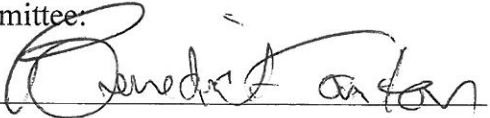


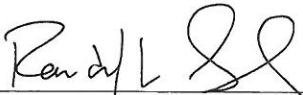
PATHOLOGIZING THE BYWONER: THE CARNEGIE COMMISSION REPORT'S
DIAGNOSIS OF "POOR WHITE DISEASE" IN SOUTH AFRICA (1932)

by

Ann M. Steensland
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
History

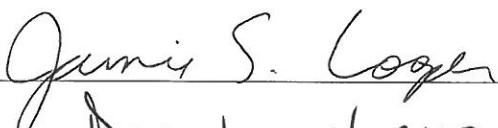
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Date: December 4, 2013

Fall Semester 2013
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by

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Bachelor of Arts
Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts, 1993

Director: Benedict Carton, Professor
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DEDICATION

In memory of my grandmother, Dorothy Eastman Steensland (1914-1988). A professional librarian and gifted researcher, she would have loved this project; I dedicate it to her.

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I entered George Mason University as a history student; with the guidance and encouragement of my thesis advisor, Dr. Benedict Carton, I graduate as a scholar. I am grateful for Ben's enthusiasm for this project and for leading me evermore deeply into the historiographies that brought my archival research to life.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
List of Equations	x
List of Abbreviations and Symbols.....	xi
Referencing and Citing the Carnegie Commission.....	xii
Abstract	xiii
Introduction: The Skeleton in the Cupboard.....	1
1. Carnegie Comes To Cape Town	23
2. Searching for a Poor White Symbiosis	49
3. Frontiers of Rural Decline	72
4. “A Boil upon the Body”	102
5. “Maladapted” Mothers.....	137
Conclusion: Environmental Etiologies, Individual Pathologies	167
Appendix A: Joint Board of Control.....	183
Appendix B: Mitchell's Circular	194
Appendix C: Research Plans.....	203
Appendix D: Tentative Hypotheses	216
Bibliography	231

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1. Carnegie Corporation Grants to South Africa, 1927-1928	46
Table 2. Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie Commission	57
Table 3. Living Conditions and Educational Levels of Poor Whites	160
Table 4. Classifications of “Culpability” for Poor Whites	162

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 1. Urbanization in the Union of South Africa, 1911 to 1921	5
Figure 2. A bywoner from the <i>Carnegie Commission Report</i>	14
Figure 3. A bywoner tending a flock of sheep	17
Figure 4. "Coloured" children at a Dutch Reformed Church School	33
Figure 5. Home of a "prosperous settler" at the Kakamas labor camp	50
Figure 6. First cabinet of the Union of South Africa (1910)	52
Figure 7. Letter from J. A. Mitchell, Secretary of Public Health, to Dr. W. A. Murray, researcher for the <i>Health Report</i>	63
Figure 8. Letter from Frederick Keppel, president of Carnegie Corporation, regarding the <i>Sociological Report</i>	71
Figure 9. Stylized map charting the movement of Voortrekkers in the Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State	75
Figure 10. <i>The Trekkers' Road</i> by Col. C. C. Mitchell	79
Figure 11. "Proposed Itinerary" for field research	91
Figure 12. Dr. J. F. W. Grosskopf interviews a poor white	94
Figure 13. "Estimation of Malnutrition in Children"	113
Figure 14. Malnourished school children wait to receive food	126
Figure 15. A malnourished boy (age unknown)	128
Figure 16. Diagram of "A Good Dairy Cow"	138

Figure 17. Poor white family from the <i>Carnegie Commission Report</i>	141
Figure 18. Poor white woman from the <i>Carnegie Commission Report</i>	148
Figure 19. Carnegie researchers in the field	151
Figure 20. The Carnegie men with their “tin lizzie”	153
Figure 21. Mother and children from a poor family in the Northern Transvaal	156
Figure 22. Women and children at the diamond diggings	159
Figure 23. An accounting of 1938 poor relief expenditures in Graaff-Reinet.....	176

LIST OF EQUATIONS

Equation	Page
Equation 1. Composite Nutritional Indices.....	130

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

<i>Carnegie Commission Report</i>	<i>CCR</i>
Dutch Reformed Church	DRC
Research Grant Board	RGB
Transvaal Indigency Commission	TIC
Composite Nutritional Indices	CNI
South African Pound	£

Archive and File Box Codes

South African National Archives Repository, Pretoria	SAB
Department of Labour	ARB
Department of Public Health	GES
Department of Justice	JUS
Prime Minister's Office	PM
Secretary of the Treasury	TES
Secretary of Union Education	UOD
Cape Town Archives Repository	KAB
Town Clerk, Graaff-Reinet Municipality	3/GR

REFERENCING AND CITING THE CARNEGIE COMMISSION

This thesis argues that the “Carnegie Commission” was both a process that studied the “poor white problem” and a body of knowledge about “poor whites”. As such, the formation, execution, and actualization of the Commission (1927-1932) are referred to as the “Poor White Study”, the “Carnegie Commission”, or the “Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question”.

The 300,000-word report published in 1932 is cited as the *Carnegie Commission Report* or *CCR*. Furthermore, the *CCR* is treated as a “book series” comprised of six individual reports, published in five volumes.

Vol. 1. *Economic Report: Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus*, by J. F. W. Grosskopf

Vol. 2. *Psychological Report: The Poor White*, by R. W. Wilcocks

Vol. 3. *Educational Report: Education and the Poor White*, by E. G. Malherbe

Vol. 4. *Health Report: Health Factors in the Poor White Problem*, by W. A. Murray

Vol. 5. *Sociological Report: (a) The Poor White and Society*, by J. R. Albertyn; (b) *The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family*, by M. E. Rothmann

In the narrative of the thesis, each report is referred to by its main title, i.e. *Economic Report*. *Sociological Report* is the short form for Albertyn’s study; Rothmann’s work appears as the *Mother and Daughter Report*. The full title of the report appears in the first citation; secondary citations are the main title alone.

This format reflects the Carnegie researchers’ conviction that these reports stand alone as separate works. The “Joint Findings and Recommendations” is the only collaborative section of the *CCR* and is treated as a “book section” and not a stand-alone report.

The authors of the *CCR* are collectively referenced as the Carnegie researchers or investigators.

ABSTRACT

PATHOLOGIZING THE BYWONER: THE CARNEGIE COMMISSION REPORT'S DIAGNOSIS OF "POOR WHITE DISEASE" IN SOUTH AFRICA (1932)

Ann M. Steensland, M.A.

George Mason University, 2013

Thesis Director: Dr. Benedict Carton

This thesis seeks to expand existing scholarship by examining the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question's conception of poverty that pathologized poor whites, in particular the *bywoners*, Boer tenants and sharecroppers on large Afrikaner-owned farms in areas such as Middleburg in the Transvaal or the Karoo in the Cape Province. The Carnegie Commission was the first study of the "poor white problem" in South Africa to link concepts of environment, disease, and poverty in one causal explanation of poor white "maladaptation" to modernity. *Poor white disease*, as described in the *Carnegie Commission Report*, was induced by the "unhealthy" ecological and socio-economic environment in which poor whites lived. The Carnegie Commission took into account the bodies of knowledge about poor whites generated in previous studies, as well as the political, economic, and ideological debates they evoked, including: environmental theories of disease and racial degradation; the role of South

Africa's "frontier" past in shaping the country's twentieth-century future; the fate of tens of thousands of unemployed whites in an industrial economy saturated with "native" laborers; the rise of Afrikaner nationalism; and tensions between state and church over who was to assume responsibility for the poor, elderly, and infirm. Sources from the South African National Archives Repositories in Pretoria and Cape Town demonstrate how the Carnegie researchers considered these debates in the process of devising their methodologies and conducting their field research. The Carnegie Commission's studies of malnutrition and of mothers and daughters reveal how the researchers interpreted their data so as to pathologize Afrikaners who were living in poverty.

INTRODUCTION

THE SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD

In July 1929, Dr. Ernest G. Malherbe gave the most important speech of his young career. A professor of education at the University of Cape Town, Malherbe also served as one of the “deans of research” for the prestigious Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question. Malherbe had spent the previous six months touring the poorest regions of South Africa, meeting and interviewing thousands of Afrikaners. On a clear winter morning in Cape Town he stepped to the podium to make the first public presentation of the Carnegie Commission’s inquiry into white poverty and the “exodus” of rural Boers to urban centers. He told his audience that given what he had witnessed, the time had come to “speak in plain terms about...the skeleton in our social cupboard.”¹ For too long, white poverty had been dismissed as a moral deficiency, Malherbe protested. He believed that “the presence of the poor white was” nothing less than “a pathological situation.”² A poor white man was not destitute because he was inherently bad; he suffered from an illness that “prevents him from rising to or

¹ “Striking Address by Dr. Malherbe. ‘Poor Whiteism’ A Phase of the Native Problem. British Association in Full Swing,” *Cape Times*, July 24, 1929.

² Ernest G. Malherbe, *Education Report: Education and the Poor White*, vol. 3 of *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* (Cape Town: Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, 1932), 10.

maintaining a decent standard of living.”³ Furthermore, Malherbe argued, “the obvious solution...would be to inoculate every child with a secondary education serum and there will be an end of the poor white disease.”⁴ Unfortunately, he reported, South Africa’s school system “was not a sufficient prophylaxis to safeguard a large section of the rural population against economic and social degeneration.”⁵

The *Cape Times* reported that in the audience that day were “the most distinguished men of science in the world,” experts in biological, physical, and social science attending the annual meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science (SAAAS).⁶ The conference was a “coming out party” for South Africa’s fledgling scientific community. When the Association was founded in 1903 there were fewer than 50 professional scientists in South African academic institutions. The scientific community consisted principally of “collectors, fossil hunters, [and] amateur botanists, pursuing their enthusiasms in solitary isolation or in the course of social activities (like picnics, meetings, or outings).”⁷ In an era of growing interest in apparent human differences and “anthropological, historical, and archeological understandings of society,” knowledge-based institutions such as the South African Museum and publications like *Cape Monthly Magazine* facilitated a dialogue among an

³ “Striking Address by Dr. Malherbe,” *Cape Times*, July 24, 1929.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. The disciplines represented at the conference were agriculture, anthropology, botany, chemistry, economics, education, engineering, forestry, geography, geology, mathematics, physiology, physics, psychology, and zoology.

⁷ Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa, 1820-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

embryonic group of professional scientists.⁸ The South African Association harnessed this fascination to create a national scientific institution with 1,300 members.⁹ Many of them heard Malherbe's speech that July day in 1929.

SAAAS also showcased the growing influence of South Africa's scientists in the national agenda of economic and social progress. In addition to Malherbe's report on "Education and the Poor White", South African scientists presented breakthroughs on soil fertility, new advances in shipping navigation, and studies of accident prevention in the workplace.¹⁰ The *Cape Times* noted that "the laboratories of pure science have eventually proved to be the keys which have opened the doors to great industrial enterprise."¹¹ But the highlight of the day was Malherbe's contribution. The lead article in the *Times* declared it "a douche of the coldest of cold water thrown on the shivering back of our national pride"; the editorial board printed Malherbe's full address on the facing page.¹² The newspaper urged that no time be wasted in finding a cure for poor white disease: "Dr. Malherbe tells the truth...[and] it shakes a fist in the face of our pretense that the Poor White really does not exist at all."¹³

It is difficult to fathom that Malherbe's speech was as revelatory as the editors claimed. Since the Second South African War ended in 1902, tens of thousands of rural

⁸ Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 3.

⁹ W. D. Morton, "Report of the Acting Honorary Treasurer for the Year Ending 30th June 1907," in *Report of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science 1908* (SAAAS, 1908), xv. Within three years of its founding, SAAAS had more than 1,300 members. SAAAS's membership grew rapidly, but some members were not diligent about paying the £1 annual subscription fee. At SAAAS's annual meeting in 1907, the Treasurer reported as of June 30, 1907, there were approximately £500 in unpaid subscriptions, leaving the association with debit balance of £231 12s. 5d.

¹⁰ "Striking Address by Dr. Malherbe," *Cape Times*, July 24, 1929.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Editorial, *Cape Times*, July 24, 1929.

¹³ Ibid.

whites, principally Afrikaners with few prospects, had migrated to cities, like Cape Town. In 1911, the white population of the newly formed Union of South Africa was evenly distributed between urban and rural areas (52 percent to 48 percent). By 1931, almost two thirds of whites (61 percent) lived in cities and towns. As a result, half a million more whites lived in urban areas in 1931 than in 1911, while the rural white population grew by less than 100,000.¹⁴ The white exodus in the Cape Province was particularly stark. From 1911 to 1926, the percentage of whites living in urban areas of the Cape increased by 22 percent, while another 21 percent of rural Cape-born whites migrated to other provinces, a net loss of 120,000 people.

¹⁴ Census figures in this paragraph can be found in J. F. W. Grosskopf, *Economic Report: Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus*, vol. 1 of *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* (Cape Town: Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, 1932), 57, 62, 64.



Figure 1. Urbanization in South Africa in the decade after Union in 1910. The red dots indicate a decrease in the white population; black dots indicate the opposite. Each dot represents 100 people. *Source:* Map from 1910-1922 *Official Year Book of the Union and of Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1923), chap. 3.

When the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question published its final report in 1932, three years after Malherbe's speech, the researchers estimated a population of 300,000 poor whites in South Africa. Such an assessment was based on questionnaires issued to 50,000 schools in which the principals described 17.5

percent of families with children in school as “very poor.”¹⁵ This percentage was applied to the total “European” population in 1931 (1.8 million) and rounded down to a “conservative” estimate of 300,000. The lack of statistical clarity did not trouble Carnegie investigators for they claimed “such an enumeration has to be based on...estimates...of what constitutes ‘a decent standard of living for white men,’ [and] varying traditional standards in different parts of the country render the result highly unreliable.”¹⁶ The Commission favored a qualitative definition of poverty.¹⁷ It identified poor whites as “gain[ing] . . . their livelihood chiefly from farming,” including unskilled, rural-born migrant workers, agricultural laborers working on large farms, cultivators with small land-holdings, and “frontier” pioneers still living off the land.¹⁸ Malherbe and his fellow Carnegie researchers were more concerned with the discerning the causes of the “poor white disease” than calculating the precise number of patients.

A New Diagnosis

The Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question was set in motion during the visit of Carnegie Corporation officials to South Africa in 1927.

¹⁵ J. R. Albertyn, J. F. W. Grosskopf, E. G. Malherbe, W. A. Murray, M. E., Rothmann, and R. W. Wilcocks, “Joint Findings and Recommendations of the Commission,” in *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* (Cape Town: Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, 1932), vii. The CCR noted that the 17.5 percent estimate was taken before the worldwide depression truly gripped South Africa in 1929 and 1930. By this estimate, the number of poor whites was certainly larger in 1932, when the report was published.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ John Iliffe, *The African Poor: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 4. For the purposes of this study, the meaning of “poverty” is derived from John Iliffe’s classification of structural poverty: “long-term poverty of individuals due to their personal or social circumstances.” This definition was different from conjectural poverty, “which is the temporary poverty into which ordinarily self-sufficient people may be thrown by crisis.” Iliffe described South Africa as a “land-scarce society” where the nature of structural poverty encompassed “many able-bodied [people] who lack[ed] access to land (or other resources) and [were] unable to sell their labour power at a price sufficient to meet their minimum needs.”

¹⁸ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” v.

Planning for the investigation commenced in 1928 and field research began in 1929. This thesis examines the Carnegie Commission's conception of poverty that pathologized the *bywoners*, Boer tenants and sharecroppers on large Afrikaner-owned farms in areas such as Middleburg in the Transvaal or the Karoo in the Cape Province. "These so-called 'bywoners' were sometimes younger relations, sometimes overseers of labour, sometimes objects of charity, sometimes victims of exploitation, depending on their resources and relationship [with the landowner.]"¹⁹

The premise of this thesis is that the Carnegie Commission should be understood as both a "process" and as a "body of knowledge". Historian Tamara Giles-Vernick employs this framework in her study of *doli*, a mode of interpreting environmental change deployed by Mpiemu people in the Central African Republic. While "doli is a process," she writes, or "a way of perceiving, characterizing, and interpreting the past and present...doli is also a body of knowledge about the past through which...people have...debated...social and political relations."²⁰ From another perspective, it could be argued that doli is a historical narrative that both traces change in the Mpiemu environment and informs human choices about the use of natural resources. As a whole, doli shapes an environmental consciousness linking present concerns with past actions. The Carnegie Commission might best be seen as embodying a similar kind of historical narrative and environmental consciousness.

¹⁹ Bill Freund, "The Poor Whites: A Social Force and a Social Problem in South African History," in *White but Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880-1940*, ed. Robert Morrell (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992), xv.

²⁰ Tamara Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rain Forest* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), 1.

The Carnegie Commission's diagnosis of poor white disease was grounded in several bodies of knowledge that I examine critically in this thesis. The Commission consulted a number of comprehensive poor white studies that preceded it, including the 1906 Cape Parliament Select Committee on the Poor White Question, 1908 Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1913 Union Parliament Select Committee on European Employment and Labour Conditions, *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* by W. M. Macmillan (1919), 1921 Interim Report of the Unemployment Commission, and the 1922-23 Reports of the Drought Investigation Committee. Taken together, these publications engaged with the biggest political, economic, and ideological debates shaping interwar South Africa. Some of these debates evoked environmental theories of disease and racial degradation; the role of South Africa's "frontier" past in shaping the country's twentieth-century future; the fate of tens of thousands of unemployed whites in an industrial economy saturated with "native" laborers; the rise of Afrikaner nationalism; and tensions between state and church over who was to assume responsibility for the poor, elderly, and infirm. The Carnegie Commission considered these debates when devising methodologies and hypotheses, testing assumptions, formulating research agendas and diagnosing "poor white disease."

A New Body of Evidence

The historical scholarship critically assessing the Carnegie Commission focuses either on its process or body of knowledge. Process-oriented studies highlight the people and institutions involved in the Carnegie endeavor. Morag Bell, Richard Glotzer, and Zine Magubane, for example, concentrate on networks of professionals in South African

universities, Columbia Teachers College, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, all of whom in one way or another facilitated the Poor White Study.²¹ Brahm Fleisch and C.J. Groenewald discuss how Carnegie researchers evolved from social scientists to policymakers.²² Marijke du Toit, Richard Heyman, Peter Kallaway, and Paul Rich provide insights into the key players driving the Carnegie Commission process.²³

Several other academic analyses of the *Carnegie Commission Report (CCR)* highlight the political and social debates concerning the health of white society in the late 1920s and early 1930s. For example, Randall Packard and Diana Wylie discuss the deleterious effects of malnutrition and malaria on the poor whites examined in the *CCR's Health Report*.²⁴ For her part, Marijke du Toit scrutinizes the psychological implications

²¹ For more on the Carnegie-Columbia connections, see Morag Bell, "American Philanthropy, the Carnegie Corporation and Poverty in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 3 (September 1, 2000): 481–504; Richard Glotzer, "The Career of Mabel Carney: The Study of Race and Rural Development in the United States and South Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 29, no. 2 (January 1, 1996): 309–336; Zine Magubane, "The American Construction of the Poor White Problem in South Africa," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 691–713.

²² See Brahm Fleisch, "Social Scientists As Policy Makers: E. G. Malherbe and the National Bureau for Educational and Social Research, 1929–1943," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (September 1, 1995): 349–372; C. J. Groenewald, "The Methodology of Poverty Research in South Africa: The Case of the First Carnegie Investigation 1929–1932," *Social Dynamics* 13, no. 2 (1987): 60–74.

²³ For information about M. E. Rothmann, author of the *CCR* study on *The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family* see Marijke du Toit, "The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904–1929," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 155–176. For information on C. T. Loram, a Carnegie Corporation trustee in South Africa, see Richard D. Heyman, "C. T. Loram: A South African Liberal in Race Relations," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1972): 41–50. For information on F. S. Malan, chair of the Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie Commission, see Peter Kallaway, "F. S. Malan, the Cape Liberal Tradition, and South African Politics 1908–1924," *The Journal of African History* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 1974): 113–129 and Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003). For information on C. T. Loram and E. G. Malherbe see Paul Rich, *Hope and Despair: English-speaking Intellectuals and South African Politics, 1896–1976* (London: British Academic Press, 1993) and Paul Rich, "Race, Science, and the Legitimization of White Supremacy in South Africa, 1902–1940," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23, no. 4 (January 1, 1990): 665–686.

²⁴ See Randall Packard, "'Malaria Blocks Development' Revisited: The Role of Disease in the History of Agricultural Development in the Eastern and Northern Transvaal Lowveld, 1890–1960," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1, 2001): 591–612; Diana Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

and sociological significance of photographic images of poor whites featured in the *CCR*.²⁵ Susanne Klausen and Saul Dubow pinpoint the *CCR*'s interest in the environmental dimensions of white poverty.²⁶ According to Judith Tayler, the Nationalist Party (NP), winner of the apartheid election in 1948, exploited the *CCR*'s negative characterizations of depleted Boers to promote a call to Afrikaners to dominate the national ballot and strengthen the *volk*'s muscular hold over executive power.²⁷ More recently, Jeremy Seekings recast the *CCR* as a document that drew on withering criticism of South Africa's rapidly expanding welfare state by the Dutch Reformed Church who advocated "a reversion to 'constructive charity' and the fostering of self-help."²⁸

While these studies offer valuable insights, the Carnegie Commission's process and body of knowledge need to be integrated into one scholarly inquiry. This thesis seeks to do just that by drawing on evidence from the South African National Archives Repositories in Pretoria and Cape Town, which does not appear in many works of historical scholarship. These primary sources include minutes of the meetings of the Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie Commission; minutes of the meetings of the principal researchers; methodology proposals and field questionnaires; hypotheses drafted at the mid-point of the research phase; and records of meetings with American sociologists who advised the Carnegie investigators.

²⁵ Marijke du Toit, "'Journeys to the Interior': Photographs of the Carnegie Committee of Investigation into the Poor White Problem 1929/1932," *Kronos* 32 (November 2006): 49-76.

²⁶ See Susanne Klausen, *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910-39* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²⁷ Judith Tayler, "'Our Poor': The Politicisation of the Poor White Problem, 1932-1942," *Kleio* 24 (1992): 40-65.

²⁸ Jeremy Seekings, "The Carnegie Commission and the Backlash Against Welfare State-Building in South Africa, 1931-1937," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, no. 3 (September 2008): 515-537.

There are limitations to this pool of evidence. The meeting minutes capture only the formal conversations between Carnegie participants; some jottings merely reflect the perspective of the note-taker, in this case Professor R. W. Wilcocks, who served as the secretary for the Carnegie Commission as well as the author of the *Psychological Report*. The detailed methodologies and hypotheses, while enlightening, cannot be read as complete expressions of the researchers' priorities. Much of the intrigue of these documents stems from the fact that they were not part of the Commission's public record and were not shared with their Carnegie patrons in New York, who received only short summaries. Yet each page had an "audience", which should be considered critically by scholars. Indeed, the departmental secretaries serving on the Joint Board of Control knew records of their deliberations would be shared with the ministers of the government departments involved in the Poor White Study. By contrast, the Carnegie researchers were assured that their conversations, as well as their plans for field research, would barely circulate beyond the Commission's inner circles.

For the historian, the danger of focusing on minutes and memoranda lies in the temptation to oversimplify the link between theories and conclusions in the Carnegie process. Saul Dubow cautions that ideas "do not travel upwards or downwards like packaged messages in an old-fashioned pneumatic tube. At any one moment there are an infinite number of ideas or thought-structures in formation."²⁹ While heeding this warning, it is also true that, as a body of knowledge, the Carnegie Commission does not encompass an unlimited number of ideas about poor whites. To determine which thought-

²⁹ Dubow, *Scientific Racism*, 8.

structures defined official views of the poor white pathology, the Carnegie planners and researchers “expressed, debated, and made claims of truth about the past and present” causes of white impoverishment.³⁰ The minutes and methodologies detail such “claims of truth”, revealing how they animated the Carnegie Commission’s investigation of poor white disease.

The Patients

Stories of poor whites scratching a living in South Africa’s agrarian interior can be found as far back as the 1820s in settler accounts of the Cape.³¹ There were many causes of destitution: colonial settlement failed to take root in dry soil; economic depression drove down prices for agricultural products; drought and disease ravaged crops and herds; and small-plot farms could not compete against larger, more capitalized operations.³² Settlers and farmers on the margins of subsistence became tenants on wealthier neighbor’s property, working as sharecropping bywoners and exchanging a portion of their harvest for use of a plot of land. In his study of poor whites in northern Natal, Verne Harris identifies 12 classifications of bywoners, categorized by whether they resided on their landlord’s property, whether they exchanged labor for land, and in some cases, how they shared crops that they cultivated. The bywoners commonly featured in the *CCR* were usually sharecroppers who lived on owner-occupied land.

³⁰ The quoted phrase was inspired by Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past*, 1.

³¹ Colin Bundy, “Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen: White Poverty in the Cape Before Poor Whiteism,” in *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930*, ed. William Beinart, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 105.

³² *Ibid.*, 106–107.

Typically, a sharecropper's agreement entitled him to a parcel of land in return for 10 to 50 percent of what they harvested; they were also expected to labor for the farm owner.³³

Arrangements between landowner and tenant could be generous, and “in the nineteenth century ‘bywoners’ occupied a respected position within Boer society,” writes Robert Morrell.³⁴ But by the turn of the twentieth century, this system of rural patronage was breaking down. Farmers with access to land, labor, and capital mechanized their operations and increased the size of their farms to meet the skyrocketing demand, driven by the Mineral Revolution, for agricultural staples and exports.³⁵ There was no place for the sharecropping bywoner in this new industrial economy, which offered few job opportunities to unskilled rural whites.³⁶ The material and social standing of bywoners would decline precipitously until the name “bywoner” became synonymous with poor white in the *CCR*.

³³ Verne Harris, “Time to Trek: Landless Whites and Poverty in the Northern Natal Countryside, 1902-1939,” in Morrell, 62.

³⁴ Robert Morrell, “The Poor Whites of Middelburg, Transvaal, 1900-1930: Resistance, Accommodation, and Class Struggle” in Morrell, 6.

³⁵ Alan Jeeves and Jonathan Crush, introduction to *White Farms, Black Labor: The State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa, 1910-50*, eds. Alan Jeeves and Jonathan Crush (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997).

³⁶ For more on the disappearing role of the bywoner in South African economy, see William M. Macmillan, *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* (Witwatersrand: Central News Agency, Ltd., 1919).

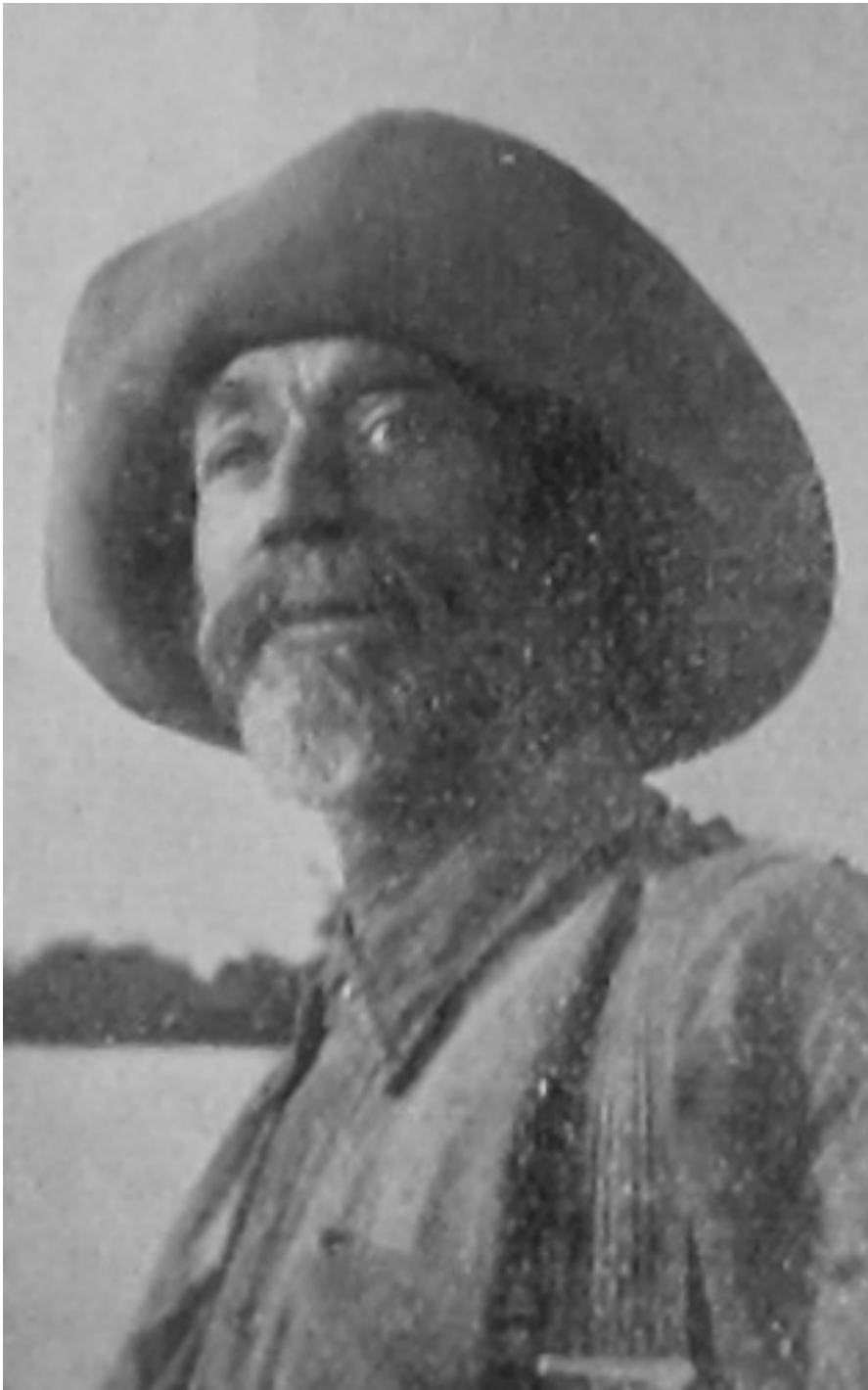


Figure 2. This photograph of a “disappearing type” of rural Boer captures a world-weary expression that, for the Carnegie researchers at least, typified the bywoner. *Source:* Photograph from R. W. Wilcocks, *Psychological Report: The Poor White* vol. 2 of *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question in South Africa* (Cape Town: Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, 1932), 2:chap. 8.

Poor whites escaped rural poverty by moving to cities that could neither house nor employ them. Witnesses before the Transvaal Indigency Commission (1908) testified to the Dickensian living conditions of poor whites who settled in Pretoria and Johannesburg. “Squatting...is on the increase and investigation discloses a terrible state of affairs,” testified Mrs. Faure of the Pretoria Benevolent Society.³⁷ “There are no sanitary arrangements,” she continued, “They are most miserable, living huddled together in little tin shanties – married couples, young children and grown-up young people, all living together, sometimes in one little room or tent.”³⁸ Manual labor for men and domestic service for women offered dignified paths out of poverty, even though they were considered vocations for black people. But witnesses testified that girls “think it is degrading to work for another white person in a house.”³⁹ Witnesses affirmed that poor Afrikaners lacked the education and skills to do anything other than manual labor and “not being able to speak English...if they get jobs as labourers they are not able to retain them.”⁴⁰

Urbanized poor whites earned money any way they could but “[their] behavior...was not understood as a survival strategy for desperate men and women,” writes Lis Lange in her study of poor whites in Johannesburg.⁴¹ Poor whites were “most unwillin[g]...[to] leave the countryside,” argues John Iliffe, “but, at least [the cities]

³⁷ *Minutes of the Evidence of the Transvaal Indigency Commission 1906-1908* (Pretoria: Government Printer and Stationery Office, 1908), 30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Q.1, 176.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Q. 5, 639; Q. 5, 641.

⁴¹ Lis Lange, *White, Poor and Angry: White Working Class Families in Johannesburg* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 156.

offered work and wages.⁴² Major Fuge of the Salvation Army stated that he had observed poor whites “meet[ing] the farmers as they come in from the country and off-load[ing] their wagons, delivering goods...they earn in this way about 4s. per day and in some cases have nothing to do for the remainder of the day.”⁴³ And like a scene from *Oliver Twist*, witnesses described women taking in washing and children selling newspapers and flowers to earn a few shillings.

Political lament over the “poor white problem” began in earnest with the 1906 Cape Parliament Select Committee on the Poor White Question. “The conditions of life in...the interior of South Africa ...[develop] strength, self-reliance and courage,” acknowledged the committee, “but without education people of this class often become unfit for the more strenuous struggle for [settled] existence.”⁴⁴ The migration of poor Afrikaners to urban areas in search of work was a clear indication that, “once down they are unable to rise again with assistance.”⁴⁵ The Select Committee hoped that if the rural refugees were offered agricultural training and a piece of land, they would gladly return to the countryside. At Kakamas, an agricultural labor colony on the banks of the Orange River, former stock farmers whose herds had been decimated by drought and rinderpest agreed to work on a large irrigation project in return for a plot of land.⁴⁶ Once the family “recovered” from poverty, they were expected to leave, making space for new families in need of assistance. But turnover was low and as a result, in its first two decades of

⁴² Iliffe, *The African Poor*, 119.

⁴³ *TIC Minutes of Evidence*, 107.

⁴⁴ F.S. Malan, summary findings of *Report of the Select Committee on the Poor White Question* (Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, 1906), iv.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 320.

operation, only 800 poor white families lived and worked at Kakamas. With the population of bywoners numbering in the tens of thousands, labor colonies and other land distribution schemes were not scalable solutions.



Figure 3. A bywoner tending a flock of sheep. The Carnegie Commission saw this type of transhumance, the moving of herds from pasture to pasture, as a pre-modern form of agriculture. They condemned transhumance, and other forms of subsistence farming as inefficient and environmentally damaging. As the demand for agricultural products skyrocketed, anxious agricultural officials exhorted farmers to fulfill their duty to the nation by maximizing production. Farming solely for the sake of subsistence, as most rural Boers did, was considered self-indulgent and immoral. *Source:* Photograph from Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:chap. 8.

The Diagnostic Process

The Carnegie Commission planners and researchers believed the best way to reduce rural poverty and slow the rural exodus was to treat the causes of the poor white disease. The diagnostic “process” began in 1927 with the visit of Frederick Keppel, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to South Africa. The first chapter of this thesis, “Carnegie Comes to Cape Town”, recounts how Keppel, together with two

former South African students from Columbia Teachers College, C. T. Loram and E. G. Malherbe, devised and organized a Carnegie-funded Poor White Study. Loram, a Native Affairs Commissioner, served on the Research Grant Board (RGB), a woefully underfunded initiative of the Department of Mines and Industries responsible for subsidizing scientific research. State funding had all but dried up, but with Carnegie money the most pressing social and economic problems facing the Union government, including the poor white question, could be studied. Malherbe's acquisitiveness was personal; he wanted Keppel to fund his ambitious research agenda. When the two men in August 1927, Malherbe suggested that the Carnegie Corporation support a "cooperative study" of poor whiteism that harnessed the expertise of different disciplines, including his specialty, education.⁴⁷

Keppel awarded money for a Poor White Study to the Research Grant Board (RGB), but he insisted that a non-governmental institution lead the project. Most "poor whites" were Afrikaners and lived in Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) parishes, so Loram asked the church to step in. The second chapter, "Searching for a Poor White Symbiosis", recounts the unintended consequences of giving the church authority over the Poor White Study. The RGB hoped the study would be structured as an epidemiological survey that yielded data on how poor whites responded to specific policy interventions. The church preferred a psychological autopsy of the poor white himself in hopes of identifying the mental and moral issues keeping poor Afrikaners from their God-given, racially-

⁴⁷ Ernest G. Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment* (Cape Town: Timmins Publishers, 1981), 119-120; Frederick Keppel and James Bertram, *Report of the President and the Secretary as to an Education Program in Africa, October 1927* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, December 1, 1927), 11.

determined potential. With such varied approaches, conflict between the government and the church was inevitable. A Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie Commission enabled the RBG and the DRC to debate the topics to be researched and decide who would do the work, specifically: J. F. W. Grosskopf, author of the *Economic Report*; R. W. Wilcocks, author of the *Psychological Report*; E. G. Malherbe, author of the *Education Report*; W. A. Murray, author of the *Health Report*; J. R. Albertyn, author of the *Sociological Report*.⁴⁸

The Joint Board also determined that the “decline” of South Africa’s rural interior underpinned any diagnostic framework. Chapter three, “Frontiers of Rural Decline”, examines the frontier theory of South African history and its links to Carnegie definitions of white poverty. Historians and social scientists argued that the Voortrekkers who “conquered” the rural interior in the 1830s and 1840s were unable to make the transition from armed pioneer to settled farmer. Living on isolated farms and fiercely protective of their independence, such rural Boers lost touch with “modern” socio-economic norms. The Joint Board instructed the Carnegie researchers to consider whether a history of “backwardness” condemned poor whites to poverty.

A New Body of Knowledge

There were three broad considerations informing the Carnegie Commission. First, the researchers were instructed to gather and analyze data, but refrain from conclusions that could sway public policy. Second, while the Carnegie Commission embraced a diagnostic framework favored by Dutch Reformed Church ministers, it was to proffer a

⁴⁸ Mrs. M. E. Rothmann, author of the *Mother and Daughter Report*, did not join the research team until 1929; the details can be found in chapter four of this thesis.

robust analysis of socio-economic conditions. Third, each researcher would have to consider how South Africa's frontier history contributed to the decline and impoverishment of rural Boers.

With these parameters established, control over the poor white study passed to the researchers themselves. On February 2, 1929, the researchers embarked on a six-month journey through the remotest areas of the Union. Frequently traveling as a unit, the researchers drove village-to-village, interviewing poor whites by day and discussing their impressions at night. They designed elaborate questionnaires intended to measure everything from a poor white's psychological development to her economic prospects. The final chapters of this thesis, "A Boil on the Body" and "Maladapted" Mothers reveal how the personalities and prejudices of the individual researchers influenced the ways in which they categorized the symptomatic evidence and rendered their diagnoses.

I single out the work of two researchers for particular attention. Dr. W. A. Murray's groundbreaking study of malnutrition introduced the Composite Nutrition Indices, the first quantitative measurement of nutritional status employed in South Africa. He weighed and measured more than 1,700 students aged 9 to 14 and collected data on the diets and financial circumstances of 900 families. Murray found a direct correlation between poverty, poor diets, and malnutrition. He agreed that some dietary habits, such as boiling meat (which drained its nutrients), needed to be corrected. Still, Murray found that a person's socio-economic and ecological environment was the greatest determinant of whether or not a child was malnourished. For her sociological study of *The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family*, Mrs. M. E. Rothmann collected data about the home

“environments” of the women she interviewed. Like Murray, she saw a clear correlation between poverty and health in the home. But Rothmann added a further diagnostic factor, culpability. Unlike Murray who portrayed poor whites as victims of their degraded environment, Rothmann held women partly or wholly responsible for the degeneration of their domestic sphere.

Broadly speaking, the Carnegie Commission’s poor white pathology identified rural Boers’ isolated environment, ignorance of modern socio-economic norms, and stubborn independence as principle causes of their impoverishment. Yet each researcher determined what caused the “poor white disease” by observing their subject and heeding their ideological proclivities. The result was a body of knowledge with common themes and internal inconsistencies.

A High-Stakes Diagnosis

Expectations of the Carnegie Commission could not have been higher. The unrelenting exodus of tens of thousands of poor, unskilled Afrikaners from farms to towns radically reshaped the landscape of white society. The presence of a permanent underclass of discontented, unemployed white voters threatened the legitimacy of the state and the viability of white supremacy.⁴⁹ Just as troubling to South Africa’s rulers was poor whites’ hostility toward the forces of progress that could lift them from destitution.

⁴⁹ For more on the “threat” posed by unemployed whites see David Yudelman, *The Emergence of Modern South Africa: State, Capital, and the Incorporation of Organized Labor on the South African Gold Fields, 1902-1939* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1983), as well as, Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*; Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*; and Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Simply put, poor whites displayed “a lack of...white racial identity based on a sense of essential difference from and superiority to blacks.”⁵⁰

But the Carnegie researchers were confident they could identify “remedies which were calculated to remove the cause of the evil... and build up and strengthen the general tone of the [social] organism.”⁵¹ Malherbe predicted, “the remedies will be manifold just as the causes are manifold.”⁵² Yet Rev. Albertyn was more circumspect about the prognosis. “Although there have been doctors for thousands of years, they have not yet solved the problem of illness. How much less can a panacea be expected for a social evil, the causes of which operate much more indirectly?”⁵³ This thesis presents the story of the Carnegie Commission’s attempt to cure the “social evil” of poor white disease.

⁵⁰ Klausen, *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*, 19.

⁵¹ Malherbe, *Education Report*, 3:4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵³ J. R. Albertyn, *Sociological Report: The Poor White and Society*, vol. 5a of *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* (Cape Town: Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, 1932), 2.

1. CARNEGIE COMES TO CAPE TOWN

Charles T. Loram, Native Affairs Commissioner, received the news while preparing for his vacation: after years of enticing officials of the Carnegie Corporation of New York⁵⁴ to visit South Africa, Frederick P. Keppel, president of the Corporation, was arriving on July 27, 1927, and he wanted Loram to organize his itinerary. Loram was the obvious choice to organize Keppel's visit. They had met a decade earlier when Loram was a doctoral student at Columbia Teachers College and Keppel served as Dean of Columbia College. The publication of Loram's dissertation, *Education and the South African Native*, marked him as a rising star in American academic and philanthropic circles. While Chief Inspector of Native Education in Natal, he served on the Phelps-Stokes Fund's African Education Commission expeditions to East, Central, and West Africa in 1920 and 1921. After traveling with the Phelps-Stokes team for several months, Loram was asked to join their British Advisory Committee on Education⁵⁵, but they were unable to offer him the salary he needed to take the post. In November 1923, the Phelps-

⁵⁴ To this day, the trust is officially referred to as the "Carnegie Corporation" or "the Corporation" even though it is a philanthropic foundation. "Founding and Early Years," Carnegie Corporation of New York, <http://carnegie.org/about-us/foundation-history/founding-and-early-years/> (accessed on February 5, 2012).

⁵⁵ Thomas Jesse Jones, *Education in Africa: A Study of West, South, and Equatorial Africa by the Phelps-Stokes Fund African Education Commission (1920-1921)* (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1922), 188. The Phelps-Stokes Commission was an initiative of American and British missionary organizations and philanthropists who believed that the problems of blacks in Africa and in the southern U.S. were similar and that educational techniques and policies in the U.S. could be effectively implemented in Africa. "Dr. C. T. Loram...[has] a thorough knowledge of [the] American experience in dealing with the race problem," wrote Thomas Jesse Jones in the Commission's final report, "In addition to a scientific grasp of the facts in the problem, he has a deep and unwavering faith both in the sense of justice of the white group and in the possibilities of the Native group."

Stokes Fund asked the Carnegie Corporation to contribute toward Loram's salary. Keppel declined to make the grant, but he was impressed by Loram's credentials and identified him as a potential partner for the Carnegie Corporation in South Africa.⁵⁶ Four years later, Keppel's visit to South Africa gave Loram the chance to show the most influential man in American philanthropy what he was capable of. It was the opportunity Loram had been hoping for – his vacation would have to wait.

This chapter unfolds the genesis story of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question in South Africa. It includes the customary creation narratives of Carnegie Commission historiography: the Carnegie Corporation's ties to South Africa's knowledge elites through Columbia Teachers College, the personalities and prejudices of Frederick P. Keppel, C. T. Loram, and E. G. Malherbe, the transition from eugenic to cultural and environmental theories of difference, and the relationship between the "poor white problem" and the "native question."

In addition to synthesizing current scholarship on the origins of the Carnegie Commission, this chapter employs documents from the National Archives Repository in Pretoria, not previously cited in the Carnegie Commission historiography. It delves into the often overlooked Research Grant Board, the committee of government bureaucrats, social scientists, and industry leaders who saw a Carnegie-funded Poor White Study as their best opportunity to collect desperately needed data on South Africa's rural economy and growing class of white unskilled laborers. Morag Bell discusses the Research Grant Board as a mechanism for coordination with the Carnegie Corporation for the Poor White

⁵⁶ Heyman, "Loram, a South African Liberal," 42.

Study; this chapter explores the composition and motivations of the Board itself, drawing on evidence from the Board's files at the National Archives Repository in Pretoria.⁵⁷

Eight representatives from the Research Grant Board served on the Joint Board of Control of the Carnegie Commission.⁵⁸ It was their responsibility to negotiate with representatives of the Dutch Reformed Church to structure a Poor White Study that met the needs of the Union government. The debates and decisions of the Joint Board, discussed in detail in the following chapter, created the framework within which the Carnegie researchers diagnosed the causes and cures of poor white disease.

As the author of the *Education Report*, E. G. Malherbe is the only character in the Carnegie Commission genesis story with a direct role in pathologizing the bywoner. Once the field research began in February 1929, neither Frederick Keppel nor C. T. Loram had any influence over the content or conclusions of the Poor White Study. But without these three men, and their relationships with one another, it is unlikely that the Carnegie Corporation would have funded a study of white poverty in South Africa.

⁵⁷ Bell, "American Philanthropy," 490-491.

⁵⁸ Representatives of the RGB on the Joint Board: Dr. S. F. N. Gie, Department of Education; Dr. J. W. Holloway, Department of the Census; Mr. J. C. Markotter, Transvaal Department of Education; Dr. J. A. Mitchell, Department of Public Health; and Mr. A. G. van der Horst, Department of Labour. C. T. Loram was also a member of the RGB, as was Dr. R. W. Wilcocks, Professor Psychology at Stellenbosch University, who served as the Secretary of the Carnegie Commission and lead researcher for the *Psychological Study*.

