

'HULLE GAAT DIE STROP OM ONSE NEK SIT': DR ABDULLAH ABDURAHMAN'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE MAKING OF UNION VOICED THROUGH PIET UITHALDER'S 'STRAATPRAATJES' COLUMN

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Founded in Cape Town in 1902, the African Political Organization (APO) was the first substantive coloured political association, and subsequently dominated coloured protest politics for nearly four decades.¹ After an initial period of volatility characterised by infighting amongst its leaders, the organization found stability when the feuding president and vice-president were expelled in a coup engineered by Matthew Fredericks, the general secretary, at its 1905 annual conference and a young, dynamic, medical doctor, Abdullah Abdurahman, was elected president. Under the energetic leadership of Abdurahman the APO grew into South Africa's largest black political organization over the next five years, its success fuelled largely by apprehension over intensifying segregationism and dissatisfaction around the terms of Union amongst politicised coloured people. By the time of Union the APO had grown into a national body with several thousand members organised into a countrywide network of branches.

During the wave of protests that preceded the unification of South Africa the APO decided to publish its own newspaper to represent the interests of the coloured



Matthew Fredericks and Dr Abdullah Abdurahman. Detail from a photograph of the Joint Delegation to London in 1909. National Library of South Africa, APO Album III, INIL 11807.

community and to champion its 'just cause for political equality with whites'.² The *APO* newspaper which first appeared on 24 May 1909, was divided into two parts to cater for its bilingual readership. An English section took up about two thirds of its space, and one confined to the back pages was written in Dutch and Afrikaans, a language that had not as yet been standardised. In the latter segment there appeared a regular column called 'Straatpraatjes' written in a variety of Cape Vernacular Afrikaans spoken in particular by the coloured working classes of Cape Town's inner city areas – a colloquial dialect often referred to as 'kombuis Afrikaans'. 'Straatpraatjes' was narrated in the first person by Piet Uithalder, a fictitious character, and tells of the social experiences and political encounters of Piet and his friend Stoffel Francis. It is clear that Uithalder self-consciously identified himself as coloured and that he wrote specifically for a coloured readership. Not only did he introduce himself as 'een van de ras' but often voiced opinions on behalf of 'onse bruin mense' and 'onse ras'.³ Using this vernacular with wit and ingenuity, Uithalder brought humour to a newspaper otherwise given to high seriousness. The column proved to be one of the most popular and enduring features of the paper.

Piet and Stoffel were former shepherds from the Kat River Settlement who had managed to acquire some education and had become politicised as a result. They had migrated to Cape Town where they joined the *APO* and Uithalder attached himself to the organization's head office as a voluntary worker. Piet, who is portrayed as socially unsophisticated and somewhat naïve, could speak only Afrikaans. He relied on Stoffel, who had a rudimentary grasp of English and some knowledge of middle-class social etiquette, to act as his guide and interpreter. Uithalder, amongst other things, related his experiences at dinner parties, picnics along Cape Town's Atlantic seaboard and a wide variety of *APO* functions. Piet gave his impression of public celebrations, election meetings and regularly visited parliament, parodying its proceedings. He took particular delight in ridiculing uncouth whites, especially 'boere' from the 'backveld', chided coloureds for being too colour-conscious, poked fun at their social pretensions and lampooned rival coloured political organizations. At one time or another Uithalder delivered commentary on all of the key political issues confronting the coloured community, the coming of Union being a major pre-occupation during the column's first year of life.⁴ Piet Uithalder's assessment of the prime purpose behind the Draft South Africa Act was '... hulle gaat die strop om onse nek sit'.⁵

Abdurahman and the *APO* were not opposed to Union *per se* but rather to those clauses of the Act that denied blacks outside of the Cape the franchise and deprived those within the Cape Colony of the right to be elected to the new Union parliament. The decidedly Anglophile *APO* was in fact strongly in favour of Britain consolidating her dominion over southern Africa by merging the four colonies into a single state. Although it advocated a federal constitution as a better safeguard of black civil rights at the Cape, the *APO* was prepared to accept a unitary constitution that did not discriminate against black people. The *APO* thus participated in the Joint African and Coloured Delegation that travelled to London in 1909 to petition the British government to modify the Draft South Africa Act. 'Straatpraatjes' paid a great deal of attention to the Joint Delegation by having Piet and Stoffel accompany it and relate their adventures on the trip.

