

## PUBLIC OPINION IN NATAL AND THE NON-WHITES 1910-15\*

\*Condensed from an address delivered in Durban to the South African National Society, May 14th, 1973.

With Unification in 1910 there was no general franchise for the non-Whites in Natal, simply because the Europeans were against it. Indeed, English-speaking Natalians practised a specific superiority towards all non-Whites. This is clearly evident from leading articles in Natal's English newspapers, their correspondence columns, reports of meetings, statements by politicians and others.

In studying the two leading newspapers of the time, *The Natal Witness* and *The Natal Mercury*, one finds the following to be the rule rather than the exception — terms like “white superiors”,<sup>1</sup> “superior races”,<sup>2</sup> “European overlords, confirmed in their superior authority”,<sup>3</sup> “superiority of the poorest, humblest and meanest of white men”,<sup>4</sup> “superior intelligence of the white man”,<sup>5</sup> “superior competitor”,<sup>6</sup> “the dominant and ruling caste”,<sup>7</sup> “the dominant race”,<sup>8</sup> “purity of the race”,<sup>9</sup> “white . . . masters”,<sup>10</sup> “supremacy of the European”,<sup>11</sup> and “the sacred principle . . . of white supremacy”.<sup>12</sup>

Side by side with these White-centred glorifying terms appear those descriptive of the non-White and his position on the social ladder, for instance: “the inferior races”,<sup>13</sup> “the Indian alien, who is only a parasite in the land”,<sup>14</sup> “the absolute subordination of the native”,<sup>15</sup> “the Negro is the common labourer, at the base of the compound commonwealth. Let us put him there . . .”,<sup>16</sup> the Bantu is a descendant of Cain. “Therefore the question is, are we going to place Cain and Seth on the same level? My answer is no, emphatically no!”<sup>17</sup> the European and the Bantu is physically as different as a horse and a donkey “and of much the same kind”.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the Zululand Correspondent of the *Mercury* once reported that he had read a letter received by a Bantu from the Department of Mines. It was addressed to “esquire” so and so and ended with the words: “I have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servant.” The correspondent indignantly commented. “It leaves a bad taste in one's mouth. Fancy being the obedient servant of a native!”<sup>19</sup>

1. *The Natal Witness*, 21 Nov., 1910: letter, J. H. Garbers.
2. *The Natal Witness*, 30 Nov., 1910: letter, A. Mother, Ladysmith.
3. *The Natal Witness*, 29 Dec., 1910: editorial.
4. *The Natal Witness*, 30 Oct., 1912: front page report about inaugural meeting on Native Affairs Society in Pietermaritzburg City Hall.
5. *The Natal Mercury*, 8 March, 1910: editorial.
6. *The Natal Mercury*, 6 Sept., 1911: editorial.
7. *The Natal Mercury*, 19 May, 1900: editorial.
8. *The Natal Mercury*, 20 March, 1912, p. 8: statement by F. Tilbury about formation of White League.
9. *The Natal Mercury*, 2 Dec., 1910: editorial.
10. *The Natal Mercury*, 30 Jan., 1910: editorial.
11. *The Natal Witness*, 27 May, 1910: editorial.
12. *The Natal Witness*, 29 Oct., 1912: editorial.
13. *The Natal Mercury*, 6 Sept., 1911: editorial.
14. *The Natal Witness*, 27 May, 1911: editorial.
15. *The Natal Witness*, 30 Oct., 1912: front page report about inaugural meeting on Native Affairs Society in Pietermaritzburg City Hall.
16. *The Natal Witness*, 10 July, 1912, p. 6: article by Allan Reeth.
17. *The Natal Witness*, 15 April, 1913, p. 6: letter, Wm. Oates, Swinburne, O.F.S.
18. *The Natal Witness*, 10 July, 1912, p. 6: article by Allan Reeth.
19. *The Natal Mercury*, 14 Sept., 1911: report by Zululand Correspondent.

