CRITICS OF COLONIAL POLICY IN KENYA

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CRITICS OF COLONIAL POLICY IN KENYA

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

NORMAN LEYS

AND

W. McGREGOR ROSS

by

Diana S. Wylie

M.Litt.

University of Edinburgh

1974

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A B S T R A C T

During the inter-war years a number of influential left-wing humanitarians tried to inform and arouse British public opinion in order to put a deadlock on the plans of the Kenya settlers for self-government. These liberals were successful in creating a political force to balance that of the settlers and largely for this reason a Great White Dominion was ~~largely for this reason~~ not created in East and Central Africa and a strong Imperial Trust was retained. Two men who had formerly been civil servants in Kenya, Norman Leys and W. McGregor Ross, were responsible for initially informing members of the public about the injustices perpetrated on Africans by the settlers and for maintaining a flow of pro-African propaganda in books, in the press and through a number of left-wing and humanitarian organisations, though chiefly through the Labour Party. They described the significant subsidy of white settlement by African taxation and labour, the complete absence of attempts to develop indpendent African production, the effective enslavement of the African in the modern industrial system.

Leys and Ross were motivated by a desire to apply Christian ethical principles to the injustices of East Africa and used the socialist movement as their vehicle for achieving substantial political and economic reforms: peasant agriculture must be given direct economic aid by the State; Africans must be actively prepared for self-government in a multi-racial state; the African must own his own land and be free to labour on it for his own profit; European privileges must be extended to Africans, thus realising the traditional

Imperial idea of equal rights. They applied to Kenya the means which had helped to improve the lot of the British worker: education, the franchise, unions and co-operatives. Without these reforms, they predicted, a devastating African rebellion would occur. They failed to impress the Colonial Office with the urgency of the need for reform, though various commissions on, for example, land and taxation, confirmed their allegations, and were regarded there as partisan fanatics; as the economy of Kenya was dependent on settler production, initiative for change would have to come from Africans themselves. Leys and Ross helped to thwart the acquisition of greater political power by the settlers while African protest matured.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the product of eleven months' work; the previous nine months of the period of study required for the degree of M.Litt. were occupied with three courses: the British in East and Central Africa, 1885-1964, taught by Professor George Shepperson; Cultures and Societies of Sub-Saharan Africa, by Dr. Roy Willis; Islam and Politics in East and West Africa, by Professor W. Montgomery Watt.

I am grateful for help given to me throughout the twenty-one months by Professor Shepperson, who suggested the topic and supervised the writing of the thesis, and to Professor R. E. Robinson of Balliol College, Oxford for reading a draft and reminding me to keep an eye on the Imperial context and significance of the two critics.

The staff of the following libraries and archives were, without exception, helpful and accommodating: the Royal Commonwealth Society, the British Museum, Edinburgh House, the Public Record Office, United Africa Corp. Ltd., Edinburgh University Library, the Bodleian Library, the Church Missionary Society, Transport House, the University of Sussex Library. The staff of Rhodes House and Miss Grace Hunter of the Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh University were particularly generous.

Norman Leys' daughter, Mrs. Agnes Avery, and W. McGregor Ross' son, Professor Peter M. Ross, were generous both in their hospitality and in their willingness to loan various possessions of their parents; and I was greatly impressed by their openness and honesty in speaking about them. Similarly, I appreciated the hospitality of Dr. John Lonsdale

of Trinity College, Cambridge and Professor and Mrs. W. M. Macmillan while I looked through papers in their possession.

Diana Wylie
University of Edinburgh

CHAPTER

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Chapter I

THE CONTEXT

The 'Dark Continent' remained obscured in myths for most Europeans long after they first penetrated it. Initially only a few missionaries and administrators troubled themselves to learn African languages or to study African cultures. Even the early armchair anthropologists analysed the explorers' findings in order to illumine the 'evolution' of European society from such primitive beginnings. Due to this ignorance, it was inevitable that Africa should be looked upon as a blank slate on which Europe could chalk her superior culture. If the Africans' childish mentality were capable of growth, then the results of their education - were they to become Calibans or the equals of Europeans? - would reflect the quality of their teachers. Perhaps they were perpetual children, in which case they would be prized according to their amenability, as labourers, to European supervision. In either case, the treatment of Africans became a matter of ethical concern for British moralists, the means by which they could attempt to realise their own ideals. As the commonly accepted concepts of those ideals and of the proper relationship of the state to the individual changed in Europe, so did the concepts of the duties of the 'superior' to the subject race. A grasp of African needs and realities was for the time out of reach.

Imperial rhetoric had, since Burke first applied the term in 1783, summed up Britain's responsibility to her subject races in the doctrine of 'trusteeship': that the ideal of all rulers should be to exercise their power for

the ultimate benefit of the ruled, that the rights and privileges of the rulers "are all in the strictest sense a trust...to be rendered accountable". The vagueness of the concept meant that it could be filled with the rhetorical ideals of any age; it was to serve both as a means to justify the status quo and as a rallying point for reformers. The first humanitarian movement in Britain to take an active interest in the welfare of the native races was the anti-slavery campaign which defined the trust as the protection of the African against European abuses of power. By conversion to Christianity, the savage was believed to be capable of becoming more like an Englishman; however, by the mid-nineteenth century this faith in his potential was waning due to successive failures of attempts to use commerce as a civilising force. The individualist ethic of the age dictated only that a man should not be artificially restrained from achieving his full potential and so the trust was 'negative'.

By the turn of the century a less Euro-centric concept of trusteeship was beginning to grow in some quarters. Africanists such as E. D. Morel, Mary Kingsley, and John Holt strongly supported the preservation of native laws and institutions within a system of free trade; the salvation of the African - his incentive to scale his own peak in the ranges of civilisation - was found in the competition and profit of commerce. These ideas indicate the beginning of a decline of faith in the universal supremacy and applicability of British culture: non-European institutions should be viewed according to the function they served in their own

societies. Morel, Kingsley and Holt also implied, by stressing the virtues of the informal 'rule' of trading companies in West Africa, that the roots and solutions of African problems were economic. The African would advance, along his own lines, only if he owned his own land and could sell his produce under a system of free exchange.

Economic analysis was increasingly used to explain politics in the late nineteenth century by those who noted that without economic democracy there could be no political democracy. The creed of liberalism was seen by those Radicals who were turning towards Socialism to have failed to give the individual any protection against economic exploitation; consequently they believed the state must actively aid the individual who was struggling for a better life. At the same time as the Labour movement was beginning, other left-wing groups were struggling to answer ethical questions left by the demise of liberalism. The Ethical Society, for example, of which J. A. Hobson and Ramsay MacDonald were members, strove

> "to transfer religion from a supernatural to a scientific basis...to subordinate politics, both national and international, to morality and religion."[1]

To secure the common good must be government's highest priority.

Various left-wing movements at the turn of the century were charged with high moral idealism: meetings of labour groups often exuded a revivalist fervour; individual Christians and some churches demanded the application of New Testament

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1. Porter, Bernard, Critics of Empire, London, 1968, p.158.

doctrine to industry and politics.[2] These exalted hopes were undoubtedly due to recent improvements in the lot of the British worker and his high prospects for future advance. His progress had been achieved not through philanthropy but by self-help: through education, the franchise, unions and co-operatives. The concept of active state regulation of the economy which these various left-wing groups were proposing eventually contributed to the growth of a more positive concept of the Trust; rather than simply secure justice for Africans, the Imperial government must actively encourage his economic and political development. Without precedents or large-scale administrative machinery, they could only propose the same means to aid African advance as those which were working in Britain: education and the franchise.

The goal of subordinating international politics to morality and religion was the logical extension of this mood of high idealism. For Socialists its achievement lay in the creation of a Socialist International; then, wars, caused by conflicting imperial AND capitalist interests would cease. J. A. Hobson, in particular, helped to foster the idea that imperial expansion was contrived by a politically powerful group of vested interests in Britain. He and other radicals opposed the Boer War for parochial reasons: cheap alien labour would drag down the wages of the British worker; a

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2. See, for example, Conrad Noel's The Battle of the Flags (London, 1922) or George Benson, "Socialism and the Teaching of Jesus" (ILP Publications Dept., 1925) in which the author asserts that communal ownership is the means by which Brotherhood and Love will replace the self-interest and competition of capitalism: "In a peculiar way the ownership of capital turns a man into an Ishmael. It sets his hand against every other man. He must fight owners of similar forms of capital, he must fight his employees, and he must fight the community in order to wring from it the greatest possible profit on his capital." (p.7.)

large war budget would not profit the workers' interests; the war was seen as an object lesson in economic exploitation. Anti-capitalism was linked temporarily to anti-imperialism. Radicals expressed little if any disinterested concern in African welfare until after the war. Throughout the 1890s left-wing groups regarded imperialism as a domestic, not a colonial, phenomenon. Rather than refer to the needs of the dependencies, the new radicals preferred to attack or support the Empire depending on its success or failure in fulfilling British needs, and particularly those of the British worker.

The Boer War earned jingo support and so was believed by many critics to be causing a decline in British moral standards: "we are purchasing the morality of Africa at the price of our own."[3] The strain of patriotism which runs through the writings of critics of empire or of colonial policy is as strong as that of the defenders of imperial expansion: "Experience and temperament have made the rule of the British over non-adult races an example of everything that is best in modern imperialsim", wrote Leonard Woolf in a book attacking economic imperialism.[4] Britain's imperial defects must be purified so as to fulfill the traditional policy of governing native races with justice and sympathy. By appealing to such cherished national principles as the policy of equal rights, some critics were able to arouse public opinion to demands for the redress of certain

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3. Hammond, J. L., in Liberalism and Empire, London, 1900, p.185.

4. Woolf, Leonard, Empire and Commerce in Africa, London, 1920, p.337.

grievances.[5]

None of the critics mentioned above had a significant impact on colonial policy in his own time but they did contribute to, or revitalise, concepts and rhetoric of thought on the Empire and, in time, many of their proposals were adopted. Their criticisms foretold or bore witness to changes in the assumptions of their age: doubt as to the universal applicability and superiority of Western culture; recognition of the need for the state to control the economy for the general good and to aid individuals who were struggling for a better life. Although attention was increasingly paid to African social and political structures - as anthropologists gradually affected public attitudes and turned from an evolutionary to a functional perspective - changes in policy remained a function of European ideas about European society.

At the same time as these movements seeking the elevation of the labourer and the service of the common good were growing in Britain, small colonies of whites were beginning to grow in East Africa. Many of the settlers were members of the British upper classes, some on hard times, who had gone to Kenya in search of wealth and scope for pioneering. The settler was, in the words of W. M. Macmillan, "an economic anachronism, a tragic survival of rugged and inefficient individualism". Their attitudes towards their labourers were of necessity not in sympathy with those of left-wing movements in Britain. Farther south, Cecil Rhodes described

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5. Porter notes that Mary Kingsley failed to change public attitudes towards Africa's future because she smashed so many sacred cows, defending polygamy, slavery and other African customs, and attacking the missionaries. (Porter, op. cit., p.250-1)

his perspective on labour relations:

> "When I see the troubles that are going to occur with the English people in their own country on the labour question, I feel rather glad that the labour question here is connected with the native question... If the whites maintain their position as the supreme race, the day may come when we shall all be thankful that we have escaped those difficulties which are going on amongst all the old races of the world."[6]

With sufficient information, Radical British opinion was bound to conflict with that of the settlers.

The settlers called those who rushed to the defence of African land and labour rights 'sentimentalists' who had no conception of the frustrations and hardships they were enduring. Their development seemed always to be interrupted by depressions and war and they were further hampered by an expensive, and restrictive, bureaucracy responsive to Whitehall, and not to their needs and wishes. Initially their frustrations were often vented in invective against officials and Africans, which could alienate the 'humanitarian' elements in the British public.

Because the public could still work itself into indignant rages, reminiscent of Emancipation days, the Colonial Office was sensitive that the settlers should not be allowed to provoke a political crisis by unreproved and uncontrolled negrophobe acts. Due to strictures of the Treasury, funds for development were extremely limited so the goal of Colonial Office policy was to encourage the rapid development of financial self-sufficiency in the colony: the "East African craze" to develop the colonies quickly had, according to John Holt, originated in South Africa and could be detriment-

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6. Millin, Sarah Gertrude, Rhodes, London, 1933, p.233.

al to African production. The reliance on settler acriculture evolved, rather than having been chosen by the Colonial Office, and once the pattern was set the Imperial government attempted to reconcile the conflicting interests of the settlers and the Africans, championed by the humanitarians, with rhetoric such as the "Dual Policy" which purported to stand for the development of both native and non-native production.

During the inter-war years the settlers were able to gain great power over local policy through their strategic representation on Legislative Council committees; through pressure exerted on the administration by their political organisation and elected representatives and by such vocal settler leaders as Lord Delamere, they were able to restrict ownership of land in the Highlands to whites and obtain Nandi and Masai land for settlement, resist paying an income tax and obtain land and labour legislation favourable to the development of white, and not African, production. Only a minority of the settlers - primarily those in the Highlands - may have been politically active, but their power and their degree of elective representation was out of all proportion to their numbers. Largely because they feared that Westminster, particularly under a Labour government, would attempt to apply the doctrine of the paramountcy of African interests, they agitated during the twenties for a majority of seats on the legislature as a prelude to self-government, the traditional aspiration of British settlers. Failing to achieve this goal, partly because of the successful rallying of humanitarian opposition to their plans, they were forced to continue to use local committees and councils to serve their own interests.

Within Kenya, isolated settlers and administrators and some missionaries opposed concessions to settler interests at the expense of African development and of such traditional principles of trusteeship as equal rights. Although African interests were represented on the legislature by missionaries until 1944, most missionaries took, at best, cautious stands for African rights, fearing that strong protest would drive the settlers into extreme reaction. Archdeacon Owen of Kavirondo was an outstanding advocate of the redress of certain African grievances, founding a union to represent the interests of Kavirondo taxpayers; yet his hand was heavily paternal:

> "Our Kavirondo do not write to the Press as do the Kikuyu because they know that I will do it myself if there is any need for it."[7]

Owen was determined to defend those who were unable to defend themselves and to foster inter-racial goodwill but he also wished to prevent the growth of sedition, of <u>independent</u> African political associations in his diocese. Because he feared the latter, he tended to demand the redress of specific abuses - particularly in letters to the press, which made the Church Missionary Society fear that the publicity would cause the government to withdraw its grants-in-aid from their educational work - rather than the reform of the industrial system which had created them; intellectual advance, the development of local industries and services must, he believed, precede political advance. In 1924 a Provincial Commissioner was moved to praise Owen for restraining political agitation among the Kavirondo.

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7. Archdeacon Owen to Pitt Pitts, 14.10.1930, 06/2, Church Missionary Society Archives.

Among the officials two men stand out from all the others because of the strength of their support for African rights and the energy which they poured into defining and publicising the East African situation as they knew it: Dr. Norman Leys, a medical officer, and W. McGregor Ross, the Director of Public Works. Unlike Owen, both men analysed African grievances within the context of the industrial system, sought to reform it and, in later years, to stimulate African protest.

These informed propogandists took independent stands against the paramountcy of settler interests while in Kenya and were the first to describe in print the extent of the African subsidy of white settlement. There were not administrators with original ideas on colonial development but British subjects who took Imperial principles seriously and, in accord with the left-wing movements at the turn-of-the-century, tried to apply Christian ethics to politics and industry in Kenya. By stressing the importance of discovering African wishes and deferring to their interests and the need to prepare Africans rapidly for self-government, they were important transitional figures in the development of a more positive and Afro-centric concept of the trust.

The author of this work was initially intrigued by Leys and Ross because they took lonely stands in Kenya in support of unknown African potential, despite great social and cultural pressures. Their vision of the future - particularly that of Leys - was far-sighted and proved to be surprisingly accurate. So, this work began as a personal interest to determine what provoked and enabled the two men to stand alone; it became an

inquiry into the nature of their protest within its historical context and an attempt to judge the possible impact of their sustained battle against white domination in Kenya.

W. McGregor Ross July 1901

Chapter II

LEYS AND ROSS IN AFRICA

William McGregor Ross was the first of the two men to arrive in East Africa. When he disembarked from the 'Caledonia' in Kilindini Harbour in May 1900 - carried ashore on the shoulders of Swahili porters - he entered a country where there was still a frontier. Although 'effective occupation' of new districts meant in most cases simply safety for traders, the punishment of crime and the collection of taxes, these frontiers were continually being pushed forward, often at great loss of African life and livestock. Violent deaths were in any case not uncommon. The lines of the future development of the country had not yet been decided: was it to be a white, black or brown man's country; if the former, were the big capitalists or 'small men' to be favoured; were Africans to labour for Europeans and be 'civilised' by 'interpenetration' or were they to stay in the reserves and labour for themselves; on what exports was the development of the country to depend?

The Foreign Office in 1900 had not defined its position on those questions; it wished above all to keep down the costs of administration and railway construction. A pattern of local initiative had been established by such pioneer administrators as Francis Hall and John Ainsworth who entered African areas and on their own established some form of European control. Until about 1905 such men were exclusively concerned with African interests and often came into conflict with the Land Office which frequently parcelled out African occupied land to potential settlers. Even the role of the

Governors paled in contrast to these local administrators, although some Governors did take initiative without consulting Downing Street.[1]

Not all the Europeans who bought or leased land from the Crown intended to farm it. Fortunes were to be made in land speculation and years later large blocks of land remained untouched because the owners were simply waiting for a sufficiently inflated bid. When Ross arrived the land rush had not begun. Yet he, like many others, did not appear to know why the railway to Uganda had been constructed or even to ask that question.[2] Although he praised Francis Hall as a "typical pioneer of civilisation - the sort of chap that disappears into the wilderness and works miracles there",[3] he appears not to have seriously considered the benefits, destruction and problems which the 'civilising mission' would bring.

During his first months in East Africa, Ross was responsible for the maintenance of the first hundred miles of the railway line from Mombasa; he was aided by two white permanent way inspectors and four to five hundred coolies. Ross had few contacts with Africans. Hindustani was the first language which he was to learn in East Africa; he used 'nigger' and 'native' in letters written during his first three years to

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1. For a detailed examination of this period, see Gordon H. Mungeam, British Rule in Kenya 1895-1912, the Establishment of Administration in the East Africa Protectorate, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966.

2. Sir Charles Eliot, the second Commissioner of the E.A.P., confessed that he did not know why the railway was built, assuming that it was the product of an exaggerated idea of the riches and fertility of Uganda. Sir Charles Eliot, The East Africa Protectorate, London, 1905, p.208.

3. W. M. Ross to his mother, March 23, 1901, papers in the possession of Professor Peter Ross.

describe, not the African, whom he rarely mentioned, but the Indian coolie. The greatest engineering challenge that he met in the early years was the construction of Morendat Bridge in the Rift Valley which considerably enhanced his reputation and was probably instrumental in securing for him tasks of greater and greater prestige. In 1904, having successfully completed the construction of the Nairobi Water Supply by damming a stream in the Ngong Hills and running a fourteen mile pipeline into Nairobi, Ross was offered at the age of 28 the post of Director of Public Works in the East Africa Protectorate.

In the letters which he wrote in these early years there is no foreshadowing of the man who would later describe himself as driving "about Kenya's troubled waters on one sublime corsair-hunt" in attacks on the settlers' 'Political Machine'.[4] Rather, there is to be seen a hard-working, self-disciplined young man, delighting in game and surveying safaris, whose indignation was roused to highest pitch by liberal liquor legislation, thieving houseboys and lazy coolies.

Ross' dislike for the low-caste Indian labourer on the railway had begun to grow even before his arrival in East Africa. Looking down from the raised European promenade on the 'India', he had felt distaste for the diseased and dirty coolies who were tightly packed with sheep pens at each end of the deck. In response, apparently, to a word of sympathy for the coolies from his mother, Ross warned her not to waste her time, "Their accommodation was palatial compared to their

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4. W. McGregor Ross, Kenya from Within, A Short Political History, London, 1927, p.756.

homes in India and perhaps a bit cleaner"[5]. Similarly, he noted that their sick wages in East Africa, often earned on feigned illness, were twice their normal pay in India. His dislike grew as he was forced to cope with them as employees with distressingly leisurely work habits. According to him, the "failed to see any reason why they should not fight with jemadars, throw each other into the river, or sit in their tents all day and gamble"[6]. On one occasion, after obtaining permission to have the more shiftless flogged, Ross indicated the culprits to a native sergeant and six askaris who placed shackles around their necks and who then gave them five to fifteen lashed with a kiboko, a hippo hide stick which, Ross noted, could cut like a knife if used with skill.

Although Ross never did warm to the 'Punjabi character', he did from time to time develop a feeling of personal sympathy for individuals among his employees. The first personal encounter occurred probably in November 1902 when he walked for twelve miles with his hardest-working cooly, a 17 year-old Hindu, who explained to him aspects of Hindu religious life and customs as well as his own future prospects. This encounter initiated a pattern, which was to last throughout Ross' East African years, of strong personal attachments to individual employees for whom he showed striking concern and generosity.

There was little sentimentality in his view of Indians, nor did he ordinarily feel particularly curious about their

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5. W. M. Ross to his mother, July 2, 1900.

6. ibid., June 30, 1901.
A 'jemadar' was the boss of a gang of coolies.

cultural differences. Forced to arbitrate a Muslim-Hindu dispute over the correct slaughtering of an animal, Ross noted with apparent boredom, "I didn't know jhatka from treacle".[7] His perspective was primarily that of the employer. He remarked that the Americans building viaducts at Mau had their work at a complete standstill because they had treated their relatively high-caste artisans as they would Carolina 'darkies'. Brutality was not only unethical but uneconomical as well. Ross was undoubtedly an eminently fair employer, supporting his men when their pay was in arrears by complaining to management, and he probably never employed severe discipline unless greatly provoked. In an early letter, he expressed his disgust at hearing "fellows who first met our friend the Punjabi 6 or 8 months ago, discoursing on the absolute necessity of 'letting the beggars see you're ~~the~~ boss'".[8]

Before World War One Ross had to deal with two strikes: one by Nyeri porters during a safari in the Mt. Kenya region and one by Indian artisans of the railway and P.W.D. who were protesting against the Rs.15 poll tax. In both cases, Ross negotiated with the strikers with great skill and persuaded them by argument rather than by threat of force to return to work. In the latter instance, Ross mildly chided the Indians for trying militant methods before presenting him with a petition or asking him for an interview; they agreed to return to work. However, soon they returned to strike methods under pressure from their compatriots in the employ

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7. ibid., July 21, 1901

8. ibid., June 18, 1900

of the railway, the leader of whom Ross felt should be deported; they were also aided by a "sedition-mongering agitator of a white lawyer from South African named Ritch". Ross refused to see employees who demanded full pay during the strike, a concession granted under duress by the railway manager, and told them they would be cut two days' wages for each day's absence. They returned to work and Ross was praised by the Governor for his handling of the strike.[9]

Similarly, Ross dealt with his Nyeri porters' strike firmly and sympathetically. He had hired them only for a short safari but had kept them out for two and a half months in cold weather and with frequently scarce rations. They were within sight of their homes and they wanted to return to them.

> "If I had had no knowledge of the Kikuyu lingo this would actually have been the end of our safari, and Hutchins' town sweepings would have had to cart our combined effects downhill in two shifts and so into Nyeri. The shauri lasted for about an hour. By singling out one or two ringleaders and turning the laugh of the crowd against them, and with the powerful assistance of their headman, who has been at work in the PWD now for over three years and is known as the 'Smiler', the deputation at length dissolved in smiles and withdrew to reconsider their decision"

and agreed to return to Nairobi with Ross.[10]

A perhaps less honourable solution to a potential strike was devised by Ross in 1907 when a religious dispute threatened to become a mass protest. Ross advised one of his engineers to take a sudden and unexpected photo of the men and

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9. ibid., July 26 1914.
In The Man-Eaters of Tsavo, chapter 5, J. H. Patterson described more dramatic means of protest among the 'coolies', including an attempt on his life, because he "intended to make each man do a fair day's work for his money". (J. H. Patterson, The Man-Eaters of Tsavo, London, 1973, p.38.)

10. ibid., June 1, 1908.

then tell them that their names and photographs would be sent to all government offices as a bar to future employment unless they returned to work.

Although in later years Ross developed a convivial style of living, he was initially set apart from the railway officials because of his teetotal habits and preference for photography, piano-playing and church-going rather than billiards and drinking at the Club. Stung by gossip which depicted him as a schoolboy, Ross wrote,

> "The small talk and slander that goes about would knock spots out of the gassiest old fishwife in England. Men in position are under the thumb of fellows below (sic) them and favouritism is a power in the land."[11]

Ross was particularly afraid in 1904 when the post of Director of Public Works became vacant that the "spare sons and nephews of debilitated intellect" of people like Sir Clement Hill would usurp the position.[12] Because of the "intensity of caste prejudices" in East Africa, Ross dissuaded his father from applying for a position there.[13]

European 'scoundrels' evoked a particularly strong expression of dislike from Ross. There were the alcoholics among the Protectorate and railway officials: "beastly pariahs that even a respectable half-caste wouldn't be seen talking to."[14] Although such settlers as Lord Delamere and A. Baillie clearly did not belong to this category, Ross did not approve of their drinking habits. In August 1908,

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11. ibid., October 7, 1900.
12. ibid., August 20, 1904.
13. ibid., May 21, 1903.
14. ibid., August 31, 1900.

he noted their arrest for being drunk and disorderly, "smashing (a hotel proprietor's) billiard table by romping on it and for ruining his walls by bursting oranges on them. Our old nobility!"[15] But Ross could hold his own against them. On one occasion Captain Ewart Grogan, the Cape financier and timber merchant, accosted him across the room at a dinner and accused him of dishonouring the King's name by toasting him with mineral water; Ross, always a quick and able speaker, immediately quoted the code in army regulations which permitted him to do so.[16]

In March 1909 Ross wrote to Governor Sir James Hayes Sadler protesting against liberalised liquor laws. Sadler praised the letter and, in doing so, convinced Ross that a diplomatic letter to the Governor could be an effective means of protest. In 1910 Ross showed this letter to Dr. Norman Leys, who was then disturbed by plans to move the Masai from Laikipia, and urged him to emulate its tone.[17]

Worse than the drinkers were the contractors who failed to pay their employees.[18] After Francis Hall's death, for example, news was received at Kedong, where Ross was staying, that four hundred Kikuyu were preparing to raid the station because Palmer, a contractor and editor of the East Africa

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15. ibid., August 25, 1908.

16. Conversation with Professor Peter Ross, March 6, 1974.

17. W. M. Ross to his mother, May 24, 1910.

18. The Colonial Office was aware of this problem and tried to remedy it in 1907 by requiring that employers using government labour recruiters should deposit sufficient security beforehand to prove that the employees would be paid.
Churchill to Sadler,11.11.1907, CO 533/33, P.R.O.

and Uganda Mail, had disappeared without paying them. Although the attack never took place and Mrs. Hall was allowed to bring her husband's body to Nairobi in peace, the man who had begun the rumour of the raid was given twenty lashes. Ross defended this punishment, again in response to his mother's protestations:

> "If no notice is taken of this man's yarn which put the entire white population under arms and on the watch for a whole night, some of the festive niggers here will no doubt be trying it on again shortly."[19]

By 1903 Ross had met enough planters while working on the Nairobi Water Supply to have decided that the type of settler attracted to East Africa was not necessarily a benefit to the country:

> "When one sees what loose, careless, unscrupulous, objectionable swine most of the settlers are around here, one cannot help thinking what a hard-working prosperous community could be raised by importing a lot of Scotch crofters."[20]

It would appear that the 'get rich quick' motives of many settlers disturbed Ross who had no objection to the acquisition of wealth in East Africa as long as it was earned. He once entertained the idea of buying a waterfall on the Ruaraka River and harnessing it in order to supply Nairobi with electricity; he was even tempted by the prospect of a fortune to be made speculating in Kenya land but "decided it wasn't worthy of the clan to be hankering after 'unearned increment'".[21]

Although Ross was raised in Southport where his father, H. M. Ross, had founded two grammar schools, his ties to

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19. ibid., July 29, 1901.

20. ibid., August 17, 1903.

21. ibid., October 11, 1903.

Scotland were strong. His father was originally a Highlander, from Strathcarron, Ross-shire, spoke Gaelic in childhood and was a good Gaelic scholar; his family had been forced from their homes during the 'Clearing of the Glens' when Sir Charles Ross, the local laird, had decided to clear one side of the strath for deer. During the eviction, a sister of H. M. Ross had been incurably injured. Ross referred to this incident in conversation with Governor Sir Percy Girouard in 1910 on the subject of the move of the Masai from Laikipia:

> "I told him I was naturally on the side of the evicted, that an aunt(?) had been laid out by British soldiery from Inverness in resistance to the depopulation of a glen that was wanted by people of superior standing and that my sympathies automatically went in that direction."[22]

He had not acquired privilege by birth and he did not wish Europeans to assume rights above the law by virtue of their race.

Ross never took the 'Black Peril' seriously as did so many settlers. Rather, he scoffed at their fears, pointing to the continuous "splendid" improvement of the African. He first did so publicly in a report on a 1905 petition by the Colonists' Association which was sent to the Colonial Office.[23] The tone of the petition was sufficiently unrealistic and virulent to alienate Lord Elgin and W. D. Ellis of the Colonial Office and to prompt counter-memoranda from John Ainsworth, C. W. Hobley and Frederick Jackson as well as from Ross.

The petition, signed by 200, had plainly been written

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22. ibid., May 30, 1910.

23. Petition of the Colonists' Association, August 23, 1905, CO 533/4, P.R.O.

by men who felt themselves to be in unsatisfactory financial straits. They blamed the absence of a market for their produce on excessive rail and steam freight rates, the lack of a government steamship and the exclusion of the East Africa Protectorate from the South African Customs Union. Their resentment of the officials who prevented them from controlling the legislative functions and finances of the country was evident in their attack on the Indian penal code which gave too great power to young, inexperienced magistrates without legal training. Many of the petitioners revealed their South African origin in their suggestions to replace coloured troops and police by mounted whites, and to institute Burgher law in areas such as Ukamba where there was a large white population.[24] Not only would this method of government be cheap and obviate the need for government officials but it would also, by entrusting the settlers with the maintenance of law and order, help them to protect themselves against the 'inevitable' black rebellion.

> "As the country becomes more settled, as fences are erected and the savage finds himself shut out from the enjoyment of land, which before he could roam over and enjoy, so will his resentment grow. From being a smouldering fire, that resentment will after a time break into flame, and when it does, may cause hereditary tribal enemies to unite in rebellion against the common foe of both, the white man."[25]

The petition closed with a further call to discard all Indian attributes of government and to treat Kenya as a white man's

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24. Under 'Burgher law' all males between 16 and 60 were liable to be called up for service. They would elect their own commandants and turn them into magistrates entrusted with law and order. Civil rights would be administered by a quasi-county council elected by the burghers. The system originated when the Boers trekked in clans.

25. ibid., CO 533/4, P.R.O.

Ross on Safari

Ross with parents at Morendat Bridge
April 1912

colony.

The Colonial Office reply from Lord Elgin emphasised the potentially great cost to the British taxpayer of the Colonists' Association demands. Elgin found Indian codes to be, in all probability, more suitable than English law because the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Protectorate were natives. Electoral institutions were not to be granted to the European colonists as they contributed such a small proportion of the Protectorate's tax revenue. Only a year later, however, when Elgin had become Colonial Secretary in the new Liberal government, Kenya was granted a new constitution which included executive and legislative councils. Finally, Elgin cautioned the settlers that the surest way to safeguard themselves was to treat the natives with justice.

Ellis went further and in his minute disputed Grogan's dream of creating a second New Zealand, foreseeing, rather, that Kenya was more likely to follow the pattern of a mixed community as in Barbados and Natal; it would be unwise to transfer responsible government to a handful of Nairobi whites. The 'men on the spot', Ainsworth, Hobley and Jackson, replied similarly, praising the officials of the Administration who had fostered in Africans a belief in the impartiality of the Administration; they feared that poor, avaricious, irresponsible settlers would destroy this hard-won good understanding and, in their land hunger, treat Africans unjustly. All preferred that a man like Delamere, having some knowledge of native tribes and with the means of obtaining capital, should have some voice in the government of the country rather than the unenterprising South Africans, who, with no real

interest in the country, were simply waiting to sell their land at an inflated profit.

Ross, as Director of Public Works, was the largest employer of native labour in the Protectorate and therefore reported on the labour aspect of the Colonists' Association address. When he installed the Nairobi Water Supply during eight months in 1903 and 1904 he was the first man in Kenya to make such extensive use of African labour; this was largely due to the great need for economy. Most of the Africans with whom he had contact were Kikuyu and to some extent he was able to speak their language. He noted that this skill enabled him to receive "illuminating expressions of opinion on the native question from the 'other side'". Although childlike and as exasperating to employ as a British navvy, the African was, according to Ross, able and eager to learn anything which was explained to him in a language which he could understand. With patient and genial tutelage as well as absolute fair play, he could be converted into an intelligent and efficient workman. There was no danger of risings as long as the African felt that he had in the Government a protector and arbitrator; danger lay only in the harsh treatment of labourers. The cases of illegal flogging which Ross then described so alarmed Lord Elgin that a special message on the subject was sent to Governor Sir James Hayes Sadler. Unlike the notorious 'negrophobes', Ross had never had any trouble in obtaining sufficient labour. He explained,

> "I consider that in the past the Government has given too much assistance in labour matters (to bad employers)...natives will work well and cheerfully when they have some assurance that they will not be diddled out of their earnings by 'sharp practice'."[26]

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26. Report on the Address of the Colonists' Association by Mr. W. M. Ross, October 17, 1905, CO 533/5, P.R.O.

The idea of "our very good friend the native" rising in rebellion was simply amusing. In private, Ross described the petitioners less mildly:

> "I loathe (that 'putrid' section of the settlers) and wish the Wakikuyu would disembowell them. It was very hard to write on the subject without lapsing into 'Billingsgate'."[27]

Ross' initial contact with African labourers was far happier than it had been with the coolies. He remarked that he had hired fifty or sixty "painted savages" to scoop out the reservoir basin and enjoyed watching the "refreshingly innocent display of skin in all shades from copper colour to slaty black".[28] From this rather indifferent beginning, Ross grew to become entirely pleased with the reserve Kikuyu as workmen; they were cheaper to employ and feed than Indians and he may have appreciated that they were "more amenable to European supervision".[29] However, Ross grew fond of many individual employees, one of whom, Abdullah Tairara, a Muslim Kikuyu, was later to become an associate of Harry Thuku. Ross appeared to enjoy his role as an agent in the building of strong characters among his younger employees; this was particularly true in the case of Govai, a young and strong-willed Kikuyu boy whom Ross did not want to lose, he said,

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27. W. M. Ross to his mother, October 28, 1905.

28. ibid., May 21, 1903.

29. A Colonists' Association petition had used this phrase in a 1902 petition in the following context: the importation of Indians "creates unfair competition to Europeans and natives, the latter being in every way superior in physique and morality and more amenable to European supervision."
(J. S. Mangat, A History of the Asians in East Africa 1886-1945, London, 1969, p.97.)

"after all the instruction that I have put into him. He will make quite a decent boy if he continues to be a steady church-going member of society".[30]

In 1912 Ross gave evidence to the Native Labour Commission which was investigating the current labour shortage. He objected to all suggestions to increase the labour supply by increased taxation, pass laws or by cutting down the size of the reserves; not only were these proposals unstatesmanlike and unethical, but they also would have the opposite effect to that intended. There was no shortcut to increasing the number of African labourers. Employers would have to wait for the desire to work for wages to increase while trade was extended in the reserves. In the meantime, labour-saving machinery should be introduced wherever possible. Ross also defended the PWD against charges that the Department was raising the scale of pay demanded by labourers by paying them more than most planters could afford. This was not so, he said; another local employer of labour had been forcing up the wages. In any case, higher wages would not improve the labour supply. The desire for monetary wealth had not effected many proud and independent peoples; others would not labour because they had been badly treated by particular employers[31] or were simply debilitated by malnutrition, disease

30. W. M. Ross to his mother, November 24, 1905.

employers[31] or were simply debilitated by malnutrition, disease and social evils. The worst aspect of current methods of labour recruitment was that by subsidising chiefs who procured labour for them, they were contributing to harsh and arbitrary rule. This development had undermined the attitude of the peasant toward wage-earning.[32]

Despite a general expression of goodwill toward Africans and opposition to negrophobes, Ross did not appear disturbed by the possible implications for Africans of white settlement. Although the twenty-four acres for the Nairobi dam had been bought from its Kikuyu owners, Ross was apparently indifferent to the issue of African land rights. In 1903 he expressed the hope that Sub-Commissioner S. L. Hinde would obtain permission from Governor Sadler to smash "an openly hostile tribe", the Induani, living on the slopes of Mt. Kenya so that he could climb the mountain.[33] Further, Ross jettisoned his

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31. An example of this tendency is found among Ross' own papers:
"I see trouble ahead with the natives on my shamba at Kiambu: the last time I was up there for a couple of days they boycotted me and I could not get porters to carry my loads back to Nairobi and so lost a day: eventually I went round myself to each village and told them that if they did not produce so many porters next morning that I would turn them off my shamba and all they would get for their huts would be Rs.2 which is the price laid down by regulations. Next morning the desired number turned up."
G. W. Johnson to W. M. Ross, March 29, 1906.
In Ross' first journal article, on his ascent of Mt. Kenya, he counselled prospective climbers to "when in doubt, act like a gentleman and not like a ruffian" if annoyed by "somewhat erratic" assistants.
(W. M. Ross, "The Snowfields and Glaciers of Kenya", The Pall Mall Magazine, Feb-March 1911, p.197-208, p.463-473)

32. Report by W. M. Ross to Native Labour Commission, Nairobi 1912-13, CO 544/5, P.R.O.

33. W. M. Ross to his mother, January 9, 1904.

idea to buy a waterfall on the Ruaraka River when he discovered it was in a projected 'native reserve', because his friend Hope, a District Officer, was afraid that settlers would accuse him of favouritism if he agreed to its excision for Ross' sake.

In 1906 Capt. Ewart Grogan was waging a campaign to remove the white elements of Nairobi to land which he owned. Ross noted that the Commissioner was "weak as water in Grogan's hands...Grogan always says that he is not prepared to tamper with schemes that bring him in less than £20,000".[34] One month later, the Nairobi Sites Board had rejected the plan and Grogan had moved on to new enterprises. Winston Churchill, who visited the Protectorate in 1907, was strongly anti-speculator and anti-Grogan. Speaking with Ross one evening in Government House, Mombasa, Churchill told him that he had

> "very fierce views on the subject of land tenure. He would immediately evict all fellows from their holdings who are not developing them...He told the Governor to fire ahead with his anti-speculator programme and that the Home Government would support him through thick and thin."[35]

Ross doubted, however, that the Governor would be bellicose enough to take that lead.

At the same time as Grogan was trying to become the greatest Nairobi landlord, Ross was attempting to draw up a segregated town plan for the new capital. He wrote, "I like living among natives in their country, but I don't like 'em living round me in a town."[36] He particularly wanted to

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34. ibid., May 13, 1906 and June 27, 1906.

35. ibid., October 31, 1907.

36. ibid., August 3, 1906.

"clear out the Indian section into an Indian town by themselves" and to remove the Africans to beyond the railway.[37] On this point he encountered opposition from John Ainsworth; Ross' letters do not clarify Ainsworth's reasons for taking this stand, which Ross attributed simply to a "truly sublime lack of imagination".[38] Ross had to concede that the bazaar should remain where it was but hoped an outbreak of plague would occur in time to necessitate its destruction. Nevertheless he did win his point that the native quarters, both Indian and African, would be located to the south and west of the railway line.[39]

If there was little moral indignation apparent in Ross' treatment of the broader issues of African rights, he did evince a great deal in his descriptions of petty miscarriages of justice and petty racial discrimination. The failure to maintain British standards of justice was ample cause for protest.[40] Ross attributed the frequent failure to convict

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37. ibid., October 28, 1905.

38. ibid., January 17, 1906.

39. Apparently Ross intended such segregation to be purely informal; he noted with pride in Kenya from Within that he had in 1921 urged the deletion of segregation clauses from the Public Health Bill and had opposed legal segregation in 1918 as well. (Ross, ibid., p.264)

40. The Colonial Office was aware of injustices perpetrated by Europeans. Governor Sadler had informed the Colonial Office that it was difficult to obtain convictions against Europeans in cases concerning natives, adding that there was "nothing more calculated to injure our prestige and create disturbances in outlying districts" than the conduct of unruly white men.
(Sadler to Elgin, December 27, 1905, CO 533/6, P.R.O.)
The Europeans around Nairobi were known to be particularly "turbulent".
(Ellis minute, 30.10.1905, CO 533/4, P.R.O.)

Europeans to "white juries who don't like to be unpopular with the living".[41] In 1908 he was scandalised by the acquittal of a Limuru settler named Hall who shot a Somali for driving cattle across his farm:

> "so much for the justice of trial by jury in this land of 'Light and Liberty' when the jury is made up of Nairobi stiffs."[42]

Imagining that the Somalis would try to avenge their tribesman's death, Ross foresaw the raising by the settlers of the spectre of the 'Black Peril' and the demand that the Volunteers be called out or that the Somalis, "formidable trade rivals", be expelled.[43] At the same time as this case, another storm was brewing because a hunter had been lost on the mainland near Mombasa. Fearing that the five Africans accused of murdering the hunter might become victims of a settler vigilante movement, Ross instructed his parents to feel at liberty to give extracts of his letters to Dr. Haran, a Protectorate medical officer, home on leave, who had shown, Ross felt, great presence of mind in photographing the victims of the Grogan flogging incident the previous year.[44] Perhaps Haran would be able to do some good by describing "the exact state of affairs either to the Colonial Office, or to the editors of some of the papers if he has any facts

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41. ibid., June 15, 1916.

42. ibid., January 16, 1908.

43. ibid.

44. Ross noted that one of the women in the rickshaw whose 'boys' were flogged for some undetermined 'outrage' "is said to remark to the present day that she has no notion why the natives were or should have been flogged". W. M. Ross to his mother, February 25, 1909.

to go on".[45]

In another case the previous year, Ross had employed his camera as an aid in defence of two child shepherds who were accused by the East Africa Syndicate of stealing sheep on its five hundred mile estate near Gilgil. By photographing the children and presenting their picture to J. W. T. McClellan, who was prosecuting the case at Naivasha, Ross hoped to expose the insanity of prosecution.

As a government employee, however, Ross did not feel that he was able to take action in many cases which he considered unjust and, rather, simply listened to African friends who felt wronged by the police and courts and vented his anger in letters to his family. However, there was considerable scope for private initiative and he used it. When home on leave in 1909, Ross had interviewed Andrew Carnegie at Skibo Castle and requested that a library be donated to Nairobi where there were no facilities for intellectual advancement; the only indoor resorts were saloons and a club with a library of limited scope owing to "financial, social and racial restrictions".[46] Ross suggested that a library should be opened to all respectable, English-speaking, educated residents or visitors in Nairobi: "There are already Africans in the town who have got sufficiently far on to read with eagerness the works of Lytton, Kingsley, Dickens and other novelists and there are of course many highly educated Indians and Goanese."[47] The "anti-coloured man party" rallied

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45. ibid., January 16, 1908.

46. W. M. Ross to James Bertram, October 9, 1909, Ross Papers.

47. Ross to the Commissioner of Works, G. K. Watts, October 21, 1909, Ross Papers.

in opposition and alleged that the Governor, Sir Percy Girouard, was opposed to allowing a class of educated Africans to arise. Ross requested, and received, from Girouard a letter, to be used publicly if necessary, refuting the allegation. The opposition, including the sub-editor and leader-writer of the Standard, McClellan Wilson, proved too strong, however, and the scheme was dropped. Although in his book Ross does not describe the apathy of Nairobi whites towards the scheme as a crucial factor in its demise, it is clear from his letters that this lack of interest was at least as important as the opposition of the 'negrophobes'.[48]

Similarly Ross was disturbed by the attitude of "violent negrophobes" to playing football against the Church Missionary Society boys and transferred to a team which did not object to playing with Africans.

