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# CRISIS AND CATHARSIS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURE.

Timothy Keegan

The image of the countryside in South African historiography has changed significantly in recent years. Earlier writers like C.W. de Kiewiet and W.M. MacMillan stressed the backwardness and stagnation of the South African countryside. The image of the isolated, introspective frontier as the fons et origo both of impoverishment (black and white) and of racial exclusiveness and animosity, dominates de Kiewiet's writing in particular. Equally, black tenancy or the 'squatting system' was in his view an index of backwardness and lack of enterprise. De Kiewiet draws a stark opposition between town and countryside: the former progressive, competitive and prosperous, the latter mostly 'semi-feudal', unchanging and poverty stricken. These images dominated a generation of liberal thinking. [1]

More recent writers, faced with very changed circumstances, have stressed, firstly, the initial success of black tenant commercial production; and secondly the vigour and strength of white agriculture, the rapidity of its development under the auspices of a modern, industrial state, and the brutality of the suppression of the once prosperous black rural economy. In this process, the 1913 Natives Land Act is given pride of place as the single most devastating blow aimed at black peasant production. Earlier writers stressed the rather more negative function of the Act in the demarcation of reserves and the entrenchment of territorial segregation. More recently, the significance of the Act has been seen more centrally in

terms of its decisive role in the emergence of a white-dominated capitalist agriculture at the expense of the black peasantry.[2]

The more recent interpretations reflect to a far greater degree than did the inter-war generation of liberals, the perceptions of those who were involved in the agitations of the years before 1913. In the view of contemporary whites, there was nothing stagnant or decaying about the black rural economy. To the white populists[3] who largely forged the 'public opinion' of the day, the 'squatting system' was no moribund anachronism. As far as they were concerned, whites on the land were engaged in a life or death struggle for social and economic dominance.

But what has been missing from much of the more recent literature by and large is a sense of the dynamics of change and an awareness of local specificity. When the focus is narrowed, what emerges is less a unilinear, homogenous transition to capitalism, taking place in readily definable stages, but a far more complex, ambiguous and multi-faceted process of change. In particular, it seems that the relationship between state initiatives (inevitably the primary focus of scholars who prefer the mega-view) and local transformations, is far from being an unproblematical one. Those whose methodological horzons are largely confined to a scrutiny of official publications commonly assume quite wrongly that parliamentary debates, commission reports and legislative enactments precisely reflect as well as shape social reality in rural areas. After all, it is altogether simpler to examine the details of laws and the professed intentions of their progenitors, than to try to unravel the complex social reality of which they are a product. But legislative initiatives often bear little relationship to what is practically possible for the state to accomplish. Further, much public perception of rural social reality as reflected in political agitation and debate is so encrusted with ideology as to be highly problematical as historical evidence. If the periodical crises of labour supply and the recurrent upsurges of agitation

about the consequences of allowing blacks to gain control of the rural economy are to be understood rather than taken at face value, we need to uncover the social realities underlying the rhetoric.

This paper, then, is concerned on one level to examine the complex relationship between state action on the one hand, and social reality on the other, in the transformation of the countryside in early industrial South Africa. The specific focus of this paper in this respect in on the 1913 Natives Land Act, the most closely studied law in South Africa's history and historiography. The study focuses on the white-settled rural hinterland of the Witwatersrand, the industrial hub of southern Africa, incorporating the northern and eastern Orange Free State and the southernmost districts of the Transvaal. For it was in the most advanced heartland of the arable highveld that the 1913 Act had its most immediate resonance in the transformation of rural relations.

The paper also investigates the dynamics behind the development of a capitalist agriculture, particularly the cyclical, unsustained pattern evident in the drive for accumulation and control of productive resources by whites. Only at certain periods of financial boom and productive expansion, as we shall see, did racial antagonisms and competition for resources reach critical intensity. It seems that only under certain transitory and recurrent material circumstances did the underlying antagonistic forces at work rise to the surface of popular consciousness, resulting in a much more explicit resort to force and state power. At such times there arose a heightened awareness among rural whites of the urgency of concerted action and state intervention if whites were to establish dominance over the rural economy. The implied goal was the establishment of capitalist agriculture based on black wage labour; but this was not a practical possibility in the early twentieth century. It was the extension of white control over black labour, time, capital, skills and produce that was sought, and not

necessarily their total expropriation.

Purely economic explanations (in a narrow, functionalist sense) for the recurrent assaults on the black rural economy are unlikely to get us very far. For a rational calculation of interests by individual white landholders usually led them to conclude that the exploitation of black production in sharecropping relationships involved lower risks, higher productivity and distinct cost advantages in relation to capitalised farming.[3a] After all, fully capitalised farmers almost always derived their capital from outside agriculture.[4] Sustained, autochtonous accumulation from agricultural production alone was very rare (hence the importance of state intervention). Mastery at the point of production became a social or cultural imperative for the white populists. It should not surprise us to find that private behaviour often conflicted with public perception - that despite the condemnation of black tenant production, many rural whites were reliant on black tenants' resources and skills in some degree for their own survival and accumulation. Moments of crisis and catharsis in the rural political economy, such as that which culminated in the passing of the Land Act, cannot be fully understood if these subjective elements are overlooked. The populist mobilisation of racial consciousness was clearly a major feature of such periods, and one which more abstract and schematic analyses are ill-equiped to apprehend. In short, the process of 'class struggle', so often invoked but not explained, needs to be invested with some historical specificity.

The years 1893-95 constituted one period of heightened antagonisms and competition between white and black on the land. These were years of expansive financial conditions and heavy crop yields when the extent of cultivation and the pace of productive activities increased rapidly amongst the black and white farmers alike. Large cereal harvests depressed prices, put a premium on wagon transport and made labour for reaping very scarce. Not only were the many burghers who signed petitions in 1893 and 1894 (and who

thereby secured the enactment of the Republican anti-squatting laws of 1895) motivated by the spectre of black competition for scarce transport resources and competition on inelastic urban markets, but they also were enraged at the great surge of African peasant prosperity and blacks' increased independence from the need to render labour for whites.[5] It was at such times of accelerated accumulation amongst black producers, when they were able to consolidate and extend their independence and their control over productive resources, that the spectre of long-term economic decline and increasing dependence amongst whites was most vivid. Without state intervention in the protection and promotion of white controlled production and white accumulation, and in the suppression of the black rural economy, many considered that white authority and control were in danger of collapse. The alien land speculators and absentee landlords whose interests seemed to be opposed or indifferent to indigenous white capital formation, were not to be trusted. The political economy of white supremacy could not simply be assumed; it had to be fought for and actively forged under the new conditions of industrial and financial capitalism. The white populists who were at the forefront of this struggle saw the dominance of foreign capital and black control of market production as the twin-edged sword which was threatening to overwhelm them.

The anti-squatting laws of 1895 (enacted in both the Free State and the Transvaal) grew out of a similar set of circumstances as those prevailing in 1913 when the more far-reaching Natives Land Act was enacted. The laws of 1895 were designed to restate and tighten up the provisions of earlier laws, restricting the number of black tenant families (defined as nuclear families) allowed per farm to five.[6] The laws were very much the product of those seeking to protect the landless 'little men' in Boer society from the consequences of allowing prosperous independent black peasant communities to accumulate on the land of large landowners at the expense of the poor burghers.