In the light of the foregoing it is not surprising to find that the colour bar was applied in Natal's public life. The *Witness* once differentiated between two main groups among Natal's Whites in their attitudes towards the non-Whites. The one group, according to the paper, was much concerned about the interests of the non-Whites; the other regarded the non-Whites more or less as slaves and "for ever a race of helots".<sup>20</sup> From London a certain W. A. M. Goode wrote a letter under the heading "The Colour Bar", stating that South Africans in London were trying their utmost to expound and stress "the doctrine of inequality of colour" and that every South African visiting London should do the same.<sup>21</sup> The *Witness* justified the existence of the colour bar in South Africa by stating that it was "a barrier which nothing can break down, a gulf which nothing can be allowed to bridge. The belief in this great fundamental principle is the only hope for the white race in South Africa."<sup>22</sup>

Colour prejudice had come to the fore under the old Natal regime, among others, in the form of a variety of restrictions placed upon the Indians. After Unification it deepened and the *Witness* on several occasions praised the Free State for her farsightedness in blocking the entry of Asiatics, while at the same time the paper rejected Natal's importation of Indians as "shortsightedness and folly".<sup>23</sup> The paper saw the presence of Indians in the country as an evil and warned against the Indian menace. It justified its anti-Indian view point as follows: "It is not a question of harshness, or injustice; it is a question of self-preservation, and to that imperative need all else must yield."<sup>24</sup> Some time later the *Witness* congratulated the Cape Town Municipality for having refused certain trading licences to Indian applicants and expressed the hope that the Cape City Fathers "will not be turned from this resolution by any specious arguments about freedom of trade and the liberty of the subject".<sup>25</sup>

The paper subsequently repeatedly stressed that the unrestricted entry of Indians would be "an act of lunacy"<sup>26</sup>; that the Indian was only a parasite in the land and that he would never be allowed the franchise;<sup>27</sup> that threats would not deter the Europeans in restricting the influx of Asiatics.<sup>28</sup> During the Indian demonstrations in Natal in 1913 the *Witness*, strongly in favour of repealing the £3 tax on Indians, held an informal referendum on the issue among its readers, the result of which was that the majority of some 20 Natal Members of Parliament, Senators and Members of the Provincial Council asked for their views, voted for the retention of the objectionable £3 tax.<sup>29</sup>

20. *The Natal Witness*, 6 Jan., 1912: editorial.

21. *The Natal Witness*, 27 June, 1913, front page: W. A. M. Goode writing about The Colour Bar.

22. *The Natal Witness*, 29 July, 1910: column, Inter Alia.

23. *The Natal Witness*, 19 Jan., 1910, and 5 Sept., 1910: editorials.

24. *The Natal Witness*, 19 Jan., 1910: editorial.

25. *The Natal Witness*, 5 Sept., 1910: editorial.

26. *The Natal Witness*, 26 June, 1911: editorial.

27. *The Natal Witness*, 27 May, 1911: editorial.

28. *The Natal Witness*, 15 Oct., 1910: editorial.

29. *The Natal Witness*, 27 Nov., 1913: front page report. See also *Witness*, 19 Nov., 1913: editorial.

The general attitude of the Natalians has probably been better portrayed by the *Mercury*, always much more moderate in its views generally. The paper declared that the presence of Asiatics in the country "is not to be allowed to jeopardise the permanence or lower the standard of European civilisation and that the dominant European reserves to himself the right to enact and enforce such laws as shall prevent his being swamped by the rising tide of Asiatic incomers".<sup>30</sup>

As far as the Bantu were concerned Natal's attitude was the same. To point this out reference will be made to only a few of the many authorities.

The last Prime Minister of Natal, Sir Frederick Moor, stated that the White man was to remain in control, for the Bantu lacked the brain power to replace him.<sup>31</sup> The constitution of *The Natal Party* of 1910 made provision for an enlightened Bantu policy for the whole of the Union. On reading further, though, one finds this enlightened policy to have consisted of (1) a ban on the sale of liquor to Bantu, and (2) "a liberal franchise", based on that of the Transvaal and the Free State<sup>32</sup> — where the non-Whites had no franchise at all. On August 9, 1910, Sir Starr Jameson, Leader of the Unionist Party, was loudly applauded in a crowded Durban City Hall when he declared himself against the granting of the franchise to the Bantu and stated that he knew of nobody in the hall in favour of the franchise for the Bantu.<sup>33</sup> D. C. Dick, President of the Royal Agricultural Society of Natal, stated: "Ever since I was old enough to think intelligently we have been telling each other in Natal that something would have to be done about the native question. What we have done is practically nothing."<sup>34</sup> A Norwegian missionary in Zululand, the Rev. P. Blessing Dahle, appealed to Natal's Europeans to shake off their prejudice against the Bantu and pointed out that it was only a short time since the disappearance of the following notice from the doorway of a European church in Natal: "No Admittance for Dogs and Natives" — in that order.<sup>35</sup>

