EASTERN CAPE POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS AND RE-ALIGNMENTS, 1854–1858

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Politieke groeperinge en hergroeperinge in Oos-Kaapland, 1854–1858

In hierdie artikel word die veranderende grondslae van die vernaamste politieke groeperinge in Oos-Kaapland gedurende die vroeë jare van die Kaapse parlement ondersoek. Hoe het politieke groeperinge tot stand gekom en wat was hul verhouding tot mekaar? Watter opvattinge, ideologieë of doelwitte het hulle gemotiveer? Watter metodes is gebruik om ondersteuning daarvoor te mobiliseer? En hoe het politieke mag en invloed van een groep, klas of sekere belange na 'n ander verskuif? Hierdie studie toon die groot verskeidenheid van magte en belange wat werksaam was, sowel as die wisselwerking wat plaasgevind het binne die raamwerk van 'n uiters komplekse politieke situasie.

Drie gevallestudies wat heelwat van mekaar verskil, word ontleed en vergelyk: die "grensparty" wat die dominante politieke groep gedurende hierdie tydperk was en wat gegrondves was op die Britse Setlaar- en Wesleyaanse gemeenskappe, onder leierskap van die kommersiële elite van die grensdorpe; die Stockenströmgroep, wat bestaan het uit 'n buitengewone wye verspreiding van persoonlike steun wat sir Andries Stockenström geniet het van feitlik elke sektor van die uiters uiteenlopende Koloniale gemeenskap en die "Port Elizabeth-Graaff-Reinet-konneksie", wat tot stand gekom het a.g.v. die ontwikkeling van handelsroetes en spoorweë tussen die kus en die ontwikkelende "middelandse" streek. Teen 1858 het nog 'n politieke groepering te voorskyn gekom, nl. die grondeienaars, wat bestaan het uit ondersteuners van al die bestaande groepe.

'n Verdere diepgaande studie van hierdie prosesse van groepvorming en streeksverskeidenheid gedurende die daaropvolgende jare sou veel bydra tot 'n verbreding van ons begrip van die veranderende kontoere in die politieke strukture gedurende hierdie wordingstyd in die ontwikkeling van die Kaapse samelewing.

This article explores the changing bases of the main political alignments in the Eastern Cape in the early years of the Cape parliament. How did political groupings form and cohere? By what assumptions, ideologies or objectives was each of them informed? What techniques were employed to mobilize support? And how did power and influence shift from one group, class or interest to another? The study reveals something of the great multiplicity of forces and interests at work and their interactions in a very complex political chemistry.

Three widely differing case studies are analysed and contrasted: the "frontier party", which was the dominant political group during this period and which was based upon the British Settler and Wesleyan communities under the leadership of the mercantile élite of the frontier towns; the Stockenströmites, drawn from an extraordinarily wide range of personal supporters of Sir Andries Stockenström from virtually every sector of a very diverse Colonial community; and the "Port Elizabeth-Graaff-Reinet axis", which evolved in relation to the expansion of trade routes and railways between the coast and the emerging "midlands". By 1858 yet another political grouping had begun to appear – the landowners, whose constituency cut across all the existing groupings.

Further in-depth studies of these processes of realignment and regional variation in the subsequent years could contribute much to our understanding of the changing contours of the political culture of this formative period in the development of Cape society.

As in the Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, and other colonies of the nineteenth century[1]

See, e.g. F.K. Crowley (ed.), *A new History of Australia* (Melbourne, 1974), pp. 147-49, 211, 234, 236-40; Manning Clark, *A short History of Australia* (London, 1964), p. 143 cf. W.H. Oliver and B.R.

formal political parties emerged at the Cape only some decades after the coming of parliamentary government.[2] Many scholars have written about the colony's political life in the decades after 1854, but not about the mechanisms whereby the political aspirations and objectives of major sectors of the electorate and of the political leaders were given expression. McCracken has described politics in their institutionalized form as expressed in and through parliament;[3] Mabin has portrayed the broad socio-economic-political processes at work, but has not given attention to the individuals primarily responsible for the decision-making nor to their ideological assumptions.[4] Sole and Taylor perceive much of the dynamism in the politics of the period to lie in the clash between the interests of the eastern and the western districts,[5] and Taylor emphasizes a deep-seated basic conflict between the Dutch and the English-speaking groups. In my earlier work I characterized the 1850s and 1860s as "a period of municipal politics",[6] but further study reveals that many of the political ties and loyalties of the period transcended the limitations which this interpretation suggests.

In this article an attempt is made to examine the case of the eastern districts[7] of the Colony and to explore the means whereby, in the period before party organizations existed, the political aims of some of the leading activist groups and individuals were expressed or realised. How did political groupings form and cohere? How did power and influence shift from one group, class or interest to another? Who were the dominant agents? What techniques and ideologies were employed to mobilize support? It is hoped that in probing these sorts of issues in three very different cases in the eastern districts, this article may make some contribution towards the study of the structure of, and underlying forces in Cape politics in the years immediately after the inauguration of parliamentary government.

In the early years of parliamentary government, eastern politics were dominated by what *faute de mieux* was called "the frontier party" or "the Grahamstown party". The system of representation in the new parliament worked to the advantage of the English at the expense of the Dutch areas of the Colony: in 1854 the combined divisions of Albany, Grahamstown and Fort Beaufort, for example, with a population of 6 184 whites and a total population of 11 428,

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Williams (eds.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 95, 110–111, 198 etc.; W.L. Morton, *The critical Years: The Union of British North America, 1857–1873* (Toronto, 1968), p. 11; D. Creighton, *Canada's first Century, 1867–1967* (Toronto, 1970), p. 13.

2. J.H.O. du Plessis, for instance, is in error in writing of "political parties" before 1885: J.H.O. du Plessis, "Die Ontstaan van politieke Partye in die Kaapkolonie tot 1885" (M.A. dissertation, University of South Africa, 1939).
3. J.L. McCracken, *The Cape Parliament, 1854–1910* (Oxford, 1967).
4. A.S. Mabin, "The Making of colonial Capitalism: Intensification and Expansion in the economic Geography of the Cape Colony, South Africa, 1854–99" (Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1984).
5. D.B. Sole, "The Separation Movement and the Demand for Resident Government in the Eastern Province . . . 1828–1878" (M.A. dissertation, Rhodes University, 1939); N.H. Taylor, "The Separation Movement during the Period of Representative Government at the Cape, 1854–1872" (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1938).
6. B.A. le Cordeur, "Robert Godlonton as Architect of Frontier Opinion, 1850–1857" (M.A. dissertation, Rhodes University, 1955) in *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1959, II, p. 122.
7. Except for the period 1836–47, when the Eastern Province was a lieutenant-governorship, and when between 1854 and 1874 it was an electoral division for the Legislative Council, it has never existed as a political entity: J.V.L. Rennie, "The Eastern Province as a geographical Region", *South African Geographical Journal*, 27, 1945.

returned six representatives to parliament, while Graaff-Reinet, Murraysburg and Richmond, with their white population of 5 177 and total population of 9 663, returned only two.[8] In this way frontier opinion was over-represented in both Houses of Parliament, a phenomenon accentuated both by the high property qualification for members of the Council, which made the Upper House a Grahamstown monopoly, and by the system of the cumulative vote which, designed as a safeguard for minority rights, was used in practice in the initial years to reinforce Grahamstown's regional predominance.[9] The fact that the Colony had not yet reached the point at which a leisured class could emerge, particularly in the outlying areas, meant that Grahamstown, with its longer-established economic base, political experience and activist tradition, was in the 1850s and early 1860s often able to supply representatives for other eastern districts in parliament. The first elections also favoured Grahamstown.[10] In addition to the solid phalanx of its own three mercantile representatives – Robert Godlonton, George Wood and Henry Blaine – Grahamstown could usually count on support in the Council from the two businessmen of Port Elizabeth, William Fleming and W.S.G. Metelerkamp, who had business interests in Grahamstown.

While the politics of the east were initially dominated by individuals and groups in Grahamstown and other frontier villages, the politics of those places themselves – as in all the towns of the Colony in the mid-19th century[11] – were monopolized by the commercial and business classes, often in alliance with the land speculators of which group they themselves constituted a not insignificant component. In this respect there was indeed a closer link between land and business in the eastern Cape than in the west.[12] The so-called "frontier party" was led by the "Grahamstown gentry", the heads of the trading and mercantile firms like C. and H. Maynard, Joseph Lawrence, G.C. Clough, W.R. Thompson, and T.F. King;[13] the leading business and professional men like P. Heugh, James Howse and George Jarvis, and the commissariat contractors such as William Cock and William Lee. In the Legislative Council this interest was strongly represented by Robert Godlonton, editor of *The Graham's Town Journal* and at various times the owner of property in Grahamstown, Bathurst and Somerset East, and farms on the Fish River, in the Fort Beaufort area and near Grahamstown.[14] His colleague George Wood had obtained by far the largest number of votes in Grahamstown and Albany in the election for the Council and was reputedly the wealthiest man among the Settlers. A frontier trader and later merchant of Grahamstown, he had made a fortune out of land speculation and wool, and owned four farms.[15] The third Grahamstown member of the Council, Henry Blaine, was an old friend and colleague of Godlonton, a wealthy merchant and like Godlonton, Wood, and so many other Grahamstown leaders, a prominent member of

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8. See detailed table and analysis in Taylor, "Separation Movement", pp. 27-28.
9. McCracken, *Cape Parliament*, pp. 28-29; Taylor, "Separation Movement", pp. 26, 29; K.W. Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands: a History of the Graaff-Reinet District, 1786–1910* (Grahamstown, 1976), p. 440.
10. For the results of the Council elections see *Government Gazette*, 14 Mar. 1854.
11. See A. Mabin, "Class as a local Phenomenon: Conflict between 'Cape Town' and 'Port Elizabeth' in the 19th Century" (Wits History Workshop, 1984), p. 3.
12. T.E. Kirk, "Self-government and Self-defence in South Africa: the Inter-relations between British and Cape Politics, 1846-1854" (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1972), p. 60.
13. See requisition to Godlonton in 1857 elections: Godlonton to Joseph Lawrence etc., 24 Aug. 1857, in 43326/18, Library of Parliament.
14. B.A. le Cordeur, *The Politics of Eastern Cape Separatism, 1820–1854* (Cape Town, 1981), pp. 64, 189.
15. A.E. Makin, *The 1820 Settlers of Salem* (Wynberg, 1971), pp. 82-84; M. Bell, *They came from a far Land* (Cape Town, 1963), pp. 66-67, 142.

