

DUIVELSKLOOF.

INDEX.

J.F. van Rensburg	pp. 363 - 386
Rev. F.L. Reuter	" 386 - 393
Numeri Moodjadje	" 393 - 394

NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION.

DUIVELSKLOOF, FRIDAY, 8th AUGUST, 1930.

at 11.35 a.m.

PRESENT:

Dr. J.E. Holloway (Chairman)

Major Anderson.

Mr. F.A.W. Lucas, K.C.

Mr. A.M. Mostert.

Senator le Roux van Niekerk

Dr. A.W. Roberts

Dr. H.C.M. Fourie.

Mr. C. Faye (Secretary)

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

MR. JOHANNES FREDERICK JANSE VAN RENSBURG, called and examined:

THE CHAIRMAN: You are a Sub-Native Commissioner ? -
I am Assistant Native Commissioner at Leydsdorp.

Will you give us your general impressions about the area first ? - It is very difficult for me to make a statement to you. I would rather answer questions to the best of my ability. I have come here quite unprepared. I did not know what evidence I had to give here, or anything. So far as knowing the Northern Transvaal is concerned, I think I know that pretty well. I was born and bred here, and I am still here.

Let us take the native agricultural system; the way the natives work their lands here. Has that shown any tendency towards improvement during that time ? - Very little.

Do they use ploughs ? - Yes.

Invariably ? - I think you will find practically 70 per cent of them use ploughs, but being short of draught animals, and so on, they do not set their ploughs deep enough, to break the necessary soil, with the result

that year after year they just cultivate the top soil.

And the remaining 30 per cent, how do they break the soil ? - Just by using kaffir picks.

Do they use the shop article here, or do they use those of native manufacture ? - Those of European manufacture.

How deep do they plough ? - Well, I should not think more than about two inches.

Is there any tendency to arrange their holdings in regular order, or do they scatter them about the countryside ? - No, the native himself once the ground is allotted to him sticks to it.

The cultivation that is allotted; do they make it in square acres ? - He does not measure off how much he can cultivate. A piece of ground is pointed out to him and that he uses; it is his.

DR. FOURIE: It is not in one block ? - No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do they pick up the stumps ? - I am afraid they do not.

Do they allow the bushes to stay in the ground ? - Yes, to a certain extent they do now. They have recently burned the trees, but it is by no means what you can call stumping.

Do they allow the bushes to spring up promiscuously in the lands ? - More or less.

What crops do they grow ? - Principally mealies. Where I am, they go in for a lot of luja, and kaffir corn.

What is luja ? - Kaffir corn.

No other crops ? - I am afraid not - well, kaffir beans and monkey nuts, but their principal crop - what they all rely on, is mealies.

Do they have here what they call in some parts - the tops of various vegetable plants which they boil up into a spinach ? - They might do that, but it is not specially

cultivated.

No, I know; do they practically cultivate it? - They all go in for that, they have black-jacks; they pick off the leaves of that and they have "misbredie"; they use that to a large extent as marok.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: Do they grow sweet potatoes? - The sweet potatoes down below will not grow; it is too dry; but up here at Duivelskloof, where you have the damp climate, continual moisture, and so on, they certainly grow a lot of sweet potatoes here.

Pumpkins? - Yes, quite a lot.

THE CHAIRMAN: With regard to the vegetables they use for marok - that is, pumpkins? - The flour and the black-jack, and so on.

Is there anything else they use for marok? - No, I do not think so.

Do they use the bracken-tops - that is hard ferns? - No, I do not think so.

Those are the main constituents? - Yes.

How do cattle answer here; have they good cattle? - It is nice cattle country, but there is a lot of room to improve their cattle.

Have you the same stunted heifers - stunted cows? - You can practically call all the cattle that the natives keep here "compound beef" - as it is called.

They are now breeding indiscriminately; they do not keep the heifer long enough before she starts breeding? - That is just the trouble; and then there is no change of bulls. The father covers the heifer again and probably gets its grandchildren again.

Do they castrate many of them, or do they just allow them to breed indiscriminately? - They do not castrate too many.

MR. LUCAS: They castrate some? - They castrate

some of them.

The native who castrates any, does he castrate many of his bull calves then, or is it an odd one occasionally? - It is an odd one that they castrate. In a year he probably has half a dozen bull-calves. He is going to let them run for at least three years before he finds out which one he is going to keep as a bull.

THE CHAIRMAN: In the mean time they breed? - Yes.

MR. LUCAS: Can the natives castrate them when they are that age? - Oh yes.

