

commented at its height, the famous siege of the town during the Anglo-Boer War was "not to be compared with the calamity" of the 'flu.¹⁰⁷

The epidemic followed a similar course in Kimberley's army camp to that in the town itself. This makeshift camp had been set up in 1917 in three of De Beers' Compounds on the edge of town to house men of the Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Company and the Cape Corps.¹⁰⁸ When Spanish 'flu struck, there were 2 322 men encamped there.¹⁰⁹

In the last days of September, numerous cases of influenza were reported among the camp's medical staff¹¹⁰ – presumably they had been infected by newly admitted patients. Within days, men were reporting sick all over the congested camp and the hospital and convalescent wards were quickly filled to overflowing. In the latter, the sick and the dying had to lie head-on "and it was out of the question to keep the place anythink [*sic*] like clean, or to treat the patients properly", admitted the Senior Medical Officer; as for the makeshift hospital, "it was brought to me and to all of us, how absolutely inadequate thw [*sic*] whole place was for a Hospital, . . ."¹¹¹ By 3 October almost the entire camp had 'flu;¹¹² even the guards on the VD ward had to be removed, though, as the Commanding Officer remarked huffily, no VD patient had been affected.¹¹³ Anyone still on his feet was pressed into service helping his comrades. "Am OC, messenger, bottle washer etc. etc.", the Commanding Officer informed Pretoria on 10 October.¹¹⁴

By that date the mild influenza of early October had become a dangerous killer. "The Epidemic is by no means the simple thing I was led to believe from literature . . .", the Senior Medical Officer reported with dismay on 8 October.

"All Pneumonia cases so far have ended fatally. In some cases within 12 or 14 hours from commencement of illness. I am afraid there are going to be many more deaths . . . It is absolutely essential that I be sent further help in the shape of Medical Officers and Nursing Orderlies."¹¹⁵

In response to these pleas medical and nursing help began to arrive later that week.¹¹⁶ By the time that Colonel Orenstein reached Kimberley on 13 October, the situation had improved sufficiently for three military doctors to be assigned to his medical districts scheme in the town;¹¹⁷ but it was not until he ordered all troops not in hospital to be moved to tents at the Showgrounds while the camp was thoroughly disinfected that the epidemic was halted.¹¹⁸ Thereafter, fit soldiers were sent to assist the civilian authorities in Kimberley.¹¹⁹

For all the 'flu's ravages in Kimberley, its locations and the military camp, it was the tightly-packed De Beers' Compounds which bore the brunt of the epidemic. Here it killed almost a quarter of the 11 445 Black employees within a month;

107. *Cape Argus*, 11/10/1918, p. 5.

108. SADF Archives: DC 861, file 13/23066, Chief Accountant, Kimberley to DSO, Kimberley, 22/8/1919. See too files 20/23066 and 33/23066 and *The Union of South Africa and the Great War 1914-1918 - Official History*, p. 207.

109. SADF Archives: DC 1303, file 4003, OC Troops Kimberley to Staff Officer, UIS Details, Pretoria, 4/10/1918.

110. SADF Archives: WW1 ISD 24, file 685, "Medical Situation for Week Ending 28/9/1918".

111. SADF Archives: DC 1199, file 226, Report on No. 5 General Hospital and No. 4 Convalescent Camp, Kimberley by Lt. Col. Maxwell, 19/11/1918.

112. SADF Archives: WW1 ISD 24, file 685, OC Troops Kimberley to Staff Officer, UIS Details, Pretoria, 4/10/1918.

113. *Ibid.*

114. SADF Archives: WW1 ISD 24, file 685, telegram for Concamp to Uneca, 10/10/1918.

115. SADF Archives: DC 1303, file 4003, OC No. 5 General Hospital Kimberley to DMS, 8/10/1918.

116. See p. 45.

117. Williams, p. 1.

118. SADF Archives: DC 1303, file 4501, vol. 1, Report by Lt. Col. Orenstein to CGS, 19/10/1918.

119. Lawrence, p. 26.

between 5 and 14 October the death-toll did not fall below 100 per day and on three days, 8, 9 and 10 October, it rose to over 300 per day.¹²⁰

As in the rest of Kimberley, the first cases of influenza late in September 1918 caused no anxiety. Reports from the mines on the Rand indicated that it would pass quickly, with little danger to life. "[T]he worst that could be anticipated", expected the General Manager, "was some disorganization of work."¹²¹ This was precisely what happened at Dutoitspan Mine which was forced to cease operations on 30 September.¹²² Very soon, all three Compound hospitals were literally overflowing – mattresses were put on the verandahs to accommodate more patients and at the Wesselton Compound Hospital portions of the side walls were removed to improve ventilation.¹²³ To supplement the ailing hospital staff, St. John Ambulance nurses of the De Beers Corps were called in,¹²⁴ while less serious cases were dosed at dispensaries set up in the centre of each Compound.¹²⁵

It was only when serious pneumonic complications and death began to supervene in many cases that the management recognised that Kimberley was not following the pattern of the Rand. Deaths began to mount rapidly and on 4 October, on the advice of its medical officers, the company decided to stop work on all its mines.¹²⁶ Conditions were becoming horrific: men were dropping dead in their tracks, hospital floors were covered with groaning, dying patients and corpses were piled on top of each other awaiting removal.¹²⁷ A doctor working there had seen "horrible things happen in the war, but nothing so terrible as the way that the natives died from influenza in the Compounds".¹²⁸ On 6 October the General Manager, Alpheus Williams, withdrew the St. John nurses (of which his wife was a member¹²⁹) when he saw that if he left them there any longer, "owing to the terrible death rate every one would have contracted the disease".¹³⁰ Two days later De Beers stopped burying their dead in the location cemetery and began using a site on their own property instead.¹³¹

Workers who had not yet been affected by the 'flu soon realised that if they wanted to stay alive, they had better leave the Compound deathtrap quickly. From 8 October some of them began to press for permission to go home at once, "saying that if they had to die they would rather die at home and that they also wished to go and look after their families".¹³² For a week De Beers officials prevaricated, trying to dissuade them, but at the end of this time they were even more intent on leaving; moreover, by then their number had been swollen by many who had recovered. While the De Beers management debated Orenstein's opinion that, since by this time the epidemic had virtually run its course in the Compounds and most of the country was already infected, repatriation would be "the lesser evil",¹³³ the workers came to a decision: they "had made up their minds to leave, and if De

120. Williams, p. 17.

121. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

122. DFA, 1/10/1918, p. 7.

123. Williams, p. 14.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

125. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

127. Interviews with Mr. B. Mochi and Mrs. H. L. Gibson; *South African Medical Record*, 11/1/1919, p. 8; DFA, 17/7/1971, Supplement p. 25.

128. Collier Collection: Letter from Mr L. G. Beet, 12/5/1972.

129. Williams, p. 8.

130. IEC, vol. 2, file 6: Explanatory Statement by A. F. Williams, p. 3.

131. See p. 46.

132. CA: GNLB 301, no. 2, part file 370/18/103, Report on Repatriation of Native Labourers by Chief Registrar of Natives, Kimberley, 13/11/1918.

133. CA: GNLB 301, no. 2, part file 370/18/103, telegram from Chief Registrar of Natives, Kimberley to Natlab, 18/10/1918. (This telegram is quoted in UG 15–19, Appendix J).

Beers did not agree they would break out, even if fired upon".¹³⁴ Further negotiations were of no avail and De Beers gave way. "The temper of the natives is such that no other settlement was possible, and . . . nothing can now shake their determination to go home", explained the Government's Chief Registrar of Natives in Kimberley.¹³⁵ Repatriation was begun on 18 October and during the next 2½ weeks over 5 000 survivors were sent home, the majority of them by rail.¹³⁶ Provision was made to help any who fell ill on the journey home, though De Beers tried to ensure that no one even suspected of being ill was allowed to embark.¹³⁷

A few cases did develop aboard the trains, but these men were removed and not permitted to proceed until they had recovered.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, there were several reports of the 'flu being carried to rural areas by returning De Beers miners.¹³⁹

1 808 men elected to remain at work at De Beers,¹⁴⁰ which resumed washing operations on a limited scale on 24 October.¹⁴¹ Labour was slow to return, however: it was March 1919 before working operations were back to normal¹⁴² and April before the monthly diamond output was touching its September 1918 level again.¹⁴³

Between 1 and 4 November the Board of Health carried out a house-to-house canvass of the town to discover the extent to which the town had been affected. Together with the figures kept by De Beers and the UDF these provide a detailed statistical picture of the epidemic in Kimberley. This is set out in Tables 8 and 9. Unfortunately, the results of the canvass were not tabulated so as to admit of a breakdown by age or sex, but the mortality figures from Kimberley's four hospitals do conform to the country-wide pattern of very high mortality in the 20–40 age-group.¹⁴⁴

The figures from De Beers' Compounds are suggestive. Mortality was far higher among underground workers (both Black and White) than among men who worked on the surface,¹⁴⁵ indicating a greater susceptibility on their part or a more congenial environment for man-to-man infection underground. Secondly, mortality in the Bultfontein Compound was substantially higher than in the other two Compounds;¹⁴⁶ this may well have been because the 'flu struck it after the other two and had become even more virulent by then. Certainly accommodation at Bultfontein was no more inadequate than elsewhere.¹⁴⁷ Finally, much to the dismay

134. *Ibid.*

135. *Ibid.* These glimpses of prevailing sentiments in the Compounds present a picture very different from that portrayed in a letter from "James Smith (Native), Beaconsfield", which appeared in *DFA*, 7/12/1918, p. 7. So lavish was Smith's praise for De Beers' "treatment during 'Black October' of our boys in these mines" that one has doubts about the letter's authenticity.

136. CA: GNLB 301, no. 2, part file 370/18/103, Report on Repatriation by Chief Registrar of Natives, Kimberley, 13/11/1918.

137. CA: GNLB 301, no. 2, part file 370/18/103, telegram from General Manager, De Beers, to Resident Commissioner, Maseru, 21/10/1918, enclosed in Chief Registrar of Natives to Director of Native Labour, 22/10/1918; Williams, p. 16.

138. Williams, p. 16.

139. *De Burger*, 11/11/1918, p. 3 (Letter from J. J. Claassen); IEC, vol. 2, file 6: Written Evidence by Major H. P. Tuckey, p. 3. See too chapter 5, p. 79.

140. CA: GNLB 301, no. 2, part file 370/18/103, Report on Repatriation by Chief Registrar of Natives, Kimberley, 13/11/1918.

141. *De Beers Consolidated Mines (DBCM) Ltd: 30th Annual Report for Year Ending 30/6/1918*, p. 43.

142. *DBCM Ltd: 31st Annual Report for Year Ending 30/6/1919*, p. 25.

143. *National Bank of South Africa Ltd: Monthly Trade Reports*, no. 19 (31/10/1918), p. 2 and no. 26 (31/5/1919), p. 3.

144. Williams, pp. 8–9.

145. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 13, 15.

146. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

147. *Ibid.*, p. 15; IEC, vol. 2, file 6: Explanatory Statement by A. F. Williams, p. 4.

TABLE 8
THE SPANISH INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC IN KIMBERLEY - INCIDENCE AND MORTALITY
BY RACE AND AREA

		Population	Cases ¹	Cases per 100 of population	Deaths	Deaths per 100 of population
Town	W	17 529	10 844	62	543	3,1
	"C"	8 745	6 481	74	567	6,48
	B	3 013	1 749	58	238	7,9
Locations	W	—	—	—	—	—
	"C"	—	—	—	—	—
	B	9 934	8 126	82	571	5,75
De Beers compounds	W	—	—	—	—	—
	"C"	—	—	—	—	—
	B	11 445	?	?	2 564	22,4
Military camp	W	} 2 322 ²	277 ³	} 86	19 ⁴	} 9,2
	"C"		1 580 ³		187 ⁴	
	B		138 ³		7 ⁴	
Kimberley (all areas)		52 988	?	?	4 696	8,86

W = White

"C" = "Coloured"

B = Black

Sources: All statistics except those numbered 1-4 from Williams, p. 11.

1: from Williams, p. 9.

2: from SADF Archives: DC 1303, file 4003, OC Troops Kimberley to Staff Officer UIS Details, Pretoria, 4/10/1918.

3 and 4: from UG 15-'19, Appendix G, p. 35.

TABLE 9
THE SPANISH INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC IN KIMBERLEY — DEATHS IN HOSPITALS BY AGE

Age	Kimberley Hospital	Belgrave Hospital	Training College Hospital	Beaconsfield Hospital	Total	% of all Hospital deaths
Under 20	22	3	1	—	26	7,1
20-30	112	25	9	—	146	40,0
31-40	104	19	9	1	133	36,4
41-50	29	11	4	—	44	12,1
51-60	7	5	1	—	13	3,6
60+	2	—	1	—	3	0,8

Source: Williams, pp. 8-9. (The figures probably refer to White deaths only).

of De Beers officials, full inoculation with Lister's pneumococcal vaccine provided no special protection against the pneumonic complications which followed Spanish 'flu.¹⁴⁸

Yet, none of these features adequately explains why De Beers' Compounds were such a deathtrap during the epidemic, more so than anywhere else in South Africa. The answer may lie in the point made in the opening paragraph of this chapter: Kimberley seems to have been infected by the virulent second wave of the 'flu, the only town in the Union with a heavy concentration of young men in overcrowded compounds to have suffered this fate without a preceding mild first wave having bestowed some immunity. In its mines and compounds, therefore, the second wave found optimal conditions to spread and intensify among thousands of completely defenceless young men of the most vulnerable age-group.

Deeply shocked by the staggering number of deaths in its Compounds, especially as this compared so unfavourably with other mines in the country,¹⁴⁹ the De Beers management realised that improvements were imperative; they could not afford the risk of another devastating epidemic like the Spanish 'flu. Amidst general applause, the chairman promised the Annual General Meeting in December 1918 that

"no expense will be spared to make the Compounds, if possible, more comfortable and healthy for the natives than those occupied previous to the Epidemic".¹⁵⁰

No mention was made of improving conditions underground.

Compound managers were sent to investigate conditions on other mines¹⁵¹ and plans were made to install water-borne sewerage, rebuild outdated Compound accommodation and replace the inadequate Compound hospitals with one large general hospital.¹⁵² This hospital was erected,¹⁵³ but it has not been possible to ascertain whether the other intentions were carried out or if they were shelved in the same way as the recommendation that the men be sold cooked food instead of being left to prepare their own.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps the initial sense of urgency waned after a mild recurrence of influenza in 1919 was swiftly and effectively stamped out.¹⁵⁵

White residents and authorities in Kimberley itself were equally shaken by "Black October", with its high mortality and revelations of appalling living conditions in the town and its locations. The passing of the epidemic let loose long accumulated criticism of local conditions which were thought to have contributed to the disaster: the divided responsibility for public health, the absence of a municipal ambulance, overcrowded and dirty slums, insanitary locations, dusty streets, the pail system of sewage-removal, the inefficient collection of slop water and refuse and the proliferation of flies in the town. "It is acknowledged that the appalling mortality during the Influenza Epidemic was primarily due to overcrowding", ran a well-timed Board of Executors advertisement. "Fortify yourself against a recurrence of the disease by Buying or Building Your Own House."¹⁵⁶

From Resident Magistrate¹⁵⁷ and Mayor¹⁵⁸ down, calls proliferated for these

148. Williams, pp. 15-16, 20; IEC, vol. 2, file 6: Evidence of Dr. Pearson, pp. 2-3.

149. See chapter 1, pp. 2-3.

150. *DBCM Ltd: 30th Annual Report 1917-1918*, p. 42.

151. IEC, vol. 2, file 6: Explanatory Statement by A. F. Williams, p. 9.

152. *DBCM Ltd: 30th Annual Report 1917-1918*, p. 42.

153. *Johannesburg Municipality: Council Minutes, July-December 1919*, p. 562 (Report of Delegation re Native Housing).

154. *Ibid.*; IEC, vol. 2, file 6: Explanatory Statement by A. F. Williams, p. 9.

155. *DBCM Ltd: 31st Annual Report 1918-1919*, p. 34.

156. *DFA*, 2/12/1918, p. 1.

157. *DFA*, 3/4/1919, p. 6; 26/4/1919, p. 7.

158. *DFA*, 8/11/1918, p. 7; 3/4/1919, p. 6.

conditions to be remedied at once: a public meeting insisted that the City Council secure De Beers' co-operation in tackling these problems,¹⁵⁹ ratepayers' associations spoke of the need to formulate a general betterment scheme for the town,¹⁶⁰ Alpheus Williams produced a detailed statement of what improvements were necessary and what these would cost¹⁶¹ and municipal officials repeated what they had been telling the council for years about the need for urgent reforms.¹⁶² As one town councillor put it, "it was time they did something to make Kimberley a better town to live in".¹⁶³

Municipal reform started with a flourish because fresh cases of influenza were reported at the gaol late in November 1918.¹⁶⁴ The locations,¹⁶⁵ the gaol-hospital¹⁶⁶ and Malay Camp¹⁶⁷ were thoroughly cleansed and disinfected, £500 was set aside to buy a municipal ambulance,¹⁶⁸ local MLAs were approached to have the Board of Health superseded by the Municipality as the local health authority¹⁶⁹ and schemes to erect houses for Blacks¹⁷⁰ and Whites¹⁷¹ and build a completely new location "on Sanitary lines"¹⁷² were discussed in Council.

Yet, much of this early promise was not fulfilled. In the face of vested interests, bureaucratic delay, Kimberley's growing post-war financial difficulties,¹⁷³ its heavy dependence on the falling diamond-market¹⁷⁴ and the emergence of other post-war problems, the post-flu resolve to bring about reforms faded quickly. A solution to the housing shortage "depended largely upon whether the Council could secure money from the Government or by a general loan", the Mayor told a visiting delegation in August 1919.¹⁷⁵ That night he showed how far his 1918 reformism had evaporated when he reminded an election meeting that the Influenza Epidemic Commission had concluded that,

"whilst admittedly there was [*sic*] so-called houses here in Kimberley not fit to live in, yet that was not the direct cause of the influenza, . . . Kimberley sanitary arrangements, or want of sanitary arrangements, had nothing to do with this . . ."¹⁷⁶

A few days later the town's sanitary inspector made it clear that shelving housing schemes meant no more dilapidated buildings could be condemned, "owing to the fact that tenants would thus be de housed and overcrowding increased".¹⁷⁷ Sanitary conditions also remained unremedied all through 1919 – one group of ratepayers

159. CACT: Kimberley City Council Minute Book 18, p. 60.

160. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

161. Williams, pp. 23–44.

162. DFA, 5/2/1919, p. 7; Williams, pp. 38–44; KPL: Kimberley City Council Archives, file 660, dossier T38, Report by Sanitary Inspector to Kimberley City Council Sanitary Committee, 11/3/1919.

163. DFA, 8/11/1918, p. 7.

164. KPL: Board of Health Minute Book 1914–1922, p. 47; DFA, 3/12/1918, p. 5.

165. KPL: Kimberley City Council Archives, file 685, dossier T5, Report by Superintendent Native Locations to Kimberley City Council Locations Committee, 18/11/1918.

166. IEC, vol. 2, file 6: Evidence of Dr. Jones, p. 3.

167. DFA, 30/10/1918, p. 7.

168. CACT: Kimberley City Council Minute Book 18, p. 155.

169. *Ibid.*, p. 189; KPL: Kimberley City Council Archives, Town Clerk's Letter Book, vol. 59, p. 98.

170. *The Friend*, 6/2/1919, p. 5.

171. CACT: Kimberley City Council Minute Book 18, p. 219.

172. *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 118.

173. *Ibid.*, p. 539f., Preface to Estimates, 30/12/1919; CACT: 3/KIM, vol. 1/1/1/17, p. 219f., Report on Estimates, 30/12/1920.

174. M. Roberts: *Kimberley – Turbulent City*, p. 370; H. A. Chilvers: *The Story of De Beers*, pp. 222–223.

175. *Johannesburg Municipality: Council Minutes*, July–December 1919, p. 563 (Report of Delegation re Native Housing).

176. DFA, 29/8/1919, p. 7.

177. DFA, 4/9/1919, p. 7.

was so incensed by this neglect despite the lesson of "Black October" that they complained directly to the Public Health Department in Pretoria which sent a medical officer to investigate.¹⁷⁸ Even the intended purchase of an ambulance was not carried through; 1921 found the City Council asking De Beers if it might use theirs in case of emergencies.¹⁷⁹ To cap these negative results, the City Council's bid to replace the Board of Health as the local health authority was also thwarted, possibly because of the opposition of De Beers which would have lost their two representatives on the Board. The new Public Health Act of 1919 specifically provided for this anomalous body to continue its responsibility for public health (excluding the supervision of water, food, sanitation and housing) in the Kimberley District.¹⁸⁰ It retained these functions until 1977 when it ceased to exist.

Even where the 'flu had sharply underlined the danger to White health posed by unhealthy conditions in Malay Camp and the locations, the implementation of reform was slow and meagre. Many Whites had called for the demolition of Malay Camp after the epidemic – in a nearby street eight people had died, "and no wonder", protested one old resident, "they were in such close proximity to the Malay Camp that they caught the infection".¹⁸¹ Yet it survived till after World War II. Radical improvements were promised for the locations too – the City Council, "in consequence of what they saw during the epidemic, came to the conclusion that the present conditions of the three locations . . . were such that they must not exist much longer", the Resident Magistrate told a meeting at the Native Brotherhood Institute in April 1919.¹⁸² Four years later, "comprehensive reform" had yielded a few health visitors (but still no municipal dispensary)¹⁸³ and an expansion of the existing locations at their already unsatisfactory sites,¹⁸⁴ despite White protests that this would bring them "in too close proximity to the existing European dwellings, viz. 750 feet", which would create inter alia, "a menace to the Health of the City".¹⁸⁵

Not all was failed reform and short memories, however. A housing scheme for Whites was finally approved and in 1922, with the aid of a Government loan of nearly £51 000 in terms of the 1920 Housing Act, 85 houses were erected.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the Council's four-year delay over this scheme and the latter's eventual modesty stand in sharp contrast to the speed with which De Beers set aside £100 000 as housing loans for its White employees.¹⁸⁷ As for Black housing, it was not until 1923 that a loan of just over £30 000 was approved for the construction of 223 location houses.¹⁸⁸

In addition, the 'flu had demonstrated so conclusively how vulnerable the pail-system of sewage-removal was to a sudden loss of labour, "that we can never feel secure against the danger of dislocation in some form or other", argued the

178. *DFA*, 20/5/1919, p. 7; 29/5/1919, p. 7; 13/6/1919, p. 7; 20/6/1919, p. 7; 9/7/1919, p. 7.

