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GRAAFF-REINET AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1929-1933)

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by

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A. de. V. Minnaar



## ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.V.V.	Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging
ANC	African National Congress
BKB	Boere-makelaars (Koöp) Beperk
BSB	Boere Saamwerk Beperk
CPAU	Cape Province Agricultural Union
CPWGA	Cape Province Wool Growers Association
E.C.W.	European Child Welfare Society
E.P. Herald	Eastern Province Herald
F.C.U.	Farmers Co-operative Union
Gov P	Governing Party
G.R.	Graaff-Reinet
G.R. Advertiser	Graaff-Reinet Advertiser
G.R. Municipal Minutes	Graaff-Reinet Town Council Minutes
G.R. Municipal Correspondence	Graaff-Reinet Town Council Correspondence
G.R. Board of Executors	Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors (Pty) Ltd.
GRWGA	Graaff-Reinet Wool Growers Association
HNP	Hersuiwerde Nasionale Party
H. of A. Deb.	House of Assembly Debates (Hansard)
Indep	Independent
Indep Gov P	Independent Governing Party
Indep NP	Independent National Party
Ladies Benevolent Society	Ladies Benevolent Fund Society
Midland Agency	Midland Agency and Trust Company (Pty) Ltd.
M.P.	Member of Parliament.
NP	National Party
NP Coal	National Party Coalition
NWGA	National Wool Growers Association
SA	South African
SAMEA	South African Municipal Employees Association
SAP	South African Party
U.N.I.S.A.	University of South Africa
UP	United Party
U.P.E.	University of Port Elizabeth
VRP Irrigation Board	Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam Irrigation Board

## INTRODUCTION

The Depression of 1929-1933 was a world-wide phenomenon, in which "no aspect of the economy, no part of the world, escaped devastation".<sup>1</sup> Accordingly the study of a medium sized rural town in South Africa during the period of the Depression, should show effects and reactions that were, in general, indicative of worldwide trends. In choosing Graaff-Reinet, I felt that being a close-knit community, with its urban and rural populations closely associated with each other, and the white, coloured and black sections of the population interdependent, it adequately represented a microcosm of South Africa as a whole. Then, too, Graaff-Reinet was ideally suited to illustrate the reality, that in South Africa during the Depression "the farmers were the most heavily hit of all".<sup>2</sup> The single most significant product of the Graaff-Reinet district was wool, which at the time of the Depression was South Africa's second most important export, and consequently the well-being of the whole district depended largely on the market performance of this product. During the Depression the price of wool dropped drastically and the Graaff-Reinet farmers suffered in consequence.

Graaff-Reinet also went, almost according to a blueprint, through the general phases of the Depression. The privations of the farming community led to the financial embarrassment of the local financial institutions causing their collapse, which in its turn led to the widespread hardship of everyone in the town. But these events all had a particular Graaff-Reinet quality, and the twists to the general outline are rooted deep in the local character of the district.

Historically Graaff-Reinet is extremely interesting. It is the fourth oldest town in South Africa, being established in 1786, and in studying Graaff-Reinet one cannot but become conscious of the immense tradition and the awareness of history, which all its people have.

The study itself starts with a general outline of the Worldwide Depression, its causes and results, then moves on to the Depression in South Africa. The study of Graaff-Reinet in the Depression is divided into three basic sections, the Farmers, the Townspeople, and the Politics of Graaff-Reinet during the Depression. All three contain their own sub-divisions dealing with different aspects.

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1. Heaton, H. : *The Economic History of Europe*. p. 696

2. Kruger, D.W. : *The Making of a Nation; a history of the Union of South Africa 1910 - 1960*. p. 158

In the Graaff-Reinet sections are included references to national events, tying them to, and explaining the course of, local happenings.

In short the study becomes the story of how the Depression effected the people of Graaff-Reinet, how they suffered during this period and how they reacted to it. A final concluding section deals with their general recovery from the Depression.

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1929-1933)

(a) INTRODUCTION

"The Depression was a far more shattering national experience than the two World Wars themselves, because of the mystery of its origin and the bleakness of its prospects, and also because of its uncontrollable, almost fatalistic operation..... For the first time in the history of the Western Hemisphere, man in all his rugged individuality seemed not the master of his fate".<sup>1</sup>

It is this "mystery of its origin" that makes the detailing of specific causes of the Depression a particularly difficult task. Economists, the world over, have failed to agree on the primary factors involved. It is, however, safe to say that most of the causes of the Depression stemmed from the First World War. The War caused a tremendous loss of life, devastation of farming areas, destruction of factories and mines, the disruption of trade and the inflation of currencies. It also raised the vexing question of war debts and reparations.<sup>2</sup>

The period from 1919-1928 was spent largely wrestling with these problems and to a certain degree overcoming them. But the problem lay in the fact that the solutions applied were mostly short-term and not permanent. Although the years 1925-1928 were, on the whole, years of considerable and widespread prosperity, since prices were practically stable, production and trade developing rapidly and many of the characteristic phenomena of an industrial and investment boom beginning to appear - nevertheless the recovery of the years 1925-1928 had a very shaky base.<sup>3</sup>

The year 1929 was called by the historians of the 1930's "the last normal year". By this is meant that by 1929 the world seemed to have recovered from the economic consequences of the First World War. The material destruction brought about by the war had been made good; the devastated areas of the Western and Eastern fronts had been repaired;

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1. Chambers, F.P. : *This Age of Conflict*. p. 311

2. Robbins, L. : *The Great Depression*. p. 3

3. Soltau, R.H. : *An Outline of European Economic Development*. p. 257-258

former battlefields rebuilt and mines reconditioned; disorganised currencies had all become reconstructed and stabilised, re-establishing normal international exchanges.<sup>1</sup> Despite the apparent normalcy of this year, it ushered in the start of the breakdown of the recovery of the previous years.

(b) THE END OF PROSPERITY

During the First World War the belligerent nations were compelled to re-organise their factories for the production of war materials (even the Royal Mint in London was converted to turning out ammunition). This changeover necessitated a high degree of centralisation and government control. This all led to a large-scale disruption of the world market and a depletion of the world stock-piles of raw materials, especially agricultural products.<sup>2</sup>

Europe became the main battleground during the First World War and consequently much of its agricultural production was disrupted and output plummeted. The shortfall was filled from the prairies of North America. At the end of the war, there was a period of crisis and readjustment, but by the mid-1920's recovery had taken place in European agriculture. Production slowly reached the pre-1914 levels. It became evident that as the world stockpiles became replenished, there existed the possibility of overproduction. The signs went unheeded by the general populace, although, especially in America, the farmer strove to adjust himself to a reduced economic level. He bought less and less from industry, and this downward trend in world trade first made itself felt in the decline of agricultural prices.

Even prior to the slump on the New York Stock Exchange, the so-called Wall Street Crash, in October, 1929, agricultural prices were falling, due mainly to excess supply. The problem was compounded by governments absorbing the excess supply in stockpiles instead of adjusting production.

"Countries one by one found it necessary to evade the consequences of the excess supply by keeping it out of the domestic market, or selling the crop for what it could bring, perhaps cushioning the consequences at home by depreciation which forced prices down abroad."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Soltau p. 257-258.

2. Robbins p. 4

3. Kindleberger, C.P. : *The World in Depression 1929-1939*. p. 107



Till 1928 production and demand advanced at about the same pace, and the efforts of cartel's, farmer's pools and other schemes for price maintenance, had not yet piled up large unsold stocks or provoked a great increase of production. But in 1928-1929 hints of saturation began to be evident; prices of foodstuffs and raw materials began to fall; and surplus stocks grew large enough to overshadow the market. By mid-1929 mineral prices were breaking, wool brought much lower returns in the auction rooms, while bumper wheat crops in 1928 and the revival of Russian exports wrecked grain prices. This fall came first at a time when the flow of capital to primary production countries and to Germany had been checked. Hence the debtor primary producing countries could no longer pay their interest or pay for their imports out of new loans, but must do both by exporting produce that was shrinking rapidly in value and supplement it with gold from their bank reserves. Soon they had to reduce imports and some of them had to default on their interest payments.<sup>1</sup>

As primary products continued to sink during the next three years, the loss of purchasing power by their producers was a serious blow to manufacturing industries. This problem had been compounded by the fact that far too much money had been invested in industry in America especially, in the expectation of a great expansion of production, without realising that such an indefinite expansion necessitated either an expansion of population, or an expansion of purchasing power, neither of which was taking place, at least at a sufficient rate. Most of the manufacturing industries were by 1929 producing more goods than they were selling, that is, overproducing, and found they had to cut-back.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the problem of falling agricultural prices there was the subtle change in world financing. Before 1914 Great Britain had acted as the world's financier, transferring funds to various parts of the world to overcome local depressions. After the First World War she was unable, due to financial exhaustion and unwillingness, to continue this role. America took over this role, but in a rather haphazard manner thinking rather of her own interests than the fulfilling of a true world-power role.<sup>3</sup>

This situation was aggravated by the concentration of gold reserves in France and America. Due to the low value of the Franc and the French

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1. Heaton p. 694

2. Soltau p. 291

3. Kindleberger p. 28

government's decision in 1928 that all returning capital be brought back in the form of gold, the French gold reserve in 1929 comprised sixteen percent of the world's supply.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1920's the American Federal Reserve had kept interest rates low in order to prevent money from coming to America, but this easy money encouraged the rising tide of stock speculation. In the hope of checking this the interest rate was raised. This only stopped American foreign investment, and in addition induced Europeans to send their funds to New York for speculation or for supplying loans to the speculator. By 1929 the American gold reserve had risen to thirty-six percent of the world's monetary gold. Neither France nor America used their accumulated gold to serve world investment or trade needs. The gold was either sterilized or domesticated, and meanwhile Great Britain, with only seven percent of the world's gold reserves and a precarious trade balance was unable to play its former role, as the world's banker, to the full. At the same time Germany was living on borrowed money.<sup>2</sup>

The tremendous growth of American industry during the period after the war had provided much capital. The export of American capital had first been encouraged by the stability brought about by the signing of the Dawes Reparation plan which became effective on 1 September 1924. This plan provided for lower annual reparations payments by Germany. It also put an agent-general in Berlin to supervise the collection and transfer of reparations money. The Dawes plan saw a tremendous spate of lending to Germany where lenders and investors could get at least two percent more than anywhere else.<sup>3</sup>

The agents of investment bankers scoured Germany looking for potential borrowers that could be persuaded to take loans so that the bankers could earn fat commissions by floating bonds on the American market. Americans invested heavily in German securities, largely issued by German municipalities and other corporations. At the time, in the good years of Germany's economic recovery, no securities seemed safer or more attractive. For their part, the German borrowers found it easy to pay their private and their national obligations with loans and the loans with more loans.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Heaton p. 689

2. Ibid p. 690-691

3. Ibid p. 685-686

4. Chambers p. 304

Americans were the largest suppliers of this capital to Germany. The total foreign investment in Germany alone, between 1924-1931 was about \$6 000 000 000.<sup>1</sup> So long, therefore, as the stream of money flowed into Germany all was well for that country and its creditors but since hardly any of Germany's reparations payments came from her own resources the position was precarious.

Thus towards the end of 1929 an unstable position had developed in the world's financial structure. The basic causes of the instability lay far back in the disorganisation produced by the war and the burdens of debt and taxation which it bequeathed to the post-war generation. For all these reasons, the economic prosperity of the period 1925-1929 could scarcely last. The world economic structure was not resting on solid foundations; it was perilously resting in a position of unstable equilibrium, which the slightest shock might overthrow. This shock was duly administered by the slump on the New York Stock exchange in October 1929, the so-called Wall Street Crash.<sup>2</sup>

(c) THE WALL STREET CRASH (OCTOBER, 1929)

The American people had been caught up in the recovery and boom of the mid-1920's. Thinking that prosperity was here to stay, many embarked on a round of frenetic speculation. "Playing the Stock-market" became almost a national pastime. Everybody wanted to make a quick fortune. This frantic scramble had its first setback with the collapse of the Florida Land Boom in 1927 but the longterm signs were ignored and it was taken to be only a temporary setback.<sup>3</sup>

Laws dealing with the launching of Investment trusts and the buying of shares on margin were extremely lax. Enterprising entrepreneurs exploited this lack to its fullest, floating companies upon companies. In this way an extremely shaky edifice, based on the speculation of shares was built up. The funds fueling this domestic speculation in shares in America were provided by the profit inflation that developed in America between the end of 1927 and the middle of 1929.<sup>4</sup> This inflation led to an enormous volume of foreign loans spread out to other countries and generated expansion there.

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1. Heaton p. 686

2. Soltau p. 291

3. Galbraith, J.K. : *The Great Crash 1929*. p. 17-21

4. *Ibid* p. 49-67



This export of capital had first been encouraged by the Dawes Reparations plan of 1924. The American private investor had been encouraged to invest in Europe and by 1929 the total of American loans to Europe stood at \$3 500 000.<sup>1</sup>

American speculators, despite the extent to which they had been playing the international market, traditionally regarded foreign lending as a sideline to be exploited for a time and then dropped if and when more attractive opportunities arose at home. By 1928 those opportunities were present, and idle funds found better use in Wall Street than in Europe.

In 1928 short-term money began to be harder to get in the United States. Money for Germany was becoming tight; the old loans were harder to come by. Negotiations for replacing the temporary Dawes Plan with a permanent one, which would look after the long remaining period during which Germany must pay reparations, were started in Paris in the early months of 1929. What became known as the Young Plan proposed to free Germany ~~of the previous foreign supervision~~ of the collection and payment of reparations. Germany was to be trusted to pay her annual instalment into a new bank, the Bank of International Settlements, which was to be set up in Basel in Switzerland. The Young Plan also set forth a series of payments which stretched till 1988. The total capital payments were to amount to about \$9 000 000 000 instead of the \$33 000 000 000 which had been fixed in 1921.<sup>2</sup> The Young Plan was signed on 20 January 1930 but its terms had been adopted at The Hague in August 1929. These terms, especially concerning the length of time given for repayment, had caused a certain amount of nervousness on the New York Stock Exchange in September 1929.<sup>3</sup>

The frenetic speculation on the American Stock Exchange had continued unabated throughout 1929 regardless of repeated warnings. As early as February 1929 the authorities of the Federal Reserve System had become persuaded that the boom had reached such dimensions that a slump was inevitable. But in spite of private warnings, rising discount rates, and all kinds of unofficial indications the rise of stock exchange values continued.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Chambers p. 304

2. Heaton p. 685

3. Chambers p. 304

4. Robbins p. 19

The first indisputable declines in the Stock Market began in the second week of September 1929. There began a slow calling back of American loans from Europe. Soon some European borrowers were in difficulties. On 20 September 1929, in London, there occurred the failure of Clarence Hatry and his bogus companies. Withdrawals of gold from the Bank of England at the same time were causing anxiety. For the first three weeks of October, Wall Street was in a very nervous mood. Demand began slackening in the United States as people began to think that a severe slump might be on the way. The more discerning operators began selling their shares. Once the selling had begun and had become general, it was accelerated by the huge margin calls which it automatically developed. On 23 October, almost in the last hour of the day's trading, the market suddenly collapsed, with the Dow-Jones index of the price of industrial shares dropping about 21 points. On 24 October, "Black Thursday", a record number of shares were sold. In the next six days the Dow-Jones Index fell about 76 points.<sup>1</sup> This marked the real beginning of the worldwide depression for :

"The Wall Street crash of 1929.... brought home to the world the unsound condition of the International economic situation and introduced the most international depression the world has ever known".<sup>2</sup>

It did not matter that there was thereafter a temporary rally and that the big bankers bought large amounts of shares to try and restore confidence.<sup>3</sup> The Wall Street Crash was the end of American business confidence and of overseas investment. After a last brief rally in 1930 American money for investment abroad dried up. The World slump was well on its way.

(d) THE WORLD SLUMP

"No aspect of the economy, no part of the world, escaped devastation".<sup>4</sup>

For the first two years (1929-1931) the Depression was an almost uninterrupted downward movement. Governments tried to cope with the situation by raising tariffs, propping up some prices, giving relief, subsidizing unemployment insurance funds, and assuring the public that the worst was over. They were wrong, for in the middle of 1931 the combined

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1. Galbraith p. 70-118

2. Schumann, C.G.W. : *The World Depression, South Africa and the Gold Standard.*

3. Galbraith p. 96-99

4. Heaton p. 696

cumulative burden broke the financial, credit and banking system of the world.

The first important step leading to this new crisis, was taken when the United States Congress passed the Hawley-Smoot Act in 1930. This act raised all the tariffs on American imports which forced other countries to raise their tariffs on farm and industrial products.<sup>1</sup> The most important European tariff step, was the abandonment of free trade by Great Britain after the financial crisis of 1931. Imports from the Dominions and the colonies were admitted either duty free or at lower rates than were charged on goods from foreign sources. In 1932 Great Britain and the Dominions met at Ottawa to negotiate a number of trade agreements which provided further mutual preferential concessions.<sup>2</sup>

This drastic step by Great Britain had been prompted by the decline of international trade. Between 1929 and 1932 the foreign trade of Europe by itself fell by over one-half, that of America by two-thirds.<sup>3</sup>

The European recession produced, in May 1931, first in the proposed Austro-German Customs Union and then in the failure of the Kredit-Anstalt Bank in Vienna, crises on a par with the American stock-market crash of a year and a half previously. The start of the crisis of 1931 was the fact that Germany, deprived of American loan dollars, found it difficult to pay reparations to the Allies or interest to American creditors. Some of the Allies, in turn, could not pay their instalments to America without drawing on their gold reserves. Central Europe began to show the effect of a shortage of funds especially since so much of its recovery had been financed with American loans. London tried to bolster Vienna and Berlin with loans as the gold reserves of their central banks sank lower.<sup>4</sup>

The announcement in March 1931 by Dr. Julius Curtius, the German Foreign Minister, that an Austro-German customs union was under discussion, was immediately met with storms of protest from Italy, the Little Entente, and from France. After months of bickering France forced Austria and Germany to withdraw the proposals, leaving Austria to struggle with her difficulties alone.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Robbins p. 68

2. Heaton p. 699

3. Soltau p. 293

4. Chambers p. 327

5. Ibid

In May 1931 the Kredit-Anstalt Bank in Vienna collapsed. The Austrian government forbade gold exports. While the Kredit-Anstalt was eventually reorganised and propped up, it had a ripple effect on other banks. Germans and foreigners rushed to withdraw their deposits and short-term loans from German banks. In July the Darmstädter Bank closed its doors and the German government not merely suspended the operations of the other banks to prevent them from crashing, but also stopped the payment of all short-term loans to foreigners.<sup>1</sup>

As this financial crisis reached its height, President Hoover of America suggested, in June 1931, a moratorium of all intergovernment debts - reparations and inter-allied - for a year. This was agreed to reluctantly by France and very hesitantly by the American Congress. In August 1931 an international conference of bankers, held at Basel in Switzerland, made a "Standstill agreement" to suspend all payment of foreign loans for six months.<sup>2</sup>

The events in Vienna, Berlin and Basel had a detrimental effect on Great Britain, for the Bank of England could not recover its continental loans just at a time when short-term foreign depositors were rushing to withdraw their funds, largely in gold, from British Banks. Further confidence in London was shaken by the news of the mutiny of naval ratings at Invergordon naval base. The drain on British Banks rapidly became so serious that the Government suspended the right to demand bullion for notes on 21 September 1931. This effectively meant that Great Britain had abandoned the Gold Standard.

(e) THE GOLD STANDARD

"When the Gold Standard was a working system, it provided the World with the benefit of stable rates of exchange".<sup>3</sup>

In other words any buying or selling of goods abroad could be transacted with confidence and certainty, since the exchange value of all currencies was stable. But as soon as some countries abandoned the Gold

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1. Robbins p. 92-93

2. Heaton p. 702

3. Withers, H. : *Aspects of the Gold Standard*. p. 227



Standard, export and import operations became a gamble as they were subjected to fluctuations in the exchange rates :

"and lending operations, especially the long term loans which were once so effective in stimulating production all over the world, became highly dangerous both to lender and borrower".<sup>1</sup>

By linking their currencies with gold the main trading countries of the world provided a measure of stability in exchange rates. A nation was, however, able to fix its currency at a particular level, and later re-fix it at a higher or lower level i.e. revalue or devalue. In either case it would remain fixed to gold. This linking was an acknowledgement of an obligation to convert domestic money into gold on demand.

"The right of conversion into gold, borne by all the chief currencies of the world, was the foundation-stone of the system, which enabled all the principal nations to trade together and to lend and borrow with one another with as much ease and confidence as if they had already achieved the ideal of a universal currency".<sup>2</sup>

But this system broke down under the strains of the economic crisis facing the world in the early 1930's. It broke down, not owing to any inherent weakness in the Gold Standard but because of the imbalance in international payments and the loss of confidence in the financial world, which in turn slowed the flow of goods and funds.

On receipt of the news from London of the British abandonment of the Gold Standard, the European stock exchanges, with one or two exceptions, closed, and when they began to reopen a few days later, all their shares had depreciated substantially. Bank rates everywhere were protectively raised. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, all the nations and dependencies of the British Commonwealth - except South Africa, which refused, and Australia which had already previously done so, all in quick succession went off gold. Japan went off gold three months later. Those countries with sterling reserves which did not follow suit suffered heavily. By April 1932 the only important financial powers to remain on the Gold Standard were France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Rumania, Switzerland, South Africa and the United States. Germany kept up the fiction of a gold standard, but

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1. Withers p. 227

2. Ibid p. 229

she was already trying out complicated experiments in exchange control. The exchange rates of currencies kept on falling and it became clear that few were going to benefit by any competitive exchange depreciation, and that the Gold bloc was suffering acutely by keeping its currency at the values fixed in the twenties.

The situation was summed up by President Roosevelt in his inaugural address in March 1933 :

"Values have sunk to fantastic levels; our factories are without orders; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by a serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen; the withered leaves of our industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce and the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone. More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence and an equally great number toil with little return".<sup>1</sup>

During the Depression the official German Institute for Economic Research had written that :

"Never in the history of the past fifty years did the income of the people drop as much as it has dropped in this crisis. Never in any previous crisis was there such an all-round decrease in income as there has been in this crisis, which has not spared the salaries of officials, the income of independent persons or the income of agriculture, sources of income which were not touched, or hardly touched, in former periods of industrial crisis".<sup>2</sup>

The Great Depression caused immense suffering the world over. Unemployment reached an all time high. By 1933 there were three million unemployed in Great Britain, five million in Germany and at least six million in America.<sup>3</sup> These unemployment figures slowly began to decrease as the

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1. Chambers p. 334

2. Sternberg, F. : *The Coming Crisis*, p. 47

3. Soltau p. 293

world economy began to recover.

(f) WORLD RECOVERY FROM THE DEPRESSION

Recovery was slow, but by 1932 was not hampered by the problem of intergovernmental debt payments. At the Lausanne Conference in 1932 Germany's creditors agreed to settle the whole reparations account for \$750 000 000 provided that they in turn got their debt to America reduced. America did not grant this relief, so the agreement never came into effect; but that was immaterial, for Germany made no more reparations payments - not even the \$750 000 000 - and no one was disposed to try to make her do so.<sup>1</sup>

In December 1932 the Hoover Moratorium expired and the next instalment on the American debt was due. Raising the money would have been well-nigh impossible in the prevailing condition of national finances, and remitting it to America was possible only in metal in view of the collapsed state of the world trade. Great Britain dug into her gold reserve to pay her instalment of nearly \$100 000 000. Italy, Czechoslovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland paid in full, a mere \$3 000 000; but France, Poland and the other states sent none of their total dues of \$25 000 000.<sup>2</sup>

When the next instalment was due in June 1933 the British sent a token \$10 000 000 in silver, some other states sent their little share but France and the rest again defaulted. Since America took no steps to reconsider the whole changed situation, no further payments were made, except by Finland who eventually paid her debt in full. So the outstanding debts due to America, the loans made by the British and reparations - about \$50 000 000 000 in all - were wiped out by default.<sup>3</sup> However, with the war debts out of the way, progress was possible but still slow and difficult.

In 1933 a World Economic Conference was held in London to see if international co-operation could stabilize currency and exchanges. But the conference had scarcely met, when a message from President Roosevelt ended any hope of success by his repudiating all idea of collaboration, and announcing that America intended to pursue an isolationist policy.<sup>4</sup> Each nation now went its own way with no hope of any Gold Standard being able to function. America confirmed this by abandoning the Gold Standard on

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1. Heaton p. 704

2. Ibid p. 705

3. Ibid p. 705

4. Ibid p. 703

1 May 1933.<sup>1</sup> In 1934 America raised the price of gold from \$20 to \$35 an ounce.<sup>2</sup> This particularly benefited South Africa as she was the biggest producer of gold in the world. By 1935 the three main western countries (America, Great Britain and Germany) were in a modest recovery. Only France and some smaller countries, which had remained on the Gold Standard, were still stagnating, until they finally followed the example of the others in September 1936 by going off the Gold Standard.<sup>3</sup>

How much of the recovery was a normal revival of the economy and how much the result of governmental policies is hard to measure. In all countries the recovery was in the domestic field rather than because of any great revival of international trade.

(g) THE DEPRESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Even before the Wall Street Crash in October 1929, the Prime Minister of South Africa, General J.B.M. Hertzog, had warned the public that there would soon be a period of hardship as South Africa was highly dependent on international trade for her well being.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this dependence, her economy was highly sensitive to fluctuations in the demand for her exports in the major industrial countries. The Great Depression after 1929 was almost entirely imported from abroad.

Before the Depression wool was the second most important export after Gold. By the end of the Depression, the export value of wool had fallen by sixty-five percent.<sup>5</sup> But wool was not the only agricultural product to suffer. All the major products like maize, hides, tobacco, sugar, cotton and wattle-bark suffered a decline in prices starting in 1928. The income from agricultural and pastoral exports was £5 000 000 less in 1929 than in 1928.<sup>6</sup> Total net national income declined from £271 000 000 in 1928/29 to £217 000 000 in 1931/32 - a decline of nineteen percent.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Robbins p. 123

2. Heaton p. 703

3. Tinbergen, J. : *Lessons from the Past.* p. 61

4. Holloway, : Presidential Address. J. of E.S. of S.A., Vol 3, part 2, No. 6, July, 1930.

5. Franzsen, D.G. and Reynders, H.J.J. : *Die Ekonomiese Lewe van Suid Afrika.* p. 60

6. Katzen, L. : *Gold and the South African Economy; the Influence of the Gold-mining industry on business cycles and economic growth in South Africa 1886-1961.* p. 77

7. du Plessis, J.C. : *Economic Fluctuations in South Africa 1910-1949.* p. 74



The burden of the Depression was unevenly distributed throughout the economy. The agricultural and diamond mining industries were very severely depressed, while manufacturing was relatively only slightly affected. Gold mining, on the other hand, expanded as the following table clearly shows :

NATIONAL INCOME : SOUTH AFRICA 1927/28 - 1932/33 (in £M)

Year :	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31	31/32	32/33
Farming and Fishing	49.2	46.6	38.8	32	29.0	28.4
Gold Mining	30.4	31.1	32.4	33.4	34.8	51.7
Other Mining	19.9	13.9	11.4	7.0	4.4	4.7
Manufacturing	35.8	38.2	39.1	37.2	33.5	32.0
Total net National Income	270.3	270.7	256.8	235.6	217.2	234.7

1

Because South Africa was still largely an agricultural country, the Depression brought widespread economic distress. The net income of the farming and fishing sector fell by forty-two percent between 1927/28 (the high year of farming in South Africa) and 1932-33.<sup>2</sup>

An indication of the severity of this decline can be gauged from the following statement by S. Herbert Frankel :

"Of the decline of £28.7 mil. in the value of total exports between 1929 and 1932, £13.5 mil. was accounted for by the decrease in value of agricultural and pastoral exports. It is significant that, whereas the volume of agricultural and pastoral exports declined, between 1929 and September 1932 by only about 2%, the value of these exports declined between the same dates by 51%".<sup>3</sup>

From this it is possible to conclude that the brunt of the Depression of 1929-33 fell on the producers of raw materials. This was a fact that was emphasised by Professor Schumann's statement that :

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1. Katzen p. 75 (see tables 1, 2 & 3)
  2. Ibid p. 79
  3. Frankel, S.H. : SAJE, Vol. 1, No. 1, Mar 1933, p. 83

"An important characteristic of the present World Depression is the abnormal fall in the prices of foodstuffs and raw materials with the result that agriculture has been most severely affected".<sup>1</sup>

Revenue from most sources declined in the Depression but, due to the compensating increase in direct and indirect revenue from gold mining, the Government of the day was probably exceptional in being able to balance its budget in 1932, without the drastic cuts in expenditure that added to the deflationary forces in the economies of other countries. The gold mining industry had an important stabilising effect on the economy via the balance of payments position. The increase in gold exports in the Depression coupled with a large fall in imports, produced a large balance of payments surplus in 1932.<sup>2</sup> The surplus and deficit figures (in £M) for the budget for the years 1927 - 1932 are as follows :

1927	:	+ 1.0
1928	:	- 6.7
1929	:	-15.1
1930	:	+ 3.4
1931	:	- 3.5
1932	:	+20.1

3

However the refusal of the Union Government to follow Great Britain in going off the Gold Standard in September 1931, intensified and prolonged the Depression in South Africa. South Africa's exports were placed at a disadvantage on the British market and there was a flight of capital from South Africa between September 1931 and December 1932, when the Union government finally abandoned the Gold Standard. Before the abandonment actually took place there had been considerable controversy over the wisdom of taking such a step. The country was divided on the issue. Those that stood to benefit by the abandonment of the Standard were the gold producers, farmers, exporters in general and debtors. Those that stood to lose, if a rise in prices were to follow, were the importers, wage-earners, fixed income receivers in general and creditors.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Schumann p. 97

2. Katzen p. 81

3. Ibid p. 75

4. Ibid p. 83.

South Africa's recovery from the Depression started almost immediately after the abandonment of the Gold Standard in December 1932. Prices for agricultural products improved steadily. But the farmers in South Africa still suffered in 1933 due to a crippling country-wide drought. By the beginning of 1934 the drought had broken and the country could look to the future with confidence and optimism.

PART II

GRAAFF-REINET AND THE DEPRESSION (1929-1933)

CHAPTER II

THE FARMERS

(a) INTRODUCTION

During the years following World War One, the South African farmers in general experienced boom years, and in 1919 the world record price of 85<sup>d</sup> per lb was paid for wool grown in the Graaff-Reinet district and sold by J.S. Minnaar of Grassdale. This record price stood till 1951.<sup>1</sup> Since wool was South Africa's biggest export product after gold, there was much financial speculation in this important commodity and by 1921 prices of 7<sup>s</sup> per lb were general.

The Graaff-Reinet district, being the premium wool-producing area of South Africa, was largely dependent for its well being and that of the town, upon the performance of its main product wool, and the moods of confidence in the district were directly correlated to the vicissitudes of the wool market.

The wool prices of 1921 could not be maintained and the market crashed, to an average of 7<sup>d</sup> per lb. This slump was short-lived, and a quick recovery to a more realistic level of around 2<sup>s</sup> per lb brought confidence back to the producer, and for nearly seven years prices remained steady. The price of sheep and ground became fixed in relation to the steady price the farmer was receiving for his wool. Farming investment thus became based on receiving 24<sup>d</sup> per lb for wool, so that when the wool price began to fall towards the end of 1928, reaching rock-bottom in the season of 1931-32, wool producers, being over-capitalised, were faced with ruination.<sup>2</sup>

The farmer's hardships had, however, started well before the onset of the Depression in the latter half of 1929. As with the rest of South Africa, they had suffered a serious and severe drought in 1927-1928, and by 1929, when climatic conditions were improving, they found themselves faced by economic factors beyond their control. Having been unable to

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1. Oral Source : J.S. Minnaar

2. Merino Ram Breeder's Journal, April 1945, p. 10. See tables 6+7

consolidate during the drought, they entered the Depression with insufficient cash reserves to withstand the economic pressures.

(b) THE WOOL SLUMP

Even before the Wall Street Crash of October 1929, farmers had noticed a steady decline in the price of wool. As early as October 1928 the wool clip of S.H. Rubidge of the farm Wellwood in the Graaff-Reinet district, averaged  $13\frac{1}{4}^d$  per lb prompting him to comment that this was a "truly absurd price".<sup>1</sup> During the September-October 1929 wool sales in London the low average price of  $11^d$  per lb was reached, and though most farmers thought that the price would not drop any lower, they were to face an even bleaker period over the next few years.<sup>2</sup>

In February 1930 the price of wool had slumped to  $7^d$  per lb.<sup>3</sup> This slump hit the farmers very hard as at that time it was generally accepted that to produce a pound of wool it cost the producer  $9^d$ .<sup>4</sup> But at this early stage they were still extremely optimistic. This is borne out by newspaper reports throughout 1930. Farmers as well as wool buyers were confident that "the market has now reached bottom".<sup>5</sup> At the ram sales at Bloemfontein in August 1930, it was reported that the consensus of opinion among leading sheep farmers and experts was, that "the tide has commenced to turn so far as wool values are concerned".<sup>6</sup> At the same sales, A.A. Kingwill, of Coloniesplaats, Graaff-Reinet, one of the biggest wool producers of the time in South Africa, who was in touch with brokers in South Africa and overseas, stated that farmers fully expected :

"fines to fetch from  $16^d$  to  $18^d$  per lb by middle of November.... Stronger wools would probably reach  $13^d$  to  $14^d$ ".<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately this optimism was sadly misplaced. The wool market continued to drop. In November 1930 S.H. Rubidge reported in his diary that at the London wool sales the top lines were sold for  $10^d$  per lb with an average of  $8\frac{1}{8}^d$  per lb for wool clips. He was highly indignant at

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1. Wellwood Diaries 20 Oct 1928

2. Ibid : 17 Oct 1929

3. Ibid : 20 Feb 1930

4. G.R. Advertiser 8 Nov 1929

5. E.P. Herald 18 April 1930

6. Ibid 26 Aug 1930

7. Ibid 26 Aug 1930

this state of affairs, recording that :

"this means 7<sup>d</sup> average out here for good clips and about 5½<sup>d</sup> for ordinary; in other words a penalty of minus 5<sup>d</sup> per lb on each sheep kept as it costs 10<sup>d</sup> per lb to produce".<sup>1</sup>

Individuals in various capacities tried to instil some hope into the farmers who were slowly becoming more and more despondent. G. Bekker, president of the Cape Wool Growers Association and of the South African Merino Breeders Association, stated, in a speech at the opening of the first of the bi-annual national ram sales in Bloemfontein during March 1931, that :

"the clouds of adversity which have overshadowed the merino industry of the Union for the past year or two are at last showing distinct and encouraging rifts, and it is probable that at the next series of the London Auctions in August, prices remunerative to wool farmers will be realised".<sup>2</sup>

These optimistic predictions decided many of the farmers to hold back their 1930 wool clips till the following season in the hope of receiving a better price. This proved to be a mistake as most were forced to sell at even lower prices. This happened to S.H. Rubidge who kept out twenty-six bales from his 1930 wool clip. In December 1931 he ruefully records the steady downtrend of prices for wool :

"Last year I could have had at least 9<sup>d</sup>, now 6<sup>d</sup> and I predict next year 3<sup>d</sup> or unsaleable - thus with having an "optimistic" agent I lose [heavily]".<sup>3</sup>

He finally sold the twenty-six bales of his 1930 wool clip in August 1932 after a delay of two years. On 25 August he had received a telegram from his agents with an offer of 5½<sup>d</sup> per lb for this wool. He had accepted this offer replying he would "be pleased to sell".<sup>4</sup> His reasoning behind this acceptance was that he "could have got 9½<sup>d</sup> and similar prices intermittently till March 1931. Since then steady downward trend [and for the] past **Seven** months about 3½<sup>d</sup> to 5¼<sup>d</sup>. Hence now it [5½<sup>d</sup>] seems 'better'".<sup>5</sup>

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1. Wellwood Diaries 29 Nov 1930

2. *E.P. Herald* 24 March 1931; G. Bekker, MP Cradock, Member of the Wool Council.

3. Wellwood Diaries 1 Dec 1931

4 & 5 Ibid 25 Aug 1932



That the farmers were finding it hard to carry on farming becomes obvious from the comment by Sidney Rubidge after receiving an average of 4 1/3<sup>d</sup> per lb for his wool in June 1931 that :

"at present basis Karoo ground becomes totally valueless or rather worse still, if presented as a gift would be a liability lacking productivity to cover taxes and bring up bare costs of marketing wool".<sup>1</sup>

The 1931-32 wool season reached an all time low averaging 4<sup>d</sup> per lb.<sup>2</sup> One wool broker was reported as saying that :

"Never in my experience, and it goes back 40 years, have I known such low prices bid for wools of good class as at the sale. Even when wool was sold unskirted we had better prices. Unless the government does something it spells ruin for the farmers".<sup>3</sup>

At this stage it did not even pay the G.R. farmers to rail their bales of lox wool (crutchings and off cuts) to the Port Elizabeth market as the price they received for it did not cover the railage costs. Many farmers found themselves in the position of having to pay in to cover their railage costs on their bales of lox.<sup>4</sup>

The market had been badly depressed after the British announcement on 21 September 1931 of their abandonment of the Gold Standard. So much so that, the position being so critical by December the wool trade in Port Elizabeth and East London came to a standstill. The wool traders recommended that all selling should cease from 20 December 1931 to 5 January 1932, and that in January a strict rationing of offerings, both by private treaty and public auction, should be enforced at all South African ports. This rationing, on the trader's advice, was introduced for February. In March 1932 a slight improvement became obvious and the wool trade, thinking a general revival had set-in, opposed the continuation of rationing. But after April market values again declined.<sup>5</sup> This decline can be attributed to the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Gold Standard who brought out their report in May 1932. Their emphatic support for the retention of the Gold Standard had been a blow to the hopes of farmers and wool traders, who were in favour of the abandonment of the Gold Standard,

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1. Wellwood Dairies 10 June 1931

2. Gordonville - Westaway Diaries See tables 6 & 7

3. *E.P. Herald* 21 Sept 1931

4. Oral Sources - D. Archer, D. Kingwill, F. Rubidge

5. *Farmers Weekly* April 1931

hence the decline after April 1932.

The slump in wool badly affected the next most important source of income for many Graaff-Reinet farmers, the sale of Merino rams. Many of the well established farmers of the district had previously depended on the lucrative sale of merino stud rams, (which had earned a proud reputation for quality over the years) to push up their income to respectable levels. But with the drop in the price of wool the bottom dropped out of this related market. Twice a year a central ram sale was held in Bloemfontein which drew ram buyers from all over South Africa. The sale in February catered mainly for the class of rams termed "flock" while the sale in August for those type of rams termed "selected" and "specials". The August sale was therefore the more important since it realised better prices. At both ram sales the Graaff-Reinet farmers had consistently topped the lists for the best prices received. While still doing so during the Depression, they found that they could hardly cover their cost of production.<sup>1</sup>

At the February 1929 ram sale S.H. Rubidge had averaged £24.10<sup>s</sup> for nine "selected" rams.<sup>2</sup>

But the situation had changed dramatically by the following February. S.H. Rubidge valued his rams from £7.10<sup>s</sup> to £40. "According to things as had been up to the time I attended last sale in Bloemfontein"<sup>3</sup> for a total of £403 "but in view of the wool slump I will be pleased of (if) any offer of 1/3 of this amount".<sup>4</sup> He eventually averaged £8.10/- for his rams and "would have ave. £18 to £20 last year".<sup>5</sup> Many rams of top breeders sold for only £3. The highest price for a ram on this sale was £41 "for a ram that would have made £150 last February and £500 at Sir Abe Bailey's".<sup>6</sup>

The trend of falling prices continued and the August 1930 ram sales were "about as one could expect with wool dropped to 9<sup>d</sup> and merino wethers 9<sup>s</sup>".<sup>7</sup> Only twelve hundred out of over 2000 rams offered received any bids and many of these sold at between £2.10<sup>s</sup> and £4.<sup>8</sup>

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1. See Table 5 and note 2

2. Wellwood Diaries 14 Feb 1929

3 & 4 Ibid 12 February 1930

5 & 6 Ibid 26 Feb 1930, see note 1

7 & 8 Ibid 27 Aug 1930



An interesting episode occurred at these August 1930 ram sales. S.H. Rubidge had received a cable from the world-famous Collinsville Merino Stud in Australia on 26 September 1929, eleven months previously, offering him one of their top rams "lustre no. 81" for £1050 in Australia.

In this telegram mention was also made of the impending Australian embargo on the export of merino stud rams. To beat the embargo, a number of rams from the Collinsville Stud were shipped out to the brother of the owner, Melvin Collins, who farmed in the Orange Free State. He in turn sent them to the August ram sales at Bloemfontein in 1930. When Sidney Rubidge heard this, he took the telegram he had received from Australia, to the sales in Bloemfontein to check the number quoted in the telegram with the eartags of the sale rams. He was delighted to find they matched and was determined to buy the ram. He asked the advice of a friend, W.L. Kingwill on what he should pay for the ram and W.L. Kingwill replied that it would take a brave man to pay more than £100 for this ram in the present conditions. S.H. Rubidge was, however, prepared to bond his farm to obtain this ram. As it transpired the ram was sold for £280 to S.H. Rubidge, which was the highest price paid that year for a ram at the sales.<sup>1</sup> S.H. Rubidge simply records in his diary that at that price "I could not resist buying him".<sup>2</sup>

Paying that price for a ram was a considerable risk under the prevailing conditions. But the importance of breeding good rams was highlighted by Sidney Rubidge himself in an entry some months later :

"As things stand today with glutted market for sheep and low wool prices, improvements on Wellwood would have to cease if dependant on wool and mutton, especially so if seasons like the past ten years must be the rule. Hence it is imperative that I keep up a ram trade albeit that prices drop to £10 for the specials, £5 for best selected and nothing for flocks".<sup>3</sup>

At the 1931 February ram sales Sidney Rubidge had the top average, a mere £5 for a string of twenty-two rams. With some sadness he reported that in 1929 the same string would have averaged well over £25 and with wool

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1. Oral Source : R. Rubidge
  2. Wellwood Diaries 27 Aug 1930
  3. Ibid 2 September 1930

selling below the cost of production it was "a wonder to find buyers at all".<sup>1</sup> This source of income from ram sales seemed to be drying up and at the August 1931 ram sales the demand was so slack that good rams were being sold at £3 and fair rams as low as £1.<sup>2</sup> The situation was no better at the 1932 February sale. S.H. Rubidge was one of the more fortunate breeders being able to sell all of his fourteen rams offered, for an average of £4.12<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup> but he "wonders how farmers can buy at all with wool having dropped to 4<sup>d</sup> per lb i.e. 5<sup>d</sup> below cost of production".<sup>3</sup>

To protect this source of income a meeting of Graaff-Reinet ram breeders, held on 27 July 1932, attended by eleven local breeders (the consent of twelve breeders absent had been previously obtained) passed a "Gentleman's Agreement" by which they undertook not to sell rams below £2.10<sup>s</sup>. Eventually the consent of thirty-five bona-fide ram-breeders in the Graaff-Reinet district was obtained.<sup>4</sup>

However the August ram sale at Bloemfontein, <sup>in 1932</sup> showed no improvement being "even weaker than last year with regard to prices".<sup>5</sup>

With the fall in wool prices and the price of rams, the income of farmers suffered a heavy blow. All the farmers struggled to make ends meet.

