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**Title:** Strikes in the Cape Colony, 1854-1899.

**by:** Alan Mabin

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STRIKES IN THE CAPE COLONY, 1854 - 1899

*by Alan Mabin*

Prior to the eighteen fifties, southern Africa was almost totally devoid of the elements of a modern capitalist economy. But it was in that decade that some of the familiar features of capitalism began to show themselves in the Cape Colony. The beginnings of industrial copper mining in Namaqualand, coupled with speculation and the cycle of boom and bust provide examples.<sup>1</sup> The decade of the fifties also seems to have brought the first instance of that classic form of struggle in capitalist society: a strike by wage-workers.

Much of the historical literature leaves the impression that the era of industrial capitalism in southern Africa commenced with the mining of gold on the Witwatersrand. The roots of this development in the Kimberley diamond mines seldom receive more than passing recognition.<sup>2</sup> The progress of accumulation, and the struggles between workers and employers in the rest of the Cape Colony before (or, for that matter, after) 1899 have received almost no attention. Gottshalk's note on the 'earliest known strikes by black workers'<sup>3</sup> and Purkis' thesis on railways<sup>4</sup> stand alone in detailing some of the strikes which marked the extension of wage labour in the Cape in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was also the unfulfilled hope of John Smalberger to write an article on early strikes, and materials in his papers deposited posthumously in the library at the University of Cape Town provide valuable pointers on the subject.<sup>5</sup> Smalberger seems to have been under the impression that the earliest strikes were conducted by black workers.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the first recorded strike – that of the Cape Town boatmen in 1854 – was a strike of all the port's boat workers: one cannot distinguish in the records between black and white. As the division of labour became more complex and the nature of workplace struggles more varied, the separation of black and white workers developed. Particularly from the 1870s onward, strikes reflected this separation.<sup>7</sup> But strikes can also be seen as part of the process of shaping these divisions. Different issues of class, race and sex overlapped and intersected in these early South African workers' actions. This article outlines the history of the (known) strikes in the Cape Colony from 1854 to 1899. The intention is to demonstrate the extent to which workers have found it necessary to resort to strike action throughout the history of wage labour in southern Africa, and to point to the ways in which complex social processes were reflected, reproduced and created in these workplace struggles. In order to situate the material which follows, the first sections survey the economic context of the Cape Colony, 1850 to 1899. The geographical limits of the study are determined by the area brought under the sway of a single state – the Cape colonial state – in the period

before the Anglo-Boer War brought the states of South Africa into a far closer relationship than the economic development of capitalism alone had done.

#### THE ECONOMY OF THE CAPE COLONY, 1850 - 1899

Accumulation of capital in the Cape Colony proceeded rapidly though unevenly through the second half of the nineteenth century. The massive and unprecedented accumulation of capital in Britain in the 1850s produced a search for opportunities to employ that capital abroad.<sup>8</sup> As the imperial banks grew on the boom in Australian gold and wool in that decade, other London interests planned expansion in various colonies. From these developments came the capital for the Namaqualand copper mines<sup>9</sup> and for the south African imperial banks. In the early sixties the Standard Bank of British South Africa and the London and South Africa Bank were established, both making their head offices in the Cape at Port Elizabeth.<sup>10</sup> This port, rather than Cape Town (as is frequently assumed), dominated the foreign trade of the Cape Colony from the fifties to the nineties (Figure 1), reflecting the greater role of Port Elizabeth merchants in the main areas of pastoral expansion and, later, in the Kimberley and Transvaal trade.

The boom-and-bust cycle of expansion in the Cape from the fifties to the end of the century is illustrated by the movement of imports and exports in Figure 2. The sputtering growth of the fifties, the disappointing sixties, the first (wool and diamonds) boom of the seventies, the slump of the early eighties, the sustained boom associated with the Transvaal gold mines – and the setback of 1890 - 1892 – all appear in the graphs. Not surprisingly, much of the growth in wage-labour was connected with the raw commodity booms, in transport (construction and operating), and in the relatively simple industrial and commercial workplaces of the port towns. The first railway construction boom, involving large numbers of workers, was in the seventies; construction, craft and industrial expansion in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and smaller towns paralleled the general movements of the economy.<sup>11</sup> It was in these expanding sectors, as well as in the industrial diamond mines of Kimberley, that the strikes mentioned in this article took place.

#### WORKERS, WAGES AND BREAD

In order to indicate the range of wages and prices over time and space, a series of tables is presented below which gives some information on wages in selected occupations and the prices of bread and shirts from 1869 to 1891 (Tables 1 to 4). To establish a sense of scale, the numbers employed in some urban centres in certain occupations, according to the censuses of 1865, 1875 and 1891 are included in the Tables. (Census occupation categories vary, so these numbers are not necessarily comparable across different years). The size of the workforce at individual workplaces varied from small numbers (for example, among carpenters) to the thousands employed in the railway works and Kimberley mines. In the industries of the port cities, the number of workers employed per plant reached into the hundreds in some cases by the turn of the century.<sup>12</sup>

It is apparent from the price tables in the Cape *Blue Books* and *Statistical Registers* that the prices of some of the necessities of life fluctuated quite widely during the period. The constant shifts in the price of bread reflect this phenomenon. The price of shirts, however, allows one to see that some prices rose quite dramatically in the boom of the early seventies (Table 1(c) and Table 3(c) ), falling again by the nineties

(Table 4(c) ). Wages also rose in the boom of the seventies (Tables 1(b) and 2(b) ), declined in the depressed period into the eighties (Table 3), and reached new heights for craft workers in the nineties, though remaining much lower for ordinary labourers (Table 4(b) ). The implications of these schematic figures for the struggles of workers to maintain and improve their lot are significant for the discussion of strikes during the period. The pressures of higher prices and the tight labour market conditions of the early seventies meant that workers could effectively combine to raise the price of their labour power. But the last frontier war in 1877 - 1878 and the slump of the early eighties had precisely the opposite effect. From that point on, only workers who could organise in unions had the prospect of maintaining or increasing their wages. The material and social separations between those who did and those who did not or could not achieve the organisation required, consequently increased into the nineties.

#### KNOWN CAPE STRIKES, 1854 - 1897.

I have collected information on forty strikes which took place in the Cape Colony between 1854 and 1897.<sup>13</sup> These strikes involved workers in a wide range of different occupations (dock workers, railway builders, woolwashers, printers, post office sorters, miners, musicians and carpenters among others). It is possible to group the strikes in a number of different ways. Grouped by decade of occurrence (Table 5), the seventies and eighties emerge as the decades of most strike action; but a decline in the rest of the colony is noticeable in the eighties when action in the newly industrialised diamond mines is excluded. This grouping is not terribly helpful, however, given that the list of strikes recorded here is inevitably incomplete.<sup>14</sup>

A second way to read Table 5 is geographical. To simplify the presentation, Table 6 shows the occurrence of strikes by 'province' (Western, Eastern, Griqualand and West) and decade. That workers were in a stronger position in the seventies than the eighties in the Eastern Province is evident from this Table. With this general background in mind, I have developed a set of three categories into which the forty strikes have been divided for the purposes of this article.

1. Strikes in areas where skills, 'labour shortage' or specific location (e.g., ports) gave workers a relatively strong position.
2. Strikes as response to worsening conditions.
3. Strikes by organised workers distinct by duration and effect.

The next three sections of the discussion take up each of these categories in turn.

#### WORKERS IN POSITIONS OF STRENGTH

The strike among the boatmen has been brought to a close, the proposal made by the boat owners for an advance equivalent to fifty per cent on their previous earnings having at length been accepted.<sup>15</sup>

With these words a contemporary newspaper reported the result of the first known strike by wage workers in south African history — a victory for the port workers in Table Bay. The early eighteen fifties was a period of speculation and also of inflation. As one of those first strikers, Francis Dousing, said to the magistrate before he was

convicted of 'intimidation':

Everything has risen. For the bread that you bought for 3d. you have now to pay 4d.; you have to pay more for your washing and for carrying water and even – I beg your pardon, gentlemen – for carrying out the tubs, and when everything rises so, we can't work for the same wages as before.<sup>16</sup>

The speculative growth of copper mining companies had its effects on the labour market, placing the workers who handled the boats which moved cargo between wharves and ships in Table Bay in a position of relative strength:

... the working boatmen ... demand higher wages, in consequence of the dearness of provisions, and the increased demand for labour to the copper mines.<sup>17</sup>

One of the boat owners complained that, even before the strike, he had found it increasingly difficult to maintain control of his employees and of their working hours.<sup>18</sup> The strike began on Friday March 3, 1854 on a small scale against a restricted number of boat owners, and then spread to all the employers.<sup>19</sup> The strikers were sufficiently organised to assemble at the wharves on the Saturday and subsequent days to discourage others from working, with the result that the strike became general not only among the boatmen but also among the less skilled workers who loaded and unloaded the boats.<sup>20</sup> Presumably most of the latter workers were black ('coolies', a term which undoubtedly had a wide meaning in the Cape at the time). But in some instances the heavy work was done by the whites;<sup>21</sup> and there is no way of telling who the boatmen were beyond a few names, which certainly do not identify these workers as white.

Almost as soon as the strike began, Cape Town merchants began to pressure the boat owners to settle with the strikers. The workers demanded a wage increase of 50% – a rise from 3s. to 4/6 a day.<sup>22</sup> The merchants and boat owners agreed to an increase in boat trip and tonnage charges and the boat owners offered the boatmen a 25% rise, which was rejected.<sup>23</sup> By Saturday March 11, 1854, the boatmen had won their demand for the 50% increase and were back on the job.<sup>24</sup> Their strategic position in handling the commodity trade of a mercantile town contributed to their success. The results of the strike included an 80% increase in charges for the use of the boats.<sup>25</sup> Whether the 'coolies engaged at the wharves' gained as much from their involvement in the strike as the 'working boatmen' did is unclear, though subsequent comments by boat owners suggest that they did receive some wage increase.<sup>26</sup> Eleven of the boatmen were tried for actions undertaken during the strike. Jose Massin, Frank Louis and three others were convicted of preventing a ship's captain from using a boat (owned by one of the boat owners) for unloading.<sup>27</sup> Massin and Louis were convicted and imprisoned while the other accused were discharged. Francis Dousing, Oelof Williamson, Cornelius Camperdock, Charles Kaber, Leendert de Bes and Alexander Wheeler were tried for 'threatening' a boatman named Jose Joachim and preventing him from working.<sup>28</sup> The exchange between Dousing, the magistrate ('the Baron') and Joachim at the trial is worth quoting as the first recorded defence of solidarity among strikers in south Africa:

Dousing asked to be allowed to speak. He stated that Joe (Jose) and the whole of them had joined hand and heart when they struck for more wages; they wanted a dollar a day more each man.