179. *CAC*: 3/KIM, vol. 1/1/1/17, p. 407.

180. Act 36 of 1919, section 153.

181. *DFA*, 14/11/1918, p. 7.

182. *DFA*, 3/4/1919, p. 6.

183. *City of Kimberley: Mayor's Minute 1919–1922*, p. 88.

184. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 69; KPL: Kimberley City Council Archives, file 733, dossier T25, Minutes of Housing Sub-Committee Meetings, 26/1/1921 and 1/2/1921.

185. KPL: Kimberley City Council Archives, Unnumbered file, "Housing Scheme – no. 2 Native Location Extension and Petition Against It", copy of Petition to Sir Frederick [sic] De Waal, 22/3/1923.

186. *City of Kimberley: Mayor's Minute 1919–1922*, pp. 13, 69; *CAC*: 3/KIM, vol. 1/1/1/17, pp. 358, 430; Union of South Africa: *Report of Central Housing Board for 1924*, UG 31–25, p. 9.

187. H. A. Chilvers: *The Story of De Beers*, p. 220; *DBCM Ltd: 31st Annual Report 1918–1919*, pp. 38–39; *32nd Annual Report for Year Ending 30/6/1920*, p. 37.

188. UG 31–25, p. 12.

City Sanitary Inspector.¹⁸⁹ The threat to public health that such a disruption entailed had become all too clear during the epidemic.¹⁹⁰ After this, no-one needed convincing as to the benefits of the long-contemplated system of water-borne sewerage. However, a prerequisite for this was municipal control of the town's water supply, then still in the hands of a private concern, the Kimberley Waterworks Company. The Kimberley City Council finally began negotiations with the company in 1920 and concluded purchase the following year.¹⁹¹ Thereafter, it embarked on an extensive sewerage-construction programme in the town and its White suburbs.¹⁹² The locations made progress too – a pail removal system was introduced there.¹⁹³

In short, the 'flu did prompt Kimberley to tackle a few of its longstanding health problems, but it left many more untouched, except by good intentions and shelved blueprints.

189. Williams, p. 39.

190. See p. 44.

191. *City of Kimberley: Mayor's Minute 1919-1922*, pp. 4, 68.

192. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

193. *Ibid.*, p. 87 and *City of Kimberley: Mayor's Minute 1916-1919*, p. 102.

CHAPTER 4

BLOEMFONTEIN

In 1918 Bloemfontein was a town of nearly 31 000 civilians, with a large military contingent encamped at nearby Tempe. Of the resident population, 14 767 were White,¹ 16 000 Black and "Coloured".² Although the town's population had grown very rapidly since the Anglo-Boer War,³ it was widely believed that its invigorating climate, general cleanliness and apparent lack of extensive slums were proof against any serious outbreak of disease. To bolster this belief it could point to an average White infant mortality-rate of 70,6 per 1 000 over the last three years and a general White mortality-rate of 7,71 per 1 000 for 1917-18.⁴ Nor were these figures a temporary phenomenon; since 1895 Bloemfontein had consistently had the lowest urban death-rate in South Africa during peacetime.⁵ Well might the Bloemfontein-based *The People's Weekly* write in 1918 of "our unchallenged reputation as the cleanest and healthiest city in the Union".⁶

Thus, when late in September 1918 reports began to be received of outbreaks of Spanish 'flu on the Rand and in Cape Town, Bloemfontein was not unduly alarmed. These were reported to be mild in nature and, in any event, how dangerous could what *The People's Weekly* blithely called "our old friend the ordinary common or garden influenza",⁷ be? Nor was there excessive concern when mild cases began to appear in the Waaihoek location and in the town itself, probably brought there from Kimberley.⁸

The local daily, *The Friend*, typified the prevailing popular attitude when it spoke almost flippantly of the appearance of "the new and fashionable disease known as 'Spanish influenza.'" Even a notice on 4 October by the OFS Assistant MOH, Dr. P. Targett-Adams, gave no cause for alarm, merely warning that the disease was highly infectious and was best prevented by remaining in the open air as much as possible.¹⁰

Within a matter of days, however, the secure complacency in the town gave way to growing anxiety as the virulence and extent of the 'flu increased sharply. "The onset was extremely violent and very sudden and reached its summit in a few days", Targett-Adams later recalled.¹¹ By 8 October hundreds were laid up in the locations, where officials and volunteers were already working hard to help the sick,¹² while, in an effort to keep the disease from White Bloemfontein, White residents were counselled to keep their Black servants "at their master's house, as they are most susceptible and pass the infection to the whites".¹³ This and other

1. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: "Memorandum on progress of epidemic in Bloemfontein submitted by J. P. Logan" (hereafter cited as Logan), Attached Table. A significant number of these Whites were English-speaking (see Union of South Africa: *Third Census of the Population of South Africa — Part III: Official Languages Spoken (Europeans)*, UG 35-23, pp. 22-23).

2. IEC: Logan, Attached Table.

3. K. Schoeman: *Bloemfontein — Die Ontstaan van 'n Stad 1846-1946*, pp. 184, 218, 231.

4. *Municipality of Bloemfontein: Abstract of Treasurer's Accounts for 1921-2*, p. 117.

5. *The Star*, 29/10/1918.

6. *The People's Weekly*, 9/11/1918, Editorial.

7. *The People's Weekly*, 12/10/1918, Editorial.

8. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of J. P. Logan, pp. 1, 2; Evidence of Dr. P. Targett-Adams, p. 1.

9. *The Friend*, 5/10/1918, p. 7. See too *Grey University College Magazine*, 1919, p. 26; Interview with Miss A. Helmbold and Collier Collection: Letter from Mr. E. Horn, May 1972.

10. Union of South Africa: *Report of the Influenza Epidemic Commission*, UG 15-19, Appendix I.

11. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of Dr. P. Targett-Adams, p. 1.

12. IEC: Logan, Entries for 7/10/1918 and 8/10/1918; *The Friend*, 7/10/1918, p. 4.

13. *The Friend*, 7/10/1918, p. 4.

advice offered by *The Friend*¹⁴ were of little use, however: doctors and pharmacists were soon being inundated with requests for help¹⁵ and on 10 October the National Hospital announced that it was full and in urgent need of volunteers to help "in any capacity".¹⁶

As the position steadily worsened, Bloemfonteiners began to appreciate the quite extraordinary danger posed by the disease enveloping the town. Reluctantly abandoning its belief in Bloemfontein's immunity to epidemics ("By that time they realised what they were up against," explained the Town Clerk),¹⁷ on 8 October the Municipality decided to open two soup-kitchens cum-dispensaries (one at the Town Hall and one at Waaihoek) for those families too sick or too poor to care for themselves, while house-to-house visits were begun to ascertain the extent of the 'flu and where help was needed most.¹⁸ An appeal was also made for no indoor gatherings to be held and for bioscopes and other places of entertainment to be avoided. The Vaudette open-air theatre was quick to try and cash in on its distinctive character by stressing that doctors were unanimous that fresh air was the best preventative and cure,¹⁹ but, in the face of strong Council disapproval, it was compelled to close too.²⁰

The house-to-house census of the town and the locations confirmed the Municipality's fears: over 4 000 cases were discovered, 3 000 of these in the locations.²¹ Moreover, deaths from Spanish 'flu began to mount alarmingly: 30 on 10 October, 44 on 11 October and 72 on 12 October.²² While the Mayor spoke gravely of the "serious menace threatening the health of the community"²³ and tried to persuade the Railways to forbid any more Blacks to travel to or through Bloemfontein lest they be 'flu carriers,²⁴ the Municipality attempted to still panic by quoting the "considered opinion of the medical profession" to the effect that, "There is no real cause for alarm. . . . If one considers the number of cases that have been sick, the death rate is really trifling."²⁵ Nevertheless, some townsfolk began to take additional precautions like boiling drinking water²⁶ and drawing blinds "to keep the germs out".²⁷

In the town regular activity was beginning to falter for want of labour. By the end of the week in which schools were instructed not to re-open after the short vacation,²⁸ *The People's Weekly* was describing Bloemfontein's plight vividly:

" . . . our servants dropping off in scores, the stores being closed from shortage of staffs, the railways, post office, public services, and workshops becoming disorganised, natives dropping dead in the street, and even the municipal health officers, and private physicians themselves attacked, and the mortality growing daily to an alarming degree. . . ."

14. *The Friend*, 9/10/1918, p. 4.

15. IEC: Logan, Entry for 7/10/1918.

16. *The Friend*, 11/10/1918, p. 4.

17. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of J. P. Logan, p. 1.

18. IEC: Logan, Entry for 8/10/1918; *The Friend*, 9/10/1918, p. 4; OFS Archives (hereafter OFSA): MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Minutes of Public Health Committee Meeting, 9/10/1918.

19. *The Friend*, 10/10/1918, p. 4.

20. *The Friend*, 12/10/1918, p. 3; 14/10/1918, p. 4.

21. IEC: Logan, Entry for 10/10/1918.

22. IEC: Logan, Attached Table.

23. *The Friend*, 10/10/1918, p. 4.

24. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Telegram from Health, Pretoria to Mayor Bloemfontein, 12/10/1918.

25. *The Friend*, 12/10/1918, p. 4.

26. Interviews with Mrs. M. Birt, Miss A. Helmbold and Mr. C. Kohler.

27. Interview with Mrs. M. Birt.

28. *The Friend*, 7/10/1918, p. 4; 12/10/1918, p. 4.

It observed that, "All the week the hand of the disease has lain heavily on the town, and so uncanny was the stillness in the streets and shops that we might have been in a city of the dead."²⁹

In these ominous circumstances the Municipality was compelled to extend its relief organization and put it onto a more systematic footing. Several bureaux were set up, each to deal with a specific facet of relief and assistance; all fell under the overall direction of a Central Bureau which remained in permanent session so it could deal with problems as soon as they arose.³⁰ The public were kept informed of the latest developments via a daily "Official Bulletin" in *The Friend*, while from 14 October a "report and discussion" meeting for the public was held every day at 5p.m.³¹ It is clear that the municipal authorities realized that the battle against the 'flu had a psychological dimension too and that one way morale could be kept up was by seeming to take the public into their confidence. Likewise, to still rampant rumours about who had died, from 18 October *The Friend* began to publish a daily list of White 'flu victims. As part of this counter-offensive, *The Friend* itself seems to have refrained from criticizing the Municipality's efforts and assumed the role of semi-official mouthpiece for the duration.

As for the actual rendering of assistance, house-to-house visits were put on a daily basis,³² businesses were urged to keep shorter hours so their employees could care for their own families,³³ volunteers were called for to do the housework of those women too ill to do their own³⁴ and, to spare doctors, Dr. Targett-Adams issued a notice carefully distinguishing between severe cases (which needed a doctor at once) and milder ones which could be treated according to the advice he outlined.³⁵ Convalescents were sternly warned not to get up too soon.³⁶

To overcome the lack of hospital accommodation for 'flu patients, temporary hospitals were opened at Eunice Girls' School (for "women of the better classes" only)³⁷, at the Railway Institute for Railway employees³⁸ and at the half-finished Waaihoek Cathedral.³⁹ Male civilians were also admitted to the Military Hospital at Tempe⁴⁰ and two further dispensaries and food depots – later turned into temporary hospitals – were opened at the Kaffirfontein and No. 3 locations.⁴¹ White children with 'flu were sent to the Belmont Isolation Hospital,⁴² while a temporary crèche for those White 'flu orphans not taken in by private families and

29. *The People's Weekly*, 12/10/1918, Editorial.

30. IEC: Logan, Entry for 10/10/1918; IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Written statement by J. A. Ashburnham, p. 1.

31. *The Friend*, 14/10/1918, p. 4.

32. OFSA: MBL 4/3/140, file 101/1/17, Minutes of Special Meeting of Town Council, 11/10/1918, p. 1; *The Friend*, 12/10/1918, p. 4.

33. *The Friend*, 14/10/1918, p. 4.

34. *The Friend*, 14/10/1918, p. 4; IEC: Logan, Entries for 12/10/1918 and 13/10/1918.

35. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of Dr. P. Targett-Adams, Appendix; *The Friend*, 10/10/1918, p. 4.

36. *The Friend*, 12/10/1918, p. 4.

37. OFSA: MBL 4/3/140, file 101/1/17, Acting Director of Education to Town Clerk Bloemfontein, 12/10/1918.

38. *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, p. 5; IEC: Logan, Entry for 14/10/1918.

39. *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, p. 4; *Quarterly Paper of Dioceses of Bloemfontein and of Kimberley and Kuruman*, no. 203, 20/1/1919, p. 6; OFSA: Accession 510 (The White Book – Diary of the Community of St. Michael and All Angels, Bloemfontein, 1909–1939), vol. II, p. 67; IEC: Logan, Entry for 11/10/1918; Interviews with Mrs. M. Bogacu, Mr. J. Hodes, Mr. A. Nathan and Mr. H. Venter.

40. *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, pp. 5, 6; IEC: Logan, Entry for 14/10/1918; OFSA: MBL 4/3/140, file 101/1/17, Staff Officer for Medical Services to ADMS, Bloemfontein, 21/10/1918; SADF Archives: DC 1305, file M4502 B, Telegram from ADMS, Bloemfontein to DMS, 15/10/1918; UG 15–19, Appendix G, pp. 32, 35.

41. IEC: Logan, Entry for 11/10/1918; *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, p. 6.

42. *The Friend*, 22/10/1918, p. 4; IEC: Logan, Entry for 22/10/1918.

those whose families were too ill to care for them was opened at Oranje School.⁴³

To run this extensive organization volunteers were exhorted to come forward. "Generally, no man or woman in this time of trial has any other more important duty than helping the sick and the needy", declared the Mayor in a public appeal on 12 October. "Won't you come and help us save lives?"⁴⁴ Initially, response was slow, as many people, apprehensive of infection, kept indoors or fled the town⁴⁵ or were too pre-occupied with caring for their own family and friends.⁴⁶ Urgent appeals to supplement the hard core of "our heroic workers"⁴⁷ soon became a regular feature of Official Bulletins.⁴⁸

These energetic initiatives and actions by the Municipality both bolstered morale and brought into being an all-embracing and coherent system of relief and counter-attack, "a sort of *ad hoc* Soviet system", as one writer later described it.⁴⁹ Something concrete was being done and the whirl of intense activity acted as a deterrent to morbid resignation and fearful passivity in the face of the epidemic. Would-be volunteers were confidently assured that there was little danger of infection to them, for "The enthusiasm and vigour of the workers so far have been a powerful antidote."⁵⁰ In retrospect the Town Clerk observed that there had been

"Unlimited support to Council authorities in doing anything for the common good. At no time in the history of this town has the Town Council been so absolute. It merely had to issue requests and vigorous workers saw to it that no one dared to refuse."⁵¹

Commending their zeal, the Mayor declared that

"in no other town was there such complete or rapid or more effective organisation framed whereby the whole of the energies of the 'well' were brought to the help of the sick and dying."⁵²

Probably it was in Bloemfontein's locations that the Municipality's counter-offensive was most authoritarian. Here it was not a case of appeals and exhortations, winning confidence and coaxing people to co-operate. Instead, orders were issued and decisions taken without much consultation by the Municipal authorities as they brushed aside anything which they perceived as an obstacle to the successful prosecution of their attack on the centre of the epidemic. The Chief Executive Officer of the relief organization in the locations, the City Engineer, made no bones about their *modus operandi*. He told the Influenza Epidemic Commission:

"They commandeered everything they could find, if people wanted any explanation he told them to go to him later on."⁵³

Councillor Arthur Barlow who was in supreme control of the campaign in the locations related how, with the assistance of the police, they had commandeered Blacks as grave-diggers:

"... they got 10 motor cars and took every native they came across, and made them bury the dead. . . . The boys he had commandeered were paid 4/- a day and their food."⁵⁴

43. *The Friend*, 18/10/1918, p. 4; 21/10/1918, p. 4.

44. *The Friend*, 12/10/1918, p. 4.

45. Interview with Mr. H. Venter; E. Buys: *Triomf van 'n Reddingsdaad*, p. 12.

46. *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, p. 5; *The People's Weekly*, 2/11/1918, p. 3.

47. *The Friend*, 16/10/1918, p. 4.

48. *The Friend*, 14/10/1918, p. 4; 15/10/1918, p. 6; 16/10/1918, p. 4 and Editorial.

49. W. H. Dawson: *South Africa - People, Places and Problems*, p. 252.

50. *The Friend*, 14/10/1918, p. 4.

51. IEC: Logan, Entry for 14/10/1918.

52. Central Archives, Pretoria: GG 961, file 34/784, D. A. Thomson to Major Fitzroy, 31/7/1919.

53. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of A. Stewart, p. 1.

54. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of A. Barlow, p. 1.

These grave-diggers “literally lived at the cemetery”,⁵⁵ coming home only at nights after spending the day burying the scores of Black corpses brought there under tarpaulins aboard open carts.⁵⁶

In the locations themselves White volunteers gave help zealously. Some nursed the ‘flu patients forced by a lack of beds to lie on the floor of Waaihoek Cathedral hospital;⁵⁷ others toured the locations, distributing medicine, food and soup to the sick. Sardonically, *De Volkstem’s* Bloemfontein correspondent observed how

“... die witmense hier krij toen ’n bevliegung van broederlikheid en rij soep aan naar die skepels, dat ’t ’n aardigheid was. Waaihoek kon swem in die sop!”⁵⁸

Some location residents were deeply impressed by this altruism. Many years later a prominent Black journalist at the time spoke of a spirit of brotherhood

“... that was never known before in Bloemfontein. Whites were sympathetic and became friends and brothers to the people in the location. It seemed as if everyone in the town took an interest in what could be done.”⁵⁹

Others were suspicious of the unwonted attention and were reluctant to heed the advice given or use the medicine prescribed, preferring the familiar “bujalwa jura setswana” (so-called Bantu Beer).⁶⁰ White volunteers interpreted such attitudes as fatalism and tradition-bound obstinacy. “They do not seem to care whether they get well or not”, remarked *The Friend* uncomprehendingly,⁶¹ while several White relief workers fulminated against the widespread Black reluctance to go to hospital or to take medicine.⁶²

As a result of this, of ignorance as to preventive measures, of crowded living conditions and of a low state of resistance, mortality in the locations continued at a very high level: between 10 October and 18 October, when deaths there reached 90 in one day, 621 deaths were recorded.⁶³

“People were dying like flies”, recalled a woman who lived in Waaihoek at the time. “Brides collapsed at the altar.” She remembered that there was no time for coffins, single graves or funeral services – people were buried in hessian sacks which were dumped in trenches on top of each other.⁶⁴ A contemporary of hers, Selby Msimang, then editor of a local Black newspaper, was amazed that the disease was “so vicious, so violent — it took very little time. . . . You would talk to a man in the morning and in the afternoon he’d be flat [i.e. dead].”⁶⁵ Many fled to try and escape the disease; one group sought safety at a spot on the edge of Waaihoek which they dubbed “Mahlomola” (“grief”) as “there was an exodus of grief into that area”.⁶⁶ The name remains today. Yet, the Municipality’s flurry of vigoros

55. Interview with Mrs. M. Bogacu.

56. Interviews with Mr. S. Daubney and Mr. H. S. Msimang; Letter to author from Mrs. E. Aldworth, October 1978.

57. Interviews with Mr. A. Nathan and Mr. H. Venter; L. F. Swanepoel: “The Origin and Early History of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 1886–1920”, p. 147.

58. *De Volkstem*, 29/10/1918, p. 4.

59. Interview with Mr. H. S. Msimang.

60. Interview with Mrs. M. Bogacu. Apparently many Whites were convinced of the value of this brew too and tried to buy bottles of it from local Blacks (interviews with Mrs. Bogacu and Mr. H. S. Msimang).

61. *The Friend*, 11/10/1918, p. 4.

62. For instance, *The Friend* 11/10/1918, p. 4; 18/10/1918, p. 4; IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of A. Barlow, p. 1.

63. IEC: Logan, Attached Table.

64. Interview with Mrs. M. Bogacu.

65. Interview with Mr. H. S. Msimang.

66. Interview with Mrs. M. Bogacu. See too B. L. Leshoai: “Mahlomola” in R. Harvey (ed.): *Six Short Stories*, p. 35.

measures failed to check the epidemic. It continued to rage virulently and by the middle of October the town had "the aspect of a besieged city".⁶⁷ To this lack of instant success the municipal authorities responded in the only way they knew: redoubling their efforts and taking even more facets of the campaign under their direct control, "ignoring all considerations but the common good", as the Mayor put it, "knowing that they had the public behind them . . . [and] leaving legal remedies to stand over. No powers were given to the municipality; they took them."⁶⁸ In short, the methods used in Waaihoek were being applied to the town proper. It was necessary "all the time to 'carry on'", wrote a local student, "because wavering meant going under".⁶⁹ Looking back on this period, *The Friend* concluded:

"It was largely because the Town Council set conventional usages at defiance and even saw fit at times to ignore the strict letter of the law, that the Bloemfontein Municipality was able to act so promptly and effectively. . . ."⁷⁰

To try to make the most effective use of the reduced number of doctors,⁷¹ it was arranged that one of those who was convalescing would give advice by telephone,⁷² while nurses doing house-to-house calls were asked to determine which of the cases they saw really did need a doctor.⁷³ The doctors themselves were opposed to dividing the town into medical districts as in Kimberley,⁷⁴ but in order to rationalize their activities, all calls for doctors were channelled into a central Medical Bureau which passed them on to whoever was available if the doctor asked for was too busy.⁷⁵ Despite this arrangement, doctors found themselves hailed by people standing outside their houses, imploring them to attend to 'flu-stricken members of their family.⁷⁶ To ease the shortage of nurses twelve German nurses from Tanganyika who had been interned at Tempe were allowed to help in the town,⁷⁷ while households free of 'flu were requested to display a white cloth to minimize unnecessary visits by relief workers.⁷⁸ Free inoculation with anti-'flu vaccine from Johannesburg was begun on 21 October,⁷⁹ almost at the same time as extra medical and nursing assistance began to reach the town from elsewhere in South Africa.⁸⁰

The Municipality also intervened after it had become clear that the price which pharmacists were charging for anti-'flu medicine was making it too expensive for poorer citizens to buy. It persuaded doctors to settle on three uniform prescriptions and then tried to buy up the necessary components from the town's pharmacists or even the University's Chemistry Department. Using these, it had stock mixtures made up and supplied to pharmacists at cost. Those customers who could not pay

67. *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, p. 5.

68. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of D. A. Thomson, p. 4.

69. *Grey University College Magazine*, 1919, p. 26.

70. *The Friend*, 14/1/1919, Editorial.

71. *The Friend*, 19/10/1918, Editorial, which spoke of half of the town's twelve doctors being laid up with 'flu.

72. IEC: Logan, Entry for 15/10/1918.

73. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Minutes of Public Health Committee, 1917–1919, Report of Lady Health Visitor for October 1918 (attached to Minutes of 6/11/1918 Meeting).

74. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of D. A. Thomson, pp. 2, 4.

75. IEC: Logan, Entries for 16/10/1918 to 19/10/1918; *The Friend*, 21/10/1918, p. 4.

76. Collier Collection: Letter from Mrs. J. Pritchard, 14/5/1972.

77. *The Friend*, 18/10/1918, p. 4; 19/10/1918, p. 4; *The People's Weekly*, 2/11/1918, p. 3; Letter to author from Mrs. A. Frayne, February 1981; Interview with Mr. C. Kohler.

78. *The Friend*, 17/10/1918, p. 4; 21/10/1918, p. 4; Interviews with Mr. J. Coleman and Mr. S. Daubney.

79. IEC: Logan, Entry for 21/10/1918; Interview with Mr. S. Daubney.

80. IEC: Logan, Entry for 20/10/1918. These were volunteer nurses and doctors sent by the Department of Public Health – see ch. 6, p. 109.

even these prices were supplied free at the Town Hall.⁸¹ A teenage relief-worker at the time remembered, "If I wanted a gallon of 'flu mixture, they just said, 'Take it, take it' . . . They only wanted to know when I'd bring the bottle back."⁸²

Not surprisingly, none of the pharmacists' indignation at this high-handed action was reflected in the "Official Bulletin", which referred to how they had, "in a most public-spirited manner, put their services at the disposal of the health authorities for the common good".⁸³ However, when the Influenza Epidemic Commission visited Bloemfontein, the secretary of the local Pharmaceutical Society complained angrily that

"the Council seemed to have the idea that they had to run the epidemic, . . . The Town Clerk might be an excellent organiser, but he did not know how to run a chemist's business."⁸⁴

Similarly, the Municipality gave serious thought to assuming control of the flagging undertakers' service, but finally it decided to assist the two local firms by commandeering Black labour to dig graves and by securing hearses from the UDF and coffins from Railways carpenters.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, at the peak of the epidemic waggons had to be sent through the town to collect bodies,⁸⁶ while those residents with their own cars took their dead to the cemetery themselves.⁸⁷ "What made such a terrible impression on me was the cars with [three or four] coffins", recalled a woman over sixty years later.

"The streets were quiet and then came this hooting. People stopped and removed their hats as they came by. It was horrible – I have that in my mind still to this day."⁸⁸

At the cemetery burial followed burial. An Anglican minister was even assigned a room at the Superintendent's house there so that he could be available to conduct funerals at all hours.⁸⁹ For an elder of the Dutch Reformed Church,

"Dit het vir my gesmaak of die end van die mensdom daar was. Daar was meer begrafnisse op een dag as in gewone omstandighede in 'n hele maand . . . Dit het gelyk of die aarde oopgeploeg was."⁹⁰

To allay fears among the poor that some 'flu victims would receive only pauper burials, the Municipality guaranteed a "decent" burial for all Whites, with payment to be settled once the epidemic had passed.⁹¹

The constant refrain as the Municipality took on commitment after commitment was for more helpers.⁹² The (White) public was asked to inform the Enrolment Bureau of any able-bodied people not yet giving assistance so that they could be approached to do so,⁹³ while non-essential businesses were requested to close for three days to free their employees for relief work. "Public opinion demands that

81. *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, p. 6; 16/10/1918, p. 4; IEC: Logan, Entry for 11/10/1918; IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of F. Carter, p. 1; Evidence of J. P. Logan, p. 2; OFSA: MBL 4/3/140, file 101/1/17, Letters to chemists from Mayor, n.d.; and from Town Clerk, n.d.

82. Interview with Mr. S. Daubney.

83. *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, p. 6.

84. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of F. Carter, pp. 1–2.

85. *The Friend*, 17/10/1918, pp. 4, 5.

86. Interview with Mr. H. Venter; Letter to author from Mrs. E. Aldworth, October 1978; Collier Collection: Letter from Mr. E. Horn, May 1972.

87. Letter to author from Mrs. E. Aldworth, October 1978.

88. Interview with Miss A. Helmbold.

89. Letter to author from Mrs. E. Aldworth, October 1978.

90. E. Buys: *Triomf van 'n Reddingsdaad*, p. 11.

91. OFSA: MBL 4/3/140, file 101/1/173A, Statement of Evidence to be submitted by J. P. Logan, pp. 1–3; Evidence on "Voorboom's Business" prepared for case, Voorboom vs. Town Council.

92. *The Friend*, 15/10/1918, p. 6; 16/10/1918, p. 4; 17/10/1918, p. 4; 18/10/1918, p. 4; 19/10/1918, Editorial.

93. *The Friend*, 17/10/1918, p. 4.

they should close", declared the "Official Bulletin".⁹⁴ Most did.⁹⁵ "Slackers" were the subject of sharp disapproval. Deliberately employing current recruitment language, the Deputy Mayor railed against "many men who were not doing their bit, and these men should be hounded out of their gardens and stoeps with knobkerries".⁹⁶ Nor were the authorities beyond hinting at the use of some form of compulsion: on 21 October the "Official Bulletin" warned that if more help was not immediately forthcoming, "the workers in the epidemic organization will demand that more drastic action be taken".⁹⁷

Appeals to Blacks were couched in quite different terms, underlining the role prescribed for them by Whites. They were urged to return to work, almost as a duty, to release Whites from household tasks (in particular doing the laundry of the sick) for relief work.⁹⁸

Underlying these vigorous attempts to mobilize the town's population there apparently lay the belief that the 'flu could be checked by human means, if only enough assistance was forthcoming. Or did these continuing, almost insatiable demands for more helpers (going on well after there seems to have been a good response)⁹⁹ arise in part from a refusal to make the terrible admission that perhaps the epidemic of Spanish 'flu was not susceptible to any human counter-measures?

Evidence of such thoughts is not to be found, however, for the epidemic did not continue at this high level for long enough. From 22 October deaths began to decline significantly – probably the epidemic was burning itself out naturally, its very virulence and compass having created a temporary immunity in those it attacked but did not kill. Within ten days mortality was down to single figures.¹⁰⁰

This allowed the emergency relief organization in Bloemfontein to be dismantled gradually and for a growing number of the town's volunteer workers to be deployed in surrounding districts. From being a model centre of self-help, Bloemfontein became a centre for helping other parts of the OFS.¹⁰¹

Slowly the town began to return to life: trams began to run according to their usual schedules again, with conductors to take fares, public services were resumed and, to spare their recuperating employees, businesses lengthened their opening hours in stages, in accordance with requests from the Mayor and the Chamber of Commerce.¹⁰² The Mayor actually advised the public to boycott firms which ignored these requests, declaring that, "public opinion will not stand the taking advantage of those who are endeavouring to care for the best interests of their employees".¹⁰³

On the other hand, several Blacks who were slow to return to domestic work or who could not show that their absence was due to the 'flu were prosecuted under the Master and Servants' Act. In sentencing one man to three weeks in gaol with hard labour, Assistant Magistrate C. W. F. Atkinson

94. *Ibid.*

95. *The Friend*, 18/10/1918, p. 4.

96. *The Friend*, 19/10/1918, p. 4.

97. *The Friend*, 21/10/1918, p. 4. A similar veiled threat appeared in *The Friend*, 17/10/1918, p. 4.

98. *The Friend*, 16/10/1918, p. 4; 22/10/1918, p. 4.

99. *The Friend*, 16/10/1918, Editorial.

100. IEC: Logan, Attached Table.

101. IEC: Logan, Entries for 19/10/1918, 21/10/1918–28/10/1918; OFSA: PAS 140, file 310/8, Provincial Secretary to J. Duff, 23/10/1918; MBL 4/3/140, file 101/1/17, Mayor to His Excellency Viscount Buxton, 5/11/1918; and Secretary Municipal Association of OFS to Town Clerk and Treasurer Bloemfontein, 3/3/1919.

102. *The Friend*, 24/10/1918, p. 4; 25/10/1918, p. 4 and Editorial; 28/10/1918, p. 2; 6/11/1918, p. 4; OFSA: MBL 4/3/140, file 101/1/17/4A, Minutes of Special Town Council Meeting, 4/11/1918, p. IV; OFSA: Accession 360 (Minute Book of OFS Chamber of Commerce), vol. 1/7, pp. 385–386; Letter to author from Mrs. A. Frayne, February 1981.

103. *The Friend*, 25/10/1918, p. 4.

"commented on the poor return these natives were showing for the care and attention lavished on them during the epidemic by the European community, and intimated that any similar cases coming before him would be similarly dealt with",¹⁰⁴

The town was indeed returning to normal.

These prosecutions caused dismay among Bloemfontein's Black population. Jacob N. Tatane afforded a brief glimpse of this when he wrote to *The Friend* asking,

"what is this Master and Servants' Act – a gazette or book? Where can it be obtained? I am anxious to get it in order that we may translate it into the native tongue and distribute it here and to the farms. We want our people to die the death which they know."¹⁰⁵

In the first weeks of November schools were re-opened for those children whose parents were "desirous of sending them to school",¹⁰⁶ despite sharp protests by the Town Council¹⁰⁷ and the Bloemfontein Urban School Board¹⁰⁸ that such a step was premature. Response was poor however, and a teacher at Eunice Girls' School recalled how "at breakfast the first morning Miss King & her 24 mistresses surrounded The Staff table while there were 5 girls at one end of theirs".¹⁰⁹ Three schools were forced to close again, as

"The teachers had found the children dull and unfit to attend, while many of the teachers themselves who had been ill and had resumed work were even unable to solve the mental problems of Standard III."¹¹⁰

Grief and post-flu weakness pervaded the town. Referring to the Black population, *The Friend* observed, "One can see, in going through the streets, the listless walk and demeanour as compared with the old-time jauntiness that characterised the younger men and women."¹¹¹ The theatre and cinema critic of *The People's Weekly* was deeply moved as he thought back over

"the frightful nightmare of the past three weeks . . . The daily toll of sick and dying and dead, the sights in the hospitals, the irresponsible rumours, the sepulchral gloom of our dark and deserted streets, the absence of music have all had a most nerve-racking effect, . . ."

To overcome this he called for

"good pictures and bright music, [to] act as a stimulating tonic for the over-wrought nerves of workers and convalescent alike, and take the minds of those who have lost relatives off their sorrows for a brief hour or so . . . No morbid pictures ought to be shown, and films of funerals and other depressing subjects should be cut out of the topicals."¹¹²

Until Armistice Day, the only uplifting topic was the zeal which volunteers had displayed in fighting the epidemic. Fulsome praise was heaped on them,¹¹³ poems

104. *The Friend*, 30/10/1918, p. 5. See too *The Friend*, 8/11/1918, p. 4; 12/11/1918, p. 5; 16/11/1918, p. 7. Unfortunately the court-records of all these trials have been destroyed in accordance with the Department of Justice's code, "Records" (OFSA: Landros Bloemfontein – Strafsake 1918, vol. 166, Note in front of volume).

105. *The Friend*, 27/11/1918, p. 6.

106. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Provincial Secretary to Mayor Bloemfontein, 6/11/1918.

107. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Mayor to Provincial Secretary, 28/10/1918.

108. *The Friend*, 5/11/1918, p. 3.

109. Bloemfontein Public Library: Photocopy of "Notes on Miss E. L. M. King" by Kathleen Ramsbottom, p. 5. See too H. O'Connor, *No Other School So Dear – A History of the Eunice Schools 1875–1970*, p. 82 and *Eunice High School Magazine*, December 1918, p. 1.

110. *The Friend*, 3/12/1918, p. 8.

111. *The Friend*, 25/10/1918, p. 4.

112. *The People's Weekly*, 2/11/1918, p. 4.

113. *The Friend*, 23/10/1918, p. 4; 24/10/1918, p. 4; *The People's Weekly*, 2/11/1918, Editorial.

were composed in their honour¹¹⁴ and sermons preached on their altruism and sacrifices.¹¹⁵ Forgetting the constant appeals and veiled threats of conscription, the Mayor proudly congratulated his citizens:

"Bloemfontein has done something which will never be forgotten in the history of the city. Never before have people, so diverse, worked together so wholeheartedly, accepting orders and instructions from anyone, so long as it was for the good of the sick and the sorrowing."¹¹⁶

Particular emphasis was laid on comradeship, on how the battle against the 'flu had drawn together "all sections of the [White] community – no matter what their political views". This showed that "our differences are only on the surface, and that deep down in our hearts we have greater, truer and more humane feelings for each other than one expected", rejoiced the President of the OFS Chamber of Commerce, A. E. Fichardt.¹¹⁷

But such goodwill and co-operation were for the moment only, and sometimes not even for that. At the height of the epidemic, *De Vriend des Volks* had commented angrily as to "hoeveel onkunde daar is in die engelse kamp hier . . . ten aansien van die Afrikanerdom",¹¹⁸ after a man organising relief on the outskirts of the city had called for "Someone with influence among the Dutch community . . . to stir up in them a sense of duty."¹¹⁹ Ten days later, with the epidemic fading, *De Vriend des Volks* complained that almost all notices and advice had been in English only, and "wie die taal nie verstaat nie werd sodoende afhanklik van 'n toevallige mededeling deur 'n vriend, die bedoelde taal wel ken . . ."¹²⁰ By 1919, all the old divisions among Whites had reappeared. "It is a disgrace that we have sections, . . . who have endeavoured to make political capital out of such a calamity," a chastened A. E. Fichardt declared.¹²¹

More long-lasting was the other aspect of Bloemfontein's campaign which the Mayor highlighted. The confidence which the Municipality had won by its vigorous measures and skilful publicity was amply demonstrated by the wide-scale support it enjoyed among most of the White population. They were quite willing to subject themselves to its dictates and had even helped to implement these. Many saw in the organisation set up by the Municipality a vicarious opportunity to "do their bit" at last and to share more closely in the wartime feeling of sacrifice and duty. Expressing this very sentiment, Miss E. L. M. King, headmistress of Eunice, wrote:

"O! then we knew a ripple of that wave
Of Europe's pain had reached us, too – to save.
All the heroic virtues of the fight,
So long uneasy in us, sprang to light . . ."¹²²

Moreover, in the absence of a lead from the central or provincial authorities, the Municipality had appeared to offer the only hope of stemming the epidemic.

It seems, however, that the autocratic control which it exercised was not out of

114. *The Friend*, 21/11/1918, p. 4; 2/12/1918, p. 7.

115. Institute for Contemporary History, University of OFS: PV 153 (Kestell Collection), file 3/1/4/30, Documents 14/352–353 – "Schets" for sermon, 17/11/1918.

116. *The Friend*, 24/10/1918, p. 4.

117. *The Friend*, 29/10/1918, p. 3. For similar sentiments, see *The Friend*, 24/10/1918, p. 4; 11/11/1918, p. 6; *De Burger*, 25/10/1918, p. 3; OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17/4B, J. F. Diemont to Mayor, 29/10/1918; Letter to author from Mrs. A. Frayne, February 1981; Collier Collection: Letter from Mr. W. Rhodes-Harrison, 9/5/1972.

118. *De Vriend des Volks*, 28/10/1918, Editorial.

119. *The Friend*, 19/10/1918, p. 4. For his reply to the criticism, see *The Friend*, 22/10/1918, p. 5.

120. *De Vriend des Volks*, 7/11/1918, p. 4.

121. OFSA: Accession 360 (OFS Chamber of Commerce Annual Reports 1913–1928), p. 19.

122. *The Friend*, 2/12/1918, p. 7. See too *Eunice High School Magazine*, December 1918, p. 3.

character. Indeed, the episode left few regrets at the Town Hall about the desirability of direction from above. Councillor Arthur Barlow, who had controlled relief-work in the locations, complained that "they should have had a medical dictator of the whole show",¹²³ while the Mayor lamented the absence of martial law which "would have saved them a great deal of trouble".¹²⁴ The underlying conviction, that "the Municipality knows best", was to become a hallmark of Bloemfontein life in the inter-war period.

As the town started to take stock of its losses, it began to realise the magnitude of the visitation – three years' deaths in three weeks.¹²⁵ The statistics are set out in Table 10.

TABLE 10
THE SPANISH INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC IN BLOEMFONTEIN – INCIDENCE AND MORTALITY BY RACE

	Whites	Blacks & "Coloureds"	All races
Population	14 767	16 000	30 767
Cases	c. 7 500	c. 11 000	c. 18 500
Cases/100 of population	50,8	68,75	60,13
Deaths	398	893	1 291
Deaths/100 of population	2,7	5,59	4,2

Source: All figures taken from IEC: Logan, Attached Table, except for "Cases" which are taken from K. Schoeman: *Bloemfontein*, p. 244.

Evidence to the Influenza Epidemic Commission stated that the death-rate among the small "Coloured" population was higher than that among Blacks,¹²⁶ while, overall, it was young adults who were particularly susceptible: Whites between 21 and 40 constituted 64% of total White deaths in Bloemfontein;¹²⁷ in the Bloemfontein Magisterial District Blacks under the age of 35 comprised 55,8% of all Black deaths.¹²⁸

Reflecting on this toll, *The People's Weekly* concluded that for Bloemfontein it was "the most terrible experience it has suffered since the great enteric period of the Anglo-Boer War",¹²⁹ while *The Friend* was sure that "Black October" constituted "a chapter of the history of Bloemfontein which will never be forgotten".¹³⁰

It was vital that help be given at once to those families which had lost their breadwinners. As early as 24 October a Bureau of Advice was opened by businessmen and lawyers to give financial and legal assistance to "flu widows"¹³¹ and four days later the Mayor formally launched the "Mayor's Temporary Relief Fund

123. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of A. Barlow, p. 4.

124. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of D. A. Thomson, p. 1. See too *ibid.*: Evidence of J. P. Logan, p. 3.

125. *Corporation of Bloemfontein: A Public Health and Social Welfare Survey*, p. 3. (hereafter cited as *PHSW Survey*).

126. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of D. A. Thomson, p. 3.

127. IEC: Logan, Attached Table.

128. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Written statement by J. A. Ashburnham, p. 2.

129. *The People's Weekly*, 2/11/1918, Editorial.

130. *The Friend*, 22/10/1918, p. 4.

131. *The Friend*, 25/10/1918, p. 4; 26/10/1918, p. 4; 28/10/1918, p. 4; IEC: Logan, Entry for 24/10/1918.

for Bloemfontein and District".¹³² Over £3 000 was rapidly contributed by the public¹³³ and most of this was used to assist 'flu widows and orphans during the next twelve months. These all appear to have been White.¹³⁴

In the absence of any reliable knowledge about the nature of Spanish 'flu or how it was spread, it was felt to be equally necessary to take every precaution against a recurrence. The municipal authorities insisted on the disinfection of all buildings ("particular attention is to be paid to native quarters" they stipulated),¹³⁵ linen and clothing which might have retained 'flu germs¹³⁶ and warned auctioneers not to remove household effects from houses where there had been cases of 'flu, until the sanction of the Health Department had been obtained.¹³⁷ For its part, the Railways refused to accept second-hand goods for dispatch without a disinfection-certificate from the MOH.¹³⁸ The town's dairies were given a thorough cleaning,¹³⁹ spitting in public places (especially by convalescents) was discouraged¹⁴⁰ and citizens were warned, on pain of a heavy penalty, to notify the authorities immediately of any fresh cases of influenza.¹⁴¹ Reports of smells from the cemeteries were quickly investigated and found to be false,¹⁴² while the appearance of swarms of flies occasioned an energetic campaign against them. *The Friend* was only venting the strain, anxiety and tension in the air when it declared stridently that,

"if a recrudescence of the influenza epidemic is to be avoided, every citizen of Bloemfontein must co-operate with the municipal authorities in eradicating living flies by every weapon that is available, but more important still, wipe out the breeding places in stables and backyards."¹⁴³

A very close watch was kept on the locations for signs of a recurrence and on 2–3 November a thorough census was undertaken there by the Municipality to discover any remaining cases so that they could be treated "and so prevent any chance of a recrudescence".¹⁴⁴ At the more distant Kaffirfontein location a special Epidemic Superintendent was appointed to report any new cases, attend to serious ones and generally help in the campaign of disinfection.¹⁴⁵

At a stroke, "Black October" had shattered the fondly-held belief that Bloemfontein was a model town, healthy and without slums. It had called into question one of the few sources of the town's post-Union civic pride and self-esteem and had left it shocked and chastened by its impact. "The whole thing

132. *The Friend*, 28/10/1918, p. 4; 31/10/1918, p. 4.

133. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3, vol. 1, Mayor's Minute for 1918–1919, p. 2; *The Friend*, 12/5/1919, p. 4.

134. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 101/6/4, List headed "Epidemic Poor Relief".

135. *The Friend*, 4/11/1918, p. 3.

136. *The Friend*, 26/10/1918, p. 4; 4/11/1918, p. 3; OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Acting Secretary Department of Education to Town Clerk, 11/11/1918; Town Clerk and Treasurer to Assistant MOH, 13/11/1918; MBL 4/3/1/40, file 110/1/17/4B; Town Clerk and Treasurer to Hon. Secretary Hospital Committee Wepener, 20/11/1918; MBL 4/3/1/42, file 101/5/3; Minutes of Meeting of Public Health Committee, 6/11/1918, p. IV.

137. *The Friend*, 6/11/1918, p. 3; OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Auctioneers, 29/10/1918.