(c) THE PRECARIOUS POSITION OF THE FARMERS

"One of the worst periods in my life. There was no money at all. You could hardly sell anything".<sup>6</sup>

Although Graaff-Reinet was a stable farming community, most farmers found it a struggle to keep solvent. Some areas of the district fared better than others, for instance, those in the Camdeboo area (West of Graaff-Reinet) were long established and had some agriculture. In the early days of the Depression good seasons were experienced and good harvests of wheat and oats were obtained. The price of wheat (approximately 18<sup>s</sup> per 200lb bag) was relatively better than that of wool (averaging 5<sup>d</sup> per lb at that

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1. Wellwood Diaries 2 Sept 1930
  2. Ibid 27 Aug 1931
  3. Ibid 1 March 1932
  4. Ibid 27 July 1932
  5. Ibid 24 Aug 1932, see table 5 and note 2
  6. Oral Source : B. Vorster

time) in terms of production costs, until the Government abandoned the Gold Standard at the end of 1932. One farmer along the Sunday's River, South of Graaff-Reinet, calculated that he would have to shear 6 000 sheep to obtain the same income that he could obtain from 1000 bags of wheat.<sup>1</sup> In the Sneeu-berg Mountains to the North of Graaff-Reinet, farmers planted wheat in the hopes of reaping a reasonable crop, but for the Sneeu-berg farmer the growing of wheat was a highly risky proposition with, at best, a one out of three success rate. In the heart of the Depression, the weather struck with a late frost on 29 October 1931, killing all the young vegetables and destroying the Sneeu-berg wheat crop. The plight of these farmers is highlighted by this entry in the Wellwood Farm Diaries : "Wheat all taken [by frost] in Sneeu-berg. Last hope, with wool unsaleable".<sup>2</sup> Many of these Sneeu-berg farmers, in an attempt to get some cash, sold their beautiful poplar groves, that grew in almost every kloof, to the travelling representative of the Lion Match Company of Durban. To make a little extra cash the farmers offered to saw down the trees themselves.<sup>3</sup> The volume of this sideline was evidenced by the railway motor lorries securing the contract to transport 180 tons of logs from farms in the Sneeu-berg to the Graaff-Reinet Station during August 1932.<sup>4</sup>

The farmers, finding themselves short of operating capital, with the Banks and Lending Companies reluctant to extend their overdrafts, turned to that well-known institution, the Graaff-Reinet Men's Club. Here they found a willing accomplice in the form of Willie Dean, the coloured barman, who most obligingly, cashed their wool cheques for them depositing the money in the safe at the Men's Club till required. In this way the farmers ensured that their cheques were not swallowed by their bank overdrafts, and that they had a little ready cash to continue their farming.<sup>5</sup>

The farmers South of Graaff-Reinet, finding mohair totally unsaleable and with no sale whatsoever for their goats, stored mohair in their grain tanks hoping for better prices later.<sup>6</sup> One farmer-speculator from the neighbouring village of Aberdeen, Izzy Izzroff, travelled the district buying up this stored mohair for 1<sup>d</sup> per lb, eventually having in store an amount in excess of one million pounds. He much later made a huge profit

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1. Oral Source : W. Lipschitz
  2. Wellwood Diaries 29 Oct 1931
  3. Oral Sources: D. Kingwill, R. Kingwill
  4. *G.R. Advertiser* 26 Aug 1932
  5. Oral Sources: D. Archer, J.S.Minnaar
  6. Ibid : P. de Klerk

from the sale of this mohair, but the farmers did not begrudge him the making of this fortune since they had been only too relieved to be paid anything for their mohair, which they had been unable to sell elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The farmers' problems were compounded in that, not only wool but all agricultural produce was fetching ridiculously low prices. The records on the farm Wellwood show that a truckload of oranges in October 1929 was sold for £12 as compared to £20 in 1928 and between £28 and £30 the year before.<sup>2</sup> Another entry from the same farm records, dated 12 September 1929, states : " in no period since 1915 has Wellwood prime produce reached this low ebb".<sup>3</sup>

In their frustration and desperation farming families tried to cut expenses wherever they could. They were as self-sufficient as possible, growing their own wheat, maize and vegetables, and making their own soap and candles. Finding the price they received for butter did not cover the cost of production, many farmers' wives used butter, instead of the usual sheep fat, to make soap scenting it with homegrown lavender. On many farms old watermills, which had stood idle for years, were once again put to use milling homegrown wheat and maize into a rough meal, and when times became particularly difficult the farmers did without such basic commodities as sugar and coffee.<sup>4</sup>

During these lean years, farm children seldom had new clothes, the best portions of their parents old clothes being remade for them. In some large families flour bags were washed and used to make baby clothes, and sugar bags were unpicked so as to use the strong cotton for mending. Even old felt hats were cut up to make slippers in an ingenious effort to economise. Another Depression economy measure was using the unsaleable wool, like lox, to stuff mattresses and to make blankets. The women washed this wool, spread it out on wire frames to dry and then combed it. This combed wool was stitched to butter muslin and then put into an eiderdown cover to make a blanket. As the price of wool rose and the Depression lifted this particular use was never again resorted to.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Oral Sources: D. Parkes, M. Kroon, W. Lipschitz

2. Wellwood Diaries 10 Oct 1929, see table 4

3. Ibid 12 Sept 1929

4. Oral Sources: E. Minnaar, L. Booyesen, D. Kingwill, A. Luscombe

5. Ibid : A. Luscombe, M. Kingwill



Farmers being unable to pay the yearly telephone rental of £7.10<sup>S</sup> had their telephones disconnected.<sup>1</sup> Motor cars were put up on blocks to save tyres, and only used for long trips, on average once every three months to town to collect essential supplies. Many reverted to the use of horse and wagon on the farms, some farmers built what they called "Can't Affords" consisting of the back seat and axle of an old Model-T Ford hitched to a horse. These "Can't Affords" were used for short family trips and visits between farms.<sup>2</sup>

The following incident illustrates the straits in which many of the farming community found themselves as the Depression dragged on : A farmer went to town in his car to do his business, but after buying his necessary monthly supplies he found that he did not have enough money for petrol for his return journey. He did not want to borrow money from any of his friends who he knew were themselves short of cash. Instead he phoned a neighbour, who fortunately had not had his telephone disconnected, asking him to send a message to his wife. The wife immediately sent one of their coloured staff to town on horseback with a crateful of turkeys which were sold, enabling the farmer to buy petrol to get back home.<sup>3</sup>

Another section of the farming community that suffered were the farm foremen and managers. As the Depression deepened, these foremen and managers, very often the little educated sons of the old "bywoner" class, found themselves in a precarious position, since their employers were unable to pay their salaries. These men realising that it would be almost impossible for them to get any kind of job in town if they left the farm, opted to work for lodgings and rations, or in some cases payment in farm produce in lieu of their salaries.<sup>4</sup> Men with unemployed sons begged farmers to employ them for just their board and lodging so that they could have a job.<sup>5</sup> Four farm foremen managing four different farms, realised that their employer would not be able to continue paying their salaries of £15 per month each, in the difficult times he was experiencing and would have to reduce his staff. So they decided on a voluntary cut in their salaries and offered to work for £7 per month while the Depression lasted. This enabled them to keep their jobs and when good years returned their employer paid them the full amount they had lost.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Oral Sources: R. Kingwill, H. Hartzenberg, A. Luscombe

2. Ibid : M. Kroon, A. Rubidge, R. Kingwill

3. Ibid : A. Luscombe

4. Ibid : R. Kingwill, M. Kingwill.

5. Ibid : R. Rubidge

6. Ibid : J.S. Minnaar

The Black labourers on the farms suffered severe deprivations, as did their white employers, but relatively speaking they were better off than the Blacks in town who starved. During the years of the Depression it was very cheap to employ Blacks and farm labourers were paid an average of 10<sup>s</sup> per month.<sup>1</sup> But they were also given food rations which included milk and two slaughter sheep per family per month.<sup>2</sup> Some farmers paid their staff even less, but allowed them to keep their own few head of stock.<sup>3</sup> So on the whole the Blacks on the farms, whose standard of living was not changed drastically by the Depression, survived these years better than most other classes of the population.

During these times of hardship almost the only produce that had a ready sale, was a fat animal. Farmers spent much time and energy fattening animals, but now unlike previous years when their livestock was herded to the stockfairs in town, they took the unprecedented step of trucking these few selected fat stock to town. Here they made increasing use of the newly instituted railway motor transport, or if they were fortunate enough to own a truck, they used their own vehicle. All this in an effort to prevent their stock from losing condition on the long trek to town and to sell the stock at the best price they could obtain.<sup>4</sup>

Those farmers close to Graaff-Reinet started selling their surplus stock in town, for whatever price they could receive, much to the chagrin of the registered butchers in the town.<sup>5</sup> Every few days a flock of sheep or goats would be herded through the streets, with a herd boy behind, and one in front who would knock on the doors of houses offering a good fat sheep for, perhaps, 5<sup>s</sup>; but if a farmer's need for ready cash was urgent, prices would sometimes go as low as 2<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> per animal.<sup>6</sup>

With such low prices being obtained for livestock there was much muttering amongst the farmers about the middleman, and various schemes were put forward to try and obtain, for the farmers, a fair price for their stock. One of these schemes was formulated by C.R. Southey of the Schoombie area near Middleburg and it was presented to the Graaff-Reinet Wool Growers

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1. Oral Source ; D. Parkes
  2. Ibid : R. Kingwill, M. Kingwill
  3. Ibid : D. Parkes
  4. Ibid : J. Brodie
  5. Ibid : M. Kroon
  6. Ibid : H. Hartzenberg, L. Booyesen

Association at their meeting on 3 July 1931.<sup>1</sup> It was a scheme designed to help the disposal of surplus stock, and called for the erection of a large refrigeration unit at a suitable point in the Cape Midlands for the slaughtering and chilling of carcasses and their release onto the market according to favourable market prices. This plan also required the two wool co-operatives, the Farmers Co-operative Union (F.C.U.) and the Boere Saamwerk Beperk (B.S.B.) to become wholesale suppliers of the retail market, and not to compete in the retail market itself. This plan did not materialise as no-one had the necessary capital available for the erection of the refrigerating unit, or for any other similar outlay.<sup>2</sup>

A more promising plan was the Farmer's and Consumer's Meat Exchange, which was another scheme proposed by the enterprising farmers of Schoombie and which drew much of its support from the Graaff-Reinet district. The idea was to supply the most stable meat market in South Africa, namely Newtown, Johannesburg, directly from the district, cutting out the middleman. Eventually it was planned to establish farmers' butcher-shops in Johannesburg to retail the farmers meat. This scheme seemed to get off to a good start at a public meeting in Graaff-Reinet on 15 June 1932 where a large gathering of farmers were addressed by two of the founders and directors from Schoombie, H. Torr and J. Edwards. Many present at the meeting became members and took shares.<sup>3</sup> The plan was to give each farmer an opportunity to send a number of sheep to Johannesburg but unfortunately, after six months, the Directors of the Meat Exchange found that they had no more running capital since their manager had mismanaged funds. H. Torr was sent to the Graaff-Reinet district to solicit more funds, but none of the farmers were willing to advance any more money and the Meat Exchange went into liquidation.<sup>4</sup>

The most successful of these local self-help schemes, was the introduction of semi-annual concentration stock sales, organised and held under the aegis of the Graaff-Reinet Wool Growers Association (GRWGA). The idea behind the scheme was to gather all the surplus stock, in large numbers, at one place at a certain time, so as to attract buyers from far and wide, and so to ensure stable prices.<sup>5</sup>

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1. GRWGA Minutes 3 July 1931
  2. Ibid : 15 June 1932; Wellwood Diaries 15 June 1932; Oral Sources : H. Hartzenberg, K. Nezer, D. Parkes
  3. Ibid : 15 June 1932
  4. Wellwood Diaries 3 Oct 1932; Oral Sources : D. Parkes, K. Nezer, H. Hartzenberg
  5. GRWGA 28 June 1929

The first concentration sale was held on 17 October 1929, and its success encouraged the GRWGA to plan on holding one every six months. At this sale there were 9000 sheep penned, of which 4019 were sold at an average price of 18/5<sup>d</sup>.<sup>1</sup> Over the next few years these concentration sales were held with fair success, which the GRWGA attributed to the demand for the superior quality of the Graaff-Reinet-bred merino sheep. Their pride in this Graaff-Reinet product was not misplaced if one considers, that at that time, the Graaff-Reinet district contained more merino studs than any other district in South Africa. Amongst these were six of the oldest studs in South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

All these efforts to secure alternate sources of income, had stemmed from the slump in the wool market, but the Graaff-Reinet farmers had by no means abandoned wool production and a great deal of their effort was spent in trying to protect and organise the wool industry. The GRWGA had been established in 1922 and was the first of its kind in South Africa. The Graaff-Reinet farmers had a long history, not only of individuality, but also of leadership and rebelliousness. In their efforts to do what they considered to be the best, in the situation, for their interests, they often found themselves involved in controversy.

(d) THE GRAAFF-REINET WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION AND THE EFFORTS TO ORGANISE AND CONTROL THE WOOL INDUSTRY

The leadership of the Graaff-Reinet wool farmers was established in 1922 with their Graaff-Reinet Wool Growers Association which lead directly to the establishment of the National Wool Growers Association in 1926. Furthermore Graaff-Reinet wool was much sought after on the wool markets of the world because of its quality. To stimulate this demand they had decided to mark all the bales of its members with the GRWGA's own brand so that buyers knew the origin of the wool. This was in addition to the Springbok head which all classed wool in South Africa was entitled to. The Graaff-Reinet farmers were, consequently, the first in South Africa, to add their own district brand.<sup>3</sup>

In 1929 the Wool Council was formed and as with the NWGA the Graaff-Reinet farmers played a large, if not a dominating role in this organisation. (T.E. Murray of Graaff-Reinet was president of the Cape Province Wool Growers

1. *Ons Koerant* 24 Oct 1929
2. Oral Source : J.S. Minnaar
3. Bloemhof Diaries 1922



Association in 1929-30.) It was because of the tremendous influence that the sheep farmers and merino ram breeders of Graaff-Reinet had on the sheep and wool industry as a whole, that when the Wool Council tried to implement proposed legislation to control the wool industry in 1932, they found themselves faced with the difficult task of having to deal with the opposition of the GRWGA and other farmer's associations.

The Depression caused a series of problems in the wool industry, centred mainly on the efforts to regularise, organise and further control all facets of the trade. Various efforts were usually met with the opposition of the producer - the farmer himself, who cherished his independence. But the vagaries of the slump in wool prices forced these very farmers to cooperate, for their own survival. This did not stop them though, from agitating against what they considered over-interference by the Government in their own affairs. Above all else the farmers, together with the wool brokers, wanted voluntary control of the wool industry, and resented the fact that the Government saw fit to legislate for control. To the farmer the mixing of farming and politics was anathema. This attitude was at <sup>the</sup> root of all the troubles in the wool industry of the ensuing years and in which Graaff-Reinet farmers took a leading part.

On 18 September 1929 a special conference of farmers was convened by the South African Agricultural Union in Bloemfontein, attended by all the organisations interested in wool production, as well as by many individual farmers.<sup>1</sup> Here it was agreed to recommend to the Government the imposition of a levy of one shilling on each bale of wool exported from South Africa. This levy was to go into a levy fund, to be devoted to the research, propaganda and organisation of the wool industry.<sup>2</sup>

The GRWGA, while realising the need for such a levy, were not particularly in favour of this method of imposition. They all noted that a large proportion of the wool, directly exported during this period, came from the Graaff-Reinet district. As it was some of the best and finest wool available, was much in demand on the wool market in London. At the London wool sales in the second week of December 1929, out of 4050 bales from South Africa (from a total of 137 000 bales mainly from Australia and New Zealand) there were about 1000 bales from the Graaff-Reinet district alone.<sup>3</sup> But this fact was only a minor irritant when taken with the

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1. Farmers Weekly 25 June 1930

2. Ibid

3. GRWGA Minutes 9 Feb 1930

appointment at the same meeting of a board, known as the Wool Council, which would handle the levy fund. The GRWGA immediately objected to the manner of appointment of the officers to the Board, especially the condition that the Minister of Agriculture could veto any appointment if he should so wish. This, in conjunction with the fact that the chairman of the Wool Council was a government employee, (The Secretary of Agriculture) led to much unhappiness with this interference of politics in the wool industry.

The Cape Province Wool Growers Association (CPWGA) immediately clashed with their parent body, the Cape Province Agricultural Union (CPAU). Fear arose that the CPWGA would secede from the CPAU. The GRWGA was quick to support the CPWGA, and pledged its support if it should decide to secede.<sup>1</sup> This fear was averted at a specially convened conference at Middelburg (Cape) on 19 March 1930. An agreement was drafted and signed by the presidents of the two bodies, T.E. Murray of Graaff-Reinet for the CPWGA and A. Rabie for the CPAU.<sup>2</sup>

The controversy had originally arisen because the CPAU had refused to consider the nominees of the CPWGA for the Wool Council. By this agreement it was decided that each Association would nominate a member until such time as the CPWGA represented 60% of the wool producers in the Cape. This agreement had come into being largely as a result of the agitation by the GRWGA who had felt slighted since the nominees of the CPWGA had been Graaff-Reinet men. No sooner had this danger to the organising of the wool industry been successfully overcome, when the touchy individualism of the GRWGA was once again aroused.

At the National Wool Conference at Bloemfontein on 28 August 1930, Col. Williams, the secretary for Agriculture and Chairman of the Wool Council, enumerated certain Wool Council proposals aiming at a national type of organisation, of which membership would entail little expense, and would carry no obligations except an undertaking to work for the advancement of the S.A. Wool Industry. This seemed acceptable to most of the delegates, but the Wool Council had also drawn up a draft constitution for this body. Col. Williams had submitted this constitution to the conference and then for reference, to the local wool growers associations.<sup>3</sup>

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1. GRWGA Minutes 9 Feb 1930

2. Ibid March 1930; Farmers Weekly March 1930

3. Farmers Weekly 3 Sept 1930

The GRWGA was up in arms immediately on receipt of this draft constitution and accused the Wool Council of attempting to dictate policies. The complaints of the GRWGA were taken up by the S.A. Wool and Mohair Board, which represented the brokers, as well as by T.E. Murray, president of the CPWGA, backed by his executive committee.

The draft constitution provided for the disbanding of the existing provincial wool growers associations and their incorporation in a national body. To the farmers of the GRWGA this smacked too much of control. But as T.E. Murray said :

"I emphatically protest against the Cape Province Sheep and Wool Growers Association being ignored in any consideration of proposals to amalgamate or incorporate itself".<sup>1</sup>

The problem lay in the fact that they, as a body, had not been consulted by the bureaucrats of the Wool Council, and they resented this fact, in view of their cherished aim of organising the wool industry along voluntary lines.

At the same time as T.E. Murray was attacking the Wool Council through the CPWGA, W.L. Kingwill of Graaff-Reinet proposed to the GRWGA that it express the opinion that the wool levy funds were not being used for the purpose intended, namely, to improve the demand for wool and slaughter stock by propaganda and other methods; but that the funds were being squandered by useless appointments and other expenditure in no way beneficial to the wool producer. Further, that the GRWGA take steps to have the levy reduced to 3<sup>d</sup> per bale.<sup>2</sup> So the feud between the Wool Council and the CPWGA backed by the GRWGA, continued.

The Graaff-Reinet farmers were determined that as much as possible should be done for the wool farmer and in this they agreed with the Wool Council. But they differed radically as to the methods to be used to achieve this aim. They were continually on the alert for any signs that the Wool Council was acting contrary to their wishes, or was unduly influenced by the Government. When their delegate to the CPWGA Congress in September 1930 reported back that the Minister of Agriculture, Gen. Kemp, had stated that

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1. Farmers Weekly 15 Oct 1930

2. GRWGA Minutes 4 Oct 1930

he would be taking £30 000 from the wool levy every year, to create a fund for the protection of the sheep industry, they immediately reacted to this, maintaining that it showed that the Wool Board was dominated by the Minister of Agriculture.<sup>1</sup>

The GRWGA meeting of 4 October 1930, also refused to consider the new constitution of the NWGA as agreed to by the Wool Council and the NWGA, until such time as a conference of the CPWGA had been called to consider it. They took this decision on the ground that it was a counter to the unconstitutional moves of the Wool Council and the NWGA.<sup>2</sup>

On 12 December 1930 the GRWGA finally accepted the new NWGA constitution, but with much grumbling that the individual farmer's associations had been ignored in this important matter.<sup>3</sup> Discontent was somewhat assuaged when at the Congress of the CPWGA in March 1931, two out of the three members elected to the NWGA executive were Graaff-Reinet men, T.E. Murray and J.S. Minnaar, the third being C. Lotz from the Western Cape.<sup>4</sup>

The resolving of this particular controversy came just in time for the GRWGA to turn their attention to the real business of surviving in a depression. During January and February 1931 the rationing of the wool market, by means of quotas for each port, was introduced.<sup>5</sup> This had the wholehearted support of the GRWGA. This move was successful, and the market stabilized to such an extent that rationing was suspended during March, on the understanding that, should circumstances alter, the rationing scheme could again be brought into operation.

This rationing was implemented as a result of the practice of railing all wool to the auction sales as soon as it had been shorn. This produced a glut on the market during November and December every year and Manufacturers were unable to buy all the wool offered owing to the prevailing financial stringency. This forced them to enter into "forward sales" with speculators, who frequently made at least 100% profit, apart from causing the market to fluctuate dangerously. If the unhealthy monopoly thus created was to be

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1. GRWGA Minutes 4 Oct 1931
  2. GRWGA Minutes 4 Oct 1930
  3. Ibid 12 Dec 1930
  4. Farmers Weekly 15 April 1931
  5. Ibid 18 Mar 1931



eradicated and the market stabilised, it was essential that the supplies should be controlled : hence the rationing instituted from time to time by the Wool Council. Unfortunately this rationing scheme led to the Wool Council wanting more control of the overall marketing of wool.

In September 1932 the Wool Council drew up a Draft Bill for the regularisation of the wool trade.<sup>1</sup> Almost immediately they ran into strong opposition from both the brokers and the wool producers. As before, the GRWGA was in the forefront of this opposition and at the 18 October 1932 meeting of the GRWGA, W.L. Kingwill moved that :

"this Association is opposed to any legislation for control of the wool industry".<sup>2</sup>

This was the start of a controversy that raged for eighteen months. The farmers of Graaff-Reinet felt that the industry did not need more control but better organisation, especially along voluntary lines. They maintained that legislation for control would result in rigidity and they reasoned that the industry must be free to learn and grow along its own lines. In this stance they were wholeheartedly supported by the members of the trade and other farmer's associations.

At a meeting of the GRWGA on 9 February 1933 a motion was passed calling on Gerard Bekker, the president of the CPWGA and a member of the Wool Council, to resign, as he had forfeited the confidence of the GRWGA.<sup>3</sup> Their particular grievance with him was that he had at the S.A. Agricultural Union Congress in Pretoria, supported the proposed legislation and in addition, he had given the assurance at this congress that he had the support of all the wool growers in the Cape. Once again the GRWGA went on the attack against the Wool Council, forgetting the main issues involved but rather concentrating on the fact that they had not been previously consulted. This, to them, was the crux of the matter. They wanted to have a say in the decision-making and their greatest fear was that they would lose all participation in this decision-making process, if the proposed legislation for the control of the wool industry was passed. For this reason they strenuously opposed the Wool Trade Bill, believing that this was in the best interests of the farmer, during the terrible depression which they were experiencing.

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1. Farmers Weekly 21 Sept 1932

2. GRWGA Minutes 18 Oct 1932

3. Ibid 9 Feb 1933

At the same meeting, G. McCabe of Graaff-Reinet proposed that the Wool Council be asked to resign so that a new and more representative council could be elected. He held that the Wool Council had lost the confidence of the wool producers by the manner in which they had introduced the proposed wool legislation.<sup>1</sup>

At the CPWGA Congress at Cradock in April 1933, the motion was passed to postpone the proposed legislation for a year owing to the opposition of a large section of the wool growers.<sup>2</sup> Finally in March 1934, the compulsory offering of the wool by public auction was accepted by the Government on the recommendations of the select committee on co-operative societies, and became law in the same year. The GRWGA accepted this, though still feeling that there was no need for legislation; but times were improving and the judicious usage of the rationing scheme by the Wool Council had stabilised the market, much to the satisfaction of the farmers. The Graaff-Reinet farmers, with the improved conditions and prospects, did not feel the need, as before, to remember the original controversy and dissatisfaction over the Wool Council's attempts at control.<sup>3</sup>

However, regardless of what the GRWGA felt about the actions of the Government in relation to legislation, specifically regarding the wool industry, the Government was by no means forgetting or neglecting the agricultural community in general, and throughout the Depression years, had passed certain measures dealing with relief for the hard-pressed farmers.

(e) GOVERNMENT RELIEF MEASURES

Towards the end of 1930 legislation had been introduced into Parliament, and in February 1931 the Farmers Special Relief Bill was passed.<sup>4</sup> The object of this Bill was to give financial assistance to farmers to enable them to pay their pressing debts, without being obliged to sell their stock at uneconomic and ruinous prices.

A Board consisting of the managing director of the Land Bank, the under-secretary for Agriculture and a third member, from the Central Board of the Land Bank, would be appointed. It was this Board which would

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1. GRWGA Minutes 9 Feb 1933
  2. Farmers Weekly April 1933; GRWGA Minutes 19 April 1933
  3. GRWGA Minutes 28 March 1934
  4. Farmers Special Relief Act, No. 4 of 1931



eventually decide whether loans to farmers should be granted or not. The Board however would use the recommendations of the local magistrate, who in turn relied on information supplied by local citizens.<sup>1</sup> In Parliament the Minister of Finance, N.C. Havenga, had explained the workings of the act saying that the people of any district could form :

"local vigilance committees, persons acquainted with local conditions who know the farmers concerned and who are people of financial responsibility".<sup>2</sup>

These local committees had to endeavour to make settlements between debtors and creditors, and had to enquire what the circumstances of the applicants for loans were. Basically the function of these local committees was to supply information and advice to the Central Board who decided whether the loan would be granted or not.<sup>3</sup>

The amount above which no assistance could be given, was fixed in the Act at £1000. Interest was to be 6% and the period of repayment was to be seven years. Clause six made it possible for farmers to make use of this relief measure by stating that their stock could be used as security even while remaining in the hands of the farmer.<sup>4</sup> But in the words of the Minister of Finance :

"The Bill only contemplates taking over the pressing debts where it is clear that in that way the farmer will come through so that when prices improve once more he will be able to stop on the land".<sup>5</sup>

So in fact the Act made it a difficult and long process for the farmer to obtain government relief. The farmer, by the conditions laid down, had to be practically on the verge of bankruptcy before he was actually granted funds to carry on his farming operations.

The farmers of Graaff-Reinet, acting according to the Farmers Special Relief Bill, called a public meeting in the Town Hall of Graaff-Reinet on

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1. Farmers Special Relief Act : Union Gazette Extraordinary 9 Feb 1931  
Clause 1, sub-section 1-4
  2. H. of A. Deb 11 Feb 1931, col 271
  3. Ibid
  4. Farmers Special Relief Act, Clause 6
  5. H. of A. Deb 11 Feb 1931, col 271

the 18 February 1932, under the auspices of the GRWGA, and a Vigilance Committee was appointed. This Committee, consisting of C.H. Maasdorp (convenor), W.L. Kingwill, T.E. Murray, K. van Heerden and C. Ochse, did valuable work in alleviating the load of interest payments for a large number of farmers. Anyone called on to pay interest but unable to do so, could appeal to the Committee, who would then interview the creditors and endeavour to come to some agreement, or try to get the interest rates reduced. This Committee had some success in getting extensions of up to twelve months on the payment of interest for certain debtors. It was also able to get undertakings that creditors would not call up the bonds in question during the period of extension.<sup>1</sup> The Committee ensured many extensions by forwarding affidavits, in proof of the indebtedness of debtors, to creditors.<sup>2</sup> In July 1932 this Vigilance Committee drafted a letter to all the Banks and Financial Institutions in Graaff-Reinet asking them to what extent they were prepared to reduce the interest on Bonds, and whether they were prepared to allow arrear interest to stand over rather than adding it to capital.<sup>3</sup> In June 1932 the Midland Agency and Trust Company of Graaff-Reinet had already taken the step of reducing interest rates.<sup>4</sup> However the other institutions waited until April 1933 when the Government legislated for compulsory reduction of the interest rates.<sup>5</sup>

While the Farmer's Special Relief Act of 1931 seemed to offer a certain amount of relief, many of the farmers in the Graaff-Reinet district were wary of availing themselves of financial help. They were reluctant to take on further debt, especially considering the prevailing economic conditions and their present difficulty of meeting interest payments on any loans they might have secured. Added to this were the disturbing rumours circulating through the district, of impending financial difficulties of the largest local financial institution, the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors. So, for the Graaff-Reinet farmers, the Farmer's Special Relief Act was not quite the solution that it was intended to be.

On 15 October 1931 the Prime Minister, General Hertzog, announced, at the National Party Congress in Bloemfontein, that there would be a

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1. GRWGA Minutes 18 Feb 1931; G.R. Board of Executors Minutes 20 March 1931 p. 452
  2. GRWGA Minutes 24 April 1931 p' 486
  3. Midland Agency Minutes 29 July 1932 p. 373
  4. Ibid 24 June 1932 p. 357
  5. Farm Mortgage Interest Act (No 34 of 33) Government Gazette April 1933 No. 2126

reduction of 33½% on the railway rates on wool, to be retrospective from 1 September. This reduction was not greeted with as much enthusiasm as might have been expected in farming circles. It was pointed out that while it might be beneficial to the farmers, particularly those producing the poorer grades of wool, a reduction was long overdue as rates had still been in keeping with the boom prices of 1924.<sup>1</sup>

A much more popular measure was the announcement of subsidies on exports. This measure was announced by the Minister of Finance, N.C. Havenga, at the Agricultural Congress in Pretoria at the end of October 1931. The Government had decided on this subsidy on exports as a purely temporary and emergency measure.<sup>2</sup>

A ten percent subsidy on the export of all primary products, excluding gold, diamonds and sugar, was to be paid. The funds required to pay this subsidy were to be obtained by a special customs duty or primage of five percent *ad valorem* on all imports. The five percent primage was to be levied on all goods from all countries whether sterling, gold or other standard.<sup>3</sup>

This measure was taken in an effort to soften the blow, to exporters, of the Government remaining on the Gold Standard and to lessen the effects of the rates of exchange on the prices received for exported goods. It was at first, supported by the Graaff-Reinet farmers as the majority in the district exported their high quality wool to the London wool market. It seemed to be made for their particular needs. But ten percent was not regarded as a sufficient subsidy and the farmers complained that the value of the ten percent was being eroded by adverse exchange rates. Eventually on 19 January 1932 the export subsidy on wool was raised to twenty-five percent.<sup>4</sup>

But the grumbling over the lack of financial help from the Government to the farmers did not lessen. What particularly incensed the farmers were their losses on the exchange rates, which in turn were tied to the controversy over the retention of the Gold Standard.

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1. *Daily Despatch* 15 Oct 1931

2. *E.P. Herald* 30 Oct 1931

3. Export Subsidies Act No. 49 of 1931; Union Government Gazette 30 Nov 1931

4. Union Government Gazette 19 Feb 1932 proclamation No. 228

(f) ADVERSE EXCHANGE RATES

The problem had started when Australia had abandoned the Gold Standard at the beginning of 1931. The position was complicated by the sudden fall of the Australian exchange rate to £125 Australian for £100 sterling. This allowed the English wool buyer in Australia to pay more in Australian currency for wool sold in the Commonwealth, but at the same time made Australian wool cheaper in sterling in London.<sup>1</sup> The depreciated Australian currency adversely affected the purchases of wool from South Africa, as the higher nominal price in the former country involved a comparatively lower price when measured in terms of European currency. Throughout 1931 the Australian market remained relatively firm, largely due to the discount, amounting to thirty percent, which the overseas buyer obtained when purchasing from the Australian wool growers, owing to the favourable rate of exchange of the Australian pound to the British sterling purchaser.<sup>2</sup>

This was an enormous advantage for the Australian wool grower and accounted for the bulk of the buying orders going to Australia. European, American and Japanese buyers could afford to pay ten to fifteen percent more for Australian wool, yet land it in their own countries cheaper than any other wool because of this premium on their money.<sup>3</sup> A fair amount of this demand for Australian wool could be attributed to speculative buying. This did not, however, reconcile the South African wool grower to what he considered an unfair advantage on the part of his Australian counterpart. They felt that the poor prices they were receiving for their wool led from the fact that to compete with Australia, they had to offer their wool at a price below the cost of production. This irked the Graaff-Reinet farmers, for they felt themselves to be at a distinct disadvantage in relation to Australia in the matter of the export of their wool to Great Britain. They looked upon the position as being a matter of unfair competition and hence demanded that the situation be rectified. They were particularly indignant that :

"Teenstrydige wisselkoerse wat heersende is in verband met die verskeping van wol uit hierdie land, saam met die gunstige wisselkoers van die Australiese verskeping,

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1. Farmers Weekly 25 Feb 1931
  2. *E.P. Herald* 13 Feb 1931
  3. Ibid



beteken dat solank Suid-Afrika op die goudstandaard bly, ons feitlik die produsente van Australië help om sy wol teen pryse wat byna dubbel soveel is as die tans in Suid-Afrika verkrygbaar van die hand te sit".<sup>1</sup>

An added complication was that in 1931 the Australian wool clip was 400 000 bales more than the previous year's clip.<sup>2</sup> This increase represented about half the total South African production. The total production of Australia for 1931 was just under 3 million bales and for South Africa just over one million.<sup>3</sup>

When Britain abandoned the Gold Standard in September 1931, the situation became even worse. In November 1931 British Sterling stood at 20% below par, and the Australian sterling at 45% below par.<sup>4</sup> The fluctuations in the British exchange worsened the position. Australian buyers did not suffer from the same disability, because the Australian sterling had so depreciated in value in terms of gold that buyers could withstand the risk of fluctuations in the exchange of British sterling.

This position was attacked in the local press of Graaff-Reinet and a debate arose on the merits of exporting wool to Great Britain or not. Some were of the opinion that it did not pay to export wool, particularly in the light of the adverse exchange rates between South Africa and London. Others maintained that with the twenty-five percent subsidy on wool exports, and the extremely low prices received on the local wool markets in Port Elizabeth and East London, it paid to export wool to the London market and receive the slightly better return from there.

The problem with selling wool in South Africa as opposed to exporting it to Great Britain, was that towards the end of 1931 the local woolmarkets were almost completely stagnant. Buyers had abandoned them mainly because they felt they could not compete with the Australian market. On 10 October 1931 the Port Elizabeth Wool and Mohair Sellers Association, issued a statement outlining the situation. They felt that owing to the continued high rates and the rapid fluctuations in the exchange rates, and also to the

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1. *Ons Koerant* 23 Nov 1931

2. *E.P. Herald* 13 Nov 1931

3. *Fort Beaufort Advocate & Adelaide Opinion* 14 Jan 1932 (SA Wool Board files)

4. *E.P. Herald* 13 Nov 1931



fact that the banks were restricting the amount of exchange they were willing to purchase, it had become impossible to sell wool on the South African markets in competition with the markets in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

Nor were the farmers satisfied with exporting their wool as they felt particularly bitter about the working of the twenty-five percent subsidy. Firstly, as the exchange rate continued to work against the South African pound, the twenty-five percent was not enough to cover the difference especially after Great Britain had abandoned the Gold Standard. Secondly, because the Government had decided in February 1932 that all exporters submitting claims for payment of any subsidy, must transfer back to South Africa the nett proceeds of the sale of their produce overseas.<sup>2</sup> This meant that the subsidy was paid on the amount paid in London less the adverse exchange rate. But this was not all. Once their money arrived in South Africa they had to deduct from this amount the cost of pressing, insurance, rail and shipping rates. The subsidy was only calculated on this final amount. So in fact they were not being paid subsidy on the actual price paid per pound for their wool in London.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately the farmers did not have much choice in the matter. As the local markets had all but collapsed, they exported their wool in sheer desperation to London. They knew that they would suffer severe losses on exchange but felt that at least they would receive slightly more than if they sold on the local markets. This point was corroborated by a Graaff-Reinet farmer, R.H.Murray of Broederstroom, who reported that he had received an average of £10.3<sup>s</sup> per bale for 200 bales of wool sold in London. This amount was "mulcted of 30%" by the exchange. But similar wool from the Graaff-Reinet district, sold the same week in Port Elizabeth, had received an average of only £5.10<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup> 4<sup>4</sup>.

The advisability of sending wool to London instead of selling it on the local market was comprehensively set out in a letter to the local English newspaper by a farmer, Deane Archer, of the farm Ferndale in the Graaff-Reinet district. Archer made a comparison on the same account of wool, from adjoining farms, with the same rainfall, identical veld, the same growth of wool of ten months but one of which had sold on the London market and the other on the local market at Port Elizabeth.

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1. *E.P. Herald* 10 Oct 1931
  2. *G.R. Advertiser* 8 Feb 1932
  3. *Ibid* 3 Feb 1932
  4. *E.P. Herald* 7 Jan 1932

"42 bales sold in London on 23 Jan 1932 (excluding lox)  
 Money received in S.A. from London : £362. 7. 7  
 Deduct total expenses  
    shipping        £32.17. 4 : £329.10. 3  
 Add levy of our association imposed  
   but not on his : 14<sup>s</sup> : £330. 4. 3  
 25% subsidy on money received : £ 90.12. 0  
    Total cash : £420.16. 3  
 On 15 470 lbs shipped this gives a return  
   in Graaff-Reinet of 6.5 pence per lb  
Neighbour's figures : for 42 bales  
 Nett cash from broker with expenses paid : £205. 3.10  
 Remove 1 052 lbs lox at 7/8<sup>d</sup> per lb : £ 3.16. 8  
    : £201. 7. 2  
 Credit railage paid on lox at 30<sup>d</sup> per  
   100 lb : £ 1. 6. 3  
    : £202.13. 5  
 Subsidy at 25% on sales : £ 60.11. 0  
    : £263. 4. 5  
 Less subsidy on lox credited : £ 19. 2  
    Total cash : £263. 5. 3  
 On his 12 670 lbs sold in P.E. gives him  
   a return of money in Graaff-Reinet of  
   4.9 pence per lb  
 If my neighbour therefore shipped he would  
   have gained £82.9.4 on his clip.

If I had sold in Port Elizabeth at his price my loss would  
 have been £101.2<sup>s</sup>.

With regard to lox, which I eventually washed and  
 shipped my nett return in Graaff-Reinet all expenses  
 paid was 1.6 pence in the grease, while he only got 7/8  
 of a penny in Port Elizabeth and still had to take off  
 his costs".<sup>1</sup>

The farmers of the Graaff-Reinet district agreed with Deane Archer's  
 argument but still maintained that the exchange rate was robbing them of  
 money that was rightfully theirs. They turned their anger against the  
 retention of the Gold Standard by the Government. The Gold Standard

1. G.R. Advertiser 2 May 1932

controversy during the Depression became the single most important factor in the lives, not only of the farmers but of the general public. It spread out from the economic sphere and entered the political. The majority of the farmers were not slow to throw their weight behind the agitation for its abandonment. They blamed most of the hardships experienced during the latter part of the Depression on the retention by the Government of the Gold Standard.

(g) THE GOLD STANDARD CONTROVERSY

When Great Britain abandoned the Gold Standard on 21 September 1931, the question asked in South Africa at the time was, whether she should follow sterling or remain on the Gold Standard independently. Most people expected South Africa to follow Great Britain's lead, especially since she was a member of the British Commonwealth and therefore tied to sterling. The Prime Minister, General Hertzog, thought otherwise and saw no need for South Africa to abandon the Gold Standard simply because England had. Basically this course of action was a result of his strict adherence to the principle of South African independence, and also because the Government genuinely believed that this was the best course to follow. (They also wanted to avoid uncertainty and unnecessary speculation.)<sup>1</sup>

General Hertzog's decision was correct, but only in principle and on the assumption that normal conditions with continuing confidence would prevail. But as the situation developed, circumstances worked against the government, and the economic condition of the country worsened.

At first the Government decision was supported, but "on 13 November 1931 the Transvaal Chamber of Mines passed a resolution in favour of leaving the Gold Standard".<sup>2</sup> This was the beginning of the agitation and opposition which became especially strong in the rural areas.

A most important consequence of the Government's decision to remain on the Gold Standard was the export of capital.<sup>3</sup> People in South Africa thought that England would either return to gold parity, or that South Africa would be forced off gold in the near future. In either case their hope was to score on the exchange rates when they brought this capital back to South

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1. Nicholls, G.H. : *South Africa in my Time*. p. 262

2. Schumann p. 103

3. Report of Select Committee on the Gold Std. (No. 9 of 1932) May 1932, p. XII.

Africa. This export of capital affected the cash flow inside South Africa and threatened the stability of the currency. It was subsequently established that the total amount of cash resources withdrawn from the Union in the months immediately after the British abandoned the Gold Standard, was between £9 000 000 and £10 000 000.<sup>1</sup> The South African government adopted various measures to restrict this export of capital. By the end of 1931 conditions on the South African money market showed some improvement. Uncertainty, as to the immediate course of the South African pound, largely disappeared due to the very definite stand taken by the Government on the matter. Speculative capital apparently ceased to flow out from the country.

On 17 January 1932 the Reserve Bank made the important statement, that under the conditions then ruling South Africa could undoubtedly maintain the Gold Standard.<sup>2</sup> But at the same time the Government deemed it advisable to appoint a select committee to investigate the whole question of maintaining the Gold Standard or not.

This committee took considerable evidence on the subject and reached certain conclusions. Amongst which was that the departure from the Gold Standard would only be "a temporary relief" and the "permanent interests" of South Africa would not be served by its abandonment.<sup>3</sup> The committee also felt that the effect of abandonment would be to introduce "very grave and serious disturbances into the body economic" and would be "dangerous".<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, it came as no surprise when the committee in its final paragraph reported that :

"Your committee is firmly convinced that the interests and welfare of the Union demand, as they have always in the past demanded the maintenance of the Gold Standard".<sup>5</sup>

This was, however, largely a foregone conclusion, since most of the members of the committee were government supporters, since the opposition had refused to serve on this committee. But this result strengthened the government's determination to adhere to its chosen policy. Even up to

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1. Report of Select Committee on the Gold Std. (No. 9 of 1932) May 1932, p. XII
  2. Schumann p. 104
  3. Report of Select Committee on the Gold Std. (No. 9 of 1932) May 1932, p. XXXIX
  4. Ibid p. LIII and p. XXXIX
  5. Ibid p. LIV



December 1932, the Prime Minister, General Hertzog, had given the assurance that in no circumstances would the government abandon the Gold Standard.

In the evidence before the select committee the main arguments put forward against the abandonment of the Gold Standard were, that the balance of payments position of the country was essentially sound. This was basically true but at tremendous cost to the taxpayers, manufacturers and importers. Secondly, that the devaluation would result in a rise in prices. While this was used as an argument, no-one seemed to be certain to what extent this would happen or whether it would happen immediately on the abandonment of the Gold Standard. The select committee rather arbitrarily maintained that prices would rise and immediately too.<sup>1</sup> The last important argument against, was that as South Africa was the premier gold-producing country, her abandonment of the Gold Standard would have a bad psychological effect on the future willingness of the world to continue to use gold as an instrument of international trade, and would also impair South Africa's credit worthiness in the international capital markets.<sup>2</sup> This was a valid point but those who were against the retention, argued that their present sufferings far outweighed anything that might or might not happen in the future.

