

Notions of racial prestige sometimes differed. On the subject of a proposed European defence force, for instance, a Cherangani soldier-settler advocated conscription while a Kitale counterpart termed the idea "an insult to British prestige".<sup>68</sup>

The politics of race remained a cornerstone of colonial policy in the highlands and in Trans Nzoia district. Europeans were determined to enforce the status quo. In August 1921 an impromptu gathering had discussed the "Indian menace", and resolved that:

Trans Nzoia settlers will not, under any circumstances accept any plausible compromises which allow Indians the right to take up land in the Highlands of Kenya Colony and are determined to resist, by every means in their power, any attempt by the Colonial Office towards this end.

Those present also endorsed similar resolutions passed by their Nairobi counterparts and the Convention of Associations.<sup>69</sup> The settlers demonstrated their resolve in practical terms. Earlier in the year the Commissioner of Lands had raised the question of land sales in Kitale township, following completion of surveys there. Plots had been laid

out on a racially segregated basis with thirty four business sites, two hotel sites and thirty residential sites reserved for Europeans. Non-Europeans were allowed forty business sites and twenty-three residential ones. The Commissioner recommended the immediate gazetting and auction of the plots on this basis.<sup>70</sup> Following postponement of plot sales pending settlement of the Indian Question, the Principal Medical Officer advised Governor Northey that racial segregation in commercial areas was unwarranted because in new townships like Kitale and Nanyuki it would be impracticable to curb residence in commercial zones since commercial buildings would be the only ones erected. Moreover, applications were already being received to subdivide farm land bordering new townships into plots, a notable example being Bahati estate near Kitale. The Medical Officer argued that auctioning commercial plots on a non-racial basis would render such schemes for subdivision redundant.<sup>71</sup>

The acting Colonial Secretary notified the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner that the sale of commercial plots in Kitale "without restriction of race" was a viable option. He sought the opinion of the Trans Nzoia District Committee.<sup>72</sup> This was quickly forthcoming. On 9 December, 1921, the

Trans Nzoia District Committee passed the following resolution:

that this Committee strongly recommends that no Government Commercial or residential plots be auctioned until the Indian Question is finally decided but that the matter be referred to the Farmers' Association for decision.

This decision was unanimously endorsed by the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association on the following day.<sup>73</sup>

It represented an unequivocal expression of racial solidarity which transcended social and economic divisions.<sup>74</sup>

Racial solidarity was an axiom when issues concerned European interests versus those of Indians and Africans. Many settlers in the district, however, continued to contrast their position with the opulence of rich settlers and civil servants who dominated events on the colonial scene. One farmer, Tebbitt, was particularly forthright, comparing "the small farmers" like himself who depended on the land for an income with wealthy politicians like Delamare and Conway Harvey. In his view such people were not really concerned about issues like labour, livestock and a Land Bank which interested ordinary farmers.<sup>75</sup> His was not an isolated opinion. Discussing the

question of East African federation in December, 1927, a Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association meeting felt that this was premature and wanted more emphasis laid on economic issues.<sup>76</sup>

Representatives from the district were acutely conscious of such feelings and attempted to express this in other forums. In 1923 Coney and Angus, president of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association, had petitioned the Governor over local farming problems.<sup>77</sup> The following year, Coney had tabled a motion in the Legislative Council rejecting any form of political federation with neighbouring territories "until this [European] Colony has been consulted."<sup>78</sup> He was still very popular with his constituents, being re-elected in 1924. Delamare was now his mentor, however, the two having served on the 1923 Bowring Committee together.<sup>79</sup> Coney's increasing isolation from events in Plateau North culminated in his leaving the Colony for over a year. On returning from England in 1927 to contest a by-election, he was trounced by Kirkwood, a blunt-spoken farmer and businessman who had convinced voters of his steadfast commitment to their interests.<sup>80</sup>

Agricultural matters continued to be the overriding factor in local politics, with farmers becoming

increasingly strident in their demands. During a maize and wheat conference in August 1928, Pudsey,, representing the Kenya Farmers Association together with Tucker and Griffiths, claimed that 25% of the farmers needed low-interest short term loans.<sup>81</sup> The clamour for a Land Bank, which had died down following the implementation of the Bowring Committee's proposals, was rising again, as farmers began feeling the strain of commercial bank interest rates. Other issues, like labour, were also important. In essence, European interests were irreversibly tied to the land. Developments in European agriculture will be discussed in the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. For a description of early European farming in the Kipkarren Valley, where contemporary conditions were similar to those found in Trans Nzoia, see M. Blundell, So Rough a Wind (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964) pp. 30-34.
  
2. The principle of elective representation had initially been tested by elections to the War Council. See M.F. Hill Planters' Progress: The Story of Coffee in Kenya (Nairobi: Coffee Board of Kenya, 1956), p. 50; For a lucid summary of European political development see G. Bennett "The Development of Political Organizations in Kenya" in Political Studies: The Journal of the Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom, Vol. V, 2, June 1957, pp. 113-130.
  
3. The currency crisis began as a result of a rise in the sterling value of the rupee during 1918 and 1919. On 25 February 1920 the Colonial Office announced the stabilisation of the East African rupee at two shillings. As a result settlers who had borrowed money had their debt increased by about 50% and experienced a rise in other costs. The rupee was replaced by the florin. On 1 January 1922 an East African shilling was introduced at the exchange rate of twenty shillings to the pound. See Hill, Planters Progress, pp. 51, 53-54.

4. M.G. Redley, "The Politics of a Predicament: The White Community in Kenya, 1918-32" (Ph.D. Cambridge University, 1976), pp. 75-76.
5. Ibid., p. 78.
6. Ibid., p. 68.
7. The Leader, 3 September 1921, p. 17.
8. Ibid., 3 August 1921, p. 17.
9. For a comprehensive account of how powerful settlers like Delamare and Grogan tried to influence what route the Uasin Gishu railway would follow, See W. McGregor-Ross, Kenya From Within: A Short Political History (London: Frank Cass, 1968) Chapter XIV.
10. The Leader, 12 November 1921, p. 13.
11. This requirement was a stipulated regulation for Kenya Europeans, See The Leader, 4 March 1922, p. 19.
12. Ibid., 5 November, 1921, p.3.
13. R. Wolff, Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930: The Economics of Colonialism, (Nairobi: Trans Africa Publishers, 1974), p. 84.
14. The Leader, 12 November, 1921, p.13.
15. Ibid., 5 November, 1921, p. 19.

16. Ibid., 3 December, 1921, p. 16 b.
17. Kenya Colony and Protectorate: Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1922, p. 18.
18. The Leader, 3, 12, 1921, p. 15.
19. Ibid., 4 February, 1922, p. 16 d.
20. Ibid., 11 February 1922, p. 4.
21. Ibid., 11 February 1922, p. 4.
22. Department of Agriculture: Annual Report, 1922, p. 11.
23. Ibid., Annual Report, 1921, p. 115.
24. The Leader, 29, October, 1921, p. 12 b.
25. Ibid., 1 April 1922, p. 20.
26. East African Standard, 1 April 1922, p. 20.
27. Ibid.
28. The Kenya Observer,
29. Ibid., 1 January 1923, p. 8.
30. Ibid., 10 February, 1923, p.8.
31. See M.F. Hill, Planters' Progress, p. 57.
32. Economic and Financial Committee: Report and

Proceedings during 1922, p. 1.

33. During 1923, The Kenya Observer frequently published editorials calling on the Government to help maize farmers in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia. See for example, The Kenya Observer, 31 August, 1923 and 20 September, 1923.
34. Economic and Financial Committee, pp. 6-16.
35. Report of Proceedings of the Maize Conference, 24-25 April, 1923 (Nairobi:Department of Agriculture, 1923) pp. 1-2.
36. Out of 368,770 bags of maize exported in 1922, Nyanza Province produced 48%, compared with Nakuru district, 29% and Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia districts, 13%: See The Kenya Observer, 25, April, 1923, p.6.
37. Department of Agriculture: Annual Report, 1923, p. 117. 3
38. Ibid., Annual Report, 1924, pp. 9 and 42.
39. The Kenya Observer, 20 September, 1923, p. 3
40. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1926, p. 11; Attempts by Trans Nzoia District Committee to have the 1927 maize moisture content standard of 12.5% raised to the 1926 standard of 14%, following the rejection of many bags from the district, failed. See East African Standard, 4 September, 1926 and Report of Proceedings of the Fourth Maize

- Conference. (28-29 July, 1926), pp. 16-17.
41. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1927, p.10.
  42. The Kenya Observer, 26. April 1923, p.4; Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1929, p. 15.
  43. See for example, M.A. Buxton, Kenya Days, (London: Edward Arnold, 1928), pp. 80-81.
  44. E. Huxley, No Easy Way (Nairobi: East African Standard, 1957), p. 84.
  45. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1927, pp. 215-216.
  46. Final cost of the branch line was £ 195,000 , an excess of £ 51,000 over the original estimate. Legislative Council Debates, 22 October, 1926, p. 517; East African Standard, 30 October, 1926, p. 7.
  47. The Kenya Observer, 25 April, 1923.
  48. The number of local farmers taking commercial loans increased rapidly from 1924, reflecting rising land values and recovery of producer prices from the postwar slump. See Redley , "The Politics of a Predicament", p. 21.
  49. Legislative Council Debates, 1924, p. 11.
  50. See Hill, Planters' Progress, p.50.

51. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 Extract from the Kenya Daily Mail, 20 April, 1928.
52. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 Deputy Registrar of General Titles to Commissioner of Lands, 11 February, 1924 pp. 1-5.
53. KNA: PC/RVP 2/5/1, Annual Report, 1920, p.1.
54. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 pp. 1-5.
55. Ibid., A.C. Johnston to Commissioner of Lands, Nairobi, 23, January 1928 and Commissioner of Lands to Johnston, 3 April 1928.
56. Ibid., extracts from the Kenya Daily Mail, 20, April 1928 and East African Standard, 8 March 1928.
57. According to the 1933 population returns, there were 417 male British farmers and only 32 European farmers of other nationalities in the district. KNA: PC/RVP 6A/29/2.
58. The Leader, 24 December, 1921, p.6.
59. Ibid., 26 November, 1921, p. 24.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 24 December, 1921, p. 6
62. Ibid., 31 December, 1921, p. 12 a.
63. G. Groen. "The Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-

51. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 Extract from the Kenya Daily Mail, 20 April, 1928.
52. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 Deputy Registrar of General Titles to Commissioner of Lands, 11 February, 1924 pp. 1-5.
53. KNA: PC/RVP 2/5/1, Annual Report, 1920, p.1.
54. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 pp. 1-5.
55. Ibid., A.C. Johnston to Commissioner of Lands, Nairobi, 23, January 1928 and Commissioner of Lands to Johnston, 3 April 1928.
56. Ibid., extracts from the Kenya Daily Mail, 20, April 1928 and East African Standard, 8 March 1928.
57. According to the 1933 population returns, there were 417 male British farmers and only 32 European farmers of other nationalities in the district. KNA: PC/RVP 6A/29/2.
58. The Leader, 24 December, 1921, p.6.
59. Ibid., 26 November, 1921, p. 24.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 24 December, 1921, p. 6
62. Ibid., 31 December, 1921, p. 12 a.
63. G. Groen. "The Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-

- 1969" (Ph.D. Michigan State University, 1968) pp. 169-170. See also G. Groen, "Education as a means of promoting Afrikaner Nationalism in Kenya" in B.A. Ogot, ed., Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974).
64. Legislative Council Debates, 1924, p. 150.
65. Speech in Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on European Education (Nairobi: Department of Education, 1925) p. 7.
66. The Kenya Observer, 14 July 1923, p. 5.
67. Ibid., 17 July, 1923, p.5.
68. East African Standard, 25 September, 1926, pp. 37 and 40.
69. The Leader, 3 September, 1921, p. 17.
70. KNA: Lands BN 19/21 Commissioner of Lands to Acting Colonial Secretary, 26 April, 1921.
71. Ibid., acting Colonial Secretary to DC, Trans Nzoia, 15 November, 1921, p. 1.
72. Ibid., p. 2.
73. Ibid., Chairman, Trans Nzoia District Committee to Colonial Secretary, 13 December 1921.
74. According to the Return of Licences issued

at Kitale under the 1919 Traders Licensing Ordinance, in 1925, out of 26 licencees, 16 were Europeans. The remaining ten were Indians, Goans and Arabs. See The Official Gazette, 2 September 1925, p. 844.

75. East African Standard, 25 September, 1926, p. 39.
76. Ibid., 31 December, 1927, p. 19.
77. The Leader, 1 January 1923, p. 8.
78. Legislative Council Debates, 1924, p. 100.
79. G. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History, the Colonial Period (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 58; Redley "The Politics of a Predicament" pp. 137-138.
80. KNA: Lands BN 19/21 acting Commissioner for Lands to Acting Colonial Secretary, 16 June, 1927; East African Standard, 26 January 1927, p. 28 D.
81. Proceedings of the Fourth Maize Conference and First Wheat Conference, 1928, p. 15.