Although he never accused Canon Harry Leakey, of the Church of Scotland mission, Kikuyu, of colour prejudice, he found Leakey's unreasonable attitude to conversion, common among missionaries, to be hateful, as illustrated by the following case. A carpenter in the PWD shops wanted to marry a Kikuyu girl whom Leakey refused to baptise because he did not consider her to be sufficiently truthful. Because she was not baptised, as her fiancé had been, Leakey refused to marry them in church and, if they married according to Kikuyu custom, the fiancé would be excommunicated:

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48. Governor Sir Percy Girouard was disgusted that only 20 of the 800 whites in Nairobi had bothered to attend the library meeting, and so dropped the scheme. (W. M. Ross to his mother, December 3, 1910)
In Kenya from Within Ross wrote, "The opposition was so heated that the Governor declined to proceed with the consideration of Mr. Carnegie's offer". (op. cit., p.263)

> "not allowed to go to church again, to visit the mission, or to talk to (or play football with) the mission boys, for fear of corrupting them after his relapse into heathendom. I doubt whether I shall be able to be civil to Leakey when I see him."[49]

As Director of Public Works, Ross was automatically a member of the Legislative Council from 1916 until 1922. There he was able legitimately to oppose legislation which he considered unwise or unjust. He was later to remark that he was turned against settler politicians by the number of hours that he was forced to sit on the Council, listening "for hours on end, to the crude, crass clamour of self-interest".[50]

In Kenya from Within, he assessed his contribution; although he was often the sole dissenter, small and unwelcome minorities "import an entirely different complexion into decisions upon findings with which they disagree".[51] The impact of such dissent on events in Kenya may have been slight, but the Secretary of State had at least been informed that not all 'men on the spot' approved of the legislative enactments.[52]

What qualities, then, in Ross' character and in his background contributed to his assumption of the role of "sole dissentient"? His family had prepared him to be hard-working rather than to expect membership in an elite, living on the labour of others. This background was not unusual among

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49. ibid., January 7, 1910.

50. Ross, "The Grave of Reputations", 4/2/f.100, Ross Papers, R.H.

51. W. M. Ross, Kenya from Within, p.331.

52. See Chapter III for a discussion of Ross' activities on the Legislative Council.

Europeans in Kenya, however; not all settlers had been public school boys, prepared to do nothing but supervise labour, as Lord Cranworth described them.[53] His close family ties to Scotland and the clearances were undoubtedly a factor contributing to his dislike of the arbitrary exercise of power by 'superior' people. Monopoly of power in any limited group of hands struck him as dangerous and worthy of protest; in 1909 he wrote privately to the editor of the Daily News suggesting that the paper publicise the fact that the British press was controlled by only one or two powerful financial concerns.[54]

His own self-discipline was rigorous and he deplored its absence in others. His unqualified abstention from the consumption of alcohol is one example. Another is the diligence with which he prepared for his Hindustani, Swahili and Kikuyu exams; he would study while riding the railway trolley to and from work and nearly suspended his private correspondence while preparing for the exams. Although he read the Koran and the Bible while in East Africa, he appeared less interested in questions of theology than in the maintenance of basic Christian ethics.

Another personal quality with great influence on Ross' peformance in East Africa was his fearless independence, sometimes shown as an apparent joy in confrontation. Less sympathetic observers called him "cantankerous" and criticised the tone of his official letters as often unnecessarily

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53. Lord Cranworth, Profit and Sport in British East Africa, London, 1919, p.244-8.

54. W. M. Ross to the editor of the Daily News, a copy enclosed in a letter to his mother, December 14, 1909.

"sarcastic".[55] His delight in battle must have made him a frustrating, though never a spiteful, opponent. In the following description of "corsair-hunting", written in characteristically sprightly language, he illustrated this pleasure in combat:

> "The excitement lay in the joyful element of doubt as to how long that crisis of Fate could be averted when the last culverin would flash and the hot weapons hiss as the tilted deck slid into the sea of retrenchment."[56]

Of all the books which he read during his early years in East Africa, two titles alone stand out as suggestive of lines of inquiry which he would later pursue: Tolstoi's "How much land does a man need?" and Sydney Olivier's White Capital and Coloured Labour. In reference to the former, he wrote in 1905:

> "There's great jingo activity out here - the Commissioner is trying to drum everyone into volunteer corps. I'm going to be a passive resister. I don't want to be called upon to shoot my friends the Wakikuyu because some drunken beast of a tenth rate white settler gets himself slit open some day. So Tolstoi to the rescue."[57]

It is not clear, however, how Ross reacted to Olivier's book nor for what reasons he passed it around to several of his

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55. ibid., May 12, 1910.
Governor Sadler had appointed a Commissioner of Works over Ross, who retained his title of Director of the department, because he found Ross quarrelsome and resented being advised by such a young man.

56. W. M. Ross, Kenya from Within, p.257.

57. op. cit., August 11, 1905.

friends.[58]

One undoubted catalyst in the development of his 'negrophile' activities was his friendship with the medical officer Dr. Norman Leys. Ross was a patient of Leys in May 1907 when he was suffering from fever in Mombasa. During the following five and a half years when they were both in East Africa, there was a marked increase in the number and types of pro-native activities in which Ross participated. In August of the following year Ross responded to Leys' request for his views on the native question:

> "I have not got time to think connectedly on many subjects and as for reading up any subject under heaven - well, I should smile. Your calm demand for views on policy therefore tickles me."[59]

Two weeks later Ross wrote to his parents that Leys, another official named Reddie and himself were corresponding with a view to issuing a pro-native 'counterblast': "We want to show some of the South African stiffs that there is a community in the country opposed to almost everything they advocate."[60] The sentiment was not new to Ross but the idea

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58. Sydney Olivier argued that the future relationship between white capital and coloured labour would depend on the possibility of race fusion, either by intermarriage or by a psychical process of sympathetic understanding. (Sydney Olivier, White Capital and Coloured Labour, London, 1906, p.29)
To this idea, A. G. Anderson, editor of the East African Standard, reacted adversely, declaring he was so upset that he could not finish the book: "If Mr. Olivier was a stock breeder, would he herd the worst and best stock together to improve the breed of either."
Anderson to Ross, January 9, 1908, Ross Papers.

59. W. M. Ross to Norman Leys, August 8, 1908.

60. W. M. Ross to his mother, August 21, 1908.
Reddie and de Lancey Davis are the only other 'negrophiles' mentioned in Ross' letters through 1916.

of directing it at the 'negrophobes' themselves was for him an innovation. In December Leys travelled from Nakuru to Nairobi to speak to Ross for a day or two about their manifesto. There is no evidence that it was ever written but a significant friendship had been made. Similar visits took place over the years, during which they undoubtedly spent much of their time discussing the 'native question'. Although Ross did not always agree with Leys, he was obviously impressed with his knowledge and ability.[61]

Before turning to an examination of Leys' early years in Africa, it may be worthwhile to look at the seven basic planks in Ross' platform on the native question as he detailed them to Leys in his August 1908 letter. Characteristically, he believed that the supply of European liquor to Africans must be prohibited. Second, the reserves must be retained beyond their present requirements. It would not be statesmanlike to ignore the results of the Pax Brittanica and arrange only for current African requirements in land,

> "unless the statesmanlike is to be prostituted to cover the attitude of those who advocate the restriction of reserves by way of ensuring that succeeding generations of natives shall be crowded on to the wage market."

Similarly, taxation must not be used for that purpose, in disregard of the peasant's right to contribute to the wealth of the State by working on a holding of his own. Government must not be involved in Labour Agency operations. Although

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61. ibid., May 30, 1910.
Ross spoke with Governor Girouard for half an hour about the Masai move and thought "He made out no case which a man of Leys' knowledge and ability could not counter effectively if he started writing in the home papers".

Africans and Europeans should be treated equally for crimes of violence, Ross doubted that the African had as yet earned the right to complete equality before the law: "the native should be made to realise that there are privileges that he must not pretend to aspire to unless he will take the trouble to educate himself, e.g. the vote." The government, then, must provide educational facilities "up to any standard that the native proves capable of attaining". Finally, the required use of passes by Africans was seen as "tactics of surveillance that savour more of (Tsarist) Russia than of the British Empire".[62]

Not surprisingly, Ross rarely referred to the Empire in his letters. He preferred to work within it rather than in a foreign area but he was as likely to refer to "proud England's power" in terms of "chains and slavery" as in terms of "peace and progress". Neither Ross nor Leys showed any patriotic exaltation at bearing the 'white man's burden' and participating in the dissemination of British culture, though Leys was more deeply concerned than Ross with the moral implications of British rule.

From the beginning of his sixteen years in African, Norman Leys was alive to the question: what did the European presence in Africa mean for the black man? Even before leaving Britain, he had written,

> "What I imagine the black and yellow people need most is not so much treatment for dyspepsia or rheumatism as something to make them stand up to the circumstances

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62. ibid., August 8, 1908.

Leys at Chinde

Ross with Muchiri the tracker
April 1908

of the civilization which I suppose is coming to them."[63]

The language and thoughts are, for Leys, uncharacteristically vague, yet they reflect his ideal of service. This important spur to his life's work was not directed primarily to the greater glory of the British Empire. It stemmed, rather, from his deep Christian concern for a wider humanity. Throughout his years in Africa and later, when he practised medicine in rural Derbyshire, the intensity of this emotional and intellectual concern for Kenya's Africans grew until the ideal of service had in a sense become a spirit of self-sacrifice. The fanaticism of his devotion, which he himself admitted, frequently proved to be a source of strength in his role as creator of public opinion but it limited his success as a reformer.

His concern for the 'deprived and inarticulate' dates at least from his university days when, as a medical student at the University of Glasgow, he lived and worked in a settlement house in a Glasgow slum. He also belonged to the Fabian Society and a year or two before leaving for Africa had become a member of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society. At the settlement house he participated in social evenings, preaching and debates, which frequently had a political bias. When he returned to the settlement for a visit in 1918, he found considerable sympathy there for the Bolsheviks' treatment of capitalists and the churches.[64]

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63. Leys to Gilbert Murray, 13 January, 1900, Gilbert Murray Papers, Box 32, Bodleian Library.

64. ibid., 17 March, 1918.

There is no indication that he shared this sympathy. To him, 'revolution' always meant radical reform. Society was as cruel as nature to all but those who inherited wealth;[65] however, the inequities and injustices would best be remedied by radical but non-violent change. Throughout his life, Leys retained a reverence for the fragile tissue of human society. The violence which could destroy it, either by force of arms or by too rapid change, was likely to unleash the basest human instincts. It was better, therefore, to put down ruthlessly a rising among Africans and place all hopes for the future in reforms stemming from metropolitan institutions.

Although he once wrote that as a youth he feared responsibility, he appears thoughout his life to have had a keen sense of personal duty to others and a sense of urgency that he must attempt to realise certain ideals before dying.[66] He feared and scorned the "devil" of lethargy. As he once wrote to Gilbert Murray, his professor of Classics at Glasgow, with whom he corresponded and maintained close personal ties until his death, "My belief is, of course, that if one finds the good won't work it is because it isn't good enough".[67]

Leys' letters to Murray reveal a strong need for an intellectual schema; he was frustrated when ideas did not fit into a whole. If they did not, they "rattled about" and Leys could only assume that he had been fitting them together wrong.[68] Often he would imply that a careful and dispassionate

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65. Leys to Lady Mary Murray, ibid., 12 February, 1913.
66. Leys to Murray, ibid., 10.10.1902.
67. ibid., 24.2.1903.
68. ibid., 9.3.1911.

examination of the facts would reveal that there was only one course to follow. There was no place in his intellect for ambivalence and contradiction. Like an evangelist, he saw the world as divided between the righteous and the unjust. The scorn of other men would face the man who chose the path of righteousness. To Murray, Leys quoted a Swahili proverb, the earth does not punish virtue, and interpreted it to mean that the righteous man is punished by his fellow men.[69] Accommodation and compromise would have been signs of moral cowardice. In later years his zeal to convert men to his vision of justice for Kenya became single-minded; even in the last few weeks of his life he was still searching for a "resounding victory for justice".[70] Winifred Holtby, novelist and champion of the rights of African workers in South Africa, described this quality by quoting Olive Schreiner:

> "That deep conviction buried somewhere in our nature, not to be eradicated, that man as man is a great and important thing, that the right to himself and his existence is the incontestable property of all men. And above all, the conviction that not only we have a right and are bound to preserve it in ourselves. But that when we come into contact with others we are bound to implant it or preserve it in them."[71]

The Calvinist roots of some aspects of Leys' thought are clear. He had spent much of his boyhood with his grandfather, Peter Leys, a Presbyterian minister in Lanarkshire, because

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69. ibid.

70. Leys to Leonard Woolf, August 1, 1944, Leonard Woolf Papers, University of Sussex Library.

71. Winifred Holtby, Mandoa! Mandoa!, London, 1933, p.262. According to Miss Holtby's biographer, Vera Brittain, Leys had provided the model for the character Arthur Rollett, a crusading negrophile whom the Schreiner quote is used to describe in the novel.

his mother had died when his younger brother, Kenneth, was born. His father, John Leys, a barrister, converted to Roman Catholicism and, influenced by a Jesuit priest, began agitating for the return of his sons; they would be reared in his new faith. When Peter Leys refused to allow his grandsons to return to their father to become Catholics, John Leys began a court case, famous at the time, which resulted in his father being sent to prison for contempt of court. Meanwhile the boys had been spirited away to New England where they stayed, studying at Mount Hermon School, founded by the evangelist Dwight L. Moody, until they entered university. Although Leys never became a dogmatic sectarian, his religious faith - which fell, as he described it, within the Puritan tradition - was a fundamental root of his later political activities.

When in October 1904 Leys arrived in Chinde, the Portugese port at the mouth of the Zambesi, as a doctor employed by the African Lakes Corporation, he had the liberty and leisure for the first time in his life to read as widely as he wished.[72] Previously, his reading had been limited generally to Biblical criticisms, for which he always retained a fascination. In later years he enjoyed corresponding with a Congregational minister, Rev. Thomas Rook, and Alec G. Fraser, the colonial educator, on theological questions: in what sense was Jesus a son of God? Did Paul distort Christ's teaching by posing the Church as the recognised body of the saved?[73] At Chinde he was sent poetry and Greek tragedies by

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72. ~~ibid.~~ Mrs. Avery.

73. ~~Mrs. Avery~~ ibid.; Leys to Alec G. Fraser, 7 September, 1942, Fraser Papers, 11/2 ff.170-173, Rhodes House

Murray and such works as The Golden Bough, Gibbon, Trevelyan, Dostoevsky by his brother Kenneth. He remarked to Murray after reading Euripides that he saw in his plays,

> "the good man in unabridged opposition to evil cosmic powers. I hadn't realised before how strong his testimony is that the world forces are outside as well as inside the individual soul."[74]

Leys believed that men must go on battling the forces of evil and attempt to achieve Christ's "infinitely attractive" plan for life but must not cheat themselves by distorting that vision. He found D. H. Lawrence's interpretation of "The Grand Inquisitor" to be "utterly preposterous" for submitting that the nature of man makes such an ideal impossible to attain: "How can a man get any satisfaction out of life if, knowing his ideal, he makes no attempt to reach it?"[75]

It is not surprising, then, to find a strong tone of moral indignation in Leys' earliest letters from Central Africa. He wrote to Murray, "The strongest language cannot describe the depth of corruption and folly of Portugese politics". It was arbitrary and harsh and created in Africans a "servile manner that annoys a true child of democracy". From his own verandah, Leys had seen an official having a girl dragged to his house while her husband followed behind, protesting and beseeching. Portugese courts never acquitted Africans, he said, but offered them the option of paying a fine or, for punishments against whites, a beating by a 'palmatorio', a cat containing bits of iron. In 1902 Leys sent Murray an

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74. Leys to Murray, op. cit., 24.2.1903.

75. Leys to Lady Mary Murray, ibid., 31.8.1930.

article from the Central African Times, Blantyre, entitled "The Downfall of Quelimane", which described the economic decline occurring after the prazos (districts) were granted by the Portugese government to the Companhia da Zambesia; Africans had stopped farming and had bolted into the interior because the police, after banishing the Indian traders, had either stolen their produce or forced its sale at a fixed price.

Having come to Chinde determined to think well of the Portugese, Leys decided that they deserved to be cursed and would reap a stormy future. Yet, he was apparently not certain that a storm would come; he ripped open his letter and added the following postscript:

> "Will a race that has tamely submitted to Portugese oppression for five hundred years ever be fit for a share in government? Will they ever ask for it? What can education do for so spiritless a people? How much education will they be found capable of?"[76]

It is noteworthy, however, that as early as 1902 this "child of democracy", who tried to "treat nobody as his inferior", was already thinking in terms of sharing government with Africans.

Initially there was no one in Chinde with ideals similar to Leys and he felt lonely and morally and mentally confused by the rapacity and miscegenation around him. Not until 1905 when he was married and living in Karonga did he mention meeting a sympathetic character, an Irish judge who was a "fervid democrat" and had "hopeful views for the African Negro".[77] Throughout his years in Africa Leys appears to have

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76. Leys to Murray, ibid., 7.2.1902.

77. ibid., 14.2.1905.

had pleasantly social relationships with both settlers and officials, but he seems to have chosen his friends primarily, if not exclusively, from among the 'negrophiles'.

On his own, he had gathered together at Chinde all the material he could find on the relations of 'superior' to subject races. Besides works by Bryce, Westlake and Darwin, he found disappointingly little on the subject. He felt annoyed at what he called English complacency and indifference to metaphysics and exact thinking: "At present the Englishman governs black races much after the style of tossing for drinks at a bar." He wished that politicians at home could get a little first hand knowledge of the 'uncivilised races' they governed. Those who had principles made them into formulae that would solve only paper problems; they failed to realise that slavery would exist wherever the European was in contact with the 'semi-conscious savage' and that Parliamentary decrees were presently unenforceable. Leys felt that the difference between Portuguese and British rule in Central Africa was that the Portuguese treated Africans with more callous cruelty, although both treated them as livestock, as their own personal property; undoubtedly he was referring here to individuals of each nation whom he had met, rather than to colonial policy. Neither the British people nor their representatives appeared to have any control or concern for the British Central African Protectorate; perhaps he could act anonymously through the Anti-Slavery Society, Leys thought, and by presenting an M.P. with a good case instigate a parliamentary question and public inquiry.[78]

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78. ibid., ~~10.10.1902.~~ 18.6.1905.

Leys found that his 'boy' became inattentive when he learned that he would not strike him as the Portugese had done, so by "shouting a few unknown words with a stern face", Leys tried to reform his carelessness.[79] The products of the Scottish mission schools near Lake Nyasa were far superior to these servile and indolent Africans, Leys thought. Most could read and write, speak some English and were well clothed and clean. "Some at least have their natural cruelty partly removed." More important in a political sense, Christian teaching helped to dissolve class and racial divisions. Mission-trained Africans would not accept blows mutely but would either take the master before the consul or go away remarking 'God will not love you'. For this reason they infuriated most Europeans, with whom, Leys said, they were beginning to compete, but they continued to command three to four times the wages of the 'raw native' as foremen of labour gangs and storekeepers.

Later, when living at Karonga as an employee of the BCA Protectorate, Leys noted that the Administration officials hated the nearly four hundred Livingstonian schools and would gladly have put down the movement if they could. Leys himself apparently felt only delight at the prospect of an African teacher, his shirt-tails outside his loincloth, preaching in

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79. ibid., 7.2.1902.
Leys, who by his own admission was impatient and had a bad temper, later transgressed this principle: "I have cuffed and kicked boys, sometimes because for the moment it seemed that no how else could things be done. Sometimes just because my mind was tired beyond control, sometimes because I hated the people I kicked, though I never hated them as I hated myself."
Leys to Lionel Curtis, 23.11.1918, International Missionary Council, Edinburgh House, Box 248.

grammatical Aberdeen English from a Standard 5 English reader on lighthouses and the steam engine: "It's all like the Arabian nights to them, only doubly more wonderful because they know it's all true."[80] These were the men of tomorrow, Leys thought, who would lead their fellows to independence. Having failed to create a system of village sanitation in Nyasaland due to the opposition of the chiefs Leys felt he would have succeeded if he had been aided by the mission-educated. The readiness with which Africans were absorbing Christian education illuminated the absurdity of the British public paying a large annual deficit for two battalions of native troops "who are not and never will be of any use to the Protectorate" while not a penny was spent on education.

Leys' admiration for mission teaching did not preclude respect for certain indigenous African ways. Their languages, for example, were rich and poetic. Of greatest interest were the phrases and metaphors used to express the un-seen and the un-heard. Gradually Leys came to realise that abstract ideas were indeed capable of expression in a Bantu tongue: "it is all a matter of metaphor, in our language as much as in theirs." Nevertheless, "ignorance and inertia and sensuality" were dominant characteristics in Africans whose minds had not yet been liberated by European education.[81] Later he was to write that no-one who knew an African language well believed that Africans were mentally inferior.

Like Ross, Leys was not politically active during this

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80. ibid., 14.2.1905.

81. ibid., 30.6.1914.

early stage of his African career. Early in 1905 he protested against a local magistrate locking several female relations of a suspected criminal in jail in the hope of capturing the criminal when he tried to release them. The Judge of the High Court told Leys "not to expect a more perfect judicial system than is possible in the latitude of the Protectorate" and went on to describe greater injustice supported from high places. Leys vowed to expose one of these cases in public if he ever learned of one and learned how to do so. As will be seen in the following chapter, and as he admitted, he couldn't "live long in Africa without taking sides".[82]

In September 1905 Leys was transferred to the East Africa Protectorate where he was to stay for seven years. During that time, he spent three years in Mombasa, three in Nakuru and one in Fort Hall; he was later to remark that due to his shifting assignments he never had the time to know one tribe intimately.[83] Working hard at his grammars, he probably achieved a working grasp of Swahili and Kikuyu, enough to follow the general drift of the conversations of Africans sitting around a campfire. Leys' concern for the African was in any case largely a matter of European ethics. The name of an individual African rarely if ever entered his correspondence from Africa. It is doubtful whether Leys would have been inclined, even if his command of African languages had been sophisticated enough, to encourage relationships of personal sympathy to grow. The questions which he asked Africans were probably

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82. ibid., 18.6.1905.

83. Leys to J. H. Oldham, 23.10.1920, Box 248, Edinburgh House.

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more frequently abstract than personal - about their wages, their religious beliefs. He appears isolated from Europeans as well; never since his college days had he formed relationships of intimacy with other men.[84] Rather, he appears secluded in an intense confrontation with his own personal conscience and his conscience as a British subject. Throughout his life, Leys' temperament - his impatient dogmatism - prevented him from enjoying harmonious relationships with his fellow workers, from achieving one of his dearest ideals - 'common service'.

His work in Mombasa consisted largely of inspecting thousands of incoming and home-going labourers.[85] He also supervised the collection and examination of plague-carrying rats and empty tins and bottles where water collected and malarial mosquitoes could breed. The latter task was, he felt, an entirely inadequate preventive measure. He also inspected the sanitary facilities of steamers and municipal and railway sites. In 1912 he engaged the railway in a legal battle over the cleanliness of its latrines and, losing the case, complained bitterly that the magistrate "held that the railway could break the law without penalty".[86] He felt that the work of his office was hindered "by the indifference and misconduct not

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84. Mrs. Avery.

85. He published his findings in an article, "Notes on a Series of Physical Measurements from East Africa", in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute, vol.43, 1913, p.195-267 (with T. A. Joyce) and in Man, November, 1910.

86. Leys to the Principal Medical Officer, August 15, 1912, Reel 15 of Kenya National Archives microfilm.

so much of Africans and Asiatics, as of public servants".[87]

Except when epidemics broke out and he devoted his time to invaccination, he was unable to carry out preventive work of any value and large sums were wasted on the treatment of disease, spread particularly by migrant labourers. Similarly, when back in Nyasaland in 1915 he and other medical officers wrote to the Governor urging that provision be made for better treatment and study of disease among Africans through the use of native hospitals.[88] Not until after World War One was there a large scale re-organisation of medical administration in East Africa. The way had been prepared by William J. Simpson, lecturer in Tropical Hygiene at the London School of Tropical Medicine, who was sent to East Africa in 1913 to investigate sanitary conditions. With the aid of Dr. Hope Reford, Simpson succeeded in cleansing the town and preventing the spread of plague by destroying the rats, making house inspections, securing hospital accommodation and instructing people on the disease.

Simpson must have used Leys' highly regarded report on Mombasa, written in 1911, as one guide to necessary reforms. Perhaps characteristically, Leys had not confined himself to an examination of medical and sanitary facilities but had linked public health to its roots in the economic system. He had received the governor's special thanks for a report which, in his own words, "described the disgraceful failure of our

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87. Health Quarterly Report, Mombasa, 9.4.1912, ibid.

88. Nyasaland Confidential Despatch, December 20, 1915, CO 525/63, P.R.O.

work on the coast, the callous neglect broken through by blunders, the bruising and the wounding of the living bonds of which government itself consists".[89] C. C. Bowring, chief secretary of the Protectorate, hastened to correct the impression Leys created in a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies; Leys had been praised, not for his criticism of government for allowing the old order to pass away under the pressure of modern competition, but for the effort he had evidently made to acquire an intimate, though somewhat sentimental, knowledge of the people under his care.[90]

A vague feeling of sympathy coupled with a sense of the absurd mark Leys' account of his experiences with the Kisii Expeditionary Force in 1908. G. A. Northcote, Collector of Kisii District, had been speared in the back by Africans angered by the imposition of a hut tax. The attack was personal, Northcote stressed, in the sense that people thought the hut tax money went into his pocket and they objected to his stone house as a sign of permanent occupation. Leys justified the punitive expedition by noting that it achieved greater future safety for officials and traders: "Granted the existence of B.E.A., to do nothing would have been as unjust as to do what we did." Government harmed the innocent as well as

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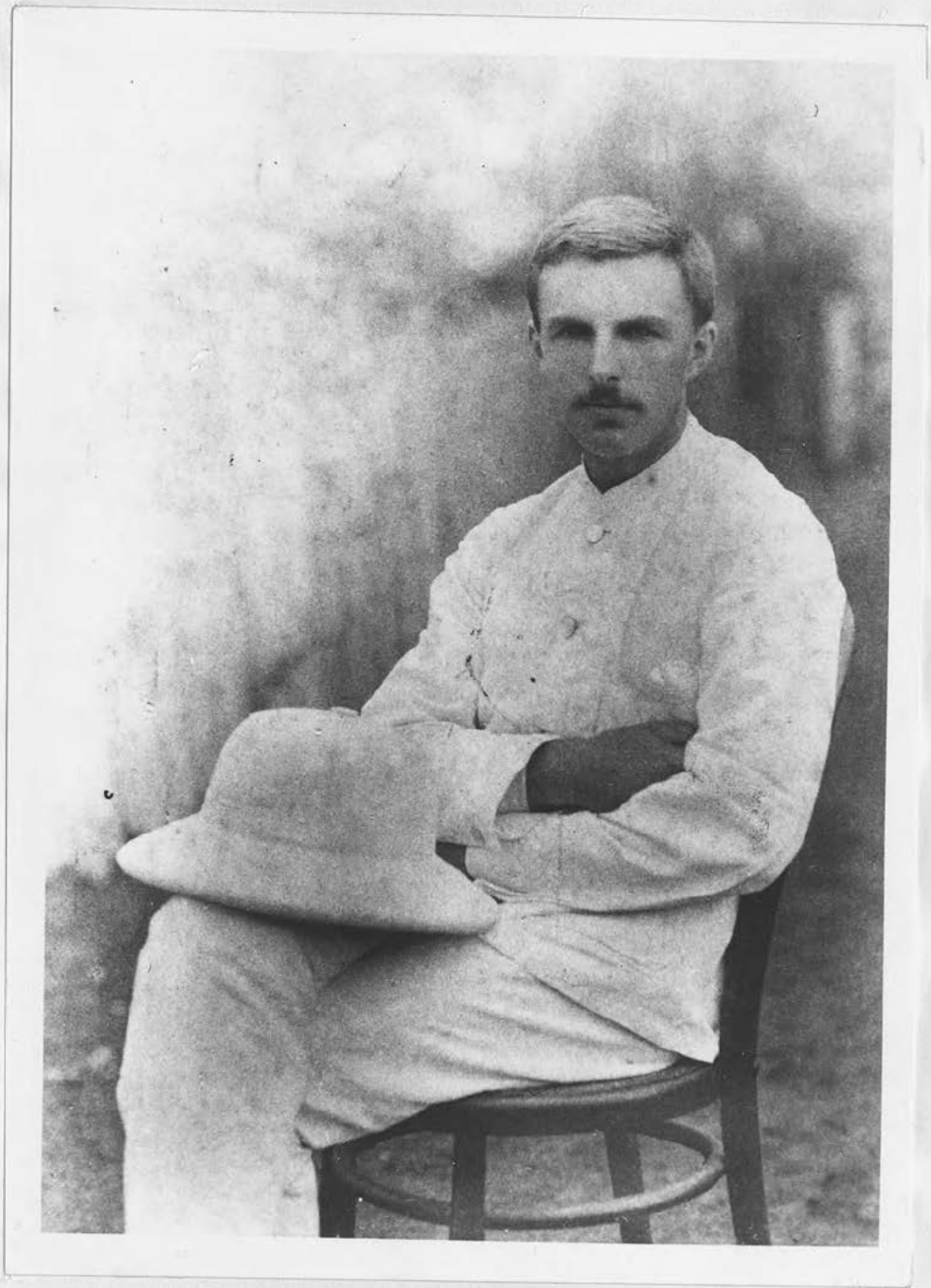
89. Leys to Lord Harcourt, 16.9.1912, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

90. When Leys asked Colonial Office permission to publish the report as a journal article, Sir Cosmo Parkinson rejected the request, saying, "We are aware of the difficulties in Mombasa as to sanitation, land, etc. and it is not necessary for Dr. Leys either to send them for us to read about in his report or above all to publish them to the world at large". Minute by A. C. C. Parkinson, 17.2.1913, CO 533/131, P.R.O.



Leys at Chinde

the guilty but it was preferable to anarchy.

Leys' description of the benefits of civilisation were strangely vague, given his usual clarity and intensity of expression. At the end of his letter he mused that although many Christian principles had been incorporated in Western civilisation, many ideals remained to be achieved. Only those with visions of how they would like the world to be had any right to interfere in the government of other people. Perhaps this violent event was the beginning for the Kisii of their incorporation into a future universal civilisation, a kingdom of heaven on earth. For a man who loved facts and clarity, such wandering thought can only indicate confusion or, at best, an uncharacteristic ambivalence toward the worth of the 'civilising mission'.

In any case, punitive expeditions were abominable things, Leys felt; most of the dead were noncombatants, simply those who had not surrendered to Northcote's attackers fast enough. Yet the expedition was not without humour. No officer knew the language of his Kavirondo porters. The porters straggled over the landscape, taking twenty-two minutes to assemble after the colonel blew his bugle for the formation of a square; "our progress for the next half hour resembled that of a piano going up a narrow stair." One thousand warriors who had massed on a small hill ran away when a maxim gun was fired. One Nubian sergeant taken for missing, strolled in by himself at midnight driving 150 cattle before him. Northcote was annoyed that the hut tax receipts would decline because the Kisii had lost stock and crops and would be occupied in build- new homes. Leys noted, however, "A hut only takes a week or

two to build up anyhow and these people have years of time on hand."[91]

Winston Churchill, Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, was aghast at the number of Kisii killed:

> "it looks like a butchery and if the House of Commons gets hold of it, all our plans in E.A.P. will be under a cloud. Surely it cannot be necessary to go on killing these defenceless people on such an enormous scale."

A lengthier indictment of the incident was delivered to the Colonial Office the following year when R. Popham Lobb, a former Kenya official, previously one of Lord Lugard's officers in Northern Nigeria, asked the Colonial Office to take action against those responsible for the Kisii expedition. Declaring that Governor Sadler had proven himself unfit for his post, Lobb added,

> "The whole episode betrays a degree of administrative ineptitude and a vicious misuse of force on the part of the Administration which deserves the gravest censure."

Lobb's memorandum stimulated the Colonial Office to send a copy of Lord Lugard's "Instructions for the Control of Expeditions" to Kenya and to ask for a report on the current condition of Kisii country. As will be seen in the following chapters, Leys rarely approached the Colonial Office directly and personally as Lobb had done, nor did he receive such direct and responsive action in return for his efforts. Two more years would pass before Leys would begin to express to public figures his indignation at the treatment of African

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91. Leys to friends, March 1908, Murray Papers, op. cit.

people.[92]

One of Leys' last acts in East Africa before being transferred, in disgrace, to Nyasaland for his role in opposing the Masai move, was to give evidence to the 1912 Native Labour Commission. He attested to the high death rate among Kikuyu labourers in Mombasa, due, he said, to the absence of sanitary measures in townships and on plantations as well as to bad diets and poor housing, "both of which are inferior to what was provided for slave labour a generation ago". He found that reluctant labourers, those who feigned illness when he examined them, had been seized by their headmen by force.

The only way to improve the labour supply, short of force, was, Leys believed, to make wage labour popular by improving conditions through legislation and inspection. The pressure currently used was increasing the unpopularity of working for wages. Petty traders in European goods could be encouraged to settle in native areas in order to stimulate desire for the rupee. Both employer and employee should be given easy access to the courts to protect the former against desertion and the latter against illegal punishments. Similarly, a system of identification would aid both parties; the present system was futile as it allowed, for example, recruiters to substitute old men for deserters. Leys noted that suggestions commonly made by settlers of means to increase the labour supply - raise taxes, restrict the 'reserves',

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92. Churchill believed that 160 Africans had been killed but Leys found it impossible to calculate casualties as the 'dead' often crept away and soldiers inflated the body counts.
See G. H. Mungeam, op. cit., p.173.

force - would simply stir a rebellion one day.

> "the only way to change the disastrous belief that Europeans live in the country to make money out of natives is to give them unmistakeable evidence that the tax money is being spent for their benefit."[93]

Four months later when he was back in Glasgow on leave, he wrote to the Anti-Slavery Society, from which he had resigned when he entered government service, and asked them to investigate the Masai question and watch closely the coming legal proceedings. He offered one criticism of the Society: that it seemed able to do for the Congo and Angola what it could not do for British dependencies. The only effective check on the evils perpetrated under the British flag were publicity and appeal to law. With publicity, there would come an administrative revolution. Urging the society to find a skilled investigator, Leys added his article of faith in British decency: "I have no wish to change public opinion. I only wish it to operate."[94]

One initial reaction to Africa, common to both Ross and Leys, was a revulsion against certain of the Europeans there. Both men were at first extremely lonely and secluded themselves from the coarse and lusty Europeans around them. Even members of the English gentry earned their scorn for their raucous pursuit of such pleasures as horse-racing and drinking. Inheritors of the Puritan tradition, Leys and Ross believed in the virtue of private judgement, which was difficult to reconcile with authority, and upheld egalitarian ideals that

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93. Evidence given by Dr. Norman Leys to the Native Labour Commission, 1912, Nairobi, CO 544/5, P.R.O.

94. Leys to Travers Buxton, 26 April, 1913, Anti-Slavery Society Papers, G131, Rhodes House.

were antithetical to the rigid racial hierarchy in Kenya.[95] Because they had no financial interests in the colony, their ideals did not conflict with their self-interest and they were free to witness and judge the settlers' struggles without compromising their high ethical principles. Yet, their personal courage and independence of mind were of even greater importance in determining their later stands against the paramountcy of settler interests than their financial independence from the vagaries of native labour. And, although they were outsiders among the settlers, their ideals had been fostered and were supported by the growing left-wing movements within Britain.

In Leys' case, it was easy to draw inferences about the nature of colonial policy from the behaviour of its representatives, because he lived in an area controlled by an alien power. Perhaps one of his most striking early observations, however, was that the difference between Portugese and British rule was less one of kind than of degree. Living in Chinde aided the development of Leys' thought along the lines of 'what were the implications for Africans of the European presence' and in his second letter to Murray he wrote that slavery existed wherever the European, not just the Portugese, was in contact with the 'semi-conscious savage'.[96]

Ross, on the other hand, was a less politically conscious individual and did not often feel compelled, as Leys did, to fit his perceptions into a larger intellectual scheme. Yet,

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95. Leys, N., Kenya, London, 1924, p.211.

96. Leys to Murray, op. cit., 5.11.1902.

he too was furious at the excesses of the 'negrophobes'. Neither Leys nor Ross had a clear idea of what African capacities were and what rights Africans should have. Their opposition to 'negrophobes' appears to be based less on the championing of a known cause than on a dislike of elitist privilege and a serious concern with Christian ethics. They may also have loathed the unprincipled Europeans because they feared that they would follow them in their degeneration. Leys noted in 1902 that the continual sight of cruelty and lust were dulling his mind and soul; the memory of the clean, straight-forward lives of friends was the breath of life to him:

> "Life often takes on a dirty drab colour, clearness of mind goes and the greatest things in the world are for the time uninteresting. The nightmare of slipping away from all that sometimes visits me."[97]

Leys placed greatest stress in his early letters on the potential of education to save the African from his natural cruelty, lust, indolence and ignorance. Ross, the schoolmaster's son, was not as anxious to change the African and his sentiments appear closer to the image of the primeval innocence of the 'savage'. Abstract principles of the right standards for European behaviour, rather than a defence of African rights, dominate their theories and appear to be a more significant root of their later protest. Leys in particular glorified and continually upheld in later years the Emancipation movement as the model of national behaviour from which, in self-interest, Britain had slipped.

Many commentators on racism have observed that whites

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97. ibid.

have feared and hated blacks because they invested or saw in them qualities or potential which they hated most in themselves. Neither Leys nor Ross showed this fear of 'going black'. Rather, the ever present prospect of degradation was signified by the Europeans without principles. Those Europeans also presented a foul model for Africans to copy. In this sense, Ross and Leys would probably have agreed with the following words of Sir Edward Grigg, Governor of Kenya from 1925 to 1931:

> "All white men and women destined to spend their lives in Africa...were born into a special and inalienable responsibility. Throughout their lives they would have to set a standard of civilization among people still far behind them (whatever the future might hold) in culture. They were assigned to an involuntary aristocracy."98

The later careers of Leys and Ross were devoted to the principle that, either through direct appeal or by the intercession of Parliament, this "aristocracy" must be made to live up to its own best standards.

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98. Elspeth Huxley, White Man's Country, Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya, vol. II, London, 1935, p.253.

Chapter III

CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE CRITICS

Leys and Ross were not the only civil servants to defend African interests in Kenya. The heavy loss of African life in punitive expeditions had been condemned at length by R. Popham Lobb; because officers in the field had not been closely controlled by headquarters, he wrote, the ratio of 'enemy' to government casualties was forty to one in the six operations between 1902 and 1906. As Secretary for Native Affairs A. C. Hollis dealt with both the recruitment and protection of African labourers; in 1907 he informed Governor Sadler that the two most offensive employers of labour were the railway and Ross' Public Works Department and, with the support of Winston Churchill and the disapproval of Lord Delamere, required that all homeward-bound labourers be provided with food by their employers.[1] Mervyn Beech, a district commissioner, had also sought more stringent controls of employers and had even produced in 1912 a memorandum entitled "The Kikuyu Point of View" based on interviews which he had conducted. There were also such officials as John Ainsworth and Rupert Hemsted who, in Nyanza and Masailand respectively, had tried to stimulate local African production for sale.

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1. Sadler to Elgin, 26.11.1907, CO 533/33, P.R.O. This accusation was probably due to the death of twenty Kikuyu labourers in the employment of the Public Works Department. Ross angrily denied that one of his European employees was responsible for their starvation. They had died, he said, because after travelling long distances they arrived at work on the point of collapse. C. Espeut, Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Nairobi to Ross, D.P.W., Mombasa, 16.10.1907, Ross Papers in the possession of Professor Peter Ross.

However, these independent and enterprising men were few in number and were most prevalent among the pioneering administrators whose roles were necessarily creative and intimately bound to African lives and institutions. Many wrote amateur anthropological works. During the early years, they generated much resentment among the settlers by their championing of African interests and some settlers felt that officials generally did not consider East Africa to be a 'white man's country'.[2] Their independent stands damaged the argument which the settler beamed to Britain, that the 'men on the spot', themselves, knew best how to govern Kenya.

Leys and Ross are significant, then, not as 'sole dissenters', though their stands were often lonely, but because their agitation turned the light of publicity on the Kenya settlers. Unlike the above officials who sought to protect certain African rights because they believed their jobs required them to do so, Leys and Ross were committed, in varying degrees, to a broader, ideological interpretation of African rights. Both men left Kenya unwillingly as a result of their antagonism to settler policies. The moral issues involved in these conflicts are clearest in the case of Leys.

An analogy between the tale of Naboth's vineyard and the move of the Masai was commonly made by 'humanitarians' in 1910 and 1911.[3] Just as Ahab had destroyed Naboth so that he might possess his vineyard, his father's inheritance which

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2. Lord Cranworth, Profit and Sport in East Africa, op. cit., p.103; Kenya Chronicles, London, 1939, p.73; Elspeth Huxley, White Man's Country, vol.I, op.cit., p.180-186. See also T. H. R. Cashmore, "Your Obedient Servants, Kenya 1895-1912", original typescript in Rhodes House.

3. see The Nation, July 8, 1911, p.528-9.

he would not sell, so were prominent settlers seen to cast envious eyes on the land of the northern Masai and to contrive to expel them from it. Governor Sir Donald Stewart had foreseen that this would happen. In 1904 the Masai had agreed to be divided into two reserves - one, Ngong, south of the railway and the other on the Laikipia plateau and Stewart warned the Colonial Office that it was absolutely necessary to establish these reserves on a permanent basis. The Masai had been formally granted occupation "so long as the Masai race shall exist" in order that Europeans could be granted their old grazing grounds, now highly valuable land, along the railway. Even Leys admitted that the first move had been justified by the diminished numbers of Masai, due to epidemics, and by their consequently wasteful use of this land.

Although Leys described the moral issues of the second move clearly in letters to Governor Girouard, Ramsay MacDonald, M.P. and T. E. Harvey, M.P., the case does not appear as clear as he wished it to be. In his quest for the truth which would fit into a larger conception Leys may have distorted the facts by robbing them of their confusion. Was the move prompted exclusively by European financial interests, as Leys suggested? The material on which the following account is based leaves many questions unanswered.

In Kenya Leys wrote that Governor Girouard had approached the Colonial Office and asked for the move in 1909. The previous year an article by Sir Harry Johnston had appeared in Nineteenth Century advocating the move of the Masai from

the northern reserve.[4] By 1910 Lord Delamere had begun agitating in its favour. One crucial question which is not clear is whether Girouard's initial request had been directly prompted by the desire of prominent settlers, particularly Delamere and his brothers-in-law Berkeley and Galbraith Cole, for the rich lands of Laikipia. However, even the official history of the moves states that as early as 1908 "The suggestion to move the Masai was undoubtedly made in the interests of European settlers".[5]

Land on Laikipia was granted to Delamere and the Coles, among others, in 1914 after the move had been completed, on the basis of whether they had abandoned farms there in 1904 or in the Lemek Valley and the Southern Uaso Nyiro in 1910 for occupation by the Masai. As C. C. Bowring, the acting governor, wrote to the Colonial Office,

> "Although no definite promise appears to have been made that the Laikipia lands would be available for

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4. Johnston, Harry, "The East African Problem", The Nineteenth Century, October, 1908, p.567-87.
Johnston had proposed in this article that, ideally, East Africa should be divided into counties along racial or tribal lines, each to be eventually granted self-government on the basis of literacy and intelligence. For this reason, a single Masai reserve must be created. He added that officials had heedlessly granted areas in the cool uplands to Africans who should, rather, have been given tracts in warm country not suited to European settlement.

5. Sandford, G. R., An Administrative and Political History of the Masai Reserve, London, 1919, p.27.
A. C. Hollis went so far as to write that the move was suggested solely in settlers' interests.
Memorandum by A. C. Hollis, July 5, 1910, "Correspondence Relating to the Masai", Cd. 5584(1911), p.725.