MR. MOSTERT: What implements do they use with the exception of a plough; do they use harrows? - No.

Do they use planters at all? - I am afraid not.

And no cultivators? - No, I am afraid not; not up here, unless you may be able to pick out one or two isolated ones.

But generally speaking they do not? - Absolutely not. Take about 95 per cent of them; they only use the ordinary plough and the pick.

Can you tell me the rainfall area? - I am afraid not; I could let you have it.

Now, what do you reckon these natives get; how many bags of mealies to the acre? - About five bags a morgen - $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 bags a morgen, so that would be about $2\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ bags per acre.

The soil; is it similar soil to what we see here? - At certain places; it all depends.

A boy that is getting now $2\frac{1}{2}$ bags to the acre? - It is more or less the same soil as you see here.

He should get more, do you think? - I should hope so.

How is malarial fever in this part of the country? - It is certainly improving a lot. Of course, it is pretty bad.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do the natives use kraal manure for their lands at all ? - No.

You do not know of any single instance ? - I know only of one instance - of only one native who is using it; he is getting very good returns from it.

Are you thinking now of the district of Letaba ? - I know of one district where he is using kraal manure.

Have you any idea why he is so much ahead of the rest? - I do not know. Probably he has been living somewhere where he saw what improvements he can make and what crops he can get. I might mention that I think the principal reason why the natives are against kraal manure is that immediately they use manure they will have to cultivate their crops - skoffel them such a lot of times; that is the principal objection to it. They get a lot of weeds coming up.

MR. LUCAS: Do you think they realise that ? - I certainly think they do. I can quite remember that as a kiddie on the farm whenever we had to cart manure on to the lands they said, "Oh yes; we will have to cultivate that and skoffel it three or four times."

The natives said that ? - Yes.

MR. MOSTERT: Do you think there would be any difficulty in educating the native up to a plot of ground instead of the way he is doing to-day - ploughing for one wife here, and one wife there - intervening spaces? If it is allocated in a plot like that he can still do as many plots as he likes ? - I have a location now where, as a matter of fact, we decided with the tribal council of that particular location that we were only going to allow lands on one side, and all the other has to be kept vacant. That was the position. I think that matter can be improved.

With regard to their mealie seed; we find where we have gone that they have a degenerated seed. Is it possible one could get them to use better seed ? - Yes. Well, I

certainly think, as far as the collection of seed is concerned and the natives, it would not meet with any opposition, but at present I do not think they have been very particular as to what kind of seed they use.

I suppose they cannot realise that seed degenerates? - It is exactly the same I think as far as their stock is concerned. They do not recognise that if you use the same seed for the same ground it degenerates, the same as the same bull over the same cow.

MR. LUCAS: Could not you teach them about the in-breeding of cattle by saying that their own custom about not marrying with their own tribe must have arisen originally from the realisation that in-breeding of human beings was bad? - You cannot sort of explain to the native that way. After all, their principal idea is to "marry your cousins as much as possible."

Is it? I do not know about here, but in many tribes it is the reverse; you must marry right away from the family; you must not marry anybody connected with your kraal? - (No answer).

THE CHAIRMAN: It depends what cousin; certain cousins cannot marry. Is not that the same here? - Yes.

DR. ROBERTS: Do not they call the cousins their "little brothers" or "little sisters"? We have that phrase; they do not have the word "cousin"? - No.

Do you have "my little brother"? - Yes, but unfortunately the native you will find if it comes to a question of marriage will always go to his uncle, especially if he has not got sufficient stock to pay his second or third wife, to marry more, and then he will go outside to look for another one.

THE CHAIRMAN: What particular tribes have you here in

this district ? - Vapedis and Shangaans.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: Do you think the native knows that if he grows beans or monkey nuts he increases the fertility of the soil ? - I do not think so.

They have got a custom of sowing it together ? - Not monkey nuts and beans.

THE CHAIRMAN: Beans with maize ? - Yes, and maize with pumpkins, but not monkey nuts. You will find on their monkey nut lands where they grow monkey nuts, they are grown by themselves.

Do you find them change over one year to monkey nuts and another year to mealies ? - That I cannot say. They may do it. I do not suppose they do it with the idea of thinking they are changing their soil.

MR. MOSTERT: They do not know it is better ? - I do not think they do. It all depends whether they are going to get early rains. You will probably find if they get early rains, where they grew monkey nuts before, the soil being loose, they have put in maize there.

THE CHAIRMAN: Have the European farmers natives squatting on their farms here ? - Oh yes, on practically every farm.