“Advancing” Science and “Diffusing” Culture

The Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation were the philanthropic juggernauts of the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁹ Andrew Carnegie established the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1911 with an endowment of \$125 million, roughly \$3.1 billion in 2012 terms.⁶⁰ He also set up a fund of \$10 million (\$244 million) for projects in the British Dominions and Colonies. Not to be outdone, in 1913 John D. Rockefeller, Sr. established a his own foundation focusing on public health research and disease eradication with an endowment \$100 million (\$3.4 billion.)⁶¹ While Rockefeller focused on the global epidemics such as hookworm, malaria, and yellow fever, Andrew Carnegie’s philanthropic mission was “promoting the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding.”⁶² Carnegie envisioned a global “university of the people” that brought knowledge to the masses. He spent \$13 million (\$179 million) building more than 2,500 free public libraries around the world, including \$1.3 million (\$18 million) for

⁵⁹ Only the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation exceeds Carnegie and Rockefeller’s transformational philanthropic power. With assets of \$36 million, the Gates Foundation has given more than \$26 billion in grants in just 15 years. Whereas the Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations rely on the income from their original endowments to determine their annual giving, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet continue to add billions of dollars to the Gates Foundation’s assets. “Foundation Fact Sheet,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/about/Pages/foundation-fact-sheet.aspx> (accessed on February 14, 2013).

⁶⁰ With assets of \$2.5 billion in 2011, the Carnegie Corporation is now the 24th largest foundation, yet it remains a driving force in global philanthropy. “Founding and Early Years,” Carnegie Corporation of New York, <http://carnegie.org/about-us/foundation-history/founding-and-early-years/> (accessed on February 5, 2012). For currency conversions, see <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php> (accessed February 14, 2013). “Top 100 Foundations by Asset Size,” Foundation Center, <http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/topfunders/top100assets.html> (accessed February 14, 2013).

⁶¹ Among Rockefeller’s first grants was a gift in 1918 to Johns Hopkins University to build and endow the nation’s first school of public health. “Moments in Time 1913-1919,” Rockefeller Foundation, <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/about-us/our-history/1913-1919>, (accessed on February 14, 2013).

⁶² “Founding and Early Years,” <http://carnegie.org/about-us/foundation-history/founding-and-early-years/>.

libraries in Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and other former British colonies.⁶³

Like many progressive reformers in the 1910s, the Carnegie trustees were “attracted by the eugenic promise of effecting fundamental social reforms through rational planning and control over the laws of human evolution.”⁶⁴ According to Ellen Lagemann, the Corporation was a “leading supporter of eugenics research,” including the work of biologist Charles Davenport, “a prominent figure in the movement...to improve what was then commonly described as ‘the germ plasm’ that controlled human evolution.”⁶⁵ Germ plasm could be incrementally improved from one generation to the next, particularly through education, a prospect that intrigued the Carnegie trustees.⁶⁶ From 1918 to 1924, the trustees commissioned a series of studies examining how “educational opportunities” could integrate a genetically diverse immigrant population into the American race. Carnegie-funded studies of *Schooling of the Immigrant*, *A Stake in the Land*, *Americans by Choice*, and *Adjusting Immigrant and Industry*, reflected the trustees desire to “preserve the racial purity of American society.”⁶⁷

In 1923, the Corporation’s emphasis on the “scientific management” of social development gave way to a paradigm of cultural change, with the Corporation’s new

⁶³ Robert Lester, *A Thirty Year Catalog of Grants: Showing Recipients and Totals of Grants made by Carnegie Corporation of New York during the period November 10, 1911 to September 30, 1941* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1942), 19, 108.

⁶⁴ Dubow, *Scientific Racism*, 123.

⁶⁵ Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 80.

⁶⁶ Rich, “Race, Science, and the Legitimization of White Supremacy,” 677. Germ plasm theory was the brainchild of August Weismann, a German scientist who argued that the hereditary code contained in the “germ plasm” determined the limits of a person’s development, therefore “the goal of human improvement could only work in the context of a more basic set of hereditarian limits.”

⁶⁷ Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 81.

president, Frederick P. Keppel, leading the way. Keppel spent most of his career at Columbia College. Graduating 1898, he took up the position of Assistant Secretary in 1900 and was appointed Dean ten years later. As the son of an art dealer, “art, books, Latin, poetry – the stuff of a classical liberal education [loomed] large in Keppel’s experience.”⁶⁸ Keppel’s personal interests reflected Andrew Carnegie’s belief that “it was the duty of men of great wealth to provide a culture that was both ‘instructive’ and ‘elevating.’”⁶⁹ For Keppel, culture, not biology, was the driver of social change and determinant of racial difference; a form of racism that “appealed broadly to people who felt pride in what they believed was white achievement and virtues.”⁷⁰ In 1935, Keppel wrote an “informal” and revealing report to the Carnegie trustees, “For those of us who believe in what, for want of a better term, is called the Anglo-Saxon tradition...[there] lies an essential unity of spirit, an agreement as to what things are really worthwhile in life, what things are right, and what are wrong.”⁷¹

Keppel’s cultural racism found sympathy in South Africa where white authorities used culture to explain social, political, and economic differences between the races. In her study of the “nutritional roots and consequences of apartheid,” Diana Wylie shows that white doctors, scientists, and public health authorities considered hunger and

⁶⁸ Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 101.

⁶⁹ Jeffrey Brison, *Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2005), 121.

⁷⁰ Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach*, 2.

⁷¹ Frederick Keppel, *Informal Report of the President on Visit to the Southern British Dominions January-June, 1935* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, October 1935), 38.

malnutrition in blacks to be result of cultural deficiencies.⁷² Blacks were hungry because they relied on agricultural practices that were unscientific and ineffective. The food they managed to grow was less nutritious and poorly prepared. Keppel's interests were institutional, not individual. His greatest concern was that South African cultural institutions were "slavish" imitations of their American and British counterparts. "With the exception of agricultural education...there is no corresponding 'bridge' in the education and cultural interests of the whites," he lamented.⁷³ After his visit to South Africa in 1927, Keppel recommended that the Corporation grant £25,500 (\$72,600) for an exchange program of South African and American educational and cultural leaders.⁷⁴

Carnegie - Columbia Connections

Keppel was the epicenter of a circuit of knowledge, ideas, and resources created by South African academics, students and professors at Columbia College, and the leadership of Carnegie Corporation. Membership in this network implied that its members shared "styles of research, political views, even manners."⁷⁵ The fraternity of Columbia alumni in South Africa invited Keppel to South Africa, but it was Mabel Carney, a professor at Columbia Teachers College, who convinced him to make the trip. Carney taught several students from South Africa whose work echoed her scholarly

⁷² Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach*, 2. The Carnegie Commission researchers applied this same cultural bias to hungry and malnourished poor whites. Their diet "was monotonous, being ill-balanced and lacking in variety, especially vegetables," and they were "ignorant as to the choice and proper preparation." Albertyn et al., "Joint Findings and Recommendations," xiv.

⁷³ Keppel and Bertram, *Report of the President and Secretary*, 16.

⁷⁴ By comparison, the grant for the Poor White Study was only £4,000, or \$11,100 (2012).

⁷⁵ Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 5.

interest in “Negro” education.⁷⁶ In 1926, she visited her former students in South Africa to learn about “native” education.⁷⁷ While Carney was away, Dr. James Russell, the Dean of Columbia Teachers College, joined the Carnegie Corporation, working directly with Keppel. It was “Carney’s glowing report, coupled with Russell’s new post [at Carnegie that] finally persuaded Russell (in 1926) and Keppel (in 1927) to come out for an in-depth look at philanthropic possibilities in the Union.”⁷⁸ In South Africa, Keppel found that the Columbia alumni network was eager to help him spend hundreds of thousands of dollars of Andrew Carnegie’s money.

Keppel arrived in Rhodesia in July 1927 and traveled through the Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal, and the Eastern and Western Cape, before departing Cape Town on September 2, 1927.⁷⁹ During his trip, he visited universities, schools, missions, and libraries and met with leaders in government, academia, and the church. He also spent time with two graduates of the Teachers College who were at Columbia during his tenure as president: Charles T. Loram, the Native Affairs Commissioner who coordinated Keppel’s itinerary, and Ernest G. Malherbe, a professor of education at the University of Cape Town. The purpose of Keppel’s trip was to identify projects for the Corporation to fund, so he turned to Loram and Malherbe for suggestions. Between them, they

⁷⁶ Glotzer, “The Career of Mabel Carney,” 325. Carney was also a graduate of Columbia Teachers College, recruited to return as a professor by her mentor Dr. James Russell, dean of the Teachers College.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 321. When Carney was in Cape Town, E. G. Malherbe arranged speaking engagements, a meeting with former Prime Minister Jan Smuts, and a dinner attended by 14 graduates of Columbia Teachers College.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 324–325. Carney’s role in bringing Keppel to South Africa is frequently overlooked by historians. The Corporation’s search for projects to fund in Africa is the reason most frequently cited for Keppel’s trip, but Glotzer argues that Carney played a pivotal role in the Carnegie-Columbia network. “[Carney’s] capacity for hard work, fairness...and ability to nurture friendships... transformed an alumni club, members of the [Teachers College] faculty, and the Carnegie Corporation staff into an active and powerful ‘old boy/old girl’ network.”

⁷⁹ Keppel and Bertram, *Report of the President and Secretary*, 7.

conceived of, funded, and initiated the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question: Malherbe proposed to Keppel that the Corporation make a grant for the Poor White Study and served as the researcher for the *Education Report*, Keppel provided the funds and arranged for two American sociologists to consult on the project, and Loram assembled representatives of the Union government and Dutch Reformed Church to form a Joint Board of Control for the study.

In his autobiography, Malherbe recalls meeting Keppel in Cape Town and sharing his opinion of the greatest social problem in South Africa in need of research. Malherbe showed Keppel an article he wrote on the poor white problem for the *Cape Times* in 1921. “We shall never solve the Poor White problem adequately until we get thorough and first-hand knowledge of the causes underlying this malady,” wrote Malherbe in the article, “We must get down to the bedrock facts, by living right with these people... Only when we have made a correct diagnosis and are certain of the causes can we remedy them.”⁸⁰ Malherbe gives himself credit for convincing Keppel to fund the Poor White Study, but his influence with Keppel was less consequential than his recollections suggest. Loram, not Malherbe, was Keppel’s key contact in South Africa. In his report to the Carnegie trustees, Keppel writes of Loram, “We feel that not only are we personally but the Corporation as a whole is under a deep sense of obligation to him.”⁸¹

For Malherbe, the poor white study was important, but his eyes were on a bigger prize. In the files of the Research Grant Board in the National Archives Repository in Pretoria is Malherbe’s proposal for an ambitious national program for “The Provision for

⁸⁰ Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 119.

⁸¹ Keppel and Bertram, *Report of the President and Secretary*, 7-8.

the Training of Research Workers Under the Faculty of Education” which was submitted to Keppel in August 1927.⁸² Malherbe’s request reflects a proclivity for cultural racism that he shared with Keppel, “In South Africa our education problems are rendered more complicated, by considerations of language, race, and different standards of civilization.”⁸³ He proposed that the Corporation provide funding for university students to be deployed to local schools around the Union to “diagnos[e] the intricacies of individual differences among pupils and their proper treatment...[and apply] objective measurement to products and processes hitherto regarded as incapable of measurement.”⁸⁴ Malherbe had an unshakable conviction that any social development program not firmly grounded in empirical evidence was folly. “Facts...are potential forces: more like sticks of dynamite,” he said, “Reformers forget this. They start with proposing remedies and are surprised when naught comes of them.”⁸⁵ Malherbe envisioned a Union-wide scheme that involved academics, university students, local schools, and teachers. He offered to test the project in the Cape Province through the University of Cape Town, where he was on the faculty. His agenda was clearly personal: “However desirable it may be that those actively engaged in teaching [education] should also do research, it is clear that such research, in order to be effective, must also have a

⁸² Proposals for Research Made to Dr. Keppel in South Africa, August 1927, (UOD) 7/MISC 77, SAB. Malherbe’s proposal was one of thirty projects the RGB recommended for Carnegie funding during Keppel’s visit to Cape Town. Other proposals included, “Study of Smaller South African Fauna”, “Investigation of Meteorological Conditions in the Southern Hemisphere”, “The Study of Native Psychology”, and “Study of Therapeutic Effects of Sunlight.”

⁸³ Ernest. G. Malherbe, Memorandum on the Provision for the Training of Research Workers under the Faculty of Education, August 1927, (UOD) 7/MISC 77, SAB.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Malherbe quoted in Fleisch, “Social Scientists As Policy Makers,” 349.

few men who will be engaged full time.”⁸⁶ Keppel declined to fund the study, but it did little to deter Malherbe from his goal.

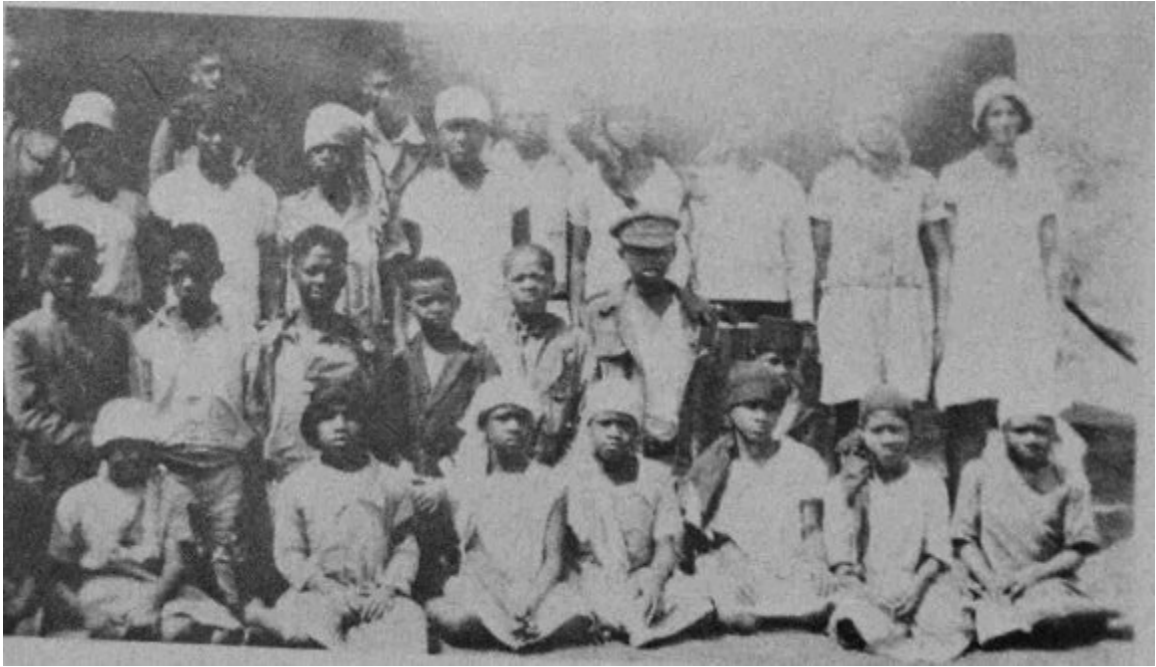


Figure 4. "Coloured" children at a Dutch Reformed Church school given intelligence test designed by E. G. Malherbe. Source: Photograph from Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 166.

In 1929, while Malherbe was conducting research for the *Educational Report*, he convinced Dr. D. F. Malan, the Minister for Education, to establish the National Bureau for Educational and Social Research under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.⁸⁷ Dr. Malan agreed to establish the Bureau, but in name only, as no funding was available

⁸⁶ Malherbe, Memorandum on the Training of Research Workers, August 1927, UOD/SAB.

⁸⁷ From June 1924 to November 1928, Dr. D. F. Malan served as Minister of the Interior, Education and Public Health. He appears in this chapter in his Education and Public Health capacities, as indicated. *1928-1929 Official Year Book of the Union and of Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland* (Pretoria: Government Printer and Stationary Office, 1930), 64.

for research.⁸⁸ Following the *CCR*'s publication in 1932, Malherbe traveled to the United States to raise funds for the Bureau. The Carnegie Corporation granted Malherbe \$92,500 to fund research projects, while the Union government agreed to pay salaries and administrative costs.⁸⁹

The mission of the Bureau far exceeded Malherbe's original vision for training university students to conduct research at local schools. Malherbe created a new paradigm of engagement and influence between social scientists and policy makers. According to Brahm Fleisch, policy-minded social scientists like Malherbe believed that "discoveries of facts have enormous power to set in motion process of social change them. Without them, social change is an emotional activity that generates, at best, sound and dust."⁹⁰ Malherbe developed a regimen of standardized intelligence tests to evaluate Union education policies. By giving the black and white students the same test, Malherbe measured and compared racial intelligence.⁹¹ As instruments of public policy, the intelligence tests "reproduced the existing class [and race] structure through the seemingly neutrality of science."⁹² But ideological concerns meant little to Malherbe who "felt sure that outcomes and methods were much more important than theories and dogma."⁹³ The Bureau relied on Malherbe's relationship with Keppel to keep the Carnegie dollars flowing; but personal affinities and professional loyalties

⁸⁸ Fleisch, "Social Scientists as Policy Makers," 353-354; Lester, *Thirty Year Catalogue of Carnegie Grants*, 102.

⁸⁹ Lester, *Thirty Year Catalog of Carnegie Grants*, 108.

⁹⁰ Fleisch, "Social Scientists As Policy Makers," 350.

⁹¹ The Bureau also encouraged white schools to use the tests to separate the scholastically promising students from those better suited for vocational training.

⁹² Fleisch, "Social Scientists As Policy Makers," 357.

⁹³ Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 223.

notwithstanding, Keppel decided the Bureau's methods and outcomes were "second rate" and the Corporation ended its support in 1940.⁹⁴

Poor White Problems and Native Questions

C. T. Loram was no less ambitious than his young friend Malherbe. Not an Afrikaner himself, Loram was less interested in poor whites and more concerned about the development and progress of the "native." He considered himself a "segregationist", taking the middle ground between "repressionists" who believed that total economic and political control of the blacks was the only way to preserve minority rule, and "equalists" who argued that blacks could be assimilated into white society, given an appropriate education, limited economic opportunities, and some form of franchise.⁹⁵ Segregationists claimed that blacks could be educated and trained to play an economically productive role in society, so long as they stayed in their territory. For territorial segregationists, "cities and urban areas and the temperate high veld regions were considered the abodes of whites, while the low veld areas and regions of dense African peasant settlement such as the Transkei and Zululand were the terrain of Africans."⁹⁶ Within their own territory, Africans could develop and evolve to their racially limited potential. According to Paul Rich, "Loram was a strong advocate of segregation...for he felt that the education of African should be geared towards industry and agriculture rather than 'literary and

⁹⁴ Lester, *Thirty Year Catalog of Carnegie Grants*, 108; Fleisch, "Social Scientists As Policy Makers," 371. Malherbe's fall from grace with the Carnegie Commission was preceded by a period of "financial problems" and struggles with "the petty jealousies of colleagues, and the alarming growth of the Afrikaner right" who rejected the moderate segregationism favored by Malherbe. See Glotzer, "The Career of Mabel Carney," 330.

⁹⁵ Rich, "Race, Science, and the Legitimization of White Supremacy," 687.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 688.

bookish' training."⁹⁷ Loram reasoned that a Standard Four education would be sufficient to tame the native's "aggressive spirit" and instill the civilized values of hard work and diligence, making them more productive servants, farmers, and miners.⁹⁸

But many whites, particularly the Afrikaners in the Northern Provinces living among the largest portion of the black population, doubted that territorial segregation and a civilizing education were sufficient means of controlling blacks. "To deepen and stabilize the rule of a racially defined minority, it was necessary to split the majority into compartmentalized [tribal] minorities," writes Mahmood Mamdani. Whites ruled blacks indirectly, with the implicit and explicit assistance of tribal authorities. But for indirect rule "to be believable, and to stick, it had to be anchored in an historical and cultural experience [of the tribe.]"⁹⁹ Exposure to white culture and education undermined "tribal" bonds, so Loram's "civilizing" agenda fell out of favor. As segregationist strategies gave way to indirect rule, Loram found himself increasingly at odds with the Afrikaner nationalists setting native policy in the Union government. A prophet without honor in his own country, Loram left South Africa in 1931 for the ivy-covered comfort of Yale University where he preached the virtues of segregation to a willing pupil, Jim Crow.¹⁰⁰

Loram abandoned the field of battle just as Malherbe was gearing up for the fight. Malherbe was contemptuous of policies that suppressed and "tribalized" the native,

⁹⁷ Rich, "Race, Science and the Legitimization of White Supremacy," 676.

⁹⁸ Charles T. Loram, *The Education of the South African Native* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917), 41-42.

⁹⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 96.

¹⁰⁰ Before departing for America, Loram wrote a wistful, paternalistic missive, "I could not help thinking how much good...the European has done to the African...Discipline is good for us all, and with all his disadvantages, the South African Bantu are receiving at the hands of the European a training which will stand them in good stead." Quoted in Heyman, "Loram, a South African Liberal," 47.

dismissing them as evidence of a white “inferiority complex.” In his presentation of the Carnegie Commission’s research at the annual meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science in July 1929, Malherbe said the so-called native question “boils down to [the] fear that the upper 50 percent of the native race will oust the lower 10 per cent of the white. And under the influence of this fear the white man resorts to measures which will jeopardise the whole of South Africa’s future.”¹⁰¹ Rather than benefitting from a “colour bar” that protected jobs for whites, Malherbe argued that “such measures will in time rob the dominating race of the virility bred from the buffeting of stern competition and will render it soft and weak when the Nemesis comes.”¹⁰²

Not everyone in the audience shared his opinion. An editorial in *Ons Vaderland*, the leading Transvaal newspaper, called Malherbe conclusions “thoughtlessly stupid” and “schoolboy chatter.” “It is clear that Dr. Malherbe understands precious little of the conditions on the countryside, and particularly in the Northern Provinces,” they scolded.¹⁰³ Malherbe’s remarks also offended his new boss, D. F. Malan, the Minister of Education and a leader of the Nationalist Party (NP). In 1905, Dr. Malan spent six months in the Transvaal and his exposure to white poverty convinced him, “if the ‘progressive’ blacks were allowed to continue on this course, there was no hope of South Africa’s remaining a ‘white man’s’ country.”¹⁰⁴ For Dr. Malan, the “poor white problem” and the “native question” were two sides of the same coin, solving the one could not be achieved without answering the other.

¹⁰¹ “Striking Address by Dr. Malherbe,” *Cape Times*, July 24, 1929.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ As quoted in “Causes of ‘Poor Whiteism’.” Nationalist Reply to Dr. Malherbe,” *Cape Times*, July 29, 1929.

¹⁰⁴ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 328.

This presented a challenge for the Pact government whose poor white supporters were terrified of *swart gevaar*, the “black peril” to their lives and livelihoods from educated, enfranchised, and employed blacks.¹⁰⁵ Prime Minister Hertzog promised his white constituents a job and a ‘civilized’ wage, but South African industrialists were averse to replacing skilled, cheap black laborers with unskilled, costlier white workers. In fact, mining companies and capitalist farmers were clamoring for more black workers.¹⁰⁶ The 1921 Interim Report of the Unemployment Commission bemoaned the plight of the Simmer Deep mine, “which had to close down last year after a long struggle with an inadequate supply of native labour.”¹⁰⁷ The Commission noted that farmers were also suffering, including “the poorer white farmer and *bijwoner*, whose limited means restrict him to the season rush to native labour, the scarcity of which often deprives him of the full value of his crop.”¹⁰⁸ As far as industry was concerned, hiring more whites, at a civilized wage, only made sense if they had enough black workers for them to supervise.

For the Pact government, the poor white-native conundrum was a minefield: industry needed to maximize profits and minimize expenses, the state needed the tax

¹⁰⁵ See Jeremy Seekings, “‘Not a Single White Person Should Be Allowed to Go Under’: *Swartgevaar* and the Origins of South Africa’s Welfare State, 1924-1929,” *The Journal of African History* 48, no. 3 (January 1, 2007): 375–394.

¹⁰⁶ T. Dunbar Moodie, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 45. The black labor “crisis” was created in large part by blacks exercising their right to choose where they worked, even though their options were very limited. “Despite many of the measures encouraging recruitment (advances up front) and controlling the labor force (taxes, pass laws, lengthy contracts, and the compound system), black migrant workers...did exercise strategic choice.” They could choose between mining and agriculture, what kind of mining they wanted to do, gold being the preference, and which mine they wanted to work in.

¹⁰⁷ Union of South Africa Parliament, *Interim Report of the Unemployment Commission 1921* (Cape Times Limited, 1921), 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

revenues that major industries, especially mining, provided, and the government needed to retain the support of unemployed whites. “In other words, the state necessarily had to commit itself increasingly to ensuring the viability of certain key industries, especially the gold mines; at the same time it had to do this in a way that would not fundamentally estrange the white electorate,” writes David Yudelman.¹⁰⁹ Malherbe’s “inferiority complex” undermined the state’s position with industrialists, who already objected to fixing the poor white problem with a massive employment scheme, and it threatened the state’s legitimacy with poor whites by implying that native problem was only in their minds.

Having infuriated his new boss and jeopardized the reputation of the Carnegie Commission, Malherbe and his fellow Carnegie researchers released a statement to the press. “Dr. E. G. Malherbe is strongly of the opinion that an interpretation could have been put on his words other than that of the merely tentative and personal statement...[that was] really intended.”¹¹⁰ The Carnegie Commission was an objective, fact-finding investigation, they said. Their job was to collect information, not set policy. “The committee is not a Government Commission, nor were the political and social views that might be held by the individual investigator ever inquired into,” they assured their readers. When the *Carnegie Commission Report* was published four years later the researchers reiterated that they were “concerned mainly with finding facts and causes.” In the introduction to the *Education Report*, Malherbe was suitably restrained, “In writing

¹⁰⁹ Yudelman, *Emergence of Modern South Africa*, 38-39.

¹¹⁰ Quotes from the researchers’ statement taken from ““Poor Whites’ Inquiry. Investigators Define Their Functions. Aim Merely to Gain Facts. Dr. Malherbe’s Address Misinterpreted?” *Cape Times*, July 30, 1929.

this report I have given most space to the *presentation* of these facts...and relatively little to discussion of and philosophizing about them,” adding contritely, “Only here and there my own conclusions are explicitly stated, more by way of starting the reader on a line of thought, than in the attempt to be dogmatic in any way.”¹¹¹

Malherbe’s “fact-finding” debacle reflected the central point of negotiation over the diagnostic framework of poor white disease. On one side was the state, represented by the ministries of Labour, Education, and Public Health, who were fed up with trying to treat a disease with an unknown etiology. They wanted an epidemiological analysis of the patterns, causes, and effects of poor white disease so they could devise policies for prevention and treatment. On the other side was the Dutch Reformed Church who was concerned that most of the victims of poor white disease were rural Afrikaners living in DRC parishes. They wanted to dissect the social, psychological, and moral health of the poor white, hoping that such an autopsy would reveal how and why rural Afrikaners degraded into poverty. The two positions were hotly contested through a process of committee meetings and correspondence from January to October 1928. The outcome of these negotiations determined the diagnostic framework for the Carnegie Commission’s poor white pathology.

Making Policy in the Dark

The dispute was unwittingly set in motion by Frederick Keppel, who gave the government’s Research Grant Board the authority to manage the Carnegie research

¹¹¹ Italics are from the original text. Malherbe, *Education Report*, 3:12.

grants¹¹² and then insisted that the DRC lead the Poor White Study. Founded in 1918 as a subcommittee of the Advisory Board of Industry and Science, the Research Grant Board (RGB) was an office in the Ministry of Mines and Industries. Its original research portfolio included areas of knowledge that the Department felt were restricting the economic growth of the Union including, “statistics of production, scientific and industrial research, the encouragement of industries, and the development and utilization of the natural resources of the country.”¹¹³ Unfortunately, chronic underfunding hampered the RGB. In its first five years of existence, the Board gave an average of £1,700 per year (\$4,600 in 2012 terms) for scientific research.¹¹⁴

In 1923, the government, pleading poverty, proposed eliminating the RGB. This prompted a bitter response from the RGB commissioners: “To withhold from scientific research its due share of the national resources, in flagrant contradiction to the Government’s professions of interest in this important Department of national activity, would be nothing short of betrayal of the best interests of the country.”¹¹⁵ The RGB painted a bleak picture of scientific research in the Union. The universities “have no money for original research... [and] the Government grant to the Royal Society of South Africa...has been cut off.”¹¹⁶ With undisguised frustration and indignation, they declared that the RGB “finds itself in the farcical position of being the only Body in Union

¹¹² Research Grant Board, *Proposals for Research*, August 1927, UOD/SAB. In August 1927, Keppel met with R. B. Young, Chairman of the RGB to discuss the possibility of the RGB administering Carnegie funds for scientific research and an exchange programs for scientists and academics.

¹¹³ *Report of the Research Grant Board 1918-1935* (Pretoria: Government Printers and Stationary Office, 1936), 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ A. C. Marsh, *Memorandum Regarding Provision of Funds in 1923 for Research Purposes*, February 5, 1923, (PM) 1/2/398, PM118/2, SAB.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

charged with the duty of supporting original research in Science and of having no funds at its disposal.”¹¹⁷ The president of the Scientific and Technical Societies of South Africa wrote to Prime Minister Jan Smuts condemning the government for its actions, “What may, at the time, appear to be a small savings is likely to affect adversely the conditions of the country for many years.”¹¹⁸ The RGB survived the bureaucratic chopping block, but its funding was cut to the bone. In 1923 and 1924 the RGB gave a total of £550 (\$1,500) in grants-in-aid.

Despite the budget cuts, the Board’s membership expanded to include a handful of ministries and experts beyond mining.¹¹⁹ At the time of Keppel’s visit, the Board included representatives from the ministries of Agriculture and Labour, as well as the head of the Government Chemical Laboratories, two mining engineers, and the director of the Department of Veterinary Education and Research. The South African Institute for Medical Research, Victoria Falls Power Company, and the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory also had seats at the table. University of Stellenbosch, University of Cape Town, Transvaal University College, and the University of the Witwatersrand contributed experts in geology, history, physiology, psychology economics, botany, and chemistry. One of the academics was Professor R.W. Wilcocks of the University of Stellenbosch. His membership on the Board led to his appointment as the secretary of the Carnegie Commission and author of the *Psychological Report*.

¹¹⁷ Marsh, Memorandum Regarding Provision of Funds, February 25, 1923, PM/SAB

¹¹⁸ Elsdon Dew to Prime Minister Jan Smuts, March 15, 1923, (PM) 1/2/398, PM118/2, SAB.

¹¹⁹ For a list of RGB members, see Research Grant Board to Frederick Keppel, August 25, 1927, (UOD) 4/Misc 43, SAB.

In 1926, the RGB published a report detailing its grants-in-aid. One of the studies caught the eye the Mr. Hotz, Secretary of Labour, and prompted him to contact the registrar of the University of the Witwatersrand. “It is gathered...that one of the subjects under investigation at your institution is the history of the poor white question,” he wrote. “As the [Labour] Department is desirous of keeping in touch with the current research into that question, I shall be glad if you would be good enough to furnish me with such further particulars.”¹²⁰ The Registrar replied that indeed, a study of the history of the poor white problem was underway, by none other than historian W. M. Macmillan. Macmillan’s work on the poor white question was widely known and highly regarded. In 1919, he gave a series of lectures that were published as *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development*, and the ideas they contained had a significant influence on the Carnegie Commission’s analysis of the historical and environmental roots of the poor white problem. Unfortunately for Mr. Hotz, Professor Macmillan was on sabbatical in England in 1926.

The lack of data on the South Africa’s white rural workforce was tying Labour officials in knots. In 1927, the Advisory Council of Labour dedicated a portion of its annual meeting to the “Investigation into South African Village and Rural Life.” The Council bemoaned “the almost complete darkness in which the economic conditions of the rural areas and smaller urban centers are wrapped.”¹²¹ Statistics on wages and working conditions in rural areas and small towns were urgently needed, but “even the

¹²⁰ Mr. Hotz to Registrar of University of Witswatersrand, September 8, 1926, (ARB) 3984/LD1763/1, SAB.

¹²¹ Tenth Session of Advisory Council of Labour: Investigation into South African Village and Rural Life, October 1927, (ARB) 3984/LD1763/1, SAB.

barest statistical data, beyond the figures of population, are entirely absent once we leave the nine largest urban areas.”¹²² The Council was anxious to slow the migration of unskilled, poor white laborers to the cities. They hoped a study of social conditions in rural areas would “determin[e] the extent to which the attractiveness of these conditions might be increased as a means of counteracting the lure of the city.”¹²³ Ignorance of rural economies made it almost impossible to know the “reactions of past and existing industrial laws and policies on the national life.”¹²⁴ Perhaps, they suggested, an independent institution, such as a university, could secure a substantial grant to undertake the research. For Labour officials, the Carnegie Corporation came to Cape Town just in time.

A Job for ‘Competent Men’

When he returned to New York, Keppel sent the Carnegie Board of Trustees a report on his trip and on November 17, 1927, the trustees awarded 17 grants for projects in South Africa totaling £108,600 (\$294,000). As part of its support for scientific research, the Carnegie Board designated £4,000 (\$10,800) for “A Co-operative Research” project on the poor white problem. “Europeans who have sunk below the economic level of the more advanced natives and who present a problem of the utmost gravity, which neither sociology, nor economics, nor public health, nor psychology and education can

¹²² Tenth Session of Advisory Council of Labour, October 1927, ARB/SAB.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

deal with alone,” Keppel explained to his colleagues.¹²⁵ A cross-disciplinary study that brought together the most “competent men” in the Union was needed to diagnose the problem.

On November 29, 1927, Keppel sent Loram a copy of his report to the trustees and a letter informing him that the grants contained in the report had been approved. On January 12, 1928, Loram sent Prime Minister Hertzog a copy of Keppel’s report to the Carnegie trustees. Loram made a bid for the Prime Minister’s support of the Carnegie initiatives. “The Carnegie Corporation is most anxious to work [sic] with the Govt. and has asked me to act, unofficially of course, as its adviser in these matters.”¹²⁶ He predicted that the Carnegie grants portend a new wave of investment in South Africa by American foundations, while simultaneously positioning himself at the center of the potential developments. “I know that a representative of the Laura Spelman Fund¹²⁷ will be here this year or next...My chief hope and expectation is however, that the Rockefeller Foundation will help with the scheme for training natives in health work.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Keppel and Bertram, *Report of the President and Secretary*, 17. The connection between the Carnegie Corporation and studies of South African poverty continues into the twenty-first century. When Carnegie funded a study of black poverty and apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s, its authors called it “The Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa”. In 2011, the University of Cape Town launched “Towards Carnegie 3: Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality.” For information on Carnegie 3’s September 2011 launch conference and a PDF of the thesis author’s conference paper, “Multi-sectoral Approaches to Ending Hunger and Malnutrition,” see “Towards Carnegie 3: Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality,” accessed March 7, 2013, <http://www.carnegie3.org.za/about>; For information on the second Carnegie study see Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart*, ed. Omar Badsha (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1986); and Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge: Report for the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa*, 1st American ed (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989).

¹²⁶ C. T. Loram to Prime Minister Hertzog, January 12, 1928, (PM) 1/2/398, PM118/2, SAB.

¹²⁷ Laura Spelman Rockefeller was the wife of John D. Rockefeller. She was the namesake of Spelman College in Atlanta. Established in the late 1800s as a seminary for black women, Spelman received significant gifts from the Rockefeller family for decades.

¹²⁸ Loram to Hertzog, January 12, 1928, PM/SAB.

Table 1. Carnegie Corporation Grants to South Africa approved in 1927. Of the £108,600 in grants awarded by the Corporation in 1927, only 3.7 percent were designated for the Poor White Study. *Source:* Table adapted from data in Bertram and Keppel, *Report of the President and Secretary*, 11-17.

	Per Annum	Years	Total	US\$ 2012
Scientific Research				
Poor White Study	£2,000	2	£4,000	\$11,100
Research projects selected by the Research	£2,000	5	£10,000	\$27,700
Travel allowances to young scholars	£750	5	£3,750	\$10,400
<i>Subtotal-Scientific Research</i>			£17,750	\$49,200
Library Science				
Stipend and travel expenses for two U. S. library scientists to consult on South Africa's library system	£4,500	1	£4,500	\$12,500
Additional library service grants			£20,000	\$55,400
<i>Subtotal - Library Science</i>			£24,500	\$67,900
Native Education and Culture				
Support to Jeanes Schools to train native teachers	£5,000	4	£20,000	\$55,400
Demonstration project to improve education materials in native languages	£3,000	1	£3,000	\$8,310
Develop a tool to measure Bantu mental capability and improve teaching methods	£1,500	1	£1,500	\$4,150
Support for government vocational school	£2,500	1	£2,500	\$6,930
Grants for inter-racial cooperation	£3,750	1	£3,750	\$10,400
<i>Subtotal - Native Education</i>			£30,750	\$85,190
Other "Non-European" Initiatives				
Technical training for "coloured" students	£1,750	1	£1,750	\$4,830
Grant to start a technical college for Indian students in Cape Town	£3,000	1	£3,000	\$8,310
<i>Subtotal - Other "Non-European"</i>			£4,750	\$13,140
Art and Archaeology				
Grants to university art departments in Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town	£3,000	1	£3,000	\$8,300
Publication of the collection of Bushman cave paintings	£1,500	1	£1,500	\$4,150
<i>Subtotal - Art and Archeology</i>			£4,500	\$12,450
Adult Education				
Salary for a tutor at a worker education project	£850	1	£850	\$2,350
<i>Subtotal - Adult Education</i>			£850	\$2,350
Academic exchanges				
South African to the U.S.	£18,000		£18,000	\$49,800
U.S. to South Africa	£7,500		£7,500	\$22,800
<i>Subtotal - Academic Exchanges</i>			£25,500	\$72,600
TOTAL CARNEGIE GRANT TO SOUTH AFRICA			£108,600	\$302,830

Keppel was convinced that the RGB were “competent men” with a solid track record of administering grants, but he was apprehensive about giving a government entity sole oversight of the Poor White Study. Government participation and cooperation in the study was desirable, but given the highly political nature of the topic, Keppel was concerned that the study would be unduly “partisan.”¹²⁹ “To avoid possible complications, an invitation to the Corporation from some non-political body to support the study is essential,” wrote Keppel to the trustees, “We have had intimations that such an invitation would be forthcoming from the Dutch Reformed Church, the best possible agency.”¹³⁰

At Loram’s request, The Right Hon. F.S. Malan, the highest-ranking South African Party (SAP) representative in parliament and leader in the DRC Cape Presbytery, agreed to approach the church about joining the study. On 13 October 1927, Malan chaired a meeting of the Cape Presbytery and recommend they accept Keppel’s invitation to lead the Poor White Study. The *Cape Times* reported Malan as saying, “He would rather see the initiative taken by the Church...because he did not want it to be said that the Church did not concern itself in that vital question affecting the welfare of a large number of people who they were in duty bound to look after.”¹³¹ The study would be primarily psychological and moral, focusing on “Poor Whites and their classification into normal and abnormal in order to try and arrive at the causes of the evil.”¹³² The extent that malnutrition and misogyny contributed to white impoverishment would also be

¹²⁹ Keppel and Bertram, *Report of the President and Secretary*, 8.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹³¹ “‘The Poor White Question’, Senator F. S. Malan’s Suggestion. Carnegie Trustees to Be Approached for Research Work,” *Cape Times*, October 14, 1927.

¹³² Ibid.

examined, he said. Malan also stressed that there needed to be “a great deal of attention as to what extent economics influenced the creation of 'Poor Whites' in their midst.”¹³³

The presbytery passed Malan’s recommendation and asked him to send a letter to the Carnegie Trustees on their behalf.¹³⁴

The decision to ask Malan to secure the DRC’s participation in the Poor White Study was strategic, but it had consequences that Loram neither anticipated, nor intended. Malan’s role as chairman of the Carnegie Commission is rarely mentioned in the historiography, yet in every debate over the practice and purpose of the Poor White Study, Malan’s position carried the day. As a former Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Mines and Industries, and Agriculture, Malan easily outranked the government bureaucrats and church officials serving on the Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie Commission. Given his seniority and experience, if Malan set his mind to something, no one could question his judgment. The next chapter describes how Malan’s leadership of the Joint Board and the debates between the Research Grant Board and the Dutch Reformed Church created the parameters within which the Carnegie researchers diagnosed poor white disease.

¹³³ "The Poor White Questions", *Cape Times*, October 14, 1927.

¹³⁴ The letter from F.S. Malan and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) “requesting” funding for the Poor White Study would not be sent until January 10, 1929, almost two months after the Carnegie Trustees had approved the funding. No doubt Keppel had received confirmation of the DRC’s October 13 decision to lead the study before the Carnegie Trustees voted on November 17, making the letter from Malan a formality only.

2. SEARCHING FOR A POOR WHITE SYMBIOSIS

For more than two decades, Senator F. S. Malan maintained the conviction that the poor white problem could not be solved without the active engagement of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). As chairman of the 1906 Cape Parliament Select Committee on the Poor White Question, Malan was particularly impressed by the work at Kakamas, an DRC labor colony on the banks of the Orange River, where poor whites worked on a large irrigation project in return for a plot of land on which they could live and grow food.¹³⁵ In the Select Committee's final report, Malan urged the church to build more such colonies, noting that poor whites "require moral and religious supervision; and...such a body will undertake the task in a spirit of enthusiasm, which is essential to its success, but is foreign to any purely Government undertaking."¹³⁶ In 1908, Malan reiterated his conviction in his testimony before the Transvaal Indigency Commission. When asked what made Kakamas a success compared to labor colonies run by the Transvaal government, he replied, "What [poor whites] require...is moral supervision, and the State cannot give that. Your settlement at Douglas...is a failure, because...all that Government has to do with the matter is to say, 'There is your ground, and if you pay me the rent I am satisfied.'"¹³⁷ For Malan, poverty was as much a psychological and moral

¹³⁵ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 320.

¹³⁶ Malan, *1906 Report of the Select Committee on the Poor White Question*, ix.

¹³⁷ *TIC Minutes of Evidence*, 139.

condition as an economic one, so any attempt to reduce white poverty that did not include significant participation from the church was doomed from the outset.



Figure 5. Home of a "prosperous settler" at the Kakamas labor camp. *Source:* Photograph from *Psychological Report*, 2:chap. 8.

Historians overlook Malan's role in the Carnegie Commission, concentrating instead on the officious C. T. Loram and loquacious E. G. Malherbe; but dismissing Malan as a figurehead is a mistake. The poor white problem was the unfinished business of Malan's thirty years in public service. He took advantage of his position as chairman of the Joint Board of Control to direct the Poor White Study towards his priorities: increasing the authority, responsibility, and engagement of the church in preventing and treating poor white disease.

Like Malan, the Joint Board of Control is virtually invisible in the Carnegie Commission historiography, yet its decisions about the content and purpose of the Poor

White Study created a diagnostic framework that pathologized the bywoner. In her study of disability and healing in Botswana, Julie Livingston observes that diagnostic frameworks set the parameters “through which medical practitioners define, describe, and explain disease.”¹³⁸ The Joint Board of Control, through a sequence of committee meetings, conversations, and correspondence, created a set of constraints within which the Carnegie researchers were expected to operate, both in their research and in their findings. Livingston also notes that any diagnostic process “expresses as much about current sociocultural realities, and biases, therapeutic technologies and the power of medical epistemologies as it does about an objective organic state.”¹³⁹ The story of the Joint Board provides insight into the challenge of incorporating unskilled white workers into an industrial economy built on cheap African labor, as well as the struggle of the Union government and Dutch Reformed Church to reach *sybiosis*¹⁴⁰ over their approach to “uplifting” hundreds of thousands of Afrikaners from poverty. The plot begins with its main protagonist, The Right Hon. Senator F. S. Malan.

F. S. Malan’s Unfinished Business

F. S. Malan entered the Cape parliament in 1900 as a member of the Afrikaner Bond party before joining Jan Smut’s South Africa Party (SAP). During his long and distinguished career, he served as Minister of Agriculture, Education, and Mines and

¹³⁸ Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 153.

¹³⁹ Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination*, 153.

¹⁴⁰ This study draws on David Yudelman’s theory that social and political institutions with complimentary, yet conflicting agendas can find a *sybiosis* that strengthens both of their positions without reconciling all of their differences. See Yudelman, introduction to *The Emergence of Modern South Africa*.

Industries in the governments of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts.¹⁴¹ In 1919, when Smuts was in Europe attending the Paris peace talks, Malan served as Acting Prime Minister for more than a year. When Smuts returned to the Union, Malan wielded enormous power and frequently led the debates in Parliament on behalf of the SAP.¹⁴² From 1924 until his retirement in 1936, he represented the Cape SAP in Parliament.



Figure 6. First cabinet of the Union of South Africa, assumed office on May 31, 1910. F. S. Malan, Minister of Education, top right. *Source:* Photograph from J. Ploeger and Anna Smith, eds. *Pictorial Atlas of the History of the Union of South Africa* (Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik Ltd., 1949), 71.

Scholars are split in their interpretation of F. S. Malan. According to Peter Kallaway, Malan became a force in South African politics because of a combination of Cape Liberal pragmatism and a highly attuned political acumen. Cape Liberalism “stood

¹⁴¹ F. S. Malan served as Minister of Education from 1910 to 1921, Minister of Agriculture from 1920 to 1921, and Minister of Mines and Industries from 1912 to 1924. *1928-1929 Official Year Book of the Union*, 64.

¹⁴² Smuts willingness to trust F. S. Malan with such authority probably stems from their friendship as students at Cambridge University. See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 304.

for rationality, progress, and universalist values; it counted on the modernizing forces of free trade, education, and democracy to overcome ignorance, prejudice, and local oligarchies.”¹⁴³ Cape Liberals were leaders in the church, universities, and other social institutions. They constituted, what Richard Elphick calls, a “benevolent empire” that was not directly involved in the political system, but nonetheless had a political agenda that closely resembled Malan’s preferences for rationality and pragmatism over racial ideology.¹⁴⁴ Throughout his career, Malan advocated for “a stable labour force of black as well as white workers,” and for “allowing non-whites to do skilled work and semi-skilled work under certain circumstances.”¹⁴⁵ Believing “a union based on black exclusion was not a genuine union,” Malan supported qualified Union-wide enfranchisement and the development of a black middle class.¹⁴⁶

But F. S. Malan was not a typical Cape Liberal. According to Hermann Giliomee, Malan’s political influence was enhanced by his credentials as a leader of the Afrikaner Bond and his support of a nationalist agenda. From 1895 to 1908, he was editor of *Ons Land*, the leading Afrikaans-language newspaper in the Cape. As editor, he was a fierce critic of Lord Milner’s administration in the Transvaal and British “jingoism” toward Afrikaners, often complaining, “The affairs of South Africa are again arranged from Downing Street.”¹⁴⁷ The Bond agreed with the Cape Liberals on the expansion of the

¹⁴³ Andre du Toit, “The Cape Afrikaners’ Failed Liberal Moment, 1850-1870,” in *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect*, eds. Jeffrey Butler, Richard Elphick, and David Welsh (Middletown, Ct.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 36–37.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Elphick, “Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism” in Butler et al., *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa*, 69-70.

