparently enabled rapid hiring of white labourers without dismissal of Africans. *Report of Commission of Inquiry regarding the Cape Coloured Population of the Union*, UG 54–1937, Appendix 12, p. 272.

40 UG 45–1937, p. 272.

41 SATSL, ARDO, 1911: Annual report of the White Labour Superintendent, including annexure 11: CSAR Special Notice no. 539, 23 November 1911; Select Committee, appendix D, and items 4630, 4631.

42 SATSL, ARDO, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1915: Annual reports of the White Labour Superintendent.

43 SATSL, ARDO, 1913: Annual report of the White Labour Superintendent.

44 The estimated annual cost of replacing 1 600 black workshop labourers by 1 000 whites was £43 000, some 2 per cent of the workshop budget. South Africa, *Report of a Committee to Enquire into and Report on Certain Matters Concerning the Railway Workshops*, UG 33–1912, p. 36.

45 *Hansard,* 11 February 1913, col. 204; UG 33–1912, p. 37. As in mining, so on the railways, fraternisation between black and white may have been regarded as undermining the coercion and racist ideology which underpinned control of black

labour. Cf. R. H. Davies, 'Mining capital, the state and unskilled white workers in South Africa, 1901–1913'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, III, 1976, p. 57. Officially, concern was that racial mixing failed to 'improve' blacks and just bred 'white kaffirs' (e.g. *Report of the Unemployment Commission,* UG 17–1922, p. 10).

46 Select Committee, appendix E; *Hansard,* 11 February 1913, col. 204.

47 SATSL, ARDO, 1911–1915: Annual reports of the White Labour Superintendent. December employment figures are not necessarily representative of totals in other months. In 1912, for example, the December figure was below the mean monthly total for the year, the highest monthly employment figure being 5 100.

48 White labourers received identical war bonuses to other railway servants, viz. 52s monthly. The bonus meant an increase in pay of some 40 per cent. *Hansard (Cape Times),* 22 February 1918.

49 SATSL, ARDO, 1911: Annual report of the White Labour Superintendent.

50 Central Archives Depot, Pretoria (hereafter, CAD), SAS 1770 (RG 735/10): SAR General Manager's memorandum, 30 June 1914.

51 CAD, MNW 254 (2971/14): letters to Provincial Secretary (Pretoria), 10 and 26 June 1914; *Transvaal Chronicle* (26 June 1914).

52 *Select Committee,* item 4636, and pp. 637–638. Between 1909 and 1916 the majority of white railway labourers were engaged as track maintenance crews, station and workshop assistants – in 1910, 59 per cent; by 1916, 99 per cent.

53 SATSL, ARDO, 1911-1915: Annual reports of the White Labour Superintendent.

54 CAD, MNW 432 (2383/18): Notice of NURAHS mass meeting, 13 July 1918; White Labour Superintendent to Private Secretary, Department of Mines and Industries, 3 October 1918; *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 September 1918; SATSL, SAR Special Notice no. 1059, 26 September 1918.

55 *Hansard (Cape Times),* 19 February 1919; 21 May 1919, p. 331; 30 June 1921, p. 284; CAD, MNW 543 (3197/20): Secretary for Mines and Industries to General Manager, 2 October 1920; SATSL, SAR General Manager's Special Notice no. 1173, 27 February 1920.

56 *Hansard (Cape Times),* 22 February 1918, p. 91.

57 *Annual Report of the SAR General Manager,* UG 40–1923, p. 77.

58 *Second interim report of the Unemployment Commission,* UG 34–1921, p. 5; *Report of the Unemployment Commission*, UG 17–1922, p. 10; *Hansard (Cape Times),* 14 March 1919, pp. 149–150.

59 *Report of Committee Appointed to Investigate the Employment of Unskilled European Workers in the Railway Service,* UG 29–1947, p. 3; Davies, *Capital, state and white labour*, pp. 150–151.

60 *Hansard (Cape Times)*, 30 June 1921, p. 284; 9 February 1923, p. 61; *South African Railway Review,* September, October, November 1922. Government was also accused of foregoing the opportunity eventually to have a South African as Railway General Manager. A future Railway Minister did in fact emerge from the ranks of the poor white labourers. Starting in 1921 as a sixteen year old, B. J. Schoeman's first three railway jobs were messenger, locomotive cleaner and stoker.

61 Davies, *Capital, state and white labour,* p. 75.

62 *Supplement to the annual report of SAR General Manager*, UG 46–1914, p. 68; *Report of the Railway Commission of Inquiry,* UG 14–1917, p. 17 (cf. Zeerust magistrate's report that the SAR's white labour policy had been 'gratifyingly successful' (cited in *Annual report of the SAR General Manager,* UG 43–1918, p. 114)).

63 SATSL, ARDO, 1915: Annual report of the White Labour Superintendent, p. 6.

64 *Minutes of Proceedings, South African Society of Civil Engineers,* XV, 1917, pp. 43–44. The district engineer's statement that 'the principal point to consider ... in dealing with white labour is not its cost but its colour' (p. 217) accords with the 1910 opinion of the Chief Engineer that the cost per mile of maintenance by blacks and whites was 'an extinct comparison in a white man's country' (cited by Davies, *Capital, state and white labour,* p. 106).

65 *South African Railway Review* (August 1918), p. 20.

66 *Wage Commission,* p. 225; *Annual report of the SAR General Manager,* UG 59–1919, p. 65.

67 V. Hogbin, 'Railways, disease and health in South Africa', *Social Science and Medicine,* 20, 1985, pp. 933–938.

Chapter 7: Slums, segregation and poor whites in Johannesburg, 1920–1934

1 University of the Witwatersrand, Church of the Province of South Africa Records Library, Race Relations Collection, Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives, Report of the Housing Committee, no date (approximately 1930).

2 D. Radford, 'Tins, tents, temples', unpublished lecture delivered to the Students Architectural Society Conference, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, April 1986.

3 J. P. R. Maud, *City government, the Johannesburg experiment*, Oxford, 1938, p. 61.

4 N. Kagan, 'African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903–1923', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1987.

5 E. Koch, '"Without visible means of subsistence": slumyard culture in Johannesburg, 1918–1940'. In B. Bozzoli (ed.), *Town and countryside in the Transvaal*, Johannesburg, 1978.

6 E. M. Cosser, 'Water supply and utilization in Johannesburg, 1886–1905', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1988.

7 J. Wentzel, *A view from the ridge, Johannesburg retrospect*, Cape Town, 1975.

8 E. J. P. Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad*, Pretoria, 1978.

9 City of Johannesburg, City Health Department Archive (henceforth: CoJ, CHDA), Box 27, File 9608: Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the shortage of dwelling houses, 5 December 1919.

10 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 9608: Evidence given by Dr Porter (Medical Officer of Health) before the Housing Commission, 9 December 1919.

11 N. Herd, 1922: *The revolt on the Rand*, Johannesburg, 1966; B. Hessian, 'An investigation into the causes of the labour agitation on the Witwatersrand, January to March 1922', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1957; D. Yudelman, *The emergence of modern South Africa: state, capital and the incorporation of organised labour on the South African gold fields, 1902–1939*, Cape Town, 1984.

12 B. Freund, 'The social character of secondary industry in South Africa, 1915–1945 (with special reference to the Witwatersrand)', paper presented to the African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1985.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

14 P. R. Golding, 'The conditions of employment for white workers in urban industry 1880–1948', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1976. W. M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa*, London, 1930; South Africa, *Report of the Economic Commission*, UG 12–1914; South Africa, *Report of the Economic and Wage Commission*, UG 14–1926.

15 South Africa, *Report of the Economic and Wage Commission*, UG 14–1926.

16 CoJ, CHDA, Box 27, File 9608: Report of the General Purposes Committee, 1 September 1919; *Municipal Magazine* (July 1921).

17 Maud, *City government, the Johannesburg experiment; Municipal Magazine* , November 1919.

18 Under the Housing Act of 1920 money was made available to assist in construction of homes for whites, coloureds and Indians. Africans were excluded from the legislation on the grounds that their residential requirements would be catered for in the proposed Natives Urban Areas Bill.

