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PAICE'S PLACE: RACE AND POLITICS IN NANYUKI DISTRICT, KENYA, IN THE 1920s

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LOCUSTS CAME TO Nanyuki in 1928. So did the Prince of Wales.

The year was on the whole a dry one. Nanyuki had had good 'little rains' at the start of the year, but drought hit in the second half until a welcome shower in November. The drought was especially hard on the area's wheat growers, many of whom had invested heavily in new machinery. Apart from the always dominant concern with the weather, the year witnessed a certain amount of development and the normal minutiae of settler existence in Kenya. Nanyuki saw its very first wedding and the first scheduled air service to its township. The mail car, which ran twice a week between Nanyuki and Nyeri, was rammed by a rhinoceros. Arnold Paice, one of the earliest settlers in the district, had a holiday on the east African coast, his first sight of the sea in twenty-one years. Under the surface, the normal state of quiet desperation in which most people lived occasionally forced itself into the public consciousness. Alan Rathbone, son of the owner of the Nanyuki Trading Store, shot himself in November. Newspaper accounts said it was an accident; settler opinion held it to be yet another of the suicides for which Kenya was famous.[1]

Nanyuki was a remote settler district 130 miles north of Nairobi. It comprised about half a million acres of land in a broad swath to the west and north of Mount Kenya. Much of it was land left free by the second Maasai move of 1911, a controversial forced migration which led to the resignation of Governor Percy Girouard but no retribution for the uprooted Africans.[2] It became a white district isolated from the rest of the Highlands by the physical barriers of the Laikipia plains and Aberdare mountains in the

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1. This paper was originally presented to the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies, Montreal, May 1992. It relies heavily, although far from exclusively, on two sources: the monthly feature of the *East African Standard* weekly edition (hereafter *EAS*) entitled 'Nanyuki Notes', a feature that began in 1923; and the letters of Arnold Paice (Ms. 46, Royal Commonwealth Society, London). Paice's regular letters to his mother, and occasional ones to his father and other relatives, are probably the richest collection of an ordinary settler's private papers in existence. The correspondence was deposited at the RCS archives because of the combined efforts of A. T. Matson, Elspeth Huxley and Donald Simpson. Letters run in chronological order and are easy to find; we have therefore dispensed with box/file numbers, simply referring to date and correspondent. We would like to thank Joan Butler for her assistance in transcribing and amending our original text.

2. G. H. Mungeam, *British Rule in Kenya 1895–1912* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966), pp. 259–73.

north-east and east, and by the racial barriers of predominantly Kikuyu areas to the south. Nanyuki was, in settler parlance, decisively 'up-country'. Brigadier-General Wheatley captured the isolation within his district, while confirming the invisibility of its Africans: 'It's on the dull side never by any chance seeing a white face week in week out'.[3]

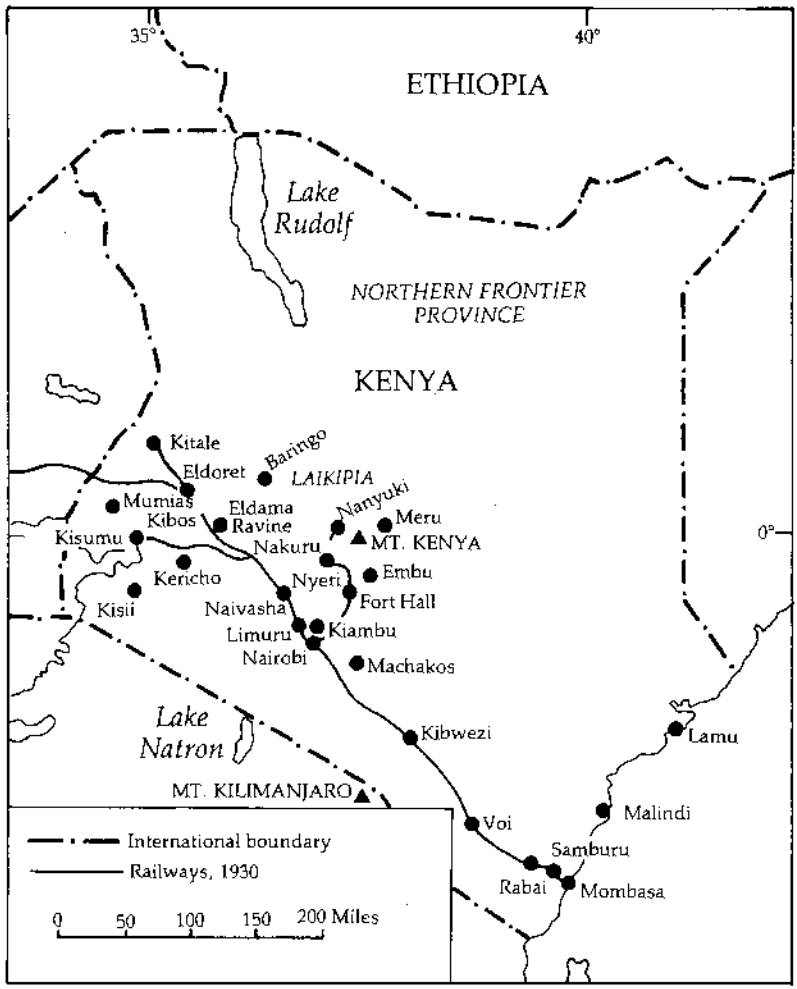
By 1928, though, it was becoming developed. The air service was one indication. Wild game was practically 'prehistoric'.[4] And there were about a hundred and fifty actual settlers, that is, Europeans operating farms (one hundred men, fifty wives).[5] There were also a small number of whites living in Nanyuki township and a number of landless Afrikaners. In 1930 the Nairobi train arrived. Even so, Nanyuki did not enjoy a separate administrative existence. The local District Commissioner was in Nyeri, and Nanyuki shared its Legislative Council member with Nyeri and Laikipia.

Despite its incorporation into Nyeri, Nanyuki had its peculiar identity. Indeed, white Kenya was more a congeries of localities than a unified whole, primarily because of the dislocation resulting from sparse settlement and poor transportation. Settlers, therefore, lived in tiny universes. The historiographic richness of colonial Kenya is tempered by the distortions of Nairobi-centricity, of big politicians like Lord Delamere and Sir Francis Scott either pressing for self-government in the face of metropolitan intransigence[6] or, from a differing ideological standpoint, allying with the colonial state to exploit the African masses.[7] The fight for a European unofficial majority on the Legislative Council existed of course, but for many settlers in the districts it was just not relevant. As the editor of the *Nakuru Advertiser* lamented in 1929:

> . . . in this district we are sick and tired of politics; more and more we realise that the future of the country and ourselves is in economic development and not in political juggling.[8]

For most settlers the district, not Nairobi, was the centre of their existence. This brief study of Nanyuki in the 1920s endeavours to reveal the essence of white community life.

3. Rhodes House Library, Oxford (RHL). Wheatley Papers. Ms. Afr. s. 799(2), f. 38. Wheatley to Aunt July, 13 January 1921.
4. Paice to Mother, 17 June 1927.
5. F. J. Joelson, ed., *Eastern Africa Today* (London, East Africa, 1928), p. 194. Joelson's book is a survey of British East Africa in 1927; the section on Nanyuki is on pp. 194–97.
6. An example of this genre is Marjorie Dilley, *British Policy in Kenya Colony* (New York, 1937).
7. For instance, Richard Wolff, *The Economics of Colonialism: Britain and Kenya 1870–1930* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1974).
8. 15 June 1929, cited in M. G. Redley, 'The Politics of a Predicament: The White Community in Kenya, 1918–32'. Unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1976, p. 212.



KENYA COLONY

Nonetheless, we are alert to the potential parochialism of local studies. In order to establish some hypotheses on race and politics in what was officially the first decade of colonial status, we move from an overview of the district to a microstudy of one white farm, Paice's place. We then try to establish linkages with colony-wide politics. This is very much a white story but one which we hope will illuminate the process of white supremacy at the ground level.

