



## CHAPTER 7

### *Agricultural societies, farmer associations and the creation of a 'farming community'*

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Farmers formed organisations to advance their economic interests. These were locally constituted and attempted to bring together all the farmers of a particular area. The organisations facilitated the sale of members' animals and produce, coordinated demands and grievances and brought these to the attention of local officials and government. As time went on, agricultural societies (ASs) and farmer associations (FAs) became more important for farmers. Apart from changes in the local economy which heightened competition with other sectors, there were challenges which flowed from the new opportunities provided by access to the expanding international market. Farmers were spurred to develop more powerful organisational capacity. Farmer organisations also played a significant social role. Over time they brought together not just the farmers in their particular, geographically confined area, but forged a unified class of farmers across the Midlands. The process of integration took a gendered form. The values of settler masculinity which stressed hierarchy, the subordinate place of women and the importance of teamwork were at play in regulating gender relations. The moulding of an agricultural class was achieved through the rhythms established by the organisations themselves. The ASs and FAs held regular meetings and shows, hosted social functions and became highly visible and active in local politics. These were the mechanisms which drew members to the organisation, kept them there and promoted a sense of belonging. The organisations became a focus of local identity, carrying the hopes and aspirations of members. These were basically the same people who had attended the Midlands' schools (chapter 3), who played Midland sport (chapter 4), who belonged to the Midland clubs and societies (chapter 5) and who were members of the Midland regiments (chapter 6). The farmer organisations were for whites only, though they differed from the other institutions thus far described in that women were admitted and played a significant role in their activities (see section 6).

## *An overview of farmer organisations in South Africa*

In South Africa there were basically three types of farmer organisation. The oldest type was the agricultural show-holding society. Such bodies emerged as early as the 1860s in the Transvaal (Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek) (Naude 1954). They popularised farming, promoted scientific methods and injected a forward-looking, competitive attitude. The second type of organisation was the FA. At the turn of the century, particularly when depressed economic conditions were sending many farmers to the wall, farmers came together organisationally in order to lobby the state for support (Murray 1992:71–84). Often the leading figures were ‘progressive farmers’ (well capitalised and market-oriented). Farmer cooperatives were the third type of organisation. These were formed in the early decades of the twentieth century to deal specifically with marketing problems. In time, they provided credit and farm supplies at cost (Morrell 1986a).



*Richmond Agricultural Society members (c 1918)*

The state was involved in some of the farmer organisations. In the nineteenth century intervention was on a limited scale. Encouragement of farmer initiatives and restricted administrative assistance generally was the extent of involvement. British victory in the South African War fundamentally changed the sub-continent's economy and altered the role of the state in agriculture. The Milner regime initiated a reconstruction programme which promoted commercial farming amongst white farmers (Marks & Trapido 1979; Keegan 1986a). In the Transvaal, the state stepped up its involvement. Farmer associations

were encouraged in order to provide representative organisations with which the state could deal. This could also involve attempts to convert farmer disgruntlement into economic endeavour (Power 1992). It was hoped that FAs would be led by progressive farmers who would encourage their backward colleagues along the road to profit (Morrell 1983:272–273). Secondly, the state encouraged the establishment of cooperatives. Here it was even more active, passing laws and establishing a government office to oversee affairs. Cooperatives had large memberships and functioned to provide aid to struggling farmers as well as to rationalise marketing which became increasingly chaotic as South Africa became a part of the international trade system.<sup>1</sup>

The state's lack of capacity to assist farmers could explain its early passivity. Natal's Midland farmers faced up to this by organising their own organisations. Many were in the fortunate position of having already paid for their land, while those who entered farming after land prices had risen often had access to family capital. Nevertheless, they faced some problems which were best solved by collective action (for example marketing stock), and other problems which only state intervention could solve (for example problems of inadequate transport and veterinary services). There were racial considerations in the work of the AS/FAs as well. To maintain class power and an identity that was racially exclusive, attention had also to be given to any black challenge. In east Griqualand, for example, where the white farmer population was particularly small, an organisation was established in the 1880s to deal with challenges from African landowners/farmers and white merchants (Beinart 1986:287). In the Midlands white farmers were in less precarious a position but, as we shall see, they were well exercised on the racial question all the same.

In Natal in the early 1880s farmers began to demand that government develop a coherent and organised response to the problems of agriculture. A Select Committee chaired by Henry Binns in 1883 commented that a 'general feeling exists ... that ... the question of the agricultural progress of the Colony has not received the amount of attention it deserves from Government and the Legislative Council'.<sup>2</sup> Law 22 of 1883 resulted from the recommendations of the Select Committee. The law made provision for the registration of ASs, which implied governmental recognition. State intervention remained limited. Grants given to show-holding societies were increased in 1890 from £100 to £200 (Lambert 1986:174) but for the most part farmers continued to make their own arrangements in the area of marketing and labour (see below).

The state did gradually develop a small administrative and scientific capacity. This signalled both the success of organised agriculture's efforts and a growing recognition in the state of the need to commit greater resources to agriculture. In 1893 General C B Lloyd, prominent Mooi River farmer and president of the local FA, was appointed the first

Commissioner of Agriculture. In 1896 a dairy expert, Ed Challis, was appointed. Together with the principal veterinary surgeon, Dr Watkins-Pitchford, they constituted the nucleus of the Agricultural Department. Before 1896 there was no agricultural portfolio in government, and the Treasurer, George Sutton, did the honours. Sutton was a well-known Howick wattle farmer, foundation member of the Howick Farmers Association and president of the Pietermaritzburg Agricultural Society in 1880.<sup>3</sup> In 1896 the portfolio was formally created and filled by H D Winter, Estcourt farmer and politician. From then on, the department was steadily enlarged, mainly to increase its capacity to combat agricultural scourges (locusts, stock diseases) and to increase the efficiency of settler production. The concern was to modernise – to use technology and scientific advances to increase yields and quality of produce in order to make an impact on world markets.

### *The economic position of Midland farmers*

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I have already indicated that the needs and concerns of Midland farmers differed from those of upcountry farmers. Access to credit, a major problem elsewhere, did not generally hinder Midlanders. Frustrated bank managers bemoaned the fact that farmers provided their own capital and had little need of banking services (Morrell, Padayachee & Vawda 1993:189–191). Farmers had a number of available sources of capital. Family money in the metropole was available to many families. The Kimbers and Morphews, who bought land in the Dargle in 1882–89 and 1901 respectively, were examples here.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, via intermarriage and social connection, many farmers lent one another money. Thirdly, within families there was a lot of lending, especially between fathers and sons (Pearse 1981:37). Another major complaint in the interior was the role of the ‘middleman’. The role of the middleman was a marketing issue – he linked the producer to markets, and took a cut for his services. In the Midlands, marketing was generally in the hands of ONF businessmen. Indian businessmen tended to sell agricultural supplies to farmers but were seldom at the forefront of marketing. When they were, they were included on the fringes of that community, treated as honorary members, rather than as members of a threatening Indian business invasion (Rahman interview 1992). The marketing of animals did become a problem as volumes increased and farming became more commercial. The practice whereby a tried and trusted local auctioneer took sole responsibility for marketing was diluted as profit margins shrank and farmers became more aware of the need to optimise stock prices. Show-holding societies (ASs) were established to give farmers collectives sales’ clout by which more profitable arrangements were struck with auctioneers.



*Maize: one of the many crops successfully grown in the Midlands. (Photo taken c 1902)*

It is common in South African historiography to see the issue of farm labour cited as the major concern of white farmers. In the Midlands, as elsewhere, there were labour shortages. But farming was overwhelmingly pastoral in the early years, and for this only a small number of reliable, full-time workers (especially for dairy) were needed. For the most part, such labour seems to have been procured, valued and in return, rendered loyal service.<sup>5</sup> When places like Nottingham Road were initially settled by farmers like John King (1858) there was no African labour available at all (King, [n d]:3). By 1880 three sources of labour had become available: Africans living in homesteads on white farms, Africans living on crown land, unoccupied white-owned land or in reserves, and indentured Indian labour. Most farmers depended on the labour of Africans resident on their land – this generally involved the adult males working for four to six months, plus boys to herd cattle and women for seasonal labour during the harvest. In addition, particularly on farms where arable farming was significant, full-time labour would be procured during harvest time and planting. This often came from ‘thorn farms’ (located in areas not too distant, for example near Colenso, Ladysmith, Dundee and Muden) purchased by farmers specifically for labour. Labourers would be drawn from these farms, often without pay, at harvest time. Alternatively, seasonal labour could be drawn from the reserves at a daily or weekly rate.

Many of the wealthier farmers (Duncan McKenzie and Joseph Baynes for example) employed Indian labourers.

By the twentieth century, farmers were increasingly paying their labourers in cash. On a minority of large farms, big labour forces were employed full time. Here, control and surveillance, often exercised through the delegated authority of a white farm manager or an African *induna*, were a key to efficiency. On most farms the old method of paternalistic control, getting one's hands dirty, continued. Farmers directly supervised labour. Labourers gradually lost the tenant rights they had enjoyed before: the area set aside for their cattle declined and in many instances disappeared altogether; their rights to an arable plot were reduced; rights to firewood were circumscribed. By the 1940s most labour in the Midlands was provided by tenants paid in cash, though in the most capitalised areas (Lions River) 20 per cent of farmers used full-time wage labour (Mazower 1991:47-48). On the other hand, it should be noted that farmers continued to provide services such as the provision of transport and the maintenance of a rudimentary schooling facility at a time when in other areas labour tenants were being evicted.

Much of the South African agricultural literature stresses that the state's intervention was crucial in assisting 'agriculture' to secure its labour needs (Crush, Jeeves & Yudelman 1991). Without doubt, where farmers were switching to full-time wage labour and were in competition with other major users of black labour (the Transvaal goldmines for example), the intervention of the state was important. In moulding labour relations on the farms, once labour supply had been secured, the state was less active. I have argued elsewhere (Morrell 1996) that labour relations on the farm were ordered along mutually understood lines between farm owner and African homestead head. Such agreement limited friction and sanctioned the use of violence in particular instances against the young men who, at the instruction of their fathers and under legal obligation in terms of the Masters and Servants Act, did most of the work. While this point is not commonly conceded in South African historiography, in the comparative context of Europe, Mann points out its logic: 'Farm workers obtained their wants through farmers, not against them, and so developed and internalised deferential strategies of appeal to them' (Mann 1993:695). This point is supported by work on the centrality of the colonial household. Toby Ditz argues that it was the central social, religious, economic and political unit. Virtually everything emanated from or was directed towards the household, because different types of social organisation were either not present or were subordinate. This phenomenon, she argues, was particularly true of lightly populated, large rural areas. 'Even when the centrality of the household began to give way under the impact of commercialisation, and as the locus of politics slowly shifted to state and national arenas ... new institutions would at first model themselves after households.' This was a world which 'put large powers in the hands of heads of households' (Ditz 1986:120).