138. *The Friend*, 8/11/1918, p. 2; OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Acting MOH Bloemfontein, 7/11/1918.

139. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Minutes of Public Health Committee, 1917–1919, Food Inspection and Dairy Reports for October 1918 (attached to Minutes of 6/11/1918 Meeting).

140. *The Friend*, 30/10/1918, p. 4.

141. *The Friend*, 30/10/1918, p. 4; 6/11/1918, p. 3.

142. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Minutes of Public Health Committee, 1917–1919, Minutes of Meeting 22/11/1918, p. I.

143. *The Friend*, 1/11/1918, p. 5. For details of the campaign see *The Friend*, 1/11/1918, p. 4 and OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/41, file 101/2/2, Town Clerk and Treasurer, Bloemfontein to Cape Province Entomologist, 7/11/1918; Interview with Mr. S. Daubney.

144. *The Friend*, 2/11/1918, p. 4; OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Minutes of Special Meeting of Town Council Native Affairs Committee, 1/11/1918, p. 1.

145. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/40, file 101/1/17, Town Clerk and Treasurer to A. Ramanti, 6/11/1918.

was an outrage on the sense of the fitness of things and against humanity', declared *The Friend* indignantly.¹⁴⁶ How could it be that other towns like Pietermaritzburg and Port Elizabeth which paid far less attention to public health had had a lower mortality rate, asked *The People's Weekly* incredulously. It went on:

"Here we have a high and healthy climate, perfect drainage and a water-borne sewerage system, advantages which neither of the towns in question enjoys. Maritzburg and Port Elizabeth, moreover, have a large Asiatic and coloured population living under conditions much more unhealthy than those in our model location, and they are not without slums every whit as bad as any in Bloemfontein."¹⁴⁷

Experience during the epidemic convinced many that, even if slums were not wholly to blame for Bloemfontein's high death-toll, they had contributed materially to it. In poor, overcrowded areas the mortality-rate among Whites had been two to three times that of the rest of the city.¹⁴⁸ If nothing else, noted *The Friend*, the existence of these slums had "added largely to the labour of combatting the disease."¹⁴⁹ It reminded its readers that these unhealthy conditions had been overlooked

"until a raging visitation accentuates the evil and enmeshes the whole community in a common calamity as a reminder of a common duty and responsibility that is entailed upon all alike for the maintenance of universal rules of health and hygiene".¹⁵⁰

Though slum-dwellers might constitute only a small minority of Bloemfontein's Whites (less than 20% according to figures presented to the Influenza Epidemic Commission),¹⁵¹ the 'flu had sharply underlined that, in the words of the Town Clerk, "the poor take toll of the rich for the evil conditions under which they exist".¹⁵² "While one section of the community, however small, is permitted to grow up in ignorance of the laws of physical well-being, and continue to dwell in unhealthy conditions, and surroundings," argued *The Friend*, "it means that the whole community lives on the edge of a volcano; an eruption will come sooner or later to involve all in disaster."¹⁵³

With fear of a second visitation widespread, urgent action was believed to be essential. Even before the end of October, the lines along which some minds in the Municipality were working were indicated in official and semi-official statements in *The Friend*. On 24 October the Mayor urged the town to learn from the "flu episode "for securing better and safer conditions of living",¹⁵⁴ while next day a report declared:

"We trust that this calamity may not be allowed to pass without us making the catastrophe the occasion of a definite step forward in our civic life. While the impulse is warm, it would be good for each one to frame his or her own suggestion for an improved state of affairs whereby the people may secure better lives and stronger constitutions, enabling them better to stand any attacks in future."¹⁵⁵

146. *The Friend*, 23/11/1918, Editorial.

147. *The People's Weekly*, 2/11/1918, Editorial. The belief that Bloemfontein had a "model location" was widely held, even by leading Blacks – see p. 77.

148. PHSW Survey, p. 3.

149. *The Friend*, 23/11/1918, Editorial.

150. *The Friend*, 29/10/1918, Editorial.

151. IEC: Logan, Attached Table.

152. *Municipal Journal of South Africa*, January 1919, p. 34.

153. *The Friend*, 29/10/1918, Editorial.

154. *The Friend*, 24/10/1918, p. 4.

155. *The Friend*, 25/10/1918, p. 4.

It is clear that men such as J. P. Logan (joint Town Clerk and Treasurer), Councillor Arthur Barlow (Chairman of the Housing Committee) and Councillor W. M. Barnes (Chairman of the Public Health Committee) realized that "Black October" had created a uniquely favourable climate for their long-cherished ideas on reform to be put forward and accepted. "The citizens were, . . . shocked at the revelation of slums and degradation disclosed by the 'Flu'", explained Logan; there prevailed a "spirit of service to the community, . . . which made the world wonder."¹⁵⁶ It was an opportunity not to be missed.

By the middle of December 1918, with the assistance of the two councillors, Logan had drafted a *Public Health and Social Welfare Survey of Bloemfontein*, focussing on the town's Whites. (A further report dealing with its Blacks was promised, but does not seem to have been compiled). This *Survey* traced the epidemic's unexpectedly high toll in the town beyond the existence of slums to the persistent poverty of body and mind of its Poor Whites. "South Africa cannot be free from formidable epidemics and undermining diseases unless it prevents the 'poor white' . . .", it asserted. "Before we can expect anyone to exercise the laws of hygiene adequately, he must have the necessities of life."¹⁵⁷ To secure these (and thereby eradicate Poor Whiteism in Bloemfontein) it proposed a comprehensive programme of quite radical local reforms, going well beyond health and housing, in which, not surprisingly, the Municipality was assigned a leading role. The "community is responsible for the rehabilitation of families which have sunk below the poverty line and for the prevention and cure of the causes of poverty" believed Logan.¹⁵⁸

For its time and place the *Survey* was a remarkably advanced document, owing much to Logan's knowledge of civic-led social reform overseas. "The merit, if any," he wrote, "is in the adaptation to South African conditions and welding the various parts into a practical working organisation."¹⁵⁹ Although *The People's Weekly* believed that its aims fell "well within the purview of State socialism",¹⁶⁰ it won widespread praise and commendation. "Bloemfontein is congratulated on once more giving the Union a lead", exulted *The Friend*.¹⁶¹ The Town Council was equally enthusiastic, delighted, no doubt, that once again the town was living up to its reputation for progressiveness. Not only did it have *The Friend* print the *Survey* unabridged for public comment,¹⁶² but it also put it into pamphlet form for free country-wide distribution.¹⁶³ Reflecting on the consequences of the 'flu episode, *The Friend* wrote:

"The immediate result has been a stimulating of the public conscience in the direction of long-delayed social reforms. Schemes are now under consideration which were regarded yesterday as the dreams of impracticable visionaries, and to-day are demanded as urgent necessities."¹⁶⁴

156. *Child Welfare Conference: Report of Proceedings of 3rd Annual Conference, 1919*, p. 24.

157. *PHSW Survey*, p. 4.

158. OFSA: MBL 4/3/143, file 101/64, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Chairman Local Government Commission, 19/12/1919. The reforms proposed in the *Survey* included greater local autonomy for the Municipality, a comprehensive city plan, the establishment of a Municipal Social Welfare Department, the erection of workmen's cottages, the eradication of slums and overcrowding, the economic and educational upliftment of the town's Poor Whites, measures to improve their health and the expansion of medical facilities (see *PHSW Survey*, p. 23 for a list of these reforms).

159. OFSA: MBL 4/3/142, file 101/5/3, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Assistant Editor, *The Star*, 30/12/1918.

160. *The People's Weekly*, 11/1/1919, Editorial.

161. *The Friend*, 4/1/1919, p. 4.

162. *The Friend*, 23/12/1918 and subsequent editions.

163. OFSA: MBL 4/3/143, file 101/64, J. P. Logan to Dr. J. E. Holloway, 5/2/1919.

164. *The Friend*, 3/1/1919, Editorial.

A few days later it noted that nowadays, "ordinary, steady, conservative municipal administration is no longer sufficient to meet the new spirit. There is in the air an imperative demand for something to be added day by day. . . . Councillors are asked in resentment why is not this or that reform carried out, . . ."165

Logan was hard-headed enough to know that a favourable response to the *Survey* was only the start. "I only hope that after the notice that has been taken that we shall now make good with the scheme itself", he wrote to a friend early in 1919. "It would be an awful thing to get the reputation of being only talkers."¹⁶⁶

Given the prodigious nature of the reforms outlined, it was almost inevitable that their implementation would be less than full. Already in February 1921 Logan was lamenting: "We badly need a new impulse, . . . the enthusiasm created after the 'Flu having died away.'¹⁶⁷ Yet, during the interwar decades Bloemfontein far outstripped other towns in South Africa, with its carefully formulated social, economic and administrative reforms. A visiting British authority on local government wrote admiringly in 1925 that, with regard to social welfare, "here again Bloemfontein goes far beyond the conventional limits of municipal concern for the public health"¹⁶⁸ Three years earlier, the Secretary for Public Health, Dr. J. A. Mitchell, had nothing but praise for the "very valuable pioneer work . . . done by the Municipality of Bloemfontein who, in this direction, had probably done more than any other municipality in South Africa."¹⁶⁹

The *Survey* had identified housing the poor as "the most pressing need of the hour"¹⁷⁰ after the epidemic's revelations, and, following its recommendations, Bloemfontein tackled this problem from two directions. Early in 1919 it began a scheme to buy up slum properties, upgrade them and then ensure that they were maintained in this condition.¹⁷¹ In this way it aimed to abolish slums completely, as it would eventually control all the cheapest accommodation in town itself.¹⁷² (Such an idea was only feasible as Bloemfontein's slums were far less extensive than those in the larger industrial cities).

Progress towards this goal was slow. Late in 1922 press exposés about the town's "submerged tenth" were still common – one wondered "whether the lesson of the dread epidemic of 1918 has not been forgotten"¹⁷³ – while in 1926 the Mayor reported with disappointment, "Daar is nog honderde huisgesinne wat in agter plaas kamers onder onhygieniese toestande leef."¹⁷⁴

A more conventional approach to the problem was to construct houses. Taking advantage of its ownership of considerable tracts of land, the Municipality extended its existing building-programme substantially. "A scheme for better housing had been under consideration for some time past," the Mayor told the Influenza Epidemic Commission, "and the epidemic had hastened the urgency of the matter."¹⁷⁵ By the time that the 1920 Housing Act supplied a new source of

165. *The Friend*, 6/1/1919, p. 4.

166. OFSA: MBL 4/3/143, file 101/6/4, J. P. Logan to Dr. J. E. Holloway, 5/2/1919.

167. OFSA: MBL 4/3/143, file 101/6/5, Town Clerk and Treasurer to M. C. Elliot, 17/2/1921.

168. W. H. Dawson: *South Africa – People, Places and Problems*, p. 246.

169. OFSA: PAS 791, file 3042, no. 1, Minutes of 17th Congress of OFS Municipal Association, 1922, p. 52.

170. *PHSW Survey*, p. 3.

171. OFSA: PAS 384, file 633/105, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Provincial Secretary, 30/4/1919.

172. *PHSW Survey*, pp. 5–6.

173. OFSA: MBL 4/4/163, file 105/1/22, Undated clipping from *Cape Argus*. See too *ibid.*, translated extract from *Die Volksblad*.

174. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor's Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Notule van die Burgermeester 1925–1926, p. 6.

175. IEC: vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of D. A. Thomson, p. 2.

funds for housing (which Bloemfontein was quick to tap)¹⁷⁶, the Municipality had already taken action in a variety of ways: 24 cottages intended for “Coloureds” at Uitskoms had been hastily allocated to Poor Whites occupying the worst slums;¹⁷⁷ a 60 cottage scheme in Monument Road for hire-purchase by workmen was well advanced;¹⁷⁸ the Department of Defence had been persuaded to let (at reasonable rentals) more than 100 houses at Tempe, which it no longer needed¹⁷⁹ and the Railways had been encouraged to provide housing for its employees.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, when in 1921 the Central Housing Board had to halt its financial assistance temporarily, Bloemfontein did not cease its activity. It turned to the private sector and raised a very large loan from South African Mutual (at 2% more than had been available from the Central Housing Board) to enable it to continue its assistance to intending home-builders.¹⁸¹ The Municipality even tried to cater for those who required only single accommodation by converting a building it had bought into a hostel for young working women.¹⁸²

This energetic activity to provide houses arose not merely from the need to overcome the existing lack of suitable accommodation. The shortage was constantly being increased by the migration of Poor Whites to Bloemfontein, despite the Municipality’s efforts to prevent this.¹⁸³ Paradoxically, the town’s attractiveness to them lay in its reputation of caring for its inhabitants. In his report for 1918 the Secretary for Mines and Industries observed:

“Unfortunately the good work being done here is becoming widely known with the result that large numbers are flocking to that town as they regard it as ‘’n goeie plek vir arme mense.’’¹⁸⁴

Yet, notwithstanding this influx, it is clear that the Municipality’s various schemes improved the housing position for Whites markedly. The town “was far in advance of any other centre and the Housing Board was much encouraged by Bloemfontein’s progressive programme”, a member of the Board told a reporter in

176. OFSA: MBL 4/3/15, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor’s Minute for 1920–1921, p. 3; OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor’s Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor’s Review of Civic Year 1921–1922, p. 3; *Municipality of Bloemfontein: Abstract of Treasurer’s Accounts for Year Ending 31/3/1921*, p. 110 and *Abstract of Treasurer’s Accounts for Year Ending 31/3/1922*, p. 122; Union of South Africa: *Report of the Central Housing Board for 1920*, UG 25–21, p. 2 and *Report of the Central Housing Board for 1925*, UG 19–26, p. 3.
177. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor’s Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor’s Minute 1923–4, p. 6; Union of South Africa: *Report of the Housing Committee to Inquire into Matters Concerning Housing Accommodation in Urban Areas and the Amendment of the Unhealthy Areas Bill*, UG 4–20, para. 42. When it came to restoring these houses to “Coloureds” in 1923, the Town Council jibbed and instead established the “Coloured” township at Heatherdale, where it has remained until to-day, under its later name, Ashbury. (See OFSA: MBL 4/5/1/27, file 25/32/24).
178. OFSA: MBL 4/3/15, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor’s Minute for 1919–1920, p. 9; Mayor’s Minute for 1920–1921, p. 3; OFSA: PAS 385, file 633/121, Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Town Council, 17/3/1920; *Municipality of Bloemfontein: Abstract of Treasurer’s Accounts for Year Ending 31/3/1920*, p. 106; UG 4–20, para. 42; *Rand Daily Mail*, 30/11/1920.
179. OFSA: MBL 4/3/15, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor’s Minute for 1919–1920, p. 9; *Architect, Builder and Engineer*, July 1919, p. 24.
180. OFSA: MBL 4/3/15, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor’s Minute for 1919–1920, p. 9; Mayor’s Minute for 1920–1921, p. 3; OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor’s Minutes 1919–1920 to 1935–1936, Mayor’s Review of Civic Year 1921–1922, p. 4; *Rand Daily Mail*, 30/11/1920.
181. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor’s Minutes 1919–1920 to 1935–1936, Mayor’s Minute 1922–1923, pp. 2–3.
182. OFSA: MBL 4/3/15, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor’s Minute for 1920–1921, p. 9.
183. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/43, file 101/6/4, Burgermeester to Die Redaksie, *De Vriend des Volks*, 4/4/1919; Town Clerk and Treasurer to Superintendent of White Labour, 26/3/1919; Inspektuur van Blanke Arbeid, Bloemfontein, to Supt. on Hd. Insp. van Blanke Arbeid, Pretoria, 14/6/1919; Superintendent and Chief Inspector of White Labour to Town Clerk Bloemfontein, 3/7/1919; Town Clerk and Treasurer to Superintendent and Chief Inspector of White Labour, Pretoria, 14/7/1919.
184. Union of South Africa: *Annual Report of Secretary for Mines and Industries for 1918*, UG 38–19, p. 8.

December 1920, adding, "They were going about things in the right way."¹⁸⁵ Five years later, Logan himself was able to say that the housing situation was "to-day . . . much easier".¹⁸⁶

However, the drive to eradicate Poor Whiteism in Bloemfontein had to go beyond housing if it was to succeed. Poverty itself had to be tackled. It was the "root cause of slums" declared the *Survey*, and was "the result of low wages, ignorance and drink and no work. If we cannot remove the root causes," it concluded, "we shall find ourselves travelling in a vicious circle, . . ."¹⁸⁷ A number of measures to remedy these underlying causes was outlined in the *Survey*,¹⁸⁸ and, in the wake of "Black October", several were implemented.

To provide additional income for Poor White women, the Municipality purchased a steam laundry and staffed it with 40–50 Poor Whites in place of the 60 Black employees who had worked there;¹⁸⁹ relief labour was arranged for 35 disabled men¹⁹⁰ and donations to local charitable institutions were doubled.¹⁹¹ To break the parent-to-child cycle of poverty, special attention was paid to child welfare – "once get the children out of their slum environment and teach them to think healthily, progressively and ambitiously," argued the *Survey*, "and you have gone far to solve your poor white problem".¹⁹² Thus, particular support was given to the Child Welfare Society,¹⁹³ a crèche was opened,¹⁹⁴ a play centre was established in one of the poorer districts,¹⁹⁵ the town's Assistant MOH undertook the medical inspection of local schools,¹⁹⁶ school-feeding was begun¹⁹⁷ and milk was supplied free to needy pre-school children and expectant mothers.¹⁹⁸

To administer all these schemes a municipal Social Welfare Department was created under the Council's Housing Committee, now renamed the Social Welfare Committee.¹⁹⁹ Provision was also made for a Director of Social Welfare, but in the absence of a suitable candidate,²⁰⁰ it eventually fell to the MOH and his assistant to direct the programme.²⁰¹

The 'flu episode had also revealed other deficiencies in Bloemfontein's public health system and the Municipality acted to rectify these in the ensuing years. In

185. *The Star*, 29/12/1920.

186. OFSA: MBL 4/6/1/47, file 27/1/25, Town Clerk to Mrs. D. Anderson, 2/10/1925.

187. *PHSW Survey*, p. 11.

188. The Municipality subsequently expanded on these in a separate pamphlet for application nation-wide, *The Combating of Poverty: A Suggested Programme*.

189. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3, vol. 1, Mayor's Minute for 1918–1919, p. 3; MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor's Minute 1919–20, p. 9; MBL 4/3/1/43, file 101/6/4, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Superintendent of White Labour, Pretoria, 26/3/1919.

190. OFSA: MBL 4/6/1/47, file 27/1/25, Town Clerk to Mrs. D. Anderson, 2/10/1925.

191. *Ibid.*

192. *PHSW Survey*, p. 13.

193. OFSA: MBL 4/6/1/47, file 27/1/25, Town Clerk to Mrs. D. Anderson, 2/10/1925.

194. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor's Minute 1919–1920, p. 10; Municipality of Bloemfontein – Minutes of Public Health, Markets, Housing and Social Welfare Committee 1921–1922, Report of Lady Health Visitor for 1920–1921, p. 2 (attached to Minutes of Meeting 22/4/1921); MBL 4/5/1/28, file 27/2/23, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer Bloemfontein Crèche to Mayor Bloemfontein, 13/4/1923; and Hon. Secretary and Treasurer Bloemfontein Crèche to J. P. Logan, 5/5/1924.

195. OFSA: MBL 4/6/1/47, file 27/1/25, Town Clerk to Mrs. D. Anderson, 2/10/1925.

196. *Ibid.*

197. *Ibid.*

198. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/43, file 101/6/5, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Town Clerk Oudtshoorn, 28/8/1920.

199. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/43, file 101/6/4, Extract from Minutes of Town Council Meeting, 12/5/1919.

200. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/43, file 101/6/4, Town Clerk and Treasurer to H. E. Norman, 2/10/1919; and Extract from Minutes of Town Council Meeting, 14/4/1921.

201. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor's Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor's Review of the Civic Year 1921–1922, p. 7.

1921 the first full-time MOH and a female Assistant MOH were appointed,²⁰² to be followed by an additional health visitor soon afterwards.²⁰³ A modern motor-ambulance was purchased,²⁰⁴ but the up-to-date, new hospital sought by the Municipality after the 'flu²⁰⁵ was not built by the Provincial authorities until 1933.

The Municipality also believed that one of the prime lessons of the epidemic was that it should be even more zealous in sanitary matters. Early in 1919, for instance, it responded rapidly to objections against the presence of a commercial cattleyard in a residential area by buying the site and demolishing the yard;²⁰⁶ significantly, in their petition against the yard, the residents had emphasized that they felt that, "when an epidemic makes its appearance in the city – as was unfortunately the case in October last – the presence of these stock yards is a positive danger to the health of the community, . . ."²⁰⁷ The following year it took over those sanitary services still in the hands of private contractors²⁰⁸ and in 1924 the Mayor proudly announced that all of White Bloemfontein was now connected to the waterborne sewerage system, "a condition that prevails in few other towns", he added with obvious satisfaction.²⁰⁹ The vigilance of Bloemfontein's sanitary inspectors became a byword – one councillor referred to the town's "martial law of sanitation"²¹⁰ – and its reputation for cleanliness widespread. In one of her better poems, Miss King characterized this feature with gentle humour, observing,

"If Cleanliness
Be next to Godliness
Our little town
Has a short way to go
To win the shining prize."²¹¹

The absence of Bloemfontein's Blacks from the *Survey's* considerations is a fair reflection of how they were viewed by the Municipality. Linked to White Bloemfontein by their labour, yet apart from it in their private lives, they were held to require quite different treatment. Attempts to deal with their problems highlighted by the 'flu lacked the intensity of effort evident in the schemes to uplift the town's Poor Whites. Yet, the Municipality was clear-sighted enough to appreciate one of "Black October's" major lessons: that the health of the two sectors of the town was inextricably linked. In his Minute for 1919–20 the Mayor spoke of the Location, "where so much disease must perforce originate and be communicated to town", and added:

"We are convinced that we shall never have a satisfactory solution of our sickness and public health difficulties among the white population until we have adequately dealt with the serious disease conditions of the natives."²¹²

In short, self-protection, overlaid with a feeling of duty to the "less civilized", was the major factor shaping Municipal policy to Bloemfontein's Blacks.

