

### 3. A Historical Analysis of the Labour Question in Kabale District

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#### Introduction

Kabale District, in south-western Uganda, is part of the former Kigezi District which comprises the present Kabale and Rukungiri districts. Kigezi was created in 1911 through the Anglo-Belgian-German Agreement which divided the Ndorwa region among the three colonial powers. Kigezi District was 2,045 square miles.

Before colonialism societies in the present Kabale area had not been grouped into classes. Money had not been introduced and wage labour was non-existent. The family was still the basic production and consumption unit. From this mode of peasant production families derived their livelihood independence and unity. Socio-economic conditions later forced individuals to labour for others on an unequal basis. Disasters such as epidemic drought, floods, locusts or ravages of war forced them to work, or even pawn their children, for food. When some families ran short of food, they went to work for food — *kucwa encuro*. Young men who had no sisters or other sources of bride-wealth went to work for families with daughters. Their services would be rewarded with a daughter for a wife. This was called *okutendera*.

As the Kivu Mission scrambled for control of this area against the Belgian and German colonialists which it found there, it began reorganising the area to serve colonial interests. In 1909, Captain Ireland reported how they were reorganising the area for capital penetration.

It is a source of gratification to find yesterday that some seven or eight villages have sprung up within the last six weeks near the British depot at Kumba. The villagers want land ... The Political Officer is most anxious to encourage these people... I am taking several of these natives to Lake Ingezi, at the Political Officer's request, to show them land north of the lake... will cultivate and sow what the Political Officer tells them, and sell their produce to passing convoys.<sup>1</sup>



After 1911, British colonialists began a systematic policy of reorganising the area to serve British interests. While it closed down areas infested with tsetse flies to establish a fishing industry in the area it was forced to open some up. Dr. Carpenter recommended their habitation in 1922 and the state, without considering the danger to the lives of the peasants, sanctioned, opening the Nakisanvu and Chikarara areas in July 1923.<sup>2</sup> The district officers discovered in 1930 that the population of Nyarubwiga was not fulfilling the colonialists' purpose for which it was granted special permission to live in the sleeping sickness area, and the colonial state closed the area. To colonialism, what mattered was capital through commerce.

It was found that the Nyarubwiga community was merely a nuisance; considerable efforts had been made earlier to develop the fishery there, but these people entirely failed to cooperate, merely living as an isolated community and in no way justifying the trouble taken to create a regular supply of fish. The Belgian authorities heartily concurred in getting rid of this settlement ... many went back to the Congo, others moved to the mouth of the river where they are easier to access and control.<sup>3</sup>

While maintaining pre-capitalist forms of production, the colonial state used political force to transform the peasants into wage labourers for both this district and other parts of Uganda. This deliberate policy turned Kigezi into a labour reservoir, disintegrating the local economy, undermining its self-sufficiency and independence. Gradually, this political force changed into a socio-economic force. Labour migration continued until Amin's rule in the early 1970s when many employment ventures closed and the employment capacity of others fell. Coupled with inflation that persistently lowered real wages, unbearable working conditions lack of incentives, etc., labour migration halted. While over 60,000 people were being recruited annually from Kigezi by 1946, a total of only 6,112 people were recruited from 1974 to August 1987.<sup>4</sup>

No productive enterprises or employment ventures were created in Kigezi by the colonial state nor the neocolonial state after it. The new enterprises in the area to date draw their wage labour from this reservoir where:

These people feel very much perturbed due to land scarcity and as a result they are ... failing to support their families financially including payment of school fees... and find it difficult to raise money for payment of government tax. A good number of people are dying because they cannot

afford treatment charges when they fall sick. Mortality rate is increasing highly due to poor feeding, especially in infants ... are generally poor and cannot even get money to buy themselves clothes.<sup>5</sup>

In 1987, Kabale District had 115 recorded private farms with over 3,340 head of cattle and other enterprises. This chapter focuses on wage labour on these farms. Among these are Batuma's four farms, which cover about 600 hectares of land with a capacity of about 700 head of exotic and crossed cattle. There are also other production processes on his main farm at Bubare. These have generated employment opportunities for children, women and men.

Various methods have been used in this research. This includes interviews with workers and ex-workers, peasants, teachers, farm managers, businessmen, employees in district administration departments, and others. Observations were also made on these enterprises and their surroundings. Due to the desire of dairy farm owners to avoid any outside interference, we tried to interview all workers we could locate at their place of work, in bars and in their hostels. In addition, library-based research was carried out mainly at Makerere University in Kampala. An intensive study of the documents in the district departmental offices of Kabale was carried out. These included the District Administration Office, Treasurer's Office and Kigezi Resettlement Office. Studies were also carried out in the Departments of Veterinary, Agriculture, Labour, Education and Lands and Surveys. To reconstruct the history of labour in Kigezi, it became imperative to carry out research in the District Archives, Kabale, and at the National Archives, Entebbe. Various methods of sampling were used to get respondents in the peasantry outside the dairy farms and questionnaires were also used.

The first section of this chapter reviews the history and development of wage labour in Kigezi. The second section briefly reviews some forms of accumulation that have led to commercial dairy farming. The third section deals with the forms and conditions of labour and concludes with a few suggestions.

### **Forced Labour in Kigezi District (RUHARO)**

The Western Province sub-Commissioner submitted in 1904 a view that became instrumental both in formulation and implementation of major colonial policies:

With improved cultivation and knowledge the natives will find no difficulty in paying the Hut Tax in kind either in cotton, fibre or any other



commodity that is easily grown. You will then have the labour question as the price of labour naturally rises with the demand. This means that labour will gradually rise, from Rupees 3 to say Rupees 10 per month in a short time and the development of the country, which is entirely dependent on cheap labour will be retarded.

To obviate this, the taxes will have to be raised in proportion to the prosperity of the country or the exports will drop away... unless the natives are taxed at least the equivalent of two months work at present rates that export trade will not increase as it should do, the natives being naturally lazy and accustomed to live on the products of land cultivated by the women.<sup>6</sup>

From its inception the new colonial power imposed forced labour on men under 45 years for a month annually or by payment of the commutation fee.<sup>7</sup> Forced labour was exacted in form of *luwalo*, *kasanvu* and tax defaulting among others to build and maintain, modify and expand public projects like communication, administration centres, patrols and agricultural projects, etc.<sup>8</sup>

Colonial administrators took steps to ameliorate, control and supervise forced labour in the district in 1919. A large number of tax labourers were employed on public works at Kabale. Before 1919 such labour was neither housed nor fed and the colonialists transferred the blame to Buganda headmen who had fallen out of colonial favour due to peasants' resistance. Sixty-four colonial agents, for instance, had been murdered at Nyakishenyi in 1917. The colonialists accused the Buganda headmen of incompetence for not providing this labour force with houses. They 'were all of low type Baganda, of dubious antecedents. Labourers lived in squalid shelters and unsanitary conditions in the bush below the station. Some came from more than five days away and had no means of obtaining food. Desertions from labour were wholesale, and Government work, and the station associated with it, most unpopular'. It constructed a large labour camp that year and designed it in such a way as to foment 'divide and rule' through clanism. It defended this sectarian action as an attempt to avoid quarrels based on clans. Inhabitants of each *gombolola* were given their house, each house had its own shamba attached to supply food for them and the *gombolola* provided labour as their crop came to maturity.<sup>9</sup> Super-exploitation of labour occurred with little resistance as the peasants produced their own food giving them some attachment to this labour camp. Colonialism attributed the three desertions that year to external causes, since 'labour is not now unpopular, and an ample and regular

nourishment has enabled more work to be obtained from a given amount of labour'.<sup>10</sup>

To maximise labour exploitation, the state imported Banyarwanda and Baziba headmen to supervise and control labour. These were reported as having simultaneously 'popularised and sympathetically supervised labour, with results exceeding the most sanguine expectations', and it was reported that the political effect throughout the district, apart from the efficiency of labour, had been most satisfactory.<sup>11</sup> This labour was mainly tax labour; in addition to *luwalo* and *kasanvu* labour,<sup>12</sup> it was also used to build projects in other administrative centres in the district.

The colonial administrators later faced a dilemma in the province on both taxation and compulsory labour after the abolition of *kasanvu*:

Under the 1920 ordinance offenders render themselves liable to imprisonment or to work in custody. Previous experiments have shown the futility of such people to work on the plantations, as they merely vanish. The abolition of *kasanvu* has removed any form of compulsory labour, with the result that these people who have no wants, and who can grow their food without any effort do not undertake voluntary labour. There is apparently a passive movement against tax-paying, the natives saying '*kasanvu* is now abolished, the Government will not kill us, and the jail cannot hold us all'.<sup>13</sup>

To increase exploitation of this forced labour, the colonial state appointed a road inspector to assist the sub-agents in mobilising and coordinating it.<sup>14</sup> The common chant on *luharo* work, learnt from colonial bosses, was *Piri piri waka! waka!* ('people work! work!'), which they did along a *makatara* (marked line). Peasants used their own tools. 'Many of the roads run over rock or stone. It is not fair to expect a very poor peasantry to ruin their only cultivating tools in a few hours. The Public Works Department have been unable to loan any road tools to the district, and Native Government funds are too poor to be able to afford to buy many'.<sup>15</sup> In 1924, it imposed a *luwalo* commutation of three shillings 'enable the upper classes to fulfil their national obligations'.<sup>16</sup>

Colonialism was faced with two major problems: resistance and the impossibility to store human labour in the form of *luwalo*. They 'hoped to devise a remedy to obviate this in future' to prevent public projects and infrastructure from crumbling and others deteriorating.<sup>17</sup> The colonial administration appointed a *luwalo* inspector. 'Most cases of non-payment of tax in Rukiga are due to serious illness, absence or age. In such conditions,



there is naturally very little of such labour to be found'; roads maintained by local government were the subject of very large gangs of labour which 'inter alia resulted in exhaustion generally of tribal labour before the month of August'.<sup>18</sup>

This continues to be a most unpopular imposition, as it is also the most wasted form of labour imaginable. This is amply borne out by the fact that normal *luharo* requirements were mostly fulfilled during 1932, although over 600 men per month were also working on the Kumba-Muko Road. To whatever extent *luharo* requirements are organised, there is always a shortage towards the end of the year; as a man sees his turn approaching, he makes it convenient to be absent. This is partially being overcome by seeing that, as far as possible, all do their first portion of 15 days before second portions are called for. The possibility of introducing general commutation is under consideration, and, as it will be in the nature of an epoch-marking change, means of obviating any dislocation of the regular and existing organisation will require to be arranged.<sup>19</sup>

The Public Works Department supervised this forced labour in some projects. By 1932, the Government was providing tools on Kumba-Muko road construction, housing about 600 *kampu* or labour camps.

While *luharo* labour is certainly not popular, one cannot help reporting on the cheerfulness and willingness with which the men have set about their work. The terms of work for these men were made a little easier than those who worked in their own *gombololas*, and five weeks of five days each (Saturday and Sunday being holidays to allow the men had to return to their homes to collect food) were required for a man to complete his tribal obligation for the year.<sup>20</sup>

Yet two men drowned in the swamp while escaping from *luharo*. Colonialism exposed *luharo* workers to numerous dangers and one of them sustained head injuries during blasting operations on this road, for which no compensation was made. In short, labour was only useful as long as it was in direct production for the colonial state.<sup>21</sup> With this forced labour, these men to bring their own food and cook it themselves as they were not allowed to go home to join their families. Culturally and historically in Kigezi, cooking was a woman's job. In 1934, the Provincial Commissioner of Western Province (PCWP) issued the *Luharo* Regulations 1934, which bound all adult male natives aged between 18-45 years to perform *luharo* for a month every year or pay a commutation fee of six shillings.

*Luharo* labour would not be employed outside the natives' county of residence without permission. Natives had to employ *luharo* labour within their *gombolola* area, within a five-mile radius from home for eight hours between 7.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m., with one hour off at midday for lunch. The worker would then be given a ticket whose number would be entered on a poll tax register. This work had to be reduced to the lowest minimum during the planting season. No labour was to be employed for any work not approved by the Native Administration with the DC's approval. *Luharo* defaulting led one to face a court trial in *gombolola* courts and defaulting from paying the commutation fee for six months would lead to manual labour.<sup>22</sup>

The general commutation of *luharo* proposed on September 3, 1934 to be raised from five shillings to six shillings, was approved in December 1934 making the total tax burden (obligations) on peasants 14 shillings; poll tax being seven shillings, one shilling for tribute and six shillings for *luharo*.<sup>23</sup> By 1936, 30,896 people worked *luwalo* while 8,864 commuted six shillings each.<sup>24</sup> All these taxes were instituted and backed by force in a pre-capitalist area where peasant production was still the dominant mode. Wage labour and money were now being introduced in a natural economy.<sup>25</sup>

As colonialism was imposing forced labour onto peasants and enjoying the fruits of that labour, it was also interested in the long-term effect of creating wage labour for economic crops and projects inside and outside the district. Commending the accommodation and feeding of tax labour at Kabale which had produced 'very desirable results', the PCWP had envisaged that 'as the natives get more used to work and leaving their homes, a large amount of labour will be available from this district but very careful organisation will be necessary in the first instance'.<sup>26</sup>

The Kigezi District Annual Report (KDAR) of 1925 reported that the previous year 4,718 men failed to pay poll tax and provided tax labour in 1925. The KDAR of 1926 reported that the number had fallen to 2,044. The main methods used by colonialists to separate the producer from his means of production and to force him to work for capital were: forced labour, taxation, recruitment, undermining the capacity of the society to reproduce itself both in producer and consumer goods and in technology, the depopulation of livestock through looting, forced sales and political



finer, which finally rendered peasants dependent on wage labour for government demands and survival.

### **The Role of Taxation in Liberating Labour and Generating Resources**

In 1913-14 the PCWP cautioned against the abrupt imposition of poll tax in cash:

until the natives have some means of earning money; which at present they have not... should give them time to realise the advantages of being under the British Government and by degrees they will learn that they must contribute something in return for the benefits they enjoy. Premature taxation without opportunities for earning the wherewithal to pay it would cause discontent and might result in migration to the Congo or G.E.A.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, the colonial state, desperate to earn revenue to meet its administrative costs and other expenses and support the British economy and its war expenses, imposed tax the following year which led to resistance by Nyindo, Katuleggi and Musinga. This form of exploitation was continuously resisted.

Natives of Kinkinzi County object to tax or other work in Kabale and it is difficult to bring pressure to bear as the frontier is so near. It seems politic therefore to give them as much work in their own country as possible.<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, revenue from political fines fell by Rs. 7,762 in a year. Colonialists attributed this to the 'improvement of native behaviour and the disinclination to contribute to the revenue as they did in the previous year in consequence of acts of lawlessness'.<sup>29</sup> This unreliable source of revenue was replaced by annual taxation. To maximise tax collection, the state used chiefs to collect taxes and allowed them a commission of 5 per cent on the tax collected. However, some taxes were embezzled by the tax collectors.<sup>30</sup> It streamlined administration and put a limit on the exploitation of peasants by chiefs through tributes, influencing the District Lukiiko to replace a beer tribute with an annual tribute of one shilling by every man liable to pay tribute. The money was payable to the Lukiiko Fund with poll tax.<sup>31</sup> Through this, the state broadened its revenue base and instead of being consumed in beer form, by individual chiefs without any criterion at different times, taxes were now at the disposal of the state, in cash. The state could then pay chiefs one third as an addition to their salaries 'thus materially increasing their emoluments and leaving a considerable balance for the Lukiiko Fund'. It was now also able to meet

other expenses and expand its programmes, spending part of its budget on education.

This increase of taxation stimulated further migration of labourers in search of employment to pay taxes, i.e. commoditisation of labour. This also boosted the sales of livestock and food crops. In addition, money earned as rebates increased money circulation and further stimulated economic activities all of which led to increasing capital penetration. Politically, the colonial state in some form freed peasants from exploitation by chiefs. At the same time, it increased the dependence of chiefs on the state as the sole employer, which brought with it more oppression on the colonised.

By 1932, 'The whole revenue statement reads very favourably and the large increase can be ascribed generally to the increasing popularity of the district from an official as well as a public point of view, mainly due to the new Kabale-Rutshuru Road Construction'.<sup>32</sup>

**Table 1: Tax Collection in Kigezi (1914-37)**

1914-15	1918-19	1921	1927	1930	1937
Rs. 489.00	76.587	163.044	233.597	13,569.10	17.970

Source: Compiled by author

Note: Figures from Kiges District Annual Reports & W.P.A.Rs.

These annual state demands, fines and indemnities had far-reaching consequences. First, they forced peasants to sell their livestock and food on a weekly and monthly basis. Markets were opened up throughout the district. This undermined animal husbandry, food production, people's feeding habits and social stability. To meet both family and social demands, they had to labour more, which the Colonial Secretary underlined:

The position must be that practically the whole of the money earned by large numbers of workers goes to pay the direct taxes. [He suggested local investigation] in the light of factors which may indicate direct taxation is oppressive, such as the extent of arrears of taxes outstanding and the number of tax defaulters committed to prison.<sup>33</sup>

Second, these people were being drawn into the market both for their products and labour power. What initially had been a political compulsion



gradually developed into an economic compulsion. Their former self-sufficiency was being corroded and they gradually became dependent on the market, wages and on imports.<sup>34</sup>

Within this colonial period, 9.02 per cent of our respondents began paying tax before 1950; 12.9 per cent began paying tax between 1950-60; 6.5 per cent obtained money for their first tax from their fathers; 5.8 per cent obtained it from sales of livestock; 43.22 per cent obtained it from wage labour and 12.25 per cent obtained it from the sale of crops.

### *Human Head Portage*

The first form that marked the transition from forced labour to paid wage labour was 'native head portage.' The only employers of labour in Kigezi were the government missions and the Asian traders, with shops that could be stocked only if goods were carried to Ankole and back. With a lack of employment opportunities, the demands of government were usually met by the employment of tax defaulters from the previous year. From the start, labourers feared going to Ankole because of sickness caused by low altitude. Some peasants eventually braved it, but reported that they did not want to be kept out of their country for long. 'The natives are not likely to be available as yet except in small numbers for labour outside the district'.<sup>35</sup> The work of collecting labour for government transport and for making government roads in the district fell on local chiefs, though the agents were responsible for seeing that such work was done.<sup>36</sup> One instance is that in 1916-17 military movements led to an increase in money circulation in Kigezi and in turn increased many people's incomes in payment of portage and sales of local foods. This boosted government revenue through poll tax and in one instance the credit went to Agent Sebalijja, who 'successfully supplied all the military requirements in the way of foodstuffs and porters...Thousands of military loads were transported from Kigezi to Kamwezi entirely by local porters. The Carbels took over these loads at Kamwezi and gave no assistance within the district'.<sup>37</sup>

Head portage had become the mode of transport. All Kabale-Mbarara transport in both directions was undertaken by the natives of Kigezi. Camp-to-camp porters were almost exclusively used by officers touring the district, while Rujumbura peasants were employed for a time to bring loads for the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from Kampala.<sup>38</sup> However, 'after passing Mbarara, many fall sick, even to Mbarara numbers of porters in each large safari fall sick; and there have been several deaths.' The

PCWP said there had been very heavy sick rates among porters to Mbarara, especially Bakiga people, with considerable deaths that year. He attributed this to the fault of porters who failed to take care of themselves. 'The Bakiga are especially culprits in this respect; the Banyaruanda look after themselves better, hence the lower percentage of sickness amongst themselves'(sic!).<sup>39</sup> The PC reported native portage in excess of local requirements in Kigezi. There was 'a never ending and constant stream of porters proceeding backwards and forwards between here and Mbarara' the following year, and from camp to camp in the district. They hoped that vehicles stopping at Lutobo would reach Kabale to 'cut out the extremely wasteful method of head portage', which was extremely desirable from a medical point of view to reduce sickness and mortality<sup>40</sup> but human portage continued on the Kabale-Mbarara route and from camp to camp in the district even as motor transport replaced head portage. The reason was the numbers of vehicles were still few while the volume of luggage was increasing daily. Furthermore, there was a lack of roads.