CHAPTER FOUR

EUROPEAN FARMING, 1930 - 1946

The original goals of European settlement remained elusive by the late 1920s. Throughout the Highlands, mortgages and bank overdrafts had reached alarming levels. Many European farmers used borrowed money to meet ordinary living expenses rather than investing in farm improvements. Few had any savings to fall back on in the event of crop failure and there was a marked shortage of efficient farm managers.<sup>1</sup> Most of these settlers were essentially single crop farmers and the Trans Nzoia district was notable in this respect. Trans Nzoia settlers had originally petitioned Governor Northey over the issue of farm credits in 1921. High<sup>2</sup> producer prices and cheap labour temporarily eased their anxieties but the fundamental problem remained. This was apparently the situation in other settled districts, prompting the 1929 Agricultural Commission to identify "a pressing need" for agricultural loans.<sup>3</sup>

Economic issues came to the fore in local European circles. By 1930 the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association had decentralised itself into branches, each with a chairman and secretary. Each branch was represented on the central Committee by two delegates. According to Elmer, Secretary of the Association, the change was effected "in order to avoid large unwieldy meetings, where farming is often ignored, and to encourage farmers to debate on farming topics." Indeed, an increasing number of settlers were

interested in technical questions like the manuring of coffee and combating coffee berry disease which was on the increase in Trans Nzoia, Sotik, Kericho, Kaimosi and Turbo.<sup>4</sup>

The plummet of producer prices on the export market underlined the importance of economic issues. One old settler recalls the price of maize dropping to shs. 3/- per bag in 1931.<sup>5</sup> As the main crop of the district,<sup>6</sup> this was a calamity and lorry transporters were forced to reduce freight rates to five or six cents per bag per mile for the haul into Kitale.<sup>7</sup> Internal prices remained higher than on the export market, with the Kenya Farmers Association quoting an average return of sh. 6/19 per 200 lb bag of maize and sh. 9/27 per 200 lb bag of wheat for the 1931 season.

European membership of the Kenya Farmers Association had grown to comprise over ninety per cent of the wheat farmers in Kenya Colony. By 1932 this association had ventured into the cooperative purchase of inputs, especially seeds and fertilizer. These inputs were supplied to farmers at cost.<sup>9</sup> The association maintained a high profile in Trans Nzoia. At a Kenya Farmers' Association general meeting held in Kitale 7 November 1933, for example, farmers were lectured on maize grading procedures at Mombasa and encouraged to improve the quality of their maize.<sup>10</sup>

Settlers in the district had quickly identified advantages to be accrued from manipulation of the internal maize market. The Trans Nzoia Farmers Association unsuccessfully sought direct European producer control during the 1931-1932 season.<sup>11</sup> Such control was, however, exerted with a varying degree of success by the Kenya Farmers Association which tried to maintain high internal prices by increasing exports of African grown produce. The associations pool price for the 1934 maize crop was declared at sh.5/68 per bag f.o.r. main line, mainly due to sales on the Canadian market at a price above export parity.<sup>12</sup> While the payout by the association for the 1935-1936 crop was only sh. 4/42 per bag, f.o.r. growers station, deliberate effort was made to forestall a further depression of internal prices by consigning 58,700 bags of African - grown maize for grading at Mombasa.<sup>13</sup> The maize payout by the Kenya Farmers' Association for the 1936-1937 season was shs. 7/20 per bag, reflecting a slight recovery in the producer price.<sup>14</sup> During 1937 no maize originating from African reserves was exported because of high demand on the local market.<sup>15</sup>

The continuation of maize marketing throughout the depression years was significant with regard to Trans Nzoia because of the importance / of this particular crop to farmers in the district. During the 1933-1934 season, local settlers planted 47,021 acres of maize, compared with 34,328 acres for Nakuru and 20,368 acres for Uasin Gishu.<sup>16</sup>

It had therefore become the principal European maize district. The gross output of maize, coffee, wheat, barley and oats produced in Trans Nzoia in 1934 totalled 37,640 tons, compared with 57,017 tons from other European districts.<sup>17</sup>

Adverse economic conditions had re-kindled interest in mixed farming. W.D.D. Jardine, a livestock officer, had addressed the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association on this matter in 1930. Warning those present that erecting fences to isolate land free of ticks was a prerequisite for eliminating East Coast Fever, he argued that beef farming was a waste of fertile arable land. In his opinion, dairy cattle were a better proposition and farmers should aim at slowly building up small, high quality herds.<sup>18</sup> Most farming in the district was, however, still based on one or two crops with dairy farming being of an "elementary and extensive type."<sup>19</sup> Besides the absence of skills and technology, this emphasis on a few crops was a result of proven returns on a minimal investment. Coffee, for example, was fetching relatively high prices and enjoyed increasing popularity.<sup>20</sup> In the words of Megson, the Land Bank Inspector for Trans Nzoia, "the outstanding lesson of 1934 is that with economical and good farming, maize can be grown as a successful and profitable crop at a price anywhere above sh. 6/50 per bag."<sup>21</sup> Few farmers showed much inclination to experiment with new crops apart from some Europeans who introduced pyrethrum cultivation on the slopes of Mount Elgon in 1934.<sup>22</sup>

One consequence of maize monoculture which was becoming increasingly evident by the early 1930s was destruction of the soil structure, leading to soil erosion. As one shrewd observer noted, this particular problem would worsen with time, particularly in those parts of the district with a sandy loam soil.<sup>23</sup> Megson himself was forced to concede in 1935 that soil erosion had reached alarming proportions.<sup>24</sup>

Over the years many settlers had mined the soil by planting an annual maize crop on the same piece of land, without a fallow period. As yields declined, more land was cleared of bush and brought under the plough and the same process was repeated. Following the onset of economic depression many settlers were left with few options beyond continuing with these rudimentary farming methods or simply abandoning the land altogether. Their predicament is illustrated by the case of F.H. Chappell, who had been farming near Kiminini in South-Western Trans Nzoia for five years by 1932, growing maize and some coffee. In that year he applied for a Land Bank loan of £1000, disclosing no outstanding debt beyond what was already covered by his last maize deliveries. His total expenses for the preceding year amounted to £230 and he was anticipating a harvest of 2500 bags of maize. The evaluator, H.C. Kirk, described Chappell as a hard working farmer who could eventually

prosper.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of this endorsement the Trans Nzoia Agricultural Advances Board concluded that the applicant seemed to own a sufficient number of plough oxen and implements to continue farming and therefore qualified for the loan.<sup>26</sup>

Most of Chappell's arable land lay fallow and he needed the money urgently to complete buying his farm from the Barberton s, who were pre-war settlers. The Land Bank loan of one thousand pounds went towards clearing this commitment and Chappell's land remained mortgaged.<sup>27</sup>

By 1946 he was still heavily indebted to the Bank and wanted to sell upto 250 acres of land to another European, Mills, for £750 to reduce the mortgage.<sup>28</sup> Chappell's diligence notwithstanding, therefore, he was evidently unable to make a financial success out of commercial farming.

Chappell's financial problems predated the economic depression and became more protracted following the decline of producer prices but the pertinent point is that money loaned by the Land Bank went towards keeping him on the land rather than streamlining his farming operations. This also applied in the case of another European, Alfred Boy, who farmed near Endebess. Boy applied for a one thousand pound loan from the land Bank in 1933. He became a mortgagee but by 1943 remained mired in debt and was trying to discharge the mortgage by selling part

of his farm.<sup>29</sup>

Other settlers found conditions too tough and gave up farming. For some, this meant leaving the district without expecting to return in the foreseeable future. Among these was George Davidson who had secured an eight hundred pound Land Bank loan in 1932. He subsequently abandoned <sup>his</sup> farm, apparently weary of continuous hardship, and died intestate in England in 1939.<sup>30</sup> Many Europeans sought temporary diversions from farming, primarily as a means of earning some money. A considerable number of local settlers, for example, left the district to participate in the Kakamega gold rush, which they hoped would be a source of instant wealth.<sup>31</sup> Captain Vaughan - Philpott was among them, leaving for Kakamega in 1932 after obtaining a fifty pound loan from a commercial bank, as his working capital. He enjoyed a measure of success in a joint mining venture with other Trans Nzoia settlers, called the Hell-fire syndicate.<sup>32</sup> Another group of farmers from Trans Nzoia, Messrs Ross, Foster and Mangan, enjoyed even more spectacular success and formed the goldmining firm, Rostermans.<sup>33</sup> For most participants in the gold rush, however, prospecting did not prove to be an Eldorado, providing a subsistence income at best. During years of severe economic recession, any form of employment which offered an alternative to destitution was attractive. Herein lay the significance of the Kakamega gold rush to European settlement in Kenya.<sup>34</sup>

In 1933 which was a peak mining year, an average of between four hundred and five hundred Europeans worked in the gold fields monthly.<sup>35</sup>

The shortage of hard cash during this period meant that those settlers remaining in Trans Nzoia often experienced a reversion to subsistence living with money being spent on only the bare essentials. One settler called Cripps, for example, was reputed to have made a return journey of almost thirty miles on foot in pursuit of a six shilling debt. The Barbertons, who farmed on the slopes of Mount Elgon, supplemented their meagre income by digging out bat guano from caves on the mountain and selling this to coffee farmers for sixty shillings per ton.<sup>36</sup>

The total European population in the district declined from 1141 in 1933 to 970 in 1938.<sup>37</sup> While this was not remarkable, settler farming was undoubtedly affected, both within Trans Nzoia and in other European districts.

Government policy which subscribed to the notion that the settlers were "an asset which the Colony cannot afford to lose"<sup>38</sup> meant that saving them was paramount. By June 1934, outstanding agricultural loans amounted to £106,450.<sup>39</sup>

The Land Bank's loan capital was increased to £500,000 in 1933,<sup>40</sup> and almost forty per cent of the money from mortgages registered by the Bank went towards discharging existing mortgages.<sup>41</sup>

Under these circumstances, Trans Nzoia settlers formed part of a dispersed European rural population whose problems were a major preoccupation of the Colonial Government. Events within the district frequently appeared more urgent to local farmers than abstract debates on European predominance within the colony, however. The reason for this was the social, political and economic conditions in situ, which influenced their outlook. They had endorsed the concept of a district council as early as 1928, for instance, but its implementation was delayed by the insistence of many settlers on the Government guaranteeing to continue making annual road grants for maintaining the local road network.

Following the settlement of this issue, an interim council was constituted and its first meeting was convened in Kitale on 25 February 1930 under the chairmanship of a farmer from Kiminini called Thompson.<sup>42</sup> The Trans Nzoia District Council quickly recommended the appointments of Messrs Carter, Marshall and Corrie. These were gazetted in due course.<sup>43</sup>

The District Council and the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association were the two main elected bodies in the district, with their activities frequently overlapping. In March 1932, for example, the councillors proposed that "in the event of new legislation being introduced, local option should include a limitation on squatters cattle."<sup>44</sup> An earlier recommendation made by the Trans Nzoia Farmers

Association executive was that as a temporary solution, a maximum of ten cattle be allowed per newly attested squatter. An upper limit of thirty cattle per squatter was set.<sup>45</sup>

Almost a year later the debate raged on, with the Association proposing that a squatter's stay in the district be limited to one month after expiry of contract.<sup>46</sup> In another executive meeting held at Kiminini on 4 April 1938 under the Chairmanship of Captain Elmer, the problem was reviewed and the Trans Nzoia District Council proposals were discussed. It was finally agreed that a postal ballot be taken before submitting proposals to the government, since some farmers were opponents of livestock restrictions.<sup>47</sup>

The squatter issue involved the high cattle population in the district, of which 40,000 to 50,000 were believed to be susceptible to rinderpest.<sup>48</sup> While a growing number of farmers favoured the imposition of restrictions, others thought these unnecessary, and very sharp differences arose over what policy to adopt. A significant case involved Oswald Bentley, a settler who had permitted Jama Noor, a Somali, to graze one hundred cattle on uncultivated farmland near Kitale. The District Commissioner subsequently threatened legal action against Bentley under section 39 of the Crown Lands Ordinance cap 140, for permitting non-European occupation. Bentley protested to the Commissioner for Lands. The Solicitor General had previously advised, in similar cases, that grazing

agreements, as opposed to sub-letting of land, did breach the Crown Lands Ordinance. This precedent notwithstanding, the acting Commissioner for Lands advised the Colonial Secretary that normal procedure involved the advertisement of tender rights for grazing facilities on vacant Crown Land. In the Highlands this would be racially restricted. In practice, grazing rights were granted by Provincial Commissioners under paragraph 4 of circular number one of 1931. These grants were made to Europeans who required additional pasture. Bently, therefore, had contravened this policy.<sup>49</sup>

Another case involved Idu Wasamu, widow of Hurreh Hassan, a sargeant in the Kings African Rifles. She had complained to the Commissioner of Lands over an eviction order issued to her while residing in the Somali location. Her claim to be legally grazing twenty cattle in the Township Reserve was disputed by the District Commissioner. Observing that the maximum number of cattle allowed in each boma was twenty, he alleged that this rule was being flagrantly flouted. An average of thirty to sixty cattle were being kept in each Somali boma and he had decided to enforce the Control of Stock Rules. Asserting that 180 cattle were enough to meet Somali milk requirements, the District Commissioner claimed that Idu Wasamu did not have any boma and so her cattle were among the excess stock removed.<sup>50</sup>

The issue of Somali livestock had drawn the attention of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association in 1930, when it complained about unfair competition from Somali traders. According to the Association, European dairy farmers were being undercut by the Somali, who, for a small fee, had access to grazing rights on 15000 acres around Kitale.<sup>51</sup> In a meeting on 19 November 1930, the Trans Nzoia District Council expressed concern and sought further information from the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association on the subject of Somali Stock on Crown Land.<sup>52</sup>

Settlers in the district were not oblivious to issues involving their relationship with the colonial government and other European districts. Indeed, unlike questions concerning local farming problems and district administration which were often discussed at length by representatives from various parts of the district during local government meetings and in farmers forums, colonial questions were frequently dealt with on an ad hoc basis in public meetings. One such well attended meeting was convened on 6 September 1935 by Kirkwood, the member of Legislative Council for Plateau North. Those present elected Messrs Keyser, Tyack and Bentley as delegates to the forthcoming session of the Convention of Association. A subscription was taken to cover their expenses, with a unanimous resolution being passed that they express the districts' demand for a reduction in

Government expenditure and lower interest rates on loans.<sup>53</sup>

Another crowded meeting was held on 20 September at the Kitale hotel cinema under the chairmanship of Mr. Swain, to receive the delegates report. The settlers first endorsed the rules of the Trans Nzoia District Association which replaced the defunct Trans Nzoia Farmers Association. They agreed that the new association be affiliated to the Convention of Associations and the subscription was fixed at five shillings, with a minimum of one shilling entitling any European to become a member. Following the delegates report, the meeting pledged to support the Vigilance Committee in any action it took to safeguard the settlers' interests. Governor Byrne's apparent lack of sympathy for the settlers plight was roundly criticised. When the meeting ended, many farmers had joined the Trans Nzoia District Association, reflecting renewed interest in colonial politics following a period of apathy which had led to the demise of its predecessor.<sup>54</sup>