In the light of recent claims for more land for the Zulu nation, the following makes interesting reading: In 1913 the *Witness* strongly denied that the Bantu of Natal had a first claim to the land, stating that when the British first arrived, there were only some 18,000 Bantu — the others having flocked in only after the British had established peace and order. "It is clear from all this," the paper says, "that the natives had no inherent title to the lands now occupied by them, but they, on the contrary, received them as an act of grace from the Europeans, who desired their welfare and prosperity."<sup>36</sup>

The Bantu saw themselves as the underdog and had some rather unflattering things to say about the English. One of them stated: "To-day the native mind has lost all confidence in British justice . . ."<sup>37</sup>; and

30. *The Natal Mercury*, 30 Jan., 1911: editorial.

31. *The Natal Witness*, 15 April, 1910: front page.

32. *The Natal Witness*, 23 June, 1910: front page.

33. *The Natal Witness*, 10 Aug., 1910: front page.

34. *The Natal Witness*, 6 Nov., p. 5.

35. *The Natal Witness*, 10 Aug., 1910, p. 3: article by Rev. P. Blessing Dahle.

36. *The Natal Witness*, 13 Oct., 1913: editorial.

37. *The Natal Witness*, 28 Oct., 1911: letter, *Nisundu*.

another: “. . . the true British ideals of justice and fairplay have been either lost, mislaid, or buried in the sands of the various South African ports the moment the Englishman landed in this country.”<sup>38</sup>

This period was marked by a political awakening of the Bantu, and in January 1912, at a big conference in Bloemfontein, the existing Bantu organisations were loosely joined into a federation, known as the South African Native National Congress<sup>39</sup> (later to become the African National Congress). The first President of the Congress, the Rev. John Langalibalele Dube of Zululand, saw the formation of the Congress as the political renaissance of the Bantu.<sup>40</sup> The Bloemfontein Conference was followed by a meeting of some 700 Bantu in Durban and the formation of the Natal Native Congress as a branch of the parent body. The first of a series of ten resolutions passed at the latter meeting was a total rejection of Natal's old Bantu policy as “a menace to public peace, . . . a cruel infliction on the native people — . . . barren of all good, productive of untold evil, an utter failure”; and an appeal was made to the Union Government to save the Bantu of Natal from the misery in which they had been forced through the Bantu policies of the Natal Governments.<sup>41</sup>

The wording of this resolution was correctly seen by the *Mercury* and the Durban Native Affairs Reform Committee as extravagant,<sup>42</sup> but even should it be stripped of all its bombast, it still shows that a representative meeting of Bantu rejected Natal's Bantu policy, practised for so many years, *in toto*.

After Unification, Natal, of course, no longer had full control over her Bantu policy, and the Natalians were divided about the segregation policy that was now being preached for the whole of the Union. It is interesting to note that Natal, in general, seems to have favoured segregation. Some of the main opponents of the idea were the *Mercury* and the *Witness*, but it is doubtful whether their views coincided with those of the majority of Natalians. For instance, segregation was time and again rejected by the *Witness*,<sup>43</sup> but when that paper asked its readers for their views on the matter the result was 9 against and 17 for segregation.<sup>44</sup> Indications are that had a referendum been held in Natal the segregationists would have won by far.

38. *The Natal Mercury*, 12 April, 1912, p. 4; article by Kwazikwake.

39. *The Natal Mercury*, 24 Jan., 1912: editorial.

40. *The Natal Mercury*, 3 Feb., 1912, p. 10: John L. Dube's manifesto.

41. *The Natal Mercury*, 26 Feb., 1912, p. 8.

42. *The Natal Mercury*, 27 Feb., 1912: editorial; 2 May, 1912, p. 9.

43. *The Natal Witness*, 29 Dec., 1910, 9 Dec., 1911, 2 Feb., 1912, 16 Oct., 1912, 29 Oct., 1912, 31 Oct., 1912: editorials.