Head portage proved lucrative and a local firm, Victor and Co., supplied porters and equipment on safaris for non-government purposes. By then, 'a local class of habitual porters, chiefly Banya Ruanda of the station, is gradually becoming evolved'.<sup>41</sup>

They know the individual and his methods, and appreciate the consideration they receive. Constant demands for camp porters has caused emigrations from Bufundi.<sup>42</sup>

In 1931, movement in Kigezi was of necessity mostly by head-transport:

It is gratifying to find in Kabale the existence of a professional class of porters; the same people volunteer over and over again, and whenever safaris take off from Kabale, the applications for employment are far in excess of requirements. On all my own safaris, at least 50 per cent are the same people, time after time.<sup>43</sup>

This class was undermined mainly by improvement in the communication system and mechanised means of transport.



Table 2: Government Safaris

Year	Number of Safaris	Number of Porters
1925	-	780
1926	-	1,289
1930	-	950
1931	25	960
1932	25	1,095
1933	25	690

Source: Compiled by author.

Note: Figures from Kigezi District Annual Reports.

### History of Wage Labour in Kigezi

When Britain established colonial rule over present Uganda, it began a process of reorganising it to serve British interests. These were basically economic. Certain regions like Buganda were designed to produce massive amounts of cheap industrial raw materials, like coffee and cotton, for British industries. At the national level, the colonial state had compartmentalised the country. Areas outside the industrial crop zone, like Ankole and Karamoja, were reserved as sources of livestock while areas like Kigezi, West Nile, and Acholi were deliberately turned into labour reservoirs. The common process of control was through the creation of a money economy using political compulsion in the form of annual taxation, forced labour supply, and forced sales.

While the colonial state had instituted forced labour in the form of *kasavu* and *luwalo* in Buganda for public projects, the labour supply could never be enough if these people had to accomplish this goal while also producing food for subsistence and for sale. Dependence on this supply of labour negated the principle of profit maximisation. Bishop Alfred Tucker had written to Governor Boyle in December 1909 against the crude exploitation of labour:

If their wages are offered... ample supply of voluntary labour for government works will be forthcoming... the same holds good with regard to labour for traders. The standard of living in Uganda has never so risen that a larger proportion of the population will not be content without some of the so called luxuries of civilisation. Better clothes, better food, better houses are all in request everywhere and as these things

can only be obtained by work ... if these new desires and economic laws are allowed fair play both Government and traders will find ready to their hands an ample labour supply... forced labour whether for Government works or for the industrial and commercial development of the country is not only economically unsound but is a violation of all the principles of freedom for and justice towards subject races which are the main-spring and ... the secret of the success of most of our colonial enterprise.<sup>44</sup>

It was also politically important to get labour from elsewhere— which would lead to a separation of the producers from ownership. As a result, the first steps taken were to attract labour from outside Kigezi— namely Rwanda/Urundi, Congo,<sup>45</sup> and Tanganyika.<sup>46</sup> As examples, from 1934 to mid-1936, 65,174 workers returned to Rwanda/Urundi and Tanganyika while in 1937, 128,800 of the 130,000 recorded unskilled workers in Buganda were from these three countries. Bishop Tucker had also argued that:

To compel men, therefore, who have paid their rent, to labour even though it be for wages is a gross injustice and a direct violation of the law.<sup>47</sup>

He submitted that this negated Government's policy spelled out by Acting Governor Boyle in 1909:

It should always be remembered that there is no compulsion on the natives to labour when once they have paid their poll tax and performed other labour on the road provided by the Uganda Government. Every native is free to go where he likes and cannot be compelled to work or be punished for not doing so.<sup>48</sup>

He continued that in spite of the law laid down in January 1910, 'thousands of men who have paid their rent and their poll tax and have also done the prescribed work on the roads are brought in under compulsion every month for labour both for the Government and for traders... paid the regulation wages of 3 rupees per month but nevertheless the whole thing is illegal and in consequence ought to be abolished'.<sup>49</sup> He challenged the Government to publicise the governor's statement and firmly demanded that the chiefs should not be used as government agents in what he regarded as an illegality: 'that this great injustice was prejudicial to the best interests of Uganda'.

Force was applied in Kigezi from the start. It was used to mobilise labour for public projects and war, for example, and the newly appointed chiefs and agents were forced and punished to mobilise it. By 1915-16,



Sebalijja was commended for being responsible for the enormous labour demands and successfully fulfilling all requirements for war. By then 'Local Chiefs are now less averse from providing their quota of labour and do not need armed threats as before'.<sup>50</sup> By 1916, local chiefs were members of Rukiiko, with no regular pay but receiving most of the fines paid into the sub-divisional courts.

By 1921, this pre-capitalist society was being drawn into wage labour using these methods. That year, 100 porters were employed monthly by CMS in addition to those employed by PWD at Kabale Station. Attempts to induce Bahororo peasants from Rujumbura to work on European estates in Toro had only a small success.<sup>51</sup> It was noted the following year that 'a considerable number of natives volunteer for work in Buganda; some have gone even as far as Bombo to work on the loco tractor line'; that there was ample volunteer labour but that there were no funds for wages;<sup>52</sup> that a considerable number of peasants left the district in search of work in other parts of the protectorate, mostly Buganda; that numbers of men wandered down to Buganda in search of work as government labour requirements in Kabale were almost entirely supplied by tax defaulters from the previous year due to lack of employment opportunities.<sup>53</sup> The administration proposed to expand the labour camp in 1924 as it could no longer accommodate all the labour.

A problem was noted in 1926. 'The natives of this district have little opportunity of earning money ... for some time to come there must be every year a considerable number who are unable to find the money for their tax'.<sup>54</sup>

I do not think any hope of material increase to the Poll Tax in future can be entertained until the natives of this district have some opportunity of earning money by agricultural produce.<sup>55</sup>

#### Active Measures to Create Kigezi into a Labour Reservoir

It was argued in 1919 that the main point hindering poll tax collection in Kigezi was the absence of wages and means of earning money locally.<sup>56</sup> The abolition of *kasavu* labour in Uganda in 1921-22 caused a great labour shortage. The colonial state therefore appointed a labour commissioner to recruit labour for government purposes from all sources and a labour department was inaugurated in 1925. This increased the flow of labour to raw-material producing areas. Colonialists, in studying how to draw peasants into wage labour, appointed a new labour inspector for

Kigezi, which imposed in 1924 a tax on the sale of salt in markets. It also took steps to draw people actively into wage labour by creating a new labour recruitment department under P.C. Jackson on October 1, 1924. He immediately despatched 200 wage labourers to Mbarara and Masaka to build labour camps which were completed by the end of the year. He then recruited and despatched 204 wage labourers to raw-material producing areas that year.

Other individuals were recruiting in Kigezi before Jackson's venture. By July and August that year, Dewhirst recruited 250 labourers for the PWD. Two European planters and Mr. Nanji Kalidas Mehta also recruited about 200-250 men.<sup>57</sup> The following year it sent to Kampala 3,500 recruits from Kigezi,<sup>58</sup> and 235 recruits between April 1 and July 31, 1926. Although active recruitment was halted in August that year,<sup>59</sup> it did not stop those who had been going voluntarily. The question of whether the labour supply would be affected by the growth of coffee and cotton disturbed the Colonial Government. The Labour Commissioner informed the Chief Secretary on June 25, 1928 that labour supply from Ankole and Kigezi districts was, and had always been, negligible, 'such as has been forthcoming was very unsatisfactory from the health and work output point of view'; that they went out in search of work on their own account in Buganda, and were usually absent for no longer than six months. He concluded that 'The active stimulation of native production in these districts will not materially affect the protectorate labour supply'.<sup>60</sup> The breakthrough was in 1929:

After a great deal of initial difficulty, including an insensate panic, voluntary labour has for the first time been induced to go out of the district to work and gain money. Six hundred men are now on the Kagera Port Road construction and the idea is very slowly becoming popularised.<sup>61</sup>

The following year, 'a good supply of volunteers found their way early in the year to Nsongezi, Kaina although the supply tended to fall about June', after earning enough money to pay poll tax for themselves and their families. It was also noted that the abundant malaria among those who went to Kagera did not deter others who wished to raise funds.<sup>62</sup> The following year, labour supply was 'more than adequate' with a continual supply 'going begging'<sup>63</sup> and work was offered on Rutshuru-Lake Kivu Road with a rush of 'some 100 stalwarts', although fever and the falling demand for wage labour by Belgian authorities gradually undermined the exercise.<sup>64</sup> The following year, Kargaratos and Grant employed about 400 men daily, as did other mining companies, while Muko-Nyakabande



Road Construction employed 600 men monthly. By then 'There was never any fear that labour in this respect would not be forthcoming... thousands of applicants turned up at Muko and Nyakabande'.<sup>65</sup>

In 1933 the demand for paid labour was well supplied: 'within his own district, the local native shows a keen desire to work, and individuals go far afield. The quantity of labour is good', although they still feared going out of their areas for health reasons. Mining concerns employed less than 1,000 labourers, but this local labour feared working at Mwirasandu because of fever and terrible working conditions. However, 40 per cent of its labour force came from Kigezi.<sup>66</sup> By 1936 the situation had barely changed. 'In Ankole, work in the mines is generally too strenuous for the physique of the local natives, and much of the unskilled labour is provided by the Bakiga and Banyaruanda'.<sup>67</sup>

Prompted by new applications for recruiting permits and the great inflow of outside labour, the PCWP informed the Chief Secretary:

Recruiting on this scale would probably affect the labour supply of Baganda farmers. Application for these recruiting permits is a new departure. The development of coffee cultivation in Ankole and Kigezi will also affect the purely local labour supply in Buganda to a growing extent and every encouragement is being given to natives to cultivate in their own country in preference to going further afield.<sup>68</sup>

It was noted in 1934 that the district had no labour shortage as local natives turned out for work in embarrassing numbers and that the DC's office was overwhelmed at the end of each month with applications for work which it was unable to grant.<sup>69</sup> Two years later, the PCWP noted that many natives from Kigezi relied on finding work in Buganda to earn income for their taxes and other needs, despite 'the agricultural development and local opportunities for earning money'. Colonial tactics included using those who had returned from wage labour outside the district as a bait for labour migration. Two years later, the PCWP toured the whole district to mobilise wage labour and taught large *barazas* in the open air on the various methods of earning money using concrete examples:

Crowds of well-dressed peasants had returned from their annual visit with enough money to meet their obligations ... was impossible to avoid the impression that a spirit of adventure prompted these excursions, quite as much as economic pressure. Out of hundreds of cases, only one man had worked on a coffee estate ... in one area it was apparently the fashion to work on the municipal roads in Kampala. The great majority cultivated cotton in Buganda ...<sup>70</sup>

The PCWP showed how wage labour had neither been institutionalised nor become a source of livelihood in Kigezi, as there was work in the gold mines in Kigezi 'but many of the primitive population appear to be content to work for one month only to get enough money for tax. They find the unaccustomed work very hard, and still regard it as a disagreeable necessity to be accomplished as quickly as possible'.<sup>71</sup> He underlined how peasants hated this labour migration that exposed them to diseases like silicosis, malaria, and spinal meningitis.<sup>72</sup>

### *Initiation of a Massive Recruitment Campaign*

The great labour shortage experienced in the whole colony in 1937 prompted a campaign for massive recruitment through recruiting agents.<sup>73</sup> The 1938 Labour Report warned against forced labour and low wages as the peasants would resist by withdrawing their labour or shifting from cash-crop production to food production if the prices were kept low. It stressed the peasants' subjection to British capital:

It is inconsistent with the economic progress of the whole country and with the advance in civilisation of the native of Africa that he should be allowed to stagnate in a native reserve leaving all the work to the women ... [He] must be taught by every legitimate means open to the Government that... unless he is prepared to do a reasonable amount of work on his own account, it is his duty to go out either for Government or private employer in industrial employment.

The report advised the provincial administration to mobilise the natives for wage labour which in the end would provide the colony with an internal labour market independent of outside labour supplies.<sup>74</sup>

In 1940 thousands of men were conscripted for war.<sup>75</sup> In 1941 the PC hoped that recruitment for military services would not have any material effect on the local labour situation: 'As soon as those now in service return to their homes and the flow to and from the army becomes constant the number away at any one time should not be so great as to upset the proportion of manhood in village life'.<sup>76</sup> During the war, labour demands changed to ensure production of war-time demands for the forces and economic and food crops for sale. Among the Bantu, Kigezi and Ankole produced the bulk of men for the war.<sup>77</sup> Of those conscripted from Kigezi District, 112 were recorded dead in action.<sup>78</sup>

The colonial state intensified labour recruitment for the war and established a labour department in Kigezi. More roads were constructed



for transporting labour and flax and for opening up the fertile country for closer settlement by European firms for pyrethrum growing as a war measure.<sup>79</sup> With the war, the colonial state began changing its policies on the colonial economy. For Kigezi, the major changes came through two migration policies of 1946: labour migration and population migration. Their main aim was to explore and tap local sources of labour, introduce and promote production of cash crops by the resettlers<sup>80</sup> and facilitate land consolidation for the stayers. Confronted by a critical labour shortage and economic crises both at the local level and internationally, the Labour Advisory Committee on September 19, 1945 called for the recruitment of women and children into wage labour and the use of propaganda to combat the negative attitude of Africans towards employing women.

Through experience, colonialism had learnt the disadvantages of heavy dependence on imported labour. This labour could be withdrawn any time due to political conflicts or wars between the colonialists. Intelligence reports show that there were fears that labour could be stopped from coming into Uganda.<sup>81</sup> It could also be withdrawn by wage workers themselves in protest against poor remuneration and increased marginalisation, poor working and living conditions, or any other grievances between labourers and employers. Yet the colonial state had neither political nor economic powers to control this external labour. It was easier to control and super-exploit local labour through political and economic measures like taxation, political demands or purchases. The colonial state could create channels and actively participate in locating, recruiting and transporting labour to where it was needed, unlike voluntary labour from outside the colony which had to be recruited at the border. The 1938 report had underscored the importance of encouraging and depending on local labour.

Britain had incurred heavy costs in the war. It was heavily indebted to the US and its economy had great problems. As a result, it desperately wanted to save every penny and squeeze more resources from its colonies. Dependence on imported labour negated this objective as it drained out of the country resources that it earned as wages while local labour would pay part of it as taxes and use the rest locally to buying British manufactured goods. This would have a multiplier effect on the British economy. On top of monetising the local economy, it would increase the resources of the colonial state, keep British industries running and ensure good remuneration and other social benefits to British workers.

Reliance on imported labour would undermine any planning for the economy as it was unpredictable, unreliable, costly and resource-draining. To implement its new exploitative programme, British colonialism had therefore to look for controllable, reliable and cheap sources of labour. Unlike imported labour, which hindered monetisation, massive labour recruitment of this area would quicken it and create a continuous supply of wage labour. They also preferred to employ a strong labour force, which would be dependent on home and other resources in terms of food, accommodation and health, not a proletarian class but migrant labour.<sup>82</sup> This was feasible through compartmentalisation of the economy. It would also cause less political problems, with fewer demands as workers from each nationality would tend to group separately. This would derail workers from identifying their problems and their solutions. Such a labour force, while divorced from the means of production in such an economy, was not likely to cause any serious political or economic problems.

Plans to maximise resource-extraction from this colony were therefore mounted. With the creation and expansion of plantations, mines, factories and other production ventures, labour recruiting agencies were created. Increased demand for labour, with less labour supply from voluntary wage seekers, and a new need to withdraw from the heavy reliance on foreign labour, meant that the recruiters had to penetrate deeply into the peasant communities.

The continuous recruitment for war led to a labour shortage which limited the expansion of pyrethrum growing the following year. The famine of 1943 had led to the closure of borders which affected labour from outside. The colonial government got labour from returning local labourers. From this war emerged a wage labour class.

### **Monetisation through the Institutionalisation of Wage Labour**

Labour recruitment accelerated the monetisation of the economy, as the PCWP referred to it in one of his communications: 'Desire by men on leave for quick marriages has certainly forced up the price of cattle, which are also in demand for export to the meat markets'.<sup>83</sup>

Inflation on the other hand affected unfavourably the supply of unskilled labour needed for maintenance of roads and other local services.

The plethora of cash received from men in the army is said to affect crop production adversely, as the peasants no longer take trouble to harvest



and market all their produce. Immediate needs are quickly satisfied from the remittances, and the price of trade-goods is now generally regarded as exorbitant, and the quality of the goods too poor for satisfactory purchase.<sup>84</sup>

By 1945 the habit for wage labour had become ingrained and large numbers of men left the district for Ankole and Buganda to work in the mines, towns, factories and plantations. The following year, 1,000 labourers were recruited from Kigezi for Kakira Sugar Estates. Wage labour went to Mwirasandu tin mines, despite the severe cases of silicosis among miners there. It was reported that labour shortage complaints by private employers were accentuated by demands for higher wages as a result of disturbances in Kampala the previous January. These employers paid meagre wages and, as money was plentiful throughout the country, few unskilled labourers were willing to work for them on those terms or to remain long after satisfying their needs.<sup>85</sup> With World War II and after it, people's ways of life and the society's mode of production changed. By 1947, it was noted that many of the ex-soldiers had spent their savings and were settling down to farming in their own homes or were prepared to take on work for wages, and that the increase in wage rates was also partly responsible for easing the labour situation.<sup>86</sup> The PCWP noted that Bachiga labourers did not volunteer in great numbers for outside work and that the number employed in Ankole mines was falling off, while the sugar companies recruited 363 and Stafford of Hoima 25.<sup>87</sup> Mining was unpopular because of the poor conditions of work. By 1950, these mines were contemplating mechanisation as a solution to labour problems.<sup>88</sup>

A contrary argument that gained currency was that Kigezi became a source of labour because it could not produce cash-crops.<sup>89</sup> Yet, there is abundant empirical evidence to disprove this apologia for colonialism.<sup>90</sup> From colonial records, wheat, barley, cotton, coffee, pyrethrum, wattle trees, *inter alia* had proved successful. Following the recommendations of the conference of November, 1923 to promote cotton and coffee growing in Kigezi, the colonial administration sent four men from the four counties to Masaka for a course in cotton and coffee cultivation under a Mr. Staples at government expense. On their return, they were employed by the Agricultural Department and they did a good job.<sup>91</sup> Since the colonial state had other regions which could grow crops very cheaply, such areas as Kigezi were considered distant and only suitable for labour provision. Compared to Buganda, cash crops from Kigezi were considered

uneconomical in terms of land acquisition, transport costs, the question of perishability, and bulkiness.

While upholding the apologia that economic development was held up because of the distance of Kigezi from the outside world, because of lack of vehicular transport (*sic*) and the fear of fever from portage down country that militated against economic products for years,<sup>92</sup> the truth lay in the colonial policy on cotton growing spelled out by the Chief Secretary in October, 1925 to the Director of Agriculture:

His Excellency (the Governor) desires, however, to reaffirm the policy that the production of cotton should not be actively stimulated by propaganda in the West Nile or Chua Districts .... or in the Ankole and Kigezi Districts of the Western Province until such time as labour difficulties in the more central districts of the protectorate become less acute. It is not, however, nor has it ever been, the intention to prevent in any district the planting of cotton by natives who wish to do so ... arrange for them issue of seed to the districts named in the preceding paragraph in accordance with the requirements which may be communicated to you from time to time.<sup>93</sup>

The colonial state was also confronted with the problem of absorbing returning World War II soldiers into the economy through crop production or wage labour. As these events were taking place, a new propertied class was created through land allocation, land purchases, land consolidation, subsidies and loans. Massive labour recruitment in South Kigezi by recruiting agents thus ensued. At the same time, the resettlement scheme to North Kigezi was initiated. Chiefs and religious leaders were very instrumental in mobilising labourers for the two schemes.<sup>94</sup>

### *The Labour Migration Process*

The effects of the labour migration policy were felt within five years after the end of World War II. The most alarming feature of 1951 was said to be the ever-increasing exodus of adult males from the districts of Kigezi and Ankole for Buganda which had reached such proportions as to create a real labour shortage for the African local government and local mining concerns in Kigezi. By then:

Very large numbers of Bakiga travel to Buganda on their own accord where they can earn as much as Sh.60 to Sh.80 per month by working as many as three tickets at one and the same time. In addition they probably grow a patch of cotton for themselves ... 29,000 men left the district.<sup>95</sup>



These workers were subsidised by their employers and the State in growing cotton in addition to work they did for a non-living wage. In addition to that, they were promoting British capitalist interests by producing raw materials for British textiles. By 1954, money had become a new social power in Kigezi and wage labour had become an important occupation. In the colonial language, it had become customary for many men to obtain work outside Kigezi for periods of between six to nine months, leaving their wives and families behind. They retained their land but their earnings constituted the main source of cash income for local populations.<sup>96</sup> By 1957, there was intensive labour recruitment in every village.<sup>97</sup>

Major profits from this migration accrued not only to the employers, British industrialists and the colonial state but also to the recruiting agents. In 1959 alone, for example, Scard earned commission on over 21,003 recruited labourers.