This interest was sustained, as was made clear in January 1936 when a public meeting chaired by Major B.H. Hill heatedly, debated the issue of farm rents. No communication had been received from the Vigilance Committee on the matter but it was evident that local farmers were keen on taking unilateral action. One of them, O.R. Arnell, read a letter he had drafted requesting a remission of farm rents pending

an improvement in producer prices. His suggestion that all farmers send a copy to the Government was, however, strongly opposed by M. Bentley. The unexpected arrival of a document from the Vigilance Committee immediately diverted everyone's attention and the meeting went in camera to discuss its contents. That same afternoon, copies of the letter concerning farmers inability to pay farm rent were posted for signatures. European professionals and businessmen working in Kitale held a meeting the following morning and decided to petition the government over the need for more time to be allowed for paying trading licences.<sup>55</sup>

Governor Byrne had made a fact finding tour of the district in 1935.<sup>56</sup> In 1932 he had acknowledged that there was little likelihood of recovering the money advanced to insolvent farmers in the Colony in the near future.<sup>57</sup> His Government continued to support European maize growers at the expense of African peasant farmers, as J.B. Pandya succinctly put it during debate on the Economic Development Committee Report.<sup>58</sup> Equally significant was the continued subsidy of European local government, with the six district councils levying no rates, except for nominal subscriptions to maintain European hospitals in Eldoret and Kitale. Basic road grants made to the European Councils in 1935 totalled £31,070. In stark contrast, Local Native Councils contributed £8,128 raised from local rates for the upkeep

of roads in their areas of jurisdiction.<sup>59</sup>

Differences between the Colonial Government and the settlers involved specific questions, therefore, rather than the principle of European predominance. This contention is borne out in a different context. When Sir Francis Scott, the de facto European leader, moved a motion in the Legislative Council demanding that all vacancies in the colonial civil service be reserved for the offspring of Europeans resident in Kenya Colony, he was not acting on sheer impulse. The motion was informed by the premise that European colonists would eventually be granted self-government, something which neither the Colonial Secretariat nor Indian leaders were willing to concede as inevitable. For this reason the motion was defeated by twenty-four votes to thirteen after Indian and official members joined forces to defeat it.<sup>60</sup> A further reflection of the outlook of European settler leaders and their sympathisers was articulated in a unanimous resolution passed by Rift Valley district commissioners in Nakuru in 1937. This called for the reservation of Crown Land for sons of settlers and the provision of agricultural training facilities for them. The expressed intention was to avoid "a poor white population."<sup>61</sup>

In Trans Nzoia, the social and political factors influencing ideas on closer settlement underlined subtle differences between local settlers and the colonial government, as well as divisions within the European community itself. The availability of unsold Crown Land ,

in addition to private land which was undeveloped, had spurred debate over closer settlement. The Colonial Government wanted to dispose of land allocated for European settlement and the Commissioner for Lands suggested that this could be implemented in Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu and along the Aberdare slopes, on the basis of smallholdings.<sup>62</sup> Europeans in Trans Nzoia showed considerable interest in these proposals.<sup>63</sup>

There were several large blocks of land in the district and Booth, the district agricultural officer, reported that this could be surveyed as follows:

- 1) Block A: 6500 acres bordering the Pokot reserve, to be divided into five 750 acre farms.
- 2) Block B: 8000 acres North-West<sup>of</sup> Kitale along the Kaitobas river, to be divided into five 500 to 600 acre farms for maize, wheat and coffee.
- 3) Block C: already alienated.
- 4) Block D: 6000 acres at the foot of the Cherangani hills, to be divided into twelve 500 acre farms.
- 5) 4,378 acres South of Kitale to be divided into eight 500 acre farms for maize, coffee and wheat.
- 6) Blocks E and F to be allocated on the basis of a report on Kitale Township land.<sup>64</sup>

When this scheme was submitted to the Kenya Advisory Committee, it resolved that fifty 20 acre farms be selected around Kitale and auctioned as sub-township holdings. The motive was to provide residential and agricultural land without draining trade licence revenue from Kitale township. The Committee was of the opinion that this sort of scheme was unsuitable for the yeoman farmer, arguing that water supplies would have to be laid on at the new settlers' expense. The remaining 6000 acres in the vicinity could be surveyed into 200 acre farms, including one demonstration farm. Ten of these farms could then be allocated to local applicants, to provide working examples for new arrivals from overseas. On completion of land surveys around Kitale, the rest of the unalienated Crown Land could be surveyed for closer settlement.<sup>65</sup>

The Government subsequently gave tentative approval to a scheme incorporating an "A" component for small holdings and a "B" section for larger farms. A Trans Nzoia Farmers Association meeting held in Kitale on 19 December 1927 had resolved to back the "B" scheme but rejected the "A" scheme unequivocally.<sup>66</sup> When the government refused to revise its original proposals, another meeting of the association convened during mid-1928 requested that the scheme be proceeded with cautiously until the initial settlers' success was ensured.<sup>67</sup> These sentiments were also articulated by

by Colonel Kirkwood in the Legislative Council. While acknowledging that the district would benefit from an influx of new settlers<sup>68</sup>, he felt that they should buy large farms from the government.<sup>69</sup>

Following a stormy Legislative Council debate on closer settlement, the Kenya Advisory Committee continued to promote its original proposals on the "A" scheme. In addition the Council suggested that offers from Trans Nzoia farmers willing to take on farm pupils from Britain should be forwarded to the East Africa Office in London.<sup>70</sup>

This position failed to impress informed opinion in Trans Nzoia, as was apparent during a Trans Nzoia District Council meeting on 14 January 1930, also attended by Mr. Gilbert, the Surveyor General. The councillors rejected the "A" scheme as unworkable and wanted this reduced to five farms, with three being reserved for overseas applicants. Two hundred acres, of which only one hundred acres might be arable, was deemed inadequate, unless the soil was suitable for coffee - which was still on experimental crop and expensive to bring into bearing. Livestock were unprofitable if water was paid for at township rates. Other crops required large areas and small farmers could not supplement their income by working as artisans or mechanics due to stiff Indian competition.

As an alternative, the Trans Nzoia councillors wanted the twenty farms allocated to scheme "A" to be included in Scheme "C", for which no provision had been made in Trans Nzoia. Pensioners from Services throughout the Empire should be attracted because they had fixed incomes, experience in public affairs, leisure time and were probably raising young families. This background would ostensibly make them dedicated colonists. The councillors suggested that the balance of land be allocated to scheme "B", which they felt had the best chance of success, provided good farmers rather than artisans or small speculators, were selected. Moreover they felt that financial benefits of the government scheme for Crown Land could be extended to approved buyers of private land.<sup>71</sup>

The suggestion that farm acreages be increased under the scheme was supported by Holm, the Director of Agriculture, and Conway Harvey, an outspoken European leader, during an Advisory Committee meeting held in Nairobi on 26 February 1930. Both men justified their position as warranted by adverse economic conditions which made small holdings unviable.<sup>72</sup>

In 1930 the honorary Secretary of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association informed the Commissioner for Lands that he had received numerous requests for details of the proposed government settlement scheme. The association

had subsequently formed a Committee to assist pupil-settlers and promote closer settlement. Claiming that letters had been received from South Africa, Austria, Belgian Congo (now Zaire) and England, the honorary secretary expressed his associations' desire for a definitive government policy on European settlement. In addition, because many prospective settlers would lack working capital and commercial interest rates were very high at 8% or 9%, a Land Bank would enable them to secure soft loans.<sup>73</sup>

These remarks won tentative endorsement from the Commissioner for Lands, who sent a copy of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association letter to the East African Trade Information Office. In effect the Commissioner reiterated Government support for the principle of closer settlement.<sup>74</sup>

Vaughan - Philpott, the honorary Secretary of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association, was more specific about the type of settlers the association had in mind in a subsequent letter. His suggestion that retired civil servants and army officer could be settled on plots near Kitale ranging from ten to fifty acres<sup>75</sup> was, however, rejected by the Commissioner for Lands. The latter pointedly observed that no Government financial assistance would be forthcoming and emphasised that water supply, land prices, location of plots and communications were among many technical factors requiring serious consideration.<sup>76</sup>

Swain, the chairman of Trans Nzoia District Council Settlement Committee and Kirkwood, the local member of Legislative Council, had discussed the matter with Governor Byrne on 3 February 1932. Later that year the Settlement Committee convened a meeting to review various proposals. Those present, who included the District Commissioner and representatives from Trans Nzoia District Council and the Kitale Chamber of Commerce, resolved that Crown Land West and South West of Kitale be surveyed into plots ranging from twenty to fifty acres. While acknowledging that no Government financial support could be expected, the participants were so enthusiastic that they included the local airfield and race course as future sites for settlement. The problem of inadequate infrastructure was dismissed as secondary to the question of further land surveys and a buoyant land market.<sup>77</sup>

Over the years ideas about the scheme had varied from sales of large farms to the provision of plots near Kitale township. Central to the debate was the question of what type of farming was most viable. Initially, European leaders in the district had championed the concept of sizeable farms on the grounds that extensive mono-crop farming of the type already common in Trans Nzoia was the most viable option. Such a scheme would involve considerable capital investment on the part of purchasers, however,

besides limiting the number of farms available. Government assistance in the form of subsidised land sales and cheap credit would be a vital prerequisite. By the onset of economic depression, it was becoming increasingly clear that such assistance would not be forthcoming and emphasis shifted to what sort of settler would be willing to come out on their own resources. The British middle classes were identified as a main target group, as they had been during planning of the 1919 ex-soldier settlement scheme. When worsening economic conditions led to a crisis for European farmers in the Highlands, the proposed scheme was shelved.

The ideas about boosting the numbers of European settlers were still mooted in certain circles, however. The scheme was briefly resurrected in 1936 following its approval by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Small holdings of five to thirty acres were to be allotted to retired Indian Army officers wishing to settle in Kenya, near Nairobi, Thomsons Falls, Kitale and other suitable grants. The colonial government proposed to offer free grants, subject to normal rents and specified conditions for development and occupation.<sup>78</sup> No further Government assisted European settlement was to be implemented in Trans Nzoia, however, until 1946, when a large western section up to the Kamukuywa river was allocated for post war settlement.<sup>79</sup>

Closer settlement in the district became a major issue because there were large acreages of unoccupied and unutilised land. The reason for this were fundamental to the European agricultural economy. There were still considerable areas of unsold Crown Land including 12000 acres within six miles of Kitale, but, in fact, it was often difficult to differentiate between private farms and unsold Government land precisely because the latter remained undeveloped. In certain cases, when the occupiers failed to pay rent instalments, the Government took action. J.C. Connan for example, had taken up a 2090 acre farm (L O 2194) near Kiminini in December 1926. Following his repeated failure to pay annual rent, the acting Commissioner for Lands sued for recovery of the farm and a supreme court order was issued to this effect on 18 November 1932.<sup>80</sup>

A number of land owners were not in actual occupation. This situation was exemplified by the case of Captain Coney, the former Member of Legislative Council for Plateau North. The land, registered as LO 3631, had originally been granted to the Finch - Hatton Syndicate. Ownership was subsequently transferred to Coney. The original grant stipulated that improvements to the value of 15,640 shillings be effected before 30 June 1928. In October 1927, Coney, who was now living in England, applied for an extension

of the development period upto 31 December 1929, ostensibly because illness prevented him from returning to Kenya immediately. This request was <sup>subsequently</sup> granted by the Commissioner for Lands.<sup>81</sup>

Coney did not return to Kenya and on 17 June 1929 he wrote to the Commissioner for Lands from London, admitting failure to fulfill development conditions. He sought another extension upto 31 December 1931, promising to travel to Kenya in early 1931 to develop the farm.<sup>82</sup> His excuses did not convince the Land Advisory Board which met on 16 August 1929 and rejected the application.<sup>83</sup> The Commissioner for Lands approved this decision and duly advised Coney of his action.<sup>84</sup>

The land in question had been allocated under the 1919 ex-soldier settlement scheme and was still registered under the names of Finch-Hatton and other members of the syndicate to which the original grant had been made.<sup>85</sup> A number of other allottees under the scheme had also failed to occupy their farms. A.C.A. Thackwell was among them. In 1937 he had only recently retired from the Indian Army with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. On taking up the farm, L.O. 2034, he found it waterless and applied for a boundary alteration to allow access to water on adjacent Crown Land. He pledged to surrender an equal acreage in exchange<sup>86</sup> and the application was endorsed by the Trans

Nzoia District Committee.<sup>87</sup> On the strength of this recommendation, the Commissioner for Lands approved the proposed land exchange provided Thackwell surrendered 600 acres on the south side of his farm for an equivalent acreage of Crown Land on LO 2033. Cost of survey would be shared between Thackwell and the Government while cost of deeds, registration and other procedures of transfer were to be borne by Thackwell. The Commissioner for Lands had earlier suggested that Thackwell purchase LO 2033 but the latter declined, claiming that only a small portion of its 3149 acres was arable.<sup>88</sup> Of more significance was the fact that LO 2034 had never been farmed since the grant was made and land rent was in arrears to date. Non-cultivation of the land was cited by H.C. Kirk, acting on Thackwell's behalf, as sufficient reason for the Government to remit rent on the portion of LO 2034 being surrendered.<sup>89</sup> The Commissioner for Lands disagreed with this view, instructing the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner to claim rent upto the date of exchange, from which time rent on land added to LO 2084 would become due.<sup>90</sup>

No land had been cultivated, as R. Tough, Thackwell's farm manager, acknowledged.<sup>91</sup> This was not an isolated case. A neighbouring settler, Manley, who owned farm LO 2036, had submitted a similar request. He wanted access to water on LO 2035 and the District surveyor recommended that this application be accepted.<sup>92</sup> This endorsement

had no basis in proven farming capability, however, since development had not gone beyond the ploughing of between 100 and 150 acres of land. In fact, the land was being utilised by twenty squatters with large herds of cattle.<sup>53</sup>