Although the newspaper never revealed the identity of the authors of the

'Straatpraatjes' column, it is clear that Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman wrote nearly all of them. Besides Uithalder displaying a knowledge of politics and a sophistication of analysis that very few APO members besides Abdurahman possessed, he unerringly happened to be at the same places and functions as Abdurahman.⁶ An extraordinarily capable and charismatic man, an astute politician and gifted public speaker, Dr. Abdurahman dominated the APO from the time he assumed the presidency in 1905 until his death in 1940. Abdurahman had by far the greatest influence on the editorial policy of the newspaper despite Fredericks being editor. Fredericks was in any event his confidant and closest collaborator within the organization. By the time he started writing 'Straatpraatjes' Abdurahman was the most eminent coloured person in what was soon to become South Africa. Abdurahman's family was, however, of humble origin, his grandparents having been slaves who had managed to buy their freedom. During the latter half of the nineteenth century the Abdurahmans did well enough out of the greengrocer's business they ran in Cape Town to be able to provide the precocious young Abdullah, who had been born in 1872, with a secondary education, something quite exceptional for people of their social status. Abdurahman went on to qualify as a medical doctor in Glasgow in 1893 and to become the first black person to be elected to the Cape Town City Council in 1904. He subsequently became the most distinguished coloured political leader of the first half of the twentieth century.⁷ Despite his social standing, Abdurahman had nevertheless been acculturated to coloured working class life. By simultaneously embodying their highest aspirations and retaining the common touch, he became immensely popular within the coloured community and acquired a reputation as a champion of the poor. Some of Abdurahman's attraction as a leader during this period also lay in the confidence with which he negotiated the intimidating environment of the dominant society, and the fearlessness and flair with which he attacked the injustices suffered by the coloured community.

'Straatpraatjes' was one of the most effective weapons in the *APO*'s journalistic arsenal. The combination of Uithalder's razor-sharp wit and the novelty of writing in colloquial language gave the column unusual popularity and political punch. 'Straatpraatjes' also had the virtue of allowing Uithalder to say in jest what the *APO* did not feel comfortable articulating in the rest of the paper. Piet clearly saw himself as a spokesman for the coloured community and did not shy away from controversial issues. Prompted in part by 'Parlementse Praatjes', a popular column in the conservative, white supremacist, *De Zuid-Afrikaan* newspaper, it was the intention of Uithalder to voice the interests of the coloured community in the language of the coloured people, and to use the dialect to appeal to their identity as coloured and thereby win their confidence. He wanted to contrast his idiom of the street and kitchen with that of white speakers' language which he associated with parliament and parlour. The enthusiastic response elicited by the column indicates that Uithalder, by addressing his intended readership in their distinctive code, struck an emotional chord with them. Contrary to other instances in which this vernacular occurs in early Afrikaans literature – where it was used by white authors to caricature black people and their language was distorted for comic effect – in 'Straatpraatjes' the language is vested with propriety and dignity, and deliberately set out to undermine the racial chauvinism of the dominant society.

It is indeed ironic that the APO leadership chose 'barbarous Cape Dutch' - scorned on various occasions within the *APO* itself as a 'vulgar patois' and a 'bastard lingo'⁸ - for its most direct expression of resistance to white supremacy. The APO and coloured elite in general preferred English which they regarded as a prestigious international language with a rich literature, and which they associated with the liberal and racially tolerant values of British rule at the Cape. Very importantly, proficiency in English was seen to be a key attribute for individual social and occupational advancement. In contrast, Afrikaans was associated with the racism and boorishness of Afrikanerdom, and being the language of the coloured working classes, Cape Vernacular Afrikaans was viewed as a mark of social inferiority. Thus not only does Uithalder cause 'rouwe boere' to betray their lack of refinement through their broken English or by conversing in 'kombuis Hollans', but he also makes fun of the preference for English amongst status conscience coloured people who are not fully proficient in the language. Besides mimicking their tortured English, he enjoyed mocking their penchant for Anglicising their names. Thus the Gedults changed their name to Patience, Miss November tried to hide her Afrikaans background by calling herself Miss Wember, Piet preferred Outholder when in refined company, and Mrs Margaret Shepherd would have been mortified to be called 'ta Grietjie Skawagter' as she was known back in Kat River.⁹ Thus although many 'Straatpraatjes' readers regarded their home language as nothing more than a menial argot, they nevertheless relished Uithalder hitting out at their oppressors in an idiom recognizably their own.

