

THE CONCILIATION MOVEMENT IN THE CAPE COLONY  
DURING THE ANGLO-BOER WAR, 1899-1902.

A THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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BY

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PREFACE

The conciliation movement at the Cape was largely the offshoot of a parent body in England. This factor tempts the researcher to compare the one with the other, a practice which produces the most frustrating results. Unlike their English counterparts, the conciliators at the Cape did not form a clearly defined, centrally directed, organisation. They were, on the contrary, members of a loosely knit alliance of like minded persons. Although the movement resulted from the stimulus of a number of leading figures, it had a large and varied supporting cast and there were even individuals who were not formally associated with it who played a leading role in its activities. The term conciliation movement therefore covers a very wide range and there is a voluminous amount of material available in connection with it. There are, however, also the most tantalising lacunae in the available information.

In dealing with the conciliation movement I have attempted to concentrate on the activities of its English-speaking associates, as it was they who gave it its essence, but as it drew the bulk of its support from the Dutch section of the colonists their activities cannot be ignored.

With regard to terminology, I have used the word Dutch to refer to the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the Cape Colony, applying the term Afrikaner in a wider context to include the inhabitants of the Republics as well. When referring to the conciliation party in the period immediately preceding the war I have used the term 'peace party', for this was the manner in which they referred to themselves; the conciliation movement only developing early in 1900. The word 'race' has also been used in the manner current at the time.

Dr T.R.H. Davenport, in his study of the Afrikaner Bond and Dr. C.J.S. Strydom in his history of the Cape Colony during the Anglo-Boer war are the two historians who touch most directly on the conciliation movement. Dr Davenport deals with many of the salient points where they link up with the activities of the Bond and as numerous Bondsmen

played leading rôles in the movement, his book provided valuable background material. Strydom presents a most useful account of the impact of the war upon the Colony and of the administration of martial law. This system, has therefore been dealt with only in so far as it directly affected the conciliation movement. The issue of an enquiry into martial law and compensation after the war have not been touched upon as Strydom covers this ground in his book.

In writing this thesis I have made extensive use of material from newspapers, particularly the South African News, the official organ of the conciliation party. Both the conciliators and their opponents relied on the press to convey their opinions during the strident battle of words which accompanied the war and I have frequently quoted from newspapers to try to impart the temper of the time.

Research for this thesis was begun several years ago as a full time student, but was somewhat unintentionally interrupted when I joined the ranks of the gainfully employed. I should therefore like to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Mr A.M. Davey, for the patience with which he has borne with me and for the manner in which he has enabled me to benefit from his extensive knowledge of the subject based on his own research. To the staff of the South African Library I am greatly indebted for the generous use of their facilities both as a researcher and as a semi-official colleague. My thanks also to the staff of the manuscript department of the Jagger Library for their assistance during my final period of research.

## CHAPTER I

### ON THE EVE OF THE CRISIS

On 31 May 1899 the British High Commissioner, Sir Alfred Milner, and President Kruger of the South African Republic met at Bloemfontein to discuss the points of difference which had arisen between their governments. To many contemporaries this meeting marked a vital stage in the protracted controversy between Great Britain and the South African Republic and the issues involved were of momentous importance to the future of South Africa. Britain embarked upon this final stage of the confrontation determined to assert its supremacy in South Africa beyond any further cavil and the South African Republic was equally determined not to relinquish its independence. Relations between the two governments had reached a critical stage and public opinion in the Cape Colony was sharply divided upon the issue. Supporters of the Imperial Government urged it to take a firm stand and the possibility of war was openly discussed, many holding that the threat of force would have a salutary effect upon the Transvaal. Others, however, advocated a conciliatory attitude and warned that a war with the Transvaal would only bring disaster upon South Africa.

These two factions represented radically different attitudes to the problem of how Britain's position as the paramount power in South Africa was best to be maintained and consolidated. In the eyes of British statesmen, who regarded the existence of an economically powerful and politically hostile state in the Transvaal as a threat to British supremacy in South Africa, this had become a most pressing imperial issue. A closer union of all the states and colonies in South Africa was regarded as the ideal solution to the problem, but to this the Transvaal's isolationist policy presented a major obstacle. On two occasions in the past attempts to force the Transvaal into a union had led to armed conflict. The first had occurred in 1881 when the Transvaal succeeded in regaining a qualified independence after it had been annexed in 1877 as part of Lord Carnarvon's federation scheme. After gold had been discovered in the Transvaal in 1886, making it the wealthiest state in South Africa and attracting a large immigrant population, mainly of British origin, the question assumed a new urgency. The second armed clash took place on a less heroic scale at the end of 1895 when C.J. Rhodes, managing director of the British South Africa Company and Prime Minister of the

Cape Colony, tried to solve the problem by organising the abortive Jameson Raid with the support of Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies. Chamberlain was an ardent imperialist who regarded the British as the greatest of governing races and the British Empire as a guarantee for peace and civilisation in the world.<sup>1</sup> Having imbibed the doctrines of Professor Seely, he became a fanatical supporter of Imperial Federation for which the federation of South Africa was one of the prerequisites.<sup>2</sup> His particular interest in South African affairs dated from the 1880s and his assumption of office as Colonial Secretary in June 1895 heralded the advent of a more vigorous policy in South Africa. Chamberlain's determination to consolidate Britain's position in that part of the Empire prompted his support for Rhodes's ill-conceived conspiracy against the Transvaal.

The effects of the Jameson Raid reverberated throughout South Africa. Together with the Committee of Enquiry, which did not altogether succeed in allaying suspicions regarding the Colonial Office's rôle in the affair, it convinced Afrikaners in the Transvaal and elsewhere that Britain wished to deprive the Republic of its independence. Between 1877 and 1881 imperial pressure upon the Transvaal had caused it to become the focus of a nascent Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>3</sup> In the ensuing years Kruger's obstructive economic policy lost him the sympathy of many Afrikaners, particularly in the Cape Colony. The Jameson Raid, however, aroused renewed sympathy for the Transvaal and stimulated Afrikaner nationalism by giving it yet another grievance to rally around. It also struck a serious blow at the co-operation which had been developing between the English- and Dutch-speaking inhabitants of South Africa and replaced it with suspicion and hostility which became more and more exacerbated as the controversy between Britain and the Republic progressed.

In the Transvaal the Raid cut the ground from under the feet of the more progressive party which had been emerging under the leadership of Commandant-General P.J. Joubert, favouring administrative

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1. J.L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, v. iii, pp. 27, 186.

2. J.S. Marais, The Fall of Kruger's Republic, p. 68.

3. F.A. van Jaarsveld, The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism, pp. 198-202, 219-220.

reforms which would conciliate the uitlanders, and rallied support round Kruger's conservative regime. The Republic, which had been virtually defenceless on the eve of the Raid, began arming extensively in order to ward off any possible future attack.

In the Cape Colony the Raid shattered the alliance between Rhodes and the Afrikaner Bond and out of the ensuing confusion emerged a division of parties along racial lines. Dutch support rallied around the Bond and moderates like J.X. Merriman, J.W. Sauer and W.P. Schreiner moved towards closer co-operation with it. On the other hand the formation of the South African League and its subsequent activities brought about a crystallisation of a distinctive and strongly imperialist Progressive Party.<sup>4</sup> Men like James Rose Innes and Richard Solomon found it increasingly difficult to maintain an independent stand. The Transvaal issue became the dominant theme in Cape politics and support for or disapproval of Rhodes became the criterion according to which political affiliations were judged. Although the Raid spelt the end of Rhodes as the dominant force in Cape politics, contemporaries did not see him in that light. He still commanded considerable support and his opponents were dogged by the fear that he might return to power.<sup>5</sup> After much wooing by the Progressives he eventually emerged as a supporter of that party in March 1898. Sir Gordon Sprigg's stop-gap ministry fell in June of that year and after the most bitterly contested election in the history of the Cape Colony the Bond under the parliamentary leadership of W.P. Schreiner, emerged with a small majority. His ministry, composed of the moderates, Merriman, Sauer and Solomon and two Bondsmen, A.J. Herholdt and T.N.G. Te Water, assumed office in October 1898. Bound together mainly by their fear of Rhodes, the ministry's main objective was to maintain peace in South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

The appointment of Sir Alfred Milner as Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner for South Africa marked a decisive stage in the

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4. Y. Sank, The Origin and Development of the Cape Progressive Party, 1884-1898, chs. V - IX.
  5. E. van Heyningen, The Relations between Sir Alfred Milner and W.P. Schreiner's Ministry, 1898-1900, p. 4.
  6. Ibid., p. 17; P. Lewsen, Selections from the correspondence of J.X. Merriman, v. iii, p. 24.

British Government's attempts to solve its problems in South Africa. Milner was deliberately chosen for the post because of his absolute devotion to the interests of the Empire. After a brilliant academic career at Oxford, he had earned his laurels first as under-secretary in the Egyptian ministry of finance and then as chairman of the British board of revenue. Both Liberal and Conservative politicians had the highest regard for his outstanding abilities and the appointment of a man of his calibre was indicative of the gravity with which the British Government viewed the situation in South Africa. Milner was far too forceful a character to be merely the instrument of his superiors at the Colonial Office. As the man on the spot he exercised a decisive influence on the formulation of Britain's policy and, in Merriman's phrase, wrote his name in lasting characters on the memory of the South African people.<sup>7</sup> Between 1899 and 1902 many came to regard him as the greatest obstacle to the restoration of good relations between Briton and Afrikaner. These considerations justify a brief examination of his personality and of the imperial creed which directed his actions.

Having come under the influence of George Parkin at Oxford, Milner fully shared Chamberlain's views on the mission of the British Empire and remained throughout his life an ardent champion of Imperial Federation as the best method of strengthening the Empire in an age of increasing foreign competition.<sup>8</sup> The significance of his views, however, lay not in their originality but in the singlemindedness and rigidity with which he adhered to them. He arrived in South Africa a self-confessed "civilian soldier of the Empire",<sup>9</sup> determined not only to maintain Britain's supremacy there but also to consolidate her position with a view to a united British South Africa eventually taking its place in an Imperial Federation. Milner admitted that he could not understand the point of view of those who did not share his enthusiasm for the Imperial cause. He viewed Afrikaner nationalism with extreme hostility and regarded the Transvaal as the focus of disaffection in the British possessions in South Africa. In the Cape Colony Milner was

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7. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 76.

8. A.M. Gollin, Proconsul in politics, pp. 16-18.

9. Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 174.

quick to equate loyalty with unreserved support for his views and he therefore regarded the bulk of the Dutch population as being merely nominally loyal.<sup>10</sup> This attitude rankled with many and aroused the hostility of not only the Dutch, but of some of the English-speaking colonists as well.<sup>11</sup> Milner tended to minimise the influence of the Dutch as a political force and maintained that a Bond ministry had come to power by accident.<sup>12</sup> He did not take their leaders into his confidence and discounted their advice. Although he had admitted, on his arrival at the Cape, that the restoration of good relations between English and Dutch should be a major consideration guiding his work, he never tackled the task with any degree of conviction.<sup>13</sup> Milner did not intend solving the problem of dual loyalties which divided South Africa through conciliation or accommodation. On the contrary, he meant to arrest the growth of Afrikaner nationalism by eliminating the Transvaal as an independent state and hoped to neutralise Afrikaner influence through a large influx of British settlers.<sup>14</sup> In 1899 L.S. Amery, a close associate of Milner's, wrote: "... what we are committed to is the stamping out of a national movement which we have allowed to grow up in the last twenty years",<sup>15</sup> and after the war Milner maintained: "If two years hence there are three men of British race and two of Dutch in the country we will be safe .... If there are three of Dutch and two British we shall have perpetual difficulty."<sup>16</sup> Those who recognised the Dutch as a permanent feature of the South African political scene and believed that their sentiments would have to be accommodated if any lasting settlement were to be arrived at, regarded Milner's attitude as fraught with the gravest consequences for the future of British influence in South Africa. On first being apprised of his policy Merriman had warned Milner against the danger of turning South Africa into a second Ireland<sup>17</sup> and this cry was

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10. C. Headlam, The Milner Papers, v. i, p. 477; G.H.L. Le May, British Supremacy in South Africa, p. 51.
  11. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 77.
  12. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 39.
  13. Headlam, The Milner Papers, v. i, p. 177.
  14. Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 319; Headlam, Milner Papers, v. i, p. 425; Le May, British Supremacy, pp. 35-36.
  15. Le May, British Supremacy, p. 35.
  16. Gollin, Proconsul in Politics, p. 62.
  17. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 98.

reiterated by the conciliation party throughout the war.

Milner's authoritarianism was another feature of his political outlook which aroused resentment amongst a section of the Cape colonists. Gollin says of him: "As an imperialist he desired to preserve the British system over vast areas of the world. But a basic thing about him was that he disliked the British system, and British parties and British democracy." <sup>18</sup> By temperament an administrator rather than a politician, Milner's dislike of the democratic process might have originated in his failure to win a seat in parliament early in his career, but more probably sprang from resentment at having to accept the interference of men whose motives he often distrusted and whom he regarded as less capable and less well informed than himself. His lack of sympathy with constitutional forms enabled him to disregard the advice of his Cape ministers, advocate the suspension of the Cape constitution and insist on crown colony government for the conquered republics after the war, without any qualms. In a self-governing colony like the Cape, which was not only jealous of its constitutional rights, but where many regarded these rights as the most noble principles embodied in the British Empire, Milner's attitude caused considerable alarm.

Merriman was quick to sense Milner's sentiments and after his first long talk with him reported: "He gives one the idea of an atavism of Sir Bartle Frere, a very clever intellectual man with a charming manner, but an official of officials who profoundly distrusts and despises Parliament. I gathered also that he was a strong Rhodes and anti-Transvaal man." <sup>19</sup> Rose Innes too, judged Milner to be a man of great fixity of purpose, more inclined to give advice than to take it. <sup>20</sup> Milner's rigidity and his tendency to confine his society to those who shared his own views, created an unfavourable impression. After a conversation with Mrs. Marie Koopmans de Wet, the distinguished Cape Town hostess, Merriman's wife reported that it was thought that Milner "sees no one but his ministers, shuts himself up, and reads only the subsidised press!! He hates the place and won't put himself out in the least." <sup>21</sup>

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18. Gollin, Proconsul in Politics, p. 603.

19. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. ii, p. 274.

20. J. Rose Innes, Autobiography, p. 165.

21. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. ii, p. 321.

On his arrival in South Africa Milner had been hopeful that the development of a progressive opposition to Kruger would eventually lead to reforms, but he abandoned all hope of an agreement with the Republic after Kruger's re-election with an overwhelming majority in February 1898. He regarded the Transvaal as growing stronger and more hostile by the day and having decided that time was no longer on Britain's side, he determined to bring about a confrontation that would lead either to the Transvaal's complete capitulation or to war.<sup>22</sup>

A vigorous policy in South Africa was, however, dependent upon two factors; Britain had to be free of any other international entanglements and there had to be strong popular support for such a policy in Britain and South Africa. Despite Milner's dislike of bowing to "rotten public opinion", he skilfully undertook its 'education' along the desired lines, both in Britain and South Africa. His two main auxiliaries in this task were the South African League and the press.

The South African League had been founded in 1896 for the express purpose of maintaining British supremacy in South Africa. Its affiliated body in Britain was the Imperial South African Association which had been established at the same time.<sup>23</sup> In the Transvaal the League undertook the task of organising the uitlanders into a homogeneous body and it became the main mouthpiece through which their grievances were expressed. It availed itself of every possible opportunity to criticise the actions of the Transvaal Government and, as it regarded the Republic as obdurate, it appealed to Britain to intervene on behalf of the uitlanders. Chamberlain had been quick to grasp the importance of the League which provided a justification for British intervention and the British agent Conyngham-Greene soon began to keep an eye on its executive in order to regulate their activities to suit the needs of British diplomacy. From 1897 onwards the supreme direction of the League in the Transvaal was unofficially in the hands of Greene and it became an instrument of Imperial policy.<sup>24</sup> After his return from England at the beginning of 1899 Milner took over the direction of the League from Greene, working mainly through him and F.J. Fitzpatrick.<sup>25</sup>

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22. Headlam, Milner Papers, v. i, pp. 221-222; Le May, British Supremacy, p. 13.

23. Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 170.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 164; Le May, British Supremacy, p. 16.

25. Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 263.

The Cape province of the League, of which Rhodes became president and Edmund Garrett, editor of the Cape Times, vice-president, supported the actions of its Transvaal counterpart. It also organised parliamentary opposition to the Afrikaner Bond and eventually became an extra-parliamentary organisation of the Progressive Party. In order to discredit the Bond it warned the Imperial Government that the disloyalty of the Dutch was on the increase and that there were "republican emissaries and republican Mausers" in the Colony. As early as 1897 it advocated the abandonment of the "servile policy of conciliation".<sup>26</sup> The activities of the South African League at the Cape created a powerful body of local opinion in favour of a vigorous policy towards the Transvaal without which Britain would not have risked a war with the Republic. The rôle played by the League was therefore of signal importance. "It may be seen as the first stage of the Boer War - a forward column which prepared the ground for the real fighting."<sup>27</sup>

The activities of the League were widely reported in the imperialist press which fully supported its aims and objectives. Milner's most intimate link with the local press was Edmund Garrett, editor of the Cape Times, the newspaper with the largest circulation in South Africa. They had become acquainted in Egypt in 1892 and a warm friendship had developed between the two men whose views on imperial matters were in close sympathy. Garrett, who came to the Cape in 1895, had used his influence to support Milner's appointment as High Commissioner and he had been one of the first persons with whom Milner had discussed South African affairs before leaving for the Cape. In Cape Town Garrett was a regular caller at Government House. During these visits the two men exchanged information and if Garrett's ideas frequently obtruded into Milner's dispatches, the High Commissioner's views were equally frequently echoed in the columns of the Cape Times.<sup>28</sup> Although Dr. Rutherford Harris, an associate of Rhodes, was the major shareholder in the Cape Times, the newspaper did not form part of the Argus group which was controlled by Rhodes and Garrett enjoyed complete independence

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26. M.F. Bitensky, The South African League, p. 143.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

28. A.N. Porter, "Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897-1899", The Historical Journal, v. XVI, 2, 1973, p. 328; E.T. Cook, Edmund Garrett, pp. 151-156.

as editor.<sup>29</sup> Milner did, however, enter into close collaboration with the Rhodesite press. In 1895 control of the Argus Printing and Publishing Company which owned the Johannesburg Star, the Transvaal counterpart of the Cape Times, had passed into Rhodes's hands. Two years later editorial policy was centralised and it was stipulated that company policy would be:

"as is indicated from time to time in the leading columns of the Star, and all publications of the company unless specially authorised to the contrary by the Managing Director, are to follow the lead therein given in all matters of a political nature which are of more than local importance"<sup>30</sup>

Determined to make the Star the leading newspaper in the campaign to consolidate anti-Boer opinion, the proprietors approached Milner for assistance in finding a really capable editor. During his visit to England at the end of 1898 Milner used his influence to secure the services of W.F. Monypenny, then on the staff of the Times, who was appointed as editor of the Star and Transvaal correspondent of the Times. Monypenny arrived in South Africa shortly after Milner's return and thereafter the High Commissioner remained in close contact with him in order to provide him with guidelines and to co-ordinate their activities.<sup>31</sup> On 18 April another newspaper the Transvaal Leader, financed by Wernher, Beit & Co., edited by J.R. Pakeman late editor of the Star, and blessed by Milner, appeared to swell the wave of criticism against the Transvaal government.<sup>32</sup> Through his influence with Monypenny and the Star Milner was able to direct the opinions of the other Argus company newspapers - the Bulawayo Chronicle, Rhodesia Herald, African Review, Cape Argus and Diamond Fields Advertiser - which in turn, through their editors as local correspondents and through the news agencies, supplied most of the information on South Africa acquired by the British newspapers. Milner was therefore in a commanding position to regulate the flow of information to Britain and he made use of this to influence public opinion in such a way as to make it all the more receptive for the ideas advocated in his own dispatches.<sup>33</sup>

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29. Porter, "Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897-1899", Hist. Jour., 2, 1973, p. 85.

30. Ibid., p. 330.

31. Ibid., pp. 334-5.

32. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 44; Porter, "Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897-1899", Hist. Jour., 2, 1973, p. 335.

33. Porter, "Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897-1899", Hist. Jour., 2, 1973, p. 334.

During his long association with the Pall Mall Gazette Milner had also made an impressive array of friends in the British world of journalism, who were to stand him in good stead. These included G.E. Buckle, editor of the Times; C.F. Moberly Bell, its assistant manager; Flora Shaw, the colonial editor; E.T. Cook, editor of the Daily News; H.S. Wilkinson, foreign leader writer of the Morning Post and E.B. Iwan-Müller of the Daily Telegraph. While visiting England at the end of 1898 Milner saw most of the leading pressmen in order to "stamp on rose coloured illusions about South Africa" and to prepare the ground for a policy of increased pressure on the Transvaal. In the ensuing crisis he relied on his journalist friends to spread the right ideas and to try and influence the Liberal newspapers in his favour.<sup>34</sup> Milner's opponents were only too well aware that the major part of the imperialist press spoke with one voice and this strengthened their belief that public opinion was being "manufactured" and that there was a "capitalist conspiracy" afoot against the independence of the Transvaal,<sup>35</sup> but the extent of Milner's involvement with the press was not known, even to as astute a journalist as J.A. Hobson of the Manchester Guardian, who made a special study of the inner workings of the imperialist press.<sup>36</sup> The Irish member of parliament, John Dillon,<sup>37</sup> voiced what few realised when he declared in the House of Commons that Milner's dispatches consisted of,

".... clippings from newspapers and partisan reports giving one side of the question without alluding to the other side .... The editor of the Cape Times calls every day on Sir Alfred Milner and between them in the study of the latter they concoct articles, which are published and then sent by Sir Alfred Milner to the Colonial Secretary who issues them in a blue book as evidence of the opinion in South Africa ....."<sup>38</sup>

The close relations between Imperial officials and the South African League and Milner's considerable influence with the imperialist press, therefore created a complex, interrelated system by means of which the way was prepared for British action against the Transvaal. Their modus

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34. Porter, "Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897-1899", Hist. Jour., 2, 1973, pp. 336-337.
  35. South African News, 25 Feb. 1900.
  36. J.A. Hobson, The War in South Africa, pp. 206-228. Also published by the South Africa Conciliation Committee (S.A.C.C.) as a pamphlet (No. 14) "How the press was worked before the war".
  37. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 286.
  38. Porter, "Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897-1899", Hist. Jour., 2, 1973, pp. 338-339.

operandi is epitomised by this communication from Greene to Milner on 10 March 1899:

" ..... Monypenny came to see me today and we had a long chat: he seems sound on all points except the South African League, on which he appeared uncertain. When, however, I had explained to him that they .... bound themselves to be guided by me, as in the past, he was quite reassured, and said, while he might not support them publicly in his paper, as a political Body for fear of spoiling the game, he would take care that their objects and efforts were supported. This is, after all what we want". 39

At the Cape there existed a body of opinion which ran strongly contrary to the views held by the Colonial Secretary and the High Commissioner. This group, named the South African Party by W.P. Schreiner, their parliamentary leader, consisted of an alliance between the Afrikaner Bond and a small body of moderate English-speaking politicians. It was out of this alliance that the conciliation movement eventually crystallised in the early months of 1900. It then organised a campaign against the annexation of the republics, but before the war the same individuals were engaged in expounding the same views, although in a less concerted fashion. The movement derived its essence from the support of men who, despite their close affinities with England, championed the cause of the Republics and urged a policy of peace and conciliation upon the British Government. Of these John X. Merriman was the ablest and most articulate and, after the resignation of the Schreiner ministry in June 1900, he assumed the parliamentary leadership of the party, supported by his political twin, J.W. Sauer. Other prominent participants in the movement were the brothers James and Charles Molteno, sons of Sir John Molteno, first Prime Minister of the Cape Colony; the authoress Olive Schreiner, sister of the Prime Minister, and her husband S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner; F.J. Centlivres, managing director of the South African Newspaper Company; Albert Cartwright, editor of the South African News; advocates H.L. Currey and Henry Burton;<sup>40</sup> William Hay, one time editor of the Cape Mercury; Dr. F.C. Kolbe, the Roman Catholic clergyman and scholar; Ramsden Balmforth, the Unitarian minister and author and Andrew Murray, the well known Dutch Reformed theologian and author. Throughout

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39. Porter, "Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897-1899", Hist. Jour., 2, 1973, p. 335.

40. H.L. Currey was the son of J.B. Currey, a close friend of Merriman's. He had been personal secretary to Rhodes and secretary of the Chartered Company. Henry Burton had contested Barkly West against Rhodes at the last general election. He later held several cabinet posts. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. ii, p. 49; Ibid., v. iii, p. 271.

their campaign the conciliationists co-operated with like-minded men in England. One of their most valuable links with their Liberal allies was P.A. Molteno, a brother of James and Charles Molteno, who had settled in London where he was in partnership with his father-in-law, the ship-owner and prominent public figure, Sir Donald Currie. Holding radical Liberal views, Percy Molteno worked energetically in the interests of the Boer cause.<sup>41</sup> In his recently published book A Federal South Africa he had expounded the principle that South Africa could best prosper with a minimum of interference in its internal affairs by the Imperial Government, a view in which the peace party at the Cape heartily concurred. His intimate knowledge of South Africa was of great value to Liberal politicians whom he often supplied with material for their speeches and with whom he frequently co-operated in planning parliamentary strategy. He also had access to the Liberal leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and frequently consulted with his parliamentary secretary, Captain John Sinclair, so that he was in a position to use any information from his Cape friends to the greatest advantage.<sup>42</sup> Percy Molteno also attempted to establish a more reliable organisation for the transmission of information to some of the British papers. In co-operation with the Daily Chronicle, Morning Leader and the Star, it was arranged that H.L. Currey, S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner and Albert Cartwright should be approached to act as South African correspondents of these papers.<sup>43</sup> Other members of the conciliation party, like Schreiner and Merriman, also frequently exchanged views with Liberals including Frederick Mackarness, James Bryce, John Morley and John Ellis.<sup>44</sup>

The ideas underlying the conciliation movement were entirely opposed to the concept of empire of which Chamberlain and Milner were such ardent advocates. Their attitude was outlined by a correspondent in the columns of the South African News who criticised the movement towards Imperial consolidation and asked:

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41. P.A. Molteno Papers (M.P.), P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 23 June 1899 and 30 June 1899.
  42. M.P., P.A. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 4 July 1899; P.A. Molteno to J.H. Hofmeyr, 1 Aug. 1899.
  43. Ibid., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 14 Jan. 1899.
  44. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. ii, p. 29; Ibid., v. iii, p. 68; E.A. Walker, W.P. Schreiner: a South African, p. 90.

"What on earth is wrong with the British Empire that it should not be left as it is? Disguise it as we may the whole Transvaal question has arisen because certain enthusiasts influenced by narrow and shallow vanity-laden doctrines for which Professor Seeley and his disciples are mainly responsible, wish to make our present Empire something very different from what it is".

Chamberlain, he continued, wanted a provincialised, homogeneous, centrally administered empire and war with the Transvaal was intended as the first step in the general reversal of Britain's colonial policy of the last half century.<sup>45</sup> Merriman, a firm believer in the Liberal laissez faire theory of empire, had been a correspondent of Professor Goldwin Smith, the great exponent of that theory, since the 1870s when confederation had first been mooted in South Africa. On the eve of the war he wrote to him lamenting Milner and Chamberlain's rampant imperialism which he felt had put the clock back twenty-five years and which he predicted would ultimately destroy the Empire. Merriman regarded the other colonies' offer of troops as meddling in what should be a domestic quarrel and cited it as "a fine example of what [Imperial] Federation might lead us to".<sup>46</sup>

The belief that South Africa should be left to solve its own problems unaided by interference from Downing Street formed a cornerstone of the conciliation party's philosophy. While giving evidence before the Committee of Enquiry into the Raid, Schreiner had warned:

"You must either let salvation come from inside or else have a condition of things in South Africa which there is not a man in this hall today would wish ever .... to have had any responsibility for"<sup>47</sup>

South Africa would not have a union forced upon her from outside.<sup>48</sup> Merriman's efforts in March and April 1899 to arrange a conference between the representatives of the republics, Natal and the Cape Colony to discuss matters of common interest was indicative of the determination to prove that South African matters could be settled in South Africa by South Africans.<sup>49</sup>

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45. South African News, 4 July 1899.

46. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 84-85.

47. Walker, Schreiner, pp. 93-94.

48. J.X. Merriman Papers (J.X.M.P.), Sauer to Merriman, 3 May 1899; South African News, 8 May 1899.

49. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 65.

The peace party did not agree that the Transvaal constituted a threat to British supremacy in South Africa. They believed that Britain derived her supremacy, not from agreements and conventions, but from her enormous wealth and the vigorous energy of the ideas and institutions which she carried with her. They also believed that, in a country like South Africa where British and Dutch had to live together, Britain had to follow a policy of fusion rather than strive for supremacy.<sup>50</sup> Because of their belief in England's innate superiority they were convinced that it would eventually, in the natural course of events, come to control the Transvaal politically as well as economically.<sup>51</sup> While visiting South Africa just before the war, J.A. Hobson gained the impression that the Schreiner ministry and its supporters were:

"as firmly convinced as the most pronounced Jingo that England must in effect control the destinies of the whole of South Africa, but they deprecate the doctrine of force as the mid-wife of progress seeing - what the Imperial Government fails to see - the moral and political reactions of menace and war upon the race question which underlie the political future of the country".<sup>52</sup>

With regard to the immediate causes of the crisis, the conciliation party did not deny that the Transvaal Government had many faults. They condemned Kruger's evident determination to found his state on a narrow and unenlightened minority and urged a moderate reform of the franchise which would give the uitlanders a fair voice in the direction of affairs. They did not regard the uitlanders as unreservedly hostile to the Republic, but maintained that there was a responsible section amongst them who genuinely had the interests of the Republic at heart and who were opposed to the machinations of men like Rhodes. On the other hand they believed that those who were agitating most loudly for the franchise were merely using it as a stalking horse to penetrate the defences of the Transvaal. Besides the franchise issue the conciliation party also saw numerous other blots upon the Transvaal administration, such as the ambiguities in the constitution and the ignorance and corruption in its financial administration. They regarded the dynamite monopoly as a

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50. South African News, 28 Sept. 1899.

51. M.P., Merriman to P.A. Molteno, 1 Jan. 1900.

52. Hobson, The War in South Africa, ch. I; South African News, 3 Oct. 1899.

scandal and urged the appointment of a competent financier to reform financial matters.<sup>53</sup> Long before the situation became critical prominent Cape politicians like Merriman, Schreiner and Sauer urged reform on the Transvaal and encouraged their friends in the Orange Free State to do the same.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand they pointed out that the goldfields presented the Transvaal Government with a problem of particular complexity with which they were totally unprepared to cope. Its opponents they felt, tended to overlook the fact that its administration had not been totally without merit and that much had been accomplished regarding railways, telegraphs, public buildings, hospitals and education. Merriman thought its administration, despite its shortcomings, compared favourably with that of the goldfields in America and Australia and believed its mining law to be better than those in force anywhere else. Its taxation also, both direct and indirect, was lower than on any other goldfields in the world.<sup>55</sup> Despite these achievements the Transvaal Government had met with virtually unrelieved hostility from Britain for the previous ten years and every reform had been stigmatised as a sign of weakness by the hostile press. The Jameson Raid and the inconclusive enquiry following it, the agitation of the capitalist press and the activities of the South African League, all served to retard the progress of reform just as much as the prejudice and obstinate conservatism of the Boer Volksraad.<sup>56</sup> The conciliation party believed that the Transvaal should be given credit where it was due, even if the occasion did not arise very frequently, and that this would be more conducive to further advances than a constant harping on its deficiencies.

While recognising the need for reform the conciliation party, however, regarded the uitlander grievances as grossly exaggerated. Moreover, they maintained that while friendly representation on the matter should be made to the Transvaal Government, any attempt by

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53. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. ii, p. 302; Ibid., v. iii, p. 53; South African News, 15 May 1899.

54. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. ii, p. 302.

55. Ibid., v. iii, pp. 126-127; South African News, 15 May 1899.

56. J.X.M.P., Merriman to J. Bryce, 9 Oct. 1899.

Britain to force reform on the Transvaal would constitute an unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of the Republic and a breach of the London Convention which had restored the Transvaal's complete independence in internal matters. They regarded any claim to internal supervision as preposterous and saw it as creating the impression that by some feat of legerdemain Britain "gave back the Transvaal and yet did not give it back".<sup>57</sup> In addition the conciliationists felt that, in view of the Jameson Raid and the scandal of the Committee of Enquiry and Chamberlain's whitewashing of Rhodes which followed it, the British Government's hands were not clean in the matter and that living in a glass house it was in no position to throw stones at the Transvaal.

As a panacea for the problems besetting South Africa the conciliation party urged a policy of peace and patience.<sup>58</sup> The theme of General Sir William Butler's speech at Grahamstown on 17 December 1898 in which he said:

"South Africa ..... does not need a surgical operation; she needs peace, progress and the development which is only possible through the union of many hearts and the labour of many hands ...",<sup>59</sup>

virtually became the rallying cry of the movement.<sup>60</sup> Butler, who was commander-in-chief of the British forces in South Africa and had been acting High Commissioner during Milner's absence in England, was a man after their own heart and he echoed the conciliationists' sentiments exactly when he informed the War Office:

"The whole social fabric of life in South Africa is too closely woven together to allow the sword to be the arbiter of the differences between the white races without endangering the very existence of the social body itself".<sup>61</sup>

The very nature of the population would turn a war between Britain and the Transvaal into a civil war as there was hardly a Dutch family in the Cape Colony that did not have relations in the Republics. In such

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57. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, pp. 55-56; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 70; South African News, 15 May 1899, 3 Oct. 1899.

58. What Milner contemptuously referred to as the "time and patience twaddle" of the peace-at-any-price party. Cf. Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 271.

59. W.F. Butler, Autobiography, p. 398.

60. South African News, 2 May 1899.

61. Butler, Autobiography, p. 447.

circumstances a war would be the greatest calamity that could befall South Africa. <sup>62</sup> The first shot fired against the Transvaal would unite Afrikanerdom from the Zambezi to Cape Agulhas and destroy at one stroke the achievements of those who had been striving to bring about a better understanding and harmonious co-operation between the two races. <sup>63</sup> War with the Transvaal would not only be a crime as there was no casus belli, it would also be a political blunder of the first magnitude. Thus the conciliation party believed that the paramount interests of both Britain and South Africa demanded peace and they saw it as the duty of all who had the interests of the Empire at heart to tirelessly urge the necessity of preserving peace. <sup>64</sup>

In the constant reiteration of these warnings the peace party found itself seriously handicapped by the lack of support in the English language press which was almost entirely pro-imperialist. The desire to establish an English paper to put across their views had long been present, the main problem, however, being the lack of funds. <sup>65</sup> When the opportunity arose of acquiring the building and plant of the defunct South African Telegraph at a very favourable rate an attempt was made to raise the money and the first prospectus of the South African Newspaper Company was issued in September 1897. <sup>66</sup> It was hoped that the paper would be established before the pending Legislative Council elections or at least in time to influence the election which would follow the dissolution of the Assembly in 1898. Lack of funds, however, proved an insurmountable obstacle and the undertaking had to be shelved. From London Percy Molteno kept on chiding them for allowing "that pestilential fellow Garrett" to continue leading public opinion by the nose without contradiction and by October 1898 sufficient funds had eventually been subscribed to allow the company to be officially registered. Sauer, Merriman, Schreiner, Charles and James Molteno and Harry Currey all lent their support to the venture and Percy Molteno, besides taking up a generous number of shares himself, used his influence to raise some financial support in England. Alexander Mair, J.A. van Reenen, F.K. Wiener

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62. Butler, Autobiography, p. 449.

63. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. ii, p. 272.

64. M.P., J.W. Sauer to P.A. Molteno, 3 March 1897.

65. Ibid., P.A. Molteno to Merriman, 5 Feb. 1897; Merriman to P.A. Molteno, 6 Feb. 1897 and 18 Aug. 1897.

66. Ibid., Sauer to P.A. Molteno, 9 Sept. 1897.

and Charles Molteno were the first directors with F.J. Centlivres as managing director.<sup>67</sup> Albert Cartwright, an associate of Schreiner, Merriman and Innes, was appointed as editor. Originally from England, he had been in South Africa for ten years and had gained considerable experience in the field of South African journalism. He had begun his career with the Cape Times in 1889, joined the staff of the Cape Argus three years later and in 1892 went to the Rand where he became sub-editor and later assistant editor of the Johannesburg Star. Objecting to its plutocratic atmosphere he resigned from the Star after the Raid to become editor of the Diamond Fields Advertiser, but resigned in 1898 when that paper too was taken over by the Argus group. He then became editor of the Cape Mercury at King William's Town where he remained until approached to edit the South African News. Cartwright had therefore worked for every major newspaper in South Africa and had established a reputation for honesty and independence, preferring to resign excellent prospects rather than write to order.<sup>68</sup> As editor of the South African News his views were in complete agreement with those of the proprietors. On the fundamental issue of the relationship which should prevail between Britain and her colonies, he believed that the colonies should to all practical intents and purposes be fellow nations with England. The champions of Imperial Federation seemed to him to be working against nature and her processes and he predicted that their efforts would come to naught.<sup>69</sup>

The South African News appeared as an eight page daily on 2 May 1899. In making its "Confession of Faith" it expressed its conviction that there were no problems in South Africa which could not be settled by the unaided efforts of the people of South Africa themselves.

"Our country's need is a South African policy in the broadest sense - non-interference by Downing Street and the study of the interests of the whole people by the various governments in South Africa ... The essential thing is that we should feel - and act as if we feel - that we are all South Africans. Nature has made us one country; and a common if different ancestry and the absence of religious and social differences

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67. Walker, Schreiner, p. 121; M.P., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 17 Feb. 1898 and 27 May 1898; P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 29 July 1898 and 17 Nov. 1898; Murray-Parker Collection (M.P.C.), F.J. Centlivres to Betty Molteno, 5 Nov. 1898.
68. South African News, 23 Feb. 1901; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. ii, p. 305.
69. M.P.C., A. Cartwright to Betty Molteno, 6 May 1901.

emphasize the fact that we are meant to be one people. Let us see that no man puts us asunder .....

On the issue of the Transvaal it therefore indicated that it would keep both sides of the question in mind and it disavowed any sympathy for "philanthropic proposals to take over and manage neighbour Naboth's highly desirable vineyard", or even with an attempt to prove that "Naboth's relations are a pestilential disloyal set of fellows who ought not to be tolerated". Finally, Cartwright made it clear that the paper "would not deal in blood"; he would not sit at home in ease and conjure up Armageddon from an ink-pot. As a final jibe at the imperialist press he suggested that the following quotation from Burke be framed and hung in some newspaper offices in South Africa:

"I cannot conceive of any existence under heaven more truly odious and disgusting than an impotent, helpless creature calling for battles which he cannot fight and contending for a violent dominion which he can never exercise". 70

The appearance of the South African News was heralded with enthusiasm by the conciliation party which not only hoped that it would make converts in the Imperialist camp, but also that it would present the true facts of the situation in South Africa to the British public and prove that there was a body of English-speaking opinion in the Colony opposed to the Imperial Government's policy.<sup>71</sup> From England Percy Moltano assisted with advice on editorial policy and arranged that at least the Cambridge Union would receive the paper regularly. He and Frederick Mackarness also contributed by, at various times, writing its weekly "London Letter".<sup>72</sup> On the local front the South African News co-operated cordially with Ons Land, but it got a rough reception from the opposition press, which even before its appearance had ridiculed the publication of another morning paper. As the official organ of the conciliation movement the South African news remained locked in constant combat with the imperialist press in its efforts to counteract what it regarded as the constant stream of misrepresentation emanating from that

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70. South African News, 2 May 1899.

71. Ibid., 9 Oct. 1899 and 30 Dec. 1899; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 47; J.X.M.P., F. Mackarness to Merriman, 6 Dec. 1899.

72. M.P., P.A. Moltano to A. Cartwright, 28 April 1899 and 15 Feb. 1900; P.A. Moltano to C. Moltano, 3 June 1899; J.X.M.P., F. Mackarness to Merriman, 6 Dec. 1899.

source, and in turn it was referred to derisively by its opponents as "the conspirators' organ".

On the eve of the crisis few contemporaries understood the relationship between the Imperial authorities and the war party in South Africa. Haunted by the bogey of Rhodes and the Jameson Raid they regarded the agitation against the Transvaal as part of a "capitalist plot" designed, this time by constitutional means, to force the British Government to take action against the Transvaal in order to enable a gang of wealthy adventurers to exploit the natural resources of South Africa for their own benefit.<sup>73</sup> The Imperial Government was seen as being dragged by the apron strings of the capitalists into a position from which it would be difficult to retreat without loss of face. J.A. Hobson was mainly responsible for popularising this theory and although the peace party was not always consistent in its attitude, the majority shared his views. Thus Olive Schreiner wrote to her brother:

"If the English Government once gains control of the Transvaal in a military sense as she now has control of the Colony it seems to me South Africa may and almost must fall entirely into the hands of the capitalists .... Ultimately we have nothing to fight the capitalists with but the guns and forts of the Transvaal ....."<sup>74</sup>

Merriman also complained: "If war comes ..... it will be the outcome of the newspapers ..... We are made the football of Stock Exchange speculators ....."<sup>75</sup> As Chamberlain's reputation had already been tarnished by the Jameson Raid, many were prepared to believe that he was implicated in the capitalist conspiracy and the conciliation party's severest criticism was at this stage directed at him, Milner being regarded as merely carrying out his instructions. After the Bloemfontein conference Merriman still saw Milner as "the man at the end of the string".<sup>76</sup> Although his provocative Graaff-Reinet speech in March 1898, which had been hailed with such enthusiasm by the Progressives, had caused some to view Milner with suspicion, others still regarded him with an open mind. Olive Schreiner, for example, decided to reserve

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73. South African News, 24 Feb. 1900.

74. W.P. Schreiner Papers, U.C.T. (W.P.S.P., (U.C.T.)), O. Schreiner to W.P. Schreiner, 14 Sept. 1899.

75. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 44, 50.

76. *Ibid.*, v. iii, p. 56.

her judgment until, after the Bloemfontein conference and saw Garrett as the evil influence.<sup>77</sup> Sir William Butler, whose position brought him into intimate contact with Milner and his staff, was one of the few who understood the situation. Soon after his arrival in South Africa he became convinced that there existed a "colossal syndicate for the spread of systematic misrepresentation" and he eventually came to the conclusion that more powerful forces than he had imagined were joined with the old agencies to force a racial war upon South Africa.<sup>78</sup> His reluctance to be party to such a policy resulted in his resignation in August 1899.

Milner's visit to England, during which he set about preparing the ground for a more forceful policy towards the Transvaal, coincided with the easing of Britain's international position. The Anglo-German agreement of August 1898 had removed the fear of possible German intervention in favour of the Transvaal; the campaign in the Sudan was concluded a month later and in November the French withdrawal from Fashoda removed the threat of complications in that quarter.<sup>79</sup> Although Chamberlain would not commit himself, Milner adopted a more bellicose attitude after his return to the Cape. The South African League had worked up a lather of excitement over the Edgar case and Milner encouraged them to "keep on pegging away".<sup>80</sup> On 24 March the second uitlander petition was presented to the High Commissioner, and unlike the first, which had been frustrated by Butler, this one was duly forwarded to the British Government. Milner's dispatches became more stringently worded in order to strengthen Chamberlain's hand in the cabinet and eventually culminated in the notorious 'helot' dispatch of 4 May. Milner also began to intimate to the Cape ministry that the British Government "meant business". His relationship with Schreiner and his colleagues was a delicate one. Although they held divergent views on the Transvaal question, Milner was inclined to make the best of the situation as he did not think that a Progressive ministry could muster enough support to maintain itself in office. On the other hand

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77. Olive Schreiner Papers (O.S.P.), O. Schreiner to W.P. Schreiner 6 June 1899.

78. Butler, Autobiography, pp. 400, 444.

79. Le May, British Supremacy, p. 15.

80. Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 263.

he did not think that the Bond ministry would be able to take a line too divergent from Imperial policy in the face of strong and united opposition from the Progressives. In addition, they would be able to hold Afrikaner opinion in check more effectively than the latter in the event of a crisis. Milner also placed considerable reliance on Schreiner personally, believing that his moderate views would prevent his straying too far from the imperial path.<sup>81</sup> Having decided to keep the ministry in office Milner's main problem was to channel their energies in the right direction without taking them into his confidence. As the Imperial Government was averse to a settlement arrived at without its intervention, Milner disapproved of Merriman's efforts to arrange an interstate conference and was secretly relieved when the scheme fell through, not long after J.P. Fitzpatrick had also wrecked the 'capitalist negotiations' in Pretoria. Milner capitalised upon the Cape leaders' horror of war to oblige them to bring greater pressure to bear upon Kruger.<sup>82</sup> At the end of April his attitude during a series of interviews with Schreiner greatly alarmed the Prime Minister. Together with warnings from friends in London, that the situation was becoming extremely critical and that some concessions from the Transvaal had become imperative, this prompted the ministry into taking the initiative in arranging a conference between Milner and Kruger.<sup>83</sup> Milner found the suggestion extremely inopportune as it came at a time when the Colonial Office was preparing to take the diplomatic offensive by publishing a serious indictment of the Transvaal administration together with a blue book on uitlander grievances, which was to contain, inter alia, Milner's 'helot' dispatch. The British cabinet had on 9 May approved a strongly worded dispatch by Chamberlain which in fact committed it to an aggressive policy. The dispatch concluded with a suggestion of a conference between Milner and Kruger at Pretoria which, if the desired concessions were not obtained, would be followed up by 'stronger measures'.<sup>84</sup> Milner therefore received the Cape Government's proposals with little enthusiasm as "a good stroke of business on the part of the enemy" which he could not very well decline without being accused of not sincerely desiring a settlement. He was determined, however, that the conference would take place on

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81. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, pp. 19-20.

82. Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 272.