the Wesleyan establishment.[16] Wesleyanism was a uniquely pervasive political force among the Settlers, especially in Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth. The majority of the Settlers were Wesleyans and Grahamstown was said to be "almost wholly Wesleyan". The vitality of Methodism owed much to its inherent nature and to its system of organization. Just as the efficient cell-like structure of the Methodist Church with its class meetings of laymen and leaders' meetings had been copied by working class movements in Britain, so it was found peculiarly suitable for the Settler community of Albany. It brought a high proportion of ordinary members into active participation in the day-to-day administration of church affairs, affording them training which was to be important in the organization of many aspects of the life and development of the community.[17] Like Methodism in England, Methodism at the Cape was politically a conservative force. Most of the Methodist missionaries and ministers were either Settlers or – in later generations – the sons of Settlers. Although the Society took an interest both in the black and in the white races, it regarded its first responsibility to be towards the white colonists. A.W. Cole, later Judge of the Supreme Court, described the social and political impact of the sectarianism which so bedevilled Grahamstown public life as follows: "The Church of England party are the 'aristocratic' sect, the Wesleyans the 'serious' one, who seldom visit members of the other and look on them with an eye of pity for their worldliness. The Baptists are the 'intellectual' sect, or were so, headed by their minister till he was caught tripping in so serious a manner that the residue of his days were destined to be spent in jail, to the great scandal of his followers. The Independents are the very 'radical' sect, celebrated for getting up scenes at vestry and municipal meetings etc. The Catholics are steadily progressing in numbers, and make, I verily believe, more genuine converts among the coloured classes than any other sect. The Jews are just what they are in England."[18] Wesleyanism was an exceptionally cohesive force for the "frontier party", both in Grahamstown and in the area of its orbit.

The "Grahamstown party" enjoyed the support of like-minded people in other frontier villages. It was predominant, said the *Eastern Province Herald* of Port Elizabeth, in the districts of Albany, Fort Beaufort, Victoria, Cradock "and perhaps Somerset", which were occupied mainly by British Settlers or by "those who are too weak in numbers or in self-opinion to stand up against them", while Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth and Graaff-Reinet constituted the headquarters of the more liberal British party, the "newest comers".[19] The final returns for the 1854 Council elections would seem to bear out this analysis, reflecting in addition the strength of the "frontier party" in the new district of Queenstown.[20] In these villages and districts the "frontier party" was supported by the "Conservatives" and the businessmen who, like their Grahamstown counterparts, depended upon the continued presence of the military and the commissariat chest for their prosperity, if not their existence. Fort Beaufort was scornfully dismissed by Fairbairn's *The South Alfrican Commercial Advertiser* as "a sort of offshoot of Grahamstown; . . . a sort of semi-military dependency, with subordinate ideas and expectation of favour".[21] In the Assembly, R.J. Painter of Fort Beaufort was a staunch ally of

16. Le Cordeur, *Politics of Separatism*, p. 225.
17. A.T.C. Slee, "Some Aspects of Wesleyan Methodism in the Albany District between 1830 and 1844" (M.A. dissertation, University of South Africa, 1946), pp. 7, 17-23.
18. A.W. Cole, *The Cape and the Kafirs: or Notes of five Years' Residence in South Africa* (London, 1852), p. 154.
19. *Eastern Province Herald*, 29.5.1855.
20. A.H. Duminy, "The Role of Sir Andries Stockenström in Cape Politics, 1848-56" (M.A. dissertation, Rhodes University, 1955), *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1960, II, pp. 149-50 and Appendix II (pp. 167-68).
21. *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 24.11.1849.

the "frontier party", and other supporters in the town or district were Robert Bovey, Charles Blakeway and George W. Clark.[22] The thriving little town of Cradock where English-speaking residents were prominent and which relied heavily upon the presence of the military for its survival, had an active element of the "frontier party", including James Collett, Charles Scanlen, William Shepstone, John Walker, and John Boon.[23] Amidst the overwhelmingly Dutch population of Graaff-Reinet too, was a small but active group of English-speakers. The cultural lead which they were giving to the town by the 1850s imparted a degree of political cohesion to them as a group. Almost entirely Settlers who had migrated from Albany in the 1830s led by the Southey and Rubidge families, they had a natural affinity and sympathy for the "Grahamstown party".[25] Carey Hobson who had freehold property in Salem, was anxious to render active political support to the separatist cause on behalf of the "frontier party", and some of the Settlers who had migrated – such as Godlonton's own daughter and son-in-law, the Booths, who were forced to abandon the frontier during the 1850 war – retained strong ties with Albany.[26] The *Graaff-Reinet Herald*, founded in 1852, and described by R.W. Murray as "always a highly respectable little journal, thoroughly English", criticized Graaff-Reinet's representatives in parliament and lent its support instead to the "frontier party" and to eastern separation.[27] On a central issue such as the immigration of European labour, vociferously championed by the "frontier party" and equally vigorously resisted by many Dutch and rural people, it is illuminating that in 1856 a public meeting in Graaff-Reinet divided 76-70.[28] As late as 1861 a small group of English-speaking farmers held a meeting at the farm Wheatlands at which a branch of the Separation League was formed, and some sixty people in favour of eastern separation met in Graaff-Reinet itself. J.F. Ziervogel, the leading Graaff-Reinet political figure of these decades, was so concerned at the appeal to Boers of the midlands to lend a sympathetic ear to the Grahamstown separatist cause that he personally financed the publication of anti-separatist propaganda.[29] Similarly, when Queenstown was founded during the Eighth Frontier War, it was the Albany and other frontier settlers who led the advance guard in the settlement of the village and the district;[30] and as Governor Cathcart, founder of the dis-

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See requisition to Godlonton from James Savory etc., 22 Aug. 1857, in 43326/19, Library of Parliament.

23. See correspondence of these men with Godlonton in Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library.
24. C.G. Henning, *Graaff-Reinet: a cultural History, 1786–1886* (Cape Town, 1975), p. 36.
25. Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands*, pp. 249-55.
26. See correspondence of Hobson and Benjamin Booth with Godlonton, in Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library.
27. R.W. Murray, *South African Reminiscences* (Cape Town, 1894), p. 92; cf. *Graaff-Reinet Herald*, 19.4.1856, 10.5.1856, 14.6.1856, 21.6.1856.
28. *Graaff-Reinet Herald*, 3.5.1856.
29. Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands*, pp. 475-76.
30. See correspondence to Godlonton of E.R. Bell, John McMaster, James Attwell, Samuel Loxton, George Coleridge etc., in Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library. In April 1854, for instance, John Weakley sold up his Grahamstown business prior to opening a general dealership in Queenstown. Stephen Trollip, an original 1820 Settler, settled in Queenstown at its inception and became a prominent merchant and municipal commissioner: private communication, Richard Bouch, 9 Mar. 1989.

trict, had anticipated "the Methodists were there first."[31] In 1857, 77 of these Queenstown supporters led by Shepperson, a relative of Godlonton, sent a petition for separation to the Assembly.[32]

The "frontier party" was described by Governor Maitland as "large" and by James Read as "strong",[33] although in practice its bark was often worse than its bite. In parliament itself, it dominated the Legislative Council until the mid-sixties; consequently it was there that frontier measures had the best chance of success. In the Assembly Saul Solomon estimated in 1856 that the "Grahamstown party" usually commanded 10 out of the 22 Eastern Districts votes[34] – those for the constituencies of Grahamstown, Albany, Victoria and Cradock, with Uitenhage and Fort Beaufort "dividing against each other". They also had "staunch friends"[35] in the west. Among these were the Cape Town merchants with business and other interests in the eastern districts, many of whom stood by them both in parliament and out,[36] namely Benjamin Norden, H.T. Vigne, Thomson, Watson and Co., J.B. Ebden, Hamilton Ross, and C.S. Pillans – the latter three of whom kept a sharp eye on frontier policies which had a bearing on the trans-frontier trade. The house of J.C. Molteno and Co. financed George Southey in the "Kaffir trade" of the frontier. Joseph Barry of Swellendam, a prominent member of the Legislative Council from 1854, opened up the coasting trade between Cape Town, the Kowie and Port Beaufort with a small fleet of steamers.[37] B.H. Darnell, M.L.A. for Caledon from 1854, was the first westerner openly to espouse eastern views. He was opposed to the western-backed demands for responsible government.[38] He also favoured the annexation of Kaffraria to the Eastern Province, and its conversion into a distinct colony, and was a staunch separatist. "He has always been very much attached to the eastern party", wrote "Limner", "and has rendered them excellent service by his writings and advice."[39]

The "frontier party" mobilized its supporters – as did most other political groupings of the day – by means of frequent public meetings, especially when issues of special concern to their constituents arose. Report-back meetings to their supporters were common at the end of parliamentary sessions, and political banquets were not infrequently held to honour members. Furthermore it seems not unlikely too that agricultural societies and other local organizations were used as primitive forms of pressure groups.[40] Immediately prior to the 1855 session thirteen leading figures in the Fort Beaufort district met at Godlonton's farm Ham-

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31. F.G. van der Riet and L.A. Hewson (eds.), *The Reminiscences of an Albany Settler, by Rev. Henry Hare Dugmore* (Grahamstown, 1958), pp. 4, 58. Wesleyan influence was evident in numbers of ways: David Barrable, editor of the *Queenstown Free Press* from 1859, was a Godlonton protege and a Wesleyan; when H. Staples advertised for a journeyman baker and confectioner he stated that "A Wesleyan would be preferred" (*The Graham's Town Journal*, 11.3.1854); and the Wesleyan church building was one of the first to be erected: P.J. Lombard, "Die Stigting en vroeë Geskiedenis van Queenstown, 1853-59", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1952, II, p. 148 (private communication, Richard Bouch, 9 Mar. 1989).
32. Assembly Debates, 14.5.1857 in *The Cape Argus*, 16.5.1857.
33. Maitland to Grey, 2 Dec. 1846, no. 202, *Parliament Papers*, 1847-48, xliii [912] p. 6; J. Read, jun., *The Kat River Settlement in 1851* (Cape Town, 1852), p. 126.
34. Assembly Debates, 27.5.56, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 3.6.1856.
35. See B. Norden to Godlonton, 26.2.1854, in Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library.
36. McCracken, *Cape Parliament*, p. 138, states: "The Cape Parliament was the instrument of an 'ascendancy' – a local ruling class. It was essentially conservative in outlook . . ."
37. Murray, *Reminiscences*, p. 188.
38. L.E. Neame, *Today's News Today: The Story of the Argus Company* (Johannesburg, 1956), p. 8.
39. "Limner", *Pen and Ink Sketches in Parliament* (Grahamstown, 1864), II, pp. 43-44.
40. Cf. Le Cordeur, "Robert Godlonton", p. 122.

monds and formed a committee "for the purpose of communicating from time to time through their representatives in Parliament upon such measures as may conduce to the general welfare of the eastern province."[41]

Especially important in keeping the "frontier party" together was the fact that it had as its mouthpiece *The Graham's Town Journal*, by far the most important newspaper in the eastern districts. Week by week it gave voice to the preoccupations of the rising capitalists of the east, both the commercial and the landed classes. Among the Settlers and their descendants Godlonton had great influence; they looked to him for leadership and advice, and the *Journal* became known everywhere as the "Settlers' Bible".[42] Even his opponents had to admit that the *Journal* had a "very large circulation", and that *The Frontier Post and Times*, for instance, could claim far less support from Grahamstown.[43] The prime virtue of the *Journal* was the extent of its circulation and the fact that by the mid-century it had become a household word, a commercial necessity. Although Godlonton did not inspire enthusiasm for new ideas or succeed in making men change over to beliefs which they did not already hold or even to take positive action which they had not previously intended, he played a supremely important role in consolidating opinion, in keeping men's minds attuned to an ideal and in giving expression and unity of spirit to a cause.