19 CoJ, CHDA, Box 27, File 9608: Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to Mr Gow, 14 November 1919; *Municipal Magazine*, July 1921.

20 *Municipal Magazine*, July 1921.

21 *Municipal Magazine,* August 1922.

22 CoJ, CHDA, Box 27, File 9608: Report of the General Purposes Committee, 1 September 1919; *Municipal Magazine*, August 1922.

23 *Hansard*, 1929, col. 180.

24 *Hansard,* 1927, col. 2156.

25 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 9608: Special Report by Medical Officer of Health to the Parks and Estates and Public Health Committees on Housing for Europeans (Housing Act (No. 35) 1920), 3 August 1923.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Hansard*, 1927, col. 1951.

28 South Africa, *Report of the Central Housing Board*, UG 19–1926.

29 City of Johannesburg, 'Minute of the Mayor, Report of the Director of the Non-European Affairs Department for the year ending 31 June 1929', p. 105.

30 E. Brink, '"Maar 'n klomp 'factory' meide": Afrikaner family and community on the Witwatersrand during the 1920s'. In B. Bozzoli (ed.), *Class, community and conflict,* Johannesburg, 1978; University of the Witwatersrand, Church of the Province of South Africa Archives, Records of the Garment Worker's Union, Box AH 1092, File Bch1, Wage Board report into the clothing industry, 1926.

31 C. M. Ellias, 'A comparative analysis of government housing policy and Cape Town Council housing policy, 1890–1935', MA dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1980; *Hansard,* 1925, cols 119–120; South Africa, *Report of the Central Housing Board for the year ending 31 June 1924,* UG 31–1925.

32 H. P. Pollak, 'Women in Witwatersrand industry: an economic and sociological study', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1932.

33 City of Johannesburg, *Minutes of the Mayor: Report of the Director of the Native Affairs Department for the year ending 31 June 1927.*

34 *Hansard,* 1930, col. 1755.

35 This figure represents almost one fifth of the 153 000 African population of Johannesburg as reported by the Director of the Native Affairs Department in his report for the year ending 31 June 1927, in City of Johannesburg, *Minutes of the Mayor;* E. Koch, 'Doornfontein and its African working class, 1914–1935, a study of popular culture in Johannesburg', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1983, points out that before the Court's decision the Johannesburg Council had already moved 5 000 people from the slums.

36 Junction Avenue Theatre Company, *Sophiatown speaks*, Johannesburg, 1986.

37 City of Johannesburg, *Minutes of the Mayor, Report of the Director of Native Affairs Department for the year ending 31 June 1932.*

38 By the mid-1930s the council controlled some 50 000 accommodation units in the form of hostels: see G. H. Pirie and M. Da Silva, 'Hostels for African migrants in greater Johannesburg', *GeoJournal*, XI, 1987. The following figures of housing stock owned by the council in 1934 gives some sense of the extent of official accommodation available for Africans in Johannesburg: Western Native Township (2 308 houses) – Eastern Native Township (616 houses) – Orlando (6 641 houses) Pimville (180 houses and 2 076 stands) – Wemmer Native Men's Hostel (2 750 beds) – Mai Mai Hostel (300 beds) – Wolhuter Native Men's Hostel (3 520 beds) – Wolhuter Native Women's Hostel (120 beds). Source: CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 9608: Draft Joint Report by Town Clerk, City Engineer, Medical Officer of Health, City Treasurer, Manager, Non-European Affairs Department, Director of Social Welfare re housing, Appendix A: existing housing schemes (1934), 13 August 1943.

39 See *The Star,* 8 November 1930. A slum register was opened to monitor the re-influx of Africans to Doornfontein, City and Suburban and Jeppestown; see also City of Johannesburg, *Minute of the Mayor, Report of the Director of the Native Affairs Department for the year ending 31 June 1933.*

40 Maud, *City government, the Johannesburg experiment;* J. R. Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga,* Johannesburg, 1963.

41 R. Davies, D. Kaplan, M. Morris and D. O'Meara, 'Class struggle and the periodisation of the state in South Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, VII, 1976.

42 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 9608: A survey of white housing needs, 1933.

43 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 9608: Special Report by Medical Officer of Health to the Parks and Estates and Public Health Committees on Housing for Europeans (Housing Act (No. 35) 1920), Annexure B: Enumeration of empty dwellings in working class districts made during the last week of July 1923, 3 August 1923.

44 C. M. Ellias quotes UG 19–1926, Annexure 201 of 1927 (unpublished) to show that the cost of construction had risen by 10–25 per cent because of the policy of civilised labour; *Hansard,* 1927, col. 1971. It was estimated that 30 per cent more was paid on construction as a result of the 'civilised labour' policy.

45 *The Star,* 31 January 1930.

46 Davies *et al.,* 'Class struggle and the periodisation of the South African state'.

47 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 4574A: Housing and slum elimination, 19 September 1935. The council's suggestion was for a 50 per cent subsidy on all housing provided by the local authority.

48 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File B 54: Joint Report by Medical Officer of Health and Acting City Engineer to the Public Health Committee, 14 November 1935. In addition, 84 married men from the SAR had access to their own accommodation, while the council paid no attention to the requirements of unmarried men or women of any marital status.

49 South Africa, *Report of the Department of Labour,* UG 37–1933; Quoted in R. Davies, 'The white working class in South Africa', *New Left Review*, LXXXII, 1973, p. 47.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *The Star*, 25 April 1934.

52 Carnegie Commission Report, *The poor white problem in South Africa*, Pretoria, 1932; P. D. Tyson, T. G. Dyer and M. N. Mametse, 'Secular changes in South African rainfall: 1880 to 1972', *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society*, CI, 1975.

53 City of Johannesburg, *Report of the Mānager of the Non European Affairs Department, 1934; Municipal Magazine,* September 1933; see also Johannesburg Housing Utility Company, *To hell with slums*, Johannesburg, 1933.

54 CoJ, CHDA, Box 17, File 4574A: Supplementary Report of the Town Clerk to the General Purposes Committee, 28 November 1933.

55 *The Star,* 8 December 1932.

56 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 4574A: Slums Act 1934: Properties returned by District Inspectors requiring attention.

57 *Ibid.*

58 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 4574A: Special Report of Medical Officer of Health to Special Committee on Slums and Housing, 13 February 1934:

59 Johannesburg Housing Utility Company, *To hell with slums.*

60 *The Star,* 18 July 1932. Ethelreda Lewis defined the 'new poor' in this way: 'The latest group of New Poor in Johannesburg is that of the ex-officer of the army and navy, now an ex-settler too, who, after going swiftly bankrupt on the alleged farm sold to him in London, finds Johannesburg the best place in which to become a taxi-driver, a peddler of sewing-machines or an agent for some coal merchant, going from door to door in the slums.' E. Lewis, 'Johannesburg', *Geographical Magazine,* III, 1936, pp. 293–310.

61 E. Brink, 'The garment workers and poverty on the Witwatersrand', paper presented to the African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1986.

62 *The Star,* 23 April 1932.

63 City of Johannesburg, *Minute of the Mayor, Report of the Director of the Native Affairs Department for the year ending 31 June 1932,* p. 108.

64 *The Star*, 14 December 1932. Similar profits were reported in coloured and African slum areas: see S. Parnell, 'Johannesburg's backyards: the slums of New Doornfontein, Bertrams and Prospect, 1934–1939,' *South African Geographical Journal,* 1988, p. 70.

65 *The Star,* 14 November 1933.

66 *The Star,* 8 September 1931.

67 In February 1937 the first tenants moved into the Jan Hofmeyr housing scheme which had been built to provide alternative accommodation for the white slum-dweller.

68 Johannesburg Housing Utility Company, *To hell with slums; Municipal Magazine,* August 1935; *The Star,* 4 October 1934.

69 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 9608: Special Report by the Medical Officer of Health to the Parks and Estates and Public Health Committees on Housing for Europeans (Housing Act (No. 35) 1920), 3 August 1923.