83. Ibid., p. 273; Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, pp. 33-35.

84. Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 273.

his own terms and refused to allow either Hofmeyr or Schreiner to accompany him, although Schreiner had expressed the desire to be present as the Cape Colony's interests too were vitally involved.<sup>85</sup> Milner's reasons for the decision were manifold, but in essence he was determined not to give the Cape ministry the opportunity of exercising a moderating influence upon British policy towards the Transvaal.<sup>86</sup> The indications were that Milner was beginning to view the prospect of war with increasing equanimity. Two weeks before the conference he wrote to Selborne that he did not want war, but that he was beginning to think that it was the only way out. The Transvaal Government would probably climb down under pressure, but if it did not it would be better to fight at that stage than five or ten years later when the Transvaal would be even stronger and more hostile. Shortly after the conference he confessed to Chamberlain that war would enable them to "put things on a sound basis for the future better than even the best-devised Convention can".<sup>87</sup>

In these circumstances the conference at Bloemfontein had little likelihood of success. The imperialist press naturally shared Milner's lack of enthusiasm, and in the weeks preceding the conference, devoted much editorial space to what steps it considered should be taken in the event of its failure. The conciliation party, ignorant of the attitude of the Imperial Government, fixed their hopes on the conference and the correspondence of Merriman, Sir Henry de Villiers and Charles Moltano reveals that they all expected that a genuine effort would be made to bring each side a step nearer to the other.<sup>88</sup> On the eve of the conference the South African News, while admitting that it did not expect the meeting to result in an instant solution, expressed the hope that the British Government's views would be "calmly and respectfully represented" and that Kruger would reciprocate by recognising the "honest and peaceable nature" of Britain's intentions and begin an

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85. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 37.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

87. Headlam, Milner Papers, v. i, pp. 384-385, 444; Van Heyningen. Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, pp. 39-40.

88. M.P., C. Moltano to P.A. Moltano, 23 May 1899; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 51; E.A. Walker, Lord De Villiers and his Times, p. 337.

honest effort at reform so that the present rumours of war which were paralysing the country would be once and for all dispelled.<sup>89</sup>

Milner's prediction that: "The real turning point of the battle is coming after - and I think very soon after the conference break up", was, however, to prove more accurate.<sup>90</sup>

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89. South African News, 29 May 1899.

90. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 40.

CHAPTER II

THE POLICY OF RESTRAINT

During the troubled months which intervened between the Bloemfontein conference and the outbreak of the war, the peace party consistently adhered to the principle that the crisis could best be dealt with by the Cape Government and other prominent men such as J.H. Hofmeyr and the chief justice, Sir Henry de Villiers. As the recognised leaders of the majority of the colonists their actions would carry far more weight than the unauthorised activities of the rank and file of the party. Although their efforts were supported by appeals for peace from the Afrikaner Bond, from prominent men of religion and from the women of the Colony, the Schreiner ministry played the central rôle in the peace party's attempts to avert war and there was no concerted action by their supporters outside parliament. Throughout the crisis the ministry adhered strictly to a policy of restraint and moderation, even when it became increasingly apparent that, in sincerely striving for a negotiated settlement, it was in fact working at cross purposes with the Imperial Government whose actions created the growing impression that it did not desire a settlement that would leave the South African Republic's independence unscathed. The ministry believed that enough ill feeling had already been caused by the imperialist party's intemperate utterances and frowned upon any actions which might further inflame feelings. Although there was not always unanimity within the cabinet, they remained steadfastly opposed to any drastic action on their part, believing that it would only destroy such influence as they had with the Imperial Government. Although their restraint was not always successfully emulated by their supporters, they did succeed in keeping their followers fairly well in hand in the face of constant provocation from the imperial party which became increasingly bellicose and vociferous.<sup>1</sup>

There were, however, some who were of the opinion that the Cape Government should make a determined stand and that its supporters should vigorously demonstrate their disapproval of the Imperial Government's

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1. T.R.H. Davenport, The Afrikaner Bond, pp. 197-198; M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 12 Sept. 1899.

policy. This would indicate to the British public that there was a strong body of opinion in the Colony opposed to war with the Transvaal and would fortify the Liberal Party's attacks upon Chamberlain and his supporters. But to responsible leaders at the Cape the dangers inherent in such a course seemed to outweigh the advantages. A determined stand by the government involved the risk of an open breach with Milner and the possible dismissal of the ministry and there could be no certainty that strong opposition from a section of the Cape colonists would in fact be regarded as significant enough to cause the British Government to modify its policy. The two parties at the Cape were fairly evenly balanced; the South African Party's small majority in the Legislative Assembly being countered by the fact that their opponents had a decided advantage over them in the press, both locally and in Britain. Constant complaints from their Liberal allies in England, that their point of view was hardly ever represented in the British press, were indicative of the measure of success which attended the imperial party's efforts to influence public opinion.<sup>2</sup> In addition, thanks to the work of the South African League, the imperial party at the Cape was so well organised that enthusiastic public meetings to support Imperial policy and counter peace demonstrations could be arranged without difficulty. These meetings were prominently reported in the British press and Milner's sympathy assured their inclusion in Imperial blue books. The state of disarray in which the Liberal Party found itself, owing to the split between the moderates and the Liberal Imperialists, was another factor hampering the peace party. Although it had many sincere and enthusiastic allies in England, the weakness of the Liberal Party limited the scope of their influence and prevented them from exerting any effective pressure upon the Government.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Cape leaders feared that if sympathy with the Transvaal were too readily demonstrated in the Colony it might cause the Republic to become more obdurate, thus rendering a settlement more difficult. Although a policy of moderation and restraint would almost certainly be misconstrued in England as indicating the weakness of the peace party,<sup>4</sup> it would, if it did not succeed in averting war, at least leave the Cape Government in a position to cushion the impact of war upon the Colony and to influence

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2. M.P., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 14 Jan. 1899; F. Harrison to P.A. Molteno, 28 Nov. 1899; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 91.

3. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 156; M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 7 July 1899.

4. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 26 July 1899.

the settlement after the war. Furthermore, as the Imperial Government never confronted the Cape ministry with a direct challenge, it was extremely difficult for them to make a determined stand at any particular stage without running the risk of doing their cause more harm than good. As expediency at times caused the Imperial authorities to adopt an ambiguous attitude, interspersing provocative actions with pacific gestures, the crisis was characterised by the manner in which periods of acute tension, crowded with rumours of war, were relieved by lulls in which the atmosphere became more relaxed as it was felt that the crisis had passed. The correspondence between Percy Molteno in London and his brothers at the Cape offers an interesting illustration of the difficulties which arose out of this situation. Molteno's repeated demands that the Cape Government should make a firm stand and clearly indicate their attitude to their allies in England met with the reply that, in view of the constantly changing situation, information which reached him through the mail after three weeks was often more or less useless.<sup>5</sup> Until almost on the eve of hostilities the peace party was never confronted with a clearly defined situation and it was therefore forced to formulate its policy to meet the demands of every situation as it arose. The lack of finesse which the Transvaal displayed in its handling of the negotiations further added to the Cape's difficulties. The attitude of the peace party was also to some extent influenced by its reluctance to believe that the more responsible members of the British Cabinet would sanction a war for which a casus belli was so obviously lacking.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately after the Bloemfontein conference the Cape ministry resumed its efforts to secure a settlement. It regarded President Kruger's offer of a seven year franchise as a considerable step in the right direction and determined to secure such a modification of the proposals as to render them acceptable to the Imperial authorities.<sup>7</sup> The attitude of the Cape ministry reflected the reaction of the peace party in general to the outcome of the conference. Although its failure came as a disappointment to many, the tendency was to grasp at its more positive

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5. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 23 Aug. 1899.

6. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 73.

7. For a comprehensive discussion of the Cape ministry's rôle as mediator between Britain and the Transvaal, see Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, ch. IV.

results. Milner's demand that the proceedings be published and his abrupt termination of the conference caused a few raised eyebrows,<sup>8</sup> but any criticism was by far outweighed by the emphasis which was placed upon the fact that Kruger's franchise proposals indicated a radical change in the Republic's attitude towards the uitlanders. While admitting that the scheme contained many imperfections, the South African News hailed it as the most significant point to have emerged from the conference. It expressed the hope that the Volksraad would accept the President's scheme stripped of its more ambiguous and undesirable features and urged Britain to adopt a sympathetic attitude.<sup>9</sup> The Republic's abandonment of its intransigent attitude towards the uitlanders caused such relief that the conciliationists, in an unwarranted mood of optimism, placed far too hopeful an interpretation on Milner's attitude. Following the publication of the official memorandum on the conference the South African News confidently stated its belief that "the situation had reached a stage at which all idea of war may be dismissed".<sup>10</sup> A few days later the paper praised the "friendly and peaceable tone" of Milner's speech to a deputation of Progressives which called on him to express their approval of his attitude at the conference. The South African News pointed out that he had the reputation of being one of the most thoughtful and philosophical men of his time and it was therefore, "inconceivable that such a man could meditate a resort to methods which could not withstand the criticism of just and enlightened public opinion".<sup>11</sup> Two days later the arrival of the first cabled summaries from the 'grievances' blue book<sup>12</sup> effectively dispelled these illusions.

Having been delayed by the Bloemfontein conference the blue book was published on 14 June with a view to further strengthening public opinion against the Transvaal. It contained Chamberlain's dispatch of 10 May which was a stringent indictment of the Transvaal administration

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8. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 56.

9. South African News, 8 June 1899.

10. Ibid., 9 June 1899.

11. South African News, 13 June 1899. Schreiner also misinterpreted this speech by which Milner in fact meant to bolster the confidence of his supporters. Cf. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 43.

12. C. 9345.

and which spoke of Milner as "living in the midst of hatred and intrigue" at the Cape. More significant, however, was Milner's 'helot' dispatch in which he argued that "the case for intervention is overwhelming" and in which he also accused the Cape Dutch of disloyalty on the evidence of such obscure newspapers as the Stellalander and the Rand Post. From the peace party's point of view, the publication of this blue book, revealing as it did not only the High Commissioner's true sentiments but also the extent to which he personally influenced the formulation of Britain's policy, brought about a profound change in the situation. They now began to realise that the forces against which they were struggling in their efforts to maintain peace were far more formidable than they had anticipated. They also realised that the chances of war had been greatly increased as the aggressive tone of the blue book committed the British Government to a policy from which it would be difficult to retreat without loss of face.

The Prime Minister was shown the dispatch when news of its publication first reached the Cape and the revelation of Milner's attitude caused profound disillusionment in Schreiner who realised that the High Commissioner had never truly taken him into his confidence and had placed little reliance upon his judgment.<sup>13</sup> He made no secret of the disappointment, and relations between Milner and the Cabinet, which had already been clouded by Milner's refusal to allow Schreiner to accompany him to Bloemfontein, now became increasingly strained. Schreiner's sense of duty and his loyalty did not allow him anything but the mildest criticism of the High Commissioner,<sup>14</sup> but his colleagues did not share his reticence and both Sauer and Merriman complained bitterly of the difficult conditions under which the ministry had to operate.<sup>15</sup> It was mainly due to Schreiner's influence and Milner's personal regard for him that the ministry was able to continue co-operating with the High Commissioner at all.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from the disappointment and apprehension which the contents of the blue book caused the ministry, its publication at a time when

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13. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 48.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

15. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 70;  
M.P., Sauer to P.A. Molteno, 4 Oct. 1899.

16. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 62.

the most delicate negotiations with the Transvaal were in train, came as a double blow. It was bound to further antagonise the Republic and cause a furore in the Colony at a time when the Cape leaders were doing their utmost to foster a spirit of reasonable compromise. The Cabinet, with Milner's consent, therefore decided to delay the publication of the dispatch in South Africa until its inevitable arrival on the mailboat three weeks later, and Schreiner used his influence to prevent any discussion of it in the press.<sup>17</sup> His task was facilitated by the fact that the Bond press was already operating under self-imposed restraint, and it had been unofficially decided at its Congress in March that the handling of the crisis should be left to its leaders and that undue publicity should be avoided.<sup>18</sup> Despite this, reaction could not be stifled altogether. The ministerial organ at first expressed the hope that the cabled summaries had been deceptive and decided to reserve its judgment until the full text became available, but it did not strictly adhere to this resolve. On the other hand it refrained from commenting upon that part of the dispatch which dealt with the Transvaal and reserved its criticism for the aspersions which Milner had cast upon the loyalty of the Dutch in the Colony. In an editorial headed "Waiting", the South African News said:

"It appears to us to be a most painful and deplorable thing that the High Commissioner, who, on his own showing, has not had time to mix much with the Colonists, should take the grave step of hinting that they are not loyal to their allegiance .... That Her Majesty's High Commissioner should think such thoughts .... might easily become a calamitous fact".<sup>19</sup>

Two days later it returned to the charge:

" .... it is a thousand pities that the full dispatch of Sir Alfred Milner, in which Cape Colonists are accused of disaffection, has not been made public. At present the attitude of the leaders of the majority of the Colonists is one of blank incredulity. They do not believe that such a charge has been made. If it has been made, it will be idle to pretend that the incident could be left where it is .... If Sir Alfred Milner has penned the words attributed to him he has in our humble judgment made an astounding departure from the principles of democratic statesmanship ...."<sup>20</sup>

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17. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 45.

18. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 197.

19. South African News, 15 June 1899.

20. Ibid., 17 June 1899.

On 20 June it gave further vent to its indignation in a lengthy editorial attacking Chamberlain's dispatch of 10 May which it described as "packed with inaccuracies and exaggerations".

".... one would almost be justified in concluding that some person went to Johannesburg who had already made up his mind on the question, spent a few hours at the Rand Club and the Star office, finished up at the local habitation of the League and then wrote a dispatch which Mr. Chamberlain signed. That British statesmanship should take its final stand upon such a document is inconceivable".

Even Olive Schreiner was moved to admonish: "The News .... must restrain itself! When the lives of thousands of human creatures are in the balance every word becomes of solemn importance".<sup>21</sup>

The imperialists were, however, not hampered by any such scruples. They had heralded the failure of the Bloemfontein conference as an indication that war was now inevitable and during June a spate of rumours that Britain was making active preparations for war with the Transvaal appeared in the imperialist press, causing such alarm that Schreiner was forced to seek a denial from Milner and the South African News gave prominent publicity to a statement from military headquarters contradicting these canards.<sup>22</sup> It advised South Africa to keep cool in the face of "a campaign of callous mendacity" which was being skilfully engineered by publishing reports in South Africa of the mobilisation of troops and the choice of commanders and by bombarding the public in England with lies about 40 000 Cape Colonists ready to rush to the assistance of the Transvaal, and of Boers drilling and receiving ammunition.<sup>23</sup> Feelings were further inflamed by a series of public meetings held in towns throughout the Colony in support of Milner's demands. These "spontaneous expressions of public opinion" were organised by the Demonstrations Committee of the South African League in Cape Town.<sup>24</sup> The meeting which took place in the Good Hope Hall in Cape Town, a favourite venue for League gatherings, on 28 June, set the tone for all the others. On that occasion Dodd, secretary of the Transvaal branch

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21. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 23 June 1899.

22. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 23 June 1899; South African News, 22 June 1899.

23. South African News, 26 June 1899.

24. Ibid., 7 July 1899.

of the League announced: "The Paramount power having spoken, men must range themselves on one side or another. This is no time for mealy-mouthed platitudes. He who is not with us is against us". T.L. Graham, a leading Cape Progressive, expressed the hope that there would be no withering away from the irreducible minimum of reform. If the British Government receded it would sound the death-knell of British paramountcy in South Africa. A wave of republicanism would sweep from the north and Pretoria would become the Mecca of the republican Afrikaner.<sup>25</sup> Schreiner believed that these noisy imperialists hoped to provoke the peace party into retaliating,<sup>26</sup> and although they protested that these meetings did not represent the true voice of the Colony, suggestions that counter-demonstrations should be held were quashed so as not to add further fuel to the flames.<sup>27</sup> Although Schreiner had requested Milner to use his influence with the imperialist press to prevent inflammatory writing, the High Commissioner had disingenuously disclaimed any influence in that quarter. The series of League meetings, which continued into July, took place with his approval and the resolutions passed were submitted to Chamberlain for inclusion in the next blue book.<sup>28</sup> While the peace party was despairing of any results deriving from the negotiations with the Transvaal in an atmosphere of such hostility and suspicion, Chamberlain delivered a further blow to their hopes with his provocative speech at Birmingham on 26 June. It was meant as another instalment in the by now familiar process of educating public opinion and its significance was not lost on the Cape leaders.<sup>29</sup> But their cup of woe was not yet full, for on 4 July the 'grievances' blue book arrived and on the following day its contents were blazoned out in the press for all the world to see, accompanied by comment from leading British newspapers. The ministerial press at once sprang to the defence of the Transvaal and the Cape Dutch, but for the present moderated its tone and refrained from a direct attack on Milner. The South African News maintained that it wished to avoid personal references

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25. South African News, 29 June 1899.

26. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to John Ellis, 27 June 1899.

27. South African News, 28 June 1899; M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 5 July 1899.

28. Headlam, Milner Papers, v. i, p. 430; Marais, Kruger's Republic, p. 287.

29. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 72-73; W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), W.P. Schreiner to John Ellis, 27 June 1899.

in discussing the situation and referred in general terms to the slight practical experience of the Imperial staff in South Africa. Although it had no means of knowing what public notice would be taken of the "momentous" dispatch, it thought that some action would almost certainly be taken during the coming parliamentary session, an augury which boded ill for the future. <sup>30</sup>

The Cape ministry's silence during this period of tumult and shouting caused considerable agitation amongst some of its less patient allies in England. Percy Molteno regularly reported on the state of opinion in England to his brothers at the Cape with the object of assisting the peace party in formulating its policy and his letters were shown to Hofmeyr and Schreiner. <sup>31</sup> His reports were liberally interspersed with advice from himself and the Liberal leaders with whom he co-operated. Immediately after the publication of the blue book he wrote to his brother Charles urging the advisability of tabling a peace resolution in the Cape parliament:

" ..... your parliament occupies a position of great responsibility and great advantage at the present juncture ...., petitions and public meetings and such expressions of opinion may be, and generally are, the result of interested action and as such are discounted here, but a resolution of the Cape Parliament is understood here, carries enormous weight and is received as the expression of the opinion of the Colony". <sup>32</sup>

This theme was reiterated with increasing urgency in his letters but the length of time which they took to reach the Cape virtually rendered his advice ineffective. At the beginning of July, when the air was thick with rumours of war, Molteno, with the concurrence of Campbell-Bannerman, telegraphed to the Cape advising the absolute necessity of at once giving public notice of a peace resolution to be tabled when the Cape parliament met on 14 July and urging that this be cabled to

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30. South African News, 5 July 1899. A. Cartwright, who was the South African correspondent of the Daily Chronicle, wrote an article for that paper, defending the Dutch colonists, and this was later published as part of the S.A.C.C. pamphlet No. 2 "Some Answers to Sir Alfred Milner's Reflections on the Loyalty of the Cape Dutch".
31. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 23 June 1899; C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 18 July 1899 and 23 Aug. 1899.
32. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 16 June 1899.

England.<sup>33</sup> His message was shown to the cabinet by James Molteno, but although Schreiner at first seemed prepared to consider the step, he decided against it after having consulted Hofmeyr. They feared that the move might provoke Milner into intervening to prevent such a motion being brought before the House.<sup>34</sup> The need for a public declaration by the ministry was, however, becoming increasingly apparent. Its opponents were criticising it for not giving public opinion a lead and on 4 July Chamberlain announced in the House of Commons, in reply to a question from John Ellis, that he had received no representations from the Cape Government on the subject of the Transvaal.<sup>35</sup> The ministry's reticence in this regard was evidently due to their anxiety that a firm presentation of their views might antagonise Milner and the Colonial Secretary to the point where they would consider dismissing the ministry. Although a minute had been drafted in which the Cabinet frankly expressed its opposition to British intervention in the Transvaal, it had not been presented to Milner and Schreiner had contented himself with conveying the ministry's views verbally. There is no doubt, however, that Milner was fully conversant with the ministry's views and that he had communicated these to the Colonial Secretary.<sup>36</sup> After a protest from Schreiner, Chamberlain qualified his earlier statement by informing the House that he had in fact meant that he had received no formal representations from the Cape Government and on 7 July Schreiner sent a communication to the South African News explaining that his government had refrained from addressing a formal minute to the Imperial Government because it had been convinced that its views were known in that quarter. He emphasized that the Cabinet's views had been fully and frequently represented to the High Commissioner but declined at that stage to record them at any length or to discuss the rôle of the Cape Government in the recent negotiations. The concluding part of his message was, however, more positive. It stated that:

" .... while anxious and continually active with good hope in the cause of securing reasonable modifications of the existing representative system of the South African Republic, this

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33. M.P., Union Castle Mail Packets Co. Cape Town to Donald Currie & Co. London, 5 July 1899.
34. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 23 Aug. 1899; Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 53.
35. South African News, 6 July 1899.
36. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, pp. 55-57.

government is, convinced that no ground whatsoever exists for active interference in the internal concerns of that Republic". 37

Schreiner's explanation did not, however, satisfy the peace party's allies in England. Complaints continued that the Liberals were placed in a difficult position by the ministry's advice not being official. Informal representations were all very well but they did not appear in blue books and were of no use for public purposes. Percy Molteno reported with some irritation that they had been forced to abandon most valuable questions in the House because of uncertainty as to the Cape Government's official position. 38

In view of the increasing difficulties of the situation, the news that Hofmeyr had finally induced the Transvaal Government to modify its franchise proposals so as to meet virtually all the demands made by Milner at Bloemfontein, came at a most opportune moment. The new proposals were communicated to the press at once and they were published on 8 July together with a statement that the ministry regarded the new measures as "adequate, satisfactory and such as should secure a peaceful settlement". In an editorial, indicative of the relief felt by the peace party at the successful outcome of the negotiations and full of praise for Hofmeyr's efforts, the South African News hailed the scheme as ushering in a new era for South Africa and as bringing peace with honour to all concerned. 39

It was then decided that the time had come for the Bond to break its silence on the issue and on 12 July a meeting was held in Cape Town with Hofmeyr taking the chair. Resolutions were passed endorsing the ministry's Transvaal policy and calling for the maintenance of peace and the arbitration of disputes arising under the London Convention. Although the self-imposed ban upon public demonstrations had been lifted the Bond was, however, determined to maintain its moderate stand and avoid the contentious issue of a resolution condemning Milner's accusations of disloyalty against the Dutch colonists which was ruled out of order by the chairman. 40 Once they had been given the green light by their leaders

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37. South African News, 8 July 1899.

38. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 7 July 1899 and 14 July 1899.

39. South African News, 8 July 1899.

40. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, pp. 199-200.

approximately 185 meetings were held by branches of the Bond throughout the Colony approving resolutions similar to those passed at Cape Town. The South African News lent its support to the movement and expressed the hope that English colonists no less than Dutch would without hesitation or reserve endorse the "moderate and statesmanlike" resolutions.<sup>41</sup> Some of these peace resolutions were forwarded to the High Commissioner for communication to the Imperial Government<sup>42</sup> but they were received without enthusiasm and the peace meetings did little to dispel the impression created in Britain by the noisier demonstrations of the imperial party.<sup>43</sup> Friends in England therefore continued urging the advisability of tabling a peace motion as soon as parliament met and this view was supported by the South African News.<sup>44</sup> But although the Transvaal's new proposals had served to ease the situation they had not provided a conclusive solution to the problem and the Cape Government was not prepared to depart from its policy of restraint while the Cape leaders were still in close communication with the Transvaal. From that time onwards Milner excluded the ministry from direct participation in the negotiations, but Hofmeyr in particular continued to do his utmost to avert a deadlock.<sup>45</sup> After the meeting of parliament Merriman and Sauer tried to persuade Schreiner to introduce a motion "which would open the eyes of the British public to the facts of the situation" but the prime minister refused to comply. In this he was supported by Hofmeyr and by the Chief Justice, Sir Henry de Villiers, who feared that such a move would lead to the introduction of a counter-resolution in the Legislative Council where the South African Party did not have a majority.<sup>46</sup> On 18 July Schreiner replied to Sir Gordon Sprigg's question in the House as to the Government's intentions by reading the text of the peace motion adopted by the House on 26 April 1897. He also made it clear that he thought that no good purpose could be served by a heated debate at a time when "every lover of the Empire and South Africa should exercise stern control over the unnecessary expression of heated feelings".<sup>47</sup> Percy Molteno

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41. South African News, 13 July 1899; M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 25 Oct. 1899.

42. Ons Land, 19 Oct. 1899.

43. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 28 July 1899.

44. South African News, 14 July 1899.

45. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, pp. 66-67; Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, pp. 200-206.

46. Walker, De Villiers, pp. 341-342.

47. South African News, 19 July 1899.

admitted that Schreiner's move had been a clever one, but continued to complain, in rather exaggerated terms, that lack of information as to the Cape ministry's attitude paralysed the Opposition in the House of Commons.<sup>48</sup> No doubt, he admitted, there were sound reasons for the Cape ministry's cautious behaviour and he implored his brother Charles to get Schreiner to give him some hint as to what these were. There are indications, however, that Schreiner regarded the impatient Molteno as a dangerous ally and that he feared that he might make indiscreet use of confidential information, for he appears to have left him unenlightened.<sup>49</sup> Molteno was not, however, the only one who found the ministry's attitude inexplicable. Frederick Mackarness also complained to Merriman that although there were many Liberals who wished to work with the Cape ministers, they were not always able "fully to understand their ways" and John Morley later expressed his regret that there had been so little communication between the Cape Government and its Liberal allies.<sup>50</sup>

These reactions to a certain extent indicated a failure to fully appreciate the difficulties of the situation in which the Cape Government found itself. Their approval of the Transvaal's franchise scheme placed them in public opposition to the High Commissioner and their relations became increasingly strained. Their disagreement with Milner, who occupied the dual position of Governor and High Commissioner, created an ambiguous constitutional position, for as Governor of the Cape Colony he was obliged to heed the advice of his ministers but as High Commissioner he could overrule them in matters of Imperial concern. As the Cape Colony's interests would be vitally involved in the event of war its government could reasonably expect its views on the question to receive some consideration, but as Britain's relations with the Transvaal were, in strictly constitutional terms, a purely Imperial matter, it was a moot point whether the Cape ministry had the right to insist that its advice should be followed and the danger was always present that it might be dismissed if its views embarrassed the High Commissioner. Its opponents

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48. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 21 July 1899 and 28 July 1899.

49. Ibid., 3 Aug. 1899 and 11 Aug. 1899.

50. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 114-115, 234.

did not hesitate to point to Sir William Butler as an example of the fate which awaited those who opposed "the man at the wheel". Percy Molteno held extremely radical views on the constitutional aspect of the question. He urged that "the constitutional course was to take the advice of the Cape Government and to qualify the advice even of the High Commissioner if necessary by such opinion of the Cape Government".<sup>51</sup> Schreiner, however, saw the situation in a very different light and as he was not opposed by Hofmeyr and the Bond his views prevailed and the ministry refrained from carrying its opposition to the point where it would provoke a constitutional crisis. Molteno therefore had to be satisfied with assurances from his sister Caroline Murray, that:

"We all appreciate so much all your efforts and only wish more could be done from this end to co-operate with you .... but they wish to do nothing that could be said to add to the difficulties or prevent Chamberlain and Milner from having what they might call "fair play" for their policy ...."

Charles Molteno also felt that "some day we shall have to reckon with Milner, but the time is not yet ....".<sup>52</sup>

When the British Government countered the Transvaal's offer of a modified franchise scheme with a request for a joint commission of enquiry, the Cape leaders advised the Republic to agree to it. They had from the outset regarded Milner's request that the proposals should be submitted to the Imperial authorities for examination before they expressed an opinion on them, as reasonable.<sup>53</sup> On 11 August a meeting of Afrikaner parliamentarians was held to endorse a petition to President Kruger which had been drafted by Hofmeyr. While sympathising with the Transvaal in its troubles they urged the expediency of its doing its utmost, short of sacrificing its independence, to avert the horrors of war.

"While agreeing that the Commission of Enquiry proposed by Mr. Chamberlain cannot be asked for as a matter of right, we believe that such a commission might prove a way out of the

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51. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 7 July 1899; Percy Molteno wrote a letter to the Times (10 July 1899) in which he defended the right of the Cape and Natal governments to have their views consulted. It was sent to the Prime Ministers of all the self-governing colonies and was later published as a S.A.C.C. pamphlet No. 1 "A Plain Statement of the Facts by Percy A. Molteno."
52. M.P., Caroline Murray to P.A. Molteno, 12 Sept. 1899; C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 12 Sept. 1899.
53. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 63.

existing difficulties, which are fast approaching a crisis, with results which might prove fatal to the best interests not only of our Transvaal and Free State brethren, but also to the Afrikaner party in the Cape Colony .... We beg that Your Honour will lay these words which are only dictated by a keen sense of our common interests and risks privately before your Executive and Volksraad".

This appeal was signed by fifty-three parliamentarians and was dispatched to Kruger via Abraham Fischer.<sup>54</sup> On 20 September Kruger's reply, in which he pointed out that his Government had accepted the joint enquiry, was communicated to the caucus of the South African Party. The meeting passed a resolution expressing its satisfaction at the Transvaal's action and the hope that it would "render the outbreak of active hostilities practically impossible". The hollowness of these hopes was reflected, however, in the proposal of a further resolution that subscription lists in aid of Transvaal widows and orphans be opened throughout the Colony. Discussion of the matter was postponed in the hope that war might still be averted, but Hofmeyr had in fact abandoned his attempts to influence the Transvaal two days before and Charles Molteno reported to his brother, on the day of the meeting, that the situation was as bad as it could possibly be and that it seemed almost hopeless to look for a peaceful solution.<sup>55</sup> The proceedings of the meeting, together with the text of the appeal to Kruger, were communicated to the press and the South African News hailed it as conclusive proof of the Afrikaner party's loyalty to Britain.<sup>56</sup> Milner, however, regarded the terms in which it was couched as evidence that: "The Afrikaner alliance is thus solid and defiant in its opposition to our policy".<sup>57</sup>

Amidst preparations for war on both sides last minute appeals for peace were made by the ministry and its parliamentary supporters. On 21 September the Cabinet petitioned the British Government to approach the Transvaal in a spirit of magnanimous compromise, but Milner's brief reply indicated that Britain's patience had been exhausted and Chamberlain was

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54. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 202; J.H. Hofmeyr and F.K. Reitz, Life of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, p. 549.

55. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 206; M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 20 Sept. 1899.

56. Ons Land, 21 Sept. 1899; South African News, 21 Sept. 1899.

57. Headlam, Milner Papers, v. i, pp. 541-542.

equally unyielding.<sup>58</sup> At the suggestion of Rose Innes and Hofmeyr, Schreiner then drafted a peace resolution in the hope of securing a unanimous vote in the House of Assembly, but they failed to agree upon the wording and the attempt was abandoned.<sup>59</sup> The caucus of the South African Party then appointed Dr. J.H.M. Beck, Charles Searle and James Molteno to draw up a petition to the Queen which was signed by fifty-eight parliamentarians. It was presented to Milner by James Molteno on 29 September but constituted little more than a last desperate gesture as the petitioners realised that their appeal had come too late to have any appreciable effect.<sup>60</sup> A counter petition supporting Imperial policy was circulated amongst the Progressives and the fact that it received fifty-three signatures indicates how evenly the parties were divided.

Although the Cape Government made the major contribution to the peace campaign its supporters outside parliament did not remain altogether inactive. While Schreiner was working for peace in the realm of politics his sister Olive made her contribution in another sphere. In this eloquent denunciator of Rhodes the Boer cause found one of its most ardent champions. Her literary reputation alone was bound to secure her a hearing, and although her political judgment was often too impetuous and intuitive to be sound, she was associated with prominent men like Smuts and Reitz in the Transvaal and with virtually all the leaders of the peace party at the Cape and could therefore reasonably be expected to be well informed, so that her opinion was often more highly valued than it warranted. She was known in literary circles in England through her writings and during the early months of the war Montagu White, the Transvaal's consul-general in London, wrote from New York that he had been astonished to find how much influence she had in America "especially amongst cultivated Americans". He urged that she and her husband should come to the United States to address public meetings in support of the republican cause.<sup>61</sup> On the eve of the war the New York Journal asked her to act as its war correspondent and offered her a handsome fee.<sup>62</sup>

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58. Headlam, Milner Papers, v. i, pp. 541-542; Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 206.

59. Walker, Schreiner, p. 192.

60. J.T. Molteno, The Dominion of Afrikanderdom, pp. 178-180; M.P., James Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 11 Oct. 1899.

61. O.S.P., Montagu White to P.A. Molteno, 26 Feb. 1900.

62. Ibid., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 24 Sept. 1899.

The chronic asthma from which she suffered necessitated her living in a dry climate at a high altitude which removed her from Cape Town and therefore the centre of activity for most of the war, but it did not prevent her from making a spirited contribution to the conciliation movement.

In November 1898 she and her husband had settled in Johannesburg where she therefore had the opportunity of studying the situation at first hand. She formed a very low opinion of the average uitlander and contact with the leaders of the South African League convinced her that no concessions of Kruger's would satisfy "Rhodes and his crew".<sup>63</sup> The increasing deterioration of relations between Britain and the Transvaal disturbed her so deeply that, with a fine sense of the dramatic, she launched an impassioned plea for peace on the eve of the Bloemfontein conference. It appeared in the Standard and Diggers News in the shape of an article entitled "Words in Season - An English South African's view of the Situation". The value of her appeal lay in its passionate sincerity rather than in its rational argument and from the latter point of view it had many weaknesses. Edmund Garrett, in the course of an article repudiating it, objected with some justification to her "question-begging rhetoric" and maintained that her appeal "supports the logic of a school-girl with the statistics of a romanticist and wraps them both in the lambent fire of a Hebrew prophetess".<sup>64</sup> From the conciliation party's point of view her appeal was particularly significant for the manner in which she interpreted the rôle of the English South African:

"We English South Africans of today who are truly South African, loving the land of our birth and men inhabiting it, yet bound by intense and loving ties, not only of intellectual affinity but of personal passion to the homeland from which our parents come, and where the richest formative years of our lives were passed, we stand today midway between these two great sections of South African folk, the old who have been here long and the new who have only come; between the homeland of our fathers and the love-land of our birth and it would seem as though, through no advantage of wisdom or intellectual knowledge on our part, but simply as a result of the accident of our position and of our double affections, that we are fitted to fulfil a certain function

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63. W.P.S.P., (U.C.T.), O. Schreiner to W.P. Schreiner, 24 Sept. 1899.

64. E. Garrett, "The Inevitable in South Africa", Contemporary Review, Oct. 1899.

at the present day, to stand as it were as mediators and interpreters between those our opinion compels us to sympathise with and to understand them as they may perhaps not be able to understand each other.

Especially at the present moment has arrived a time that it is essential that however small we may feel in our inherent fitness for the task we should not shrink nor remain silent and inactive, but exert by word and action that peculiar function with which our position invests us".

She concluded her appeal with a warning to Britain that it could only lose by war and with a pointed reference to Milner, "this new Englishman of ours", whom she hoped would save an Empire for England and heal the wounds of South Africa. "Are we asking too much when we turn our eyes in hope to him?". She had originally, on hearing of the proposed conference between Kruger and Milner, intended going to Bloemfontein in the hope of securing an interview with the High Commissioner, but she eventually contented herself with working feverishly to complete her article in time to send Milner a rough printer's proof to meet him at Beaufort West so that he might read it before the conference.<sup>65</sup> What Milner would have thought of a personal confrontation at that stage with this "most interesting of South African humans"<sup>66</sup> can only be surmised. Her gesture, however, received a predictably polite reply, "a very nice letter not mentioning politics but very cordial personally".<sup>67</sup>

The article was taken over by the South African News which published it in three instalments and later issued it as a pamphlet.<sup>68</sup> Ons Land devoted a leader to it and the editor, F.S. Malan, wrote to Olive Schreiner expressing his appreciation, as did James Butler, editor of the Midland News, whom she had always regarded as more or less a Rhodes man. The Cape Times also published extracts from it as "anything Olive Schreiner writes is always exceedingly worth reading" even though it thought she displayed a "sublime blindness" to the facts of the case.<sup>69</sup> In the Transvaal it was translated into Dutch by the State Secretary,

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65. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to W.P. Schreiner, 17 May 1899 and 30 May 1899; O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 31 May 1899.

66. Milner's comment on Olive Schreiner, see Headlam, Milner Papers, v. i, p. 336.

67. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 3 June 1899.

68. South African News, 1-3 June 1899.

69. Ons Land, 3 June 1899; Cape Times, 1 June 1899.

F.W. Reitz, in order to circulate it amongst the burghers and a translation by Edward Boucher, the French consul in the Transvaal, was sent to Paris.<sup>70</sup> It was also circulated by publishers in America and England where Percy Molteno lent it his energetic support.<sup>71</sup>

Olive Schreiner followed up her "Words in Season" with an article on the situation which she sent to the Sun appealing to the American people to strengthen the hands of those in England and South Africa who were struggling for peace by expressing their sympathy. On the advice of J.A. Hobson she also cabled to the Manchester Guardian urging that public meetings be held throughout England in support of John Morley's Arbroath speech in which he had urged Britain to follow a policy of fusion instead of supremacy. On the outbreak of the war she again appealed to the Americans through the New York Journal, but by then she admitted that it was like administering medicine to a dying child.<sup>72</sup>

In July Mrs. Koopmans de Wet, friend and mentor of the editor of Ons Land, sent a copy of Olive Schreiner's pamphlet to England with the request that it be presented to Queen Victoria. This gesture was prompted by the widely prevalent belief that the Queen was opposed to the war and revealed the faith that many had in her as the personal champion of peace. When Mrs. Koopmans de Wet's appeal got no further than the Queen's private secretary, who informed her on 28 July that publications of a politically controversial nature had to be submitted through her responsible ministers, she took the lead in composing a petition to the Queen to be signed by the women of the Colony.<sup>73</sup> The idea had already been mooted in the columns of the South African News at the end of June when the energetic circulation of a petition supporting the resolutions passed at the Good Hope Hall meeting of 28 June was causing the peace party considerable annoyance. The South African News had pointed out that "some means will have to be taken to remove the semblance of unanimity concerning which the Rhodesite wire-

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70. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 13 July 1899; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 90.

71. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, c. July 1899 and 4 Nov. 1899; M.P., P.A. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 4 July 1899.

72. W.P.S.P., (U.C.T.), O. Schreiner to W.P. Schreiner, 14 Sept. 1899; South African News, 2 Oct. 1899.

73. F.S. Malan, Marie Koopmans de Wet, pp. 196-200.

justified the horrors of war, signed by the moderator, J.H. Hofmeyr and three senior officials of the Church, was presented to Milner for transmission to the Queen.<sup>78</sup> Individual congregations also petitioned for peace and 20 August was consecrated a day of prayer for peace.<sup>79</sup> Of all the appeals which emanated from the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church that of its senior and most distinguished representative, Andrew Murray, received the most attention. On 5 October he appealed to the people of England on behalf of 100 000 members of his church to pause and reconsider, and on the first day of the war the South African News published another eloquent appeal from him in the place of its usual editorial.<sup>80</sup> It was followed up by three articles on various aspects of the dispute which formed part of a series, but in the face of the outbreak of hostilities their publication was abandoned.<sup>81</sup> A few days after the war had commenced the Chief Justice appealed to Andrew Murray to lead a deputation to England to remonstrate with the British people but he regarded it as a hopeless errand and advised that they concentrate their energies upon keeping their own people from open rebellion.<sup>82</sup>

Support for the peace party was not confined entirely to the Dutch Reformed Church. Although most of the prominent Anglican clergy approved of the Imperial Government's policy, the peace party did receive some support from the ranks of the Nonconformists. Of these the Unitarian minister and author Ramsden Balmforth was the most prominent. Having arrived at the Cape at the same time as Milner he had since then become convinced that the High Commissioner was not the man to solve South Africa's problems and he did not hesitate to express his views from the pulpit and in the press.<sup>83</sup> Even more energetic and outspoken support for the peace party came from Dr. F.C. Kolbe. In July he defined his position in an extremely frank article in the South African Catholic.

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78. South African News, 10 Aug. 1899.

79. Ibid., 12 Aug. 1899; 12, 18 and 26 Sept. 1899; 10 Oct. 1899.

80. South African News, 12 Oct. 1899.

81. J. du Plessis, The Life of Andrew Murray of South Africa, p. 424. These three papers were issued as a pamphlet entitled "In Defence of the Boers" in America. Op. cit., p. 426.

82. Walker, De Villiers, p. 366.

83. South African News, 19 June 1899; 28 Sept. 1899; 16 Oct. 1899; 12 Jan. 1900.

Magazine of which he was the editor. Describing himself as a Progressive in Cape politics and a Liberal in British politics, he accused Britain of having stolen the diamond fields from the Free State and of now having the same designs upon the Transvaal gold fields. He even went so far as to express the hope that Imperial arms would not be successful if so unjust a war were ever entered upon. After the outbreak of the war he described the attack upon the Transvaal as "the greatest national crime of the century".<sup>84</sup> His outspoken views led to his resignation as editor of the South African Catholic Magazine in April 1900 and it was only after it had been decided that the discussion of political issues - except where they directly involved the interests of the Church - would be avoided, that he resumed that position in January 1901.<sup>85</sup>

The attitude of the South African News towards the Anglican Archbishop, W.W. Jones, marked a signal departure from the peace party's policy of avoiding unnecessarily provocative actions. Throughout the months of crisis the Archbishop had avoided committing himself beyond instructing that a prayer "for the removal of all hindrances to the peace of our land" be inserted in the service of the Church. In this he was apparently motivated by the desire to avoid giving extremists within the Church the opportunity to preach political sermons which would further inflame public opinion. He was, however, repeatedly criticised for not giving the Church a more definite lead and was eventually provoked into breaking silence by the editor of the South African News who sent him a copy of that paper in which Andrew Murray's appeal for peace had been pointedly marked. In his reply the Archbishop expressed his abhorrence of war and the hope that it might still be averted at the eleventh hour, but left little room for doubt as to where his sympathies lay.<sup>86</sup> This inevitably led to further correspondence, in the course of which the Archbishop, in referring to the exodus of refugees from the Rand, expressed his astonishment that the paper had not seen fit to express its disapproval of:

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84. South African News, 27 Feb. 1900.

85. South African News, 13 April 1900; Southern Cross, 29 Dec. 1954.

86. South African News, 7 Oct. 1899.

influence to prevent the opposition holding any public meetings. Thus, for a brief period, a "truce of God" prevailed between the two sides.<sup>90</sup> During the months which followed most Bond parliamentarians energetically exerted their influence to restrain their constituents and Schreiner in particular, made a titanic effort. His correspondence during this period bears witness to the innumerable appeals which he sent to all and sundry encouraging, admonishing and advising against "passionate utterances which might breed lamentable consequences". The situation was indeed such as to arouse the liveliest apprehension amongst the Cape leaders.<sup>91</sup> For some time past they had feared that they might lose control over their followers and the invasion of the Colony by the Free State forces in November dashed their hopes of preventing a rebellion. Wherever they appeared the commandos were enthusiastically welcomed by their colonial sympathisers and by the end of the first invasion of the Colony they had been joined or otherwise assisted by 10 000 rebel Afrikaners.<sup>92</sup> Prior to the war Schreiner had appealed to President Steyn not to invade the Colony and he had been convinced that this would not be done. The Free State's action bitterly disappointed the ministry who felt that the Republic gained little from such a move which merely placed a cruel strain upon the loyalty of the Cape Afrikaners.<sup>93</sup> Schreiner roundly condemned the invasion and reported annexation of Colonial territory and Merriman complained bitterly: "The Free State is bent on ruining this Colony and all South Africa. We deserve better treatment".<sup>94</sup> The Cape leaders did their utmost to dispel any illusions which might have been created by the 'annexation' of some districts of the Colony by the Republicans and strove with might and main to convince their followers of the folly of rebellion. This telegram from Merriman to G. Hugo, himself a potential rebel, speaks for many:

"The suicidal proclamation by the Republics of Colonial territory makes us very anxious knowing the strain of your people. I do most earnestly beg you to use all influence to keep things

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90. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, pp. 210, 213; Cd. 261, p. 183.

91. M.P., C. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 3 Aug. 1899.

92. C.J.S. Strydom, Kaapland en die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog, pp. 102-103, 107; J.H. Snyman, Rebelleverhoor in Kaapland, p. 67.

93. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 104.

94. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), W.P. Schreiner to P.J. de Wet, 23 Dec. 1899; J.X.M.P., Merriman to N.F. de Waal, 16 Dec. 1899.

quiet. Anything like [a] rising would mean ruin to all concerned and destroy all chance of our acting hereafter as peace-makers. The truest patriotism is to remain tranquil". 95

The ministry also used its influence to prevent military arrangements being made which would unnecessarily irritate a section of the colonists. Schreiner had obtained a qualified assurance from Milner that colonial troops would be used only for defensive purposes and the colonists were assured that they would not be commandeered to fight against their republican kin.<sup>96</sup> The ministry also tried to restrict the proclamation of martial law and on 23 November a proclamation was issued to counteract rumours that the Colony was to be deprived of its constitution.<sup>97</sup> The fear that the natives would be armed caused particular alarm and Schreiner was in favour of making a public statement on the issue, but disagreement within the cabinet prevented this and he had to content himself with issuing private assurances to individuals.<sup>98</sup> The fear was particularly prevalent in Merriman's constituency of Wodehouse which adjoined the native territories and was used as a pretext by some disaffected persons who were in collusion with the Republicans to obtain arms. Sauer was dispatched to Dordrecht to try and salvage the situation, but his mission ended in disaster when the Free State commando entered the town on the invitation of some of the inhabitants with whom Sauer had been co-operating to prevent this occurring.<sup>99</sup> The incident placed him in a compromising position and was eagerly seized upon by the opposition press to cast suspicion upon Sauer's integrity. The Cape Argus even went to the length of suggesting that "by the side of Mr. Sauer's sort of loyalty open treason itself is respectable".<sup>100</sup> The ministerial press spoke up in Sauer's defence and the verbal exchanges which ensued merely added to the heated feelings on both sides. The affair also led to an exasperating exchange between Milner and Sauer. A meeting of Aliwal North refugees took place at Queenstown on 25 November and a resolution casting suspicion

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95. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 102.

96. South African News, 17 Nov. 1899; Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 83.

97. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Draft Proclamation, 23 Nov. 1899.

98. Ibid., Draft minute, 15 Dec. 1899.

99. For a detailed treatment of the episode, see J.A. James, The Rebellion in Barkly East and Dordrecht, 1899.

100. Cape Argus, 29 Nov. 1899.

on Sauer's motives for visiting Dordrecht was forwarded to Milner after which it duly appeared in a blue book<sup>101</sup> without Sauer having been consulted. When he protested, Milner replied that he had not mentioned the resolution in his dispatch, which had in fact commended Sauer for his efforts to prevent the rebellion from spreading.<sup>102</sup> But the insinuation had been there and the harm had been done.

