

THE CHANGING PATTERN OF ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS IN RURAL NATAL:

1838-1914

by

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During the course of some work on the history of Natal, I developed an interest in certain questions related to the complex of land and labour relations in the period 1838 to 1913. My interest was drawn in particular to the themes of African "squatting", cash-cropping, land purchase, and labour migration, on the one hand, and the phenomena of absentee landownership and "labour shortage" amongst Whites, on the other. It seemed to me that these and related themes received scant attention in the secondary literature, and attempts to trace their inter-relationship, the manner in which they underwent change through time, and the relationship of this cluster of themes to repressive legislation in the general field of land and labour questions were either conspicuous by their absence or seemed, somehow, unsatisfactory. The paper represents an attempt to outline more precisely this general field in which my research is set rather than to deal with one particular theme in depth.

In 1838 one branch of the Great Trek, which had left the Cape Colony some four years before, had succeeded in defeating the Zulu armies under Dingaan at Blood River and had established a new Voortrekker republic which laid claim to almost all the land between the Buffalo-Tugela and the Mzimkulu rivers, that is more or less the land area of what was to become the British colony of Natal. They apparently enjoyed the support in this enterprise of the members of a tiny trading community which had been established at Port Natal since 1824. (1) The activities of this trading settlement had initially been seen by Shaka as complementary to his own, but in the time of Dingane the relationship between the Zulu kingdom and the community at the Port had progressively deteriorated. (2) The population of the new Republic should not be over-estimated; by 1842 the community of White settlers still only numbered some 6,000 men, women and children. (3)

Pastoral subsistence farmers formed a substantial proportion of the new settler community and their needs of plentiful land, security, and a readily available supply of cheap labour feature prominently in

the legislative policies of the Voortrekker republic. In theory, the first condition could be met relatively easily. The area claimed by the new settlers was substantially under-populated owing to the temporary or permanent migration of the population elsewhere to avoid the regular pattern of Zulu raiding. (4) In the eyes of the settlers Natal was an empty land ripe for development. All those settlers who arrived in Natal before December 1839 were entitled to claim two farms on the 3,000 morgen scale laid down by the original Voortrekker burghership law, and those who arrived subsequently one. (5)

It seems, however, that relatively few of the farms claimed by "settlers" were actually occupied by them. The numbers actually working the land remained very small and one is led to wonder just how many of the original claimants had any intention of using it for farming purposes. (6) Perhaps amongst those who had intended to farm, game-hunting and trade with the African population offered a more attractive style of life. Certainly, in the first two years of the Republic some 2½ million acres were provisionally registered in favour of only 254 persons, a mere 49 of whom seem actually to have occupied their claims. (7) This was possible under the system by which applications from settlers were entered provisionally in the books of the Volksraad pending inspection and formal registration. Occupation was not a requirement of provisional registration and youths of 18 could also hold land in return for the registration fee of 12 Rix dollars. Permanent registration did, however, necessitate occupation, though here again evasion of the condition was possible. Someone, usually an African servant, could be sent to live on the farm until a title had been issued. By the time of the arrival of British imperial power in 1842, over 1,000 land claims had actually been registered, many of them ill-defined, and Cloete, the Commissioner sent by the Imperial power in 1843 to investigate the land situation, was concerned to find that claims had been staked not only in every district of republican Natal but even in territory claimed by Faku on both sides of the Umzimvubu, as well as north of the Tugela in Zululand. (8)

By 1843 many of the unoccupied claims already seem to have passed into the hands of a class of land speculators. One of the pressures operating here may have been the need of subsistence farmers to sell some of their claims in order to pay the fees necessary for examination and permanent registration. Some of the speculators seem actually to have been officials of the Voortrekker administration. Commandant Gert Rudolph, for example, was claiming title to 40 farms in 1843, amounting to some ¼ million acres. (9) Carl Behrens, son of one of the secretaries of the court of justice at Hamburg, also seems to have entered into land speculation in 1841 on emigrating from the Cape to take up a position with a merchant at Pietermaritzburg. (10) When the imperial power arrived, not all these claims were recognized. (11)

The labour needs of the pastoral farmers seem to have been met initially by Coloured servants brought on the Trek from the Cape, the apprenticeship of children captured during commando skirmishes with the forces of the Zulu kingdom (12), and perhaps by Africans who had been sufficiently alienated from the means of subsistence during the course of the Mfecane to find the possibility of entry into a labour relationship with Voortrekker farmers attractive. Ideally, then, Africans would gain access to land (which the Republic would try to deny them access to elsewhere) in return for labour service rendered to the farmer. There may also have been envisaged some payment in kind or,

more rarely, in cash. (13) What does not seem clear, however, is whether these terms were sufficiently attractive to create a situation of surplus or whether the situation was already one of "labour shortage".

