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JOHN WILLIAM JAGGER

AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS

1921 - 1924

An extended essay in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the B.A. (Hons) Degree

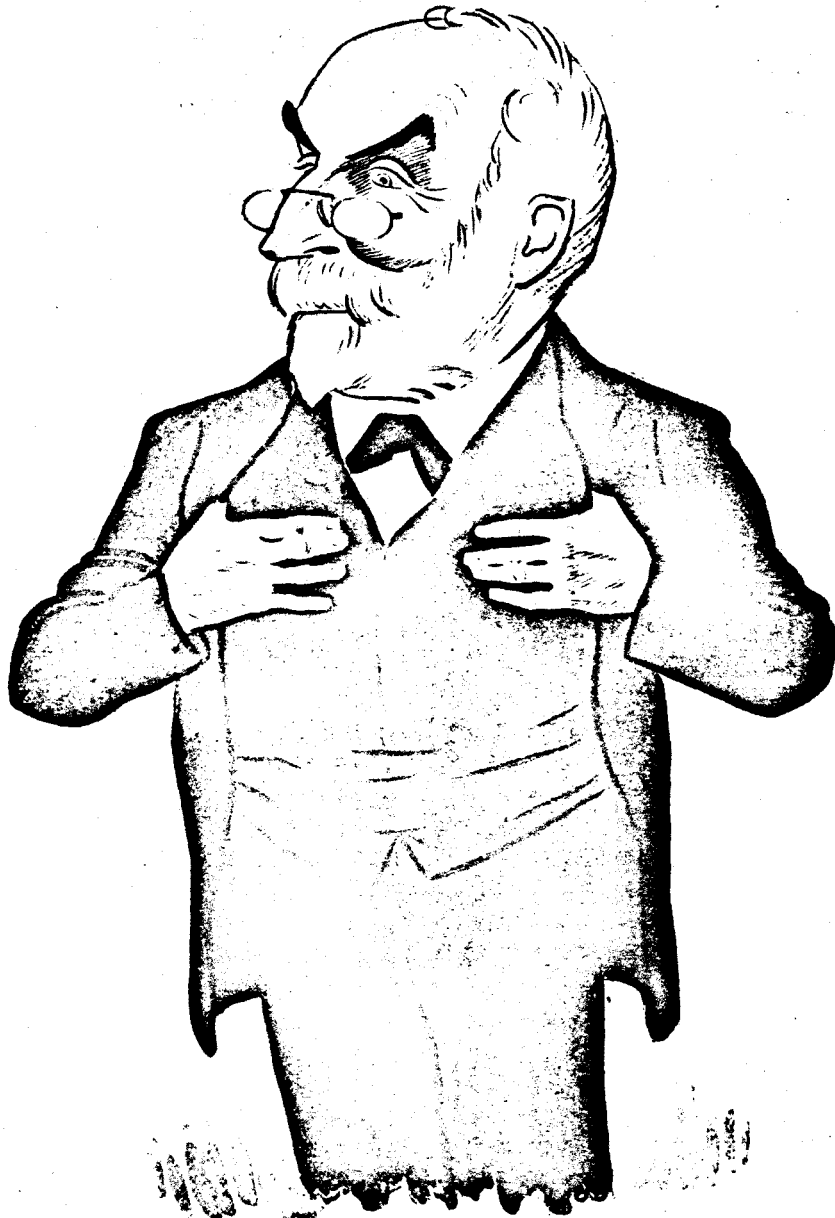
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James Bissett: University of Cape Town
September, 1973

"A remarkable man this John William Jagger, merchant prince, ex-Minister, economist, farmer, statesman, manufacturer, and politician in spite of himself."

L.E. Neane (1929)

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Quip — 1928

C O N T E N T S

<u>PREFACE</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
<u>CHAPTER I</u>	The First Stormy Months	1
<u>CHAPTER II</u>	Negotiations and Delegations	18
<u>CHAPTER III</u>	Railway Finances and Labour Relations	38
<u>CHAPTER IV</u>	Vilification for Jagger : Table Bay Harbour, 1921-1924	63
<u>CHAPTER V</u>	Jagger's Thorny Problems : A Miscellany.	75
<u>CHAPTER VI</u>	A Scandal for Jagger.	88
<u>CHAPTER VII</u>	Conclusion : The Skull Beneath the Skin.	99

BIBLIOGRAPHY NOTE

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDICES:

1. Gross earnings and total expenditure, 31.3.17 - 30.6.21.
2. Fluctuations in earnings and expenditure (railways).
3. Railway revenue, 1921-22.
4. Railway revenue, 1922-23.
5. Railway revenue, 1923-24.
6. Cost of living, 1914 - June, 1921.
7. Black and white labour on the railways, 1917-1924.
8. (1) Expenditure for equipment and improvement, Table Bay, 1911-1922.
(2) Tonnage handled at Table Bay, 1909-1921.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

J.W.Jagger ("Quip").
"Every pig has his day"
"Uncoupling"
"Jag-ur the Son of A-Gun Refuseth to Recognise
the Nurahs"
"Smuts' White South Africa"
"The Deficit Machine - Working the Oracle"
"Dock Improvements"
"Jaggerisms"
"The Duettists"
"Die Pot en Ketel"

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P R E F A C E.

The Major problems facing me during both the research and the writing of this essay were the material available and the nature of the subject. Initially, both the necessary material and Jagger's character and role as Minister of Railways seemed remarkably elusive. The nature of the material available tended to enforce a reliance on Jagger's actions in parliament and the crises which he faced on that somewhat isolated stage, and on the gleanings from an almost exclusively partisan press. Jagger himself was a humourless, dry and lonely man whose private life remained his own business. His public career was the common story of the "boy with brains" who "did well in the Colonies". Another problem rises out of the fact that Jagger was appointed Minister of Railways and Harbours, a portfolio as dry as his personality.

These factors go a long way towards explaining the generally uncontroversial nature of the material presented in this essay. Any dullness and related deficiencies are, of course, entirely the fault of the writer. It could be asked of what possible significance grain elevators, harbour extensions and railway deficits are. It is unlikely that any of these features will ever be considered to be of major significance to the history of South Africa in the twentieth century. In fact it could never really be said that J.W.Jagger was of major significance to South African history. What is presented here, however, be it dry statistics or seemingly absurd scandals about grain elevators or harbour extensions, is what Jagger himself

found compelling. These aspects of South African life, the economic aspects, are where Jagger found fulfilment. To many this may seem incomprehensible, but this was Jagger's life. Life, after all, is at the core of history and it is only by immersing ourselves in the past, as historians, that we can hope to understand the present. Thus Jagger's life - albeit a dry and humourless life - is history; it lives; it is the "stuff of which dreams are made". Statistics and ways and means of economising comprise the essence of both Jagger's term of office as Minister of Railways and Harbours, and in fact of his entire life. The making of money, the best ways of saving it, and the best ways of spending it for the good of the nation comprise the essence of his career.

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CHAPTER I

THE FIRST STORMY MONTHS

J.W. Jagger was one of the leading ex-Unionists, together with Sir Thomas Smartt and Patrick Duncan, brought into Smuts' cabinet on March 10, 1921. Smuts made him his Minister of Railways and Harbours - a task which was openly acknowledged as an extremely formidable one. The story has often been told that Smuts took Jagger into the cabinet and gave him express instructions to remedy the railway finances in any way he could without fear of interference from Smuts. There is however no actual documentary evidence of this. It is to Jagger's credit that he managed to fill this office with aplomb. Yet the years of Smuts' second government saw Jagger faced with numerous crises, not all of which were competently handled. This was partly the result of the very trying economic situation at the time.

After a brief post-war boom of inflationary expansion, prices of produce fell very seriously in 1920 and there was a world-wide depression in trade which adversely affected the South African economy. Credit was shortened and unemployment figures rose sharply and this, working in conjunction with factors such as vastly increased social mobility, falling profits and labour unrest, gave rise to widespread discontent. The whole financial situation was in fact extremely grave. "The general condition of the country since the war was bad. Agriculture, with low and fluctuating prices, offered little security and secondary industry was in its infancy as yet. The mainstay of the country's economic

prosperity was the goldmining industry and that was being threatened by abnormal post-war conditions."⁽¹⁾ The gold price "fell from 130 shillings in February, 1920 to 95 shillings in December, 1921. Gold production decreased from 8,332,000 fine oz. in 1919 to 8,129,000 in 1921, and production costs rose from 22/11d per ton of ore in 1919 to 25/8d in 1921, ultimately forcing some of the low grade mines to close down."⁽²⁾ Henry Burton, Minister of Finance, in his Budget Speech of April 15, 1921 "unfolded a Budget which was a tale of falling revenue and increased taxation."⁽³⁾

The financial situation on the South African Railways and Harbours when Jagger became Minister was equally serious. On Jagger's entry into the Cabinet the Cape Times commented "It is quite certain that Mr. Jagger, in his new capacity as Minister of Railways and Harbours, will find that he has not fallen on a bed of roses The finances of the railways are in an exceedingly anxious position today, and it will require all the business acumen and the financial knowledge which are so peculiarly Mr. Jagger's attributes to set them right."⁽⁴⁾ And Jagger himself commented, while delivering the 1921 Railway Budget, that the financial position of the Railways was one of grave concern, and nothing but a determined effort to achieve economy would relieve the position. "It must be remembered that the Railway

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- (1) D.W.Kruger: The Making of a Nation, a History of the Union of South Africa, 1910-1961. (Johannesburg, 1969) p.118.
- (2) B.J.Liebenberg: "The Union of South Africa up to the Statute of Westminster, 1910-1921" in C.F.J.Muller (ed) 500 Years : A History of South Africa (Pretoria, 1969, pp 355-6;
- (3) Cape Times: 16.4.21. See also Debates of the House of Assembly of the Union of South Africa as Reported in the Cape Times, 16.4.21, pp 80-87.
- (4) Cape Times: 17.3.21.

Administration has only two means of balancing revenue and expenditure and those are, firstly, increased rates and fares, and secondly, reducing working costs. As regards the first, this has been used to almost the fullest extent further increases, except perhaps on a few lines, can only result in putting a check on production and trade, and on travelling."⁽⁵⁾ At the end of the previous financial year (31st March, 1920) the accumulated deficit on the Railways and Harbours had been £1,549,000.⁽⁶⁾ In fact the railways had been running at a loss for five years (see Appendix 1), with the deficit becoming larger and larger. At the same time, this monetary imbroglio was exacerbated by a progressively rapid increase in expenditure and rise in working costs, which in turn led to an alarming decline in traffic. Between 1909 and 1920-21 railway earnings increased by 126 per cent while expenditure during the same period increased by 229 per cent. The actual costs of working the railways were at least 75 per cent higher than in 1913-1914.⁽⁷⁾

While moving that the House of Assembly go into Committee on the Estimates of Additional Expenditure to be defrayed from the Railways and Harbours Revenue and Loan Funds, Jagger pointed out that the railways were in their present position, "notwithstanding the fact that we have increased the rates and fares not less than four times during the last seventeen months. The Railways ran at a loss from May to October, 1919, but in November rates and fares were increased in the hope of bringing in extra revenue of

(5) Debates, 19.4.21, p.91, cols. 2 - 3
 (6) Ibid 22.3.21, p.21, col. 1.
 (7) Ibid 21.1.23, p.30, col. 3.

£1,750,000.⁽⁸⁾ In February and March, 1920, there was again a heavy loss. Rates and fares were thus again increased on April 22 to bring in £1,404,000, but in May and June there were losses of over £280,000 - which led to a further increase in rates on July 12.⁽⁹⁾ This increase did not even produce a profit - it merely reduced the loss for July. On October 3 there was a "general and fairly considerable" increase in rates and fares which brought in profits for the next three months, but from February onwards there was again a loss. And on March 10 Jagger was appointed to the Cabinet as Minister of Railways and Harbours - at a time when the railways, in spite of the substantially increased rates outlined above, which had been raised to the tune of £7,720,000⁽¹⁰⁾, were run at a very heavy loss.

In the House of Assembly on March 21, Jagger pointed out that the major increases in expenditure came from the increased cost of living allowances, extensions of the eight-hour day, increases in the price of coal, the additional number of trains being run, the vastly increased cost of materials and of running the railways, and the growth of the necessity for heavy repairs to rolling stock.⁽¹¹⁾ Gross expenditure on the railways increased by 96 per cent between 1914 and 1920-21. In addition it was found to be necessary to reduce the rates charged on coal in order to retain the coal bunkering and export trade, incurring a loss in revenue of £850,000, a move which made Jagger unpopular from the start of

(8) Debates, 22.3.21, p.21, cols. 1 - 2

(9) Bulletin of the General Manager of the South African Railways and Harbours, No. 24, 1921, p. 135.

(10) Debates, 17.5.21, p.160, col. 1.

(11) Ibid 22.3.21, p.21, col. 2. See also Cape Times 19.3.21.

his ministerial career. Yet he was in most ways the sort of man who would have inevitably made an unpopular cabinet minister.

Jagger had, throughout his parliamentary career, the reputation and was known by all and sundry as the self-appointed "watchdog of the public purse"⁽¹²⁾ and as the terror of the various Ministers of Finance. He was particularly well-known, for example, for his fierce opposition to his own party's treasurer, Sir Edgar Walton, in Jameson's Ministry of 1904-1908.⁽¹³⁾ After his elevation to the Cabinet C.T.M. Wilcocks (Nat. Winburg) even expressed his regret that the House of Assembly would in future have to do without the Minister's trenchant criticism of the Government's financial policy.⁽¹⁴⁾ To put it mildly, Jagger was never a "good party man".

In his first major speech in Parliament as Minister of Railways, Jagger very frankly stated the alarming state of railway finances and said that the Railways had "just got to about the end of the tether in the matter of the increase of rates and fares and the prospects of business before the country at the present time are, to put it mildly, just the reverse of bright I put it to this House that it is one's first duty to make the railways pay their way, to make revenue meet expenditure, and not only to do that, but also to make provision to wipe out this large accumulated deficit"⁽¹⁵⁾ He then set out to discover ways and means of making the railways "pay their way".

(12) Cited by P.F. van der Schyff: "John William Jagger" in W.J. de Kock (ed), Dictionary of South African Biography, Vol.1 (Cape Town, 1968), p.408.

(13) L.E. Neame. Some South African Politicians (Cape Town), (1929), p.102.

(14) Debates, 22.3.21, p.22, cols 1 - 2.

(15) Ibid 22.3.21, p.21, col. 2.

The first steps were to implement the more obvious economies such as savings on new works and open lines, as well as on rolling stock and sleepers. During the Assembly debate on the Estimates of Additional Expenditure to be defrayed from Railways and Harbours Revenue and Loan Funds, numerous speakers criticised previous railway policy and some, such as Thomas Boydell (Labour, Durban Greyville), suggested that the railway deficit be paid out of general revenue. But this was not possible, as Jagger pointed out in his reply⁽¹⁶⁾, since it had been agreed at the time of Union to keep revenue accounts and railway accounts separate. In the same debate emerged one of the criticisms which was used ad nauseam during the years 1921-4 - that of the railways not being run on business principles. This criticism derived from Section 127 of the South Africa Act, part of which stated that "the railways, ports and harbours of the Union shall be administered on business principles, due regard being had to agricultural and industrial development within the Union and promotion, by means of cheap transport, of the settlement of an agricultural and industrial population in the inland portions of all provinces of the Union."⁽¹⁷⁾

It was even suggested that Jagger himself, as a great businessman was responsible for this particular clause in the Act of Union - by Sir William MacIntosh (S.A.P. Port Elizabeth, South West)⁽¹⁸⁾ There is, however, no real evidence for this assertion. Frankel interprets this section

(16) Debates, 22.3.21, p.23, col. 1.

(17) H.J.May: The South African Constitution, (Cape Town, 1949), p. 87.

(18) Debates, 10.5.21, p.141, col. 2.

as making it clear that the Railways Administration should be guided by commercial principles and not the considerations which influence the policy of a department of state. He goes on to say that the "direction of railway expenditure has been frequently determined in accordance with political rather than with economic or railway considerations".⁽¹⁹⁾ Ever since 1910 there had been controversy as to what exactly was meant by "business principles", the particular Minister of Railways and Harbours always being guilty of "unbusinesslike principles" as far as his Opposition was concerned. The end result, however, was that the railways accounts were kept separate from the general revenue accounts.

In a sense, however, this was a separation on paper only. The Railways were headed by a Cabinet Minister who consequently "assumed the function of a representative of the financial interests of the central government rather than those of the head of a great industrial enterprise performing a public service".⁽²⁰⁾ This factor together with that of Jagger's own personality - in his narrow attitude to financial undertakings - made the whole financial situation on the railways more complex and difficult to cope with, and added greatly to the unpopularity of the Railways Administration. Jagger was often criticised, for instance, for running the railways "like one of his soft goods department stores and ignoring the human factor".⁽²¹⁾

While introducing his Railway Budget on April 19, 1921, Jagger once again emphasised the difficult situation

(19) S.H.Frankel: The Railway Policy of South Africa, An Analysis of the Effects of Railway Rates, Finance and Management on the Economic Development of the Union, (Johannesburg, 1928), p.11.

(20) Ibid, pp.103-104.

(21) Boydell in the Cape Times, 13.8.21.

"Every pig has his day!"



FARMER JAGGER: I breed prize Pigs, but not this kind!

[The Railway Budget discloses Mr. Jagger's intention of fighting the High Cost of Living.]

[Cape Times 23.4.21]

in which the Railways found itself. He also reiterated what he termed "further causes for anxiety" - "the advance in rates of pay of 8d per day to the artisans granted in January, 1921, further advances in the rate of local allowances to the whole of the staff, and finally on February 7 and March 14, reductions in the rates on bunker coal which are estimated to involve the surrender of £1,000,000 per annum".⁽²²⁾ The increase in salaries, for example, between 1911-1912 and 1920-1921 was £10,538,000 or a 181 per cent increase - from £5,800,000 to £16,400,000.⁽²³⁾ In addition the original estimated expenditure for the year was exceeded in almost every vote, an excess which totalled £2,185,000.⁽²⁴⁾ To add to all this of course was the accumulated deficit at March 31, 1920 of £1,549,000. Jagger then went on to outline some of the steps which he hoped to take in order to reduce expenditure and generally economise on the South African Railways. In the few months since he had become Minister of Railways there had been widespread speculation as to the sort of action which Jagger would take to "right" the railways finances. Thus we find the Rand Daily Mail commenting that "..... it seems probable that the real solvent of the financial situation on the railways is to be found in a revision of the eight-hour day system, but to ensure its application on a reasonable basis"⁽²⁵⁾ Also at this time many speakers in parliament expressed the hope that the Minister of Railways would make no attacks on the war bonus⁽²⁶⁾

(22) Debates, 19.4.21, p.88, col. 2.

(23) Bulletin of the General Manager, No. 24, p.137.

(24) Debates, 19.4.21, p.89, col. 1.

(25) Rand Daily Mail, 12.3.21.

(26) The war bonus or cost of living allowance was granted to both railway employees and public servants during the war to compensate for the vast rise in the cost of living.

or the hours of work, as, for example, Boydell and Havenga (Nat. Fauresmith) did.⁽²⁷⁾

In his Budget speech Jagger announced that he hoped to effect economies by reducing the cost of living allowance; reducing the number of trains owing to falling off in passengers, goods and coal traffic; and reducing the repairs and maintenance of buildings and of overtime amongst the running staff.⁽²⁸⁾ The main economy proposed by Jagger was to be the gradual abolition of the abnormal cost of living allowance, the process of reduction to be applied being the same as that in the general government service announced by Burton in his Budget speech on April 15 - i.e. reductions by 25 per cent at the end of every three months, till at the end of the financial year the allowance would disappear altogether.⁽²⁹⁾ In this way Jagger hoped to save £1,785,000. He justified his action in this regard by his assertion that the cost of living had fallen. This was quite true (see Appendix Six), yet this particular step was to earn Jagger (and the Smuts government) more hatred - I use the word advisedly - than any other during the time in which he was Minister of Railways and Harbours. It led to mass protests all over the country - for example in Pretoria and Durban on April 27.⁽³⁰⁾ It has in fact been asserted that this measure alienated, politically, the bulk of the rank and file of railway workers in South Africa.⁽³¹⁾ Yet Jagger was supported by the press on this question. The Cape Argus,

(27) Debates, 22.3.21, p.23, col. 1.

(28) Ibid 19.4.21, p.90, col. 2.

(29) Ibid 14.4.21, p.91, col. 3 and 16.4.21, p.83, col.1.

(30) Cape Times, 28.4.21.

(31) Oral Evidence - H.G.Ashworth, Esq.

for example, commented that there were no alternatives, unless, indeed, the Government was to adopt the principle of wholesale retrenchment which would only add fuel to the fire of unemployment.⁽³²⁾ The Cape Times on the other hand qualified its approval of "a measure justifiable in the present circumstances of the country and in the light of the Budget scheme as a whole, but unjustified if it were to be synchronised with measures that would in themselves raise the cost of living".⁽³³⁾ Jagger himself later justified this step by arguing that, if they took away the cost of living allowance, the wages of the men would still be 33 per cent above what they had been in 1914, while the cost of living was only about 23 per cent higher than in 1914.⁽³⁴⁾ By September, 1922, according to Carr, Assistant General Manager of the Railways, this measure had reduced railway expenditure by three and three-quarter million sterling.⁽³⁵⁾

The Railway Budget debate was a fairly stormy one and Jagger was attacked on many counts. The major issue remained, however, the reduction in the cost of living allowance. It was again Boydell and Havenga who were the most trenchant critics of Jagger's policy. The former in fact accused Jagger of merely finding excuses to "take away £1,800,000 from our railways and harbours servants".⁽³⁶⁾ Jagger was also strongly criticised by Arthur Barlow (Lab. Bloemfontein North), for introducing this measure. He warned Jagger that any attack on the eight-hour day after this, would bring trouble as "it was already being thought by

(32) Cape Argus, 19.4.21.

(33) Cape Times, 2.5.21.

(34) Debates, 16.3.22, p.66, col. 3.

(35) Cape Times, 4.9.22.

(36) Debates, 7.5.21, p.139, col. 1.

railwaymen that there was an attack on labour".⁽³⁷⁾ Sir Abe Bailey (S.A.P., Krugersdorp), surprisingly, was also very critical. He said that after hearing Jagger's speech one felt "..... that having lived under Table Mountain (Jagger) had a pinched view of the future of South Africa. The Minister had no confidence in the future and did not take a broad enough view"⁽³⁸⁾

These comments are important in that they provide a view of some of Jagger's worst faults, namely, his narrow outlook, both politically and economically, and also his rigid autocratic attitude towards subordinates. Jagger has often been praised, quite rightly, for his remarkable aptitude as a businessman but even in this sphere his vision remained a narrow one; "he had a very limited outlook on commercial matters, an attitude which resulted in his being 'penny wise, pound foolish'"⁽³⁹⁾ An excellent example of this shortsightedness is provided by Jagger's strong opposition to the establishment of Iscor in 1928. "He felt that in its interests protective tariffs would have to be established and according to his views (on Free Trade and Protection), that would be a bad thing for the country as a whole."⁽⁴⁰⁾ Jagger was also a very brusque and forthright man, while in the eyes of his terrified employees he was a true martinet. His impulsiveness and restless nervous energy pulsed through his whole being and he always expected his employees to work as hard as he did. "His impetuosity made Jagger impatient and brusque, autocratic and overbearing. He seemed quite

(37) Debates, 14.5.21, p. 155, col. 3.

(38) Ibid 10.5.21, p. 142, cols. 1, 2.

(39) Oral Evidence - H.G.Ashworth, Esq.
and R.F.M.Immelman: "Jagger - Man of Iron, Man of Action - An objective study in Biography",
The Bulletin, Special Jubilee Issue, May, 1958,
V. IV, No. 1, p. 33.

(40) R.F.M.Immelman Files.

insensible of hurting people's feelings by walking roughshod over them most people were consequently terrified of Jagger, including the majority of his staff Working for him was not easy. He ruled his staff with a rod of iron. In fact he was a representative of the old Victorian laissez-faire tradition. He did not allow men under him much room for initiative His attitude to his employees was the Victorian paternalistic one [with] himself as the owner - manager keeping his finger on everything."⁽⁴¹⁾

It is quite possible, economically, that the Cape Argus was correct in saying that Jagger had no alternative to reducing the cost of living allowance (other than retrenchment), but the fact remains that Jagger introduced this measure at a difficult time in a roughshod, autocratic manner which was likely to cause resentment. "Jagger thought he was running a department store rather than the great national concern that it was."⁽⁴²⁾ Many parliamentarians also expressed this criticism - such as Saunders (S.A.P. Natal Coast), who "hoped that the Minister would look at the railways not merely from the point of view of a merchant trading in business, but would take the broad view that the railways were the greatest factor in the general development of the country".⁽⁴³⁾ The unfortunate aspect of this attitude of Jagger's was that, in terms of political tactics, it laid him open to widespread criticism. Waterston (Lab., Brakpan), for example, criticised his over-emphasis on the spirit of "big business" and suggested that the consideration should be on the supplying of human needs, not the making of human profits.⁽⁴⁴⁾ This was, however, probably making Jagger into rather more of an

(41) Immelman, The Bulletin, 1958, p. 33.

(42) Immelman Files.

(43) Debates, 12.5.21, p. 149, col. 1.