A failure to notice the generational aspect of farm labour relations and to ignore the common problems faced by rural people has caused writers to generalise about violence on the farms and to present it in gender- and race-stereotypical ways.<sup>6</sup> White male farmers were violent towards blacks because it was in their nature so to be when faced with a lack of compliance or obstinate resistance by farm labourers together with pressing economic crisis. In the Midlands, Bradford (1986), Burton-Clark (1988:241) and Mazower (1991) all stress coercion and violence as the major mechanism of labour control. It is argued here that this is misleading, particularly in the period before the onset of full-blown wage labour.

Evidence by Midland farmers before the 1906 Native Affairs Commission shows a wide range of preferences concerning farm labour arrangements.<sup>7</sup> For convenience, these can be divided into two positions. On the one hand, farmers who had been on the land for many years and whose labour arrangements were well established, like Cotton Acutt (Rosetta) and Edwin Peniston (Estcourt) and Robert Speirs (Howick), championed the view that private arrangements agreed upon between farmer and labourer should be retained. Peniston stressed that he 'did not think that Government should interfere with private contracts between landlords and tenants'. Acutt said that in all his years of farming, he had never had recourse to the Master and Servants Act.<sup>8</sup> Charles Nicholson, respected elder farmer of Richmond, gave his view that 'Natives working for their masters were happier than if they were living at home. As soon as they left the farm, they were filled with the spirit of unrest'.<sup>9</sup> This position stressed the need to bolster the authority of the homestead head, and even suggested that corporal punishment was necessary for this system to work.<sup>10</sup>

Farmers who had settled more recently on the land, did not have labour farms, and had trouble in attracting labour were more inclined to demand state intervention.<sup>11</sup> Another group of farmers who had labour problems were those who treated their labour harshly, and had extremely authoritarian views about the relationship between labour and employer. Here H D Winter (and Duncan McKenzie (see chapter 5)) was a prime example. He believed that missionaries and farmers who negotiated with Africans and attempted to reach a mutually agreeable settlement with the homestead head were the source of the problem. They were soft and undermined a more efficient and rigorous system. 'You know what natives are. They will make a mountain out of a mole hill ... Then you get the individual white man who backs the natives up. Those are the people we have to guard against. If these people were not in existence you would not have any trouble with the natives.'<sup>12</sup>

It was not always possible for farmers to look beyond their own immediate problems, but William Comrie of Richmond probably summed up a basic realisation of Midland farmers, and in doing so, giving support for Mann's views above, that 'members for country constituencies were bound to consider the interests of all classes of the community, natives

included, and in this way he thought natives were sufficiently represented'.<sup>13</sup>

For many farmers, the system worked admirably. They attempted to retain the services of loyal and reliable farmworkers even when such workers got on the wrong side of the law. In a fascinating 1906–08 case, W H Allwright of 'Glenavon', Bulwer, sought to keep his farmworker, Mehlomakulu, out of jail in order to secure his services. Mehlomakula served six years for rape and then on release, being unable to repay George Francis, the Ixopo lawyer, the £25 charged for his unsuccessful defence, was repeatedly jailed at Francis's instigation for breaching the payment contract. Allwright pleaded for leniency for Mehlomakulu, describing him as 'a good servant', and offered to pay some of Mehlomakulu's debts (he owed money 'all over the place') in order to keep him out of prison.<sup>14</sup>

On Joseph Baynes' estate, his stern, paternal presence aroused admiration, fear and affection from the workers. He rarely had recourse to the colony's laws, preferring to dish out justice himself, fashioning it to suit the offence. An aggressive labourer was instructed to fight a tree with fighting sticks while a drunkard was ordered to drink water for a whole day.<sup>15</sup> While his methods seemed extreme and feudal, they were apparently effective. In 1904 a *Natal Witness* reporter wrote, 'Nel's Rust does not know what it is to have labour trouble with its employees, all of whom are apparently obedient, tractable and hard-working' (Pearse 1981:45, 240). Other prominent farmers like Charles Smythe also took the law into their own hands. As Smythe's biographer puts it, 'Corporal punishment was the rule in the 1880s, and it was the accepted thing for farmers to assert their authority with the aid of a sjambok' (Child 1973:123). Descendants confirm this impression. Barbara Pennefather, granddaughter of H D Winter, says her father and grandfather (who farmed in the Estcourt district) understood 'Zulu culture' and respected its norms. They punished within those norms, beating only boys and young men. Married men were never beaten because of the humiliation. Similarly, girls and women were never hit. H D Winter's Zulu nickname was 'Ufahla', strict but fair (Pennefather interview 1993).<sup>16</sup>

When the state, generally after some prodding by the colonial office, intervened to limit the farmer's authority and power in the highly personalised world of farm labour, farmers were deeply resentful (Lambert 1986:101–102). They preferred to deal with things in their own way without interference (and it was the passivity of some magistrates in this regard that was appreciated). It was only once the labourers escaped the closed world of the farm or threatened to disrupt orderly relations that farmers became agitated about the form and implementation of the law. In these cases, farmers would demand that deserters be returned, that the authority of the homestead head (over wives and sons) be enforced,<sup>17</sup> that stock thieves be deported. When Africans attempted to elicit state intervention on

their behalfs by, for example, laying complaints or legal charges, farmers would attempt to subvert the law or have it changed to extend their powers.<sup>18</sup>

The relationship of farmers to legislation should not be simplified. Orthodox Marxist argument would have it that the law is simply a reflection of ruling class interests. While few would accept such a crude analysis nowadays, it is not fully appreciated what a dual-edged weapon the law was. Prominent farmers were not exempt from the law and it touched their lives in many places. While they might use it against recalcitrant labour tenants or debtors, they could equally fall foul of it. Trevor Tatham, one of the many prominent Tathams in the Midlands, farmed at Rosetta. In 1925 he was fined £1 on two counts of contravening Road Traffic Ordinances 11 of 1913 and 8 of 1921.<sup>19</sup> The Mooi River criminal record book shows that members of other ONFs were arraigned too: Lund, McKenzie, Simmons and Ballantyne all found themselves before the magistrate in this period. Farmers did not just laugh these appearances and small fines off. They were considered a nuisance and a slight. In 1913 Duncan McKenzie, perhaps the most volatile of farmers, was fined £25 for moving cattle in defiance of the Cattle Diseases Act (for which farmers had powerfully pushed). He wrote to the Minister of Agriculture to protest the fine and demand intervention. 'You can hardly expect me to be satisfied, & surely I have every right to look to the Minister to put a wrong right.'<sup>20</sup> It is not surprising therefore that when AS/FAs applied for 'a complete set of the Laws of the Colony' it was not so much for the purpose of using the laws against Africans tenants as to permit the AS/FA 'more efficiently (to) protect the interests of members' (Wood 1946:25).

The extension of the state into farming specifically, and civil society generally, also received a mixed reception. In 1908 the Income and Land Assessment Act, No 33 of 1908 was passed. It increased the farmers' tax liability. Up until this time farmers had paid a minimal tax on land. The new tax made them liable for additional payments to the state which in many districts amounted to an increase of between 50 and 100 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

### *The establishment of farmer organisations*

The first agricultural society formed in Natal was the Pietermaritzburg Agricultural Society in 1851 (Gordon 1984). Its founders were not prominent farmers for such did not yet exist in Natal. They were, however, the colony's elite. Amongst them were Lieutenant Governor Pine and Thomas Fannin. Fannin had been a wealthy shipbuilder in Liverpool before emigrating to the Cape. He lost money searching for copper in Namaqualand but then had the good fortune to buy a 6 000 acre farm outside Pietermaritzburg for a mere £150 in

1847 (Juul 1982:27). In the first decade only one president (Charles Barter) could claim to be a farmer. Barter, despite owning a number of farms, was a gentleman farmer. His main interest was breeding and racing thoroughbreds and involving himself in the cultural and political life of the colony.<sup>22</sup> The show was therefore designed amongst other things to promote the colony via agriculture rather than to promote agriculture for its own sake, or to promote the interests of farmers. It had a social aspect too: the show was to be the hub of Maritzburg's social and commercial life during its run.

In 1854 Greytown established the colony's second (the Umvoti) AS. Greytown was a relatively well-established agricultural district and its show soon rivalled that of Pietermaritzburg. For the next three decades there was little further organisation in the Midlands (though Klip River and Weenen established agricultural societies). From 1882, however, the accelerating tempo of the rural economy and the influx of farmers, resulted in steady expansion.

- 1882 Richmond Agricultural Society
- 1884 Howick Farmers Association
- 1887 Nottingham Road Farmers Association
- 1891 Polela Agricultural Society
- 1893 Underberg Agricultural Society
- 1899 Dronkvei Agricultural Society
- 1903 Himeville Agricultural Society (which became the Himeville FA in 1919)
- 1905 Donnybrook Farmers Association
- 1911 Impendhle Agricultural Society
- 1917 Highflats Farmers Association<sup>25</sup>

Each of these organisations was started either by a prominent local or a group of the district's foremost farmers. In each case it was the prominent farmers who took office, dominated the committee and set the agendas. Let us take the Richmond AS as an example. The RAS was established by James Schofield, local farmer and on a number of occasions MLA for the district. He was a close friend of Joseph Baynes and together with another MLA, S J Marwick, was elected the first patron. The first president was A C Hawkins, the local magistrate. This was a common feature of FAs and ASs, though in some the magistrate was *ex officio* a member, rather than elected president.<sup>24</sup> In due course Joseph Baynes, Peter Flett, Henry Nicholson, J C Nicholson, J W McKenzie and John Marwick became presidents (Coulson 1986:313). The committees included virtually all the oldest and wealthiest farming families of the district. In a 1918 photograph of 78 members of the RAS, well over half can be identified as coming from the most prominent (and numerous!) families.

