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The "New Native Policy" of the 1870s
"The manner in which the forces that bequeathed to modern South Africa its unique black proletariat were welcomed in the nineteenth century as forces of reform and civilization is one of the most amazing chapters in the country's social history." Thus De Kiewiet on the 1870s. One might expect "civilisation" to be equated with European culture in general, but it is very striking how often in the 1870s it was more narrowly equated (or closely associated) with the European institution of wage labour in particular. Examples abound; a few must suffice. "Looking as we are bound to look to the good that we can do to these people" wrote the novelist Anthony Trollope in 1878 after visiting South Africa, "rather than to the extension of our own dominion, we ought to rejoice greatly at their readiness in adapting themselves to the great European institution of daily work and weekly wages." Everywhere, he pointed out, work was being done by blacks. "This being so, I think we may congratulate ourselves on the civilization we have carried with us..." Urging that, despite Isandlwana, Zululand should be brought under British rule, the High Commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere, wrote: "The Zulus are, I believe, by nature a light-hearted, thoughtless, very intelligent and very teachable race...as easily led to habits of civilisation as they can be trained by Chaka or Cetywayo to become a man-slaying human military machine of enormous power." What little had been done by education and training "has shown that the Zulus are by no means indolent, unimprovable savages, but that they have, in a degree far superior to most barbarous races, the power of becoming at once a useful class of native labourers."
Robinson, the editor of *The Natal Mercury* and a future Prime Minister of Natal, wrote in 1870: "In South Africa alone we find the natives of that continent rendering voluntarily their own free labour, on their own soil, to the white settlers around them. Nowhere else do we find so happily exemplified the peaceful civilization of the savage."\(^a\) Natal colonists, nature's marxists, were apt to disdain so much as an ideological figleaf. "I will not detain this House" said the chairman of a select committee of the Legislative Council in 1873, "by making a long claptrap speech about the mission of the white man in civilising our native population. In this resolution, I propose to use civilisation, and morality, and Christianity as means to get labour."\(^b\)

"Amazing" implies bafflement, and constitutes something of an admission of failure. De Kiewiet was one of our greatest historians, but he was not without blemish. His liberalism led him to see social conflict as the product of misunderstanding and prejudice rather than as a real conflict of interest between classes and races. While he liberated himself from the prevalent racism of the society in which he grew up, he was less critical of some of its economic assumptions. Surprisingly, he sometimes resorted to scissors and paste methods of composition, and in the process incorporated nineteenth century ideology into his discussion. Epigrams and fine phrases were sometimes made to do the work of analysis.\(^c\)

These tendencies are illustrated in his discussion of the political economy of Natal.\(^d\) Like the Natal colonists, he was highly critical of the "Shepstone system", and condemned land speculators. Of the six million acres in Natal which had been alienated to whites, five million were in the hands of absentee landlords who held them in the hope of eventually selling them at a profit. De Kiewiet wrote that Natal was "unable to encourage immigration because the inducement of good and cheap land was gone. Although a vast space of waste and unoccupied land formed
the most common feature of the country, there was a serious land shortage." The wasteful distribution of land was a restraint upon a prosperous and expanding European settlement. The lack of an industrious and prosperous farming population handicapped economic development. But, according to De Kiewiet, "the natives and Europeans of Natal were both the victims of a vicious land system." The "serious overcrowding" of the black population in Natal was partly the result of "the operations of...land speculators." "It is one of the most familiar paradoxes of South African life that the same process which produced an exaggerated and uneconomical sparseness of European settlement was responsible for an equally exaggerated condensation of the native population. European underpopulation and native overpopulation were phenomena with similar causes." Shepstone was criticised by De Kiewiet for maintaining an "unenterprising policy of peace." "It was one thing to be versed in native matters and keep an unenterprising peace; it was another to affront boldly and constructively the confusion that was Natal's native policy." Shepstone pursued chimerical schemes for relocating Africans beyond the borders of Natal because he lacked "a land policy which sought to achieve within the limits of Natal a wiser and richer mode of association between the races." 

Now, from all this one might conclude that De Kiewiet did not know that the land owned by white absentees was occupied by black tenants. But it is quite clear that he knew this very well. Why then did he describe this land as "unoccupied"? In what sense was black overcrowding or "condensation" caused by absentee landlords? If land occupied by black tenants were used to attract white immigrants, what would become of the black tenants? What was the "wiser and richer mode of association between the races" that Shepstone failed to achieve?

When settlers and colonial officials attacked absentee landlords and the Shepstone system one knows exactly what they meant. By "unoccupied"
they meant unoccupied by whites. Black "squatters", as black tenants were significantly called, were regarded simply as a potentially valuable resource which had been allowed to run to waste, and which ought to be converted to usable labour at the disposal of white immigrants. The Shepstone system was condemned because it obstructed the flow of labour. It did this both by providing blacks with reserves of land, and by legalising polygyny and bridewealth, a system of "female slavery" which enabled black males to live in "barbarous idleness". The "mode of association between the races" that whites wanted was that of master and servant.

This vision is a good deal less humane than De Kiewiet's, but it is a good deal more intelligible. Economic development in the nineteenth century could only mean capitalist development, which necessarily implies proletarianisation. To favour economic development but deplore proletarianisation is surely to be guilty of evasiveness or confusion. Nothing could be more of a chimera than a "wiser and richer mode of association" which would achieve economic development while avoiding proletarianisation. The fact has to be faced that economic development is good for some but bad for others. In the long run it may be good for all, but the long run is apt to be very long indeed."