The Baron: "Who said so"?

Dousing: "One and all; and this man is the first that turns against us. We all firmly agreed not to work below this price, and that one would not go to work unless all got it".

The Baron: "That is a combination and unlawful. You are doing yourselves an injury".

Dousing: "I don't think so".

The Baron: "Will you be so good as to hear me"?

Dousing: "Most undoubtedly".

The Baron: "You have a right to leave the service of your employer if he refuses to give you the remuneration you ask, but if another man chooses to accept that rate, as this man did . . ."

Dousing: "But see what a false-hearted man"!

Jose: "I told you on Saturday frankly, that the master had agreed to give me the 1s. 6d., and that I would go to work".

Dousing: "And he was the very man that says to me 'If one gets it all must get it', and now he is the first to turn tail upon us".

The Baron: "Your views are unreasonable and absurd".<sup>29</sup>

The magistrate 'bound the whole down to keep the peace', and Camperdock and Kaber were released after paying £50 in security. The other four were jailed, but later released when the security was paid.<sup>30</sup>

In this first known strike in south Africa, many of the elements of subsequent strikes are present. Without formal organisation a group of workers combined to achieve a wage increase during a period of rapid inflation and 'labour shortage'. The success of the strike depended among other things on solidarity between different types of workers (boatmen and wharf workers) and on the maintenance of that solidarity through picketing. The rejection of the legitimacy of the strike and of the strikers' views by those in authority, even though the strike was won, is also characteristic of many later events.

Over the next three decades many Cape colonial workers in strategically favourable locations struck for higher wages. In 1856 work at the boating companies in Port Elizabeth was stopped for over a week when first the wharf workers (described as Fingo) and then the boatmen (described as Malays) struck successfully for increases from 5/- to 6/6 and 7/- to 9/- a day respectively.<sup>31</sup> The following January, 'Fingo' workers on the beach – that is to say, workers who landed and loaded boats serving ships in the roadstead – won a strike for higher wages.<sup>32</sup>

A somewhat different set of circumstances surrounded the October 1858 strike of workers at the Kowie River harbour (Port Alfred). In this case the workers concerned were involved in construction rather than cargo handling; and the issue was their rations rather than their money wages. On October 7, 200 workers marched to Bathurst to protest the insufficient level of rations. It seems that most returned to work; whether their rations were increased is unclear, but the workers escaped the punishment urged in the press, probably due to the difficulty of obtaining large numbers of wage workers in the area at the wages (and rations) offered at the time.<sup>33</sup>

Strikes in construction, particularly on railways, harbours and roads, were fairly common from this period onwards. In the early instances, the workers, like those at Port Alfred in 1858, were in positions of relative strength because of conditions in the labour market; and also, on occasion, because of the specific location, whether geographical (in isolated areas where it was difficult to recruit wage workers) or sectoral (in

ports or on railways which were crucial to colonial trade).

In the case of railways, the first strikes occurred soon after construction commenced on the Cape Town to Wellington line. In January 1861, masons and labourers employed at time and piece rates struck to secure a minimum daily wage of 6d.<sup>34</sup> The workers were losing time (and wages) through the inefficiency of the contractor and delays caused by arguments as to the requirements of the contract for laying the track.<sup>35</sup> Later the same year, on October 31, navvies working on the line at Muldersvlei struck for an increase in wages. Their relative strength in the labour market – most were imported from Britain and Ireland – is revealed by the fact that their wages at the time were already 6s. a day.<sup>36</sup> One of the contributory reasons for this strike may have been the dangers attendant on the work; on the same day an Irishman named Hegan was killed in an accident to the train which carried 250 workers to and from work, while ‘a dozen others were more or less injured . . . some . . . seriously’.<sup>37</sup>

After completion of the lines from Cape Town to Wellington and Wynberg in the early sixties there was a hiatus in railway construction in the Cape Colony until economic conditions improved in the early seventies.<sup>38</sup> In the subsequent decade there were probably many work stoppages on the railways, though black workers – who made up two thirds to three quarters of the work force – improved their terms of labour by refusing to leave home for waged work until better terms were offered, or deserting when those terms were not met or better opportunities presented themselves.<sup>39</sup> One instance of a strike by black railway workers occurred in June 1872 at Port Elizabeth, when after several days most of the strikers were discharged.<sup>40</sup> But as Purkis has shown, while strikes might not have been won, together with other forms of resistance they did contribute to substantial improvements in wages, forcing the railway department to offer higher wages in order to secure an adequate number of workers.<sup>41</sup>

Strikes by port workers, woolwashers, and roadworkers over the next eighteen months in the Eastern Province and border area seem likely to have contributed to the general rise in wages. In June 1872 the *Eastern Province Herald* reported that business in Port Elizabeth was ‘almost at a standstill, owing to the recent strike among the boatmen’.<sup>42</sup> The boatmen, as in 1856 described as ‘Malays’, who before the strike received 7/6 a day, demanded 10/- and held out until the boating companies settled at 9/- a day. The ‘Fingoes’ gained an increase to 6/6 per day. Concerned at the effect on wages overall, the *Eastern Province Herald* pointed out how high these wages were by comparison with English conditions, where ‘Warwickshire labourers (were) out on strike because they cannot get 12s. a week’.<sup>43</sup>

The 1872 boatmen’s strike was noteworthy for a number of reasons. The coxswains, most of whom were probably white and who received higher wages than the ordinary boatmen (8/6 before the strike, 10/- after it), played a variety of roles. Some ‘reasoned with their boatmen’ and ‘urged them to go to work’, while the majority supported the strike.<sup>44</sup> The division of labour in authority and racial terms did not yet yield a division in the struggle for higher wages. A recurring feature of these early strikes was the attempt to prevent those ‘willing to work on lower terms’<sup>45</sup> from doing so. The success of the strikers in this endeavour led to police intervention and arrests.<sup>46</sup> Finally the local press was vocal in demanding not only strong police action to support strike-breakers, against picketing,<sup>47</sup> but also that the government should invest in landing jetties at the port so that merchants would no longer ‘be at the mercy of the boatmen and coolies’.<sup>48</sup>

The mainly black workers at the woolwashing plants in Uitenhage, meanwhile, were being paid 2s. a day. Unsurprisingly – for communication among black workers in communities of migrants must have been reasonably rapid – the woolwashers struck in

August 1872 for 6d. raise.<sup>49</sup> The increase in wages in the Eastern Province was sufficiently rapid that the same workers were out on strike for a minimum of 3s. a day the following May.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, at least once in the latter half of 1872 roadworkers at Kingwilliamstown struck to back up their demand for an increase in wages; and struck again late in 1873 for the same reason.<sup>51</sup>

The strength which black workers established in the early seventies is captured in the August 1876 strike of 'Fingo' port workers at Port Elizabeth. The weather being bitterly cold, the workers refused to start at the usual hour, and stayed off work for the day – none of them being arrested or punished for this breach of contract, which was a criminal offence under the Masters and Servants Acts.<sup>52</sup> Another strike for higher wages in the port followed in July 1877.<sup>53</sup>

The wage strikes of the seventies were not restricted to the Port Elizabeth vicinity; it is noted there were strikes at Kingwilliamstown, and in July 1877 a strike over wages took place at Kimberley. This was before the era of large-scale company mining, and the strikers were employees of the Kimberley Mining Board. They struck – without success, it seems – for an increase from 20s. to 30s. a week. But the need for labour was such that at their court appearance the Mining Board asked that they be reprimanded rather than jailed.<sup>54</sup>

It was, of course, not only black workers whose wages improved in the 1870s. The rise in skilled and unskilled wages is reflected in Tables 1(b) and 2(b). Purkis has demonstrated that white workers, for reasons of labour scarcity and in some cases skills and experience, established higher wages for themselves than did almost all blacks on the railway works in the seventies.<sup>55</sup> These factors gave skilled workers – and presumably not only white skilled workers – a strong bargaining position which was exploited in other areas of employment as well as railways. Thus cordwainers in Kingwilliamstown struck for higher wages in the first week of March 1876, returning to work when the increase was won.<sup>56</sup>

The highpoint of demands for wage increases came from East London harbour workers at this time: with some surprise it was noted in the press at the end of May 1878 that:

All the native surf-boatmen are out on strike. It seems that they want 9s. per day, which is more than the European men are getting.<sup>57</sup>

But the tide was turning against black workers.<sup>58</sup> The last frontier war in the Cape was already underway in 1877, and one of its results was to dispossess large numbers of Xhosa-speakers, thereby delivering them onto the Cape wage-labour market. By 1880, the conditions of the labour market were such that strikers found themselves readily replaced by others 'willing to work' for low wages. Thus a strike on the railway at East London, on December 19, 1880, by workers who wanted 5s. instead of 2s. a day, resulted in the strikers losing their jobs when 'other labour' was 'sent for, to Keston and Peulton'.<sup>59</sup> Black workers were forced to accept work at reduced wages on the railways and in all the towns of the colony.<sup>60</sup>

As a further demonstration of the weakening of the position which many workers had occupied for over two decades, it is fitting to return to Cape Town harbour and the 1884 strike at the docks. By that stage – thirty years after the first strike – a considerable investment had allowed the construction of an enclosed harbour,<sup>61</sup> changing the nature of the work and replacing the skilled boatmen with wharf labourers. The strike



started on August 1, when 'a score or two of West Indians and American negroes' began an effort to dissuade the workers from starting work.<sup>62</sup> 'In the course of the morning parties of men went round the quays . . . warning men to leave their work'; and 'pickets were stationed along the Dock-road, who prevented (a stevedoring company's) wagons from coming in'.<sup>63</sup> A large force of police was called out resulting in the almost immediate arrest of one striker for making 'offensive remarks'.