70 CoJ, CHDA, Unsorted Box, File 9608: Special Report by Medical Officer of Health to the Parks and Estates and Public Health Committees on Housing for Europeans (Housing Act (No. 35) of 1935), 3 August 1923.

71 K. Eales, 'Patriarchs, passes and privilege: Johannesburg's African middle classes and the question of night passes for African women, 1920–1931', paper presented to the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1987.

72 *Municipal Magazine,* August 1935; Johannesburg Housing Utility Company, *To hell with slums.*

73 Octavia Hill, a philanthropist in post-World War I Britain, established a system of housing management which was adopted by the Johannesburg Council. Her approach, aimed at rehabilitation of the previously slum resident, was based on the regular collection of the rent, cleanliness, and the presence of a female housing manager to liaise with wives at home.

74 *Hansard,* 1930, col. 1757; 1934, col. 3317. Significantly, section 29, sub-section 2 of the Slums Act included specific provision that the residents could not refuse to move from a slum clearance area on the grounds that no alternative accommodation existed. This clause was invoked in the Bertrams case; see Parnell, 'Johannesburg's backyards', p. 70.

75 CoJ, CHDA, Box 43, File 9828: Papers in a file marked Bertram–Maurice Freeman Housing Scheme, no date.

76 University of the Witwatersrand, Church of the Province of South Africa Archive, South African Institute of Race Relations Collection, Box AD 843, File B43.2, Letter from A. L. Barrett of the Department of Native Affairs, 8 June 1934.

Chapter 8: Minute substance versus substantial fear: white destitution and the shaping of policy in Rhodesia in the 1890s

1 David Yudelman, *The emergence of modern South Africa: state, capital, and the incorporation of organized labour on the South African goldfields, 1902–1939,* Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1983, pp. 131, 236.

2 L. H. Gann, *A history of Southern Rhodesia: early days to 1934*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1965, pp. 303–304

3 A census was taken in Rhodesia but not South Africa in 1931, so that the figures of 2 004 000 whites in South Africa and 55 408 whites in Rhodesia are taken from the census held in each territory in 1936. Malcolm, Lord Hailey, *An African survey – revised 1956,* London, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 126; Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, *Census of Population 1956*, Salisbury, Central Statistical Office, 1960, p. 3.

4 Hailey, *op. cit.*, p. 1281.

5 The view that colonial Rhodesia and South Africa were one has been expressed or implied from the 1890s onwards by contemporary commentators, by participants, and by historians. James Bryce devoted four chapters to the territory in his *Impressions of South Africa,* London, Macmillan, 1897. W. H. Brown was a participant who commented on developments exclusively within Rhodesia in his *On the South African frontier,* London, Sampson Low, Marston, 1899 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1970. H. Marshall Hole, a participant turned historian, consistently upheld the view in his books that Rhodesia was an outpost of Cape civilisation. *The making of Rhodesia,* London, Macmillan, 1926 / London: Frank Cass, 1967, p. 16 ff. More recently, D. M. Schreuder (*The scramble for Southern Africa, 1877–1895,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980) has joined others in integrating Rhodesian colonial history into that of South Africa. The most notable opponent of what might legitimately be described as the standard viewpoint has been the late Sir George Schuster who argued against regarding Rhodesia as a part of the 'white' South in 1928 as a member of the Hilton Young Commission on Closer Union of the Dependencies in East and Central Africa, and was still wrestling with the implications fifty years later, as he reveals in *Private work and public causes: a personal record 1881–1978,* Cowbridge, D. Brown & Sons, 1979, p. 80.

6 Revisions dating the emergence of the poor white problem, possibly on a regional basis, are most probable in light of Colin Bundy's 'Vagabond Hollanders and runaway Englishmen: white poverty in the Cape before poor whiteism', in William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido (eds), *Putting a plough to the ground: accumulation and dispossession in rural South Africa 1850–1930,* Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986, pp. 101–128; C. W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: social and economic,* London, Oxford University Press, 1941/1975, pp. 182–183; E. A. Walker, *A history of Southern Africa,* 3rd revised ed., London, Longmans, 1964, p. 545.

7 S. Trapido, 'Reflections on land, office and wealth in the South African Republic, 1850–1900', in Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore (eds), *Economy and society in pre-industrial South Africa,* London, Longman, 1980, pp. 354–355, 359–360; De Kiewiet, *op. cit,* pp. 181, 186–187; Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914, 2, New Nineveh,* London, Longman, 1982, pp. 113–114, 118.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 114; Walker, *op. cit,* p. 506; Trapido, *loc. cit.*, fn. 40, pp. 367–368.

9 Van Onselen, *op. cit.,* p. 114; De Kiewiet, *op. cit.,* pp. 193, 217, 221. Why blacks were able to accept lower wages is explained in liberal terms by De Kiewiet, when discussing what he regarded as the associated problem of poor blacks, and in scientific socialist terms by Wolpe: De Kiewiet, *op. cit.,* pp. 182, 230; Wolpe, 'Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa from segregation to apartheid', in Harold Wolpe (ed.), *The articulation of modes of production,* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, pp. 298–298, 303.

10 Editors' 'Introduction', in Marks & Atmore, *op. cit,* p. 36; De Kiewiet, *op. cit.,* p. 187; Van Onselen, *op. cit.* p. 114; Yuleman, *op. cit.,* pp. 57–58; Walker, *op. cit.,* pp. 575, 576.

11 Marks & Atmore, *loc. cit.,* pp. 6, 8.

12 Gann, *op. cit.,* provides but one among a number of available alternative sources for further details.

13 [National Archives of Zimbabwe], BO 11/1/1. H. J. Borrow to his mother, Hanyane River, 10 September 1890. An embodied member of the Pioneer Column had signed attestation papers in contradistinction to the prospecting parties who accompanied the column. Frank Johnson, *Great days,* London, G. Bell & Sons, 1940 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1972, p. 126. A Cape morgen equals 2,11654 acres.

14 BSAC, *Report of the Directors, 29 October 1889 to 31 March 1891,* p. 7; Arthur Keppel-Jones, *Rhodes and Rhodesia: the white conquest of Zimbabwe 1884–1902*, Kingston & Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983, pp. 366–367.

15 Eight pioneer farms were awarded on 19 September 1893 to the Paarl delegates, who had stimulated settlement by Afrikaners from the Cape, and two more names were associated with the other eight on 5 October 1894, for M. M. Venter and D. C. de Waal were political associates of Rhodes: S 1107, folio 508. For further detail on De Waal's association with Rhodes, see D. C. de Waal, *With Rhodes in Mashonaland*, Cape Town: Juta, 1896 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1974.

16 A. S. Hickman, *Men who made Rhodesia,* Salisbury, BSAC, 1960, pp. 100–101; *The Rhodesia Chronicle*, 20 August 1892 and 3 September 1892.

17 The time period in respect of the right of A. J. F. Sandeman was extended to 30 June 1895, which permitted the right to be sold to James Dickenson in order to secure the farm Springfield, JG 3/3/35, DR 2/264, James Dickenson, Certificate of Right No. 845. Similarly, C. H. Tilney's time-period was twice extended in 1895 before his right was sold to H. H. Ruping, who used it to secure his farm: S 1107, folio 606. Occupation by the ex-policemen involved was clearly waived in both these instances, while farms were known to have been transferred without the

occupation clause having been fulfilled before August 1892 (*The Rhodesia Chronicle*, 20 August 1892). In 1899, the Chartered Company still recognised the validity of fifteen unlocated police farm rights: BSAC, *Report on the Administration of Rhodesia 1898–1900,* p. 175.

18 CT 1/24/5, No. 50, Ag. Secretary, Cape Town, to W. J. Parker, P.O. Nelspoort, 15 July 1891; CT 1/24/2, No. 6, BSAC printed notice, *Conditions of land grants selected subject to the approval of the Administrator in the British South Africa Company's sphere of operations during the year 1892; The Rhodesia Herald,* 19 October 1894.

