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A CASE OF MINORITY RULE: THE CAPE COLONY, 1854-1898

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The emergent nations of the colonial world have given the term "minority rule" a specialized meaning: the government and domination of the coloured population of a plural society by the privileged white minority in its midst. There are other kinds of privileged minorities who monopolize power, but the term is not currently applied to their situation. It is rightly assumed that universal suffrage, if it can be introduced, will invariably transfer power from the white minority to the coloured majority.

The Cape Colony, under its constitution that lasted from 1854 to 1910, was in two senses dominated by a minority. The case has a topical and an historical interest because, under the conditions of that time and place, the actual location of power was not determined quite so simply by the location of the franchise. For the first half of that period at least, the political arrangements of the colony might be called an object lesson in "how to exercise power without appearing to do so". They show how much beside the mere right to vote was necessary to those who sought the political kingdom.

The vote was given in 1854 to all adult males, regardless of race, who occupied premises of a capital value of £25 or earned wages of £50 a year. This was a generous basis even for that simple society. Men so qualified could vote for both houses of Parliament. With the same qualification they were eligible to the lower house, though not to the upper. There was nothing in the law to prevent a Coloured or a black man from being elected to Parliament. Yet during the whole life of the constitution none ever was. The Coloured and African inhabitants were 63 per cent of the population in 1865, and in 1891 — after the incorporation of various native territories — they were 75 per cent. In the course of that time the franchise laws were changed, but not so drastically as to explain this phenomenon. The white minority retained exclusive control by means which included more than a restricted franchise.

The white population was itself divided into Dutch and English in the ratio of about two to one. As it was a very rare white man who did not qualify for the vote, the English were no more than a third of the white electorate. Yet during the whole period of responsible government, from 1872 to 1910, every Prime Minister was English-speaking, and all but one (Schreiner, 1898-1900) were born in the British Isles. From 1872 to 1898 thirty-three men held ministerial office. Twenty-three of

them were of British, seven of Afrikaner origin. But, of these seven : J. H. De Villiers always insisted that his origin was not Dutch but French, and he became a peer of the United Kingdom; J. A. De Wet became a knight and served the imperial government as Agent in Pretoria; Andries Stockenstrom was the second son of a baronet; and Pieter Faure was knighted. Thus the government was composed, up to 1898, almost entirely of Englishmen and more or less anglicized Afrikaners, a minority within a minority. [1]

While the means to the two ends, white supremacy and British supremacy, were mostly different, they had at least two factors in common. The first was inertia, a stronger force then than now. In 1854 the Cape had been a British Crown Colony for half a century, and for the next eighteen years it continued to be ruled by an executive responsible to the Crown and not to the colonial Parliament. This gave the colony a British imprint in official personnel, policy, many of the unchallenged assumptions of public opinion, and other intangibles such as the social atmosphere in which government at all levels was conducted. None of these features could be changed without a specific effort. On the other hand the main body of the Coloured people was in 1854 only twenty years removed from slavery and from the slave mentality. The Kaffirs, still mostly outside the frontiers but soon to be brought within them, had been in arms against the colony until the previous year. A great effort would be required to bring these groups within hailing distance of the citadel of power.

The second common factor reinforced the first. It was the doctrine that there were no racial or national distinctions within the population, that the interests of all were the same, that it was dangerous and disruptive to organize a racial group for specific political purposes of its own. This doctrine was used against the Afrikaner Bond, against an incipient Coloured organization in Cape Town in 1893, against a group of German voters in 1884. [2] It was accepted, as a general truth, by the very people against whom it was directed. Hofmeyr would never assume the highest office because he feared that political division on "racial" lines would be the result. But those who used this argument overlooked or deliberately obscured the fact that without such moves, by groups outside the establishment, the *locus* of power would never be shifted. That it was shifted was due to Hofmeyr's breaking the rule in organizing the Bond.

The refusal to recognize racial distinctions is one of the most striking features of nineteenth century discussions of racial questions in the colony. Whether it was Coloured voters or the Dutch language, Bantu tribesmen

[1] Lists of Ministers and Members of Parliament are found in Ralph Kilpin, *The Romance of a Colonial Parliament.* From 1885 onwards the official source is *Votes and Proceedings of Parliament.* (*C.A.* : *Cape Argus*; S.P., Sessional Papers, United Kingdom.)