While the Dordrecht affair was agitating the public mind another incident occurred to add to the state of ferment in the Colony. On 21 November the South African News published a report of a conversation between James Molteno and Sir Alfred Milner in which the latter had allegedly said that he was "determined to break the dominion of Afrikanderdom". The conversation had taken place on 4 October when Molteno, as the representative of the South African Party caucus, had called upon Milner to enquire whether any communication had been received from the Imperial Government in reply to the party's peace petition. James Molteno had sent a summary of the conversation to his brother in London and Percy Molteno, after seeking the advice of the eminent jurist Sir Edward Clarke, had on his own initiative communicated it to the press. It was published by the Morning Leader and the Daily Chronicle on 3 November and was reprinted in the South African News after the arrival of the mail at the Cape.<sup>103</sup> Milner's private secretary immediately informed that paper that "the report is so imperfect and inaccurate as to be absolutely misleading. Not only are expressions attributed to His Excellency which he never used, but the whole tenor of his observations is entirely distorted" and in replying to a query from Chamberlain Milner denied having used the phrase.<sup>104</sup> Both in England and at the Cape the report caused considerable excitement and a heated controversy ensued with the imperialist press showering abuse on James Molteno which in turn caused his associates to leap to his defence. On the strength of a letter from L.S. Amery, their war correspondent in South Africa, which falsely described Molteno as being a prime contributor

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101. Cd. 43, p. 220.

102. James, The Rebellion in Barkly East and Dordrecht, pp. 69-70. Cd. 261, pp. 47-48.

103. M.P., P.A. Molteno to Capt. J. Sinclair, 3 Nov. 1899.

104. South African News, 22 Nov. 1899; Molteno, Dominion of Afrikanderdom, pp. 172-193.

to the columns of Ons Land, "the most mischievous of Afrikaner journals", the Times attacked him in a fierce leader accusing him, inter alia, of a breach of etiquette in publishing a confidential conversation.<sup>105</sup> In England the more outspoken Liberals who had expected the Cape parliament to censure Milner after the publication of the 'helot' dispatch and who had been advocating his recall, regarded this "bombshell" as a great coup.<sup>106</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, however, while assuring Percy Molteno that he did not doubt the veracity of his brother's word, found his hands tied by the strong support which Milner received from the "Oxford group". Asquith had warned him bluntly: "To countenance an attack upon Milner would be to split the party at once into fragments".<sup>107</sup> In his speech at Manchester on 15 November the Liberal leader therefore found it prudent to refer to the objectionable phrase as almost certainly a mistake in the report. As a palliative he added: "If we are to coin barbarous words, I would say that if South Africa is to be saved to the Empire it will be saved by Afrikanerdom and never by Downingstreetery", a remark for which he was rebuked by Asquith.<sup>108</sup> In South Africa the Cape Times took up the cudgels on behalf of the High Commissioner, but Molteno stuck to his guns despite its "extraordinarily malevolent" leader and adhered to his memorandum in every particular.<sup>109</sup> "One of the 57" wrote to the South African News verifying that the published version was consistent with the report which Molteno had given to the party caucus on 5 October, when the members "to a man sat thunderstruck" by what they heard. Although Milner's alleged remark therefore did not come as a complete surprise at the Cape, its publication further estranged the Dutch whom Milner, in Sauer's words, "made to feel that because of their nationality they cannot be embraced in the folds of the Union Jack".<sup>110</sup>

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105. The Times, 19 Jan. 1900; M.P.C., J. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 7 Feb. 1900; P.A. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 19 Jan. 1900.

106. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 115; M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 22 Nov. 1899.

107. M.P., Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman to P.A. Molteno, 18 Nov. 1899; J. Sinclair to P.A. Molteno, 29 Nov. 1899; Gollin, Proconsul in Politics, p. 60.

108. Le May, British Supremacy, p. 39.

109. Cape Times, 22 Nov. 1899; South African News, 23 Nov. 1899; The text of the interview with Milner's denial of its accuracy and Molteno's reassertion of its truth was published as a S.A.C.C. pamphlet No. 6; "Sir Alfred Milner on the Real Object of the War".

110. M.P., Sauer to P.A. Molteno, 4 Oct. 1899.

The conciliation party, whose resentment against Milner had been steadily growing since the shock of the 'helot' dispatch, now became increasingly outspoken in their criticism of the High Commissioner. Although the official policy of restraint had caused the press to moderate its tone, there had already in the past been indications that it found it difficult to adhere to its resolve. On 21 August the arrival of the blue book containing Milner's dispatch on the Bloemfontein conference and the correspondence between the South African League and Imperial officials, had provoked a violent leader in the South African News in which the desirability of Milner's recall had been openly hinted at. The editorial claimed that:

"The connection between the Colonial Office and the South African League constitutes a scandal in its partisanship and its scarcely-concealed encouragement to that organisation to persevere in its endeavours to bring about a war of races in this land".

Its assertion that the blue book "reeked" with prejudice and contained a dozen references from both Milner and Greene which "almost suggest the inferior minds of a couple of Rhodesite leader writers", left little doubt as to its attitude towards the High Commissioner and its sentiments were echoed by most of the peace party, Charles Molteno describing Milner's policy as "nothing less than villainous", and Merriman referring to the "cynical immorality" of his collusion with the imperialist press.<sup>111</sup> Demands for Milner's recall began to be heard and the issue of the South African News in which Molteno's memorandum appeared also contained a report from the paper's London correspondent stating:

"It is at last safe to say that the gradually growing conviction that there can be no chance of peace until Sir Alfred Milner has been recalled from the Cape will be enormously strengthened by the insight into his mind afforded by this conversation with Mr. Molteno ....."

Although what Milner termed the "truce of God" continued to prevail for some months yet, it became increasingly apparent that this was a most precarious state of affairs.

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111. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 11 Oct. 1899; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 223.

CHAPTER III

THE PROTEST AGAINST ANNEXATION

While there had still been a chance of averting war the conciliation party had adopted the course favoured by their political leaders and had refrained from any concerted action. When, however, they found themselves completely outclassed by their opponents many began to pause and reconsider. The outbreak of hostilities cleared away the tangle of negotiations and false hopes which had to a certain extent obscured the issue and the conciliation party saw with greater clarity how well organised the war party had been. They were also not lacking in candid friends who, while admitting that it was easy to be wise after the event, reproached them for not having realised from the outset what a powerful combination they had to contend with. Although the disturbed state of the Colony and the presence of enemy forces within its borders at first tied their hands, increasing demands began to be heard that the conciliation party too, should organise itself into a more effective force. In this they had before them the example of the allies in England where several organisations were established to oppose the war, the most significant being the South Africa Conciliation Committee (subsequently denoted by the abbreviation S.A.C.C.) with Leonard Courtney as president, F.C. Selous as vice-president and Frederick Mackarness as chairman. The objectives of the S.A.C.C. were to watch South African affairs with a view to issuing accurate information so as to enable the public to form a just estimate of the political situation in that country and to advocate the paramount importance of a policy aimed at re-establishing goodwill between the British and Dutch races in South Africa by recognising the just claims of both in a settlement of the conflict at the earliest possible opportunity.<sup>1</sup> Percy Molteno had been a prime mover in the establishment of the Committee which became public on 15 January 1900 and his brothers at the Cape had been kept abreast of developments from the inception of the idea. Molteno was throughout the war an extremely active member of the S.A.C.C. and the first month of its existence in particular was a time of almost frenzied activity on his part. During this period he showered upon his associates

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1. South African News, 8 Feb. 1900.

at the Cape a veritable torrent of advice in order to galvanize them into action, providing them with the minutest instructions as to what he thought they should do. There were two points in particular which he continually stressed. He insisted that Milner was riding rough-shod over the Cape Colony's constitutional rights and urged the conciliators to take action to defend their liberties; and secondly, he insisted that something had to be done to dispel the profound ignorance which prevailed in England as to the true state of affairs in South Africa. Prior to the war Molteno had already been severely critical of what he regarded as the Schreiner ministry's too complaisant attitude and after the outbreak of hostilities he continued pursuing the subject with unabated vigour. He maintained that in 1889, when the High Commissioner's salary had been increased and the Cape parliament had undertaken to pay two thirds of it, an understanding had been entered into according to which the High Commissioner agreed that, in the conduct of negotiations with the two Republics, he would consult the Cape ministry. Furthermore, the Cape was being used as a base for military operations against the Republics and Milner therefore had no right to ignore its government. In doing so he was usurping power to which he was not constitutionally or historically entitled. "Milner's action is that of the Crown and Strafford at the time of the Stuarts and must be stopped or your liberties are worth nothing".<sup>2</sup> Molteno wrote a series of five letters on the subject to the Westminster Gazette and the Manchester Guardian and these were later published by the S.A.C.C. as a pamphlet entitled "The Action of Sir Alfred Milner as High Commissioner from a Constitutional Point of View". Molteno was most insistent that the points he raised should be brought to the attention of every member of the Cape House of Assembly and that a firm stand should be made in defence of their liberties when their parliament met.<sup>3</sup> He also urged Albert Cartwright to take the matter up in the South African News and personally wrote to the paper under the noms de plume "Constitutionalist" and "Contributor", with the result that further criticism of the government's 'inertness' before the war began to appear in that paper.<sup>4</sup> Equally urgent was the

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2. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 2 Feb. 1900; P.A. Molteno to the editor of the Westminster Gazette, 7 Feb. 1900; P.A. Molteno to A. Cartwright, 10 Feb. 1900.

3. Ibid., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 15 Feb. 1900.

4. M.P., P.A. Molteno to A. Cartwright, 2 Feb. 1900; South African News, 2 Feb. 1900, 28 Feb. 1900.

need to provide the British public with accurate information about South Africa. This problem had become more acute after H.W. Massingham's resignation as editor of the Daily Chronicle in November 1899 when that paper changed hands. It became increasingly difficult for the anti-war party to get a hearing in any of the major London newspapers. Frederick Harrison complained that there was virtually a "reign of press terror" and Percy Molteno also pointed with increasing exasperation to the dwindling support of the press.<sup>5</sup> The S.A.C.C. was making a concerted effort to remedy the problem by publishing a large number of pamphlets on matters relating to the war and Percy Molteno suggested that a committee be formed at the Cape to supply them with accurate information and to assist in distributing their literature.

"It is no use being cowed down by the deplorable circumstances in which you are placed - only by solid, exact, careful and continuous work are any successful results to be obtained".<sup>6</sup>

He was particularly anxious to counteract the theory that a great Afrikaner conspiracy consisted to oust Britain from South Africa, which became increasingly prevalent once the British army had suffered a series of reverses during the first months of the war and which soon replaced the franchise issue as a justification for the war.<sup>7</sup> In answer to his appeals Dr. J.H.M. Beck, M.L.A. for Worcester, wrote a tract refuting the charge which was published by the S.A.C.C. as one of its first pamphlets under the title "The Pan-Africander Conspiracy - A Refutation by an Africander Member of the Cape Parliament".<sup>8</sup>

While Percy Molteno was urging the conciliation party at the Cape to "work like the devil" his exhortations were enforced locally by Ernest Temple Hargrove who played a prominent rôle in the conciliation movement during the first half of the year, but whose assistance ultimately proved to be rather a mixed blessing to his associates. Hargrove was a member of a well placed English family and although his parents did not share

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5. M.P., F. Harrison to P.A. Molteno, 28 Nov. 1899; P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 8 Dec. 1899.
  6. M.P., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 2 Feb. 1900, 15 Feb. 1900.
  7. Le May, British Supremacy, pp. 31 - 34.
  8. M.P., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 14 Dec. 1899; J.H.M. Beck to P.A. Molteno, 29 Jan. 1900.

his pro-Boer sentiments his sister also actively supported the Republican cause.<sup>9</sup> He had been educated at Harrow, was a former member of the Middle Temple and an author of some note, including a work on world politics. Being a gentleman of means and leisure he and his American wife were travelling in South Africa when the war broke out.<sup>10</sup> In November 1899 he accompanied Sauer on his mission to Dordrecht and was an "unofficial" member of the deputation sent to request Commandant Olivier not to invade the town.<sup>11</sup> He maintained that his observation of the situation in South Africa convinced him that the war was unjust and unnecessary and in a letter to the South African News of 19 December he urged the people of the Colony to exert themselves to stop it by telling the people of Britain the simple truth. They should not waste time appealing to the political leaders but should speak boldly and clearly to the man with the vote and strike hard home with facts. An editorial commenting upon this letter pointed out that nothing could be done while there were enemy troops on British territory, but expressed the hope that once the Republicans had been driven out of the Colony, members of the South African Party would come together on platforms throughout the Colony to urge Britain to declare her intentions towards the Republics.<sup>12</sup> All the talk of an Afrikaner conspiracy prompted Hargrove to take the unorthodox step of travelling to Pretoria via Delagoa Bay with the object of securing from the Republican leaders themselves a statement as to their exact aspirations. Although he spoke no Dutch and had no introductions, he claimed that he experienced no difficulty in getting about and between 17 January and 15 February had had the opportunity of coming into intimate contact with Presidents Kruger and Steyn as well as Fischer, Smuts, Reitz and others. The Presidents and their executives assured him that they were merely fighting for their freedom and that they had no territorial ambitions. Hargrove in fact suggested that President Kruger should appeal to Queen Victoria, and although the President had declined to do so, he favoured Hargrove with a lengthy explanation, couched in strongly religious terms, of the Republic's objectives and the conditions upon which it would be

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9. J.X.M.P., Agnes Merriman to Sarah Merriman, 15 June 1900.

10. South African News, 12 March 1900, 19 March 1900.

11. Cd. 43, pp. 222 - 223; South African News, 29 Nov. 1899.

12. South African News, 19 Dec. 1899.

prepared to make peace. Kruger pointed out that all the Republics wanted was to be left alone and that the Transvaal was prepared to abide by the London Convention. The war, he said, could only be ended either by their extinction or by their retaining their independence. "With us the only question is one of freedom or death".<sup>13</sup> On his return to Cape Town Hargrove showed this "documentary evidence" to Cartwright and two of his associates and it appears that this convinced them that the time had arrived to actively advocate the cessation of hostilities on the basis of continued independence for the Republics.<sup>14</sup>

Another strong appeal for action came from Thomas Hannah of Pietermaritzburg, who took the lead in organising anti-war opinion in Natal. He urged the conciliation party to rouse itself from the lethargy of the past "for the enemy is active and vigilant", and advocated the formation of a Conciliation Committee in South Africa with branches in even the smallest villages to reveal the great capitalist conspiracy which was flourishing in their midst and in so doing to stop the war.<sup>15</sup>

All these appeals culminated in an editorial in the South African News under the heading "Wanted, a Conciliation Committee and £1,000". Contrasting the disheartening lack of organised effort on the part of the conciliation party with the effective machinery operated by the capitalists to influence public opinion, and pointing out the ignorance on the true facts of the situation which prevailed both locally and in Britain, it drew the conclusion that the first great need of the peace party was "a well organised, capably managed, adequately supported intelligence Department". If they were to achieve anything they would have to make liberal use of "that material which has brought about more reforms than all the bullets ever cast - printer's ink". It therefore appealed to opponents of the war to subscribe a thousand pounds for the purposes of a printer's ink campaign. It also advocated the formation of a conciliation committee, pointing out that it would be a poor reflection on the local conciliation party if they remained inactive while

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13. Cd. 261, pp. 127 - 128.

14. South African News, 12 March 1900, 19 March 1900, 8 Jan. 1901.

15. Ibid., 24 Feb. 1900. In April T. Hannah became secretary of the conciliation committee established at Grey Town in Natal, vide, South African News, 1 May 1900; Ons Land, 3 May 1900.

men in England were courting unpopularity and making personal sacrifices in order to champion the cause of peace and justice. It urged the more timid souls who deplored the war, but who hesitated to speak out against it for fear of personal odium to join with the members of the South African Party in establishing a local conciliation committee and offered to place a room in the newspaper's offices at the disposal of the committee and also to print without any profit all the material that was required. "Time passes, the capitalists are powerful, unscrupulous and excellently organised. Are we to do nothing?".<sup>16</sup>

The appeal came at a juncture when even the boldest might hesitate to commit themselves to public support of the Republican cause. The relief of Kimberley and Ladysmith and the surrender of General Cronje on the anniversary of Majuba resulted in a series of demonstrations which did not remain confined to the parading of the Union Jack and the singing of "Rule Britannia". In Cape Town Mrs. Koopmans de Wet's house was hooted by a loyalist mob and at the offices of the South African News they expressed their disapproval more forcibly by breaking several windows and threatening to wreck the machinery so that police protection had to be sought.<sup>17</sup> Similar scenes were witnessed in towns throughout the Colony, the homes of prominent Afrikaners being singled out for special attention by hooting, stone-throwing crowds. Even Milner admitted that the English were rather overdoing "Rule Britannia" and on 13 March the Attorney-General felt obliged to issue a circular to all resident magistrates containing special instructions on how to deal with exuberant public rejoicings.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the conciliation party strongly disapproved when Schreiner agreed to the relief of Mafeking being celebrated by a public holiday, an event which Ons Land satirically styled "Sint Schreiners holiday".<sup>19</sup>

Despite the prevailing unpleasantness the South African News announced that it had received a "gratifying" response to its appeal

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16. South African News, 26 Feb. 1900.
  17. Ibid., 17 Feb. 1900, 28 Feb. 1900, 3 March 1900; M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 8 March 1900.
  18. Le May, British Supremacy, pp. 57 - 58; South African News, 17 March 1900.
  19. Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, p. 110; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence v. iii, p. 171.

which had included, amongst others, suggestions that the proposed committee should consider carefully the question of the future of the Republics and that if necessary a congress should be held at Cape Town to point out to the British people the danger of a settlement that would place South Africa in the hands of the mining capitalists.<sup>20</sup> A meeting was therefore held in the offices of the South African News under the chairmanship of Charles Molteno on 12 March at which a committee of twenty-one members with power to add to their number was elected to work with the S.A.C.C. in England to organise public opinion in South Africa. Amongst the founder members the legal fraternity was represented by advocates H. Burton, H.L. Currey, James Molteno and attorneys Vincent van der Byl, H.T. Standen (of the firm with which Sauer was associated) and C.C. de Villiers, a younger brother of the Chief Justice. For the churches there were B.J. Marchand, C. Morgan, Andrew Murray and R. Balmforth; and for the South African News F.J. Centlivres, Alexander Mair, A.J. van Reenen and Albert Cartwright. The rest of the number were made up of C.P. Schultz, Olive Schreiner, F.S. Malan, William Hay, Melt Roux and Adrian van der Byl (the husband of Agnes Merriman's sister and a close associate of the Merrimans). In discussing the objectives of the Committee Charles Molteno deplored the fact that in the past they had generally been told to put off action in connection with the crisis with the result that matters had gone from bad to worse and some had accused them of inertia. Cartwright expressed the hope that the supporters of the Afrikaner Bond would work in close co-operation with the Conciliation Committee despite the fact that the prejudice which existed against the Bond in some quarters hampered it as a promotor of peace. F.S. Malan agreed that the opinion of the Dutch colonists was generally discounted because of their close ties with the inhabitants of the Republics and in the circumstances he felt that it was largely incumbent upon the English-speaking colonists to voice their opposition to the war.<sup>21</sup>

The Committee at once set about drafting a programme of principles and on 17 March William Hay called on Schreiner to discuss these with him. The Prime Minister had already in December 1899 been invited to

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20. South African News, 5 and 10 March 1900.

21. Ibid., 13 March 1900.

give his support to the S.A.C.C. and he had from the start disapproved of such a body being established at the Cape fearing that it would do more harm than good.<sup>22</sup> With Lord Salisbury's recent categorical rejection of the Republics' peace overtures before him, Schreiner objected to the Committee's intention of making the retention of the Republics' unqualified independence one of its objectives and tried to persuade it to modify its aims through consultation with either Hofmeyr or himself. But the leaders of the conciliation movement had lost patience with the ministry's policy of moderation for they declined to do so and made only an insignificant alteration in their proposed resolution against annexation. When Hay, on Schreiner's behalf, pointed out that the Republics might be restored as mere empty shells without any real freedom or power (an objection also raised later by Hofmeyr) the Committee replied that in asking for a loaf they might succeed in obtaining half.<sup>23</sup> F.S. Malan, who sought Merriman's advice in the matter also met with little encouragement, as Merriman believed that an attempt to turn the clock back to the London Convention would be impractical, and he recorded in his diary: "Never was I more struck with the proverbial Dutch failing [of] 'asking too much'".<sup>24</sup> Richard Solomon was also strongly opposed to the movement and advised Schreiner to have nothing to do with it, maintaining:

" ..... however drastic it may be the best policy for South Africa is to have the British flag in the Republics. There is no doubt England has made up her mind to this and by recognising it we shall have far more influence in making the settlement as liberal as possible to the Boers than by kicking against the pricks".<sup>25</sup>

Hofmeyr also, although sympathising with the conciliation movement, refused to take part in it, explaining that it was,

" ..... not only because I hold that most Britons are delirious on the subject of the war and therefore not able to calmly consider any representations in connection with it but also and chiefly because I hardly believe that the racial bitterness resulting from the war must inevitably and in any case be endless".<sup>26</sup>

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22. Walker, Schreiner, p. 209.

23. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), W. Hay to Schreiner, 20 March 1900.

24. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 170.

25. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), R. Solomon to Schreiner, 22 March 1900.

26. Ibid., Hofmeyr to Schreiner, 22 May 1900.

It was therefore obvious that the Conciliation Committee would have to proceed without official support. On 22 March it published its programme which provided for assisting the S.A.C.C. in obtaining and disseminating information, maintaining peace throughout the Colony, advising those who had suffered in person or property during the war as to the best method of obtaining redress and in general promoting a policy aimed at re-establishing the goodwill between the British and Dutch races in South Africa. It also published the text of two resolutions which had been unanimously adopted by the Committee. The first declared that if due regard had been paid to the advice of the Cape ministry the unnecessary and unjust war could have been avoided, and the second expressed the conviction that any settlement that did not respect the independence of the Republics would be detrimental to the highest interests of the Empire and would be fraught with grave danger for the future peace and progress of South Africa. The office-bearers of the Committee were Charles Molteno (chairman), Albert Cartwright (secretary) and A.J. van Reenen (treasurer), thus making the executive virtually synonymous with the management of the South African News. Sympathisers were invited to form conciliation committees throughout the Colony and to arrange public meetings which would endorse the resolutions passed by the parent body in Cape Town. The Committee also impressed upon its supporters the importance of sending full reports of these meetings to the Cape Town branch which would see to it that they were submitted to the High Commissioner for transmission to the Imperial Government. This appeal was endorsed by Ons Land and it was obvious that the conciliators were determined to secure a mention in British blue books, something which had previously been a prerogative of the war party.<sup>27</sup> The Committee concluded by appealing for liberal monetary support to defray the expenses of printing and disseminating literature and possibly even of sending delegates to Europe. Sympathisers were invited to send in their names as associates or members of the Committee whose numbers had been swelled to thirty-two, largely as a result of the wives of existing members joining. Prominent amongst its feminine supporters were Mary Sauer, wife of the Commissioner for Public Works and Mrs. Koopmans de Wet. Mrs. C.C. de Villiers, Betty Molteno and her sister Caroline Murray were also to prove

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27. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 28 July 1899; Ons Land, 20 March 1900.

very active members as were the two most prominent male recruits Dr. F.C. Kolbe and Dr. Meiring Beck.<sup>28</sup>

The response to the Cape Town appeal was prompt if not overwhelming. A conciliation committee was formed at Worcester under the chairmanship of J.N.P. de Villiers, elder brother of the Chief Justice, on the same day as the Cape Town Committee's programme was published and notice was immediately given of meetings to be held at Paarl, Stellenbosch and Tulbagh, at all of which places Hargrove was to be guest speaker. On 17 March he had already addressed a meeting in Cape Town on the subject of his recent visit to the Transvaal and the conversations he had there with Presidents Kruger and Steyn. On this occasion he also produced a petition composed by himself in the form of an appeal from the people of the Colony to those of Great Britain. It pointed out that the British public had been led into the war "in ignorance of vital facts and by misleading statements", that even if Britain succeeded in conquering the Republics it would never be able to subjugate their people. The petitioners denied that the Republics had ever aimed at conquest; they had assumed the offensive because they had believed their independence to be threatened, a fear which the British Government's recent declaration that it was determined to annex their territory proved to have been well founded. The Republics had proved themselves worthy to be free and to deprive them of their freedom "would not only be unjust, it would be a hideous and almost irremediable blunder". As the ultimate decision must rest with the people of Great Britain the petitioners appealed to them to grant the Republics "in the name of justice and for the sake of South Africa and the Empire, that freedom for which they ask". If eloquence had been their aim the Committee might have fared better had it availed itself of the services of Olive Schreiner, but Hargrove's unsophisticated appeal reflected their sentiments with sufficient accuracy to be received with enthusiasm and it was reported that there was a great rush to sign the petition at the Cape Town meeting, although the manner of its presentation would still have to be decided.<sup>29</sup> It was taken up by the South African News and Ons Land and copies with adequate space

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28. South African News, 22 March 1900.

29. Ibid., 19 March 1900.

for signatures appeared repeatedly in their columns and were made available on application at their offices. At many of the subsequent conciliation meetings in the country districts sub-committees were established for the purpose of circulating the People's Petition, as it became known, and the women in particular were asked to canvass signatures. <sup>30</sup>

Altogether fifty-seven conciliation meetings were reported up to the end of June in the columns of the South African News and Ons Land and at twenty of these local committees were formed to co-operate with the parent body in Cape Town. <sup>31</sup> The most active committees were the above-mentioned one at Worcester and the one at Stellenbosch, which counted three M.L.A.s (M.C. Neethling, G. Kruger and J.P. Marais) and Professors Hofmeyr, Muller, Viljoen and De Vos of the Theological Seminary amongst its members. Although a committee was evidently not formed at Paarl, the local conciliationists under the leadership of A.B. de Villiers also played a prominent rôle in the movement.

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The fears of those who believed that the movement would have violent results proved to be unfounded. The meetings were conducted in an orderly fashion and did not result in any disturbances, contrasting favourably in this respect with the scenes of violence which ensued at similar meetings in England. On the whole, opponents of the movement avoided the meetings but where they did attend, as for example at Oudtshoorn on 14 April, they were given a hearing and then outvoted. At Hanover, where the conciliators attended a meeting organised by their opponents, the resolutions in favour of annexation were allowed to be proposed and then negatived in an orderly fashion. A motion appointing a Vigilance Committee for Hanover was not interfered with and a separate conciliation meeting was held four days later. <sup>33</sup> Many of the meetings were attended by the local M.L.A.s, Dr. Beck, J.A. Graaff and D. de V. Rabie in particular

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30. The petition was published as pamphlet No. 37 in the S.A.C.C. series, entitled "A Petition in Favour of Peace by the Ministerial Party at the Cape."

31. Although the organisers were anxious that the movement should receive the maximum of publicity, it is possible that some of the smaller meetings in the rural areas were not reported.

32. South African News, 28 March 1900.

33. Ibid., 10 April 1900.

making a point of supporting the movement in the constituencies. Charles Searle, M.L.A. for George, was one of the few English-speaking members of parliament who lent his support, presiding at a meeting at George and another at Brandwacht in the Mosselbay district.<sup>34</sup> The opposition press went out of its way to discredit the movement as being due to the machinations of the Afrikaner Bond and it even laid the responsibility for the Stellenbosch meeting - where the Bond had no branch - at the door of that much maligned organisation.<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that Bondsmen did play a prominent part in the movement, but the meeting at Wellington, which was also attended by Andrew Murray, appears to have been the only one summoned directly at the behest of the local organisation of the Bond, and then largely at the instigation of its feminine supporters.<sup>36</sup> As has been seen in the instance of Stellenbosch, the Dutch Reformed Church gave its tacit support to the movement, the local clergy nearly always attending and often presiding at the meetings.

The speakers at these gatherings were all agreed that with the withdrawal of the Republican forces from the Colony and in view of the Republics' peace offer to Britain on 5 March, the time had arrived to consider the terms of a settlement. They felt that they would be guilty of a dereliction of duty if they did not raise their voices against the move to deprive the Republics of their independence for, as Dr. Beck pointed out at Tulbagh, silence would mean that they acquiesced in Lord Salisbury's verdict of annexation.<sup>37</sup> The British Prime Minister's speech of 9 November 1899, in which he had claimed that Britain sought no gold-fields and no territory, was frequently referred to and it was pointed out that the annexation of the Republics would be inconsistent with this declaration. During the course of the conciliation meetings it also became apparent that many had questioned the wisdom of the ministry's policy of restraint before the war. M.J. Pretorius, M.L.C., speaking at Middelburg, expressed the opinion that the party should have protested against the war

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34. South African News, 27 April 1900, 29 May 1900.

35. Cape Argus, 27 March 1900, South African News, 28 March 1900.

36. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 214; South African News, 26 March 1900, 31 March 1900.

37. South African News, 2 April 1900.

in parliament instead of keeping quiet. Not that he thought that it would have averted the war, but it would have put them right "as a matter of history", a point of considerable importance to the conciliatonists.<sup>38</sup> As far as can be judged from the incomplete reports available, the speeches at the meetings, although usually outspoken, were not inflammatory. The conciliation party seems to have regarded it as a point of honour that they register their protest in a firm but constitutional manner and viewed against the background of animosity and excitement caused by the war they acquitted themselves creditably.<sup>39</sup> The resolutions passed were usually similar to those adopted by the Cape Town committee. Occasionally local variations were added and many meetings also adopted resolutions in favour of the deproclamation of martial law and against the transportation of Boer prisoners of war to St. Helena. The Middelburg meeting passed a resolution condemning the recent attempt on the life of the Prince of Wales and several of the gathering concluded with a lusty rendering of "God Save the Queen". The resolution adopted at a relatively small meeting at Vredenburg in the Malmesbury district on 9 April, censuring Milner because he had "not succeeded in the execution of his duty in satisfying all parties, and that if a less partial position had been adopted by him towards the Afrikaner population of South Africa this war would probably have been prevented", was the only one of its kind.<sup>40</sup>

The Cape Town committee had offered to provide guest speakers for meetings in the rural districts and Hargrove in particular was in constant demand. He spoke at altogether twelve meetings, mostly in the western Cape but also further afield at Cradock, Humansdorp and George. He was everywhere received with great enthusiasm and his speeches were reported in glowing terms in the South African News and Ons Land. Several of the meetings which he addressed became quite lively, a problem which he seemed quite capable of handling. At Stellenbosch there were noisy interjections of "Proof! Proof!" from the back of the hall while he spoke, at George he was loudly heckled and at the Cradock meeting, which had the misfortune of coinciding with the day on which the report of the relief of Mafeking was

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38. South African News, 20 April 1900.

39. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 214.

40. South African News, 16 April 1900.

received, unruly scenes ensued when crowds repeatedly burst into the hall to announce the good news.<sup>41</sup> Wherever he spoke Hargrove tried to spur his audience on to greater action. At Robertson on 17 April he particularly deplored the Afrikaner's patience which, he maintained, they carried to the point of political inertia. He believed that they left too much to their leaders and he urged that each individual should do his share. They should write to the press in Britain, Canada and Australia and even to individuals to correct the constant misrepresentations of the Jingos; they should establish an intelligence department in every town or village to assist in this task; they should challenge the allegations of Boer atrocities on the battle field and above all they should hold a people's congress to take up the resolutions which would have been dealt with by the Bond Congress. He had at first regretted the indefinite postponement of the Bond's meeting but was now rather glad as it provided the opportunity for a more representative gathering at Worcester, Wellington or any other place which might be considered suitable.<sup>42</sup> There was no doubting Hargrove's enthusiasm for the cause and the idea of a people's congress was definitely one of his more practicable suggestions.

One of the main objections raised by members of the peace party who disapproved of the conciliation movement, was that it would provoke the war party into retaliating and that the heat generated in the ensuing exchanges would have exactly the opposite effect to that desired by the conciliators. In this respect their predictions proved correct for the conciliation movement was speedily countered by a movement in favour of annexation, although there is some doubt as to whether their opponents' activities were due entirely to the provocation of the conciliation party. An Eastern Province newspaper had already in December suggested that meetings be organised throughout the Colony to urge Britain on no account to allow the Republics to retain their independence,<sup>43</sup> and the first annexation meeting at Grahamstown on 17 March followed hard on the heels of the formation of the Conciliation Committee and preceded any of the anti-annexation meetings.<sup>44</sup> The municipalities of all the major centres of

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41. South African News, 23 March 1900, 27 April 1900, 21 May 1900.

42. *Ibid.*, 19 April 1900.

43. *Ibid.*, 13 Dec. 1899.

44. South African News, 19 March 1900.

the Colony soon followed suit by passing resolutions in favour of annexation at their regular council meetings and churchmen of various denominations, including the Anglican Archbishop, hastened to ensure Milner of their support for his policy.<sup>45</sup> An Imperial Vigilance Committee was formed in Cape Town under the presidency of Sir Gordon Sprigg and the activities of its supporters soon gave rise to the type of utterances which men like Schreiner had hoped to avoid. At a particularly unfortunate gathering at Paarl on 28 March, for example, the Dutch Reformed Church was accused of being responsible for the rebellion and it was suggested that all rebels be tried by special courts and disfranchised for life while ringleaders should receive even more exemplary treatment. On this occasion Hargrove was labelled "a criminal who should be behind bars - a man in the pay of the Transvaal - a secret service fund man and a treasonmonger".<sup>46</sup> More significant, however, than the activities of the Paarl annexationists, was the meeting at Claremont on 30 March at which James Rose Innes was the main speaker. As Innes was one of the Cape politicians most highly respected for his personal integrity, his attitude on the war was bound to be of considerable importance. Although he had for some time been a source of disappointment to his erstwhile political associates like Merriman and Sauer, he had so far remained more or less uncommitted; sitting on the fence, his opponents were later to call it. During the months preceding the war it had become clear that he differed from the peace party on several major points, but his attitude had been moderate enough for them to regard him as not entirely lost to the cause and the South African News had even supported his suggestion on the eve of the war that a joint resolution be passed in the Cape parliament urging the Transvaal to concede a five year franchise scheme.<sup>47</sup> At Claremont, however, he supported the annexation of the Republics on the grounds that there would be race hatred whatever the settlement was and that what had been possible before the war was no longer possible after it; "what had been smashed could not be put together again".<sup>48</sup> "Isn't Innes's speech terrible?", lamented Olive Schreiner.

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45. Cape Times, 13 April 1900; South African News, 26 April 1900.

46. South African News, 31 March 1900.

47. Ibid., 26 Sept. 1899.

48. Ibid., 31 March 1900; Harrison M. Wright, Sir James Rose Innes, Selected Correspondence, 1884-1902, p. 263.

"No consideration of what is right only what is expedient!".<sup>49</sup> The South African News agreed with this verdict. Being well aware what a valuable recruit Innes was to the war party, it pointed to his speech as the most significant event in the annexation campaign and several speakers at conciliation meetings took him to task for it.<sup>50</sup> The Vigilance Committee organised a nation-wide series of meetings in favour of annexation to take place on 3 April and a mass meeting was held in Cape Town as part of this demonstration. The conciliators were even more surprised and disappointed when on this occasion Innes appeared on the platform with men of the most extreme views. At Claremont he had implied that he would have preferred to remain silent, but that the agitation being carried on throughout the Colony against annexation had compelled him to raise his voice. Schreiner also blamed the conciliation movement for having provoked Innes into open support for the war party.

"See how the meetings of the conciliation committee movement have raised a counterblast of tenfold greater force and effect from very many quarters. Those meetings, often promoted with the best intentions, have caused us to witness and hear, not only in Cape Town but throughout the country responsive scenes and utterances which might well have been spared, but which as counter demonstrations to Mr. Hargrove's movement will have much greater weight:- one Innes is more potent than fifty Hargroves, - yet Innes would never, I think, have spoken as he did had the contrary extreme movement not forced him to it"<sup>51</sup>

The events which accompanied the mass meeting in Cape Town further disposed Schreiner to view the conciliationists and all they brought in their train with a jaundiced eye. The Cape Town meeting had assumed the proportions of a major event, with a liberal display of bunting and such prominent personages as the Roman Catholic Bishop and the Anglican Dean of Cape Town reinforcing the usual assembly of Progressive politicians on a platform erected in front of the Town House on Greenmarket Square. All the principal business establishments closed down for two hours so that between 5 000 and 6 000 people attended the meeting and the whole affair ended on an unpleasant note with Schreiner being hooted and jeered at in the street by a crowd after the meeting.<sup>52</sup> It is therefore not surprising

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49. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 3 April 1900.

50. South African News, 2 April 1900.

51. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to T.P. Theron, 16 April 1900.

52. South African News, 4 April 1900.

that he questioned the value of the anti-annexation meetings as a conciliatory force.

In the Vigilance Committee the conciliation movement encountered an energetic opponent. Reporting at a special meeting on 1 May its organising and finance sub-committees claimed that 105 vigilance committees had been established and 110 meetings representing over 60 000 people had been held throughout the country. £900 had been raised so far and the literary committee was actively distributing pamphlets.<sup>53</sup> Beside these achievements the efforts of the Conciliation Committee paled into insignificance. In discussing the progress of the movement the South African News, however, pointed out that unlike the supporters of the imperial party who lived in towns and could be easily organised, many of those supporting the conciliation movement resided in rural areas where public meetings were rare and difficult to arrange. They also did not have at their disposal the unlimited funds of the Rhodesite party. Furthermore, on 10 April the military authorities had issued a proclamation prohibiting meetings of a political nature in districts under martial law and this, the South African News claimed, deprived the conciliation movement of support in at least fifty centres. This was an issue on which they felt extremely sore as they believed that they had been deliberately victimised. The war party, because of its concerted action on 3 April was not affected by the prohibition, whereas the conciliation party which had been slower to move, had been able to hold only one meeting in a martial law area, namely at Philipstown on 31 March.<sup>54</sup> They also complained that annexation meetings were in fact being allowed in proclaimed areas and pointed to that which took place at Kenhardt on 28 April as an example of "equal rights".<sup>55</sup>

If the conciliation movement was finding it uphill going in the Cape, news from England was equally disheartening. In March Percy Molteno reported that their resolutions were being cabled to the press, but that they were being off-set by counter resolutions from the vigilance committees. By May they were no longer being mentioned and were therefore having little effect upon the public eye, but he promised that the S.A.C.C. was doing its

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53. South African News, 2 May 1900.

54. Ibid., 6, 16 and 20 April 1900.

55. Ibid., 30 April 1900.

best to advertise the results. He urged that their Committee should continue its work as it could do enormous good by encouraging and giving heart to those in the Colony who sympathised with it.<sup>56</sup> Charles Molteno also saw no hope of immediate success in the present temper of the English people.

"The Conciliation Committee can simply get as strong an expression of opinion as possible in favour of their resolutions, which will be our protest against a great injustice. More than this it is impossible to do at the present time".<sup>57</sup>

The conciliation movement's campaign against the annexation of the Republics culminated in the People's Congress at Graaff-Reinet on 31 May. The idea of convening such a meeting had been present since the inception of the movement. It had been advocated by speakers at several of the conciliation meetings and Hargrove in particular gave it his enthusiastic support. In mid-May he travelled to Graaff-Reinet with the Rev. Pienaar of Uitenhage and at a private meeting in the Afrikaner Bond Zaal arrangements for the Congress were discussed and the invitation committee agreed upon.<sup>58</sup> It consisted of J.F. du Toit, M.L.C. (Midlands), J.H. Smith, M.L.A. (Graaff-Reinet) and F.K. te Water (ex-M.L.A. and father of the cabinet minister) and twenty-one other leading inhabitants of the district with G.F. Smith as secretary. In announcing the convening of the Congress the South African News pointed out that although meetings had been held throughout the Colony under the auspices of the Conciliation Committee it had been impossible to voice the feelings of the majority of the colonists by a united demonstration. It emphasized that the gathering was not intended to be one merely of delegates or specially nominated persons and urged all those who sympathised with its aims to make every effort to attend.

"We hope that the congress may be the means of opening the eyes of the people of Great Britain to the strength and reality of the sentiment in the Colony which is opposed to the annexation of the Republics"<sup>59</sup>

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56. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 11 March 1900, 23 March 1900.  
57. M.P.C., C. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 5 April 1900.  
58. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Resident Magistrate, Graaff-Reinet to Secretary, Law Dept., 18 May 1900.  
59. South African News, 17 May 1900.

Schreiner, still convinced of the undesirability of public meetings in the present temper of the Colony, had advised against the summoning of the Bond Congress and strongly disapproved of the Graaff-Reinet meeting.<sup>60</sup> The issue led to a breach between him and Hofmeyr at the time when the Cabinet was on the verge of resigning because of the disagreement between Schreiner and the majority of the South African Party on the proposed punishment of the colonial rebels. Schreiner maintained that Hofmeyr, in a letter to T.P. Theron dealing with the convening of a special Bond Congress, had suggested that a popular congress should be summoned which would adopt resolutions which could subsequently be endorsed by a Bond Congress without much discussion.<sup>61</sup> Hofmeyr denied ever having said anything which could be interpreted as an approval of the Graaff-Reinet Congress, but added that on the other hand, he did not "share the Jingo abhorrence of that gathering".<sup>62</sup> He, however, took umbrage when Schreiner insisted that he had in fact approved of a People's Congress.<sup>63</sup> There is little doubt that Schreiner's reading of Hofmeyr's attitude was correct, for the meeting took place in the constituency of Te Water, Hofmeyr's intimate political associate, and T.P. Theron, the chairman of the Bond, sent a message to the secretary of the congress expressing his sympathy and support. However, at the subsequent meeting of the Bond Congress at Paarl on 15 June, when a resolution was passed giving the People's Deputation its blessing, a special amendment was added which made it clear that the Bond had not engineered the People's Congress and had nothing to do with the sending of the deputation.<sup>64</sup>

A considerable crowd assembled at the agricultural showgrounds at Graaff-Reinet on 31 May, the proceedings beginning at ten in the morning and continuing almost until sunset.<sup>65</sup> There is no doubt that in the course of the numerous and lengthy speeches many of the speakers got a good deal off their chests, but the proceedings remained orderly throughout.

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60. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to T.P. Theron, 16 April 1900.

61. Ibid., Schreiner to Hofmeyr, 7 June 1900.

62. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Hofmeyr to Schreiner, 7 June 1900.

63. Ibid., Schreiner to Hofmeyr, 8 June 1900; Hofmeyr to Schreiner, 8 June 1900.

64. South African News, 19 June 1900; Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 214.

65. The South African News claimed that 2 500 people were counted at the gates, the Cape Times reporter put the number at 1 500 and the Resident Magistrate at 1 200. South African News, 5 June 1900; Cape Times, 1 June 1900; W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Resident Magistrate Graaff-Reinet to Secretary Law Dept., 1 June 1900.

J.N.P. de Villiers, head of the Worcester conciliation committee was elected to the chair and numerous messages from sympathisers who could not attend were read. These included good wishes from Dr. Kolbe, Andrew Murray, J.H. Hofmeyr (moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church), Rev. A. Moorrees of Paarl, Dr. Beck, Charles Searle and several other members of parliament. The S.A.C.C. also sent a message of support which, however, only arrived several days after the event.<sup>66</sup> At the outset the meeting agreed that it represented the voice of the majority of the Cape colonists. It then proceeded to resolve that the war had been caused by the "unwarrantable and intolerable" interference of the British Government in the internal affairs of the South African Republic and by the fact that the advice of the Cape ministry had been disregarded. It protested against the deliberate misrepresentation of the situation in the Jingo press and pointed out the enormous difficulties experienced in attempting to acquaint the British public with the true facts of the case. The meeting voted in favour of the unqualified independence of the Republics and resolved that, should they be annexed, the majority of the Cape colonists would work by every right and lawful means for the restoration of their independence. They also requested that all disputes between South African states be settled by arbitration and desired a voice in the selection of their Governor. The majority of the speakers supporting these resolutions were of Dutch extraction; Olive Schreiner and Albert Cartwright, who attended on behalf of the Cape Town committee and Hargrove being the only English ones. The speeches revealed that the Dutch colonists felt it a keen insult that their ministry had been ignored and that they regarded the war as being directed against Afrikanerdom in general. When Andries Liebenberg of Victoria West declared that the war was intended to avenge Majuba and put the question: "Will it be possible to give the hand of friendship to men who have the blood of my brethren on their hands?", he was answered with cries of "No, no" and loud applause so that the chairman had to intervene to point out that the movement was aimed at conciliation and not at creating further division. In proposing the resolution regarding the advice of the Cape ministry, Albert Cartwright made liberal use of Percy Molteno's arguments in support of the contention that the Cape Government was entitled to a voice in the direction of South African affairs. Olive Schreiner, who on this occasion said little, was

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66. South African News, 12 June 1900.

given a great ovation and Hargrove too was received with cheers. He addressed the meeting mainly on what he regarded as the best method of keeping the Empire together, emphasizing that it should be a free association of nations. The worst foes of the Empire were at present not the Boers but those who set up the "howl for annexation". He was accorded a special vote of thanks amidst loud applause and was asked to continue his agitation on behalf of the Republics when he returned to England.

The congress concluded by adopting the People's Petition and it was decided that a fund would be established under the superintendence of Andrew Murray in order to publish it as widely as possible in the British, Canadian and Australian press. It was also resolved to send a deputation to Britain to present it to the British people and to make known the views of the colonists. A selection committee was appointed as well as a committee to administer a fund, to be raised by public subscription, to defray the expenses of the deputation. The deliberations of the congress were reported in detail in the South African News and Ons Land and were later published in pamphlet form as was a description of the event by Betty Molteno.<sup>67</sup> A sketch of the proceedings by Olive Schreiner sent to a friend in England appeared in the Morning Leader and was subsequently republished in the local press.<sup>68</sup>

The Graaff-Reinet Congress did not mark the end of the conciliation party's campaign against annexation. It was succeeded by a series of meetings organised by the women of the Colony, the majority of which took place between June and August.<sup>69</sup> These meetings adopted resolutions similar to those passed at the regular conciliation meetings and many pledged their support for the fund for the People's Delegation. The wives of Dutch Reformed clergymen played a prominent rôle in this aspect of the movement and some of the meetings had a strong religious flavour.<sup>70</sup>

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67. South African News, 2 and 5 June 1900; Ons Land, 2 and 5 June 1900; M.P.C., "Dutch Feeling in South Africa towards England", pamphlet printed from a letter by Betty Molteno.

68. Ons Land, 21 July 1900.

69. Meetings were reported at Knysna, Paarl, Cape Town, Middelburg, Worcester, Tulbagh, Victoria West, Porterville, Wellington, Ceres, Caledon, George, Montague and Somerset East.