Employers then began to plan to recruit labour on long-term contracts of three years instead of six months. The colonial state studied the possibilities of introducing longer contracts of service from labour recruited from Kigezi and opening up Bufumbira County for recruitment by the Kigezi Recruiting Agency.<sup>98</sup> In pursuit of this, a sub-committee of the council advanced on November 28, 1957 that 'acceptance of longer contracts by labour would be beneficial to labour and industry and to the district' and that employers would accept the Labour Commissioners' suggestion of introducing means by which a proportion of the employee's pay could be deferred to payment on his return home, and by which he could regularly send sums to his family, but that acceptance of longer contracts and use of the deferred pay, and family remittances system would depend on individual labourers' decisions.<sup>99</sup>

The colonial state finally arranged to re-open Bufumbira County for recruiting from January 24, 1958 for Kilembe Mines.<sup>100</sup> Colonial officers were instructed to translate contracts into Rukiga and Runyarwanda 'so that they can be read out by the attesting officer in person, as there is some danger at the moment that recruits do not always appreciate the conditions and the binding nature of these contracts'. Before then, many had not understood their contracts well.<sup>101</sup>

By November 1958, the Labour Commissioner had introduced a system where the payment of part of the labourers' wages on their return home could regularly be sent back to the family instead. This policy aimed at

tying workers to their original employers regardless of the oppressive and exploitative conditions, poor wages, or non-payment of wages. It was also designed to check labour turn-over and absenteeism, strikes and other forms of resistance to the employers' exploitation and oppression. It was hoped this would develop some form of worker-employer patronage. It would also deprive the district of this labour continuously, reduce the burdens of tax-collection and tax-defaulting. But workers also resisted poor working conditions. In 1946, for example, 84 workers at Uganda Sugar Works refused the terrible conditions and terms of service plus the miserable wages and demanded to go home. This was then accepted by the administration, which transported them back after they had been interviewed by the Secretary General of Kigezi as 'it would be better to send the men home, than to allow them to spread discontent among the remainder of the workers' and hoped that this would not affect further recruitment from Kigezi, a valuable source of labour supply.<sup>102</sup> Nine workers' strikes were recorded in 1957 against bad working conditions, meagre wages, bad terms, etc., leading to a continuous fall of labour force at Kilembe Mines.<sup>103</sup>

### *Recruiting Agencies in Kigezi*

The colonial state permitted Kigezi Recruiting Agency, Kilembe Mines, and Bachanans Estates active recruitment in Ndurwa and Rukiga counties while Masaka Recruiting Agency was allowed to recruit immigrant labour for the sugar estates. To offset the labour shortage in Toro, it allowed the East Estates and the Toro Tea Company active labour recruitment in Kigezi.<sup>104</sup> In subsequent years between 45 per cent and 50 per cent of the tax-paying population left the district for wage labour annually, returned with sufficient money for their requirements and had no need or inclination to work locally. The colonial state addressed the question of labour resistance through desertions and resolved on punitive measures against 'desertions of recruited labour after the arrival at the place of work'. Employers affirmed to take legal action against all deserters apprehended.<sup>105</sup> From September the officer in charge of Masaka Recruiting Agency spent two weeks each month recruiting labour in Kigezi.<sup>106</sup> Intensive recruitment continued in the following months. To offset the fall in copper prices, Kilembe Mines wanted to increase output which demanded increasing underground labour strength. It was therefore studying possibilities of increasing this labour from Kigezi to 1,200 to 1,300 over a period of 24 months and maintaining it there.<sup>107</sup>



It is clear that Kigezi has an exportable surplus of manpower ...insofar as this export can be controlled and directed to areas where men will work under approved conditions it is beneficial to all concerned.<sup>108</sup>

Kigezi Recruiting Agency was expanded to embrace the recruiting demands of several other concerns. Masaka Recruiting Agency procured 2,000 labourers for Lugazi and Kakira. In addition, there was an exodus of voluntary labour that went on its own, mostly to Buganda. The PCWP noted that: 'apart from the efforts on the local economy of the districts, the undesirable effects of the exodus, political, social, agricultural and administrative are becoming increasingly evident'.<sup>109</sup>

By 1953, commoditisation of labour was a central fact of economic life in Kigezi: 'Kigezi again proved an invaluable labour reservoir, and recruitment from that district has solved many labour problems in other areas'. That year, Kigezi Recruiting Agency alone recruited 10,000 labourers. This exodus resulted in increased bus fares, which sparked off an illegal carriage of labour by lorries.<sup>110</sup> The following years witnessed an exodus from Kigezi to raw-material producing areas. By 1954, 60,000 left the district annually for wage labour. Kigezi Recruiting Agency increased its operations and recruited nearly 13,000 labourers and it was estimated that labour in mining concerns represented by Kigezi Recruiting Agency amounted to 40,000 a year. However, attempts to stabilise labour were still frustrated as:

A number of these concerns are anxious to build up a stable force by offering facilities, including good housing, for labourers to bring their families to live on the estates... the Bachiga are still opposed to this idea but it is hoped that their attitude will gradually change.<sup>111</sup>

The July 1955 meeting had agreed to:

The means whereby the recruiting of their labourers and their families from Kigezi could be encouraged. There is strong reluctance by the Bakiga to take their families with them but there are some small indications that this attitude is being changed... could not only help to alleviate the overcrowding problem in Kigezi but would be of benefit in establishing permanent and suitable labour forces at places of employment.<sup>112</sup>

This would solve the agrarian question in Kigezi, begin to solve the labour shortage crisis and also create a reliable proletarian class.

**Table 3: Labour Recruitment Activities in Kigezi by Masaka Recruitment Agency and Kigezi Voluntary Employment Bureau**

1951	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1960
14.454	16.481	12.637	15.613	13.139	12.283	13.348	16.672

Source: Compiled by author.

Note: Figures from Labour Reports, Masaka Recruitment Agency and Kigezi Voluntary Employment Bureau.

In 1956, 50 per cent of the male adult population was absent from the district.

This leads to a shortage of labour for agricultural development and for the local mining industry and at times there is a shortage of labour for government departments. As the majority of these men find their way into private employment in Buganda no accurate statistics are available.<sup>113</sup>

In 1957, individual contracts for all recruits were introduced by the Kigezi Recruiting Agency and they made all efforts to interest labourers in contracts longer than the usual six months.<sup>114</sup> The whole of that year was marked by intensive labour recruitment with the labour inspector stationed at Kabale. In December, the colonial state appointed an Assistant Labour Officer to inspect places of work in the district, to recruit, and to record recruited labour.<sup>115</sup> The PC disclosed that this exodus of labour from the district had caused a shortage on agricultural development projects, although local mining was well-supplied with labour with a daily average labour force of 1,394 labourers.<sup>116</sup>

Masaka Recruiting Agency requested permission in July to shift its recruiting centre from the Belgian custom post of Katuna to Kamuganguzi, on the grounds that they wanted to serve porters better by being near the junction of the new road.<sup>117</sup> But there were more reasons for this shift. As Belgian authorities were restricting the labour exodus into Uganda, it entered and exited from points Belgians could not monitor. The agency also wanted the camp to be situated away from Belgian sight to stop them monitoring its activities as it feared paying dues on migrant labour. Outside labour too was avoiding customs because of heavy taxation and other impositions exacted on whatever returning labour brought back from



Uganda. The Agency therefore wanted a central place where they could assemble this labour, recruit it and then transport it without unnecessary costs.

The agency was also focusing on local labour recruitment and trying to reduce dependence on outside labour for economic, medical, political and social reasons. Employers also preferred local labourers to outsiders because they were strong and worked harder. Labourers from outside would arrive on foot, exhausted by the long tedious journey with fatigue, hunger and diseases contracted on the way.

In 1958 the PCWP reported the satisfactory stabilisation of labour, as over 3,500 labourers had completed their first contract of six months and had re-signed for another six months or longer. 'This continuity of service is welcomed by the employers and various incentives are offered to foster it'.<sup>118</sup> The colonial state had lifted a ban on recruitment of labour in Bufumbira: 'Large numbers of labour had moved in the normal way out of Kigezi to seek employment in other parts of Uganda.' The Bufumbira migration was regarded as 'free', without any ties, claims or further obligations by recruiters and could therefore work anywhere, anytime and return anytime it wanted.<sup>119</sup> This form of labour was the largest and freest in the sense that it was not tied down to any contracts. It was 'free' labour indeed.

### *The Defence of Labour Reservoirs*

A recruitment sub-committee set up in 1960 to review the labour recruitment situation and study grievances from labour reservoirs discovered two prevalent types of active recruitment. One was through recruiting agencies, the other was through the 'worker-recruiter' method. Employers also applied for worker-recruiter permits and gave them to their employees who went out to hire at least 24 recruits from their area.<sup>120</sup> Its defence for labour reservoirs was that although it agreed that shambas were neglected when men were absent from the district, only a small minority of the absentees were recruited and that:

the productivity of the Protectorate as a whole must be the overriding consideration... on the economic grounds labour should be applied where it is most productive... felt sympathy with local councils in their efforts to increase productivity in their areas, they felt it would be wrong to restrict the movement of labour to achieve this where that labour could make a greater contribution to the economy of the territory by working for wages or producing crops elsewhere.<sup>121</sup>

It accepted that:

the absence of males from their home areas disrupts family life but it considered that the proportion of persons recruited in relation to the total numbers absent is so small that recruiting does little to exacerbate the problem; moreover recruits are returned to the district at the end of a given period.

This view ignored that even the unemployed absent labour had been uprooted from production. It saw no validity 'in the criticism that certain areas were being singled out as labour reservoirs and the corollary that for this reason they were being deliberately kept backward...'<sup>122</sup>

The emotional resentment against people leaving the district colours the attitude of chiefs and councillors and even members of the Provincial Administration towards recruiting. Although it was admitted that only a fraction of the persons leaving the districts were recruited, the chiefs and councillors felt that anything which encouraged even small numbers of people to leave the district was wrong and had to be resisted.

Contrary to this view, the committee strongly backed the demand by employers for freedom to recruit in areas closed to labour recruitment in times of labour shortage (except in Karamoja and in resettlement areas) to 'remove the accusation levelled by employers that Government is being unnecessarily restrictive'. To avoid giving rise to local hostility, the committee:

recommended that the use of district names by recruiting agencies should be avoided as far as possible'. It rejected the demand for only one recruiting body 'as there was and would continue to be an adequate reservoir of labour in the territory and provided no restriction is placed on the present extensive free movement of labour.'<sup>123</sup>

The colonial state took steps to implement these recommendations. In June, 1961 it replaced the Labour Officer at Kabale with a Labour Inspector solely for labour matters. On June 7, 1962 the Acting Labour Commissioner informed the DCs of Western Province of the Uganda Employment Ordinance and of his plans to grant freedom of recruiting in all areas with the exception of Karamoja and where resettlement schemes were starting.<sup>124</sup>

### *Labour Migration after Independence*

With independence, all chiefs became more involved in labour recruitment. Intending labour recruits registered with *gombolola* and *miruka* chiefs,



heeding the state call for labour recruitment for sugar estates, although many waited for transport in vain. The whole of the independence period was marked by recruitment by all government functionaries in every village of the district. The exercise continued with vigour. For example, between October 1, 1968 and October 23, 1968, over 3,095 recruits had registered to work in the sugar estates and on April 10, 1969, Lugazi and Kakira sugar factories had recruited 558 labourers.<sup>125</sup> From then recruitment fell.<sup>126</sup> The response was worse in the following years especially because of the poor conditions of work and the meagre remuneration in the estates.<sup>127</sup> From 1968-1987, tea estates recruited about 12,479 workers from Kigezi. The local enterprises that emerged in Kigezi avoided male labour and resorted to exploiting children, whom they could manipulate, overwork and intimidate. Our respondents give some idea of the post-independence labour experience. Of the 629 people who had gone out of the district for wage labour, 451 had gone to work in Buganda and Jinja, 18 to Kilembe, 141 to Ankole, Toro and the rest to other places. A total of 33.5 per cent of our respondents worked for money in Kigezi; 33.5 per cent went out of the district once for wage labour; 23.2 per cent went out twice, and 9.7 per cent more than twice.

A total of 15.5 per cent of our respondents first went out into wage labour before 1950, 11.6 per cent between 1951-1960, 20 per cent between 1961-1970, and 20 per cent after 1971. At least 12.3 per cent went on foot while others went by vehicle. During their absence, 19.4 per cent left their wives in charge of their homes, 23.2 per cent left their fathers in charge of their homes, 17.4 per cent left their mothers while others left relatives and friends in charge. Colonialism thus created a wage labourer who neither subsisted on his wages nor maintained his family on it. He had a home and a piece of land to return to after achieving his target. As this labour was not proletarianised but migrant in nature, and being heavily illiterate and unskilled, there was no basis for it to form trade unions. On return to their villages, they dissolved into the peasantry, lost the status of workers and became small proprietors and producers, while others assumed a new parasitic position.<sup>128</sup>

As a further illustration of this, coffee which covered 150 acres in 1931 covered 143,579 acres in 1970, while land acreage per head fell to 1.8 acres. Tobacco acreage rose from 243 acres (1928) to 1,860 acres (1966). Sorghum, which, with the labour migration policy, changed into a lucrative commodity, increased acreage from 50,000 acres in 1931 to

101,222 acres in 1970. Peas production, which consumed little labour, increased from 25,263 acres (1931) to 46,840 acres (1970) while millet, which is highly labour-intensive and therefore would have deprived the system of labour supply, was rapidly being abandoned. In 1931, it covered 32,758 acres and by 1966 still only covered 33,455 acres (from 'File District Book, Kigezi' and Annual Reports).

The Kigezi Resettlement Officer commended the new resettlement scheme in 1973 thus:

...Is the long awaited relief operation, from lots of burdens caused by overcrowdedness e.g. land disputes resulting into numerous murders, poverty, thefts, divisionism, tax-defaulting and insecurity ... we advise them and convince them to move to Kagadi for better settlement...we have discovered that there are families who are simply not aware of the problems which confront them... not willing to move elsewhere...two married men in Bufumbira county who had no job, no house but had families who were sleeping in somebody's grainstores on hire-term!... were not willing until after serious campaign did we succeed in resettling them in Kagadi.<sup>129</sup>

The situation worsened as the labour officer in Kabale explained 1986:

This exercise was promising and successful, but the inflation and high cost of living came about, the exercise died a natural death. The would-be recruits were no longer willing... to work for inadequate wages, under poor terms and conditions and service... Employers were seriously hit by the high labour turnover... a workman is unable to meet his day-to-day needs from the statutory minimum wage of Shs. 6,000 per month... A kilo of sugar is at Shs. 10,000 and a piece of soap is Shs. 1500... A labourer can no longer work for a target. In the past, a labourer could work with the hope of buying a bicycle...after some two or three 'months' earning. Today...it costs a man the whole of his monthly salary to feed his family for less than four days ... the would-be recruits rather engaged themselves elsewhere they could make money to meet their day-to-day needs.<sup>130</sup>

All these potential workers are now back in the peasantry which is characterised by increased land purchases and land consolidation by a few individuals. Those who have some land lack tools of production or monies to invest in production or trade. It is this peasantry, settling with thousands of unemployed and landless peasants which forms a big labour reservoir for the commercial dairy farms and other enterprises.



*The Effects of Labour Migration*

As well as undermining 'the natural economy' by flooding it with a lot of new consumer and producer commodities, capitalism initiated the commoditisation process into the peasantry and monetised it. By doing so, it halted the independent, historical development of these people, destroyed their self-sufficiency and gradually made them dependent on wage labour as a form of livelihood.

The second effect was that districts lost revenue, both from taxes and other sources like tobacco and cotton. Certain districts were also singled out as labour reservoirs.<sup>131</sup> Many complaints were made in 1957 that often recruits with tax tickets were under 16 years of age and that the dependants who accompanied recruits disappeared after reaching the estates. These entered the wage labour market at an early age but on their own terms having travelled on the expenses of the recruiting agencies.<sup>132</sup>

Massive wage labour migration undermined and disrupted the production process of Kigezi. The 1928 report on the contradiction between the peasants, Church and the State disclosed that, 'tourists and the Protestant mission (25 whites) have in the past expected the Government to supply them with men for head portage for all journeys — that is, by illegal' compulsion of them through their chiefs. The Bakiga are a people who cultivate, women and men together, throughout the day'. The report also noted that insufficiency of cultivable soil, in proportion to density of population, necessitates heavy cultivation all the year round to supply their numerous families.

The 1956 Labour Report noted that as much as 50 per cent of the adult population was away from the district at any one time and that:

In parts of Kigezi District there is a land shortage and a seasonal shortage of food, so the absence of a large number of adults at any one time does help to relieve those situations. In addition it is customary in Kigezi also for the men to stay away from the district for little more than six months at a time. On the other hand the large, although temporary, exodus of people has caused a shortage of manpower in the district and has hampered the implementation of the Productivity Committee's proposals for the intensification of agriculture development in the district.<sup>133</sup>

This was reiterated by the 1957 Annual Report, which noted that 50 per cent was a very high figure 'which may have adverse effect on agricultural development in the district if this continues to increase'.<sup>134</sup> Food production

fell on the shoulders of women and children. They were overworked to maintain the food balance and to meet the new demands. Labour on public projects, restrictions not to work on Sundays and on *barazas* or Monday, and forced contributions for chiefs and visitors, also fell on them. All these undermined both implement production and food production leading to food shortages while the population was increasing. The labour employed in the district depended on home for food, accommodation and other provisions. Some food was being sent to workers outside the district by their families and some of it was now sold to obtain imported commodities. In effect, these workers were subsidising their employers who could not pay them a living wage.

The PCWP succinctly exposed the super-exploitation of employers who 'seemed to take the spirit of self-sacrifice in the individual as inexhaustible, some of whom seemed to expect African unskilled and semi-skilled to work for them, regularly and for long periods, under unnatural conditions of living, which can only be described as miserable'. In default they call urgently on the Protectorate Government to compel the African to do so. The idea that Government can exercise unlimited powers of compulsion is shared apparently by members of certain departments but if Africans cannot be persuaded that some action is right and reasonable, no legal powers of compulsion in the hands of District Officers or Native Administration will be effective'.<sup>135</sup>

Furthermore, there was no replacement of this removed labour in the form of other human labour, animal power, ploughs or tractors. No new methods, technology, seeds or other scientific innovations were introduced to increase productivity. The income this migrant labour earned was neither invested in agriculture nor in any other form of production, but was used to pay annual taxes and other dues, to buy imported goods and alcohol. The brewing of muramba, while contributing revenue to the government in the form of permits for brewing — and licences for alcohol selling — encouraged alcoholism among the peasantry. Ebaara (or bars) mushroomed all over the district. All these boosted revenue for the colonial state, the local employers and the British industrialists who produced alcohol and ensured employment of British workers at reasonable living wages. This resource drainage had a multiplier effect on the British economy and negative effects on the domestic economy. Returnees from wage labour no longer joined families in food production. Instead many formed a new



parasitic, alcoholic group best described by the District Agricultural Officer in 1964:

Men have gone out of the district to seek employment. Those staying at home have, unfortunately, taken to drinking so that little work is being done on the fields. Formerly, there was division of labour between men and women. Men were for clearing land, building and repairing houses, building granaries and carrying harvest produce... Although some men do today carry on with these specified jobs, most of them do not in actual fact do anything. Women... (are) responsible for family up-keep ... grow all the crops ... most of the work has been left to women but there is a good chance for men to return to the old system integrated with the new one where most men do work on their most valuable crops such as coffee, tobacco, tea and some other crops.<sup>136</sup>

To the District Agricultural Officer, the most valuable crops were raw materials for British industries. This new parasitic group, which shunned social responsibilities, depended on the families' produce for taxes and other dues, alcohol, clothes and social demands, such as donations to visitors, weddings and parties. Evidently, what had started as political compulsion gradually developed into economic and social compulsion. In Marx's words, money gradually became a powerful social power in Kigezi that pushed all the people into its service. This process of depriving the local economy of productive labour inevitably undermined the production of implements and crafts as well. Skilled craftsmen and smiths were taken to work for money. Others were faced with the competition from cheaper, durable imported implements and goods.