On what contract ? - I think they are on the ninety days.

Do they feed them while they are their servants ? - Most of them do.

But there are cases where they do not feed them ? - Oh yes.

Is the practice of making them work two days a week in vogue here ? - Oh yes. There are some farmers who have taken up recently the idea of their working the ninety days consecutively, but the majority still hang on to the two days

per week.

Do the natives like it, or do they object to it ? - I do not suppose they quite like the idea. Of course, I find again - I have quite a lot of farmers in my district who have squatters on their farms and they pay them a nominal wage for every day they are required, and they never take any free labour off them.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: What do they pay them ? - About 9d. or 1/- a day for every day they are required.

THE CHAIRMAN: So that they do not get their ninety days ? - No. I know quite a lot of farmers down my way who do not take the ninety-days' free labour, because their argument is if they take the ninety days freelabour they work the ninety days, go off, and they have no call on them. They would rather pay him a nominal wage.

How much would they pay if the native came from outside ? - It all depends on the class of work they are required for.

For instance ? - If a man wants a driver for his oxen he is going to pay more than he pays a boy who is doing ordinary pick and shovel work. If he wants a boy to look after the water, - the watering of his lands, and so on, he will probably regard him in the same capacity as the one who is required as a driver.

How much would the driver get ? - About 2/- a day, I think.

With or without food ? - With food.

So that the wages are really on a higher level here compared with other districts ? - I am afraid so, but I always thought it was very low until it was pointed out that in the Free State it was the other way.

But in comparison with other districts ? - Take a male adult - a boy of about eighteen years upwards - take

the average wage, they get about 1/- a day up to 2/-, according as they go up.

MAJOR ANDERSON: With food ? - With food.

MR. MOSTERT: They have got the ticket system in this area whereby a boy works for thirty days ? - Oh yes, they have that. But according to law, if you have a boy working for you for a month, the calendar system does not help you very much.

I think you can hire the native as you desire. It is a matter of contract; it is 1/- a day for thirty days, or 1/- a day for 26 or 27 days ? - Yes.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: Do the farmers make the natives' wives work here ? - Oh yes.

Do they pay them extra ? - I do not think they do here.

In any part of your district ? - Yes, they do pay the wife extra but it depends on the contract. If the contract is that the boy has to work ninety days free, they probably contract with his wife and she has got to render a certain number of days too.

Free ? - Yes, free.

And the children ? - Oh yes; there are quite a lot of instances. Again, people hire a herd boy at 5/- a month.

Are there any instances where the wives are paid ? - Oh yes.

Would you say they are exceptional or fairly frequent ? - I do not know; up in Duivelskloof and Groot Spelonken it is absolutely universal.

To pay the wives ? - No.

So that the other cases are exceptional ? - (No answer).

THE CHAIRMAN: Does a great deal of labour go out from this district to work on the mines or in other districts ? - Oh yes.

are
Do you think there/any natives who could go out to work in addition to those who actually do ? - It would be a very small percentage.

This district is very well drawn on; are there recruiting agents here ? - Oh yes, any number of them.

MR. MOSTERT: W.N.L.A.? - Yes, and N.R.C. Of course, the W.N.L.A. do not recruit here, only the N.R.C. The W.N.L.A. recruit in Portuguese territory; they have stations. Although the two are amalgamated, the N.R.C. are the only ones who have runners out.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Is there enough labour for local farmers in the district, they do not have to recruit outside ? - No, the farmers do not. Of course, you get isolated farmers; you will always get a certain class of man who will always want labour; whether there is a surplus of labour or not, you will always get a certain type of man who will never get it. But universally the farmers are not too badly off for labour.

MR. LUCAS: These instances you mention, are they due to boycott owing to the ill-treatment of natives - reputation ? - Yes. We always have instances where you will find a man employs a boy and he says, "I will employ you at the rate of so much a month", and when it comes to the end of the month he says, "You broke so many cups", or "lost so many riems", and he makes a deduction. That is where the boycott comes from.

Are there any other forms of what are regarded as injustices by the natives which cause trouble of that sort in the district ? - No, not that I know of.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: It is a question of taking the law into their own hands ? - You will find if a boy knows he has done wrong - it has been my experience -

that if you give him a clout or a thrashing, it is finished with, and you are not going to have any trouble. But a native, if he is promised 20/-, at the end of the month he wants his 20/-, and it is no use their trying to make any deductions from his salary; that is where the trouble comes in.

Do you find in this district a man sticks to a farm even though a man who has given it a bad name has left? - No, not for long, if a farmer has a bad name. No matter what wages he pays it sticks to him. But I do not think, if the owner is changed, and somebody else takes over, that name will stick there.

