

A House Divided: Afrikaner Ethnicity and Sub-ethnicity

Chapter One focused on the Afrikaner–English-speaking divide. From the perspective of my interest in the evolution of Cape Afrikaner ethnic identity and consciousness, the conflict between Afrikaner and English-speaking sheep farmers is of great importance. This is so because, as has been seen, ethnic identity develops and flourishes in situations where there is contact between different cultural groups. It is in such situations that ethnic boundaries can best be defined and maintained. The fact that the Afrikaner–English-speaking divide was much more than merely about culture in the narrow sense greatly contributed to the consolidation of Afrikaner ethnicity among the farmers who opposed the Act.

Yet, the impact of the encounter with the English-speakers on the evolving Afrikaner ethnicity was more complex. Ethnic identities and consciousness and the communities they engender are rarely homogenous and uniform. Consequently, the process of ethnic identity formation is often marked by strife rather than by unison. Indeed, even bloody civil wars can form part of the process. This is so because ethnicity is about establishing an ethnic boundary rather than determining the content of the group's ideology or politics. There could even be conflicting views with regard to the essence of the particular ethnicity and the appropriate strategies to promote it.

The existence of the ethnic other can serve to unite an ethnic community. However, the impact of the encounter between ethnic groups, especially when they live in close proximity, can be contradictory with respect to the prospect of ethnic unity. This is mainly because ethnic boundaries in such cases are often porous and what flows from one ethnic space to the other does not always reinforce unity; also because the perception of and the attitude towards the other ethnic community is often varied. Furthermore, influences filtering from one ethnic space to another can produce internal fault lines exacerbating cleavages and negatively impacting the process of ethnic identity formation and consolidation. This was certainly so in the case of the evolution of Cape Afrikaner ethnic identity and consciousness in the late nineteenth century.

As has been shown in Chapter One – the English-speakers as rulers and settlers were not only members of a different linguistic–cultural group. They were also the bearers of economic development, modernisation and the ethos of progress. By the end of the nineteenth century these currents, penetrating the Cape through British agents and capital, had left a deep but unequal imprint on Cape Afrikaner society. As was manifested in the anti-Scab Act movement, most Afrikaner stock farmers rejected

much of the radical version of the creed of modernity and progress. However, this was not the case with all Cape Afrikaners. The opponents of the Act faced this complexity as their campaign unfolded.

Ethnic unity and economic diversity: The 'triple alliance' (sheep, wine and wheat) – myth and reality

The main strategic thrust of the opponents to the Act was to rally the other farming sectors in the Cape behind them. Their targets were particularly the two other major agricultural sectors, namely the wine farmers and the wheat farmers. From this perspective the Afrikaner Bond, representing Cape Afrikaner ethnic assertion, was conceived of as a coalition of different economic sectors rather than a manifestation of undifferentiated ethnicity. Consequently, the articulation of the 'triple alliance' became a major theme in the discourse of the leadership of the opponents. This was the message of J. B. Nigrini when he addressed a meeting in Paarl, the capital of viticulture: 'The best plan is that the wine farmer, the wheat farmer and the stock farmer will unite and cooperate for the mutual promotion of their interests. If one will suffer the others will suffer too.' He elaborated on the need for the wine farmer and the stock farmer to collaborate in combating unwelcome interventions by the Government: 'The stock farmer fears the Scab Act and the wine farmer fears the Excise [on brandy]. It was only the unity of all the farmers that could guarantee that the 'fortune seekers' would not have their way.¹ Earlier, at the founding conference of the anti-Scab Act movement, Nigrini presented a more idealistic and organic view of the totality of the Afrikaner farming community: 'The sheep, corn and wine farmers form a great body. If one limb suffers all suffer and therefore all farmers should support one another and must eliminate the Act.'² P. B. van Rhyn, a leading opponent of the Act in Parliament who spoke in similar terms, added a personal touch: 'My duty is towards my fellow stock, wheat and wine farmers – because these three industries are one body tied to one another.'³ This was also the message at a meeting in Swellendam assembled with a view to forging such unity. Hugo argued that the interest of one farming sector was the interest of the other and that if the Act was implemented, the suppression of the [Afrikaner] farmers would continue.⁴ At the 1897 Bond Congress, D. P. van den Heever implied that in causing disunity between the different sectors the supporters of the Act wished to destroy the Afrikaner farmers.⁵

The same spirit emanated from the rank and file. A correspondent foresaw that in the wake of the ruinous Act the Government would pursue the wine farmers and the wheat farmers, arguing that this would spell doom for the Afrikaners in the Colony.⁶ A Bond branch from Fraserburg passed a resolution requesting the cooperation of the wine and wheat farmers.⁷ Another branch in the same district resolved to establish a committee to correspond with the latter.⁸ A correspondent recalled, with a touch

of nostalgia, that when the wine farmer was hard pressed by the Excise his 'two brothers the wheat farmer and the stock farmer came to his rescue', and that when the wheat farmer suffered from imports from Australia, 'his brothers' were always prepared to assist him. He added that the stock farmers did it even though it was to their own disadvantage.⁹ This 'glorious' past solidarity stood, of course, as is often the case, in stark contradiction to the current state of affairs.

Thus, the Afrikaner ethnic community was articulated and disseminated not as an organic amalgamation of atomised individuals, but rather as a 'federation' of particular sub-ethnoeconomic communities. At the root of this articulation was the recognition of internal cleavages and of the centrality of economic considerations in the evolution of Cape Afrikaner ethnicity. The ethnic community was to be constructed not by destroying the sub-communities or ignoring them, but rather by transcending them. In order to achieve that, emphasis was laid not only on the unifying culture and history of the whole group, but also on the interdependence between the different Afrikaner sectors. This thrust was not unproblematic.

Sheep farmers did enjoy the support of the wheat farmers. This was so because many of the latter were also involved in sheep farming. This was acknowledged by a correspondent who reported on the grain-growing districts of Malmesbury, Piketberg, Caledon and Tulbagh.¹⁰ This was the message of Rossouw from the wheat-growing area of Porterville: 'We are marching hand in hand, as wine, wheat and stock farmers because we are obliged to carry one another's burden.'¹¹ Consequently, the rage and supplications of the frustrated sheep farmers were directed mainly towards the wine farmers. The leaders of the anti-Scab Act movement organised a special meeting in Paarl, the centre of viticulture in the Western Cape, in an attempt to win the wine farmers over.¹² The results, however, were disappointing. At a subsequent meeting in Tulbagh, D. P. van den Heever said that he was under the impression that the wine farmers did not want to help the sheep farmers. He played on the fear of the other farming sectors saying that if the Act were passed, the Excise would be re-imposed and the wheat farmers would be denied protection against competing imports with the consequence that they would all go under.¹³ The support of wine farmers was important because the vote of their representatives in Parliament, especially in the Legislative Council, was crucial. At the meeting in Paarl a leader of the anti-Scab Act movement specified the names of seven MPs representing wine-growing districts, particularly in the Legislative Council, who had voted for the Act.¹⁴ A meeting of sheep farmers in Fraserburg expressed rage against members of the Legislative Council for 'shamelessly' voting for the Act.¹⁵ Nigrini called on the wine farmers not to elect those who supported only one farming sector.¹⁶

Opponents of the Act tried various lines of argument to secure the support of wine farmers. They kept on reminding them of the sheep farmers' support for them with regard to the Excise on brandy and the phylloxera disease. Erasmus was a bit

emotional, and perhaps a bit hypocritical, when he claimed that it was love that rallied sheep farmers behind their brothers.¹⁷ Others alerted them to the danger that if the Government had its way with regard to the Act, the Excise would follow on its heels.¹⁸ D. P. van den Heever warned that if the representatives of the wine farmers did not stand by the sheep farmers, they would also be subjected to 'severe laws'.¹⁹ Others warned them that the stock farmers' suffering would be felt by the other sectors. The rise in the price of meat was mentioned as one way in which this could transpire.²⁰ There were those who not only predicted the difficulties that the wine farmers would face but also threatened to facilitate them. Van Rhyne asked his fellow MPs from the wine districts how they would be able to ask the representatives of the sheep-farming districts to vote against Innes' Liquor Bill, designed to restrict the sale of liquor, if they did not help them to scrap the 'oppressive' Act.²¹ He warned that 'if the Legislative Council made the sheep farmers slaves he would vote for the Excise'.²² D. P. van den Heever, having reminded wine farmers that he had helped 'to release' them, warned that 'the time would come for revenge'.²³ Earlier he had already threatened that the representatives of the sheep farmers would vote for the Excise.²⁴

The wine farmers faced a serious dilemma regarding the agitation of the sheep farmers against the Act. As seen above, they were also vulnerable to detrimental government intervention. The threat of re-introduction of the Excise was hanging over them like Damocles' sword. They were aware of their vulnerability and their dependence on others in warding off this threat. 'Tatoo' recalled that during the struggle against the Excise, sheep farmers held protest meetings in support for the wine farmers' cause and asked: 'Shall we, the wine farmers, sit quiet now and will not help the sheep farmers ...? Shall we not put pressure on our representatives in Parliament to support the sheep farmers?' 'Tatoo' was not merely being nostalgic or altruistic. He maintained that the Act was designed to draw a wedge between the sheep farmers and wine farmers in order to suppress Afrikaner farmers as a whole. More particularly and more importantly, he argued that support for the sheep farmers would prevent the re-imposition of Excise in the future.²⁵

The Dutch and Afrikaans press in the Western Province, the wine-farming region, were also trying to promote the spirit of unity and solidarity among the different Afrikaner farming sectors. The line propagated by the *Zuid Afrikaan* was that the Afrikaner farmers and Afrikanerdom more generally could 'assert their rights only if the wheat farmer, wine farmer and stock farmer will support one another's interests'.²⁶ This thrust was also manifested in the representation of the meeting in Paarl in early 1895, initiated by the leaders of the anti-Scab Act movement. The *Zuid Afrikaan* wrote: 'Above all there was sympathy for the sheep farmers. It is not possible anymore to speak of the hostility of the wine farmers towards the sheep farmers.'²⁷

However, this optimistic representation did not accurately reflect the message delivered to the leaders of the Volkscomite who came to Paarl to enlist the support

of the wine farmers. It is true that there was an attempt, especially by S. J. du Toit, to appease the sheep farmers and to demonstrate general support for their cause. He refuted the allegation that the wine farmers were responsible for the Act. He reminded the audience that those present at meetings held in the wine districts expressed sympathy with the sheep farmers and instructed their representatives in Parliament to collaborate with the opponents of the Act in preventing the passing of an 'unworkable' Scab Act.²⁸ This, however, was hypocritical in view of the fact that S. J. du Toit had been the author of the 1894 Bond Congress resolution that encouraged the Government to go ahead with general scab legislation. The voting pattern of the Afrikaner representatives in Parliament also contradicted S. J. du Toit's smooth talk. At the meeting, Myburgh, a prominent wine farmer who said that the Act should have been passed 20 years earlier and who proposed a resolution asking the Government to proclaim the Act as soon as possible, was applauded. The opponents felt patronised and insulted by the meeting. S. J. du Toit claimed that the resolutions of the Victoria West meeting that launched the anti-Scab Act movement were confusing. D. P. van den Heever alleged that a Paarl newspaper wrote that the *volksvergaderingen* were too dumb to adopt appropriate resolutions.

In essence, the Paarl meeting did not support the strategy of the opponents. The sheep farmers were advised to take their cue from the wine farmers who had tried to live with the Excise before fighting for its removal. The opponents perceived such a possibility as ruinous. The meeting also rejected the sheep farmers' initiative in establishing a separate organisation to defend their interests. This was also the gist of S. J. du Toit's resolution that was adopted by general acclamation. Only eight voted for the resolution of the leaders of the opponents of the Act.²⁹ S. J. du Toit's resolution, general expression of sympathy notwithstanding, was rightly perceived by D. P. van den Heever as a slap in the face.

This encounter between the sheep and wine farmers highlights the complex and contradictory nature of the evolution of Cape Afrikaner ethnic identity and consciousness. Had the issue involved only a functional alliance between the three economic sectors, the support of the wine farmers could have been more easily secured. After all, defence of the vulnerable Cape Afrikaner farmers against the big waves of economic change associated with the integration of the Colony into the global capitalist system was a crucial factor in engendering this evolution. The first substantive Cape Afrikaner political organisation, the *Zuid Afrikaansche Boeren Bescherms Vereeniging* (South African Farmers Protection Union), was established in 1878 by Western Cape wine farmers in opposition to the Excise imposed on brandy by the Government. This organisation was one of the foundation blocks of the subsequent Afrikaner Bond established in 1881. However, this organisation also revealed the tension between the general and the particular. While purporting to be a party of all Afrikaner farmers, it represented mainly the interests and grievances of one farming sector. It was only with the establishment of the Afrikaner Bond that

most Cape Afrikaners were incorporated into a single party. The centrality of the farmers was manifested in the full name of the party, namely the Afrikaner Bond and Farmers Protection Union. Yet, even then Afrikaner farmers were not related to as atomised individual farmers. As has been shown, ideologically and instrumentally the Afrikaner Bond was articulated as a coalition, or 'federation', of the three major Afrikaner farming sectors. Clearly, then, Afrikaner farmers perceived themselves as participating in the project of ethnicity-building not only as individuals, but also as members of particular sub-ethnoeconomic collectivities.

The three farming sectors shared a common sense of vulnerability, a common fear of adverse intervention by the colonial state and a common desire for protection by this state. They also shared a common economic enemy in the 'free traders' whose strong opposition to government support for sectorial farming interests through tariff walls adversely affected all of them.³⁰ This goes a long way to explaining the urge for unity that fed the evolving ethnic identity and consciousness and the almost instant electoral success of the Afrikaner Bond. Yet, beyond that, as has been shown, the particular economic interests of these three sectors did not necessarily converge. They all had common enemies but these threatened them differently. The *Zuid Afrikaan* was candid about it: 'The Afrikaner farmers can demand their rights only if the wine, wheat and stock farmers will support each other's interests ... The problem is that the interests of the different groups are different.'³¹

This tension between ethnic commonality and economic particularity that was manifested in the Bond was exacerbated by the Scab Act crisis. The recurrent calls by members of the three sectors for unity and mutual help reflected dreams more than reality. Indeed, it highlighted the underlying conflict between them rather than celebrated their commonality or unity. During the Scab Act crisis, wheat farmers were clamouring for raising the tariff on imported wheat. A meeting of wheat farmers in Durbanville asked Parliament to impose a tariff on imported wheat and flour.³² In a debate in Parliament later that year MPs representing wheat-growing areas presented the wheat farmers as the most depressed farming sector in the Colony. Louw, from a wheat-growing constituency, gave expression to the underlying tension and jealousy between the different farming sectors: 'Wool farmers amassed fortunes, and so did the wine farmers in former times, but not so the wheat farmer, who remained a poor man all his life. Yet there was no community which worked harder.' A. S. le Roex, the champion of the stock farmers, on the other hand, insisted that the sheep farmer 'had the hardest life of any farmer in the country'.³³ 'Wheat farmer' from Piketberg complained that the crop had been small and the prices did not even cover the production cost. His solution was to unite the three sectors and put pressure on the Government to adequately respond to their grievances.³⁴ However, a high tariff on wheat meant higher prices for flour and bread that negatively affected the other sectors. Consequently, as manifested in a letter from a stock farmer, he had reservations regarding protection of local wheat.³⁵ The hostility of stock farmers

towards high wheat prices was also conveyed by Le Roex when criticising a fellow Afrikaner MP for hoarding wheat in order to obtain a better price for his crop. However, the tension between wheat and sheep farmers was mitigated by the fact that, as shown above, many of the former were also involved in sheep farming.