Another absentee landowner was G. Hancock of Bedford in England, who wanted to form a limited liability company to take over his Green Hill farm, LO 5341, which consisted of 831 acres near Hoey's Bridge. The Commissioner of Lands duly informed him that the transfer could be done under the Registration of Titles Ordinance if he completed and signed a form to be attested by a law officer in England. The necessary transfer fees could then be forwarded to the Registrar of Titles in Nairobi.<sup>94</sup>

A significant sign of the large expanses of surplus land were speculative applications from various farmers intent on increasing the sizes of their holdings. A.C. Hoey, for example, applied for LO 2201 totalling 1365 acres along the Suwerwa river in Cherangani, claiming that the land adjoined the western boundary of a dairy farm he was developing. While he allegedly required more pasture, his extensive holdings in the vicinity included LO 3019, LO 3048 and LO 2213, totalling 4359 acres. Hoey had sold another farm, LO 3020, to a settler called I. Mackinnon. The farms had been rejected by the original soldier settler allottees and Hoey apparently had purchased

them cheaply. He claimed to have spent over £9000 on developments, besides installing a power and water unit worth over £3000 on the Suwerwa river. Besides fencing and Paddocking over 1000 acres, he kept 400 grade stock and had ordered a pedigree bull from America.<sup>95</sup> For all intents and purposes he was portraying himself as a progressive dairy farmer in a district where herds of indigenous livestock kept by many settlers were often secondary to maize or other crop farming.<sup>96</sup>

Arguing that besides additional grazing his grade cattle required protection against undipped squatter cattle carrying East Coast Fever, Hoey promised to fence the western and southern boundaries of the land if it was sold to him cheaply. In effect he wanted the land sold to him at his price and this was complied with by the government, which accepted his quotation of Shs. 20,925/- for the farm.<sup>97</sup>

Hoey also applied for land in partnership with R. Ferguson, under the name of the Hoey's Bridge Sisal Syndicate. The application was for a direct grant and this was eventually recommended by the Advisory Land Board and approved by the Governor - in - Council. The land was a portion of LO 1802 A, totalling 1400 acres and was allotted at a stand premium of twenty shillings per acre<sup>98</sup> at an annual rent of twenty cents per acre.<sup>99</sup>

Another speculative application came from H. Brian Bates of Longlea Estate, Kitale. Bates wanted one or two

thousand acres of well watered grazing land and enquired whether any Crown Land was up for sale.<sup>100</sup> He was advised that direct grants were no longer being made.<sup>101</sup> Unperturbed, he argued that he wanted "to go in for cattle" by building up an indigenous herd and proposed that LR 2162 which was Crown Land near his farm would be ideal for this purpose. Since purchasing a 1064 acre farm in partnership with W.E. Nops in 1928, 200 acres of maize and 100 acres of tung had been planted. In his view such effort warranted access to more land.<sup>102</sup>

Major Keyser, a well known politician in the district had also applied for part of LR 2162, besides LR 2160. The Crown Land Valuation Board, meeting on 29 March 1938, had valued LR 2160, consisting of 2940 acres, at shs. 7/- per acre stand premium.<sup>103</sup> The Trans Nzoia District Council recommended both Keyser's and Bate's applications<sup>104</sup> but the District Land Board opposed this decision on the grounds that Keyser already owned huge tracts of land and so granting him an additional 1719 acres at shs 7/- per acre was uncalled for. Bates application for 2000 acres was stood over until Bouwer, a Board Member, visited the locality.<sup>105</sup>

Bouwer reported that the farms consisted of well wooded and watered land in the Cherangani hills. He had interviewed Bates who reiterated his desire to develop a dairy farm to settle his son and nephew on. In Bouwer's view, the land was

fertile and could be developed by anyone with enough money to build a dip and breed a good dairy herd.<sup>106</sup> Bates' credentials were evidently wanting in this respect and the Land Board rejected his application together with Keyser's on the grounds that both had enough land to develop. The Board suggested that the land be earmarked for closer settlement.<sup>107</sup>

Land sometimes became an issue when applicants felt they were being placed at a disadvantage by influential rivals. One disgruntled applicant was W.F.K. Morrice of Kathini Estate, Nairobi. He had bought a 230 acre farm, LO 5350, in south western Trans Nzoia in 1923, hoping to develop it after developing a 308 acre Kiambu coffee farm in which he had one-third interest. Morrice left for England in 1927 because of ill health, returning to Kenya in 1938 with his son. On appraising farm LO 5350, he identified the only permanent water source as a small section of the Kamukuywa river along the farm boundary. This was used as a watering hole by Bukusu herdsmen from the adjacent reserve and he wanted to return the farm to the government as a total loss.

Morrice had applied for an alternative piece of land which was part of LO 2066 on the slopes of Mount Elgon. Claiming that he needed additional income from farming to meet personal expenses and his son's education, he alleged

that the chances of his application succeeding were being thwarted by applications for the same farm from members and former members of Trans Nzoia District Council.<sup>108</sup>

These allegations were rejected by the Council's Executive Committee, which expressed dissatisfaction with Morrice's explanation for failing to develop farm LO 5350.<sup>109</sup> The Land Board accepted these views and rejected his application.<sup>110</sup> Most land applications were free of such controversy, however, with grants being made in many cases. Homboe of Orange Farm, Lugari, for example, was granted LO 2985 in Trans Nzoia, consisting of 1233 acres.<sup>111</sup> The acreages involved were usually relatively small with the land in question being adjacent to an applicant's farm, as in the case of F.J. Buck, a tractor and motorcar dealer in Kitale, who wanted to buy 30 acres adjoining his farm from W. Swain.<sup>11.2</sup> When the acreages were larger, the intention was probably to procure more pasture. This applied in the case of Bowker who applied for the purchase or lease of 500 acres of Government outspan along the Kitale - Eldoret road.<sup>11 3</sup>

The land market remained the forte of local settlers or Europeans from outside the district with a fair knowledge of which farms were available. Prices were low because of the sluggish demand which did not warrant, for example, further land auctions. In 1936, for instance, prices

ranged from shs 17/50 to shs 60/- per acre depending on assessed potential of the land.<sup>114</sup> Many farmers in the district owned more land than they could possibly use, as two local settlers, Morgan and Swain admitted on separate occasions.<sup>115</sup> This had become increasingly evident during the depression years when farm development was relegated to "a back seat"<sup>116</sup> The surplus of farm land prompted one Land Bank Inspector to recommend that the settlers sell some land and invest the money in their farms. In his view, "A successful settlement policy would thus be of the greatest benefit to the district and the older settlers therein."<sup>117</sup> Nicol, the Member of Legislative Council for Mombasa was more explicit, condemning the 1919 Soldier-Settlement Scheme as a failure, he felt future settlement should involve experienced farmers. In his view "It is no use sending the old school tie round the shows at Home in an endeavour to get workers for Kenya."<sup>118</sup>

Views of this type were unpopular in the district, with many settlers seeking further Government financial relief. One public meeting held in Kitale demanded a general remission of land rents but the Government proved unwilling to adopt this sweeping measure.<sup>119</sup> Such complaints were not isolated to insolvent farm owners. Water Keyn, the Managing Director of Suam Estates in North-Western

Trans Nzoia, petitioned the Rift Valley Provincial Commissioner over £752 rent being paid on 4706 acres of unused land since 1919. He described the land as being suitable only for "grazing native cattle" and wanted to exchange this for a piece of land lying between the Suam and Aptaka rivers.<sup>120</sup> The land in question bordered the Pokot reserve and after failing to secure an exchange,<sup>121</sup> WaterKeyn urged the Government to take over the 4706 acres in exchange for a free rental for five years on the remaining 16058 acres belonging to Suam Estates.<sup>122</sup> He later requested a drastic reduction in land rent because most of the company estate was ranchland.<sup>123</sup> The District Land Advisory Board recommended that rent be waived for 1935 and 1936, a decision accepted by the acting Commissioner for Lands, pending approval from the Colonial Office in London.<sup>124</sup>

Kitale township, which was the administrative centre and commercial hub of Trans Nzoia district, was expanding very slowly. This was partly attributable to the relatively small consumer market, composed mainly of scattered European farmers and under paid African farm workers, a situation worsened by economic depression. Many township plots remained undeveloped. When S.H. Powles, Manager of Estates and Investments Limited, wanted to purchase a plot for his company near the township centre,<sup>125</sup> his application was rejected because no auction was being held and there

were many vacant plots available for renting.<sup>126</sup> Following his protests<sup>127</sup> the Kitale Township Committee reiterated its earlier position.<sup>128</sup> In agreement, the acting Commissioner for Lands noted that there was "no evidence of sufficient demand for plots in Kitale to justify an auction sale."<sup>129</sup>

Subsequent events confirmed this point. One land auction was held at the District Commissioner's office on 22 July 1937 under Cap.140 of the Crown Lands Ordinance.<sup>130</sup> Only three plots were sold, the purchasers being Mrs. Lovisa Buck, who bought plot number 10 in Section III for shs 1408/- ; East African Timber Co-operative Society, Nairobi, which bought plot number 23 in section III for Shs 2142/- and Barclays Bank (DCO), Kitale which bought plot number 43 in Section XVII for shs. 1318/-. All three plots were sold at the upset price. No bids were received for the other four plots put up for auction.<sup>131</sup> In another auction held on 22 March 1938 at the same venue, two plots, numbers 33 and 34, were sold to the Kenya Farmers Association and another two plots, numbers 35 and 36, were sold to F. Tellatin. Two more plots remained unsold.<sup>132</sup> While urban plots were available for Indian buyers also, no evidence is available on competitive bidding between Europeans and Indians, implying that a de facto racial barrier prevailed on land in certain sections of Kitale. This is illustrated

by an auction held on 26 October 1938, when two plots were purchased by Indians. Mistry Mavji Visram bought plot 29 in section VI for Shs 460/- and Gorhandas Kalyanji bought plot 31 in the same area for shs 450/-.<sup>135</sup>

The contention is that the colonial government continued to perform an important administrative function in Trans Nzoia with regard to European political and economic interests. When the district was placed under a district officer reporting to the Uasin Gishu District Commissioner in October 1935,<sup>134</sup> this measure was resented by local settlers<sup>135</sup> and another District Commissioner was posted to Trans Nzoia in May 1937.<sup>136</sup> The Government was committed to devolving certain local government functions to Europeans despite overwhelming evidence that the local farming community would not rate itself. In March 1936, for example, the Public Works Division in Eldoret was abolished and its road function assumed by the Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia District Councils.<sup>137</sup> European leaders articulated popular opinion and because the District Commissioner was the initial point of contact between the executive arm of the Colonial Government and local settlers, the latter continued to expect an authoritative administrative presence. Racial affinity was important in this relationship. This was exemplified <sup>by</sup> a resolution passed by the Trans Nzoia District Council, demanding the immediate removal of Indian police officers from outposts

in the district.<sup>138</sup> In 1939 racial solidarity still characterised relations within the European community although the predominant influence <sup>was</sup> essentially British, with other nationalities being expected to toe the line.<sup>139</sup>

The outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and the subsequent departure of 102 settlers on military service prompted the introduction of a group farm management scheme.<sup>140</sup> European leaders from the district had earlier insisted that appointments to the district manpower committee be vested in Trans Nzoia District Council as the "Local Governing Authority."<sup>141</sup> They now demanded representation for the district on the colonial production, settlement and supply Committee.<sup>142</sup> By 1940, with over 150 settlers conscripted, coordinated production was being implemented. During the year between 5000 and 6000 acres of flax was planted.<sup>143</sup>

The settlers remaining were either too old for active service or were experienced farmers, retained to coordinate agricultural production. In July 1940, 134 of the 152 European farmers still in the district were aged 40 years and over, and 73 of these were 50 years old or more.<sup>144</sup> Among those retained for farmwork was Vaughan-Philpott, who was released from the army in late 1940 at the request of the district production Committee.<sup>145</sup> The Trans Nzoia Manpower Sub-Committee had already resolved

that no more men could be spared for military service, although it did not consider the release of any serving farmer essential.<sup>146</sup> Many of the more capable settlers were managing more than one farm. J.F. Seymour of Endebess, for example, was in charge of five farms with a total of 500 acres under maize, 130 acres of coffee, 150 acres of beans and 125 acres of wheat. R.M. Buswell of Lugari managed 1200 acres of maize, 30 acres of coffee and 250 dairy cattle on four farms. H. Crampton of Hoey's Bridge managed 750 acres of maize and 330 acres of coffee on four farms.<sup>147</sup>

Extensive acreages of wheat and flax planted in 1941 were damaged by heavy rain but coffee, pyrethrum and maize yields were above average. More farmers were diversifying into dairy farming and pig rearing, with almost 250 000 pounds of butter fat being sent to the Eldoret creamery.<sup>148</sup> Maize remained the staple, however, with Kirkwood continuing to insist in the Legislative Council that it was "an absolutely essential crop."<sup>149</sup> European maize acreages in the colony had declined from 233, 973 acres during the 1929-1930 season, to 63,100 acres in 1941 due to low prices.<sup>150</sup>

European leaders had demanded a guaranteed minimum price on maize,<sup>151</sup> and this was provided for under the Increased Production of Crops Ordinance, which enacted minimum prices and subsidised inputs. Under Government contract, European

farmers were able to sell as much coffee, sisal, pyrethrum and flax as they could produce.<sup>152</sup> Executive bodies like the Agricultural Production Board were monopolised by settlers<sup>153</sup> who ensured that Government policy remained skewed in the Europeans' favour. The maize acreage in Trans Nzoia increased from 40 000 acres in 1941 to 58,906 acres in 1945. The area under wheat expanded from 8000 acres to 10,714 acres over the same period. In Uasin Gishu district the maize acreage increased from 12,513 acres in 1941 to 28,446 acres in 1945 and the area under wheat rose from 45,816 acres to 70,070 acres.<sup>154</sup>