'Straatpraatjes' came into being at a time when the coloured community was feeling particularly threatened by the rising tide of segregationism. The assimilationist overtures of the coloured elite had been firmly rejected by the dominant society and they faced a hardening of racial barriers in the years following the Anglo-Boer War. Avenues for social advancement, particularly in education and employment, were being closed and their civil rights were under serious threat. Representing a marginal group, the APO was unable to stem the flood of discriminatory measures coloureds faced in the first decade of the twentieth century despite vociferous and well-organised protests. During the first year of its existence the *APO* newspaper was largely devoted to campaigning against the Draft South Africa Act, and this pre-occupation was reflected in the 'Straatpraatjes' column. Riding the wave of coloured anger and apprehension at the imposition of a racially exclusive political settlement on South Africa, the *APO* was at its most vigorous and 'Straatpraatjes' at its most spirited during this period. Uithalder displayed a remarkably creative impulse both in his use of the vernacular and in conjuring up images of great hilarity.¹⁰ This was the time when Piet was at his most defiant and his satire at its most trenchant.

It is thus not surprising that 'Straatpraatjes' from the outset signalled its intention of challenging the racial order. Firstly, the name 'Uithalder' means 'excellent' or 'the best' and was intended as a repudiation of the stereotyping of coloured people as intellectually limited and socially inferior.¹¹ That Piet hailed from Kat River was of great symbolic significance in that it had strong connotations of black resistance to white domination for politicised coloured people during the early part of the twentieth century because of the Kat River rebellion of 1851 which many recalled with pride.¹² At one point Piet thus warned racists that 'die Kat River's Hotnots... weet hoe om e boer

THE NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE A.P.O., HELD AT JOHANNESBURG IN 1912.



The Ninth Annual Conference of the A.P.O. held at Johannesburg in 1912. National Library of South Africa, APO Album III, INIL 11816.

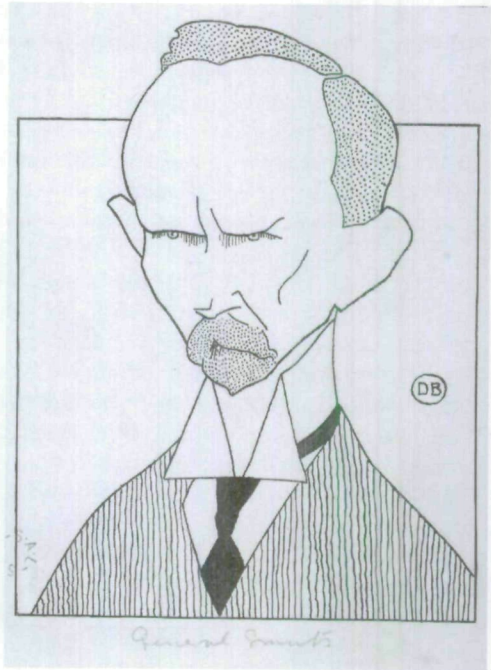
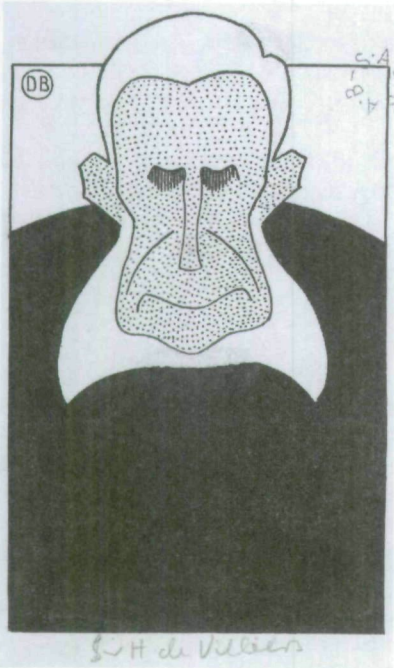
agter die klip uit te haal'.¹³ It is no coincidence that Willem Uithalder was a prominent leader of the rebellion. Piet presumably was one of his descendants. Perhaps more importantly, the Kat River settlement had a special place in the hearts and minds of the coloured petty bourgeoisie of the time because they saw this land grant as proof of Britain's recognition of their loyalty to the Empire and their claim to full citizenship rights. This much is evident from the way Uithalder equated Kat River with 'equal rights' when describing his first encounter with W. P. Schreiner; 'Achter Stoffel my geintroduce het, toe gaat die geselserij aan. Mr. Schreiner vertel mij van die Kat River equal rights. Slavernij, excise, rebellion, Botha en so an'.¹⁴ Uithalder also frequently questioned the ruling order with assertions of the sort 'we are all South Africans' and 'kleur gee e mens nie e gooie karakter nie'.¹⁵ He at times became openly defiant. For example, in 1912 Uithalder issued a provocative challenge to both the white establishment and the coloured community, 'Ons het lang genoeg gekruip net soes gedierte na die wit man. Dit is nou tijd dat ons moet reg op staan... en nie meer met hoet in die hand en met gebuide kneei "asseblief baas" en "ja baas" se nie'.¹⁶