[2] E.g., *C.A.*, February 8, 1884, July 12, 1892, July 27, 1893.

or the census that was in question, the politicians seemed to fear open reference to racial categories as the Devil fears holy water. Every topic was discussed in terms of general principles, as if no element of race had entered into it. Even the detailed census report of 1891, which for the first time gives a racial breakdown of the voters' roll, does not distinguish between "native" and "coloured". And while it draws conclusions about the ratio of Dutch to English in the whole population, based on religious denominations, it fails to report the relevant figures by districts. Instead, the population of each district is classified as Protestant or Catholic, a distinction irrelevant to politics. One is left with the impression that this is one of the important clues to our problem. The rulers of the old Colony monopolized power by pretending not to do so. Their successors have adopted the opposite principle : it is not enough that injustice is done, it must be seen to be done.

Apart from these general factors, the instruments of white supremacy and of British supremacy were different. The fundamental reason for white supremacy was the stratification of social and economic classes. In 1865, before either the Transkei or British Kaffraria had been annexed, the population of the colony was divided approximately thus : Europeans, 37 per cent; Hottentots and Mixed, i.e. the Cape Coloured people, 43 per cent; Bantu, 20 per cent. The last group, described as Kaffirs and Fingos, was concentrated near the eastern frontier and consisted largely of refugees from the troubled lands beyond. Living in the most primitive conditions, most of them were neither qualified for nor, probably, aware of the parliamentary franchise. Between them and the Coloured people, who in every sense belonged to the Colony and who had shared it with the whites for two centuries, there was a great cultural and social difference. The franchise of 1854 was intended to be accessible to the Coloured people; it had hardly taken account of the Bantu.

The white and Coloured populations (in the South African sense of Coloured) were not significantly unequal in numbers. In the area within the boundaries of 1865 the ratio between them did not greatly change. In 1891, for instance, there were nine districts in which the whites were more than 50 per cent of the population, and twelve more in which they were more than 47 per cent.[3] Thus, even if all the adult Coloured males had voted, they would have had to carry some social and economic weight to make their will prevail. In fact they carried no such weight.

The Coloured people of 1865 were either Hottentots or but one generation removed from slavery. They were the lowest class of what was in some respects a stable and integrated society. Though the census classified Hottentots, Europeans, etc. as "races", this word was never so

[3] These and other population statistics are taken from the Cape Census Report of 1891.

used in political speeches. By a curious but interesting inversion, "races" meant the English and the Dutch, whereas the dark-skinned people were called the coloured "classes". What would now be called racial discrimination in law was then called "class legislation". The word is significant. The landowner was white, his labourers Coloured. The urban employer was white, his servants Coloured. The skilled Malay might be an artisan, and out of the mission schools came a handful of Coloured teachers and clerks. But in general the Coloured people were the working class of a mainly agrarian society. It has been argued [4] that white attitudes to the Coloured people in the nineteenth century were essentially class, not race, attitudes. The factor of race was there, but it did not become the dominant factor until other and more intractable racial elements had been added to the mixture.

Class distinctions among the whites themselves were accepted as a part of the natural order, the more easily, perhaps, because they provided a framework within which the "Coloured classes" could be assigned to their appropriate place. The whole weight of English tradition was thus thrown behind the slave-owning tradition of the Cape Afrikaners to justify a hierarchical social structure. In all the arguments about political rights this social principle was never questioned, even when a nephew of Karl Marx [5] presided over the House of Assembly.

An incident in the life of Hofmeyr illustrates the point.

> A deputation of his coloured electors waited upon him to ask whether they might become members of the Bond, for though there was no colour prohibition in the constitution, they felt that there was no chance of their election. Mr. Hofmeyr made no reply; instead, he invited the deputation to dine at his house. The men saw the point; they felt that it was impossible for them to accept such an invitation, neither, therefore, could they accept to be treated in every way as the white man's equals. [6]

This being the feeling of the Coloured people themselves, it is not surprising that few of those who were qualified troubled to register as voters. In 1871 the Attorney-General, W. D. Griffith, in a report opposing the introduction of responsible government, referred to the large number of Coloured men qualified for the franchise, and, in a tone of pained surprise, to the fact that some of these actually availed themselves of it "under the instigation of persons of European race". [7]

The Europeans who did this were not trying to undermine white supremacy. Before 1898, when the secret ballot was used for the first time in a general election, voting was oral and open. In the country

[4] By D. P. Botha, in *Die Opkoms van Ons Derde Stand*, ch. 2.
[5] Sir Henry Juta, Speaker, 1896-8.
[6] J. H. Hofmeyr, *The Life of J. H. Hofmeyr*, p. 309.
[7] S.P. 1871, vol. XLVII, p. 579.

districts Coloured men, being members of a humble and dependent class, could no more defy their masters at the polls than could the English tenants-at-will enfranchised by the Chandos clause. They were, in modern South African terminology, *stemvee* (voting cattle).