Nicholson	8
Marwick	11
McKenzie	6
Cockburn	3
Comrie	4
Hackland	2
Shepstone	1
Payn	2 <sup>25</sup>
Mapstone	5
D Adamson (local magistrate)	
(Coulson 1986:311)	

Once an AS/FA had been established, one of its first missions was to build an agricultural hall. These became the centres of community life in most Midland villages. In addition, all the ASs concentrated on holding stock sales and later hosting agricultural shows. For the Howick FA, the task of holding shows proved too onerous so it established the Lions River and Division Agricultural Society (LRDAS) in 1882 to discharge this task, leaving the HFA to concentrate on matters of local politics. For most AS/FAs these were the major activities. Another area which became increasingly important, especially after the Farmers Congress had been established in 1891 by T K Murray, was sending delegates to its conferences and discussing motions to be put there.<sup>26</sup>

As regionalism within the Midlands broke down and Natal's provincialism was eroded by economic and political forces which were integrating the sub-continent, farmer organisations found themselves drawn into an energy-sapping and time-consuming web of bureaucracy and politics. Agricultural societies no longer just organised shows and sales. As government increased its involvement in agriculture, the volume of correspondence increased dramatically. Secretaries in some organisations found it impossible to keep up and resigned. In 1919 the long-serving secretary of the Underberg AS, C A Huber, resigned, stating that the remuneration by the society could no longer compensate for lost time and burdensome work load. In the same year, George Blackmore, the desperate secretary of the Donnybrook FA noted that whereas in 1917–18 he had written 66 letters, in 1918–19 he had written 262.<sup>27</sup> Farmers were now more aware of markets and agricultural competition, which necessitated developing a more coherent political lobby and greater organisational efficiency. With these developments, local agricultural shows were gradually phased out and farmers focused on the premier show, Pietermaritzburg's Royal Show. In effect, over the forty years discussed in this chapter, the functions of farmers organisations changed. Many still held stock sales and thus maintained their marketing function, but the bulk of the effort now went into creating a farmers' voice.<sup>28</sup> This meant that the distinction

between ASs and FAs all but disappeared and some changed their names from AS to FA.

AS/FAs were drawn into a much closer relationship with government and came to reap the benefits of this. In terms of Act 35 of 1904 (Agricultural Development Act) farmer organisations were granted government land for their shows and sales and could use this land to gain government funding.<sup>29</sup>

The transformation of the AS/FAs was reflected not just at the levels of function, title, scale and political profile. At inception, many of the ASs had been elitist. They had been similar to the farmers' clubs which prominent farmers had organised. Bearing a close resemblance in conception to the Victoria Club, the Pietermaritzburg Farmers' Club (1867–1874), for example, aimed 'to maintain a reading room with agricultural literature and provide a discussion venue for farmers' (Gordon 1984:26). In the remote and insular community of Highflats near Ixopo a similar club was started in 1901 by (later General Sir) William Arnott. It operated until 1915 and then was replaced by the Highflats Farmers Association, of which Arnott was president as well (Woodley 1984:17).

Although this chapter deals with AS/FAs, it is necessary briefly to review the history of the region's cooperatives. There were few cooperatives and their memberships were small. Buying cooperatives were designed to help cash-strapped members avoid bankruptcy by obtaining supplies cheaply and providing limited credit facilities. Marketing cooperatives brought together small numbers of farmers whose aim was to market or process a specific crop or product. Neither venture served, as they did in the Transvaal, to keep borderline farmers from bankruptcy.<sup>30</sup>

One of the first cooperatives formed in Natal was the Pietermaritzburg Cooperative Society (in 1892). Its major object was 'to carry on the business of storekeepers, either wholesale or retail, under a cooperative system'.<sup>31</sup> A few farmers were members but its prime constituency was urban and its business was not directed at agriculture. It was unsurprising that Weenen, a town of white smallholders, established the Weenen Cooperative Trading Society.<sup>32</sup> An altogether different type of cooperative was established in 1902 in the wattle industry. Difficulties of marketing led William Deane, an Umvoti farmer and later Minister of Agriculture, to found the Natal Farmers' Cooperative Association for the sale of bark (Guest 1989:319). In Weenen, a similar marketing venture was launched by small-scale lucerne growers in 1915 (Weenen 1929:7). The essential point to be grasped here, however, is that cooperatives operated with limited effect in the Midlands. Despite government attempts to promote cooperatives in the early years of the twentieth century, they remained unpopular.<sup>33</sup> Apart from the regional reasons already indicated, perhaps the words of Joseph Baynes best explain their limited utility and appeal. As the colony's pre-eminent

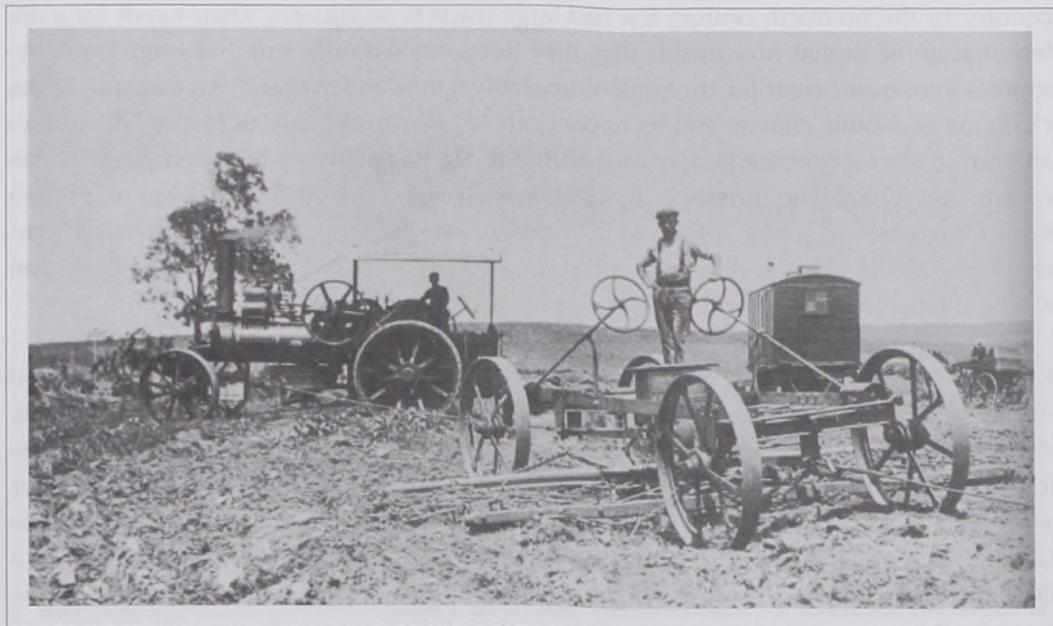
farmer he opposed cooperatives for his whole life, describing them as 'simply limited liability companies which do little, if anything, for the farmer beyond limiting their dividends and paying a bonus' (Pearse 1981:222). What he preferred was to invest his own capital in companies owned and directed by prominent farmers. Perhaps the best-known example of this course of action was when he launched the Nel's Rust Bacon Factory in 1907 after farmers had failed to achieve the same goal by creating a cooperative (Pearse 1981:220).

### *Membership of farmer organisations*

The membership of AS/FAs had a number of features:

- It changed over the period from consisting mainly of the local gentry – whom Duminy and Guest describe as 'smug, well-to-do farmers' (1989:367) – to including a much wider spectrum of farmers. This in fact reflected changing demography – initially areas were lightly settled and most farmers were on large, extensively farmed lands. In the twentieth century, farm sizes dropped and rural white population rose.
- Membership and office continued to be dominated by the old, well-established and prosperous farming families. In the Howick FA, for example, prominent local families (Sutton, Mackenzie, Campbell, Hyslop, Sinclair) were represented on its committees throughout the first century of its existence (Scotney & Scott-Shaw 1984:16).<sup>34</sup>
- Membership was not confined to farmers: some AS/FAs included local professionals (for example doctors) and businessmen. A few FAs encouraged the membership of women and juniors, often catering for families with a long association with the FA.
- A quite astounding number of AS/FA office-holders were members of government or members of parliament.<sup>35</sup>

As agriculture changed, so members came to view the AS/FAs differently. Agriculture became more intensive and it was no longer possible for farmers to continue as before. As a shift, especially in the early twentieth century, from pastoral to arable and mixed farming occurred, manures and fertilisers became vital. Growing crops (including timber) meant that the threat of fire had to be combated more seriously. Experiments were conducted on different seeds and livestock types. The farmers who had been longest on the land led in introducing innovations and upgrading their operations. They encouraged collective approaches to problems such as burning firebreaks and inoculating against stock diseases. They also turned to government for technical assistance and advice, while the smaller farmers followed their lead, using the FAs to obtain fertilisers cheaply and to gain access to touring agricultural experts as well.<sup>36</sup>



*Steam harrowing (c 1900)*

The ONF leadership of the FAs followed a dual, and at times paradoxical, policy. On the one hand, they used the FAs to organise the farmers into a community. On the other, FAs disciplined rogue elements. Farmers who ignored laws and showed little good neighbourliness (for example by allowing sheep scab to spread, by allowing weeds to infest their lands or by harbouring stock thieves) could bring disaster to a large area. These actions threatened to fragment community, giving rise to division and acrimony. Another aspect of creating farmer community was to give it a voice. Identification with the resolutions and public statements of AS/FAs was an important way of consolidating the feeling of belonging. But ONF leaders could find themselves at odds with members when they attempted to present their own agricultural views as FA policy. Attempts to modernise farming and get the government to adopt liberal labour policy, for example, often evoked opposition from members whose economic positions were less secure and who needed more state intervention to procure labour. They did not have the capital necessary to diversify their crops or erect fences or take a range of preventative measures to combat disease.

By the turn of the century it had become imperative to act and speak collectively. Only farmers with the resources of Joseph Baynes could afford to steer an individualistic course. Whereas ONFs had the ability to convert investment (land) into capital in the nineteenth

century, by the twentieth century few had large tracts to so convert. Their needs for a different scale of capital now meant that they were less self-sufficient and even family resources were insufficient for the scale of operations now undertaken.<sup>37</sup> An example of the changing economic climate and its impact can be seen in the fate of Henry Nicholson's attempt to start a canning factory in Richmond. He was a farmer but specialised in processing and selling dairy products. In 1889 he was receiving 1 000 lbs (454 kg) of butter a week for delivery to Johannesburg and elsewhere. In that same year he launched his factory with local shareholders including his wife and J W McKenzie. The venture failed and was liquidated in 1908 (Coulson 1986:53–54).

Family money could also be overextended as a result of marriage and the concomitant need to set up each son: Charles Smythe left 12 children. He provided for each of them, every son getting a farm, except Oswald, a lawyer, who received two urban plots.<sup>38</sup> He also lent them money to make their farms a working proposition. This in itself was a huge achievement, but in addition Smythe was uncle to J G (Jim) Speirs, founder member of the Impendhle FA Speirs, son of a Byrne settler, borrowed much from Smythe, establishing a farm of 1 800 acres and a sawmill. In the process, however, he reduced Smythe's own ability to fund his sons and his own operations to their fullest extent (Speirs 1985:93–94).

Government thus became more important as it intruded ever more expansively into agriculture. The strength of family and other social networks, which had often extended into government itself, were no longer secure ways of accessing the state. The way to harness state power was to be organised. As confirmation of this change, the membership numbers of AS/FAs rose throughout the period, with parents telling children that when they became farmers it would be essential that they join the local FA (Paterson interview 1992).

### *Economic functions*

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The *raison d'être* of agricultural societies was to hold stock sales. As Nottingham Road's James King (founder member of the LRDAS in 1884) said, 'The worst drawback was the lack of markets' (Scotney & Scott-Shaw 1984:1). In Mooi River the absence of markets was given as the reason for the district's lack of diversification and the limited range of crops produced.<sup>39</sup> Their function was thus primarily marketing and their fortunes were generally judged by the success or failure of sales.