(44) Ibid 1.4.21, p.43, col. 1.

ogre than he actually was. The important point is that his short-sighted actions laid him open to this sort of attack. At the annual meeting of the Executive Council of the N.U.R.A.H.S., for example, a resolution was sent to Jagger which stated that railways and harbours servants would be prepared "to take drastic measures in order to protect themselves from the predatory operations of certain sections of the community that are apparently disposed to exploit the national revenues to their own particular advantage"⁽⁴⁵⁾ In his reply to the Budget Debate Jagger defended the reduction of the cost of living allowance but did not make as strong a case for his actions as was probably necessary at the time. He based his defence on his estimates that, if the cost of living allowance to the railway employees was not taken off, the railways alone would have a deficit in the current year of £2,400,000.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Something obviously had to be done about the finances, but Jagger should have been far more circumspect in his economies. It would appear that even as a cabinet minister he was oblivious to the reactions he caused, particularly if they were antagonistic.

Another important issue with which Jagger had to contend in his first few months as Minister of Railways and Harbours was that of electrification, about which Jagger himself was admirably non-committal.⁽⁴⁷⁾ There was a strong desire on the part of the "business interests" that the Cape Peninsula and the Durban-Maritzburg lines be electrified. This was opposed by the National Party, who felt that railway extension on the platteland was of greater importance.

(45) Cape Times, 17.5.21.

(46) Debates, 17.5.21, p. 159, col. 1.

(47) Stanford Papers - D.50, Diary 31.3.21, p.90.

Stanford, for example, discusses Smuts' promises of railway extension in such a way as to lead one to conclude that by December, 1921 the issue had become quite a sore one.⁽⁴⁸⁾ In 1920 two million pounds had been set aside for the electrification of the railways though the scheme had not as yet been implemented. Jagger mentioned the possibility of postponing the scheme on account of the financial position, and at the same time asserted that "our very first consideration as a Railway department should be railway extension".⁽⁴⁹⁾ Yet, as the Rand Daily Mail pointed out, "with so serious a deficit against them it is not surprising that the government has decided, with the rate of interest at its present abnormally high figure to postpone or at least to curtail its railway construction programme for another twelve months"⁽⁵⁰⁾, a postponement announced during the introduction of the Budget debate on April 19.⁽⁵¹⁾ Thus neither railway extensions nor electrification schemes were implemented in 1921, earning Jagger the animosity of both the urban and rural interests. In fact between 1920 and 1924 only 233 miles of railways were constructed in South Africa.⁽⁵²⁾ This particular issue caused much dissension between Jagger and Sir William Hoy, the latter being of the opinion that "South Africa was in need of railways in an extended way".⁽⁵³⁾ On the question of electrification Frankel is highly critical of Jagger, and, more particularly, of the railways financial

(48) Stanford Papers, D.50, Diary 23.12.21, p. 357

(49) Debates, 1.4.21, p.43.

(50) Rand Daily Mail, 23.3.21 and Cape Times, 17.3.21.

(51) Debates, 19.4.21, p.89, col. 2.

(52) M.H. de Kock: Selected Subjects in the Economic History of South Africa, (Cape Town, 1924) p.351.

(53) Cape Times, 21.10.21, and A.P.Cartwright: "Sir William Hoy" in South Africa's Hall of Fame, (Cape Town and Johannesburg), p.72.

system where it was possible "for one man, not necessarily a railways expert, to decide on millions of railways expenditure within a few weeks, without any consultation with the Railway Board or the General Manager or statement of any reason for his actions".⁽⁵⁴⁾

The eight-hour day for railways employees had been introduced in May, 1919⁽⁵⁵⁾ but its universal application in South Africa was unsatisfactory in many respects. In the larger workshops and in the big towns the eight-hour day system worked towards efficiency and productiveness. On the rural stations, however, this was not the case, particularly where only two or three trains passed through within a period of eight hours. It was in fact first criticised in parliament by the National Party in the person of Havenga in March. It was only in July, however, that the likelihood of the system's abolition became apparent. On July 7, Boydell urged Jagger to look at the Labour Charter which had been incorporated in the Versailles Peace Treaty - which accepted the principle of an eight-hour day and a forty-eight-hour week.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Other speakers, however, such as L.Geldenhuys (S.A.P., Johannesburg North), and C.E.Nixon (S.A.P., Denver), urged Jagger to abolish the system. The latter asserted that this would mean a saving of at least £200,000 a year to the Railways.⁽⁵⁷⁾ On the other hand quite a number of speakers, both S.A.P. and National Party, warned Jagger of the resentment and ferment he would cause if he did withdraw the eight-hour day system. Jagger's reply was eventually a calm and reasoned one promising that, should

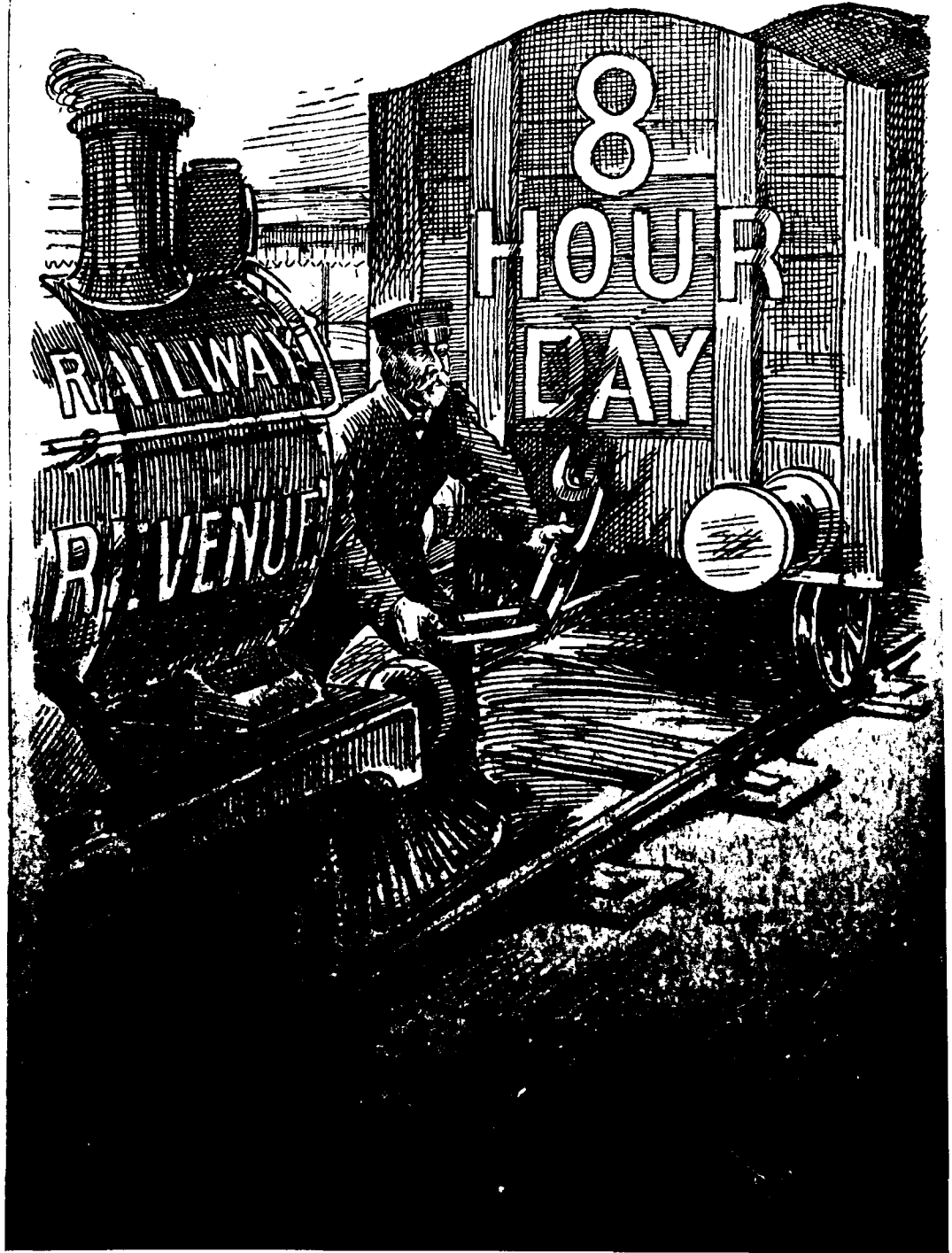
(54) Frankel : op cit, p. 280.

(55) Cape Argus, 10.9.21.

(56) Debates, 8.7.21, p. 306, col.1.

(57) Ibid 9.7.21, p.307.

"Un coupling"



[Cape Times 14.9.21]

it be necessary to interfere with the eight-hour day system the Administration would not interfere with those who had continuous occupation during the eight hours.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Despite this reasoned and justifiable step, no one was prepared for the furore it caused once Jagger had abolished the system in August, 1921. Once again he faced massive embitterment amongst the railwaymen, earning for himself and for the Railways Administration much unpopularity. Yet, as Jagger announced in Parliament on July 13, the already serious financial position had worsened considerably and since the beginning of the financial year in March, 1921 the Railways had a further loss of £200,000 a month owing to a falling off of revenue, bringing the total accumulated deficit to £3,198,311.⁽⁵⁹⁾ In addition the Railways had to borrow £1,170,000 from the Treasury to meet current expenses.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Thus with the rapidly declining railway finances and the rapidly increasing unpopularity of the Railways Administration and feelings of vindictiveness towards it among its employees, Jagger was faced with a difficult job during his next three years in office. It was unfortunate that Jagger the businessman, the man whom many thought to be "the wrong man to be at the head of a Government concern"⁽⁶¹⁾, should have been able to deal with the problem of railway finances, but not that of embittered employees. It was probable that had a man less autocratic or less rigid in his ideas been Minister of Railways and Harbours, support for the Smuts government - referred to at this time by the president of a railways trade union as a "bunch of dissembling

(58) Debates, 9.7.21, p. 308.

(59) Ibid 14.7.21, p. 319.

(60) Bulletin of the General Manager, No. 24, p. 137.

(61) Dr. Forsyth, later Labour M.P. for Cape Town Gardens, in the Cape Times, 1.9.21.

conjurors"⁽⁶²⁾ - would not have dwindled as rapidly as it did.

(62) Railway Review, Vol. III, No. 43, 1921, p.15.

CHAPTER II

NEGOTIATIONS AND DELEGATIONS

The unpopularity referred to at the end of the previous chapter manifested itself in numerous ways, the most common being in mass protest meetings by railway employees, in strongly worded protests to the Minister, and in a renewed surge of support for the National Union of Railways and Harbours Services (N.U.R.A.H.S.). The latter development in particular was of some significance since it marked the beginning of a long and bitter campaign by the N.U.R.A.H.S. against Jagger's administration of the Railways (see Chapter III).

Jagger's measures of economy roused the ire of railwaymen all over the country - the major bones of contention being, of course, the reduction in the cost of living allowance, the abolition of the eight-hour day and the retrenchment of railwaymen. Early in August, 1921, discussions took place between Jagger, Sir William Hoy (the General Manager of the South African Railways and Harbours), and officials of the South African Industrial Federation. In their reports of this meeting the Cape Times⁽¹⁾ and The Star⁽²⁾ both maintained that it had been made clear by the Railways Administration that reduction in wages and retrenchment were under consideration. These reports led immediately to protest meetings in many railway centres, for example, Uitenhage and Salt River⁽³⁾, but on August 9 the Railways Administration issued a statement denying that the retrenchment of permanent employees was discussed.⁽⁴⁾ Within a week, on August 15, reports of wholesale retrenchment

(1) Cape Times, 6.8.21.
(2) The Star, 5.8.21.
(3) Cape Times, 8.8.21.

at the Bloemfontein railway workshops were announced, and the furore over Smuts' Minister of Railways continued apace⁵. These reports were also denied by the Administration. Soon afterwards it was stated that the eight-hour day for artisan grades was being abolished, but on this occasion Jagger took the sensible step of inviting railways and harbours servants to discuss the issue with him in Pretoria - this was to take the form of a meeting with the delegations from the various trade unions. Yet even before this meeting took place, further protests were held, such as the large railwaymen's meeting in Uitenhage which strongly protested against "retrenching men and throwing them into the unemployment market without consulting the workers' unions"⁽⁶⁾, while a similar protest came from the Beaufort West Chamber of Commerce⁽⁷⁾.

The meeting with Jagger on August 25 was a crucial one as far as relations between management and labour were concerned. Jagger managed to alleviate the fears of certain sections of labour, particularly the delegation from the South African Industrial Federation under Mr. Archie Crawford, who achieved notoriety in labour circles during the 1922 strike as a "puppet" of the Smuts government and of the big mining houses. On the other hand the railwaymen's delegation was not impressed by Jagger's efforts at consultation and, after the Pretoria conference, they issued a statement refusing to be party to any agreement "which would have the effect of bringing the railwaymen to a worse position than before the war".⁽⁸⁾ The Labour Party attacked the government's railway policy on the

(4) Rand Daily Mail, 9.8.21.

(5) Ibid. 15.8.21.

(6) Cape Times, 19.8.21.

(7) Ibid. 22.8.21.

(8) Rand Daily Mail, 24.8.21.

same grounds - that of the railwaymen being driven back to pre-war conditions.⁽⁹⁾ They also presented their own interpretation of the financial position on the railways which, they said, did not justify any change in the present labour conditions on the railways. Sir William Hoy replied to this statement on August 31 stating that the financial situation on the railways did necessitate drastic action, particularly as "on an average the weekly railway earnings have been £20,000 below the estimate"⁽¹⁰⁾, while for the week ending August 20 they were £35,770 below the estimates.⁽¹¹⁾ The railwaymen's reply was that the estimates were deliberately inflated to produce a "paper deficit", but this seems highly unlikely. The railway finances certainly appeared to be in a serious position and the Railway Administration at last seemed to be making a concerted effort to put their case before the railway unions, but they had little success. This was mainly because many employees felt that the railways' financial position had been made out to be far worse than was actually the case. The text of a resolution passed by a large number of protesting railwaymen explains this attitude clearly:-

"This meeting having considered the actual figures published in government records, relating to the financial position of the railways and harbours, expresses its indignation that there apparently exists an organised attempt to mislead the country on this matter, presumably in order to justify the present programme of retrenchment and pulling down the railway workers' standard of living. The meeting directs the attention of the public and Parliamentary members to this discreditable design, as illustrated by (1) inflated estimates, thus producing

(9) Boydell in Cape Times, 16.9.21.
 (10) Ibid 1.9.21.
 (11) Ibid 27.8.21.

a paper deficit, especially in the first lean months of the financial year; (2) the incidence of an increase of about £400,000 in the earnings this year as compared with the corresponding period of 1920; (3) the surrender of approximately £35,000 weekly in rate reductions to big interests, upon coal, cement, and other similar traffic; (4) the huge increase in expenditure for the first half of this year, mainly on the inflation of supervisory and police establishments; (5) the placing of £150,000 every month to reserve funds, while monthly deficits are ostentatiously reported; and (6) that while there is really a monthly profit, the money is swept away on paper to liquidate paper deficits deliberately created during the last few years by rate reductions of not less than £1,300,000 annually

The meeting calls on all railways and harbours servants to combine to resist this unwarrantable attack on one section of the community in order to procure (1) the restoration of the eight-hour day; (2) consolidation of the remaining half of the cost-of-living allowances and (3) the abolition of "short time arrangements for artisans"⁽¹²⁾

The resolution shows the very wide credibility gap between the Railway Administration and its employees. Despite explaining the current attitudes of the railwaymen, the resolution tended to distort the facts. It exaggerates the earnings of 1921 over those of 1920 and omits to mention that rate reductions were necessitated by falling traffic and so on. Even the point of falling traffic was disputed - in a pamphlet issued by W. Moore, the General Secretary of the N.U.R.A.H.S.⁽¹³⁾ On the question of the railways paying interest on non-interest bearing capital in the period since Union, the Labourites, especially Boydell, constantly expressed their disapproval. In this attitude, however, they had the support of the General Manager of the Railways "who has for years past put up a very strong protest against the decisions of parliament"⁽¹⁴⁾ to compel the railways to

(12) Cape Times, 5.9.21.

(13) W. Moore: Nurahs Justifies its Attitude. A survey of the Railway and Harbour Finances from the Nurahs' Point of View. (Cape Town, 1922) p.3.

(14) Cape Times, 16.9.21.

pay this interest. During 1922 Mr. W.A. Martin, President of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, made numerous attacks on this payment of interest on capital, and this opinion was strongly held "in responsible quarters" that this charge on the railways was not equitable on any grounds - "an opinion which has now been endorsed, unanimously, by the best commercial intelligence of South Africa".⁽¹⁵⁾

The impression left by Jagger's earlier clumsiness and his autocratic manner of introducing measures of economy could not be eradicated. Meetings of railwaymen all over South Africa passed unanimous resolutions condemning the Railway Administration in general terms, the simmering resentment all being directed at Jagger as Minister of Railways and Harbours. There were meetings at Braamfontein (5.9.21), De Aar (6.9.21), East London (8.9.21), Uppington (8.9.21) and Salt River (14.9.21), to name a few, all of them strongly protesting against Jagger's measures of economy. The official announcement of the withdrawal of the universal eight-hour day system was finally made on September 9, with effect from September 12. There were immediately large protest meetings held in Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein and Johannesburg⁽¹⁶⁾ calling on Jagger to rescind his decision, while the Durban meeting also called for Smuts' resignation and an immediate election. Fiery letters and resolutions were once again sent to Jagger⁽¹⁷⁾. In a letter to the Cape Times Boydell stated that the "vicious attack on the railway workers' standard by the Jagger and Smuts government" was entirely indefensible, "except by those junkers of finance who believe in Prussian politics when dealing

(15) W.A. Martin: The Economics of Railway Policy in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1922), p.6.

(16) Cape Argus, 13.9.21.

(17) Cape Times, 12.9.21.

with the working classes of South Africa".⁽¹⁸⁾

The most militant reaction, however, took place in Port Elizabeth in the second week of September where 700 black railways and harbours employees participated in a passive resistance movement in connection with the new extended working hours schedule.⁽¹⁹⁾ Unfortunately, other than the newspaper report cited, very little other information on this development could be found, and this resistance movement was presumably forcefully crushed by the White government. All 700 were eventually dismissed on September 14.

The remaining months of 1921 saw the protests outlined above continue on much the same scale. The basic grievances concerned diminished bonuses, retrenchment, the cutting down of the hours of working of artisans and consequently lessening their wages, and the lengthening of the working hours of the running and transportation staffs, the government's refusal to accept the principle of joint control or to adopt the stop-order system in regard to union subscriptions, and the "double-trial" system. Even the relatively conservative South African Railways and Harbours Salaried Staff Association, at its Third Annual Congress, called for a redress of grievances and the investigation of the eight-hour day system by a Conciliation Board.⁽²⁰⁾

Accusations of "bad faith" and of contravening the Labour Charter continued to be flung at the government with increasing intensity. It was again an indication of Jagger's insensitiveness that, on the evidence available, these protests and criticisms had little effect on his policy. He kept his sights on reducing the railways' deficit and

(18) Cape Times, 16.9.21.
 (19) Cape Argus, 14.9.21.
 (20) Cape Times, 21.9.21.

~~and~~ allowed very little to distract him from this task.

Most of the English language newspapers blindly supported the government at this time, but there were a number of occasions when the activities of railwaymen's trade unions, such as the N.U.R.A.H.S., seemed to touch the Cape Times' sensitive areas. For example, on the question of the government's having contravened the Labour Treaty, the Cape Times delivered itself of a quibbling editorial which maintained that the Government was not bound by the Labour Treaty since the Union Parliament had never officially ratified the Washington Convention,⁽²¹⁾ a technicality which ultimately proved nothing. This particular weak argument was later taken over by the government and used to justify its extension of the eight-hour day system. Public feeling in South Africa on the question of the railways and its "big business" Minister ran high in many circles. A perusal of the correspondence columns of, say, the Rand Daily Mail for September shows a stream of twenty to thirty letters protesting against government railway policy, with only one really supporting it.

A new element emerged in the matter of resistance to the Railways Administration with the passing of a resolution by a meeting of railways representatives from Johannesburg, Braamfontein, Germiston and Pretoria. It stated, inter alia, that "..... as it is positively known that hundreds will be retrenched, this meeting was resolved to urge the immediate introduction of the working to regulation movement, delay otherwise being fatal".⁽²²⁾ This new tone of aggressiveness was to be repeated again and again over the next couple of months, as Jagger resolutely pursued his policy of economy. Shortly after the passing of the resolution quoted above,

(21) Cape Times, 14.9.21.

(22) Rand Daily Mail, 16.9.21.

there was, on September 22, once again a meeting between delegations from all organised branches of unions of government employees and the government, represented by Smuts and Jagger, where the reductions in the cost of living allowance, retrenchment in the public service and the question of whether the government had disregarded the recommendations of the Civil Service Commission of Inquiry were discussed. (23)

There followed a quite remarkable "ping-pong" battle between the government and the delegations as to whether the former had promised no further retrenchment or not. This misinterpretation of the proceedings of the meeting, by whichever side was responsible, merely served to exacerbate existing bitterness. Once again Jagger bore the bulk of the blame for what the average railwayman considered to have been his poor lot. Jagger had even become the target of the daily protest meetings of the unemployed in Greenmarket Square, where, on one notable occasion, he was referred to as "King Jesus on Wheels". (24)

Once again large protest meetings were held in all the larger centres. The aggressiveness, which had first been noticeable a few weeks earlier, once again revealed itself - such as at a meeting of Johannesburg government servants. One of the resolutions passed there stated that the meeting supported the "Pretoria resolution in regard to the formation of a joint Council of Action, and, unless the Government meets its servants in the above matters, acting under an extreme sense of injustice, it pledges itself to support any action by various organisations to obtain these". An addendum proposed "that this meeting has no confidence in the present government" ^{and} was greeted with applauding assent. (25)

(23) Rand Daily Mail, 23.9.21.

(24) Cape Times, 16.8.21.

(25) Rand Daily Mail, 29.9.21.

At a Cape Town protest meeting Morris Alexander (Constit. Democrat, Cape Town Castle), warned the government that it was no use disguising from themselves "the fact that there was a condition of very serious unrest and dissatisfaction throughout all the grades of the [public] service at the present time"(26) The eventual motion adopted at this meeting was even more resolute than the Johannesburg one quoted above. Part of it stated that -

"..... Further the meeting realises that its delegates have done everything possible in the direction of constitutional representation, and considers that the time for further arguments about figures, etc., will not serve a useful purpose to modify the present attitude of the Government. As, however, the meeting cannot accept Gen. Smuts' decision with any degree of loyalty, it recommends that the various service organisations strengthen and consolidate their ranks and elect various committees as a council of action to consult and advise the services all over the country as to the next step to be taken, and hereby calls on the wage and salary earners in South Africa to support the Government servants in their fight against the action of the Government in its determination to lower the standard of living of all wage and salary earners."(27)

Jagger's remarkable insensitivity to public opinion once again manifested itself at this critical juncture. At the beginning of October he announced further reductions in railway rates for the transport of bunker and export coal. The transportation of coal was for the railways a major source of revenue. Yet, with the climate of opinion being what it was, this move, which probably had a sound economic basis, was considered by many to be another concession to

(26) Cape Times, 3.10.21.

(27) Ibid

the "big business" Hoggenheimer interests by a "big business" Government. Tactically, the decision was a major blunder on Jagger's part. The popularity of the Smuts government was already plummeting and Jagger's policy decision, added to this unpopularity. "The government laboured through the morass as best it could, unable to foresee the course of events, and unable to act consistently. Its chief characteristic in this period was its opportunism and lack of principle." (28)

The "ping-pong" battle referred to earlier continued throughout October. Smuts and the N.U.R.A.H.S., in particular, flung accusations of misrepresentation at each other, till it seemed as though no one knew what had actually occurred at the September 22 meeting. Smuts denied the N.U.R.A.H.S' charge that he had promised no further retrenchment, and numerous contradictory statements were issued on both sides. (29)

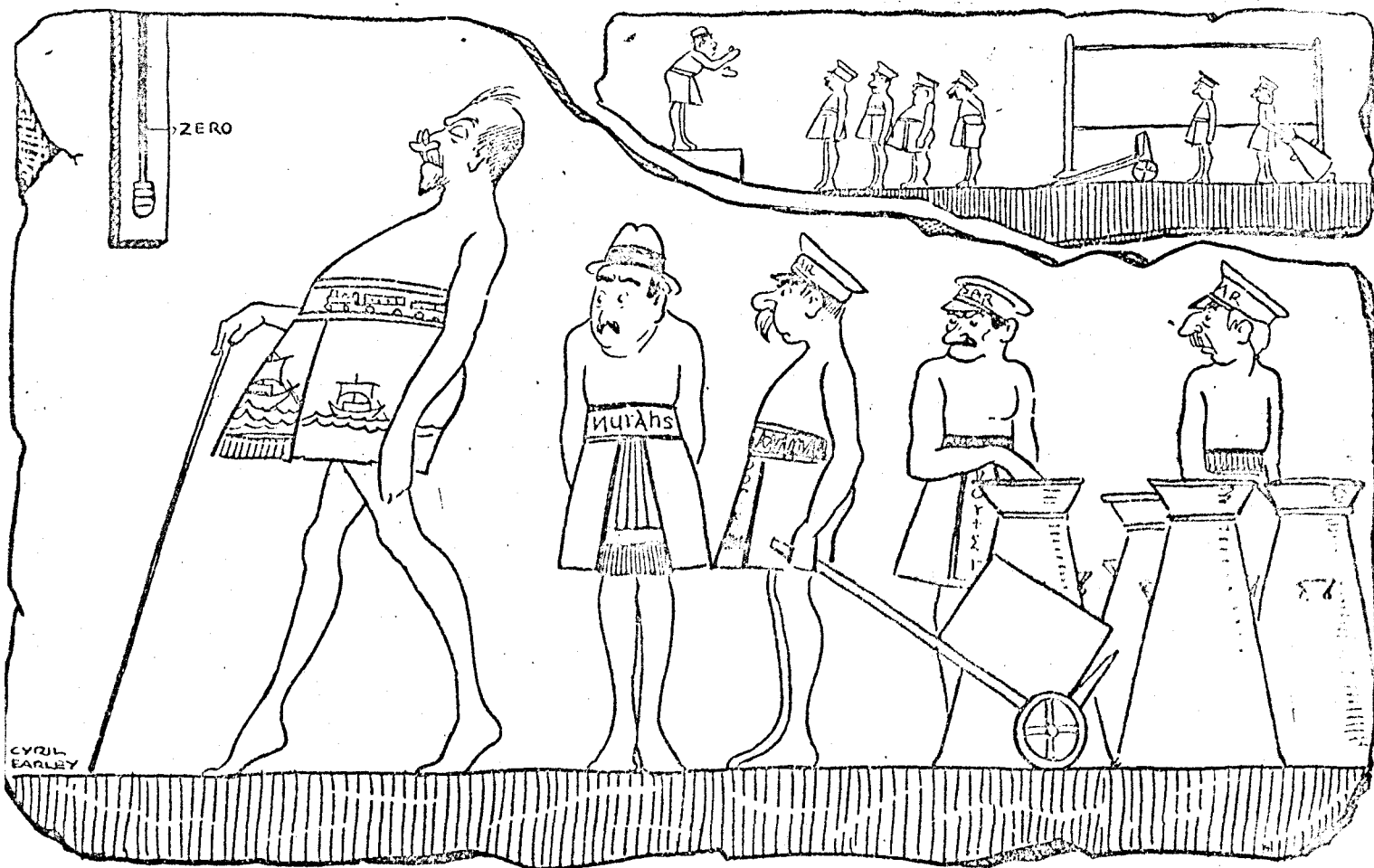
The Railway Administration meanwhile continued apace with its economy programme. During November, 1921, reports of retrenchment from all over the country were published in the press. After a protest from Alexander on this matter, Jagger justified his policy in a telegram which stated that the railways' financial position made the retrenchment of redundant men imperative. (30) This once again laid Jagger open to the oft-reiterated criticism that he was an extremist, taking no cognisance of the claims of railway servants on the Administration, nor of the individuals involved nor of the outlook prevalent at the time which held that a government had a firm responsibility towards each of its individual citizens.