During its early years Uithalder repeatedly used the phrase 'of European descent' in a variety of ironic and caustic observations. This was a very emotive phrase for politicised coloureds at the time because these were the very words in which legislation such as the School Board¹⁷ and Draft South Africa Acts stipulated segregatory measures. The APO never tired of pointing out that there were substantial numbers of black people who, on merit, were more deserving of such rights and privileges than many whites. Its newspaper continually reminded readers of the absurdity of the racial distinctions that were being drawn because a considerable proportion of those accepted as white had 'a taint of the tar brush'. Piet, for example, upon observing J. H. de Villiers, the Chief Justice and a man of swarthy complexion, commented; 'Ma hoor hy is gevebrand. As hij kan pas veer en of European descent da is Stoffel e volle Scotsman, maskie is sij ma e bruine vrou'.¹⁸ Uithalder also referred to 'swart Boere in die Transvaalse parlement... wat kan pas ver een "of European descent" in die maanschein'. He in particular fingered Charles Hull, Transvaal Treasurer, as a pass white; 'ons eie soon Hull sal ook een van die dage hier wies.... Enige deputatie die hom gaat sien moet hem adress The Honorable the Treasurer en nie bij enege bijnaam wat hij misschien gekrij het bij Zonnebloem Kollege of in Caledon nie'.¹⁹

The marginality of its constituency posed the APO with a dilemma in the party political arena. The APO had the option of either boycotting white electoral politics or backing the political party that best served coloured interests. Because of its assimilationism the former strategy was never seriously considered. This in effect meant that the APO was forced to choose the most liberal from an array of white supremacist parties. The APO's predicament in this regard was abundantly clear in the way Uithalder gave vent to his disappointment at the Unionist Party's support of the Draft South Africa Act.²⁰ As the political home of Cape liberalism, Abdurahman expected it and other liberal politicians to oppose racist elements within the Draft South Africa Act on principle and to stand firm in defence of coloured civil rights. It is thus no revelation that the APO characterised the Cape parliament's endorsement of the the Draft South Africa Act as 'The Great Betrayal'.

In the very first installment of 'Straatpraatjes' Piet and Stoffel visited parliament setting out Abdurahman and the APO's perspective on the impending unification of South Africa. Upon entering the grounds of parliament, Piet in a respectful tone noted 'een staanbeeld van die Konningin Victoria. Zy ons die stemrecht gegee het'.²¹ It was in 1853, during her reign, that the Cape was granted representative government which included a colour-blind constitution with a low franchise qualification. Abdurahman's Anglophilism was rooted in a particular interpretation of the history of the coloured people broadly shared within the community.²² They looked back upon the period of Dutch colonial rule as a dark night of slavery, savagery and serfdom in which the coloured people came into being as a result of miscegenation. The introduction of liberal policies under British rule – the main reforms being the emancipation of Khoisan in 1828 and of slaves in 1834, as well as the grant of representative government in 1853, which introduced the principle of equality of all citizens in the eyes of the law – was seen to initiate the coloured people's ascent from brutish and servile origins into the light of civilization. In their eyes the continued upliftment of the coloured people and their integration into the civic life of Cape society, imagined as eventually culminating in their assimilation into the dominant society on an equal footing with whites, was placed under dire threat by the terms of Union which represented the triumph of northern racism over southern liberalism.