It is arguable that the 1939 - 1945 war period "Killed the Slump" in European agriculture.<sup>155</sup> The emphasis remained, however, on cereal farming and problems like soil erosion were a constant reminder of destructive farming methods.<sup>156</sup> Experiments with chemical fertilizers and improved techniques upto 1939 had been restricted to a few innovative farmers and large concerns like the Kibomet estate owned by Estates and Investments limited. The situation had not changed significantly during the war, with improved agricultural methods remaining secondary to the priority of bringing more land under the plough.<sup>157</sup> The Trans Nzoia Production and Manpower Committee exerted considerable influence in this respect. In one instant it censured W.J. Van Maltitz for failing to boost production

on his farm and recommended that he be drafted into the army.<sup>158</sup> The same committee refused to release C. Preddy from his position as farm manager to work in Nakuru.<sup>159</sup>

The war had heightened patriotic sentiment in British circles and other Europeans were prudent to follow suit. By April 1940 one German settler had taken out British citizenship while another three Germans and one Russian were in the process of becoming naturalised Britons.<sup>160</sup> Events had underlined the settlers' role as clients of the Colonial Government.<sup>161</sup> When the war ended local farmers were unwilling to compromise over this relationship. Following widespread dissatisfaction with low maize prices in 1946, the Trans Nzoia Production and Manpower Committee and all production sub-committees resigned.<sup>162</sup> Major Keyser, the member of Legislative Council for Trans Nzoia, had earlier taken up the issue with the Trans Nzoia Association. A planned boycott by maize farmers had failed and the resignations represented an attempt to present a united front over the issue.<sup>163</sup> The prices were eventually raised,<sup>164</sup> after protracted debate culminating in a high level decision to send the Chairman of the Agriculture Production Board to Trans Nzoia for discussions.<sup>165</sup>

Relations within the settler community continued to be influenced by the politics of racial consensus which blurred social and economic divisions. This situation had been evident during 1945 when a split in the District Council threatened to upset the balance. Some councillors favoured an expansion of local government functions while others wanted these to be reduced. Both groups, however, were against the imposition of local rates on Europeans and the controversy soon passed.<sup>166</sup> This common outlook was clearly revealed by European views about Africans. Consequently, racism was an important factor, shaping relations between European settler and African labourer.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1929 p. 583.
2. F.H. Weller interviewed by N.W. Fedha and K. Ward, KNA: 967.6203 FED; See also The East African Standard, 12 February 1927, p. 3.
3. Report of the Agricultural Commission (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1929) p. 20.
4. AGR 1/243 L.A. Elmer to the Coffee Officer, Department of Agriculture, Nairobi, 24 July 1930; Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1929, p. 23.
5. A.M. Barberton interviewed by K. Ward, KNA: 153.3 WAR, p. 10.
6. NCC: LG 5/1/3/2 Engineer Clerk to Commissioner for Local Government, Lands and Settlement, 24 June, 1931.
7. NCC: Minute book no. 6 summary of a meeting between Governor Byrne and Messrs Graham and Tebbit, representing Trans Nzoia District Council. See also Legislative Council Debates, 1932, p. 190.
8. Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1931, p.8
9. Ibid., Annual Report, 1932, pp. 10-11.
10. Ibid, Annual Report 1933, p. 222
11. M.G. Redley 'The Politics of a Predicament: The White Community in Kenya, 1918 - 32' (Ph.D. Cambridge, 1976) pp. 227 - 9.

12. Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1934, pp.6-7
13. Ibid, Annual Report, 1936,p. 13
14. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1937  
(Government Printer, 1939) p. 12
15. Ibid., p. 109.
16. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: Food Shortage  
Commission of Inquiry Report, 1943 (Nairobi:  
Government Printer, 1943).
17. NCC Minute book No. 8, p. 56
18. AGR 1/243 Mitchell, Secretary of TNFA to Holm,  
Director of Agriculture 2 February 1931.
19. Department of Agriculture. Annual Report, 1933, p. 121.
20. Ibid, p. 32.
21. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank  
1934, p. 10.
22. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1934, p. 10
23. Ibid, Annual Report, 1933, p. 125
24. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank 1935  
p. 20 Among rudimentary soil conservation measures  
taken by Land Bank supervised farmers were trenching  
and strip planting with Napier grass.

25. AG 2730 Loans to Mr. and Mrs. Chappell.
26. Ibid., Evaluators Report
27. AG 2730, Chappell to Land Bank Secretary,  
29 August, 1946.
28. Ibid., Land Bank Secretary to Attorney General,  
29 August, 1946.
29. AG 4/2726
30. AG 4/2722
31. Weller interviewed by Fedha and Ward, KNA 967  
6203 FED pp. 7-8 and Ward. See also A.M. Barberton,  
interviewed by K. Ward, KNA: 158.3WAR, 21 August  
1971. p. 12.
32. Philpott, interviewed by Fedha and Ward, KNA: 967.  
6203 VAU; p. 1.
33. Luck, interviewed by Ward, KNA: 158.3 WAR, p.5.
34. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1932, p. 7
35. Report of the Economic Development Committee  
(Nairobi: Government Printer, 1935) p.179
36. Barberton, interviewed by K. Ward, p. 11, KNA:  
158.3 WAR
37. PC/RVP. 6A/29/2 Population Returns, Trans Nzoia  
1933, 1938.

38. Interim Report of the Agricultural Indebtedness Committee (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1936) p. 7
39. Report of the Economic Development Committee (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1935) p. 9
40. Ibid., p. 19
41. Ibid., p. 21
42. NCC: Minute book no. 3 Butler to Thompson, 5 February 1930, p. 15.
43. PC/RvP. 6A/34/11 DC, Kitale to PC, Nzoia, 17 July 1931
44. NCC: Minute book no. 8. Standing Executive Committee meeting, 23 March 1932 p. 4
45. AGR 1/243 cutting from The East African Standard 3 March 1932. 3
46. NCC: Minute book no. 8 Executive Committee Meeting 3 May 1933, p. 26; Minute book 9, Council Meeting 8 February 1933, p. 45 and 7 June 1933, pp. 52-53.
47. AGR 1/243, cutting from The East African Standard 11, April 1933.
48. Ibid., cutting from The East African Standard, 3 March, 1932.

49. LANDS BN 66/15 Oswald Bentley to Commissioner for Lands, 6 July 1936, meeting between Commissioner for Lands and Bentley, 13 August 1936, Acting Commissioner for Lands to Colonial Secretary, 18 August 1936, Acting Commissioner of Lands to Colonial Secretary 23 August 1936.
50. LANDS BN 66/15 Widow of Hurreh Hassan to Commissioner for Lands, 17 May 1938; Commissioner for Lands to District Commissioner, Kitale, 21 October 1938; District Commissioner, Kitale to Commissioner for Lands, 24 October 1938.
51. LANDS BN 46/10 Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia Farmers Association to Commissioner of Lands, 26 September 1930.
52. Ibid., Engineer Clerk, Trans Nzoia District Council to District Commissioner, Kitale, 24 December 1930.
53. Kenya Weekly News 13 September 1935<sup>2</sup>, p. 19.
54. Kenya Weekly News, 4 October 1935 p. 26. On the formation of Trans Nzoia District Association, see also PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1935, p. 11
55. Kenya Weekly News 24 January 1936.
56. PC/RVP/ 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1935, pp. 4-5.
57. Legislative Council Debates, 1932, p. 310.
58. Legislative Council Debates, 1935, p. 473.

59. Report of the Select Committee on Economy (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1935) pp. 63-65.
60. Legislative Council Debates 1935, pp. 319 - 321 and 334 - 335.
61. PC/RvP. 6A/34/7. Minutes of the District Commissioners' meeting held at Nakuru, September 7 1937, p. 6.
62. Ed 1/51 Acting Director of Agriculture to Acting Colonial Secretary 20 August 1927.
63. The East African Standard, 31 December 1927, p. 37.
64. LANDS BN 46/10 Booth to acting Director of Agriculture, 5 March 1928.
65. LANDS BN 46/10 Extract from Minutes of a Kenya Advisory Council meeting, 11 April 1928
66. Ibid, Honorary Secretary of Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association to Colonial Secretary, 21 January 1928 see also the East African Standard 31 December 1927, p. 37.
67. LANDS BN 46/10 President of Trans Nzoia Farmers Association to Colonial Secretary, 7 July 1928.
68. Legislative Council Debates, 1928 p. 508.
69. Legislative Council Debates, 1928, p. 508.
70. LANDS BN 46/10 Extract from Kenya Advisory Committee Minutes, 12 July 1928.

71. LANDS BN 46/10 Extract from Minutes of Trans Nzoia District Council meeting, 14 January 1930, and PC Nzoia to Colonial Secretary, 20 January 1930.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia Farmers Association to Commissioner for Lands, 26.9.30.
74. LANDS BN 66/15 Commissioner of Lands to Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia Farmers Association, 14 October 1930.
75. LANDS BN 46/10 Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia District Council Settlement Committee to Commissioner for Lands 12 February 1932.
76. Ibid. Acting Commissioner for Lands to Honorary Secretary Trans Nzoia District Council, 24 February 1932.
77. LANDS BN 46/10 Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia District Council to Commissioner of Lands, 20 May 1932.
78. Legislative Council Debates 1936 (Government Printer, 1937), p. 245.
79. PC/RVP/ 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1946 p. 330.

80. Legislative Council Debates, 1939, col umn210;  
AG 4/1790.
81. LANDS BN 11/11 Resident Commissioner, Kitale to  
Commissioner of Lands, 25 July 1929.
82. Ibid, Coney to Commissioner for Lands, 17 June 1929.
83. Ibid, Extract from minutes of the Land Advisory Board  
16 August, 1929.
84. Ibid, acting Commissioner for Lands to Coney, 22  
August, 1929.
85. Ibid, DC. Kitale to W.A. Shaw, Advocate, Eldoret,  
13 January 1930.
86. Lands BN 15/2 acting Commissioner for Lands to acting  
Colonial Secretary, 9 August 1927. Thackwell to  
Commissioner for Lands, 15 March 1928.
87. Ibid, acting Commissioner for Lands to acting Attorney  
General; 9 August -927 .
88. Ibid., Commissioner for Lands to DC, Kitale, 3 July  
1930.
89. Ibid., Thackwell to Commissioner for Lands 17 July  
1930.
90. LANDS BN 15/2. Commissioner for Lands to DC, Kitale,  
2 April 1930.

91. Ibid., H.C. Kirk to D.C. Kitale
92. LANDS BN 15/5 Commissioner for Lands to Colonial Secretary, 17 February 1927.
93. Ibid., District Survey<sup>or</sup>, Eldoret to Director of Surveys.
94. LANDS BN 30/114 G. Hancock to Commissioner for Lands, 29 September 1923, Commissioner for Lands to Hancock, 4 January 1933.
95. LANDS BN 1/218 A.C. Hoey to Commissioner for Lands, 17 July 1934.
96. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank, 1936 p. 28.
97. LANDS BN 1/218 Commissioner of Lands to Hoey, 21 December 1934.
98. LANDS BN 1/221 Hoey's Bridge Sisal Syndicate to Commissioner of Lands, 16 July 1937.
99. Ibid., Commissioner of Lands to A.C. Hoey, 8 July 1937.
100. LANDS BN 41/111 H. Brian Bates to Land Office, Nairobi, 9 October 1937.
101. Ibid., Commissioner of Lands to H.B. Bates, 26 October 1937.

102. Ibid., H.B. Bates to Commissioner of Lands, 22 January 1938.
103. LANDS BN 41/111, Extract from minutes of the Crown Land Valuation Board, 29 March 1938.
104. Ibid., DC, Kitale to Commissioner for Lands, 16 August 1939.
105. Ibid., Minutes of the District Land Board 10-11 October, 1939.
106. Ibid., Report by W.A.C. Bouwer, 29 December 1939.
107. Ibid., Minutes of the District Land Board, 31 February, 1940.
108. LANDS BN 41/109 W.F.K. Morris to Commissioner for Lands, 1939.
109. Ibid. Clerk Supervisor, Trans Nzoia District Council to Commissioner for Lands, 4 July 1939.
110. Ibid., Commissioner of Lands to W.F.K. Morris, 17 October 1939.
111. LANDS BN 1/222 acting Commissioner for Lands to E. Holmboe, 2 February 1938.
112. LANDS BN 3/6 F.J. Buck to Land Office, 16 January 1939.
113. NCC: Minute book no 13: Executive Committee meeting 12 January 1938, p. 13.

114. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank,  
1936, p. 29.
115. NCC. Minute book no 13, Full council meeting,  
16 March 1938 p. 30 and Executive Committee  
meeting .25 March 1938, p. 33.
116. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank,  
1934 pp. 7 - 9.
117. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank,  
1938 p. 37.
118. Legislative Council Debates, 1938, col umn 112.
119. NCC: Minute book no 12: Full Council meeting,  
27 January 1937, p. 4.
120. LANDS BN 15/6 WaterKeyn to PC, Nakuru, 5 May 1935
121. Ibid., DC. West Pokot /: to Officer in charge of  
Turkana District, 16 September 1935; Commissioner  
for Lands to PC, Nakuru, 4 October 1935; acting  
PC, Nakuru to Commissioner for Lands, 29 October  
1936.
122. Ibid., WaterKeyn to PC, Nakuru 19 July 1936.
123. Ibid., WaterKeyn to PC Nakuru, 29 October 1936.
124. Ibid., acting Commissioner for Lands to Honorary  
Secretary, Land Advisory Board, Kitale 24 February  
1938.