At this time Jagger again took an important policy

(28) Kruger: Op.cit., p.118.

(29) See, for example, Cape Times, 29.10.21; 31.10.21; 1.11.21.

(30) Cape Times, 18.11.21.



Jag-Gir the son of A-Gun Refuseth to Recognise the Nurahs.

[The Cape 23.3.23]

decision which, though applauded by many of the government's followers at the time, was very short-sighted. On November 15 South Africa learnt that he had withdrawn "official recognition" from the N.U.R.A.H.S., recognition which had been extended to them in July, 1918. As has already been pointed out there had been constant friction between the Railways Administration and the N.U.R.A.H.S. ever since Jagger first entered the Cabinet. The resultant deputations and various restrained battles through the press were brought to a head by this indiscriminate action of Jagger's. At the same time it is important to bear in mind that there had also been a certain amount of dissension within the ranks of the N.U.R.A.H.S., but this was minimal at this time. The N.U.R.A.H.S. had admittedly "openly suggested that the railway accounts were being deliberately manipulated in order to give the public an impression that the state of railway finances was very much worse than was actually the case!.." (31) but this withdrawal of "official recognition", (a nebulous term of which even Jagger admitted not knowing the meaning), aggravated the relations between the railwaymen and the Administration. This was in spite of the official unconcern expressed by the N.U.R.A.H.S. Executive. The N.U.R.A.H.S' Biennial Congress opened in Bloemfontein about a week later, where Hjalmar Reitz, in his opening address, accused Jagger of being "unreasonable, petty and shortsighted" in his "tendency towards autocracy" while sitting in his "Ministerial holy of holies". (32)

The Congress later issued a memorandum which clearly set out the most important grievances, not only of the N.U.R.A.H.S., but of all railwaymen. These were the

(31) Cape Times, 15.11.21.

(32) Ibid 22.11.21.

withdrawal of the war allowance which the N.U.R.A.H.S. alleged had been done without any reference, on the part of the government, to the rise or fall in the cost of living; the extension of the railwaymen's hours beyond those previously in force; the insistence on salaried officers working Sundays and overtime with less pay than before; the retention of the double trial system and the "heartless and iniquitous method of retrenchment which is being conducted in the most brutal way and with entire callousness"(33) The memorandum went on to attack the Smuts Government for its alleged repudiation of previous agreements on each of the above grievances, in the course of which it said that "the Government generally and the Railway Administration in particular, present themselves to us not as a group of men realising their national obligations to the whole community, but as a group of magnates whose greater care is for the success of speculation, and the obtaining of facilities to accumulate money".(34)

The government-supporting press immediately launched into a vituperative campaign against the N.U.R.A.H.S. accusing it of fomenting discontent, and of "studious insolence", while Die Burger merely referred briefly to the N.U.R.A.H.S. and then resumed its ceaseless vilification of Smuts.(35) The Railways Administration then issued a detailed reply to the N.U.R.A.H.S' memorandum denying all the charges made against it and asserting that the financial position of the railways and harbours demanded "acute watchfulness" since, notwithstanding economies already effected by the Administration, there had been a loss of over a million sterling for the

(33) Rand Daily Mail, 22.11.21.

(34) Ibid.

(35) Die Burger, 25.11.21.

first six months of the financial year.⁽³⁶⁾ In reply the N.U.R.A.H.S. reiterated their arguments - concerning inflated estimates, the "unnecessary payments of large sums of interest" (about which even Hoy had complained bitterly) and that rate reductions on coal surrendered over £30,000 a week - to justify its stand on the railway finances. In one sense it would appear that the N.U.R.A.H.S. had a strong case for their argument on paying interest. Since the whole financial position which Jagger had to face was the result of accumulated deficits since 1916-1917, therefore why not have it counter-balanced by the accumulated surpluses of the previous years instead of paying those surpluses over to general revenue. Fuel was added to this already volatile situation when Smuts, addressing the Free State Congress of the South African Party, indicated that it was the government's intention to increase working hours and reduce salaries.⁽³⁷⁾ At the end of November yet another deputation waited on Jagger and requested categorical replies to questions which they had prepared concerning the various grievances of the railwaymen.

Included in these questions was one concerning the colour bar and for the first time we see Jagger concerned with policy and problems of some direct long-term significance, rather than merely within the limited frame of reference of the early nineteen-twenties. The N.U.R.A.H.S. wanted Jagger to state categorically whether White labourers on the railways would continue to be protected by a minimum rate of pay, and by control of the partial employment of Coloured labour in "white occupations". Jagger's secretary replied a few days later stating that it was not possible for the Administration "to guarantee permanency in the rates of pay

(36) Cape Times, 25.11.21.

(37) Ibid 24.11.21.

and other conditions".⁽³⁸⁾ This ominously equivocal reply foreshadowed even more unpopularity for Jagger, since the issues of colour and race, though not yet dominant in South African politics, were then, as now, very explosive issues. The rank and file on the railways were horrified by this reply to their complaint.

The whole question of black labour on the railways during Jagger's administration is shrouded in somewhat peculiar circumstances. As far as some commentators are concerned the period during which he was Minister of Railways and Harbours definitely saw the introduction of black labour on the railways. O'Dowd talks of Jagger "admitting additional non-European workers",⁽³⁹⁾ the Railway Review said that "the white man was being displaced by the uncivilised native in the Service"⁽⁴⁰⁾ and van Rooyen asserts that "in die jare 1920-24 in die spoorweë is blankes deur naturelle vervang as deel van 'n besuinigingsbeleid. Die ontevredenheid hierdeur veroorsaak het na die blanke werkers in ander bedrywe versprei, en onder die Transvaalse mynwerkers het beroering gekom."⁽⁴¹⁾ Die Burger, when referring to the railways, an occurrence which was rare, seldom mentioned the issue of black labour. It usually referred to Jagger's need "to cleanse the Augean stables" of the South African Railways' financial position. The files of Die Burger for this period are filled with countless references to this image of the railway finances, coupled with laudatory references to Jagger who was admired as a forthright opponent of integrity.

(38) Cape Times, 1.12.21.

(39) C.E.M.O'Dowd: "The General Election of 1924", South African Historical Journal, No. 2, 1970, pp. 54-55.

(40) Railway Review, Vol. I V, No. 55, October, 1922, p.3.

(41) J.J. van Rooyen: Die Nasionale Party - Sy Opkoms en Oorwinning, Kaapland se Aandeel (Cape Town, 1956), pp. 97-98.

"..... Ons het oor die algemeen geen klagte op die manier waaroor ons Spoorweë bestuur word nie. Minister Jagger is 'n man van groot bekwaamheid wat met hart en siel werk vir die belange van die groot bedryf"(42)

As far as the English press was concerned there were, insofar as could be ascertained, no references to this question, with the exception of a report in the Cape Times after Jagger had been a Cabinet Minister for less than a fortnight. The report stated that the Cape Town branch of the Provincial Native National Congress had very strongly protested against the "unsympathetic attitude of the Railway Administration" which was considered to be "an indirect project to replace native labour by poor whites"(43)

Thus as far as unofficial sources were concerned it was difficult to determine whether or not Jagger had replaced whites by blacks for reasons of economy. Other than the sort of vague references quoted above, there is no more information in unofficial sources. In parliament Jagger consistently denied undercutting the security of the white railway employee. Addressing a meeting at De Aar in September, 1922, Jagger stated that at one stage white gangers had been removed from the branch lines (which were not paying) to the main lines. "This had however caused some misunderstanding and he had given instructions that no further transfers of this nature should take place."(44) This particular practice was rarely mentioned in the press and could not have been very widespread. In parliament, however, it was brought up from time to time, Walter Madeley (Labour, Benoni) being its strongest critic.(45)

(42) Die Burger, 28.4.23.

(43) Cape Times, 21.3.21.

(44) Die Burger, 28.4.23.

(45) Debates, 23.3.22, p.83, col. 2.

In fact the whole question of black labour on the railways was seldom mentioned in parliament except from the Labour benches. Dr. Visser (Nat. Vrededorp), objected to coloured men being employed as checkers at the Johannesburg Kazerne⁽⁴⁶⁾, Col. Creswell (Lab. Stamford Hill), criticised Jagger on the grounds that it was a "departure from the Minister's previous policy"⁽⁴⁷⁾ and J. de Waal (Nat. Piquetberg), accused Jagger of wanting to force whites off the railways and into the towns.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Three South African Party members - L. Moffat (Queenstown), P.S. Cilliers (Hopetown) and Sir David Harris (Beaconsfield) - and one Labour member, J. Stewart (East London), appealed to Jagger to employ more black labour on the railways. Cilliers' appeal was on the grounds of compassion for the whites working on the railways whom he felt ought to be placed on the land⁽⁴⁹⁾; those of Moffat⁽⁵⁰⁾, Harris⁽⁵¹⁾ and Stewart⁽⁵²⁾ on the grounds of economy. In his replies to both pleas and criticism on this issue, Jagger never really gave a clear impression of whether he was replacing whites by blacks or not.

The official figures for the numbers of whites and blacks employed on the railways are no more illuminating than the vague remarks mentioned above, in that these figures are remarkably contradictory. What is without doubt, however, is that these figures do not show any startling changes as the percentages of whites and blacks are concerned. (See Appendix Seven) - notwithstanding some of the vitriolic

(46)	<u>Debates</u> ,	2.6.21, p. 210, col. 3.
(47)	<u>Ibid</u>	13.3.23, p. 146, col. 3.
(48)	<u>Ibid</u>	22.6.23, p. 416, col. 3.
(49)	<u>Ibid</u>	23.5.22, p. 229, col.1 and 13.3.23, p.146, col.2.
(50)	<u>Ibid</u>	21.3.22, p. 76. col. 1.
(51)	<u>Ibid</u>	19.5.22, p. 219, col. 3.
(52)	<u>Ibid</u>	13.3.23, p. 147, col. 1.

SMUTS' "WHITE" SOUTH AFRICA.



THE BLACK PERIL ON THE RAILWAYS AND HARBOURS.
 DIE SWART GEVAAR OP DIE SPORWEG EN HAWENS.

Ow! Bass!! You Unemployed?
 A-Ash! I've now got your Government Job—eh!

Ow! Bass!! Is jy sonder werk?
 A-Ash! Ek het nou jou Goewermentwerk—net!

propaganda that was on occasions churned out, as, for example, in the cartoon opposite. Yet as Jagger himself said "in 1912 the proportion of Europeans to the total employed on the railways was 51.4, and in January, 1924, the proportion was 51.3".⁽⁵³⁾ Ultimately it is not really important whether Jagger did use black men in "white men's jobs" or not. There is more significance in the fact that at the time there was a widespread belief that he had replaced whites by blacks, which consequently added greatly to his unpopularity and that of his party.

This whole question of black labour on the railways was thus initially aired by the N.U.R.A.H.S., which, although a white union, seemed to admit coloured workers into separately organised branches. In fact in May, 1919, the N.U.R.A.H.S. even held a meeting for black railwaymen to protest against the decision of the Railway Administration "to limit the payment of the coloured war bonus to the Cape Coloured staff, as distinct from Indians and Natives".⁽⁵⁴⁾ The N.U.R.A.H.S. had, in 1921, initiated and co-ordinated strong opposition to Jagger's policies. 1921 was an extremely difficult year for Jagger, and for South Africa. Addressing a N.U.R.A.H.S. meeting in Cape Town, Morris Alexander said that 1921 "had been a nightmare, with four milestones in the easy descent to Avernus, the withdrawal of the eight-hour day, the withdrawal of the war bonus, withdrawal of official recognition of the N.U.R.A.H.S. and wholesale retrenchment."⁵⁵ The hardship caused by these economies were all blamed on Jagger and his name is today still remembered amongst railwaymen with extreme dislike.

(53) Debates, 27.3.24, p.1163.

(54) P.L.Wickins: "The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union", (Ph.D.Thesis, U.C.T., 1973), footnote, p.61.

(55) Cape Times, 14.1.22.

These economies on the railways should not, however, be seen as harsh, isolated measures implemented by a fanatical Minister of Railways. The whole South African economy was suffering under the effects of a post-war depression. As was pointed out earlier the gradual withdrawal of the cost of living allowance applied to the whole public service as well as to the railways. And on May 10, 1921, for example, retrenchment in the postal service seemed likely, according to an announcement in the Cape Times. Yet, when it was eventually announced officially, only 114 postal officials were affected.⁽⁵⁵⁾ less than one per cent of the total labour force of the post office. In October, 1921, there was a considerable fracas in the Transvaal when prominent officials, including some inspectors, were retrenched from the Transvaal Education Department.⁽⁵⁶⁾ This was intensified a few weeks later by a rumour strongly prevalent among public servants that an all-round percentage reduction in salaries would take place throughout South Africa early in 1922.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Late in November retrenchment began in the Defence Force, and it was later announced that 40 permanent force officers (including four brigadier-generals) and some 69 warrant officers and N.C.O's had been retired from the force "owing to the serious financial situation of the Union".⁽⁵⁸⁾ During the 1922 parliamentary session the Secretary for Defence, Sir Roland Bourne, announced a policy of drastic retrenchment in the Defence Force.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Then in August, 1922, "consternation spread through the ranks of bank officials throughout South Africa due to fear of retrenchment, such as is at present taking place in the National Bank"⁽⁶⁰⁾

(56) Rand Daily Mail, 25.10.21.
 (57) Cape Times, 28.11.21.
 (58) Ibid 13.12.21.
 (59) Ibid 2.3.22.
 (60) Rand Daily Mail, 21.8.22.

The end result of all these measures was to add to unemployment, with an attendant alarming increase in poor whiteism. The general growth of discontent and insecurity rapidly undercut much of the support of the Smuts government, particularly in the urban working class areas. At the same time, as O'Dowd points out, there were a number of incidents which intensified opposition to the government. This was especially true of what was then referred to as "Native Affairs". The memory of 71,000 black miners striking in February 1920 on the Rand was still vivid.⁽⁶¹⁾ In 1921 there were strikes in Port Elizabeth which, like that of February 1920, was bloodily put down.

In May 1921 there was the infamous Bulhoek incident in which scores of blacks were shot, after months of inept manoeuvring by the government. Smuts, in particular, acquired a reputation for bloodshed and staunch support for "big business" rather than the common man. The blame for all the blunders and economic ills of the country landed squarely on the government. In Cape Town, for example, there were the regular and vociferous meetings held in Greenmarket Square by the unemployed of the City, at which the government (especially Smuts and Jagger) continually bore the brunt of the bitterness and resentment of the men.

In July, 1921, disputes between the Chamber of Mines and the miners began to be reported, but the initial question of cutting wages was settled on August 5.⁽⁶²⁾ The furore on the railways on the question of black labour should be seen in relation to developments on the Rand Mines between labour and management. In November, 1921, the Chamber of

(61) O'Dowd: Op. cit, p.55.

(62) Rand Daily Mail, 6.8.21.

Mines, on the recommendations of the Low Grade Mines Commission⁽⁶³⁾ proposed that the Status Quo Agreement - which regulated black-white ratios on the mines - be abolished. A further wage cut had already been proposed the previous month. It was this proposal which led to the initial disputes with the Chamber of Mines and, ultimately, to the 1922 Strike. Thus the railwaymen's fear of black labour usurping their own livelihood was on very much the same level as one of the major factors which led to the miners' strikes of 1922.

A large portion of South Africa was thus, at the start of 1922, alienated from the government and generally resentful. The prospect of governing for Smuts' cabinet, and for Jagger in particular, could not have been very attractive.

(63) U.G. 34 - 20.

CHAPTER III

RAILWAY FINANCES AND LABOUR RELATIONS

The most important event of 1922 was very obviously the Rand Strike. What effect did this have on the railways? It affected the railways in two ways - its income and its staff. The accumulated deficit on the railways at March 31, 1921, was £2,598,883.⁽¹⁾ As has already been pointed out, by June another £600,000 deficit was recorded. The most important financial details as regards Jagger's justification for his policy of economy have been discussed in the preceding chapters. It would appear that - disregarding arguments concerning "inflated estimates" and "paper deficits" - in 1921 the actual earnings of the railways exceeded the ordinary working expenditure by three and a half million pounds.⁽²⁾ From April to July, for example, Jagger's first months after the 1921 Railway Budget, the railway earnings exceeded expenditure by £1,321,000 which was increased to £1,419,000 by other miscellaneous receipts.⁽³⁾ However it was payments on the cost of living allowance and interest charges on capital that gave the railways an accumulated deficit of £3,336, 00 on July 31, 1921. As yet Jagger had not managed to cut down his expenditure however, for it had increased by 0.74 per cent over the sum for the same period of the previous year.⁽⁴⁾ By September the accumulated deficit was £3,500,000 and the Railway Administration was being inundated with calls for rates and fares reduction.⁽⁵⁾

(1) U.G. 46 - 22, p.1.

(2) U.G. 37 - 22, P.19.

(3) Cape Times, 20.9.21.

(4) Bulletin of the General Manager, No. 27, p.167.

(5) Cape Argus, 1.12.21.

Jagger explained this rise as being the result of the 164 per cent or £10,000,000 wages increase since 1913 while in the same period railway rates had only increased by 48 per cent. "The future raising of railway rates would simply mean discouraging production, with a further falling off in the revenue of the country."⁽⁶⁾ There was however a gradual improvement in the position from then onwards. By October the excess earnings over total working expenditure were about £2,300,000, yet because of interest charges and accumulated deficits the deficit reached £3,700,000 by October 31⁽⁷⁾ and £3,770,000 by November.⁽⁸⁾ Without taking into account the charges for the Betterment and Pension Funds, the period from April to November, 1921 saw a monthly loss on the railways ranging from £268,000 in May to £50,000 in November.⁽⁹⁾ In December, 1921, and January, 1922 however, the railways showed profits of £63,000 and £68,000 respectively. But the economies effected could not prevent a further loss of £235,000 in February as a result of a serious fall in revenue because of the Strike. There would thus appear to be a great deal of truth in Jagger's assertion that had the Strike not occurred the railways quite probably would have paid their way from December, 1921 until the end of the financial year.⁽¹⁰⁾ Jagger had budgeted for a deficit of £3,144,710⁽¹¹⁾ but was finally confronted by one of £4,189,374⁽¹²⁾ despite a saving of £953,000 on the estimates.⁽¹³⁾ (Burton, Minister of Finance in his 1921-1922 Budget aimed at a deficit of £189,000 but instead faced one of almost

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- (6) Cape Times, 22.12.21.
 (7) Ibid 27.12.21.
 (8) Ibid 28.1.22.
 (9) Ibid 1.5.22.
 (10) Debates, 21.2.22, p.7, col. 1.
 (11) U.G. 18 - 21, p.2.
 (12) U.G. 37 - 22, p.19 & U.G.46 - 23, p.1.
 (13) Cape Times, 23.2.22.

£1,400,000.⁽¹⁴⁾) The Strike eventually lost the railways - about half a million pounds.⁽¹⁵⁾ "The cumulative effect of three months of strikes and disturbance in the municipal industrial centres of the Union, following so soon on the acute depression of the preceding twelve months, disturbed the whole economic system of the country, and led to acute unemployment and to lack of confidence and further depression in trade and industry."⁽¹⁶⁾

The close relation of the Strike to the question of Black labour on the railways has been mentioned. Both the miners and railwaymen felt forced to fight "to maintain a White standard of living" - basically to prevent the removal of the colour bar. A meeting of railwaymen in Braamfontein in early January, 1922 promised to assist the miners in their struggle and called for a ballot to be taken for direct action "in order to bring force to bear on the Government to reintroduce the eight-hour day and to stop immediately further retrenchment".⁽¹⁷⁾ This enthusiasm for taking a ballot was not shared by other branches, such as that at Germiston⁽¹⁸⁾ while the De Aar Railwaymen, for example, wished to arrange some sort of confrontation immediately. At the same time the N.U. R.A.H.S. reopened their campaign and asked Jagger for further consideration of their grievances, but, other than more deputations to Pretoria and a fruitless set of negotiations, nothing came of this. Consequently the call for joining the miners' strike became stronger in some quarters but, according to the Cape Times "inquiries from many parts of the Union on the railway situation indicate

(14) Debates, 6.5.22, p.185.

(15) Ibid 14.3.23, p.149, col. 3.

(16) U.G. 37 - 22, p.2.

(17) Cape Times, 7.1.22.

(18) Rand Daily Mail, 13.1.22.

that at present the great majority of the railwaymen are not in favour of a general sympathetic strike".⁽¹⁹⁾ In a speech in Johannesburg Mr. W. Moore, General Secretary of the N.U.R.A.H.S., asserted that the railwaymen were dissatisfied and restless and that

"there was no disguising the fact that the loyalty of the railwaymen had broken down ... He considered that there would be distinct pressure on the railway unions to take advantage of the present crisis, not only in their own interests, but because the railwaymen were entirely sympathetic to the aims of the miners. They recognised the way the miners had been treated presented the same autocratic features which had characterised the treatment of the railwaymen by the Government generally and by Mr. Jagger in particular and he thought it quite possible that the present position would force a consolidation of forces."⁽²⁰⁾

This consolidation of forces never actually materialised but throughout January and February of 1922 rumours circulated the Reef that the railwaymen were about to throw in their lot in sympathy with the general body of strikers. The General Secretary of the N.U.R.A.H.S. addressed meetings of railwaymen in most of the larger centres, urging them to close their ranks to ensure the "solidarity for the cause". Early in January the South African Industrial Federation (representing the strikers) made strong representations to the N.U.R.A.H.S. asking them to refuse to move trains containing Natives from the mines. Certain National Party members of parliament also addressed meetings organised by the N.U.R.A.H.S. but

(19) Cape Times, 14.1.22.

(20) Rand Daily Mail, 13.1.22.

spoke against a strike being declared at the present stage by the railway employees.⁽²¹⁾ These rumours of an imminent railway strike were quite logical in a sense, especially when one considers the atmosphere in the country at the time as well as the general antagonism amongst the railwaymen. The railways was an enormous organisation and with the many different unions opinions on striking really were divided, and for these reasons, together with the fact that the N.U.R.A.H.S' finances were in a somewhat difficult state⁽²²⁾ the railwaymen never did achieve anything approaching unanimity on the strike issue. In the railway workshops in Pretoria, for example, a ballot resulted in 431 voting against a strike and 425 for one.⁽²³⁾ Seventy-nine men in these workshops did at a later date come out on strike for three days.⁽²⁴⁾ The other areas where a substantial number of men went on strike in March, 1922 were Durban (203 men), Germiston (79), Braamfontein and Kazerne.⁽²⁵⁾ Of the 412 who went on strike 385 were taken back into the service.⁽²⁶⁾ South African Party, Nationalist and Labour speakers at one stage all appealed to Jagger to reinstate all those who had been on strike on the same basis as before especially as some had lost up to twenty-five years' superannuation money. This he predictably refused to do. The consequent divisions in the service ran deep and served to exacerbate tensions and bitterness already present among the railwaymen as a result of Jagger's measures of economy.

(21) e.g. Dr. Visser (Nat.Vrededorp), 21.1.22 in Rand Daily Mail, 22.1.22.

(22) Cape Times, 2.2.22.

(23) Rand Daily Mail, 10.3.22.

(24) Debates, 11.7.22, p.342, col. 2.

(25) Ibid 14.3.23, p. 149, col. 3.