> the exchange, there is at the same time little doubt but that it was taken for granted that this would be the case."[6]

No written agreement had been reached and the Colonial Office had not been informed by Girouard of the above assumption. Rather, Girouard had telegrammed Lord Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary, on October 7, 1911, that no rights had been granted or promises made to the Europeans who had left the extended southern reserve, although they would have to be accommodated elsewhere.[7] Harcourt angrily minuted on a 1913 despatch when it became clear that he had been misled, "Sir P. Girouard shall pay - in public reputation!"[8] Girouard's successor, Sir Henry Belfield, informed Harcourt that the refusal to fulfil the confident expectations of the southern settlers would cause the "greatest discontent and exasperation; nor will the Government escape accusation of a deliberate breach of faith".[9]

So the Colonial Office was obliged to grant compensation which it knew would increase public suspicion of machinations in Kenya. This difficulty was compounded by the fact that the claimants had been promised since 1909 a fifty per cent increase in land area as compensation for improvements on the farms that they were relinquishing. Delamere's increase was due to the aid that he had given the government in persuading the other settlers to give up their claims. Whether the move had been primarily prompted by the desire to reunite

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6. Bowring to C.O., August 26, 1912, CO 533/105, P.R.O.
7. Quoted in Belfield to Harcourt, October 23, 1912, CO 533/105, P.R.O.
8. Minute by Harcourt, 28.2.1913, CO 533/116, P.R.O.
9. Belfield to Harcourt, October 31, 1912, CO 533/116, P.R.O.

the conservative Masai as a prelude to persuading them to enter the cash economy or whether certain prominent settlers had initiated it because they themselves wanted the rich lands of Laikipia is still, however, not clear.

When a letter opposing the move, written by Leys to Gilbert Murray, found its way to the Colonial Office in 1910, it provoked concern that the Colonial Office would be publicly criticised as the villain of a Naboth's vineyard tale. Girouard's proposal for the move was immediately checked to see whether it was consistent with statements made in the Commons. The move was halted by the Colonial Office until it had been furnished with further details from Kenya; Leys had hoped for this reaction.[10] However, he was aware that Girouard would be covered by the Colonial Office and only Girouard's subordinates would be punished. For the eyes of the public the Governor was protected but internally he was bitterly credited with gross mismanagement. Similarly, when the Kenya administration was placing great obstacles between the barrister Alexander Morrison and his Masai clients so that they found it difficult to meet, Harcourt expressed the hope that no unnecessary difficulties were being created as he feared the effect which such petty obstruction would have on British public opinion.[11] In short, the Colonial Office evinced no concern that the move may have been engineered in the settlers' interests. This apparent lack of interest would support

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10. Crewe to Girouard, 22 April, 1910, CO 533/72, P.R.O.

11. Harcourt to Belfield, 7.11.1912, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

Leys' belief that in this period "with rare exceptions policy has depended on the personal opinions of governors" and that Downing Street was concerned simply with petty details and financial matters,[12] as long as there were no risings or trouble with home opinion.

Girouard was particularly piqued by allegations that he was motivated by a desire to secure lands for settlement; at the Colonial Office he was known as the most negrophile governor in Africa, he told Leys. To E. D. Morel he wrote requesting help if there should be much agitation by 'sentimentalists' in Britain who found his motives self-interested.

> "I have a small native question which is being criticised particularly by Ramsay MacDonald, I wish he would come and govern for a while...I have croakers who certainly don't know a Masai from a Fulani howling what a cruel beast I am."

Everyone in Kenya, even the missions and the bishops, agreed with his policy, he said, and no-one had every approached him opposing the reunification of the Masai. Although this statement is, strictly speaking, true, Leys had, one year previously, argued with Girouard for two hours about the justice and implications of the move.

Girouard believed that the only hope for the Masai lay in their "coming into line with the times". Like the man who was believed to go to hell for selling his cow too cheap, the Masai would, it was believed, cause a bloody war and cease to exist as a tribe if they refused to trade their cattle. The Masai and the Europeans had utterly incompatible ideas of currency. Because of over-stocking, the Masai

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12. Leys, N., Kenya, op. cit., p.98.

13. Girouard, Percy to E. D. Morel, October 1, 1911, Morel Papers, London School of Economics; Girouard to Harcourt, September 30, 1911, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

were over-spilling their boundaries and were sure to come into conflict with settlers if they were not "subjected to economic development". For this reason the move was an essential prelude to their re-education; their division in 1904 had been a "gross error" which simply forestalled their becoming traders by "moral suasion pretty forcibly applied".[13]

Because Girouard resigned during the move, he did not have the opportunity to prove that he had plans for the economic development of the re-united Masai, so it is difficult to judge the sincerity of his protestations to Morel and Harcourt. Even his successors did not devise any programmes for stimulating the Masai economy. Part of this failure was due to the conservatism of the Masai themselves, a source of frustration to many officials. Because settler interests were in fact paramount, the few district officers who did try to stimulate Masai enterprise were officially rebuffed. In 1906 A. J. M. Collyer had tried to breed merino rams with wool-less Masai sheep but this experiment was soon forbidden as it was feared that the Masai would as a result be encouraged to steal European sheep.[14]

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14. It has been argued that white settlement and quarantine regulations cut the Masai off from their traditional source of improved herds in Somalia, and the idea of selling surplus stock was quenched by the lack of southern stock outlets. As late as 1929 the D.C. for Narok wrote,

> "so far as this district is concerned (the Masai) is forbidden by law to sell his stock however much he may want to...Folks may talk of the useless Masai. But the fact is that they are forbidden to help the Colony in the way which they best could, that is by supplying cheap beef."

King, K. J., "The Kenya Masai and the Protest Phenomenon 1900-60", Journal of African History, XII, 1 (1971) p.123.

Leys argued in Kenya that the post-World War One attempts to develop the Masai economically and politically were largely the creations of Rupert Hemsted, the District Commissioner, rather than part of the administration's policy. (Kenya, p.117-121)

Lenana, the senior laibon who resided in the south, was almost entirely responsible for the move in March 1910, Girouard alleged. If his authority and prestige had not been backed by British power, the consequences would have been awkward for both parties.[15] In February 1910 when Lenana had been afraid that his loss of authority over the northern reserve would be signified by the holding of two different circumcision ceremonies, Girouard had stressed to the elders that Lenana was the acknowledged paramount chief and that all government orders for the Masai would be given only to him.[16] With the aid of the Governor, Lenana was able to change the traditional site of the ceremonies from Kingangop to Ngong. Whether he had initiated the idea or not, Lenana did agree to a move two months later of the northern Masai which would reunite the tribe and thereby restore to him some of his waning power. Leys did not deny Lenana's complicity, but dismissed him as an example of "the nauseous practice of making native agents into government instruments and still pretending that they represent the people".[17]

The second crucial gap in the understanding of this confused episode concerns the wishes of the Masai: was Legalishu, the spokesman of the northern reserve, manipulating opposition to the move purely out of self-interest, as the Kenya administration alleged, or was Leys correct in

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15. Girouard to Crewe, 3.3.1910, CO 533/72, P.R.O.

16. Notes of February 2, 1910 meeting, Hollis and Collyer to Chief Sec, Nairobi, February 4, 1910, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

17. Anonymous (Leys') letter to Gilbert Murray, February 3, 1910, CO 533/72, P.R.O.

saying that the people in the north were independently antagonistic to the move? Were the Masai opposed to the move on principle or from distrust of British motives, or was it largely a matter of indifference to them, apart from the trouble of moving, if they were provided with well-watered grazing land elsewhere? Perhaps distrust was the most common reaction; in 1904 they had suspected the Government of dividing the tribe in order to make their annihilation easier.[18] Leys hinted darkly that unethical methods had been used to obtain Legalishu's assent as early as February, 1910: "The methods by which that consent was obtained are not specified in the Blue Book", but he made no suggestion himself of possible means of suasion.[19] In a letter to Murray he alleged that Lenana had used magic to obtain the consent of the northern chiefs. Leys admitted the difficulty of determining the true wishes of Africans, especially once government had made its wishes known. He unrealistically proposed that, because of this amazing African 'docility', the Government should conceal its own wishes in order to learn those of the Masai.[20] Here lies the great snag in Leys' argument: he believed that, in order to maintain loyalty, the wishes of Africans must be discovered and deferred to; but, in this case, where was one to look for an authoritative expression of Masai opinion?

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18. Memorandum by A. C. Hollis, July 5, 1910, op. cit., Cd. 5584.

19. Leys, Kenya, op. cit., p.105.
T. H. R. Cashmore suggests that the Masai were simply indulging their natural aptitude for keen bargaining; the more they complained, the more land they were given. ("Your Obedient Servants", p.387)

20. Leys, Kenya, op. cit., p.109.

The barest facts of the move are as follows. Of their own accord the Masai began moving south in April 1910 before the Government had made adequate preparations for the journey and re-location. This premature start was largely due to drought and to an outbreak of gastro-enteritis in Laikipia and, rather than expressing mass approval of the move, the northern Masai were simply driving their herds to fresh pastures. It is difficult to determine whether this premature start robbed the Governor of a chance to forewarn the Colonial Office or whether, as Leys alleged, he had intended to present Downing Street with a fait accompli. Leys felt that by writhis letter to Murray, MacDonald and Harvey, he had spoiled this scheme. His chief informant, A. J. M. Collyer, the D.C. for the northern Masai, would not join him in protest because, he said, he believed in the tact and good intentions of the Government, even though he opposed the methods used to bring about the move. To this, Leys countered, in characteristically righteous tones, "The immediate consequences of injustice are not modified by tact and good intentions".[21]

Although a formal meeting had been held in February at which all Masai leaders had given their assent to the move, without, however, formally signing an agreement as had been done in 1904, it was halted by order of Lord Crewe, Harcourt's predecessor as the Secretary of State, immediately after it began. Crewe had received the letter that Leys had sent to Murray alleging that the Masai did not want to move and that there was insufficient grass and water for them in the south-

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21. Leys to Murray, ibid., April 30, 1910.

ern reserve, land which Europeans had rejected. Crewe was not willing to disbelieve entirely the allegations until he had received a report from the Secretary of Native Affairs on the two issues.

By May Legalishu had changed his mind, believing the new area to be too small. His own scouts, who spent two months in the area, accompanied by Collyer, found the area was also too dry and too close to the Sotik who would, it was feared, continually raid their cattle. Clearly, the welfare of the Masai had not been a high priority in the administration's choice of land.

It is not clear why Legalishu underwent a change of heart in April of the following year. It was reported that Lenana on his deathbed had said, "Tell the Laikipia Masai to move with their cattle to the Loita plains", but it is unlikely that Legalishu would have been humbled by his rival's deathbed wish. A more potent spur was probably the government's prohibition of grazing across the Uaso Nyiro River as the area was then being marked for white settlement. After Legalishu informed the Governor of his wish to move, a formal treaty was signed obligating the Masai to move despite subsequent vacillations.

It is also not clear from the contemporary accounts why Legalishu later, in February 1912, again changed his mind. These accounts do not mention the various forms of 'moral suasion forcibly applied' which might have provoked his evasive and vacillating spoken opinions: the rejection of his offer in 1910 to pay double tax and one hundred cattle a year if allowed to stay in Laikipia; the subsequent

charging of rent for their occupation of the northern reserve; the prohibition of the purchase of land by the Masai outside the reserve; the patrolling of the northern border of the southern reserve to prevent the return of those who had left. Legalishu even alleged that he had been threatened with deportation. In August 1912 Morrison complained to Harcourt

> "An attempt is being made to isolate the Masai in their reserves, trading has been stopped on the Loita Plains, and Masai suspected of being sympathisers with my clients' case have been refused passes to enter the reserve; accordingly my clients have not yet been able to get their cattle sold."[22]

Force was eventually given official sanction. According to official directions, quoted by Leys in Kenya, the Masai were to be informed that if they refused to move, troops would be sent to Laikipia.[23] Such orders were proof to Leys that the government was aware that the northern Masai wished to stay in Laikipia. He felt that the contents of his 1910 letter to Murray had been vindicated.

The move itself had been badly bungled: three of the four routes south converged on a plateau called the Promised Land and there, because of the heavy rains, a great congestion of Masai grew; the number of their stock had been underestimated; roads became impassable. It was never determined whether there had been any loss of human life. (This did not prevent an ill-informed 'humanitarian' from writing a

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22. Alexander Morrison to Harcourt, 12 August, 1912, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

23. Leys, Kenya, op. cit., p.113.

tear-jerking letter to the Anti-Slavery Society.[24] Leys disapproved of such a spectacular approach to a campaign of protest.) But they did lose many cattle and in 1912 sued the Crown for £50,000 in damages.

Ainsworth was brought in to sort out this muddle and decided that the move could take place only in relays. He accommodated some Masai on European farms, especially on land offered by the East African Syndicate, and moved others back to Laikipia. In regard to the failure to judge the grazing capacity of the southern extension or to develop water conservation schemes there, Ainsworth wrote, "I could not help but express my surprise that these very necessary details had not been dealt with before the move began".[25] It was only after the move had dissolved in chaos that reports were requested on these issues, further proof of the effective paramountcy of settler interests in the affair. Ross and the Director of Agriculture thought, after travelling through Trans-Mara, the second extension, that that area was far better suited to the needs of the Masai than Laikipia. Legalishu was still not convinced but acquiesced under the terms of the August 1911 treaty.

In June 1912 Alexander Morrison informed the Colonial Office that he had taken up the Masai case. The Masai lost

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24. Anonymous letter to Travers Buxton, September 25, 1911, A.P.S. Papers, G131, Rhodes House.
According to the letter, an example of the worst kind of humanitarian effusions, "It was a case of 'death' where they were, certain 'death' in front and perhaps what they feared most, death at the hands of the savage native soldiers at the orders presumably of those at the head of affairs."

25. John Ainsworth, "Reminiscences" chapter 12, Rhodes House MSS Afr. S. 380, f.41. Delamere suspected that Ainsworth had contrived the Masai opposition to the move and propagated that rumour among the settlers. (Chapter 13, "Reminiscences").

it in May 1913 on the grounds that a Protectorate court had no jurisdiction in such matters.[26] In any event, the move had already been completed in April 1913. Their appeal failed and by May 1914 the allotment of Laikipia to its European claimants began. Although Girouard, like Sir Charles Eliot, had lost his post over the Masai question, the settlers received their land; the 'man on the spot' had won. By 1926, however, so few of the European farms on Laikipia had been developed that a scheme was devised to alienate the vacant farms and redistribute them. Most settlers were chronically short of money for development and it is possible that the intervening years of war and depression had prevented the new European owners and lessees of land in Laikipia from developing the area as they would have wished. However, the question remains: was Laikipia desired for development or for speculation?

Leys tried four different means of protesting against the move of the Masai and was removed from Kenya for the last of them. First, he had written in February 1910 to Gilbert Murray, Ramsay MacDonald and T. E. Harvey, hoping to provoke informed parliamentary questions or even to get someone to plead the Masai's case at the Colonial Office; in this letter Leys made no detailed reference to the role of settler interests in prompting the move but based his opposition on the reluctance of the Masai to vacate Laikipia. Leys went so far as to attribute Harcourt's discovery of the inadequacy

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26. The Masai had signed the 1904 compact not as British subjects but as a sovereign state so a British court was held to have no jurisdiction in the matter.

of the southern reserve, Girouard's resignation and the publication of the Masai Blue Book all to a speech which MacDonald made in Parliament, based on his information.

Two months later he acted on an idea he had broached in a letter to Murray and suggested to ~~give other~~ five other officials, including Ross and Collyer, ~~that they~~ that they protest by requesting a transfer to a country where government could be served without a loss of self-respect. This proposal did not generate much enthusiasm among the other five potential martyrs and Ross suggested that Leys write to Girouard instead.[27]

As a result, Leys was granted a two hour interview with the Governor in June 1910 and was sufficiently impressed with Girouard's exposition of his native policy, with which he agreed, to write, "This Masai business is an inconsistency which I believe the Governor in his heart regrets".[28] He added that Girouard was better fitted to be responsible for native interests and rights than any other governor under whom he had served. This appreciation of Girouard was due primarily to Girouard's assurance that in six months the settlers would know that they had gained a wrong impression of his policy. Leys verbally withdrew half the contents of his letter and his conscience was stricken with guilt at having brought his grievances through Murray to Parliament rather than directly to the Governor.

He considered correcting his mistake by going to Seely in the Colonial Office and telling him that he was the one

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27. Leys to Murray, op. cit., 24 April, 1910; Ross to his mother, May 24, 1910. Extracts from Leys' letter to Girouard are printed on pages 108-9 of Kenya.

28. ibid., June 18, 1910.

who had written to Murray and asking permission to confess to the Governor.[29] Later, he wrote to Murray, "I suppose that interference of the kind we went in for is an impossible means of good government. It is too like the boys' way of propelling a toy boat by throwing stones into the water around it."[30] He resolved that the next time he engineered an explosion he would write a joint letter to the Secretary of State through the Governor. Finally, when it became clear that Girouard was not fulfilling his promise to resist strongly the settlers' demands for further accessions of African land, Leys told Morrison that the Masai might need legal representation. Again, he re-assessed Girouard and in private called him "an unscrupulous adventurer who thinks he can play Clive's part without his brains and do what Rhodes did without Rhodes' money".[31]

To Leys the importance of the case lay in the precedent which it set for the sacrifices of African to European interests. Although His Majesty's Government was in Africa for the benefit of Africans, Colonial Office policy was wrong because its chief object was the profit of the European immigrant. By treating Africans as factors in production, without human sympathy, the government was worshipping false gods. The move itself might be simply the prelude to future concessions to the settlers, perhaps leading to self-government when the country was paying its own way. It would encourage the "illegitimate anticipations" of the settlers for Kenya's

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29. ibid., July 17, 1910.

30. ibid., 27.12.1911.

31. Leys to Oldham, 26.9.1918, Box 248, Edinburgh House(E.H.)

best land and thus contribute to the development of political unrest and racial antagonism.[32]

Like Girouard, Leys foresaw the possibility of a future rising but only if the Colonial Office continued to send governors who were servants of the rich planters and investors. Girouard had won popularity by giving African land to influential friends; fourteen farms in one area had passed through the hands of three men alone.[33] For this reason, Girouard was, in Leys' eyes, the chief villain of the piece.

In a letter to Ramsay MacDonald, Leys wrote,

> "Our Governor is not playing fair; his mind and ambitions lead him into intrigues and bluffing. It is freely said that he does not mean to listen to Colonial Office admonitions. He thinks himself safe in the favours of wealthy planters and investors."[34]

Although Leys had never been blind to the workings of financial interests in Africa, this episode marks for him an increasing awareness of their contribution to present and future policy. Throughout his life, he tended, like Ross, to accuse vested interests of complicity in apparently untoward political events. He also continued to be highly suspicious of governments whose chief object was to create profits. The two factors - human and economic - were, in his eyes, widely divergent and the political system must never be allowed to make the former serve the latter, as in Kenya.

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32. ibid., June 3, 1910; April 24, 30, 1910.

33. ibid., July 17, 1912; April 3, 1911.

34. G. H. Mungeam, op. cit., p.263.
A mass meeting of settlers telegraphed the Colonial Office in 1912 expressing its "deepest regret" and "consternation" at Girouard's resignation. (17.7.1912, CO 533/105, P.R.O.)

The breaking in meanness and dishonesty of the 1904 promise that the Masai were to have Laikipia in perpetuity was an "abomination" of greater importance than the harm that could be done to them.[35] Again, his focus was on the failure of Europeans to live up to their highest ethical standards. Leys cared what Africans thought of Europeans, fearing that they would be seen simply as profiteering exploiters. Perhaps even more important, however, was his fear that European sovereignty in Africa would prove to be a greater curse to Europeans than to Africans, that it would bring about the moral impoverishment of this generation of whites and the next. The tradition would grow that Africans were the spoil of the strong and that Britain governed for the sake of profit from their labour.[36]

The need for concrete justice - to prevent European moral decline, to avoid African rebellion, to fulfil the 'civilising mission' - was far greater than the need to maintain prestige. He was aware that other tribes might seek restitution of their lands if the Masai won their case but he insisted that prestige was an abstract quality which it was pointless to pursue; at any rate, prestige did not connote in this case 'honour and intelligence' as it did in Britain. Leys did not speculate on the outcome of a possible rash of court cases brought by Africans against the Protectorate government. Throughout his long career of criticising colonial policy, he refused to view his basic moral principles

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35. Leys to Murray, op. cit., February 3, 1910.

36. ibid., 27.12.1911.

37. ibid., August 29, 1911; Leys, Kenya, op. cit., p.110.

simply as ideals. It was urgently necessary that they be converted into concrete justice; this was the only realistic path. Any compromise, in response, for example, to fear of losing prestige, was the product either of moral cowardice or of self-interest.

Justice did not mean expulsion of the Europeans for there was no real antagonism between European and African interests. However, the growth of social harmony, an interdependence of European and African, would be thwarted by the mistrust generated by such sacrifices of African to European interests, the gradual occupation by Europeans of the best land. Justice lay in the fulfillment of the following task which Leys refused to see as an 'ignorant dream'. In perhaps the best early summary of his hopes for Africa, he wrote,

> "the real task is to gain for the people of the country liberty of mind, though knowledge, through the cherishing of traditions that still live, and the encouraging of new traditions that create life, and to reach thereby close interdependence of interests and a mutual respect and regard."[38]

Racial harmony could be achieved if Africans were educated, though not taught to assimilate, and if the fabric of their social lives and institutions were not allowed to fall apart and to be replaced by no new social bonds.

A herd of elephant in Hyde Park was as preposterous and impossible as the maintenance of the Masai political and social organisation. They must change with the times. Western civilisation "with all its crimes and follies is better than Masai civilisation. And there is no room for both in

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38. Leys to Girouard, May 25, 1910, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

the same world".[39] A real effort must be made to teach them other ways of life: "Schools are the only means by which these new ideas can be implanted."[40] But rather than devising an adequate scheme of education, a debt owed to the tribe, the government was discouraging them from breeding wool-bearing sheep and from crossing their cattle with those of Europeans and was trying to reduce their stock by annually removing 1% as tax. Neither had the Masai been taught the uses of wealth.

> "Native reserves are simply an artificial barrier against a flood, behind which a wise Government will work to build up a new life. If it does not, the barriers go, and Imperial Parliament itself cannot keep them standing."[41]

For the moment the docility of Africans, a source of amazement to Leys, was guaranteed. They knew too little about bringing their grievances to courts and they knew too much to risk rebellion against arms-bearing Europeans.

Nevertheless, Europeans must guard against the temptation of attempting to 'do good' to Africans against their will. An unintelligent attempt to transplant European beliefs and practices in African soil had a slim chance of success.[42] First, native opinion must be discovered and deferred to. It was always difficult to discover the truth in Africa, but it would be easiest to unearth it if government concealed its own wishes. By all means, African governments must be democratic, rather than allowed to become autocratic under

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39. Leys, Kenya, op. cit., p.123

40. ibid., p.124.

41. Leys to Murray, op. cit., September 19, 1911.

42. ibid., April 13, 1910; Leys to friends, March 1908, op. cit.

European control. Lenana was a good example of an indigenous official, in this case religious, who was not representative of his people but was simply a government agent. In order to secure African loyalty, Leys believed that planning for the economic, social and political development of Africans must originate from Europeans who had consulted African opinions and who would then realise their plans with African support. There is, of course, no suggestion that Africans would choose independently their future path or that they should be allowed to preserve completely their indigenous ways; they would simply set the problems for the Europeans to solve.

Despite holding up democracy as the best means of governing, Leys was willing, perhaps with some resentment of social and political realities, to seek help from men of influence. He disliked pretention and privilege but he preferred to resort for help to a 'gentleman' rather than to a well-meaning but ineffective Radical. To Murray he wrote,

> "I suppose a few of us might resign and go home and agitate and be called l(iberal) and get the support of Mr. Redmond and Mr. Keir Hardie and many other enthusiastic and uninfluential persons...I would rather the thing did not get into the Radical or Soc(ialist) papers. I don't want to see my grievances keeping company with the numerous grievances both real and bogus, that have been v(ented) in these papers for many years."[43]

Similarly, when he broached his idea of a joint resignation to five East African officials he felt that they should have a 'gentleman' to lead them because "it matters in England." In later years he accepted, with some bitterness, that his rank in life was that of a sergeant while others had the prestige and influence of colonels. He would never have

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43. ibid., February 3, 1910.

approached a man of influence whose opinions he did not respect. Nevertheless he may sometimes have connived through important men when his own personal representations would have been equally or more effective.

His manner of interfering in the Masai move seems unnecessarily circuitous, particularly since he did believe in the honesty of the Colonial Office officials who were simply, he thought, poorly informed. If he had written to the Colonial Office through the Governor, he would not have provoked the flurry of self-protection which his more public protest did. Both the Governor and the Colonial Office were primarily concerned with protecting their own positions and Leys, by failing to keep the conflict away from the public eye, was to be punished for his indiscretion. What is most surprising here is that Leys had failed, in his too great faith in 'disinterested' British instiutions, to foresee that this would happen.

His resort to letters written privately to Murray, MacDonald and Harvey illustrate, as well, his faith in the efficacy of well-informed parliamentary questions. The courts could also serve as disinterested redressers of grievances; in 1910 he believed that the Masai would, of course, win a court case if they knew enough to begin one. Although their failure to win did diminish his faith in the courts to some extent, he never blamed the Colonial Office of corruption but, rather, of weakness in the face of unscrupulous, interested parties such as Girouard.[44]

Despite his clear exposition of his stand, which he

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44. Leys wrote to Murray, "I made the mistake of taking for granted that when a British government enters into an engagement with people who owe "obedience" to it...it provides a court to decide on alleged infringments of the engagement. There is no such court it seems." (ibid., 30 June, 1914.)

believed to be fundamentally loyal, in a series of letters to the Colonial Office, Leys was branded "disloyal" for his role in arranging Morrison's initial visit to Legalishu. C. C. Bowring, the Acting Governor, suggested that Leys leave the Protectorate service; he believed that the incident of the court case had been engineered,

> "either by unscrupulous persons who wish to trade on the credulity of the tribe to their own pecuniary advantage or by so-called 'sympathisers' who, like Dr. Leys, are obsessed with the idea that the Government has adopted a policy of systematic and continual oppression ~~where~~ where the interests of the natives are concerned."[45]

The former reference was to Alexander Morrison, "the hungry lawyer from the Coast"[46] whom the Masai were able to hire because of their great wealth in cattle. Morrison himself denied that Leys had suggested to the Masai that they obtain a retainer; this suggestion had been made by another and highly placed official and Leys had simply asked Morrison whether he were willing to represent the Masai and had then recommended him.[47] Neither did Legalishu's evidence implicate Leys. He stated that two Europeans had approached him and had offered to help him regain Laikipia on payment of forty bullocks; that transaction misled many Masai into believing that they were buying permission to return to Laikipia. The Colonial Office also

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45. Bowring to the Secretary of State, August 8, 1912, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

46. Minute by Sir J. Anderson, October 23, 1912, CO 533/106, P.R.O.
The incident was an affair which provoked the administration but it attracted, apparently, little interest among the settlers. The only reference to the case in the East African Standard in the last half of 1912 alleged that Morrison had dubious motives. (David Forbes, "The Masai Again", East African Standard, August 24, 1912, p.8)

47. Leys mentioned in a letter to Murray that a friend of his had approached the Masai and recommended that they obtain a lawyer. (ibid., July 17, 1912)
Morrison to Acting Chief Secretary, Nairobi, September 4, 1912, CO 533/105, P.R.O.

took offence at Leys' statement to Bowring that he would do everything to overturn the Government's intentions that "the letter and spirit of the regulations allow me".[48] His Majesty's Government could not leave unpunished such blatant interference in matters of administration, entirely outside a medical officer's scope, particularly once they had been accepted as policy by the Secretary of State. H. A. Butler minuted that Leys would have been removed from the Colonial Service entirely if only the Government had been on perfectly safe ground as to the execution of its policy.[49]

For this reason, because they did not want to make a martyr of him, and possibly because Murray had interceded on his behalf with his friend Lewis Harcourt, Leys was simply transferred to Nyasaland.[50] It was known that he had 'incited' not only the Masai but also Members of Parliament to obstruct Government policy. The Colonial Office knew that he had written to Murray in 1910 thereby starting the entire storm but they had not revealed his identity to Girouard because they believed he had been acting from conscientious motives. They later learned that the Governor had known all along about Leys' activities; perhaps one of the five men whom Leys had invited to resign had turned informer as Leys had feared he would.[51] Harcourt dismissed the matter by saying that Leys would remain in the Service but that he would deal with him

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48. Leys to Bowring, July 22, 1912, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

49. Minute by H. A. Butler, October 8, 1912, CO 533/106, P.R.O.

50. Murray to Lord Oxford and Asquith, 16.2.1926, op. cit.

51. Minute by Fiddes, September 6, 1912, CO 533/105, P.R.O.; Leys to Murray, April 30, 1910.

in the Commons if he were brought up for debating purposes.[52]

Leys was clearly wounded by having to leave Kenya after reaching "a degree of mutual regard (with its people), that is the work of years of endeavour".[53] He refused to admit that he was guilty of an offence for helping

> "certain discontented subjects to lay their grievances before one of His Majesty's courts, to have them discussed there and perhaps appeased instead of allowing them to be nursed and to breed, possibly for generations."[54]

He was not cowed, however, but continued to agitate, most notably against the acquittal by a jury of settlers of Galbraith Cole who admitted having murdered a suspected sheep thief; he successfully contrived to have questions asked in Parliament about the incident. The growth of forced labour into an accepted system also became a matter for his increasing concern.

Although the failure of the courts to vindicate his position did somewhat shake his faith in British institutions, his faith in the power of aroused public opinion never weakened. As early as 1911 he had begun to prepare notes for a book which would show the British public what a Protectorate really was.[55] He craved for a spark of talent so that he could

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52. Minute by Fiddes, October 29, 1912, CO 533/106, P.R.O. The Masai incident was brought up again in the Colonial Office in 1925 when Leys' book, Kenya, was being assessed; the Office noted that there had never been any evidence that Leys had had contact with the Masai and continued to deny that the desire to provide land for settlers was a motive in the move. (Minute on Denham to to Amery, 27.3.1925, CO 533/330, P.R.O.)

53. Leys to Harcourt, 16 September, 1912, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

54. Leys to Monson, Acting Chief Secretary, October 2, 1912, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

55. Leys to Isabel Ross, 19.8.1923, Ross Papers.

expose the grosser injustices one by one and felt that two more years in East Africa would sufficiently clear up the vagueness and inaccuracies in his mind.[56] Similarly, he urged the Anti-Slavery Society to acquire an independent East African correspondent; the assault on the public conscience must be made on irreproachable evidence.[57] His only fear was that the public would fail to see the need of Africans for liberty and, content with economic advance, would forestall the granting of liberty until Africans proved themselves to be men and took it for themselves.[58]

One crucial question remains: why was Leys alone in his protest? The Executive Council of the Protectorate had unanimously approved his removal from the Service.[59] No missionaries joined him in protest; the only missionary voice quoted in the White Paper deprecated the use of a mission boy as a courier for Morrison, saying "Our policy is to work in harmony with the administration".[60] Collyer publicly expressed his fears that the move was simply a prelude to the acquisition of more Masai land by Europeans but he declined to join Leys in protest.[61] Leys' colleagues did not want to sacrifice their

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56. Leys to Murray, op. cit., 12 May, 1912; 27 July, 1912, 30 June, 1914; 17 March, 1918.

57. Leys to Travers Buxton, 2 May, 1913, A.P.S. Papers, D2/4, Rhodes House.

58. Leys to Murray, op. cit., 30 June, 1914.

59. "The Case of Dr. Norman Leys", Coryndon Papers, 2/4, ff.12-14, Rhodes House.

60. Lee Downing, African Inland Mission, Kijabe, to Judge of the East African High Court, September 13, 1912, CO 879/112, P.R.O.

61. Report on the Masai Question by Mr. Collyer, Enclosure in Governor to Colonial Secretary, 6 February, 1913, CO 879/112, P.R.O. Collyer had written "It is quite likely that in a few years the white settler will be as anxious to obtain the Loita country as he is now to obtain Laikipia".

Leys and daughter Agnes
1913

positions for a principle nor did they want to dishonour their fellow officers. Perhaps Leys was alone in his vision of the move as the product of a conspiracy between the settlers and the Governor and most officers shared Collyer's faith in the good intentions of the Government. Even Leys was less disturbed by the fact of the move than by its implications for the future; and he was a rare visionary.

Alone, Leys accomplished little; the Masai were moved even though the suspicions of the liberals and humanitarians within the British public had been aroused against the unethical tactics of the settlers. A cherished principle, of allowing no political considerations to prevent the fulfillment of a promise made to subjects of the Crown, had been violated. The publicity given to this violation, ineffectual at the time, had been roused entirely by the actions of Leys. 'Pro-natives' in Britain were now primed to watch for further abuses of British justice perpetrated by their own countrymen in Kenya.

When Kenya and Kenya from Within were reviewed by hostile critics, they were frequently discredited as the works of "embittered" former officials and thereby dismissed as the products of their authors' personal vendettas against the settlers and administration in Kenya. The circumstances of Ross' resignation, even more than those of Leys' transfer, could give rise to such accusations because the factor of personal antipathies and jealousies was strong and it is more difficult to prove the truth of Ross' specific allegations.

Even Leys once accused Ross of fighting in Kenya with greater vigour in his own and his friends' interests than for those of Africans. Because the sources of material on the conflict which terminated his East African career are largely limited to his own book, one can only describe in detail the conflict as Ross saw it himself.

In Kenya from Within, Ross' backward-looking perspective distorted his early protest by making it appear premeditated and part of a larger campaign in which he was intent on engaging from the moment of his arrival. So, he described his 1905 letter to the Secretary of State about the Convention of Associations' manifesto as his "first opportunity for a raid on the embryo 'Political Machine'".[62] He assessed his career of protest as follows:

> "there was probably no official remaining in the British Government's Colonial Service in Kenya for any considerable period who was so unvarying in his readiness to attack the pet projects of the Political Machine as was the Director of Public Works."[63]

He went on to describe his career of "corsair-hunting" as a private person in his official post as an official member of the Legislative Council and on two committees, the Nairobi Sites Board and the Nairobi Township Committee: it indicated that he was independent in his judgement of government measures and aggressive toward the elected representatives of the Reform Party.

The Reform Party was the name given by Lord Delamere to a political organisation which he had formed in 1921 to enable

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62. Ross, Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.257.

63. ibid.

the elected members of the Legislative Council to have a common and constructive policy, the main aim of which was to insist on economy in government spending. In short 'over-paid' and 'extravagant' officials were to be sternly watched and it is not surprising, then, that Ross directed much of his antagonism towards the party. He used the expression the 'Political Machine' to refer more generally to the rich and powerful, especially Captain Grogan and Lord Delamere who, he believed, to their own profit wielded such power over the administration in Kenya. The idle and noisy minority of 'negrophobes', many of whom were South African, also received a verbal lashing although Ross hastened to add that they were not representative of the majority of hard-working settlers who were too busy to engage in polemics and political obstruction.

Ross' encounters with the 'Political Machine' reveal on examination that he opposed the 'Machine' on four basic points. He opposed the use of political influence by vested interests for their own financial benefit; the frequent immunity of Europeans from the demands of the law; the coercion of Africans to serve the interests of Europeans, especially in labour matters; the use of political influence to elevate Europeans above African interests so that Africans were to a great extent subsidising white settlement. Kenya from Within placed greatest emphasis on the unethical behaviour of a sector of the settler community and questions of African rights were given a place of subordinate importance. The first two principles mentioned above evoked greater concern in Ross' writing and in his own activities in Kenya. In a sense, many

of the injustices described in Kenya from Within could have occurred in a capitalist society anywhere. This is particularly true of the crisis which resulted in Ross leaving Kenya. Before turning to this crisis, its background and Ross' earlier protest will be discussed.

As mentioned previously, land speculators were not uniformly popular and Captain Grogan was perhaps the most notorious example of this "get rich quick" breed of settler. Ross by his own account battled for thirteen years against granting 50 acres abutting Kilindini Harbour to Grogan and, when the government acquiesced in 1918, continued his resistance to such blatant catering to vested interests by insisting that the government should conduct its harbour activities on Crown land rather than on Grogan's grant; Ross lost his battle and was scandalised when in 1925 the government purchased the 50 acres for £100,000 more than had been paid to the Imperial British East Africa Company for their entire interests and development in East Africa.[64] Ross did not describe how Grogan had managed to manipulate the administration in this matter but assumed from the facts that unethical methods of persuasion had been employed. Similarly, he opposed the removal of the railway station and the Indian bazaar to land owned by 'prominent politicians'.

Ross attributed the extent of popular support for his opponents' attacks on his performance as Director of Public Works directly to the controlling interest held by such powerful entrepreneurs as Grogan in Kenya's press. He believed

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64. ibid., p.264-5, 162-3.

that he had earned their enmity by his opposition to their use of political influence to serve their own interests and that through their control of the press they were able to create public hostility to him as well. The case of the Uasin Gishu Railway, which Ross believed led up to his premature retrenchment, illustrated in his eyes the manipulation of public projects by the rich to serve their own interests.

In Kenya from Within Ross grandly wrote that his record

> "perhaps justified apprehension, in the year 1920, that the project for building a branch railway to the Uasin Gishu Plateau from Nakuro would not be adopted without a struggle, unless he were discredited or removed first."[65]

There still remains a degree of mystery regarding the reluctance of administrators in both London and Kenya to make public the details of the construction of the branch railway and the choice of its route. Public ire was aroused in Kenya because the cost of the railway was so much higher than had been anticipated and the line was taking an unexpectedly long time to complete. Yet even a request by the Convention of Associations for a Commission of Enquiry was refused. The official history of the Uganda Railway does not illumine the reasons for this secrecy, although it does mention that the terms of contract were more favourable to the contractors than to the Colony and Railway.[68]

Ross' chief allegation was that a more expensive route had been chosen for the railway in order to serve the interests of influential settlers, most notably Lord Delamere and Captain Grogan. By beginning in Nakuru rather than on Mau

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65. ibid., p.265.

66. Hill, M. F., Permanent Way, The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway, volume I, Nairobi, 1949, p.418.

Summit, the branch would climb the Rift Valley escarpment twice and for 53 miles would parallel the Uganda Railway route at a distance of only about 10 miles. Rather than following the cheapest and easiest route to the Soldier Settlers on the Plateau, Ross alleged, the branch traversed the large blocks of forest in a concession owned by Grogan "in a manner almost ideal for the economical working of the forest areas" and crossed an allotment given to Lord Delamere in 1903. According to Delamere's biographer, however, the new railway hardly affected Delamere's assets as, by the time a final decision on the route had been made in 1921, he had sold almost all of his neighbouring land. Delamere was so angered by the suggestion of his complicity that he considered suing Norman Leys in whose book, Kenya, the allegation first appeared.[67]

Apparently, suspicions of wrong-doing filtered out of Kenya and eventually found their expression in parliamentary questions asked by M.P.s concerned to root out corruption. It is not unlikely that Ross corresponded with Leys who contrived to have questions asked in Parliament. Because of this publicity, Colonial Office officials appear to have been relieved when the choice of a route was finally made. The engineer in charge of the survey, Lt. Col. J. K. Robertson, had a good reputation so the Colonial Office took it for

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67. Huxley, Elspeth, White Man's Country, Volume II, (op. cit.,) p.96, 98.
The planning of railway routes was in any case an occasion for much political in-fighting among the settlers because proximity to the line greatly inflated land values. See forthcoming Cambridge Ph.D. thesis by M. Redley on the Kenya Settlers, 1920-1940.

granted that his proposal represented the best possible route to follow. Ross, on the other hand, was so incensed by Robertson's alleged ingratiation to influential people in the Colony that in 1922 he sought his censure by the Institute of Civil Engineers.[68] In Kenya from Within he was more kind and simply implied that Robertson had been "facile in the hands of local influences".[69] Many other experts agreed with Robertson's decision to begin the branch in Nakuru rather than Mau even though they felt that he had underestimated the costs. Robertson and the experts agreed that the future of the railway lay in its future connection to Uganda; the Nakuro route, although more expensive to construct, would, because it was constructed on an easier gradient, be cheaper to operate in the long run as the major route to Uganda.

Ross' opposition to the Nakuru route may have further turned against him certain influential men such as Grogan and Delamere, but such an allegation is as difficult to prove as the complicity of the two men in the choice of the railway route, which Ross dared only to suggest. Of far greater significance is the analysis which Ross placed at the end of his chapter, "The Story of the Uasin Gishu", of the role of the African in the railway squabbles. He pointed out that the railway to Uganda skirted the Native Reserves which were consequently not being encouraged to develop but were instead "being denuded of workers in order that non-natives may

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68. H. J. Morton, C.E., to Ross, 16 August, 1922, Ross Papers.

69. Ross, Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.267.

secure profits".[70] Ross anticipated that the railway rates would rise after 1929 when Kenya would begin to pay the interest and sinking fund on railway and Kenya Colony loans; the African would find that the cost of living would rise as a result but without deriving any benefit from the railway system in terms of being encouraged to market his own produce. There were two possible remedies: a Betterment Tax could be placed on districts served by branch railways and the unearned portion of the increase in property values, driven up by the land's proximity to the railway, could be taxed at land sales; native interests could be better served as well if they were represented on the Railway Council, especially when schemes for branch lines were under consideration.[71] There is only a vague reference here to exploitation of Africans. But Ross had made a suggestion less easy to refute than the uncorroborated hints of corruption which preceded it.

The European community in general was guilty of income tax evasion. Since 1920, settlers had refused to fill in tax returns, not only because they felt they could ill afford to pay an income tax but also because they felt such a tax was 'unconstitutional' unless it was accompanied by the grant of an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council. Ross was

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70. ibid., p.254.
In 1907 Ross wrote to the W. D. Ellis of the Colonial Office, "There is at present no population in the Kenya province requiring railway communication with Nairobi"; apparently, he did not feel moved to press for the development of African cash crop farming, which the presence of a railway line would have helped to stimulate. (Ross to Ellis, 5.2.1907, Ross Papers, P. M. Ross)

71. ibid.

the only member of the Legislative Council to vote for the retention of the income tax on Europeans and Indians and urged that the more eminent tax resisters should be jailed.

When in 1917 plans for the provision of land to soldier settlers were being made, Ross resisted the suggestion that the area should be obtained by reducing native reserves by 10%. He preferred to see the subdivision and subletting of the great undeveloped estates brought about by the taxing of unimproved holdings at 1s. an acre. Undeveloped European land might even be bought back by the Government to provide land for Africans living in over-crowded reserves. Often alone, he opposed other attempts to serve European interests by depriving Africans of land or liberty such as the Pass Law and Registration of Natives Ordinance, designed to increase the labour supply. For such efforts Ross, locally maligned as a "sort of blurred copy" of Ramsay MacDonald, inflicted on the settlers for their sins, earned the following treatment in a Nairobi paper in 1918:

> "There is probably hardly a modern fad or novel untried shibboleth to which our valuable D.P.W. does not subscribe; from pacifism to self-determination of the ignorant and masterless, primitive races now under the tutelage of the white man."[72]

One "novel fad" for which Ross earned some enmity, from C. C. Bowring in particular, was his support of female suffrage; his wife, Isabel, a founder of the East African Women's League and a dedicated supporter of women's rights, undoubtedly

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72. ibid., p.266.
Some settlers, spreading rumours that Ross was corresponding with Gandhi, urged that his mail be watched. (Ross Diaries, April 22, 1922)

encouraged him to stand alone on the Municipal Committee in 1916 for the inclusion of women on the Nairobi electoral roll. His opposition to a European Defence Force probably earned him the label of "pacifist". Although not at this point an advocate of African "self-determination", Ross did speak and vote in Legco in 1919 in favour of Alexander Morrison's amendment that the franchise be given to educated Africans and Indians.[73]

Finally, he resisted attempts by the 'Political Machine' to force Africans to pay heavily in taxes and labour for European development from which they derived no economic benefit. Although, he said, the European presence did have some educative effect, it was unfair to force Africans to pay for this informal advantage by large cash subsidies of European enterprise. Again, he was alone in his opposition to the halving of the value of currency in 1921, an act which he believed was designed to reduce the value of native wages. In the same year he refused to reduce the wages of his employees by one-third in obedience to a "demand by the Political Machine". As "sole dissentient" on a council of twenty-five, Ross opposed in 1922 the imposition of heavy import duties on wheat and wheat flour which he believed would greatly increase the price of bread, all to the benefit of certain landholders, principally in Lord Delamere's constituency.