The whole process weakened the formerly resistant inhabitants and a new group of collaborators was actively created among them. Late tax-payers and tax-defaulters were hunted down as they were always on the run and hid or were imprisoned and fined, all of which disrupted production. Many of those who had gone outside the district for labour contracted various diseases resulting from congestion, environmental changes, and terrible working conditions, while others died of accidents, particularly in the mines. Similarly, with the establishment of colonial rule and the emergence of urban life and wage labour, capitalism introduced prostitution. The DC reported with consternation in 1923:

Of late more and more prostitutes, nearly all infected with venereal disease, have been finding their way to Kabale. A general clearance was necessary and accordingly Mr. McGregor took action with the result that very few remain, and it is hoped that these will be rounded up shortly.

He envisaged a crisis from labour migration:

It is felt that the advent of the new Labour Department will bring a number of fresh and complex problems to the administration of the district in the near future. The most serious is the introduction of venereal disease on a fairly extensive scale, which is bound to come unless adequate and strict measures are taken at once. The district is comparatively free of venereal disease at present, about 15 per cent being infected.<sup>137</sup>

This crisis had worsened by 1928:

In constant examination throughout the district of large groups of sick people ... one is struck by the very serious and obvious increase in syphilis in the past eight years... This is perhaps because the price of effective treatment is far beyond the reach of all but an infinitesimal section of the population. Apart from the pathetic cases of individual suffering, the progressive and avoidable destruction of the health and physique of one of the finest races of Africa is really a heartbreaking thing to have to witness.<sup>138</sup>

The DC was concerned that, 'there is an appreciable loss of revenue to the British Government in tax, and to the native government in labour, by curable incapacitation owing to venereal disease'.<sup>139</sup> By 1959, 2.97 per cent of the cases admitted in hospitals were suffering from venereal diseases.<sup>140</sup> This problem of prostitution has not been eliminated as it is a product of capitalism and the problem of venereal disease has been compounded by AIDS. The eradication of prostitution means addressing the social-economic and political conditions that gave rise to it, and which continue to produce it.

Numerous imported diseases confronted the district, for which local medicinemen had no cure. This called for the importation of medicine, which meant the dependence of peasants on the colonial system for modern treatment in the new hospitals for diseases such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, respiratory diseases, scabies and malaria after the opening up of the district. 'It is [malaria] comparatively new to the district, as the local native apparently has not yet developed the enlarged spleen'.<sup>141</sup> Long periods of separation due to labour migration caused hardships, family breakages, infidelity and delayed marriages. The outcry by 1960 that massive wage labour migration disrupted family life (but which the Lwamafa sub-committee was at pains to dismiss) had been raised already by Bishop Tucker:



I have no doubt in my own mind that the population of the country is decreasing and that that decrease is due not altogether to a low birth-rate or a high death rate although there are no doubt factors to be taken into consideration, but to the amount of forced labour created from the people. It is driving large numbers of young men from the country. The marriage rate has gone down nearly 50 per cent within the last three or four years. Young men and women will not marry simply because marriage means settlement on the land and a life of endless toil in consequence.<sup>142</sup>

Animal husbandry, one of the main occupations of the peasants, was undermined. Cattle, formerly the accepted form of bridewealth, were gradually replaced by money; weddings and all other social functions like parties now demanded money, which meant continued dependence on wage labour. From our research, 19 per cent of our respondents first went out into wage labour for dowry, 14 per cent for tax, 26 per cent for money to buy land and livestock, 24 per cent for money to sustain their families and 17 per cent for school fees and clothes.

### Sources of Capital in Kigezi

If, as we have seen in the previous section, the colonial state actively carried out a policy of making Kigezi into a labour reservoir, with no positive economic policy for the area, what then was the source of these commercial dairy farms? After World War II, the colonial state found it necessary to create an indigenous propertied class in Uganda which would protect British interests. The plan of class creation had originally been conceived in 1921<sup>143</sup> following recommendations of the conference of Western Province administrators in August 1921. This plan advanced 'the question of getting into close touch with younger and more educated natives with a view to giving them some vent for their aspirations and preventing them by practical measures from becoming revolutionary or disloyal'. It urged the colonial state to embark on 'the establishment of a club or a reading room in each station for the use of native staff and educated chiefs. The idea is to enable the natives to have a place where they can meet to pass their spare time, and by providing papers and suitable literature to endeavour to curb those ideas which are at present making headway in the country'.<sup>144</sup>

After the war, some Africans tried their luck in trade. The colonial state realised the need to create conditions for some of these to compete and exist, particularly in agriculture. At the eve of Uganda's independence, the colonial policy aimed at:

Developing a class of yeoman farmers as the spearhead of agricultural development. In pursuance of this policy an Agricultural Subsidy Scheme and a Progressive Farmers Loan Scheme were brought into operation. The object of the subsidy scheme is to make available to as many progressive and emergent farmers as possible implements and equipment they need and at a price they can afford... The Progressive Farmers Loan Scheme is designed to provide credit for farmers who agree to carry out improved agricultural practices. Credit worthiness is assessed on the character, integrity and the farming ability of the individual farmer. The initial response to the two schemes, which are in fact complementary, has been very encouraging... Where possible, enclosure of land was encouraged and in Kigezi District where the development is most advanced, 99 holdings were enclosed with five fences and a further 173 partially enclosed.<sup>145</sup>

In 1962 the Agricultural Annual Report stated that:

Progressive farmers and their sons received priority on district farm institute courses and demonstrations ... on their farms'. 'The Agricultural Subsidy Scheme and the Progressive Farmers Loan Scheme continued during the year... to provide credit for farmers who are prepared to help themselves and who are willing to listen to and put into practice the advice given to them by the department. Credit-worthiness is assessed on character, integrity and the farming ability of the individual farmer, together with the productive capacity of his farm and the improved farming practices being introduced.

Technical education schemes were implemented by the Veterinary Department using 'extremely useful propaganda' for animal husbandry. These included encouraging construction of shelters for all livestock, care and supervision of cattle as opposed to entrusting cattle to children, controlled grazing including the pasturing of cattle on resting leys, culling by the slaughter of unproductive cattle and low grade stock and sale of bulls, improved hoeing places and the proper use of manure.<sup>146</sup> They carried out these with the co-operation of chiefs and stock owners and the Director of Veterinary Services recommended in 1949 that Kabale cattle 'were the best he had seen in the country'.<sup>147</sup> The following year:

A Kabale stock farmers' association was formed under the chairmanship of a veterinary assistant who gives instruction and holds discussions on animal husbandry and reads in the vernacular extracts from English farming books and periodicals.<sup>148</sup>



This veterinary assistant, with other enlightened young men, mobilised all men of their Basigi lineage in Bubare subcounty to form the Kasigi Co-operative Society in 1950. Membership was open to all Basigi tax-payers and the minimum annual subscription was one shilling. Bubare is mainly populated by Basigi people. While 2,861 men paid taxes in Bubare in 1951, the number had risen to 3,237 tax payers by 1955, an increase of 13.14 per cent. Most of these were members of the Co-operative Society<sup>149</sup> who mobilised others on the theme of Basigi development through animal husbandry, commerce and education. Basigi lineage formed the basis for unity and when Batuma emerged chairman, the colonial state expressed great optimism.

The Kasigi Co-operative Society, which aimed at a closed, narrow solidarity as in pre-colonial times, however, failed to achieve its objectives. Its leadership invested the funds into personal ventures, later emerging as 'progressive farmers'. While Basigi peasants had high hopes in this enlightened leadership, due to illiteracy and ignorance of the new capital accumulation relations, they did not know how to demand accountability from this leadership. The result was that while the leadership grew into powerful industrious businessmen, the Kasigi Association crumbled.<sup>150</sup> Having accumulated profits from commerce, Batuma and the other propertied men, including his brothers-in-law and relatives formed Kigezi African Wholesale (KAW). As the enterprise developed, however, he phased the members out and gained control over it.

KAW engaged in importing and exporting, and other profitable ventures like transport, internal trade, charcoal burning, brick-making. Its heyday came with the expulsion of the Asians migrant community in 1972 when Batuma made a great leap in the commercial sector. Taking advantage of the prevailing economic crises, he increased his efficiency in all these ventures, expanded and diversified production. For instance, KAW earned over Shs. 4 million from the Kigezi District Administration in the six years between September 1, 1969 and October 30, 1978.<sup>151</sup> He invested part of this in dairy farming. To maximise marginalisation of labour in these ventures, he created and accentuated Kasigism. As an ideology, this emphasised brotherhood of all Basigi lineage members, the need to co-operate, and the need to consider any Musigi's property as Basigi property. With this, he was able to give them verbal promises for future help.<sup>152</sup>

The workers learnt of the new power relations within KAW when Batuma began sacking any worker whom he suspected of cheating him. 'A worker who improved his family's dressing, feeding, shelter, or who purchased lands would lose his job'. There was no assistance for anyone who landed into problems, and anyone who questioned Batuma's policies or actions was immediately sacked or was transferred to Kampala.

Second, KAW workers were bound to have shares in KAW and to bank all their savings there. They were not expected to own a bank account elsewhere, although their savings never earned them any interest and no staff were allowed to question this. This tied the employees to Batuma and increased their loyalty and his capital. At the same time, these workers had an illusion of ownership, protected the enterprise from any dangers and sabotage, worked harder and could not rebel. These factors undermined any basis for their unity and struggle against exploitation. The new class that Batuma represented exploited the peasants' low level of consciousness and illiteracy by employing them at low wages with poor terms of service. It intensified this parochial and sectarian lineage syndrome to exploit both labour and other resources while raising unfulfillable hopes. This was a cover-up to grab their land and swamps by the State which it redistributed. Some land was bought cheaply or the owners were manipulated.

### *The Resettlement Scheme*

With the implementation of a population migration policy, land acquisition took various forms. While some resettlers gave away their land, others sold it cheaply to individuals. Buyers included chiefs and government functionaries, businessmen and traders. Land, formerly a family/communal property, gradually became an important commodity. Within 17 years of this scheme, over 80,000 people had resettled elsewhere. Of these, over 47,530 were assisted by the government. The government embarked on a second scheme from 1973 to 1979, which resettled over 11,580 people, of whom over 4446 had been forced back from Tanzania. Thousands of people have continued migrating.<sup>153</sup>

Resettlers got larger and better free farm land and earned incomes for reinvestment. They also produced a surplus for marketing. Some of the resettlers emerged into important traders, while others invested in transport and commercial farming as their outlook widened. It helped them to overcome the barriers of lineage and Bukigism. The indigenous people



could now send their children to school and meet medical bills. On the whole, their standard of living improved greatly.

The chiefs who approved the Resettlement Scheme won the colonial government's confidence for localising the project by rubber-stamping it. In fact, Mukombe was recommended to the Chief Secretary for the silver gilt King's Medal for Native Chiefs in 1947.

Mr Mukombe's record has been consistently excellent throughout his long service, it shows him to be a wise counsellor, an able and intelligent man whose devotion and loyalty to his people and the Government have been exceptional. Latterly he has been largely instrumental in obtaining additional land for pyrethrum growing and in fostering resettlement owing to his influence with his people.<sup>154</sup> Such chiefs won popularity among the peasants and the land which they vacated was either left to relatives and friends or bought by those left behind. This helped the latter to incorporate and expand their land holdings and increase both production and productivity.

Resettlement facilitated the commoditisation of land and increased money circulation. Chiefs and other highly placed functionaries were better placed to know who was leaving and thus which good land was falling vacant. They approached the resettlers quietly and bought the land and livestock cheaply without attracting competition. They were able to manipulate resettlers to undersell their land on the grounds that they were going to be given government land, or to leave it under their care since they were going to get free land, free transport, free food, tax-exemption and accommodation at the beginning, plus a helper. Worse happened to cattle. They were not allowed to be taken to the new areas and those who managed to sell them did so. Others left them in care of friends—kuhereka. Some lost the cattle or land they had left with their friends and relatives. The cattle reproduced but the settlers on return would be told false stories. All this quickened the commoditisation process of land and other property and the intensity of capital penetration and accumulation. Gradually, the peasants began selling land and livestock to meet their day-to-day needs, including alcohol. With the breaking up of society's cohesion, individuals were able to take over communal lands and swamps with or without the blessing of the State.

Under these circumstances, colonialism was seen as providing solutions to people's problems. To implement the resettlement, new jobs were created.

The stayers who occupied the vacated lands embarked on commodity and food production when the colonial state launched the land consolidation scheme in the whole country.

While, ideally, this scheme would have caused a fall in the labour supply and a rise in wages, the reverse became true. It grew into a reservoir for cheap labour, which various factors contributed to. The intensification of land and livestock sales to the new propertied class, to meet political, economic and social demands, catalysed the impoverishment of the peasants.<sup>155</sup>

The county chief, Rubanda, sent Batuma Shs. 8,700 which he had recovered from six of the sellers and promised to retrieve the rest of the money and send it to him. He advised Batuma 'to fill in your form for the Government, so that the Land Committee will recommend you in using the land, when it will come to inspect the swamp'.<sup>156</sup> While employment avenues for labour outside the district had diminished, they did not exist in the district. Yet the population was increasing while land was diminishing. All other avenues like crafts, smithing, and pottery had already been destroyed and the continued inflow of labour from Rwanda and Zaire also contributed to this crisis. Furthermore, massive illiteracy and ignorance of workers was another major problem.

### **The Swamp Reclamation Process**

To understand this phenomenon, it is important to review a few other sources of capital in Kabale. Commercial dairy farming in Kabale District emerged from a swamp reclamation project which began in 1942. Like the two migratory policies that followed four years later, it aimed at providing more arable land to increase food production. Peasants resisted this scheme.<sup>157</sup> While in 1950 there were no capital assets and land could not be mortgaged, it was noted in 1954 that communal ownership of all grazing with continued cultivation of this grazing land was giving way to restrictions on individuals' flocks. In due course, the emerging propertied class acquired acres of swamp land through competition, land grabbing and distribution, facilitated by the employment of cheap labour from incoming refugees. This process coincided with the political crises in Rwanda.

While it is true that this unplanned land reclamation process increased the amount of arable land available and food supply at the market in short run, it did not alleviate the food and land problem for the majority.



This was because land fell into the hands of the new propertied class, which employed a lot of cheap labour — both local and from outside — to clear the swamp and cultivate it for food production and marketing. In this process, if a peasant tried to clear a part of these swamps, the emerging swamp developers would send their workers to clear the whole swamp around him, making his cleared land part of theirs. He would have no basis to claim this land. Such a peasant would go home frustrated, defeated and annoyed by these labourers whom he viewed as the enemy. The employer would not be blamed as the main problem. Lineage ideology played a significant role in blinding these peasants and workers from seeing the new socio-economic changes that their society was undergoing.

Due to bitter popular resistances, the state was forced to reserve some swamps for communal use.<sup>158</sup> Rubaya students supported the peasants in challenging the state to stop depriving peasants of their swamp and allocating it to a few individuals.<sup>159</sup> In 1983 Hamurwa peasants destroyed Batuma's farm. Realising their financial weaknesses, Bubare peasants united and formed the Kijuguta Batungi Kweterana Co-operative in the early 1970s. Their communal land was in the process of being taken away but after registering their Co-operative, they forcefully re-possessed their land. However, they have failed to develop it, partly due to financial, technical and managerial limitations and a lack of commitment.

One of the major problems of swamp reclamation was environmental degradation: 'The swamp belongs to the Government and it is Government's wish to conserve nature and correct the ecological imbalance' (File No. MIS 12/5 'Miscellaneous Land Disputes' 1984. The DC Kabale, in his letter of 11/3/1984 to the sub-county chief Bubare on Karweru Swamp, Bwindi). Researchers have discovered an acidification crisis threatening production of pulses and bananas in the area due to indifferent, unscientific swamp reclamation (The New Vision, December 12, 1987). Environmental acidification is caused by the unplanned massive drainage of swamps, which activates fast decomposition of the organic matter with rapid chemical changes. Hydrogen sulphide gas in the swampy water combines with the oxygen and produces sulphuric acid. Acidity and alkalinity of a substance are measured in PH (Puissance Hydrogen). The higher the logarithm of hydrogen iron concentration, the lower the PH, the higher is the acidity and the lower the alkalinity. On the other hand, the lower the logarithm of hydrogen iron concentration, the higher the PH, the lower the acidity

and the higher the alkalinity. The PH is neutral at 7, where acidity equals alkalinity. As it falls towards zero, the alkalinity is falling while the acidity is increasing. As it increases towards 14, the acidity decreases while the alkalinity increases. The ideal PH acid/alkaline balance for crops is between 5.5 to 5.8. With Amin's rule, the communal swamps were distributed officially to this new class through the Land Board. To concretise this, Batuma's four applications were granted land in four years, while numerous applications were rejected.<sup>160</sup> The acquired land was reclaimed for cereals, potatoes, vegetables and legumes. This increased food supply for sale in the short run. As an illustration, Batuma supplied an average of 1,820 kg of vegetables, 217 sacks of potatoes per week to six institutions in the 1974-75 harvest season.<sup>161</sup>

This class gradually transformed the land into commercial dairy farms. The animal husbandry and pasture sowing process had been introduced in Kigezi around 1956,<sup>162</sup> followed by paddocking and rotational grazing. Though no exotic cattle were introduced in Kigezi by 1964, it was noted that 'local progressive farmers' had started improving pastures by fencing their land and having a system of controlled grazing, unlike the peasantry which had no control of stocking rate. As a result there was very little land left for grazing in South Kigezi. In 1970, Musaazi, Chairman of the Uganda Land Commission, noted a serious new socio-economic problem:

For the whole of 12 miles from Kabale to Hamurwa he saw big farmers, the well-to-do people, how they had enclosed larger pieces of land for cattle-rearing and he visualised from records the complaints he had received from individuals who were turned (sic) out or deprived of the use of that swamp...[He] said it was a pity for the swamp to be used by a few individuals instead of being used communally by all those who can come forward and have a small holding.<sup>163</sup>

Private farms sprang up with indigenous cattle. With state help in the form of technical assistance, loans, subsidies, and drugs, exotic cattle were imported from Kenya. This process reached its climax during Amin's rule. By 1980, there were 114 private farms with 3523 head of cattle of which 1134 were indigenous. The district cattle population was 68,770, giving a 5 per cent cattle population on individual private farms. By 1984, there were 131 private farms with 3340 cattle, of which 403 were indigenous.<sup>164</sup>



### *Commoditisation of Land*

As the 1950 colonial plan 'for a reorientation of land tenure systems to provide for the consolidation of individual holdings... change in the method of land inheritance and for the acceptance of claims of primogeniture to avoid fragmentation and subdivision of land...'<sup>165</sup> began to bear fruit, this new class thirsted for more land. Realising this danger, many peasants refused to sell their land. Faced with this new hostile situation, the new class began using land-buying agents who lured peasants into selling the needed land. This was confirmed by the field research I carried out in Kibiito, Toro, where I interviewed 50 respondents who had resettled there from Kigezi. At the same time, the gospel of resettlement as one of the solutions to over-population in Kigezi was being preached by the state functionaries, resettlement agents, the mass media, the Church, schools and the university.