¹⁴⁵ Kallaway, “F. S. Malan, Cape Liberal Tradition,” 121.

¹⁴⁶ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 305.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 243.

franchise and native education, but the Bond's response to the native question was "segregationist" and they emphasized white unity in a way that Cape Liberals did not. "[The Bond] represent[ed] the less educated part of the white electorate [and] protested against the limited funds spent on white education, particular on rural schools."¹⁴⁸ According to Isabel Hofmeyr, the Bond's populism made it attractive to the "gentile poor", including "the legion of dubiously certified teachers, the clerics in poor parishes...small shopkeepers and traders...leading a precarious life."¹⁴⁹ But Malan was never comfortable with strident Afrikaner nationalism. He was a strong supporter of the Afrikaans language movement, but was critical of Afrikaner nationalists for making it a "fetish".¹⁵⁰ His moderate positions put him at odds with the new generation of conservative Afrikaners and by the time the Carnegie Corporation came to Cape Town in 1927, he was weakened politically; but he was still a respected senior statesman with considerable knowledge of the poor white problem. As a political moderate, a leader in the Cape Presbytery of the DRC, and an expert in education, industry, agriculture, and native affairs, Malan was the ideal candidate to lead a committee of government and church officials in setting up the parameters for the Poor White Study.

A Poor White Turf War

The Carnegie Corporation gave the government's Research Grant Board (RGB) the authority to select the researchers for the Poor White Study, but instructed, "thereafter the enterprise should be carried on as to redound to the credit of the [Dutch Reformed]

¹⁴⁸ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 289.

¹⁴⁹ Isabel Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902-1924," in *The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (New York: Longman, 1987), 98.

¹⁵⁰ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 389.

Church.”¹⁵¹ This directive did not sit well with the department secretaries and industry leaders of the RGB. For years, the Departments of Labour, Education, Public Health, and Mines and Industries had clambered for data on white workers and rural economic conditions. They had no intention of wasting time on psychological or moral causes of white poverty, which were Malan’s primary concerns.

On January 27, 1927, the RGB met to discuss their goals for the Poor White Study. Their priority was that the study “be devoted to Research Work on the existing condition of the poor whites of South Africa and the causes which have brought it about.”¹⁵² The first step was to identify, organize, and classify all the relevant data and studies currently available on poor whites. Once the data was collated, they would decide what additional research was needed. The RGB resolved to take control of the Poor White Study from the DRC, in defiance of the Carnegie Corporation’s instructions. “The Board fully recognizes the great work...and valuable efforts...made by the Dutch Reformed Church towards the practical solutions of the poor white problem,” they said, pledging to conduct the study “in the spirit suggested by the Carnegie Corporation.” Then the Board members lowered the boom: “At the same time [the RGB] desires it to be clearly understood that research work...should be on the scientific side [and] fall under the control of the Research Grant Board.” The RGB intended to lead the Poor White Study and to manage it on terms that met the needs of the government.

¹⁵¹ Keppel and Bertram, *Report of the President and Secretary*, 12.

¹⁵² Quotes from this meeting can be found in Resolutions of the Research Grant Board Regarding Cooperation with the Carnegie Corporation of the Poor White Question in South Africa, January 27, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

One month later, a delegation from the RGB, including Wilcocks and Loram, met with Malan and four representatives of the Cape DRC Presbytery to discuss the RGB's plans for the study. The discussion was productive, but Malan refused the RGB's principle demand, to relinquish control of the study.¹⁵³ Instead, the parties agreed to create a 15-member Joint Board of Control that included representatives from the RGB and the Cape, Transvaal, and Orange Free State DRC Presbyteries.¹⁵⁴ Malan was appointed Chairman of the Joint Board and Wilcocks was chosen as Secretary. The DRC agreed to the RGB's call for a review of existing data on poor whites, but wary that the RGB would use the review as a stalling tactic to strengthen their hand, the DRC set a timetable of no more than two months. The meeting concluded with a brief discussion about hiring an American sociologist with knowledge of the poor white problem to act as a coordinating secretary.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Report of the Combined Meeting Held Between the Members of the Cape Province [DRC] Representatives of the Research Grant Board, February 22, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Addendum to Report of the Combined Meeting Held Between the Members of the Cape Province [DRC] Representatives of the Research Grant Board, February 22, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB. While the idea of an overseas sociologist was appealing, they were concerned that this was not a cost-effective use of the grant money. The notes of the meeting do not indicate who suggested hiring an American sociologist, it was in all probability, C. T. Loram. Sociology was not a well-developed field of study in South Africa and Loram was concerned that without a trained sociologist, the research would be poorly directed. He continued to advocate for an American sociologist with members of the Joint Board and directly with Keppel.

Table 2. Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa. * Indicates a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Research, a subcommittee responsible for selecting the Carnegie researchers. *Source:* Adapted from R. W. Wilcocks to Robert Young, June 19, 1928, (UOD) 4/Misc 43, SAB.

Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie Commission	
Senator F. S. Malan *	Chairman of the Joint Board, Representative of the DRC Cape Province
Dr. R. W. Wilcocks *	Secretary of the Joint Board, Representative of the RGB
Representatives of RGB and Government Ministries	
Dr. S. F. N. Gie	Department of Education
Dr. J. W. Holloway	Department of the Census
Dr. C. T. Loram *	Native Affairs Commission
Mr. J. C. Markotter	Transvaal Department of Education
Dr. J. A. Mitchell	Department of Public Health
Mr. A. G. van der Horst	Department of Labour
Dr. W. J. Viljoen	Cape Province Department of Education
Representatives of Dutch Reformed Church	
Rev. J. R. Albertyn	Dutch Reformed Church
Rev. T. F. Cronje	Transvaal Presbytery
Rev. J. R. Luckoff *	Cape Province Presbytery
Mr. C. Murray	Cape Province Presbytery
Rev. P. J. Pienaar	Orange Free State Presbytery
Rev. F. X. Roome *	Cape Province Presbytery

One way to interpret the tension between the government and the church over the Poor White Study is as a “turf war” over who controlled the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of poor white disease. Jeremy Seekings’ description of the Carnegie Commission as a “backlash” against the welfare state supports this scenario. “Prior to 1924...[the DRC] played the major role in the relief of poverty among white people, especially in rural area,” but in the 1920s, the church lost ground to the growing welfare state, which treated white poverty as an economic problem, not a psychological or moral

one.¹⁵⁶ “[The Pact government] introduced programmes based on the novel idea that the state had a major responsibility for raising white people out of poverty,” writes Seekings.¹⁵⁷ He sites the Old Age Pensions Act of 1928 that provided pensions for elderly whites and coloured men and women as evidence of the state’s pragmatic approach to addressing poverty.¹⁵⁸

Seekings argues that in the Poor White Study, the DRC saw an opportunity to reclaim ownership of the poor white “cause”. The Poor White Study was “a backlash against the existing programmatic, state-based responses to poverty,” and under the influence of the DRC, the researchers determined that “the redress of poverty would require the elimination of vice and ignorance.”¹⁵⁹ Neither the records of the Joint Board of Control nor the Carnegie researchers’ hypotheses and research plans indicate a premeditated “backlash” on the scale Seekings suggests. The Carnegie researchers were highly critical of welfare programs, especially for creating a cycle of dependency that destroyed individual initiative; but they were also highly critical of the DRC for not “adapt[ing] itself fully to the rapid and widespread social changes...and insufficient intensive social work amongst the poor.”¹⁶⁰

This study proposes that the state-church tension over poor whites was not a “turf war”, but a search for a mutually beneficial symbiosis. David Yudelman develops the theory of symbiosis in his study of the state-capital relationship in South Africa, which is

¹⁵⁶ Seekings, “Carnegie Backlash Against Welfare State,” 518.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. The Act was created in response to the Pienaar Commission on Old Age Pensions and National Insurance in 1926 that “recommended that the state greatly expand its responsibility for the poor through means-tested, non-contributory old-age pensions and disability (or invalidity) grants.”

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 519-520.

¹⁶⁰ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” xxix.

often characterized as a battle between two adversaries over how to “incorporate organized [white] labor into the state structure without wrecking the capitalist economy.”¹⁶¹ In South African historiography, these two needs are placed at the opposite ends of a chessboard, constructing a historical narrative that reads like a tally of moves and counter moves, wins and losses. Yudelman argues that neither the state nor capital could effectively organize and incorporate white labor into the economy on its own. Despite rhetoric condemning the policies and practices of the other¹⁶², state and capital recognized their need to find a mutually beneficial symbiosis that provided sufficient “legitimization” to keep a given government in power and sufficient “accumulation” for the industrialists.

The Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie Commission was an acknowledgement that both the state and the church had a role in preventing and treating poor white disease. The diagnostic framework given to the Carnegie researchers in 1928 privileged the DRC’s concerns for psychological causes of poor white disease, but the researchers were also expected to provide a rigorous analysis of economic and social conditions, as well as quantitative studies of the health and education of poor whites. When published, the *Carnegie Commission Report* recommended improving the administration of government programs by coordinating with and through the church and charitable institutions.¹⁶³ The Carnegie Commission reflected the etiology preferred by

¹⁶¹ Yudelman, *The Emergence of Modern South Africa*, 3.

¹⁶² Ibid., 6. “Unlike the marriage of individuals, state-capital relationships everywhere tend to be characterized by public antipathy and private passion,” writes Yudelman.

¹⁶³ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” xxviii – xxxiii.

the church, but its recommendations for prevention and treatment amount to a blueprint for church-state symbiosis on the treatment of poor white disease.¹⁶⁴

Just the Facts, Thank You

The search for symbiosis began in earnest at the Joint Board's first meeting on April 14, 1928. The point of contention was who would have the "responsibility", or in this case, the "right", to formulate policy recommendations that might result from the Poor White Study.¹⁶⁵ Wilcocks recorded the conversation this way: "Regarding the religious and moral condition of the Poor White, Dr. Loram pointed out that there might easily be a danger of going off into platitudes...or of expressing purely subjective views."¹⁶⁶ Wilcocks responded by reminding the Joint Board "the Carnegie Corporation desired the research to 'redound' to the credit of the church and that therefore the [religious and moral] problem should be tackled." Malan weighed in, saying, "Whenever the enquiry indicates remedial measures, suggestions to give effect to such measures are to be put forward [by the researchers.]" Loram countered that the researchers' job was to get the facts and "that the formulation of remedial measure might be left to the Joint Board." Mr. C. Murray and Rev. F. X. Roome of the Cape Presbytery argued, "[a] statement of causes could not take place without already suggesting means of

¹⁶⁴ Seekings, "Carnegie Backlash Against Welfare State," 526. Seekings acknowledges that the *Carnegie Commission Report* recalibrated the church-state relationship over poor whites. "Whilst the welfare state continued to grow, despite the [Carnegie] Commission's attack, it did so in a somewhat bifurcated way, combining programmatic elements...with more moralist rhetoric and policies...in which the church played important roles."

¹⁶⁵ Agenda: Meeting of the Joint Board Appointed on the Poor White Question, April 14, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB. The agenda for the meeting indicated that the primary discussion centered on the content for the study. They discussed topic in the five research areas: sociology, economics, public health, psychology, and education. The substance and influence of these deliberations will be discussed in chapter two.

¹⁶⁶ Quotes in this paragraph can be found in Minutes of Meeting of Joint Board on the Poor White Question, April 14, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

improvement.” Dr. J. A. Mitchell, Secretary for Public Health pushed back, stating, “Prevention and cure would go together but should be held over until the diagnosis had been made in order to prevent the research work from being prejudiced.”

No consensus was reached at the meeting, but records indicate that researchers were instructed to draw conclusions from the evidence they collected, but not make specific policy recommendations. In a separate meeting, C. W. Cousin, Secretary for Labour, expressed his concern that the Poor White Study would be a “series of investigations without practical point,” if all the researchers did was collect facts.¹⁶⁷ He wanted a study that provided “a clear path to the Government in regard to education and health and effort to be put forth towards a remedy.” Professor Wilcocks told the Secretary that the “Joint Board as well as the research workers had taken this aspect into consideration but were not in favor of laying down any clear path of practical policy.” Loram added, “It had been feared that investigators would begin work with the idea of finding a cure.” The researchers were told “they should approach the question with an open mind, collect facts and draw conclusions from these facts” which would then be submitted to the Joint Board who would draw up policy recommendations.

As Minister for Public Health, Dr. D. F. Malan displayed a hawkish determination to prevent the Carnegie researchers from making policy pronouncements. Dr. Malan’s concerns were articulated in a letter from Secretary Mitchell to Dr. W. A. Murray, author of the *Health Report*, the only government official among the researchers. “Dr. Malan...desires me to make it clear to you that...you should restrict your work and

¹⁶⁷ Quotes from this conversation can be found in Notes from Meeting between C. W. Cousin, C. T. Loram, and R. W. Wilcocks, January 24, 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

reports thereon to the collection and submission of data,” wrote Mitchell. Murray was told to avoid “the submission of any proposals or recommendations which might be interpreted as in any way committing the Government on any question of policy or to any expenditure.” Mitchell directed Murray to see himself as a census worker whose sole responsibility was to collect information and to leave it “to the Authorities concerned to formulate their own recommendations and proposals.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ J. A. Mitchell to W. M. Murray, February 20, 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

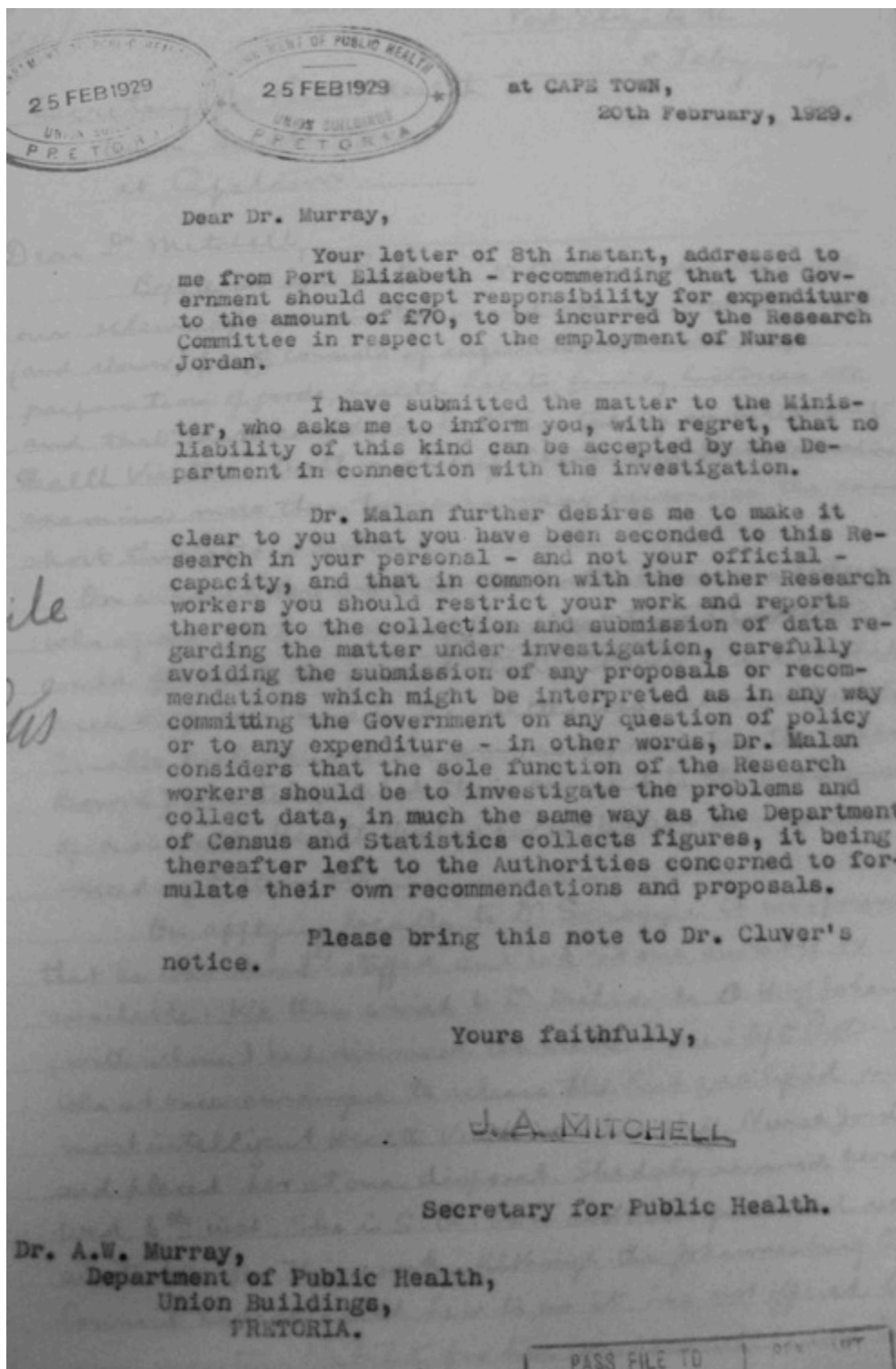


Figure 7. Letter from J. A. Mitchell, Secretary of Public Health, to Dr. W. A. Murray, Carnegie researcher for the *Health Report* containing Dr. D. F. Malan's directive on data collection. Source: Mitchell to Murray, February 20, 1929, GES/SAB.

In fact, the dividing line between general conclusions and policy recommendations was illusory. The researchers' recommendation of "compulsory education up to an age limit of at least fifteen years (irrespective of the school standard reached by the child)," was a general conclusion with specific policy implications.¹⁶⁹ Education was neither compulsory, nor free for rural whites. Such a mandate would require significant legislative efforts and would have been virtually impossible to enforce. The 1934 National Conference on the Poor White Problem at Kimberly made the fact-finding-policy debate irrelevant. According to Rev. J. R. Albertyn, author of the *Sociological Report*, the purpose of the Kimberly Conference was to take the 40 recommendations in the *CCR* and "endeavor to base on them definite proposals for a nationwide policy attacking the common problem."¹⁷⁰ The conference produced more than 100 policy recommendations, including the creation of a Bureau of Social Work, the institution of a national unemployment insurance program, and an endorsement of the Commission on Old Age Pensions' plan to develop a system of national health insurance.¹⁷¹

Historicity of Poor White Disease

The question of fact-finding spilled over into a debate about the extent to which the Poor White Study should consider historical factors contributing to poor white

¹⁶⁹ Albertyn et al., "Joint Findings and Recommendations," xxvi.

¹⁷⁰ *Report of the National Conference on the Poor White Problem, Kimberly, 1934* (Cape Town: Nasionale pers beperk, 1935), 3.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 304. In the 1930s, there were 1,000 medical practitioners working in rural South Africa, approximately one for every 46,000 miles. "The organization of South Africa's health services was totally inadequate largely as a result of the compromise at the time of union...[when] the responsibility for health was divided in a bewildering fashion among provinces, municipalities, and the central government." See Shula Marks and Neil Andersson, "Industrialization, Rural Health, and the 1944 National Health Services Commission in South Africa," in *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*, ed. Steven Feierman and John M. Janzen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 148, 153.

disease. Sen. Malan had a longstanding conviction that the poor white problem was a historical phenomenon rooted in the closing of the South African “frontier”. In presenting the findings of the 1906 Select Committee, he wrote, “The conditions of life in...the interior of South Africa are undoubtedly favorable to the development of a type of character peculiar to the pioneer. Strength, self-reliance and courage are its chief qualities.”¹⁷² While acknowledging the heroic self-reliance of the thousands of Afrikaner pioneers who trekked to the ‘wilds’ of inland Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State in the 1830s and 1840s, the Select Committee was concerned that their descendants were isolated from “modernizing” influences, such as education and advances in agriculture. In his appearance before the Transvaal Indigency Commission, Malan testified, “The population starts out being pastoral and living from hand to mouth...When they find the land no longer produces enough...well, there is the trek.”¹⁷³ Malan was convinced that the pioneering Voortrekkers were “unfit for the more strenuous struggle for [settled] existence...and too often they become the victims of circumstances, such as periodic drought.”¹⁷⁴ Generations of ignorance and poverty bred a large and growing class of poor, landless whites with no skills to recommend them for employment.

When the Joint Board met, Malan made his position clear; the Poor White Study should include a robust examination of the historical causes of the degradation of the Afrikaner pioneer. Like many questions regarding the structure and content of the Poor White Study, members of the Joint Board quarreled over the relevance of the historicity

¹⁷² Malan, *1906 Select Committee on the Poor White Question*, iv.

¹⁷³ *TIC Minutes of Evidence*, 138.

¹⁷⁴ Malan, *1906 Select Committee on the Poor White Question*, iv.

of white poverty. The representatives of the RGB insisted that the researchers collect data on the current conditions of poor whites, not speculate about the history of a social phenomenon. Dr. S. F. N. Gie of the Department of Education was concerned that a historical study would distract the researchers from the government's pressing need for data on poor whites and the rural economy. Meanwhile, Loram attempted to outflank Malan by arguing that the Carnegie Corporation did not expect the Poor White Study to include a historical investigation.

But this time Secretary Mitchell broke ranks with his government colleagues. As a medical man, Mitchell appreciated the historical nature of poor white disease in a way that his coworkers did not. He believed that poor white disease was caused by long-term exposure to environmental factors; therefore, a diagnosis was, inherently, "a historical index of its own."¹⁷⁵ Mitchell suggested that the Joint Board instruct the researchers to conduct a historical study of limited scope. "Given that the historical side will have to be studied...every effort should be made to keep it practical and to keep the final objects of the investigation in view."¹⁷⁶ The Board agreed to tell the researchers to restrict their historical studies to five areas related to South Africa's frontier past: the roots of poor whites' prejudice against doing manual labor; the "origin and development of the trek spirit which...induced people to trek away when the economic circumstances became too difficult for them;" the extent to which wars with "natives" and the Anglo-Boer war contributed to white poverty; the poor whites' lack of access to educational facilities; and

¹⁷⁵ Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination*, 153.

¹⁷⁶ Minutes of Meeting of Joint Board, April 14, 1928, GES/SAB.

“the effects of the rapid change in the economic conditions of the country particularly from a pastoral to industrial state.”¹⁷⁷

These questions drew on a theory of rural decline, discussed in detail in the following chapter, which causally linked the degradation of rural Afrikaners to the “closing” of the frontier. The Joint Board’s instructions were specific, but once the investigation began, the researchers themselves determined the extent to which the theory of rural decline influenced their pathology of poor white disease.

Question of the Sociologist

No single question animated the members of the Joint Board more than the issue of who would author the *Sociological Report*. Malan, Wilcocks, Loram and Gie met on 12 June 1928, and selected four of the five Carnegie researchers: R. W. Wilcocks, *Psychological Report* and coordinating secretary; E.G. Malherbe, *Education Report*; Dr. J. F. W. Grosskopf, agronomist and professor at the University of Stellenbosch, *Economics Report*; and Dr. W. A. Murray, district health officer, *Health Report*. The researcher for the *Sociological Report* was an open question. Loram was adamant: the lack of a qualified South African sociologist necessitated hiring one from Britain or America, but Malan, Wilcocks and Gie were not as keen. In addition to budgetary constraints, they were concerned that the search for an experienced sociologist would delay the work of the other researchers.¹⁷⁸ They agreed to appoint someone on an interim

¹⁷⁷ Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Research on the Poor White Question, June 14, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB. June 14, 1928.

¹⁷⁸ Minutes of Meeting of Committee of the Board of Research on the Poor White Question, June 12, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB. There is evidence the Keppel was willing to pay to bring a sociologist from overseas. Wilcocks received a letter from Keppel indicating that if “a thoroughly competent person” was found, “the question of financing him...could then come up on its merits.”

basis until an experienced sociologist could be found. Loram indicated his willingness to take the post. Two days later, their recommendations were presented to the Joint Board for consideration. Wilcocks, Malherbe, Grosskopf, and Murray were quickly approved. Then the conversation turned to the sociologist. There are two accounts of this conversation that capture what must have been a heated and tense exchange. The first is the official minutes of the meeting as taken by Professor Wilcocks. The second is a written report by Mr. A.G. van der Horst to C. W. Cousins, Secretary of Labour.

According to both sources, the nomination of Loram as interim sociologist met with immediate resistance from the DRC. Not one of the researchers represented the church, they protested. To add insult to injury, Loram was not an Afrikaner – he was of British ancestry. How could he possibly comprehend or sympathize with the experiences of rural Boers? In the face of obvious hostility, Loram withdrew his nomination and the debate continued.¹⁷⁹ Offended that the RGB seemed to think the church's work with poor whites was remedial, the DRC pointed out that they had a number of conferences on the poor white problem that had dealt with the issue in a "scientific" way. "These facts, as well as the intimate knowledge of the Poor White which the church had obtained in the course of many years justified the appointment of a...representative of the church on the Committee of Deans of Research," they argued.¹⁸⁰ Then, the DRC played the trump card, reminding the Board members, "the research grant was largely given by the Carnegie

¹⁷⁹ After stepping aside from the sociological study, Loram's active participation in the poor white study rapidly declined. He focused his energies on another Carnegie-funded project, the Institute for Race Relations.

¹⁸⁰ Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Research, June 14, 1928, GES/SAB.

Trust as a result of representations made by the Church.”¹⁸¹ Everyone in the room knew that without the participation of the church, the Corporation would not fund the Poor White Study. The Joint Board agreed that Rev. J. R. Albertyn, director of the Cape DRC’s poor relief programs, would lead the sociological study on an interim basis.

When the Joint Board met again on July 27, 1928, Loram made an impassioned plea for an overseas sociologist. In a thinly veiled criticism of Albertyn’s lack of scientific experience, Loram said, “There was no dearth, of course, of men with invaluable experience into remedial work of the Poor White Problem...[and] considerable knowledge of what might be called the philosophy of the poor white question.”¹⁸² He also implied that Albertyn was unlikely to criticize the church’s poor relief work, where as a “trained sociological investigator would show that the...remedial measures which were being applied in South Africa had been tried and been found wanting elsewhere.”¹⁸³ Loram invoked Keppel’s name, saying it was his express wish that the Board employ a trained sociologist. Nevertheless, that same day, Keppel wrote a letter to Wilcocks approving of Joint Board’s selection of Albertyn as the interim sociologist. “I am quite sure that full responsibility for caring out the work should rest upon your shoulders...and that the Corporation should back your judgment,” he wrote.¹⁸⁴ Budgetary considerations put the final nail in the coffin for the overseas sociologist. When the Carnegie researchers met for the first time in October 1928, “it was decided that no clear case could be made out at present for the expenditure which would be

¹⁸¹ A. C. Van der Horst to C. W. Cousins, June 15, 1928, (ARB) 3984/LD1763/1, SAB.

¹⁸² C. T. Loram, Report on the Sociological Aspect of Poor White Question, July 27, 1928, (UOD) 4/Misc 43, SAB.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ F. P. Keppel to R. W. Wilcocks, July 27, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

involved with such an appointment.”¹⁸⁵ Albertyn was permanently awarded the sociological investigation.¹⁸⁶

A Poor White Symbiosis

By August 1928, the RGB and DRC arrived at a tentative symbiosis over three elements of the Carnegie Commission’s diagnostic framework. The Carnegie researchers would gather facts and draw conclusions, but avoid policy recommendations. Historical causes of poor white disease could be considered, but within limits. And the Union government and the Dutch Reformed Church each provided a researcher: Rev. Albertyn for the *Sociological Report* and Dr. Murray for the *Health Report*. The maneuvering, politicking, and acrimony between the members of the Joint Board of Control effectively ended in October 1928, when the influence over the content and conclusions of the Poor White Study shifted to the researchers. The next chapter investigates the histories and mythologies of rural decline that the researchers integrated into their diagnosis of poor white disease.

¹⁸⁵ R. W. Wilcocks to Frederick Keppel, October 22, 1928, (UOD) 4/Misc 43, SAB.

¹⁸⁶ Bell, “American Philanthropy,” 491–492. At Loram’s insistence and urging, Keppel hired two American sociologists, Dr. Kenyon Butterfield and Dr. C. W. Coulter, to travel to South Africa and advise the Commission on its research program. Dr. Coulter travelled with the researchers during the summer of 1929. Dr. Butterfield met with the researchers in April 1929 to discuss their research plans and again in May 1929 to review their preliminary hypothesis.

CARNEGIE CORPORATION
of New York,
522, Fifth Avenue,
NEW YORK.

Office of the President.

July 27, 1928.

Professor R. W. Wilcocks,
Stellenbosch,
South Africa.

Dear Professor Wilcocks,

Upon receipt of your letter of June 19
regarding the Poor White question, I cabled you as follows:

"Approve your decision regarding overseas
sociologist".

Fuller experience may bring your Board to the belief that further
light on the sociological problems involved in the study may be
desirable, but meanwhile I am quite sure that full responsibility
for carrying on the work should rest upon your shoulders and those
of your associates, and that the Corporation should back your
judgment in every way possible.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) F. P. KEPPEL.

Figure 8. Letter from Frederick Keppel, president of Carnegie Corporation, to R. W. Wilcocks regarding the choice of Rev. J. R. Albertyn as the researcher for the *Sociological Report*. Source: Keppel to Wilcocks, July 27, 1928, GES/SAB.

3. FRONTIERS OF RURAL DECLINE

In 1906, F. B. Smith, Director of Agriculture in the Transvaal, expressed cautious optimism that “a better class of farmers” was becoming firmly established in the British administered colony.¹⁸⁷ These progressive farmers were English-speaking yeomen, “landowners, whose well-capitalized farming operations were geared to market production.” They employed the latest scientific advances in veld preservation, water conservation, pest eradication, and disease control.¹⁸⁸ Yeomanry was common in the British Natal Colony, where farmers maximized yield per acre through large inputs of capital and labor. Smith and his colleagues at the Transvaal Department of Agriculture were keen to constrain what they saw as inefficient and unproductive agricultural practices of Boer farmers, who used far fewer inputs relative to the size of acreage under cultivation, thereby producing significantly lower yields.¹⁸⁹

Smith touted the department’s programs to help farmers modernize their operations. These initiatives included training schools, loans to purchase equipment, and

¹⁸⁷ F. B. Smith, “Annual Report of the Director of Agriculture,” in *1906 Transvaal Department of Agriculture Annual Report*, ed. Transvaal Department of Agriculture (Pretoria: Government Printers and Stationary Office, 1907), 60, .

¹⁸⁸ Robert Morrell, “‘Synonymous with Gentlemen’?: White Farmers, School and Labor in Natal, c. 1880-1920,” in Crush and Jeeves, 181.

¹⁸⁹ Stanley Trapido, “Reflections on Land, Office and Wealth in the South African Republic, 1850-1900,” in *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore (London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1980), 362. Stanley Trapido argues that historians put too much emphasis on the political ramifications of the Milner Administration’s attempt to “create a class of commercial yeoman farmers.” The most important outcome of the Anglicization policy was the “substantial state involvement in agriculture.”

veterinary services. But agricultural officials were frustrated by the “large numbers of [Boer] farmers” who were content to “[raise] from their land a mere subsistence for their families.”¹⁹⁰ To Smith, these poor Boer farmers and sharecropping bywoners appeared content to eke out an existence as subsistence producers, much like their pioneering ancestors, the Voortrekkers. The Milner administration complained, “so long as the farm will give them a living, [Boers] prefer to spend their days in other pursuits...rather than making their land more productive.”¹⁹¹ Rural Boers were impoverished by their “narrowness of outlook, [marked] by [a] lack of enterprise and by a dread of the strange world outside the farm.”¹⁹² “Backwardness” and “isolation” condemned bywoners to poverty, and possibly extinction.

The “backwardness” of isolated Boer farmers had become a familiar trope of Cape-liberal Afrikaner politicians and social scientists who connected their country’s frontier tradition with the failure of the rural *volk* to adjust to the modern world. Martin Legassick best captures the causal link between colonial expansion and white poverty in South Africa in his classic critique of South Africa’s romantic frontier historiography. He punctured the puffy scholarship that portrayed Boers as intrepid adventurers seeking virgin lands, while jealously guarding their freedom to live as they chose. Instead, Legassick characterized the “trek spirit” as deeply “individual and anarchic, suspicious of and hostile to the authority.”¹⁹³ He also dismissed the idea that rural Boers were naturally

¹⁹⁰ *Report of the Transvaal Indigency Commission 1906-1908* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1908), 54.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, xvi.

¹⁹³ Martin Legassick, “The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography,” in Marks and Atmore, 45. Legassick identified “the obstinacy of the African chiefs, the oppression of British colonial administrators, or the patronage of Cape Afrikaners” as the targets of trekker hostility.

driven to explore the “wild” interior, as historian I. D. MacCrone once boasted.¹⁹⁴

“Isolated from Cape Town, isolated from Europe, isolated from government, isolated from each other,” the frontier offered many Voortrekkers nothing, except backward destitution, Legassick argued.¹⁹⁵ At the end of the nineteenth century capitalists were reaping profits from mining and wresting land from subsistence producers in order to promote mechanized farming. Love of the “frontier spirit”, he concluded, merely kept the pioneer and his descendants from embracing the progressive and profitable “practice of intensive agriculture.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ I. D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa; Historical, Experimental and Psychological Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 99.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 45. Intensive agriculture maximizes yields by intensive inputs of land, labor, and capital per acre, where as extensive agriculture uses minimal inputs resulting in much smaller yields.

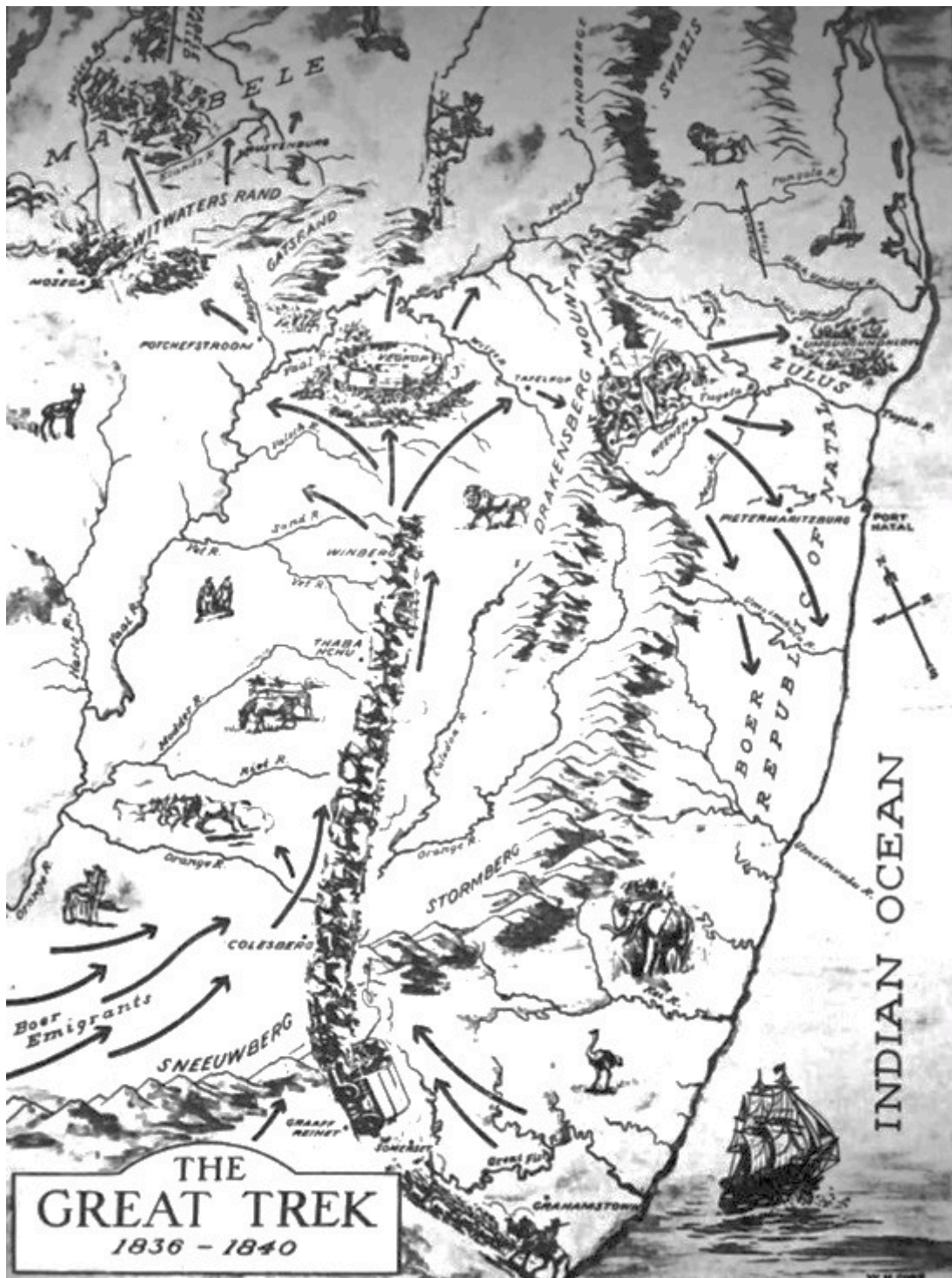


Figure 9. Stylized map charting the movement of Voortrekkers in the Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State. Source: *Pictorial Atlas of the History of South Africa*, 77.

Prophecies of Degradation and Destruction

Frustration with the resiliency of the pre-modern frontier spirit and fear of rural decline permeated the poor white “canon”: the series of studies, commissions, and investigations of white poverty and unemployment dating back to the 1906 Select Committee on the Poor White Problem.¹⁹⁷ These investigations produced a cumulative body of knowledge on poor whites, a tome of “sacred” writings containing prophetic visions of environmental destruction and social degradation that shaped the Carnegie Commission’s “way of perceiving, characterizing, and interpreting” poor white disease.¹⁹⁸ The first two chapters of this study focused on the Carnegie Commission’s process: the creation of the Carnegie Commission and the debates within the Joint Board of Control that generated a diagnostic framework within which the Carnegie researchers were expected to operate. But this process did not take place in a vacuum. The Carnegie researchers’ understanding and interpretation of poor whites was informed by a series of canonical texts that “debated [the role of] people, events, places, and natural resource exploitation” in rural decline, “as well as social and political relations” between whites and “natives”, rich and poor whites, rural Boers, urban Afrikaners, and English-speaking South Africans.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ The author considers the “canon” of poor white studies to include: 1906 Cape Parliament Select Committee on the Poor White Question, 1908 Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1913 Union Parliament Select Committee on European Employment and Labour Conditions, *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* by W.M. Macmillan (1919), 1921 Interim Report of the Unemployment Commission, 1922-23 Reports of the Drought Investigation Committee, and the *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* (1932).

¹⁹⁸ Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past*, 1.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. This definition of “body of knowledge” comes from Tamara Giles-Vernick’s study of the Mpiemu people’s way of interpreting history and engaging environmental change.

This chapter explores the debates over the causes and consequences of rural decline in the two bodies of knowledge that most influenced the Carnegie researchers, the *Transvaal Indigency Commission (1908)* and Afrikaner historian W. M. Macmillan's study of *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development (1919)*. It also examines the relationship between theories of rural decline and the Voortrekker mythologies that were the narrative currency of Afrikaner nationalism. Finally, it demonstrates how J. F. W. Grosskopf, author of the *Economic Report*, and R. W. Wilcocks, author of the *Psychological Report*, incorporated the theory of rural decline into their diagnoses of poor white disease.

Evidence in this chapter is drawn from documents in the files of the Department of Public Health at the National Archives Repository in Pretoria that have not been previously cited in Carnegie Commission historiography. In October 1928, each investigator prepared a research plan, detailing the methodology of their study. The plans did not follow a set format, but they helped the researchers identify areas where their work overlapped. In May 1929, having completed their research in the Natal and Cape provinces, each researcher developed a "tentative hypothesis" based on their work to date. These hypotheses were firmly rooted in the theory of rural decline and influenced the researchers' interpretations of what they saw and heard in the "frontiers" of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. The methodologies and hypotheses provide an extraordinary window into the researchers' thinking before and during their field research. As a result, it is possible to track how the researchers engaged paradigms of rural decline as they pathologized the bywoner.

Mythological Voortrekkers

As a historical figure, the Boer pioneer, or *Voortrekker*, represented the best of the Afrikaner character, its bravery, perseverance, and resourcefulness. After their defeat by the British in the Second South African War, tales of Afrikaner pioneers who left the Cape Colony “in their ox wagons to become the major agents of settler expansion” during the Great Trek, as well as Afrikaner victories in battle, such as their defeat of the Zulus at Blood River in 1838, “turned into a full-scale Voortrekker industry.”²⁰⁰ In 1905, journalist Gustav Preller wrote a series of articles on Voortrekker “history” that were “unabashedly emotional, affective and colourful.”²⁰¹ Preller was not a historian, he was a mythologizer “with a one-dimensional view of the past” whose articles took “a single characteristic or trait” of the Voortrekker “then portrayed it as the essence of reality.”²⁰²

Mythologized views of frontier history were expressed and commemorated in a variety of forms. *The Pictorial Atlas of the History of the Union of South Africa* (1949) is an excellent example of the interplay of myth, truth, and remembrance. The Great Trek is presented as the fulcrum of Afrikaner history. A highly stylized drawing of Cradock Pass called *The Trekkers' Road* purports to show “the kind of road the Voortrekkers had to use.”²⁰³ In addition to depictions of battles and renderings of Voortrekker heroes, there are photographs of everyday objects such as guns, wagons, and women’s bonnets. There are also stills from the “historical” film “The Building of a Nation” showing pioneers

²⁰⁰ Isabel Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words,” 109; William Beinart and Peter A. Coates, *Environment and History: the Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa*, Historical connections (London: Routledge, 1995), 12.

²⁰¹ Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words,” 110. Preller’s articles were circularized in papers across the country and 15,000 copies were sold in book form.

²⁰² Paul A Cohen, *History in Three Keys: the Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 214.

²⁰³ *Pictorial Atlas of the History of the Union of South Africa*, 78.

setting up camp and the Battle of Blood River. In the *Atlas*, historical people, events, and places are presented in a seamless narrative that is far more myth than reality.



Figure 10. *The Trekkers' Road* by Col. C. C. Mitchell. Source: *Pictorial Atlas of the Union of South Africa*, 78.

Afrikaners were encouraged to see their own lives and histories as an extension of these heroic mythologies. Paul Cohen describes this as an “everyday” mythology composed of “images of the past that ordinary people in all societies carry around in their heads.”²⁰⁴ With the proliferation of the Kodak camera in the 1910s, amateur photographers recorded these everyday mythologies and gave them a wider audience.

²⁰⁴ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 215.

Photographs celebrating the lives of ordinary Afrikaners were published in magazines such as *Die Huisgenoot* (*The Home Companion*). In one issue, a photograph of four elderly sisters was presented with the caption, “Healthy living on our wide open veld helped explain the sisters’ great age and liveliness.”²⁰⁵ Pictures and stories of rural life were interspersed with references to Boer heroes, drawing all frontier-dwellers, past and present, into the same heroic narrative. At a time when Afrikaners were divided by class, politics, language, and geography, all claimed the mythological Voortrekkers as their kinsman and knighted them as the standard bearers of the *volk*.

Voortrekker mythologies found their power and validity not in the “truth” they told, but in the emotional response they generated. Nonetheless, in order for a myth “to be effective in persuading or mobilizing people in the present, it must be bound by at least a loose conception of ‘truthfulness’.”²⁰⁶ Legends of Voortrekker resourcefulness in the harsh conditions of the rural interior were grounded in truth. Margo and Martin Russell’s study of *Afrikaners of the Kalahari* documents the ingenuity of Voortrekkers who arrived in Ghanzi region of Namibia at the turn of the century. “[They] knew how to live frugally on gathered green vegetables, berries, fruits and roots... that *tsamma* melons provide water for man and beast through the long thirsts...[and] they could cure skins and tan leather for clothes and furnishings.”²⁰⁷ Many of these skills were adopted from black residents of the Kalahari, with whom they had an “uneasy symbiosis”.²⁰⁸ Voortrekkers

²⁰⁵ Marijke du Toit, “Blank Verbeeld, or the Incredible Whiteness of Being: Amateur Photography and Afrikaner Nationalist Historical Narrative,” *Kronos*, no. 27 (November 1, 2001): 90.

²⁰⁶ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 214.

²⁰⁷ Margo Russell and Martin Russell, *Afrikaners of the Kalahari: White Minority in a Black State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 16–17.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

had skills that gave them a competitive advantage over their black neighbors, particularly in securing access to water. “Techniques for shoring up excavations and knowledge of dynamite enabled trekkers to dig lower levels for water than would otherwise have been possible.”²⁰⁹ In addition to drilling wells for household use, Voortrekkers planted and irrigated vegetable gardens and crops that travelers in the South African interior described as “striking oases of verdure in the semi-arid terrain.”²¹⁰

A Tarnished Frontier

Even as the myth of the Voortrekkers grew, the privations of rural poverty tarnished the image of rural life. In the 1920s, a new literary form, the *plaasroman*, or farm novel, celebrated the pioneer spirit but lamented the loss of the frontier's virtues. Authors such as Olive Schreiner wrote stories condemning “the corrupting indulgence of the city and of modernity...[the] indolence of black and ‘coloured’ labourers; the grinding poverty of life on the farm; and social problems such as poverty and illiteracy.”²¹¹

Similarly, Afrikaner historians such as I. D. MacCrone, C. W. de Kiewiet, and W. M. Macmillan popularized a theory of history that glorified the achievements the Voortrekkers, while simultaneously depicting the frontier as a place of isolation and backwardness. Macmillan’s landmark study of *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* was an autopsy of the historical roots of the Voortrekkers’ decline and degradation into poor Boer farmers and landless bywoners. He argued that,

²⁰⁹ Russell and Russell, *Afrikaners of the Kalahari*, 17.

²¹⁰ William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment, 1770-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 89.

²¹¹ Nicole Devarenne, “Nationalism and the Farm Novel in South Africa, 1883-2004,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 3 (September 2009): 629.