In all of this Godlonton was greatly assisted by the supremacy of Methodism in the Settler community. He depended very largely upon the support of the Wesleyans, who comprised the majority of the Settlers and who in turn relied on him as a Wesleyan, to champion Wesleyan interests in parliament.[44] Methodism in the Colony, said a contemporary, "rules the court, the camp, the grave"[45] and it was not surprising that the critics of the Wesleyans of Grahamstown deplored their "overweening intolerant conceit", their "narrow sectarian time-serving spirit", and the overwhelming power which they could bring to bear in order to intimidate their opponents.[46] The Acting High Commissioner, Sir George Clerk, even accused high frontier officials of "timidity in regard to the mercantile and settlers' press".[47]

The ideology which gave unity of purpose to these politically-dominant commercial classes was a frontier protected by the imperial government, providing the stability, law and order which would create the context in which (at little or no cost to themselves) they could pursue their essential aims namely: the expansion of trade on both sides of the frontier; the free flow of labour not only from local sources but also from Britain; the promotion of capital flows and investment from the Mother Country; the acquisition of lucrative contracts for the supply of goods and services to the troops and the government, and easy access to land both for the expansion of commercial farming and for speculation. These entrepreneurial and expansionist ambitions, asserting themselves from the earliest days of the settlement, were rampant by the mid-century. In 1851 Fairbairn told his son of his concern that "The English settlers... are more stern and implacable than the Boers and... a generation is rising up full of enterprise

41. *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 13.3.1855.
42. Samuel Loxton to Godlonton, Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library; C.T. Campbell, *British South Africa* (London, 1897), p. 116.
43. *British Settler*, 1.11.1851; *Eastern Province Herald*, 4.8.1857.
44. Slee, "Albany Methodism", p. 133; T. Langford to Godlonton, 28.4.1857, Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library.
45. "Justus", quoted by Slee, "Albany Methodism", pp. 72-73.
46. J. Fawcett, *Account of an eighteen Months Residence at the Cape of Good Hope, in 1835-36* (Cape Town, 1836), pp. 50-51.
47. Sir George Clerk to Governor Grey, 21.12.1854, GH 33/4, no. 37, Private, Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town.

and bent on conquest, whom no government will be able to control."[48]

The "frontier party" clamoured for the new parliament to tackle these problems; for as Godlonton told the Select Committee on Frontier Defence in 1854: "At the moment, the two great wants of the eastern province are security and labour."[49] They pressed for a vagrancy law to prevent coloureds from evading participation in the Colonial labour market, and they were also in the forefront of those who were campaigning, both in parliament and outside, for the importation of European labour, even if it had to be funded by the Colonial treasury.[50] They threw their weight eagerly behind every attempt to promote European immigration, especially against the opposition of the rural, largely Boer population of the Graaff-Reinet and other districts remote from the frontier, who were somewhat less impressed than the "frontier party" by the business ethic and not at all inclined to commit themselves and future taxpayers to schemes from which they did not expect to benefit directly.[51] When, however, both Houses heartily approved of the scheme of the Colonial Office to settle the Anglo-German Legion on the frontier, Godlonton was exultant. "Visions of long-continued industrial successes", he wrote in the *Journal*, "under the influence of the security which their arrival promises; hopes of larger assistance in the shape of manual labour; anticipations of a growth in political importance commensurate with the sudden development in other respects, are among the blessings looked for from their arrival."[52] In the following session they enthusiastically supported the assisted immigration scheme proposed by Governor Grey, under which 9 000 immigrants from Europe were introduced between 1858 and 1862.[53] In 1853 their election manifestoes had called also for a revision of the tariff, and this was achieved as early as 1855 with the passing of the Customs Tariff Act, which abolished the preferential import duties on British goods and substituted specific and *ad valorem* import duties for the purposes of revenue only.[54] The "frontier party" had always been strongly opposed to the low franchise, which, they believed – incorrectly as it turned out – would assure their Dutch fellow colonists and the coloureds a political predominance over the English colonists. Political domination by Afrikaners could, they feared, be used against the interests of "progressive" groups of commercial farmers and traders such as themselves. To give the vote to large numbers of coloureds, on the other hand, would in their view endanger political stability by leaving them prey to demagogues who could use them for their own purposes against the interests of "property".[55] The "frontier party" thus continued to demand an upward revision of the franchise. So far as Africans were concerned, Godlonton proposed during the very first session of parliament that the franchise be raised sufficiently high – at least in the eastern districts – to exclude them altogether.[56]

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48. John Fairbairn to James Fairbairn, 28 Aug. 1851, A 663, Ba (1), Fairbairn Family Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library.
49. *Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings, 1854*, Report of Select Committee on Frontier Defence, p. 38.
50. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 3.3.1855.
51. Assembly Debates, 29.4.1856, in *The Graham's Town Journal*, 17.5.1856.
52. Grey to Labouchere, 30.5.1856, GH 23/26, nos. 39 and 40, Cape Archives Depot, *The Graham's Town Journal*, 8.7.1856.
53. See, e.g., William Southey to Godlonton, 2.5.1857, Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library; Taylor, "Separation Movement", p. 47; S. van der Horst, *Native Labour in South Africa* (Oxford, 1942), p. 26.
54. M.H. de Kock, *Selected Subjects in the economic History of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1924), p. 410; J.L. Meltzer, "The Growth of Cape Town Commerce and the Role of John Fairbairn's *Advertiser*, 1835-1859" (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1989), pp. 26, 164.
55. Le Cordeur, *Politics of Separatism*, pp. 227-28, 246.
56. McCracken, *Cape Parliament*, p. 84.

In the years immediately after 1854 the preoccupation of the "frontier party" was with the frontier, and this is what gave it special prominence, cohesion and strength at that stage; for, as a group of Fort Beaufort supporters informed their representatives, they were convinced "that any system which will secure permanent peace and tranquility to our border is of the utmost importance to the eastern frontier, and therefore we most urgently impress upon all our representatives the necessity of bringing this to a completion before any other business in the House of Assembly."[57] From the moment that parliament met, a determined campaign was launched by the "Grahamstown party" in both Houses. They rallied the forces needed to defeat Lieutenant-Governor Darling's bill for regulating the permanent settlement of the Mfengu in Victoria East and in the newly-annexed Crown Reserve as a buffer against possible Xhosa attack, vehemently opposed as they were to "the large congregations of natives on the border".[58] They moved for statistics on the Tambookies, about 20 000 of whom were said to be living "lawlessly" within the Colony, and it was at the instance of Godlonton in the Council and his long-time colleague and friend William Cock in the Assembly that Select Committees were appointed to report on the defence of the frontier.[59] It was at the repeated urging of the "frontier party" that a mounted police force on an extended scale and a permanent basis was established on the frontier, known as the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police.[60] And it was the Grahamstown and frontier members too who finally contrived to push a Burgher Law through the Legislative Council and then through a very intractable opposition from the west in the Assembly as well.[61] They threw their weight behind the Masters and Servants Act which J.C. Molteno introduced in 1854 and which passed two years later.[62] After much agitation from their members a Select Committee was appointed and bills passed to regulate the sale of gunpowder and firearms.[63] There was widespread and warm support from the "frontier party" for Grey's frontier policy, which Godlonton in his private note-book equated approvingly with "Progress – reduction of Kaffir power" and in the *Journal* he praised "the establishment of Industrial Schools in which the Natives may be trained to those active pursuits, and taught those useful arts which are best calculated to wean them from predatory habits and convert them from vagrants and pilferers into good and useful neighbours."[64] Not least did the "frontier party" applaud Grey's proposal that the "still considerable tracts of land on the frontier" should "be occupied by settlers on terms of military service".[65] By the mid-forties virtually no productive farming land remained to be granted in the Colony,[66] and the Settlers' eyes were cast ever more covetously upon the apparently open and unused lands across the Fish or the Keiskamma, which they hoped to induce the Colonial authorities to colonize. So far as the "frontier party" was concerned, there was thus cause for some optimism that their special needs would be viewed increasingly sympathetically by the authorities in the future. Should they not be, however, they made clear that they would resort

57. *The South African Commercial Advertiser,* 13.3.1855.
58. Legislative Council Debates, 17.7.1854; 24.7.1854; 7.9.1854.
59. *Ibid.*, 24.7.1854; 26.7.1854.
60. A.J. Smithers, *The Kaffir Wars, 1779-1877* (London, 1973), p. 263.
61. President of Legislative Council to Colonial Secretary, 7.6.1855, enclosed in Grey to Russell, 13.7.1855, GH 23/26, no. 98, Cape Archives Depot.
62. P.A. Molteno, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Charles Molteno* (London, 1900), vol. 1, pp. 61-63; Van der Horst, *Native Labour,* pp. 34-36.
63. Le Cordeur, "Robert Godlonton", pp. 111, 120, 133.
64. Godlonton's MS. note-book, Cory Collection, MS. 6819, Cory Library; *The Graham's Town Journal,* 22.12.1855.
65. Governor's speech at opening of parliament, 13.3.1856, in G. 23-56, p. 2.
66. Kirk, "Self-government and Self-defence", p. 292.

to demands for a separate government or for removal of the seat of government to the east. When all else failed, this was often the *sine qua non* for mobilizing their forces and assuming a threatening posture.

