

**THE DISMISSAL OF JOHN MITFORD BOWKER, RESIDENT
AGENT AMONGST THE GQUNUKWEBE AND MFENGU
AT FORT PEDDIE, 1836—39**

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It was reported in the *Graham's Town Journal* on 28th February 1839 that Mr J.M. Bowker, Diplomatic Agent at Fort Peddie, had been suspended from office. 'The Journal' believed that the suspension had resulted from a "mere error in judgement in respect of official routine" as Bowker had communicated information directly to the Governor in Cape Town instead of through the office of the Lieutenant-Governor in Grahamstown. It seems, however, in a recent investigation into the diary of Bowker, that the reasons for his dismissal were far more complex than this and were wound into the intricacies of frontier politics during this troubled period.¹ Indeed the dismissal of Bowker gives a clear illustration of three of the main weaknesses of the Stockenström treaty system. Firstly, that the Agents were often highly prejudiced in favour of their particular tribes, secondly, that the Lieutenant-Governor himself broke the Treaties and acted beyond the advice of his agents, and thirdly, that the chiefs were treated with scant respect in a system which depended on mutual respect and co-operation.

During the early 1830's frontier tension between the colonists and the African tribes beyond the frontier had mounted steadily. War broke out finally in December 1834 with the invasion of the Colony by thousands of Xhosas. In the destruction that followed 455 farms were reported to have been burned and thousands of cattle, horses and sheep were taken beyond the frontier, while 100 Europeans and Hottentots were killed. It is estimated that in the six months of the War colonial losses totalled about £300,000.² In the twelve months that followed Queen Adelaide Province was proclaimed by the Governor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban, as the land lying between the Keiskamma and the Kei Rivers. Within a few months, however, on the orders of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, the territory was abandoned. The original proclamation of the Province had been greeted jubilantly by the frontier colonists who saw it as an opportunity for receiving land as compensation for their losses in the War and by others as a reward for the part they had played in it. The province was finally abandoned in October 1836. In the meantime Andries Stockenström had made himself immensely unpopular for the evidence he had given before the Aborigines Committee of the House of Commons which reflected poorly upon the frontier colonists. He now became even more unpopular for his association with the withdrawal from Queen Adelaide Province.

In the settlement that followed the War the frontier of 1829 was reverted to and Stockenström made treaties with the individual chiefs in order to try to secure a lasting

The diary and letter book of John Mitford Bowker has recently been donated to the Albany Museum, Grahamstown by Mr. Duncan Bowker of Middelburg, Cape Province.
Eric A. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, p.188.

peace. In 1836 Diplomatic Agents were posted with the chiefs to settle problems that arose among the tribes and between the tribes and the colonists. A system was worked out for the return of stolen property and for the trial of the thieves. It is clear that the duties of the Diplomatic Agents were not at all well defined though it was obviously a post that required considerable understanding of the Africans, tact and patience. Mr H. Fynn was posted to the Queenstown district for the Thembu, Mr C.L. Stretch at Tyumie for the Ngqika and the 35 year old Mr J.M. Bowker at Fort Peddie for the Mfengu and Gqunukwebe tribes. A large group of Mfengu had been settled near the Fort so that they might receive protection from it. The Mfengu were mostly the remnants of the Hlubi, Bheli and Zizi tribes who had left Natal in the second decade of the 19th Century and had arrived in Xhosa country in the early 1820's. They were regarded by the Xhosas as being inferior. It was because they were essentially a landless group and because they had joined the colonists in the War of 1834—35 that they received colonial protection.³

1837, the year of the Great Trek, seems to have been one of uneasy peace on the frontier. On the whole it would appear that the Ngqika tribes were co-operating with the authorities in catching criminals and were returning stolen cattle. In August of that year the Mfengu, who had always been treated with lofty contempt by the other tribes and had been settled near the fort for their protection, were attacked by a large number of unidentified tribesmen who were thought to have belonged to Nqeno's people. In the skirmish that took place some 400 yards from the Fort 10 Mfengu were killed, 11 were wounded and Corporal Porter of the Mounted Rifles was assegaied to death. Mr. Cyrus the official interpreter to Bowker was lucky to escape uninjured. A large number of Mfengu cattle were carried off. This was the first of the serious incidents between the tribes associated with Bowker and those associated with Stretch that was to bedevil their working relationship and to contribute to a spirit of hostility and lack of co-operation between them.