44. *The Natal Witness*, 31 Oct., 1912: front page editorial; 31 Oct., 1912: front page letter, *T*, Maritzburg; 1 Nov., 1912: front page interview with W. H. Griffin, M.P., and Rev. Joseph Ward; 1 Nov., 1912: front page letters, *Suburb*, *Clericus* and *T*; 2 Nov., 1912, p. 3: letter, *Felix*; 2 Nov., 1912, p. 3: Letter, William Cox, Pietermaritzburg; 4 Nov., 1912, p. 5: letters, *A.W.C.*, Maritzburg, and *Iqiniso*; 4 Nov., 1912, p. 5: letter, *J.A.V.*, Fox Hill; 5 Nov., 1912: front page letters J. W. Shepstone and F. W. Morgan; 6 Nov., 1912, p. 5: interview with D. C. Dick and letter, *Metaphysics*; 7 Nov. 1912, p. 6: letters, Lewis E. Hertslet, W. T. Woods, *W.T.*, and Albert D. J. Taylor; 8 Nov., 1912: front page letter, *T*; 11 Nov., 1912, p. 2: letter, Chas L. Lund; 15 Nov., 1912, p. 6: letter, *T*.

Although the *Witness* rejected segregation, it had little to offer by way of an alternative, except to suggest that things should be taken as they come and that a scheme for full-scale European immigration be evolved.<sup>45</sup> The *Mercury*, too, appealed for European immigrants and that a system of Bantu representation, similar to that existing in the Transkei, should be adopted for the whole of the Union.<sup>46</sup> Further, both papers were unanimous that, whatever happened, the "sacred principle . . . of white supremacy", as the *Witness* referred to it, should be maintained.<sup>47</sup>

Apart from certain politicians and the majority, if not all, of the non-White leaders, the strongest supporter of these two newspapers against segregation was R. C. A. Samuelson, who was prepared to go much further by asking for the immediate granting of the franchise to the Bantu.<sup>48</sup> Samuelson was a Natalian by birth who had lived for some 50 years in close contact with the Zulu, but he seems to have been a bit of an eccentric whose British-glorifying language was once branded by a reader as "sentimental twaddle . . . suitable for a schoolgirl's magazine".<sup>49</sup>

Natal's real authorities on Bantu affairs were supporters of segregation, or partial separation, as they preferred to call it. Among them were the following: the aged and experienced J. W. Shepstone, former Secretary of Native Affairs in Natal's Colonial days; the Rev. Lewis E. Hertslet, who wrote and talked with authority on the topic; the Rev. A. T. Bryant; Capt. James Stuart, and, at the top of the list, Maurice S. Evans.<sup>50</sup>

Before dealing with Evans it is interesting to note that already in 1911 Parliament was surprised by the Natal member for Durban Point, Maj. P. A. Silburn, giving notice of a motion for the segregation of all Bantu. He later withdrew the motion under pressure from other members.<sup>51</sup>

Coming to Maurice Evans: he was a Durbanite who wrote and talked with great authority on Bantu affairs after having studied conditions in America and South Africa. The way in which the American Negro was intimidated by the Whites not to use his vote, and Evans's own belief that the Blacks were mentally and physically inferior to the Whites, led him to his policy of partial separation which he forcefully expounded for South Africa in several thorough-going lectures, articles and in his book *Black and White in South-East Africa*. It was

45. *The Natal Witness*, 29 Dec., 1910, 2 Feb., 1912, 31 Oct., 1912: editorials.

46. *The Natal Mercury*, 3 May, 1912, 9 May, 1912, 25 Oct., 1912: editorials.

47. *The Natal Witness*, 29 Oct., 1912: editorial.

48. *The Natal Mercury*, 21 May, 1913, p. 4; 20 June, 1913; 30 June, 1913, pp. 5-6: articles and letter.

49. *The Natal Mercury*, 10 Nov., 1913, p. 4: letter, *Student*. See also A. J. van Wyk: *Dinizulu-opstand van 1888*, p. 14 (unpublished M.A. thesis, U.O.F.S., 1971).

50. *The Natal Witness*, 6 June, 1911, 26 Oct., 1911: letter and article by J. W. Shepstone; *The Natal Witness*, 30 Oct., 1912, 16 June, 1913: statement and article by Lewis E. Hertslet; *The Natal Mercury*, 25 Nov., 1912, p. 16: article by A. T. Bryant; *The Natal Witness*, 17 July, 1914: front page article by Capt. James Stuart.