The point may be made more generally; which brings us back to "civilisation" and its connection with wage labour. The word implies a society in which human potentialities are able to be fully developed in the arts and sciences and all areas of achievement. This implies a fairly large proportion of the population (more than a mere handful of rulers) relieved from the need to produce their basic necessities; and this necessarily means that the rest of the population have to do it for them as well as for themselves. As long as the productivity of labour is low, direct producers in "civilised" societies do more work for less reward than do their counterparts in "uncivilised" societies. Some pay the cost
of civilisation while others gain the benefit. Some potentialities are
developed because others are stunted. Civilisation rests upon the ex-
ploitation of one class by another. "The slavery of one person", as Marx
put it, is "a means to the full human development of another." Marx's
hostility to capitalism was based on the fact that while it so stimulated
the forces of production and raised the productivity of labour as to
create the possibility for the first time of the full human development
of all, without exploitation, the immediate effect was to intensify and
prolong and render more meaningless and monotonous the labour of the
masses. To this was added a good measure of snobbery. Marx castigated
bourgeois economists who "preach the slavery of the masses in order that
a few crude and half-educated parvenus might become 'eminentspinners',
'extensive sausage-makers', and 'influential shoe-black dealers'." The
pioneers of the industrial revolution were not inspiring exemplars of
civilisation. But Lord Clark himself was the great-great-grandson of a
spinner who achieved eminence by inventing the cotton reel. And Capital
could not have been written without the surplus value appropriated from
the workers of Engels & Ermen, cotton spinners of Barmen and Manchester.

There was a continuing tradition in European culture which extolled
the small farmer as a sort of ideal, and this told against the advocacy
of proletarianisation. Added to this was the lack of clarity as to the
connection between proletarianisation and wage labour. Nineteenth cen-
tury liberals tended to assume that wage labour (unlike slavery) was
somehow natural, and simply the normal state of affairs. Peasants
producing for the market were sometimes conflated with wage labourers,
the assumption being that the same men would perform both functions. That
they would rather be their own masters than someone else's servants does
not always seem to have been clearly grasped. "Habits of industry", like
"civilisation", was a phrase which could be applied to both categories.
Such phrases helped to perform the essential function of enabling the
dominant class to believe that what was good for them was in some sense good for everyone.

However dimly it may have been perceived, there is a logic to the association between civilisation and proletarianisation. "Civilisation" at all times requires appropriation of surplus value. "Civilisation" for nineteenth century Englishmen meant a developed society something like nineteenth century England. The "civilisation" of South Africa therefore required economic growth, which required capital accumulation, which required appropriation of surplus value, which, in an age when direct coercion was outlawed, required free labour, which in turn required proletarianisation. As the quotations at the start of this paper suggest, a view consistent with this would come equally naturally to metropolitan as to colonial Englishmen. But in De Kiewiet's Imperial Factor it is strongly suggested, though not clearly stated, that the urge to proletarianise was peculiarly South African, an irrational product of the ignorance and stagnation of the frontier and that the impulses coming from Britain were very different. De Kiewiet was reacting against an albcentric nationalism which condemned interference by an Imperial government supposedly ignorant of local conditions. This led him to attribute an unrealistic degree of enlightenment and benevolence to the British government and caused his account of Lord Carnarvon's confederation scheme and the "new native policy" of the 1870s to be seriously misleading.

Carnarvon gave the need for a "uniform native policy" as the principal reason for his confederation policy. De Kiewiet saw this in humanitarian terms. Carnarvon's aim, he believed, was "to find some more ample place for the native population", to "win for the natives a higher and better place in the future of the land they lived in", "to create an order in which there was room and hope not merely for Dutch and English, but also for the native majority of the population." The failure of confederation
was a "failure of high motives and worthy ends":27 a "failure to do anything to stem the torrent that was rushing the native population into political helplessness and economic hopelessness."28

Carnarvon's intervention in the Langalibalele affair in Natal gives an impression of humanitarianism, and, indeed, he was, as any Englishman might have been, genuinely affronted at the unEnglish perversions of legality that took place in Natal. But it would be unwise to conclude from this that he was opposed to the reduction of most Africans to the proletarian status of most Englishmen, or that he would have thought of it as "economic hopelessness".

Carnarvon sometimes expressed the hope that a strong central government would be more self-confident and less liable to panic than weak and divided governments and consequently more disposed to act justly towards blacks.29 De Kiewiet took this very seriously - rather more so than Carnarvon himself.30 When Sir George Grey had earlier put forward the same argument in support of his confederation scheme, Carnarvon, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies had rejected it as absurd, and commented, "I am disposed to think on the contrary that the present separation and consequent sense of individual weakness is the best safeguard for fairness towards the native tribes and for peace on the frontier."31

In August 1874 we catch a glimpse of Carnarvon in the process of persuading himself that Grey was right after all: "Half the cruelty and injustice to a native race arises from fear:- and the union of the States would give a consciousness of strength which might perhaps go some way to make a humaner and kindlier [policy] more likely. But it might also have another effect..."32 No doubt Carnarvon eventually succeeded in persuading himself that confederation would be a good thing for blacks,33 but it is scarcely possible to believe, in the light of these statements, that this was why he wanted it in the first place. He was opposed to the illegality and violence that settlers were prone to in
times of panic, but there is no reason to believe that he opposed their wish to ensure white supremacy or secure adequate supplies of labour. Quite the contrary, in fact. Far from wishing to "stem the torrent that was rushing the native population into political helplessness and economic hopelessness", Carnarvon was principally motivated by the fear that this "torrent" was drying up.