There was, however, one constituency to which these generalizations might not apply. It was the city of Cape Town, where by reason of concentrated numbers, and of the presence of Coloured people economically and culturally more advanced than elsewhere, some electoral independence might be possible. Cape Town returned four members and was the only constituency with the "cumulative vote"; each elector had four votes and could distribute or "plump" them as he chose. A minority group, by "plumping" for one candidate, might hope to get him elected. Apparently, when this provision was included in the constitution, the imperial government intended by it specifically to provide for Coloured representation. [8]

The opening was not exploited up to 1893. In that year it became known that there was a move to procure, by "plumping", the election of a Malay, Ahmed Effendi. Parliament quickly saved the situation by abolishing cumulative voting in Cape Town. The bill was opposed, arguments pro and con were aired, and the bill was passed. The debate revealed that nobody, not even those who were generally feared as negrophilists, wanted a Malay in the House. But it revealed more significant things than this.

The bill was not introduced by the government, nor by any of the Cape Town members. The task was given to a prominent politician from the opposite end of the country — i.e., significantly, from the "Kaffir" frontier — J. M. Orpen. His arguments were of the most general kind: cumulative voting was unfair, since it enabled a "class" to get representation, whereas other classes would have no motive to organize for this purpose, and would not be specifically represented; moreover, there was no other place in the British Empire where the anomaly of cumulative voting existed. (It existed for the Legislative Council in this very Parliament.) He appeared never to have heard of Ahmed. Other members were less reticent about the real reason for the bill, but equally disingenuous in their arguments. Tamplin "believed the Malays had too much good sense to obtrude a member of their community upon the House, for though he might be of use to his own small community, he would not be of much use as a representative of the country at large". Sauer, the staunch liberal, did not want to have a Malay in the House, and did not think it would be good for his community if he were. Rhodes, who was Prime Minister but had left the initiative to a private member,

[8] So Sir Gordon Sprigg reported having been told by William Porter. *C.A.*, July 27, p. 1893.

reached the lowest depths of hypocrisy by claiming that no rights were taken away, as everyone would have as many votes as before; further, all four Cape Town members at present represented the Malays, whereas if one of them were elected the other three would disregard Malay interests, and the community would be worse off than before.

The word "race" was never mentioned. When the bill reached the upper house Ahmed was called "a certain Moslem" and "a certain individual of another nationality and another religion". Through all the discussion ran that thread of argument which was the standard rationalization of group prejudice: the specific representation of a group, in this case the Malays, ran counter to the precious non-racial principle enshrined in the constitution. A member of Parliament must represent all his constituents, as each of the Cape Town members now did. But the *Cape Argus* knew where the danger lay, and warned its readers accordingly. "So long as we are particularly careful," said the editor, "to avoid any legislation which oppresses the natives in their daily life, we need not fear to base the constitution of the country on sound principles." [9]

The mention of "natives" reminds us that we have run ahead of events. That word has come to be applied exclusively to the people who in the early days of the constitution were foreigners, the Bantu-speaking Africans. White attitudes to them had a different origin from attitudes to the Coloured people. The latter were a humble class of colonial society; Kaffirs, on the contrary, were foreign enemies. They conjured up in the colonial mind—Coloured as well as white—memories of a hundred years of war, murder and pillage. The incorporation of these people and their country into the colony, before Ahmed Effendi was heard of, had given a new dimension and character to the problem of race in politics.

The expansion began with the annexation—forced on the colony against its will by the imperial government—of British Kaffraria in 1866. The incorporation was complete. Constituencies were formed and the new population had access to the franchise on the same terms as the old. Thereafter, by stages up to 1885, the Transkeian territories were added, except for Pondoland which followed in 1894. They were treated at first as a dependency, not an integral part of the colony, and were not represented in Parliament. The handful of white inhabitants wanted representation, but this posed a problem. The whites in the Transkei itself were outnumbered by nearly fifty to one. What was more serious, the annexations radically changed the racial balance in the colony as a whole. In 1891 the whites were 25 per cent, the Coloured 20 per cent and the Bantu 55 per cent.

[9] *C.A.*, July 26, 27, August 17, 22, 1893.

The Bantu were living, almost without exception, under tribal conditions. The final stages of annexation had been accompanied by war and rebellion. It was not difficult to foresee a Parliament dominated by savage warriors. Even in the frontier constituencies within the old boundary there had been a sudden increase of native registrations on the voters' roll between 1882 and 1886, so that they outnumbered the whites in Aliwal North and Victoria East, and came near to doing so in several other constituencies.[10]

The danger was averted, first, by the Parliamentary Registration Act of 1887. This provided, among other things, that property had to be held on individual, not communal, tenure to count as a qualification for the franchise. Since almost all tribal Africans held land communally it was thought that this change would debar 90 per cent of the Africans who would otherwise qualify.[11] Thus the Transkei was given two members of Parliament, but they represented very few of the inhabitants. In the older constituencies the number of native voters dropped. The Coloured voters were affected by some provisions of the Act, but not by the exclusion of communal tenure.