The District

Nanyuki in the 1920s was a comparatively new part of white Kenya. The first farms in the district had been allocated in 1910 as the settler frontier

moved north from Nyeri, but the bulk of the area remained unalienated because of the political complications inherent in the second Maasai Treaty and the First World War.[9] It was only with the 1919 Soldier Settlement Scheme, an official attempt to increase Kenya's white settler population by providing cheap land to ex-service men and women, that Nanyuki came into its own as a distinct area. The first soldier settlers began trickling into the district at the start of 1920, but in Nanyuki, as in much of the rest of Kenya, the Soldier Settlement Scheme was chiefly notable for how few soldiers it settled. Few of the scheme's participants cared to venture themselves or their capital in a district so remote from transportation facilities while others, such as the Honourable Mrs Eleanor Grant, came, saw and sold out as soon as possible. There were only seventy-three landowners living in the district by 1921, yet these few individuals set their stamp on local white society in the 1920s.[10]

The dominant element in Nanyuki white society was composed of retired military officers. They dominated the Nanyuki Farmers' Association and local politics, the local economy and local social life. Indeed, any newspaper account of any activity in Nanyuki in the 1920s reads like an Army List, as the Brigadier Generals, Colonels, Majors and Captains were counted. These individuals were all comparatively well off. The Soldier Settlement Scheme had specified that applicants had to have at least a £1,000 capital available to develop their farms, a requirement which effectively limited participation in the scheme to the wealthiest three per cent of contemporary British society. They had come to Kenya for a variety of reasons. Many were Anglo-Indians, i.e. British soldiers who had served much of their careers in India and were essentially refugees from the rising tide of Indian nationalism.[11] Others were career officers who found channels of promotion clogged as a result of the First World War, and yet others were reluctant to return to the dull world of peacetime soldiering after the greatest conflict in human history. All, however, had the habit of command, reinforced by their financial resources and guaranteed incomes in the form of military pensions. What brought them to Kenya and Nanyuki was the opportunity of a career in settler agriculture which provided independence and prestige, an occupation suitable for a retired gentleman; it even offered the possibility of income.[12] The fact that very few of them had any agricultural experience was to produce a number of personal financial tragedies, but

9. Errol Trzebinski, *The Kenya Pioneers* (Heinemann, London, 1985), p. 152.
10. Paice to Mother, 8 February 1920; Elspeth Huxley, *The Mottled Lizard* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1983 [1962]), p. 30; C. T. Stoneham, *Africa All Over* (Hutchinson, London, 1934), p. 100.
11. C. J. D. Duder, 'The Settler Response to the Indian Crisis of 1923 in Kenya: Brigadier-General Philip Wheatley and "Direct Action"', *J. of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, **XVII**, 3 (1989), pp. 349–73.
12. Col. A. G. Arbuthnot, 'Life and Prospects in Kenya Colony', *J. of the Royal Artillery*, **LIII** (1926), pp. 137–51.

it did not stop them from trying. And Nanyuki's isolation, although it was to create economic problems, was also a positive social advantage, as a one-time butcher in Nanyuki would later write:

> . . . they had all that obvious pride of birth and race which makes the well-born Englishman an object of dislike in the Colonies. But here they formed a little world of their own. Except for the South African settlers . . . they were the population, and their manners were not yet rubbed off by contact with the less fortunate of mankind.[13]

Nanyuki's premier citizen was Major Lionel Gascoigne. There was not a single aspect of settler Nanyuki that he did not play a part in. His Nanyuki Cash Store was the first in Nanyuki township. With four other ex-artillery officers, he owned Gunners' Venture Limited, a seventeen thousand acre farm, including a sawmill, outside Nanyuki. He was also a Justice of the Peace, President of the Sports Club, Nanyuki's usual delegate to the Convention of Associations (the main settler organization) and secretary of the Co-operative Creamery. A close friend and fellow Anglo-Indian, General Wheatley, built Nanyuki's race course, was occasionally President of the local Farmers' Association and was also President of the Sports Club. Nanyuki also had its aristocratic element, Lady Mary Boyd, and even its 'resident tourist', the Hon. H. G. O. Bridgman, a man with 'bags of money' and extensive interests in both South Africa and Britain. His main activity during his visits to the district was shooting, but the fact that he also contributed £200 to the establishment of the local creamery indicates that even absentee landlords did not entirely neglect their local responsibilities.[14]

They were not the only settlers in Nanyuki. There were plenty of working farmers even among the ranks of the soldier settlers. J. D. Chater, for example, had been a Commander in the Royal Navy in the First World War, but he had also spent five years before the war as a dairy farmer in New Zealand. Settlers with experience in the Dominions supplied white Kenya with much of its agricultural expertise. Chater was Chairman of the Nanyuki Creamery, acted as Honorary Secretary to the Stockbreeders' Association, and would later be Secretary to the Kenya Farmers' Association.[15] There was also a relatively large English South African contingent in Nanyuki; individuals like E. M. V. Keneally and Segar Bustard. Arnold Paice, who had lived in South Africa and whose experience of the British Army was confined to serving in the ranks in the South African War, might be considered a member of this group.

13. Stoneham, *Africa*, p. 135.
14. *EAS*, 10 August 1929, 12 April 1935, 8 October 1927; Paice to Mother, 29 May 1924.
15. *EAS*, 25 March 1949.

Living standards for all landed settlers were high. W. S. Beale, a local resident, assumed that an average settler household would have four domestic servants.[16] Many of the settlers lived in Army tents or daub and wattle huts when they first arrived in Nanyuki, but by the late 1920s cedar houses with brick chimneys were much more the norm. Car ownership was extremely common. There were eighty-five cars and thirty-two lorries in Nanyuki owned by settlers. Given over 150 adult whites in the district, the ratio of people to cars was much higher than contemporary America. Most of the cars in the district, in fact, were American. The pathetic performance of the British automobile industry in the twentieth century had its own small reflection in Kenya. Holidays 'home' were also common. Paice felt that the fact that his neighbour, E. M. V. Keneally, sent his wife and children 'home' sailing Second Class, while Keneally himself stayed in Nanyuki, was a telling indication of comparative poverty. Cars were more than just a luxury. The large size of many farms and the amount of unoccupied land in the district often put neighbours fifteen miles away. One resident, writing in 1935, thought that a neighbour five miles away 'seemed very close'.[17]

The sparse population, and the social origins of the settler community, showed in its social life. This was strongly influenced by Anglo-Indian models. Nanyuki's main social event was its gymkhana, three days of races, polo and social events which attracted people from all over the colony. This had been founded in 1921 by Lt.-Col. J. A. Pollock, a soldier settler who had served in India for six years. Both the name and the sports involved—racing, tent pegging and especially polo—reflected Anglo-Indian origins. Indeed, weekly polo matches were one of the early features of Nanyuki's existence. Initially, the gymkhana was an amateur organization but it soon came under the control of the Nanyuki Sports Club. With two hundred and fifty members, it was the largest organization of any kind in Nanyuki and it had grown to a three-day event by the late 1920s.[18] But it was hardly the only distinctive sporting organization in Nanyuki. There were also two packs of hounds in the district. Lt.-Col. J. A. Pollock's Loildaiga Hounds chased ostrich, while the North Kenya Hounds were successful enough to be converted into a subscription pack in 1928.[19] Settler Nanyuki, on the whole, played hard. The usual agenda for the gymkhana consisted of dancing all night and then adjourning for a full day of polo. Nanyuki showed white Kenya's usual tolerance for the public display of private vices. Arnold Paice had earlier noted two unmarried female

16. W. S. Beale, 'East Africa 1: Kenya Colony', *United Empire* (April 1921), pp. 221–222.
17. Nora St John Beale, *The Hazelbys in Kenya* (G. G. Harrap, London, 1935), p. 12. The other information in this paragraph is from: Mrs R. Gascoigne, 'Nanyuki Thirty-Four Years Ago', RHL. Ms. Afr. s. 56, Box 6; Paice to Mother, 9 July 1923, 10 August 1924; Joelson, *Eastern Africa*, p. 196.
18. *Ibid.*; Paice to Mother, 12 March 1923, 16 December 1928; *EAS*, 15 January 1921.
19. Paice to Sister, 20 May 1924; *EAS*, 1 September 1928.

visitors staying unchaperoned with a local settler, 'not at all to the scandal of this funny countryside'.[20] The distaff side of the settler population was as distinctively free as it was in most of the rest of white Kenya: 'Cigarette smoking, drinking, dressing in khaki slacks and shirts like men's, hair cut and brushed like men's!! Mrs Pankhurst & Co. surely did their job thoroughly.'[21] This was miles removed, however, from anything like Happy Valley. Nanyuki was simply too remote from Nairobi to attract 'pseudo settlers' and human dramas tended to be on a more pedestrian level than that of the Lord Errolls of Kenya.