*Maize crop (c 1900)*

The sale of stock differs markedly from that of maize (the product which sparked the cooperative movement in the Transvaal). In Natal the market was very localised with local butchers and auctioneers generally dealing with farmers in their area. I do not have information on relations between auctioneers and farmers, but the ONF ties existed across this divide as well. The major Midland auctioneers were Raw and Co. The Raws were early settlers and their numerous descendants had a presence throughout Natal and Zululand. Some were farmers (Underberg, Eastwolds, Alfred County), others businessmen.<sup>40</sup> They were married into many prominent ONFs, for example the Ottos. The relationships between auctioneers and agricultural societies were varied but tended to be quite cordial. In 1906 or 1907, in a situation that bordered on nepotism, Raw and Co got the contract to conduct the sales of the Donnybrook FA despite competition from the Holliday Brothers. At least two Raws were prominent in the Association!<sup>41</sup> In the case of the Richmond AS, the auctioneers Collier and Forsyth of Pietermaritzburg had a long-standing and strong relationship. At a meeting of the RAS the secretary noted that 'a great deal of the success attending our sales is due to them. They have assisted me in every possible way and nothing is too big or too small for them to undertake.'<sup>42</sup> What AS sales allowed was for farmers to rationalise their sales, obtaining better prices because of the large number of animals for sale and the larger

number of buyers who arrived. Costs were also cut to the minimum because the sales were held locally and either the AS or the auctioneer would pay for the transport and other associated costs of the sale. ASs thus kept farmers closely in touch with the marketing of their products in a way that maize cooperatives were never able to do.

A variety of factors increased the importance of cattle sales particularly in the late and early twentieth century. Catastrophic cattle diseases, particularly rinderpest (1897/8) and East Coast Fever (1907–10), reduced herds dramatically, making it all the more important for farmers to realise the best prices available for surviving stock. The number of cattle in Natal was reduced from 280 000 in 1896 to 150 000 in 1898 (Pearse 1981:83). This amounted to a loss of £863 700 to white farmers (Camp 1986:50).

It was only in the area of stock sales (sheep, cattle and to a lesser extent horses) that cooperative marketing operated.<sup>43</sup> Foreign imports began to undercut local products, particularly once the railway system was developed. In 1905, on behalf of the Ixopo FA, Magistrate F E Foxon objected to government allowing imported grain.<sup>44</sup> In other domains (such as dairy and ham products), cooperative companies were formed. These were joint stock companies, generally headed by prominent and prosperous local farmers (John Moor<sup>45</sup> and George Richards<sup>46</sup> of Estcourt for example), who raised capital from farmer shareholders. The members of the board were generally the major shareholders (Tarr 1991?:39). Farmers who joined were then obliged to supply the factory/dairy with produce, in return for which they got a guaranteed price and, if available, a dividend.

The small size of the local market put pressure on farmers to export. The capacity of Natal's manufacturing industries was minuscule. They began to expand around 1910, yet by 1914 there were no more than 500 enterprises in the whole colony (Guest 1989:358). Interestingly, a reason *not* cited for the increased concern about marketing was competition from Africans. There was a vigorous trade between white and black farmers in livestock, but this was not considered deleterious.<sup>47</sup> It was for access to the urban and metropolitan markets that farmers struggled.

When ASs became FAs, most of them did not cease their marketing labours. As indicated above, they took on other functions, becoming an extension of the burgeoning colonial bureaucracy. For example, it became routine for them to be asked to provide evidence to government commissions.<sup>48</sup>

Labour supply was not amongst the major concerns of any of the FAs until the late 1910s and 1920s. This is, on the face of things, surprising. Throughout the Midlands labour was difficult to obtain, especially in 1880s. Many farmers hired Indian labour because African

labour was not forthcoming. The issue of labour was important, but it was not just the supply that was at stake. Control was often a greater concern. Labour issues were tackled in two ways. By far the most popular was direct control – negotiating relationships with farm tenants. This preference rested increasingly on the buttress of the law, particularly the Master and Servants Act. As early as 1895 the Mooi River FA was opposing any prospect of Africans being able to escape the private world of the farm.<sup>49</sup> And again, in 1912, the same issue evoked similar sentiments. P D Simmons, a well-established, prize-winning member of the association, proposed that ‘contracts made by the Head of a Kraal acting as a parent or a guardian of a minor, where service is given in lieu of rent, shall be regarded as binding and valid and treated accordingly in the Courts’.<sup>50</sup>

There was another threat to the ties that bound white farmer to African labour tenant. From the 1890s onward, mine labour recruiters in the Transvaal looked enviously at the untapped labour resources of Natal. They negotiated with the colonial government for the right to recruit Africans. In 1895 it decided to regularise the situation by appointing a ‘native labour agent’ in Johannesburg. This was viewed with alarm by farmers who considered it a harbinger of full-scale recruiting in the colony. The Mooi River FA ‘emphatically’ protested the action, supporting their concern with two arguments: the move was ‘repugnant to the Farming interests in Natal’ and ‘fraught with the greatest responsibilities towards the Natives themselves by encouraging them to leave the Colony for a country where many of them will become morally and physically weakened’.<sup>51</sup> The issue remained a sensitive one, with Donnybrook and Umvoti protesting touting whenever the spectre occurred (in 1908 and 1915).<sup>52</sup>

While labour became an increasingly important and potentially divisive issue, there were issues on which farmers were absolutely unanimous. A grievance with long history was stock theft. Here the farmer was unable to exercise his direct power over Africans resident on his farm, as these were rarely the culprits. Invariably theft was blamed upon (and generally perpetrated by) Africans living on crown land or unoccupied white-owned land. In the early days military solutions had been used to solve stock theft by ‘Bushmen’. But by the 1880s ‘Bushmen’ raids had ended and the origin of the problem was closer at hand. Neighbouring crown and land company lands were filling with African residents who were not under the control and surveillance of white landowners. Such people, according to white farmers, were prime suspects in any stock theft. In 1889 the Howick FA created a special fund to reward native informers about stock theft (Scotney & Scott-Shaw 1984:13). In general, however, farmers turned to AS/FAs to call for harsher punishment including deportation and whipping.<sup>53</sup>

Magistrates assisted farmers by evicting stock thieves. On occasion, they notified the local FA about an offender and asked it to apply for an eviction to a different district.<sup>54</sup> Shortly

after Union there were fears amongst farmers that this handy expedient would be terminated. The Impendhle District FA consequently endorsed a motion put to the NAU that the old practice be continued.<sup>55</sup>

Another issue which evoked heated response was attack on white farmers. In 1919 farmers became worried that stock dip would be used to poison animals and farmers alike. The changes in the countryside in the early twentieth century had included higher levels of eviction and heavier financial exactions by the state upon Africans. Africans often took revenge for eviction or ill-treatment. The Donnybrook FA reported, for example, that 'some fiend' had poisoned a local farmer's entire Friesland herd. AS/FAs called for arsenite of soda (the stock dip) to be given a particular colourant and to be distributed more carefully. There was little more that they could do.<sup>56</sup>

From the turn of the century a number of developments made labour a more sensitive issue. There was a switch from pastoral to arable/mixed farming, and more farmers began operating in the Midlands. The spread of wattle farming, which was labour intensive, added to a perceived labour shortage. In 1902 the Lions River magistrate observed that 'Native labour has been almost unobtainable, except by those who are fortunate enough to have Native tenants on their farms.'<sup>57</sup> Those 'fortunate' to have labour tenants were the well-established ONFs. It was the newly arrived farmers that felt the labour shortage most acutely, although the transition to more intensive production by established farmers even caused them labour shortages at peak moments in the agricultural cycle.

But it also has to be acknowledged that labour shortage was not absolute. Shortages occurred from time to time and from district to district, depending on circumstances. For example, immediately after the South African War labour was difficult to procure. Tax collection was inefficient and the turmoil of the war led Africans to resist demands for wage labour (Krikler 1993). A drought and the gradual waning of hopes for liberation caused an upsurge in labour availability. In 1903 the magistrate of Upper Umkomanzi reported that native labour was 'more easily obtained than it has been for the last two or three years'.<sup>58</sup>

In 1912 the Mooi River FA president commented, 'The labour for carrying on farming operations is becoming scarcer, more difficult to obtain and dearer, Indian labour having been abolished the Union government have as yet taken no steps to replace it in any way. We must hope definite action will soon be taken in the matter.'<sup>59</sup> Farmers were no longer able to solve problems personally or even locally. Economic and political changes (in the latter case, Union transformed the bureaucracy, making it less amenable to private access) demanded collective action. The problem was that farmers were experiencing the eco-

conomic changes differently. While some wanted to continue to use Indian labour, others did not. While some wanted to retain the small, stable labour tenant population, others wanted it scrapped.<sup>60</sup> The NAU put agriculture's position to government, but this was not a position which everybody agreed with. The fact that, in the face of many different economic demands by members, the AS/FAs held together is the concern of the next section.

Farmers seldom, if ever, got immediate relief from the AS/FA or the NAU or government. Policy took a long time to formulate and enact. Farmers, therefore, continued to seek solutions by acting individually. This involved dealing with tenants and state officials. Three examples below demonstrate the different outcomes of such a strategy.