As this measure failed to exorcise the spectre of savagery, Parliament returned to the attack. In 1891 Hofmeyr moved in the House of Assembly a resolution to amend the franchise. This was passed, and the government embodied it in a bill the following year. The debate on the second reading of the Franchise and Ballot Bill, which lasted a week, conveys to the modern reader a sense of unreality. Some cats were certainly let out of the bag: the accusations, made and denied, that the Bond wanted this measure merely to reduce the votes of its opponents, and that Rhodes had given Hofmeyr an undertaking to make this reform in return for his support; and, on the other hand, a reference to a letter in which Hofmeyr had said that this bill "was wholly inspired by the fear that the native vote would swamp the white vote". Yet Rose-Innes, Sauer and Merriman, the liberals in the Cabinet who stood up for native rights, supported the bill. They considered that raising the property qualification from £25 to £75 would make no great difference. The wage qualification of £50 was unchanged, and they accepted the minimal test of literacy which required the voter to sign his name when registering. Sauer asserted that the natives approved of the bill, and could quote Tengo Jabavu's paper, *Imvo,* to this effect.[12]

Sauer and Rose-Innes supported the bill because the price they had exacted was paid: the inclusion of the secret ballot. The widespread opposition to this included Hofmeyr, Rhodes and Merriman. But they

10 J. H. Hofmeyr, *op. cit.*, p. 310.
11 *C.A.*, July 5, 1887.
12 *C.A.*, July 12, 1892.

had to accept it or face a break-up of the Cabinet. It can be argued that the native and Coloured voters gained more by the ballot than they lost by the new qualifications. But in that case it would be hard to explain the zeal of the Bond for the measure. Many branches of the Bond had passed resolutions in its favour. But no public meeting, in that day of public meetings, had dealt with the matter. The silence was explained by the unwillingness of the public "to go any distance upon political lines which would bring us against any race question".[13] Though Parliament itself did just that, it did it with a maximum of verbiage about all the other countries in the world and a minimum of reference to the racial effects of the Bill.

The Acts of 1887 and 1892 reduced the native vote more than the Coloured vote, as they were intended to do. By 1907 the effects can be seen by comparing the constituencies in the west, where the non-European voters were Coloured, with those in the east, where they were African. In Cape Town the white voters were 25 per cent of the white population, the non-whites (mostly Coloured) 6 per cent of the non-white population. In Griqualand East the corresponding figures were 28 per cent and 0.15 per cent.

Yet the non-European voters were not a negligible quantity. In Stellenbosch, Port Elizabeth, Fort Beaufort, and Tembuland they were about a third of the electorate, in many other constituencies a quarter, and many who did not register were qualified.[14] Their passive role in politics was a reflection of their humble role in society, of the practical impossibility of elbowing their way into circles that would not accept them, and of the thinly veiled power and will of Parliament to strike back if they tried to do so.

The political predominance of the British minority was more subtle than the supremacy of white over coloured, and it was concealed behind a thicker smoke-screen. It even eludes easy definition. The British origin of cabinet ministers need not signify British supremacy; there are two English-speaking ministers in the present South African government. The insistence of contemporaries, whether English or Dutch, that their interests were identical, the obscurity of the statistics, the absence of political cleavages on "racial" lines and the importance of cleavages on other lines discourage the attempt to locate power in one of these groups.

These difficulties exist, however, only for the period up to about 1880. After that the lines began to be more sharply drawn. The cause of this lay outside the colony, in the conflicts between Great Britain and

[13] *C.A.*, July 12, 1892. Sir James Rose-Innes, *Autobiography*, pp. 95-6.
[14] *Cape of Good Hope Statistical Register*, 1909.

the Boer republics, which tended to range English and Dutch colonists on opposite sides. To be on the British side meant to support British imperial interests against the republics. British supremacy in the Colony, then, meant control of its government by those whose imperial loyalty could be relied upon. The loyal group was not identical with the people of British descent or English speech, but the two categories were not very far from coinciding. Thus the predominance of Englishmen in Parliament up to the seventies would have ensured the loyalty of the colony if that had been in question. Their numbers declined during the eighties and nineties, until the election of 1898 returned a government that hoped to be practically neutral in the coming war. Why was this consummation so long delayed? Why was a majority of Parliament English, when two-thirds of the electorate was Dutch?