Despite a certain degree of continuity and cohesion it is doubtful if the "frontier party" – let alone the east – ever formed what Murray called "a compact party" in these years.[67] A good deal of such coherence as it possessed derived from negative factors such as a hatred of Andries Stockenström and his policies; and some members' support owed much to personal interests in, for instance, the Kowie scheme or to allegiance to the Wesleyan community. But these ties were often disrupted by even stronger involvement in other current issues.[68] Despite the relative homogeneity of parliament, about which McCracken writes, there were continual differences among individual members of the "frontier party" even over what was widely regarded as one of their major objectives, namely separation, removal of the capital or a federal system of government for the Colony; and there were persistent recriminations over such a pre-eminently "frontier" issue as the proposed Burgher Law, or over the Voluntary Principle.[69] Even at its height, the "frontier party" possessed no more than the most rudimentary organization. This failure was in glaring contrast to the ingenious organization underlying the anti-convict agitation a few years before.[70] Worse: none of the leaders of the group was capable of inspiring continuous mass loyalty to their cause, however passionately it might have been advocated by the leaders themselves.

In Grahamstown some of those who supported separatism opposed the "frontier party" on other grounds. Those who were sympathetic to the Stockenström frontier policies grouped around J.G. Franklin, editor of *The Cape Frontier Times* and his father-in-law, Dr John Atherstone. Franklin was, in the words of the Rev. James Read, "the respectable representative of the Grahamstown moderates".[71] The *Cape Frontier Times*, declared Murray, was "an independent paper connected with no party, faction or clique, conservative in its tendencies, and . . . inclined to lean towards the English Episcopal Church in opposition to the extreme Wesleyan bias of the *Journal*. It was also less local than the *Journal*, dealt broadly with the affairs of the Colony outside of Grahamstown, and grappled with western politics broadly as with eastern and midland."[72] Franklin had many reservations about the disinterestedness of the entrenched mercantile elite of the town, and was an opponent of the high qualifications for membership of the Legislative Council; small wonder that he was dismissed by the "frontier party" as "that anti-colonial editor".[73] Yet he and the rest of the "minority of moderates and liberals who disavow all participation in the views of the editor of the *Journal*," Read concluded regretfully, "are too weak to make head against the faction."[74]

Opposition to the "frontier party" was even greater in Graaff-Reinet. The Graaff-Reinetters did not experience the same apprehension about the frontier and the Xhosa as did the "frontier party" and many residents were deeply offended by Grahamstown's contempt and hostility towards Stockenström. With the mythology of settlerdom asserting itself in an increasingly jingoistic form of "Britishism", the people of Graaff-Reinet in general found it

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67. Murray, *Reminiscences*, p. 11.
68. McCracken, *Cape Parliament*, p. 105.
69. E.g. Robert White to Godlonton, 14.2.1852, in Robert White Papers, f.233, Rhodes House Library, Oxford; cf. E. Bradlow, "Saul Solomon, Cape Liberalism and the Voluntary Movement in the 19th Century Cape", in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 60 (Sept. 1987), pp. 28–45.
70. A.F. Hattersley, *The Convict Crisis and the Growth of Unity* (Pietermaritzburg, 1965), pp. 82, 85.
71. Read, *Kat River Settlement*, p. 111.
72. Murray, *Reminiscences*, p. 96.
73. Robert White to Godlonton, 23.4.1855, MS. 7099, Cory Library.
74. Read, *Kat River Settlement*, p. 110.

difficult to identify themselves with a cause which seemed to be dedicated to the promotion of the interests of Grahamstown and Albany at the expense of the remainder of the eastern districts; even many of the English residents of Graaff-Reinet who by the late 1850s were midland rather than eastern in their opinions, began to feel alienated by Grahamstown's aggressive pursuit of separation and of her own economic self-interest at their expense.[75] Subsistence farmers, both Dutch and English, regarded the traders and officials who constituted the "Grahamstown gentry" with growing dislike and suspicion.[76] Graaff-Reinet fears of Grahamstown's intentions were intensified after the establishment of the *Graaff-Reinet Herald* towards the end of 1852. Throwing its weight determinedly behind the "frontier party", it attacked Stockenström and mocked the Afrikaner colonists, serving as a standing reminder of the deep-seated if latent antagonisms between Graaff-Reinet and Grahamstown and between Afrikaner and English colonists. This led in turn to the revival of the *Graaff-Reinet Courant* the following year, which immediately attacked Godlonton for having "laboured for years to create bad feeling between the English and Dutch" inhabitants of the eastern districts.[77] The Grahamstown leaders to their cost made little or no attempt to heal this rift between Grahamstown and Graaff-Reinet. For his part Graaff-Reinet's representative in the Assembly from 1854 to 1873, J.F. Ziervogel, became increasingly distrustful of Grahamstown.[78] He and other midlanders tried to gain advantages for the midlands in the Assembly by playing off the two larger political groups against each other.[79] The declining strength of the "frontier party" in Graaff-Reinet was reflected in the voting in the first elections for the Legislative Council in 1854. Whereas Stockenström received 2 152 votes and Fleming of Port Elizabeth received 556, Godlonton polled a mere 65 votes in the Graaff-Reinet district.[80]

2

Even more informal than the "frontier party" in its composition and functioning was the second important political alignment in the eastern districts, that of the Stockenströmites; yet it was from them that the most resolute and bitter opposition to the "Grahamstown party" came. The Stockenströmite grouping had a totally different basis from that of the "Grahamstown party". The extraordinarily wide base of Andries Stockenström's personal support derived from the respect which he had earned from men in every walk of life as a colonist of exceptional integrity, devotion to duty and independence in a lifetime of service to the Colony not only as a burgher commander on the frontier, but also as landdrost of Graaff-Reinet, Commissioner-General, Lieutenant-governor and member of the Legislative Council. This, together with his partly Dutch parentage and his Dutch upbringing, assured him of the support of substantial numbers of the Dutch inhabitants; contrary to what is commonly believed, his political views were often very much in line with those of the broad mass of the Dutch colonists, not only in the west but also in the east.[81] Many of these burghers held him in even higher regard after serving under him in the 1846 war, in which he had provided an indispensable rallying point for numerous discontented and dissident elements in the east.[82] He was

75. Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands*, pp. 466-68, 480-81.
76. Kirk, "Self-government and Self-defence", p. 49.
77. Quoted by Duminy, "Stockenström", p. 65.
78. Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands*, p. 111.
79. Sole, "Separation Movement", p. 167.
80. Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands*, p. 467.
81. Duminy, "Stockenström", p. 154.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-53.

also strongly supported by the residents of the towns in which he had lived and worked over a period of half a century and in which he had many relatives and friends. This was especially so in Graaff-Reinet, where political power had for long been concentrated in the hands of the Stockenström and Ziervogel families and where Stockenström was related to many of the leading families: not only the Ziervogels, but also the Maasdorps, the Meintjes, the Hartzenbergs, and the Watermeyers.[83] In Uitenhage, his brother O.G. Stockenström was for long a Municipal Commissioner and a J.P.[84] The bulk of Stockenström's political support thus rested to a quite extraordinary degree upon the esteem in which he was held, as Governor Harry Smith said, "principally by his private friends, of whom, from his long residence he has, of course, many in all parts of the colony."[85] These were in particular the pre-1820 generation of frontiersmen. Yet ironically, as Professor Duminy has shown, many of those who supported him did so without agreeing with the politics and principles for which he stood and which he advocated so vigorously and single-mindedly.[86] In 1853 this was tacitly acknowledged even by his election committee, who urged that "if much difference of opinion may exist as to the policy of some of his proceedings, none can exist as to his zeal, energy and devotion to public interests, the liberality and justice of his opinions, or the integrity and independence of his character."[87] It is significant, for instance, that he also received substantial support from a variety of groups of English-speaking colonists in the east: from those who had settled at the Cape before the 1820 Settlers, such as Robert Hart and George Paton; from those opposed to the policies of Sir Harry Smith after 1848, such as Dr John Atherstone, C.W. Hutton and Henry Hutton, and the Grahamstown independent, J.G. Franklin; and from those, particularly in Port Elizabeth, who were united in their opposition to the course pursued by the "Grahamstown gentry".[88] He would appear also to have been supported by many of those dispossessed or threatened by the spread of commercial farming at the hands of groups such as the Grahamstown élite.[89] So intense was this opposition to the "frontier party" that it could sustain the unlikely alignment of what Duminy has called "the hardened frontiersmen, the Hottentots, the missionaries and the philanthropists."[90] After the 1854 elections, Stockenström could indeed claim that he had obtained votes from all sections of the community, from "ministers of the Gospel, magistrates, Justices of the Peace" and from the "leading men of the country who, either themselves or through their fathers, have known me and my private and public dealings and thoughts throughout the whole course of my life – men of the highest respectability: English, Dutch, Scotch and Irish, white and black."[91] In the Council itself, Stockenström attracted the same sort of personal support: F.W. Reitz was characterized by *The Graham's Town Journal* as "Sir Andreas's shadow", and G.D. Joubert was dismissed by Calderwood as a "silent vote" of the Baronet's.[92] Unlike the "frontier party", Stockenström could not rely upon loyal and regular press coverage to promote his cause; this had to be done by personal contact. In the 1853 elec-

83. Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands*, pp. 452-53.
84. Le Cordeur, *Politics of Separatism*, p. 143.
85. Smith to Grey, 19.2.1851, GH 23/19, Cape Archives Depot.
86. Duminy, "Stockenström", pp. 148-49, 153-54.
87. *Graaff-Reinet Courant*, 19.11.1853.
88. Duminy, "Stockenström", pp. 152-56.
89. Kirk, "Self-government and Self-defence", p. 356.
90. Duminy, "Stockenström", p. 156.
91. *The Colonist*, 8.2.1854.
92. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 29.3.1856; Calderwood to Godlonton, 29.8.1855, Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library.

tions his candidature was thus promoted by especially energetic election committees in all the main districts of the east.[93]