19 F. C. Selous received the 9 449-morgen estate Little England as a reward (BSAC *Government Gazette*, 10 February 1899). The Clare Estate Syndicate failed to respond to twenty-two farms offered to it as an inducement to enter Mashonaland (*The Matabeleland News and Mining Record,* 2 June 1894). M. Martin, a member of the Free State Raad, did respond to the inducement of eight 3 000-morgen farms in Gazaland (S 1107, folios 396-397; S. P. Olivier, *Many treks made Rhodesia* (Cape Town, Howard B. Timmins, 1957 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1975), pp. 69–79).

20 The terms of the original agreement were negotiated at Fort Victoria, so that the rights are known as 'Victoria Agreement' rights. W14/1/1, L. S. Jameson to Captain Allan Wilson, Victoria, 14 August 1893, refers.

21 BSAC, *Reports ... 1898–1900,* p. 176. An example of a special grant is provided by the farm Shiloh consisting of 6 000 morgen of land covering the pre-colonial mission station of Thomas Morgan Thomas,'granted' to his widow in 1893 on occupation. C. C. Thomas, 'Thomas Morgan Thomas Pioneer Missionary 1828–1884', p. 79 – unpublished typescript, a copy is held in the National Archives of Zimbabwe.

22 *The Matabeleland News and Mining Record,* 2 June 1894.

23 L 1/2/1, Surveyor General, Salisbury, to Civil Commissioner, Umtali, 17 August 1894; *ibid.*, Surveyor General, Salisbury, to J. W. Barry, 6 October 1894.

24 *Ibid.,* Surveyor General, Salisbury, to Civil Commissioner, Victoria, 19 September 1894, referring to the 'alleged' Charlestown trek; S 1104, folio 103, referring to authorisation of the grants by the Surveyor General on 7 August 1894.

25 P. Stigger, *The Land Commission of 1894 and the land,* Salisbury, Historial Association of Zimbabwe Local Series 36, 1980, p. 25.

26 T 1/2/105, folio 312, debit in respect of costs and counsel's fees, 24 October 1894; L 1/2/1, Surveyor General, Salisbury, to L. V. Lyle, Lesapi Post Office, Umtali, 11 September 1894.

27 S 1107, folio 394, 16 December 1896.

28 Such confirmation was contained in a minute of the Administrator-in-Council dated 27 October 1897: S 1107, folios 394, 418.

29 M1 1/1/1, telegram, Rhodes, Umtali, to Milton, Salisbury, 29 November 1897.

30 BSAC, *Directors' report and accounts, 31 March 1896 and 31 March 1897,* p. 18.

31 BSAC, *Directors' report and accounts, 31 March 1899 and 31 March 1900,* pp. 17–18.

32 H. G. Knox had worked his passage up from Natal to Melsetter with F. E. Markham, with whom he boarded for four months before attempting to occupy the farm Woodford for the nine days preceeding his death as a pauper on 9 May 1894: JG 3/3/10, DR 1/154. Two trekker families at Melsetter in February 1895 had been dependent upon communal charity from the moment of their arrival. P. A. Strasheim, *In the land of Cecil Rhodes*, Cape Town: Juta, 1896, p. 121.

33 The pioneer William Harvey Brown refers to this activity in 1894 and 1895; he secured his own fourth farm right on 7 January 1895 through a verbal award from the Surveyor General (Brown, *op. cit*, pp. 304–307, 318; S 1107, folios 42, 60). The interest in acquiring rights in 1894 and 1895 is confirmed by the action taken to confirm R. C. W. Clowes's entitlement to a police farm, which was due to expire on 23 September 1894. L 1/2/1, Surveyor General, Salisbury, to L. H. Gabriel, 13 September 1894.

34 The only safe assumption that can be made about the landholding tables published in 1901 is that they were drawn up at some stage prior to the date of publication and not necessarily in 1899: BSAC, *Reports ... 1898–1900*, pp. 175–176. The Chartered Company's tendency to adjust dates to suit its own convenience is illustrated in detail in P. Stigger, 'The emergence of the Native Department in Matabeleland, 1893–1899', *Rhodesian History*, 7, 1976, pp. 59–60.

35 Robert Cary, *The Pioneer Corps*, Salisbury, Galaxie Press, 1975, p. 121.

36 Four hundred and fifty individuals who had forfeited their entitlement were named in Government Notice No. 19/1898, BSAC *Government Gazette*, 26 January 1898. There is thus some conflict with the published table: BSAC, *Reports ... 1898–1900*, p. 175.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 176; Stigger, *Land Commission*, p. 14.

38 Only seven final titles were issued in respect of a sample 91 entries made in the Grant Register before the end of 1896 (S 1107, folios 394, 400). This implies that most grants which are known to have lapsed probably did so by the end of 1896. BSAC, *Reports ... 1898–1900*, p. 175.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 175–176.

40 Sufficient is known about 135 men to establish that 65 were born in the British Isles and 59 in South Africa, while 11 others hailed from elsewhere. The biographical details which Cary provides on the South Africans suggests that they originated in about even proportions from town and countryside. Cary, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

41 P. R. Warhurst, 'Extracts from the South African letters and diaries of Victor Morier, 1890–91', *Rhodesiana*, 13, December 1965, p. 14. The pioneer W. H. Brown started out as a collector and prospector and, although he took up his pioneer grant in October 1891, he did not turn to the land until 1894, first selling firewood in Salisbury and producing foodstuffs only in 1896 (Brown, *op cit.*, pp. 122–123, 142, 304–307; S 1107, folio 42; T 1/2/4, folios 75 and 218, 11 July 1895 and 12 December 1895; T 1/2/5, folio 136, 31 July 1896). Peter Forrestall was a military policeman who joined the civil police in 1892. He first attempted to farm outside Victoria at some date between February and July 1893. In 1894 he became a Native Commissioner and acquired a pioneer farm in the Chibi district in December 1896. He developed this into a ranch and ran more than 4 000 cattle.. Forrestall succeeded because he

was employed while he built up his ranch. Most policemen subsisted on 5s a day, one shilling of which was withheld until their discharge, when their deferred pay was likely to be their only asset. A year's deferred pay (£18 5s) would not go far when regular board and lodging cost at least £3 a week. Hickman, *op. cit.*, pp. 277–278; T*he Mashonaland Times,* 11 February 1893; B[ritish] P[arliamentary] P[apers], C7555, *Report ... upon ... the collision ... at Fort Victoria ...*, 1894, LVII 545, p. 30; Hickman, *op. cit.*, p. 178; BSAC *Government Gazette,* 1 December 1897; T1/2/103, folio 189, June 1892; CT 4/1/3, folios 104, 111, 29 November 1892 and 19 December 1892; *The Mashonaland Herald,* 27 June 1891.

42 J. G. McDonald, *Rhodes: a life*, London, Philip Allan, 1927, p. 165; W. A. Wills and L. T. Collingridge, *The downfall of Lobengula*, London, The African Review, 1894 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1971, pp. 239–272.

43 Some men who could shoot and ride were recruited around Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal to take horses to Fort Victoria (*The Press,* 7 August 1893). The Fort Victoria column also contained a body of men brought up by wagon from Johannesburg itself: Captain C. H. W. Donovan's printed address 'With the Victoria Column in Matabeleland' to the Aldershot Military Society, 20 March 1894, p. 17. Raaff, the Resident Magistrate at Tuli, was sent to Johannesburg to recruit 250 men and eventually led 225 of them into Matabeleland: Keppel-Jones *op. cit.*, pp. 245–246, 266–267.

44 The members of the Van der Byl Agricultural Syndicate or Expedition formed a group of twenty-five trekkers who were predominantly townsmen and enthusiastic farmers until faced by the realities of rural Rhodesia. Two men obtained farms. One, P. W. de Vos, was killed in action in Matabeleland in 1893 and, while his heirs received his pioneer farm, they received only £1 14s after his debts were paid through the sale of his Victoria Agreement farm, mining, and loot rights. R. Hodder-Williams, *White farmers in Rhodesia 1890–1965,* London, Macmillan, 1983, p. 24; JG 3/3/5, DR 1/79, P. S. Insipp, Bulawayo, to G. A. K. Marshall, Salisbury, 7 June 1894; *ibid.*, An account ..., 25 July 1894.