When Carnarvon became Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1874 he was confronted by problems in two parts of South Africa, the Diamond Fields (Griqualand West) and Natal. With the former we are not concerned, except as the principal source of supply of the firearms with which Africans in South Africa became extensively equipped in the 1870s. The 1873 Langalibalele "revolt" in Natal arose out of this acquisition of firearms. When Chief Langalibalele of the Hlubi failed to send his people's firearms in for registration (or, as was feared, confiscation) he was summoned to Pietermaritzburg. Fearing treachery, he made a variety of excuses for not going. An armed force was sent against him, and he and most of his people fled to Lesotho. A group of Hlubi were intercepted by a force at the top of the Bushmans River pass. Since the commander stuck punctiliously to his instructions not to fire the first shot, his attempts to persuade the Hlubi to return to Natal were unsuccessful. Finding themselves becoming surrounded, the force withdrew, and while doing so five of them, three colonists and two Africans, were shot in the back. This unleashed a wave of anger and fear among the whites of Natal. The remaining Hlubi, and their neighbours, the Ngwe, who had done nothing more than harbour some of the fleeing Hlubi's cattle, were driven off their land, between 150 and 200 were killed, their cattle were seized, and prisoners were compelled to enter into contracts with white employers. When Langalibalele was captured he was accorded a travesty of a trial by a special tribunal composed largely of his accusers under what was deemed to be "native law", and sent to Robben island.
Carnarvon restored the Ngwe and some of the Hlubi to their land, ordered the Ngwe to be compensated for their other losses, and released the prisoners from forced labour. He did not allow Langalibalele to return to Natal, but removed him from Robben island to a farm near Cape Town. This intervention was strongly opposed by Natal’s colonists, who feared the imposition of the doctrinaire philanthropy of Exeter Hall. They need not have worried. Carnarvon felt obliged to correct some of the injustices inflicted on the Hlubi and the Ngwe, but the conclusion he drew about the Africans in Natal generally was not that they were oppressed but that they were out of hand.

The Imperial parallel that came to many people’s minds was the Morant Bay rebellion of 1865 in Jamaica. The principal clerk of the Africa department at the Colonial Office, searching for precedents, turned to the files on Jamaica. Edward Jenkins of the Aborigines Protection Society, writing to the Colonial Office, compared the events in Natal to "those which some years since arrested public attention in Jamaica." Carnarvon’s private confidant, the historian James Anthony Froude, whom he sent to South Africa in 1874 to investigate conditions, commented that "we have seen in Jamaica how ill constitutional government works in these mixed societies." He urged Carnarvon "to treat Natal as Jamaica has been treated and to resume the entire control", to "make Natal a second Jamaica" and bring both black and white under direct rule. He also remarked that "Natal is a beautiful country and would soon become as rich as Jamaica in its best days if the labour question could adjust itself."

Like the Langalibalele affair, the Jamaican uprising of 1865 had excited fears of a general massacre of the greatly outnumbered whites, and had been suppressed with unnecessary ferocity. As in Natal, the alleged ringleader was convicted in a trial which was a travesty of law and justice: "martial law" was the name given to arbitrariness in Jamaica, cor-
responding to "native law" in Natal. As in Natal, the Governor was recalled and the constitution reformed so as to bring the country under more direct metropolitan control.  

I am inclined to think that the socio-economic background of the Jamaican revolt also influenced the view taken of Natal in the 1870s. With the emancipation of the slaves, the white-controlled plantation economy of Jamaica had gone into severe decline. By 1870 exports were half what they had been in 1832, and more than half of the sugar estates had fallen into ruin and been abandoned. This was mainly the result of labour shortage, as freedmen took up peasant agriculture, increasing numbers in time squatting on ruined sugar estates, so that the decay of the plantation economy fed upon itself. The perfectly rational decision to switch from wage labour to peasant production was viewed with the strongest disapproval by planters and other white employers. Coupled with the growth of syncretic Afro-Christian cults among the freedmen, it was seen as a sort of atavism or reversion to barbarism. The white population declined both absolutely and as a proportion of the total. They declined in power, too; representative government was abolished in Jamaica as much because of a fear that blacks would gain control of the Assembly as because of the partiality of its existing white majority. In time the decline of the estates began to harm the peasantry themselves, by reducing the market for the provisions they produced. When drought struck in 1863-5, few could find relief in wage labour as they had done on earlier such occasions. Poverty, partial and unsympathetic administration, and attempts to evict squatters led to increasing tension. A petition against evictions was rejected, the crowd refused to disperse, was fired on, and became an insurrectionary mob, burning and killing.

There are a number of parallels with Natal. There too the whites were greatly outnumbered by blacks, and the black population was increasing while the white stagnated or even declined as settlers were drawn to the
diamond fields. If blacks in Jamaica were reverting to barbarism, blacks in Natal, it was complained, had never emerged from it. The franchise laws in Natal ensured there was no possibility of blacks gaining control of the legislature, but they were becoming more powerful in the more dangerous sense that they remained organised on military tribal lines under their chiefs, and were acquiring firearms. The white-controlled economy in Natal was stagnant and in danger of decline as a result of labour shortage, which was largely caused by blacks "squatting" on absentee-owned land. There was, said Carnarvon, a "great urgency for immediate reforms"; they were "essential to the prosperity of the colony in its development, and are also essential to the improvement of that country if it is ever to be brought to a state of civilisation." If this were not done "you would end by having a black colony, which means decay of its resources, the absence of prosperity, and general falling away of its means of subsistence."12