Already before October 1918 a new location (subsequently named Batho) was

202. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor's Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor's Review of the Civic Year 1921–1922, p. 6.

203. OFSA: MBL 4/6/1/47, file 27/1/25, Town Clerk to Mrs. D. Anderson, 2/10/1925.

204. *The Friend*, 14/10/1919, p. 6; OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/45, file 102/1/11D, Firemaster to J. P. Logan, 17/5/1921.

205. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3, vol. 1, Mayor's Minute for 1918–1919, p. 4.

206. OFSA: PAS 384, file 633/105, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Provincial Secretary, 30/4/1919.

207. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/41, file 101/2/3, sub-file A, Petition to Mayor and Town Councillors, 17/2/1919.

208. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor's Minute for 1920–1921, p. 8.

209. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor's Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor's Minute 1923–1924, p. 3.

210. *The Friend*, 20/7/1922.

211. "Our Streets" in E. L. M. King and M. Littlewood: *Bloemfontein – An Impression in Verse*.

212. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3, vol. 2, Mayor's Minute for 1919–1920, pp. 5, 7.

being planned to replace Waaihoek and its smaller adjuncts. The virulence of the epidemic in the locations strengthened the Council's resolve "that the standard of housing there shall be much in advance of previous native houses",²¹³ and in the ensuing years it expanded its policy of assisting intending housebuilders with loans, material or basic labour.²¹⁴ This procedure attracted favourable attention from the Central Housing Board²¹⁵ and in 1922 it granted Bloemfontein's application for £20 000 for Black housing in terms of the Housing Act.²¹⁶ However, no provision was made for the replacement of the old system of sewage-removal by pail.²¹⁷

The struggle against the 'flu in the locations where there had been, in the Mayor's words, an "extraordinary collapse of the population",²¹⁸ convinced the Municipality that the maintenance of public health in these areas had to be put onto a more effective footing. The District Surgeon, a Black nurse, a sanitary inspector and his Black assistant (the latter was appointed in the wake of the epidemic)²¹⁹ could hardly be expected to care for the health of 16 000 people adequately. Gradually the Municipality increased its complement of health workers, until in 1925 an assistant MOH was appointed with special responsibility for the locations.²²⁰ At the same time, a clinic was built in Batho to replace the one in Waaihoek²²¹ which had been opened in July 1920 with three town doctors providing their services voluntarily.²²² It is a mark of the importance which the Municipality attached to health in the locations after the epidemic that it had allowed the clinic to be sited in Waaihoek, even though its days were already numbered. Indeed, when the Council's Public Health Committee threatened to delay a decision on the clinic, the Deputy Mayor expedited matters appreciably with a reference to the likelihood "that the Influenza Epidemic would again appear in this country. He referred to the news in the papers to the effect that it had already broken out in Great Britain." Thereupon, the Committee hastily agreed to spend £150 to set up such a clinic.²²³ However, with regard to a separate hospital for Blacks, even the experience of "Black October" could not spur the Provincial Administration to decisive action.²²⁴

A further shortcoming which the 'flu had underlined – the paucity of reliable vital statistics about Bloemfontein's Black population, which made gauging the state of

213. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3, vol. 1, Mayor's Minute for 1918–1919, p. 10. See too Union of South Africa: *First Report of the Select Committee on Native Affairs*, SC 3–23, p. 84.
214. UG 4–20, para. 43; Union of South Africa: *Report of Central Housing Board for 1921*, UG 13–22, para. 35; *Johannesburg Municipality: Council Minutes, July–December 1919*, p. 556 (Report of Delegation re Native Housing); OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/43, file 101/6/4, Town Clerk and Treasurer to Dr. Macvicar, 28/6/1919; MBL 4/3/1/74, file 161/1/10, Town Clerk and Treasurer to G. Hills, 27/5/1920; Bloemfontein Mayor's Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor's Review of Civic Year 1921–1922, p. 13 and Mayor's Minute, 1922–1923, p. 7; MBL 4/4/1/47, file 45/14/22, MOH Bloemfontein Report for 1921–1922, p. 25.
215. UG 13–22, para. 35.
216. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor's Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor's Minute, 1922–1923, p. 7.
217. UG 13–22, para. 35; OFSA: MBL 4/4/1/47, file 45/14/22, MOH Bloemfontein Report for 1921–1922, p. 24.
218. OFSA: MBL 4/3/1/5, file 21/4/3 vol. 1, Mayor's Minute for 1918–1919, p. 10.
219. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Native Affairs Committee Minutes 1917–23, Minutes of Meeting, 28/11/1918, p. 3.
220. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor's Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor's Minute, 1924–1925, p. 6; D. H. Pfeiffer: "The Health Services of a City" in *Public Health*, vol. 15 (January 1950), p. 23.
221. OFSA: MBL 4/6/1/44, file 25/17/25, Extract from Special Meeting of Public Health, Market and Social Welfare Committee, 15/6/1925.
222. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Minutes of Public Health and Market Committee 1920–1921, Minutes of Meeting 27/7/1920, p. 2; Municipality of Bloemfontein – Native Affairs Committee Minutes 1917–23, Minutes of Meeting 14/3/1921, p. 2.
223. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Minutes of Public Health Committee 1919–20, Meeting 3/2/1920, p. 3.
224. OFSA: PAS 511, file 848 Part 1, Provincial Secretary to Secretary Bloemfontein Hospital Board, 9/3/1920; and Secretary Bloemfontein Hospital Board to Provincial Secretary, 19/3/1920; PAS 106, file 191 C, OFS Hospital Commission of Enquiry 1921, para. 42.

its health guesswork – does not seem to have been remedied for many years,²²⁵ despite several attempts to do so by the Council.²²⁶

The longer-term responses of Black Bloemfontein to the 'flu episode are difficult to specify in any detail as evidence is thin. While some of those who survived did little more than crow about their strength with the boast, "We are seasoned ox hides",²²⁷ a few tried to understand why the mortality in the locations had been so high. The young Selby Msimang concluded that it was not only poor housing and inadequate sanitary arrangements which were to blame; low wages and the consequent malnutrition were also responsible. They "were not getting such a wage or getting enough means to build up their physical powers sufficient to resist epidemics of this kind", he told the Influenza Epidemic Commission. He went on:

"He considered that the only salvation would be to place the native people in such a position by means of better wages and good living as he could guarantee sufficient nourishment to bring up his children properly."²²⁸

With these words, spoken in the heart of White Bloemfontein in January 1919, Msimang outlined the basis of the campaign which was to lead to his arrest and the "4/6 riots" of February and March.²²⁹

Yet, it is illuminating of the Town Council's concern about the high 'flu toll among Blacks that, despite sharp criticism of Msimang's conclusions by *The Friend*²³⁰ and some councillors,²³¹ it had begun discussions with the Native Advisory Council about raising Black wages even before the riots.²³²

It comes as no surprise, therefore, to discover that in post-war South Africa Bloemfontein was able to add to its reputation as a progressive town by virtue of what Sol Plaatje called its "model location",²³³ "Bloemfontein . . . offers an example to be followed with regard to the treatment of its Native community", wrote C. R. Moikangoa, co-editor of *South African Outlook* in 1922.²³⁴ Such praise was only relative, however; that Bloemfontein had no near rival is as much a strong indictment of conditions in other South African towns as it is a tribute to Bloemfontein's progressiveness. Bloemfontein certainly felt that it had set the pattern for the country to follow. In 1923 the Mayor pointed out the indebtedness to Bloemfontein of the framers of the Natives (Urban Areas) Bill then before Parliament, and shortly to become law:

"The Bill practically adopts in toto the principles and practice that has [*sic*] been evolved during the past 10 years in providing decent surroundings and sanitary homes for our native citizens."²³⁵

It would not be accurate to trace Bloemfontein's municipal-led reformism solely to its experiences during "Black October". Ideas, enthusiasm and the problems themselves had all been germinating since the end of the Anglo-Boer War, while the financial means to implement these schemes had grown steadily too. What the

225. D. H. Pfeiffer, "The Health Services of a City", p. 23.

226. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Native Affairs Committee Minutes 1917–23, Minutes of Meeting 28/11/1918, p. 3; Municipality of Bloemfontein – Minutes of Public Health Committee 1919–20, Meeting 21/1/1920, p. 2; MBL 4/3/1/74, file 161/2/3, Extract from Town Council Minutes, 9/2/1920.

227. B. L. Leshoai: "Mahlomola" in R. Harvey (ed.): *Six Short Stories*, p. 36.

228. IEC, vol. 1, file 5: Evidence of H. S. Msimang and J. Twaye, p. 1.

229. K. Schoeman: *Bloemfontein*, pp. 280–281.

230. *The Friend*, 14/1/1919, Editorial.

231. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Native Affairs Committee Minutes 1917–23, Minutes of Meeting, 13/1/1919, p. 3.

232. OFSA: Municipality of Bloemfontein – Native Affairs Committee Minutes 1917–23, Minutes of Special Meeting, 18/2/1919.

233. Quoted in K. Schoeman: *Bloemfontein*, p. 286.

234. OFSA: MBL 4/4/1/37, file 25/3/22, C. R. Moikangoa to J. P. Logan, 5/1/1922.

235. OFSA: Bloemfontein Mayor's Minutes 1919–20 to 1935–6, Mayor's Minute 1922–1923, p. 8.

'flu episode did, however, was to trigger reform and, in so doing, to exercise considerable influence on its shape, pace and direction. As the Mayor told the Influenza Epidemic Commission,

"Bloemfontein had long had such a scheme in contemplation, but the experience in the epidemic had hastened matters and stimulated public opinion, which was now ripe for these reforms."²³⁶

236. *Cape Times*, 11/1/1919, p. 7.

CHAPTER 5

THE TRANSKEI¹

It was primarily by way of South Africa's extensive rail system that the Spanish 'flu was spread to the predominantly Black rural areas of the country. In this process the main carriers were probably from two groups: the over 2 700 South African Native Labour Corps troops among whom influenza had broken out on the return-voyage from Europe and who had left for their homes all over the country on five trains from Cape Town between 16 and 30 September;² and those Black workers hastening home from seriously infected centres like Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Kimberley.³ Since the return of a batch of the Native Labour Corps troops in the first week of the month, reported the Magistrate of Tsolo on 16 October, "sickness has become rife amongst both races in village and country and people are being brought in to local doctor by wagon and sledge loads . . ."⁴ At the same time, Black workers in various stages of infection were arriving home, with devastating effect. One such man from Cape Town, "evidently suffering from influenza", went to an *intonjane* (initiation) dance at a kraal near the Kei. "In less than a week 28 of the young men who attended the dance, were dead and buried", reported a local newspaper.⁵

As fresh cases multiplied and reports came in of homebound Blacks taking ill and dying on trains or on the road,⁶ local authorities began to appreciate the enormous danger which the disease posed to them and the inhabitants of their medically deficient districts. Consequently, some tried to stem the tide engulfing them by

1. The focus of this chapter is on the Transkei, as a case-study of the impact of the epidemic in the predominantly Black rural areas of South Africa. My limited in-depth research on the impact in other such areas (some of it included in this chapter for comparative purposes) suggests that the epidemic had similar effects there. I chose to concentrate on the Transkei because of the relative richness and accessibility of source-material relating to it. The impact of the epidemic on rural Whites is briefly referred to elsewhere in this work (see ch. 6, pp. 110–111, ch. 10, pp. 188, 191–192 and ch. 11, pp. 219–220).
2. Union of South Africa: *Report of the Influenza Epidemic Commission*, UG 15–'19, paras. 31–35 and Appendix B. See too ch. 2, pp. 8–9.
3. See ch. 1, p. 6f, and ch. 3, pp. 51–52; Cape Archives (hereafter CACT): 1/EDL 6/1/13, file 28/1B, Telegram from Magistrate Elliotdale to Chief Magistrate of the Transkei (hereafter CMT), 14/10/1918; 1/WVE 3, file 28, Station Master, Rosmead to Magistrate Willowvale, 12/10/1918; 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28, vol. 8, Town Clerk Umata to Magistrate Umata, 28/10/1918; Central Archives, Pretoria (hereafter CA): SAS 719, file G 119/5, Telegram from Paterson to Hov, 14/10/1918; IEC, vol. 2, file 6: Evidence of A. H. Pagan, p. 1; *Territorial News*, 17/10/1918, Editorial; *Transkeian Gazette*, 24/10/1918, Editorial; *Cape Times*, 6/11/1918, p. 8; *St. Matthews College Magazine*, Special Supplementary Number, 12/11/1918, p. 2; Interview with Mr. B. Mochi.
4. CA: 1/TSO 11, file 485(1), Telegram from Magistrate Tsolo to CMT [16/10/1918].
5. *Daily Dispatch*, 4/11/1918, p. 4.
6. CA: SAS 719, file G119/5, Telegrams from Station Master, Naaupoort to SAR, Johannesburg, 12/10/1918, and from Divisional Superintendent, Port Elizabeth to SAR, Johannesburg, 19/10/1918; Clipping from *Grahamstown Journal*, 24/10/1918; CACT: 1/EDL 6/1/13, file 28/1B, Telegram from Magistrate Elliotdale to CMT, 14/10/1918; 4/KWT 4/1/19 no. 42, A. P. Dallas to Magistrate Kingwilliamstown, 23/10/1918; SADF Archives: DC 1303, file 4003, Mellie to Orenstein, 1/12/1918; IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. B. Moffat, p. 1; vol. 2, file 6: Written Statement by J. Adams, p. 3, and Written Evidence by T. W. Halliwell, p. 4; vol. 2, file 8, part 2: Evidence of W. Stuart, pp. 4, 6; *Territorial News*, 17/10/1918, Editorial, and 12/12/1918; *Transkeian Gazette*, 24/10/1918, Editorial; *The Star*, 8/11/1918 (Letter from D. H. Poole); *De Burger*, 25/10/1918, p. 2; 28/10/1918, p. 3; 11/11/1918, p. 3 (Letter from J. J. Claasen). See too ch. 1, pp. 5–6.

pressing the Government to bar all Black train-passengers⁷ or at least to issue instructions that those who developed 'flu aboard a train be put off at the first station where they could be treated.⁸ However, these requests met with a qualified refusal,⁹ which left local Whites feeling bitter. "So far as the Transkei is concerned", complained the *Territorial News*, "we consider the authorities have been criminally neglectful in allowing Natives with the disease to come here at all . . ."¹⁰

Some towns ignored the Government's recalcitrance and for all practical purposes took the law into their own hands. The town council of Lydenburg demanded that, before being allowed to enter the town, arriving Blacks must produce a certificate of good health from the Railway Medical Officer up the line at Belfast Junction;¹¹ Tarkastad went even further and simply refused to allow Blacks or "Coloureds" to disembark.¹² At Pietersburg an official was posted at the station "to look for sick natives arriving by train", so that the need for an isolation camp could be gauged,¹³ while Natal tried to catch infected passengers early by instituting inspection north of Pietermaritzburg.¹⁴ It is probable that this inspection concentrated on passengers who were not White.¹⁵

All this activity underscores the fact that, at bottom, most Whites saw Blacks as a threat to their health because they were Black, and were therefore believed to be careless of public health. "With regard to the movements of natives and their restriction," the Mayor of East London told the Influenza Epidemic Commission, "in times of national danger the Government should take powers and act upon them. Natives were brought into contact on the railway with Europeans."¹⁶ Almost every call for restriction of movement was expressed in racial terms. As the Deputy Mayor of Grahamstown explained, "It was easy to ascertain whether Europeans were suffering from the disease, but not wandering natives. Natives' movements should therefore be restricted in epidemic times."¹⁷ "Statistics prove that Natives are more susceptible to the disease than Europeans," asserted the *Territorial News*, "and this being so, it is the duty of the authorities to take special precautions in regard to them."¹⁸

There were but two authoritative voices to counter the chorus of calls before the

7. CA: SAS 719, file G119/5, passim; CACT: 3/UIT 28 (vol. 2), Telegram from Mayor Uitenhage to Minister of Interior, n.d.; I/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Town Clerk Umtata to Magistrate Umtata, 28/10/1918; I/EDL 6/1/13, file 28/1B, Telegram from Magistrate Elliotdale to CMT, 14/10/1918; IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. B. Moffat, p. 1; vol. 2, file 8, part 2: Evidence of J. J. Simon, p. 1; South African Library MSS, Department: MSC 15 (J. X. Merriman Correspondence), Letters 553 and 569 from R. A. Barry to J. X. Merriman, 29/10/1918 and 5/11/1918.
8. CA: SAS 719, file G119/5, Town Clerk Umtata to General Manager, SAR & H, 4/11/1918; Chairman Nelspruit Health Committee to General Manager, SAR & H, 15/10/1918.
9. CA: SAS 719, file G119/5, Hoy to Chairman Nelspruit Health Committee, 16/10/1918; MOH Union to Town Clerk Pietersburg 28/10/1918; CACT: 3/UIT 28 (vol. 2), Telegram from Public Health Department to Mayor Uitenhage, 17/10/1918; CMT to Magistrate Elliotdale, 14/10/1918; IEC, vol. 2, file 8, part 2: Evidence of J. J. Simon, p. 1.
10. *Territorial News*, 24/10/1918, Editorial.
11. *The Star*, 15/10/1918; *De Volkstem*, 18/10/1918, p. 5.
12. CA: SAS 719, file G119/5, Telegram from Divisional Superintendent, East London to SAR G, 15/10/1918.
13. IEC, vol. 1, file 1: Evidence of T. Kleinenberg, p. 52. See too CA: SAS 719, file G119/5, Telegram from Magistrate Pietersburg to General Manager, SAR, 23/10/1918; and Transvaal Archives, Pretoria: MPB 1/1/26 (Council Minute Book no. 7, December 1918–March 1919), pp. 89–90, 101.
14. IEC, vol. 1, file 3: Statement by Dr. P. Murison, p. 17. For action by some other towns, see CA: SAS 719, file G119/5, Clipping from *Grahamstown Journal*, 24/10/1918, and IEC, vol. 2, file 8, part 2: Evidence of J. S. Young, p. 3; and of C. H. Mackay, p. 5.
15. IEC, vol. 1, file 3: Statement by Dr. Murison, p. 16; CA: SAS 719, file G119/5, Telegrams from Divisional Superintendent, Durban to Rolstok, 14/10/1918, and to SAR G, 17/10/1918.
16. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. Stewart, p. 6.
17. IEC, vol. 2, file 8, part 2: Evidence of J. J. Simon, p. 2.
18. *Territorial News*, 24/10/1918, Editorial.

Influenza Epidemic Commission for restricting the movement of Blacks during an epidemic¹⁹ – W. H. Stuart, MLA for Tembuland,²⁰ and Dr. W. Rubusana, ex-MPC for the same constituency, who felt that, “If railway travelling was to be restricted it should affect all classes of the population alike, and not natives only.”²¹ “Jindy” reacted in less measured tones in a letter to the *Cape Times*, asking frankly why, “whenever there is sickness of any kind a native has to suffer. We suffered during rinderpest, bubonic plague, East Coast fever, etc., and now we have to suffer for somebody else’s neglect. . . . When anyone falls into sin or commits an offense [*sic*] is it right to attribute it to the Prince of Darkness because he is the hated one? I think not.”²²

The epidemic spread swiftly through the predominantly Black rural areas. By the third week of October it had overwhelmed most of the Transkei and surrounding districts and made devastating inroads into the Transvaal and Natal. It “swept like an avalanche through the District”, reported the District Surgeon of Umtata, “carrying off hundreds if not thousands and leaving whole kraals desolate in its wake.”²³ “We are dying here in scores every week”, wrote a Black man in the Peddie district grimly.²⁴ Around Keiskammahoeck, recorded a local missionary, there were

“corpses lying in the same hut as the living, who are, themselves, too weak and too indifferent with pain, to try to move them. . . . cattle, sheep and goats straying, unherded, and no one to secure the milk, so badly needed, from the uneasy cows: hundreds dying from sheer hunger and exhaustion. . . .”²⁵

In the Zoutpansberg district police found “Hele kafferstatte . . . uitgestert”,²⁶ while in the neighbouring Pietersburg district branches were placed across the entrance to huts where whole families had died.²⁷ In some areas of Natal the situation was scarcely better. The historian of Mariannhill Mission described how people “died in their fields and in the bush along the roadside. . . . The people were stunned and terror-stricken.”²⁸ From several parts of the country came reports of corpses not being buried,²⁹ but it is not clear whether this was because in many households the ‘flu left no-one well enough to undertake this task or because of fears of being infected by the dead.

The overall effect of the epidemic on the countryside was eerie. “[F]or two weeks a great solemn hush has prevailed”, wrote a correspondent in the Cathcart District.

19. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. Stewart, p. 6, and of Dr. H. M. Chute, p. 2; vol. 2, file 6: Evidence of A. H. Pagan, p. 3; of T. J. van Duyn, p. 3, and Written Evidence by T. W. Halliwell, p. 5; vol. 2, file 8, part 2: Evidence of J. S. Young, pp. 3–4 and of J. J. Simon, p. 2.

20. IEC, vol. 2, file 8, part 2: Evidence of W. H. Stuart, p. 6.

21. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of Dr. W. Rubusana, p. 1.

22. *Cape Times*, 24/10/1918, p. 6.

23. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/219, file 28 vol. 10, District Surgeon’s Report for 1918 quoted in Acting Resident Magistrate to MOH, Pretoria, 3/3/1919.

24. *Daily Dispatch*, 1/11/1918, p. 4.

25. *The News-letter*, December 1918, p. 351.

26. *De Volkstem*, 6/12/1918, p. 4 (Letter from H. H. van Gass).

27. Interview with Mrs. M. Moloto.

28. F. Schimlek: *Mariannhill – A Study in Bantu Life and Missionary Effort*, p. 210.

29. CACT: 1/MTF 6, file 28, Chief Lehana to Acting Resident Magistrate Mount Fletcher, 22/10/1918; CA: SAS 825, file P2/159, Memorandum for the Acting General Manager (Parliamentary Section), 24/1/1919, p. 6; *Daily Dispatch*, 19/10/1918, p. 8, and 23/10/1918, p. 5; *De Burger*, 25/10/1918, p. 2; *The News-letter*, December 1918, p. 351; Interviews with Mrs. L. E. Mashigu and Mr. A. Venter.