“The Boer of 1834 was in all essentials the Boer of the present day.”²¹² Boer farmers were infected with an “easy come, easy go” attitude toward land and settlements, as were their trekking forefathers.²¹³ They were a “self-reliant and independent people,” but that also led to “a temptation to idleness.”²¹⁴ With little access to education, they were unprepared for the radical transformation to an industrial economy. This challenge was compounded by the fact that “it is not human nature to revolutionise the farming methods to which a whole people have grown accustomed.” As a result, for many rural Afrikaners “the coming of competition...had meant ruin and hardship for themselves.”²¹⁵

Macmillan argued that poverty was entrenched because poor whites refused to take “kaffir work”, a derogatory term for manual labor traditionally done by blacks. Macmillan claimed that from the days of slavery, when “every common or ordinary European [became] a gentleman, and prefer[ed] to be served than to serve...[whites] consider[ed] it a shame to work with their own hands.”²¹⁶ When Voortrekkers encountered blacks on the frontier, they saw them “only as a servant or an enemy,” and treated them accordingly.²¹⁷

Frontier historians in South Africa and America claimed that the greatest value of native populations was as “consolidating agents” that unified a culturally and geographically diverse white population against a common foe. In America, historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued that the resourcefulness and superiority of the pioneers

²¹² Macmillan, *The South African Agrarian Problem*, 33.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 29.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 36.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 31.

²¹⁷ Legassick, “The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography,” 45.

ensured that “[Indian] tribes [were] ultimately dependent on whites” and as a result, “primitive Indian life had passed away.”²¹⁸ Unlike the America frontier, where the Native American population was decimated by disease, Afrikaner pioneers had to conquer far more populace African kingdoms. Dunbar Moodie asserts that Afrikaners saw their success as “proof of God’s election of the Afrikaner people and his special destiny for them,” and as a result, they were entitled to “deal with the black Africans as they saw fit.”²¹⁹ This sense of “entitlement” led to a prejudice against manual labor, creating an epidemic of structural poverty.

For thirty years, investigators of the poor white problem agreed on this interpretation of South Africa’s frontier past. Despite their shared theoretical foundations, the appropriation of culpability for white poverty and responsibility for designing and implementing a solution varied from study to study, no more so than in the *Transvaal Indigency Commission Report* and Macmillan’s study of *The South African Agrarian Problem*.

The Idle and the Worthless

The frontier theory of rural decline was so ingrained in the poor white canon that other reasonable explanations for Voortrekker behavior were not considered. William Beinart points out that one of the primary causes of “isolation” of Voortrekker farms was

²¹⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company: 1920), 11, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/22994> (accessed February 16, 2013). The only value Turner found in the “savage” Indian nations was as a “consolidating agent” that unified Americans to defeat a common enemy.

²¹⁹ T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 3, 7. Many historians see this frontier theory of Afrikaner racism as a teleological argument in which “the past becomes the inevitable movement to the present.” Dan O’Meara points to, among other things, the role of capitalization of agriculture and the politicization of white unskilled laborers in uniting Afrikaners against Anglo politicians, British imperialists, and black Africans. See O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 7.

access to water. “Those who arrived first could choose the best land and, critically, the best water sources; those who followed sometimes condemned themselves to seasonal trekking in order to find water.” Blaming the unsettled life of the Voortrekker on the “trek spirit” gave little credence to such practical concerns as access to water and pasture. Criticizing Voortrekkers for using “backward” farming techniques overlooked the fact that “rudimentary [agricultural] technology and reliance on ecological processes [are] strengths, allowing people to get food with lower effort or risk.”²²⁰

But for Transvaal agricultural officials who believed that a farmer’s primary duty was to maximize production per acre, “improvement of the land was seen not only as potentially profitable, but as a moral and religious good, bringing civilization and order.”²²¹ The agricultural productivity regime demanded an end to the pillars of frontier farming: transhumance, the practice of moving herds on a seasonal basis in search of fodder, and kraaling, the corralling of livestock for large portions of the day or night to protect them from predators. Boer farmers were urged to abandon their “backward” ways, “produce more and thus pull themselves out of poverty.”²²²

In truth, officials did not hold out much hope for poor white farmers. Despite the efforts of his department to indoctrinate Boer farmers with the gospel of prosperity through productivity, F. B. Smith lamented that “there are numbers of white men...doing nothing and very badly off, [and] there appears to be little disposition on the part of such

²²⁰ Nancy J. Jacobs, *Environment, Power, and Injustice: a South African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23.

²²¹ Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 47.

²²² Hubert Dudley Leppan, *Agricultural Policy in South Africa* (The Central News Agency, 1931), 45. Such expectations were entirely unrealistic; the cost just to settle a farm was £2,000 to £4,000, out of reach of poor whites, many of whom earned just a few shillings per month. See Robert Morrell, “The Poor Whites of Middelburg,” 4.

men to undertake manual work upon the land.”²²³ He speculated that “the little band of [Afrikaner] voortrekkers who inhabited [the Transvaal] was almost cut off from the world...so, as might be expected, they are not very up-to-date, or very well versed in the methods adopted by farmers elsewhere.”²²⁴ Smith acknowledged that the transition to a modern form of agriculture was not easy. “[Farmers] are having to accommodate themselves to altered circumstances; always a difficult and disagreeable task, particularly to the older generation.”²²⁵ Boer farmers, who seemed capable of little more than subsistence farming, were treated with contempt.

Unable to make the transition to intensive agriculture, many Boer farmers fled to cities and towns in search of work. According to the 1911 Census, the white urban population in the Transvaal Colony grew by 42 percent (12,000 people) in just seven years.²²⁶ The poor white exodus created an indigency crisis that overwhelmed charitable institutions working with the urban poor. From 1906 to 1908, the Transvaal Indigency Commission (TIC) investigated that nature and extent of indigency in the Transvaal Colony, as well as the efficacy of government and charitable remedies. The *TIC Report* included themes from the theory of rural decline: the influence of the trek spirit, the lack of education, and an unwillingness to adopt modern ways of farming. “Two features of the early condition of the Transvaal must be noted,” wrote the investigators, “The isolation of the lives of its white inhabitants and the large size of the farms.”²²⁷ The investigators drew a straight line between isolation and ignorance. “His homestead was

²²³ Smith, “Report of the Director of Agriculture 1906,” 42.

²²⁴ Ibid., 40.

²²⁵ Ibid., 61.

²²⁶ Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:61.

²²⁷ *TIC Report*, 8; Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 78–79.

usually some miles from that of his nearest neighbor; and there were few strangers with whom he ever came into contact. It was, therefore, but natural that his outlook was both circumscribed and essentially non-commercial.”²²⁸ Ignorance was compounded by a lack of access to education which made poor whites unfit “for getting skilled or semi-skilled employment.”²²⁹

Condemnation of Boer farmers rang out from every line on the *TIC Report*. “It might have been expected that as the country became occupied they would settle down and make a living by farming. But this they were quite unfitted to do.”²³⁰ TIC investigators described Boers as pastoralists, implying that they were perpetually on the move and never settled down. In reality, they practiced transhumance, meaning they “sen[t] animals away or move[d] between two or three fixed points during the year.”²³¹ But the TIC investigators saw seasonal trekking and subsistence farming as a selfish unwillingness to abandon the pioneer past. “There are...many who are descendants of the original pioneers whom it is almost impossible to reclaim... We do not believe that anything can turn them into settled, hard-working farmers. They will [always live]...on the outskirts of civilization.”²³² Government relief and charitable assistance only “perpetuat[ed] a class, which, however useful and stalwart it may be in its wild pioneer days, inevitably degenerates and becomes idle and worthless when once settled

²²⁸ *TIC Report*, 8.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

²³¹ Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 43. In the *Economic Report*, Grosskopf tells the story of a family of Voortrekkers he met in the Transvaal who practiced transhumance. They were stock farmers with a family homestead outside of Pretoria. The homestead was sizable and well irrigated, but the pasture was poor and the herds had to be moved seasonally to keep them fed. “As soon as the summer grass on the High Veld was good, often in October, the horses and sheep were sent there under the care of one of the elder sons,” he wrote. Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:43.

²³² *TIC Report*, 17.

conditions are introduced.”²³³ Some classes of rural Boers, the TIC investigators decided, needed to die out.

W. M. Macmillan, on the other hand, wanted to save the Boer farmer and the sharecropping bywoners from extinction. He shifted the blame for backwardness from the farmer to the structure of rural society. In *The South African Agrarian Problem*, he took the TIC investigators to task for their invective against Boer farmers: “The 1908 Report has hardly succeeded in impressing its main conclusions... This may be due in part to the odd fact that those who actually signed the report include no one [from] the farming community.”²³⁴ Macmillan’s sympathetic paternalism for poor whites is evident throughout his study. “If a poor man talks a language and has habits that are as strange to us as what we describe and dismiss as the “Back Veld” it does not follow that it is not we who are as ignorant as he.”²³⁵ Yet, he also recognized that something was fundamentally wrong with Boer farmers’ agricultural practices. “No doubt the frugality and temperance of the farming community are invaluable assets, but there is something wrong with the working methods of a farmer who, with lands valued at £5,000, can swear to an annual income of only £64.”²³⁶ In Macmillan’s view, rural decline was a defect in the “peculiarities of our rural [social] organisations,” not in Boers themselves.²³⁷ He believed that if poor whites were given the opportunity to become landowners, not just tenants,

²³³ *TIC Report*, 17.

²³⁴ Macmillan, *South African Agrarian Problem*, 8. His critique was slightly disingenuous; Macmillan was a scholar, not a farmer. He had far more in common with the community of interwar Afrikaner liberals who “formed committees, wrote letters, studied problems, held conferences, issued policy statements, and made discreet representations to congenial persons in power,” than he did with Boer farmers struggling to survive in the Transvaal. See Richard Elphick, “Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism,” 72.

²³⁵ Macmillan, *South African Agrarian Problem*, 16.

²³⁶ Macmillan, *South African Agrarian Problem*, 21.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

and instructed in modern agricultural methods and marketing, they could pull themselves out of poverty and regain a respectable position in rural society.

Macmillan's pseudo-utopian vision of rural society was no more realistic than the TIC's desire for the extinction of its weakest inhabitants. Not only were their proposals politically untenable and economically unfeasible; given the sheer number of poor whites, they were practically impossible. The efficacy of their solutions to the poor white problem notwithstanding, their embrace of the frontier theory of rural decline had a profound influence on the Carnegie researchers' diagnosis of poor white disease.

Process of Impoverishment

When the Carnegie researchers²³⁸ met for the first time in October 1928, they discussed how to define the object of their study. The representatives of the Union government who supported the Poor White Study hoped the researchers would focus their efforts on collecting data on economic and social conditions in rural areas, but the researchers chose to follow in the footsteps of previous investigations and looked for historical causes of poor white disease. "The general problem of the research work [is] not to be defined in a definition of the term 'Poor White' but as progressive process," they concluded.²³⁹ The researchers centered their diagnostic framework on "the process of impoverishment and retrogression of a portion of the white population." As others had done before them, the researchers concluded that the process of impoverishment "mainly

²³⁸ J. F. W. Grosskopf, *Economic Report*; R. W. Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*; E. G. Malherbe, *Educational Report*; W. A. Murray, *Health Report*; and J. R. Albertyn, *Sociological Report*. M. E. Rothmann, author of the report on the *Mother and Daughter Report* did not join the research team until the spring of 1929.

²³⁹ Minutes of Conference of Research Workers with Poor White Problem (rough translation by W. A. Murray), October 20, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

originates in the ‘Platteland’ [or countryside].”²⁴⁰ After a brief discussion, the researchers agreed on a working hypothesis for their diagnosis: poor white disease was not an acute condition, it was a chronic illness, historical by nature and rural in origin.

Dr. Kenyon Butterfield, an American sociologist hired by the Carnegie Corporation to advise the research team, none of whom were trained sociologists²⁴¹, urged them to focus on gathering data about poor whites and their social and economic conditions. He pressed the team to define the term “poor white” and suggested that they limit their historical analysis, focusing instead on their “contribution to the study of the science of society.”²⁴² Butterfield acknowledged that the Poor White Study was “social in the broad sense,” but he advised the researchers to focus on the “qualities and capacities” of poor whites “that can be measured with some degree of assurance” and “may be changed by the physical and social environment.”²⁴³ He also challenged the researchers’ rural-centric hypothesis of poor white disease. “Is not a study of the ‘city proletariat’ of significance with respect to the likeness or unlikeness of causes affecting the rural poor whites and the city as a possible channel of release from poor whiteism?” he asked.²⁴⁴

The researchers met in April 1929 to consider their response to Butterfield’s suggestions. According to the minutes of the meeting, the researchers acknowledged that, as a scientific document, the *Carnegie Commission Report* should have a “clear-cut”

²⁴⁰ Minutes of Conferee of Research Workers, October 20, 1928, GES/SAB.

²⁴¹ The first Department of Sociology and Social Work in South Africa was established at the University of Stellenbosch. The chair of the department was a former student of Professor R. W. Wilcocks, H. F. Verwoerd, the future architect of apartheid. See Roberta Balstad Miller, “Science and Society in the Early Career of H. F. Verwoerd,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 4 (December 1, 1993): 634–661.

²⁴² K. L. Butterfield, Suggestions Concerning the Study by the Poor White Commission, April 1, 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Butterfield, Suggestions Concerning the Study, April 1, 1929, GES/SAB.

definition of ‘poor white’.²⁴⁵ But having just completed their field research in the Cape, “the [researchers were] finding a considerable degree of difference in many respects between [poor whites] involved [in the study].”²⁴⁶ They reaffirmed their belief that the poor white problem was “a movement or a process” and concluded that “from a heuristic point of view...it [was] desirable to avoid at the present stage directing [our] work along the lines of a hard and fast definition of poor white.”²⁴⁷ One month later, when the researchers entered the “frontier” of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, everything they saw and heard was filtered through the lens of the pioneer pathology that tinted previous investigations.

²⁴⁵ Minutes of Meeting of Research Committee on the Poor White Problem, April 13, 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

22/77/38

Voorgestelde Reisinplan.

Eerste Toer Feb. — May 1929

Stellenbosch(via Kaapstad) na Fort Elizabeth
 Fort Elizabeth via Barroo na Steytlerville
 Steytterville via Barroo na Klipplaat
 Klipplaat na Jansenville
 Jansenville(via Klipplaat)na Willowmore
 Willowmore na Oudtshoorn
 Oudtshoorn na George
 George na Knyena
 Knyena na George
 George na Oudtshoorn
 Oudtshoorn na Calitzdorp
 Calitzdorp na Ladysmith
 Calitzdorp na Ladysmith
 Calitzdorp oer Oudtshoorn na Graaff-Reinet
 Graaff-Reinet na Middelburg(K.P.)
 Middelburg(via Rosmead)na Craddock
 Craddock(via Rosmead, Bormberg en Sterkstroom)na Dorrecht
 Dorrecht na Ugie
 Ugie(via de Aar) na Stellenbosch.

Tweede Toer June — October

Stellenbosch na Johannesburg
 Johannesburg na Ohrigstad
 Ohrigstad na Lydenburg
 Lydenburg na Belfast
 Belfast na Middelburg(Transvaal)
 Middelburg na Pretoria
 Pretoria na Potgietersrus
 Potgietersrus na Pretoria
 Pretoria na Rustenburg
 Rustenburg na Pretoria
 Pretoria via Johannesburg na Lichtenburg
 Lichtenburg via Coligny en Padios na Vryburg
 Vryburg na Kuruman(motor)
 Kuruman na Vryburg
 Vryburg na Barkly Wes via Kimberley
 Barkly Wes via Kimberley na Stellenbosch

Derde Toer Decem. — Feb. 1930

Stellenbosch(via Kaapstad)na de Aar
 de Aar na Kaimoes
 Kaimoes na Kakamas
 Kakamas na de Aar
 de Aar(via Dover)na Parys
 Parys(via Dover)na Standerton
 Standerton na Vrede
 Vrede na Heidelberg
 Heidelberg na Witwatersrand (verblyf)
 Witwatersrand na Stellenbosch.

Figure 11. "Proposed Itinerary" for field research. The itinerary outlined three research trips: the Cape Province from February to May 1929, the Transvaal Province from June to October 1929, and the Orange Free State from December 1929 to February 1930. *Source:* Minutes of Executive Committee – Joint Board for Research on the Poor White Questions, December 17, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

A Pioneer Pathology

The construction of the Carnegie Commission's pioneer pathology fell principally to J. F. W. Grosskopf, author of the *Economic Report*, and R. W. Wilcocks, author of the *Psychological Report*. Their studies were designed to work in tandem: Grosskopf presented an analysis of the economic transformation of the rural economy, while Wilcocks studied the psychological effect of these changes on whites and the subsequent degeneration of a portion of the rural population into poverty. Together they created the picture of rural Afrikaner life that was in such a state of decline as to be in danger of extinction.

From the beginning, Grosskopf saw the economic study as a historical exploration. The opening paragraph of his research plan confirms that the poor white problem “no doubt manifests itself primarily as an economic and social phenomenon,” nonetheless, “the study of its possible causes and of possible means of control will certainly depend to a large extent upon the other proposed directions of the investigation, - psychological, education[al] and medical.”²⁴⁸ As a result, his investigation did not “focus on the question of poverty itself,” but rather, “the problem...at a given stage of its historical development.”²⁴⁹ He called the poor white problem a “gradual movement...in our social and economic organism,” whose roots could be found in “the natural and

²⁴⁸ J. F. W. Grosskopf, Poor White Investigation: Preliminary Plan for the Economic Approach, October 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB. All underlined words and phrases are from the original text. They are included here as indications of Grosskopf's points of interest and emphasis.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

human factor of our life, primarily affecting the rural population.”²⁵⁰ In a parenthetical reflection, Grosskopf stated, “The investigator is thinking mainly of the effect upon a simple and self-sufficing rural pioneer population, suddenly overwhelmed by ‘money-economy’, competition and speculations, without proper chances for adaptation.”²⁵¹ In a hopeful note he added, “Possibly we may now already be at the crisis or even beyond it, so that this social malady may of itself be losing its acute and virulent forms,” but then admitted, “perhaps more serious aspects are still facing us.”²⁵²

For his field research, Grosskopf recorded his own observations of rural life and interviewed poor whites, as well as “experienced men acquainted with the history of such persons and conditions.”²⁵³ Taking his role as a diagnostician literally, Grosskopf listed more than thirty “Specimen Questions”, most of which reflected the themes of Afrikaner independence, isolation, and ignorance found in the frontier theory of rural decline.²⁵⁴ “Were wasteful methods (over-cropping, over-grazing, non-prevention of land erosion, exhaustion of natural resources) by a careless pioneer population a contributory cause?” he asked. He was curious about the “connection between [the] growth of Poor Whites and the end of free (or extremely cheap) land for settlement” and he wondered if “pastoralists contribute[d] in a greater measure to the Poor White class?” He wanted to know if the failure of many farmers was due to the fact that they came from “a community previously

²⁵⁰ Grosskopf, Preliminary Plan, October 1928, GES/SAB. Grosskopf’s focus on the rural origins of the poor white problem is a purposeful reflection of Macmillan’s approach. Grosskopf is not blind to urban white poverty, but states that the “problems of a city proletariat will not at present concern the investigation, excepting in so far as one of the results of the growth of rural impoverishment, namely migration to the towns.”

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. The “Specimen Questions” cited in this paragraph are numbered in the original source as: A-3, B-2, B-4, B-11, B-12, B-14.

engaged chiefly in simple ‘subsistence farming’.” What were the “effects of ignorance of business methods and contract liabilities?” he wanted to know. Were “inefficient farming methods” a result of “lack of proper guidance or education?” He speculated that the “Department of Agriculture [was] encouraging types of farming less suited to the needs and interests of smaller owners.”

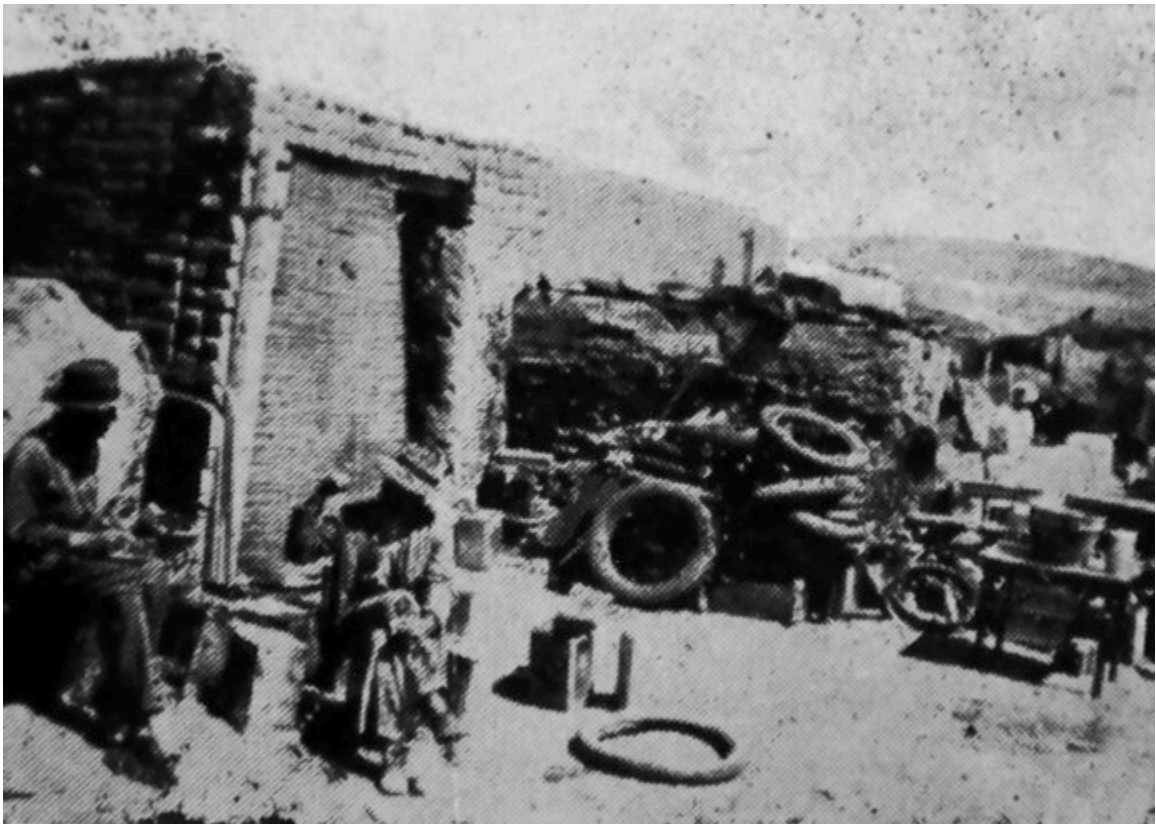


Figure 12. Dr. J. F. W. Grosskopf interviews a bywoner who abandoned his farm to try his luck at the diamond diggings. *Source:* Photo from Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 146.

During his research in the Cape and Natal, Grosskopf observed significant links between white poverty and the degradation of the rural environment. In his tentative

hypothesis, he condemned Afrikaner pioneers for “wasteful use of natural resources: forests, natural ‘veld’ (pasture), arable land – perhaps water.”²⁵⁵ The days of exhausting the soil or water in one settlement and then trekking to greener pastures were over. “New land for settlement has practically come to an end in the Union,” he wrote.²⁵⁶ Even seasonal trekking contributed to soil erosion, over-farming led to soil exhaustion, and overstocking drastically reduced the carrying capacity of pastures. “Some [farmers] did begin applying scientific methods of stock breeding, and diversified their farming by breaking in land [and] planting crops,” says historian Hermann Giliomee, “but the majority were not prepared for such a major venture and carried on the tradition of largely subsistence farming.”²⁵⁷ Environmental degradation was compounded by the Afrikaner tradition of inheritance in which farms were divided evenly among the heirs. Grosskopf visited a farm in Natal where the original farmer’s land was divided among his 11 children, and eventually among his 90 grandchildren. In two generations, a 3,300 morgen farm that sustained one family was divided into 90 farms of 37 morgen, each with a family to support.²⁵⁸

In Grosskopf’s paradigm of rural decline, environmental degradation and its consequent impoverishment were both individual and communal. “When the free gifts of nature have been largely exhausted then those groups that were chiefly dependent on

²⁵⁵ J. F. W. Grosskopf, Economics Section, ‘Poor White’ Investigation, Hypotheses Beginning to Take Shape out of Investigations up to the Present, March 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 321.

²⁵⁸ Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:119. One South African morgen equals 2.1 acres. The original farm size was approximately 7,000 acres and subdivided into farms of 78 acres.

them, necessarily become impoverished.”²⁵⁹ The Boer farmer was not solely responsible for the degradation of his land, but he was guilty of failing to mitigate it. Unfortunately, Grosskopf observed, the pioneer spirit proved resistant to the idea of conversation, preferring to live in the moment rather than plan for the future. The source of frontier farmers’ pathological defiance and obstinacy in the face of poverty and ruin was the purview of Wilcocks’ *Psychological Study*.

Infected with Inefficiency

Wilcocks’ task was to uncover and clarify the characteristics and attitudes that prevented Boer farmers from adapting to modern economic and social norms. Wilcocks believed that pioneer stubbornness was not a momentary temper tantrum, but a historical, pathological maladaptation “of the character and mentality of the people.”²⁶⁰ In addition to the origins of the trek spirit and the prejudice against “kaffir-work”, Wilcocks was concerned about rural Boers’ isolation “from centres of civilization with consequent lack of knowledge and of stimulating social contacts,” and the “possible retarding psychological effect of prolonged and close contact with natives.”²⁶¹ Wilcocks speculated that rural isolation led to a “strongly marked individualism and lack of social discipline...and unwillingness to organise and cooperate.”²⁶² This distorted spirit of individualism led to “unpreparedness and lack of adaptation to later rapid economic and industrial development of the country.”²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:87–88.

²⁶⁰ R. W. Wilcocks, Projects for Psychological Section of the Research on the Poor White, October 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

To test his assumptions, Wilcocks drafted 75 questions for men with “knowledge of the situation,” which were designed to gauge the psychological causes and consequences of rural decline.²⁶⁴ “Do you hold that the general nature and conditions of life in earlier days (pioneer times) has assisted in hindering the development of the habit of steady work?” Wilcocks asked. He speculated that a lack of education about modern business practices, such as credit, could be “explained by the earlier social and economic conditions of the country,” and was curious to know the extent to which isolation “played a role in causing such [a] lack of knowledge [about farming and trade].” He was concerned that the “large distances separating farmers from each other...[perpetuated] a spirit of independence.” Wilcocks speculated that reoccurring drought, disease, or war had caused “discouragement” and therefore a tendency toward laziness. Laziness was a significant concern because of its tendency toward improvidence. “Do you know of cases in which spendthrift or extravagant modes of life have led to a descent to the poor white state?” he asked.

After two months of field research, Wilcocks hypothesized that poor whites were infected by the virus of “inefficiency”, a psychological maladaptation preventing the development of strong work habits, self-esteem, and in more serious cases, transmuting into alcoholism and criminality. “Certain mental traits have been developed which make for a lessening of efficiency,” wrote Wilcocks.²⁶⁵ “This decreased efficiency has co-operated...in the impoverishment affecting this section of population.” The trek spirit

²⁶⁴ Wilcocks, Projects for Psychological Section, October 1928, GES/SAB. Questions cited in this paragraph are numbered in the original source as: B-10, 5; C-8, 6; E-2, 7; E-12, 8; B-14,15, 5; C-1, 6.

²⁶⁵ Quotes in this paragraph appear in R. W. Wilcocks, Psychological Section: Tentative Hypothesis, March 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

“militated against the development of the habit of settled, constructive and progressive farming.” This tendency was compounded by the memory of a time when land was “easily obtainable, so that little or no steady application and hard work was necessary in order to provide fodder.” Without any stimulus to use land efficiently, “improvident habits of farming and of farming outlook resulted, which became fatal to many when the conditions of farming life became more stringent.” Rural Afrikaners did not display “the amount of exertion needed to obtain many of the comforts and conveniences of civilization.” The isolation of rural life required a pioneers’ self-reliance and independence, but these virtues, taken too much to heart, “militated against the development of a spirit of cooperation...prevent[ed] the acquirement of knowledge regarding other occupations...and decreased both the chances for acquiring and esteeming the value of education.”

Wilcocks’ hypothesis of psychological “inefficiency” tied directly to Grosskopf’s critique of poor whites’ culpability in environmental degradation. Agricultural and environmental discourse of the early twentieth century “was dominated by the language of efficiency,” say William Beinart and Peter Coates. Government publications from the 1910s and 1920s extolled the virtues of efficient farming and the scientific husbandry of natural resources in ecclesiastical tones. The language of these publications echoed the Old Testament admonitions from Psalms or Proverbs. The *1929 Handbook for South African Farmers* reproved farmers for their contributions to the “evil” of soil erosion: “It is we who have made the wagon tracks, the plough furrow...who allow the vegetation...to be burnt out and trampled down, and who are destroying our native trees and bushes

without replacing them.”²⁶⁶ Sometimes the language was more reminiscent of the New Testament exhortations of St. Paul. “Cognisant of the vicissitudes of his calling, there is no class of the community so resigned to adversity when it comes, so tolerant and longsuffering...[I]n his isolation, [the farmer] becomes strong [and] self-reliant,” stated an essay entitled “The Farmer as Individual.”²⁶⁷ Hundreds of speeches, newspaper articles, and agricultural journals extolled the virtues of the efficient farmer: thrift, self-sacrifice, modesty, vigilance, and fortitude. Beinart and Coates argue that agricultural officials had unrealistic expectations of Boer farmers, given that “[they] lived under constant threat of eviction” and were forced to “maximize production in a short space of time.”²⁶⁸ Inefficient farming practices and environmental damage were inevitable.

Given the extent of poor whites’ psychological maladaptation, Wilcocks warned that “serious dangers attend attempts to improve the economic position of the poor white in the shortest possible way, since a sudden increase in income often leads to extravagance and thriftlessness.”²⁶⁹ He recommended a program of rehabilitation of the “personal qualities and mental attitudes” of poor whites.²⁷⁰ Lessening the social isolation of rural people was a critical component of Wilcocks’ rehabilitation scheme. “Modern means of communication, of interchanging ideas and of giving and receiving instruction,” could be employed, and “rural youth may be encouraged to seek other means of

²⁶⁶ Union of South Africa Department of Agriculture, *1929 Handbook for Farmers in South Africa*, (Pretoria: Government Printers and Stationary Office, 1929), 344.

²⁶⁷ P. J. Du Toit, *The Farmer in South Africa, Some of His Problems* (Cape Town, 1919), 17.

²⁶⁸ Beinart and Coates, *Environment and History*, 65.

²⁶⁹ Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:171.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

livelihood than on the farm.”²⁷¹ Exposure to new ideas and people would breakdown traditional methods of farming, as well as pioneer modes of living. School children “must be taught to read more easily and encouraged to develop the habit of reading,” and “much more [agricultural education] is required... amongst the backward farmers than occasional hurried visits to a farm by extension officers.”²⁷² Wilcocks was unequivocal: psychological maladjustment of poor whites took place over generations; rehabilitating them from their pathological backwardness would take just as long.

A Frontier Tragedy

In the theory of rural decline, the South African frontier was a crucible of Afrikaner character. Voortrekkers had perseverance and fortitude, virtues of that could help them make the transition from pioneer to settler; but because of their isolated environment, these qualities atrophied into a stubborn intransigence that prevented them from adjusting to modern life. In his research for the Carnegie Commission, Grosskopf entertained the radical notion that rural society was too degenerated to be saved, asking, “Should white family-farms be our aim?”²⁷³ W. M. Macmillan, whose historical study of rural decline was cited by Grosskopf, would have been horrified at such a question. Macmillan believed Boer farmers and the bywoners under their protection were essential to the health of rural society. For Grosskopf, this was a feudal system, “Mediaeval” and lacking “modern ‘economic rationalism’.”²⁷⁴ The rural Afrikaners who were able to adapt had already moved on, the question was why so many rural whites seemed unable to do

²⁷¹ Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:173.

²⁷² Ibid., 174.

²⁷³ Grosskopf, Poor White Investigation: Preliminary Plan, October 1928, GES/SAB.

²⁷⁴ Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:55.

the same. “That is the sad tragedy of the pioneer,” Grosskopf wrote, “those very qualities which are most essential to him, so seldom fit in with a more developed social order and with the modern economic struggle.”²⁷⁵ The next chapter explores the Carnegie Commission’s diagnosis of poor white disease and its threat to the health of the social order, and its members.

²⁷⁵ Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:109.

4. “A BOIL UPON THE BODY”

Similar to previous investigators who contributed to the poor white “canon”, Carnegie researchers agonized over the inability of rural Boers to adapt themselves to the tremendous changes wrought by the Mineral Revolution. “The discovery of diamonds and gold, the capitalistic exploitation of mines, the influx of immigrants with the modern business outlook, the rapid penetration of the railways...quickly forced the development of [South Africa] into new channels,” they wrote.²⁷⁶ Afrikaners faced “entirely changed conditions” as industrialization transformed the economy and the fabric of rural life.²⁷⁷ Some whites were able to make the transition and “captains of industry, civic leaders, and state officials...[were eager] to inspire struggling white farmers” to follow the example of men like Esreal Lazarus, a poor Lithuanian immigrant who was known as the “Mealie King”.²⁷⁸ In the early 1920s, when the average farm yielded less than 10 bags of maize per morgen, Lazarus’s farms produced at least 30 bags, sometimes as many as 50 bags.²⁷⁹ With thousands of acres under cultivation in the eastern Transvaal, Lazarus proclaimed himself the largest maize farmer in the world. But Lazarus was the exception. Thousands of rural whites, particularly the Boer farmers with small landholding and the landless bywoners, struggled to survive, let alone adapt to the industrial regime.

²⁷⁶ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” vii.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Martin Murray, “Factories in the Fields: Capitalist Farming in the Bethal District, C. 1910-1950,” in Crush and Jeeves, 83.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 82.

The *Carnegie Commission Report* warned that the “economic decline” experienced by poor whites “has been caused principally by inadequate adjustment to modern economic conditions among a portion of the older [Dutch] population of South Africa.”²⁸⁰ Rural Boers were too enamored with the “older forms” of the pioneer life, claimed the *CCR*, leaving them isolated from and ignorant of the vital lessons of progress. Poor whites, unschooled in industrial labor or the efficiencies of modern agriculture, were “maladjusted”, seemingly unable or unwilling to achieve anything beyond the wandering existence of their Voortrekker ancestors. The Carnegie researchers reluctantly allowed that “a certain roving spirit...cannot be considered, in its typical form, [a] . . . pathological” vector, but being “maladjusted to modernity” was not “a normal or a healthy” condition, particularly in gold-rich, urbanizing South Africa.²⁸¹ Indeed, maladaptation represented a contagion, a kind of social infection that endemically gripped the Union’s poorest white communities, rural and urban alike. E. G. Malherbe described this maladaptation as “a boil upon the body...an unsightly symptom of an impure bloodstream.”²⁸² Left untreated, this nasty boil, Malherbe and his colleagues feared, would suppurate and further sicken the Afrikaner *volk*.

This chapter investigates the theories of “maladaptation” that impressed the Carnegie researchers as they prepared for their historic investigation. Biological and cultural theories of maladaptation, underpinned by racial science, were the dominant paradigms in the decades proceeding the Carnegie Commission. Proponents of these

²⁸⁰ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” viii.

²⁸¹ Ibid.; Malherbe, *Education Report*, 3:3.

²⁸² Malherbe, *Education Report*, 3:3.

archetypes of difference argued that blacks were “inexperienced with civilized life” and therefore unable to “adapt to the ways of industrial society.”²⁸³ After Union in 1910, the South African government incorporated these assumptions about racial difference into segregationist laws. The so-called cultural and physiological “inadequacies” of blacks helped white authorities rationalize their removal to the tribal “homelands” where they “belonged”, thereby safeguarding the health and well-being of black and white communities.

But in the 1930s, a paradigm of maladaptation emerged that prioritized the role of an ever-changing social, economic, and physical “environment” to explain disease and poverty in blacks, as well as whites. Most evident in the public health arena, the environmental paradigm linked the vitality of “the internal human organism” to an external socio-economic environment characterized by “adequate nutrition, social support, water supply, housing, sanitation, and collective defense against contagious and degenerative disease.”²⁸⁴ In this “climate” of health, “disease” was a maladaptation of the human organism, “defined [by its] interactions...among populations and their [unhealthy] surroundings.”²⁸⁵

The *Carnegie Commission Report* was the first study to link concepts of environment, disease, and poverty in one causal explanation for poor white “maladaptation”. The “unhealthy” ecological and socio-economic environment in which

²⁸³ Randall M. Packard, “Tuberculosis and the Development of Industrial Health Policies on the Witwatersrand, 1902-1932,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 2 (January 1, 1987): 188.

²⁸⁴ E. B. Worthington quoted in Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 212. See also Steven Feierman and John M. Janzen, introduction to *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa* in Feierman and Janzen, xvi.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

poor whites lived, as described in the CCR, induced poor white disease. “The manner of [rural] life...caused a type of mentality, i.e. certain psychological traits, to develop among the people by which (even if for no other reason) they were handicapped in the adjustment (or effective adjustment) to the demands of modern conditions,” concluded the researchers.²⁸⁶ All things being equal, they argued, simply living in an environment that was socially isolated, economically volatile, and ecologically fragile could undermine a white person’s ability to adapt to modernity.

While the previous chapter examined linkages between poor whites’ psychological maladaptation and the environment of the inland “frontier”, as outlined in the *Economic and Psychological Reports*, this chapter explores the CCR’s environmental etiology of disease, particularly in the nutrition study. The files of Dr. J. A. Mitchell, Secretary of Public Health, and Dr. W. A. Murray, District Health Officer and author of the *Health Report*—a deep reservoir of documents in the records of the Department of Public Health in the National Archives Repository in Pretoria—provide a window into how top health experts understood the causal relationship between physical illness and white poverty. They also show Murray to be a leading proponent of environmental theories of illness. He was so convinced of their validity that he wholly relied on environmental etiologies in his groundbreaking study of malnutrition in children.

As with all the Carnegie researchers, Murray’s prejudices and personality were just as influential as his methodologies and theoretical assumptions. Murray’s *Health Report* pathologized the bywoner, body and soul, yet Murray himself is virtually invisible

²⁸⁶ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” x.

in the Carnegie Commission historiography, the notable exceptions being Randall Packard's study of malaria among poor whites in the lowveld and Diana Wylie's work on the politicization of nutrition in the apartheid era.²⁸⁷ Addressing this historiographical oversight, this chapter provides insights into Murray, drawn from his own accounts and from those in authority over him.

Mutually Dependent Adaptability

The notion of "adaptability" was heavily informed by the "science" of heredity, which implied that the "physical, mental, or moral qualities in human populations" could be improved.²⁸⁸ In a time of economic, social, cultural and political uncertainty, "improvement" was defined as the ability to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Saul Dubow's *A Commonwealth of Knowledge* shows that the tenets of "adaptability" were the intellectual currency between the South African, British, and American "modern" societies.²⁸⁹ On both sides of the Atlantic, scientists and policymakers declared that people whose race, gender identity, and class position limited their potential were inherently degraded; those who failed to reach their racially appropriate station were said to be degenerates.

Not surprisingly, the threats posed by maladaptation to the South African body politic had become a justification for white politicians to tighten policies that reinforced "an imagined binary between European and African societies, [in which] European

²⁸⁷ See Randall M. Packard, "'Roll Back Malaria, Roll in Development'? Reassessing the Economic Burden of Malaria," *Population and Development Review* 35, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 53–87 and Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach*.

²⁸⁸ Klausen, *Politics of Birth Control*, 41.

²⁸⁹ See introduction to Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 1–17.

rationality and science was contrasted to African irrationality and simplicity.”²⁹⁰ In this worldview, blacks’ purported maladaptation, namely their intrinsic need to hold onto the “customs or traditions” of their tribal past, prompted segregationist authorities to cordon off races in designated areas to which they “naturally belonged”.²⁹¹ Blacks were removed to the “less civilized” rural environment, where “preferred” primitive approaches to health included witchcraft. Similarly, whites were deemed fit for the centers of civilized European society, where life-saving scientific techniques and modern medicine prevailed.

For segregationists, the maladaptation paradigms that “divided the human species into relatively stable, bounded entities, each with distinctive cultural as well as physical characteristics,” had the additional advantage of being “quite easy to understand.”²⁹² But theories that prioritized “innate” differences were less desirable in explanations of why certain whites were poorer than they should be. White degeneration theory had to “reflect – simultaneously and contradictorily – an overweening sense of whites’ biological superiority, and a perception of their social vulnerability,” explains Dubow.²⁹³ The capacity to thrive in a modernizing world was considered an essential ability of every white person. The Carnegie researchers were exasperated by the obstinacy of rural Boers who, in their eyes at least, were clinging stubbornly to a marginal pioneer past that was no longer viable in South Africa’s industrial age. Quixotic attachments to the frontier life

²⁹⁰ Karen Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, and Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 5.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Leonard M. Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 11.

²⁹³ Dubow, *Scientific Racism*, 167.

and the Voortrekker's "roving spirit" were symptoms of poor white disease, a potentially lethal condition that demanded an immediate cure.

The Carnegie researchers sought to address the purported lack of initiative exhibited by rural Boers in a way that did not undermine the "innate" superiority of the white race. Given such constraints, a "strictly biological determinist interpretation of poor whites...[had] limited purchase," explains Susanne Klausen.²⁹⁴ The 1908 Transvaal Indigency Commission, for example, suggested that the weakest Boers be denied government and charitable assistance. This expression of Social Darwinism was a non-starter in Carnegie circles. The authors and supporters of the *CCR* knew they needed a "much more complex model" of adaptation which allowed for "continuous cultural and even physical change by a process of adaption to environmental conditions, which are themselves subject to change."²⁹⁵ To achieve this end, they framed a symbiotic worldview in which a "modern" society and its citizens were mutually constituted; the progress of the former was dependent on the health of the latter, and vice versa. Poor white disease threatened the dynamics and viability of the entire social organism.

"A National Disease"

From its inception, the Carnegie Commission inextricably linked the physical and socio-economic well being of the poorest Afrikaners. At the first meeting of the Joint Board of Control for the Carnegie investigation, J. A. Mitchell, Secretary of Public Health called white poverty "a national disease".²⁹⁶ He was not convinced that illness

²⁹⁴ Klausen, *Politics of Birth Control*, 152.

²⁹⁵ Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*, 11.

²⁹⁶ Minutes of Meeting of Joint Board, April 14, 1928, GES/SAB.

alone was sufficient to impoverish an otherwise well-adjusted white person. Although, he admitted, “an insufficient, unsuitable and monotonous diet would have an effect on vitality and virility,” adding that “malaria [and] human Redwater, might be factors in certain areas.”²⁹⁷ In May 1928, Secretary Mitchell circulated a letter to South Africa’s preeminent public health authorities, asking for guidance on the best research areas and methods for the *Health Report*.²⁹⁸ “I am personally inclined to think that adverse health conditions are not a prime causative factor in the [poor white] problem,” he wrote, “but, nevertheless, there are health aspects of the matter which merit careful consideration.”²⁹⁹ Mitchell suggested the study of malnutrition, malaria, bilharzia, and hookworm, and then invited his colleagues’ recommendations.

The replies to Mitchell’s circular reflected a shift (most notable in the late 1920s) from the physiological paradigm of disease to the environmental paradigm of illness.³⁰⁰ The “biological fatalism” of turn-of-the-century Social Darwinism, had lost its hold, but many social scientists and health officials still believed that poverty had gene-like traits that could be inherited. (Two of the Carnegie researchers, M. E. Rothmann and E. G. Malherbe incorporated this perspective into elements of their analysis, as discussed in the following chapter.) The generational nature of structural poverty, combined with a perceived decades-long decline in the quality of the white race, gave hereditary paradigms added credibility. Professor Raymond Dart of the University of the

²⁹⁷ Minutes of Meeting of Joint Board, April 14, 1928, GES/SAB.

²⁹⁸ J. A. Mitchell to R. W. Wilcocks, June 5, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

²⁹⁹ J. A. Mitchell to Dr. van der Merwe, May 3, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

³⁰⁰ “These changes in medical ideas did represent the abandonment of previous theories in the favor of new ones,” says Randall Packard, “But rather a shift in emphasis. At any one time, one could find advocates for all [views].” Packard, “Tuberculosis and Industrial Health,” 188.

Witwatersrand argued, “the hereditary aspect...is of extreme importance,” and suggested combining an anthropometric survey with an investigation of “in-breeding and racial inter-breeding.”³⁰¹ Dr. Dru Drury of Grahamstown, an ardent eugenicist, also urged Mitchell not to discount the role of genetic defects in preventing poor whites from thriving.³⁰² “[The] mental defect is inborn...and the hereditary aspects of ‘poor white-ism’ should be carefully investigated,” he wrote.³⁰³

Perhaps the most well known public health official Mitchell consulted was Dr. C. Louis Leipoldt of Cape Town. Leipoldt worked as School Health Inspector in the Transvaal bushveld and was Chief School Health Officer of the Union from 1914-1922.³⁰⁴ In his handwritten reply to Secretary Mitchell, Leipoldt “equivocated” between biological and environmental paradigms of poverty.³⁰⁵ He began by confessing, “I have not paid any attention to the ‘poor white problem’: [they] are imprudent people...chimney sweeps, painters, who live and breed beyond their means.”³⁰⁶ He speculated that “pre-natal and genetic causes...play a large part in [the] production of ‘poor white-ism’.” Leipoldt gave a nod to environmental factors, saying, “it is arguable

³⁰¹ Raymond Dart to J. A. Mitchell, May 16, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

³⁰² In 1935, Drury organized a plenary session for the Medical Association of South Africa meeting on the question, “Our Land: Is Our Population Satisfactory?” See Dubow, *Scientific Racism*, 179.

³⁰³ J. A. Mitchell, Poor White Problem: Proposed Investigation Abstract of the Replies to Circular Letter from Secretary for Public Health, June 5, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

³⁰⁴ Christian Louis Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor* (London: J. Cape, 1938), 12. After leaving public service, Leipoldt had a long career as a poet and author. Leipoldt’s memoir of his service as a *Bushveld Doctor* displays a penchant for fatalism and literary flair. “I shall try to...tell of my experiences in that park-like sub-tropical lowland, where beauty and disease are close neighbours, and where white civilization struggles against factors that seem to make its perpetuation an improbability.”

³⁰⁵ Saul Dubow characterizes Leipoldt as “equivocating” between biological and environmental paradigms of disease and poverty. Dubow, *Scientific Racism*, 175.

³⁰⁶ C. L. Leipoldt to J. A. Mitchell, May 13, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

that a poor white is manufactured prior to or soon after the school learning age,” but concluded that the “mental defect is an inborn condition.”³⁰⁷

Leipoldt believed that the “fit”-ness of the white race was the key to its survival. “The white community will have to learn that health is the first consideration of any community,” he wrote in his memoir. He complained that the government “spends much annually on its misfits.” Instead, Leipoldt advocated for a “system of selection and classification” that identified those with an aptitude “for development with State assistance.”³⁰⁸ When the *CCR* was published, Leipoldt criticized the Commission for “the comforting conclusion” that the degeneration of Boer children was not a permanent condition and that it “can be modified by altering the environment.” “[My] experience of Bushveld schools...does not enable me to subscribe glibly to that conclusion,” he said.³⁰⁹ Leipoldt’s experience was, indeed, substantial, and his influence over the Carnegie Commission’s health study was greater than is typically understood.

