

THE SMYTHE ADMINISTRATION AND THE ZULU REBELLION OF 1906¹

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Introduction

This paper is an attempt to understand the violence that erupted in the Natal Colony in 1906 through primary sources. The area studied is limited in that it only examines the role of the White Natal government in relation to the Black people (Africans) of Natal and Zululand. No attempt has been made to study the broader aspects, such as the socio-economic relations between the groups under discussion.

By 1905 Natal was facing a serious deficit in her revenue and the only solution that the government seemed prepared to institute was to increase the taxation of her Black population, who had played no part in creating it. The result was a rebellion by the Blacks which perpetuated worsening Black/White relations and placed Natal on a poor footing when it came to the closer union negotiations of 1908-1909.

1. Background to Black/White confrontation before union

Natal was too small to warrant responsible government which had been granted her in 1893.² No section of Natal's population suffered more from the instability of its politics after the introduction of responsible government than the majority population group, the Zulus. The cost of living was rising, wages remained low, and the Blacks had no representation in the Natal Parliament. The franchise was farcical, the number of Black registered voters in 1905 being three. The advice of a former Prime Minister of Natal, Sir Albert Hime (1899-1903), was that Blacks should not be granted political rights.³ The Natal Parliament expended its energies on lesser things and the unpredictability of a legislature with no defined Party system made it nobody's particular concern to protect Blacks.⁴ In essence the Natal government was a ruling oligarchy founded on racial exclusivity, dominated by Whites, and maintained in the final analysis by force.⁵

The post Second Anglo Boer War recession (1903 - 1910) appreciably retarded the rate of economic growth for the whole period.⁶ This was aggravated by a fierce rates war between the steamship companies, which began in 1902.⁷ By 1905 Natal faced a deficit of 17 percent. There were serious shortfalls in revenues of customs, the post office and

¹ Based on a paper presented at the 16th Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society, 6-9 July 1997.

² T. R. H. Davenport, 'the Responsible Government issues in Natal, 1880-1882', MA thesis (1948), pp. 38, et seq.

³ E. H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, *A History of Natal* (1965), p. 216.

⁴ Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, pp. 218-219.

⁵ D. Welsh, *The roots of segregation. Native policy in Natal (1845-1910)*, (1971) p. 318.

⁶ C. G. W. Schumann, *Structural changes and business cycles in South Africa, 1806-1936*, [n.p.], [n.d.], p. 112.

⁷ M. Murray, *Union Castle Chronicle, 1853-1953* (1953), pp. 147 et seq.

telegraph and the railways.⁸ The existing system of trade relations in Southern Africa was also on the verge of collapse. Governed in part by the Anglo-Portuguese "modus vivendi" signed in 1901, it gave the Portuguese a decided preference in the Transvaal trade over that of the Cape and Natal. In addition the coastal colonies were fiercely competing with each other for the Transvaal trade.⁹ Their situation was made particularly precarious because their main sources of revenue were customs and railway receipts. Customs formed 24 percent and railway receipts 53 percent of the revenue of Natal in the year ending in June 1903. From 1903 both these sources declined sharply. The means of checking these falls were outside the control of the Cape and Natal governments as the customs tariff could not be altered without the consent of the Customs Union.¹⁰

Faced with this critical financial situation, it was vital that the Natal government find a solution to the deficit. The lack of strict party divisions in the Natal Parliament, and the fact that it was fairly evenly divided, made it impossible for the administration of George Sutton to pass the necessary taxation measures through parliament. Consequently it was decided that the only solution was a coalition ministry. Frederick Moor, leader of the opposition, vehemently opposed this proposal but Charles Smythe agreed to form a coalition ministry as long as he was given a free hand. Smythe agreed that taxation measures were necessary, but did not want to introduce any until after the Inter-Colonial Customs Conference which was expected to meet in about August 1905.¹¹ Smythe was given a free hand and assured the support of the whole government. He also had the support of about twelve of the opposition's supporters. This gave him approximately thirty supporters in a house of forty-two members.¹² Nonetheless, Smythe had his doubts as to how long they would remain faithful, especially as Moor refused to join his ministry.¹³

2. The taxation measures of 1905

Smythe's hopes of postponing the introduction of vital taxation measures were dashed when on 13 June he received a telegram from the High Commissioner for South Africa, Lord Selborne, informing him that the Transvaal Parliament would probably not meet before June 1906 and that the Customs Conference should not take place before March 1906.¹⁴ The introduction of taxation measures was now imperative. Natal had to raise another loan of £1,000,000 to meet the Colony's capital expenditure in the course of the financial year.¹⁵

⁸ *The Natal Mercury*, 5 and 6 May 1905.

⁹ L. C. A. Knowles and C. M. Knowles, *The economic development of the British Overseas Empire*, vol. III (1961), pp. 285, 294, 299.

¹⁰ L. M. Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa, 1902-1910* (1960), p. 153.

¹¹ C. J. Smythe Collection, (Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban), C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 12 May 1905; *The Natal Mercury*, 12 May 1905 and 26 May 1905.

¹² Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe personal diary, 15 May 1905; and C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 12 May 1905.

¹³ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 19 May 1905.

¹⁴ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 13 June 1905.

¹⁵ *The Natal Mercury*, 27 July 1905.

Moor made it clear that he would oppose any measure to introduce taxation before the Customs Conference had been held.¹⁶ There was also strong opposition from the White electorate in general. Smythe began by reducing civil service salaries (including his own). This met with fierce protests from the civil servants.¹⁷ The most popular solution to the colony's declining income, to many members of the Legislative Council, was a poll or personal tax of £1 on every adult Black male and a hut tax of £1 on every hut after the first.¹⁸ Smythe demurred as it would constitute class legislation because it taxed only Blacks. It was British policy that all peoples had to be treated equally in the eyes of the law. These taxation measures would have to be placed before the Imperial government for consideration and it was highly improbable that the British Parliament would sanction them.¹⁹

Instead, on 22 June, Smythe laid five Taxation Bills before the Legislative Assembly.²⁰ They consisted of: 1) a small succession duty; 2) a tax of 10s. per hut to be levied on landlords with Black tenants who did not work for them but paid them rent; 3) a tax of ½d. per acre on unoccupied rural land suitable for European occupation under £1 per acre in value, rising by 1d. per acre for every pound increase in value; 4) an inhabited house tax of 25s. on every dwelling up to £750 in value, £2.10s. up to £1,500 in value, and so on; and 5) the substitution of the 14s. hut tax with a £1 poll tax on all Black males with an additional £1 tax for every wife after the first.²¹

Legislative Assembly members commented on the absence of measures to ensure adequate taxation of the Indian population. The government responded that the House Tax had been devised largely in order to reach the Indian population. The Bill had been so designed as to affect the whole of the Indian community with the exception of the indentured labourers, including "free" Indians, Arabs and half-castes - every inhabitant in fact of a dwelling, whether hut, cottage or mansion. The bulk of the Indian population fell into the lowest category but there were a number of Indian traders who would be rated in the higher categories.