(26) Ibid

Thus it was that the strike affected the railways. Its importance was that it increased the financial problems of the railways and consequently made Jagger's attachment to and pursuit of economy even stronger. In addition it crystallised and mobilised much of the simmering opposition to Jagger as Minister of Railways and Harbours. During the strike there were quite a number of meetings at which very strong criticism of Jagger was expressed. The major political importance of the strike however, was that it hastened the demise of the Smuts government - mainly through the alienation of White labour, which led ultimately to the establishment of the Pact, the largest single factor in Smuts' defeat. (27)

One of the most important effects of the strike on the railways was that it brought about the final, irreconcilable split between the Railway Administration in general and Jagger in particular and the N.U.R.A.H.S. As has already been emphasised, the relations between Jagger and the N.U.R.A.H.S. had been somewhat stormy ever since he assumed office as Minister of Railways and Harbours. It was indeed a turbulent association from the start. It was in fact highly unlikely that Jagger and the N.U.R.A.H.S. could ever have associated amicably with each other. Jagger was always conservative and authoritarian and did not understand compromise (28), while the N.U.R.A.H.S' Executive was generally socialist and relatively left-wing in relation to Jagger and the Railways Administration. The two sides, basically incompatible, did not understand each other. Jagger thought the forthright criticism of the N.U.R.A.H.S. made them agitating subversives, while the N.U.R.A.H.S. quite

(27) O'Dowd, op cit, p.56.

(28) Duncan Papers 1 D 5(o). Duncan to Lady Selborne, 15.2.21.

understandably could never fathom that negotiation and collective bargaining were totally foreign and incomprehensible to Jagger the martinet, who expected submission from all subordinates. Thus we find E.H.Jones, Assistant General Secretary of the N.U.R.A.H.S, relating to a meeting of railwaymen what he considered to be his astounding treatment by Jagger in "negotiation".⁽²⁹⁾

The conflict dated back to the days of the Botha Government, but the Union's unpopularity with the government and the "big business" interests stemmed from Moore's activities, in early 1921, when he had advised members of the N.U.R.A.H.S. how to vote during the general election. Jagger's first antagonistic move was his policy decision on the stop-order system of collecting subscriptions for trade unions. He refused to implement this system as well as that of "joint control" as far as the N.U.R.A.H.S. were concerned.⁽³⁰⁾ The ensuing negotiations, attacks and counter-attacks of 1921 have already been discussed. Another factor which ought to be emphasised is the policy towards the N.U.R.A.H.S. followed by the rank and file of the South African Party. Generally, they vigorously supported Jagger's strong line. Thus we find R.W.Close (S.A.P., Rondebosch) declaring that "a more damnable doctrine than what appeared in the N.U.R.A.H.S' and their official organ had never been preached".⁽³¹⁾ He accused them of doing a malignant disservice to the people of South Africa. Jagger himself accused them of endeavouring to undermine the loyalty of the staff offices. The national press was generally very critical of the N.U.R.A.H.S' policy. The Cape Times, for example, commented that "the dictators

(29) Cape Times, 12.12.21.

(30) Debates, 18.3.21, p.17, col. 3.

(31) Ibid 12.5.21, p. 149, col. 3.

who direct N.U.R.A.H.S' policy are leading their organisation straight for disaster and the few remaining dupes of their embittered political partisanship are paying heavily for the doubtful privilege of being personally involved in the inevitable crash".⁽³²⁾ These attitudes continued throughout the period under review, the withdrawal of "official recognition" on November 15 not really making any difference to the situation, other than alienating even further the hard core of the N.U.R.A.H.S' supporters. Shortly after this event the N.U.R.A.H.S. published a pamphlet called "Working to Regulations" which annoyed Jagger and the Railways Administration a great deal, for it recommended a policy of going slow in order to eliminate miners' grievances. On 18 April, 1922, the Railways Administration decided that unless the manual was officially withdrawn the Administration would have nothing further to do with the N.U.R.A.H.S. On 13 July the N.U.R.A.H.S. complied with this demand and in September Jagger promised to review the question of official relationships. Jagger then asserted that what had caused this situation between his Department and the N.U.R.A.H.S. was "the policy pursued by the N.U.R.A.H.S. of undermining the loyalty of the staff and the discipline of the Administration and the general abuse which had been poured on the Administration"⁽³³⁾

The final split, however, came as a result of the strike. During the strike the General Secretary had made himself extremely unpopular by addressing meetings, urging solidarity and sympathy with the miners. Moore, in doing so, had antagonised many old N.U.R.A.H.S. supporters. In fact the Braamfontein branch defected from the N.U.R.A.H.S. in

(32) Cape Times, 14.3.23.

(33) Debates, 8.7.22, p. 337, col. 2.

April, 1922.⁽³⁴⁾ Later in the year the Natal branches withheld subscriptions from the General Council of the N.U.R.A.H.S.⁽³⁵⁾ Before Parliament assembled Moore sent out a circular which stated that "our ranks are depleted and a good deal of energy is being wasted in internal recrimination from certain points of view".⁽³⁶⁾ The Union was in an uncomfortable situation by early 1923. In the House of Assembly on March 14, 1923, Colonel Creswell (Labour, Stamford Hill), leader of the Labour Party, during the Committee Stage of the Railways and Harbours Appropriation (Part) Bill, asked Jagger what his grounds were for refusing to recognise the N.U.R.A.H.S. in any way.⁽³⁷⁾ To justify his stand of having nothing further to do with the N.U.R.A.H.S. Jagger virtually accused Moore of attempted murder and consequently caused an uproar in the House of Assembly and in the national press in the days that followed. He accused Moore firstly of using the strike as an opportunity for the railwaymen all to join forces and use the N.U.R.A.H.S. as a means of protest. But the major sensation was caused when Jagger accused Moore of furnishing Marten Mulder (Johannesburg Secretary of the N.U.R.A.H.S.) with the times of train arrivals on the Rand, trains on which the General Manager of the Railways and on which General Smuts had travelled. It was then alleged that Mulder had given the details to Fisher (later a leader of the Council of Action during the strike), who had dynamited the railroad, but Smuts had fortunately left the train at Potchefstroom. In a letter to

(34) Rand Daily Mail, 19.4.23.

(35) Cape Times, 7.2.23.

(36) Ibid 14.3.23.

(37) Debates, 15.5.23, p. 152, col. 1.

the Cape Times Moore immediately denied the charges, stating that he had never met nor communicated with Fisher.⁽³⁸⁾

Mulder did the same in a letter to the Rand Daily Mail.⁽³⁹⁾

In the ensuing debate in parliament Jagger was attacked on all sides for his accusations. Creswell questioned his sources and then attacked him for using a system of espionage of Trade Unions.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Smuts replied to Creswell's tirade at length but actually said very little other than to support Jagger's assertions. There followed a long stream of Nationalists and Labourites all of whom either attacked Jagger or pleaded for a parliamentary select committee to go into the affair in order that Moore might either be prosecuted or declared innocent. Jagger's initial claims had been made as though he had documentary evidence for them, but after a somewhat fiery debate he admitted⁽⁴¹⁾ that he had deduced Moore's guilt from the telegrams which had been sent to Johannesburg by him. Smuts himself replied to the debate and, after a very torrid exchange with Creswell refused to appoint a select committee on the matter - interestingly enough, on the grounds that Moore might incriminate himself before a select committee, which was not a competent body to investigate criminal charges. (It is tantalising to think of what Smuts' latter-day disciples on the Schlebusch Commission would think of this argument!) The debate was then adjourned.

For the next few days the press was filled with references and comments on the "Moore-Jagger" affair. The Cape Times and Cape Argus, predictably, supported Jagger

(38) Cape Times, 16.3.23.

(39) Rand Daily Mail, 15.3.23.

(40) Debates, 15.3.23, p.154, col. 1.

(41) Ibid p.155, col. 2.

very strongly, while the Rand Daily Mail called for an impartial investigation into the whole affair.⁽⁴²⁾ Mr. Burger on the other hand very strongly criticised Jagger for his attack on Moore in parliament.⁽⁴³⁾ When the parliamentary debate on the matter was resumed on March 16, Jagger once again seemed to have backed down. He stated that the only incontrovertible evidence which he had was that of the telegrams and that "anyone could infer what they wished - he would make no charges". He conveniently forgot about his own pointed conclusions of the previous debate and went on to outline, as he saw them, the relations between the N.U.R.A.H.S. and the Railway Administration since the granting of "official recognition in 1918".⁽⁴⁴⁾ Jagger particularly objected to the attacks on him in the Railway Review from which he quoted many examples. For instance the Review had told the railwaymen that "with the advent of Mr. Jagger's business outlook the railways' and harbours' servants had to sit up and pay attention, and had to decide whether to fight for a standard of living or be ground to the level of a poor paid servant". Jagger objected to the N.U.R.A.H.S. having taken an active and aggressive part in converting their society into a political machine.⁽⁴⁵⁾ It was nevertheless a forceful speech in a rather "drum-beating" manner, quite unlike Jagger's usual restrained, humourless style.

But, as Creswell rightly pointed out immediately after Jagger had spoken, while the latter had virtually denounced railwaymen daring to take part in politics, what of the

(42) Rand Daily Mail, 19.3.21.

(43) Burger, 16.3.23.

(44) Debates, 17.3.21, p.161, cols. 2 - 3.

(45) Ibid 17.3.21, p. 161, cols. 2 - 3.

position of the General Manager - this was a telling point as Sir William Hoy was all too often associated with the South African Party. What Jagger did not realise, however, was that because of its size and the large number of semi-skilled Whites employed, the Railways could never really function in a political vacuum.⁽⁴⁶⁾ (Patterson also maintains that at its foundation the Afrikaner Broederbond seems to have drawn many recruits from the railways.)⁽⁴⁷⁾ Creswell also accused Jagger of "whittling away" what he had asserted previously.⁽⁴⁸⁾ There followed two further very lengthy debates on the matter, both involving an unusual amount of perennial South African political rhetoric about "agitators" and "subversives" on the one hand from the South African Party, while on the other the Nationalists and Labourites took a very strong line on the Rule of Law which Jagger, they alleged, was contravening. The end result of the controversy in parliament was that Jagger remained adamant in his refusal to appoint a select committee, and the opposition failed in its attempts to force Jagger to admit making a mistake, and thus the parliamentary debate ended.

The repercussions outside of parliament are more important perhaps, yet more difficult to assess. It is quite possible that the whole affair was a concerted effort on the part of Jagger to break the Union, through his attack on Moore. The effect certainly was to place the N.U.R.A.H.S. in an uproar. Shortly before Jagger's attack on Moore the N.U.R.A.H.S. was in a somewhat difficult position, with a

(46) S. Patterson: The Last Trek - A Study of the Boer People and the Afrikaner Nation.
(London, 1957) p. 36.

(47) Ibid p.111.

(48) Debates, 17.3.21, p. 162, col. 2.

sharp drop in both finances and membership. Jagger's attack, however, seemed to give the organisation new life - as one prominent Trades Union official had warned it might on March 17, that is, a few days after the initial attack on Moore in the House of Assembly. This official declared that unless the statements were substantiated up to the hilt (by Jagger) the inevitable effect would be to rally Trade Unionists round Mr. Moore and very considerably increase the membership of the N.U.R.A.H.S.⁽⁴⁹⁾ From the evidence of the active lampooning in their newsletters and magazine, the fiery resolutions sent to the press, and the support given to Moore, it would seem that the N.U.R.A.H.S' support was increased by Jagger. Early in April, for example, the Executive Council of the N.U.R.A.H.S., meeting in Bloemfontein, unanimously accepted Moore's denials and reappointed him General Secretary of the Union.⁽⁵⁰⁾ This unanimity did not last very long however. By July of the same year, the organisation had split in half, and in fact ceased to be the threat to Jagger and the Railway Administration which it had once been. A.L.Clark, President of the N.U.R.A.H.S., resigned and became General Secretary of a new body, the Brotherhood of Railways and Harbours Servants (S.A.) The rapid deterioration in the N.U.R.A.H.S' support is well illustrated by the fact that on March 16 the Durban Branch of the N.U.R.A.H.S. had supported Moore and attacked Jagger for his allegations. In early June, however, the Durban Branch resigned en bloc from the N.U.R.A.H.S. in protest against Moore's policies. The N.U.R.A.H.S. in fact dwindled

(49) Cape Times, 19.3.23.

(50) Ibid 3.4.23.

in importance and "died a natural death in the late twenties". (51)

The 1922 parliamentary session proved to be yet another ordeal for Jagger. All his measures of economy came in for very severe criticism. Jagger was continually castigated as the railwayman's oppressor. On March 21, Jagger announced the Railways and Harbours Estimates for 1922-1923 which showed a decrease of £2,631,000 on those of the previous year. (52) Once again he was severely criticised for having issued such high estimates the previous year, which, it was alleged, produced an artificial deficit. (53) As always the Labour Party, the N.U.R.A.H.S. and various other discontented railwaymen attacked Jagger because it was felt that railway revenue was being "bled by the Treasury quite illegitimately" in the contributions made by the railways to the Renewals and Betterment Fund. Snow (Labour, Salt River), for example, held that "the railways were not really losing money; it was mainly a paper debt, and they were paying interest on a sum on which, the General Manager held, the railways should not pay". (54) Throughout the session Jagger's own words from his "Message to the Staff" of March 22, 1921 (55) - "It is my duty to endeavour to hold the balance fairly and to see that both sides [railway staff and the public interest] get a 'square deal'" - were thrown back at him with numerous quotes of 'evidence' of railwaymen's discontent.

The same old issues arose again and again. Jagger was repeatedly criticised for the railway's reductions

(51) Immelman Files.

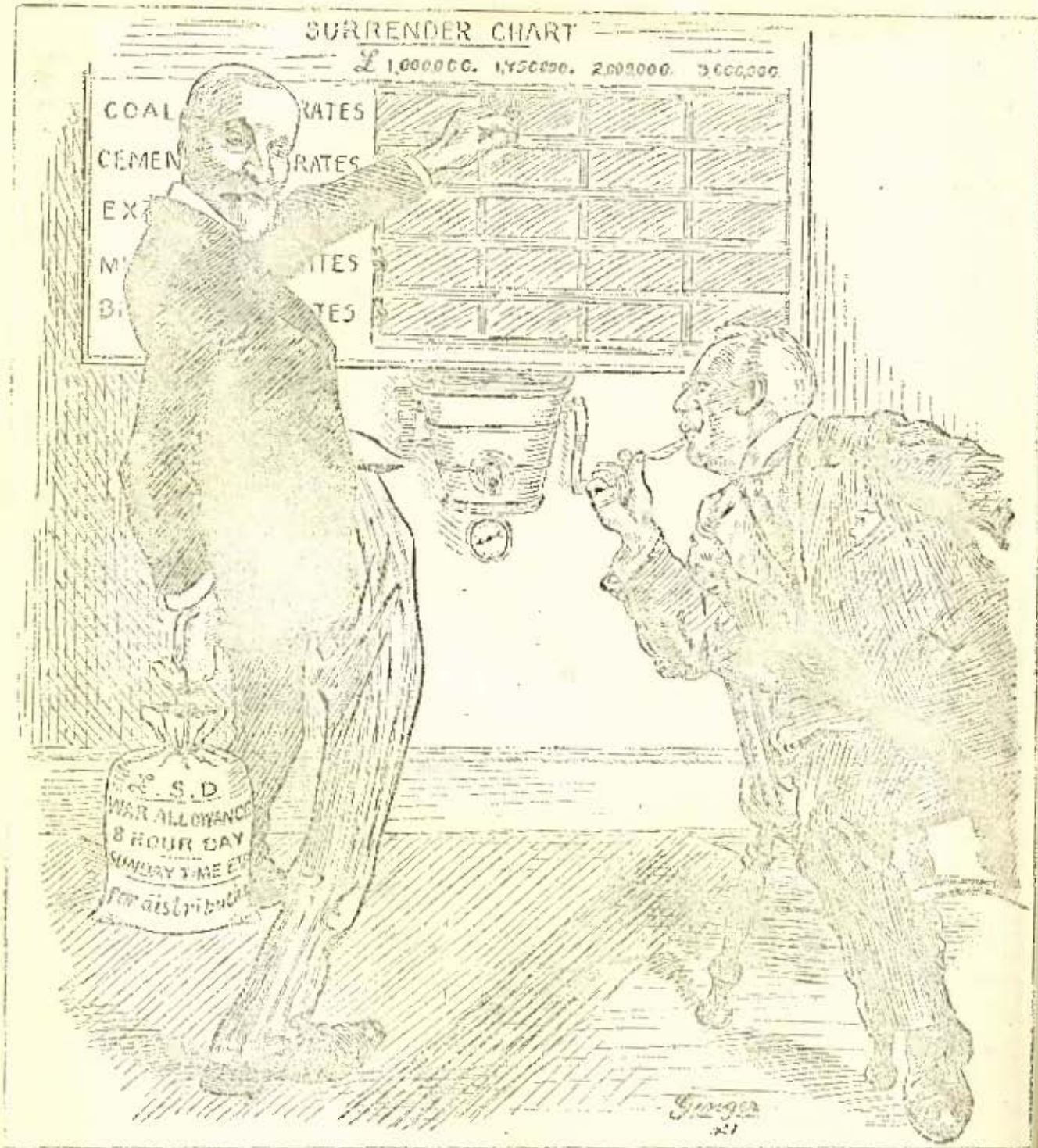
(52) Cape Argus, 21.3.21.

(53) Railway Review, Vol. III, No. 49, April 1922, p.4.

(54) Debates, 21.3.22, p. 75, col. 2.

(55) South African Railways and Harbours Magazine, Vol.15, No. 42, March 1921, p. 3.

De Onopbetaalde Machine – Wonderen Werkende.



The Deficit Machine – Working the Oracle.

J.W.J.: I say, Hoy, who is this lot for? Cement or Coal?

[South African Railway Review, November, 1921]

on coal rates by which the railways had sacrificed £2,000,000. During this period the rates on agricultural products were only reduced to the tune of £650,000.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Once again he was seen to be in collusion with the "big business" interests, frequently depicted as a repulsive, selfish and exploitive "Hoggenheimer". The Railway Review asserted that, to Jagger, the coal interests were the "public". Pearce of the Labour Party viciously attacked Jagger on March 20 for carrying coal on a non-profit-paying basis.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Jagger's reply to this particular point contended that as coal made up 54 per cent of the total tonnage of goods carried on the railways it was essential to reduce coal rates.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Another unfortunate feature of Jagger's reputation of being in collusion with big business was brought out by Morris Alexander in parliament when he stated that Jagger had retrenched grossly unfairly with a million and a half pounds' reduction in regard to employees and £49,000 in the superintendence.⁽⁵⁹⁾ This was in actual fact untrue, but the allegation served to harden attitudes against Jagger. The opinion that he was merely making ends meet on the railways without regard to the misery he caused was gaining ground. He was repeatedly criticised for just wanting to balance his accounts - usually at the expense of his employees.⁽⁶⁰⁾

After Jagger had introduced his Budget speech on May 9, the criticisms which followed in the Budget debate were much the same as those made throughout the country over the previous year. Yet, from his parliamentary colleagues, including members of the opposition, Jagger received a good

(56) Debates, 27.2.24, p.497.
 (57) Ibid 21.3.22, p.75, col. 3.
 (58) Ibid p. 83, col. 1.
 (59) Ibid 7.7.22, p. 334, col. 3.
 (60) Cape Times, 29.3.22.

deal of respect and approval - they always considered him to be a man of great integrity. Hertzog, for example, considered him to be a very honest man, and one of the most courteous members of parliament.⁽⁶¹⁾ Havenga thought he had joined "evil company" which had corrupted his good manners.⁽⁶²⁾ John X. Marriman (South African Party, Stellenbosch) echoed this criticism a week later when he asserted that "evil communications had corrupted Mr. Jagger's excellent manners".⁽⁶³⁾ When appointed Minister of Railways and Harbours, Jagger had been marked by many as the man "to set the railways right", but many now wondered if Jagger had not become too fanatical about economising. As far as they were concerned the only concessions he had made - other than to his cronies in the coal and cement trades - were the reductions made as from April 1 on fertilisers, grain products, fruit and dairy produce.⁽⁶⁴⁾

Jagger introduced the 1922-23 Budget on May 8 at which it was announced that the deficit instead of being the estimated £693,000 would be nearer £1,800,000. The accumulated deficit of well over £4,000,000 "would be financed out of £2,000,000 from the Renewals Fund and from the temporary loan of £1,500,000 provided for in the Loan Estimates for 1921-22".⁽⁶⁵⁾ Jagger also proudly announced that as a result of economies implemented, the expenditure for the past year would be about a million pounds less than the amount originally provided for. This was mainly as a result of reductions in supplies of railway equipment, modification of the eight-hour day, less engine miles run, decrease in

(61) Debates, 21.3.22, p. 77, col. 1.
 (62) Ibid 9.5.22, p. 195, col. 1.
 (63) Ibid 16.5.22, p. 208, col. 3.
 (64) Cape Argus 28.3.22.
 (65) Debates 9.5.22, p. 190, cols. 1 - 2.

staff owing to a falling off in traffic, and savings in subsidiary services as a consequence of reduced business. During the course of his address, Jagger said that "non-essential work has been eliminated and certain classes of work reorganised to secure greater efficiency and economy. Train services have been curtailed wherever possible and many stations and sidings have been closed. Overtime and Sunday payments have been reduced and the general application of the eight-hour day was modified."⁽⁶⁶⁾ He then went on to announce that exhaustive investigations regarding railway extensions had been carried out and that a Bill on the matter would soon be introduced. The criticism which followed was largely unconstructive, often tinged with prejudices of the time in order to gain a few debating points. C.W.Malan (Nat., Humansdorp) for example, stated that the railway's financial problems stemmed from the use of the railways for the free transport of troops during the war (an assertion which was untrue, but guaranteed to drum up some Afrikaner Nationalist support) and its use as an immigration bureau (also a sore point among Afrikaner Nationalists).

One of the more important criticisms insofar as Jagger's policy as a whole was concerned, was made by the Labourite Snow, who condemned the retrenchment of men (of which there were 12,672 retrenched in 1921)⁽⁶⁷⁾, while there were plenty of repairs to be done to rolling stock. It was all very well pursuing economy and making the railways pay from a business view, but the railways "could not be run like a little shop".⁽⁶⁸⁾ J.Stewart called this sort of economising

(66) Debates, 9.5.22, p.192, col. 2.

(67) Ibid 25.5.22, p. 237, col. 2.

(68) Ibid 16.5.22, p. 210, col. 1.

"idiotic and suicidal"⁽⁶⁹⁾ while the point is corroborated by H.G.Ashworth who asserts that Jagger tried to run the railways as he ran his business, which was a seasonal one and that he applied short-term remedies instead of taking a long-term view of the railways.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Frankel, in his discussion of railway policy mentions this point when he is talking of political considerations determining railway policy. "Vital expenditure which would have resulted in a reduction of operating costs or development of traffic has been curtailed or postponed. This is illustrated by the policy adopted in the development of railway workshops."⁽⁷¹⁾ In his reply to the debate Jagger predictably refused to budge, especially as his pride in his measures of economy had been dented as far as the railway workshops were concerned - it was the only item on the 1921-1922 Railways and Harbours Vote which had been overspent, according to Jagger. Ashworth in fact goes so far as to say Jagger was disastrous for the South African Railways, for he not only estranged the bulk of the staff but came close to wrecking the railways' rolling stock through parsimony.

This attitude seems to be corroborated by the Labourite Pearce who asked Jagger for more information on rumours which were circulating on the number of railway accidents recently reported on account of rolling stock in poor condition.⁽⁷²⁾ An incident during the 1925 parliamentary session however resulted in a devastating attack on Jagger's policy of economy by Sir William Hoy in his 1925 Report.⁽⁷³⁾ It had

(69) Debates, 25.5.22, p. 218.

(70) H.G.Ashworth, Esq. - Oral evidence.

(71) Frankel, op cit. p. 11.

(72) Debates, 21.6.23, p.415, col. 1.

(73) U.G.50 - 25, pp.13-19. See also Frankel, op cit. pp. 103-4.

been asserted that expenditure on rolling stock maintenance was too high. Jagger asserted he had never been informed of this because the Administration's senior officers were unaware of this. Hoy replied that he had informed Jagger of this necessity, one particular occasion being a letter from a manufacturing company director stating that he was surprised at the efficiency of the railways considering the out of date material. Hoy went on to state that year after year funds for new machinery had been requested and invariably refused. "..... there were many occasions when the reasons advanced for the refusal were, in my opinion, altogether the reverse of sound, notable amongst which, was that advanced during 1921 to 1924 and which consisted of a bold statement to the effect that no money for workshops, etc., was available."⁽⁷⁴⁾ There was also very strong criticism of railway policy as a whole from the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce.⁽⁷⁵⁾ All these criticisms were put most forcefully by Walter Madeley (Lab., Benoni) when he complained that "insane retrenchment galloping on, the ranks of the unemployed were swollen and the spending power of the people lessened and that, too, while the rolling stock of the country was in a deplorable state."⁽⁷⁶⁾

Jagger was very proud to be able to announce in August at a meeting of the Transvaal Agricultural Union that for the first time in four years the railway had just been able to pay their way, in April, May and June.⁽⁷⁷⁾ By 1923, however, there were apparently welcome signs that the Union was beginning to recover from the depression, notwithstanding

(74) U.G.50 - 25, pp.13-19. See also Frankel, opcit. p.17.

(75) Cape Argus, 3.6.22.

(76) Debates, 11.7.22, p. 342, col. 3.