Methods of Measuring Malnutrition

As a health inspector in the Transvaal, Leipoldt undertook the first widespread study of child malnutrition in South Africa. In the *Health Report*, Murray describes Leipoldt’s research assumptions, quoting at length from a 1923 article written by Leipoldt in which he identified “[physical] fatigue, accompanied by mental lassitude and

³⁰⁷ Dubow, *Scientific Racism*, 175. Saul Dubow concludes that despite Leipoldt’s dalliance with eugenics he was, by the standards of his day, a “humanist...interested in improving people’s lives...[and therefore] disinclined to endorse a creed of biological determinism.”³⁰⁷ Dubow is generous with this assessment. Leipoldt called poor whites “low-grade, indifferent or altogether worthless ore.”

³⁰⁸ Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, 347.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

inability to concentrate” as the primary indicators of malnutrition.³¹⁰ Leipoldt elaborated: “the cardinal signs of physical fatigue in a child are as follows: (1) alterations in the reflex mechanism; (2) alterations in the muscle tone; and (3) alterations in the metabolic process.”³¹¹ (Dr. Leipoldt’s instructions for examining a child can be found in the text box below.) Between 1914 and 1929, Leipoldt evaluated some 132,000 students in Transvaal schools, examining each for signs of “fatigue” and malnutrition.³¹²

³¹⁰ W. A. Murray, *Health Report: Health Factors in the Poor White Problem*, vol. 4 of *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* (Cape Town: Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, 1932), 49.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid. The average percentage of malnourished children was as low as 2.5 percent (1916) and as high as 8.2 percent (1926).

“Estimation of Malnutrition in Children”
by Dr. C. L. Leipoldt
Medical Journal of South Africa, February 1923

These signs are well seen in a typically underfed child.

Strip the child completely and you may at once observe that the normal flat or slightly concave outline of the abdomen is changed to a convexity, which may be slight or pronouncedly protuberant; that the large masses of scapular and vertebral muscles are lax and flabby, so that it requires some effort on the part of the child to avoid adopting a scoliotic or kyphotic attitude; that the perineal muscles are equally lax and that the inter-costals appear to share in this general weakness.

Further, the pupil of the eye is widely dilated; pinching of the cheek no longer causes a further dilation, and the reaction of light and accommodation is sluggish; the pilomotor reflex, on the other hand, and the cremasteric are increased, which the superficial abdominal reflexes are usually either abolished or very weak; tendon reflexes on the contrary, are usually strengthened.

Further, attention to the appearance of the skin shows at once that there are marked differences between the smooth velvet-like feel of the skin of a well nourished child and that of the underfed child.

The latter may not show much difference on superficial examination, but on closer inspection one notes the fact that there is pronounced laxity or flabbiness of the skin in certain regions, e.g. the corners of the eyes, the folds of the neck and axillae, the lower buttock folds, and the arch of the instep.

Slight pinching up of the skin over the deltoid or gluteal region confirms this impression of laxity, and in pronounced cases of malnutrition, not far enough advanced to have produced marked oedema of the subcutaneous tissues, one notes a wrinkling of the tips of the fingers and toes.

These are all signs of marked loss of muscle tone which is so pronounced a sign of malnutrition in these cases of alimentary dystrophy.

Figure 13. “Estimation of Malnutrition in Children” by Dr. C. L. Leipoldt. *Source:* Quoted in Murray, *Health Report*, 4:48.

The keen interest in identifying and screening certain populations for malnutrition was not confined to South Africa. In America, at the end of the nineteenth century, infectious and communicable diseases such as diphtheria and tuberculosis were the greatest public health concerns. As public health interventions succeeded in reducing the presence of contagious pathogens, the acute absence of nutrition, as a pathological condition in and of itself, became clear.³¹³ But “malnutrition” was a notoriously elusive diagnosis because it was “characterized not by the presence of something foreign, as with infections disease,” explains Alexander Ruis, “but by the absence of something essential.”³¹⁴ Leipoldt’s “fatigue” theory was typical of early attempts to “normalize the description and identification of malnutrition.”³¹⁵ A Scottish physician, Dr. Alister Mackenzie, developed the Dunfermline Scale in 1912, which considered a child’s “height, weight, eyesight, breathing, muscle tone, mental acuity, and complexion.”³¹⁶ But Mackenzie’s methodology, like Leipoldt’s, was primarily an assessment of individual cases “based mostly on experience and judgment,” not a medical diagnosis.³¹⁷

This was the *Health Report*’s principle critique of Leipoldt’s methodology. Murray believed that “fatigue” was an inadequate and inconsistent indicator of malnutrition. “Physical fatigue again may be due to various causes such as a tiring journey to school...to malaria, bilharzia, heart disease, etc. – and all must be carefully

³¹³ A. R. Ruis, “‘Children with Half-Starved Bodies’ and the Assessment of Malnutrition in the United States, 1890–1950,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 3 (2013): 385.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 379.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 386.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

eliminated before fatigue due to malnutrition *only* can be estimated,” he wrote.³¹⁸ He also critically exposed Leipoldt’s diagnostic method as being “based largely upon personal impressions made upon the examiner by the appearance, posture, etc. of the child.”³¹⁹ This anecdotal approach, Murray explained, “allows for wide variations recorded not only by different observers, but even by the same observer at different times and under different circumstances.”³²⁰ Murray believed that any nutritional assessment “unsupported by physical weights and measurements...[was] too subjective...[to be] of much intrinsic value.”³²¹ For the *Health Report*, he created a new quantitative methodology, the Composite Nutritional Indices, the first nutritional assessment of South African children to incorporate weights and measurements. The strengths and weakness of Murray’s methodology will be discussed later in this chapter.

Getting to the Root of the Matter

By the late 1920s, the influence of physiological paradigms of disease and poverty was waning. Two of the responses Secretary Mitchell received in response to his circular advocated a paradigm of poor white disease that prioritized the socio-economic environment of the shrinking rural “frontier” and the urban slums.³²² Dr. Spencer Lister, Director of the South African Institute for Medical Research, told Mitchell, “the etiology of [poor whites’] sad condition...rest[ed] on sociological and economical grounds.”³²³ He agreed with Mitchell: malnutrition, malaria, and bilharzia were worthy of study but were

³¹⁸ Emphasis added. Murray, *Health Report*, 4:49.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² See “Appendix B” of this thesis for a copy of Mitchell’s circular and the responses from Drs. Leipoldt and Lister.

³²³ Spencer Lister to J. A. Mitchell, May 8, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

not causal factors of white poverty. Lister suggested that in every locality where “Poor Whites are produced in any number” an investigation of “the sociological, economical, health and other conditions present” would be “very fruitful in getting to the root of the matter.”³²⁴

Murray who worked for Mitchell as a District Health Officer in British colonial Nyasaland (now Malawi) agreed with Lister’s assessment. The causes of the poor white problem “were entirely non-medical, but to some extent and in certain areas ill-health may now be a contributory factor.”³²⁵ Murray added a historical element to Lister’s analysis, linking poor white disease to a well-worn vision of rural decline.³²⁶ Most poor whites descended from Voortrekkers who “were largely fortune seekers, hunters, and stockfarmers,” and preferred “a vagabond lifestyle,” Murray wrote to Mitchell.³²⁷ Their purported penchant for avoiding hard work bred an attitude of “improvidence and lack of foresight.”³²⁸ Rural Boers lived on “isolated farms, [with] little education or reading, [and clung to] patriarchal methods of farming [with] little competition to spur ambition.”³²⁹ As a result, they were not prepared for the “droughts, floods, hail, locusts, rinderpest, East Coast fever, [and] crop disease” that threatened the viability of a farm life.³³⁰ Murray assumed that Afrikaners should, at the very least, be able to survive and quickly

³²⁴ Lister to Mitchell, May 8, 1928, GES/SAB.

³²⁵ Mitchell, Abstract of the Replies to Circular, June 5, 1928, GES/SAB.

³²⁶ W. A. Murray, Research in Causation of the Poor White Problem: Health Aspects as Causes, October 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB. Murray analysis was written before he was invited to serve as the lead researcher for the *Health Report* in June 1928. Murray submitted the same analysis as his “research plan” when the Carnegie researchers met for the first time in October 1928. See R.W. Wilcocks to W.A. Murray, June 19, 1928, GES, Vol. 2277, Ref. 77/38, SAB.

³²⁷ Mitchell, Abstract of the Replies to Circular, June 5, 1928, GES/SAB.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

overcome these pseudo-apocalyptic conditions. They failed, he believed, because their environmental struggles were compromised and compounded by “defective diet and malnutrition due to unbalanced and monotonous diet or to insufficient food.”³³¹

Mitchell agreed with Murray’s opinion, forwarding it in full to Wilcocks, the secretary of the Commission, along with summaries of the other responses he received.³³² Wilcocks hoped that Mitchell himself would join the Poor White Study as the lead health researcher, but given Mitchell’s time-consuming commitments as Secretary of Public Health, his participation was never seriously pursued. Mitchell nominated Murray to author the *Health Report*. As a district health officer, Murray was the least illustrious of the Carnegie researchers. Yet he was very knowledgeable and experienced, and as a mid-level bureaucrat, he could be spared. Mitchell predicted that a proper health study would take a qualified expert some two or three years to complete; Murray was given just four months.³³³

Murray’s Assumptions and Ambitions

Once elevated to the “deans of research” for the Carnegie investigation, Murray outlined an ambitious agenda for the *Health Report*. Following the researchers’ first meeting in October 1928, Murray prepared his proposed plan for field work, revealing his central conviction that poor whites’ environment was the greatest contributor to their

³³¹ Mitchell, Abstract of the Replies to Circular, June 5, 1928, GES/SAB.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ J. A. Mitchell to R. W. Wilcocks, June 5, 1928.

poverty and unacceptable rates of disease.³³⁴ Family medical histories were critical data points for Murray, but with the exception of “intermarriage”; hereditary or genetic factors were not to be considered.³³⁵ He also wanted information on water sources and usage for every household the Commission investigated.³³⁶ Contaminated water-borne intestinal diseases, as well as malaria, made basic hygiene virtually impossible, he argued. While it received little attention in his final report, Murray’s list of causes of tuberculosis came straight from the environmental handbook of the segregation era: “(1) History of community – earlier cases known in parents, etc., (2) Family histories of tuberculosis or lung trouble: gland or bone afflictions [sic], (3) Housing. Overcrowding. Construction. Ventilation. Light.”³³⁷ But for Murray, and indeed most public health officials in the 1920s, a person’s nutritional health was the most important indicator and predictor of disease. Anthropometrics were revolutionizing the field of nutrition, with new quantitative diagnostics replacing the qualitative observations favored a decade before.

Murray led the anthropometric vanguard in South Africa, but did more than weigh and measure; he correlated the physical measurements of children to the socio-economic environment in which they lived. His organizing questions probed several environmental indicators: “Is food supplied sufficient in amount all through the year?” “What facilities on this farm grow fruit, oranges, vegetables, tomatoes?”³³⁸ If a family grew food, Murray

³³⁴ Murray, *Health Aspects as Causes*, October 1928, GES/SAB. Each researcher prepared a similar document for their study. When the researchers met again to finalize their plans, they used these documents to see where their research could be coordinated. See document entitled *Points for Special Co-Operation of Research Workers*, January 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

³³⁵ Murray, *Health Aspects as Causes*, October 1928, 2, GES/SAB.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

considered dietary deficiencies as well as the “chemical composition of local soil, especially presence or absence of lime, phosphates, etc., water, percentage of iodine, lime, etc.”³³⁹ Unlike Leipoldt who diagnosed “fatigue” as malnourishment, Murray identified five “concomitant diseases of disability”: malnutrition, malaria, syphilis, bilharzia, and helminthiasis.³⁴⁰ Murray vowed that his quantitative approach of weighing and measuring each child would help him isolate the true causes of malnutrition.

Murray’s approach required far more time and money than was allocated. It was not long before Murray’s ambition got him into hot water with Wilcocks and Mitchell. The files of the Department of Public Health in the National Archives Repository in Pretoria contain correspondence in which Mitchell scolded Murray for letting his contributions to the Carnegie Commission distract him from his duties as Health Officer. Passionate about his research, Murray used the “Carnegie Commission” name as collateral for unauthorized expenses. From April to June 1929, he spent more than £100 on a new, specialized scale for weighing school children and hired a female nurse to assist him for a month. The Carnegie Commission had not budgeted for these costs and insisted that Murray seek reimbursement from Mitchell. Murray wrote unabashedly to Mitchell that with “Nurse Jordan” at his side, he could “examine more than twice as any persons in the same short time.”³⁴¹ “She is S. A. born...and very suitable for this work,” he wrote, and “she is now fully employed, at times...examining school children, at other

³³⁹ Murray, *Health Aspects as Causes*, October 1928, 2, GES/SAB.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Bilharzia is a parasitic disease carried by snails that contaminated water supplies, impairing growth and cognitive development. Helminthiasis is a classification of parasitic worms that live in the intestinal tract, causing a variety of symptoms, including diarrhea, loss of appetite, and fatigue.

³⁴¹ W. A. Murray to J. A. Mitchell, February 8, 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

times in obtaining information at their homes – a very tedious business!”³⁴² Murray added, “the question has been raised...here whether...the Public Health Dept. would not be willing to include her services as part of its contribution [to the Carnegie Commission]...Personally I would like to recommend it.”³⁴³ Mitchell was not convinced and told Murray that he would have to find funding elsewhere. Murray appears to have made several fruitless inquiries. In the end, he was unable to pay Nurse Jordan, who returned to her regular job in Johannesburg. After several weeks of tense negotiation, Mitchell and the Carnegie researchers agreed to split the cost of reimbursing Nurse Jordan for her time.

The limitations of Murray’s time resulted in a substantially shorter health study. His resulting frustration was evident in the final report. Referring to himself in the third person, he complained that “it was found impossible to second [the writer] for this work for any considerable length of time. His duties were so arranged as to permit him from time to time to devote himself for short periods to this research work.”³⁴⁴ Murray relied heavily on data gathered by other researchers. For example, the surveys Malherbe used for the *Education Report* asked children what they had eaten in the previous 24 hours. Murray also leveraged his Carnegie appointment to elicit information about poor whites from local officials. In September 1929, Murray wrote a “Circular to all Magistrates in the Union” under the auspices of the Minister of Justice.³⁴⁵ Murray said he was “extremely reluctant to impose” but nonetheless asked the magistrates to supply him with

³⁴² Murray to Mitchell, February 8, 1929, GES./SAB.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Murray, *Health Report*, 4:introduction.

³⁴⁵ W. A. Murray, Carnegie Research into the Poor White Problem (*Health Report*), Circular to All Magistrates in the Union, September 22, 1930, (3/GR) 4/1/1/19, 2/6D(M), KAB.

“the amount of sick relief granted to European indigents in your area.”³⁴⁶ Murray pressed for official information on how many poor whites were treated by a district surgeon or hospitalized at the government’s expense, and how many applying for government help were eventually refused.³⁴⁷ “What was the approximate cost over the last five or ten-year period?” he asked. And if no statistics were available, he sought the magistrate’s general impression. Murray’s quest revealed a desire to understand how many poor whites were seeking medical attention and what this form of “pauper relief” was costing the state.

Murray had no choice but to petition magistrates because “the information in this office does not discriminate between European and non-European paupers.”³⁴⁸ It is a startling revelation in light of the Carnegie Commission, whose very ethos was based on the innate racial superiority of even the poorest white over blacks. Ideological irony aside, the lack of racially segregated statistics had very mundane causes, as evidenced by the files of the Town Clerk of Graaff-Reinet on “poor relief” in that Cape Town Archives Repository. When the Town Clerk received a memo from his magistrate with Murray’s circular attached, he simply responded, “I beg to advise that the small number of applications made to the Office for medical relief are hardly suitable for comparative purposes.”³⁴⁹ Besides, he added, “the majority of applications [for relief] are referred to the various Charitable Institutions which my Council supports, and I would suggest that

³⁴⁶ Murray, Circular to All Magistrates, September 22, 1930, 3/GR/KAB.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Magistrate of Graaff-Reinet to Town Clerk, September 25, 1930, (3/GR) 4/1/1/19, 2/6D(M), KAB; Town Clerk of Graaff-Reinet to Magistrate, October 13, 1930, (3/GR) 4/1/1/19, 2/6D(M), KAB.

you communicate with them.” Even in 1930, poor and isolated areas of South Africa remained a statistical black hole, much to policymakers’ consternation.³⁵⁰

Climate and Civilization

Lacking time and data, Murray frequently resorted to quoting and scrutinizing the research of other men. In addition to taking on Leipoldt, Murray confronted another theoretical giant, Ellsworth Huntington and his popular assumptions about the economical and physical consequences for whites of living in “climates” for which they were not racially suited. Huntington’s climatological theory of white degradation appeared in his 1915 study *Climate and Civilization*, arguing for the “recognition of the importance of climate...as a [foremost] condition of civilization.”³⁵¹ Huntington observed that civilization progressed in a climate affected by seasonally cold weather that “stimulated” the blood in the body and kindled a level of vitality essential for building a civilized society. The apocalyptic collapse of civilizations, he argued, was linked to climatic shifts, particularly a rise in temperature, which slowed down the circulation of blood, sapping the strengths of citizens, “caus[ing] economic distress, and thus engender[ing] famine, misery, and general discontent and lawlessness.” The same was true “when the white man migrates to climates less stimulating than those of his original home, he appears to lose in both physical and mental energy.”³⁵² The loss of physical energy and mental acuity “gives greater scope to the disease which under any

³⁵⁰ See chapter one for more on the frustration of government officials over the lack of socio-economic data on rural communities in South Africa. Their consternation is captured in, Tenth Session of Advisory Council of Labour, October 1927, ARB/SAB

³⁵¹ Ellsworth Huntington, *Civilization and Climate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915), 8.

³⁵² Ibid.

circumstance would find an easy prey in the weakened bodies.” Huntington claimed that in South Africa as well as the American South “climate is the original force which sets the wheel [of maladaptation] in motion...[for] it is only in adverse climates that we find the types of ‘poor white trash’ developing in appreciable numbers.”³⁵³

Huntington’s theories influenced many prominent thinkers, including Leipoldt, but Murray never endorsed Huntington’s hypothesis that whites were racially unsuited to certain environments. Murray argued that, on the whole, “the natural environment of the farmer and his family whether rich or poor, was on the whole healthy and favourable. Life was mostly spent in the open air with abundance of fresh air and sunlight by day.”³⁵⁴ He was “by no means convinced of the soundness either of Huntington’s conclusions or of the correctness of his premises,” adding, “the presence of malaria and [hookworm] are more than sufficient to account for the retardation ascribed by Huntington to climate alone.” Murray pointed out that only a fraction of the Union could be considered “tropical” and the “the poor white problem first appeared in the Karoo” despite the “stimulating effects of the cold winters and sharp frosts.”³⁵⁵

Murray acknowledged there were links between climate, malnutrition, and poverty. Based on his research in the Karoo, Murray declared it “remarkable” that anyone survived in environmental “conditions that were a menace to their health and existence.”³⁵⁶ In his chapter on “Geographical and Rainfall Data” Murray noted that in seven different years between 1882 and 1925 rainfall in the Karoo was less than 6 inches

³⁵³ Huntington, *Civilization and Climate*, 8. See also Stanley B. Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development: Comparative Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

³⁵⁴ Murray, *Health Report*, 4:66.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 86–87.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

per annum. “These droughts brought very great hardships to the rural inhabitants, as, in addition to the death of large numbers of cattle and sheep from drought and famine, it was impossible to grow crops of vegetables,” he wrote.³⁵⁷ In this unforgiving environment, malnourishment and financial hardships were inevitable and “in this way, ‘poor whites’ were created.”³⁵⁸ The environment was unforgiving to those who failed to adapt to its vagaries, but Murray and his fellow researchers believed that well-adjusted Boers could eventually thrive in harsh environments such as the Karoo. The question for the Carnegie Commission was, what prevented generations of rural Boers from making the necessary adjustments?

Murray Measures Malnutrition

Of the five “concomitant diseases of disability” that Murray believed prevented poor whites from adjusting to their environment³⁵⁹ malnutrition was by far the biggest threat. Murray’s nutrition study is divided into two parts. First, he catalogued the quantity and quality of food that poor whites ate every day and compared their intake with the diets of whites that were “not poor”. Second, Murray introduced a new diagnostic called the Composite Nutritional Indices (CNI) and demonstrated how it could be used to determine individual cases of malnutrition in children.

Murray’s dietary study drew on data that he collected from the families of some 900 school children in the Cape Province. This pool was small and decidedly skewed towards poorer families, but Murray felt such a sample size was sufficiently

³⁵⁷ Murray, *Health Report*, 4:11.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 87.

³⁵⁹ Murray’s five concomitant diseases of disability were malnutrition, malaria, syphilis, bilharzia, and hookworms. Murray, *Health Aspects as Causes*, October 1928, 1, GES/SAB.

representative of what he had witnessed throughout the Union. For comparative purposes, Murray divided the students into four arbitrary economic “classes” based on his perception of the income of the principle wage earner in the family, usually the father.³⁶⁰ Of the children in the study 111 (12.3 percent) lived in “good” financial circumstances, 211 (23.4 percent) in “fair”, 262 (29.1 percent) in “poor”, and 317 (35.1 percent) in “very poor” circumstances.³⁶¹ Murray’s accounting indicates that nearly two-thirds of his subjects lived in some degree of destitution.

³⁶⁰ This is precisely the same qualitative, subjective technique that Murray criticized Leipoldt for using in his malnutrition metric.

³⁶¹ Murray provides no definitions, quantitative or qualitative, of these classifications. Murray, *Health Report*, 4:23.



Figure 14. Malnourished school children wait to receive a cup of soup, for many their best meal of the day. The Carnegie Commission's use of photography echoes the work of Dorothy Lange whose photographs of Dust Bowl and Great Depression were instrumental in motivating support for sweeping poor relief programs. *Source:* Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:chap. 8.

Murray asked his subjects to identify the type of food that they ate regularly. (He was unable to gather data on the quantity of food consumed and could only estimate the average calorie value.) From this, he created four dietary classifications, which are described in depth on pages 24 and 25 of the *Health Report*. The “Good” Diet (Type A) had a daily caloric intake of 3,500 and included three meals and a snack. Each meal included a serving of grain- or vegetable-based carbohydrate (porridge, bread, rice, or potatoes), and a protein in the form of eggs, fresh or tinned meat, or fish. Dairy, root or green vegetables, and fruit were eaten at least once a day, as well as tea, coffee, sugar or jam. The “Fair” Diet (Type B) averaged 2,900 calories per day. Meat was not consumed

everyday; grains and vegetables were only eaten at the midday meal, and fruit only in season. The “Poor” Diet (Type C) averaged just 2,200 calories, derived primarily from three portions of “Boer” bread, a coarse leavened wheat bread served with meat “drippings” or butter. Filling foods such as rice, sweet potatoes, or pumpkins were a daily staple, but meat or soup was consumed only once a week; fruit and green vegetables were rarely on the plate. The “Very Poor” Diet (Type D) at 1,700 calories was hardly a diet at all. It consisted almost entirely of Boer bread, sweet potatoes, pumpkin or mealies.



Figure 15, A malnourished boy (age unknown). Boy is likely older than he appears due to stunting and wasting) whose “whole diet consists of meal meal and coffee – all without sugar or milk.” *Source:* Photograph and accompanying note from Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:chap 8.

There was virtually a one-to-one correlation of students Murray classified as “very poor” financially and those with “very poor” diets. Murray illustrated the connection between extreme poverty and malnutrition in his description of a family of bywoners in the Willowmore district of the Cape Province. As sharecroppers, this family worked a smallholding and paid for their tenancy by contributing half of their annual yield to the landowner. When Murray visited their home “the full year’s crop had just been harvested and was pointed out to me amounting to ten pailfuls of inferior wheat and fifteen pumpkins.”³⁶² The family had seven children aged 1 to 14 years.³⁶³ Murray described three of the four girls who attended school as “mentally retarded”, meaning they were at least two grades behind for their age. For example, Christine, the eldest, was a Standard II (grade four) level rather than a Standard IV (grade six). Hunger was certainly a factor in their educational “retardation” given that when “there was no food whatever with which to break their fast – the four girls then walked to school hungry and listless.”³⁶⁴ The two oldest girls Martha, 12, and Christine, 14, were more malnourished than other “very poor” children their age. Their parents were “tall and extremely thin, and looked decidedly underfed.”³⁶⁵

Murray developed a new index for measuring the nutritional status of children like Martha and Christine, the first qualitative measurement to be widely employed in South Africa. Unlike Leipoldt’s study, which relied on the examination of physical characteristics, Murray’s anthropometric Composite Nutritional Indices (CNI) measured

³⁶² Murray, *Health Report*, 4:32.

³⁶³ Murray’s description of the “S” Family appears in *Ibid.*, 31–32.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

trunk length (or sitting height), chest circumference, and observed weight. He then divided these values by the child's age. A lower CNI corresponded inversely with a greater degree of malnutrition, according to Murray's index.

Equation 1. Composite Nutritional Indices. To develop the ratio for CNI, Murray compared the standard deviation for each measurement. The deviation for the trunk and chest measurement as roughly 1.5 inches, therefore those number could be added together without being adjusted. The standard deviation for weight was 12 pounds, 8 times that of the trunk and chest measurements. *Source:* Equation and methodology from Murray, *Health Report*, 4:20.

$$\text{Composite Nutritional Indices} = \frac{\left(\text{Trunk} + \text{Chest} + \frac{\text{Weight}}{8} \right)}{\text{Age}}$$

Murray measured roughly 1,700 children, age 9 and 15, in the Karoo, Port Elizabeth, Langkloof, Knysna, and various locations in the Transvaal. At the time, there were no standard measurements for height and weight of children, so Murray could only compare the children he measured to one another. He divided the children into three categories, “poor children” living at home, “poor children living in hostels”, where they were more likely to have better diet, and “not poor children”.³⁶⁶ At every age, the “poor children” living at home had significantly lower CNI than the “not poor” children. Children living in the Transvaal had CNI's lower than those in the Cape. After age 7, boys, on average, had lower CNI than girls. While Murray provided little analysis to

³⁶⁶ CNI graphs can be found on Murray, *Health Report*, 4:56–62.

account for the gender and geographic differences in CNI, his study confirmed a measurable link between the rate of malnutrition and the socio-economic environment.

Murray's principle goal was to demonstrate how to diagnose malnutrition at the individual level; the innovation of his study, he believed, was the metric, not the findings. Globally, anthropometric studies of malnutrition like Murray's were meant to give public health officials the upper hand in their battle against malnutrition. "The scale had become a regular apparatus of school health programs and the primary metric of nutritional status," writes Alexander Ruis.³⁶⁷ A 1925 survey by the American Child Health Association revealed that 80 percent of students at urban schools were weighed at least once a year.³⁶⁸ By nutritional anthropology's meteoric rise in the 1920 was matched only by its breathtaking slide into ignominy in the 1930s. "As physiologists learned more about the growth process, they came to understand that the extent and pace of growth were determined by copious factors, including heredity, geography, climate, general health, amount of exercise, diet, and even time of year."³⁶⁹ Research confirmed what public health officials and physicians had suspected for some time. "Standard" weights and measures for growing children, from which nutritional deviations could reliably be identified and monitored, were an insufficient diagnostic tool for malnutrition.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Ruis, "'Children with Half-Starved Bodies,'" 390.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 393.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 404–405. By the end of the 1930s, officials eventually abandoned their attempts to identify the symptoms of malnutrition on an individual basis. Instead, they began managing the risk factors for malnutrition through a "universal approach based on education, food security, and fortification of foods." Malnutrition was defined by a lack of sufficient nutritious food while "the broader role of the social, cultural, and physical environment in nutritional health was no longer prominent in the etiology of [American] nutrition." In South Africa, on the other hand, the definition of what was "nutritional" was a powerful tool of cultural racism that the white apartheid governments wielded well into the twentieth century. See Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach*.

Murray Misses the Mark

In her study of the cultural politics of nutrition in South Africa, Diana Wylie observes that nutrition in “poor whites and poor blacks tended to be discussed in similar terms.”³⁷¹ Studies of black malnutrition were indicators of the health of the black labor force; studies of white malnutrition aimed to show the relative health of the white race. In neither case, she contends, were social scientists or policymakers eager to connect malnutrition with lack of wages, preferring to argue that malnutrition was “a sign that time-honored...habits were not up to the challenges of modernity.”³⁷² There was evidence of the cultural prejudice in Murray’s study when he faulted the “Dutch” diet for its preference for over-cooked vegetables and meat. Similar to his fellow researchers, Murray laid the blame for dietary deficiencies on the woman’s defective kitchen skills, revealing how Carnegie men viewed poor white pathology in gendered ways, a theme more fully explored in the following chapter. But on the whole, Murray prioritized poor whites’ “poverty [and] their unfavorable natural environment,” in his diagnosis of poor white disease.³⁷³ Any “ignorance of the laws of dietetics on the part of the rural population” was rooted more in geographic isolation than in cultural malfeasance.³⁷⁴

Murray reckoned that malnutrition and disease were symptoms of white poverty, not the cause of it. He concluded: “no evidence has been found during the investigation to show that either epidemic or endemic disease, or under-feeding or ill-feeding...so

³⁷¹ Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach*, 147.

³⁷² Ibid., 146.

³⁷³ Murray, *Health Report*, 4:126.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

deleteriously affects the physique as to bring about their poverty.”³⁷⁵ While this finding was consistent with Murray’s environmental paradigm of disease and poverty, it was too simple by half. Environmental crises such as drought or epizootics triggered malnutrition and disease, undermining the health of undercapitalized farmers at a time when they needed every ounce of physical strength. Septic sores, dental disease, physical weakness, and mental fatigue brought on by undernourishment were severe and acute in times of hardship, but they also led to chronic health problems in adults and underdevelopment in children.

Not all of Murray’s contemporaries shared his etiological optimism. The 1926 Report of the (Cape) Medical Inspectors, quoted extensively by Murray, describes how malnutrition weakened the entire human organism. When children were seen to be malnourished, for example, “the developing tissues of their body are deprived of material they need. It is unreasonable to suppose that bones, for instance may [not] show the effects of wrong diet, and that the delicate tissues of the brain should remain unaffected in their growth and function.”³⁷⁶ A 1936 study of Poverty and Dependency in Capetown by O. J. M. Wagner, a doctoral student in sociology at the University of Stellenbosch³⁷⁷,

³⁷⁵ Murray, *Health Report*, 4:127.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 37.

³⁷⁷ Oloff Jacobus Marais Wagner, *Poverty and Dependency in Capetown; A Sociological Study of 3,300 Dependents Receiving Assistance from the Capetown General Board of Aid* (Capetown: The Standard Press, Limited, 1936), v. Wagner was one of the first doctoral candidates from the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch. His academic tutor was none other than H. F. Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, himself a former student of R. W. Wilcocks, author of the *Psychology Report*. Roberta Miller argues that during his academic career Verwoerd “organized his department [of social work] on the basis of such problems as poverty,” and that he “emphasized the methodology of social surveys or investigation that could be used to provide information for social policy.” The content and structure of Wagner’s study supports this contention, as well as the acknowledgement he gives to Verwoerd for the “unfailing lesson in the exercise of scientific discipline.” See Miller, “Science and Society in the Early Career of H. F. Verwoerd,” 637.

argued that the long-term consequences of ill health were sufficiently disabling that a person in “very good” financial circumstances could slip from conjectural poverty to structural poverty, with little hope of recovery.³⁷⁸ Wagner recognized that “it is usually very difficult to determine...whether illness was a primary cause or a later development,” nonetheless, “even if ill-health is a later development...it helps to aggregate [poverty.]”³⁷⁹ He estimated that in 1 in 5 poor white families in Cape Town, poverty was either precipitated or aggravated by illness.³⁸⁰ “The income and expenditure of the poor family is, at the very best, so closely balanced,” said Wagner, “that the slighted disturbance owing to illness of any member of the family may lead to the need for assistance.” In some cases, both the illness and the need for financial assistance became chronic.³⁸¹

Murray’s “Nutritional” Value

The *Carnegie Commission Report* frequently characterized bywoners as “the weaker element” of society.³⁸² In the *Economic Report*, Grosskopf wrote, “people of the poorer rural type...give the general impression that they possess little spirit and have but a limited horizon.”³⁸³ Murray’s nutritional study should have challenged Grosskopf’s

³⁷⁸ Iliffe, *The African Poor*, 4. Conjectural poverty is brought on by a temporary economic downturn caused by drought or unemployment. Structural poverty is a form of systemic, generational poverty that, according to Iliffe, was particularly common among landless whites in rural South Africa.

³⁷⁹ Wagner, *Poverty and Dependency in Capetown*, 95.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 96.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 94.

³⁸² Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:140.

³⁸³ Ibid.

assumptions about poor whites' "laziness" and questioned the degree to which a lack of initiative was caused by physical "lethargy" brought on by temporary or prolonged malnutrition. Instead, Murray failed to make clear the very real impediment that the physical and mental disabilities caused by malnutrition posed to the Carnegie researchers plans for "uplifting" poor whites. Grosskopf suggested that if bywoners were given an assurance of land tenure, were educated in modern agricultural methods, or granted grazing rights for a few head of cattle or sheep, they would have an incentive to improve their circumstances.³⁸⁴ But without the physical strength to work the land the value of these inputs was limited. Similarly, changing the curriculum of local schools to make it more relevant to rural life, as Malherbe's *Education Report* suggested, would not keep hungry children from fainting in class.

By Diana Wylie's reckoning, Murray's work "had no *clear* nutritional [my emphasis] significance," despite his "careful measurements."³⁸⁵ That statement is valid in so far as it applies to the limitations of the CNI as a diagnostic for malnutrition, but the same can be said of the anthropometric indices developed by American public health officials in the same period. Wylie's critique should, therefore, be read as a general, rather than a specific accusation. Within the context of the poor white canon, Murray's study of nutrition was groundbreaking. Poor whites' health, let alone their nutritional

³⁸⁴ Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:136.

³⁸⁵ Emphasis added. Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach*, 147.

status, was not a factor for the Transvaal Indigency Commission or for W. M. Macmillan, the two most important poor white studies preceding the Carnegie Commission.³⁸⁶

Murray and his boss, Secretary Mitchell, constructed a diagnostic framework for the *Health Report* in which physical illness alone could not induce poverty in an otherwise well adapted white person.³⁸⁷ For Murray and Mitchell, the advantage of their environmental paradigm was its assumption that a change in the socio-economic or ecological environment could restore “adaptability” to poor whites. Its weakness was the unfair and unrealistic expectations it placed on people whose capacity for “adaptability” was chronically compromised by regular bouts of malnutrition and disease. The next chapter explores the burdensome expectations the Carnegie Commission’s pathology placed on poor whites, particularly on mothers and daughters.

³⁸⁶ Not even Wagner’s study of poverty in Cape Town considered malnutrition an illness; it was barely mentioned as a concomitant factor in illness and debility. In fact, Wagner criticized the Board of Aid for equating nutrition with health, in the vain hope that nutritious food, in and of itself, was a sufficient remedy. “Types of Condition or Disease” in poor Cape Townians identified by Wagner were tuberculosis, nervous conditions affection sense organs, defects of the circulatory system, respiratory and digestive complaints, non-venereal disease of the genital-urinary systems, diseases of the bones or organs of locomotion, and other conditions. See Wagner, *Poverty and Dependency in Capetown*, 98, 140–141.

³⁸⁷ Iliffe, *The African Poor*, 119. John Iliffe goes so far as to say that the Carnegie Commission “ignored the white poverty caused by [the] incapacitation” of illness or malnutrition.

5. “MALADAPTED” MOTHERS

The Carnegie Commission’s claim that “healthy” rural Boers were “adapted to modernity” depended on gendered expectations of what poor whites could, and should, strive to be. Each man was expected to be the “good farmer”, meaning a steward of the land that maximized hectare productivity, conserved water in semi-arid regions, prevented soil erosion, commanded high prices for stock, and maintained disease-free herds. His virtues included perseverance, thrift, and modesty. He was a man of duty who saw his work as vital to the white nation and its farming enterprise, which agricultural expert P. J. Du Toit, in 1919, called the “great school of science, severe in its teaching...[that] rewarded lavishly, once its lessons are learnt.”³⁸⁸ In the early twentieth century, the Union government regularly produced handbooks, reports, and journals extolling the virtues of the modern farmer. Some of these publications were biblical in length. For example, the *1929 Handbook for Farmers in South Africa* exceeded one thousand pages, with an index that included everything from discussions of fertilizers, soils, and irrigation to rust prevention. The entry on “How to Choose a Good Dairy Cow”, exhibited below, illustrates the breadth and detail of the *Handbook*. Such publications presented a moral compass rooted in the testaments: “As the Bible points the way to spiritual perfection, this *Handbook [for Farmers]* will indicate ways and means to

³⁸⁸ P. J. Du Toit, *The Farmer in South Africa, Some of His Problems* (Cape Town, 1919), 15.

more profitable farming and greater prosperity for every farmer in every part of the country.”³⁸⁹

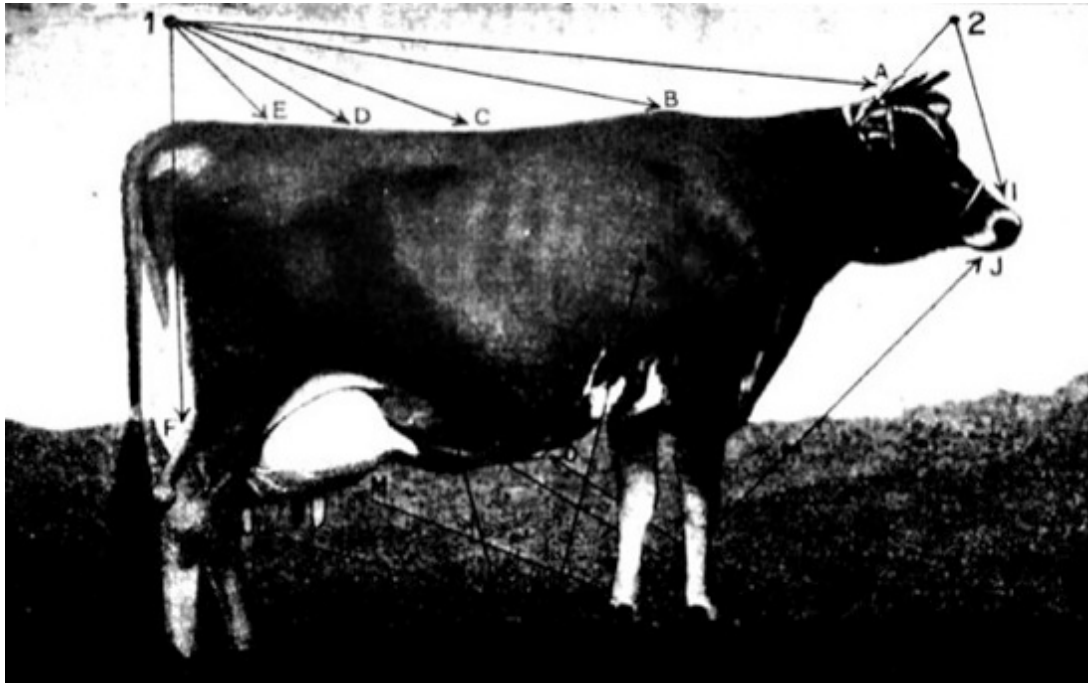


Figure 16. Diagram of “A Good Dairy Cow” from the 1929 *Handbook for Farmers*. According to the *Handbook*, points indicating “A Good Dairy Cow” include: “(A) Head - feminine, clean-cut, eyes prominent and alert; (B) Shoulder - fine, withers, vertebrae, hips and pin-bones prominent and free from fleshiness, (C) Back - straight and strong, (D) - Loin wide, ribs long and wide apart, (E) Rump - long, wide level, thurls wide apart and high, (F) Legs straight, bone fine.” The list of physical attributes was accompanied by a picture of a sixteen-time Grand Champion cow and the admonition: “REMEMBER! ONE GOOD DAIRY COW IS OFTEN WORTH MORE THAN A HERD OF SCRUBS.” Source: Diagram from the 1929 *Handbook for Farmers in South Africa*, 158-159. The so-called “scrubs” were Nguni cattle, a hardy, native breed whose narrow elongated face and low body weight was as a stark contrast to the plump European dairy cow pictured above. For Zulus, Nguni were essential to their lives and livelihoods, providing milk, meat, hides, and a source of income and cultural wealth. Agricultural officials considered “scrub” stock “inferior and destructive” and in the 1920s Native Affairs Department officials sought to strengthen herds by “execut[ing] a large number of ‘scrub’ stock.” See Aran Mackinnon, “Chiefs, Cattle and ‘Betterment’: Contesting Zuluness and Segregation in the Reserves,” in *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present*, eds. Benedict Carton, John Laband, and Jabulani Sithole (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 254.

Expectations of the virtuous farmer’s wife were just as high. Rural women were responsible for cultivating a “grid” of social values that were meant to “guide

³⁸⁹ 1929 *Handbook for Farmers in South Africa*, 1.

[Afrikaners] in expected conduct and provide a way to judge and interpret the actions of others.”³⁹⁰ As a guardian of the “moral order”, it was a mother’s duty to educate her children in Boer history and the Afrikaans language, and socialize them through worship in the Dutch Reformed Church. In addition she was expected to manage efficiently the household and labor on the farm.³⁹¹ Her most important obligation, perhaps, was to strengthen nationalist ideology defining the *volk* during the Pact era by safeguarding the Afrikaner “moral order” and turning it into a prophylaxis against poor white disease. “A family with a...weak mother is more liable to sink [into poverty] than one with...a respectable mother,” affirmed Rev. J. R. Albertyn, author of the Carnegie Commission’s *Sociological Report*.³⁹²

In the midst of rural hardships, a Boer’s home was seen as the last defense against “degeneration”. Dubbed a “genetic” form of “maladaptation”, degeneration was said to doom the poor-white household to poverty. In her study of illness and debility in Botswana, Julie Livingston observes that in Tswana etiology “both social and personal health were...in part managed through proper interaction with...various

³⁹⁰ I paraphrase Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination*, 20.

³⁹¹ See M. E. Rothmann, *The Mother and Daughter of the Poor White Family*, vol. 5b of *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* (Cape Town: Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, 1932), 171–172, as well as Butler, “Interwar Liberalism and Local Activism” in Butler et al., *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa*; Du Toit, “The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism”; and Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words.”

³⁹² Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:34. See also Butler, “Democratic Liberalism in South Africa”; Du Toit, “The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism”; and Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words.”

environments.”³⁹³ The Commission defined “proper interaction” as a harmonious relationship between a socio-economic environment that enabled the adaptation and advancement of the white race. To maintain a healthy environment, whites were obligated to efficiently and respectfully steward their ecological and cultural resources.³⁹⁴

This chapter explores how Rev. J. R. Albertyn and Mrs. M. E. Rothmann scrutinized the “proper interaction” between poor whites and their “natural home” environment. It also examines how the Commission identified what it considered the “unhealthy” imbalance³⁹⁵ afflicting poor whites who willingly interacted with racial “inferiors”, thereby threatening the very vitality of the Afrikaner family unit. This concern, reflecting South African eugenicists’ fears of so-called racial ruin (e.g., miscegenation and detribalization), worried Mrs. M. E. Rothmann in her report on *The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family* and Rev. J. R. Albertyn in his report on *The Poor White and Society*. Between them, they constructed an etiology of poor white

³⁹³ Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination*, 21. Livingston explains that for Tswana, “proper interactions” are maintained when “the interconnectedness of people and the individuality of hearts are triangulated through the ancestors, who bestow inner nature yet concern themselves with social harmony and who create the ecological world in which people, their cattle, and their fields are located.” (Livingston, 167). While the comparison to poor white disease, as depicted in the Carnegie Commission is inexact, Tswana etiology provides a fascinating lens for interpretation and comparison. In the frontier theory of rural decline, described in chapter three, rural Boers were held responsible for environmental degradation by not conserving water, protecting the soil against erosion, and coralling their sheep and cattle. At the same time their semi-arid environment, prone to extremes of drought and flood, was also identified as an impediment to successful Boer smallholder agriculture. While there were no “ancestors” ritually invoked in this etiology, the need for balance between humans and the environment preoccupied agricultural officials and scientists who strove to create, in their own minds as well as for the good of the state, a harmonious relationship between Man and Nature in South Africa. On these broad environmental and conservation concerns, see Beinart, *Rise of Conservation* and Beinart and Coates, *Environment and History*.

³⁹⁴ Thank you to Benedict Carton for his insights on the idiomatic significance of “proper”, or *uqotho* in isiZulu, and his encouragement to consider its application for poor white disease. See also Benedict Carton, “The Forgotten Compass of Death: Apocalypse Then and Now in the Social History of South Africa,” *Journal of Social History* 37, 1 (2003), 199-218.

³⁹⁵ For Tswana, “social harmony” is maintained through *madi*, the “substance that flows through relationships (as semen, blood, and money).” If the flow of *madi* becomes polluted or corrupted, “discord [can] manifest itself in illness,” both in the present and for future generations. Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination*, 167.

disease in which present and future mothers of the *volk*, namely Boer girls, women and wives, were overwhelmingly responsible for the wellbeing or deprivation of the home environment fostering the bywoner population.



Figure 17. Unidentified poor white family from the Carnegie Commission Report. Unlike some photos which show the family in front of a wooden shack or reed hut, the brick wall in this picture is a sign of permanence, and perhaps better times. *Source:* Photograph from Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:chap. 8.