Moor was thought to be favourably inclined towards these taxation proposals, especially the taxation measures in regards to Blacks. The substitution of the poll tax for the hut tax, and especially the taxing of polygamy, were strongly favoured by the Whites. However, opposition by White farmers to the proposed 10s. tax on landlords who had Black tenants led Moor to announce, on 4 July, the intention of opposing the taxation proposals.²² He believed that no direct taxation should be imposed on the people of Natal until further retrenchment in expenditure had taken place and until the proposed

¹⁶ *The Natal Mercury*, 31 May 1905.

¹⁷ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 30 May 1905.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1905.

¹⁹ *The Natal Mercury*, 16 June 1905.

²⁰ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 22 June 1905.

²¹ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 30 June 1905; *The Natal Mercury*, 21 June 1905.

²² *The Natal Mercury*, 22 June 1905.

Customs Conference had been held.²³ Of the new tax proposals, the House Tax was the most unpopular because the lodgers were totally exempted. In many cases they were felt to be better able to pay than were the lessees or owners of the properties. Smythe realised that, if he could not include the lodgers in the tax, he would have great difficulty in carrying the Bill.²⁴ Also the tax would be difficult to assess and collect and was in many respects unfair: the minimum tax was set at 23s. whether a house was valued at £7 or £700. This meant that an Indian hovel was to be assessed at the same rate as a brick villa. The proposed tax would have particularly affected the towns, where the bulk of the taxation was already being collected, and where the occupants were also expected to pay municipal rates.²⁵ Although the opposition, made up largely of rural M. P.'s, had no special quarrel with the tax on the grounds that it discriminated against the towns, it nevertheless made much of this issue. Several public meetings were held in the urban centres to protest against the measure.²⁶

Smythe estimated that he would carry the proposed House Tax Bill, but only at the cost of testing the loyalty of many of his supporters to the utmost.²⁷ It was decided to withdraw the Bill.²⁸ The effect of this was to place the bulk of the taxation burden on the Blacks, while the Indian population were relieved of a part in the new taxation. Consequently, just as the Native Tax Bill was going out of committee, Dan Taylor (Member for Durban Borough), moved for an amendment for the title of this Bill to read "Natives of Natal and Asia" but this was disallowed by the Speaker.²⁹ Opposition to the exclusion of Indians from the taxation proposals, however, intensified with the arrival of the annual report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants. The Indian population in Natal was estimated at over 100 000 and the number of Indian immigrants in 1904 had been the greatest for several years, and 1905 promised to be another bumper year. As a result Natal Parliamentarians were becoming increasingly worried by the encroaching Indian "menace", especially as it was felt that many Indians were evading taxation and no proper method existed to bring defaulters to book.³⁰

Despite its initial popularity the native poll tax - which also embodied a tax of £1 on every wife after the first - encountered strong opposition in the Lower House.³¹ F. Fergg (Member for Vryheid) felt that the government should be careful of legislation which would "...affect the native mind..." or interfere with Black customs. Since the tax would be retrospective - a Black, who had married a number of wives in previous years, would find himself faced with a substantial fine for past legitimate actions.³² If introduced, this

²³ *The Natal Mercury*, 6 July 1905.

²⁴ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 7 July 1905; *The Natal Mercury*, 6 July 1905.

²⁵ *The Natal Mercury*, 22 and 23 June 1905.

²⁶ *The Natal Mercury*, 5 July 1905.

²⁷ *The Natal Mercury*, 12 July 1905.

²⁸ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 15 July 1905.

²⁹ *The Natal Mercury*, 26 July 1905.

³⁰ *The Natal Mercury*, 25 July 1905.

³¹ *The Natal Mercury*, 21 June 1905, 25 July 1905.

³² *The Natal Mercury*, 25 July 1905.

new "wife" tax would impose a considerable burden on some of the impoverished Chiefs, that would be out of proportion to the taxation, direct and indirect, of any member of the community.³³

Smythe admitted to his sister, Beatrice, that the poll tax would be difficult to collect as there was nothing attachable to fall back on, though it was hoped to work through the heads of kraals. A general tax on all racial groups was out of the question as it was objectionable to Whites.³⁴ Publicly, Smythe responded by submitting figures to show that Blacks were not paying their fair share of taxation, based on the average figures as shown by the census in the previous ten years. From these figures it appeared that Whites had been paying £30 11s. 4d. per annum towards the revenue, Asiatics £1 6s. 4d. and Blacks 9s. 5½d. In direct taxation, Whites paid £1 0s. 2d., Asiatics 4s. 5d. and Blacks 3s. 11½d. In terms of customs, excise and other forms of taxation Whites paid £8 6s. 4d., Asiatics 8s. 7d. and Blacks 1s. 10d. It is interesting to contemplate why the government considered Blacks to be necessarily responsible for many of these areas of taxation. Smythe saw little difference between the existing system and the proposed system as far as the collection of the taxes from the Blacks were concerned, and thus did not feel that it would involve undue expense or create any great problem as Fergg had contended. The difference between the proposed tax and the old hut tax was that a man had paid according to the number of huts, and these contained his wives. He was not allowed to have more than one wife per hut, and in addition he also had to pay for the huts of the widows. Consequently, there would be no less certainty in the matter of collection than there had been with the existing hut tax. At the same time a major grievance would be removed, since Blacks had long complained that it was unfair that they should pay for widows. Smythe also pointed out that the collection of the proposed tax would be done by the magistrates, in much the same way as the hut tax and he did not think that there would be any difficulty in explaining the proposed taxes to the Blacks.