Nanyuki's lifestyle drew much from Anglo-India and the Shires, and like those places, it did not provide much intellectual stimulation. There was no library in Nanyuki and the nearest bookstore was in Nairobi. A small community newspaper, the *North Kenya Kelelite*, enjoyed a troubled existence, hampered by the lack of population and a propensity to indulge in personality. No settler had a radio in 1928 and the more bookish settlers found the isolation difficult, although someone in the district did get a letter from George Bernard Shaw in 1924. Nanyuki could also boast its own published author in the form of Nora St John Beale, wife of a New Zealand soldier settler, who produced two novels of romantic fiction, *Flame and Wind* and *Mustard and Cress* in the 1920s, and a couple of children's books in the 1930s. Otherwise, cows were more important than Cowper in Nanyuki. The district's relative maturity by the late 1920s was reflected by the establishment of a government school in the township in 1927; there were also two private schools in the area, but settlers who could, dispatched their children to boarding schools in Nairobi or, better yet, England.[22]

The lifestyle of the landed settlers dominated Nanyuki, but there were also Europeans involved in retailing and the service industry in Nanyuki township. They ran the butcheries, stores and garages that serviced the landed settlers. Most of them were rank amateurs and pretty bad at that; they were barely one step above the level of poor white in Paice's estimation.[23] C. T. Stoneham, who later entitled his autobiography *From Hobo to Hunter*, ran a butcher's shop in Nanyuki in the 1920s. His problems were perhaps those of the shopkeepers as a whole. He had no experience whatsoever of being a butcher and depended on Major Gascoigne's cook to identify joints of meat. His only customers were other Europeans and there were so few of them that he had to throw away half his meat every week before it rotted. In the end, he gave up.[24] J. S. Rathbone was perhaps the most successful of the district's shopkeepers. He owned a soldier settlement farm in North Kenya,

20. Paice to Mother, 12 September 1921.
21. Paice to Mother, 23 July 1924.
22. Information in this paragraph is drawn from *EAS*, 17 November 1923, 21 April 1928, 22 March 1924, 18 August 1928; Joelson, *Eastern Africa*, p. 196.
23. Paice to Mother, 17 November 1926.
24. C. T. Stoneham, *From Hobo to Hunter* (1956), pp. 172–75; *EAS*, 5 February 1927.

established a store on it, another store in Nyeri, the Township Store in Nanyuki, and also owned the Dewdrop Inn in Rumuruti. He lost his farm to his mortgagor and his Nyeri store went bankrupt in 1926, but Rathbone remained in Nanyuki. He was a member of both the Township Committee and a driving force behind Nanyuki's school, but significantly he was never involved in either the gymkhana or the Nanyuki Farmers' Association.[25]

There was also a number of Afrikaners in the Nanyuki area. Dingaan's Day was celebrated on the Uasin Nyiro river in 1928 and over two hundred English- and Dutch-speaking South Africans attended. Afrikaners had been in the district since the first days of white settlement. Most were landless. They lived as squatters on unoccupied farms, dodging consistent government attempts to evict them, or as *bywoners* (landless labourers). Arnold Paice had an Afrikaner family, including ten children, working on his farm in exchange for grazing land and food. Both the lack of land and the number of children were indicative of the marginal status of the Afrikaners. They ran transport, but by the end of the decade they were being ousted by lorries driven by Indians. They also poached game; indeed, this was the one area in which they made a valuable contribution to the settler economy. They had no part in the gymkhana, or anything else to do with authority in Nanyuki.[26]

The relations between the landed ex-officers and the rest of European Nanyuki were not entirely smooth. Arnold Paice's letters from the 1920s are filled with references to the 'far too swanky and tactless' ex-colonels that the ex-private had to deal with. Occasionally, the tensions turned violent, as when C. T. Stoneham and Commander Hook, owner of the Silverbeck Hotel, once settled a personal quarrel with their fists, in an encounter famous in the annals of settler Kenya. It might even be possible to see political repercussions from these social resentments. The victor in the 1927 election to the local seat in the Legislative Council, E. M. V. Keneally, was a South African who had beaten Brigadier General H. L. Beynon, who had inadvisably made his family tie with the Lawrence brothers, of Punjab fame, a main plank in his campaign platform. Conclusions, however, are hazardous when based on a voting population of 158 people.[27]

The centre of the district, the glue that held it together, was the township of Nanyuki. This was where political and social events were held, mail picked up, whisky bought, cars repaired and wheat delivered to the local godown, milk to the local creamery and pigs to the local bacon factory. The township, like much else in settler Kenya, had first been established by the

25. For a history of Rathbone's farm, see Kenya National Archives, Nairobi (KNA). Kenya, Department of Lands, LO 14796.
26. *EAS*, 29 December 1928; J. A. Wolmans to Resident Commissioner, Nyeri, 7 September 1922: 'I am staying on this farm by no authority whatever'. KNA. Kenya, Department of Lands, LO 15503; Paice to Mother, 14 March 1921, 21 October 1925; *EAS*, 29 December 1928.
27. Stoneham, *Africa All Over*, p. 186; *EAS*, 22 January 1927.

colonial government. When Nanyuki was opened to Europeans in 1919 the local District Commissioner in Nyeri, correctly anticipating that the bulk of the new settlers would be too far from Nyeri to administer directly, designated government land at the junction of the Nan Yoke (sic) and Likki rivers as a new township. His choice was confirmed by the Commissioner of Lands and Nanyuki was officially gazetted a township in November 1920, with boundaries giving it the same area as the City of Birmingham. Elaborate schedules of administrators and civil servants to staff the new town were also drawn up. There were so few whites in the district by 1921, however, that the only administrative presence was an African police sergeant and twenty *askari*.[28]

The first settler building in the town was Major Lionel Gascoigne's Nanyuki Cash Store, shortly joined by Commander Logan Hook's Silverbeck Hotel. It was across the bar of the latter that most of the white community's limited business was done. Further development was hampered by political events. All sales of Crown land, including township plots, were suspended in 1921 pending the settlement of the then-current Indian question. The suspension remained in effect for years and Major Gascoigne moved his store, and the contract Post Office that went with it, to private land outside the township. There a second township developed with a general store, garages and a blacksmith to rival the general stores, garage and blacksmith in the government township. It gave Nanyuki's urban geography a dispersed nature which it retains to the present day. The township was in a fairly healthy condition by the late 1920s. There were even four stone buildings, a mark of both permanence and success in colonial Kenya. Nanyuki township, however, was still very much a dependency of the larger town of Nyeri. That was where the District Commissioner was and while Nanyuki had a resident nurse by 1928, Dr Doig's Nursing Home in Nyeri was the nearest medical facility. Banking services were still provided by a representative of the Nyeri branch of the Standard Bank and a chaplaincy fund brought the Reverend Pitt-Pitts up from Nyeri for religious needs. Most of the marriages and burials in Nanyuki, in fact, were done by the local Justices of the Peace.[29]

Nanyuki township served as the headquarters for the local settler economy. This was almost purely agricultural. There were two sawmills working in the forests of Mount Kenya, but the cedar they produced was only for local consumption. The basic problem for the sawmills and the rest of the local economy was communications. The branch line of the Kenya and Uganda Railway did not reach Nanyuki until 1930. In the meantime, settlers had to depend on roads which were legendarily bad. The main route between

28. KNA. PC/CP. 9/6/1 Minute Papers on Soldier Settlement, Kenya, 1919–1920.
29. Paice to Mother, 20 May 1920, 24 June 1926; Nora St John Beale, *Mustard and Cress* (Leonard Parsons, London, 1924), p. 264; *EAS*, 4 June 1927; Joelson, *Eastern Africa*, p. 196. Paice conducted the burial service for Alan Rathbone (to Mother, 16 December 1928).