I.S. Ferreira, the representative for Korannaberg (Ladybrand district) in the Free State Volksraad and a spokesman for the populist sentiment, warned in 1897 of the alleged consequences of allowing African communities to accumulate on individual farms without restriction. The 'needy burghers' would be oppressed as the landowners would simply fill their land with African sharecroppers, he declared. 'Many foreign capitalists will then also buy land in this country for that purpose, and the result will be that within thirty years only a few burghers will be in possession of their land'.[7]

There was seldom any real attempt to implement the law in the face of opposition from absentee landlords and the big grain farmers, who relied on larger, relatively self-sufficient tenant communities for labour supplies.[8] But like the 1913 Land Act several years later and other such rural social engineering legislation, the activities of the legislators were designed to fulfill a symbollic, mobilising function, rather than produce a practical code capable of regulating real relationships.

It was in large part the status of black commercial producers, most obviously the sharecroppers working the soil without interference or supervision, usually on absentee-owned land, which riled white populist opinion. However, it is likely than many of those who signed petitions objected to such sharecropping arrangements were themselves increasingly dependent in some degree or another on black-owned and -controlled means of production and black productive initiative. From 1896 onward the rinderpest, drought, the Anglo-Boer War, followed by another period of drought and trade depression eroded rural resources and drew the sting from the populist agitation against the independent black tenantry.

But the half dozen years leading up to 1913 constituted another period of financial boom and productive expansion in agriculture, a period of rapid land division and of unprecedented state intervention in the promotion of white farming. Particularly, it was a period of crisis in labour supply

and in productive relationships, when agitation and concerted action against the independent black tenant farmers reached a fever pitch. In this, these years were not unlike the mid-1890s, albeit on a grander scale. The remainder of the paper will attempt to uncover some of the motor forces behind rural change during one period when circumstances in the political economy at large and in the heartland of the arable highveld in particular conspired to spark heightened conflict, social anxiety and employer mobilisation.

The intervention of the state in the provision of transport and marketing facilities, of capital and credit, and gnerally in the propagation of improved methods and techniques of production during the decade after the Anglo-Boer War was a necessary precondition for the advancement of white agricultural capitalism. But state intervention in colonial agriculture was slow in bearing fruit. The greater access of capital of white farmers as often as not meant greater financial vulnerability, and many landowners were hard pressed to survive once the post-War depression had set in. This was accompanied by a tightness in government finance which forced a severe cut back in aid to farming. [9]

Nevertheless, by 1908 the tide was turning, and by the time of Union in 1910, a financial boom was once again under way. State aid to agriculture increased correspondingly. The establishment of Land Banks in the various South African colonies in the years immediately preceding Union in 1910 offered opportunities for farmers to raise loans at low interest rates from the government.

In the years immediately after Union there was greater liquidity in agrarian commerce and more generous provision of private loan capital than had been the case in many years, perhaps ever. The magistrate in Bethlehem wrote in 1910: 'Business has shown more vitality, money has been more plentiful, old debts have been liquidated and financial corporations as well as

an issue of great importance after Union, and the corporate landowners were the strongest supporters of such schemes. A Select Committee investigated the question of land settlement in 1910 and 1911, and a Land Settlement Act was passed in the following year, providing for largescale state purchase of private land. Just as Milner's land settlement scheme after the War was partly fuelled by large landowning (including mining) interests, so the same interests were behind the schemes of the early 1910s.[16]

In the same year as the Land Settlement Act was passed, a Union Land Bank was established, incorporating the pre-Union banks of the constituent provinces. Its effects were mainly felt in the inland provinces, especially the Transvaal. The reason for this was the unevenness of penetration of loan capital. Very little settled and improved land in the Cape was not already encumbered with private mortgage debt to the coastal insurance and trust companies by the end of the nineteenth century. The field of activities of the Land Bank was therefore concentrated in areas, notably in the Transvaal, where much land was relatively undeveloped and concentrated in corporate and speculative hands.[17] Here again the interests of the large landowners, seeking to cash in on the greatest land inflation the country had experienced by selling off to white land purchasers with access to Land Bank loans, is to be seen.[18] The Land Settlement Act and the Land Bank Act, both of 1912, were closely related statutes.

There was plenty of incentive in these boom times to attempt to reformulate terms of tenancy to the advantage of landlords. They sought to increase their claims to tenant household labour, to restrict tenants' access to grazing land, and to increase the surplus extracted from tenant production. As a consequence of surging land values and the greater marketing and transport opportunities available, white landholders were concerned to maximise their profits from productive activities on their land, whether black tenants remained the direct producers or not. In particular, demands on the labour

of black tenants were greatly increasing, more especially as more and more capitalised farmers took up land on the highveld, intent upon investing in capital resources and directly controlling production. To a greater degree than ever before, the independent black tenantry was seen as obstructing the development of capitalist farming insofar as tenant production severely impeded the availability of labour to white farmers. Again, it was the sharecropping tenantry on absentee-owned land, where tenant households were free of supervision or control and had seemingly unlimited opportunity for accumulation, which elicited the strongest condemnation, especially as their enterprise was frequently enriching foreign capitalists. It was not so much tenants' ownership of productive resources which propagandists railed against - as long as they were harnessed to the profit of resident white farmers - , but rather the more explicit manifestations of black independence and prosperity. White farming was no longer as vulnerable and dependent as in the post-War years, and populist opinion could again be mobilised against the black rural economy.

This crisis in relationships between white and black was particularly intense as not only was the capital base in the white rural economy expanding, the black rural economy was expanding too. Good seasons and the opening of export markets for the increasingly predominant commercial crop, maize, created new opportunities for black producers as well as for whites. The rapid increase in the extent of land put to the plough not only implied an expansion of white capitalist production, but also of black peasant production, more especially on the still very extensive landholdings of absentees. In the post-Anglo Boer war years of depression, the proportion of land in the hands of absentees, of creditors and speculators, had no doubt been growing as resident landowners succumbed to the pressures of indebtedness.

The black sharecropping tenantry thus reached its high point of profit and accumulation, at precisely the same time that white agriculture was

capitalising at a faster rate than ever before. The inevitable result was that competition for resources reached critical intensity. The crisis in relations between black and white on the land was a replay, on a larger scale and with more actors, of the drama played out in the previous phase of financial boom and productive expansion, that of the years 1893-95. This time, too, the rural crisis was heading toward a legislative catharsis.

Attempts by landlords to reformulate contracts of tenancy to their own benefit evoked considerable resistance and a great deal of trekking from farm to farm, especially in the months following the winter harvest. J.A. Sugden of Bethlehem district noted this as early as 1907, a year in which rains were good and crops were heavy. He reported that complaints regarding the scarcity of labour were becoming more frequent and noted that

> the increased amount of work, which the Native squatters are being called upon to do, is causing an unusual number of Natives to trek on to other farms, in the hope of finding farms, where there will be less work to do.[19]

These kinds of complaints were general in the years under consideration. The magistrate in Lindley reported in 1912 that several capitalised farmers in the district had resorted to hiring Zulu migrant labourers under contract from Natal labour agents after unsuccussfully having tried to introduce new conditions of tenancy which involved the payment of small wages to workers and in addition themselves ploughing and sowing plots for the tenants' benefit. Local Africans had resisted this transformation to servile status, often with a large degree of success.[20]

The crisis of labour supply was reflected in a furious agitation which found its chief expression in the correspondence columns of newspapers and journals, such as the Farmer's Weekly, a Bloemfontein publication launched in early 1911. J.A. Jorissen, writing from the eastern Free State, provides a sample of the genre, replicated in any number of similarly exaggerated diatribes. 'The real master,' Jorissen wrote,

> is the native. He is independent; his services not purchaseable for money; won't hire himself out or bind himself to any contract whatsoever. The only course he is agreeable to is to sow on the half. Whether the owner likes it or not, he has to submit. . .The natives' hold over the farmers down in these parts is absolute.[21]

We need not take these expressions of concern as reflections of objective reality to realise that what was being described was a heightened level of racial tensions and hostilities in the countryside, as white farmers sought to harness black labour and capital resources more tightly to their own profit, and as black households sought to resist these transformations in productive relationships. One manifestation of this was the repeated complaints by white farmers that the organs of social control - the pass laws, masters and servants laws, and the local courts and police who enforced them - were inadequate to their task.[22] But no matter how coercive were the laws, how politicised the court system and how pervasive the police function, they were unlikely ever to satisfy the demands of whites for social revolution in the countryside.