The situation was complicated for the settler and for the historian by the return to the lands now claimed by the Voortrekker republic, and particularly those on its northern boundary, of large numbers of Africans who had temporarily vacated the area to escape from Zulu raiding. The return to peaceful conditions after the defeat of Dingane had made this possible. It is clear that large numbers of these returnees settled on those lands claimed but not occupied by Whites. From the settler viewpoint, these were the first "squatters".(14) From 1840 this situation became an increasingly important concern of the Volksraad. It was proposed that wherever such settlements were found within the district they should be broken up and removed, either to south-west Natal beyond the Umzimkulu or back to what were presumed to be their former homes in Zululand. The exception was to be parties not exceeding 5 families to each 6,000 acre farm, and those otherwise in service with Whites. (15) Pretorius, as military commander, was empowered by the Volksraad decision of 2/8/41 to implement a policy of removing all "surplus" Africans to an area in the south-west of the Republic between the Umtavuna and Umzimkulu rivers. (16) Whether the motivating concern here was simply security or whether a possible situation of labour shortage was the cause does not seem clear. (17) The restriction of 5 families per farm, for example, could be seen as a measure to ration a scarce resource, or as one designed to regulate the numbers of Africans within the boundaries of the Republic to within a level which would not constitute a threat to security. Later in the century there seems a good deal less doubt surrounding measures of this kind.

What is clear, however, is that the Voortrekker republic did not control the resources which would have made possible the implementation of such a grandiose design. The ideal type pattern of settlement which the Voortrekker farmers desired was never achieved. In fact, more and more Africans returned to the area claimed by the republic without being controlled by the republican government. (18) The position of the White pastoralists was severely threatened, not only by the attentions of the Cape speculators but also by the rapidly growing number of Africans who threatened their security and perhaps also resisted their demands for labour.

We can already see evidence in this picture of the close relationship between land and labour questions in Natal, and in turn the degree to which the nature of this relationship in a particular area and at a particular point in time was determined by two other inter-related questions - those of alternative means of subsistence and relative physical force. The Voortrekker pastoralists' vision of society could not have been realized because, for the majority of the African population, other means of subsistence were available which the Voortrekker did not control and which they could not barter for labour service. There was still land for settlement because the claims of the Republic could not be backed effectively by force on the scale that would have been necessary. With the British colonization of Natal in 1843 the relative balance between these factors was to change and new elements were to be added. It is to a discussion of these processes that we now turn.

A section of the Republic's White community welcomed the British colonizing initiative in 1842. Others, however, chose to trek once more rather than fall foul of the new power. Unfortunately, we do not have a picture of the social groupings that were involved here. The effect of the change, however, was to loosen still further the hold of the pastoral farmers on the polity. With the arrival of the imperial power they were obliged to compete for their interests with a still wider cluster of social groups amongst which speculators, merchants, missionaries, and African farmers were amongst the most important.