The conclusions of the committee were attacked immediately on the publication of their report. Basically the public felt that the report was :

"An apologia and an attempt at the justification of the present position, and not by any means an impartial discussion of the merits and demerits of the case".<sup>3</sup>

Towards the end of 1932 conditions, especially in the political sphere, had again become more uncertain. The World Depression reached new depths in 1932 and in South Africa the lowest point of the Depression was reached in July-September 1932.<sup>4</sup> The farmers were growing more discontented, and the conviction was gaining ground, rightly or wrongly, that economic salvation lay in the depreciation of the currency.

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1. Report of the Select Committee on Gold (No. 9 of 32) May 1932 p. XXXI-XXXVI
  2. Katzen p. 83
  3. *G.R. Advertiser* 6 June 1932
  4. Schumann, C.G.W. : *Structural Changes and Business Cycles in South Africa 1806-1936.* 292-3



The transfer of funds to London again made its appearance towards the end of the year - a sure sign that the degree of confidence, especially in the stability of the currency, was waning. The uncertainty was increased by the rumours of the imminent return to politics of the ex-minister of Justice, Tielman Roos, who had been a government supporter and still had considerable influence in the Transvaal.<sup>1</sup> The resultant shortage of money and capital was acutely felt by the producers and most financial institutions. Dissatisfaction with existing conditions grew daily more apparent. Such comparatively strained conditions required only a moderate shock to undermine confidence in the currency completely, and to instigate a new flight of capital. This shock came on 16 December 1932 when Tielman Roos addressed a gathering, in his old constituency Lichtenberg, at Haakboslaagte. He told the meeting that he was resigning from the bench and that the country was going off gold.<sup>2</sup> A week later he handed in his resignation. He then attempted to form a coalition government with Smuts, having as its basic manifesto the devaluation of the Union's currency.

Carefully planned, Roos's re-entry into politics could not have been better timed. Not only was the Depression at its worst but an important by-election at Germiston, a hitherto safe pact seat had been won, in a three cornered contest between a National, a Labour, and a South African Party candidate, by the SAP nominee, J.C.N. Strauss.<sup>3</sup> The popularity of the Government had reached a new low and accordingly, Roos, the archetypal political opportunist, had taken his chance and re-entered politics.

The effect of Roos's actions were remarkable. Under the strained political situation all confidence in the continuing stability of the currency disappeared. Large-scale speculation on the probability of the devaluation of the South African pound began immediately. It was estimated that in this run on the banks for remittances to England, between £2 000 000 and £3 000 000 left the country in the last few days prior to the actual devaluation, that is, the Government's abandonment of the Gold Standard.<sup>4</sup>

To begin with, the withdrawal of deposits was for the purpose of buying sterling, but as the exchange restrictions imposed by the Banks began

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1. Nicholls p. 263
  2. Pirow, O : *J.B.M. Hertzog*. p. 145
  3. Nicholls p. 263
  4. Katzen p. 83

to function, a rush was started to convert notes into gold at the Reserve Bank for the purpose of hoarding in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> Under these circumstances the only way to prevent a financial disaster of the first magnitude, was to release the Reserve Bank from its liability to redeem its notes in gold, and thereby detaching the South African currency from the Gold Standard. The official statement taking this course, was announced by the Minister of Finance, N.C. Havenga, on 28 December 1932.<sup>2</sup> Everybody, especially the farmers, heaved a sigh of relief and congratulated themselves, if they had opposed the retention of the Gold Standard, on the part they had played in forcing its abandonment.

Throughout this Gold Standard controversy the farmers of Graaff-Reinet had made known their feelings on the matter, mostly opposed and bitter. Commenting on the unanimous support of the Nationalist members of Parliament for the Government's decision to retain the Gold Standard, S.H. Rubidge had written that :

"Let it ever be remembered that South African politicians could stoop so low as to make politics and vote party on bread and butter questions - at the expense of starving their people".<sup>3</sup>

That the Government was losing its rural support became obvious when the Government only narrowly won the by-election at Colesberg in July 1932. The Government had expended a large amount of energy on their election campaign there, even though it was regarded as a safe rural seat. Their small majority was indicative of their waning rural support.

"It became apparent that many Nationalist supporters were falling away - were also getting sensible to the fact that they would rather have £607 for their wool than £344".<sup>4</sup>  
(Wellwood wool figures for 1932, less exchange.)

This waning of rural support for the Government was also evident at a meeting of the Graaff-Reinet primary producers held in the Town Hall on the 18 January 1932. Even though the nationalist M.P. for Graaff-Reinet, Dr. Karl Bremer, was present, a vote of 157 against 10 was recorded for the abandonment of the Gold Standard.<sup>5</sup>

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1. *E.P. Herald* 30 Dec 1932
  2. *Ibid* 28 Dec 1932
  3. *Wellwood Diaries* 31 Dec 1932
  4. *Ibid*
  5. *Wellwood Diaries* 18 Jan 1932

The 1931-32 wool season would be unforgettable, as it recorded the lowest prices in terms of gold within living memory. Apart from world conditions the difficulties of the Union producers were accentuated by adherence to the Gold Standard.

The incidence of the exchange remained a national peril and threatened the extinction of the wool trade of the country; the subsidy a mere palliative and wool farmers would be in a much more affluent position if they were able to compete on equal terms on the markets of the world".<sup>1</sup>

In this letter R. Haldane Murray succinctly aired the true position of the wool farmer and particularly why they were against the Gold Standard. That the Graaff-Reinet farmers suffered enormously in comparison with the other sectors of the community cannot be doubted. Their situation was made more difficult because they had to continue their farming operations without the necessary ready cash for interest and mortgage payments. This shortage of funds was hampered by the financial collapse of the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors.

(h) THE FAILURE OF THE GRAAFF-REINET BOARD OF EXECUTORS

During the boom period of 1924-5 many farmers of the Graaff-Reinet district had taken out loans and bought land at highly inflated prices. The financial institutions of Graaff-Reinet, amongst which were the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors (est. 1 August 1856) and the Midland Agency and Trust Company Ltd. (est. 30 March 1864), had readily advanced the required monies to the farmers. During the drought of 1927-28 the farmers had taken additional loans to see them through the lean years. By the time the Depression came, most farmers had quite substantial debts. However a farmer in debt was nothing unusual. He would, generally, run his farming operations on a bank overdraft settling all his accounts once a year, when he received his wool cheque at the end of the year. The problem was that prices fell to such an extent during 1929-1933, that most farmers were unable to reduce their yearly overdrafts. They became so short of ready cash that they were not even able to pay their interest on their loans.

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 12 Oct 1932

Various eloquent appeals appeared in the local press - under the heading "Adherence to the Gold Standard - everybody is suffering" A. Luscombe maintained that :

"While admitting the difficulty of world conditions today, surely it is evident that the distress is infinitely aggravated by our continued adherence to the Gold Standard".<sup>1</sup>

T.E. Murray in a later issue carried on the attack, blaming the Gold Standard and the exchange rate for the farmer's difficulties, adding that if :

"we farmers could get our money for clips sold in London at 10<sup>d</sup> ~~ave.~~ worth about 8½<sup>d</sup> here, without being mulcted in exchange, we could carry on and pay our interest".<sup>2</sup>

In May 1932 a report appeared in the Graaff-Reinet Advertiser stating that for the first time since 1922, Cape top-line wools were cheaper than Australian on the London market. This situation was blamed entirely on South Africa remaining on the Gold Standard, and to the fact that South Africa had to export to survive.<sup>3</sup>

Under the title "Wool Growers on Poverty-line" R. Haldane Murray once more attacked the Gold Standard in the local press. He wrote that :

"Investigation proves conclusively that our product [wool] sells below the cost of production, that the large majority of wool growers are unable to cover overhead expenses - many are living on the very verge of poverty unable to meet their obligations.

Our stud breeders find only a limited market for their animals and in many cases for want of a market, desirable stud stock are being sent to the butcher.

Sheep and wool have fallen to an unremunerative basis and as a result of the reduced value of primary products land values have dropped to an appalling degree; vested interests running into millions are imperilled. Wool growers, are threatened with extinction.

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 13 Jan 1932
  2. *Ibid* 22 Jan 1932
  3. *Ibid* 18 May 1932



Loans to farmers were looked upon as very safe investments, and many of the people of Graaff-Reinet who had surplus cash had readily agreed to the extension of loans to farmers. These investors had then lived on the interest of the loans. The problem was that the Board of Executors had been rather lax in securing adequate security for some of these loans as :

"They were well disposed to the farming community, bonds were granted easily, more on personality than financial standing. If you knew the directors, you could get a loan very easily".<sup>1</sup>

The Board of Executors began to experience difficulties, so too, the Midland Agency, but to a lesser degree, as it was the more conservative and careful of the two institutions. As the Depression deepened and prices plummeted the farmers found themselves unable to pay the interest on their bonds.

Basically the position with both institutions was that they took clients money on fixed deposits. They then lent this money, usually to farmers. In the pre-Depression period the competition for fixed deposit money was strong between the two local companies, and quite high rates of interest were offered to depositors. This competition led to a situation where the profit margin became small. So, during the Depression with the farmer as debtor to the company creditor, unable to pay his interest on his loan, the company in turn, could not pay any interest to its depositors.<sup>2</sup>

What complicated the situation was the practice of ceding. A client would borrow a certain amount from the company, and register his bond in favour of the company. The problem often arose that the company would be unable to find a depositor for the whole amount, so would split the loan amongst a number of creditors by means of an underhand cession, so called as it was a cession that was not registered in the Deeds Office to save the stamp duty and registration fee (a sum of + £5). Further complications arose if one creditor wanted to withdraw from a loan. Then another unregistered cession took place. In this way a complicated system of cessions had been built up over the years. Because the company was regarded as responsible for the administering of these loans, seeing to it that the various interests were paid and collected, they were held

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1. Oral Source : M. Kroon

2. Oral Sources: J.P. van Niekerk, N. van der Westhuizen, E. Whitlock



responsible by their fixed depositors for the payment of interest payments on the loans made with the fixed depositors monies.<sup>1</sup>

On this financial maze the Depression created havoc. Many creditors needing their money, demanded the payment of their cessions. The situation then arose that the company, unable to find another creditor, in the difficult times, to take over the cession, had either to call in the entire loan or to take over the cession themselves. Both companies preferring to keep the bond running, chose the latter course and took over the cession themselves and paid out the fixed depositor from their own reserve funds. The situation was worsened by the non-payment of interest by farmers. As the company was held responsible for interest payments to their fixed depositors they began using their liquid assets to pay this interest. It did not help to sequesterate any of the farmers and to have forced sales, as both financial institutions found themselves selling farms not for their purchase value but merely to recover loans. As the Depression deepened they found they could not even sell the farms as there was no-one to buy them.<sup>2</sup> This was not surprising with conditions as bad as they were :

"with the price of skins and hides not covering transport costs to market, with wool at 5<sup>d</sup> for top sortings (if finding a buyer at all), with farm bonds around £2 to £3 per morgen in this district .... farmers unable to pay running expenses of farms much less able to bring up rents and interests and thus rendering private investors and Finance Companies also without means of income, even Banks without cash funds".<sup>3</sup>

So even though the local finance institutions' assets exceeded their liabilities, they ran into a liquidity problem. As their problems increased so too did the rumours circulating the town and district. The Directors of the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors slowly became aware that their company was heading for a crisis. Applications for extensions of time to pay interest on loans increased in 1930 over those in 1929.<sup>4</sup> In July 1930 the secretary, H.J. Pienaar was instructed to write to the S.A. Mutual Insurance Company and the Guardian Assurance and Trust Company to ascertain whether they were prepared to grant the Board a loan of £20 000 for a period of five

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1. Oral Sources : J.P. van Niekerk, N. v.d. Westhuizen, E. Whitlock.

2. Ibid

3. Wellwood Diaries 1931 Summary

4. G.R. Board of Executors Minutes 1929-1930

years, and what the lowest rate of interest they would charge would be.<sup>1</sup> The S.A. Mutual replied that they would only consider the loan at six percent and subject to a pledge of Bonds approved by them. The directors accepted these conditions, and ceded ten selected bonds ranging from £1200 to £5000 to the S.A. Mutual.<sup>2</sup> While this loan helped to alleviate their immediate liquidity problems, after six months they were forced to take another loan of £12 000 from the S.A. Mutual.<sup>3</sup> There were other indications during 1930 that the Company was having financial problems. The directors even refused a donation of £5.5<sup>s</sup> to the 1820 Settlers Memorial Association which they had readily given in 1929.<sup>4</sup> So too with their yearly grant towards the funds of the Rhodes University College.<sup>5</sup>

Both Companies were so worried about the situation that they held a round table conference of their respective directors, a totally unprecedented move considering the intense rivalry between the two institutions. As a result of these deliberations, a deputation from both institutions was elected to enlist the services of J.E.P. Close, a well-known accountant of Cape Town. J.E.P. Close was to endeavour to find ways and means of obtaining :

"Government assistance for both institutions against the possibility of Investors of money, withdrawing capital in the shape of fixed deposits on a large scale".<sup>6</sup>

J.E.P. Close offered to interview the treasury and to put the position of the two institutions before them. Close proceeded to Pretoria and interviewed the Minister of Finance on 7 August 1931. Unfortunately the Minister, while sympathetic, was unable to offer any assistance, on the grounds that if given in one case would have to be extended to other Trust Companies and Building Societies who might also demand assistance. On the suggestion of the Minister, Close proceeded to interview the general manager of the Land Bank, who gave him the assurance that the Bank would be prepared to make any given farmer, who applied, an advance not exceeding £2000.<sup>7</sup> J.E.P. Close did not stop here, he then interviewed representatives of both the Standard and Barclays Banks. He was able to get from them the tentative proposal that they would :

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1. G.R. Board of Executors minutes 4 JULY 1930 p. 291
  2. Ibid 18 July 1930 p. 297-315
  3. Ibid 23 Dec 1930 p. 374-6
  4. Ibid 11 July 1930 p. 293
  5. Ibid 3 Oct 1930 p. 332
  6. Ibid 23 July 1931 p. 35-6
  7. Midland Agency Minutes 23 July 1931 p. 219

"possibly come to the Companies assistance provided the Government guaranteed payment".<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately on his return to the Minister of Finance, with this proposal from the Banks, the Minister refused to consent to the Government guaranteeing the repayment of any such loans.<sup>2</sup>

Somehow the two Trust Companies in Graaff-Reinet carried on through 1931. At a meeting held on 12 September 1931 of all the Directors of both Companies, plus the Managers of the local banks and the executives of the Chamber of Commerce and the Graaff-Reinet Wool Growers Association, an attempt was made to find some solution to the financial problems of the two companies. But no viable solution short of liquidation was found.<sup>3</sup> The previous day the Board of Executors had received a letter from Close advising them that the Standard and Barclays Banks were anxious to come to the Board's assistance; but they insisted on an investigation of the Board's position by Close.<sup>4</sup> The directors offered this solution to the meeting the following day and it was accepted, being the only course to follow at that moment.<sup>5</sup>

On this precarious position, the announcement on 21 September 1931 of Great Britain's abandonment of the Gold Standard acted as a catalyst, and brought the crisis to a head. Those depositors who had surplus funds, had withdrawn them and sent them overseas to London. At a meeting of shareholders of the Board of Executors in February 1932 the Chairman, T.E. Murray, reported that the sum of "£100 000 in cash" had been withdrawn in 1931, the major part after 21 September 1931.<sup>6</sup>

The withdrawal of these funds was the last disaster in a dangerous situation. Desperate attempts were made to stave off collapse. The Midland Agency finding that the company had to pay the interest on bonds that they had guaranteed, as debtors were unable to pay their interest, decided on 16 October to withdraw the sentence "The Company guarantees all investments made by it on behalf of clients" from their advertisements in

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1. G.R. Board of Executors 26 Aug 1931 p. 56
  2. Ibid
  3. Ibid 12 Sept 1931 p. 69
  4. Ibid 11 Sept 1931 p. 68
  5. Ibid 12 Sept 1931 p. 69
  6. Ibid 29 Feb 1932 p. 107

the local newspapers.<sup>1</sup> On the same day Close strongly advised the directors of the Board of Executors to enter into negotiations with the Midland Agency with a view to amalgamating with them.<sup>2</sup> But before anything could be finalised a run developed on the Board of Executors and on 20 October 1931 they suspended all payments and closed their doors. On that day S.H. Rubidge wrote in his diary :

"Climax to my anxiety over the past nine months over the fixed deposit loan to the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors due today. Phoned 11 a.m., and got a promise from their secretary that it would be placed in the Bank. At 12.45 Bank reported nil. Again phoned heads of Board and got disgustingly evasive replies. Made quick start to town - more talk and evasion. Position now revealed that this Grand Old Institution now at the end of its tether.

A most dangerous situation now facing Graaff-Reinet and district. If one Institution falls what can save the other although a more careful one".<sup>3</sup>

As the situation developed it was touch and go whether the Midland Agency would also succumb to a financial collapse but fortunately the directors were equal to this crisis. On the 21 October 1931, as the news of the Board of Executors' difficulties spread, a run began on the Midland Agency.

This withdrawal of funds was arrested by the appearance at the entrance to the Midland Agency building at 22 Church Street, of one of its directors, P.A. Luckhoff, who promptly placed himself in the doorway of the building. He demanded of the people what they intended to do with their savings once they had withdrawn them. His plea was strengthened by the appearance of the Chairman of the Midland Agency, Dr. D. Massey, a man well-liked and respected by the people of Graaff-Reinet. He begged the crowd of depositors assembled outside the Agency building, to trust and to have faith in him to protect their savings. Such was the respect for this man of integrity and honour that the crowd accepted his assurance and dispersed. In this way a run was averted.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Midland Agency Minutes 16 Oct 1931 p. 257

2. G.R. Board of Executors Minutes 16 Oct 1931 p. 97

3. Wellwood Diaries 20 Oct 1931

4. Oral Sources: J.S. Minnaar, J.P. van Niekerk, D. Archer, E. Minnaar  
L. van Heerden, M. Kingwill



Dr. Massey and the secretary of the Midland Agency, H.J. Pienaar, did much in the ensuing months to redeem this promise. The burden of keeping this company afloat fell largely on the shoulders of these two men, so much so, that soon after the crisis had passed and the position was improving in 1934, both men passed away worn out by their uphill struggle to save the Midland Agency.<sup>1</sup> On the death of Dr. D. Massey on 25 February 1934 S.H. Rubidge had written in his diary that it was the "faith in his [Dr. Massey] humanness and honesty that saved us from the crisis in the recent Depression".<sup>2</sup> Similarly when H.J. Pienaar died on 7 August 1934 he wrote that :

"often during the stress and storm of the Great Depression 1931-33 did I marvel at any human being, being able to stand the strain which fell on him".<sup>3</sup>

After the crisis of October 1931 these two "main pillars of the company" started immediately on the work of rescuing the company. At an emergency meeting of the Directors of the Midland Agency on 28 October 1931, it was decided to impose a moratorium on all capital payments.<sup>4</sup> Mainly to :

"divert a panic rush as has brought the fine old Board of Executors to a state verging on liquidation. The position in Graaff-Reinet is sad and depressed".<sup>5</sup>

This moratorium meant the suspension of all payments of sums of a capital nature. It was also decided not to cede any of the Agency's securities to satisfy depositors.<sup>6</sup> This decision was confirmed by a special general meeting of the shareholders and creditors on 13 November 1931.<sup>7</sup> The directors also voluntarily decided, in view of the difficult times, to forgo their director's fees until the financial position of the company improved.<sup>8</sup> That the clients of the company approved of these moves was evident at the sixty-seventh Annual General Meeting held on 10 February 1932, when a sincere vote of thanks was extended to the directors and staff "for their handling of the situation".<sup>9</sup> Not only the directors, but also

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1. Oral Sources: M. Kingwill, L. van Heerden

2. Wellwood Diaries 25 Feb 1934

3. Ibid 7 Aug 1934

4. Midland Agency Minutes 28 Oct 1931 p. 260

5. Wellwood Diaries 28 Oct 1931

6. Midland Agency Minutes 28 Oct 1931 p. 260

7. Ibid 13 Nov 1931 p. 270-272

8. Ibid 15 Jan 1932 p. 296

9. Midland Agency AGM Minutes 10 Feb 1932



the staff made sacrifices. The secretary and accountant voluntary offered to accept cuts of, respectively, £50 and £30 in their salaries.<sup>1</sup> It was by these means that the Midland Agency finally survived.

Their rival institution the Board of Executors found it too difficult to continue. The directors, on the advice of J.E.P. Close, decided to apply to the Supreme Court for an order placing the company under judicial management.<sup>2</sup> There immediately arose dissent between the supporters for outright liquidation and those wanting the Institution placed under judicial management. A committee, working for the former course, was formed under the leadership of G.B. Minnaar. This committee secured the services of a lawyer, C.H. Maasdorp, to act for them in pushing for liquidation. They were able, as a preliminary move, to secure an order that the Board's assets be frozen on 29 October 1931.<sup>3</sup>

However, their opponents were able to count on the support of the MP for Graaff-Reinet, Dr. K. Bremer, the mayor and also a past vice-chairman of the Midland Agency, H. Urquhart, and other prominent citizens.<sup>4</sup>

S.H. Rubidge, a director of the Midland Agency, had on 6 November 1931 :

"interviewed Maasdorp and Urquhart on behalf of the Board of Executors and their impending liquidation, viewing the result of a crash as too tragic for contemplation but apparently hope very small".<sup>5</sup>

The mayor, H. Urquhart, had brought the matter up at the Town Council meeting on 11 November 1931, reporting to his fellow town councillors that :

"certain creditors were trying to force the Board into liquidation, but this should not be allowed to happen, as it would mean wholesale ruin for the district and town. Attorney Maasdorp, who was acting for a number of creditors, contended that there had been undue preference during the last few months, and intended opposing the confirmation of the Judicial Manager (J.E.P. Close). Mr. Close would be permanently appointed or otherwise on the 19th instant".<sup>6</sup>

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1. Midland Agency Minutes 27 Jan 1933 p. 432
  2. G.R. Board of Executors Minutes 26 Oct 1931 p. 103-104
  3. Oral Sources : E. Minnaar, J.P. van Niekerk, D. Archer
  4. Ibid
  5. Wellwood Diaries 6 Nov 1931
  6. G.R. Municipal Minutes 11 Nov 1931 p. 778

The mayor also confirmed that he had signed a petition from some sixty creditors of the Board of Executors opposing any attempt at liquidation, and asking the Supreme Court to allow the judicial manager-ship to stand.<sup>1</sup> The liquidator committee opposed this because they wanted to rescue what they could, immediately from the Board, rather than wait for years in the hope of getting paid out their deposits in full. They argued that, in the meantime, they needed something to live on. They represented mainly those people whose sole income was derived from the interest on their investments. The majority of those opposing them were the small depositors and bond holders. If the Board was liquidated immediately, it would have been these people who would have suffered the most. Dr. Bremer, with the backing of H. Urquhart and other influential citizens was able to have J.E.P. Close confirmed as judicial manager on 19 November 1931, with retrospective effect to 29 October 1931. To allay the fears of those who doubted the efficacy of judicial management, a special impartial advisory committee consisting of D. Parkes, Dr. J. Rubidge, W. Nicol, D.G. Collet, and A. Murray was appointed to check on the Judicial Manager.<sup>2</sup>

J.E.P. Close set about, immediately, trying to unravel the financial problems of the Board of Executors especially the confusion over the cessions. But his efforts in this direction met with certain problems.

He discovered that certain bonds registered in favour of the Board of Executors, had been set aside by means of underhand cessions (unregistered). He adopted the attitude that these bonds belonged to the Board of Executors, but certain creditors maintained that the Board had no claim to them. The judicial manager, in order not to create preferences, held that everybody was to become concurrent creditors. But the bond holders claimed preferential rights, that is, a right to voice an opinion on how their bonds should be administered. Soon accusations of undue preferences were being hurled at the judicial manager though J.E.P. Close tried to be completely impartial and scrupulously fair. He stressed that the creditors must be patient and bide their time till matters improved. Eventually he converted the claims of all the creditors into £50 debentures and the existing securities of the Board of Executors were placed in the care of debenture trustees. A list of all the names of creditors was drawn up. The names were then placed in a drum, and once a month a number of names were drawn to find whose debenture was to be paid. The lucky ones

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 11 Nov 1931 p. 782

2. G.R. Board of Executors Minutes 29 Feb 1932 p. 108

would then be paid out the sum of £50 from the funds that were slowly being accumulated by the careful administration of the Judicial Manager. Later this system was dropped as investor clients claimed their securities had nothing to do with debentures. They maintained that the debentures should only have been issued to those who had ordinary deposits with the Board of Executors. J.E.P. Close then proposed the creation of two classes of shares as an alternate to liquidation, <sup>which</sup> was in some measure a prolonged settlement arrangement. The original shareholders received an "A" class share having a certain paid up value and "B" class shares were given to depositor creditors, which were in partial settlement of claims, and for the rest of their claims they were given debentures. After this arrangement the dissatisfaction subsided and the situation improved since no creditor lost his investment, although from 1931 to 1934 no interest was paid on any investment. In 1935 the assets were unfrozen and everyone was paid out their deposits and investments.<sup>1</sup>

"The failure of the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors was in many ways the worst episode of the Depression to many inhabitants of Graaff-Reinet as it was then the biggest financial institution in Graaff-Reinet".<sup>2</sup>

The whole population of Graaff-Reinet and the District suffered from this financial crisis in one way or another. Especially hard hit were the many whose only income was the interest from their investments with the Board of Executors. Those who had spread their funds between all the financial institutions in Graaff-Reinet fared slightly better than those who had deposited their entire savings with the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors.

This financial disaster that struck Graaff-Reinet had various consequences, particularly as it was the first of its kind in South Africa. It was directly responsible for the local M.P. Dr. Karl Bremer introducing the Companies Act 1926 Amendment Bill into the 1932 Parliamentary session. In his proposal speech on 4 March he said that :

"The Bill is one intended to help certain companies, who in this time of economic stress find themselves in a very difficult position".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Oral Sources : J.P. van Niekerk, N. v.d. Westhuizen, E. Whitlock, A. Jansen
  2. Oral Source : M. Kroon
  3. H. of A. Deb. 4 March 1932 col 1867

He referred particularly to Companies that :

"were faced with the possibility that there might be a sudden serious call on their resources and might be unable to meet the demands made on them. It was not, perhaps, so important where the companies had only themselves or a few shareholders to consider, but there were cases where companies had lent large sums of money to farmers and if the shortage of money might put these companies into liquidation, large numbers of farmers would suddenly be called on to pay up their bonds. At the present time it was often impossible for farmers to pay the interest on their bonds much less repay them.

The Bill before the House was designed, when a company felt itself obliged to go to court and ask them to give the Judicial Management power to keep such a company going until it found itself in a more favourable position. It was merely intended in a time of economic stress to prevent wholesale insolvencies amongst the farming community and others ...."<sup>1</sup>

This Bill was a direct result of Dr. Bremer's experience with the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors. Soon after the promulgation of this law the directors of the Midland Agency introduced the first reduction of interest rates in South Africa during the Depression - a full year before the Government's Farm Mortgage Interest Act of 1933. At their monthly meeting on 22 April 1932 the directors unanimously signed an acceptance of an appeal to all depositors to reduce the interest on farmer's bonds to five-and-half percent instead of six percent. They also decided to circularise all their clients who had fixed deposits and trust funds, requesting their consent to a corresponding reduction from five-and-half percent to five percent in the Midland Agency's payment of interest to them.<sup>2</sup>

This circular of appeal was endorsed by a public meeting of bond debtors in the Town Hall on 15 June 1932. This meeting had been convened by the Graaff-Reinet Wool Grower's Association to discuss the position between farmer bond debtors and bond creditors. The resolution of

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1. H. of A. Deb. 4 March 1932 col 1868

2. Midland Agency Minutes 22 May 1932 p. 332



T.E. Murray that :

"the best way to meet the desperate situation is for the bond holders to make very substantial reductions of interest charges and to write the unpaid balance off, thus making a clean cut and giving the farmer a chance".<sup>1</sup>

was passed with one dissentient. By the end of the month the secretary of the Midland Agency was able to report that :

"164 depositors (£232 814) agree to reduce interest
18 " (£ 31,995) refused
12 " (£ 15 599) conditional consent
25 " (£ 27 900) have not replied". <sup>3</sup>

In Graaff-Reinet the reduction of interest rates was accepted as a dire necessity and the farmers were sincerely grateful for the slight reduction introduced by the Midland Agency. They continued to suffer but struggled on and it was only in April 1933 that the Government took any concrete steps to lighten the interest burden. In that month, the Government voted a sum of three and a half million pounds for the emergency relief of farmers. In the Farm Mortgage Interest Act, 1933, all bond holders were to reduce interest to five percent. Failing this, a surtax would be charged equal to the interest above five percent. Of the five percent, the farmers would be called upon to pay three and a half percent and the Government would guarantee the remaining one-and-half percent.<sup>4</sup> While this measure was welcomed by farmers they did censure the government for giving relief too late, since by 1933 conditions had already started improving.<sup>5</sup>

While the farmer bond holders were the major losers of the financial failure of the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors, they were by no means the only sufferers. This financial failure brought the Depression, for the first time, closer to the townspeople in Graaff-Reinet. They now became acutely aware of the real effects of the Depression, for they began to suffer in their own unique way, a kind of suffering that was infinitely worse than the farmers, involving, as it did, unemployment, hunger and destitution.

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1. GRWGA Minutes 15 June 1932 ;  
*G.R. Advertiser* 20 June 1933
  2. Midland Agency Minutes 24 June 1932 p. 357
  3. Farm Mortgage Interest Act (No 34 of 33) Union Government Gazette April No 2126
  4. *G.R. Advertiser* 10 April 1933



CHAPTER III

THE TOWNSPEOPLE

(a) INTRODUCTION

The town of Graaff-Reinet lies in the horseshoe bend of the Sunday's River, and the availability of water from this river was an important factor in the town's early growth, and the rights to the water, which was of such importance in the arid Karoo, had been the cause of much controversy and the source of conflict in the community throughout the history of Graaff-Reinet.<sup>1</sup>

(b) THE ERFHOLDERS AND THE KENDREW SETTLERS

A large proportion of the townspeople of Graaff-Reinet, at the time of the Depression, were dependent for part or the whole of their livelihood on the produce from their large *erwe* and most particularly from their vines. These townspeople were referred to as *erfholders* and the water for these gardens was their lifeblood, and "its supply was their most vital concern, overriding in importance all questions of national policy".<sup>2</sup>

Economic factors during the Depression made the regular supply of water almost a question of the continued survival of these *erfholders*. So although there had been a period of relative calm in the problems of water rights in Graaff-Reinet, during the Depression the whole vexed question of the supply of water added another burden to the economic hardships of the erfholders and also to a new group, the settlers at Kendrew, approximately twenty miles south of Graaff-Reinet along the Sundays River.

The start of the water controversy of the Depression began in the early 1920's when the Government decided to launch various irrigation schemes throughout the country. One of these was the Sunday's River Irrigation Scheme which involved the building of two dams, one which would become Lake Mentz, the other the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam. The Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam was to be built where the Pienaar's, the Gats and the Sunday's Rivers met. This site was a mile-and-quarter to the north of the town of Graaff-Reinet but still on the Town Commonage.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Early water problems : see Smith p. 136-183 See map I+II

2. Smith, K.W. : *From Frontier to Midlands : A History of the Graaff-Reinet District 1786-1910.* p. 136

3. See map I+II

The drawback of this site, was that it would cover the fountain, known as "Mackie's Pit", from which the town's water supply was piped. The Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam Irrigation Board was formed to negotiate with the Town Council, and an agreement was eventually reached and signed on 27 September 1920. Under this agreement Mackie's Pit would be slabbed over, and the Town Council would grant the Board certain commonage land for the site of the dam. In compensation for this land the Board contracted to supply 2 000 000 gallons of water per day. This amount represented the irrigation supply for the *erfholders* while the supply of 750 000 gallons per day from the slabbed over Mackie's Pit would be used for the domestic supply.<sup>1</sup>

With this agreement concluded, the Government was able to go ahead with its plans for an irrigation scheme and commenced the building of the van Ryneveld's Pass Dam which was completed in August 1924.<sup>2</sup> The official opening was held on 16 July 1925 and a new irrigation scheme came into being.<sup>3</sup> The Government had subsidised this scheme to the extent of £410 000, but it had no other involvement.<sup>4</sup> The development of the scheduled irrigated area, and the settling of people there, was left to private enterprise which in this case was one company, the African Irrigated Lands Company, financed by Schlesinger's of Johannesburg.<sup>5</sup>

When the plan for an irrigation scheme had first been raised after the First World War, the Schlesinger Group had approached all the farmers along the Sunday's River south of Graaff-Reinet, who would fall under the scheme.<sup>6</sup> By the time the dam had been completed the African Irrigated Lands Company had bought out most of these farmers and had title to ninety-one percent of the scheduled land, or 8 551 morgen out of 9 420 morgen rated as irrigable under the scheme.<sup>7</sup>

The African Irrigated Lands Company produced a brochure advertising the potential of what was to be called the Kendrew Estates. In this brochure they used photographs of farms in the district; the peach trees at Mooifontein; the orange groves of Wellwood; the lucern lands at Coloniesplaats; thus creating the impression that the Kendrew Estates were already developed.<sup>8</sup> In this way the African Irrigated Lands Company

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1. V.R.P. Irrigation Board Minutes 27 Sept 1920 p. 41

2. Ibid 21 Aug 1924 p. 220

3. Ibid 16 July 1925 p. 279

4. Farmers Weekly 18 Dec 1929

5. Oral Sources: W. Lipschitz, M. Kroon, D. Parkes, S. Fourie, M. Booysen

6. Ibid : W. Lipschitz, M. Kroon, M. Booysen

7. G.R. Municipal Minutes 1 July 1929 p. 478

8. Oral Sources: W. Kingwill, M. Booysen

was able to interest prospective settlers from Great Britain. Most of these settlers were ill-suited to farming, but before the Depression they worked hard at trying to develop their thirty morgen plots, most of which they bought with a small deposit and credit from the African Irrigated Lands Company; "a number of the settlers had put everything they possessed in the world in their plots".<sup>1</sup> They were given a ten-year period to make "beneficial use of the land" before they would receive the title deeds to their land. To all intents and purposes the company was still the registered owner of the ground.<sup>2</sup>

These settlers farmed the small community of Kendrew, approximately twenty miles south of Graaff-Reinet along the Sunday's River. The majority of them came out during 1924-25 and faced the usual difficulties encountered by settlers starting out on undeveloped land.<sup>3</sup> They had no tractors and used mules and donkeys for ploughing.<sup>4</sup> Most of the settlers grew fruit, especially apricots, but while they produced excellent fruit they were hampered by the lack of an adequate market and the fact that when they had a good season, so too did the *erfholders* of Graaff-Reinet. The settlers attempted to start a dried-fruit factory, but just as this scheme seemed to be getting under way the Depression struck and it eventually had to be abandoned.<sup>5</sup> This dried-fruit factory might well have, in better times, given the settlers a good livelihood. One settler, L.B. Greig, had in 1929 exported a shipment of sample boxes of dried apricots to London for which he received 1<sup>s</sup> per lb which was infinitely better than the 6<sup>d</sup> per lb being offered on the local markets.<sup>6</sup> He anticipated a "great future for Kendrew, which is one of the largest producers of apricots in South Africa".<sup>7</sup> He based his optimism on the fact that "each tree should yield 100 lb of apricots; this will mean a yield of £60 an acre".<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately the prices of fruit fell as the Depression deepened and the other main product of the Kendrew Estates, lucerne hay, was also reduced from a pre-depression price of 8<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> to 1<sup>s</sup>9<sup>d</sup> per 100 lbs.<sup>9</sup>

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1. V.R.P. Irrigation Board Minutes 18 Dec 1925 p. 310
  2. Ibid 18 June 1926 p. 344
  3. Oral Source : W. Lipschitz, S. Fourie
  4. Ibid : M. Kroon
  5. Ibid : M. Parkes, W. Lipschitz
  6. *G.R. Advertiser* 30 Aug 1929
  7. Ibid
  8. Ibid
  9. Ibid 13 Dec 1929

Faced with these adverse economic conditions, plus the drought of 1933 when the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam was empty, the settlers all sold out or returned their plots to the African Irrigated Lands Company. Only one original settler remained, an ex-German engineer, Wartze, who had been expelled from Russia by the Bolsheviks.<sup>1</sup>

During the Depression the African Irrigated Lands Company tried to rescue their settlement. They employed men to train the settlers in farming for many of them were ex-army men, unprepared for Karoo conditions, and the company also extended credit for fencing and ploughing. One of the directors visited Kendrew during the early part of the Depression in an endeavour to learn what could be done to keep the farmers on the land. They were advanced money to start a communal dairy and a piggery, but this also ended in failure because of falling prices, no capital and no real regular water supply.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of irregular water supply, which jeopardised the whole future of the Kendrew Estates, arose from the fact that when planning the irrigation scheme, the Government engineers had overestimated the water that would be available for irrigation. They had based their calculations on faulty rainfall figures and had consequently arrived at a greatly inflated total figure. In 1928 the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam Irrigation Board had appointed a highly qualified and experienced resident engineer, P.R.R. Bisschop, a B.Sc. graduate from Wits University and a M.Sc. from the University of California. He immediately commenced on a thorough investigation of the water available for irrigation purposes and according to his report, the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam could only reasonably be expected to irrigate one half of the original scheduled area. This conclusion he based on his study of the average rainfall figures in the catchment area over a period of thirty-four years (1894-1928).<sup>3</sup> He concluded that : "the project as at present constituted is unfeasible and must be modified".<sup>4</sup> In his report he also emphasised the problem of the wastage of water by the townspeople, especially in the winter months when a large amount of irrigation water out of their daily supply of 2 000 000 gallons was returned to the river.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Oral Source : M. Parkes, W. Lipschitz

2. Ibid : W. Lipschitz

3. Report on availability of water in Van Reynevelds Irrigation district  
14 Sept 1928 p. 8-9

4. Ibid p. 51

5. Ibid p. 3-4



This report caused much debate as well as concern amongst all those involved. The Irrigation Board approached the Town Council concerning the alleged wastage of water and a conference of all interested parties was held, where it was decided to wait for the resident engineer's figures on the amount of water wasted per day.<sup>1</sup> By 16 May 1929 the engineer, P.R.R. Bisschop, had held readings for a full calendar year and had calculated that on average "a million gallons of water per day were wasted by the Graaff-Reinet Municipality".<sup>2</sup> Armed with this figure the Irrigation Board attended the conference of all owners of scheduled land within the irrigation area. This meeting was held in the Town Hall on 17 May 1929 and turned particularly acrimonious. The secretary of the Irrigation Board accused the Town Council of the wastage of one million gallons per day while the Town Council maintained that in accordance with their agreement with the Irrigation Board of 17 September 1920, certain rights were given to the municipality "in consideration of the right of storage, aqueduct and abutment".<sup>3</sup> These rights included the culvert supply from Mackies Pit and the agreement by which the Irrigation Board bound itself to deliver to the Municipality, free of charge, two million gallons of water per day. To this the Municipality claimed an "unqualified right" stating that :

"There is nothing in the agreement that would justify the Board in taking upon itself the right to decide whether or not the delivery of two million gallons per day is more than can be reasonably used, nor is it for the Board to decide whether or not the Municipality is reasonably using that quantity".<sup>4</sup>

The Town Council felt that it was not wasteful to return to the Sundays River the surplus runoff from the Town's furrow system, for this water <sup>was not wasted</sup> as lower riparian owners reaped a benefit from this practice.<sup>5</sup> Here the Town Council strengthened their argument by quoting from the resident engineer's report :

"Some four miles below the town of Graaff-Reinet are situated the villages of Rouvierville and Ardendorp. The cultivated lands of these villages are watered

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1. V.R.P. Irrigation Board Minutes 20 Sept 1928 p. 45
  2. Ibid 16 May 1929 p. 96.
  3. G.R. Municipal Minutes 17 May 1929 p. 458
  4. Ibid
  5. Ibid



by the return flow in the river from a weir situated some two miles below Graaff-Reinet at what is known as Tweede Drift".<sup>1</sup>

The Town Council particularly objected to the Irrigation Board's interference, alleging that : "The Municipality has the sole control as to the use of the water".<sup>2</sup> It argued further, that as far as the Town Council were concerned the Irrigation Board merely discharged the water which was :

"a duty under the agreement and not a right of control. Nor has the Board any right or interest in what the Municipality may do with the water".<sup>3</sup>

However, the Irrigation Board and the Town Council were not the only parties involved in the question of the run-off of water from the Graaff-Reinet furrows. At this meeting of the owners of scheduled land on 17 May 1929, the representative of the Adendorp Municipality, K. Wiley, had tried to enlist the support for Adendorp of those present. He maintained that in the dispute between the two major parties, the Graaff-Reinet Town Council and the Irrigation Board, "poor old Adendorp was [being] left out in the cold". Adendorp had been founded in 1854 on its present site, because of the existence of seepage water there. K. Wiley objected to the reference of "waste water" as he understood this to mean, in the case of Adendorp, seepage water. He maintained that if the Graaff-Reinet Council was going to store waste water, Adendorp would be robbed of its seepage water. Similarly the Irrigation Board was "attempting to do worse" by trying to stop the source of the seepage water, that is, the surplus water from the Graaff-Reinet furrows. Unfortunately for the Adendorp Municipality its objections were disregarded.<sup>4</sup>

A further complication in this matter was that the Town Engineer, H. Purves, disagreed with the figure of one million gallons per day as given by P.R.R. Bisschop, the maintenance engineer of the Irrigation Board.<sup>5</sup> This difference of opinion between these two men was exacerbated by a personality clash as well as by previous difficulties. These had arisen

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1. G.R. Municipality Minutes 17 May 1929 p. 458  
Report on Availability of Water in Van Ryneveld's Pass Irrigation District  
14 Sept 1928 p. 4
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 17 May 1929 p. 458  
V.R.P. Irrigation Board Minutes 17 May 1929 p. 107
  3. G.R. Municipal Minutes 17 May 1929 p. 458
  4. Ibid
  5. V.P.R. Irrigation Board Minutes 17 May 1929 p. 107

when, early in 1929, H. Purves had wanted to check that the Municipality were getting their full 2 000 000 gallons per day. P.R.R. Bisschop had, however, put a lock on the measuring chamber, refusing Purves access. Purves had complained to the Town Council who had eventually convinced the Irrigation Board to allow Purves access. But the Irrigation Board, at the instigation of Bisschop, had placed a condition on Purves' access to the measuring chamber, and he was only allowed inside if accompanied by the resident engineer.<sup>1</sup> This personal animosity was the reason for Purves' refusal to accept Bisschop's figures for the wastage of water, and this friction between the two engineers created a further series of complications later in the controversy over water.<sup>2</sup>

It became obvious at this meeting of the owners of scheduled land in May 1929 that sacrifices would have to be made by everyone concerned. The question was, who would make the first sacrifice. The African Irrigated Lands Company, owning 8 551 of the 9 420 morgen rated as irrigable but for which there was only sufficient water for 5 000 morgen, would have to sacrifice at least 4 000 morgen. Realising this, the manager of the company, O. Zacariah, approached the Town Council with the proposal that some of the irrigation canals to Kendrew be concrete-lined "at an estimated cost of £20 000". This would save water previously lost in transmission to Kendrew. The manager felt this was a reasonable request in view of the fact that the company had decided to sacrifice the 4 000 morgen out of the, as yet, undeveloped land still in the company's possession, so that "no settler need lose an acre". The manager noted that this land had

"been bought at irrigable prices [and] the company was losing hundreds of thousands of pounds in hard cash" so his company was entitled to something "in return".<sup>3</sup>

This was only half of Zacariah's proposal. According to calculations there would only be sufficient water to irrigate approximately 5 000 morgen. Some 408 morgen belonged to owners outside Kendrew, out of which 108 morgen would have to be voluntary forfeited. This would leave 300 morgen more than could be irrigated.