DR. ROBERTS: Nothing he can do will change their view? - No. Once he has a bad name he has rather a rough time with labour.

MR. MOSTERT: A farmer may be strict and make his boys work, but providing he pays and feeds them, he will have all the labour he wants.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there any over-stocking of cattle? - Yes, well I certainly think so.

Do the natives ever sell their cattle? - They do to a certain extent when they are sort of pressed with one thing and another; but the trouble is, so far as one comes to the point of cattle, if they were to improve their breed of cattle they could run 50 per cent less of cattle than they are doing at present and they would have their necessary grazing, etc., for their stock.

MR. LUCAS: Would a native be satisfied with the better stock, but a smaller number? - Yes. Of course, the native just now looks upon cattle as his bank, and every calf that is born, according to him, is worth £5 to him. The more he can get - it does not matter what class it is - it is his bank.

(At this stage Dr. Fourie entered).

MR. MOSTERT: Lobola is not by quality but by quantity ? - Exactly.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you think they could be encouraged to go in for more trading in cattle ? - I do not know. You see, their trading with their stock is amongst themselves.

I mean trading with Europeans ? - At present the trading of native cattle with Europeans is very small amongst the natives on account of the quality of the beast.

Do they sell or trade much grain ? - Oh yes; they trade quite a lot of grain.

MR. LUCAS: Do they trade in for cash or goods - mercantile goods ? - Goods and stores principally.

You do not get a native sending in a truck-load or half-a-truck-load ? - No, they trade it in, in stores.

THE CHAIRMAN: The advanced natives in this district, what size of plot could they reap - individuals ? - Well, I do not know; you could practically put it down that a man and his wife would probably cultivate about two morgen, which would only give about ten bags.

An average of about ten bags to a family ? - Yes.

When you say a family - there are polygamous marriages ? - Oh yes.

MR. LUCAS: That native you told us of who manured his ground, does he get more than that ? - Yes.

What does he do with it ? Has he gone in for trading yet ? - No, he has not.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: He is selling it, is he not ? - Yes, and trading it to stores, and so on.

MR. LUCAS: But not selling it in the way the European does ? - No.

I would like to ask, is there any indication that his neighbours are being influenced by his manuring ? - I am afraid so far not.

Have you spoken to any of them and drawn their attention to the improved crops he has got ? - Yes, I have.

But there is no impression yet ? - No, there is no impression.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: When you have a drought here, do the natives lose much stock ? - Yes, they do.

And then they start right from the beginning again ? - Oh yes, there are quite a lot of them, who start off again.

MR. MOSTERT: Do you find that the native trades his stock away; trades it all away and then has to buy again ? - Yes, if it is lobola transactions, not otherwise. I do not think a native would go and get rid of his stock.

I am talking about grain - mealies ? - Oh yes, that certainly happens.

Does it not happen invariably ? - Yes, it does, because as soon as they reap their crops and have them all in, they get rid of them, because they are afraid of the weevils getting in, and then probably towards the end of the year and so on they have to buy some mealies back from the stores for 50 per cent more.

MR. LUCAS: Quite a lot of the natives have small, what look like tanks ? - Mealie pits.

MR. MOSTERT: Do many of them go in for tanks ? - No, mealie pits.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are they more likely to get weevils in mealie pits ? - No.

Why are they afraid of weevils ? - Probably a man has a mealie pit. They make them in the cattle kraals, harden them outside, put the mealies in; probably he still

has the full mealie pit from the previous year and draws on what he has over from this year. They will not make an additional mealie pit. They probably have one there, and that is their reserve.

MR. LUCAS: I see it is in respect of a surplus that they are afraid of weevils ? - Yes.

They keep enough in the ordinary way for what they can consider their needs for the year ? - Yes, more or less.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Do they sell cattle to pay their tax at all ? - They may, but it cannot be regarded as universal.

What tax do they pay ? - £1, 30/-, £2.

Is there much difficulty in collecting it ? - I do not know, Mr. Chairman. I do not know that that is quite a fair question.

We have the Inland Revenue people coming along on Monday on the question of tax collection. Do you mean it falls rather outside your scope and you do not want to speak for the Inland Revenue Department ? - That is exactly it. If I am allowed to, I would rather not touch on that question.

Do you find the natives are wasteful in the use of their forest reserves; do they cut down trees wantonly ? - I think they do, to quite a large extent, where there is wood available.