Nanyuki and Nyeri was locally known as the 'Black Sea'. Simply getting to and from one settler's farm in North Kenya in 1919 had involved three weeks of walking behind an ox cart. With transportation costs eating up any profits, most local settlers went into stock raising. There were nine thousand 'grade' and a thousand locally-bred cattle on European farms in 1928 and twenty thousand 'grade' and four thousand 'native' sheep. It was not an impressive number for half a million acres of land and the amount of cultivation was almost miniscule, with two thousand acres of wheat in 1927.[30] The standards of European agriculture were not high, as Arnold Paice, one of the most progressive farmers in the district, noted in the early years, '. . . at present our methods would probably give an English farmer a fit'.[31] The slow progress and low standards of agriculture could be put down partly to the difficulties of pioneering a new district with uncertain rainfall. It took years to build up a herd, subject to all the problems of drought, disease and lions, and Paice estimated that it took five acres of land to support a single cow.[32]

Brigadier Generals seem to have made especially bad farmers. Philip Wheatley sank much of his capital into an utterly uneconomic fruit orchard, somehow imagining Nanyuki to be England. He sold out in 1924 and pursued a more successful career simply as a retired officer in the township. General Sir R. H. Ewart, another of the soldier settlers, sold out in 1925 and returned to England. It was statistics and examples of the kind Nanyuki could provide which have led a long series of observers, beginning with Norman Leys in the 1920s, to assert that white settlement in Kenya was fundamentally an uneconomic phenomenon only able to keep going through expensive and inefficient government supports.[33]

It might be noted that Nanyuki settlers were more than aware of their own precarious economic position, derived in the main from the restricted local market. The settlers in the far north of the district, those furthest from the railway, supplied the King's African Rifle battalion, stationed at Meru, with food. It was an important enough market for Nanyuki's elected representative to raise objections to government plans for the garrison to grow its own food.[34] Wheat growing, which had begun with the first soldier settlers—men who initially sowed their crop by hand—was totally dependent on the local market.[35]

The stock farmers' response to the isolation of their district was to use organization to overcome it. The Stockbreeders of Mount Kenya was

30. *EAS*, 24 November 1928; RHL. Ms. Afr. s. 782, Box 3, File 3. J. S. Rathbone, memoirs, in Elspeth Huxley Papers; Joelson, *Eastern Africa*, p. 195.
31. Paice to Mother, 22 June 1921.
32. Paice to Mother, 31 April 1925.
33. Paice to Mother, 23 July 1924, 26 August 1928; Norman Leys, *Kenya* (London, 1924).
34. Kenya, *Legislative Council Debates*, 18 August 1925, Public Record Office, Kew [PRO]. CO 544.
35. Joelson, *Eastern Africa; EAS*, 20 November 1926, 24 September 1927.

founded in 1921 primarily as a pressure group to get the government to establish a canning plant in Kenya. The Stockbreeders expanded their activities to include building stockyards in Nanyuki, holding stock sales in the township every six months, and securing 10,000 rounds of free government ammunition to exterminate local herds of zebra. Their chief accomplishment was the establishment of the Stockbreeders Direct Meat Supply Company in 1923 which opened its own butchery in Nairobi to break the 'ring' of Nairobi butchers who had cornered the one big urban market in the colony. The Direct Meat Supply Company was employing a staff of seven in Nairobi and supplying a hundred sheep and twenty-five oxen a week to the Nairobi market. The Stockbreeders were also instrumental in the foundation of Nanyuki's Co-operative Creamery. One was essential if Nanyuki was to develop and if Nanyuki's settlers were to get the vital monthly cheque a Creamery would produce. The first general meeting was held in December 1927. There were thirty-seven shareholders, with the largest sum subscribed by Lt.-Col. the Hon. H. G. O. Bridgman. The Creamery itself was opened in March 1928 and with it the settlers had in place the basic agricultural apparatus which would enable them to survive the depression.[36]

The basic political voice of the district was the Nanyuki Farmers' Association. The N.F.A. was typical of the Farmers Associations found all over settler Kenya. It spoke loudly and much on virtually every subject under the sun from railways through wage levels to East African Federation. It also nominated individuals to sit on the District Committee and Road Board that advised the District Commissioner in Nyeri and sent a delegate, usually Major Gascoigne, to the Convention of Associations, the unofficial 'Settler Parliament'. Average attendance at its meetings in the 1920s, however, was thirty and the N.F.A. had virtually no Afrikaner members. There was, in fact, a move among local Afrikaner residents to establish a separate Colonial Farmer's Association as their own distinctive voice in 1927. The proposal failed, but it did have the effect of changing the N.F.A. The executive committees of the Stockbreeders' Association and the N.F.A. were combined with two representatives each from Nanyuki's wheat growers and Afrikaners to form the Stockbreeders' and Producers' Association at the end of 1927. The new body was both a political organization and a marketing and distribution agency.[37]

One area that the local Association avoided was European electoral politics. Nanyuki was part of the Kenya constituency and the sitting Legislative Council member from 1925 was E. M. V. Keneally. He had won the seat in a by-election on the strength of his identification with

36. Paice to Mother, 12 September 1921, 26 October 1923, 24 November 1927; *EAS*, 26 December 1925, 24 March 1928, 17 December 1927, 7 April 1928.
37. *EAS*, 13 February 1926, 26 November 1927, 24 December 1927.

'Conservative policy and the interests of the small man', and retained it in the 1927 general election. Keneally, according to a friend and neighbour, had an extremely difficult personality and he was certainly unpopular with the other settler representatives in the Legislative Council, but this probably did him little harm in his own constituency. Settler voters liked their members to be independent and there was some local resentment of Lord Delamere, the settler political leader. Delamere was the largest landowner in the colony and there was a widespread feeling that he used his political influence to feather his own nest. In any event, electoral politics in Nanyuki were almost as much a minority interest as the N.F.A. Less than half of the eligible voting population bothered to cast their ballots in the 1927 election.[38]

A pressing issue for local whites in the late 1920s was Somali competition. One of the main goals of the local Association in 1928 was the ouster of all Somali-owned cattle from the district. A wave of Somali cattle traders had appeared in Nanyuki with the Soldier Settlement Scheme and stayed to squat on Crown and unoccupied land. Many settlers built up their herds from this source, but the Somalis were also resented for their truculence and their skill as economic competitors in the meat and dairy markets. Protestations to the governor and motions by Keneally in the Legislative Council requesting the eviction of the Somalis into the Northern Frontier District, had reduced five thousand Somali cattle down to a thousand by the end of the decade. The remainder and their owners squatted on township land offering passive resistance to further government efforts to move them. The settlers considered even these reduced numbers an example of government 'supineness, inefficiency and vacillation'.[39]

The other main racial competitors to the settler position in the 1920s, the Indians, were comparatively thin on the ground in Nanyuki. There were only five Indian-owned businesses in the township and Indians, contrary to their position in the rest of the colony, were in a distinct minority. Settler economic relations with the Indians were extensive. Indians provided much of the district's motor transport and settlers were seldom hesitant about business dealings or borrowing money from Indians. The collective political response of the settlers to the Indians, however, was loathing and contempt. During the Indian crisis of 1923, when it looked as if the Colonial Office would actually give the Indians equal rights with the settlers, white Nanyuki had united to threaten armed rebellion against the British government. General Wheatley had actually been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the prospective settler forces in all of Kenya. Anglo-Indians who hated Indian nationalism in India were hardly amenable to it in their

38. *EAS*, 23 May 1925, 22 January 1927. Paice to Mother, 25 January 1927.
39. *EAS*, 24 December 1927; Kenya, *Legislative Council Debates*, 25 March 1926, 1 January 1928, 18 March 1928; Joelson, *Eastern Africa*, 195.

adopted homes. Emotions had calmed down by the mid-1920s, but it is unlikely that feelings had changed.[40]

It was, of course, Nanyuki's African population which was at the receiving end of most settler political attention. The actual size of this population is difficult to gauge. There was no African census before 1948, but the local estimate was that the district had two hundred Africans in regular employment. The number is surprisingly small and reflects the low labour requirements of a stock-raising district. The local settlers mainly dealt with Africans as a labour force. They provided domestic servants in settler houses and hands in the field, because despite all the talk of being farmers, white settlers supervised labour; they only did the most skilled operations themselves. Labour in Nanyuki came from a variety of sources. Maasai and Kipsigis were much preferred as 'herdboys' because they were considered pastoral peoples and had experience with cattle. A few settlers also used Somalis or Kipsigis as 'houseboys', but the bulk of domestic and agricultural labour came from a wave of Kikuyu squatters who had also entered the region with the Soldier Settlement Scheme.[41]

Labour was never much of a problem to the settlers. Nanyuki's slow development and pastoral economy spared its farmers the worries which beset other districts. This was beginning to change by the late 1920s when the higher wages paid by the coffee farmers of Nyeri were drawing labour away from Nanyuki. This might have become a serious handicap if the depression had not intervened.

On the level of human relations between settlers and Africans, the picture from Nanyuki is rather mixed. The district escaped any of the incidents of flogging and murder which so blighted white Kenya's reputation in the 1920s, but references to interviewing a worker with a *kiboko*, a rhinoceros hide whip, are common in settler letters. Many of the problems resulted from settler lack of knowledge of African languages.[42]

As a result of this lack of communication, the settlers seem to have viewed the Africans of Nanyuki as living in a separate, mysterious world of their own. Newspaper reports from the district noted an outbreak of murders among African labour but with no explanation of why it was happening. Direct settler involvement with African lives was limited to such items as using a local witch doctor to uncover an African cattle thief. Individual settler reactions to Africans also varied. It was often assumed that there

40. Joelson, *Eastern Africa*, p. 196. For the Indian crisis, see C. J. D. Duder, 'The Settler Response to the Indian Crisis'; and C. Youé, 'The Threat of Settler Rebellion and the Imperial Predicament: The Denial of Indian Rights in Kenya, 1923', *Canadian Jl of History* **12**, 3 (1978), pp. 347–60.