70. Ons Land, 30 June 1900.

Occasionally the wives of the chairmen of the local conciliation committees took the lead as did Mrs. J.N.P. de Villiers at Worcester and Mrs. A.B. de Villiers at Paarl. The activities of the Cape Town women had rather the nature of a family affair as most of them were bound together by long-standing friendships. Such was the case with Mary Sauer, Marie Koopmans de Wet, Caroline Murray, Betty Molteno and her companion Alice Greene, Mrs. C.C. de Villiers and Anna Purcell, wife of the zoologist W.F. Purcell. Most of them were members of the Cape Town Conciliation Committee and had been associated since April with others like Mrs. A.I. Steytler, wife of the minister of the Groote Kerk, the senior Dutch Reformed congregation in Cape Town, as members of the Ladies Clothing Committee for Prisoners of War. Their voluminous correspondence sheds a particularly interesting light on the women's contribution to the conciliation movement.

The first women's meeting took place at Wittedrift near Kynsna on 31 May and this in turn inspired a gathering at Paarl on 27 June.<sup>71</sup> These meetings at the Cape were also partly due to the example set in England where a meeting of 3 000 women in London on 13 June, under the auspices of the S.A.C.C., caused considerable comment.<sup>72</sup> The meeting at Paarl, attended by 550 women, including delegates from several neighbouring towns, was one of the largest and even Merriman, who strongly disapproved of women meddling in public affairs, regarded it as a significant illustration of a current moving the people. In sending a report of the meeting to Goldwin Smith he commented:

"The speeches will give you some notion of the way in which these women will bring up their children, and indeed anyone who looks below the surface may well be alarmed at the sullen spirit of dogged resolution that is taking hold of the young generation ... They are convinced of the hopelessness of the justice of England and they almost welcome any fresh act of arbitrary power, because it hammers the people together and makes them more resolved for the struggle they look forward to"<sup>73</sup>

The most significant of the women's meetings took place in Cape Town on 9 July under the chairmanship of Mary Sauer. It was attended by 1 500 women including Olive Schreiner, who had come specially from Beaufort West

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71. South African News, 12 and 29 June 1900; Ons Land, 12 and 30 June 1900.

72. South African News, 15 June 1900.

73. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 222.

and by the wives of Merriman and Schreiner who usually avoided such demonstrations. Marie Koopmans de Wet was the only woman of note on the conciliation party's side who was not present and she contributed a speech which was read by Mrs. A.I. Steytler and received with great enthusiasm. The highlight of the occasion was indubitably Olive Schreiner's address in support of the resolution against annexation. In the course of it she proclaimed dramatically:

" .... Unless England should immediately refute and reverse her entire course of action every farm-house which the British soldiers were burning down today was a torch lighting the British Empire to its doom, every trench which the brave English soldiers dug was part of the tomb of England; every bullet which took the life of a South African found its billet in the heart of the British Empire; every political prisoner of South Africa who in his cell that night would dream of freedom would one day realise it in his own person or that of his descendants ... South Africa today lies torn, wounded and bleeding at the feet of England. It was the hour of England's might; but the day would come when England would know that for her the path of justice should have been the path of peace ...." 74

H.W. Nevinson, war correspondent for the Daily Chronicle, later maintained that he had heard much indignant eloquence, "but never such a molten torrent of white-hot rage". 75 It was received with loud and continuous applause and inevitably provoked considerable comment in the press. 76 Later an address by Olive Schreiner, read at the women's meeting at Somerset East, also turned that relatively insignificant gathering into an occasion of note and resulted in its being accorded far more attention in the press than would otherwise have been the case. On that occasion she declared:

"Now the bond of affection and confidence that bound England to South Africa has snapped ... Now England is dead to me ....  
Never again while I live shall I hear the name of England spoken  
or see it written but I shall hear a whisper - the Oppressor!  
Life's night begins, let her never come back to us;  
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain;  
Forced praise on our part, the glimmer of twilight;  
Never glad, confident morning again". 77

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74. South African News, 10 July 1900.

75. Z. Friedlander, Until the Heart Changes, p. 55.

76. Ons Land, 10 and 12 July 1900. The proceedings were also published as a pamphlet entitled "The Voice of South African Women for a Lasting Peace".

77. From Browning's "Lament for the lost leader". The South African News called the speech "an outburst of noble eloquence", 19 Oct. 1900.

She admitted that the speech was "rather strong", but found it a relief to have her full say. "Now is the time when one must cheer the spirits of the people up".<sup>78</sup>

The activities of the women supporters of the conciliation movement were welcomed as a counter to the League of Loyal Ladies which had been established in Cape Town early in March under the presidency of Mrs. H.M. Arderne. This was an extremely stylish organisation counting amongst its associates Prince Alexander of Teck, Lady Edward Cecil, Lady Charles Bentinck and Mrs. Hanbury Williams, wife of Milner's military secretary who, because of the High Commissioner's bachelor status, usually acted as hostess at Government House. Branches of the League were established throughout the Colony and by the middle of July it had 3 000 members.<sup>79</sup> As most of the branches habitually adopted resolutions expressing their appreciation for Sir Alfred Milner's services to the Empire the South African News was quick to label it a "gubernatorial admiration society" and the activities of the League of Loyal Ladies became the object of much mirth and derision in the columns of that paper. With undisguised relish it contrasted the frivolous preoccupation of these "Loyal Ladies" with their elegant garden parties at which the High Commissioner was usually the main attraction, with the more substantial achievements of the women of the conciliation party.<sup>80</sup> While the League of Loyal Ladies enjoyed the High Commissioner's whole-hearted approval, the activities of the women of the conciliation party met with a decidedly chilly reception. Ons Land underlined the significance of the fact that the Paarl meeting decided to by-pass the High Commissioner by forwarding their resolutions directly to the People's Deputation in England, no doubt wishing to avoid a rebuff similar to that which they had encountered on presenting their peace petition.<sup>81</sup> On the occasion of the Cape Town meeting great offence was caused by a message being delivered that no deputation would be allowed to march on Government House. The South African News indignantly enquired whether it was thought that the women intended assaulting the Governor and claimed that although Milner was always available to see deputations of Loyal Ladies, he could not even accord their opponents common civility.<sup>82</sup>

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78. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 7 Oct. 1900.

79. South African News, 14 July 1900.

80. Ibid., 30 June 1900, 9 and 24 Nov. 1900.

81. Ons Land, 30 June 1900.

82. South African News, 11 July 1900.

On submitting reports of the Graaff-Reinet Congress to Chamberlain, Milner made use of the occasion to express his opinion on the conciliation movement in general. He believed that it made for "mischief and mischief only".

"The term conciliation is a curious misnomer, inasmuch as the leaders of the movement, with the exception of Mr. Hargrove, are drawn exclusively from the more extreme members of the Afrikaner party, while its programme consists of a direct negative to the policy of Her Majesty's Government, and its arguments of abuse of that policy, and of its principal representatives".

He accused the conciliators of encouraging the Cape Afrikaners to adopt an irreconcilable attitude, of refusing to recognise the facts of the situation and of holding the threat of perennial race hatred over the head of the Imperial Government. The movement was to his mind not spontaneous but "artificially produced by a certain class of politician" and fanned by the leader writers of Ons Land and the South African News. Later in the year, when Charles Molteno visited England, Milner wrote to Chamberlain describing him as "a particularly poisonous person ... a clever but ... malignant rebel ... a man to be watched".<sup>83</sup> These were censorious terms indeed to apply to the mild-mannered Molteno, who unlike his brothers, avoided the limelight and was regarded by his associates as "reserved, but with a tremendous amount of sheer grit and common sense".<sup>84</sup> Milner also drew Chamberlain's attention to "a very unpleasant and characteristic feature of the conciliation movement ... the threat to boycott the English in commercial relations". Although the tendency did no doubt exist in some of the rural communities it was an unjustified charge to level against the conciliators whose leaders certainly did not encourage the practice. Milner concluded his indictment of the movement with the accusation that they had broken the "truce of God" and held their violent and mischievous proceedings responsible for the more extreme utterances of their opponents.<sup>85</sup>

Milner's disapproval of the conciliation movement was no doubt strengthened by certain aspects of Hargrove's activities in South Africa.

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83. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 205.

84. M.P.C., A. Cartwright to Betty Molteno, 2 May 1901.

85. Cd. 261, pp. 182-184.

On the occupation of Bloemfontein the British army found amongst the captured documents a telegram from Kruger to Steyn dated 20 January which stated:

"A certain E.T. Hargrove, an English journalist, about whom Dr. Leyds formerly wrote that he had done much in Holland to work up the peace memorial to Queen Victoria, has come here, so he says, from Sauer and Merriman, who are ready to range themselves openly on our side to make propaganda in the Cape Colony provided an official declaration is given that the Republics only desire to secure complete independence ..."

On 13 April Milner approached Schreiner to secure an explanation from Merriman and Sauer and both ministers denied that they had ever given Hargrove any authority to use their names in the manner which he appears to have done or to communicate on their behalf with anyone in the Republics. Milner felt that Hargrove owed them an explanation and on discussing the matter in the Cabinet Schreiner urged them to expose him publicly.<sup>86</sup> On being approached by Merriman, Hargrove maintained that neither of the ministers had been aware of his intention to visit Pretoria and that it was therefore absurd to infer that they had used him as an emissary. What he had in fact done was to recount to Kruger a conversation which he had with Sauer in which he had asked him what his attitude would be in the event of the Republics offering to withdraw from colonial territory on condition that their independence be recognised. Sauer had replied that in those circumstances he would, in his personal capacity, urge the acceptance of the offer, and although he could only speak for himself, he thought that Merriman would do the same. Hargrove further asserted that he had assured Kruger that he had come in his individual capacity, and the president's telegram he explained, had probably been dictated in haste amidst the rush of other business which accounted for the more or less careless account it gave of the long conversation which had passed between them with Reitz acting as interpreter. Schreiner regarded Hargrove's explanation as "laboured, lame and unsatisfactory". Milner agreed with him and, probably hoping to embarrass the ministers, expressed the desire that the full correspondence be published. Merriman and Sauer both felt that this would serve no useful purpose "beyond giving the politicians a morsel of that sort of scandal that they dearly love ...",

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86. W.P.S.P., (U.C.T.), Milner to Schreiner, 18 April 1900, annotated by Schreiner.

but could obviously not refuse.<sup>87</sup> In the light of this incident it is not surprising that Merriman declined to be associated with the conciliation movement. Sauer was less circumspect and although he himself did not become actively involved, he did not conceal his approval of the movement and his wife remained a prominent and active supporter.

On becoming aware of Hargrove's irresponsible behaviour, Schreiner had tried to intimate to supporters of the movement that all was not above board. In April, when H.P. Beyers, M.L.A. for Caledon, sought his advice on the matter, he wrote to him:

"I think that thousands of our people are taking part in the conciliation movement with the best of intentions who do not quite understand the inner history connected with it. Do you yourself, as a man of ripe judgment, consider that it is truly a conciliation movement?".<sup>88</sup>

When the blue book containing the compromising correspondence reached the Cape in August, Hargrove had already returned to England; he had departed on 20 June on the same ship as the People's Delegation. His associates were therefore left to explain themselves as best they could. The South African News tried to make light of the affair. While dealing fully with the rest of the blue book's contents, it declined to publish the major part of the Hargrove correspondence on the unconvincing pretext that it was of no particular importance. It adopted the strategy of placing great emphasis on Kruger's letter to Hargrove publishing the full text. The Cape Times later dismissed it as a "canting manifesto", but the South African News regarded it as "the one interesting feature of the matter" and in greater fairness to Kruger, declined to think that it "breathed either insincerity or hypocrisy".<sup>89</sup> With regard to the rest of the correspondence, it maintained that Milner had found a mare's nest and was exaggerating the significance of the affair.<sup>90</sup> On Hargrove's lack of candour regarding his earlier association with Leyds, whose diplomatic posturing

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87. Cd. 261, pp. 126-132, 150. Correspondence relating to the Hargrove affair is to be found in the Schreiner papers in the S.A.L. and at U.C.T. and in the Merriman papers. See also Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 187-191.

88. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), H.P. Beyers to Schreiner, 17 April 1900; Schreiner to Beyers, 19 April 1900.

89. South African News, 10 Aug. 1900.

90. Ibid., 11 Aug. 1900.

on the Continent was generally disapproved of by all leading Cape politicians, it preferred to remain silent.

This was, however, not possible for long, for on 28 August Hargrove's activities again made headline news when the Cape Times published a cable from the local correspondent of the Daily Telegraph containing the startling information that on seizing the offices of the Netherlands South Africa Railway Company at Pretoria, the British authorities had found evidence that the company, on instructions from Reitz, had paid Hargrove £1 000 for political purposes. The correspondent of the Daily Telegraph drew the conclusion that Hargrove was a paid agent of Dr. Leyds and that he had used the money to start the conciliation movement in Cape Town. The Cape Times hastened to make the most of this propensity which Hargrove's correspondence had for falling into the wrong hands, reminding the gullible South African News of its extravagant eulogies of Hargrove whom it had described as "a high minded, courageous, independent English gentleman". In an editorial heavily laced with sarcasm it proceeded to examine all the inconsistencies in Hargrove's story and facetiously commended him for having kept his side of the bargain by using the £1 000 to buy signatures for the People's Petition. He could, after all, simply have taken a ship back to Holland to renew his profitable acquaintance with Dr. Leyds. Remarks of this nature need not have troubled the leaders of the conciliation party unduly, but the Cape Times concluded by drawing attention to a more serious aspect of the affair. It called upon Sauer to explain how he had become associated with a person "making money by incitement to sedition" and pointed out, not unreasonably, that "it is difficult to believe that a minister of the Crown associates himself with a peripatetic adventurer without knowing anything of his antecedents and objects ..."<sup>91</sup>

On 11 September the matter was raised in the House of Assembly by Col. F.X. Schermbrücker, who ostensibly required an explanation regarding the refund of part of the payment made for a special train which Hargrove had chartered to take him part of the way to Dordrecht. This gave Sauer an opportunity to explain his relationship with Hargrove. He told the House that he had met him at a dinner party at the home of a well-known

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91. Cape Times, 28 Aug. 1900.

Cape Town personality, on which occasion Merriman had also been present. Hargrove had been introduced to him as a gentleman of position who was anxious to know something of the situation in the country and had made a favourable impression upon him. It had been mentioned that he was about to visit Dordrecht and a day or two later Hargrove had intimated, through a close friend of Sauer, that he would like to accompany him. Sauer, seeing no harm in it, had agreed. After their return he did not see Hargrove again until he called on him at his office one day and, in discussing the war, enquired whether, if the Republicans withdrew from the Colony and asked for peace, Sauer would declare himself in favour of their retaining their independence, to which Sauer had replied in the affirmative. He had not been aware that Hargrove intended visiting the Transvaal. During the ensuing debate the details of Sauer's ill-fated visit to Dordrecht and Hargrove's doings in the Transvaal were thrashed out at length. J. Laing, in the light of the recent revelations, objected to Sauer virtually giving Hargrove "a certificate of good character" by saying that he had impressed him as being a gentleman in every way. A lively exchange took place between Sauer and his critics, with Merriman supporting his friend by saying that Hargrove had struck him too as being a gentleman and evidently an enthusiast who was rather visionary in his ideas. He insisted that Hargrove should not be condemned without having had an opportunity to explain himself and wished to know by what back-stairs intrigue the correspondent of the Daily Telegraph had obtained the information regarding Hargrove's alleged dealings with the NZASM. Several other speakers joined in the fray, and the consensus of opinion on the South African Party side of the House appeared to be that there was some doubt as to the accuracy of this information.<sup>92</sup>

On being confronted with the "Hargrove disclosures", which Milner confidentially informed Schreiner, were in substance absolutely true,<sup>93</sup> the South African News resorted to various dodges to prove that the Cape Times report was probably inaccurate, but eventually committed itself to stating that it believed the story to be absolutely without foundation and that Hargrove's doings and character would bear any investigation.<sup>94</sup>

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92. Cape Hansard, 1900, pp. 385-390.

93. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Milner to Schreiner, 12 Sept. 1900.

94. South African News, 29 Aug. 1900.

In October its discomfiture was, however, increased when it became known that J. van Kretschmar, director of the NZASM had, on being interviewed by the Transvaal Concessions Commission, confirmed the accuracy of the reports. He stated quite frankly that Hargrove had come to him from Reitz with the explanation that he intended working for peace in the interests of the Republic and that he would have travelling expenses to defray, a lot of publications to issue and books would have to be written, and for these purposes he asked for financial assistance. He explained that Reitz and Kruger had been unwilling to give him the money as they did not want the idea spread abroad in the Cape Colony or in England that state money was being used for such purposes. On being informed in writing that Kruger approved of Hargrove's activities, Kretschmar had provided him with the £1 000 which he entered in the Company's books under the heading of political circumstances and working expenses.<sup>95</sup> This was in fact only one of several occasions on which the Company had acted as almoner for the Transvaal Government. The disclosures were made all the more damaging by additional revelations that the company had actively assisted the Transvaal in prosecuting the war by, for example, blowing up bridges. On this occasion the South African News was forced to admit that the charges against Hargrove were damning, but it stubbornly insisted that he was innocent and demanded an enquiry into the matter.<sup>96</sup> On 26 October the editor received the following cryptic message from New York:

"Cabled you weeks ago. Find not sent. Shall return Cape deal attacks on spot. Facts rebound credit Africander cause. Publish. Hargrove".

On this occasion the South African News further discredited itself by insinuating that the message had been withheld by agents of the Colonial Office "for the purposes of the Chamberlain ring at the present general election".<sup>97</sup> The final instalment in the Hargrove affair appeared in January 1901 when the South African News reprinted from the Cape Argus an account of an interview with Hargrove which had appeared in the Boston Globe on 28 November 1900. On that occasion he had finally admitted that he had gone to South Africa because he was anxious for justice for the

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95. Cd. 624, pp. 41-42.

96. South African News, 16 Oct. 1900.

97. Ibid., 27 Oct. 1900.

Boers, sailing on the same ship as Buller two days after the delivery of the Boer ultimatum. He also recounted how, on returning to the Cape from the Transvaal he had called a meeting of leading Afrikaners and had shown telegrams from Presidents Kruger and Steyn to a committee of that meeting consisting of a newspaper editor, a member of parliament and a clergyman who certified to the others that he had documentary proof that the Boer leaders were prepared to come to terms to end the war. When this became known to the British authorities they tried to discredit him.<sup>98</sup> With this the South African News discreetly drew a veil over Hargrove's activities in South Africa and he was not mentioned again. If he ever proffered an explanation of his conduct it was not of such a nature that it could be published.

In themselves Hargrove's indiscretions constitute little more than a storm in a teacup and Davenport dismisses him as merely being a "tactless meddler".<sup>99</sup> But it must be borne in mind that although others like Albert Cartwright, as editor of the South African News, made a far more sustained contribution to the conciliation campaign, in the eyes of contemporaries, the more colourful Hargrove was inseparably connected with the movement, which was frequently referred to simply as "Mr. Hargrove's movement", and there is no doubt that after his departure it lost some of its momentum. Anything he did was therefore bound to reflect upon the conciliators and to most people his behaviour must have appeared injudicious in the extreme. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that his actions also caused the integrity of his associates to be questioned and that his indiscreet behaviour to a certain extent discredited the movement, particularly in the eyes of English-speaking colonists of moderate views whose support was so eagerly sought. Milner's severe censure of the otherwise inoffensive Charles Molteno might have been prompted by Molteno's association with Hargrove.

The question therefore inevitably arises whether leaders of the conciliation party at the Cape were aware of Hargrove's financial dealings with the Transvaal authorities. It is clear that Cartwright and Charles Molteno knew of the letters he had in his possession for these had already been alluded to in a veiled manner in March.<sup>100</sup> In the

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98. South African News, 8 Jan. 1901.

99. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 214.

100. South African News, 19 March 1900.

light of subsequent events the heading of the South African News editorial of 26 February announcing "Wanted, a Conciliation Committee and £1 000", does seem to point to further complicity. There is, however, no clarity on the question. When Charles Molteno informed his brother of their intention to establish a committee, he did not mention Hargrove. In fact, he never referred to him at all, although this may be due to most of his correspondence for February and March being missing from the Molteno papers and also to the fact that he left for England on 6 September and only returned to the Cape at the end of December so that he did not correspond with his brother during the period immediately following the "Hargrove disclosures". Yet it is difficult to credit that apparently sensible and upright individuals like Cartwright and Molteno would knowingly have associated themselves with methods as questionable as those of Hargrove. This seems particularly unlikely in view of the indignation always aroused amongst members of the South African Party when accused of using Transvaal secret service funds to finance Cape elections and in the light of their constant denunciation of those Rhodesite politicians who were known to "have their price". The chief exoneration of the local conciliators is to be found in the fact that there is nothing to prove that Hargrove spent any of his Transvaal funds on the conciliation movement at the Cape, apart perhaps from paying his travelling expenses, which, it must be admitted to his credit, he insisted on defraying himself.<sup>101</sup> It is possible that these may have been considerable for during his stay in Cape Town he resided at the Mount Nelson Hotel, the most fashionable and expensive establishment in the city. The one aspect of the movement to which funds might reasonably have been devoted, namely Cartwright's proposed "printer's ink campaign", however, bore hardly any fruits. Although the South African News made a point of advertising and helping to circulate the anti-war literature which was being produced in large quantities in England by such organisations as the S.A.C.C., W.T. Stead's Stop the War Committee and the Transvaal Committee,<sup>102</sup> as far as can be ascertained, the Conciliation Committee at the Cape undertook very little independent publishing. Apart from sporadic publications such as Olive Schreiner's "Words in Season", the proceedings

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101. South African News, 19 April 1900.

102. For a discussion of this aspect of the war vide J.S. Galbraith, "The Pamphlet Campaign on the Boer War", The Journal of Modern History, June 1952, Vol. XXIV, No. 2.

of the Worcester Congress which took place in December and reprints of letters from a few of their regular correspondents, the conciliation movement's literary efforts remained confined to the columns of newspapers such as the South African News and Ons Land.<sup>103</sup> The South African News in particular, tried to reproduce as much as it could from S.A.C.C. pamphlets and for a short period in March and April published Stead's "War against War" as a weekly supplement. It also published Olive Schreiner's work "The African Boer" in eight instalments between 27 November and 29 December after reviews in Britain had turned it down. But for a more elaborate effort than this, funds appeared to be lacking.

Although the conciliation party's campaign against the annexation of the Republics evoked considerable response in the Colony, albeit mainly from the Dutch section of the population, it made very little impact in Britain as Percy Molteno's earlier reports indicated. The conciliators did, however, achieve their objective of having their views officially published. Several reports of meetings, forwarded to the High Commissioner by Cartwright in his capacity as secretary of the Cape Town Committee, were published in the July blue book on South African affairs,<sup>104</sup> but these were accompanied by Milner's strongly condemnatory dispatch and were more than neutralised by the numerous counter resolutions in favour of annexation which appeared in the same blue book. Many of these came from religious bodies of various denominations in Cape Town and elsewhere,<sup>105</sup> which had been the cause of renewed fulminations against the "Jingoism of these gentlemen of the cloth" in the columns of the South African News, whose editor always displayed a particular sensitivity on that subject.<sup>106</sup> The Dutch Reformed clergy cooperated actively in the conciliators' campaign against annexation, but the Church did not register a formal protest of its

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103. The pamphlets by local writers were: "Another Tract for the Times" and "Natural Laws and Miracles" by "Ignotus", a prolific contributor to the columns of the South African News, whom they described as "a Dutch colonist hailing from a little settlement in the Karroo" whose identity remained concealed. M. Rabinowitz was another frequent contributor and two pamphlets of his, "Letters and Articles relating to the War between Great Britain and the South African Republics", were printed in 1900 and 1901 respectively.

104. Cd. 261, pp. 57-58, 92-94, 147-150.

105. Ibid., pp. 77-85, 94.

106. South African News, 27 April 1900.

own, although individual consistories such as those at Carnarvon and Alexandria did forward an appeal for the cessation of hostilities and resolutions against annexation to the High Commissioner.<sup>107</sup> In February a number of leading Dutch Reformed clergymen issued a manifesto entitled "The Dutch Reformed Church and the Boers" which was intended to dispel a number of misconceptions regarding the Republicans.<sup>108</sup> It set out to refute, at great length, the charge of an Afrikaner conspiracy against British rule in South Africa and also to disprove that the Boers in particular maltreated the natives or were opposed to missionary work. This manifesto was partly prompted by the fact that many clergymen tended to justify their support for the annexation of the Republics by maintaining that the Boers were particularly harsh in their treatment of the natives and that British rule in these territories was necessary to safeguard the interests of the native population. The manifesto was signed by nine clergymen who were members of the Synodical Mission Board and professors at the Theological Seminary. Milner forwarded it to Chamberlain who included it in the July blue book,<sup>109</sup> and the S.A.C.C. published it as a pamphlet. Percy Molteno reported that it had been distributed at a Liberal Federation meeting as well as being forwarded to all Members of Parliament,<sup>110</sup> but appeals of this kind or any other made no appreciable impression on the British public.

The first phase of the conciliation movement's campaign against the annexation of the Republics culminated, in a sense, in Merriman's speech in parliament on 24 September in support of Sauer's motion favouring a limited independence for the Republics which was lost by two votes. After condemning the fact that the future of the Republics was being discussed by the most unsuitable persons on every conceivable platform except in the House of Assembly where it should properly be dealt with, Merriman went on to endorse the conciliators' warning that Britain was jeopardising its own future in South Africa and supported their contention that it would be impossible to extinguish the Republicans' desire for independence. But he concluded by pointing out that it would be impossible for the Republics to revert to a condition of unqualified independence.

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107: South African News, 1 May 1900; Cd. 261, pp. 2-3, 138.

108. South African News, 28 Feb. 1900; Ons Land, 1 March 1900.

109. Cd. 261, pp. 31-41.

110. M.P., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 30 March 1900.

"We must put down these foreign legations, these enormous armaments and must stop the process of making the Transvaal a burlesque first class power, but I believe there is a bright future for the Transvaal and Orange Free State if you adopt the principle of the protected state .... That would give the Republics individual national existence which is all they want ...." 111

Although the official programme of the conciliation movement did not accord entirely with the line taken by Merriman, there were leading men in its ranks whose views did not differ very much from his. The editorial which appeared in the South African News on the eve of the Graaff-Reinet Congress, setting forth a number of concrete proposals regarding the future of the Republics, agreed virtually with every major point made by Merriman, although it did not advocate a qualified independence for the Republics in so many words. <sup>112</sup> The congress itself indicated its awareness of the difficulties it faced when it resolved that:

" .... Although we are well aware that such a settlement (unqualified independence) would not be approved at the present moment by the majority of English people, we hope that before it is too late they will become convinced of its wisdom"

As the conflict wore on it became increasingly apparent that, if the conciliators were to make any impression upon the Imperial authorities they would have to moderate their attitude on the issue of Republican independence.

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111. Cape Hansard, 1900, pp. 478-484. The speech was later published as a S.A.C.C. pamphlet entitled "A Historic Speech against Annexation". (No. 56).

112. South African News, 28 May 1900.

CHAPTER IV

PROTEST AGAINST THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR  
AND ASSISTANCE TO ITS VICTIMS

The campaign which the conciliation party conducted in favour of the Republics' retention of their independence constituted the major objective of the movement, but this was not the sum total of its activities. For the majority of Cape colonists the war was a real and personal catastrophe. On warning the Imperial Government of the distress which a conflict with the Transvaal would cause the conciliation party had repeatedly emphasized the close ties which existed between the people of the Colony and those of the Republics. They were not merely referring to their common origin but also to the fact that nearly every Dutch family in the Colony had close relations who were burghers of the Republics and who would, in the event of war, be actively engaged in hostilities. The conduct of the war with the devastation and suffering which it entailed, would inevitably have as fatal an effect on relations between the two races as the injustice of the object for which it was fought. The conciliators were therefore anxious that, if such a thing were humanly possible, military operations should be conducted with a minimum of harshness and the assistance which they rendered to the victims of the war formed an integral part of the movement. It would have been an empty gesture had they confined themselves entirely to agitating for a political principle without attempting to alleviate the physical distress caused by the conflict. The situation was complicated by the war being carried into colonial territory. Although the Republican commandos caused relatively little damage many Cape colonists suffered severely in consequence of the rebellion which occurred in the border districts. When insisting that something be done to help the Republican victims of the war the conciliators were on relatively firm ground for the humanitarian motive underlying this desire could not be questioned. But in attempting to alleviate the privations of their fellow colonists in the border areas their efforts were to a large extent confounded by the political issues involved.

The question of providing aid for the Republican widows and orphans had already been raised at a caucus meeting of Afrikaner members of parliament on 20 September 1899 and immediately after the outbreak of

hostilities a fund was established for this purpose.<sup>1</sup> The committee administering it consisted of J.H. Hofmeyr (chairman), C.P. Schultz (secretary) and C.C. de Villiers (treasurer). The latter, however, soon retired on account of ill health and was replaced by D.J. de Villiers, sub-editor of Ons Land. At a meeting of women at Mrs. Koopmans de Wet's home on 16 October 1899 a ladies' committee was established under her presidency to assist in raising subscriptions for the fund with Mrs. C.C. de Villiers as treasurer.<sup>2</sup> Charles Molteno immediately lent the fund his support and appealed to his brother to use his influence to raise subscriptions in England.<sup>3</sup> Percy Molteno himself contributed generously but informed his brother that as a result of the reverses suffered by the British army the state of opinion in Britain was such that a public appeal was out of the question at that stage. He did however place Hofmeyr's committee in communication with the Society of Friends which was anxious to render assistance to non-combatants.<sup>4</sup> The executive committee of the Widows and Orphans Fund met regularly in the offices of Ons Land and the editor, F.S. Malan, always attended its deliberations. The fund was therefore more intimately associated with Ons Land than with the South African News but both Malan and Schultz were members of the conciliation committee and through them it liaised with the rest of the conciliation party. Being the first and the largest of the numerous relief funds, the Widows and Orphans Fund formed the nucleus of most of the others and the various committees which later came into being to deal with different aspects of the war relief work, placed their finances in the hands of this committee. This was found to be the most convenient arrangement for as the war progressed the sums involved assumed considerable proportions and their administration called for great effort and responsibility. C. de P. Chiappini acted as auditor for the committee. It was reported that when the war broke out an excited colonist approached Hofmeyr for advice on what the people should do and that he was told that the inhabitants of the Colony could pray and pay; pray for the early restoration of peace and pay their share into the relief funds.<sup>5</sup> There is

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1. South African News, 12 Oct. 1899; Ons Land, 14 Oct. 1899.
  2. J.H. Hofmeyr Papers (H.P.), Minute Book of the Working Committee for the administration of money and goods for the relief of Boers and their families, 17 Oct. 1899.
  3. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 18 Oct. 1899.
  4. Ibid., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 27 Oct. 1899, 11 Nov. 1899, 2 March 1900.
  5. South African News, 19 Dec. 1899.

no doubt that they did so with liberality, though considerable assistance was also received from Britain, America and Europe.

The first disbursement which the fund made went towards defraying the expenses of five doctors who volunteered to do ambulance work with the Boer commandos and for this purpose the fund broadened its terms of reference to include the wounded as well as widows and orphans. The issue had first been raised by Dr. J.M. Hoffman, M.L.A. for Paarl, who convened a meeting at the town on 7 October 1899 to discuss the question of providing medical assistance to the Boers who, unlike the British forces, did not have an efficient Red Cross service co-operating with them.<sup>6</sup> His suggestion was taken up enthusiastically and public meetings were held at several towns in the western Cape to open subscription lists for an ambulance corps. By 14 October Drs. Reinecke (Ceres), Viljoen (Grabouw) and Cilliers (Caledon) had already departed for the front, with Dr. Hoffman and an ambulance party of seventeen following later.<sup>7</sup> The first three proceeded to Bloemfontein where they met President Steyn and were then attached to various commandos and Dr. Hoffman's party joined the Phillipolis commando at Colesberg. Although these medical men were granted passes to proceed to the Boer lines it was clear that the military authorities did not approve of their activities and when Dr. Izaak van der Merwe later applied for leave to join them he was refused permission. On Milner's suggestion he then travelled by sea hoping to reach the Transvaal via Delagoa Bay, but was detained by the military authorities at Durban and only released on condition that he abandon his philanthropic mission.<sup>8</sup> The others were also beset by difficulties from the start. Ill health and domestic problems forced Viljoen to return to the Colony in November. En route he was arrested by the military authorities at De Aar, but released on parole on condition that he went straight back to his farm. As a result of his having given his parole he had to obtain special permission from Milner before he could report back to the Committee.<sup>9</sup> Hoffman's party fared no better.

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6. South African News, 9 Oct. 1899.

7. Ibid., 17 Oct. 1899; H.P., Minute Book, 17 Oct. 1899.

8. South African News, 29 March 1901.

9. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Report from A.J. Viljoen to the chairman of the Committee for the Transvaal and Free State wounded widows and orphans, 15 Jan. 1900; Milner to Schreiner, 23 Jan. 1900; H.P., Minute Book, 23 Nov. 1899.

Ill health forced him to go to Pretoria to convalesce, leaving the party in the hands of Dr. Cilliers. During his absence they were captured by the British at Springfontein and on some Mauser cartridges being found amongst their equipment,<sup>10</sup> the ambulance was confiscated and its members bundled back to the Colony where Dr. Reinecke eventually tendered a verbal report to the committee on 7 June. Hoffman only returned to the Cape on 2 July to face considerable hostility in the House of Assembly where he was referred to as being "fresh from the enemy".<sup>11</sup> In view of the obstructiveness of the military authorities and seeing that well-equipped ambulances from Europe arrived to assist the Boers, the committee decided to reserve its funds for a more suitable purpose but not before over £1 000 had been expended on this ill-fated gesture.<sup>12</sup>

The misadventures of the ambulance party were, however, soon overshadowed by the concern felt for the Boer prisoners of war who began to arrive in Cape Town in increasing numbers once the British army, having recovered from its initial reverses, continued its advance to Bloemfontein. The prisoners were at first kept on board army transport ships in Simon's Bay and in a small camp established on the naval recreation ground at Simonstown, the wounded being accommodated in military hospitals at Wynberg and at the docks. After the large increase in the number of prisoners following Cronje's surrender at Paardeberg a second camp was laid on at Simonstown and early in March another was established on the Green Point Common. With Cronje's men came the additional problem of disease for many of them had contracted typhoid during the defence of Paardeberg.<sup>13</sup> As soon as the first prisoners of war arrived at Cape Town the press was inundated with letters from anxious relatives complaining about almost every aspect of their treatment. Many wrote directly to the Prime Minister, the strongest protests coming from persons who knew they had relatives among the prisoners. Particular anxiety was caused by reports that prisoners had been transported in open trucks and that several wounded had died in consequence. This elicited an official response from the officer

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10. It was hinted that these had been planted there by members of an Australian ambulance party which had camped nearby.

11. H.P., Minute Book, 7 June 1900; South African News, 3 and 21 July 1900.

12. South African News, 29 March 1901.

13. Ibid., 29 Jan. 1900, 2 and 13 March 1900.

commanding lines of communication who admitted that the first batch of prisoners taken by General Lord Methuen at the battle of Belmont had been conveyed in this manner, no other transport being available, but he denied that any of the wounded had died.<sup>14</sup> Schreiner also, while apologising about the open trucks, confirmed that the alleged deaths were mere rumour.<sup>15</sup> Further resentment was caused by the fact that prisoners were at first frequently exposed to the jeers and insults of crowds at stations en route to Cape Town and at the docks where they were transferred to the various camps and hospitals. On the occasion of an ambulance wagon in Cape Town being besieged by a hostile crowd which its military guard could not fend off, an aggrieved colonist wrote to the South African News:

"Now Sir, is not such a sight sufficient to raise resentment in the hearts of the most loyal Dutch colonists to see their kinsmen being thus treated without being able to render them help? Is not blood thicker than water? ..... Let Britons remember that Dutchmen have hearts as well as they and are in no wise less jealous of their honour. Let those who are so sanguine that after this war a united South Africa will follow and that race hatred will die out, remember that daily taunts and ill treatment are not easily erased from the mind".<sup>16</sup>

Schreiner had these incidents investigated and tried his best to soothe ruffled feelings.

Hofmeyr and his committee soon received numerous appeals on behalf of the prisoners, particularly for clothing. The Dutch Government contributed £500 and the Dutch Consul, B.H. de Waal, became a member of the committee for the purpose of disbursing the money, subsequently devoting much time to caring for the needs of the Boer prisoners.<sup>17</sup> Payments were also at first made out of the Widows and Orphans Fund but demands became so heavy that a separate fund had to be created for the prisoners and on 7 March a special appeal was made to the public for additional donations.<sup>18</sup> Two days later Hofmeyr, Chiappini and D.P. Graaff called on Schreiner and through him elicited from the military authorities an acknowledgement that it was their responsibility to clothe the prisoners.<sup>19</sup> This was the first

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14. South African News, 15 Dec. 1899.

15. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to S.T. Klopper, ? Dec. 1899.

16. South African News, 16 March 1900.

17. H.P., Minute Book, 6 Dec. 1899; J.X.M.P., Agnes Merriman to Sarah Merriman, 15 June 1900.

18. South African News, 29 March 1901.

19. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to Hofmeyr, 20 March 1900.

of the numerous deputations which besieged the authorities during the following two months. The announcement that Cronje and his men were to be sent to St. Helena until the end of the war caused protests to come pouring in from all sides. A deputation of Dutch Reformed clergymen led by Andrew Murray called on Milner on 15 March to urge the authorities to desist from such a step. At Stellenbosch, Wellington and Paarl 800 women signed a petition pointing out that the Boer prisoners would regard their removal to St. Helena as a punishment inflicted upon them and as an undeserved aggravation of the privations to which, as prisoners of war, they were necessarily exposed. The petitioners feared that the bitterness of feeling already existing would be intensified by this measure and requested that the prisoners be confined where they would not be out of reach of their relatives and friends. Mrs. Koopmans de Wet got up a similar petition and Schreiner, who disapproved of the authorities' decision, gave them his official support. By then the conciliation movement had got well under way and the matter was frequently raised at conciliation meetings, at least seventeen of these passing resolutions condemning the deportation of the Boer prisoners. But although the conciliators found the military authorities most accommodating in other matters regarding the prisoners, on the issue of deportation they were adamant and the conciliators had perforce to make the best of the situation.<sup>20</sup> On 28 March a deputation of fifty prominent men called on Schreiner to make further representations regarding the treatment of the Boer prisoners. They urged that those suffering from typhoid should be separated from the others, that the sick should not be shipped to St. Helena and that more facilities be provided for relatives to visit the men. This unwieldy deputation was reduced to more manageable proportions and it was arranged that a sub-committee consisting of James Molteno, Malan, Chiappini and Rev. B. Marchand call on the military authorities. After a lengthy consultation it was agreed that all prisoners would be removed from the transports as soon as possible, that lists would regularly be published to indicate where prisoners were located and permits were granted to members of the relief committee and to several clergymen to visit the hospitals and camps at regular intervals.<sup>21</sup> Conciliation meetings in

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20. South African News, 19 and 29 March 1900, 3 and 4 April, 1900; Malan, Marie Koopmans de Wet, pp. 205-206; W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Andrew Murray to Milner, 16 March 1900.

21. South African News, 29 March 1900, 3 April 1900; Ons Land, 3 April 1900.

the western Cape displayed a particular anxiety regarding the treatment of the Boer prisoners and the Stellenbosch and Tulbagh meetings appointed delegates to discuss the matter with Schreiner. Consequently another deputation of "influential and representative gentlemen" from Paarl, Stellenbosch, Wellington, Tulbagh, Malmesbury and Caledon, led by J.S. Marais, M.L.A. for Paarl, called on the Prime Minister on 2 April to lay before him demands similar to those of the previous deputation.<sup>22</sup>

Schreiner, who was always most helpful in these matters, suggested that they establish a regular liaison with the relief committee and when communicating their demands to Colonel Trotter, the local chief of staff, he pointed out:

"One can never forget that many of our perfectly loyal subjects have very close ties of kinship with many of the Republican prisoners, and any legitimate alleviations of the lot of the latter tell for much in aid of the wise policy of soothing the feelings of the Dutch people of this Colony".<sup>23</sup>

After the military authorities had overcome the initial difficulties involved in accommodating large numbers of prisoners, aggravated by the outbreak of typhoid for which they had been totally unprepared,<sup>24</sup> arrangements were placed on a more satisfactory footing. By mid-April most of the men had been removed from the transports, where the ships' surgeons admitted that the most unsatisfactory conditions prevailed, and additional hospitals had been established at Simonstown and Green Point. By the end of April the conciliators had also streamlined their own organisation. On 20 April a general Ladies Clothing Committee for Prisoners of War was established which had the support of women like Mrs. Koopmans de Wet, Mary Sauer, Caroline Murray, Anna Purcell, Mrs. C.C. de Villiers, Mrs. Hay and Mrs. Beck as well as a galaxy of clergymen's wives.<sup>25</sup> This committee grew mainly out of the activities of the women of Sea Point and Green Point, who had initially under the leadership of the local clergymen's wives constituted themselves into two committees which undertook to make conditions more bearable for the men detained on the Green Point Common. Funds were raised independently but later assistance was secured from the Prisoners of War Fund to engage six nurses to care for the sick and wounded

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22. South African News, 3 April 1900.

23. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to Col. Trotter, 2 April 1900.

24. South African News, 3 April 1900.

25. C.C. de Villiers Papers, U.C.T., (D.V.P., (U.C.T.)), Minute Book of the Ladies Clothing Committee for Prisoners of War, 20 April 1900.

and to erect a depot near the new hospital to store gifts sent to the prisoners from Cape Town and other neighbouring towns. These were systematically distributed by the depot officer and Dr. Kolbe also worked independently to provide comforts for the sick and wounded. Throughout the military authorities welcomed this co-operation and afforded the workers every assistance. In April these committees became affiliated to form a general committee which established additional branches in Cape Town, Rondebosch and Woodstock each with its own executive. Mrs. Stegmann became president of the general committee, Mrs. B. Marchand secretary and Mrs. Roos treasurer. Having been first in the field the women of Sea Point and Green Point displayed a certain reluctance to relinquish their independence, but after some persuasion they were eventually prevailed upon to part with their funds which were handed over to Hofmeyr's committee for administration as part of the Prisoners of War Fund from which the Ladies Committee received regular disbursements to defray their expenses.<sup>26</sup> The various branches worked independently, collecting funds and material and making clothing, with regular general meetings being held every month to co-ordinate their activities.

In the ensuing months, as the number of prisoners grew, the task of providing for their needs developed into a major undertaking. The Gentlemen's Committee, as Hofmeyr's committee was usually referred to, hired a special depot, staffed by two clerks and three labourers, at which goods were received, stored and packed for dispatch to the thirty-two camps in the Cape and Natal and in St. Helena, Ceylon, Bermuda, India and Portugal. Later in the war the consignment of goods to overseas camps was prohibited, but the prisoners were allowed to receive money instead. Under the direction of Andrew Murray most of the camps were provided with chaplains who had to undertake the duties of the "zieken-trooster" of old as well as minister to the spiritual needs of the prisoners. An effort was made to provide some sort of education for the large number of young boys in the camps and committees in England and Holland assisted in providing such literature as was permitted by the military authorities. Up to the end of 1900 the Gentlemen's Committee devoted its efforts almost entirely to the Boer prisoners, the funds

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26. South African News, 19 and 26 April 1900, 10 and 25 May 1900; D.V.P., (U.C.T.), Minute Book, 27 April 1900.

received for the widows and orphans being invested for distribution after the war. By November £16 939 had been received for the prisoners fund of which £10 470 had been expended.<sup>27</sup> After that the needs of the prisoners were dwarfed by those of the women and children in the concentration camps. The prisoners fund was, however, continued until the end of the war. When it was closed in August 1902 £18 157 had been received of which £15 058 had been spent. In addition to this a further £37 075 had been forwarded to individual prisoners by the secretary of the committee.<sup>28</sup> Workers amongst the Boer prisoners came not only from South Africa, but also from Britain. Mrs. Alice Stopford Green, widow of the English historian and a friend of the Chief Justice, went to St. Helena where Percy Molteno's generosity helped to alleviate the lot of the detainees and her friend Mary Kingsley, the well-known writer and African explorer, nursed the Boers, suffering from typhoid at Simons-town, eventually succumbing to the disease herself.<sup>29</sup>

Apart from the British Government's decision to deport the Boer prisoners of war the conciliators' work in connection with them remained free from the acrimony which attended their efforts in other spheres. They found the authorities on the whole most co-operative and those engaged in the relief work frequently praised the efforts being made on behalf of the prisoners.<sup>30</sup> The imperialist party at the Cape also refrained from trying to make political capital out of the matter although there were occasions when controversy lay not far beneath the surface. Shortly after the Widows and Orphans Fund had been established the Cape Argus seized upon the fact that Schreiner's wife had contributed to it to point out that the Prime Minister had "indirectly" subscribed to the fund and maintained that this would encourage the Boers in their resistance. This incurred the wrath of the South African News as did its later remark that the Boers were being treated more like pets than prisoners.<sup>31</sup>

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27. H.P., Minute Book, 15 Nov. 1900.

28. H.P., Verslag en Overzicht van de Werkzaamheden van het Werkend Comité .... Aug. 1902, p. 15.

29. Walker, Lord de Villiers, p. 371; M.P., A. Stopford Green to P.A. Molteno, 30 Aug. 1900, 24 Sept. 1900, c. 12 Oct. 1900; Ons Land, 12 June 1900.

30. South African News, 13 March 1900, 13 April 1900.

31. Ibid., 17 Oct. 1899, 6 April 1900.

In February, when the electric lights at the Simonstown camp failed and, as a prearranged signal two shots were fired to warn the station from where the power was supplied, the Cape Argus turned this into an escape bid by some of the Boer prisoners, publishing a report with full particulars as to the number of prisoners and guards wounded in the attempt and embroidering it with additional details of the prisoners' misdeeds while on board one of the transports. When the camp commandant explained what had happened only a half-hearted denial was published.<sup>32</sup> These were, however, minor irritations compared to the incident which occurred in May and which had all the makings of a nasty row. On 3 May a Boer prisoner was shot by a sentry at the Green Point camp, apparently without reason.<sup>33</sup> The verdict of the inquest was that the prisoner had been shot while trying to escape and the private responsible was promoted to the rank of corporal. It was clear that the South African News was not satisfied with the verdict but it refrained from making an issue of the matter, merely remarking that if the soldier's promotion had been unconnected with the unfortunate incident it would have been as well for the military authorities to have stated this; a remark which the Cape Argus interpreted as a "vile insinuation". The South African News eventually conceded that the sentry had merely been guilty of an error of judgment and, comparing his action to that of the policeman who shot Edgar, allowed the matter to rest there.<sup>34</sup>

The Boer inhabitants of the Republics were not the only ones to suffer privations as a result of the war. When it became apparent that a conflict was imminent a large number of uitlanders fled from the Transvaal, mainly to coastal towns such as Cape Town and Durban where many were left destitute. After the middle of 1900 when Lord Roberts had confidently declared that the war was virtually over, but conditions remained such that the uitlander refugees could not return to the Transvaal, their enforced presence in the Cape and Natal caused the authorities considerable embarrassment. In Cape Town the Rand Relief Committee was established which co-operated with the Mansion House Fund to provide assistance to these people.<sup>35</sup> It was tacitly accepted that the

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32. South African News, 8 and 13 Feb. 1900.