The six or seven hundred strikers came out in response to a *reduction* in wages from rates of 5/- and 4/6 a day to 4/- and 3/6 for vessel and quay hands respectively, demanding that their wages be 'restored to their normal condition'.<sup>64</sup> The largest employer, A. K. McKenzie and Co., responded by advertising for 300 new vessel hands at 31s. a week and 300 new quay hands at 21s. a week<sup>65</sup> — a proposal which would, of course, have increased the wage gap between the two groups. The *Cape Argus* commented:

As so many men are out of employment in Cape Town at the present moment, there is certain to be no difficulty in filling the void opened by the strikers.<sup>66</sup>

The strike had started on a Friday morning. By the Saturday afternoon the position of the strikers was weakened by the arrest of four 'leaders' (including John Titus, James Mendes and George Roberts).<sup>67</sup> On the Monday morning many were working under police guard, and the employers commented that 'business was not being seriously impeded', although 'there was room for a couple of hundred more men'.<sup>68</sup> Three more strikers appeared in court charged with assault (August Brown, Robert Williams and Henry Yateman).<sup>69</sup>

The last known Cape dock strike in the nineteenth century took place in 1886 at Simonstown, when construction workers struck against a reduction of pay from 3/9 to 2/9 per day, which was linked to a reduction of hours from ten and a half to nine per day. While labourers struck from April 12, artisans worked on under military guard, until the military authorities decided to stop all work and pay off the workers a week later.<sup>70</sup>

The 1884 and 1886 strikes reflect the much weakened position of workers not only in the docks but all over the Cape Colony, as the entry of large numbers into the labour market, recession and unemployment, as well as the changing nature of labour processes, strengthened employers at the expense of unorganised workers. Before turning to examine the position of organised workers, however, it will be useful to explore the collective but unorganised responses of workers to worsening conditions.

## WORKERS AND DETERIORATING CONDITIONS

The purpose of this section is to outline several strikes which illustrate the responses of unorganised workers to deteriorating conditions in the seventies and eighties. At first these responses were engendered by employers' attempts to undercut the position of workers under conditions of relative labour scarcity. Then, as recession deepened into the eighties, workers encountered increasingly repressive conditions and struck against increasing control.

The labour market conditions of the 1870s discussed earlier put pressure on employers to structure their workforces in new ways, to extend hours of work and to substitute capital for labour where possible. Three Cape Town strikes illustrate these pressures and the response of workers.

The largest printing and publishing firm in the Cape at the time was Saul Solomon and Co., who published the *Cape Argus* and the *Mercantile Advertiser*, as well as the *Government Gazette* and other government papers as the official government printers. Solomon and Co. were 'short of hands' owing to the 'press of work' and imported twenty compositors – all men – from England and Holland during 1876. In addition, a number of women were introduced as compositors. Initially the women were not employed on newspaper work, but on August 23 some *Argus* copy was composed by them. When the men heard about this change in practice, they held a meeting and sent a deputation to the head of the company, Saul Solomon, to present their grievance that 'their preserves' had been 'invaded'.<sup>71</sup>

The deputation urged upon Mr Solomon that his firm should cease to employ female labour, and as he declined to do anything of the kind, that the firm should not employ females on work connected with the *Argus*, *Mercantile Advertiser*, or *Government Gazette*. This was also declined by Mr Saul Solomon, when the deputation made use of certain threats with a view to intimidate the firm as to the way they should carry on their business. All this was of no avail, and three of the four men composing the deputation, with several others in the employ, absented themselves for the remainder of the day.<sup>72</sup>

The three men who initiated the strike were tried under the Masters and Servants Act for 'absenting themselves from their work without leave'; a charge of using threats to intimidate their employers' was withdrawn on a technicality. They were fined 10s. each, and lost their jobs.<sup>73</sup> It seems that the apparently strong position of skilled work *men* could be undermined by altering the division of labour – sexually in this case – backed up by the colonial state's willingness to enforce the Masters and Servants Act.

Employers with sufficient capital could also hold out against strikes. The new glass works in Cape Town were temporarily prevented from opening in July 1879, but the resources of the company allowed it to disregard the demands of the English immigrant workers (which related to their working conditions in the new factory) and to send to Europe for yet more workers.<sup>74</sup>

The six-day week was, of course, the standard in the Cape during the nineteenth century. In the conditions of the the 1870s, it is not surprising to find that workers were pressured to work long hours and even on Sundays – without overtime or Sunday pay. Reacting against this practice, Cape Town post office workers struck on Sunday, September 14, 1879. The strike lasted only a short time, but the point was made, and for once a group of strikers received the support of the press: the *Argus* commented that their 'demands for some allowance for this trenching upon their day of rest are but fair and reasonable'.<sup>75</sup> These three strikes point to the specific problems faced by workers at a time of rapid economic growth, labour scarcity and increasing capitalisation.

The depression in the Cape, which was particularly acute in the early 1880s (cf. Figure 1), had the effect of precipitating strikes against employers who found themselves in difficulties and reluctant or unable to pay wages. An instance of this issue occurred in Cape Town when the orchestra of the Theatre Royal, where 'salaries were in arrears', 'refused to perform' one Saturday in February 1885.<sup>76</sup>

A larger occurrence of worker action associated with failure to pay wages took place with the collapse of Firbank, Pauling and Co., the contractors building the railway ex-

tension from the Orange River to Kimberley in 1885 - 1886. The railway as far as Kimberley actually came into operation in 1885, but the station was unfinished. The contractors encountered financial problems and the workers were not paid for some time in April 1886. As a result they struck work on April 15.<sup>77</sup> The workers, whose number probably included some who had been involved in the diamond industry strikes of 1883 and 1884 (see below), evinced great determination to succeed in their demand for the wages owed to them; they occupied the (incomplete) station, goods yard and sheds.<sup>78</sup> The dispute between the workers, represented by one of their own number, J. W. Moss, and their employers, represented by George Pauling, overlapped with a dispute between the government and the contractors, who had failed to complete their contract.<sup>79</sup> The workers, realising that they could expect nothing from the contractors, petitioned the government to resume the contract and guarantee their basic wages, in return for which they would 'undertake to complete the work for Government'.<sup>80</sup> By this time - four weeks into the strike - the workers were in dire straits; some of them were 'almost starving'.<sup>81</sup> Matters came to a head when the government decided to prosecute the strikers for illegal occupation; notices of a 'test case' were posted at the station.<sup>82</sup> But the case was never resolved in court. The occupation, although costly to the workers, was also costly to the government in terms of loss of traffic and interest; the workers were confident that their legal advice was correct and that they would win in the courts.<sup>83</sup> Although the press reported on May 19 that the dispute between workers and government was over<sup>84</sup> - that was, indeed, the day the court case was withdrawn - workers remained in occupation of the station until the end of May.<sup>85</sup> But by early June they had received their wages, work was close to completion, and the trains were again running to and from Kimberley station.<sup>86</sup> The workers must have had considerable community support to remain in occupation of the station for so long. The mounting publicity pushed the government into settling with the workers, leaving its dispute with the contractors unresolved.<sup>87</sup> Thus ended the longest strike in Cape colonial history.

While bankruptcies and failures to pay wages precipitated strikes, larger employers took advantage of the depression to tighten their control over workers both white and black. Increasingly repressive conditions were especially apparent in those places which originated as 'company towns'. Apart from the railway towns such as de Aar and Naauwpoort, coal and copper mining companies established what were essentially their own towns at locations such as Indwe and O'Okiep. In the latter town, the rule of the Cape Copper Mining Company was almost absolute in the eighties: the company showed a high 'degree of overlordship . . . in connection with the lives of their workers and anyone dependent upon them'.<sup>88</sup> The town was very unhealthy, the air and even the water being contaminated due to the copper smelter, and the death rate at times reaching two or three per week in a population of 2 000.<sup>89</sup> In these circumstances, a strike 'of by far the larger number of Cornish and German miners' took place in 1882. While the workers were 'discontented with their earnings', 'several other reasons have been given'.<sup>90</sup> The strike began on September 5, 1882; after ten days most miners were back at work, seven had been dismissed and only five stayed out.<sup>91</sup> By the end of September one more worker had been dismissed and the other four had gone back to work.<sup>92</sup> Even though the company would have faced extensive losses had the strike continued - there was no possibility of rapid substitution of the skilled miners - and despite the solidarity of the workers,<sup>93</sup> the strikers were forced to concede. The power of the employer in the context of the isolated company town proved too great for the workers.

Kimberley in the eighties was *par excellence* the site of tightening control over work-

ers, to the extent that in the nineties under the control of De Beers it was widely thought of as nothing more than a company town.<sup>94</sup> When the first closed compounds housing black workers were introduced, a year after the last major strike by white mine workers in Kimberley (see below), black mine workers resisted the compound system by refusing to work. A short strike marked the first day of the Kimberley Central Diamond Mining Company's new closed compound on April 27, 1885. The managers immediately fired the 'ringleaders' and the remaining workers went back to work. The closed compound was then 'opened' (sic) by a large party of managerial guests, who heartily toasted the 'success of the compound system and the purpose for which it has been inaugurated'.<sup>95</sup> When the De Beers Diamond Mining Company closed their first compound on 1 500 or 1 600 Africans,<sup>96</sup> in July 1886, the workers struck, some for up to a week.<sup>97</sup>

While the 'structural conditions of capital accumulation in the mining industry'<sup>98</sup> were no doubt responsible for the incarceration of black workers in compounds, the workers' responses was sometimes expressed against the managerial personnel who implemented the new structures. In January 1887, workers at the De Beers compound objected strongly to the role of ex-detective Ford in the compound. Ford had developed a bad reputation as a 'trapper' in the Detective Department of Kimberley, the main purpose of which was to combat illicit diamond trading. On January 11, the De Beers board decided to transfer 'discipline' in the compound from the manager, F. R. Thompson, to Ford.<sup>99</sup> Within a few days the presence of Ford reduced the pace of recruitment into the compound labour force, and Ford was given a fortnight's leave of absence.<sup>100</sup> But when Ford returned, on Monday January 31, the workers struck, refusing to go to work while Ford was in the compound.<sup>101</sup> Ford was thus removed from the compound, and the later abolition of trapping in terms of an amendment to the Diamond Trade Act was indirectly due to this incident.<sup>102</sup> While the immediate cause of the strike was removed, the structure remained, and strikes continued to threaten.<sup>103</sup> Workers struck next at the Kimberley Central Co. compound on April 5, 1887, against anal examinations for 'stolen' diamonds.<sup>104</sup> In this case the cancellation of the practice was achieved, but Africans were still subjected to stripping, jumping over bars and other degrading inspection. As H. J. and R. E. Simons have remarked, 'this was much the same kind of search that Africans endured in Kimberley's central prison'.<sup>105</sup>

The position of black workers had been steadily weakened from the late 1870s on, by increasing proletarianisation and by ever-stricter control both by employers and by the colonial state. Strike action around increasing control over both black and white workers had at best erratic results. But in response to the deteriorating conditions in which they found themselves, some workers began to respond by attempts to turn collective action into organisation. In the next section, the effects of this change are discussed.