Symptoms of Degeneration

The Carnegie men³⁹⁶ shared the commonly held belief that a healthy home was the foundation of a strong Boer society. Rev. J. R. Albertyn, author of the *Sociological Report*, observed that in a wholesome domestic unit where “relations of peace and harmony exist . . . the family unity is preserved, and the children as a rule grow up to be respectable citizens.”³⁹⁷ This salubrious household, in other words, offered Boers the best chance to turn away from “deeds of violence and despair” and embrace, instead, “respect for law and order” and “reverence for the minister and church council.”³⁹⁸ Thanks to the Afrikaners’ “inherent good nature,” Rev. Albertyn assured, “pugnaciousness” will become “foreign to his character” while “virtuous qualities” will “save hundreds of poor whites from complete degradation.”³⁹⁹

Carnegie researchers – and other prominent Afrikaans-speaking whites like Albertyn, Grosskopf, and Malherbe – assumed that Boer identity nested in the family. Thus they aimed to preserve what they believed were the most distinctly “virtuous qualities” of *volk* culture.⁴⁰⁰ In 1908 F. S. Malan, Member of Parliament for the South African Party and the future chair of the Carnegie Commission, proclaimed, “raise the Afrikaans language to a written language, let it become the vehicle for our culture, our

³⁹⁶ The “Carnegie men” are the male authors of the *Carnegie Commission Report*: J. R. Albertyn, sociology; J. F. W. Grosskopf, economics; E. G. Malherbe, education; W. A. Murray, health; and R. W. Wilcocks, psychology.

³⁹⁷ Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:35. For the story behind Rev. Albertyn’s elevation to author of the *Sociological Report*, despite his lack of academic training in sociology, see chapter two.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁰⁰ For more on the virtuous qualities of the *volk*, see Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*; Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words”; Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*; Nicole Devarenne, “Nationalism and the Farm Novel”; Marijke du Toit, “Incredible Whiteness of Being”; and Butler, “Democratic Liberalism in South Africa.”

history, our national ideals and you will also raise the people who speak it.”⁴⁰¹ Albertyn praised the homes where “the intimates speak with great readiness and love of their ancestors. Old traditions are honored, and the family tries to live up to them.”⁴⁰² Even if a Boer household fell upon hard times, he argued, its nineteenth-century traditions of self-sufficiency and frontier hardiness would help “the family to return to a higher standard.”⁴⁰³

For thousands of poor whites, “virtues and traditions” did little to ease the “domestic strife and discord” brought on by poverty, vice and illnesses, among them alcoholism. “Respect for law is often undermined by the illicit drink,” reported Albertyn.⁴⁰⁴ The rural whites who searched for work in major towns left spouses, children, and their elders. Urban centers, he believed, had become breeding grounds for “immorality and desertion” as well as “agitations and riots.”⁴⁰⁵ Albertyn was most disturbed that poor whites exhibited a cavalier disregard of their “honorable past.” He obsessed over the *swart gevaar*, or in his words, “the extent to which the home life and habits have been affected by contact with barbarous races.”⁴⁰⁶ Albertyn observed that

⁴⁰¹ He is quoted here by Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 366. For more on F. S. Malan, his perspective on the poor white problem, and influence over the Carnegie Commission, see chapter two.

⁴⁰² Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:20.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. Albertyn’s sentimental notion of a placid, good-natured white proletariat was more mythical than historical. As Jeremy Krikler points out, for white laborers, the “honorable past” included rebellion against the landowning classes in the Second South Africa War at the turn of the century and revolts against the Rand capitalists in the 1920s. Jeremy Krikler, “The Commandos: The Army of White Labour in South Africa,” *Past & Present*, no. 163 (May 1, 1999): 202–244. See also Jeremy Krikler, “Agrarian Class Struggle and the South African War,” *Social History* 14, no. 2 (May 1, 1989): 151–176 and Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 331–336.

⁴⁰⁶ J. R. Albertyn, Poor White Question: Sociological Survey, October 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB. Jeremy Seekings defines *swart gevaar* as “the mix of demographic, political, sexual, social and economic threats [to white moral order] posed by African people.” Seekings, “Not a Single White Person” 382.

“the standard of living of some Europeans is approximating more and more to that of natives” warning, too, that “a large section of our community is not yet alive to the necessity of a wise policy of segregation wherever possible.”⁴⁰⁷ A growing class distinction between landed and landless whites, he said, created the conditions for a dangerous affinity between poor whites and blacks. Albertyn accused the “privileged [white] classes” of “unsympathetic – often unjust – treatment of the poor.” Wealthy commercial farmers were especially blamed for treating the bywoners as if he was a black laborer or servant.⁴⁰⁸ In one agricultural business Albertyn witnessed blacks “no longer address[ing] [their bywoner neighbors] as ‘baas’ and ‘nooi’, but call[ing] them by their Christian names.”⁴⁰⁹ As economic and social distinctions between the classified races disappeared, the prospect of miscegenation increased. An anxious Albertyn was convinced that “the progeny of such a union tend to ally themselves to the coloured race;” as a result, “families may be indeed be ‘poor’ but are no longer ‘white’.”⁴¹⁰ With miscegenation spreading, poor whites were reputedly succumbing further to degradation and altogether ignoring their moral obligation to uphold Afrikaner society in a segregationist order.

Albertyn’s main finding was that bywoners valued their freedom to live a pre-modern, maladapted life over their responsibility to uphold the racial purity of the *volk* in white supremacist South Africa.⁴¹¹ Even more alarming, he concluded, this state of

⁴⁰⁷ Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:37, 39.

⁴⁰⁸ J. R. Albertyn, “Sociological Section: Tentative Hypotheses Concerning Causes of Poor White-Isim”, March 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

⁴⁰⁹ Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:38.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35, 37.

⁴¹¹ Albertyn, Sociological Survey, October 1928, GES/SAB.

affairs was “stamped by parents on their children,” especially by the mother who exercised the greatest “influence in the family life.”⁴¹² She “socialize[d] children as Afrikaners,” writes the contemporary scholar Isobel Hofmeyr, noting that “it was not for nothing that Afrikaans was so frequently called ‘the mother tongue’.”⁴¹³ Mothers were more than cultural tutors, Albertyn recognized; they were principal custodians of the moral order and therefore wholly accountable for “proper interactions” within the home and community.

Poor Whites...and their women

In many of the period studies of the poor white phenomenon, “ordinary” poor whites were “conceptualized as male.”⁴¹⁴ The Transvaal Indigency Commission (1908), for example, described poor whites in gender-neutral terms, but its theory of impoverishment was based on the ability or inability of men to provide for their families. Rural Boers “got a crude but sufficient living by trekking about living on the game...But later, when game became scarce...they sank into a condition of indigency,” wrote the Transvaal investigators, concluding, “it might have been expected that...they would settle down and make a living by farming. But this they were quite unfitted to do.”⁴¹⁵ J. F. W. Grosskopf, the Carnegie economist, made similar assumptions in his proposed research methodology to colleagues in 1928. “In how far is the Poor White problem a phenomenon concomitant with a certain stage in the social-economic development of the

⁴¹² Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:35.

⁴¹³ Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words,” 113.

⁴¹⁴ Helen Bradford, “Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and Its Frontier Zones, C. 1806-70,” *The Journal of African History* 37, no. 3 (January 1, 1996): 352.

⁴¹⁵ *TIC Report*, 15. For more on the Transvaal Indigency Commission, its place in the poor white canon, and influence on the Carnegie Commission, see chapter two.

white populations?” he asked.⁴¹⁶ “The investigator is thinking mainly of the effect upon a simple and self-sufficing rural pioneer population suddenly overwhelmed by ‘money-economy’, competition and speculation, without proper chances for gradual adaptation.”⁴¹⁷ While not explicitly expressed, Grosskopf associated white poverty with the inadequacies of men as breadwinners.

Women, on the other hand, were viewed from a perspective “of ‘helpmate...or as a governing force both within and outside the family unit,’” not as people in their own right.⁴¹⁸ The education and socialization of children evoked the female domain. Even so, the Carnegie men, at least on paper, considered “home” or “family” in gender-neutral terms. In his published study of poor white education, E. G. Malherbe wanted to know how many books bywoners read in their home.⁴¹⁹ R. W. Wilcocks hoped to discover, “What does the child do during his spare time or the time he is not at school?” He also asked, “What sources of stimulating social contact does the child have?”⁴²⁰ Yet some in the Commission openly evaluated the perspectives of girls and women. Rev. J. R. Albertyn and Dr. W. A. Murray proposed an extensive set of questions that critically assessed Boer maternalism. Were poor whites’ “standard of living” the result of “poor and unhygienic homes and ways of living; of insufficient or incorrect feeding and clothing...[or] of deeply rooted habits and traditions?” asked Albertyn.⁴²¹ And what were

⁴¹⁶ Grosskopf, Preliminary Plan for the Economic Approach, October 1928, GES/SAB.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Bradford, “Women, Gender and Colonialism,” 353.

⁴¹⁹ E. G. Malherbe, Tentative Plan for the Educational Section of the Investigation on the Poor White Problem, October 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

⁴²⁰ Wilcocks, Projects for Psychological Section, October 1928, GES/SAB.

⁴²¹ Albertyn, Sociological Survey, October 1928, GES/SAB.

“the relations existing between the members and the strength of family bonds?”⁴²² Dr. Murray wondered, “is food of [the] family commonly over cooked? How are babies usually reared? How early is bottle or food given? School children: times of meals and what eaten?”⁴²³ Women’s use of water, the vector for introducing intestinal diseases such as hookworm, was also considered. Even Murray’s malarial study implied delinquencies in Boer mothers who maintained the home from the cooking hearth to sleeping environment. “Are dwellings mosquito-proof? Are mosquitoes killed indoors? Are mosquito-nets used by all?”⁴²⁴ On matters of poor white disease in the “home”, the wife and mother was invariably prime suspect in cases of malnutrition, maladaptation, and what was termed educational retardation.⁴²⁵

⁴²² Albertyn, Sociological Survey, October 1928, GES/SAB.

⁴²³ Murray, Health Aspects as Causes, October 1928, GES/SAB.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ The term “retardation” in the Carnegie Commission did not necessarily imply a physiological impairment. It referred to a student who was at least two grade levels behind in school or an adult who did not have basic competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics. See “Problem of the Poor White, Dr. Malherbe’s Interesting Address. Some Aspects of a Vital Question,” *Cape Times*, July 24, 1929.



Figure 18. Photograph of an unidentified “poor white” woman. She is notable for being the oldest woman whose picture appears in the *CCR*. With the exception of young people, adult poor whites in the *CCR* are essentially ageless. Indeed, the needs of elderly people, as a specific population group, were rarely mentioned. *Source:* Photograph from Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:chap 8.

In the *Sociological Report*, Rev. Albertyn sought to isolate “the causes of the retrogression of disintegration of family life.” Thus, his field appraisal included collecting data from Boer women about the health of their family unit and domestic dwelling.⁴²⁶ Through “personal interviews carried out tactfully,” Albertyn hoped each mother would explain their “habits, traditions and superstitions, her treatment of the infant before and after birth.” As the head of Cape Dutch Reformed Church’s poor relief programs, Albertyn had much more exposure to people living in poverty than most of the Carnegie men. He confidently concluded that “since [the mother] will often undoubtedly speak more freely on such points to one of her own sex, it is a matter of importance that use be made of...carefully selected female field workers.”⁴²⁷ He got his wish. In December 1928, six weeks before field research commenced, the Joint Board of Control agreed “that £100 be spent for assistance from women field workers in the sociological section.”⁴²⁸ Then, in January 1929, the Carnegie men decided to hire a “Carnegie woman”, M. E. Rothmann, a leading South African voice for issues that defined the lives of her sex in the family, at home, and on the farm.

The Carnegie Woman

In January 1929, Maria Elizabeth Rothmann (known by her initials M. E. R. and the honorific Mrs.) joined the Carnegie Commission as its sole female researcher. “Mrs. Rothmann” was an author and journalist who wrote a weekly column in the leading Cape Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*. Her work also encompassed a broader range of

⁴²⁶ Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:24.

⁴²⁷ Albertyn, Sociological Survey, October 1928, GES/SAB.

⁴²⁸ Minutes of Executive Committee - Joint Board for Research on the Poor White Question, December 17, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

women's experiences. She examined Boer women's role as homemakers and helpmates, as well as their involvement in the workplace, suffrage campaigns, birth-control crusades, and Afrikaner nationalist politics.⁴²⁹ She was also a leader of the Afrikaans Christian Women's Society (ACVV), a women's voluntary organization founded in 1904, closely allied with the Dutch Reformed Church.⁴³⁰ Rothman was instrumental in transforming the ACVV's voluntary initiatives in rural areas from "poor relief" to an "organized campaign that would improve the lots of impoverished."⁴³¹ Even with this shift, the ACVV and Rothman herself never lost their dedication to the "preservation of the [Dutch Reformed] church, *volk*, and [Afrikaans] language."⁴³²

⁴²⁹ For more about Rothmann's work and writings see Klausen, *Politics of Birth Control*; Du Toit, "The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism" and Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words."

⁴³⁰ Du Toit, "The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism"; Butler, "Democratic Liberalism in South Africa."

⁴³¹ Du Toit, "The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism," 174.

⁴³² Butler, "Democratic Liberalism in South Africa," 84.



Figure 19. Carnegie researchers in the field. Left to right, Dr. Grosskopf, author of *Economics Report*, Dr. and Mrs. Butterfield from America, Dr. Wilcocks, author of *Psychological Report*, and Mrs. M. E. Rothmann, author of the *Mother and Daughter Report*. Local minister standing behind. Source: Photograph from Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 120.

M. E. R.'s expertise in Afrikaner women's issues and her national profile made her the ideal complement to the Carnegie Commission's research team. Her male colleagues respected her "wide experience...[of] the women's side of the problem" which made her the ideal interpreter of the mysterious female realm of "the home". Malherbe was particularly effusive: "her shrewd insight...she very often provided the economic as well as the sociological clues to a particular situation which had puzzled us."⁴³³ But "Mrs. Rothmann" was only an interloper in this male conclave of "good

⁴³³ Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 129.

companions” who, in her absence, indulged in “naughty little jokes.”⁴³⁴ M. E. R.’s “insights” are confined to a 65-page report titled, *The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family*, which appears as a feminine adornment to Rev. Albertyn’s *Sociological Report*. Nonetheless, M. E. R.’s participation in the Carnegie Commission marked the first time a national investigation of white poverty employed a female investigator. Thanks to Rothmann’s contribution, the Carnegie Commission was the first poor white study to record the experiences of poor white women.⁴³⁵

In 1928, M. E. R. travelled with her male colleagues to visit 322 families in the Cape Province and 140 families in the Transvaal. When she interviewed women, she took care to note the condition of their homes and observe the behavior of their children.⁴³⁶ This evidence underpinned her three-part study. Rothmann’s section on “The Family” establishes her methodology and systems of classification. The chapter on “The Mother” contains a series of case studies, some of which address the maternal functions within the family unit and the quotidian experiences of the women themselves. Her investigation of “The Daughter” focuses on the financial, social, and educational “prospects” of poor white girls who with vocational training might one day escape destitution.

As a body of knowledge, Rothmann’s report is a study of contrasts. On the one hand, Rothmann vividly captures the challenges faced by poor white women, a constituency whose concerns would otherwise have been invisible in the Carnegie Commission. But her narrative-centric approach yields a harsh, often subjective critique

⁴³⁴ Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 129.

⁴³⁵ A handful of women involved in charitable work in the white tenements of Pretoria and Johannesburg, testified before the Transvaal Indigency Commission, but the investigators were mostly interested in the women’s assessment of poor relief programs. See *TIC Minutes of Evidence*.

⁴³⁶ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:151.

of her subjects' behaviors and choices. The following pages below examine Rothmann's interpretation of the role of Boer mothers and their proper "social senses", which they were expected to instill in their children. It also demonstrates how Rothmann grappled with her own emotions, namely her disgust at seeing firsthand the degrading behavior of poor whites. Such sentiments, it seems, were only mitigated by her ardent Afrikaner nationalism, which celebrated the ethnic superiority of the even poorest Boer.



Figure 20. The Carnegie men with their "tin lizzie". When E. G. Malherbe wrote his memoir in 1981, he recounted fondly the camaraderie of the male Carnegie researchers during their field research. "We went after our [poor white] witnesses in the field. We literally hunted them out in the most hospitable parts of South Africa," he wrote. In this photograph Grosskopf, Wilcocks and Malherbe pose with their "tin lizzie". Malherbe recalls how their cars broke down in the Kalahari, complains about the lack of comfortable accommodations, and comments on the personal habits of his fellow travellers. Grosskopf snored quite loudly, for example, making for long wakeful nights, if he shared a room with his fellow Carnegie researchers. *Source:* Photograph and quote from Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 122.

A Harmonious Home

Rothmann opens her study with a description of a “normal” domestic environment. In this idyllic patriarchal home, the Boer mother “uses the supplies provided by the father, such as food, clothing, and money, to manage the house according to the needs of the family.”⁴³⁷ A mother’s faithful execution of these duties, as a woman subordinate to her man, helped ensure “the development of judgment, adaptability, etc. in the children.”⁴³⁸ At this time, the idealized duties of Afrikaner women were described and reinforced in newspaper columns about women's issues, in photographic portraits of the “noble” Afrikaner woman in the popular magazine *Die Huisgenoot* (The Home Companion), and novels about farming glorifying yeoman Boer life.⁴³⁹ Rothmann recognized that poor white women, many of whom were illiterate, had limited access to “modern” sources of knowledge. Nonetheless, she expected rural women to teach children about the Afrikaner moral order and their place in white supremacist South Africa.

Rothmann truly focused on the “social senses” defining “proper interactions” under the moral order. Each “social sense” was connected to a different social environment that scaled up in size and complexity: the home, the community, and the nation. “One of the first essentials” for every human setting, she contended, “is a mutual agreement as to the functions of its members.” A mother’s ability to impart this lesson and prime example of “social sense” had significant consequences because, Rothmann

⁴³⁷ Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 171.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁴³⁹ Du Toit, “Incredible Whiteness of Being”; Du Toit, “The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism”; Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words”; Devarenne, “Nationalism and the Farm Novel.”

argued, “the measure of [a child’s] perception of [of the environment in which she lives], to a great extent be the measure of his social advance also.”⁴⁴⁰

The most basic social sense was the child’s place within the family. Rothmann assured that a “mother...who has [this sense] would realize that order, as regards to expenditure of time and energy in the home, is more profitable than disorder.”⁴⁴¹ The disordered home was unproductive, unhygienic, and uneducated. These chaotic and corrupted conditions, in turn, upset the wholesome equilibrium between humans and their environment. Such imbalance invariably brought illness and degradation to poor whites, Rothmann concluded. The second “social sense” was the knowledge of a child’s place in “relation [to] his family [and] other families.”⁴⁴² While each Afrikaner domestic unit, she assumed, had a duty to exhibit model “moral order” to neighbors, it also vigilantly needed to uphold its own family responsibilities, self-reliance chief among them. “[If] the mother’s clearest idea of society is something from which she can beg,” Rothmann warned, “her children will not learn to be self-sufficient, and content themselves with living off the dole and charitable relief.”⁴⁴³ Finally, she insisted that Afrikaner mothers compel their children to support white supremacy as a national obligation and biological fact. This ultimate social sense is an “indispensable part of modern civilization,” she contended, because “it gives us...the national leader, who perceived the relation of his nation to other nations and can make profitable use of this knowledge; it gives us...the

⁴⁴⁰ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:169.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 170.

great leaders of mankind.”⁴⁴⁴ Rothmann could not cite a single example from the 462 families she visited in which the mothers imparted this “sense” to their children.



Figure 21. Mother and children from a poor family in the Northern Transvaal. One of two photographs in the Carnegie Commission composed solely of mothers and children. Women appear either alongside their husbands in family photos or as singular examples of “womenfolk”. Source: Photograph from Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:chap 3.

⁴⁴⁴ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:169.

Maladapted Mothers

What Rothmann witnessed in her field research greatly discouraged her. She reckoned that fully 30 percent of the mothers interviewed were failing in their basic duties. Rothmann feared that children who continued to “content themselves with living off the dole and charitable relief” would reject their responsibility to maintain the “self-sufficiency” of family and *volk*. Moreover, instead of forming respectable unions that stabilized marriage and reproduction, such children were apparently driven by their “sex urge”, or their “immoral” selfish indulgence in her words. In one unnamed Karroo community, Rothmann claimed to uncover disturbing rates of female “immorality” in 8 of the 21 homes she visited; these incidents probably involved male partners of different classified race groups. She further noted with dismay that there “were many cases of syphilis... [and] a good deal of begging,” thus linking Boer women’s sexual choices to the possibility that transacted contagions worsened the degradation of poor whites.⁴⁴⁵

Rothmann was particularly contemptuous of women who used sex as a means of survival. She recounts a story told to her by a missionary worker of a young “town woman” at one of the diamond diggings. “I know you want me to live differently,” she said to the missionary, “But then I should have to sleep in that hole at night. I won’t do it. I’d rather go and sleep with the men in their rooms.”⁴⁴⁶ Oral historian T. Vivienne Ndatshe recounts a similar exchange in 1990 with a Mpondo girl who was one of the “town women” frequenting the beer taverns near Vaal Reefs mines in Kanana Township. Vivienne Ndatshe “asked her who paid the rent, she replied that they had different

⁴⁴⁵ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:154.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

boyfriends who each paid something to help out since the women were not working. 'So you are prostitutes?' asked Ms. Ndatshe. 'Not really, because we don't sell sex,' she said laughing. 'Men just help us. They are our boyfriends.'"⁴⁴⁷

For the “town women”, their behavior was logical, appropriate and practical. Nonetheless, Rothmann condemned their “immorality”. Sexual degeneracy was behavior “typical” of “backward” people who “live hand to mouth” in dirty houses and filthy clothes, she said.⁴⁴⁸ By contrast, the autobiography of E. G. Malherbe includes fond reminiscences of socializing with “town girls” at the diamond diggings in Lichtenberg. Malherbe recalls that he and Wilcocks “studied” the nightlife by indulging in “a bit of gambling and dancing with the girls.” Malherbe and Wilcocks also teased Rev. Albertyn for choosing not to partake in their nightly pleasures. Malherbe recalls with amusement that one of the “town girls” he partied with “already had three illegitimate children.”⁴⁴⁹ His comments suggest that he saw these women as oddities, whose life choices were beyond ordinary comprehension, but whose company he still enjoyed. Rothmann not only exhibited little empathy toward these women but also angrily denounced their evident lack of desperately needed “social senses”.

⁴⁴⁷ Moodie, *Going for Gold*, 145. See also: Mark Hunter, “The Materiality of Everyday Sex: Thinking Beyond ‘Prostitution,’” *African Studies* 61 (2002): 99-122.

⁴⁴⁸ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:170.

⁴⁴⁹ Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 158. Malherbe’s autobiography is an important supplement for scholars of the *Carnegie Commission Report*. One must be wary of Malherbe’s claims, given his obvious fondness for self-promotion, nonetheless it provides insight into the researchers personalities that cannot be found in the *CCR*. Additionally, Malherbe describes how the researchers conducted their work on a typical day as well as their interactions with one another. For all the political squabbles and the dozens of people involved in launching the Carnegie Commission, the personalities, priorities, and prejudices of the researchers had the most influence over the Carnegie Commission’s poor white pathology. For this reason, Malherbe’s autobiography is an invaluable source.



Figure 22. Women and children at the diamond diggings from Malherbe's autobiography. *Source:* Photograph from Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 157-158. Unlike the gold mines, where black men had no choice but to leave their families behind in the native reserves, poor whites often moved as families to the diamond diggings. In the Lichtenburg district, "they had flocked there from all parts of South Africa in every kind of vehicle imaginable," wrote Malherbe in his autobiography. He estimated that 50,000 whites, mostly landless bywoners and a few fortune seekers, lived in the shantytowns around the diggings. Despite the tenuous and transitory life at the diggings, tent schools were established for the children. Malherbe was gravely concerned by the relative equality of the living conditions of white and black prospectors and the many opportunities for miscegenation and other forms of "immorality" their proximity afforded. See also Timothy Clynick, "Political Consciousness and Mobilisation Amongst Afrikaner Diggers on the Lichtenburg Diamond fields, 1926-1929," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988).

The "Culpability" Scale

While her study was not explicitly quantitative, in contrast to W. A. Murray's *Health Report*, Rothmann provided socio-economic data drawn from her own close observations. She had hoped this evidence would "throw light...on the *whole* [emphasis in the original] question of the Poor White Family in South Africa."⁴⁵⁰ Like Murray, she

⁴⁵⁰ Italics are from the original text. Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 167.

classified both economic circumstances and living conditions of the families she studied. Yet, Murray and Rothmann's data cannot be correlated; the 462 families that Rothmann interviewed and the 901 children Murray weighed and measured were not the same people. The two researchers collected data in the Cape Province and Transvaal, but traveled at different times and never together, reducing the likelihood of coordinating their field research.

Table 3. Living conditions and educational levels of poor whites. *Source:* Tables adapted from data provided in Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:167.

1. Socio-economic Position (occupations of 412 fathers)	
Farmer (landowner or tenant)	87
Bywoner	37
Laborer (shepherd, fencer, dam maker, odd job man, relief worker, etc.)	113
Untrained artisan	74
Other occupations	101

2. Housing Conditions (416 cases noted)		
Slums (Includes 40 in the 3 big towns visited)	137	32.9 %
Clean, but unhealthily small houses	103	42.3 %
"Decent" houses	176	52.3 %

3. Educational Standard of Parents (817 parents interviewed)		
Secondary education (not further than Standard 8)	35	4.3 %
Primary or farm school education	366	44.8 %
Can read and write a little	319	39.0 %
Can neither read nor write	97	11.9 %

Above are three charts created from data gathered by Rothmann. The socio-economic data (1) reveals that the families she interviewed were predominately rural, or lived in rural towns; they were also landless and unskilled. Her data on housing conditions, while lacking categorical definitions, nevertheless reveals that three-fourths of the families lived in environmentally compromised conditions. Parental illiteracy (3) was also a significant impediment in the households she visited. Strangely, she does not provide these numbers by gender, which would have given more insight into education status of the household's primary educator, the mother.

Rothmann's research rested on an important a priori judgment. Above all else, she presumed, the debased behaviors of rural Boer families fostered maladaptation and poverty. This finding differed from Murray's study, which did not dwell on overriding moral concerns. He linked the deprivation of poor whites to their material circumstances and primarily their low income.⁴⁵¹ Rothmann, by contrast, focused on a culpability scale, which produced "personal defects" that "prevent[ed] normal progress." The chart below was created with data provided by Rothmann. Poor whites were classified by the extent to which they were personally to blame for their impoverishment. Those who were "poor owing to personal defects" (Group 1) were most culpable. Their poverty began as conjectural, caused by a temporary unemployment, for example. Like the "town women" of Litchenburg, rather than uplifting themselves from poverty, Group 1 succumbed to

⁴⁵¹ For more on Murray's methodology and findings see chapter four of this thesis and Murray, *Health Report*, chap. 3 and 4.

“economic pressure or lack of social and educational advantage” and lived at the “lowest plane of social life.”⁴⁵² In other words, they indulged in degenerate behaviors and felt no obligation to themselves, their communities, or the *volk* to improve themselves.

Table 4. Classifications of “culpability” for poor whites. *Source:* Table was adapted from data that appears under the subheading “Classification of Case Studies” in Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:153. The title “Culpability Scale” is my own.

Rothmann’s “Culpability Scale”	Cape	Transvaal	Total
Group 1. Poor owing to personal defects	80	46	126
Group 2a. Not poor at the present time	<i>Data not provided</i>		87
Group 2b. Poor owing to external influences			247

Those who were “poor owing to external influences” (Group 2b) could be just as impoverished as those in Group 1. They were maladapted, but not degenerate; they had the desire to be uplifted, but not the means. “Trekksers” typically fell into this group. Rothmann interviewed Mrs. V., the wife of an uneducated, itinerant farmer laborer, who took jobs wherever he could find work. He never had steady employment, but he maintained a bank account and saved earnings when he could. Over the years they lived in tents, shared houses with other poor families, and occasionally could afford to rent their own. Throughout their life, “[t]he wife took good care of [her husband] and of the children, and there was always enough to eat in the way of vegetables, milk and eggs.”⁴⁵³ Two of her children died in infancy, but the others “are healthy and normal.” While

⁴⁵² Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:152, 157.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 164.

generating income was the father's responsibility, Rothmann credited the mother with maintaining the social ("normal") and moral ("good care" and "healthy") order of the home.

Approximately one quarter of the families Rothmann interviewed were "not poor at the present time" (Group 2a). These families were living at the precipice of poverty, desperately trying to avoid a frightening downward spiral from economic insecurity to destitution, maladaptation and, finally, degradation. The gravitational pull of poverty greatly troubled Rothmann. She believed in a hereditary paradigm of degeneration in which "social senses" became the genetic marker that linked mother to child. On this continuum of tragedy, degeneration begot degeneration, generation after generation. She elaborated: "[t]he central figure in the home is the mother...[and] I have been strongly impressed with the idea that the lack of [social sense] in the mother...has been a fundamental cause of retrogression."⁴⁵⁴ Her sociological fatalism culminated in a damning evaluation of "successive generations of mothers [who] became steadily less capable of equipping their children with a normal home and social training."⁴⁵⁵ Such a conclusion prompted this query: "Can we expect...the children of families that are

⁴⁵⁴ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:171.

⁴⁵⁵ Albertyn et al., "Joint Findings and Recommendations," xvi; Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:171.

backward...will adapt themselves to the economic and cultural development of our nation?”⁴⁵⁶

Generational Degeneration

Rothmann’s answer was measured. Condemning poor whites to generational degradation was tantamount to an admission of inherent racial weakness. Given her dedication to the Afrikaner nationalist cause, it was imperative that Rothmann identify an external pathogen that weakened their rural Afrikaner’s immunity to the point where they were vulnerable to poor white disease. Like her male colleagues, Rothmann argued that the pre-modern economy and the social isolation of South Africa’s rural interior created an unhealthy environment in which degeneration was easily spread. “[The] burdens of an unsettled roving life...fell too heavy on upon the mother...for her to be equal to all the customary duties and functions,” she wrote.⁴⁵⁷ Following the environmental template, Rothmann argued that rural women lacked an adequate support system, solidly built on the foundation laid by organized education and religion which could bolster their efforts to manage a household and socialize their children. She lamented: “upon the mother then - with this scanty assistance from school and church, almost entirely without books to

⁴⁵⁶ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:195–196. Rothmann offered few options that could, in her view, arrest the degeneration of families dependent on Boer mothers. Her best recommendations, mentioned in two brief paragraphs, were (1) remove children from their familial environment, and (2) prevent mothers from condemning newborns to the poor white fate through birth control. She also urged that impoverished children go to state-run children’s homes where they could be “formed into useful citizens.” Without mentioning birth control or abortion specifically, Rothmann suggested that the “propagation of the unfit” must be addressed as a matter of social policy. Both Rothmann and Malherbe were firm advocates of birth control as a method of preserving the quality of the white race. Neither mentioned it in the *CCR* due to its political sensitivity in the circles of the Dutch Reformed Church. The DRC opposed birth control, believing that increasing the number of Afrikaners was the best way to strengthen the *volk*. In 1934, Malherbe’s family connections to the church and Carnegie Commission research put him in a unique position to persuade the DRC to reverse its position on birth control. See also Klausen, *Politics of Birth Control*, 52–53.

⁴⁵⁷ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:195.

guide her...fell the task of educating her children, especially her daughters, in home and social life, and she had to carry on as well as she could.”

To be sure, Rothmann was driven to document the intractability of poor white degeneration but she also “enterain[ed]...the hope of improvement with the breaking up of isolation.”⁴⁵⁸ The fact that some poor families managed to stave off degradation was evidence that there existed a resilient capacity for “adaptability”. Family G. exemplified Rothmann’s “hope of improvement”. The mother was the daughter of Voortrekkers. Despite the poverty experienced by her, her husband and her children, they still respected the social order. The mother with a Voortrekker past was christened as a baby, Rothmann discovered, and educated by her parents, both of whom were literate. The “social senses” of Family G. increasingly developed as the mother, a newlywed, endured the crisis of her husband’s imprisonment. He was a captured and incarcerated commando in the South African War. During this time of Boer concentration camps and bloody civil conflict, “she found refuge for herself and her children in the home of friend. The friend’s farm, however, was ravaged by the enemy...[so] she managed to get a tent and pitched it where she could plant something to eat.”⁴⁵⁹ Unable to afford native servants, she and her children “did the ploughing and sowing. When they had cut the corn and threshed it, she ground it...to make bread.”⁴⁶⁰ When her husband was released from British military custody, the family purchased 6 morgen of land and continued to prosper. The moral of Rothmann’s parable was clear to her: “the woman plays an important and indispensable

⁴⁵⁸ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:195.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 160–161.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 161.

part, not only in the home life but also on the lands.”⁴⁶¹ However, Family G. ultimately became the exception to the rule. Rothmann determined that “personal defects” were so embedded in poor whites that not even “the cessation of isolation will...cure these [degenerate] tendencies to such an extent as those of the more normal families.”⁴⁶²

The Carnegie Commission’s *Sociological Reports* stand out for their denunciations of what they deemed “immoral” or “degenerative” behavior. Only some conclusions presented by Albertyn and Rothmann temper this resounding judgment with other concerns, in this case the urgent goal of preserving the unity of the *volk* and redeeming poor whites so they could advance the attendant imperative of promoting Afrikaner chauvinism. The closing pages of this thesis will explore how Carnegie researchers employed environmental etiologies to address the “culpability conundrum,” which supposedly made “immoral” white poverty the most pressing national political issue of their day.

⁴⁶¹ Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter Report*, 5b:162.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 196.

CONCLUSION

ENVIRONMENTAL ETIOLOGIES AND INDIVIDUAL PATHOLOGIES

To diagnosis poor white disease, the Carnegie Commission did more than draw on medical discourse to address a major crisis afflicting the Afrikaner body politic. In her classic study *Curing their Ills*, Megan Vaughn argues that “the power of colonial medicine lay...in its ability to provide a ‘naturalized’ and pathological account of [its] subjects.”⁴⁶³ In that vein, the *Carnegie Commission Report* presented an explanation of how poor white maladaptation naturally stemmed from an isolated rural society and degraded ecological environment. The *CCR* similarly offered “an account of the effects of social and economic change” based on a body of knowledge that was verified by researchers’ extensive research and their unquestioned belief in white supremacy.⁴⁶⁴

Diagnoses are not just a reflection of a present condition or past behavior; they outline potential treatments and the prognosis for rehabilitation. As historian Julie Livingston demonstrates, a diagnostic process establishes “who, if anyone is to blame [for the illness] and what type of future onus is to accompany that blame; what is to be done...[and] how much self-determination is to be accorded to the debilitated subject.” In other words, the Carnegie Commission produced a standard and a process for

⁴⁶³ Megan Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 25.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

determining if someone was “curable” and worthy of rehabilitation. It also determined the degree of autonomy, and responsibility, for each poor white person involved in rehabilitation. And just as importantly, the Commission identified who was fiscally and morally responsible for managing the rehabilitation process.

The Culpability Conundrum

Determining culpability for whites’ impoverishment and responsibility for their rehabilitation had always produced considerable angst for researchers throughout the poor white “canon”.⁴⁶⁵ Historian Lis Lange describes the tension this way: “if poverty were a problem of weak individuals and their lack of preparation (education) for rising in society, the solution lay with the individual and the guidance the state could give him or her.”⁴⁶⁶ This was largely the conclusion of the 1908 Transvaal Indigency Commission that determined, “the Government cannot force...a change in the fundamental habits and outlook of the population.”⁴⁶⁷ This Social Darwinistic approach, which pervaded South African official thinking at the turn of the twentieth century, prioritized the culpability of the poor man or woman in their impoverishment, as well as their rehabilitation.⁴⁶⁸ Those who refused government or charitable assistance, which might improve their plight, were seen as choosing a form of self-selected extinction. There was a flipside, of course: “if

⁴⁶⁵ The author considers the range of researchers to include the contributors to the following investigations: 1883 DRC Conference on Poor Whites, 1906 Cape Parliament Select Committee on the Poor White Question, 1908 Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1913 Parliament Select Committee on European Employment and Labour Conditions, *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* by W.M. Macmillan (1919), 1921 Interim Report of the Unemployment Commission, 1922-23 Reports of the Drought Investigation Committee, and *Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* (1932).

⁴⁶⁶ Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, 146.

⁴⁶⁷ *TIC Report*, 197.

⁴⁶⁸ Dubow, *Scientific Racism*; Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*; Klausen, *Politics of Birth Control*; Rich, *Hope and Despair*.

poverty was a consequence of the historical organization of the colonial society, the solution involved the whole organization and not just the sick individual.”⁴⁶⁹ This view informed W. M. Macmillan’s *The South African Agrarian Problem*, which attributed white poverty to a malfunctioning “rural organization.” As Afrikaner farming communities modernized, they failed to maintain a viable place for those whites who labored on other whites’ farms or who farmed primarily for their own subsistence. Thousands of rural Boers were left behind by a rapidly advancing world of mines and cities. As a result, government approaches to white destitution focused on creating political and social institutions that helped bywoners, for example, step forward more confidently into modern society, usually through the auspices of sheltered employment and vocational education.

The tension between individual and communal responsibility was also at the heart of the Carnegie Commission’s diagnostic framework. “The Poor White Problem includes two main questions,” wrote the researchers, “there is first, the question of the extent and the causes of this social ill; and secondly, the question of the means by which it may be cured and prevented.”⁴⁷⁰ Were bywoners the victims of a tumultuous socio-economic environment or did they only have themselves to blame for not adjusting to modern times? For the Carnegie researchers, the answer had to be both. Their challenge was to devise a diagnosis of poor white disease in which bywoners suffering from social maladies (e.g., isolation, illiteracy, etc.), could receive a government panacea that enabled them to recover from a serious illness—poverty—and enjoy a more salubrious life

⁴⁶⁹ Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, 146.

⁴⁷⁰ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” v.

befitting their racial status. (The poor black, on the other hand, had neither the inclination nor facility to do so, assured the researchers.) Their solution was to invent an environmental etiology that embodied ways of understanding and treating the individual poor white's pathology.

Environmental Etiologies, Individual Pathologies

The Carnegie Commission located the vector of poor white disease in “inefficient” farming, hungry households with low-calorie diets, remote Karoo landscapes, and ecosystems ravaged by drought and disease. These degraded environments put “bywoners...in a particularly precarious and unprotected position.”⁴⁷¹ Chapter three demonstrated how Drs. Grosskopf and Wilcocks cited geographic isolation and pre-capitalist norms as factors reinforcing bywoner “backwardness”. Chapters four and five detailed the ways in which Dr. Murray and Mrs. Rothmann linked ruined health and social maladaptation in one diseased condition, which afflicted all poor white communities. In cataloging the deficiencies of rural life, Carnegie researchers looked deep inside “the *body*” of their subject.⁴⁷² While the Commission was careful to state that bywoners “cannot be considered, in [their] typical form, as pathological,” they were nonetheless seen as people atrophied by their frontier past and lacking the “adaptive intelligence” essential for modern times.⁴⁷³ They were by nature lazy, observed Wilcocks, often “seeking help from others, and particularly from the State,” when they should have been helping themselves.⁴⁷⁴ Many poor whites had adopted a “begging spirit” in which

⁴⁷¹ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” xxi–xxii.

⁴⁷² Emphasis added. Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills*, 13.

⁴⁷³ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” x; Malherbe, *Education Report*, 3:328.

⁴⁷⁴ Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:89.

they “ask[ed] for charity without any feeling of shame,” which only “render[ed] more difficult [their] rehabilitation.”⁴⁷⁵

Education as Rehabilitation

In establishing a rehabilitation regimen, the Carnegie Commission sought first to increase the quantity, quality, and variety of educational opportunities available to rural poor whites. In the *Education Report*, Malherbe asserted that “with the rise...of the general level of education ...[people] will have a more scientific attitude of mind: searching for causes, weighing evidence, solving problems in their immediate environment.”⁴⁷⁶ The *CCR* recommended a comprehensive program of skills training for poor whites as the primary form of therapy for unskilled whites, but to the researchers chagrin, the vocational education system was just as maladapted to the modern economy as the poor whites themselves. Up to that point, the goal of vocational education was “to form village artisans: blacksmiths, wagon-builders, cabinet-makers, shoemakers, [and] tailors.”⁴⁷⁷ But the artisan labor market was already saturated, what the country needed was skilled and unskilled industrial labor. Grosskopf advocated for the creation of a new “industrial” education system of specialized institutions, such as the Miners’ Training Schools on the Rand, where poor whites would learn the skills employers needed in the a variety of industries.⁴⁷⁸

To help the rural Boers who wished to stay on the land, the researchers urged a significant expansion in agricultural "extension" services, a concept developed in Great

⁴⁷⁵ Wilcocks, *Psychological Report*, 2:89, 96, 18.

⁴⁷⁶ Malherbe, *Education Report*, 3:61.

⁴⁷⁷ Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:238.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 239.

Britain in the nineteenth century, and perfected in the United States in the early twentieth century. Agricultural extension services disseminated scientific advances in agriculture, taking data from the laboratory and introducing it into the field. South Africa's agricultural schools were decades behind British and American standards, with only a handful of training centers and experimental farms. Each center specialized in the products of a region: viticulture, tobacco, and dairying in the Cape; irrigation and rearing ostriches, sheep, and goats in the Karoo; cattle, maize, forestry, and subtropical production in Natal; and growing cereals, such as maize, on a commercial scale in the Transvaal.⁴⁷⁹ But a diploma course often took two years to complete; short courses of one and two weeks were offered sporadically and only in the summer. The extension of specialized training for South African farmers working in the field did not begin until the mid-1920s, and even then, the programs were woefully inadequate.⁴⁸⁰

Similar education for rural women was but an afterthought. They were offered a few lectures and some demonstrations in "household science" at town gatherings and agricultural fairs.⁴⁸¹ In 1924 the minister of agriculture, Sir Thomas Smartt, visited a private training center for women run by Miss Norah Miller at Boschetto in the Harrismith District of the Orange Free State. Smartt thought Ms. Miller's farm a suitable "experiment to ascertain to what extent women will take advantage of agricultural training," but the farm could not pay its own way and Ms. Miller was almost out of

⁴⁷⁹ For a detailed description of the Department of Agriculture and its work see *1910-1922 Official Year Book of the Union*, 18-24.

⁴⁸⁰ For a discussion of South Africa's agricultural education and extension system, see Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 258-259.

⁴⁸¹ In 1921, the average annual operating cost for an agriculture school was £26,200, far more than the £300 spent on programs for women. See *1910-1922 Official Year Book of the Union*, 24.

money.⁴⁸² Mr. P. J. du Toit, Secretary of Agriculture, wrote a series of letters to the Treasury, asking for a small grant-in-aid to Ms. Miller's farm. Embracing his minister's enthusiasm for the project, du Toit wrote, "[a] regular course of training for women...is necessary to give them greater interest in farm life and to promote thereby contentedness with rural life and attachment to the land."⁴⁸³ The Treasury replied that the existing system "should be able to give all the agricultural education required by men and women," and declined to make the grant.⁴⁸⁴

While the Carnegie researchers were committed to improving the educational environment for adults, bywoner children received the lion's share of attention. Dr. Malherbe's field research convinced him that "improved environmental conditions...are responsible for a good deal of [children's] higher attainments."⁴⁸⁵ He was cognizant of the fact that "owing to the cultural, social and economic handicaps due to poor home environment[s], the average poor white child...does not start at the same level as a normal [white] child."⁴⁸⁶ Thus, Malherbe aimed to transform the rural learning environment. Education should be compulsory up to age 15, he said. He frowned on the "repressive effects" of an Anglo-education, which made bywoners associate "learning with the exotic and unmeaning."⁴⁸⁷ All classes should be taught in Afrikaans, the mother tongue of bywoners. English, on the other hand, would be the language of instruction for tradesman classes. Malherbe pressed for a curriculum that brought students "into closer

⁴⁸² P. J. du Toit to E. H. Farrer, April 7, 1924, (TES) 6765/F54/104, SAB.

⁴⁸³ P. J. du Toit to E. H. Farrer, May 26, 1924, (TES) 6765/F54/104, SAB.

⁴⁸⁴ E. H. Farrer to P. J. du Toit, May 27, 1924, (TES) 6765/F54/104, SAB.

⁴⁸⁵ Malherbe, *Education Report*, 3:299.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁴⁸⁷ Malherbe, Tentative Plan for the Educational Section, October 1928, GES/SAB.

contact...with the requirements of a practical [rural] life” so that the poor white child would have “the opportunity of tasting the joy of personal achievement.”⁴⁸⁸

Individualized Therapies

For most poor whites the “joy of personal achievement” consisted principally of finding a way to put food in their bellies and keep a roof over their heads. For those in the direst straits, state or charitable “poor relief” was essential to their survival. A circular from the Cape Office of the Administrator to all magistrates and local authorities on the “Poor Relief and Medical Services to Paupers” outlined the “benefits” available to poor whites. The Poor Relief and Charitable Institutions Ordinance, No. 4 of 1919, defined “ordinary” poor relief as “the issue of pauper rations...[and] transporting paupers to relatives or friends who are willing to support them,” with the stipulation that the administration would not “bear the cost of the transport of any house furniture or effects.”⁴⁸⁹ Additional poor relief was available in the form of “clothing, accommodation for homeless paupers, medical attendance and the supply of medicine or medical and surgical [services], [and] transport[ation] to hospitals.”⁴⁹⁰ Within these stipulations, local authorities were granted a great deal of discretion. In order to be reimbursed by the provincial administration, they simply submitted a short form certifying “that the above services were rendered to necessitous person with the occurrence of ‘x’.”⁴⁹¹ In 1938, for example, the town clerk of Graaff-Reinet submitted a reimbursement request totaling

⁴⁸⁸ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” xxv, xxvi.

⁴⁸⁹ Cape Office of the Administrator, Additional Poor Relief and Medical Services to Paupers, Circular No. 35 of 1928, June 25, 1928, (3/GR) 4/1/1/19, 2/6D(M), KAB.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

£20.14.3; he was reimbursed for everything, except the £2.5.0 that he spent on burial fees.⁴⁹²

The Carnegie researchers considered such interventions as purely palliative, with limited prophylactic value. The state “had gone too far,” they said, making “the lot of the poor so attractive that there is a strong demand for the same privileges.”⁴⁹³ Rev. Albertyn maligned voluntary organizations; they focused on “measures calculated to prevent conditions of destitution rather than to remedy existing evils.” Moreover, he condemned the state for its “supposition...that the mere provision of work would be sufficient to cause the phenomenon of poor whiteism to disappear.”⁴⁹⁴ The only way to cure pathologies of poverty was to encourage “the recipient [of poor relief] . . . [to] make good use of the help given him, that he shall in this way co-operate effectively in bringing about his own rehabilitation.”⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹² Municipality of Graaff-Reinet, Statement of Expenditure on Additional Poor Relief During the Year, 1938, (3/GR) 4/1/1/19, 2/6D(M), KAB.

⁴⁹³ Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:141.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 142, 143.

⁴⁹⁵ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” xxxi.