Moor objected that the tax would affect the "dutiful and respectful" attitude which young Blacks showed towards their fathers. Smythe quoted extracts from magistrates' reports which indicated that this respect had in fact totally disappeared. He contended that his Administration would be no more responsible for destroying the tribal system and responsibility to the kraal head than were previous governments. Also, the Hut Tax Act had contained no reference to Black customs or such matters as would affect the tribal system. These were governed by entirely separate regulations that would remain in force. The government had decided that the imposition of a poll tax, in addition to the hut tax, would be asking too much of the Blacks and as a result the hut tax had been dropped. Smythe felt the additional six shillings being asked of the Blacks was sufficient. He had confirmation from both the Transvaal and Orange River Colony that they had no trouble in collecting a similar tax. A further advantage of the proposed tax was that in contrast to the existing tax, it would not lead to the overcrowding of huts, and thereby engendering "immorality". Blacks could now build as many huts as they liked.³⁵ The opposition replied that the overcrowding of huts was not due so much to the hut tax, but rather to the practice of rack-renting by farmers.

³³ *The Natal Mercury*, 2 August 1905.

³⁴ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 7 July 1905.

³⁵ *The Natal Mercury*, 19 July 1905.

Smythe wrote to his sister that the electorate of Natal did not want any taxation and was prepared to rend any government that imposed it.³⁶ Nevertheless, on 24 July 1905, the Natal Legislative Assembly passed the Native Personal Tax Bill (Poll Tax) by a large majority³⁷ and the Unoccupied Lands Bill was also passed, but not with the same enthusiasm.³⁸ This emphasised the fact that the Natal Parliament was happy to increase the taxation burden on Blacks but rather reluctant to do so for Whites.

Not surprisingly, when the Legislative Council met on 31 July, it threw out the Unoccupied Lands Tax Bill. It sent the Native Poll Tax Bill back to the Assembly with a proposal that the wife tax should be eliminated. Sutton (a former Prime Minister of Natal) played a major role in the rejection of the latter Bill. This was surprising as he had proposed a similar tax when he was in office.

As the Unoccupied Lands Tax Bill was only likely to produce about £5 000 in taxation, the government was not greatly worried by this decision of the Legislative Council. However, the amendment of the Native Poll Tax Bill would mean a drop in revenue of some £50 000 to £60 000. The main arguments used against the Unoccupied Land Tax Bill in the Council were that it would put an additional burden on Blacks and that it would be ineffective by reason of its cumbersome provisions. No one seemed sure as to why Blacks should be the ones who would have to bear the burden of this tax, as it was aimed at their landlords.³⁹ Possibly, the Council foresaw that the tax was likely to be passed on by the White landlords to their Black tenants.

The rejection placed the government in a difficult position as it had arranged the £1 million loan on the understanding that the new tax measures would be passed to place the Colony on a sound financial footing.⁴⁰ Had the Bills been passed Parliament would have been prorogued on 4 August, but instead the session had to be extended to solve the deadlock.⁴¹

The reasons given by the Legislative Council for its actions were not unsatisfactory. It was not the task of the Council to determine whether additional tax was needed to place the finances of the Colony on a more solid foundation, but to decide whether the proposed legislation was satisfactory and legally correct. Since this was found not to be the case, and since the Council could not amend money Bills, it had to reject them entirely.⁴² It was held that the taxation measures for Blacks would probably have a very detrimental effect on "the native mind". These measures could cause "serious trouble" while at the same time create an unfavourable impression of Whites in Natal, because they placed the whole of the taxation on the shoulders of the Blacks, who were not

³⁶ *The Natal Mercury*, 27 July 1905.

³⁷ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 24 July 1905.

³⁸ *The Natal Mercury*, 27 July 1905.

³⁹ *The Natal Mercury*, 1 and 2 August 1905.

⁴⁰ *The Natal Mercury*, 5 August 1905.

⁴¹ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 4 August 1905.

⁴² *The Natal Mercury*, 3 and 4 August 1905.

responsible for the deficit and who had no say in the making of the laws.⁴³

By August 1905 a complete *volte face* had taken place in public opinion. The original taxation proposals of the Sutton Ministry were, as temporary measures, now seen as infinitely preferable to those which had been submitted by the Smythe Ministry.⁴⁴ Consequently, Smythe decided to adopt the one pound Poll Tax Bill as had been proposed by the Sutton Ministry.⁴⁵

The new Poll Tax Bill passed into law on 8 August 1905⁴⁶ without much trouble as the question had already been extensively debated and there appeared to be no alternative in view of the Legislative Council's actions. The members of the Natal Parliament were also in a hurry to prorogue and return to their homes. In terms of the new measure every male over eighteen years in Natal, irrespective of race, was to be taxed £1, with the exception of Blacks who already paid hut tax. This meant that only unmarried Blacks would be affected.⁴⁷ A great deal of discussion took place on the question as to whether the tax should be payable by Blacks at the same time as the hut tax was collected. One view was that, if the two taxes were collected together, misapprehension could arise. The government, on the other hand, felt that the collection of the hut tax would provide a very useful check upon Blacks who would have to pay the poll tax. To prevent any possible injustice, it was arranged that Blacks would not become defaulters until after 31 May. This would be well after the hut tax collection had taken place. Europeans were to be allowed two months grace, after which they became liable for a £2 fine for every two months that the tax remained unpaid.⁴⁸

Although the poll tax was levied on all sections of the community, White, Indian and Black alike, Blacks were by far the largest group and would consequently provide the biggest percentage of revenue, apart from having to pay other irksome taxes like the hut tax. However, because it pretended to treat all races equally, it could pass through both Houses of the Natal Parliament and become law.

Closely tied up with the question of taxation of the Blacks was the census of 1904. The Zulu was suspicious of himself, his family and his belongings being counted for tax purposes.⁴⁹ Although it was explained to the various Chiefs and tribesmen that the great White King desired to count his people and that they need not fear that taxation would follow, the suspicion of the Blacks persisted and was fuelled by the introduction of the new poll tax so soon after the 1904 census.⁵⁰ To make matters worse, agitators spread the rumour that the census having been taken and the cattle of Blacks numbered, the poll tax, or head tax as it was also called, was constituted for the purpose of having

⁴³ *The Natal Mercury*, 9 August 1905.