In 1904 H Lang of Rosetta entered into a verbal agreement with 'Mbomvu' to work on his farm. He realised that such an agreement was shaky because 'Mbomvu' was under order of eviction from the district under the Native Administration Law 44 of 1887.<sup>61</sup> Try as he might, Lang could not get the state to lift the eviction order. Lang protested: 'I cannot trace any wrong he has done himself', but to no avail. The Under Secretary for Native Affairs informed Lang that 'permission for Mbomvu to reside on your farm in the Estcourt Division cannot be granted'.<sup>62</sup>

Where a farmer could not reach agreement directly with neighbouring Africans, he might invoke the state or seek its involvement to resolve a problem. Arthur Woodgate farmed at 'Celeste' in Estcourt. His worry was that Africans living just beyond the boundaries of his farm were stealing his crops and wood. Having failed to get a conviction through the law courts he sought a more direct course of action. He placed a complaint with the R H Addison, the local magistrate. He identified all the laws 'Soso' had contravened, and the crimes his wives had been found guilty of. He described 'Soso' as being of 'bad character' and requested his eviction from the district. Initially the view of George Leuchars, Secretary for Native Affairs, was that he could not 'see the slightest reason why Soso's kraal should be moved'. Then Leuchars, not renowned for defending the interests of Africans, did a *volte face*. Suspecting 'Soso' of being politically involved (as an Ethiopian 'preacher') he found reason to instruct Addison to give 'Soso' 'formal notice to move his kraal next winter'. As it was, 'Soso' had decided already to move himself, having become tired of 'Mr Woodgate's persecutions'.<sup>63</sup>

The third case involves General Charles B Lloyd, the first Commissioner of Agriculture, the first, and long-standing, president of the Mooi River FA, and the first commanding officer of the Weenen Yeomanry.<sup>64</sup> Lloyd didn't have a problem of labour per se. He had loyal tenants, some of whom he wished to move to Pietermaritzburg to look after his wife, who was removing there for the winter of 1904. The problem was the need for passes. After

numerous letters and interviews, Lloyd wrote in absolute exasperation to the Weenen magistrate. 'I do not see what I am to do to carry out the Law ... *I am also endeavouring to carry out the Law and not trying to evade it.*' Lloyd, after a lot of effort, was finally successful. What is clear from this case is that there was agreement between Lloyd and the Africans travelling to Pietermaritzburg. There was trust between Lloyd and Tshuli, who 'is headman of the farm and can give full particulars'. The arrangement between Lloyd and his tenants was made difficult by the cumbersome nature of the law and the power of state officials.<sup>65</sup>

These three cases demonstrate a number of tendencies: farmers preferred to enter paternalist relations and agreements directly with Africans;<sup>66</sup> the state and its laws had the capacity to interfere with such arrangements and make the farmer's life more difficult – conversely, the state could be resorted to if no personal agreement was made between farmer and African tenant/labourer/neighbour. In the latter case it was more likely that the farmer laying the complaint would be newly settled without a stable resident tenant population and with little ability to enforce his will other than by offering high wages (which he could not afford) or using the state apparatus. In these three cases the state was as much a hindrance as an aid. And the local farmer organisation had absolutely no part to play in any of these dealings. If, then, we are to understand farmer organisation as having a role, it is at the level of policy making and lobbying rather than in the daily routines of farmer-tenant relations.

After the South African War the state expanded and became professionalised. Relations between farmer and magistrate became more formal.<sup>67</sup> The state was more present in agricultural life, making demands, for example, of statistics as farming became more scientific. The direct access to state officials which ONF farmers had in the nineteenth century was steadily eroded, dramatically so after Union.<sup>68</sup>

How close was the relationship of farmers and their organisations to the state? Were relations efficacious? In certain instances, individual farmers were closely related to government ministers and officials and it is certain that this enhanced their ability to get state assistance when they needed it. One example will suffice. William Leslie farmed near Estcourt in the Weenen division. He was a founder member of the local FA, the Weenen Yeomanry Cavalry and the local Rifle Association. His daughter was married to H D Winter, himself a farmer in the district, who was elected representative for Weenen (1893) and subsequently became Minister of Agriculture (1899–1903) and Native Affairs. Two of Leslie's sons were farmers, while the third was a magistrate.<sup>69</sup>

The relationship between AS/FAs and magistrates and government officials was close. Magistrates served on many AS executives and they were frequently consulted and invited

to meetings. This could be particularly effective when making a case to government. In the mid-1880s the local FA at Estcourt and the magistrate both condemned beer drinking among African workers, and appealed for government intervention (Burton-Clark 1988:193). The close ties gave farmers direct access to a magistrate's services and cleared communication channels, ensuring that farmers were kept informed of important local developments.

The presence of parliamentary members and ministers on the executives of AS/FAs was also an obvious boon. In 1889, for example, T K Murray used his influence in the Legislative Council to get the government to donate £100 in prize money (1889) (Gordon 1984:38).

And yet one should be careful not to exaggerate the influence of the AS/FAs or their closeness to government. Many of their requests were not acceded to. Others took a long time. In 1890, for example, the HFA petitioned for a branch line to Howick. The line was finally built in 1911. And during much of this time, the HFA was chaired by NAU president and government minister Thomas Hyslop! (Scotney & Scott-Shaw 1984:14, 25).

In fact, the AS/FAs were not primarily concerned with obtaining state support. As we shall see, their functions were many, not least in creating a progressive farmers' voice and a sense of community. So, for example, George Sutton of the HFA (and Natal premier) consistently advocated greater government support of the Veterinary Department and agricultural experiments, yet even this limited demand on government did not meet with the approval of all members who were sceptical of government involvement (Scotney & Scott-Shaw 1984:27). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to measure the influence of AS/FAs or the NAU on government policy. A few general points can be ventured, however. In the immediate context of farm life, AS/FAs were not significant in relation to labour, though central in marketing. As agriculture became more competitive and the state more involved, their role changed to include advocacy. This progression was accelerated by the recession, which lasted from 1903 (some say from 1906) to 1909 (Duminy & Guest 1989:355), Bambatha's Rebellion (which made huge fiscal demands of the state), and various agricultural pestilences which brought many farmers to the edge of bankruptcy. Many agricultural issues were raised in government by farmers who were in office. Between 1900 and 1910 only one of Natal's four premiers (Hime) was not a Midland farmer. All of the Cabinets contained many farmers, and parliament was heavily skewed towards the rural area as well.

After Union, the state became ever more professionalised, with a code of scientific management and justice which went in the face of the paternalistic orientation by which farmers had been conducting their affairs. In 1927, for example, police refused to act on war-

rants issued by the Estcourt magistrate because of their questionable legality.<sup>70</sup> Farmers were outraged, objecting that natives 'should be taught to respect their Magistrate' and not be 'assisted and encouraged to defy him'. Furthermore a Native Affairs official, sympathetic to farmers, speculated that a farmer 'could hardly be blamed if he resorted to some violent or illegal method' to solve the problem.<sup>71</sup>

### *Agricultural shows – creating a farming community*

Life in the Midlands, even in the 1880s, could be lonely and socially atomised. Farmers were often separated by large distances from one another and it was generally many miles to the local village. There was a good deal of social interaction throughout the period, with farmer diaries testifying to the importance and frequency of visits. Family ties, shared histories and locality determined patterns of visiting. For farmers in a wider area to get together required organisation. Sport was an important organisational means of bringing people together. But all the sports were aimed at specific groups and were not entirely inclusive. The agricultural show, organised by agricultural societies, was by far the most inclusive of social events. In fact as a yearly event, this dominated the village social calendar.

Peter McKenzie remembered the first agricultural show at Bulwer in 1893. It was held at 'Highbury', the farm and hotel owned by the Mingays. At this time most of the district's farmers were bachelors. They all arrived at the show, not so much out of interest in the exhibits, of which there were very few, but in the hope of fun. 'I never saw grown-up people enjoy themselves more, and I certainly never enjoyed any other Show so much myself. We all stayed the night at Mingay's store and hotel; there was very little liquor going, but plenty of songs' (McKenzie 1990:8).

By the 1890s the agricultural show had become a major event throughout Natal. The lead had been given by the Pietermaritzburg Agricultural Society, whose shows grew in importance until, in 1904, royal assent was given to its show being called the Royal Show. At this time all agricultural societies were asked to hold their shows early, allowing the Royal Show to be the climax of the season (Gordon 1984:46–47). The show became synonymous with jollity, grandeur, display (social and agricultural) and competition. It coincided with Pietermaritzburg's 'season of festivity' and included celebration of the Queen's birthday (Hattersley 1938:83). Its status was such that after Union it was acknowledged as one of the country's most prestigious shows, while locally it was chosen for a while to host the premier schoolboy rugby game of the season, that between Hilton and Michaelhouse (Gordon 1984:61).

The Royal Show had never been purely an agricultural show. Its founders and early organisers were all well aware of the importance of providing a social focus for the colony's far-flung farmers. Initially this was centred on horse racing, showing and selling since many of the colony's richest farmers were infatuated with horses.<sup>72</sup> The formula was successful and by the early 1890s the Royal Show was attracting 6 000 visitors each year (Gordon 1984:39).

Agricultural shows were expensive to run and were organisationally demanding. In due course, as government funding became less generous and demands to become involved in agricultural politics more insistent, local shows bent the knee to the Royal Show, which by the mid-1920s was the only agricultural show for white farmers in Natal.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, in our period the agricultural show was the major focus of ASs. An accompanying function was the purchase of show and sale grounds and the erection of agricultural halls. Throughout the Midlands AS/FAs put titanic efforts into these projects, squeezing cash-strapped farmers for donations, seeking government land grants, approaching local builders for supplies at cost and architects for free services. All the AS/FAs which I have examined had constructed their own halls by the turn of the century or within a decade of their establishment. So important was the agricultural hall that the Polela FA, one of the Midlands' smallest, built two in the first eleven years of its existence! Established in 1891, its first hall was burnt down a few years after erection, but a second was built and opened in 1902.<sup>74</sup>

It was the AS/FAs which initiated the building of the halls and the establishment of show grounds. In their endeavours, they generally appealed to the townspeople for assistance, invoking district loyalty as they did so.<sup>75</sup> And when a show was held, it was presented as being a reflection of the district, not just of its farmers. Local merchants were asked to donate prizes and to become involved.<sup>76</sup> Attracting a big name to open the show was important. Umvoti did well in this regard, no doubt assisted by having two former ministers of government as patrons (Sir George Leuchars and W A Deane).<sup>77</sup> Among the most prominent men to open the show were Duncan McKenzie (1912), Charles Smythe (1913) and Louis Botha (1918).<sup>78</sup> A perusal of AS/FA records reveals that the majority of time was spent on organising shows and sales. Associated activities included compiling the list of events and judges, arranging the catering, raising funds, eliciting support from local town organisations, ensuring the support of other AS/FAs and inviting speakers.

The importance attached to this function was mirrored in the interest taken in it by the local press and populace. Charmian Coulson, the historian of Richmond, summarises the importance of these events. 'The highlight of the show was the Ball held on the last evening. It was always an elaborate affair, and lavish suppers were provided by members of the Ladies Section of the Agricultural Society. Formal dress was obligatory, the men wear-

ing dress-suits and the women beautiful ball gowns.' The ball normally ended at 2 am (Coulson 1986:309).

At Donnybrook the biggest social event of the decade was the opening of the Farmers Association Hall in 1913. The opening received minute scrutiny and coverage from the local journalist. She or he commented that 'Ideal weather conditions prevailed, and the large crowd which assembled had evidently come out in the best of good humour.' Two hundred people attended the ball. These included all the local dignitaries, who are each identified by name in the newspaper report. The magistrate and parson, the local Justices of the Peace, members of neighbouring AS/FAs, local businesspeople and, of course, the Donnybrook FA committee. The occasion was judged not just by the weather and turnout, but by sartorial standards. The journalist offered extravagant description of the assembled company. '[W]hile it is obviously impossible to describe all the gowns worn at this fashionable function, some of the most artistic and striking were the following: – Mrs Harris looked charming in extremely handsome gown of old gold satin, with an overdress of fine black lace of rare quality ...' She or he commented on other aspects of the event, complimenting all involved. 'For the catering, which was carried out by the Ladies of the district, no praise is too high. These good dames, both young and old, bountifully supplied all kinds of dainties and delicacies.'<sup>79</sup>

The hall was generally the social centre of the Midlands village. It was used by dramatic and debating societies and by political parties. Numerous committee meetings were held there. Prize-givings and memorial services tended to happen there as well. For white farmers and villagers the agricultural hall was concrete testimony to their labours, productivity, indeed to their very existence. In other contexts the halls could assume an entirely different symbolic significance. In 1906 the men held responsible for the killings of Hunt and Armstrong at Trewirgie, Richmond, were tried in the Richmond Agricultural Hall. Twelve of the 24 accused were sentenced to death and shot (Shepstone 1937:48).