The conflict of interests between wine and sheep farmers went both ways. Urging the wine farmers to elect representatives to Parliament who would care for the three farming sectors, Nigrini said that it would cause him a lot of pain if his representative acted in Parliament against the interest of wine farmers.³⁶ This was hardly an honest representation of the attitude of sheep farmers towards their fellow wine farmers. From the vantage point of sheep farmers, there was a sharp conflict of interests between the two sectors. The interest of wine farmers, in addition to preventing the reimposition of Excise on brandy, was free internal trade in their products. This meant the expansion of the liquor trade into sheep-farming areas through roadside hotels, canteens, and other avenues. The result was an increase in the consumption of liquor among the people who inhabited sheep farms. This clearly had a negative impact on the interests of Afrikaner sheep farmers. First, it had a demoralising effect on the non-white labour force that was at best difficult to obtain and manage. The difficulties caused by the drunkenness of labourers were expressed in the Labour Commission by an MP representing a sheep-farming constituency.³⁷ Much more damning evidence about the effects of drinking on the labour force was given to the Liquor Commission in 1890. Van Heerden told the Liquor Commission: 'My servants used to leave the cattle and sheep kraals at night, and in the morning, when it was their duty to look after the stock, they would be all drunk.'³⁸ Du Plessis found his flock neglected while the herder was drunk for three consecutive days in the canteen.³⁹ The liquor business also encouraged stock theft, labourers and others bartering stolen stock, wool and skins for liquor.⁴⁰ One canteen owner bought some 5 000 stolen hides in a year.⁴¹ According to another source, 'farmers complain very much and say they cannot send their servants from one farm to another when there is a canteen on the road'.⁴²

The extension of formal liquor trade into the sheep-farming hinterland had an adverse effect not only on non-white labourers, but also on the white Afrikaners inhabiting the farms. Rev. Hofmeyr from Prince Albert said that in most cases 'a European is as weak as a coloured man to resist the temptation [of drinking]'. He considered that the source of evil was the 'common canteen, where the coloured people and the low whites can collect together and drink'.⁴³ Van Rensburg from Cradock 'noticed that at these canteens some people take the first step towards drunkenness, white as well as coloureds'.⁴⁴ Some related the devastating effect of drunkenness on poor whites living on the farm. Du Plessis from Somerset East had a sad story to tell: 'He is a poor white man living on one of my farms; his relatives gave some stock to his wife, and the children sheared the sheep and got one bale of wool, and in their absence he took a muid sack out of it and sold it at the canteen for liquor.'⁴⁵ According to Luttig from Prince Albert, farmers who also traded in liquor were 'a dread to women and children on the farms ... on account of

the servants drinking and sometimes *bywoners* (Afrikaner squatters) and even farmers'.⁴⁶ Aucamp also mentioned the harm drinking did to *bywoners*.⁴⁷ Farmers' sons were also lured by various liquor-selling outlets.⁴⁸ Even fully-fledged sheep farmers did not escape this ruinous temptation. Moolman from Somerset East described the impact of country hotels on the 'general welfare' of neighbouring farmers as 'most miserable': 'I am sorry to say a great many farmers who at the time I came into the district were respectable people, rich, and of good standing, are today beggars, just through the liquor at those country canteens.'⁴⁹ Rev. Hofmeyr told of a 'respectable farmer, owning a large farm ... and to-day he is ruined, and is drunk all day long'. The farmer was tempted to drink at a roadside inn. According to Hofmeyr 'you may draw a pretty large circle within which the farmers have just been ruined through drinking at these places'.⁵⁰ Van Heerden from Cradock described a farmer, 'a leader in public affairs', who 'was a member of the Divisional Council and of the church council, but he took to drink'. As a result of the habit of drinking in a neighbouring canteen 'he neglected his farm, and it was sold, and he went insolvent'. He was consequently ruined 'intellectually and morally'.⁵¹ De Beer spoke of farmers 'who have been entirely ruined by the canteens; all are bankrupt round about them'.⁵²

Clearly, nice words about ethnoeconomic alliance could hardly mask the stark conflict of interests between the two dominant Cape Afrikaner farming sectors. Evidently, the prosperity of the wine farmers spelled doom to many sheep farmers. It is hardly surprising that MPs representing sheep-farming constituencies tended to support legislation limiting the distribution of liquor in the countryside. This was manifested in the debate and voting on the Liquor Amendment Bill in 1898. Rabie, representing a wine-growing area, argued in opposing the Bill, that it was 'unworkable and not in the interest of the farmers'. He must have meant that it was not in the interest of the wine farmers.⁵³ Van der Vyver, representing the wheat and sheep-growing constituency of Riversdale, urged sheep farmers 'to support wine-farmers, and reminded them that all sheep-farmers, wine-farmers, and corn-farmers should assist each other'.⁵⁴ Botha from Aliwal North, a sheep-growing area, claimed that the Bill inflicted injustice on the wine farmers because 'the vine was to the latter what the sheep was to the sheep-farmers'.⁵⁵ It seems, however, that he expected black miners on the way back home would spend their earnings in his constituency, which was on their route. Van der Vyver's appeal, however, fell mostly on deaf ears. Weeber from Beaufort West welcomed the Bill 'most heartily', declaring it to be 'in the interests of the sheep-farmers'.⁵⁶ Van der Merwe from Clanwilliam, in supporting the Bill, 'quoted several cases where he suffered loss through his servants getting drunk'.⁵⁷ Du Toit from Richmond 'pointed to the scandal that existed in unrestricted supply of liquor to natives', as the reason for supporting the Bill 'which was for the benefit of the farmers'⁵⁸ (sheep farmers presumably). While paying lip service to the wine-farmers, Immelman from Victoria West supported the Bill 'if for no other reason than from Christian principles'.⁵⁹ This balance of opinion among MPs representing sheep-growing constituencies was manifested in their actual voting.⁶⁰

The attitudes and political conduct of sheep farmers regarding the distribution of alcohol greatly damaged the interests of the wine farmers. A newspaper in Paarl described the prospect of restriction on the consumption of their products as a greater danger than the phylloxera disease that had devastated their vines. The editor blamed the 'zealots' among the sheep farmers for undermining the basis for cooperation between the two sectors.⁶¹ A week later the editor was blunt in accusing the sheep farmers of having supported prohibition of drinking 'while ignoring the fate of the wine farmers'.⁶² Thus, the complaints of the opponents of the Act against the wine farmers smacked of at least a touch of self-righteousness and hypocrisy. The *Zuid Afrikaan* newspaper in Paarl, the capital of viticulture, while reminding the opponents of the Act that they forgot 'that they themselves through their drinking legislation have caused much damage to the wine farmers', added: 'Blaming, however, brings no good. Rather the feeling must be revived that the *boerenstand* (farming class) and Afrikanerdom can assert their rights only if the wheat farmer, the wine farmer and the stock farmer will support each other's interests.'⁶³ This verbal acrobatics did not mask the inherent tension between the need for unity for the promotion of particular interests and the antagonistic nature of the latter. The *Zuid Afrikaan* exhibited more sobriety and realism, pointing to the different interests of the various farming sectors.⁶⁴

At the meeting in Paarl, discussed earlier on, there was an attempt to paper over the contradictions between the two sectors. This was manifested particularly in the speech of the articulate and intellectually agile S. J. du Toit. As has been seen, while expressing goodwill on behalf of the wine farmers and detailing all the meetings that had passed resolutions sympathetic to the opponents, he essentially rejected their request for support on their terms, making an offer of support that was tantamount to a snub. His elaborate resolution that was almost universally adopted by the meeting highlighted his ambivalent position. This was also essentially the attitude of the *Patriot*, edited by S. J. du Toit. On the one hand the newspaper, being patronised by sheep farmers, gave the opponents of the Act wide scope to air their views and grievances and showed sympathy towards them, while on the other the editorial policy was highly critical of the anti-Scab Act movement and particularly its leader, D. P. van den Heever.⁶⁵

In accounting for the essentially hostile attitude of the wine farmers towards their pastoral ethnic brothers it must be emphasised that they were very keen to secure the goodwill of the sheep farmers. This was not only for macrocultural and political reasons – as will be discussed in Chapter Three. As members of an equally vulnerable economic sector, it was in their best interest not to antagonise the majority of the sheep farmers. Their support was needed in the face of a new attempt to impose on them the ruinous Excise on brandy that was looming large. The sheep farmers, because of their numbers and spatial distribution, controlled many more seats in Parliament than the wine farmers. For the same reason they also formed the majority in the annual congresses of the Afrikaner Bond. Their ill will could bring upon the wine farmers most unwelcome interventions by the state. While it was true, as shown above, that

in matters concerning the retailing of liquor many sheep farmers were unsympathetic, wine farmers remembered that on the issue of Excise they did support them. Since abolishing the Act or rendering it permissive did not directly affect their particular interests, their hostility towards the opponents of the Act is intriguing.

Interpreting internal ethnic cleavages

How, then, can the wine farmers' essentially antagonistic attitude towards the anti-Scab Act movement, which seriously threatened the 'triple alliance', be accounted for? On instrumental grounds their conduct was clearly incongruent with their vital sectorial interests. This was particularly so because, as shown previously, support for the opponents of the Act did not in any way adversely affect them. At the same time such support could secure them the goodwill of the majority of sheep farmers in their future struggle against unwelcome government interventions in their business. The root of the apparently unreasonable and counter-productive posture and conduct of wine farmers should be sought in a broader intra-Afrikaner contest over the essence of Cape Afrikanerdom. It had to do with the struggle for locating *Afrikanerness* on the traditional/conservative–modern/progressive axis. The respective positions on related issues resulted from the porousness of the boundary between the Afrikaners and the English-speakers and the differential impact of the British colonial state on the Cape Afrikaner society.

Indeed, it seems that the wine farmers' unwillingness to support the opponents of the Act through 'thick and thin' stemmed from their different position on the 'progressive–conservative' controversy. This, in turn, reflected the degree and mode of their integration into the capitalist economy, and their consequent different responses to the challenge of modernity. Their different responses to unwelcome state interventions was also influenced by their particular socialisation into the colonial state and the consequent political culture it engendered among them.

Wine farming was practised mainly in the Western Cape and the adjacent areas that had been exposed for a very long time to the market economy. These areas were close to Cape Town, the political and economic capital of the Colony, to which they were linked not only through the market, but also through an effective network of communication. Wine farmers also lived in closer proximity to villages and towns that were spread throughout their areas. Despite occasional adversities they were in a position to benefit from the expanding economy and infrastructure ushered in by British imperialism. It is hardly surprising that many of them became converts of the gospel of modernisation and progress. Leading more sedentary and stable lives also made them more receptive to the winds of change.

Consequently, they came to value scientific knowledge and to respect its agents. A cursory reading of the reports of meetings of Western Province Afrikaner farmers'

associations during the same period reveals the vast ontological gap between the opponents of the Act and the wine farmers. The modernised farmers from the Western Province were organised into agricultural societies geared to promote their common interests. Wine farmers' and fruit-growers' societies can serve as relevant sources of comparison because many farmers were involved in both sectors. The secretary of the Paarl Wine Farmers Association informed a monthly meeting of the Association that he had ordered books and periodicals whose titles indicated a broad interest in modern agriculture: 'The Pacific Rural Press', 'Garden and Field', 'California Fruits', 'Handbook on Insects of Victoria', 'American Fruits'.⁶⁶ At the annual general meeting of the Stellenbosch Fruit and Wine-Growers Association a discussion ensued on the treatment of insects through the employment of the latest scientific findings. They also had a lecture on the fruit industry in California.⁶⁷ The president of the Wellington Fruit Growers Association presented to the Association six books on fruit culture donated by a Cape Town publisher. He also read a letter from a Californian fruit grower on commercial and transport aspects of fruit growing in his part of the world.⁶⁸ At a subsequent meeting the chairman 'reported that it had become very clear to him and others ... that it was becoming a serious and dangerous matter in this country to pursue fruit growing on a large scale without a duly-qualified entomologist'.⁶⁹ Consequently, the fruit farmers approached the Agricultural Secretary asking him to employ such an expert.⁷⁰ The Paarl Agricultural Society joined the initiative.⁷¹ The Wellington Fruit Growers Association, through its MP, also urged the Government to prohibit the importation of lemon trees because of a disease 'now prevailing in Florida'.⁷² The Government was thus perceived as a conduit for the introduction of beneficial scientific knowledge and agents, and as a barrier against unwelcome environmental invaders.

This is so extremely different from the discourse of the opponents of the Act with its strong anti-scientific, anti-progressive overtones. Many wine farmers could not support a movement that premised its position on such an unprogressive stance. This outlook was manifested by the respected wine farmer Myburgh who told the Paarl meeting that it was absurd to claim that scab could not be cured and that the Act should have been passed 20 years ago.⁷³ It was not coincidental that Neethling, one of the most successful wine farmers from Stellenbosch, defended the *Agricultural Journal* in Parliament in the face of a bitter attack on it by his colleague D. P. van den Heever.⁷⁴ A meeting of farmers in Montague, on the periphery of the Western Province, casting doubt about the scientifically proven origin of scab, caused great embarrassment to the *Zuid Afrikaan*: 'We did not think that this was possible in our province.'⁷⁵ The modernised, scientifically and progressively inclined wine farmers could not lend support to a struggle premised on an opposing world view. From this perspective it was a struggle for the ethnic soul, for the essence of being a Cape Afrikaner. The big issue was whether the Afrikaner was to be a slave to his past or whether he was marching ahead towards becoming a member of a fully modernised community imbued with the ethos of progress.