41. See R. van Zwanenberg, 'The Economic Response of Kenya Africans to European Settlement, 1903–1939', in Bethwell Ogot, ed., *Hadith 4* (EAPH, Nairobi, 1972), p. 225; Joelson, *Eastern Africa*, p. 196.

42. Paice to Mother, 21 November 1925, 16 February 1928; RHL. Ms. Afr. s. 799, Vol. I. Wheatley Papers, Wheatley to Father, 26 February 1920.

was a 'knack' to handling Africans. Some settlers, like General Wheatley, thought they had it: 'For some reason the black man seems to like me', but others did not. Ex-officers, in particular, used to instant obedience and good domestic servants in India, found Africans a trial, but as Arnold Paice noted, '. . . a lifetime spent in the old regular Army is not a good preparation for a country like this'. E. M. V. Keneally, on the other hand, an experienced South African settler, '. . . is and always was very bad at handling niggers and he can never keep his boys any time'.[43] Beyond individual relationships, the settlers often dealt with Africans by simply ignoring them. Contemporary descriptions of Nanyuki township contain no mention whatsoever of African residents in the town. News from Nanyuki was exclusively concerned with the activities of the settlers. They were important. Africans featured occasionally as exotic items, but otherwise they had no part to play in the dramas of white settlement. It was as if they were not there.

Far more settler attention was devoted to Nanyuki's fauna. This could be dangerous. A Nanyuki settler was mauled by a lion in 1921 and another was lucky to survive an encounter with a rhinoceros in 1923. Arnold Paice also lost five cattle to a lion in 1924. With concerns like these there can be little doubt that the vast majority of local whites regarded all game as either vermin or target practice. A concerted campaign was launched in 1925 to destroy the zebra herds in the district, using free government ammunition and the employment of Afrikaner hunters. This campaign not only culled the zebra, but also effectively drove most of the rest of the game from the district. Lions were comparatively scarce by 1926 and while two elephants were actually shot inside the township limits in 1924, even the sight of elephants was a treasured moment by the 1930s.[44]

Paice's place

Arnold Paice was a working farmer with a 3,000 acre farm. Although a product of English 'society', Hampshire farming and preparatory school, Paice had to work off-farm to survive. He was a jack-of-all-trades: sheep-trader, wainwright, transport-rider, brick-maker, market-gardener, and builder of houses, cattle-dips and race-track rails. He was also part of the political arm of unofficialdom, serving in the mid-1920s as Justice of the Peace and Attesting Officer for labour tenancy contracts, positions which involved substantial interchange with African 'subjects', a difficult task given Paice's lack of knowledge of either Kikuyu or Swahili.

43. *EAS*, 9 February 1924, 6 March 1926; RHL. Ms. Afr. s. 799. Wheatley to Father, 6 June 1926, Vol. II; Paice to Mother, 9 July 1923, 15 June 1920.
44. Paice to Mother, 22 May 1921, 8 March 1924, 21 October 1925, 4 June 1926; *Kenya Observer*, 7 April 1923; *EAS*, 4 October 1924; Interview with Mrs Gladys Anderson, 6 March 1977. Mrs Anderson and her husband, a retired army officer, moved to Nanyuki district in 1929. Thanks to Dr Jocelyn Murray for this reference.

At the age of 20 Paice had fled his parents' chosen career for him—tea-tasting in London—to join the adventure of the South African War at the turn of the century. His return to England was brief for he went back to South Africa for six years 'getting jobs on farms but with little hope of ever getting one of my own'.[45] His Natalian years ended with another military adventure, and this time a medal of honour for his role in the 1906 suppression of the Zulu rising led by Bambatha. In 1907 he sailed for Kenya and stayed there for the rest of his life, a life that spanned almost the entire period of white settlement in Kenya, and a life that ended in Nanyuki hospital in Kenya's year of independence. In 1919 Paice had let his mother know that he had no intention of returning to his 'dear old country . . . there is a sort of attraction about Africa with all its drawbacks and multitude of stock disease'.[46] By that time Paice was reasonably settled. The gangly six foot four inch lifelong bachelor who had originally eked out a living as an odd-job man and white sharecropper, and who had to borrow £400 to 'prove' that he had the capital for land ownership,[47] had been a farmer in Nanyuki for a decade.

Paice's letters to his mother, over an extended period of time, 1907–1933 for his Kenya years, and remitted on a regular basis, were often lengthy despatches. Since Paice's visits to anywhere outside Nanyuki were rare, he hardly ever went to Nairobi or the coast, it would be accurate to say that he was immersed in Nanyuki affairs. The letters themselves, written to pass away many lonely days on the farm while constructing an image of his society for the mother he had left behind, are a social commentary of some candour. In the confidentiality of his correspondence he was able to avoid the scrutiny of fellow settlers; explicit objections to white conduct (of which there are a few), objections which could, in Dane Kennedy's words, 'jeopardize the outward display of white solidarity'[48] were safely tucked away in the letter home. In many instances, Paice's missives conform to the racism and cultural chauvinism emblematic of settler cosmology. Yet they also reveal nuances and insights which mainstream literature and settler anecdotal reminiscences tend to dismiss or avoid.[49]

Racial dominance was the hallmark of colonial Kenya. Whether that racial dominance originated, as Louis Hartz has suggested, as an extension

45. Paice to Huxley, 28 December 1956, Huxley Papers 3/3/52.
46. To Mother, 12 March 1919.
47. To Mother, 20 February 1908; To Huxley, 28 December 1956, Huxley Papers, 3/3/53.
48. Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler society and culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1939* (Duke University Press, Durham, 1987), p. 181.
49. When Paice was about to deposit his letters with the Royal Commonwealth Society he wrote to Donald Simpson: 'As I think you have heard, they are really very personal letters & contain a good deal of entirely family interest, but of course there is a good deal about the early days in Kenya which may be of general interest. Anyway I am sending them on the advice of Mrs Huxley and only hope that you will find that they are an asset to your archives. If however you find that they do not come up to expectations, would you please destroy them'. Paice to Simpson, 5 June 1963.

and subsequent stasis of the colonizing 'fragment' of metropolitan society, or was molded by the peculiar conditions of the host environment, is a matter of debate.[50] Radical scholars on South Africa have, until recently, downplayed 'race' as playing second fiddle to the dynamic imperatives of class relations, or have treated race as a function, or cover, of class interests.[51] This view is now being challenged by materialist scholars who view race as much as class as being important component parts of materialist production, as Marx did in his early writings.[52] This debate has hardly seen the light of day in Kenya, perhaps because of the strong political desire to find a solution to South Africa's oppressiveness, or because segregation was more *ad hoc* in colonial Kenya, and *apartheid* did not exist as a comprehensive system. Yet one must acknowledge that, even if it were a mystification of class interests, race was a visible feature of Kenya's social landscape.

Racism itself has two dimensions. One is the unquestioned inferiority of blacks and browns to whites. The second is the collapse of class distinctions amongst whites as 'racial solidarity' overwhelms and renders irrelevant such distinctions. Dane Kennedy utilizes Paice's observations that class distinctions in English society were not replicated in the colony. The son of the Earl of Enniskillen, Berkeley Cole, Nanyuki's Legislative Council member in the early 1920s, was 'up to his eyes in smoke and charcoal working away at the forge . . . on his farm', an example, in Kennedy's estimation, of 'common labour'.[53] Paice commented that there were few places in the world 'in which one might entertain a dirty butcher & dirtier wife one night and the next night a general with a string of decorations'.[54] There was indeed a certain levelling-down of ex-officers, due in part to the small size of the white population. The *East African Standard* also pointed to frontier egalitarianism when reporting on the 1925 gymkhana which had witnessed 'a pukka major selling programmes, a general who owned many well-earned decorations serving behind a bar, a colonel of long service playing the drums'.[55]

It is important to remember, however, that the provenance of the dirty butcher and decorated Generals was the English upper classes, even though it ranged from Paice's Hampshire squirearchy to Anglo-Irish aristocrats.

50. Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies* (Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1964); Kennedy, *Islands of White*, pp. 100–105.
51. For instance, Harold Wolpe, 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid', *Economy and Society*, 1, 4 (1972), pp. 425–56; John Saul and Stephen Gelb, *The Crisis in South Africa* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1981). A summation of neo-Marxist literature is in John Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1982), esp. ch. 3 'Recent interpretations of the Origins of Segregation in South Africa'.
52. See Deborah Posel, 'Rethinking the "Race-Class Debate" in South African Historiography', *Social Dynamics*, **9**, 1 (1983), pp. 50–66; Gavin Kitching, *Marx and the Philosophy of Praxis* (Routledge, New York, 1988).
53. *Islands of White*, p. 183.
54. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 184.
55. *EAS*, 4 July 1925.

There were other whites in Kenya who were not part of this upper-crust, and who were regarded as social inferiors. The Afrikaners who squatted on Paice's Nanyuki farm may have 'helped . . . in various ways' but there was no social intermixture.[56] Afrikaners were not, as was pointed out in the first section of this paper, incorporated into the formal politics of the locality—very much an English monopoly—because of their class position. Regarded as an affront to the dignity of the English community (including English-speaking South Africans), Afrikaners were outside Nanyuki's privileged elite because they were neither English nor *propertied.* It was a situation local Afrikaners tried to remedy in 1928 when they unsuccessfully petitioned the governor for special grants of land.[57] This exclusion of Afrikaners was not the same all over the colony; the anglicization of Boers on the Uasin Gishu plateau did lead to their assimilation into district-level politics there, even though social intermixture was rare.[58] There was, however, a crucial distinction between the Afrikaners on the plateau and those in Nanyuki: the former had land, the latter were landless *bywoners* or squatters. Landlessness was not acceptable to the district notables of Nanyuki: it 'blackened' more than the common labours of aristocrats.

To have to labour, to have to earn a wage was, according to Paice, an African not a white option. 'So you can imagine', he wrote to his mother in 1911, 'that with Swahili labour as cheap and as good as it is, there's not likely to be much demand for white labourers'.[59] He was not impressed with Afrikaners or New Zealanders engaged in sheep-shearing: '. . . in South Africa they are all nigger shearers'.[60]

It was not manual labour *per se* that bothered Paice, as long as one had the means to sustain an independent existence. In fact, a combination of both was essential—to prove that whites were not lazy in African eyes, and to ensure that the colony had the capital to preserve their White Man's Country. There were many in Nanyuki who 'never seriously got down to farming . . . not the right type'. Others on army pensions 'are not really any use as farmers as a rule'.[61] In Natal, Europeans built their own houses, but in Kenya 'they must all get Indians to do it while they sit and watch. There are . . . three lusty men sitting doing nothing while Indians build their house!! I can't understand it'.[62] Probably Paice's most telling criticism of fellow whites came in 1925:

56. RHL. Ms. s. 782. Huxley Papers 3/3/54. Paice to Huxley, 28 December 1956; To Mother, 23 October 1921.
57. The petition contained 55 signatures. Cited in Redley, 'Politics of a Predicament', pp. 183–84.
58. Gerrit Groen, 'Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903–1969'. Unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1974, p. 213; C. Youé, 'Settler Capital and the Assault on the Squatter Peasantry in Kenya's Uasin Gishu District, 1942–63', *African Affairs* 87, 348 (July 1988), pp. 395–399.
59. 21 March 1911.
60. 26 February 1910.
61. Both quotes in Paice to Mother, 26 August 1928.
62. To Mother, 25 September 1909.

> We really are a lot of humbugs with all this talk about the 'nobility of labour' and 'teaching the native to become a useful member of the community'. What we really mean is 'We are out here to make a living (or a fortune if possible) and we *must* make these natives work for us somehow otherwise we shall all go bust'! Don't breathe a word of the above to anyone, should it be heard out here that I have written like this I should be tarred and feathered like a Bolshie.[63]

This is nothing less than a scathing indictment of the 'civilizing mission' and the 'white man's burden'. Indubitably specious as these arguments were, and as Paice is bold enough to claim, attacks on them were an invitation to social ostracism in a tiny community such as Nanyuki. As Redley points out, 'Europeans unwilling or unable to subscribe to the norms were harshly dealt with and occasionally rejected by the community'.[64] Yet Paice's comments reveal a crack in the inner-casing of white supremacy. He realized the contradictions between trusteeship and recruiting black labour. He did not even consider that Africans had an economic duty to labour for whites, and this at a time of labour shortage in some parts of the district. As early as 1909 he had confessed to his mother: 'Why should they come and work for us for Rs [rupees] 4 a month. I'm sure I wouldn't if I were a nigger'.[65] Racial solidarity was a veneer, but subscription to it was indispensable to the maintenance of white supremacy. Private views were subsumed by the prevailing ideology.

Paice did not use migrant labour coming out of the reserves, despite the proximity of the Kikuyu districts of Nyeri, Murang'a (Fort Hall) and Kiambu. The cornerstone of his labour force was squatters or labour tenants. Migrants were unreliable, 'the freest of free agents' who could 'pick and choose' their employers[66]; as a result, Paice wrote in 1928, 'natives do not come out to work as they used [to]. If it were not for our permanent squatters I don't know how some of us would carry on.'[67] Indeed, the relationship between Paice and his twenty or so squatter families (the norm for stock-keepers in the district) was generally a long-term one. In return for a piece of land, a ration of maize-meal, the right to graze livestock and a small wage, Paice managed to retain a number of Kikuyu squatters on his farm. In 1956, and despite the Mau Mau war of the previous four years, Nanyuki's pioneer farmer could boast a squatter who had been with him since 1911, three who had served since the 1920s, and 'several' who had worked for ten years or

63. To Mother, 19 June 1925. Also cited in Kennedy, *Islands of White*, p. 181.
64. Redley, 'Politics of a Predicament', p. 2.
65. From Naivasha. To Mother, 10 February 1909.
66. To Mother, 17 March 1928.
67. To Mother, 16 February 1928.

more.[68] Given the settler hysteria over Mau Mau, Paice's comments to Elspeth Huxley at the tail-end of the war, are quite remarkable:

> . . . in spite of the [Kikuyu] tribe's ghastly set-back during the last four years and in spite of many faults and failings I consider it [sic.] to have been the mainstay of this colony as regards labour.[69]

Obviously Paice's Kikuyu labourers stayed loyal while many Kikuyu, especially from Nyeri, the closest Kikuyu reserve, joined the forest fighters.

Paice's biggest problem with squatters was colonial government interference, interference which was stimulated by the official desire to reduce squatter numbers. For Nanyuki farmers this was a threat to a 'constant and reliable source of labour', something more important than the government's attempt to reassert control over Africans outside the reserves.[70] By the middle of the 1920s, however, it was necessary for settlers to enter into formal contracts with resident labourers on their farms. Paice did not like this legalism. The 'free and easy years' of informal, mutual arrangements were being replaced by 'so much civilization': the labour contract had to be thumb-printed in triplicate![71] The bachelor farmer bemoaned the passing of the early years of settlement:

> Life was much simpler when I first came to this country. Then if a negro didn't like you he girded his loins and ran away & you never saw him again; if *you* didn't like *him* . . . you probably gave him a 'thick ear' and you certainly sacked him on the spot. *Now* all is law and order and much signing of documents and talk, talk, talk and writing to the paper about shortage of labour, insolence and indolence of the natives and so on. It's a funny old world.[72]

Ironically, though, the first line of law and order was Paice himself. Like many other settlers in the 1920s, Paice was, because of the shortage of white officials, charged with implementing the terms of the 1918 Resident Native Labourers Ordinance, the very piece of legislation he had originally objected to. 'My job is', he told his mother, 'to explain to the native exactly what the terms are to which he is agreeing & see that he puts his thumb mark',[73] a difficult task given his pathetic language skills. Nonetheless, Paice's

68. RHL. Afr. Ms. s. 782. Huxley Papers 3/3/52. Paice to Huxley, 28 December 1956. See also Paice to Mother, 11 August 1929.
69. RHL. Ms. Afr. Ms. s. 782. Huxley Papers 3/3/52. Paice to Huxley, 28 December 1956.
70. To Mother, 13 February 1917.
71. To Mother, 6 May 1928.
72. To Mother, 17 December 1926.
73. 17 December 1926.

continuing need for squatters meant it was essential to have a contented labour force; we have argued elsewhere that settler-squatter relations were delicately balanced in the interwar years, even though a focus on the legislation erroneously suggests increasing oppression.[74] The length of service of Paice's tenants is testimony to this contention.