⁴⁴ *The Natal Mercury*, 4 August 1905.

⁴⁵ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 4 August 1905.

⁴⁶ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 8 August 1905; *The Natal Mercury*, 10 August 1905.

⁴⁷ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 11 August 1905.

⁴⁸ *The Natal Mercury*, 9 August 1905.

⁴⁹ J. Stuart, *A history of the Zulu Rebellion, 1906* (1913), p. 100.

⁵⁰ H. P. Holt, *The Mounted Police of Natal* (1913), p. 183.

Blacks shot in the head, their cattle confiscated and their women-folk handed over to the soldiers.⁵¹

Thus the introduction of the poll tax was to have widespread repercussions among the Black population, despite the fact that the rumours associated with it were false. It is ironic that the new tax measures, which threw the burden of relieving Natal of its financial difficulties upon a section of the population which had played no part in the creating of them, proved in the end not only inadequate to restore Natal's finances but led to a rebellion that aggravated the precarious financial situation of the colony.

3. The opening of Zululand to White settlement

Another area that affected Black/White relations in Natal dealt with during the parliamentary session, was the opening up of Zululand to White settlement. The final report of the Zululand Delimitation Commission was discussed in the Natal Parliament on 29 June. The question of Zululand was one of those subjects which in a small Parliament needed the full attention of all its members but frequently failed to receive it. Only three members out of 43 were responsible for Zululand affairs.

The report was received with marked disappointment and with a feeling that the Commission had appropriated to itself an amount of authority which did not in fact belong to it. The general opinion was that the Commission had designated the largest part of Zululand as Black locations, thereby excluding the White settler. The Commissioners had set apart for permanent occupation by the Blacks in Zululand an amount of territory which averaged out seventeen acres per head of the Black population, on the basis that only a small proportion of the country was healthy and fit for occupation, that four-fifths of Zululand was rugged, barren and fever stricken, and that it would be impossible to remove Blacks from the uplands to the lowveld on account of their susceptibility to fever. The unsuitability of much of Zululand for human habitation was strongly denied by C. A. S. Yonge (Member for the Zululand constituency of Melmoth). The government (including W. F. Clayton and E. A. Brunner, the other Members for Zululand) were entirely behind Yonge. There was also dissatisfaction because both St Lucia Bay and Kosi Bay, each of which possessed possibilities of future development, had been delimited as a portion of native reserve, and thus closed to European enterprise.

Clayton (Minister of Agriculture), under whose jurisdiction Zululand was placed, said that the report was a miscarriage of the Colony's intentions to bring the European and Coloured races into contact by the dual occupation of Zululand. He claimed that the large Black locations were not only undesirable in the interests of the Europeans, but in the interests of the Blacks themselves. According to him, there was abundant room for expansion in Zululand and the dual occupation of Natal had been a great success and was likely to prove equally successful in Zululand. The motion not to accept the report and to proceed with the opening up of Zululand immediately, was carried without dissent or division.⁵² By the end of 1905 forty farms on the Zululand coast had already

⁵¹ R. C. Samuelson, *Long, long ago* (1929), p. 189.

⁵² *The Natal Mercury*, 30 June 1905.

been occupied by Whites.⁵³

Parliament was prorogued the day after the passing of the Poll Tax Bill.⁵⁴ The session had lasted four and a half months.⁵⁵ The Cape Parliament had completed its session in thirteen weeks, but then the Cape parliamentarians were only paid for a set 90-day session, whereas in Natal there was no corresponding time limit and the allowances of the members ran as long as the session lasted. Natal parliamentarians were noted for their frequent breaks during the session, as well as their tardiness in getting through parliamentary business.⁵⁶

4. Black political opposition in Natal at the beginning of the twentieth century

Natal, unlike the other regions of South Africa, only had one significant Black political organisation at the beginning of the twentieth century. This was the **Natal Native Congress** (NNC), founded in June 1900.⁵⁷ The founders of the NNC were Martin Luthuli (a leading member of the American Zulu Mission at Groutville and Dinizulu's Secretary during the 1880s), Saul Msane and Josiah Gumede.

These new mission-educated and politicised Blacks soon came to be epitomised by John L. Dube, who was strongly influenced by the American Negro leader, Booker T. Washington. Washington advocated the idea that Negro advancement lay in industrial and vocational training and gradual self-advancement rather than in political and civil rights activism. Dube returned to Natal from the United States in 1899 and founded the Ohlange Institute at Inanda with the intention of providing Black youths with training in practical skills. In 1903 he established the newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal*. Published in Zulu and English, it became the mouth-piece of the Natal Native Congress.

Dube was the centre of controversy from the moment he returned from the United States. He was seen by Whites in Natal as a committed member of the separatist Ethiopian Church Movement.⁵⁸ The Ethiopian Church Movement had come into existence by the 1880s as the result of the breakaway by Black Christians, or "kholewa," from established European Christian denominations which were felt to perpetuate racial prejudices.⁵⁹

Dube exhorted Blacks to "learn" from their White masters. He demanded that educated Blacks be accorded the right to "improve" themselves and, once they had done that, they be accepted as equals in the colonial society. In sharp contrast to the United States, where Whites generally welcomed the moderate ideals of Washington, Whites

⁵³ *The Natal Mercury*, 5 December 1905.

⁵⁴ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 9 August 1905.

⁵⁵ *The Natal Mercury*, 10 August 1905.

⁵⁶ *The Natal Mercury*, 24 June 1905.

⁵⁷ A. Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu! The beginning of Black protest politics in South Africa to 1912* (1984), p. 59.