The theme of speculation, which we have already discerned in the period of the Voortrekker Republic, seems to have both developed and diversified in the period following the arrival of the British power in Natal. A combination of Cape and London-based agencies seems to have been at work, though considerable further investigation is needed to unravel the network of financial relations here. One aspect was the continued accumulation in the hands of individual speculators of original Voortrekker land claims. A second involved their receiving substantial grants of Crown land from the government in return for bringing settlers out from England and establishing them on small acreages in Natal. Several schemes were in operation between about 1849 and 1852, involving some 5,000 immigrants. (19) That of J. C. Byrne and his backers was amongst the most prominent. (20) But for the operators of these schemes and for others who had speculated in land a return on their investment was necessary, both for profit and, in the case of Byrne and the like, for working capital to allow the continuance of their immigration operations. The large acreages which had been acquired had to be sold quickly and expensively. This depended on settlers "settling" on the land, engaging in successful production for the market, and so pushing up the value of neighbouring lands which were controlled by the speculators. To allow for further insurance, the same men who were heavily committed to speculation in land also tried to present a picture to potential settlers in England and the Cape of a rich and fertile land where commercial cash-crops were already established. The founding of a Natal Cotton Company (21), the encouragement of African commercial production of potential export crops such as cotton (22), heavy publicity for the arrival in Manchester of a few token bales of Natal cotton (23), and the spread of favourable propaganda through books and speeches in England (24), were all part of this programme. But the hoped-for surplus did not materialize. Though some 5,000 settlers did arrive in Natal, they did not settle on the land - either because they were given lots of poor quality and could not farm at a profit, or were urban dwellers who had no intention of becoming farmers. They either sold their lands back to the companies from which they had bought them, or to other speculators, but in both cases at very cheap prices. (25) The speculators' "insurance" scheme was no more successful. Cotton production was a failure and the Natal Cotton Company collapsed. (26) The consequence was that the market in land remained deflated and the operations of the settlement companies ground to a halt. At least some of their holdings seem to have reverted to the Crown. The continued drift of Afrikaner settlers away from Natal during this period was a further factor contributing to the collapse in the market for land.

Some at least of the new settlers in this period did remain on the land and experimented with various crops with a view to commercial production. These seem mainly to have been men who brought with them to Natal fair amounts of initial capital, sufficient to permit some years of crop experimentation or to permit the purchase of

substantial herds of livestock.(27) Amongst the crops tried were tobacco, coffee, wheat, arrowroot, indigo, flax, and tea, but it was to be maize, fruit of various kinds, sugar, timber-cutting and wattle cultivation that were to prove the most profitable.(28) By about the mid-1850s a group of Natal farmers were beginning to embark on the commercial production of these commodities, and their numbers were to increase gradually through the century. Entry into large-scale production of agricultural and forestry products, however, required labour; but before looking at the implications of this it is necessary first to try to look at the changes which we have so far described, from the point of view of the African population of Natal.

We have so far argued that by about the mid-1850s several White groups laid claim to control over the land resources of Natal. These seem to have comprised large and small absentee speculators, small farmers of Voortrekker or British origin, largely engaged in subsistence mixed farming, a few large farmers beginning to enter into commercial cash-crop production, lands granted to various missions to facilitate their "civilizing" activities amongst the African population, lands set aside as "locations" for the African population, and remaining Crown lands that had yet to be formally alienated. As far as Africans were concerned, one suspects that the net effect of these changes was to make land in Natal a more scarce and differentiated resource. Land had never been a totally homogeneous commodity. In pre-colonial times it had been differentiated according to fertility, access to watering places, and also by the degree to which its occupation could be carried out peacefully. In the period of the Voortrekker republic a distinction was added between those areas of land which could be occupied free, though subject to a degree of harassment, and those whose control by Voortrekkers would require labour-service in return for access to it. By mid-century, as we have seen, land as a resource had become still more differentiated. Access to it could be obtained in different ways, and increasingly through the century the price was entry into some kind of relationship with the agents of colonization who now claimed legal control over the territory's labour resources. The "opportunity cost" (29) of entry into such relationships differed from one category of land to another, and the balance between these changed during the course of the century. Initially, it was quite possible to exercise choice between these various categories of land but this, of course, was detrimental to those Whites who controlled, from the African point of view, those lands which were least attractive. Two themes therefore can be seen to run through our period with respect to this question. The first is the exercise of African choice with respect to the kinds of relationships which they decided to enter into. The second is that of the persistent attempts by those White groups whose categories of land were not seen to be attractive to reduce the options open to Africans for gaining access to the means of subsistence and to force them into relationships with those who controlled the categories of land which, from the African point of view, carried the heaviest "opportunity cost". Before attempting to describe this struggle and to relate it to the labour needs of the emerging class of commercial farmers, it is necessary, however, to justify our assumption that for Africans access to land was crucial in the period under consideration.