The above description of battles which Ross waged against the 'Political Machine' was based on his own treatment of them in Kenya from Within. So the elements of personal antipathies and jealousies, which may have played important roles

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73. ibid., p.326.

in provoking and determining conflicts, were omitted and perhaps a too clear picture emerges of a struggle against political corruption. It is important to remember that although relations between officials and settlers had become more harmonious since the departure of Governor Sir James Hayes Sadler, much antipathy remained. It was largely due to the difficult financial straits of many settlers, particularly during the depression which followed World War One. The Soldier Settler Scheme was largely a failure. Officials could be implicated in such disasters as, for example, when Delamere complained in 1922 that 'native unrest' was due to over-taxation imposed to meet increased Government salaries.[74]

Those officials who controlled large sums of public money, though not necessarily adequate for the tasks demanded of them, were consequently prone to be blamed for the misuse of funds. This tendency was particularly marked in the case of the P.W.D. which had a considerable amount of influence over the settlers' access to markets through its control of the construction and maintenance of roads. Ross was also accused by settlers of delaying the development of Naivasha through his insistence on following a detailed town plan.[75] Delays and unfulfilled promises were the primary sources of dissatisfaction with his Department. Ross recognised the existence of this public discontent:

> "It is inevitable that any Public Works Department, if badly starved for funds, must cause much discontent by inability to meet the demands of

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74. ibid., p.255.

75. I am grateful to Michael Redley, author of a forthcoming thesis on the settlers 1920-1940, for this information.

scattered residents, and property-holders, for improvements."[76]

Was Ross 'victimised' because of his opposition to the Reform Party or was he a scapegoat on whom financial failure could be blamed? Perhaps the truth lies in a combination of the two perspectives.

In 1921 a commission was set up to investigate the working of the Public Works Department at the request of the Legislative Council. Governor Sir Edward Northey believed that one fault of the Department was over-centralisation and Ross himself was aware that the Department needed to be re-organised.[77] Believing that the report would suggest ways of improving efficiency, Ross was unprepared for the framing of specific charges against "incompetent" individuals in the Department. He was personally accused of failing to obtain the best results from the funds and resources placed at his disposal as Director. Characteristically, the Convention of Associations' attack was more virulent: under Ross, the P.W.D. was alleged to be inefficient, extravagant and disorganised.[78]

This attack was, Ross felt, in many ways unfair. He had anticipated many of the Commission's most important recommen-

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76. Ross, Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.266. Yet Ross noted that the Phelps-Stokes Commission had praised the road system in Kenya and that under his supervision the Thika Tramway was constructed at extremely low cost, albeit with prison labour.

77. Minute by Cosmo Parkinson, 2.8.1921, on Public Works Department Commission Report; Ross to Colonial Secretary, June 10, 1921, CO 533/261, P.R.O.

78. Resolution of the Convention of Associations, March 1922, Box 1, File 3, Convention of Association Papers, Rhodes House.

dations in principle or in detail and desired even further devolution of his own responsibility than the Commission had recommended. He was aware that

> "Apart from the question of accounts, popular criticism of the Department in recent years may be said to have centered upon the road system, the practice of purchasing from the Crown Agents for the Colonies instead of from local stores, the alleged unwillingness of the Department to put all or more work out to contract and its treatment of native labour."[79]

(Both the Commission and Ross agreed on the principle of voluntary labour.) Yet the Commission's proposals would, by increasing the P.W.D. staff, greatly add to the budget of the financially troubled Colony.

Worst of all, the press campaign against Ross had been slanderous and, due to Governor Northey's too rapid release of the report, began before the Legislative Council had received copies and before Ross had had time to prepare his defence. Ross attributed the press attack to the fact that the Reform Party was represented upon the Board of Directors of both Nairobi papers. Headlines read: "How Brains and Organisation Go A-begging in the P.W.D.; Remarkable Record of High Salaries and No Responsibility". Ross was depicted in the East African Standard as suffering from megalomania. He became:

> "a weakling Colossus bestriding a great Department and sterilising or suppressing brains and activities perhaps no less visionary but scarcely less practical than his own."[80]

As Sir Cosmo Parkinson of the Colonial Office observed,

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79. Ross to Colonial Secretary, June 10, 1921, CO 533/261, P.R.O.

80. ibid., enclosure from the East African Standard, May 12, 1921.

Ross was "an admirable dialectician and a good talker",[81] and publicly refuted the report with wit and skill; a motion to reduce his salary by £100 was withdrawn. Characteristically dramatising the event as a victory over the forces of evil, Leys congratulated Ross on his "defeat of corrupt railway enterprise and all other forms of graft".[82] However the victory was short-lived for in June 1922 Governor Northey supported a recommendation by the Economic and Finance Committee, whose most prominent members were Delamere and Grogan, for the reduction of the Director of Public Works' salary by £300. Initially, the commission had suggested abolishing the entire P.W.D. in order, Ross thought, to get rid of him. Northey would not expect Ross to stay on at that salary and so accepted his resignation. At the age of 46, in 1923, Ross was retired on pension. Although initially a "clumsy" failure, the "pogrom", "a political maoeuvre of a type dear to the heart of Reform Party", was finally successful.[83]

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81. Minute by Cosmo Parkinson, 2.8.1921, ibid.

82. Leys to Ross, 5.12.1921, Ross Papers, volume I, Rhodes House. Archdeacon Owen, a friend of Ross, was indignant that Leys attributed Ross' troubles to his alleged opposition to the use of forced labour by settlers: "I have many planter friends who desire that he retire and I'd be shocked to find that it was because they objected to his attitude on compulsion. Rightly or wrongly they disapprove of his work." (Comments by Archdeacon Owen on a letter from Leys to Borden Turner, 26.5.1921, Box 248, E.H.). In Kenya, Leys attributed Ross' dismissal to his refusal to cut the wages of his employees.

83. Ross, Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.272. The Public Works Department presented Ross with a plaque on his departure from Kenya inscribed with the following words: "We have watched with admiration your defence of the Department against the attacks which have been launched against it by parties seeking to disrupt it. We have appreciated your unswerving devotion to the highest principles of rectitude in political and Departmental affairs and your fearless advocacy of those principles."

From this experience and from those of a few similarly 'victimised' colleagues, Ross and Leys drew inferences about the lot of the Kenya official. If he acquiesced to the demands of the 'Political Machine', by, for example, passing stiff sentences in punishment of natives or by approving forced labour, he would be praised in the press, largely controlled by local politicians since 1918, or in the Convention of Associations' resolutions. If he were zealously pro-native, he was likely to be transferred from a "white" area to a distant post or, like Leys, out of the country. To disobey orders would bring a request for resignation and the subsequent forfeiting of a pension. It was official suicide even to insist on a complaint going to the Secretary of State, although it could be hoped that some modification of policy might quietly result.

Because some officials had proved unamenable to settler wishes, various means were tried to replace them. In 1919, full service of an official was declared to be twenty years, after which he would retire. Suggestions were put forward to recruit officials locally and settlers were increasingly taking over magisterial powers, as they had demanded in 1905, by, for example, becoming Justices of the Peace.[84]

From this distance in time and place it is difficult and pointless to attempt to corroborate the specific charges made by Leys and Ross in their conflicts with the Kenya administration and politicians. Throughout their careers as propagandists they tended to see corruption in events which may merely

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84. ibid., chapter XVI, "The Fated or Feted Official".

have been bungled or related to interested parties only by chance. Yet, the residue of personal bitterness from their unsuccessful conflicts seems quite small in proportion to their concern that 'concrete justice' be achieved in Kenya. Both were independent men of strong principles, apparently fearless under attack; Leys took a particularly lonely stand, for his time, in urging deference to African wishes and was alone among his colleagues in challenging the setting of precedents for the paramountcy of settler interests. His resort to publicity damaged his career and alienated the Colonial Office, which was allowing policy to be formed mainly by local initiative. But because the Office was so sensitive to parliamentary criticism, he came to exercise a certain indirect influence by priming humanitarian opinion to watch for further abuses of British justice. The questions which still surround the Masai move and Ross' resignation do not diminish the force of the larger context of their argument, as developed in their books: Africans were being forced to subsidise white settlement at the cost of their own economic development; the settlers had not proved themselves to be sufficiently responsible, faithful to British ethical standards, to merit self-government.

Chapter IV

THE BOOKS

In 1924, the year of the publication of Norman Leys' Kenya by the Hogarth Press, the battle for public sympathy between the supporters and opponents of settler policies was intense. The settlers were only beginning to recover from the post-war depression and had not yet convinced the Home Government that they were indispensable to Kenya's economic well-being.[1] The question had still to be given an official answer: was Kenya's future to be based on plantation or peasant agriculture? Settler interests had been in effect paramount but no definitive and detailed statement of official policy had been made on the colony's future development. The 'Indian Question' - the demand by Indians for equal rights - had drawn public attention to Kenya and various interest groups and Commissions were helping to keep it there.

'East Africa', an 'apolitical' journal founded by F. S. Joelson in 1924 to help foster the growth of East African business, urged Britain to strengthen inter-imperial trade and to recognise the splendid achievements of the settlers, as illustrated by the Kenya produce then on display

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1. Among the men of influence who at this time doubted the viability of a settler dominated economy in Kenya were: Robert Coryndon, Sidney Henn, W. G. Ormsby-Gore, Edward Wood, Winston Churchill.
E. A. Brett, Colonialism and Under-Development in East Africa, The Politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939, London, 1973, p.178-9.

at the Wembley Empire Exhibition.[2] A parliamentary commission composed of one man from each of the three parties and chaired by W. G. Ormsby-Gore visited Kenya in the same year and, closely hosted by Lord Delamere and other settlers, produced a report which also praised the achievements of the settlers and asserted that the interests of Africans and Europeans in Kenya were complementary. Kenya was published before the commission, whose appointment Leys had urged, returned to Britain, so Leys was deprived of the opportunity to attack the report's lack of concern for African welfare and development. From his contacts with the 'missionary statesman', J. H. Oldham and Dr. T. Jesse Jones, Leys had learned enough about the Phelps-Stokes Commission, then in Kenya, to attack its advocacy of industrial education for Africans as a truly racist policy. If such visits of 'inquiry' were "the best medicine for Kenya critics"[3], then pro-native publicity must be rapidly brought into the battle.

Shortly after Ross returned to Britain in 1922, he had agreed with Leys to write a joint work on Kenya. Leys would describe the impact of European rule on the villages and Ross would relate in his half of the book the history and features of the industrial system set up by Europeans on farms, railways

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2. Lord Cranworth called the journal "a permanent and stable barrier against the curious flow of anti-British propaganda, directed more especially against the colonists of Kenya." (Cranworth, Kenya Chronicles, London, 1939, p.55) Joelson berated the British merchant for having failed to take the initiative in re-establishing direct trading relations with the Continent after the 1920-1922 slump. That role had been taken by German merchant firms in Mombasa. (O. A. G. Denham to C.O., 27.3.1925, CO. 533/330)

3. E. B. Denham to Sidney Henn, 15.5.25, Henn Papers, 1/8 f. 3, Rhodes House.

and in the towns.[4] Their purpose was simple: to illumine the injustice of British rule in Kenya so that "thousands of important people in (Britain)" would be persuaded to follow the "right policy".[5] The Colonial Office was responsible to Parliament and "it is for the public to appoint to Parliament men to whom Imperialism means justice to all the wards of the Empire."[6]

Both Leys and Ross believed that the British public possessed a high moral sense; ignorance alone kept public opinion from demanding a just policy. Leys, an ardent democrat, was particularly anxious to gain the support of the masses, even more than that of the men of influence, in a conflict which he believed to be as great as the emancipation of slaves in the previous century: the freeing of the subject races from informal slavery in the modern industrial system. Ross, too, referred to "the old and crushing obligation which lies upon us as a nation, to reduce the debt which is due from us to Black Africa, for our participation in the Slave Trade."[7] He believed that a history of the relations between Africans and settlers in Kenya might help the British public to make an informed decision regarding the wisdom of surrendering to the settlers legislative and administrative control of the mixture of national groups in the Colony.[8] If the British

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4. Leys to Isabel Ross, 11.9.1923, Ross Papers in the possession of Professor P. M. Ross.
5. ibid, 7.9.1923.
6. Leys, N., Kenya, op. cit., p.364
7. Ross, W. M., Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.87
8. ibid, p.68.

people were made aware of the injustices to Africans there, it was probable that they would exercise their trusteeship to redress those wrongs.

By the summer of 1923 Leys was corresponding in great distress with Isabel Ross because her husband was not putting his best efforts into their collaboration and his delays were holding up Leys' own writing. Leys' style and method were meticulous and he urgently counselled Ross to focus every page, to make each sentence bear a certain argument and each detail describe a single, vivid picture.

> "I feel as Mac would if he and another man were building a bridge that must be ready before the rains and the other man instead of helping with beams and girders spent most of the time putting bunches of flowers on it."[9]

Leys must have been particularly stung by Ross' apparent nonchalance as he felt that good writing was achieved only by painful effort. He craved accuracy, as indicated by his spare style which contrasts markedly with Ross' elaborate and ironic expression.

> "Every activity of the mind when engaged on the task (must be) solely directed to seeing the truth of things .....And truth means both perfect clearness and perfect unity of all the elements in the attempt to depict it."[10]

Ross did not even realise, Leys complained, the need for strictest accuracy. Writing for information to G. V. Maxwell, Chief Native Commissioner, Ross had probably failed to earn his confidence by giving a highly coloured account of sensational events. Ross was also "quite wrong", Leys felt, in "thinking that the evils in Kenya are due to there being so many bad

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9. Leys to Isabel Ross, op. cit., 19.8.1923.

10. ibid. ~~Leys to J. H. Oldham, 26.2.1925, Box 248, Edinburgh House (E.H.).~~

Leys, Ross and families about 1923

men among the settlers"[11]; this perspective obscured the role of social and economic conditions in determining the behaviour of natives and settlers. Despite pleading, cajoling and flattery, Leys failed to spur Ross, who was at the time suffering from illness, to share his ardent desire for "making that book what it might be" and the joint project was dropped.[12] Ross' Kenya from Within appeared in 1927, three years after Leys' Kenya.

It is likely that Ross did not feel ready to commit to paper his ideas on Kenya, as he had left the colony only the preceding autumn. Even when his book eventually appeared, it did not equal Kenya in the breadth and intensity of its analysis. In later years Ross was to become involved in international labour legislation with a special interest in the protection of the native labourer. Although the seeds of this interest are apparent in Kenya from Within, they are not sufficiently developed to form part of a full proposal for Kenya's future. He intended simply to write a detailed history of the settlers' political behaviour. His narrative was aimed at the people in Kenya, as well as the public at home, because he hoped they would "clean up their own stable."[13] Unlike Leys, he still believed in the possibility of reform initiated from within.

Ross was aware that his tone could grow unsuitably flippant. However, he was impressed with a certain humour of the settlers' antics and resolved to treat their behaviour

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11. ~~ibid~~. Leys to J. H. Oldham, 26.2.1925, Box 248, Edinburgh House.
12. ibid, 16.9.1923.
13. Ross, W. M. to J. H. Oldham, 18.4.1925, Box 247, E.H.

with irony and derision so that he and the reader might laugh at bad men and fools whom they might otherwise be weak enough to hate.[14] Despite the jocularity of his tone and indulgence in satire, an element of bitterness sometimes entered his narrative. It is apparent that some of his anger at the Convention of Associations, for example, was provoked by its audacity at trying to take technical decisions out of the hands of experts. The book reflects the tension between the officials and settlers, frequently pointing out with sympathy the role and treatment of dissident officials.

Leys' approach drew far less attention to himself; 'bad men' among the settlers were of less importance than the system which produced them and allowed them such power. While attempting to pressure Ross into working hard on his half of the projected book, Leys had caustically written to Isabel Ross that Ross should work as hard on the book in defence of African interests "as he did mainly of his own interests and his friends' in Africa."[15] Kenya from Within is in part a strong defence of victimized officials; in his preface Ross stated that one of his aims was to give British opinion an idea of some of the problems with which Britain's servants in Kenya were faced.

Like Leys, Ross believed in the Imperial mission. Despite the appropriation of much of the best land the African had benefited from the British presence: border warfare no longer disturbed industry; the Africans' power to amass

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14. Ross, W. M., Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.14.

15. Leys to Isabel Ross, op. cit., 14.9.1923.

wealth had been increased; missionaries offered free education; the trader had introduced modern tools. It was true that family life had suffered and disease had been spread but these detriments could be remedied by a change of policy which assisted native producers and did not advise or encourage them to work for Europeans. Ross quoted with approval Ruskin's words glorifying the Imperial mission, words which are said to have inspired Cecil Rhodes. He warned the British public and the more stable mass of the settlers themselves that Kenya's politicians "proclaimed themselves as hardly of the class of those who in the past have written proud pages in Britain's honourable record of colonization."[16] The Trust must not be surrendered to them.

Leys had been planning his book since 1911 and had written a lengthy "interpretation of native opinion" to the Colonial and War Offices in 1918, shortly after he was invalided out of the Nyasaland medical service.[17] Gilbert Murray, at Leys' request, had been responsible for distributing it to Dr. C. P. Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian, Sidney Webb and J. H. Oldham; the Colonial Office had passed a copy on to Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Oldham had given a copy to Dr. T. Jesse Jones. Leys noted that the letter had had "as little influence on the Colonial Office as an incantation"[18] and so he concentrated on planning his book,

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16. Ross, W. M., Kenya from Within, p.426.

17. There is no trace of this letter in the Colonial Office files.

18. Leys to Gilbert Murray, 11.6.1919, Murray Papers, Box 32, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

which was to be called "The Empire's Backyard".[19] He had files bulging with clippings from the East African Standard and other local papers, annual reports, White Papers and Blue Books. His personal informants within Kenya were probably few in number; by 1915, he had only one friend left in Nairobi.[20] He continued, however, to correspond with Walter Owen, Archdeacon of Kavirondo, and Alexander Morrison, among others. Nevertheless he could not rely on unverified reports. If they were proven inaccurate, he could lose hard-won public sympathy.

In seeking to give an entirely objective account of Kenya's problems, Leys relied on published, verifiable material, often quoting official reports. He refused to judge the settlers, who were "just ordinary people"[21], or the officials who were not corrupt, but simply ignorant, prone to favouritism and, in effect, pawns of the logic of Kenya's industrial system. Somewhat reluctantly he even included an account of government policy in addition to his intended description of events and their consequences.[22] In discussing the causes of imperial expansion, he described a multiplicity of causes and gave no indication of supporting J. A. Hobson's emphasis on economic factors. As a result of these efforts, there is little of the censorious and doctrinaire in Kenya.

Yet, Margery Perham once remarked that Leys was a prophet rather than a student of Africa.[23] His faith in his message

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19. Leys to Leonard Woolf, 6.11.1919, Woolf Papers, Box 60, Sussex University Library, Brighton.
20. Leys to Lady Mary Murray, 18.9.1915, Murray Papers, Box 32, Bodleian Library.
21. Leys, N., Kenya, op. cit., p.153.
22. ibid, p.181.
23. Perham, M., The Spectator, July 4, 1941, p.16-18.

was so great - in a sense, evangelical - that he rankled under such a description. He retorted that scholars like Perham who had not lived in Africa lacked "the kind of testing that only those who understand Africans talking to one another can give".[24] In his own eyes he was emphatically a student of colonialism and not a prophet; he wanted his argument to be accepted, not on faith, but because his work clearly described the situation as the facts dictated. However, the criticisms of Perham and the Colonial Office official[25] who complained that Leys saw his facts in the light of his conclusions are partly vindicated by a reference Leys himself once made to "obvious facts" about Africa "that are only untrue when seen in the appalling splendour of the kingdom of God".[26] Leys' writing never provokes suspicions that he might have been deliberately misleading his readers. Skepticism may be encouraged, rather, by the tightness of his intellectual scheme: all motives are clear; there are no anomalies; 'things as they ought to be' exercise a certain tyranny over the facts.

Particularly within the context of the battle for public sympathy in 1924, Leys needed to be certain that his facts would not be disproved. To obtain statistical data was extremely difficult. The publication of the annual Blue Book of detailed information had been suspended during the war and there were no reliable official figures breaking down total taxation and production into contributions made by each

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24. Leys, N., "The Colour Bar", The Spectator, July 25, 1941, p.84-5.

25. Minute by Strachey, 28.7.1921, CO 533/274, P.R.O.

26. Leys to Lionel Curtis, 23.11.1918, Box 248, E.H.

community. Official returns were so incomplete and misleading that it was difficult to reach the facts about land grants. An official map showing alienated areas, Crown land described as native reserves and areas of Crown land intended for alienation had not been issued since 1909. Leys was forced to admit in his summary that published data on commerce and finance was so inadequate that he could not present a basic outline of the facts. For these reasons, exactitude was impossible and the pages of Kenya and Kenya from Within abound with 'reasonable' estimates. Whether or not there had been a deliberate attempt by the administration to be vague in order to camouflage the true nature of the situation, the work of the critics was made difficult and they were consequently easily attacked on minor factual points.

Leys and Ross were not alone in their frustration at inadequate factual data. The C.M.S. missionary Handley Hooper, for example, wrote to a sympathetic settler urging "a strenuous campaign for the careful investigation of facts". He feared that "impassioned indictments" would provoke resentment in government departments and therefore urged Dr. Scott of the Guardian and Leys

> "to give pause to the 'Plantation vs. Reserve' controversy, for that is still largely an academic question, and to devote themselves to a campaign for eliciting statistics which shall be the result of wide and careful investigation."[27]

Hooper's sentiment marks a crucial split in the reformers' methods. All worked to gain public support but many feared

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27. Handley Hooper to G. H. Goldfinch, 29.7.1925, Anti-Slavery Papers, G137, Rhodes House.

that Leys' kind of 'fanaticism' - the priority which he gave to demands for reform rather than to requests for facts, his intense analysis of the issues in their broadest possible context, would alienate 'reasonable' men.

However, Leys did realise the need for a calm and dispassionate tone. He managed to achieve this in Kenya and was pleased that the book was "less censorious, less political, more of a picture and less of an argument" than his 1918 letter to the Secretary of State.[28] Even more censorious than the letter itself was an addendum entitled "The Problems of East Africa" in which he attacked, in particular, the Kenya Civil Service:

> "Its rank and file is composed of men conservative in politics, believers in the religion that enjoins labour on the many, and the enjoyment of its fruits by a minority of a superior race, sportsmen rather than readers of books, unaffected by any wind of doctrine since the Tariff Reform Campaign, as loyal to the code of their caste as any hero of Kipling's, and as contemptuous and ignorant of the feelings and wishes of those who never went to a public school.... No honester and more patriotic set of men is to be found in the world and none stupider."[29]

Administrative and technical staff should therefore be recruited by public examination; graduates of Workers' Education Association classes would be preferable to the existing rank and file, so lacking in intellectual vigour. This attitude may have been a source of friction between Leys and Ross as Ross thought that officials were, next to the missionaries, the great defenders of African rights. Both men - nonconform-

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28. Leys to Gilbert Murray, 17.3.1918, Murray Papers, Box 32, Bodleian Library.

29. Leys, "The Problems of East Africa", n.d., United Africa Corp. Ltd., London.

ists of Scots origin, graduates of provincial universities though not of public schools - were, however, keenly resentful of social privilege. In Kenya Leys was able to conceal his apparent bitterness towards his 'social superiors' who had failed to perceive, as he had, the injustice of white domination. Although he felt that knowledge of the characters of certain key figures was crucial to understanding the 'whole truth', he knew that his greatest effectiveness would come from avoiding personalities and for the most part he succeeded in doing so.

He was also able to avoid linking his hopes for the future to the victory of the Labour Party and produced a book which could not really be attacked as partisan. In his second book, however, he did refer to the "deep" commitment of the Labour Party to the traditional British policy of equal rights and opportunities but he was writing then, in 1931, primarily in disappointment at the failure of the 1929 Labour government to resume that policy, to fulfil the terms of its own 1930 White Paper. In this case, his detachment suffered; he suggested, for example, that Drummond Shiels would have been a better Colonial Secretary than Lord Passfield.[30] His tone had become more strident; he apparently cared less to curb his tendency to be censorious.

Leys was an "Imperialist to whom Empire (meant) not domination, but liberty".[31] Kenya was written to reform British rule in Kenya, to remind Britons of their duty to protect the welfare and foster the political development of

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30. Leys, N. A Last Chance in Kenya, London, 1931, p.141.

31. Leys, N., Kenya, op. cit., p.388.

the imperial subjects - concerns which were in Leys' eyes traditionally British and which had only four years earlier been reaffirmed by the League of Nations Covenant.

> "We cannot afford to let a community of seven thousand men, women and children.....destroy our country's good name before the world and alienate beyond restoring the confidence of all the Asiatic and African subjects of the Crown."[32]

Africans would in no way benefit from a rapid British departure. There were too few politically conscious Africans to have any influence with the masses who would be condemned to live under the autocratic rule of chiefs appointed by the British.

> "To give them power now would be to condemn the masses of the people who are subject to these autocracies to undertake, as they awaken, that long struggle for liberty from which after centuries the workers of Europe are only now beginning to emerge."[33]

Premature independence could, equally harmfully, result in the seizure of power by the resident European minority, "the homologues of the eighteenth century slaveowners".[34]

One particularly tantalising question is: how sophisticated was Leys' grasp of African opinion, his means of divining it? One might suspect that the unseen listener to African campfire conversation perhaps exaggerated the depth of knowledge and understanding of African opinion which such experiences gave him. He did interview the survivors of John Chilembwe's band after their rising had failed and they were in prison in Nyasaland, but his race may have presented a greater barrier to the frank expression of opinion than he realised. The sympathy fostered by his personal experiences

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32. ibid, p.379.

33. Leys, N., "The Problems of Empire, What to do with the Dependencies", Socialist Review, May 1928, p.24.

34. ibid, p.27.

with Africans was perhaps of greater importance in the development of his thought than information which he derived from them. Yet the analysis in Kenya does not depend in any sense on how Africans perceived their situation.

By 1931, however, Leys had been so frustrated by the failure of East African commissions to explain African wishes that he sought in his second book to demonstrate the falsity of the idea that Africans had no views. As he had been away from Kenya for nearly twenty years by that time, it is difficult to credit him with being an 'African' spokesman. It is not surprising, for this reason alone, that his second and third books failed to have as great an impact on the public as had Kenya.

No matter how correctly he had divined African opinion at the time, the urgency of the need for reform, before racial hatred blossomed into rebellion, was a great motive force in his writing. The garnering of objective facts and their clear exposition was designed to awaken public opinion, not only to develop awareness of the dishonour of the colony and the Empire, but also to prevent a rising:

> "If one morning, the readers of this book open the morning paper and over their breakfast coffee read of some other Chilembwe or Thuku, they must not expect that some particular act of policy or the unwisdom of some Governor is the cause. They should look on the rising as a by-product of the system under which the very coffee they are drinking is produced."[35]

The tribal risings against the initial occupation of African land by Europeans would be supplanted by pan-tribal risings provoked by the discovery of what occupation really involved:

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35. Leys, N., Kenya, p.334.

the loss of land, taxation, the demand for labour.

Ross, on the other hand, only alluded to the danger of African rebellion, warning that the suppression of Harry Thuku's movement had simply driven it underground. In general, however, he was far more impressed than Leys with African docility and sensed that it would not wear thin in the immediate future. He wrote that the "sunny disposition" of the African provided barren ground "for the sowers of international hate" and added in his original manuscript, "the vast bulk of the native populations did not know what was going on. Varieties of franchise are not of interest to them".[36] Leys would have countered that times would change faster than Ross expected.

In Leys' writing there is also a romantic and exalted sense of the great potential for human endeavour in Africa, a sense which is prevalent in the literature of most Victorians and Edwardians in Africa. In Leys' case this dream appears in the form of a mystical hope that mankind would be <u>better</u> in Africa than in Europe where men wanted to escape from the "system of industrial autocracy and ruthless competition and ambition for profit"[37] that they had created. In Africa, there were "undreamt-of opportunities for human effort..... one knows that Africa is beautiful, and will respond generously by greater beauty to the best that man can do for man".[38] Here as elsewhere, Leys' sense of beauty appears to be primarily

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36. Ross, W. M., Original manuscript of <u>Kenya from Within</u>, Ross Papers, 3/3 f.632, Rhodes House.

37. Leys, N., <u>Kenya</u>, p.255.

38. Leys, N., <u>Kenya</u>, p.393-394.

spiritual and moral: in Kenya lay the chance for the "long-delayed victory of justice";[39] brotherhood and freedom.

Leys began his book with an attempt to correct certain common misapprehensions about Africans. He did not completely divest himself of a Rider Haggard perspective of fascinated distaste in regard to witch-finding and 'superstitions', but his view was largely unemotional and sympathetic. The industrial inefficiency and social backwardness of Africans were due, he wrote, to disease and isolation from foreign influence. Even though African society was in a less civilised stage of development than European society, one must not assume, for example, that their systems of slavery failed to allow social mobility, that African men expected women to do all their labour, that all land-ownership was communal, or that Africans were lazy.[40] All these myths were used to buttress pro-settler policies and it was important that they be destroyed. The debate between settlers and their critics had a certain pattern: a statement by the Europeans that the native character was idle or untrustworthy and therefore merited certain restrictive measures was met by the critics' retort that the demand for such measures was truly based on fear of native competition. But Leys believed that one must guard equally against attempts to glorify traditional African life as free and happy; on the contrary, it was filled with gloom and injustice due to ignorance and to the absence of individuality which education alone could remedy through fostering the determination to be

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39. ibid.

40. "Humanitarians in England require to be reminded that the woman of Africa is the tiller of the soil and accustomed to field work just as much as her counterpart in Europe among the poorer classes is accustomed to charring." Gov. Sir Edward Northey to Winston Churchill, 25.6.1921, CO 533/259, P.R.O.

free.

One curious aspect of the way in which Leys and Ross attacked racism was their counselling of a 'leap of faith' in African equality. Leys wrote that whereas there was proof that Asiatics were as capable of civilisation as Europeans, there was "no scrap of proof that Africans are not".[41] The results of mission education and the evidence of past African civilisations were the best guides to African capacity. In the early twenties Leys continued to maintain that the whole question of the character and future of Africans was still open: "The African may or may not prove to be capable of self-determination."[42] Similarly, when Ross urged his readers to attack racism aggressively and with originality, he implied that those who took up his challenge would be the Adventurers of modern times, inspiring other nations and glorifying the Empire. Part of the element of Adventure lay in accepting as a political equal the African who had advanced "to whatever level of achievement his capacity...enables him

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41. Leys, N., Kenya, p.369. Privately, Leys stated his stand with greater conviction:
"I now believe the whole conception of race is an illusion, one of many shadows men pursue, and that Paul's statement that racial differences inherent in people themselves, apart from history and circumstances, do not exist, is true."
(Leys to J. H. Oldham, 23.7.1924, Box 248, E.H.)
Even Lord Olivier warned in White Capital and Coloured Labour that "if there is racial inferiority", it should not be burdened with an artificial handicap.
(Oliver, Sydney, White Capital and Coloured Labour, 1906, p.57.)

42. ibid, p.55.

to reach".[43]

By 1931 when A Last Chance in Kenya was published, Leys stated his faith more emphatically. Between writing the two books he had met several educated Africans in Britain, among them Kenyatta who had given him some information for his book. Perhaps because of these encounters Leys was encouraged to state that with equal legal status and opportunity for education, the primitive state of African society and racism itself would definitely come to an end. Differences in status always meant that the natural advance of Africans would be thwarted by disadvantages and Europeans would continue to think of them as inferior. Tribalism was after all simply a lower stage in the evolutionary scale of human societies; with proper tutelage the next generation of Africans would be fit for political independence.

Leys justified this 'leap of faith' in the potential of Africans for civilisation pragmatically as well as ethically: such an attitude would help to prevent an African rising. Africans were for the moment docile in the face of superior force; the acquiescence of the fierce Masai to Europeans was described by Leys as an example of African recognition of a superior civilisation, a higher standard of justice than their own![44] But such confidence in European law and administration

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43. Ross, W. M., Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.457.

44. It is strange that Leys omitted any mention of the lessons the Masai had learned about European fire-power when serving as levies on punitive expeditions. Perhaps this omission was due to the pride and pleasure which men of Leys' generation took in their role of moral leaders, the moulders and models of tomorrow's Africa.

could be destroyed by European racial discrimination. White brutality was the spark which would enflame the dormant grievances of Africans, as had been the case in the rising led in 1915 by John Chilembwe in Nyasaland. There, ambitious Africans of knowledge and ability had led ignorant and lawless people, who had been deprived of an education and stripped of their tribal authority and who suffered from acute economic grievances, most notably the lack of free land. Probably because he had witnessed the events following the rising, Leys was unusually sensitive to the possibility of its occurrence in Kenya. He was writing less than two years after Harry Thuku had been imprisoned for organising a political society to seek redress of African grievances, proving that political consciousness was being born in Kenya as well. Leys did not think that Thuku and Chielmbwe were particularly honourable men but neither were they or their followers criminals. Nevertheless, he believed that turbulence such as they had provoked must be repressed with violence even though it might never have occurred if Europeans had fulfilled their 'Trust'.

Yet Leys was ambivalent about the use of violence to put down risings. He sympathised with the rebels:

> "I am afraid that I think 'who must free themselves must strike the blow'. I mean that no race or class gets liberty from those who withold it without the act or threat of violence."[45]

Because he had little faith in the resilience of African society and because he gave such great value to education, available to very few Africans in Kenya, he feared the un-

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45. Leys, N., 'The Problems of East Africa', op. cit., United Africa Corp. Ltd.

leashing of the lawless brutality of "barbarians (who had been) turned by the hundred thousand into a vagrant proletariat", the snapping of restraints on individual appetites and lusts so that government of any kind was impossible. Because the metaphysical system and social code of the East African had been destroyed by European industry, education and religion, he was

> "the slave of the appetites, lusts, instincts which even the most barbarous society when intact controls, and at the mercy of economic forces as incomprehensible to him as they are irresistable."[46]

The urban African was the epitome of Caliban, the most debased creation of the European.

For these reasons, civil disturbances, dangerous to the life and property of Europeans, would occur and they would need to be ruthlessly suppressed. "In the end", he wrote, "the franchise is the only weapon by which a subject race or class can win emancipation."[47] The simplest way of avoiding the Chilembwe rising would have been to allow a mission on the grounds of the Bruce Estates, where it occurred; there, then, men would have learned the futility of an armed rising and to take their personal grievances to a magistrate. Rebellion could be avoided by establishing local democratic political bodies into which dissent and the energies of the intelligent and ambitious could be directed:

> "They will give warning of the storms presaged by the Chilembwe affair. And if they are set up without delay, they will be channels, dug before the flood comes, through which the Government may lead the developing sense of race and nationality."[48]

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46. Leys to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7.2.1918, Box 248, E.H.
47. Leys, Kenya, p.347.
48. Leys to Secretary of State, 7.2.1918, op. cit.

By bringing to Africa elements which would foster a sense of common national feeling - a uniform administrative and industrial system, literacy, economic development, Christianity - and yet by basing policy on a concept of the innate inferiority of Africans, "our country encourages the one means that, unfortunately, man can always use to prove that he is not canine, but human and not slave, but free, the murder of his master."[49] Unless African loyalty were earned by the Imperial government adopting the slogan 'Africa for the Africans',[50] then Britain must realise that she could eventually be forced by violence into a humiliating withdrawal. Leys' tone of urgency stemmed from his belief that there was still time to win African loyalty.

This loyalty would be won not only by the grant of democratic institutions of local government but also by grants of adequate rent-free land for African needs and the expenditure of African tax revenue on African education and other services within the reserves. The latter reforms must, in fact, precede the grant of democratic institutions or the demands made by African representatives would be unwelcome to the authorities. In any case, the demand for popularly elected councils had not yet arisen, but when it did, it must be complied with. And when they were established they must not be dominated by district officers, particularly in matters regarding finance. Sir Donald Cameron's consultation of tribal opinion in Tanganyika was preferable by far in the

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49. ibid.

50. Leys probably meant to convey 'government in the interests of Africans' rather than 'self-government'.

short term though its success depended too much on the appointment of "disinterested autocrats" as Governor and Chief Native Commissioner.[51] 'Indirect rule' was no long-term solution to the problems of Africans:

> "It is futile with one hand to give the system artificial support and with the other to stimulate economic and social changes that destroy it."[52]

The growth of new social institutions would be hindered by attempts to revive or create a tribal autocracy and to preserve tribalism, which deserved a "euthanasia".[53]

Leys spent little time developing possible remedies, such as Cameron's, for the evils of the present situation in East Africa because he felt that to a certain extent they were self-evident: "axioms of elementary political arithmetic of universal validity."[54] The real problem was to relate policy to events; therefore, fostering an understanding of the current situation was of greater importance than determining the remedies. Unfortunately, by skating over this aspect of the East African problem, Leys opened himself to attack on the grounds of insufficient realism.

Leys believed that 'things were falling apart' in Africa because of the speed with which modern industrialism was destroying tribalism. Tribalism was doomed in any event: "the home men have in tribalism falls in ruin when tribal isolation is broken in upon."[55] Leys placed great importance

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51. Leys, N., The Colour Bar in East Africa, London, 1941, p.117.
52. Leys to Secretary of State, 7.2.1918, op. cit., E.H.
53. Leys, N., Kenya, p.300.
54. Leys, N., "The Problems of East Africa", (op. cit., United Africa Corp.
55. Leys, N., Kenya, p.259.

in the preservation of family life as a source of a stable civilisation for tomorrow's Africa and greatly feared its destruction by the industrial system - just as he would have deplored, and probably predicted, the effect of apartheid on South African black families. It is apparent that Leys failed to give due credit to the resilience of tribalism and the extended family: to perceive that tribal ties would play an important role in the acquisition of wealth and authority in modern times; that the obligations binding members of the extended family would frequently continue in new forms; that the "vagrant proletariat" and 'detribalised' actually had strong ties to their rural origins. Leys had probably reached this despairing attitude towards the strength of African society because his contact with Africans had been primarily with often unwilling labourers whose health he was inspecting; he interpreted their shirking of work as the only means of protest open to them. One wonders how much contact he had had with the village life in the reserves.

Religions which gave Africans a wider sense of brotherhood than the tribe also had initially an unsettling, provocative effect on the traditional social and intellectual order. The industrial system and, in particular, the Christian church were, Leys wrote, the two most potent institutions forming the new African. In contrast, the effect of the Government, simply restrictive, was negligible. Leys was particularly annoyed by the encouragement given to Islam by "administrators to whom racial superiority is a fundamental axiom of government",[56] who felt that Islam suited Imperial purposes admirably

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56. Leys to Secretary of State, 7.2.1918, op. cit., E.H.

by failing to encourage hopes for equality with Europeans. He went to great lengths in Kenya to prove to these officials that Islam was not necessarily apolitical. The simplified, unintellectual nature of East African Islam, lacking not only European believers but also the great social and political ideals of the West, was potentially the anti-European precursor of a nationalist movement.[57]

Even Roman Catholic dogma was popular with those in authority because "the faith must be taken on authority and does not foster the spirit of enquiry".[58] Protestant converts, on the other hand, were those most commonly concerned with sedition because their nascent individualism had been so enhanced by the missions' stress on the individual and personal nature of Christianity. Leys would have been delighted to read the following extract from a letter written by his protagonist, Governor Sir Edward Grigg, which emphatically confirms his suspicion that the authorities feared the effect of Protestant teaching. Protestant missions, Grigg wrote,

> "in particular, with their incapacity for teaching any respect for authority or experience, and with their total indifference to the need for structure, political or other, in a still imperfect world, are acting as a dangerous dissolvent of government which must lead to serious trouble if it is not dealt with in time. It is, after all, an old story, for primitive Christianity must have acted in much the same way as a dissolvent of Roman authority in the old Mediterranean world - so much so, indeed, that Roman law and order only held their place in those parts of Europe in which the native population was reinforced by Roman colonists."[59]

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57. ibid and Leys, N., Kenya, p.265.

58. ibid.

59. Governor Sir Edward Grigg to Lord Passfield, July 22, 1930, Sidney Webb Papers, IV/22, London School of Economics.

The Protestant church in Africa had many of the "youthful energies" of primitive Christianity, Leys wrote: religious instruction was in the vernacular, descriptions of the next world vividly fostered hope for a better life, and in the best mission stations there was no division of society into sacred and secular. Teachers of religion, medicine, agriculture and carpentry were united with their students in the ideal, not of self-interest, but of common service. There, one could find an "instinctive communism",[60] perhaps similar to a spirit that Leys had hoped to find during his student days at the Glasgow settlement house. The needs of the whole man, each with his function in the common service, were ministered to in these ideal stations, while the modern church in Europe had become quite often a defender of official policy.

> "The Church has not thought out Christian politics and economics....it is not the law of Christ they apply in politics and industry but the maxims of Mammon."[61]

Leys believed, in short, that religion and politics were inseparable. Because the African, "naked and defenceless, the prey of forces he can neither control nor comprehend, the victim within of the more pitiless slavery of ignorance and lust",[62] was as completely within the power of the European as any slave, God would judge the European according

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60. Leys, N., Kenya, p.229.

61. Leys to J. H. Oldham, 10.6.1920, Box 248, E.H.

62. Fullani bin Fullani (Leys' early pseudonym), "Religion and Common Life, A Problem in East African Missions", International Review of Missions, April 1919, p.168.

to his treatment of these, the least of the brethren. This belief accounts for much of the intensity of Leys' writing. It also indicates the importance of religion in all aspects of his life, particularly in his political activities. While in East Africa he had been a frequent visitor to missions, spending a total of about six months within more than a score of stations; and religion had been a common topic in his discussions with Africans.[63] He was deeply disappointed by missionaries who failed, as the logic of their doctrine dictated, to become bold critics of official policy.

Ross, also, noted that one mark of the failure of missionaries in Kenya was that no one was afraid of them. Although Ross thought that missions should offer technical training, their services to the African, especially in education, were of immeasurable value. But because they were silent in the face of abuses they risked being regarded as bought. Indeed, Harry Thuku had been able to popularise the idea among Africans that the missionary was in the pay of the settlers. By 1931 Ross was writing that missionaries must be trained in economics, and before posting must demonstrate a general knowledge of industrial legislation in Britain and Europe as well as pass a three-hour examination on Sidney Webb's Industrial Democracy. Missionaries were obliged to adopt this tactic, Ross felt, because Christian virtues and depressed wages do not flourish in the same soil.[64]

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63. Leys to J. H. Oldham, 23.7.1920, Box 248, E.H. Ross himself had instigated the first systematic industrial training of Africans in Kenya; in 1907, the Public Works Department had set up a training shop in carpentry.

64. Ross, W. M., review of J. Huxley's Africa View in The Church Overseas, No. 4, 1931, p.273.

Leys believed that the rebuilding of the African social fabric must begin on the village level, by the fostering of local industries, but that the progress of its growth would be slow and could not be created by the conscious efforts of the Imperial government.

> "opportunity must be given to the individual to produce what our world demands of him without wholly cutting himself off from old habits and traditions. It is only in the villages that family life can be preserved and tribal life can survive until replaced by institutions suitable to new conditions. Thus alone can the state be given stable social foundations."[65]

Europeans would continue to cultivate the crops best suited to large-scale, mechanised farming, such as sisal, tobacco, rubber and tea. The large profits from these crops would be divided between European investors and supervisors who had provided the necessary capital and special skills. However, crops which did not have such a large profit margin - cotton, rice, coffee, for example - would become the preserve of African cultivators. At the moment the wages of European managers were swallowing up the bulk of the profit, leaving African wages below the subsistence level. In short, although one might wish that the West African policy of native cultivation had been followed in Kenya, the settler presence had to be accepted and changes in policy must "spoil the life and alienate the loyalty of no man, of whatever race, whose services are valuable to Kenya".[66] The worker must be free to choose between plantation or village labour. By 1931 Leys was not as accepting of the continued presence of Europeans. He probably feared that one of their schemes for political

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65. Leys to Secretary of State, 7.2.1918, op. cit., E.H.