(77) Cape Times, 18.8.22.

the pessimistic tone of Jagger's speeches and of the 1923 General Manager's Report. The latter stated that during 1922-23 "there were few signs of a revival from the depressing trade conditions which set in during 1920. The continued chaotic state of European affairs, the effects of the industrial upheaval early in 1922, the heavy loss sustained by the farming section of the population owing to the ravages of locusts and prevalence of drought combined to retard improvement in the economic and trade conditions in the Union."⁽⁷⁸⁾ The position on the railways, however, was still not very rosy. On February 14 Jagger announced in parliament that there had been a decline in revenue of six-and-a-half per cent, well over £1,000,000.⁽⁷⁹⁾ He had of course managed to economise very well and up to December saved 11.2 per cent on 1921, or £1,500,000. In the 1923-1924 Estimates Jagger also managed to budget for a saving of £884,000.⁽⁸⁰⁾ In addition, for 1922-1923 there was a surplus of earnings over gross working expenditure of £4,600,000.⁽⁸¹⁾ In fact in this year, even after interest on capital had been deducted, there was a surplus on the joint account of £817,080.⁽⁸²⁾ It was only contributions to the Pension and Betterment Funds which made for a deficit of £31,000 for the year and an accumulated deficit of £2,220,511 on March 31, 1923.

There followed the usual criticisms of fanaticism and "neglect of those who were suffering" from Jagger's policy. Both Burton and Jagger delivered their Budget speeches on March 28. During the course of his speech, Burton mentioned

(78) U.G. 40 - 23, p.2.
 (79) Debates, 15.2.23, p. 78, col. 1.
 (80) Cape Times, 17.2.23.
 (81) U.G. 40 - 23, p.1.
 (82) Ibid, p.29.

that during the parliamentary recess, he, Jagger and Duncan had spent much time investigating the Union's public expenditure and had succeeded in reducing expenditure in many ways. This was not sufficient, however, and they had fixed on new scales of pay which would represent fairer pay for the work done.⁽⁸³⁾ Jagger's announcement that there had been an improvement of £36,000 over the estimated deficit was welcomed, especially after his pessimistic statement of February 14. The past years' workings had fluctuated a great deal, but the improved position seemed to have resulted from a surplus of £145,000 over the Harbour estimate as the Railways still had a loss of over £200,000.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Jagger then went on to announce his own scheme of re-classification and re-grading of the railways service, a move which once again aroused a storm of protest, intensifying Jagger's unpopularity. For example, in late July, once Jagger had accepted re-grading proposals made by the Conciliation Board, the railwaymen's elected members of the South African Railways and Harbours Board of Reference protested strongly against the scheme.⁽⁸⁵⁾ There were various mass protests as well - such as that of the railways salaried staff.⁽⁸⁶⁾

Other measures of economy announced by Jagger included large-scale reduction in train mileage - in 1923-24 he hoped to reduce the 1922-23 mileages by 1,500,000⁽⁸⁷⁾ - and in the staff. The latter was generally done by not replacing men who left the Railways Administration. In addition the estimates of working expenditure for 1923-24 showed a decrease of £230,000 on the actual expenditure for 1922-23. Yet for

(83) Debates, 29.3.23, p. 196, cols. 2 - 3.

(84) Ibid p. 198.

(85) Cape Times, 30.7.23.

(86) Rand Daily Mail, 9.6.23.

(87) Debates, 27.3.23, p. 256, col. 3.

Jagger "there was no doubt that the cost of working the railways was far too high" - as compared with 1913 it was up by no less than ninety per cent.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Jagger thus stoutly defended his plan of re-grading and re-classification as an essential measure of economy, but he promised that the maximum reduction would not exceed ten per cent and that the Administration would meet with the various representative bodies of the railways' employees to discuss the scheme.⁽⁸⁹⁾ Few people, however, were prepared to trust Jagger with his reputation as the "high priest of economy ... they knew that such a gentleman could play ducks and drakes with any service he had charge of".⁽⁸⁹⁾ The unfortunate thing was that from the start Jagger was in too much of a hurry to balance his accounts and he "had made the big mistake of using the ethics of St. George's Street"⁽⁹⁰⁾ for what should be the ethics of a great public department".⁽⁸⁹⁾

From a primarily mercenary aspect all of Jagger's work appeared to have been justified when the results of the railway operations for the first two months of the 1923-24 fiscal year were announced. Even after all charges had been debited to the railway accounts there was a credit balance of over £140,000.⁽⁹¹⁾ On October 2 Duncan wrote that things were slowly improving in the Union - "revenue coming in fairly well and Railways making a substantial profit though Mr. Jagger is doing all he can to hide it as it hinders his passion for economy from having its full scope".⁽⁹²⁾ By late October the railways earnings were showing an average of

(88) Debates, 27.4.23, p. 256, col. 3.

(89) Ibid 21.6.23, pp. 412-413.

(90) Site of Jagger's private business.

(91) Cape Times, 27.7.23.

(92) Duncan Papers, I D 5 (q). Duncan to Lady Selborne, 2.10.23.

£30,000 over the estimates - a very considerable improvement over the earnings of the previous six years which had all shown a loss.⁽⁹³⁾ This improved position continued and by December 1 the accumulated deficit of March 31, 1923 of £2,220,000 had been decreased by £900,000.⁽⁹⁴⁾ The position improved instantly and by the time Jagger introduced his Budget for 1924-5 C.W. Malan was able to say "Ek kan hom (Jagger) die versekering gee dat die land dankbaar is dat hy die finansies van die Spoorweg Departement so mooi reggemaak het".⁽⁹⁵⁾ Each month of the past financial year had shown a surplus, the revenue showing an increase over the estimate of approximately £1,600,000, while the actual expenditure was expected to be £300,959 less than the amount originally estimated.⁽⁹⁶⁾ The actual surplus of earnings over expenditure amounted to £5,613,000 while the net profit after interest on capital had been paid amounted to £1,724,000.⁽⁹⁷⁾ The accumulated deficit for the year after a final profit of £1,450,206 for 1923-24, was reduced to £770,243.⁽⁹⁸⁾

Jagger had thus achieved marvels with the finances, but this achievement resulted in lasting unpopularity amongst the railwaymen. Things being what they were in the Union at this time Jagger's policy was, rightly, considered an asset by the newly formed Nationalist-Labour Pact. for example, said in parliament that "we on the Labour benches regard him [Jagger] as a great asset and we know perfectly well that during the coming election the railwaymen will show the Hon. the Minister what they think of him and

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- (93) Cape Times, 9.11.23.
 (94) Ibid 11.2.24.
 (95) Debates, 27.2.24, p. 493.
 (96) Ibid 8.4.24, pp. 1363-4.
 (97) U.G. 43 - 24, p. 27.
 (98) U.G. 42 - 24, p.1.

the manner in which he has carried out the promises he gave them in regard to their being given a square deal".⁽⁹⁹⁾

On April 7 Smuts had announced that Parliament would be dissolving and a general election held. In March 1921 when Jagger was taken into the Cabinet the South African Party had 79 seats, the National Party 45, Labour 9, Independents 1. Since then Smuts' majority of 24 had been whittled down to 8, with the South African Party holding 71 seats, the Nationalists 48, Labourites 13, Independents 1, and one Constitutional Democrat.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ In March 1921 the South African Party lost Rustenberg to the Nationalists and on 14 April 1921 East London went to the Labour Party, both losses on account of electoral technicalities. On September 9, 1921, the South African Party lost both the Liesbeeck and the Gardens seats to the Labour Party. Colonel Creswell gained the Stamford Hill seat for the Labour Party, which the Cape Times called "a serious blow and a severe warning" for the South African Party.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Then in March, 1923 the National Party gained the Oudtshoorn seat from the government. On June 6, 1923, Major Hunt (South African Party, Turffontein) resigned over the issue of re-grading the railways staff. This prompted the apt remark from the Cape Times that "Ministers cannot and should not be expected to yield to every representation made to them by members of parliament on their own side of the House. Mr. Jagger of all Ministers, is least likely to be impressionable in this way."⁽¹⁰²⁾ Major Hunt eventually resigned his seat and regained it as an Independent, increasing his 1921 majority by almost 500.

(99) Debates, 9.4.24, p. 1392.
 (100) van Rooyen, op. cit., -112.
 (101) Cape Times, 7.7.22.
 (102) Ibid 7.6.23.

In early November 1923 very vigorous provincial election campaigns were held. In the Transvaal the National-Labour majority was reduced from fifteen to ten⁽¹⁰³⁾ while in the Cape the Pact obtained a majority of one. During this time the South African Party held their own, but with reduced majorities in each case, in the constituences of Uitenhage (June, 1923), Parktown (September, 1924) and Umvoti (March, 1924). Then on April 5, 1924, the famous South African Party defeat at Wakkerstroom was announced. The importance of the railway vote in this defeat was openly acknowledged by the press before Smuts announced dissolution. The Cape Times, for example, commented on the discontent amongst the Volksrust railwaymen.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ At the same time Trade Union leaders were interviewed on the political developments, many of them being prone to cite Jagger's retrenchment policy on the railways as a dominant factor in the wave of antipathy against the government. Jagger's policy was rapidly utilised as a political tool by the Pact,⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ and consequently played no mean rôle in the defeat of Smuts' government. Jagger had balanced his accounts and Neame's assessment of this, though exaggerated, contains a great deal of truth. "..... Jagger's axe retrenched. He scrapped. He cancelled orders. He tore estimates to shreds. He lengthened working hours. In finance he was Charles Martel and Tamerlane and Attila rolled into one. Deputations fled without putting their case. Officialdom trembled outside his door. Thirty thousand White railway employees gnashed their teeth in helpless rage. The accounts were balanced. It was magnificent, but it was not politics. Jagger saved the Railways and killed the Smuts government." (106)

(103) Rand Daily Mail, 13.11.23.

(104) Cape Times, 7.4.24.

(105) Rand Daily Mail, 9.4.24.

(106) Neame, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

CHAPTER IV

VILIFICATION FOR JAGGER : TABLE BAY HARBOUR

1921 - 1924

In his overweening desire to economise and to "put the railways in order" Jagger very frequently overlooked the consequences of his actions. This was generally the case with most of his economising measures. One particular issue which roused the ire of many South Africans was the question of the extension and development of the Union's ports. The Durban harbour was in the process of being modernised when Jagger came into the Cabinet, and, in the midst of saving and retrenching, the Railway Administration continued to set aside fairly considerable sums of money for this purpose. For two years, however, from March, 1921 until March-April, 1923, there was a consistent campaign for the extension and development of the Table Bay Harbour, since little development had taken place since 1910. This at first sight appeared to be a fairly parochial issue, but both the press and the commercial circles of the interior supported the leading campaigners - the Cape Times and the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce - over this issue.

In addition it was pointed out time and again that the development of the Cape Town harbour was of national and not merely local importance. This contention had a great deal of truth in it, especially if one considers, for example, that in 1921 of the 348,572 tons of coal shipped from Cape Town 254,608 tons came from the Transvaal⁽¹⁾ while 105,454 tons came from Natal.⁽²⁾

Even before Jagger's appointment to the Cabinet was

(1) Cape Times, 14.8.22.

(2) Ibid 14.9.22.

announced, "long-established concern in commercial circles over the stagnation of Cape Town's dock development" was voiced,⁽³⁾ and appeals for extension came from as far afield as the Free State Chamber of Commerce.⁽⁴⁾ Throughout March 1921 indignant editorials appeared in the Cape Town press on the question of the development of the docks. When Parliament assembled, Jagger was assailed by a barrage of questions requesting information on his intentions regarding the development of the docks and by demands for immediate extensions. Major van Zyl (S.A.P., Cape Town, Harbour), for example, stated that the matter of dock extension was one of urgent necessity, particularly as the docks, he maintained, were in a worse condition than they had been twenty years previously. He went on to say that any further delays might jeopardise the future of Cape Town as a port.⁽⁵⁾

All this publicity and the various pressures in parliament had their effect on Jagger, for on May 31 the appointment of a special committee to investigate the development of the docks in Cape Town was announced. This was a welcome concession, but it met only qualified approval from the press - "..... if it means that the question of carrying immediate improvements to repair the perilous shortcomings of the present accommodation and facilities at the docks, which are throttling trade right and left, is to be still further postponed to await a leisurely verdict on the larger question of railway policy, then the news will come as an unpleasant shock to public opinion".⁽⁶⁾ The Rand Daily Mail then spoke of "administrative myopia and neglect" and of "delays possibly jeopardising the future of the port".⁽⁷⁾

(3) Cape Times, 1.3.21.
 (4) Ibid 2.3.21.
 (5) Debates, 10.5.21, p.143.
 (6) Cape Times, 31.5.21.
 (7) Rand Daily Mail, 2.6.21.

The announcement of the appointment of the committee led to a full-scale debate on the future of the docks on June 1 in the House of Assembly. Jagger resolutely refused all requests, including forceful attacks from van Zyl, Mushet (S.A.P., Liesbeeck) - who also pleaded for the use of the unemployed in this work - Madeley and R.W.Close. Jagger, as always, based his decision on the lack of finance available, though he acknowledged the necessity for development.⁽⁸⁾

The Cape Times referred to this as a "melancholy debate" in which "Mr. Jagger, who in the dual role of departmental apologist and vigilante member for Cape Town Central enjoyed considerably less than his usual degree of success" in a speech of "autumnal sorrow".⁽⁹⁾

In October 1921 the Committee submitted its report and, unfortunately for Jagger's programme of economy, after acknowledging the need for extensive improvements to the harbour, it recommended the urgent implementation of immediate development. It stated that the most pressing needs were improved facilities at the existing docks and then the provision of additional deep-water berths.⁽¹⁰⁾ It also recommended that the breakwater extension was of primary importance and should be commenced without delay. It suggested a yearly vote of £536,000 by Parliament for six years and £65,000 a year for the following four years of the scheme of extensions. By this time (late 1921) the campaign had almost fizzled out - particularly since the end of the 1921 parliamentary session and, except for the periodic editorial urging the government to action, it remained in abeyance for the rest of 1921.

(8) Debates, 2.6.21, p. 209

(9) Cape Argus, 2.6.21.

(10) Ibid

On the day of the opening of parliament in 1922 the Cape Times once again made a passionate appeal for the immediate extension of the harbour and would probably have sustained this campaign for the rest of the session had the Rand Strike of 1922 not pushed the issue of harbour extensions well into the background. Towards the end of the session the issue was again raised, and the campaign gathered momentum and reached its climax during the second half of 1922. Major van Zyl reiterated his criticisms⁽¹¹⁾ as did Close and Greenacre (S.A.P., Durban Point).⁽¹²⁾ Soon the press was once again up in arms about the "paltry sum" of £20,000 which Jagger set aside for improvements. The Cape Times for example, referred to "a beggarly £20,000" for "preliminary tinkering" with the South Arm.⁽¹³⁾ Both the Cape Times and the Rand Daily Mail criticised what they considered to be a waste of money in the allocation of £310,000 "to sink into the sands of Walvis Bay".⁽¹⁴⁾

Once parliament rose the campaign was taken up in earnest by the President of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, Mr. E. Rowe. He took up the clarion call of the Cape Times and went on to assert that there was nothing local or parochial in this campaign for harbour development. He stated, at a protest meeting on this issue that "It is a national claim because Cape Town is the gateway not only to South Africa but to the Southern Hemisphere".⁽¹⁵⁾ At the same meeting J.W. Mushet maintained that the harbour was "at least twenty-five years behind the times". The recommendations of the committee which Jagger had appointed were also taken up

(11) Debates, 7.7.22, p. 334.

(12) Ibid 8.7.22, p. 336.

(13) Cape Times, 12.7.22 and Rand Daily Mail, 11.7.22.

(14) Ibid Ibid

(15) Cape Times, 26.7.22.

and the call went out again and again for the implementation of its proposals of immediate and urgent action.

On July 20 Jagger met a deputation from the Chamber of Commerce, consisting of members of its Management and Harbour and Shipping Committees. The latter put forward a strong case for the development of the harbour and intimated that it was "useless talking of a lack of money" - particularly as the government was spending £300,000 on Walvis Bay. In reply Jagger actually stated his sympathy with the views of the Chamber, but pointed out that the financial situation had to be reckoned with.⁽¹⁶⁾ The Rand Daily Mail went on to attack Jagger for his "studied refusal to carry out the advice of a special committee of technical and business experts that the commencement of a harbour improvement scheme necessitating an annual expenditure of over half a million for a number of years should be treated as a matter of "urgency", also that this starvation of development should be inflicted on the port during the regime of a 'business' Railway Minister".⁽¹⁷⁾

Another major field of criticism of the state of the docks at the time came from the fruit-growing interests. The provision of enlarged and improved cold storage facilities alongside a deep-water berth was requested by the Fruit Growers' Exchange - yet Jagger, once again, remained unconvinced of the necessity for spending money on increased cold storage facilities at the docks. In this he was again ignoring the recommendations of the Committee which he had appointed. The Cape Times commented that Jagger's policy was "so unbusinesslike that it was surprising to find a 'business' Minister sponsoring it".⁽¹⁸⁾

(16) Rand Daily Mail, 28.7.22.

(17) Ibid.

(18) Cape Times, 27.7.22.

In the second week of August the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce convened a conference "representative of the political, agricultural, commercial and industrial life to deliberate on the steps necessary to bring the plight of the docks to the notice of the government". On the eve of this meeting the Cape Times commented:

"The Prime Minister and his colleagues will recognise, we believe, that Mr. Jagger is a very scrupulous man, who, in his anxiety to show no undue favours to his own city, has actually been less fair to her undeniable claims ... the determination of patriotic citizens of Cape Town to force it [this claim] upon the attention of the government involves no diminution of their respect for Mr. Jagger himself. Very much to the contrary, Cape Town is proud of his ability and integrity ... To him, money spent in Cape Town is money spent for the sole benefit of Cape Town and, as the Cape Town Docks are not self-supporting from the business point of view, his honest soul revolts against sinking more capital in what he sees as an unremunerative enterprise... But Cape Town Docks he cannot see as one of the essential traffic valves of the great and flowing engine of South African trade, business and industry ... Such a view of the finance of Cape Town Docks is fantastic in its limitations"(19)

It may or may not have been true that Jagger was being scrupulous about spending money on his home city, but this was probably not his prime motivation. All through his term of office we see a Jagger loath to spend any money on extensions or improvements. It certainly was true that Jagger did take a rather narrow and short-sighted view of business, but it often enabled him to hit back at his critics rapidly and incisively in public debate. For example, the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce on August 14, 1922, sent Jagger (and the press) a long series of resolutions expressing grave

(19) Cape Times, 9.8.22.

concern that Parliament had voted no money towards the extension of the breakwater and that no adequate provision had been made to start work on the scheme, recommended by his committee, during the coming year.

At the conference mentioned earlier, J.W.Mushet brought a new element into the campaign for the development of the Docks. He mentioned that the Dominions Royal Commission appointed shortly before the First World War broke out to inquire into the question of the development of the Empire's resources, had emphasised the strategic importance of the Union's ports. In 1918 this commission had recommended the elevation of Cape Town and Durban into first-class harbours. This line of argument was utilised very effectively by the Chamber of Commerce in its campaign to win Jagger over. The Conference in fact appointed a standing committee to mobilise public opinion and generally campaign for the government's approval of harbour extensions.

Jagger replied to the resolutions sent to him by the Chamber of Commerce on August 23, stating that money had been set aside for practically all the improvements which the Commission had found to be urgent, that is, a sum of £300,000. (For a comparison with expenditure of other years see Appendix Eight(I)). It was then said that "the Minister did not consider that there was any pressing hurry" for the completion of the scheme recommended by the Commission. In addition Jagger argued that it could not be implemented as there was no money for this type of development, and that it was a definite policy of the Administration that the aggregate revenue of the harbours of the Union must meet the aggregate expenditure, and not call on the Railways to meet any deficiency. (20) In his reply Jagger also disputed the

assertion that Cape Town was the "gateway to South Africa" on the grounds that, when general merchandise was considered, far from being the "Gateway to Africa", Cape Town was further away from the producing and consuming districts of the interior than any other port. He provided a long list of statistics in an attempt to refute charges that the state of the docks had brought about a loss in revenue, arguing that in previous years Table Bay had easily handled heavier tonnage than it did in 1922.⁽²¹⁾ (See Appendix Eight (II)) Jagger's reply was a strong one, stated quite unequivocally.

It brought, however, indignant reproaches from both the press and the Chamber of Commerce. The Cape Times rebuked Jagger for his "unsound propositions" regarding the time factor as well as his fiscal policy for the harbour. It went on to say that "if we allow the merely cash-book method of reckoning out the accounts of the harbours to dominate our developmental policy we shall learn to rue the day".⁽²²⁾ The Chamber of Commerce made the telling point that "the Minister cannot surely have overlooked that, with direct government control of harbours the profits earned, or the losses sustained, in the working of individual harbours may largely be determined by the general financial policy of the Government".⁽²³⁾ This point was then taken up by the Cape Times which asserted that "the harbours of the Union are the ancillaries to the railways and the argument which regards each individual harbour as an isolated unit in the transport system of South Africa is mischievous in its tendency because it encourages the inland community to believe that when capital expenditure is incurred on a particular point, it is being incurred in the special

(21) Cape Argus, 7.9.22.
 (22) Cape Times, 7.9.22.
 (23) Ibid 14.9.22.

interests of that port and not in the general interests of the country a very short-sighted line of reasoning".⁽²⁴⁾

The Chamber of Commerce's reply also contained the argument that the figure of £300,000 to be spent on the harbour quoted by Jagger was entirely misleading as the actual amount to be spent on extension was only £50,000. After further detailed criticisms the Chamber's memorandum went on to say that the whole question resolved itself into "whether the Administration believes in the future of the country, believes in the great industrial and agricultural expansion which the next decade is expected to bring, and whether it realises that the only sound policy is to set our house in order and be ready for a great and general revival of trade in all directions. This is a bigger question than the immediate balancing of revenue and expenditure."⁽²⁵⁾

This was obviously not what Jagger thought. Throughout his term of office, he considered the balancing of revenue and expenditure to be his task. He could not see beyond this immediate task and as a result his policy remained a short-sighted, amputated one. The next stage in the campaign for harbour development came with the announcement that Sir George Buchanan, an eminent engineer, would investigate the problem of Table Bay Harbour development.⁽²⁶⁾ In the meantime the debate continued between Jagger and the Chamber of Commerce with both the Cape Times and the Rand Daily Mail regularly adding fuel to the controversy. In September Jagger did make one important concession - after meeting a deputation from the powerful Fruit Growers' Exchange of South Africa on September 18. He announced that he was considering the provision of more suitable cold storage accommodation,

(24) Cape Times, 14.9.22

(25) Ibid.

(26) Cape Argus, 12.9.22.

since the Railways Administration realised "the absolute need for the development of deciduous exports".⁽²⁷⁾ This did not, however, stave off the stream of editorials referring to "dissipation of effort"⁽²⁸⁾ and the "pursuit of non-essentials"⁽²⁹⁾, and to these comments were added appeals for port development in Cape Town from such diverse bodies as the South African Commercial Exchange and the Agricultural Union Congress.⁽³⁰⁾

Then, in late October, the Cape Argus produced a lengthy article during the course of which it was pointed out that in 1910 the Cape had contributed the Cape Town Harbour profit of £429,000 to the Railways and Harbours Consolidated Revenue Fund. Yet between 1910 and 1922 the government furnished only £392,841 on the equipment and improvement of the harbour - a reasonable cause for complaint.⁽³¹⁾

On November 3, 1922, Jagger held a "report-back" meeting with his constituents. At this meeting he denied starving Cape Town Harbour of funds, and generally presented a rosy picture of the future, avoiding contentious remarks. The possibility of railway extension was held out as a sop - pending the forthcoming report of Sir George Buchanan which, he said, would probably be completed by the second week in November.⁽³²⁾ By early January, 1923, however, this report had not yet been released. The Cape Times said that at Buchanan's appointment many had felt that he would come out with a verdict favourable to the government as he had already decided that Table Bay had no case for development.⁽³³⁾ The position had now, according to the Cape Times, changed and Buchanan had apparently recommended immediate extensions.

(27) Cape Times, 19.9.22.
 (28) Ibid 11.10.22.
 (29) Rand Daily Mail, 10.10.22.
 (30) Cape Times, 14.10.22.
 (31) Cape Argus, 24.10.22.
 (32) Cape Argus, 4.11.22 & Rand Daily Mail, 4.11.22.
 (33) Cape Times, 4.1.23.

"Dock Improvements"



Transitive Rows: "It's all right now. She's paid up."
(Mr. E. Rows informed a "Cape Times" representative that he was satisfied with the amount that the Minister of Railways had allocated for Dock Improvements this year.)

[Cape Times 16.6.23]

It also criticised Jagger very strongly for delaying tactics in not releasing or publishing the report. It even went so far as to question Jagger's integrity on this issue - a quite remarkable action at this time for a government-supporting newspaper. (34)

On February 9 a deputation from the Chamber of Commerce visited Jagger and he appears finally to have capitulated. He told the deputation that funds for dock development in Table Bay Harbour were to be placed on the Loan Estimates for 1923-1924. It was, however, only with the publication of Sir George Buchanan's report that Jagger's previous position was made entirely untenable. Buchanan quite explicitly maintained "the pressing necessity" for an immediate extension of the docks". (35) All protest subsided and in May, 1923, Jagger provided for £250,000 for the extension and improvement of the docks.

In retrospect the issue is of very minor political significance, yet at the time reflected very badly on Jagger, who was, of course, already an extremely unpopular Minister. The Table Bay Docks were without doubt inadequate for handling an expanding trade; it possessed only one deep-water berth and its cold storage accommodation was very unsatisfactory. The port was of both national and international significance. In addition the Cape sea route had always been of immense strategic importance, and the growing importance at this time of the Panama and Suez routes merely increased the need for improvements to the harbour. All these factors working in conjunction with the fact that world shipping was at this time developing very rapidly and that international economic mobility was ever on the increase should

(34) Cape Times, 4.1.23.