If white determination to extract more and more black labour was one manifestation of intensified competition for resources in these years, competition for grazing land was another. The rapid increase in the numbers of stock (white- and black-owned) on the farms in the years after about 1905 was another aspect of the crisis in productive relations. The recovery of herds and flocks and their rapid increase after 1905 - unprecedented probably since the opening up of large-scale internal markets - provided alternative or supplementary access to commodity markets for many African households. For stock ownership implied opportunities for profit from sales of livestock, hides and skins and wool. This tended to diminish African dependence on other, more servile, means of access to cash incomes, and rendered them less susceptible to debt bondage. As long as grazing land was available to them, many African households loosened their dependence on rendering

labour and on credit. Under these circumstances, many African households were able to resist landlords' pressures towards increased labour service.

The explosion in the stock population can be explained by natural factors. The half dozen years after about 1905 saw good rainfall, and the virtual elimination of many animal diseases by the administration meant that the natural checks were no longer maintained, especially since the Free State escaped East Coast fever completely at the very time it was ravaging other parts of the subcontinent. Economic boom meant a flood of wage income into the black rural economy, which was generally invested in livestock. Given the overgrazed state of Basutoland, excess stock was commonly sent over the border on to Free State farms.[23]

Not only did grazing rights greatly benefit the black tenant, but they also materially penalised the white landlord whose access to grazing land was correspondindly reduced. The situation was made urgent by the subdivision of farms and overstocking throughout the territory. Ladybrand farmers were reported in 1909 to be seeking out stock farms in other parts of the colony to purchase due to overstocking. In 1913, breeding stock was reported to be unsaleable in Bethlehem for the same reason, and the price in consequence had fallen by 25 percent.[24] The magistrate in Winburg, R. Harley, wrote that in the past, when the land had been cheap, landowners had not minded Africans who owned as much stock as they on their farms, but as the farms were getting smaller there was less and less inclination to entering tenancy agreements with Africans who grazed large herds and flocks. Nevertheless, many landholders lacked muscle to enforce their will, as they needed the labour and often also the capital resources of black households.[25]

Many farmers were becoming increasingly conscious of stock breeds, too, partly as a result of large-scale importations of pure-bred animals by the Department of Agriculture for breeding. Many were unwilling to allow intermingling of their own stock with tenants' rams, bulls or stallions. A Free

State farmer wrote in 1911:

> Look at the drawback to progressive farming while natives are allowed to graze and breed any kind of mongrel stock. . .Our Government is spending large sums on the importation of pedigree stock, but what real progress can be made until we have a law enforcing the castration of downright mongrels.[26]

In order to avoid the danger of interbreeding, many white farmers were obliged to allow African tenants on their land free access to their own rams, bulls or stallions, on condition that no African-owned male animals would be allowed on the farm unless castrated.[27] With the rising value of grazing land fewer and fewer progressive stock farmers were willing to make this concession. It was still common at this time for all stock to graze together. But paddocking was becoming widespread, which made it possible to restrict tenants' stock to stony or overgrazed camps while landlords' stock were rotated - a decisive innovation in many black people's memories.[28]

It was not African stockownership in general that whites railed against, however. One of the major advantages of labour tenancy was the use of the tenants' oxen during the ploughing season, a very common arrangement. The more draught oxen available to the farmer, the more land could be placed under cultivation. It was those animals which were of less utility to landlords which they resented. Thus, a number of informants remember these years as the time when goat herding came to an end at the behest of their landlords, apparently because they were very destructive of grazing and damaged trees, notably fruit trees. Ndae Makume remembers that this happened in 1913. Their fifty goats were sold for 10s each to speculators travelling from farm to farm buying up the tenants' animals.[29]

Orders to tenants to reduce their livestock numbers caused much movement by households from farm to farm. The white landholders' determination to undermine blacks' independent access to wealth in livestock was often obstructed by the bargaining strength of tenants' households with considerable

labour resources and productive potential. Again, this struggle for control over grazing land was the cause of much hostility and bitterness between white and black on the land.

An important index of the increasing insecurity felt by African tenants was the extent of black land purchase during these years in the Transvaal, where, unlike the Free State, it was permitted by law up to 1913. In the three years, 1910-12, according to information given to parliament, 78 farms were bought by blacks.[30] In many cases black chiefs bought land off the highveld on which they and their people had always been settled, but to which absentee whites owned title. Cattle was subscribed by the chiefs' followers for this purpose, and they often paid highly inflated prices for the land. But in a significant number of cases, tenant families on highveld farms banded together to buy land in the less developed regions of the Transvaal highveld in anticipation of increasing pressures being brought to bear on their commercial farming enterprises. In some such cases sharecropping families of diverse origin were clearly involved in a degree of identity-building, extrapolating back into the past an often spurious ethnic allegiance in order to legitimise the new communities being formed. Networks of kinship, imaginary as well as real, infused it seems with networks of church affiliation, formed the common factor in the large group of perhaps a hundred or more Free State sharecropping families who bought a farm, Swartrand (which they called Mogopa), north of Ventersdorp in the western Transvaal. These people identified themselves as subjects of the Koena chief, Mamogale, who lived at Bethanie west of Pretoria, under whose patronage they sought out the land which in 1912 they bought. They seem to have elaborated an ingenious clan hierarchy based on often fictive kinship ties to the ruling lineage, and on this basis organised the geography of settlement on Mogopa.[31] In other cases, such as the Motsuenyane and Ngakane families, smaller groups of close kin - brothers, in-laws and cousins - pooled their resources and bought land

without the mediation of a chiefly authority.[32] All these land purchasers used their considerable resources of livestock to buy the land. Many of the subscribers did not move immediately to their newly acquired land, but sent their excess livestock there. Purchase of freehold lots on the outskirts of towns was also common at this time, such as at Top Location and Evaton near Vereeniging south of Johannesburg. These viable and increasingly pursued alternatives to life as tenants on white-owned farms was closed off by the 1913 Natives Land Act. Clearly the pursuit of white supremacy on the land was in jeopardy if the better-off black farmers could maintain their independence and increase their security by resorting to the land market as a weapon of resistance.[33]

Amongst whites, as in the 1890s, economic crisis coincided with a generalised social anxiety about the fate of the 'poor white', an ill-defined malaise centered on the supposed consequences of white 'degeneration' for the whole system of racial domination and social control. The crystallising and propagating of a sense of moral panic about the 'lapsed whites' - the flotsam and jetsam of white rural society being thrown up during this period of rapid social and economic change - intersected with the emergent crisis of race relations on the land. The most evocative strand in the populist agitation against independent black tenant farming was the assumption that the very success of black farming on white-owned land was responsible for the failure of so many whites to survive as rural producers. At this point the crisis in rural relations became part of a larger, less tangible, more subjective ideological crisis of racial survival and racial purity.[34]