The agricultural show provided a place for every white who lived in the Midlands. Going to the show, being at the show, confirmed for everyone his or her membership of a distinctive community. But its inclusivity did not gloss over the hierarchies implicit in the event. The organising committee obviously took pride of place. Committee members, as we have already seen, were the farmers who were well-off and geographically close enough to town to attend committee meetings with regularity. These were the men who were able to take out debentures to pay for the hall, the show ground or whatever the society needed to advance its claim as being the leading organisation in the district. Then there were the farmers who 'showed'. Once again these tended to be the 'progressive' farmers, men like P D Simmons of Mooi River, who year after year won major prizes for cattle, merino

sheep and wool at the Royal Show. And from across the Midlands the 'progressive' farmers secured their reputation, or made it, by winning agricultural prizes. So, for example, Ixopo's J T Foster (of 'Stainton') and General Arnott ('Esperanza'), became renowned for their Shorthorn cattle (Gordon 1984:55). But even if you were not a farmer with products that were potentially prize-winning, you could be a part of the show by being a steward or judge yourself. In the Umvoti and Richmond Agricultural Societies the lists of judges include a member of virtually every ONF in the district. With often 20 to 30 categories to judge, it was possible to include a large spectrum of the local farming population.<sup>80</sup> As time went on, judging became more scientific and the realm of the expert, and such inclusivity was no longer possible, but for much of our period at least the local agricultural show was hosted and manned (sic) by the people of the district.<sup>81</sup>

The agricultural show, then, was a mechanism (within strict racial limits) of inclusion rather than exclusion. It allowed for the local endorsement of existing social and economic hierarchies and, to a large extent, ensured that harmony existed. The annual general meeting was a generally well attended function, with a dinner or some other form of function accompanying it. The meetings invariably included a long speech by the president, outlining the district's progress, problems ahead, achievements and so on. The tone was normally self-congratulatory but with some carefully chosen admonitions too: a captain's assessment of the team's performance during the season. Reports of meetings frequently capture the atmosphere by referring to the president's speech being 'punctuated by applause and exclamations of approval'.<sup>82</sup> In short, meetings were affirmations of group identity, and implicit within this, of the status of the president and his committee. It was not always plain sailing: with regards to agricultural shows there were squabbles about prizes, about fairness and about the composition of organising committees. But this needs to be judged by the increases in entries and the steady expansion of the show to include such ice-breakers of the modern age as the bioscope, brought to Greytown's agricultural show in 1919.<sup>83</sup>

The district's leading farmers used the AS/FAs to claim to be the authoritative voice of the district. In 1897, for example, the right of the MRFA to host an important public meeting was emphasised by A K Murray. All societies in the district, he said, 'looked upon this one as the parent society'.<sup>84</sup> And twenty years later when Greytown's Patriotic League decided to hold a fancy dress ball to raise funds, it was obvious that the first organisation they turned to was the Umvoti AS.<sup>85</sup>

The agricultural shows not only acted as a focus for local community, they also served to integrate a wider farming population, introducing farmers to one another, through a yearly repetitive exercise, renewing and strengthening the notion of collective endeavour and identity. This was achieved not just by farmers exhibiting at shows outside their own district

(primarily at the Royal Show). Judges were drawn from far and wide and agricultural shows (and sales) were carefully staggered so that there were very few, if any clashes.<sup>86</sup> It was thus possible for merchants, auctioneers, and farmers to circulate to all the shows. The process whereby agricultural shows were rationalised involved cooperation between AS/FAs. This became ever closer and was institutionalised by reciprocal arrangements of one sort or another. In 1898 the Mooi River FA accepted the principle of reciprocity with other FAs.<sup>87</sup> In 1909, for example, the Howick FA made the NRFA president an exofficio member (Scotney & Scott-Shaw 1984:29).

The process by which the agricultural societies strengthened their ties and created a particular understanding of the Natal Midland farming community was not linear, smooth, uncontested or unproblematic.

Elections for office could be hotly contested. Members could resign in a huff. Notions of honour could be transgressed and apologies demanded. Offence might be taken at some political comment and dire action threatened. Yet without exception the AS/FAs survived this turbulence. One major reason for them so doing was the insistence on procedure (ways of channelling and controlling dissent, preventing it from becoming destructive rather than merely disruptive). Another was a commitment to inclusion, of fostering the idea that the AS/FAs were for and of the farmers.

The affairs of the Mooi River FA illustrated how farmer organisations survived the turbulence. Cotton Acutt was part of the large and influential Acutt family (Miller 1978). He was one of the biggest and earliest farmers in the district, cultivated rhubarb for export and headed the local rifle association. On a number of occasions his robust belief in the rights of the individual and the need for initiative got him into trouble with prickly fellow committee members. In 1897 Acutt called a public meeting in Mooi River to discuss the approaching rinderpest. He was accused by the secretary of trying to destroy the MRFA. His response was that he had acted only because the president, Herbert Blaker,<sup>88</sup> had done nothing, and had 'sat mum'.<sup>89</sup> A month later the matter was still simmering. The president defended himself against the insinuation of complacency.

Mr Cotton Acutt said he was sorry the Pres. [sic] should bring this matter forward again. He thought it had been settled at last meeting. If he had done wrong he had already been punished and had taken his punishment, but it was not generous to harp continually on the subject.

On a separate matter, Acutt was then accused of ignoring committee instruction when as a delegate to the Farmers Conference he had voted against the withdrawal of the 'kaffir

agent' in Johannesburg and had 'neglected his instructions to bring before that same conference the fact that the Res Magte at Estcourt had ordered scabby sheep to be travelled along the public road'. Acutt left the meeting saying 'he had no time just at present to answer Mr Richards. He had a meeting of the Rifle Assoc to attend, of which he was Pres and had already wasted some time here. He might tell them, however, that he had voted against the removal of the Native Agent because that course appeared right to him and he could not vote blindly.' He 'simply and flatly refused to be "bound down hand and foot" on any subject'. The matter was debated heatedly, with a vote to remove Acutt as delegate to the Farmers Conference succeeding. The controversy split the committee. Other issues were drawn into the arena. The secretary, Mr West, 'having brought to the notice of the meeting the serious accusation preferred against him by Mr Acutt "That of twisting the books of the Assoc to suit his own palate" requested the Assoc to require Mr Acutt to withdraw this serious charge or to substantiate it.'<sup>90</sup>

A year later things had cooled off. West and Acutt were, together, delegates to the Farmers Conference. At the annual general meeting they presented a joint front: 'The Delegates replied in a few words that doing their duty was their sole aim and reward and assuring the Association of the pleasure and gratification they felt in having secured their approbation. (applause).' Four years later, Cotton Acutt was elected president, unanimously.<sup>91</sup>

The second means by which the unity of farmers was maintained was to define their area of provenance clearly and closely to ensure that other interests were not destructively brought within the ambit of AS/FA affairs. 'Politics' was always avoided. The president of the Mooi River FA stressed this in his 1910 presidential speech:

I have always steadfastly refused to allow your Association to be used as a medium by any political organisation or politician, or to be dragged into political polemics, as I maintain such are not within our province and only tend to lower our prestige, when we require our voice heard in matters vital to our interests. I hope such will ever be our policy.<sup>92</sup>

For the most part, this policy was successful and although members of AS/FAs contested parliamentary elections, there is no record of representative political debates ever being drawn into the AS/FA sphere.<sup>93</sup>

A commitment to inclusion overrode virtually all other considerations. In 1913 Umvoti AS chair, E J van Rooyen, said that some committee members should not be reelected because they 'never attended meetings and were no more good than dead men'. His call (or was it just a statement of exasperation) was not heeded.<sup>94</sup> When members took umbrage and

resigned, no matter how cantankerous and difficult they might be, they were always asked to reconsider.<sup>95</sup> And when members failed to pay their subscriptions, moralistic calls for them to be exposed (and thus humiliated) were defeated.<sup>96</sup>

When one pages through the minutes of the AS/FAs one is struck by the repetitive character of organisational activity. The meetings occur with regularity, each accompanied by a particular ritual, each supportive of organisational and social hierarchy. It was in these performances, year in and year out, that the integrative power of the AS/FAs lay. People are not members of a community because they objectively own so much, or have such-and-such an occupation or live in a particular place. Nor are communities created in a simple, one-off process of social construction. Communities as dynamic, fluid, unstable social forms exist only to the extent that the members who consider themselves to be part of that community continue so to do. It was through the metronomic doings of the farmer organisations that belonging was established, confirmed and reinforced. To be counted a farmer involved, 'naturally', being a member of the AS/FA (Pennefather interview 1993). The longer the AS/FAs functioned, the greater their influence, the more undeniable their history, the more forceful their claim to be the farmers' voice. And histories could be written and spoken to prove the seamless nature of the farming community, one undivided and natural.<sup>97</sup> This interpretation totally conceals the fact that in the AS/FAs people were silenced and excluded, hierarchies were created and perpetuated. It hides the fact that in this ostensibly neat and comfortable community dissension occurred and power prevailed.

In a candid description of the concentration of power Mrs B Gordon, of the Greytown Museum, wrote, 'The History of the Umvoti Agricultural Society is so closely linked with the History of Greytown itself, it is impossible to separate the two ... The names of the members of the Agricultural Society are the same names found taking part in all the activities of the town' (Gordon [n d]:6). The concentration of influence and power was awesome, but not unusual. Yet the ONFs were not the only families in the area and, over time, they became numerically less significant. Their monopoly of the AS/FA limelight was achieved by consciously excluding other people and by having their claims to elevation accepted by fellow farmers.

