



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

HISTORY WORKSHOP 1984

CLASS, COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT:

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

31 JANUARY - 4 FEBRUARY, 1984

AUTHOR: WILLIAM BEINART

TITLE: AMAFELANDAWONYE (THE DIEHARDS):
RURAL POPULAR PROTEST AND WOMEN'S
MOVEMENTS IN HERSCHEL DISTRICT,
SOUTH AFRICA, IN THE 1920s.

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Amafelandawonye (The Diehards)*: Rural Popular Protest and Women's Movements in Herschel District, South Africa, in the 1920s.

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*Amafelandawonye - literally, those who die in one place. Various translated at the time as 'we-die-together', 'we will die fighting in one place'. The term has many resonances in Xhosa. It is an adaption of the word used to describe the close advisors or bodyguards of a chief. Ukufela, to die for, also has Christian connotations, being used to describe the Saviour's sacrifice. The word as a whole later came to mean a 'co-operative'.

Introduction

In his research on the history of the African peasantry in the Cape, Colin Bundy rediscovered the detailed economic survey made of Herschel district by W.M. Macmillan in 1925 and published some years later in Complex South Africa. Macmillan found that the state of the district, a rough triangle of African reserve land in the north-eastern Cape, wedged between the Orange Free State and Basutoland, gave cause for deep concern. The population, largely African, did not produce sufficient food for its needs even in good years. Sale of wool and grain could not provide enough cash for tax, food and commodities; rates of labour migrancy were therefore high. Indebtedness was widespread, the district was overpopulated by both people and stock and the depletion of natural resources was signified by the absence of firewood and spreading soil erosion. Land, held under communal tenure, was in short supply; some families were without arable plots and disputes over land allotment were frequent.

Bundy then contrasted this picture with that revealed by the historical documentation on Herschel before the turn of the twentieth century. He argued that the district had supported a relatively prosperous African peasantry in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its population, as a whole, had produced more food than it consumed and exported both crops and pastoral produce. The case study of Herschel provided a rich illustration of his general theme - the rise and fall of the peasantry. It also supported his view of the timing of decline. By the first decade of this century, the peasantry was under severe pressure. By the 1920s, though Herschel people may not have been the worst off in the Cape, MacMillan's report indicated, so Bundy argued, that they were 'desperately impoverished'.

Herschel seems to be one of the Cape districts which best fits the thesis of rise and decline. (This model does not adequately describe processes of change in all areas of the Cape.) Bundy and Macmillan's economic outline could certainly be elaborated and nuanced, for neither used the extensive archival material on the district. Though such an exercise would no doubt raise further questions about, for example, the nature of differentiation, the relationship between migrancy and rural production, and, most important from the point of view of this paper, the actual size of the 'progressive' section of the peasantry, it

would probably not seriously challenge their major findings and is not attempted here. However, in explicitly concentrating on the economic position in the district, neither of these historians asked how Herschel people responded to the pressure that they faced. Macmillan merely noted in passing that 'Herschel in 1925 was seething with discontent'. He was certainly correct. If the district was economically depressed, its people were politically and religiously vibrant. There was little of the 'mute apathy' which apparently characterised the area fifty years later. This paper traces the development of popular protest in Herschel through the 1920s. It covers the first moves towards local mass organisation in the shape of passive resistance to state intervention and a boycott of trading stations; it demonstrates how local politics became polarised in the middle of the decade between a progressive elite and a popular alliance calling itself the Amafelandawonye; and it concludes with an analysis of intervention by broader political movements in the last few years of the 1920s.

Although the study is focussed on one district, wider issues concerning the nature of popular protest in the 1920s are raised. Research undertaken for this project, as well as other work in progress, suggests that the decade saw an intensification of political struggles in many parts of rural South Africa. There was also a change in the nature of rural popular protest. National and regional political movements, largely urban based, spread, often for the first time, into the rural districts. The ANC, the ICU, the Communist Party, the Wellington movement all took up rural issues, and the separatist churches grew rapidly in some areas. While protest was often still localised, and the aims and ideology of petit bourgeoisie, urban workers, agricultural workers, tenants and reserve dwellers could differ significantly, broader movements could provide, albeit sometimes briefly, a more unified thrust to political action.

What little has been written on popular protest in this period tends to follow broader political movements into the rural areas rather than examine how the ground was laid for their entry. Such an approach, while clearly necessary, is not adequate in itself. None of the national movements in South Africa can claim deep and sustained involvement in the politics of many rural districts. The bridges built between urban and rural,

national and local movements in the 1920s had largely collapsed by the 1930s. Links were admittedly constrained by the effectiveness of state control. But, it will be suggested, the particular trajectory of rural popular struggle could not easily be contained within the national movements of the time. In this context, it is all the more important to analyse the discrete development of localised rural politics and to describe what rural people were concerned about, and how they organised themselves.

It would be highly misleading to suggest that 'rural' was a uniform category, defining a single set of social relationships, in the 1920s. Agrarian protest took markedly different forms in the various regional economies of the country. More proletarianised agricultural workers in the western and southern Cape organised themselves around wage issues. Those with tenancies on white-owned farms, especially in the Transvaal, the OFS and Natal, fought for continued access to land, and against the intensified demands for agricultural labour, as farmers extended and mechanised production. Those in the reserves had a rather different experience of the process of capitalist growth in South Africa. Few reserve families could escape an increasing dependence on wage income; changes in the nature of agricultural production ^{on the farms} also had a spill-over effect on nearby reserve districts. But state intervention in the reserves, in a segregationist era could have an ambiguous effect for it protected access to land, and gave some local political and economic space to chiefs and traditionalists who tended to be in the majority. Nevertheless, some state measures, particularly the attempts to regularise the system of taxation for the four provinces, to extend the council system and control the distribution of communal land provoked widespread resistance, not least in the more Christian and incorporated reserve districts of the Cape such as Herschel. It is the implications of such measures that the paper tries to describe, against a background of the complex social divisions between wealthier and poorer families, between those of different ethnic identifications, and between men and women which shaped patterns of collaboration and resistance. But in the elaboration of the detailed history of political action in one district, the larger rural context should be kept in mind.

1: Social division through the eyes of outsiders - Herschel in the early 1920s

Both Macmillan and Bundy emphasised the absence of any powerful or widely recognised chieftaincy in Herschel. Indeed, like East Griqualand, it was an upland area which had not attracted people of the major African chiefdoms prior to the Mfecane. Settled rapidly from the 1830s and 1840s, the district was a cultural melting pot, its population made up of a variety of small refugee

and immigrant groups. Most were not, however, 'Mfengu' in the sense that the term was usually understood in the Cape. They came from those who scattered on the southern Highveld during the Mfecane - Hlubi, Tlokwa and Sotho - rather than those who had fled to the Colony via the Xhosa. But Thembu groups as well as 'Mfengu' immigrants from the eastern Cape proper, and 'bruinmenschen' also established themselves in the district. Such a population was, Bundy argued, freer than most from the constraints of tributary authority; the area proved attractive to enterprising immigrants from the crowded eastern Cape locations partly for this reason. Missionaries, particularly the Methodists, established themselves early and were fairly successful. Much of the population even if by no means all Christian, was 'dressed' in the late nineteenth century. It was from such communities that many of the Cape's wealthier and more socially incorporated peasants emerged. It was also such communities, which sold more and bought more, that were often hit hardest when independent production was constrained in the early twentieth century. Bundy has stressed that wealth was not evenly shared in the period of relative prosperity. Nor was it in decline. The 1920s was also marked by deep social divisions in the district, though these are not easily reducible to relative wealth and poverty alone. If roots of popular protest are to be pinpointed it is essential to come to terms with differentiation and cleavage in the district.

By the 1920s, the problems about which Macmillan wrote affected some parts of the district more than others. In a lengthy comment on Macmillan's draft report, the local magistrate drew attention to 'two areas totally differing from each other naturally': the highlands and the lowlands. In fact the district was all at a high elevation with cold winters and hard early frosts. But towards Basutoland and along the southern border with the white farming areas of Lady Grey and Barkly East, mountains climbed to over 2,000 metres. Between these ranges stretched a long irregular valley, spreading out onto a broad but hilly plain which fell away towards the Orange river on the border of the Orange Free State.

The mountain locations, comprising about one third of the district, enjoy a better and more seasonal rainfall; they have better soil and much better grazing; and they do not seem to be so congested. Their crops are much more dependable and do not require so much supplementing by purchase. Wheat is abundantly grown and largely used as food. Oathay is grown on a large scale and sold. Cattle and sheep thrive well. The lower locations, however, i.e. the remaining two thirds of the district are very much worse off. Their production will hardly ever I think balance their requirements; land is scarce, the soil eroded, grazing poor and poverty much more noticeable.

The magistrate's division was too stark. A number of locations straddled highlands and lowlands. Settlements in such areas tended to be 'on mountain sides and in nooks, sheltered against the cold winters'. Stock would be moved between highlands and lowlands; arable plots concentrated in the valleys. The two ecological zones would be exploited by the same people. Yet there was some basis to his distinction. Especially towards the OFS border, the locations - Wittebergen, Khiba, Tugela, Governor's Drift, N dofela and most of Madakana and Bamboesspruit - were largely in the lowlands. It was here that the population was most dense. The magistrate failed to mention, however, that lowland locations had not always been under such pressure. It was partly because they were well watered, suited to intensive cultivation and near the major transport routes through the district that they had attracted such dense settlement. Though richer and poorer families were to be found in all parts of the district, the slide into poverty which the magistrate noted had thus been particularly rapid in the lowland areas. Needless to say, these lowland locations were the centres of political protest in the 1920s.

Dotted around these lowland areas, and along the river valleys, were the mission, trading and administrative stations which the roads in the district, such as they were, linked together. The railway reached only Lady Grey and Aliwal North in the Cape - the nearest concentrations of urban population. Herschel itself and Sterkspruit, seats of the magistrate and Superintendent of Native Locations respectively, accommodated some state employees, traders, labour agents, craftsmen and other specialists who made up typical village settlements in the African reserves. But they had only small settled African populations. Similarly, although the church and educational centres of Bensonvale, Wittebergen (Methodists) and St Michaels (Anglican) had small villages around them, most of the churches and schools serviced a population scattered through rural locations.

When D.D.T. Jabavu visited Herschel just before the first phase of mass political action in 1922, it was at such centres that he stopped. His hosts were the educated Christian teachers and ministers who ran the mission institutions. They were part of a regional elite of whom Jabavu was a leading member. Through their education, their access to salaried posts and, sometimes, their success in maintaining agricultural production, they could escape the downward spiral into poverty. They held strongly by the ideals of education, progress and loyalty to the state. If they could no longer hope for an incorporationist 'native policy' they still looked for opportunity within a larger common society. Their political tradition was the African

variant of Cape liberalism; there had been as many as 800 African voters in the district in the late nineteenth century. They also claimed strong links with leading white liberal politicians. As Jabavu recalled on visiting the Methodist station at Wittebergen, it was 'where W.P. Schreiner was born and for this reason he was proud of being called a Hlubi'. (Olive Schreiner was also born there.) J.W. Sauer represented the Herschel African voters for nearly forty years until his death in 1913. Men from this educated minority dominated the local (African) Farmers' Union which Jabavu addressed. They also ran the long-established Herschel Teachers' Association and had recently formed a local branch of the Native Congress. 'This is the way in which Africa could be saved', Jabavu affirmed in his series of articles on the visit. 'Only if there could be many men like Makaluza minister at Bensonvale⁷ will the standard of life of the Black nation be raised'.

Away from this small network of people, Jabavu found less to encourage him. His route between the missions and villages, though it took him through a few Thembu and Sotho locations, mainly revealed the position of the Hlubi population for it was they who dominated the lowland locations. (Jabavu himself, local officials, and many local spokesmen used these ethnic terms to identify communities at the time. Most locations were mixed, but had a dominant group of lineages; the term Hlubi tended to be generalised to both early immigrants from the highveld and later 'Mfengu' entrants.) Macmillan noted that while Herschel was not the most Christianised African district in the Cape, many had some affiliations to the Church. Indeed Jabavu mentioned: 'we noticed very few people who belonged to the red-ochred folk, except among the Thembu'. Yet, though they were by no means all 'reds', Jabavu considered their 'ways of life were still backward'. 'Here in the Hlubi region people are tied by the manacles of outdated customs; there is no progress? Education is suspected and feared'. This judgement he placed against the picture, later to be made familiar by MacMillan, of 'soil damaged by rains which make cliffs and dongas' and a 'great exodus of people leaving a beautiful country of loamy soil and wheat and going to Johannesburg on contract'.