⁵⁸ A. Duminy and B. Guest, *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910* (1989), pp. 403-405.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 294-295.

in Natal reacted with hysteria to Dube's suggestions.⁶⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that although the government of Natal faced virtually no demands from politically organised Blacks by the beginning of the twentieth century, White politicians were becoming increasingly alarmed by the appearance of the Ethiopian Churches. They feared that the drive for self-determination by Blacks in religion would promote a similar drive for political self-determination. The NNC's moderate protest had no effect on the legislation passed in connection with Blacks by the Natal Parliament, but when the Blacks rose in rebellion in Natal in 1906 much of the Press and the Natal government instantly blamed Ethiopianism, even though there was little evidence of "kholewa" complicity.⁶¹

5. The Black Rebellion of 1906

Further burdening the already over-taxed Black population provoked sporadic rebellion early in 1906. Persistent rumours of impending trouble had circulated among the Blacks as far back as 1903 and even earlier, many involving the name of Dinuzulu or tied to natural phenomena such as the aphid attack on the mabelle crops and the severe gale and snowstorm on 31 May 1905.⁶² Linking them with Dinuzulu showed that the Zulu Monarchy, though legally defunct, still exercised a strong degree of influence among many of the tribesmen of Natal. The rebellion was thus as much the result of persistent and systematic neglect and poor government as it was of superstition. This was perpetuated by the rigid application of the Sheptone System of Administration which prevented the development of education and incentives to progress in the reserves. Although Theophilus Shepstone (Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes of Natal from 1845) had fiercely opposed this lack of advancement for tribal reserves in Natal it was forced upon him by the parsimonious nature of Britain's Colonial policy.

The Poll Tax affected unmarried Black men, particularly those who were in the process of emancipating themselves from parental control by working on the Witwatersrand gold mines. Consequently, this tax was not only resented by the hitherto untaxed young men, but also by their elders who felt that it would be a means of still further increasing their sons' independence from parental discipline and control.⁶³

On 17 January 1906 Henry Smith, a farmer of Umlaas Road, was murdered after conducting his Black labourers to the magistrate to pay their poll tax.⁶⁴ On 22 January a near riot occurred when the Magistrate at Mapumulo tried to collect the poll tax at Allan's Store and was threatened and insulted by Chief Ngobizembe and about a hundred men who refused to pay the tax.⁶⁵ Similar incidents of defiance were exhibited in the Mapumulo district at Bulter's Store, Insuze, on 29 and 30 January, and at

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

⁶² Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 112.

⁶³ Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, pp. 220-221.

⁶⁴ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 19 January 1906; Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 120.

⁶⁵ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 25 January 1906; Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 121.

Gaillard's Store, Umvoti, on 1 February, by the members of three other tribes.⁶⁶

On 8 February, as a result of the hostile attitude of an armed group of Blacks at Henley, a party of Natal Police under sub-inspector Hunt was sent out to enforce law and order. On the farm Trewirgie, near Byrne, a confrontation occurred in which Hunt and Trooper Armstrong were killed. Though Hunt fired the first shot, the aggressors would appear to have been the Blacks and Hunt and his men appeared to have been in a position of extreme peril before he fired.⁶⁷

The Militia was immediately mobilised and Martial Law proclaimed the following day.⁶⁸ The Governor of Natal, Sir Henry McCallum, was placed in a difficult position due to the opposition of the Imperial government to these measures. McCallum nevertheless gave the Natal government support, wherever he could, but recorded that Natal had been granted responsible government too soon and it lacked the manpower to govern efficiently.

It is debatable whether it was necessary to call out the militia and proclaim Martial Law all over the Colony. A counter-argument is that the government would have failed in its duty had it done less in view of the widely scattered disturbances. While the calling up of the militia cannot be considered provocative in itself, any responsible government would have controlled its military commanders, avoided unnecessary action under Martial Law, and taken immediate steps to ascertain and deal with the causes of the unrest. None of these vital steps were in fact followed by the Natal government. Martial Law was proclaimed long before the second and more serious part of the rebellion occurred, and it is debatable whether the Hunt fracas really precipitated a breakdown of law and order to the point where Martial Law had to be declared. It is possible that part of the reason for the further spread of the "rebellion" was the excessively severe action taken by the troops in hut and crop burning before there was any revolt at all.⁶⁹

Rumours continued to spread from all quarters, which seemed to show that the entire Black population was more or less disaffected and that outbreaks of rebellion were possible anywhere at any moment.⁷⁰ Smythe held that the cause of the rebellion was the influence of the separatist Ethiopian Church Movement.⁷¹ The Governor of Natal also blamed the trouble on the Ethiopian movement. He informed the Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Elgin, that the outbreak would be easily dealt with and that the situation had in fact been saved by the Natal minister's decision to make a show of force at once and thus had prevented the outbreak from spreading to other areas.⁷²

⁶⁶ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 122.

⁶⁷ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, pp. 122-125; C. J. Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 7-8 February 1906; C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 10 February 1906.

⁶⁸ *Gazette Extraordinary*, No. 19, 1906, 9 February 1906; Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 16 February 1906; *The Natal Mercury*, 10 and 12 February 1906.

⁶⁹ Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 223.

⁷⁰ *The Natal Mercury*, 10 February 1906.

⁷¹ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 10 February 1906.

⁷² Broomhall Archives (Broomhall, Dunfermline, Scotland): Sir Henry McCallum to Earl of Elgin, 10 February 1906.

J. G. Maydon (Minister of Railways and Harbours), in an address to the Political Association in Durban on 14 February, made it apparent that he did not know what had caused the Trewirgie incident. Although he said that it was a matter of no real importance at the same time he admitted that it could have very grave consequences for the colony if not dealt with prudently. It had the potential to develop into a large conflagration and involve Natal in a full-scale rebellion. The Colonial government assured people that a purely local fracas had occurred. Yet at the same time they instigated military activity, Martial Law, press censorship and all the other phenomena indicative of an actual, or potential, conflict on a large scale. When Maydon was asked whether the poll tax had not had a great deal more to do with the rebellion by the Blacks than the Ethiopian Movement he replied that he believed that it had nothing to do with the rebellion and emphatically stated that there would be a renewal of the tax.⁷³

Smythe admitted to constituents at Wartburg that while the poll tax was not the most satisfactory taxation measure, it had its advantages as a rough and ready measure of raising revenue. Colonel E. M. Greene stated, at the same meeting, that although he had strongly opposed the poll tax he did not believe the trouble was due to the collection of that tax - it was only a pretext. He conceded that the tax might have been responsible for bringing the trouble to a head as the Blacks were in a restless state. Nevertheless, the tax should be retained because, in dealing with the Black population, whatever taxes had been imposed had to be continued because the Black man did not understand changes of taxation. If the tax was to be withdrawn, the Blacks would interpret the action of the Whites as a sign of fear.⁷⁴