“[N]o one to be seen, no one to be heard; no life on the farms, no work in the lands. Lord influenza and his followers have held the countryside in their grip.”³⁰ From his mission station in the Mount Frere District, Reverend J. G. Locke told of the “awful death-like stillness that brooded over this Mission Station. . . [which] was like a place of death. Not a soul stirred.”³¹

In Pretoria the Native Affairs Department frankly admitted on 23 October that, with regard to the epidemic of Spanish ‘flu, “there is no justification at present for assuming it is under control or even that it has reached its zenith.”³² It “threatens the existence of the entire race”, concluded a Black contributor to the *Territorial News* ominously.³³

Outside the towns and villages, organized counter-measures were slow to be devised. In the former, well-established municipal authorities existed to take the lead and, generally, they had the means to do so. However, responsibility for districts beyond their boundaries (where the majority of Blacks lived) rested with hard-pressed Magistrates or Native Commissioners, who usually lacked both the staff and the resources to mount a campaign against the epidemic. In their counter-measures towns and villages generally followed the example of the larger centres in the Union, as reported in the press, but inevitably they gave their own areas priority, at least initially. Outside districts had to make do as best they could.

Practical assistance from the Native Affairs and Public Health Departments in Pretoria was meagre and slow to arrive, despite the Prime Minister’s instruction that the former do all in its power to alleviate distress, “even if it cost money.”³⁴ “The Native Affairs Office gave us no help whatever, beyond sending us fatuous telegrams of which I took no notice”, complained the Chief Magistrate of the Transkei privately. “The Health Department did what I suppose was their best but they were generally about a fortnight late.”³⁵ Magistrates and Native Commissioners were thus largely left to their own resources to try to stem the epidemic. It “makes one realize what the Civil Servants in India have to go through”, commented one sharply.³⁶

Since nurses and doctors were few and far between (six Transkeian Districts lacked even a District Surgeon in 1918),³⁷ leaflets and posters with simple instructions in English, Dutch and four Bantu languages on prevention and treatment were sent out in large numbers.³⁸ Magistrates and Native Commissioners were also made responsible for obtaining supplies of the medicines recommended and ensuring that these were distributed.³⁹ In the Transkei this led to orders being placed in Durban, East London and Cape Town, as the stocks held by the six chemists in the territory were rapidly exhausted.⁴⁰ Measures were also taken to

30. *Daily Dispatch*, 4/11/1918, p. 6.

31. *Methodist Churchman*, 18/11/1918, p. 3.

32. *Daily Dispatch*, 24/10/1918, p. 5.

33. *Territorial News*, 24/10/1918.

34. CA: GNLB 301, part file 370/18/103, Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary for Finance, 4/4/1919.

35. South African Library MSS. Department: MSC 15 (Merriman Correspondence), Letter 633 from J. B. Moffat to J. X. Merriman, 6/12/1918.

36. *Ibid.*, Letter 547 from M. G. Aylthorpe to J. X. Merriman, 25/10/1918.

37. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. B. Moffat, p. 1.

38. *The Star*, 9/11/1918 (Communiqué from Native Affairs Department).

39. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. B. Moffat, p. 1; CACT: 1/UTA 4/2/25, Circular from Secretary for Native Affairs to All Magistrates and Native Affairs Department Officers, 22/10/1918; 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Telegrams from CMT to All Transkeian Magistrates, 23/10/1918; and from Public Health Department, Pretoria, to Magistrate Umtata, 23/10/1918.

40. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. B. Moffat, pp. 1, 3; CACT: 1/TSO 11, file 485(1), Magistrate Tsolo’s Schedule of Expenditure, 23/12/1918; 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Telegram from Public Health Department, Pretoria, to Magistrate Umtata, 23/10/1918.

minimize opportunities for the 'flu to spread by closing schools,⁴¹ prohibiting meetings⁴² and indoor church services for Blacks,⁴³ postponing court-cases and the payment of taxes⁴⁴ and suspending military recruiting.⁴⁵ However, when one Transkeian Magistrate requested that recruiting for the mines be halted too, this was turned down.⁴⁶

To distribute medicine, food and advice, help from any quarter was welcomed. In some areas local relief committees were set up,⁴⁷ but in others Magistrates inspanned an array of individuals ranging from stock inspectors, policemen, teachers and missionaries to traders, labour recruiters and headmen and their councillors.⁴⁸ Black orderlies trained on the mines or in the Native Labour Corps were sent to several districts, as their "knowledge of the language, customs and prejudices of the people" was felt to fit them especially well for helping fellow-Blacks;⁴⁹ other Blacks in towns and villages did much the same unofficially, "carrying to their homes by the Saturday native express train", as one East London resident observed, "all necessities recommended by the hundreds of their European baases."⁵⁰ A few White medical students came up to the Transkei from Cape Town to assist where doctors were in particularly short supply,⁵¹ while Black students from Fort Hare and Lovedale helped by distributing food and medicine and giving assistance in the temporary hospitals which were set up in the Victoria East District.⁵² This experience persuaded at least three of them to follow medical careers later in life.⁵³

41. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Magistrate Umtata to CMT, 20/11/1918; 1/EDL 6/1/13, file 28/1B, Telegram from Magistrate Elliotdale to CMT, 21/11/1918; 1/TSO 11, file 485(1), Circular from Acting Resident Magistrate Tsolo to Inspector of Schools and Missionary Superintendents, 20/11/1918; 1/NKE 3, file 13/3/13, Telegram from Acting Magistrate Nqamakwe to CMT, 16/10/1918; 1/MTF 6, file 28, Telegram from CMT to Magistrate Mount Fletcher, 11/11/1918; *Daily Dispatch*, 31/10/1918, p. 6.
42. CACT: 1/TSO 11, file 485(1), Report by Acting Resident Magistrate Tsolo, 9/12/1918.
43. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Circular from Magistrate Umtata to Various Ministers, 22/10/1918; and Magistrate to A. Mtengane, 9/12/1918; 1/TSO 11, file 485(1), Missionary Superintendent Ross Mission to Magistrate Tsolo, 10/11/1918.
44. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Telegram from CMT to All Transkeian Magistrates, 21/10/1918; and Magistrate Umtata to District Commandant S.A. Police, Umtata, 21/10/1918; 1/FSF 69, file 28/1917-1918, Telegram from Magistrate Flagstaff to CMT, 2/11/1918; 1/MTF 6, file 28, Acting Resident Magistrate's Notice, 23/10/1918; *Territorial News*, 24/10/1918, Editorial.
45. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 9, Magistrate Umtata to Secretary War Recruiting Committee, 12/10/1918.
46. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, CMT to Magistrate Umtata, 18/10/1918.
47. IEC, vol. 1, file 1: Evidence of J. B. Skirving, p. 58; CACT: 1/EDL 6/1/13, file 28/1 B, Telegram from Department of Public Health, Pretoria to Magistrate Elliotdale, 25/10/1918; *The Star*, 9/11/1918 (Communiqué from Native Affairs Department).
48. IEC, vol. 1, file 1: Evidence of J. B. Skirving, p. 57; vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. B. Moffat, pp. 1-2; vol. 2, file 9: Memorandum by J. E. Adamson, p. 10; CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Magistrate Umtata to Traders in Bityi District, 28/10/1918; to J. H. Bouwer, 4/11/1918; to MOH, Pretoria, 2/12/1918; and Telegram from CMT to All Transkeian Magistrates, 11/11/1918; 1/MTF 6, file 28, Telegram from Acting Resident Magistrate Mount Fletcher to CMT, 2/11/1918; South African Library MSS. Department: MSC 15 (Merriman Correspondence), Letters 547 and 576 from M. G. Apthorp to J. X. Merriman, 25/10/1918 and 9/11/1918; *The Star*, 9/11/1918 (Communiqué from Native Affairs Department).
49. *The Star*, 9/11/1918 (Communiqué from Native Affairs Department).
50. *Daily Dispatch*, 23/11/1918, p. 11 (Letter from "Kultur no. II"); Interview with Mrs. M. Philda.
51. IEC, vol. 2, file 8, part 2: Evidence of W. H. Stuart, p. 2; CACT: 1/CAA 9, file 17 vol. 5, F. C. Willmot to Magistrate Cala, 29/10/1918; and J. G. S. van Jaarsveld to Town Clerk Cala, 2/12/1918; 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Telegram from Magistrate Umtata to J. H. Bouwer, 30/10/1918; *Cape Times*, 6/11/1918, p. 8.
52. Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University: MS 14, 754, "Notes on Influenza Epidemic" by Dr. Neil Macvicar, p. 5; *Christian Express*, 2/12/1918, p. 185 and 1/2/1919, p. 27; *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 15/4/1919, p. 5; *Territorial News*, 26/12/1918; *Lovedale Missionary Institution: Report for 1918*, p. 24; R. H. W. Shepherd: *Lovedale, South Africa 1841-1941*, pp. 330-331; A. Kerr: *Fort Hare 1913-1948*, p. 71. Students from other institutions also rendered assistance in their respective areas (F. Schmieke: *Marianhill*, pp. 211-212; *Territorial News*, 26/12/1918).
53. Z. K. Mathews: *Freedom for My People*, pp. 61-62.

The UDF lent a hand too. Defence Rifle Associations and Commandos in the Transkei helped throughout the territory⁵⁴ and early in November the Department of Public Health managed to arrange for three fully-equipped field ambulances, each under a military doctor, to tour the Transkei, dispensing medicine and giving inoculations and advice.⁵⁵ One of these subsequently went up to the Lydenburg District where it performed similar tasks.⁵⁶ The UDF was also able to send a few military doctors to other severely affected areas.⁵⁷

For all these sterling efforts, it is clear that, with such make-shift organization and meagre supplies, counter-measures against the epidemic barely got off the ground in many districts. In the Mount Fletcher District a missionary reported that "many died on account of the disease, for lack of instructions or medicines and doctor. Thanks to the Cape Times which gave us some idea how to manage in case of influenza."⁵⁸ In the Pietersburg District there was "practically no medical attendance" for the 160 000 Black cases⁵⁹ and, as a result, lamented local Blacks, "Many of our people have had to die in appalling numbers through lack of medicines and proper care."⁶⁰ The situation was astonishing, wrote a resident of Potgietersrus, "want alles loopt zo maar op genade af; geen medisijnen, geen hulp, geen begrip van de ziekte, nog minder 'n idee hoe de zieken te behandelen."⁶¹ In the Transkei a Black correspondent appealed to the Chief Magistrate for help to be given to local Blacks on a par with "other sections of the community whose local organizations are leaving no stone unturned to save those within their jurisdiction."⁶²

Yet, much of the advice and medicine that was given by Whites was ignored in favour of tried and trusted remedies or treatment by traditional healers, for many Blacks had a deep distrust of Whites and the medicines they were suddenly urging on them.⁶³ In addition, "Some thought the Government medicine was of no value because it was free",⁶⁴ while others "feared that the Government would tax th[em] for looking after them in this epidemic and so would not take advantage of the food, medicine etc., sent to them."⁶⁵ In Senekal, members of a local Ethiopian

54. SADF Archives: DC 1151, file DB 2430/2, Report by District Staff Officer No. 3 Military District to CGS, 3/12/1918.

55. SADF Archives: DC 1151, file DB 2430/2, Telegram from Secretary for Defence to CMT, 1/11/1918; DC 1021, file 509/2, sub-file 21/2/509, MOH for Union to Staff Director for Medical Services, 8/11/1918 and A/DMS Hewat to DMS, 18/11/1918; DC 1303, file 4003, Reports by Captains Wicht, Kramer and Landsberg enclosed in Memoranda from District Staff Officer No. 3 Military District to DMS, 28/11/1918, 3/12/1918 and 14/12/1918.

56. SADF Archives: DC 1303, file 4003, Report by Captain Landsberg enclosed in Memorandum from District Staff Officer, East London to DMS, 12/12/1918.

57. SADF Archives: DC 1305, file 4942, Telegram from DMS to CMT, 6/11/1918; *The Star*, 9/11/1918 (Communiqué from Native Affairs Department).

58. CACT: I/MTF 6, file 28, Reverend B. Moreillon to Magistrate Mount Fletcher, 5/11/1918.

59. IEC, vol. 1, file 1: Evidence of J. B. Skirving, pp. 57–58.

60. Transvaal Archives: MPB 1/1/26 (Council Minute Book no. 7, December 1918 – March 1919), p. 15.

61. *De Volksstem*, 15/11/1918, p. 7.

62. *Territorial News*, 24/10/1918. See too *Ilanga lase Natal*, 25/10/1918, p. 3 and *Medical Journal of South Africa*, December 1918, pp. 336–337.

63. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. B. Moffat, p. 2, and of Dr. W. Rubusana, p. 1; *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 10/12/1918, Editorial; *Methodist Churchman*, 18/11/1918, p. 3; *Daily Dispatch*, 20/11/1918, p. 10; *The Friend*, 7/11/1918, p. 8; *Ilanga lase Natal*, 25/10/1918, p. 3; *St. Matthew's College Magazine*, Supplementary Number, 12/11/1918, p. 6; *St. Cuthbert's Mission: Report for 1918*, p. 7; *St. Michael's School Magazine* (Bloemfontein), April 1919, p. 21; *Foreign Mission Chronicle of the Episcopal Church in Scotland together with the Kaffrarian Diocesan Quarterly*, July 1919, p. 43; F. Schimlek: *Mariannhill*, pp. 210–211; Interviews with Mr. J. Mfunda, Mrs. M. Philda, Mrs. D. Soyizwapa and Mr. D. Balose; Collier Collection: Letter from Mrs. M. B. Gilfillan (née Miles), 4/5/1972.

64. *St. Matthew's College Magazine*, Special Supplementary Number, 12/11/1918, p. 6.

65. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of Reverend J. Henderson, p. 5.

Church refused the medicines offered by Whites “on conscientious grounds”,⁶⁶ while Zulu Zionists in Zululand behaved similarly, believing their white head-dresses to be “proof from all diseases”.⁶⁷

In some districts the rejection of Whites and their medicines was quite explicitly hostile. In one village in the Victoria East District, medical orderlies found that a man was going ahead of them,

“telling the people that this disease was a device of the Europeans to finish off the Native races of South Africa, and as it had not been quite successful, they were sending out men with poison to complete the work of extermination.”⁶⁸

The Bishop of St. John’s encountered similar antagonism in parts of the Umtata District. In his diary he recorded his experience in one location where

“The people simply w[ould] not have us. One stood outside his hut & insisted his child was better: another woman took our medicines but said we had come to poison them.”⁶⁹

In the light of such attitudes, the refusal of many Blacks to go to hospital is not surprising. As one ‘flu survivor related, they believed that, “if you were very ill and went to hospital, the doctors would kill you quickly.”⁷⁰

However, certain patent medicines did enjoy widespread popularity among Blacks and were thus much in demand. In the Pietersburg District a phenol solution was eagerly sought after because of its apparent efficacy,⁷¹ while in the Transkei, quinine,⁷² Epsom salts⁷³ and an “Iyeza le fiva” mixture made up by an Umtata pharmaceutical firm⁷⁴ were much favoured. Traders with stocks of these or other popular medicines did well – one “made a fortune out of a medicine called BOSS (The Master Medicine) during the epidemic”,⁷⁵ while another sold hundreds of

66. *The Friend*, 23/10/1918, p. 4. For a similar refusal by certain White Christian groups, see ch. 7, p. 134.

67. *The Friend*, 13/11/1918, p. 5. Zulu Zionists opposed the use of medicine in all circumstances as a matter of principle (see B. M. G. Sundkler: *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, p. 226).

68. *Christian Express*, 2/12/1918, p. 185. For evidence of similar beliefs, see *De Volkstem*, 22/11/1918, p. 11 (Letter from “Tor”); IEC, vol. 1, file 1: Evidence of T. Jooste, p. 1; IEC, vol 1, file 4: Evidence of Reverend J. Henderson, pp. 3, 5; F. Schimlek: *Mariannhill*, p. 211; South African Library MSS. Department: MSC 15 (Merriman Correspondence), Letter 553 from R. A. Barry to J. X. Merriman, 29/10/1918; Collier Collection: Letter from Mrs. M. B. Gillilan (née Miles), 4/5/1972.

69. Witwatersrand University Library, Historical and Literary Papers Division: AB 1011 (Bishop J. W. Williams Papers, Diary 1918–1919), Entry for 9/11/1918.

70. Interview with Mr. P. Ndaba. See too CACT: CMT 3/653, file 97. District Surgeon Bizana to Magistrate Bizana, 15/5/1919; District Surgeon’s Report, Elliotdale, 16/5/1919; District Surgeon Idutywa to Magistrate Idutywa, 16/5/1919; and Magistrate Flagstaff to CMT, 11/6/1919; Union of South Africa: *Transkeian Territories General Council (hereafter TTGC) Proceedings and Reports, 1920*, p. 159; Anglican Archives, Bloemfontein: Log Book of St. Augustine’s Mission, Thaba Nchu, p. 22 (Entry for 8/10/1918); UG 15–19, para. 53; *Christian Express*, 8/11/1918, p. 170, and 2/12/1918, p. 185; *Matatiele Mail*, 24/10/1918.

71. IEC, vol. 1, file 1: Evidence of J. B. Skirving, pp. 57, 60; SADF Archives: DC 1303, file 4003, Melle to Orenstein, 1/12/1918; *The Star*, 9/11/1918 (Communiqué from Native Affairs Department).

72. *The Star*, 9/11/1918 (Communiqué from Native Affairs Department).

73. CACT: 1/TSO 11, file 485(1), Israel ? to Magistrate Tsolo, n.d.

74. CACT: 1/TSO 11, file 485(1), Memorandum from Acting Resident Magistrate Tsolo to Dr. McMurrie, 4/11/1918; L. Mzazi to Acting Resident Magistrate Tsolo, 7/11/1918; Telegram from Acting Resident Magistrate Tsolo to Pickens, Umtata, 7/11/1918; E. Jordan to Acting Resident Magistrate Tsolo, 10/11/1918; *St. Matthew’s College Magazine*, Special Supplementary Number, 12/11/1918, p. 6.

75. Letter to author from Dr. J. Branford, 24/11/1978; *St. Matthew’s College Magazine*, Special Supplementary Number, 12/11/1918, p. 6.

bottles of a "wonderful German cure" for influenza which had achieved good results. Its fame had spread "like wild fire amongst the natives who travelled for many miles to obtain a supply", reported the *Transkeian Gazette*.⁷⁶

Inoculation with anti-flu vaccine was not readily accepted, however, and opposition to this form of treatment was extensive. The Public Health Department had only sanctioned its general use reluctantly, as it had genuine reservations about its efficacy⁷⁷ and it was late in October before adequate supplies became available.⁷⁸ In the Pietersburg⁷⁹ and Middelburg⁸⁰ Districts local Blacks absolutely refused to have injections, while there are numerous reports from the array of inoculators pressed into service in the Transkei of being boycotted, avoided and ignored as they toured the areas assigned to them.⁸¹ A sheep-inspector-turned-inoculator in the Umtata District complained "that a certain Native minister . . . is telling people not to believe in Inoculation or medicine issued by Gov [sic] as they are only trying to kill people".⁸² The Magistrate at Flagstaff explained this resistance as arising from rumours that

"the Natives who died in Johannesburg were those inoculated";

"the White man is killing them";

"the operation is performed with a long needle which is thrust . . . into the jugular vein";

"vaccination against Small Pox which was recently performed has caused the disease"

and from a general "belief in Witch Doctors."⁸³ Indeed, so serious did anti-inoculation feeling in the Transkei become that a special warning was issued to at least one inoculator to ensure that he disinfected his syringe thoroughly after each injection, "in order to avoid any risk of poisoning, which, if it occurred, would have a bad effect on the Native mind."⁸⁴ Finally, the Native Affairs Department felt compelled to issue a general circular stressing that inoculation was not compulsory "and cannot be made so until there is more substantial ground for regarding it as

76. *Transkeian Gazette*, 26/12/1918. On the popularity of patent medicines in colonial Africa see G. W. Hartwig and K. D. Patterson (eds.), *Disease in African History*, p. 17.

77. See ch. 6, p. 114; IEC, vol. 2, file 8, part 2; Evidence of W. H. Stuart, p. 2; CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Telegrams from Public Health Department, Pretoria to Magistrate Umtata, 23/10/1918 and 26/10/1918; Telegram from CMT to All Transkeian Magistrates, 23/10/1918; *The Star*, 9/11/1918. Nevertheless, the Department still had serious doubts: in the original draft of a telegram to the MOH, Salisbury (deleted from the final version), Dr. J. A. Mitchell confessed that inoculation had been begun among Blacks "largely owing [to] popular clamour for such facilities" (CA: GES 67, file 13/42^A, sub-file 316/28, Draft of Telegram from Mitchell to "Medicus", Salisbury, 18/11/1918). Presumably he was referring to a popular demand for inoculation by White officials and residents (see ch. 6, p. 115), as there is no evidence of such a desire among Blacks. Even then, at least two doctors in Black rural areas refused to inoculate, as they were not convinced of the vaccine's efficacy (*Transkeian Gazette*, 24/10/1918, Editorial; SADF Archives: DC 1303, file 4003, Melle to Orenstein, 1/12/1918).

78. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28, vol. 8; Telegram from Public Health Department to Magistrate Umtata, 26/10/1918; *The Star*, 9/11/1918 (Communiqué from Native Affairs Department).

79. IEC, vol. 1, file 1; Evidence of J. B. Skirving, p. 58.

80. IEC, vol. 1, file 1; Evidence of Dr. J. H. Rousseau, p. 3.

81. CA: GES 67, file 13/42^A, sub-file 316/28, Memorandum by Dr. J. A. Mitchell to Dr. F. A. Arnold, 6/11/1918; CACT: 1/WDL 6/1/13, file 28/1B, Magistrate Elliotdale to CMT, 15/11/1918; 1/CAA 9, file 17, vol. 5, Magistrate Cala to CMT, 12/12/1918; 1/NKE 3, file 13/3/13, Telegram from Assistant Magistrate Nqamakwe to S.A. Institute for Medical Research, 9/11/1918; 1/TSO 11, file 485(1), Acting Magistrate Tsolo to Dr. McMurtie, 4/11/1918 and Telegram from Acting Magistrate Tsolo to S.A. Institute for Medical Research, 7/11/1918; 1/MTF 6, file 28, Telegrams from Acting Resident Magistrate Mount Fletcher to CMT, 9/11/1918, 15/11/1918 and 25/11/1918; 4/KWT 4/19 no. 42, Reports on Inoculation at Balassi 28/10/1918, and at Blaney Station 29/10/1918 to Divisional Council, Kingwilliamstown; *Transkeian Gazette*, 7/11/1918 and 14/11/1918.

82. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, J. H. Bouwer to Magistrate Umtata, 16/11/1918.

83. CACT: 1/FSF 6/9, file 28/1917-1918, Magistrate Flagstaff to CMT, 20/11/1918.

84. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Magistrate Umtata to J. H. Bouwer, 1/11/1918.

effective protection against disease than at present exists.”⁸⁵ As the Secretary for Native Affairs, told the Influenza Epidemic Commission, this step became necessary

“as the idea was getting abroad that inoculation was compulsory and it looked as if they were going to cause more trouble through inoculation than through the disease itself.”⁸⁶

Once again, reactions to the acute crisis produced by the ‘flu epidemic highlight underlying feelings and attitudes very sharply. Many rural Blacks did not trust Whites and expected the worst of them. “They could not understand why the white man had suddenly grown so solicitous for their welfare”, lamented the *Christian Express*. It went on:

“This is a terrible impeachment of our attitude towards the Native races, that they could not believe us capable of helping them even in such a season of calamity unless we had behind it some scheme of bettering ourselves. Do the Europeans deserve such distrust? Is there anything in our past treatment of these people to create such suspicion and fear? We ought thoughtfully to ask ourselves this question.”⁸⁷

Most Whites failed to do so, rather seeing their activities during the epidemic as proof of “the good will that the Government and its officials as well as the medical men, Missionaries and many others bear towards. . . . the children of the Government and our friends.”⁸⁸ Indeed, the Chief Magistrate of the Transkei concluded that, “a new bond of friendship” had grown up between White and Black in many districts⁸⁹ and certainly it would be misleading to ignore the genuine expressions of gratitude on the part of Blacks for these efforts.⁹⁰ Yet, in the opinion of some, even this assistance was not wholly disinterested. As one Magistrate observed tellingly, the expenditure authorized to combat epidemics “tends to be in proportion only to the degree of (European) alarm.”⁹¹

It is impossible to say with any precision how many Blacks died of Spanish influenza and its complications in the rural parts of South Africa. Even where a system for registering Black deaths did exist in these areas, it functioned haphazardly.⁹² Nor do the figures collected by the Influenza Epidemic Commission in December 1918 and published in its Report⁹³ inspire much confidence. For example, the number of Black deaths in the Kingwilliamstown District up to 23 November was given as 2 024 by the Magistrate, with “500 to 600 native deaths not yet reported.”⁹⁴ However, when he appeared before the Commission in person in January 1919, he gave the total Black deaths in his district as 7 081.⁹⁵ To cast doubt

85. CACT: 1/UTA 6/1/218, file 28 vol. 8, Telegram from Secretary for Native Affairs, 2/11/1918, as quoted in Circular from CMT to All Transkeian Magistrates, 4/11/1918.

86. IEC, vol. 1, file 1: Evidence of E. E. Dower, p. 101.

87. *Christian Express*, 2/12/1918, p. 185. For a similar, though sharper, opinion on these lines, see South African Library MSS. Department: MSC 15 (Merriman Correspondence), Letter 553 from R. A. Barry to J. X. Merriman, 29/10/1918.

88. CACT: 1/LSK 6, file 28, 13/2, Acting CMT to Magistrate Lusikisiki, 20/2/1919. For the classic “White man’s burden” attitude, see *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 3/12/1918 (Letter from R.W.R.I.).

89. *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1919*, p. 38.

90. For instance, see *Transkeian Gazette*, 26/12/1918 (Kentani Notes), and 6/2/1919; *Territorial News*, 27/2/1919 (Letter from Magistrate Tsolo); CACT: 1/LSK 6, file 28, 13/2, Secretary to Paramount Chief Marelane to Magistrate Lusikisiki, 5/2/1919.

91. CACT: CMT 3/653, file 97, Magistrate Tsolo to CMT, 21/6/1919.

92. *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1921*, p. 39; *De Volksstem*, 12/11/1918, p. 4. See too, ch. 9, p. 157.

93. UG 15–19, Appendix C.

94. UG 15–19, p. 25.

95. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. H. O’Connell, p. 1.

on even this figure, the District Surgeon testified next that, "No reliance could be placed on the statements as to the number of Native men, women and children who had died during the epidemic."⁹⁶

In the Transkei both the Chief Magistrate and the Deputy Commissioner of Police estimated that some 30 000 Blacks had died of 'flu out of a total population of one million.⁹⁷ But even the Influenza Epidemic Commission's figure for 27 Districts was considerably higher (37 454),⁹⁸ and then three magistrates frankly admitted that the figures they had submitted were far from complete,⁹⁹ while others noted that the 'flu had not yet abated when they sent in their returns.¹⁰⁰ Dwarfing such figures, however, the 1921 Census concluded that the population of the Transkei was 100 000 below what had been anticipated, based on the rate of increase between previous censuses. This shortfall it attributed to deaths in the 'flu epidemic.¹⁰¹

What is certain is that the death-toll among Blacks in many rural areas was high, with the general exception of the north-eastern parts of the country.¹⁰² Even without the dubious contemporary belief in Blacks' natural "susceptibility . . . to diseases of the respiratory tract",¹⁰³ possible reasons for this heavy toll are open to debate: for instance, congested living conditions,¹⁰⁴ diminished physical resistance as a result of undernourishment¹⁰⁵ or the effects of other diseases,¹⁰⁶ disregard of the measures advocated by White doctors¹⁰⁷ (where knowledge of these reached 'flu-stricken kraals early enough) and too great a reliance on unsuitable traditional treatment.¹⁰⁸ In the opinion of the progress-minded *Imvo Zabantsundu*, this neglect of the laws of health arose from "ignorance, ignorance, and yet again ignorance". In most cases Blacks had simply "applied their own methods which are their stock cures for the ordinary headache and cold, not knowing that this epidemic demanded special treatment", it declared.¹⁰⁹ To be sure, practices such as getting up as soon as possible,¹¹⁰ moving the sick,¹¹¹ excluding fresh air¹¹² or

96. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of Dr. H. M. Chute, p. 4.

97. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. B. Moffatt, p. 1; CACT: CMT 3/872, file 638.31, Annual Report of Transkei Division of S.A. Police for 1918, p. 10.

98. UG 15-19, pp. 24-27.

99. UG 15-19, pp. 24-25 (Bizana and Idutywa); CACT: 1/UTA 6/1218, file 28 vol. 8, Assistant Resident Magistrate Umtata to Public Health Department, 26/11/1918.

100. UG 15-19, pp. 24-26 (Elliotdale, Ngqeleni, Tabankulu, Tsolo). Magistrates in other Black rural areas added similar reservations when they submitted their figures (for example, see UG 15-19, pp. 24-29, Alexandria, Fort Beaufort, Herschel, Moltveno, Mapumulo, Nylstroom, Standerton, Kroonstad).

101. Union of South Africa: *Third Census of the Population of the Union, 1921 - Report*, UG 37-24, p. 43.

102. See ch. 9, pp. 160-161 for an attempt to explain this phenomenon.

103. UG 15-19, para. 53.

104. W. M. Macmillan: *The Land, The Native and Unemployment*, pp. 3-4, 6, 14; Union of South Africa: *Report of the Under-Secretary for Education for 1918, Part II*, UG 8-20, p. 35.

105. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of Reverend J. Henderson, pp. 1-4, and Evidence of Reverend H. Markotter, p. 3; *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 3/12/1918, p. 5; *Christian Express*, 8/11/1918, p. 175; 2/12/1918, p. 185; *Daily Dispatch*, 22/1/1919, p. 9 (Letter from "Trader"); *Methodist Churchman*, 18/11/1918, p. 3; Cape of Good Hope: *Report of the Superintendent-General of Education for 1919*, CP 4-20, p. 68, para. 60; W. M. Macmillan: *The Land, The Native and Unemployment*, p. 14.

106. IEC, vol. 1, file 1: Evidence of T. Kleinenberg, p. 55, and of J. B. Skirving, p. 60.

107. See p. 84 and UG 8-20, p. 35.

108. See pp. 86-87 and UG 8-20, p. 35.

109. *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 10/12/1918, Editorial. This lists eight traditional ways of treating patients, all of them dangerous in the case of influenza.

110. H. Ngubane: *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, p. 100.

111. *Cowley Evangelist*, February 1919, p. 38.

112. *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts: Report for 1919*, p. 20; *St. Matthew's College Magazine*, Special Supplementary Number, 12/11/1918, pp. 6-7; *St. Michael's School Magazine* (Bloemfontein), April 1919, p. 20; *De Volkstem*, 8/11/1918, p. 5.

complete inadequacy of the available resources has been demonstrated by the history of recent epidemics.¹²³

Some effort had been made soon after the Spanish 'flu epidemic to ascertain exactly how inadequate these resources were, but no significant action seems to have followed, beyond the appointment of the first Government MOH for the Eastern Cape and Transkei in August 1920 and provision for the dead in the Transkei to be buried in central cemeteries instead of scattered around the locations.¹²³ When in 1921 the Transkeian Territories General Council attempted to take the first step recommended by its Select Committee on Public Health – having itself proclaimed the local health authority for the whole territory¹²⁴ – its application was turned down in favour of a continuation of the existing, overloaded system.¹²⁵

A little progress was forthcoming in Natal, however. In 1924, nearly six years after the 'flu had driven home the pressing need for fully-qualified Black nurses,¹²⁶ the Natal Medical Council formally recognized the McCord Zulu Hospital in Durban as a training-school for Black nurses.¹²⁷ Until then the Victoria Hospital at Lovedale and Crown Mines Hospital on the Rand had been the only two recognized institutions in South Africa for training such nurses.¹²⁸

In the field of health education, on the recommendation of the Native Education Commission¹²⁹ and the Transkeian Territories General Council,¹³⁰ hygiene was given a place in the Black primary school syllabus introduced in the Cape in 1922;¹³¹ the Transvaal Director of Education claimed that this subject was already in the curriculum of Black schools in his province before the influenza epidemic.¹³²

123. Union of South Africa: *Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Training of Natives in Medicine and Public Health*, UG 35–28, para. 8. See too Union of South Africa: *Report of the Committee of Inquiry re Public Hospitals and Kindred Institutions*, UG 30–25, paras. 251–252, 260, 371–374 and 515, and Union of South Africa: *Report of the Hospital Survey Committee*, UG 25–27, para. 129.
124. CACT: CMT 3/653, file 97, Identical Minute from Secretary for Native Affairs, 29/4/1919. The same file contains the replies from all Transkei Magistrates.
125. *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1920*, p. xli and *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1921*, p. 171. The appointment of this MOH was a posthumous achievement for J. B. Moffat who, in the wake of the epidemic, had declared it his intention to have such an official appointed (South African Library MSS, Department: MSC 15 (Merriman Correspondence), Letter 633 from J. B. Moffat to J. X. Merriman, 6/12/1918).
126. *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1919*, pp. 146–148 and *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1920*, p. xv.
127. *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1921*, pp. 37–39, 58–63, 170–172, 178–179.
128. CACT: CMT 3/654, file “TTGC Select Committee on Public Health 1921”, Copy of Minute by Secretary for Public Health, 2/11/1921 and draft Circular from Department of Public Health, enclosed in Secretary for Native Affairs to CMT, 15/11/1921; UG 34–22, p. 15.
129. See p. 89.
130. C. Searle: *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa 1652–1960*, p. 272. To follow the progress of the scheme, see *South African Nursing Record*, March 1919, p. 102; May 1919, p. 143; November 1919, p. 91; December 1919, p. 291; May 1920, p. 402; *Medical Journal of South Africa*, May 1919, p. 466; December 1919, p. 115; February 1920, p. 168; June 1920, p. 245.
131. C. Searle: *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa*, p. 268; UG 34–22, p. 19; *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1919*, pp. 133–134; CACT: CMT 3/653, file 97, Identical Minute from Department of Native Affairs to Native Commissioners and others, 29/4/1919; *Transvaal Chamber of Mines: 29th Annual Report for 1918*, p. 45. In addition, some form of training Black nurses was being undertaken at Butterworth and Klerksdorp, but this does not seem to have been officially recognized (*The Star*, 25/6/1919; *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1919*, pp. 133–134, and *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1921*, p. 62).
132. CP 4–20, p. 68, para. 63; Union of South Africa: *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education, 1935–1936*, UG 29/1936, para. 35.
133. *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1919*, pp. 149–150, and *TTGC Proceedings and Reports, 1921*, p. 38, para. 10, and pp. 178–179; CACT: CMT 3/653, file 97, CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 16/11/1919.
134. UG 29/1936, para. 35.
135. IEC, vol. 2, file 9: Memorandum by J. E. Adamson, pp. 8–10.

Natal determined that, together with elementary physiology, hygiene would be taught in its Black schools from 1919.¹³⁶ With regard to informal health education, a series of articles on elementary health and hygiene by "Hygienist" in *Ilanga lase Natal* in 1919¹³⁷ point to a new awareness of such matters among some Blacks. The author believed that there was a "reasonable demand for correspondence on this subject" and hoped to be "of good service to your numerous readers."¹³⁸ Once he had put his moralistic lessons behind him and turned to elementary physiology, he probably was.

At a different level, the experience of the influenza epidemic produced far more immediate results, though there is no way of knowing how thorough or enduring these were.

It is not uncommon for serious crises to bring shifts in or revivals of belief in their wake¹³⁹ and, in this, the 1918 epidemic was no exception. Whether they were spurred by the altruistic relief work of missionaries or teachers and students from Christian institutions, by a loss of faith in a traditional religion unable to explain the disaster adequately or by what seemed to be the greater immunity of Christians to the 'flu¹⁴⁰ and their familiarity with the sometimes effective medicines and treatment being prescribed, many Black non-Christians suddenly displayed an unwonted interest in Christianity. They "faced a situation where the insurance given to them by their system of superstition and magic had failed completely", wrote one Catholic missionary.¹⁴¹ Moreover backsliders probably saw the 'flu as a divine admonition and made haste to return to the ways of the Church.

Missionaries were almost ecstatic at the prospect. "In our vast Mission fields there are opportunities given the like of which have only come once or twice before," enthused the Methodist South African Missionary Society,

"and never on so great a scale as at present. The terrible mortality during the epidemic has awakened the heathen peoples as nothing in recent times has done, and they are flocking in large numbers to the Churches, opening their houses for Evangelistic Work, calling Christian people to pray with them, and looking to the Missionaries for direction and help as they have never done before. It is a golden opportunity if we are ready to take it and use it."¹⁴²

The energetic efforts which followed this exhortation did not go unrewarded, for Methodist station after station reported revivals and conversions on an unprecedented scale during the months after the epidemic had struck¹⁴³ – so much so, in fact, that already by January 1919 the Clarkebury District Synod could speak of "the compensating blessings accompanying the ravages of the recent influenza epidemic seen in the awakened interest among the heathen, and a desire for the

136. Province of Natal: *Report of the Superintendent of Education for 1918*, NP 4-1919, p. 48.

137. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 14/2/1919, and following editions.

138. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 14/2/1919.

139. K. Burrige: *New Heaven New Earth*, p. 3; R. J. Morris: *Cholera 1832*, p. 144; H. McLeod: *Religion and the People of Western Europe 1789-1970*, p. 82; A. D. Gilbert: *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp. 186, 197; M. Barkun: *Disaster and the Millennium*, p. 6 and ch. 4 passim.

140. *St. John's Chronicle*, March 1919, p. 79; *St. Cuthbert's Mission: Report for 1918*, p. 7; *Cowley Evangelist*, February 1919, p. 37; *Matatiele Mail*, 7/11/1918; *Daily Dispatch*, 16/11/1918, p. 6; IEC, vol. 1, file 4; Evidence of J. B. Moffat, pp. 2, 4 and of J. H. O'Connell, pp. 1-2. However, some non-Christians interpreted this phenomenon quite differently. They were not attracted by "a god who was so lacking in impartiality" (D. W. Semple: *A Scots Missionary in the Transkei* p. 65).

141. F. Schimlek: *Mariannhill*, p. 211. See too Terence Ranger's reference to the "conceptual crisis" for Africans posed by the 'flu (T. Ranger: "Medical Science and Pentecost" in W. J. Sheils (ed.): *The Church and Healing*, p. 355).

142. *Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa: 37th Report of South African Missionary Society* (1919), p. 1.

143. *Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa: 37th Report of South African Missionary Society* (1919), pp. 6-21.

Word of God.”¹⁴⁴ Missionaries of other denominations reported a similar increase in new catechumens and repentant recidivists.¹⁴⁵ “God fulfils Himself in many ways”, observed one missionary wondrously.¹⁴⁶

Yet, Christianity and its associations did not provide the answer to all Blacks who had lost family and friends in the epidemic. Some Black Christians in the Transkei were so disillusioned by that religion’s inability to protect and comfort them at such a time of crisis that they turned their backs on Christianity completely.¹⁴⁷ Elsewhere in Africa, others sought new avenues within Christianity as a result of their dissatisfaction with the behaviour of the established churches during the crisis¹⁴⁸ or because they interpreted the devastating epidemic as a sign from God.¹⁴⁹ Both Barrett and Turner note that several new independent churches were set up in Africa soon after 1918 and they link this development with the impact of the Spanish ‘flu epidemic.¹⁵⁰ It is probable that South Africa shared in this phenomenon: the ‘flu featured prominently in the creation of the Church of the Saints, the one independent church established at this time to have left detailed records.¹⁵¹ Both its founders, John Mtanti and George Khambule, received their initial inspirations in the midst of the epidemic. Khambule had been so shaken by the death of his mistress from Spanish ‘flu,

“that he himself – in those terrible months of influenza and rumours of death everywhere – fell ill and was taken to hospital. There in the evening he ‘died’, and woke up again at 4 a.m. the following morning. He knew then that he had been through a terrifying experience . . . He saw there his own corpse, foul and smelling, and his wife crying beside it. Then he was told: Return to the earth to save its inhabitants.”¹⁵²

Within traditional circles the epidemic had spiritual consequences too. In Zululand it was followed by an extensive outburst of *amandawe* or *amandiki* spirit possession.¹⁵³ The symptoms resembled those of hysteria or a nervous breakdown. “You cry for nothing . . . for a while, then you come up again like [recovering

144. *Daily Dispatch*, 21/1/1919, p. 9. For a similar view see *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 24/1/1919, p. 7.

145. *Presbyterian Church of South Africa: Proceedings of 20th General Assembly 1919*, p. 122; *Cowley Evangelist*, March 1919, p. 56; April 1919, p. 77; *SSM Quarterly Paper*, Michaelmas 1919, pp. 10, 11; *St. Matthew’s College Magazine*, April 1919, p. 2; *St. John’s Chronicle*, March 1919, p. 79; *St. Cuthbert’s Mission: Report for 1918*, p. 8; M. Houghton: *SSM at TY*, p. 36.

146. *Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa: 37th Report of South African Missionary Society (1919)*, p. 13.

147. *Cowley Evangelist*, April 1919, pp. 76–77. For a similar response in Nyassaland see *De Koningsbode*, August 1919, p. 156. Understandably, contemporary mission journals carry few references to such reactions.

148. D. B. Barrett: *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, p. 73; H. W. Turner: *Religious Innovation in Africa*, pp. 4, 229; M.-L. Martin: *Kimbangu – An African Prophet and His Church*, p. 44; J. D. Y. Peel: *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba*, pp. 60, 62–63.

149. On post-‘flu millennialism, see ch. 8, p. 143. It is worth noting that at least two men who established independent churches or orders after the ‘flu had had the disease themselves or had lost close acquaintances through it (T. O. Ranger: “Medical Science and Pentecost” in W. J. Sheils (ed.): *The Church and Healing*, p. 350 and B. M. G. Sundkler: *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists*, p. 125).

150. D. B. Barrett: *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, p. 73; H. W. Turner: *Religious Innovation in Africa*, pp. 4–5, 11, 125, 229.

151. B. M. G. Sundkler: *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists*, ch. 4.

152. *Ibid.*, p. 125. If his illness was also Spanish ‘flu, it is possible that his “death” was a case of the deep coma which sometimes accompanied serious attacks of the disease (see ch. 7, p. 132).

153. B. M. G. Sundkler: *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, p. 23; Interviews with Mrs. P. Mhlungu and Mr. W. Kubeka.

from] a stroke", recalled a woman who was stricken by it.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps these symptoms were the result of traumatic experiences during the epidemic when many were hastily buried without due ceremony.¹⁵⁵ Extended treatment by a witchdoctor was required to cure these *amandawu* and *amandiki*.¹⁵⁶

It was not only religious ideas which the episode of the 'flu epidemic helped to spread among rural Blacks. Traders reported that after it had waned in the Transkei, "red" Xhosa began to buy tea, coffee and sugar in large quantities, supposedly because they associated these commodities with the greater immunity of the "school" people during the epidemic.¹⁵⁷

It is also likely that some of those who survived after inoculation, hospitalization or medical treatment thereby had their suspicion of Western medicine diminished. "In some ways the epidemic may be considered a boon", concluded the Superintendent of St. Barnabas' Hospital in West Pondoland,

"for it broke down the prejudice against us which has existed in the minds of some of our neighbours; they were only too glad to come into hospital and be cared for when a whole household went down at once with the disease."¹⁵⁸

Recognizing the power of successful treatment to impress people, the Magistrate of Kingwilliamstown agreed that inoculation should continue in his District after the 'flu had ebbed. He "did it for educational purposes – i.e. to gain the natives' confidence in the event of a future epidemic", he told the Influenza Epidemic Commission, adding confidently, "There would be very little difficulty in future with respect to inoculation."¹⁵⁹ The effect on a "red" mother in the Kentani District of having her 'flu-stricken son doctored back to health with Western medicine can be gauged from her lavish praise for Whites who were, in her words, "a great race, God-fearing and kind to those in distress, and to them should be entrusted the affairs of the world."¹⁶⁰

The economic consequences of the influenza epidemic were extensive. The death or post-'flu debility of many young migrant workers hit their dependent families hard and often these were left destitute, falling into arrears with the payment of taxes as a result.¹⁶¹ This situation was aggravated by the failure of early crops at the

154. Interview with Mrs. P. Mhlongu. For other accounts of the symptoms, see B. M. G. Sundkler; *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, p. 23; H. Ngubane; *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, p. 143 and S. G. Lee: "Spirit Possession among the Zulu" in J. Beattie and J. Middleton (eds.): *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, pp. 131–133. These symptoms also resembled those of post-'flu melancholia (see ch. 10, p. 190). It would be satisfying to explain *amandawu/amandiki* in this way, but these forms of possession occurred at other times of crisis too (see B. M. G. Sundkler: *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, p. 23; H. Ngubane: *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, pp. 142, 146–147 and S. G. Lee in Beattie and Middleton (eds.): *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, pp. 130, 133).