51. *The Natal Witness*, 27 Feb., 1911, p. 5; *The Natal Mercury*, 21 Feb., 1911, p. 9; *The Natal Witness*, 2 Dec., 1911: front page article by P. A. Silburn: *Why I Am An Independent?*; *The Natal Mercury*, 11 March, 1912, p. 8.

under his influence that the Durban Native Affairs Reform Committee (later changed to Reform Association) also accepted and championed the idea of partial separation. This body was the only Natal one with real influence on Bantu affairs.<sup>52</sup>

Not only did Natal, generally speaking, favour segregation, or partial separation, but the supporters and opponents of the idea were furthermore, with minor exceptions, unanimous that there should be no social equality, no franchise equality, no miscegenation — if white supremacy were to be maintained. This can be substantiated at great length,<sup>53</sup> but for the sake of brevity the above must suffice.

Steering away from the general policy, one finds, on closer examination, that not a single town in Natal had made provision for a location for its Bantu employees. This was the case despite the fact that a Natal law of 1904, which had remained on the Statute Book after 1910, had specifically made provision for the creation of municipal locations.<sup>54</sup> The mass of the domestic and general servants, the riksha runners and togt labourers were mainly accomodated on or close to the premises of their employers, while the thousands of visitors and loafers occupied some of the most filthy dens imaginable. About one-third of Durban's 18,000 Bantu consisted of visitors and loafers.<sup>55</sup>

Councillor Charlie Henwood, who was also Member of Parliament and who proposed a location for Durban in 1911, envisaged "a nice little village" for Durban's Bantu in Cato Manor,<sup>56</sup> but his plan was rejected to be put into practice at a later date. How nice the little village in Cato Manor proved to be initially, is not known. It is well-known, though, that Cato Manor became a seething and dangerous slum in much less than half a century.

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52. *The Natal Mercury*, 5 March, 1913, p. 13: Maurice Evans addressing Native Affairs Reform Committee; *The Natal Witness*, 28 Nov., 1912, p. 2: Maurice Evans addressing Native Affairs Reform Committee; *The Natal Mercury*, 12 May, 1913, p. 13: resolutions compile by Maurice Evans and submitted to Native Affairs Reform Association; *The Natal Mercury*, 28 May, 1913, p. 8: Maurice Evan's resolutions discussed by Native Affairs Reform Association; *The Natal Mercury*, 13 May, 1913: editorial.
53. *The Natal Witness*, 27 May, 1911, 15 June, 1911, 9 Aug., 1911, 18 Aug., 1911, 21 June, 1913: editorials; *The Natal Mercury*, 30 Jan., 1910: editorial. See further *The Natal Witness*, 30 Nov., 1910: letter, *A Mother*; *The Natal Witness*, 30 Oct., 1912: front page report of meeting in Pietermaritzburg City Hall; *The Natal Witness*, 29 Dec., 1910, 26 Sept., 1911, 5 Feb., 1912, 29 Oct., 1912, 20 May, 1913, 12 June, 1913: editorials; *The Natal Mercury*, 16 June, 1910, p. 3: P. A. Silburn's Election Manifesto; *The Natal Mercury*, 20 March, 1912, p. 8: statement by F. Tilbury about formation of White League; *The Natal Mercury*, 8 March, 1910, 19 May, 1910, 2 Dec., 1910, 9 June, 1911, 6 Sept., 1911, 24 Jan., 1912, 3 May, 1912, 6 Jan., 1913: editorials.
54. *The Natal Mercury*, 20 Dec., 1911: editorial.
55. *The Natal Mercury*, 20 Oct., 1911, p. 7: report of Charlie Henwood's address to Durban City Council.
56. *The Natal Mercury*, 20 Oct., 1911, p. 7: report of Charlie Henwood's address to Durban City Council; *The Natal Mercury*, 18 Dec., 1911, p. 10: report of Charlie Henwood's address to Native Affairs Reform Committee. See further *The Natal Witness*, 23 Oct. 1911, p. 3: report of Charlie Henwood's address to Durban City Council; *The Natal Witness*, 21 Dec., 1911, p. 6: letter, W. B. Cunningham; *The Natal Mercury*, 10 Nov., 1911, p. 5: letters, *West Riding and Prevention*; *The Natal Mercury*, 16 Dec., 1911, p. 10: report of Rev. Gregson's address to Native Affairs Reform Committee;

*The Natal Mercury*, 26 Jan., 1912, p. 11: report of Durban City Council's rejection of Henwood's location plan; *The Natal Mercury*, 26 March, 1912, p. 10: decisions taken by Durban City Council; *The Natal Mercury*, 29 Oct., 1914, p. 3: article by Arthur Wade.