Before the arrival of White settlers in the area of what became Natal, access to land was one of the factors essential both for economic survival, the accruing of a surplus with which to trade, and

to allow full participation in the social system. This remained the case after 1838, but, as the White demand for labour increased, land was also essential to avoid being drawn into meeting the White-Man's labour needs at minimum cost. The exercise was also then to avoid simply becoming pawns in the economic machine of the Whites. At the same time, however, the arrival of settlers provided a wider set of economic possibilities. Land was also essential in realizing these. But land was not the only resource over which control had to be maintained if these goals were to be achieved. Labour-power and cattle-ownership were two others which formed part of this core of key economic resources. The maintenance of certain social practices was also essential if these economic resources were to continue to function effectively. The practices of polygamy and lobolo were important here. The relationship between each of these resources and social institutions was one of inter-dependence. Each represented one part of a total socio-economic complex. Loss of control over one of these resources or the abandonment of a social practice would serve also to undermine the value and the possibility of retaining control over the remainder. Without land, for example, cattle could not be grazed and crops could not be grown, and a surplus could not be produced for trade. The factor of surplus was increasingly important during the century as various cash needs were forced upon Africans designed to make labour for the White Man unavoidable. Loss of cattle would preclude the payment of lobolo for wives and so reduce the amount of labour power available to the family for the tending of crops. The abandonment of the practices of lobolo and polygamy would have the same effect. Without a surplus crop or cattle, taxation and other cash needs could not be met without labour for Whites. But labour of this kind would reduce the labour power available at crucial times for ploughing and other heavy tasks. Loss of control over one of these key resources or social practices would therefore be likely to set off a vicious spiral at the end of which lay something akin to slavery.

In the early period of White settlement it is clear that the emphasis should be laid on the degree to which this socio-economic complex provided a sound basis for taking advantage of new market opportunities. It was initially possible to find low cost land which permitted both the maintenance of the social system and effective economic competition. The Report of the Natal Native Affairs Commission of 1852/3, for example, was already complaining that

"The Kafirs are now much more insubordinate and impatient of control; they are rapidly becoming rich and independent". (30)

Moreover, the Commissioners identified the social practice of polygamy, of "female slavery", as one of the factors maintaining this situation. (31) It also seems that Africans met the bulk of White taxation in the early period without having to surrender key resources in the socio-economic complex that we have described. Out of a total of £1918.7.0. paid in taxes in 1851, only £35 was actually paid in cattle. (32) By 1863 Shepstone was also commenting on the fact that some Africans were living "in European-style houses on individual holdings they had bought". (33)

We have argued that, despite the increasing differentiation of land, it was initially fairly easy to gain access to it at low "opportunity cost". Perhaps it is necessary to spell this out a little more clearly, and to look at the manner in which it began to change later

in the century. Land in the locations laid out by Shepstone was probably initially the "cheapest" available in the sense that neither rent nor labour-service was required from those who chose to live on it and those who did not were likely to be subjected to harassment by the "legitimate" authorities. We should not therefore be particularly surprised at the ease with which Shepstone was apparently able to persuade Africans to move onto land in the locations which had been laid out in various parts of Natal. "Squatting" on unalienated Crown lands or unoccupied purchased lands was a fairly attractive alternative to this in the early period. The entry into some kind of labour relationship with a White farmer was somewhat less attractive, though here a number of other factors had to be considered. Service on a stock farm was not particularly arduous, gave the opportunity of running cattle, and, if payment was made in kind, offered the possibility of accumulating cattle. Labour-service on a commercial farm was probably least attractive of all. The work was arduous, payment was usually in cash or food rather than cattle, and the farmer's concern with marginal costs probably reduced the numbers of African-owned cattle he was prepared to see run on his land. So far as occupation of mission-lands was concerned, the attraction of access to free land had to be balanced against the social cost of abandoning certain social practices. As I have pointed out, this could also involve an economic cost.

The balance between the relative "opportunity costs" of access to these different categories of land changed during the course of the century. One factor here, for example, was the attempt by those who controlled speculative holdings of land, which they were unable to sell at a profit because of the deflated market, to exact rent from those Africans squatting on their land. This practice came to be known as "Kafir farming" and was very prevalent. The Natal Land and Colonization Company, a London-based company, was engaged in this lucrative business. "Squatters" on its vast holding of $\frac{1}{4}$ million acres paid an annual rent of from 5/- to 28/- per hut. (34) By 1874 it was estimated that 5 million acres belonging to private individuals or company such as this were occupied by Africans. (35) Moreover, the rent exacted gradually rose during the century. By 1876 it was sometimes as high as £5 per hut. (36) Rent also came to be charged on Crown lands during the century. Space does not permit a full discussion of the range of changes here.