MUNICIPALITY OF GRAAFF-REINET.		
STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE ON ADDITIONAL POOR RELIEF DURING THE YEAR, 1938.		
Voucher	Particulars	Amount.
763	Railfare of Mrs. J.H. van der Merwe to Port Elizabeth for Special Hospital Treatment.....	2. 5. 9.
859	Board and Lodging for two indigents	11. 0.
892	Cash Relief to indigents.....	2. 6.
920	Railfare of Mr. C. Gilmer to Port Elizabeth for Special Hospital Treatment.....	2. 5. 9.
29	Railfare for native Hospital patient to enable him to proceed to his home at Queenstown.....	1. 3. 3.
105	Railfare of Mr. C. Gilmer to Port Elizabeth for Special Hospital Treatment (Cancer).....	2. 5. 9.
143	Board & Lodging for indigent.....	4. 0.
249	Railfare of P. Burger to Port Elizabeth for Special Eye Treatment.....	1. 2. 11.
297	Board & Lodging Four indigents....	1. 13. 6.
346	Busfare for family of six to enable them to return home.....	18. 0.
	-do- -do-	2. 3.
351	Railfare of Miss H. Koekemoer to Port Elizabeth to enable her to seek employment.....	1. 4. 0.
452	Board & Lodging for various indigents.....	1. 13. 6.
X 537	Burial Fee of J.P. Theron.....	1. 0. 0.
542	Travelling Expenses of stranded indigent.....	7. 6.
597	Board & Lodging for various indigents.....	2. 2. 6.
X 598	Expenses of Burial of D.J. van Vuuren.....	1. 5. 0.
653	Rations for indigent.....	2. 7.
-	Petrol issued from stock for assistance of stranded indigents 3 gallons @ 1/6d.....	4. 6.
Certified for refund on £18.9.3. Items marked X not eligible for refund.		£20.14. 3.
<p>I certify that the above expenditure was incurred entirely as a measure of Poor Relief, and not to prevent the spread of disease.</p> <p>TOWN CLERK.</p>		

Figure 23. An accounting of 1938 poor relief expenditures in Graaff-Reinet. Source: Statement of Poor Relief, 1938, 3/GR/KAB.

Operating under the assumption that rehabilitation “fundamentally implies a change in the person”—and not just a change in their economic circumstances—the researchers proposed that poor whites undergo individual examinations to determine the most efficacious course of their treatment.⁴⁹⁶ “The study of individual cases should be directed particularly to determining what possibilities of self-help are present in the individuals or families,” so that “suitable advice, guidance, and encouragement [can] be given them,” recommended the researchers.⁴⁹⁷ They urged the state and voluntary sectors to prioritize the training and support of “social workers who are able to make sound social diagnosis.”⁴⁹⁸ This was no small feat. No tertiary institution in South Africa offered a course of study in social work. Only the University of Stellenbosch offered a degree in sociology, and that program was less than two years old. This army of Carnegie-recommended social workers would have to come from elsewhere.

Religious Rehab

As the director of poor relief programs for the Cape Presbytery, Rev. Albertyn saw the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) as a logical source of social workers. The poor white problem had been a priority for the DRC for more than 30 years. By all official and unofficial accounts, the majority of poor whites were Afrikaners living in communities served by the church. For some of the DRC faithful, fighting poverty was a sacrificial duty. “Many who had been trained...to care for the soul of the individual...were drawn into caring for the bodily welfare of their congregations as well,” writes Dunbar

⁴⁹⁶ Albertyn et al., “Joint Findings and Recommendations,” xxviii.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., xxxi.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

Moodie.⁴⁹⁹ The church's focus on moral and bodily welfare "coincided with an upsurge of Afrikaner national consciousness" and a desire to unify the *volk*.⁵⁰⁰ Poverty not only threatened the livelihoods and souls of congregants, it put the church's cultural, political, social authority at risk. "Christian charity was becoming Christian nationalist charity," writes Moodie.⁵⁰¹ The DRC came "to see that without a Afrikaans-speaking community, their church would not survive."⁵⁰²

Albertyn, a DRC minister, demonstrated a keen awareness of the risks and opportunities for his church in the recommendations put forth by the *Sociological Report*. He proposed that local welfare committees, led by DRC ministers and lay leaders, coordinate charity in every district, including government sponsored poor relief initiatives. Their responsibilities would include the "compilation of statistics...the classification of types of indigents...the organization of local charity, health service and child welfare; [and] the inculcation of social virtues."⁵⁰³ Under the current system, local magistrates distributed aid from a set menu of "pauper relief"; Albertyn proposed that the church-led welfare committee evaluate the needs of each poor white and devise a program of "rehabilitative" relief.

Jeremy Seekings describes the welfare committees as an attempt by the church to seize social policy and discretionary public spending from the state.⁵⁰⁴ This characterization certainly applies to Albertyn. In the spring of 1930, he circulated a

⁴⁹⁹ Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 69.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 70.

⁵⁰³ Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:140.

⁵⁰⁴ Seekings, "Carnegie Backlash Against Welfare State-Building," 515.

memo in which he outlined his proposal for “Organization of our Poor Relief: Cooperation between Church and State.”⁵⁰⁵ In a departure from the environmental etiology favored by his Carnegie colleagues, Albertyn wrote, “the Church while it recognizes the necessity of [a] healthy environment concerns itself more with the person himself and endeavours to make him an honourable citizen by moral and religious influences.”⁵⁰⁶ Only the church had the “patience, devotion and tact” to “instill self-respect and independence” in poor whites, without which, “even in the best environment will turn out to be failures.”⁵⁰⁷

In his volume of the *CCR*, Albertyn credited the church with good intentions, but he gave it low marks for results. “Without [Church] support the Poor White problem must certainly have assumed very much larger proportions,” he wrote, “the fact remains, however...a section of the population has sunk into abject poverty. The question now arises whether the Church will be held responsible to any degree.”⁵⁰⁸ While acknowledging that many parishes, particularly in rural areas, were ill equipped to lead a welfare committee, he concluded that the church’s capacity would expand to meet its obligations. “The purposeful inclusion of the Church in the philanthropic policies of the Government” would awaken the churches to the “importance of their social duties towards the less privileged classes.”⁵⁰⁹ Albertyn was resolute: “the Church should have a

⁵⁰⁵ J. R. Albertyn, *Organisation of Our Poor Relief*, May 1930, (ARB) 3984/LD1763/1, SAB. It is unclear exactly how or to whom this memorandum was circulated. This copy was found in the files of the Department of Labour, with a notation from Secretary C. W. Cousins who served on the Joint Board of Control for Carnegie Commission.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ Albertyn, *Organisation of Our Poor Relief*, May 1930, ARB/SAB.

⁵⁰⁸ Albertyn, *Sociological Report*, 5a:47.

⁵⁰⁹ Albertyn, *Organisation of Our Poor Relief*, May 1930, ARB/SAB.

voice in Government circles,” adding confidently, “its influence, experience and prestige will ensure that its views receive attention.”⁵¹⁰

Moralizing about Maladaptation

Given the audacity of Albertyn’s proposal and his insistence that the cure for white poverty lay in “improve[ing] the man and his wife personally and through proper [moral] influences,” it is possible to conclude, as Seekings has, that “according to the Carnegie Commission the redress of poverty would require eliminating vice and ignorance.”⁵¹¹ In addition to having the effect of branding poor people as sinners, according to Seekings, the CCR’s “moralist rhetoric and policies” delayed the development of welfare state programs such as old age pensions or national health insurance.⁵¹² Indeed, there was a delay, as Albertyn’s welfare idea was tested, but in 1940, the faith-based social service experiment ended abruptly with the creation of a Department of Social Welfare.⁵¹³ A circular to “all magistrates, probation officers, charitable organizations, provincial secretaries, local authorizes,” announced that effective 1 July 1940, the new Department would have financial and administrative control over all poor relief and grants to charitable institutions.⁵¹⁴ The Department of Public Health sent out a similar circular announcing its intention to take over of the health services and medical treatments of “paupers”. Of all the Carnegie researchers,

⁵¹⁰ Albertyn, *Organisation of Our Poor Relief*, May 1930, ARB/SAB.

⁵¹¹ Seekings, “Carnegie Backlash Against Welfare State-Building,” 520.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 526. Moralizing was nothing new in the poor white canon; the Transvaal Indigency Commission was every bit as “preachy” as the Carnegie Commission, and it did not advocate a church-based social safety net.

⁵¹³ Seekings, “Carnegie Backlash Against Welfare State-Building,” 526-528.

⁵¹⁴ A. C. van der Horst, *Transfer of Poor Relief and Charitable Institutions from the Provincial Administrations to Department of Social Welfare*, Circular No. 8/1940, June 14, 1940, (3/GR) 4/1/1/19, 2/6D(M), KAB.

Albertyn was the true evangelist for a faith-based social safety net; his colleagues may have been dismayed by the “immorality” they witnessed in their subjects’ homes and communities, but their diagnosis of the poor white disease was decidedly environmental, not spiritual.

Perpetual Pathologies

The Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question pathologized every aspect of the bywoners life: how they worked, lived, learned, and loved. While the diagnosis of poor white disease was not considered terminal, even a rehabilitated bywoner was condemned by the (lethal) stigma of "backwardness". As a result, the Carnegie researchers put the final nail in coffin of W. M. Macmillan’s dream of recreating a "healthy" role for landless Afrikaners in rural society. In doing so, they helped perpetuate the urbanization and proletarianization they had initially sought to reduce. Grosskopf himself admitted that “although I had previously studied the problem” and concluded that sending poor whites “back to the land” was “a promising expedient,” he wrote, “the manifold direct impressions, the man to man talks [with poor whites]...have forced me...to amend many of the opinions I had [previously] formed.”⁵¹⁵

In the simplest terms, the goal of this study was to examine critically why and how the Carnegie Commission sought to understand poor whites in South Africa during the socio-economic turbulence of the 1920s and 1930s. The archival research was conducted with the assumption that it is possible to historicize theories of poverty, trace the researchers who shaped them, and consider the outcomes of their investigations, both

⁵¹⁵ Grosskopf, *Economic Report*, 1:2.

in their time and place, and in our present. This endeavor proved to be an exercise in connecting forgotten dots while reading between the lines. For scholars of the Carnegie Commission one thing remains very clear. The case studies of poor Afrikaners, often narrated with great candor, offer more uncharted territory for future inquiries.

If there is a cautionary tale in the story of the Carnegie Commission, it is the recognition that poverty and poor people were, and still are, implicitly and explicitly pathologized. Making poverty a disease simplifies a far more complex world. Pathologies of poverty are often presented as (deceptively) straightforward narratives, linking causation and cure – a particularly handy foil for anyone obsessed with assigning fault to someone other than themselves. While the targets of the blame game shift over time, pathologies of poverty are cumulative bodies of knowledge. Scratch the surface of a newspaper article about hunger or poverty in contemporary America and you may be reading the revised lines of the *Carnegie Commission Report*. Pathologies of poverty are most destructive in the way they distort understandings of the experience of living in poverty. Knowing what it is like to be poor and deciding who to blame for it are not the same things.

APPENDIX A

JOINT BOARD OF CONTROL

In November 1927, the trustees of the Carnegie Corporation of New York approved a grant for a “cooperative research” study of South Africa’s “poor white problem”, as part of a slate of grants for South African institutions and initiatives. (A list of all the grants can be found in chapter one, page 46.)

In this appendix are the minutes from three critical meetings that inaugurated the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question. The first document is from a meeting of the government’s Research Grant Board (RGB) in January 1928, where they discuss their need to take control over the Poor White Study from the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC).⁵¹⁶ The second document is the minutes of the meeting between the RGB and DRC in which they agree to establish a Joint Board of Control to select the researchers and set the parameters for Poor White Study.⁵¹⁷ The final document is the minutes of the first meeting of the Joint Board of Control in April 1928.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ Resolutions of the RGB Regarding Poor White Question, January 27, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

⁵¹⁷ Report of the Combined Meeting Held Between the Members of the Cape Province [DRC] Representatives of the Research Grant Board, February 22, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

⁵¹⁸ Agenda: Meeting of the Joint Board Appointed on the Poor White Question, April 14, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

ANNEXURE A.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH GRANT BOARD REGARDING
COÖPERATION WITH THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION ON THE
POOR WHITE QUESTION IN SOUTH AFRICA.

At a meeting held on Friday, January 27, 1928, the Research Grant Board of the Union Department of Mines and Industries decided to lay the following proposals before the Synodical Commission of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Cape Province:-

1. RE: AIM OF WORK.-

In the first instance the funds now allocated by the Carnegie Corporation should be devoted to Research Work on the existing condition of the poor whites of South Africa and the causes which have brought it about. The work should in the main follow the directions indicated by the following:-

- (a) Sociology.
- (b) Economics.
- (c) Public Health.
- (d) Psychology.
- (e) Education.

No part of the funds should be used in any attempt to alleviate immediately the condition of the poor whites though the research work would naturally have a possible improvement of their state as ultimate aim.

2. Steps should be taken, at as early a date as possible, to collect and classify all information already existing in South Africa on the poor white problem as well as information available elsewhere especially in the United States of America.

3. For the purpose mentioned under (2) as well as to assist in the continuance of the research work the Research Grant Board appoint a committee consisting of the following:-

- (a) Professor R.W. Wilcocks, Chairman.
- (b) Dr. J. Holloway.
- (c) Dr. Mitchell - alternate Dr. Murray.
- (d) Rev. A.D. Luckhoff and Rev. J.R. Albertyn.
- (e) Dr. C.T. Loram.
- (f) a Representative to be suggested by the Union Department of Labour.

The Committee to co-opt members of the Provincial Education Departments as and when required.

2.

4. The Committee is to have power to co-opt.
5. That membership of the Committee under (3) be honorary.
6. That the headquarters of the Committee under (3) be Stellenbosch in the meantime.
7. As soon as, in the opinion of the Chairman, sufficient information has been collected the Committee shall meet for the purpose of drawing up detailed suggestions for carrying out further research. These suggestions to be forwarded in due course to the Carnegie Corporation.
8. That the opinion be expressed that a salaried secretary with knowledge ~~***~~ of South African conditions and both languages be appointed; that information regarding similar problems in America is essential and to request that Carnegie Corporation to furnish this as soon as possible. That the question of the appointment of an organising secretary be left to the Committee appointed by the Board for consideration later.
9. That the Carnegie Corporation be requested to nominate Trustees in South Africa for the funds allocated for research on the poor white question.
10. The Board fully recognises the great work which has already been accomplished and the valuable efforts which are still being made by the Dutch Reformed Church towards the practical solution of the poor white problem. The Board therefore welcomes the suggestion that it should coöperate with the Dutch Reformed Church in the research under discussion in the manner and spirit suggested by the Carnegie Corporation. On account of the intimate personal knowledge of the poor whites possessed by the Church the Board considers such coöperation to be of the greatest importance. At the same time it desires it to be clearly understood that research work outlined under (1) should on the scientific side, fall under the control of the Research Grant Board.
11. That Prof. R.W. Wilcocks, Sir Carruthers Beattie and Dr. C.T. Loram be requested to meet representatives of the Dutch Reformed Church with a view to laying before and discussing with them the suggestions here made.

----- R E P O R T -----
OF THE
COMBINED MEETING
HELD BETWEEN THE MEMBERS OF THE CAPE PROVINCE
DUTCH REFORMED SYNODICAL COMMISSION AND THE
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RESEARCH GRANT BOARD
OF THE UNION DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND INDUSTRIES
RE COÖPERATION WITH THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION
IN RESEARCH WITH REGARD TO THE POOR WHITE QUEST-
ION IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The meeting was held at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, February 22, 1928 in the University Buildings, Queen Victoria Street, Cape Town.

Present were:- (as members of the Synodical Commission) Rev. F.X. Roome (Chairman of the Synodical Commission); Senator the Hon. F.S. Malan; Rev. J.R. Albertyn; Rev. A.D. Luckhoff; Mr. C. Murray; and (as representatives of the Research Grant Board) Sir Carruthers Beattie; Dr. C.T. Loram; Prof. R.W. Wilcocks.

Senator the Hon. F.S. Malan was elected as Chairman of the meeting.

The Chairman placed before the meeting the correspondence which had passed between the Synodical Commission and the Carnegie Corporation regarding coöperative work on the Poor White Question in South Africa, and Prof. R.W. Wilcocks presented the suggestions made by the Research Grant Board. (See Annexure A).

After discussion the meeting resolved:-

- (1) That a Joint Board of Control be created consisting in part of representatives of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, in part of representatives of the Research Grant Board and of one Union Government representative.
- (2) (a) That the representatives of the Dutch Reformed Church be
 - (i) the members of the Synodical Commission.
 - (ii) a nominee of the Transvaal Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk).
 - (iii) a nominee of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Orange Free State.

- (b) That the representatives of the Research Grant Board be those nominated under (3) of Annexure A.
- (3) That the Joint Board have power to co-opt, but that its membership do not exceed 15 in number.
- (4) That the Joint Board elect its permanent Chairman and Secretary at a later date.
- (5) That Senator the Hon. F.S. Malan and Prof. R.W. Wilcocks act respectively as interim Chairman and Secretary.
- (6) That the interim Chairman and Secretary approach the Union Minister of Education with the request to nominate a government representative on the Joint Board.
- (7) That the interim Chairman and Secretary communicate with the bodies and persons mentioned under (2)(a)(ii) and (iii), and (2) (b) with a view to completing the membership of the Joint Board.
- (8) To agree to the proposals of the Research Grant Board as made under (1) and (2) of Annexure A.
- (9) That the Joint Board meet as soon as possible (but not later than two months hence) after obtaining the information already existing in South Africa on the Poor White Question as well as information available elsewhere, especially in the United States of America.
- (10) That a small committee be appointed to act in the meantime, this committee to consist of:- Senator the Hon. F.S. Malan (Chairman); Rev. A.D. Luckhoff, Dr. C.T. Loram and Professor R.W. Wilcocks.
- (11) That the Carnegie Corporation be informed immediately of the steps that have been taken.

ADDENDUM I.

The Committee mentioned under (10) of the report met immediately after the adjournment of the combined meeting.

With regard to the appointment of an organising Secretary by the Carnegie Corporation, the Committee welcomed the suggestion that the services of an expert on the Poor White Problem in the United States should be placed at the disposal of the Joint Board and its research workers, especially if he had, in addition, experience in the organisation of coöperative research. At the same time the Committee was of the opinion that the payment of a full-time organising secretary from the funds provided by the Carnegie Corporation would not be desirable, since such payment would seriously limit the resources at the disposal of the Joint Board. It was resolved that these views of the Committee be placed before the Carnegie Corporation, but that the Corporation also be informed that further communications would be addressed to it on this matter at a later date.

The Committee also resolved that the Carnegie Corporation be asked for information with regard to the possible appointment of Trustees for the administration of the funds allocated to Research on the Poor White Question in South Africa; and to suggest to the Corporation that the appointment of Trustees not resident in South Africa would, in the opinion of the Committee, hamper the work of the Joint Board and of its research workers.

ADDENDUM II.

In accordance with resolution (6) of the Combined meeting the interim Chairman and Secretary interviewed the Minister of Education at 2.45 p.m. on the same day as the meeting was held. The Chairman explained the position and placed the request of the Joint meeting regarding a Government representative before the Minister. The latter expressed himself as in full sympathy with the general project and undertook to place the matter before the Government for consideration.

Interim Chairman of Joint Board.

Interim Secretary of Joint Board.

Buildings: West Building, 2nd Floor, 9.30
Special Comm. - 2.30
-----: A G E N D A -----
12.12

MEETING OF THE JOINT BOARD APPOINTED
ON THE POOR WHITE QUESTION.

Place of Meeting: University Buildings, Queen Victoria Street,
Cape Town.

Time of Meeting: 10 a.m., 14th April, 1928.

Report of Interim Secretary.

1. Acceptance of membership on the Joint Board (Secretary to report).

2. General Scope of Work.-

Research on the Poor White question from the points of view
of Sociology, Economics, Public Health, Psychology, Education.

The following suggestions have been submitted with regard to
special lines of research:-

- 2 (a). Sociological.-

- (i) An investigation on the connection between crime and poor
whitism (Secretary).
- (ii) The religious and moral condition of the Poor White. (Rev.
J.R.Albertyn).
- (iii) Effects of isolation. (Rev. J.R.Albertyn).
- (iv) Effects of contact with natives. (Rev. J.R.Albertyn).

- 2 (b). Economics.-

- (i) The extent to which peculiar farming conditions in South
Africa, (whereby closer settlement cannot be viewed as the
rule but rather as the exception), have led to the develop-
ment of the Poor White Problem, and have shown the need for
special action to combat such natural causes. (Superintendent-
General of Education, Cape Province).
- (ii) The extent to which the absence of a living wage for farm
labourers and overseers makes it impossible for the Poor
White and the "Bywoner" to rise in the economic scale.
(Superintendent-General of Education, Cape Province).
- (iii) The extent to which the problem is accentuated by the
inability of the Poor White of a low standard of intelligence
to compete in the unskilled labour market with the intelli-
gent coloured or native worker. (Superintendent-General of
Education, Cape Province).
- (iv) The extent to which the children of Poor Whites who have
drifted into towns have made, or have failed to make good.
(Superintendent-General of Education, Cape Province).

(v) /.....

- (v) The extent to which private and Government ameliorative measures have succeeded in raising the economic value of the Poor White. (Superintendent-General of Education, Cape Province).
- (vi) The extent to which ~~periodic~~ ^{seasonal} droughts are responsible for increasing the number of Poor Whites. (Superintendent-General of Education, Cape Province).
- (vii) The effects of agricultural conditions on the economic state ^(of the Poor White) (diseases of animals and plants, lack of sufficient soil fertility and proper manuring, unsuited ^{to the} methods of agriculture). (Report from Union Department of Agriculture to be requested).
- (viii) The effect of unexpectedly sudden changes in the economic conditions of successful farming for which the farming population is unprepared.
- (ix) The research should be directed more especially to an examination of the gradual economic decline of a considerable portion of our rural white population and of the movement towards the cities where the real Poor White class is formed as the result of lack of training for urban callings.

Probably statistical information to be obtained from the churches with regard to the number of persons in receipt of charity will be of use, but to a large extent use will have to be made of the questionnaire method by means of which an intensive study can be made of representative regions and groups of persons. This method ought to be accompanied by the oral collection of data from trustworthy inhabitants of different parts of the country. Such data may be controlled to a considerable extent by reference to the minutes of "Kerkraad" meetings and documents in the local Magistrates' offices, etc.

In this connection fruitful lines of work would be for example:-

- (a) The examination of say a suitable group of people on relief works with regard to their previous places of residence, their previous economic state, their family and personal history.
- (b) Examination of particular localities from which many more or less pauperised rural inhabitants have moved, with a view to finding the causes concerned.
- (c) A careful and intensive study of the history of a series of typical Poor Whites in different cities.

Since the Poor Whites certainly, to a large extent, come from an originally rural population it would be fruitful to determine :-

In as many cases as possible what the special nature of their previous farming occupation was. There is good reason to believe that far more Poor Whites come from the stock ^{pastoral} ~~farming~~ class than from the grain growing class. ^{are}

In this connection an economic geographical research might be carried out on the connection between rainfall on a number of Poor Whites, and also one on the extent to which the improvident use of the soil and of grazing lands has taken place, as well as one on the extent to which the attempt to farm on ground of insufficient size has led to economic failure.

Of great value would be an examination of the methods and results of the state's general land policy, the division of
landed/....

landed property, and the possibilities existing for an industrious and hard working man without capital to hire ground under suitable terms and eventually to become a landowner.

A statistical table could be drawn up for a suitably selected group of Poor Whites with regard to the number who had previously been landowners or whose fathers or grandfathers had been landowners. A statistical examination would also be possible, at least in the case of representative districts with regard to the growth of the rural population relative to the number of landowners. In the case of districts with a decreasing white rural population it will be desirable to determine if there is a tendency for the formation of large individually or company owned properties. (It should be remarked that the latter may take place to a certain extent at the same time that the number of individually owned farms is increasing).

A further line of work relates to the question of an increasing influx of Kaffir labourers into regions which are in the hands of white farmers and of the effect of such influx on the economic status of the landless rural white population such as the "Bywoners". (Dr. J.F.W. Grosskopf).

- (x) An examination as to the different percentages of Poor Whites in different parts of the country. At present statistical information on this point is almost wholly lacking. A great difficulty in collecting such information is the absence of a definition of Poor White which is everywhere understood and applied in the same sense. With regard to the collection of statistics ~~on this point~~, there is necessary a complementary intensive study of representative localities.

It is essential that the geographical conditions affecting the economic state of the population should be fully taken into account, although, naturally, a many sided synthetic study only can successfully discover the different causes for the growth of the Poor White population. (Dr. J. Serton).

(c). Public Health.-

- (i) The extent to which physical inefficiency and ~~an~~ inability to make normal progress in school are due to lack of adequate diet. Controlled experiments are essential. (Superintendent-General of Education, Cape Province).
- (ii) The effects of disease (e.g. intestinal parasites and malaria) on vitality in general and general physical and mental efficiency. (Superintendent-General of Education, Cape Province).
- iii) The extent to which varying climatic and environmental conditions affect mental and physical well being. (Superintendent-General of Education, Cape Province).

d). Psychology.-

- (i) Intelligence tests and survey. (Secretary to report).
- (ii) Disparity between Poor White and other children in respect of innate intelligence. (*Superintendent-General of Education, Cape Province*).
- iii) Geographical distribution of intelligence as determined by intelligence tests. (Dr. J.T. Dunston). (iv)/.....

- (iv) Examination of all individuals with regard to intelligence who are committed to work colonies. (Dr. J.T. Dunston).
 - (v) Influence of isolation on mental development. (Dr. J.R. Albertyn)
 - (vi) See 2 (c) (ii) and (iii).
 - (vii) See 2 (a) (iv).
- (c). Education.-
- (i) Determination of areas in which Poor White children are present in comparatively large numbers and of the schools attended by them.
 - (ii) In connection with the drift of the Poor White population from the country, an examination of the extent of any increase in the Poor White school population in urban areas.
 - (iii) The study of possible differences in the characteristics of different classes of Poor White school children. Such differentiation will in part have reference to the areas to which the children belong (e.g. rural, urban, alluvial diggings) and in part to points mentioned below.
 - (iv) The extent of retardation in school of the Poor White child and of the causes conducing thereto such as irregularity of attendance at school, frequent change of school due to parents changing place of habitation, lack of estimated intelligence and lack of application and concentration.
 - (v) Educational facilities. In this connection:-
 - (1) Lack of the ordinary facilities in special regions such as may, possibly, exist on the alluvial diggings.
 - (2) Inability to make use of the ordinary facilities of (e.g., secondary) education or of vocational training on account of economic pressure necessitating work providing some income on the part of the Poor White adolescent.
 - (3) Possible disadvantages with regard to the quality of the instruction given in, e.g. small rural schools.
 - (vi) The study of home influences other than those implied by points already raised and of the effect relating to the placing of the Poor White child in surroundings conducive of a more regular and discipline life.
 - vii) A study of the results obtained in after life as the result of the vocational training of the Poor White child in, e.g., Industrial Schools.

Research Workers.-

Secretary to report on personnel.

Existing Sources of Information.-

1. Co-operation with the Parliamentary Librarian. (Secretary to report).
2. Calling in assistance of an expert or experts of the Union Department of Agriculture in an advisory capacity. (Secretary to report).

3 /.....

3. Information to be obtained from Inspectors of Schools, School Boards and Headmasters of schools in country areas. (Director of Education, Transvaal).

4. *Files of the "Kerklike Armesorg".*

5. Allocation of Funds:-

- (a) Appointment of an organising Secretary and co-operation between Research Workers.
- (b) Appointments of assistants to Research Workers.
- (c) Travelling and subsistence expenses and payment of Research Workers.
- (d) Purchase of literature (the Chairman of the Carnegie Corporation has intimated that the literature available on the problem in the United States of America is being forwarded).
- (e) Provision for seconding Research Workers from Universities and Government Departments.
- (f) Travelling and subsistence expenses to members of the Joint Board and the Committee of the Research Grant Board.
- (g) Clerical assistance.

R. W. Willocks.

INTERIM SECRETARY.

APPENDIX B

MITCHELL'S CIRCULAR

Members of the Joint Board of Control agreed to solicit comments from experts in the fields of education, health, psychology, sociology, and economics that would inform the content and practice of the Poor White Study. Dr. J. A. Mitchell, Secretary of Public Health, sent a “circular” to a number of public health officials in May 1928.⁵¹⁹ This appendix includes a copy of the circular, as well as a handwritten response by Dr. C. Louis Leipoldt, a former School Health Officer who conducted one of the first broad-based studies of malnutrition in white children in South Africa.⁵²⁰ Leipoldt’s letter represents a hereditary paradigm of disease; Dr. Spencer Lester, Director of the South African Institute for Medical Research, whose letter is also included here, presents the environmental view, with which Mitchell himself had sympathy.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁹ J. A. Mitchell, Poor White Problem: Proposed Investigation, Public Health Circular No. C.T.379, May 3, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

⁵²⁰ C. L. Leipoldt to J. A. Mitchell, May 13, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

⁵²¹ Spencer Lister to J. A. Mitchell, May 8, 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

9/77/38
Professor R.W. Wilcocks,
The University of Stellenbosch,
Stellenbosch.

For your information.

J.A. MITCHELL
SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH.

Sir Spencer Lister,
S.A. Institute for Medical Research,
P.O. Box 1038, JOHANNESBURG.

77/38

C.T. 379

Dr. C. Louis Leipoldt,
Southern Life Buildings,
St. Georges' Street, CAPE TOWN.

Dr. W.A. Murray,
Health Department,
Union Buildings, PRETORIA.

3rd May 1928

Dr. Carl Bremer,
67, Cradock Street,
GRAAFF REINET.

Dr. van der Merwe,
School Medical Inspector,
Provincial Department of Education,
PRETORIA.

POOR WHITE PROBLEM: PROPOSED INVESTIGATION.

Dear

The Carnegie Corporation of New York has made available £2,000 annually for two years for the purpose of financing a comprehensive research into the "Poor White" question in South Africa, to be carried out under the guidance of a special committee nominated by the Research Grant Board of the Union and the authorities of the Dutch Reformed Church.

2. The President and Secretary of the Carnegie Corporation, who recently visited South Africa, in a report submitted by them remark that there are now more than 120,000 of the small total of the European population of the Union who have sunk below the economic level of the more advanced Natives and who present a problem of the utmost gravity, which neither sociology, nor economics, nor public health, nor psychology and education can deal with alone, though valuable results might be obtained if these aspects of the problem could be dealt with jointly.

3. A representative committee under the chairmanship of Senator the Honourable F.S. Malan has been constituted by the Research Grant Board and the Dutch Reformed Church authorities accordingly and at a recent meeting of the committee, members were nominated to formulate proposals in regard to lines of research, with plans of work and organisation and suggested research personnel, it being suggested that before formulating such proposals each member so nominated would consult with those in the best position to give useful and practical advice in regard to the particular section of the work under consideration.

4. Under this scheme I have been asked to formulate proposals regarding the public health aspects of the question and in this connection I should be very pleased to be favoured with your views and suggestions.

5. On present information I am personally inclined to think that adverse health conditions are not a prime causative factor in the problem, but, nevertheless, there are health aspects of the matter which merit careful consideration.....

sideration in connection with the proposed investigation. For instance in some localities where "poor white-ism" is common, a low grade and monotonous diet may influence the matter; in some localities this diet is mainly of mealies, in others again it is largely of sweet potatoes. Again, in the malarial areas of the Transvaal middle and low veld, malaria is undoubtedly an aggravating factor and in some localities the same is probably true of bilharzia. It has been suggested that hookworm may also in some localities be an aggravating factor, and whilst I am at present unaware of any tangible grounds for this suggestion the matter certainly merits further investigation. A careful health and anthropometric survey of sample batches of "poor white" families or children in different parts of the Union would also probably be useful.

6. Your views and suggestions in regard to the foregoing and any other health aspects of the matter, including proposed arrangements for carrying out the enquiries, would be much appreciated. I may mention that the mental and psychological aspects of the question do not fall within the health section of the investigation and are being dealt with separately. The funds at present available are limited but should they prove inadequate the committee proposes to approach the Government with a view to obtaining a supplementary grant.

7. Reports and proposals regarding research work must be in the hands of the Secretary before the end of the present month, so that I should be grateful if you would kindly reply as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

J. A. MITCHELL

Poor White Problem 13/7/38

Port Elizabeth Club
South Africa.

But will pay
per. letter

2/11
16/5

13 May 1928

My dear Dutchell

Your letter of 94
from Cape Town reached me
as I was leaving for a week
end of sleep & a masquerade
ohie!

I have not paid any
attention to the "Poor White
Problem": but there are
unprudent people, curators,
chimney sweeps & painters,

Who live abroad beyond their means: these
are untrained people (some of us are much
good without training) who have been dislocated
by the chances of life or ill-fated essays of their own
for a setting in which they could exist but one
where as one will hire them. The exodus from
adrought-stricken and air towns is a great tragedy.
Finally, there are those who, from defective physique
or twisted mentality or from early brutalization, are
untrainable by the home school technique applied
to them. I doubt whether our 'Arme Blanche'
are any worse or more hopeless than the million
dole-receivers of West Britain. A poor white is
either an unemployable or in a lesser degree an
unemployed white. A half-starved child was
adopted in Rahamstown from a baby farm in Lough
Linn last week. It had ^{had} bread & coffee, unseasoned
milk, night & morning, & milk pap at noon
day without milk. Such a child does not

Poor white problem

- Port Elizabeth Club
South Africa.
1. A poor white is not a man who has lost his money by speculation, or by the extravagance of his family; but one who is so degraded economically that he cannot but take a white man without charitable aid.
 2. Such aid has been lent by religious organizations, such as Kerkamers; by charitable societies, such as the Relief Societies, British Nursing Association and Benevolent Societies; and by State or State aided hospitals, outpatient departments, issues of medicine & antiseptics, drugs; & by loan distribution, drought relief funds, relief works, & pensionations.
 3. Experience in Grahamstown shows that some ten families related or intermarried are constantly on the books of all such institutions & care of spouse habitually. They squander a month's ration in a few days, and are totally improvident.
 4. Some of these are the first generation born in Africa of European parents. Their condition cannot then be the result of any process of sterilization & sub-tropical heat & light - a process which may be operative in a third or later generation of African-born whites.
 5. Not all of these people are diseased physically or markedly cachectic, nor do mental tests reveal mental

education or arrest

6 It is arguable that a poor child is manufactured prior to or soon after the school leaving age. But mental defect is an inborn condition. School tests should be used to separate easily the uneducable mental deficient, who need institutional whole life treatment, from those who could become citizens of some worth.

7 There is at present no intelligent co-ordinated direction of the careers of those who ought to follow handicrafts rather than a clerical career. False ideas & false pride indicate a Government department as the goal of a self-respecting youth - with civil service, railway administration, teaching and nursing professions, with limited hours, travelling privileges, vacation leave, & pensions. Agriculture & pastoral farming, the building trade, plumbing & painting, and for the most part "picked up" in a rule & thumb manner, & Employment bureaux & advisory Committees have no real power. Vocational tests & orders to pay fees for apprenticeship subject to inspection. Lists of professions would strengthen their hands. The Anti-Labour policy now operating on the railway system is a cruel example of such a ^{Control} policy. It is in the rising generation that the supply of poor skulls must be arrested.

11/77/38
THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH.

POSTAL ADDRESS:
P.O. BOX 338
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
"BACTERIAT"
TELEPHONE 5774. AVA

HOSPITAL STREET,
JOHANNESBURG.
A.25/28. SOUTH AFRICA.

May 8, 1928.

Dr. J. A. Mitchell,
53, Parliament Street,
Cape Town,
C.P.

Dear Mitchell,

From the contents of your letter No. 77/38
C.T. 379 of May 3rd it appears that quite an am-
bitious scheme for studying the "Poor White" ques-
tion is afoot.

In replying to your letter you will realize that
I have no accurate experience or data about "Poor
Whites". I see them in the course of my travels, in
concentrated formation attempting to do manual work
very inefficiently and with ill grace, many of them
have a half witted expression and give one the im-
pression of a deep rooted degeneration of both mind
and body. I have some opinions, devoid however of
proof, concerning the aetiology of their sad condition,
but they rest on sociological and economical grounds
about which I will not burthen you as you are enquir-
ing about the public health aspect of the matter only.

You will gather therefore that I agree with your
opinion that "adverse health conditions are not a
prime causative factor in the problem", nevertheless
as you suggest both malaria and bilharziasis may be
responsible for a certain proportion of poor whites
in some localities, although the types that I see,
only casually, do not suggest from their general
appearance disability from these diseases so much as
mental hebetude of a deeper origin. I think it very
unlikely that hookworm plays any part in bringing
about the condition. Dr. Annie Porter holds the
view that climatic conditions pertaining to South
Africa are unfavourable for the existence of hookworm
in dangerous numbers, of course the isolated occurrences
in certain mines is another story.

I have not sufficient knowledge of the dietetic
customs of whites in some areas to express any opinion
on your suggestion as to the importance of insufficient
and unsuitable food as an aggravating cause of "poor
whitism".

You/

You write that "a careful health and anthropometric survey of sample batches of poor white families or children in different parts of the Union would also probably be useful". I would go further and say that this procedure should form an essential part of the scheme of investigation, but suggest that a much wider survey should be first undertaken, having as its object the determination of every locality in South Africa where Poor Whites are produced in any number together with the numerical extent of the condition. The sociological, economical, health and other conditions present in each locality should be closely investigated and recorded.

Having done this it would no doubt become obvious that by a process of elimination certain factors could not be held primarily responsible, for instance important "Poor White" producing areas might be found where neither malaria nor bilharziasis exist; similarly in grossly inadequate diet, although necessarily the poorer population of all such areas would be reduced to at any rate a frugal dietary. With this information at hand it might be possible to select a "bad area" where none of the disease or dietetic factors suggested could possibly account for the "poor whitism"; in such circumstances a thorough study of the sociological (including genealogical), psychological and economic factors in selected Poor Whites from such a locality might be very fruitful in getting to the root of the matter.

In other areas where particular disease or dietetic factors prevailed, similar individual examinations could be made but more directly addressed to the past history as to illness and mode of diet. It might be of advantage to determine whether the Natives in a selected Poor White area have fallen below the general standard level of Native mental and bodily efficiency.

I am not quite clear as to your request:- "including proposed arrangements for carrying out the enquiries"; a good deal of information concerning the geographical prevalence of malaria and bilharziasis is no doubt in your possession, and the knowledge of the distribution of the Vectors of these diseases is fairly comprehensive as a result of the various surveys made by Dr. Ingram and Dr. Porter respectively. So far as the individual medical examination of Poor Whites is concerned in relation to the scheme I am at a disadvantage in making any suggestions, as I do not know all the ramifications of your department and all the various units of personnel of which you can avail yourself, but District Surgeons, School Medical Officers, subsidized private practitioners assisted on the administrative side by Magistrates, Principals of Schools and School Teachers occur to my mind.

The funds provided are not commensurate with the importance of the problem to be tackled, but even such a beginning may lead to greater things.

Yours sincerely,

Spencer Lister

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH PLANS

In October 1928, five of the Carnegie Commission's principle researchers met for the first time. According to Murray's handwritten translation of the minutes, included in this appendix, the discussion focused primarily on practical matters.⁵²² But a note at the top of the second page indicates two of the fundamental principles of their work; first, that the Carnegie Commission study of the "process of impoverishment", and second, that the poor white problem had its origins in the former frontier areas of the South African interior.

Over the course of the next few months, each researcher devised a research plan for their area of study. The group shared these plans with one another at their second meeting in December 1928. These plans give exceptional insight into the researchers' interests and assumptions before the investigation began in January 1929. Included in this appendix are the research plans for the *Economic Report* by Dr. J. F. W. Grosskopf and the *Health Report* by Dr. W. A. Murray.⁵²³

⁵²² Minutes of Conference of Research Workers with Poor White Problem, October 20, 1928, GES/SAB.

⁵²³ J. F. W. Grosskopf, Poor White Investigation: Preliminary Plan for the Economic Approach, October 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB; W. A. Murray, Research in Causation of the Poor White Problem: Health Aspects as Causes, October 1928, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

41/77/38

Minutes of Conference of Research Workers into the
Poor White Problem, held on 16, 17th & 18th October 1929,
at Stellenbosch.

(rough translation)

Present: Dr. Grosskoff, Malherbe, Wilcocks & Murray,
Revs. Albertus, Luckhoff and Cronje.

Following resolutions were taken: -

1. To request from the Govt. a grant of £2300 to cover estimated expenses of the Committee, beyond the Carnegie grant, for purposes of the Research.
2. To request from the Federal Council for Mother Craft & Child Welfare a grant of £100 (to cover expenses of a special women worker).
3. To request from the D. R. Ch. Synod of the Afrikaner provision of a locum in Rev. Albertus' parish during his absence.
4. To request the Transvaal D. R. Church Synod to make provision for Rev. Cronje's locum.
5. The ~~Research~~ Committee of Research Workers ^{mainly} to travel together so as to ensure co-operation. Rev. Albertus to act as Chairman in absence of Rev. Malherbe; Dr. Wilcocks as Secretary.
6. The Research workers commence their combined tour on Feb 1 1929, but ~~that~~ individual workers may commence on or after 1st Jan. 1929. Active Research commences on 1st Jan. 1929.
7. Port Elizabeth to be the first centre to be visited by the Committee.

4/77/38

The general problem of the research not to be defined in a definition of the term "Poor White" but as a progressive process viz:

"The process of impoverishment and retrogression of a portion of the white population of S.A."

As preliminary working hypothesis it is assumed that Poor Whiteism mainly originates in the "Platteland".

9. That each Chief Research Worker is responsible for the queries dealing with his own subject in the combined "questionnaire" to be drawn up. He will also in the first instance be responsible for the eliciting of answers to those queries, but some interplay & cooperation with other workers in the latter connection may be found practicable.
10. The proposal of Res. Alberts (to call ^{together} at a later juncture a conference of experts on certain aspects of the problem) to stand over meanwhile.
11. The appointment of a Sociologist from Overseas in an advisory capacity — no further steps to be taken until after the Carnegie Conf. has commented & advised on the ~~proposed~~ plans ~~of the~~ proposed by the Committee, & after the Comm. has reported to the Board of Control their preliminary experiences.
12. Res. Alberts & Dr. Melkerbe to cooperate in examining church and parish records & archives.
13. The list of books recommended by Dr. Koppel to be circulated amongst members of Committee.
Res. Luchhoff & Alberts to consult Mr. Rabbink of the Parliamentary Library in compiling a list of existing literature in S.A. on the Poor White Problem.

Wasserman

D. Brodsky

POOR WHITE INVESTIGATION.

Preliminary Plan for the Economic Approach.

(Owing to sickness and other obstacles this memorandum had to be drawn up in great haste. - J.F.W.G.).

- I. Whilst the Poor White question no doubt manifests itself primarily as an economic and social phenomenon, the study of its causes and of possible means of control will certainly be dependent to a large extent upon the other proposed directions of investigation, - psychological, educational and medical.
- II. The economic investigation is in this case not concerned (as, for instance, in connection with charity organisation) with the question of poverty itself, - that is to say poverty and degeneration of a certain ~~an~~ number of individuals or families. The problem here has to be considered as peculiar to South Africa at a given stage of its historical development. (Although, of course, similar problems may exist elsewhere).

The broad, typical manifestations must be searched for and explained; individual and casual factors must be excluded.

Unfortunately the data for an extensive statistical treatment of the problem are not procurable, and probably it will not be possible to collect such.

For us in South Africa, the problem stands closely connected -

- (a) with the leadership of the white race (which, in the interests of civilisation, still appears essential): and
- (b) with the preservation of the material and moral welfare of a large part of South Africa's pioneers, mainly Dutch speaking, although traces of a similar development are noticeable in areas of older rural settlement by English speaking people.

Problems of a city proletariat will not at present concern the investigation, excepting in so far as one of the results of the growth of rural impoverishment, namely migration to the towns, seems liable to contribute to the formation of a turbulent urban proletariat comparable in many respects to that of the ancient city of Rome.

II. Our Study as that of an Evolution Phenomenon.

On the economic side the problem has to be viewed mainly as a gradual movement, - as a process in our social and economic organism, connected with the natural and human factors of our life, and primarily affecting the rural population.

Looking beyond the individual, the question is: How did this process originate? Whither does it tend? At what points are its evil results being softened?

IV. Three Major Aspects.

- A. Firstly: In how far do the geographical background and natural conditions of our life (i.e. more or less inevitable external factors, like desert conditions, climatic irregularities, endemic pests and diseases) afford an explanation for rural distribution and population?

- B. Secondly: In how far is the Poor White problem a phenomenon concomitant with a certain stage in the social-economic development of the white population? (The investigator is thinking mainly of the effect upon a simple and self-sufficient rural pioneer population, suddenly overwhelmed by "money-economy", competition and speculation, without proper chances for gradual adaptation. Possibly we may now already be at the crisis or even beyond it, so that this social malady may of itself be losing its acute and virulent forms; perhaps more serious aspects are still facing us.)
- C. Thirdly: In how far is the problem of the Poor White the result of the conflict of white and black? In how far may the question therefore threaten to grow even more acute? (For the native is no doubt becoming more and more absorbed and integrated in the whole economic life of South Africa).

Method:

As far as possible historical sources will be examined, to try to trace the beginnings of the process of breaking up the simpler and easier rural life; but mainly the "enquête" and survey method will be applied. (Local study and observation of men and things; examination, chiefly orally, of individuals belonging to the Poor White class and of experienced men acquainted with the history of such persons and the conditions of the district. Investigation of any further available sources of information: official, ecclesiastical, or other).

Specimen Questions, under each Head, to which Answers are sought.

A.

- V. External Causes: Here questions like the following will be examined:
1. Are arid and semi-arid conditions (with growth of population) the chief cause? Or unexpected droughts? Or frequent diseases of man and beast?
(Inevitable and unforeseen calamities like wars, epidemics, etc. are irregular, non-calculable factors; nevertheless older investigations go to show that the South African War of 1899 - 1902 and its wholesale destruction of farm property gave a strong push to the Poor White movement. - It may, however, be asked in how far lack of foresight, failure to discount the more or less normal risks of drought years, for instance, - is a cause of impoverishment).
 2. In what ways are natural handicaps being overcome or controlled?
 3. Were wasteful methods (over-cropping, over-grazing, non-prevention of land erosion, exhaustion of natural resources) by a careless pioneer population a contributory cause?
- Valuable data in Report of Drought Commission. (Bluebook U.G.49, 1923).