No further open insurrection occurred after the Trewirgie incident despite threatening talk and alarming reports, which were confined principally to the coastal belt and the southern border of Natal. Smythe felt that it would be easier to handle the situation if the Blacks would actually break out into open rebellion and that it was the duty of every White man in Natal to arm himself: if the Whites were going to hold Natal, they had to be prepared to hold it by force if necessary.⁷⁵ He announced that the government intended to take measures to prevent any further incident of insurrection. He declared that, if the authority of the magistrates was allowed to be defied, it would be impossible for the government of Natal to continue. It therefore had to uphold the authority of the magistrates, even if they had to shed blood.⁷⁶

The White population of Natal had no proper perception of the situation that confronted them or any real understanding for the position of the Blacks. As a result no sensible course for dealing with the causes of the unrest was followed. On the day after their arrest (13 February), two tribesmen who were accused of complicity in the murder of Sub-Inspector Hunt and Trooper Armstrong were tried by Drumhead Court Martial, found guilty and shot. This was despite the fact that the colonial court was functioning normally only a few miles away. Smythe felt that the Blacks had richly deserved the

⁷³ *The Natal Mercury*, 15 February 1906.

⁷⁴ *The Natal Mercury*, 5 March 1906.

⁷⁵ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 1 March 1906.

⁷⁶ *The Natal Mercury*, 5 March 1906.

sentence but was fearful that it might lead to ill-feeling towards the Natal government, or that there might be some legal bother because the crime had been committed before Martial Law had been declared.⁷⁷

Surprisingly the case attracted little attention. It was only when a further twelve Blacks were sentenced to death, on the same charge on 28 March, that vehement criticisms broke out in Great Britain. A fortnight earlier Sir Henry McCallum had pressed for trial by the civil courts, but had allowed himself to be overruled by his Ministers. Immediately on receiving the news of the death sentences the Colonial Secretary ordered that the executions be suspended. Smythe, who since childhood had disliked his second cousin Elgin, refused to adhere to the request. McCallum then ordered the suspension of the executions himself, whereupon Smythe and his Cabinet resigned. The situation had far-reaching implications. It exalted the issue to a major constitutional question involving other self-governing colonies. Both Australia and New Zealand responded to it by cabling a protest to the British government.⁷⁸ In the end Elgin gave way and the Ministers were persuaded to withdraw their resignations.⁷⁹

The executions were arranged to take place almost immediately on 2 April. Smythe was determined to prevent any further interference in the carrying out of the sentences by the House of Commons. He was particularly afraid that any further delay in the carrying out of the sentences would have a bad effect on the Blacks as it could create the impression that the Natal government had not got full power.⁸⁰ As it turned out, Smythe was correct in his foreboding that there might be a second attempt to stop the executions. On 2 April he received a telegram from the Agent General to the effect that there had been an appeal to the Privy Council for the sentences to be cancelled. However, nothing could be done as the executions of the twelve Blacks had been carried out at noon that day by the Natal Police.⁸¹

The manner in which the executions were carried out was also controversial. They took place in public, even schoolboys being allowed to attend and the firing party was made up of comrades of the two murdered men.⁸² The local tribes had been ordered to attend but only a small crowd put in an appearance. The magistrate for Richmond, J. E. Young Gibson, dissociated himself from the executions, because he believed that they were unjustified. The White inhabitants of Richmond were extremely annoyed with his attitude and called for his removal.⁸³

⁷⁷ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Margaret Smythe, 14 February 1906 (11:40 pm); Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 138; Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, pp. 223-224.

⁷⁸ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 28-30 March 1906; C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 31 March 1906; *The Natal Mercury*, 30, 31 March 1906, 3 April 1906; Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, pp. 150-153; Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 224.

⁷⁹ Broomhall Archives: Earl of Elgin to Sir Henry McCallum (Rough draft of telegram), 30 March 1906; Sir Henry McCallum to Earl of Elgin (telegram), 31 March 1906.

⁸⁰ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 31 March 1906.

⁸¹ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 2 April 1906.

⁸² Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 224.

⁸³ *The Natal Mercury*, 3 April 1906.

These public executions pre-empted the second and more vigorous phase of the rebellion which broke out when the tribesmen of the petty Chief Bambata, of the Mpanza Valley near Greytown, failed to pay their poll taxes. Bambata had called on his people to proceed to Greytown to pay their taxes, instructing them to assemble on the ridge just before coming in sight of the town. A number of the young men, having heard of the Trewirgie incident, arrived armed with assegais and shields. Bambata ordered them to lay down their arms and to go into Greytown, but they refused. There was also a group who do not have the necessary money. They were sent home with instructions to sell their goats and to raise the money for the tax. Bambata then sent a group into Greytown with a message to say that he was unable to lead his men into the town that day because he had a 'headache.'

Bambata was in a dilemma. He was apprehensive as to what might happen especially as he had, contrary to custom, been summoned to Greytown whereas in the past taxes had been collected in the Mpanza valley. Also he did not want to lose the respect of his tribesmen. Consequently, unlike Chief Moeli, he did not report the taking up of arms of his tribesmen to the magistrate. By so doing Bambata caused himself to be identified with the rebels. From the moment he excused himself from appearing before the magistrate, on a lying pretext it became increasingly difficult for him to do otherwise than rebel.

The following day the Secretary for Native Affairs summoned Bambata to Pietermaritzburg to answer for his actions. Bambata was dissuaded from going by members of his tribe. Despite further messages and assurances from the Natal government Bambata remained adamant.⁸⁴ On 3 March a final message was dispatched ordering him to Pietermaritzburg or face the consequences of his disobedience. On 6 March Major W. J. Clarke, with a force of 170 Natal Police and a troop of the Umvoti Mounted Rifles, was ordered to Greytown to arrest Bambata.⁸⁵ Although they made a surprise visit on 9 March, they failed to catch Bambata who had fled to Zululand with his wife and children.⁸⁶

In the absence of Bambata the Natal government appointed his brother, Funizwe, as his heir, but decided that for a year their uncle, Magwababa, should act as Chief. Bambata having left his family with Dinuzulu at his Usutu kraal in Zululand then returned to the Mpanza valley to oust Magwababa.⁸⁷ On 3 April Smythe heard from the magistrate at Greytown that Magwababa had been murdered by Bambata. Later the same morning Smythe received another report to say that Magwababa had not been murdered, but captured and carried off. That afternoon a third report came through from Greytown to say that a few police and civilians had gone to Mpanza and had been fired upon by a large body of men,⁸⁸ under the command of Bambata.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, pp. 155-165.