125. LANDS BN 41/75 S.H. Powles to DC, Kitale, 7 January 1932.
126. Ibid., Kitale Township Committee, Minute 5
127. Ibid., Powles to DC, Kitale 10 February 1932
128. Ibid., DC, Kitale to Powles, 2 March 1932.
129. Ibid., acting Commissioner for Lands to DC, Kitale 29 March 1932.
130. LANDS BN 19/22 The Official Gazette, 22 June 1937, p. 143.
131. LANDS BN 19/22 DC? Kitale to acting PC, Nakuru, 22 July 1937.
132. Ibid., acting PC, Nakuru to Commissioner for Lands, 22 April 1938.
133. Ibid., DC, Kitale to acting PC Rift Valley, 26 October 1938.
134. PC/FvP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1935, p. 4.
135. Ibid., Annual Report, 1936, pp. 6-7.
136. Ibid., Annual Report, 1937, pp. 5-6.
137. PC/RUP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1936, p. 37
138. NCC: Minute book no. 9. Full Council meeting, 18 November, 1936, p. 139.

139. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1937, p. 9.  
In his report the PC noted that the German settlers in Trans Nzoia had refused to support the local Nazi leader, who was eventually sacked by his employer because of his political activities and forced to leave the district.
140. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1939, p. 10  
The scheme was enacted under the Compulsory Service Ordinance on 4 September 1939. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: Food Shortage Commission of Inquiry Report, 1943 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1943) p. 11.
141. NCC: Minute book no. 14 Full Council meeting, 8 February 1939, p. 11.
142. Ibid., Full Council meeting, 20 December 1939, p. 69.
143. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1940, p. 3
144. Defence 9/16 Director of Agriculture to Chief Secretary, 26 July 1940.
145. Vaughan-Philpott interviewed by N.W. Fedha and K. Ward.
146. Defence 9/48 Trans Nzoia Manpower sub-committee, 8 November 1939.
147. Defence 9/16 Director of Agriculture to Chief Secretary, 26 July 1940.
148. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1941, p. 3

149. Legislative Council Debates, 1940 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1941) p. 156.
150. Food Shortage Commission of Inquiry Report, 1943, p. 22.
151. Legislative Council Debates, 1942, p. 43.
152. Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1945, pp. 1-2
153. Ibid., p. 19.
154. Ibid., pp. 38 - 39
155. A.M. Barberton interviewed by Kendall Ward, p. 12.
156. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1945, p. 40, R.E.T. Hobbs, who identified the continuation of careless farming methods, was a Senior Agricultural Officer. In 1946 he was elected Chairman of the Trans Nzoia Production Committee. See PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1946 p. 4.
157. Yields per acre did not raise significantly. Maize yields in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu averaged 8.5 and 5.3 bags per acre in 1942. Corresponding yields for 1945 were 7.1 and 5.6 bags/acre. Wheat yields in 1942 averaged 4.1 bags per acre in Trans Nzoia and 2.5 bags per acre in Uasin Gishu. In 1945 corresponding yields were 5.2 bags per acre and 4.5 bags per acre. Department of Agriculture: Annual Report 1945, pp. 38-39.

158. Defence 9/48 Chairman, Trans Nzoia Production and Manpower Committee to Director of Manpower, 2 March 1943.
159. Ibid., Chairman of Trans Nzoia Production and Manpower Committee to C. Preddy of Kitale, 26 July, 1944.
160. Ibid., DC, Kitale to Deputy Director of Manpower 18 April 1940, pp. 7-8.
161. AGR 5/1/11 cutting from The East African Standard 21 February 1945p. 1. Following enactment of the Increased Production of Crops Ordinance, £ 204,000 in advances had been made to European farmers, at an interest rate of only four per cent.
162. Defence 9/16 DC. Uasin Gishu/ Trans Nzoia to acting PC Rift Valley, Chairman of Agricultural Production Board and Director of Manpower, 5 June 1946.
163. Ibid., DC, Uasin Gishu/Trans Nzoia to Deputy Chairman, Agricultural Production Board, Nairobi 6 June 1946.
164. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1946, p. 4.
165. AGR 5/1/11 Secretary, Agricultural Production Board to Chief Secretary, 26 June 1946.
166. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1943, p. 4.

CHAPTER FIVE

AFRICAN SQUATTERS AND MIGRANT LABOUR IN  
TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT 1920-1946

European Settlers and Farm Squatters

Reports by the Director of Agriculture in December 1910, the Land Ranger in March 1911 and the Principle Medical Officer in September 1912 described Trans Nzoia as an uninhabited area. The district was surveyed under this premise and emphasis on European political and economic interests became the cornerstone of administrative policy. In the wake of complaints over denial of Pokot land rights, Governor Henry Belfield, acting on the advice of the Provincial Commissioner for Naivasha, had in 1916 authorised their continued occupation and use of pasture in Northern Trans Nzoia. Surveyed but unalienated farms bordering the Pokot reserve were identified for this purpose but the pledge was repudiated by Governor Edward Northey in 1919, when the implementation of soldier settlement began.<sup>1</sup> Pokot grazing cattle on the farms were driven back into the reserve in November 1919.<sup>2</sup> Those remaining

in the district were regarded as farm squatters.

The district boundary was not clearly marked, many of the original beacons having been removed. In 1927 of the fifteen farms bordering Pokot, six were occupied by their owners, four had resident managers and six were unoccupied. Cattle owned by squatters grazed on unoccupied farms number 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038 and 2033 along the boundary and this became a bone of contention between the Pokot District Commissioner and his counterpart in Trans Nzoia. The former was unwilling to endorse curbs imposed on Pokot herdsmen utilising pasture over the boundary while squatters grazed their herds with impunity. This issue was taken up by the Senior Commissioner for Kerio Province who wanted the boundary rebeaconed and police action taken against squatters in Trans Nzoia using unalienated Crown Land as pasture.<sup>3</sup>

The Pokot continued to enter Trans Nzoia, using tracks that had existed prior to the 1913 survey of the district.<sup>4</sup> Most land in the vicinity was not suitable for arable farming and this had discouraged a number of Europeans, including one who abandoned farm LR 2112 R as waterless. This farm, which was a 310 acre triangular piece of land jutting into the reserve, was suggested as being

suitable for inclusion in Pokot by the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner. In response, the Provincial Commissioner for Turkana observed that the acute shortage of pasture in the reserve was compelling Pokot to cross the border into Karamoja and therefore any small addition of land was useful.<sup>5</sup>

European settlement had effectively limited the amount of pasture available to the Pokot and, in addition, salt licks used by them were now on alienated land.<sup>6</sup> In 1923 the provincial administration proposed that an additional 3700 acres be included in the reserve, returning some salt licks to the Pokot. This change was approved by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1924 but no alteration of administrative boundaries was made to conform with the amendment.<sup>7</sup> When proposals that 10,770 acres be added to the Pokot reserve were forwarded to the Kenya Land Commissioners they declined to endorse this boundary extension, declaring that the Pokot had failed to use land recently given to them because it was infected by livestock disease and was too high.<sup>8</sup>

The boundary remained unsatisfactory, with Pokot continuing to cross into Trans Nzoia.<sup>9</sup> European farmers in the vicinity considered these movements as tantamount to trespass. One settler, P.M.

Bretelle of Kapkoi estate, complained that a Pokot sub-headman, Porit, was illegally entering his farm, LR 2037 to water his cattle. Claiming that this would interfere with his cattle dipping schedule, he wanted the District Commissioner for West Suk to restrict Porit to the reserve.<sup>10</sup>

This boundary dispute is significant as an illustration of European relations with Africans in neighbouring reserves to whom white settlement often meant new constraints on access to land, water and other natural resources. Unlike North Nyanza, West Suk remained relatively unaffected by social and economic change under colonialism. Taxation remained the main lever of colonial rule and this was collected in the form of goats and sheep. Only severe drought in 1924 forced some young Pokot men to enter European wage employment to earn tax money and these remained a minority.<sup>11</sup> The main level of contact between them and the settlers, therefore, was in competition for natural resources.<sup>12</sup>

A similar situation prevailed in eastern Trans Nzoia where Cherangany had lost land to European settlement. The alienated farms included the strategic Kaptian salt lick in addition to large expanses of fertile agricultural land and settlers in the vicinity

were unwilling to cede any territory. The dispute came before the Kenya Land Commission, which dismissed the Cherangany land claims as groundless and recommended that only twelve square miles be added to the Marakwet reserve.<sup>13</sup>

Under these circumstances, squatting on alienated land was an attractive alternative and many Cherangany simply ignored warnings from government officers over the sanctity of private property under the European system of land tenure. Indeed, with the settlers holding large acreages of undeveloped farmland, squatters were often considered as a cheap, resident labour force and their presence was ignored. Nevertheless, the squatters were not protected under colonial law and were therefore, liable to ad hoc measures initiated by European farmers or government officers. During a routine tour of inspection through Cherangani, Trafford, an assistant District Commissioner, discovered two private farms inhabited by Nandi Squatters. This was not unusual but he was riled by the absence of a European occupier and duly alerted his District Commissioner. The D.C. wrote to the owner of both farms, A.C. Hoey, threatening eviction of the squatters unless a European manager was sent there. Hoey ignored this warning and in June 1925 ten

squatters were arrested on the farms and charged with trespass. Subsequently all of the squatters, numbering some fifty families with thirteen hundred cattle and fifteen hundred sheep and goats, were rounded up.<sup>14</sup>

The action involved asserting a modicum of colonial authority over the squatters. To this extent Trafford was enforcing the status quo by administrative means, as the Attorney General argued on his behalf.<sup>15</sup> Many attested squatters had been signed on under the 1918 Resident Labourers Ordinance and there was widespread confusion in European circles over the application of specific clauses in the recently enacted 1925 squatter ordinance. This particular issue had been raised by Coney in the Legislative Council in 1924, during debates on the bill.<sup>16</sup>

Popular sentiment was largely in favour of such administrative intervention as a method of regulating African movement in the district. A Trans Nzoia Farmers Association meeting convened in Kitale on 11 July 1925 expressed "sincere appreciation of the policy of Mr. Trafford and of his energetic action in dealing with stock thefts in the district."<sup>17</sup> Hoey was roundly condemned for allo-

wing squatters a free run of his farm. This criticism incensed him and he wrote a brusque letter to the Colonial Secretary, demanding an explanation for the squatters' eviction without his consent.<sup>18</sup> He raised this question of propriety with other farmers who, confronted with the issue of their own authority over Africans, hastily recanted the earlier views. Weller, president of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association, admitted that his members' prior position appeared "subsequently to have been based on false premises".<sup>19</sup> Confronted with these developments, the acting Attorney General apologised to Hoey "that inconvenience may have been caused to you and your squatters."<sup>20</sup>

On this particular occasion a European settler's interests coincided with those of African squatters, essentially because Hoey had felt picqued by unilateral Government action. More frequently, however, African interests were subordinated to the whims of European farmers and government officers on the spot. In October 1923 a fire gutted several buildings on Captain Hewitt's farm in south-western Trans Nzoia. Arson was suspected but evidence against four African suspects proved too flimsy to secure their conviction, even under punitive colonial law. The District Commis-

ioner subsequently recommended collective punishment of Bukusu squatters on the farm. The Bukusu were from the neighbouring reserve and apparently Hewitt had recruited them as resident labour.<sup>21</sup> This perfunctory arrangement exposed the squatters to drastic unilateral action, as was exemplified when a fine of 2800 shillings was promptly imposed on fifty-six of them. Governor Grigg, endorsing this measure, concluded that "the deliberate suppression of evidence by the squatters acting in combination on Captain Hewitt's farm was established."<sup>22</sup>

Lord Amery, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in concurrence felt "bound to accept the local view that it was necessary and equitable to apply the Ordinance."<sup>23</sup> The Colonial Secretary in Nairobi interpreted this as "covering sanction" and the fine was confirmed. Following the squatters' failure to raise the amount, forty-four head of their cattle were seized and auctioned for shs. 5885 shillings.<sup>24</sup>

Punitive intervention by government officers was rarely a method of last resort and was rapidly becoming normal practice in official circles. An incident involving a group of Nandi squatters on a block of four farms in Cherangani jointly owned by Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Hoey illustrates this.

The squatters were accused of colluding in stock theft, with cattle allegedly being stolen in the adjoining reserve and driven into Trans Nzoia. Following a formal enquiry, the assistant District Commissioner, Gillespie, imposed a collective fine of 8,640 shillings on the squatters. In the absence of conclusive evidence, this was apportioned on the basis of hut tax lists of Africans on the farms.<sup>25</sup>

The enquiry had been conducted cursorily and the acting Colonial Secretary, realising this, solicited the Attorney General's advice. He was duly informed that a new enquiry should be ordered.<sup>26</sup> Crampton, the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner believed this was unnecessary, but the case was reopened in Kitale on 22 January 1929. The magistrate's conclusions merely verified earlier findings and on the strength of this, the acting Governor notified the Secretary of State that the enquiry was properly conducted, and recommended sanction of the fine.<sup>27</sup>

Sydney Webb, Secretary of State for the Colonies in the Labour Government, did not challenge the principle of collective responsibility. He did, however, question the severity of the punishment, observing that "the imposition of a fine of Shs. 8640 would mean that each native implicated will

have to pay about £ 20."<sup>28</sup> Colonial officials in Nairobi did not go beyond appraising the legal technicalities involved.<sup>29</sup> When the Colonial Secretary eventually sought clarification from the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner over payment of the fine,<sup>30</sup> he was advised that the entire amount had been collected with only eight shillings outstanding.<sup>31</sup>

This action on the spot by government officers is revealing. The Nandi squatters involved were labourers on a sisal estate in neighbouring Uasin Gishu, who utilised adjacent vacant farmland as pasture.<sup>32</sup> Their presence, therefore, was not in contention. In the view of the district administration, however, farm squatters were primarily a reservoir of resident labour. Matters concerning their social and economic interests were subsumed under the notion of Pax Britannica, which presumed racial subordination.