For Pietermaritzburg the *Witness* held up the Bloemfontein location Waaihoek as an example *par excellence*, but the city Fathers decided against a location scheme. Consequently the City Bantu had to make do with the accommodation supplied by their employers and described by Miss Harriette Colenso as: "Too often horrible tin sheds, unsanitary, never so much as whitewashed, and really not a bit fit for human habitation."<sup>57</sup>

Analysing the more personal, daily, contact between White and non-White, one finds petty apartheid in the raw: at school, at church, in sport, in the street, on tram cars and at public places. Admittedly, there was no definite policy of racial separation, but for that very reason there was contact over the whole front resulting in a distinct pattern of friction calling for a remedy.

Owing to lack of space attention will be focussed on a few of these spheres of contact only.

In view of the great interest presently displayed in mixed sport it is interesting to learn how Natalians reacted to the idea some 60 years ago. Their attitude came sharply to the fore after the White boxing champion of the world, James J. Jeffries, was mauled to pulp by the Negro, Jack Johnson, at Reno in the United States on July 4, 1910. In the United States the event had led to racial disturbances of a serious nature and a campaign to have a ban put on all such contests snow-balled from there to England and Natal. In England, where the promoters wanted to stage a fight between the Negro and the White man Wells, the campaign was led by some of the most influential religious and social leaders, closely assisted by well-known papers like *The London Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily News* and *Daily Chronicle*, while the British Home Secretary, Mr. Winston Churchill, after a thorough investigation warned that should the proposed fight not be called off voluntarily, he would introduce measures to have it banned legally.<sup>58</sup>

In Natal the *Witness* took the lead, not only for a total ban on all White-Black contests, but also for a ban on the exhibition of any photographs of such contests. This had to be done, the paper warned, "if (we) desire the respect of the blacks in this country for their white masters to be maintained". When asked by the London *Daily Chronicle* for Natal's views regarding the proposed contest between the Negro and Wells, the *Witness* replied: ". . . that the general body of public opinion in Natal would emphatically endorse the protest which has arisen in England and elsewhere against the black and white duel . . . This is a match which is repugnant to the better feelings of humanity . . .

57. *The Natal Witness*, 2 Nov., 1912: front page interview with Miss H. Colenso; *The Natal Witness*, 4 June, 1912: editorial. See further *The Natal Witness*, 7 Oct., 1910: letter, *A Thirty Year's Resident*.

58. *The Natal Witness*, 6 July, 1910, 22 Sept. 1911: editorials; *The Natal Witness*, 22 Sept., 1911, p. 2: report about proposed Johnson-Wells boxing contest; *The Natal Witness*, 27 Sept., 1911: front page report.

The suggested encounter stands to be condemned, and legislative action should be taken to render such repulsive exhibitions impossible.”<sup>59</sup>

The *Witness* was supported by the *Mercury* and several readers of both papers, one of whom stated that he was shocked on a recent visit to England to see pictures of the Negro and a White boxer on display. He writes: “I felt it was a lowering of the whole white race . . . The sickening horror of such an unexpected sight was with me for days. England allowing such scenes! England whose privilege it is to raise the races!”<sup>60</sup>

Coming to public meetings: several readers expressed their disgust at the fact that non-Whites were allowed to attend the official opening of the Durban City Hall in 1910. It was an insult to, they stated, and a lowering of the Whites in the eyes of their visitors from other towns, and it was a disgrace to see Whites hemmed in on all sides by “coolies and kafirs”.<sup>61</sup> An Indian complained about the fact that non-Whites were excluded from the Union Day Festivities in Natal and stated that many non-Whites were insulted on that day by being prevented from entering sports fields and other places of entertainment.<sup>62</sup>