Stockenström entered the newly instituted parliament in 1854 with the firm intention of finally vindicating his own policies and exposing the jobbers on the frontier;[94] for since his tenure of office as Commissioner-General and later Lieutenant-Governor in Grahamstown in the 1820s and 1830s he had placed the major responsibility for the instability of the frontier and the outbreak of frontier wars firmly upon the shoulders of the frontier contractors and speculators. During the subsequent years more and more political support had swung behind him, strengthening him in his attacks upon "the faction" and all its doings, both in parliament and without. The final returns in the 1854 election showed that his influence was preponderant in Graaff-Reinet, Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth, Colesberg, Somerset East and Burghersdorp, and he even obtained 258 votes in Grahamstown itself.[95] As in 1850 he came head of the poll in the eastern districts by a significant margin, receiving a total of 6 315 votes whereas Godlonton, who was second, obtained only 4 534.[96]

Yet Stockenström's attempts to expose the "frontier party" in parliament failed in three successive sessions. When, in the first session, he called for copies of the correspondence between the frontier authorities and the government in connection with the "frontier alarm" at the end of 1854, the Select Committee reported that the rumours had been groundless.[97] Another Select Committee, appointed after he had called for the papers relating to the disposal of land in the Ceded Territory which had originally been granted to the Mfengu, reported that much of this land had subsequently been sold by public auction to white farmers, leading to serious unrest among the Mfengu. Yet Stockenström was unable to obtain an official inquiry into the activities of the land speculators let alone have the land of the Mfengu restored to them. Similarly when he called for the documentation relating to the confiscation of the land of 242 Kat River Settlers for their role in the rebellion and the granting of the land to 260 colonists, a Select Committee declared that his accusations were unfounded and no inquiry was ever made into the causes of the rebellion.[98] In each case the "frontier party" had emerged triumphant.

Stockenström failed also in his attempts to prevent the "frontier party" from securing electoral privileges for the people of the Queenstown district. Since many of the whites in the Queenstown district had originated in Albany, Cradock, Somerset, Victoria, and other strongholds of the "frontier party" and held similar political views,[99] it was anticipated that if Queenstown was constituted an electoral division – as Godlonton's bill proposed in 1854 – the voters of the constituency would bolster the political strength not merely of the east against the west in parliament, but more particularly of Grahamstown and its satellites against the remainder of the east.[100] Although the bill was defeated in the Council in 1854 and

93. Duminy, "Stockenström", p. 153.
94. Stockenström to R. Paver, 24.3.1851, in Paver Papers, Cory Library.
95. Duminy, "Stockenström", p. 150.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 168.
97. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-37.
98. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-39.
99. Cf. E.R. Bell to Godlonton, 4.6.1855, Godlonton Papers; W.E.B. Shepstone to T.H. Bowker, 30.4.1855, in SM 2504 (a), Albany Museum. Cf. also speeches by Wood and Godlonton in Legislative Council Debates, 6.5.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 10.5.1856.
100. See, e.g., Legislative Council Debates, 6.6.1855, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 18.9.1855; Assembly Debates, 15.4.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 19.4.1856. Cf. statements made in the debate in the Assembly by Ziervogel of Graaff-Reinet: Assembly Debates, 22.4.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 26.4.1856.

in the Assembly the following year by a combination of the west and the midlands, both of which believed that the frontier districts were already over-represented,[101] an amended version was passed in 1856, uniting Queenstown with Victoria for electoral purposes. This Queenstown Electoral Bill enabled the people of Queenstown to exercise the franchise,[102] although much to the indignation of the "frontier party", without conceding what was really desired – the equality of representation of the east with the west.[103]

Despite these parliamentary failures Stockenström continued to enjoy widespread support in the Colony. It was evidence of the strength of his position that Godlonton felt constrained to resort to the underhand tactics which he did to undermine and discredit him. For when in 1854 the election results decisively disproved Godlonton's claim to represent a united frontier opinion, he began to portray himself as primarily the representative of the British Settlers. Stockenström by contrast was depicted as the representative of the "disaffected Boers" and "Kat River vagabonds", a man whose political activities were directed against the Settlers.[104] That this was not so has already been shown, but the accusation was a deliberate intensification of Godlonton's efforts to whip up antagonism between Dutch and English for his own political purposes, antagonism which was otherwise latent or abating.

3

The third of the main political alignments in the eastern districts originated in Port Elizabeth. In the 1850s the Cape became a source of raw wool for Britain second only to Australia.[105] It was especially in the eastern and north-eastern districts of the Colony that this spectacular development of commercial wool farming was concentrated, and the wool exports through Port Elizabeth rose from £6 million in 1852 to £15 million in 1857 and to £28 million in 1860.[106] The period between the 1850s and the 1880s was the heyday of Port Elizabeth when it became "in many respects the key centre of the Cape economy".[107] Port Elizabeth, the "Liverpool of the Cape", was as yet the only port of any consequence in the eastern districts and the point at which most of the traffic of the eastern districts converged. The strongly commercially orientated leaders of Port Elizabeth became increasingly frustrated at Grahamstown's selfish obsession with the acquisition of a hold upon political power in the eastern Cape in order to further its own interests and castigated the Grahamstonians for their "conservative and stationary views".[108] By contrast, the Port Elizabeth élite looked essentially to the commercial development of the region and to the creation of the economic infrastructure upon which its future would be built.

The politics of Port Elizabeth thus operated in very different ways from those of Grahamstown or, for that matter, of Graaff-Reinet. Whereas Grahamstown had always been the scene of restless political activity and rowdy public meetings, continually kept on the boil by alert and often conspicuously self-interested individuals and groups, the leaders of Port Elizabeth, a newer and smaller community not enjoying the extensive advantages of official and military

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101. Taylor, "Separation Movement", pp. 35-37.
102. See Assembly Debates, 22.4.1856, 29.4.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 26.4.1856, 29.4.1856; and Legislative Council Debates, 6.5.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 10.5.1856.
103. See, e.g. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 17.5.1856.
104. Duminy, "Stockenström", p. 150.
105. J.F. Munro, *Africa and the international Economy* (London, 1976), p. 59.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 59; Van der Horst, *Native Labour*, pp. 25-26.
107. Mabin, "Making of colonial Capitalism", p. 189.
108. *Eastern Province Herald*, 29.5.1855.

patronage on which Grahamstown thrived nor confronted by frontier dangers in such a direct way, tended to focus much more single-mindedly on their immediate business interests. The notorious political apathy was revealed when time and again it was found that Port Elizabeth had the greatest difficulty in inducing members of either House to retain their seats even for one or two sessions, let alone a whole parliament.[109] Because Port Elizabeth was often obliged to accept whatever parliamentary candidates offered themselves for election, irrespective of their views or of the fact that they were often non-residents of the town, the approach to public issues was often inconsistent and contradictory. Unlike Grahamstown too Port Elizabeth's politics were not conducted in endless series of public meetings, but primarily on the stoep of the Town Hall, where Murray reminisced, "the leading Elizabethans, merchants,, professional men, and the representatives of the press and other public institutions were to be seen collecting before going to business of a morning . . . The Port Elizabeth morning groups never died out, but grew as the place and the business of the population and place grew, and they were the best means of gathering and disseminating information. On the stoep of the Town House, and with these assembled groups, were conceived some of the plans which have led to combination and schemes out of which came many of the improvements which gave to Port Elizabeth the impetus which led to its present prosperous and proud position . . ."[110] In view of Port Elizabeth's preoccupations and the background against which her politics took place, not only the economic life but also the political life of the town was dominated by the mercantile élite as much as – and perhaps even more than – in the case of other towns in the Colony, particularly its two larger counterparts, Cape Town and Grahamstown. The links between the Cape Town merchant community and the Colonial government put their rivals in the Colonial capital at a great advantage over the merchants of Port Elizabeth and other towns in the Colony, and Port Elizabeth merchants were all too aware of this need to mobilize their resources in order to exert sufficient pressure in their own interests.[111]

One of the earliest Port Elizabeth leaders was John Centlivres Chase. A London bookseller who had come to the Colony as an 1820 Settler, he married the widowed heiress of Frederik Korsten, the wealthiest entrepreneur in the eastern districts, and set up as a notary and shipping and insurance agent at Algoa Bay. By means of his publications and his representations to the authorities, he sought to promote the interests of the eastern districts in general, and as time passed of Port Elizabeth and its environs in particular. It was he who had organized the petitions to the Governor for a lighthouse at Cape Recife and for an official survey to be made for the construction of a pass through the Zuurberg Mountains, and he had also taken a leading part in agitating for municipal institutions in a very apathetic port.[112]

Pre-eminent among his colleagues in the public life of early Port Elizabeth was John Paterson, editor of the town's first newspaper, the *Eastern Province Herald*, founded in 1845.[113] He worked indefatigably to press the claims of Port Elizabeth upon the attention of the Colonial authorities and the public of Port Elizabeth itself. "No man," Murray declared, "did half as much for Port Elizabeth as he did in his life-time – nor anything like it. For many of its existing institutions Port Elizabeth is indebted to him – for instance, its magnificent Town Hall, the largest and best built town hall in South Africa – the Grey Institute, the North End Park, the original bank on which Mr R. Steuart built up the finest banking institution on the South

109. Taylor, "Separation Movement", p. 63.
110. Murray, *Reminiscences*, pp. 241-42.
111. Mabin, "Making of colonial Capitalism", p. 65.
112. Le Cordeur, *Politics of Separatism*, pp. 163, 181.
113. P. ffolliott and E.L.H. Croft, *One Titan at a Time* (Cape Town, 1960).

African continent, the Standard Bank, and many others of value and importance."[114] A liberal as opposed to the die-hard conservatives of the "frontier party", he was said to have been "linked to" the "popular party" under John Fairbairn in the early years of parliament; he was very critical of the government and, according to "Limner", "asks for half the colony for Port Elizabeth."[115]

When both Chase and Paterson were employed in the government service, the lead in Port Elizabeth's political affairs fell to William Fleming and W.M. Harries. Fleming had been exceptionally active not only in the commercial life of the town but also in public affairs from the early decades, playing a leading role at all the major public meetings and also behind the scenes. He and another leading merchant, J. Owen Smith, had given Paterson the financial support which made it possible for him to set himself up as sole proprietor of the *Eastern Province Herald* in 1848. In 1850 Fleming had offered himself as a candidate in the unofficial "election" to fill the vacancies in the nominated Legislative Council and in 1854 he was elected to the Council with the highest number of votes in Port Elizabeth.[116] His colleague in the first Legislative Council was W.S.G. Metelerkamp, another local merchant.