In January 1838 D'Urban was replaced as Governor by Sir George Napier. Napier, like D'Urban, was a soldier who had fought in the Peninsula Campaign of the Napoleonic Wars where he had lost an arm. In 1837 he had been promoted to the rank of Major-General. D'Urban, for his part, chose to remain on at the Cape until 1846 when he accepted the position of Commander of the forces in Canada. It would seem that for some years D'Urban had been friendly with the Bowker family and had a particular regard for Miles Bowker's eldest son John Mitford and it has been suggested that this personal connection might have played a part in D'Urban's choice of John Mitford as a Resident Agent.⁴ They corresponded regularly until the latter died in 1847.

Thus the news of the replacement of D'Urban cannot have been greeted with enthusiasm by Bowker. In spite of this he continued in his post as Resident Agent. In September of 1838 the Lieutenant-Governor, Andries Stockenström, asked permission to leave the Cape for England where he intended to hand in his resignation to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, following the failure of the libel action he had brought

3. M. Wilson & L. Thompson (Eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. 1, p.249.

4. J.B. Bullock (Ed.), *Peddie, Settlers' Outpost*, p.32.

against D. Campbell (Captain). He was replaced in a temporary capacity, at first, by Colonel John Hare, commanding officer of the 27th Regiment, who happened to be the senior officer in the Eastern Cape at the time. In due course his permanent appointment to the post of Lieutenant-Governor was confirmed. It is interesting to note that Hare, like Napier, had fought in the Peninsula War and that Hare had, indeed, taken part in the Battle of Waterloo. This, in part, accounts for the very special comradeship that existed between Napier and Hare as is clearly shown in the lengthy private correspondence between the two.⁵ In view of this special relationship it may be suggested that Napier was sympathetic to Hare's opinions on events on the frontier and also to Hare's opinions of his subordinates. Napier had, soon after his arrival in the Colony, paid a visit to the frontier but in spite of this his knowledge of frontier affairs was, at this time, sketchy.

By the end of 1838 it is clear that hostility existed between Bowker and Stretch as problems developed between Bowker's tribes, the Mfengu and Gqunukwebe, and Stretch's, the Ngqika. The Ngqikas viewed the Gqunukwebe, whose chief was Pato, as 'dogs' and certainly Pato was a chief of commoner stock.⁶ This is illustrated in the acrimonious correspondence that passed between Stretch and Bowker between September and December 1838. According to Bowker a group of Pato's people had found two Africans of Tshatshu's tribe travelling through his country away from the road. It was suspected that the 20 head of cattle they had with them had been stolen from the Colony and thus in keeping with the Treaties they detained the two. In the scuffle that followed one of the men escaped into the bush dodging assegais that were thrown at him. The cattle were taken to Fort Peddie and were impounded by Bowker prior to investigations. He soon received news from the Colony that one of the Africans had last been employed by a Mr. Ford from near Salem and he had left in the dead of night with 15 of his master's cattle. It was further found that a Mr Long who farmed nearby had lost 5 head of cattle and had traced the spoor to Mr Ford's farm. Bowker, immediately upon the arrest of the African, suspected him of being a thief as he claimed that his pass had been torn up by those who had arrested him. Bowker gave him accommodation for the night and promised to return him to Grahamstown so that he could obtain a duplicate. This, Bowker, alleged, the African was unaccountably reluctant to do.