"The only hope for those 300 morgen would be to try and find more water and this could only be done by improving the irrigation equipment".<sup>4</sup>

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1. VPR Irrigation Board Minutes Feb 1929
  2. Oral Sources : W. Lipschitz, J. Kroon
  3. G.R. Municipal Minutes 1 July 1929 p. 478
  4. Ibid

Zacariah estimated that if the water for Graaff-Reinet was distributed through concrete pipes some 225 morgen could be irrigated. This piping, he estimated, would cost £10 000 and could save the Town £500 to £600 a year in water rates.<sup>1</sup>

The Town Council readily agreed to : "go into the whole matter with the Irrigation Board". But the general feeling of the Councillors was expressed by Councillor Laubscher when he stated that the ratepayers of Graaff-Reinet could hardly be expected to pay £10 000 for piping the furrow water, by which they would receive practically no benefit. Furthermore : "the trees all over town would suffer from lack of moisture if the furrow water was piped".<sup>2</sup>

A meeting of all scheduled owners on 8 August 1929 expressed their willingness to reduce the scheduled area of 9 420 morgen to 5 000 morgen :

"contingent on Parliament writing off the district's present day liability to a sum of money representing the capitalisation, at a rate of interest to be determined on, of the annual sum that can be collected on the reduced area from a water rate in proportion to the productive capacity per morgen"<sup>3</sup>

At this meeting there was, once again, disagreement between the resident engineer of the Irrigation Board, P.R.R. Bisschop, and the Town Engineer, H. Purves. In this case it was a difference of opinion over the method used to ascertain the amount of run-off water from the town furrows. The Town Engineer informed the resident engineer that he could not accept his, the resident engineer's, figures as his measurements were taken at "Tweede Drift" at Adendorp and therefore, <sup>these</sup> figures included the natural seepage of the river. He further informed the resident engineer that the Town Council had instructed him to measure the run-off at the spot where the town furrows emptied their excess water into the river.<sup>4</sup> The Irrigation Board, in a letter dated 9 August 1929, rejected all the figures obtained by the "unreliable weirs" of the town engineer. They maintained that the town engineer's weirs were incorrectly placed, and therefore were

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 1 July 1929 p. 478

2. Ibid

3. Ibid 8 August 1929 p. 492; VRP Irrigation Board Minutes 8 Aug 1929 p. 130

4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 8 Aug 1929 p. 492

of the opinion that their own engineer's method was the only reliable one, and proposed to submit both sets of figures to the Permanent Irrigation Commission.<sup>1</sup>

Here the position rested until the 3 September 1929 when the Town Council passed a resolution signifying its approval of :

"rebating its water rights to Sunnyside provided the waters of Edenvale are left intact".<sup>2</sup>

Sunnyside was a part of the town commonage south of the town municipal proper and across the Sunday's River, approximately sixty-seven morgen in size. Edenvale was a smaller, adjoining piece of land that had been sold to *erfholders* for development purposes, a few years previously by the Town Council.<sup>3</sup> The resolution of 3 September 1929 was to cause considerable problems for the Town Council when the Permanent Irrigation Commission visited Graaff-Reinet in the last week of November 1929.

The Permanent Irrigation Commission spent several days inspecting the irrigation works and the scheduled area. They also heard a great deal of evidence, interviewed the Irrigation Board and individual irrigators and finally held a lengthy meeting of the ratepayers, at which all aspects of the scheme were discussed.<sup>4</sup>

The Commission found that only J.H. van den Berg of Brandkraal, J. Lipschitz of Dorskraal, the Adendorp Municipality, the Graaff-Reinet Municipality and the African Irrigated Lands Company, had more than fifty morgen of scheduled land. All these scheduled owners except the Graaff-Reinet Municipality, voluntarily agreed to a decrease of their scheduled areas. In so doing they would bear the burden of abatement for the benefit of the small holders who owned only approximately 500 morgen out of the total of 9 420 morgen.<sup>5</sup>

At a separate meeting with the Town Council, the chairman of the Commission, R.J. van Reenen, had clashed with them over their earlier decision to rebate the water rights to Sunnyside. The Council had, between their

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Irrigation Board - Town Council 9 Aug 1929
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 3 Sept 1929 p. 495; VRP Irrigation Board Minutes 12 Sept 1929 p. 136 See Map II
  3. Ibid
  4. Farmers Weekly 18 Dec 1929
  5. VRP Irrigation Board Minutes 27 Nov 1929 p. 157



decision and their meeting with the Chairman, decided in principle, to use the run-off water by piping it across the Sunday's River for use at Sunnyside. Their plan called for the interconnection of the town's furrows to collect all the surplus water at one point and to then build a pump station at this point to pump the surplus water across the river past the showgrounds up Hospital Road to beyond the Graaff-Reinet College grounds to a reservoir, capable of storing approximately sixty million gallons. From here the water would be used to irrigate plots at Sunnyside.<sup>1</sup>

Also at this meeting between Van Reenen and the Town Council, the town engineer had been called in and testified that :

"he had felt from conversations with the maintenance engineer [P.R.R. Bisschop] that by hook or by crook he was going to try and obtain the surplus water .... [even] by coercion if necessary".<sup>2</sup>

He also objected to the resident engineer of the Irrigation Board, P.R.R. Bisschop's, figures for the wastage of water because :

"they were compiled in the best year experienced in his lifetime when there was saturation by rain".<sup>3</sup>

He felt that the only true and accurate way to determine the surplus flow was to take measurements of water actually going out of the town as he had done, and not as the resident engineer had done at Tweede Drift near Adendorp.<sup>4</sup>

On the strength of this difference of opinion the Town Council requested, and were granted, a period of twelve months in which to verify or otherwise the amount of water alleged by the Irrigation Board to be running to waste.<sup>5</sup> Here the water controversy was to a certain degree relegated to a less important role in the affairs of the Town. As the full effects of the Depression swept over the townspeople, the energies of everyone were directed at the more difficult, and important task, of every-day survival in the hardship prevailing everywhere.

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 28 Nov 1929 p. 531-2 See Map II
  2. Ibid
  3. Ibid
  4. Ibid
  5. Ibid p. 531

Though the effects of the Depression were earlier apparent in the farming community, by the end of 1930 there were signs that the townspeople were also suffering financially. The Town Council was receiving numerous applications from residents, for the discontinuance of their domestic water supply, since they were unable to pay the fee of 3<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> per month for the use of domestic water.<sup>1</sup>

The Town Council were concerned that those who had applied to have their water disconnected, as well as those who had had their water supply cut because of non-payment of their water charges, would be compelled to use the unclean water from the irrigation furrows. It was suggested that stand-pipes should be erected at various points in the town to enable these people to procure filtered water free of charge.<sup>2</sup> By the end of 1931 the situation had worsened to such an extent that the Public Works Committee reported that :

"Many people who have paid regularly in the past now state that they cannot pay for water anymore".<sup>3</sup>

There were other indications of the precarious economic conditions. The Town Council discovered that the Municipal Swimming Bath Attendant, Sutherland, had not reported being ill as he "feared losing his job".<sup>4</sup> The horse-drawn cab-drivers too had felt the economic pinch and nine drivers had signed a petition requesting a reduction in the annual £2 licence fee for cabs.<sup>5</sup>

An illuminating incident of these difficult times was the fact that the sanitary contractor, C. de Beer, offered in August 1930, to carry out the entire night-soil contract including the removal of offal from the abattoir, for the sum of £50 per month instead of the usual £57.15<sup>s</sup>. Previously the Town Council had found it difficult to get him to do a complete and thorough job and his lower offer, and preparedness to carry out the entire contract, was his reaction, in fear of losing his job, to various offers by unemployed residents to do the work "cheaper and more efficiently".<sup>6</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 28 Nov 1929 p. 531

2. Ibid 9 Dec 1930 p. 662

3. G.R. Municipality Reports : Public Works Committee 11 Dec 1931 p. 176

4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 19 Aug 1930 p. 618

5. Ibid 24 March 1931 p. 697

6. Ibid 5 Aug 1930 p. 615

This little incident was perhaps symptomatic of the struggle of the ordinary man in the street of Graaff-Reinet to keep his head above water. The *erfholders* turned to a pursuit which they found very lucrative. Vineyard cultivation had always given them a good income, for the Graaff-Reinet grapes were well-known and had, prior to the Depression, received good prices in the surrounding centres, especially Port Elizabeth. But there were a large number who cultivated grapes in Graaff-Reinet and the competition was strong. As the Depression worsened the *erfholders* found that it did not pay them to pack, crate and send grapes by rail to the Port Elizabeth market.<sup>1</sup>

Liquor distilling had always been a traditional activity in Graaff-Reinet and as the Depression continued many of the *erfholders* found that illegal distilling was their most profitable source of income. Prior to the Depression the Government had tightened the control on the distillation of spirits for sale, and by law the Graaff-Reinettters were allowed to distil only twenty-eight gallons of spirits per licence-holder and this amount was for personal use only.<sup>2</sup> Having big surplusses of grapes they distilled quantities greatly in excess of the legal maximum, and sold this to the public. Their biggest customers were the railway workers and the non-Europeans.<sup>3</sup>

The Graaff-Reinet grape, because of its high sugar content, was ideally suited to the distillation of brandy. This illegal brandy, named "Withond" was renowned far and wide and was so potent that if you poured it on a table and lit it, it would burn.<sup>4</sup> The *erfholders* also distilled a white wine and a red Jeripigo wine that was supposedly much sought after. Other favourite illegal liquors were what was called "Jan Groentjie" which was a peppermint liqueur, aniseed brandy and ginger brandy liqueur all of which were sold for 3<sup>s</sup> a bottle while withond sold for between 1<sup>s</sup> and 2<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup> per bottle, with the odd, good quality bottle, going for 3<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup>.<sup>5</sup> The most lucrative part of the distilling process, and one which was not illegal, was the selling of the "mos", which was the left-over must after the grapes had been crushed. This had a slight alcohol content and was sold for a "tickey a tot", a tot being a full tin cup, to the non Europeans.<sup>6</sup> This trade

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1. Oral Sources : P. Burger, J. Brummer
  2. Union Government Gazette 1924 (i) Cape Liquor Laws Amendment Bill 5 Jan 1924 No. 1360, clause 12. (ii) Wine and Spirits Control Bill 8 Feb 1924 No. 1366, clauses 1 and 6(i)
  3. Oral Sources : J. Brodie, W. Kingwill
  4. Ibid : J. Traas, B. Vorster, J. Brummer
  5. Ibid : K. Nezer, J. Brummer
  6. Ibid : G. Kroon, J. Brummer

in must reached large proportions and there were numerous complaints from residents, of the increase of disorderliness and drunkenness of the non-Europeans in town. Apparently only a :

"small quota of liquor consumed by the coloured people is obtained from Licensed Houses, while Natives cannot purchase any from this source".<sup>1</sup>

The Coloured and Black people of Graaff-Reinet made extensive use of the :

"illicit trade, through which any amount of intoxicants can be purchased at prices to suit the poorest pocket, and with no restrictions on the hours of trade".<sup>2</sup>

This illicit trade was further brought to the notice of the more upright citizens by the fact that most of the distilling was done by the *agterstraters* situated mainly at the western end of the town along Plasket Street. The native location was situated on the extreme eastern side of town, so to get their tot of must the location residents had to walk through town, and inevitably their behaviour on their return trip led to complaints. Jansen Street, leading off Plasket Street, was nicknamed *slinger straat* because of this returning traffic of inebriated location residents.<sup>3</sup>

The number of *erfholders* wanting to get into this must trade grew alarmingly. The possession of a licence to distil for personal use entitled one to sell must, so accordingly the number of distilling licences grew from eighty-nine in 1928 to one-hundred and thirty-two in 1930.<sup>4</sup>

Early in 1930 a local Doctor, C.J.J. van Heerden, discovered several cases of lead poisoning in his patients which he traced to several of the illicit distillers in the Plasket Street area. Apparently some of the newcomers to the business, being unable to afford the more expensive copper piping had used lead piping. Being threatened with prosecution by the doctor some of the distillers stopped their distilling, which was evident in the drop in licences issued in 1931, a drop to one-hundred and nine from a

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 13 Dec 1929

2. *Ibid*

3. Oral Sources : J. Traas, J. Brummer, G. Muller ; *see Map II*

4. *G.R. Magistracy Annual Reports 1928-1930*



peak of one-hundred and thirty-two in 1930.<sup>1</sup>

Another problem for the distillers, was the continual threat of unexpected visits from the Customs and Excise Officers, who would be checking on the legal quantities of liquor distilled, and the illegal distillers went to great lengths to hide their excess amounts. Some, whose plots backed on to the Sunday's River, hid their barrels in the river sand.<sup>2</sup> Others had hidden cellars or false backs to cupboards.<sup>3</sup>

During the "*stooking*" season a constant watch had to be kept for the police and police traps. One distiller, Dirk Olivier, had a sawn off palm tree on the corner of his plot (Jansen and Plasket Streets). On the top of this tree he would hide a coloured boy who, having a clear view of the street, could warn the distillers of the approach of any suspicious looking characters or the police. This system was not without its comical side. One day, on being warned of the approach of the police the daughter of *Withuis* Jansen, an illegal distiller, hastily took a basket full of bottled withond and threw the bottles into their lucern plot. But the police had merely come to report the theft from the town commonage of the Jansen's cow.<sup>4</sup>

On another occasion two of these distillers, Piet Els and Kerneels Smit, were busy distilling in their cellar and Kerneels Smit's wife did not have sufficient time to warn her husband and his partner of the approach of the police. There was only time for her to close the cellar door, raking gravel over it to disguise it, before the police arrived to make an inspection. While they did not discover anything suspicious, they did spend some time chatting to Smit's wife. By the time the police left and she opened the cellar door, the two distillers, overcome by the fumes were completely intoxicated, needing forty-eight hours to recover.<sup>5</sup>

A favourite ploy of the police was to station a man with a pair of binoculars on the mountainside rising on the west of town, on the other side of the Sunday's River. From this vantage point he was able to look down

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1. Oral Sources : C. van Heerden, H. Whitlock; G.R. Magistracy : Annual Reports 1928-1934
  2. Oral Sources : B. Vorster, J. Traas
  3. Ibid : L. van Heerden, R. Brodie
  4. Ibid : R. Brodie
  5. Ibid : R. Brodie, J. Brummer

on the plots of the *agterstraters*, and to see who was distilling. One of the largest distillers, *Withuis* Jansen, took exception to this invasion on his privacy and loosed off a few rifle shots in the general direction of the mountain. When asked by the police for an explanation he merely replied that he was cleaning his rifle after a long spell of disuse. (Jansen could not be prosecuted as at that time it was still no offence to fire a weapon within municipal limits.)<sup>1</sup> The police thought it wise to curtail their surveillance operations and Jansen became the toast of the local distillers for some months afterwards. The police also tried to use non-Europeans in an endeavour to catch the distillers selling their illegal liquor, but in some way it was always known who was to be used as the trap, and so the distillers were prepared. The police even resorted to the use of marked money but Graaff-Reinet was a small community and in the hard times being experienced by everyone there was considerable sympathy for the distillers.<sup>2</sup>

At one stage the police decided to bring in outsiders to help them. But according to police regulations any member of the police force has first to report to the station commander of the district into which he moves before he can go about his duty, and the arrival of these newcomers was always promptly reported to the distillers.<sup>3</sup> Only once was a distiller caught in his illegal trading. A C.I.D. detective from Port Elizabeth, one de Villiers, was sent into the area. On his own initiative de Villiers arrived in civilian clothes and went straight to *Withuis* Jansen, introduced himself asking to buy some of Jansen's *Withond* which had been recommended to him. Quite unsuspecting, Jansen sold him some bottles of his finest and was promptly charged for illicit distilling. Jansen complained bitterly of this underhand way of being caught, but paid his fine.<sup>4</sup> But the lucrative business of illegal distilling nevertheless continued since it enabled many an *erfholder* to pay for his children's education.<sup>5</sup> Illegal distilling was by no means frowned upon by the townspeople as the "*agterstraters het hulself gehou met die verkoop van withond*".<sup>6</sup> So much so that *Withuis* Jansen used to pay his year's water rate entirely with "tickeys".<sup>7</sup> Obviously the proceeds of his must sales.

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1. Oral Sources : H. Whitlock, J. Brummer, G. Muller
  2. Ibid : H. Whitlock, J. Brummer, G. Muller, P. Burger
  3. Ibid : H. Whitlock, J. Brummer, G. Muller
  4. Ibid
  5. Ibid : K. Nezer, P. Burger
  6. Ibid : W. Minnaar
  7. Ibid : G. Kroon

In February 1932 the water controversy once more came to a head. At this stage the *erfholders*, making some income from their gardens, were particularly loath to see any interference in their water rights or the supply of water. The Select Committee on irrigation matters sat in Cape Town during February 1932 for the purpose of considering the report of the Permanent Irrigation Commission on the Van Ryneveld's Pass Irrigation district.<sup>1</sup> During the sitting of the Select Committee, the Town Council received a telegram informing them that the town's water supply from the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam (2 750 000 gallons per day) would not be interfered with, and asked them whether they :

"desired to object to the proposal to exclude "Sunnyside" (67 morgen) from the scheduled area of the Van Ryneveld's Pass Irrigation district".<sup>2</sup>

The Town Council were resentful of this proposal concerning Sunnyside. The reason being that the maintenance rates had been paid on this land for the past six years; although no use had been made of the water to which the ground was entitled.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore the council was already committed to an expenditure of £430 for survey expenses in connection with their plan to pipe the run-off water to Sunnyside. Consequently they replied to the Select Committee that they wished to retain the water rights on Sunnyside as the ground could only be sold if it was irrigable.<sup>4</sup>

The Council did not consider it necessary to send a representative to give evidence before the Select Committee, as they had already given evidence before the Permanent Irrigation Commission. The Select Committee, after consideration of the Permanent Irrigation Commission's report, and hearing the views of representatives of the Van Ryneveld's Pass Irrigation Board, who were present, decided to recommend to Parliament that the write-off in respect of the sixty-seven morgen of Sunnyside be authorised, if the Municipality agreed to a reduction to 365 million gallons of the annual supply of water (previously approximately 1 000 million gallons per year) delivered by the Irrigation Board. This reduction was to be made by the Town Council surrendering all rights to the water from Mackie's Pit (750 000 per day), and by cutting down on the wastage of the run-off from

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Irrigation Board Memorandum 11 Aug 1933
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 23 Feb 1932 p. 16
  3. Ibid
  4. Ibid

the town's furrows.<sup>1</sup> This, of course, touched a very sensitive issue amongst the *erfholders*, who maintained that they could waste their own water if they so chose.

However, if the Municipality refused to allow Sunnyside to be descheduled, and did not take steps to prevent the wastage of the run-off water, then the Town Council would become liable to pay a sum of £876 in arrear rates to the Irrigation Board. Sunnyside would also be subjected to a differential rating of £2.15<sup>s</sup>2<sup>d</sup> per morgen per year while other irrigators were to pay only 12<sup>s</sup>7½<sup>d</sup> per morgen per year.<sup>2</sup> (The original rates for everyone had been £3.2<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup>.)<sup>3</sup>

When these proposals of the Select Committee became known, the mayor, H. Urquhart, discussed the matter with the M.P. for Graaff-Reinet, Dr. K. Bremer, who was given a memorandum setting out the Town Council's position. Beyond saying that the burden sought to be imposed on the Municipality could not be met in any circumstances, the memorandum did not comment on the findings of the Select Committee other than alleging that the Select Committee's avowed object was to force the hands of the Municipality.<sup>4</sup>

The Town Council did however realise that they would have to eventually accept the loss of water rights on Sunnyside. As to the reduction of one million gallons per day, they would :

"Convene a meeting of the *erfholders* with a view to their rebating the one million gallons of water a day or a portion thereof during certain periods of the year, and without prejudice to their established rights".<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Bremer left immediately for Pretoria to interview members of the Irrigation Commission. He eventually met the Commission on 6 July 1932 but no decision could be reached.<sup>6</sup>

In Graaff-Reinet the matter dragged on with the Town Council having a number of meetings with the *erfholders* to endeavour to arrive at some

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Irrigation Board Memorandum 11 Aug 1933
  2. Ibid; G.R. Municipal Minutes 19 June 1932 p. 62
  3. Farmers Weekly 18 Dec 1929
  4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 19 June 1932 p. 62
  5. Ibid
  6. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Bremer - Town Council 7 July 1932



means of saving water. The *erfholders*, however, insisted on their vested rights and would not countenance any interference with the water to which they were entitled by law, whether usefully used or not.<sup>1</sup> Eventually at a meeting of ratepayers on 21 April 1933, a committee consisting of five *erfholders*: J.F. Muller (Plasket Street), R.A. Jansen (Donkin Street), J. Knoetze (Cradock Street), A.P. Sommers (Church Street) and A.A. Kingwill (Cypress Grove), was appointed to collaborate with the Town Engineer in finding ways of saving water.<sup>2</sup>

This committee reported ten days later. Their recommendation was to reduce the town's flow during the winter months, when the volume of the run-off from the furrows was the greatest (due to only a small amount being used for irrigation purposes). In this way the committee hoped to obtain the desired saving of water. However in their report, the committee pointed out the difficulty of ensuring that the wastage was controlled as each morgen erf received a four hour leading a week, divided into a one day and a one night leading. The problem was that number one in a street might take his night leading, number two might leave it to run past and number three might take number two's turn and so on.<sup>3</sup> While recognising the problem, the committee's recommendation was accepted by all the parties concerned on the understanding that every effort be made to see that no wastage actually happened. The acceptance of the proposals effectively closed the matter.<sup>4</sup>

But this was by no means the end of the *erfholders* problems. By this stage of the Depression they were earning an extremely precarious living from their erfs with :

"the incomes of those of its property owners, who look to their gardens for a living, have shrunk so startlingly owing to the Depression, the Government economic policy and glutted markets for their products, that it is with the utmost difficulty that existing rates and taxes can be found, and municipal services paid for. In many instances arrears are being paid in meagre instalments".<sup>5</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Irrigation Board memorandum 11 Aug 1933
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 21 April 1933 p. 166
  3. Ibid 1 May 1933 p. 168
  4. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Irrigation Board memorandum 11 Aug 1933
  5. G.R. *Advertiser* Editorial 22 April 1933

As the drought of 1933 became even more serious, the plight of the *erfholders* worsened. The level of the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam fell to alarming levels. The *erfholders* and the Town Council now discovered that as the level fell the water from the Mackies Pit became ever more brackish. This was due to the fact that the salts in the dam, as the level fell, seeped down to the lowest corner of the dam where the Mackies Pit was situated, giving its water an extremely high salt content. The Town Council, finding that the Mackies Pit supply was unsuitable for domestic use, mixed it with the regular irrigation supply. They then drew a supply of pure dam water from the main furrow for filtration purposes, and for the subsequent use by domestic consumers.<sup>1</sup>

The Town Council was soon inundated by complaints from the *erfholders* who held that the mixed supply of irrigation water was damaging their gardens. This was a serious situation for the *erfholders* as they depended on their gardens for their livelihood. The position was made even more precarious, by the economic hardships they were still experiencing by way of the low prices they were receiving for the produce from their plots.<sup>2</sup>

The Council approached the Irrigation Board with the suggestion that the Board take over the Mackies Pit supply, and in return supply two million gallons per day of pure dam water during the winter months, and two-and-three-quarter million gallons per day during the summer months.<sup>3</sup>

The Board refused the Council's suggestion, maintaining that the high salt content of the Mackies Pit water would seriously affect the quality of the water in the Dam if it were not drawn off through the Mackies Pit pipe-line.<sup>4</sup> The Irrigation Board's decision was later supported by the resident engineer who had the Mackies Pit water analysed and found the salt content was 400 per 100 000 parts, which was the equivalent to a dessertspoonful of salt per gallon. In his opinion it would be "highly dangerous for the Board to agree to the suggestion contained in the Town Clerk's letter".<sup>5</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Town Council-Irrigation Board 5 Sept 1933
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 5 Sept 1933 p. 214
  3. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Town Council - Irrigation Board 5 Sept 1933
  4. Ibid - Irrigation Board - Town Council 14 Sept 1933; Irrigation Board Minutes 14 Sept 1933 p. 32
  5. VRP Irrigation Board Minutes : 12 Oct 1933 p. 33

The *erfholders* had to accept the situation and had to curtail their use of the mixed irrigation supply until the drought was broken at the beginning of 1934. As the level of the Dam rose, so the salt content of Mackies Pit lessened. But for the period of the drought, it presented one more hardship that the *erfholders* had to endure during the Depression.<sup>1</sup>

The final saga of the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam Irrigation Scheme was played out early in 1934. On 11 August 1933 the Minister of Lands, Colonel Deneys Reitz, visited Graaff-Reinet and publicly stated that there would be no financial write off in connection with the scheme, owing to the fact that the bulk of the land under the scheme was controlled by a speculative company, namely the African Irrigated Lands Company.<sup>2</sup>

Following this August announcement and the Minister's associated statement that he was prepared to discuss terms with the company, a meeting was held between representatives of the company and the Department of Lands and Irrigation. A provisional agreement was reached, and in accordance with this agreement the Select Committee on Irrigation matters recommended to Parliament in 1934, that the loan of £410 000 used to construct the Dam be remitted to the extent of £374 000 together with all the arrear interest amounting to £216 672.<sup>3</sup>

The company, in its turn, agreed to a reduction of its scheduled area of 8 551 morgen to 3 000 morgen, with the small-holder's area being left at its old figure of 869 morgen, the water to be shared on an equal field-edge basis. By means of this change, the small-holders share of the available water, though still below what was asked for, had been doubled.<sup>4</sup>

Another important condition provided that the settlers who had purchased land from the company were to receive full title and release on a per-morgen payment of £20 in all, in place of the original £90, while no further land was to be sold by the company at a higher price than £30 per morgen.<sup>5</sup>

This relief came too late for the settlers of Kendrew for by 1934 they had all, except for the German engineer, Wartze, been forced to abandon

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1. Oral Sources : J. Brummer, G. Muller, P. Burger

2. VRP Irrigation Board Minutes 11 Aug 1933 p. 30; Farmers Weekly 21 Feb 1934

3. Ibid : 20 Dec 1934 p. 54; Farmers Weekly 21 Feb 1934

4. Farmers Weekly 21 Feb 1934

5. Ibid

their holdings owing to economic circumstances and the drought of 1933.<sup>1</sup> So in actual fact the company was unlikely to sell any more land and the investment of the shareholders of the Schlesinger Group had turned out disastrously. The African Irrigated Lands Company continued its operations at Kendrew till 1950 when it sold out, lock, stock and barrel, to a consortium of local farmers for a sum of £500 000.<sup>2</sup>

The *erfholders* and the settlers at Kendrew were not the only section of the populace in the urban context to experience hardships during the Depression. The business section though less disastrously affected, were also financially hard hit.

(c) THE BUSINESSMEN

That the rate of business trading dropped and the supply of money dwindled to a trickle is obvious from an editorial in the Graaff-Reinet Advertiser towards the end of 1931 in which it was pointed out that :

"In a community like our own .... the spending power diminishes with the increase of those out of work and the lessening of the pay to those, whose services are retained".<sup>3</sup>

The position was worsened by the fact that : " the ordinary source of supply of outside money - the sale of produce - has this year almost ceased".<sup>4</sup>

The following business letter was received in Graaff-Reinet in 1931 and seems to be characteristic of the times, and is also interesting for its quaint phraseology :

"I much regret, but I am compelled by circumstances to ask you kindly to cancel my order ..... Since a long time the Depression we are passing through has been growing worse and worse, and is now such that I am compelled to curtail everything in my power in order to keep it up ... the bulk of my customers are so tremendously hard hit that they ask me almost without exception postponement of paying their debts till December next.

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1. Oral Source : M. Kroon
  2. Ibid
  3. *G.R. Advertiser* Editorial 9 Dec 1931
  4. Ibid



In the knowledge of the poor plight people is involved, I have to be reasonable and extend my terms of credit. The increase in postage and revenue dues, taxes and last but not least onerous bank charges in a time like the present has not little contributed to increase the ruinous position in which the bulk of the population is involved. I hope that some day the situation will improve and that you will take my request in consideration".<sup>1</sup>

This letter described clearly the position of the businessman during the Depression. Any businessman well disposed to his fellow citizens found it difficult to survive. The demand for goods was still present but the money to pay for these goods just was not available. A businessman had either to refuse to sell goods without a cash payment, or had to extend credit. In either case his business profits slowly shrank.<sup>2</sup> The lack of business in Graaff-Reinet during the Depression years is well illustrated by the case of a lessee of a blacksmith shop on Goedhals Square. On 11 November 1931 the blacksmith, J. Schroeder, applied to have his lease cancelled. This lease was to expire on 30 November 1932 but he felt that as : "he was doing no business at the present time, [he] could not afford to pay the rent of fl per month".<sup>3</sup>

Other businessmen also found this lack of business a serious obstacle to surviving through the Depression. A particular case of note was that of the butchers in town whose numbers had increased by 1930 to thirteen. This was due to the fact that farmers were selling livestock cheaply, and it was therefore relatively easy to open up a butchery.<sup>4</sup> The first setback for the butchers was the selling of livestock by farmers from door to door, but they were helpless to stop this practice. They did however try to prevent the slaughtering of livestock in the town and location, and in August 1930 nine local butchers sent a petition to the Town Council requesting them to prohibit this practice.<sup>5</sup> After waiting six months and receiving no reply to their petition, a deputation of the butchers headed by J. Kroon, approached the Town Council on 24 February 1931. They argued that beside

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 17 July 1931
  2. See Table
  3. *G.R. Municipal Minutes* 11 Nov 1931 p. 632
  4. Oral Sources : M. Kroon, J. Kroon
  5. *G.R. Municipal Minutes* 5 Aug 1930 p. 612

being a danger to public health, the private slaughtering of livestock in the location and the town, and the unlawful selling of this meat, was unfair competition. They maintained that the butchers had to meet establishment costs; the payment of licences, rents, rates and abattoir fees, therefore this practice should be disallowed. Unfortunately for the butchers, the Town Council disagreed. They decided that because of the difficult times, private slaughtering would be allowed to continue but the hawking of meat would be discouraged.<sup>1</sup> This decision was disappointing for the butchers and soon after this a price war erupted between them. Mutton at that stage was being sold for 3<sup>d</sup> per lb, but one of the bigger butchers, W. Whitlock reduced the price of his mutton to 2½<sup>d</sup> per lb. Against this competition the other butchers slowly closed down, one by one, until only two were left, Whitlock and the Kroon Brothers.<sup>2</sup>

Another section of the businessmen of Graaff-Reinet who felt the Town Council was discriminating against them, was the dairymen. At the end of 1930 the Town Council had taken the decision to compel all dairymen, within six months, to deliver all milk to customers either in bottles or half-gallon cans.<sup>3</sup> The dairymen were angered at this decision, and on 15 January 1931 handed in a petition signed by thirty-eight dairymen and milk suppliers, objecting to this decision.<sup>4</sup> They objected on the grounds of the added expense of changing over from cans to bottles. They felt the Council decision was particularly unfair as the Municipality had four years previously, compelled all dairymen to use closed cans with taps to transport milk from door to door. Other reasons they used to support their opposition was that with the big closed cans milk could be tapped directly from the can into a customer's receptacle. Furthermore the quantity of milk which the individual customers took varied each day and they therefore felt it to be impossible to know how many bottles or cans to fill at the dairy each day.<sup>5</sup> The Council moderated their decision to the extent of extending the time limit, for the implementation of this new scheme, to 1 January 1932. But from that date all :

"milk vessels used shall be filled, closed and fastened in the dairy or milk-room and under no circumstances

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 24 Feb 1931 p. 686
  2. Oral Source : M. Kroon, J. Kroon, H. Whitlock
  3. G.R. Municipal Minutes 9 Dec 1930 p. 640
  4. Ibid 15 Jan 1931 p. 678
  5. G.R. Municipal Minutes : Dairies:Petition 15 Jan 1931

shall milk be transferred from one vessel into another in the street or in any place other than the registered premises".<sup>1</sup>

This step decreased the numbers of registered dairies. In 1930 there were twenty-one registered dairymen. The circular informing the dairies of the Council's decision regarding the time extension was sent to seventeen dairymen. By the end of 1932 there were only fourteen registered dairymen left and only eleven dairies emerged from the Depression.<sup>2</sup>

From all this it is obvious that the Depression had a very detrimental effect on the ordinary small businessmen who in normal times would have been able, in all probability, to earn a very comfortable living.

Some businessmen turned their ingenuity into finding different sources of income. One small businessman who had, prior to the Depression, made a reasonable living turning out selected furniture pieces, started making wooden toys and other small items. He was able to continue his business during the Depression selling children's wheelbarrows for 6<sup>s</sup>, little children's carts that could be pulled by a goat for 10<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup>, a hobby horse for 5<sup>s</sup>. He also made dolls cots and dolls furniture for dollshouses. As a sideline he made collection boxes for churches.<sup>3</sup>

A certain speculator, Borg, started buying up the manure dumps on the farms. He paid 2<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> for a wagonload, bagged it in rough form and sold it as fertilizer to people as far afield as the sugar plantations of Natal, the ~~ma~~lie lands of the Orange Free State and the vineyards of the Western Province.<sup>4</sup> This buying and selling of manure by Borg was just another inventive scheme by a man contriving to make a living, but the business he started during the Depression grew much later into a large commercial concern.<sup>5</sup>

Another enterprising citizen, E.O. Garnett, bought all the unwanted rowing boats on the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam and established a boating business on the dam.<sup>6</sup> He eventually had eight boats and charged 1<sup>s</sup> per

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 15 Jan 1931 p. 678; G.R. Municipal correspondence Circular to Dairies 16 Jan 1931
  2. Ibid : Dairies 1930-34
  3. Oral Sources : J. Traas, D. Kingwill
  4. Ibid : B. Vorster, G. Kroon, A. Haarkoff, W. Minnaar
  5. See Note 4
  6. G.R. Municipal Minutes 19 Sept 1933 p. 311

hour for the use of a boat. He also set up a refreshment booth on the eastern side of the dam near the wall. This business prospered towards the end of the Depression when it became popular to spend an afternoon boating on the dam.<sup>1</sup>

The Goedhals family established a lime-burning business on their farm, de Barracks. This business provided most of the lime used in the housing schemes started by the Municipality during the Depression. Besides being a source of income, the lime-burning business provided approximately ten families with employment during the Depression.<sup>2</sup> In these and other ways the small businessman of Graaff-Reinet survived.

The section of the populace of the town who suffered the most during the Depression were the non-Europeans who had, besides the normal hardships being experienced, to struggle against the peculiar conditions entailed by the handicap of their colour.

(d) THE NON-EUROPEANS

Those of the non-Europeans who were classed as coloured as opposed to those who were black i.e. native, were slightly better off owing to the fact that less restrictions were placed on the coloured people. The coloured people who could afford it, lived in the town proper for at that time no municipality in the Cape had the power to compulsorily segregate its coloured from its European inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> In Graaff-Reinet the coloured people quite naturally tended to live together in the poorer quarter of town, the Blackhorse Inn and River Street area but some of them, however, lived interspersed with the Europeans. The poorer of the coloureds found accommodation amongst the blacks in the municipal location on the outskirts of the town.<sup>4</sup>

The Blackhorse Inn area had the highest density of coloured people in Graaff-Reinet.<sup>5</sup> It was also notorious for drunkenness, unruliness and as a red-light district. During the Depression because of the prevalent unemployment amongst the coloured people and with the "*goedkoop brandewyn*,

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1. Oral Source : H. Whitlock
  2. Ibid : D. Kingwill, W. Minnaar, H. Whitlock
  3. Marais, J.S. : *The Cape Coloured People 1652-1937*. p. 257
  4. G.R. Municipal Census Report 1931 See tables 8,9+10
  5. Ibid



*baie uit werk en baie gedrink*".<sup>1</sup> It became highly dangerous for a policeman to venture into the Blackhorse Inn area, especially on a Saturday night. No policemen dare go into that area on foot or alone so two policemen used to go in on horseback to try and keep order. In those days policemen were not issued with firearms and only had batons. On one occasion a certain coloured policeman, Izak Petoors, tried to confiscate some Bantu beer from a group of inebriated "out-of-works" who turned on him and proceeded to give him a sound beating. Fortunately he was able to blow his whistle and was rescued by a white colleague, Constable Botha.<sup>2</sup>

However this kind of behaviour was not representative of the coloured community. There were many respected coloured citizens who were concerned with the public image of their community. Many of them were drawn to their religion for amongst the coloured community their "*Christelike ontwikkeling was hoog dardie tyd*" and with their Graaff-Reinet Coloured Citizens Union lead by Willie Dean, the coloured barman at the Graaff-Reinet Men's Club, they contrived "*om mekaar te help, sover as moontlik*".<sup>3</sup> But <sup>the</sup> non-Europeans who suffered most during the Depression were the residents of the Municipal location on the north-eastern outskirts of the town.

Poor living conditions in the location had early in the Depression drawn criticism from various sources. One prominent citizen and the local philanthropist, W. Asher, had written to the Town Council complaining of the appalling living conditions which he felt were a direct cause of the high death rate among the Black and Coloured children. In this hardhitting letter Asher blamed the "filthy and vermin infested" condition of the free rooms for paupers, to the lack of attention by the Location Advisory Board and the Location Superintendent. Asher also deplored the prevailing poverty in the location, stating that this was due to insufficient wages and he alleged that the municipality, by paying the lowest wages in town, were most to blame.<sup>4</sup>

The mayor, H. Urquhart, was most disturbed by this letter of censure and had informed the medical officer of health, Dr. C.J. van Schalkwyk, of its contents. In his report, the MOH had stated that it was "practically impossible to do anything in the matter".<sup>5</sup>

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1. Oral Source : C. Koeberg
  2. Ibid : H. Whitlock, A. Kamies
  3. Ibid : C. Koeberg
  4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 25 Feb 1930 p. 560
  5. Ibid

The natives were in no position to help themselves for they received barely subsistence wages. The wages of labourers in the town, being from 12<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> to 15<sup>s</sup> per week. Farm labourers were also paid only 10<sup>s</sup> to 15<sup>s</sup> per month, but they were given free quarters and rations.<sup>1</sup> The Location Committee admitted that :

"the wages are definitely too low, but compare well with other centres".<sup>2</sup>

Somehow the location residents survived while still undergoing tremendous suffering. Some were lucky enough to be employed as domestics in the town, receiving wages ranging from 5<sup>s</sup> to 20<sup>s</sup> per month with a daily ration of food, and accordingly :

"Many of the males in the location do not work, but live on the food brought home from the town".<sup>3</sup>

Others had to look elsewhere for help. The location superintendent estimated that there were between 150 and 200 residents that "are old, indigent and crippled and cannot possibly earn a living".<sup>4</sup> Those who were unable to find a benefactor or employer turned to begging in the town. The superintendent reported that:

"it is obvious from the number of natives and coloureds who beg in town that destitution is rife".<sup>5</sup>

Many of these destitute inhabitants of the location lived in sack houses in overcrowded and filthy conditions.<sup>6</sup> The townspeople were not totally unaware of the situation. The Rev. A.C. File, the Methodist Minister, wrote to the Town Council in 1933 asking them to take some action against :

"the increased begging by blind, crippled and wretchedly garbed people in the town".<sup>7</sup>

He offered to raise money to maintain these people and keep them off the streets.<sup>8</sup> The Town Council acted almost immediately and rounded up all

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports: Location Committee 8 Oct 1933
  2. Ibid
  3. Ibid
  4. Ibid
  5. Ibid
  6. G.R. Municipal Minutes 2 Sept 1930 p. 623
  7. Ibid 15 Aug 1933 p. 210
  8. Ibid

the beggars, ordering the location superintendent to investigate each case and to decide which ones deserved pauper rations from the magistrate.<sup>1</sup>

Some of these poor wretches were lucky enough to receive help from the Ladies Benevolent Society. This society had been established in 1897 by the wife of Rev. C. Murray. The work of this society was entirely voluntary and its object was to :

"relieve cases of distress and destitution amongst the poor of Graaff-Reinet irrespective of creed, colour or class, and especially to assist the aged and infirm".<sup>2</sup>

The subscription for members was 1<sup>s</sup> per month, and this money plus any other collected by the ladies of the society, was spent on rent, food, wood, blankets and clothing for those whose need was the greatest. During the winter months each pensioner was provided with a warm garment, and where necessary a thick blanket was given as well.<sup>3</sup> If anyone received Government rations his name would be removed from the society's list of the needy,<sup>4</sup> but because of the difficult times it was decided that all pensioners would receive supplementary rations, consisting of eight pounds of meal, one pound of rice, one pound of coffee, one-and-half pounds of sugar, one piece of soap, and a packet of candles.<sup>5</sup> At Christmas time the society provided all pensioners with a 6<sup>d</sup> parcel of meat and a ticket valued at 2<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> for groceries at any store.<sup>6</sup> The society also built six free rooms for the poor in the location.<sup>7</sup>

In this poor relief the society was generously helped by the philanthropy of W. Asher, who in the winter of 1929 had distributed 350 blankets to the poor and had continued throughout the Depression with gifts of food, clothing and blankets to location residents.<sup>8</sup> He also provided twenty-four free rooms, shower baths, a maternity home and an open-air bioscope. He had helped finance the dispensary and mortuary built in 1926.<sup>9</sup> The Town Council, resenting the fact that facilities were

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 10 Oct 1933 p. 231
  2. Ladies Benevolent Society Minutes founding meeting 1897
  3. Ibid annual report 1929
  4. Ibid 26 Sept 1930
  5. Ibid 30 July 1931
  6. Ibid 27 Nov 1931
  7. G.R. Municipal Reports: Location Committee 21 Feb 1934 p. 308
  8. Ladies Benevolent Society Minutes 15 Dec 1933
  9. G.R. Municipal Minutes 30 Sept 1930 p. 632

being provided in the location by the charity of an individual, stated that those extra amenities were only attracting unwanted rural dwellers.<sup>1</sup> The Municipality felt that they were providing adequate services for the location residents. The Council charged 4<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> per month for site rents and 5<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> for single municipal rooms and 7<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> for double. This charge included water and sanitation, the free water coming from central hydrants and standpipes. As far as sanitation was concerned, there were communal concrete rubbish bins at central points from which the rubbish was removed daily as well as communal latrines at central points from which the pails were also removed daily.<sup>2</sup> The Town Council had allowed the location residents to keep livestock on their properties but these properties were small, bare, denuded patches of ground incapable of supporting more than a few scraggly chickens. The Town Council, well aware of the power of the ratepayers, and fearful of their wrath, had, despite frequent applications by the Location Advisory Board, refused all privileges, as enjoyed by town residents, with regard to the grazing of stock on the Town Commonage, to the location residents.<sup>3</sup> One small concession the Town Council had granted, in response to a petition from the female residents asking for permission to gather wood on the Town Commonage free of charge, was that :

"the charge of 2<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> for quarterly wood permits be temporarily reduced to 2<sup>s</sup> with effect from 1 November 1932"<sup>4</sup>

The Town Council was rudely shaken from its complacency early in 1934. The mayor had mistakenly attributed the high death rate in the location to the effects of malnutrition and tuberculosis. The MOH reported that typhoid had broken out in the location and he unequivocally blamed the Town Council, accusing them of failing to provide a slopwater removal service.<sup>5</sup> The Town Council were soon faced with a typhoid epidemic and were extremely worried as it :

"was a case of self-preservation as all the servants working in town came from the location".<sup>6</sup>

It was not surprising that an epidemic had broken out for according to a Municipal census done in May 1933, there were 7079 residents in the

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1. G.R. Municipal Report Location Committee 21 Feb 1934 p. 308

2. Ibid : 16 Aug 1933 p. 299

3. G.R. Municipal Minutes 16 Nov 1932 p. 237

4. Ibid : 12 Sept 1932 p. 97

5. Ibid : 30 Jan 1934 p. 263

6. Ibid : 6 March 1934 p. 277



location (3632 coloured and 3447 blacks). There were approximately 1100 occupied hut sites and the buildings in most cases did not conform to the Municipal regulations with regard to air space and they were very overcrowded. Further, for this large population there were only 160 sanitary conveniences, an average of 44 persons to each.<sup>1</sup> The MOH was correct in assuming that :

"The recent outbreak of typhoid fever could be directly ascribed to the lack of sufficient and proper sanitation".<sup>2</sup>

What had aggravated the situation was the fact that there was no slopwater removal service. The residents of 1100 huts merely discarded their used water anywhere in the vicinity of their huts.<sup>3</sup>

The Councillors agreed that the only way to overcome all the difficulties in respect of the location would be to build a new one, but as Councillor Dr. Laubscher put it "he shuddered at the cost".<sup>4</sup> The Council finally decided merely :

"that proper drains be built in the location [and] that the Health Inspector be instructed to sink a few test holes to ascertain whether the soil is suitable for the cesspit system".<sup>5</sup>

But nothing more substantial was done. So the lack of funds during the Depression caused the location problems to be shelved.