William Matthew Harries, although not "the father of separation", as "Limner" described him,[117] was another regular participant in the early morning Town House meetings. He had taken the lead in the early days of the separatist campaign in Port Elizabeth, especially in 1847, and he was to do so again in the later fifties. In 1848 he had briefly been a member of the nominated Legislative Council before the advent of parliamentary government and he was to serve as a member of the House of Assembly for Port Elizabeth in 1858-59 and for Cradock from 1861 to 1864. He was a scholarly man and a fluent speaker and was regarded as "one of the most accomplished members of the Assembly."[118]

The determination of the Port Elizabeth business élite to induce the Colonial state to create the economic infrastructure needed for local progress and to assist local businessmen to acquire access to overseas capital for such ventures was reflected in the actions of its parliamentary representatives from the first meetings of the new body. To relieve the severe shortage of money and credit and to facilitate business transactions,[119] Paterson introduced a bill to authorize bank notes to be issued in denominations of £1 or more and in 1857 he was a prominent member of a provisional committee which attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to establish the Standard Bank of Port Elizabeth.[120] Demands were made for improved mail services and for legislation for "the better construction and keeping in repair of the main roads of the colony, and for equitably applying the convict labour thereto".[121] The first proposals in parliament for government assistance in the financing of railway construction were made by Paterson in August 1854 and the *Eastern Province Herald* pressed tenaciously for the completion of the Zuurberg Pass.[122] After the first known strikes in the Colony – among beach and wharf

114. Murray, *Reminiscences*, p. 91.
115. "Limner", *Pen and Ink Sketches*, I, p. 11.
116. Le Cordeur, *Politics of Separatism*, pp. 139, 146, 149, 152, 181-82, 219, 226, 273.
117. "Limner", *Pen and Ink Sketches*, II, pp. 38-39.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
119. See, e.g., William Roberts to Henry Roberts, 13.5.1854, in SMD 110 (7), Albany Museum; William Southey to Richard Sou they, 24.3.1855, Southey Papers, A 611/2, Cape Archives Depot.
120. Assembly Debates, 2.8.1854, p. 142; E.H.D. Arndt, *Banking and Currency Development in South Africa, 1652-1927* (Cape Town, 1928), p. 256.
121. Assembly Debates, 4.7.1854, p. 20; *Votes and Proceedings, House of Assembly*, 1854, 10.7.1854, pp. 25-26.
122. Mabin, "Making of colonial Capitalism", pp. 80-81; *Eastern Province Herald*, 10.7.1855, 31.7.1855, 3.6.1856, 10.6.1856.

workers and boatmen in Table Bay in 1854 and Algoa Bay two years later – the merchants of both ports became more conscious than ever of the need for improved harbour facilities which would make them less dependent upon certain types of labour in the handling of freight and their representatives urged that harbour improvements be undertaken, particularly – in the case of Port Elizabeth – the construction of a wharf.[123]

The rapid expansion of commercial activity at Port Elizabeth linked the town in ever more numerous ties with Graaff-Reinet, not only in business matters but also in politics. A "midlands party" is often said to have evolved in this "midlands axis"[124] but this is too pretentious a designation for so loose and informal a relationship. The bonds between the towns of Port Elizabeth and Graaff-Reinet were based essentially upon the expansion of mercantile activity between them[125] and upon the desire to divert the interior trade, especially of the two chief wool-producing regions of the sub-continent, the Orange Free State and the north-eastern Cape, from its traditional route via Grahamstown to a route via Graaff-Reinet. In this way this trade would also be more strongly attracted to Algoa Bay as its outlet rather than to the Kowie, where the Grahamstonians under William Cock were expending every ounce of their energy in attempting to develop a harbour for the frontier districts and the hinterland. The Graaff-Reinet route would, it was expected, go via the Zuurberg Pass and Port Elizabeth and Graaff-Reinet continued to agitate for the completion of the route.[126] By the same token they continued their bitter opposition to Grahamstown's Kowie project. But at the end of 1857 Governor Grey himself described the improvement works at the Kowie as "the most important work that [had] been commenced" that year.[127] Further eastwards the commencement of works to open the mouth of the Buffalo River at East London[128] was viewed with concern by Port Elizabeth and to a lesser extent by its Graaff-Reinet partner. East London aspired to serve as the port of the fast-growing districts of the Free State and the north-eastern Cape and by 1858 a lighthouse had been constructed and work had commenced on a breakwater at the entrance to the Buffalo River.[129]

Politically this "midlands axis" involved the alignment of Afrikaner Graaff-Reinet and English Port Elizabeth against Settler Albany. Although a relapse into a linguistic-racial front was always possible, the operative lines of cleavage in politics were still dictated primarily by business, not cultural or political factors, despite the fact that the Dutch population even of the eastern districts, where there were large concentrations of English Settlers, amounted to almost double that of the English.[130] Port Elizabeth which prided itself on being the most English community at the Cape, was able to work harmoniously with the Dutch of the

123. Mabin "Making of colonial Capitalism", pp. 85-86; Assembly Debates, 7.5.1857, *The Cape Argus*, 9.5.1857.
124. Murray, *Reminiscences*, p. 11.
125. Firms such as Heugh and Fleming and the Mosenthal Brothers of Port Elizabeth established branches in Graaff-Reinet.
126. From 1857 Graaff-Reinet began to support the alternative route through Paarde Poort, proposed by A.G. Bain in 1856: Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands*, p. 122. In 1857 work on the Zuurberg Pass was suspended for two years: *The Cape Argus*, 14.1.1857.
127. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 29.12.1857.
128. *Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Council*, 29.6.1857, p. 299.
129. William Irons (comp.), *The Settler's Guide to the Cape of Good Hope and Colony of Natal* (London, 1858), p. 116. In fact, Port Elizabeth had little to fear from East London; as late as 1865 the exports and imports of East London still amounted to less than 5% of the respective Colonial totals: Mabin, "Making of Colonial Capitalism", p. 76.
130. See Minute of Executive Council to Governor, 5 June 1847, in *Correspondence between Sir H. Pottinger and Sir H.E.F. Young respecting Separation* (Cape Town, 1847), pp. 42-43.

midlands.[131] This would have been well-nigh impossible for the "frontier party" especially since, incited by Godlonton, it was giving widespread currency to rumours of a Dutch "conspiracy" and fanning the flames of mutual hostility between Dutch and English in order to keep the Settlers in the eastern districts loyal to the "frontier party" line against the Stockenströmites.[132] Many of those who adhered to the "midlands party" were indeed probably Stockenströmites, alienated by the excesses of the "frontier party" and lacking a leader after Stockenström's retirement from politics and departure from the Colony in April 1856. On matters of religion too - a not unimportant consideration in the heyday of Victorianism - Port Elizabeth and Graaff-Reinet differed from the "frontier party". Whereas the Wesleyans of Grahamstown had no hesitation in requesting state support for their church, the commercial town of Port Elizabeth believed in the Voluntary Principle of no state aid for churches, and Graaff-Reinet was a stronghold of the Dutch Reformed Church which opposed the Wesleyans, not least those of Grahamstown.[133]

As in all too many parts of the Colony in this period, the political leaders of Port Elizabeth and of its extension in the "midlands party" were not equal to many of the political demands made upon them. There was too great a division between those influential commercial interests in Port Elizabeth which had business and other ties with Grahamstown as opposed to those whose links with Graaff-Reinet or Cape Town were stronger.[134] There were also divisions between those who had valuable vested interests at stake and others who were concerned only about the taxation with which they would be saddled if action was taken.[135]

Paterson, although conspicuously active in the local business and civic affairs of Port Elizabeth, did not possess the essential qualities for successful leadership. He was an inveterate speaker whose sustained logic and rhetoric had little popular appeal. His proposals were often wildly impractical and he had a reputation for always holding "extreme" views. By temperament he was volatile; and apart from the fact that the same might have been said of most politicians in this period, the *Journal* was not being unfair in labelling him "The Port Elizabeth Weathercock".[136] Crediting him with having brought the "midlands party" into existence, his old friend R.W. Murray wrote of him: "Beyond mischief, he never did much with the midlanders. Graaff-Reinet and surrounding districts were caught by the notion of a midland party in Parliament, joined the westerns against the extreme easterns, and became instrumental to their own injury, without being Patersonians at heart. Their antagonism to their eastern neighbours originated in race feeling, and was fostered by Paterson and the westerns, who availed themselves of midland votes, but never voted the midlanders anything in return."[137] Henry Fancourt White, M.L.A. for Port Elizabeth in the First Parliament, similarly lacked leadership qualities as did Harries, who although a capable speaker, was unenterprising and unimaginative and too disinclined to confront those with whom he disagreed.[138]

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131. *Eastern Province Herald*, 29.5.1855, 8.7.1856.
132. Duminy has argued that Godlonton was guilty of inflaming Dutch-English antagonism in the east, but it would appear that this was done also by other members of the "frontier party" and by people like Pote, who always claimed ostentatiously to be an "independent": see, e.g., his speech and that of Solomon in Assembly Debates, 27.5.1856 and [prob.] 29.5.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 31.5.1856, 3.6.1856.
133. *Graaff-Reinet Herald*, 29.6.1853.
134. Taylor, "Separation Movement", p. 64.
135. E.g. Assembly Debates, 26.6.1857, in *The Cape Argus*, 1.7.1857 on a bill to construct a wharf at Port Elizabeth.
136. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 26.7.1856.
137. Muray, *Reminiscences*, p. 11.
138. "Limner", *Pen and Ink Sketches*, I, p. 12; II, p. 38; Sole, "Separation Movement", p. 169.