Upon entering parliament Piet sketched its political make-up from the APO's



D.C. Boonzaaier political cartoons of Sir Henry de Villiers and J.C. Smuts. National Library of South Africa, MSC 4, INIL 12117.

perspective. His observation, 'Ik hoor da is ma net een party buiten Mr Schreiner en zy paar volgers' reflected Abdurahman's feeling that there may as well have been only one party because both the South African and Unionist parties supported the Draft South Africa Act and only four members of parliament voted against its adoption.²³ He described the seating arrangements in the following manner,

'Op die rechter hand van "Mr Speaker" le en sit die Bond Party of Boere Party – Wyn Boer, Vee Boer, Koorn Boer, Melk Boer, Geld Boer en Witte Boer...

Op die linker hand van Mr. Speaker sit die "Mixed Party", "British Party" sonner hulle "British Principles."...

Da sit Mr. Merriman met sy arm om Dr. Jamieson se nek. Ik doch hy wil hom dood maak, ma Stoffel se hulle is nauw maters en hulle "dine at Groot-Schuur together"... Baayan van die gekleurde mense het geloof dat Merriman e vriend van hulle was, ma die meeste dink nauw anders'.²⁴

Piet referred to the South African Party (SAP)²⁵ as 'die Bond Party' to emphasise that its alliance with the Afrikaner Bond meant that it represented the reactionary and white supremacist interests of Afrikanerdom, especially farmers. The Anglophile Unionists were characterised as being without their 'British Principles' to stress their hypocrisy and betrayal of the fundamental values of British liberalism. In the eyes of the APO Leander Starr Jameson, former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony and leader of the Unionist Party, was no longer in opposition but in collaboration with the SAP. Abdurahman was particularly disappointed with John X. Merriman's support of the Draft South Africa Act and made him a frequent target of Uithalder's satire. As a leading Cape liberal and having supported the APO's call for a qualified, non-racial franchise to be implemented with the grant of self-government to the Transvaal in 1907, he had been regarded as an ally.

In subsequent episodes of 'Straatpraatjies' Uithalder went on to describe the futile attempts of the Joint Delegation to muster sufficient support amongst British politicians to force through amendments to the Draft Act; 'Mr. Merriman, die Chief Justice en Hofmeyr'²⁶ het al ons vriende die gif in gegee hal. Orals wat ons gaan dan hoor ons die selfte storie, as die Engelse die woorde van "European descent" uit die konstitusie neem dan wil Zuid-Afrika da mie niks te doen he nie'.²⁷ Later Uithalder provided a reasonably faithful account of part of the debate during the passage of the Draft Act through the British parliament where the efforts of individual Labour and Liberal politicians to introduce amendments were subverted by the threat that any such changes would undo the compromise.²⁸ Uithalder found some release for his frustration by mocking the uncouth behaviour of 'boere' he encountered in London; 'Hulle eet die rijs met die mes, vat die vleis met die hand en de brood met de virk... al wat hulle nie kon geeet nie, had hulle in hulle sakke gesteek.... Hulle dink die waiters is alga hooge heere en haal hulle hoete af en se mijnheer en baas voor hulle net soes ons op die boere plaats voor hulle moet doen'.²⁹

Uithalder's choice invective was reserved for leaders of rival coloured political organizations, in particular Francis Peregrino, the founder of the Coloured Peoples' Vigilance Committee (CPVC)³⁰ and John Tobin, who organised the 'stone meetings'.³¹ The essence of Tobin's politics from Abdurahman's perspective is neatly

captured in one sentence that Uithalder places in mouth in his first report on a stone meeting; 'Die Bond, onse beste vriende wil julle stem-recht weg neem ma wil julle goed koop dop and cheap wine gee'.³² In his first mention of Peregrino, Abdurahman characterised him as 'die ou vabond Periwinkel... Hij sal die gekleurde mense more die strop om die keel sit as hij een kans krij'.³³