Blacks (Indians and Africans) were considered to have no claim at all upon the goodwill of or inclusion in the AS/FA, though only the Umvoti AS made this explicit.<sup>98</sup> In 1905 the Mooi River FA faced the 'threat' of Indian competition: 'After the first few markets, it was evident that Arab and coolie traders intended to try and monopolise the trade. A separate table was, therefore, provided for their use, which was entirely trade stuff and not grown by them, and the produce on this table was sold after everything else. Since this arrangement has been in force the produce tabled by these people has been infinitesimal. Your

market is a European one; keep it so long as you can.<sup>99</sup> While there are very few references to Indians in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century, virtually every AS/FA was setting up 'Indian Committees' and passing motions for tabling at the NAU to have Indian competition restricted and Indians repatriated.<sup>100</sup>

Much the same treatment was meted out to Africans. Seldom regarded as anything other than a labour supply, they were generally referred to in impersonal terms. But Africans were not only idle or unwilling workers, they were also people who were careless, who carried disease. They could, therefore, come to the attention of AS/FAs as problems. In trying to contain East Coast Fever, Africans were given specific consideration. 'The greatest difficulty would be the kafir, but ... by making the kafir know that he must keep his cattle in one place, and entirely off any infected area, this threatened plague would be stamped out.'<sup>101</sup> In Polela the spread of typhus was of concern in 1920. The president of the Donnybrook FA noted that 'owing to difficulty of controlling Natives in sanitary matters they (government officials) have an up-hill task. We cannot but view the position with alarm and should assist as much as possible by seeing that the premises occupied by the Natives in our employ are kept as clean as possible and endeavour to control the movements of their Natives.'<sup>102</sup> The African was the unpredictable, the other. As in most other areas of settler life, Africans provided the backdrop to AS/FA activities. They were, for settlers, like the Drakensberg which kept a brooding watch over the Midlands of Natal: sometimes threatening, sometimes beautiful, never to be wished away, never far from view, always to be subdued and conquered.

There was another category which sat awkwardly on the benches of the excluded. The farmers' wives or, as they were always called, 'the ladies'. Policy towards women in the AS/FAs was most uneven. In some, they maintained a benign and supportive presence, making tea and bringing good cheer to the post-meeting gatherings. In others they were wooed, praised, though never given any indication that their aspirations could legitimately encompass leadership. Finally, there were some AS/FAs who took a hostile position, pushing them to the margins, rebutting their attempts to claim a place.

In the Umvoti AS, women were given a central place in the organisation of entertainment and catering. In 1912 the president applauded 'The energy and enthusiasm displayed by the ladies'. Their endeavours had brought in £206 'and they deserved unstinted praise for their efforts to further the interests of the Society.'<sup>103</sup> Eligible for full membership, the president described the increase in women members in 1917 as a 'happy augury because while we can keep the ladies interested we are sure to be able to make things go'.<sup>104</sup> The men of Mooi River were not nearly so inclusive or generous towards their 'ladies'. Motions put to meetings to allow 'ladies' to do the catering at stock sales were defeated in 1908 and

1914.<sup>105</sup> In 1915, possibly as a result of a decline in members (away on active service), the rules of the AS were altered to admit 'lady' members. In that same year, however, they were again refused the right to cater at agricultural sales.<sup>106</sup>

The role of women (to which we return in the next chapter) should be seen not just as exclusion or inclusion. It was often a mixture of both. Jeff Hearn argues that even when 'exclusion of women from some organisations was absolute, organisations still existed as relations between women and men. Exclusions were both imposed, by men, and negotiated, between women and men, particularly in the minutiae of social relationships' (Hearn 1992:143).

Although they were a minority, there were farmers who chose not to join the AS/FAs. Initially, most farmers were members of the organisations. But in time, as the white farming population swelled, the proportion dropped. In Umvoti, for example, the Executive Committee of the AS raised the issue in 1917. 'We boast that our County is one of the wealthiest in Natal with a white population of 1,944, and yet a Society that is working in the interests of one and all can only show a membership of two hundred.'<sup>107</sup> There were a range of reasons that farmers chose not to join: AS/FA subscriptions could be high; the actual benefit in material terms to members was limited; the policies proposed by AS/FAs did not suit all; there were other organisations (sports clubs, old boy societies, family affiliation) which gave farmers a voice; meetings could be inconvenient and futile if one had no interest in office or organisational politics. In the end it was the AS/FAs which needed farmer members, rather than farmers who needed AS/FA membership. It was the success of the ONF culture that farmers found so many different locations to express their voices and find institutional or organisational identity.<sup>108</sup> In fact, few white farmers seem to have been silenced. (Those that were will be discussed in the chapter 9.)

In the end, the significance of the AS/FAs lay in giving a platform for, and status to, those farmers who were held to be leaders among farmers. Initially, this did little more than establish a standard of class identity. Presidents and chairmen (of AS and FAs respectively) symbolised the worthy and sturdy Midland farmer. They created a community and gave it access to markets and state officials. But this was at a time when relationships on the farm, especially with farm labour, were conducted in a very direct way. So long as the state did not challenge these relations, the AS/FAs were considered benign by non-members. The pennant flown by the most forceful, influential and 'progressive' farmers who led the AS/FAs was of modernisation – of scientific farming, of improvement. Since the state was not able to force any of these changes onto farmers, the message of modernisation (especially as it did not include a demand for the transformation of labour tenancy into wage labour) was not threatening. With the dawning of the twentieth century, agricultural poli-

tics became more significant. Marketing became more critical, but there was little debate here: the AS/FAs held sales but these were relatively uncontroversial, giving members little advantage over non-members. It was in the area of labour relations that matters became heated. In the switch from pastoral to arable or mixed farming, more labour was required. Some farmers had the connections to obtain such labour, but many, the late-arrivals especially, did not. And so the AS/FAs began to be battlegrounds for policy.<sup>109</sup>

## Notes

- 1 In the production of maize, for example, a surplus was produced which destabilised the local market. The only way of stabilising the local market was to export at a loss, and cooperatives were the vehicle for this process. In beef production as well, oversupply had a deeply disturbing effect on the industry as a whole (Morrell 1986b).
- 2 *Natal Legislative Council, First Session, Eleventh Council, Sessional Papers 1883:195.*
- 3 Natal, *Report of the Secretary, Minister of Agriculture, For the year ended 30th June 1905:3.*
- 4 Kimber Interview 1994; Transcripts of letters from Jeffery Morpew to his father, dated April 1901 to May 1901 (in possession of Mrs Nan Slade, Howick).
- 5 In the late 1890s Peter McKenzie left his farm 'Seaforth' in the Polela district to earn some money in Rhodesia. He intended being away for a number of years. He records that he left his farm 'in charge of my natives' indicating the levels of trust that existed in some of these relationships (McKenzie 1990:9–10).
- 6 A very well-written, but essentialist, account of farmer violence in the Orange Free State context is provided by Murray 1989.
- 7 This is a point also made by Slater 1980:160.
- 8 *Native Affairs Commission, 1906–7, Evidence:201, 224.*
- 9 *Native Affairs Commission, 1906–7, Evidence:354.*
- 10 Evidence of John Marwick (Richmond), *Native Affairs Commission, 1906–7, Evidence:335–336.*
- 11 For example, evidence of John Morton (Nottingham Road), *Native Affairs Commission, 1906–7:205.* Another reason for demanding greater state intervention was to prop up the authority of the homestead head, the absence of which meant that the farmer could not access the labour of the young males of the homestead (evidence of Henry Cadle and Allan Stuart (Estcourt):229:230).
- 12 *Native Affairs Commission, 1906–7:215.*
- 13 *Native Affairs Commission, 1906–7:356*
- 14 1/BLR, 4/1/7, P1029/1907, Allwright to Magistrate Giles, 11 November 1907; Allwright to George Francis, 24 February 1908.
- 15 Oral transcripts, Baynesfield Museum.
- 16 Loudon confirms that in the 1960s this way of relating to Africans was still the norm in the Midlands (1970: chapter 5).
- 17 Benedict Carton (2000: chapter 2) on the period around the turn of the century and that of Ben Mazower (1991:61) on the 1940s show that the authority of the homestead head was constantly challenged by young men and women.

- 18 The power of the African cultivators/farm workers to influence their conditions of work is generally acknowledged. Africans were rarely, if ever, powerless. In the Orange Free State, in the era of sharecropping, they successfully used their agricultural skills (even after the passing of the 1913 Land Act) and productive capacity to bargain for better conditions (Keegan 1988). In the Midlands, sharecropping did not exist and there were fewer possibilities of migration. Yet this was an incentive to deal with white farmers who were short of labour and to build up an uneven, but not absolutely powerless, working arrangement.
- 19 I/MRV, volume 1, *Combined criminal record book and case and fines book*, 1923–1925:217. The earlier records are missing.
- 20 CAD, JUS 179, 4/251/13, McKenzie to Roos, 31 May 1913.
- 21 *Sessional Papers, 5th Session of 5th Parliament, 1909*, LA No 6 of 1909:34.
- 22 The large distance between the PAS and its supposed agricultural constituency is also borne out by the choice of secretaries: Robert Finnemore, prominent civil servant and leader of Natal's freemasons, was honorary secretary in 1879–1880.
- 23 There is no consolidated list of Midlands' agricultural societies and farmer associations, or of their dates of formation. Furthermore, their records are scattered far and wide, and many have been lost. For example, the Polela Agricultural Societies minutes have been 'lost', while the early records of the Umvoti Agricultural Society were totally destroyed in a calamitous fire in 1914. The Killie Campbell library has a good collection, but many associations/societies still keep their own records: The Nottingham Road and Underberg societies fall into this category, though the NRFA's early history is sketched in Wood (1947). The Ixopo FA also has some records, but I have not been able to track these down. By fortunate accident, I found the minutes of the Impendhle Agricultural Society in the possession of the district's amateur historian, Ann Black. In many instances I have had to glean information about associations and societies from local or private publications (eg Creighton Women's Institute).
- 24 The constitution of the Impendhle Division Farmers Association actually provided for the local magistrate to be ex officio honorary president (Impendhle Division Farmers Association Minute Book:3. (In possession of Mrs Ann Black, Elandshoek Farm, Boston.)).
- 25 Philip Francis Payn (1853–1916) farmed in Richmond. He was born in Jersey, Channel Islands, and emigrated in 1856 with his parents. In 1902 he represented Pietermaritzburg County in parliament.
- 26 Murray, as president of the Pietermaritzburg Agricultural Society, called a Farmers' Conference in 1891. All agricultural societies were invited to attend. Nine affiliated. In 1905 the Farmers' Conference was converted into the Natal Agricultural Union (NAU).
- 27 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 25 October 1919; KCM 43085, Donnybrook FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 14 September 1919.
- 28 The transformation of farmer organisations in the United Kingdom occurred at about the same time. Whereas in the 1880s agricultural interests were characterised by 'division and weakness' by the 1910s a powerful national body had emerged to represent agricultural interests (Cox, Lowe & Winter 1991:33, 35).
- 29 CAD, URU, 451, 1463; URU 20465, 2416.
- 30 In a rare case, members of LRDAS formed 'the Howick Credit Society to help their fellow farmers who were in financial difficulties'. The society operated in the depression years of the 1930s but I have no knowledge of its operations (Scotney & Scott-Shaw 1984:38).