Carnarvon was speaking of Natal, but he might have been speaking of Jamaica. There is no definite proof that Jamaica influenced his perceptions of Natal, but it seems likely. The Jamaican revolt caused a considerable stir, and the preceding socio-economic changes attracted much attention. Carnarvon had been Secretary of State for the Colonies from July 1866 to March 1867, when the attempts by several eminent Victorians to prosecute the Governor of Jamaica for murder kept the subject in the public eye. There are many statements by Carnarvon and his associates about Natal which suggest a Jamaican frame of reference. Viewing them in this light causes one, at the very least, to take them more seriously. Interpretation is a matter of selection. De Kiewiet gave special prominence to what seem to me to be more or less perfunctory statements intended to mollify public opinion or allay stirrings of conscience. He paid much less attention to statements which, viewed in the light of their authors' probable preconceptions, fears and assumptions, seem to me much more important.
The decline of the Jamaican plantation economy and the Morant Bay revolt had important effects on race attitudes in the nineteenth century, and in this indirect sense are certainly relevant to the subject of this paper. It was the spectacle of peasant farming amid the ruins of formerly flourishing West Indian plantations that provoked Carlyle's notorious diatribe "upon the Nigger Question." Abolitionists, assuming wage labour to be a normal characteristic of civilised society, and believing it to be always more efficient than slavery, had argued that the plantations would not suffer from emancipation. The event had proved them disastrously wrong, and the freedmen were held to be blameworthy for having sought to better their condition. The growth of Afro-Christian cults among the freedmen in Jamaica alienated the missionaries who had formerly been their champions. The conclusion drawn by many was that blacks were not fit for freedom. Disillusion with the results of emancipation in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Americas probably had more to do with the growth of racism and the decline of philanthropy in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century than the doctrines of "scientific racism", which seem more ideological rationalisation than fundamental cause. There appears to have been a widespread feeling that philanthropists had been exposed and confounded and that the long reign of sentimental negrophilism was over.

Another stimulus to philanthropy in the early nineteenth century (besides slavery) had been the decline in indigenous populations in the Americas, Australasia, and elsewhere in the face of European colonisation. But later in the nineteenth century it came to be regarded as inevitable that inferior races or people of primitive culture would dwindle in the face of a stronger race and a higher civilisation. Darwinism could be used to support the naturalness of such a development. Opinion was divided as to whether Africans were destined to go the same way. They had after all been used to supply the place of vanishing Amerindians. In West Africa it was the Europeans who tended to die
Nevertheless there is evidence that it was feared, hoped, or simply regarded as inevitable that the Bantu-speaking people of South Africa would follow the example of the Khoisan and diminish in the face of European advance, and that South Africa would literally become a "white man's country". By the 1870s it was clearly apparent, and widely commented on, that this was not happening or going to happen. South African blacks, it seemed, were immune to the effects that "civilization and brandy" or "civilization or whisky" had had elsewhere. Sometimes the growth of the black population was reconciled with the expectation of its decline by postulating, in Carnarvon's words, "an inexhaustible swarm of warlike Native Tribes, pouring down from the North." The mildness of British rule which preserved or attracted Africans was a subject for self-congratulation, but it made the South African colonies of settlement unlike any other, and this constituted a problem, which needed a solution. Philanthropy scarcely seemed necessary when the natives were so well able to look after themselves. While in favour of what it saw as justice for all, the Colonial Office in the 1870s was practically more concerned with protecting whites against blacks than blacks against whites.

As a first step to the solution of South Africa's problems, Carnarvon sent his friend, J A Froude, the historian, to South Africa to investigate conditions. The fact that he chose this disciple of Carlyle for such a task should surely make one doubt Carnarvon's commitment to philanthropy. Froude reported from Natal:

"I cannot but regard the state of feeling here as exceedingly serious. The colonists find themselves a small minority surrounded by multitudes of daring natives who will not work for them or who work very irregularly and who swarm over the frontier in increasing numbers owing to the ease and license which they enjoy under British rule."

The Imperial government had made a mistake in maintaining the integrity of the tribes and supporting the authority of the chiefs, and conferring the arbitrary powers of "Supreme Chief" on the Governor. Tribes were
growing in wealth and power and chiefs were becoming more independent and insubordinate. Colonists resented Africans' command of labour through chiefly authority and female slavery (i.e. polygyny and bridewealth) while they themselves were denied such powers of coercion. They also feared insurrection. They were tempted to exaggerate any evidence of disaffection in order to create an opportunity for the draconian powers of the Supreme Chief to be used. The result was a lack of normal control interspersed with such lamentable episodes as the brutal suppression of the Langalibalele "revolt". Instead of the existing mixture of weakness and ferocity, Froude advocated the scrapping of representative government, the dissolution of the tribes, the imposition of direct control by the Imperial government, the establishment of a police force, and the enforcement of vagrancy laws and contracts for service. The Africans of Natal, Froude emphasised, though out of hand politically, had excellent qualities. "Life and property are nowhere safer than in Natal and the fraction of them who consent to work are admirable servants." 

Froude described Natal as "the powder magazine of South Africa". Carnarvon wrote that "Natal - & generally speaking S. Africa - is the most dangerous point at present in the whole Colonial Empire." Sir Garnet Wolseley was sent out to Natal as much or more for his military as his administrative abilities. He asked for a fast despatch boat so that he could summon all available troops from the Cape and Mauritius without delay if necessary. The marines currently in Japan were ordered to proceed to Natal and put themselves under the command of Wolseley, and an additional naval squadron visiting the Cape was ordered to give whatever support and assistance might be required.