Peregrino and Tobin joined forces to oppose the APO's protest campaign against the Draft Act. They argued that the APO's radicalism would alienate sympathetic whites and that the strategy of sending the Joint Delegation to Britain was futile. Thus, on the eve of the departure of the official delegation, a combined CPVC-Stone deputation waited upon Hofmeyr to present him with a resolution dissociating these organizations, and by implication, the coloured people, from the Joint Delegation and entrusting their future to the Union parliament. It is quite possible that Hofmeyr solicited the resolution from Tobin and Peregrino. To the chagrin of the APO, Hofmeyr handed copies of the petition to influential British politicians claiming that the coloured community broadly supported the Draft Act. This ploy infuriated Abdurhaman, and the APO was quite justified in accusing its two arch rivals of betraying the coloured people for their own selfish ends of ingratiating themselves with the SAP leadership. Uithalder thus reported that 'Die Engelse gloo dat Hofmeyr die rechte delegaat van die gekleurde mense is, en sij woord het een groote invloed moet die parlaments heere hier.... Ons weet laat da altoos land-veraaiers is, en die skelme wat na Hofmeyr gegaan het is die twee grootste veraaiers wat die gekleurde ooit oner hulle gehaat het'.³⁴

Although Uithalder maintained a tone of strident protest in the years after Union, his flair and humour was sapped by the APO's futile attempts to stem the wave of segregationism and by the deteriorating political climate facing the coloured community. After Union the APO had to negotiate a political environment far less sympathetic to coloured aspirations than the old Cape colonial system had been. Union had the effect of further marginalising coloured political influence as well as diluting the clout of Cape liberals, the APO's main political allies within the white establishment. Soon after Union Uithalder warned that '[die Bond gaat]...die Transvaalse wette in die Kaap Kolonie en bring. Dan moet on alga pas dra, en in cattle-trucks trevel, en in die middel van die straat loop so dat die motor cars and die tremms ons kan dood rij'.³⁵ It therefore comes as no surprise that after a while a hint of despondency crept into Uithalder's writing. At one point in early 1913 Uithalder lamented 'die pilserige dage is nou verbij. Nou moet e mens al dag sit te wagte wat Hertzog of een van die Vaal pense boere se. Ik woord so mismoedig partij keers dat ik soma wil e dop stik, net om my spirits op te hou'.³⁶

While 'Straatpraatjes' can be taken as broadly indicative of the political outlook of the coloured elite, the APO and of Abdurahman himself, it would be a mistake to accept Uithalder's discourse as fully representative of their views. For much of the time the column exemplified a somewhat extreme, one dimensional viewpoint because of its satirical function which was to attack, ridicule, discredit and amuse. This of course does not mean that Uithalder lacked subtlety or that he does not provide unusual insight into social relations of the time. The politics of the APO and the attitudes displayed in its newspaper were, however, far more complex than a reading of 'Straatpraatjes' on its own would suggest. Notwithstanding repeated claims that the

newspaper spoke for the coloured people as a whole, the *APO* represented the interests of the coloured petty bourgeoisie. 'Straatpraatjes' similarly reflected the values and aspirations of the coloured elite and ultimately the political views of Dr. Abdurahman.