(35) U.G. 18 - 23, p.15.

have been apparent to Jagger. It was unfortunate that his bogey of economy should have clouded his judgement, added to his already considerable unpopularity and consequently, that of the Smuts government.

CHAPTER V

JAGGER'S THORNY PROBLEMS : A MISCELLANY

One of the thorny problems confronting Jagger during his tenure of office was that of the railways of German South-West Africa. In May 1922, Jagger introduced the South-West Africa Railways and Harbours Bill, the object of which was to incorporate the railways in South-West Africa completely and entirely in the railways of the Union, an extra mileage of 1331.⁽¹⁾ Ironically when one considers the position of South-West Africa today, the National Party very strongly opposed Jagger's Bill. The attack was led by Havenga who accused Jagger of wanting to confiscate the South-West Africa railways; he maintained that the mandate in respect of South Africa did not entitle the Union Government to appropriate these railways as this would then be a violation of the Treaty of Versailles which had only allowed the Union Government to act as "guardian" of the territory. Hertzog then went on to state that the country feared that this was merely the first step towards total annexation of the Protectorate, which would add to the bitterness and hatred in the country.⁽²⁾ Another objection which was frequently reiterated was that it was alleged the Union "would be saddled with the deficits on the South-West African Railways".⁽³⁾ The Opposition's reaction was so antagonistic that Jagger referred the Bill to the Select Committee on Railways and Harbours almost immediately after the start of the second reading debate. There was also substantial opposition outside parliament. The issue of the Railways

(1) Debates, 2.5.22, p. 174, col. 2.
(2) Ibid col. 3.
(3) Ibid 20.5.22, p. 223, col. 1.

"bearing the burden" of the South-West African Railways deficit was particularly resented by the inland areas which, according to the Rand Daily Mail, would bear the brunt of the cost.⁽⁴⁾ Strong protests on the same grounds were launched by various bodies, such as the Bloemfontein Chamber of Commerce.⁽⁵⁾

When the amended Bill was returned to the House of Assembly at the end of May, Havenga once again objected to what he called the principle of annexation or confiscation embodied in the Bill. Havenga then introduced another objection, one which was to dominate the rest of the debate. It was asserted that the Bill interfered with the private rights of the railways in the Protectorate, for one of the clauses of the Bill stated, inter alia, that "no private railways shall be constructed within the territory and no private railways whether constructed before or after the commencement of the Act, shall be worked within the territory."⁽⁶⁾ The opposition then proudly set itself up as the protectors of private railways in South-West Africa, and at the same time attacked Jagger for his autocratic obstinacy and his attitude of looking at everything in terms of commodities, while overlooking the human factor at all times. This was, in this particular instance, grossly unfair to Jagger, but he had to face this type of criticism throughout the period he was Minister of Railways and Harbours. The unfortunate aspect about it all was that Jagger never did learn to be less forthright and outspoken, less obstinate and less one-sided in his determination to get things done -

(4) Rand Daily Mail, 11.5.22.

(5) Cape Times, 12.5.22.

(6) Ibid 31.3.22.

irrespective of other priorities. He always remained more honest and above-board than politic or politically sagacious.⁷

Another "mini-crisis" which faced Jagger in parliament was that which followed his introduction of a Railways Construction Bill in June 1922. The first objections came of course from those members of parliament whose own particular areas were not included in the new Bill. Generally the Bill was greeted with approval, especially as it came from Jagger, the one man in the cabinet who had been breathing fire and brimstone for well over a year, as far as economising was concerned. The Bill itself provided for 847 miles of new railway at a cost of approximately £4,000.000.⁽⁸⁾ Jagger had said during the previous year that railway extensions should be the railways' first priority, but in 1921 this had not been provided for because of the financial situation. (See Chapter I.) Now, although welcoming the extensions, the opposition criticised Jagger for changing his policy in 1922. It did, admittedly, appear illogical since as far as the government was concerned there had as yet been no appreciable improvement in the railway finances. The decision was presumably politically expedient at the time - which would lead one to assume that the obstinate, principled, uncompromising Jagger would not have agreed to the decision. His performance during the debates on the Bill was luke-warm, but that is perhaps reading too much into the affair. The most difficult criticisms to face for Jagger, came in the Committee stage of the Construction Bill. J.P. Mostert (Nat., Namaqualand) told parliament that Jagger had told the railway authorities to refuse Mostert's request to inspect the various traffic officers' reports on the lines of railway

(7) J.W. Mushet in Immelman Files.
(8) Debates, 22.6.22, p. 298, col. 2.

which were to be built. These reports ostensibly stated why certain lines were thought to be more important than others. The whole debate took on a rather unpleasant character with accusations of party political swindling in the air. It is unlikely that Jagger was implicated in this, yet the conclusion drawn by a stranger to the scene would have been that he was implicated. Jagger probably refused access for the very reason which he gave in parliament - because he felt they were purely departmental reports for the information of the Railways Administration. He disregarded the consequences of his actions as he did not care at all if scandalous things were said about him. The incident was in itself of a very minor nature - its importance lying in the adverse publicity it gave to Jagger and its providing yet another example of a Jagger riding roughshod over all opposition, a characteristic which he shared with his Prime Minister, and one which, regrettably, seems to have become endemic in South African politics.

Jagger also had a somewhat torrid time with the introduction of the Railways and Harbours Service Amendment and Further Provision Bill on March 26, 1923. Moving the second reading Jagger proposed to refer the Bill to the Select Committee on Railways and Harbours. The Bill itself was not of great political significance - it provided for, inter alia, conditions of permanent employment and ways of dealing with inefficiency, misconduct and criminal prosecution.⁽⁹⁾ It also tended to increase the power of the Minister of Railways and Harbours somewhat arbitrarily. One of the aspects of the Bill which was most strongly criticised was that which provided for railwaymen to appeal to a board

(9) Debates, 27.3.23, p. 187.

when charged with misconduct, but without allowing him adequate legal representation. As G.B. van Zyl pointed out in parliament, this then was not even an appeal.⁽¹⁰⁾ Another aspect which caused some trouble was that, from some of the clauses, it seemed as though it might be possible for the Minister of Railways and Harbours to prevent certain organisations appearing before the Select Committee on Railways and Harbours.

It was of course feared at this time of the Jagger-N.U.R.A.H.S. feud that the Bill, if it became law, would be used against the N.U.R.A.H.S. by Jagger. The first protest meeting on the Bill was held on February 11. The General Secretary of the N.U.R.A.H.S. addressing the second protest meeting on March 11 said that the main tendency of the Bill was "to benefit vested interests and there is too much legislation by regulation. We are being placed in the hands of those who make the regulations"⁽¹¹⁾ The furore about the Bill arose shortly after Jagger's attack on Moore in the House of Assembly and consequently the resentment aroused by the arbitrary nature of the new Bill was far greater. Another large protest meeting which was held at this time was addressed by Morris Alexander and Messrs. Snow, Madeley and Sampson of the Labour Party,⁽¹²⁾ all of whom warned the railwaymen to guard the few rights and privileges which they had left. This was an exaggerated view of the Bill, which embodied some good principles but was marred a great deal by its autocratic nature. Another indication of how unpopular the measure was, is provided by the almost incredible fact that even the staid The Cape severely

(10) Debates, 27.3.23, p. 187, col. 2.

(11) Railway Review, vol. IV, No. 60, p.12.

(12) Cape Times, 26.3.23.

criticised both Jagger and Burton for wanting to regrade the "lower ranks" of the public service.⁽¹³⁾ There was also a very strongly worded protest from the Executive Committee of the Railways and Harbours Salaried Staff Association.⁽¹⁴⁾

The Bill was hailed as a "measure of great importance", a "Railwaymen's charter" by the Cape Argus⁽¹⁵⁾ but this term was sarcastically refuted by Snow in the House of Assembly who claimed that no one would look on it as a "Railwaymen's Charter" unless it were substantially amended. Unfortunately the unsavoury dictation of attitude which had caused so much resentment during the debates on the 1922 Railways Construction Bill once again manifested itself in Jagger. He refused to accede to Alexander's request for a Sub-Committee report to be placed on the Table of the House. (This report had led to the introduction of the Bill.) Alexander angrily retorted that it appeared to be a "new doctrine for a Minister to treat Parliament as he pleased and as if the members were schoolchildren and were being deprived of something by a teacher".⁽¹⁶⁾ It was an apt analogy as that was how Jagger looked upon encumbrances. Pearce's comments in another context seem to indicate the climate of opinion at this stage as far as their "burden", Jagger, was concerned - "The methods of the Minister were wrong and a danger to the State Humanity was dependent on its environment, and the Minister's environment had been that of pounds, shillings and pence, and to carry on things on business lines."⁽¹⁷⁾ The Bill was eventually dropped in June, 1923, and reintroduced

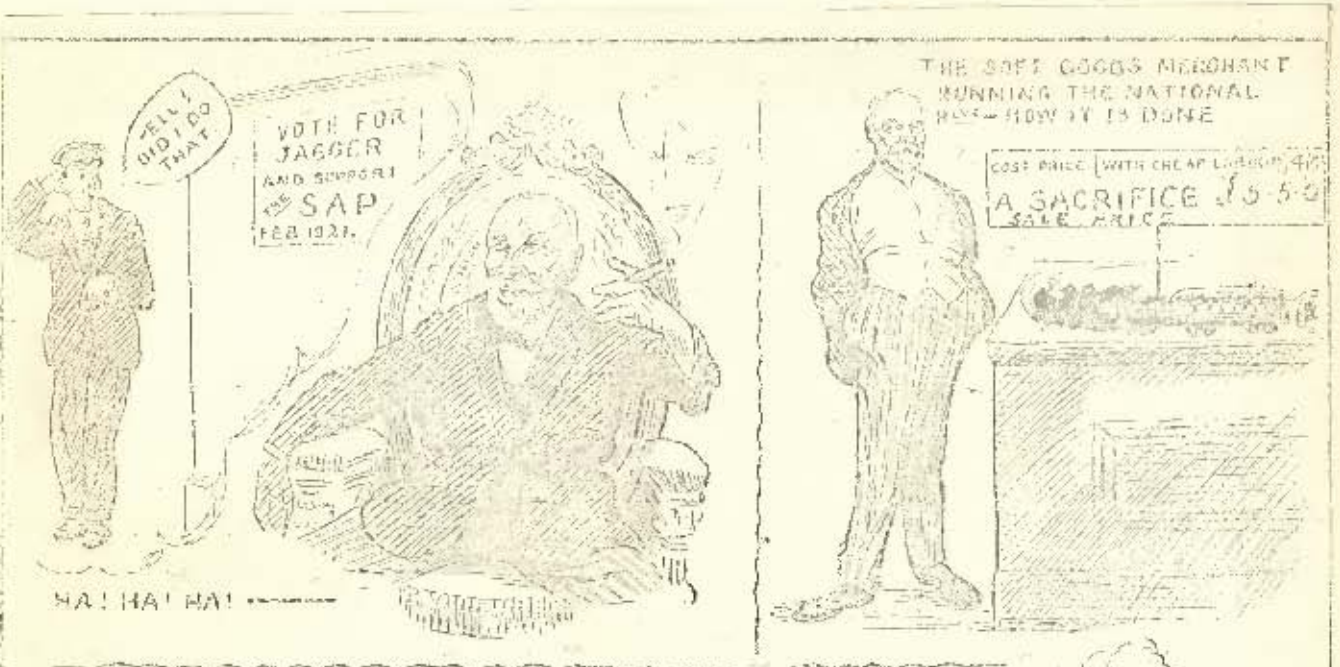
(13) The Cape, Vol. 16, No. 402, 6.4.23, p.3.

(14) Rand Daily Mail, 7.4.23.

(15) Cape Argus, 2.3.23.

(16) Debates, 27.3.23, p. 188, col. 3.

(17) Ibid 13.3.23, p. 146, col. 1.



HA! HA! HA!



HOW MUCH MORE CAN I PILE ON?

George 22

THAT SCARECROW WILL PUT THE WIND UP THEM.

THE WRECKER

IF I CAN GET ORGANISATION OFF THE RAILS THEY'RE FINISHED & I'M SAFE.

"JAGGERISMS."

in an amended form during the 1924 session. Here it appeared that there was a feeling on the part of the railwaymen in general that some of their rights were being taken away, particularly as regarded the rights of the pre-Union railway servants. People felt that the Railways Administration's tendency to govern by regulation was being increased. Parliament was however prorogued before the Bill could become law.

Jagger would set his sights on something, and though prepared to listen to others, would never change his mind. Though couched in polemical rhetoric these comments from the Railway Review have a lot of truth in them concerning Jagger's attitude. "It is of course inevitable that such a business personality should carry out these 'big business' principles into the management of a big national concern. He has lived and flourished in an atmosphere of bargaining and 'profit' and might be expected to be incapable of taking any broader national view of the circumstances, and the obligations of a people's railway"(18)

On July 22, 1922, General Smuts' offer to Rhodesia of very broad and extremely generous terms for its incorporation into the Union were published for the first time. Since 1919 there had been a long series of negotiation between the British Government and the Chartered Company as to Rhodesia's future. Smuts was very keen to incorporate Rhodesia in the Union and had presumably had this possibility in mind for some time. Negotiations were held with Smuts in October 1921 on the terms. After their publication in July a referendum on the question of incorporation was announced but, despite Smuts' efforts, the Responsible Government Party, opposed to

(18) Railway Review, Vol. III, No. 39, p.3.

incorporation, gained a decisive victory.⁽¹⁹⁾ Many factors played a part in the decision of Rhodesians not to enter the Union, Jagger's railway policy being of some importance in this respect. In the first place Rhodesia's white population was rather small and was strung out in close proximity to its railways.⁽²⁰⁾ The latter were consequently of some importance to Rhodesians as a whole, a large number of whom were railwaymen. Jagger's railway policy at this time was extremely unpopular and some South African railwaymen made no bones about warning Rhodesian railwaymen what they were in for, with Jagger as Minister of Railways and Harbours. For example, a meeting of railwaymen, convened at Salt River on Sunday, August 28, 1922 "to draw the attention of the public to the manner in which they are being treated by the present Minister of Railways and the Railways Administration", sent the following telegram to the Rhodesian Workers' Union:

"Salt River shopmen at meeting yesterday to protest against lower rates of pay and increased hours for shopmen coming into effect today, resolved telegraph warning railway workers in Rhodesia from lightly entering into this Union where railway conditions are so unstable and precarious Kindly convey this your workers"⁽²¹⁾

The Railways Administration immediately issued an explanatory statement and accused the meeting referred to of attempting to embarrass the government in its policy of bringing about entry of Rhodesia into the Union⁽²²⁾ - an assertion which was quite possible.

In the same month Smuts visited Rhodesia to campaign for incorporation and Sir William Hoy accompanied him there -

(19) E.A.Walker (ed.): A History of Southern Africa, (London, 1957, rev.1962), pp. 594-599.

(20) Railway Review, Vol. III, No. 39, p. 595.

(21) Cape Times, 29.8.22.

(22) Ibid 1.9.22.

to explain what the railwaymen faced, from the Administration's point of view.⁽²³⁾ But Hoy "the very able, but sometimes overmasterful General Manager was not very tactful in his interviews with the leaders of the men on the Rhodesian railway"⁽²⁴⁾ Further evidence of the importance of Jagger's policy in connection with this question is provided by the mass protest meeting, already referred to in this chapter, against the Railways Services Amendment Act on March 12, 1923. At this meeting a prominent member of the Rhodesian Union of Railwaymen, Kellar, described how they, up North, looked "down South" and when they saw what was going on, they decided against joining the Union.⁽²⁵⁾ Kellar went on to recount a personal brush with Jagger at an interview and spoke of "Jagger and Company and their press" being afraid of large organisations - his remarks on the importance of the railway question as regards Rhodesias's entry are thus quite probably exaggerated. Jagger's policy was, however, a factor in the success of the Responsible Government Party and as a result added to his unpopularity in some circles and increased the tendency within the South African Party to think of Jagger as a liability.

Jagger had been a very staunch Free Trader all his life. "He honestly believed in keeping customs-duties down - this suited his business".⁽²⁶⁾ His guiding maxim in business was to buy cheaply overseas and to sell dear. Speaking of Jagger, Mr. J.M. Stephens said they all knew Mr. Jagger to be an out-and-out free trader. He thought Mr. Jagger must have been born that way. He was about the only honest free trader in Parliament today, ploughing a lonely

(23) Debates, 17.3.23, p. 162, col. 1.

(24) B.K.Long: Drummond Chaplin, His Life and Times in Africa (London, 1941), p. 279.

(25) Cape Times, 13.3.23.

(26) Immelman Files.

furrow, and standing alone, an object of much admiration to his fellow members on account of his courage, representing as he did an almost extinct race."⁽²⁷⁾ Ashworth, however, maintains that being a realist Jagger was not above taking advantage of protection and relates how Jagger started first a footwear then a clothing factory when protection duties were first introduced.⁽²⁸⁾ "He [Jagger] is a fierce Free Trader raging in a chamber of calm and smug but unshakeably convinced Protectionists. He rasps out the austere principles of Gladstonian finance to easy-going men who like the State to spend with a liberal hand."⁽²⁹⁾ Jagger's very strong attachment to the principles of Free Trade is something for which most remembered him. It also provided the official reason for his resignation from the Cabinet on May 23, 1924. Most parliamentarians knew or would have deduced that from 1921 onwards the cabinet would have been divided on the question of protection and free trade. Jagger was in fact often criticised in parliament by the National Party and the Labourites for buying overseas because it was cheaper there.

One of these critics (Stewart of the Labour Party) asserted that while at that time 38 per cent of the railways' rolling stock was bought in South Africa, if Jagger introduced protective duties 75 per cent of its rolling stock could be produced in South Africa. This Jagger very firmly denied on many occasions, asserting time and again that since he had become Minister of Railways and Harbours not a single order had been placed overseas. This was however the result of economy rather than a desire to nurture South African industry. In the Budget of 1923 allusions were made by Burton to the protection of industries in South Africa which caused some

(27) J.W.Jagger: "Taxation", Economic Society of South Africa, Proceedings of Conference, July, 1925, p.151.

(28) H.G.Ashworth, Esq. Oral Evidence.

(29) Name. Do Cit - 99

comments during the session regarding dissension in the Cabinet, but nothing much was said publicly. Jagger however wrote to Smuts stating that he felt the time had come when he should reconsider his position as a member of the Government. He stated that a policy of industrial development was "unsound and unjust" for the result is to "increase the cost of living, or handicap other industries more natural to the country".⁽³⁰⁾ His other objections included the fact that the number of protected industries was rising and that protection heightened the cost of living and thus handicapped the white man in his competition with the coloured. Smuts presumably reassured Jagger for he remained on as Minister of Railways for another fourteen months.

Very little was said publicly on the question of free trade and protection for the next year. On March 26, 1924, however, Jagger announced in parliament that the government had been considering manufacturing its own railway materials but was now continuing its old policy. In late April however, when Smuts issued his election manifesto, he promised the country a huge railway factory. Then on May 13 Smuts wrote to Jagger stating that he had heard from Sir Alfred Hennessy that if the South African Party were to win the elections Jagger would not rejoin the Cabinet. After expressing his regret Smuts said that it would be wiser to face the situation now rather than to wait for a future crisis. He went on to say: "There is further feeling in my mind that your courageous administration of the Railways has put up the backs of many railwaymen who threaten to vote against our candidates as long as they think you will continue to run the Railways in future. I do not think much of this point.

(30) Smuts Papers, Vol. 26, No. 191, Jagger to Smuts, 22.3.23.

But there it is. And if in any case you make up your mind to go, it might serve the cause of our party in some small way in some few constituencies if you were tactfully to announce your intention before the date of the elections, and to base your action purely on the industrial point..."⁽³¹⁾

On May 19, Jagger sent his resignation to Smuts in the course of which he stated that upon seeing the stress laid by Smuts on an industrial policy in his Pretoria manifesto he felt compelled to resign from the Government.⁽³²⁾ Smuts accepted the resignation in gracious terms in a letter dated May 22 and thanked Jagger for his courageous work in administering the Railway Department.⁽³³⁾ Whether or not this was Smuts' true opinion is more difficult to judge. He was obviously grateful to Jagger for his work on the railways finances but probably feared the consequences of his pruning. Sir Edgar Walton certainly thought of Jagger as a liability - though possibly a grudge held from Jagger's violent criticism of Walton in the Cape Parliament. Walton wrote to Smuts in 1925 stating that "C.W.Malan was ready to take a wider view of his railway responsibilities than was our friend Jagger, who has, in a marked degree, I think, the defects of his very extraordinary qualities as a 'koopman'".⁽³⁴⁾ It was suggested at the time by Ons Vaderland that Jagger's resignation was a "put-up job" and that if the South African Party were returned to power Jagger would resume his post as Minister of Railways and Harbours.⁽³⁵⁾ To a certain extent Sir Alfred Hennessy corroborates this view for he maintains that Smuts asked Jagger to resign for the specific purpose of gaining some of the alienated railwaymen's votes.⁽³⁶⁾

(31) Smuts Papers, Vol. 30, No.106, Smuts to Jagger, 13.5.24.
 (32) Cape Times, 23.5.24.
 (33) Ibid
 (34) Smuts Papers, Vol. 34, No.339, Walton to Smuts, 7.1.25.
 (35) Immelman Files.
 (36) Ibid.

"The Duettists"



[Cape Times 29.12.21]

This of course is not in accordance with the facts as far as Jagger's resignation was concerned. However it probably is partially true as regards the timing of his resignation.

Jagger remained as stubborn, arrogant, brusque, forthright and as short-sighted as ever. The whole question of his attitude to protection thus assumed great political significance in the 1924 election campaigns. Thus we see the Pact attacking the government for failing to deal with unemployment and arguing that if South African industries were subsidised thousands would be given jobs.⁽³⁷⁾ On June 10 for example, Malan made a passionate attack on "Jagger and his colleagues" for being the lackeys of overseas factories.⁽³⁸⁾ Jagger's tenure as Minister of Railways and Harbours was thus filled with both small and large problems, most assuming at one stage or another the proportions of a crisis. In themselves the take-over of the South-West African railways, the construction of a few branch lines and the revision of the conditions of employment of railwaymen are of infinitesimal significance. It seems in fact even ludicrous to discuss them in an historical context. However, the passions which Jagger aroused by his actions are in different ways exemplified in each of these problems. Through his industry, his obsession for economy, his exacting standards and his autocratic actions, Jagger made himself, his Administration and his Party extremely unpopular.

(37) J. Hughes: "Factors Promoting a Victory for the Pact in the 1924 Election", (B.A.(Hons) Research Essay, University of Cape Town, 1966), p. 17.

(38) Cape Times, 11.6.24.

CHAPTER VI
A SCANDAL FOR JAGGER

In early 1924 Jagger faced yet another crisis. A scandal over the construction of a grain elevator at the Durban Harbour had been building up ever since the 1923 parliamentary session. Now in early 1924 it broke and, though not directly involved, Jagger had to bear much of the blame.

On February 14, 1923, J. Stewart of the Labour Party asked Jagger for information on the "trouble" with the grain elevator at Durban.⁽¹⁾ When he replied to the debate Jagger admitted that the Railways Administration had had considerable trouble with the construction of the Durban grain elevator, particularly with the foundations. He did not, however, give parliament any other information except to say that consultations had been held with the Railways and Harbours Board, the General Manager and the construction engineer, and that "they had decided now on a course of action which he hoped would be successful, although he did not say it would be".⁽²⁾ Later on March 12, in moving the second reading of the Railways and Harbours Appropriation (Part) Bill, Jagger referred to a promise given on February 14 that he would make a statement in regard to the grain elevators. He then gave an abbreviated explanation of the series of disasters which had taken place at the Durban docks.

The Union Government had, early in 1918, appointed a committee to enquire into an elevator system for the Union. This committee reported in July, 1918, recommending the erection of three port elevators and sixty-two country

(1) Debates, 15.2.23, p. 78, col. 3.

(2) Ibid 15.2.23, p. 79, col. 3.

elevators, and also an investigation on the spot by a consulting engineer with special experience in elevator construction.⁽³⁾ The elevator scheme was adopted by the cabinet in August, 1918. In February, 1919, Mr. Littlejohn Philip was appointed as consulting engineer until February, 1920 "for the purpose of advising the government generally on the matter of elevators - the best locality and their utility"⁽⁴⁾, with a salary of £1000 a month and £250 a month expenses. Philip was reappointed in November, 1920 (almost entirely as a result of an interview with the General Manager on 16th October - where it was practically decided that he would be consulting engineer for the execution of the scheme⁽⁵⁾) for three years. In December 1923 he was again reappointed, until such time as the Durban grain elevator was completed. All this time Philip's position as a director of Spencer and Company (construction engineers in the field of grain elevators) was well-known to the Railways Administration - a position from which he resigned in September 1922. During his tenure of office of fifty-four months, he was in South Africa for only thirty-five months.

The actual site of the Durban elevator at Congella was approved by all of the local officials as well as the Railways Administration - despite the fact that it lay on the line of the natural drainage of part of Berea. It was decided to construct the elevator on reinforced concrete piles, surmounted by cement slabs - again despite the fact that after the first three boreholes were sunk and completed in July and August, 1919, it was plain that there was a soft belt of clay which could not be expected to give sufficient

(3) U.G. 26 - 24, p.2.

(4) Debates, 13.3.23, p. 144, col. 2.