The picture is of access to all categories of land becoming, in absolute terms, more expensive. The "price" was not, however, the same for all categories. Some were always cheaper than others, though the lands with the lowest "opportunity cost" were not always the same. I think it would be possible to show that there was movement by Africans from one category to another as it became relatively "expensive". (37) One category of land, however, was always the least attractive. This was land controlled by commercial farmers, for the reasons outlined. Africans always sought to avoid working for this kind of farmer as labour-tenants, and it is to this category of farmer, we would argue, that the persistent claims of "labour shortage" during the century should be traced. Neither is it surprising that when sugar production began in the 1860s it was on the basis of a supply of indentured labour from India. In general, commercial farming in Natal came to rely heavily on foreign labour. (38)

During the century the ability of the African population to exercise free choice in relation to their access to land tended to decrease.

One factor here may have been overcrowding in the locations. More important, however, was the attempt by the commercial farming interest to close off access to those types of land which made possible the avoidance of labour-tenancy on their own farms. Earlier measures designed to "bring forth labour" had not succeeded in the manner in which the commercial farmers had anticipated. Taxation, heavy tariffs on African-purchased imports, the enforcement of European-style dress, fines, and medical fees were amongst the cash demands made of the African population of Natal as the state sought to exploit the African resource and as commercial farmers pressed for means to ease their labour shortage. When these demands are taken together with those of absentee landlords for rent, it is clear that the cash needs which had been forced upon the African population of Natal were quite high. A larger cash surplus had to be produced to meet these demands if conflict was to be avoided. It seems that one section of the African population was able to meet these demands through increased production for the market (39), whilst at the same time developing the competitiveness and security of their position by purchasing land. Not all these were acting as individuals, but were purchasing land through communal subscription. (40) For those who were unable to accrue the necessary surplus through these means, it was still possible to avoid labour service on a commercial farm by migration in search of temporary employment in the growing urban areas or at the mines. Fresh constraints on African movement and on the range of alternative opportunities open were still needed if the commercial farmers were to gain the labour which they required and at the price which they were prepared to pay for it.

We should not, however, paint too optimistic a picture. For some, these demands seem to have been met by entry into debt either with traders or with farmers. I suspect that these were families who lived far from the main lines of communication or urban population centres, or who, for some reason or other, were already settled on commercial farms. African indebtedness was an increasing aspect of life throughout the century and was probably one means used by farmers to keep their labour tenants. (41)

From the evidence so far presented, we would argue that the numbers seeking access to a particular category of land, or seeking a particular type of employment both inside Natal and elsewhere, were related to the relative "opportunity costs" of these opportunities. Taxation and other legislative enactments did not simply "bring forth" labour, as White commercial farmers found to their continual consternation. The relationship also involved considerations of the alternative choices available, and these differed from area to area and from time to time. We are dealing with quite complex "cost-benefit" ratios, if you like. This is clearly indicated both in the fluctuations in the labour force available to the mines and in the lack of "suitable" long-term African labour for commercial farms (and particularly for plantation farms) compared to the amount available to the mines, where inducements were a good deal higher. (42) It simply is not possible to talk in terms of a "dual economy". From the perspective of the African actors involved there was no such thing. There were a range of possibilities to consider which transcended any such structural distinctions.

As we have hinted, the picture we have painted of African resistance to proletarianization, both in the marketing of crops and in

the avoidance of White demands for cheap labour, was detrimental to one particular White interest group - the commercial farmers. One theme running throughout our period, once the period of cash-crop experimentation was over, is the attempts made by this group to use the state apparatus to destroy this independence. In this attack, however, they found as many enemies in the White community as they found allies, whilst the role of other White groups in the struggle was somewhat ambivalent. The missionary role is an example of this ambivalence. Whilst missionaries were usually sympathetic to African cash-cropping, they were hostile to the social practices of polygamy and lobolo which made this effective. The ambivalence goes even further than this, for the missionary ranks were not united. Some had bought substantial farms themselves. The struggle for the commercial farmers was not easy, and it is not until the turn of the century that they begin to assume a supreme position in Natal.