ENDNOTES

1. Although its constitution did not contain explicit racial bars, the *APO* was in effect a racially exclusive organization, its stated aim being the advancement of the coloured people. The use of 'African' in its name was meant to indicate its geographical location at a time when Africans were generally referred to as 'Natives', or more pejoratively, as 'Kaffirs'. For detail on the history and politics of the *APO* see G. Lewis: *Between the wire and the wall: a history of South African 'Coloured' politics* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987), chapters 1-6; R. van der Ross, *The rise and decline of apartheid: a study of political movements among the coloured people of South Africa, 1880-1985* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1986), chapters 1-7; M. Adhikari, *Not white enough, not black enough: racial identity in South Africa's coloured community* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), chapter 3.
2. *APO* 24 May 1909.
3. See for example, 'Straatpraatjes' 24 May 1909; 19 June 1909; 6 May 1911; 17 June 1911; 19 April 1913.
4. 'Straatpraatjes' appeared uninterruptedly until 1913 and then sporadically until February 1922, nearly two years before the expiration of the *APO* itself at the end of 1923. Publication of the newspaper was suspended for five years between 1914 and 1919 partly as a result of World War I. For a history of the newspaper see M. Adhikari, 'Voice of the coloured elite: *APO*, 1909-1923' in L. Switzer (ed.): *South Africa's alternative press: voices of protest and resistance, 1880s-1960s* (Cambridge University Press, 1997) and M. Adhikari: "'The product of civilization in its most repellent manifestation': ambiguities in the racial perceptions of the *APO*, 1909-1923' *Journal of African History* 38(2) (1997).
5. 'Straatpraatjes' 5 June 1909. Of its various meanings 'strop' is most appropriately interpreted as 'halter', a rope for leading and controlling beasts of burden.
6. See M. Adhikari: *Straatpraatjes: language, politics and popular culture in Cape Town, 1909-1922* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1996) 3-4 for more detailed consideration of the identity of the author(s) of the column. Uithalder's reportage on the Deputation's trip to London is one of the clearer indications of the doctor's authorship of 'Straatpraatjes'. Abdurahman considered 'Straatpraatjes' sufficiently important to telegraph his contributions to Cape Town while in London. Unable to relay 'Straatpraatjes' while on board ship, two columns clearly not written by him, appeared on 17 July and 11 September 1909. It is likely that Nicholas Veldsman, acting secretary during Abdurahman and Fredericks' absence, authored these columns characterised by a noticeably greater influence of Dutch in its expression.
7. For a biographical sketch of Abdurahman see M. Adhikari: 'Abdullah Abdurahman, 1872-1940' in Anon: *They shaped our century: the most influential South Africans of the twentieth century* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1999) 437-41. For further detail see R. van der Ross: *'Say it out loud': the APO presidential addresses and other major political speeches, 1906-1940, of Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman* (University of the Western Cape Institute for Historical Research, 1990).
8. *APO* 13 August 1910; 8 April 1911; 3 June 1911.
9. See 'Straatpraatjes' 20 November 1909; 2 July 1910; 16 July 1910; 3 June 1911; 17 June,

- 1911.
10. Uithalder unfortunately, but understandably, adopted a more serious and didactic tone when discussing issues of high political importance such as the franchise and discriminatory clauses in the Draft South Africa Act. He was at his most inspired and amusing when dealing with local politics and the more mundane aspects of coloured social life.
 11. H. Willems: "Ons het lang genoeg gekruip net soes gedierte na die wit man": enkele aspekte van Piet Uithalder se "Straatpraatjies" rubriek (*APO*), 'n eerste verkenning' (Unpublished paper, presented at the conference 'Taal en identiteit', Leiden University, June 1992) 7.
 12. The Kat River settlement was founded along the upper reaches of the Kat River valley in the eastern Cape in 1829 when land, from which the Xhosa under Maqoma had been expelled, was granted to Khoikhoi families. The settlement was intended to serve as a buffer between white colonists and the Xhosa. After supporting the Cape Colony in two of its wars against the Xhosa, many Kat River residents rebelled and supported the Xhosa during the frontier war of 1850-53 because of grievances against the Cape government and encroaching white settlers.
 13. 'Straatpraatjies' 11 March 1911.
 14. 'Straatpraatjies' 19 June 1909. The APO was highly critical of the Cape government's simultaneous halving of excise duty on brandy, which pandered to the interests of the Afrikaner Bond, and reducing the threshold for paying the capitation tax from £100 to £50, which it regarded as a heartless burden on the poor and would affect many coloured people.
 15. 'Straatpraatjies' 19 June 1909; 17 June 1911.
 16. 'Straatpraatjies' 13 January 1912. The nature of his discourse changed radically over time, however. See M. Adhikari: "Wanner gaat ons tog en eksampel neem uit die wit man s'boek": resistance, protest and accommodation in Piet Uithalder's "Straatpraatjies" column, 1909-1922' *Stilet* 8(2) (1996) for details.
 17. The School Board Act of 1905 which introduced statutory segregation into the Cape school system angered the coloured elite because it blocked one of their main avenues of social advancement. The Act introduced compulsory public education up to Standard IV or the age of 14 for white children, while blacks were confined to vastly inferior church schools.
 18. 'Straatpraatjies' 19 June 1909.
 19. Charles Hull was MLA for Georgetown. He was alleged to have grown up coloured in Caledon and to have attended Zonnebloem College in Cape Town before passing for white after moving to the Transvaal. 'Straatpraatjies' 24 May 1909; 15 January 1910; 2 July 1910.
 20. Although still generally known by this epithet, the Progressive Party had changed its name to the Unionist Party in 1908 to indicate its support of Unification. Fearing Afrikaner domination, the Unionists favoured strong ties with Britain. 21. 'Straatpraatjies' 24 May 1909.
 22. See M. Adhikari (ed.): *Burdened by race: coloured identities in southern Africa* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2009), 9-10; Adhikari: *Not white enough, not black enough*, 38-45.
 23. The four who voted against the Draft Act were William Schreiner, MLA for Queenstown and former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony; Morris Alexander, an immigrant from East Prussia and MLA for Cape Town; Beauclerk Upington, MLA for Cape Town's Harbour constituency; and Gordon Sprigg, MLA for East London and also a former Prime Minister of the Cape. Schreiner, the most noted Cape liberal of the time was to lead the Joint African and Coloured Delegation to London.
 24. 'Straatpraatjies' 24 May 1909.
 25. The South African Party took office in February 1908 under the premiership of John X.