Wine farmers also benefited from services rendered directly or indirectly by the British colonial state. They obviously benefited from the transport infrastructure that had been revolutionised by the colonial Government. Living in villages or fairly close to them they had much better access than most sheep farmers to the services provided by the state. Their children could benefit from the educational system established by the colonial state. They were able to attend the state-supported churches more regularly than the isolated stock farmers, many of whom attended church services a few times a year at best. Those who lived in the villages spread throughout the Western Cape were also recipients of beneficial municipal services. They learnt to enjoy the stability and law and order guaranteed by the most effective state machinery ever experienced by the Cape Afrikaners. Consequently, the balance of their socialisation into the colonial state was much more positive than that of many remote and isolated sheep farmers.

It is hardly surprising therefore that they were inclined to submit more graciously than many sheep farmers to the Government's unwelcome interventions. Even if they opposed the Government, they did it within the accepted norms of the colonial state. This was the case of their opposition to the imposition of Excise on brandy in the late 1870s. At the time of the Scab Act crisis they tried to impress on the sheep farmers the need to emulate their example. This was articulated by S. J. du Toit in his passionate appeal to his fellow Afrikaner sheep farmers. He urged them to follow the example of the wine farmers who gave the Excise a trial of four to five years, thus proving to the Government that it was unworkable. This they did, he argued, although the Excise was tougher and more burdensome than the Act. The farmer was not a master of his winery and his brandy distillery, and the cost was heavier than that incurred by the Act. He concluded that 'the sheep farmer could take a lesson in loyalty to the Government from the wine farmer'.⁷⁶ Similarly, 'wine farmer's son' promised more sympathy for the sheep farmers if they would give the Act a trial and prove that it was very pressing.⁷⁷

The different socialisation of wine farmers was also manifested in their attitude towards colonial democracy. The sheep farmers, as shown above, were convinced that the only relevant and legitimate majority was that of the Afrikaner sheep farmers who were affected by the Act. The wine farmers' more conventional view of colonial democracy found expression in a letter to the editor by a wine farmer relating to the Paarl meeting. F. J. Joubert, justifying the Paarl resolution, wrote that 'when two third of the population [namely, two third of MPs] want the Act it should be given to them'.⁷⁸

On the whole many wine farmers, especially the leading ones who set the tone in the public arena, led a much more congenial life than most sheep farmers. They pursued a sedentary, stable life in a pleasant climate, surrounded by green valleys, flowing rivers and beautiful mountain ranges. They lived in nice houses, some of them so exquisite

and beautifully furnished that they are today a source of admiration and emulation. Living in or around villages, the centres and models of culture, they were in a position to take part in a much more gentle way of life than many of their counterparts living on remote, desolate and isolated stock farms. They or their children may have played cricket at the village cricket club, participated in athletic competitions and other sports activities. They probably took part in a host of cultural activities that thrived in the new centres of urban Victorian culture. The following report appeared in the *Cape Times*: 'Last Friday evening a concert was given here under the auspices of the Stellenbosch Cricket Club ... Miss Myburgh, who was kind enough to come over for the occasion ... Miss Maggie Hofmeyr caused much pleasure by the sweet and simple, yet telling way in which she sang ...'⁷⁹ Mr G. J. Krige was a prominent wine and fruit farmer and a politician from Stellenbosch. He lived 'at his charming "Oudt Libertas"'.⁸⁰ It was 'the custom every year for the young men in Stellenbosch to assemble at "Oudt Libertas", where they erected a platform, lit a bonfire, and made speeches, being afterwards entertained by their host. The educational influence of this annual gathering 'cannot be gainsaid, teaching the youths, as it does, to ventilate their ideas and fitting them for public life afterwards'.⁸¹ While these occasions may not have been typical, they certainly convey an impression of the way of life and the cultural ambience on many wine farms.

This more gentle way of life also informed a more moderate and restrained political culture. Consequently, the more urbane wine farmers were embarrassed by the impatience, rough and aggressive political style that characterised the anti-Scab Act movement and its leader D. P. van den Heever in particular. In this spirit a correspondent criticised the 'scandalous' behaviour of the opponents of the Act (who were present at the Paarl meeting) towards a supporter who spoke in favour of the Act.⁸² The wine farmers would have liked the sheep farmers to air their grievances and pursue their politics in a proper manner, through the proper channels and within the parameters of Victorian colonial political culture. The rough and rugged sheep farmers straddling the border of survival were, of course, not inclined to pursue such a course.

The position of the wine farmers towards the anti-Scab Act movement as it was manifested at the Paarl meeting and in the Afrikaans and Dutch press reflected their ambivalence. While they were eager to maintain the broad ethnic alliance to safeguard their own material interest and to promote their ethnocultural agenda, they were at odds with the anti-progressive gospel that informed the movement and the political style they had introduced to the Colony.

The gap between the sheep farmers and the wine growers was wide and deep and the controversy evinced, consequently, bitter feelings on both sides – particularly among the sheep farmers opposed to the Act. This was so because beyond material interest it was about the essence and soul of Cape Afrikanerdom and about the vision and future of the *volk*. For the wine farmers it was essential and appropriate that

their *volk* would march, alongside their English-speaking fellow settlers, on the path of modernity, progress and democracy. The sheep farmers opposed to the Act fought a rearguard battle to preserve the traditional Afrikaner way of life and values, warding off unwelcome waves of modernisation and progress. It was the convergence, on both sides, of material interests, world outlook and values that rendered the intra-Afrikaner controversy so fierce.

In navigating their course between their particular ethnoeconomic and general ethnocultural goals without foregoing their progressiveness and their political style, the wine farmers manifested general sympathy for the sheep farmers' cause while refusing to support their movement and their strategies. They made a special effort to demonstrate that it was not their MPs who were responsible for the passing of the Act. A common argument was that the sheep farmers themselves were divided, unlike the wine farmers who had been united to a man in their opposition to the Excise.⁸³ They could cite Venter, a sheep farmer supporting the Act, who warned the wine farmers that if they did not help his 'party', they might not help the wine farmers in their struggle against the Excise.⁸⁴ An editorial pointed out that in fact sheep farmers and MPs representing sheep-farming constituencies formed the vast majority among those who had voted for the Act.⁸⁵

A kraal divided – the intra-sheep farmers rift

As argued by wine farmers, opponents of the Act faced opposition not only from their ranks. In fact, the toughest opposition to the anti-Scab Act movement came from the ranks of fellow Afrikaner sheep farmers. Indeed, the sheep farmers' *veld* was deeply divided and fiercely contested. This should not come as a surprise – the same winds of change that swept the Cape throughout the nineteenth century made their impact not only on wine farmers who lived in closer proximity to the centres of modernity, but also on sheep farmers. Not all sheep farmers lived in similar geographical and mental distance from the foci of the new economic forces and the new gospel of modernisation and progress. Since the sheep farmers' *veld* was very varied, it was natural that attitudes toward such crucial government intervention would tend to diverge rather than coalesce. I shall later attempt to draw the contours of this divergence and to account for it. It should be noted, however, that the opponents whose attitudes were elaborated on in Chapter One undoubtedly formed the great majority among Afrikaner sheep farmers.

As shown above, most opponents of the Act represented a conservative, non- or anti-progressive state of mind. There were, however, sheep farmers who were converted to the creed of colonial progress. They severely criticised the opponents from this perspective, depicting them as unprogressive. An Afrikaner Bond branch in Maclear in the Eastern Cape passed a resolution distancing itself from D. P. van den Heever's unprogressive conduct.⁸⁶ Referring to those who used religion to oppose the Act, 'a

farmer with experience' wrote that they should be ashamed of themselves for acting against 'the progress of our country'.⁸⁷ At a public meeting in Graaff Reinet, MP Smith, representing a sheep-farming constituency, argued against repealing the Act: 'One must remember that civilisation and progress demand legislation and one must move with the time.'⁸⁸ At the 1897 Bond Congress, Snyman from Maclear, who also favoured the Act, argued that the Bond must prove that it is progressive and thus support the legislation.⁸⁹ 'Sheep farmer' wondered what the future held for the progressive farmer in the face of the onslaught of the opponents.⁹⁰ Van den Berg presented a broad historical perspective: 'In our century all things have a stream and so it is with the Scab Act. If we shall not move with the stream we shall be left behind.'⁹¹ He encouraged politicians to demonstrate courage in the face of the opponents' offensive, promising the support of those holding progress dear. He went further, arguing for a Darwinian solution with regard to the opponents who hindered progress: 'The sooner they make place for more enterprising ones the better, because it is better that one member of the body will be cut off than the whole body will suffer.'⁹²

Progressive sheep farmers received support from the Dutch press. *Onze Courant* from Graaff Reinet, the capital of the Midlands sheep-farming area, articulated and propagated an Afrikaner version of progress. Hailing the 1894 Bond Congress resolution in favour of scab legislation it surmised with a touch of cultural arrogance: 'It seems that the Bond is more progressive than the so-called [English-speaking] progressives.'⁹³ The controversial issue of compulsory education, opposed by many of the opponents of the Act, gave the editor an opportunity to give full-blown expression to his version of Afrikaner progress: 'It is clear that the Afrikaner cannot allow himself to lag behind all the latest innovations if he wants to secure his appropriate place in society.'⁹⁴ He presented education as closely related to the task of 'rescuing our people', and lamented that there were people who did not provide their children with the weapon to 'fight for their survival'.⁹⁵ Arguing against the claim of English-speakers for a monopoly on true progress, another editorial stated: 'We aim at the same thing and have the same right to call ourselves progressives.'⁹⁶ In fact the English-speaking progressives whom the editor described as 'semi-educated' were presented as 'ultra radicals' rather than true progressives.⁹⁷ The editor later articulated an Afrikaner version of progress that was superior to that of the English: 'Our slogan is conservative but at the same time also progressive.'⁹⁸ In other words, true colonial progress was a combination of the best in both conservatism and progress. The *Graaff Reinetter*, before supporting the anti-Scab Act movement for reasons totally unrelated to the issue, manifested clear progressive convictions strongly supporting stringent scab legislation.⁹⁹

Sheep farmers who accepted the progressive creed naturally subscribed to the wisdom of science on which the Act was premised. A. S. du Plessis, a leading supporter of the Act, who represented a sheep-farming constituency in Parliament and was a sheep farmer himself, came to the conclusion, on the basis of research he had conducted, that scab was caused by an insect and that the disease was contagious.¹⁰⁰ This was also

the view of P. J. van den Heever, a leading sheep farmer. Contrary to the prevalent view among the opponents, he was of the opinion that a close examination of the causes of death among sheep would reveal that many of them died of scab.¹⁰¹ The SCR contains ample evidence of Afrikaner sheep farmers supporting the Act who accepted the scientific diagnosis regarding the cause of the disease. There were those who accepted it unequivocally, attributing the disease to the insect.¹⁰² Van der Walt, in stating that although he had not seen the insect he believed that it was the cause of scab,¹⁰³ manifested a preference for scientific knowledge over experience.

It is also clear from the evidence contained in the SCR that not all the supporters of the Act were familiar with the relevant scientific knowledge, sharing the prevalent local knowledge among its opponents. Indeed, not all supporters were confident about the scientific diagnosis. Du Toit, for example, did not know what caused the disease.¹⁰⁴ Luttig knew that an insect was involved 'but how it is brought here I don't know'.¹⁰⁵ Some shared the bizarre views of the opponents. Froneman believed that the disease was internal, making its appearance as a result of poverty.¹⁰⁶ Duvenage claimed that the scab gave rise to the insect rather than the other way round.¹⁰⁷ Most Afrikaner sheep farmers supporting the Act shared the view that the disease was contagious, while some believed that it was very contagious.¹⁰⁸

The diagnosis of the opponents (and of some of the supporters) greatly embarrassed the progressive supporters of the Act who adhered to the wisdom of science. At the 1895 Bond Congress, Van Aardt made the distinction between 'more developed' and 'less developed' farmers, attributing the agitation to the ontological gap between them.¹⁰⁹ Snyman, in referring to *onverligte* (unenlightened) farmers who argued that the disease was caused by drought and by the condition of the sheep and the *veld*, depicted their views as 'stupidity'. While conceding that such conditions exacerbated the disease, he insisted that they did not cause it.¹¹⁰ 'Kalmoes' believed that 'practical farmers' from abroad, reading what was written in the Cape about the scab disease, must think that 'we are dumb'.¹¹¹ On the argument that God introduced the disease and would cure it he had one word to say: '*Foei!*' (a verbal manifestation of disgust).¹¹² Pienaar was ashamed of his Afrikaner brothers who came out with 'such arguments',¹¹³ while 'C. M.' thought that some of the opponents expressed themselves on the issue 'like children'.¹¹⁴

For R. P. Botha, serving on the Commission was a transforming experience. He joined it as an opponent of the Act, but what he had seen and heard as member of it made him an ardent supporter thereof. Many supporters of the Act did not simply adhere to an abstract belief in the wisdom of science. It was rather their experience that convinced them of the usefulness of effective scab legislation. Indeed, in a society where the production of knowledge was to a large extent individualistic rather than collective, experience may lead to different conclusions. This was particularly true in a society living on the frontier of scientific knowledge in which the latter had to undergo the ultimate test of experience. Experience as the arbiter of scientific knowledge

could lead to different ontological avenues because, unlike scientific experiments, pragmatic experience is not exercised under controlled conditions.