#### (SOME) WORKERS ORGANISED

The position of skilled workers was threatened by substituting competing classes of workers (as the 1876 printers strike showed), as well as by deskilling in the labour process.<sup>106</sup> At the same time the position of supervisory workers came under attack as employers attempted to bring this group under controls as strict as other workers. In this turbulent context, the first organisation of workers emerged. Unfortunately few nineteenth century records and publications of these organisations have survived, so that an account of their history has to be drawn by inference from other limited sources.<sup>107</sup>

In Kimberley, where a large class of industrial wage workers emerged in the late seventies and early eighties, the first workers' organisation seems to have been the Working Mens' Association of Griqualand West, which was inaugurated in November 1882.<sup>108</sup> The most notable feature of this early union was that it was open to 'every branch of industry' and to 'all nationalities'.<sup>109</sup> The immediate stimulus to the formation of the Working Mens' Association was a reduction in wages of overseers; the central demand at the organisation's first meeting was that working hours be reduced if wages were cut, a weak demand reflecting, perhaps, the weakness of the organisation.<sup>110</sup> The Association did not last, and no further references to it can be found.

In 1883, under the impact of recession, wage cuts and redundancies, the mainly white artisans and engine drivers at Du Toit's Pan mine formed the Artisans and Engine Drivers Protection Association (A & EDPA).<sup>111</sup> This Association spread to other mines when the mine workers searching regulations were extended to the engine houses and workshops – that is to say, to mainly white artisans – and to white workers generally on September 27, 1883.<sup>112</sup> The A & EDPA was probably the first whites-only trade union in South Africa. In October 1883 it led a week-long strike against the searching system, supported by the unorganised (white) overseers.<sup>113</sup> Black workers also participated, but the strike ended with the mining companies promising that searching of whites would be restricted to occasional checks, while blacks gained nothing.<sup>114</sup> In the event, it was twenty six blacks who were convicted and sentenced to one month's hard labour for 'actions . . . related to the strike'.<sup>115</sup> Thus the 1883 strike illustrates how organisation of some workers to the exclusion of others could contribute to extending divisions in working conditions, wages and the supervisory hierarchy – in this case, between black and white workers.

As Turrell shows, the mine owners proceeded to renege on their promise and in late March, 1884, again enforced the regular stripping and searching of all white workers.<sup>116</sup> New branches of the A & EDPA were formed and two branches of a new body, the Overseers and Miners Protection Association (O & MPA) were established in early April.<sup>117</sup> The workers did not launch a strike until after the lockouts at the De Beers and Bultfontein mines on April 23 and 24.<sup>118</sup> Provocative displays by armed special constables – some of whom were company directors – preceded the events of April 29, 1884, when for the first time in Cape (or South African) history, six workers on strike were killed by police.<sup>119</sup>

During the strike large parties of strikers had been successful in shutting down operations at almost all the mining companies; it was in the abortive attempt to shut down the steam driven water pumping gear at the *Compagnie Francaise* in Kimberley Mine (now the 'Big Hole') that Philip Holmes and five others were killed.<sup>120</sup> In this endeavour the white workers, who had organised in the A & EDPA and the O & MPA were joined by a crowd of several hundred black workers. To this, Rhodes remarked that it was

what he hoped never to see in this colony again, white men supported by natives in a struggle against whites.<sup>121</sup>

The mine owners thenceforth took measures designed to separate black and white workers. Although proposals for the compounding of white workers occasionally resurfaced,<sup>122</sup> it was black workers alone who were placed in closed compounds, beginning as noted above in 1885; and never again would white workers even in small numbers be housed in the compounds, as had been the case in the past.<sup>123</sup> As Turrell puts it, 'white workers' authority in the workplace was reinforced by their exclusion from com-

pounding'; but rather than emphasising that 'the power of the white workers was destroyed in the strikes',<sup>124</sup> a longer view suggests that the strength displayed by organised white workers in the strike led managements to further divide white and black workers.

If a demonstration was needed of the effectiveness of the separation between black and white workers, it came in 1894 in a strike at the Wesselton mine. Whereas in 1883 and 1884 white workers had been supported by black workers, the 'disturbance' at the Wesselton mine compound was ended by police supported by white workers.<sup>125</sup> An account of the Wesselton events is valuable, insofar as it shows how completely mine owners had gained control of black workers, and how useful the separation of white from black could be. For some time there had been growing dissatisfaction among the workers over their wages and working hours. Police were called in to quell a 'disturbance' at the compound in September 1893.<sup>126</sup> On that occasion the men who refused to work were initially to be charged in court, but on the discovery that the syndicate had acted illegally in employing them without passes, they were discharged.

In February 1894 consciousness among the workers of their low level of wages relative to other employment opportunities and of the great length of hours worked reached a new height.<sup>127</sup> On Sunday February 25, a strike was planned for the following day; but after initially refusing to go to the mine the workers accepted assurances from managers that their grievances would be heard.<sup>128</sup> Three more meetings were held between workers and management, on Wednesday February 28 and on Saturday and Sunday, March 3 and 4.<sup>129</sup> It is difficult to establish exactly what the workers wanted to achieve, but it seems reasonable to assume that they had a variety of objects in view. Some wished to leave the mine altogether,<sup>130</sup> which under the Masters and Servants Act they would not have been allowed to do;<sup>131</sup> some claimed that they wished to lodge complaints with the magistrate,<sup>132</sup> which they were fully entitled to do;<sup>133</sup> others were prepared to work, but only if their pay was increased *and* their hours were shortened (for it seems that the syndicate had agreed to shorter hours only at reduced pay).<sup>134</sup> A further meeting on Sunday March 4 reached no agreement, and the compound management then requested the police to provide support for the compound guards the following morning.<sup>135</sup> During the night the guards attempted to remove sticks and any other potential weapons from the workers in the compound.<sup>136</sup> At the same time many of the workers – there were 630 in the compound<sup>137</sup> – discussed their course of action. The subsequent trial failed to show that they spent the night planning violence against the guards, which is what the latter alleged.<sup>138</sup> In the morning of March 5, the police contingent, seven strong, arrived at the compound around 5.30 am, and waited outside the gates until the bell rang for work at 6 am.<sup>139</sup> At that point about fifty men came out of the inner compound where the workers slept, crossed the outer yard and went towards the mine under the usual escort.<sup>140</sup> At this stage those who had decided not to go to work for whatever reason were still in the inner compound. A number of workers had (usually) their coats or blankets on; the chief guard brought about fifty of them into the outer yard and lined them up against a wall.<sup>141</sup> Whether Freeman, the chief guard, then struck William Masute, one of the men, or whether Masute struck Freeman when the guard tried to take something from him, is unclear.<sup>142</sup> Whatever the origin, this initial outbreak rapidly escalated into a general *melee*, in which the workers threw bottles, stones, and metal objects at the guards, police and white workers who were nearby,<sup>143</sup> while the police and guards fired into the crowd of 150 or so black workers who by this time were in the outer yard.<sup>144</sup> Many of those involved were injured; two workers died on the spot and one died later.<sup>145</sup> Subsequently thirty of the compound workers were tried on a charge of

assault with intent to murder; after two months in jail awaiting trial the prosecution brought no evidence against four of the accused, and they and fourteen others were acquitted, while twelve were convicted of common assault.<sup>146</sup>

The issues for workers in these events were complex. Some wanted to strike to bring about improvements; others simply wanted to leave the compound to take work elsewhere. For the Wesselton syndicate, however, the issue was one of retaining as cheaply as possible, their 'valuable native labour'.<sup>147</sup> In order to do so, the syndicate built compounds, ignored the legal provisions of the compound system,<sup>148</sup> employed guards to escort workers to and from work,<sup>149</sup> called out the police to reinforce the guards when the workers threatened to disturb this system, and thus bore a measure of responsibility for the deaths of the three Wesselton miners.<sup>150</sup>

It must not be forgotten that three natives were shot down by the police, and what for? For rebelling and refusing to work under a system which has been openly condemned by the verdict of the jury.<sup>151</sup>

The Wesselton strike provides a tragic confirmation of Turrell's point<sup>152</sup> that compounds were at least as much a product of the mine owners' attempt to control and retain their cheap, unskilled black labour force as they were of IDB and other peculiarities of diamond mining. They also formed part of the process of developing a separation both geographical and social between black and white workers, which the organisation of the latter (and lack of organisation of the former) had encouraged.

The separation between organised and unorganised – and thus mainly white and black – workers was not restricted to Kimberley. The organisation of craft workers in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth had similar if more muted effects. To argue that the *organisations* of white workers were *intended* to secure these effects is, however, to overstate the case. H. J. and R. E. Simons, for example, wrote that the Knights of Labour, which existed in Kimberley in the early nineties, had a vision of 'a war on two fronts, against Monopoly Capital and Cheap Coloured Labour',<sup>153</sup> but the Knights themselves, in a thirty four page manifesto, expressed opposition to 'cheap labour competition' only once, and that explicitly against foreign 'invaders'; they railed, rather, against the incarceration suffered by black workers under the compound system.<sup>154</sup> The organisation of craft workers in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth in the eighties and nineties involved a struggle against employers, not against black workers. To suggest that

The early growth of trade unionism was an easy, uneventful process in the port towns. Small employers hobnobbed with artisans in the friendly atmosphere of a colonial community, where dark men did the dirty work and all whites belonged to a racial elite.<sup>155</sup>

is simply to echo the views of the ruling elite of the times: as Cape Colony Prime Minister J. X. Merriman put it to white unionists in 1908,

... you do not represent the workers of this colony ... You represent the dominant caste in this country – the white people ... You are in this country really the aristocracy.<sup>156</sup>

That the struggles of workers, including white workers, in the port cities were arduous

and costly – and not ‘aristocratic’ – has already been shown for the period before organising began. The same continued to be the case after the first unions came into being at Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.