33. Ibid., 4 May 1900.

34. South African News, 28 May 1900.

35. Ibid., 10 Oct. 1899.

uitlander refugees' were the responsibility of the imperialist party and the League of Loyal Ladies was left to minister to their needs while the women of the conciliation party concentrated their efforts on the Boer victims of the war. The Rand Relief Committee was dissolved in July 1901 after having assisted some 5 700 refugees. Its total expenditure was £24 260 of which £6 000 was contributed locally.<sup>36</sup>

The problems which resulted from the activities of the military authorities within the confines of the Colony were far more complex than those arising out of the conduct of the war in the Republics for, as Milner pointed out, in the Colony it was virtually impossible to separate the political and military aspects of the conflict.<sup>37</sup> In theory the war was one between Britain and the Republics but the invasion of the Cape by the Free State commandos meant that the Colony also became directly involved. Some colonists joined the volunteer forces which were called out on 16 October 1899 to defend their districts while, in the border areas, large numbers joined the invading commandos, thus creating a state of civil war. Contact between these opposing forces was, however, minimal. Schreiner, not wishing to antagonise the Free State, had resolutely refused to station colonial troops on the borders and both the regular and volunteer forces were left scattered in small numbers throughout the Colony.<sup>38</sup> The Imperial troops were concentrated in two forces under Gatacre and Methuen in the midlands and the north-west so that the invaders were left a free hand in most of the border districts and most towns were surrendered to them without a shot being fired. The actual fighting in colonial territory during 1900 was confined mainly to clashes between Republican forces and Imperial troops along the major routes of advance. Thus, although the Colony could not be kept out of the war, it was spared the rigours of having to participate in a full-scale conflict and the attendant evil effect which that would have had on the already strained relations between the races. Although the Republicans usually left the loyal colonists unmolested as long as they undertook to remain neutral, a certain amount of damage to property was done, more often by the colonial Afrikaners who had joined the commandos and were either

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36. South African News, 5 July 1901.

37. Le May, British Supremacy, pp. 45-46.

38. Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, pp. 58-59.

prompted by vindictiveness or could not resist the temptation to settle old scores.<sup>39</sup> The more innocuous behaviour of the Afrikaners, their "swaggering about with an air of authority"<sup>40</sup> while the commandos were in control of certain districts also gave great offence to loyal British colonists and this was reflected in resolutions passed at many annexation meetings requiring severe penalties for the rebels. The Tarka Farmers' Association, for example, adopted a motion demanding that rebellion be punished by the death sentence, confiscation of property, life imprisonment with hard labour or disfranchisement for life.<sup>41</sup> Contributors to the columns of the Eastern Province Herald added to this list suggestions that rebels should wear distinctive badges, carry passes or even be banished from the Colony.<sup>42</sup>

By the end of March the Republican forces had withdrawn across the border and the majority of the rebels had surrendered, most of them being allowed to return to their farms until they could be dealt with by the authorities. The conciliation party was, however, extremely reluctant to admit that an extensive rebellion had taken place. The South African News repeatedly warned its readers to take the news of events on the border with a pinch of salt<sup>43</sup> and at the end of April it was still urging "the extreme unwisdom of taking seriously all the reports about the numbers affected by rebellion in the border districts". It believed that it was in the interest of the imperialist party to exaggerate the extent of the rebellion "hence the reports in the Jingo press about 'thousands of Cape colonists rising', 'the Colony seething with rebellion' and so on ad nauseam. When the facts are published it will probably be found that throughout the Colony nothing like 1 000 persons will be adjudged guilty of rebellion ..." <sup>44</sup> Numerous pleas were also advanced in extenuation of the rebels' conduct. It was pointed out that they had been motivated by their overwhelming sympathy for their Republican kin and their conviction of the injustice of the war; that they had been provoked by the attitude of their opponents and by unjust treatment under martial law; that many

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39. Le May, British Supremacy, pp. 47-48.

40. South African News, 21 Feb. 1900.

41. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), E.J. Spurway to Schreiner, 19 May 1900.

42. South African News, 26 March 1900.

43. Ibid., 28 Nov. 1899.

44. South African News, 26 April 1900.

had acted in ignorance believing that they were obliged to obey the orders of the Free State commandants who exercised effective control in their districts; that the border areas had been left undefended and that the Boers had compelled them to take up arms threatening them with confiscation of their property and other reprisals if they refused and that some had even been marched off to the Boer laagers under armed guard.<sup>45</sup> Exaggerated as some of these excuses might have been, there was no doubt that the Afrikaners in the border areas had been placed in a most trying dilemma and the conciliation party was anxious that they should not be too severely punished for their misguided actions.

Inextricably linked with the difficulties created by the rebellion, were the problems arising out of the declaration of martial law in the disaffected areas of the Colony. Milner had been anxious to use it as a means of preventing rebellion, but the ministry had agreed to it with the greatest reluctance, fearing that it would have just the opposite effect. Between 16 October and 8 December martial law was, however, declared in all the districts bordering on the Republics.<sup>46</sup> As it placed arbitrary power in the hands of the military authorities in order to enable them by extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of the country and to restore order, it inevitably lent itself to abuse. In the circumstances prevailing at the Cape this danger was greatly increased and during the war, no other measure within the Colony did more to exacerbate ill feeling between the races than the administration of martial law. The military authorities' lack of experience in this field combined with the suspicion with which many of them regarded the Dutch colonists superimposed upon the hostility of a large section of the English-speaking population, resulted in actions ranging from mere tactlessness to serious abuses of authority. The numerous petty indignities and inconveniences suffered under the system caused as much irritation as the more serious malpractices. Not a day passed without the columns of newspapers such as Ons Land and the South African News being filled with a recital of alleged grievances suffered

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45. South African News, 25 April 1900, 17 May 1900; W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), A.S. du Plessis to Schreiner, 2 April 1900.

46. The areas proclaimed were: Taungs, Vryburg, Barkly West, Kimberley, Herbert, De Aar, Steynsburg, Albert, Molteno, Aliwal North, Wodehouse, Glen Grey, Queenstown, Cathcart, Hay, Hope Town and Philipstown. Vide Synman, Rebelleverhoor in Kaapland, p. 14.

under the administration of martial law. These included complaints that people were arrested simply because they had Dutch names, that arbitrary restrictions were placed upon their movements, that only the Dutch had to carry passes, that their mail was censored while that of their English neighbours was left untouched, that rewards were offered to informers, and that those under arrest were denied access to their legal advisers and that farmers were not allowed to sell their produce or to draw funds from the bank.<sup>47</sup> The greatest dissatisfaction was however caused by the fact that individuals were often arrested on slender or unreliable evidence, imprisoned for lengthy periods, often under the most distressing conditions, and eventually released without having been charged with any offence. In the interim their stock was commandeered and sold at unreasonably low prices, often to interested persons so that on their release the victims found that they had suffered considerable pecuniary loss, many farmers complaining that they were ruined men.<sup>48</sup> In cases where bread-winners were imprisoned for long periods their families were often left without any means of support. Others emerged from prison to find that their property had been looted or destroyed. By June 1900 numerous reports of the distress being experienced by families in martial law areas had appeared in the press and suggestions were made that steps should be taken to assist those in need.<sup>49</sup> J.G. van der Horst, a partner in the same legal firm as Sauer, protested that although confiscation of property was prohibited by law the authorities were circumventing this by imposing heavy fines and that many persons were being pauperised by these measures. He pointed out that this was aggravating the poor white problem and that it was not justice but a social crime against which the Church and Parliament ought to protest.<sup>50</sup> On 6 July Hofmeyr issued a formal appeal on behalf of the destitute in martial law areas. He pointed out, however, that the committee administering the Widows and Orphans and the Prisoners of War Funds already had its hands full and that it could not undertake additional responsibility. A separate fund would therefore be created under the control of the Rev. J. Roos, general secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church, and a small committee of

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47. South African News, 18 Dec. 1899, 15 Jan. 1900, 13 Feb. 1900, 8 June 1900.

48. Ibid., 30 June 1900, 30 Nov. 1900.

49. South African News, 2 June 1900.

50. Ibid., 6 June 1900.

clergymen and others would be appointed to assist him. Funds would be distributed in consultation with local clergymen and branches of the Bond, but assistance would not necessarily be confined to members of the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>51</sup> This fund received less publicity than the others and did not equal the amounts raised for the Republicans. It did, however, receive donations, even from England. Percy Molteno had already in April contributed £100 towards assisting persons improperly arrested under martial law, and Rev. S.E. Gladstone, a son of the British statesman, wrote to Merriman commiserating with the plight of the Boer families and enclosing a donation from his parishioners which was gratefully acknowledged in the South African News.<sup>52</sup> By November 1900 the fund totalled £4 177.<sup>53</sup>

The strongest complaints against the administration of martial law came from Wodehouse and Aliwal North, the constituencies of Merriman and Sauer in both of which over three-quarters of the inhabitants had assisted the invaders.<sup>54</sup> The conduct of the military authorities in these districts was characterised by a greater degree of political vindictiveness than was present elsewhere. This was due to the fact that on the withdrawal of the Free State forces these districts were occupied by Brabant's Horse, a volunteer corps of Eastern Province farmers under the command of Brigadier General E.Y. Brabant, ex-chairman of the Cape branch of the South African League and M.L.A. for East London.<sup>55</sup> The officer commanding in the district was Major C.P. Crewe, the paid secretary of the League. Even before the outbreak of the war when Olive Schreiner wrote to her brother advising him not to do anything which would give Milner the opportunity of dismissing his ministry, she had urged:

"If you do nothing else you keep the men out who would turn the full force of the Volunteers upon us. I myself am not afraid that we could not deal with the English troops except [if] they were in the very largest numbers, but with a band of Eastern Province Volunteers it would be otherwise".<sup>56</sup>

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51. South African News, 6 July 1900; Ons Land, 10 July 1900.
  52. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 6 April 1900; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 221; South African News, 23 July 1900.
  53. South African News, 19 Nov. 1900.
  54. Snyman, Rebelleverhoor in Kaapland, p. 15.
  55. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 139.
  56. W.P.S.P., (U.C.T.), O. Schreiner to W.P. Schreiner, c. July 1899.

The activities of Brabant's Horse proved that her fears were not unfounded. Major Crewe had been an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate for Aliwal North during the 1898 election and his political opponent, P.J. de Wet, M.L.A. for Wodehouse, was one of the first to be arrested together with J.F. de Wet and D. de Wet.<sup>57</sup> It was reported that many of the most respected inhabitants of the district who had remained loyal were arrested and their stock confiscated and sold by public auction. As many of those not arrested were confined to their farms there was very little competition at the sales which were conducted by J.V. O'Brien, a prominent member of the local branch of the League. The principal purchaser of the stock was a Mr. Clarke whom the South African News described as an "active Jingo".<sup>58</sup> Merriman, protesting vigorously against these proceedings, wrote to Milner who during March undertook a tour of inspection through the martial law areas, but received little sympathy. The High Commissioner regarded the seizure of the property of rebels-in-arms as a justifiable means of suppressing rebellion but did not think that it was being resorted to as punishment for past offences.<sup>59</sup> O'Brien was one of the several Leaguesmen with whom Milner consulted at Dordrecht regarding the prosecution of rebels in the district.<sup>60</sup> The resentment aroused by Crewe's activities was aggravated by the fact that men such as H.C. Hull, E.P. Solomon, H.L. Lindsay and George Farrar were appointed as legal advisers to the military authorities engaged in prosecuting the rebels. These men had all been connected with the Uitlander Council in the Transvaal and Farrar was one of the five who had signed the letter of invitation to Jameson before the Raid.<sup>61</sup> These measures smacked strongly of political revenge and Merriman condemned the activities of Crewe and Brabant "with their junta of 'reformers'" as infamous and strongly urged upon Schreiner the advisability of having martial law withdrawn from districts where military operations had ceased.<sup>62</sup> The South African News, while admitting that all the men arrested were probably not innocent, regarded it as a disgrace that men like Crewe and his

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57. On being tried for treason, P.J. de Wet was acquitted, the other two were found guilty. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 100, 178; Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 234.

58. South African News, 29 March 1900.

59. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 173-174.

60. South African News, 30 March 1900; M.P., Sauer to P.A. Molteno, 28 March 1900.

61. South African News, 13 April 1900.

62. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 177, 198.

associates were employed for the purpose and registered a strongly-worded protest.<sup>63</sup> In addition to the political bias of their activities, Brabant's Horse acquired a reputation for wholesale looting and destruction of property being termed the "Brabanditti" by the war correspondent of the Daily Telegraph. It was reported that they "left a trail of misery and ruin from Sterkstroom to Dordrecht and from there to Jamestown that being the country they covered"<sup>64</sup> and letters such as that from a member of the force which appeared in the Graaff-Reinet Advertiser confirmed that "loot was plentiful and we fared well".<sup>65</sup> It was, however, not only the Dutch who felt the heavy hand of Major Crewe. The Rev. David Ross of Lady Grey fell foul of the Major in May when he remonstrated with him about the requisitioning of his parishioners' draught animals when they came to "nachtmaal", having previously been assured by the military that they would not be molested. On 27 June he was arrested on a verbal charge of high treason and after twenty-four days in gaol was released on £3 000 bail but was forbidden to leave the village. After undergoing four preliminary investigations he was eventually in May 1901 informed that the Attorney-General declined to prosecute.<sup>66</sup>

Proceedings such as these caused untold ill feeling and the conciliation party was loud in its condemnation of the system under which they occurred. Merriman complained that:

"Even worse than the war is this martial law business. The scars left by the former will be skinned over but I doubt whether any time will obliterate the memories of the scorn and insult that have been dealt out to the Dutch, who have remained amid great temptation loyal to their duty or the vindictive manner in which the sins of those who were led astray have been visited on their heads".<sup>67</sup>

The conciliation party was fortunate that during 1900 martial law stifled criticism in only a part of the Colony and they were still in a position to make their voices heard. Martial law formed a major topic of discussion at conciliation meetings and at many of these resolutions were passed

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63. South African News, 30 March 1900, 28 April 1900.

64. Ibid., 20 Aug. 1900.

65. South African News, 30 March 1900, 27 Sept. 1900, 3 Jan. 1901.

66. Ibid., 1 May 1900, 29 June 1900, 20 May 1901.

67. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 198.

condemning arbitrary arrests and requesting the military authorities to show more consideration in apprehending suspects. The deproclamation of martial law in evacuated areas was strongly urged and occasionally resolutions requesting an amnesty for rebels were appended. It is notable that speakers at the conciliation meeting at Philipstown, which was in a proclaimed area, were more concerned with airing their grievances under the system than with protesting against the annexation of the Republics. A committee was appointed to investigate what could be done to assist persons who were being kept under arrest and it was authorised to apply even to the Supreme Court if necessary.<sup>68</sup> The conciliation committee at Stellenbosch also forwarded a special protest to the Prime Minister objecting to the procedure being adopted by the military tribunals.<sup>69</sup> After the People's Congress at Graaff-Reinet had concluded its formal business several speakers recounted their harrowing experiences under martial law and at its Paarl Congress the Bond registered a strong protest against it and demanded an enquiry into its administration.<sup>70</sup> Speeches at the women's meetings were particularly strong on the subject. At Cape Town Mary Sauer condemned the indefinite imprisonment of suspects without trial and put in a plea for an amnesty for rebels. Alice Greene travelled to Ceres specially to speak in support of a similar resolution there.<sup>71</sup> In her dramatic address to the women of Somerset East Olive Schreiner animadverted upon the fact that "the honourable uniform of the British officer was pawned to civilians, that masquerading in that guise they might avenge themselves upon their political enemies".<sup>72</sup> On the occasion of the Cape Town meeting a deputation of women from Paarl and Wellington applied for an interview with Milner to request the withdrawal of martial law, but were informed that the High Commissioner could not see them and that they would have to submit their request in writing. This response was interpreted as yet another in the series of snubs which the women of the conciliation party received at the hands of the authorities at Government House.<sup>73</sup>

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68. South African News, 6 April 1900.

69. Ibid., 21 April 1900.

70. Cape Times, 2 June 1900; Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, pp. 220-221.

71. M.P.C., Anna Luyt to Betty Molteno, 27 July 1900.

72. South African News, 19 Oct. 1900.

73. Ibid., 11 July 1900.

Conciliators at the Cape also provided their allies in England with as much information as they could on martial law abuses in order to have these brought to the attention of the British public and in the hope that influential persons in England might intercede with the authorities for some of the accused. Thus Percy Molteno was kept abreast of the situation through the columns of the South African News and letters from his brothers and he used the information he received in the press and also to get questions asked in the House of Commons. Sauer appealed to him to see if he could get anything done about the activities of Crewe and Brabant in his constituency and the South African News urged friends of those who considered themselves wronged to make the facts of each case public at once in order to strengthen the hands of those who were at work in the British parliament.<sup>74</sup> In April Percy Molteno reported that questions put in the House appeared to have borne some fruits in the release of persons arrested and in better precautions being taken to guard against the abuse of authority.<sup>75</sup> Merriman corresponded regularly with James Bryce and John Morley and the latter used his influence to have the case of O.S. Vermooten, one of Merriman's constituents, brought to the notice of Lord Roberts. Leonard Courtney also assured Merriman that they were doing their utmost to publicise the arbitrary conduct which was taking place under the shelter of martial law.<sup>76</sup> In May John Ellis and two associates sent J.M. Robertson to the Cape to investigate the situation and to supply them with accurate information on martial law and censorship "with a view to helping some of us here who view with grave concern this drift towards unconstitutional and high-handed breaches of the right of self-government which is pretty certain to follow on this lamentable war". Robertson travelled to the Cape with Vincent van der Byl who had been visiting England and Ellis wrote to Schreiner requesting him to give Robertson what assistance he could.<sup>77</sup> Percy Molteno advised his brother to do the same and Charles Molteno introduced Robertson to the Merrimans.<sup>78</sup>

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74. M.P., Sauer to P.A. Molteno, 28 March 1900; South African News, 10 March 1900.

75. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 6 April 1900.

76. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 236; J.X.M.P., L. Courtney to Merriman, 9 March 1900.

77. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Ellis to Schreiner, 29 May 1900.

78. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 1 June 1900; J.X.M.P., Agnes Merriman to Julia Merriman, 22 June 1900.

In 1901 Robertson published the letters which he had written to the press between June and October 1900, describing the situation in the Cape and Natal, in book form under the title Wrecking the Empire.

The conciliation party's agitation against martial law made little impression upon the military authorities. If their representations were to have any effect they would have to come from the Cape Government. From London Percy Molteno, impatient and critical as ever, inveighed against the inaction of the ministry. In January he did not mince his words when he told Merriman:

"You cannot rid yourselves of your constitutional responsibility by handing over defence to the Imperial authorities. You must protect the rights of your people and guard their interests otherwise you fail in the one and only reason for your existence as a ministry". 79.

He warned that should the Dutch feel that they were being handed over to the tender mercies of the military they might be driven to desperation and perhaps even revolt and he insisted that the ministry should remain in consultation with the military authorities on the measures being taken in the proclaimed districts.<sup>80</sup> Schreiner and his colleagues, like Rose Innes after them, were subjected to much undeserved criticism on this score as the representations which they made to Milner and the military authorities were not publicly known. They were anxious to mitigate the harshness of martial law as much as possible and were particularly insistent that the operation of the civil courts should not be unnecessarily interfered with. At their instigation Judge W.H. Solomon was in February seconded to the military authorities to preside over important treason trials.<sup>81</sup> Schreiner also urged the withdrawal of martial law from certain districts, but found both Milner and the military unco-operative in this regard.<sup>82</sup> Constant complaints against the system prompted Milner, accompanied by the Attorney-General, to undertake a tour of the proclaimed districts, in order to investigate the situation on the spot. He was appalled by what he found, but was offended not so much by the alleged injustices which were being perpetrated, although he admitted that there was reason for complaint, as by the administrative chaos which prevailed.

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79. M.P., P.A. Molteno to Merriman, 3 Jan. 1900.

80. Ibid., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 26 Jan. 1900.

81. Le May, British Supremacy, p. 56; Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, pp. 97, 101.

82. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to Milner, 14 May 1900.

His efforts were therefore mainly directed towards infusing some order and consistency into the activities of the military authorities. <sup>83</sup>

The conciliation party's strongest hope of securing redress of their grievances lay in the fact that their representatives in parliament could refuse to pass legislation indemnifying persons for acts done under martial law until a commission of enquiry had been appointed. Percy Molteno repeatedly urged them not to lose sight of this. In February he told James Molteno:

"Remember you have to be asked for an act of indemnity for all that is done. You must give Milner and his crew a fright and show them that their action will be dangerous for themselves". <sup>84</sup>

Three months later he was still advising Charles Molteno to,

"Remember about the committee on Martial Law, arbitrary arrests, seizure and sale of stock and give no act of indemnity until you have fully inquired and know what has occurred and are in a position to remedy it. No one can object to this course. It is perfectly reasonable that you should know what has been done before you condone it". <sup>85</sup>

The conciliation party therefore felt understandably aggrieved when Schreiner resigned on 13 June, shortly before parliament was due to meet, and during the session took his seat on the cross-benches thereby depriving them of their majority in the House of Assembly. Schreiner's resignation was caused by the fact that his ministry could not agree on the penalties which should be imposed upon the rebels. Sauer, Merriman and Te Water admitted that the ringleaders would have to be punished but were in favour of a wide amnesty for the rank and file. The other members of the ministry, particularly Richard Solomon, felt that the rank and file should suffer some penalty for their offence. The case in favour of amnesty was ably put by Merriman in a minute which urged the Imperial Government to follow the example set by Lord Durham during the rebellion in Lower Canada in 1837-38. <sup>86</sup> The dissenting members of the ministry reluctantly endorsed the minute in order to preserve the unity of the Cabinet. Schreiner, however, felt that:

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83. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 104; Headlam, Milner Papers, v. ii, p. 106.

84. M.P., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 15 Feb. 1900.

85. Ibid., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 17 May 1900.

86. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 192-194.

"If it should be that the Imperial Government take a different view and propose the enforcement of a period of political disfranchisement upon those who have taken up arms against the Queen, - I shall greatly regret the loss of an opportunity for strengthening the position of England in the hearts of the Dutch subjects of Her Majesty in this Colony, but I shall feel bound to secure the passage of the necessary measure". 87

He believed that this was a matter in which the colonial parliament could merely petition as the granting of an amnesty was an Act of Grace which the Queen exercised on the advice of her ministers but which could not be demanded by the Cape Government. When Chamberlain insisted on a period of disfranchisement for the rank and file Schreiner therefore found himself out of sympathy with the rest of the South African Party which regarded such a step as a measure of vindictive political persecution. By disfranchising the rebels the Dutch would be deprived of political power and the position of the two parties in parliament would be reversed. Merriman and Hofmeyr both pointed out that the measure would create a class of Dutch 'helots' and the latter added that if this were done "I would indeed despair of seeing in my lifetime anything like harmony or good feeling between the two European races of the Colony". 88 As the majority of his party refused to support him, Schreiner had no choice but to resign. Milner had welcomed the difficulties created by the rebellion to rid himself of what he regarded as the disloyal section of the ministry and to ensure that political power at the Cape would for several years be in the hands of the imperialist party. He was in fact strongly in favour of suspending the Colony's constitution believing it an impossible state of affairs to maintain self-government in a colony where the majority of the population was hostile to Britain. Chamberlain, however, opposed such a drastic step and effectively curbed Milner's more extreme inclinations although he did not shrink from using the threat that the constitution might be suspended to bring pressure to bear on Schreiner. 89 Milner had hoped to keep the prime minister in office with a reconstructed ministry but Schreiner refused to join hands with the opposition against his erstwhile associates. 90 Sprigg was therefore called upon to form a government and

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87. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to R. Solomon, 27 April 1900.

88. Ibid., Hofmeyr to Schreiner, 22 May 1900; Le May, British Supremacy, p. 68.

89. Le May, British Supremacy, pp. 56-57, 69.

90. For a detailed discussion of Schreiner's attitude and the Cabinet crisis, see Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, ch. VII.

Innes accepted the vital post of attorney-general, feeling that it was not the time to refuse the request because of minor differences with Sprigg.<sup>91</sup>

The conciliation party found Schreiner's behaviour most disconcerting and although they outwardly adopted a moderate attitude towards him, many privately expressed their strong disapproval and disappointment. Percy Molteno reflected the general reaction of the party when he commented:

"The more I think about Schreiner's whole action in all this matter the more fatal and unfortunate it seems. He has sold you at a moment when you could have brought about some change for the better in the treatment of the martial law districts and could have condemned all the illegal and unconstitutional acts which have gone on while your parliament was not sitting. He has deserted you in the face of the enemy and helped Milner when he most needed help and now has resigned and divided your party and so aided Milner once more".<sup>92</sup>

Merriman remarked that they had been "basely betrayed" by their friends and his wife reported:

"The Dutch party are scandalised by Mr. Schreiner's action and say he has forfeited all claim as the leader. They say he has put them in a false position in the eyes of the English public who will naturally say 'These Dutch people are so extreme in their views that even their ex-leader says they have gone too far for him and he has resigned'!".<sup>93</sup>

Olive Schreiner found herself placed in an unenviable position by her brother's stand. She reported that the British party at Beaufort West, where she was living at the time, would have nothing to do with her because they regarded her as a "Bonds-woman" and the Dutch also shunned her as they believed her to have sided with Schreiner against them.<sup>94</sup>

The South African News was at first reluctant to admit the true nature of the difficulties within the cabinet and accused Chamberlain of at last having succeeded in intriguing the Schreiner ministry out of office.<sup>95</sup> Once it could no longer blind itself to the facts of the

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91. Wright, Rose Innes Correspondence, p. 266.

92. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 11 July 1900.

93. J.X.M.P., Agnes Merriman to Julia Merriman, 22 June 1900.

94. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Francis Schreiner, c. July 1900.

95. South African News, 21 June 1900.

situation it refrained from directly criticising the late Prime Minister, but it did reprint articles from Ons Land and the Midland News condemning Schreiner's conduct. In discussing the proposed Indemnity and Special Tribunals Act, which stipulated that the rank and file be tried by special commissions and be disfranchised for five years, it drew attention to the fact that it was virtually identical to the legislation suggested by Schreiner and commented:

" ... a more vindictive measure was probably never framed in a country supposed to be governed on rational and common-sense lines ... How any man in Parliament who sincerely desires racial conciliation or tolerable social relationships in the districts more directly affected, can vote for such a Bill passes our comprehension". 96

In October, when Schreiner became involved in an undignified wrangle with his electoral committee over his decision to hold a referendum in his constituency to ascertain whether he should resign, the South African News eventually openly criticised him for his conduct announcing that the time had come for the party to choose between its principles and its friends. 97 After Schreiner's resignation F.S. Malan was elected unopposed to fill the vacancy.

Although Schreiner's defection with his eight "Adullamites"<sup>98</sup> robbed the South African Party of any chance of preventing the passage of the Treason Bill they put up a spirited struggle against it in Parliament in the hope of modifying some of its clauses. Merriman and Sauer, their tongues no longer "grievously clogged by office" were the main spokesmen for the party. They aimed in particular at narrowing down the terms of the amnesty, maintaining that Parliament should not indemnify anything which smacked of malice or revenge such as the acts of political spite perpetrated by Farrar and his associates. Amendments to this effect were, however, defeated and an attempt to narrow down the Act's definition of a ringleader suffered a similar fate. 99 Both Charles and James Molteno spoke against the Bill, the latter making much of the fact that Chamberlain had on 25 July, somewhat disingenuously, said in the House of Commons

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96. South African News, 20 July 1900.

97. Ibid., 21 Sept. 1900, 25 Oct. 1900.

98. One of these was Charles Searle whose support of the conciliation movement had been highly valued.

99. Cape Hansard, 1900, pp. 290-297, 450-455.

that he had not brought any pressure to bear on the Schreiner ministry with regard to the disfranchisement of the rebels. James Molteno pointed out that this broke down the main argument by which Schreiner justified his support for the Bill and expressed the opinion that the Treason Bill had probably been born in a railway carriage during Solomon and Milner's tour through the martial law districts the previous March. <sup>100</sup>

On the first day of the session Merriman tabled a motion calling for the deproclamation of martial law. This gave the parliamentary spokesmen of the conciliation party the opportunity to bring complaints of abuses under the system into the open and several stormy debates on the subject took place. James Molteno, living up to his reputation as the enfant terrible of the House, was much to the fore in taking General Brabant to task for the lawless behaviour of his volunteer force and several heated exchanges ensued with the member for East London refuting Molteno's accusations at great length. <sup>101</sup> The speeches made by N.F. de Waal and S.A. du Plessis were subsequently published by the S.A.C.C. as a pamphlet entitled "Martial Law and Conciliation, being the Experiences of two Members of the Cape Parliament". Merriman's motion, although amended to call for the withdrawal of martial law only in districts where it was not indispensable for the success of military operations was, however, lost by four votes. <sup>102</sup> Sauer's motion calling for a select committee to enquire into the administration of martial law resulted in a lengthy argument as to the suitability of a select committee for such a purpose. Sprigg expressed himself in favour of a commission to enquire into the matter "when a fitting time arrives". Innes thought the complaints against martial law were greatly exaggerated and rejected a select committee on the grounds that it would lead to a partisan wrangle. Both Solomon and Schreiner accused Sauer of introducing the motion merely to obstruct the passage of the Treason Bill and it was ultimately defeated by eight votes, the cross-benches voting with the Government. <sup>103</sup> An extremely acrimonious debate ensued when Merriman moved what amounted to a vote of censure against Milner for having published correspondence of his in a blue book without consulting him. The

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100. South African News, 18 Aug. 1900.

101. Cape Hansard, 1900, pp. 30-31, 36-37, 161-166.

102. South African News, 16 Aug. 1900.

103. Ibid., 10 and 15 Aug. 1900; Cape Hansard, 1900, pp. 174-180, 203-214.

correspondence included a letter to P.J. de Wet which had been intercepted before it could reach its destination. On this occasion Schreiner also voted against the motion and Merriman later described his conduct as "inexplicable and inexcusable".<sup>104</sup>

Despite these major setbacks the conciliation party did score two minor victories during the session. Much discontent had been caused by the fact that while Dutch colonists were arrested for the most trivial offences under martial law English traders in the border areas who had freely and openly transacted business with the invading forces had been allowed to escape prosecution.<sup>105</sup> When Sauer raised the matter in the House Innes at first prevaricated, pointing out that English law had never been very clear as far as trading with the enemy was concerned. He eventually conceded that many cases of voluntary trading with the enemy had been brought to his attention and promised that these would be investigated and that the traders would be prosecuted.<sup>106</sup> The conciliation party also received some satisfaction on the question of the prohibition of certain newspapers in some martial law districts. During 1900 the military authorities did not place a general proscription on what it regarded as undesirable publications but restrictions were gradually placed on papers such as the South African News, Ons Land and a few other Dutch journals. The circulation of the South African News was first prohibited in Natal in April and a similar order followed in the Free State in May. By August it had also been stopped in the districts of Aliwal North, Barkly West, Hay, Herbert, Kuruman, Mafeking, Taungs, Vryburg and Kimberley. When a protest was registered in parliament on 16 August the House voted unanimously in favour of a resolution that the military be requested to restore the right of circulation to all newspapers which had been prohibited in martial law areas.<sup>107</sup> A month later the military had, however, only yielded in so far as it had agreed to allow reprints of newspapers containing parliamentary reports to circulate in proclaimed areas. The South African News pointed out that this was hardly any concession at all as the most important parliamentary business had by then been dealt with and

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104. M.P., Merriman to P.A. Moltano, 23 Oct. 1900.

105. South African News, 26 June 1900, 14 July 1900, 16 Aug. 1900.

106. Ibid., 3 and 5 Sept. 1900.

107. South African News, 17 Aug. 1900.

remarked that the military had "a short way with Parliaments".<sup>108</sup> When Merriman again raised the matter in the House Sprigg's answer was evasive and no further concessions could be obtained.<sup>109</sup>

The conciliators also experienced difficulties with the censors with regard to their distribution of anti-war literature. On 28 February the customs authorities seized a bale of pamphlets consigned to the South African News on the grounds that they were treasonable. The majority of the pamphlets were by W.T. Stead but there were also a few copies of F.W. Reitz's "A Century of Wrong" amongst them. Most of the pamphlets were eventually returned after they had been examined by the authorities at Government House but Reitz's tract was withheld and forwarded to the attorney-general for a decision.<sup>110</sup> In an angry leader the South African News demanded to be informed on whose authority this had been done and its indignation was increased by the fact that the offending pamphlet was allowed to be freely circulated by other booksellers in the city and afterwards made its appearance in the Public Library.<sup>111</sup> As treasurer-general Merriman was in charge of the customs department, but he had obviously not been consulted for as soon as the protest against the seizure of the pamphlets appeared in the South African News he wrote to the collector of customs pointing out that it was not the duty of his department to stifle opinion and deprecating the use of "Russian methods" in a British Colony.<sup>112</sup> In December the South African News received more severe treatment when two bales of the pamphlet "What is now being done in South Africa" were destroyed by the customs department on the instructions of the attorney-general who judged it to be a seditious libel. The pamphlet consisted of a letter from a British officer serving in South Africa giving details of the brutal behaviour of the British army in the Republics and condemning the policy of unconditional surrender. The South African News pointed out that the letter had appeared freely in the local English-language press and promptly published it, following it up by another in the same vein by the same writer a day later.<sup>113</sup> On this occasion the editor was not prosecuted, but at a later date the authorities were to act more stringently.

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108. South African News, 19 Sept. 1900.

109. *Ibid.*, 20 Sept. 1900.

110. South African News, 12 March 1900; M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 8 March 1900.

111. South African News, 13 March 1900, 7 April 1900.

112. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 172.

113. South African News, 28 and 29 Dec. 1900.

One of the objectives of the Cape Town conciliation committee was to advise those who had suffered in person or property during the war as to the best method of obtaining redress. It was probably due to the influence of the legal men who were members of the committee and who had had much first-hand experience of the cavalier treatment of many suspects by the military authorities, that this was included in the committee's programme. James Molteno, Henry Burton and Vincent van der Byl all devoted much of their time throughout the war to assisting those who had been charged with high treason or offences under martial law. They appear to have acted in their personal capacities as legal practitioners and not specifically under the auspices of the conciliation committee, but they nevertheless contributed in some small measure towards allaying the ill feeling caused by the difficulties which many experienced in having their grievances redressed. Henry Burton was first in the field, defending forty-one rebels captured on Sunnyside farm in the Douglas district and brought to trial in Cape Town. Much sympathy was felt by the conciliators for these prisoners, the majority of whom appear to have come from the poorer section of the population. They arrived in Cape Town in such a bedraggled state that the committee of the Widows and Orphans Fund had to provide them with more suitable clothing. C.P. Schultz organised the collection and distribution of delicacies amongst them so that Richard Solomon was eventually moved to complain to Schreiner that it was unseemly for such open sympathy to be demonstrated towards those who had joined the Queen's enemies.<sup>114</sup> Merriman thought their trial a scandal and Burton caused something of a sensation by refusing to continue with the defence when his request that the hearing be postponed until further witnesses were available, was turned down.<sup>115</sup> In March Burton and Van der Byl were instrumental in bringing the cases of three colonists captured near Belmont and treated as prisoners of war by the military authorities, despite their protestations that they were British subjects, before the Supreme Court with the result that the men were released.<sup>116</sup> Van der Byl on several occasions approached Milner directly on behalf of persons arrested by Major Crewe and his associates, one case being that of P.J. de Wet, M.L.A.<sup>117</sup>

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114. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Translation of a report in Ons Land, 25 Jan. 1900 annotated by Schreiner and Solomon.

115. South African News, 24 April 1900; Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, p. 193; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 188.

116. South African News, 9 and 23 March 1900.

117. Ibid., 24 May 1900, 23 July 1900.

When Sauer's fellow member for Aliwal North was unexpectedly arrested for high treason in Cape Town on 26 June, James Molteno appeared on his behalf, the attorney-general ultimately declining to prosecute. <sup>118</sup>

The Treason Bill established a special court consisting of two Supreme Court judges and an advocate of ten years' standing to try ringleaders and this court began its proceedings at Colesberg in December 1900.

James Molteno and Henry Burton followed the court in its progress through the Colony, defending many of those brought before it on charges of high treason. <sup>119</sup> Although Molteno maintained that he was on Milner's "Star Chamber list" after the fracas over the "Dominion of Afrikanderdom" he does not appear to have experienced any difficulties with the authorities in the martial law districts. <sup>120</sup>

During the greater part of 1900 martial law abuses constituted the gravamen of the conciliation party's complaint against the conduct of the war. But the nature of the war in the Republics had altered since the middle of the year. Having failed to establish effective control in these territories, the British army resorted to punitive measures and by November the burning of 600 farm-houses had been officially recorded. <sup>121</sup> These measures eventually resulted in the herding of women and children into "camps of refuge" and by the end of the year the criticism against the conduct of the military in the Colony was completely dwarfed by the outcry against the measures being taken in the Republics. The South African News maintained that:

"The most callous and the most indifferent reader even of such telegrams as the censors allow to be published must have shuddered at the reiteration day after day and week after week of the stories of the destruction by fire of the homesteads and at the accounts of those 'strong measures' which Lord Roberts himself in a recent dispatch declared to be 'ruinous to the country' .... in no war in modern times has there been such a wanton, ruthless and unnecessary destruction of private property as there has been in this war which England through her statesmen tells the civilised world is being waged for equal rights for all civilised men south of the Zambesi".

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118. South African News, 27 June 1900, 6 Sept. 1900.

119. Molteno, Dominion of Afrikanderdom, pp. 215-216; South African News, 15 Dec. 1900, 1 Feb. 1901, 10 June 1901; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 271.

120. M.P.C., J. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 18 Oct. 1901.

121. Le May, British Supremacy, p. 90.

It warned that these measures would merely prolong the struggle, "the history of which will bring the blush of shame to the face of generations of Englishmen as yet unborn".<sup>122</sup> Sir Henry de Villiers reflected the mood of the conciliation party when he told Merriman "I cannot trust myself to write about the doings of the military authorities ... My fear is that the misdeeds of the present day will hereafter make a reconciliation of the races utterly impossible".<sup>123</sup>

The women of the conciliation party, who had already at some of the anti-annexation meetings deplored the measures being resorted to in the Republics, took the lead in organising a protest against the policy of devastation. Mesdames Koopmans de Wet, A.I. Steytler and J. Roos of Cape Town, Mrs. A.B. de Villiers of Paarl and Mrs. J.H. Neethling of Stellenbosch convened a meeting which took place at Paarl on 10 November. Presided over by Mrs. Roos, the gathering of 2 000 women passed resolutions condemning the burning and plundering of private property and the deportation and imprisonment of homeless women and children as contrary to the usages of modern warfare. The speakers expressed their sorrow at seeing Britain, supposedly the most Christian of nations, committing such deplorable deeds. In an address read on her behalf Mrs. Koopmans de Wet stigmatised Britain's signing of the Hague Convention as "sheer hypocrisy".<sup>124</sup>

Although the women hoped that their protest would focus attention on the plight of their compatriots in the Republics, they realised that it would not alter the situation materially and more practical steps were also taken to alleviate the lot of the victims. In the Cape Town Ladies Committee for the Prisoners of War they had a ready made organisation and this body had already at a meeting on 21 September resolved that its work would in future be carried out on behalf of the women and children.<sup>125</sup> It also lent its support to an appeal drawn up by Mrs. Neethling of Stellenbosch and signed by five other clergymen's wives, calling upon the women of Europe and America to render assistance to the destitute Republicans.<sup>126</sup> A copy

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122. South African News, 6 Nov. 1900.

123. J.X.M.P., De Villiers to Merriman, 21 Nov. 1900.

124. South African News, 12 Nov. 1900; Ons Land, 13 Nov. 1900.

125. D.V.P., (U.C.T.), Minute Book, 21 Sept. 1900.

126. *Ibid.*, Minute Book, 19 Oct. 1900; South African News, 16 Nov. 1900.

of this appeal was sent to Percy Molteno who forwarded it to Kate Courtney and close co-operation was subsequently established between the Ladies Committee in Cape Town and the two major relief organisations in Britain.<sup>127</sup> These were the South African Women and Children's Distress Fund of which Percy Molteno was a committee member and with which Emily Hobhouse was associated and the Boer Women and Children's Clothing Fund. Frederick Markarness's wife was a member of the latter committee which liaised with the Cape Town organisation mainly through Miss E.D. Bradby and Mrs. H. Chitty, both friends of Emily Hobhouse. The latter had been in correspondence with Betty Molteno and Caroline Murray some months before she came to South Africa in December and during her stay in Cape Town she was a guest of the Murrays.<sup>128</sup> An intimate friendship developed between Emily Hobhouse and the Molteno sisters who formed the main link between her and the Cape Town committee without whose assistance her task of alleviating conditions in the concentration camps would have been a great deal more difficult. On a suggestion from Kate Courtney the Cape Town committee persuaded Lady De Villiers to preside over its activities, and she appears, during the latter part of the war, to have been actively involved in its work.<sup>129</sup> In rendering assistance to the women and children the Ladies Committee operated in the same way as it did when first dealing with the Boer prisoners of war. The women were responsible for collecting and dispatching goods to the various camps but their finances were placed in the hands of the committee originally established to administer the Widows and Orphans Fund and which, in December, opened a separate fund for the detainees in the concentration camps.<sup>130</sup> The Cape Town women co-operated with numerous committees established in various towns throughout the Colony, usually under the leadership of clergymen's wives, which assisted in collecting clothing and foodstuffs for dispatch to the Republics.

The camp established at Port Elizabeth, being in the Colony, initially attracted the most attention. The conciliators felt that if its inmates were there merely as refugees, the authorities should have no objection to

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127. M.P., Kate Courtney to P.A. Molteno, 11 Dec. 1900.

128. A.R. Fry, Emily Hobhouse, p. 89.  
M.P., Emily Hobhouse to P.A. Molteno, 17 Jan. 1901.

129. M.P., Statement to the subscribers to the South African Women and Children's Distress Fund, p. 3; M.P.C., EH/5, Record of goods sent to the concentration camps.

130. H.P., Minute Book, 13 Dec. 1900.

their being placed with families in the Colony who were prepared to accommodate them. At a meeting on 16 November the Ladies Committee appointed Mesdames Roos, Steytler, Stegmann and Purcell to act in conjunction with James Molteno and Rev. B. Marchand to secure the release of these women. On 19 November they applied to the military authorities to allow the women to be housed with friends in the Colony.<sup>131</sup> Innes at once approached Milner on the subject pointing out that the increase in the unrest and discontent in the Colony was mainly due to the feelings aroused by the deportation of these women. He was fully alive to the inconvenience of releasing them on parole but thought the risk and danger of keeping them shut up even greater. Milner, although disapproving of the behaviour of the military authorities, thought that a preposterous and partly hypocritical fuss was being made about the treatment of the women. He informed Innes:

"I regret that I entirely differ from you in your view that it would be a lesser evil to spread them over the country to carry far and wide the tale of their woes, much exaggerated. .... The idea that we can disarm the hostility of the Afrikaner, while the struggle continues by any concession or any leniency, is in my opinion pure 'will of the wisp'. Leniency is all very well, when the fight is over. But inasmuch as the fight, while it lasts, necessarily involves a number of acts, which can and will be laid hold of to inflame feeling, it is absolutely idle to give up any point from a desire to be conciliatory".<sup>132</sup>

The military authorities subsequently informed the Ladies Committee that the women would be allowed to live in the town of Port Elizabeth if they could not be cared for in the camp, but that they would not be permitted to go to other parts of the Colony.<sup>133</sup>

The Cape Dutch Reformed Church also protested against the conduct of the war. Apart from the devastation of the Republics additional concern was caused by the fact that clergymen were being forced to sign the oath of allegiance or forego their stipend which, in the Free State, was paid by the state.<sup>134</sup> The situation was discussed at the annual meetings of the Cape Town and Tulbagh presbyteries and committees were appointed to consider the interests of the suffering congregations in the Republics.<sup>135</sup>

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131. D.V.P., (U.C.T.), Minute Book, 16 Nov. 1900; South African News, 6 Dec. 1900.

132. Wright, Rose Innes Correspondence, pp. 266-268.

133. South African News, 6 Dec. 1900.

134. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 237-238.

135. South African News, 6 and 25 Oct. 1900.

At the instigation of a number of leading western Cape clergymen a meeting of between thirty and forty ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church took place at Stellenbosch on 29 and 30 November. An address was framed condemning the war and the manner in which it was being conducted. It pointed out that the banishment of ministers of religion from their congregations, the destruction of property and the deportation of women and children was contrary to articles 44-47 and 50 of the Hague Convention. A deputation presented the address to Milner on 7 December. He undertook to forward it to the Queen but expressed his doubts as to whether the military authorities would accede to their request that persons be allowed to visit the Republics to assess the extent of the suffering there. <sup>136</sup>

The volume of protest against the conduct of the war continued to grow until it culminated in the People's Congress at Worcester on 6 December. The object of the congress was to receive the report of the People's Deputation <sup>137</sup> and to discuss the lamentable condition of South Africa. Organised this time by F.S. Malan, with D.S. de Villiers as secretary of the invitation committee doing a great deal of preliminary work, the Worcester Congress was a much more elaborate affair than its predecessor at Graaff-Reinet. <sup>138</sup> Meetings were held in towns throughout the Colony to elect delegates to attend the congress and F.J. Centlivres was deputed to arrange with the railway department for a number of special trains to Worcester as well as reduced fares for those attending the congress. Here the conciliators, however, found their arrangements obstructed by the Government which strongly disapproved of the congress and gave instructions that no special facilities were to be granted over and above those provided for by the general railway regulations. <sup>139</sup> The tense state of public opinion in the Colony was in fact causing considerable alarm. Milner accused the Bond party "journalists .... and parsons .... en tête" of doing everything it could to excite the feelings of the people and referred to the "carnival of mendacity" which accompanied the pro-Boer agitation in the Colony. He thought it just a toss of the coin whether there would be a

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136. South African News, 5 and 13 Dec. 1900; Cd. 547, pp. 18-21.