Landlords' preference for black tenants was a cause of alarm and anxiety.[35] Typical was the complaint in a Bloemfontein newspaper against an Afrikaans minister who asked the farmers in his congregation to plough two acres of maize each to pay for a black church. The correspondent wrote:

> In the same district, a white bywoner [tenant] , with a small amount of stock, cannot obtain lands on the half ploughing system, whereas nearly every farm has natives who plough on the half, and in many cases have more stock than the white man.[36]

A story told by Barney Ngakane, who grew up in a wealthy sharecropping family in the Vereeniging district just north of the Vaal River, illuminates the point. In 1912 the Prime Minister, Louis Botha, addressed local farmers on Jan Muller's farm. Ngakane's father and uncles witnessed the proceedings:

> At the end of the meeting one farmer stood up and asked a question of General Botha; whether it was right that there should be black people who were living a life of comparative ease, when there were hundreds of poor whites, Bywoners. And the answer from General Botha was, 'No'. And then Cronje [the Ngakanes' landlord] got up and he asked, 'And, well, gentlemen, I have seven bywoners on the farm and seven black families, and I get from one of those black families what I cannot get from the seven bywoners together. And so are you going to ask me to take food out of my mouth?' This was the way he put it. . .And the next thing that happened there was that the farmers all said 'Donner hom!' [Beat him up!] They were going to assault Fanie Cronje for saying seven white farmers could not produce what one black farmer produced. And that was the beginning. Pressure was brought to bear upon Cronje after the meeting. . .[37]

The Ngakanes soon found the pressures brought to bear on them were such that in 1913 they bought their own farm in the western Transvaal. Of course their landlord, Cronje, might well have had his own reasons for tightening conditions of tenancy. But it does seem that widespread intimidation of sharecropping landlords who allowed their tenants too much independence and latitude for accumulation was taking place in these years. In the popular perception, the black tenant farmers were a major factor in the impoverishment and marginalisation of large numbers of rural whites.

Younger Afrikaners, products of the emergent 'Christian nationalist' education system under the auspices of the populist Afrikaans churches, were particularly likely to be sensitised to the dangers implicit in the

impoverishment of masses of rural whites. The younger generation was often more susceptibel than their elders to the need for radical social and political intervetion, if white supremacy was to be secured in an industrialising economy, and if white rural accumulation was not to be crushed by imperial capital on the one hand and the black rural economy on the other. The cultural pressures being exerted on white landholders to take greater control over production on their land and to exert their own mastery over black tenant household members were growing rapidly.

A great deal of proselytising and agitating against the dangers implicit in independent black accumulation and enrichment was conducted at specially convened farmers' meetings. In September 1912, a congress was held at Reitz, attended by 50 delegates from throughout the Free State, with a view to establishing a Boerenbond to push for the destruction of the sharecropping economy, the enforcement of compulsory master-servant contracts on all tenants, and the stipulation of maximum remuneration for workers which no farmer would be allowed to exceed. N.W. Serfontein, member of the Provincial Council, captured the spirit of the occasion when he said that the aim of the congress was to ensure the 'natural rights' of white men and to make South Africa a 'white man's country'. A Boerenbond Congress met in Kroonstad in February of the following year, attended by 65 delegates, with a view to pressuring the government to take action.[38] This mobilisation of farming opinion was fairly typical of these years. Farmers' congresses were held in places such as Wepener and Bethlehem, where angry words were exchanged about the 'squatting evil' and the impossibility of rehabilitating the mass of impoverished whites while sharecropping arrangements were allowed to persist.[39]

It was into this arena of struggle and resistance, of mounting social anxiety amongst whites and insecurity amongst blacks on the land that the 1913 Natives Land Act - far and away the most important legislative

intervention in the process of rural change in these years - was launched. The major provision of the Act stipulated that the only legal form of rent payment by black tenants to white landlords would be labour service. A rent in the form of a share of the crop or in cash was henceforth illegal. Secondly, the Act prohibited all land purchases by blacks outside specially scheduled reserve areas - generally those areas which blacks had been able to preserve from alienation (or had purchased back) - pending the proclamation of released land for inclusion in reserves.[40]

The implementation of the Act in the Free State was at first based on the proposition that contracts were automatically terminated at the close of each reaping season unless otherwise specified in writing. Thus the 1913 Act was not to be officially enforced before the 1914 winter harvest, since all existing tenancy agreements were left to run their course.[41] But many landlords took the opportunity in the winter and spring of 1913 of removing Africans who would not sell off excess stock or submit to landlord's authority; and when the Natives Land Commission visited the Free State in October 1913, the effects were dramatically evident. Without the direct support of the authorities and notwithstanding the precise provisions of the Act, it provided many landlords with an opportunity, a justification to organise and issue ultimatums in pursuit of their own interests.

Evidence before the Land Commission is replete with testimony of attempts to dramatically increase labour service, of forced stock sales and summary evictions.[42] In the winter of 1913 a great flurry of ultimatums was delivered, much confrontation and recrimination echoed through the countryside and a great trekking began. The incidence of expulsions after ploughing and sowing on trifling pretexts increased greatly. Africans at the receiving end were typically the wealtheir tenants who owned more stock than the landlord was willing to tolerate.

By October police reports indicated that about 150 families were leaving

the Ladybrand district, allegedly on account of the law. The magistrate in Winburg, R. Harley, reported that 30 African heads of households who had been turned off farms had been to see him to ask advice 'as to the best way out of their present trouble'. Practically all had had large stock-holdings. One had 60 head of cattle, 140 sheep and 11 horses. The magistrate in Bothaville in the northern Free State reported that he had attended three meetings in his subdistrict at which representatives of over 400 tenant families were present. Complaints were made that the government was trying to 'cut the throats' of the Africans. 'It was maintained that Natives possessing considerable stock would have difficulty in obtaining places of abode without selling their stock, and if they did succeed in obtaining employment their remuneration would perforce be small. . .'. Likewise, the magistrate in Heilbron, H. Reading, reported that 450 uninvited Africans had appeared before him, urging that summary evictions would cause great hardship. 'Already boys are trekking to the Transvaal from my district in considerable numbers,' said Reading. The police in the district had issued passes to 40 African families since the promulgation of the Act, taking with them 380 head of cattle, 593 sheep and 22 horses.[43]

The magistrate in Vrede had actually to intervene with white farmers to prevent them from expelling Africans until they could be provided for. 'They come to me and ask: "What must we do? Where must we go?" In some cases I have written to the master and asked him to allow the boy to stay on until we receive definite instructions.' A pass issuer in Thaba Nchu district, E.A. Worringham, told the Land Commission that 'I am daily issuing passes to natives who I know were living in my district before the war. . .It is rather the well-to-do native who is getting a pass to go into Basutoland or elsewhere.' But as Sol Plaatje discovered on visiting the border districts in September 1913, the rate of influx of farm tenants into Basutoland was threatening to seriously affect the 'land question' there. The Kroonstad

magistrate, R.C. Rosenzweig, reported that he had been approached by Africans applying (unsuccessfully) for butchers' licenses - clearly considered by harassed stockowners with entrepreneurial skills to be an answer to their dilemma. Forced stock sales inevitably depressed the market and provided a lucrative business for stock speculators.[44]

Rev. C. Stuart Franklin, Wesleyan minister of Kroonstad, testified that up to 1 October, 208 members of the church had been 'lost'. A few of them had gone to Basutoland, although they had lived in the Free State for 40 to 60 years; a few had gone to Bechuanaland; but the larger number had gone to Johannesburg.