66. Leys, N., Kenya, p.378.

domination, for example by gaining an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council within an East African federation, would be successful. He scaled down his estimate of the future role of Europeans to that of a mercantile and expert technician class. Even this scheme implies, like the earlier one, continued social stratification, a scale of earnings with European profits far above those of Africans.

Although the educative value of the settler presence had been exaggerated, Leys wrote in Kenya, Africans could benefit from European farms and plantations as long as they themselves had adequate land and the settlers did not wrest political control from Westminster. Again Leys opened himself to attack for lading a pragmatic approach to the problem by sweepingly dismissing the possibility of a settler rising or declaration of independence: "If it is unmistakably shown in advance that Parliament is not to be coerced, the Europeans of Kenya will not be so insane as to rush to their ruin."[67] Yet fear of this "insanity" did to a certain extent modify Colonial Office policy. For example, W. D. Ellis of the Colonial Office had written in 1908 in regard to amendments to the Masters and Servants Ordinance, hated by the settlers, "the settlers in East Africa are not fond of abstract justice...and I am doubtful whether we are strong enough to compel them to follow its dictates." Ellis warned that documentation of settler brutality to their employees must not be published or King Leopold would make good use of it to counter British allegations of Congo atrocities. Nevertheless, because it was impossible to repatriate the settlers, the Colonial Office was

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67. ibid, p.379.

"obliged" to raise the hut tax in order to increase their labour supply.[68]

The urgency with which Leys advocated reform contrasts markedly with the tone of administrators of that time. During the inter-war years there was within the Colonial Office no sense of a "terminal date, of plans to be achieved before a certain time."[69] Leys' warnings must have sounded unnecessarily shrill and alarmist to many of his contemporaries. Even so, by urging a slower rate of economic change, he did indicate that he felt that time and developments in Kenya could be more easily manipulated by Europeans than proved to be the case.

However, Leys and Ross agreed with two common humanitarian assumptions of the day: that British rule - justice, education, technology - would galvanise the energies of the African, which had previously been suppressed by disease, isolation and ignorance; that the protection of the African from abuses and the prudent development of peasant economies were higher priorities than the active fostering of economic development by large imperial subsidies. Many humanitarians feared that a stress on rapid economic development would prejudice the Imperial government towards plantation rather than peasant agriculture or would further disrupt native culture by fostering too rapid social change. Until the years immediately following World War One, the Colonial Office and

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68. Minute by W. D. Ellis, 26.8.1908, CO 533/42; 1.5.08, CO 533/43, P.R.O.

69. Margery Perham, "The Period of British Administration", Royal Commonwealth Society Summer School, Merton College, Oxford, 1963.

the public had traditionally conceived of trusteeship in negative terms. As Leys wrote to Charles Roden Buxton,

> "Wilberforce and your ancestor often complained that the only question people bothered with was whether the negroes were well-treated, 'a question relevant to cattle'."[70]

Even as late as 1929, Sydney Olivier, former Governor of Jamaica, wrote that the meaning of trusteeship was the duty of government to secure justice, not development.[71] Similarly, John Harris, Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, believed that the first duty of colonial administrators was to give the African a "fair chance of competing".[72] Within the Colonial Office the negative definition of trusteeship was moulded by strictures of the Treasury and strategic considerations in Southern Africa. The public in any case had clamoured for the protection, civilisation through commerce and conversion of the African rather than for the grant of equal rights.[73]

After World War One, the international popularity of self-determination and the growth of liberal criticisms of the gap between Imperial rhetoric and policy combined to produce a more positive doctrine of trusteeship which included the concepts of welfare and development; however, until at least the late thirties, the humanitarian lobby saw no pressing need for large scale economic development projects and only after the Second World War did the concept of rapid

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70. de Bunsen, Victoria, Charles Roden Buxton: A Memoir, London, 1948, p.134-5.
71. Olivier, Sydney, "The Meaning of Imperial Trusteeship", The Contemporary Review, Sept., 1929, p.312.
72. Harris, John H., "Making the 'Lazy Nigger' Work", Contemporary Review, June 1914, p.819.
73. Robinson, R. E. in conversation. Professor

political development gain approval among Colonial Office officials. Although many humanitarians shared Leys' belief that economic development should be based on the encouragement of peasant agriculture, his belief in the ability and necessity of the African to advance rapidly to self-government was a rare vision for his time.

Leys' hopes lay, in a sense, between these two perspectives on trusteeship: the protection of Africans from European excesses and the dynamic post-World War Two schemes for economic development. Particularly in his latter two books he emphasised the simplicity of the solution. It was political: end the colour bar, grant equal rights before the law and all social and economic evils would end; educate Africans for self-government. In his last book, The Colour Bar in East Africa, it is apparent that he had come under attack from those who believed that economic wrongs sprang from the profit motive and could not be cured merely by the application of a political solution.[74] The argument in this book is less assured than in Kenya. Leys counselled his readers to consider the question of whether large importations of capital into tropical dependencies were a remedy for poverty but he offered no answers himself. He implied that modern exploitation was for the sake of shareholders in foreign firms but he maintained his attitude from an earlier age which could not give such great importance to economic cures directed by the state. He wrote, with reference to Hitler, that human injustice had a deeper root - the vicious instinct to dominate and enslave - than economic causes could reveal.

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74. Leys, N., The Colour Bar in East Africa, op. cit., p.144.

Leys did suggest in Kenya certain initiatives that the state must take to foster African development: the setting up of settlements where Africans, particularly the 'detribalised' could live and work as independent cultivators; the building of an organisation for African export trade and a state-aided co-operative marketing scheme; the establishment of agricultural shows; the provision of schools and colleges. In order to provide land for the dispossessed, the Crown might have to resume rights over alienated land. Leys demanded the end of the "Boer-Delamere-Grigg" policy of allowing only the rights of squatters to Africans outside the reserves. Africans should be allowed to buy or lease land.[75] It is apparent that none of these reforms would involve considerable Imperial expenditure; Leys suggested, for example, that funds for schools could be obtained by reducing military spending. It is not even clear whether these initiatives would be subsidised purely by African tax revenue or whether, for example, any revenue from his suggested land tax on large estates would be transferred for use in a non-European sector.

Ross also spent little time developing a plan for the future. He noted that the Empire must change with the times; the replacement of non-natives by natives in many capacities was inevitable, as was the development of trade unionism. But the only suggestions he offered were to allow Africans to buy land and to provide them with vigorous assistance in production. Settlers, on the other hand, should receive, over and above a return on their contribution to general revenue, only such public assistance as they were willing to pay for.

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75. Leys, A Last Chance in Kenya, op. cit., p.67.

The "burden" of taxation and development should be carried equitably by the two races. A free labour market must be guaranteed and labour importations forbidden. Eventually, with the progress of education, Africans would have earned the preponderating influence on the Legislative Council.

Many critics of the paramountcy of European interests in Kenya pointed to the failure of the settlers to achieve economic success as proof of the superiority of the West African pattern of reliance on peasant cultivation. They also noted that in West Africa there was not, as in Kenya, a large body of potentially violent, dispossessed Africans. Lord Olivier noted that the Kenya policy was creating a "demoralised and uncontrolled proltariat"[76] and J. H. Harris wrote that the unrest created by this proletariat would "compel large monetary grants for the maintenance of law and order", adding that educated African farmers would produce more raw material on their own land than if working for wages; hearkening back to the imperialism of free trade of the mid-Victorians, he observed, "the white trader, under a system of indigenous cultivation, enjoys all the advantages of limited responsibility coupled with an increasing volume of trade".[77]

In Kenya, Leys spent little time extolling the economic benefits of African production though he did idealise the prosperity brought by West African economic policies. He noted that the paramountcy of settler interests had brought the colony to the brink of bankruptcy and that the economies

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76. Olivier, S., op. cit., p.312.

77. Harris, J. H., "Back to Slavery?", The Contemporary Review, August 1921, p.197.

of countries based on peasant agriculture showed a far higher ratio of exports to public expenditure. However, because he loathed the habit of treating Africans, not as humans, but as factors in the production of wealth, he gave greater emphasis to the ideological, rather than the economic, justification of African production. Even if the paramountcy of settler interests had paid, it would have been wrong.

A good example of this perspective may be found in letters of Leys, Owen and Ainsworth on the question of forced labour.[78] All three argued that compulsion worsened the labour shortage by increasing the unpopularity of wage-earning. However, Leys placed greatest emphasis on the detrimental effects of compulsion on African society: the growth of loyalty to limited and impersonal law would be prevented; chief and headmen would be encouraged to become more autocratic; there was no incentive to good, efficient workmanship; peasant cultivation was discouraged; perhaps unpaid forced labour would prove to be the greatest source of disaffection leading to revolution. In any event it was unjust to spend Public Works monies - derived from general taxation and Imperial loans - on the settled parts of the country and to <u>force</u> Africans to labour on such works in the reserves. Those works were limited to the construction and repair of roads, buildings and bridges; tribal councils had to levy their own rates to pay for village schools.

Owen and Ainsworth, on the other hand, both known as 'pro-native' by the settlers, noted that one beneficial effect of compulsion was to require the lazy young men to work.

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78. Leys and Ainsworth, Files on Native Labour, June-July, 1921, CO 533/273-274.
Owen, W. E., <u>East African Standard</u>, 7.9.1920, CO 533/259, P.R.O.

Despite forcing these deceitful, immoral wanderers to learn the habits of industry, compulsion was, they believed, bad policy because it was "economically unsound", just as another means of increasing the labour supply, by discouraging African cash crop production, was "bad political economy". Within the context of other 'men on the spot' Leys was unusual in giving such emphasis to moral and ethical, as opposed to economic, arguments as well as to the widest possible implications of such policies.

To dwell on the shortcomings of Leys' remedies for the "evils" of the plantation system is to rob him of the great credit which he deserves for his sophisticated and wide-ranging analysis of the "industrial system" in Kenya. According to Leys, the unlawful designation of all land in East Africa as Crown land - the failure to recognise any African rights in land - and its subsequent appropriation to settlers was the root from which the peculiar East African economic system had sprung. Nearly half of Kenya's fertile "island" had been leased or sold at trivial prices to a relatively small number of settlers, many of them speculators. Consequently, much of the land remained undeveloped. By alienating more African land than necessary, that is, by diminishing the size of the reserves, it became easier to procure labour by hiring the dispossessed, though the bulk of the labour force had still to be procured by economic pressures.[79] Because the development requirements were gradually waived, untouched

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79. The 1908 Labour Commission Report had suggested that "the existence of unnecessarily extensive reserves is directly antagonistic to an adequate labour supply". Ross, W. M., Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.92.

land frequently changed hands between speculators who, often by dummying,[80] hoped to accumulate and then sell vast areas.

The ordinary settler had not profited from these machinations and could not be blamed for subsequent abuses except on the basis of having evaded his civic responsibilities. Rather, political control was in the irresponsible hands of the wealthiest early arrivals, who were more in the tradition of Hawkins and Clive than of Wilberforce and Sharpe.

> "This oligarchy has flooded the country with capital drawn from the profits of industry in Europe. For many unofficial Europeans in Kenya these investments are only, for most perhaps, their chief source of income...So long as they can get British workmen to provide them with incomes, they will continue to play polo, hunt, and race horses, avocations that, since African cultivators have no votes to voice their grievances, and pay nearly all the taxes, can be followed with greater devotion in African than in England."[81]

Not only had these men brought the attitudes of their social class to Kenya, the idea that people with money have a natural right to the services of others, but they had also, inevitably, been brutalised by the wealth and authority available to them there. Although the anti-capitalist tone of these remarks is clear, Leys avoided the probable temptation to praise Socialism in his book. He did, however, note that in Kenya the power of wealth was not counter-balanced by extensions of the franchise as it had been in Europe:

> "Transplanted to Kenya where the forces of other growths fail to hinder its solitary development, it has shot up in a night, like the bean tree in the story until it covers the sky. It is, so to speak, capitalism at its worst, grown rankly into an unnatural monstrosity."[82]

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80. "Dummying" was a practice by which land exceeding the regulations could be acquired through applications made in the names of nominees, especially absent relatives.

81. Leys, N., "The Problems of Kenya", The Socialist Review, May 1923, p.211-12.

82. Leys, N., Kenya, p.363.

The pursuit by a governing race of the profits earned by a subject race was a moral disaster.

This "disaster" was manifest in such cases as the acquittal of Galbraith Cole for the murder, which he admitted, of a sheep thief. Leys was so incensed that he informed T. E. Harvey, M.P., who called for a report on the case, which resulted in Cole's temporary deportation. Leys also quoted as proof of moral decay the conviction of Jasper Abraham, son of the Bishop of Derby, on a charge of "grievous hurt", although he had actually murdered his 'boy'. Such immorality was

> "inevitable wherever men are given both political control over a subject people and the opportunity to profit by their labour."[83]

This principle was also illustrated in a move of the Giriama people, bungled by district officers, in 1914. Leys alleged that the move took place in order to increase the supply of labourers on nearby land which had been applied for by a syndicate. The new 'reserve' was less fertile than the old, from which grain had been exported to Arabia for centuries, so those whom the land would not support would be forced to work for wages.[84]

Leys was particularly annoyed at the hypocrisy of giving the name 'Protectorate' to a place where Africans had no

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83. ibid, p.166.

84. The Colonial Office was so disturbed by this "very bad local muddle" that the incident became the strongest argument for the appointment of a Chief Native Commissioner who would advise the Governor on such proposals. (CO minute on O. A. G. Denham to C.O., 27.3.1925, CO 533/330, P.R.O.)

security of tenure in land and where their economic self-sufficiency was seen as an evil: the object of policy was to induce Africans to become wage-earners for European employers. Although the land policy had shaped the economic system, it was the system of labour which was responsible for the greatest number of evils in Kenya. There was no land shortage. In fact, Kenya's development would be aided by the "immigration of genuine cultivators of the soil".[85] The problem was, rather, that there simply was not adequate labour to develop the seven thousand square miles of European land and to maintain sufficient labour for subsistence in the reserves.[86]

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85. Leys, N., Kenya, p.382. Leys gave in this passage no indication of their possible place of origin; he wished simply to differentiate between idle speculators and real farmers. In earlier writings he had suggested that the "genuine" farmers might come from India. For an analysis of the land issue from a modern perspective, see an article by his nephew, Colin Leys, "Politics in Kenya: The Development of Peasant Society", British Journal of Political Science, 1971, p.307-337.

86. The 1921 Labour Bureau Commission, of which Ross was a member, was set up to suggest ways of dealing with an acute labour shortage, anticipated within 2 or 3 years, due to an increase in the number of settlers and the construction of the Uasin Gishu and Thika railway services; the report is remarkable not only because it estimated that by 1926 the demand would exceed the supply by 32,000 but also because virtually every figure cited in the report is an estimate.

G. R. Sandford illustrated the government's complete lack of concern to develop native production in his history of the Masai; in the majority of administered areas, he wrote, the following had been achieved despite the lack of a uniform policy: "the native inhabitants ...(were developing) into useful agricultural labourers, fit for residential work on European farms and available for duty on works of public utility."
(Sandford, G. R., op. cit., p.1.)

British colonisation really meant the transference of able-bodied African males from their homes to land owned by aliens. If Africans had been allowed to earn the cash with which to pay their taxes on their own holdings, European land would have become virtually valueless through the lack of a cheap labour force to develop it.

Governors and Colonial Secretaries, ignorant of African society and culture, had failed to consider the injury to African society which would result from this transfer of African labour from the reserves to European estates; neither they nor their subordinate administrators were corrupt but they were prone to seek popularity, to fear public abuse and so to disregard the needs of those with no social or political pressure to bear. The political influence of the settlers had been used largely to increase the labour supply by such measures as heavy direct taxation, the fixing of native wages, vagrancy regulations, criminal punishment for desertion, the Registration Ordinance, the use of tribal police to persuade Africans to work for Europeans during harvest; in order to reduce competition for labourers between public and private employers, regulations were passed requiring in emergencies sixty days' unpaid labour on public projects only from those Africans who had not worked (for wages) for three months in the preceding year; Leys noted that such forced labour was "the means whereby the Government is enabled to spend all or nearly all the money available for public works in the areas where the land belongs to Europeans".[87]

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87. Leys, N., "Forced Labour in Kenya Colony", May 1932, Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, Memo. 101, Transport House.

The missionary societies, galvanised by J. H. Oldham and led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, had protested to the Colonial Office in 1921 that to use government officers to recruit labour was to involve them in a conflict of duties which would result in the sacrifice of the principle of trusteeship on the "altar of commercialism and exploitation".[88] Some missionaries such as Handley Hooper recognised that labour migration was due as much to the attractions of 'civilised' life as to compulsion and taxation; nevertheless, all agreed that the vagueness of instructions to headmen and administrative officers in the labour circulars opened the way to abuses - such as the coercion of women and child labourers, which Ross had witnessed.[89] Administrative officers would be tempted to use their influence to get labour for settler friends and headmen might exempt wealthier Africans from communal or private labour on the payment of a bribe. For these reasons three missionaries - J. W. Arthur, the Bishops of Mombasa and Uganda - had issued in 1920 a memorandum urging that compulsory labour be legalised; they feared that John Ainsworth's Labour Circular No. 1 of 1919 had placed too great, undefined powers in the hands of chiefs. Ross called this circular "the nadir of (the Kenya government's) recession from established British standards".[90]

Ross believed that forced labour should be paid in cash; as a member of a committee set up by Governor Northey in 1922 to scrutinise administrative officers' requests for permission

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88. Northey to Churchill, 21.5.1921, CO 533/259, P.R.O.

89. Ross, Kenya from Within, op. cit., p.110-112.

90. ibid, p.108.

to compel unpaid labour, he was only able to share in decreasing the number of compelled labourers.[91] He had been unimpressed by Churchill's 1921 circular forbidding the involvement of government officers in labour recruitment, as such time-honoured practices were difficult to change and especially as Africans rarely knew of the existence of government circulars. It was particularly iniquitous, he believed, that, by the Native Authority Ordinance of 1912, compulsory labour for public works should be chosen solely from the reserves. All these measures brought not only the rapid decline of African produce for export but also food shortages within the reserves. Leys calculated that these shortages and diseases carried by migratory workers, particularly venereal diseases contracted on labour sites, had resulted in the decline of the African population by one third in twenty-five years.

Equally iniquitous was the system of taxation which placed a heavier burden on the poor than on the wealthy; the greater part of the revenue from it was used to subsidise services strictly for the use of the settler community. As Ross observed, the white man's burden was being borne by black men. The European paid a poll tax, which increased at a slower rate than African direct taxation, import duties and various taxes for services rendered and value received; Africans paid hut and poll taxes amounting to a far greater proportion of their total incomes. In 1920 the Colonial Office had demanded that if the native tax were to be raised then Europeans and Indians must pay an equivalent amount in new taxation themselves. This demand precipitated a two year

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91. Original manuscript of Kenya from Within, (op. cit.), Ross papers, 3/2/f.369, Rhodes House.

battle by the settlers against an income tax which they successfully rejected in 1922. Ross observed that much of the revenue which a tax on European income would have raised was met by increasing import duties on articles, many of which were consumed primarily by Africans; Ross called this process, after Lord Delamere, "shifting the (tax) burden slightly" in accordance with the wishes of the wealthier and most powerful sector of the population. Similarly, a committee which was set up to consider taxing the unearned increment of land values, a plan which Ross favoured, never met. The net effect of this successful evasion by the settlers of an equitable contribution to the Colony's revenue was, according to Ross, to allow such machinations as Grogan's Kilindini deal to pass undisputed because the settlers were not bearing the heaviest burden of the cost.

Finally, transport facilities and marketing services were in effect restricted to European areas. Because railway routes were never chosen to pass through the reserves, and so to stimulate African production for export, and because Indian middle-men were being expelled from the reserves, exports of native produce were declining. Yet the railway was serving to subsidise white settlement by carrying some crops at less than the cost of haulage and so running a deficit; similarly, main line profits, earned mostly from the export of Uganda cotton, helped to meet these deficits and those incurred on branch lines serving European areas. Ross described the situation in 1936 after European but not African crops were in effect given a one-third railway rate reduction:

"Thus does the state railway system subsidise the

> white colonist and, in comparison, bleed the African farmer, building up in the process, a reserve fund from which the five shillings per ton subvention is distributed - mainly into white pockets."[92]

The government subsidy of the railway, necessitated by the low railway rates, was paid from the general revenue, one-half of which was derived, Ross calculated, from direct and indirect taxation of Africans.

As Ross and Leys were plagued by the lack of reliable figures regarding the Colony's revenue and expenditure with reference to each of the three major communities, the above analysis is studded with such expressions as "much of the revenue" and, often, the source of the estimates is not given. Nevertheless, the basic outlines of the picture which both men were trying to give the British public is corroborated by evidence in Colonial Office-Kenya Government despatches. Governor Northey, for example, admitted in 1921 that there had been in the past reasonable cause for complaint that Africans did not receive benefits equal to their tax contributions. These abuses had been due to the lack of an adequate staff; when funds increased, the new principle of increased services for Africans would be fulfilled.[93] This answer still begs the question which Leys posed: would there ever be "sufficient funds" in Kenya to develop both sectors of the economy? In short, were there enough labourers to make the industrial system profitable? Would the high level of public expenditure, necessary in order to maintain the

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92. Ross, W. M., "The Kenya African's Contribution", The New Statesman, April 18, 1936, p.596.

93. Northey to Churchill, 21.5.1921, CO 533/259, P.R.O.

European standard of living, always exceed exports?

Characteristically, the Colonial Office reaction was primarily one of relief that Northey had provided "useful material for a reply to missionary societies". The prevention of scandal rather than the taking of initiative to impose a considered policy was the chief impetus of Colonial Office action at this time.[94] Ross and Leys were angered at the weakness of both the Colonial Office and the governors of Kenya in the face of settler demands; Ross noted for example that Governor Northey had allowed the repeal of a tax exacted twice in one year on Europeans even though it was twice exacted from natives. Not only were the official 'trustees' weak but the majority of the settlers were silent so that the noisy, 'rapacious' minority had inordinate power. These politicians often were responsible to extremely small constituencies and, through strategic representation on legislative Council committees, wielded great power over local government. In the early 1920s they attempted to have the following 'unjust' measures enacted: native wages were reduced by one-third in 1921; labourers were finger-printed so that deserters, often from bad employers, could be more easily found and punished; an expensive licence was required to grow coffee and so discouraged African cultivators; an unsuccessful attempt was made to reduce the costs of production by halving the cental coinage. Again the question arises: were these efforts limited to the 'rapacious' minority or were they the inevitable

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94. ibid, C.O. minute, 25.6.1921. An earlier example of this attitude may be found in a C.O. minute by Sir F. Hopwood on the 1908 "Nairobi Labour Incident":
"We cannot say there is to be no forced labour but we want any system of labour enforced in such a way as to prevent scandal."
(21.5.1908, CO 533/43, P.R.O.)

demands of the ill-fated, nearly bankrupt system itself?

Ross undoubtedly laid too great stress on the role of vested interests in influencing policy. This is not surprising considering that he felt he had been one of their victims. He was more interested in the political behaviour of the colonist than in the economic system of which the colonist was a part and an agent. This perspective marks the great divergence of Ross' and Leys' thought, particularly in its implications for the future. Ross stressed that the 'Political Machine', represented by Grogan and Delamere, must be prevented from gaining inordinate power and directed his appeal in part to the hard-working, honest settler; Ross' subsequent protest does not appear to have been effected by this idea, although in 1929, when the Hilton Young Commission reported, he was prepared to accept its recommendation of an unofficial majority on the legislature, which Leys flatly rejected. Leys believed that self-interest dictated that all settlers defend their positions in disregard of native rights, and therefore responsibility for redress lay only in Britain. Yet neither man was a particularly creative reformer. Neither intended to suggest new ways of governing native races, but to mould a pressure group which would demand the reassertion of traditional Imperial principles of 'fair dealing'.

Ross emphasised that the white community in Kenya was so small that one's sense of his own self-importance inevitably became distorted. 'Social influence' in such a small community was given scope for nepotism and intrigue. Unpopularity could bring devastating social and economic isolation. "A farmer's debating society", the Convention of Associations,

was audacious enough to try to take technical decisions out of the hands of experts. J. A. Cable, the editor of The Times of East Africa, noted that elected representation had been granted prematurely because there were not enough whites in Kenya to belong to two political parties, to subscribe to two newspapers. Those who controlled the press could resort unchallenged to vilification of their enemies. And, according to Ross, this intensely parochial little group seldom read anything but the newspaper. Despite emphasising the size of the settler community, Ross, unlike Leys, suggested that the salvation of Kenya might lie within the "better class" of settler. Its members should be given the chance to rectify the

> "policy of rancour and exclusiveness with which they have been saddled by bitter partisans whose views of public policy have often run parallel, perhaps by mere coincidence, with selfish and financial interests of their own."[95]

Leys disbelieved that any sector of the settlers would turn against their apparent self-interest and uphold high traditions; it was the duty of the disinterested trustees, the British public, to bring about this reverse.

Ross' suggestion reveals a shortcoming in his argument. By attributing so much responsibility for policies and racial enmity to his enemies, the 'Political Machine', he gave insufficient weight to the settlers' financial failures as a factor in their attitudes and behaviour. The settlers had not only to struggle for financial success through a world war and two depressions but they had also to find lucrative products for export. The tone of the various petitions sent to the

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95. Ross, W. M., Kenya from Within, p.427.

Colonial Office was desperate and sometimes bitter because they believed that strict control from Downing Street was threatening them with ruin. If humanitarians manipulated a policy which forbade compelled labour of any sort, how was the settler to harvest his crops, to pay off his mortgage? Ross was aware of this sense of desperation, of the settlers' hope that the colony would develop more rapidly under self-government. However, by ignoring the reasons for the acquiescence of the majority to the politically active minority, he skirted the fundamental question: did the economic system make inevitable the subordination of African society to settler control and the growth of racial enmity? Leys, of course, affirmed that the system was largely responsible, although the characters of such major officials as Governors were of great importance, while Ross was content to write a detailed history of the growth of present policies with a far narrower analytical framework.

The second part of Kenya from Within comprises a close look at the Indian Question. By dwelling on the incident, Ross was able to illustrate the irresponsible hysteria of which the settler community was capable and to disprove that the settlers had, by expressing concern for native welfare during the débacle, undergone any fundamental change of heart. Ross felt that the Indian Question had been seriously misunderstood in Britain. For example, he had been informed by J. W. Gregory while he was still in Kenya that the British press attributed the East African Indian trouble to Gandhi and wondered whether some London editors thought that Kenya was somewhere inside India. Even the "better class" of

settler in East Africa believed that the problem was attributable to the Indians' alleged low caste. Perhaps if the truth had been known in 1923, Ross thought, the Duke of Devonshire's White Paper would have been more favourable to the Indian.

Initially Ross had not been impressed with the Indian as represented by the railway coolies. However, all but six thousand of these low-caste labourers had returned to India and the numbers of Indians in East Africa had been swollen by the voluntary immigration of merchants, artisans and some professionals. The pioneer merchants had borne much of the responsibility for opening the interior to trade and for allowing administrative centres to function. Their modern counterparts were helping the African to market his surplus produce and were stimulating his wants by introducing modern trade goods. The allegations of Indian depravity - curiously, that they might victimise the helpless African and provoke a rising - were, Ross felt, absurd. The racial animosity which these allegations fostered would deflect East Africa from its inevitable destiny: the home of a mixed community. If only the local and Imperial governments had not shown such irresolution in the face of the white extremists' demands, the crisis would not have developed to the verge of rebellion.

Most observers had failed to see, Ross wrote, that the cause of the conflict, cloaked in racial terms, was largely economic. Europeans feared that their bankrupt compatriots would be tempted to sell land, particularly in the Highlands, to wealthy Indian speculators. The rhetoric of racial solidarity, begun in 1906 by South Africans in the Convention of Associations, served to create a "shoulder-to-shoulder"

community against the possible temptation of its members.[96] Considerations of African welfare were voiced later; initially settler demands - for segregation, keeping the Highlands 'white', restriction on immigration or even repatriation, and the nomination of only a small number of Indian representatives to the Legislative Council - were frankly provoked by fear of European land passing into Indian hands. The change in settler rhetoric was due to the need to win the support of the Imperial government against the opposition of the Government of India which was championing the Indian cause.

The first case of Imperial irresolution had been the 1906 Elgin pledge. Ross called the pledge a "gentleman's agreement" because, while it allowed the de facto exclusion of Indians from the Highlands, as an "administrative convenience", it failed to make the restriction legal. Nine years later one hole in the pledge was patched by the Crown Lands Ordinance which allowed the Governor to veto inter-racial land transfers so the Highlands remained, in practice, white. The climax of the affair was brought about by the Indians' demand for representation on a common roll, a demand which presented to the settlers the spectre of being swamped in a brown flood by the Indians' greater numbers: the Wood-Winterton agreement of 1922 between representatives of the Colonial and India Offices proposed a common roll, with a 10% Indian electorate based on educational and property qualifications, an elective

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96. For further information, see the forthcoming Cambridge Ph.D. thesis of Michael Redley on the Kenya settlers, 1920-1940.
Sir Edward Grigg mentioned in his memoirs that the Jockey Club in Kenya refused to admit the Aga Khan because the members feared competition from wealthy Asian racehorse owners.
(Altrincham, Lord, Kenya's Opportunity: Memories, Hopes and Ideas, London, 1955, p.119)

Municipal franchise and rejected proposals for segregation and immigration restrictions, although the Highlands were to remain white. Governor Northey, by failing to order a public debate on the proposals, contributed to the growth of fantastic innuendo about what they would mean.

The Convention of Associations, according to Ross, began to fan the racial animosity of the less political settlers and to oathe support for a rebellion against Imperial rule if any attempt were made to enforce the above proposals. The projected rebellion included a plan to kidnap the new Governor, Sir Robert Coryndon. Coryndon wrote plaintively to the Colonial Office that he was "quite in the dark as to the true position of the Indian difficulty in the Colonial Office and in the House of Commons" and foresaw a mutiny of the King's African Rifles if he were forced to grant a common roll to the Indians.[97] The Colonial Secretary, too, believed that the use of troops would be

> "fatal to British prestige throughout Africa; and it would mean that in the whole of the continent the life of a European would not be safe in any area of native population. Further, it may be taken as certain that such action would be bitterly condemned in Parliament."[98]

The settler rhetoric was plentiful and often vicious. Some, like C. K. Archer, chairman of the Convention of Associations, issued suggestions for increased native representation on the Executive Council and the establishment of a system of native councils; such proposals gave body to

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97. Coryndon to Masterton-Smith, 18.1.1923, Coryndon Papers 3/3: ff.28-33, Rhodes House.

98. CO File No. 25473/30/1, Sub-File A, Cabinet Paper S, No. 99(23).

the settlers' assertion that they were more capable than the Indians of governing and civilising a subject people and for the first time raised the question of the African's political future. Others employed invective. The Convention in 1923 published a pamphlet by Powys Cobb entitled "The Thermopylae of Africa" which warned of "gradual race deterioration and ultimate extinction through the infiltration of coloured races". Presumably, Cobb had the Highlands in mind when he wrote, "the creative faculty and the highest development of mind and spirit require for their survival a more favourable environment than the less valuable, quicker breeding types". He also cautioned that "the doctrinaire altruism of the White Race" was paralysing its remaining strength in the face of an Asian renaissance.[99]

The missionary factor in Kenya certainly did not contribute to this 'paralysis'. They made no attempt to calm the expressions of racial hatred and some even encouraged them and enlisted African support. Archdeacon Owen warned that the African must not be placed in equal competition with the Indian as he was in need of "a good deal of protection and preferential treatment in these early stages".[100] He admitted that Indians were entitled to justice "but they are not entitled on grounds of justice to subvert our ideals" by obtaining legal sanctions for their social customs such as marriage.[101] The Church of Scotland forwarded to the Colonial

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99. Powys Cobb, "The Thermopylae of Africa", Convention of Association Papers, 1/18, Rhodes House.

100. Owen to Miss Hunter, 24.2.1922, Box 241, E.H.

101. Owen to J. H. Harris, 2.8.1923, Anti-Slavery Papers, G135, Rhodes House.

Secretary a minute deploring unrestricted Indian immigration as it would deprive the African of all incentive to progress because the Indians would fill the roles to which they were aspiring.[102]

A compromise between these conflicting claims was reached in the Devonshire Declaration of 1923 by the formal designation of the 'paramountcy' of African interests, contrived mainly by J. H. Oldham. Although the effects of the declaration were not felt for many years, and then for other reasons, the Kenya storm was quelled - to the detriment of many Indian goals. Leys was not particularly pro-Indian and wrote little about the issue.[103] He did feel that Indian artisans and small farmers, given the opportunity, would prove to be genuine cultivators of the soil, of real benefit to Kenya and he therefore strongly opposed restrictions on immigration. The danger of opening the Highlands to Indians lay in an increase in the numbers of people "scrambling for the loot of African land and labour";[104] he did not delude himself that this issue represented more than the desire of rich Indians for the opportunity to make fortunes in Highland land deals: "We don't want exploiter Jeevanjee to step into expoliter Grogan's shoes."[105]

The Indian had not in the past been trusted by the African

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102. Memorandum of the Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland, forwarded to the Colonial Secretary, Box 241, E.H.

103. Fulani bin Fulani, "The Indian in Africa", Church Missionary Review, 1921, p.199-214; Leys, N. M., "The History of Kenya Colony", The Socialist Review, Sept. 1923, p.129-133.

104. Leys to Miss Hunter, 18.2.1923, Box 248, E.H.

105. Leys to J. H. Oldham, 22.8.1921, ibid.

but the failure of the European community, including missionaries, to redress African disabilities, had made the Indian appear as a "deliverer" in African eyes. Leys was less interested in the Indian aspect of the question than in the effect which it would have on Africans; he feared, for example, that the grant of a franchise based on property would exlude all Africans but a few chiefs, subsidised by the government, and that the government would then point to their views as representing native opinion. However, the significance of the issue lay, for Leys, in its prevention of settler self-government; if the Colonial Office had not feared the effect that a surrender would have had on India, the Europeans would have won their demands.[106]

In the spring of 1925 members of the Imperial Parliament and the Kenya Legislative Council were anxiously waiting for the Colonial Office to receive a despatch written by the acting governor of Kenya, E. B. Denham, to defend the Kenya administration against attacks made by Leys in Kenya.[107] The book had created a public stir in both countries and, as Oldham reported to Leys, had "woken up" the Colonial Office. Predictably, left-wing humanitarians, such as Leonard Woolf and Charles Roden Buxton were loud in their praises.[108] Less politically-minded individuals were most incensed, not at the economic system, but at such abuses as forced labour, which sounded dangerously like a euphemism for slavery and brought

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106. ibid.

107. O. A. G. Denham to C.O., 27.2.1925, CO 533/330, P.R.O.

108. Woolf, Leonard, "The Empire and Africa", The New Leader, 16.1.1925, p.4-5.
Buxton, C. R., "The Black Man's Friends", The New Leader, 6.1.1928, p.5.

to mind images of Leopold's Congo. Elspeth Huxley, on the other hand, satirised the enthusiasm of the sentimentalists in their chase after the "Kenya fox":

> "there they go, over the Manchester Guardian leader and into the cheap edition of Dr. Norman Leys, slap through the editorial columns of the New Statesman and past the House of Commons at question time..."[109]

Some reformers such as J. H. Oldham feared that Leys' attack would alienate potential allies and drive the settlers into extreme reaction so that "all sorts of complications with South Africa (might) arise".[110] Others were offended by the "one-sided" - ness of the book while others were delighted that Leys "in over-stating the case...(laid) bare the weak points in his argument".[111] The East African press feared that all Leys' subsequent remarks denouncing the settlers would be given credence in Britain simply because he had published the book. The settlers' search for increased political power would thereby be made more difficult, if not endangered. Laurens van der Post was introduced to the book in Kenya by a man who had obtained his copy in secret and who wrapped it in a travelling rug as he feared what might happen if he were seen with it.[112]

It is apparent from the Colonial Office minutes on

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109. Huxley, Elspeth and Perham, Margery, Race and Politics in Kenya, London, 1944, p.16.

110. Oldham to Leys, 16.12.1924, Box 248, E.H.

111. Huxley, Julian, African View, London, 1931, p.11.

112. van der Post, Laurens, introduction to Turbott Wolfe by William Plomer, London, 1965, p.43.

111. Sidney Henn to Corydon, 4.2.1925, Henn Papers I, 1/6 ff. 73-73, Rhodes House.

Denham's despatch that his defence of administration in Kenya was not regarded as adequate. The admission of past mistakes, news of recent improvements and suggestions for the future did not demolish Leys' criticisms. The historical accuracy of some aspects of the defence was in question. Denham had also overstated the probable retardation of development in Kenya if peasant rather than settler cultivation had been given paramount importance; the Colonial Office believed that, at best, Africans would simply have taken longer to reach the current level of European production. Some of Denham's misstatements were considered dangerous as they could so easily be refuted by the existing data. It could not be alleged, for example, that native production was encouraged when only 10% of the arable land in the reserves was under cultivation.

> "It is safer to say that European settlement was harmless and indeed beneficial and inevitable, and that, having come into existence it must have a fair chance, though not to be bolstered up if it cannot stand on its own feet economically."

Coupled with this lack of faith in the viability and benefits of white settlement was a desire to dissociate the Colonial Office from the past mistakes of the Kenya government especially in regard to the Nandi expedition and the Masai move, which had both resulted in more land for the settlers. Further, the Colonial Office admitted that more should have been done for Africans in the way of sanitation, health measures and encouragement of native production and industries but the resources available had been too limited.[113]

The credibility of Denham's defence was dogged by the

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113. Minute by Strachey and others on O. A. G. Denham to C.O., 27.3.1925, CO 533/330, P.R.O.

same dilemma as Leys' book: adequate statistics to prove one case or another simply did not exist. But whereas Leys forcefully presented his case within the context of an argument based on the economics of the colonial situation in Kenya, Denham weakly cited the attitudes of administrators or the stated intent of ordinances to counter charges regarding the impact of specific policies. He also dragged out unproven cliches and stated, rather than proved, that the Dual Policy appeared to have advantages in the building of African character.

Leys' book had, in short, provoked the Kenya administration into a defensive posture before the Colonial Office. Basic reform was not considered; rather, the 'safe' statements were ascertained. Within the Colonial Office, there was revealed a malaise about the virtues and success of white settlement, a certain lack of control over events in East Africa and the absence, throughout its history, of a plan for the colony's development. Leys assessed the impact of his writing on the organs of government as follows:

> "The line the authorities took about my book was to admit that 'mistakes' had been made, but to claim that they had all been rectified."[114]

The settlers were, Leys felt, approving certain reforms in order to satisfy British public opinion and move closer to self-government but they had not undergone a fundamental change of heart, especially where their profits were concerned.

The one tangible effect of Leys' book was to provoke a demand by members of Parliament for an inquiry into the land

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114. Leys, N., "The Scandal of Kenya", The New Leader, 2.12.1927, p.14.

holdings of Lord Delamere. The results of the investigation were issued in two White Papers in 1925 and 1926.[115] Leys had published in Kenya a letter, written by Robert Chamberlain, to the East African Standard in 1920, which accused Delamere of dummying. The White Papers were to investigate that charge as well as to describe when and to what extent Delamere had disposed of his original grant of 100,000 acres, in order to determine whether he had earned £200,000 on the sale of this free land. They cleared Delamere of the charges or, as Leys wrote, "officially canonised (him) in (their) pages".[116]

Kenya from Within gained less notoriety, possibly because it appeared three years later when the history of the Political Machine was of less interest than, for example, current proposals such as closer union. Nevertheless it provoked, by Ross's calculation, 78 reviews, of which all but 8 were favourable. Rupert Hemsted reported from Kenya that local book sellers ran out of copies a few weeks after arrival. Ross's old associates from Kenya days were not all struck with the truth of his account. Handley Hooper wrote that he didn't think Ross held a balanced view but that the book was an echo of Ross in Kenya, "indomitable";[117] Harold Kittermaster, then Governor of British Somaliland, felt that Ross, like Leys, spoiled his case by "constant examples of suppressio veri

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115. Cmd. 2500 (1925): Correspondence with the Government of Kenya relating to an Exchange of Lands with Lord Delamere.
Cmd. 2629 (1926): Correspondence with the Government of Kenya relating to Lord Delamere's Acquisition of Land in Kenya.

116. Leys, N., Kenya, 1926 edition, p.5.

117. H. D. Hooper to A. G. Fraser, 10.9.1927, Fraser Papers, 11/1/f.23, Rhodes House.

and suggestio falsi", especially in his accounts of the victimisation of dissident officials.[118]

Labour Party groups in particular found both books useful in preparing criticisms of Imperial policy, and they also became part of the curriculum of men entering the Colonial Service.[119] At their best the books stirred members of the public, making them feel, as in the case of Charles Roden Buxton, that "something must be done" for Kenya's Africans.[120] Ormsby Gore felt that Ross and Leys were responsible more than anyone else for the left-wing concern over the treatment of Africans in Kenya.[121] The books' power to arouse indignation and concern - especially among liberal-humanitarians - was due not only to the strength of their authors' convictions but also to the general ignorance about what was actually happening in Kenya; even Lord Lugard had been shocked and astonished by Ross' revelations about the settlers' machinations and the substantial African subsidy of white settlement.[122]

But who had won the battle for sympathy in 1924 and in the subsequent years? The publicity given to Kenya - by the Indian Question, the various commissions, and the critics'

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118. Harold Kittermaster to Ross, Dec. 6, 1929, Ross Papers, 1/3/f.106-8, Rhodes House.

119. Brockway, Fenner, Outside the Right, London, 1963, p.56. Sidney Webb reportedly had a personal copy of Kenya from Within in his office for reference when Colonial Secretary (Gregory, R. G., Sidney Webb and East Africa, Berkeley, 1962, p.89)

120. C. R. Buxton to Molteno, copy sent to L. Woolf, 13.11. 1936, Woolf Papers, Box 18, Sussex University Library.

121. Brett, E. A., Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa, op. cit., p.60.

122. Oldham to Randall Davidson, 14.5.23, Box 241, E.H.

books - rallied the conflicting forces. The settlers had won friends in South Africa by their opposition to the Imperial government on the Indian Question. Their threat to rebel had caused some critics to tread more softly for fear of driving them further into South African arms; perhaps as a result, there was, as Sidney Henn informed C. K. Archer in 1925,

> "a marked change for the better in the attitude of the missionary bodies, more particularly towards the White Settlers during the last two years."[123]

A recent history claims that with the settlers' economic resurgence and their support by the Ormsby Gore Commission, "the great middle ground (in British politics) had been captured by those committed to the settler interest".[124] For these reasons and because the ideals of Leys and Ross had a distinctly left-wing appeal, neither managed to escape being labelled 'extremists' by the more conservative politicians and members of the public. The implications of Leys' ideas for Britain were revolutionary and he realised that even Ross was not certain, as he was, of a Socialist "revolution in Europe as a consequence of which the exploiter in Africa will have the same fate as the slave owner of one hundred years ago".[125] Even if Leys and Ross failed to convert moderates and conservatives to the cause of the Kenya African, they had, through their books, drawn liberal-humanitarian attention to

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123. Sidney Henn to C. K. Archer, 8.6.1925, Henn Papers, 1/2/f.73, Rhodes House.

124. Brett, op. cit., p.182.

125. Leys to Oldham, 23.7.1920, Box 248, E.H.

Kenya and helped in the following years to keep it there. This watchful eye of the British public exasperated the settlers as they were continually reprimanded in the home press for allegedly abusing their power; but, most important, it would help to thwart the creation of a Great White Dominion in East and Central Africa.