It seems that the first union in the Cape Colony was a branch of the (English) Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (AS of C & J), formed in Cape Town on December 23, 1881.<sup>157</sup> An organisation of printers in a Typographical Society seems to have been formed at about the same time in Cape Town, and the Eastern Province Typographical Society was established at Port Elizabeth in 1883.<sup>158</sup> Neither of these typographical societies survived, however. More lasting were the Cape Town Typographical Society (formed sometime between 1889 and 1896), the Griqualand West Typographical Society (November 1895) and the Port Elizabeth Typographical Society (February 1897), which became branches of the new South African Typographical Union in January 1898.<sup>159</sup> Meanwhile organisations of engineers, bricklayers and others had been formed in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth in the late eighties and early nineties.<sup>160</sup> The main issues which these unions took up were wages, working hours and job security – the last-mentioned to avoid replacement by imported contract workers, cheaper workers or machinery.<sup>161</sup> The gains which they achieved for their members through organisation and negotiation, including the threat of strikes but without resort to strike action, deepened the division between skilled and unskilled workers. In the struggle for shorter working hours, for example, the unions in the Cape Colony occasionally achieved advances for their members without strikes. Printers gained a two-hour reduction in the working week in 1893, from fifty two to fifty hours, in response to a demand for a forty hour week.<sup>162</sup> The AS of C & J campaigned for an eight hour day;<sup>163</sup> their achievements in this connection are unknown. These struggles could hardly be described as ‘easy’; nor were they ‘uneventful’ and ‘friendly’, as two strikes in the nineties demonstrate.

In February 1893 craft workers in the building and related trades in Cape Town sought a shilling a day increase in wages. Cape Town was experiencing rapid economic expansion and the building trades were ‘exceedingly active in Cape Town and suburbs’.<sup>164</sup> While workers in several trades were organised, and there was collaboration between the different craft unions,<sup>165</sup> the carpenters (AS of C & J) were the most militant. By March 4, most unions had agreed not to strike over their wage demands, but on Monday March 6, 140 carpenters and joiners struck, shutting down most contractors’ operations.<sup>166</sup> The strike lasted until March 22 and eventually resulted in the employers agreeing to an immediate 6d. rise, to be followed by a further increase in six months.<sup>167</sup> Perhaps the most notable feature of the strike was the availability of a strike fund – certainly among the first union organised strike funds in South Africa, which collected funds from local unions and from as far afield as the Transvaal and Natal. The carpenters received approximately 12s. a week from the fund, while wages were 9/6 a day at the time of the strike.<sup>168</sup>

Another union strike took place in Cape Town in February 1897, when the Typographical Society struck against the newspaper proprietors and printing companies for a fifteen per cent wage increase.<sup>169</sup> One again the organisation of a strike fund enabled the strikers to stay out for two to three weeks; since the *Cape Times* printers felt their jobs most threatened by strike action, they remained at work and paid a levy of 2s. in the pound on their wages.<sup>170</sup> Of the 408 members of the union, 278 struck, of whom 198 were supported by the strike fund, while 130 continued to work and eighty of the strikers found other jobs in Cape Town or other towns.<sup>171</sup> Printers were back at work at all firms except W. A. Richards and Sons by February 16. At that company, the dispute was settled by arbitration – the first recorded case in the Cape Colony – and



the workers returned on a five per cent increase, although ten were dismissed.<sup>172</sup> Once again worker organisation sustained a strike lasting up to three weeks in some places of work.

## THE CAPE AMONG COLONIES

The extent of organisation among workers in the Cape Colony remained very limited up to 1900. The first unions emerged in much the same way as in other colonies of British settlement. Thus in Australia, the earliest organisations were formed in the fifties and sixties among compositors and miners,<sup>173</sup> just as in the Cape Colony miners and other skilled workers were the first to organise about thirty years later. Many Australian unions were from the first explicitly whites only, expressing strong opposition to Asian immigrants particularly, a protectionism later extended to immigrants in general.<sup>174</sup> As in the Cape the first strikes were of unorganised workers in the port cities, but not among dock workers: in 1840 printers and carpenters struck in Sydney and Melbourne.<sup>175</sup> Violent strikes in the mines came to Australia in the nineties, in the mines at Broken Hill – in this case a few years behind the events at Kimberley in 1884.<sup>176</sup> By contrast the first arbitration settlement in Australia was in 1886, eleven years before the first such settlement in Cape Town.<sup>177</sup>

Despite the similarities in union history between the Cape and Australian colonies, there were also major differences. Organisation in the latter colonies was more extensive and its benefits more general. For example, the first strike of women workers, and the first organising of women workers, occurred in Australia in 1882.<sup>178</sup> An issue which generated more strikes than any other in Australia was the establishment of the eight hour day, 'that great charter of early Trade Unionism in Australia'.<sup>179</sup> The length of the working day (or week) was the subject of relatively few strikes and apparently little negotiation in the Cape, with the result that almost all workers in that colony worked much longer than eight hours a day, six days a week, at the turn of the century. In Australia the first recognition of the eight hour day was secured in 1856; the adoption of the principle was widespread and its achievement was extensive, frequently through strikes, from the seventies onward.<sup>180</sup>

In African colonies where white settlement was far less extensive than in the Cape the first strikes seem to have occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>181</sup> In some cases strikes by wage workers preceded direct European colonisation.<sup>182</sup> But proletarianisation, and strike action, were generally much later than in the Cape Colony. As in the Cape Colony, even where African wage workers embarked on strike action, they remained unorganised until well into the twentieth century. The focus of strike action was frequently around docks and railways, where, as in the Cape, the first large concentrations of wage workers were to be found;<sup>183</sup> later the focus of organising was in the same areas. Similarly, the first large strikes of African workers in the Cape were in ports and on railways in the 1870s; the first large strike of organised African workers was in the Cape Town docks in 1919.<sup>184</sup>

In certain respects, then, the history of collective action in the Cape Colony parallels the history of organising in Australia; and in other respects it bears a resemblance to the early history of workers' responses to colonial capitalism elsewhere in Africa. But in the Cape, workers failed to organise to the extent that was accomplished in Australia; while the thorough defeat of the Cape's African population meant both an earlier proletarianisation than elsewhere in Africa, and disadvantage for African workers when ranged against organised, mainly white workers.

CONCLUSION

The history of collective action by wage workers in the Cape Colony demonstrates that the strike has repeatedly been used as a means of settling grievances since 1854. In many strikes the participants were isolated groups of workers, fighting isolated struggles around specific demands – strikes in which the issues varied from wages through hours of work to the personalities of supervisors. Until the late 1870s strikes of workers in positions of strength due to labour shortage and strategic location contributed to a fairly rapid rise in wages, particularly among black workers. But the last frontier war and its associated ‘primitive accumulation’, as well as deteriorating economic conditions, ended the effectiveness of strikes by unorganised workers. From then on only the organised, mainly ‘skilled’ or supervisory white workers, continued to achieve gains through strike and other organised action – gains which in some cases were relative only to the position of black workers.

Collective worker action in the Cape Colony before the 1899 - 1902 war reflects the increasing sophistication of capitalism in South Africa. The changing pattern of strikes illustrates the nature of stratification in the workforce; but it also indicates the degree to which the division between organised and unorganised workers – divisions of wages, working and living conditions – were shaped by the differing nature of collective actions undertaken by the workers of the Cape Colony.

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## APPENDIX

## List of some strikes in Natal and the SA Republic before 1900

Date	Place	Strikers	Issue
Oct. 1878	Durban	carpenter and joiners	wages
Dec. 1887	Johannesburg	telegraphists	
Oct. 1888	Johannesburg	printers and compositors	hours
Dec. 1888	Newcastle	railway construction	
Sept. 1889	Johannesburg	150 engineering workers	wages and hours
May 1890	Pietermaritzburg	railway engine cleaners	
May 1895	Johannesburg	61 police	pay in arrears
Oct. 1895	Johannesburg	plumbers	
Nov. 1895	Durban	printers and compositors	wages
July 1896	Johannesburg	over 1 000 carpenters	wages
Oct. 1896	Johannesburg	6 000 black miners	wage reduction
Dec. 1896	Johannesburg	tailors	
Jan. 1897	Johannesburg	plasterers	wage reduction
Feb. 1897	Balmoral	black mine workers	
May 1897	West Rand	over 1 500 miners	wage reduction
June 1897	Johannesburg	plasterers and bricklayers	
July 1897	Roodepoort	black miners	wages
Oct. 1897	Johannesburg	tailors	
July 1898	Pretoria	printers and compositors	piece work rates
Aug. 1899	Johannesburg	mine workers	

This appendix has been compiled on the basis of information variously drawn from John Smalberger's papers, supplied by Charles van Onselen, and extracted from newspapers by the author.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Argus</i>	<i>Cape Argus</i> (Cape Town)
<i>Cape SR</i>	<i>Cape of Good Hope Statistical Register</i>
<i>Cape V &amp; P</i>	<i>Annexures to the Votes and Proceedings of the Parliament of the Cape of Good Hope.</i>
<i>Commercial Advertiser</i>	<i>South African Commercial Advertiser and Cape Town Mail</i> (Cape Town)
<i>DFA</i>	<i>Diamond Field Advertiser</i> (Kimberley)
<i>DI</i>	<i>Daily Independent</i> (Kimberley)
<i>EPH</i>	<i>Eastern Province Herald</i> (Port Elizabeth)
<i>Hansard</i>	House of Assembly Debates, Parliament of the Cape of Good Hope
<i>MASJ</i>	<i>Mercantile Advertiser and Shopkeepers Journal</i> Cape Town
<i>Mercantile Gazette</i>	<i>Cape of Good Hope and Port Natal Shipper and Mercantile Gazette</i> (Cape Town)
s., d.	shillings, pence; the notation, e.g., '4/6' is also used to represent 4s. and 6d.

NOTES

1. J. M. Smalberger, *Aspects of the history of copper mining in Namaqualand 1846 - 1931* (Cape Town, 1975), p. 48.
2. While the discovery of diamonds attracts attention, the history of diamond mining is submerged beneath the history of the gold mines: see, for example, D. H. Houghton, *The South African economy* (Cape Town, 1964), p. 13; S. H. Frankel, *Capital investment in Africa* (London, 1938), p. 52. A detailed history of diamond mining has recently been completed by R. H. Turrell, 'Capital, class and monopoly: the Kimberley diamond fields, 1871 - 1889' (Ph.D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1982).
3. K. Gottschalk, 'The earliest known strikes by black workers in South Africa', *South African Labour Bulletin* 3 (7), 1977, pp. 73-5.
4. A. Purkis, 'The politics, capital and labour of railway-building in the Cape Colony, 1870 - 1885' (Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1978).
5. In the J. M. Smalberger Collection (Special Collections, University of Cape Town Library) there is a small set of index cards giving newspaper references on about twenty strikes which occurred in the Cape Colony. These cards formed the initial inspiration for this article. How these cards came to be compiled, and how they came to form part of the Smalberger papers, remains a mystery.
6. Smalberger wrote a number of brief drafts for an article to be entitled 'Preliminary comments on some nineteenth century black strikes', beginning with the 1854 boatmen's strike (which cannot simply be labelled a 'black strike'). Smalberger's aim was to stimulate further research into this 'little-known aspect of South African history', an approach taken up but certainly not exhausted by the present article.
7. cf. P. Kallaway, 'Labour in the Kimberley diamond fields', *South African Labour Bulletin* 1 (7), 1974, p. 61.
8. E. J. Hobsbawn, *Industry and empire* (London, 1968), p. 61.
9. Smalberger, *Copper mining*, pp. 69 - 70.
10. E. H. D. Arndt, *Banking and currency development in South Africa 1652 - 1927* (Cape Town, 1928), pp. 255-6.
11. There is little detailed literature on the economic history of the Cape Colony during this period. An outline based on the printed sources is presented in my thesis 'Colonial capitalism' (Simon Fraser University).
12. cf. *Cape V & P*, Report of the Select Committee of the House of Assembly on Factory Act, A. 6 - 1906, Evidence of J. A. Armstrong, Q. 858.