The hired land buyers would buy land and then transfer ownership on payment of a commission.<sup>166</sup> Kitaryeba, one of Batuma's buying agents, lured many peasants to sell their land. They soon realised the power he represented and they stopped selling their land. Peasants reprimanded him when he sold his land and he went to stay at Batuma's Highland Hotel as a worker. He is said to have run mad and died miserably — most likely due to guilt-consciousness, loneliness and psychological torture. Those who refused to sell their land were forced, through political or economic manipulation, to do so. For example, if a peasant's land lay between newly-bought land, the new owner would fence his land and deny the peasant access to his land. Since it would be illegal to break his fence, this would force the peasant into selling it at low prices.<sup>167</sup> In some cases, land would be taken freely. This propertied class came to the fore with Idi Amin's 1972 Economic War. As shown earlier, it became the beneficiary as it replaced the expelled Asians in commerce and trade, and took over their property, merchandise and business-premises.<sup>168</sup> With time, this Mafutamingi class formed a hegemony. No wonder, therefore, that these new commercial dairy farms belong to this class. It took control of internal trade and thrived on magendo — smuggling. Let us illustrate this development drawing from Batuma's progress.

By 1970, Batuma was still competing with peasants in local food supply to schools and institutions. That year he eliminated peasants from the potato market at Kigezi College by winning a tender to supply

foodstuffs. Marx's assertion that 'A capitalist always kills many' was witnessed here. He got a reliable market for his swamp potatoes and also influenced the administration to raise the price of potatoes from ten to fifteen cents a kilo.

Vegetable production in Kigezi was doing well. As an example, in 1956 450 acres were planted, valued at Shs. 900. In 1962, 515 acres had been planted, valued at Shs. 11456.<sup>169</sup> Kigezi Vegetable Growers Co-operative Union had a monopoly on marketing these vegetables. It also monopolised the selling of seeds and other inputs for vegetable production. In January 1961, the colonial state had posted a Co-operative Officer and two assistants to Kigezi for the first time to open up the work of the department, to set up societies to take over the vegetable industry from Kigezi industries and to form societies and a union to take over the tobacco industry.<sup>170</sup> The Vegetable Growers Co-operative Society Ltd, was the first co-operative society to be registered. In 10 months, it handled vegetables worth Shs. 8,000.<sup>171</sup>

Exploiting this monopoly position, it tended to maintain low producer prices, regardless of the high market prices in Kampala and Entebbe. It never considered the production costs incurred by the producer and retained a lot of money to pay the union's running in form of salaries, transport costs, and rent. It gave annual dividends to its growers depending on how much each had sold and on the amount of profit the society made. The rest was kept to cushion the union in crisis. When the union was invaded by mismanagement, inefficiency and corruption, traders rushed to replace the union.

These new traders outcompeted the union. They bought the growers' produce directly from the fields, saving them the burden of carrying a few kilos of their produce miles away to the co-operative building on a fixed day of the week. This saved the produce from rotting in the fields. This shift from monopoly to competition of buyers opened room for bargaining for higher prices by peasants who were paid directly, unlike the union which sometimes kept the growers' money for weeks. Again unlike the union, which rejected vegetables of non-members, these traders bought all vegetables and other peasants' produce. They bought it wholesale, unlike the union which graded and rejected growers' vegetables without any criterion. The heavy production costs in form of labour, portage and other production inputs that the union had never considered, were



now covered by these traders who reached the producer with their own transport.

With this dependable market, a stable source of revenue and increasing profits, more land was put under vegetable production. Peasants could now make production decisions that were profitable. Batuma and Mutagaramba were among these traders. After making a lot of profits, Batuma left the trade to invest in more lucrative, durable and reliable investments including construction. Being in the brickmaking industry, he formed the Batuma Construction Company. He won many government construction contracts, none of which have ever been completed. The most profitable contract he won was for constructing Kabale TTC from 1972.<sup>172</sup>

### *The Results of Dairy Farming*

After the introduction of private farms and exotic cattle for commercial purposes, new methods of animal husbandry were introduced. These included pasture growing, paddocking and rotational grazing, which meant rational utilisation of pastures and feeds, scientific methods in pest and tick control, milking, and milk-preservation. This was a qualitative change from the traditional, backward, conservative and unplanned animal husbandry. This new form increased efficiency and dairy industry output in terms of meat, milk and other animal products. In 1959, when livestock was still fairly-distributed, there was a total of 12,814 head of cattle. By 1984, it had risen to 19,185 head of cattle. Unlike formerly, when cattle were for household subsistence, these new commercial dairy farms produced dairy and other animal products for sale in towns, hotels, and institutions. For instance in 1974-75, Batuma supplied an average of 1,631 litres of milk to six institutions weekly. Considering milk supply of various dairy farms in the area, a total of 5,079,852 litres was recorded at the dairy centre, Kabale, from 1980 to 1987. Of this, 235,250 litres or 4.6 per cent was poured away. This was mainly because of high prices, milk's perishability, absence of cooling facilities, storage, packaging and conversion into other by-products.<sup>173</sup> Today, Kabale sends a truck full of milk to Kampala city every day.

The commercial dairy farms provided employment opportunities to unskilled labourers. They also put land to maximum use. However, dairy farming, compared with crop husbandry, gradually reduced dependence on labour after initial investments, since grass harvesting did not consume

too much labour. This process was a great leap forward. The farms now became securities for bank loans. Today, big commercial dairy farms under individual ownership, groups and institutions like churches, schools and government, exist in the area. This new process, however, had negative consequences on peasant livestock holding. The former communal grazing areas were gradually privatised. Meanwhile sheep and goat rearing fell, with the goat population dropping from 172,873 head in 1936 to 62,436 head in 1984. The sheep population fell from 140,000 head (1931) to 38,982 head in 1984.<sup>174</sup> Importation of exotic cattle demanded exclusion of local cattle breeds, sheep and goats, unlike previously where they all grazed together using the same labour. However, this fall cannot be attributed solely to this process. As already shown, the political, and socio-economic demands on the population had initiated and increased their sales. Smuggling of livestock to other countries had worsened as economic crises increased in Uganda.

This process had adverse socio-economic and environmental consequences.<sup>175</sup> Poor peasants could not afford this new form of cattle rearing due to the heavy capital inputs and technical skills needed. The lack of land, loans and state connections is best illustrated by the Bubare Dairy Farmers who said in 1981:

Some of the peasants in your sub-county have been persistently and illegally trespassing and grazing on our farms with their herds of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. These animals are known not to have been treated for ticks and other pests and diseases. Therefore our treated and well cared for animals on our farms are being seriously threatened by invasion of diseases from their herds of animals. Worse still, there are some people...who are trespassing our farms with large herds of pigs...[are] a great danger to our farms!<sup>176</sup>

### *Conditions of Labour in the Area*

All types of unskilled labourers are employed in this area—men, women, and children, the aged, the destitute and the disabled. As will be shown in this section, child and women labourers are the most exploited, using pre-capitalist relations. From pre-colonial times, work among Bakiga began in early childhood. Children, like women, worked harder than men without direct complaints or too many questions. The same applied to the very old people.<sup>177</sup> Employers exploit this cultural background. They present a false picture of guardians which helps in blinding the workers from



developing a clear distinction between the new capitalist relations and the old socio-economic relations.

Some distinction should be made between the two forms of production. The pre-capitalist form of production was for household consumption. Differentiation into class structures had not developed. Family heads controlled this process but they, too, had prescribed work to carry out. In this mode of production, producers had control over their social product. They had no external demands and labour was not for hiring out for wages. The present work structure is, however, capitalistic. The employer assumes the air and role of the elder and workers work under such an illusion. While production is social, appropriation is private. To understand the labour question in this area, we shall use Batuma's farms, which employ all types of unskilled labour. Through this, we shall see Marx's dictum that 'If money ... comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on the cheek, capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt'.<sup>178</sup>

#### *Child Labour (Beyi Dondoro)*

Child wage labour has been a common practice in Uganda since the beginning of colonialism. When the labour migration policy was instituted women and children left behind worked harder and for longer hours to replace male labourers in food and commodities production. The new propertied class has depended heavily on these children in cultivation, construction, and farm construction. The District Labour Officer protested to Batuma in 1981:

You are still continuing to employ children at Kabale Teacher Training College, Highland Hotel and Bubare, contrary to sections 49 and 50 of the Employment Decree Number 4 of 1975... there is a countrywide problem of shortage of labour (sic!) but you cannot solve this problem by employing very young boys. I would wish to take legal proceedings against you, but this is not the best course to be taken against an employer like you ... You must give equity if you want equity. Neither under-employment nor unemployment can be answered by the way it does not deserve. I am only allowing you to dismiss these young boys within a month.<sup>179</sup>

As shown earlier, there was no labour shortage resulting from the resettlement scheme. While the scheme had been expected to avail more arable land to the population, we witness a continuous increase of

unemployed, landless peasants in the area. Commoditisation of land and the intensifying poverty concentrated more land in fewer and fewer hands. There were also other marked developments. It was seen earlier that men no longer went outside the district for employment because of miserable wages and poor working conditions. Many of them also refused to work under exploitation conditions in their home district, and there were also fewer employment opportunities for them. Many have become lazy and consume too much alcohol. They have developed contempt for both manual work and wage labour. With these developments, they have accentuated and sharpened male chauvinism, lording it on their families.

While there are some who are scared by the miserable wages, others work at whatever wages are offered so that the whole family may engage in wage labour for food, drinks, second-hand clothes and a few other needs. Another category hires itself out to collect beer from Ankole on bicycles while yet another category works in Rwanda, where remuneration is attractive, paid in francs and is convertible into dollars. This type includes skilled labour such as masons and carpenters. The last category is hired for carrying smuggled goods across the border into Rwanda and Zaire.<sup>180</sup> The children come from different backgrounds, areas and counties. Some are orphans, or school dropouts.<sup>181</sup> Some reduce maintenance and management costs by staying at home. These children tend to think that they are favoured to secure employment before the tax-payment age — some being only about six years old. When I inquired about the ages of the four boys, the farm manager at Ihanga replied defensively that they were *empa mushoro* (tax payers). This implied that employers avoid being sued for child employment by procuring tax tickets for children workers. This forms a basis for creating patron-client relationship.

Employers prefer employing women and children because they are very cheap, hard working, active, easy to model and administer. They work for longer hours, under miserable conditions which men would reject. They are very submissive and tend to fear their employers due to cultural influence, age, and their frustrating, oppressive individual circumstances and past histories. Children have fewer social, economic and political demands than the rest. Theirs are mainly related to personal and family demands. They tend to develop some attachment to the farms and therefore stay on longer with no immediate vision of leaving. Employers take advantage of this to cram them into poor rooms and give them hardly any food. In my field research, the black and sour posho that the workers



generously shared with me, with a relish of smoked calf beef, had been cooked communally.

Child labour is preferred by employers as it is incapable of demanding its rights — a living wage, good working and living conditions, holidays and leave, protective working clothes like overalls, coats, boots and warming drinks like coffee, tea and milk as they work in very cold conditions, including milking at night and tending cattle.<sup>182</sup> They also tend to fear loss of their jobs to the unemployed masses in the area. In cases of extreme injustice like non-wage payment, they cannot organise a strike owing to these weaknesses, ignorance and lack of organisation.

During this research, Batuma's main farm at Bubare employed over 25 children under a headman who has been working on the farm since it was started. I discovered that they were paid an average monthly wage of 200 shillings. The farm provides a pseudo life for them. As will be seen later, this farm has mounted a massive employment of destitute and desperate women workers. Their existence on the farm creates a life which is advantageous to the employer. As female and male workers socialise on the farm, this stabilises the labour supply and its capacity, checks labour turn-overs, labour resistances of any form, etc. After work, even children workers frequent ebaara and women's quarters to socialise. Some of these have assumed the role of husbands. The farm clerk described farm life as that of 'womanising and drinking'. The workers are trapped victims of this underdeveloped capitalist system and they have become adults in their childhood, both in outlook and practice.

Officially, farm work is carried out from 7.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. and while some of these children go home after work, others work overtime. Those who stay on the farm either work overtime or milk cows in the 4.00 p.m. to 3.00 a.m. session while others attend to cattle, look after calves, clean sheds and do other unspecified farm jobs, some of which are not remunerated. Farm work includes heavy duties like carrying heavy logs for paddocking. Their foremen are domineering, oppressive and tend to overwork them.<sup>183</sup> This has led these workers to develop a false consciousness that these foremen are the oppressors and exploiters. For instance, some of Batuma's workers see him as a generous and kind man. This conception has been strengthened by his practice of kubahagira — offering money for muramba beer as an incentive to a group of workers he finds executing a difficult task.

Batuma sometimes invites his workers to his residence for wine, wine dregs and meat. This provides occasion for workers to meet their employer and talk in a relaxed atmosphere. This gesture creates and strengthens the worker-employer relationship which is positive for the employer while undermining any basis for workers' unity. That is one of the reasons why the workers blame the foremen and Batuma's sons. These workers have complained that Batuma was willing to increase their wages but was restrained by his sons. The social meetings also provide occasions for the male workers to meet and socialise with the women workers in a free and relaxed atmosphere. Dates are fixed and deals are struck. All these are for the benefit of the farm. This, however, increases the risks of spreading venereal diseases, especially AIDS.

The main dish for child labourers on the farms is black and sour posho and weevil-bored beans. No child is given any free milk and he is not allowed to buy it. The children share cramped accommodation with adults in flea-infested and doorless huts.

### *Women Wage Workers (Masikini Hayachoke)*

More women workers are also joining Batuma's farm workforce. This is a result of a weak economy in which inflation has eroded the purchasing power of the shilling. Many male labourers, unable to make ends meet, have decided to leave farm work while others have been absent from work for too long or they have worked slowly, which has threatened the output of the farms. So management has resorted to hire especially desperate, destitute and homeless women as a move to forestall the labour crisis.

Poor women are a captive labour market. Despite heavy responsibilities on their shoulders, they lack any means of livelihood other than their labour. Being market dependent, they are forced into wage labour for whatever wage, terms and conditions of work thrust on them. Most of the women are between 25-40 years of age. Their social background is very interesting. Some are widows, others are divorcees, or those who were chased away by male relatives in revenge for having been deprived of bridewealth through pre-marital births. Others are runaways, or concubines who wanted some privacy. Some are forced to farming after failing to marry or after having no other means of livelihood, no home, while others have returned from where they had gone to resettle. There are others who are forced into wage labour with their whole families by the prevalent abject poverty.



There is an increasing inflow of women workers into these enterprises, replacing the men workers. As a result, during this study, these women wage workers were crowded in two of the three workers' quarters that formerly housed male workers. One of the quarters with 12 small rooms accommodated 20 women workers, while the second one accommodated nine women workers and two men. After struggling unsuccessfully against these socio-economic evils most of their lives, the women seem to have taken a defeatist and desperate attitude to these exploitative, oppressive conditions. As an example, some women workers on Batuma's farm said that they would work willingly for 50 shillings a month as long as he provided them with shelter and permission to work overtime. It was learnt that they worked 192 monthly hours for an average monthly wage of 230 shillings, giving an hourly average income of one shilling and ninety five cents. In the surrounding peasantry, the daily wage rate was 88 shillings, giving an hourly average income of 12 shillings. This gave a difference of 10 shillings and 5 cents hourly average income between the two forms of employment.<sup>184</sup>

They work overtime from 3.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. in communal labour called *omuganda*, a term borrowed from Rwanda. They then do another piece of overtime called *masikini hayichoki* — that beggars can never get tired. Those working in the wine press may work up to 8.00 p.m. These women workers were eager to do both pieces of overtime because they were paid five shillings for every hour overtime, and it was paid on a daily basis to enable them buy some food. To ensure maximum exploitation through this working scheme, no one could work overtime if she had not worked the morning hours. Most women worked an average of 12 hours a day, including Sundays. This is an oppressive, exploitative situation.

Although the women worked all these hours with the aim to cover food and other few expenses, this money could not cover these costs, although they worked a 248-hour month for 710 shillings which included Sunday overtime. Let us illustrate this. Let us assume that a woman worker stays alone and she eats beans and sweet potatoes alone. We assume that she eats 15 kg of beans and eight-and-a-half baskets of potatoes a month. During November-January, 1987-88, a bunch of bananas cost between Shs. 250-300, a kilo of beans Shs. 60-70, a kilo of peas Shs. 90 and a basket of sweet potatoes was at Shs. 150. Kigezi potatoes today cost Shs. 250-300 a basket, a dress costs Shs. 4,000, a shirt costs Shs. 2,500, and

a pair of trousers costs Shs. 4,000. Based on these prices, the minimum she can pay for beans a month is Shs. 900 and Shs. 1,275 for potatoes, totalling to Shs. 2175. From her total income of Shs. 710, she remains in a food deficit of Shs. 1465. The women cannot supplement these miserable wages with vendoring a few commodities or brewing alcohol due to lack of initial capital, time for brewing and money for the prohibitive state dues like brewing permits and alcohol selling licences.

### *How Do They Survive?*

It is important to understand how the women survive in this area, which is also endemic with massive smuggling. First, the farm provided them with lunch whenever they went to work. They only prepared provisions for their children who were not entitled to farm food. Whoever missed work, whether sick or not, would miss this lunch. In many cases, those who missed it skipped eating the whole day. Second, some of them got access to wine and wine dregs on brewing days and muramba dregs. These women workers had developed a communal habit of sharing this wine at their quarters. It was also learnt that on rare occasions the farm offered them some beans and posho which they described as only fit for pigs' consumption. They also assisted each other with salt, paraffin, local tobacco, nicknamed *saka*, and smoking pipes. Some of them had developed the uncanny skill and courage to steal wood and charcoal from the brewery without being caught.

Without a living wage, coupled with acute inflation and endemic smuggling, intensified by food marketing and transportation to various parts of the country which keeps food prices skyrocketing, these women get trapped in debt. To offset the debts, they miss farm work and go to work for food sellers or other employers in the neighbourhood, either on daily rates or piece rates. They sometimes work for food or get it free from the peasantry, and gather wild green vegetables and mushrooms from the surrounding neighbourhood. Some employers lend land to these workers. Other workers borrow land from the peasantry, which they work during their spare time. This land lending is advantageous to the employers. Workers grow food on it. Like other ways of looking for food, they subsidise the employers, who are supposed to pay a living wage to labourers for it to reproduce itself. As food growing takes months, these women tend to be rooted to these enterprises, developing certain attachments which become hard to overcome with time. Some women said they were willing



to continue working even if their employer did not pay them wages so long as he gave them accommodation and land for food production.

Such a policy creates a new type of relationship between employer and employee which undermines any workers' common platform for unity and struggle. Such workers cannot risk any struggle — passive or militant — against their employer or do anything that will endanger their relationship, as he will dismiss them before their crops are ready for harvest. This would cause them loss of employment, land, crops and accommodation. Individual workers are, therefore, forced to look for individual solutions to social problems.

Wage labour seems to be the most hard hit, most exploited and oppressed in these enterprises. Many of these women, faced with survival problems and failing to offset the increasing debt crisis, have resorted to supplementing it with prostitution. From our study, this was not out of habit but basically out of necessity to make ends meet but it was another form of subsidising the employers. Through this means, women workers are able to earn extra shillings which helps to keep them alive and productive. Second, it is mainly the male workers on these enterprises who make use of them. This creates a complete social life at the workplace. As such, men who left their wives behind have no hurry to rush home as they have substitutes. The young boys get initiated into adult sexual life at an early age and their desire to go home to marry is diminished. They get trapped in the farms. With this arrangement, these women find no reason to go out to attract men outside the enterprises. If outside men frequented these women quarters, other problems would arise, which would have adverse consequences on labour on these enterprises. All this demonstrates the over-exploitation of the women.