Some local people did use the terms 'red' and 'school' to describe social divisions in the district at the time. But it is clear that Jabavu referred to many more than the 'red-ochred folk' when he talked about backwardness. Similarly, when the magistrate distinguished, a couple of years later, 'a comparatively small percentage who are progressive' from 'a majority who are backward, reactionary, full of suspicion over any suggested innovation and unprogressive' he included much of the Hlubi, Sotho and Thembu population whatever

their dress or religion. The primary division noted by outside observers in the 1920s, then, was not so much between 'red' and 'school', nor between the different 'ethnic' communities nor even between rich and poor. Rather it was between the sort of people whom Jabavu and the magistrate defined as 'progressive' and those they defined as 'backward', particularly within the largely Christian lowland Hlubi locations themselves. The varied character of the Hlubi community will become more apparent for it provided the leaders, and the core of followers, for the popular movement.

Though these divisions were clearly apparent to outsiders in the early 1920s, there were still many common networks between the kinds of people they described. Even within some families there were those who would be described as 'progressive' and others who would not. Headmen did not fit easily into either category. Children from 'backward' Hlubi families attended the schools run by the members of the Herschel Teachers Association. And the churches provided a common world. Orthodox Methodist and Anglican churches still dominated in the early 1920s. There was only a small group of Ethiopians, a legacy of the first wave of separatism which had swept the rural Cape twenty years before, attached to the African Methodist Episcopal Church. When Jabavu visited Blikana, a Methodist station some distance from the major concentration of mission activity, over one thousand people attended the service. Very many of them must have been drawn from surrounding locations rather than the immediate pocket of mission 'progressives'. A majority of those who attended appear to have been women; women and girls donated nearly three-quarters of the small sum collected for 'the Methodist memorial and the provisions of the guest'. Methodist women's unions seem to have been particularly strong in the district, linking both different locations and people of different social perceptions within the locations. At Wittebergen, Jabavu described how 'the church women enjoyed themselves ... making the whole world seem red with their jackets'; red was the colour not of the traditionalists in this case, but of the orthodox Methodist manyano groups.

2. State intervention: councils and land registration

Those identified as 'progressive' in Herschel clearly saw themselves as such and had used the term for at least a couple of decades. The perjorative term 'backward' was imposed on the rest of the population by progressives and outsiders who tended to sympathise with the progressives. Aside from its derogatory connotations, it was a misleading description for it suggested passivity. The magistrate, in calling the people 'reactionary', at least

captured more clearly the fact that 'backwardness' had coalesced into an active political movement by the early 1920s. The division, though it had deep roots, had taken shape around one central political issue in the first two decades of the century: whether local councils on the Glen Grey model should be introduced into the district. When the Glen Grey Act was passed in 1894, officials in Herschel had strongly advocated the implementation of at least some of its provisions. After the South African War, the Native Affairs Department dropped its plans to enforce two central provisions of the Act - individual tenure and the labour tax. Both had stimulated strong opposition throughout the Cape and caused administrative difficulties. Walter Stanford, senior official at the time, saw the council system as a more immediate priority. By drawing an extra tax from the African population, its introduction would make funds available for local development; councils would also establish separate and controllable local political institutions in the African districts. Once constituted, Stanford argued, individual district councils could opt for individual tenure and for other measures which his department saw as progressive and ultimately necessary. The African population of the Cape would increasingly appreciate the value of measures for their advancement and would share in the responsibility and cost for introducing them.

By 1902, Stanford and his officials were actively engaged in extending the council system in the Transkeian Territories, often in the face of considerable opposition. Councils were not seen as so urgent a necessity in the other Cape districts, such as Herschel, for the African population was more directly governed as part of the Colony proper. But local magistrates attempted, on a variety of occasions over the next couple of decades, to secure voluntary acceptance. They received strong and consistent support from the 'educated and enlightened' men, who believed that great benefit would accrue in the shape of much improved local services - roads, dipping facilities, hospitals, agricultural extension, schools - from a local 10 shilling tax paid by all. For some of them, though by no means all, this was a relatively small sum to pay. (The progressive constituency was, however, wider than the small group of those with salaried posts.) They were particularly concerned about the position of the schools which then depended on voluntary contributions, and fees, only topped up by a state subsidy. The council tax would provide secure funding for education, and for teachers' salaries; school fees were proving difficult to collect as the broader community became more hard-pressed economically. The centrality of the education issue in the case presented for a council system, helped solidify the 'progressive' content in the ideology of its supporters

who 'had no desire to be left behind in the march of civilization'. In the 1910s, the progressives found a number of able leaders such as Makaluza and especially J.G. Sikiti, who became headman of the location around St Michael's mission. Opponents of the council felt that the majority of the people could ill-afford to pay a new tax at a time when household budgets were stretched. They also suggested that the services developed, including the schools, would be monopolised by the progressives; they would be paying a general tax from which the benefits would accrue to an already generally better off minority. They did not see all the projected schemes under the council system as necessary when people were struggling to make a living. And perhaps most important, they believed that the councils would become 'puppet governments' in the hands of the progressives who could then, in league with officials, implement a range of further interventions into rural life. They were not so much opposed to all change as concerned, like many rural communities, to maintain some control over the nature and pace of change. They mistrusted the progressives who explicitly stated that they did not wish to be 'held back' by an 'ignorant majority'. The opponents of the council, led by J. Fanana, succeeded in taking control of the Iliso Lomzi (Vigilance Association) which increasingly stood out against the progressive organisations like the Teachers Association and the Congress. The leaders of the Iliso Lomzi were certainly not 'red reds' as Sikiti had branded them. Fanana, apparently formerly an attorney's interpreter and gaol warder, was well-educated, 'intelligent and able'. But they came from a group of Christian families who, as in other Cape districts, had abandoned a narrow allegiance to the progressive mission world and begun to seek a more popular political constituency.

The Iliso Lomzi also found an ally in Makobeni Mehlomakhulu, sub-headman in Tugela, the largest of the Hlubi lowland locations. This was also the location in which the direct descendents of Mpangazita, the chief who had led the Hlubi onto the highveld from Natal during the Mfecane, and Mehlomakhulu, the chief who brought some of them into Herschel, resided. Makobeni and Read Mehlomakhulu, the headman, both claimed direct descent from these chiefs. Macmillan and Bundy were only partly correct in stressing that Herschel had 'no big chiefs and no cohesion'. Certainly, the absence of any strong centralised African political authority in the district had shaped its nineteenth century agricultural and social history. It is also true that unlike some Transkeian districts, where strong paramountcies had survived the process of colonisation, headmen had been more dependent for their authority on the colonial state. But headmenships, though ultimately controlled by the state, had generally become,

in practice, partially hereditary; genealogical claims, and the language of legitimacy, could play an important role in location politics. Makobeni claimed that his house was senior to Read's, although Read's father had been elevated in the previous generation to the headmanship because, unsurprisingly on the evidence of his son's name, he had a more co-operative attitude. Read identified clearly with the progressives. Makobeni, on the other hand, increasingly lent his support to the Iliso Lomzi. His claims for the headmanship became entwined with his opposition to the council as he emerged as a leading popular spokesman for the district as a whole.

By the beginning of the 1920s, divisions over the council system permeated every political issue in the district. Whereas councils had initially been resisted because they might open the way to other forms of state intervention, now any form of intervention or progressive initiative was seen as a surreptitious means to introduce the council. When some of the headmen tried to enforce the payment of school fees, Fanana argued that the 'thin edge of the Bunga' was being inserted. Jabavu reported that the 'people refuse to protect their lands from erosion by planting papyrus trees and aloes, saying that this would perhaps herald the introduction of the council, a puppet government which everyone fears'. When the Superintendent tried to measure some lands in 1920, he was resisted and accused of 'bringing in the Bunga'. The passing of the 1920 Native Affairs Act, which made legal provision for the extension of the council system to all African communities gave the progressives some hope of victory. (The Act was part of a broader attempt to regularise 'native policy'. Officials felt that the Transkeian Bunga had been reasonably successful in providing a controlled vehicle for the expression of African opinion and a means to decentralise and segregate services. Conflict in the cities after the First World War convinced them of the desirability of such institutions in other urban and rural areas.) But despite further progressive deputations, officials in Herschel delayed any active attempts to implement the system because of the intensity of opposition.

Officials did, however, take more positive steps in relation to land administration. Stanford was wrong in his prediction that an increasing number of districts would see the benefits of individual tenure. And as opinion amongst the dominant groups in South Africa swung behind segregationist thinking, little pressure was brought on the rural population of the Cape to accept the change. However, officials in the Transkeian Territories, recognising that communal tenure would remain entrenched, felt that there should be better means of regulating it. Magistrates did not know how many people held plots, or how many plots each family held; they did not know the location

of these plots nor their size. They had a list of hut tax payers who were entitled to land, but they had no means of checking this list against actual patterns of land-holding. They relied for information on observations, details from specific land disputes, and incomplete records of newer allotments. They thus had no means to intervene and regulate land-holding and found it difficult to deal with land disputes. Regulation was seen as urgent because of the increasing pressure on land. Some hut tax-payers were finding it difficult to get plots in crowded districts. And officials suggested that this was partly because other families had managed to accumulate a number of plots. The government was committed to providing space in the rural reserves for all hut tax-payers. It was also committed to a policy of consolidating scattered plots into one holding in order to facilitate agricultural improvement and land administration. Thus in 1919, a new proclamation was passed to regulate communal tenure in the Transkei, and Ciskeian officials - at this time Herschel fell under the jurisdiction of the Chief Native Commissioner in Kingwilliamstown - explored the possibility of extending an amended form of this proclamation to their districts. It was in fact a dispute in Wittebergen location, Herschel, where a number of families claimed they had no land, that set the administrative wheels rolling. And in 1921, after much official correspondence, but little consultation with African communities, GN 833 was promulgated for communal tenure areas in the Ciskei.

The new measure provided for the investigation of all existing arable and homestead allotments by the Superintendent of Native Locations, their measurement by pacing, and registration under the name of the occupier. The magistrate would thus have a permanent and complete land register at his disposal; all new lands would be similarly entered. Certificates would be issued to all registered plot holders as evidence of their rights. All lands not registered by a specified date would revert to commonage and be available for reallotment. Officials would have tighter control over the actual process of allotment, which they had tended to leave to the headmen. And the magistrate was empowered to enquire into the distribution of land in any location and order its redistribution. The regulations also provided for the concentration of lands into one holding per family and a maximum size of five morgen for arable plots was specified. Some of these provisions were contained in earlier proclamations, but the full system of registration, certification, and concentration was a new feature. It was an important development in land administration which has been little explored in the literature. (Though it was never properly implemented.)

When Ciskeian magistrates began to explain the Government Notice to the people in their districts in the second half of 1921, there was widespread unease. The feeling aroused by the regulations was perhaps strongest in Herschel itself; it was the Iliso Lomzi that took the lead. From the very start, even before the precise implications had been ascertained, land registration was firmly linked, as with other forms of intervention in the district, with the 'dreaded Bunga'. Fanana and Makobeni led a deputation to Pretoria in September 1921 to make their position quite clear to the Department. In fact, the department was not ready to implement land registration - a vast administrative task considering that Herschel alone had an estimated 30,000 arable and homestead sites. The magistrate in Herschel was instructed to 'go-slow', allow objections to be aired and try to win over the population. In November, a meeting held by the Superintendent ended in chaos. He reported that where he did try to allot lands under the new regulations, he received no co-operation at all. The opposition had started amongst the Hlubi but was spread by 'half-educated agitators' to the 'usually amenable' Thembu. He felt the go-slow policy would lead to disaster and that a 'rebellious feeling' was slowly taking root.

Another deputation of leading progressives and some sympathetic headmen in December 1921 echoed his concerns. They were deeply disturbed by the mobilisation of popular opinion behind the Iliso Lomzi. 'We see trouble brewing, something that is going to injure us. We see our people trampling the law under feet'. 'The people have deserted us saying we have been bought and belong to Council'. Commoners were holding meetings in Tugela without consulting Read Mehlomakhulu. Whereas the people refused money to the state, Fanana and Richard Baduza, the 'preachers', were collecting considerable sums. Mphuthing elaborated on the depth of divisions: 'this preaching is preventing education; it makes enmity between the teachers and the children's parents, between the ministers and their flocks, it makes the people disrespect the Headmen'.