Wolseley's account of Natal confirmed in essentials that of Froude, though, as a soldier, he gave greater emphasis to security. The existing system of native administration, he said, was cheap, which is why it had been adopted, and it had preserved the peace. So why change it?
The answer is that, under this system, not only has barbarism been legalised and perpetuated, but its strength has been fostered. So far from the Colony gaining strength during these years of false peace, it is actually weaker now than it was years ago."

When the system was instituted the black population of Natal had been 100,000. It was now 350,000.

This great increase to the native population has chiefly been occasioned by the large influx of Kafirs from all the neighbouring States, especially from Zululand. Our rule is so mild, that to the Kafir living under the stern native regulations of the Transvaal or Orange Free State, or under the strict military discipline and barbarous laws of Cetywayo and his predecessors, Natal is a sort of earthly paradise, where he can live in slothful ease, almost entirely unsubjected to any claims upon his labour, or to the performance of those duties that, under other Governments, he is forced to pay to his supreme Chief. His wants are few, and the taxes he has to pay here are very light, and the result of our past policy is that Natal is now rather a Kafir than a white Colony; and that if this policy is persisted in the whole province will become fully occupied by natives, who, learning of their own strength, will not long brook a European rule over them.

In the past Natal had been seen as a haven; by the present generation it was regarded as birthright. "By the past generation we were regarded as protectors; to the young men of today we appear in the light of alien rulers, who tax them for occupying districts and farms which they have learned to regard as their own." There had been virtually no advance in civilisation. "With few exceptions the Kafir of Natal is as idle, as barbarous, and as superstitious now as he was twenty years ago." Their primary allegiance was to their own chiefs, who had a vested interest in the perpetuation of barbarism.

Meanwhile the white population had remained stationary, and its military power had declined since so many men had left for the diamond and gold fields that the proportion of men to women had decreased considerably, and those that were left were no longer expert shots owing to the disappearance of game. "On the part of the whites there is an ever growing sense of insecurity; they hesitate to invest largely in a colony which threatens soon to pass altogether into the hands of the black man." Many talked of emigrating.
A "new native policy" was needed to prevent "a war hereafter between the two races; a war that all thoughtful men who have studied the question, must see to be inevitable sooner or later, if affairs are allowed to slide on in their present dangerous condition." Wolseley urged that the power of the chiefs should be reduced, Africans should be disarmed, and those squatting on crown land should be charged a rent. Under his direction one of his aides, Major Butler, drew up a scheme for the compulsory lease or sale to white immigrants of land held by absentees. Wolseley warned that it would be too dangerous to attempt to effect such changes without a considerable increase in the garrison. He also asked for an imperial grant of 20 000 pounds per annum for five years towards the cost of establishing a mounted police force to enforce the new native policy. He pointed out that at the Cape Sir George Grey had been granted 40 000 pounds for several years "to be expended in breaking up the power of the Kafir chiefs there, and with the same objects in view that I have now before me here." This policy, he added, had been "crowned with complete success." Wolseley backed up his dispatch with a private letter to Carnarvon.

I have in no way overstated my feeling as to the insecurity of our tenure of power here. The extreme mildness of our rule and the policy we have adopted towards the Natives have turned Natal into a Native Reserve. That policy has been dictated by high philanthropic sentiments, and has been apparently based upon a belief in the equality of rights possessed by every human being...Believe me, that we must either be masters or servants here, and that unless we are able to rule firmly as well as equitably, we had better for our reputation as a great country cease to hold Natal as a British Colony altogether."

The advice Carnarvon received from the advisers he appointed was not of a philanthropic nature. There is no sign that he disagreed with their views. He told the House of Lords:

The tribes live in a state of segregation, and are the centres of armed strength - it may be even of rebellion. Barbarous customs, which it was the intention 25 years ago gradually to get rid of, have been in some respects strengthened rather than weakened. In
the interests both of the public safety and of civilization, it is important that this state of affairs should come to an end."

There has not in my opinion been that control over Native affairs which is required by the public interest. The result is that there has been a stagnation, so to speak, of many of the industrial interests of the Colony. There has been - as I think Sir Garnet Wolseley pointed out to the Legislature - that want of internal security which leads in the long run, to a want also of external confidence - which hinders emigration and which prevents the real development of the Colony.*

The "new native policy" Carnarvon envisaged for Natal was one which would seek to do away with tribal organisation, chiefly power, and native law, and replace communal by individual land tenure.** He also wished to see some scheme "under which the proprietors of land unoccupied, or occupied only by Kafirs, may be required to grant leases on reasonable terms to European settlers."***

Carnarvon sent Froude to South Africa, not only to investigate conditions in Natal, but also to investigate the prospects of confederation between the colonies and republics. Froude reported favourable on republican native policy:

The Dutch in the Free States manage their relations with the natives successfully. They have severe laws but no harrying of tribes or arbitrary violence. They have few coloured men among them. Those that they have are fed and clothed and made to work and though not slaves, to be bought and sold, they are not allowed to be idle or leave their farms. In consequence they have no trouble there and you may be certain that the Free States will never consent to come into a federation where they will be forced to conform to any other system.**

The question of confederation, Froude told Carnarvon, depended on whether or not "England would ever permit a system of forced labour to be established here":

If you would allow the British Colonies at the Cape to adopt the policy towards the natives which the Dutch employ so successfully in Java, the Free States would immediately come in. A powerful Cape Dominion would be established which would become wealthy and progressive, it would push its frontiers far into the interior and would be thoroughly conservative and loyal to the British connexion. For myself I believe that the Natives would in the long
run be happier under such a policy and certainly would have a better chance of becoming useful industrious men.