The key targets for the commercial farmers in this struggle were the African landowners and the means which made possible the extension of this class, those who controlled mission lands on which Africans were able to settle and to farm independently, the lands set aside by the government as locations, the freedom with which mine recruiters were able to operate in Natal, absentee landlords who permitted Africans to "squat" on their land, and other farmers who were prepared or able to offer improved conditions and so were able to attract a labour surplus whilst neighbours suffered labour shortage. Quite clearly one stereotype that we must abandon is the picture often presented in the literature of a relatively homogeneous White community more or less united in its "native policy". As we have suggested, there were several axes of conflict amongst Whites, and several of them revolved around the question of African activities.

One of the struggles which particularly interests me is that which revolved around the question of the various kinds of African "squattling". Well before the turn of the century the commercial farming lobby had succeeded in getting a series of laws on the statute book against "squattling", but there remained persistent complaints that these laws were not enforced. I suspect that the chief obstacle here was the large numbers of absentee landlords who were exacting profitable rents from African tenants. The same battle was fought around the question of enforcing occupation clauses on White-owned land. Once again, the farming lobby was unable to get these enforced and between 1900 and 1908 several attempts to enforce them by introducing a special tax on unoccupied land were also blocked. (43)

The tide began to turn for the commercial farmers in the early years of the new century. Land was beginning to pass out of the hands of the rentier class of absentee speculators and became added to the holdings of the commercial farmers. The Natal Land and Colonization Company, the largest holder of land of this type, was certainly amongst those who had begun to sell out to the commercial farmers. (44) Quite what the reason for this change was is not clear. Perhaps it was because Africans were unable to meet the rents now required, or perhaps because commercial farming had now pushed up the price of land to a level at which to sell was profitable.

The shift of rentier capital away from "Kafir farming" had profound implications for the African population of Natal. The commercial farmers who had purchased the lands from the absentee speculators were unwilling to perpetuate the existing rent-paying relationship with the African "squatters" on these lands. They saw these "squatters" as a valuable potential source of labour and sought to force a change in the relationship from one in which payment was in the form of rent to one in which labour-service was required. (45) At the same time they sought seriously to curtail the numbers of cattle that their African tenants were able to hold on the land. (46) Migration was the alternative open to these "squatters", but this was a far more unattractive possibility than it had been earlier in the century, from the "squatter's" point of view. The reserves were now overcrowded, the labour needs of the more easy-going pastoral farmers were already satisfied, the land available for rent-squatting was everywhere diminishing as "Kafir farmers" sold out to commercial farming interests, and the acreages of Crown lands still unalienated were now very small. Pressure was also being placed on the availability of mission lands for settlement by the commercial farming lobby at this time, and restrictions were beginning to be forced through against African land purchase, which by 1905 had amounted to some 283,473 acres. (47)

For those who were prepared to accept neither of these possibilities willingly, there was one further course of action. By 1905 there was a "climate of unrest" observed by the authorities in Natal, and soon after there occurred a series of disturbances that have since come to be known as the "Poll-Tax" or "Bambatha's" rebellion. The unrest in the Ixopo-Richmond area of the Natal midlands has, for example, been related to the fears of eviction prevalent at this time. In this area wattle plantations were expanding rapidly and the Natal Land and Colonization Company was disposing of lands previously occupied by Africans to White farmers. (48) It may, however, be a factor in the rebellion which has yet to be brought out fully.

One suspects that parallel developments had been taking place elsewhere in South Africa and that the Natives' Land Act of 1913, with its provisions against African land purchase, rent-squatting and share-cropping, was the legislative culmination of the shift in the balance of power in favour of the commercial farmers and should be seen as part of a programme reflecting their real and special interests. It should also be seen, together with earlier measures against "squatting", against absentee landownership, against the continued existence of mission reserves and African locations, restrictions on labour mobility, and the forced creation of cash wants, as one in a series of measures designed to reduce African cash-crop competition and to remove those other factors which acted as constraints to the regular flow of cheap and unorganized farm labour into the White commercial sector of the rural economies of South Africa.