137. For a discussion of the People's Deputation see below ch. V.

138. For D.S. de Villiers' correspondence see Worcester Volkskongres Papers, S.A.L.

139. South African News, 28 and 29 Nov. 1900.

conflagration or not and did his utmost to pressurise the ministry into declaring martial law in the western and central districts of the Colony, in order to prevent the Worcester Congress "and much other mischief", but without success.<sup>140</sup> Milner's alarm was shared by Merriman who told N.F. de Waal that he regarded "this women and children business" as the last straw and dreaded the result it might have.<sup>141</sup> He did not think the Worcester Congress would do much practical good and at a meeting of South African Party supporters on his farm at Stellenbosch on 1 December he counselled moderation so as not to exacerbate the ill feeling already existing between the races. He told the gathering that he did not propose to attend the congress so as to avoid insinuations that it was engineered by politicians rather than being the spontaneous outcome of the feelings of the people and Sauer agreed that it would be wise to avoid the meeting.<sup>142</sup> De Waal, however, thought that in the circumstances "any opportunity for people to relieve their pent up feelings should be looked upon as a sort of safety valve".<sup>143</sup> T.P. Theron, chairman of the Bond, regarded the meeting with "fear and trembling". He too accused the newspapermen of having worked up the sentiments of the people to such a pitch that many had lost sight of the dangers which might accrue from attracting thousands of their most rabid speakers to a meeting to be conducted without fixed or approved rules. He believed the congress to be "a waste of energy and means, without any hope of returning to the Republics their independence. Suppose the thousands of pounds spent by the people attending the congress, in railway fares etc. were spent upon the unfortunate women and children what a blessing it would be to them".<sup>144</sup>

Despite the disapproval and anxiety with which some of their leaders viewed the event over 10 000 supporters of the conciliation movement from ninety-seven districts, representing 120 000 people, attended the Worcester Congress. Notwithstanding earlier indications of dissent both Sauer and T.P. Theron appeared on the platform with such staunch conciliators as Olive Schreiner and her husband, Dr. Beck, J.A. van Reenen, F.J. Centlivres,

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140. Headlam, Milner Papers, v. ii, pp. 171-172, 174; Cd. 547, p. 57.

141. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 239.

142. South African News, 3 Dec. 1900.

143. J.X.M.P., N.F. de Waal to Merriman, 27 Nov. 1900.

144. J.X.M.P., T.P. Theron's observations on Merriman's letter of 23 Nov. 1900.

Rev. B. Marchand and Dr. Kolbe. Jacob de Villiers, who had presided over the Graaff-Reinet Congress, again took the chair.<sup>145</sup> The atmosphere which prevailed at Worcester was decidedly less moderate than at the previous gathering and the presence of a battery of Canadian artillery supported by the New South Wales Lancers on the hills surrounding the town did nothing to improve the temper of the crowd. Sir Henry de Villiers had tried to dissuade his brother from presiding at the congress only to be told by Jacob de Villiers that he had no intention of letting the meeting down and that the attempt to overawe the people by a display of military force had made him even more determined to persevere. The Chief Justice was sufficiently concerned to write to Chamberlain leaving no doubt as to what he thought of the latest blunder at the Cape:

".... the height of tactlessness, not to use a stronger term, was attained when a few days ago a body of Colonial troops was sent to Worcester with the avowed object of being prepared for any emergency which might arise out of a Congress about to be held there ... The number of troops sent is too small to frighten the people, but it is quite large enough to indicate to them the profound distrust with which they are regarded by the authorities. Believe me that this is not the way to deal with the Dutchmen of this Colony. No people are more easily led by kindness and trustfulness but no people are with greater difficulty driven or overawed ...." 146

The reaction of the South African News had little in common with the measured tones of the Chief Justice. It pointed to the large number of prominent and respected men who attended the congress, "And upon a meeting of such a character, a Governor and High Commissioner paid £8 000 a year by the taxpayers of this Colony ... had the monumental impudence to turn a battery of Maxim guns! Fast, fast indeed are we becoming a second Ireland".<sup>147</sup>

Thus, with the Canadians and Australians on guard at a discreet distance, the Worcester Congress recorded its solemn conviction that the highest interests of South Africa demanded a termination of the war

"with its untold misery and horror as well as the burning of houses, the devastation of the country, the extermination of a white nationality and the treatment to which women and children are subjected, which was bound to leave a lasting legacy of bitterness and hatred, while seriously endangering the future relationship between the forces of civilization and barbarism in South Africa".

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145. South African News, 8 Dec. 1900; Ons Land, 8 Dec. 1900.

146. Walker, Lord de Villiers, pp. 378-380.

147. South African News, 10 Dec. 1900.

It again called for the retention of their independence by the Republics and further desired a full recognition of the right of the people of the Colony to manage their own affairs, recording its grave disapproval of Sir Alfred Milner's policy in this matter. In conclusion it resolved that a deputation consisting of M.J. Pretorius, M.L.C. (Middelburg), P. Kuhn, M.L.A. (Worcester), Rev. W.P. de Villiers (Carnarvon), P.J. Marais (Tulbagh) and P.W. Michau (Cradock) should call upon the High Commissioner to bring the resolutions officially to the notice of the British Government.

Despite the chairman's admonition to the speakers to moderate their language, Cronwright-Schreiner did not scruple to refer to Milner as a curse to South Africa and a disintegrator of the Empire. He was called to order by the chairman but loudly acclaimed by the audience. Speakers from Worcester and Hanover agreed that Milner ought to be recalled and the motion censuring him was carried amidst enthusiastic cheers. In an address read on his behalf the Rev. D.P. Faure deprecated the fact that barbarities, which it was commonly thought had been outlived by the Christian world, were revived at the beginning of the twentieth century. Dr. Kolbe, in the course of a provocative speech, expressed the opinion that locally the much lauded British constitution had come to mean "the government of South Africans by the military for the uitlanders". He suggested to his audience that, while always keeping within constitutional limits, they should make South Africa "the most uncomfortable corner in the Empire" until their grievances had been recognised and redressed. At the end of the meeting there was a great clamour for Sauer who, when unwillingly pushed to the fore, explained that he had attended merely to demonstrate his sympathy and not to speak and confined himself to proposing a vote of thanks to the chairman. 148

The deputation which called on Milner on 11 December to present the resolutions of the congress, found him as unyielding as ever and the interview could not have been a pleasant experience for either of the parties concerned. W.P. de Villiers, who acted as main spokesman for the deputation, emphasized the fact that the congress had not been a pleasure jaunt

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148. South African News, 8 Dec. 1900; Ons Land, 8 Dec. 1900. Reports of the congress reprinted from these newspapers appeared in pamphlet form in January 1901.

but that the large attendance was due to the people's desire to see the Republics retain their independence and to their great anxiety regarding the fate of the women and children in the Republics. Milner, however, made it clear that, what he termed their menacing protests against the war, would have no effect upon British policy. He regarded their allusions to the conduct of the war as being characterised by aggressive exaggeration and intimated that he did not think that further resistance on the part of the Republics was any longer justifiable as the object of that resistance could not by any possibility be attained. In his opinion the agitation in the Colony was merely encouraging the Republican forces to persevere in their hopeless struggle. In his reply to the deputation Chamberlain confirmed the tenor of Milner's observations. <sup>149</sup>

The Worcester Congress was the last opportunity which the conciliation party had to stage a concerted protest against the war. In the middle of December the Republicans invaded the Colony for a second time and the imperialist party was quick to blame this on the Worcester Congress which, they maintained, gave the Boers the impression that they could expect assistance in the Colony. As a result of the invasion, martial law was proclaimed throughout the Colony with the exception of the ports and the native territories. During the remainder of the war the conciliation party's activities were increasingly restricted and its path was beset with difficulties and frustration.

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149. Cd. 547, pp. 21-23; South African News, 12 Dec. 1900, 12 Feb. 1901.

CHAPTER V

APPEALS TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE

The conciliation party intended from the outset that its voice should not be confined to the Cape Colony. At the Graaff-Reinet Congress it resolved that delegates be sent to put its case to the people of England. This deputation was, however, preceded by various other members of the conciliation party, of whom the most notable was Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner. He was the pioneer who first braved the hazards of hostile public opinion in Britain. Known thus far mainly as the husband of Olive Schreiner, his valiant, if somewhat ill judged, crusade in support of the Boer cause earned him recognition in his own right. He came of 1820 Settler stock and had been educated at St. Andrew's College, Grahamstown, where he imbibed all the anti-Dutch prejudices peculiar to the predominantly English-speaking Eastern Province. On becoming a farmer he, however, acquired a knowledge of the Dutch language and character and came to appreciate their "many splendid qualities".<sup>1</sup> His own forthright personality probably to a certain extent accounted for his admiration of the more simple virtues of the Boers. Cronwright-Schreiner gained his first political experience as founder member and secretary of the Cradock Farmers' Association and from the outset he held pronounced anti-capitalist and therefore anti-Rhodes views. These were confirmed by his experiences while living in Kimberley and Johannesburg after his marriage to Olive Schreiner. Both he and his wife were strongly influenced by the ideas of J.A. Hobson, the journalist and economist, with whom Cronwright-Schreiner became acquainted during his first visit to England in 1897 and whose book The War in South Africa he regarded as the best treatment of the subject which had appeared to date. Hobson came to South Africa in 1899 as correspondent for the Manchester Guardian and while in Johannesburg he saw much of Olive Schreiner and her husband. With the advent of the war they decided to leave Johannesburg and when hostilities broke out Hobson suggested that Cronwright-Schreiner become the Manchester Guardian's war correspondent with the Boers. After some consideration he turned this offer down and Hobson then asked him to accompany him to England "to tell the British public the truth about South African matters".<sup>2</sup> Cronwright-Schreiner had already refused a

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1. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, The Land of Free Speech, p. xix.

2. Ibid., pp. 1-4.

similar invitation from Montagu White, for, unlike Hargrove, he was most punctilious in these matters and thought it improper to be associated with the Transvaal Government in such a venture. His only objection to Hobson's suggestion was that he could not afford the expense, and when Hobson guaranteed half the sum involved, Cronwright-Schreiner agreed to go. Leaving Olive with her brother and his family in Cape Town, he sailed for England on 10 January 1900.

In issuing his invitation Hobson had no doubt been convinced that Cronwright-Schreiner would be able to render the Republican cause some service in England. Hobson believed him to be particularly fitted for the task as he was not associated with any political party and was "a recognised pro-native man and a Johannesburg Outlander of pure British blood".<sup>3</sup> On the other hand he was totally unknown in England where he was frequently, and perhaps at times wilfully, mistaken for being a Boer, one paper referring to him as "the Boer husband of Olive Schreiner".<sup>4</sup> His nephew, G.C.M. Cronwright, later described him as being "humourless, rigid and assertive",<sup>5</sup> and although a most determined man, these qualities might have counted against his being a persuasive public speaker. He arrived in England just as the tide started turning in favour of the British army in South Africa and the public, elated at the news of the first major successes, was in no mood to give a fair hearing to an emissary denouncing the war. Yet even those most pessimistic about his prospects of success did not anticipate the violent public antagonism which he encountered.

Despite adverse conditions Cronwright-Schreiner experienced no dearth of invitations to address meetings and he eventually decided to place arrangements in the hands of the S.A.C.C. and Stead's Stop the War Committee in London which undertook to organise a lecture tour in conjunction with their local branches in various centres. While these arrangements were being finalised Cronwright-Schreiner spoke at meetings in and around London, and as the press had not yet had the opportunity to incite public opinion

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3. Cronwright-Schreiner, Land of Free Speech, p. 4.

4. Ibid., p. 162.

5. Friedlander, Until the Heart Changes, p. 86.

against him, he was in most cases given a favourable reception. The conference of Liberals in London was the first major gathering which he addressed, the proceedings being characterised by "enthusiastic unanimity and a stalwart spirit" which were to be in short supply during the rest of his campaign. <sup>6</sup> This engagement was followed by a successful public meeting at Mansfield House settlement run by Oxford graduates amongst the working men in Canning Town. The next day he spoke at a meeting at Hastings at which a branch of the S.A.C.C. was also founded. Although the proceedings passed off without undue interruption, this meeting was the first to attract a hostile crowd which required a detachment of police to keep it in order. At his next appearance, at Leicester on 20 February, it became clear that there was an organised plot to disrupt the meeting which eventually ended in pandemonium. Despite these auguries of future troubles he was given a cordial reception by the students of the two major universities. At Oxford he was the guest of the Fabian Society which was also addressed by Hobson and at Cambridge he participated in one of the debates of the Union, meeting there H.S. van Zyl, vice-president of the Union, whose brother, Dirk van Zyl, was M.L.A. for Clanwilliam. <sup>7</sup>

Cronwright-Schreiner opened his tour of the provinces with an enthusiastic meeting at Bradford but thereafter conditions deteriorated rapidly. At his next meeting enough opponents gained entry to the hall to make themselves obnoxious and a few days later at Glasgow, where Lloyd George was his fellow speaker and J. Keir Hardie, head of the Independent Labour Party, devoted himself to organising an energetic defence of the hall against an onslaught by a hostile crowd surging about outside. <sup>8</sup> By this time Cronwright-Schreiner had become familiar with the deafening rendering of "Soldiers of the Queen" and other patriotic airs which were to follow him around England like a refrain. The riot at Glasgow was, however, mild compared to the reception he got the following day at Edinburgh. Here the crowd, composed mainly of students incited to fever pitch by the strongly imperialist newspaper the Scotsman, prevented him from even entering the hall where the meeting was to be held. In the course of a prolonged struggle he was extremely roughly handled and eventually rendered unconscious,

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6. Cronwright-Schreiner, Land of Free Speech, p. 11.

7. J.X.M.P., H.S. van Zyl to Merriman, 18 Jan. 1901.

8. Cronwright-Schreiner, Land of Free Speech, p. 66.

escaping to safety, only through the intervention of a few valiant supporters. An associate subsequently compared his treatment at the hands of the mob to that of a horde of carnivorous animals worrying a carcass.<sup>9</sup> Although Cronwright-Schreiner's activities received relatively little attention in the Cape press, this incident created enough of a stir to be accorded a mention in Ons Land which scathingly referred to it as a demonstration of "gelijke rechten".<sup>10</sup>

The violence spread from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Dundee, where the Rev. Walter Walsh, author of the pamphlet "An appeal from Philip Drunk to Philip Sober", had invited Cronwright-Schreiner to speak. The Dundee meeting had to be abandoned at the last moment and the angry crowd, baulked of its prey, wreaked vengeance upon Walsh's house, breaking several windows. In view of these disturbances several successive meetings were cancelled. At York the brisk trade in rotten eggs, soft fruit and other even more objectionable missiles and the appearance of posters announcing: "Britons! A Boer is among you, Remember Majuba!" convinced the conveners of the unwisdom of proceeding with their meeting.<sup>11</sup> The S.A.C.C. at Scarborough, under the leadership of Joshua Rowntree, a member of the well known Quaker family, was however not to be deterred with the result that the Rowntree café at which an "at home" was to have been held was wrecked by the mob which afterwards went on the rampage through the town, attacking other Rowntree business premises and private homes so that the military had to be called out to quell the disturbances. Cronwright-Schreiner and Hobson were surreptitiously hustled out of town by the police in a closed cab the following morning. Although the Scarborough disturbance was one of the worst which took place during his visit Reuter merely telegraphed a mild report of the affair to the Cape, bearing out Cronwright-Schreiner's contention that the press invariably minimised the violence and rowdyism which accompanied his appearances.<sup>12</sup> In view of the fact that his tour had by then degenerated into a rout, he returned to London where, in the welcome peace and quiet of Hobhouse's drawing room, he addressed an appreciative audience composed of women supporters of the

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9. Cronwright-Schreiner, Land of Free Speech, p. 87.

10. Ons Land, 31 March 1900.

11. Cronwright-Schreiner, Land of Free Speech, p. 173.

12. South African News, 14 March 1900.

conciliation movement. On 22 March a special meeting was held under the chairmanship of Leonard Courtney to discuss what could be done to vindicate the right of free speech. Cronwright-Schreiner declared himself prepared to take the field again on the understanding that the meetings were well organised and carried through to the finish and it was therefore decided that a second tour of the Midlands and the North would be arranged.<sup>13</sup> While in London he had the opportunity of addressing numerous small private meetings and was feted by several leading Liberals including John Ellis, James Bryce and C.P. Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian. On 21 April he addressed a congress of Liberal delegates at Penistone, largely through the intervention of H.J. Wilson, who had been compelled to abandon an earlier meeting at Sheffield but was determined that Cronwright-Schreiner should be given a hearing. While in London he also attended one of his most successful meetings, that held at Battersea under the auspices of the local Stop the War Committee. This gathering was arranged as a deliberate challenge to the imperialists and careful organisation plus the fact that it took place in a working men's area ensured its success. Cronwright-Schreiner's denunciation of the capitalists was no doubt doubly welcome to an audience composed mainly of supporters of the Labour Party and he in turn warmly praised the splendid lead which organised labour had given the otherwise deluded British nation on the issue of the war. At Battersea Cronwright-Schreiner's fellow speaker was Vincent van der Byl, a member of the Cape Town conciliation committee who was in England for a brief visit in the company of Harry Currey, another Cape conciliator. Van der Byl was a nephew of Merriman's wife who reported that he had enlisted under the banner of the S.A.C.C. and was speaking daily "at drawing room meetings, public meetings, Christian Society meetings and in the parks on Sundays, addressing the 'masses' from a tub!"<sup>14</sup> At Battersea he was enthusiastically received and loudly cheered when he announced that he had not a drop of English blood in him.<sup>15</sup> Although Van der Byl wished to accompany Cronwright-Schreiner on his second northern tour other engagements prevented this<sup>16</sup> and he was only able to attend the meeting held at Manchester

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13. Cronwright-Schreiner, Land of Free Speech, p. 237.

14. J.X.M.P., Agnes Merriman to Sarah Merriman, 15 June 1900.

15. South African News, 6 June 1900.

16. For a report of Van der Byl's speech at a peace meeting in London on 24 May, see South African News, 23 June 1900.

under the auspices of the Women's Liberal Association on 7 May. Admission to the meeting was by ticket only and the support of a sympathetic police force prevented it from becoming the occasion of another violent demonstration.

Cronwright-Schreiner's second tour commenced with a meeting at Edinburgh on 18 May. In view of the disastrous failure of the first attempt the Stop the War Committee was all the more determined that he should be heard in the city. Elaborate precautions were taken to prevent a recurrence of the violence which had wrecked the previous meeting. Tickets bearing the thumb print of the secretary of the meeting to prevent their being forged, were privately distributed and the meeting was publicly announced only the day before it was due to take place. The result was that although the gathering numbered only 450 the resolutions were successfully carried and Cronwright-Schreiner and his associates, by exercising a little ingenuity, managed to escape unscathed from the hostile mob that gathered outside the hall.<sup>17</sup> The next meeting at Aberdeen was, however, not so successful. A crowd of between 20 000 and 30 000 besieged the hall and inside it opponents turned the meeting into a shambles.<sup>18</sup> The rest of the tour was abandoned as Cronwright-Schreiner judged it impossible to proceed in the teeth of the unprecedented public excitement aroused by the news of the relief of Mafeking. He was invited to participate in the large women's meeting in London scheduled for 13 June but decided that it would be wiser not to do so. By then the strain of his harrowing experiences had begun to take its toll of his health and, having come to the conclusion that he had done all he could, he sailed for the Cape on 7 July, much disillusioned with the "unmanly" behaviour of the British people.

Although W.T. Stead expressed the opinion that his tour had turned out better for the cause than if he had been allowed to speak everywhere without interruption,<sup>19</sup> the fact that Cronwright-Schreiner had caused a public furore did not mean that he had necessarily accomplished anything. He invariably found the imperialist party lamentably ignorant on the real causes of the war and equally unwilling to be enlightened. Opponents of

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17. Cronwright-Schreiner, Land of Free Speech, pp. 310-325.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 326-362.

19. O.S.P., W.T. Stead to Cronwright-Schreiner, 16 March 1900.

the war were generally much better informed on the situation in South Africa and he therefore found himself preaching mainly to the converted. The press was almost unreservedly hostile and, except in a few newspapers, he was seldom accurately reported. He was particularly scandalised by the fact that the British police, except in a few instances such as at Scarborough and Manchester, tended to sympathise with the crowds and turned a blind eye to the havoc which they wreaked. To his mind the one cheering factor in this catalogue of disasters was to be found in the "sound" attitude of organised labour in England.

On his arrival at the Cape Cronwright-Schreiner was met by a special resolution expressing the appreciation of the Afrikaner members of parliament for the great service he had rendered "in the interests of the restoration of peace on righteous principles in South Africa".<sup>20</sup> It was announced that under normal circumstances he would have been accorded a public banquet, but as so many families had been plunged into mourning by the war this was felt to be inappropriate. A special meeting of the South African Party was, however, held on 1 August with T.P. Theron in the chair, Merriman and Sauer both in attendance, and Hofmeyr as the main speaker. In moving a vote of thanks to Cronwright-Schreiner, Hofmeyr praised him for having stuck to his guns so nobly under the most trying conditions, but expressed his scepticism as to the efficacy of arguing with the British nation on the subject of the war in its present hyper-sensitive condition.<sup>21</sup>

After spending some time in Cape Town with members of his family who, to his distress, disapproved of his support of the Boer cause,<sup>22</sup> Cronwright-Schreiner retired to Hanover where Olive at that time found the air most conducive to her health. There, with his characteristic regard for the facts of the case, he recorded virtually a blow by blow account of his experiences in England in a volume ironically entitled The Land of Free Speech. Attempts to have the work published in England in 1901 failed in the face of hostile public opinion and it eventually saw the light only in 1906.

The next major onslaught on the twin bastions of prejudice and ignorance

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20. South African News, 31 July 1900.

21. Ibid., 3 Aug. 1900.

22. O.S.P., Olive Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 11 Dec. 1900.

in England was made by the People's Deputation sent by the Graaff-Reinet Congress. This gathering appointed a committee consisting of Jacob de Villiers, Albert Cartwright, J.H. Smith, M.L.A. for Graaff-Reinet, J.H. Marais, M.L.A. for Stellenbosch and R.H. Mohr of Uitenhage to select the delegates.<sup>23</sup> A second committee consisting of Professor C.J.F. Muller of Stellenbosch, Rev. A. Moorrees of Paarl, Rev. D. Rossouw of George, Charles Molteno and N.F. de Waal was to administer the fund which was to finance the mission.<sup>24</sup> The People's Deputation, which arrived in England the day before Cronwright-Schreiner's departure, could have learnt much from him, yet neither the delegates nor those at the Cape responsible for organising the undertaking appear to have drawn upon his experience. This may have been due to ignorance of the difficulties he had encountered, for unlike his successors, his activities received hardly any mention in the local press. Percy Molteno, who saw a good deal of him in England<sup>25</sup> and who, as a member of the S.A.C.C., was familiar with the hazards of campaigning in support of the Boer cause also remained strangely silent on the subject of his visit when communicating with his correspondents at the Cape. As Cronwright-Schreiner had not yet returned to the Cape when the deputation left they had little means of ascertaining the intricacies of the situation in England. On the other hand Olive Schreiner frequently passed her husband's letters on to friends such as Mary Sauer, Anna Purcell and Betty Molteno. The latter was in regular communication with Charles Molteno to whom she presumably mentioned the subject and who might therefore have been better informed than most. On hearing of the proposed deputation Percy Molteno at once wrote to his brother Charles:

"If possible it is very important to have men with English names ... Several political people have spoken to me about it - the prejudice here is so violent that I fear that they will not give a hearing to any delegates or report their speeches when made. Currey would be a good delegate".<sup>26</sup>

This letter, however, arrived too late to have any effect, for by then it had already been announced that the deputation would stand under the leadership of Professor P.J.G. de Vos of the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch,

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23. South African News, 5 June 1900.

24. Professor Muller acted as treasurer of the fund and a total of £881 was collected. South African News, 16 June 1900; Ons Land, 29 Sept. 1900.

25. Cronwright-Schreiner, Land of Free Speech, p. 307.

26. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 9 June 1900.

the other members being three farmers; R.P. Botha of Richmond, P.L. du Plessis of Cradock, and D.J. de Wet of Prince Albert who was to act as secretary. The Rev. A. Moorrees was to accompany the deputation as an unofficial adviser.<sup>27</sup> He had at first doubted the wisdom of his joining the delegates as there was some evidence of opposition to this step amongst his parishioners. On seeking Andrew Murray's advice in the matter he received a reply in which Murray revealed that he too had been approached to join the deputation. Although he had not been able to do so he told Moorrees that he would be glad if he would go and gave the venture his blessing.<sup>28</sup> The selection committee appears to have been motivated in its choice of delegates by a desire to show the British people that the farmers of South Africa were little different from those in any other part of the Empire. The South African News thought the congress had been wise to send men who would speak of matters as they presented themselves to the average Boer of the Colony and hoped they would be able to dispel some of the falsehoods which the Jingoists had spread about the "Boers". It placed great emphasis on the fact that the delegates were going as individuals to speak to the British taxpayer. "It is for the deputation talking as plain men to plain men, speaking from heart to heart, to convince John Bull of the injustice and impolicy of using a giant's strength in a way savouring of tyranny".<sup>29</sup> These were admirable intentions but reveal a somewhat naive conception of the situation awaiting the delegates in England. The London correspondent of the South African News (probably Percy Molteno) made the best of matters and later reported that the delegates had made a very favourable impression on those who met them in London, "their simple earnestness and sincerity distinguishing them from the ordinary colonial politician who comes over here".<sup>30</sup> Emily Hobhouse, in describing Professor De Vos remarked that his "saintly bearing and old-world dignity" made a deep impression. She thought he resembled a prophet of old who had stepped out of the Old Testament into their modern garish world.<sup>31</sup> There can be no questioning the dedication of the delegates, but it is a moot point whether three relatively unsophisticated farmers and a pious scholar were the most suitable men to embark upon the rough and tumble of a campaign such as that.

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27. South African News, 16 June 1900; Ons Land, 21 June 1900.

28. A. Moorrees Papers (A.M.P.), A. Murray to Moorrees, 25 May 1900.

29. South African News, 20 June 1900.

30. Ibid., 9 Aug. 1900.

31. Fry, Emily Hobhouse, pp. 75-76.

which awaited them. On their own admission they were very much at sea in a country which they had never visited before and where they knew no one. The extent of their ignorance regarding local conditions is revealed in Du Plessis' remark that he at first addressed meetings in Dutch until he discovered that he could make a stronger impression when "speaking in the vernacular".<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, any resemblance to the average Boer, far from being an asset was, in the present temper of the mass of the English people, a most serious liability, a point on which Cronwright-Schreiner could have enlightened them.

The deputation sailed from Cape Town on board the Tantallon Castle on 20 June with Hargrove and his wife as fellow passengers. Although they never mentioned Hargrove in their reports, it is possible that he assisted them during their visit for both Percy Molteno and Emily Hobhouse refer to him in passing in connection with the deputation.<sup>33</sup> Amongst those who attended to wish them well were Charles Molteno as chairman of the conciliation committee and Jacob de Villiers as chairman of the Graaff-Reinet Congress. The delegates took with them the People's Petition which, at that stage, had secured 40 000 signatures, some lists still being in circulation.<sup>34</sup>

The deputation had a foretaste of things to come when a "boel Afrikaander-haters" made life unpleasant for them on board ship with a display of petty malice and on their arrival in Southampton they found that the Daily Mail had been publishing "gruwelijke onwaarhede" about them.<sup>35</sup> It alleged that both Moorrees and De Vos had sons who had turned rebel and were fighting with the Queen's enemies; that the delegates had refused to uncover their heads when the national anthem was played; that they had refused to preach from a pulpit draped in the Union Jack and that Moorrees, as head of the Dutch Reformed Church had held meetings at which prayers had been offered for the success of the Boer arms. When they wrote to the paper denying these charges only a fragment of their letter was published.<sup>36</sup> Shortly

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32. South African News, 20 Oct. 1900.

33. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 11 July 1900; A.M.P., Emily Hobhouse to Moorrees, 1 Sept. 1900.

34. South African News, 20 and 21 June 1900; Ons Land, 21 June 1900.

35. Ons Land, 30 Oct. 1900.

36. Ibid., 2 Aug. 1900; South African News, 9 Aug. 1900.

after their arrival in London a reporter from the Daily News called on them and the fact that this "vermetelen en onbeschaamden heer" received short shrift at the hands of the delegates did not prevent his paper from publishing a lengthy statement which they were alleged to have made together with "nog vele lasterlijke dinge" about them.<sup>37</sup> This was but the beginning of the campaign of calumny in the press. Like Cronwright-Schreiner they were rarely fully or accurately reported, whereas the majority of newspapers were prepared to publish scurrulous attacks upon them. After the first day in their London hotel the proprietor asked them to leave as the other guests had conceived a great dislike of them, especially as two of them bore the same names as the Boer generals Botha and De Wet. Two woman supporters of the conciliation committee set about finding alternative accommodation for them and were turned down at twelve establishments before they found a private hotel under German management which was prepared to put them up.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand they received a warm welcome from leading pro-Boers. They were met at Southampton by Percy Molteno of whose unfailing kindness and consideration they spoke very highly, and in London they were welcomed into the homes of the Hobhouses and the Bradbys where they addressed drawing room meetings. They spent approximately twelve days in London meeting leading Liberals like Campbell-Bannerman, James Bryce, Sir Charles Dilke, Dr. Clark, C.P. Scott, Massingham and W.T. Stead.<sup>39</sup> They decided against trying to secure an interview with Chamberlain as they feared that a rebuff in that quarter would prejudice the British public against them.<sup>40</sup> Despite being advised to join hands with the existing pro-Boer organisations, they decided to adhere strictly to the instructions of the Graaff-Reinet Congress which stipulated that they should act independently. Although they were prepared to accept assistance from sympathisers they declined to appear on the platform of any particular party or organisation. The London correspondent of the South African News complained that they were being hampered by their interpretation of their instructions. He reported that a prominent politician was anxious to get them to address a select assembly of parliamentarians in a committee room of the House of Commons and pointed out that since their mandate was to appeal to the people of England it was only reasonable that

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37. Ons Land, 30 Oct. 1900.

38. South African News, 11 Aug. 1900, 20 Oct. 1900.

39. A.M.P., James Bryce to Moorrees, 18 July 1900.

40. Ons Land, 8 Dec. 1900.

they should address themselves in the first instance to such accredited representatives of the people as were willing to hear them and afterwards seek as large and various a public as they could.<sup>41</sup> It was however decided that, as Moorrees was not an official member of the deputation, he would have greater freedom of action; a somewhat artificial distinction as his expenses were paid out of the same fund as those of the other delegates. The S.A.C.C. had specially organised a big meeting to be held in the Queen's Hall London on 18 July with Leonard Courtney in the chair to welcome the delegates and it was greatly disappointed when their instructions did not permit them to attend. Moorrees, however, agreed to speak and was given an enthusiastic welcome by the large audience composed mainly of sympathisers.<sup>42</sup> Treading the same path as Cronwright-Schreiner, he next spoke, on 21 July at Bradford with Leonard Courtney again attending the meeting. As the deputation had decided to concentrate on the provinces before speaking in London, they began their tour with a meeting in Manchester on 26 July. De Vos took the chair and Botha and De Wet both delivered "flinke toespraken".<sup>43</sup> The meeting was public and encountered hardly any opposition. From Manchester they proceeded to Leeds, Liverpool, Oxford, Bristol, Bath, Blackburn, Newcastle, Rockdale, Huddersfield, Yeadon, Arnside and Edinburgh before returning to London.<sup>44</sup> De Wet, as secretary, usually travelled on ahead to make arrangements for their meetings and the deputation did not always appear as a group. Individual members often addressed meetings, especially the smaller ones, and Moorrees frequently branched off on his own. He was the guest of Lord and Lady Hobhouse at their country house in Somerset and Emily Hobhouse, who took a great interest in their work, assisted him in organising his meetings in the west of England.<sup>45</sup> In order to bring the People's Petition to the notice of the British public the deputation had it printed and distributed.<sup>46</sup> At their meeting in the Lancashire manufacturing town of Blackburn the petition, printed in bold type, was hung in various parts of the hall where it could be read by all and the resolutions passed at the People's Congress were

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41. M.P., P.A. Moltano to C. Moltano, 11 July 1900.

42. J.X.M.P., Mackarness to Merriman, 30 June 1900; M.P., P.A. Moltano to Charles Moltano, 11 July 1900; Ons Land, 14 Aug. 1900.

43. Ons Land, 18 Aug. 1900.

44. *Ibid.*, 22 Nov. 1900.

45. Fry, Emily Hobhouse, p. 77.

46. Ons Land, 22 Nov. 1900.

printed on slips and distributed to the audience before the meeting began.<sup>47</sup> In all, the deputation addressed fifty meetings, about eight of these being large gatherings. One of the most successful was that at Edinburgh, hitherto virtually an impregnable stronghold of the imperialists.<sup>48</sup> Although the deputation appears to have had a slightly more favourable reception than Cronwright-Schreiner,<sup>49</sup> they encountered much the same problems as he had. They experienced considerable difficulty in hiring halls owing to the proprietors' fear that their property would be damaged but more frequently because of hostility towards their mission. They were often jeered at as being Boers and they reported "het moeilijkste was dikwijls het Engelsche publiek er van te doordringen dat wij geen Vrijstaters of Transvalers zijn".<sup>50</sup> Although they were at first given a fair hearing, they soon began to experience their share of hooting, hissing, organ-grinding and stone-throwing.<sup>51</sup> At Stanningly they were pursued through the streets by an angry crowd, the venerable Professor De Vos, losing his silk hat in the process, having to clamber over a wall behind a sympathiser's house to escape.<sup>52</sup> When De Wet tried to address an open air meeting near Huddersfield he again had to beat a hasty retreat. At Pudsey, he reported: "hebben zij met steenen, stokken en verrotte eieren naar ons geworpen ... Maar dit was nog het ergste niet. Te Yeadon ... hadden zij ons bijna vermoord".<sup>53</sup> Like Cronwright-Schreiner before them they frequently found it necessary to secure the services of a number of sturdy individuals to purge the meetings of their rowdy element in order to be able to carry them through successfully.<sup>54</sup>

After two months in the field the deputation decided that it would be wiser to terminate its activities. Although they had encountered many sympathisers they eventually had to admit that time and sentiment were against them and that they were making little impression upon the mass of the British people. They came to the conclusion that the people did not want to hear the truth about the war, either because they had been misled

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47. South African News, 29 Aug. 1900.

48. South African News, 20 Oct. 1900; Ons Land, 22 Nov. 1900.

49. Cf. "London Letter" in the South African News, 3 Oct. 1900.

50. Ons Land, 30 Oct. 1900.

51. *Ibid.*, 28 Aug. 1900; South African News, 28 Aug. 1900.

52. South African News, 18 Sept. 1900; Ons Land, 20 Sept. 1900.

53. Ons Land, 30 Oct. 1900.

54. *Ibid.*, 20 Sept. 1900.

by the press or had an uneasy conscience on the subject. As the annexation of the Republics was assured and the war was believed to be virtually over, many wished to put the matter behind them and public attention was being diverted by the coming British general election and by the Boxer rebellion in China. The election in fact caused feelings to run so high that it became virtually impossible to hold meetings and a large one scheduled to take place in London on 28 September had to be abandoned.<sup>55</sup> Emily Hobhouse was greatly disappointed at their decision and appealed to both De Vos and Moorrees not to give up their work. Even if the others returned to the Cape she and Kate Courtney hoped that Moorrees would stay on and work with them in his personal capacity.<sup>56</sup> She also referred to the fact that a number of Rhodesite delegates were to be sent from the Cape and urged Moorrees and his associates to remain in England to counteract their influence. The delegates, however, indicated that they would not alter their decision and she reluctantly had to accept this. "I am very sorry about all this", she wrote, "but being a woman I like the last word and being obstinate also I cling to my opinion that it is a mistake to stop - that great good is being done and that three months longer would be costly yet less so than sending a fresh delegation later. However so be it".<sup>57</sup> The deputation therefore rounded off its visit with a few smaller meetings in London and after a brief stay on the Continent, returned to the Cape in October; an official report of its activities appearing towards the end of November.<sup>58</sup>

As the deputation had been dispatched by a people's congress, it was suggested that another be summoned to enable it to give an account of its mission.<sup>59</sup> The Worcester Congress was therefore convened, although the indignation being felt in the Colony at the conduct of the war in the Republics was probably as potent a factor inspiring the meeting as the desire to hear the delegates' report. Cronwright-Schreiner, who was one of the main speakers at the congress, dwelt at length on the experiences of the

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55. South African News, 20 Oct. 1900; Ons Land, 27 Oct. 1900, 22 Nov. 1900.

56. A.M.P., Emily Hobhouse to Moorrees, 1 Sept. 1900.

57. Ibid., Emily Hobhouse to Moorrees, 4 Sept. 1900.

58. Ons Land, 22 Nov. 1900; South African News, 26 Nov. 1900.

59. Ons Land, 30 Oct. 1900.

delegation, comparing them to his own. As they had all been like St. Paul "in perils oft",<sup>60</sup> they could sympathise with one another and R.P. Botha in turn proposed a special vote of thanks to Cronwright-Schreiner whom he warmly commended as having proved a true friend in his people's hour of need.<sup>61</sup>

It is difficult to assess the effect of the deputation's visit to England. They were themselves not clear as to what they expected to achieve. In their report they declared: "Wij verkeerde in den waan dat dit volk, zoo het slechts met de waarheid werd bekend gemaakt, een andere gedragslijn in deze zaak zou volgen ...", but later in the same document they admit: "Wij hebben ook nooit verwacht dat onze arbeid voor het tegenwoordige veel vrugt zal dragen". They became convinced that the influences pitted against them, particularly that of the press, were so powerful that if the British public were to be influenced in any way, the conciliation party would have to set to work "op meer systematische en kragdadige wijze" and that another deputation, at a more auspicious time, would be able to benefit much from their experience. On the whole the mission therefore appears to have constituted nothing more than a valiant gesture which accomplished very little. The delegates did, however, return with certain impressions of the English people which they communicated to their compatriots at the Cape. Some of these confirmed the more unfavourable picture already existing in the Colony. Du Plessis, for example, spoke of the callousness of the British public and said that they regarded the war as a piece of business to be pursued to the end irrespective of whether it was just or not.<sup>62</sup> The deputation also drew attention to the fact that although they had encountered great ignorance on the situation in South Africa they had also met a considerable body of well informed persons so that the attitude of the British public could not be excused simply by saying that they had been misled by the press.<sup>63</sup> The delegates were greatly disappointed at the weakness of the Liberal Party and condemned in particular the attitude of the Liberal Imperialists whom they regarded as being

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60. The comparison is Merriman's, vide Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 228.

61. Ons Land, 8 Dec. 1900.

62. South African News, 20 Oct. 1900.

63. Ons Land, 22 Nov. 1900.

neither fish nor flesh.<sup>64</sup> But their impressions were not exclusively bad, for they had been pleasantly surprised to find how many people condemned the war and to see how much was being done in support of the Republican cause in Britain. At the Worcester Congress De Vos paid tribute to the efforts of the pro-Boers, remarking: "Die namen van die menschen zulle in eere worden gehouden door ons tot in lengte van dagen".<sup>65</sup> Moorrees, who could not attend the congress, wrote to the chairman: "Niets heeft mij en mijne mede-deputanten meer getroffen dan de groot toewijding waarmede een klein getal mannen en vrouwen in Engeland voor de zaak des rechts ijveren en alles daarvoor veil hebben". He thought Leonard Courtney particularly deserving of praise, pointing out that he and his wife had suffered much popular odium and that he had sacrificed his seat in Parliament as a result of his stand. He therefore suggested that the congress accord Courtney a special vote of thanks and the resolution proposed by him was carried amidst acclamation.<sup>66</sup> Despite these mitigating factors there is however little doubt that it was the British nation's lack of sympathy with the Boers which at that stage made the more lasting impression especially in view of the harsh measures then being resorted to in the Republics.

Their opponents did not allow the conciliation party's deputation to go unchallenged<sup>67</sup> and the Vigilance Committee dispatched a number of delegates of its own to England. The first group consisted of T.L. Schreiner, brother of the prime minister, and the two clergymen J.C. Harris and J.S. Moffat.<sup>68</sup> Shortly after the outbreak of the war Theo Schreiner had caused considerable indignation amongst the conciliators by publishing an account of a conversation he had with Reitz seventeen or eighteen years before in which Reitz was alleged to have acknowledged the existence of a deep-rooted Afrikaner conspiracy to oust Britain from South Africa.<sup>69</sup> Theo Schreiner and his sister Henrietta Stakesby Lewis, who particularly condemned the Boers for their alleged harshness towards the natives, both

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64. Ons Land, 8 Dec. 1900.

65. Ibid.

66. Worcester Volkskongress Papers, A. Moorrees to Chairman Worcester Congress, 5 Dec. 1900; Ons Land, 8 Dec. 1900.

67. South African News, 21 June 1900.

68. Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, pp. 133-134.

69. South African News, 7 Nov. 1899; Walker, Schreiner, p. 205.

became active supporters of the imperialist party, thereby adding to the troubles of the much divided Schreiner family. The original deputation of the Vigilance Committee was reinforced after the khaki election by four more delegates, L. Zietsman, A. Wilmot, J.W. Jagger and J.D. Duncan.<sup>70</sup> They were received in official circles and accorded an interview with Chamberlain. There was, however, little for them to do, for as Duncan reported to the Kimberley branch of the South African League in March 1901, they found the British Government thoroughly conversant with the requirements essential for the maintenance of British supremacy in South Africa.<sup>71</sup> They did, however, go to some lengths to repudiate the People's Deputation and later the Merriman-Sauer mission as not representing the opinion of the loyal colonists at the Cape.<sup>72</sup> When they wrote to the Times refuting a letter by Professor De Vos which had appeared in that paper, the People's Deputation dismissed their activities as "echt verkiesings geschetter".<sup>73</sup>

Shortly after the departure of the People's Deputation Charles Molteno arrived in England for a private visit. He had sailed from the Cape on 6 September on the same ship as Hofmeyr who went to Europe to try and recover his health. Molteno had intended spending most of his time on the Continent and meant to return to the Cape early in November.<sup>74</sup> However, when he found that he had the chance of meeting many English parliamentarians he decided that it would be a great mistake not to make use of the opportunity to try and influence them in the right direction. He therefore postponed his departure until after the meeting of the English parliament. To Betty Molteno he wrote:

"There is considerable feeling here against the shameless way the war is being conducted and I have great hope that some change may be brought about in public feeling. Personally I feel that it is too late for the Dutch as a whole ever to forgive their treatment but one can only work in the hope that some good may come of it"<sup>75</sup>

While he was in London the question of James Molteno's disagreement with Milner over the "dominion of Afrikanderdom" affair was raked up again and Charles Molteno wrote to the Times refuting the charge that his brother had

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70. Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, pp. 133-134.

71. South African News, 30 March 1901.

72. Ibid., 20 March 1901.

73. Ons Land, 27 Oct. 1900.

74. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 15 Aug. 1900.

75. M.P.C., C. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 22 Nov. 1900.

been guilty of a breach of etiquette by publishing the contents of a private conversation. He pointed out that Milner's interview with James Molteno had been of a public nature as Molteno had called upon him as the representative of the caucus of the South African Party, and he quoted Sir Edward Clarke's opinion in support of this view.<sup>76</sup> With Percy Molteno's assistance his brother was able to meet several leading Liberal politicians including Campbell-Bannerman, James Bryce and Sir William Harcourt and he addressed numerous meetings such as the Liberal Federation at Newcastle and the League of Liberals in London.<sup>77</sup> He also tried to secure an interview with Chamberlain but his request was not acceded to.<sup>78</sup> Percy Molteno reported that his brother made an excellent impression on all the statesmen he met and that his speeches were well received by those he had the opportunity of addressing,<sup>79</sup> but from the people he met it is clear that Charles Molteno, like his predecessors, spent most of his time preaching to the converted.

Towards the end of 1900, with public opinion in the Colony inflamed by the depredations of the British army in the Republics and with the Worcester Congress in the offing, Merriman wrote to N.F. de Waal in a state of considerable alarm suggesting that something be done to give the people a lead. He had serious misgivings about the outcome of the Worcester Congress fearing that it would take little to turn the people into some foolish course which would lead to further misery. "Can we who are their leaders, do nothing? Or are we to sit and watch the flood of resentment always swelling until it breaks its banks?" He suggested that the South African Party should meet at some central place such as Beaufort West or Cradock to set forth their grievances in a Grand Remonstrance which should then be presented at the Bar of the House of Commons. This, he felt, would be an official representation of the colonists' views which would carry far more weight than resolutions passed at a meeting such as that at Worcester.<sup>80</sup> N.F. de Waal and T.P. Theron both favoured the suggestion though neither seemed very hopeful of success. Theron regarded it as the last door still

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76. M.P., C. Molteno to Editor of the London Times, 21 Nov. 1900.

77. Ibid., P.A. Molteno to J. Molteno, 3/4 Dec. 1900.

78. M.P., P.A. Molteno to Merriman, 23 Dec. 1900.

79. Ibid.

80. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 239-241.

open to them; "but ... will we with the present state of feeling in England and here, ever be able to reach the handle of that door? Cannot the Government in England with its strong majority prevent us from ever reaching the Bar of the House? ...".<sup>81</sup> Merriman broached the subject publicly at a meeting of South African Party supporters at Stellenbosch on 1 December and it was also briefly considered at the Worcester Congress.<sup>82</sup> In view of the general approval with which the suggestion was received Merriman and Sauer issued a confidential circular on 13 December inviting members of the South African Party to discuss the matter at a meeting in Cape Town on 7 January 1901.<sup>83</sup> At the meeting Merriman experienced some difficulty with the more extreme members of the party who were bent on demanding unqualified independence for the Republics. During the recent parliamentary session Merriman had made it clear that he regarded a limited independence as the most the Republics could hope for from Britain and he now firmly refused to be associated with a demand which the British Government would not for a moment entertain. He eventually succeeded in winning the party over to his point of view and it was resolved that he and Sauer should go to England to bring the true state of affairs in South Africa and the probable consequences of the situation to the attention of the British Government, Parliament and people. Hofmeyr who was then in Germany would be asked to join the deputation.<sup>84</sup> Merriman intended to act on the assumption that Britain would not reverse the annexation of the Republics. He therefore proposed that they urge the British Government not to impose Crown Colony rule on the conquered Republics as was the intention, but to substitute for this an immediate federation of South Africa on the Canadian model which would leave the Republics internal autonomy under their own flag.<sup>85</sup>

Merriman embarked upon the mission in a pessimistic mood regarding it as "a forlorn hope but a duty which I think is laid upon me".<sup>86</sup> Hofmeyr, who was dispirited and in poor health, was so convinced of the hopelessness of their quest that he refused to join Merriman and Sauer<sup>87</sup> and in his

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81. J.X.M.P., N.F. de Waal and T.P. Theron's observations on Merriman's letter of 23 Nov. 1900.