A hectic campaign was waged about the desirability or otherwise of White-Black contact in the street and on tram cars, with the *Mercury* in the lead. Several readers of the two papers were bitterly disgusted at the presence of non-Whites on the pavements. One emphatically stated: “I would much prefer to meet a stray horse or a cow on the pavement than a gang of impudent kafir boys . . .”; another was of the opinion that the problem could easily be solved by the White masters simply directing their servants not to walk on the pavements but “along the kerbstone, or in the gutter”.<sup>63</sup>

In the heat of the controversy, a few readers, mostly non-Whites, reminded the others that there was something like “British justice” and that every subject of His Majesty had a right to walk on a pavement.<sup>64</sup> However, the agitation continued and on May 17, 1910, the Ratepayers Association of Ward 7, Durban, accepted a motion calling for a joint meeting of all Ratepayers Associations to consider whether Indians and Bantu should be allowed to walk on pavements and ride on tram cars.<sup>65</sup>

Initially the *Mercury* had tried to play down the agitation,<sup>66</sup> but on November 4, 1913, it started with its own campaign for a separate tram service for non-Whites, sticking to its guns so diligently that it

59. *The Natal Witness*, 22 Sept., 1911, p. 2: answer to *Daily Chronicle*. See further *The Natal Witness*, 6 July, 1910, 7 July, 1910, 22 Sept., 1911, 27 Sept., 1911: editorials.

60. *The Natal Mercury*, 1 July, 1910: editorial, and 15 July, 1910, p. 5: letter, *For Right, Not Might*.

61. *The Natal Mercury*, 14 April, 1910, p. 6: letters, *Innes Road and Disgusted*; *The Natal Mercury*, 19 April 1910, p. 8: Letters, *Disgraceful Affair, One of a Crowd, 20 Year's Subscriber, Doubly Disgusted*.

62. *The Natal Mercury*, 8 June, 1910, p. 11: letter, *Koilpillai*.

63. *The Natal Witness*, 8 May, 1911, p. 7: letter, *Natalian*; *The Natal Mercury*, 2 April 1910, p. 11: letter, Arthur Wade.

64. *The Natal Mercury*, 25 March, 1910, p. 6, 4 April, 1910, p. 5: letters, *F.L.W. and Ntambhama*.

65. *The Natal Mercury*, 19 May, 1910: editorial.

66. *The Natal Mercury*, 19 May, 1910, 25 May, 1910: editorials.

was even congratulated by one of its readers.<sup>67</sup> *The Mercury* was careful to say that its appeal was not based on colour but on the uncleanliness and evil-smelling of some of the non-White passengers;<sup>68</sup> yet in the thick of the controversy the paper stated that the evil had been attacked from all sides and that colour prejudice may also come into play, "but, even so, we do not think that European pride of race is a thing that we can afford to under-value in such a community as ours".<sup>69</sup>

How long the *Mercury* kept up with the campaign and what the result was, could not be ascertained. By the end of 1915 the problem was still unsolved.<sup>70</sup>

In conclusion reference is made to two letters, not because the insulting wording thereof is in any way representative of the controversy of 60 years ago, but to point out that there was little hesitation on the part of the Editor in publishing insulting inter-racial references. *Sheep Dip* writes to the *Mercury* expressing the hope that should the Durban Municipality find it impossible to separate Whites from non-Whites on tram cars, it could at least introduce a separate tram service for vermin; *Long-Suffering Woman* writes to the same paper stating that the least the authorities can do is to supply every passenger on entering the tram car with a packet of Keatings' insect powder and a phile of Jayes' disinfectant "that we may not carry home with us souvenirs of our journey".<sup>71</sup>

This is how English-speaking Natal reacted to the presence of non-Whites some 60 years ago. Of sympathy towards the non-Whites little evidence is to be found; of love thy Black neighbour less. The non-White was in a subordinate position and the aim was to keep him there. Therefore, the research worker seeing this picture unfolding from the material he is dealing with, is somewhat rudely struck when he comes face to face with references in leading articles in the same newspapers to the Afrikaner as "a race notoriously unsympathetic towards the natives and coloured people"; or, as a race that regards the Bantu "as predestined by Providence to be their hewers of wood and drawers of water".<sup>72</sup>

A. J. van Wyk.