Chapter V

PRESSURE GROUPS AND ISSUES OF THE INTER-WAR YEARS

Between the time of their return from Africa until their deaths in the early forties, Leys and Ross engaged in a range of pressure group activities designed to warn the British public against surrendering to settler demands for greater political power. These demands primarily took the form in the inter-war years of attempts to gain an unofficial majority or control of finances on the Legislative Council. Both men gave extensive evidence to various commissions called to examine these and other issues. They channelled to Members of Parliament - particularly to Labour M.P.s such as Sir Robert Hamilton, Major James Milner, T. E. Harvey, Josiah Wedgwood - information on which parliamentary questions could be based. They maintained ties with an extensive network of prominent humanitarians and, of course, they assaulted the public conscience and intelligence; a wide range of journals and newspapers - including the Manchester Guardian, The New Leader, The New Statesman, Socialist Review, The Church Overseas, International Review of Missions, Scots Observer, West Africa, W.A.S.U., East Africa - printed their articles and letters. Leys even tried his skill at the work of editor and in 1938 helped Leonard Barnes, Julius Lewin and J. F. Horrabin to found an independent Socialist journal with an intentionally derisory title, Empire.

Both men were active members of the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, writing numerous memoranda as the 'Kenya experts' of the Labour Party in order

to influence the adoption of policy by the National Executive. Both spoke on African problems at Independent Labour Party summer schools in the mid-twenties; Leys is remembered by one participant as reading his lectures slowly from a pile of typewritten sheets because, he said, experience had taught him to sacrifice spontaneity to accuracy.[1] As in all these efforts, he sought to inform the public intelligence, not to create enthusiasm. Leys also worked closely with John Harris while sitting on the League of Nations Union Mandates Committee and channelled information to Harris' Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society of which he and Ross were members. Ross frequently represented the interests of the native labourer at meetings of the International Labour Organisation. Both were nominal, though not active, members of a number of black organisations and maintained close contact with several Africans in Britain, most notably with Jomo Kenyatta.

Towards the end of his life, Ross spent less time arguing for the cause of Kenya's Africans and became active in pacifist groups. His publications were far less prolific than Leys' partly due to ill-health and also to a move to Yorkshire in 1936 which isolated him from activities of the London-based committees. He had in any case been less ardent than Leys, whose dedication to reform in Kenya was obsessive. Some of his (Leys') letters indicate in a flash of self-pity or excessive sensitivity to criticism the probable strain under which he was working in two roles; as a country doctor and as a

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1. Bill Gregory to the author, 29.10.1973.

reformer. By his own admission he spent all his free time on African affairs and took no holidays.

In 1936 he gave up his medical practice in the hope of teaching a course on Imperialism at a working man's college which A. G. Fraser was founding near Edinburgh; his application may have been vetoed by trustees who found his radical views offensive or perhaps his age and lack of professional training were more important factors weighing against him. This rejection did not embitter him, despite the relative penury in which he was then forced to live, nor did an earlier rejection, in 1930, when he applied for a post as district commissioner in Kenya. Despite the intercession of Lady Mary Murray, Gilbert Murray's wife, with Beatrice Webb, he was rejected, ostensibly on account of his age: Mrs. Webb noted privately to Lady Mary, "No doubt Mr. Norman Leys has done good work as a propagandist but that would not be necessarily advantageous as an official having to deal with all the parties concerned."[2] Perhaps she was right: it is easy to imagine Leys acting on his own initiative to fulfil the Labour White Paper on Native Policy if his superiors had shown no signs of doing so.

These failures and the absence of any clear advance towards realising his reforms wore down his sense of humour and hope. After the twenties he rarely if ever mentioned his hopes for the creation of a Socialist International. By the end of his life he pointed gloomily to the refusal of Burmese and Malayan soldiers to fight for the Empire during the Second World War as proof that his warnings had been accurate.

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2. Beatrice Webb to Lady Mary Murray, September 6, 1930, Gilbert Murray Papers, Box 32, Bodleian Library.

However, the sense of failure from which he hoped to redeem his life was partially alleviated by the greater sympathy for Kenya's Africans which he could just perceive growing among members of the British public.

Leys' sympathy for the "deprived and inarticulate", whether they were Derbyshire cottagers or Kikuyu squatters, was intense but he found their simplicity frustrating and adopted a firmly paternal tone towards them.[3] During the 1926 General Strike, for example, miners marched through Brailsford on their way to London and solicited funds from him; he refused to give them money, saying they would just spend it and, instead, fed them on his lawn with all the bread and cheese from a village shop.[4] Similarly generous with his poor patients, he gave away so much medicine that his profits were never large.

Both Leys and Ross were frustrated by their contacts with Africans in Britain, such as the representatives of the Kikuyu Central Association; funds often disappeared or loans were not repaid and allegations of settler wrong-doing were sometimes so inaccurate or dated as to be useless. More Africans tended to visit Leys after he had moved to Yalding in Kent in 1936 but, in frustration at their ways, he often left them alone with his family. Like many reformers, his tolerance for the deprived was stronger in principle than in practice towards individuals.

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3. Conversation with Mrs. Agnes Avery, 14.2.1974.

4. Conversation with Mr. and Mrs. George Rodgers, Brailsford, near Derby, former patients of Leys, December 28, 1973.

The importance of Leys and Ross in this period was a function of the lack of a systematic survey of the African colonies. Until Lord Hailey's African Survey appeared in 1938, the British public and their representatives were dependent for their information on individuals like Leys and Ross, or Lord Cranworth on the settlers' side, who publicised or handed to Members of Parliament information which they had personally received from informants in Kenya. As Leys wrote,

> "Until the facts are known with rough accuracy, reformers in Europe can have no idea what to work for. British governments volunteer none of that sort of information in official reports. Its extraction from unwilling governors is the prerequisite for all reform in Africa."[5]

Although not all parties agreed with such an indictment of the motives of Imperial agents, all were frustrated by their own ignorance. The critics also tried to keep alive the idea that allegations of the settlers' "change of heart" might simply be a ploy to gain concessions which would bring them closer to self-government. Even though, as both men realised, their information on some issues was becoming out-of-date, their voices, insistently warning against concessions, helped to foster and sustain a humanitarian attitude to Kenya's Africans among members of the British public. They were the 'men on the spot' whose years in East Africa disproved the settlers' allegation that they alone knew how to exercise the Trust, unlike the ignorant liberals at home with their dangerous pro-African sentimentalism.

Neither Leys nor Ross was particularly active in domestic issues within the Labour Party. Ross once served as campaign

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5. Leys, N., Memorandum on the Land Question in Tropical Africa, 15.2.1927, Box 200, Edinburgh House.

Leys and S. P. Sinha
I. C. P. Summer School
Easton Lodge
1926

manager for an unsuccessful Labour Party candidate for Parliament from Kenley, R. O. Mennell. Leys belonged to the Derby Labour Party but never managed to oust J. H. Thomas, who he felt had been a deplorable Colonial Secretary in 1924, from his seat and to substitute Leonard Barnes.

The big farmers and "county" folk in the vicinity of his Brailsford practice tended to patronise other doctors as they disapproved of his Socialism and were particularly displeased by the distribution of his Independent Labour Party pamphlet "Why the Landworker is Poor" to their labourers. This pamphlet, written in 1925, was geared to convince the labourer, in the simplest language, that they must unite, organise and join the Labour movement in order to win battles for Socialism against those who live on the profits of others' labour.

> "Socialists believe that poverty will never be cured so long as a third part of what the soil produces and of the things men make, goes to people who do nothing in return for what they get. We believe that people have no right to all that money and to all they spend and generally waste it on. We would spend all that money on making life better for the workers and their children."[6]

The I.L.P. had been the central propagandising, organising and policy-making body of the Labour movement prior to World War One. Founded by Keir Hardie in 1893, it had been infused with moral idealism and an almost religious fervour. Leys wrote that there was greater affinity to the New Testament in the writings of Hardie than in what was commonly said in the pulpits. This crusading spirit continued into the inter-war years and resulted in 1932 in a split with the Labour

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6. Leys, N., "Why the Landworker is Poor", I.L.P. Publication Department, n.d. (1925), p.6.

Party which under Ramsay MacDonald stood for gradual change under the parliamentary system. The I.L.P. professed to stand for revolutionary change, for the immediate redistribution of the national income. The Imperial Advisory Committee of the party, of which Leys was a member, lapsed in the early thirties as the bourgeois "international Socialists" were outnumbered by workers seeking workers' control. The "internationalists" ideas of the party, as expressed in its constitution, were well in accord with those of Leys:

> "war, imperialism and the exploitation of native races are mainly caused by the greed of competing capitalist groups. It therefore realises that the Socialist Commonwealth must ultimately be international...The Independent Labour Party opposes the exploitation of the economically backward races by the more advanced, and the introduction of capitalism as a substitute for the economic structure of native society. It declares for a relationship with the less developed races, which will prepare them as speedily as possible for self-government."[7]

The only hope for Africa lay, Leys believed, in the rise to power of a party that "openly and determinedly does battle with the City and the landed Aristocracy and Big Business".[8]

Yet despite these anti-capitalist professions, there is a sense in Leys' writing that he disliked the arrogance and privilege of an elite far more than he disliked capitalism.[9] Capitalism did have an acceptable face, which it showed in

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7. Quoted in C. R. Buxton, "The Black Man's Rights", I.L.P. Publication Dept., n.d., p.13.

8. Leys to John Harris, 17.7.1932, Anti-Slavery Papers, G147, Rhodes House.

9. One story about Leys and 'county' folk still lives in Brailsford: a 'county lady' once came to his door for medical help and he informed her that if she wanted to see him professionally she would have to return to his surgery during office hours. (Mr. and Mrs. George Rodgers, Brailsford.)

Britain: workers were given the greatest share of the wealth they produced, were educated and loyal and respected the law.[10] Socialist principles formed the framework of Leys' analysis of the problems of Kenya but he was no political theorist. His most frequent references to Imperialism and the Socialist International occurred when he was working on a Draft Mandate for the League of Nations Union. Primarily, he was interested in the practical application of ethical principles to particular problems, a perspective on native policy shared by many humanitarians of his time.[11]

Capitalist exploitation by the City and Big Business was not the fundamental problem in Kenya despite the ownership of vast tracts of land by British syndicates. There, the landed aristocracy was attempting to recapture the manorial life that was passing in Europe and to preserve it by keeping their tenants in perpetual submission. When such legally entrenched privilege was coupled with racism, Leys wrote, capitalism existed in its worst form.

During the twenties Leys and Ross had pinned much of their hope for reform in Kenya on the coming to power of the Labour Party but they were profoundly disappointed with it in practice. The Party failed to fulfil its principle of equal rights and to prepare all inhabitants of the Colony for self-government. Although the Labour Party had no monopoly of these principles, it did contain men committed to reform, unlike the elite who had previously filled high positions in Kenya:

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10. Leys, N., Last Chance in Kenya, London, 1931, p.132.

11. Hancock, Keith, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, vol.2, part 2, London, 1942, p.174.

> "precisely as their grandfathers created the slums of Liverpool and Glasgow and through the operation of the same economic causes",[12]

they had created Nairobi slums by elevating the prosperity of white settlement above all human considerations. So, both because of its ideology and its membership - men opposed to elitism - the Labour Party was the chosen vehicle for the critics' efforts at reform. As Leys once wrote,

> "Our aims for Africa are closely linked with a movement in Western Europe and beyond that we all belong to. That, twenty years ago I decided was the fulcrum to which when applied even my petty lever might shift the events of a continent."[13]

In short, Leys considered the Socialist movement the best available vehicle for realising Christian ethics in Imperial politics.

The interests of the two critics remained focussed on Kenya; only rarely did they submit memoranda or write articles on other areas of Africa, though Leys, having visited the Gold Coast in 1927 and Jamaica in 1924, pointed to policies in those colonies as examples of what should have been done in Kenya. Their failure to broaden their field to defend native interests in other areas of Africa was probably due to a desire to keep to the area they knew best, but it may also indicate that one great attraction of the problem of Kenya was that it represented a projection of the current left-wing struggles against the English class system.

Leys' letter to the Colonial Secretary, written shortly after he returned to Britain from Nyasaland, had been distributed to a large number of influential people and provided

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12. Leys, N., Last Chance, op. cit., p.34.

13. Leys to W. M. Macmillan, 12.5.1936, Macmillan Papers.

his introduction to many of his most fruitful contacts of later years. This letter was probably the first systematic indictment of colonial policy in Kenya and showed considerable power to stir the imaginations of public-minded people.

Because Leys was not content simply to stir imaginations but wished to play a role in groups attempting to mould future policy, he devoted considerable effort to such organisations as, in 1920, the League of Nations Mandates Committee. His closest associates on this committee were John Harris and Leonard Woolf; Sir Harry Johnston was to have joined Harris and Leys in drawing up a Draft Mandate but never took an active part in their work. Leys felt that both he and Harris, who had been a missionary in the Congo, with some valuable criticism from Ross, possessed the intimate knowledge necessary to determine whether the scheme was workable or not; "the only principle to guide us all should be fidelity to circumstances, human desires, and human needs in Africa."[14]

To those who would label Leys an idealist, his efforts on the Draft Mandate should indicate that he was aware of the need to pin down general principles in specific and detailed terms. He bemoaned the watering down of their draft by the Chairman of the Union's Executive Committee, Lord Robert Cecil, until it was so vague that King Leopold could have signed it in all honesty. He had hoped that their draft would have been urged on the representatives to the League by the Liberals and Socialists of Europe but he discovered when even Charles Roberts, the president of the Anti-Slavery Society,

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14. Leys to Murray, 30.10.1920, op. cit.

wrote a vague draft, that Liberal opinion in Europe was not yet ready to struggle for concessions against big capitalists.

In its current form, Leys wrote, the League was simply a means by which the lords of industry and finance could continue to exploit the riches of the weak tropical nations. Although the terms of the Covenant - self-determination, treating the wealth of the dependencies as the property of the inhabitants - were just, they were unlikely to be fulfilled until the capitalists were overthrown by a Socialist revolution in Europe. Despite the League, imperial rivalry and exploitation would continue.[15] The creation of a Socialist International was, regrettably, distant.

Leys had hoped that each mandated territory would be divided into tribal provinces, each to have within two years its own government, though its form was definitely not to be based on a revival of chief-ridden autocracies. These provinces would eventually unite. Before the stage of 'national' government was reached, a European resident would advise each province; his power of veto could be over-ridden by appeal to the mandatory power and lastly to the Commission of the League. This scheme would avoid making the tribal governments dependents of the mandatories. All adults would have as much free land as they could cultivate. There would be no compelled labour and within fifteen years each village would have a school. The mandatory government would co-operate with the native government in organising trade and industry. Leys was particularly afraid that the other committee members

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15. Leys, N., "The Tropics and the League of Nations", The Socialist Review, January-March, 1921, p.68-78.

would view these proposals as the description of a "sentimentalist's Utopia"; for this reason he wished to shield them from the comments of 'opponents', such as Sir Robert Hamilton, formerly Chief Justice of Kenya, who believed that significant reform could be accomplished by making trifling amendments to the established order.[16] Preferring to tell his fellow committee members what to believe, Leys evidently had little faith in the strength of their convictions.

Leys' association with Harris also included channelling information and opinions into the Anti-Slavery Society of which Harris was secretary. Since the 1830s the Society had been one of the most active humanitarian groups arousing public opinion and protesting to the Colonial Office and through Parliament in support of African rights. Its ideals indicate the greater faith in British culture of the mid-Victorians. Initially the Society had proposed that the solution of the problem of the exploitation of Africa would lie primarily in the application of British justice and early Christian ideals: abuses of power must be curbed. Africans were believed to submit willingly to British rule when it was just because they recognised its superiority.[17] Ideally, African institutions and society would become more and more European in the future.

The parallels with some aspects of Leys' thought are clear. He believed in the 'civilising mission', in the superiority of European culture. He was so frustrated by the weak exercise of the Trust precisely because he valued the

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16. Leys to Leonard Woolf, 21.7.1920, Leonard Woolf Papers, Box 63, Sussex University Library.

17. See Leys on the Masai, chapter 4, p.125.

benefits of European culture so highly. However, both Leys and Harris in a sense bridged the gap between earlier humanitarian groups such as the Anti-Slavery Society and Exeter Hall and later Socialist groups which stressed the welfare and development needs of the tropical dependencies; they attempted to reform the system, though not to inject large sums of European capital, and not simply to curb European abuses as earlier groups had been content to do. Most important, they supported the West African 'system' of encouraging the development of peasant agriculture; by applying this scheme to settler-dominated colonies, they were in effect presaging the 1923 declaration of the paramountcy of African interests. After working in the Congo Reform Association, Harris had adopted many of E. D. Morel's ideas and advocated a policy of reform based on the development of peasant cultivation of their own land; land should be alienated only in accordance with customary laws. Morel had stressed that African wage earners on land owned by concessionaires were effectively slaves because they had no power to bargain for wages or better working conditions. Leys and Ross shared this belief and made frequent reference to it in their writings.

Leys and Harris agreed on the need to find reliable correspondents in Africa who could relay fresh, first-hand knowledge and so give greater impact to the parliamentary questions and communications to the Colonial Office devised by the Society. These communications frequently concerned such excesses in East Africa as flogging, the forced labour of children and the prohibition of certain dances. Despite Harris's more active interpretation of trusteeship, issues

such as taxation were often avoided on the grounds that they were matters for government alone to decide. Harris and Leys also disagreed on the issue of indirect rule but this conflict was no barrier to their collaboration; Leys undoubtedly admired Harris' work, particularly his earlier attempt to secure recognition of African land rights and to end Chartered Company rule in Southern Rhodesia.[18]

One of the most influential humanitarians of the inter-war years was J. H. Oldham, secretary of the International Missionary Council. Leys was involved with Oldham on two issues - the protest against Labour Circular No. 1 and the Native Authority Ordinance in 1920 and lobbying for the appointment of a royal commission - and split with him on a third issue - the question of the most suitable education for Africans in Kenya. The length of their collaboration is perhaps more remarkable than its demise for the temperament of the two men and their methods were quite different. Leys would accept nothing less than the application of the Gospel to politics in the form of a positive political and industrial policy which gave Africans equal rights with Europeans whereas Oldham was willing to compromise with political realities, such as settler attitudes, in order to reconcile differing

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18. Rachel Whitehead, "The Aborigines' Protection Society and the Safeguarding of African Interests in Rhodesia 1889-1930", uncompleted Cambridge thesis. I am grateful to Professor R. E. Robinson for bringing this thesis to my attention.

George V resigned from the Society in 1910 in reaction against a pamphlet on South Africa, because he objected to being the patron of a political organisation.

parties and achieve peaceful and moderate change.

Leys accused Oldham of trying to reconcile incompatible views; Oldham emphasised the need for consensus and refused to alienate potential allies, including the settlers who, he believed, must be encouraged to become tolerant towards Africans. Leys countered that there would be no real change in settler attitudes unless the economic system underwent a revolutionary change. Oldham hoped to bring about reforms gradually through presenting carefully researched facts to Colonial Office officials, but only in cases of absolute certainty and necessity, so as to gain their confidence. A harsh manner and rigid mind might alienate these and other influential men whose disparate views Oldham tried to forge into a consensus; it was far better gently but insistently to let one's point of view permeate others' minds. Leys would not have argued against this manner as he was aware of his own tendency to be censorious, to "climb into the pulpit", but he felt that Oldham gave too much importance to men of influence who by virtue of the attitudes of their class and their economic interests were not likely to be true friends of the African. He believed that a disinterested investigation of the facts was impossible; politics and economic self-interest permeated all goals and methods. For this reason, the Trust must always reside in Britain, where people would without a doubt choose the right course if they were simply able to lay the facts beside their consciences.

By 1926 Oldham had given up hope of reform stemming from Downing Street, believing that

"for better or worse, the local European community

> will shape the course of events. Our real task is to give that community every possible help towards taking the long view, which is one that takes full account of the claims of natives as well as of the whites."[19]

Oldham had not lived and worked in Africa. As a result, he appears to have imagined Africans in a passive role, even in the future; they were in a sense pawns to be protected by Europeans from European abuse, to be helped to become as prosperous as they were capable of becoming. Leys, on the other hand, throughout his career acknowledged Africans as active beings with the right and capability to make independent choices, even if that meant rebellion. Archdeacon Owen, also with many years in Africa, reminded Oldham that "the real safeguards of native interests will ultimately be found in Africans themselves".[20] Oldham's worst fault, in Leys' eyes, was his belief in inherent differences between the races.

Despite these ultimately crucial disparities, the two men had joined forces in 1918; Oldham had asked to meet Leys because he was impressed with his letter to the Colonial Secretary and invited him to write an article for his journal, The International Review of Missions. Leys appears to have been acutely sensitive to criticism and when Oldham suggested revisions in this article, accused him of pandering to public sensitivities, "adapting the facts of the world for mission study".[21] Although seven years later the tone of their correspondence had become bitter, they had initially, and to some

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19. J. H. Oldham to Archdeacon Owen, July 6, 1926, Box 241, E.H.

20. Owen to Oldham, 8.8.1926, ibid.

21. Leys to Oldham, 5.2.1919, Box 248, E.H.

extent continued, to admire one another: Leys valued the many concrete accomplishments of Oldham; Oldham felt that Leys possessed the gift of awakening imaginations, as he had done with Kenya, a book he admired. His imagination had probably been stimulated by the intensity of Leys' vision of the evils in Kenya and by the vitality of the New Testament in his proposed remedies. Early in his association with Leys, in 1920 and 1921, Oldham spoke of rallying public opinion and agitating for reform - threatening, for example, to provoke agitation reminiscent of that over Chinese labour on the Rand in 1905; he may have adopted these means from Leys, though he later, for the most part, discarded them. In later years Oldham saw more and more the need for accommodation and 'scientific' research, while Leys' ideas changed little.

Ross was another of the many old Kenya hands from whom Oldham gathered information about Kenya before turning to his more 'scientific' methods. On leave from Kenya in 1920, Ross was interviewed by Oldham on the labour question, describing the power of the 'get rich quick' settlers, the victimisation of pro-native officials and the political apathy of most missionaries. Two years later, at the height of the 'Indian Question', Oldham arranged a meeting between Ross and Lord Lugard. Ross shocked Lugard with his revelations regarding, for example, the rise in native taxation while the Europeans continued to evade an income tax. Both Oldham and Lugard were favourably impressed by him; Oldham urged Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to interview him ~~as well~~ on the 'Indian Question', and on taxation and the settlers' legislative power as well. During the Indian controversy, Ross urged

reversion to Crown Colony government with a nominated rather than an elected council, declaring that a large minority of settlers - and especially the merchants, "so fed up with stoppage of business and restraint of trade by these alarms and excursions" - would welcome such a change so long as it was firmly imposed.[22] In later years, Ross continued to pass on to Oldham information which he was receiving from Kenya and from officials home on leave: of continued land-grabbing despite labour shortages, inordinate taxation of Africans, the conscript European Defence Force.

Much of Leys' correspondence with Oldham concerns his disappointment with religious leaders and teachers who had failed to relate Jesus' programme to the facts: the Pharisees among ecclesiastical authorities and Christian workers with a "deficient sense of truthfulness".[23] The intensity of his expression was due in part to his frustration and impatience with those who failed to see that a plan for 'the right' did exist, in Christ's teaching: "the right course is too simple for compromisers to believe in."[24] By applying Christ's plan to Kenya, Leys hoped to redeem his own life from failure. It is not surprising, then, that he had such exalted hopes for a royal commission - "the whole future of tropical Africa hangs on this commission"[25] - and hoped that through the 1924 commission his book might have induced a change in policy. Despondent when the Ormsby-Gore Commission supported the

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22. Ross to Oldham, 30.5.1923, Box 247, E.H.
23. ibid., 7.2.1919.
24. ibid., 3.3.1925.
25. ibid., 3.7.1924.

association of the settlers in the Trust, he called the report a "pitiful tragedy" and wished that he had taken no part in the affair.[26]

Leys and Oldham had agreed that it was futile to attempt to protect the African from exploitation. The problem must be attacked from a wider base than simply a complaint against forced labour; African political responsibility, economic advance and education must be the focus of a thorough investigation. They hoped that a commission would examine the whole system and lay down the exact course of East African native policy for many years to come. As Oldham wrote to Ramsay MacDonald in 1920 when he was trying to rally support for such a commission:

> "we have got either to take our professions about 'a sacred trust of civilisation' seriously and translate them into practice or else drop this kind of talk as mere cant and humbug."[27]

Yet even within their small sphere of agreement, they disagreed; Oldham was anxious to avoid politics and Leys did not believe that it was possible to divorce the political elements from the issue. For this reason Leys hoped for a commission containing representatives of every political party and religious group in the country. Oldham opposed this suggestion because he felt that it emphasised preconceptions at the expense of a disinterested investigation. When Leys urged Oldham to collect evidence from 'men on the spot' in order to prove his points over a wide area, he undoubtedly already had in mind the points which he wished to

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26. ibid., 25.4.1925.

27. Oldham to Ramsay MacDonald, 18.11.1920, Box 238, E.H.

find the facts to prove.

Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, refused to appoint a commission in 1920 in response to a petition "Labour in African and the Principles of Trusteeship", drawn up by Oldham and signed by 69 influential public figures; the petition and the following two memoranda prepared and presented to the Colonial Office by Oldham were based on great files of missionary correspondence from Kenya on the effect of the labour laws. Although Churchill avoided a discussion of general policy, he did respond to Oldham's third memorandum and forbade compulsory labour for private employers, ordering officials to take no part in recruiting, except for essential services. In 1922 he recalled Northey and appointed Robert Coryndon as Governor. These concessions mark the first victory for humanitarian protest.

A fifteen-member commission, appointed in 1924, which included Oldham, was disbanded after the General Election and replaced by the three member Ormsby-Gore Commission whose field of enquiry included no "fundamental causes" of the Kenya situation; rather, it was "really pushed by Lancashire who want a big cotton programme in Uganda, Tanganyika and Nyasaland"[28] and conducted no rigorous investigation of current opinion in East Africa. The Hilton Young Commission of 1929 was the first royal commission to fulfil thoroughly the terms of reference on which Leys and Oldham had been working since 1920.

Leys complained that the Ormsby-Gore Commission had

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28. Ormsby-Gore to Coryndon, 5.5.1924, Coryndon Papers, 4/1/94-97, Rhodes House.

written "an official apologia" because its members had not bothered to hear evidence from indepndent Africans. He was particularly scornful of Major A. Church's contribution because, as the Labour Party member, he ought to have attacked the Dual Policy, which simply obligated the African to work to develop both the plantations and the reserves. Leys thoroughly alienated Church through sustained attacks in the Labour Party Advisory Committee. F. C. Linfield, the Liberal member of the Commission, on the other hand, had expressed in a supplementary memorandum views which were in close sympathy with Leys': he questioned whether there were enough Africans to provide an adequate labour force for the Colony's development on its present lines; he preferred to civilise Africans by the improvement of tribal systems rather than by contact with Europeans; and urged a more equitable investment of African tax revenue in African areas as well as the taxation of undeveloped European land.

Ormsby-Gore and Church primarily stressed the need to develop transport facilities and suggested that an Imperial loan be granted for that purpose. Improved services for Africans within the reserves would be paid for by taxation on increased African production.

> "The dual policy of increasing the quantity and quality of production on the native lands pari passu with the development of European cultivation is accordingly necessary, if only on financial grounds."[29]

The report failed to specify what would be the chief stimulus

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29. Cmd. 2387, Report of the East Africa Commission, April 1925, p.181.

to increase native production or whether there was sufficient labour to develop both the reserves and the plantations. However, the praise given to the settlers by the Commissioners greatly increased their respectability; they were called "pioneers" who would found a distinctive type of British civilisation based on "a more complete inter-relationship and co-operation between the European and the African than exists in either the South or the West of the continent". The settlers themselves, desired reform and must not be discouraged by ill-informed criticism from home. They must share the work of trusteeship with the Imperial government. "By his education and his moral and intellectual development and his command over natural forces", the European would lead the African to a higher stage of civilisation for the greater welfare of the entire Kenya community. The Commissioners dismissed virtually all conflicts of European and African interests and by so doing failed in Leys' view, to realise that in the existing economic system the settlers would be bogus trustees.

In 1921 Oldham agreed with Leys on this point and did not accept the inevitability of an unofficial majority on the Kenya Legislative Council as he did in 1926:

> "If (the trust) is left to the local government it will inevitably be decided in the interests of that section of the community on a long view by no means the most important - which at present is alone articulate and has influence with the government... (conflicts) will be decided against the interests of the whole which are the real and ultimate interests of the Empire."[30]

By giving the "whole" greater importance than the native wards of the Imperial trust, Oldham indicated the seeds of his

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30. Oldham to Leys, June 2, 1921, Box 248, E.H.

later advocacy of the Dual Policy which Leys firmly opposed. By 1925 Oldham was defending the Ormsby-Gore Commission's advocacy of the Dual Policy to Leys as "practical politics". The threatened insurrection of the settlers two years earlier and the government's unwillingness to send troops against them had undoubtedly convinced him that at all costs the settlers must not be antagonised, as they had been, for example, by Leys' book. For this reason Ormsby-Gore was justified in appearing as a champion of the settlers and in attacking Leys' book "if it creates a more favourable atmosphere for an attempt by the Government to give effect to the policy you advocate or as much of it as they can".[31] While Leys advocated change "with a minimum of violent resistance on the part of local Europeans",[32] Oldham feared that such a clash would drive Kenya into an alliance with South Africa and Rhodesia: "we are consequently thrown back on methods of reform that the opinion of the white community will support."[33]

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31. ibid., 9.3.1925.

32. Leys to Oldham, 26.2.1925, ibid.

33. Oldham to Leys, 3.2.1925, ibid.
Both Lord Delamere and Rhodes made the same warning: "The only question is whether our colonies will emerge into ultimate control of their destiny embittered by policies forced upon them and by the attacks of political enemies in England, or whether they will build up a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the native population living next to them in a calm atmosphere where their own future is secure." (Delamere quoted in R. G. Gregory's Sidney Webb and East Africa, op. cit., p.67.)
Similarly, Rhodes attacked those who criticised his 1892 war against the Ndebele: "It is such conduct that alienates colonists from the mother country. We ask for nothing, for neither men nor money and still a certain portion vilify us. In the same spirit it was that the mother country lost America."
(S. G. Millin, Rhodes, op. cit., p.198)

This pragmatism so angered Leys that he called Oldham a coward whose use of acceptable words like 'trusteeship' legitimised the existing system and made him an "enemy of justice".[34]

Until taking his place as a vital member of the Hilton Young Commission, Oldham devoted his energies to setting up various institutions which would research aspects of African life, as, for example, the International Institute of African Languages and Culture, and provide the basis for co-operation between colonial governments and missions in education, which the Advisory Committee on Education was set up to do in 1924. These pieces of "efficient machinery" for planning and procuring unbiased and apolitical facts were partly intended to invigorate the missionary movement by creating greater understanding and tolerance for African customs and ensuring that the mission schools were not replaced by secular state institutions.

Both Oldham and Leys believed that education had a liberating quality. However, whereas Oldham wanted to give the African the educational and professional tools with which to liberate himself from blind economic forces, Leys sought as well the reform of those forces. The two men also differed on the nature of the education which would best serve the interests of Africans. Since visiting Hampton Institute (Virginia) in 1912 in the company of his brother-in-law, the educator A. G. Fraser, Oldham had been impressed with the 'industrial' education for black Americans pioneered there and at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. This system

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34. Leys to Oldham, op. cit., 4.10.1925.

was geared to accommodate black aspirations to the political and economic realities of a white dominated society and to train young blacks to serve the basic needs, as determined by whites, of their own rural communities. Because youthful energies would be channelled back to these communities, it was hoped that the growth of proletarian unrest could be prevented; the 'good' black man would not be contaminated by such radical doctrines as W. E. B. Dubois' Pan-Africanism or Garveyism. Certainly, competition between blacks and whites would be avoided by such a differentiated system of education.[35]

Leys fiercely denounced the attempt to apply this American system to Kenya as suggested by the Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924. A Jeanes School based on the above principles was established at Kabete in 1924 to train teachers in community and rural development. Oldham had been largely responsible for the adoption of 'Phelps-Stokesism' by the Colonial Office Advisory Committee on African Education. In letters to the Manchester Guardian and the Scots Observer, Leys retaliated against the Commission's proposals and Oldham's collusion. It was shameful, he wrote, though in the long run impossible, to prevent Africans from acquiring "the knowledge that has enabled Europeans to subjugate them and to conquer the world of nature".[36] The new plan, supported by Oldham, for the government subsidy of one-half of the costs of the mission schools would simply allow them to be controlled in the interests of whites. "Is it mere accident", he asked, "that

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35. King, K. J., Pan-Africanism and Education, Oxford, 1971.

36. Leys to editor of Manchester Guardian, October 26, 1926.

the working class in England began to demand the franchise at the same time as free and compulsory education enabled the poorest to read the New Testament?"[37] He believed that 'literary' education not only created a demand for the franchise but was the means of creating men who deserved to possess it.

Leys was so concerned about the liberating influence of education that in 1918 he had wished to return to East Africa to organise the educational system there. It is not surprising that he was incensed at the suggestion of differentiated education as he had long looked to the young products of missions as the leaders of tomorrow and as he believed that the energies released by mission teaching were more potent generators of change than any individual, however powerful, could ever be:

> "The reason why Christian missions matter more than armies of any Alexander or Napoleon is that they light these fires, release energies that no man or group of men can create or control. At the moment, in East Africa, these fires and energies are breaking out and spreading. It is folly to fancy that they can be controlled. It is not for us to fix a course for events to take and shape them to our will."[38]

Knowledge was quite simply the best defence against oppression. The greatest enemies of Africans - greater even than the rich who forced them to labour for their own profit - were those who wanted to protect them from this awareness of liberty.

Oldham summed up his differences with Leys as follows:

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37. Leys, N., "Christianity and Race: A New Policy for Missions", Scots Observer, 13.11.1926, p.4.

38. Leys to Oldham, 22.8.1921, Box 248, E.H.

> "You are thinking in terms of the ultimate issue. I am occupied at the moment with the question what particular thing can be done at the present moment which will help to decide that issue in the way we want."[39]

Despite the similarity of their ultimate goals - self-government to be granted only when Africans were given a share in it - their efforts as collaboration were fruitless. This failure indicates two weaknesses which hampered Leys' effectiveness as a reformer: his concern that one particular path should be followed and his equation of compromise with cowardice often irritated and sometimes alienated his potential allies; he relied on a single mode of initiating change - through the pressure of informed opinion on Parliament - and demanded an immediate revolution in policy. Oldham's institutions were more effective in the long run in moulding fresh and informed attitudes to Africa. A country doctor did not have the time, money, prestige or range of contacts to build such institutions as did this "missionary statesman". However, Leys probably would not have had the inclination to do so as the pace of change they encouraged was too gradual to satisfy him.

The correspondence between the two men indicates that Leys rather than Oldham had been a major initiator of the idea, though not the rhetoric, of the paramountcy of African interests in Kenya. Oldham was skilled as an organiser and go-between partly because he elevated compromise above the need to achieve any particular proposal. Leys had not taken his stand for equal rights, eventually adopted in Imperial statements of policy, as a means of reconciling conflicting

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39. Oldham to Leys, 24.6.1925, Box 248, E.H.

claims - as Oldham's suggestion of the rhetoric of paramountcy was designed to do in 1923 - but because he believed it was the only just course. In accord with such left-wing movements as the I.L.P., he opposed the importation of capitalist competition and social hierarchy into Kenya. In short, unlike Oldham, his stand for the paramountcy of African rather than European interests was part of a particular ideological commitment; in one form or another he had been publicly urging its application in Kenya since the Masai move.

Just as Leys' reactions to the Ormsby-Gore Commission and its report had been extreme, so were his hopes for reform under a Labour government and his profound disappointment at its failure. In 1921 he had become an active member of the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions but resigned after ten years of supplying it with memoranda because he believed that Labour ministers and the Committee itself had sacrificed the party's pledges in the face of settler opposition. The men whom the 1929-1931 Labour government had appointed to govern in Africa had shown no faith in the party's policies and as a result the Labour government had left no mark on colonial policy. Leys disposed of the two Labour White Papers and the commission appointed by the Labour government as virtually worthless: piecemeal reform was futile; only the complete eradication of legal and administrative discrimination would forestall the violent African upheaval which was looming closer. The two crucial prerequisites for reform were the determination of a Labour government to make a radical break with past policy and the appointment of strong governors to carry out those

reforms.[40]

Leys' condemnation of Labour policy and the Advisory Committee was sweeping and embittered. Yet he was not alone in feeling that the party had failed to live up to its principles of social justice throughout the Empire, to affirm the policy of 'African paramountcy' which it had articulated in its two White Papers of 1930. The Colonial Secretary, Sidney Webb, who entered the House of Lords as Lord Passfield, was personally more interested in problems of domestic socialism; in that field his famous slogan was the "inevitability of gradualness". Although he upheld the Imperial trust and racial equality in his White Papers, he allowed both to be submitted to a Joint Select Committee on which Conservatives outnumbered Labourites by three to two. The Committee subsequently diluted his proposals - rejecting a common roll, leaving open the question of African political development, and failing to change the composition of the Legislative Council - and gave 'African paramountcy' a weak, negative definition. After Sir Edward Grigg, the staunchly pro-European governor, departed from Kenya, Passfield, instead of planning a vigorous application of his native policy, simply instructed Grigg's successor, Sir Joseph Byrne, to give effect to its terms.

Leonard Woolf, secretary of the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, was as exasperated as Leys and Ross by what he felt was Passfield's lack of decisive leadership; in several confrontations with Passfield, he found that his

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40. Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, Memoranda 89 and 99, Transport House.

complaints against, in 1930, for example, budgetary discrimination in favour of Europeans, were futile. This imperviousness to the earnest representations of more radical reformers was attributed by Passfield's own Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Dr. Drummond Shiels, to his uncritical acceptance of the judgements of 'experts'. He preferred to ignore the younger men who looked to the Labour government for vigorous leadership in a new policy. Passfield did not even attend the meetings of the Advisory Committee, a body which consequently exercised more influence on Labour policy when Labour was out of office.

Woolf assessed the chief impact of the Committee as 'educative'; it spread knowledge of the "urgent need for revolutionary reform so that there would be a rapid and orderly transition from imperialist rule to self-government" and so contributed to Arthur Creech Jones' opportunity to begin moves toward decolonisation after World War Two.[41] By 1929 the Labour Party had been issuing, through its advisory committees, applications of Socialist solutions to imperial problems for over a decade. Generally, however, the proposals had little reference to or effect on prevailing political concepts or realities, although in 1917 they did spur the idea for a mandates system under the League of Nations by proposing that all tropical Africa between the Sahara and the Zambesi should be transferred to the League and administered as a single, independent African state.[42] Two important

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41. Woolf, Leonard, Downhill All the Way, New York, 1967, p. 237.

42. See Henderson, Ian, "The Attitude and Policy of the Main Sections of the British Labour Movement to Imperial Issues 1899-1924", Oxford, B.Litt. thesis, 1964.

pamphlets, "Labour and the Empire: Africa" (1926) and "Labour and the Nation" (1928) drew more realistic outlines for an imperial policy than earlier declarations, which were made when the likelihood of a majority Labour government had been more remote. The rhetoric supporting universal elementary education, African co-operatives, a common roll, African land rights, equal rights and eventual self-government raised the hopes of all reformers only to send them crashing down in 1931 when the exigencies of the East African situation proved capable of moulding the practice even of Labour policy.

In the twenties the chief issues concerning Kenya's political future were these: the grant of an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council so that the settlers would effectively be responsible for their own government; the grant of a common roll which by applying the same qualifications to all communities would probably one day result in a majority of Indian and then African voters, as opposed to a communal roll which would maintain European dominance: whether the powers of a High Commissioner within an East and Central African Federation would be limited to economic co-ordination or extend to native policy. The settlers were chafing under the expensive system of 'state socialism' maintained by the Imperial government and wished to progress towards self-government, particularly before a Labour government came to power in Britain which would try to assert the doctrine of 'African paramountcy'.

A possible solution to this problem lay in the creation of a 'Great White Dominion', an idea urged on L. S. Amery, Secretary of State for the Colonies, by Sir Edward Grigg.

Grigg's Legislative Council in 1926 was filled with men elected on a platform demanding a European elected majority and some scheme of co-ordination of common services throughout East Africa. The business community there was particularly anxious for some form of closer union which would share a common tariff, programme for railway construction, commercial legislation and provide stable conditions for trade and development. Three conferences of 'unofficials' were held in 1926 and 1927 at the instigation of Lord Delamere who at the time hoped to stimulate enthusiasm for his dream of a Central African Dominion, "the solidification of the white ideal" against the threat of a spreading West Coast policy.[43] As Ross expressed settler goals, federation was regarded as a "supposed shortcut" to a majority of elected European members on the Legislative Council.[44] In the settlers' minds the two issues - federation and an official majority - were inseparable. Grigg believed that an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council would be a just and inevitable concession to the settlers' demand for greater control of their own affairs; the Governor of Kenya would, he hoped, be the central authority in East Africa to co-ordinate services and policy and so to preserve white domination of a union.

In 1927, Amery proposed to the Cabinet the effective surrender of Trust duties in East Africa. He believed that the settlers must be associated in the Trust by the grant of

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43. Huxley, Elspeth, White Man's Country, Volume II, (op. cit.) p.204.

44. Memorandum to the Joint Select Committee on Closer Union by W. McGregor Ross, April, 1931, Webb Papers, 4/2/ ff.104-143, L.S.E.

an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council and by allowing European unofficial members to be responsible for the administration of government departments. He had hoped by rapidly transferring responsibility for native administration to the settlers to avoid driving them into rebellion against too strict Imperial control and then into extreme policies of discrimination. The power of the settlers was so great that the Imperial government could govern only with their co-operation; as their demands for increased power were growing, it was inevitable that they be granted.

Because such a large and vocal body of pro-African opinion had grown in Britain and been focussed on Kenya - largely due to the propagandising efforts of Leys and Ross - the Cabinet feared that the adoption of Amery's proposals would simply result in political suicide for the Conservatives. Ormsby-Gore, in particular, warned that the proposals would provoke a fearful outcry in Parliament. The power of the Labour Party - into which Leys and Ross and other reformers had been pouring their ideas on Africa - was an increasing threat to the Baldwin government. As a result, the government omitted from the instructions to the (Hilton Young) Commission on Closer Union Amery's proposals to grant an unofficial majority and to allow the settlers to hold, in effect, ministerial positions. The threat of pro-native agitation had successfully thwarted Amery's intention to withdraw from Trust responsibilities in East Africa.[45]

Two other significant obstacles lay in the path of closer

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45. Professor R. E. Robinson in conversation.

union: Sir Donald Cameron, Governor of Tanganyika, and Germany. From the time of the first East African Governors' Conference held in Nairobi in 1926 Cameron had refused to compromise on the issue and so to sacrifice his carefully constructed policy of indirect administration in Tanganyika. His refusal had contributed to Amery's decision to send a commission to East Africa. Lord Lugard attributed Cameron's retention of his post despite his intransigence to the advent of the Labour Party, which would have loudly protested his dismissal.[46] The antagonism between Cameron and Grigg was evident in the memorandum which Cameron submitted to the Hilton Young Commission; he wrote, "Sir Edward Grigg has told me verbally that I shall destroy this 'dream' (of a Great White State) if I persist in present native policy in Tanganyika."[47] At the Colonial Office Cameron used the prestige of his accomplishments as a weapon against federation and threatened to resign if the plan were adopted. Then, in January 1931, Her Schnee, president of the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft, drew Passfield's attention to German disapproval of an East African union which would include the Tanganyika mandate.[48] Passfield was anxious that ill-feeling should be allayed and probably litigation before the Hague Court avoided by assuring the German government that nothing would be done outside the terms of the mandate so there would be no

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46. Perham, Margery, Lugard, Volume II, London, 1960, p.680

47. Evidence given by Sir Donald Cameron to the Hilton Young Commission, June 1927, CO 879/122, P.R.O.

48. Schnee to Passfield, 24.1.1931, Webb Papers, II/f.143, L.S.E.

federation or appointment of a Governor-General.[49]

The report did not in any sense fulfil Amery's hopes. Only one of the four members, the chairman, sympathised with the settlers' demands and he was left to describe them in a minority report.[50] In striving to reconcile the Imperial Trust with the need to provide scope for the political energies of the immigrants, the report suggested the full development of institutions of local and municipal government which could eventually be more closely associated with the powers and duties of the strong High Commissioner. The communities would be segregated politically for the foreseeable future and would develop parallel to each other. There would be no common roll unless it were supported by all communities in Kenya. In short, the settlers were not to be granted an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council, their sine qua non for accepting federation, unless the representatives of African interests were increased and protected by the powers of a strong High Commissioner. The Imperial government was to retain a firm control of the Trust throughout East Africa. The immigrants could claim with justice only partnership, not control.