155. For a discussion of possible causes, see S. G. Lee in J. Beattie and J. Middleton (eds.): *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, p. 133 and H. Ngubane: *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, pp. 142–144, 146–148.

156. H. Ngubane: *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, pp. 143–144; B. M. G. Sundkler: *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, p. 23; Interview with Mrs. P. Mhlongu.

157. J. T. Kenyon: *An Address on the General Council Administrative System of the Transkeian Territories*, p. 9.

158. *Daily Dispatch*, 15/4/1919, p. 7. See too F. Schimlek: *Mariannhill*, p. 212.

159. IEC, vol. 1, file 4: Evidence of J. H. O'Connell, p. 5.

160. *Transkeian Gazette*, 26/12/1918.

161. CA: GNLB 47, file 1159/12/D 38(1), Magistrate Mtunzini to Chief Native Commissioner, Pietermaritzburg, 4/6/1919; JUS 190, file 1/507/19, Annual Report of Magistrate Peddie, 1919; CACT: CMT 3/903, file 728.2, Acting CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 4/2/1919; Magistrate Engoobo to CMT, 31/12/1918; CMT 3/920, file 774.3 no. 1, Acting Assistant CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 22/8/1919.

beginning of 1919 because of the prevailing drought. Previously there had been a breadwinner to go out to the mines in such a situation, but now there was no-one.¹⁶²

Far more serious was the combined effect of the 'flu and this drought on sowing. In many districts of the Transkei and Border the epidemic coincided with the only substantial rains that fell during the spring-summer planting period for maize and grain sorghum (Kaffir corn). The months which followed were dry – anything but ideal for sowing grain properly. Thus, by incapacitating so many peasants and their families at the one period when ploughing and sowing could have been undertaken successfully, the 'flu epidemic was partially responsible for that season's poor harvest.¹⁶³ Typical was what happened in the Mount Frere District, where some 3 000 people were believed to have died of Spanish influenza. "Owing to the scarcity of labour through this disease during the ploughing season and the very dry weather", reported the commandant of a police patrol, "only about one third of the lands have been put under cultivation this year."¹⁶⁴ At the end of January 1919, by which time the planting-season was over, the Department of Agriculture estimated that in the Transkei 22% less land had been sown with maize and grain sorghum than in the poor 1917–1918 season; in the Border districts the figures were 41% less (maize) and 58% less (grain sorghum).¹⁶⁵ So disturbed was the Native Affairs Department by this failure to plough and sow that it earnestly asked its officials whether this might be "due to the existence of a native custom favouring this course after an epidemic."¹⁶⁶ Replies from the Transkei were negative,¹⁶⁷ but all officials warned of serious shortages of grain in prospect. "I have to state", wrote the Acting Chief Magistrate ominously in February 1919,

"that with the exception of a few favoured spots of limited extent, the crops in the Transkeian Territories will fail more completely than has been the case for many years."¹⁶⁸

Harvest-time in May, June and July 1919 confirmed this. Maize crops in the Transkei were expected to be 31% below what the Department of Agriculture considered normal; grain sorghum crops would be an estimated 27% less. Final forecasts of yields in the Border districts were far lower: maize would be 60% below normal, grain sorghum 70%.¹⁶⁹

In the Transkei, the western parts seem to have suffered most: for instance, at the end of July, a correspondent in St. Mark's reported tersely that starvation was "staring the natives in the face" there,¹⁷⁰ while in the Butterworth District crops

162. *Christian Express*, 1/2/1919, pp. 20–21.

163. For a similar result of the 'flu epidemic in Tanganyika, see T. O. Beidelman: *Colonial Evangelism – A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*, p. 80.

164. CACT: CMT 3/869, file 638.1, Report by Commandant, S.A. Police Mobile Squadron on Patrol to Mount Frere District, n.d. For similar descriptions, see CACT: CMT 3/903, file 728.2, Magistrate Willowvale to CMT, 6/12/1918; Magistrate Ngqeleni to CMT, 7/12/1918; Magistrate Matatiele to CMT, 11/12/1918; Magistrate Port St. Johns to CMT, 11/12/1918; Magistrate Mount Fletcher to CMT, 12/12/1918; Magistrate Tabankulu to CMT, 14/12/1918; 1/KNT 28, file 12, vol. 4, Telegram from Magistrate Kentani to "Crops", Pretoria, 9/1/1919; CA: NTS 320, file 1659/17F.860, Superintendent of Natives, Keiskama Hoek to Magistrate Keiskama Hoek, 31/10/1918; *Christian Express*, 1/1/1919, pp. 3, 5 and 1/2/1919, p. 20; *Matatiele Mail*, 28/11/1918; *Daily Dispatch*, 27/1/1919, p. 6 and 11/2/1919, p. 7; *News-letter*, December 1918, p. 351.

165. Union of South Africa, Department of Agriculture: *Crop and Livestock Report for January 1919*, no. 7, 1918–1919, p. 4. (Copy of this Report in CACT: 1/KNT 28, file 12, vol. 4).

166. CACT: CMT 3/903, file 728.2, Unison Circular from Secretary for Native Affairs, 13/11/1918.

167. CACT: CMT 3/903, file 728.2, CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 20/11/1918; 1/UTA 6/1/219, file 28, vol. 10, Resolution by Umtata District Council, 25/11/1918.

168. CACT: CMT 3/903, file 728.2, Acting CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 4/2/1919.

169. Union of South Africa, Department of Agriculture: *Crop and Livestock Report for June 1919*, no. 12, 1918–1919, p. 4. (Copy of this Report in CACT: 1/KNT 28, file 12, vol. 4).

170. *Daily Dispatch*, 30/7/1919, p. 11.

were "so poor as to be almost negligible", wrote the Acting Magistrate.¹⁷¹ By the end of August the Acting Assistant Chief Magistrate was of the opinion that there was a chance of "a famine, the like of which has not been experienced for many years."¹⁷² Conditions in Border districts like Victoria East and Kingwilliamstown were as bad, if not worse. There are reports of Blacks in these congested areas eating only once a day,¹⁷³ of sheep being milked to feed children,¹⁷⁴ pupils being too weak to attend school¹⁷⁵ and debility, scurvy and emaciation spreading among the population.¹⁷⁶ "A situation is arising fitted to reduce the people to despair", warned the principal of Lovedale.¹⁷⁷

Not many avenues were open to those seeking to escape starvation. Some borrowed money for food or bought on credit,¹⁷⁸ others turned to stealing food, stock or whatever could be sold for cash to purchase grain. There was a substantial increase in such cases in the Transkei and Eastern Cape in 1919. "The Influenza Epidemic, followed by the drought, are, in the main, accountable . . .", believed the Commissioner of Police for the Transkei.¹⁷⁹

A few families trekked to districts where food was more plentiful,¹⁸⁰ while others sold some of their stock to buy grain, even though many of the animals were in poor condition because of the drought and prices paid were low.¹⁸¹ Many young men resorted to migrant labour, an increasingly common decision in the face of natural disaster or economic pressure.¹⁸² Between 1 September 1919 and 12 January 1920 some 8 340 Blacks passed through the disinfection depot at Sterkroom Junction on their way north.¹⁸³ The result of this exodus was disastrous for the families and communities left behind. "The number of able bodied men in these [Transkeian] Territories at present is scarcely in excess of the minimum necessary for carrying on the work of looking after the stock and doing the ploughing when the rains come",

171. CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3, no. 1, Acting Resident Magistrate Butterworth to CMT, 2/9/1919. For other areas seriously affected, see CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3 no. 1, Copies of letters from Traders to Magistrate Idutywa; Magistrate Engcobo to CMT, 29/8/1919; Magistrate Tsolo to CMT, 23/9/1919; 1/CAA 3, file 8 vol. 3, Telegram from Magistrate Cala to CMT, 21/8/1919; *Daily Dispatch*, 22/8/1919, p. 6 and 25/9/1919, p. 4.
172. CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3 no. 1, Acting Assistant CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 22/8/1919.
173. *Daily Dispatch*, 18/8/1919, p. 3; *Christian Express*, 1/9/1919, p. 130.
174. *Daily Dispatch*, 13/8/1919, p. 9.
175. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Petition from Native Teachers' Association, Annshaw to L. Botha, Premier, 15/8/1919.
176. *Christian Express*, 1/9/1919, p. 130.
177. *Daily Dispatch*, 18/8/1919, p. 3. See too CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Draft letter from Secretary for Native Affairs to Private Secretary to Minister of Finance, 6/9/1919; Magistrate Middeldrift to Magistrate Kingwilliamstown, 28/7/1919; District Commandant Mason to Magistrate Kingwilliamstown, 15/8/1919; Magistrate Fort Beaufort to Secretary for Native Affairs, 20/8/1919; Magistrate East London to Secretary for Native Affairs, 9/9/1919; Magistrate Komgha to Secretary for Native Affairs, 9/9/1919; Magistrate Herschel to Secretary for Native Affairs, 8/9/1919; Magistrate Lady Frere to Secretary for Native Affairs, 8/9/1919.
178. CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3 no. 1, Acting Magistrate Umtata to CMT, 11/2/1919; CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Magistrate East London to Secretary for Native Affairs, 9/9/1919.
179. Union of South Africa: *Report of the Commissioner, South African Police for 1919*, UG 3-21, p. 45. See too, *Daily Dispatch*, 30/7/1919, p. 11.
180. CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3 no. 1, Magistrate Cofimvaba to CMT, 8/9/1919.
181. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Draft letter from Secretary for Native Affairs to Private Secretary to Minister of Finance, 6/9/1919; CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3 no. 1, Telegram from Magistrate Libode to CMT, 11/12/1919; 1/CAA 3, file 8 vol. 3, F. Morris to Magistrate Cala, 24/12/1919.
182. CA: GNLB 49, file 1159/12/38 (28), Magistrate Lady Frere to Secretary for Native Affairs, 10/10/1919; Circular from Director of Native Labour to All Inspectors, 15/10/1919; Standard Bank Archives, Johannesburg: Inspection Report, Umtata, 20/9/1919, p. 13; *Daily Dispatch*, 22/8/1919, p. 6, W. Beinart and C. Bundy: "State Intervention and Rural Resistance - The Transkei 1900-1965" in M. A. Klein (ed.): *Peasants in Africa*, p. 285.
183. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, J. Liepert(?) to Secretary for Native Affairs, 12/1/1920.

a senior official noted late in August 1919,¹⁸⁴ Those left at home were “the women, children, and sick,” recorded a missionary in the Victoria East District, “and there is no food for them.” As for those families unable to send out a migrant worker as he had died in the ‘flu epidemic, “the cry of hunger is coming from their kraals.”¹⁸⁵

The Central Government was slow to come to the aid of these distressed areas, as it was reluctant to check the stream of migrant workers going to the labour-hungry mines¹⁸⁶ and other industries. At all costs it wished to avoid the impression that it was

“rushing into those districts at public expense enormous quantities of grain for issue free of cost to natives who are able but unwilling to work for their own support, and thus at once pauperising the people and accentuating the shortage of native labour of which there is complaint throughout the Union.”¹⁸⁷

In this desire it was strongly supported by local officials who echoed one another in deprecating the issuing of grain free of charge or on generous terms of credit.¹⁸⁸ “The native is too prone to habits of idleness and improvidence”, argued the Additional Magistrate of Kingwilliamstown, “and it is essential that they be trained to be more self-dependent. . . . A great many natives have gone out to work but there are still a large number of able bodied adults who have not done so. . . .”¹⁸⁹

The Government finally agreed to act, when it became clear that Blacks had become almost wholly dependent on local traders for grain¹⁹⁰ and that the cost of this was escalating sharply.¹⁹¹ In September 1919 Magistrates in the distressed districts were authorized to buy grain from co-operative stores and resell it to needy Blacks at cost price; if they were unable to pay cash, explained the Department of Native Affairs, advances could be made on the best security available, but these “should be kept down [as] much as possible.” £50 000 was set aside for such

184. CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3 no. 1, Acting Assistant CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 22/8/1919.

185. *Daily Dispatch*, 6/8/1919, p. 5. See too CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3 no. 2, Statement by Chief Silimela enclosed in Magistrate Engcoobo to CMT, 22/1/1920.

186. See ch. 1, p. 5.

187. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Anonymous and undated typescript Memorandum [Native Affairs Department Memorandum, early 1920?].

188. CACT: CMT 3/903, file 728.2, Magistrate Matatiele to CMT, 11/12/1918; Acting CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 4/2/1919; CMT 3/920, file 774.3, no. 1, Telegram from Acting Assistant CMT to “Natives”, Pretoria, 10/12/1919; CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Additional Magistrate Kingwilliamstown to Magistrate Kingwilliamstown, 20/8/1919; South African Library MSS. Department: MSC 15 (Merriman Correspondence), Letter 207 from M. G. Apherop to J. X. Merriman, 28/5/1919.

189. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Additional Magistrate Kingwilliamstown to Magistrate Kingwilliamstown, 20/8/1919.

190. CACT: 1/CAA 3, file 8, vol. 3, Circular Minute from CMT, 12/8/1919; CMT 3/920, file 774.3, no. 1, Resolution by Butterworth District Council, 28/8/1919 enclosed in Acting Chairman Butterworth District Council to CMT, 6/9/1919; 1/DW 21, file 63, vol. 4, Letters from Traders in Idutywa District to Magistrate Idutywa; CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Magistrate Peddie to Secretary for Native Affairs, 9/8/1919; Magistrate East London to Secretary for Native Affairs, 9/9/1919; *Daily Dispatch*, 30/7/1919, p. 11; 25/9/1919, p. 9; 22/11/1919, p. 12.

191. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Draft letter from Secretary for Native Affairs to Private Secretary to Minister of Finance, 6/9/1919; Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary Cost of Living Commission, 21/8/1919; Note on Question by Senator Schreiner, 9/9/1919; Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary for Agriculture, 19/8/1919; Magistrate Middeldrift to Magistrate Kingwilliamstown, 7/8/1919; Principal of Lovedale to Secretary for Native Affairs, 13/8/1919; Telegram from Divisional Council Victoria East to Department of Native Affairs, 15/8/1919; CACT: 1/CAA 3, file 8, vol. 3, Telegram from Magistrate Cala to CMT, 15/9/1919; *Daily Dispatch*, 22/8/1919, p. 6 and 25/9/1919, p. 9.

purchases.¹⁹² It is likely that families particularly hard hit by the 'flu were given special consideration.¹⁹³

But, the severe drought persisted and acute famine took hold of some districts.¹⁹⁴ In response to urgent appeals for action by traders, chiefs, officials, MLAs and MPCs¹⁹⁵ and even to suggestions that looting and unrest might occur,¹⁹⁶ further relief-measures were taken before the end of 1919. To keep the price from rising further, the export of maize overseas was restricted,¹⁹⁷ while in eight Border Districts grain was issued directly to Blacks in desperate straits, with payment to be made in the future. Early maturing varieties of maize and beans were also supplied for immediate planting.¹⁹⁸ Similar bean-seed was provided for Transkei peasants on easy terms and to speed up the distribution of consignments of grain held up at stations serving the territory, lorries were made available.¹⁹⁹ The Native Recruiting Corporation was also prepared to help, provided it secured more labour from the arrangement: the 1911 Native Labour Regulation Act was amended to allow two bags of grain to be advanced to recruits upon attestation, while the ceiling for remittances home from the mines was raised from £2 to £5.²⁰⁰ "It was thus hoped that by enabling the Natives to provide for the maintenance of their families during their absence", explained the Secretary for Native Affairs, "they would the more readily proceed to the labour centres."²⁰¹

By January 1920 the various relief schemes were in operation and many Blacks in the Transkei and Border were in debt, bound hand and foot to the Government,

192. CA: GNLB 49, file 1159/12/38(28), Telegram from "Natives", Cape Town to "Natives", Pretoria, 9/9/1919.

193. CACT: CMT 3/903, file 728.2, Acting CMT to Secretary for Native Affairs, 4/2/1919.

194. CACT: I/CAA 3, file 8, vol. 3, Telegram from CMT to Magistrate Cala, 10/12/1919; CMT 3/920, file 774.3, no. 1, Magistrate Bizana to CMT, 20/11/1919; Telegram from Magistrate Bizana to CMT, 12/12/1919; Telegram from Secretary for Native Affairs to CMT, 10/12/1919; Telegram from Magistrate Engcobo to CMT, circa 11/12/1919; Telegram from Magistrate Libode to CMT, 11/12/1919; Telegram from Magistrate Tabankulu to CMT, 23/12/1919; Telegram from Magistrate Mount Ayliff to CMT, 11/12/1919; Telegrams from Magistrate Cofimvaba to CMT, 11/12/1919 and 23/12/1919; *Daily Dispatch*, 25/9/1919, p. 9.

195. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Draft letter from Secretary for Native Affairs to Private Secretary to Minister of Finance, 6/9/1919; Note on Questions by Senator Schreiner and C. A. Schweitzer, 9/9/1919; Telegram from Yates, Mount Frere to J. G. King, 15/9/1919; Telegram from Divisional Council Victoria East to Department of Native Affairs, 19/7/1919; Magistrate Lady Frere to Secretary for Native Affairs, 13/8/1919; Telegram from Mayor Alice to Native Affairs Department, 22/8/1919; NTS 101, file 351/16/179, Magistrate Willowvale to Director of Native Labour, n.d.; GNLB 49, file 1159/12/38(28), J. N. McKenzie to Director of Native Labour, 26/12/1919 and 13/1/1920; CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3, no. 1, Telegram from Secretary for Native Affairs to CMT, 10/12/1919; Magistrate Engcobo to CMT, 29/8/1919; Magistrate Tabankulu to CMT, 23/12/1919; Telegram from Magistrate Cofimvaba to CMT, 23/12/1919; I/CAA 3, file 8, vol. 3, Telegram from Magistrate Cala to CMT, 15/9/1919; F. Morris to Magistrate Cala, 24/12/1919; *Daily Dispatch*, 22/8/1919, p. 6 and 17/9/1919, p. 5.

196. CA: GNLB 49, file 1159/12/38(28), J. N. McKenzie to Director of Native Labour, 26/12/1919 and 13/1/1920; NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Principal Lovedale to Secretary for Native Affairs, 13/8/1919; CACT: CMT 3/920, file 774.3, no. 1, Telegram from Magistrate Cofimvaba to CMT, 23/12/1919.

197. *TTC Proceedings and Reports, 1920*, p. 37.

198. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Anonymous and undated typescript Memorandum [Native Affairs Department Memorandum, early 1920?]. For an example of a new crop being introduced in the wake of the Spanish 'flu epidemic in parts of Nigeria, see D. C. Oshadike: "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 and the Spread of Cassava Cultivation on the Lower Niger: A Study in Historical Linkages" in *Journal of African History*, vol. 22 (1981).

199. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Anonymous and undated typescript Memorandum [Native Affairs Department Memorandum, early 1920?].

200. CA: GNLB 49, file 1159/12/38(28), Circular Minute from Director of Native Labour to All Magistrates in Cape Province, 21/1/1920; Secretary for Native Affairs to Director of Native Labour, 7/2/1920; *Native Recruiting Corporation Limited: Report of Board of Management for 1919-1920*, p. 7.

201. CA: GNLB 49, file 1159/12/38(28); Secretary for Native Affairs to Director of Native Labour, 7/2/1920.

local traders or labour recruiting organizations. The officer in charge of the emergency organization to transport grain to traders described this situation in a matter-of-fact way:

"The whole of the Transkei appears to be living from hand to mouth and any failure of supply or of transport causes local shortages which bring many natives within sight of starvation. Recruiting for the mines is proceeding very briskly. The local agent tells me he averages about 150 applications a day in Umtata alone."²⁰²

The Spanish 'flu epidemic was an event which, in several parts of the Union, shook rural Black society to its foundations. "Those that lived, lived; those that died, died", was the stark comment of one survivor sixty years later.²⁰³ In demographic terms,²⁰⁴ the 'flu was the most devastating single episode within Black South Africa's experience. Its effects were felt at every level, from individuals to entire communities. It left an indelible impression on all who lived through it – in popular memory it became a landmark event from which events were dated as so many years before or after "the influenza".²⁰⁵

In structural terms, its permanent effects on Black rural areas (particularly the Transkei, Eastern Cape and Border) lay in the way in which it accelerated the integration of these areas and their inhabitants into the economy and culture of metropolitan South Africa, with its capitalist, mining-dominated economy and its Western ideas and mores concerning burials, Christianity and the prevention and treatment of disease. This process had already been in progress in a haphazard way for a long time before 1918.²⁰⁶ The influenza epidemic helped to ensure that it continued on a basis of dependence.

202. CA: NTS 101, Unnumbered file, Lieutenant Colonel J. G. Rose to Secretary for Native Affairs, 29/1/1920.

203. Interview with Mr. D. Balose.

204. See ch. 9, pp. 159–160.

205. J. Branford (ed.): *A Dictionary of South African English*, pp. 70–71; Letters to author from Dr. J. Branford, 24/11/1978, and Miss S. Clear, 7/2/1983; Interviews at Winterveld, 25/7/1981. For a similar practice in Nigeria, see E. Isichei: *A History of the Igbo People*, p. 224; J. D. Y. Peel: *Aladura*, p. 62, n. 4 and D. C. Ohadike: "The Influenza Pandemic . . . and the Spread of Cassava Cultivation . . ." in *Journal of African History*, vol. 22 (1981), p. 386.

206. W. Beinart and C. Bundy in M. Klein (ed.): *Peasants in Africa*, p. 275; C. Bundy: *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, especially ch. 4.

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