⁸⁵ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 6 March 1906; Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, pp. 165-166.

⁸⁶ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 9 March 1906; Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 166.

⁸⁷ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, pp. 166-167.

⁸⁸ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 3 April 1906; *The Natal Mercury*, 4 April 1906.

⁸⁹ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 168.

The next day (4 April) an attack was made at Marshall's Hotel, Mpanza, on the advanced guard of a party under Lt. Col. G. Mansel, which was escorting three European women and a boy from Keate's Drift to Greytown. Three of the police were killed in the attack. One was dangerously wounded and one was missing.⁹⁰ The body of the missing man, Sergeant Brown, was not recovered until some days later. He had received twenty-seven assegai wounds and the whole of his moustache and upper lip had been cut off and carried away, as also the left forearm. A deep incision, in the form of a cross, had been made in the left biceps. The dead man's helmet, boots and breeches had been taken, and his stomach and intestines had been ripped out. Pieces of flesh had been apparently removed for witchcraft purposes.⁹¹

Bambata and his followers took refuge in the Nkadhla Forest. The situation was now considered to be very serious and the full military strength of Natal was brought out in force.⁹² A reward for the capture of Bambata, (dead or alive) of £500, was offered and £20, in respect of each of his followers.⁹³ This reward caused considerable consternation in Great Britain where it was labelled as "Blood Money".⁹⁴ Winston Churchill sarcastically told Elgin that the reward for Bambata left him cold, as the Boers had only offered £25 for him (dead or alive) while this "savage" was valued at £500.⁹⁵ Elgin hoped that Natal would ask for Imperial troops as this would be the most effective way of taking the control over the Blacks out of the hands of the Colonials. He was particularly concerned that the Natalian's temper was becoming very dangerous. He wrote to Churchill saying that he would consider his suggestion to send a warning to the Governor of Natal but, after his recent confrontation with the Natal government, he felt that he did not want to be accused again of interference. He was fearful of increasing the difficulty of McCallum's position, without having any beneficial effect on the treatment of Blacks by the people of Natal.⁹⁶ McCallum warned Elgin that public opinion in Natal was bitterly against the Imperial government and, unless checked, could lead to serious consequences. Any further interference on the part of the Imperial government could lead to another constitutional impasse.⁹⁷

After a month of desultory fighting Bambata and his men were surrounded and trapped in Mome Gorge. In the final battle three Colonial troops were killed and a handful wounded. Rebel losses were officially estimated at five hundred and Bambata himself was allegedly killed in the massacre that took place. No opportunity was given to the rebel force to surrender. In fact some of the Colonial Forces, including Smythe's son, Oswald, had been sickened by the way in which the Blacks had been massacred in an

⁹⁰ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 5 April 1906.

⁹¹ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, pp. 175-176.

⁹² Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 16 April 1906; *The Natal Mercury*, 2 May 1906; Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 223.

⁹³ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 212.

⁹⁴ Broomhall Archives: Earl of Elgin to Winston Churchill, 16 April 1906, 17 April 1906.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Winston Churchill to Earl of Elgin, April 1906 [undated].

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Earl of Elgin to Winston Churchill, 19 April 1906.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Sir Henry McCallum to Earl of Elgin (telegram), 21 April 1906.

effort to end the rebellion. The Indian passivist, M. K. Gandhi, who served in a corps of Indian stretcher-bearers, accused the Whites of failing to care for the rebel wounded. The severe manner in which the rebellion was repressed was the outcome of racial fear.⁹⁸

Relations between Natal and Great Britain were further strained by Churchill's lukewarm defence of Natal against allegations of atrocities and in particular the manner adopted for the identification of Bambata.⁹⁹ The head of the alleged body of Bambata was severed and photographed in order to allay the rumour that he had escaped alive from Mome Gorge.¹⁰⁰ Blacks, including his Zondi tribe, to this day, vehemently deny that Bambata was killed, claiming that he escaped to Mozambique.

The end of the rebellion did not mean the end of Smythe's problems. The question of punishment of prisoners continued to be a cause of considerable debate in both Natal and Great Britain, as also did reports of alleged atrocities which were said to have been perpetrated during the suppression of the rebellion. Churchill told Kaiser William II of Germany that Great Britain's chief difficulty had not been to kill the rebellious Blacks, but to prevent the Natal Colonists (who he caustically added, claimed to thoroughly understand Black warfare), from killing too many of them.¹⁰¹

One of the most controversial prisoners was the aged Chief Sigananda,¹⁰² who had been captured on 13 June after the assault on the Mome Gorge.¹⁰³ On 18 June the Natal Ministers decided to try Sigananda, but he solved the problem of his ultimate fate by dying on 23 July.¹⁰⁴ On 7 September Mjongo, Mjuju and Urawana, all having been involved in the murder of Hunt and Armstrong in February, were tried, found guilty and sentenced to death.¹⁰⁵ Elgin petitioned that their sentences be commuted to life imprisonment,¹⁰⁶ as did the Press and many independent persons.¹⁰⁷ It was pointed out that the men had suffered serious wounds from which they had been allowed to recover, so as to be able to stand trial.¹⁰⁸ The Natal ministers considered the petitions but refused to concede.¹⁰⁹ The sentences of death by hanging were carried out on 10 October.¹¹⁰

⁹⁸ Smythe Collection: O. Smythe to E. J. Smythe, 5 July 1906; Holt, *Mounted Police*, p. 209; L. Fischer, *The life of Mahatma Gandhi* (1952), p. 73; Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, p. 224.

⁹⁹ *The Natal Mercury*, 20 July 1906.

¹⁰⁰ *The Natal Mercury*, 17 July 1906; Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, pp. 336-338.

¹⁰¹ Broomhall Archives: Winston Churchill to Earl of Elgin, 14 September 1906.

¹⁰² Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 211.

¹⁰³ *The Natal Mercury*, 15 June 1906.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 211.

¹⁰⁵ Broomhall Archives: Sir Henry McCallum to Earl of Elgin (telegram), 7 September 1906.

¹⁰⁶ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 8 October 1906.

¹⁰⁷ *The Friend*, 10 October 1906.

¹⁰⁸ *The Friend*, 11 October 1906.

¹⁰⁹ Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 8 October 1906.