> In some cases these natives have experienced considerable hardship, because they have had to leave under pressure, and have had no time to remove their effects, stock, and implements, which have been sacrificed. I wish I could make you realize the unrest and the dissatisfaction which is in the minds and hearts of the native people right throughout this district. They think that this coming year will be a year of terrible loss and deprivation to them.[45]

Similar evictions were taking place in the more advanced maize districts of the southern Transvaal, despite the fact that the provisions of the Act were suspended in that province.[46] From Potchefstroom it was reported that the passing of the Act had 'stimulated trekking on an extensive scale from various parts of the southwestern districts, many natives, with their families and stock having crossed over into Bechuanaland.'[47]

Africans complained that the farmers were taking advantage of the confused state of affairs and of the Africans' ignorance of the law in order to delude them as to the dimensions of the law. Blacks from Winburg petitioned the Secretary for Native Affairs, complaining that they were being told 'all sorts of unfounded stories': stock speculators tried to convince them that the Act obliged them to sell off their stock; farmers told them that according to the law they now had use of the Africans' oxen and wagons free of charge and that the tenant families had not to work without wages in return

for grazing.[48] The magistrate in Bothaville wrote, 'I regret to state that some farmers have been endeavouring to make contracts most advantageous to themselves and to force Natives to dispose of their stock.' One instance had been brought to his notice of a head of family being offered 2s 6d per month for the services of males under his charge and 1s per month for females.[49]

These expulsions in the winter and spring of 1913, which were taking place throughout the arable districts, were frequently in breach of existing landlord-tenant agreements, as we have seen. T.M. Mapikela, Secretary of the OFS Natives Congress, told the Land Commission of cases in which magistrates had referred expelled African tenants to lawyers, who had in turn demanded an initial payment of £50 before going into the matter.[50] When the Secretary for Native Affairs visited Winburg, he was presented a petition by local Africans who complained of the attitude of the local police, who always told them to take their complaints to a lawyer. They appealed for the Native Affairs Department to appoint local commissioners to intercede on tenants' behalf.[51]

So, despite the polemical nature of some of it,[52] the evidence clearly illustrates the widespread occurrence of evictions which followed the passing of the 1913 Land Act. Twenty years previously Africans who were ordered to sell their stock, render more intensive labour service or hand over a larger proportion of their surplus product would have been able to find alternative arrangements under the patronage of a large landowner whose demands were less intrusive. This was no longer possible for most. The age when capitalist farmers were also large land barons was receding. The private labour reserves of wealthy farmers were often being sold at high prices to farmers with access to Land Bank loans, and being put to the plough. Much absentee-owned land and many speculation farmers were gradually being sold off, or leased out to whites. Land was too valuable for farmers to continue relying on access to a supply of labourers from amongst junior members of large, wealthy and

independent tenant communities. The land crisis was coming to a head for the black tenants in the heartland of the arable highveld. Blacks who decided to move rather than submit to forced dispossession and impoverishment as often as not discovered that there were no choices left. It is probable that those who submitted were no worse off in the end than most of those who chose to join the army of trekkers in the winter of 1913.[53]

More particularly, what this evidence in large part signified was the fragmentation of extended settlement groups and the break up of large, kin-based homesteads. Relations between white farmers with extensive land holdings and the patriarchs of black settlement groups were breaking down. The family seniors usually suffered most. They were often too old to work and usually controlled the multi-generational family's often very substantial herds and flocks. They found themselves in an invidious position and were likely to be expelled sooner or later from the farm, whereas juniors could more readily find employment, which enabled them to re-establish contracts of tenancy. Thus as often as not those in distress who were reported to be wandering around the district appealing to magistrate and missionary for aid and advice, were older men.

Ultimatums and evictions were not directly caused by the Land Act, though. The formal prohibition of sharecropping in the Act was in large part ineffective, and indeed it was not even implemented by the authorities - certainly not in 1913. But the Act provided a catalyst to concerted action on the part of landlords. White farmers involved in an intense struggle for control over resources and human labour were not concerned with precise legal definition; for them, the passing of the Act was a catharsis, an affirmation from the highest authority of the legitimacy of their cause and the inevitability of their victory against their black competitors. And they acted on that perception. Legislatures often serve broader, less tangible functions than that encompassed in legal theory.

But what were the dimensions of the transformation being wrought amidst all this trauma? Once the great dispersal had run its course and black families had re-established working relationships with landlords, new or old, how had the patterns of productive life changed? Some black informants recall this as the time when landlords replaced a sharecropping system with one in which the tenants worked two days on their own fields for four in the landlord's fields - although usually still using their own oxen and equipment.[54] No doubt more white farmers felt able to exert greater authority over production once the Land Act and the great dispersal of 1913 had provided the resolve and the incentive insofar as they could reserve good arable land for themselves while banishing the tenants to stony ground, or reserve manure for their own use.[55] The price they had to pay was far greater supervision and enforcement of work-discipline. Splitting the arable did not necessarily imply a decline in landlords' reliance on their tenants' productive resources and skills. Deskilling only came with mechanisation of peak seasonal activities, which was still a long way off. There was no widespread revolution in the productive processes, no general stripping of black tenants' means of arable production, no universal undermining of peasant skills and household labour organisation, as long as tenant households continued to own the capital resources necessary for preparing the soil and planting the crop. The more labour intensive processes, weeding and harvesting, which not only required minimal capital investment, but also lent themselves more readily to gang labour (or communal work parties) rather than household labour organisation, were the activities which landlords were most readily able to bring under their direct control. Commonly, explicit sharecropping arrangements gave way to 'ploughing and sowing' contracts, often also including the use of tenants' wagons for transporting the crop.

In short, the boom in rural areas in these years did not mean the universal capitalisation of white agriculture. Certainly, many farmers were able

to buy improved implements, such as wheat reaping machines or planters. But for many more, there were limits to the benefits to be derived from investing in productive resources while the technology at the disposal of whites was not substantially different to that used by black households, especially ploughing spans and equipment, and while the weeding and reaping of the most important crop (maize) remained labour-intensive activities. The advantages of less relative risk and greater relative productivity associated with sharecropping did not disappear. In the absence of widespread opportunities and motivation to mechanise (as was the case a few decades later) there was little incentive to suppress the peasant economy entirely.[56]

Hence for many landholders, splitting the arable into landlord's and tenants' fields was not a viable option, mainly because they were not able or willing to provide the sort of supervision which such an arrangement required. This clearly applied to absentee landlords. Many poor whites continued to survive on the land by hiring farms and battening on to black tenant production, over which they exerted no direct control. Many landholders saw no incentive to exert greater control over production, given the risks of capital investment and the lower productivity of alienated labour. Many would have agreed with Wepener farmers who at their congress in January 1909 argued 'separate lands would be a curse to the landowner'.[57] As early as 1908, the ORC Natives Administration Commission had perceptively concluded from its investigations that it was not possible to frame preventive legislation against sharecropping which could not be evaded, 'and that to attempt to enforce such legislation would only drive the farmer to resort to subterfuge and evasive expedients'.[58] In the event, that expectation was fully borne out. As the magistrate in Vredefort reported in 1918: '. . .the great idea of the natives is to plough, sow and reap on their own account. The Natives Land Act has not materially altered the relationship that previously existed between the European master and the natives. . .in this respect.'[59]

as well as his personal service - to count the service of his oxen, which are to be used in consideration of his occupying the land'.[62] A.H. Maree of the same district agreed. Oxen service should be allowed

> as long as it can be proved that the service of the oxen has not been given in lieu of rent. As long as the boy gives his service and is willing to assist his employer with the help of his oxen, I do no think you can take that as rent.[63]

The government's law advisors' conciliatory and meaningless response was that oxen service was only illegal if included in the contract as a condition of tenancy.[64] But legal argument was essentially irrelevant; the Act, like so much social engineering legilsation, was a statement of ideals, a declaration of intent, a call to action by dominant classes, rather than a formal legal code. Legal debate was taking place in a vacuum divorced from social reality. Whatever the law advisors and in subsequent years the Supreme Court might decide to be the correct interpretation of one or other provision of the law, the effect on what was happening in the real world was minimal.