The meeting ended with a revealing exchange. Phooko asked 'Can I prevent these people holding meetings in my location?' The magistrate was sympathetic but ambiguous. 'This is a difficult matter. This is a free country, people can enter your location at will, provided they don't mean to settle there, and can meet others and talk provided they do not indulge in sedition etc. and you'll have to be careful not to commit yourself to an action for defamation or assault'. 'How am I to control my location then?', Phooko asked. The magistrate could only reply: 'As I control the District'. His concern for

legality was patent. In the Cape proper, there were important constraints on the exercise of state power, and the ideology and practice of officials recognised this. Such constraints had opened the way for the development of a popular movement and were to provide further scope for its growth. For although legality was strained as the crisis in the district developed, officials were always reluctant to use force. At this stage, however, the actions of the Iliso Lomzi were restricted to 'impertinences', mobilisation and representation. Indeed, it was not they who were essentially behind the first more defiant and organised mass action in the district, nor was this action aimed specifically at the state. But in the long run, the fears of the progressive proved well founded.

3. The trading store boycott of 1922 and the emergence of a women's movement.

It was not only councils and land registration which concerned the people of Herschel in the early 1920s. They, like most of the rural African population of the Cape, sold their produce to and bought commodities from local traders, usually Europeans, settled in the network of stations, scattered around the district. The basic features of produce trade in Herschel by the 1920s did not differ significantly from those well described for the Transkeian Territories. Rural families would have to sell grain, to meet debts or purchase immediate needs, after the harvest even if they had not produced sufficient for subsistence. In an unregulated market, traders paid low prices and usually refused to give cash. Traders would then store grain, and import, in anticipation of the lean season before the next harvest when they would sell at very much higher prices. Their control over the people in the immediate vicinity of their stations was reinforced by widespread indebtedness; traders were also often labour recruiters. In the early decades of the twentieth century a number of rural communities in the Cape voiced complaints about the low prices they received for produce, the high cost of grain they purchased, and the reluctance of traders to part with cash. But direct action against the traders, who had considerable power in the local economy not least because they were the major source of long term credit and advances, was rare. Some stations had, however, been looted and burnt in East Griqualand in 1914/15 when a sharp decline in wool and hide prices coincided with the mobilisation of anti-dipping movements. As dipping was not enforced in Herschel - where there was relatively little tick-borne disease and no council - these movements do not seem to have spread to the district, although close links were maintained between the Hlubi communities in East Griqualand and Herschel.

But during and especially after the First World War, prices for commodities bought from the traders inflated rapidly. To make matters worse, the eastern and north-eastern Cape suffered badly from drought, following its regular seven/eight year cycle, in 1919 and 1920. In Herschel itself, the rains were again poor in the growing season of 1921/22. The people had less than usual to sell (MacMillan estimated that in the 1920s, average production was usually only sufficient for six months consumption) and became acutely sensitive to all prices. And it was at this moment, early in 1922, that they began to realise that whereas commodity prices were coming down in urban areas, they remained static in Herschel. This perceived injustice, coming on top of the drought and the concern about land registration, broke their patience.

In mid-March 1922, the Northern Post, newspaper of Aliwal North, carried a brief report about a 'general "boycott" of shops' in Herschel. Their local European correspondent initially dismissed the action as 'silly', unlikely to last and bound to have repercussions on the people, 'who would soon have to go on their knees to the traders to give them grain "on tick"'. A couple of weeks later, the action continued - it seems to have started in early March - and the correspondent became less dismissive, warning of 'serious trouble'. What surprised the Post was the participation in the boycott: 'the women are the chief "strikers" and organise pickets near the shops and molest all natives coming away with purchases and take the goods from them'. Imvo soon carried a more sympathetic report: 'We have seen something that has never before been seen in Herschel. All the women, the converts /amagqoboka/, went on a big "strike"'. Three hundred had met at Sterkspruit in March to formulate demands and plan the action; 'they agreed that people should stop buying from the shops in Herschel until the white shopkeepers cut prices and bought wheat sold to them at a reasonable price'. The women could be 'very aggressive' when their lines were crossed. Some were apparently armed with sticks.

Though the traders would have liked direct action by the state, there was little the magistrate could do in the face of solid passive resistance. It was not illegal to refuse to sell produce and buy goods. However, the magistrate could watch for assault and forcible removal of goods from purchasers; three women were charged with these offences. The court house was crowded out with women and though the magistrate took the opportunity to lecture them, 'the court case did not frighten them'. Mediation seemed the best solution. At his instigation, a joint Committee of traders and Congress leaders such as Sikiti and Makaluza was established to clarify the women's demands and monitor prices.

Traders argued that they had bought their goods at a time when prices were high. On account of the slow turnover in their shops - it was perhaps even slower than usual because of inflation and drought in the previous few years - they were left with old goods which they had to sell at a reasonable profit. Prices were coming down elsewhere as retailers were selling newer goods obtained on a falling wholesale market. People in Herschel were not unaware of the effects of the War on prices. They had not been happy about the price rises but were prepared to accept them in the belief that they would not be permanent. In the words of Mrs Sidyoyo at a later meeting with the magistrate: 'We bore the high prices when told they were due to the war and were told prices might get lower ... We are poor and live hardly ... What are we to do especially now there is an epidemic [typhus]'. Nor could they rule out that at least some traders were using the fluctuations in prices in order to speculate. Whether or not this was the case, the wide differential in wealth between traders and people was clear; even Jabavu agreed that 'the shopkeepers have big stomachs and every one of them owns a car. There is plenty of profit for them'. His feelings echoed those of the Imvo correspondent: 'Europeans are killing us with their expensive goods'.

The action met with some success. By early May, the prices of some commodities in the shops had been reduced. After nearly two months of picketing it was agreed by the women that the boycott should come to an end and the people be allowed to purchase freely. The action was, however, by no means over. Within a month, meetings were being held in Qumbu, East Griqualand, 150 kilometres away. Initially under the leadership of a woman from Herschel, support was strongest among the 'dress women of the North Eastern part of the district in the vicinity of Qanqu mission station'. This was the centre of Hlubi settlement in the district, a community previously noted for its support of the state. At a large meeting, 'policewomen' were appointed to picket the stations and block customers. At one store, a group of women armed with sticks marched up saying 'we have come to shut the shop'.

They kept marching up and down in front of the store.
They accosted people ... They also interfered with boys.
I sent a boy to them to ask them if he could come and
buy here. I heard what they replied... They said
"you talk so wonderful; get away otherwise we will kill
you". They were lying down at the time but sat up and
he ran away...

Within a few days the boycott spread to perhaps half the stores in the district. It was not as total as in Herschel; stores in most Mpondomise and Sotho locations did not suffer. The magistrate was, however, concerned that it might

spread rapidly within and beyond his district. 'The movement is very highly organised and therein lies its danger.' He responded firmly, calling on the mobile patrol to disperse crowds and pickets around the stations. Eight women were arrested and the headmen around Qanqu were called to a meeting and threatened with the invocation of 'tribal responsibility'. The men denied responsibility for the boycott and, in some cases, knowledge of it. But they did reiterate the demands made by the women. They also stressed that the women's action was against the traders alone: 'The Hlubis ... say nobody will stand against the Government'. By the time the Chief Magistrate came to a meeting with both men and women on 24 July, barely ten days after the boycott started, the pickets were being withdrawn and by August trade was back to normal.

During July and August some attempt was made to spread the boycott from Herschel and Qumbu into neighbouring districts, especially where there were substantial Hlubi communities. There is, however, no evidence of further picketing, except again in Herschel during August. On this occasion, the women, meeting regularly, had chosen a 'Committee of Management' which approached the magistrate directly. To their original demands, they added the complaint that traders, like those in Qumbu, were now trying to enforce repayment of debts without giving people the time to raise cash through the sale of produce. 'We most humbly request you, Sir, to ask the Government to get us a Scrupulous man who will endeavour to relieve us of these inconveniences, to carry on business as a general dealer amongst us'. 'My advice to you', the magistrate warned, 'is to stop wasting your time holding these numerous meetings and in picketing the shops and devote your attention to the care of your homes which is your proper province'. His audience was hardly satisfied but made a show of respect. Annie Sidyoyo: 'We recognise Resident Magistrate as the Peace Makers between us and the traders'. Amelia Sipambo: 'We will not go beyond his orders and advice but we will listen like children to their parents'. The boycott was stopped after nearly six months of sporadic action.

Independent militant action by women, organised by themselves, was already a feature of urban areas where women tended to be more economically and socially independent. The resistance against passes in Bloemfontein in 1913 and the participation of women in the mass movements of 1919 on the Rand stand out. In the rural Cape, Walter Stanford had noted, with misgivings for the future, the involvement of women in picketing of dipping tanks in East Griqualand in 1914. But the degree of organisation in Herschel, and their ability to sustain and control political action, was rare in the rural Cape at the time. Observers whose image of the African family was one in which women were subordinate felt

that the women were being used. Husbands may have professed ignorance but the men must have been behind the action as 'a native would soon chastise his wife if she neglected her home and children all day without his permission'. (Clearly some men did know more about the movement than they let on to officials.) However, percipient officials with more experience of changing rural African communities were quite prepared to admit that 'the movement is confined to the women and is due to feminist aspiration and agitation among the more advanced dress women'. (Though in seeking to control the movement, they told the men that they should be able to exert authority over their wives.) Indeed the social roots of the Herschel action must be sought in the undermining of patriarchal authority in rural homesteads, as well as the specific effects of the post-War economic change on rural women and the general radicalisation of African political movements at the time.

Pinpointing the salient features of change in family structure in Herschel is beyond the scope of this paper. It may be that in the no doubt varied and unstable family groupings which arose amongst refugees and immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, patriarchal authority was more constrained than in settled African polities where large homesteads were the rule. Certainly in the 1920s, complex settlements, housing more than one or two married men were probably not the rule. (As tax and census figures indicate only the number of married men, not the number of homesteads, settlement size cannot be computed.) Polygyny - there were about 350 second wives, perhaps 3 or 4 per cent of the total - was limited. In such smaller units, the pressure on individual married women tended to be greater. They had to expend proportionately more time in childcare and the collection of fuel and water - both increasingly scarce resources - and agricultural labour. Rates of labour migrancy among men were high. MacMillan's estimate of 75 per cent of adult men absent for more than six months in a year is probably not highly misleading. Women could be left without husbands and older sons. Though rural poverty affected the homestead as a whole, it was often women who suffered most immediately and directly. But there was, at least for some women, an obverse to increased pressure and isolation: increasing independence. Married women, as single wives in smaller settlement groups, were not so subject to the authority of older women and men in the homestead. While not free from hard work, they were at least more able to control their own labour. The legal and social status of Christian women perhaps gave them some scope to control property. And as many husbands were away for long spells, or deserted or predeceased their wives, women could find themselves in effective control of the household for at least part of the year. It was often they who dealt with traders and it is not surprising that rural prices became an issue of particular importance to women.

Reports make it quite clear that the leadership, and core of support, for the boycott in both Herschel and Qumbu came from the married 'dressed' women. This persuaded the magistrate in Qumbu that the 'cry of poverty was not genuine'. However, it was women from such a background, whose households spent more on commodities, and probably sold more too, who were most deeply affected by price increases. Their very identity as 'dressed' people, a symbol of their Christianity, was at stake. Elizabeth Nkatshelana and Jane Mvanda, leaders in Qumbu, stressed that 'the Churches and Schools are dead'; 'our children have no clothing to wear on account of our poverty', 'this is the reason for them not attending school'. A male spokesman confirmed: 'we cannot attend church; we now wear blankets which we use for sleeping in and we are Christians'. (Emphasis added). It seems that in Herschel, particularly, the wives of the most prominent progressives remained aloof, probably because this group made a show of loyalty and were not feeling the economic pinch to the same extent. (Though Jabavu sympathised and Congress mediated.) Rather, it was the less fortunate local 'school' community that felt the economic and political pressures of the 1920s most acutely. That said, however, the movement in Herschel was not at this stage restricted to such women; it became, at least briefly, a broad front for women of various 'ethnic' identities and religious persuasions.