¹¹⁰ *The Friend*, 10 October 1906.

Apart from these instances of firmness, once the rebellion was over, the Natal Ministers claimed a willingness to allow magnanimity and mercy, except in the case of murderers.¹¹¹ Courts Martial were convened at such places as Nkandhla (Empandhleni), Mapumulo, Greytown, Dundee and Pietermaritzburg.¹¹² In some places the death sentence was passed but, on the advice of the Natal Ministers, the Governor commuted each to periods of imprisonment.¹¹³ McCallum assured Elgin that the sentences passed by the Courts Martial were lenient, varying from ten years' imprisonment and thirty lashes to six years' imprisonment. Tilonko, a Chief who had caused some consternation in the final stage of the rebellion, was found guilty of sedition and public violence. He was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment with hard labour. He was also given a fine, payable in cattle. His brother, Sikukuku, Chief of another section of the Embo tribe had to stand trial for a similar offence, including that of having personally "doctored" his tribe for war. Both sentences were confirmed by McCallum. The Attorney-General of Natal had personally attended the trials of Tilonko and Sikukuku and had informed McCallum that the greatest possible care had been exercised and that no civil tribunal could have done better.¹¹⁴

A total of some 4 700 prisoners were tried. The great majority were given sentences ranging from six months to two years, with whipping added. The Natal government later suspended whipping.¹¹⁵ McCallum said that Natal had been so lenient to the rebels that they had to devise some measure of making the rebels feel the enormity of their offence with as little expense to Natal as possible.¹¹⁶ Ultimately twenty-five of the ringleaders of the rebellion were deported to St Helena on 1 June 1907.¹¹⁷ Of those remaining some 2 500 were eventually confined in a compound at Jacobs near Durban. Four hundred prisoners - for the most part with sentences of two years • were housed in a special prison at the Point, Durban. A further hundred were sent to Fort Napier, Pietermaritzburg, and the rest were placed in various gaols. The labour on which the men were principally employed was the construction of the harbour works, Durban, as well as making and repairing roads in different parts of Natal. Later, about 1 500 were hired by the collieries and others by the railway department.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Broomhall Archives: Sir Henry Mc Callum to Earl of Elgin (telegram 2.30 p.m.), 18 August 1906.

¹¹² Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, pp. 402-403.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 403; Broomhall Archives: Sir Henry McCallum to Earl of Elgin (Telegram 6:43 p.m.), 18 August 1906.

¹¹⁴ Broomhall Archives: Sir Henry McCallum to Earl of Elgin (Telegram 5:43 p.m.), 18 August 1906.

¹¹⁵ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 404.

¹¹⁶ Smythe Collection: Sir Henry McCallum to C. J. Smythe, 17 October 1906.

¹¹⁷ Stuart, *Zulu rebellion*, p. 405.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

Conclusion

The rebellion left Natal in an even more precarious financial position than before. The military operations to put down the insurrection had cost £620 000,¹¹⁹ and the Smythe Ministry were forced to re-introduce the Unoccupied Land and Income Tax Bills. These proposals, as in 1905, met with violent opposition and were defeated.¹²⁰ Consequently Smythe prorogued Parliament on 9 August and called a general election in September.¹²¹ The government was returned to office, but was still unable to pass the necessary taxation measures.¹²² Smythe resigned and, after some delay and much manoeuvring, Frederick Moor formed a ministry on 29 November 1906.¹²³

Moore's administration did little to improve Black/White relations. The new government was convinced of the complicity of Dinuzulu in the rebellion. Consequently, Dinuzulu was tried by a special was court in 1908. The final judgement exonerated Dinuzulu on eighteen and a half of the original twenty-three counts (two having been withdrawn by the prosecution) but found him guilty on the spurious charges of harbouring Bambata's wife and children as well as harbouring Bambata and other rebels. The verdict was a moral defeat for the Natal government which had done its utmost to secure a conviction on the more serious charges and greatly hampered Dinuzulu's defence.

It was the Moor Ministry which prosecuted Dinuzulu; the Smythe Ministry for its part showed some statesmanship in appointing a commission of enquiry into the causes of the rebellion and into Natal's system of Black administration. The commission appointed on 21 September 1906, made its report on 25 July 1907. This report was in many ways a challenging document. It condemned past policy, admitted a widespread discontent and accused those in authority of not having heeded the obvious signs and words of warning before the rebellion. In one paragraph it went so far as to say that the tribal system should be discouraged. It expressed the view that there was a "striking syncretism" between the Shepstone system and parliamentary control. Parliament was an oligarchy, as far as the Black population was concerned, and the frequent changes in the office of Minister of Native Affairs were confusing and undesirable. But instead of recommending a gradual enfranchisement of the Blacks and their representation in Parliament and the government, the commission sought to meet the situation by taking Black affairs out of politics. This was to be the standard approach to Black affairs by South African politicians in the post Union and Apartheid eras.

Nothing could have been more damaging than the events of 1906 to 1908 to Natal's prestige during the negotiations leading up to union. The Natal delegation to the National Convention had to face an attitude of contempt because of their handling of the rebellion.¹²⁴ Finally, it is interesting to reflect that in their dealings with the Smythe

¹¹⁹ *The Natal Mercury*, 1 August 1906.

¹²⁰ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 18 May 1906.

¹²¹ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 10 August 1906; *The Natal Mercury*, 10 August 1906.

¹²² Smythe Collection: Personal diary, 19 September 1906; C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 21 September 1906; *The Natal Mercury*, 18 and 19 September 1906.

¹²³ Smythe Collection: C. J. Smythe to Beatrice Smythe, 23 November 1906, 1 December 1906; Personal diary, 22 November 1906; Government House Archives: GH 1234, No. 278: Sir Henry McCallum to Earl of Elgin, 24 November 1906, pp. 461-463.

¹²⁴ Brookes and Webb, *History of Natal*, pp. 224-230.

government with regards to the Richmond 'stay of execution" crisis in March 1906, the Imperial government first committed itself to a policy of non-interference in a South Africa which was admitted to be under the control of a privileged White minority. The record of Black/White relations in Natal prior to Union is a sorry story of neglect and lack of concern on the part of the ruling White population. This helped lay the foundations for the tense situation between Blacks and Whites that exists in South Africa to this day.