The evidence for Natal (of which the above forms a small part) casts grave doubts on the model of South African historical developments which appears in the bulk of South African historical literature. The "dual economy" model is seen to be untenable. Throughout our period a complex network of economic choices and relationships was operating. There was, however, a tendency towards the creation of such a situation as various options came to be closed. This was as much the product of repressive legislation as of market forces. In South Africa, in fact, the two are inextricably linked. This repressive legislation was firmly rooted in the economic self-interest of particular White groups. Commercial farmers, amongst whom there was probably a high incidence of British settlers relative to those of Afrikaner extraction, were the main force operating here. In the construction of certain parts of this repressive framework, the commercial farmers met as much opposition from other White interest groups as from Africans. There was no consensus amongst the White community at this time as to who should benefit from African exploitation. The factor resolving this conflict within the White community in rural Natal was the shift of capital away from investment in "Kafir farming" enterprises. It was the commercial farmers who came initially to dominate the new Union parliament after 1910, and this was reflected in the Natives' Land Act of 1913.

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- (1) See, for example, G. McC. Theal, History of South Africa Since 1795 (1922), Vol. II, p. 354.
- (2) I hope during my research to look much more deeply into the nature of the political economy of the Zulu Empire and its changing relationship with the trading community at Port Natal.
- (3) M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.), The Oxford History of South Africa, Vol. I (Oxford, 1969), p. 364.
- (4) There is considerable dispute over just how "empty" Natal was. "Settler" historians have argued that Natal was totally depopulated at this time, whilst more recent scholarship suggests that some groups were able to survive by retreat into defensible concentrations and stresses the degree to which migration away from the area was temporary.

- (5) A. F. Hattersley, The British Settlement of Natal: A Study in Imperial Migration (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 46/7; Oxford History I, p. 364. For the text of the law, see G. W. Eybers, Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History (1918), pp. 162-4. One morgen is equivalent to 2 1/3 acres.
- (6) The picture of the Trekkers, whether "heroic" or "pathetic", is usually of a fairly homogeneous community of pastoral subsistence farmers. One wonders, however, whether some may have seen the Trek as a speculative exercise or whether they may have been acting as agents for persons in the Cape who saw it as such. It would also be interesting to know whether members of the Port Natal merchant community staked claims to land at this time.
- (7) Hattersley, op. cit., pp. 46/7.
- (8) Ibid., and p. 76.
- (9) Moodie to Montagu 9/3/1847, Brit. Parl. Papers 1847/8 xiii (980), p. 125, quoted by Hattersley, op. cit., pp. 62 & 76.
- (10) Behrens' case appears in the correspondence of the Immigration Commissioners in London to H. Merrivale, C.O. 386/65 (P.R.O.). These two examples make the Volksraad's complaint against the British Government and its "speculative politicians" somewhat difficult to understand. See Hattersley, op. cit., pp. 49 & 76.
- (11) Only 9 of Rudolph's claims were ratified. He left Natal though the date and motivation are unclear. Behrens' claim was ratified when Sir Harry Smith for the Imperial power grew concerned at the mass exodus of the early settlers from Natal. Behrens seems to have continued to hold his claim for speculative purposes rather than to farm it himself, for he is listed among the full-time officials of the Natal administration in 1852. See Blue Book of the Colony of Natal (Pietermaritzburg, 1852), pp. 59 and 65.
- (12) Oxford History I, p. 367.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) The term is, of course, a loaded one. It implies illegality. That is, it accepts the moral right of Whites to ownership of the land and to dictate who should or should not have access to it.
- (15) Natal Native Affairs Commission Report 1852/3 (Pietermaritzburg, 1853), p. 8.
- (16) Hattersley, op. cit., p. 48.
- (17) That is, so long as settlement was possible on unoccupied lands in Natal there would be little incentive for Africans to enter into labour relationships with Whites unless they had lost control of some other essential economic resource. In connection with this it would be interesting to know to what extent those Africans living in Natal and those who were returning migrants had been able to retain cattle herds intact through the period of the Mfecane. As I shall try to point out subsequently, cattle were also an essential social resource.