MR. LUCAS: Have you noticed any district being depleted of timber since you have been here - any portion of the district ? - I am afraid the ordinary timber has been cut down, you can say, to the extent of practically 50 per cent since the Anglo-Boer War.

THE CHAIRMAN: In the native reserves ? - Yes.

Is that due to increase in population; clearing for lands ? - To a certain extent, I suppose yes; but on the other hand again you get this, the native goes and settles on

a farm - the first point he is going to select in the way of choosing his lands is where he finds trees grow; he starts cutting the trees and destroying them to make lands. I think that is what has caused a lot of trees to be cut down.

Cutting to make lands, not for firewood ? - No. He selects a spot, says, "Here are a lot of trees growing", and he selects that particular spot.

MR. MOSTERT: He does not stump it properly ? - No. In the first year he breaks up the grass, cuts the trees, burns it, and makes his lands there.

Where that actual tree grows that is his best soil ? - No.

He has never taken out the stumps then ? - No.

MR. LUCAS: This point you have just been making, is that about natives who come to live on private farms ? - Yes, and locations too.

Is it that they take up a new location, or what ? - When they shift from one location to another.

They are shifting from one location to another ? - Quite a lot of them.

Does that mean a tribe moves from one location to another ? - Not a tribe, but individuals.

I am not sure of the position, but do they set up new tribes and then get a location ? - No, they get the one tribe; you have a member living in one tribe there transferring his allegiance from one to another, and he goes there.

That takes place ? - Yes.

You mentioned a little while ago about one tribe, where you got the Council to agree to the lands being on one side and the grazing on the other ? - Yes.

Do you consider that sound policy ? - I certainly do.

And then involved in that is the question of regulations where their houses will be ? - No, not at all; the houses

a farm - the first point he is going to select in the way of choosing his lands is where he finds trees grow; he starts cutting the trees and destroying them to make lands. I think that is what has caused a lot of trees to be cut down.

Cutting to make lands, not for firewood ? - No. He selects a spot, says, "Here are a lot of trees growing", and he selects that particular spot.

MR. MOSTERT: He does not stump it properly ? - No. In the first year he breaks up the grass, cuts the trees, burns it, and makes his lands there.

Where that actual tree grows that is his best soil ? - No.

He has never taken out the stumps then ? - No.

MR. LUCAS: This point you have just been making, is that about natives who come to live on private farms ? - Yes, and locations too.

Is it that they take up a new location, or what ? - When they shift from one location to another.

They are shifting from one location to another ? - Quite a lot of them.

Does that mean a tribe moves from one location to another ? - Not a tribe, but individuals.

I am not sure of the position, but do they set up new tribes and then get a location ? - No, they get the one tribe; you have a member living in one tribe there transferring his allegiance from one to another, and he goes there.

That takes place ? - Yes.

You mentioned a little while ago about one tribe, where you got the Council to agree to the lands being on one side and the grazing on the other ? - Yes.

Do you consider that sound policy ? - I certainly do.

And then involved in that is the question of regulations where their houses will be ? - No, not at all; the houses

they can have them. As a matter of fact, what I suggested to them was that that particular portion - about a quarter of that location - should be left purely and simply for grazing, and everybody should be moved away from there.

In this separation, is the policy likely to be developed of holding the plots that are actually worked ? - That is my policy.

And you think that is likely to succeed ? - I hope so.

From what you know of the natives ? - Well, there it is working very well indeed.

Actually has it taken place in that case ? - Yes, and it is working very well. All the complaints of herds allowing cattle to get into the lands has diminished.

What is that tribe ? - The Sekororo tribe.

So it is a tribe that complained that this location was over-stocked - that they were over-crowded ? - What really prompted that was that continually every day we were faced with complaints that the herds were allowing cattle to get into the lands, and one thing and another. I went there, inspected it thoroughly, and found out that these lands were dotted all over and that cattle were allowed to graze, and I suggested that all their lands should be on the one side and that that portion should be left for grazing.

You satisfied them it was a reasonable change ? - Yes.

Was that a location in which the natives complained that they were over-crowded - that their location was not big enough ? - No.

MR. LE ROUX VAN NIEKERK: Do you think the Government should introduce drastic measures among the natives - to issue an order that all bulls should be castrated at twelve months old, save those they wanted to keep ? - I am afraid not drastic measures, but more gentle persuasion.

Do you think you could persuade them ? - I suppose it could be done.

Is that your policy at the moment ? - Yes.

Collection Number: AD1438

NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION 1930-1932, Evidence and Memoranda

PUBLISHER:

Collection funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.