Nevertheless, it would be quite wrong to discount the Land Act as a powerful factor in shaping the future development of capitalism in the countryside. For there was another aspect of the Act which was crucial in strengthening the position of capitalising landlords. The Act laid down that all black tenants were to be defined as servants under the 1904 Masters and Servants Ordinance, and not just individually contracted employees working for a cash wage. This had considerable implications for the legal status of the tenants and for the criminal sanctions that the farmer could summon to his aid against recalcitrant or unwilling workers. For J.G. Keyter, MLA for Ficksburg and a major protagonist of the 1913 Land Act, it was this consideration which was paramount. In response to comment that the effect of the Act would be to split the lands worked by the tenant into tenant's lands and landlord's without any change in the relations of production, Keyter explained the cardinal

difference:

> . . .when the boy had his whole piece of ground to sow and be given a half of the crops, he was not a servant but a partner - a master. The moment you draw the line under the new law that boy becomes your servant at once. . .As soon as you draw the line of your farm and say 'You can sow this for yourself,' he is your servant. . .[65]

Clearly this was potentially a major victory for the master class.

Of course, legal procedure in local courts constituted only the tip of the iceberg in the whole structure of social control on the farms, and what happened in local courts often reflected very imperfectly the rules of legal procedure and the formal provisions of the statute book. The informal face of the law in local courts was not greatly affected by the activities of legislators. But extending the criminal law to encompass all farm tenants was an important symbolic act, provided new sources of intimidation or threat, and occasionally enabled individual farmers to enforce their will at crucial points in the transformation of productive relationships on their land by direct resort to criminal prosecution.[66]

By 1914 many of the preconditioning factors behind the rural crisis were receding. The drought which began in 1913 became more serious. More importantly, the outbreak of war brought the financial boom to an end. The Land Bank severely curtailed its activities, and private loan capital virtually dried up. The private banks instituted a policy of reducing their advances to the farming community as rapidly as possible. The Boer Rebellion which was prompted by the government's decision to invade German South West Africa on behalf of the British Empire, caused a stagnation in trade as merchants' stocks throughout the maize districts were commandeered by the Rebel forces, paralysing the credit system. This resulted in a slump in land prices - by as much as 25 per cent in some of the highveld maize districts.[67] One consequence of all this might possibly have been a resurgence of the peasant sector. Further, when in 1916 the Natives Land Commission,

to subsume tenant production far more tightly under the organisational control of white farmers, to channel a greater proportion of the profits of their enterprise in the direction of their landlords, and to place general limits on their capacity for accumulation and self-enrichment. The most devastating immediate manifestation of these developments was the forced sale of much of their livestock, over and above those required for production and immediate subsistence (such as milk cows). The significance of the 1913 Land Act and the great spate of forced removals that it sparked off lay not in its effectiveness in abolishing sharecropping, as was the Act's formal intention, but in the tighter grip which landholders were able to exert over their tenants' productive activities and the more efficient siphoning off of their surpluses. The Act had social consequences which were quite different from those which a legalistic reading of its provisions would lead one to expect. On the other hand, the Act, while relatively ineffective in relation to the quite unrealistic projections of its progenitors, did provide part of the statutory framework within which future struggles over resources and control over labour could be fought.

When the human dimensions of conflict are investigated, the emergence of a white supremacist rural political economy in early twentieth century South Africa seems less than inevitable or unproblematic. The benefits to be derived from suppressing the black rural economy were not universally apparent amongst rural whites. Further, state interventions were often tenuous and inconclusive. The instruments of coercion and control - the courts, the police, the law book - seldom had a decisive impact on social relations in isolation. Hard ideological labour was required to mobilise racial energies for the extension of white control over rural production. This heightened consciousness and assertiveness was not easily won.

The extension of white control over production was not directly the result of the Land Act, but of concerted action and collusion amongst landlords

- together with great pressure brought to bear on those landlords who allowed too great a degree of independence and scope for accumulation to their tenants. This combined assertiveness was not easily achieved. A crescendo of agitation, proselytising, organising and intimidation reached its peak with the passing of the 1913 Act. The purpose was not primarily to destroy the black tenant farmers, but to harness their skills and their capital resources more tightly to the profit of their landlords. Sharecropping was not yet suppressed; it was transformed.

Our purpose has not been to reveal the 'turning point' in the emergence of capitalist agriculture; in truth, historians are likely to discover 'turning points' at any number of stages in the unfolding of the twentieth century, depending on the temporal dimensions of their investigations. It would be presumptious to claim that we have drawn the curtain on the era of peasant ascendancy, or launched agricultural capitalism on its triumphal march into the future. What can be claimed for these years of crisis, is that they did provide the first indication, albeit only in the most advanced heartland of the arable highveld, of the forces that accumulating white farmers could array on their side when the circumstances were propitious for their use. In fact the capitalisation of white agriculture was an unsustainable, cyclical, uneven development, manifested in different areas at different times, and ultimately achieved only with the massive support of an advanced capitalist state. But the years under discussion and in the area with which we are most concerned, there is no doubt that in many black farmers' memories, things were never quite the same again. The sharecroppers quickly lost their petty-bourgeois pretensions. Sharecropping communities no longer had the self-confidence to build schools, carve desks and hire teachers. Increasingly rarely were sharecroppers able to invest in upward social mobility by sending their sons to Kilnerton Institute. Those who sought to elevate themselves or their children into the new elite found less and less that rural production

provided them with a viable base. Typically the religion of the sharecroppers of a later era was no longer Anglicanism, Methodism or Presbyterianism. Increasingly the sharecroppers' church was to be a separatist one.[69]

The epicentre of the developments described here was to be found in the northern Orange Free State, where the capitalisation of agriculture had proceeded furthest and the exploitation of the soil was most intense. In the western Transvaal, where intensive maize farming was a later development, sharecropping seems to have become really ubiquitous only in the 1920s and 1930s. The history of black tenant farming has varied significantly from region to region. Some informants grew up in labour tenant households in the Orange Free State, only to take to sharecropping as adults further north.[70] The frontier of white capitalist farming has advanced sporadically and gradually. Indeed, it would not be surprising to find that it also receded at times. But even this might eventually seem too schematic a formulation; we might yet discover that local experiences were sui generis, and not simply variations of period. Only oral research will illuminate these issues. Nevertheless, in the end, the frontier was to close finally with the mechanisation of production and the stripping of black resources. The expropriation of the 'black spots' by the Nationalist government, many of them farms acquired in the few years prior to the prohibition of black land purchase in 1913, signifies the final triumph of the political economy of white supremacy in the rural highveld. The significance of the events described in this paper is that for the first time white farmers in the arable heartland of the highveld were able to intervene decisively to turn back the tide of black accumulation on the land in a period of rapid productive expansion, and to harness black production, resources and skills more fully to the benefit of their white landlords.