It seems that Stretch took up the cause of this African, whose name was given as Jacob. Chief Tshatshu claimed that Pato had robbed Jacob of money and the cattle he had honestly gained in the Colony. It was claimed that Bowker had abused him by calling him a 'Skellem' and had refused justice to him. So in retaliation a group of 60 of Tshatshu's people raided the Gqunukwebe and carried off 30 cattle. Bowker complained to Hare and asked that Stretch investigate the matter fully. He enclosed a letter from Mr Ford and Mr Long giving a history of the alleged thieves. Bowker claimed that all he received was a threatening letter from Stretch and the Ngqika chiefs.⁷ Thus

5. The original correspondence is housed in the National Archives in Salisbury, Rhodesia. A microfilm of this correspondence, however, is in the possession of the Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

6. Wilson & Thompson, *Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. 1, p.250.

7. *Speeches, letters and Selections from Important Papers of the Late John Mitford Bowker*. Reprint, 1962 — Original by Godlonton and Richards, 1864, pp.89—90.

it appears that the matter was left but Bowker comments significantly that he delivered the message from Hare to Pato that no further action was to be taken but "I also gave him my advice, and perhaps the case may not yet be settled as the Gaikas (sic) and Mr. Stretch would wish after all".⁸

Whatever the rights and wrongs of this case Bowker thus made it clear that he was prepared to advise his chiefs against the decision of the Government and against the interests of the other Agents. These were charges that were brought against him in another context and were to provide, in part, the reasons Hare gave to Napier why Bowker should be dismissed.

In another incident at the end of December 1838 Bowker complained bitterly that Stretch had sent his native police into his area to trace stolen property and to catch the thieves. The correct procedure would have been to contact the Resident Agent of the area concerned first. He comments bitterly in his letter to Stretch of 28th December 1838, that "...you take it upon you to act in my jurisdiction without any reference to me is the very thing that I complain of ... I must add I have every inclination to act in concert with you for the maintenance of peace and quiet along this frontier and it is not without pain that I find myself compelled from a sense of duty to have recourse to communications of this nature." This hostility between the Agents was to be tried in a more serious case that arose at the end of 1838 in a dispute between Pato and Nqeno. On this occasion there was a real risk that war could break out between the two tribes.

The trouble started in November 1838 as on the 28th of that month Bowker wrote to the Agent General in Grahamstown, Mr Hougham Hudson, that Pato had received a message from Nqeno, the latter being one of the lesser chiefs of the Ngqika tribe from Stretch's area. In the message Nqeno demanded the return of cattle that Pato had received from Nqeno during the late war. Bowker claimed that this was nothing less than a revival of an old claim that had been fully discussed and settled at King William's Town on 5th December 1836 before the chiefs signed the Treaties. Mr Bowker pointed out that on that occasion Nqeno had publicly declared that he had given up the claim and that it would not be discussed again. This had been witnessed by all the chiefs that were present, Mr. Fynn and himself. This claim, he stated, was a direct infringement of the 28th Clause of the Treaties. Pato had replied to Nqeno on receiving the new demand that he abided by the decision made by the chiefs at the time of the Great Meeting in King William's Town and he hoped that Nqeno had not forgotten the meeting either. Pato was, however, uneasy about the matter particularly as he had sided with the British against the other tribes in the War and hostility still remained. In view of this he called in his outlying kraals and made preparations for his defence should an attempt be made to attack him and seize cattle.

Hare received this letter on the 29th November and wrote off immediately to the Governor to express his views on the matter. He made it clear that he felt bound to protect Pato in the event of his being attacked. He also wrote off to Stretch at Tyumie and instructed him to make enquiries to see whether Maqoma and Tyhali, relations of Nqeno, had any hand in this matter.⁹ That night Hare travelled to Fort Peddie so that

8. *Ibid.* p.90.