The workers' quarters reflect abject poverty. The general situation of these women workers and their children is horrible. Their conditions and the surrounding peasantry negate Goran Hyden's imagined uncaptured African peasantry (1980, 1983). The women workers shared small, windowless, smoky, muddy, dusty, flea-harboured, dirty rooms, with jiggers a common disease. They lacked basic tools such as safety pins. They are miserable, starving and half-naked. The children project malnutrition. The overworked women are emaciated, underfed and sickish. Many women and their children had scabies.<sup>185</sup> They live a wretched, degraded, exploited, oppressed life.

Their worn-out, unwashed, patched, second-hand dresses and their famished, naked or half-naked children testified to the crude exploitation they were undergoing. Not washing clothes is not a cultural influence, as some might be led to believe, but is due to various factors. Poor women lack clothes to change into as they have suspended buying clothes. They fear tearing the old ones in water by washing too often and many lack washing soap, the time, or sometimes a combination of these. They lacked needles and thread to patch up holes, and the time and light to mend their clothes and do other personal chores. They do all household chores as they cannot afford domestic servants. The situation is worsened by their being denied the farm's pumped water and electricity. During my research I found that their rooms reeked of a mixture of old urine (from children), unwashed clothes and smoke. Late in the evenings, miserable children would be huddled on the floor, seated or wrapped in old rags and sleeping or crying of hunger, lack of attention, illness, and coldness. Their mothers would either be cooking with wet, smoky firewood or still out looking for money, or a drink. Some used faggots to light their rooms. Others had small, tin paraffin lamps that filled rooms with harmful gases. Such poor lighting was also harmful to their eyesight.

#### *Other Contributors to the Crisis*

In pre-colonial times, the beauty of women was judged mainly on how much work they could do. As already shown, this cultural background has made these women workers and children feel that it is culturally prescribed for them to work hard. This has obscured the new exploitative position of men in general and employers in particular. Drawing from their personal historical experiences, many of these women have been led to consider these employers better than their relatives and ex-husbands, who they think caused their plight. Yet the situation in enterprises such as Batuma is far different from that in the peasantry which has rejected them. For instance, the means of production and the social product were under the control of the producers, their living and working conditions were different, with protection offered by society. All this has now changed.

Second, all workers lack organisation. Without any organisations like trade unions, no democratic platform of their own, not even resistance councils at their place of work and abode, they have no platform to organise and struggle for their rights. Trade unions on individual enterprises or at



regional level would provide them a strong position and outlook against capital, which would eventually absolve them of the individual fears that characterise most workers. Employers have capitalised on this weakness to intensify the workers' fragmentation and disunity by paternalising them. Third, these employers encourage divisionism among workers using gender, age, nationality, lineage and other minor differences. On Batuma's farm, virtually all workers work hard and for long hours yet wage differentials are pronounced. We discovered that the children's average monthly wage was 200 shillings, the average monthly wage for women workers was 230 while that of male workers fluctuated around three hundred shillings. These wage differentials create complexes among workers and act as vices against worker unity.

Fourth, these employers use some of these workers to spy on their fellow workers. These earn more wages and some of them are appointed supervisors. They are answerable to their employers and report directly on every worker and advise on what should be done. Fifth, the District Labour Department, which should be mainly organising, mobilising and educating all wage labourers in the area, is merely engaged in its colonial role of labour recruitment for plantations and estates outside the district. It is only when labourers threaten to go on strike or to quit, or a worker has been sacked and denied his wages, that this office comes in to arbitrate. Employers have taken the advantage of the absence of any relationship between workers and this office, with its weaknesses, to terrorise and subject the workers to over-exploitation, backed by threats and punishments. For instance in June 1981, Batuma's Highland Hotel laid off 30 employees on the grounds that 'management was not satisfied with their services. Interviews were thereafter conducted for the same jobs... and half of those laid off were re-employed'.<sup>186</sup>

This same absence of relationship and lack of competing employment opportunities gives employers a monopoly in the area. Employers deduct workers' wages for lateness, being insubordinate or arguing with the employer, and if the employer thinks that the worker has not worked to satisfaction.

Sixth, these workers are threatened by the agrarian crisis besetting the area. They are scared by the uncompromising employers. In these enterprises, whoever tries to organise the workers to demand their rights is dismissed even if the workers' demands are granted. That is one of

the reasons why male workers resorted to *oreija reija* — casual employment. This way, they work for wages when they want, negotiate terms with their employers and are in many cases looked for by employers.

The female workers are given one week's maternity leave. They have failed to organise and fight for a long, paid, maternity leave with other benefits. They are in a weak position as they have no signed contracts, no marriage certificates as the law requires, and the leave does not appear in writing. They are led to think that this maternity leave is due to the employer's goodness. As these enterprises have no medical services for workers, pregnant women workers give birth without medical midwifery services. Those with gynaecological complications are carried on stretchers to hospital in Kabale town as there are no provisions for workers' transport. Similarly, workers who fall sick have to walk to town, or they are sometimes carried there while some are treated with local medicines. Some of these enterprises might meet medical charges for their workers but this does not extend to workers' families.

The babies of most women workers die, since the mothers are famished, overworked, and are affected by unhealthy, filthy living conditions with no child health care, immunisation or milk. As these workers are detached from the outside world, with no interested relatives to claim them when they die, some of the enterprises have portioned off land for a cemetery where workers, their children and dependants are buried. In so doing, employers escape compensation claims of the bereft.

### *Men Workers*

Men, too, come from similar conditions and sources. The first category is from the surrounding peasantry who commutes from home and prefers casual employment. It is this wage labour that earns slightly higher wages than the other workers and has the relative freedom to withdraw labour any time without a direct threat of starvation or lack of accommodation. This arises mainly from their uniting with their families, and their property ownership. Most of these are target workers. They seek wage employment to accomplish certain targets like paying exorbitant bride price, school fees and taxes. They determine when to work for wages, where to work, and they bargain pay rates basing them on the going market wage rates. After work, some of them may join their families in household production or do what they like, as they are not tied to these enterprises.



The other category of male workers are accommodated on these enterprises or they stay with Beyi Dondoro at the milking centre under the same conditions. All milking activities on Batuma's farm take place at Bubare main farm, by his residence, where he has milking facilities and is able to supervise the milking process and other major farm activities. This enables him to keep accounts of these farm activities. It is also near Kabale town, the important market for the farm products. Milkers, senior in service, milk the most high milk-yielding cows. Junior milkers know which cows belong to which senior milker. The reason is that a milker earns a bonus of ten cents per milked litre on top of his basic wage. If he milks 900 litres a month, he earns Shs. 90 as bonus. That would raise income to Shs. 290.<sup>187</sup>

This competition amongst milkers for bonuses has created a sharp division of seniority. In the long run, they develop some attachment to the farm. The spirit of increased incomes is a vice to workers' unity. It masks the real issues and makes them waste their energies, rivalling each other for more exploitation. Other farms and enterprises employ mostly surrounding peasants who commute and some beyi dondoro. This form of labour has a stronger bargaining power and autonomy when compared to others. Let us illustrate this.

### *Ihanga Workers' Strike and its Limitations*

Workers on Batuma's farm at Ihanga went on strike from November 2 to 5, 1987 in protest against over-exploitation. Their grievances included miserable wages, refusal by employers to pay overtime, management's bad treatment of workers and poor working conditions. This strike disrupted farm activities and they resumed work only when Batuma promised to consider their demands.

There was a reason why the strike succeeded on this farm and not on the main farm. As already shown, workers from the surrounding peasantry have relative independence, since they do not see the Batuma enterprises as the solution to their problems. They have some land to fall back on for food production and they do not therefore owe their existence to the employers' farm. They work for targets. As such, they were able to strike and sustain it for three days and would have maintained it if their demands had not been considered.

November is a month when there are no major financial obligations on farmers. It is near the end of the year and there are no immediate school demands, building funds or PTA funds, etc. Furthermore, these workers were not under any binding contracts which would have scared some of them from the strike. Furthermore Ihanga has different lineages. The workers were, therefore, free from Kasigism. There is a lot of evidence to show that people of Ihanga have been in constant struggles against exploitation.<sup>188</sup> They have become conscious of the employers' accumulation plans and this has been positive to their struggle. They were able to plan and go on strike without the knowledge of the management because they were not infiltrated by informers, who were common on the main farm. They were also free of the unskilled working women and children, refugees and other forms of wage labour in crises, who would have wavered and refused to go on strike jointly or would have volunteered to report them, or issued threats in other ways. Since manual work is not attractive in the peasantry, it would have been impossible for management to hire new wage labour at the refused wages and terms, and it would have been impossible to train it for immediate farm purposes.

However, this strike had its limitations. These rural workers acted in a narrow manner. They were limited in organisation, mobilisation and outlook. It became more of an internal affair as they wanted to satisfy their demands. They did not, therefore, try to popularise the strike among other workers on other dairy farms and enterprises in the surrounding areas, including casual wage workers in the peasantry. They failed to communicate their action to other workers through fellow workers that were commuting between these farms on tippers, delivering logs for fencing and firewood. They could also have walked and ridden bicycles to various farms to rally the support of the other workers so as to develop it into a bigger strike. Their other major weakness lay in failing to mobilise the support and sympathies of the peasantry from where they came. These peasants are their natural allies, so their mobilisation and support is a *sine qua non*. This would have been the opportunity for them to form an alliance. The labour office in Kabale did not know about the strike and, despite its weaknesses, they should have tried to involve it.

The strike could not spread or expand since it had a limited outlook and no allies, theoretical perspective, workers' councils, trade unions, or any other organisation or contact with other institutions like the district



labour office. There was also no co-ordinated internal unity among these workers or a concrete programme. Its fruits were, therefore, bound to be minimal. Batuma exploited this weakness by luring the workers back without any negotiations.<sup>189</sup>

He kept the farm running by transferring four children from the main farm at Bubare to replace those on strike. The strikers had also not planned what to do to the reinforcement that their employer was likely to bring in to weaken and diffuse the strike. As such, they did not try to involve the four children workers in the strike or chase them away.<sup>190</sup> There was also no evidence that this strike was planned long before it took place. It was an immediate workers' response to a crisis. If the employer had dispersed them, their cause would have crumbled. We cannot ignore the limitations of the high level of illiteracy, limited consciousness, lack of experience, skills, materials, and personal fears.

### *Other Forms of Workers' Struggles*

As already shown, it is through unorganised labour that workers seek individual solutions to social problems. Batuma's milkers, for example, have various methods of resistance. After milking, the milk is measured, recorded, put into milk cans and then kept in the water coolers in the compound. Some milkers come later and steal part of it although this is punishable by flogging, dismissal, deduction of wages or imprisonment. Their other type of resistance is of the guerrilla type. If, for example, they want a wage increase, or better working and living conditions, they organise and disappear at milking time. The farm owner searches for them and if he gets them, they then put forward their demands. If he fails to meet these demands, the cows stay unmilked as it is too late to hire new milking hands. Even if he employs new hands some milk will be lost as milking demands some experience. Through this, the dairy farm loses milk revenue and the cows become unsettled due to excess milk in their udders. Calves may then be allowed suck too much milk to relieve the cows, which may make them ill or they may stay without being fed. Other forms of struggle include absenteeism, late-coming or a go-slow — *kukongora* — and quitting.<sup>191</sup> They also mishandle equipment or leave it outside to rust by refusing to wipe off the soil.

### *Other Factors in Workers' Weaknesses*

Incentives like feasts and gifts by employers to workers undermine their clarity, unity and struggle. Batuma, for example, invites his workers to a

feast every April in remembrance of his late wife. He offers gifts to those with long service, good reputation, discipline, hard-work and commitment to his enterprises. He once gave a cow to one of those who had started with the farm. Such gestures act as incentives and inducements to the newcomers and other workers who work hard so as to distinguish themselves for popularity and gifts. This, too, makes them stick to the farm.

Employers generally also foment divisive and sectarian relations among workers by using lineage, nationality, religion, and political affiliations. Employers usually take advantage of the workers' lack of organisation and consciousness. There is no training of labour, no systematic and regularised criterion for increments, pensions, gratuity or promotions. However, those who stick to these enterprises earn slightly higher wages than the rest. On Batuma's farms, it was discovered that three long-serving men workers who had started with him had been promoted to headmen despite their illiteracy. They had acquired skills on the job as there were no arrangements for education to acquire skills to increase productivity. These men have nothing to show as a product of their sweat on these farms for over 25 years. They are a living testimony of exploitation of labour by capital. Their monthly wages ranged between Shs. 500 and Shs. 700.<sup>192</sup>

Lack of a worker's common programme is another limitation. They meet at work and relate to each other only on an individual basis. What unites them is a common employer, common exploitation, common working conditions, common rules and oppression. After work, they follow a general routine of dispersal. Some join their families while others spend the rest of their time in bars, contracting debts or begging for beer, quarrelling over minor issues like women which result in occasional clashes. These tendencies undermine any basis for workers' unity to struggle for their rights. There is a need to make arrangements for them to meet regularly in an organised manner to learn, identify and discuss their problems and their solutions, and work out a common strategy.

Individual targets also undermine workers' unity. The male workers I interviewed on the dairy farms revealed aspirations to accumulate property. One was a chairman of a village co-operative society which wanted to reclaim its swamp for dairy farming. Others said they sent home some money to buy land, to help their wives, children and brothers at school. One of them had bought three goats and hoped to work for five more



years to earn money to buy land. He hoped to return home, cultivate it, sell the produce and get money to join trade. Some hoped to save part of their incomes and go into trade while others hoped to build iron-roofed houses and marry.<sup>193</sup> These workers are not willing to start or join any action that will jeopardise their ambitions. Similar reactions come from some migrant labourers from the surrounding peasantry who cannot afford to lose farm jobs. Another problem arises from the nature of recruitment. Desperate women, children workers, and some men from distant places feel some threat of losing their jobs to local labourers. At the same time, local people see these workers as the ones depriving them of their employment opportunities and causing wage falls. Worse still, with no contracts between workers and employers, workers have no job security and there is no organised body to protect their interests. With the constant inflow-outflow of migrant labour and new workers reinforcing the immigrant labour, the basis of the workers' cohesion to struggle for their rights is undermined.<sup>194</sup> These put the other workers into a precarious position — either to accept the wretched exploitative conditions or to quit individually.

### What Could be Done?

We cannot make exhaustive proposals on how to resolve the crisis. Instead of making authoritative prescriptions, we make some suggestions on what could be done. Our attempt opens the arena for more research and debates by different disciplines on the crisis.

It is ironical to find that Kabale district, faced with massive poverty, destitution, unemployment, landlessness and starvation *inter alia* is endowed with millions of metric tons of iron ore covering three counties. It has electricity from Jinja which is supplemented by electricity from Maziba Dam above Kisizi Waterfalls which is capable of producing a lot of electricity for industrialisation. Kabale is also endowed with a lot of robust labour which is currently unemployed. Part of the solution, therefore, lies in industrialisation — setting up a heavy iron and steel industry in Kigezi.

Questions of what type of industry, form of ownership, how to raise resources for this industry are political questions and are beyond the scope of this study. In an economy that is heavily indebted, which lacks independent capitalists that have the capacity and willingness to invest, this venture raises important issues. Who should undergo this

industrialisation? Should it be the state or foreign investors through an open door policy? Should it be a joint venture between the state and the local bourgeoisie or the state and foreign investors? Should it be a joint venture between Uganda and other regional countries (regional co-operation)? Or between Uganda and international bodies like the World Bank or IMF? On the other hand, can resources be raised internally either through fiscal policy, forced investments or contributions by nationals with a concrete pecuniary promise of dividends from this industry in future?

The choice must be made consciously, aiming at protecting and promoting the country's integrity and sovereignty while ensuring optimum use of resources. Such an industry should be integrated with the whole economy, with forward-and-backward linkages. Such an industry will have a multiplier effect on the national economy, which will reduce the foreign debt burden by producing what was formerly imported and also boosting exports. At the same time, it will have the advantage of easy distribution of its products to the four neighbouring countries. It would be easy to connect the railway line from Kasese to the new industry to facilitate transport in general.

This district has the capacity to produce a lot of vegetables, potatoes, sorghum, peas and milk. There is a need to introduce scientific methods of production, carry out research on the soils, crops, animals and then disseminate the findings to the peasants and workers. Processing, canning and bottling industries in this area are needed. This will generate more employment, increase productivity and resource utilisation, reducing chances of waste and perishability of these products and the low prices paid to producers.

Another critical question is what type of industrialisation should be implemented — labour intensive or capital intensive? Though it lacks financial resources, Kabale is rich in labour. The question will then be how to train this labour to acquire the needed industrial skills. Such industrialisation would have to consider what type of inputs, the instruments of production that are acceptable to both the physical and social environments, their suitability to the soils, their efficiency in increasing productivity, and their socio-economic and political implications on society and the environment.



Kabale District is plagued by massive illiteracy which hinders development and productivity. It denies the victims a chance to appreciate the role of new methods, ideas and ways of life. In Uganda, illiteracy also blocks them from chances of better employment and access to certain places and positions where learned individuals transform state power into economic power, popularly known in Uganda as *twariire* — primitive accumulation from above. This calls for massive literacy campaigns for all peasants and workers and their progenies. This role falls on a cross section of society which includes pupils, students, intellectuals, civil servants, teachers, religious leaders and some literate members among the workers and the peasantry. These peasants, workers and their progenies must first be persuaded and convinced of the importance of overcoming illiteracy and the profits that will accrue to them. Those going to effect this programme should involve the masses in discussing methods on how to overcome it.

They could make use of the available infrastructure in the form of schools, mosques and churches, clubs, Rukiiko halls and co-operative buildings. The state must provide them with the logistics for mobility, some materials to use in the exercise and a lot of air time on the radio on a self-help basis through schools, clubs, community centres and recreation centres. Hospitals and health centres are required resources and should be internally generated with supplementary assistance from government and other bodies.

The commercial dairy farms which get very cheap raw materials from this peasantry without meaningful returns, should be made to contribute to the development of the area. If we draw from Batuma's farm, it gets labour from the peasantry, foodstuffs, farm inputs and brewing inputs like honey, passion fruits, sorghum, fuels, and wood for paddocking.<sup>195</sup> While draining away resources from the peasantry, they do not bring back to the peasantry any returns in the form of goods, knowledge, experience, money or social infrastructure. The peasantry does not get farm products like milk, meat, cow dung, cattle or bulls to cross with the surviving local breeds. They do not provide education or educational facilities like schools, recreation or social centres for the workers and peasants. Instead, there are restrictions against trespassing on these farms. These enterprises should be made to contribute money through progressive taxation, to contribute to literacy education campaigns for both adults and the young, and other

development projects. This money should be used on development projects for the area, provision of essential social services and on education for workers, peasants and their children. This money should be reinforced by other contributions from these two classes, organisations and institutions in and around the state.

The District Labour Office, currently used as a labour recruiting office, should reach all forms of labouring masses. It should be deeply involved in identifying, mobilising, organising, educating, and protecting these classes and in organising them in their struggles. In an economy characterised by a large class of peasants, and few workers, who are still part of the peasantry, this labour office's duties should extend to all the producers of wealth. In line with this, literacy campaigns should be mounted all over the country using all the available infrastructure, to set up centres for publishing simple literature in local languages for the masses. Local teachers and students are very important allies. This, in the final analysis, demands overhauling the whole educational system and replacing it with a pro-people one, aimed at emancipating the masses.

There is a need to address the land question at the national level. Since the introduction of colonialism there has never been a clear land rights policy giving land to the tiller. There are no safeguards to protect peasants and their families from being bought out either by force or through destitution — i.e. there is no law putting a limit to the minimum amount of land that one should have or sell. Currently, the phenomenon of buying out people is rampant in Kigezi, although no one has ventured to research this and raise a voice for the landless. Land is being concentrated into fewer and fewer hands while there are no ample employment opportunities for those being dispossessed. This demands open and broader discussion at all levels for concrete resolutions that should then be translated into laws in favour of the majority.