B.

The historical and evolutionary aspect:

cf. W.MacMillan: Agrarian Problem in South Africa.
Johannesburg. 1919.

- (a) Investigation mainly in farm areas:
(This side of problem largely concerned with question of Rural and Land Economics.)

1. It is fairly certain that the Poor White question became really acute after the South African War (1902) and that its

beginnings do not go back much earlier than the nineties. But discussions in the parliaments, in church synods, also older relief measures by governments may throw valuable additional lights on the problem, as well as interviews with reliable and observant older inhabitants

2. Connection between growth of Poor Whites and the end of free (or extremely cheap) land for settlement. (Investigation into Land Policy of South African colonies and republics is already being carried out at University of Stellenbosch by post graduate students. Further cf. Thomson: "Landwirtschaftlicher Grundbesitz in Südafrika". Jena, 1927).

3. The older type of "Bywoner" and easy access to the use of land? Did the landless "Bywoner"-class contribute largely to the Poor Whites?

(N.B. "Bywoner": rather a loosely used term for non-landowning persons living with their families on the farm of another; not as rent-paying tenants, but in different forms, varying from the fairly independent share-tenant to the hired man receiving part of his pay as a share of the produce).

4. Did pastoralists contribute in a greater measure to the Poor White class?

5. Results of sub-division of farms into uneconomic (or too risky) sizes?

6. Are promising men kept back through lack of credit facilities and so forced into the ranks of Poor Whites?

7. Are wealthier farmers and urban owners of capital buying up and consolidating land into large estates ("latifundia")?

8. Is there a correlation between number of large landowners and the migration of smaller farmers?

9. Is the Department of Agriculture encouraging types of farming less suited to the needs and interests of the smaller owners? (Should white family-farms be our aim?).

10. Are results of the irrigation and closer settlement policy of the government beneficial?

11. Has the sudden intrusion of "money economy", of commercial farming and market production amongst a community previously engaged chiefly in simple "subsistence farming" caused the failure of many farmers?

12. Effects of ignorance of business methods and contract liabilities?

13. Mistaken ideas regarding prospects in towns or on diggings?

14. Inefficient farming methods on less land per head and under more stringent economic conditions? (Lack of proper guidance or education?)

(b) Investigation amongst those who have dropped out of agricultural work:

15. Attempts to find artisan's or transport jobs in rural surroundings?

16. Prospects of the children of this class, torn from the land?

17. Did relief works, railway construction, the diamond-diggings tempt many away from farm work?

18. What ultimately draws these people to diggings and urban centres? (No dwelling place in the country? Friends; society; pleasures of town life? Hope of finding work? Gambling spirit?

Speculating on charity?).

19. Prospects in small country towns, in commercial centres, in the larger business and industrial centres? Prospects for unskilled country-men? for their sons? for their daughters? Better schooling? Risks, moral and other? Poor housing? Temptation towards dishonest gains, like illegal liquor selling to natives?

20. Are there signs of growing adaptation by this uprooted rural population to modern industrial conditions?

(Le Play's method of family histories will in many cases prove extremely valuable. Intensive treatment of typical families, if possible going back several generations; as for instance: 1st generation - landowner who cannot hold his property; 2nd generation - "Bywoner" migrating to a town; 3rd generation - the new town-dweller trying to find his place under altered conditions, or grown slum-dweller. Study of economic condition amongst the poorer farmers in areas showing considerable emigration from the country, and comparison with history of those who have already migrated.).

C.

VII. White versus Native.

cf. Report of "Economic and Wage Commission", U.G.14, 1926.
J.H.Botha: "Die Arbeidsvraagstuk van Suid-Afrika",
Amsterdam. 1928.

1. In districts showing absolute decline in white population and absolute increase of non-white population, - is native and coloured competition in farm labour the principal cause?
2. Are changes in farm organisation (e.g. capitalistic large-scale wool-growing) lessening the scope for employment of white men?
3. The native areas themselves are suffering from "rural congestion". In how far does this contribute to native families migrating to land held by white farmers? Is there any correlation between this migration of natives and the decrease of white population in certain districts?
4. In how far is the native (formerly unskilled, and only periodically working under white farmers) gradually forming a distinct class of agricultural labourer?
5. To what extent does the competition of cheap native and coloured labour in urban trades and industries increase the difficulties of the former white rural inhabitant in obtaining a footing in the economic life of the towns?
6. Can closed reserves for white labour (on the railways, in gold mines) be maintained? Is the attempt to do so justifiable as a temporary palliative and transition measure?

J. F. W. GROSSKOPF.

RESEARCH INTO CAUSATION OF POOR WHITE PROBLEM.

Health aspects as cause. *J. Murray*

1. Malnutrition.-

1. Study of selected groups and individuals and their dietaries.
(Results to be controlled by similar study of average farming community or individuals.)

- (a) at their homes (natural surroundings).
e.g. at Khyana Forest and Langkloof;
at Karroo farms - Aberdeen, Willowmore, Jansenville;
at Namaqualand;
or Transvaal Bushveld.
- (b) at Settlements or Poor White Colonies,
e.g. Kakamas,
de Lagersdrift,
or Hartebeestpoort.
Industrial Schools.

2. Historical Study.-

Note: Mortality Statistics available.
To be obtained from Historian or Sociologist.
How long as family or group lived here? (Names, ages, etc.)
Whence did parents and grandparents come?
What were financial conditions of these? (What land, stock, etc., owned).
What their normal dietaries?
What physique? Illnesses? Causes of death?
What reasons assigned for subsequent poverty?
What mental condition of parents and grandparents?
What facilities for marketing produce? Distances: Transport.

3. Nutritional Study. Effects of the diets on individuals or groups.

- (a) Physical effects: height, weight compared with age.
Anaemia? (Tallquist's Test).
Resistance or not to disease (history of previous illnesses).
Dental condition? (e.g. caries, sepsis).
Rickets?
Scurvy?
- (b) Mental effects: get school record: standard compared with age.
General progress in studies: sport.
Intelligence (Tests).
- (c) Moral.- school records of behaviour.
- police records.
- church records.

4. Dietetic Study.- *Dr. Claver*

What is average dietary and staple article of food of each family or group? of each individual?

Any important individual variation (e.g. aversion to fat, meat, milk: special fondness for carbohydrates, meat, etc.)

Result on physique?

Is food of family commonly overcooked? overrefined?

Is food supplied sufficient in amount for each individual?

Is food supplied sufficient in amount all through the year?
What seasonal variations in total supply or certain articles?
Is diet of expectant or nursing mothers different from rest?
How are babies usually reared? How early is bottle or food given?

School children: times of meals and what eaten?

Any fruit? How often? What kind? Locally grown?

Green vegetables? How often? What kind? Locally grown?

What facilities on this farm to grow own mealies, wheat, pumpkins, beans?

What facilities on this farm to grow own fruit, oranges, vegetables, tomatoes?

What facilities for obtaining cheap, plentiful and regular supplies of these from elsewhere?

5. Biochemical Studies.-

- (a) Vitaminic values of the dietaries, and of staple articles.
- (b) Caloric values and balance of the dietaries, e.g. mealie-meal, sweet potatoes, white bread.
- (c) What are chief deficiencies?

6. Chemical studies: to account for low values of certain staple food-stuffs.

Chemical composition of local soil, especially presence or absence of lime, phosphates, etc.
" " " " water, percentage of iodine, lime, etc.
" " " " foodstuffs, especially salts as compared with highveld grown cereals or vegetables.
If mainly imported cereals and vegetables used analyse the chemical composition of the product in use, as well as soil and water there.

(Note: Some records of soil and water analyses are already available in Government Chemical Laboratories).

7. Presence or absence of Concurrent diseases.-

Syphilis: See IV.
Tuberculosis: See V.
Malaria: See II.
Bilharziasis: See III.
Helminthiasis: See V.

For how long has he suffered?
Did parents or grandparents also suffer?

8. Intermarriage.-

History for four generations back.
Fertility of various past members of family.

II. Chronic Malaria.

Study of communities and individuals and controls.

- (a) in Malaria areas (Green and Red on Map) comprising districts of :-

Rustenburg (Dr. Laing's report)
 Nylstroom.
 Pietersburg.
 Zoutpansberg (Dr. des Ligneris' report).
 Lydenburg.
 Barberton.
 or Zeerust.

- (b) At their own homes, especially farms in above areas.
 (c) At malarious Settlements in above areas,
 e.g. Oorigstad.
 Schoemansdal.

2. Community and Family studies.-

Mortality Statistics.

- (a) History of each community. Number of families: Names:
 No. of individuals?
 How long settled there?
 What was their physical condition?
 What their financial circumstances?
 When did Malaria first break out?
 How often since? What fatalities?
 What years severe?
 Endemic or parasite rates?
 Spleen rates? Sporozoite rate?
 What transport facilities and distances to nearest
 markets?
 What community interests in raising foodstuffs?
 Stock?

- (b) History of families as above.

What made this family poor in opinion of this family?
 What is main source of income or property owned?
 When or how obtained? Inheritance? Raised locally?
 Is farm owned? or hired? for how much?
 What foodstuffs raised by themselves? For own use or
 sale?
 What fruit or vegetables grown?
 What water supplies? Meat how often?
 What facilities for getting food, fruit, vegetables,
 cheaply and regularly?
 What educational facilities had parents and grand-
 parents?
 Habits, customs and social status as influencing
 incidence of Malaria.

- (c) History of Malaria - in each family. How many members?
 Names, ages, sex.

Annual or only occasional epidemics. When last bad
 years?
 Only summer or all-year infection and mosquito preva-
 lence?
 How many members have had malaria?
 How many deaths? What ages and sex? What of
 Blackwater Fever? How many attacks before?
 Spleen-rate and parasite-rate of family?
 Type of dwelling: Mosquitoproof: Water supplies.

Individual Studies:

- (a) History as to Malaria. Name, Age, Sex.
 Date of first infection or attack? Where?

How often since? When last? Any Blackwater?
 What treatment during attacks? After or between?
 If Quinine, how much and when taken?
 Prophylactic Quinine taken? What time? How much? Winter too?
 Were other antimalarial drugs or remedies used? (Details).

(b) Individual Physical Condition.

Size of spleen.
 Bloodsmear: parasites present? Type?
 differential and total leucocyte count.
 Anaemia - (Tallqvist) Hb.% or R.E.C. plus Leuc. counts?
 Weight and height.
Mental standard at home: in school: what progress?
 Intelligence Tests?
Moral - is it a good and obedient child?

(c) Concomitant diseases of disability?

(See I) Malnutrition? due to underfeeding or ill-balanced diet? Degree? What is average dietary? Staple article of food of adults? Of children?

(See III) Bilharziasis: How long? Did parents also suffer?

(See V) Hel. anthiasis: How long? What kind? Did parents suffer? What degree?

(See IV) Syphilis: How long? What stage? Did parents suffer? Wassermann Test?

(See VI) Tuberculosis: How long? What stage? What type? Did parents suffer?

4. Mosquito Conditions on each farm: each dwelling.

A. Temperature and humidity of locality? Annual rainfall as far back as possible?
 What water supplies on the farm:

- (a) for irrigation - how near homestead?
- (b) for watering stock - how near homestead?
- (c) for domestic use - how near homestead?
- (d) not really used, e.g. ponds, marshes, streams - how near homestead?

Are these permanent or seasonal?

B. In which of these collections of water do Anopheles breed?
 What species?

Every summer only in "bad" years?
 Do bad fever years coincide with heavy rainfall?
 When last?
 Any antimosquito measures carried out in the open?
 What is position as to grass, bushes, etc., near dwellings?
 Are dwellings situated high or low?
 Are dwellings mosquito-proof? Harbour Anopheles?
 Are mosquitoes killed indoors? How? How often?
 Are mosquito-nets used by all?
 Were mosquito repellents used?
 Are animal stables or kraals near dwelling? How near?
 Adult anopheles found in these?

5. C. How many Natives on farm now, or on average?

In how far do they suffer from Malaria? Mortality?
 Does malaria seem to affect them much physically?
 Does malaria seem to affect them much mentally?

What food supplies do they get?
 What is their nutrition? What housing?
 Proximity to water? Bush and tall grasses?
 Do they get Quinine when ill, or after?
 Suffer from other diseases - Syphilis, Bilharzia?

III. Bilharziasis.-

1. Study in localities most affected in Transvaal.
 e.g. Rustenburg.
 Zeerust.
 Barberton.
 Pretoria (W.B.Poort and Crocodile Valley).
 P.F.Rust.
 Mylstroom.
2. History of community of farm. Names of families, etc.
 How long settled there?
 When was Bilharzia first seen?
 What stream or pool affected or suspected?
 What percentages of adults and children have been affected?
 Has disease died out in adults?
 What local treatment tried? Success?
 Any preventive measures tried?
3. History of Family. Age, sex, name of each individual.
 How long living there?
 Which members affected? How long each?
 Where infected?
 Infection still persisting?
 Treatment? Preventive measure?
4. Individuals. Name - age - sex - weight - height.
 (a) History of disease
 (b) Symptoms
 (c) Physical condition
 Urine examination - ova, albumen, blood, cells.
 Blood examination - Anaemia: differential leucocyte count
 (Eosinophils).
 Presence or absence of blood parasites.
 Total red and white counts.
 (d) Mental condition - place in school: intelligence tests.
 (e) Concurrent disease -
 Malaria (See II)
 Malnutrition (See I)
 Syphilis (See III)
 Helminths (See V)
 Tuberculosis (See VI)
5. Inspection of local streams, ponds, etc. for snails: examination for infection: types of snails found.

IV. Syphilis and Gonorrhoea.

1. Name, age, sex, weight, height, etc.
 History each individual as to known or suspected
 Syphilis or Gonorrhoea.
 Previous illnesses (rash, sore throats, ulcers, etc.).

2. Clinical examination. Stage of disease. Symptoms. Pus smears for gonococci.
 3. Blood test (Wassermann). Total red and white counts. Differential leucocyte count.
 4. Family history of Syphilis or Gonorrhoea in parents, etc.
 5. History of Venereal Disease in local Natives.
- V. Helminthiasis.
1. History of community or family - any worm infection?
Do local Natives suffer? Beef or pork measles?
 2. Study of locality for local infection:
 - wet soil for ankylostomes
 - native faeces in veld
 - cattle and pigs roaming near dwellings.
 3. History of individuals -
 - What type of worms?
 - Where was infection got?
 - How long ago?
 - What treatment? Result?
 4. Physical condition. (Height, weight, age).
 - Anaemia (Tallqvist's test) or microscopic count.
 - Bloodsmear (Eosinophile) differential leucocyte count.
 - Faecal examination for ova.
 5. Mental effects, if any.
- VI. Tuberculosis.
- History of community - earlier cases known in parents, etc.
- Family histories of tuberculosis or lung trouble: gland or bone affections.
- Housing. Overcrowding. Construction. Ventilation. Light.
- Individual examination.
- Physical. Signs and symptoms: tuberculin test: sputum.
Blood examination.
Urine examination.
Dietary and Nutrition.
- Physique. Inter-marriage.

(Sgd.) W.A.MURRAY.

CHIEF HEALTH RESEARCH OFFICER.

APPENDIX D

TENTATIVE HYPOTHESES

By mid-March 1929, the researchers had completed their field research in the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces. Before heading to the Transvaal and Orange Free State, each researcher wrote a “statement of tentative hypothesis” based on their findings to date. These documents were sent to K. L. Butterfield, an American sociologist visiting South Africa at the behest of the Carnegie Corporation. Butterfield reviewed the researchers’ hypotheses and responded with a detailed critique that, among other things, encouraged the researchers to focus on measurable indicators of poverty whenever possible. He was particularly keen for the researchers to firm up their definition of “poor white”. The researchers convened a month later to discuss Butterfield’s suggestions.

This appendix includes R. W. Wilcocks tentative hypothesis for the *Psychological Report*, K. L. Butterfield’s assessment of the researchers’ work, and the researchers’ discussion of and response to Butterfield’s critique.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ R. W. Wilcocks, Psychological Section: Tentative Hypothesis, March 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB; K. L. Butterfield, Suggestions Concerning the Study by the Poor White Commission, April 1, 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB; Minutes of Meeting of Research Committee on the Poor White Problem, April 13, 1929, (GES) 2277/77/38, SAB.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SECTION.

TENTATIVE HYPOTHESIS.

26/5/29

Introductory.

Definitions of terms are always to a certain extent of an arbitrary nature. It is, however, suggested that, for purposes of the Research, the term "Poor White" may conveniently be taken to mean an impoverished person, or his (her) impoverished descendants, who has originally followed, or is still following, a rural as main occupation.

The fact that only a section of the rural population has undergone, or is undergoing, this impoverishment, and that it is not general, suggests the supposition that some degree of inefficiency on the part of this section is a partial cause, at least, of the impoverishment. Although this line of argument, standing by itself, would not have conclusive value, it may justly be advanced that the study, up to the present, of this section of the population, is in agreement with the supposition just made. The following is presented as a statement of hypotheses, to be further examined, as to the particular directions of inefficiency and their causes.

Hypotheses relating to mental traits.

General:

As a result of a variety of conditions (to be specified below) certain mental traits have been developed which make for a lessening of efficiency, under present day circumstances in South Africa, of a section of the white population. This decreased efficiency has co-operated, and is still co-operating, in the impoverishment affecting this section of the population, namely of the descendants, primarily on the land, of the earlier white inhabitants of the country.

Apart from the utilization of historical material and the collection of statistics where available, these hypotheses are in the main being tested by the method of oral interview with "Poor Whites" and reliable and intelligent ~~whites~~ who have had the opportunity of becoming well acquainted with them and their conditions and habits of life.

Specific:

I. A marked feature of the lives of a considerable section of the rural inhabitants of the country has consisted of what may be designated as the "Trek". Well known historical facts leave no doubt on this point. The mere fact of emigration to this country might be instanced as a case in point. Hardly had the early settlers arrived here when, in connection with the development of cattle farming, the trek to the Hinterland set in. Political events strongly stimulated the movement. It may be advanced that in this way the "trekkees" as a more or less national tradition was developed and that it has militated against the development of the habit of settled, constructive and progressive farming. It might be advanced that the characteristics so developed would be further strengthened by the frequent and often prolonged absence from home of the adult males in connection with native and other wars and that, at a later date, a common mode of livelihood, namely transport riding, should be looked upon both as a symptom of the trait in question and as a cause of its continuance.

II. The conditions of (stock farming) rural life were, in certain respects, comparatively easy even in the recent past. Land in plenty was easily obtainable, so that little or no steady application and hard work was necessary in order to provide fodder, and the necessity was not apparent for the conservation of the carrying capacity of the soil. In addition, a further source of livelihood could be found in hunting game. The stimulus to efficiency, in the shape of

necessity, in the methods of farming was thus largely absent, and improvident habits of farming and of farming outlook resulted, which became fatal to many when the conditions of farming life became more stringent. In this connection, and as illustrating the degree of efficiency considered necessary on the part of the farmer, attention may be drawn to the fact that, in the past more than at present, it was held that "the dunce of the family" should choose farming as his occupation and that any considerable degree of education was not needed in the case of the farmer.

The fact that considerable use was and is being made of coloured and native labour for performing the rougher types of manual labour assisted in preventing the habit of hard work in all its forms. Mention should also be made of the fact that the comparatively low economic standards of living characteristic of the small isolated but self-providing rural community or family imply the absence of a stimulus otherwise present towards the amount of exertion needed to obtain many of the comforts and conveniences of civilisation.

III. More especially in the past, but also often to-day, considerable distances separate the stock farmer not only from his nearest neighbours but also from the nearest township. Such isolation favoured the development of self-reliance but on the other hand militated against the development of a spirit of co-operation. In addition, it helped to prevent the acquirement of knowledge regarding other occupations than those of farming to which any surplus rural population could turn as a means of livelihood, and decreased both the chances for acquiring and esteeming the value of education. One consequence is that the section of the rural population now being forced off the land reaches the towns and cities unskilled in urban occupations. Another consequence is intimately connected with the tradition of the subdivision of farms mentioned below.

The lack of social contacts also retarded the acquirement of knowledge of modern economic methods of business. It does not appear improbable that a somewhat strongly developed patriarchal system of family life may have assisted this retardation. Such lack of knowledge became of especial importance in connection with the introduction of the credit system. In this connection it is suggested that the lack or loss of a proper commercial morality in a section of the people under discussion is connected with the introduction of a commercial system not fully understood by them and often accompanied by "sharp practice" involving, on the one hand often ruinous losses to them and, on the other, examples which it appeared advisable to follow in order to achieve material gain or prosperity.

In some cases the geographical isolation was that of groups. This led to the intermarriage of near relatives of which the effects come in for discussion later. Ignorance of its often deleterious effects has repeatedly been attested to as concomitant factor.

IV. On the whole large families are characteristic of the rural population. At one period of the country's history it was possible easily to obtain fresh lands for the natural increase of the population to inhabit as farmers, the latter occupation being the only one coming in for consideration, to a large extent due to factors mentioned under III above. This possibility gradually decreased as result of the available land becoming occupied. In part, too, the possibility of moving to fresh country was not used while still existing, on account of ~~the~~ lack of the necessary enterprise to move to more or less ill-known and often distant "pastures new". Settlement on the lands, by the descendants, already occupied by their parents, thus appeared to be the only possibility. In this connection now, it is of especial importance that certain methods of inheritance, originating from the Roman-Dutch Law, had become traditional. These consisted of the equal subdivision of the property among the children, or alternatively, of the system of fidei commissa by which one or two of the descendant generations hold the property in trust for a later one, among the members of which it has then eventually to be divided. Often, too, on account of the expense involved, legal division of the land involved in the inheritance, did not take place. These practices had various deleterious effects:-

- (a) The land belonging to each descendant became too small eventually for the holder still to make a living on it. In addition, and connected with the points raised under II, the smallness of the farm had the psychological effect of the farmer overstocking and thus decreasing the carrying capacity of his farm, which in turn had disastrous effects in time of drought.
- (b) If no proper subdivision had been carried through by survey and registration, the part-owners remained uninformed what particular portion of the inherited farm belonged to each of them. This militated against willingness to improve the value of the land and encouraged methods of farming leading to its exhaustion.
- (c) Similar effects resulted where the inheritance took place on the basis of the fidei commissa to those mentioned under (a) and (b).

V. In some portions of South Africa, especially in some of the parts from which the "Poor Whites" largely come, the climate is very variable, times of extreme drought often intervening between more favourable times. This markedly increases the difficulty of successfully planning out farming with an eye to the more distant future, and has the psychological effect of encouraging the farmer to attempt to get the maximum immediate gain from his farm while the "good times" last. This, in its turn, inevitably conduces to the eventual exhaustion of the farm itself.

VI. While the factors mentioned above may, in a sense, be looked upon as peculiar to South African conditions, it cannot be doubted, on the evidence available, that other factors of a more generic character, have also been casual in the production of the Poor White, namely the abuse of alcohol and of an extravagant mode of living.

VII. Certain mental traits become of more especial importance once the impoverishment has taken place:-

- (a) The repugnance to undertake what is called "kaffir work", meaning by this term not merely manual work, but manual work undertaken for another at a wage. With regard to the development of this attitude see II above. As far as the evidence from the Cape is concerned this repugnance is now fast dying away and has in part disappeared under economic pressure, but it is clear that while still in existence it must militate against the "Poor White" making a livelihood, especially where he is an unskilled urban inhabitant.
- (b) The characteristic mentioned under VII (a) is connected with the democratic sentiment existing in South Africa as far as the white population is concerned. With the rise of economic and of social distinctions this sentiment in its original form is dying away to a considerable extent. The cheapness with which coloured unskilled or rural labour can be obtained has had the effect psychologically, of developing a tradition of low wages on the part of the employer, and especially on the part of the rural employer. Although the insight is developing that efficient labour demands a proper wage, the pay given by the rural employer to his white employee is often still very low. Possibly illogically, but nonetheless true psychologically, is the result that the employer now often prefers coloured to white labour on the farms, adducing as reason that he is unwilling to treat a white labourer as he would a coloured, and that he does not desire to pay such low wages as he is willing to offer to a white man.

VIII. Certain further qualities are developed more especially as a consequence of impoverishment:-

- (a) Unwise charity is leading to pauperisation and a loss of self-respect and independence of spirit and is even conducive to developing the habit of depending on charity rather than work

as a means of obtaining a livelihood.

- (b) The state of poverty in itself and the absence, largely as result of lack of training in other than rural occupations, of opportunity to improve his own position, conduces to the development of an attitude of hopelessness and a feeling of inferiority which paralyses the "Poor White" implying, as it does, a loss of self-respect.
- (c) In conjunction with a point mentioned under III, the state of impoverishment itself is conducive to dishonesty where it appears that by dishonest means some increase in the means of livelihood may be obtained. In urban centres of the Transvaal poverty leads to transgression of the "liquor law" and so to what is at any rate statutory crime. Beyond the latter point it has not as yet appeared that there is any marked connection between Poor White-ism and crime either as cause or effect.
- (d) The low wages earned by the poor white conduce to increased reliance on the system of credit in the country, a trait which is inimical to the development of habits of thrift. In addition continued poverty, interrupted by periods (e.g. at the receipt of wages) when there is - apparently - a superfluity of the means of livelihood, is conducive, with some people at least, to improvident expenditure at such periods. Often people following rural occupations and already on the verge of impoverishment, are tempted to use their last possessions in attempting to retrieve their fortunes on the alluvial diamond diggings. Not only does this hope often turn out to be illusory but the whole atmosphere there, being one of extravagance and improvidence, helps to enhance these traits in the persons seeking their refuge there.

Hypothesis relative to the intelligence of the Poor White.-

Apart from the mental traits developed as result of a series of conditions enumerated above it is essential that the hypothesis be also examined that lack of intelligence, even as potential, is one of the factors constituting the inefficiency leading to the impoverishment under discussion.

In the case of the adult poor white there is some evidence to show that many have not or do not attain to more than a relatively poor level of efficiency in the occupation with which they have had most chance to become familiar, viz: rural occupations and that this inefficiency is due not merely to mental traits such as have been treated in the preceding section but rather to what may be termed intelligence as such.

In addition to the directions of work outlined in the original project for the Psychological section of the Research, it is now proposed to apply the American Beta Tests to a sufficient number of poor whites employed in the Railway Service of this country in recent years. Otherwise the Intelligence Survey is being carried out as originally planned. Apart from the fact that considerable advance has already been made in working out test results with a view to determining the extent to which Intelligence runs in families, no report can as yet be made as to the data obtained from the Intelligence Survey up-to-date.

SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING THE STUDY BY THE POOR WHITE COMMISSION

K. L. BUTTERFIELD. 1/4/29

OBJECTIVES OR AIMS:

Which of the following are major aims?

1. To secure a body of facts as full as possible.
2. To interpret these facts in terms of explaining situations and causes.
3. To interpret these facts in terms of remedies.
4. Definite suggestions or recommendations as to direction and method of relief and remedy.

Would it be feasible so to arrange the facts and the interpretations of facts as to indicate clearly and unmistakably the judgment of the Commission as to the lines along which effective remedies may be found, and lines along which effective remedies are likely to be futile? Thus forming the sure basis for a constructive policy without committing the Commission to the details of a program?

DEFINITIONS:

It would seem desirable to formulate fairly soon provisional definitions of terms, of the field, and of the aims, including the term "poor whites" itself. Also the question of

SCOPE OF INQUIRY:

Shall it be as complete and exhaustive as is humanly possible at this stage of the development of the technique and having regard to the relationships to the entire structure and dynamic of South African society? or

Shall it be definitely restricted in scope?

This on account of limitations of funds, of time, and of the availability of the personnel of the Commission.

If limited, it would seem desirable to determine and define quite early the nature and extent as well as the boundaries of the study; and especially to indicate how the matter or relationships to other problems is to be handled.

ANALYSIS OF THE INVESTIGATION:

This study is social in the broad sense. It deals with the reactions of people to the social movements of the time and in turn the effect of the characteristics of the people upon such movements. For the sake of efficiency there should be a division of labour among the participants in the study, though each study should stand on its own feet, be carried on with full freedom, utilize its own technique, and seek to be a contribution to the study of the science of society.

But there should also be a unity in the study and the consciousness of tackling a problem of social control. This implies a careful analysis of the entire problem, the relation of its parts, agreement as to fields of work, co-operation at overlapping points, and co-ordination of all parts into organic study.

It would seem as if out of the material gathered by the Commission, the historical approach, that is the emergence and development of the problem, might well be treated as a unit and preferably be written by one pen.

The natural division of labour is pretty much prescribed by the sections already provided for:

1. Economic
2. Educational
3. Medical
4. Psychological
5. Sociological.

/the.....

The first three sections seem to be more sharply differentiated than the last two. Nearly all of the some 60 questions given in the outline of the psychological section are of immediate interest to the sociological section, and consequently material gathered in each section is vital to the other. Without assuming to indicate all the necessary adjustments among the five sections, there is here ventured a suggestion as to some distinctions in the direction of approach by the psychological and sociological sections.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH: Determining those qualities and capacities in the people that seem to be inherent, or at least that are difficult to trace to a cause, that apparently must be accepted, and that can be measured with some degree of assurance.

Determining those personal qualities and tendencies that seem to have been affected and that may be changed by the physical and social environment.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH: Chiefly in terms of social institutions, but to include

1. Population movements as basic fact.
2. The woman's point of view, interest and influence, with respect to all aspects of the problem.
(Mrs. Rothman).
3. Social Habits (a borderline area)
Play for young.
Recreation for adults (use of leisure)
Travel and communication.
4. The Family.
5. The Church.
6. The Voluntary Association (economic and social)
7. Government; law and administration as affecting the problem.
8. (The School as a social agency is presumably covered in the educational section.)

NOTES ON PROJECTS AS OUTLINED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION.

ECONOMICS SECTION

Some minor queries.

What are the extent and value of economic statistics already made and available?

What are the extent and value of economic studies now found in books, reports, etc?

Is the present study intended, through oral or written questionnaires, to supplement and perhaps correct existing material, or is to be a substitute for it?

Should there not be rather conclusive figures on farm wealth, income, savings, debt?

Might one suggest an analysis of the economic problem as involving something like the following classification of data bearing upon the poor white status?

1. Physiography: Climate - Weather - Soil - Topography.
2. Land Economics: Acquiring land - Tenure or occupancy - Size and use of holdings - Types of farming.
3. Production Technique: Soil fertility, over-cropping, overstocking, over-watering, erosion, etc. - Adaption of stock and crops to land - Quality of stock and crops - Unit yields - Use and conservation of water, irrigation and forestry - Cultivation - Tools and implements - Power.
4. Management: Capitalization - Land prices - Equipment & improvements - Labour - Managerial skill.
5. The Market: Domestic - Foreign - Marketing Methods &c.

/6.....

6. Other Economic Factors: Transport - Credit, Long & short - Tariffs - Industrial labour - Competitive racial labour.
7. Relation of Industrial Development to Markets:
 - Bid for labour
 - Social lure of urban centres.
 Hence, correlation of prospective demand of the market, domestic and foreign, for soil-grown products, and prospective supply from South Africa as affected by national physical resources and human skill as well as by competition from other countries.

Under II of Outline, are (a) & (b) indications of a thesis to be considered or maintained? Is the question of white and black a basic issue? Does the Commission wish to commit itself to the issue as involving a national psychology with respect for example to (1) white domination (2) white leadership (3) white influence with co-operation? Is not a study of the "city proletariat" of significance with respect to likeness or unlikeness of causes affecting the rural poor white and the city as a possible channel of release from poor whiteism; or on the other hand, the city migration as merely transferring the poor white problem from country to city?

EDUCATIONAL SECTION

- B. "Aim" as phase of total purpose of poor white study.
- A. I. To what extent to be treated and to what extent to be treated on basis of existing facts and opinions? To what extent to be treated on basis of new facts and opinions and conclusions therefrom?
- II. "In so far as they effect the poor white" as to
 1. Opportunity
 2. Incentive
 3. Adaptability to peculiar needs if such exist.
- III. - 4 - Adult Education
 - Distinction between schooling received by adults (VII) and education continued beyond schooling of children and youth.

It is a sound principle that provision should eventually be made for facilities and incentives for organized education for all continued beyond the schooling period (primary, secondary, collegiate) and with respect to needs (a) occupational (b) civic (c) cultural? Could the Church take leadership in a scheme of "Continuing Education" by which it is brought to bear upon occupational, civic, and personal problems the sanction of Christian ethics and the dynamic of Christian motivation?

Should not the School itself be central in a scheme of Continuing Education; and should not school, church, and the mechanism of Continuing Education be correlated?

Does the present Extension in agriculture adequately consider and reasonably meet the full needs of the rural people in all areas and of all types of people? - Farm, Home, Children out of school?

5. Vocational guidance

Can this be correlated with "Life needs" (IV.5) and worked into a system of "Life-Planning", by which both incentive to will and understanding of capacity can be brought to bear upon occupation, citizenship and service, personal culture, and become organic in the curriculum of primary school, high school, college;

Could not the Sunday Schools and Young Peoples' Societies of the Church assist in Life Planning by bringing to bear upon youth more especially, but adults as well, the religious and moral aspects of work and life, as integral in education with techniques of knowledge and skills? Here again, as in Continuing Education, could not Church and School co-operate in "Life-Planning" Service for youth?

III.....

- III, IV, V - Comment same as under I.
 Can these be done within time and money limit?
 Can you get sufficient and sufficiently accurate data?
 IV - 7 - Problem of Religious Education as a major topic.
 IX. Purpose? to get opinion?
 10 - When? How studies? definitions - Envision mental factors?

HEALTH SECTION

- In general, are you getting or likely to get all this detail?
3. How determine whether and to what degree certain conditions are caused mainly or largely by food habits?
 Diets of adults equally important.
 6. Is this to be carefully done? A fairly "large order".
- Are following sufficiently provided for in the plan of study:
- (a) Sanitary conditions, in general, as compared with specific diseases mentioned.
 - (b) Physical characteristics, as assets or liabilities, apart from more distinctly medical problems.
 - (c) Sex life and habits as physical and moral factor in problem.
 - (d) Mental disease.
 - (e) Medical and hospital service.
 - (f) Use of drugs, home remedies, "patent" medicines.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SECTION

- I. A. The phrase "different classes or stages of poor whiteism" suggests pretty clear-cut definition of the general term as well as of stages. Also suggests comparison of classes or stages of rural poor whites with urban poor whites, and both with more favourably situated members of the Society".
- B. "Isolation". A relative term, and increasingly so as transport facilities multiply. Psychological "apartness" is perhaps to be more decisive than sheer "isolation", as factor in future differences between rural and urban.
- C. To what extent are medical and physical examinations definitely made of identical groups and of total numbers, as compared with educational, psychological, and sociological exams?
- D. How secure as precise data on (c) as on intelligence?
 "Unfavourable home surroundings" for example, "atmosphere" of home and community as significant.
- E. F. & G. See under A.
- H. Method?
- I. Are (a) and (b) fully secured?
 (c) Is personal behaviour score-card in use?
- Crime - B. Are these data available and accurate?
 Ratio of criminals to population among poor whites and among other groups?
- II. Psychological and Historical.
- A. & B. What are the factors that prevent (a to h) from producing poor whites? Are there common dominators of poor whiteism or those inhibiting it? Add (i) Effects of type of work i.e. insufficient in incentive amount, Variety, speed, especially as contrasted with industrial labour. Effect of self-directed as against supervised labour.

/III.....

III. Adult questionnaire.

- A. Number and competency of those questioned?
To what extent are answers facts or opinions?
- B. (7) & (8) see II. B (1).
(9-10-11-12) Difference between (1) willingness to work with the hands or to do specific manual tasks, and (2) energy, managerial skill, initiative, resourcefulness. Do farming conditions in South Africa permit (2) without demanding (1)?

Is climate a factor?
Is the "servant habit" a factor?
(13) History of opportunities to form "the Habit".
- C. (2) Analysis of psychological results of credit systems.
- D. Relation of morals and morale in "demoralization."
- Add (E). Aspects of opinion as factors in social psychology.

PERSONAL

Why do you like farming?
Why do you not like farming?
Why do you not leave it?

PUBLIC

These as background.
e.g. Source, rationale,
and effects of the
current philosophy of
life and work.

Psychology of the pioneer.
Psychology of the trekker.
Psychology of the open spaces.
Tradition
Custom
Superstitions.
Race
Theology.

SOCIOLOGICAL SECTION.

- IV. Co-operation of Census office? Population movements.
(1) within rural areas (2) from rural to urban or town areas.
- V. & 6. Reaction of Racial, Social, Economic, and Political factors upon personal character. Might be added to psychological section but is important in considering influence of church.
Difficulty of analyzing "character" and tracing its evolution.
Suggest as added questions, such as Travel - Use of idle time - Effects of poor relief - Leadership - Co-operation of school and church - "Grumbling" - Child labour and children's labor.
Suggest importance of studying actual influence of the church upon the persons involved in poor whiteism, and the potential influence of the church in rehabilitating these persons, so far as ideals, hope, etc. are effective therapy and particularly in determining community and national ideals of social progress.
Suggests Mrs. Rothman add to her questions household conveniences - standard of living - divorce - home discipline.

METHOD.

A co-operative analysis of whole problem and of projects.
Agreements as to methods of gathering data, sifting, and checking, as relates to materials of use to more than one investigator.
Mapping areas of material.
Mapping areas of personal work to be done.

General procedure as to checking and evaluating data

Nature.....

Nature and value of Facts	Statistics
Nature and value of <u>Opinions</u>	<u>Personal Interviews</u>
Opinions as facts	<u>Poor Whites</u>
Facts as challenge to opinions	<u>Observers</u>
	<u>Questionnaires</u>
	<u>Printed Views</u>

Method of interpreting material, both by individual and Committee.

Case Studies - Importance of a considerable number of intensive studies.

- (a) Of Individuals
 - Children
 - Adults
- (b) Of Families
- (c) Of Groups or Committees Communities
 - e.g. Oosthuizen's group. -
 - all poor whites in Willowmore.

Use of maps, charts, tables and graphs.

Comparative Studies - Importance of -
e.g. Origin of poor white
e.g. In city or Country
Beer or Briton, etc.

OCCASIONAL INVENTORIES OF PROGRESS OF WORK OF COMMISSION

as to matter	When Dr. Coulter comes.
method	1. Reanalysis of problems
Co-operation & correlation	2. Reappraisal of work done
Major & minor factors	3. Readjustments of work to be done.

SOME GENERAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. Importance of endeavouring to trace the trouble to its roots or seeds.

Is the poor white problem an instance of the inevitable stratification of individuals that comes in all countries when the factory system and a commercial agriculture coincidence to challenge the economic validity of the self-sufficient farm; and further to squeeze the less competent during a period of transition and adjustment? Is it a race between personal efficiency and new economic pressure? Do the experiences of other countries, especially Germany and the United States throw light on these queries?

Or, are there additional factors present in South Africa, different in kind or in degree, that make the problem at least in part specific and unique?

For example, do racial heritage, racial competition, racial fears; climate in its influence on persons; conditions - historical or intrinsic - governing the agricultural industry in South Africa; international economic competitions, and so on, play a major or a minor part in the problem?

These questions are basic in laying foundations for a social self-direction that will tend to a remedy.

Is it feasible to discuss the part to be played by various social forces in solving a problem of this sort?

- e.g. 1. Education
2. Voluntary Organization
 3. Law and public administration
 4. Religion
 5. Community Consciousness
- on behalf of both self-help and mutual service.

/Use.....

USE OF MATERIAL

1. Preservation of Data
 2. Presentation of results, by each investigator.
 3. Availability for use
 - By researchers
 - By Government officials
 - By other students.
 4. General Reports with main conclusions.
 - A. Written by one person, but approval by all the Commission.
 - B. Dignified, but not too long, and not at all abstruse "semi-popular."
Newsletters, for popular information.
 5. Suggestions for further research. For example, into the present structure and future organization of South African Society.
Possibilities of specific and sustained co-operation of universities and of Government in such studies.
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MINUTES OF MEETING OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE
on the POOR WHITE PROBLEM

Held at WILLOWMORE on the 13th. APRIL, 1929
from 10 to 12.30 & 2 to 4.15

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Present:-

Mrs. Rothmann, Rev. Albertyn, Dr. Murray, Dr. Grosskopf,
Dr. Malherbe and Dr. Wilcocks.

- (A) The Committee reviewed the financial situation and found that apart from capital expenditure for a motor car and £150 expended on meetings of the Joint Board, of the Executive Committee and other incidentals, the work of the Committee was costing the Carnegie Fund on an average of little over £200 per month.
- (B) The memorandum from Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones to Dr. Keppel was then read and discussed, special attention being devoted:

- (1) To Dr. Jones' suggestion that "the Governmental relationships to and provisions for the Poor White situation" be made the subject of particular study.

It was held that the work of the Committee as far as education is concerned largely fell under this heading, and that otherwise, generally speaking, it should be carried out by the Sociological Section.

Rev. Albertyn informed the Committee that he had already agreed with Rev. Luckhoff that the latter would, while in the United States, make a special study there of ameliorative measures undertaken by the State and other bodies. He also undertook to prepare an account in conjunction with the Rev. Luckhoff of all such steps undertaken by the Government in South Africa, use being made of certain data being collected, or already collected, by Drs. Grosskopf and Wilcocks. It was decided that a statement, covering this field, form part of the reports of the Committee. It was also pointed out that the Committee in carrying out this work, as at present, was paying considerable attention to individuals effected by such ameliorative measures.

- (2) With reference to the suggestion of Dr. Jones that some of the questions in one (the Psychological) of the questionnaires were "Dangerous in their implication of unfortunate qualities in the Poor White group", it was pointed out that such qualities were in the public opinion and otherwise often ascribed to the Poor Whites. It was, therefore, necessary that the truth, degree of truth, or otherwise, of these imputations be made a definite subject of study.
- (3) The Committee expressed its conviction of the necessity of ensuring unity in the study. It was held that every effort should be made to obtain this, partly by means of the continual contact made possible by the fact that the Members of the Committee largely work together at the same time at the same places, partly by means of specially arranged discussions and partly by arranging the work, as at present, by dovetailing the different lines of work.
- (4) The Committee discussed the possibility and desirability of so instituting its work that its findings could be used as a basis for constructive policy in connection with (2)

/C.....

C. and (3) of the memorandum of Dr. Jones' and in connection with suggestions made by Dr. K.L. Butterfield. (See below)

- (C) The Committee read and discussed the suggestions concerning the Study by the Poor White Commission as drawn up by Dr. K.L. Butterfield.

I. OBJECTIVE OR AIMS:-

The Committee held that the following were its major aims:-

- (a) To secure a body of facts as full as possible.
- (b) To interpret these facts in terms of explaining situations and causes.
- (c) It also held that a part of its duties could profitably consist in formulating its findings in such a way that they indicate on broad lines the direction and nature of remedial measures but "without committing the Commission to the details of a program". In this connection reference should be made to the stipulation under which the allocation was made by the Carnegie Corporation according to which the Research should be a fact finding one. On the other hand the Committee, naturally, in its selection of the facts to be studied was guided by the principle that its attention should be directed to those of practical importance, the knowledge of which would be necessary for "forming the sure basis for a "constructive policy".

II. DEFINITIONS:

From the heuristic point of view the Committee thought it desirable to avoid at the present stage directing its work along the lines of a hard and fast definition of "poor white".

It was held that, naturally, the only scientific procedure would be to give this term a clear-cut meaning when used in the reports to be drawn up. The main inquiry would be directed to the impoverishment of a large section of the rural population and its vicissitudes, first in the countryside and then also in urban and industrial areas. The Committee was finding a considerable degree of difference in many respects between the people involved, and it was held that at the present stage it would be well to work with classificatory concepts, such as "bywoner", various classes of wood cutters, unskilled factory hands who had moved in from the countryside to urban centres, etc. In agreement with its view of its main problem as a movement or a process it was held that an inclusive definition of "poor white", eventually to be drawn up, would have to take the form of a limiting concept.

III. SCOPE OF INQUIRY:

It was held that the present inquiry should be definitely restricted in scope, its nature and extent being defined as under (II) above, and it should form a part of the work of the Committee to formulate further problems arising from the Research and to indicate lines of attack on them.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE INVESTIGATION:

The Committee was convinced of the necessity for co-operation, and was taking steps as indicated under (B) above for its continuance and furtherance. The Committee agreed that "for the sake of efficiency there should be a division of labour among the participants in the study, although each study should stand on its own feet, be carried on with full freedom, utilize its own technique, and seek to be a contribution to the study of the science of society".

It proposed carrying out periodical revisions of the

/methods.....

methods of work and co-operation, and as frequent consultations as possible to ensure the necessary co-ordination.

In the discussion of the question of the historical treatment of the problem a distinction was made between:-

- (a) An historical research involving research work in archives, e.g. on points to be suggested by the Members of the Research Committee, with a view to discovering, if possible, important new facts bearing on question.
- (b) A statement summarising the main facts of South African history bearing on the problem is so far as was already these were already known.

With regard to both these sections it was held that the assistance of historians should be called in as was already being done in the case of Sir George Cory.

The Committee expressed itself in an agreement with the division of work between the Psychological and Sociological Sections of the work as formulated by Dr. Butterfield. It was held that to a considerable extent use would be made of the same facts viewed from different angles.

- (D) The Committee decided that each research worker consider those suggestions of Dr. Butterfield bearing especially on his particular portion of the work, and communicate individually with Dr. Butterfield on any points found desirable before, or at, the next meeting with Dr. Butterfield at the end of May.
- (E) The Committee discussed the "general suggestions" on pages 9 and 10 of Dr. Butterfield's memorandum. It agreed as to the necessity of finding whether there were special factors in South Africa making the problem "at least in part specific and unique".

The Committee held that in the present research it was advisable only to formulate "the part to be played by various social forces in solving a problem of those sort" to the extent indicated in (G) (c) above.

- (F) The Committee agreed that its data be preserved (1)
 - (2) At a previous meeting the Committee had decided that each investigator present the result of his research in the form of a report to be printed, but that a general report be drawn up giving its main findings in a form fitted for general use by the public, Government Departments, or other bodies.

It was suggested provisionally that the Members of the Committee co-operate with regard to the last, but that probably the editing should be left to one of the Members of the Committee.

- (G) The Members of the Committee unanimously expressed their appreciation of the suggestions drawn up by Drs. Jones and Butterfield.

R. W. WILCOCKS

SECRETARY.

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GES	Department of Health
JUS	Department of Justice
PM	Prime Minister's Office
TES	Secretary of the Treasury
UOD	Secretary of Union Education

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