The section regarding native policy may owe a great deal to the earlier debates between Oldham and Leys and to the information which Leys had given to Oldham. The principles

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49. Webb Papers, ibid., f.277.

50. Col. C. W. G. Walker to Grigg, 26.9.1928, Walker Papers, 3/4, Rhodes House.
Hilton Young had hoped to get through a report which would give the settlers a great deal even if they were at first compelled to go slowly and accept less significant concessions.

which the report laid down - and even the broad terms of reference which its members formed independently of their instructions - were at least in agreement with those that Leys had begun to urge on Oldham in 1920. Native interests were declared to be an end in themselves, not accessories to those of the immigrant communities. For this reason the primary duty of government was to devote all available resources to assisting Africans to develop; immigrant needs should be protected but they were not the government's first charge: an even balance must be struck between native and non-native interests. Africans were to receive secure title to adequate land on which they would be free to earn their living; they would not be compelled to work for Europeans. The inadequate return of African taxation in services for African development, a point introduced and long stressed by Leys, would be redressed by government aid to African production and marketing. From 1929, then, the Dual Policy would, at least in theory, be applied to African economic development, as Leys had long urged.

Many critics of colonial policy, including Ross and Lord Olivier, welcomed the report, but Leys was almost entirely critical; he found it "fatally ambiguous and vague."[51] The granting of an unofficial majority could prove to be a disastrous step towards settler self-government despite the presence of safeguards and the common roll should be established immediately, not posed as an ideal eventually to be attained with the consent of all local communities. He therefore drafted six specific steps which he hoped the

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51. Leys to Harris, 11.8.1929, A.P.S., G145, Rhodes House.

Labour Party would, through the Colonial Office, force the government of Kenya to take: the immediate announcement of a policy of equal rights to be achieved through the extension of European privileges to all; a common franchise for all passing a 'civilisation test'; the preparation of schemes of settlement for Africans wishing to hold Crown land on the same terms as Europeans; permission for Africans to grow coffee; future railways to be built near settled areas and not more than one-third of the funds allocated by the Imperial Exchequer to be spent on European areas; the rich to be taxed according to their wealth.[52]

Yet this 'downright' method of effecting radical change had one drawback: the settlers could have retaliated by declaring their independence from Britain. Fear of settler rebellion did modify Colonial Office policy; in his Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa, Lord Passfield stressed that inter-racial equality and the common roll were ultimate aims of policy but he admitted, in effect, that he did not see how they could be attained given the current colonial realities; so, to evade personal responsibility for effecting them, he submitted the White Paper to a parliamentary committee. John Harris had led a deputation to the Colonial Office in November 1929 requesting support for a common roll and an end to the colour bar, points also drawn up by C. R. Buxton for the Labour Party and directly based on Leys' above six proposals. Passfield assured Harris that he accepted the principles and that they would find a place in the government's statement

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52. ibid., 9.8.1929.

on future policy, but when the common roll was proposed to the Joint Select Committee it was voted down by the Conservative members. Perhaps, with a view on Rhodesia's successful declaration of independence in 1965, it was in the long run wiser not to follow Leys' course, but to allow Kenya's peaceful development within the loose strictures set down by the Imperial government.

Leys had probably foreseen that Oldham, the great compromiser, would elevate the principle of partnership above that of equal rights. In a memorandum which he had submitted to the Commission in 1927, he warned that the Trust must not be shared, that the duty of the Imperial government was to educate their wards for self-government: an unofficial majority must be granted only if educated Africans were enfranchised on a common roll. He summarised the fundamental elements behind his perspective on Kenya, with a rare but significant reference to South Africa, which led him to urge this policy:

> "the deliberate abrogation of (the basic principles of British policy) by the Europeans of South Africa; the admiration of South African policy professed by most of the Europeans in Eastern Africa and by some of its high officials; the certainty of the spread to East Africa of the nationalist movement already begun in South Africa; the nearly universal influence in the whole area of a system of education that is based on a book that teaches that the servant is the superior of the master and that national and racial differences are unimportant or non-existent."[53]

He opposed the Dual Policy only because he believed it would be fraudulent in practice; the settlers did not intend to fulfil Rhodes' dictum of equal rights for all civilised men.

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53. Memorandum submitted to the East Africa Commission on Closer Union by Dr. Norman Leys, 24.11.1927, CO 879/122, P.R.O.

Neither did he agree with the phrase 'the paramountcy of African interests': "Professing to give more than equal justice, we give less."[54] He was not opposed to the creation of native states side by side with areas in which Europeans had local control. He did oppose the sharing of the Trust with the settlers.

Amery's plans for federation had been shattered by the report. He tried to salvage them by sending Sir Samuel Wilson, his Permanent Under-Secretary of State, to East Africa to secure a workable modification. The settlers were well pleased with Wilson's visit as they were able to reach a compromise: they would be given an unofficial, though nominated, majority on the Legislative Council; Wilson agreed to restrict the central authority to co-ordination of economic services, that is, no High Commissioner would intervene in native policies. By so doing, he "re-established (among the settlers) confidence in the fairness of the Imperial Government which, before his visit, had really ceased to exist". Wilson was dismayed at the effect which Oldham's and Lugard's lobbying against his report had had on its reception in Britain. Largely because of the press campaign conducted by those two men, a lively body of critical opinion had grown in Britain. As a result he was "regarded by these damned doctrinaires as the permanent official sent out by Amery and chloroformed by the settlers".[55] Before he could report,

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54. Leys, N., A Last Chance in Kenya, op. cit., p.138.

55. Wilson quoted in Perham, M., Lugard, vol.II, op. cit., p.691.

however, Labour had won the General Election and Lord Passfield was Colonial Secretary.

Passfield assured Grigg that he would implement Wilson's report and on this understanding, Grigg returned to Kenya. Grigg certainly would not have returned on the basis of the Hilton Young recommendations which he considered to be effectively a "coup d'etat to a local autocrat";[56] the High Commissioner, whose power was limited only by the Secretary of State; the report denied responsible government to Europeans until the black population could join them on equal terms, and restricted the Europeans' freedom to grwo economically and politically on their own lines. Later, in November 1929, Passfield attempted to work out a compromise between the Hilton Young and Wilson reports to submit to a Joint Select Committee; apparently, he intended to direct the replacement of four officials on the legislature by four nominated unofficial European representatives - in short, to end the official majority.

Leys resolved to convince the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions to submit to the Cabinet a strong statement against this proposal and was delighted that no-one on the Committee disputed his allegation that the grant of an unofficial majority would "work out in more evil than every good thing Lord P. or any other person can possibly do".[57] The memorandum which the Labour Party executive passed on to Passfield contained Leys' specific proposals as drafted by Buxton; and it reminded the Colonial Secretary of the Party's pledge, also based on a point long urged by Leys,

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56. Grigg to Passfield, n.d., Coryndon Papers, 16/3/f.26, Rhodes House.

57. Leys to Harris, 8.11.1929, A.P.S., G145, Rhodes House.

> "(to) instruct the governments of these countries to extend to their native inhabitants such rights as may already, as a result of legislative or administrative measures, have been acquired by Europeans."[58]

Leys also contrived to have Passfield bombarded with protests from other quarters. Oldham and Lugard, too, instigated men of eminence and goodwill to flood the Colonial Office with pro-African letters. Beatrice Webb dismissed these virtuous machinations in a letter to R. H. Tawney, "Tell Oldham it is useless to wire-pull an old-hand wire-puller, it arouses derision";[59] adding in her diaries, "the Left Wing (of the Labour Party) is in revolt - determined to have the blood of the settlers - to make them feel that they are beaten".[60]

Because Passfield was an "excellent civil servant",[61] it is difficult to find the basic principles which underlay his different approaches to the problems of Kenya: his willingness to compromise with the Wilson report, his subsequent strong statements in his two White Papers of 1930. The White Papers contained many of the points which Leys and Ross had long been urging: the Imperial government would retain its monopoly of the Trust and would provide Africans with additional benefits and exceptional safeguards of their rights; the Kenya government was to regard the active assistance of native production and marketing as its primary duty; no African land would ever be expropriated for any individual's

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58. Final Memorandum on the Situation in East Africa and the Wilson Report, A.C.I.Q. memo. No. 69A, November 1929, Transport House.

59. Webb, Beatrice, Diaries 1924-1932, London, 1956, p.224.

60. ibid., p.229.

61. ibid., p.230.

private profit; "the native should be effectively and economically free to work, in accordance with his own wishes, either in production in the reserves, or as an individual producer upon his own plot of land, or in employment for wages";[62] compulsory labour for public or tribal purposes would gradually disappear; the provision for African farmers of adequate rail and road access to markets must be a primary consideration of government; government spending in the reserves must be a fair return on what natives pay in taxes.

Grigg began an acrimonious correspondence with Passfield after he issued the White Papers. Even though Passfield agreed to submit both papers to a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament including representatives of all political parties, Grigg attacked him and his papers as "partisan", initiating a radical departure from all previous policy, applying in "a rapid and roughshod manner" the ideas of "zealous and militant (European) reformers" to a complex and difficult situation. Party bias would, Grigg informed Passfield, "work nothing but harm unless (future declarations) treat the welfare of the East African peoples, native and immigrant, as an inseparable whole".[63] The aggressive tone of Grigg's letters failed to provoke antagonistic or even disciplinary responses from Passfield who, although he did not back down on matters of policy, tried to mollify Grigg by saying that he had over-estimated the influence on his policies of the Labour Party's zeal for reform.

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62. Cmd. 3573, Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa, June 1930, p.12.

63. Grigg to Secretary of State, 30.5.1930, Webb Papers, IV/22/f.64, L.S.E.

The crucial question which had been answered in various ways since 1929 - whether the settlers were to receive an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council - was finally closed by the Joint Select Committee of 1931: there was to be no change in the composition of the Council. The closer union proposals had been dropped both because of the depression and because the settlers, realising that they would not be allowed majority representation on the Council and fearing that they would be swamped in a predominantly black federation, had dropped their support of the plan. The body of public opinion created by influential humanitarians such as Leys and Ross had forced the watering down of Amery's proposals; their ideas had permeated the commissions set up to examine the prospect of the Great White Dominion and so had helped to destroy it.

Fearing that the 'Jamaican' policy of equal rights would not be made safe in Kenya before the next General Election and that Kenya would then go the way of South Africa, Leys had submitted an extensive memorandum to the Joint Select Committee and hoped in addition to submit the manuscript of A Last Chance in Kenya as evidence. In his memorandum Leys stressed that direct taxation was the most important cause of African unrest, the most common topic in the conversation of the common people, a point that the three African delegates had failed to emphasise because two of them were employed as public servants. As always, Leys was disappointed by hard-won concessions. The Anti-Slavery Society had convinced Passfield of the need to hear African witnesses even though East African officials denied that it was possible to find

nine representatives of East African native opinion. The three from Kenya had stressed the need for elected African representatives on the Legislative Council. Although Leys agreed that this was necessary, he felt that African labourers would have been better witnesses and suggested that the next commission spend most of its time investigating the lives of workers and peasants; in the meantime, he would tell the commission "what I know Africans think".[64]

Fearing any constitutional change which could weaken Parliament's control of policy in Kenya, neither Ross nor Leys supported the appointment of a High Commissioner; in view of recent developments in communications Ross felt that it would be easier in the future for the Colonial Secretary to maintain tight control over policy and he feared that it would be difficult continually to secure outstanding men as High Commissioners. Unlike Leys, Ross suggested in his evidence to the commission the investigation of separate administration of African areas, a system "tantamount to the restoration of Protectorate status to regions under African occupation", and implied that those who opposed such a scheme feared that the settlers would be deprived of African subsidies.[65] The short-term remedy was to separate African and non-African finances and to allow local native councils increasing liberty in their own expenditure.

Ross urged that Africans should be nominated to the Legislative Council from a list of those regarded by Africans

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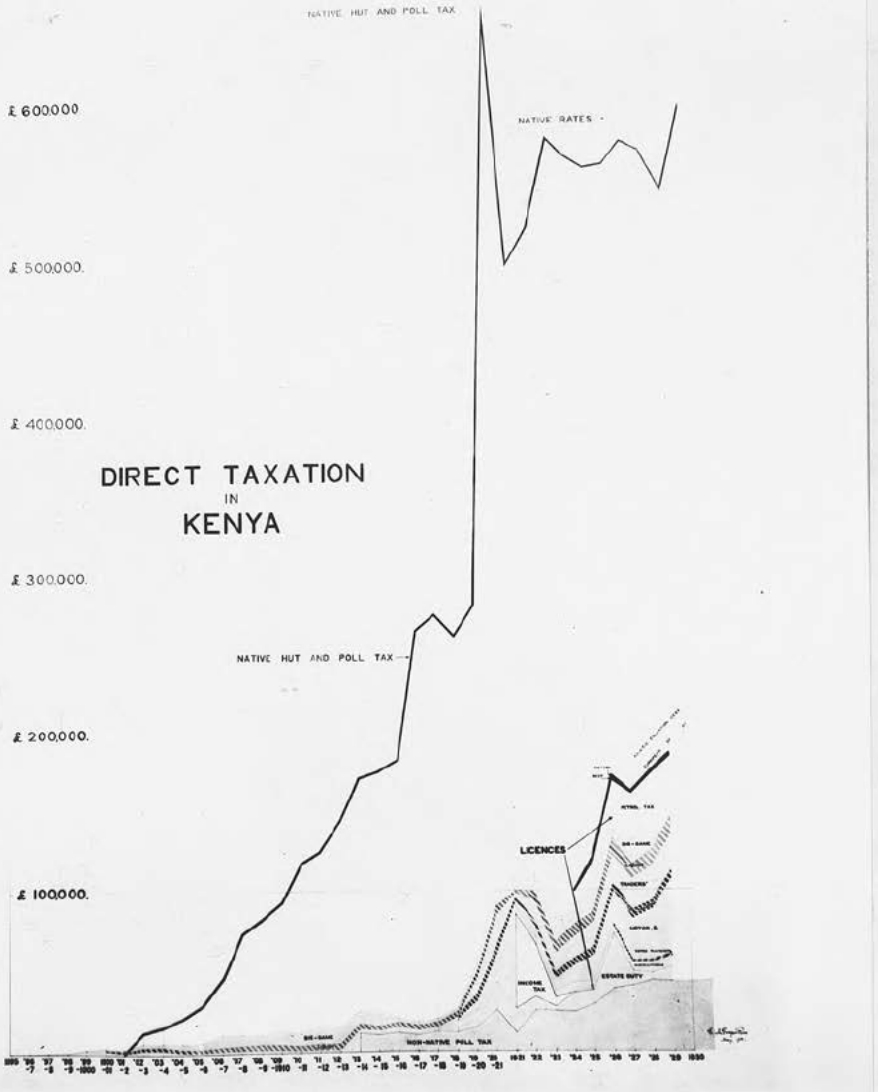
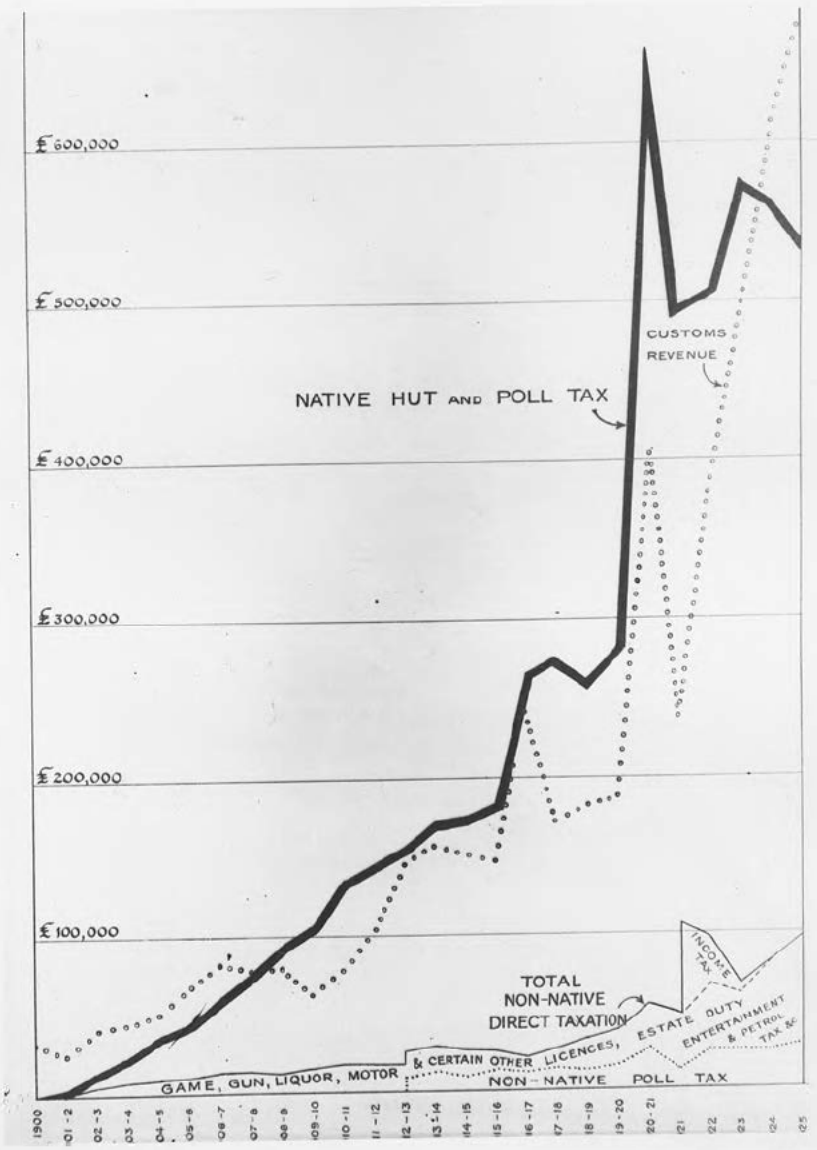
64. Leys, N., Memorandum for Joint Select Committee, 20.5.1931, Webb Papers, vo. 5, L.S.E.

65. Ross, W. M., Memorandum upon Issues Associated with Proposals for Closer Union in East Africa, 1931, Ross Papers, 4/2/ff.104-143.





Presented by Ross to the Joint Select Committee, May 1931.

as the most competent exponents of their hopes; there should be an equal number of Europeans and Africans on the legislature of which roughly half, including chiefs and headmen, would vote as officials. Many reformers feared the 'detribalised' as lawless, but many, like Ross, also saw in them the vanguard of tomorrow's Africa, who ought to be enfranchised on the basis of an education test and put on the common roll. Ross foresaw that Africans would gradually transfer themselves from the tribe to settled areas. On the other hand, the tribal system might prove to be so adaptable to modern conditions that the peasants could organise in communal enterprise with chiefs and headmen as heads of rural district councils and a paramount chief as 'president' of each tribe. In any case, African representation on the Legislative Council should develop from and not in competition to, representation on local and district native councils.

Referring to urban workers, Ross deplored the absence of any attempt to instruct Africans in the development of trade unions and workers' councils. Cheap, unorganised African labour harmed not only the African but also his European counterpart. The Labour Party feared that Africans would be used to depress the living standards of the world's workers:

> "By (state management of mines and railways), rather than by restrictions on production and trade the Labour Party can avert the imminent peril that the real wages of British workers may be further cut down by the competition of spineless, illiterate labour, with a miserably low standard of living, organised and driven by British and other capitalists."[66]

Although this perspective was frequently voiced by left-wing

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66. 'Imperial Policy', A.C.I.Q. Memorandum No. 122A, 1933, Transport House.

critics of Empire, particularly among early anti-imperialists, Ross did not often take this stand; his concern, like Leys', was primarily with the needs of Africans, the strains on their loyalty and the dishonouring of solemn British promises.

Clearly, Ross had devoted much creative thought to the problems of Kenya since his return to Britain. Unlike Leys, he was willing to make use of anthropology as a guide to incorporating African traditions in new forms of governments. However, the above schemes indicate that like many observers, he saw a too clear-cut difference between 'tribal' and 'detribalised' existence. While Ross was mulling over alternative schemes of local government, Leys, as propagandist, continued to urge on the public the same basic points that he had espoused in 1918 and, largely due to his distrust of anthropology, avoided questions of local government, simply repeating that they must be responsive to the will and needs of the people.

Although closer union in East Africa had been effectively put to rest in 1931 the idea of administrative separation, which had often accompanied it, continued to be raised as a possible solution to conflicts of interest between the European and African communities. Even during World War Two, the Colonial Office was seriously considering "A Federal Solution for East Africa" drawn up by Sir Henry Moore, which suggested appointing a lieutenant-governor over each African area and one over a white area to extend from the Highlands to Mobasa; the privileged position of the settlers in the Highlands would be preserved while the entire area would be given the advantage of unified control of public services.[67]

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67. "A Federal Solution for East Africa", CO822/111/46709, 1942-3, P.R.O. I am grateful to Christine Winfield for bringing this to my attention.

In the 1923 edition of The Dual Mandate, Lord Lugard had proposed a similar scheme, which would have given representative followed by responsible government to the white area in which, he calculated, about 500,000 Africans would reside. The Colonial Office was sufficiently interested to print his draft scheme for private distribution in 1927. Lugard's biographer has written that he had no illusions that Africans were ready for self-government but he distrusted the settlers and feared the concessions they would gain from the shifting balance of power between them and the Imperial government; he wished to stabilise the situation by vesting executive power over the vast majority of Africans in a paternal British government.[68] Lugard, unlike Moore, was interested in protecting African welfare rather than in shoring up European privilege.

In 1925 L. S. Amery had instructed Governor Grigg to investigate the delimitation of the native reserves preparatory to the creation of two distinct units of government - the African units to be, in Grigg's words, "immune from the forces of detribalisation with steadily increasing powers of self-government in local affairs within their own areas".[69]

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67. One objection to the scheme illustrates the significant development of Colonial Office awareness of African opinion: "I doubt whether we can afford to completely ignore what Africans may think in the not too distant future about the ordering of E. and C. Africa." (Sir A. Dawe, 18.1.1943, ibid.)

68. Perham, M., Lugard, volume II, op. cit., p.674.

69. Grigg to Secretary of State, n.d., Coryndon Papers, 16/3/f.10, Rhodes House.

Political control of the African would be far easier if the government continued to pursue "a definite policy of encouraging strong and isolated tribal nationalism".[70]

J. A. Cable, editor of the 'pro-native' Times of East Africa, proposed a similar plan to the Colonial Office in 1930. Although Ross, who requested Passfield to grant Cable an interview, felt that the proposal was actuated only by concern for the equitable treatment of Africans, Drummond Shiels, who received Cable, responded,

> "He is a segregationist with a conscience! ... And the underlying impulse of his seeking is self-government for the European community. He thinks his scheme guarantees that this can be given without detriment to native interests."[71]

In 1927 Cable had suggested only that the Native Affairs Department be made independent of the Kenya legislature and that its head should be directly responsible to the Secretary of State. By 1930, however, he was proposing the separation of the reserves from the European areas in administration and finances.

Leys had opposed Cable's initial plan but he approved the second because it would allow economic development in the reserves. When asked by Cable how he would govern remote, backward tribes, Leys had "expounded the orthodox L.P. Programme": all future roads should be constructed in the reserves; all new funds should be spent on native education; Africans should derive services from government agents equal

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70. Acting P.C., Nyanza, to D.C., 19.10.1917, quoted in Lonsdale, J., "European Attitudes and African Pressures", Race, x, October 1968, p.141.

71. Minute by Shiels, 8.8.1930, CO 533/396, P.R.O.

to those received by the settlers.[72] Again, Leys failed to meet the challenge of how to develop African institutions of local government. Because he spurned anthropology as conservative and vested his hopes for change in Western education, he left undefined the period of institutional transition. By supporting Cable's plan he failed to come to terms with one of its possible effects which he deplored: in Grigg's words, "(immunity) from the forces of detribalisation". He regretted only that Cable's scheme would

> "leave unsolved the hardest problem, that of the relations in the Colony of European masters with, except in the towns, the complete monopoly of the land, with their African serfs denied every right except that of escape."[73]

The Labour Party Advisory Committee noted in addition that administrative separation took no account of the Indian presence and that the European colony would continually agitate, as in South Africa, for the Protectorate to be brought under their control.

After the demise of their hopes for an unofficial majority on the Legislative Council the settlers, too, turned to other plans, which were ultimately rebuffed by the Colonial Office as Cable's plan had been. Delamere had died in the same year as the unofficial majority was rejected and his place as settler leader was taken by Lord Francis Scott. Partly because of the depression the settlers were realising that their greatest need was to foster and consolidate their economic development and Scott began pressuring the Colonial

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72. Leys, N., Statement on the Policy Proposed for Kenya by Mr. J. A. Cable, AC.I.Q. Memorandum No. 74, March 1930, Transport House.

73. A.C.I.Q. Memorandum No. 76A, May 1930, Transport House.

Office for greater financial control. At the same time the Convention of Associations urged that an intensive campaign should begin to promote further white settlement in order to increase the colony's wealth production. An obvious but unstated motivation was to strengthen their position vis-a-vis the Imperial government which had become even more autocratic, in effect, through the appointment of a strong governor, Sir Joseph Byrne, who ignored unofficial advice and assistance. Several Convention of Association members urged that an open appeal for support be made to South Africa.

In 1932 Lord Moyne presented a report to the Imperial government which admitted that Africans were more heavily burdened by taxation than Europeans and suggested that non-natives should pay an income tax; "prevailing bias has been towards the convenience of a civilisation in which the native so far shares little of the direct advantages."[74] This news and the settler reaction against it helped further prejudice opinion in Britain against the settlers.

In 1933 Scott proposed to Samuel Wilson, who he believed understood the settler point of view better than anyone else at the Colonial Office, that the unofficial Legislative Council members be given the power to prevent extravagant or unjustified expenditure. The model he had in mind was a Jamaican committee which could hold up a money bill by the vote of nine of its fourteen elected members. He also suggested a statutory Standing Finance Committee with an elected majority. There might be trouble in Kenya from the

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74. Cmd. 4093(1932), Report by the Financial Commissioner (Lord Moyne) on Certain Questions in Kenya.

"direct-actionists" among the settlers, Scott warned Wilson, if the settlers were not given some form of financial control and were forced to pay an income tax; his own personal influence, Scott said, had alone kept them back for months but he could not foresee the reaction if his policy of "sound argument and reasonableness" failed.[75] The setters were frustrated by their failure to gain any constitutional advance since 1922 and as their position under the present governor was weaker than it had ever been, they were losing their trust in the Imperial government.

With the exception of a vague minute by Lord Passfield, Colonial Office officials did not respond sympathetically to these requests. They were afraid of granting concessions to unofficials and so provoking serious-minded critics as well as "the 'pro-native' elements that have been so vocal of late, and which would be only too happy to seize upon some new mud to throw at the government of Kenya and the Colonial Office."[76] It was too dangerous to step toward "the slippery slope which has responsible government at the end" and to place the Colonial Office in the position of being unable to accomplish anything except at the price of concessions to settler wishes.[77] As Scott realised, such a proposal would involve opening the Indian question once again.

With the interest due on Kenya's £17 million debt it was believed to be risky to give control to the "irresponsible" settlers. Two years later the continuing depression had so

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75. Scott to Wilson, 12.4.1933, CO 533/436, P.R.O.

76. Minute by Flood, 24.4.1933, ibid.

77. Minute by W.A.B., 24.4.1933, ibid.

badly damaged Kenya's economy that a request for increasing the Land Bank's capital was met with some sympathy in the Colonial Office as well as exasperation. The settlers had spent their funds on schemes of development and had never accumulated a large balance of capital but when the depression came they crippled their own economy by devoting that capital to advances to European maize growers, on which there was little hope of return. The 'irresponsibility' of the settlers - described so often by Leys and Ross - was seen in the Colonial Office to extend to their handling of their own finances and was probably an important factor in the refusal of the Colonial Office to grant responsible government.

By 1936 an income tax was finally imposed by means of a compromise worked out by Sir Alan Pim who had been sent to Kenya to further examine the Colony's financial position: the Europeans accepted a reduction of native taxation and the imposition of a light income tax in return for a promise by W. G. Ormsby-Gore, the new Secretary of State, to inquire into a reconstitution of the Executive Council. This concession failed to bring the settlers any nearer to self-government as the Council was to become multi-racial.

Although the settlers failed to gain a significant increase in their political power during this period, they suffered no major losses despite the flurry of public attention, pro-native rhetoric and commissions in Britain. The crucial facts in the demise of their hopes for a white man's country - their small and isolated numbers, the growth of African protest and violence - were not to make themselves felt until after the war. In the meantime, the liberal-humanitarian protest

had caused the Colonial Office to put a highly significant deadlock on their political progress. The humanitarians had been largely successful within their narrow scope: by putting up a clamour equal to that of the settlers, by balancing one political force with another, to achieve for the government of Kenya some freedom from settler pressures.

From 1915 to 1945 the settlers enjoyed favourable and unchanging conditions for the acquisition and tenure of land, threatened only by Indian claims for equal rights and, after 1926, by African needs and demands to expand into undemarcated areas. By declaring all land to be the possession of the Crown, the government had allowed to Africans only the right of occupation; when they ceased to occupy land, it could pass to a lessee who was obligated to pay compensation only for crops and huts. Before reserves were formally proclaimed in 1926 Africans were simply "tenants at will of the Crown". The critics deplored this situation and the feeling of insecurity which it provoked among Africans - whose loyalty was suffering a major strain - but they were satisfied by none of the government's attempts to stabilise the situation.

In 1928 Governor Grigg, with the approval of L. S. Amery, introduced the Native Lands Trust Bill which, by setting up a board including settlers to manage and control the reserves, effectively associated the settlers in the Trust. The Central Trust Board had the option of appointing an African member and the Local Boards each included one African, who, the critics felt, could easily be intimidated or over-ridden. The Hilton Young Commission succeeded in shelving Grigg's bill because it allowed too easily the alienation of land to

non-natives; so the bill became law in 1930 with the provision, insisted upon by Lord Passfield, that any land taken from the reserves must be compensated by a grant of Crown land of equal value; African objection to leases could be over-ridden only with the approval of the Secretary of State.

These stern safeguards were shown to be worthless when gold was discovered in the Kavirondo Reserve in 1932. A bill amending the above ordinance was rushed through the Legislative Council: land might be taken from the reserves for the purposes of mining with no obligation to add equivalent land to the reserve in exchange; it was no longer necessary to consult the Local Native Council in advance on such matters; leases of Kavirondo land, although regarded as temporary, became perpetually renewable; mining rights were in effect denied to Africans by the stipulation requiring prospectors to be able to read the mining ordinance. The spectre of an East African Rand rushed into the minds of many critics.

Although some observers credited Archdeacon Owen with stirring up the natives in his diocese, where the gold was discovered, there is no doubt that the abrogation of the 1930 Ordinance created great distrust and uneasiness there and, as Leys wrote, could "create more disloyalty than all the Communists in the world would stir up".[78] Owen's Kavirondo Taxpayers' Welfare Association instructed him to send the following criticisms of the amendment to Britain: the Chief Native Commissioner did not circulate a memorandum explain-

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78. Leys to the editor of the Manchester Guardian, 21.12. 1932.

ing the process of obtaining prospecting licences and mining leases;[79] the Native Authorities had been given no notice of the amending bill; compensation due to Africans was to be assessed by only one European constable; Europeans had used their fists on Africans; prostitution was increasing due to the presence of goldminers; the government ought to exploit the mine field and pay its profits into the Local Native Councils. Owen also sent a K.T.W.A. petition in May 1933 to Ross who gave it to Sir Robert Hamilton who then presented it to Parliament. It is apparent from Ross' correspondence with Owen on this issue that he greatly enjoyed the high drama of their virtuous machinations.

The suspicions of Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, the Secretary of State, that the Africans' protest was not quite spontaneous were partly justified. In January Lord Lugard had suggested to Ross and Handley Hooper of the C.M.S. that the Kavirondo should petition Parliament. As a guide Ross sent to Owen a copy of the petition used for the campaign against capital punishment and J. H. Oldham warned that the wording should be obviously of African origin but that the Kavirondo should be advised to support mining operations under State control. Cunliffe-Lister rejected the petition on the grounds that none of the petitioners resided in the goldfields and that complaints should be made through the Local Native Councils; he rejected allegations that the mining operations transgressed the terms of the 1930 Ordinance by contending that areas were to be added to the reserves only

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79. The Chief Native Commissioner had simply sent a circular to the local missions noting that they could translate it if they wished.

when Africans were permanently excluded from other areas and in this case Europeans were simply temporarily prospecting. Ross suggested that the Kavirondo should try to hire as their lawyer D. N. Pritt, a 'pro-Soviet' who was to defend Kenyatta in 1953 against charges of managing 'Mau Mau'. But Pritt saw no hope of legal redress, implying that the "bandit government (of Kenya) has covered itself at practically every point by jerrymandering the law against the Africans".[80] Meanwhile Ross barraged the press with letters which described the unfolding of each alleged iniquity.

Ross was particularly incensed by this "idolatrous veneration of 'private enterprise'"![81] "a localised and atavistic recession to the colonial mentality of the Jamaica of two hundred years ago."[82] As in the case of the Masai move two decades earlier, the British government had shamed itself by breaking its word. Ross believed that the next Socialist government at Westminster would not be as unscrupulous as Ramsay MacDonald's National Government. The drift towards insurrection was increasing because such acts heightened the African's sense of insecurity. This incident marks the first time that Ross laid such stress on the possibility of an African rising. He believed that the government was aware of African dissatisfaction and linked the decision of Governor Byrne to enforce vigorously the provisions of the (European) Conscription Ordinance to the virtually simul-

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80. Ross to Owen, 1.2.1933, C.M.S., 012/2.

81. Ross, W. M., "Kenya Gold, The Sequel", for The Socialist Review, Ross Papers, 4/2/f.62, Rhodes House.

82. Ross, W. M., "Gold in Kenya, Our Scrap of Paper", The Labour Magazine, February 1933, p.469, CO 533/429, P.R.O.

taneous discovery of gold in Kavirondo. Ross was particularly opposed to the Kenya Defence Force, not simply because its oath did not contain a pledge of loyalty to the King, but because it was in effect "an armed body of employers".[83] From Owen he had learned that hut tax collection was at the same time becoming more severe in order to force Africans to sell their produce to the miners. Perhaps because his ire had been roused by his intimate contact with the Kavirondo incident, he devoted much energy to comment on the Morris Carter Commission which was appointed in 1933 to define the boundaries of the reserves and the Highlands and to investigate the entire land situation.

Throughout this period he fashioned Cunliffe-Lister as the 'villain of the piece' just as Leys had poured his blame on Sir Percy Girouard in the Masai case. This tendency to be censorious evoked no sympathy from the Colonial Office. Ross had written an article on the issue for The Labour Magazine, the official monthly journal of the Labour movement, which the Colonial Office filed with a personal letter in which he condemned the handling of the incident. Sir Cecil Bottomley lamented "his unhappy way of seeing crookedness in everyone"[84] and sent the article on to Governor Byrne "in order that you may see the sort of thing we are getting at present". Apologising to Byrne for adding to his work, Bottomley asked him to send

"as definite a contradiction as is possible of the

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83. Ross, W. M., "Conscription in Kenya", Ross Papers, 4/2/f.293, Rhodes House.

84. Minute by Bottomley, 24.2.1933, CO 533/429, P.R.O.

> forcible ejectment of natives and, at the same time, information as to the extent to which cases of the sort have by execution occurred and how they have been dealt with."[85]

Byrne replied to this characteristic request for both a denial and an investigation by vaguely describing Ross' allegations as too definite; although the government had heard that Africans were dissatisfied at the method of assessing compensation, there was no evidence that any evictions had in fact taken place.

Ross' initial attack on Cunliffe-Lister concerned "secret" terms of reference which he had allegedly given to the Morris Carter Commission in December 1932. In response to Carter's request for a definition of the "privileged position" of Europeans in the Highlands, the Secretary of State had written: "no person other than a European shall be entitled to acquire by grant or transfer agricultural land in such area or to occupy land therein."[86] This definition not only transgressed the original terms of reference, which were to accord with the White Paper of 1923, but introduced legal discrimination against non-Europeans in place of the 1906 "gentleman's agreement" with the Government of India; it would also remove from Africans resident in the Highlands all protection against eviction. Ross supplied Major James Milner, M.P., with this information and Milner launched an attack on Cunliffe-Lister in the Commons on February 14, 1935 but the Secretary of State maintained that the proposed Order-in-Council merely confirmed what had been administrative practice for the past thirty

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85. Bottomley to Byrne, 27.2.1933, ibid.

86. Cunliffe-Lister in Commons, 14.2.1935, quoted in Ross Papers, 4/2, Rhodes House.

years and refused to admit that he had altered the commissions terms of reference.

Ross was also incensed at the suggestion that the cost of the commission - £7000 - should be met by unclaimed balances of pay due to carriers or their relatives from the Great War. The protest against this proposal - by, among others, Sir Robert Hamilton, Ross and Sir John Harris - succeeded in convincing the government that the funds ought to come from a Parliamentary grant rather than to worsen the Africans' sense of grievance. Ross also complained, without effect, against the composition of the commission - two of its three members were landholders in Kenya - and told Harris that "Conservatives of the Lister type seem incapable of approaching an Imperial or colonial question in a non-Party spirit"; because there were no Labour or African representatives on the commission, an all-party revision group should examine the report.[87] He was heartened, however, by the fact that the Labour front bench had repeatedly warned that it would repudiate the report when Labour was back in power.

Ross had hoped that the government would buy back unoccupied or untenanted European farms and restore them to their former African owners and that whites should be free to sell land to Africans in the absence of European buyers. The boundaries of the Highlands - where Europeans were cultivating only 11% of their land - were defined by the commission to include 6355 square miles of formerly unalienated land. Rather than giving those areas to dispossessed Africans the report suggested distributing £2000 among them and adding

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87. Ross to Harris, 16.3.1935, Ross Papers, 4/2, f.307, Rhodes House.

to the reserves waste, arid, water-less, low-lying land, much of it in the Tana Valley which Ross had traversed in 1909, which no European would want to buy. The grievances of the Kikuyu had been dealt with in "contemptuous and provocative terms".[88] The commission had failed to take adequate account of the decimation and contraction of the Kikuyu people during the 1898-9 famine. The importance which the Kikuyu gave to their claims was illustrated by the fact that Senior Chief Koinange had dug up his ancestors' remains in order to prove that a settler coffee estate was originally Kikuyu.

There were some credits to the report in Ross' view; he approved of the designation of the reserves as native rather than Crown land and supported the end of the Native Land Trust Board as recommended by the commission. He felt that the trustworthiness of the settlers had been dealt a just blow by the commission's suggestion that such a Board should sit in London and that its local branches should consist entirely of Africans. Like Leys, Ross stressed the importance of African opinion and urged that no action be taken on the report before Africans had had time to study it and to express their own opinions. For this reason, a major stricture on the report was that it was "too involved, complicated and lengthy for any African to follow".[89]

The squatter problem caused much concern to the government after World War Two and was a major factor in the rise of the 'Mau Mau' movement. Three resident native labour

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88. Ross, W. M., "Strictures on the Morris Carter Report", 28.7.1934, Box 236, E.H.

89. ibid.

ordinances were passed before the war, each specifying in increasingly strict terms the rights and obligations of the squatter and his landlord-employer. Initially the restrictions on the African tenant had been few because the settler wished to have a large resident labour force. However, the settlers soon complained that their farms were over-grazed because Africans insisted on keeping more stock with them than necessary. Many residents failed to fulfil contracts. There was nowhere for surplus stock and labourers to go but back to the reserves which, especially in the case of the Kikuyu, were already overcrowded. For this reason the Morris Carter Commission had recommended enlarging the reserves and setting aside areas where Africans could hold land on individual tenure.

The 1937 Resident Native Labour Ordinance extended the resident labour system beyond the European farms to unalienated Crown land, thereby making Africans strictly temporary residents in all areas outside the reserves. Arthur Creech Jones, official Labour spokesman on colonial affairs since 1935, protested to the Secretary of State, W. G. Ormsby-Gore, that questions of soil erosion and over-stocking did not justify this labour policy.[90] In sublime disregard of the overcrowding in the reserves, Ormsby-Gore replied that there was little difference between the rights and duties of a gardener on an English estate and those of the Kenya resident labourer; the labourer should retain his right to use land in the reserve and return to it at the end of his temporary service for Europeans.[91] Later, however, Ormsby-Gore's successor,

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90. Creech Jones to Ormsby-Gore, 26.5.1937, Creech Jones Papers, 21/1/f.55, Rhodes House.

91. Ormsby-Gore to Creech-Jones, 25.6.1937, ibid.

Malcolm MacDonald, informed Creech Jones that no Africans were to be removed from the Highlands unless they were given a fair deal in land in exchange. Even so, Africans were to have no legal rights to land there.

Leys had attacked the 1937 ordinance because it prohibited Africans from buying or leasing land. According to his policy of equal rights, Africans should be as free as Europeans to buy or lease land where they resided or on abandoned farms. Unfortunately for the African, this suggestion presupposes greater wealth than virtually any African could possess. More realistically, but vaguely, he concluded his discussion of the problem in The Colour Bar in East Africa by writing that the government was morally obliged to find free holdings for the squatters; the Crown must resume rights over some land previously alienated to Europeans. Initially the squatter system had not aroused much indignation in Leys; he had written in Kenya, before the problem of over-crowding became so severe and before the evictions of Africans from the Highlands began in 1929, that at least the squatter system allowed families to stay together.

Yet this chance for greater social cohesion which Leys praised mattered less in terms of Kenya's political history than the security of tenure. Many Africans, particularly those in the Kiambu area, were aggrieved to find that they held no rights at all to land which had once belonged to their clans; the Carter Commission had expunged their traditional rights and directed that they be removed to lands within the extended native areas. Others, evicted from the Highlands and finding no room in the Kikuyu reserve, settled

in Masailand until they were removed to Olenguruone in 1941. These evicted and the Nairobi proletariat were the generators of 'Mau Mau.' Leys, of course, had continually warned of the dangers of insurrection but he had devoted more attention to forced labour and the inequities of taxation and services as potential causes of rebellion than to the plight of the landless.

The contacts which Ross and Leys established with African individuals and organisations were, with few exceptions, frustrating; the critics and the Africans were often opposed on the questions of what were the major grievances and how they were to be protested. Leys attributed the failure of prominent Africans to live up to European standards of conduct to the ignorance which had stunted their minds and characters. So, rather than modifying his stand on the common roll, for example, he simply reaffirmed his faith in the Africans' need for a literary education and his scorn of the anthropologists' desire to preserve "obscene and irrational habits".[92]

Although the practice of female circumcision was seen by many Europeans to be just such a habit, Leys and Ross defended the practice against missionary attacks. The controversy began in 1929 when the Church of Scotland missionaries A. R. Barlow and Dr. John Arthur sought Kikuyu signatures on a petition requesting legal protection for Christians wishing to abandon the ceremony. Earlier in the year the principle had been established as a result of the "Kiambu

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92. Leys, N., "The Real Africa and the Real African", West Africa, 13.3.1926, p.289

Circumcision Case" that forced circumcision would not be punished and the missionaries feared that a precedent had been set; the operation, which marked a Kikuyu girl's entry into womanhood, was a pagan custom custom injurious to a young woman's health.[93] Arthur and Barlow blamed the "political agitators" of the Kikuyu Central Association for the lack of support for their petition and consequently drew up another petition repudiating both the K.C.A. and female circumcision. All mission employees who refused to swear in agreement were fired. Nine-tenths of the congregations of the missions involved deserted their churches. Seditious songs began to be sung in the Kiambu area. A female missionary was murdered, having been sexually mutilated.