At the same time, other issues related to land, such as the causes of land fragmentation and its effect on society, overpopulation and soil exhaustion, should be discussed at various levels to seek possible solutions. Also to be discussed is the question of how to avoid land problems, how to implement the solutions to achieve increased food output for the whole society and for sale outside. Issues on land ownership and land use must also be discussed exhaustively at different levels for broader, acceptable meaningful solutions.



The Ministry of Environmental Protection and institutions like the Faculties of Agriculture, Forestry, Geography, and Social Sciences at Makerere University, Non-Governmental Organisations and the mass media should carry out massive research on the environment. Rigorous campaigns for environmental awareness and protection can then be mounted. Laws must be enacted to protect swamps and the environment. There is also a need for varied and continuous research to test the levels of acidification and the level of environmental destruction including the effects of swamp reclamation on the social and physical environments, its impact on food production, the effect of this acidification on ecology and on human beings and other species, on the economic system and its socio-economic effects on society. Based on this research relevant meaningful solutions would be found.

Is it economically viable and politically practical and socially acceptable to revert some of this reclaimed land to swamps? If so, which swamps, whose, and on what criterion? Won't it be a step backwards? Is it possible to pool these swamps for communal use or will it be a return to the past? How can they have commercial dairy farms, balance the ecosystem, protect the environment while also providing more food and employment? Is it economical to dismantle these farms and convert them into small holdings, as advanced by Chayanov, Lipton, et al., or is the solution in big communal farms, co-operativisation? Is it possible to carry out campaigns of afforestation and reforestation to protect the environment, provide timber and fuel?

The peasantry in Kabale is gradually becoming sensitive to these new socio-economic developments. It is this class that must form a strong alliance with these workers. Without this alliance, neither class will manage to break away on its own from their narrow outlook that is worsened by massive illiteracy and ignorance which employers, the state and other interested parties have been exploiting. This alliance demands making a comprehensive, meaningful programme for both classes. Such a programme needs to be designed to achieve internal class unity. In this light, vices to unity which serve employers' interests must be exposed to workers and peasants.

While conducting the literacy campaign, progressives from all levels workers — the National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU), the Ministry of Labour and Resistance Committees — must mount a

consciousness programme using concrete examples. The relationship between labour and capital and the role of narrow ideologies like lineages, clannism, tribalism, or regionalism in undermining workers' and peasants' unity must be studied critically. A wage worker from Basigi lineage, working on a Musigi's dairy farm, might assume superiority over fellow workers from other lineages and nationalities. They should be taught how they are subjected to similar exploitative and oppressive capitalist relations, how the problem is a class question. They should be helped to understand the dynamics and stratagems of capitalism and its vices, and how to struggle against it. This includes the limitations of despising female workers, crude, obscene abuses, and the danger in the myth that no woman can equal a man — divisive tactics that employers use as wedges between gender as a basis for super-exploitation through wage differentials. The age question based on a Kikiga myth that no shoulder can grow taller than the head and the harping on seniority among workers to foment disharmony and disunity among workers must be exposed to them.

Similarly, the skilled labour of the technical staff on the dairy farms, who are given preferential treatment and higher pay with some privileges, should be mobilised on the same programme. Considering their training, the lack of job security and terminal benefits, bonuses, pensions or retirement benefits, they too are exploited. They have to be helped to overcome their petty bourgeois weaknesses and be assisted to learn their position in this exploitative relationship and on which side they must stand and struggle.

All this means going beyond teaching workers how to read and write to providing theories, raising the consciousness of both workers and peasants, carrying out education schemes, training for leadership, mobilisation and organisation. Dedication to the workers and peasants' cause has to be encouraged by a cross-section of people. This cross-section, which has to provide political guidance and protection, should spearhead the articulation of the demands of these workers and peasants. It has to push for laws to protect these classes and ensure that once enacted, they are implemented. To accomplish this, it has to create a strong cadreship among these two classes. This cadreship will take over and intensify the role of mobilising, educating and organising these classes in addition to sedimenting the literacy campaign. The cadreship will also provide a strong, meaningful leadership in the struggles for their rights.



Progressive forces must take up the challenge to educate and assist this class of workers to form meaningful, democratic platforms through which they will struggle and defend their rights. These should be in the form of trade unions, workers' councils, workers/peasants' councils, peasants' councils and Resistance Councils at both their places of work and abode with the full participation of all members in all these fora, co-operatives, societies and clubs.

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power through a popular struggle of peasants. It cannot, therefore, shy away from taking up its historical role of repealing the current oppressive, exploitative anti-labour laws. It must enact progressive laws to protect the exploited and oppressed in the whole country, legislate and fix the limit of working hours per day, fix hours for overtime and rates for its payment, work out and fix a minimum living wage, fix periods for leave, then make laws on the working and living conditions of workers. The NOTU too must play a primary role in this. The affected classes have to learn these laws, how to defend them and their application, to defend and promote their rights. Similarly, the NRM Government must redress the current fiscal policy. It must reduce the tax burden on destitute peasants and workers and transfer it to the bourgeoisie, landlords and commercial dairy farmers which at the moment it is refusing to tackle. I was shocked to find that one of my respondents, aged 81 years old had paid his 61<sup>st</sup> tax that year.

The Ministry of Labour and its district and regional labour offices, NOTU, and co-operatives, have to assist workers in Uganda to set up labour commissions, supervisory and inspectorate bodies to investigate and constantly review the conditions of labour, workers' grievances and various forms of exploitation on every enterprise. These bodies should have direct contact with all workers, with powers to intervene directly on their behalf, and to take action against any employer violating workers' rights. These bodies should also be entrusted with the role of facilitating the formation of autonomous workers/peasants' organisations, mobilisation, education and conscientisation. Such bodies should neither be part of the state, nor should they be under control of any state body, but should be accountable to workers. At the political level, there is a need for sound economic policies and strategies aimed at stabilising the economy, boosting production and industrialisation, while also re-addressing remunerations

to labour in the right quantities. This demands legislating for the basic minimum living wage payable to labour, enacting laws on this and enforcing them.

At the district level, strong economic and political measures should be taken to reduce these employers' great control over departmental civil servants in education, veterinary, lands, labour, district administration, and religious leaders in the area. Adequate remuneration and other economic and administrative reforms will facilitate breaking this control. These bodies can influence wages as they are the main employers in the area. Meaningful policies are, therefore, necessary to protect workers' rights. For instance, during this study, Mowlem workers alleged that some of these employers advised and prevailed over Mowlem to fix low wages for its workers. They argued that this was because of the fear that high wages would cause a general wage rise in the area which would reduce the employers' profit margins and lure Mowlem away from the area and also affect their rent from Mowlem. Although this could not be proved, it was learnt that Mowlem had fixed the wages arbitrarily at Shs. 688 per month for unskilled labour. Workers threatened to go on strike, and after arduous negotiations, their wages were raised to Shs. 825.<sup>196</sup>

The other important allies include other workers in Uganda and those from the rest of the world in our present struggle against capitalist exploitation. International allies are very important. The major objective must be to unite the producers of wealth in the whole country for a democratic struggle.

In conclusion, this chapter has tried to show how Kigezi was drawn into the service of British capital basically as a labour reservoir, the various forms this process underwent, its current consequences and how local capital emerged, the various effects of this process on the different classes that capital gradually created and their ideologies and tactics. It has also tried to show peasants and workers' responses to capital accumulation, exploitation and oppression. It has shown the different categories of wage labour and their differences and has ended with a few suggestions on how the problem could begin to be resolved.

The intensifying capital penetration and accumulation in Kabale District is increasingly impoverishing the peasants, which strengthens the exploitative position of the dairy farms. Due to an absence of a wider labour market, alternative ventures like industries and crafts, workers'



organisations and pro-workers' laws and policies, isolated individual demands for higher wages and better working conditions are likely to have disastrous effects on wage-labour without affecting these enterprises and the labour supply. The prevalent economic crises, increased costs of goods and services are likely to accelerate, exacerbating the crisis with unfavourable labour recruitment, maintenance and remuneration. All these events will affect labour struggles in the area. This chapter lays out the evidence for the urgency in resolving the crisis.

### Notes

1. Report by Captain Ireland, November, 1909. N.A.
2. K.D.A.R. 1922 and K.D.A.R. 1933.
3. K.D.A.R. 1933.
4. Letter of 12/1/1987 reported that 31 workers had deserted Sugar Corporation of Uganda Ltd with company property. File No. A3: 'Recruiting Sugar Estates Employment,' 1972.
5. Letter of Kigezi Resettlement Officer of 2nd October, 1987 to the Permanent Secretary, Local Government.
6. File: A6/17/1904: Annual Reports: General Report on Western Province 1904. The Western Province Sub-Commissioner Monthly Report of 13/6/1904. N.A.
7. Files: C22 561 '*Luwalo*: Abolition of'; R. 31 'Labour: *Luwalo* Labour Policy And Principles'; R. 31/5 '*Luwalo* Labour: *Luwalo* Commutation Fee, Western Province', N.A.
8. K.D.A.Rs showed that from 1911-1917, they had completed over 140 miles of road network for vehicles in Rukiga. Also see W.P.A.Rs from 1910-1917.
9. K.D.A.R. 1919-20 & W.P.A.R. 1920.
10. Ibid.
11. K.D.A.R. 1920. K.D.A.R. 1924 reported that thirty labourers were employed daily cultivating the shambas and fed a daily average of 200 men.
12. K.D.A.R. 1921.
13. Sullivan, C.E., to the PCWP who in turn appealed to the Chief Secretary. File: Native Affairs. Poll Tax in Western Province. N.A.
14. K.D.A.R. 1922.
15. K.D.A.R. 1928.
16. W.P.A.R. 1924.
17. K.D.A.R. 1931.
18. K.D.A.R. 1928.
19. K.D.A.R. 1933. *Luharo* was transformed into commutation in 1937.
20. K.D.A.R. 1932.

21. Ibid. They were under Cadet M.J. Bessell, 21: Cases of these *Luharo* workers were recorded hospitalised.
22. File: *Luwalo* Labour. Policy and Principles. N.A.
23. File: *Luwalo* Labour. *Luwalo* Commutation Fee: Western Province. As colonialism was not yet strong enough to confront militarily organised peoples, it exempted the organised Bahima and Batusi from *luwalo*.
24. Kigezi District Annual Reports, 1911-1950. Files: 516/08 Part II 'Crown Land Rents and Poll Taxes: — Appointments of Collectors.' R. 3/4 (iii) 'Chiefs: Western Province: Appointments And Dismissals'; File: 4754 'Kigezi Chieftainships', N.A.
25. The 1938 Labour Report had noted that wage labour was an alien and still more or less new form of life, and that therefore, other than the political demand for cash to pay taxes and to buy a few of the simple luxuries, there was no necessity to push the African into wage labour, '... is indeed happy in that he is not confronted with the sole alternative of wage-labour or starvation'.
26. W.P.A.R. 1920. This was a colonial plan for depletion of labour— voluntary labour creation. K.D.A.R. 1922 reported that 'This labour camp was burnt down in 1922 when it was invaded by ticks and another one was built on a new site using tax labour'.
27. W.P.A.R. 1913-14.
28. K.D.A.R. 1932.
29. W.P.A.R. 1914-15 and 1915-16.
30. Notice of 11/8/1917, Gazette Notice No.430 of 26/9/1917 by Chief Secretary, Collectors of Rent, W.P. Kigezi District. Gazette Notice No.35 of 1920 dated 27/1/1920 names agents and counties and sub-counties where they were authorised to collect taxes with commissions of 5 per cent of the tax collected. File: Crown Land Rents and Poll Taxes:- Appointment of Collectors and File: Counties — Chiefs. Divisions and Titles of. N.A.
31. W.P.A.R. 1924.
32. K.D.A.R. 1932.
33. Chief Secretary to PCWP dated 10/4/1937, File: C22 561 '*Luwalo*: Abolition of': N.A. Western Province Court Returns showed this form of resistance was still prevalent in the 1940s and 1950s. There were 414 tax defaulters in 1941, falling to 204 in 1948, and in 1956, the number had gone up again to 302.
34. In her 1932/33 research in Kigezi, E. May (1957) noted that the head-tax, which was the first step towards a money economy, was beginning to have an effect on the working habits and exchange; that the seasonal need for money for poll tax payments created a seasonal supply of sheep.
35. K.D.A.R. 1917-18. K.D.A.R. 1919-20 reported that Banyarwanda were not employed east of Kabale for political and climatic reasons, feared they would unite with the peasants there and struggle against the colonialists to get Muhumuza back, that Bahororo 'prove to desert from labour but persevered these climatic changes'.
36. K.D.A.R. 1916-17 and W.P.A.R. 1916-17.



37. Ibid.
38. K.D.A.R. 1922. It was discontinued. There were also predators on the way to Kampala in Nyekongorero.
39. W.P.A.R. 1923 and K.D.A.R. 1923. That year, 600 porters were employed on one safari to collect loads of a Belgian prospecting mission from Mbarara, and 300 of these had to collect them from Masaka. A return trip to Mbarara was Shs. 4/50. Camp to camp porters increased.
40. K.D.A.R. 1924.
41. K.D.A.R. 1928.
42. K.D.A.Rs 1928-1930 noted that government safaris used 950 porters while non-official parties were catered for by Victor & Co. in the bazaar; motor cars reaching Kabale from Kampala were replacing head porterage.
43. K.D.A.Rs 1931-1933.
44. Letter of Bishop Alfred R. Tucker, Bishop of Uganda to Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies on 3/2/1911; File: From Colonial Office: From 14th Jan. to 3rd March, 1911. Vol.I. The 1938 Labour Report re-emphasised 'After a century of experience, the British Administration and Trader have learned that it is difficult and in the long run impossible to induce the African to work except voluntarily... will work only if he wants to. If he thinks that he is being underpaid, or cannot use his money to buy what he wants, he simply 'goes to the bush' where the white man cannot follow him, and lives there, tant bien que mal, on the resources of the country as his ancestors did ... where compulsion, even of the severest kind, has been attempted it has uniformly failed. Even where the African derives his income from a cash crop, he will not grow it if he thinks that the price is too low...'
45. Intelligence Report of April, 1910 No.38 showed that peasants under Belgian colonial rule were running away from Belgian oppression and super-exploitation through taxation. Men paid 12 francs while women paid 6 francs each per annum. The Belgian Colonial Government was proposing to reduce it to 7.5 francs and 2.5 francs for men and women respectively from July. Intelligence Reports: Uganda, February 1907-1914. National Archives (N.A.).
46. Ibid. Also refer to Files: R.30/3 'Labour: Immigrant Labour — Buganda'; U2/14(1931) 'Annual Reports: Inspector Of Labour'; and 'Uganda Labour Department, Reports'. N.A.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. K.D.A.R. 1915-16 and W.P.A.R. 1915-16.
51. K.D.A.R. 1921.
52. K.D.A.R. 1923 noted that only 20 porters were employed per month.
53. Ibid.
54. K.D.A.R. 1926.
55. K.D.A.R. 1927.
56. W.P.A.R. 1919.

57. K.D.A.R. 1924. W.P.A.R. 1924 noted no lack of volunteer labour to meet all essential requirements but many of the 1000 recruits for the Labour Department were from Belgian Territory.
58. K.D.A.R. 1925.
59. K.D.A.R. 1926. W.P.A.R. 1926 reported that 292 labourers enlisted to be sent to Buganda.
60. Communication from the Labour Commissioner to the Chief Secretary on 25/6/1928. File No. 8062, Agricultural Development in Western Province. N.A.
61. K.D.A.R. 1929.
62. K.D.A.R. 1930.
63. Commissioner of Police on 15/5/1931 discouraging the idea that labour was to be had in Kampala in K.D.A.R. 1931.
64. K.D.A.R. 1931.
65. K.D.A.R. 1932.
66. K.D.A.R. 1933.
67. W.P.A.R. 1936.
68. File: Labour: Immigrant Labour — Buganda. N.A.
69. 1919 and 1934 Reports of Provincial Commissioner, Western Province. (PCWP), N.A.
70. W.P.A.R. 1936.
71. Ibid. He disclosed that the Inspector of Labour had discovered that in their own climate, Bakiga were about the best labour in the Protectorate; which gave colonialism more interest to promote and exploit this labour on a large scale.
72. Ibid.
73. W.P.A.R. 1937.
74. The 1938 Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Labour Situation in the Uganda Protectorate. Government Printer, Entebbe.
75. W.P.A.R. 1940.
76. W.P.A.R. 1941.
77. File: Western Province Uganda. Survey of the War Years 1939-1946.
78. File: F 78/65/11 'Roll of Honour — Casualties, Kigezi District', N.A.
79. W.P.A.R. 1943.
80. It was argued that part of the cause of the famines in early 1940s was overpopulation. As Kigezi had little land and lacked any employment opportunities, the solution was to move the 'surplus population' to the unpopulated areas. Starting in 1946, over 80,000 people were resettled by 1962 despite malaria, food shortages, tsetse flies, and cerebro-meningitis. These resettlers concentrated on production of industrial crops like coffee, cotton and tobacco. Refer to Files: No.Dev.4/1/AI, 'Bwambara Resettlement Scheme 1962'; Dev.4/6 'Resettlement in Ankole'; No.Dev.4/6/1, Resettlement General 1972, and Annual Reports from 1946, Resettlement Office and Kigezi District Administration (KDA), Purselove (1950).



81. Ibid. Also see Report of 27/7/1936: 'Notes Made after a Short Visit to the Belgian Congo'. N.A.; Report of Chairman, Labour Enquiry Committee 1938, of 30/7/1938 to the Chief Secretary and the appended letter. N.A. & Report of Buganda Resident of 13/4/1939 on his visit to Rwanda. N.A.
82. Ibid.
83. W.P.A.R. 1944.
84. Ibid.
85. W.P.A.R. 1945.
86. W.P.A.R. 1947. Pyrethrum estates experienced labour shortage by end of 1947.
87. Ibid. The previous year, 680 men had been recruited for sugar plantations.
88. W.P.A.R. 1950.
89. Some works argue that '...the scarcity of land and paid labour...forced many people to leave the district in search of new opportunities for permanent settlement or a regular employment elsewhere'. Refer to 'Background to Kigezi Population, Growth and Resultant — Agricultural Problems'. File No. Dev. 4/9 vi, 'Resettlement', 1961; Baxter (1960). Colonialism advanced that 'Both economic and climatic conditions have hampered the development of cash crop production; to date this has played little part in the economy of the district. Large numbers of cattle are kept, though for social rather than economic reasons...' File: 'District Book, Kigezi.' Agriculture Department. Also refer to Files: H.43/4 'Agriculture: Native Coffee Industry — Kigezi District — Arabica'; H.43/5 'Native Coffee Industry: Arabica Coffee in Ankole And Kigezi, Marketing of Crop'. N.A. The PCWP on 6/8/1946 to Chief Secretary, recommended Mukombe, 30 years in colonial service, for 'Kings Medal for Native Chiefs in Silver Gilt because of his excellent services... devoted and loyal to the Government' and especially being 'largely instrumental in obtaining additional land for pyrethrum growing and in fostering resettlement owing to his influence with his people'. File 'Mukombe'; S.2122 'Honours: Circulars and Instructions On Award of Honours Vol.II, S.21161, Kings Medal for Chief'. N.A.
90. Refer to K.D.Rs, W.P.Rs and Agricultural Reports starting from 1911 hitherto.
91. K.D.A.R. 1924.
92. K.D.A.R. 1933.
93. Chief Secretary to the Director of Agriculture on 10/10/1925. File No. 8062. Agricultural: Agricultural Development in Western Province. Also see Letter of Chairman, Uganda Chamber of Commerce of 24/9/1927 on cotton and coffee growing to the Chief Secretary.
94. Ibid. Files: No. Lab I.V. 'Labour Policy', 1963; No.C1/2, 'Annual Report General' Kabale District Labour Office; File: 'Mukombe'. N.A. following year, 2300 workers were recruited from the district for Kigezi and Ankole mines and 2,200 workers were employed by the District Administration. 1947 PCWP Annual Report. The proverb on this labour migration is that Otakafwire tarahirira

- kuza Buganda — He who has not died can never bet that he will not go to Buganda.
95. W.P.A.R. 1951.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid. Masaka Recruiting Agency had its headquarters at Masaka and a depot at Kabale, recruiting all types of labour, but mainly from Belgian territory and Kigezi. Kigezi Voluntary Employment Bureau was the Uganda Company who were managing agents on behalf of a consortium of employers, recruiting all labour.
99. Monthly Report of the Senior Labour Officer (West) of 30/11/1957.
100. Monthly Report of the Senior Labour Officer (West) of December, 1957 recorded nine strikes in the west.
101. Western Province Labour Office Annual Report, 1957. These were oppressive, exploitative, undemocratic contracts. They also show the unity of interests between employers and the interests the colonial state was representing 'British Capital'. These exploitative relations were strengthened by workers' high level of illiteracy and ignorance of the dynamics of capitalism.
102. Ibid.
103. Toro Labour Office Monthly Reports, 1957.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid. It noted the progress of the translation of these contracts of service for the recruits for clarity on attestation. Even when translated, the officer would read with difficulty, in a foreign accent and inaudibly a legal document that could not fully be comprehended and would not therefore reflect the actual relations being entered into between capital and labour. Furthermore, a democratic contract demands that both parties conclude it and not for one party with the protection of the state to design, draft it and then impose it on these pre-capitalist peasants being drawn into wage labour for the first time. Did such papers mean anything to pre-literate peoples?
106. Monthly Report of the Senior Labour Officer (West) of 30/9/1957.
107. Monthly Report of the Senior Labour Officer (West) of 31/10/1957.
108. W.P.A.R. 1952.
109. Ibid.
110. W.P.A.R. 1953.
111. W.P.A.R. 1954. It noted that Bakiga formed the greatest number employed in Toro Tea Estates, railway construction and Kilembe Mines, while more than 4,000 men were employed in the district and 1,000 in Kilembe Mines.
112. W.P.A.R. 1955.
113. Uganda Protectorate Annual Report 1956. By the mid-1950s, it was reported that over 60,000 people went outside Kigezi for a period of 9-12 months. Then, they came back and went back again, mainly to Toro for mines and tea estates, to Buganda in townships and village shambas, Busoga in industrial areas and for sugar estates.