Furthermore, supporters of the Act rejected the opponents' claim to a monopoly on the wisdom of experience. In an open letter to Nigrini, A. S. du Plessis wrote: 'You speak from experience, I can also do it.'¹¹⁵ Similarly, at the 1895 Bond Congress, Grove denied Le Roex's allegation that the supporters of the Act did not speak from experience.¹¹⁶ Pienaar from Beaufort West, arguing in support of the Act, added that 'the aim of my letter is to tell of my experience'.¹¹⁷ Another supporter wrote that 'experience is the best teacher'.¹¹⁸ Experience certainly went both ways. In fact, proponents of the Act cast doubt on the validity of the opponents' experience. On the basis of their own experience they contradicted the arguments of the latter. Thus a speaker at a meeting in Graaff Reinet argued that sheep were dying while being dipped not because of the dipping itself, but as a result of their treatment while being dipped.¹¹⁹

It was a common argument of the proponents of the Act that the opponents did not dip their sheep according to instructions. Van der Merwe from Philipstown claimed that most farmers did not dip properly, while Botha from Cradock asserted that none of his neighbours did.¹²⁰ Pienaar argued that it was not true that it was impossible to dip sheep suffering from poverty.¹²¹ Others contradicted the claim that the Act was inapplicable in dry areas.¹²² Van Rooyen disputed the claim that it was impossible to keep sheep suffering from poverty clean,¹²³ while Grove contradicted the argument that dipping damaged the stock.¹²⁴ Bosman from Beaufort West told the 1895 Bond Congress that, contrary to the argument of the opponents, lack of water did not inhibit the beneficial operation of the Act.¹²⁵ Moolman from Barkly East claimed, contrary to the opponents' conventional wisdom, that the Act did not cause difficulties in moving the sheep in response to ecological conditions.¹²⁶ In a similar vein petitioners from Venterstad argued that in fact the absence of a general Act would inhibit rather than facilitate the movement of stock.¹²⁷ Proponents of the Act also rejected opponents' complaint that the Act inhibited the trade in stock. Vermaak told the Commission that the Act had removed the restrictions on trade rather than produced them.¹²⁸ This was also the view of the petitioners from Venterstad who urged the Government not to render the Act permissive.¹²⁹ From this perspective, if the Act failed to achieve its objectives, it was mainly because farmers did not implement its provisions properly. As Pienaar argued at the 1897 Bond Congress, 'improper implementation of the Act does not prove that it is not good'.¹³⁰

Some Afrikaner supporters' attitude to their fellow Afrikaners opposing the Act was arrogant and patronising. A supporter claimed that the Act was not designed for the 'intelligent and industrious' farmer, but for the one who slept and let others, namely his labourers, tend to their sheep.¹³¹ 'Boer' from Stutterheim wrote of 'the indifferent and backward farmers who are against the Scab Act' suggesting that they preferred travelling to meetings to cleaning their sheep.¹³² *Pro bono publico* depicted those who

signed the anti-Act petitions as 'simple and ignorant'.¹³³ A newspaper in Victoria West described the arguments of MP Le Roex as 'uneducated and ignorant'.¹³⁴ A supporter of the Act described the opponents as '*hardekop boere*' (obstinate farmers).¹³⁵ 'An obedient farmer' believed that the opposition to the Act stemmed from 'foolishness'.¹³⁶ Another supporter attributed the opposition to a combination of ignorance, inexperience and 'natural prejudice'.¹³⁷ Snyman lamented that 'with such people you cannot reason because they are not suitable to being convinced'.¹³⁸ 'A farmer' from Stockenstroom accused D. P. van den Heever of 'selling nonsense'.¹³⁹ Wagenaar from Wodehouse was even ruder, depicting the opponents as 'backwards' and 'pigs'.¹⁴⁰ In Parliament, Maasdorp, representing the Midlands, attributed the failure of the Act to 'the gross ignorance of a certain class of farmers'.¹⁴¹ Alluding to the supposed laziness of the opponents, Venter claimed that the industrious farmers support the Act.¹⁴² P. J. van den Heever made the distinction between 'backward' and 'industrious' farmers.¹⁴³ These are only some of the abuses hurled at the opponents of the Act by their fellow Afrikaner sheep farmers who supported the Act.

Afrikaner supporters of the Act were also so abusive towards their fellow sheep farmers because they were convinced that the opponents' arguments contradicted not only the scientific knowledge, but also their own experience. Thus, beyond criticising and abusing the opponents, Afrikaner sheep farmers, in defending the Act, also made use of their own positive experience. There was firstly the experience of those who lived in 'proclaimed areas' under the 1886 Scab Act and were obliged to abide by its provisions and restrictions. As has been seen, there were many farmers in these areas who, on the basis of their experience, became fierce opponents of the Act. There were, however, also many others who drew different lessons from experience. It is important to re-emphasise that for many supporters of the Act experience rather than science was the source of relevant wisdom. Thus a supporter of the Act sounded exactly like a diehard opponent: 'I do not want to hear about the scab insect until I will find it on one of my sheep and until I will establish, without doubt, that the scab is caused by the insect.'¹⁴⁴

The pages of the SCR are full of praise for the Act by farmers living under its 1886 version. Wentzel stated that the Act kept his sheep clean.¹⁴⁵ Similarly Cruywagen said that in the last three years his flock had been clean.¹⁴⁶ Others argued that there had been an improvement or a great improvement in the condition of their stock since the implementation of the Act.¹⁴⁷ There were also those who were more precise regarding the beneficial impact of the Act. Marais from Uitenhage measured the improvement at 50–60%, while De Wet from Tarkastad put it at 75%.¹⁴⁸ This view of the Act was also conveyed in many letters to the editor. A correspondent from Wodehouse claimed that in his area the Act almost eradicated the disease.¹⁴⁹ 'Sheep farmer and Bondsman' had kept his stock clean for the last seven to eight years.¹⁵⁰ Van Rooyen from Humansdorp (who opposed the Act in 1886) wrote that since then his sheep had been clean.¹⁵¹ Smith from Aberdeen, who had been living under the Act

for seven years, was satisfied with it, while Scheepers from neighbouring Jansenville did not know what he would have done without it.¹⁵² De Klerk from Bedford told the 1895 Bond Congress that in his area there were farmers who had kept their flocks clean for six to seven years.¹⁵³ De Villiers from Beaufort West, who had initiated the application of the Act in his ward, told the inaugural meeting of the anti-Scab Act movement in Victoria West that the five years' experience had been good and that farmers had learnt to clean their sheep.¹⁵⁴

There were also positive experiences among farmers who came under the general Scab Act of 1895. The 1897 Bond Congress heard reports of such experiences. Viljoen from Venterstad claimed that after only five months of implementing the Act its beneficial results were apparent. The sheep of all those who abided by the Act were free from scab and farmers were already getting higher prices for their stock.¹⁵⁵ Pienaar, going to a lot of trouble dipping his sheep, almost doubled the quantity of wool and also fetched a higher price for his scabless sheep.¹⁵⁶ Snyman from Maclear said that as a result of the 16 months of positive experience of the operation of the Act he was transformed from an opponent to a supporter thereof. Pretorius from Middelburg told the Congress that before 1895 scab was prevalent in his district and that the Act operated very well. As a result, he claimed, most of the farmers supported the Act. Michau from Cradock also stated that positive experiences with the Act transformed staunch opponents into supporters of the Act.¹⁵⁷ With regard to Middelburg, MP Wienand told a meeting in Cradock that unlike previously, it was a pleasure to watch the sheep in the district and that despite the drought the sheep were fat because they could eat instead of scratching.¹⁵⁸ A letter from Victoria West, in the heartland of the opponents, expressed great satisfaction with the functioning of the Act, asking rhetorically 'what would have happened to us without the Act'.¹⁵⁹ 'An obedient farmer' from the drought-stricken district of Sutherland wrote that in consequence of the Act the district was free from scab – something they had not experienced before.¹⁶⁰

There were those who became supporters of the Act because, while not necessarily living under it, they had had a positive experience with dipping, a major provision of the Act. As has been seen, experience with dipping often led farmers to fiercely oppose the Act. Pienaar, who became a supporter of the Act, had had a positive experience with dipping his sheep.¹⁶¹ Liebenberg from Hopetown found out that dipping alleviated the disease. This was also the experience of Du Toit from the same district who had dipped for five years.¹⁶² Van der Merwe who 'had never failed to clean the sheep in two dippings' also became a staunch supporter of the Act.¹⁶³ Deyer from Molteno succeeded in cleaning his sheep only when he moved from hand dressing to dipping.¹⁶⁴ Pienaar from Beaufort West told the story of a collective conversion to scab legislation. In 1885 the people of his area became conscious of the great damage caused by the scab disease. Subsequently they formed the 'scab disease union' and took it upon themselves to dip their flocks more diligently. Previously he had been only partially

successful in cleaning his sheep. In the wake of the application of the permissive 1886 Act in his district, he managed to keep his stock clean for six years.¹⁶⁵

Supporters of the Act seem to have been more inclined to learn from the experience of others. Pienaar learnt how to dip from a farmer living in a 'proclaimed' area.¹⁶⁶ Rooy provided an account of the conversion of an opponent: 'I had been an opponent of the Act, but fortunately I was one of those who, out of interest in the health of my stock, discarded my wisdom and my experience and learnt from others whose stock was clean.'¹⁶⁷ Others were impressed by the experience of farmers in other regions and countries. 'Sheep farmer' learnt from the experience not only of neighbouring Orange Free State and Natal, but also from that of Australia and New Zealand.¹⁶⁸ Another took his cue from the different districts in the Cape that had succeeded in eliminating the disease as well as from the Australian colonies.¹⁶⁹ Yet another correspondent believed that if other countries had dealt satisfactorily with scab, the Cape farmers could follow suit.¹⁷⁰ This diverged radically from the prevailing view of opponents regarding the centrality of particular local conditions.

Like some opponents of the Act, there were supporters who also tried to prove their point by experimentation based on observation. A. S. du Plessis stated that he had come to a positive conclusion with regard to the prospect of treating the disease after conducting research on the subject.¹⁷¹ One farmer placed a group of sheep in a site previously occupied by other sheep and found out that after 16 days they were full of scab. His conclusion that the disease was contagious transformed him from an opponent to a supporter of the Act.¹⁷² Nesor from Philipstown used instruments for his research, while his friend Potgieter mixed scabby sheep with healthy ones to reach the same conclusion that the disease was contagious.¹⁷³ Many of those inhabiting the realm of experience realised that scab was contagious and were led to accept the need for the Act. Those who subscribed to scientific knowledge did not have to engage in their own experimentation in order to establish the undisputed scientific position that scab was indeed contagious.

What united many science- and experience-oriented farmers who supported the Act, was the belief that the disease could be cured, even eradicated. Thus A. S. du Plessis told Parliament that 'he knew by experience that they could be cured of scab'.¹⁷⁴ De Wet, a candidate in the parliamentary election, told a meeting in Barkly West that it was clear that it was possible 'to cure the disease and eradicate it'.¹⁷⁵ Snyman was confident that scab could be eradicated and Theron added that he knew it from experience.¹⁷⁶ Slabbert was certain that if the farmers did what they were expected to do, the country would be cleaned of scab.¹⁷⁷ Wentzel thought that the Act was needed in order to facilitate it.¹⁷⁸

The possibility of curing or even eradicating scab fuelled the desire to have an appropriate Act to bring it about. This desire was also enhanced by the strong belief among many supporters of the Act that it would serve their best interests. As previously

noted, the opponents of the Act were mostly concerned with their micro-economic survival and viewed the macroeconomic approaches to the pastoral economy as a threat, not only to their economic interests, but also to the survival of their way of life. Among the Afrikaner sheep farmers supporting the Act there was convergence rather than contradiction between their macro and micro-economic outlooks. In this their views coincided with those of the English-speaking sheep farmers. 'O. P. Q.' gave expression to the above convergence, writing that 'as a farmer' the day the Act was enacted would be a happy day for his sheep and his purse.¹⁷⁹ Conversely, the absence of an Act, in exacerbating the disease, was perceived as a disaster. 'Pro bono publico' from Clanwilliam lamented that the scab disease had destroyed sheep farming in his district.¹⁸⁰ De Wet told an election meeting that scab must be fought as if it was an enemy.¹⁸¹ Berg thought that without proper legislation to combat the disease, 'our wool industry will come to an end'.¹⁸² 'O. P. Q.' was more dramatic in elaborating on this theme:

I fight the scab insect. He is the fiercest enemy of my friends, the Merino sheep, and the best friend of *land en volk*. This insect harms my profits and my existence ... I am determined not to give up fighting until the death of the last insect, because I want to be the master of my farm and I will not allow the enemy to be the master over my pocket and my sheep.¹⁸³

MP Smith told a public meeting at Graaff Reinet that because of scab, the economic development of the Cape had been kept back by 25 years.¹⁸⁴ Thus, scab was not only the enemy of individual farmers trying to make a living, but also of the Colony as a whole. Becker from the Little Karoo also articulated the convergence of general and individual interests: 'The aim of the Act is to rescue an important industry and in so doing the Act will provide a great service to the country and to thousands [of] individuals.'¹⁸⁵ De Wet said that 'wool was the staple of the Colony',¹⁸⁶ and thus its economic mainstay as well as the economic backbone of many farmers, Afrikaners and other. P. J. van den Heever argued that the expense involved in the implementation of the Act was worthwhile as it would benefit the country by eliminating the disease that destroyed, directly and indirectly, one of Colony's main products.¹⁸⁷

As wool was primarily geared for export, many supporters were concerned about the position of their wool in the highly competitive world markets. This concern was articulated by Van Aardt in supporting the Act: 'I am in favour of a general scab act, because I think it is high time and in the interests of the Colony that scab should be eradicated ... At the present day many countries produce good wool, free of scab ... and unless we improve there will be no market for the wool.'¹⁸⁸ Similarly gloomy was De Villiers who warned the Victoria West Congress not to be hasty because 'wool is almost unseleable [sic]'.¹⁸⁹ A Bond branch meeting in Maclear town distanced itself from D. P. van den Heever 'because we live in an age of competition and because the sheep is the backbone of our land'. Hence, the meeting viewed the Act as the salvation of the farmer.¹⁹⁰ A petition by a group of farmers from Venterstad

stated, in supporting the Act, that scabby wool could not fetch high prices in England and other places.¹⁹¹ Kalmoes asked: 'What shall we do if the competition from other countries will increase?'¹⁹² Snyman was more specific and knowledgeable about the difficulties involved in exporting the Cape scabby wool: 'In Europe the supply exceeds the demand and consequently we have to supply a good product.'¹⁹³ Similarly, Viljoen believed that without the Act, 'we will not be able to maintain the quality of our wool and to get high prices in England.'¹⁹⁴ Another correspondent was more ambitious, hoping that the Act would place 'our wool in the forefront of the wool market'.¹⁹⁵

Thus, whereas the opponents of the Act not only tended to ignore macroeconomic considerations, but also viewed them as a veil covering a sinister conspiracy against them, the supporters entertained a totally different perception thereof. Macroeconomic considerations for them were closely linked to the prospect of their individual prosperity. Furthermore, whereas the rule of the free market spelled doom to the opponents, supporters viewed obedience to it as a means of economic salvation. 'Sheep farmer' was angry with D. P. van den Heever for engineering an agitation against legislation 'that in the opinion of every industrious sheep farmer means salvation'.¹⁹⁶ The Bond branch in Maclear also viewed the Act as 'the only means of salvation for the farmer'.¹⁹⁷

The wide gap between sheep farmers opposing and supporting the Act did not foreclose the possibility of dialogue. In fact, since the issue at stake was considered so vital to both, each group tried to convince the other to change its respective position. However, for a meaningful dialogue to take place there had to be at least a limited common ground between the two sides. One common ground was the belief shared by members of both camps that experience was an important arbiter of appropriate knowledge. This was the basis for the prevalent argument of supporters of the Act that it should be given a fair trial. Badenhorst argued that one could not determine the attitude towards the Act before it was tried.¹⁹⁸ Flowing from this basic position Wentzel urged the participants at the 1895 Bond Congress to give the Act a trial.¹⁹⁹ In late 1894, a farmer wrote of the need for an appropriate trial.²⁰⁰ Two years later, after more than a year's trial, Venter still called on the delegates to the 1897 Bond Congress to give the Act an appropriate trial period.²⁰¹ 'Sheep farmer' asked to give the Act a trial of two years 'and let us see how it works'.²⁰² A trial period of one to two years was suggested.²⁰³ The adjective 'appropriate' was of course of utmost importance. As has been seen, supporters claimed that the opponents did not abide by the provisions of the Act nor by the instructions of the veterinary surgeons. Consequently, their experience, in the eyes of many supporters, was inappropriate. Experience-based dialogue did not, in itself, produce many converts in the ranks of the opponents. However, there were also opponents who had been converted through their own experience after having been forced to live under the Act.