13. A list of twenty strikes before 1900 in the S. A. Republic and Natal is contained in an Appendix to this article.
14. The limited number of strikes in the nineties may reflect the relative quiescence of the working classes in the Cape Colony at a time when many individuals believed that they could improve their own conditions by moving to the gold fields, as in Australia in the 1850s; see J. D. Sutcliffe, *A history of trade unions in Australia* (Melbourne, 1921), pp. 33 - 40.
15. *MASJ* 18.3.1854.
16. *Commercial Advertiser* 14.3.1854.
17. *MASJ* 8.3.1854.
18. *Commercial Advertiser* 14.3.1854, remarks of Mr Sinclair, boat owner, to meeting of merchants.
19. *Commercial Advertiser* 9.3.1854, 14.3.1854.
20. *Ibid.* 9.3.1854.
21. *Ibid.* 16.3.1854, remarks of Capt. van Reenen to meeting of merchants.
22. *Ibid.* 14.3.1854; evidence of Jose Joachim to Polic Court.
23. *Ibid.* 14.3.1854; evidence of Mr Heckrath, boat owner.
24. *Ibid.* 11.3.1854; *MASJ* 18.3.1854.
25. *Commercial Advertiser* 14.3.1854.
26. *Ibid.* 16.3.1854, remarks of Grange and Bates to meeting of merchants.
27. *Ibid.* 14.3.1854; *Cape Mercantile Advertiser* 15.3.1854.
28. *Commercial Advertiser* 14.3.1854.
29. *Ibid.* 14.3.1854.
30. *Cape Mercantile Advertiser* 15.3.1854. Some strikes suggest that workers' actions in one workplace served as a model for others. An early example is supplied by the strike of workers at the Cape Town market in March 1854 – immediately following the first boatmen's strike. But the market workers were in a weak position and gained nothing:

The coolies employed by the farmers in the town market made an unsuccessful strike for an advance of remuneration from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. Instead of complying with this request, the farmers economised still more by unloading their wagons them-

selves. The coolies consequently returned again to work at their old rate. *MASJ* 15.3.1854.

31. *EPH* 3.6.1856. In this paper I use 'Fingo' as used in the press of the period.
32. *Mercantile Gazette* 16.1.1857.
33. *Grahamstown Journal* 9.10.1858; *Mercantile Gazette* 15.10.1858; *Argus* 16.10.1858. Another strike in construction took place at much the same time in East London, when in February 1858

The whole of the Kafirs at East London, employed on the public works . . . deserted . . . The immediate cause of their so doing, was the apprehension that the Government intended to embark them for India. (*Mercantile Gazette* 26.2.1858).

Subsequently some of these workers 'returned to their duty' – none were shipped to India.

34. *Kingwilliamstown Gazette* 16.1.1861.
35. *S.A. Advertiser and Mail* 16.1.1861; cf. also F. Holland, *Steam locomotives of the S.A. Railways*, Vol. 1: 1860 - 1910 (Cape Town, 1960), pp. 13 - 16.
36. *Argus* 2.11.1861. See also *Cape Mercantile Advertiser* 30.10.1861 and preceding weeks for some insight into the difficulty in maintaining 'a full staff of labourers' on the railway works.
37. *Argus* 2.11.1861. The train struck a mule on the track, but a letter from 'Working Navy' a few days later (*Argus* 5.11.1861) indicates that cost-cutting and dangerous practices by the contractors were the real cause of the accident.
38. Strikes by operative workers on the railways are not recorded here, though the occurrence of workers action is demonstrated by the deliberate derailment of one of the Cape Town and Wellington Railway Company's locomotives during this period: cf. Holland, *Steam Locomotives*, p. 16.
39. Purkis, 'Railway-building', pp. 403-4.
40. Cape Archives, Colonial Office Papers, C. O. 950, Letter of Chief Inspector of Public Works to Colonial Secretary, No. 183, 28.6.1872.
41. Purkis, 'Railway-building', pp. 355 - 410.
42. *EPH* 14.6.1872. I can find no reference to a boatmens' strike suggested by Purkis to have occurred in August of the same year; cf. 'Railway-building', p. 360.
43. *EPH* 14.6.1872.

44. *Port Elizabeth Advertiser* 1.6.1872.
45. *EPH* 14.6.1872.
46. *Port Elizabeth Advertiser* 5.6.1872.
47. *EPH* 14.6.1872.
48. *Port Elizabeth Advertiser* 1.6.1872. The increases in charges at the port consequent on higher wages reinforced this demand for capital investment; see *Port Elizabeth Advertiser* 22.6.1872 and *Grahamstown Journal* 9.9.1872.
49. *Grahamstown Journal* 9.9.1872.
50. *Ibid.* 9.6.1873.
51. *Cape V & P*, Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Works for 1872, G. 28 - 1873, p. 1; and Cape Archives, Public Works Department Papers, Semi-Official Letters Received, A. de Smidt to Chief Inspector, 17.11.1873.
52. *EPH* 5.9.1876.
53. *Cape Times* 24.7.1877.
54. *Independent* (Kimberley) 27.7.1877.
55. Purkis, 'Railway-building', pp. 342, 352-3.
56. *Kingwilliamstown Gazette* 6.3.1872. Cordwainers were leather workers making the uppers of shoes.
57. *Grahamstown Journal* 29.5.1878.
58. See Purkis, 'Railway-building', Chapter 9.
59. *Argus* 21.12.1880.
60. It seems that some workers were able to organise informally against the worst employers in small towns and rural areas; cf. *Colesberg Herald* quoted in *Grahamstown Journal* 14.7.1882.
61. D. W. Rush, 'Aspects of the growth of trade and the development of ports in the Cape Colony, 1795 - 1882' (M.A. thesis, University of Cape, 1872).
62. *Argus* 2.3.1884. Gottschalk, 'The earliest known strikes', refers to a strike by 'Asian workers' in Cape Town harbour in 1882, of which no record can be found. It seems likely that the strike referred to was the 1884 strike, and that the notion of 'Asian workers' arose from the use of the common nineteenth century term 'coolie' to describe black workers. In the Cape Town case it is clear that the term referred to workers of diverse backgrounds.



63. *Argus* 2.8.1884.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.* 4.8.1884.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.* 5.8.1884.
70. *DI* 16.4.1886, 20.4.1886.
71. *EPH* 5.9.1876.
72. *Cape Argus* 31.8.1876.
73. *EPH* 5.9.1876.
74. *Argus* 10.7.1879. The *Argus* rather belatedly deplored the 'introduction of the strike system, the bane and destruction of so many industries' in Cape Town.
75. *Argus* 16.9.1879.
76. *S.A. Illustrated News* 7.2.1885.
77. *DI* 26.5.1886.
78. *Ibid.* 13.5.1886.
79. Hansard, 13.5.1886, pp. 207-8.
80. *Ibid.*; also *DI* 13.5.1886, telegram from J. W. Moss to Pauling.
81. *DI* 14.5.1886, letter from 'Justitia'.
82. *DI* 18.5.1886.
83. *Ibid.* 17.5.1886, letter from 'Friend of the oppressed'.
84. *Argus* 19.5.1886.
85. cf. *DI* 26.5.1886.
86. Instead of Beaconsfield; see Cape Government Railways advertisement, *DI* 9.6.1886. Kimberley station was officially opened on 5.7.1886; cf. *Cape V & P*, report of the General Manager of Railways for 1886, 6. 24 - 1887, p. 10.

87. *DI* 23.6.1886. It may have been that the Government was seeking to protect some of its supporters who were involved as subcontractors; the Firbank, Pauling tender was not the lowest for the railway extension. Cf. P. Lewsen (ed.), *Selections from the correspondence of John X. Merriman* (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society 41, 1960), Vol. 1, pp. 215-6, Merriman to Currey, 18.6.1886, and notes 96 and 97.
88. Smalberger, *Copper Mining*, p. 101.
89. *Ibid.* p. 108.
90. *Arugs* 12.9.1882; letter from correspondent at Springbok.
91. *Argus* 23.9.1882.
92. *Ibid.* 5.10.1882.
93. As evidenced by the response of the miners to court fines imposed on two men (immediately paid collectively), and by the decision to carry on the strike (*Argus* 12.9.1882); also by the brass band procession to bid farewell to the seven dismissed miners on 15.9.1882 (*Argus* 23.9.1882).
94. An excellent illustration of the general tightening of social control over labour, both black and white, appears in F. R. Stathan, *Mr Magnus* (London, 1896), pp. 22, 84, etc.
95. *DFA* 28.4.1885. The guests included several later extenders of the compound system, such as Lionel Phillips, H. Eckstein, O. Staib, etc.
96. *Cape V & P*, Report of the Commission on the Diamond Trade Acts, G. 3 - 1888, Q. 108, evidence of F. R. Thompson.
97. N. Rouillard (ed.), *Matabele Thompson* (Johannesburg, 1953), pp. 43-4.
98. cf. R. Turrell, 'Kimberley: labour and compounds', in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.), *Industrialisation and social change in South Africa* (London, 1982), p. 68. It is worth noting that J. M. Smalberger recognised the same point in unpublished drafts of his paper 'IDB and the compound system in the 1880s' (*S.A. Journal of Economics*, 42 (4), 1974, pp. 398 - 417) and in an unpublished draft entitled 'Pass laws, convict labour and the compound system' UCT, Smalberger Collection).
99. UCT, Smalberger Collection, De Beers Diamond Mining Co. Daily Minutes Book, Meeting of Directors, 11.1.1887, p. 80.
100. *Ibid.*, 19.1.1887, p. 85.
101. *Cape V & P*, Report . . . Diamond Trade Acts, G. 3 - 1888, Q. 83, evidence of F. R. Thompson.