The answer does not lie in gerrymandering. The predominantly Dutch districts — if we can trust our approximate knowledge of which they were — accounted for about two-thirds of the constituencies. Many of them in the early decades chose Englishmen to represent them. Some continued to do so to the end. Again, in Parliament as in the Cabinet, there were members with Dutch names but English hearts. These are the anomalies to be explained.

The first explanation lies in the kind of anglicizing policy which Durham vainly hoped for in Canada, but which had been practised for about a generation at the Cape before the first Parliament met. Between 1822 and 1828 English had been made the sole official language. Scottish ministers were placed in Dutch Reformed pulpits, English-speaking Presbyterians joined the Dutch church and held lay as well as clerical office in it, and services were conducted in both languages. In 1850, the Dutch Reformed ministry included the names of Sutherland, Robertson, Fraser, Thomson, Murray, Pears, Reid, Taylor and Welsh.[15]

Schoolmasters were brought from Britain. Public education was effectively organized for the first time in 1839, with James Rose-Innes, one of the imported schoolmasters, as Superintendent. Under this system and under the Act of 1865 which modified it, teaching through the medium of English was enforced. Instruction in the Dutch vernacular was permitted only at the lowest elementary level while pupils were being prepared in English.[16] Nor was the anglicizing confined to language. The pupil might learn the counties of England and the clans of Scotland, but no South African history or geography.[17]

15 Van de Sandt De Villiers, *Cape of Good Hope Almanac*, 1850, *passim*.

16 P. S. Du Toit, *Onderwys in Kaapland*, 1652-1939, ch. 2.

17 Sir James Rose-Innes, *Autobiography*, pp. 13-16. His grandfather (of the same name) had inaugurated the system of which he complained.

The schools so provided were in the towns, large and small. They were easily accessible to the people classified in the census as urban, but inaccessible to most of the rural population, which for a long time had to be content with peripatetic teachers of low attainments. Two-thirds of the urban white population was English.[18] Even the small town in a Dutch countryside had its substantial English community. This and the school and, often, the Scottish *predikant* combined to anglicize the local Afrikaners, and so further to emphasize the difference in language and sentiment between town and country. Most of the Dutch farmers were out of reach of these influences, not because the government or even they themselves willed it so, but because of the practical difficulty of influencing a sparsely scattered population.

Among the Afrikaners sectional nationalism hardly existed in the sixties. When they objected to the exclusion of Dutch from the schools and the examinations it was for practical and not nationalist reasons. Private schools were set up to meet the needs of Afrikaner children, but they had little success outside Cape Town, where wealth and numbers made them more practicable. The best known of the Dutch private schools, the *Tot Nut van't Algemeen* in Cape Town, flourished for a few decades, then steadily declined until in 1870 it had to close its doors for lack of support. In 1829 the South African College, out of which both the University of Cape Town and a great school were to grow, was founded on a bilingual basis. In the early years the governing body, which included a Smuts, a Hertzog and a Hofmeyr, was more Dutch than English. The academic year was inaugurated at a ceremony in the *Groote Kerk,* where sermons in both languages were preached.[19]

By 1842 the interest in Dutch had so far declined that classes in that language were made free, to the detriment of the Dutch professor who depended partly on fees. The professor accordingly left the College. His successor, who continued to teach the classical languages through the medium of Dutch, reported in 1860 that he did not teach Dutch literature because there were no pupils who could profit by the teaching.[20] Thus the College, by force of circumstances, became an English institution.

In the country towns the schools, being state schools, were English by government decree. In 1867 James Gill at Graaff-Reinet forbade his pupils to speak Dutch even outside the classroom; this in the most solidly Dutch part of the country.[21] He was attacked for this, but the belief that Dutch was destined to extinction in the colony was then hardly disputed even by those who spoke it. Since English was the language of education, Parliament, the Civil Service, the Courts, and also of

[18] In 1891.
[19] W. Ritchie, *History of the South African College,* vol. I, ch. 3-7.
[20] *Ibid.,* pp. 119, 184.
[21] P. S. Du Toit, *op. cit.,* p. 101; J. H. Hofmeyr, *op. cit.,* p. 78.

commerce, Dutch parents had the strongest reasons for wanting their children to acquire it. Again it was the farming class that was least influenced by these motives.

The rural white population was, in 1891, 84 per cent Afrikaner. Since most of the other 16 per cent are accounted for by the bloc of English districts east of a line from Port Elizabeth to Queenstown, the homogeneity of the *platteland* is apparent. But even there, in the sixties, there was no nationalist stir.