- 31 A1292, 1/1/1/1, *Regulations of the Pietermaritzburg Cooperative Society* (reprinted 10 May 1929).
- 32 CNC 376, 1919/3045.
- 33 Challis, the government dairy expert, for example, believed that dairy output would be doubled if farmers abandoned stubborn individualism and embraced cooperation (Natal, Agriculture Department, *Annual report for 1902*:137.)
- 34 Mazower (1991:37–38) maintains that this was still the case in the 1940s.
- 35 To mention a few, the Umvoti AS included W A Deane and George Leuchars (Ministers of Agriculture and Native Affairs respectively); HFA had Thomas Watt, Thomas Hyslop and George Sutton; NRFA boasted Charles Smythe, Weenen Agricultural Society had H D Winter and John Moor; RAS boasted Joseph Baynes; Klip River, T K Murray.
- 36 In 1901, for example, the Mooi River FA cooperated with the Howick FA to import bone dust fertiliser at a cheap rate for members. (KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of special general meeting, 2 March 1901.)
- 37 An example of the change in scale, orientation and sophistication of farming is provided by William Nicholson of Richmond. His farm, 'Thedden', was described by a *Natal Mercury* journalist in 1889 as 'endless fields of verdant, cultivated spots' while all of the family's farms were extensively irrigated and fertilised and in the process of becoming mechanised (Lambert 1986:181). Ten years later, it was not just the farms of a few leading farmers that were in this stage of transition.
- 38 MSCE 2645/1918 Estate of Charles John Smythe; Smythe Interview 1992.
- 39 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of a subcommittee meeting, 30 July 1896.
- 40 MSCE 11/12, Estate of Reginald Raw.
- 41 KCM 43085, Donnybrook FA Minutes, committee meeting at Donnybrook Hotel, 17 November 1906. A similar situation existed in the NRFA, where the auctioneers were Raw and Co, and a brother/cousin was a leading member (Wood 1947:7–8).
- 42 KCM 33647, Richmond AS 1917–1938, minutes of meeting, 1 April 1920.
- 43 In Australia similar developments occurred: 'In the rural economy, farmers began to form cooperatives, or unions, to lobby for greater control over the circulation sphere (in such matters as lowering railway freight costs, enhancing marketing, and obtaining greater financial assistance in the face of the bank's traditional pastoral bias). They also demanded a more scientific approach to agriculture' (McMichael 1984:227).
- 44 *The Agricultural Journal*, VIII (3) (24 March 1905):287.
- 45 Moor was chair of the Natal Cooperative Creamery (1902–1907), chair of the Farmers' Cooperative Bacon Factory (1917–1933) and Director of Federated Farmers Cooperative Company and Overseas Cooperative Selling Agency.
- 46 George Robert Richards (1865–1951) served with the NC in the South African war. In 1901 he was elected for Weenen County. In 1924 he was elected as a SAP representative for the same constituency.
- 47 The local African market was considered a godsend: Donnybrook farmers sold their horses to Pondoland Africans when other markets dried up. (KCM 43085, Donnybrook FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 2 September 1916.)
- 48 KCM 33647, Richmond AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 27 January 1925.
- 49 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, general meeting at Grantleigh hotel, 12 December 1895.
- 50 KCM 24436, Mooi River FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 25 October 1912.

- 51 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of general meeting, 12 December 1895.
- 52 KCM 43085, Donnybrook FA, minutes of general meeting, 7 March 1908; KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 30 January 1915.
- 53 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of special general meetings 16 August 1903, 29 August 1903; KCM 33659, Umvoti Agricultural Society, minutes of annual general meeting, 30 January 1915.
- 54 This practice was particularly widespread before Union in terms of Section 37 of the Native Law Code, which was amended by Act 47 of 1903. See SNA 1/1/325, 1905/2281 and SNA 1/1/380, 1907/2961.
- 55 Impendhle Division FA minutes of annual general meeting, 8 September 1911:17.
- 56 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of special general meeting, 22 March 1919; KCM 43085, Donnybrook FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 23 September 1920.
- 57 Natal, Agriculture Department, *Annual report for 1902*, (1903):3.
- 58 Natal, *Magisterial reports, 1903* (1904):12.
- 59 KCM 24436, Mooi River FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 25 October 1912.
- 60 KCM 24436, Mooi River FA, minutes of special general meeting, 8 April 1908; KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of special general meeting, 22 March 1919.
- 61 The section (6) of the law transgressed made it an offence punishable with a £5 fine for Africans to harbour criminals or conceal evidence. The section cited in correspondence actually makes NO provision for eviction.
- 62 SNA 1/1/311, 201124/1904, Lang to Secretary Native Affairs, 23 May 1904; Under Secretary for Native Affairs to Lang, 11 August 1904.
- 63 SNA 1/1/311, 1444/1904, Woodgate to Addison, 7 July 1904; Leuchars to Magistrate Estcourt, 21 July 1904; Leuchars to Magistrate Estcourt, 28 November 1904; Addison to Secretary for Native Affairs, 21 November 1904.
- 64 KCM 24435, Minutes of the Mooi River FA; Laband and Thompson 1990:252.
- 65 SNA 1/1/311, 1255/1904, Lloyd to Magistrate Weenen, 15 June 1904; Lloyd to Magistrate Weenen, 13 June 1904.
- 66 In using the term 'paternalist' here, I am associating myself with Robert Ross's 'weak' definition of the term, which is to say that dominant individuals (mostly men) realised that their dominance entailed duties as well as rights. While some (a few) farmers treated their labourers as though they were more than just paid-providers of labour service (which comes closer to Ross's stronger definition of paternalism (Ross 1995:39)), few, if any, of them treated labour as extended kin.
- 67 This became particularly true after Union, and ever more so as magistrates were moved around and were thus unfamiliar with local farmers. See Loudon 1970:62.
- 68 The process, however, was not uniform or all-pervasive. Midland communities worked hard to gain the friendship of magistrates and make them feel part of the 'white community'. This is evidenced in the case of the Estcourt magistrate who, on his departure from the district, was hosted to a dinner by the Women's Institute, the Tennis Club, the Parish Association and Bowling Club (of which he was president) (Mazower 1991:84-85).
- 69 *Natal Agricultural Journal*, 7 (1904):1039-40.
- 70 CAD, NTS 9252, 1/371, Part 1, CNC (Natal) to SNA, 3 July 1928.
- 71 CAD, NTS 9252, 1/371, Part 1, unsigned memo, 7 September 1927.

- 72 Three men who dominated the Royal Show (all were presidents) all owned thoroughbred race-horses and were fiercely competitive with one another. They were Charles Barter, Lushington Philips, and P A R Otto. All were well known at the Victoria Club as well. Of the presidents during the show's first decade only Barter was a farmer, and he not primarily one.
- 73 Agricultural shows for African farmers began in the 1920s as a way of shoring up 'disintegrating relations in the countryside' and thus socially controlling Africans (Hughes 1988:17).
- 74 Private correspondence, Desmond Mingay, 11 March 1988.
- 75 KCM 33659, Umvoti Agricultural Society, minutes of a special meeting held at Commercial Hotel, 14 October 1911.
- 76 KCM 33659, Umvoti Agricultural Society, minutes of committee meeting, Saturday ? December 1911.
- 77 William Arthur Deane (1868–1958) farmed in Umvoti. He was elected to Parliament in 1901 and in 1906 became Minister of Agriculture.
- 78 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 23 October 1912; annual general meeting, 31 October 1913; executive council meeting, 8 June 1918.
- 79 KCM 43085, Donnybrook FA, minutes of the annual general meeting, Saturday 27 September 1913.
- 80 See for example, KCM 33646, Richmond AS, minutes of a meeting, 14 April 1886 and 28 April 1886; and KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of an executive committee meeting, 8 February 1919.
- 81 In 1910, after an appeal by the Department of Agriculture, the NAU took up the issue of standardising judging and had affiliates adopt uniform criteria of judging.
- 82 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, annual general meeting, 23 October 1912, apparently published in the *Greytown Gazette*.
- 83 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of executive committee meeting, 25 January 1919.
- 84 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of a special general meeting, 24 April 1897.
- 85 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of executive committee meeting, 19 May 1919.
- 86 For example, KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of a special meeting, [n d] c October 1895.
- 87 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 30 July 1898.
- 88 Herbert Blaker came to Natal in 1864 and began the farm 'South Downs' in 1868. He won prizes at agricultural shows for cattle and sheep. He sent his son, George Ernest Blaker, to Hilton College. George took over the farm, joined the NC, played a host of representative sports and was steward at the MRFA stock sales (*Cape Times* [n d]:245).
- 89 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of special general meeting, 27 February 1897.
- 90 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of special general meeting, 27 March 1897.
- 91 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 30 July 1898.
- 92 KCM 24436, Mooi River FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 27 August 1910.
- 93 In the 1892 elections, for example, the Ixopo division was contested by Joseph Baynes and Henry Nicholson (office-bearers in Richmond AS) and Grafton (chair of the Polela AS) (Pearse 1981:132).
- 94 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 31 October 1913.
- 95 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of executive committee meeting, 28 November 1919.
- 96 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of a meeting, 16 September 1896.
- 97 Scotney and Scott-Shaw, the official historians of the LRDAS, achieve this by claiming that the

LRDAS was formed so that 'farmers of the district could speak with one voice in their approach to government' (1984:1).

- 98 This is a vastly more complex issue, since farmers did business with Indian traders, especially in the nineteenth century, and even after the deluge of anti-Indian legislation relations between established, local Indian traders and white farmers could be cordial (Huttenback 1976, Rahman interview 1992). KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 23 October 1912.
- 99 KCM 24435, Mooi River FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 26 May 1905. President's address.
- 100 For example, KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 5 October 1919.
- 101 KCM 24436, Mooi River FA, minutes of special general meeting, 26 September 1906.
- 102 KCM 43085, Donnybrook FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 23 September 1920.
- 103 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 23 October 1912.
- 104 KCM 33659, Umvoti FA, minutes of annual general meeting, 30 November 1917.
- 105 KCM 24436, Mooi River FA, minutes of a special committee meeting, 24 October 1908; committee meeting of the Fat Stock Show Committee, 15 July 1914.
- 106 This was also the experience at the Royal Show (Gordon 1984:60). KCM 24436, Mooi River FA, minutes of special general meeting, 31 July 1915; committee meeting, 12 November 1915.
- 107 KCM 33659, Umvoti AS, minutes of annual general meeting, 30 November 1917.
- 108 The best-known example was Joseph Baynes, who refused to join the NAU, but was a member of the Rand, Victoria and Durban clubs, the Royal Agricultural Society and the Pietermaritzburg Botanic Society, as well as an MLA for much of the period (Pearse 1981:249).
- 109 In 1918 and 1919 motions concerning the resuscitation of the *isibhalo* labour system were put at the NAU congress, resulting in heated debate. The motion was carried in 1919, but the Native Affairs Department refused to implement 'such a retrograde step'. CAD, NTS 9252, 1/371, Part I, CNC (Natal) to SNA, 15 November 1919.