In all his letters, Paice revealed substantial sympathy for the African labourer, provided he was illiterate and uneducated. Africans were 'pretty decent', or at least some of them were; 'it is really marvellous how one can trust a raw, uneducated nigger' as opposed to 'any Christianized mission nigger'.[75] There were limits to that trust, of course. Intimacy was precluded. Just before the First World War Paice had fired a Maasai worker for 'plopping his dirty carcase down in my best chair'.[76]

Paice often talked about 'thumping' his Africans or giving them a 'thick ear' for evasion of duty or sheer audacity. In the 1920s he romanticized about the 'good old days' when such actions were possible Yet his early letters suggest that his later recollections had distorted reality. 'If you hit one', he informed his brother in 1911, 'the chances are the whole lot will clear off the next morning'.[77] In 1907 he compared the Kikuyu to their southern African counterparts: 'The worst of it is, if you do thump them, they clear off before daybreak the next day, they can't stand a hammering like the old S. African Kafir'.[78] Desertion in the face of corporal punishment, or even for better job opportunities, gave African labourers a certain latitude. The possibility of desertion may not have eradicated settler coercive power, but it certainly tempered it.[79] The existence of squatters, Paice propounded, was testimony to the African respect for 'good treatment and fair play'.[80]

This may seem hard to reconcile with some of Paice's other statements and actions. He had no compunction about shooting 'niggers down like rabbits' in the Bambatha rebellion.[81] He condoned Berkeley Cole's murder of a sheep-stealing Kikuyu—' . . . it was as cold-blooded a case of murder as one could wish for. But I say what if it was?'[82] In these instances Africans have not played a 'fair game' (and were therefore treated as 'fair game') and so summary, decisive punishment is portrayed as *the* best form of justice, one which Africans are presumably best able to understand. Violence, then, was acceptable in white settler society in general, but not often used in the day-to-day running of the farm. Theft and treason, however, were different matters, and the British way of dealing with it—through

74. Christopher Youé, 'A "Delicate Balance": Resident Labour on Settler Farms in Kenya, until Mau Mau', *Canadian Jl of History*, 22 (1987), pp. 209–228.
75. To Mother, 15 December 1907, 5 October 1913.
76. To Mother, 24 September 1911.
77. 26 August 1911.
78. To Mother, 3 July 1907.
79. Youé, ' "Delicate Balance" '.
80. To Mother, 16 February 1928.
81. To Mother, 20 July 1920.
82. To Mother, 24 September 1911.

the courts—was considered inappropriate, not least because it seemed to accord as much weight to the words and credibility of blacks as it did to whites. Hence, the anger felt towards the people 'at home', people who were, Paice complained 'forever putting their stupid fingers in the pie. The way the settler is run down and the native backed up makes one quite sick'.[83] This was an affront to the dignity of the white man. It presumed equality between the races.

The 1920s witnessed a common chorus of white voices against metropolitan critics, against people like the missionary C. F. Andrews, and John Harris of the Aborigines Protection Society.[84] Redley makes the point 'that the continual public symbolic representation of Britain as "home" confirmed the implicit judgement of Passfield [Colonial Secretary in the 1929 Labour government] . . . that Kenya was no white man's country'.[85] But there is another element in this discourse: Paice and the European community were distancing themselves from the ideology of the metropole. Colonial ways were more than geographically distant from the hub of empire: settler culture and notions of justice were distinct from those 'at home'. Racial solidarity in the colony was, in part, the extension of nationality in the diaspora but, in part also, and almost paradoxically, a reaction to the criticism of the home country. The so-called negrophiles had unified Kenya's whites, and helped rationalize pernicious forms of 'justice'.

This does not mean, however, that Kenya's settlers were ready to cut the constitutional umbilical cord with the mother country. There were many voices amongst the white leadership pressing for an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council, especially after Rhodesia's assumption of internal self-government in 1924. The demand for the Rhodesian 'solution' is portrayed in the political literature—the works of Bennett and Dilley, for example[86]—as being all-encompassing in the 1920s. Arnold Paice for one regarded those who pursued this objective as being 'hot-heads'. He explains:

> Certainly we have a good many legitimate grouses as to the way people at home interfere with and malign us. But after all the white population out here is only something over (12,000 I daresay Egham has a bigger population) and I personally (and a good many others too) think we are better off under the Colonial Office, though we wish it were the Conservative govt. and not these funny Labour people.[87]

83. To Mother, 4 June 1926.
84. Christopher P. Youé, *Robert Thorne Coryndon: Proconsular imperialism in southern and eastern Africa* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ont., 1986), pp. 188–189.
85. Redley, 'Politics of a Predicament', p. 203.
86. George Bennett, *Kenya: A Political History* (Oxford University Press, London, 1963); Dilley, *British Policy*.
87. To Mother, 13 May 1930.

Paice's disdain for formal politics was motivated in part by resentment of the concessionaire farmers and the other big men of settler politics who had too much influence.[88] But it was also borne by the belief that Nairobi politics, the politics of constitutions—what Paice may well have referred to as talk, talk, talk—was not relevant. Redley, who has engaged upon a thorough survey of the locality-centre nexus in settler politics, proposes: 'formal politics was considered irrelevant by most whites to the defence and advancement of their own interest'.[89]

In Paice's world-view, or perhaps Nanyuki-view, 'politics' did not include the power relations of the locality. In the 1920s Paice was a J.P., a labour officer, member of the local farmers association, the Stockbreeders Association and the Gymkhana Club, and Commander of a district Vigilance Committee group prepared to rebel against the imperial government if Indian political rights were conceded.[90] But this was not politics. After all, most association business was done on Sunday. For the rest of the week Paice was concerned with making a living.

Making a living from off-farm income was a commonplace in the initial years of white settlement.[91] Yet the type of off-farm work had changed by the 1920s. Before the Great War Paice relied heavily on exchange. This would sometimes involve entrusting an African worker with money to purchase sheep or cattle from Laikipia or Meru, with the African trekking to make bargains, especially at hut tax time. Sometimes itinerant traders passed through the farm and a deal was made on the spot. Paice himself would trek to Meru to 'buy cattle for various people' at the government auction, again at hut tax time when Africans parted with livestock in lieu of the cash commutation.[92] These trading ventures were probably more important than the growing of crops, even though Paice was considered by local officials as an improving farmer, the local expert on agricultural methods.[93]

After the war, the trading frontier closed down, at least for Paice. Cattle had replaced sheep as the preferred livestock (Paice hints that this is an effect of the war) but he still cultivated a number of things—potatoes, beans, wheat, oats and barley.[94] What Paice did now for supplemental income was

88. To Mother, 5 November 1922.
89. Redley, 'Politics of a Predicament', p. 27.
90. In the 1930s he joined the Vigilance Committee to protest the income tax, and during the war he was an inspector for the Land Bank, a position of considerable power over the other settlers. From PRO. CO533/525/6/3807/18–19. 'Land and Agricultural Bank'.
91. John Overton, 'Spatial Differentiation in the Colonial Economy of Kenya: Africans, Settlers and the State 1990–1920'. Unpub. PhD. thesis, Cambridge University, 1983; Elspeth Huxley and Arnold Curtis, eds., *Pioneers' Scrapbook* (Evans Bros., London, 1980), p. 52.
92. For Meru, see letter to Brother, 28 July 1911. See also letters to Mother, 29 January 1908, 21 November 1909, 5 December 1910, 12 August 1913, 5 October 1913.
93. KNA. NYI/1. Nyeri District Annual Report 1913–14, p. 5.
94. To Mother, 10 February 1918, 25 June 1918, 1 August 1919, 10 August 1919.

still off-farm, but jobs indicative of the first stages of infrastructural development. In the 1920s Arnold Paice made and sold bricks, built houses and cattle dips, and put up the rails on the Nanyuki race track.[95] By this time Nanyuki was reasonably developed. It was not as developed as Limuru outside of Nairobi, but developed enough to make lions 'prehistoric in these parts', and developed enough also for Paice to describe the land to the north, home of the Soldier Settlement Scheme, as 'out in the bluer blue'.[96]

As a pioneer farmer Paice was well-known in Nanyuki, initially as a provisioner of 'safari people',[97] then as a trader and odd-job man, and ultimately as the unofficial arm of the law. The politics of the locality was very much in Paice's domain, but the politics of the Legislative Council was not within his sphere of interest. By the late 1920s Paice knew his district and his district knew him. But he did not really know his Africans, something he readily admitted to his mother: 'I wish I did understand the Kikuyu well. It would make it much easier to understand *their* point of view'.[98]

Conclusions

In 1920, the East Africa Protectorate became Kenya Colony, a status viewed by colonial officials, and educated Africans, as consistent with a future grant of responsible government for the white minority.[99] At the end of the 1920s, though, responsible government was no longer an option. While European settlers enjoyed local political hegemony, Colonial Office overrule remained firmly in place until the transfer of power to the black majority in 1963. This reversal of fortune for white settlement was rooted in simultaneous crises at the beginning of the 1920s: a severe slump in world commodity prices and a political stand-off which settlers characterized as the 'Indian question'.