Afrikaner nationalism was discouraged both by negative factors — the absence of grievances affecting the Afrikaners as such, the lack of a strong feeling of nationality inherited from the past or acquired in the schools, the emigration of the more recalcitrant spirits in the Great Trek; and by positive factors — English influences in school and church, the development of a very real sense of allegiance to the Queen, the continual preaching of the common interests uniting all colonists, and the fact that the most exciting political issues did in fact find Dutch and English on the same side.

Afrikaner nationalism, when it did appear, became the basis of the first and for a time the only organized political party in the colony. Before the eighties there were no parties. Without them, elections were managed by local worthies in the context of local situations, but under conditions which the law imposed on all.

By law, only English could be spoken in Parliament. Candidates had therefore to be found who could speak that language. They might be Afrikaners, but then probably Afrikaners who had been to the English schools; most of these would be not farmers but small town people. Thus Uitenhage elected J. C. Krog in 1854 and 1859 and F. L. Liesching in 1874, both members of families that Rose-Innes remembered knowing when he was at school in that town. In the fifties and sixties, when a successful candidate had a Dutch name, he was commonly a local attorney, notary, sworn translator, auctioneer, agent or bank director. These occupations, to which membership of the Board of Municipal Commissioners (or Town Council) was often added, indicate the townsman. They also imply education, bilingualism and probably some anglicization. Of the 46 members of the lower house in 1854, 16 bore Dutch names. At least six of these belonged to those minor professions in the country towns. Three others were advocates of the Supreme Court.[22]

[22] The chief source for this information is the *Cape of Good Hope Almanac and Annual Register*, published annually in Cape Town by Van de Sandt De Villiers. In the analyses that follow, the upper house has been disregarded. Its composition has interesting features. But for reasons of space I have confined this discussion to the House of Assembly, which was the important arena.

The English-speaking representatives of predominantly Dutch constituencies fell into two main classes. There were local notables, usually landowners, who had settled in the midst of the Boer population. Such were the Barrys and Moodies of Swellendam, the Searles, Barringtons and Newdegates of George, the Scanlens and Colletts of Cradock, and Sir John Molteno (the first Premier) of Beaufort West. The other class was the carpet-baggers, almost always from Cape Town. Some of these were leading politicians, like Merriman and Upington, others backbenchers.

These might be good men to have in Parliament, but they were not representative of their constituents in the way that their successors of the next generation would be. How they came to be chosen is explained partly by the electoral system. On nomination day, which was not the same in all constituencies, the returning officer — normally the local Civil Commissioner — was in attendance at the court house of Uitenhage, George, Swellendam, or other magisterial centre. A small crowd collected. The politically interested townsmen would be there; the farmers would be deterred by distance, by ignorance of the language in which the proceedings were conducted, and probably also by a feeling of not belonging.

Names were proposed and seconded. The returning officer then called for a vote on these by show of hands, and announced the result. If it was not challenged, the election was over; if any of the defeated candidates demanded a poll, a day was fixed for this and the electorate had its say. Thus, in 1869, seven candidates were nominated at George. On the show of hands the returning officer declared that Walter had 34 votes, Wehmeyer 23, and that the rest "were nowhere". There was no challenge. At Uitenhage Reuben Ayliff was proposed by Hall, Thorn and Chase, and Woodford Pilkington by Cawood and Grewer; all these names were English. But a third candidate with an English name, J. G. Franklin, was proposed by two men with Dutch names, Aspeling and Liesching. Defeated on the show of hands, Franklin demanded a poll, at which he and Ayliff were successful.[23]

There was something in this of the Anglo-Saxon moot or the Bantu tribal gathering, where heads were weighed rather than counted. The men of influence and status took the initiative, and influence and status in this case depended, among other things, on the English language and some association with the English establishment.

In 1879 there were 33 constituencies, Cape Town returning four members and each of the others two. Ten or eleven of these, including Cape Town, were predominantly English in population, and their representatives had always been, with rare exceptions, English. The

[23] *C.A.*, May 15 and 20, 1869.

twenty-two which were clearly Afrikaner in population included nine which are of special interest.[24] From their creation up to the session of 1878 they had elected 73 members, of whom 52 were of British origin, and not all the others were Afrikaners. The representatives of these divisions elected in 1874 were: British 14, Afrikaner 4. Their successors in 1884 were: British 6, Afrikaner 11, and one German. Decisive events had occurred in the intervening decade.