102. UCT, Smalberger Collection, De Beers . . . meeting of directors, 3.2.1887, p. 89. The directors, who clearly had incomplete knowledge of the compound, were told that the reason for Ford's dismissal was 'because he could not get on with Thompson'. Subsequently Ford obtained a letter from De Beers which stated that he had left the company voluntarily. He used this to gain reappointment in the Detective Department a few months later, only to be exposed; cf. *Cape Legislative Council Debates*, 15.7.1887, pp. 98, 104, debates on Detective Department speeches of Sir T. Upington and William Ross.
103. UCT, Smalberger Collection, De Beers . . . Meeting of directors, 29.7.1887, p. 119.
104. *Cape V & P*, Report . . . Diamond Trade Acts ( G. 3 - 1888), Q. 2211, 2212, evidence of J. Gifford.
105. H. J. and R. E. Simons, *Class and colour in South Africa 1850 - 1950* (London, 1969), p. 42. The harsh similarities between compound and prison life have been noted by C. van Onselen, 'Regiments of the Hills', in *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand*, Vol. 2, *New Nineveh* (Johannesburg, 1982), p. 178. Strikes by compound miners convict workers may have been more frequent than is yet established. Only two strikes by convicts can be recorded here: one in Kimberley in August 1884, and the other in East London on September 3, 1889. What the immediate issues were is unknown, but it is clear that the convicts gained nothing from the strikes. In Kimberley, 'the men were induced to return by having their rations reduced', while in East London the strike was put down with reinforcements from the Cape police; *Argus* 16.8.1884; 5.9.1889; 6.9.1889.
106. e.g., Turrell, 'Capital, class and monopoly', pp. 237-9.
107. D. Ticktin, 'The origins of the S.A. Labour Party' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1973), pp. 553-7. See also A. J. Downes, *Printers Saga* (Johannesburg, 1952), pp. 1-96, passim.
108. *DI* 18.11.1882.
109. *Ibid.*
110. *Ibid.*; The Wesselton strike in 1894 shows the persistence of this basic demand in Kimberley, where in the mid-nineties working hours were still 'twelve hour shifts practically lengthened out to fourteen hours'; cf. Stathan, *Mr Magnus*, p. 22.
111. UCT, Smalberger Collection, Kimberley Central Diamond Mining Co., Daily Minutes Book 2, Meeting of directors, 7.8.1883, p. 116.
112. *DI* 13.10.1883, 16.10.1883.
113. See Turrell, 'Capital, class and monopoly', pp. 255-7. The most accessible contemporary accounts of the strike are contained in *DI* and *DFA* of 20.10.1883,

both of which reproduced many articles relating to the strike.

114. *DI* 19.10.1883.
115. *Ibid.* 17.10.1883.
116. Turrell, 'Capital, class and monopoly', pp. 265-6. See also H. Olsen's remarks at the public meeting on 28.4.1884, *DI* 29.4.1884.
117. On the A & EDPA see *DI* 5.4.1884; on the O & MPA see *DI* 9.4.1884, 12.4.1884.
118. *DI* 24.4.1884, 25.4.1884.
119. Among the conflicting accounts of events on 29.4.1884 – newspaper reports, inquest evidence, etc. – perhaps the clearest is provided by the *Daily Independent* of 30.4.1884. Company directors among the special constables at the scene of the shooting were English, Tracey and Wright; cf. evidence of H. Freeman to inquest, *DI* 1.5.1884.
120. *DI* 30.4.1884. The inquest exonerated the 'firing party' (*DFA* 7.5.1884), but some stigma attached to those who 'had saved their property from being tampered with . . . at the cost of human life'; Angove, J., *In the Early Days: Reminiscences of Life on the Diamond Fields of South Africa* (London, 1910), pp. 184-5.
121. *Hansard* 20.5.1884, p. 36.
122. UCT, Smalberger Collection, De Beers Diamond Mining Co., Daily Minutes Book, 13.12.1886, p. 76.
123. *Cape V & P*, Report . . . Diamond Trade Acts, G. 3 - 1888, Q. 91, evidence of F. R. Thompson.
124. Turrell, 'Kimberley: labour and compounds', p. 67.
125. cf. Inquest evidence of C. A. McGinnis, tallyman at the Wesselton mine and resident in Beaconsfield, *DFA* 14.3.1894; also of D. Fitzpatrick, *ibid.* 22.3.1894; and A. Stephens, *ibid.* 13.3.1894.
126. *DFA* 11.5.1894, evidence in the High Court of J. S. Lockhart, member of the Wesselton syndicate.
127. *DFA* 6.3.1894; and *ibid.* 11.5.1894, evidence of Lockhart and of compound workers Sam, and William Masute. There were also complaints of high prices in the compound store and of the inequity of piece rates; cf. evidence of Lockhart and Sam respectively.
128. *DFA* 11.5.1894.

129. *Ibid.*
130. *DFA* 11.5.1894, evidence of Sam, of William Masute and of Hans; also *ibid.* 22.5.1894, Inquest, evidence of 'Michael, a Basuto'.
131. *DFA* 11.5.1894, Trial, argument of Ward, counsel for the defence, and statement of the Judge President.
132. *Ibid.*, evidence of Sam and William Masute.
133. *Ibid.*, Ward and Judge President.
134. *DFA* 11.5.1894, evidence of Sam and of Lockhart.
135. *DFA* 20.5.1894, Inquest, evidence of Inspector Robinson.
136. *DFA* 13.5.1884, evidence of A. E. Whammond.
137. *Ibid.*, evidence of W. S. Lockhart.
138. *DFA* 22.3.1894.
139. *DFA* 17.3.1894, evidence of Sgts. Cowieson and Cullinan.
140. *DFA* 13.3.1894, evidence of Lockhart.
141. *DFA* 11.5.1894, Trial, evidence of Sam.
142. See, for example, the contrast between the inquest evidence of P. D. Fitzpatrick (*DFA* 22.3.1894) and the trial evidence of William Masute (*DFA* 11.5.1894).
143. e.g., *DFA* 14.3.1894, Inquest, evidence of C. A. McGinnis.
144. e.g., *DFA* 20.3.1894, evidence of Const. Erickson and of Trooper Rudderford.
145. *DFA* 6.3.1894.
146. *Ibid.* 11.5.1894.
147. *Ibid.* 6.3.1894.
148. *Ibid.* 11.5.1894, Trial, statement of Judge President and rider to the verdict of the jury.
149. *Ibid.*
150. *DFA* 12.5.1894; this is the position taken in a letter from 'Justice' commenting on the case. The *Diamond Fields Advertiser* consistently reflected the position of the guards that if they had not fired on the crowd in the compound on March 5, 1894, 'serious loss of life' would have resulted; cf. *DFA* 6.3.1894.

151. *DFA* 12.5.1894, letter from 'Justice'.
152. Turrell, 'Kimberley: labour and compounds', esp. p. 68.
153. H. J. and R. E. Simons, *Class and Colour*, p. 45. The Simons' view of the Knights of Labour has become part of the mythology of the history of organising in South Africa; cf. Ticktin, 'Origins', p. 53.
154. *Manifesto of the Knights of Labour of South Africa* (Kimberley, 1892), pp. 9, 17.
155. H. J. and R. E. Simons, *Class and colour*, p. 32.
156. *Indian Opinion* 13.6.1908, p. 258. As a member of the Scanlen ministry in 1882 and 1883, Merriman had been joint chair with Rhodes of the enquiry into depressed conditions in diamond mining which had recommended searching of mine workers, and had been partly responsible for the 1883 extension of searching to whites. At the time of the 1884 Kimberley strike, Merriman was one of those who sympathised with the mine owners, 'whose property is plundered by the hundreds of thousands'. He originally approved, as a result, of the closed compounding of black miners though he was subsequently shocked by the conditions in the compounds; cf. P. Lewsen (ed.), *Correspondence of J. X. Merriman*, Vol. 1, Merriman to C. Mills, 30.4.84, p. 175; Merriman to A. Merriman, 31.1.1886, p. 207; also P. Lewsen, *John X. Merriman, Paradoxical South African Statesman* (Johannesburg, 1982), p. 94.
157. E. Gitsham and J. F. Trembath, *A first account of labour organisation in South Africa* (Durban, 1926), p. 15.
158. Downes, *Printers saga*, pp. 2, 8.
159. *Ibid.* pp. 2 - 3, 10, 32, 43.
160. Ticktin, 'Origins', p. 23; *Argus* 4.3.1893.
161. cf. Downes, *Printers saga*, pp. 53, 76.
162. *Ibid.* p. 6.
163. *Argus* 5.5.1890. A two week strike by engineers in Johannesburg in 1889 over wages and the reduction of hours from 54 to 48 per week suggests the generality of the demand for the eight hour day; see Gitsham and Trembath, *A first account*, p. 16.
164. cf. Figure 1; also *S.A. Trade Journal and Shipping Gazette* April 1893, p. 1.
165. *Argus* 4.3.1893, 8.3.1893. The original Cape Town Trades and Labour Council originated soon after the 1893 strike, though it did not survive, and the carpenters, masons, plasterers and plumbers formed the Cape Town and District Trades and Labour Council in August 1899. See *Standard and Diggers News*

166. *Argus* 4.3.1893, 6.3.1893.
167. *Ibid.* 20, 21 and 23.3.1893.
168. *Ibid.* 14.3.1893.
169. *Ibid.* 5.2.1897. See also the account of the strike in Downes, *Printers saga*, pp. 6 - 7.
170. *Argus* 1.2.1897, letter from 'Typo'.
171. *Argus* 8.2.1897. Apart from those at the *Cape Times*, eighteen newspaper printers at the *Argus* stayed on the job, which accounts for the printed record of the strike.
172. *Argus* 20.2.1897.
173. J. T. Sutcliffe, *Trade unionism in Australia*, pp. 33 - 40.
174. *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 52-3, 68.
175. *Ibid.*, pp. 29 - 30.
176. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-4.
177. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
178. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
179. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
180. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
181. e.g., in West Africa; A. Hopkins, *An economic history of West Africa* (London, 1973), p. 257.
182. e.g., in the Tanganyika caravan trade; J. Iliffe, *A modern history of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 46.
183. Dock strikes: Conakry 1919, Tanga 1939; railway strikes: Dakar-Niger 1925, Thies 1938; Sierra Leone 1919, Nigeria 1920, Ghana 1918; cf. Hopkins, *Economic history*, p. 257; Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p. 309; R. Jeffries, *Class, power and ideology in Ghana: the railwaymen of Sekondi* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 28.
184. Gitsham and Trembath, *A first account*, pp. 21, 123.