9. Maqoma was an implacable enemy of the Colony and was, in his prime, an able and astute leader. He acted as Regent until Sandile came of age in 1840.

he could address the chiefs on the matter and so avoid a crisis. The meeting took place on 1st December in Mr. Cyrus's house. Mr. Cyrus, who was the official interpreter at Fort Peddie, wrote a full report of the meeting. Nqeno, who was an old man, was unable to attend due to ill health and his son Stockwe represented him. Stockwe declared to the meeting that the claim was for cattle kept by Pato's people during the War. Hare replied that this claim could not be made because it had been given up in terms of the treaties that his father had signed in 1836. Stockwe then claimed that the cattle were not taken in the War but were passed over to Pato for him to look after. Hare was not prepared on this occasion to make any concession and stated that this made no difference to the Treaties and he asked why so much time had been allowed to elapse before the claim was made. To this Stockwe replied that his father thought that they could ask for the return of the cattle when it suited them. Thus the matter was left until Stockwe had had time to consult with his father.

On 6th December Hare wrote to Sir George Napier to explain in more detail what had taken place. He made it quite clear that in his opinion Pato had been "neither just nor honorable".¹⁰ He then offered for the Governor's attention a full explanation of what had taken place. Pato had, at the start of the War, decided to remain neutral though it was clear that many of his tribesmen had fought against the Colony. Stockwe claimed that every head of cattle taken near the sea or in the vicinity of Bathurst and every murder that took place in that part of the Colony was at the hand of Pato's tribesmen.¹¹ While in this state of declared neutrality Pato had received from the Ngqika tribe a large number of cattle on trust to look after. Pato seeing a large force of British troops and Colonists ready to cross the Keiskamma River and fearing that he would lose the cattle joined the British. Hare then comments "the Resident Agents as you have remarked in a former note are so warm in the vindication of their respective tribes, that really one finds a difficulty in getting to the exact case in dispute between their tribes".¹² On one hand Bowker stated that the matter was fully discussed at the meeting in King William's Town in December 1836 and that Stockenström would not let the Treaties be signed until the matter had been settled finally. Nqeno, he stated, said that though he cries for his cattle, for the sake of peace he would drop his claim to them. Stretch on the other hand claimed that the matter was left open for further discussion. Hare made it plain that he feared that unless the matter was settled to the satisfaction, even to a limited extent, of the Ngqikas it would always be a useful pretext to pick further quarrels with Pato.

It seems clear that from this point Hare was looking for a compromise solution which would to some degree satisfy the Ngqikas at the expense of the Gqunukwebe even though he was running the danger of making it clear to all that he was also compromising the Treaties on which peace on the frontier depended. However, Bowker and the Wesleyan Missionaries in Pato's country stood between Hare and this solution. The fact that Pato had apparently acted dishonorably had further convinced him in his intention to find a compromise.

A week after the meeting at Ford Peddie Hare travelled to Fort Beaufort in order

10. Hare to Napier, 6th December 1838.

11. Hare to Napier, 13th December 1838.

12. *Ibid.*

to see whether the Ngqikas were going to adopt a hard line in this matter. In the presence of Maqoma, the Regent for the young Sandile and Tyhali, Stockwe presented his case. He gave the Ngqikas' account of what had taken place during the War. It seems, from this, that the cattle that Pato had accepted on trust were in fact Colonial cattle captured during the War. Stockwe claimed that his father believed that, as Pato was neutral when these cattle were handed over, that they would be in better hands being looked after by a neutral tribe. In return Pato had given him an equal number of his cattle. At the end of the War Nqeno had returned these cattle to Pato and waited for the return of his war spoils but Pato did not fulfil his part of the contract. Hare admitted being impressed by this account of what took place and showed the first clear sign of weakening resolve by asking Pato and his brothers Kama and Cobus to meet with the Ngqika chiefs at Fort Beaufort at a date to be settled upon later. In his letter to Napier that followed this meeting, he referred in even stronger terms to the treachery and dishonesty of Pato.¹³ He now believed that there were two possible solutions to the problem that might be considered. On one hand to agree that the claim was, in part, a just one and insist that a portion of the cattle be returned to Nqeno. On the other hand to make it clear to all that the Treaties on no circumstances could be broken even if Pato had been thoroughly dishonest in this case. The Ngqikas treated the whole matter as a family one as Pato had married one of Nqeno's daughters.