For many Christian women, the manyano, the women's unions of the churches, established around the turn of the century, provided a channel for both religious and economic independence. They established distinct forms of participatory group worship within the mission churches, and were a vehicle for mutual aid outside the spiritual sphere. Jabavu, struck by their strength in Herschel, commented:

The people with insight here are the women. They are the ones that wear the trousers because the men fear the whites who have become rich from them. The women have their unions /banomanyano/ where they discuss their affairs; they keep these to themselves and do not reveal the finances to men.

It seems to have been the manyano that provided the initial organisational core for the women's movement during the boycott. They were not explicitly directing their action against men, but increasing political independence was predicated on a challenge to male authority in which the manyano played some part. Jabavu's claim that men were more psychologically subjected in the wider society may have had some basis. It was the men that experienced white domination at first hand when away at work. In the rural areas, they still bore primary legal responsibility for taxes and torts though they may not always have had commensurate authority within the family. Through the early stages of the movement, officials reported

that women were more ready to take militant action because they believed that they were immune from prosecution.

How the women's church unions became politicised is not clear. It may be that, as in other areas, conflicts developed between the leaders, wives of ministers and teachers, and bulk of membership initially around church and family relationships. But given the political context, it is not surprising that women took on wider issues; MacMillan was hardly correct to characterise Herschel as 'peculiarly isolated'. In an era of mass migrancy, the isolation of any rural district, however geographically removed, should not be exaggerated. Not only were rates of migration high, but patterns of male migration were very varied not least because underground work on the mines, the largest employer of men from Cape rural districts, was particularly unpopular in Christian communities like those in Herschel. Perhaps eight per cent of the women between fifteen and fifty were also migrating to work by the 1920s. Located between the urban centres of the Cape, the OFS and the Rand, Herschel people had more varied links than most. Herschel women also had important contacts in other rural districts. Whereas it was men rather than women who worked in town, female networks between rural districts were strong because women tended to move on marriage, but stay in touch with their kin.

Such links are immediately apparent in the form and progress of the action. The experiences of Bloemfontein in 1913 was recalled on more than one occasion in Herschel in the 1920s. In calling themselves 'strikers', the women associated themselves with the post-war wave of strike action in urban centres, particularly on the Rand, where the 1920 black miners' strike was preceded by a boycott of stores in 1919. (There had also been a rural boycott in Taungs in the Cape.) The knowledge displayed of comparative regional prices testifies to the rapidity with which information was spread. There are also hints of Garveyite influence on the women's thinking. And the movement spread between rural districts linked by marriage. But if the movement pulled in strategies and ideas from outside, it was solidly rooted in the local community. Even officials, always ready to blame outside 'agitators', could find no targets at which to point their fingers. And at this stage, it is important to point out that most of the women were prepared to accept local progressives, and officials, as mediators. They were calling for help from the state. These latter features of the popular movement were to fall away.

4. Political Polarisation Over Land Registration 1922-5

Though inflation, store prices and trading practices served to mobilise and politicise women in Herschel, the council and land registration - that is the forms of state intervention - remained the central issues in the district. Between 1922 and 1925, the differing political impulses focussed in the women's movement and the Iliso Lomzi were to come together primarily over the issue of land registration. In the process, alliances within the district shifted and popular feelings radicalised.

By the middle of 1922, the SNA, reiterating that landholding had to be 'reduced to some sort of order', gave instructions for general implementation of GN 833. It was in about September 1922 that the Superintendent in Herschel actually started visiting locations to begin systematic pacing and registration. Six months later he reported angrily on his lack of success. Both the delay over the council system and the 'go-slow' on land, he claimed, had been seen as weakness on the part of the government and were being exploited by Fanana and the Iliso Lomzi. Opposition had not been broken down, it had solidified. Even some progressives had switched position. When the Superintendent arrived in Wittebergen - one of the centres of organisation for the store boycott - people refused to give him their names and told him to go home. 'Unfortunately neither I nor my constable knew to whom the lands belonged and I simply had to "go home" as instructed by the natives'. Many of the headmen on whom he called for help denied that they knew who occupied the various plots. Where the headmen were sympathetic, such as at Gatberg (Sikiti) and Sterkspruit (Phooko), some lands could be noted and paced, but many people refused to take certificates. His constables were threatened with violence; fines did not seem to help. And the 'stronghold of the anti-progressive standbacks', he felt, was Tugela location, base of the Iliso Lomzi and Makobeni Mehlomakhulu. He believed that if firm action was not taken a second Bulhoek would result. Despite threats that the penal clauses of the proclamation would be invoked, and visits from the Chief Native Commissioner and Minister (F.S. Malan), only two locations were near completion by March 1924.

Such general resistance to land registration needs some explanation. True, the association in people's minds between the new regulations and the attempts to introduce a council was enough to trigger off opposition, even though officials were at pains to promise that land registration did not imply a council. But the declared intent of the government was to ensure that all tax-payers could have plots, and that the quantity of plots held by any individual would be levelled down if necessary. The petition from Wittebergen in 1919, which helped convince Ciskeian officials that intervention was necessary, centred on the

shortage, and unequal distribution, of plots. One of its chief signatories, Philemon Sidyoyo, husband of the women's leader Annie Sidyoyo, became a prominent member of the Iliso Lomzi which seemed to associate itself with such demands.

When officials moved beyond a formula which cited 'backwardness' and suspicion fanned by agitators, they suggested that it was indeed the larger, non-progressive landholders who were instigating the opposition. These men might fear not only a redistribution of plots, but also the breaking up of pasturage for plots, long a contentious issue in the district, because they also tended to be the largest stockholders. Older, more traditionalist men who had had more opportunity to accumulate land, were thought to be influencing others. There is probably an element of truth in this example of official logic. Chiefs and headmen who generally had more land, and whose control over the allocation of land was threatened, led the opposition in other Ciskeian districts. Some headmen in Herschel associated themselves, usually covertly, with the Iliso Lomzi, at least on this issue. There is also evidence to suggest that the older established families feared a redistribution of plots to newer immigrants from the Eastern Cape or the farming districts neighbouring Herschel. Yet it was the Iliso Lomzi which clearly led the opposition in Herschel, and aside from Makobeni, and a couple of others, its leaders, such as Fanana and Philemon Sidyoyo, were neither headmen nor apparently large land holders. (Richard Baduza was found to have four or five plots in 1929, only a little over the customary expectation of three.) And the Iliso Lomzi specifically took up the demands of the poorer sections of the community. The official explanation of opposition, in part a mirror image of the state's motivation for introducing the proclamation, misconstrued the complexity of alliances in the district and failed to grasp the issue at stake.

Councils had been resisted largely because they might give the state the means to intervene unilaterally and restructure rural relationships. Land registration would give officials the information to control the distribution and allocation of plots. Knowledge, as the Superintendent made explicit in a report of 1924, was power. And the people recognised just as clearly that without unless it used coercion, was powerless to intervene. What was at stake knowledge, the state, was the control over land distribution, rather than just differential access to plots. Nor was control merely a question of reinforcing the authority of headmen. Perhaps Makobeni put the issue most clearly, and outlined popular conceptions of the way that land should be allotted, in a description of what he called the 'old way' a few years later.

The headman calls men together, people point out their fathers' lands. People who have left are found out. List is taken and sent to the superintendent. Then lands are allotted by according to the list of new names for land which is also prepared by the headmen and men.

Superintendent appoints a day and headmen and people attend. Lands are then allotted; orphans choose a land of their fathers then new applicants are considered.

The most important point in his brief and guarded summary was the involvement of 'the men' of the location at every phase. This may not have been the case in all communal tenure districts. But in a district like Herschel, where the institution of headmanship was relatively weak, communal control was central to the system of allocation. It was a safeguard against progressive headmen who favoured their supporters. Furthermore, popular decisions preceded official supervision at every stage; / Superintendent's role was often a mere formality, and he himself did not always attend.

Certainly there was not equal access to land in the locations. Landholding was meshed in with relationships of power and wealth, age and membership of controlling factions. But there was some popular control over the way in which power was exercised and such relationships were mediated by local usages according to which entitlement to land was judged. Land had become, to some extent, a hereditary asset. The formalisation of inheritance depended on the sanction of the men of the location, but 'orphans' would be assured of at least one of their father's plots. The possibility that registration might result in the reversion of plots to commonage after death, and thus impinge on patterns of inheritance, was mentioned by opposition spokesmen on a number of occasions. Widows also tended to have customary protection even if they only held land for their male children. Further, although few obtained the customary entitlement of three plots immediately they became eligible for land, there was scope for gradual accumulation. All these arrangements could be deeply affected by direct magisterial control over allotments. Reporting on the issue in 1926, the CNC also clarified that 'on previous occasions the Herschel people have stated that they regarded the certificate as a title which would withdraw the land from control of the people and rest it in the individual'. Individuals might then be free to use the land with no communal constraints, and ultimately - this was a general fear in the Cape reserves in the early twentieth century - even alienate it. State control over land or creeping private tenure that threatened access to land in the long term / ^{was more dangerous than an element of inequality.} Inequality was an issue for the local political arena. The state might be called on when a headman clearly discriminated against some families, but the people did not want the state to level them down. They also felt that whatever its declared intent, the effect of any government intervention would be to favour the progressive supporters of the government. This battle for communal tenure, 'customary' rights and local political control was by no means unique to Herschel; both the majority of people, and chiefs and headmen, could find their interests / ^{protected} by such a position.

The stalemate over land registration was broken in mid-1924 when new official appointees arrived in Herschel. The new Superintendent came from Kamastone, scene of Bulhoek, and felt even more strongly than his predecessor that firm action was necessary if disaster was to be avoided. The Magistrate, arguing that F.S. Malan had publicly committed them to registration in 1923, was more aggressive and legalistic than his predecessor. But as they pushed ahead in sensitive locations, they gave new cause for bitterness and conflict. Although the government ceased, by the end of 1924, to attempt registration of all old lands, all new allotments had to be registered. Those who refused to register did not get land while those who were prepared to co-operate, usually progressives, took advantage of the situation in order to gain access to disputed lands. 'If a man died', Makobeni later claimed, 'just any other man came and got a constable to measure off the land and he got it without a meeting'. 'Widows are often opposed by others and deprived of lands', Baduza elaborated. The general fear that the state would use the proclamation to discriminate in favour of its supporters now seemed well founded, although this had not been the original intention. (Constables were not above suspicion of showing favour.) Conflict between factions in the locations thus intensified.

In Tugela location and elsewhere, the subheadmen merely continued to allot lands without reference to the Superintendent and ignored registration procedures. The position in this location was of particular importance. Towards the end of 1923, officials, in an attempt to defuse the resistance, had held elections for the appointment of new headmen in some locations. By no means all unpopular and progressive headmen were sacked, nor were the results accepted in all cases, but in Tugela, the unpopular Read, voted out in favour of Makobeni, was dismissed. It is perhaps surprising that the magistrate agreed to try Makobeni even on a probationary basis, although it does seem that through 1924, he was, temporarily, less vocal in the affairs of the Iliso Lomzi. But there is little doubt that he knew about the continued allocation of unregistered land by subheadmen, and by the end of the year he was again publicly representing popular opinion. The new magistrate, labelling him 'untruthful, unreliable, quite unsuitable and controlled by the J. Fanana sect' refused to confirm his appointment.

It was only in mid-1925 that Makobeni was actually dismissed and the move, though expected, provided a further catalyst to political organisation. Makobeni's sense of personal grievance intensified the urgency of his broader demands. The people of Tugela refused to choose a replacement; Read 'seemed afraid to accept' the headmanship again. The re-appointment of popular headmen, and Makobeni's recognition as a Hlubi chief now became central demands, which were linked to a defence of 'the old way' of allocating land. No longer constrained by office, Makobeni began to challenge local officials more directly. Officials believed

Makobeni had threatened to 'recapture' people prosecuted for ploughing unregistered land 'because the Act has not been passed by the Government'.