3. 'Populism' is used to refer to the movement of mass mobilisation amongst rural whites in pursuit of indigenous accumulation and white supremacy, spurred by the encroachments of big capital and the expansion of the black rural economy which accompanied the rise of urban industry. Populism was anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist in its rheoric, but only in relation to big concentrations of capital, particularly merchant and finance capital, which allegedly were bent on monopolising landed resources. The populists' self-image was of a classless democracy of small (white) property-holders whose harmonious self-sufficiency had been rudely shattered by the intervention of foreign capital. The ideological pacemakers were the small-town Afrikaner petty-bourgeoisie (the politicians, lawyers, teachers, and churchmen); and the readiest response came from the small men amongst the rural whites - those on the edge of respectability who were most vulnerable in the face of middlemen, financiers and speculators. On the other hand, the most marginalised poor whites - the 'dangerous classes' - were often likely to resist the cultural interventions of the petty-bourgeoisie; and the more prosperous landed whites with sources of income from other capitalist sectors were similarly unlikely to be responsive to populist agitation.

3a See T. Keegan, 'The Sharecropping Economy on the South African Highveld in the Early Twentieth Century', Journal of Peasant Studies, 10, 2/3, (1983). In 1918 (the earliest date for which such statistics are available) 36 percent of farms in the Orange Free State and 45 percent in the Transvaal were owned by absentees. Ten years earlier the proportions were probably higher. (U.G. 13-1927, Report of Agricultural and Pastoral Production, 1924-5.) Most such land (even where it was nominally leased to a white middleman) was worked by black sharecroppers. Many farms occupied by their owners were worked (at least in part) by black sharecroppers too. Many others were reliant on black tenants' oxen and other means of production in some degree. Undercapitalisation was the normal condition of white farming.

4. From trade, transport, speculation, land sales, inherited wealth, private funds imported by new settlers, and (in the case of the most notable of the 'cheque-book farmers') from mining enterprise.

5. Petitions pertaining to these issues containing some 1200 signatures from white burghers are to be found in the Bloemfontein Archives, VR 381, 1894.

6. See T.R.H. Davenport and K.S. Hunt, The Right to the Land, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1974), pp 56-7; H.J. van Aswegen, 'Die Verhouding tussen Blank en nie-Blank in die Oranje-Vrystaat, 1854-1902', Archives Year Book for South African History, 1971, 1, (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1977), ch. 14.

7. Orange Free State Volksraadsnotule, 26 April 1897, p. 214; also ibid, 29 April 1895, p. 311; 29 May 1896, p. 525; 28 June 1898, p. 520.

8. See e.g. OFS Volksraadsnotule, 29 May-1 June 1896, pp 522-34, 2 July 1896,

pp 878-89, etc.

9. See T. Keegan, 'The Restructuring of Agrarian Class Relations in a Colonial Economy: the Orange River Colony, 1902-10', Journal of Southern African Studies, 5, 2, (1979).

10. Pretoria Archives, JUS 1/401/10, Annual Reports, Magistrates, 1910: Bethlehem, Edenburg, Heilbron.

11. Standard Bank Archives, Johannesburg, Inspection Reports, 1912: Ficksburg; JUS 1/401/10, Annual Reports, 1910: Ficksburg, Smithfield; JUS 1/566/11, Annual Reports, 1911: Fouriesburg.

12. G.T. Amphlett, History of the Standard Bank of South Africa, 1862-1913, (Glasgow: Robert Maclehose and Co., 1914), p. 58.

13. Standard Bank Inspection Reports, 1911: Heilbron.

14. See Annual Reports of the Department of Justice, for years 1910-14; Standard Bank Inspection Reports from all districts bear testimony to this rapid inflation.

15. Ibid. Cf. a comment from Potchefstroom district: 'It is quite remarkable to find how rapidly the aspect of the district is changing, many of the old Dutch farmers having disposed of their holdings to more progressive agriculturists who have come in from the Cape and elsewhere.' ('Our Weekly Causerie', The Farmer's Weekly, 23 April 1913, p. 607.)

16. See Senate S.C. 6-1910/1911, Senate Select Committee on Closer Land Settlement. The issues of land settlement and subsidised immigration became bones of great political contention between 1910 and 1914. Nationalists, led by General Hertzog, saw in these schemes an attempt to make South Africa safe for foreign capital and to force unskilled Afrikaners into the reserve army of labour. (See T. Keegan, 'Lapsed Whites and Moral Panic', unpublished paper, 1978.)

17. See U.G. 13-1914, Land and Agricultural Bank of South Africa, Report for Period 1 January 1913 to 31 December 1913, p. 22; U.G. 20-1915, Land and

Agricultural Bank of South Africa, Report for Year ended 21 December 1914, pp23, 24.

18. Thus the Lewis and Marks partnership in 1913 formed the Union Land Settlement Company Limited, to which they transferred 1,319,866 acres of land for the low price of £750,000 (mostly in the Transvaal), with the specific purpose of effecting improvements and leasing the land to white settlers with an option to purchase after a short period. (See Prospectus in The Farmer's Weekly, 17 September 1913, pp 216-18.) The big land companies also saw the opportunity for profit from the sale of their unimproved land in the Transvaal middle and lowveld to Africans and to the state at inflated prices for the purpose of creating African reserves. This was one of the factors behind the passing of the 1913 Land Act, which provided in part for the demarcation and subsequent extension of reserves (especially in the Transvaal where very little land had been recognised as 'reserve land'). The Transvaal Land Owners' Association represented the owners of 9,517,000 acres in the bushveld and 1,326,000 on the highveld. Only 1,012,000 acres were leased to whites (649 individuals), almost all on the highveld. The rest were occupied solely by blacks (some 1200 farms in all). ('Farmer George', Roodepoort, to editor, The Farmer's Weekly, 23 April 1913, p. 561; evidence of C.A. Madge, Senate S.C. 6-1910/1911, pp 136-40.)

19. Bloemfontein Archives, CS 4502/07, Director of Land Settlement, 28 March 1907. See also Emelia Pooe's comment quoted in Ted Matsetela, 'The Life Story of Nkgono Mma-Pooe: aspects of sharecropping and proletarianisation in the northern Orange Free State, 1890-1930', in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone, eds, Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African class formation, culture and consciousness, 1870-1930, (Longman, 1982), p. 231.

20. JUS 1/401/10, Annual Reports, 1910: Lindley.

21. J.A. Jorissen to editor, The Farmer's Weekly, 8 May 1912, p. 557. See also 'Progress', Kroonstad, to editor, ibid, 19 July 1911; 'Spes Bona' to editor, ibid, 30 August 1911, p. 30.

22. See H.S. Viljoen, Florence, to editor, The Friend, 23 September 1911; Edgar I. Webb to editor, ibid, 4 October 1911; S.F. Papenfus, Harrismith,

to editor, The Farmer's Weekly, 25 October 1911; 'Death-Knell to Kaffir-Farming', The Farmer's Advocate, September 1913, p. 39; J.G. Keyter, MLA, Ficksburg in U.G. 22-1916, Natives Land Commission, Minutes of Evidence, pp51-2; JUS 1/401/10, Annual Reports, 1910: Winburg.