Government officials were dismayed at this campaign which in Grigg's words "revived tribal conservatism".[94] The loss of Kikuyu trust in Dr. Arthur, the representative of African interests on the Legislative Council, was so pronounced that Grigg asked him to resign. Kenyatta warned that

> "any attempt to coerce my people by <u>force majeure</u> will have the very opposite effect as it causes my people to attach accentuated importance to the maintenance of this custom."[95]

Drummond Shiels agreed and suggested that government doctors be instructed to begin a propaganda campaign against the custom. Leys appears to have been embarassed by the incident, perhaps fearing that it would prejudice Britons against

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93. Barlow, A., to the Duchess of Atholl, M.P., 6.6.1930, Barlow Papers, Edinburgh University Libary.

94. Grigg to Passfield, 7.12.1929, Webb Papers, IV/22/f.28, L.S.E.

95. Kenyatta to the Colonial Secretary, 22.1.1930, CO 533/394, P.R.O.

Africans, and wrote to Shiels:

> "Some people must have atrocities to wallow in and in peace time they are easiest fathered on Africans who cannot speak in their own defence. All the same, since the business gives a handle to the devil, and since justice clearly would give girls liberty to refuse the rite the Government of Kenya ought to be directed at once to pass a law giving them that right."[96]

Characteristically, Leys diagnosed the remedy as a simple legislative solution.

Ross, on the other hand, had gained a deeper understanding of the significance of the operation and of the controversy. Talking with Kenyatta over tea in London, he had learned that Kikuyu girls' hopes for later sexual intercourse and legitimate maternity depended on the ceremony and that a circumcised male who had intercourse with an uncircumcised girl was regarded as ceremonially unclean. The rite served, then, as a form of social control, as a means to restrain promiscuity. Kenyatta also enlightened Ross as to a highly significant political aspect of the conflict: the attack on the ceremony was linked in Kikuyu minds with their insecure possession of their lands.[97] Leys, Ross and Josiah Wedgwood decided to assault this misconception at its root and wrote to the "thinking men and women" of the K.C.A. They expressed regret that the issues of land and circumcision were being mixed up with one another:

> "Far from leading to the loss of any of your lands, we are certain that more people in Kenya and in England and in Scotland will support you in the ownership of your lands if you can assure them that

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96. Leys to Shiels, 18.2.1930, ibid.

97. Ross to Professor Stephenson, "The Missionary Situation in the Kikuyu Country in 1929-30", n.d., Ross Papers, 4/2/f.57-60, Rhodes House.

> the Association leaves its members absolutely free whether their daughters are to be circumcised or not."[98]

It is difficult to imagine how well this letter was appreciated by the K.C.A. but the letter does indicate that Leys and Ross were willing to recognise the K.C.A. as "a perfectly legitimate native political body" unlike the Local Native Councils of old men who continually acquiesced to government wishes and were supported by such men as Grigg and Arthur.[99]

Leys had also been in contact with Joseph Kangethe and Kenyatta, president and general secretary of the K.C.A. His letters to Kangethe had been intercepted by officials in Kenya. Grigg wrote about the letters to Passfield, noting that Leys was

> "in truth (the natives') most dangerous enemy for the suggestions he makes to them will inevitably end some day in violence of some kind and then the natives themselves will be the greatest sufferers."

Leys had suggested to Kangethe and to Kenyatta that they should draw up petitions to be signed by virtually all Africans and ~~to~~ organise peaceful marches of protest to Government House, acts which would stimulate agitation in the home press by British people themselves.[100] He discouraged requests for special privileges for the Kikuyu and deprecated the efforts

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98. Leys, Ross and Wedgwood to the K.C.A., 23.1.1930, Ross Papers, Volume I, Rhodes House.
Kenyatta translated the letter into Kikuyu and Handley Hooper checked the translation.

99. Ross to Shiels, "Clitoridectomy among Kikuyu...", 2.2.1930, CO 533/394, P.R.O.

100. Leys also suggested to some Tanganyika Africans with whom he was corresponding that they should petition President Roosevelt in support of self-determination.
Leys to A. G. Fraser, 14.10.1938, Fraser Papers, 11/1, f.46, Rhodes House.

of Kenyatta who, he believed, had done more harm than good in Britain. The greatest need was to make African wishes known, to show British people that they greatly desired reform and that they could rely on powerful friends of the African in Britain who were struggling to achieve a policy of equal rights. Rather than urging African representation on the Legislative Council, Africans should demand the right to vote;

> "I don't mean that any African ought to be enabled to vote, but only those of incomes of £50 a year... and are able to write in English... And if the boys and girls now in school do their best, there would be more African voters in Kenya than European voters. And as the number of African voters gradually increased they would be able to elect people, whether European, Indian or African who would do as Africans want in the Legislative Council. I wish I could promise you that this reform will be carried. But we fighting very hard for it and it would help if you were to demand it rather than anything else."[101]

The tone and content are clearly paternalistic but it is important to remember that in the same year the Hilton Young Commission had reported that twenty centuries might pass before Africans reached the European 'level' of civilisation.

Ross also wrote to a Kikuyu asking whether Africans were being given sufficient help in understanding and discussing the Morris Report, but his primary contact with Kikuyu leaders was with Jomo Kenyatta. Only two weeks after his first arrival in Britain, Kenyatta met Ross at the Royal Empire Society and discussed with him tactics of presenting his K.C.A. memorandum to the Secretary of State. During this visit Ross was to give Kenyatta help in other approaches to officials: a briefing prior to a meeting with Grigg at which they discussed the release of Harry Thuku and the Native Lands

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101. Leys to Joseph Kangethe, 3.11.1929, CO 533/384, P.R.O.

Trust Bill; aid in preparing the proofs of a pamphlet entitled "Correspondence between the K.C.A. and the Colonial Office 1929-1930"; sending Kenyatta to Transport House to get advice on the running of the unions. The Rosses saw a good deal of Kenyatta during both his visits in Britain - the second was to last for fiteen years - introducing him to the C. R. Buxtons, the Quaker meeting, Othello and even to open criticism of Governor Grigg.[102]

From the beginning of their relationship, Ross does not appear to have trusted Kenyatta; he felt, for example, that Kenyatta should be prevented from "parading an alternative version" of his meeting with Drummond Shiels.[103] Both Leys and Ross were "disappointed by his lack of grip".[104] Nevertheless Ross helped to secure loans from the Anti-Slavery Society and from C. R. Buxton for Kenyatta who was stranded in London because Governor Grigg would not allow K.C.A. members to collect subscriptions.[105] Grigg had been incensed by Shiels' interview with Kenyatta and informed Shiels that Ross clearly did not understand the current state of the native problem as he supported agitators such as Kenyatta rather than progres-

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102. Murray-Brown, Jeremy, Kenyatta, London, 1972.

103. Ross to Shiels, 30.7.1930, CO 533/394, P.R.O.

104. Handley Hooper to Miss Soles, 26.9.1929, Letter Book of Africa Sec., C.M.S. Archives.

105. Ross to Wedgwood, 30.6.1930, A.P.S., G145, Rhodes House. Ross felt that such tactics must be illegal and requested Josiah Wedgwood to ask a parliamentary question on the matter.

sive Chiefs like the wealthy Koinange. Grigg was astonished at Ross' assertion that Kenyatta had had nothing to do with Communists since it was known that Kenyatta had gone to Moscow in 1929. Ross genuinely believed, however, that although Kenyatta had been to Moscow he was not a Communist and had been trapped into writing an article for the Daily Worker with "lurid headlines" and "wild exaggerations" that were inserted without his knowledge.[106]

According to Handley Hooper, "Ross tried to father (Kenyatta) because he felt the boy was making a fool of himself", spending too much, of doubtful morals and giving those in Africa too great an impression of his progress.[107] For these reasons as well as his independent journey to Russia, Ross tried to convince Kenyatta to return to Kenya. The repeated representations of the Rosses had failed to win Kenyatta an interview with Sir Robert Hamilton at the Colonial Office because the K.C.A. was not recognised by the Kenya government as representing the Kikuyu tribe, so his continued presence in London was not serving his people. Although Ross was still willing to arrange meetings for Kenyatta - with C. F. Andrews, for example - he had lost all faith in him by 1932. He accused Kenyatta of interfering with promising approaches to the Colonial Office by passing on "sensational misstatements" from the K.C.A. and doing nothing in London except addressing meetings.

> "You are just having a pleasant holiday and you surely must know that the proper place for you at present is in your office at Nairobi working hard

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106. Shiels to Grigg, 6.2.1930, CO 533/394, P.R.O.

107. Handley Hooper to Miss Soles, op. cit.

on preparing evidence for Sir William Morris Carter to receive."[108]

Ross had even succeeded in persuading Carter to hear Kenyatta's evidence in London before leaving for Kenya. By 1935, Ross had completed broken with Kenyatta; the final break was due to his exasperation that Kenyatta was ruining his landlady by withholding his rent.

Both Leys and Ross had diverse contacts with black organisations such as the West African Students Union and the League of Coloured People, addressing their meetings and subscribing to their journals. Leys sometimes sent copies of Kenya to such societies. In 1921, he had attended the second Pan-African Conference, organised by W. E. B. Dubois and had read an abstract of Kenya, which was on the conference reading list. He had been "more deeply moved (by the conference) than ever in my life since boyhood".[109] Leys had met Dubois at a meeting of the Advisory Committee on International Questions in August, 1921 and found that they shared many basic assumptions; they both firmly opposed Jesse Jones' system of 'adapted' education which presupposed that "American negroes (were) as a whole different in nature and capacity from the Europeans they live among".[110] Contacts with such men as Dubois were essential to the discovery of what black people were thinking and wanted. The creation of such scrupulous, educated men - to serve as models for their fellows -

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108. Ross to Kenyatta, 14.5.1932, Ross Papers in the possession of Professor P. M. Ross.

109. Leys to Oldham, 6.9.1921, Box 248, E.H.

110. Leys quoted in King, Kenneth J., Pan-Africanism and Education, op. cit., p.134.

must be a high priority of Imperial policy. Until Africans were taught and realised the need to maintain European standards of conduct, as Leys pointed out to his friend and fellow negrophile, Winifred Holtby, most liberal movements among native populations would fail.[111]

However, unlike such reformers as the Ballingers, who were aiding the Industrial and Commerical Workers' Union in South Africa, Leys did not feel that education, industrial organisation and co-operatives could be used to gain political liberty. Rather, political liberty was a prerequisite for advances in those directions: "without political rights and equality of status in the laws, all other reforms are either unattainable or insecure."[112] There were two ways in which that liberty could be won: by insurrection or by the pressure of world opinion. Ross and Leys devoted much of their lives to an attempt to ensure that Kenya's future would be determined by world opinion rather than by the blind rebellion of the deprived and inarticulate, suddenly conscious of injustice.

Both men would probably have judged their lives' work a failure if they had lived to witness the 'Mau Mau' movement following World War Two. They had succeeded in arousing a pro-African sentiment in Britain and their arguments had eventually permeated Imperial documents on the subject of Kenya. But the rhetoric and profusion of documents - ten between 1923 and 1936 - were out of all proportion to the concrete reforms they effected. The settlers' local powers

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111. Brittain, Vera, Testament of Friendship, London, 1940, p.204.

112. Leys to W. M. Macmillan, 29.7.1935, Macmillan Papers.

prevented the Imperial government from applying Passfield's statements on native policy which was official policy since its adoption by the Joint Select Committee in 1931. Only one of the great debates on Kenya's future, though it was the most significant at the time, was answered during the inter-war years: the settlers were not to step towards responsible government by achieving a majority of seats on their legislature. The effective postponing of major Imperial decisions is indicated by the fact that as late as 1943 serious consideration was being given to the proposed separation of black and white areas. As Leys had warned, "when Asiatics and Africans really wake up, how much of the work of all those solemn committees and conferences is likely to last?"

Yet their positive contribution must not be underrated. The attention of the British public - Radical, humanitarian, liberal - had been focussed on Kenya largely due to their efforts and to those of influential men such as J. H. Oldham, Lord Lugard, Charles Roden Buxton, John Harris who had first learned about the political realities of the settler-dominated colony from them. Largely because the pressure exerted on the Colonial Office by this body of aroused and informed opinion was greater than that of the East and Central African settlers and their supporters, the Great White Dominion was never created and the settlers' demands for greater local power were similarly rejected.

All the revelations of Leys and Ross pointed to one conclusion: the settlers were not trustworthy. Sometimes this realisation was brought to public notice without the help of the two critics, as in the Grogan flogging case in

1907 or the shouting down of Governor Sadler by the settlers in 1908. Missionaries had aroused public opinion on the issue of forced labour and so achieved the recall of Governor Northey and the withdrawal of the 1919 labour regulations. However, a large proportion of the causes célèbres had been publicised by Leys and Ross: the Masai move, the Galbraith Cole case, Delamere's 'dummying', the theft of Kavirondo gold. Even though these cases made many British people distrust the settlers, the critics' analyses of the situation in Kenya which had allowed them to occur succeeded only in accentuating the points in debate, not in resolving them: were Africans to develop politically through democratic institutions of local government which would attract the energies of the young and educated or were they to be governed by chiefs, headmen and district officers; were they to be offered 'adapted', industrial or 'literary' education; were the non-white races to be legally excluded from the Highlands or were Africans to be allowed to buy and lease land there and elsewhere?

Leys and Ross contributed to the articulation of these problems, urging that if they were to be solved with any regard to justice for Africans and the retention of African loyalty, the Imperial government must maintain a strong monopoly of the Trust. Their solutions to the questions of African development were simple and firmly in the humanitarian tradition: equal rights, European education and the common roll. As a result, their answer to a later question was in a sense conservative, despite their egalitarian principles: a minority of properties, educated Africans were to be en-

franchised and so allowed to join the elite. However, their demand for the application of the Dual Policy to African economic development had Socialist implications and roots: responsibility for the development of the reserves - the raising of standards of education and sanitation, the improvement of methods of cultivation and access to a fair market - was to be in the hands of the State.

Their accomplishments fell short of their goals and the rising that they had predicted did occur. But their ability to stir imaginations among the British public helped to forestall the surrender of the Trust until the demands of Africans themselves grew to sufficient power that they became the major determinants of Colonial Office policy towards Kenya. Leys in particular was despondent during his last years because he had succeeded only in creating a deadlock between settler self-government and African paramountcy, whereas his goal had been to bring about the reform of the entire industrial system in Kenya. Their substantial accomplishments - articulating basic problems and helping to prevent the creation of the Great White Dominion - pale only in relation to their high hopes.

Chapter VI

AN ASSESSMENT

Within the context of the 'men on the spot', Leys and Ross were mavericks. Outsiders among the settlers by virtue of their professions and attitudes, they made a leap of faith in African potential which few Europeans, even among the missionaries, attempted. As their faith in the professed values of European culture was great, so was their sincere desire to see them fulfilled. They defended the abused African not because they loved him or his culture but because they hated the debasement of their values by their own kind. Their racial guilt, cultural pride and Christian faith demanded that they seek the protection of the weak, the uplifting of the African by Western medicine and education, and the imposition of a 'superior' system of justice. Their anger and dismay at broken Imperial promises are the best guides to how seriously they accepted Imperial rhetoric.

Their most important message, and the one which they were most successful in communicating to the public, was that the settlers were too irresponsible and self-interested to be capable of exercising the Trust fairly. To both men, 'Africa for the Africans' did not mean a future without whites. The European presence was necessary and inevitable, but whites should not be allowed any privileges. Social harmony - a "close interdependence of interests and a mutual respect and regard" - could be achieved only with legal equality between the races.

There were few significant dissimilarities in their

perspectives, but Leys, pouring more time and energy into his protest, produced more material on the subject and also analysed the Kenya situation within a wider context than Ross. Leys took a deep, personal interest in Christian ethics - particularly in the ideal of common service - and, from the beginning of his years in Africa, had a clear and fairly constant idea of what was wrong with the European presence. He sincerely believed that a man's treatment of the least of his brethren would be the basis for his final judgement; Christian ethics must be realised in politics and applied to the industrial system and to the social order in Britain and throughout the Empire. Initially, Ross had been more upset by petty miscarriages of justice - European 'excesses' - but gradually grew as concerned with the broader issues of African rights. His Quaker faith may have helped to nurture his political conscience and Leys, whose intensity fired many imaginations, probably also played a significant role in stimulating the growth of his political involvement.

As they loathed social privilege in Britain, they resented the class attitudes - towards Africans and towards themselves - of the upper class settlers and the 'public school boys' among the officials. They feared that European domination in Kenya would perpetuate a rigid hierarchy of castes; the hard-up or would-be aristocrats who were seeking to become colonial squires were escaping from a movement towards greater social justice in Britain of which both critics were committed, middle-class members. To Leys, it was "accursed cowardice" to dilute one's message out of "fear of the opinion of respectables", as he accused many other

reformers of doing.[1] Respectability, after all, had nothing to do with morality: "The sole motive of the long shame and agony of the African slave trade was the desire for profit in the hearts of men in Europe, Asia and America, who were counted respectable beyond the ordinary..."[2] He apparently regarded those in power with distrust and, unlike Ross, rarely approached them for the redress of grievances.

Both men were virtually fearless under attack, Ross delighting in the use of satire and irony in sallies against opponents. They tended, like evangelists, to see conflicts in terms of the righteous against the evil. For this reason, they were often censorious, sometimes alienating fellow reformers, and their remedies were at times naively just. As propagandists, they were inattentive to the details of the reforms that they urged and as historians, their work savours more of prophecy than of empirical observation. Leys tried to avoid condemning individuals or groups for causing African disabilities, preferring to blame the industrial system, while Ross did not in the least mind pinning blame on the Political Machine of Delamere and Grogan - unrepresentative of the 'better class' of settler - which he alleged had victimised him and other dissident officials. For this reason Ross tended more than Leys to focus on specific abuses, such as forced labour. Leys, on the other hand, hoped that by insistently demanding, and so achieving, a policy of equal rights,

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1. Leys to W. M. Macmillan, May 20, 1933, Macmillan Papers.
2. Leys, Kenya, op. cit., p.47.

all other reforms would naturally follow. Both men believed in the need for radical, non-violent reform, though, again, Leys initially wrote with a greater sense of urgency than Ross. Not until the thirties did Ross begin to warn that too many broken promises would so destroy African loyalty that Africans would rise in revolt. Over the years they stressed with increasing frequency that African opinion must be discovered and deferred to. Especially after certain British institutions - the courts in the Masai case, the 1929-1931 Labour government - failed to redress grievances they saw greater and greater need to arouse and pay heed to African demands. Of course, uneducated Africans were "too ignorant" to be granted the vote. Even though wishing to enfranchise only the educated, Leys was concerned with "what the millions think". He did not idealise 'the people' but recognised their potential power, their ability to destroy the fragile social tissue. He scorned the effect of "solemn committees" as ephemeral and knew the future would be created, rather, by mass movements which had been given force and direction by men like Paul and Lenin.

The greatest impact of the work of Leys and Ross was on liberal and humanitarian opinion in Britain. Their strength as propagandists was due not only to the vitality of their style and convictions but to the ignorance of their countrymen on the subjects of African society and the behaviour of the settlers. The following expression of the meaning of 'trusteeship', made by J. H. Oldham in 1920, illustrates the general vagueness of contemporary ideas on African affairs: "a cardinal aim of policy (is) to foster in every possible

way the growth of a healthy, independent native life."[3] Leys and Ross helped to give body to the ideas of such men who had not been 'on the spot'. They were the ones to spark imaginations partly because no one else had clarified the East African situation by the application of Christian and Socialist principles or had described in detail the extent of the African subsidy of white settlement.

Like E. D. Morel they stressed the importance of vesting land in native ownership and of developing native cash crop production. Although they were irritated by the conservatism and corrupting potential of indirect rule and accepted the continued presence of whites, they in effect applied Morel's, or the 'West African', doctrine to the special circumstances of East Africa. They sharpened the debate on whether Kenya's future should depend on plantation or peasant agriculture and helped to resolve it - at least in official statements on policy - through the impact of their writings on such a significant report as that of the Hilton Young Commission. Problems of finance and the settlers' local political power continued to thwart the application of the Report's injunction, "that the government has the (primary) duty to devote all available resources to assisting the natives to develop..."[4] but the lines of future official policy had, at least, been authoritatively laid down. They were not idle theorists; they were as much 'men on the spot' as the settlers even though their ideals had not been distorted, or made more realistic, by the demands of self-interest. They were the first theorists

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3. Gregory, R. G., Sidney Webb and East Africa, op. cit., p.30.

4. Cmd. 3234, Report of the Commission on Closer Union, op. cit., p.40.

whose Radical ideas were not only tested and maintained, but grew as a result of many years of living and working in Kenya.

Hearing anti-settler questions addressed to Elspeth Huxley during a radio broadcast, Leys exulted,

> "'no one can deny that if I had not lived such questions would never had been asked.' Solely responsible I know I am not but I did define and was the first to explain the peculiarly East African situation."[5]

Their warnings failed to prevent the rise of 'Mau Mau' but they did help to achieve one of their goals - arousing the conscience of the British public. They helped to focus British liberal-humanitarian attention of Kenya and to keep it there rather than on any other racially troubled area within the Empire. The pro-African clamour of the inter-war years was undoubtedly a factor in preventing the surrender of the Imperial trust to the settlers; in some respects it was the greatest humanitarian revival since Emancipation. Of greater importance, Kenya, unlike Rhodesia which was granted self-government in 1923, had only a small white population isolated in the fertile island of the Highlands; and the India Office on behalf of the Kenya Indians exerted considerable pressure on the Colonial Office to maintain its monopoly of the Trust. The positive achievements of enlightened public pressure are harder to discern; the industrial system in Kenya was not reformed and the settlers continued to gain important concessions, short of self-government. But in a sense the two men had helped to keep the future boundary between black and white nationalism at the Zambesi rather than on the shores of Lake Victoria.

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5. Leys to Leonard Woolf, 1.8.1944, Woolf Papers, Sussex University Library.

Although the Colonial Office eventually admitted the validity of many of Leys' criticisms - the substantial subsidy of white settlement by African tax revenue as stated in the Moyne Report, the inadequacy of reserve land as judged by the Morris Carter Commission - officials viewed him as a partisan fanatic. Even a Labour minister, Drummond Shiels, found him unco-operative and a somewhat careless writer whose criticisms were commonly believed in the Colonial Office to be out of date. Shiels found Ross, on the other hand, a "level-headed man and not one to make rash statements or to exaggerate for personal or propaganda purposes", and based his memorandum "Alleged Injustices to Native Peoples in Kenya" largely on information from Kenya from Within.[6] This judgement of the two men seems unfair as Shiels' memorandum contained the basic points of Leys' analysis which he had been the first to voice. Undoubtedly his intensity and refusal to compromise were offensive to bureaucrats, the nature of whose work was to seek pragmatic compromising solutions which damaged the prestige of the Office as little as possible. Less abrasive critics such as Archdeacon Owen and Ross drew more sympathy from officials but apparently achieved no more positive reforms than Leys; Sidney Webb, who had two formal consultations with Ross after being introduced to him by Leonard Woolf, found him a very able person, but still a fanatic. Officials distrusted both Leys and Ross because of the stimulus that they were giving to native unrest, either by

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6. "Memorandum on Alleged Injustices to Native Peoples in Kenya, with Special Reference to ~~Kenya~~ the Luntowa", 11.2.1930, CO 533/396, P.R.O.
The tone of A.C.C. Parkinson's reply defending past Colonial Office policy indicates ~~perhaps~~ the extent to which Shiels may have been an outsider in the eyes of the permanent officials.

suggesting means for protest or through letters to English newspapers which were circulating among Africans. The Colonial Office did not doubt that the Governor of Kenya's efforts in promoting native advancement were hindered by the settlers on the Legislative Council; some officials feared that the critics would make the Governor's job even more difficult by so exasperating the settlers that they would further stiffen their resistance to measures for native benefit. These critics' analyses of the Kenya situation based on its historical roots were also seen to be unfair because they failed to take account of the "new", less narrow and selfish outlook of the settlers.

The Colonial Office feared the political consequences of aroused public opinion and sought always to mitigate 'excesses', such as forced labour, which inflamed the public conscience. There is no better example of this tendency than the decision of the Colonial Office in 1911 to seek the written consent of the Masai leaders to their move from Laikipia; they wished not to determine the nature of Masai opinion but to legitimise the move in the eyes of the British public. Even when soothing words were given to the public, requests for investigations were at the same time despatched to Kenya. This sensitivity to criticism resulted at best in the redress of minor abuses though never, given the power of the settlers, in major reforms such as Leys and Ross demanded.

As the settlers were not great readers of political tracts, Elspeth Huxley doubts that the books written by the two men had much impact in Kenya except on the politically-minded Europeans.[7] Similarly, F. S. Joelson, founder and

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7. Elspeth Huxley to the author, 26.12.1973.

editor for forty-three years of East Africa, notes that they had no impact

> "except to provoke anger and ridicule, rather less at them than at the exaggerated attention paid to them by left-wing publications and politicians in Britain, who so sedulously exploited their writings."[8]

The movement of public opinion against European 'excesses' sparked by Leys and Ross and fuelled by the activities of many committed humanitarians was nevertheless of great importance to the settlers. Their rhetoric became more conciliatory and less violently racist because they sought to appear capable of responsibly exercising the Trust.[9] At the same time as they modified their rhetoric, they may have been alienated by the adverse publicity and closed their ranks to outsiders so that local politics became conducted in great secrecy.

The attitude of Leys and Ross to the effective paramountcy of settler interests in Kenya was a logical extension of their ideas about capitalism in Europe. Both men disliked elitist privilege in any form. Leys once wrote that "only men and women with the audacity to challenge the existing social order in England will ever have the guts to do justice in Kenya."[10] In some respects the African peasant was analagous to the European worker; the advance of both had been thwarted by those who wished to profit from their labour. However, in Europe the worker had been gaining the means to free himself from this system of exploitation whereas

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8. F. S. Joelson to the author, 8.1.1974.

9. To counter the spate of anti-settler propaganda generating in Britain, the Convention of Associations, for example, in 1932, urged Capt. Grogan to write a book.

10. Leys to John Harris, 17.7.1932, Anti-Slavery Papers, G147, Rhodes House.

capitalism was present in its worst form in Kenya; the African had no vote, no unions to express his interests.

What effect did the long association of both critics with the Labour Party have on the party's policy? Arthur Creech Jones wrote that Labour's analysis of economic imperialism was derived from Marx, but owed much to Leys, Ross, Hobson, Brailsford, Olivier, Morel, Woolf, Charles Roden Buxton, Horrabin, Leonard Barnes: "They, with workers in the mission and administrative fields, have created the present public sense demanding constructive change and colonial advance."[11] Leys and Ross, then, were part of a movement which urged the Labour Party to apply Socialist and humanitarian principles to the economies of the dependencies: by the development of large-scale co-operative farming and the promotion of state ownership of mineral resources, for example.

The ideas of the two critics were thoroughly in accord with Radical criticism of the Empire, which, following the Boer War, turned from opposing expansion to the 'race problem': land, labour and the colour bar. During the 1890s, Radical opinion had focussed on the welfare of Britain, and particularly of the British worker, and touched on the exploitation of the native labourer primarily as a means to blacken British capitalists. However, during the first decade of the century, this emphasis was shifting towards the problem of native welfare: the Congo Reform campaign had been particularly successful in focussing attention on the damage done

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11. Arthur Creech Jones, introduction to Fabian Colonial Essays, edited by Rita Hinden, London, 1945, p.10.

to African life by the concessionaire system; isolated M.P.s such as Josiah Wedgwood demanded controls of European freedom to acquire and develop African land; humantarian groups, particularly the Anti-Slavery Society, sought to end de facto slavery under the European industrial system; the Labour Party attacked the colour bar and made a moral stand for equal rights.

According to a recent study of critics of empire, the Labour Party had contributed the most original concept in colonial debates before World War One: the right, according to Ramsay MacDonald, of

> "some central authority to take charge of the traditions, the honours and the reputation of the whole",[12]

that is, the right of the home country to intervene in dominion affairs in order to assert "the guiding principles of Empire, namely, justice, law and mercy".[13] This rhetoric was, of course, extremely difficult to translate into action and had been formulated largely to counter Liberal support of Home Rule. However, Labour emphasis on humanitarian ideals was not simply expedient but reflected the high degree of moral idealism in turn-of-the-century left-wing thought and politics. Leys and Ross, then, are not remarkable for formulating new principles of colonial government but for the strength of their commitment to the traditional humanitarian ideal of equal rights.[14]

The Labour Party in general had little interest in colonial affairs and, like the two critics, contributed few

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12. Porter, Bernard, Critics of Empire, op. cit., p.310.

13. Seely quoted, ibid., p.311.

14. ibid., Chapter 9.

original ideas or policies to the Empire, preferring to focus on practical problems in individual colonies. Not until after the Second World War did the party begin to demand a dynamic policy of practical assistance to Colonial peoples, which had been pressed on it by the Fabian Colonial Bureau, founded in 1940 to establish the guide-lines of post-war Labour policy. The Labour Party had contributed ideologically to the establishment of the Colonial Development and Welfare Funds of 1929 and 1940; although both funds had been set up by Conservative initiative, the principle of state economic intervention which they embodied was an idea approved by Labour ideology. Even so, the party's post-war emphasis on reform in local government was not a socialist initiative but a response to nationalist demands and a means to avoid open conflict with them. Neither Leys nor Ross had devoted much thought to such details as the development of local government nor had they quarrelled with the traditional principle of colonial self-sufficiency. Their importance, then, even within the Labour Party, was their contribution, as two of many voices, to the demand for the redress of African economic and political grievances and for progress towards self-government.

Because the vote had enabled the British worker to advance, Leys and Ross, like many of their contemporaries, had exalted faith in its potential as an instrument for reform. But, as Lord Hailey warned,

> "We had to fight for our liberties ourselves and perhaps we find it a little difficult to believe that the path to health, happiness, or perhaps even heaven, does not lie in the possession of a vote."[15]

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15. Albertini, R. von, Decolonization, New York, 1971, p.107.

The critics believed that political reform, encouraged by the Labour Party, the natural representative of both African and British workers, was the essential prelude to economic advance. Workers' co-operatives and unions were also means to end oppression; they were achieving success in Europe and the Labour Party should simply apply them to Africa. Similarly, Leys insistently advocated Western education as a means to true freedom because he had witnessed its liberating effect on the British worker. Both men, and the Labour Party, were urging with great conviction the application of tried European panaceas to Africa — at the same time as they urged deference to African opinion.

Towards the end of his life Leys became aware of criticisms that he gave insufficient emphasis to the needs of the tropical dependencies for economic development. Nowhere is this defect more glaring that in his attitude towards Jamaica. Because the policy of equal rights - his panacea for fundamental social and economic ills - had been first applied there, he was reluctant to weaken his support for the policy by pointing out its shortcomings. Apparently, even when he visited the islands in 1924 he had failed to perceive their hopeless poverty, preferring to focus on virtues such as integrated education. Further, for a committed Socialist, he was strangely prepared to accept vastly different strata of wealth within the same society; it is also puzzling that he included an income qualification among his suggestions for the bases of a common roll. Like many reformers of the first three decades of the century, he concentrated on schemes of welfare and education; by the late thirties, however, this perspective

was increasingly considered to be too narrow. Lord Hailey's survey and the Jamaica riots of 1938 helped to foster awareness of tropical development needs, to be met by grants of Imperial capital.

Even before the Jamaica riots, Professor W. M. Macmillan, Leys' colleague on the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, had travelled to the West Indies to "get a new light on the study of the African colonies"[16] and wrote a book entitled Warning from the West Indies. Macmillan warned that the West Indies were only nominally free because the franchise was monopolised by an elite while the masses stagnated in voteless poverty: political organs must be democratized but economic development must precede political concessions. Like a later Labour critic, Macmillan implied that the greatest crime of British rule was not exploitation but neglect. For this analysis, he received criticisms from Leys and Lord Olivier, the former Governor. Both feared the damage which his critique would do to the ideals of peasant rather than estate cultivation and the policy of equal rights; the Afrikanders would use the book to prove that they knew better how to govern Africans than did the British humanitarians.[17] In contrast to the sense of urgency with which he usually regarded the passing of time, Leys stressed to Macmillan that more time was needed before black Jamaicans became interested in public affairs and education; it was, after all, only a century since the grant of equal rights.

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16. Macmillan, W. M., Warning from the West Indies, London, 1936, p.7.

17. Olivier to W. M. Macmillan, 9.2.1936, Macmillan Papers.

And so, Leys avoided admitting that lack of opportunity for economic advance was a major cause of the political torpor of the poor Jamaicans.

He preferred to emphasise the admirable points in the Jamaica system: there was no colour bar; the majority of voters were black; peasant crops sold for the same prices as those of the big planters; the government had for thirty years encouraged the extension of family settlements by black peasants.[18] Leys would have been dismayed by the Moyne Report on the 1938 disturbances in Jamaica, which was so unflattering to British rule that it was not issued until after World War Two. The report had condemned the extreme poverty of the islands and noted that race relations were deteriorating. Even Emancipation, which Leys had idealised, was attacked; the freed slaves had initially been prevented from raising their standard of living by a severe depression caused by Britain changing her sugar market to Cuba - where slave labour continued to keep prices down.

Leys idealised the franchise partly because he believed it would win the loyalty of those who would have become seditious if their advance were permanently thwarted by the colour bar. Even the enfranchised African of the Transvaal felt, he believed,

> "that the facts that a handful of them can share the civilisation of the masters and a few thousand have equal rights are their only hope, are proof that serf and African are not always interchangeable and that someday escape may be possible to all."[19]

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18. Leys to Macmillan, 17.7.1935. op. cit.

19. Memorandum and Resignation by Dr. Norman Leys, April, 1931, No. 89, Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, Transport House.

Again, it is strange that Leys, as a Socialist, was prepared to accept the formation of classes which this policy implied, especially as he had been irritated by middle class Africans and chiefs in the Gold Coast who cared nothing about the problems of labour and merely sought control of the Legislative Council.

In 1941 Leys attacked Leonard Woolf's scheme for a post-war Labour Party colonial policy and was himself called to task by a fellow Advisory Committee member, J. F. N. Green, for failing to see that educated Africans were as likely to exploit their fellow Africans as any European capitalist and that the vote in Jamaica had not relieved Jamaican illiteracy and poverty. Leys applauded Woolf's suggestions to expand African land holdings, abolish direct taxation, replace European with African employees in the public service, enfranchise a percentage of the adult African population, because they included "nearly everything for which educated Africans ask". However, he urged Woolf to delete his advocacy of large importations of capital for education and health because, he said, educated Africans would mistrust or oppose the plan. Hearkening back to his early ideas on the fragility of human, and particularly African, society and to his own experience in Africa, he feared that rapid change would be socially disruptive resulting, for example, in urban slums, filled, presumably, with the lawless 'detribalised'. The importation of capital was a plan formulated by Europeans and gave insufficient attention to African wishes; future policy should

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> "aim rather at giving the people the fullest opportunity of making free choices instead of imposing any plan on African society that must be based, however hard we try not to, on what Africans would think if they were in our place."[20]

Leys was keenly aware of the danger that political power could be abused in the service of economic ends. Like many Socialists of the day, he emphasised the distribution of wealth as a basic function of government and paid little attention to the question of the role of government in the creation of wealth. He appears to have believed that participation in the creation of wealth by any but a Socialist government would result in the perversion of power by vested economic interests.

> "By capitalist industry I mean industry that is... controlled by a tiny minority with immense power in Parliament, over the Press, etc. In recent times industry operating thus has I believe had an even stronger influence over beliefs and character in Europe and America than any other, having in fact silenced all respectable rivals and reduced the Churches to empty shells. That triumph I hope and believe will not last, but whatever may happen in Europe, what is happening in Asia and Africa is that this industrial system - or industrial anarchy if you like, has so far engulfed only a small but rapidly increasing minority, but on the other hand, meets, in that minority.., with even less resistance than Europeans offer it."[21]

For this reason Leys not only opposed the large-scale investment of European capital but also never sought to join forces with businessmen who favoured the development of peasant rather than plantation agriculture. Both men gave insufficient emphasis to economic factors as possible remedies for the disruption of African life, even though they recognised

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20. Comment by Dr. Leys on Woolf's Memo. on Colonial Policy, No. 236, November 1941, ACIQ, ibid.

21. Leys to Fraser, 29.6.1936, Fraser Papers, 11/1/f.45, Rhodes House.

that the industrial system was the cause of that disruption. They wished to slow down the rate of economic change and loathed the capitalists' habit of thinking of Africans as factors in the production of wealth. In this sense they shared some assumptions with laissez faire individualism, wishing primarily to control the ambitions of capital to make profits from cheap labour and to return to Africans in benefits and services every penny that was taken from them by direct taxation.

Unlike many Europeans Leys and Ross felt no distaste for the 'Europeanised' African. Rather, their faith in the value of European standards and institutions was so great that attempts to make Africans develop 'along their own lines' earned their angry condemnation:

> "it is the complex of social-economic-educational conditions that is to be studied in any given African territory, and not any hypothetical Africanness of the inhabitants...Damn and blast the drivellers who write on the Soul of the Negro or the Soul of Japan."[22]

Leys doubted that Africans would choose to assimilate European standards and culture and believed that they should not. Within the broad road of human evolution there was room for many varieties of society. Although the world wars and depression had contributed to declining popular faith in the moral standards of Europe, Leys and Ross never condemned its values but, rather, the failure to realise them. Christianity was not only a necessary binding and progressive force in the face of the social and moral dissolution brought to Africa by the European industrial system but it was the Way,

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22. Leys to Macmillan, 20.5.1933., op. cit.

the Truth and, in so far as Western civilisation contained this faith, it was preferable to pagan civilisation. For this reason, they were not particularly creative reformers, nor did they intend to be. They aimed primarily to foster understanding of the issues rather than to determine remedies. The institutions for the redress of grievances and the values for a better world already existed; they needed simply to be made vital by the fundamentally decent conscience of the British public.

Although Ross was intrigued by the insights of anthropology and saw that such research might serve as a valuable guide to reforms, Leys believed that anthropologists, by supporting indirect rule, had a dangerously conservative influence on Africa: they would preserve traditional oligarchies which would inevitably give rise to antagonistic popular movements. The competitive world of modern capitalism and traditional African communalism were utterly incompatible and, although indirect rule was appropriate for a short time, it was hopeless to attempt to preserve or revive the old culture; "of what relevance", he asked, "to the future of Africans is the knowledge of their past?". He implied that the nature of Africa's future depended mainly on "how the people with the higher culture provide for the one with the lower". Clearly, there was a certain unresolved ambivalence in Leys' thought regarding the freedom with which Africans ought to be able to choose their future. Leys admired Sir Donald Cameron's system of administration but he felt that Cameron and "his hero-worshipper" Philip Mitchell wanted too tight control of the time and type of African

evolution; rather, the European ought to help the African to make the best of both worlds.[23]

Despite these professions of the desire to defer to African opinion, it is clear that only the westernised were to wield substantial political power in Leys' scheme for the future. 'Literary' education and the franchise with an income qualification, which he supported, would have created an elite as ready, as J. F. N. Green pointed out, to exploit their brothers as was any European. There is a strange discord between these proposals and his praise for the "communal service" of the ideal mission station. Rather than investigate the potential for African socialism, he dismissed the question, saying that there were no Socialists in Africa.[24] In short, his faith in equal rights contained a strong strain of individualism. Welfare meant giving Africans the means - health, education, no legal barriers - for self-help, to become civilised and capable of governing themselves.

The second Labour government of 1929-1931 failed to realise their reforms partly because Sidney Webb, as Colonial Secretary, was not convinced of their necessity, allowed his strong policy statements to be diluted and failed to appoint immediately a strong and committed Governor, so that the

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23. Leys to Macmillan, 19.1.1931.

24. Leys, N., Colour Bar in East Africa, op. cit., p.78. Leys was not alone in his reluctance to apply a Socialist solution to African problems:
"Once Europe is reorganised, and North America, that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the semi-civilised countries will of themselves follow in their wake; economic needs, if anything, will see to that. But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organisation, I think we can advance only rather idle hypotheses."
(Engels to K. Kautsky, September 12, 1882 in K. Marx and F. Engels, On Colonialism, Moscow, 1960.)

situation in effect changed little. Even his more committed successor, Arthur Creech Jones, found that he had to compromise with the fact that Kenya's economy depended largely on the settlers' contribution; he felt that he could not open the Highlands to Africans as Labour rhetoric had insisted:

> "The Settled Area has been developed by European enterprise and, indeed, with African labour, contributes the major part to the economy and prosperity of the country and much to the finances which enable schemes to be undertaken in the general territorial interests as well as African interest."[25]

This pattern of reliance on settler agriculture had been established since the settlers' economic recovery from the depression following World War One; attacks by Leys and Ross which would upset the East African economy were consequently discounted since 1924 as extremist and effectively ignored by the Colonial Office.

Leys and Ross captured the imagination of the liberal-humanitarian public with their attacks on settler policies. However, the 'revolutionary' implications for Britain of their socialist ideas meant that moderates and conservatives would not sympathise with their criticisms and reforms. The masses could easily be aroused to enthusiastic clamour by dramatic and specific issues such as the 'theft' of Kavirondo gold or Masai land and forced labour but mass support for the fundamental reform of the economic and political system in Kenya which had little or no effect on their material interests was more difficult to generate. Further, the cultural malaise which which followed World War One made unlikely the mass embrace of a cause, like Emancipation, by which Englishmen could prove

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25. Goldsworthy, David, "Colonial Affairs in British Politics," Oxford, D.Phil. Thesis, 1968, p.158.

to themselves their own moral superiority.

So Leys and Ross failed to generate substantial and specific reforms within Kenya by means of an aroused and informed body of British public opinion. They did succeed in making a major contribution to the growth of a keen public watchfulness against abuses of justice in Kenya; and the Colonial Office was driven partly by this opinion into declaring that Kenya was not to be a self-governing white man's country. They did contribute to the growth of a more positive concept of trusteeship - of education and welfare with reference to African needs and desires - rather than, for example, simply the development of transport facilities as urged by the Ormsby-Gore Commission in 1924. They had not relinquished the old principle of economic self-sufficiency for that of direct imperial financial aid, but they did urge the more active preparation of Africans for self-government, primarily through the extension and development of education. Leys believed that Africans in Kenya would be ready for self-government within twenty years - an unusual belief for his time.[26]

Neither man was much concerned with the issue to which The Round Table was so devoted, the future form of the Empire. Before the Second World War only isolated individuals spoke of a multi-racial Commonwealth, of granting Dominion status to protectorates or non-white colonies. By urging rapid progress towards self-government under majority rule in Kenya, the two critics - and Leys in particular -

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26. Undated memorandum by Leys in the Charles Roden Buxton Papers, 5/3/f.7-8, Rhodes House.

were in effect proposing an original idea to British Imperial theory: the inclusion of a white settler area in the Empire as a self-governing state only if its government were truly multi-racial. Until 1923, the ideal of equal rights and progression to Dominion status had applied only to white settler areas, as illustrated by the Rhodesian settlement of that year. By the end of the decade, however, the principle of a multi-racial charter of equal rights had been expressed in Lord Passfield's White Paper and in the Hilton Young Commission Report. Leys and Ross had been urging this transition throughout the decade and, through their contacts with such influential men as J. H. Oldham and with the Labour Party, were no doubt instrumental in achieving its formal declaration by 1930.

Within Britain Leys and Ross were part of a movement towards greater understanding of the needs of African society. However, even though they may have helped to shift the emphasis of policy from what the Empire needed to what Africans needed, they still referred to those needs in terms of institutions like the franchise which had helped the disadvantaged to advance in Britain. The work of anthropologists and of research institutions, such as those that J. H. Oldham had played a part in founding, was also breaking down the stereotype of African barbarism. The traditional Imperial rhetoric which set self-government of the dependencies as an eventual goal was to be fulfilled far more rapidly than most people anticipated during the inter-war years. The brave and at one time lonely voices of Leys and Ross had played a part in encouraging members of the British public - particularly

influential men of the left-wing - not only to demand a more honest and active attempt to fulfil the Trust but also to accept as just and inevitable the need and capacity of African peoples for rapid advance to self-government. It is not unlikely that their rhetoric, which preceded the nationalist demands, helped to spur African articulation of their own grievances, just as Indian protest had done. Most important, the protest that they had played a role in fostering in Britain helped to forestall the surrender of the Trust to the settlers while African protest matured.

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