This latter formulation reveals an important facet of popular perceptions. Makobeni tried to keep a public face of legality. It was the administration, he argued, which was departing from both customary and statute law. Officials were trying to rule Cape districts in the way that they ruled the Transkei - through proclamations rather than Acts passed by the properly constituted parliament. The Iliso Lomzi clearly distinguished between different levels of the state. It argued that local officials, acting beyond their authority and outside the law, should be disregarded. But over the next few years Makobeni consistently approached higher officials and ministers. This strategy was clearly an attempt to manipulate the levels of officialdom, but it rested on a very real hope of justice from above. It was a notion strengthened by the legacy of parliamentary representation in Herschel, and often expressed in Cape districts by an association of historic rights with Queen Victoria, but by no means unique to rural society in Herschel. Nor did success on this score seem a chimera. In mid-1925, the new magistrate was moved from Herschel after coming into conflict with his seniors about the pace and method of registration in Herschel. (The Pact government decided to go slow again until amendments to the proclamation had been discussed.)

At this time, one further issue also disturbed the people of Herschel: the new £1 poll tax to be levied under the Native Taxation and Development Act of 1925. Having successfully fended off the council, they paid only a hut tax of 10 shillings and additional levies of about 2s. 6d. a year. Now they would have to pay a total of thirty shillings and all men over eighteen, rather than just the hut tax payers (family heads), would be liable for the poll tax. Moreover, the new legislation overrode the necessity to collect a separate tax for local councils; the proceeds from the new tax would be used to fund councils. And though the local councils, where established, would be divested of some of their responsibility for funding education, part of the new tax would go into a fund for that purpose. The principle of a general tax for education was thus also introduced.

The radicalisation of popular opinion caused by land registration; Makobeni's dismissal and the tax legislation, was reflected in church politics and the leadership of the Iliso Lomzi. In March 1925, Timothy Mngqibisa had arrived to fill the vacant ministry of the small independent AME church. Officials did not immediately notice his presence, but when they did towards the end of the year, they found him 'undesirable' in every way. Mngqibisa was from a well established AMEC family with roots in the Eastern Cape and on

the Rand. Why he came to Herschel, from Benoni via Bloemfontein, and whether he had previous links with the district is unclear. Whatever the case, he was a charismatic preacher who, through a mixture of religious radicalism and association with popular causes in the district, soon secured a large following. His church headquarters were moved near Makobeni's homestead in Tugela. He began to speak at political as well as religious meetings, and became a leading spokesman in the Iliso Lomzi, advocating far tighter organisation in the opposition to registration.

Fanana had long been leader of the Iliso Lomzi and was regarded by officials as the most dangerous and radical popular spokesman. It comes as something of a surprise that in the course of 1925 he split with Makobeni and was ousted from the Iliso Lomzi. Fanana did not sign the petition for Makobeni's reinstatement and was disturbed by the prominence allowed to Mngqibisa. He moved instead into one of the wings of the highly fractionalised Eastern Cape Congress movement under J.A. Sishuba. Sishuba at this time distanced himself from the more progressive core of Congress groups in the region: he was opposed to councils, in favour of chieftaincy, against location superintendents, and against the new tax. He looked to a popular rural constituency of which men like Fanana, deeply opposed to the progressive Congress elements, were leaders. But Sishuba was still trying to bridge the elite and popular worlds; he was still wedded to an incorporationist strategy and deeply concerned about the vote. Whatever Fanana's personal differences with Makobeni over the question of leadership in the Herschel Iliso Lomzi, he clearly felt that it had now gone too far in a separatist direction.

Makobeni, drawing support from the more Africanist wing of the Iliso Lomzi, the AME church, and the broader Hlubi community, Christian and non-Christian, began to look for outside support and help. He was highly suspicious of Congress groups in the Eastern Cape - the Herschel branch included some of his worst enemies. However, Congress was a highly diffuse umbrella organisation in the 1920s. James Thaele, heavily influenced by Garveyism which stressed Africanist ideas, took control of the Western Cape in the mid-1920s and for the next few years he fought a battle with Eastern Cape branches over spheres of influence within the province. Makobeni established contact with Thaele who by the end of the year was making representations on behalf of Herschel people. Makobeni also visited the Transvaal to seek a meeting with Hertzog. He formed links with the Transvaal and National Congress committees, which had experience of more radical popular politics on the Rand after the First World War. By November, Mvabaza and Dunjwa had moved down to Herschel and were participating in public meetings called by Makobeni. The

people in Herschel prepared a sustained political campaign. Their targets and strategy were, however, perhaps surprising.

5: A popular alliance is formed: the Schools Boycott and the second phase of the women's movement, 1925/6

While Mngqibisa was establishing himself in the Iliso Lomzi, and Makobeni looking for outside support towards the end of 1925, the women's movement renewed its activities. The organisation established during 1922 had remained at least partly intact. In late 1924 and early 1925, one store had been boycotted and there were rumours that others would soon be affected. Links between leaders of the Iliso Lomzi and women's leaders were also reported. Land registration, which would favour male applicants and seemed to place single women and widows in a difficult position, was a particular threat to women as well as a general threat to communal control. When reports on the women's movement started reaching the magistrate from September 1925, it became clear that prices and trading practices were no longer the central issues for them. Rather, they were directing themselves to state intervention on a broader front. A Methodist teacher reported to his white missionary that 'some women of our church, including women of our women's association ... went to Makobeni's homestead and held a prayer meeting'. But their prayers had more than religious content. They prayed that Makobeni should become headman again, indeed chief headman of the whole district, and that all means should be used to stop land registration. There were echoes of 1922 when women said they were 'tired of saying Nkosi, Nkosi to all the abelungu' at the trading stores. But their feeling was directed beyond the traders. 'A spirit of anti-white is being widely sewn among our church people and every effort is made to overthrow the church'. 'Ethiopianism' was 'rapidly moving'. It was the women, in particular, who were deserting the Methodists for the AME church under Mngqibisa. The potential for religious separatism in the manyano was being realised. Religious separatism was being linked to a new political radicalism which the mission churches could no longer contain. Mngqibisa now offered an alternative, especially to the women, which bound their religious and political beliefs together. And he played a catalytic role in the formation of a popular alliance by providing an organisational and ideological bridge between the Iliso Lomzi and the women's movement.

Mngqibisa and Makobeni organised the collection of funds in every location in the district except Bensonvale. 'First the men collected and then the women'. But most worrying of all for the teachers, Congress members and the progressive communities, who supplied the magistrate with much of his information,

was that the women were removing their children from school. By the middle of October 1925, five schools, all in the Hlubi heartland of the lowland locations, were affected. The more militant women, not content with removing their own children, attempted to stop others from attending. A teacher in Khiba location, bordering Tugela, reported that a group had stopped children on their way to school 'saying they are going to kill those who go'.

The primary reason given by the women for the boycott of schools was related to the broader issues facing the people of Herschel. 'The teachers /were/ responsible for the application of the registration of lands in the district'; 'some of the teachers /were/ guilty of complicity and were constantly clamouring for the introduction of the "Bhunga"'. The action was directed against the agents of the state. 'If the boycott continued', the women apparently argued, 'all the teachers will be sacked by the government which would affect the magistrate in administrative affairs'. But there was more to the boycott than this. The women were attacking the ideological hold of the progressives. Many had removed themselves from the Methodist church which the progressives dominated; now their children would be removed from the control of progressive teachers. They had taken action against the stores and the churches, now they took on another manifestation of the larger society in the district: the schools. Their protest was also against the principle of compulsory taxation for education which was associated with the councils.

The women also explicitly contrasted their militancy with the more passive resistance of their own menfolk. They 'even challenged the men to take of their pairs of trousers and wear frocks as the men were such cowards and were afraid of another man (meaning the magistrate)'. (Symbolic inversion of sexual roles was not unique to the women's movement in Herschel.) But it is also clear that the women began to work closely with the leaders of the Iliso Lomzi. The two wings of the popular movement attended each others meetings; Makobeni seems increasingly to have been recognised as overall leader. Some progressives thought that Mngqibisa had been 'given' six young women by Makobeni. The magistrate at least recognised that 'while six young women go about with /Mngqibisa/ when he goes to meetings', they were 'probably a sort of committee'. The relationship between charismatic male Ethiopian preachers and religious women certainly needs to be explored, but the women in Herschel, at this stage, acted with considerable independence. As their boycott escalated, however, they timed their initiatives to coincide with Makobeni's approaches to higher authority.

The Herschel Branch of Congress, and the Teachers Association, pressed the officials to take some action. They feared violence against themselves and those

children who were still going to school. A hut belonging to George Mehlomakhulu, the man eventually appointed to replace Makobeni as headman in Tugela, had been burnt down. On this occasion, in contrast to 1922, the local Congress members were in no position to mediate for the action was aimed not least against them. But the magistrate was again constrained by the boycott tactic. He, and visiting senior officials, could only give warnings. They could not even easily take action against 'outside agitators' such as the ANC representatives or Mngqibisa. Regulations restricting movements within the Cape reserves outside the Transkei were weak and these visitors had not asked for homestead sites which the magistrate could refuse. Mvabaza and Dunjwa left of their own accord, to accompany Makobeni on a second trip to the Rand and the ANC conference in Bloemfontein. Mngqibisa, advised by a sympathetic white lawyer, stayed.

In January 1926, the women intensified their action. More schools were affected by the boycott, and more direct measures were taken to close the schools. The teacher in Madakana, also local secretary of Congress, reported that the 'women came to tell him not to do his duties as a teacher'. They had decided to 'pull the teacher out, disperse the children and close the school'. Police guards were sent; these dissuaded the women from going through with the plan which would have exposed them to arrest. But they did succeed in a more removed part of the district. 'They drove ... the children out of the school and told them not to go to school again', a teacher reported, 'then they told me that if I went to school again they would beat me ... My school is closed now'. A large meeting in Gatberg, where Jeremiah Sikiti, the progressive leader, was still headman, decided that the people should withhold their taxes. The popular movement now began to call the progressives Witvets.

Late in 1925, the magistrate whose enforcement of land registration had precipitated so much popular opposition had been replaced by a young official, Munscheid. In taking this step, ^{the} CNC in Kingwilliamstown aimed to gain more direct control over the district, unimpeded by an experienced and strongminded magistrate. Munscheid was clearly rattled by the effectiveness of the school boycott in January and February 1926 and was not unsympathetic. The CNC felt strongly that the previous magistrate, in taking such a hard line, was partly responsible for the polarisation. Makobeni's followers were 'fools rather than knaves' and would tire of paying subscriptions when they found that they received only promises in return. 'Time is a great factor in helping to take the glamour out of any popular movement; people can't keep themselves on the top note all the time so when things become noisy a little postponement of any action ... gives them time to quieten down and wiser councils may prevail'.

His strategy was in direct contrast to those who feared that compromise opened the way for another Bulhoek. His was the very strategy against which local officials and progressives in Herschel had been arguing for the past few years.

The CNC was also prepared to make concessions. At the same time as the schools boycott reached its height in February 1926, Makobeni requested meetings with the magistrate on the issue of land registration. Munscheid, in some awe of Makobeni who tended to dominate the proceedings, agreed to stop any allotment of plots by officials without full consultation, and also to maintain the 'go slow' on registration. Attempts to defuse conflict were aided when Mngqibisa, for reasons that are unclear, fell out with Makobeni and left the district voluntarily in March. Makobeni also left again in March, for some months, on his third trip in less than a year. (All funded by the popular movement.) Many kept their children from school - ten out of the fourteen main schools in the district were still poorly attended - but the attempt to close all the schools was called off. The popular movement had made significant gains.

Makobeni's trip took him to Cape Town where he met the Secretary of Native Affairs, Herbst, whom he succeeded in persuading to come to Herschel. In June 1926 Herbst arrived to attend a gathering of 1,000 men and 200 women. He was presented with the people's main demands: the reinstatement of Makobeni, a halt to any implementation of land registration, the council system and the tax; and protection of communal grazing lands. He acknowledged that mistakes might have been made in the appointment of headmen and the allotment of land. But he gave no hope of any concessions. Worse still, he refused to allow the representatives of the women to speak, and made gratuitous reference to their presence. 'This district is really advanced. There is a child taking notes, and women are also taking notes'. He had 'never seen women at meetings before and ... never been asked by them to speak'. The magistrate soon recognised how serious a gaffe had been made. He asked for a 'round table conference' to follow so that his strategy of compromise could be saved. His requests were refused by the Minister and 'the forcible closing of schools by native women again commenced'. Passive resistance to taxation and registration was maintained. During their meetings the 'women were very excited, saying that they would die together'. It seems to be at this time that the term Amafelandawonye, or Amafela, was adopted by the popular movement to describe the alliance between the women and the Iliso Lomzi.