45 J. N. Norton, killed outside Salisbury on 16 June 1896, had £2 008 16s 8d in the bank and owned five farms, for damage to which his estate received £4 970 19s 5d, in compensation from the Chartered Company. Walter Tapsell, killed on 20 June 1896, had developed his two farms by borrowing £200 from Colonel Frank Rhodes on 17 March 1893 and had done well enough for his estate to receive £767 12s 10d in compensation from the Chartered Company. JG 3/3/35, DR 2/262.

46 Olivier, *op. cit.*, pp. 160–164.

47 The exceptions were not all that numerous. Borrow on behalf of his company ploughed fifty acres in October 1890. He did so again in the following season. His activity may have been rivalled by that of E. Kermode, of Spring Valley, who called for tenders by 1 October 1891 to plough fifty acres. At the end of the 1892/93 season, it was said that 'there are not more than half-a-dozen [farmers] in the country who are doing any good work'. Thereafter, some men were active around Salisbury until the crisis in mid-1896 checked development. John Dixon Briscoe was as active as Tapsell until he was killed on his farms nine miles from Salisbury on 19 June 1896. Hy had by then supplied forage and mealies worth £269 4s 6d to

the Chartered Company, which paid an additional £2 075 in compensation for losses to his estate. The most notable effort early in 1896 in Matabeleland was F. C. Selous's breaking of about forty acres, largely planted to trees, on the enormous Essexvale estate belonging to the Matabeleland Gold Reefs and Estate Company. More serious activities resumed in the Salisbury magisterial district in the 1898/99 season, when some work was done on forty farms, with the usual fifty acres ploughed at Borrowdale by the end of the third quarter of 1898 being especially remarked upon. On the eastern frontier, the efforts of Mrs Moodie at Kenilworth stood out at the end of the 1900/01 season in comparison only to what other Afrikaners were not doing. Thus, even the most energetic farmers were not achieving all that much in the 1890s. BO 11/1/1, Borrow to his Mother, The Ranche, 27 October 1890; *The Mashonaland Herald,* 9 April 1892; *ibid.*, 25 July 1891 and 5 September 1891; *The Mashonaland Times*, 1 April 1893; JG 3/3/35, DR 2/261; fn. 45 above; F. C. Selous, *Sunshine and storm in Rhodesia* , London, Rowland Ward, 1896 / New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969, pp. 10–11; BSAC, *Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia, 1897–1898,* London, BSAC, 1899, p. 253; Carl Peters, *The Eldorado of the ancients*, London, C. Arthur Pearson, 1902 / New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969, p. 249;

48 *The Mashonaland Herald,* 11 June 1892.

49 *Ibid.*, 12 and 26 September 1891.

50 *Ibid.*, 12 September 1891.

51 H. H. Romilly: *Letters from the Western Pacific and Mashonaland 1878–1891,* London, David Nutt, 1893, p. 381.

52 BSAC, *Report on the company's proceedings ... 1894–1895,* pp. 67, 77.

53 BSAC, *Report on the company's proceedings ... 1896–1897*, p. 136.

54 Peters, *op. cit.*, pp. 165–166.

55 BSAC, *Report on the administration ... 1897–1898,* p. 260.

56 D. Saward, *'Bomber' Harris*, London, Sphere Books, 1985, pp. 7–8.

57 The railway from the Cape to Bulawayo opened on 4 November 1897. Umtali was linked to Beira on 4 February 1898 and to Salisbury on 22 May 1899. Salisbury was connected to Bulawayo on 1 December 1902, while access was gained to the coalfields at Wankie a year later and to the Victoria Falls on 20 June 1904. A. H. Croxton, *Railways of Rhodesia,* Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1973, pp. 295–296.

58 *Official year book of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia, No. 1–1924*, pp. 89, 103. Territorial production to 31 March 1898 was valued at only £20 702. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 53.

60 Gann, *op. cit.*, pp. 166–167.

61 *Year book ... 1924*, pp. 130, 132–133, 159.

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 53.

63 See Bob Challiss' informative discussion in chapter 9.

64 The war not only slowed down the forecast high rate of white immigration into the territory over the second decade of the twentieth century, but it also caused an

estimated 25 per cent of whites to leave on war service. *Year book ... 1924,* pp. 37, 295.

65 Gann, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

66 Government of Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1931*, CSR 7–1932, pp. 7, 12.

67 Southern Rhodesia, *Government Gazette,* 13 April 1934.

68 *Ibid.*, 20 April 1938; Gann, *op. cit.,* p. 307.

69 The Maize Control Amendment Act 1933, No. 24/1933, was published in the *Government Gazette*, 23 June 1933. The next potentially repressive measure was the Bill for an Industrial Conciliation Act, published in the *Government Gazette*, 9 March 1934. The Maize Control Amendment Act 1934, No. 17/1934, was published in the *Government Gazette*, 25 May 1934. There was then pause until a broad range of economic controls was introduced in 1937, the sequence commencing with the Dairy Act 1937, No. 28/1937, published in the *Government Gazette,* 19 November 1937.

70 One wave of white settlement took place at the end of World War II, in part under the stimulus of expanding tobacco production. R. Gray, *The two nations,* London, Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. 203–294.

71 By October 1892, the Surveyor General estimated that 300 men were occupying farms. A year earlier, there were between 230 and 250 whites in Salisbury alone, while about 100 were mining at Fort Victoria, apart from those so engaged around Hartley Hills, in Lomagundi, or near Umtali. The number and percentage of economically active whites engaged in agriculture rose between 1904 and 1921, when they numbered 3 626 and formed 18,38 per cent respectively. Subsequently, the number increased but the percentage fell, e.g. in 1956 to 7 036 economically active males or 12,42 per cent. BSAC, *Report on the company's proceedings ... 1889–1892*, p. 25; *The Mashonaland Herald,* 7 and 21 November 1891; fns 60, 62 refer; Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, *Census of Population 1956*, pp. 69–70.

72 The firm of Johnson, Heany and Borrow was buying up all the pioneer farm rights it could get within a month of the Pioneer Corps standing down.The company scramble for land in Matabeleland began as soon as the Chartered Company started to disband its forces in December 1896. BO 11/1/1, Borrow to his mother, 27 October 1890; Hans Sauer, *Ex Africa*, London, Geoffrey Bles, 1927 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1973, pp. 232–233; fn. 37 refers.

73 F. Clements and E. Harben, *Leaf of gold. The story of Rhodesian tobacco,* London, Methuen, 1962, pp. 90, 97–98, show how tobacco cultivation generated one such surge in the mid-1920s.

74 CT 1/24/5, C. J. Rhodes, Cape Town to Messrs Van Heerden and Bisset, Ladybrand, 15 June 1891; CT 1/24/1, printed notice: *Conditions of land grants selected subject to the approval of the Administrator in the British South African Company's sphere of operations during the year 1892.*

75 Hodder-Williams, *op. cit.,* p. 24.

76 *The Rhodesia Chronicle,* 17 September 1892. When the Pioneer Column was disbanded, its members had been similarly assisted. Gann, *op. cit.,* p. 95.

77 CA 4/4/7, Undated manuscript account by Jack Carruthers.

78 Frank Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 111; Cary, *op. cit.,* p. 137.

79 *Ibid.,* p. 95.

80 John S. Galbraith, *Crown and charter,* Berkley, University of California Press, 1974, p. 263.

81 This position had been reached in Matabeleland by September, 1894. T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896–1897*, London, Heinemann, 1967, p. 104.

82 A. G. Leonard, *How we made Rhodesia,* London, Kegan Paul, 1896 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1973, pp. 321–322; Gann, *op. cit.,* pp. 157–158.

83 Johnson, *op. cit.,* pp. 112–115; Cary, *op. cit.*, pp. 114–115.

84 McDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 159; Sauer, *op. cit.*, p. 228; C. L. Norris Newman, *Matabeleland and how we got it*, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1895, p. 147.