TABLE 1

Workers, wages and bread, 1865 - 1869.

(a) Number of:	Cape Town		Port Elizabeth	
	Coloured*	White	Coloured	White
Carpenters, joiners, cabinetmakers	128	311	8	197
Printers	24	122	-	31
Mariners, boatmen, ** fishermen, stevedores	288	207	51	112
(b) Daily wages in shillings of:				***
Carpenters & joiners	5/0	5/6	6/0	7/0
Day labourers	0/9	1/0	1/0	1/6
(c) Price of				
- bread (1 lb.)		2d		3d
- a shirt		2/4		1/9

Sources: Cape Census 1865, Cape SR 1869.

\* Census definitions. Usually 'coloured' or 'all other races' was distinguished from 'European' or 'white'.

\*\* Note that the figures here include fishermen.

\*\*\* Uitenhage figures substituted for Port Elizabeth.



TABLE 2

Workers, wages and bread, 1875.

(a) Number of:	Cape Town		Port Elizabeth	
	Coloured	White	Coloured	White
Carpenters, joiners, cabinetmakers	135	227	8	210
Printers, compositors	18	122*	1	31
Stevedore, wharfman, boatman, ferryman **	27	46	49	148
(b) Daily wages in shillings of:				
Carpenters & joiners	?	7/6	7/0	8/0
Daily labourers	?	3/0	2/6	3/6
(c) Price of				
- bread (1 lb.)		3d		2d
- a shirt		4/0		2/6

Sources: Cape Census 1875, Cape SR 1875.

\* Of the total of 122, one was a woman.

\*\* Figures exclude fishermen; Port Elizabeth figures exclude 'dockers' etc. called 'Fingos'.

TABLE 3

Daily wages 1883.

	Cape Town		Port Elizabeth		Kimberley	
	Coloured	White	Coloured	White	Coloured	White
Carpenters and joiners	5/0	7/0	?	10/0	12/6	19/0
Day labourers	1/6	3/6	3/6	4/0	3/0	5/0

Source: Cape SR 1883.

TABLE 4

Workers, wages and bread, 1891.

(a) Numbers of:	All urban areas			
	Coloured		White	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Carpenters, joiners, cabinetmakers etc.	5	675	14	2174
Printers, compositors	10	103	23	528
Stevedores, watermen, boatmen	-	126	1	241

(b) Daily wages	Cape Town	Port Elizabeth	Kimberley
Carpenters and joiners	8/0 to 11/0	6/8 to 8/4	15/0 to 16/8
Building labourers	3/0	3/4	3/4

(c) Price of:	Cape Town	Port Elizabeth	Kimberley
Bread (d/lb)	2 1/2	2 1/2	3
A shirt	2/0	2/6	2/6

Sources: Cape Census 1891, Cape SR 1891.

TABLE 5

Strikes in the Cape Colony by decade and place of occurrence, 1854 - 1897.

Place	Decade				
	50s	60s	70s	80s	90s
Cape Town	2	1	3	2	2
Port Elizabeth	1		4		
East London	2		1	2	
Port Alfred	1				
Muldersvlei		1			
King William's Town			3		
Uitenhage			2		
Kimberley			1	8	2
O'Okiep				1	
Simonstown				1	
Cape Colony	6	2	14	14	4

Sources: Compiled by author, see text.

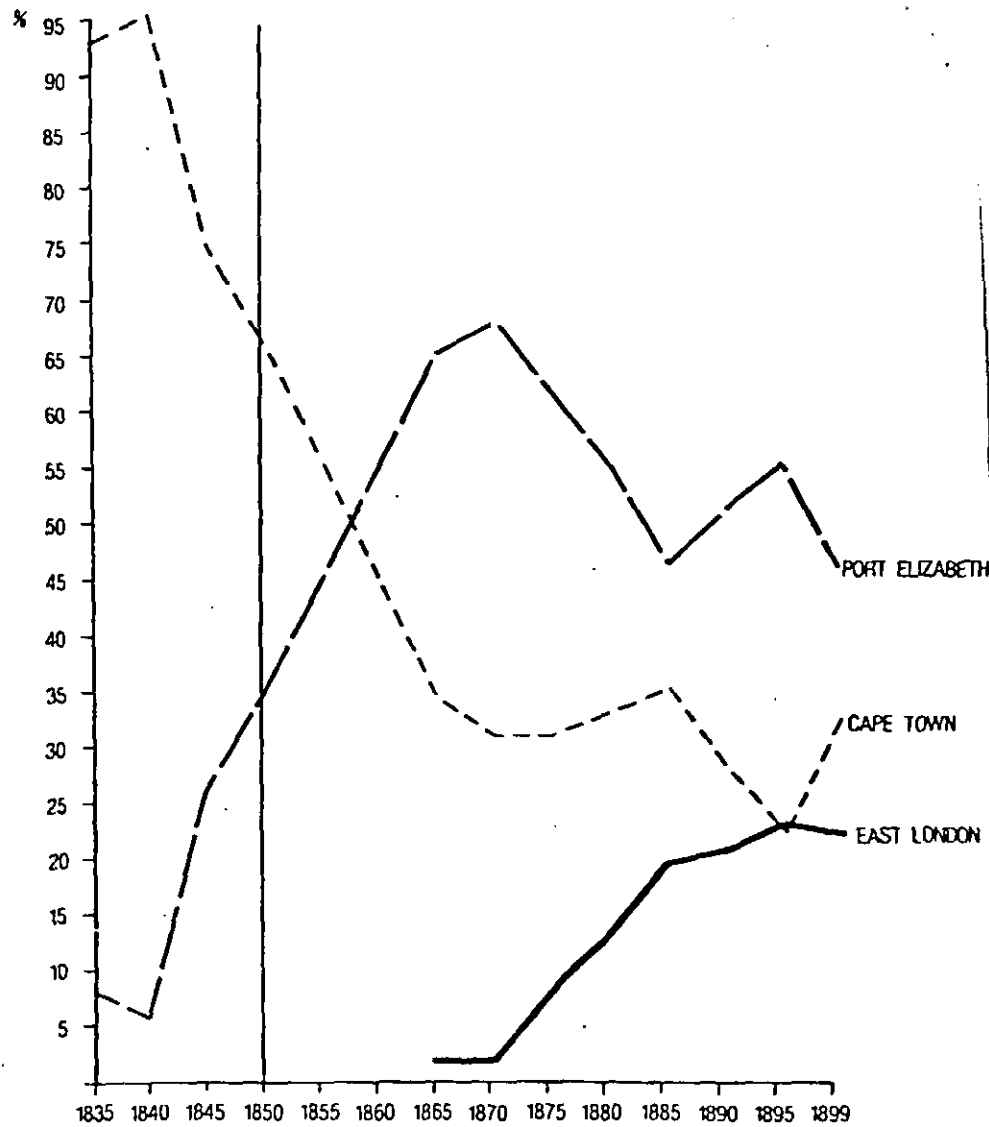
TABLE 6

Strikes in the Cape Colony by decade and province, 1854 - 1897.

Province	Decade				
	50s	60s	70s	80s	90s
Western Province	2	2	3	4	2
Eastern Province	4	1-	10	2	-
Griqualand West	-	-	1	8	2

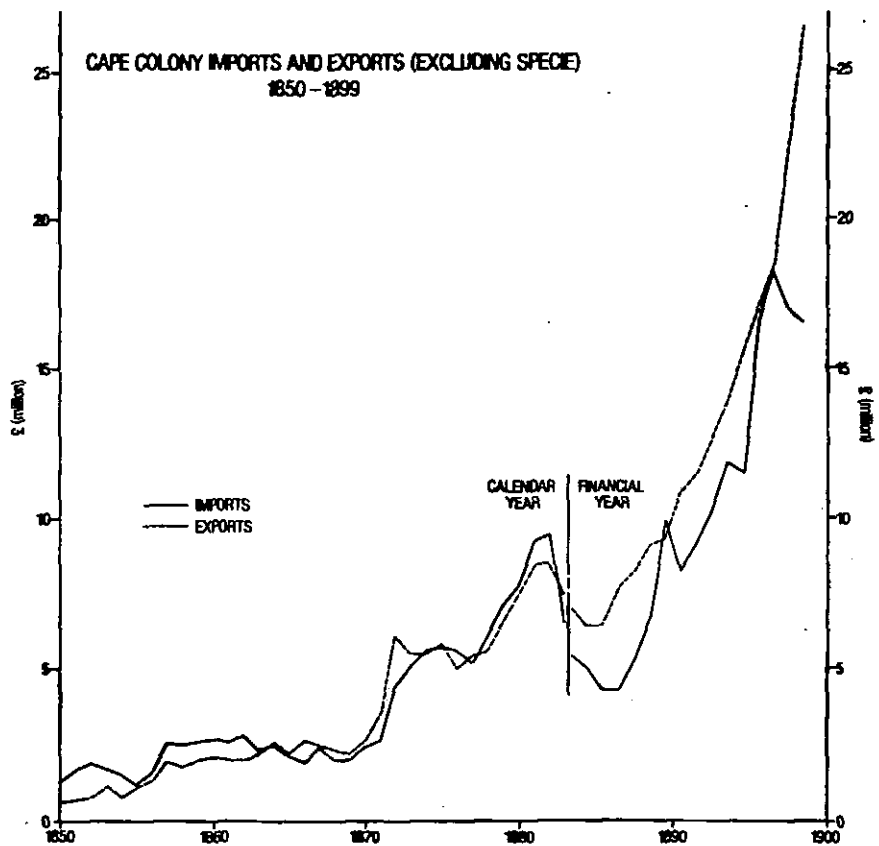
Source: Derived from Table 6.

Figure 1. Shares of trade (imports plus exports) through major ports expressed as percentage handled at Cape Town, East London and Port Elizabeth, 1835 - 1899.



Source: Compiled from Cape Blue Books and Statistical Registers and Port Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports.

Figure 2. Cape Colony imports and exports (excluding specie), 1850 - 1899.



Source: Compiled from Cape Statistical Registers.