The controversy among the Afrikaner farmers and Afrikaners as a whole was very fierce because the issue was, in the eyes of both camps, of utmost existential importance. The Cape Afrikaner ethnic field was indeed a highly contested one. It was so because ethnicity defined the boundaries of the field rather than its content. In the case of the Act the issues were existential not only in the narrow sense, they also touched the core of the collective Afrikaner being. It was indeed a contest about Afrikaner ontology as well as Afrikaner cosmology, about material benefits, but also about ethnic morality. It reflected the Afrikaner guts as well as the Afrikaner heart, the Afrikaner's mind as well as his soul. The internal struggle was indeed about the essence of being Cape Afrikaners at that stage of their evolution.

Morality was a highly valued resource and weapon among Cape Afrikaners. There was, in this respect, some difference in the ethnomoral arguments used in the internal debate and those used by the opponents in their confrontation with English-speaking progressives. Afrikaner farmers expected the English-speaking farmers to be progressive and materialistic; it was part of their ethnocultural baggage. Furthermore, they were not expected to care for the struggling Afrikaner farmers. From this perspective of the opponents of the Act, the English-speakers were external enemies. Consequently, there was no meaningful dialogue between the opponents of the Act and English-speaking farmers. Even when the opponents spoke about the dire consequences for the Afrikaner sheep farmers from the supposed English-speaking conspiracy, it seems that it was employed as a moral weapon directed at their ethnic brothers who broadly subscribed to similar positions. They articulated the appropriate Afrikaner ethnomoral order as a moral critic of and a challenge to the Afrikaner supporters of the Act. The intra-ethnic debates and contests among Cape Afrikaners were much more morally charged and fierce than is usually the case between ethnic strangers.

Afrikaner support for the Act was perceived by many opponents of the Act as a deviation from Afrikaner core values. Their very Afrikaner identity was put in question. Kruger viewed the supporters of the Act as *verengelsde boere* (anglicised farmers).²⁰⁴ When De Wet wrote of the danger of dividing the 'true sheep farmers' (Afrikaners), he implied that the supporters of the Act were not such.²⁰⁵ In the same vein, a correspondent from Stockenstroum described the opponents of the Act in his area as *ware Afrikaansch gesinden* (possessing true Afrikaner inclinations), implying that the supporters were not. Indeed, a correspondent from Victoria West was astonished that Verster 'whom we have always seen as an *opregte Afrikaner*' (an upright Afrikaner) accepted the job of a scab inspector.²⁰⁶ D. P. van den Heever, referring to a few districts, claimed that 'it was fully proven what the opinions of the *real* landowners [emphasis added] were'.²⁰⁷

First and foremost, supporters of the Act were attacked for transgressing the prime value of ethnic solidarity and for being motivated by personal greed. Erasmus accused 'sheep farmer' of supporting the Act for immoral selfish reasons: 'Why will you not

chivalrously tell the truth that through the Act you would become master over the lower classes in our country?'²⁰⁸ Van Eck claimed that the supporters of the Act wanted to protect the rich farmers who wanted to 'swallow everything', namely the poor farmers.²⁰⁹ De Wet accused a wealthy Afrikaner farmer of supporting the Act for selfish reasons, thus ignoring the plight of his poorer brothers.²¹⁰

Members of the Afrikaner political establishment were singled out as the main objects of the opponents' moral critique. Van Rensburg strongly criticised the editor of the *Zuid Afrikaan* for accepting the arguments of the English-speakers, surmising that he did so 'because whoever opposes the Act is struck off the list of the progressives'.²¹¹ A resolution taken at a scab meeting in Sutherland depicted the conduct of such MPs as 'unprincipled'.²¹² The same accusation was levelled against the delegates to the 1895 Bond Congress who voted for a general scab Act contrary to their instructions.²¹³ A meeting in Fraserburg singled out MP Botha for condemnation for 'inflicting a curse upon us' despite knowing the difficult local conditions.²¹⁴ In stating that the 'voice of the people' was not represented in Parliament, Jooste implied that the Afrikaner MPs were acting immorally, 'the voice of the people' being the assumed moral authority in Afrikanerdom.²¹⁵ In a letter to MP Du Plessis, Nigrini mounted a vicious moral attack against the Afrikaner leaders supporting the Act:

You have brought desperation to the land ... You have reduced many poor *rondtrekkers* to beggary. You have denied bread to many widows and orphans and pushed hard up landowners to misery. Who are you caring for? The boss who strolls in the streets with a walking stick and cigar in his mouth and who goes out at night while the farmers must rest? This is what you have done for your people, and yet you speak of love-motivated cooperation.²¹⁶

Thus Afrikaner leaders who supported the Act were presented as the enemies of Afrikaner values and the Afrikaner rural way of life which underpinned them. When Van Niekerk, after delivering a strong moral attack against Afrikaner MPs who supported the Act, wrote that it was better to have ten 'trustworthy' MPs than 20 who 'were not so',²¹⁷ he was also making a distinction between two moral types of Afrikaner leaders. Erasmus gave this critic of the Afrikaner leadership a religious touch: 'And how many believers in Jesus work forcefully for our beloved homeland and our mother tongue?'²¹⁸ The implication was that the above betrayed both their nation and their religion. In blaming the Bond for the Act and for consequently harming 'our poor people', Van Eck argued that the party was a 'curse'.²¹⁹ In the same vein Nigrini described the voting of Afrikaner MPs for the Act as a sin.²²⁰

It is understandable that Afrikaners who volunteered to act as scab inspectors were also criticised from a 'true' Afrikaner moral position. Van den Berg argued that no 'decent' Afrikaner would become a scab inspector, thus implying that any association with the implementation of the Act was morally indecent.²²¹

This aggressive moral thrust by the opponents of the Act put the supporters under strong pressure to either conform to the position of the former or to state their own moral case. They did not succumb to moral pressure and opted to mount a counter-moral assault. Many did it anonymously, alluding not only to strong social pressures, but also to the realisation that their positions were outside the moral consensus of the majority of their fellow Afrikaner sheep farmers. Yet, there were also some who defended their position openly and with moral courage and vehemence.

There were unashamed modernists who articulated a conception that opponents would have depicted as 'immoral economy'. For them, as for their English-speaking counterparts, economic efficiency was not merely profitable, but also had beneficial macromoral outcomes. Such a position, as shown above, tended to ignore the predicament of the poor and vulnerable members of the community. Jooste, who was interested in protecting those who supported the Act, invariably wealthy farmers, advocated compulsion with regard to its opponents.²²² For P. J. van den Heever the benefit of the Act was that it would force the 'backward' farmers to treat their stock properly, thus preventing them from spreading the disease to the flocks of the 'industrious' ones.²²³ Some spoke of the need to protect the 'industrious' farmer from 'negligent' ones.²²⁴ Thus the modern successful farmers, rather than the traditional and/or struggling poor farmers, were the concern of the above. This 'immoral' economic stance was particularly manifested in the attitude towards transhumance. W. v. L. was happy with the Act because it protected him by putting an end to the constant movement of scabby flocks across his farm.²²⁵ In supporting the prohibition on the movement of infected sheep, Nester also manifested a lack of social conscience towards his less fortunate trekking counterparts.²²⁶ Two farmers from Barkly East even favoured the prohibition of movement of infected stock along public roads.²²⁷ Van der Merwe opposed the idea of assisting the poor farmers by providing them with free dipping tanks.²²⁸ Those entertaining such deviant attitudes clearly did not feel obliged to abide by the core values that underpinned traditional Afrikaner sheep farming. It should be recalled that freedom of movement in times of ecological adversity was perceived, by many opponents of the Act, as vital to the survival of all farmers, not only poor farmers.

However, not all supporters of the Act were oblivious to the traditional values of reciprocity and solidarity that were so central to Afrikaner pastoral life. Some insisted that the supporters of the Act were not beyond the boundaries of the Cape Afrikaner moral kraal. Luttig denied an allegation that the Act was a conspiracy of wealthy farmers who wanted to buy out the poor ones. He challenged this allegation by a counter-moral claim arguing that the Act would save the poor farmers in particular.²²⁹ Speaking at a meeting convened to discuss the Act, Vorster also maintained that the Act saved poor farmers from ruin.²³⁰ This was also implied in Bekker's assertion that 'the greatest loss in stock [from the scab disease] is among small farmers'.²³¹ A Bond branch resolution, more generally, asserted that the Act was the only means of salvation for the farmer.²³² There were those who related to the benefit to *land en*

volk as a whole. Imbued with this spirit, MP A. S. du Plessis insisted that in supporting the anti-Scab Act legislation he acted out of a sense of duty and 'deep conviction as to what is good to our poor country and people'.²³³ Liebenberg, arguing from a more positive perspective, wrote that a scab Act would be a blessing to the country.²³⁴

There were wealthy farmers who supported the Act, but opposed measures that would ruin their poor neighbours. Van Zyl, for example, had reservations with regard to the position of Luttig: 'Consequently I should not allow any poor man to come on my property, and the result would be that the poor man would lose all his little possessions.'²³⁵ Similarly, Swartz manifested sensitivity to the impact of the Act on his poor neighbours.²³⁶ According to MP Weeber, the following was the position of De Villiers from Beaufort West, one of the biggest sheep farmers in the Colony: 'He is in favour of a compulsory Act, but unless the present Bill is suitably amended it will ruin the North-Western districts.'²³⁷

Supporters of the Act also related to the religious dimension of the ethnomoral discourse of the opponents. The latter, by portraying the Act as a challenge to Providence, cast doubt on the formers' religious commitment. Nigrini stated it clearly in relation to prominent Afrikaner leaders who were persistent in supporting the Act: 'Making a mistake is human but to persist in doing evil is unchristian.'²³⁸ Erasmus argued that the leaders' support for the Act was an affront to God.²³⁹ The response of supporters to this moral religious challenge was varied. There were those like 'Q. P. R.' who simply mocked those who used the Bible to justify their resistance to the Act.²⁴⁰ 'Farmer's son' criticised the religious interpretation of plagues, adding cynically: 'Too many people wish our beloved Lord to be a sheep herder, a goat herder and even a cattle herder.'²⁴¹ Another anonymous correspondent combined mocking with irritation relating to the opponents' reference to the Bible: 'I maintain that every man can dip his sheep healthy and they speak about Moses and do nothing to help their poor stock.'²⁴² Another correspondent thought that those using religion in the Scab Act controversy should be ashamed,²⁴³ while Marais thought that they were using it as an excuse to cover up their lack of interest in their stock.²⁴⁴ Kalmoes described the idea that God who inflicted a plague would also cure it as childish.²⁴⁵

There were, however, supporters of the Act who made their own use of Providence. De Waal from Sutherland asserted that the Act would not have been in place unless 'our beloved God' desired it.²⁴⁶ Erasmus, in supporting the election of scab inspectors, had his own idea: 'I already see the hand of God in the Government's intransigence in the face of the people's supplications.'²⁴⁷ Another correspondent saw the light at the end of the biblical tunnel: 'God is strong enough to rescue us from all our troubles.'²⁴⁸ There were also supporters of the Act who entered the religious arena, producing counter-moral arguments from biblical sources. They did so because they themselves were as devoutly religious as the opponents. P. J. van den Heever, an ardent supporter who had mocked those using the Bible, had his own theological interpretation. He argued

that 'anybody who had a shred of religious belief in him must recognise that after paradise the earth was cursed'.²⁴⁹ But, he added, 'God also gave us the means and the medicines for our use.'²⁵⁰ Grove stated similarly: 'The Lord who gives us the plagues has also given the care which we have to apply properly.'²⁵¹ Indeed, religion and the Bible are a double-edged sword readily supplying moral underpinnings and guidance for almost every eventuality and everyone who seeks inspiration or excuses.

God and the Bible also provided ample moral ammunition to ward off the assault of those opponents purporting to care for the poor animals. As has been shown, the opponents argued that the provisions of the Act, in causing suffering to the sheep, were a transgression of a person's Christian duty to care for their animals. P. J. van den Heever turned the table on those employing this argument, criticising them for neglecting to treat the disease: 'The heart aches seeing the sheep suffering from scab while nothing is done to alleviate their condition because of the assumption that it was God's punishment.'²⁵² There were, in fact, many who articulated a counter-religious morality in support of the Act. 'Christian Afrikaner' argued that caring for the sheep 'who suffer because of our sins' was a religious obligation. He hoped that God would open the eyes of the Christians so that they would not conduct themselves 'contrary to the Bible and their human and Christian duty'.²⁵³ 'Farmer's son' read in the Bible that 'the righteous knows the soul of his beast'.²⁵⁴ His moral lesson therefrom was that a 'righteous' farmer should be compassionate towards his animals.²⁵⁵ Graaff echoed this line of argument in Parliament: 'Reference had been made to the interference of a Higher Power. If they did not take steps to prevent small-pox the Lord would punish them for that; and if they did not dip their sheep the Lord might punish them for that.'²⁵⁶

There were those who argued for the cause of compassion towards the animals from a more modern secular perspective. This was the thrust of Vermaak's evidence: 'It is our duty to dip our sheep and not to keep them clean is cruelty to animals in its worst form. The very animal which gives you your food and clothing must not be allowed to run in such a state.'²⁵⁷ 'Sheep farmer' urged fellow farmers to treat infected sheep as if they were sick humans.²⁵⁸

Thus the ultimate moral weapon of the supporters of the Act, as in the case of the opponents, was the Bible. As shown above, the Bible was an encyclopaedia for moral values, lessons and precedents. It is not surprising, therefore, that ardent supporters also turned to this moral source. There was, however, one major difference. Whereas the opponents turned to the Old Testament, the supporters drew their inspiration and moral arguments more from the New Testament. This is hardly surprising. The Old Testament – and particularly the prophets – can serve as a rich source for a struggle for social justice. The opponents drew inspiration from the way evil kings were the objects of God's moral rage, and God's compassion towards suffering subjects. The supporters of the Act could find little encouragement in this much read and admired sacred text. Consequently they turned almost exclusively to the New Testament, with

its emphasis on obedience to the secular authorities – be they righteous or evil. One supporter referred to the general biblical commandment to obey the Government: 'The Bible says that we must submit to the authorities.'²⁵⁹ Another supporter more specifically appealed to Paul's commandment to be obedient to the Government without regard to its moral conduct, while others cited more specifically his message in Romans 13.²⁶⁰ 'Young Bondsman', who seems to have made a study of the subject, used extensively other New Testament references.²⁶¹ De Villiers responded to threats by opponents to engage in passive and even violent resistance to the Act: 'No Christian can support such talk.'²⁶² A correspondent from Steynsburg called on his fellow farmers to submit to the Act and live in peace and tranquillity 'as the Bible teaches us',²⁶³ while Smit asserted: 'We cannot rebel against the Government and the laws; it will be *onbijbels* (unbiblical).'²⁶⁴