85 *The autobiography of John Hays Hammond*, New York, Farrar & Rinehart, 1935, Vol. 1, p. 278; P. Stigger, 'Volunteers and the profit motive in the Anglo-Ndebele War, 1893', *Rhodesian History*, 2, 1971, pp. 21, 22. Hammond's report is most easily accessible in Alexander Davis, *The directory of Bulawayo and handbook to Matabeleland 1895–1896*, Bulawayo, Alexander Davis, 1896 / Bulawayo, Books of Zimbabwe, 1981, pp. 179–183.

86 Johnson, *op. cit.,* pp. 109–111, 160.

87 CT 1/24/1, Schedules, 31 December 1891, *Administration: civil establishment: Europeans.*

88 BSAC, *Report on the company's proceedings ... 1889–1892,* p. 8.

89 BSAC, *Directors' report ... 1892*, p. 3. The report was signed on 24 November 1892.

90 *The Mashonaland Herald,* 15 August 1891 and 3 October 1891.

91 Fns 48, 49 and 50 refer.

92 Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 157; Cary, *op. cit.,* p. 64.

93 Galbraith, *op. cit.,* pp. 262–263; H. Marshall Hole, *Olde Rhodesian days,* London, Macmillan, 1928 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1976, pp. 32–33.

94 *Ibid.,* p. 33.

95 McDonald, *op. cit.,* pp. 164–165.

96 *The Mashonaland Herald,* 7 November 1891 and 21 November 1891.

97 WI 9/2/1, Sir John Willoughby to Captain Wemyss, Intelligence Department, [War Office, London], 6 May 1891.

98 BSAC, *Directors's report and accounts 31 March 1898*, pp. 10–11, 19. The white population of Matabeleland was said to have doubled within six months as the railway approached Bulawayo. At Umtali, the white population rose from 300 to 1 000 over twelve months for similar reasons. BSAC, *Report on the company's proceedings ... 1896–1897,* p. 128. T 2/17/2, H. Scott Turner, Umtali, to T. Berry, Salisbury, 4 February 1898.

99 Hole, *Old Rhodesian days,* pp. 74, 77–78, details the position at Salisbury. Umtali was 'a sort of deserted city' where, for most whites it 'will be a hard job for the greater portion to keep their heads above water till better times come'. T 2/17/1, M. D. Graham, Umtali, to J. H. Kennedy, Salisbury, 15 July 1892.

100 BSAC, *Report on the company's proceedings ... 1889–1892*, p. 5 and fn. 97 above.

101 Men discharged at Tuli were entitled to an additional thirty days' pay and ration allowance to enable them to reach Taung in British Bechuanaland. Most men were discharged at the end of December 1891, supposedly so that they might have 'time ... to go down country'; those who did not go were promised food or work, including civil appointments. Rations were provided until 30 April 1892, being terminated in terms of a BSAC Notice, dated 21 April 1892. Frank Rand, a humane doctor, took an interest in those who remained, and stressed that most had been discharged 'at the most inclement season'. Hickman, *op. cit.,* p. 101; *The Mashonaland Herald,* 2 January 1892; *ibid.,* 23 April 1892; *The Rhodesia Chronicle,* 20 August 1892.

102 Stigger, *The Land Commission ... and the land,* p. 14; GR 1/1/1, Countess Grey, Bulawayo, to her children, 27 August 1896; F.W. Sykes, *With Plumer in Matabeleland,* Westminster, Archibald Constable, 897 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1972, p. 213.

103 *Rhodesia,* 12 March 1898.

104 T 2/17/9, Chief Accountant to Harbord, minute, 14 November 1898; Harbord to Berry, minute, 15 November 1898; Chief Accountant, Salisbury, to Civil Commissioner, Umtali, telegram, 16 November 1898. Some fourteen out of twenty four indigents had come from Johannesburg.

105 BSAC, *Directors' report ... 1899 and ... 1900*, pp. 18, 20; Saward, *'Bomber' Harris,* p. 7.

106 *The Mashonaland Herald*, 25 July 1891 and 12 September 1891.

107 *Ibid.,* 19 September 1891 and 3 October 1891.

108 Thus, the price of sugar fell from 2s 11d a pound to 1s 6d: *ibid.*, 26 September 1891 and 31 October 1891.

109 *Ibid.*, 5 December 1891 and 16 January 1892.

110 *Ibid.,* 12 September 1891, which drew attention to the arrival of Colonel Pennefather, commanding officer of the BSAC's police, and to an intention not to reduce the strength of the force below 400 men.

111 The rate of attrition within the military police force is unknown, but the Directors in London maintained in mid-December that 300 men had been discharged: BSAC, *Directors' report ... 1889 ... 1891,* p. 6. This report was signed on 18 December 1891.

112 T 1/2/1, payment to William Mbenya; *The Mashonaland Herald,* 31 October 1891 and 7 November 1891.

113 *Ibid.,* 5 December 1891.

114 *Ibid.,* 21 November 1891 and 23 January 1892.

115 *Ibid.,* 27 February 1892; 12 March 1892; 26 March 1892; and 9 April 1892.

116 T 1/2/1, 11 August 1892.

117 *The Mashonaland Herald,* 13 August 1892.

118 *The Rhodesian Herald,* 7 January 1893 and 14 January 1893.

119 *Ibid.,* 26 January 1894.

120 *The Matabeleland News and Mining Record*, 28 April 1894 and 12 May 1894.

121 *Ibid.*, 19 May 1894.

122 *The Bulawayo Chronicle,* 15 February 1895.

123 *The Rhodesia Herald,* 15 March 1895.

124 *Ibid.,* 25 January 1895; 22 February 1895; and 8 March 1895.

125 *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 23 October 1895.

126 *The Bulawayo Sketch,* 10 April 1897.

127 R. A. Huttenback, *Gandhi in South Africa,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971, pp. 337–339.

128 One method adopted by the Chartered Company in 1904, and discussed at length in correspondence in T 2/2/18, was to deny leases to Asians in order to justify subsequently denying licenses to them, for they could not trade without premises. Another was to decline to sell stands to Asians, which reinforced a general white willingness to apply restrictive title deed conditions to Asians and other 'non-whites': L 2/2/81/2, Acting Commercial Representative, Bulawayo, to the Director of Land Settlement, Salisbury, 18 August 1910; Claire Palley, *The constitutional history and law of Southern Rhodesia 1888–1965*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966, pp. 640–641.

129 Leonard, *op. cit.,* p. 157; L 7/8/1, List of stand owners in Salisbury on 1 October 1892; H. Kuper, *Indian people in Natal*, Pietermaritzburg, Natal University Press, 1960, pp. 2–3.

130 Some fifteen withdrew as early as February 1892. *The Mashonaland Herald,* 6 February 1892.

131 *The Matabele Times and Mining Journal,* 30 March 1894.

132 *The Rhodesia Herald*, 26 November 1892; 10 December 1892; and 25 September 1895.

133 Ordinance 10/1903, operative from 3 June 1904. Section 2 inter alia defined a prohibited immigrant as one who was 'unable by reason of deficient education to write out and sign with his own hand in the characters of any European language'.

134 L 2/2/81/1, endorsement by F. J. Newton on Civil Commissioner, Victoria, to Assistant Treasurer, telegram, 5 March 1904.

135 Huttenback, *op. cit.,* pp. 102–115.

136 B. Pachai, *The international aspects of the South African Indian question 1860–1971,* Cape Town, Struik, 1971, pp. 24–27.

137 Palley, *op. cit.,* pp. 8. 89.

138 Hence, 'The sale of liquor to Natives and Indians regulations', BSAC *Government Gazette,* 2 December 1896, Government Notice No. 134/1896, and 'The possess-

ion of arms by Natives and Asiatics restricting regulations', *ibid.,* 17 November 1897, Government Notice No. 198/1897.

139 Article 23, The Matabeleland Order in Council 1894, *ibid.,* 5 October 894.

140 Bulawayo Sanitary Board location regulations, *ibid.,* 25 January 1895, Government Notice No. 12/1895. The regulations applied to 'Native races such as Kafirs, Zulus, Shangaans, Mashonas, Matabeles, Bechuanas, Mamangwatos, Fingoes, Basutos, Hottentots, Bushmen and the like ...'.