The controversy over Indian claims for political equality was legalistically resolved in the settlers' favour with the Devonshire Declaration of 1923—a White Paper entitled 'Indians in Kenya'.[100] Such legalism notwithstanding, the 'Indian question' was resolved only by introducing the 'African question' in its stead. The 1923 White Paper clearly stated that 'Kenya is an African territory and ... the interests of the African natives must be paramount'.[101] No tangible way was proferred to make praxis out of principle, but the Declaration was enough of an African 'lever' for

95. To Father, 21 June 1922; To Mother, 10 August 1924.
96. On Limuru, see letter to Mother, 15 September 1926. Also 22 September 1919, 17 June 1927.
97. RHL. Afr. Ms. s. 782. Huxley Papers, 3/3/52–55. Paice to Huxley, 28 December 1956.
98. 26 April 1928, cited in Kennedy, *Islands of White*, p. 158.
99. Robert Maxon, 'The Years of Revolutionary Advance, 1920–29', in W. R. Ochieng', ed., *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895–1980* (Evans Bros., London, 1989), p. 76.
100. Cmd. 1922 (1923).
101. Cited in Maxon 'Revolutionary Advance', in Ochieng', *Kenya*, p. 88.

metropolitan critics to attack alleged settler abuses. A whole host of commissions of enquiry into Kenya's constitutional future during the 1920s,[102] held amidst the vociferous claims of the governor and settlers for an unofficial white majority on the Legislative Council, was not enough to erase the indelible word 'paramount'. Adjustments would be made to enhance settler power, especially during the Second World War, but the limits of 1923 precluded the Rhodesian solution.

As if to reinforce the doctrine of African paramountcy, although the policy had in fact preceded it, the colonial state had also, in the early 1920s, adopted a peasant strategy of promoting indigenous cash-crop production. Although this was reversed in the late 1920s under the veneer of the so-called 'dual policy', something which was meant to signify the complementarity of settler and peasant agriculture but which in reality accorded primacy to settler labour demands,[103] economic development, especially after the 1929–32 Depression, rested heavily on black agrarian production. It was high policy which demolished settler hopes of self-government; it was the dynamics of colonial capitalism which kept the peasant strategy alive.[104]

What was Nanyuki's position in all of this? Undoubtedly the 'Indian question' was the most politically volatile of the decade. Both Wheatley and Paice were prominent in the direct action campaign. Paice was appointed Commander, 'B' group, in charge of women and children; he 'had to see that the Natives were kept in order'.[105] Paice's views on the harmful effects of western education, already noted with respect to Africans, were echoed in his statements on Indians. Education had caused the Indian to believe 'that all men & races are equal & "Jacks as good as his master" and all that sort of rot'; the demands for political equality came from 'rotten Indian agitators, mostly lawyers'.[106] In the end, though, Paice was thankful that the burgher force was not mobilized.[107]

The vehemence of the anti-Indian campaign was in stark contrast to the lack of support for self-government. Nanyuki was hardly touched by the constitutional debates of the 1920s, with the exception perhaps of closer union with the other east African territories. This was more a sign of antipathy than apathy. By 1929 most district associations had opted out of the Convention of Associations; only six localities were paying membership fees.[108] The quest for an unofficial majority was considered irrelevant to the pressing concerns of economic development. Paice, as we have already

102. Cmd. 2387 (1924–25); Cmd. 2904 (1927); Cmd. 3234 (1928–29); Cmd. 3573 (1929–30); Cmd. 3574 (1929–30).
103. C. Youé, 'The Peasant Strategy and the Reassertion of Settler Predominance'. Paper presented to African Studies Association of the U.S. Conference, Baltimore, 1990.
104. Tabitha Kanogo, 'Kenya and the Depression, 1929–39', in Ochieng', *Kenya*.
105. To Mother, 8 August 1923.
106. To Mother, 13 May 1930, 31 January 1923.
107. To Mother, 8 August 1923.
108. Redley, 'Politics of a Predicament', p. 169.

seen, was more content with the stability and impartiality of Colonial Office rule. According to Redley, 'by 1929 it was recognized that white responsible government, even if it could be taken, would create more problems than it would solve'.[109] The discourse of the locality was the discourse of the gymkhana, crops and labour.

A good portion of Nanyuki's labour was Kikuyu squatters. The colonial state undertook a drastic culling of squatter stock in 1929 known in Kikuyu as the *kifagio* or broom; it was an assault which precipitated escape and dispersal.[110] Some squatters moved up-country. Paice, for instance, had 'something like 20 families' on his farm early in 1928 but 24 squatter families in 1929.[111] This suggests that Nanyuki offered refuge from *kifagio*. Apart from the casual reference to numbers, Paice offers no comment on the destocking. Nanyuki whites are silent on the issue. Of course, white silence on African matters should be treated cautiously; there could well have been unreported assaults on Nanyuki squatter stock. This, however, is unlikely. When the real assault on squatter stock and landholdings took place during and after the Second World War it was the single, most dominant issue in district politics.[112] Paice certainly had squatters with livestock after the *kifagio*.[113] The 1928 assault on Somali cattle, mentioned in the first part of this paper, was to eradicate competitors on Crown and unalienated land. Kikuyu squatters on Nanyuki farms were less of a threat to, more of a prop for, the European agricultural sector. This stands in contrast to the position of squatters to the south, where the white farms were smaller and more productive, and squatter cattle could be viewed as a hindrance to advanced farming by tying up the land. Nanyuki depended on squatter labour. Whites had the luxury of large farms and could afford to host resident labour. Hence, Kikuyu squatters in Nanyuki escaped the *kifagio* and the fate of the Somali cattle-keepers.

Kenya's settlers in general, and Nanyuki's in particular, were the indirect heirs of one of the longest, strongest traditions of European imperialism, the imposition of a racial elite upon a conquered people. The immediate lifestyle of settler Nanyuki in the 1920s was, in racial terms, by Anglo-India out of the Shires, but the historical tradition of retired soldiers taking up ranching as a career dates back at least as far as the Spanish conquistadors in the New World.[114] The lifestyle itself, everything from the high standard of living to the lack of interest in the people settlers were exploiting, bears more than a passing resemblance to West Indian sugar planters in the eighteenth

109. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
110. Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau* (James Currey, London, 1989), pp. 46–50.
111. To Mother, 16 February 1928, 12 May 1929.
112. C. Youé, '"A Delicate Balance"', esp. pp. 222–24.
113. To Mother, 11 August 1929.
114. J. H. Parry, *The Spanish Seaborne Empire* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973 [1966]), pp. 87–88.

century.[115] Conquistadors, West Indian planters and settler Nanyuki were all part of a historical tradition of white settlement predicated on the exploitation of the 'lower races'.

Nanyuki's whites were not just the agents of colonial rule, they were the colonial rulers. The thin official presence meant the devolution of authority to Paice and friends. They were free to punish but not murder; literally licensed to dominate but not overwhelm. Their connections with Legislative Council politicians, weak in 1920, grew weaker as the decade progressed. On the surface, then, Nanyuki's white society was autonomous, divorced from the centre of power (Nairobi), and a universe unto itself. Nanyuki had a separate political consciousness, albeit white and propertied. Yet Nanyuki's role in the imperial tradition depended on the existence of metropolitan power. The district's isolation, and fear of manipulation by 'men of influence', favoured Colonial Office overrule, not self-government.

Paice, Wheatley and others wanted to get on with work and play. They were ordinary settlers from decent backgrounds. Paice was the pioneer and survivor, the longest-serving resident of them all, man of Nanyuki. Cynical of the professed noble motives which justified the white presence, he was also more tolerant of Africans. He depended on blacks. He lived with them. He wrote to his mother in 1912:

> Of course our niggers are a low down benighted lot and one can't become in any way intimate with them but they still are of the human race and, as such, are "Company" in a way.[116]

Subjugation, therefore, allowed for company, but only in quotation marks.

115. Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves* (Norton, New York, 1973).
116. 11 August 1912.