Some supporters were more specific regarding the secular authorities ordained by God. 'Young Bondsman' reminded D. P. van den Heever of the motto he had himself always repeated: 'Fear God and respect the King.'²⁶⁵ He accused Van den Heever of not respecting Queen Victoria who 'was installed by God, the Lord, in his stead to rule the people in the Cape and elsewhere'. He also accused him of organising resistance to a law by a government that was ordained by Providence.²⁶⁶ Others presented obedience to a democratically elected parliament as a religious duty. P. J. van den Heever asked: 'Is it right that we, a Christian people, will rebel against a law that had been passed by the majority of our representatives?'²⁶⁷ Botha told Parliament that 'it was our duty as Christians and as free citizens to accept the situation imposed on us by the majority'.²⁶⁸ 'Obedient farmer', relying on Romans 13 predicted that disobedience to the law would bring punishment in its wake.²⁶⁹

There were also supporters of the Act who argued the case for obedience from a secular perspective. A meeting in Kraaifontein did not refer to a divine source when condemning D. P. van den Heever for inciting the people against the law and the Government. A similar resolution was adopted in another meeting.²⁷⁰ MP Wienand drew on the Afrikaner historical tradition and on the *volk's* character: 'A good deal had been said about their forefathers, and no one was a greater admirer of their virtues than he was, and he believed that their noble blood still flowed in the veins of their descendants. They ought therefore to imitate them as law-abiding subjects and give this Act of Parliament a fair trial.'²⁷¹

The controversy between opponents and supporters of the Act was accompanied by fierce and acrimonious debates and written exchanges, insults often being hurled across the dividing line. Furthermore, the tension between the two sides was also manifested in strong social pressures exerted against supporters of the Act. Van Schalkwyk, a supporter of the Act, was asked: 'Is it possible that there can be many farmers in this district who hold your opinion, but, knowing that the majority of the people are opposed to such opinions, do not wish to state them in public?' He

answered without hesitation: 'Certainly. Take for instance Mr. Van Wyk, who gave his evidence this morning; he will be hooted for what he has said.'²⁷² Vorster responded similarly to a question whether people expressed opposition to the Act for the sake of popularity: 'Apparently it is the case.'²⁷³ Kruger's answer was even more revealing:

I believe that many people who pretend to be opposed to the Scab Act are not really so, but being leading men in the district, and dependent upon the support they receive from others, they would not get into office if they declared themselves in favour of the Act. It is even impossible to become an elder of the church if you are in favour of the Act or a member of a divisional council, or of Parliament; and they are afraid of losing their position if they should say they are in favour of the act.²⁷⁴

MP A. S. du Plessis, an ardent supporter of the Act, was under pressure from two Bond branches to cooperate in the struggle against it.²⁷⁵ In Richmond, P. J. du Toit was boycotted for supporting the Act in Parliament.²⁷⁶ The chairman of the Bond branch in Springbok warned a member of the branch that if he did not renege on a letter to the *Patriot* supporting the Act, he would be forced to do it.²⁷⁷ A few Bond branches resolved to throw out of the party those who were willing to implement the Act.²⁷⁸ Various branches threatened those who collaborated in the implementation of the Act with sanctions.²⁷⁹

Conflicts and convergences – interpreting intra-Afrikaner sheep farmers' divisions

All this may indicate that there was a clear-cut line of division between the opponents and the supporters of the Act. It is intriguing and challenging to try and sketch this supposed rigid fault line between the two apparently uncompromising opposing groups. This fault line is, however, rather elusive. Indeed, the boundaries between the two camps were very unclear and highly porous. Any attempt to draw clear boundaries is bound to face a solid rock of conflicting evidence.

A socioeconomic interpretation, drawing the line of division between wealthy farmers who supported the Act and vulnerable poor ones who feared and opposed it, may be appealing. This interpretation may be as attractive for a student of the episode as it was for many among those who took part therein. A report from Stockenstrom had it that opponents of the Act in that district possessed few sheep while supporters thereof boasted big flocks.²⁸⁰ An editorial in the *Zuid Afrikaan* claimed that 'we have got reason to believe that if we shall calculate the number of stock owned by the farmers we shall see that the majority [i.e. the owners of the majority of animals] are for the Act'.²⁸¹ Similarly, a correspondent from Colesberg argued that if the number of sheep was taken into account, it would appear that the supporters had the upper hand to the extent of three to one.²⁸² Dr Smartt put the ratio at four to one in favour of the supporters.²⁸³ At a meeting in Piketberg, MP De Waal argued that the supporters of

the Act produced the bulk of the wool.²⁸⁴ Stockenstrom stated similarly in Parliament that the big sheep farmers supported the Act.²⁸⁵ In a petition in support of the Act signed by 41 farmers from Venterstad, the signatories stated that they owned between them 28 003 sheep, an average of 7 000 each.²⁸⁶ This was referred to in an editorial in *Ons Land* that added some 2 000 sheep to make the total a round number.²⁸⁷ An editorial in *Onze Courant* pointed out a correlation between poverty and opposition to the Act in areas where the Act had already been in operation.²⁸⁸ 'Pro Bono Publico' insinuated that the opponents were not only ignorant, but also poor.²⁸⁹ In reporting an anti-Scab Act protest meeting in Britstown, *Ons Land* implied that the wealthy farmers were uninterested observers and that the poor rough farmers set the tone.²⁹⁰ The district executive of a Bond branch condemned Van den Heever for exerting a bad influence on the 'underprivileged'.²⁹¹ Oudendal presented, on the basis of the above assumption, a conspiracy theory whereby the wealthy farmers used the Act 'to oppress the poor'.²⁹² MP Van Eeden, an opponent of the Act, in telling Stockenstrom that if they had small farms in his area the farmers would have sung a different tune, implied that he accepted this assertion.²⁹³

Not everybody, however, subscribed to this class interpretation. One correspondent wrote that in Humansdorp many leading farmers opposed the Act.²⁹⁴ Another from the North West stated that in his part of the world not only the poor, but also the wealthy farmers opposed it.²⁹⁵ In Britstown the local newspaper refuted an account in the *Zuid Afrikaan* of a protest meeting against the Act that presented a class analysis of the participants. *De Britstownner* insisted that wealthy farmers were also actively involved in the meeting and in the agitation against the Act.²⁹⁶

It remains to subject contemporary assertions to the scrutiny of a more detached and systematic investigation. The main body of information for such an exercise is the SCR. The Commission interviewed some 350 Afrikaner stock farmers. All the farmers interviewed had to report the number of stock in their possession. While this is not a scientific statistical sample it is sufficiently reliable to serve as a means to prove or disprove a class analysis of the division between the two camps. The evidence contained in the SCR shows conclusively that such analysis holds no water. As shown above, in the case of the divide between the Afrikaner and English-speaking farmers, there were much wealthier farmers among the former than among the latter. A close scrutiny indicates that both Afrikaner camps were socioeconomically mixed. The difference between them was in the proportions of the mix.

I have divided the farmers interviewed by the Commission into four groups: 1. Those owning up to 1 000 animals; 2. Those owning between 1 001–5 000; 3. Those owning between 5 001–10 000; 4. Those owning more than 10 000. In the first category there were proportionally slightly more opponents than supporters of the Act. However, in the fourth category the former had a clear advantage. While there was only one supporter who owned 11 000 stock, among the opponents there

were four who owned 30 000, 15 000, 12 000 and 10–11 000 respectively. While there was proportional equality between the two camps in the third category, in the second the supporters had a slight edge. Thus the evidence based on the SCR is unequivocally conclusive. Yet a qualitative qualification would somewhat amend the socioeconomic profile of the respective camps. It is important to note that the very poor farmers, the many landless *bywooners* and permanent *rondtrekkers*, were not directly represented in the SCR. It stands to reason that being the most vulnerable to the restrictive provisions of the Act, all of them strongly opposed it. Thus a more adequate socioeconomic profile should include in the opponents' camp also those belonging to the latter categories.

One farmer alluded that the age of the farmers might explain their attitude towards the Act, the young being more inclined to accept new, at times painful, measures designed to brighten their economic future. An editorial in the *Zuid Afrikaan* argued that the opponents of the Act belonged to the older generation.²⁹⁷ At a meeting in Hanover, Venter, a supporter of the Act, said that he did not want to fight with old people like Van Zyl. He preferred to argue with younger people because 'old people possess overly entrenched views'.²⁹⁸ Cloete from Worcester said that 'there are a great many of the old farmers who think that scab comes from poverty'.²⁹⁹ However, the information contained in the SCR does not lend credibility to the argument that the line of division was generational. The Commission asked each interviewee how many years he had been farming. This allows us to test the plausibility of a generational interpretation. I have divided the respondents into four groups reflecting the number of years they had been farming: 0–10, 11–20, 21–30, 31+. This statistical exercise reveals that this interpretation is of only limited validity. In the first group (0–10) there were 24,7% supporters and 14,3% opponents. In the second group (11–20) there were 29,9% supporters and 30,4% opponents; in the third group (21–30) there were 25,7% supporters and 33,4% opponents; in the fourth group (over 30) there were 19,5% supporters and 21,7% opponents. While on its own the age differential does not provide the full answer it certainly has some merit within a broader analytical framework.

Another line of inquiry relates to possible regional differentiation. Already in 1884 Jan Hofmeyr offered a regional explanation to the division among the stock farmers with regard to scab legislation. He told Parliament that the farmers in the East wanted a scab Act, the Midlands farmers wanted no Act at all and the farmers from the West wanted the appointment of a commission.³⁰⁰ By 1890, it was widely believed that the farmers in the East and the Midlands supported the Act, while the ones in the West, mainly in the North West and South West, opposed it. This view may have been influenced by the assumption that in the former areas of English-speaking settlement, Afrikaner farmers were influenced by their more progressive neighbours. However, the evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, considerably qualifies this view. Again, the SCR provides us with relevant information. While, as pointed out earlier on, it does not represent a systematic and scientific sample, it does offer some quantitative

basis for evaluating the balance of regional dispositions towards the Act. It is important to note that among those giving evidence many were delegated by Bond or public meetings. There were a number of districts, broadly in the West and in the Karoo, whose delegates were overwhelmingly opposed to general scab legislation. These were the districts of Victoria West, Britstown, Prieska, Kenhardt, Calvinia, Williston, Fraserburg, Carnarvon, Hopetown, Prince Albert, Ladismith and Riversdale. In some districts in these zones the supporters, while being in the minority, had a greater representation. The ratio between supporters and opponents giving evidence to the Commission was clearly in favour of the latter: In Hanover 5:4, in Philipstown 12:7, in Richmond 5:2, in Beaufort West 7:4, and in Colesberg 6:4. In Griqualand West the balance was mixed, while in Kimberly district there were five opponents against two supporters, in Herbert there were five supporters and four opponents. In Ladismith in the Little Karoo five gave evidence against a general Act while only one supported it. In Riversdale in the South West there were eight opponents against one supporter.

In the Midlands the balance was in some cases surprising. In Middelburg nine spoke against while only four defended the Act. In Graaff Reinet six were against the Act and only one in favour. In Murraysburg six were in favour and four against. In Aberdeen two were in favour and two were against the Act. In Cradock there were three representing each side, while in Jansenville there were three supporters and no opponents. In the North East the ratio between supporters and opponents was as follows: Barkly East – 12 against and five in favour; Burghersdorp – seven against and three in favour; Aliwal North – seven against and five in favour; in Steynsburg – five against and four in favour. The biggest surprise, however, was in the 'deep' East. In Komgha, which was the showpiece of the 1886 Scab Act, there were five in favour and none against. Similarly, in Uitenhage the ratio was 3:0. However, in the following areas the ratio was in favour of the opponents: Somerset East – 6:1; Molteno – 9:2; Lady Frere – 4:0; Fort Beaufort – 2:0; Dordrecht – 5:3. In Humansdorp there were two supporting each side, and in Cathcart it was one each. In Stutterheim and Bedford the ratio was 1:0 in favour of the Act.

Even if those giving evidence did not represent accurately the balance of opinion among Afrikaner sheep farmers, their evidence is sufficiently convincing to bury the myth of clear regional differentiation. The records of petitions sent by Afrikaner farmers protesting against the Act and demanding its abolition reinforce the data provided above. It is superfluous to detail the petitions in the areas where the opponents had an overwhelming majority. I will therefore only refer to the petitions sent by farmers from the Midlands, the North East and the East. The numbers of those who signed petitions against the Act are as follows:

The Midlands:

Jansenville: 1895 – 74; 1896 – 78; Willowmore: 1895 – 139; 1896 – 289; Murraysburg: 1895 – 14; 1896 – 23; 1898 – 55; Middelburg: 1895 – 84; 1896 – 162; 1898 – 78;

Oudtshoorn: 1896 – 146; 1898 – 26; Aberdeen: 1896 – 242; Graaff Reinet: 1896 – 40; 1898 – 25.

The North East:

Steynsburg: 1896 – 236; Albert: 1895 – 182; 1896 – 132; 1898 – 72; Aliwal North: 1895 – 141; 1896 – 158; Venterstad: 1896 – 108; 1898 – 48; Barkly East: 1895 – 326; 1896 – 122.

The East:

Tarkastad: 1896 – 236; Molteno: 1895 – 151; Sterkstroom: 1895 – 71; 1896 – 27; Lady Grey: 1895 – 66; Albani: 1895 – 16; Uitenhage: 1895 – 111; 1896 – 136; Stockenström: 1895 – 205; 1896 – 110; Queenstown: 1898 – 123.

In some of these districts more farmers signed petitions against the Act than in districts in the West, where they were renowned for their opposition to the Act.