82. South African News, 3 and 8 Dec. 1900.

83. M.P., Merriman and Sauer to Molteno, 13 Dec. 1900.

84. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 245-246; Ons Land, 8 Jan. 1901.

85. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 253-254.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

87. Reitz & Hofmeyr, J.H. Hofmeyr, p. 562.

letters to them he proceeded to raise a host of difficulties. He pointed to the enormous gulf which existed between Britain and the Republics, with the one side demanding unconditional surrender and the other insisting on complete independence. What would happen, he asked Merriman, if they accepted terms from the British Government and the Republics refused them? He poured cold water on Merriman's suggestion of internal autonomy for the Republics within a South African Federation. In his opinion Britain would never agree to a settlement which would give the Boers any real power.

"Under the specious motto of 'equal rights for all white men' ... things would be so arranged that the Boer would be outvoted at the very outset and would be made 'underdog' by the millionaires in the sacred name of 'Republican Equality'. I for one would rather see him governed direct from Downing Street (where Chamberlain will not be in perpetual power) and by a British Governor (who will not always be a Milner) instead of being hoodwinked and sucked dry by a Brummagem President and Volksraad". 88

Although Hofmeyr followed Merriman and Sauer's progress with keen interest they therefore had to content themselves with advice from afar.

On their arrival in England Merriman and Sauer received a warm welcome from opponents of the war. Throughout their visit it was Merriman who acted as the main spokesman, Sauer keeping somewhat in the background. Their mission was to be very different from those which preceded it. Not only were they men of standing, eminently fitted to plead the Republics' case, but they also had well established contacts with leading public figures and, as the official representatives of the people of the Colony, they were far more likely to secure the ear of those in authority. Intending to appeal first to the British Government, then to parliament and, as a last resort, to the public, they were at the outset careful to avoid contact with organisations such as the S.A.C.C. lest it prejudice their chances of a hearing in official circles. They also tried to steer clear of the press, no easy task with numerous persistent reporters besieging them.<sup>89</sup> Merriman soon came to the conclusion that they would have even greater difficulties than they had anticipated "for though many are full of fear and dislike of this

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88. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 260-261.

89. J.X.M.P., Agnes Merriman to Julia Merriman, 8 Feb. 1900.

war they do not see how to end it and keep up the feeling with brave words".<sup>90</sup> This was certainly the case with Chamberlain who, although privately most concerned about the situation, gave no inkling of his misgivings during the interview which Merriman had with him on 18 February. Merriman therefore gained a somewhat distorted impression of the Colonial Secretary whom he thought "a most ignorant self-sufficient person". Of all the Colonial Ministers he had met he found Chamberlain the "most absolutely unsympathetic in mind and manner".<sup>91</sup> Merriman's protestations against the evil effects which Crown Colony rule would have in the Republics apparently made no impression on Chamberlain who put the seal on their interview by making a jarring speech in the House of Commons the same evening in which he dismissed the suggestion of immediate self-government for the Republics as the most inept, childish, ridiculous and impractical proposal ever made. For good measure, and no doubt with his eye on some of the Liberals and other offending radicals, he added a warning that the country would never forgive a party which attempted to frustrate the objects with which the war had been undertaken.<sup>92</sup> Sauer, who also had an interview with Chamberlain, made as little headway as Merriman and they therefore turned their attention, without much hope, to securing a hearing in parliament. Since their arrival in England they had spent a great deal of time "dangling after the official Liberals" whose support was essential if they were to be heard at the Bar of the House. But although they found them personally most hospitable and sympathetic they received little concrete support. Despite indications that a change was coming over public opinion, the Liberals in parliament remained disunited and timid, with Campbell-Bannerman reluctant to risk another rupture with the Liberal Imperialists.<sup>93</sup> After a month in England Merriman was reluctantly forced to the conclusion that the Liberal Party did not intend making South Africa a parliamentary question and he complained to Bryce that, as they could get no reply from the leaders of the Party, even the prospect of being able to make an application to be heard at the Bar of the House seemed remote.<sup>94</sup> Further delay was occasioned by the fact that Merriman and Sauer's activities coincided with the

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90. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 262.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

92. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 264.

93. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-269.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

negotiations between Botha and Kitchener which took place at Middelburg between 28 February and 16 March. While these were pending they held their hand in order to avoid prejudicing a possible agreement.<sup>95</sup>

Campbell-Bannerman thought the time for intervention had not yet come, but advised them to be on the spot with their petition at the ready.<sup>96</sup>

When the Middelburg negotiations came to nought, it was decided that Sir Robert Reid would present their petition in parliament and this was done on 25 March. As they had anticipated the Government returned a polite but firm refusal and declined to make the matter the subject of a debate.<sup>97</sup> It was then rumoured that one of the Irish Nationalist members would temporarily resign his seat in favour of Merriman so as to give him a chance to be heard in the House of Commons. The South African News took over the report from the Standard, but Merriman dismissed the idea as absurd.<sup>98</sup>

The Government's refusal to give them a hearing in parliament cleared the ground for Sauer and Merriman to appeal directly to the British public. This was a task which they determined to embark upon with greater circumspection than their predecessors. Merriman thought that it would not do "to make oneself and the cause ridiculous by a campaign like Cronwright-Schreiner's" and he told a reporter that he had no intention of travelling about stirring people up in an objectionable way.<sup>99</sup> The two delegates received numerous invitations to speak at various places and a good deal of contradictory advice. Keir Hardie was particularly anxious that they should not

"run helter-skelter all over the country speaking at badly arranged and in some cases poorly attended meetings with a chance of their being broke up and which have no influence on public opinion".

He suggested that they confine their efforts to a few carefully planned and really impressive gatherings.<sup>100</sup> They in fact began their series

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95. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 278.

96. Ibid., p. 277.

97. South African News, 27 and 30 March 1901. The S.A.C.C. published their petition in pamphlet form (No. 69).

98. South African News, 3 April 1901.

99. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 287; South African News, 2 April 1901.

100. J.X.M.P., J. Keir Hardie to Merriman, 18 April 1901.

of public appearances with a defiant gesture, with Merriman bearding Chamberlain in his den by speaking at a meeting in Birmingham on 17 April. His reception was indicative of the change which was coming over public opinion. The meeting organised by the local Democratic League was completely public. Out of an audience of over 1 500 there were only forty dissentients and Merriman was actually cheered as he drove off in a cab after the meeting, an occurrence which would have been unheard of a year before.<sup>101</sup> On 24 April Merriman and Sauer both addressed the annual general meeting of the League of Liberals in London, Merriman in particular delivering a forceful and strongly pro-Boer speech.<sup>102</sup> Two days later he spoke at a meeting organised by the Young Scots Society in Edinburgh. Keir Hardie had been strongly opposed to Merriman's undertaking this engagement, for he feared that the students, incited by the Scotsman, would repeat the Cronwright-Schreiner escapade.<sup>103</sup> H.S. Swinny, secretary of the S.A.C.C., however, seemed to favour the idea for he pointed out that if Merriman could succeed at Edinburgh it would mean that he could get a hearing virtually anywhere else.<sup>104</sup> The meeting did in fact turn out to be a most lively affair. As the Young Scots had been refused any other venue the meeting was held in the Waverley Market, a building capable of accommodating 15 000 people. The audience numbered about 3 000 and included a large number of opponents who did their utmost to disrupt the proceedings. The Young Scots were, however, not to be thwarted and set about ejecting the disturbers in a most determined fashion, with the result that for the first half hour scenes ensued which, according to Merriman, resembled a football match rather than a public meeting. Once the rowdy element had been removed Merriman was given a fair hearing and he returned to London well pleased at the success with which he had "fought the enemy" in Edinburgh.<sup>105</sup> On 28 April Merriman and Sauer both addressed an audience of 2 000 at the Mansion House settlement in Canning Town, where Cronwright-Schreiner had previously received a sympathetic hearing.<sup>106</sup> Despite these successes Merriman remained despondent for

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101. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 288-9; South African News, 10 May 1901.

102. South African News, 15 and 22 May 1901.

103. J.X.M.P., Keir Hardie to Merriman, 18 April 1901.

104. *Ibid.*, Swinny to Merriman, 20 April 1901.

105. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 293-294; South African News, 29 April 1901.

106. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 294; South African News, 24 May 1901.

he felt that they meant little as long as the official Liberals remained apathetic. Since his arrival he had become increasingly disillusioned with the Liberal politicians whom he felt were sinning against the light. "They sit by and see all kinds of iniquity perpetrated, smoothing over their consciences with the salve that they are 'keeping the party together'".<sup>107</sup> He was disgusted by the fact that they evidently seemed to regard the artificial unity of the Liberal Party as of far greater importance than the abnegation of all Liberal principles which their South African policy carried with it.<sup>108</sup> Although James Bryce was in favour of the delegates speaking at several more meetings, Merriman came to the conclusion that the majority of Liberals regarded them as "troublers in Israel" and would be glad to see them leave.<sup>109</sup>

During their visit Merriman and Sauer came in for their fair share of obloquy in the imperialist press. Their opponents even went so far as to rake up Sauer's misadventures with General Gordon in Basutoland in 1882 and the Dordrecht incident remained a fertile source of abuse and misrepresentation.<sup>110</sup> They were, however, fortunate that the Daily News, which under the editorship of E.T. Cook had taken a firm imperialist line, had recently been recaptured by the Liberals so that there was a leading London newspaper which would report them favourably.<sup>111</sup> R.C. Lehmann, editor of the Daily News, sent the prominent journalist H.W. Massingham, late editor of the Daily Chronicle, to interview them<sup>112</sup> and Sauer made use of this forum to publish a caustic attack on Lord Selborne's misstatement of facts regarding the punishment of rebels.<sup>113</sup>

Merriman and his wife left for Germany on 3 May as the guests of E.A. Lippert, the Transvaal concessionaire then living in Hamburg, and Merriman only returned to England at the beginning of June to complete the last of

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107. J.X.M.P., Merriman to Goldwin Smith, 2 May 1901.

108. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 295.

109. Ibid., pp. 295-296.

110. South African News, 27 March 1901. For the Dordrecht incident see above pp.49-50

111. J.X.M.P., P.A. Molteno to Merriman, 18 Jan. 1901; Agnes Merriman to Julia Merriman, 16 Feb. 1901; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 290.

112. South African News, 25 April 1901; reprint of article from Daily News, 30 March 1901.

113. Reprinted in South African News, 20 April 1901.

his engagements. By then Milner had arrived in England to receive a tumultuous welcome and a peerage, which Merriman regarded as an outrage, and the attitude of the Liberal Party appeared to have become even more ambivalent. One of the last meetings to be addressed by both Merriman and Sauer was that at Battersea, that stronghold of opposition to the war where Cronwright-Schreiner and Vincent van der Byl had previously encountered such an enthusiastic reception.<sup>114</sup> A large meeting was scheduled to take place at Queen's Hall to round off their visit, but as they felt that the other speakers engaged for the occasion were men of too extreme views who were also frowned upon by Leonard Courtney and other leading conciliators, Merriman and Sauer were not enthusiastic about the venture. Sauer, however, agreed to attend and, as had been anticipated, the meeting was marred by organised rowdism.<sup>115</sup> The delegates sailed for Cape Town on 22 June, both disappointed with the result of their mission<sup>116</sup> and Merriman in particular feeling thoroughly disillusioned with the land of his birth.

Their mission might, however, not have been as abortive as they thought. Hofmeyr, who had been wont to write in the most pessimistic terms, sent them some encouragement on the eve of their departure.

"To be sure you and Sauer did not succeed in bringing about a revolution in English Jingoistic thought and feeling, nor effect quite what you expected when you came over. But you must have succeeded in shooting rays of light in many a dark place, and converting waverers [you must have] confirmed in the faith many a true believer in need of some stiffening of the political backbone".<sup>117</sup>

Merriman and Sauer had indeed, during the extensive round of entertainments arranged for them by their friends, had the opportunity of speaking privately to virtually every Liberal politician of note and also to some leading men in the opposition camp. They had both made a very favourable impression, Campbell-Bannerman describing Merriman in particular as "a most taking and effective envoy".<sup>118</sup> It is possible that their influence

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114. J.X.M.P., Merriman to Agnes Merriman, 3 June 1901.

115. Ibid., Agnes Merriman to Julia Merriman, 14 June 1901; Merriman to W.P. Byles, 19 June 1901; South African News, 11 and 17 July 1901.

116. South African News, 24 June 1901.

117. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 299.

118. Ibid., p. 274; M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 2 March 1901.

combined with the sensation caused by Emily Hobhouse's revelations regarding the concentration camps might have "invigorated the opposition to the war"<sup>119</sup> as was evidenced in Campbell-Bannerman's "methods of barbarism" speech. There was little public reaction in the Colony to the negative outcome of the Merriman-Sauer mission for the paralysing grip of martial law stifled the expression of opinion and the impact of the second invasion upon the Colony caused people to become disheartened and preoccupied with their own misfortunes.

From the beginning of 1900 to the middle of 1901 there had been a regular flow of visitors from the Cape to England and opponents of the war there were kept in constant contact with opinion in the Colony. Taken as a whole the results of the conciliation party's appeals to the English people's sense of justice and fair play were, however, disappointing. The disillusionment felt at the outcome of their efforts is epitomised in Charles Molteno's comment from England at the end of November 1900: "The old England we were taught to believe in ... is a myth and we have to adjust our ideas accordingly".<sup>120</sup>

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119. This was the opinion of the London correspondent of the South African News, 11 July 1901.

120. M.P.C.; C. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 22 Nov. 1900.

CHAPTER VI

THE STIFLING OF CRITICISM

The extension of martial law which resulted from the second invasion of the Colony virtually paralysed the conciliation party. Any political action was rendered impossible in districts under military control which, by 9 October 1901, included the whole of the Colony with the exception of the native territories. The conciliators had, up to the end of 1900, been able to voice their opinions freely in the press, in Parliament and on public platforms, but during the last seventeen months of the "lingering war" they struggled to keep their heads above water in the face of growing despondency engendered by the stringent action of the military authorities and the disruption caused by the Boer commandos. As early as June 1900 Dr. Meiring Beck had written to Percy Molteno: "We are in despair here" and a year later Merriman reported on his return from England that "the spirit seems crushed out of people".<sup>1</sup> The task of rendering assistance to the destitute Republicans was the only aspect of the conciliators' work which continued unabated. This aspect of their activities could to a certain extent be regarded as non-political and their work was not unduly obstructed by the authorities.

Despite the general feeling of dejection and war-weariness, the conciliators refused to encourage the Boers to surrender. In February 1901 three members of the Kroonstad Peace Committee, which had been founded for this purpose, visited Cape Town to seek the Bond's assistance to end the war. Ex-commandant P.D. de Wet, a brother of the celebrated Boer general, headed the deputation which also contained a member of the late Free State Volksraad. The conciliation party regarded these men as "hands-uppers" who represented the few weaklings in the Boer nation and had no mandate from their people. It looked askance at the Committee's peace efforts in the Republics which it regarded as an attempt to seduce the burghers from their allegiance.<sup>2</sup> The Kroonstad envoys met with no success at the Cape. When they approached T.P. Theron, chairman of the Bond, he refused to

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1. M.P., Meiring Beck to P.A. Molteno, 18 June 1900; Merriman to P.A. Molteno, 23 June 1901.
  2. South African News, 2 May 1901.

recognise the deputation's status or to enter into negotiations on the peace question, on the grounds that it was against the Bond's programme of principles.<sup>3</sup> Andrew Murray was immovable in declining to do anything unless the British Government acknowledged the independence of the Republics.<sup>4</sup> As a result of his attitude the Bloemfontein Post, which was under official control, published a vituperative article against him in which it remarked:

"It is extremely doubtful whether this blasphemous creature, this impious priest, this Pecksniffian humbug, would sacrifice a tittle of his stipend to secure anything which would not feed his personal vanity or conduce to his material exaltation".<sup>5</sup>

The South African News expressed its opinion on the peace envoys in a scathing leader on 14 February, in which it condemned De Wet and his associates for the disgraceful manner in which they were attacking the cause with which they had previously been associated. It conceded that if the Republican leaders decided to accept the fact of annexation, it would be the duty of the conciliation party to consider the whole situation afresh. But it did not regard the position of the Boer commandos as hopeless and found it incomprehensible that any of their late comrades could adopt an attitude such as that of the peace envoys. Although there was now little talk of unqualified independence for the Republics the conciliation party was still convinced that the Boers would not accept anything less than complete self-government.

The first serious setback suffered by the conciliation party after the second invasion, came in the form of a military order prohibiting the circulation of the South African News in all districts under martial law. This was issued by General Walker, the officer commanding lines of communication at the Cape, who regarded the paper as an undesirable publication.<sup>6</sup> The decision was a severe blow for the South African News which was still struggling to establish itself in the face of the hostility of the English-speaking section of the population. Because of its policy the

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3. J.X.M.P., Meiring Beck to Merriman, 27 Feb. 1901; Hofmeyr to Merriman, 29 April 1901 with a memorandum by Te Water appended.

4. South African News, 1 May 1901.

5. *Ibid.*, 15 May 1901.

6. South African News, 8 Feb. 1901.

paper had received its main support in the country districts from which it was now excluded. In December 1899 it had had a daily circulation of 4 800 copies and sold 1 200 weekly editions. Charles Molteno reported in February 1900 that its circulation was growing rapidly in the country districts and that support for the paper had generally greatly improved. By April 1901 the exclusion of the South African News from martial law districts had, however, reduced its daily circulation to 1 300 copies.<sup>7</sup> This entailed a heavy loss as its finances had never been very stable. It had started off rather ambitiously for an anti-war publication taking the field in an imperialist stronghold such as Cape Town. Because of its unpopular policy the major financial houses had refused to advertise in it and the Cape Argus had even hinted that English-speaking Capetonians should boycott the firms that supported it.<sup>8</sup> In December 1899 the South African News had been running at a loss of £1 000 a month and was perilously close to bankruptcy.<sup>9</sup> Its discomfiture had been heralded with joy by the imperialist press which had always predicted that it would not survive. The Cape Times had obtained a copy of a confidential circular to shareholders of the South African News which it had published, also telegraphing to the Daily News and the Daily Mail in London that the paper was about to collapse. The rumour was widely circulated and the London correspondent of the South African News had been so convinced of the demise of the paper that he had refrained from forwarding his usual "London Letter".<sup>10</sup> The 280 shareholders of the paper, mostly Cape colonists with limited means, had, however, been prepared to waive their dividends and to rally with additional support so that the paper survived the crisis although it had to economise and reduce its size from eight pages to four.<sup>11</sup> By November 1900 the South African News was again in financial difficulties and Percy Molteno appealed to numerous persons, including Captain Sinclair, Sir Robert Reid and R.C. Lehmann for assistance to tide the paper over its present "pinch". He also made full use of Charles Molteno's presence in England to secure support for the paper.<sup>12</sup> The banning order which

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7. M.P.C., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 21 Feb. 1900; South African News, 30 Dec. 1899, 19 April 1901.
  8. Cape Argus, 13 Jan. 1900.
  9. M.P., R. Philipson-Stow to P.A. Molteno, 4 Dec. 1899.
  10. South African News, 20 Dec. 1899, 19 Jan. 1900.
  11. Ibid., 30 Dec. 1899; M.P.C., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 21 Feb. 1900.
  12. M.P., P.A. Molteno to Capt. J. Sinclair, 14 Nov. 1900; P.A. Molteno to R.C. Lehmann, 14 Nov. 1900; P.A. Molteno to Sir R. Reid, 15 Nov. 1900; P.A. Molteno to A. Cartwright, 16 Nov. 1900.

accompanied the extension of martial law therefore placed the proprietors of the newspaper in a most difficult position. With the journal confined to Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and the native territories, where its friends were stalwart but few in number, they feared that its circulation would dwindle to nothing and seriously contemplated closing it down. Harry Currey, who appears to have been intimately associated with the paper, however, was in favour of keeping it going as it would be extremely difficult to restart it once its small staff had been scattered and had lost their connections. He discussed the possibility of raising money for the paper with Joshua Rowntree, who had come to South Africa with Emily Hobhouse to investigate the extent of suffering amongst non-combatants, and Sauer and Merriman promised to see what they could do in this connection as soon as they reached England. <sup>13</sup>

The South African News, however, refused to accept the ruling of the military authorities without protest. On 7 February the managing director, rather unwisely, brought an action against the Postmaster-General. Advocate Burton, who presented the case, pointed out that the military stoppage of the paper virtually amounted to its suspension. This arbitrary interference with the activities of the company had caused it to sustain great loss and Burton argued that the Supreme Court would have to decide whether the military authorities were justified in their action. Innes, who as Attorney-General appeared for the respondent, however, maintained that the reason for the paper's exclusion from martial law districts was not the question before the court. The applicants had asked that the Postmaster-General remove certain restrictions which he, in fact, had not imposed. He had merely been the channel through which the South African News had been informed by the military of the restrictions placed upon its circulation. The Postmaster-General was not responsible for the order and he could therefore not remove it. Both judges concurred in this opinion and the South African News's application was refused with costs. <sup>14</sup> It is

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13. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 8 Jan. 1901, 26 Feb. 1901; J.X.M.P., H. Currey to Merriman, 27 Jan. 1901. A Quaker anti-war syndicate headed by Cadbury had been responsible for buying out the Daily News, which under the editorship of Lehmann returned to the paths of true Liberalism. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 290.
14. South African News, 8 Feb. 1901.

difficult to imagine what grounds they had for thinking that their petition would succeed and it can only be surmised that they brought the action against the Postmaster-General with the object of drawing attention to their plight.

Pecuniary embarrassment was, however, not the paper's only problem for on 28 March its office was attacked by a group of Australian troopers. They broke into the building after having spent a "lively" evening in the town, and wrecked everything they could reach, smashing windows, destroying furniture, and battering the lighting apparatus.<sup>15</sup> The Cape Times and Cape Argus, neither of which said a word in condemnation of the attack, ascribed the Australians' action to the fact that they were smarting under the insults levelled against them in the columns of the South African News, one of their grievances being that the paper had stigmatised the Australian contingent as "scum".<sup>16</sup> The South African News hotly denied having published any disparaging remarks about the Australians and was scandalised by the fact that no arrests had been made.<sup>17</sup> As the attackers had not been able to get at the composing room or the printing machinery the paper appeared as usual, although in a slightly dishevelled state. On 1 April it, however, reported that owing to an "accident" to its machinery it was temporarily being printed at the offices of Ons Land.

On 22 February the South African News again featured in the Supreme Court, this time with the editor, Albert Cartwright, suing the Cape Times, proprietors and publishers of the weekly newspaper the Owl, for £5 000 damages for defamation of character. The action was brought on account of an article which had appeared in the Owl on 27 April 1900. In discussing the South African News's comment on the trial of the Sunnyside rebels<sup>18</sup> it had insinuated that Cartwright would not be in a position to agitate for a review of the case after the war.

"If it has been necessary to pass exemplary sentences on the ignorant, uncouth creatures, what measure shall be meted out

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15. South African News, 29 March 1901, 16 May 1901; M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 30 March 1901.
  16. Cape Argus, 29 March 1901; Cape Times, 29 March 1901.
  17. South African News, 30 March 1901.
  18. For details of the case see above p. 115.

to the amicable and cultured Albert for the amount of treason, sedition and misrepresentation which has been diligently dished up every morning for the last six months. I am afraid that nothing less than 15 months will meet the case".

In replying to the charge against them the defendants admitted that the words used in the article had been strong, but pleaded that they had acted under great provocation. In order to substantiate their plea of justification counsel for the defence quoted copiously from past editions of the South African News, maintaining that articles written by Cartwright had regularly been untruthful and seditious. On this occasion Burton again handled the case and with greater success than before, as the jury eventually found for the plaintiff to the tune of one farthing.<sup>19</sup> As Cartwright maintained that he had taken legal action not for the money but to clear his good name, the verdict must have afforded him some slight satisfaction. This was, however, not the case for long, for the Owl's prediction regarding the fate which would befall him was soon borne out by the course of events.

On 7 February Burton had maintained in court, while presenting the South African News's action against the Postmaster-General, that the military authorities could not have banned the paper from martial law districts on account of its being a treasonable or libellous publication for no such charge had been brought against it. This had been a most unfortunate line to take, for on the same day Albert Cartwright was arrested for having published a defamatory and seditious libel against Lord Kitchener.<sup>20</sup> The charge arose out of the publication, on 6 February, of a letter from a British officer in the field, alleging that Kitchener had given secret instructions to the force pursuing De Wet that no prisoners were to be taken when it finally caught up with the Boer general and his commando. This officer had also been the author of the letter published as a pamphlet entitled "What is now being done in South Africa". It had been destroyed on instructions from Innes who regarded it as a seditious libel, but Cartwright had nevertheless published it on 28 December 1900.<sup>21</sup> In printing this latest letter the South African News maintained in an editorial that it might have been possible to turn a blind eye to the officer's first two letters, but the charge contained in the third was too dreadful to be ignored. It therefore demanded an

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19. South African News, 23 Feb. 1901.

20. Ibid., 8 Feb. 1901.

21. See above p. 114.

explanation from Lord Kitchener. The editorial also pointed out that the letter had appeared three weeks before in Reynold's Newspaper, the Freeman's Journal, the New Age and Stead's Review of Reviews, none of which had been prosecuted. On the following day it again devoted a leader to the subject, revealing that essential parts of the letter had also appeared in the Times on 16 January.<sup>22</sup> The publication of this letter in the South African News was a most injudicious move in view of the fact that three other editors had already been arrested for publishing similar material. J.E. de Jong, proprietor of the Worcester Advertiser had been arrested on 3 December 1900 on a charge of criminal and seditious libel as a result of a letter which appeared in his paper alleging that General French had fired cannon at a house in which several women and children had taken shelter. When their presence had been pointed out to him he was said to have replied: "Shoot the beggars. Afrikanerdom must be swept from the face of the earth" and, some of the victims who had managed to escape from the house, were left lying outside without it having been ascertained whether any of them were still alive. J.A. Vosloo, editor of Het Oosten in Somerset East, who had also published the letter, had been arrested on 14 December 1900 and F.S. Malan editor of Ons Land, who had been the first to print it, suffered a similar fate on 7 January 1901.<sup>23</sup> The editors were all let out on bail and none appear to have taken the charge too seriously, believing that they would merely be fined for the offence. Malan and Cartwright appeared in court together. Both pleaded not guilty and both undertook their own defence.

From Cartwright's declaration in court<sup>24</sup> it appeared that he had received the letter from W.T. Stead who personally knew the writer and had given Cartwright his word of honour that the information was genuine. Stead had also sent the letter to Lord Roberts who had replied that he did not doubt the good standing and unblemished reputation of the officer

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22. South African News, 7 Feb. 1901.

23. Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 231; South African News, 6 and 17 Dec. 1900, 9 Jan. 1901; B. Cloete, Die lewe van Senator F.S. Malan, pp. 152-154.

24. Cartwright had prepared a statement which he intended reading in court, but Innes objected on the grounds that a statement in the nature of evidence for the defence had to be made on oath and Cartwright was therefore not allowed to proceed. The statement was published in the South African News on 27 April 1901.

responsible for it, but that he also did not believe that Kitchener would countenance such proceedings. Cartwright pointed out that the idea of shooting prisoners was not new as several leading English newspapers<sup>25</sup> had advocated such a policy. In the light of statements which had appeared in these papers and in view of the fact that both Stead and Lord Roberts had vouched for the bona fides of the writer of the letter, Cartwright had obviously believed that there might be some truth in it, and had considered it a public duty to publish it in order to obtain a denial. As soon as this had been forthcoming from Lord Kitchener he had published it also. This explanation did not satisfy the court as Mr. Justice Jones pointed out that the law did not entitle a person to publish a defamatory libel simply in order to obtain a contradiction. Innes, who conducted the prosecution, was also not to be pacified, and he relentlessly pointed out the weaknesses in Cartwright's explanation. If the latter's object in publishing the letter had merely been to elicit a denial there had been no need to "rub it in" in two leading articles. He could have got a reply simply by communicating it to official quarters, which he had not done. Neither had he seriously attempted to ascertain the identity of the officer concerned. Innes also referred to the fact that Cartwright had, in December 1900, deliberately printed material by the same writer although he knew that the pamphlets concerned were regarded as being seditious. The South African News had also frequently contained articles which had sailed too close to the wind. Innes drew particular attention to the vicious attack upon the Anglican Archbishop in the paper's leading article on 9 May 1900. It had been inspired by the Archbishop's formal announcement of his support for Milner's policy on 21 April 1900.<sup>26</sup> Cartwright had never concealed his opinion that the Anglican Church had betrayed its mission by supporting the war. The article in question had stated:

" .... we have the Anglican Primate of the Cape, in his sacerdotal robes, with his mitre upon his head and his crozier in his hand, leap into the bloody arena of war-politics and there lay about him like a gladiator. No words of peace from him. Kill! Kill! Kill! is his cry. Like the Zulu in battle he has smelled blood and sees red ..."

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25. The Birmingham Gazette, the St. James's Gazette, the Standard and the Daily Telegraph.

26. South African News, 26 April 1900.

This leader had not been written by the editor, being a contributed article. Cartwright, however, took full responsibility for it, and while admitting that it was "a little theatrical", maintained that it was a permissible comment on the Archbishop's attitude. The South African News's numerous attacks on the Anglican Church,<sup>27</sup> and this article in particular, undoubtedly caused great offence. It had also been cited by the publishers of the Owl to justify their allegation that Cartwright's writings had frequently been libellous.

Although the indictment of seditious libel against Cartwright was withdrawn<sup>28</sup> Innes emphasized the fact that there was a difference between publishing an allegation, such as that made against Kitchener, in England where there was no war and "where the clash of extreme opinion on the other side neutralises the effect", and publishing it "within the sound of cannon" in South Africa. The fact that the circulation of the South African News had been so restricted that it was unlikely to have a seditious effect did not weigh with Innes as he maintained that the story would sooner or later reach the martial law districts. That it was bound to do so through the columns of the English newspapers which were allowed to circulate without restrictions in these areas, did not seem to occur to him. He maintained that he did not wish to be unduly hard on Cartwright, but thought that he had to suffer the consequences of his actions. The judge agreed that Cartwright had placed himself in a predicament for legally there was no defence for what he had done. The jury therefore returned a verdict of guilty.

Malan's case was heard immediately after Cartwright's and he fared no better. He requested a postponement of the trial so that he might contact six witnesses, two of whom were in a military refugee camp. Four of them were said to have been subjected to the treatment mentioned in the letter accusing French of having fired on women and children and the one woman was the writer of the libellous letter. It had been sent to her relations at Caledon and had been extensively circulated before it had been brought to Malan's notice. As Malan could not assure the court that the witnesses

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27. For examples of its attacks upon the Church see South African News, 27 and 28 April 1900, 2 and 31 May 1900.

28. Ibid., 24 April 1901. A person could not be charged with two different crimes arising out of the same set of facts.

concerned would supply evidence which would be material to his case, his application for a postponement was refused. Innes made it clear that although he was very much in favour of the liberty of the press, he believed that an editor had to behave responsibly, and if he deliberately chose to publish material which endangered the safety of the state he had only himself to blame for the consequences. He pointed out to Malan that the allegations against General French were such as to create the impression with the Afrikaners in the Colony that deliberate butchery was being practised amongst their kinfolk in the Republics. "Is it to keep them quiet or is it to stifle their loyalty? I have spoken warmly on this matter because I feel warmly". Malan, who had qualified as an advocate at Cambridge, delivered a long and somewhat involved address justifying his action. He concluded his defence by stating that the publication of the allegation against French was a fair comment "looked at from my side". In summing up the judge maintained that the jury's only task was to decide whether the charge against Malan fell within the limits laid down by the law and he was therefore found guilty. Malan and Cartwright were both sentenced to one year's imprisonment. De Jong and Vosloo received sentences of six months with an additional two months for De Jong on a separate charge. <sup>29</sup>

Innes's only comment on the outcome of the trials was that Malan and Cartwright's sentences were a little more severe than he had expected; "but no one could say that they were undeserved". <sup>30</sup> Merriman, who was still in England, condemned the proceedings, remarking that not even in the worst crisis in Ireland had four editors been imprisoned simultaneously. The South African News also reacted vigorously. In a leader headed "A Second Ireland", it severely condemned Innes for his line of prosecution, accusing him of employing double standards.

"... what may be printed ... with impunity by the leading journals of England, may not be ... published in South Africa. So much for the so-called 'equal rights' of British subjects".

They did not regard as legally valid Innes's "excuse" that it was unwise to publish offensive material in view of the disturbed state of the country.

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29. South African News, 19, 20, 23 and 24 April 1901; Davenport. Afrikaner Bond, p. 231; Cloete, F.S. Malan, p. 164.

30. Wright, Rose Innes Correspondence, p. 280.

"As a matter of wisdom and policy, that may be true, but as a matter of strict legal right, we venture to say that every lawyer in the world would laugh at the doctrine ... In the not distant future he Innes will be regarded as a legal curiosity ... while the Jingo press may libel our Dutch fellow-subjects and leading Afrikaners to their hearts' content, - calling them 'murderers', 'thieves', 'liars' and 'traitors' - adverse reports of the doings of British soldiers amongst whom there are bound to be a certain number of hooligans ... are to be pounced upon and their authors punished with drastic severity ... Such are the humours of justice in a British colony and the vagaries and vindictiveness of racial animosity! The Attorney-General may flatter himself that he now has nearly the whole of the opposition editors in prison - a second Ireland indeed!"

They also wished to know how Lord Kitchener's reputation could have been injured any further by the publication of the letter in the relatively obscure South African News after it had already been spread throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire by the Times and other leading journals. The editorial also assured those responsible for the prosecutions that if they had thought to strike a crushing blow at Afrikanerdom through these vindictive measures they had been mistaken for the nation would be all the stronger for such blows and would be welded by them into greater unity. <sup>31</sup>

The affair confirmed Innes as the South African News's bête noire and it allowed no opportunity of attacking him to pass. On 27 April it returned to the charge with an editorial headed "Evolution of a Politician". They had already in June 1900 pointed out that Innes was no longer his old "radical" self and warned that he might degenerate into a "colonial Rosebery". <sup>32</sup> They now maintained that in at first opposing the war and indulging in a "somewhat ostentatious 'conscience'" he had merely been sitting on the fence. When it became apparent that his support for the side that was being worsted might endanger his future in politics he had jumped off the fence, on the winning side.

"He chose his time with consummate skill and is now Attorney-General ... like Mr. Chamberlain with the Tories Mr. Innes had to justify himself with the Jingo. He had to purify himself of the ultimate taint of mugwumpery ... [so now] he is as keen after the scent of disloyalty as ever a Spanish inquisitor after heresy".

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31. South African News, 23 April 1901.

32. Ibid., 28 June 1900.

The South African News was particularly incensed at Innes's attitude towards the Cape Daily Telegraph, a Port Elizabeth newspaper which, on 12 February, reprinted the libellous letter against Kitchener without a word to throw doubt upon its accuracy, but was not prosecuted. At Cartwright's trial Innes had dilated upon the danger of "throwing gunpowder about in South Africa". The South African News pointed out that the Cape Daily Telegraph, which was a ministerial organ and therefore free to circulate in martial law districts, had been in a better position to scatter gunpowder about than the journal whose editor was now languishing in prison. They regarded Innes's attitude in this matter as one of the most damning blots on his official career.<sup>33</sup> His acceptance of the post as Chief Justice of the Transvaal and the fact that he was awarded a knighthood during the Royal visit in August, provided them with fresh ammunition.<sup>34</sup> Innes was accused of deserting the Colony in the midst of a crisis which he had largely helped to create. "One of the most regrettable incidents connected with this struggle is to be found in the fact that more than one of our prominent public men should have shown such indecent haste to grab a share of the spoils which are always at the disposal of the victors ...".<sup>35</sup>

The imprisonment of the editors evoked a strong reaction amongst the conciliation party in England, more so as Cartwright was English born and had personal friends amongst journalists there. Percy Molteno, who condemned Cartwright's sentence as "monstrous and iniquitous", was convinced that Innes had allowed his feelings to override his judgment at the trial and stigmatised his mode of prosecution as vindictive and inconsiderate.<sup>36</sup> Charles Molteno had reported that the proprietors of the South African News were determined that Cartwright should suffer as little as possible as a result of his imprisonment and had decided to pay him his salary for the present. He also appealed to Percy Molteno to see what he could do for

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33. South African News, 29 April 1901, 8 May 1901.

34. Innes claimed that his title was thrust upon him at such short notice that he had no opportunity of refusing it. Wright, Rose Innes Correspondence, p. 284.

35. South African News, 24 Aug. 1901. Richard Solomon was censured for the same reasons. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 10 Jan. 1901.

36. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 26 April 1901, 17 May 1901; P.A. Molteno to H. Currey, 20 Aug. 1901.

Cartwright in England. His energetic brother at once set about raising a fund in conjunction with a committee which included several journalists and was presided over by Lord Farrar. By July the fund amounted to £300. Moltano reported regretfully that he had not been able to do the same for Malan, but personally contributed generously to a fund being raised for the editors at the Cape. <sup>37</sup>

The leading Liberal newspapers all condemned the editors' sentences, the Daily News being of the opinion that the British Government meant to muzzle its critics and that this "cruel and horrible" penalty was only the first in a series of punishments intended to stifle the voice of free protest in South Africa. <sup>38</sup> Frederick Dolman, a personal friend of Cartwright, tabled a resolution at a meeting of the London district of the Institute of Journalists on 28 June, condemning Cartwright's treatment and suggesting that action be taken to secure a remission or reduction of his sentence. The resolution was, however, defeated. <sup>39</sup> Questions were also asked in the House of Commons in March and May and the S.A.C.C. forwarded a resolution to Chamberlain requesting that representations be made to the Cape Government with a view to the commutation of Cartwright's sentence. <sup>40</sup> It also published an account of the affair in two pamphlets, one entitled "The Imprisonment of Mr. Cartwright" and the other "The True Facts of the Cartwright Case". In addition several addresses of sympathy were forwarded to the editors from towns in England. <sup>41</sup>

During their first month of confinement the editors were treated rather roughly, being placed on a par with less reputable prisoners. Betty Moltano, who made a particular effort to be of assistance to

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37. M.P., C. Moltano to P.A. Moltano, 30 April 1901; P.A. Moltano to C. Moltano, 26 April 1901, 14 and 21 June 1901, 19 July 1901; South African News, 12 July 1901.

38. South African News, 13 May 1901 citing the Daily News, 20 April 1901. See also the article from the Morning Leader, 11 May 1901 reprinted in the South African News, 1 June 1901 and comment from the Manchester Guardian, 13 May 1901 reprinted on 11 June 1901.

39. South African News, 12 and 19 July 1901.

40. *Ibid.*, 27 March 1901, 4 and 15 May 1901; M.P., P.A. Moltano to C. Moltano, 26 April 1901.

41. South African News, 5 and 13 June 1901.

them,<sup>42</sup> informed her brother in London that they were being imprisoned under most unsatisfactory conditions and that they were not being allowed to receive any books or writing materials.<sup>43</sup> Innes sailed from the Cape on 1 May to attend a meeting of a judicial committee and he had hardly arrived in London when Percy Molteno and Mackarness called on him to make representations regarding the treatment of the editors. It appeared that Innes was not aware of the manner in which they were being confined and agreed that the prison regulations should be altered to enable them to receive books and writing materials. He, however, pointed out that the prisons were not controlled by his department and advised Molteno to petition either the Governor or the Cape ministry if he wished to have the matter reconsidered.<sup>44</sup> In reporting the result of his interview with Innes to Charles and Betty Molteno, Percy Molteno, however, stressed the fact that it had been entirely private and warned them not to make use of it in any public way. Before this information could reach the Cape the editors had already, on 20 May, been removed from the crowded Roeland Street jail to more comfortable quarters at Tokai and it therefore seems unlikely that the amelioration of their condition was in any way due to intervention from Innes.<sup>45</sup> During their spell at Tokai the editors were treated more reasonably. They were allowed regular visitors and Centlivres sent them daily summaries of the news so that they were able to keep abreast of events. Malan set about learning shorthand from De Jong and Cartwright devoted his time to acquiring a working knowledge of Dutch from the editor of Ons Land as well as to studying French, so that their year in prison was not entirely wasted.<sup>46</sup> In August 1901 Percy Molteno proposed that Cartwright might benefit from a visit to England after his release. Cartwright did in fact act upon this suggestion and was feted at the House of Commons by no less a personage than C.P. Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian.

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42. During his imprisonment Cartwright regularly corresponded with Betty Molteno, expressing his thanks for all she had done for him and his wife, and for the manner in which this had helped him to overcome the initial despondency which he had experienced after his conviction. Some of the letters are in the Murray Parker Collection. See especially A. Cartwright to Betty Molteno, 2 May 1901.
43. M.P., Betty Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 1 May 1901; South African News, 3 June 1901.
44. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 24 May 1901; M.P.C., P.A. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 24 May 1901.
45. South African News, 21 May 1901.
46. Cloete, F.S. Malan, pp. 158-167; M.P., Betty Molteno to P.A. Molteno, July 1901 (no day); M.P.C., A. Cartwright to Betty Molteno, 6 Dec. 1901.

He apparently made a good impression for Leonard Courtney's wife reported that his utterances had been very moderate and wanting in bitterness considering the injustice he had suffered. <sup>47</sup>

The South African News's claim that virtually all the opposition editors were in jail, was an exaggeration, but their sentences did have a drastic effect on the majority of the newspapers concerned. The Worcester Advertiser was closed down by the military on 6 January, Ons Land was replaced by the Advertentieblad on 8 January, which for the remainder of the war avoided contentious subjects, and Het Oosten appears to have gone out of circulation on 28 March, the day it was prohibited from circulating in the Somerset East district. <sup>48</sup> If Cartwright's sentence was meant to cow the South African News into submission it did not have the desired effect. His imprisonment resulted in a rush of volunteers to the editorial rescue, two of these being Cronwright-Schreiner and Dr. Kolbe. It is not clear who the other contributors were, but it is possible that Harry Currey also wrote for the paper, the direction of which devolved upon the sub-editor, Charles Henry Graham. <sup>49</sup> With the assistance of this small band of helpers the South African News was able to "keep its end of the stick up" and continued a valiant protest against the administration of martial law, the conditions in the concentration camps and the efforts to suspend the Cape constitution. Cronwright-Schreiner, who was in Cape Town from December 1900 to May 1901, was not a very imaginative writer, but Kolbe, who was also editor of the South African Catholic Magazine, made a valuable contribution towards keeping the newspaper going. <sup>50</sup> He undertook the task of writing editorials for the Saturday edition and probably contributed other material as well. His writings were always spirited and at times, perhaps, a shade too outspoken. Although the South African News continued to present good material, the general tone of its reporting deteriorated. Julia Merriman, who must have secured the paper surreptitiously at Grahams-town, complained that it was becoming so rabid that she could no longer read it. <sup>51</sup>

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47. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 21 Aug. 1901; J.X.M.P., Kate Courtney to Agnes Merriman, 25 July 1902.
  48. South African News, 8 Jan. 1901; Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, pp. 231-232.
  49. South African News, 15 Feb. 1901.
  50. J.X.M.P., Meiring Beck to Merriman, 8 April 1901, 1 May 1901; M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 3 June 1901; Cronwright-Schreiner, Life of Olive Schreiner, p. 323; Southern Cross, 29 Dec. 1954.
  51. J.X.M.P., Julia Merriman to J.X. Merriman, 30 July 1901.

The South African News's attitude was, however, not wholly unjustified for the senseless and irritating manner in which martial law was administered antagonised even the loyalists. The conciliators' complaints on this score were much the same as they had been in 1900, except that the situation was markedly worse during the second invasion of the Colony. Innes was convinced that a decided change had come over the entire administration of martial law. He ascribed this partly to the scope of the second invasion but mainly to the fact that the Cape Government had agreed to allow more serious political offences to be tried by military courts. This decision, he thought, created the impression, amongst those engaged in administering martial law, that they could act more rigorously than they had done before.<sup>52</sup> Others believed that the fact that the troops, both Colonial and Imperial, had been allowed to act in an unrestrained and lawless manner in the Republics encouraged them to behave in the same way in the Colony.<sup>53</sup>

On 9 September the South African News published one of its most searing indictments of "that abhorrent system of misrule and petty tyranny, misnamed martial law", under which the Colony had been suffering for the past twenty-two months.

"We have experienced the rigours of martial law, felt what a crime it is for a free-born Briton to differ in opinion from the commandant who rules his village with the autocracy of a Czar. Every district where martial law is established and enforced is being transformed into a Khannate. Measures too often vindictive, brutal, and unjust, have been tried and are being tried to break the spirit of the people whose offence is that they have opinions of their own and adhere to them ... To be safe from persecution means to be cringingly submissive to whatever the powers in charge of a town or district mean to enforce ... That 'it is forbidden' is the quintessence of martial law, as in olden times it was the keynote of autocratic power ... If the Colony must be ruled by martial law, let it be reasonably administered, let us not suffer the enactments of a set of intolerant officials ..."

After the war Merriman summarised the main grievances against martial law under the following headings: the handing over of civil jurisdiction to the military, the whole system of commandeering goods from farmers, the activities of the Intelligence Department and the low quality of the men

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52. Wright, Rose Innes Correspondence, p. 191.

53. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 30 July 1901.

employed by it, the systematic deportation of leading inhabitants regarded as "undesirables", without any cause being shown, the subornation of evidence, and the system of army contracting which enabled a few individuals to make handsome profits.<sup>54</sup> Of these the commandeering of horses, cattle and wagons and the prohibitions placed upon the raising of crops in certain districts, caused the most general discontent as it affected not only the Dutch but also the 'loyal' section of the population. It was alleged that martial law had been declared in districts not directly threatened by invasion in order to enable the military to obtain large numbers of horses and mules at prices considerably lower than those which would have prevailed in the open market. Additional offence was caused by the fact that many of the animals commandeered were quite unsuited for military purposes, persons thus being needlessly deprived of stock essential for farming purposes.<sup>55</sup> With their activities thus disrupted many farmers were placed in severe financial straits. In a doleful letter to Schreiner, enumerating his difficulties, the ex-cabinet minister, A.J. Herholdt, who farmed near Graaff-Reinet, remarked: "Our prospects are very gloomy. I do not wish to give you any details of my experience for fear that I might make myself liable to martial law. Suffice it to say that if things do not take a turn soon I shall be a ruined man".<sup>56</sup> The wanton destruction of stock and other property aggravated the situation and some even feared that if the state of affairs continued for any length of time the Colony might be faced with famine.<sup>57</sup>

Although the rebellion which accompanied the second invasion was less extensive than that which took place at the outbreak of the war<sup>58</sup> it was serious enough for the military authorities to implement the severest penalties. According to the provisions of the Treason Bill all acts of rebellion committed before 12 April 1901, fell under the jurisdiction of the Special Court. The military authorities, however, paid scant attention to this

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54. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 356-357. For a comprehensive discussion of the administration of martial law during the second invasion see Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, pp. 202-224.