141 BPP, C 8773 [HC 1898 LX 157], (I), Charter of the British South Africa Company, October 29, 1889 ..., p. 5, clauses 13, 14 and 15.

142 Thus Africans were specifically entitled to 'acquire, hold, encumber, and dispose of land in the same conditions as a person who is not a native' in terms of Article 24, The Matabeleland Order in Council 1894. An African holding title to an urban stand might therefore reside upon it.

143 Policemen were paid four shillings a day, rising to five shillings, of which one shilling was withheld as deferred pay intil their discharge or death, so that 408 days service would give a man £20 8s, an amount sufficient to provide him with room and board for thirty-seven days: Cary, *op. cit.,* 119; CT 4/1/3, folio 104, 29 November 1892; T 1/2/103, folio 189, June 1892; *The Mashonaland Herald,* 27 June 1891.

144 W. E. Thomas and T. M. Thomas, both members of the Native Department in Matabeleland, were born at Inyati in 1865 and 1875 and were probably the only white adults who had been born within the territory who lived there in the 1890s. In the census taken on 8 May 1956, 32,33 per cent of 177 124 whites in Rhodesia had been born there, while 28,16 per cent had been born in Great Britain and Ireland, 28,73 per cent in South Africa, and 10,78 per cent elsewhere. C. C. Thomas, *loc. cit.,* p. 80; *Census ... 1956,* p. 64.

145 That limited interest was sufficient to allow William Mbenya to survive as a brick-maker in Salisbury in 1892/93 and even later, for in 1894 he built a stable for the Resident Magistrate in Bulawayo, where some blacks were self-employed and licensed brickmakers in October 1895. Brickfields generally appear to have been a sanctuary for some blacks, even after World War II. JG 3/3/20, DR 1/342 death notice of Watweka, dated 19 March 1892, petition of William Benya of 18 February 1893, indemnity note of W. H. M. Benya dated 25 February 1893; T 1/2/105, folio 185, November 1894; *The Bulawayo Chronicle,* 9 October 1895; Lawrence Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, London, Heinemann, 1976, p. 170.

146 As late as 1958, some indigents were returned to Britian from Tanganyika as distressed British subjects. Personal observation.

147 The Johannesburg unemployed exported as policemen through Kimberley in 1890 were returned through Taung in 1891/92. Cary, *op. cit.,* pp. 118–119, and fn. 101 above.

148 Macloutsie was approximately 320 miles and Tuli 370 miles from Mafeking, while Salisbury was about 800 miles distant and Bulawayo 525 miles away. The gap between the South African zone of white settlement ending at Mafeking and that in Rhodesia did not begin to be bridged until after 1895. J. P. FitzPatrick, *Through Mashonaland with Pick and Pen*, Johannesburg, Ad. Donker, 1973, a revision of

the 1892 edition, p. 131; Anon., *From the Cape to Bulawayo*, Vryburg, Townshend & Son, 1896 / Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1979, p. 7; and fn. 11 above; P. Maylam, *Rhodes, the Tswana, and the British,* Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1980, pp. 196–203.

149 Van Onselen, *op. cit.*, pp. 137ff.

150 *The Mashonaland Herald,* 12 September 1891.

151 The Chartered Company's action probably prevented a fifth crisis developing, for free rations to the unemployed meant that those in work were not forced to compete against starving out-of-work men in order to preserve their employment. It is doubtful if the Chartered Company acted out of charity. It needed to ensure that superfluous whites were exported. By providing rations to the unemployed, the Chartered Company ensured that those in employment had no ground to attack the company on behalf of the unemployed, while those in employment had cause to encourage those who were not employed to leave the territory. In effect, the provision of free rations divided the incipient white working class against itself and mobilised those in employment against the unemployed in support of the Chartered Company's campaign to create an illusion of prosperity and progress in the minds of potential investors outside the territory.

152 Ordinance No. 4 of 1893, published on 17 October 1893.

153 BSAC *Government Gazette,* 25 January 1895, containing Government Notice No. 12 of 1895.

154 *Ibid.,* 26 February 1896, containing Government Notice No. 20 of 1896.

155 Ordinance No. 16 of 1901, published on 19 November 1902.

156 Ordinance No. 10 of 1902, published on 3 June 1904.

157 Act No. 14 of 1936, which became effective from 1 June 1937 in terms of Proclamation 38 of 1936, published in the Southern Rhodesia *Government Gazette,* 31 December 1936, also repealed the Natives Registration Amendment Ordinance 1902 and the Amendment Ordinance 1918. The Native Pass Consolidation Ordinance Amendment Act 1936, Act No. 11 of 1936, which became effective on 1 September 1936 in terms of Proclamation 14 of 1936, *ibid.,* 24 July 1936, further amended the Consolidation Ordinance 1913.

158 For example, by the Natives (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act 1946, Act No. 6 of 1946, operative from 14 June 1946 in terms of Proclamation No. 23 of 1946, *ibid.,* 14 June 1956.

159 The effect of such burdens on blacks in mine compounds after 1904 and in locations from 1909 is illustrated in C. van Onselen, *Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900–1933,* London: Pluto Press, 1976, pp. 157, 231.

160 C. F. Keyter, *Maize controls in Southern Rhodesia 1931–1941. The African contribution to white survival*, Salisbury: Central Africa Historical Association Local Series 34, 1978, p. 2.

161 See fn. 69 above.

162 Gann, *op. cit.*, pp. 196–303, illustrates this tendency.

Chapter 9: Education and Southern Rhodesia's poor whites, 1890–1930

1 Captain the Hon. (later Sir) Arthur Lawley, Administrator of Mashonaland, 4 November 1897, British South Africa Company (BSAC), *Report on the company's proceedings and the condition of the territories within the sphere of its operations, 1896–1897*, p. 170.

2 Compulsory Education Act, No. 7 of 1930.

3 The Education Ordinance, No. 18 of 1899; The Education Ordinance, No. 1 of 1903.

4 National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ), Department of Education (NAZE), 1, Out Letters, 1, General, 2, 26 August, 1901 – 21 April 1902, G. Duthie, Superintending Inspector of Schools, to the Rev. F. W. Bates, Mount Selinda Mission, 16 October and 20 November 1901.

5 NAZ, London Office (NAZLO) Departmental Reports, 1, Annual, 21, 1905–1906, Draft Report of the Administrator of Southern Rhodesia W. H. Milton, 20 July 1906; R. J. Challiss, *The European educational system of Southern Rhodesia 1890–1930,* Salisbury, University of Zimbabwe, supplement to *Zambezia,* 1982, pp. 96–108; The Education Ordinance, 1903, Order 'D', clause 2, sub-section 4; R. J. Challiss, 'The foundation of the racially segregated educational system in Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1923, with special reference to the education of Africans', Salisbury, University of Zimbabwe, DPhil thesis, 1982, pp. 130–242.

6 G. Duthie, 'Education in Southern Rhodesia,' in *Addresses and papers read at a joint meeting of the British and South African Association for the Advancement of Science: Report, 1905,* Johannesburg, 1905, IV, pp. 321–324.

7 For accounts of changing strategies of economic exploitation in Southern Rhodesia during the early years of white settlement, see generally R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, London, 1977, and C. van Onselen, *Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900–1933*, London, 1976. More detail on the settler population appears in Stigger's chapter in this volume.

8 Van Onselen, *Chibaro,* p. 23; M. E. Lee, 'Politics and pressure groups in Southern Rhodesia 1898–1923', University of London, DPhil thesis, 1974, cited in I. R. Phimister, 'Capital and class in Zimbabwe 1890–1948', University of Zimbabwe, Department of History, Henderson Seminar Paper No. 50, 6 October 1890, pp. 8–9.

9 M. E. Lee, 'An analysis of the Rhodesian Referendum, 1922', *Rhodesian History,* VIII, 1977, pp. 71–98.

10 R. Hodder-Williams, 'The British South Africa Company in Marandellas: some extra-institutional constraints on government', *Rhodesian History,* II, 1971, p. 46.