In his letter of 21st December Hare informed the Governor that he was still at a loss to know which course was the correct one to take. The whole issue was further confused, at this stage, as Stockwe had accused Cyrus, the interpreter for Bowker, of deliberately misleading the Lieutenant-Governor and Hare expressed his determination to Napier to make this matter public at the meeting at Fort Beaufort. This meeting was, however, never to be. On the 19th December Bowker met with Pato and his brothers and Pato stated that he had no intention of going to Fort Beaufort to open discussion on the matter. They pointed out that in calling this meeting they were being asked to re-open discussion on Treaties they had sworn to obey and which had been declared to be inviolate. If they were asked to return the cattle it meant that the Treaties could be broken with impunity and other old grievances could once more be dragged up.

From the 25th to 28th December Hare received, at his office in Grahamstown, a number of missionaries who apparently had long and well prepared arguments in favour of Pato and they all warned against re-opening the matter settled in the Treaty of 1836.¹⁴ Hare decided, at this stage, that other individuals who had been present at the meeting in King William's Town should be contacted to see whether they could give any further information on what had, in fact, taken place at that time. In this regard he wrote to the two Fynn brothers and to the Rev. Brownlee who were all reported to have been present when the Treaties were signed.

Up to this point Hare had shown himself to be only mildly sympathetic to the cause of Nqeno but had no particular opinion as to whether Bowker or Stretch was telling the truth. However, at the beginning of January Hare suddenly and without ob-

13. *Ibid.*

14. Hare to Napier, 28th December 1838.

vious reason became very hostile to Bowker and to the stand he had taken in the issue. In the meantime Bowker, in his enthusiasm for his cause, made a breach of protocol that was to make Hare furious, though the latter was not to find out about it for another two and a half weeks. On 1st January 1839 Bowker wrote directly to the Secretary to the Governor in Cape Town, Colonel Bell, supplying all the information in his possession on the case. In his covering letter he stated that he had done this because the urgency of the case demanded that the Governor should know all the details with the least possible delay. He apologised to the Governor for the breach in the same letter. On the same day he wrote a long letter to Hare giving his full reasons why Pato should be supported in the matter. Bowker claimed that no agreement had been reached during the War between Nqeno and Pato for the protection of the former's cattle. The cattle in question were driven down at the time when Nqeno's kraal was under attack from Major Cox and Major Halifax. Bowker ended his letter by advising the Lieutenant-Governor to consider very carefully before he withdrew his support for Pato's people as their conduct in terms of the Treaties since the War had been very good.

On the 4th January Hare was decidedly hostile towards Bowker and Pato, though it is not clear why this change had taken place. It seems that the Rev. Shaw in his attempt to assist Pato's cause had succeeded only in irritating the Lieutenant-Governor by telling him in rather a forthright manner how he should act in this instance. In his letter to Bowker of 11th January Shaw wrote, "I wrote a rather long, and somewhat sharp letter to Mr. Hudson for the Lt. Governor ... I thought it essential to follow up your efforts, and therefore contrived to send off another copy ... by the last post to Col. Bell for the Governor. Depend upon it there is a point of endurance beyond which I sh'd think anything but right to go. And if for absurd theories, the local Gov't chooses to place a whole tribe of people (the only really friendly tribe to the Colony) into jeopardy I know my duty in the case, and will discharge it at all hazards."¹⁵ On receiving this letter Hare wrote in great indignation to the Governor, "you will readily perceive ... how difficult it is to rely upon information given by people so prejudiced that they will not allow any thing that may be unfavourable to their own party and will mislead if they can. I am quite sure that the missionaries with Pato's tribe are a bad set and that there is no act of Pato's however dishonorable or dishonest that they will not support, and Mr Bowker too."¹⁶ Hare went on to add that he intended writing to Shaw to tell him to "mind his own duties and not to interfere with those of the Governor".¹⁷ He still maintained that if he could find clear evidence that the matter had been buried in 1836 he would not allow it to be raised again. Hudson, who had been at the signing of the Treaties, stated that he could remember nothing of this matter having been discussed. It is not clear whether he was present at the deliberations that led up to their signing.