Any attempt to require a different native policy would simply result in "perpetual collision" between Britain and the South African confederation. 183

Froude's remarks on native policy in the republics were written before he had visited them. When he got to the Transvaal he found things were rather different to what he had supposed. He found it was not the case that the Dutch "had few coloured men among them." "You perhaps do not realise" he wrote to Carnarvon, "the enormous disproportion of numbers between the Blacks & the Whites. If the Whites were drilled and organised they might laugh at the notion of danger - but they are defenceless both here and in Natal." The "native problem" Froude discovered was just as bad in the Transvaal as in Natal. "You ought to be here to see how absurdly the policy of the Transvaal has been misrepresented" he told Carnarvon. "The Kafirs are as idle as they please. Here as in Natal the women are the slaves of the men and you have a vast and increasing colonial population growing up in idleness." 64 In fact Froude began to doubt the wisdom of bringing the Transvaal under the British flag, despite its mineral riches. Unless, he told Carnarvon, "you can make up your mind to introduce some system of apprenticeship by which the future generation of natives can be educated in industrious habits...the Transvaal...will prove a perilous acquisition." 65

Carnarvon could never agree to any system of forced labour, which he knew would be unacceptable to British public opinion. Nevertheless, when he sent Froude out again in the following year, to represent Great Britain at the proposed conference between the republics and colonies in South Africa, he told him:

If you can get into Conference, the native question seems to me one of the first, if not the first, matter to approach. It is of very
great importance to see whether you can suggest any common system of treatment which shall be clear of the reproach of a system of servitude, and yet shall put that moral screw on the native which is desirable for the safety and interest of all parties."

This conference never took place, but Carnarvon managed to get together something of a conference in London in 1876. In his opening speech Carnarvon stressed the question of security. The "several native tribes" he said, "may easily constitute a serious and common danger to the whole European population." Confederation would certainly create strength, diminish the risk which is inseparable from the existence of these great native tribes, preserve the European communities from sudden panics, and tend at least to tranquillize the native mind, because the natives would see in times of disturbance that there was little chance of their being able to combine for mischief.

He noted that "the usual method of payment in South Africa for work done and labour given seems to be by arms," and commented: "It is a dangerous form of wages." Means should be found to "raise and improve, and gradually bring within the pale of a fuller civilization those native tribes who have so strong a claim upon us." It was desirable "so to incorporate them into the body politic, as to make them a source ultimately of strength rather than of danger and of difficulty." Carnarvon did not specify in what capacity they were to be incorporated into a common society, but if employers were not able to lure labour with guns, something presumably would have to take their place. Froude, who had been sent to South Africa to represent Great Britain, was deemed to represent Griqualand West at the London conference, and he took the opportunity to propose a resolution on his favourite subject of apprenticeship, which was passed, and concurred in by Carnarvon. It was agreed that "no permanent improvement can be expected in the condition of the natives of South Africa until the native children are generally brought up in habits of industry" and that an endeavour should be made "to persuade the native parents to place their children under the care of the farmers and artizans, where they may learn to become useful members of society."
The most explicit statement concerning the place of Africans in the proposed new confederation is found in a confidential memorandum drawn up by Edward Fairfield to explain the Colonial Office's South African policy to the cabinet. Confederation, he argued, was needed to provide a propitious framework for economic development.

But the most immediately urgent reason for a general union is the formidable character of the native question, and the importance of a uniform, wise, and strong policy in dealing with it. In Natal alone, there is a population of over 300,000 Kafirs, little influenced by civilized institutions, rendering habitual obedience to their hereditary Chiefs, and to a certain extent armed and trained to a military life.

In the Cape there were 250,000 blacks, an equal number in the Transkei, and about 40,000 each in Griqualand West and the Orange Free State.

The South African Republic has about the same number within its occupied parts; while beyond these outposts of colonization, to north-west, north-east, and north, lie native nations numbering hundreds of millions of inhabitants, who, ever since we have record of them, have always been pushing southwards, impelled by causes and objects which are but imperfectly understood.

It is this continuous pressure southwards which imparts the most formidable aspect to native affairs in South Africa. In other quarters of the globe where colonists and natives have met as rival occupiers of the soil, the latter were limited in numbers, and when they dwindled before the destructive agencies of civilization, their places were not supplied, and the native question in time settled itself by the disappearance of the natives; but in South Africa the native question will not so be disposed of. The number of natives with whom we have to deal is increasing and practically unlimited.

White unity and concerted action were therefore essential.

It was, then, primarily, with a view to lay the foundation of a sound system of self-protection against native danger, and to shift the burden of that protection on the right shoulders, that Lord Carnarvon moved in the question of Confederation.

It was, Fairfield pointed out, differences over native policy that caused the separation between colonies and republics in the first place. For many years there were reports from the interior of violence committed by commandoes and virtual slavery under the guise of apprenticeship. But
things had changed; Boer policy was now much milder, and it was not beyond
hope that the economic advantages of confederation might incline the re-
publics to relieve blacks from their legal disabilities in respect of
property and personal rights. "On the other hand" he continued, "their
are points in the Boer policy towards the natives which are not unworthy
of our attentive consideration." English policy had been unselfish and
humane; "but our policy has sacrificed our safety and our commerce to
uninformed theory and sentiment"; and the result was the dangerous and
difficult situation in Natal.

The Dutch make the Kafirs work; they do not allow them to squat and
multiply in savage sloth. Undoubtedly a Kafir should be compelled,
as the Dutch compel him, to work. The problem is how to make him
work, and yet to make him work so that his work shall be of profit
to himself and not solely of profit to his white masters. 6

Fairfield did not attempt a solution to this problem; but it might be
suggested that the only way to make people work for others without actu-
ally enslaving them (which is what the problem seems to be) is by
proletarianising them.