11 NAZE 1/1/4/ 2 January 1903 – 5 September 1904, Duthie to Chief Secretary, Department of the Administrator, 12 July 1904.

12 NAZE 1/1/3/ 5 January – 16 April 1903, Duthie to Chief Secretary, Department Administration, 29 May 1903; Rev. A. F. Louw, personal communication, 31 March 1978.

13 P. A. Strasheim, *In the land of Cecil Rhodes,* Cape Town, 1896, 61, pp. 118–119; H. E. D. Hammond, 'The system of education in Southern Rhodesia (1890–91), its origin and development,' in Great Britain, *Board of Education special reports on educational subjects, volume 13: Education systems of the Chief Crown Colonies ... including reports of the training of native races, Part 11: West Africa ... Seychelles* (Cd 2378), 150 (HC 1905, xxvi, 1).

14 *The Bulawayo Chronicle,* 8 August 1908; NAZ, Resident Commissioner (NAZRC), 3, Correspondence, 8, High Commissioner for South Africa, Transmittal Series: 1905–1907, 3, Numbers 118 (1905–29/1907), HC 188, 1905, RC Executive Council Minute, 23 February 1906; Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Inspector of Schools upon education, 31 March 1901* (Sess. papers, 1901), p. 4.

15 H. Wilson Fox, *Memorandum on the position, policy and prospects of the company, including an investigation of the company's title to land in Rhodesia,* London, 1907, p. 208.

16 NAZRC, 3/8/3, RC Executive Council Minute, 23 February 1906; Challiss, *The European educational system,* p. 24.

17 Challiss, *The European educational system,* pp. 14–16; see also Sir Alfred Beit & J. G. Lockhart, *The will and the way, being an account for Alfred Beit and the trust which he founded*, London, 1957.

18 *Rep. Dir. Educ. 1928* (Sess. papers, CSR 19, 1929), p. 5.

19 *Rep. Dir. Educ. 1914,* p. 10.

20 Southern Rhodesia, *Debates in the Legislative Council Third Session of the Fourth Council, 25 May to 10 June 1910,* p. 49.

21 NAZE, 2, Correspondence, 15, Miscellaneous, 1 (23 May 1900 – 25 November 1923), Duthie to Secretary Department Administration, 19 April 1913.

22 Challiss, *The European educational system*, pp. 17–21; Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Committee Appointed .. to Enquire into Education, 1908* (Sess. papers, A5, 1908); Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Director of Education for the year 1914* (Sess. papers, A8, 1915), p. 1.

23 Challiss, *The European educational system,* pp. 29–30.

24 Southern Rhodesia, *Debates, Fourth Session of the Seventh Council, 25 to 31 May, 11 to 14 June, 20 to 28 June, 23 to 27 July, and during the Special Session of the Seventh Council, 3 to 11 October 1923*, p. 537.

25 Southern Rhodesia, *Debates, Second Session of the Sixth Council, 28 April to 8 May, 1915,* pp. 195–196, 5 May.

26 R. J. Challiss, *Vicarious Rhodesians: problems affecting the selection of Rhodesian Rhodes scholars 1904–1923*, Salisbury, The Central African Historical Association Local Series, 1977, p. 2; *Debates,* 1910, p. 80; NAZ, Administrator's Office (NAZAO), 3, Correspondence, 9, Education, 1, General, 9 February 1910 – 19 October 1911, Milton to L. M. Foggin, Inspector of Schools, 12 January 1911.

27 Lee, 'An analysis of the Rhodesian Referendum,' p. 86; Challiss, *The European educational system,* pp. 24, 34.

28 *Debates, 1915,* p. 190, 5 May.

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31 *Ibid.,* p. 1.

32 *Ibid.,* pp. 5–10.

33 *Het Volksblad,* 6 February 1917; *Rep. Educ. Comm. 1916,* p. 3; NAZA, 3/9/7, Chaplin to Secretary, BSAC, 10 April 1917; E/1/1/41, 16 January – 5 March 1917, Foggin to Sir Lewis Michell, 27 February 1917.

34 *Het Vaderland* (Evening Edition), 15 April 1921; NAZE, 1/1/54, 12 December 1918 – 30 January 1919, Foggin to Secretary Department Administration, 15 January 1919; E/1/1/95, 8 June – 3 July 1922, Foggin to Secretary Department Administration, 20 June 1922.

35 Challiss, *The European educational system,* p. 25; NAZLO, Board of Director's Papers, 1, Agenda with annexures, 170, 6 June – 19 December 1918, Agenda for 3 October 1918, Chaplin to Lord Buxton, 30 July 1918; E/1/1/58, 6 May – 7 July 1919, Foggin to Secretary, Department Administration, 30 June 1918; NAZE, 1/1/88, 30 December 1921 – 25 January 1922, Foggin to J. Condy, Inspector of Schools, 2 June 1921.

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37 L. H. Gann, *A history of Southern Rhodesia, early days to 1934,* London, 1965, p. 245.

38 Challiss, *The European educational system,* pp. 35–40; NAZRC, 3, Resident Commissioner: Correspondence, 1, Administrator, Salisbury, Main Series, General, 65, 1919 No. 262–369, C. D. Jones, Resident Commissioner to Viscount Buxton, 10 March 1919; *Government Gazette,* 11 May 1921, Government Notice No. 244 of 11 May, Report of the Rhodesia Committee, Appendix 11, Lord Milner's Memorandum of 22 December 1920; Historical Manuscripts Collection, CH, Papers of Sir Francis Percy Drummond Chaplin, 2, Correspondence and Other Papers, 2, By Correspondent, 6, P. L. Gell, 24 October 1918 – 6 January 1923, Gell to Chaplin, 7 June 1921.

39 *Rep. Dir. Educ. 1928,* p. 5.

40 *Debates, Third Session of the Sixth Council, 1 to 13 May, 1916,* p. 328, 10 May; *Debates, 1915,* p. 253, 6 May.

41 *Debates, 1916,* p. 328, 10 May; *Debates, 1915,* p. 264, 6 May.

42 *Debates, 1915,* p. 191, 5 May; *Debates, Third Session of the Seventh Council, 1 to 25 May, 1922,* p. 342, 15 May; *Debates Second Session of the Seventh Council, 25 April to 27 May 1921,* p. 617, 12 May.

43 *Debates, Third Session, First Parliament, 27 April – 13 June 1925,* pp. 111, 671, 20 May; *Debates, 1915,* p. 264, 6 May; *Debates, Seventh Session, First Parliament, 14 May to 6 July 1928,* VII, p. 956, 13 June.

44 *The Gwelo Times,* 29 April 1921; see also *The Rhodesia Herald,* 13 May 1921.

45 *Debates,* 1915, p. 254, 5 May.

46 *Debates, First Session of the Sixth Council, 15 to 17 April, 4 to 26 May, 8 to 10 June and 5 to 22 October 1914,* p. 460, 20 May. Apparently the famous Rhodesian Rhodes Scholar Kingsley Fairbridge originally suggested that the government should establish such a school in 1908. Of course, with so many poor and ill-educated white settler children already in Southern Rhodesia, Fairbridge's 'child emigration' scheme for underprivileged children from Great Britain was hardly feasible. Consequently, the first Fairbridge farm school for slum children was to be founded instead at Pinjarra in western Australia (*The autobiography of Kingsley Fairbridge,* London, 1927, pp. 170–171, 179).

47 *Debates, 1923.* p. 541, 23 July, L. Cripps, elected member for the Bulawayo district, quoting from a personal communication from the Director of Education, L. M. Foggin.

48 *Debates, 1915,* p. 892, 27 May.

49 *Debates, 1915,* p. 800, 26 May.

50 Challiss, *The European educational system,* p. 108; *Debates, First Session, Second Parliament, 22 April to 13 June 1929,* VIII, p. 885, 17 May.

51 *Debates, 1929,* p. 648, 13 May; Southern Rhodesia, *Report of the Education Commission 1929* (Sess. papers, CSR 27, 1929), p. 1.

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