- (18) Oxford History I, p. 335.
- (19) E. H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, History of Natal (Pietermaritzburg, Natal UP, 1965), p. 65; Hattersley, op. cit. p. 315 and passim.
- (20) Ibid.
- (21) Hattersley, op. cit., p. 85, draws a firm link between the land speculators and the Cotton Company.
- (22) "Official" policy seems to have been to encourage such developments. Ibid.
- (23) Ibid., p. 225.
- (24) For example, Francis Collison's prospectus for potential immigrants: F. Collison, A Few Observations on Natal (1848). A Cape merchant in the 1820s and member of the Burgher Senate, he had purchased, through the agency of Henry Cloete's secretary, 14 farms from individual Voortrekkers in 1843 at an average price of 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per acre. 84,000 acres were involved. In the 1840s he moved the centre of his operations to London and set up an emigration scheme. He seems to have played some part in interesting Byrne in this kind of operation and sold him two farms on the basis of which Byrne's company began to try to attract settlers. They were, apparently, very poor farms. Hattersley, op. cit., pp. 77, 104/5 and 142.
- (25) Ibid., pp. 108, 114, 142, 148, 168, 175, 189 and 193.
- (26) Ibid., pp. 135, 229.
- (27) One British landowner, for example, seems to have shifted his whole enterprise out to Natal, including his substantial labour force, Ibid.
- (28) Brookes and Webb, op. cit., p. 66. Sugar was first grown experimentally in 1849 and was established as a successful commercial crop by the 1860s. Wattle cultivation began in 1864 but did not become established as a widely grown commercial crop until the 1880s. Maize was extensively cultivated by 1861. See N. Hurwitz, Natal Regional Survey Vol. 12: Agriculture in Natal 1860-1950 (Cape Town, Oxford, 1957), pp. 36, 52, and 62.
- (29) This is; perhaps, a somewhat too "classical" term. Arrighi prefers "effort price" in this context. See G. Arrighi, "Labour Studies in Historical Perspective. A Study of the Proletarianization of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia" in Journal of Development Studies (1970), pp. 197-234.
- (30) Natal NAC, op. cit., p. 27.
- (31) Ibid.
- (32) Ibid., part v, pp. 7 sqq.
- (33) Oxford History I, p. 385.

- (34) C. F. Muller, Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa (Cape Town & Pretoria, Academica, 1969), p. 189.
- (35) C. W. De Kiewiet, The Imperial Factor in South Africa: A Study in Politics and Economics (Cass, 1965), p. 192.
- (36) Ibid.
- (37) This was rendered relatively easy by the dispersal of the different categories of land throughout Natal.
- (38) By 1939, for example, that is well after the system of indentured labour from India had been abandoned, at least 40% of the labour employed on the sugar plantations were imported, mainly from Portuguese East Africa. See R. H. Smith, The Labour Resources of Natal (Oxford, 1950), p. 42. This pattern persists to this day and is a significant wage depressant.
- (39) See, for example, the remarks of the resident magistrate of Upper Umkomanzi district in 1876 on the means by which some members of the African population of his area had dealt with the demand for increased rents; S. Van der Horst, Native Labour in South Africa (Cape Town, 1942), p. 102. See also Hurwitz, op. cit., p. 62.
- (40) This is a persistent theme throughout the century and one into which I hope to go in some detail. Land was certainly being purchased by Africans as late as 1908; Cosmas Desmond, The Discarded People (Penguin, 1971), p. 68. In Natal, Africans owned or were in process of acquiring through purchase 238,473 acres of land by 1905; J. S. Marais, "African Squatting on European Farms in South Africa with special reference to the Cape Colony (1892-1913)", unpublished seminar paper (ICS, 1967), p. 5, f. 15.
- (41) Marais, ibid., p. 7.
- (42) It is a persistent feature of South African history that such employers do not seek to increase the supply of labour available to them by offering improved conditions. Quite the reason for this is not clear. Was it simply that they could get away with it? But, then, why the complaints of "labour shortage"? Was it traditional prejudice? But Legassick, amongst others, has discussed some of the problems inherent in this kind of explanation. Was it that some other constraint was operating? I suspect this may be the answer and wonder whether it was that the market situation was not yet such that large profits could be made from commercial farming, or that many of the farmers were heavily indebted to banks or other financiers.
- (43) S. Marks, Reluctant Rebellion (Oxford, 1970), p. 131.
- (44) Ibid., p. 193.
- (45) The Natives Land Act of 1913, by making rent-"squatting" illegal, provided the farmers with the backing of the state machine in effecting this change. See Marais, op. cit., p. 8.
- (46) Ibid.

- (47) Ibid., p. 5.
- (48) Marks, op. cit., p. 193. The Company seems to have been engaged at this time in selling its rural landholdings in Natal and reinvesting its capital resources in Durban city properties. Thus, while the total acreages owned by the Company declined, the income it derived from rents continued to rise. See my unpublished typescript, "The Natal Land and Colonisation Company, 1860-1948".