The second phase of the schools boycott was a more limited and violent action aimed at a few teachers who were regarded as particular enemies. This

time, the women threw caution to the winds. Complaining that a teacher had gone to pace lands during school hours, and had children gather wood for him, they took possession of his school and prevented him from entering. The police were called in and arrested twenty seven women - the first mass arrests since the school boycott began nearly nine months before. The court was again crowded for the trial. When the verdict was given (£5 or two months each) 'pandemonium broke out'. 'From 200 to 300 native women present rose as one, brandishing sticks and shouting at the top of their voices, their evident intention being to rush the police and effect a rescue of their friends'. Police reserves brought in from Aliwal North were stoned, but their presence was sufficient to maintain control. That night, more women gathered in town; 'the mob camped out on the bare patch at the back of the gaol, singing, dancing and shouting'. But the arrests marked the last militant action by women in the district. At a meeting of men in Tugela, the Amafela decided against violence. Vigilante groups were formed by the progressives to guard the schools. So far had Fa.nana been left behind that he was seen amongst them.

6. The Amafela and broader political movements: Wellington

The period of the schools boycott, through late 1925 and the first half of 1926, saw an important transition in the form and ideas of the popular movement. The women, and their boycott strategy, had been absorbed into the broader struggle against state intervention. The polarisation between progressives, or Witvoets, and the Amafela was complete. An organisational structure had been established in a number of locations, and regular meetings were held to discuss tactics and responses. Makobeni's leadership was recognised, and the two wings of the movement were able to co-ordinate and time their initiatives with considerable effect. Open violence, or revolt, was rejected as its costs would be great and its results counterproductive. Despite the intense anger generated in the political struggle, the leaders were able to control their followers. The targets of mass action had increasingly become those who collaborated with the state and thus opened a breach in the defences of the local community. The local progressives could no longer hope to mediate.

Such organisational and tactical shifts were integrally linked with changes in ideology. Those who broke from the mission churches were rejecting progressive controls, seeking a new African christianity in independent churches. (The fact that so many had remained in the mission churches for so long, when independency had been an option for three decades, only affirms that Herschel Christians were experience a period of radical change.) The separatist and Africanist tendencies in the churches were reflected in the political sphere.

What had started as a fight on specific issues, had become a generalised resistance to state, progressive and white domination. Moreover, the Amafela increasingly abandoned attempts to protect remaining African rights in the common society - the primary focus of Congress action in the Eastern Cape - in favour of attempts to secure independent local control in their own community. Their adoption of an 'anti-white' ideology, and their support for a political system, based on a popular chieftancy, in which customary rights and local political control could be protected, reveals the direction of their political thinking.

Up to 1926, the popular movement in Herschel was largely locally generated. Herschel people certainly had access to ideas and strategies current in other parts of South Africa. They were able to draw in outside ideologues especially Mngqibisa, who caught their mood. But the commitment which the popular movement commanded grew out of the particular history of social division in the district. And the shifts in strategy and thinking through the 1920s were closely related to the way in which the local struggle, on a succession of issues, had developed. The genius of the Amafela leaders was that they could bind together the various strands of resistance to forge an innovative form of political action and ideology. But in the next few years, the Amafela increasingly turned to outside leaders and to more universal political ideologies. They did so in the hope of budging a seemingly intransigent state, and in an attempt to seek a more generalised explanation of the condition of oppression.

Mngqibisa's departure in March 1926 left those Amafela who had deserted the Methodists for a more politicised, independent church without leadership. Makobeni does not appear to have tried to fill the spiritual void, but restricted himself to the more clearly political sphere. They found a new leader, briefly, in Wellington Buthelezi, who arrived in Herschel in about September 1926. Buthelezi's career has been mapped in some detail by Bob Edgar; the material on Herschel allows a deeper examination of the way in which he linked up with local political dissidents, drew on their ideology and developed it in a more universal direction. Originally from Natal, and schooled partly at Lovedale, Buthelezi began his active involvement in politics only a couple of years before he came to Herschel. It was apparently when he was based at Qachas Nek, in Eastern Lesotho in 1924 and 1925, that he made the transition from herbalist, healer and patent medicine vendor to populist politician. Garveyism, learnt first hand from Ernest Wallace, a West Indian who had organised a branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Qachas Nek, strongly influenced his ideas. But most of all, he articulated the thinking of the rural people around him to produce a distinctive message of liberation stressing religious and

political separatism, black political unity, and rejection of whites and the state.

Buthlezi's political initiation during 1925 and 1926 took place partly in the East Griqualand districts bordering Lesotho, where the people were mobilising around very similar issues to those at stake in Herschel. Indeed, he became involved in the internal politics of Hlubi communities, especially in Mt. Fletcher, on the 'anti-government' side; the name Amafela was also adopted by the dissidents there, where it may have originated. He also had contact with the AMEC and with Thaele. It is possible that Buthelezi visited Herschel before September, when his presence was first reported to the magistrate. (By 1926, the network of informers had partly broken down.) If not, he almost certainly knew of the political developments in the district, and the local Amafela would have known about him. It is thus not surprising that he was rapidly absorbed into the heart of the movement. Girls choirs sang for him in the lowland locations. He was 'prominently associated with a 'we-die-together' group of Herschel malcontents (mostly women)'. He later claimed to have married Ester Nomageza Alliance Siboto, a Herschel woman from one of the leading Amafela families. He attended many 'secret' meetings. And when the magistrate served a summons on Buthelezi, he sent it to Makobeni's kraal.

Few of Buthelezi's speeches at this time were recorded, but what magistrate Munscheid did hear was sufficient to concern him. Buthelezi advised people against paying the new tax saying it was 'not law'. He promised the people 'all that the white man can give'. Rather than pay the tax, they should buy a membership ticket for his organisation at 2s. 6d. each. This would serve to identify them as supporters when the reckoning came. For, at this stage, Buthelezi, and his supporters in the Wellington movement elsewhere, tended to lay stress on deliverance from outside. 'The American negroes have decided to fight the Europeans and will help the local natives. There are already three ships with ammunition on this side of the sea' and 'balloons are also coming over'. Such speeches, together with the dire warnings he had received from East Griqualand officials, persuaded Munscheid that he should take action lest Buthelezi fan what he felt to be the dying embers of popular protest. Munscheid therefore served a summons on Wellington ordering him to leave the district, despite the fact that he was well aware that the government might lose should it be challenged in court. Buthelezi did contact a lawyer, and returned to Herschel in December, but the magistrate forcibly ejected him under a similar order. When the case came to court in 1927, a judge ruled not that the order was legal, but that the case did not fall under his jurisdiction. Buthelezi, suggesting that he could not expect justice in the white man's court, went no further.

Wellington may have left the district, but some of his influence and following remained. A minister who was in close touch with him and also related to Mngqibisa - arrived in 1927 to take over leadership in the independent church. By this time, the Amafela had found the religious practices of the AMEC too restrictive and they were led into various Apostolic or Zionist-type churches, especially the African Christian Church, which allowed for full immersion (in the Orange River), healing, and African customs. By mid-1927, the Amafela were collecting funds to build independent schools, a major feature of the Wellington movement in other districts. It was a logical development of the attempt to boycott mission schools. By the end of 1928, a constable found that there were eighteen such schools in operation, an alternative educational system covering most of the district. Teachers were drawn from the dissident families in Herschel, as well as from those East Griqualand districts where the Wellington movement was strongest. One school was at Makobeni's kraal, 'among the peach trees there'. The financial burden of running the schools was soon to prove too heavy for an impoverished population which already paid taxes to cover the costs of education. (By 1928, the poll tax was finally being collected.) But for a brief period, the Amafela had full control over the education of their children. And during 1928, and 1929, Buthelezi himself returned to hold a series of well attended meetings. Unable to enter Herschel he called people to the border with Lady Grey district.

It is the millennial features of the Wellington movement which have attracted most academic attention. Buthelezi's promise of deliverance by American blacks in aeroplanes, and his calls for people to kill their pigs so that the fat would not catch fire, and burn kraals when the flames or bombs dropped, have often been cited. The Wellington movement certainly did stress such ideas, at certain times and in some districts. But Buthelezi by no means originated such thinking. A belief in deliverance by American blacks was reported from rural districts in the Cape, not least from Bulhoek in 1920, well before he began addressing meetings. Rural people were aware of the Garveyist thinking and reinterpreted it in their own terms which could include a strand of millennialism. Even those who doubted such a total solution to South Africa's political problems could look to post-War America as a symbol of liberty and to Garvey's movement as a source of inspiration and ideas. Buthelezi and his followers merely picked up on rural thinking in some districts, and spread it to others. Pig-killings were in fact rather restricted geographically in the 1920s; they seem to have been most widespread in Pondoland and southern Natal in 1927. Again, the killing of pigs was a well-established means of explaining dislocation and venting anxiety in these areas - there were at least four pig-killings in

Pondoland districts between the 1880s and the 1920s. Buthelezi, who had little direct involvement in these districts, rode the currents of rural thinking in linking pig-killings with the aeroplanes. The Wellington movement was very decentralised, local leaders developing their own forms of action and belief. But Buthelezi did have a core set of ideas, not of millennial nature, which also deserve attention.

It would be surprising if the Amafela, with long experience of tight organisation and issue-oriented politics, and their own set of Africanist ideas, had moved en masse into pig-killing. Indeed, there is little evidence of millennial thinking, Americanism, or slaughter in the district. (A few people killed white animals in 1928.) Rather it was the separatist ideas in the Wellington movement that resonated with their thinking. During 1927 and 1928, after Buthelezi's first visit, reports indicate that these ideas had become rounded out and developed in Herschel. Constables heard that 'natives in this district wished to control their own affairs', 'doing away with the Police camps and Magistrates etc. in this area and further, to have their own store, and to appoint no further Headmen, Councillors to control them'. They developed their attack on measures which might increase differentiation within the African population. This was implied in the fight against councils and taxation which were seen to benefit a minority, but now it became more explicit. Agricultural demonstration schemes were opposed because they would intensify inequality 'causing us to hate each other'; people should not buy and sell food from each other. There are strong hints of anti-commercialism in Amafela thinking at this time. The struggle against traders had become generalised to a fight against further commoditisation of rural relationships. They advocated a return to 'old native custom' in regard to marriage, bridewealth, land distribution and the sharing of food. Their line of defence as an impoverished community lay in the blocking of further state intrusion, mission authority and the economic relationships of the dominant capitalist economy.

How far these ideas were drawn from Buthelezi are unclear. But when he returned in 1928/29 there was no hint of deliverance from outside in his recorded speeches. Rather, he advocated a radical local separatism. His speeches were infused with biblical references and couched in the language of separatist Christianity; his political message was interleaved with symbols of resurrection and the New Jerusalem. He called for unity of Africans and 'Africa for the Africans and Europe for the Europeans' - an old Ethiopian slogan. He totally rejected whites: 'I want you to do away with the European Government ... as well as all the white people. There are no hypocrites like white people'.

They made pictures of Jesus Christ as a whiteman.
Nobody knows God. God is neither white nor black
... If at my death I go to heaven and find a white
man there I shall take my hat and go out at once and
even if I go to hell and there come across a white
man that Hell won't contain me.

He attacked both Congress and the ICU because 'they co-operated with white men'.
'They tell people lies; they cannot do anything for a black man'. Buthelezi's
was a pure Africanist message. And he also called for a return to African ways.
'The people should not depart from custom and should love each other'; 'the
natives must not sell their brothers for bread'. How far Buthelezi was again
elaborating on the ideas of the local movement is unclear. Certainly, he
pushed separatist schools and Africanist ideas in other districts. He seems
himself to have developed a more consistent position by the late 1920s. Whatever
the case, his speeches in Herschel resonated with the position which had been
reached by at least the core of the Amafela movement. (The leading families,
the Sibotos, Sipambos and Qalingas, all regularly attended his meetings.)

Buthelezi was not a major influence on Herschel politics. But he arrived
at a time when the Amafela were searching for the kind of ideas he could offer.
His supporters in Herschel and those from elsewhere played an important part in
establishing and staffing the independent schools, and those in the independent
churches looked to him for spiritual as well as political leadership. It was
never a majority of dissidents in Herschel who gave their support to him.
But he and his followers did capture and elaborate separatist ideas, and give
them further definition and content. A small group of important Amafela families
continued to look to him as one of their leaders well into the 1930s.