There was much confusion over what the "new native policy" of the 1870s
was to be. Natal colonists at first feared the imposition of impractical
schemes of philanthropy. Froude and Fairfield praised republican policy.

The Molteno ministry at the Cape commented that

with regard to the native policy, the crude and impracticable ideas
of Mr Froude, as expressed by himself, have led some to entertain
the opinion that the Imperial Government are prepared to inaugurate
a system which will be retrograding from the principles which have
hitherto been acted on by the Government and Legislature of this
Colony.

They warned that "the introduction of violent changes based on theory
will... lead to disastrous consequences." 69 The Colonial Office were puz-
zled by this statement. A marginal comment reads: "There has been no
proposal of this kind; on contrary Cape system has been praised." 70 And,
indeed, in a confidential memorandum written by Fairfield only a few
months earlier he stated "It was a current phrase in the Colonial Office some years ago, that the Government of Natal had 'shown peculiar aptitude for dealing with native questions.' We have now virtually reconsidered that opinion, and are modelling Natal policy on the policy of the Cape." 71

How could Fairfield commend Cape policy in December 1875 and republican policy in January 1876? What did they have in common, which Natal policy lacked? Fairfield was quite explicit about the nature of the merit of republican policy - that it succeeded in extracting labour from blacks. The founder of Cape native policy, Sir George Grey, had been very insistent on the importance of obtaining labour, though his method was proletarianisation rather than coercion. 72 The Shepstone policy in Natal had notoriously failed to obtain adequate supplies of labour from its black inhabitants. When Granville had advocated the annexation of Basutoland to Natal on the grounds that it had "shown a peculiar aptitude for dealing with native questions" 77 cheap and trouble-free administration had been the sole aim in view. By the 1870s, with the mineral discoveries, and the changes they had set in motion, the aims of "native policy" had changed.

It is impossible to share De Kiewiet's belief that the aim of British policy in the 1870s was to prevent blacks from being forced into "political helplessness and economic hopelessness", if the latter is understood to mean proletarianisation. There is no doubt that Carnarvon intended to bring to an end the political independence of African polities and incorporate them into a British dominion. And it is a remarkable fact that the constitution drawn up by white South Africans in 1909 was more liberal as regards the franchise than that drawn up by the Colonial Office under Carnarvon, since the latter failed to provide any representation for Africans in the federal legislature. 78 No doubt it would be too much to say that Carnarvon wished to proletarianise the entire black population.
of southern Africa. His intentions were not so stark and explicit, and nor was the connection between proletarianisation and wage labour so clearly grasped. The Hfengu were regularly commended for the progress they had made in civilisation, and peasant production under missionary auspices was a large part of the reason for the favourable image they projected. But Africans in Natal who avoided wage labour by producing for the market received no such commendations, presumably because the "labour shortage" in Natal was particularly severe. It is scarcely possible to doubt that the ultimate role envisaged for most Africans was as members of the working class of the proposed new dominion. The fact that they were not disappearing in the face of European colonisation and seemed likely to remain a permanent majority of the population made this virtually a necessity. The forces that bequeathed to South Africa its black proletariat were as much Imperial as local. On theoretical grounds one should not expect Imperial policy to have been opposed to the making of a black working class in South Africa, and empirical investigation shows that it was not. Milner's account of his ultimate goal applies equally to Carnarvon's: "a self-governing White Community, supported by well-treated and justly governed black labour from Cape Town to the Zambesi."

Finally, a few remarks about the black responses to the "new native policy" of the 1870s may be in order. Resistance in Natal took a mediated form. Theophilus Shepstone, the veteran Secretary for Native Affairs, had throughout his long career resisted the colonists' attempts to proletarianise the Africans of Natal, and, without explicitly disagreeing with Carnarvon, he did his best to obstruct the implementation of the new policy. He strongly advised Wolseley not to attempt to disarm the Africans nor to levy any tax or rent on Africans squatting on Crown land. His reasons were that such attempts would be resisted, and that the government was simply not strong enough to carry out such a policy. It was
not philanthropy, therefore, but black power which protected the Africans of Natal.

Zulu resistance necessarily took a more active form. Jeff Guy has stated that the Zulus fought in 1879 to save themselves from becoming members of the proletariat. This might seem to attribute to them an implausible degree of prescience, but there is some evidence which suggests that they did indeed know what they were up against. The missionary Robert Robertson, who was very much in favour of a British takeover of Zululand, wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal in December 1877 that "should a war take place, the number of sympathizers with the English would be largely increased if whoever is in command were able to proclaim that no one would be taxed or obliged to work. These two things are the great horror of the Zulus in contemplating such an eventuality." Similarly, albeit in more muted terms, a Natal African border guard reported earlier in the same year: "In general conversation with the Zulus I learn that the old men wish for British rule so that they may live in peace, but the young men would like to fight, they say, before they would become servants and have to pay taxes." Subjects of the Zulu King contrasted their position favourable with the tax-paying labourers of Natal, whom they called amakhefula, a name derived from "kaffir". But many Natal Africans were not labourers; there was a class more wretched than themselves, with which they could favourably contrast their position, and into which they feared being driven. Robertson reported that it was a common opinion among Natal Africans that "if the Zulu power were ended, the white men would be able to do what they liked with them, make Coolies of them, etc."  