114. W.P.A.R. 1957.
115. Monthly Report of Senior Labour Officer (West) of 30/4/1957. In March that year Kilembe Mines had taken action against four surface labourers on six month contracts for refusing to fulfil the contract and three strikes had occurred. The April Monthly Report of Toro reported that Kilembe's daily labour force had reached 1,850 and was continuing to fall. Monthly Report of 31/7/1957 showed that 702 workers out of 2052 of Kilembe Mines were on contract terms, 9,652 were employed in wage labour within the district while many more were employed by employers with less than five employees especially in Buganda. W.P.A.R. 1957.
116. W.P.A.R. 1957.
117. Letter of 8/7/1958 of Officer, Masaka Recruiting Agency; File No. LAB 1/2 VI 'Masaka Recruiting Agency' opened 16/5/1958. Labour Office, Kabale.
118. W.P.A.R. 1958.
119. Ibid.
120. Executive Council — Memoranda Nos. 276-329, 1960. Report of the Recruitment Sub-Committee chaired by J.W. Lwamafa N.A. This committee interviewed employers, chiefs and councillors, recruiters including L.H.D. Scard (Manager Kigezi Voluntary Employment Bureau) while no workers or peasants were interviewed.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid. One of its respondents, Scard, had earned commission on 21,003 recruits the previous year; despatched 5,586 between April and June.
124. File: No. LAB.1 V 'Labour Policy'; Ag. Labour Commissioner Ministry of Works and Labour to DCs of Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga, Kigezi and Fort Portal on Uganda Employment Ordinance: Prohibited Areas of Recruiting.
125. Monthly Returns of Sugar Estates Employment Bureau Masaka, 1968-69. Many recruits had registered and were awaiting transport throughout the district.
126. The Monthly Report of Sugar Estates Employment Bureau Masaka of 30/4/1919 had few recruits and that of 30/9/1969 reported 17 recruits, of whom two deserted. The policy of Ugandanisation had backfired. Refer to Files: No. LAB.1 V, 'Labour Policy', & No. LAB.1 1/1 IV: Labour Recruiting Voluntary Employment Bureau. Kabale Labour Office.
127. File No. C.1/2: Annual Report General; M/S Sugar Estates Employment Bureau Masaka, 1970 Annual Report. District Labour Office — Kabale. In 1972, 81 men were recruited for Kakira and 64 for Lugazi and in 1972 both recruited 78 men, Sango Bay 15 and M/S Agricultural Enterprises Ltd recruited 118 men. In 1973, both recruited 683 men from Kigezi and neither did the situation become better in the subsequent years. Also see File: C.2/7: Monthly Reports, Southern Province.
128. A process of creation and acceleration of commodity production was carried out in the area. While available land per head was falling, from 5.4 acres in 1921 (when there was still fair land distribution as it had only use value and no exchange value) to 1.2 acres per head by 1979 (when there was a great unequal distribution of land due to new forms of property accumulation and ownership) population tripled from 225,892 (1921) to 645,000 (1970). Yet it was not food crops but cash crops that were increased. In fact, acreage of some foods stagnated and in other cases fell, with the exception of those that gradually became commodities.
129. The County Chief, Rubanda wrote to Resettlement Officer, Kigezi that he had imprisoned Mpazi and Turahe for '...confusing the whole village that they should not accept to be taken to Kagadi because the area is bad and that there is no food'. File KZ/RST/RO, 'Resettlement-Rubanda' 1974. 1973 Resettlement Annual Report, KDA, on 'Kagadi Resettlement Scheme'.
130. Report of Labour Officer, Kabale on 'Labour Recruitment'. File No. A.3 'Recruiting Sugar Estates Employment', Kabale Labour Office.
131. Ibid.
132. Monthly Report of Labour of 31/5/1957.
133. 1956 U.P. Annual Report, Labour Department.
134. 1957 U.P. Annual Report, Labour Department.
135. W.P.A.R. 1942.
136. Ibid.
137. K.D.A.R. 1923. One of the common songs that emerged was 'Twegendere Kilembe Mine, Kwegondeza abaguda bonka 'Let us go to Kilembe Mines in search of the rich ones'.
138. K.D.A.R. 1928.
139. Ibid. He submitted that sexually, the local races were exceptionally moral people. Prostitution and alcoholism increased and led the public to compose the song calling Katarina (Catherine) to leave the bar and go to cook for the children as they were perishing of hunger: 'Katarina Ruga omubara otaahe otekyere abaana. Abaana bamarwa enjara....'.
140. U.P. Medical Services Statistical Records, 1959.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid. The colonial state took it up and within a few years implemented it all over the country. File: 'Provisional Administration: District Commissioners' Conference — 'Minute of Meetings' of 4th-8th August 1921', N.A.
144. Ibid. Minute 9 on 'Recreation Rooms for Educated Natives'. People with revolutionary ideas, women, children, alcoholic drinks, political, religious or any other sensitive or controversial discussions were barred from this club.
145. Agricultural Annual Report 1961.
146. W.P.A.R. 1949.
147. Ibid.
148. 1950 Uganda Protectorate Annual Report.
149. One member donated his land to this association for building their business premises. In return, they paid for his education to technical level. During our field research, he was demanding this land back. We also found that when



- the surviving members met to share their initial deposit in the early 1980s, many did not get anything back.
150. On 26th December 1987, a friend's wife, Anna shared with us her experience. While on her teaching practice in Bubare Primary School, a pupil in infant section answered that the Father of Jesus was 'Batuma'.
  151. Figures from Treasury Department, KDA.
  152. It was learnt that Batuma exacted loyalty and hard work from his workers of Basigi lineage through empty, verbal promises to help them in future if they worked hard. Kasigism became a basis for retaining and exploiting labour. Workers from other lineages and nationalities who were employed there, were looked at with hostility by fellow workers. Placed in this situation which looked like a privilege for the latter category, they had to work hard and keep quiet.
  153. Figures from Resettlement Office Kabale and Kabale District Administration.
  154. PCWP to Chief Secretary, letter No.C.55 on New Year's Honours — 1947. Also see General Notice No. 406 of 1935, Official Gazette of 29/6/1935. Also refer to PCWP to Chief Secretary of 6/8/1946. File S. 2116 I. King's Medal for Chiefs.
  155. The best example is of the county chief, Rubanda. He wrote to Batuma on 12/6/1978 exposing fraud, land greed, the intensive commoditisation of land, and the role of the State in redistributing people's land to this new class. 'The swamp which you bought at...Kanyamihova swamp at Hamurwa sub-county. The Belongs (read 'owners') to swamp who sold it to you have never applied for it neither dug it. They have stolen (read 'cheated') Government in selling it'.
  156. Ibid.
  157. 'Swamp Reclamation' caused popular opposition. It succeeded after the murder of Bwankosya's in 1950. As county chief and member of Legco, he had defended peasants' interests against this reclamation. He was immediately replaced by E.C. Cook and the 1950 Colonial Annual Report then argued that 'In Kigezi, the baseless suspicion of the Government intentions regarding land utilisation and in particular swamp drainage, has tended to colour many of the council's deliberations. The suspicion seems to have waned during the latter part of the year, and Government's published statement on land policy is considered to be in part responsible for this'.
  158. Ibid. The District Veterinary Officer, Kigezi, on 22/3/1972 wrote to the DC, Kigezi, and the DC wrote to the P.S. of Provincial Administration on 11/2/1974 on popular resistances to swamp deprivation and reclamation. This was a similar situation that the Colonial Officer in 1954 had described: 'The cropping of which is hampered by the high acidities (PH) developed on drainage and the opposition to drainage by the local population because papyrus is an important source of thatching and rope-making material'.
  159. Memorandum to the DC of 10/8/1974. Refer to the following unpublished researches: Kisule (1977), Wasswa (1978), Tingira Kibangira (1975) and Matete Bekunda (1978) et al. M.U. and Nuwamanya (1979) N.U.
  160. The District Land Committee distributed land to this new class. As an illustration, on 11/9/1974, Batuma's application No.24 was granted land; on 15/12/1977, his applications No.1873 and No.2019 were granted land and on 26/7/1978, his application No.3086 was granted land. Refer to minutes: 24/74; 17/77; and 1/78. File: No. LAN 10/3 pt.iii, 1970: 'Land Commission— Kigezi Branch. Application For Land and Land Disputes'; and Files under the same Title: No.LAN 10/3 iv, 1971; No. LAN 10/3 pt.v, 1972; No. LAN 10/3: 1975; No. LAN 10/3 viii, 1977; No. C. LAN 10/6 'Uganda Land Commission: Agenda and Minutes of Kigezi Land Committee', 1970; File No.C/D.L.C. 'Correspondences Addressed to Chairman, South Kigezi District Land Committee'; No. LAN 10/3 ix, 'Land Commission — Kigezi Branch, Application For Land And Other Related Matters,' 1978; No. 47, 'Kigezi Land Board, 1962-1986'; and No. 47/2 'Minutes of The Land Board, 1963-1984'. KDA.
  161. Figures from Kagonyera's Case Study, M.U., 1980, table 0.013, p.92.
  162. 1956 Agricultural Annual Report.
  163. Ibid.
  164. Kabale District Veterinary Departmental Reports.
  165. Ibid.
  166. Batuma borrowed Government's Demonstration Land in February 1971 to return it any time they needed it back. When they demanded it back two years later he tried various methods to buy or exchange it but failed. Refer to correspondence between the Regional and District Agricultural Officers, with Batuma. Files: 'Land Commission-Kigezi Branch. Application For Land And Land Disputes', No.LAN 10/3 pt.iii, 1970; & No.LAN 10/3 pt.v. 1972.
  167. Conspiracies with chiefs would land such peasants in jail for failure to meet certain state demands, sanitation charges, etc. Such would force these peasants to sell their land. Such peasants' children would be sent out of school at wrong periods for building funds, uniform, etc. This class gained a lot of influence in education, religious institutions, etc. They were appointed to management boards for these institutions and influenced policies, won concessions, tenders and places for their children. Kigezi High School students complained to the DC about it in their memorandum of 24/8/1979 about their strike of 6/8/1979 'Replacement of academically capable students by financially capable upstarts', File No. Edu 10/1/C, 1971.
  168. As an example, Batuma was allocated the best three businesses in Kabale during the 1972 Economic War. This multiplied his capital assets and allowed him to diversify his economic ventures, leading him to emerge as a national capitalist.
  169. I am indebted to the late Siira Mutagaramba for the valuable information regarding vegetable trading since the 1960s.



170. K.D.A.R. 1961.
171. Ibid. This department was supposed to establish co-operative societies in the long run to handle both vegetable and coffee processing and selling. It secured a government contract to supply 14 hospitals, prisons and other institutions in Kampala. By the end of the year, it had formed the North Kigezi Co-operative Union and the three other affiliated societies were registered aimed at taking over the flue-cured tobacco business from Kigezi Development Company Ltd. By 1966, 1,300 growers had organised themselves into seven primary co-operative societies and a FAO expert had been stationed in Kabale. Agriculture Annual Report, 1966.
172. Interviews with workers, people in Kabale, students, the P.S. and other personnel in the Ministry of Education. It was gathered that the materials the Ministry of Education provided to build the TTC were used to build a storeyed hotel, a four-block, sixteen-flat complex for renting, a residential storeyed house, a go-down in Kabale that invested part of the profits in farming activities while other materials are said to have been smuggled out of the country. There is enough evidence to prove that the mafutamingi class was a beneficiary of magendo — smuggling, but this is beyond the scope of this study. There is no sign yet of completing this TTC: foundations dug 17 years ago have never been started on; other structures stopped after the damp course, others are half-way. The NTC Guild in 1988 advised the Ministry 'to revise the contract.' File No. Educ. 18 NTC, Kabale, 1984. KDA. Also refer to his contracts for Bubare Boarding Primary School and Bubare Secondary School.
173. Ibid. Kabale District Veterinary Department Reports.
174. District Veterinary Department and Agriculture Department Reports. Contrary to these falls, the DC Kigezi on 28/9/1928, while protesting to the PCWP against the C.M.S.'s exploitation of peasants through forced contribution of milking cows and enslavement of their owners, observed that 'the loss of a cow to a mkiga is equivalent to the loss by fire to a poor European, who has neither income, nor bank balance, of his house and all its contents— uninsured! A cow to a mkiga frequently represents the savings of a lifetime', File. C.M.S., N.A.
175. Ibid.
176. Bubare Farmers: Messrs. J. Batuma, G.J. Rubereti, Musinga, Tabaro and Zaribugire to Bubare Sub-County Chief, of 22/4/1981, entitled 'Trespassing On Our Farms'. File No. MIS 12/5 vi, 'Miscellaneous Land Disputes', 1980.
177. Loewenthal, 'A Survey of Diet and Nutritional Health at Giharo and Mutanda'.
178. Marx, Karl, Capital, vol. I p.714.
179. Letter of District Labour Officer, Kabale of 30/10/1981 and its addendum of 28/5/82 to Batuma on 'Employment of Children', File No. Lab 1/IV 1960. Kagonyera (1980) and Bakamwangiraki (1984) M.U. discovered exploitation of child wage labour on this farm.
180. Interviews with teachers, and peasants. The New Vision of February 24, 1988 highlighted this crisis. 'A wave of smuggling has hit Ndoorwa County

- in Kabale District involving school children aged between 10 and 18 years... The children are hired by smugglers... to carry cartons of hoes and cooking oil across to neighbouring countries'.
181. It was learnt that when parents accused these employers of luring children from school into wage labour, they argued that they were not the ones sending these children from school. This crisis was created by lack of a correct national economic and educational programme. Money exchange in 1986 worsened the general mass poverty in the peasantry and raised school fees by about 47 times in one term, leading to a wave of school dropouts.
182. Male workers on Batuma's farm used to get khaki overalls and soap. The overalls got old and no more soap was thereafter distributed. When the workers demanded them, a tailor was brought months ago, took their measurements but they had not received them yet.
183. I witnessed a quarrel at Ihanga farm between the newly transferred children workers and the headman over carrying logs.
184. These were the prices during my field research.
185. A doctor cousin told me that these were likely to be signs of malnutrition and vitamin deficiency.
186. 1981 Annual Report, District Labour Office, Kabale.
187. Batuma's farm produced a daily average of 900 litres. As a litre was Shs. 30, a daily gross income of Shs. 27,000 (new currency) was expected from milk. A dollar fetched Shs. 60. Past studies discovered a similar situation. Tumushabe (1981) discovered that in 1980, this farm had earned Shs. 2,942,214 from milk, of which Shs. 54,000 was spent on labour.
188. Peasant resistance to capital has been continuous. For instance, Ihanga peasants resisted Batuma from grabbing their land at Ihanga until the State stepped in. Refer to the DC's letter of 5/5/1983, File No. Mis 12/5 vii, 'Miscellaneous Land Disputes', 1982. They also resisted him when he wanted to take away their grazing land for planting eucalyptus trees for production purposes. Also refer to Files entitled: 'Miscellaneous Land Disputes', Nos. Mis 12/5 iii, 1963; Mis 12/5 iv, 1968; Mis 12/5 v, 1979; Mis 12/5 vi, 1980; Mis 12/5 vol.viii, 1983; Mis 12/5 vol ix, 1984; & Mis 12/5 1986. KDA.
189. He called them to resume work, promising to solve their problems while they worked. They banked on his promise and resumed work, without knowing what solutions he was going to provide. The farm manager and his assistant hinted that there was likely to be a rise of Shs. 40 per month for a worker while payment for overtime remained the same.
190. As already shown, child labour and women labour have now become the employers' weapons against workers' unity, organisation, demands and resistance. It is not surprising that workers at Bubare farm referred to the four children workers merely as 'the ones who had been transferred to Ihanga'.
191. In October 1987 the Labour Office, Kabale, reported that absenteeism and lateness were common in both the public and private sectors, because employees



- engaged themselves elsewhere first to meet their day-to-day needs and to supplement their inadequate salaries and wages.
192. This applies to some women workers, too. They have been raised to some higher levels depending on Batuma's choice. During this study, it was discovered that one woman had worked on this farm for about eight years. She came from the peasantry, was a divorcee and the most trusted foreperson in the wine-press. She exercised a lot of authority over the workers and was feared. The latest information was about her tragic death at work.
193. One worker at Ihanga farm explained the problem thus: 'My monthly wage cannot afford me anything. A plot of land around is between Shs. 15,000 and Shs. 20,000. My wage cannot buy a cow of Shs. 40,000. Even if one bought it, he would not be able to get land to graze it'.
194. Using their economic and political power, unity and organisation, they will try all methods to undermine and frustrate any workers' organisation in the area.
195. It was learnt that peasants are being encouraged to increase production of these items. Apart from consuming the scarce available land, eucalyptus trees spoil the soil, encourage pests and also lead to extinction of local species. Encouraging them to increase raw material production for his factory and farms without teaching them correspondingly any scientific methods of production, will catalyse their impoverishment and their dependence on these enterprises.
196. File: Mowlem International Ltd, No.19/40/18, 1981, Labour Department. Also discussions with Mowlem workers at Kabale, and District Labour Officer.

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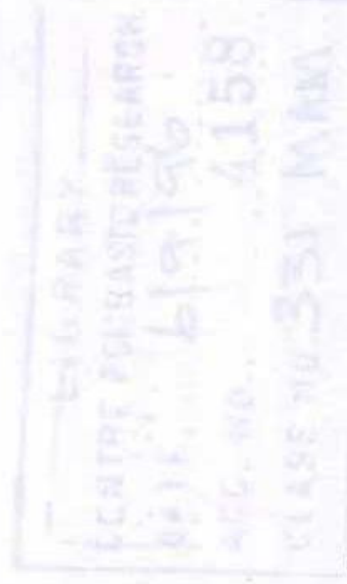


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## Uganda: Studies in Labour

Edited by  
**Mahmood Mamdani**



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