55. South African News, 5 and 24 June 1901.

56. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Heroldt to Schreiner, 1 June 1901.

57. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 30 July 1901, 31 Aug. 1901.

58. According to Snyman 3 437 rebels surrendered in the Colony at the end of the war, almost two-thirds less than the numbers which had been involved in the first rebellion. Rebelleverhoor in Kaapland, p. 30.

legislation<sup>59</sup> and a flagrant miscarriage of justice was perpetrated when Hendrik van Heerden of Middelburg was executed on 2 March without his sentence even having been confirmed by military headquarters.<sup>60</sup> On 19 March three rebels from Hanover, who had been sentenced by a military court at De Aar for allegedly having participated in the derailment of a train, were also illegally executed.<sup>61</sup> Olive Schreiner, then living at Hanover, applied for a pass to travel to De Aar to intercede with General Settle on their behalf. She was convinced that they had been convicted on false evidence; "They are such poor ignorant fellows, real 'tack-haars' and they had no one to defend them". The general, however, refused her application, maintaining that he was acting on instructions from his superiors. Olive Schreiner therefore had to content herself with rendering some assistance to the widow of one of the men who had a large family and was living in great poverty.<sup>62</sup> The Sprigg ministry protested vigorously against these illegal proceedings, but to no avail. When the Treason Act expired on 12 April they were persuaded to consent to the more serious offence under martial law being tried by military courts on the grounds that the civil courts could not deal effectively with such cases in the disturbed state of the Colony. They did so with great reluctance and only after Lord Kitchener had agreed to various safeguards to ensure that the accused received a fair trial.<sup>63</sup> This meant that a Government notice of 6 April, announcing that rebels would be tried by the civil courts after the expiry of the Treason Act, had to be cancelled, and the new decision was published on 22 April. The Government was at once attacked for surrendering its powers to the military and its opponents wished to know what had transpired between 6 April and 22 April to have caused such a radical change of front.

The conciliators objected to the military tribunals not only because they were composed of men who had no legal training, but also on the grounds that their members were at times colonial volunteers and violent political

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59. Snyman, Rebelleverhoor in Kaapland, p. 44.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 33 ff.

61. South African News, 22, 23, 25 and 29 March 1901.

62. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 19 March 1901; Cronwright-Schreiner, Life of Olive Schreiner, pp. 327-328.

63. Snyman, Rebelleverhoor in Kaapland, pp. 33, 35, 42-47.

partisans.<sup>64</sup> That their accusations of injustice against the military were not without foundation was proved by the fact that the Royal Commission which investigated 700 of these cases after the war, drastically reduced most of the sentences.<sup>65</sup>

Altogether thirty-two rebels were executed, these severe measures being intended to act as a deterrent against rebellion. In themselves the executions caused extreme resentment and the fact that they were on several occasions conducted in public, with leading residents of the districts being compelled to attend, caused an even greater outcry. The South African News condemned these proceedings as "brutal and degrading" and an aggrieved colonist remarked that "these khaki fools are sowing a rich harvest to be reaped by us who remain in the country when they are safely at home".<sup>66</sup> Innes in particular was viciously attacked for

"handing over on 22 April the issues of life and death in the Colony to a court of Militiamen, Brabant's Horse and Port Elizabeth Volunteers ... in the ... districts where these infamous tragedies were enacted, his name and those of his colleagues who were party to these trials being taken out of the hands of the colonial judges, will be held in everlasting obloquy".<sup>67</sup>

Some of the women of the conciliation party were so distressed by the harsh treatment of the rebels that a group, under the leadership of Caroline Murray, approached Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson on 18 July in an attempt to secure a remission of the sentences passed on C.J. Classen and Petrus Klopper. Their petition requested the Governor to exert his influence

"to stop this summary method of dealing with the rebels which we feel will not only make a union between English and Dutch fellow colonists almost impossible in the future but will now stir up such feelings as can only greatly augment the difficulties and sufferings of the present time".

Hely-Hutchinson, however, replied that he was powerless to act in the matter and Kitchener declined to interfere in the cases. Betty Molteno's appeals to Sprigg, Thomas Graham (the Colonial Secretary) and the wife of the Anglican Archbishop were also of no avail with the result that the men were

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64. South African News, 17 July 1901.

65. Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, p. 225.

66. South African News, 12 July 1901, 28 Aug. 1901.

67. Ibid., 15 Aug. 1901.

executed at Burghersdorp and Somerset East on 23 July.<sup>68</sup> The consensus of opinion amongst the conciliators was that the severity of these measures merely stiffened the resistance of the commandos and made surrender more difficult. Many who would otherwise have remained loyal were driven into rebellion. Charles Molteno reported to his brother in England that he had it on good authority that in a district where an execution had taken place seventy young men instantly joined the commandos.<sup>69</sup>

Martial law also gave the military the opportunity to take action against various prominent members of the conciliation party whose activities they had long viewed with disapproval. J.G. van der Horst, a partner of Vincent van der Byl, was one of the first to feel the heavy hand of authority. He had been outspoken in his criticism of martial law and in his capacity as an attorney he actively assisted many who had fallen foul of the military. When he travelled to Beaufort West on business in January he was arbitrarily imprisoned at the town. Being more fortunate than many others, he was not detained for long and was allowed to return to Cape Town.<sup>70</sup> On 22 January C.J. Lötter, Charles Molteno's fellow M.L.A. for Jansenville, was arrested at Uitenhage on a charge of high treason, after having been kept under observation by the Port Elizabeth Intelligence Department for some months. He was released on bail after spending more than a month in prison and the charge against him was eventually withdrawn after several preliminary investigations. These proceedings resulted in renewed fulminations from Charles Molteno upon the manner in which martial law was being used as an engine of political terrorism.<sup>71</sup>

In view of the hyper-sensitive state of the military authorities it is not surprising that as outspoken a conciliator as Olive Schreiner should

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68. Copies of the petition are in the Murray Parker Collection and in the Molteno Papers. See also M.P., H.W.B. Robinson (Private Secretary to the Governor), to Caroline Murray, 21 July 1901; Betty Molteno to P.A. Molteno, ? July 1901; M.P.C., Betty Molteno to Sprigg, 14 July 1901; South African News, 21 and 25 July 1901.

69. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 21 Aug. 1901, 3 Sept. 1901.

70. South African News, 11 Jan. 1901; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 247.

71. South African News, 26 Jan. 1901, 16 Feb. 1901, 1 March 1901; Davenport, Afrikaner Bond, p. 234; M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 26 Feb. 1901; F.C. Mackarness, "Lifting the Veil in Cape Colony being some further facts about martial law".

have aroused their suspicions. The S.A.C.C. published details of her experiences in a pamphlet entitled "Olive Schreiner. Her Treatment under Martial Law. Breakdown and Recovery". The tract consisted of an article reprinted from the Daily News of 17 September 1901. This newspaper claimed to have received its information from someone well acquainted with the facts of the case. It declared that both Olive Schreiner and her husband had been "marked down" by the authorities. They had visited Cape Town after the Worcester Congress, Olive Schreiner returning to Hanover before her husband who had some business to attend to in the city. After the extension of martial law he was not allowed to travel to Hanover and she was subjected to special persecution in the village. Of all the inhabitants she was the only one who was not allowed to walk or drive out from the village and was kept a close prisoner for several months. Under the strain of enforced isolation her delicate health broke down and towards the end of May she collapsed and almost died. Only then was her husband allowed to return to Hanover. After her illness she was treated with the greatest consideration by the military authorities. "The pity is that the military authorities only learnt sense by almost killing Olive Schreiner". Although the basic facts presented in the pamphlet are accurate, its tone generally is too emotional to ring true. Mindful of the strict censorship under martial law, Olive Schreiner was extremely cautious about what she wrote, usually avoiding politics and confining her voluminous correspondence to a discussion of trivialities. Her letters do, however, contain indications that her movements were restricted, but there is no mention that she suffered any particular persecution.<sup>72</sup> In his biography of her Cronwright-Schreiner also does not mention any particularly severe measures being taken against Olive Schreiner. He ascribes the breakdown in her health not only to her isolation but to the general strain caused by the war, her anxiety about the execution of the three Hanover rebels and mainly to the distress she felt on receiving the news of her eldest brother's death early in May.<sup>73</sup> There is, however, no mention of her being critically ill. Despite the fact that Cronwright-Schreiner was at that stage intimately associated with the South African News, no mention of his wife being victimised by the military appeared in that paper. This may have been because, like most other victims under martial law, she was afraid to complain, as this might merely cause

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72. O.S.P., O. Schreiner to Betty Molteno, 8 and 18 April 1901, 1 Aug. 1901.

73. Cronwright-Schreiner, Life of Olive Schreiner, pp. 330-331.

*But Women & Labour*

further difficulties. Nevertheless it does appear as if the conciliation party in England exaggerated the affair in the hope of making political capital out of it.

There was, however, no need to manufacture grievances, for evidence of flagrant abuses was available in abundance. The cases of the Rev. W.A. Alheit and Dr. R.J. Reinecke of Ceres were two of the worst examples of conciliators being victimised because of their political opinions. Alheit was one of the most energetic supporters of the conciliation movement at Ceres and had been the first chaplain to minister to the Boer prisoners of war at the Green Point camp. Dr. Reinecke was one of the five medical men who undertook ambulance work with the Boer commandos during the early stages of the war and had also been one of the main speakers at the Worcester Congress. Both were arrested at Ceres in August and, after being lodged in jail at Malmesbury until the end of October, they were eventually released on parole but neither was allowed to return to Ceres until after the end of the war. While in prison they were not allowed to see their legal advisers and the commandant refused to inform them what the charge against them was. Alheit had evidently caused offence by remarking from the pulpit that "it was no time for dancing", an allusion to an entertainment organised by the commandant, and Reinecke was apparently arrested because he was "an influential man". During his banishment from Ceres Reinecke's family was turned out of his house which was occupied by the military. His property was extensively damaged but this was excused on the grounds that he was a rebel and deserved such treatment. When the matter was raised in the House of Commons, St. John Brodrick, the Secretary of State for War, declared that Dr. Reinecke had been arrested for communicating with the enemy and the Rev. Alheit for using treasonable language and his influence in favour of the enemy. Details of the cases were published by the S.A.C.C. in a pamphlet entitled "A Pastor and a Doctor Imprisoned and Exiled under Martial Law".<sup>74</sup>

J.X. Merriman was the most prominent member of the conciliation party to be "arrested" under martial law. From the time that the system had been extended to Stellenbosch, where his farm Schoongezicht was situated, Merriman had feared that action would be taken against him because of his

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74. See also South African News, 17 Sept. 1901; D.V.P., (U.C.T.), R.J. Reinecke to C.C. de Villiers, 22 Oct. 1901.

opposition to the war. Some of the leading imperialists in the district had made no secret of the fact that they would welcome the event. On 25 August two armed members of the district military police called on him at his farm and requested that he surrender his travelling pass. Later that day he was asked to give his parole that he would not leave his farm and armed guards were stationed around his house. The following day his wife travelled to Cape Town to present his case to the Governor, who, however, maintained that the matter had to be dealt with by General Wynne, the officer commanding the Cape Colony District. An appeal to Richard Solomon, who had been appointed Legal Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief, to intercede with Kitchener, met with the same reply. Merriman placed his case in the hands of attorney Van der Horst and after lengthy negotiations with the military, Merriman was granted permission to visit Cape Town on 5 September. Once in the city he decided to remain there lest renewed restrictions be placed upon him at Stellenbosch. This led to a protracted wrangle with the military authorities who maintained that he had been under an obligation to return to Stellenbosch and requested him to do so at once. Merriman denied that he had given any such undertaking and refused to comply with the order. The matter was only cleared up in November, by which time martial law had been extended to Cape Town as well. Throughout the whole acrimonious affair Richard Solomon behaved in a most sympathetic manner and it is evidently as a result of his intercession with Kitchener that the matter was eventually resolved.

The behaviour of the military authorities infuriated Merriman, who regarded his treatment as a gross insult to a man of his standing. He supplied several associates in Britain, including Campbell-Bannerman, with details of his case and requested Percy Molteno to assist him in taking legal action in the matter. The advice he received from Mackarness and another prominent jurist, however, held out little hope of success, particularly in view of the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council not to interfere in the Marais case.<sup>75</sup> Merriman therefore abandoned his decision to appeal to the courts.<sup>76</sup> It was never revealed

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75. Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, pp. 214-216, 226-228.

76. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, pp. 300-304, 306-307; J.X.M.P., Major-General C. Wynne to Merriman, 11 Sept. 1901, 14 Nov. 1901; Merriman to Martial Law Board, 18 Oct. 1901; Joint opinion of Blake Odgers and F. Mackarness, 6 Nov. 1901; M.P., Merriman to P.A. Molteno, 11 Sept. 1901.

at whose instigation these steps were taken against Merriman, the local commandant disclaiming all responsibility in the matter. Nor is it clear what, apart from political vindictiveness, could have prompted the actions of the military authorities. The S.A.C.C. hinted that his arrest might have had some connection with the appearance, in the British press on 27 August, of a letter by him condemning martial law. The dates, however, do not tally and Merriman's views in the matter were so widely known that publicity of this nature could hardly have been of any significance. 77

From London Percy Molteno strongly urged the advisability of registering a formal protest against the arbitrary behaviour of the military authorities and Charles Molteno used his influence to try to bring this about. Sauer favoured the idea, but Merriman appeared to be reluctant to take action. Many other members of the South African Party shared this reluctance as all their previous protests had been treated with contempt. 78 After their departure from Stellenbosch, Merriman and his wife spent a week at the home of Charles Molteno. The latter reported that he had almost persuaded Merriman to agree to the drawing up of a formal protest when he was ordered by the military to return to Stellenbosch.

"This further attempt upon his liberty seems to drive everything else out of his head ... and I now doubt whether he will be got to do anything. Of course there have been various deputations from the country districts to the Government, protesting against the working of martial law but nothing of this gets into the papers". 79

On one minor occasion, however, slight success did attend the efforts of the conciliators. On 11 September a certain Mrs. Brooks and seven teenage girls from Maraisburg were sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment on account of having handed supplies to a Boer Commando which invaded the town, and for having sung the Volkslied and fraternised with the King's enemies. This sentence was regarded as an outrage by the conciliators and the matter was raised at the monthly meeting of the Ladies Central Committee on 20

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77. Merriman's letter was subsequently published as a pamphlet by the S.A.C.C. (No. 79) under the title "An English Ex-Minister of the Cape on the State of the Cape Colony".
78. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 8 Aug. 1901; C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 27 Aug. 1901.
79. Ibid., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 18 Sept. 1901.

September.<sup>80</sup> It was resolved that the secretary should write to both the Governor and the Prime Minister to request the release of the prisoners. As a result of this request Sprigg made representation to the military authorities whereupon the girls were set free. This, however, took place only a few days before their sentence was due to expire.<sup>81</sup>

Martial law was declared in Cape Town<sup>82</sup> at 2 p.m. on 9 October and immediately upon the appearance of the notice, detectives accompanied by armed men, called at the home of Mrs. Koopmans de Wet, and the offices of the South African News, and the legal firm of Van der Byl, Van der Horst, Sauer and Standen as well as that of C.C. de Villiers and carried out a search evidently with the object of discovering incriminating documents. According to Innes the search was simply carried out at random, but the military's choice of suspects gives an interesting indication of whom they regarded as the most dangerously disaffected persons in the city.<sup>83</sup> Nothing of any importance was found but subsequently letters to Mrs. Koopmans de Wet which were censored, convinced the military that she had been corresponding with officials of the late Republics. The person involved was H.N.P. Muller, the Free State consul-general in Holland, an old friend with whom she had been corresponding for the past twenty-three years.

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80. This was the new title adopted by the Ladies Clothing Committee for Prisoners of War after it had decided to devote its efforts to assisting the women and children in the concentration camps.
81. Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, pp. 218-220; South African News, 14 Sept. 1901; D.V.P., (U.C.T.), Minute Book, 20 Sept. 1901, 18 Oct. 1901; H.W.B. Robinson (Secretary to the Governor), to Mrs. C.C. de Villiers, 23 Sept. 1901; S. Cowper (Prime Minister's Secretary), to Mrs. C.C. de Villiers, 27 Sept. 1901, 10 Oct. 1901.
82. The Sprigg ministry was not as indifferent to the interests of the colonists as the conciliation party believed. They resisted in particular Kitchener's demand that martial law should be extended to the ports of the Colony. This resulted in extremely strained relations between the Government and the military authorities and Innes was strongly tempted to resign. The Government eventually agreed to the extension of martial law to the ports on condition that the powers of the military authorities in these areas be restricted in certain matters and on condition that a Martial Law Board be created to investigate complaints against the system throughout the Colony. This body was, however, ineffective. Le May, British Supremacy, pp. 114-121; Wright, Rose Innes Correspondence, pp. 298-305.
83. M.P., Caroline Murray to P.A. Moltano, 13 Oct. 1901; Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 307.

The military authorities also maintained that her home had been a meeting place for enemies of the King. Mrs. Koopmans de Wet was placed under house arrest for a few days, but on signing a declaration that she would in future refrain from any treasonable activities, which she denied ever having been guilty of, the restrictions upon her movements were lifted. The Ladies Central Committee was greatly angered by this insult to one of its most highly honoured members and passed a special resolution sympathising with her. <sup>84</sup>

The authorities had undoubtedly viewed the South African News's defiant attitude with displeasure and Innes privately complained of the venomous attacks upon him which regularly appeared in its columns and which he suspected of having been inspired by Sauer. <sup>85</sup> The extension of martial law to Cape Town sounded the death knell of the newspaper. According to Kolbe they had long anticipated the event and he believed that it was his last editorial on 12 October, under the heading "Spring Time", which "brought the military crashing down upon us". Refusing to be daunted by the advent of martial law, this irrepressible cleric, in an impertinent article full of veiled allusions, poked fun at the new state of affairs. He compared the situation to Topsy-turvy Land as depicted in Alice through the Looking Glass and admitted that the South African News did not feel itself at home in the new non-political atmosphere. Making a pretence at avoiding the forbidden topic he turned to admire Cape Town in the spring time, expressing the hope that there would be no offence "in speaking of the flowers that bloom in Spring tra la!". On 14 October the South African News appeared for the last time during the war. Its suppression was the most serious blow struck at the conciliation party, for with their correspondence also subjected to strict censorship, they now had no means of communicating with one another or with their allies in England. Charles Molteno declared that the last vestige of freedom had disappeared <sup>86</sup> and a blanket of silence fell over the conciliation party until the end of the war.

The only positive line of action which still remained open to them

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84. Malan, Marie Koopmans de Wet, pp. 217-226; Wright, Rose Innes Correspondence, pp. 315-316; D.V.P., (U.C.T.), Minute Book, 20 Dec. 1901.

85. Wright, Rose Innes Correspondence, pp. 289-290.

86. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 16 Oct. 1901.

was that of rendering assistance to the Boer victims of the war. They worked in close co-operation with Emily Hobhouse and other members of the conciliation party in England, which had from the outset registered a vigorous protest against the conduct of the war, and published numerous pamphlets to bring the facts regarding farm-burning and the concentration camps to the notice of the British public.<sup>87</sup> At the Cape the South African News continually criticised the conditions in the concentration camps, particularly when the death rate amongst the children began to assume alarming proportions during the winter of 1901.<sup>88</sup> Members of both the Ladies Central Committee and the Gentlemen's Committee unsuccessfully tried to secure permission to visit the camps to assess the extent of the suffering there.<sup>89</sup> Emily Hobhouse, who wished to take Mrs. Roos, treasurer of the Ladies Central Committee, and a few other Dutch women with her when she visited the camps between January and April 1901, was not permitted to do so. Betty Molteno's request to Sir Gordon Sprigg that she be allowed to visit the camp at Aliwal North met with a most discouraging and injudicious reply.

"The report on the condition of the camp at Aliwal North is to my mind satisfactory and discloses no reason why a visit should be made. I do not in the least concur with the outcry that is raised against the Imperial Government with regard to the treatment of the wives and children of those who are fighting against us, urged on by leading men in this Colony, who deserved to be hanged. On the contrary I consider that Her Majesty's Government deserve infinite credit for their humanity".<sup>90</sup>

His rash remark caused him to experience considerable embarrassment when he next encountered the Molteno sisters, for Betty Molteno told him bluntly: "So you want to hang all of us - here we are".<sup>91</sup>

The conciliation party regarded it as a great triumph that Brodrick adopted many of Emily Hobhouse's recommendations regarding the concentration camps, especially in view of her having been branded a "hysterical woman" by the Cape Times.<sup>92</sup> They saw the acceptance of her advice as an

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87. E.g. No. 58, "A Plain Statement of the Change that has come over the War in South Africa" and No. 59 "Farm Burning in South Africa" by J.M. Robertson.

88. For a detailed study of the concentration camps see J.C. Otto, Die Konsentrasiekampe.

89. H.P., Minute Book, 13 Dec. 1900; M.P.C., Betty Molteno to Sprigg, 14 July 1901.

90. M.P.C., Sprigg to Betty Molteno, 13 July 1901.

91. M.P., Betty Molteno to P.A. Molteno, July 1900 (no day).

92. South African News, 22 July 1901.

admission of the accuracy of her report and attributed the appointment of the Fawcett Commission to the pressure exerted upon the British Government after public opinion had been aroused by her revelations. The mere fact that there was to be an enquiry, they believed, would prompt the authorities to begin putting their house in order, so that the conditions in the camps would be considerably improved.<sup>93</sup> There was, however, a great deal of dissatisfaction over the composition of the commission. The conciliators objected in particular to the inclusion of Dr. Jane Waterson of Cape Town. Shortly after her appointment she wrote to the Cape Times expressing the opinion that the privations of the inmates of the camps were "assumed".<sup>94</sup> In a strongly worded leader in the South African News Dr. Kolbe condemned her as the most rabid Jingo in Cape Town and stated flatly that the conciliation party had no confidence in her. Neither did it have much faith in Mrs. Fawcett, an aunt of Edmund Garrett, and an ardent propagandist of the war party in England who made no secret of the fact that she believed that the conditions in the camps could not possibly be as bad as Emily Hobhouse had painted them.<sup>95</sup>

When the commission arrived in Cape Town in August the Ladies Central Committee tried to have some of its members added to it. Mrs. C.C. de Villiers, who had recently replaced Mrs. B. Marchand as secretary of the committee, Anna Purcell and Caroline Murray were deputed to call on Mrs. Fawcett to present their request to her. The interview, which took place on 12 August, was, however, barren of success. Protestation that the two committees in Cape Town had already forwarded supplies to the value of £20 000 to the camps and were therefore entitled to be represented on the commission, met with the reply that their committee was politically biased. Mrs. Fawcett's contention that the commission was non-political drew from Anna Purcell the retort that it could hardly be so with Dr. Waterson on it. Although Mrs. Fawcett's commission had the power to add to its number it refused to accede to the conciliators' request, but Mrs. Fawcett still wished to know whether, if her commission found any particularly pressing need in any of the camps, it could call on the Ladies Central Committee for assistance. Mrs. De Villiers did not reject this request out of hand,

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93. South African News, 18 July 1901.

94. Cape Times, 24 July 1901.

95. South African News, 27 July 1901, 26 Aug. 1901.

but her committee subsequently declined to work with the Fawcett Commission.

Caroline Murray, Mrs. Hay and Mrs. Stegmann were also deputed to interview the Governor as to the possibility of having a few of their committee included on the Fawcett Commission, but were equally unsuccessful. Although their request was forwarded to the British Government they received no reply and Hely-Hutchinson did not think that the Imperial authorities intended taking any notice of it. When they urged him to use his influence to assist them the Governor denied having any authority in the matter. He maintained that he had not been consulted about the commission and had only learnt of their presence in Cape Town through the local press. Caroline Murray also telegraphed Percy Molteno to use his influence on their behalf in London, but Molteno replied that there was nothing he could do as the British Government merely wanted a commission to whitewash what was being done in the concentration camps. <sup>96</sup>

The Ladies Central Committee suffered another disappointment when the authorities refused to allow Emily Hobhouse to return to her work in the camps and forcibly deported her to England after her arrival in Cape Town on 26 October 1901. Her associates at the Cape were scandalised by the high-handed behaviour of the military authorities and the Ladies Central Committee passed a formal resolution sympathising with her and expressing their appreciation for all she had done and suffered on behalf of their compatriots in the Republics. <sup>97</sup>

Despite these setbacks the two Cape Town committees continued their work, dispatching goods received from sympathisers in Europe and America, and from the Boer Women and Children's Clothing Fund, and also assisted Miss Monkhouse and Miss Mellor, the local representatives of the South

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96. D.V.P., (U.C.T.), Minute Book, 12 and 16 Aug. 1901; Separate set of minutes of interviews with Mrs. Fawcett and Sir W. Hely-Hutchinson; M.P., P.A. Molteno to Caroline Murray, 8 Aug. 1901.
97. Fry, Emily Hobhouse, pp. 167-181; D.V.P., (U.C.T.), Minute Book, 15 Nov. 1901. Betty Molteno and Caroline Murray both did their utmost to intercede with the military authorities on Emily Hobhouse's behalf and left detailed accounts of the events accompanying her deportation, which were meant to be used in the event of legal action being taken against the authorities. The reports are in the Murray Parker Collection.

African Women and Children's Distress Fund. Caroline Murray coped with the correspondence with these organisations and when she visited England the work was taken over by Betty Molteno in February 1902.<sup>98</sup> The latter and Alice Greene, who were both teachers, were also instrumental in the establishment of a special Education Fund which enabled a few destitute Republican children to be sent to schools at Paarl, Knysna and Stellenbosch for the duration of the war.<sup>99</sup> Mrs. Koopmans de Wet was the most energetic member of the committee, handling a total of 2 046 crates of clothing and supplies at her home, mostly contributions from Europe and America. She continued her work up to 1904 and issued a separate report in August of that year.<sup>100</sup> The Ladies Central Committee reported in August 1901 but continued its work until well into 1903. The Gentlemen's Committee issued a report on 7 August 1902. The work in connection with the Boer prisoners of war was then rounded off, but that in connection with the concentration camps and the administration of the Widows and Orphans' Fund continued, the latter until 1905. The money from this fund was distributed through committees in the Transvaal and Free State headed by A.I. Louw and J.B.M. Hertzog.<sup>101</sup>

The general reaction of the conciliation party to the advent of peace was one of relief. The occasion was, however, marred by the fact that the strength of the movement for the suspension of the Cape constitution and Milner's open support for it, came to light at the same time.<sup>102</sup> James Molteno set off hot foot for England to fight the movement there while Merriman led the opposition to it at the Cape. The conciliation party had in fact regarded the repeated prorogation of parliament as "suspension by instalments" and had strongly attacked Sprigg, maintaining that he refused to summon parliament for fear of the questions which would be asked and the revelation that he had been "a mere marionette of a Prime Minister",<sup>103</sup> which would follow. Sprigg's determined opposition to the

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98. M.P.C., EH/5 Record of clothes and foodstuffs sent to the camps.

99. H.P., Verslag en Overzicht van de Werkend Comité ... pp. 9-10.

100. Malan, Marie Koopmans de Wet, pp. 206-217.

101. South African News, 24 Aug. 1901; H.P., A.I. Louw to J.H. Hofmeyr, 21 April 1905; J.B.M. Hertzog, 18 April 1905; Verslag en Overzicht van de Werkend Comité ...

102. For a detailed discussion of the movement see E.D. Thielscher, The Suspension Movement in the Cape Colony and its effects, 1901-1904.

103. South African News, 31 Aug. 1901, 14 Sept. 1901.

suspension of the constitution, however, did much to improve his image in the eyes of the conciliators, who had always regarded him as a political opportunist of the worst kind. The movement, which was doomed from the outset because of Chamberlain's opposition to it, proved to be a two-edged sword, for it weakened the Progressive Party and resulted in Merriman's agreeing to support the Government on condition that it undertook to institute a thorough enquiry into the administration of martial law. The alliance was short-lived, but it helped to clear the political atmosphere immediately after the war. Percy Molteno, who arrived in Cape Town in October 1902, reported that he found feeling had greatly improved. Moderate men had coalesced and personal relations between leading politicians had been restored. The Imperial authorities had adopted a most conciliatory attitude and were particularly polite to his brothers. He also commented upon the moderation of the Dutch which he found remarkable in view of all they had suffered. <sup>104</sup> The fact that the Boer leaders refrained from adopting an irreconcilable attitude did much to confound the conciliators' predictions of undying race hatred after the war. Their leaders' attitude was not an accurate reflection of the feelings of the Afrikaner people in general but helped to ease the tension and facilitated the task of reconstruction. The S.A.C.C. in England disbanded in November 1902 with the intention of resuming its work under a new title, possibly the South Africa Constitutional Committee, which its original members hoped would secure the support of all the leading Liberals in England. <sup>105</sup> Percy Molteno, however, reported that there seemed to be little enthusiasm for the idea at the Cape.

"It is rather difficult to get any opinion here on such a question. No one likes to admit the possibility of any interference from England in the internal concerns of this Colony so that they are rather inclined to pay no attention to what goes on in England". <sup>106</sup>

The idea of a constitutional committee to take the place of the S.A.C.C. never came to fruition.

The South African News, which reappeared on 20 August 1901, <sup>021</sup> faced the future hopefully despite indications that their old problems were still with

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104. M.P., P.A. Molteno to Mackarness, c. 23 Oct. 1902; P.A. Molteno to Capt. Sinclair, 23 Oct. 1902.

105. J.X.M.P., L. Courtney to Merriman, 14 Nov. 1902.

106. M.P., P.A. Molteno to Markarness, 3 Jan. 1903.

them. It announced that it accepted the annexation of the Republics as a fait accompli and that all Afrikaner aspirations were now contained within the bounds of the British Empire. It intended dealing

"with the future rather than with the past, and would strive to avoid raking over the embers of past strife that still glow beneath our feet ... Out of the welter of blood and misery the Afrikaner people have emerged, worthy, by common consent, to stand as fellow citizens of the proudest Empire in the world".

The conciliation party's aim in future would be to remove all distinctions between the European races in the country and to secure a free Parliament of a united South Africa. "The winter is over and gone: a political Spring is at hand". <sup>107</sup>

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In reviewing the activities of the conciliation party in the Cape Colony, several issues which require clarification present themselves. The first which comes to mind is the question of whether the conciliators, and the Schreiner ministry in particular, could not have made a stronger stand before the war. Their cause would obviously have been far better served by preventing a war than by trying to mitigate its effects after it had already broken out. The decision to leave the handling of the crisis in the hands of their leaders, however, sealed their fate. For Schreiner's anxiety to avoid a breach with Milner was one of the major considerations directing his actions. It was this which caused him to oppose any attempt to make Britain's policy towards the Transvaal a parliamentary issue at the Cape. Although dissenting voices remained muffled in the months preceding the war, Schreiner was severely criticised on this point when his lack of sympathy for the conciliation movement became apparent, and especially after the resignation of the ministry and his defection from the South African Party. Percy Molteno, exasperated by Schreiner's inaction, eventually condemned the ministry as "a mere set of miserable puppets", <sup>1</sup> and in May 1900 wrote to Schreiner:

"I cannot help regretting that the whole matter was not brought into a position of a constitutional struggle when your parliament met last year and had the opportunity of repudiating the interpretation put on things by the High Commissioner in his dispatch of May 4th. The ignorance here, even of members of parliament, is profound and a constitutional struggle then would have roused them to enquire what it was about - a war only raises emotions and delusions ... passion unseats reason". <sup>2</sup>

After the Prime Minister's resignation one of his disillusioned supporters maintained that if it had not been for his "neither-this-nor-that" policy there would have been no war. <sup>3</sup> It is, however, unjust to place all the blame for the failure of the policy of restraint solely on Schreiner's shoulders, for prominent men such as Hofmeyr and Sir Henry de Villiers shared his views. Merriman was one of the few who plainly stated his

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1. M.P., P.A. Molteno to C. Molteno, 4 May 1900.

2. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), P.A. Molteno to Schreiner, 17 May 1900.

3. South African News, 27 Oct. 1900.

dissent. In reflecting upon the events preceding the war, Merriman, in 1916, told the second Lord De Villiers that it was one of the few occasions on which he entirely differed from the Chief Justice.

"He was ... opposed to any discussion in our parliament, just before the outbreak of the war, of the threatening position. There I differed in toto. I always believed that a full discussion in our parliament and a moderate but firm motion, would have opened the eyes of the people in England not only to the facts themselves but to the way in which those facts were regarded by the bulk of our population. I pressed my view in the Cabinet with the only result of driving Schreiner to a pitch of exasperation. My only regret is that I did not take the bold course of resigning and thereafter moving a resolution as I did about the Charter. /After the Jameson Raid./

The whole efforts of the Progressives were bent on concealing the facts and pressing on the ill judged diplomacy that led to the war. They succeeded and we failed largely owing to the want of the one quality that is before all things necessary in statecraft - courage".<sup>4</sup>

Schreiner might have acted more boldly had he not underestimated the strength of his Government's position. In view of the fact that a Progressive ministry would not have been able to command a majority in the House of Assembly, his one fear was that the resignation of his Government would result in the suspension of the constitution. He was not aware of Chamberlain's opposition to so drastic a step and went in dread of a general rebellion in the Colony should such a measure be resorted to.<sup>5</sup> Schreiner was therefore determined to deal with the situation "as it stands" and, in rebutting Percy Molteno's accusation that he had failed to realise his responsibility towards the people of the Colony, pointed out, with some justification that

"by continuing so long in office, despite enormous external and internal difficulties, I have in great measure till today gained my simple object, which was, to the greatest extent possible, to save the Colony from devastation by war or the even worse consequences of general rebellion".<sup>6</sup>

In view of the dangers inherent in a vigorous policy, the Schreiner ministry should not be condemned too strongly for not having had the courage to challenge Milner at the outset. As the South African News point out when it later defended the government against its detractors, it was easy to be wise after the event.<sup>7</sup>

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4. J.H. de Villiers Papers, (S.A.L.), Merriman to Lord Percy de Villiers, 9 Jan. 1916.
  5. Van Heyningen, Milner and the Schreiner Ministry, p. 130.
  6. W.P.S.P., (S.A.L.), Schreiner to P.A. Molteno, 7 June 1900.
  7. South African News, 21 Sept. 1900.

The most perplexing aspect of the conciliation movement arises out of the question: what became of the conciliation committee established amidst such enthusiasm in Cape Town on 12 March 1900? To all appearances this should have been a strong and active committee for some of the staunchest and most respected conciliators, such as Andrew Murray, Mrs. Koopmans de Wet, Olive Schreiner, Albert Cartwright and the Molteno brothers lent it their support. In trying to trace the fate of the committee one is led entirely into the realm of supposition for after its first two meetings it was never mentioned again. Charles Molteno, who was chairman of the committee, only referred to it twice; the first time when he mentioned to Percy Molteno that they intended establishing such a body at the Cape and later in April 1900 when he referred to it in passing in a letter to Betty Molteno.<sup>8</sup> His apparent silence on the question might be due to the fact that many of his letters, especially for the period 4 April to 1 August 1900, are missing from the Molteno Papers. This however, does not account for the silence of the South African News, which was virtually synonymous with the committee. As the conciliators' chief aim was to give as much publicity as possible to their activities in order to reveal the strength of the movement, it is inconceivable that the committee's activities would have been allowed to pass without mention. Yet the South African News never referred to the conciliation committee again after having reported its foundation. On three occasions the treasurer acknowledged financial contributions to the committee,<sup>9</sup> which eventually amounted to £163-7-6, but no indication was ever given as to how the money was spent. It is possible that, on the committee becoming defunct, it was paid into one of the numerous relief funds, or it may have been absorbed in the fund for the People's Deputation.

The only interpretation which can be placed upon this apparent conspiracy of silence, is that the committee, for some reason or another failed to function, but that the conciliators refrained from publicising the fact for fear of appearing ridiculous in the eyes of their opponents. Numerous reasons can be advanced for the failure of the committee, but there can be no certainty as to their validity. The most obvious explanation is that the committee did not receive adequate support. This was

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8. M.P., C. Molteno to P.A. Molteno, 8 March 1900; M.P.C., C. Molteno to Betty Molteno, 5 April 1900.

9. South African News, 29 March 1900, 18 April 1900, 23 May 1900.

certainly so with regard to the English-speaking colonists. The majority of them refused to support the movement because they disagreed with its policy. It is also possible that prospective adherents, while deprecating the drastic nature of the British Government's action, felt secretly relieved that the annexation of the Republics had finally removed the greatest obstacle to a South African Union. Like Richard Solomon they tended to argue that the wisest course was to accept the facts of the case and to try and make the best of the situation. In the circumstances they could not have felt any genuine sympathy for the conciliation committee's unrelenting opposition to the annexation of the Republics, which might account for their failure to support the movement. As it cannot be denied that, although the movement aimed at conciliation, its activities also stimulated the opposition, so that it aggravated the inflamed state of public opinion, this was another circumstance which might have alienated those who held moderate views. Schreiner was one of those who believed that the movement did more harm than good. The treasurer's last report indicates that the committee was still in existence on 23 May 1900 so that Hargrove's departure in June might have deprived it of an impetus after which it sank into oblivion. Conversely, the revelation of his indiscretions might have embarrassed the movement to such an extent that the committee preferred to put a silent and unobtrusive end to its activities. Another potent reason for its failure might have been the belief by many of the colonists that the battle it was fighting was such a hopeless one that there was no point in continuing its activities. There were several indications that many persons reasoned along these lines. At the end of March 1900 Ons Land published a letter from an embittered and disillusioned correspondent. In referring to the proposal that a deputation be sent to present the conciliation party's case to the people of England he said:

"Een beroep op het Engelsche volk is niets anders as een griypen naar een armzaligen stroohalm; het is boter aan de galg; het is - verskoon de uitdrukking - spotternij met onze eigenen hulpeloze machteloosheid". 10

In enumerating the difficulties being experienced by the movement the South African News also complained that many people, when asked to sign the People's Petition or to endorse the resolutions of the conciliation committee, asked " ... what is the use with the British people in the

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10. Ons Land, 29 March 1900.

mood they are ... ".<sup>11</sup> The committee's failure must also have been due to lack of financial support. The total of £163 raised in two months does not indicate an overwhelming response. In remarking on the scarcity of money the South African News pointed out that the numerous relief funds had made heavy demands upon the colonists who had responded most generously.<sup>12</sup> T.P. Theron later condemned the Worcester Congress as a waste of money which could have been put to better use in rendering assistance to the destitute women and children in the Republics. It is possible that those who sympathised with the movement but regarded it as a hopeless venture, might have preferred to make donations to the relief funds which would have put their money to better use. There is probably a perfectly simple explanation for the discontinuance of the committee's activities, but in the absence of reliable facts the matter remains an enigma.

Whatever the fate of the committee might have been, almost all its members were extremely active in their individual capacities. The women, including Olive Schreiner at Hanover, and several of the men, especially C.P. Schultz, were actively involved in relief work; the legal wing assisted victims of martial law; the churchmen worked amongst the Boer prisoners of war and the Rev. C. Morgan ministered to the political prisoners at Tokai; and the journalists, and also Dr. Kolbe carried on their protest through the medium of the press. Others, like Merriman and Sauer, who sympathised with the movement but did not join the committee because of their involvement in politics and their unfortunate entanglement with Hargrove, contributed their share by going to England to contend for the cause in the political arena. The only serious consequence of the failure of the committee was that the movement lacked strong central direction which might have enabled it to operate more effectively. The failure of Cartwright's proposed "printer's ink campaign" was not so serious for, unlike the S.A.C.C., the Cape conciliators did not operate in conditions where such a campaign could have had fruitful results. In Britain many people tended to support the war out of ignorance of the true facts of the situation and a well-organised publicity campaign stood a chance of winning converts. In South Africa the war party, however, sinned against the light for they were in a better position to receive accurate information. A printer's ink campaign was therefore unlikely to have had much effect.

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11. South African News, 20 April 1900.

12. Ibid.

In conclusion it has to be considered how much the conciliation movement at the Cape really achieved. When considering the results of their efforts during the war the temptation arises to conclude that they achieved very little although there were indications that the Afrikaner people appreciated the stand of individual conciliators. The same disillusioned correspondent who remarked upon the "hulpeloze machteloosheid" of his people in the columns of Ons Land also maintained:

"Ik vertrouw dat dan ook de namen van de heeren Cartwright ... Molteno, Hannah (Natal), Hargrove en andere Engelsche die voor recht en waarheid in de bres hebben gesprongen, toch ter gedachtenis en herinnering voor het nageslacht bewaard zullen blijven". 13

At the Worcester Congress De Vos said much the same thing about the members of the conciliation party in England. After Merriman's valiant struggle during the parliamentary session of 1900 the Rev. S.P. Helm paid him this sincere tribute:

"Ever since parliament met and you took such a decided stand for our poor, despised, crushed people, I felt thankful that such men as yourself and Mr. Sauer, who have nothing to gain by your advocacy of our cause, have cast in your lot with us. Your friends must naturally belong mostly to the English section of society. It will be no wonder if many are estranged, many look askance at the pro-Boer Englishmen. There was so much to lose and so little to gain by taking your stand on our side. From our Dutch members we expected it; there is no merit in their being faithful.

But have you really gained nothing? I am sure that I, an obscure minister and missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church though I be, am expressing the feelings of thousands of my countrymen when I say you have gained the deep gratitude and respect of our people. I, and many with me, shall look back on these years of sorrow and despair with deep pain; but it will be mingled with affection and gratitude to the man who so earnestly, so unselfishly pleaded our cause". 14

It is, however, doubtful whether the appreciation of the stance of many individuals really coloured the attitude of the Afrikaner people towards the British nation as a whole. The resentment aroused by the war was too deep-rooted for that.

The real practical outcome of the conciliation party's work lay in the future, as was pointed out by Dr Kolbe in an article in the South African News, discussing the future of the national cause and

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13. Ons Land, 29 March 1900.

14. Lewsen, Merriman Correspondence, v. iii, p. 244.

revealing a strong awareness of a separate South African identity.<sup>15</sup> The war caused the antagonism, which had existed between the two language groups, to reach an unprecedented height. Although the conciliation movement made little impact upon it at the time, the very fact that it existed prevented the rift between English and Dutch from becoming complete. The conciliators, through their co-operation with their counterparts in England, acted as a link between the Afrikaner people and their sympathisers in Britain whose attitude was to be of great significance in the future. One of his Dutch correspondents at the Cape wrote to Percy Molteno, pouring out his grievences against the imperialist party and concluded by expressing the hope that he would receive a reply in order to show his neighbours that there were Englishmen who sympathised with the Dutch.<sup>16</sup> In rounding off his review of the Cape Colony during the war Strydom expresses the opinion:

"Dat rasseversoening nā al die gebeurtenisse nog wel 'n kans gehad het, is myns insiens enkel daaraan te danke dat die ganse Engelse volk nie teen die Afrikaner gekant was nie. Ek is daarvan oortuig dat Campbell-Bannerman en sy Liberale Party in Engeland, en Merriman, die Molteno broers, Cartwright, Burton, Olive Schreiner en haar eggenoot en die ander Engelssprekendes in Suid-Afrika die grondslag gelê het vir rasseversoening. Sonder hulle sou dit ondenkbaar gewees het dat hierdie geslag van Hollandssprekendes sou kon vergewe het".<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, although the conciliators' achievements were meagre at the time, they helped to lay the foundations for a future reconciliation of the white races and some had the satisfaction of seeing their labours bear fruit.

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15. South African News, 14 April 1900.

16. M.P., L.M. Ferreira to P.A. Molteno, 29 June 1900.

17. Strydom, Kaapland en die Oorlog, pp. 263-264.

NOTE ON SOURCES

As the Moltenos played a central role in the conciliation movement the P.A. Molteno Papers were my most important source of information. The collection, however, proved something of a disappointment as many of Charles Molteno's letters are missing. However, I was able to supplement the Molteno Papers with the Murray Parker Collection which contains a great deal of valuable material. Some of the Molteno brothers' letters are in this collection which also contains Caroline Murray's correspondence as well as that between Alice Greene and Betty Molteno and also the latter and Olive Schreiner. The Murray Parker Collection also contains the only letters of Albert Cartwright which I have been able to trace. These documents also shed interesting light on the activities of the women supporters of the conciliation movement, as do the C.C. de Villiers Papers, which were a valuable and unexpected find.

Olive Schreiner's papers are at present scattered amongst various collections in the Jagger Library, but the intention is to combine them into a single collection. I have therefore cited her correspondence as Olive Schreiner Papers, except for those papers which are in the W.P. Schreiner collection and which will remain there.

The only section of the W.P. Schreiner Papers in the Jagger Library which was of any interest to me, was that relating to the Hargrove affair. The Schreiner Papers in the South African Library, however, were more useful and Miss Van Heyningen's thesis The Relations between Sir Alfred Milner and W.P. Schreiner's Ministry, 1898-1900, was invaluable in providing an insight into the complex problems confronting the Cape ministry during the war.

Apart from the Molteno Papers, the Merriman Papers were the other major source which I consulted, and P. Lewsen's volumes proved a mine of information on numerous details.

The Hofmeyr Papers were of peripheral importance, except for the Minute Books of the Relief Committee which provided valuable additional information on various aspects of the assistance rendered to the

Republicans. The two smaller collections, the Worcester Volkskongres Papers and the A. Moorrees Papers yielded valuable additional information on the People's Deputation.

In view of the large gaps in the Molteno Papers, I relied heavily on the South African News with which the Moltenos were intimately associated and which was a reliable index to their opinions. This newspaper was also invaluable in that it provided a running commentary on the major events of the period as seen through the eyes of the conciliation party.

S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner's Land of Free Speech was one of the printed sources which proved most useful, as there is very little other information available on his activities in England. The volume of Rose Innes Correspondence, edited by Harrison M. Wright, contains much valuable information and obviated the need to cite the Innes Papers.

Mr. Davey also kindly allowed me to read two draft chapters of his work based on sources to which I have not had access and which therefore provided interesting new information on the pro-Boer organisations in England and the various Cape deputations which visited Britain.

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