Moreover, as in many other parts of the Colony, there was dissatisfaction in general with the calibre of the representatives sent to parliament. As late as 1866 Chase was castigating the political apathy of the merchants of Port Elizabeth who seemed not to care who represented them in parliament.[139]

4

The Protean nature and the fragility of all these political alignments was exposed anew as each political issue arose. Responsible government, proposed in 1854 and 1855 by Paterson and supported by the midlanders, was defeated by a combination of those westerners who were concerned about the expense of such a system of government,[140] and the "frontier party" which was apprehensive about western domination and the withdrawal of Imperial troops which would inevitably follow.[141] *The Graham's Town Journal* strove once again to rally the "frontier party" by emphasizing the Dutch threat to English (particularly Settler) interests in the Colony. "Heartily and lustily did several hundred voices give three cheers for the Queen at the end of the meeting", it reported on the large and excitable anti-responsible government public meeting in Grahamstown, "the people's loyalty being aroused and quickened by the approach of danger – a dread of Capetown Republican dominion".[142] In a by-election in the latter months of 1855 to replace Joubert, who had resigned from the Council, William Cock of Albany, adamantly opposed to responsible government and requisitioned by appeals from all the stamping grounds of the "frontier party",[143] topped the poll. When in the following session Stockenström revived the moves for responsible government in the Council, the westerners solidly supported the midlanders in throwing their weight behind him,[144] but in the Assembly Armstrong of Port Elizabeth broke ranks with his midlands colleagues and helped to defeat the motion.[145] And one of the worst blows to the responsible government cause occurred when in April 1856 Stockenström sailed for England. His fierce independence and individuality, based upon the voice of conscience, and his pursuit of politics as a personal as much as a public matter in which the canvassing of popular support was not regarded as important, had made it impossible for him to operate on an effective basis through any form of political organization. In parliament he had followed a zigzag course on one issue supporting the west, on another the east. Finding himself in conflict with one group after another, he was unable to count upon widespread support at crucial moments. When he sailed from Cape Town he was a defeated man.[146]

While the clash over responsible government had revealed the inherent weaknesses of the Port Elizabeth, midlands and Stockenström alignments the conflict over eastern separatism was similarly to expose the fissile foundations of the "frontier party". Rejecting responsible government, the Grahamstown core of the "frontier party" turned yet more determinedly to

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139. J.C. Chase to Godlonton, 27.7.1866, Godlonton Papers, A 43, University of the Witwatersrand Library.
140. Assembly Debates, 11.4.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 17.4.1856; Legislative Council Debates, 3.4.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 8.4.1856.
141. *Cape Frontier Times*, 17.4.1855, 22.4.1855, 1.5.1855; *The Graham's Town Journal*, 21.4.1855.
142. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 21.4.1855.
143. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 25.8.1855.
144. Legislative Council Debates, 3.4.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 8.4.1856.
145. During the recess Armstrong had been re-elected for Port Elizabeth despite his opposition to responsible government; the *Eastern Province Herald* (1.1.1856 and 29.1.1856) explained that this was because no other candidate was available.
146. Duminy, "Stockenström", pp. 144, 161-63.

press for some form of separation from the west as the panacea for their ills, preferably in the form of an expanded, independent executive authority under their influence in Grahamstown itself.[147] Yet it seemed to too many - not least to other eastern members, and even some adherents of the "frontier party" - that these measures would benefit Grahamstown as distinct from the east in general. Ironically at the very moment when in 1854 the widespread exposition to the proposed Burgher Law had led increasing numbers of westerners to look more sympathetically at the requests of the east for their own separate government[148] and when both the "liberal" and "conservative" sections of western opinion had come to believe that if the whole of the east was intent upon securing separation they should not oppose it, certain members of the "fontier party" favoured giving the new parliament and their popular new Governor further opportunities to address their problems, and advised against separatist agitation.[149] Not only could the "frontier party" depend upon no more than 10 out of the 22 votes possessed by the east in the Assembly,[150] but it was divided against itself even on core issues such as separation. At a public dinner given for the frontier members of parliament held in Grahamstown after the session, Godlonton viciously attacked the statistics quoted by the member for Grahamstown, Charles Pote, in support of his contention that the east could not as yet afford separation. Such was the hold of the Godlontonians on local politics and such too was their frustration at the rejection of separation that when Pote attempted to explain his calculations he was repeatedly ignored by the chairman and when he finally had a chance to speak Godlonton, Cock and Wood stomped out of the hall.[151] Replying to accusations that he had not consulted his colleagues before speaking on separation in the Assembly, Pote described the great lengths to which he had gone in three successive sessions to convene meetings at his hotel in Cape Town at which frontier members could consult with one another on a regular basis on issues before they were raised in parliament. These efforts had been entirely in vain. Moreover, added Pote in illustrating the disarray of the separatists, "While the motion for separation was on the notice paper, that motion was attempted to be crossed and foiled by a counter-motion for the removal of the seat of government. I did not complain at not having been consulted, but I thought that we looked like a parcel of fools, that two such contradictory motions should appear at the same time on the same notice paper.[152] This absurdity was handled by Mr Solomon to our disadvantage, by remarking upon our disunion. One wanting separation, another removal, and he added, perhaps we wanted both as both were asked for at once . . ." Even Godlonton deplored the "lamentable want of cohesion" of the eastern members.[153]

Prior to the 1857 session of parliament Godlonton in particular had done much to mobilize support for separation, both in parliament and out, by suggesting[154] that it might be achieved

147. See the report on the "numerous" public meetings held in the Town Office, Grahamstown, on 2 Jan. 1854, in *The Graham's Town Journal*, 7.1.1854; also the reply of Godlonton and Wood to the address presented to them by 353 inhabitants of Grahamstown after the 1854 parliamentary session, in *The Graham's Town Journal*, 21.10.1854.
148. See e.g., speeches in Assembly Debates, 27.3.1855, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 12.4.1855; and Legislative Council Debates, 15.4.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 22.4.1856.
149. Sole, "Separation Movement", p. 177; James Collett said that he was not in favour of separation: Assembly Debates, 8.8.1854, pp. 221-22.
150. Assembly Debates, 27.5.1856, in *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 3.6.1856.
151. *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 8.7.1856.
152. *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, 15.7.1856.
153. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 20.9.1856.
154. As early as 1855: *The Graham's Town Journal*, 20.10.1855.

within the framework of a federal system of government, to which increasing numbers of colonists throughout the Colony were giving favourable consideration.[155] When he moved that the Council express its opinion in favour of a system of "Federative Provinces", the motion was defeated by the 7 westerners against the 6 eastern representatives, Fleming and Metelerkamp of Port Elizabeth having voted with their frontier colleagues.[156] In the following month the eastern members of the Council again stood four-square together. After Godlonton had failed to persuade the Council to postpone the debate on the much-delayed Wellington Railway Bill "in view of the late period of the session and the absence of so many of the eastern province members", the 6 eastern members resigned *en bloc.*[157]

But this eastern unity was short-lived and it was this very issue of railways which sowed disunity not only among eastern members but also within the different "parties" themselves. From 1857 when the Governor laid before parliament proposals for railway construction in the Colony, Graaff-Reinet had enthusiastically embraced the prospect of a direct rail connection with Port Elizabeth. But when a Select Committee of the House took evidence on railways, members from Graaff-Reinet such as Mosenthal and Meintjes opposed the schemes as premature, as did the leading political figure in Graaff-Reinet, Ziervogel.[158] Grahamstown too which had initially been much in favour of railway construction, turned against it when it was discovered that there was no intention to construct two lines, one from Port Elizabeth to Grahamstown, and another from the Kowie to Grahamstown.[159] Port Elizabeth interests were also divided on the subject and swithered between one strategy and another. Paterson systematically publicized the potential value of railways to the port; but in the Select Committee on the subject, Fleming expressed the view that the east should see how the venture fared in the west before committing itself.[160] He was severely censured by Paterson, who a few months later also joined with "most of the merchants of Port Elizabeth" in the Commercial Association of Port Elizabeth in requiring William Armstrong, the M.L.A. for the town, to resign his seat if he could not bring himself to support railway construction.[161]

The general swing back in eastern Cape opinion in favour of railway construction implied having the financial resources and guarantees of a united Colony. This weakened the support for eastern separatism and for the "frontier party" which was its chief protagonist. In Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth permanent committees were elected to agitate for separation and to liaise with other local committees.[162] The enthusiasm spread to Fort Beaufort and Bathurst, to Victoria and to the further reaches of the frontier.[163] Alice pledged itself to separation, as did Cradock, at what was described as "one of the largest public meetings known to have met in this town for many years past."[164] But attempts to orchestrate similar reactions

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155. *Eastern Province Herald,* 22.5.1855, 1.7.1855, 15.7.1856, 30.6.1857, 7.7.1857, 14.7.1857, 4.8.1857; *Graaff-Reinet Herald,* 4.7.1857, 8.8.1857; see also letters to Godlonton from William Southey, 2.5.1857, and Dr W. Way, 4.5.1857, in Godlonton Papers; *The Graham's Town Journal,* 21.6.1856; *The Cape Argus,* 1.7.1857; *King William's Town Gazette,* 19.9.1857.
156. Legislative Council Debates, 8.5.1857, in *The Cape Argus,* 16.5.1857.
157. *Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Council,* 23.6.1857.
158. *Graaff-Reinet Herald,* 20.6.1857, 27.6.1857; Smith, *From Frontier to Midlands,* pp. 122–3, 470–1.
159. *The Graham's Town Journal,* 13.1.1857, 21.2.1857; *Graaff-Reinet Herald,* 20.6.1857, 27.6.1857; Taylor, "Separation Movement", p. 55.
160. Assembly Debates, 8.8.1854, p. 215; *Eastern Province Herald,* 9.5.1854, 13.6.1854; Taylor, "Separation Movement", p. 55.
161. *Eastern Province Herald,* 23.6.1857, 22.9.1857. Armstrong did resign: *The Cape Argus,* 30.12.1857.
162. *The Graham's Town Journal,* 4.7.1857, 7.7.1857; Sole, "Separation Movement", p. 188.
163. *The Graham's Town Journal,* 25.7.1857, 1.8.1857. Both Queenstown and Whittlesea expressed strong support for separation: *The Graham's Town Journal,* 4.8.1857, 8.9.1857.
164. *The Graham's Town Journal,* 4.8.1857, 18.7.1857.