Merriman. It was formed in 1903 when anti-imperialist politicians joined forces with the Afrikaner Bond, which represented the interests of Afrikaners, especially farmers. Since this was merely a parliamentary alliance, the Bond maintained an autonomous organizational structure that allowed it to dominate the SAP.

26. J.H. (Onse Jan) Hofmeyr was unquestioned leader of the Afrikaner Bond. Despite having retired from parliament in 1895 he was one of the most influential figures in Cape politics. Though he found it distasteful, Merriman nevertheless invited Hofmeyr to join the official delegation to Britain. Hofmeyr was particularly disliked by the APO as the embodiment of Afrikaner racist mores.
27. 'Straatpraatjies' 28 August 1909. The official delegation, fearing that Schreiner's mission might swing opinion in favour of amendments being made to the Draft Act, did what they could to discredit the Joint Delegation in private discussion with influential politicians.
28. 'Straatpraatjies' 28 August 1909; 25 September 1909.
29. 'Straatpraatjies' 28 August 1909.
30. Peregrino was born in Accra, Ghana in 1851, lived in Albany, New York in the 1890s and emigrated to Cape Town in 1900 as an agent of the Pan African Association. Here he published a newspaper, the *South African Spectator*, and established the CPVC that sought redress for black political grievances. The organization drew negligible support within the coloured elite because Pan Africanism held little appeal for them and because of Peregrino's abrasive manner. Rejected by the APO leadership, Peregrino took every opportunity to oppose and upstage the organization. See C. Saunders: 'F. Z. S. Peregrino and the *South African Spectator*', *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, 32(3) (1978)
31. John Tobin, former vice-president of the APO, became a staunch opponent of the APO after his expulsion from the organization in 1905 for sowing division within its ranks and allegedly embezzling funds. From May 1901 through to at least 1919 he organised open air political gatherings near a large boulder on the slopes of Table Mountain above District Six known as 'stone meetings'. The opportunistic Tobin aligned himself with Afrikaner interests and was in turn exploited by Afrikaner politicians to gain coloured political support.
32. 'Straatpraatjies' 19 June 1909. See note 36 below for further elaboration.
33. 'Straatpraatjies' 28 August 1909. Abdurahman did not realise how close to the truth he was because Peregrino for many years acted as a government spy reporting on coloured political activity in Cape Town.
34. 'Straatpraatjies' 28 August 1909.
35. 'Straatpraatjies' 16 July 1910. Walking in the middle of the road is a reference to the Transvaal's notorious Footpath Regulation No. 36 of 1899, which prohibited black people from walking on pavements. Also, the Transvaal had recently introduced stricter measures enforcing segregation on trains.
36. 'Straatpraatjies' 8 March 1913. Readers would have found his urge to 'stik e dop' particularly funny because of Uithalder's relentless opposition to liquor interests and the consumption of alcohol. This antipathy was partly derived from Abdurahman's Muslim background and partly from his knowledge of the pernicious effects of alcoholism both on the individual as well as the social life of the coloured community. He was particularly incensed by various government measures to encourage the consumption of 'cheap light wine' and the justification of farmers using the tot system that the 'light' wine they served their workers was nutritious and did not intoxicate them. They blamed pervasive drunkenness on 'heavy' liquor served in canteens in urban areas. Hence Uithalder's aphorism 'moenie stem ver goedkoop wijn nie, want het is duur betaal' expressed in 'Straatpraatjies' 11 September 1909.

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