The effects of the Depression were exacerbated in the town by the fact that not only the inhabitants but also all the organisations who had the care of their needs, were short of finance.

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 6 March 1934 p. 277

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

4. Ibid

5. Ibid

(e) FINANCIAL PROBLEMS OF LOCAL BODIES

A Coloured and Native Child Welfare Society was formed in 1928 with W. Asher as its first president and Canon A. Price as its first chairman. This society was able to obtain the services of a qualified white maternity nurse, A. Jooste, and she did maternity work among the non-Europeans in the location and distributed medicines for the minor ailments of the children. Throughout the Depression this society struggled on with no assistance from the Government. Their only source of income was from grants from the Municipality, the Vrouesendingsbond, the Ladies Benevolent Society and what was collected in the way of subscriptions or donations from the public. During the Depression these sources dwindled and the Coloured and Native Child Welfare Society never fully recovered from the effects of the Depression. They eventually became affiliated to the European Child Welfare Society in 1940.<sup>1</sup>

The European Child Welfare Society also experienced financial difficulties. In 1930 they were able to give approximately one hundred and five pauper children a plateful of hot food every schoolday.<sup>2</sup> In April 1930 they were forced, in order to reduce expenses, "to substitute more beans for meat" in these children's daily meal.<sup>3</sup> In March 1931 the local Standard Bank refused them overdraft facilities for £250 unless adequate security was given, though the Society had previously had had no difficulty in getting such facilities without any security.<sup>4</sup> In November 1931 the number of children receiving free meals was cut to sixty, and these children had to bring their own plates, knives and forks so that costs could be reduced as "there would be no washing up to do".<sup>5</sup>

In their annual report for 1931 which was printed in the local newspapers, the Child Welfare Society ended with an eloquent public appeal pointing out that :

"if we are burdened down by the Depression we must not complain. We should but ask someone who is acquainted with conditions to take us through the side streets of this beautiful town of ours and to tell us something

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 18 March 1943
  2. E.C.W. Society Minutes 11 Dec 1930
  3. *Ibid* : 24 April 1930
  4. *Ibid* : 5 March 1931
  5. *Ibid* : 19 Nov 1931

about the poverty and misery and then we shall complain less and count our own blessings more and delve deeper into our pockets to give more to our less privileged fellowmen".<sup>1</sup>

However, the society continued to struggle to provide its services, and had to make savings wherever possible. The nurse employed by the Child Welfare had her monthly salary reduced from £6 to £3.5<sup>s</sup> in April 1932.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless the society experienced, for the first time in its history, a shortage of £53 in its operating funds, as "owing to the Depression the society had great difficulty in collecting funds [in 1932]".<sup>3</sup>

The Child Welfare Societies were not the only organisations to suffer from an acute shortage of funds. Societies like the Vrouesendingbond, Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging, the Ladies Benevolent Society, the Poor Funds of the Methodist and Anglican Churches and the Armsorg of the Dutch Reformed Church, all had to cut down on their welfare activities during the Depression. Other organisations like the Town Council and the Divisional Council had to take drastic steps to remain solvent.

The Town Council of Graaff-Reinet was not particularly well-renowned for its fiscal responsibility. On numerous occasions in its long history it had found itself financially embarrassed.<sup>4</sup> During the Depression the Town Councillors were all well aware of the financial stringency of the times, and were determined to keep expenses as low as possible. But like all the other institutions their income dropped as economic conditions worsened. The ratepayers, feeling the pinch of hard times, neglected to pay their rates and arrears began to build up.

Both the Town Council and the Divisional Council were aware of the problem, and took certain measures to try and strengthen their financial positions. At the Town Council meeting on 18 July 1929, which debated the financial estimates for 1930, the mayor, H. Urquhart, had emphatically stated that the Finance Committee of the Council had thoroughly investigated the question of expenditure and had ascertained that the position could not be regarded as satisfactory.<sup>5</sup>

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1. E.C.W. Minutes 3 Dec 1931
  2. Ibid : 21 April 1932
  3. Ibid : 9 Nov 1932
  4. see Smith p. 116-180
  5. G.R. Municipal Minutes 18 July 1929 p. 486

This made it easy for the mayor to order the Finance and General Purposes Committee to scrutinise their expenditures, in an attempt to find where the Town Council could cut expenses. In their report dated 31 July 1930 the Committee recommended that all work, beyond that of absolute and essential necessity, be discontinued immediately. Furthermore, that spending be brought down to the irreducible minimum. To carry out this policy the Committee suggested that the dismissal of certain employees take place. Coupled to this, they recommended the reduction, by ten percent, of all salaries and wages of those officials and employees whose services must be retained. They ended the report by stressing that :

"[This] is a step taken with very keen regret but the financial position calls for extraordinary measures and there appears to be no alternative".<sup>1</sup>

The thinking of the Divisional Council on the matter was identical. The Finance Committee of this body reported at the August 1930 meeting that

*"'n besuiniging op die paaie ens. noodsaaklik is, en beveel aan om twee weg-partye, namens die van voormanne J. Kitching en J.A. van Heerden of te dank, waarmee die raad minstens £600 sal besuinig".<sup>2</sup>*

The Divisional Council's finances after being briefly in credit during the months of July, August and September 1929 were constantly in overdraft throughout the Depression. On 12 November 1929, a proposal by A. Luckhoff that an application be made for overdraft facilities of £3000 for 1930, was accepted.<sup>3</sup> The Divisional Council continued to search for means of cutting expenses. In January 1931 the Weed Inspector was temporarily laid-off, and at a special meeting of the Finance Committee in January 1931 the secretary was ordered to see that all arrear rates be collected.<sup>4</sup> At the January 1931 meeting it was also agreed to apply for an increase of overdraft facilities for 1931 from £3000 to £4000.<sup>5</sup>

By tradition, every Christmas, the Divisional Council gave its non-European labourers, who had been in their employ for one year or more, a bonus of 10<sup>s</sup> each. But in 1931, owing to the financial straits, this

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports: Finance Committee 31 July 1930 p. 68-69

2. G.R. Divisional Council Minutes 12 Aug 1930

3. Ibid : 12 Nov 1929

4. Ibid : 13 Jan 1931 and 19 Jan 1931

5. Ibid : 13 Jan 1931



bonus was reduced to 5<sup>s</sup>.<sup>1</sup> Clearly the Divisional Council was feeling the pinch by way of a reduction in its rates income. But even though experiencing financial problems themselves they tried to alleviate the burdens of the private citizen by reducing the vehicle tax for 1932 from 7<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> per wheel to 5<sup>s</sup> per wheel, as this was by law the minimum allowed to be levied.<sup>2</sup> At the September 1932 meeting a motion to the Provincial Council was passed asking them :

*"Dat die Belastings op vervoer middels op klein en ligte waentjies tot op 7 voet in lengte verminder sal word na 2<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> per wiel".<sup>3</sup>*

From this it is obvious that the Divisional Council, although well aware of their own precarious financial position, were prepared to make sacrifices to help the ordinary man of Graaff-Reinet

The Town Council, on the other hand, encountered obstacles to its economy proposals, especially concerning its recommendation for a voluntary acceptance of a ten percent reduction in the wages of municipal employees.

The Graaff-Reinet Municipal Employees Association objected strongly to the proposed reduction. In a letter to the Town Council they communicated their intention of making an application to the Minister of Labour, for the appointment of a Conciliation Board to consider the Council's decision to reduce all salaries by ten percent from 1 August 1930.<sup>4</sup>

On receiving this letter the mayor, H. Urquhart, called a special meeting of the Town Council and at this meeting the Town Clerk, A.E. Bebington, made it clear that the Municipal Employees Association had, according to the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924, a perfect legal right to take up its present attitude. He also pointed out that the appointment of a Conciliation Board would involve considerable expense, of which the Council would have to bear a large share. Furthermore the Conciliation Board, if appointed, would undoubtedly find that the Council's present financial position was due mainly to the large sums paid out of ordinary revenue for permanent works, and they would probably come to the conclusion that the Council's financial policy was wrong, and that the employees could not be made to suffer thereby. The Town Clerk then stated that he was of the opinion that should the Council

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1. G.R. Divisional Council Minutes 8 Dec 1931
  2. Ibid : 10 Nov 1931
  3. Ibid : 13 Sept 1932
  4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 2 Aug 1930 p. 625

decide to allow the whole question to be investigated by a Conciliation Board, the Council could not possibly win the case, to which the mayor indignantly replied that he disliked being threatened by the Employees Association. He blamed the employees themselves for the precarious financial position of the Council since the Town and Electrical Engineer had exceeded his estimates, while the Town Office had not collected large amounts of outstanding revenue. The Town Clerk was quick to jump to the defence of his fellow employees, maintaining that even though the Town Engineer might have spent more money than had been estimated, it did not exonerate the Council from its liability of its excessive expenditure.

The Town Council faced with these facts unanimously decided :

"that notice be given at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council to the effect that the resolution adopted by the Council to reduce all salaries and wages by 10% from 1 August 1930, be rescinded".<sup>1</sup>

But the matter was merely held in abeyance for in the face of a worsening financial position the Town Council was again forced to review the position. On 26 January 1932 the Town Council received a petition signed by forty-two residents and ratepayers requesting it to reduce the salaries of certain officials and to dispense with the services of others.<sup>2</sup>

The Finance Committee in its report tabled on 28 May 1932 stated that :

"in the present time of Depression and the universal shortage of money, the dismissal of certain employees and the reduction of salaries on the one hand and the increase of taxation on the other are the last things that should be thought of were they at all possible to be overcome. There are, however, no alternatives and painfully reluctant as your committee are about making the proposals, they realise that there is no other way".<sup>3</sup>

In this report the Finance Committee estimated that there would be an amount of £1021 outstanding in rates and taxes. They blamed the substantial deficit on water charges, and the heavy maintenance and running

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 21 Aug 1930 p. 620

2. Ibid : 26 Jan 1932 p. 3

3. G.R. Municipal Reports : Finance Committee 28 May 1932 p. 208-210

costs of the power station as well as the outstanding rates and taxes, for the Council's financial dilemma.<sup>1</sup> The position of the Town Council was indeed precarious. According to the estimates passed at the beginning of 1932, it had been calculated that there would be a combined overdraft of £1421 at the end of the year. But according to the revised estimates prepared on 1 May 1932, by the Town Clerk, the overdraft at the end of the year would be £4015.<sup>2</sup> The situation was undoubtedly serious and a special council meeting was called on 1 June 1932 to consider some of the proposals of the Finance Committee.

At the special meeting of the Town Council held on 21 August 1930 to consider the proposed reduction of the municipal employees' salaries, the Town Clerk had suggested the levying of a water rate, instead of making a monthly charge, as a means of improving the Council's financial position.<sup>3</sup> The Finance Committee in its report of the 28 May 1932 accepted this recommendation and proposed a water rate levy of 1<sup>d</sup> in the £ on all property owners as from 1 January 1933. This proposal was unanimously accepted at the Town Council's special meeting held on 1 June 1932.<sup>4</sup>

The other proposals, namely the retirement of certain employees and the abolition of certain offices, were also accepted at this meeting. One reduction was the salary of the Medical Officer of Health from £240 to £100 per annum. Amongst those who were retired on pension were the Abattoir Superintendent, the Poundmaster, the Overseer of Pasturelands and the Water Bailiff. The Council would not reverse any of these retirements even though W.J. Haarhoff, the Overseer of Pasturelands had requested the Council to keep him and even to give him more work to do.<sup>5</sup>

In addition the Town and Electrical Engineer, H. Purves, had to accept the abolition of his office of Town Engineer and the redefining of his post as that of Electrical Engineer at a reduced salary.<sup>6</sup>

Finally it was decided, once again, to investigate the possibility of a general reduction in municipal employees' salaries. The mayor

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports : Finance Committee 28 May 1932 p. 208-210
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 1 June 1932 p. 47
  3. Ibid : 21 Aug 1930 p. 620
  4. Ibid : 1 June 1932 p. 47-8
  5. Ibid
  6. Ibid

announced his intention of meeting with the employees to explain the reasons for the Council's proposals.<sup>1</sup> Soon after this a meeting was held between the Finance Committee and a Sub-Committee of Employees. The Sub-Committee had expressed their willingness to accept a five percent reduction on condition that the proposed water rate levy of 1<sup>d</sup> in £ was passed and that increments were paid as usual. The Town Council had recommended that salaries over £150 per annum be reduced by fifteen percent and salaries and wages under £150 per annum by ten percent. This meeting ended in a deadlock and the municipal employees appealed to the South African Municipal Employees Association for assistance in resolving the problem.<sup>2</sup>

The SAMEA sent their general secretary, R.J. Hickland, to the special meeting of the Town Council held on 11 June 1932. At this meeting the mayor, H. Urquhart, opened the meeting by making a counter-proposal that salaries over £150 per annum be reduced by twelve-and-half-percent and salaries from £50 to £150 by seven-and-half percent, and that the consideration of increments be postponed until the estimates were framed at the end of the current year. The position was complicated by the refusal of the rate-payers to accept the proposed water rate unless the municipal employees also made salary sacrifices.<sup>3</sup> So the position was an extremely difficult one for the Town Council since they had to convince the municipal employees to accept a cut in their salaries, while on the other hand they had to satisfy the ratepayers that these salary cuts were significant enough to warrant an equal sacrifice from the ratepayers of accepting the proposed water rate. The Council also wanted to avoid, if possible, the costs of arbitration, if a Conciliation Board was appointed to review the case. It therefore finally accepted the motion :

"That salaries over £150 per annum be reduced by 12½ percent, and that salaries from £50 to £150 be reduced by 7½ percent; and that the question of increments be left in abeyance".<sup>4</sup>

It was stressed that this measure was purely temporary and that as soon as conditions improved the restriction would be lifted.<sup>5</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 1 June 1932 p. 47-8

2. Ibid : 11 June 1932 p. 52

3. Ibid

4. Ibid : 11 June 1932 p. 53

5. Ibid



The ratepayers agitating against the proposed water rate levy, signed a petition calling for a public meeting to discuss the matter. The meeting was convened on 22 June 1932 but developed into a discussion of the difficulties being experienced by the Town Council with regard to their proposal to reduce staff salaries. R.A. Jansen went so far as to suggest that the Council dismiss the entire staff and invite applications for vacancies at lower salaries. D. de Graaf put the case for the ratepayers most succinctly stating that :

"Most of the inhabitants are trying to make a living out of their gardens. The Council does not realise the fact that the ratepayers pay their rates with the greatest of difficulties, as most of them have lost about 75% of their incomes. As regards the salaries, the staff are living in clover while the rest of the community is being throttled to death".<sup>1</sup>

Eventually after much discussion a committee, to collaborate with the Council and to investigate ways and means of effecting savings and increasing revenue, was appointed. It consisted of the following nine ratepayers :

D. de Graaf, Dr. J.L. Rubidge, A. Luckhoff, C.H. Maasdorp, J.J. Muller, H.J. Theron, H.J. Pienaar, R.A. Jansen, and J. Gouws.<sup>2</sup>

The matter was left in abeyance, the Council receiving a letter from the Department of Labour on 23 August 1932 stating that the Council could not effect any further reductions in salaries until the matter in dispute had been finally decided - this through the provisions of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924. To avoid the expense of a Conciliation Board, the Council decided to compromise and proposed that salaries over £150 per annum be reduced by ten percent and salaries and wages under £150 per annum to be reduced by seven-and-half percent.<sup>3</sup> Further, with the view to making the negotiations successful the Council passed the following resolution :

"That whereas it is the intention of the Town Council of Graaff-Reinet to endeavour to settle the dispute with the Municipal staff in connection with the proposed further reduction in salaries and wages by means of

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 22 June 1932 p. 59-60

2. Ibid

3. Ibid : 23 Aug 1932 p. 70

informal discussions or Round Table Conferences and without recourse to a Conciliation Board as defined in Act 11 of 1924, this Council signifies its willingness to accept the provisions of Section 16 of Act 24 of 1930 as legally binding on the Council".<sup>1</sup>

This section 16 of Act 24 of 1930 provided protection for employees against any victimisation on account of their activities in connection with the Conciliation Board. This resolution was communicated to the general secretary of the South African Municipal Employees Association. The compromise proved successful as on the 6 September 1932 the mayor was able to report that the SAMEA had agreed to the reduction of ten percent for salaries over £150 per annum and seven-and-half percent on salaries and wages from £50 to £150 per annum. This reduction to come into force from 1 August 1932.<sup>2</sup>

Another area of financial anxiety was the municipal location. The revenue collected from this source was dropping steadily as shown in a report dated 8 July 1931 of the Location Committee of the Town Council giving the following figures :

"To June 1930 £1 343 : 14<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup>  
To June 1931 £1 082 : 2<sup>s</sup>"<sup>3</sup>

The Council could not understand the continual deficits of the location account, until the pastor of the Coloured Congregational Church, H.J. Theron, requested an interview with the Council. He revealed that there were irregularities taking place in the collection of room rents and the issuance of receipts. Some inhabitants were being asked to pay twice; while others were being forced to leave council houses if they were unable to pay. The location superintendent, J. Brown, denied Theron's accusations and alleged that the pastor was "nothing but an agitator".<sup>4</sup> But on the Council investigating the matter, it was found that the location superintendent, J. Brown, was guilty of misappropriating location fees and rents. He had done this by issuing false receipts, changing the amount on the receipts kept by the location office and by charging twice in some cases.<sup>5</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 23 Aug 1932 p. 70
  2. Ibid : 6 Sept 1932 p. 84
  3. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 8 July 1931 p. 145
  4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 18 July 1933 p. 198
  5. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 2 Dec 1932 p. 244

The financial situation of the location did not improve even after the location superintendent, J. Brown, was discharged. The Location Committee reported on 23 February 1933 that :

"Your committee view, with alarm the increase in the location outstandings as at 31 December 1932. The superintendent reports that most of the debtors are out of employment .... This state of affairs simply cannot be allowed to continue".<sup>1</sup>

But the problem continued and the Location Committee, in its report on 16 August 1933, came to the conclusion that :

"if steps are not taken at an early date to bring about a restoration of the location finances, the Council will eventually be faced with the necessity of increasing the town rate to meet the deficits on the native revenue account".<sup>2</sup>

By the end of 1933 the position was serious with the Location Committee reporting that :

"the total costs of administration are approximately £3000 per annum. Only by strenuous efforts on the part of the staff is it possible to secure a like amount of revenue. Arrear rent at 31 December 1933 totalled £2900, while large amounts are written off annually. A considerable portion of the arrears mentioned may be regarded as bad and irrecoverable".<sup>3</sup>

Besides all these financial problems, the Town Council had to contend with the serious problem of unemployment amongst the citizens which had risen during the Depression, and providing unemployment relief was another severe drain on their finances.

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 23 Feb 1933 p. 266

2. Ibid : 16 Aug 1933 p. 299

3. Ibid : 21 Feb 1934 p. 308

(f) UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

Unemployment relief was separate and distinct from poor relief and welfare. Poor relief was associated with the problem of poor Whiteism as outlined by the Carnegie Commission of 1927-32. This poor relief was administered by the magistrate who allocated rations to those poor white families who were destitute and reduced to financial difficulties. The magistrate was assisted in this job by the welfare organisations of Graaff-Reinet who collaborated in drawing up lists of those most in need, for distributions of these rations. As the Depression deepened, the welfare organisations tried to increase the poor relief but were handicapped by the lack of funds.

However the main problem became the large increase in the numbers of unemployed. These unemployed genuinely wanted work, and a Labour Bureau was established at the local Post Office and administered by the Postmaster. Here those who were out of work, could hand in their names and become officially listed as unemployed.

The growth of the problem can be traced in the annual reports of the magistrate. In 1930 he reported that "a few cases of unemployment dealt with"<sup>1</sup> but by 1931 the problem had burgeoned with "about 100 Europeans out of work owing to bad times. There is much native and coloured unemployment".<sup>2</sup>

The Town Council were well aware of this problem. On 16 November 1931 the Town Council made application to the Provincial Administration for a loan of £5000, in terms of the Housing Act No. 35 of 1920, for the purpose of establishing a sub-economic housing scheme in Graaff-Reinet. In motivating their application the Town Council stated that "with the granting of the loan, steps will immediately be taken to absorb as much European labour as possible".<sup>3</sup>

They had initially planned on the construction of twenty houses for poor whites, but were eventually granted a loan of £3350 for sixteen houses.<sup>4</sup>

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1. G.R. Magistracy : Annual Report 1930
  2. Ibid : 1931
  3. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Housing Scheme 1930-1932
  4. Ibid



Construction on this Municipal Housing Scheme in Hare Street began early in 1932 and provided employment for thirty-two white and eighteen coloured men.<sup>1</sup> The scheme which was officially opened on 27 July 1932 provided, for a period of six months, fixed employment for this limited number of unemployed.<sup>2</sup>

On New Year's Day 1932, Graaff-Reinet experienced severe floods. Trees were unrooted and furrows damaged. Temporary employment was given to one hundred non-Europeans repairing this damage.

The main railway line from Port Elizabeth to Cradock was washed away in these floods and this necessitated all railway traffic being rerouted through Graaff-Reinet. This increase in rail traffic led to fifty additional men being taken on at the railyard.<sup>3</sup> At the same time fifty-six Europeans were recruited for repair work on the damaged but still functioning railway section between Graaff-Reinet and Rosmead. The placement of all these unemployed was supervised by H.R. Cocking, the Postmaster in charge of the Post Office Labour Exchange.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately this work was only of a temporary nature, though Cocking continued with his efforts to place unemployed men in work. In a letter to the editor of the Graaff-Reinet Advertiser, Cocking reported the situation for April 1932 to be that :

"there had been registered on the books of the Labour Bureau and reported to the Department of Labour 149 men. 33 of the 149 had been placed in work - 30 with the Divisional Council and 3 with the Municipality. So that there were still 116 seeking work. ... including those who had not registered their names the total of unemployed was approximately 150 to 175. Some had been so disappointed at non-success that they had not re-registered their names".<sup>5</sup>

In the same issue of the Graaff-Reinet Advertiser the mayor, H. Urquhart, had written a letter stressing the position of the unemployed whose "wives and children are destitute or below the bread line".<sup>6</sup> To discuss the

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* : H.R. Cocking - Editor 18 May 1932
  2. *G.R. Municipal Correspondence* : Housing Scheme 1930-32
  3. *G.R. Advertiser* 11 Jan 1932
  4. *Ibid* : 22 Jan 1932
  5. *Ibid* : 18 May 1932
  6. *Ibid*

situation and find means of alleviating their plight, he invited all interested to attend a public meeting in the Town Hall on 20 May 1931.<sup>1</sup> On the same day in a letter to the local M.P., Dr. Karl Bremer, the mayor admitted that he had scant hope of achieving anything with this meeting as "everybody is so hard up owing to prevailing conditions and the [Graaff-Reinet] Board('s) [of Executors] failure".<sup>2</sup> In the same letter he appealed for Dr. Bremer's help in securing a loan from the Government for unemployment relief.<sup>3</sup> This appeal was probably initiated by a deputation of unemployed Europeans who had met the mayor on the morning of 18 May 1932. He had asked them to appoint representatives to state their case to a meeting of the Town Council later on the same day. Present at this meeting were H.R. Cocking, the Postmaster in charge of the Labour Bureau, and the magistrate, G.W. Evans. After long discussions detailing the situation prevailing amongst the unemployed, the best the Town Council could offer was to pass the following motion :

"That a meeting of all charitable associations and other local bodies be convened to devise ways and means of relieving the situation".<sup>4</sup>

Graaff-Reinet was fortunate that they had an energetic M.P. in Dr. Bremer who wired back to H. Urquhart :

"Have made representations for share loan funds to Provincial Administration. Please induce Municipality and Divisional Council approach Provincial Administration immediately, urgent, for £2500 for 4 months work for 160 men".<sup>5</sup>

A week later Dr. Bremer wrote to the Council clarifying the position. The Divisional Council had to apply through the Provincial Council for a subsidy for relief work, while the Municipality had to put their scheme for relief work direct to the Department of Labour and not through the Provincial Council. Further, any kind of improvement work would be considered by the Department, whether it was street construction or even prickly pear eradication. The Department required a minimum wage of 4<sup>s</sup> per day for Europeans on which a subsidy of 9<sup>d</sup> would be paid, leaving a balance of 3<sup>s</sup>3<sup>d</sup> to be paid by the

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 18 May 1932
  2. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Unemployment Relief 18 May 1932
  3. *Ibid*
  4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 18 May 1932 p. 44
  5. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Unemployment Relief 11 Aug 1932

Council.<sup>1</sup> This last condition was felt to be impossible for the Town Council to fulfil, considering their precarious financial position. Consequently the Graaff-Reinet Town Council prepared a circular letter to be sent to all the small municipalities in the Cape Midlands. In this they maintained that inland centres like Graaff-Reinet had suffered more than the coastal towns, and if assistance were offered to enable unemployment to be temporarily alleviated, then such assistance must take the form of a hundred percent subsidisation of labour, since the costs of the necessary materials could only be met with great difficulty out of ordinary income.<sup>2</sup>

The Town Council did, however, take Dr. Bremer's advice and applied to the Department of Labour for an unemployment relief loan. The Town Council called a public meeting on 7 September 1932 to consider their proposal to raise an unemployment relief loan of £1640. The mayor, in opening the meeting, outlined the negotiations that had taken place so far. The Government would grant the Town Council a loan of £1640 at five percent and repayable after ten years. Added to this amount the Government would provide a subsidy of £2460. With this sum of £4100, it was proposed to employ one-hundred and twenty-five Europeans and a similar number of non-Europeans. These men were to be used on road construction and the tarring of the streets in town. The Council's loan proposal was passed by a vote of forty-four with eight against.<sup>3</sup>

This road construction scheme of the Municipality provided much needed employment for the unemployed of Graaff-Reinet. While it was of a temporary nature, lasting only as long as the money lasted, it was much appreciated by those who had been out of work. The Divisional Council also provided unemployment relief but on a much smaller scale. They had enquired about the possibility of an unemployment relief loan as early as 8 December 1931. They had passed a resolution applying to the Provincial Council for a subsidy of £1800 with which to provide work for forty unemployed men at a rate of 3<sup>s</sup> per day for twelve months.<sup>4</sup> Three months later they received a letter from the Administrator of the Cape granting them £500 for unemployment relief. They were then able to employ thirty whites for roadwork.<sup>5</sup> In June 1932 they were informed by the Provincial Council that they could apply for a further

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Unemployment Relief : Bremer - Town Council  
18 Aug 1932

2. Ibid : Town Council - Bremer 26 Aug 1932

3. G.R. Municipal Minutes 7 Sept 1932 p. 85

4. G.R. Divisional Council Minutes 8 Dec 1931

5. Ibid 8 March 1932

subsidy of £1250 but had to take a loan of twenty-five percent of the value of the subsidy. The Divisional Council passed a motion stating that they were in no position financially, to take on the twenty-five percent loan. At the same meeting they appointed two councillors, A.A. Kingwill and P.F. de Klerk, to inform Dr. Bremer of the matter.<sup>1</sup> At a later meeting they decided to accept, if granted, the subsidy of £1250 and the twenty-five percent loan condition, provided they could repay the loan over a period of five years.<sup>2</sup> Nothing further was heard for some time and on 9 August 1932 the secretary of the Divisional Council was instructed to write to the Provincial Administration that "*die saak baie dringend is, en die ook hulle ernstige aandag te gee*".<sup>3</sup>

The position was finalised in September 1932 when the Divisional Council received a letter from the Provincial Administration approving a ninety percent subsidy of £940, ten percent of which would be a loan to the Divisional Council. On receipt of this letter it was decided to send out a road work party consisting of fifty whites under foreman D. Wolmarans. The foreman received 7<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> per day while the gang workers received 3<sup>s</sup> per day. Another road gang consisting of twenty coloured people under a European foreman, W.J. Schoeman, was also sent out.<sup>4</sup>

So by the middle of September 1932 the unemployment relief program of Graaff-Reinet was well under way. The Municipality had initiated their road construction scheme by appointing twenty-seven men to the crusher plant at the quarry two miles out of town. It would take two to three weeks to put the crusher plant in order but when this was achieved it was planned to work two shifts a day to speed up the work. In the meantime fifty men had been appointed to start on the preparatory work on the roads and the magistrate had agreed to grant three weeks rations to those who had as yet not been employed.<sup>5</sup> But these unemployed would be provided with work only as long as the loan lasted. The Public Works Committee had estimated that the whole scheme, including implements and materials, would cost £5216. The Town Clerk thought that the scheme would last up to 31 March 1933 but after that date it was difficult to know whether more money would be available to continue the relief work.<sup>6</sup> The Town Council were well aware that they would find it

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1. G.R. Divisional Council Minutes 14 June 1932

2. Ibid 12 July 1932

3. Ibid 9 Aug 1932

4. Ibid 13 Sept 1932

5. G.R. Municipal Minutes 12 Sept 1932 p. 86

6. Ibid



difficult to continue with this relief work since beside the Government subsidy of £2460 and their loan of £1640, they had by February 1933 spent approximately £2200 on plant, implements and materials out of ordinary income and "this, of course, cannot go on much longer".<sup>1</sup>

The Divisional Council took the initiative in March 1933 by appointing two councillors, P.F. de Klerk and P.A. Luckhoff to meet with the local M.P., Dr. Bremer.<sup>2</sup> These two councillors joined by two town councillors, A.A. Kingwill and H. Urquhart, interviewed Dr. Bremer.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this interview Dr. Bremer wrote a letter to the Minister of Labour, Colonel Creswell, mentioning that Graaff-Reinet had applied for a further subsidy of £2700 and a loan of £1080 for three months from 1 April 1933. He further stated that the municipality were unable to finance the extra expenditure entailed in carrying out this work, unless the Department of Labour allowed them to use a portion of the £1080 loan for implements, materials and costs of overseeing.<sup>4</sup> At the same time the Divisional Council had put in an application for a subsidy to provide employment for one hundred unemployed for a period of three months.<sup>5</sup> The situation was indeed urgent, especially with the present relief work scheduled to end on the 31 March 1933, and with the prospect of approximately "400 unemployed walking the streets of the town".<sup>6</sup>

In an effort to continue the relief work the Town Council had proposed that the old relief loan of £1640 and the new loan of £1080 be embodied in the loan of £75 000 that they were trying to negotiate with the S.A. Old Mutual to set up their proposed new electricity scheme.<sup>7</sup> This meant that instead of repaying the Government loans within a period of ten years at five percent interest, the capital could be spread over a period of twenty years at a lower rate of interest.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of March 1933 the Town Council had found that they still had a balance of £300 left from their previous loan of £1600. They applied

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports : Public Works Committee 17 Feb 1933
  2. G.R. Divisional Council Minutes 14 March 1933
  3. G.R. Municipal Minutes 18 March 1933
  4. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Unemployment Relief : Bremer -Creswell 17 March 1933
  5. G.R. Divisional Council Minutes 11 April 1933
  6. G.R. Municipal Minutes 18 March 1933
  7. Ibid
  8. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Unemployment Relief : Dept of Labour - Town Council 29 March 1933

to the Department of Labour for permission to use this amount to keep the two hundred and fifty white and coloured men, who had been employed from 3 April, to work for as long as the money lasted. This was granted, but the Department was not prepared to accept the Council's terms for the furtherance of relief works.<sup>1</sup> The Town Council were extremely concerned over the position and at the Town Council meeting on 5 April 1933, they instructed the Town Clerk to inform the magistrate that "at the end of the coming week 250 men would be discharged and that these men would probably apply to him for rations".<sup>2</sup> The Finance Committee also recommended that, in view of the many applications for rations from the unemployed who had no immediate prospect of employment, fifty white men be taken on weekly on the basis of one week's work for one month's food, as the magistrate was no longer prepared to issue rations unless the unemployed were prepared to work for them.<sup>3</sup>

While the Municipal unemployment relief was coming to an end the Divisional Council was able to procure another ninety percent subsidy of £940 for relief work on the roads. They authorised the following works to continue :

1. *Die bou van 'n brug oor die Sondags Rivier op die plaas Roodebloem met 40 werksmense.*
2. *Die Graaff-Reinet - Jansenville pad verder klaar to maak met 30 werksmense onder voorman D. Wolmarans.*
3. *Die Graaff-Reinet - Pearston pad klaar te maak met 30 werksmense onder voorman W.J. Schoeman. Asook die Graaff-Reinet - Aberdeen pad as die toelae dit toelaat".<sup>4</sup>*

The Divisional Council was able to keep these one hundred workers in work for most of 1933. In June 1933 they had applied for another subsidy to keep these one hundred unemployed in work for a further three months from 1 July and on 11 July 1933 the secretary of the Divisional Council reported that they had been granted a hundred percent subsidy of £810 to be used to continue the relief work, until the whole amount had been spent.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately the unemployment position was aggravated by a further

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Unemployment Relief : Dept of Labour - Town Council 29 March 1933; G.R. Municipal Minutes 15 April 1933 p. 158; *G.R. Advertiser* 24 April 1933
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 5 April 1933 p. 158
  3. G.R. Municipal Reports : Finance Committee 4 April 1933 p. 279
  4. G.R. Divisional Council Minutes 24 April 1933
  5. *Ibid* : 11 July 1933

sixty labourers being laid off by the railways in April 1933 , and these had swelled the numbers who had become unemployed on the cessation of the Municipal relief works in April 1933.<sup>1</sup> Their position was so desperate that a number of them held a hunger march through the town on 20 April 1933, when the :

"hunger marchers in scores passed down Graaff-Reinet's main street on their way to the Government buildings to obtain rations. The first batch marched in twos and they were followed by many others in irregular formations. Eventually a crowd of European and non-European men packed themselves at the main entrance to the magistrate's office .... where one week's rations were issued to 168 white men [and] 145 non-Europeans".<sup>2</sup>

These rations were not very substantial, a white married man received eight pounds of meal, half a pound of coffee, half a pound of salt and two pounds of meat per week, while a white single man received exactly half of the above ration. Non-Europeans were on a slightly different ration receiving twenty-five pounds of mealies or mealie-meal, one pound of fat and one pound of salt per month.<sup>3</sup> This ration was obviously inadequate and many of the location inhabitants supplemented their diet, in season, with the juicy fruit from the prickly pear that thickly covered the hillside surrounding the location.<sup>4</sup> Some residents subsisted on this fruit and as a result found themselves suffering from bleeding gums and vitamin deficiency.<sup>5</sup> The Town Council frowned upon the practice of prickly pear eating, maintaining that it enabled location residents to survive without making an attempt to seek work, while prickly pear syrup was used for the brewing of potent liquor.<sup>6</sup>

The Location Committee of the Town Council readily conceded that there was much unemployment and overcrowding in the location.<sup>7</sup> The superintendent of the location, however, found it difficult to calculate how many able-bodied men were unemployed, as a large proportion of them lived on the earnings and rations of their womenfolk or on piecework in or near town. He attributed

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* Editorial 22 April 1933
  2. *Ibid*
  3. *Ibid*
  4. *G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee* 16 Aug 1933 p. 299
  5. Oral Source : M. Kingwill
  6. *G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee* 16 Aug 1933 p. 299
  7. *Ibid*

the start of the overcrowding of the location to the fact that when the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam had been built in 1920-24, many non-Europeans had been brought in from other areas to help with the work, but when this project was completed those non-Europeans remained in Graaff-Reinet.<sup>1</sup> The superintendent listed other reasons for the continual influx of blacks and coloureds as follows :

- "(a) All farms being netted;
- (b) The location is a dumping ground for aged farm servants;
- (c) The quantity of prickly pear growing in the vicinity of the town;
- (d) The native mind being keen on education - large numbers are drifting to urban areas where educational facilities are available;
- (e) The system known as "keeping the door open" Registered owners of huts and rooms leave the location with their families to take up work on the farms, and allow another family to occupy the house in the meantime. After a while they become tired of or too old to work and return to the location to take up residence. The Council is then faced with the difficulty of finding accommodation for the family who occupied the hut while the owner was away;
- (f) The amount of charity provided by a local philanthropist. Many facilities have been provided for which the local authority is grateful. The location, however, is only attracting people from all over the country and the Council's difficulties are being increased".<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to alleviate the situation in the location, the superintendent had suggested that those unemployed location residents, far in arrear with their rents, be given the opportunity of rendering service in the location to secure a proportionate write off of their arrears. This scheme was intended to enable the superintendent to clear the location area of prickly pear, and also to have other important maintenance work attended to. The Location

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 8 Oct 1933 p. 314

2. Ibid



Committee recommended that the scheme be started initially with twenty-five men, with each labourer being supplied weekly with eight pounds of mealies and eight pounds of mealie meal, and that every fortnight a sum of 18<sup>s</sup> be written off his arrear rent.<sup>1</sup>

In a last desperate attempt to halt the overcrowding and the unemployment in the location, the Location Committee recommended that :

"a formal application be made to His Excellency the Governor-General to issue a proclamation declaring that after a date to be specified therein, no native may enter the urban area for the purpose of seeking or undertaking employment or of residing therein, otherwise than in accordance with conditions to be prescribed in such proclamation".<sup>2</sup>

Unemployment was a serious problem in Graaff-Reinet in all sections of the community, but unfortunately though the hardships of the non-Europeans were greater; most of the relief measures were for the benefit of the European population. The Council did however, try to encourage various industries and schemes to provide permanent labour for all the inhabitants of Graaff-Reinet. One such scheme was the effort to establish a jam factory in Graaff-Reinet. In January 1930 the idea had been raised at a Town Council meeting. It was felt that Graaff-Reinet would be an ideal place to establish a jam factory since there was a surplus of fruit, labour was cheap and the site for a factory would be given free. Furthermore, it would "help the people to obtain employment". Consequently the Town Clerk was instructed to communicate with various jam factories in the Union.<sup>3</sup> Only one favourable reply was received namely from the Wellington Fruit Preserving Company. Unfortunately the plan was abandoned when the town engineer informed the Town Council that it would be impossible to supply the additional electrical power required by the factory, with the existing power plant.<sup>4</sup>

The jam factory scheme had brought to the attention of the Town Council the inadequacies of the power station. They appointed a consulting engineer from Cape Town, G.V. Adendorff, who estimated that the building of a new

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 29 June 1933 p. 291

2. Ibid 1 March 1934 p. 340

3. G.R. Municipal Minutes 14 Jan 1930 p. 544 and 23 Jan 1930 p. 551

4. Ibid : 25 Feb 1930 p. 562

power plant would cost in the region of £30 000.<sup>1</sup> The problem was to find that amount since the Town Council already had a Southern Life Association loan of £45 000,<sup>2</sup> but it was decided to go ahead with the new electricity scheme as they "hoped to be able to use local labour to give work to the unemployed".<sup>3</sup> The Town Clerk was instructed to apply to the Southern Life for a reduction of interest to five percent on this loan, and to enquire whether the Southern Life Association would be interested in consolidating the existing loan of £45 000 with a new loan of £30 000, but this application was refused.<sup>4</sup> The Town Council then decided to accept the offer of the SA Old Mutual Company for a loan of £75 000 at five percent interest.<sup>5</sup> The signing of the bond for the loan of £75 000 from the Old Mutual Company took place on 3 November 1933.<sup>6</sup> In early 1934 the Town Clerk proceeded to Cape Town to secure the necessary authority to start with the new electricity scheme, as well as to discuss the question of interest on the loan from the Old Mutual. The Town Clerk found that the Provincial Administration would not grant permission for the scheme to get under way, unless the interest on the loan was four-and-half percent. Fortunately when the Town Clerk approached the Old Mutual, they had readily agreed to the lowering of the interest rate from five to four-and-half percent on the loan of £30 000, while the balance of £45 000 to be paid to the Southern Life Association would remain at five percent. The Town Clerk, while in Cape Town, arranged for all the necessary materials to be offloaded at the new power station site (next to the railway station) at the beginning of June 1934 when work was to start on the building of the Power Station.<sup>7</sup> Local labour was used in this scheme and a considerable saving was done by using locally manufactured bricks.