(5) U.G. 26 - 24, p.15.

support to pile foundations.⁽⁶⁾ The main elevator was in two portions - the working house (containing the machinery) and the storage annexe.⁽⁷⁾ The "considerable trouble with construction" mentioned earlier arose out of the fact that the level of the foundations slab carrying the working house was eleven feet lower than the level of the slab carrying the storage annexe. It would naturally be thought that the first piles to be driven down would be on the site of the working house. Yet the piles for it were only started on February 15, 1922 - a week after the annexe foundations were completed. This had disastrous results in that the slab foundation of the storage annexe cracked. Despite Jagger's lame attempts at justifying the Railways Administration - "at least nine-tenths of the elevators in the world were built on a pile foundation"⁽⁸⁾ - the great carelessness of the Administration's decisions could not be hidden. As the Commission of Enquiry later pointed out, the scheme was entirely unsuitable for the Durban site.⁽⁹⁾

Then, in May, 1922, Jagger appointed a departmental committee to enquire into the best course of action to follow this initial error. A.W.Menckins, the superstructure contractor, on July 12, proposed to sink ninety concrete cylinders to rock. Yet as Jagger said in parliament, "when the contractor began to proceed vigorously with the sinking of cylinders it was found that the excavations of ground made for this purpose created cavities under the working house foundations, which caused an inrush of ground from the surrounding areas. The force of this inrush was so great that a number of cylinders already sunk were shifted

(6) U.G. 26 - 24, p.6.

(7) Debates, 13.3.23, p. 144, col. 3.

(8) Ibid

(9) U.G. 26 - 24, p.8.

out of plumb"(10)

The usually meticulous Jagger , who had an "attitude of honesty, a fairness [which] showed in his business as in public life so that all agreed he could be trusted implicitly and was 'a man straight and upright in all his dealings'"(11), carefully refrained, at this stage, from mentioning in parliament that much of the trouble stemmed from the fact that the site chosen lay in the line of the natural drainage of Berea. This had made the soil clayey and totally unsuitable for the methods of construction recommended by Littlejohn Philip and adopted by the Railways Administration. Had Jagger's reticence been known, it is unlikely that Charles Pearce would have commented as he did later during the same debate - "the methods of the Minister were wrong and a danger to the State, although on his principles he considered the Minister upright".(12)

This seems to show evidence of yet another contradictory quirk to Jagger. Most of his political opponents and even his most forceful critics acknowledged that they admired Jagger's integrity even if they distrusted his judgement. Hansard is littered with attacks on Jagger's railway policy, coupled with laudatory references to the "Minister's upright fairness and integrity". Yet the minor episode in the grain elevator scandal related above does seem to suggest that Jagger was at least for the time being, trying to withhold all the evidence. Later on in the same debate both Colonel Creswell and Major Hunt called on Jagger to appoint an enquiry, but he remained impervious to their appeals. Yet,

(10) Debates, 13.3.23, p. 145, col. 1.

(11) F.E.Auerbach: "Commerce - J.W.Jagger" in R.M. de Villiers (ed), Better Than They Knew, (Cape Town, 1972), p. 193.

(12) Debates, 13.3.23, p. 145, col. 1.

at this stage, there seems to have been surprisingly little real criticism of either Jagger's handling of this particular problem or of the whole elevator issue.

In his reply to the Railway Budget debate on April 26, 1923, Jagger again referred to the Durban elevator situation. He told parliament that on March 29, he had appointed a "commission of three eminent engineers" - Messrs. Ingham, Kanthack and Mackenzie - to inquire into the position at Durban.⁽¹³⁾ He went on to say that it would not be in the "public interest" for him to say more than that at the present.⁽¹⁴⁾ Once again Jagger managed to stave off controversy and, generally, all remained quiet regarding the elevator situation for the next two months, until parliament reached the committee stage on the Railways and Harbours Estimates. Boydell and Havenga led the attack on Jagger for shortsightedness and mismanagement as far as the grain elevators were concerned.

On June 20, 1923, Havenga asked Jagger for information as to whether it was true or not that £250,000 had been spent to no purpose whatever on the Durban elevator. Soon afterwards, Boydell asserted, quite correctly, that the Ingham Commission had recommended that the foundation contract be cancelled and that the work be done departmentally.⁽¹⁵⁾ Boydell went on to state quite specifically that there was something scandalous about the whole affair and asserted that there was a feeling in Natal "that something had been happening underground that should not" and that public opinion in Durban was up in arms.⁽¹⁶⁾ He also referred to the "very nasty impression on the public mind of Durban"

(13) U.G. 26 - 24, p. 71.

(14) Debates, 27.3.23, p. 256, col. 1.

(15) Ibid 21.6.23, p.414, col. 3 and U.G.26-24, pp 71-72.

(16) Ibid 22.6.23, p. 477, col.1.

by Littlejohn Philips' connection with Spencer and Company, the firm with the contract for the machinery. In his reply to the debate Jagger denied that any underground method had been employed and that the Administration had every hope of the construction scheme succeeding - although the total cost of the elevators would now be £1,909,000 which was £450,000 in excess of the estimates.⁽¹⁷⁾ He hedged somewhat on the question of an inquiry or investigation and said that the General Manager considered that "further investigation into the subject he [Boydell] had referred to was not desirable at present".⁽¹⁸⁾

There was little mention of the affair during the next few months and it was only early in January, 1924, when the Auditor-General's report was released, that it began to assume the proportions of a large-scale scandal. Editorials began to appear in the press speaking of a "scandal of the first magnitude"⁽¹⁹⁾, "high-handed secrecy and the withholding of information"⁽²⁰⁾, while the Auditor-General rather dramatically remarked that there was no indication of "an inquiry to determine the loss, and the facts are not getting any fresher; the actors are departing, accounts are being paid and the foundations are being covered with a solid apron of concrete three feet thick".⁽²¹⁾ The role of Mr. Littlejohn Philip in the whole affair was already at this stage subject to widespread suspicion. Yet, since Jagger refused to hold an inquiry or release some of the relevant papers, the Railway Administration was also under suspicion.

The whole affair was aired considerably in parliament

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- (17) Debates, 21.6.23, p. 415, col. 2.
 (18) Ibid 21.6.23, p.418, col. 1.
 (19) Cape Times, 24.1.24.
 (20) Rand Daily Mail, 25.1.24.
 (21) U.G. 43 - 24, p.12.

on February, 1924 when Boydell, in an obviously well-prepared speech, strongly appealed for the appointment of a select committee "to enquire into and report as to the responsibility for the excessive cost, and the circumstances in connection with the carrying out of the work of erecting the grain elevator at Durban".⁽²²⁾ Jagger refused this request despite openly admitting the need for an inquiry. His refusal was on the grounds that, since the issue referred to a highly technical matter, a select committee of parliament was a totally unsuitable body to enquire into the affair and to apportion any blame. There is much to be said for Jagger's point of view here and he argued his case very skillfully. He was on less steady ground when he objected to an immediate enquiry, since he felt that an enquiry would best be held once the work on the Durban grain elevator had been completed, since the construction job was a very difficult one and required the constant attention of the engineers.⁽²³⁾ He proposed instead a committee of three to investigate the issue - two qualified engineers with a lawyer as chairman.

Creswell seconded Boydell's motion and seemed to have taken umbrage as a result of Jagger's speech which, he asserted, disregarded the House of Assembly and its prerogatives and ignored the principle of ministerial responsibility.⁽²⁴⁾ He also said he was not prepared to trust a government-appointed commission for "the country is tired of the government and the way they appoint commissions, confined to their own political friends." C.W.Malan also maintained that Jagger had insulted the dignity of the House. "Die Minister weet nie hoe sterk die gevoel is nie oor

(22) Debates, 12.2.24, p.185.

(23) Ibid 12.2.24, p. 191.

(24) Ibid p. 192.

hierdie kwart miljoen pond wat verkwis is. Dit word gevoel dat dit een van die ergste gevalle van verkwisting is wat daar vir 'n lang tyd voorgekom het."⁽²⁵⁾ Boydell's motion was not carried, being negatived by 61 votes to 50.

Considering the climate of opinion at the time, in particular the feelings of animosity towards Jagger by railwaymen generally, he was rather foolish in not acceding to the demands for an immediate enquiry - a mistake which it is perhaps not too far-fetched to say is in a small way analogous to some of President Nixon's shortsightedness at the present moment. Both men appear to have considered their positions beyond enquiry. Jagger's usual obduracy did not, however, prevail. A day or two after the debate on Boydell's motion, the Cape Times published a letter from Littlejohn Philip during the course of which the latter described the Auditor-General's Report as "incomplete, inaccurate, misleading and unfair".⁽²⁶⁾ On the following day Jagger announced in parliament that there would no longer be any delay in an enquiry.⁽²⁷⁾ It was finally appointed on February 27.

This commission's report was published on July 19, 1924. Its assessment of the loss - "We find that the total amount expended upon the Durban foundations under Mr. Philip's scheme was £212,740, the whole of which was wasted" - caused a very great outcry. The commission also asserted that the whole of the loss on the foundations was attributable to Philip's recklessness.⁽²⁸⁾ He was severely castigated by the commissioners, in particular for his insufficient exploration of the ground into which the piles had to be

(25) Debates, 12.2.24, p. 192.

(26) Cape Times, 15.2.24.

(27) Debates, 15.2.24, p. 257.

(28) U.G. 26 - 24, pp. 76-77.

driven, his failure to advise the Railways Administration to provide in the superstructural contract with Mr. Menckins that the contractor's operations should not begin until the foundations were satisfactorily completed, and his "culpable negligence in concluding the Menckins cylinder contract with a contractor who was incompetent to undertake the work".⁽²⁹⁾ The commission also criticised Philip's stipulation that he would only accept the post as consulting engineer on the condition that the right of his firm to tender for the supply of machinery should be conceded - a stipulation accepted by the Railways Board. "We think this provision was a departure from wholesome principles, both of business and morality."⁽³⁰⁾ On the whole, the commission found that "Mr. Philip's control of the situation was vacillating, uncertain and indecisive".

Both the Railways and Harbours Board and the General Manager were criticised for their shortsightedness in not taking cognisance of the unethical duality of Littlejohn Philip's position. The charges made by the General Manager and the Board against the departmental engineers on the scheme were firmly refuted by the commission. "We do not for a moment suggest that the Board or the General Manager are responsible for the engineering blunders, but they are mistaken in suggesting that the fault lies with the departmental engineers."⁽³¹⁾ It was also stated that the General Manager threw over the departmental committee without consultation and without enquiry into Mr. Philip's qualifications for carrying out the Durban foundations.⁽³²⁾

What of Jagger's role in the whole affair? As Minister of Railways and Harbours he was not of course directly

(29) U.G. 26 - 24, p. 78.

(30) Ibid p.19.

(31) Ibid p.75.

"Die pot en ketel"



DIE POT: "Waarom protesteer jy nie!"

DIE KETEL: "Hoekom sal ek so gek wees om teen te praat en tog voor te stem!"

[Meermale het die heer Marimau gedurende die laaste sitting 'n beroep gedoen op Minister Jagger, van onder sy medestanders, om tog sy stem te verhef teen regeringsvoorstelle. Maar los-ged.]

[Die Burger 18.6.22]

responsible for all the blunders, but at the same time he had to bear the political consequences of the scandal. In some instances though Jagger did share responsibility for the mistakes. In the first place, he had been specifically warned by the South African High Commissioner in London, in a personal letter, dated December 22, 1921, of the stupidity of allowing Littlejohn Philip's firm to secure the contract for almost the whole of the supply of the material to the chief contractor.⁽³³⁾ There is no evidence that Jagger took any notice of this warning and he must therefore share the responsibility for the "unethical duality" of Philip's position. In addition, as was pointed out earlier, in parliament it appeared that Jagger was withholding information from the rest of the House of Assembly concerning the scandal. This was a very foolish mistake on his part. It is true that the original contracts were signed well before Jagger came into office, but the whole matter was, after this date, dealt with in such an unsatisfactory manner that it is quite obvious that Jagger failed to take charge of the situation "or to make any endeavour to stop the tremendous loss of money which was going on"⁽³⁴⁾

Above all, however, the scandal proved to be yet another crisis for Jagger. His entire period of office was filled with crises, most of which he was able to weather. The effects on the Smuts government were not so superficial. The finances of the country had only recently begun to improve while Jagger had of course done marvels through strict economising on the railways finances, but this was largely at the expense of the political support of the rank

(33) U.G. 26 - 24, p. 45.

(34) Railway Service Gazette, March, 1925, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 8.

and file of the railwaymen. Consequently many felt that the blunders made over the construction of the grain elevators were the direct result of harrassed officials under the orders of an autocratic, fanatically penny-pinching Minister of Railways and Harbours. This aspect is clearly illustrated by a Cape Times report of the debate on Boydell's motion for an enquiry. During his reply Jagger explained that one of Philip's numerous decisions (to abandon the loading tests for the piles) had been made in the interests of economy. "Upon this remark there was a roar of ironic cheers and laughter from the opposition benches"⁽³⁵⁾ - an appropriate reaction considering the economising Jagger had himself initiated. In retrospect, however, the whole scandal is of minimal significance to South African history. In this particular essay its importance lies mainly in the fact that it showed Jagger in a rather ambivalent light instead of the usual cut-and-dried, no-nonsense picture we have of him. The scandal added to Jagger's unpopularity and provided another blow for the shaky Smuts government.

(35) Cape Times, 13.2.24.

CONCLUSION : THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN

Who was this man J.W.Jagger who caused so much animosity and bitterness in the early 1920's? John William Jagger was born in Northowram in Yorkshire on September 20, 1859. After receiving a primary school education at Burnsall Grammar School and some experience as an apprentice, he came to South Africa in 1880. He spent three years as a commercial traveller for the firm of Gordon, Mitchell and Company. On February 1, 1883, he established his own firm of J.W.Jagger and Company. The business expanded very rapidly, with branches soon opening all over the country - Johannesburg (1888), Port Elizabeth (1894), Rhodesia (1893) and Durban (1915). In 1885 Jagger married Mary Hall of Cape Town, who predeceased him by five years. They had two daughters.

In 1887 he joined the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce and by 1892 was prominent enough to be the Chamber's delegate to the Second Congress of Chambers of Commerce in London. He was President of the Cape Town Chamber in 1899-1900, 1906, 1909-1913, was first honorary secretary of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of South Africa, and was President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce from 1899 to 1904. Jagger also helped to found the Cape Technical College, the South African Political Association, the Economic Society of South Africa, was a fellow of the Society of Arts, a member of the South African Delville Wood Committee and a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society (" as a statistician he stands almost alone in the mercantile community")⁽¹⁾

(1) Mr. J.W.Jagger" in Prominent Men of the Cape Colony, South Africa, (Portland, 1902,p.492.

Jagger was the first Chairman of the Cape School Board from 1905 - 1911; from 1902 until 1930 was a member of the University of Cape Town Council; from 1912 - 1930 a trustee of the South African Museum, and was also a member of the Harbour Board. For some time too, Jagger was connected with the Somerset Hospital Board. During his years of association with the University he was for many years Chairman of its Finances Committee, while he himself donated upwards of £60,000 to the University during his lifetime as well as creating the Chairs of Economics and Education. The University was also the residuary legatee of his estate.

Jagger was first elected to the old Cape Legislative Assembly in 1902, and in 1910 was returned as the Unionist member for Cape Town Central. He was also a member of the Closer Union Society, eventually playing a prominent part at the National Convention. There, had it not been for Jagger, Cape Town would probably not have been the legislative capital of the Union. Merriman however, believed that, at the National Convention, Jagger had approached the question of the capital in "a narrow, commercial spirit"⁽²⁾ At the convention Jagger strongly opposed a federal structure because of the expenditure involved;⁽³⁾ favoured a uniform, colour-blind franchise for the Union,⁽⁴⁾ and objected to the number of Ministers to be appointed. Throughout his parliamentary career he lived up to his reputation as "watchdog of the public finance" as a trenchant

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- (1) Anon: "Mr. J. W. Jagger" in Prominent Men of the Cape Colony, South Africa, (Portland, 1902, p. 492.
- (2) P. Lewsen: Selections from the Correspondence of John X. Merriman, 1905-1924, Vol. 4, (Cape Town, 1969, p. 105.
- (3) L. M. Thompson: The Unification of South Africa, 1902-1910, (London, 1960), p. 190.
- (4) Ibid: p. 218.

and aggressive critic of fiscal policy.⁽⁵⁾ From 1910-1913 and 1925-1929 Jagger was an ordinary member of the House of Assembly Public Accounts Committee, and served as its Chairman from 1914 to 1920.⁽⁶⁾ In 1918 Jagger refused Botha's offer of a knighthood - in fact all his life he hated personal publicity and almost the only public honour he ever accepted was an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Cape Town University in 1929.⁽⁷⁾

As Minister of Railways and Harbours from 1921 until 1924 it has been shown that Jagger made himself excessively unpopular. Yet he certainly tackled what he knew would be a difficult task with great courage. It was this courage in fact which enabled him to address a meeting of Rand miners and mechanics (before he became a cabinet minister) on the advantages of a colour-blind franchise throughout South Africa. Jagger was a man of peculiar contradictions. Although an arrogant and authoritarian martinet, Jagger honestly believed in a non-racial franchise. According to his employees he was a very stern taskmaster yet he was the first Cape Town businessman to give his employees regular holidays. He was a fanatical man for economy, for buying cheaply and selling dearly, yet the evidence of acquaintances and his letter-books give an impression of highly efficient work, business acumen and an astounding generosity in response to appeals from sources of all kinds. "He took as his model the successful businessmen of Manchester and

(5) See, for example, J.T.Molteno: Further South African Recollections, (London, 1926) pp 117-122.

(6) Immelman Files.

(7) R.F.M.Immelman: "The Anniversary of a Capetonian's Generosity to the University of Cape Town", The Jaggerite, No. 13, July, 1951, p.7.

followed their methods. They had made almost a fetish of character, ability and integrity."⁽⁸⁾ Jagger was a stubborn man and, though prepared to listen to other views, seldom modified his own. Yet he was never afraid to admit that he was wrong. This inability to compromise caused his colleagues a certain amount of concern. Duncan wrote in February, 1921 on the prospect of Jagger being in the Cabinet that "Jagger will be a very difficult man to fit in and to work with because he confuses obstinacy with sincerity and does not understand compromise I fear he will make himself impossible unless he can adapt himself to new requirements".⁽⁹⁾

The issues which Jagger faced during his term of office as Minister of Railways and Harbours indicate that he never did learn to compromise. Yet he remained a "sincere, honest and determined man of unbounded enthusiasm ... who had thrown himself into the advocacy of free trade with a rooted objection to anything in our tariff system which made for protection".⁽¹⁰⁾ Ashworth maintains that Jagger had too narrow a vision to be a successful cabinet minister - a fairly accurate assessment of Jagger's tenure as Minister of Railways and Harbours. Jagger felt that he had to get rid of the railways deficit and, come what may, this he did. Yet by his very nature, Jagger, through honesty and frankness, gained the respect of friend and enemy alike. Even Die Burger commented that "Minister Jagger is 'n uiters bekwame besigheidsman by wie die taak om die spoorweë kragtens die grondwet op besigheids-

(8) Immelman: The Bulletin, 1958, p.31.

(9) Duncan Papers, I D 5 (o), Duncan to Lady Selborne, 15.2.21.

(10) G.H.Wilson: Gone Down the Years, (Cape Town, 1947), P.203.

beginnels te drywe in goeie hande is".⁽¹¹⁾ Though always unpopular, Jagger did "set the railways right". He, of all Smuts' cabinet, appeared in the news most frequently.

It was unfortunate that Jagger could not manage to take a broader view of his task in order to be perhaps a little less autocratic and energetic. The hopes which the Rand Daily Mail expressed when Jagger was appointed to the cabinet were not fulfilled - "..... we do trust that Mr. Jagger's virtue of economy will not develop into the vice of shortsighted retrenchment regardless of the future needs of the country"⁽¹²⁾ Jagger always tended to lose sight of the fact that people did suffer as a result of his policies. He remained a slave to his own purpose and drive until his death on June 21, 1930.

(11) Die Burger, 28.4.23.

(12) Rand Daily Mail, 23.3.21.

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After exploring, all too rapidly, the most obvious sources of which I had knowledge, I was confronted by a horrifying dearth of material directly referring to Jagger. As a result most of the evidence on his term as Minister of Railways and Harbours has been culled from official publications, and from newspapers. This unfortunately resulted in a somewhat limited picture of his career in the Cabinet. I regret that it was not possible for me to consult the Railway Archives in Johannesburg.

Both the Duncan and Alexander Collections were virtually useless, providing very little information on Jagger or the railways. The F.S.Malan papers are unfortunately very thin on the nineteen-twenties. The little that was relevant in the Smuts papers was, however, very useful and provided some interesting insights. The Jagger Library Archives holds a mass of material relating to Jagger, collected by Mr. R.F.M.Immelman, but contains little of value. Private files in the possession of Mr. Immelman were of far greater assistance and contained some interesting material, particularly on the attitudes held by those of Jagger's acquaintances whom Mr. Immelman was able to interview. My own attempts at interviewing Jagger's descendants and surviving acquaintances were generally abortive and merely affirmed, in my opinion, the vast superiority of the written word, as historical evidence, compared with that of oral evidence.

Blue books and other parliamentary publications were extremely helpful and gave very full information as far as the railways and the general tenor of the Smuts government were concerned. As with all the material

consulted for this essay, however, it was very difficult to assess what Jagger's actual role in each particular sphere was. Other than the snippets of personal detail culled from a wide variety of sources, the best overall view of Jagger's role, as Minister of Railways and Harbours, is probably that in Hansard, for which I used the debates as reported in the Cape Times, there being no official Hansard published for this period.

The Cape Times was used most extensively of the newspapers consulted, but its remarkably strong jingoistic slant gave a one-sided commentary on affairs. It was, however, very useful insofar as it gave Jagger an excellent coverage on most occasions, at times being surprisingly critical. This slant was, to a certain extent, balanced by use of the Cape Argus and the Rand Daily Mail, but these were only very slightly less partisan in their attitude to the politics of the time. On the other side of the political spectrum Die Burger was easily as biased as the Cape Times, using about four-fifths of its editorial space to attack Smuts, with the result that very little was said about Jagger. Consequently the so-called independent journals such as The Cape and The Round Table were sometimes helpful in restoring the balance.

The various service magazines consulted, such as the Railway Review and the Railways and Harbours Magazine, were useful in giving the attitudes held by railway employees towards Jagger's Administration. The Railway Review in particular illustrated how strong the antipathy to Jagger actually was during these years.

Of the published works on this period, the most useful was probably Neame's Some South African Politicians,

which is remarkably objective for its time; its pithy epigrams and perceptive insights into character were of great assistance. Other articles referring to Jagger specifically were mostly expanded or altered versions of Neame's ideas. There is little mention of Jagger by Smuts' biographers, while his name appears even more infrequently in the pages of the general histories. Of the latter the most useful were Kruger's The Making of a Nation and Walker's History of Southern Africa. The memoirs and biographies most useful for the general background included Hancock's volumes on Smuts and the reminiscences of Leslie Blackwell and W. Duncan Baxter. The theses looked at were mainly of a general nature. Those by Hughes and van der Schyff dealt with Jagger to a certain extent. The latter unfortunately contained little to recommend it.

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A P P E N D I C E S.

APPENDIX ONE

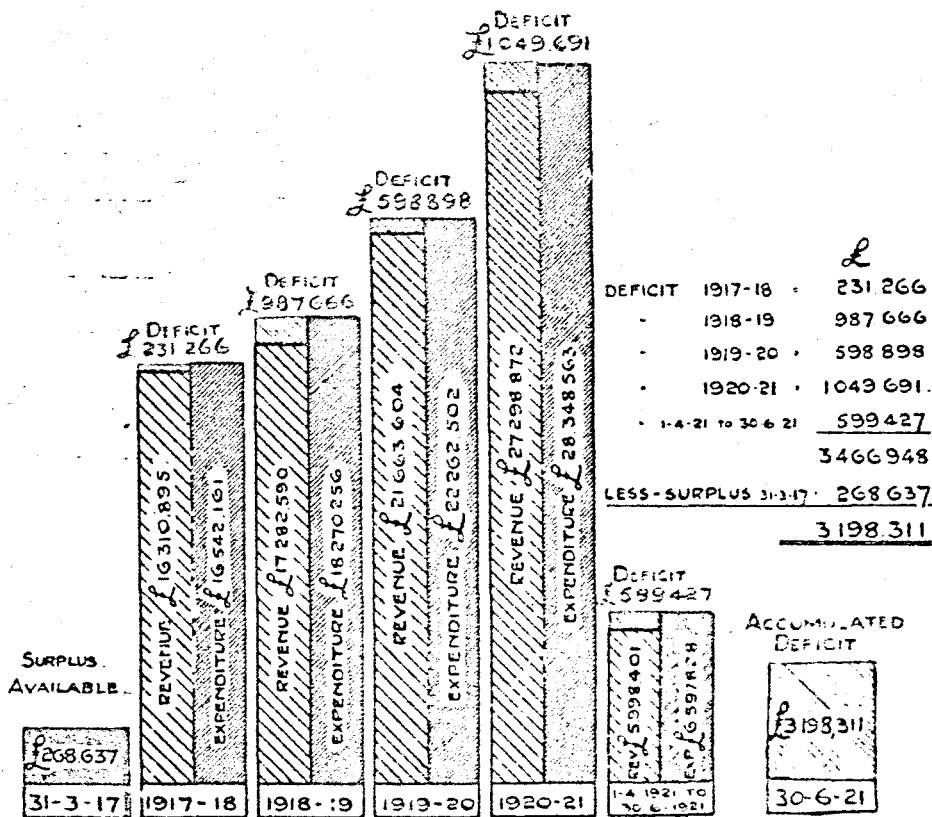
GROSS EARNINGS AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE.

31. 3. 17 - 30. 6. 21.