Hare now set his mind upon a compromise solution to resolve this problem. He let Pato know that he could not expect support from the Government and strongly suggested to him that Nqeno's demand be, to some degree, accommodated. He recom-

15. From the John Mitford Bowker Papers in the possession of the Albany Museum, Graham

16. Hare to Napier, 4th January 1839.

17. *Ibid.*

mended that Pato should give Nqeno a present of some cattle. So that fighting might be avoided he gave the officers in charge at Fort Peddie and Trompeters Drift confidential instructions that they should go to Pato's assistance if he was attacked. He decided that these instructions should be kept from Bowker as he feared that Bowker would warn Pato that it was a bluff and so render them ineffective. In the dispute of a few months before between Stretch and Bowker, Bowker admitted that he had supplied very special information to Pato that was outside his duty as Resident Agent. Hare is, for this reason perhaps justified in not taking Bowker into his confidence.

Bowker reported on the 8th January that the matter had been cleared up in the manner that Hare had required and that Pato was collecting some cattle that he would hand over to Nqeno. On 11th January Hare wrote to Napier, with some satisfaction, that all was settled and expressed his opinion that agreement might have been reached earlier had Bowker not interfered on behalf of Pato. Nqeno, for his part, informed the Lieutenant-Governor that the cattle in dispute had nothing to do with those involved in the late War and that they formed part of the dowry that Pato was required to pay for Nqeno's daughter whom he had married. It was claimed that this matter had been deliberately kept from Hare by Bowker and the missionaries. It is very doubtful whether this claim by Nqeno was justifiable though it is clear that Pato had married one of his daughters. If this matter had been common knowledge, as it must have been amongst the Ngqika chiefs who had met with Hare in Fort Beaufort, it is fair to assume that it would have been brought to his attention. It was, after all, a very strong argument in favour of Nqeno's claim. It is clear, however, that no mention was made of it at this stage. Neither Bowker nor his interpreter were present at that meeting so they could not be accused of misleading or withholding information.

In his letter to Napier, Hare observed that there could be no peace on the frontier while Bowker and Stretch were required to work together. He expressed the view that Bowker should be dismissed as he was under the control of the missionaries and was "lacking in prudence and judgement". He believed that Stretch had co-operated as far as he could and had played no part in withholding information from him. Later in January Hare received the news that Bowker had sent a dispatch at the beginning of the month directly to Cape Town. He received the piece of information from Bowker himself who had come into Grahamstown expressly to offer his apologies. Hare was furious and made it quite clear that he did not accept the apology. He believed that this action on the part of Bowker showed that the Agent lacked confidence that dispatches would be forwarded to Cape Town. He angrily demanded that either Bowker must be dismissed or that he himself would have to resign but it was quite impossible for the two of them to work together. In due course Bowker was suspended and his suspension was confirmed by the Colonial Secretary in London. In spite of attempts from various parties he was never reinstated in this post, although he was offered a junior clerkship which he indignantly refused.

It is interesting to note that Colonel Somerset wrote to Bowker on 26th February to say that he was not in on "the politicking of the day" but that Bowker had always offered him every assistance in matters concerning the chiefs. He also noted that "our friend Pato is but a scamp after all — I hear some of the cattle he intended to send Enno (sic) were a wretched set."¹⁸ Indeed Hare reported to Napier on 1st March that

18. Letter to John Mitford Bowker, 26th February, 1839.

Nqeno had indignantly refused to accept them. Pato replaced them with animals in better condition. On 21st March Bowker received a letter from Rev. W. Shaw at Wesleyville Mission expressing his warmest thanks for the constant attention he had shown to the problems of the tribe. On 4th April 1839 the *Graham's Town Journal* reported that Mr. Theophilus Shepstone had been appointed as Resident Agent in Mr. Bowker's place. In later life Theophilus Shepstone was to become prominent in the history of Natal and for his part in the annexation of the Transvaal. At this time he was already recognised as an outstanding scholar in African languages. John Mitford Bowker returned to farming until the outbreak of the Seventh Frontier War, the War of the Axe in 1846. He lost all his property during the War and died of a chest infection while living with his wife and family in the out-house of his brother's farm.