Behind the manufacture of these bricks lay another scheme by the Town Council to provide employment for a section of the inhabitants of Graaff-Reinet, the brickmakers on the Municipal brickfields. These Municipal brickfields were situated on the banks of the Sunday's River near the area known as Sunnyside, and further along near the Port Elizabeth and

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 12 Aug 1932 p. 89
  2. Ibid : 5 April 1933 p. 158
  3. Ibid : 12 Aug 1932 p. 89
  4. Ibid : 5 April 1933 p. 158
  5. Ibid : 8 April 1933 p. 159
  6. Ibid : 3 Nov 1933 p. 236
  7. Ibid : 13 Feb 1934 p. 266

Aberdeen road intersection. These brickmakers numbered approximately twenty families, mostly interrelated. The most important family were the Victors, who were considered master brickmakers. In normal times they made a reasonable living, but as the Depression deepened the demand for bricks grew less. To secure any business the brickmakers underbid each other, and with this fierce competition most found themselves in dire straits, starving and unable to pay their municipal brickfield rents.<sup>1</sup> On 13 January 1931 eleven brickfielders signed a petition asking for a reduction in their rent to the Municipality.<sup>2</sup> The situation had deteriorated to such an extent by September 1931, that they were bartering bricks at a great loss to obtain food for their families. It had become impossible under present circumstances for them to pay their rents with the result that arrears were increasing monthly. The Finance Committee recommended that the Town Council should take complete control of the brickfields and fix a price for all bricks.<sup>3</sup>

The Town Council acted on this recommendation with the brickfielders ~~and drew up an agreement~~ whereby the Council would assume control of all brick selling from the brickfields. All orders for bricks were to be placed with the Town Clerk and payment for bricks supplied would be done through the Town Clerk. The Town Council also set fixed prices for all grades of brick. The agreement was made on the condition that should any brickfielder dispose of his bricks through any person other than the Town Clerk, he would receive immediate notice to quit the brickfields.<sup>4</sup>

Other conditions contained in the agreement, were that rent on all brickfield claims was to be reduced to 10<sup>s</sup> per month and the Council would take over the large number of bricks the brickfielders had on hand, for which there was no immediate sale, in lieu of arrear rent totalling approximately £80. Further that any brickmaker who had disposed of none of his bricks in any one week, be paid the sum of 12<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup> for five hundred first grade clinker bricks delivered to the Municipal yard.<sup>5</sup> By August 1932 a total of 70 000 bricks had been collected in the Municipal yard by the operation of this last condition.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Oral Source : G. Muller; G.R. Municipal Reports : Finance Committee 16 Sept 1931 p. 158
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 13 Jan 1931 p. 672
  3. G.R. Municipal Reports : Finance Committee 16 Sept 1931 p. 158
  4. Ibid : 1 Oct 1931 p. 161
  5. Ibid
  6. G.R. Municipal Minutes 23 Aug 1932 p. 79

It was hoped that this agreement would stabilise the position but some brickmakers persisted in continuing to undercut the fixed price and sell on their own. There were complaints to the Town Council but all they did was promise to warn the offenders. The agreement expired on 15 January 1933 and the brickmakers reverted to their undercutting operations. In an effort to improve their lot, one of their number, J.J. Wessels, travelled to Cape Town. He was able to obtain interviews with both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour. Accompanied by Dr. Bremer he had :

"advised them that Graaff-Reinet could produce the best blue hard brick in the Union, and when he had mentioned the price for which the bricks could be turned out, the Minister of Labour would hardly believe that bricks could be manufactured so cheaply".<sup>1</sup>

The Government were so interested that they were prepared to spend an amount of £3 000 on a scheme to manufacture bricks locally on a large scale, under Municipal supervision, for the Public Works Department. It was envisaged that seventy-five men would be employed on the scheme.<sup>2</sup> On hearing of the scheme the Municipality readily agreed to :

"supervise the manufacture of the bricks and storage in the kiln, and at the same time guarantee that 75 men would be absorbed on this work".<sup>3</sup>

The Town Council also appointed J.J. Wessels as foreman at a monthly salary of £20 (to come out of the £3000).<sup>4</sup> Wessels was to reorganise the brickmakers :

"in gangs of seven (foremen included), and that the minimum number of bricks on which payment will be effected be fixed at 23 000 per week, completely burnt in the kiln, payment to be as follows : 14<sup>s</sup>3<sup>d</sup> per week for labourers and 18<sup>s</sup> per week for foremen, and that in the event of the minimum being exceeded the same proportion of wages apply. Further that the cost of the bricks turned out to be fixed at 12<sup>s</sup> per thousand,

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 3 June 1933 p. 181

2. Ibid

3. Ibid : 3 June 1933 p. 182

4. Ibid : 3 June 1933 p. 181



this representing 10<sup>s</sup> for wages and the balance to cover supervision and contingencies".<sup>1</sup>

This scheme was able, before the Government subsidy expired, to provide all the bricks needed for the building of the new power station in 1934. In this and other ways, attempts were made to reduce the number of unemployed in Graaff-Reinet. But throughout the Depression unemployment was a serious problem that could not be completely overcome. It was only with the general recovery in 1934-5 that this problem was overcome.

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 3 June 1933 p. 182

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICS OF GRAAFF-REINET DURING THE DEPRESSION

(a) INTRODUCTION

Traditional European politics in Graaff-Reinet was along the language split, Afrikaner versus English. There was still much antagonism and bitterness between these two sections of the populace at the start of the Depression. Neither side would forget or forgive the local events during the Anglo Boer War. The Afrikaners never forgave the execution by the British of a local man, Gideon Scheepers. They maintained that he had been no rebel, but a true patriot, since at the time of the outbreak of the war he had been resident in the Orange Free State and therefore not a colonial subject, and had legitimately joined the Commando that had raided in the Graaff-Reinet area. His execution turned him into a local hero and martyr. So much so that a monument was erected in his memory on 8 December 1908.<sup>1</sup>

In the English speaking section of the community memories were bitter of incidents during the Anglo Boer war when Gideon Scheepers and his raiders victimised those who sympathised with the British.<sup>2</sup> The bitterness engendered by the Anglo Boer War never really subsided although at times it lessened. The period of 1908-1912 was a period of conciliation helped by the efforts of the Graaff-Reinet representative in, first the Cape Legislative Assembly and later in the Union Parliament, Gysbert Henry Maasdrorp.<sup>3</sup> But in 1914 the First World War broke out and in South Africa the "Rebellion of 1914" took place. Once again the Nationalism of the Afrikaners was awakened. In Graaff-Reinet this Afrikaner awareness, especially of Afrikaans as a distinct language, was fanned by a Dutch Reformed Minister, D.F. Malan, later to become the leader of the Cape Nationalist Party. In his term at Graaff-Reinet (February 1913 to November 1914) Malan concentrated much of his time on the question of education for the children of the poor whites, and in efforts to separate coloured and whites living interspersed in the town.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Malan had been particularly effected by the fact "*dat daar [in]*

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1. Oral Source : J. Traas

2. Oral Source : L. Booysen, E.M. deV. Minnaar

3. Smith p. 113

4. Oral Source : J. Traas; Booysen, B. : *Die Lewe van D.F. Malan*. p. 234-279

*sommige strate van die buurt geen woonbuurtskeiding tussen blank en nie-blank bestaan het nie*".<sup>1</sup> This was in the southern portion of the town, the Blackhorse Inn and River Street area and Dr. Malan had to witness this intermixing of races daily as the "*pastorie : Naudeshof*" in Murray Street was situated on the edge of this area. One other "*bedrieging*" that the Afrikaner child had to face in Graaff-Reinet was the "*Engelse gees wat van die plaaslike onderwysinstelling uitgegaan*".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Malan was, consequently, the chief instigator of a commission to investigate whether the language ordinances were being applied in the Graaff-Reinet schools or not.<sup>3</sup> These efforts of Dr. Malan in the cause of Afrikanerdom had important results in the direction that later politics took in Graaff-Reinet.

In January 1914 at Bloemfontein, General J.B.M. Hertzog had formed the National Party.<sup>4</sup> This party received enthusiastic support from the Afrikaners in Graaff-Reinet especially from the poorer sections of the white populace. In the 1915 election the National Party won the Graaff-Reinet seat and from that time till the present day, an unbroken line of Nationalist candidates have held the seat.<sup>5</sup>

After the First World War the language issue once again split the community, but this time not only between English and Afrikaners but also between Afrikaners. In 1922 some Afrikaners agitated for the substitution of Afrikaans for Dutch at the Midland Seminary (local high school). This caused the English speaking community to start their own English medium school, the Union High School, where Dutch would remain the second language.<sup>6</sup> With these English speaking were those Afrikaners who wanted Dutch instead of the "lowly language of the common people", Afrikaans, taught to their children.<sup>7</sup> Generally speaking, these Afrikaners were the more wealthy and moderate Afrikaner, who in certain instances had remained loyal to the old South African Party ideals of General Botha. However at the same time there had been a new upsurge in "British identification". "God Save the King" was played in the Anglican Church by the organist, de Ville, and at one rowdy political meeting a certain citizen, Mills, came wrapped in the Union Jack.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Booyens p. 244

2. Ibid p. 257

3. Ibid p. 258

4. Muller, C.F.J. (ed) : *Five Hundred Years; A History of South Africa*. p. 386

5. Oral Source : P.F. de Klerk; See Table 13

6. Ibid : R. Kingwill, M. Kingwill

7. Ibid : L. Booyens

8. Ibid : J. Traas

A difference in loyalties in the Afrikaners led to a division in the local Dutch Reformed Church. The Dutch Reformed Minister, Ds. Naude, was a staunch supporter of the Afrikaans language, and he alienated the more moderate members of his congregation. He particularly aroused their anger when he arbitrarily dismissed the organist, A. Murray, the daughter of Rev. Charles Murray, an ex-Dutch Reformed Minister of Graaff-Reinet. The final break came when Ds. Naude brought politics into his religious sermons. Half the congregation (approximately 600 members) broke away and formed their own congregation known as the "Nuwe Kerk" in 1928.<sup>1</sup>

*"Hoewel byna al die SAP lede van die Graaff-Reinet gemeente by die ontevredenes is, staan dit tog bo alle twyfel vas dat vele van die Beswaardes vooranstaande Nasionaliste is. Manne soos P en C.G. Joubert, F. Retief, A.P. Sommers, G. Olivier, A. Heunis en J.B. Wagner se nasionale gevoel is bo alle twyfel verhewe".<sup>2</sup>*

In fact this schism in the Dutch Reformed Church became identified basically with the division between the conservative and the moderate. These differences were intensified by the Depression, first with the controversy over the Gold Standard, and then the moves towards coalition and fusion between the two political parties, the Nationalists and the South African Party.

During the Depression the Conservative Afrikaner fanatically supported the Nationalist Party candidate regardless of the circumstances, economic or political, maintaining that only through the National Party would they be able to give expression to their "Afrikanerheid". The Depression did not draw the people of Graaff-Reinet together, it rather emphasised the conservative-moderate split, but this time with certain new twists.<sup>3</sup>

On 22 May 1929 the M.P. for Graaff-Reinet, I.P. van Heerden died of a heart attack and the elections in Graaff-Reinet were post-poned for one month.<sup>4</sup> The Nationalist Party branch in Graaff-Reinet nominated Dr. K. Bremer.

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1. *Kerklike Moeilikhede op Graaff-Reinet 1921-1928*

2. *Ibid* : p. 3

3. Oral Source : J. Traas

4. *Ons Koerant* 23 May 1929



The nomination of the South African Party in Graaff-Reinet was the mayor, H. Urquhart, a holder of the M.B.E., and at the postponed election it was a relatively straight forward fight between Nationalist Party and South African Party ideals.<sup>1</sup> The deceased Member of Parliament, I.P. van Heerden, had prior to his death, injected a certain amount of race hatred into his election campaign, especially concerning the segregation of Europeans and non-Europeans.<sup>2</sup> However due to the respect Dr. Bremer and H. Urquhart had for each other the election of 1929 was remarkable for its restraint and lack of acrimony between the candidates.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Bremer duly defeated H. Urquhart at the election on 17 July 1929 by 1586 votes to 1036. A total of 2648 votes were cast out of a possible of 3272 registered voters (twenty-six ballot papers spoiled).<sup>4</sup> This represented a percentage poll of eighty-one.

(b) Dr. KARL BREMER AND WHITE POLITICS

Dr. Bremer was an ex-Graaff-Reinet resident who had a medical practice in Cape Town. He had been elected as M.P. for Graaff-Reinet in the 1924 elections but had resigned in 1925 to continue further medical studies in Germany.<sup>5</sup> He was a popular man in Graaff-Reinet, being a good speaker and having a strong personality.<sup>6</sup> Being an astute politician he never neglected to be on friendly terms with the opposition and in this was much helped by his Scottish wife. He was able, having "a foot in each camp", to cultivate all sections of the community.<sup>7</sup> He was also president of the exclusive Graaff-Reinet Men's Club and often played poker with the mayor, Urquhart, his opposition in the 1929 elections.<sup>8</sup>

In his capacity as Medical Inspector for Cape Schools, he had had much to do with the poor white population and had also, for many years, been the Chairman of the Graaff-Reinet Child Welfare Association.<sup>9</sup> In this

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1. *Ons Koerant* 17 June 1929
  2. *Ibid* : 20 May 1929
  3. Oral Source : P.F. de Klerk
  4. Union Government Gazette 19 July 1929 No. 1309
  5. *Ons Koerant* 17 June 1929
  6. Oral Sources : D. Archer, J. Traas.
  7. *Ibid* : R. Kingwill
  8. *Ibid* : D. Archer, P.F. de Klerk
  9. *G.R. Advertiser* 4 July 1929

position he had learnt much about the needy situation of the poor, and after he was elected to Parliament he particularly interested himself in legislation concerning the improvement of the lot of the poor.<sup>1</sup> When the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors was in financial difficulties in October 1931 he was instrumental in getting the Board placed under Judicial Management.<sup>2</sup>

During the early years of the Depression it had seemed as though Dr. Bremer, by his general popularity, would be able to draw all sections of the community together, but the economic as well as other factors of the Depression prevented this taking place. A factor which made him less popular was that he spent much of the parliamentary recess at his medical practice in Cape Town. Complaints appeared in the local press about the "afwesige L.V."<sup>3</sup> Disparaging remarks were made about the continuation of Graaff-Reinet's "carpetbagger politicians".<sup>4</sup> This was an allusion to the days of the 1860's when there were few men who had the leisure to devote to politics and to attending Parliament in Cape Town and so Graaff-Reinet had been represented by non-Graaff-Reinettters, usually from Cape Town.<sup>5</sup> A section of the Graaff-Reinet public feared that Dr. Bremer's election was a return to the neglect of local interests by "carpetbagger politicians". Dr. Bremer was not unduly worried about these particular sentiments, but did go so far as to answer his critics with an open letter claiming that anyone had only to look at his record to see that he was serving the interests of the people of Graaff-Reinet.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Bremmer's real problems started when the Government decided to stick to the Gold Standard after September 1931. Being a member of the National Party, he automatically supported the Government in this decision, even though he represented a large farming community. The majority of the farmers in Graaff-Reinet, regardless of party affiliations, supported an abandonment of the Gold Standard. This was obvious at a meeting on 18 January 1932 in the Graaff-Reinet Town Hall of primary producers, organised by the Graaff-Reinet Wool Growers Association, specifically to urge the Government to abandon the Gold Standard. Dr. Bremer was present at this meeting but this did not prevent the farmers from voting by one-hundred

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1. Oral Sources : A. Luscombe, P.F. de Klerk
  2. G.R. Board of Executors Minutes 29 Feb 1932 p. 107
  3. *Ons Koerant* 17 July 1930
  4. *G.R. Advertiser* 17 July 1930
  5. see Smith p. 269-272
  6. *Ons Koerant* 17 July 1930

and fifty-seven to ten for the abandonment of the Gold Standard.<sup>1</sup> However it became obvious that Dr. Bremer could still rely on the vote of the loyal townspeople, mainly the *erfholders* and *agterstraters*. At a public meeting held later that evening Dr. Bremer's town supporters had clearly illustrated that because Dr. Bremer supported the Gold Standard, they, being true Nationalists, would also support it.<sup>2</sup> Their support also stemmed from the fact that Dr. Bremer had done so much to help this section by way of poor relief, for they associated the receiving of poor relief directly with him. "Dr. Bremer always tried to be present at the handout of blankets and food".<sup>3</sup>

Rallying his supporters Dr. Bremer was able, at this Public meeting on 18 January 1932, to win a motion "of complete confidence in the Government" by the very narrow margin of 413 votes to 407.<sup>4</sup> The farmers were particularly upset at this reversal by the *erfholders* and *agterstraters* of their earlier motion that "the Government be urged to abandon the Gold Standard".<sup>5</sup> The bitterness between the Afrikaner and English sections flared up once again, but this time the Afrikaner farmer supported his English counterpart against the conservative Afrikaner *erfholders* and *agterstraters* of the town. Dr. Bremer did not improve his popularity with the Graaff-Reinet farmers by maintaining in Parliament that the sufferings of the wool and mohair farmers had "nothing to do with the Gold Standard".<sup>6</sup> He proceeded to add fuel to their resentment by stating that the "quitting of gold is doubtless a quack remedy for the primary producers".<sup>7</sup> After these first rash pronouncements Dr. Bremer wisely kept out of the Gold Standard controversy, obviously realising the need for placating the farmers of Graaff-Reinet, irrespective of party affiliations. The opposition to the Gold Standard was continued in Graaff-Reinet by the farmers, but Dr. Bremer did not try to defend the Gold Standard at all in the local press and once the Gold Standard was abandoned, the confidence of the farmers of Graaff-Reinet in their parliamentary representative, returned. However with the moves towards a coalition between the National and South African Parties, in the early part of 1933, Dr. Bremer became once again the centre of political conflict in Graaff-Reinet.

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1. Wellwood Diaries 18 January 1932; *G.R. Advertiser* 22 Jan 1932

2. Ibid

3. Oral Source : A. Luscombe

4. *G.R. Advertiser* 22 Jan 1932

5. Wellwood Diaries 18 Jan 1932

6. H. of A. Deb. 8 Feb 1932 col 735

7. Ibid 8 Feb 1932 col 737

After the abandonment of the Gold Standard, Tielman Roos the former deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Transvaal National Party, had entered into negotiations with General Smuts of the South African Party on the possibility of forming a National Government. Smuts had eventually rejected Roos' proposals, but had offered the co-operation of the South African Party to General Hertzog. After first rejecting this offer, Hertzog decided to go ahead with negotiations with Smuts.<sup>1</sup> D.F. Malan, the leader of the Cape National Party, objected to any negotiations as he maintained that "co-operation was tantamount to a coalition of the Parties and the Afrikaans language would be endangered thereby".<sup>2</sup> Hertzog nevertheless went ahead with negotiations, and on 15 February 1933, together with Smuts, drafted and accepted a plan of eight points of principle. The rank and file of both Parties, trusting their leaders, were completely satisfied with the conditions agreed upon. But on each side there was a section which had doubts. In the Cape, Malan and his followers feared that the principles of the National Party would be sacrificed to Smuts' ideals. In Natal, the Devolutionists and their allies resented what they considered to be a surrender to Hertzog.<sup>3</sup> But since the parliamentary seats of the incumbents were guaranteed by one of the conditions the two extremes refrained from objecting too strongly :

"for such was the state of public opinion that any candidate who dared to oppose coalition at the forthcoming general election was sure to forfeit his seat".<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Bremer, a supporter of D.F. Malan, had taken advantage of this guarantee, and in a message to the people of Graaff-Reinet had explained the meaning of coalition. In this message he had clearly stated that :

"the electoral division of Graaff-Reinet will be contested by the official nominee of the National Party, supported by the South African Party, provided that the candidate undertakes to support the new co-operative government".<sup>5</sup>

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1. Kruger p. 163-164; Nicholls p. 272-273; Pirow p. 150-153
  2. Kruger p. 164
  3. Kruger p. 164-165; Nicholls p. 273-274; Pirow p. 154-157
  4. Kruger p. 166
  5. *G.R. Advertiser* 20 March 1933



He went on to emphasise that :

"each party remains separate and distinct both inside and outside Parliament and there will be no combined caucus of the parties".<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Bremer made sure that he did not specifically name the agreement between the two Parties as a coalition, preferring to call it "co-operative government". In emphasising the separate identities and administration of the parties outside of Parliament, he was in complete harmony with the stand of his provincial leader, D.F. Malan, on the matter. While setting out his interpretation of the agreement between Hertzog and Smuts, Dr. Bremer did not forget to appease the farmers and solicit their support. He stated that he supported the Government's declaration of placing the needs of the farming community in the forefront of its economic plans, and :

"the rehabilitation of the farming community will help in the rehabilitation of our towns. If returned, I will make this a matter of prime urgency, and trust that this will have the support of the constituency".<sup>2</sup>

Throughout his message to the people of Graaff-Reinet, Dr. Bremer refrained from specifically mentioning whether he fully supported the coalition or not. Many people in Graaff-Reinet were aware of his support for Dr. Malan's stand, but seemed to be prepared to allow Dr. Bremer to stand unopposed in Graaff-Reinet. The public wanted coalition to work and a committee, supporting the "Coalition Union of South Africa movement", was formed in Graaff-Reinet by a local attorney, K. Wiley. This committee made an appeal for all parliamentary voters to join the movement as they were a "non party organisation standing for 'country before party'".<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Bremer confidently believed that he would be unopposed. On nomination day he was duly nominated by the Chairman of the local National Party, P.F. de Klerk and the general view at the nomination court appeared to be that at eleven o'clock the magistrate would be able to declare Dr. Bremer re-elected unopposed.<sup>4</sup> But shortly before the closing of nominations :

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 20 March 1933

2. *Ibid*

3. *Ibid* : 17 Feb 1933

4. *Ibid* : 22 April 1933

"A stir was caused by some fresh arrivals by car, and it soon became evident that there was to be another [candidate] in the field".<sup>1</sup>

A farmer and auctioneer from Aberdeen, L.A.F. Slabbert, was nominated as an opponent to Dr. Bremer. Apparently the Aberdeen branch of the National Party were not happy with Dr. Bremer's stance on coalition, believing that he was not wholeheartedly behind it. Accordingly they had nominated L.A.F. Slabbert as an "unofficial Nationalist coalition candidate (100% coalition)".<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Bremer was obviously not happy with this turn of events and was obviously dubious about Slabbert's claims of having received the blessings of the Aberdeen National Party branch for he : "left soon after the nominations had concluded for Aberdeen by car".<sup>3</sup> He must have berated the executive of the Aberdeen National Party branch for they repudiated Slabbert, who was "definitely sailing under political colours to which he is not entitled".<sup>4</sup> The nomination of Slabbert forced Dr. Bremer to take up a firm position on the question of his support for the coalition and he declared almost immediately in an open letter to the local press that he was : "supporting the coalition government wholeheartedly".<sup>5</sup> Many people were cynical about this sudden announcement by Dr. Bremer as :

"only weeks ago Bremer took sides with Dr. Malan against Hertzog in deciding the coalition was wrong and not necessary because there would be cheating. Only when opposition to his seat arose, did he pronounce himself as 100% for coalition".<sup>6</sup> His opportunism was bitterly remembered, when he "cheated" himself by crossing the floor in 1935 with Dr. Malan after fusion had come about in 1934. The Editor of the Graaff-Reinet Advertiser, R. Slater, in an editorial on this sudden declaration, comments that even though Dr. Bremer had "not heretofore announced [his support]", his late announcement could well :

"materially alter the aspect of the election and lead many waverers in willingness to support his candidature

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 22 April 1933
  2. Ibid
  3. Ibid
  4. Ibid : J. van Schalkwyk - Editor, 3 May 1933
  5. Ibid : Open letter Dr. K. Bremer 1 May 1933
  6. Wellwood Diaries 1 May 1933
  7. *G.R. Advertiser* Editorial 3 May 1933

or who had adopted a detached air, to change their minds in his favour".<sup>1</sup>

Although he had been repudiated by the Aberdeen National Party branch, Slabbert was still a figure of interest to the people of Graaff-Reinet, and they arrived in large numbers to hear him speak at a public meeting held in the Town Hall on 10 May 1933. At this meeting, attended by between 900 and 1000 people, Slabbert was good humouredly taunted about being an "unofficial Nationalist candidate", and was asked whether he could still term himself a Nationalist if he stood against the official candidate. Slabbert had no election program and his only real argument was that he felt himself to be "100% for coalition", and unlike Dr. Bremer, who was a professional man residing in Cape Town, he, being a farmer and businessman resident in the constituency, "would be able to represent the people better". There was a good deal of banter throughout this meeting, but in the end the meeting voted by an overwhelming majority, for the motion of no confidence in Slabbert but of full confidence in the official candidate, Dr. K. Bremer.<sup>2</sup>

Slabbert was a colourful character but no real politician. His electioneering was somewhat haphazard, and he had no appointed canvassers as he maintained that Dr. Bremer would bring his voters to the polling booths.<sup>3</sup> At the elections on 19 May 1933, Dr. Bremer won by a big majority polling 3 777 votes to Slabbert's 976; (4815 votes out of a total of 7 161 registered voters were cast; % poll 67).<sup>3</sup> Dr. Bremer gained this large majority because, besides his own National Party supporters, he had obtained most of the South African Party votes. It had been one of the terms of agreement between Generals Hertzog and Botha that their respective party supporters would be urged : "to vote for the official candidate and not for any independent".<sup>5</sup>

While Slabbert had provided some light relief in a time when the Graaff-Reinnetters did not have much to be entertained about, he and his supporters had, however, been correct in suspecting the sincerity of Dr. Bremer's commitment to the coalition. In an interview in August 1933 Dr. Bremer criticised the working of the coalition, maintaining that it was

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* editorial 3 May 1933
  2. *Ibid* : 12 May 1933
  3. Oral Source : P.F. de Klerk
  4. Union Government Gazette 2 June 1933 No. 2117
  5. *G.R. Advertiser* editorial 3 May 1933

unsatisfactory since there was no real debate on important questions. In this interview he also mentioned that there was a strong movement growing to abolish the National and South African Parties and form a central party through the fusion of these parties. He regarded this as "definitely against the spirit of the coalition and the retention of the identities of parties which had been agreed on".<sup>1</sup> This fusion movement started shortly after the general elections of May 1933. Branches of the two parties adopted resolutions in favour of fusion and urged the leaders to take the lead. But Dr. Malan and his Cape Nationalist supporters, preferred a re-union of the Parties to be based on the Nationalist program, with the extremist wing of the South African Party excluded altogether. The controversy centred round the right to make propaganda for a republic; the right to secession and the right to neutrality in time of war.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of 1933 the National Party Congress in the four provinces debated the matter at length. In the three Northern Provinces large majorities favoured fusion, but the Party in the Cape refused to support fusion and lose its separate identity.<sup>3</sup> In the South African Party, Smuts was also having trouble with the Natal members who felt that :

"If Malan joins fusion [he] would enter with little Afrikaner group professedly anti-British, having isolated Karoo outlook backed by *Die Burger* and [would] thus change the whole purpose of fusion".<sup>4</sup>

In the months after the elections of May 1933 the controversy raged in both Parties, with both extreme wings attacking the concept of fusion. In November 1933 in a speech at the Koffiehuis in Cape Town, Dr. Bremer came out strongly against fusion, denouncing the motives behind the formation of a new party. He accused Generals Hertzog and Smuts of "bad faith to their supporters in working for the fusion of the parties".<sup>5</sup> Even though the country at large, tired of the hardships of the Depression, wanted political stability so that a complete economic recovery could take place, did not deter these extremists. Dr. Bremer could still rely on his loyal supporters in Graaff-Reinet to back any course he chose to follow. On 2 December 1933 at a meeting attended by approximately 500 people, all of

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 11 August 1933
  2. Kruger p. 168-170; Pirow p. 159-175
  3. Ibid
  4. Nicholls p. 274
  5. *G.R. Advertiser* 24 Nov 1933



whom were his supporters, he was able to get motions, condemning fusion, supporting the resolutions of the Cape National Congress, and expressing full confidence in himself, passed unanimously.<sup>1</sup> At its party congress in October 1933 the Cape National party had passed resolutions maintaining that it was not prepared to dissolve itself or to relinquish its identity, for the purpose of calling into being a new party. The congress had also resolved that no negotiations should at any time take place between the representatives of the National Party and South-African Parties.<sup>2</sup>

To try and hasten fusion, Generals Hertzog and Smuts had spoken at public meetings proclaiming their faith in the new ideal. Both tried to reassure the extreme wings of their respective parties that they had nothing to fear. One of the venues chosen by Hertzog to reassure his extremists was Graaff-Reinet. He paid Graaff-Reinet a visit at the beginning of December 1933. He addressed a big open-air crowd of between 1500 and 2000 who had assembled on the Market Square on 5 December 1933. He opened his speech commenting on the fact that :

"it had been twenty-one years since he had last visited Graaff-Reinet to give a public talk as he had not deemed it necessary to assist the Nationalists here as it had always been a Nationalist stronghold".<sup>3</sup>

He went on to argue that South Africa as a whole would not be satisfied with "anything else but fusion". He felt that as the Prime Minister, he had to accept the "call from the country". Unfortunately the extremists of Graaff-Reinet did not accept his appeal, and throughout his speech there was intermittent heckling by Dr. Bremer's supporters led by Adv. F.C. Erasmus. Dr. Bremer, as he was the sitting M.P. for Graaff-Reinet, was allowed to answer General Hertzog. In his reply, Dr. Bremer accused General Hertzog of "abusing the spirit of coalition".<sup>4</sup> But the majority of Graaff-Reinetters were solidly behind General Hertzog's fusion policy and "some four to one showed in favour of the new preaching", and just as solidly against the opposition composed of :

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 4 Dec 1933
  2. Pirow p. 168
  3. *G.R. Advertiser* 6 Dec 1933
  4. Ibid

"Dr. Malan as leader and our worthy slippery German Graaff-Reinet member, Dr. Karl Bremer, and their followers - the ignorant riff-raff interspersed with a few educated extremists".<sup>1</sup>

So Dr. Bremer's leadership in politics in Graaff-Reinet, that had at the beginning of the Depression held out so much hope of uniting the people of Graaff-Reinet, had slowly become more and more dependant on the conservative extreme element of the community, the *erfholders* and the *agterstraters*. This alienation of Dr. Bremer from the more moderate Afrikaner and English speaking public of Graaff-Reinet, was a direct result of his handling of the politics of economics. His popularity had reached its apex with his role in the saving of the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors. His popularity had begun to wane due to his support of the Gold Standard, and through this support he lost the confidence of the farmers. With his opposition to the coalition and then of the fusion, he lost the rest of his moderate support in town retaining, only the conservative core.

Despite the opposition of Dr. Malan, Dr. Bremer and their supporters, fusion eventually came about. Throughout 1934 there were negotiations between General Hertzog and Dr. Malan and his Cape National Party, to try to overcome their differences regarding the fusion of the National Party and the South African Party. But to no avail, as the negotiations finally foundered on the intransigence of Dr. Malan to accept negotiations with General Smuts.<sup>2</sup> But Dr. Malan was unable to prevent the eventual fusion of the two parties. Finally on 5 December 1934 at Bloemfontein, a joint congress of the two parties was held, and fusion was officially accepted. However Dr. Malan and his supporters did not accept this and when Parliament re-opened in 1935 they formed the Purified National Party consisting of nineteen M.P.'s, amongst whom was the M.P. for Graaff-Reinet, Dr. K. Bremer.<sup>3</sup> The people of Graaff-Reinet were not surprised at this move, having expected it, but were still disappointed as "he was such a good member".<sup>4</sup>

While tensions and emotions had been running high in European politics, a concurrent high level of agitation had been taking place in non-European

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1. Wellwood Diaries 5 Dec 1933
  2. Kruger p. 171-172; Pirow p. 180-191
  3. Muller p. 412
  4. Oral Source : A. Luscombe

politics. During the Depression, non-European politics was concentrated largely on the confrontations between black and white, with racial hatred and discrimination against non-Europeans figuring prominently.

(c) NON-EUROPEAN POLITICS

In 1929 race relations were particularly strained by the general elections of that year. These elections have become notorious for injecting the issue of "*swartgevaar*" into South African politics. During the election campaign General Smuts, leader of the South African Party, made a speech at Ermelo in which he was reported to have favoured a Black Dominion state throughout Africa. Upon the publication of the report of this speech, Hertzog, Tielman Roos and Dr. D.F. Malan issued a statement that became known as the "Black Manifesto", warning the white man of the dangers of the black franchise, and declaring that what was at stake was the continued existence of the white man and his civilization in South Africa. What the authors particularly objected to was Smuts' alleged doctrine of "equal rights for all - kafirs and white men everywhere - on an equal footing".<sup>1</sup>

In the rural areas the cry went up that Smuts "wanted to give the vote to kafirs".<sup>2</sup> In Graaff-Reinet the sitting M.P., I.P. van Heerden was not slow to raise the race issue. At a public meeting, attended by approximately five-hundred supporters, he most emphatically told them that the whites were to remain "*nommer een in Suid Afrika*", and that the Nationalists would see that there was no "*Kaffer oorheersing*". He drew loud cheers by telling his audience that he and his Nationalist party colleagues fully supported "*segregasie*".<sup>3</sup>

Soon after Hertzog had taken office as Prime Minister in 1924, he had explained that by segregation he meant that the natives would have their own well defined areas in which the great mass of them would reside, for he wanted to prevent a mixture of races. But on the other hand, he desired to keep the coloured people on the side of the whites. Hertzog maintained that, even though the coloured people often fell short of white civilization, they

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1. Neame, L.E. : *The History of Apartheid; The Story of the Colour Bar in South Africa.* p. 57

2. Ibid

3. *Ons Koerant* 20 May 1929

had their "origin and existence in our midst, [and] in [their] case there can be no talk of segregation".<sup>1</sup> Hertzog's support for the coloured people was based on simple arithmetic. Before 1930 the coloured vote had been important in a number of Western Cape constituencies. In 1929 the coloured voters in the Cape Province numbered nearly 24 000 as compared with 15 780 native and 167 184 European voters; and could turn the scale in favour of one or the other of the two main political parties in at least ten of the fifty-eight Cape constituencies. After 1929 the coloured vote lost much of its influence as in 1930 Parliament, by large majorities, passed an Act giving the franchise to European women over twenty-one years of age but withholding it from coloured and native women. In 1931 the Government placed on the statute book a measure which conferred adult suffrage on the Europeans of the Cape and Natal - they already had it in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal - but left prospective coloured and native voters still subject to the old qualifications.<sup>2</sup>

In Graaff-Reinet the coloured voters did not hold the balance but did swell the vote of the South African Party. In 1931 out of a coloured population of 6 970, 2945 lived in the Municipal location and approximately 1 670 lived in town. There were approximately 360 coloured males in the town and 1 109 in the location. Because of qualifications it is safe to assume that of this total of 1 459 at the most 350 were registered voters. In 1929 the total number of registered voters in Graaff-Reinet was 3 272. At the 1929 elections the Nationalist candidate Dr. K. Bremer won by a majority of 550.<sup>3</sup> This majority was almost certainly drawn from the approximately five-hundred *erfholders* in Graaff-Reinet for it was these people who had cheered I.P. van Heerden's speech on segregation a few days before he died.

The South African Party supporters in Graaff-Reinet were certainly bitter about the use of racial hatred in the 1929 elections and objected to it while "all us right thinking [people] are striving to eliminate race hatred".<sup>4</sup> They could not understand the increase of support for Hertzog by Cape Afrikaners, especially since they had "enjoyed the protective freedom of the British flag for 120 years" and were "ashamed to feel" that 2 out of 5 in this area are

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1. Neame p. 53-54

2. Marais p. 279-280

3. G.R. Magistracy Annual Report 1929; G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 22 March 1930; G.R. Municipal Census 1931; Union Government Gazette 19 July 1929 No. 1309

4. Wellwood Diaries 14 June 1929



composed of a substance devoid of honour".<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the *erfholders* felt justified in giving their wholehearted support for a doctrine of segregation. Unfortunately they had misinterpreted the sentiments of the Nationalists "Black Manifesto". They were under the impression that the segregation they supported was a blanket segregation between Europeans and non-Europeans. The *erfholders* especially the *agterstraters*, had particularly resented the presence of the coloured people in the town. Over the years many of the coloured people had acquired property in the town and the south-end of town, the Blackhorse Inn and River Street area, was largely inhabited by coloured people. Spreading out from this area they had infiltrated other areas and could be found living side by side with whites. The poorer classes of whites resented this mixing, and felt that the policy of segregation as propagated by the Nationalists offered them the opportunity of removing the coloured presence from their midst. But unfortunately for them, Hertzog had intended his segregation policy to apply only to "natives" not the coloured people whose "outlook is essentially that of the whites and not of the natives".<sup>2</sup>

Having won the elections for the Nationalists in Graaff-Reinet, the *erfholders* and *agterstraters* fully expected the Party to carry out its election promises of racial segregation. The Government, even if it was so inclined, and being fully occupied with the economic problems of the Depression, found scant time to minister to the segregationist sentiments of the *erfholders* and *agterstraters* of Graaff-Reinet. As the Depression deepened the poorer whites in Graaff-Reinet became even more resentful of the coloured people in town. They could accept being reduced to the same economic level perhaps but resented any social contact.

In contrast to this the coloured people "*het die blanke mense geëer as blanke mense*" and they certainly wanted to co-operate and to associate with Europeans.<sup>3</sup> There was "*nooit 'n gevael van aanstoot of vyandskap teen inmenging met blanke*".<sup>4</sup> They trusted and treated the whites with respect but at the same time fully understood their inferior position. They never

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1. Wellwood Diaries 17 July 1929

2. Neame p. 54 See tables 9+10

3. Oral Source : C. Koeberg

4. Ibid

lost their hope of receiving better treatment and constantly attempted to improve their position. During the Depression those that were privileged to live in the town, still considered themselves as part, albeit inferior, of the European community. They paid their municipal taxes and some had the vote. Accordingly they felt they were well within their rights to apply for the use of the Town Hall. In June 1929 a coloured of the Anglican Mission congregation, Joel M. Ndabukelana, applied for the use of the Town Hall to stage a "musical concert".<sup>1</sup> The Town Council sought legal advice on this problem from a local attorney, K. Wiley, who delivered the opinion that the Council "cannot legally refuse the application, merely on the ground that the applicant is a native".<sup>2</sup> (In this sense the use of the word native was used to denote non-European.) The Town Council, feeling itself under too much pressure from the white inhabitants, disregarded this advice and refused Ndabukelana's request.<sup>3</sup> Another request from another coloured person, M.C. de Klerk, for the use of the Market Hall for the Graaff-Reinet Coloured Citizen's Union's Christmas dance in 1929 was also refused.<sup>4</sup> The Graaff-Reinet Coloured Citizen's Union consisted largely of the teachers, salaried workers and other professional coloured people. This, however, was of no significance to Europeans in general, and particularly to the *erfholders* and *agterstraters*, as was aptly demonstrated in an incident in 1932 when the Coloured Citizen's Union applied for the use of the supper room of the Town Hall for a dance. The Town Council had granted their request arguing that the Coloured Citizen's Union were a responsible society. Furthermore the Municipality was having problems financing the upkeep of the Town Hall, so this extra income would be most welcome. The Town Council promptly received a petition signed by eighty-eight whites requesting the cancellation of their permission to use the supper room to the Coloured Citizen's Union. The petitioners based their argument on the fact that if coloured people were allowed the use of the supper room and the cutlery therein, the Town Council would, in the future find it difficult to lease the Hall to whites. Hence there would be a further drop in Hall revenue. Faced with this argument and the implied threat, the Town Council withdrew their permission to the Coloured Citizen's Union to use the supper room of the Town Hall.<sup>5</sup>

The Native (Urban Areas) Act (No. 21 of 1923) had enforced the living of all natives within the limits of any urban area in a Municipal native

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- Hire of Town Hall by Non-Europeans : Ndabukelane
1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : - Town Council June 1929 ; See Note 4
  2. Ibid : 8 June 1929 : Wiley - Town Council
  3. Ibid : 14 June 1929 : Town Council - Ndabukelana
  4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 7 Dec 1929 p. 526
  5. Ibid : 19 June 1932 p. 65-66

location. It also exempted the coloured people from this, and the operation of the pass laws.<sup>1</sup> The Urban Areas Amendment Act of 1930 had not added much to the previous act, merely giving the Municipalities greater rights in enforcing the restrictions on native (especially female) entry into the urban area.<sup>2</sup> This Act had been a disappointment to those *erfholders* and *agterstraters* who had expected some action to be taken about the coloured people residing in the town. Wanting them removed to the location, the *erfholders* and *agterstraters* started a campaign of complaints against them. They wrote letters to the Town Council, and had personal interviews with their councillors. They aimed their campaign specifically at the coloureds in the numerous hire-rooms scattered all over the town. They complained of insanitary conditions, unruliness and drunkenness by the coloured occupants of these hire-rooms. In 1931, twenty-three residents of Cradock Street sent in a petition to the Town Council asking them to institute a thorough investigation of the hire-rooms in town.<sup>3</sup> The Council were powerless to interfere and the best they could do was to request the police to keep an eye on the behaviour of the occupants of the hire-rooms.<sup>4</sup> But complaints continued to reach the Town Council of the bad behaviour of the coloured occupants of the hire-rooms.

The number of coloured people and natives living within the limits of the town were considerable. In February 1928 a house to house census was done revealing that there were 351 adult coloured males, 414 adult coloured females and 908 coloured children living in town. The census of April 1931 gave more detailed figures :

Non-Europeans in town : April 1931

	<u>Adults</u>		<u>Children</u>	
	<u>male</u>	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>female</u>
Coloureds	271	309	348	329
Blacks	31	29	44	48
Indian	10	3	3	3
Total :	Coloured	1257		
	Black	152		
	Indian	29		
	TOTAL :	1438	5	

1. Native (Urban Areas) Act (No. 21 of 1923); Union Government Gazette 19 June 1923 No. 1326 clauses 5(1), 28
2. Native (Urban Areas) Amendment Act (No. 25 of 1930); Union Government Gazette 16 Jan 1930 No. 1840 clauses 5; 10
3. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Petitions 12 March 1931 & 27 March 1931
4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 7 April 1939 p. 702
5. Census Reports G.R. Municipality 1928 & 1931

These figures were cause for concern by those wanting a completely "white" town. The pressure to remove them from the towns limits, and place them in the location grew as the Depression worsened. The influx of poor unemployed whites from the surrounding rural area, focused attention on this problem since these poor unemployed whites began to compete for the cheap lodgings in the south end of town. Resenting the fact that economic circumstances forced them to live amongst the coloured people, they turned to another avenue of protest. One of their number, J.J.M. Mostert, of 2 River Street, appealed directly to the Member of Parliament for Graaff-Reinet, Dr. Karl Bremer, asking him to help with the removal of the coloureds from town. Mostert put his case as follows :

*"Met betrekking omtrent die kleurlinge hier in die dorp, volgens wet, elke dorp het sy lokasie meen vir die kleurlinge .... hulle behoort in die lokasie nie tussen die wit geslachte te bly nie. Die onteer is te groot ek is 'n man van kinders in ook arm in deur my armoet moet ik laans aan die kleurling bly want ek het nie die geld om 'n huis to huur in die vernaamste plek van die dorp nie. Nou meen dit dat sy kinders in my kinders is een, in ik my zelf moet tevrede wees met al die onteer wat hulle pleeg. Dit meen ook dat hulle geen ontzag het vir wit mense nie want dit word dikwels van hulle gezeg wat zoek julle arm ou boere hier tussen ons. Zoo ik reken dit is 'n schandaal dat die kleurlinge moet saam met ons hier in die dorp bly. Dit moet virstaan word al is ons arm maar ons is wit in dit moet ook in aanmerking geneem word. Dat die Heere het die onderskeid hier op die Arde gemaak nie ons mensehe nie, zoo waaroor moet ons dan onze kinders saam in deurmekaar groot maak tussen die kleurlinge waar daar in die lokasie plek is vir hulle..."<sup>1</sup>*

Close on the heels of this letter the Town Council received two petitions requesting the removal of the non-Europeans in town to the location. The first on the 5 June 1933 was signed by thirteen whites and the second on the 15 June 1933 was signed by thirty-eight whites.<sup>2</sup> That they were getting impatient at the lack of progress was obvious in the closing paragraph of the second petition written and signed by a C. de Beer :

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Separation of Europeans and non-Europeans in town: Mostert - Bremer 29 May 1933.
  2. Ibid : Petitions 5 June 1933



"zoo hoop ik in vertroue dat die petisie in aanmerking geneem word in tot een uitwerking zal kom. Ik verwag in antwood spoedig op my brief".<sup>1</sup>

The Town Council delayed taking action but referred the matter to the Medical Health Officer.<sup>2</sup> In April 1931 the Medical Health Officer had condemned a block of hire rooms at the south end of Cradock Street.<sup>3</sup> This had appeased the complainants for a time, so hoping for a similar report the Town Council had turned the matter over to the MOH but the MOH took more than six months to prepare a report. In the meantime the Town Council received a petition specifically requesting them to condemn those hire rooms having a "lack of proper sanitary arrangements".<sup>4</sup>

The report of the MOH was tabled on 20 March 1934. To everyone's chagrin he reported that :

"there was insufficient evidence to condemn the hire rooms complained of as unfit for human habitation"<sup>5</sup>

even though the mayor felt that :

"a very undesirable type of tenant occupied these rooms .. and it was quite evident that life was unbearable [for whites] ... in the close vicinity".<sup>6</sup>

The Town Council decided that the only way out of the situation was to adopt an "*Agterbuurtes Verbeteringskema*" whereby they would buy up hire rooms and demolish them.<sup>7</sup> The Council made their first purchase in May 1934 buying five hire rooms in Bourke Street for £15 from the Estate of W. Dippenaar and promptly demolished them.<sup>8</sup> Their next purchase was in September 1934 when they bought a block of hire rooms in River Street known as the "*Ou Tronk*" for the sum of £75.<sup>9</sup> By the time the Government enacted

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Petitions 15 June 1933
  2. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Petitions 15 June 1933
  3. Ibid : 2 April 1931
  4. Ibid : 6 March 1934
  5. G.R. Municipal Minutes 20 March 1934 p. 281
  6. Ibid : 20 March 1934 p. 281
  7. *Ons Koerant* 6 Sept 1934
  8. G.R. Municipal Correspondence 17 May 1934
  9. Ibid 5 Sept 1934

its Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937, the buying up of slum dwellings was far advanced and the resettlement of many coloured people had already taken place in the new coloured housing project of Sunnyside. In terms of the 1937 Act the remaining coloured people were removed to their own location next to Sunnyside, named Kroonvale.<sup>1</sup>

During the Depression the politics of the Municipal location were largely aimed at the discrimination against location residents obtaining licences for trading purposes.

The Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 had given Municipalities the right to grant trading licences to natives in the Municipal locations, but had also given them the power to refuse such licences on a wide variety of conditions.<sup>2</sup> The Native (Urban Areas) Amendment Act of 1930 authorised the Minister of Native Affairs to compel Municipalities, in certain cases, to grant trading licences to natives in locations.<sup>3</sup> The Graaff-Reinet Town Council deplored this threat to their independence and the mayor, in particular was opposed to this power. The Town Council unanimously passed the resolution :

"that the Council oppose any attempt to abolish the right of local authorities to prohibit trading in the location".<sup>4</sup>

In April 1930 the Town Council circulated a letter to the other Municipalities in the Cape Midlands requesting them for their opinions and views on the question of trading in locations.<sup>5</sup>

In this matter the Town Council were faced by three very persistent applicants, Thomas Bastyana, F.G. Mkwane and Thys Ngeinzane. These three, obviously not well educated, merely wanted "to make a little shop here at the location"<sup>6</sup> Ngeinzane had applied in September 1929 for a "butchery and shopping licence" but on receiving a negative response, had explained that all he wanted was "permission to sell meat in the location. I didn't mean about trade".<sup>7</sup> What made the Town Council's refusal more irritating

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1. Oral Sources : C. Koeberg, A. Kamies

2. Native (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923; Union Government Gazette 19 June 1923, No. 1326, clause 22

3. Native (Urban Areas) Amendment Act No. 25 of 1930; Union Government Gazette 16 Jan 1930, clause 10.

4. G.R. Municipal Minutes 11 Feb 1930 p. 556

5. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Trading in location 10 April 1930

6. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Trading in location F.G. Makwane - Town Council 27 Jan 1930

7. Ibid : Ngeinzane - Town Council 9 Sept 1929

was the fact that the white butchers in the town were permitted to send carts into the location to hawk meat and offal to the location residents.<sup>1</sup>

To all appeals the mayor replied emphatically that "my Council does not issue trading licences in the location", but this attitude could not last and under pressure the Town Council had to change its stance.<sup>2</sup> In this matter of trading licences in the location the Town Council procrastinated as long as they could, before conceding as little as possible. To their extreme annoyance the African National Congress had entered the picture. With the backing of the Head Office in Cape Town the Graaff-Reinet Branch of the ANC had in March 1931 written an appeal to the Town Council wherein their attention was drawn to the :

"immediate demand for trading rights by the location inhabitants of Graaff-Reinet".<sup>3</sup>

This letter was notable for its alternating humility and bravado. The letter enquired :

"Why the non-Europeans residing in the Graaff-Reinet location have not been permitted trading opportunities to trade amongst themselves".<sup>4</sup>

The letter further threatens to ask the Native Affairs Department to "Apply the amendment to the Urban Areas Act of 1923".<sup>5</sup> In addition to the right to open shops in the location, they requested the Town Council to instal street lights for greater night safety of the location residents, sufficient water taps and a reduction of taxes.<sup>6</sup>

The Town Council, on receipt of this petition, wrote to the local Chamber of Commerce asking them to forward definite reasons for the refusal of trading sites, failing which :

"it would appear that the Minister will exercise his power under the Act, and instruct my Council accordingly".<sup>7</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Trading in Location : Town Council - Provincial Administration 10 Feb 1930
  2. Ibid : 3 Feb 1930
  3. Ibid : G.R. ANC - Town Council and Native Affairs Dept 25 March 1931
  4. Ibid : Trading in Location 25 March 1931
  5. Ibid
  6. Ibid
  7. Ibid : 23 April 1931

The Chamber of Commerce objected to the granting of trading licences in the location in a strongly worded reply. They cited various reasons for their objection, amongst which was their opinion that there were a sufficient number of shops in the immediate vicinity of the location boundary which adequately served the needs of location residents.<sup>1</sup> These shopkeepers also felt that it would be :

"a breach of understanding and an interference with their vested rights if the departure from age-long custom was now to be tolerated".<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore they felt that the trading licences in the location would simply end up in the hands of Asiatics "who are as a rule not desirable tradesmen".<sup>3</sup>

The Town Council agreed wholeheartedly with the reasons advanced and in a reply to the Chamber of Commerce, assured them that :

"in view thereof, it is hardly likely that the Minister of Native Affairs will endeavour to alter the existing conditions".<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately this confidence was sadly misplaced. In July 1931, F.G. Makwane and Thomas Bastyana had appealed in writing, directly to the Department of Native Affairs, for the granting of trading licences.<sup>5</sup> The Town Council had in November 1931 received a letter from the Native Affairs Department requesting the Town Council to review the situation and to frame and adopt regulations, in accordance with the Urban Areas Amendment Act of 1930 or failing this to :

"formulate a statement of its reasons for its unpreparedness to do so".<sup>6</sup>

In a reversal the Town Council informed the Chamber of Commerce of this letter from the Department of Native Affairs, and acknowledged that : "[the] Council feels that it has no option in the matter".<sup>7</sup> So accordingly, early

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Trading in Location : Chamber of Commerce - Town Council 29 April 1931
  2. Ibid
  3. Ibid
  4. Ibid : Town Council - Chamber of Commerce 7 May 1931
  5. Ibid : Mkwane & Bastyana - Native Affairs Dept 20 July 1931
  6. Ibid : Dept of Native Affairs - Town Council 8 Nov 1931
  7. Ibid : Town Council - Chamber of Commerce 31 Dec 1931



in 1932 the Town Council passed additional location regulations in accordance with the Urban Areas Amendment Act of 1930.<sup>1</sup> But their new regulation was framed in such a way as to leave them a certain amount of room for manoeuvre. No hawking of meat, offal, fruit, vegetables, dairy produce or merchandise of any description was allowed unless a permit was obtained from the Town Council : " upon such terms and conditions as may be prescribed by the Council".<sup>2</sup> This regulation very neatly allowed the Town Council to avoid issuing the more lucrative "General Dealers" licence by issuing "Fresh Produce Dealers" licences.

Notwithstanding this partial capitulation to the combined pressure of the ANC - backed location applicants, and the Department of Native Affairs, the Town Council still tried to safeguard the interests of the European ratepayers. The concession of "Fresh Produce Dealer" licences was an obvious ruse and even these licences were difficult for location residents to obtain. By the end of August 1933 only six "Fresh Produce Dealer" licences had been issued for trading in the location.<sup>3</sup> The reason for the issuance of so few licences was, unofficially, to keep white economic interests paramount, while officially it was because of the Council's lack of control over hawking in the location. The Town Council had in February 1932, informed the Department of Native Affairs of this problem and had maintained that it was :

"essential that the class of product to be disposed of [by the hawkers] should be approved of first by the Council".<sup>4</sup>

The obvious restricting of the issue of licences had not prevented the Chamber of Commerce objecting to the "unrestricted granting" of licences to people they felt were not qualified to possess them. They deceptively proclaimed that they had "no desire to restrict legitimate competition" but were worried that the number of insolvencies would increase which in turn would be detrimental to the business reputation of Graaff-Reinet.<sup>5</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Minutes 26 Jan 1932 p. 4

2. Ibid

3. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Trading in Location 31 Aug 1933

4. Ibid : Town Council - Dept of Native Affairs 10 Feb 1932

5. Ibid : Chamber of Commerce - Town Council 19 April 1932

The Town Council had replied promptly to this complaint by the Chamber of Commerce, assuring them that every possible step would be taken to avoid "the necessity of granting trading licences for the location".<sup>1</sup> To add weight to this assurance the Town Council sought legal opinion to their "right to refuse application for certain licences".<sup>2</sup> In February 1933 the Town Council informed the Chamber of Commerce that it had decided that, until regulations controlling hawking in the location were promulgated, no hawking or general dealer licences for the location were to be issued. The only licences to be issued were either "Cafe" or "Fresh Produce Dealer" licences.<sup>3</sup> The term "Cafe" was used here to indicate an "African eating house" and to be able to operate a "Cafe" in the location required a "Fresh Produce Dealer's" licence. The two went together and in this way the Town Council was readily able to refuse the "Fresh Produce Dealers" licence on the grounds that the premises of the "Cafe" were unhygienic, and the applicant was unable to operate a "Cafe" without the "Fresh Produce Dealer" licence.<sup>4</sup> So despite the two Native Urban Areas Laws of 1923 and 1930, which gave Natives trading rights in locations, the Town Council had very neatly been able to limit the issuance of trading licences to a minimum. Eventually hawking was allowed in the location in 1942 but this was long after the end of the Depression.<sup>5</sup>

During the Depression the acts of political activists and agitators in the location were also a source of anxiety to the Town Council. The ANC had annoyed the Town Council with its petition asking for trading rights.<sup>6</sup> But this was not the only cause for concern. The ANC was particularly active in Graaff-Reinet during the early part of the Depression. They held meetings every month and even the labourers from farms in the district attended.<sup>7</sup> In July 1931, the Location Committee of the Town Council reported that, owing to the frequent meetings of the ANC in the location, much ill-feeling was being caused amongst the location inhabitants, and :

" it would appear that if immediate steps are not taken serious trouble will occur in the near future".<sup>8</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Trading in Location - Town Council - Chamber of Commerce 2 May 1932
  2. Ibid : 9 May 1932
  3. Ibid : 27 Feb 1933
  4. Oral Sources: C. Koeberg, A. Kamies
  5. G.R. Municipal Correspondence : Trading in location circular 1942
  6. Ibid : Town Council - Chamber of Commerce 23 April 1931
  7. Oral Sources : D. Kingwill, D. Archer
  8. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 8 July 1931 p. 145

On the recommendation of the Location Advisory Board the Location Committee felt it necessary to ask the Town Council to take action to prevent further meetings.<sup>1</sup> This Location Advisory Board consisted of seven members. Three non-Europeans elected by the location residents, three non-Europeans nominated by the Town Council, and the location superintendent as the Chairman.<sup>2</sup> The Location Advisory Board was not popular with the location inhabitants as they were looked upon as the "accomplices of the superintendent, [J. Brown]" and "adopted a dominant attitude" towards the other residents "ignoring their wishes".<sup>3</sup> That "public opinion in the location was not in favour of the Board" was obvious from the fact that in the 1929 elections for the 1930 Location Advisory Board there were only three nominations, A.W. Ranana, S.S. Kolisang and J. N'Gindana, who were all duly declared elected.<sup>4</sup> The Council's nominees to the Location Advisory Board were Japie Marais, Solomon Gates and Abie West.<sup>5</sup> All these men, except for James N'Gindana, were members of the group that regularly supported all the Town Council's proposals concerning the location. N'Gindana was the Chairman of the local ANC branch and his opposition to Town Council proposals was no surprise. His presence on the Location Advisory Board was the cause of much friction on the Board and encouragement to the ANC agitators and political activists in the location.<sup>6</sup>

Towards the end of 1931 there was a distinct increase in ANC activities in the location. This was due to the activities of the assistant provincial secretary of the ANC, Thomas Faku. His activities seemed to indicate that the Location Committee's prediction of future trouble was coming true. In December 1931 Faku held a series of meetings in the district and in the town. At one particular meeting he had declared that he would continue to hold meetings "till blood flows".<sup>7</sup> After this meeting there had been scenes of violence and stone throwing. The location superintendent had received complaints from various coloured people that Faku's actions were causing "bitter feeling between natives and coloureds".<sup>8</sup>

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 8 July 1931 p. 145
  2. G.R. Municipal Minutes 14 Jan 1930 p. 545
  3. Ibid : 11 Feb 1930 p. 554
  4. Ibid : 11 Feb 1930 p. 554 and 14 Jan 1930 p. 545
  5. Ibid : 14 Jan 1930 p. 545
  6. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 10 Feb 1932
  7. *G.R. Advertiser* 23 Jan 1932
  8. Ibid

The Town Council were naturally worried about the situation but Faku soon found himself silenced. He had been issued a visitor's permit valid till 22 December 1931. The superintendent had warned Faku on 20 December 1931 that he must leave the location as he was "an undesirable person .... causing disturbances by holding meetings [in the location]".<sup>1</sup>

Faku had rather rashly told the location superintendent that he would not leave but at his trial Faku denied having said this. In his defence he claimed that he had sent a messenger with a letter to the superintendent asking for an extension of his permit. He maintained that the superintendent had agreed to the extension but had later given him notice to leave within twenty-four hours. Faku had then organised a deputation to the superintendent who had referred them to the Location Committee who had written a letter to Faku declining to give him an extension. But before Faku received this letter he was arrested for being in the location without a permit. At his trial Faku's defence was rejected and he was fined 40<sup>s</sup> or seven days hard labour.<sup>2</sup>

This incident decided the Council to pass additional location regulations using the provisions of the Amendment to the Urban Areas Act of 1930. On 26 January 1932 the Town Council passed a regulation giving the location superintendent the right, with the special approval of the magistrate, after reference to the local police officer, to prohibit any meeting of natives in the location if it was thought there was a possibility that it "may provoke or tend to a breach of the peace".<sup>3</sup> This regulation was soon in use. The Location Committee requested in its February 1932 report for its imposition, and an application to prohibit any meetings in the location was duly forwarded to the magistrate.<sup>4</sup>

These measures soon discouraged the enthusiasm of the ANC and led to a conservative reaction. The six members of the Location Advisory Board, A.W. Ranana, S.S. Kolisang, J. N'Gindana, J. Marais, S. Gates and A. West were all re-elected or re-nominated for 1931 and 1932 but in the 1932

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1. *G.R. Advertiser* 23 Jan 1932

2. *Ibid* : 25 Jan 1932

3. *G.R. Municipal Minutes* 26 Jan 1932 p. 4

4. *G.R. Municipal Reports* : Location Committee 10 Feb 1932;  
*G.R. Municipal Minutes* : 10 Feb 1932 p. 7



elections for the 1933 Location Advisory Board S.S. Kolisang, J. N'Gindana and A. West were replaced by the more conservative Sam Williams, Dan Saloana and H. Sobukwe.<sup>1</sup> This was an indication that the influence of the ANC had been curbed by the measures taken by the Town Council to discourage the ANC.

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1. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 23 Feb 1930 p. 266 ; see note 5

CHAPTER V

THE RECOVERY

(a) INTRODUCTION

The South African economy experienced "a period of unprecedented prosperity after South Africa left the Gold Standard on 28 December 1932".<sup>1</sup> The immediate effect of this was a sharp rise in the internal price of Gold from 85<sup>s</sup> to 120<sup>s</sup> per fine ounce.<sup>2</sup> This spectacular rise is evident from the table of the index value of gold.

Index of the Value of Gold (Base Year 1910 = 100) 1928-1935

<u>Year</u>	<u>Price of Gold Index</u>
1928	100.0
1929	100.0
1930	100.0
1931	132.9
1932	138.8
1933	146.8
1934	161.8
1935	167.1

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This rise in the price of gold in turn led to a rise in the value of gold mining shares. Between 17 December 1932 (after Tielman Roos's speech at Haakboslaagte on 16 December 1932) and May 1933, gold mining shares doubled in price, a contributory factor to this rise was that while working costs declined working profits rose rapidly after the devaluation.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Working Costs per ton</u>	<u>Working Profits per ton</u>	<u>1928-1935</u>
1928	19 <sup>s</sup> 9 <sup>d</sup>	8 <sup>s</sup> 1 <sup>d</sup>	
1929	19 <sup>s</sup> 7 <sup>d</sup>	8 <sup>s</sup> 0 <sup>d</sup>	
1930	19 <sup>s</sup> 5 <sup>d</sup>	8 <sup>s</sup> 4 <sup>d</sup>	
1931	19 <sup>s</sup> 4 <sup>d</sup>	7 <sup>s</sup> 11 <sup>d</sup>	
1932	19 <sup>s</sup> 0 <sup>d</sup>	8 <sup>s</sup> 3 <sup>d</sup>	
1933	19 <sup>s</sup> 3 <sup>d</sup>	10 <sup>s</sup> 2 <sup>d</sup>	
1934	19 <sup>s</sup> 3 <sup>d</sup>	15 <sup>s</sup> 2 <sup>d</sup>	
1935	18 <sup>s</sup> 8 <sup>d</sup>	13 <sup>s</sup> 9 <sup>d</sup>	

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1. Katzen p. 83

2. Ibid p. 84

3. Frankel, S.H. : *The Tyranny of Economic Paternalism in Africa; A study of frontier mentality 1860-1960.* p. 38

4. Katzen p. 18-19

There was a consequent increase in gold production and investment, which led to a rise in activity in other sectors of the economy. The manufacturing industry experienced a boom in a variety of fields particularly those of food and drink, metals and engineering and clothing and textiles. This economic activity was also encouraged by the very slow rise in the price indices especially of imported goods.<sup>1</sup>

Year	Wholesale Prices			Retail Prices	Wages	
	All Groups	S.A. Goods	Imported Goods	Food, light Rent & sundries	Nominal	Real
1929	-	-	-	143	Na	Na
1930	116	103	143	140	Na	Na
1931	120	103	130	135	Na	Na
1932	103	95	120	129	131	109
1933	105	97	120	125	132	113
1934	114	112	120	127	132	111
1935	107	100	118	126	137	117
1936	111	109	115	127	140	118
1937	114	108	124	130	140	116
1938	117	113	125	134	141	113
1939	115	109	125	134	141	113

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By June 1934 employment had recovered to the level it had reached before the Depression in the peak month of April 1929. Another immediate effect of the devaluation was a return of the capital that had left South Africa after Great Britain abandoned the Gold Standard in September 1931. The stability of the recovery of the gold mining industry was assured, for at least a number of years, when, in 1934, the President of the United States of America, F.D. Roosevelt, fixed the price of gold at \$35 per fine ounce. This guaranteed price was important to South Africa since she was the biggest producer of gold in the world. It also enabled the gold mining industry to re-open old low-grade mines and to plan ahead to develop new mines :

"Between 1933-1939 the gold mining industry not only jerked the South African economy out of the Depression, but inaugurated a period of expansion and prosperity perhaps only equalled in the period from the discovery of gold to the Boer War".<sup>3</sup>

1. See Kruger p. 167; Davenport, T.R.H. : *South Africa, a Modern History*. p. 218  
Katzen p. 83-4

2. Katzen p. 84

3. Ibid : p. 86

The Government was able, with its share of the gold premium, to wipe out the accumulated deficit of the Depression years. The importance of this gold premium to Government revenue is evident from the following figures :

Government Revenue from Gold Mining as a Percentage of Total Revenue

<u>Year</u>	<u>%</u>
1928	5.5
1929	5.2
1930	5.8
1931	6.1
1932	8.2
1933	33.0
1934	23.8
1935	33.6
1936	23.6
1937	20.4
1938	19.5

This rise in Government revenue enabled the Government to assist the hard-hit farming community on a generous scale. By way of the Farm Mortgage Interest Act of 1933, interest on farm mortgages was subsidised, and thus many farmers were saved from bankruptcy. The Government used all its influence to keep the rate of interest as low as possible, even so, the farming recovery was slow. The following table illustrates this :<sup>2</sup>

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1. Katzen p. 56-57
  2. Kruger p. 167



Income from a Typical Graaff-Reinet District Farm

<u>Year</u>	<u>Gross Income</u>	<u>Ave Wool Price (d/lb)</u>	<u>Sheep Sales</u>	<u>Weather Conditions</u>
1929-30	£1943	7 <sup>d</sup>	738	Fair
1930-31	£1745	5½ <sup>d</sup>	860	Fair
1931-32	£1324	4 <sup>d</sup>	616	Fair
1932-33	£1410	7 <sup>d</sup>	1506	Dry
1933-34	£1351	12½ <sup>d</sup>	29	Drought
1934-35	£2142	7¾ <sup>d</sup>	558	Good
1935-36	£2540	10 <sup>d</sup>	1423	Good

From this table it is possible to see that the worst income years were 1931-32, due to the very low wool price received, and 1933-34 with no saleable sheep available due to the severe drought of 1933. The income for the years 1932-33 would have been worse, but the steadily worsening climatic conditions forced the sale of all surplus stock which added to the income of these years. This drought was one of the severest in the memory of the farmers and "most pitiful tales of drought from every part of South Africa" were common.<sup>2</sup> The effects of the drought were aggravated by the fact that when the price of wool had fallen during the depression, the sheep farmers, unable to diversify their farming since the Karroo was only suitable for sheep or goat farming, tried to counteract the fall in their incomes by producing more wool.<sup>3</sup> The result was heavy overstocking, which had a detrimental effect upon grazing and accelerated soil erosion, so that when the drought of 1933 occurred, over a quarter of the sheep population died or were slaughtered. Between 1930 and 1934 there was a reduction of thirteen million in the numbers of sheep and a smaller wool clip for 1934.<sup>4</sup>

A farmer of the Graaff-Reinet district working out a financial estimate during that period came to the conclusion that to break even he would have to shear a minimum of 2 400 sheep a year, to give at least 25 000 pounds of wool to be sold at not less than 6<sup>d</sup> per lb; this would give him £625. He would also have to sell 1000 sheep at an average of 12<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> per head, also bringing in £625. Sales of sundry produce, skins and cattle

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1. Westaway Diaries 1929-1936
  2. Wellwood Diaries 13 May 1933
  3. See note 6
  4. See table 7

would have to cover the balance of his expenses.<sup>1</sup>

The income of the years 1933-34 would have been worse than those of the Depression years, if wool prices had not been so much higher than the preceding few years. Even though the farmers sustained great losses during the drought of 1933, the higher wool prices were a tangible proof that the economic position of the farming community was finally improving.

(b) THE RISE IN WOOL PRICES

The higher wool price was due to a number of factors. Firstly, to the return of confidence when South Africa abandoned the Gold Standard in December 1932. Secondly there was an increase in buyer demand, mainly because the depleted world stockpiles of wool had not been replenished to any substantial degree during the Depression. Then too South African wool production being down, owing to the loss of sheep during the 1933 drought, demand exceeded production.

Average Price for South African Wool

<u>Year</u>	<u>Price Pennies per Pound 1927/28-1937/38</u>
1927-28	16.9 <sup>d</sup>
1928-29	14.5 <sup>d</sup>
1929-30	9.2 <sup>d</sup>
1930-31	6.5 <sup>d</sup>
1931-32	4.5 <sup>d</sup>
1932-33	5.0 <sup>d</sup>
1933-34	11.1 <sup>d</sup>
1934-35	7.9 <sup>d</sup>
1935-36	10.1 <sup>d</sup>
1936-37	13.0 <sup>d</sup>
1937-38	10.4 <sup>d</sup>

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The drop in the 1934-35 price of wool can be explained in terms of economic cycles. It is usual when a depression is broken, for an economy to experience an initial surge of economic activity and buying of materials. This sudden growth tails off slightly, and then settles down into a period of sustained and steady growth, which in fact is what happened in South Africa.

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1. Westaway Diaries : Summary 1936

2. Handbook of Agricultural Statistics 1904-1950 See tables 6 & 7

The improvement in the wool price, after the abandonment of the Gold Standard, was far beyond that which many had been led to expect. On the departure from gold the price of wool improved by between forty and forty-five percent. By the end of January 1933 there was a rise of fifty percent over the December 1932 price, which was in approximate proportion to the depreciation in the South African currency measured against gold.<sup>1</sup>

After this initial rise in prices, there was a slight slackening off of demand till May 1933, when there was another rise of fifteen percent above the price ruling at the end of April.<sup>2</sup> The market continued to improve with the July prices twenty percent above those of June.<sup>3</sup> On 1 September, at the opening sale of the 1933-34 season, prices were about two-and half times the average prices of the previous year.<sup>4</sup>

The average export price of wool for October 1933 was 10<sup>d</sup> as compared with 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub><sup>d</sup> for October 1932. The average price from July to October 1933 was 9.6<sup>d</sup> as compared with 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub><sup>d</sup> for the same period the previous season, and with 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub><sup>d</sup> the season before that.<sup>5</sup>

A report in February 1933 illustrates the relative betterment of the lot of the wool farmer :

"Four years ago [1929] a farmer sold his wool clip for £4000 incurring expenses of £700. In 1932 his expenses were no less but with the fall in prices he realised only £500 on his wool clip. Parity will mean, at present prices, a return of about £750, so the farmer would be making a small profit".<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately, this "small profit" continued to grow throughout 1933, and an indication of the improved situation was the fact that on 30 June 1933 there were only 5000 bales of unsold wool in stock at the South African ports, as compared to a figure of 53 000 in June 1932, and 40 000 in June 1931.<sup>7</sup>

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1. The Organised Wool Farmer : Feb 1933
  2. Ibid : June 1933
  3. Ibid : Aug 1933
  4. Ibid : Oct 1933
  5. Ibid : Nov 1933
  6. *G.R. Advertiser* 9 Feb 1933
  7. Ibid : 21 Aug 1933

By the end of 1933 the position of the agricultural sector had improved considerably. When the drought broke at the end of the year, the farmers could look forward to the coming year with more confidence than had been possible for the previous four bleak years, during which time they had suffered immense hardships. In 1934 the price of wool stabilised at around 11<sup>d</sup> per lb, which was above their estimated cost of 9<sup>d</sup> for producing a pound of wool. In many cases the excellent quality of the wool grown in the Graaff-Reinet district received a better price than the national average of 11.1<sup>d</sup>.<sup>1</sup>

Another indication of the improved position of the farmer, and their returning confidence, was the increase in the price of rams sold at the National sales at Bloemfontein.

(c) DEMAND FOR MERINO RAMS

At the ram sale in February 1933, the better wool price had not yet filtered through to the farmer by way of ready cash. The sale was "far better than last February for the general seller, in that a ready demand for any decent ram at £3.10<sup>s</sup> to £7".<sup>2</sup> But the main complaint of the ram breeders at this sale was that the "absolute dearth of cash prevented the average of £4.10<sup>s</sup> from being higher".<sup>3</sup>

At the August 1933 ram sales there was an improvement with "a more sustained demand, not so many as last year going at £1 and 30<sup>s</sup>".<sup>4</sup> But there was still, in the eyes of the farmers, much room for improvement. Just how much is well illustrated by the fact that a ram bought for £40 "was of the merit that would have induced me to pay £300 for it three to four years ago".<sup>5</sup>

By 1934 the hoped for improvement seemed to be taking place in the ram sales. At the February 1934 sales S.H. Rubidge had an average price of £13 as compared to his average of £6.13<sup>s</sup> in February 1933 which in turn

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1. See Tables 6+7

2. Wellwood Diaries : 22 Feb 1933

3. Ibid

4. Ibid : 23 Aug 1933

5. Ibid



had been better than his average of £4.12<sup>s</sup>6<sup>d</sup> for the February 1932 sales.<sup>1</sup> Because of the loss in sheep sustained by the farmers during the drought of 1933, for the first time in the history of the sales, there were "more buyers than rams".<sup>2</sup> By August 1934 it was obvious to ram-breeders that full confidence had returned to the wool farmers as at the August ram sales "the sale was all round good" and there were "more buyers than [at] any sale since 1929". At this sale S.H. Rubidge's average price had risen to £21. At the same time the top price for a stud ram at these sales was £270 which was much better than the extremely low price of £80 received at the ram sales in August 1933.<sup>3</sup>

The good average price of 11<sup>d</sup> per lb that farmers received at the September/October 1934 opening wool sales led to such demand for rams that the unprecedented step, of holding an extra national ram sale at Bloemfontein was taken. This sale, held at the end of November 1934, had 1000 rams penned and the "demand [was] very big and keen", and good prices were received all round. An indication of the improved demand is the fact that S.H. Rubidge earned an average of £39 for sixteen rams.<sup>4</sup>

This was a solid indication, not only of the return of the economic prosperity of farmers but, more important, of the return of his optimism and confidence, two essential requisites for any sheep farmer.

While the farmers in the Graaff-Reinet district began to enjoy more prosperous times, so too the economic situation in Graaff-Reinet improved.

(d) THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE TOWN

As more money began to circulate with the improvement in the price of wool, so too did the inflow of cash into the local businesses. However, the improvement only began in mid-1933 and then only slowly; but in 1934 and 1935 the flow of cash improved dramatically over the figures of the previous Depression years.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Wellwood Diaries : 21 Feb 1934
  2. Ibid : 22 Feb 1934
  3. Ibid : 29 Aug 1934 : see table 5 + note 2
  4. Ibid : 29 Nov 1934
  5. See Table 13

Another indication that the finances of the town were improving was the fact that the Midland Agency and Trust Company deemed it safe enough in June, 1933 to institute their first en masse call for payment of bonds. They sent out demands for forty-seven company bonds totalling £76 850, and ten client's bonds totalling £14 450.<sup>1</sup> The company also decided to pay to a number of selected customers whose need was greatest, their deposits; that is, they rescinded their moratorium on capital payments instituted in October, 1931. In the period 6 October 1933 to 5 January 1934, they paid out thirty-seven depositors a sum totalling £21 198.<sup>2</sup> This sum seemed to take care of those depositors who urgently needed money, for after 5 January 1934 no more block repayments of deposits were recorded in the minutes.<sup>3</sup> The company also made a profit of £5000 for 1933 and decided to pay a dividend of 5<sup>s</sup> per share. The directors, mindful of the propoganda value of this act for their company, instructed the secretary to take the necessary steps "to make this known as widely as possible".<sup>4</sup>

This general prosperity gradually reached the poorer sections of the community, but the unemployment position improved even more slowly. In 1933 the magistrate still struggled to find work and rations for "*'n groot aantal werklose*".<sup>5</sup> By 1934 there were still a number of unemployed in the town but the "*werkloosheid posisie het baie verbeter gedurende die jaar*".<sup>6</sup> In 1935 the problem had almost been overcome as the postmaster was able to inform the magistrate that he was in a position to find work for anyone who applied for it, with the result that "only a few work-shy individuals are out of employment".<sup>7</sup> This improvement in the unemployment position was helped by the start in 1934 on the reconstruction of the road to Middelburg along national road standards. The first fourteen miles were tarred by 1936. This "road to the North" played an important role in the later growth of Graaff-Reinet.

A strong indication of the return of confidence in the future was apparent in the welcome accorded to the Duke of Kent on his visit to Graaff-Reinet in February 1934. The Duke's visit was a gala occasion with the

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1. Midland Agency Minutes : 30 June 1933 p. 486-8
  2. Ibid : 6 Oct 1933 - 5 Jan 1934 p. 521-555
  3. Ibid : 1933-34
  4. Ibid : 19 Jan 1934 p. 560
  5. G.R. Magistrate : Annual Report 1933 ; see table 11
  6. Ibid : 1934
  7. Ibid : 1935

town decked out, at considerable expense, with flags, banners and huge flower arrangements.<sup>1</sup>

Participation in the preparations was not confined to any one section of the community, and everyone, both English and Afrikaans speaking, White and Black, co-operated in the effort to make this a special occasion. At the beginning of 1934, the spirit of coalition was still strong amongst the majority of the community, and on the day of the Duke's arrival, the streets of the town were thronged.<sup>2</sup> Even though Dr. K. Bremer and his anti-fusion supporters had made their political position clear to General Hertzog at his public meeting in Graaff-Reinet on 5 December 1933, they also participated in the celebrations. On this occasion, pride in their town transcended party political emotions.<sup>3</sup> This kind of harmony did not return to Graaff-Reinet for many years. Later in 1934 Dr. Bremer supported Dr. Malan's stand against Fusion and followed him across the floor of Parliament in 1935. After this, tensions returned to the political sphere in Graaff-Reinet. But nonetheless the Graaff-Reinet community continued to recover economically from the Depression. In the ensuing years Graaff-Reinet remained an important rural town serving an ever widening area, as the surrounding smaller towns and villages slowly stagnated.

(e) THE GEM OF THE KARROO

Graaff-Reinet was able to continue to prosper because various citizens became aware that their "Gem of the Karroo" was a "Gem" with great historical value. This awareness was brought about, initially, by the geographical position of the town. Graaff-Reinet is situated on the main Johannesburg - Plettenberg Bay route. The tarring of the "road to the North" begun in 1934 continued throughout the 1930's. By 1939 it had been tarred as far as the Lootsberg Pass. All construction was halted during the Second World War but was resumed soon after the end of the war. By 1950 the road had been tarred all the way to Middelburg. The increasing flow of holiday-makers, travellers and tourists passing through Graaff-Reinet, prompted the community to an awareness of the possible exploitation of this tourist situation. Realising that the town's most important asset was its history, its traditions and its old buildings, certain citizens and public bodies decided to embark on a programme of historical restoration.

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1. Commemorative Brochure on Duke of Kent's visit to Graaff-Reinet
  2. Commemorative Brochure ; Wellwood Diaries 26 Feb 1934
  3. Oral Source : J. Traas

The first step in this scheme was taken in 1947 when the Graaff-Reinet Publicity Association bought the former Dutch Reformed Parsonage, Reinet House, with funds raised entirely by public subscription. The building was restored and in 1956 the Governor-general, E.G. Jansen, officially opened it as the Graaff-Reinet Museum, otherwise known as Reinet House. In the ensuing years the restoration work continued. Between the Reinet House and the Old Drostdy, which face each other, lies Parsonage Street in which a number of buildings have been restored. One of them, the residency of the local Landrosts, was declared a national monument in 1962. Another is the original mission church of the London Mission Society. This building was acquired in 1969 by Anton Rupert, a son of Graaff-Reinet who, after restoring it, donated it to the Graaff-Reinet Town Council in perpetual Trust. It has been named the John Rupert Art Gallery in memory of his father. Earlier he had commemorated his mother in the establishment of the Hester Rupert Art Museum which is the restored Dutch Reformed Mission Church. This building was officially opened on 26 July 1966 by the State President, C.R. Swart.

Other restorations have followed. The most important being that of the old coloured labourers cottages of Stretch's Court opened in 1970, and that of the Old Drostdy in 1977 which together form an hotel complex. Apart from these major restorations, approximately twenty houses, representing different periods, have been restored. This restoration program has been largely successful in turning Graaff-Reinet into a tourist centre. The steady stream of tourists passing through the town ensure its continued growth and prosperity. These "better times" for the town are very different to the growth planned for the town during the Depression. In the early 1930's the Town Council had envisaged the establishment of various industries, which would have led to the building of factories and the destroying of the old buildings and character of the town. Consequently the Depression, and the lack of funds to carry out these plans, can be said to have saved the historical character of Graaff-Reinet for posterity since the South African Historical Commission have declared large parts of the town Historical Monuments. The eventual aim of Graaff-Reinettters is to turn their town into the "Williamsburg of South Africa".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Oral Source : E. Whitlock

Graaff-Reinet : Information on National Monuments and Places of Interest.



The growth of the town also took place in another sphere, that of education. The educational institutions grew over the years in importance, and serve a much wider area now in the 1970's than at any other time in the history of the town since the turn of the century. The English medium school, the Union High School, which is the only English medium school in a large predominantly Afrikaans speaking area, has since the late 1960's expanded considerably with the building of additional academic and sports facilities, as well as establishing a separate preparatory school. The Afrikaans medium school, Volksskool, as well as the Union High School, have extensive boarding facilities which serve the surrounding areas. The coloured community likewise expanded and their Lingcom Preparatory School is the biggest coloured preparatory school in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> In the Graaff-Reinet Teacher's Training College the town has the largest dual medium training college in the Cape Province.

Agriculturally the Graaff-Reinet district has remained one of consequence with wool production and the breeding of merino rams, both stud and flock, an important farming occupation. However in recent years, owing to the low wool prices, and conversely, the high price of mohair, many farmers have increased their production of mohair. Unfortunately for some Graaff-Reinet farmers, Angora goat farming is restricted largely to the areas south of Graaff-Reinet, for the Sneeuberg range, north of Graaff-Reinet is climatically unsuitable to the production of mohair. The problem for the wool farmers of the 1970's is that the present price of wool has not kept pace with the rise in the price of other commodities. The wool farmer is now receiving a price for his wool that barely covers his cost of production, and during the severe drought of 1969-71 the price of wool dropped below the cost of production. The position became so acute, that the South African Wool Board had to establish a stabilisation fund and to guarantee a minimum price for wool. Thereafter the price of wool rose, but this gain was largely cancelled by the rapid increase in the price of all manufactured goods, especially marked since the oil crisis of 1973-74. Amongst the wool farmers of Graaff-Reinet, in the present time, there is much comment often bitter, of the hard times they are experiencing. Various comparisons are made between the present time and the Depression. They point out that while during the Depression the price of everything was down, during the 1970's

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1. Oral Source : J. Meyer

the low prices apply only to selected articles, and they talk of "the Depression in wool today".<sup>1</sup>

Politically Graaff-Reinet has changed. In present times the old bitterness and antagonisms are not as evident as in the past. The position today in Graaff-Reinet is that the Nationalist Party dominates the politics of the region to such an extent that, except for an independent candidate in 1974, the local opposition to the Nationalist Party in elections has become non-existent.<sup>2</sup>

The successor to the old South African Party, the United Party, was disbanded before the 1977 elections, and no other official opposition party has any following of consequence in Graaff-Reinet. While certain individuals remain politically active, the majority of non-Nationalists have to, a certain extent, withdrawn from active politics.

In the Afrikaner section of the community there is still a loyalty and attachment to the traditions of the past. In 1978 the Afrikaner community unveiled another monument to Gideon Scheepers, celebrating the centenary of his birth.<sup>3</sup>

But, disregarding all the overt changes, Graaff-Reinet remains essentially what it has always been, a medium sized rural town serving an important farming community. It is significant not only because it has such deep historical roots, but also because of its universality and representativeness in its context of average rural South Africa.

The future of the town undoubtedly lies in its dual role of development as an important historical centre, and of providing the necessary services, particularly education, to its own and the surrounding farming communities. If the town is able to continue combining these two roles effectively, then it will ensure its prosperity for the future.

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1. Oral Sources : J. Brodie, J.S. Minnaar See table 6

2. See Table 12

3. *G.R. Advertiser* : 27 May 1978

In undertaking this study, I renewed my connections with Graaff-Reinet both familial and communal. As before, I was once again conscious of how steeped in history the whole area is. I also discovered that Graaff-Reinet, in her beautiful setting, and with the hospitality and friendliness of her people, in every way fulfills her name "The Gem of the Karroo".

Everyone I interviewed received me with genuine interest, and extended me every assistance. Some of those interviewed had better memories than others, but in general the information given me was of considerable help. Frequently facts were mentioned that I had not previously found in any written records, or if at all, only very briefly. On following these leads, whole new areas of information were uncovered. In this connection I think specifically of the illegal distilling of the *erfholders*, about which nothing appears in official records.

Although oral evidence lacked specific detail, numerous oral sources put together, gave me a clearer picture and general outline of the events of the Depression which guided my research. It was often stated that the Depression "caught us all on the wrong foot" and that although "everybody suffered", this did not break the will of people as "their spirit remained strong".<sup>1</sup> Some people remember the Depression as "the best thing that could have happened for this country .... [as] the unproductive left the land .... only the best remained".<sup>2</sup> But on the other hand "it was the worst time in my life".<sup>3</sup> The hardships endured "brought the people down onto the same level ... class distinctions became unimportant".<sup>4</sup> There certainly was "*'n beter gees en samewerking onder die mense, want ons het mekaar nodig gehad*".<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately these sentiments did not include the non-European section of the community, who were largely disregarded and left to provide for themselves with only intermittent help from the white community.

In my search for source material, certain problems were encountered and unfortunate gaps were found, since in many instances records were destroyed, lost or incomplete.

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1. Oral Sources : F. Rubidge, S. Fourie
  2. Ibid : E. Minnaar
  3. Ibid : B. Vorster
  4. Ibid : H. Hartzenburg
  5. Ibid : W. Minnaar

The records kept by the Municipality in Graaff-Reinet, only go back to 1943. Earlier Municipal Minutes stored in the Cape Archives, contain no record of the yearly financial estimates of the Town Council, but only the monthly petty cash payments and the discussions of specific financial problems such as government loans. Furthermore the correspondence files of the Municipality also in the Cape Archives, have not been sorted and are kept in a haphazard fashion in box files. An attempt has been made to number the reports of the Municipal committees; but again this applies only to certain reports, others being unnumbered.

In the collections of the *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser* housed in the Reinet House Museum in Graaff-Reinet, and in the South African Public Library in Cape Town, there are no copies for the years 1929-1931. No satisfactory explanation could be found for this unfortunate break in these valuable records. These are the only two collections of the *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser* dating from its founding in 1846. The collection which is housed in the State Archives in Pretoria dates only from 1943. Fortunately I was able to procure several isolated copies of the *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser* for the years 1929-1931 from various sources, and I have been able to ensure that all these copies will be handed to the Reinet House Collection.

The records of the Graaff-Reinet Chamber of Commerce up to 1948, were apparently put in safekeeping, but no-one could inform me where. A search, in response to a suggestion by a former president of the Chamber of Commerce, that the Town Council might have these records, yielded nothing. Similarly the records of the Vrouesendingbond and the Non-European Child Welfare Society could not be traced. The Non-European Child Welfare Society formed in 1928 was amalgamated with the European Child Welfare Society in 1940, but in 1953 three separate societies, the European, the Coloured and the Bantu Child Welfare Societies were formed. The records of the Non-European Society are missing while those of the European Society are pitifully thin.