elsewhere were far less successful. In Port Elizabeth, Paterson had initially strongly urged support for the renewed separatist effort, coming as the initiative did when Port Elizabeth was concerned at the growing commercial rivalry of Table Bay, especially after the introduction of the Table Bay Harbour and Refuge Bill during the 1857 session, improvements which Port Elizabeth merchants saw as giving their rivals in the west an unfair advantage against them.[165] A Port Elizabeth public meeting attended by 300 people had also warmly supported "a strong local executive government" in the east.[166] However, once the railway question obtruded itself more powerfully upon the consciousness of the east again and when Graaff-Reinet seemed to stand some chance of obtaining a railway and the Kowie made more progress than had been expected, Paterson and other Port Elizabeth leaders turned sharply against separation and concentrated upon railways. When the invitation to Port Elizabeth to participate in the convention on separatism arrived, the *Eastern Province Herald* reported that the deputation had been informed that "absolute separation is not countenanced here. The Permanent Committee have, because of the division between the Frontier and Midland divisions, deferred the Local Government agitation altogether . . ."[167] Similarly in Graaff-Reinet, when circulars arrived from Grahamstown and Cradock, urging the necessity for separation, a public meeting, dominated by the English-speaking residents including W.J. Dixon, S.A. Probart, S.E. Wimble, and A. Essex, swung decisively against separation and resolved not to participate in the convention. "Certainly we do not want the subject [i.e. separation] agitated now," declared a speaker. "We want railroads and other general improvements . . ." For the same reasons Uitenhage and Richmond also refused to send delegates.[169] The splintering of opinion both in the east and within the various political groupings themselves was well summed up by Paterson who observed that political opinion in the east could now be divided into four main groups: the "Parliamentarians" ("those satisfied with the present order of things") who were predominant in Graaff-Reinet, Colesberg and Albert; the "Removalists" who were strong in Uitenhage and Somerset; the "Federalists" who were to be found mainly in Port Elizabeth, and the "Separatists" who hailed in the main from Grahamstown, Cradock and Fort Beaufort.[170]

The elections to fill the Legislative Council vacancies caused by the resignations of the six members, shed further light upon the continually shifting basis of each of the political alignments. In Port Elizabeth where, as in Uitenhage, Middelburg and other places,[171] the tide had now set in so strongly in favour of railways, A.J. Clairmonte was elected to the Assembly in Armstrong's place after advocating "federal government" and pledging himself to campaign for railways.[172] Fleming and Metelerkamp, in offering themselves for re-election to the Council, both declared themselves against "absolute separation" and in favour of federal union and railway promotion, Fleming being obliged unequivocally to recant his earlier opposition to railways in the process.[173] In Grahamstown the tune of the "frontier party" had also changed. At the beginning of 1857 their spokesman, Godlonton, had written enthusiastically about the prospects and advantages of railways; by June he was strongly opposed, but by October the pressure from within upon the "frontier party" in favour of railways had become too powerful

165. Sole, "Separation Movement", p. 188.
166. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 4.8.1857.
167. *Eastern Province Herald*, 28.7.1857.
168. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 18.8.1857.
169. *Graaff-Reinet Herald*, 15.8.1857, 22.8.1857.
170. *Eastern Province Herald*, 4.8.1857.
171. *Eastern Province Herald*, 11.8.1857.
172. *Graaff-Reinet Herald*, 12.12.1857.
173. *Eastern Province Herald*, 11.8.1857, 10.10.1857.

even for him to resist.[174] Reluctantly facing up to the rising tide of enthusiasm, he declared: "The unavoidable deduction we make from the whole is – that if railways are to be introduced into this colony, and if a public guarantee is to be given for the money required, then that the Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown line is beyond all comparison the one that may justly claim the preference... It is satisfactory to know that the Sub-Committee at this place are zealously pursuing their enquiry as to the amount of actual traffic between Port Elizabeth and this city."[175] But his heart was not in the election. By means of the Council resignations he had hoped to force the hand of the Governor to dissolve parliament, and had advised that the elections to fill the vacancies be boycotted. In Grahamstown there was so much support for the resignation of the members that only nine people voted in the elections to replace them,[176] and Godlonton proclaimed triumphantly: "The election, as it is termed, turned out an *entire failure.*"[177] Yet it was the "frontier party" that was the loser. The election was uncontested and the midlands secured the four seats vacated by them.[178] Since the elections had demonstrated that people were becoming far more sympathetic to federation[179] and since it was well known that the Governor was strongly in favour of it,[180] the "frontier party" was obliged to change its strategy and to campaign for federation as a more widely acceptable form of local self-government.[181]

By 1858 the chief political groupings in eastern Cape politics had even less cohesion than they had had for some years. The Stockenströmites had – at least temporarily – lost their leader who could alone provide the focus for his exceptionally heterogeneous following. The Graaff-Reinet-Port Elizabeth axis was for the moment agreed in rejecting separation and concentrating upon the project of a railway line to Graaff-Reinet as opposed to Grahamstown, and in Graaff-Reinet itself so little interest existed in local political activism that in January 1858 a resident of Cape Town, F.S. Watermeyer, was elected as the town's representative in the Assembly for the remaining year of the First Parliament.[182] The "frontier party" was in greater disarray than any other group. In vain did the *Journal* strive to keep the separatist agitation alive, "but", gloated *The Cape Argus*, "the party connected with that paper are far more noisy than influential"[183] When, in the early months of 1858 Godlonton and Wood, two of the foremost and most consistent proponents of separation, both left for England the focus of attention shifted from the local scene. "Having so signally failed in efforts in the colony," jeered *Het Volksblad*, "we hear that the two distinguished champions of frontier exclusivism, Messrs Godlonton and Wood, are to proceed on a quixotic mission to England, to try the accomplishment in Downing Street of what can by no means be accomplished anywhere else than within the walls of the colonial legislature".[184] By 1858, too, yet another interest group

174. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 13.1.1857, 21.2.1857; *Eastern Province Herald*, 13.10.1857.
175. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 20.10.1857.
176. *Ibid.*, 31.10.1857. In Uitenhage only 33 out of 228 voted, and in Somerset East, 8 out of 85; *Ibid.*, 3.11.1857.
177. *Ibid.*, 29.12.1857.
178. *The Cape Argus*, 30.12.1857.
179. Cf. the correspondence which Godlonton was receiving on the subject, e.g. from William Southey, 2.5.1857; Dr W. Way, 4.5.1857; and W.A. Richards, 8.5.1857, in Godlonton Papers.
180. G.C. Henderson, *Sir George Grey. Pioneer of Empire in Southern Lands* (London, 1907), pp. 165-170.
181. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 25.8.1857, 5.10.1857, 21.12.1857; *The Cape Argus*, 30.12.1857.
182. Taylor, "Separation Movement", p. 51.
183. *The Cape Argus*, 30.12.1857.
184. Quoted in *Graaff-Reinet Herald*, 19.12.1857.

was beginning to become visible, its constituents drawn from all the existing groupings.[185] Many landowners, hostile to the proposed additional taxation, reacted strongly against the suggested state "sub-guarantee" for the construction of railways.[186] It was the landowners of the east who played a major role in the defeat of Solomon's proposal in parliament in 1858 that construction of a line between Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown be commenced, and the Bowker brothers, who had opposed the Grahamstown commercial interests even before the advent of parliament, were in the ensuing years to organize an anti-railway party.[187] But although the Second Cape Parliament would thus see further variations on the theme of political alignments, particularly in the eastern Cape, the failure of the Stockenströmites, who represented the ideology of the pastoral interests more than of any other, was a clear sign that the locus of political power at both ends of the Colony remained in the hands of the mercantile élite and would do so for some years to come.

5

Each of the "parties" of these years thus consisted of no more than a core of determined individuals dedicated to a particular cause to which others attached themselves for varying individual purposes and for greatly varying lengths of time. Godlonton bitterly deplored the "want of organization" and the fact that there was no such thing as a party in the eastern districts.[188] "When the six members of Council resigned last session," he wrote, "there was then felt most acutely this utter want of a *party* . . . So far from there being *a party*, there was not even a watchword or a motto, to which people could pin their faith." Yet, for his own political purpose of pursuing the interests of the separatists, Godlonton himself continued to exploit the word "party" in order to depict a continuing clash between a united western party and an eastern – a dual instead of a triangular struggle involving the midlands as well. "The instincts of self-preservation on one hand, and the desire for appropriation on the other, are the *principles* on which our political parties are formed," he declared, deliberately falsifying the position, as we have seen.[189]

The amorphous nature and the inherent weakness of all the political alignments of these years were due, as this article has suggested, to a number of factors. The groupings included within their embrace a wide variety of often ill-defined and rapidly-changing opinions and interests. When these interests sought political fulfilment, it was within the context of a political system of parliamentary government which was essentially unfamiliar to most of the Colonial population, especially the Dutch and the coloureds.[190] Many of them were disillusioned, too, that in practice their members of parliament so often failed to represent their views; nor, in many cases, did they feel well served by the press, which had its own priorities. In such circumstances colonists all too easily retreated into political apathy.[191] On the other hand, should they decide to take action, they discovered that the problems of communication

185. Meltzer has shown how the years 1854–59 were the heyday of the commercial bourgeoisie in parliament, although usually in alliance with the agricultural interest: Meltzer, "Growth of Cape Town Commerce", pp. 142, 155–56, 161.
186. Taylor, "Separation Movement", p. 55.
187. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57. Cf. the relationship of the farmers as a political force to the merchants even in the heyday of mercantile dominance in Cape politics: Mabin, "Making of colonial Capitalism", p. 89.
188. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 12.1.1858.
189. *The Graham's Town Journal*, 7.11.1857.
190. McCracken, *Cape Parliament*, pp. 35, 52.
191. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

in a vast, sparsely-populated colony were formidable and political mobilization exceedingly difficult. Nor could these disadvantages be offset by a leadership which was lacking in sufficient experience and, in most cases, in the innate ability required for their role. Above all, as Stockenström, Reitz, Wicht, and other political figures of the day emphasized, it was not until responsible government existed and with it constant criticism and the initiation of constructive measures that members would be united in parties under leaders.[192]

This article has sought to explore the changing basis of each of the main political alignments in the eastern Cape in the early years of the Cape parliament. It reveals something of the great multiplicity of forces and interests at work and their interactions in a very complex political chemistry. The conception of political history in South Africa needs – as in the United States – to change from that of an exercise in the acquisition and use of power to that of a succession of different political eras or party systems, separated by periods of realignment.[193] In South Africa today with its special sensitivity to the important contribution which regionally differentiated processes can make to change, a need is also felt for research into regional variations. Studies based upon these processes of realignment and regional variation could contribute significantly to a comprehensive social analysis of the changing contours of political life in this formative period of the development of Cape society as a whole.

192. Legislative Council Debates, 26.3.1855.
193. See A.G. Bogue, "The new political History in the 1970s", in M.Kammen (ed.), *The Past before us: contemporary historical Writing in the United States* (London, 1980), pp. 231-251; and P.R. VanderMeer, "The new political History: Progress and Prospects", in G.G. Iggers and H.T. Parker (eds.), *International Handbook of Historical Studies: contemporary Research and Theory* (London, 1980), pp. 87-108.