7: The Amafela and National Movements: the ANC

Wellington Buthelezi attacked the ANC in his speeches to the people of Herschel during 1928/29 not so much because the local branch of Congress was the enemy of the Amafela but because he was competing for a following with representatives of the national and Western Cape Congress. Makobeni, leader of the Amafela, by no means restricted his political links after 1926 to the Wellington movement. He sought support wherever he could get it and was intent on maintaining the character and independence of the Amafela. ANC representatives, from the highest echelons of that organisation, were sought as mediators. Early in 1927, Rev. Z. Mahabane, still national ANC President, visited Herschel. Mahabane had in fact been Methodist minister in the district in 1914/15 and must have been one of the few people who could command the respect both of progressives and Amafela. But his mission was unsuccessful. Munscheid, the magistrate, though still content to let the movement take its course, would make no concessions, nor would his seniors have allowed him to. The progressives, no doubt sensing a lull in Amafela activity after the school boycott, were staging their own counter-offensive and were in no mood to compromise. In July 1927, Makobeni again visited Pretoria, this time in the company of the new ANC President J.T. Gumede. He was again spurned by officials, now thoroughly impatient with his unceasing approaches. When Gumede used the opportunity of the meeting to make representations for increased expenditure on African education, officials pointed out that in Herschel, the people refused to make use of the available facilities. It was a telling recognition of the gap in ideas between Congress and Amafela. Nevertheless, the importance of Herschel in regional politics encouraged the ANC to build its links with the Amafela. Towards the end of 1927, James Thaele came to the district and in 1928, he established a permanent branch there which became one of the main nodes of organised ANC activity in the Cape at the time. The new branch of Congress stood in direct opposition to the old, progressive dominated and Eastern Cape linked branch.

Wellington Buthelezi had no monopoly over Africanist ideas in the 1920s, though his rurally derived position presented separatist thinking in its least diluted form. Elements in all the national movements shifted in this direction, especially in the latter part of the decade, though for slightly different reasons. How far this change was a response to popular ideas remains to be investigated. Thaele, in particular, had a large store of Garveyite rhetoric, was well known to attack whites and missionaries and to support

independent schools. In the Western Cape, he came into conflict with, and ousted, those members of Congress such as Elliot Tonjeni and Brandsby Ndoba who took a more class-based position. Thaele picked up on local separatist thinking in Herschel, especially after he had been there for some months. But Thaele was essentially wedded to progressive ideas and could not go nearly as far as Buthelezi. He directed his strategy and speeches towards achieving a compromise. He represented local feeling against councils and land registration but confided to the magistrate that if only the state would recognise Makobeni as chief, opposition to councils might subside. He suggested that a deputation of Amafela should visit districts in which the council was operating; 'don't condemn a thing before you know about it' he argued. (This proposal was voted down at a large meeting.) And after noting in a letter to the magistrate that registration remained the central grievance, he added 'personally...I consider pacing with the award of receipt as protection'. Such sentiments put him at odds with the Amafela on major issues. Thaele was also unhappy with the religious content of popular thinking, and especially in earlier speeches he proposed a typical Congress position. 'We are not going to be treated as our forefathers were, we are a progressive race...The National Congress has one aim, that is to educate the Europeans as they are not living up to their morals.' This was hardly the same message as that which Wellington Buthelezi and the leading Amafela delivered.

Nevertheless, many ANC meetings were held in Herschel between late 1927 and mid-1929, often attracting attendances of from 500 to 1000 people. Such crowds were a little larger than these of a few hundred that Buthelezi attracted to the border. The ANC's success was in part the result of its ability to operate openly in the district, and to hold meetings in central locations. Officials hardly welcomed Thaele, but they did not regard him as dangerous. Partly because of his florid manner of speaking and writing English (he like Buthelezi spoke very largely in English), they tended not to take him too seriously and hinted that the leading Amafela were of similar opinion. Any influence that he did have was more likely to confuse or moderate the popular movement than politicise it further. Thus, although the new GN302 of 1928 gave officials more power to take action against individual outsiders, Munscheid did not employ this measure against Thaele and Congress as he did against Wellingtonites.

But there were more important reasons for ANC success. Initially Thaele,

like Mahabane, was accepted because he represented an organisation which had access to the state and might therefore be able to mediate and obtain concessions. During the course of 1928, however, the new branch of Congress was effectively taken over by local Herschel organisers as a vehicle for Amafela political activities. Thaele's main associate in the district was Tamplin Jabane, who had been a noted leader of the popular movement for some years. Resident in Tugela location, Jabane had taken over as secretary of the Iliso Lomzi in 1925 when Panana was ousted. From then he appeared prominently at Makobeni's side on deputations and during meetings. When Makobeni died in 1928, Jabane became perhaps the major spokesman for the Amafela. He chose to use the Congress branch as his platform and it was he, rather than Thaele, who controlled it, and successfully recruited members. (Congress charged a fee of 6 shillings for men and 2s. 6d., like Buthelezi, for women.)

Jabane spoke with Thaele at meetings, but he took a rather different position. He dwelt on local issues: the council, access to communal land, the threat of dipping, the power of progressive headmen. But he also touched on national questions. While national^{as well as} Eastern Cape Congress members tended to attack Hertzog's segregationist policy^{and} condemn the violence perpetrated by Afrikaner on African, Jabane could say that 'he liked General Hertzog'. Clements Kadalie, it is true, had some sympathy for Hertzog's policy of domestic industrialisation and saw him as a model of what could be achieved through nationalist struggle. But Jabane's support was on other grounds, nor were these merely tactical and a means to keep channels of communication open. Jabane argued that the Hertzog government was taking steps in the direction of giving the people a greater measure of self-government and that this was the 'policy of Mfela'. He held by Makobeni's concept of a popular chieftaincy as the most representative form of local authority. He particularly attacked state appointed headmen and felt that the 1927 Native Administration Act offered the possibility of chiefly restoration. By 1929, indeed, he maintained that 'the country of Mhlophakulu has now been returned' and 'the magistrate's jurisdiction /has/ now been curtailed in trying cases and the headmen have been reduced to nothing'. This was not so, and the state did not appoint chiefs in Herschel in this period, but Jabane was clearly working on the assumption that it soon would be so. He also argued that this implied that decisions would be

made 'by the men themselves in the locations'.

Jabane's position was a logical development of central elements in Amafela thinking that had jelled during the course of the political struggle. Moreover, although he was a separatist, who did not consider the protection of the African vote to be a key issue, he did advocate the use of the vote as a strategic means of achieving Amafela aims. As the 1929 election approached, Jabane pressed those in Herschel who could vote to give their support to Hertzog. This may seem anomalous, even perverse, given that Hertzog was fighting on a 'swart gevaar' ticket, openly advocating an end to the Cape African common roll franchise, and pursuing discriminatory policies on a variety of fronts. But it was so broadly held a position in Herschel that Thaele himself had to concur. It was that this period that Thaele, playing to the local audience, began changing his position to explore separatist ideas. (How sincerely is not clear.) Hertzog, he argued, should be supported because he would allow Africans to become 'territorially independent' and recognise African customs such as lobola. It may not have been the Amafela alone who changed his position. In stating that Smuts was 'controlled by financial interests such as De Beers', that Hertzog was more honest and had South African interests at heart, ~~he~~^{Thaele} reflected Kadavie's thinking. Other Congress leaders, such as Mahabane, frustrated in their efforts to push for more equal rights, also tried to work out what benefits could be derived from the segregationist policy that was being imposed. But Congress leaders in general, and local progressives, tended to see the negative sides of segregation as far more important. Jabane, on the other hand, was willing Hertzog into pursuing the logic of a fully segregationist policy.

Jabane's decision to ally with Congress, even though he could dominate the political direction of the new Herschel branch, was not universally accepted by the Amafela. Those who had come into the popular alliance through the women's movement and the separatist churches, by no means all female, tended to look rather to the Wellington^ties and church leaders for guidance. While Makobeni was alive, he, as the acknowledged leader with a legitimacy deriving both from his key role in the struggle and his membership of the leading Hlubi lineage, could hold the two wings together. He was involved both with Buthelezi and with Congress leaders, and the Amafela could retain its independent identity without being subject to either of these outside organisations. But after his death, the alliance began to come apart.

Both sections espoused a version of radical Africanism and separatism, and shared views on most aspects of state intervention. Both groups were fluid - individuals would attend Congress meetings as well as Buthelezi's border gatherings. But Jabane and the Congress oriented group tended to emphasise a populist chieftaincy, territorial segregation and secular separatism. They were also more prepared to negotiate for concessions, use the vote, and even develop links with old Iliso Lomzi members who had not originally gone in with the Amafela. The Congress umbrella sheltered many more than the hard-core of the popular alliance. Those more closely associated with the women's movement tended to be more exclusivist, abstracting themselves from negotiations which had given them little, fending off alliances with those not totally committed to the Amafela and seeking expression through, still politicised, religious activity. The change in the form of popular protest helped precipitate the split; volatile mass meetings ^{and} strong rhetoric had displaced the tightly knit location based organisation after 1927. And funds and collections were increasingly held separately by the Wellingtonites and churches, on the one hand, or the Congress group on the other, rather than by the Amafela organisation itself.

Open splits became manifest at the end of 1928 when Jabane's supporters at one of the border meetings criticised Buthelezi for attacking the ANC and misleading the people. Shortly afterwards, a group favouring the Wellingtonites disrupted an ANC meeting in Sterkspruit 'because congress they say is controlled by the white man and...Tamplin Jabane was making himself "Inkosi Makobeni"'. Within the Congress group Theo Mvalo, an outside organiser, fell out with Jabane and switched to Buthelezi with some followers. (Mvalo, but not Jabane, was arrested and banned from the district.) The magistrate was not unaware of these internal tensions, and did his best to encourage them, but he maintained a largely non-interventionist policy. (His major efforts were reserved for his attempt to rebuild the network of informers; but as meetings were now relatively open, and his constables could attend and record the proceedings, he did not rely on ~~them~~ ^{informers} for most of his information.) Munscheid made no further concessions, and there is no doubt that the momentum and unity of the Amafela failed partly because it could not establish a foothold for bargaining, and transform itself into more formal political organisation. But given this context, the Amafela fractured into a number of different groupings largely for internal reasons. The intervention of outside movements initially seemed to give some hope. But their clearly rival ideologies and strategies gave definition to previously submerged internal differences, and

they offered no concrete means of political advance. Such a dissolution was by no means atypical of popular movements in a repressive state where people could not hook onto more institutionalised forms of expression and organisation. For a time, however, it had seemed that the Amafela could escape that rule. Their ideas, at least, lived on.

In 1929, land registration, under amended regulations, again commenced against only limited opposition. In 1930, a new magistrate took steps to introduce the council. He made sure that the preparatory meetings would give forth a majority in favour, and also that the electoral college would select moderate men. The council was dominated by former progressives, although once the crisis had passed, less 'ultraloyal' members, such as J.S. Mphuthing of the Teachers Association, took the lead and worked hard to secure wider acceptance of the institution. (Fanana, consistent on this point, staged a rearguard action against the council but had little support.) The ANC faded at a local level; Thaele's intervention did not result in a permanent base. A few supporters of the Congress wing of the Amafela actually became councillors, though one of them, at least, emerged as a leading opponent of the government's betterment policies ^{for} ~~in~~ the reserves in the 1940s. In a report on the 'General Attitudes of the Natives' in 1938, the magistrate noted that 'a small but vocal section of the type which favours vigilance societies' was active in opposing stock limitation and 'development work'.