It is undeniable that many farmers in the Midlands, the North East and the East supported the Act and manifested clear progressive inclinations. This was due in no small part to the presence of relatively many English-speaking farmers in their midst. In the Graaff Reinet area there were mixed marriages and extensive contacts across the ethnic divide.³⁰¹ Progressive ideas and improvement practices must have filtered through to Afrikaner farmers in this way. Yet, the above evidence shows that opposition to the Act was also widespread in these districts. Had there been a clear majority in favour of the Act in these districts, the Bond Congresses would have supported the Act rather than being mobilised by the opponents in their struggle against it. At the 1895 Bond Congress the following was the distribution of the 107 delegates: the East – 46, the Midlands – 30, the West – 23, Griqualand West – 7 and Bechuanaland – 1. Thus those representing the districts that were considered to be the core of the opposition, were a small minority among the delegates. And yet, this Congress voted in favour of a permissive Act reversing its 1894 resolution in favour of a general Act.³⁰²

There is abundant additional evidence that corroborates the above. Venter from Barkly East, a supporter of the Act, stated that in his district only a third of the farmers supported the 1886 permissive Act and only a few supported a general one.³⁰³ The chairman of the Barkly East Bond branch sent a letter of support to the founding meeting of the anti-Scab Act movement, mentioning that his executive had passed a resolution against the Act.³⁰⁴ MP A. S. du Plessis, one of the foremost supporters of the Act, conceded that in his district in the North East there had always been a majority against the Act.³⁰⁵ Similarly, R. P. Botha, representing the Midlands as a supporter of the Act, stated at the 1895 Bond Congress that most of his constituents were against it.³⁰⁶ Lotter from Somerset East, who had no complaints against the Act, conceded at the

1896 Bond Congress that farmers in his district opposed it.³⁰⁷ At the same Congress, De Lange from Queenstown said that his district had turned against the Act because of their experience of living under it.³⁰⁸ At a meeting in Bughersdorp, 60 expressed support for the anti-Scab Act movement while only 23 voted for a trial period for the Act.³⁰⁹ At another meeting in Bughersdorp, out of some 200 participants only five voted against a resolution opposing the Act.³¹⁰ Cloete, a supporter of the Act from Aliwal North, told the Commission that only a third of the farmers in his ward supported it.³¹¹ Sutherland from Dordrecht reported that 68 out of the 81 voters for the Divisional Council appointed him to give evidence against the Act.³¹² Van Heerden from Tarkastad stated that a district Bond branch meeting that had appointed him to give evidence was unanimously against the Act.³¹³ At a meeting in Stockenström 33 opposed the Act and 23 lent it support.³¹⁴ The executive of the Bond in Steynsburg adopted a resolution against the Act, condemning Bond members who had signed a petition in support thereof.³¹⁵ At a meeting in Achter-op-Sneeuwberg all participants with the exception of one voted for the repeal of the Act.³¹⁶ A Fort Beaufort Bond branch passed a resolution condemning MPs who had voted against a permissive scab Act.³¹⁷ Straaten from Molteno complained against the *Patriot* for having written that few in his district supported the struggle against the Act. He mentioned that 135 signed a petition against the Act and that it was possible to get as many as 200 signatories.³¹⁸ A meeting in Murraysburg condemned the Act.³¹⁹ Barnard from Uniondale claimed that most of the farmers in his district opposed the Act and that Oudtshoorn farmers were also 'strongly' against it.³²⁰ This is only some of the overwhelming evidence of dissatisfaction with the Act among Afrikaner sheep farmers in the Midlands, the North East and the East. Thus the broad claims that 'the true sheep farmers' (i.e. Afrikaner) in the East were against the Act and that the majority in the East or in the North East were against it,³²¹ were not mere figments of the imagination.

With regard to a possible educational variable the information is scant. It stands to reason that educated farmers would be less inclined to abide by the wisdom of experience and would tend to be captivated by the scientific knowledge and the modern methods of animal husbandry. The SCR provides qualitative evidence of supporters of the Act who read literature related to their agricultural pursuits and were consequently more familiar with the scientific discoveries and more inclined to accept them. They were also more familiar with sheep farming in other countries and more ready to learn from experience. Michau from Cradock (who supported the Act) was impressed by his visit to the United States where he saw millions of sheep without a trace of scab.³²² Nesor from Philipstown read professional literature and conducted a scientific investigation of the disease.³²³ Louw from Colesberg read the scab acts not only of the Cape Colony but also of Natal and the Orange Free State.³²⁴ Similarly, De Wet from Tarkastad read journals and was aware of sheep farming in the rest of the world.³²⁵ Cloete from Dordrecht owned only 700 sheep but possessed broad local and international knowledge.³²⁶ However, since most sheep farmers were not much educated this explanation can provide only a very partial clue. Furthermore, it would be incorrect to argue that all opponents of

the Act had no education and were unfamiliar or uninfluenced by scientific knowledge and prescriptions. Nel from Riversdale, for example, read the *Agricultural Journal* but remained an opponent of the Act.³²⁷

Another possible line of division stemming from the above is that between progressive, industrious farmers who naturally supported the Act and backward, lazy ones who resisted it. This was certainly the flattering self-perception among many supporters that informed their arrogance towards the opponents. There were certainly negligent farmers among the opponents who did not want to submit themselves to the rigorous provisions of the Act. Coetzee, a wealthy farmer who not only boasted that 'I have never doctored my sheep in my life', but also had a religious support for his conduct ('I only believe in a blessing from Providence, I don't believe in individual effort'),³²⁸ may not have been unique in this unprogressive attitude found among the opponents of the Act. Yet, this was certainly not true of many others. Van Rensburg, in protesting against the assertion that the opponents were not progressive, insisted that there were among them many 'very progressive farmers'.³²⁹ A correspondent from Calvinia wrote: 'I can assure you that we are very much in favour of improvement ... exactly as the farmers in the East.'³³⁰ The *Graaff Reinetter* argued that there were among the opponents not only negligent farmers but also diligent ones.³³¹ De Wet, from the East, a bitter opponent of the Act, had had a 'good' dipping tank for more than ten years and claimed that 'we have been fighting the scab for a long time without the act'.³³² Nigrini, one of the leaders of the anti-Scab Act movement, not only dipped his infected sheep but also hand-dressed them.³³³ De Klerk had dipped his sheep since 1870.³³⁴ An opponent from Worcester presented himself as 'a progressive farmer with 30 years' experience'.³³⁵ MP Joubert, from Prince Albert district, who had been farming for 26 years, stated that the first thing he did was build a dipping tank. He also said that he had used all the remedies that had been recommended.³³⁶ Marais, one of the leaders of the opponents, won a prize at the Richmond Show. While being a staunch opponent of the Act he declared himself to be 'a diligent farmer' who had a 'first class dipping tank'.³³⁷ He dipped his sheep and they were free of scab. He was also the chairman of the Britstown Agricultural Society that also included English-speaking farmers. The *Zuid Afrikaan*, which considered itself to be the mouthpiece of the progressive Afrikaners, conceded that MP Van Zyl, an arch opponent of the Act, was considered a progressive farmer.³³⁸ With regard to the opponents of the Act in Richmond and Britstown, the newspaper argued that 'the opposition of these people does not tally with their being progressives'.³³⁹ Kilian turned the table on the supporters, stating that every diligent farmer could do without the Act.³⁴⁰

Thus, it is clear that the various variables that have been tested for possible causes of the division between opponents and supporters of the Act cannot provide, in themselves, appropriate interpretations. It is indeed very difficult to chart a clear social or cultural map that would account for the differentiation between supporters and opponents of the Act. Categories of age, culture and education, class and regions are to be found all

over the place. This was also reflected in the confusion in the respective discourses of the Afrikaner supporters and the opponents of the Act. As has been seen with regard to the ontological discourse, not all the opponents were oblivious to scientific knowledge and not all the supporters were imbued by it. There were as many opponents who followed scientific prescriptions as there were supporters whose conduct stemmed solely from experience.

As has also been shown, the religious discourse was not the monopoly of the opponents of the Act. Many of the supporters of the Act were as deeply religious as many of the opponents. They employed religious arguments out of deep convictions as much as for practical considerations. It is true that supporters turned more often to the New Testament to underpin the need to obey the Government. However, many opponents also subscribed to St Paul's commandment to obey even an evil ruler. Esterhuysen called on the opponents to obey the law once it had been passed, because it was a religious duty.³⁴¹ This was the gist of a resolution adopted by a public meeting in Piketberg: 'The Act is unfair and unworkable but on the other hand as an obedient Christian people we shall elect our inspectors and give the Act a trial period.'³⁴² I shall further elaborate on this point in Chapter Three.

The dichotomy between those subscribing to moral ethnicity and macroeconomy was also not sharp and clear. It is true that opponents to the Act were inspired by social justice and by the critique of evil rulers in the Old Testament. However, many of the supporters also subscribed to the moral economy that inspired the ethnomoral discourse of the opponents. Many of them were sensitive to their poor brothers who lived under difficult conditions and were committed to the values of solidarity and reciprocity that informed the opponents.

This confusion was also manifested in the attitude towards the stringency of the measures to combat scab. There were inconsistencies among supporters of the Act in their attitude towards the degree of its stringency. As seen above, the English-speaking farmers supported, almost to a man, stringent legislation. There were also Afrikaner farmers who favoured such legislation. Eckhardt, for instance, advocated a stringent general Act that would preclude suspension in times of drought in the dry areas in the North West.³⁴³ Van der Merwe and Van Heerden similarly favoured a general stringent Act,³⁴⁴ while Morkel supported forcing the Act on unwilling farmers.³⁴⁵ Those propagating such radical positions ignoring the plight of their less fortunate brothers were, however, in the minority.

Many who declared themselves supporters of the Act had reservations about it, and proposed modifications that at times make it difficult to decide whether to count them as supporters or opponents thereof. There were quite a few who supported a general Act, but were hesitant about its application in districts other than their own. Thus, Van Rensburg from King William's Town said that a general Act was desirable, but while he believed that it was good for his area, he did not know if it was good for

other areas where different conditions prevailed.³⁴⁶ His namesake was more specific, stating that the Act was good for areas well provided with water. He did not know, however, if it was also good in less privileged areas like Victoria West.³⁴⁷ Since the knowledge of many supporters derived from their personal experience which was locally circumscribed, these positions made perfect sense. Van Heerden, whose knowledge was similarly derived, supported a general Act, but hastened to add that he personally knew only the dry areas of Fraserburg, Carnarvon and Prieska.³⁴⁸

There were those who supported a general Act, but wanted to scrap important provisions in order to alleviate it. Van Wyk was 'in favour of the scab act, but not of the present act'.³⁴⁹ Van Zyl, while supporting some kind of legislation, vacillated: 'I am partly in favour and partly opposed to the act, but if there were a workable act I should be in favour of it'.³⁵⁰ Those who had delegated Steyn from Aliwal North were not opposed to the Act, but to some of its provisions.³⁵¹ Steyler, who was not opposed to legislation, had some reservations: 'Such a law would be advisable if it could be made to suit every farmer, without being unduly oppressive.' He objected, for instance, to the imposition of limitations on the movement of sheep even if they were scabby.³⁵² This was also the position of Greyvenstein, who was in favour of an 'improved' Act allowing the free movement of infected sheep.³⁵³ Duvenage supported a lenient Act that allowed free movement and did not include compulsory dipping.³⁵⁴ Theron would have agreed to the Act if it included a suspension clause in times of drought.³⁵⁵

Some supporters were opposed to dipping sheep in winter while others were opposed to dipping sheep in high places.³⁵⁶ Louw opposed compulsory dipping of clean sheep.³⁵⁷ Many supporters were simply in favour of a general lenient Act, 'a reasonably lenient' Act, a 'more workable' Act, or an 'improved' Act, without specifying the nature of leniency or improvement.³⁵⁸ Fourie would have become a supporter 'if the law is so made that it will not cause the farmer to suffer a loss'.³⁵⁹ Peltzer was prepared to accept an Act that would authorise the Divisional Council to adjust it to local conditions.³⁶⁰ Pretorius agreed only to an Act that would be accepted by the farmers.³⁶¹ These reservations regarding a general compulsory law stemmed from the Afrikaner farmers' common ontology as well as from their shared moral ethnicity.

At the same time there were many farmers who, while opposing the Act categorically, favoured anti-scab measures that were even harsher than the ones advocated by some supporters or contained in the Act. Some opponents advocated tough measures against those who infected other farmers' flocks.³⁶² There were those who desired an Act that would provide for compulsory dipping of stock, some even supported compulsory simultaneous dipping in the whole Colony, while ignoring local ecological conditions.³⁶³ Others were more considerate. Henning supported a dipping Act, but only in the summer.³⁶⁴ Other opponents would have supported the Act if they believed that the disease could be eradicated.³⁶⁵

The above confusion and ambiguities make the task of interpreting the roots of the division among Afrikaner farmers complex and challenging. An appropriate interpretative paradigm has to account not only for the contradictions and conflicts between the two camps, but also for the obvious overlappings and convergences. In providing such a broad interpretative framework such a paradigm must be able to accommodate the different variables of class, age, education and region according to their appropriate explanatory power. To account for the contradictory and converging nature of the positions and dispositions of the sheep farmers across the porous dividing line, the paradigm has to be dynamic and flexible. This should facilitate the capturing of the dialectic outcomes in both camps.

My paradigm is informed by the broad historical context of the evolution of sheep farming among the Cape Afrikaners since the onset of European colonisation of the Cape.³⁶⁶ Already before the end of the seventeenth century pastoral life had become a safety valve for the European settlers in the Cape, providing at least survival for those who could not integrate into the more sedentary economy and way of life around Cape Town as agriculturalists. Spreading in all directions, the Afrikaner pastoralists were occupying increasingly less privileged ecological environments. These pastoralists did not tame the wilderness. They were individual settlers who lacked the social scale, resources, knowledge and technology to do that. Rather they submitted themselves to the vicissitudes of the environment, with its cycles of rain and drought, with its scarcity of pastures and with its diseases and plagues. In order to survive they had to be sensitive to the environment, to decipher its secrets, to avoid its hazards and to exploit its potentialities. In the long process of adjustment to their often hostile natural environment Afrikaner stock farmers evolved a complex ontology related to their pastoral pursuit which was passed from generation to generation, informing their everyday pastoral practices. They also benefited from the relevant knowledge of indigenous pastoralists they encountered along the constantly shifting frontiers.³⁶⁷ This ontology passed the test of time and formed the basis of local knowledge that was manifested in the evidence given to the Commission and in numerous contributions to the local press. This knowledge, having been instilled in the minds of consecutive generations of Afrikaner sheep farmers and having served as the basis for their everyday pursuance of animal husbandry, had become ingrained in their consciousness and way of life. It formed part and parcel of their deeply ingrained frontier tradition. This gave their ontology and the experience that underpinned it a privileged position in relation to other possible sources of knowledge.

Local knowledge, being geared to adjusting to the ecological challenges, had clear social implications. As shown previously, coping with these challenges often required manoeuvrability over very wide spaces. Such movement required investment in social capital that translated into networks of reciprocity and solidarity. These networks of interdependence were at the root of the Afrikaner pastoralists' way of life. Not surprising, therefore, the social values that allowed these vital networks to function

were deeply embedded in a moral economy that was often more implicit than explicit. This was then the ontological and moral world of the Cape Afrikaner sheep farmers by the end of the period of Dutch occupation. It shaped what P. Bourdieu terms *habitus*, namely a set of dispositions that guided their everyday practice and conduct. It did so almost instinctively because these dispositions were acquired through a very effective process of socialisation.