The implication was that African administration in European districts was essentially a question of law enforcement, particularly where white farmers were involved. An Elgeyo Marakwet District Commissioner seemed to perceive this when he was provoked into protesting over unproven alle-

gations by Eldoret police that tribesmen from his district had stolen drought oxen from Snyman, a Uasin Gishu farmer. He saw no reason for arbitrary punishment.<sup>33</sup> The population of Africans in settled districts had soared as European farms continued to attract squatters in search of pasture and land for cultivation. The settlers, dependent upon them for seasonal labour and sometimes also taking African livestock and produce in lieu of land rent, were unable to exert control. It had become increasingly difficult for government officers, under conditions where European and African livestock, for example, were grazing virtually together. The squatters were often suspected of stock theft and this provided a justification for sporadic forays by European officials.

A Nandi District Commissioner defended such forays when he recommended an intensive search for stolen livestock among squatter herds in the district, asserting that similar searches in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia had proven to be highly effective.<sup>34</sup> In his view:

One of the principle objections to squatters is that it is economically unsound that able bodied natives should only be worth a wage of shs. 6/- or shs. 8/- per month, such is the pre-

vailing rate for squatters, they are undoubtedly worth more, it therefore, follows they are receiving payment in kind for grazing rights, which is contrary to a specific section in the [1925 Resident Labour] Ordinance.<sup>35</sup>

The problem was a consequence of European farming. According to an old Trans Nzoia settler, "even in those early days ( I am talking of 1919 onwards) we all had mostly native cattle".<sup>36</sup> A similar situation existed in neighbouring Uasin Gishu and by 1924 the veterinary department was trying to curb a series of rinderpest outbreaks in both districts by conducting an inoculation campaign. These precautions proved inadequate and O'Shea, Legislative Council Member for Plateau South called for the appointment of an investigating committee.<sup>37</sup> The committee was subsequently appointed. It reported that the rinderpest epidemic was caused by the increasing influx of susceptible cattle from African reserves.<sup>38</sup> Quarantines were imposed, but these had already proven unpopular because they discouraged squatters. On 12 May 1923 a general meeting of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association had demanded the reopening of Kamukuywa cattle boma on the Bukusu reserve boundary, following its prolonged

closure by the Chief Veterinary Officer.<sup>39</sup> The same meeting had also agreed that opening up the Marakwet reserve would enable settlers to buy cattle and procure labour.<sup>40</sup> Innoculation remained the main method of disease control, therefore. During November and December, 1928, for example, 50,000 cattle were inoculated in Trans Nzoia.<sup>41</sup> The cattle population continued to soar and in 1934 there were an estimated 40,000 squatter cattle in Trans Nzoia and 100,000 squatter cattle in Uasin Gishu.<sup>42</sup>

The Convention of Association's Labour Committee acknowledged the importance of squatters as a cheap seasonal labour supply for farmers in sparsely settled areas like Kericho, Sotik and Turbo.<sup>43</sup> In Trans Nzoia they remained the main labour source. The Trans Nzoia District Council tacitly accepted this fact when it recommended that squatter wages be stabilised at a minimum of five shillings per month, during a period of economic depression.<sup>44</sup> There was a growing body of opinion among the district political leadership, however, that numbers of squatter livestock be reduced and harsher employment terms be introduced. Rear Admiral Crampton, a councillor representing Cherangani, where squatt- ing was commonplace, was a staunch advocate of such

restrictions. The Trans Nzoia District Council and Trans Nzoia Farmers Association drafted regulations to this effect.<sup>45</sup> but implementation was an entirely different proposition. This problem was confirmed when the District Commissioner reported that while about 8000 cattle had been removed in 1934, the net reduction was minimal. Councillors blamed this on "the natural increase of squatter cattle" and an ongoing influx of livestock from the North Kavirondo reserve.<sup>46</sup>

Farmers in the district and elsewhere were not used to the squatter system and retained a vested interest in its continuation.<sup>47</sup> This applied particularly to the more marginal settlers, to who squatting permitted high returns on a minimal outlay. Fenton was one such farmer and in 1935 he applied for permission to increase his squatter livestock up to 250 head for purposes of manuring his coffee.<sup>48</sup> The prevalence of such attitudes militated against any drastic reduction of squatter-owned cattle, as a councillor representing Naitiri ward, Major Jack, implicitly recognised. He suggested that each family be allowed only fifteen cattle.<sup>49</sup> By 1935 it was optimistically claimed that there was "a greater number of labour units to a smaller number of stock"<sup>50</sup> but this is debatable. Livestock redu-

ctions were difficult to enforce and a number of settlers continued to solicit more squatters. One of these, a Hoey's Bridge farmer called Major Hill, applied to the Trans Nzoia District Council for permission to bring fifteen more squatters into the district. His application was rejected.<sup>51</sup>

At a time when arable European farming in the Highlands was undergoing an economic crisis because of the fall in prices of staple crops like maize and coffee,<sup>52</sup> squatting remained entrenched as an integral part of the settler economy.<sup>53</sup> In 1937, Trans Nzoia District Council appointed a sub-committee to liaise with the Trans Nzoia District Association over squatter policy. Previous measures had been ineffective. The settlers continued to draw heavily on the labour of squatter men, women and children and livestock restrictions often affected the labour supply. This was particularly evident in Cherangani where Pokot and Marakwet labour was in short supply during the 1936-1937 season.<sup>54</sup> In 1937, 1500 unbranded squatter cattle were rounded up in Cherangani and fines of two shillings per head were imposed on the settlers concerned. The cattle were mostly stock brought onto farms by settlers anxious to attract more squatters, in contravention of the 1925 Resident Labour Ordinance.<sup>55</sup>

Continued European dependence on squatter labour was deplored during a settlers' meeting in Nakuru. The participants wanted drastic reductions in numbers of livestock, with Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia being cited as districts where such measures were urgently required.<sup>56</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by the executive committee of Trans Nzoia District Council, which resolved that the District Commissioner should evict all squatters from Crown land and unoccupied private farms.<sup>57</sup> The Council also recommended enforcement of Maize Inspection (European Areas) rules to curb illicit marketing of squatter grown maize.<sup>58</sup> Payment in kind for access to land was not an isolated practice, as the Rift Valley Provincial Commissioner insinuated when he endorsed Trans Nzoia settlers' procurement of free manure from farm squatters.<sup>59</sup>

The outbreak of war in 1939 interrupted the debate - but in 1941 Trans Nzoia District Council renewed its efforts to reduce the number of squatter livestock by drafting regulations to this effect.<sup>60</sup> This remained a controversial issue among those farmers not away on military service, with the order eventually being approved in 1942 "after considerable differences of opinion".<sup>61</sup> The order, enacted under section twenty one of the 1937

Resident Labourers Ordinance, was specifically intended to restrict squatter access to land. A maximum of two acres was stipulated for subsistence cultivation and each family was limited to keeping ten cattle and five sheep. A minimum of 240 days labour was to be rendered annually and contracts were valid for three years.<sup>62</sup> In 1943 an enactment prohibited squatters from selling maize to anyone besides the settlers,<sup>63</sup> thus outlawing an informal market in which African producers obtained higher prices.<sup>64</sup>

An informed observer noted "a tendency... for those in authority to look with disfavour on squatters." In his opinion, however, any drastic reduction of squatter livestock would affect agricultural production and "hit some farmers badly."<sup>65</sup> Views of this sort did not deter the district administration and by 1946, both the Trans Nzoia District Council and its Uasin Gishu counterpart had passed legislation to eliminate squatter cattle completely. One contemporary explanation for this decisive step was that "the farmers are convinced that the presence of cattle eventually will give the resident labourer a right a moral if not a legal one, to the land he grazes." The expressed intention was to replace "the pastoral labourer with the cottage labourer."<sup>66</sup>

### Forest Squatters

The European occupation of Trans Nzoia district disrupted the economies of those communities inhabiting the area from the precolonial period. The Konyi of Eastern Trans Nzoia, in particular, were forced off farmland, retreating up the slopes of Mount Elgon or into North Kavirondo and Uganda. The colonial government regarded them as forest squatters and their habitat soon attracted European attention. Initial attempts to curb Sabaot movement in the vicinity of Mount Elgon, between Lwakhakha and Suam, had started by 1925. To one European administrator they appeared "a useless and lazy lot"<sup>67</sup> and such contempt conditioned action taken against them. The Konyi, who were the largest Sabaot community in Trans Nzoia, had been pushed from Mount Elgon towards the South West by police from Kitale in 1923.<sup>68</sup> This eviction was unwarranted, as the Assistant D.C. for North Kavirondo suggested when he argued:

These people cause no trouble whatever, pay their taxes regularly through Headman Tandeti, are rarely seen, and no allegations from outside have been made against them to the District Commissioner, Kakamega, either officially or otherwise.

They are regarded as having an absolutely prescriptive right to the territory they inhabit.

The Assistant DC revealed that the Forest Department considered the Konyi a menace because they allegedly stole cattle from European farms and burnt forest cover while collecting honey or clearing land for grazing. He observed that the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner, Kitale Police, forestry officers and local settlers all wanted to push them out of their habitat near the Kisawai river into North Kavirondo.<sup>69</sup> These views were corroborated by the acting Chief Native Commissioner, who noted that settlers in the Legislative Council wanted the area included within the boundaries of Trans Nzoia.<sup>70</sup> Farmers in the vicinity were already exploiting timber stands in the forest, after being granted lucrative concessions. They included Brigadier-General Baker-Carr and Mr. Tweedie, both of whom farmed near Suam, and the De la Harpe family of Saboti.<sup>71</sup> European demands were acceded to and a new boundary was demarcated between the North Kavirondo reserve and the Southern edge of Mount Elgon forest.<sup>72</sup>

The Konyi were not intimidated and began returning to the forest reserve by 1927, where they

were subjected to another raid by police from Kitale. Nine owners of cattle, sheep and goats were charged with offences under the Forest Ordinance and Diseases of Animals Rules with heavy fines being recommended.<sup>73</sup> They were among a group of squatters on the Sabotĩ farm of De la Harpe and were probably attracted by the lush pasture on the moorland above. Eventually, sixty of their cattle were served and auctioned in Kitale to a European farmer.<sup>74</sup> A subsequent meeting of the Trans Nzoia District Committee resolved that the area excised from the forest reserve "should be surveyed and then thrown open for alienation as soon as possible."<sup>75</sup> Confronted with this potential threat to the sanctity of its domain, the Forest Department termed the resolution "ignorant" and vowed to oppose further land alienation.<sup>76</sup>

An officer from the Department, citing specific reasons for this position, emphasised that the land in question was "unfit for any agricultural purpose other than grazing".<sup>77</sup> In a colonial situation characterised by conflicting racial interests,<sup>78</sup> such reasoning failed to discourage the determined settlers. One exasperated forestry officer discovered this when he attended a Trans Nzoia District Council meeting. The councillors gave him a brief hearing before one of them launched

into a tirade over "the iniquity of allowing land to go back from White Settlement to Native Reserve." The meeting hastily resolved that the land in question revert to forest reserve only if an equal area was alienated to the district elsewhere. The officer saw no reason for Government to be influenced by such resolutions and proposed that if the land was not gazetted as Forest Reserve it should remain unalienated Crown land, instead of being sold as farmland.<sup>79</sup>

When the dispute came before the Kenya Land Commission, its findings emphasised European settler opinion. Dismissing the Sabaoi precolonial presence in Trans Nzoia as myth, the Commissioners intoned that, "in view of all the circumstances, we do not consider that any claim to land beyond the mountain region need be considered."<sup>80</sup> They then remarked that:

The Policy of the administration is to move the El Gonyi off the farms where they are an embarrassment to the European settlers and to the Government, and where it is clearly not in their own interests that they should be permitted to remain.

The Commission recommended "that the policy of the administration of moving the [Konyi] from

alienated farms should be continued ..."<sup>81</sup> The Commissioner for Lands accurately deduced this as approval of the eviction measures and suggested that compensation be paid.<sup>82</sup> This was opposed by the Kitale District Commissioner,<sup>83</sup> who was supported by his Provincial Commissioner. The latter did admit, however, that the Konyi were unhappy with the evictions, recalling:

I interviewed Headman Arap Kassis and several of his people last week, and they are most concerned with the provision of arable land suitable for cultivation. The moorlands on Mount Elgon - which are suitable for grazing will undoubtedly be too high to provide suitable land.<sup>84</sup>

The settlers resolved that no moorland be reserved for the Konyi.<sup>85</sup> Their concern evidently did not go beyond removing the squatters from the district. Those remaining in Trans Nzoia were attested under stiff squatter contracts. In 1934 the District Commissioner estimated their number to be 2014, with 7570 cattle and 2117 sheep. Those on the moorlands were estimated by the Forest Department to be 608, with 5,345 cattle and 1,764 sheep.<sup>86</sup> The accuracy of these figures is unveri-

fiable but they do provide an idea of the numbers involved. A victim of this incident recalls:

We were driven away because the Europeans said that the land had become theirs and that the cattle we were keeping could not produce enough milk and they were not of the special type they wanted. So we were driven away to the reserves.<sup>87</sup>

European settlement had meant economic dislocation for the Konyi, whose mixed pastoral and agricultural mode of production was constricted by denial of access to the best land. Like the Nandi of the KipKarren salient, who lost 45,000 acres to Soldier-Settlement,<sup>88</sup> land remained the basis of their grievances long after eviction.

Wage Labour

Squatters were the main source of farm labour in Trans Nzoia district, but over the years, a growing number of men from reserves and other European farming districts were arriving in search of wage employment. By 1927, there was a daily group of job seekers outside the DC's office in Kitale awaiting registration, during peak periods.<sup>89</sup> Zacharia Gicheru was among the early wage labourers. Born in Kiambu before 1914, he was later orphaned and according to him, "I came to the European farms in order to eat." Gicheru first worked on a Londiani farm and entered Trans Nzoia in 1930, when he was hired by a Saboti farmer called Anderson. In 1937 he moved to a farm near Centre Kwanza, before moving on to work for another settler near Sandum's Bridge.<sup>90</sup>

Cosmas Sifuna's experience illustrates some of the vagaries of wage labour. Arriving on Major Jack's farm in South - Western Trans Nzoia in 1930, he was initially deployed as a mshika kamba (rope holder), guiding a team of plough oxen along the furrows. His other duties included collecting maize stalks for burning. During the planting season, he and others walked along a line measured by rope, digging holes. Women and children followed behind, dropping in maize seed. Labourers turned out early, with ploughing starting at the crack of dawn.