The independent churches which were established in the 1920s were sustained at least into the next decade. But they tended to split into congregations of a few hundred each recognising different leaders and affiliating to different outside church organisations: the AMEC, the Christian Church, the Apostolic Faith Assembly of South Africa. Perhaps the largest group of 300 - 400, including a number of core Amafela families, affiliated to the Santu Baptist Church. (In the meantime, reports suggest that the secessions from the Methodists had stopped, and that their number, around 2,500, was perhaps growing again.) It might be tempting to interpret church segmentation and Zionism as a sign of defeat and oppression - ~~the~~ ^{some} Amafela, especially from the women's movement, ^{was} espousing philosophies which allowed them to escape day to day struggles and concentrate their minds, in the words of Thaele, 'on things Celestial and Heavenly'. Such a view would accord with analyses which have identified Zionism with political quiescence and even 'false consciousness'. Clearly there was a shift in the approach of those who joined the Zionist churches in the 1930s. But it would be a mistake to see ~~them~~

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as politically dormant. Their churches had been forged in intense political struggle. In the 1930s, the leader of the Christian Church was still resisting land registration. ^{A few independent schools were still running} And in the 1938 report cited above, the magistrate also thought that much of the opposition to 'development work' came from these who had joined the Baptists, but had previously been in 'the "amafelandawonye" movement which flourished in the "Twenties"'. Such churches certainly could provide a vehicle for sustained political as well as religious activity. In a sense, their very existence was a political statement. The question to ask is not so much whether they were 'political', but what form their religious and political activity took.

Conclusions: (Amafelandawonye)

This study has attempted to recover a phase of rural popular politics in South Africa that has barely been noted in the historical literature. The intensity, and degree of sustained organisation, of the struggle in Herschel was perhaps unusual, but similar ideas, actions and political strategies are in evidence elsewhere. To characterise the reserve districts of South Africa as merely isolated and economically depressed backwaters in the twentieth century is highly misleading. Economically depressed they were, although the nature and implications of migrancy with sub-subsistence production needs far more investigation. But the evidence from Herschel and other districts suggests that they could be the scene of innovative and important political and ideological developments. Such events and processes must be recorded and inserted into the historiography of the country as a whole. Nor is this just a call for 'balance' in a new historiography which has tended to concentrate on capital, the state and wage labour. The particular character of rural and migrant organisation and ideas, especially in the earlier twentieth century, needs to be understood because it had a bearing on the patterns of African resistance as a whole. It perhaps influenced the direction of the national movements; but as important, it displayed very real differences between popular and nationalist political thinking. The rural areas were not 'unorganised'; but rural people were often fighting for different things. In doing so, they also revealed something of the ambiguous class position of large sections of the African population. Perhaps, the record of their struggle might reveal to historians that the social balance in the country at the time is still ill-understood. And perhaps the conclusion might be drawn that until it is better understood, the peculiar trajectory of capitalist development, and state policy, at an important period of change must also remain something of a mystery.

This analysis of Herschel in the 1920s accepts, in broad terms, that it was a period of economic hardship for the local peasantry, a moment in a longer history of 'decline'. It was those more incorporated Christian families, except for the small minority who had access to salaries, who were particularly affected by the decline. Traditionalists did not find their world so radically disturbed in the 1920s and 1930s, though their turn was to come. It is not therefore surprising that it was largely

dissident 'school' people who were in the van of political organisation. In taking on, initially, a series of discrete though linked political issues, they cemented a popular alliance with a wider following. But their ideas also shifted significantly. Out of an initial suspicion about state intervention, grew^α radical separatist programme. These ideas were also closely linked to their economic position. A defensive communalism offered some possibility that rights to the remaining rural resources could be protected. Given their history, the demand for restoration of chieftaincy, as well as a separatist Christianity were an integral part of such a defense.

In Pondoland, where a strong paramountcy survived the process of colonisation, there could be, in the earlier twentieth century, an important community of interest between chiefs and people in defending rural resources and resisting full proletarianisation. (Migrancy, in this analysis, at least in its origin, can be seen as a form of proletarianisation born out of the relationships of rural society as much as out of the specific demands of capital.) In Qumbu, where the Mpondomise paramountcy was destroyed, an immigrant Mfengu community given land and opportunity, and the district divided between traditionalists and 'school' communities, the traditionalists tended to fight for the restoration of their land and rights through a 'chieftaincy' movement despite (or because of) the fact that they were deeply involved in the migrant economy. Such movements were quite widespread in the Cape at the time. They should not be seen as merely backward-looking and traditionalist though they certainly contained traditionalist features. Rather, they were a struggle to guarantee communal rights for a partially proletarianised community. A new popular chieftaincy was a form of political representation which could allow participation in, and access to, political decision-making for the majority of people. In Qumbu, some members of the Christian community began to swing round to this position in the 1910s and 1920s. In Herschel, the demand for chiefly restoration and territorial segregation became an integral part of the platform of an essentially Christian political movement.

Moreover, it is important to note that many women, who were core members of that movement, were amongst the leading separatists. It was they who bore the brunt of the economic changes in the reserves. They were also

fighting a battle for limited independence from male authority within the rural communities. But, to a certain extent, they - the majority of the rural population - saw their interests as being served by an increasingly separatist, sometimes traditionalist political ideology. They did have differences with the men who dominated the Iliso Lomzi. It may be, although the evidence is not yet sufficiently clear, that they tended to move into church, rather than secular, separatism because they feared that the patriarchal features of chiefly authority might hamper their struggle in the domestic sphere. (The particular direction of the women's movement needs to be related in other ways to their economic and social position.) But the links between church separatism, and chiefly authority could be important.

The evidence from a few, but quite different Cape districts suggests this separatist political momentum in the earlier decades of the twentieth century has been much underexplored and underestimated. (Whether such a response was typical elsewhere remains to be shown) It could clearly vary in form, in intensity, and in the issues around which it was articulated. Nevertheless, the evidence is sufficient to argue that it must be analysed as part of a broader political culture which partially bridged the gaps between town and countryside, farms and reserves, traditionalists and Christians. Though drawing on earlier strands of thinking, this popular culture of the 1920s was a new amalgam; in this sense the period under discussion must be seen as a critical period of change in African political responses. These were ideas which were attractive to communities which were becoming more proletarianised, to people whose remaining independence was threatened, and who were thus becoming more incorporated into the national capitalist economy at one level. But they were also distancing themselves, and being excluded, at another. Africanist popular consciousness by no means precluded organisation and demands on issues of wages and prices, but such action must in a number of cases be seen as part of a wider defensive response. Nor was popular culture essentially nationalist in character; some of the mobilising symbols and ideas could be shared with nationalist leaders, but the latter tended to seek a more incorporationist direction. There was a complex interplay between popular ideas and movements on the one hand, and nationalist and trade union positions on the other. But broader movements tended to overlay or briefly connect with rather than incorporate,

or deeply shape, local struggles.

Whether or not it is useful to categorise popular political responses in this period as specifically populist, and to see populism, especially in the countryside, as a distinctive feature of early industrialisation in South Africa, is open to discussion. The idea of African populism in the colonial and post-colonial period was certainly attractive to scholars such as Saul and Worsley in the 1960s, although it has not been widely debated since then. Saul tends to suggest that populism should define an explicit ideology, and movement, rather than merely a series of semi-traditionalist, anti-state and egalitarian local resistance movements, which perhaps characterised rural politics in Africa in the earlier colonial period. They must be distinguished from the features which define American populism amongst small farmers and townspeople who were much more thoroughly incorporated in, and losers in, a broader capitalist economy. Indeed, more recent attempts to understand rural and peasant movements in Africa have tended to start from the assumption of a relatively 'uncaptured' peasantry. The South African examples, as is often the case, seem to lie somewhere in between, shaped by the specific forces working in the society.

What can be asserted with more confidence is that localised rural political movements in South Africa, as elsewhere at other times, often sought a degree of autonomy not only from the state and capital, but also from broader movements in which they saw their interests threatened. Officials and African progressives in Herschel characterised the Amafela as 'backward' and 'reactionary'; indeed such movements have been thought 'primitive' and susceptible to 'reactionary' alliances in other contexts. The Amafela decision to support Hertzog's nationalists, however briefly held and strategic a position it might have been, could be seen in this context. But their position had forward-looking as well as traditionalist elements in it; and such a mix could have important implications for the distribution of power and wealth in the society they envisaged. It is difficult to dismiss them as 'reactionary' in the context within which they operated. Such rural movements held within them important impulses for change; they could be eclectic in the political and class alliances which they sought. Their first impulse had been to look for support from African nationalists, but given the social divisions within black society,

and the nature of the state, they hardly found such leaders a satisfactory source of succour and organisational advance.

There were significant changes in the rural economy, and in rural political responses in the next few decades, a period which culminated in the mass urban and rural mobilisations of the late 1950s. Indeed, there are, as yet uninvestigated, hints that some of the Amafela might have changed their position. But this separatist or populist political tradition must at least be put on the agenda for further and deeper research. For example, Sundkler notes that the Nazarites, the leading independent Zionist-type church in the Zululand area, were deeply involved in politics in the 1950s - but involved in striking alliances with Zulu chiefs in support of the Bantustan policy. The specific roots of this alliance need to be examined - and it may be that the Nazarites were not typical of independent churches in the 1950s - but the material from earlier decades in the Cape is suggestive. The Nazarites, like the Amafela, included many of the poor and oppressed within their ranks. Yet they seemed to be headed in rather a different political direction from that advocated by Congress and trade unions at a critical moment in the history of mass resistance in South Africa. Congress, in its earlier years, has of course often been described as an elite organisation. But the implications of its 'progressive' position has hardly been explored either in the 1920s or in this later period. Links could certainly be made with later rural political movements but the sources of 'mass' support for Congress have hardly been defined.

This line of enquiry prompts a further set of questions. How far were elements of segregation, in the earlier decades of the century, a policy developed along the least lines of resistance, rather than a policy imposed purely in the interests of capital? How far did the persistence of a strong rural base, the defensive response, and rural separatism actually shape capital/labour relationships and the policy of the state? How far did elements of the early separate development policy actually meet some of the demands of the rural and migrant masses, rather than just chiefs and rural trading and bureaucratic elite? Is the new historiography of South Africa still missing important, but hidden, voices from the past?

A note on sources:

The paper is based largely on a number of dense files in the Government archives which in themselves offer material for a deeper and lengthier analysis.

Cape Archives:

Papers of the Magistrate and Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Herschel (2/SPT). Boxes 16 and 17 contain a number of relevant files including those on Agitators and Troublesome persons (N1/9/2); Mafela Ndwane Enye (N1/9/3); Quarterly meetings (N1/15/4); Annual reports (N1/15/6);

Papers of the Chief Native Commissioner of the Ciskei, housed with those of the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Kingwilliamstown. Boxes 1 - 6 include files on land regulations, Councils, native conferences and Ciskeian politics.

Papers of the Resident Magistrate, Qumbu (1/QBU). Box 4 file 2/3/22/3 has details of the store boycott in that district.

Papers of the Chief Magistrate of the Transkeian Territories (CMT). Box 3/824 file 558 and 3/951 file 15/411A have further material on Qumbu.

Union Archives, Pretoria

Naturellesake papers in the Intermediate Storage Depot (NTS). File nos. 8748 and 8749 19/360 Herschel Local Council.

7749 11/335 Ciskei Location Regulations (for land registration)

14 14/8 Headmanship Tugela

(These three kindly copied by Helen Bradford.)

7602 23/328 Timothy Mngqibisa

7664 32/332 contains details of the Amafela, the schools boycott and the later 1920s.

Imvo Zabantsundu has been used largely for 1922 and 1923, including DDT Jabavu Uhambelo eHerschel, 16.1.1923, 6.2.1923; Abafazi eHerschel 18.4.1922, 9.5.1922 and a number of comments and letters on the councils. The Northern Post, 16.3.1922; 23.3.1922 and 30.3.1922 has material on the store boycott.

The general analyses of the Herschel economy are to be found in W. M. Macmillan, Complex South Africa (London, 1930); Colin Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry (London, 1979).

The only mention found of the movement in secondary literature was in Robin Cohen's edited version of Albert Nzula et al, Forced Labour in Colonial Africa (London, 1979), 209. Nzula was himself from nearby Rouxville, and schooled in the Herschel / Aliwal North Area at the time under the Primitive Methodists. He believed that it could 'correctly be called a women's movement', but perhaps unsurprisingly argued that it was 'betrayed by its leaders, especially Dr. Wellington Buthelezi'. This, as suggested in the paper, does not seem a very helpful assessment.

The material quoted on Pondoland and Qumbu can be found in W. Beinart, The Political Economy of Pondoland (Cambridge, 1982); and 'Conflict in Qumbu: Rural Consciousness, Ethnicity and Violence in the Colonial Transkei', Journal of Southern African Studies, 8 (1981).