How Cape politics would have developed if the colony had been insulated from external influences it is impossible to say. But the actual impulse came from outside, and its main constituent was British policy in relation to the Boer republics. The British annexations of Basutoland, Griqualand West and the Transvaal, the Transvaal war of independence culminating in the victory of Majuba, the Anglo-Transvaal rivalry in Bechuanaland, and other events that followed these, stirred the latent nationalism of the Cape Afrikaners to vigorous life. This is the theme of F. A. Van Jaarsveld's *Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism*. S. J. Du Toit's *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners*, which among other things began the movement to make Afrikaans a literary language, was launched in 1875. It is true that Hofmyer founded the Farmers' Protection Association in 1878 in response to a domestic stimulus, the excise on brandy, but it was blood rather than brandy that ensured the public response. The call of the blood had even more to do with Du Toit's *Afrikaner Bond* in 1879. Four years later Hofmeyr succeeded in uniting the two bodies under the name of the Bond but under his own leadership. It was a highly organized party, reaching from the grass roots to Parliament.

Using this wave of emotion and the petitions for recognition of the Dutch language which came out of it, Hofmeyr moved a resolution in the House of Assembly in 1882 in favour of permitting the use of Dutch in parliamentary debate. The resolution was passed, and the government followed it up with a bill to amend the constitution Ordinance. Apart from one or two gibes at the form of Dutch that would be spoken — "low and miserable gibberish" — and the argument of Mr. Stead in the upper house that the bill was an insult to the Dutch, because implying that they could not understand English, there was general approval. English-speaking members sensed that they were handling dynamite, and wanted it out of the way as quickly as possible. Sir Gordon Sprigg said that when in England recently he had discussed the subject with Sir John A. Macdonald, who gave him the benefit of his Canadian experience. Macdonald's advice had been: "Well, I think you might as well let them have it; you will find that they will not avail themselves of it at all." Sprigg went on to spoil the case by adding "that the French

[24] Aliwal North, Beaufort West, Clanwilliam, Cradock, George, Somerset East, Swellendam, Uitenhage, Victoria West.

language was vastly superior to the Dutch, and contained a vast amount of literature". This stung Hofmeyr into interjecting "Second-class novels".[25]

To allow the use of Dutch in Parliament was to open the dike at the very moment when the nationalist waters were in flood. The change from English to Dutch representatives in nine constituencies has been indicated. It was even more significant that the election of 1884 returned 33 Bond candidates, most of whom were real unassimilated Afrikaners from the *platteland*. The appearance of the new parliament startled those who had been familiar with the old. Rose-Innes, who entered the House at that election, recorded later in his memoirs that "those whose mother tongue was Dutch were in the majority". His memory played him false there, but he was right in adding that "most of them understood English, but not all".[26] Alexander Wilmot, who looked on the new members with a jaundiced eye, wrote that "when Parliament assembled it was seen that it had undergone a complete change, not only in constitution but in composition. Many men returned could scarcely speak English, and the handiwork of the Bond was very noticeable in the election of persons whose only merit or qualification for duty seemed to be the great virtue of political obedience."[27] Hofmeyr, on the other hand, had complained that it was under the old conditions that incompetent men had been elected.[28]

The British backlash soon made its sting felt. Since Majuba and the "craven surrender" that followed it the British section had been bottling up its bitter feelings. In 1884 the Bechuanaland dispute, following the elections, brought the feelings to the surface. The Empire League at the Cape anticipated by a short interval the Imperial Federation movement elsewhere. On September 24 a crowded and excited meeting at the Commercial Exchange, Cape Town, called for British intervention in Bechuanaland. The Mayor was in the chair and many leading politicians on the platform. The meeting began with *Rule, Britannia* and ended with the national anthem and three cheers for the Queen. It was punctuated by cheers, deafening cheers, hisses, groans, and cries of "shame", "hang him", "go on", and "bloody murder". The deafening cheers were for the Mayor when he said: "We intend to give proof to-night, I hope, of our loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen." Hisses and groans were the comment on "the sentiments of disloyalty with which the atmosphere was now charged", and the statement that "treason was rampant in the land".[29]

25 *C.A.*, March 31, May 4, 1882.
26 Sir James Rose-Innes, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
27 A. Wilmot, *History of Our Times in South Africa*, vol. II, p. 265.
28 J. H. Hofmeyr, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-1.
29 *C.A.*, September 25, 1884.