By their heroic defence of their country at Isandlwana the Zulus preserved their independence for a little longer. The contrast between the Zulus' manifest desire for peace and the British High Commissioner Sir Bartle Frere's equally manifest desire for war, and the unjust, unneces-
sary, bloody and expensive nature of the war he unleashed upon the Zulus produced a revulsion in Britain and made it politically impossible to follow up a defeat of the Zulus with an annexation of their country. Sir Garnet Wolseley was sent out once again to end the war as rapidly as possible, which he did by assuring the Zulus that there would be no annexations and no confiscations. But he feared that the moment his back was turned the frustrated Frere would upset his Zulu settlement. This professional rivalry produced a degree of insight into the socially conflictful nature of "progress" and "civilisation" which one would not have expected from Wolseley's earlier sojourn in South Africa. To Wolseley, therefore, may be left the last word.

The 'anti-black' party with which he [Frere] has associated himself is brim full of goody-goody clap-trap sentiment as to the necessity of spreading Christianity and civilization amongst their "heathen brethren". This secures for their party at home the sympathy and consideration of "Aborigines Protection" and other kindred societies, and the party is regarded as the true lovers and well wishers of the Kaffir...Now far from this party being the well wishers of the native, those composing it are loudest in their cry to enact laws to coerce the native to work for the White man. They argue that to do so will be to the native's eventual benefit & therefore he should be forced to labour. They clamour against allowing land to be appropriated as native locations, and that Zululand should be parcelled out as farms to White men...Their plans and schemes for Native management for which they will give you a hundred plausibly righteous reasons are all based upon the assumption that the land belongs to the White man [and] that the native was designed to be the settler's servant.
NOTES


6. A recent short critical biography is Christopher Saunders, C.W. De Kiewiet, Historian of South Africa (Cape Town, 1986)


8. De Kiewiet, p.188.

9. Ibid., pp.190-1.

10. Ibid., p.188.

11. Ibid., p.31.

12. Ibid., p.191.

13. Ibid., p.195.

14. Ibid., p.32.

15. Ibid., p.34. Some of these statements are repeated in a recent book, which shows the continuing influence of De Kiewiet: Bill Guest & J M Sellers, eds., Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony; Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Natal (Pietsmaritzburg, 1985) p.7.


17. The immediate answer to this question is his scissors and paste methods of composition referred to above. Cf. C O 879/11, African no 121, Bulwer to Carnarvon, 17 Feb. 1877, p.5, and De Kiewiet, pp. 186 & 192.


19. K Marx, Capital; A Critique of Political Economy, vol. 1 (Harmondsworth, 1976) p.533. This statement occurs in an ironical passage, and may therefore be suspected of not representing Marx's


33. The fact that he repeated the argument in a private letter suggests this: P R O 30/6/38, no 14, Carnarvon to Wolseley, 30 April 1875.


37. Carnarvon Papers (British Library) B L Add. Mss. 60798, no 6, Froude to Carnarvon, 5 July [1874].


41. On this see G Eisner, *Jamaica, 1830-1930; a Study in Economic Growth* (Manchester, 1961)

42. C O 179/122, Carnarvon’s reply, 21 March 1876, to Natal Land & Colonisation Company to Carnarvon, 9 March 1876, in cutting from *The Standard*, 22 March 1876.


45. 425 of 1837, Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines.

46. Lorimer, p.145; Curtin, pp.372-6; Bolt, pp.20-2.


50. B L Add. Mss. 60798, no 51, Froude to Carnarvon, 4 Oct [1874].


53. P R O 30/6/12, p.97, Carnarvon to Hardy, 26 Oct. 1875.


56. C O 879/8, Natal no 80, pp.1-6, Wolseley to Carnarvon, 14 June, 1875.

57. P R O 30/6/38, no 25, Wolseley to Carnarvon, 12 June 1875.

58. British Hansard, 3rd ser., vol. CCXXXIII (12 April 1875) col. 693.


60. C.1121, pp.92-4, Carnarvon to Pine, 3 Dec. 1874.
63. Ibid., no 53, Froude to Carnarvon, 11 Oct. [1874].
64. Ibid., no 62, Froude to Carnarvon, 10 Nov. [1874].
65. Ibid., no 65, Froude to Carnarvon, 19 Nov. [1874].
66. PRO 30/6/84, no 18, p.36, Carnarvon to Froude, 2 Sept. 1875.
67. C O 879/10, Africa no 102, Conference on South African Affairs, 3-15 Aug. 1876, pp.3, 4 & 9. Goodfellow states that the resolution was proposed by Froude, which seems very likely, though the minutes do not specify this: C Goodfellow, Great Britain and South African Confederation 1870-1881 (Cape Town, 1966) p.106.
69. C.1631, p.13, Ministerial minute, 14 March 1876, encl. in Barkly to Carnarvon, 16 March 1876.
70. C O 48/478, marginal comment in pencil, anon. & n.d., on Ministerial minute, 14 March 1876, encl. in Barkly to Carnarvon, 16 March 1876.
74. Goodfellow, p.121
75. T Pakenham, The Boer War (Johannesburg, 1982) pp.118-9
76. C O 879/8, Natal no 80, Wolseley to Carvarvon, 14 June 1875, & enclosures; PRO 30/6/38, no 25, Wolseley to Carnarvon, 12 June 1875.
78. C O 879/13, African no 150, p.28, Robertson to Bulwer, 1 Dec. 1877.
79. Secretary for Native Affairs files, Natal Archives, S N A 1/4/1, report by Makata, 22 June 1877, encl. in Resident Magistrate Umsinga to Acting S N A , 22 June 1877.