The Afrikaanse Christelik Vroue Vereniging was largely run by Mrs. P. Joubert from 1920-1940 and then by her daughter Mrs. L. Nel, from 1940-1974. When Mrs. Nel died, her whole estate was left to the A.C.V.V. and her house and furniture were put up for sale. Family and friends in the process of sorting her effects, burned many of her papers, amongst which were the old minutes of the A.C.V.V.



In the search for material I came across much evidence of similar loss of old records. This unthinking destruction took place mainly because many people have neither the space to store old records, nor an historical awareness which might prompt them to entrust old documents to a museum, or an historical archive, for sorting and preservation.

Another set of valuable records that have been lost are those of the two wool brokerage firms, the Farmer's Co-operative Union and the Boere Saamwerk Beperk. These two firms amalgamated in 1975 to form the Boere-makelaars (Koöp) Beperk. At the beginning of this year I enquired of BKB whether they had any records of the two firms, FCU and BSB. They replied that they were in fact sorting old records, keeping everything that was of historical value to their company, the rest of this material they intended to offer to the University of Port Elizabeth. Unfortunately when I later enquired after this material, I was told that since U.P.E. had found it of no historical value it had been destroyed.

Since there was a dearth of oral information in the political sphere, I had to rely on newspaper articles and general histories of South Africa. The majority of those interviewed, White, Coloured and Black did not remember political details or showed a reluctance to talk about politics. Only in a few instances could I draw on personal reminiscences of the politics of the time. The records of the local branch of the United Party, which included those of the Old South African Party, had been sent to the University of South Africa in Pretoria, on the disbandment of the United Party before the elections in 1977. On enquiring at U.N.I.S.A. for these minutes I was told that I would have to wait until they had, along with the records from the other United Party branches in South Africa, been sorted. Unfortunately this work has still to be completed. As far as the National Party was concerned the only active branch in the Graaff-Reinet district, which had records from the Depression period, was the "Voor-Sneeuwberg" branch, but their minutes did not contain much information. In the sphere of black politics oral sources in the non-European community were very reticent, and no records were found. If such records do exist, I was not informed of them.

The farm diaries that I was able to trace, were mostly recitals of daily farming events and were valuable for that reason. One of my main sources of information, especially for the section on the farming community, were the Wellwood Farm Diaries of S.H. Rubidge. These records were meticulously

kept and contain a wealth of information, not only on local events, but also on a wide variety of subjects, national and international. Other records used to supplement farming information were the minutes of the Graaff-Reinet Wool Grower's Association, issues of the Farmer's Weekly, and the South African Wool Board files of collected newspaper and magazine articles on the wool slump of 1929-1933. These files are kept at the Eastern Province Branch of the South-African Wool Board in Port Elizabeth.

Material on the water problems of Graaff-Reinet are fully covered in the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam Irrigation Board records. Other source material well worth unearthing were the minutes of the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors, and those of the Midland Agency and Trust Company. These I finally found, after a long and dusty search, in the storage room of the Syfrets (Midland) Company in Graaff-Reinet. These documents were extremely useful as no other financial or business information, except for the journal and cash book of the auctioneers, Watermeyer and Company, were found. All other business records have been unthinkingly consigned to the bonfire over the years. Other records studied were those of local churches, the Ladies Boneyvolent Fund and the School Board, but little mention was found of any matters specifically related to the Depression period.

Undoubtedly the Depression was an experience not easily forgotten by its participants. It was a universal event in which everybody, all classes, regardless of race, suffered extreme hardships. For many it was a traumatic experience but at the same time it was an experience that taught the people much. This learning experience was not only in the realm of economics or politics but "spiritually the country was the better for that Depression .... [it] brought out the virtue of humility".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Correspondence : S. Fourie - A. Minnaar 3 Aug 1978

TABLE 1 : SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN TRADE STATISTICS (£000 000) 1928-1938

Year	Merchan- dise Exports £	Domestic Produce exported (including gold)	Gold Exports		Diamond Exports		Agricultural Exports		Imports as a % of National Income
			£	%	£	%	£	%	
1928	79.1	89.0	42.8	48.1	8.9		31.8	35.8	29.2
1929	83.4	89.0	45.0	50.6	12.1		26.3	29.6	30.6
1930	64.6	76.7	46.3	60.4	5.5		19.9	25.9	25.6
1931	52.9	65.1	45.1	69.4	3.6		12.8	19.7	22.3
1932	32.7	66.2	48.5	73.3	2.0		13.4	20.9	15.2
1933	49.1	92.0	69.9	76.0	2.1		16.9	18.4	20.8
1934	66.3	78.1	56.2	72.0	2.8		16.1	20.6	23.7
1935	75.3	97.9	71.4	72.9	3.0		20.0	20.4	25.0
1936	86.3	109.3	82.7	75.7	3.3		19.1	17.5	26.1
1937	103.4	119.6	82.9	69.3	3.3		28.1	23.5	27.8
1938	95.6	102.9	73.3	71.3	2.4		20.5	20.0	26.7

TABLE 2 : NET CONTRIBUTION OF VARIOUS INDUSTRIES TO THE NATIONAL INCOME OF SOUTH AFRICA (£000 000)

Year	Farming and Fishing	Gold Mining	Other Mining	Manufacturing	Total Income
1927-28	49	30	20	36	270
1928-29	47	31	14	38	271
1929-30	39	32	11	39	257
1930-31	32	32	7	37	236
1931-32	29	35	4	34	217
1932-33	28	51	5	32	235
1933-34	42	54	5	38	278
1934-35	38	57	6	46	298
1935-36	41	60	7	53	329
1936-37	49	63	10	61	369
1937-38	45	63	10	66	375

1. Katzen p. 60-61

2. Ibid : p. 48

TABLE 3 : PERCENTAGE CONTRIBUTION OF VARIOUS INDUSTRIES TO NATIONAL INCOME  
1928-1939

Year	Farming and Fishing	Gold Mining	Other Mining	Manufacturing
1927-28	18.2	11.2	7.4	13.2
1928-29	17.2	11.5	5.1	14.1
1929-30	15.1	12.6	4.4	15.2
1930-31	13.6	13.8	3	15.8
1931-32	13.4	16	2	15.4
1932-33	12.1	22	2	13.6
1933-34	15.1	19.3	1.7	13.7
1934-35	12.8	19.1	2	15.3
1935-36	12.6	18.2	2.2	16.1
1936-37	13.3	17.1	2.6	16.5
1937-38	12	16.9	2.6	17.6

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TABLE 4 : WELLWOOD ORANGE SALES

Year	Total Pockets Sold (100 oranges per pkt)	Total Price	Ave Price per pkt
1928	1,725	£500.13 <sup>s</sup> 6 <sup>d</sup>	5 <sup>s</sup> 9 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> <sup>d</sup>
1929	910	£265. 4 <sup>s</sup>	5 <sup>s</sup> 9 <sup>7</sup> / <sub>8</sub> <sup>d</sup>
1930	(First season on memory that oranges fail to bring in any profit)		
1931	330	£ 46	2 <sup>s</sup> 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>
1932	669	£107. 0 <sup>s</sup> 6 <sup>d</sup>	3 <sup>s</sup> 2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>
1933	1,787	£241.15 <sup>s</sup>	2 <sup>s</sup> 8 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>
1934	1,390	£237. 5 <sup>s</sup>	3 <sup>s</sup> 5 <sup>d</sup>

2

1. Katzen p. 49
2. Wellwood Diaries 1928-1934



TABLE 5 : ANNUAL BLOEMFONTEIN MERINO RAM SALES

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Rams Catalogued</u>	<u>Top Price</u>
1928	3 000	£1000
1929	2 800	£1000
1930	2 665	£ 280
1931	1 500	£ 400
1932	1 450	£ 85
1933	1 200	£ 80
1934	1 000	£ 270
1935	3 540	£ 300
1936	3 500	£ 500

1

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1. Wellwood Diaries 1928-1936

TABLE 6 : INDEX\* FOR SOUTH AFRICAN WOOL : 1917-77 (base year 1911 = 100)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Index</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Index</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Index</u>
1917-18	112.8	1937-38	103.1	1957-58	136.8
1918-19	112.8	1938-39	101.2	1958-59	125.6
1919-20	125.6	1939-40	102.7	1959-60	134.9
1920-21	103.4	1940-41	102.8	1960-61	129.4
1921-22	102.2	1941-42	103.0	1961-62	130.4
1922-23	110.5	1942-43	105.4	1962-63	133.8
1923-24	112.6	1943-44	105.8	1963-64	142.9
1924-25	114.3	1944-45	105.8	1964-65	133.4
1925-26	107.5	1945-46	104.8	1965-66	135.2
1926-27	107.9	1946-47	109.4	1966-67	132.1
1927-28	109.6	1947-48	119.1	1967-68	130.3
1928-29	107.2	1948-49	126.6	1968-69	132.5
1929-30	101.9	1949-50	135.2	1969-70	127.4
1930-31	99.2	1950-51	188.5	1970-71	114.6
1931-32	97.2	1951-52	140.8	1971-72	122.2
1932-33	97.7	1952-53	149.3	1972-73	177.3
1933-34	103.8	1953-54	150.2	1973-74	175.0
1934-35	100.6	1954-55	141.3	1974-75	158.5
1935-36	102.8	1955-56	135.5	1975-76	167.7
1936-37	105.7	1956-57	150.1	1976-77	181.1

1

\* The index is calculated for all types of wool including crossbreeds.  
Merino wool prices are usually slightly higher than the national average.

1. Union of South Africa : Department of Agricultural Economics and Marketing, Handbook of Agricultural Statistics 1904-1950; South African Wool Board : Wool Statistics, Pretoria, Dec. 1977.

TABLE 7 : NUMBER OF SHEEP AND WOOL SALES IN SOUTH AFRICA 1928-38

Year	No. of Sheep (000's)	Wool Sold (000's) (lbs)	Value (£000's)	Ave Price d/lb
1928	42 500	261 390	18 477	16.9 <sup>d</sup>
1929	45 010	272 296	16 418	14.5 <sup>d</sup>
1930	48 358	295 428	11 298	9.2 <sup>d</sup>
* 1931	49 777	274 861	7 475	6.5 <sup>d</sup>
* 1932	49 280	291 188	5 433	4.5 <sup>d</sup>
* 1933	46 091	326 647	6 799	5.0 <sup>d</sup>
1934	35 011	235 235	10 919	11.1 <sup>d</sup>
1935	35 835	222 216	7 363	7.9 <sup>d</sup>
1936	39 705	216 096	9 088	10.1 <sup>d</sup>
1937	41 034	255 148	13 834	13.0 <sup>d</sup>
1938	39 002	218 355	8 768	10.4 <sup>d</sup>

\* No agricultural censuses were done during the Depression years 1931-33 (suspended as an economy measure). The figures given for the number of sheep during these years were estimated by the Department of Agriculture.<sup>1</sup>

1. Union of South Africa, Department of Agricultural Economics and Marketing : Handbook of Agricultural Statistics 1904-1950.

TABLE 8 : POPULATION OF GRAAFF-REINET AND DISTRICT

Year	Urban/ Rural	Europeans		Coloured			Black			Asiatic			Total	
		Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M		F
1911	Urban	2025	2484	4509										
	Rural	1453	1293	2746										
	Total	3478	3777	7255										
1918	Urban	1937	2466	4403										
	Rural	1287	1145	2432										
	Total	3224	3611	6835										
1921	Urban	2314	2825	5139	1728	1949	3677	892	991	1883	11	7	18	
	Rural	1187	1076	2263	1443	1238	2681	2246	2051	4297	2	-	2	
	Total	3501	3901	7402	3171	3187	6358	3138	3042	6180	13	7	20	19 960
1926	Urban	2398	2766	5164										
	Rural	1348	1069	2417										
	Total	3746	3835	7581										
1928 <sup>*</sup> (Est)			8060			6834			7772			25	22 691	
1929 <sup>*</sup> (Est)			8220			6970			7926			25	23 141	
1930 <sup>*</sup> (Est)			9375			9166			8427			48	27 016	
1931 <sup>*</sup> Municipal census			4869	2102	2100	4202	1686	1668	3354			29		
Est Total			7140			9000			8500			29	24 640	
1932 <sup>*</sup> (Est)			7300			9000			8500			35	24 835	
1933 (Est)			7300			9000			8600			40	24 940	
1934 (Est)			7400			9500			8700			50	26 100	
1936	Urban	2235	2716	4951	2338	2557	4895	1626	2108	3734	16	9	25	
	Rural	1018	907	1925	2133	1777	3910	1982	1711	3693	-	-	-	
	Total	3253	3623	6876	4471	4334	8805	3608	3819	7427	16	9	25	23 133
1946	Urban	2538	2951	5489	3280	3327	6607	1842	2206	4048	12	6	18	
	Rural	781	631	1412	2217	1959	4176	2052	1781	3833	2	-	2	
	Total	3319	3582	6901	5497	5286	10783	3894	3987	7881	14	6	20	25 585
1951	Urban	2481	2965	5446	3421	3663	7084	1800	2294	4094	24	22	46	16 670
	Rural	626	504	1130	2602	2210	4812	1771	1552	3323	-	-	-	9 265
	Total	3107	3469	6576	6023	5873	11896	3571	3846	7417	24	22	46	25 935
1960	Urban	2596	2872	5468	4081	4667	8748	2338	2939	5277	14	14	28	19 521
	Rural	405	390	795	2797	2657	5454	1526	1228	2754	-	-	-	9 003
	Total	3001	3262	6263	6878	7324	14202	3864	4167	8031	14	14	28	28 524
1970	Urban	2351	2742	5093	5981	6806	12787	3376	3650	7026	11	14	25	24 931
	Rural	319	319	638	2695	2764	5459	1167	1009	2176	-	-	-	8 273
	Total	2670	3061	5731	8676	9570	18246	4543	4659	9192	11	14	25	33 204

\* Annual Reports of Magistrate of Graaff-Reinet 1928-1931 (1928-1930 figures estimated by Magistrate. 1931 figures based on Municipal census. 1932-1934 figures estimated by Magistrate).

1. Union of South Africa : Census Report 1918 (UG 56-'20); 1921 (UG 40-'24); 1926 (UG 4-'31); 1936 (UG 21-'38); 1946 (UG 51-'49); 1951 (UG42-'55)
2. Republic of South Africa : Bureau of Statistics Census Report 1960 (R.P. No. 62-'63); 1970 (Report No. 02-05-01)



TABLE 9 : RESIDENTIAL MIXING OF RACES IN GRAAFF-REINET 1931

Street	Adults		Children	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Plasket	6	5	4	5
Donkin	8	9	10	14
Stockenstroom	27	24	18	14
Cradock	18	12	20	15
Bourke	14	20	22	27
Church	4	4	6	3
Church (Indians)	10	3	8	8
Murray	15	16	22	15
Rothman	7	8	11	8
Park and Auret	17	17	24	24
Queen	2	3	-	1
Monument Rd	2	4	1	3
Caledon	6	6	9	6
Somerset	9	10	10	14
Stretch's Court	8	10	14	9
Caroline	7	7	3	12
Middle	2	5	1	2
Globe	2	4	4	5
Hare	17	22	32	29
East (Brooke's Block)	24	26	37	36
River and Blackhorse	96	110	130	112
College	6	9	9	13
Vicinity of Abattoir	5	7	5	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>385</b>
<b>Coloured</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Indian</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>

TOTAL : COLOURED : 1257; BLACK : 152; INDIAN : 29

GRAND TOTAL : 1438

1. G.R. Municipal Census April, 1931

TABLE 10 : MUNICIPAL LOCATION POPULATION OF GRAAFF-REINET, 1931

	Male	Female	Total
Coloured	1483	1462	2945
Black	1611	1591	3202
Total	3094	3053	6147

TABLE 11 : NUMBERS OF PAUPERS IN GRAAFF-REINET (CONFIRMED AND CASUAL)  
1928-1935

Year	Confirmed				Casual (Unemployed; Registered)				Grand Total
	European		Non-European		European		Non-European		
	M	F	F	F	M	F	M	F	
1928	36	22	97	61	51		19		286
1929	11	14	71	50	63		38		247
1930	10	14	76	52	43		16		211
1931	55	47	414	404	93		22		988
					M	F	M	F	
1932	47	50	430	417	342	208	184	95	1773
1933	43	43	448	398	436	394	119	87	1968
1934	36	30	386	340	32		72		896
1935	40	29	405	311	28		84		897

Year	Registered Voters	% Voted	Candidate	Party	Votes	% of Votes	Spoiled Ballots
1910	-	-	G.H. Maasdorp	Gov. P.	1423	82,5	-
			P.B. de Ville	Indep. Gov. P	<u>302</u> 1121	17,5	
1915	2877	81,5	J.M. Enslin	NP	1234	52,6	44
			G.H. Maasdorp	SAP	<u>1067</u> 167	45,5	
1920	3480	73	J.M. Enslin	NP	1480	58,2	28
			G.F. Smith	SAP	<u>1033</u> 447	40,6	
1921	3617	68,9	J.M. Enslin	NP	1457	58,5	22
			W. Rubidge	SAP	<u>1013</u> 444	40,6	
1924	3654	81	K. Bremer	NP	1849	62,5	20
			W. Rubidge	SAP	<u>1091</u> 758	36,9	
By election							
8 April 1925 : Unopposed : I.P. van Heerden, NP							
By election							
15 July 1929	3272	80,9	K. Bremer	NP	1586	59,9	26
			H. Urquhart	SAP	<u>1036</u> 550	39,1	
1933	7161	67,2	K. Bremer	NP Coal	3777	78,4	62
			L.A.F. Slabbert	Indep NP	<u>976</u> 2801	20,3	
1938	6463	86,7	K. Bremer	NP	3169	56,5	63
			I.P. van Heerden	UP	<u>2375</u> 794	42,4	
1943	8429	84,6	G.P. Steyn	HNP	3795	53,2	62
			M.H. Louw	UP	<u>3276</u> 579	45,9	
1948	9314	85,1	G.P. Steyn	HNP	4644	58,6	85
			O.J.M. Paul	UP	<u>3194</u> 1450	40,3	
1953	9839	89,2	G.P. Steyn	NP	5327	60,7	64
			J.P. van Niekerk	UP	<u>3385</u> 1942	38,6	
By election 15 July, 1957 Unopposed : H.H. van der Ahee, NP							
1958	8661	91,8	H.H. v d Ahee	NP	5115	64,3	57
			W.G. Kingwill	UP	<u>2780</u> 2335	35	
1961 : Unopposed : H.H. van der Ahee, NP							
1966	8472	83,3	A.N. Steyn	NP	5002	70,8	28
			G.D. van Schalkwyk	UP	<u>2031</u> 2971	28,8	
By election 5 Feb 1969 : Unopposed : S.A.S. Hayward NP							
1970	8389	80,4	S.A.S. Hayward	NP	4728	70,1	44
			P.J. van der Merwe	UP	<u>1976</u> 2752	29,3	
1974	9145	61	S.A.S. Hayward	NP	5166	92,6	36
			S.J. Schoeman	Indep	<u>379</u> 4787	6,8	
1977 Unopposed : S.A.S. Hayward NP							

TABLE 13 : CASH-IN-FLOW FOR WATERMEYER AND COMPANY (LAND, STOCK AND FURNITURE AUCTIONEERS) GRAAFF-REINET 1928-1935.

RECEIPTS (£'s)								
	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
January	4089	4232	2445	2046	1212	1156	4280	2525
February	3490	2233	3023	1513	1755	1581	3274	2846
March	2738	3030	3712	5229	1700	1025	9073	3321
April	3439	3739	6411	2630	2367	2579	4591	3255
May	4467	3116	5312	2697	1113	1774	3476	4535
June	3726	4733	2449	1779	1370	1717	6178	3433
July	2761	4380	3521	2451	1078	2878	3496	3412
August	2663	2771	2833	2884	1078	3020	3048	3258
September	3581	4673	3367	1689	1451	2987	3526	2642
October <sup>*</sup>	5388	5249	8772	3288	7440	7151	1682	6435
November	3659	5814	3848	1715	1509	2755	3587	6243
December	2537	3553	3254	1715	1474	3962	3183	3788
Total	42538	47523	48947	29636	23547	32585	49394	45693

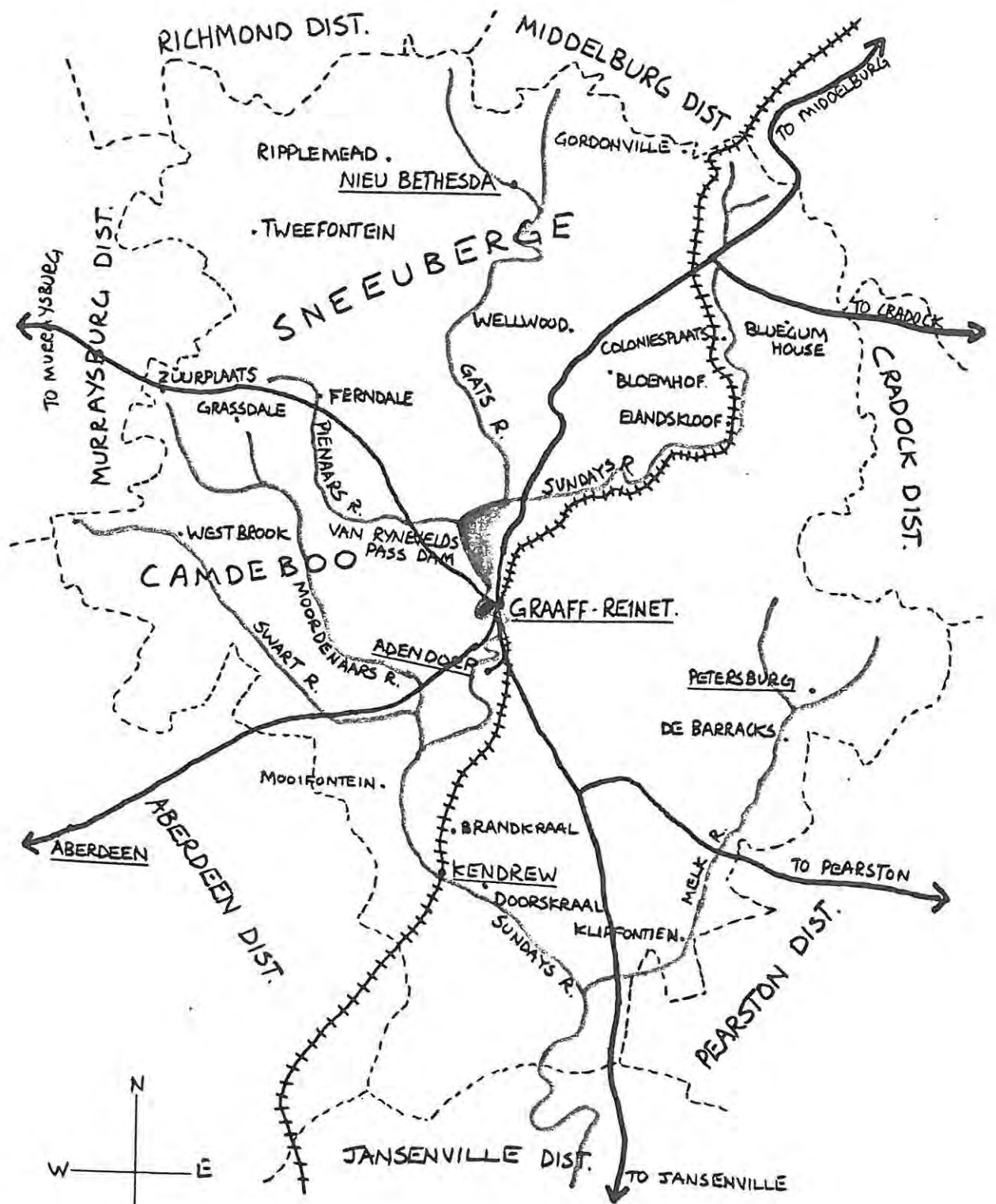
\* The bigger amounts of cash received in the month of October are due to the practice of paying the wool farmers their wool cheque for all their wool sales in any one year in that month. The exception to this is 1934 where the biggest amount was received in March. The usual practice of farmers is to shear their rams in February and the bulk of their flocks in August - September but because of the drought in 1933 most farmers delayed their shearing till February 1934. Consequently they sent off the bulk of their 1933 clip in March 1934.

1. Journal and Cash Books, Watermeyer & Co. 1928-1935



# I

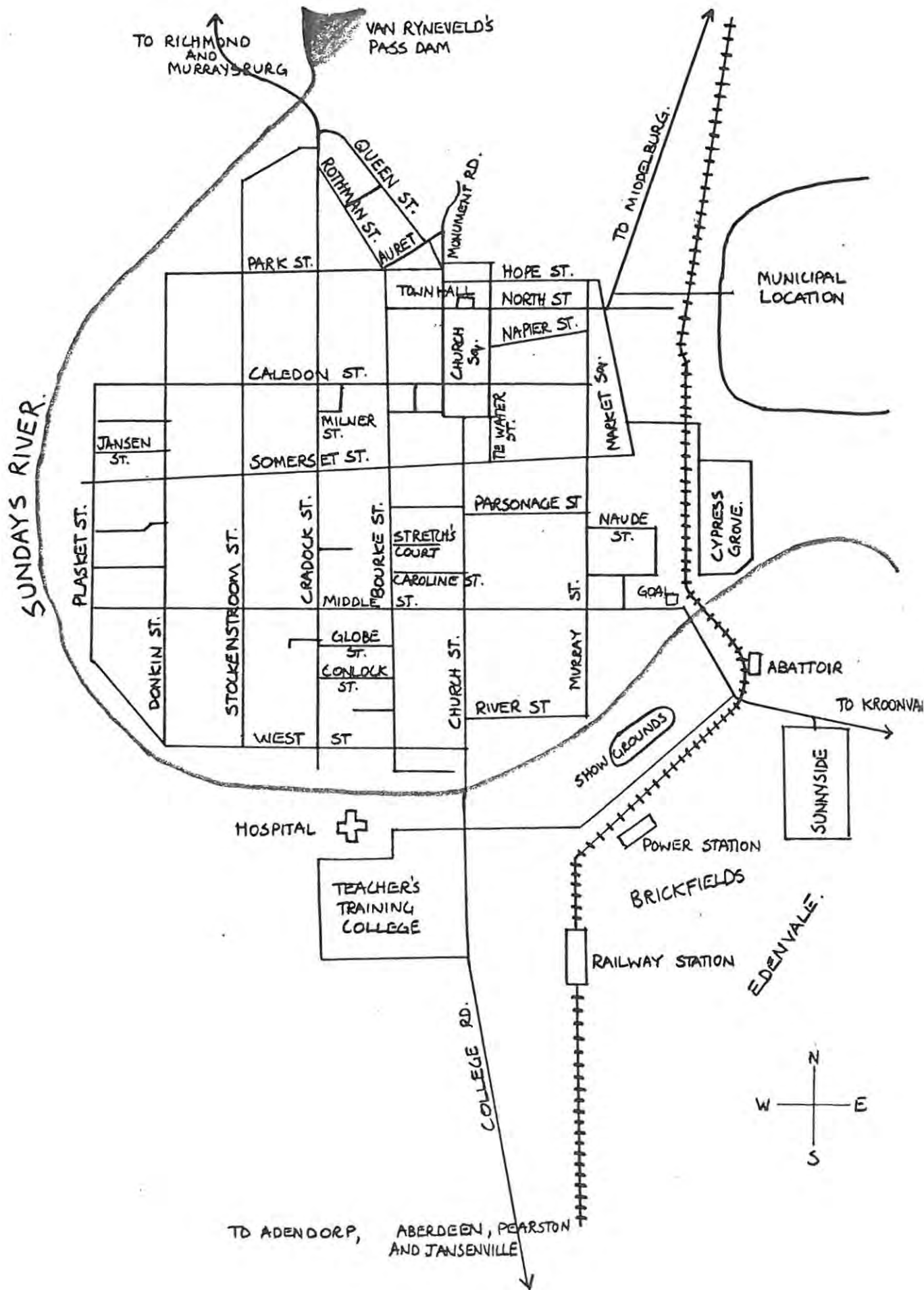
## -THE GRAAFF-REINET DISTRICT-



### REFERENCE:

- MAIN ROAD —————
- RAILWAY +++++
- RIVER ~~~~~
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY - - - - -
- TOWN OR VILLAGE • KENDREW
- FARM • MOOIFONTEIN

# II - GRAAFF-REINET -



NOTE 1 :

On 6-8 May 1929 Sir Abe Bailey held a dispersal sale of his Merino stud on his farm Grootfontein Estates in the Colesberg district. His farm (2800 morgen) was sold for £30 000 to Percy Southey.

Approximately 2400 stud sheep were sold for + £60 000, a world record. Some 300 cars and about 1000 people attended this sale. Top price for a ram was £2000, others going for £1750, £1050, £930, £800 and £600. Ram lambs, ten months old, were sold for up to £450. The ewes ranged from £25 to £275.<sup>1</sup>

NOTE 2 :

Annual August Bloemfontein Merino Ram Sales (See Table 5)

The top price in 1929 of £1000 was normal since the farmers had as yet not lost confidence in wool. The extreme drop in 1930 in sympathy with the fall in the wool price, was to be expected. Even so the price of £280 paid for the imported Australian ram, Collinsville "lustre No. 81", was for above prices received by other rams on the sale. This price was due to the fact that the Australian Government had placed an embargo on the export of stud rams in 1929, and this ram had been part of the last consignment of rams that had slipped through.

In 1931 the surprising price of £400 was paid for a ram sold by J.H. Southey of the Middelburg district. But the reason for this was that because fine wools were receiving slightly better prices than strong wools, many farmers began to think that the breeding of fine woolled sheep would save them in the future. This particular ram was an exceptionally fine woolled ram, and consequently its price was pushed up by farmers anxious to acquire it. In normal years this ram would probably have been sold for about £80.

The next two years, 1932 and 1933, were more indicative of actual conditions, and in both years the top prices of £85 and £80 were received by the Grassdale Stud of Graaff-Reinet run by Minnaar Bros.

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1. Wellwood Diaries : 8 May 1929

In 1934 the top price of £270 was a sensation and was due to a combination of factors. Better veld conditions plus the fact that the ram was of a high quality and that it was sold by the Collins Stud. The owner of this stud, M. Collins, brother of the owner of the wellknown Collinsville Stud in Australia, had died three months earlier, and this sale would be the last on which the Collins Stud would enter rams bred by the Collins family.

In 1935 there was a big increase in the number of rams catalogued. The top price of £300 was again received by a stud from the Graaff-Reinet district, the Minnaar Bros. Grassdale Stud. This stud repeated this achievement in 1936 by gaining the top price of £500.<sup>1</sup>

NOTE 3 :

Manure Factory

In the late 1930's J.C. van Rensburg took over the buying and selling of manure from Borg and he expanded and reorganised the whole operation. He started hammermilling the manure and bagging it according to type - sheep, cattle, horse and pig - and had salesmen travelling the country with samples of the different types. During the Second World War this business boomed, owing to the shortage of artificial fertilizers. The greatest demand was from the vineyards of the Western Province and at the end of the Second World War he sold this highly successful business to a group of businessmen from Worcester. The business subsequently went bankrupt as the demand for natural fertilizer dwindled with the return to normal conditions after the war when inorganic fertilizers once more became freely available.<sup>2</sup>

NOTE 4 :

Ndabukelana is a Xhosa name but in Graaff-Reinet coloureds and Blacks had lived side by side for many years. In spite of considerable racial antipathy a certain amount of miscegenation had taken place. Out of a total location population of 5 735 in 1930, 2839 were classed as coloured.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Wellwood Diaries; Grassdale records.
  2. Oral Sources : A. van Rensburg, G. Kroon
  3. G.R. Municipal Reports : Location Committee 1930



NOTE 5 :

H. Sobukwe

H. Sobukwe was the father of the African Nationalist, Robert Sobukwe who founded the Pan-Africanist Congress in 1959.

A paralell situation seems to have existed in the Sobukwe family as that in the Cape Malay Abdurahman family of Cape Town. Abdullah Abdurahman had been elected chairman of the African Peoples Organisation in 1904. His daughter Zainunissa (Cissie) Gool, in reaction to his conservatism, had entered radical politics and became president of the National Liberation League in 1935, and played a prominent part in the establishment of the Communist backed United Front in 1938.

Robert Sobukwe, in a similar raction to his father's small-town induced conservatism, had been prominent in the African National Congress till he broke away in 1958. He was subsequently arrested and kept under detention for many years. He died in 1978 and was buried in Graaff-Reinet.

NOTE 6 :

Angora Goat farming

During the Depression goat farming was a minor part of a Graaff-Reinet farmers farming operation. In the 1930's the concentration of Angora goats was mainly in the Jansenville district and the southern portion of the Graaff-Reinet district.

It has only been in the 1970's with the boom in mohair prices that Angora goat farming has become an important source of income for some Graaff-Reinet farmers. But this increase in Angora goat farming has been restricted to the areas south of Graaff-Reinet. The cold and wet winters in the Sneeuberg area north of Graaff-Reinet precludes the farmers of this area from changing over to Angora goats from Merino sheep.

SOURCE LIST

1. OFFICIAL SOURCE MATERIAL

(Cape Archives Depot)

(1) Town Clerk, Graaff-Reinet (G.R.)

- (i) 3/GR 1/1/1/18 - 21 : Minutes of the Town Council 1928-1935
- (ii) 3/GR 5/3/1/3 : Reports of Town Council Committees 1928-1935
- (iii) 3/GR 4/1/1/1 - 39 : Correspondence of the Town Council 1928-1935
  - (a) 4/1/1/4 : Irrigation Dam and Water Supply
  - (b) 4/1/1/7 : Housing Scheme for Poor Whites
  - (c) 4/1/1/7 : Correspondence : Dr. K. Bremer
  - (d) 4/1/1/9 : Brickfields
  - (e) 4/1/1/10 : Separation of Europeans and Non-Europeans living in town
  - (f) 4/1/1/13 : Jam Factory
  - (g) 4/1/1/15 : Chamber of Commerce
  - (h) 4/1/1/15 : Trading in the Location
  - (i) 4/1/1/17 : Census
  - (j) 4/1/1/17 : Opportunities for industrial development in Graaff-Reinet
  - (k) 4/1/1/20 : Hire of Town Hall by Non-Europeans
  - (l) 4/1/1/22 : Petitions; re: letting of premises in residential part of town to coloured people
  - (m) 4/1/1/23 : Graaff-Reinet Butcher's Association
  - (n) 4/1/1/24 : Dairies
  - (o) 4/1/1/27 : Housing Scheme for the Poor
  - (p) 4/1/1/34 : Trading by Hawkers
  - (q) 4/1/1/37 : Native Location Advisory Board
  - (r) 4/1/1/39 : Unemployment

(2) Divisional Council, Graaff-Reinet (3GR). Minutes of the Divisional Council 1928-1935.

(3) Magistrate, Graaff-Reinet (3GR). Annual Reports of the Magistrate 1928-1935.

## 2. UNOFFICIAL SOURCE MATERIAL

- (1) Farm Diaries and Records :
  - (i) Bloemhof \*
  - (ii) Bluegum House
  - (iii) Doorskraal
  - (iv) Elandsfontein
  - (v) Gordonville \*
  - (vi) Grassdale
  - (vii) Grootplaas
  - (viii) Klipfontein
  - (ix) Ripplemead
  - (x) Wellwood \*
  - (xi) Westaway \*
  - (xii) Westbrook
  - (xiii) Wheatlands
  - (xiv) Zuurplaats

\* indicates that particularly useful material was found.

### (2) Records of Public and Private Organisations :

#### (i) Business Institutions:

- (a) Minutes of the Directors' Meetings of the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors 1928-1935 (including the period of judicial management October, 1931 - February, 1935).
- (b) Minutes of the Annual General meetings of the Graaff-Reinet Board of Executors 1928-1935.
- (c) Minutes of the Director's meetings of the Midland Agency and Trust Company 1928-1935.
- (d) Minutes of the Annual General meetings of the Midland Agency and Trust Company 1928-1935.
- (e) Journal and Cash Book of Watermeyer and Company, auctioneers of Graaff-Reinet, 1928-1936.

#### (ii) Church Records :

- (a) Minutes and correspondence of the Church Council of the St. James Anglican Church, Graaff-Reinet, 1928-1934.
- (b) Minutes and correspondence of the Church Council of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Graaff-Reinet 1928-1934.
- (c) Minutes and Correspondence of the priest in charge of the Roman Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception, Graaff-Reinet 1928-1934.

- (d) Extracts from the records of the convent of the Sacred Heart, Graaff-Reinet (Closed 1969), kept at the headquarters of the order of the Sisters of Kingwilliamstown, in Johannesburg.
- (e) *Notule en Korrespondensie van die Kerkraad van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Nuwe Kerk Gemeente, Graaff-Reinet, 1928-1934.*

(iii) Minutes of the Graaff-Reinet Wool Growers Association 1928-1935.

(iv) Minutes of the Graaff-Reinet School Board 1928-1935.

(v) (a) Minutes of the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam Irrigation Board 1920-1935.

(b) Report on the availability of water in the Van Ryneveld's Pass Dam Irrigation district. 14 September 1928.

(vi) Welfare Societies

(a) Minutes of the Ladies Benevolent Fund Society 1928-1935.

(b) Minutes of the European Child Welfare Society 1928-1935.

(c) Records of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging.

(3) Newspapers and Periodicals :

(i) The Daily Despatch 1929-1934

(ii) The Eastern Province Herald 1929-1934

(iii) The Farmer's Weekly 1928-1935

(iv) The Graaff-Reinet Advertiser 1928-1931 (limited copies) 1932-1935.

(v) The Merino Ram Breeders Journal 1943-1978.

(vi) Ons Koerant (Onze Courant) 1928-1935.

(vii) The Organized Wool Farmer 1932-1935. (Official organ of the South African Wool Council).

(4) Press Cuttings :

(i) South African Wool Board (E.P.) files of newspaper and magazine articles on the wool slump 1929-1934.



### 3. LITERATURE

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Vol 4 : Blumenfeld, J.P. : The Economic Structure

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Union of South Africa : Report of the Select Committee on the Gold Standard (S.C. 9-'32)

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#### (b) Unpublished Works

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Charton, N.C.J. : The Financial Resources of the Municipality of Graaff-Reinet, unpublished M. Admin thesis, U.P., 1960.

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(c) Printed Books, Pamphlets and Articles

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#### 4. ORAL SOURCE

(Name, initials, address, occupation during the Depression, present occupation or retired (ret); all interviews took place between January and November, 1978).

Archer, D. : 8 Te Water St., Graaff-Reinet, farmer, (ret).

Booyesen, L. (Miss) : 62 Bourke St., Graaff-Reinet, maternity sister, (ret).

Booyesen, M. (née de Villiers) : 103 Stockenstroom St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife,  
Brodie, J. 111 Caledon St Graaff-Reinet, farmer, (ret) (ret).  
Brodie, R. (née Murray) : 4 Park St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Brummer, J. : 11 Donkin St., Graaff-Reinet, school pupil, funeral parlour  
director.

Burger, P. : 105 Caledon St., Graaff-Reinet, school pupil, businessman, (ret).

Carrick, I. (née Lawrie) : 67 Somerset St., Graaff-Reinet, nurse, (ret).

De Klerk, P. : Waterval, Graaff-Reinet, school pupil, farmer.

Fourie, S. : Lindela, Jansenville, auctioneer and speculator.

Haarhoff, M. : 80 Cradock St., Graaff-Reinet, typist/bookkeeper, (ret).

Hartzenburg, H. : 90 Bourke St., Graaff-Reinet, farmer, (ret).

Jansen, A. (miss) 14 Bourke St., Graaff-Reinet, typist, (ret).

Kamies, A. : 89 Sunnyside, Graaff-Reinet, horticulturalist, (ret).

Kingwill, D. : 24 Bourke St., Graaff-Reinet, farmer, (ret).

Kingwill, M. (née Adams) : 24 Bourke St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Kingwill, M. (née Massey) : Gordonville, Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Kingwill, R. : Gordonyville, Graaff-Reinet, farmer, (ret).

Koeberg, C. : 93 Sunnyside, Graaff-Reinet, storeman/clerk, (ret).

Kroon, G. : 99 Church St., Graaff-Reinet, municipal clerk, auctioneer.

Kroon, J. : 39 Church St., Graaff-Reinet, butcher, farmer/speculator,  
(deceased).

Kroon, M. : 3 Milner St., Graaff-Reinet, butcher, farmer/speculator.

Lawrie, I. (Miss) : 67 Somerset St., Graaff-Reinet, --, (ret).

Lipschitz, W. : Doorskraal, Kendrew, farmer.

Loock, W. : Bluegum House, Graaff-Reinet, --, farmer.

Luscombe, A. (née Murray) : Westbrook, Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Minnaar, E. (née Verster) : 9 Milner St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Minnaar, E. M. de.V. (née Booyesen) : Grassdale, Graaff-Reinet, school pupil,  
housewife.

Minnaar, J.S: Grassdale, Graaff-Reinet, school pupil, farmer.

Minnaar, W. : Tweefontein, Graaff-Reinet, farmer.

Meyer, J. : 51 Koedoe St., Kroonvale, Graaff-Reinet, teacher, school principal.

Muller, G. : 10 Cradock St., Graaff-Reinet, road construction foreman,  
groundsman.

Murray, A. : 49 Cyprus Grove, Graaff-Reinet, farmer, (ret).

Murray, M. (neé Weir) : 49 Cyprus Grove, Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Neser, K. (neé van Heerden) : 10 North St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Parkes, D. : Klipfontein, Kendrew, farmer.

Parkes, M. (neé Crabtree) : 94 Somerset St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Rubidge, A. (neé van Niekerk) : 4 Cradock St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Rubidge, F. : 2 McCabe St., Graaff-Reinet, farmer, (deceased).

Rubidge, O. (Miss) : 27 Cypress Grove, Graaff-Reinet, --, (ret).

Rubidge, R. : Wellwood, Graaff-Reinet, child, farmer.

Theron, D. (neé van Niekerk) : 54 Cypress Grove, Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Traas, J. (neé Laubscher) : 8 Jansen St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

van der Westhuizen, N : 109 Caledon St., Graaff-Reinet, school pupil, secretary  
financial institution, (ret).

van Heerden, C. : 29 Cyprus Grove, Graaff-Reinet, medical practitioner, (ret).

van Heerden, L. (neé Massey) : 29 Cyprus Grove, Graaff-Reinet, student,  
housewife, (ret).

van Niekerk, J.<sup>P</sup>: Protea St, George, bank manager, and secretary of financial  
institution, farmer, (ret).

van Niekerk, C. (neé Luckhoff) : Protea St., George, school pupil, housewife,  
(ret).

van Rensburg, A. (neé Kroon) : 13 Rothman St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Vorster, B. : 42 North St., Graaff-Reinet, farmer, (ret).

Vorster, H. (neé Jansen) : 97 Caledon St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Wiley, F. (neé Maclaren) : 19 North St., Graaff-Reinet, housewife, (ret).

Whitlock, E. : 6 Church St., Graaff-Reinet, Clerk, secretary financial institution.

Whitlock, H. : 1 Rothman St., Graaff-Reinet, Shop assistant, businessman, (ret).