— DIAGRAM SHEWING :- —

— GROSS EARNINGS AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE. —

— YEAR BY YEAR SINCE 31ST MARCH 1917. —



from: Bulletin of the General Manager, No. 24.

APPENDIX TWO

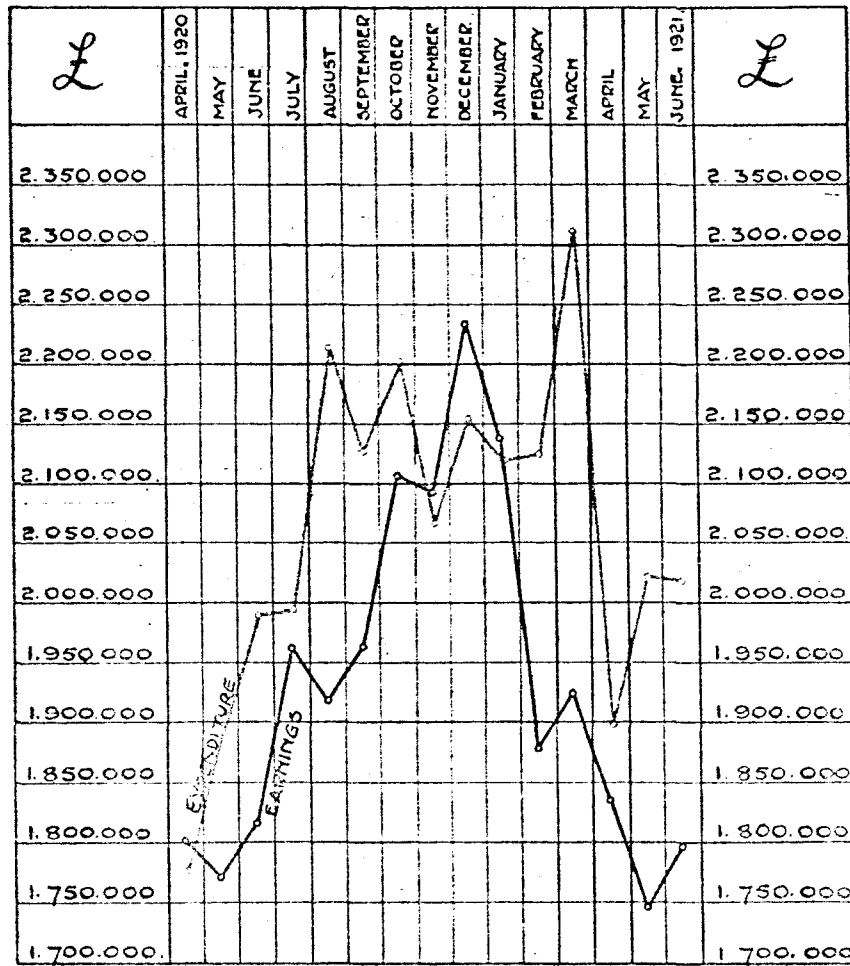
FLUCTUATIONS IN EARNINGS AND EXPENDITURE

— DIAGRAM SHOWING : —

— FLUCTUATIONS IN —

— EARNINGS AND EXPENDITURE (RAILWAYS) —

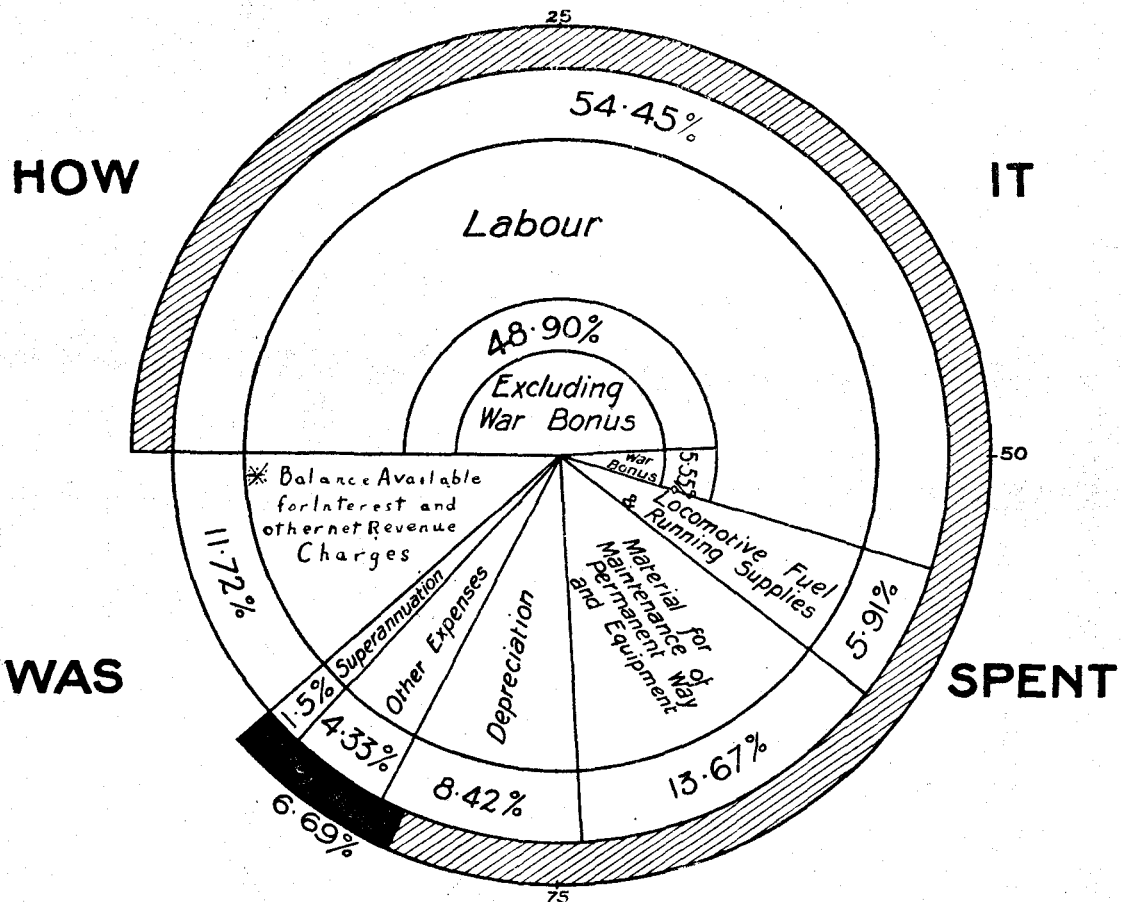
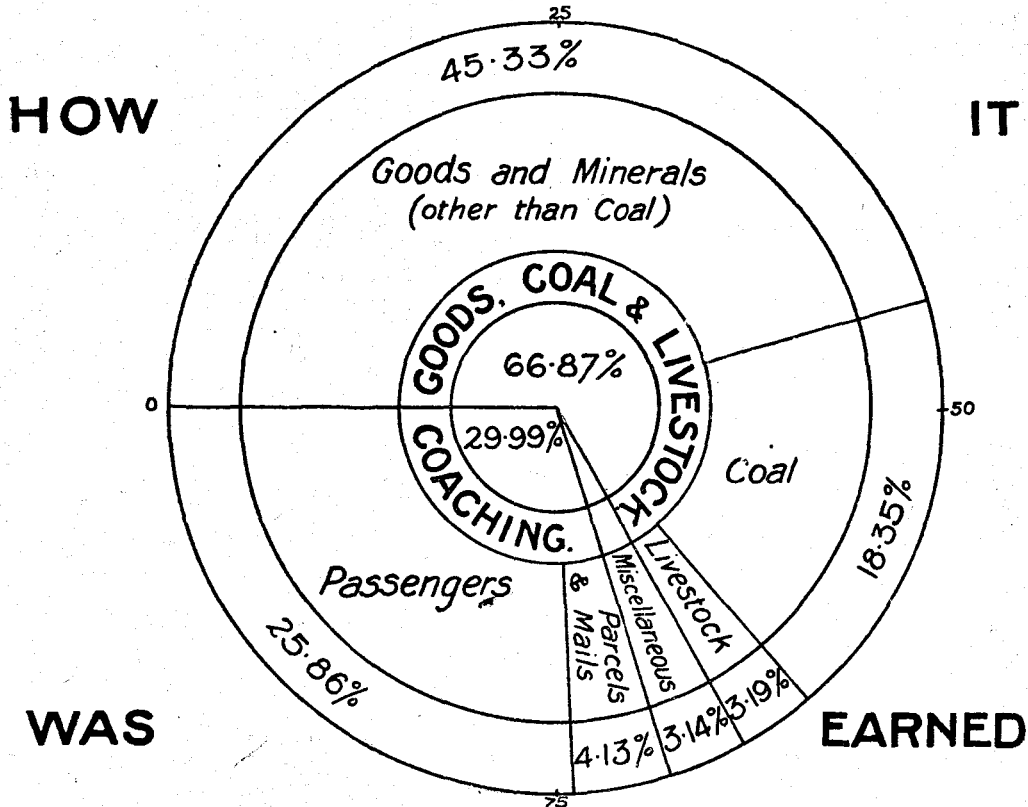
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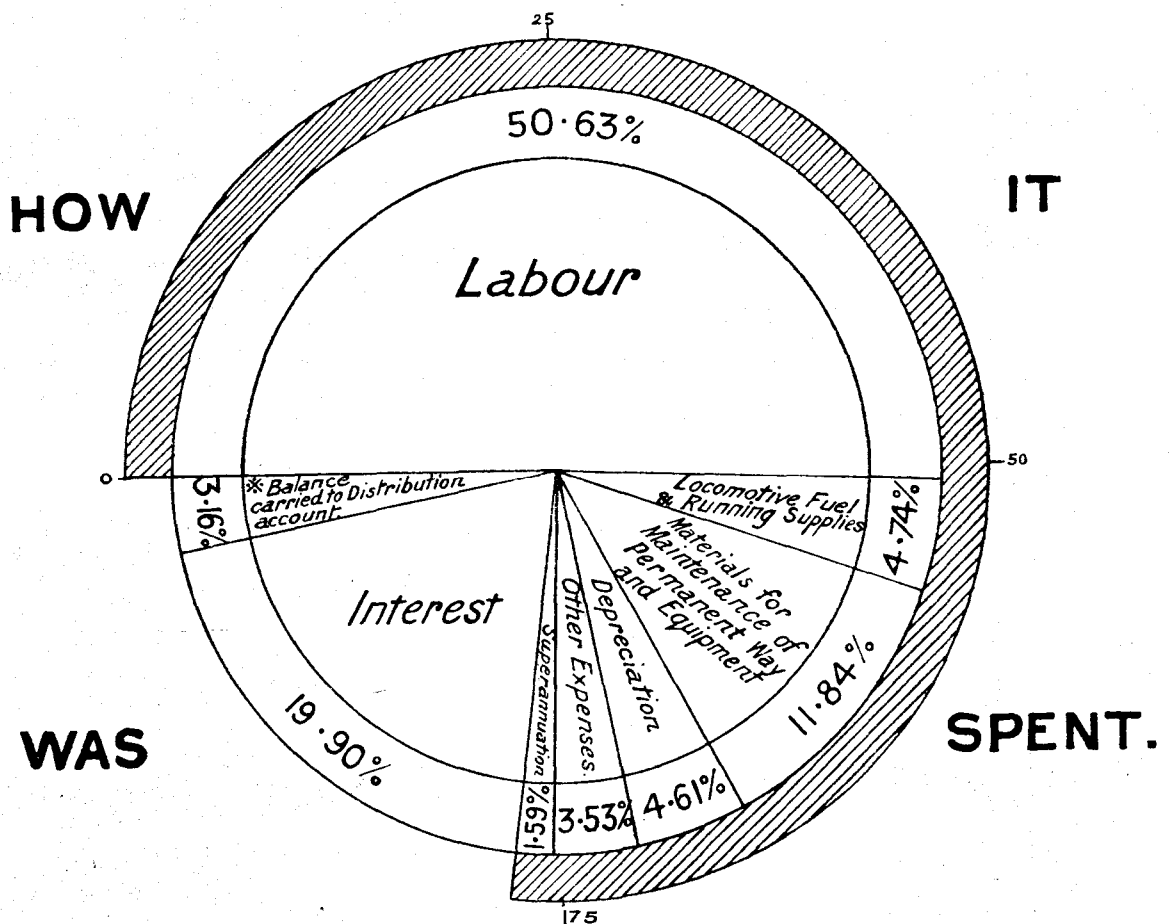
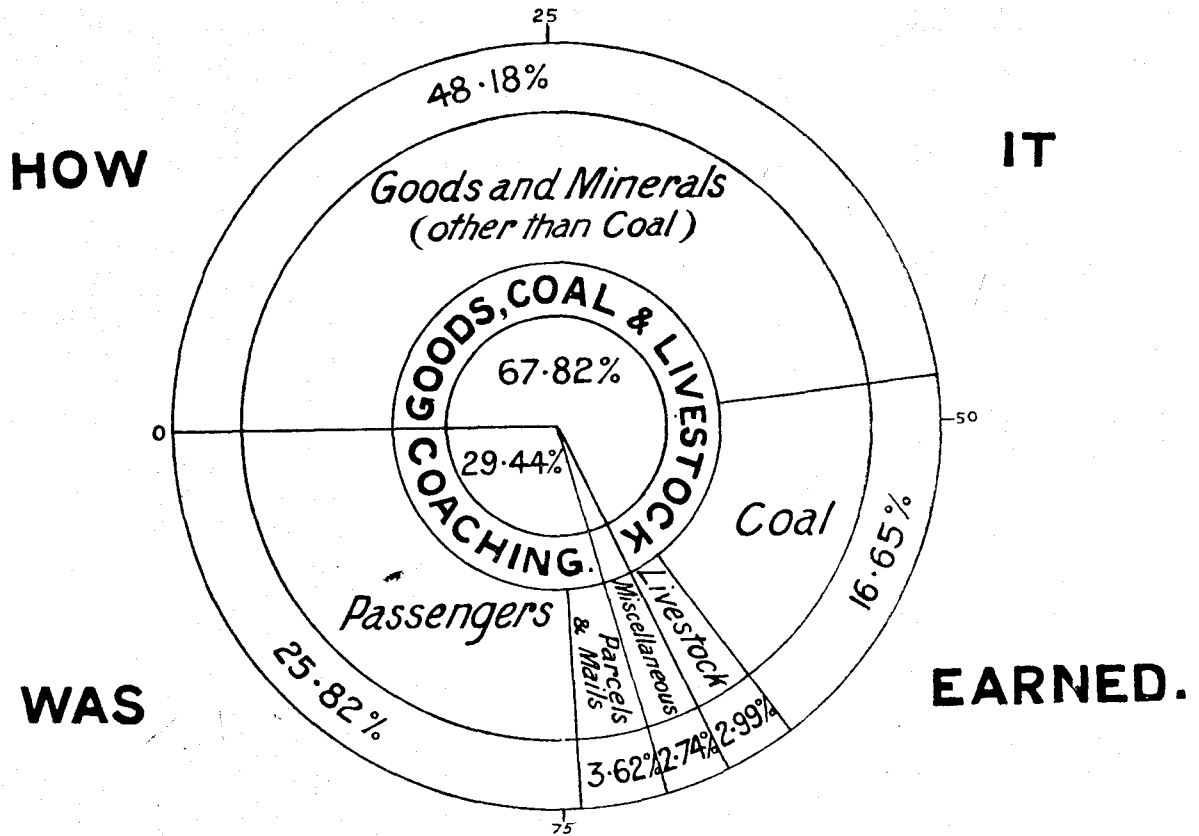
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APPENDIX THREE

RAILWAY REVENUE, 1921-22.



RAILWAY REVENUE, 1922 - 23.



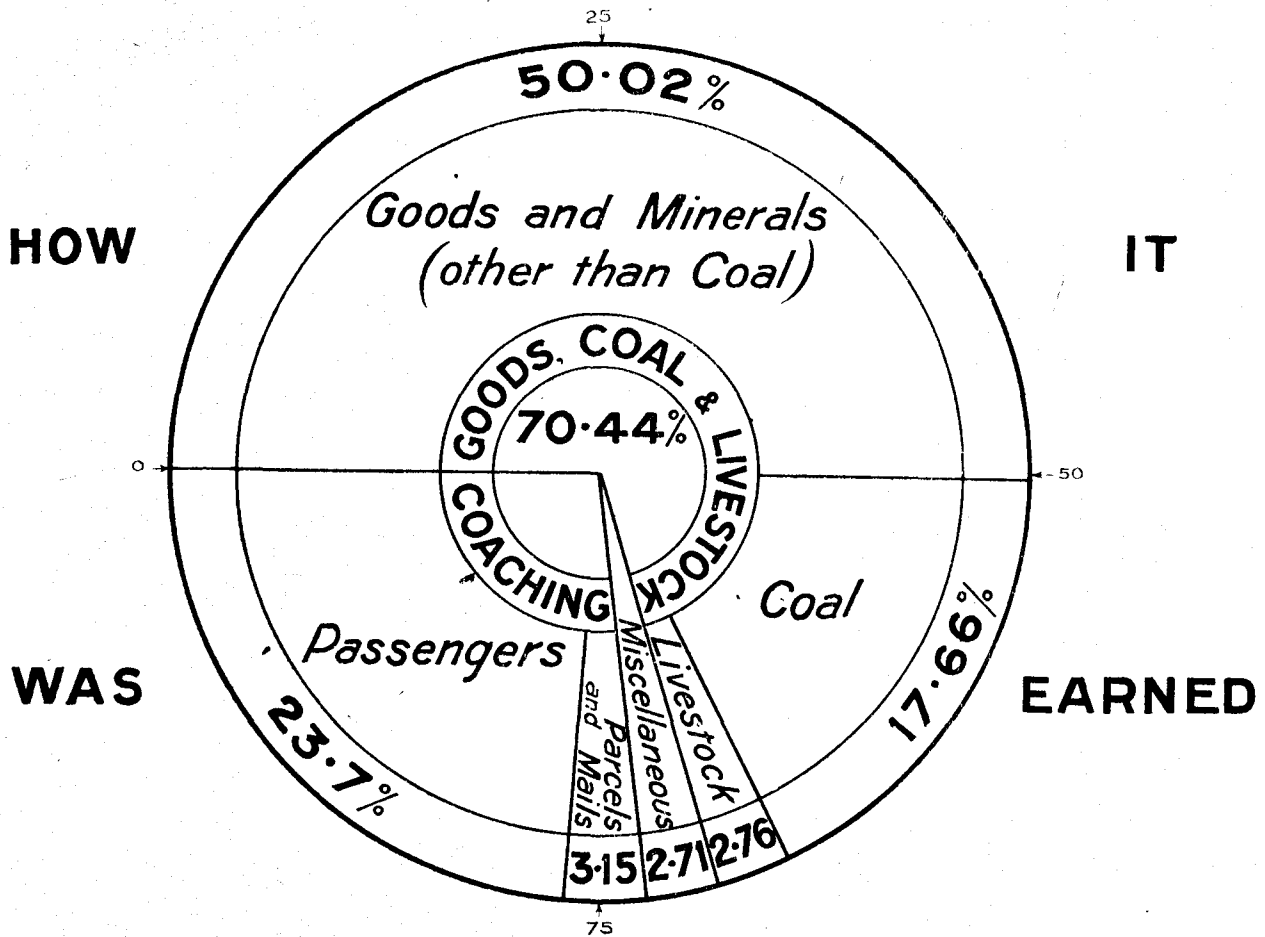
from:
U.G. 40-23

76.94 Operating Expenses

* Balance Available for Distribution = £636,559.

RAILWAY REVENUE, 1923-24.

RAILWAY REVENUE, 1923-24.

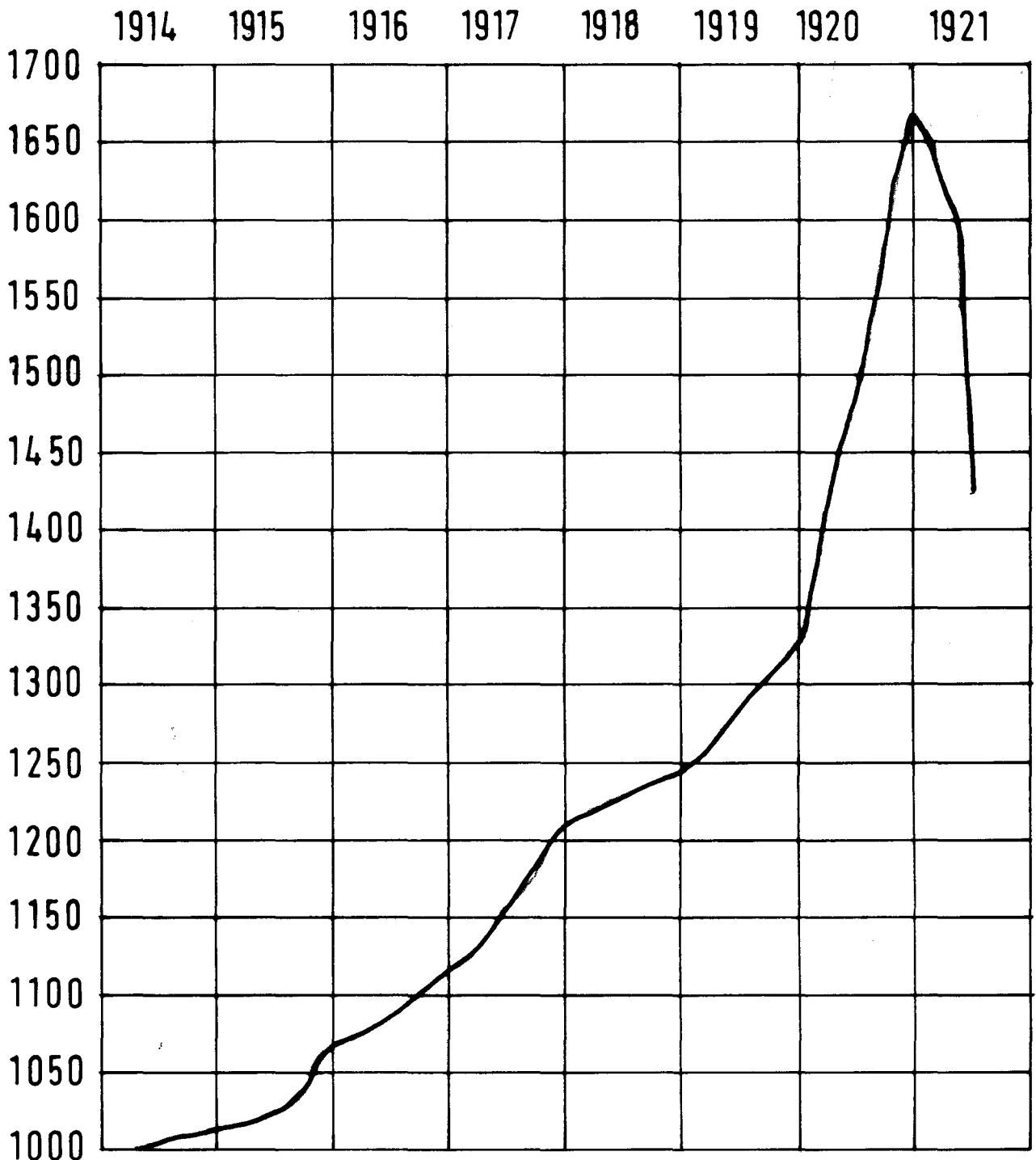


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APPENDIX G.

DIAGRAM FROM CAPE TIMES 16.7.21 P. 9

THE FALL IN THE COST OF LIVING.



A DIAGRAMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE MOVEMENT IN THE C.O.L. SINCE 1914. THE CHART IS CONSTRUCTED ON THE BASIS OF THE OFFICIAL RETURNS OF THE CENSUS DEPARTMENT.

COST OF LIVING (FOOD, FUEL, LIGHT AND RENT) IN CAPE TOWN. THE BASIC FIGURE 1000 IS TAKEN AS REPRESENTING PRE-WAR COSTS AND THE CHART SHOWS THE MOVEMENT FROM 1914 TO JUNE 1921.

APPENDIX SEVEN

BLACK AND WHITE LABOUR ON THE RAILWAYS

1917 - 1924

(1) Official Year Book of South Africa:

	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Blacks</u>
1917-18	34,243	32,544
1918-19	35,283	34,962
1919-20	39,639	38,189
1920-21	41,351	40,802
1921-22	36,258	29,921
1922-23	35,111	35,307

(2) Reports of the Railways and Harbours Board:

	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Blacks</u>
1919	33,608	32,071
1920	36,301	40,020
1921	33,150	31,392
1922	31,283	33,601
1923	31,579	37,111
1924	33,086	36,036

(3) Reports of the General Manager of the Railways:

	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Blacks</u>
31.3.21	42,578	47,280
31.3.22	37,444	34,774
31.3.23	37,759	43,619
31.3.24	39,629	47,157

(4) Hansard:

	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Blacks</u>
31.12.20	42,715	42,615
31.12.22	36,812	37,407
31.12.23	37,148	42,940

APPENDIX EIGHT

(1) EXPENDITURE FOR EQUIPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT
ON TABLE BAY HARBOUR

<u>Year</u>	<u>Capital Expenditure</u> £
1911	27,194
1912	77,858
1913	42,093
1914	67,162
1915	61,662
1916-17	10,162
1917-18	6,594
1918-19	19,402
1919-20	21,088
1920-21	38,180
1921-22	21,482

(2) TONNAGE HANDLED AT TABLE BAY

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons</u>
1909	797,744
1910	945,288
1911	1,134,805
1912	1,508,440
1913	1,400,253
1914	1,397,247
1915	1,476,125
1916	1,489,316
1917	1,496,818
1918	1,405,595
1919	1,024,415
1920	1,051,024
1921	1,264,488