This way of life was coming under increasing pressure in the wake of the British occupation and especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was then that Merino sheep farming became the mainstay of the colonial economy. It was also then that the mineral revolution provided the Colony with greater means to modernise and effect changes. This assault by modernity had a few prongs. First, Afrikaner sheep farmers were increasingly linked to the global market, their economic fortunes or misfortune being dependent on their economic performance, as arbitrated by the global wool market and the growing local meat market. Second, unlike the Dutch, British colonial rule ushered in a revolution in the sphere of governing. The British colonial Government was both much more effective and intrusive. Third, the British colonial Government introduced a modern education system that conveyed the knowledge of English and socialised many young Afrikaners to a totally different world from that of their ancestors. All these modernising impulses were informed by the ethos of development, improvement and progress that imbued British Victorian society.

These new forces and this new ethos were subversive of the Afrikaner sheep farmers' traditional way of life. Since this way of life was the very antithesis of progress, the colonial Government and other informal agents of modernisation were intent on undermining it and fully integrating the Afrikaner sheep farmers into the 'brave new world'. The encounter between the new forces of change and the traditional Afrikaner pastoral way of life was one of the most salient themes in the history of the nineteenth century Cape. From the perspective of very many Afrikaner sheep farmers, the strategy that inspired the 1894 Scab Act was, as shown previously, the ultimate assault on their way of life and on their values by the forces of modernity.

The fragmented Afrikaner sheep farming population lacked sufficient resources to withstand the forces of change and to maintain intact their traditional way of life. Furthermore, the new forces had their attraction in an essentially individualistic rather than a communal society. Consequently, the market, the state and the school were gradually eroding the Afrikaner traditional pastoral way of life. Economic forces, guided by the market, eroded the material basis of their survival, while cultural and other influences shattered their social and moral world. The anti-Scab Act movement was the most widespread and intensive resistance to the aggressive march of the forces of change. Yet, it should be stressed that the movement did not reject outright the march of economic development and social change in the name of a pre-modern golden age they sought to recover. Essentially they struggled for a synthesis between the old and

the new and for the right to select what they considered beneficial to them in both. This in itself is a source of confusion to anyone who wishes to impose on this complex historical reality a simple and rigid interpretative paradigm. Indeed, the difficulty in delineating clear sociocultural boundaries between the Afrikaner opponents and supporters of the Act is itself reflective of the complex and contradictory nature and impact of modernisation on the Afrikaner society.

This has to be borne in mind when an attempt is made to account for the division between the two conflicting camps. In accounting for this salience of the controversy Afrikaners should be viewed as being involved in a march along a continuum between the world of tradition and conservatism, and the world of modernity and progress. From the vantage point of the present it is known that during the twentieth century, Afrikaner society completed the transition to the new world in a long and painful march. However, in the late nineteenth century, Cape Afrikaners were very far from completing it. In such a march, involving a large scale and varied society, individuals and groups are bound to be located on different points along the continuum. Furthermore, on different issues they may be found on different points along the continuum. The Scab Act controversy, in arousing such heated debate, revealed the views and sentiments of very many Afrikaners – sheep farmers and others – not only on the particular issue at stake. They also related to broader issues pertaining to the totality of their historical and contemporary experience. This provides an opportunity to locate groups of Afrikaners along the continuum and to account for their choice of *woord en daad* (word and deed). In doing so, due weight must also be given to the different variables that have been found to be significant though insufficient determinants.

This broad paradigm goes a long way to explaining why sheep farmers, who otherwise seemed to share common backgrounds and interests, were at loggerheads with regard to the Act, and why others shared similar views and dispositions. Above all, most of them were socialised into their world imbued with the knowledge, customs, values and dispositions derived from the common experience of generations of Afrikaner sheep farmers who had struggled to survive in a hostile environment. Furthermore, the traditional pastoral way of life with the old ways of doing things and the social networks that had evolved, had not disappeared. Indeed, this traditional way of life was, for many opponents of the Act as well as for many supporters, still a living reality. The ontology and the values embedded in this way of life were so deeply ingrained in the consciousness of opponents and supporters alike, that they had existed at least partly autonomously persisting – even when they seem to have been injurious to material interests.

This paradigmatic perspective helps to explain why a class analysis has only partial explanatory power. It cannot explain why wealthy farmers held antagonistic views or why some gave precedence to social solidarity over maximisation of profit. Indeed, as has been shown, wealthy farmers were to be found at different points along the

continuum between the traditional past and the progressive future. There were as many prosperous farmers who had farmed very successfully following the traditional ways as there were others who thrived by adopting modern ones. Since there was no incongruity between traditional sheep farming and wealth, there was little incentive for the successful traditional farmers to abandon the proven path to wealth in favour of an alternative modern one. The expected marginal long-term improvement was not sufficient to transform wealthy farmers into profit-making machines who would discard their cherished moral values and way of life. As shown above, even those who in supporting the Act manifested more commitment to the ethos of progress exhibited, at times, solidarity and compassion towards those who stood to suffer from the stringent Act. From this perspective most wealthy farmers – opponents and supporters alike – were busy striking a synthesis between the old and new, between the traditional and the modern. The former gave precedence to the old values without turning their backs on the opportunities presented by the modern market, while the latter gave precedence to the demands of the modern market without totally discarding the traditional values. Class interpretation held much more water in the case of the very poor, struggling sheep farmers – whether they were small landowners or landless. The Act, in serving the dictate of the free market and of the progressive creed, spelled certain doom for them. Not surprisingly they were overwhelmingly in the opponents' camp.

As for the well-to-do farmers, the extent of their wealth is not sufficient to account for their attitude towards the Act. Education is a possible explanatory variable. The evidence strongly suggests that farmers who had had a formal education through which they became familiar with the English culture and with its progressive ethos, tended to support the Act in its stringent form and to exhibit impatience with the old ways and the traditional values. In many cases the educated were also young men. Indeed, the combination of a young generation and a modern education could have resulted in ardent support for the Act. However, young, educated, Afrikaner sheep farmers were few and far between.

Education, as noted previously, was not the only agency for modernity and progress among the sheep farmers. By the end of the nineteenth century, diverse agencies of modernity were spread throughout the length and breadth of the Cape. There were physical infrastructure and communication systems that diminished distances. There were cities, towns and villages which served as commercial and financial centres linking the farmers to the local and global markets. The Government was sending its tentacles increasingly deeper into the rural countryside with its taxes, courts and services. There were also the English-speaking sheep farmers who adhered to the gospel of progress and served as models of modern farming. The proximity of Afrikaner sheep farmers to the centres of modernity and the length and intensity of their contact with these agencies had a definite influence on their degree of modernisation. All this had a clear regional salience. It is an undisputed fact that in the East, serious opposition to

the Act notwithstanding, there was greater support for the Act than in areas like the North West where there were few or no English-speaking sheep farmers.

Yet, even this line of interpretation has its limitation. For what explanation is there for the fact that in the South West, an area that was relatively close to Cape Town and that had known progressive Afrikaner farming since the early nineteenth century, the opposition to the Act was as strong as it was in the North West? Indeed, a proper interpretation of the divisions among the Afrikaner sheep farmers should also take into account ecological and economic conditions. The East, for instance, was not only the main concentration of English-speaking settlers, it was also ecologically a more favourable part of the Colony – especially with regard to rainfall. This made compliance with the provisions of the Act less hazardous than in less favourable areas. It is not coincidental that the most widespread and fiercest resistance to the Act occurred in the drought-prone districts of the North West. In the South West, and also in the Swartland districts of Malmesbury and Piketberg, the economic conditions have to be taken into account. The farmers in these areas were engaged in mixed farming, sheep growing and wheat growing being the major pursuits. In many cases wheat growing was the farmers' main preoccupation, with the sheep providing a source for manure for the corn fields rather than being raised for their wool and meat. For these farmers, abiding by the provisions of the Act would have consumed scarce resources and labour at the expense of their major economic activity. No less damaging were the provisions relating to the management of kraals, that seriously hindered the availability of manure.

However, this interpretative line should not be pushed too far. I do not wish to suggest that all farmers answering the above description were to be found in the ranks of the supporters of the Act as that would be too functional an approach. It has been shown that among the opponents of the Act there were successful, progressive farmers who may have surpassed other opponents in their diligence and in their ability to adopt appropriate strategies to cope with ecological adversities. As underlined earlier on, the moral economy that underpinned the traditional Afrikaner pastoralism was not a mere superstructure sustaining more material earthy interests. This moral economy, transformed into moral ethnicity, and the social system it upheld, had an autonomous existence and an intrinsic value which motivated many progressive, successful farmers at least as much as their material interests.

An appropriate analytical paradigm should allow scope for individual choices and idiosyncrasies. In a society imbued with a spirit of frontier individualism, albeit mitigated by the need to develop a social support system, attitudes could be shaped by the vagaries of individual experience.

It is difficult to understand and interpret a society embroiled in a complex process of economic and social change. Simple or mono-causal interpretations are tempting, but misleading. I have tried to offer a rather complex interpretation of a confused situation. The only way to better understand the episode of the Scab Act controversy

is to analyse it in the light of the broader context of the modernisation and social change that the Cape Afrikaner society was subjected to from the onset of British colonialism. The complexity of this process was responsible for the apparent confusion and the consequent difficulty to offer a simple and clear-cut interpretation. Yet, only such an approach can account for the contradictions and conflicts as well as for the convergences which characterised this episode and the agents involved.

In conclusion, it can be asserted with a great degree of confidence that there were relatively very few Afrikaner sheep farmers who could be located on the progressive pole of the continuum. These radical Afrikaner progressives were few and far between. There were also relatively few ultra-conservatives who rejected modernity and progress *in toto*. Most Afrikaner sheep farmers were to be found around the centre. Whereas the centre can be defined theoretically, on the ground it was represented by a very porous boundary around which most Afrikaner sheep farmers – supporters and opponents – congregated, intermingled and moved to and fro.

Cape Afrikaner sheep farmers – between *volk* and flock

What are the implications of this study so far for the evolution of Cape Afrikaner ethnic identity and consciousness? Primarily, it has been shown that ethnic identity and consciousness are not only shaped by common language, culture and historical myths; they are shaped as much by existential experience, by particular responses to ecological and economic adversities and opportunities, and by everyday practice. More generally, in colonial situations that also involve an encounter between modernity and tradition, the evolution of ethnic identity is closely linked to the impact of colonial rule and modernisation on colonial societies. The response to the forces of economic change and their social implications forms an important part in the ethnic discourse that shapes the nature of ethnic identity. This discourse involves fierce internal debate as much as it contributes to enhancing the common identity.

John Lonsdale demonstrates this salience in the evolution of ethnicity in his study of the Mau Mau movement. Among the Kikuyu the ethnomoral debate, while having a clear anti-colonial thrust, also involved a fierce internal debate that reflected the socioeconomic fissures within that society.³⁶⁸

From this perspective Cape Afrikaner identity and consciousness evolved along two frontiers. Chapter One dealt with the external frontier between the Afrikaners, and the English-speaking settlers and the British colonial Government. The latter provided the essential 'other', not only in the linguistic and cultural sense, but in no less vital a matter than sheep growing. For most Afrikaner sheep farmers, this was much more than mere economic pursuit; it was the foundation of their survival and their way of life. The dichotomy between the Afrikaner sheep farmers and their English-speaking counterparts, with their contradictory ontologies, cosmologies and moral

economies, was a crucial determinant in shaping the particular Cape Afrikaner identity and consciousness. This was so also because the Scab Act controversy raised issues related to sharply contradictory world views. Indeed, the fierce debate between progress and tradition was not merely a theoretical one; it touched upon concrete, tangible aspects of economic and social existence, and on everyday life. The encounter with the ethnic 'other' over an issue of such great importance forced Afrikaner sheep farmers to articulate and propagate Afrikaner values that had been hitherto implicitly embedded in their everyday experience and social life. These articulations played an important role in forging the Afrikaner 'imagined' ethnic community in times of radical economic and social changes that had eroded the traditional way of life.

This chapter has dealt with the internal frontiers along which the process of ethnic identity and consciousness formation unfolded. What has emerged clearly is that this process was anything but unanimous or univocal. Indeed, as is universally the case, the process of ethnic identity and consciousness formation among Cape Afrikaners was a multi-agent, multi-vocal affair. In fact, as has been seen, the intra-Afrikaner controversy was much fiercer than the one between the Afrikaner opponents and the English-speaking supporters of the Act. The Afrikaner *veld*, as it was manifested in the Scab Act controversy, was an arena of contest and conflict rather than one of idyllic celebration of ethnic unity. Intra-ethnic conflicts are often deeper than others because they tend to involve struggles for ethnic ideological, political and moral high grounds. Consequently, there are often the implications, the insinuations or the blatant accusations of betrayal of the ethnic heritage and/or destiny. What makes the conflict so fierce is also what makes it so crucial to the forging of ethnic identity and consciousness – the struggle is about the essence and the soul of the ethnic group. Indeed, the significance of such conflicts from the latter perspective is not the content of the debates, their fierceness and divisive nature, but rather the fact that they are engaged in, within the boundaries of the ethnocultural community.

The participants in the controversy did it as Cape Afrikaners. They argued about the true Afrikaner ontology, cosmology and moral economy. They drew on Afrikaner historical experience and on the Bible as the source of Afrikaner morality to underline their arguments. It could be perceived as an 'Afrikaner' debate as long as there was sufficient common ground between the conflicting camps. Such common ground did exist in the case of the Scab Act controversy, even before common language, culture and collective memories and myths were involved. As has been shown, despite the divergence of interests, there was sufficient common ground between the main Afrikaner agriculture sectors to prevent total rupture between them. There was also common ground among most contesting sheep farmers, despite the fact that the most acrimonious debates were within the sheep-farming community. Indeed, it has been difficult to draw clear boundaries between the two sides. Fierce contests notwithstanding, there were also, among the majority of sheep farmers, impressive convergences on matters concerning Afrikaner ontology, cosmology and

moral economy. Thus, dialectically the controversy that produced such ferocity also made a definite contribution to the forging of Cape Afrikaner identity. This is a very important conclusion and pertinent starting point for Chapter Three, which deals with the interface between ecology, cosmology and moral economy on the one hand, and ethnic culture and politics on the other.

Notes to Chapter Two

- 1 *Patriot*, 23 May 1895.
- 2 ZA, 22 December 1894.
- 3 ZA, 12 September 1895.
- 4 ZA, 5 February 1895.
- 5 *Patriot*, 18 March 1897.
- 6 *Patriot*, 20 June 1895.
- 7 *Patriot*, 1 November 1894.
- 8 *Patriot*, 22 November 1894.
- 9 ZA, 29 October 1896.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 ZA, 8 January 1895.
- 12 ZA, 9 February 1895.
- 13 *Ibid.*
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