23. See for evidence of the burgeoning stockholdings of black tenants: U.G. 22-1916, pp 10, 18, 28, 70, Appendix I, pp1, 4; U.G. 17-1911, Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1910, p. 178; JUS 5/262/13, R.M. Bothaville, 10 August 1913.

24. Standard Bank Archives, Inspection Reports, 1909: Ladybrand; ibid, 1913: Bethlehem.

25. U.G. 22-1916, p. 2. See also 'Natives and Land', The Farmer's Advocate, October 1913, p. 73; U.G. 22-1916, pp 12, 38, 39-40.

26. 'Puzzled' to editor, The Farmer's Weekly, 4 October 1911.

27. See 'Taxation and Registration of Stallions', The Farmer's Weekly, 19 April 1911, p. 5.

28. E.g. Interview, Lucas Nqandela, 25 August 1982. Tapes and transcripts of interviews cited are housed in the Oral History Project, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand.

29. Interview, Ndae Makume, 10 August 1982; also Interviews, Daniel Makiri, 20 November 1980; Jameson Molete, 26 February 1980; Johannes Moiloa, 11 April 1980. Fanie Cronje of Vlakplaas, Vereeniging, issued an ultimatum to the tenant families in about 1912 to either sell off their cattle other than the trek-oxen and four cows for milking, or to share the increase of all their livestock with him. (A Community Man: An Oral History of Barney Ngakane, South African Institute of Race Relations, (Johannesburg, 1983), p. 4.) Some charged their tenants for grazing rights, for example a shilling a month for a cow or a horse. (R. Pell Edmonds to editor, The Farmer's Weekly, 13 September 1911.)

30. House of Assembly Debates, 18 February 1913, p. 339.

These issues are discussed in greater length in my forthcoming Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa.

36. 'A Sympathiser', Bloemfontein, to editor, The Friend, 9 May 1911. See also Bloemfontein Archives, DA 72, 2065/1/10, M.B. Honge, Clocolan, to Minister of Agriculture, 4 April 1910; CS 1325/1/09, D.J. van Zyl, Langkloof, 14 January 1909; CS 617/09, L.D.J. Erasmus, Parys, 26 March 1909.

37. A Community Man, pp3-4; Interview, Morobane Ngakane, 6 September 1979.

38. 'A Mutual Bond', The Friend, 1 November 1912; 'Country Day By Day: Frankfort', ibid, 4 February 1913; 'Boerenbond Congress', ibid, 19 and 20 February 1913.

39. See 'Bethlehem Native Affairs Congress', The Friend, 6 November 1908; 'Bethlehem Native Affairs Congress', ibid, 29 January 1909; and 'Nepener Congress', ibid, 27 January 1909.

40. Details of the complex legislative history of the Act are to be found in P.L. Wickens, 'The Natives Land Act of 1913: A Cautionary Essay on Simple Explanations of Complex Change', South African Journal of Economics, 49, 2, (1981). Wickens rejects the idea that the Act had much to do with the development of the capitalist economy, leaving the impression that it had no significance other than homogenising existing pre-Union legislation. This less than useful conclusion abstracts law-making from any social context and demonstrates the dangers of focusing narrowly on legislative bargaining and parliamentary politicking. See also Paul Rich, 'African Farming and the 1913 Natives Land Act: Toward a Reassessment', in Collected Papers on Southern Africa, University of York, vol. 4; P. Dickson, 'The Natives Land Act, 1913: its antecedents, passage and reception', M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1969.

41. JUS 5/262/13, E. Dower to Apthorpe, 12 August 1913; 'Natives and Land', The Farmer's Advocate, October 1913, p. 73.

42. U.G. 22-1916, p.11.

43. ibid, pp 1-4, 35-6, Appendix XI, pp 4, 5; also JUS 5/262/13, Natives Land Act, 1913: Opinions re. Position in the Orange Free State.

44. U.G. 22-1916, pp 10, 12, 16, 21, 32, 33-4, 76; Sol T. Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa, (P.S. King and Son, 1916; reprinted Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), pp 122-3.

45. U.G. 22-1916, pp 70-71.

46. The original intention of the Act was to suspend all action against black tenants until extra land had been demarcated for addition to the scheduled reserves - a recognition of the impracticability of trying to subvert the tenantry on the vast lands of the land companies, which were due to be incorporated in the reserves anyway. But this quid pro quo did not apply in the Free State due to the strength of the white farming interests there and the absence of land which could be added to the small reserves. But, as we shall see, such legislative arrangements do not really explain the practical effects of the passing of the Act.

47. The Farmer's Weekly, 29 October 1913, p. 866. See also evidence of Barnard Bahane and T.M. Dambuza, U.G. 22-1916, pp 291-2.

48. JUS 5/262/13, Natives Land Act, 1913: Opinions re. Position in the Free State.

49. ibid, R.M. Bothaville, 29 August 1913.

50. U.G. 22-1916, p. 45.

51. JUS 5/262/13, Natives Land Act, 1913: Opinions re. Position in the Orange Free State.

52. Sol Plaatje's classic polemic, Native Life in South Africa, has been very influential in the recent interpretations of these events. But, although Plaatje clearly shows that a dramatic forced migration of people took place in 1913, his evidence is highly suspect in its detail. Apart from the problems of memory (he was writing some time after his travels), Plaatje did not really understamd the nature of rural relationships, and further tailored his evidence to suit a British audience. See also R.W. Msimang Natives Land Act, 1913: Specific Cases of Evictions and Hardships, South

African Natives National Congress, (ca. 1914).

53. Land shortage was always relative. There was plenty of marginal land unsuitable for profitable cultivation available. See the story told by Emelia Pooe, Matsetela, 'Life Story', p. 224; also U.G. 22-1916, p. 5.

54. See evidence of Archdeacon Hill of Springs on a company-owned farm in the southern Transvaal:

> In 1913 or soon afterwards the farmers white lessees called the Natives together and told them that the half share system had come to an end, and if they wished to remain on the farm they would be given a few morgen to plough for themselves, but that they must now plough the rest of the lands for the farmers with their own ploughs and oxen and that for the pasturage of their cattle they must be prepared to do the transport of the produce to the market.' (U.G. 22-1932, Report of the Natives Economic Commission, 1930-32, pp 199-200.)

55. Interview, Tolo Manoto, 26 February 1980.

56. Indeed, most of the surge of mortgage capital moving into the rural areas was not being spent on productive capital. Such was the accumulation of debt during the preceding years, that the bulk of mortgage loans made by the Land Banks established in 1908-09 were taken up for the discharge of existing liabilities in cases of financial pressure, such as onerous conditions of repayment or high interest rates.

The Banks were also intended to enable newcomers to the highveld, as well as established lessee farmers, to buy land of their own. In the first year of operation of the Union Land Bank in 1913, £231,639 out of £615,335 granted to Free State landowners was for liquidation of of liabilities, a further £270,942 for land purchase. The bulk of the rest went on overheads or 'improvements' like buildings or fencing, rather than on productive equipment. (U.G. 13-1914, Land and Agricultural Bank of South Africa, Report for Period 1 January 1913 to 31 December 1913, p. 22.)

57. 'Wepener Congress', The Friend, 27 January 1909.

68. 'Kaffir Farming', The Farmer's Weekly, 12 March 1924, p. 2704.

69. These conclusions on the changing social characteristics of the sharecropping tenantry are put forward tentatively, and are based on interview evidence.

70. E.g., Interview, Lucas Nqandela, 25 August 1982.