This meeting was followed by others in most towns of the colony, but the speakers were always English, and it can be assumed that the audiences were English too. Where there were few or no English the cry could not be taken up. In Graaff-Reinet there was indeed a meeting, several days later, but it was to protest against the reduction in the number of trains on the local line. On the other hand the immediate issue was not a racial one. On general grounds it was possible for the *Volksblad* to give its blessing to the Cape Town meeting and to its demands.[30]

In the following years the nationalist tiger was kept on a chain. Hofmeyr, who held the chain, wanted an inclusive colonial nationalism as much as he wanted to preserve the cultural identity of his own people. Though commanding the biggest, indeed the only disciplined, bloc of votes in the House, he would never accept the premiership, for fear of dividing the electorate on "racial" lines. He threw the support of the Bond behind an English Prime Minister, notably behind Rhodes in 1890-1895.

In this period, as in the days before 1880, the great political issues were such as to divide opinion on lines that were not racial or sectional. In the earlier period there had been the issue of responsible government, which divided the Dutch almost as much as the English. Hofmeyr himself was an anti-responsible then. There had been the question of state support of churches, against which Saul Salomon waged a long campaign for the "voluntary principle". As the churches which received state support were the Dutch Reformed and the Anglican, the division of opinion on the question was politically safe. In 1869 this was the main issue in many constituencies. Cradock, for example, returned two anti-voluntaries, and their names were Miller and Botha.

The separatist movement in the Eastern Province came nearer to being racial than either of these, since the Dutch in the East were against it; but it was opposed also by English as well as Dutch in the West, and by English, German and Dutch in British Kaffraria. The excise on brandy, which in 1878 gave Hofmeyr his opening, united the vinegrowers of the west, who were almost all Dutch. But other Dutch farmers were less concerned with this, and the passions of temperance or total abstinence cut across racial lines. The Dutch Reformed congregation of Stellenbosch was probably unique in holding a thanksgiving service for the repeal of the excise.[31]

More fundamental than any of these was what was called the "Native question". Though this could not be wholly separated from the question of the Coloured people, it was essentially the group of problems created

30 *C.A.*, September 29, 30, October 1, 1884.
31 J. H. Hofmeyr, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

by the incorporation of great numbers of Bantu in the east. Repressive or restrictive policies were most strongly supported by the easterners, whether English or Dutch. On the other hand it was well known, after the Bond had become powerful, that the native vote was generally cast against it. Much of the opposition to the Franchise and Ballot Bill of 1892 was therefore based on the fear that the change would strengthen the Bond, and even that that was the real purpose of the bill. But this kind of opposition was weak and ineffective.

In 1895 we see Rhodes at the height of his power, at the head of a government mostly English in composition but depending on Bond support, Parliament and electorate concerned with issues that did not divide Afrikaners from English, the nationalist tiger chained, the colony apparently a loyal and secure bastion of British power.

The Jameson Raid, at the end of 1895, loosed the tiger and released another British backlash at the same time. The Empire League was succeeded by the South African League, out of which grew the Progressive Party. In the election of 1898, the most bitter the colony had seen, the parties to the contest were essentially British and Afrikaner, though there were racial minorities in both camps. The nine constituencies which in 1874 had returned fourteen English members and four Dutch now elected four English and fourteen Dutch. The Bond emerged from the election and from the many disputed returns with a narrow majority.

Schreiner's ministry was only partly Afrikaner. The Civil Service was still overwhelmingly English. The English language was still predominant in education and in the urban population. Loyalty to the Crown was still generally professed. The Progressives would enjoy a brief spell of office after the war. But 1898 marked the end, first heralded in 1884, of the period of continuous British supremacy in Cape politics.

White supremacy and British supremacy have been examined separately here. The connection between the two operations, including the role of the Coloured voters where they held the balance between the two white sections, introduces a complication which there is no time to pursue. But certain general conclusions may be drawn.

Minority rule depended on the absence of party organization, particularly by the racial groups other than the dominant British; on open voting; on the great economic superiority of the whites; on the privileges accorded to English as the only official language and the language of education; on the concentration of the English population in the towns, and the advantages which the method of election gave to the townsmen. It depended also on the unwritten understanding that racial and national distinctions, some of which were rigidly observed in practice, were an

improper and dangerous subject to be publicly discussed. The minority ruled, but refused to draw attention to itself, or even to acknowledge its existence as a group. Its rule depended, further, on the absence of political issues that divided the dominant from the subordinate group. When these issues arose, in the form of international tensions beyond the borders, they polarized the white population, and the whole structure began to crumble.

The Afrikaners used the liberal political system to exploit their numbers and climb to power. To-day they are the ruling minority. Far from concealing either their identity or the difference between rulers and ruled, they flaunt and magnify both. The conflict of interest between minority and majority, instead of being hidden from view, has become the main subject-matter of politics. But the new rulers learned one lesson from the experience of their predecessors: they have drawn up the ladder by which they climbed into the citadel.