The question remains as to whether Hare was justified in dismissing Bowker. The reason for his dismissal hangs on the fact that he had deliberately misled the Lieutenant-Governor in what had taken place at the time of the signing of the Treaties in 1836. Curiously no proper minutes were taken of the proceeding of the meeting, though Bowker claims to have kept private notes of what had taken place. Two of John Mitford's brothers, Bertram Egerton Bowker and Robert Mitford Bowker, had also been present at the meeting. Hougham Hudson, later the Agent General, the two Fynn brothers and Rev. Brownlee had also acknowledged to be present. As already mentioned Hudson stated to Hare that he could remember no reference to the dispute between Nqeno and Pato. Mr H. Fynn, the Resident Agent at Queenstown, wrote to Bowker about the meeting in February 1839. He stated that he could not specifically remember any mention of the dispute but that this was because he was "in and out like a dog in a fair nor was I there at the end of it".¹⁹ He made it clear however that he clearly understood at the time and "never understood otherwise untill (sic) now that circumstances relating to the War were that day at an end and the impression upon my mind was then and is now that at that meeting all was finally settled..."²⁰ He was quite sure that nothing was left open for further discussion, particularly as it was common knowledge that a dispute left open for further settlement was no settlement at all. He then commented that if Pato was forced to give up the cattle it would be a precedence for others to open disputes. He believed that Nqeno secretly intended to re-open the matter when the time was right. If Fynn was correct in this last suggestion then Nqeno had indeed chosen the best possible time. The Cape Government was receiving a new Governor and the Eastern Cape had just received a new Lieutenant-Governor.

Perhaps the clearest existing evidence of what took place at the meeting of the chiefs is contained in a letter dated 6th December 1836 written by Robert Mitford Bowker to his brother the day after the discussions had taken place.²¹ The letter outlines the provisions of the Treaty that had been signed that day by Stockenström and the chiefs. It also deals with the meeting to settle the dispute between Nqeno and Pato over the cattle. The Lieutenant-Governor informed the chiefs that they must set-

19. Letter to John Mitford Bowker, 4th February 1839.

20. *Ibid.*

21. It is not clear to which brother this letter was addressed but clearly from the full description of what had taken place it was one of the brothers who had not been present.

tle all their grievances “now that they were together as he wished them to forget and forgive...” as it was no use making peace with them if they were at war amongst themselves. Fynn “mustered them all and they sat down on the grass about two hundred of them all together and they kept talking and jawing away. The Amakakabu chiefs (sic) told the others, the Gonoquabus (sic) that they were not chiefs but a set of low dogs etc.”²² It appears that nothing was achieved on the first day, but on the second Nqeno stated that he intended to ask Pato to give up his cattle but he had decided against this as the Governor had stated that all that was done in the last war was to be forgotten. Thus, though he could not forget it, he would never ask for them again. Robert Mitford Bowker commented that the other chiefs thought that Pato had the better of the case. Significantly, it was also stated in the letter that Maqoma agreed never to raise the matter again as they had completely forgiven Pato. It is fair to assume that this letter, written at the time, between two brothers present a clear picture of what took place at the meeting. It was a report that Hare was later to disregard.

It is clear that from this time (1839) Pato, who had fought with the Colonial forces in the War of 1834–35, became increasingly hostile to the Colony. It may be suggested that this incident over cattle was to set Pato on a path that led him to fight against the Colony in the destructive and inconclusive War of the Axe in 1846.