Other work like clearing, planting and weeding started at 7 am, with the nyapara (overseer) allocating tasks. The usual signing off time was 3 p.m.

Wages were low, averaging between six and eight shillings per month for adults, with children being paid one or two shillings. The basic diet was invariably posho (maizemeal) and salt. Unlike squatters who were often allocated land along river banks, downhill from a European's compound, wage labourers occupied bachelor quarters constructed close together in lines.

Sifuna returned to the Bukusu reserve in 1932, at the height of the Depression, when employment opportunities were scarce. He re-entered Trans Nzoia in 1934 to work for a European near Kiminini, before migrating to Namanjalala to work for Vaughan-Philpott in 1936. In later years he was a sisal cutter on the farm of a settler called Moss, near Hoey's Bridge (now Moi's Bridge).<sup>91</sup>

This transient way of life seems to have characterised seasonal wage labour. Many young bachelors were forced to brave the hazards of farm labour by a heavy poll tax burden, compulsion by colonial headmen in reserves or sheer financial hardship. There were few alternatives for young men without land or cattle. Economic pressure was probably the major incentive, rather than wanderlust. During the Depression, taxation in particular, became

very oppressive in African reserves. Archdeacon Burns had raised this issue in the Legislative Council, claiming that in Central Kenya a sack of maize was being sold for one shilling and a goat for about the same amount, during tax collection.<sup>92</sup> In 1937, because of a surplus of unemployed men, the Trans Nzoia District Council advised the District Commissioner that there were no employment opportunities for Kipsigis in the district.<sup>93</sup> The African population was now estimated at 31,074, including an increasing percentage of ethnic groups from distant reserves like the Kikuyu, Luo and Kipsigis, who were mainly wage labourers.<sup>94</sup>

The outbreak of war in 1939 marked a transition for farm labour in the White Highlands. Increased agricultural production became an official priority. In 1940, for example, between 5000 and 6000 acres of flax was planted in Trans Nzoia.<sup>95</sup> Later that year the Nanyuki Farmers Association demanded labour conscription for civil purposes. In August, 1941, the Settlement and Production Board expressed concern over the labour position. Two months later the Kenya Farmers' Association called a meeting in Nakuru to protest over Government inaction. At the Association's annual general meeting, held in Kitale in December, 1941, members voted unanimously for civil conscription. This gesture had already been superceded by events,

however, since Governor Moore had secured Colonial Office approval for the introduction of agricultural labour conscription.<sup>96</sup>

Labour deployment was already an important function of the Trans Nzoia District Council, which sponsored an Assisted Recruitment Scheme.<sup>97</sup> Three hundred men were recruited for retting flax in 1941, for example.<sup>98</sup> Following termination of this scheme, colonywide labour conscription was introduced under the Defence (African Labour for Essential Undertakings) Regulations. Implementation of these measures in Trans Nzoia involved "the lively cooperation of the District Commissioner, North Kavirondo."<sup>99</sup> Low wages and difficult working conditions caused sporadic strikes and widespread desertions during the year.<sup>100</sup>

Under the Defence Regulations, European farmers submitted requests for conscripts to the District Labour Committee. Approved applications were sent to the Provincial Commissioner, who forwarded them to African district selection committees in various areas. This system was enforced throughout the highlands.<sup>101</sup> Kibukuna Matere, who was conscripted near Kamukuywa in 1942, was later deployed in Nakuru.<sup>102</sup> According to another informant, Jacob Masinde Matere, "when the war started they seized people. Some went off on forced labour for the Government, others went to KAR (Kings African Rifles) and the rest went

to the farms."<sup>103</sup> Conscript camps were established in Kitale and Nakuru.<sup>104</sup> The settlers enforced minimum wage rates, which averaged eight or nine shillings per month by 1946. Farm strikes were rife.<sup>105</sup>

Labour conscription ceased by Government Order on 31 December 1945, but Trans Nzoia settlers were allowed to retain men whose contracts had not been completed.

Subsequently, Minchin, the commandant of Kitale Labour Conscript Camp, announced that 250 conscripts would be available for the next planting season, with 90 going to Eldoret and 150 being retained in Trans Nzoia.

European settlers and Government officers attending a joint meeting of the Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia district production committees in Eldoret, decided that conscripts be allotted to sub-committees. Each sub-committee would be responsible for allocation and movement of labour between farms and no labourer would be returned to camp before completion of his work tickets.<sup>106</sup>

The official wartime policy of compulsory labour recruitment, therefore, had led to a rapid expansion of the wage labour force in Trans Nzoia. Unlike previous years, large numbers of men were being seasonally deployed simultaneously, with the result that squatters had ceased to be the main source of agricultural manpower within the district. These developments reflected changing labour

relations in an expanding European agricultural sector.

Social and economic conditions of African Farm Labour

A general meeting of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association was held in Kitale on December 10-11, 1921 and the effect of wage reduction on African labour was avidly discussed. One farmer, Elmer, proposed that a letter be written to the Chief Secretary, requesting a rebate on hut tax for Africans in European employment ranging from 12½% for three months work to 50% per cent for twelve months work. Furthermore the hut tax on ethnic groups which were major sources of labour and tax on non-labour providing peoples should be equalised. The resolution was passed unanimously. Elmer then proposed that a Select Committee be appointed to examine the effects of a scheme adopted the previous June for reducing wages, with any changes being based on a maximum signing on rate for unskilled labour of three shillings per month. The committee would also standardise a number of tickets covering all farm tasks, to ensure that hard workers earned more. After this resolution was carried with only one dissenter, Elmer proposed that a maximum wage be set for skilled labour and this was carried nem con. A labour committee was appointed, including Brigadier-General Baker Carr, Lt. Colonel Kirkwood, Messrs Manley, Taylor, Scally, Elmer, Hallowes, Tyack Eckhlin, Sharp, Hewitt, Brown and Kruger. 108

The Committee submitted its report to a general meeting of the association held in Kitale on 17 March 1922. and the following monthly rates were adopted:<sup>109</sup>

Category	Maximum Signing on rate	Maximum wage
Unskilled labour	Shs. 6/-	Shs. 10/-
Children	Shs. 4/-	-
Ox-drivers	Shs. 24/-	Shs. 30/-
Plough boys	Shs. 8/-	Shs. 12-
Headmen	Shs. 30/-	Shs. 40/-
Gangers	Shs. 8/-	Shs. 12/-
Women	Shs. 4/-	-
Squatters	-	Shs. 6/- with <u>posho</u>

Enforcing low wages throughout the district was a priority for many farmers. A general meeting of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association convened in Kitale on 6 June 1923 deplored violations of wage guidelines and resolved that the collective agreement must be upheld. The associations honorary secretary was instructed to contact a Kitale contractor who had raised wages to attract more labour, demanding that he conform to the stipulated maximum rate.<sup>110</sup>

The settlers refused to accept that poor pay was a major disincentive. They attributed intermittent labour shortages to African indolence and Government reluctance to resort to compulsion. Tebbitt, who farmed on Chebusan estate near Kitale, was an outspoken advocate of forced labour. Claiming that labour shortages were a consequence of rapidly expanding European agriculture, he argued that Africans were unwilling to work "unless one is willing to turn half one's holding into Native reserve and have a few squatters who will deign to work for 180 days each year." In his view, increased pay meant fewer months worked.<sup>111</sup> Condemning attempts "by those who favour the West Coast Policy to impose 'Dual Policy' at the settlers expense, he remained adamant that European interests were paramount.<sup>112</sup> A similar argument was pursued by another local farmer, Napier, who asserted that there were over 400 000 idle Africans available for farm labour. Alleging that Africans in Trans Nzoia could easily pay tax and meet living expenses for a whole year by selling two sheep and two broods of chicken per family, he proposed the introduction of vagrancy laws on the English model.<sup>113</sup>

European farmers justified harsh labour conditions in absurd ways. One Kitale settler dismissed allegations about the poor diet of African workers by referring to a Professor Drummond who believed that vitamin C was manufactured in the body by exposure to ultra-violet rays, regardless of the diet. In this settler's opinion, a naked African was exposed to sunlight, which converted posho and wild ants into vitamin C. Clothing or decent housing blocked the sun rays, making an African a "sour belly".<sup>114</sup> Le Breton, who farmed near Soy in Uasin Gishu district, asserted that including meat in the diet encouraged "sleep and lethargy." Explaining that this was the reason for most settlers issuing meat only on Saturday so that Sunday could "be spent in sleeping off the after effects," he claimed that housing Africans in permanent dwellings was unnecessary.<sup>115</sup>

The racial outlook of these Europeans was characteristic of this period. Governor Edward Grigg articulated these premises during a speech at Falmouth in England, when he asserted:

In the settler there you have one world and in the natives you have another world. The native in his own Reserve is living under his tribal organization, only guided by the offices of our Government. There is an entirely primitive world, living side by side with the civilization which our own people have already planted.<sup>116</sup>

Incidents of European brutality were not exceptional. One particularly gruesome case involved the severe beating of a five Africans by a European woman and her African employees in 1937. One victim died soon afterwards. The survivors were locked up in a maize store for the night and walked seventeen miles to Kitale hospital the following day.<sup>117</sup> Such cruelty usually earned derisory penalties. When a settler called Macdonald shot an African house servant dead with five bullets at point blank range during an alleged burglary attempt at Bellerine estate on the night of 4 April 1943, the Kitale District Commissioner refused to hold an inquest, demanding that Macdonald be charged for manslaughter. Following a routine inquest, Rudd, the Eldoret resident magistrate, nonchalantly ruled that the killing was justifiable homicide.<sup>118</sup> Whipping remained common place on particular farms, and in the opinion of Major Keyser, Member of Legislative Council for Trans Nzoia in 1945:

If flogging is considered degrading and is considered degrading by the person who is flogged, then I advocate it wholeheartedly, because imprisonment to many natives is not a deterrent as it carries no social stigma with it, whereas with a civilised person it carries a stigma with it all his life.<sup>119</sup>

Some settlers were neither brutal nor blatantly racist, adopting a paternalist approach in their relations with Africans. During a period when labourers sometimes took up to three months to complete a thirty day ticket, an employer's conscience was influential. The Trans Nzoia District Councillors once related this particular factor to the problem of sporadic labour shortages and concluded that because some farmers enjoyed a labour surplus while others experienced a shortage, the issue involved "the personality of the employer."<sup>120</sup> One fairly liberal farmer was Colonel H.F. Stoneham. He had bought an 1800 acres of land in Cherangani under the 1919 soldier settlement scheme,<sup>121</sup> resigning his army commission in 1925 to take up farming.<sup>122</sup> On occupying the farm, Stoneham decided to recruit Luo labour, having commanded Luo troops during an earlier tour of duty in East Africa. He initially hired a Luo from Gem called Odera, in 1925.<sup>123</sup> In February of the following year Odera brought another Luo from Gem called Apiyo Ombogo.<sup>124</sup> More Luo soon followed. Among these later arrivals was Leonard Ochieng, who arrived from Siaya in 1934 and was hired by Stoneham at the rate of five shillings per month.<sup>125</sup>

In 1926 Stoneham started evening classes for his labourers and Istaare Central School became the first formal African school in Trans Nzoia. He also established a dressing station which was maintained until an African

hospital was opened in Kitale . Such innovations made him a popular employer and his labour force grew rapidly from about fifty to one hundred and fifty.<sup>126</sup>

Stoneham's benevolence was unusual and reflected a sensitive nature, which steered him towards unusual pastimes. Besides farming he was a keen amateur ornithologist and started a small natural history museum in his house.<sup>127</sup> More often, racial relations were characterized by mutual animosity and the African response to European belligerence was often hostile. Arson was one way of exacting revenge against an unpopular employer. When Captain C.C. Johnstone lost 900 bags of maize and agricultural implements in a fire on his farm near Kitale, suspicion was directed towards discontented Bukusu coffee pickers. Rear-Admiral Crampton also lost his maize cribs in a fire on his Cherangani farm.<sup>128</sup> Covert resistance was frequently resorted to because of the risks involved in openly defying Europeans enjoying unquestioned authority. Labour overseers employed by settlers often hailed from <sup>a</sup> different ethnic group from most of the farm labour to minimise chances of active collaboration. This was exemplified on Mr. Hunter's farm on the slopes of Mount Elgon, where Zachayo Nyongesa Sindu and other Bukusu worked under the close supervision of a <sup>menacing</sup> Wanga overseer. Occasionally, a sympathetic overseer could ease the workload by ignoring idlers, as

was once the case on Mr. Moore's farm near Hoey's Bridge.<sup>129</sup>

In a situation where Africans were increasingly able to identify common grievances, especially concerning wages and working conditions, collective action could result. By 1937 the desertion rate was soaring<sup>130</sup> and the Trans Nzoia District Association published a list of tasks which labourers could perform.<sup>131</sup> The problem worsened as more wage labourers entered the district and during 1941 there were sporadic farm strikes and widespread desertions.<sup>132</sup>

There were <sup>isolated</sup> / incidents of assault on European employers. This was the case when Colonel Cunningham, an Endebess farmer, was attacked on the night of 15 August 1938. He had earlier sacked a Mugishu worker called Yafes, confiscating the latter's maize plot. Yafes was subsequently employed by a neighbouring settler called Heape. He evidently bore a grudge towards his former employer, however, deciding to steal some money in compensation for his lost maize. In the ensuing commotion Cunningham was seriously injured.<sup>133</sup> Cunningham had reduced the wages and cut the ticket of another suspect, Masobo, during the preceding week.<sup>134</sup> In the Africans' view, Cunningham would probably not deserve the investigating officer's description of his being "a good master and just." In the event Yafes was sentenced to 7½ years with hard