

HERBERT BAKER, THE UNION BUILDINGS, AND THE POLITICS OF ARCHITECTURAL PATRONAGE

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Abstract

In this article, the author argues that the patrons of the Union Buildings, Jan Christian Smuts and Louis Botha, commissioned this complex of buildings as a part of a specific political agenda during the process of the unification of South Africa: the project was intended as one means of bolstering political support for Botha's bid to head the first Union Government. This analysis provides a framework for a consideration of how the patron's political agenda conditioned Baker's initial work on the project.

Abstrak

In die artikel voer die skrywer aan dat die opdraggewers vir die Uniegeboue, naamlik Jan Christian Smuts en Louis Botha, die opdrag vir die oprigting vir die geboue uitgereik het vir duidelike politieke oorwegings. Dit was deel van hulle politieke agenda en die projek moes die funksie vervul van om die doel te laat realiseer deur te help verseker dat Botha politieke beheer oor die eerste Unie regering verkry. Hierdie artikel verskaf 'n verklaring van hoe die opdraggewer se politieke doelstrewes Baker se aanvanklike werk aan die projek beïnvloed het.

The Union Buildings, generally regarded as the crowning achievement of Baker's South African career, are well known for their rich political symbolism.¹ As many scholars have noted, Baker intended the buildings to glorify the basic premise of Union – reconciliation between Boer and Briton, represented in the plan of the structures – two identical office blocks connected by a semi-circular colonnaded building and amphitheatre² (Figure 2 and 4).

However, the political implications of this complex design are not yet well understood. My work furthers this understanding in two ways: first, by exploring the political agenda of the patrons, Jan Christian Smuts and Louis Botha, arguing that they perceived the commission as one means of consolidating political support for their bid to become leaders of the new Union Government; and, secondly, by investigating how this agenda conditioned Baker's initial designs for the project.

In order to understand the relationship between the Transvaal Colonial Government and Baker in conjunction with the Union Buildings, it is crucial to develop a conception of the patron as consisting not only of Louis Botha, then Prime Minister, and Jan Christian Smuts, then Colonial Secretary, but rather as consisting of a

government network comprised of Botha, Smuts, ministers, members of the Public Works Department, and other civil servants. While Botha and Smuts certainly held ultimate responsibility for the project, many other government officials conditioned the work as well. Therefore, the patron might most usefully be conceptualised as a government network under the control of Botha and Smuts.

The Political Origins of the Commission

The first section of this article examines the circumstances which led to Baker receiving the commission in June 1909. As the project was bound inextricably to the political agendas of Botha and Smuts in late 1908 and early 1909, and, in turn, to that of the architect, it is necessary to examine them in some detail: namely, Botha's and Smuts' manoeuvrings in connection with the choice of the new capital of the Union at the 1908-1909 National Convention at Durban; and Baker's relationship to the Milner Kindergarten.

As Doreen Greig points out in her pioneering study of Baker, Botha and Smuts commissioned the Union Buildings to house civil servants in Pretoria, as it had been decided at the National Convention, called



Figure 1:
Portrait of Herbert Baker, no date. C. P. Walgate Papers. (The University of Cape Town Libraries, Manuscripts and Archives Department.)

to consider the contents of a Draft Constitution for Union, that Pretoria would be the new administrative capital of the Union, with the legislature at Cape Town, and the judiciary at Bloemfontein (Greig 1970:173-4). However, when one examines

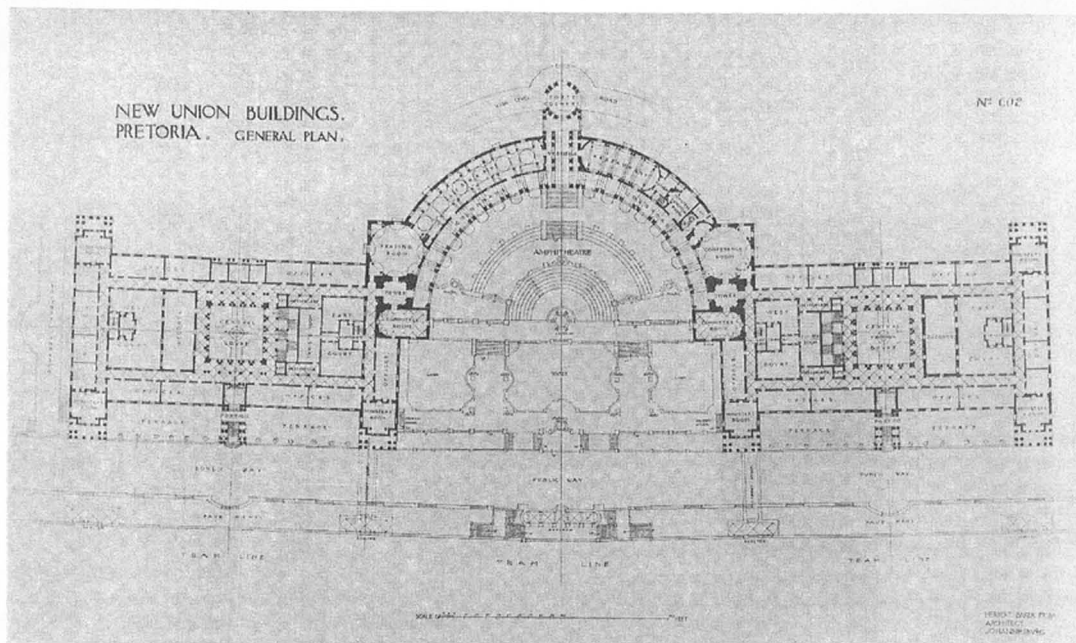


Figure 2:
H. Baker: *General plan of the Union Buildings.* (From: The State. Baker file, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.)

closely the debates over the site of the capital, a more complex story emerges. What is revealed is evidence that the commission was linked to a move by Botha and Smuts to develop Pretoria as the sole capital of the Union.

Although seemingly minor in comparison to other questions raised at the convention, the question of the capital was an explosive one, and threatened to bring proceedings to a halt in January 1909 after weeks of discussion. As Thompson points out in a detailed study of unification, the issue was controversial for both economic and sentimental reasons (Thompson 1960:294-305). The capital question had devolved into a contest between Pretoria and Cape Town, with delegates for each side convinced that this decision was crucial in determining their standing after union. The Cape delegates argued that Cape Town, as the capital of the most populous colony, was the only logical choice, while the Transvaal delegates, headed by Botha, argued that Pretoria deserved to be the capital as compensation for the financial sacrifices the Transvaal was making for union. Botha considered these sacrifices to be considerable; although southern Africa in general was suffering from a depressed economy, the expansion

of the Transvaal gold mining industry had left that colony in a more favourable financial position than that of other colonies. In the end, only the split decision concerning the choice of the capital, a decision engineered by Smuts to save the convention



Figure 3:
Louis Botha and Jan Christian Smuts. (State Archives, Central Archives Depot. SAB photo 8111. Pretoria.)

from total collapse, satisfied all parties. As a measure of the perceived economic importance of the decision, Thompson points out that the colonial capitals which did not become the capital – that is, Bloemfontein and Pietermaritzburg – were to be compensated for diminution of prosperity or decreased rateable value, with annual payments from the revenue fund of two percent of their municipal debts as existing in January 1909, for up to twenty-five years (Thompson 1960:304).

Although the capital decision was embodied in section 135 of the Draft Constitution, and the delegates had made a gentleman's agreement not to agitate for amendments to this portion of the document, in many minds the decision was far from final. Many people, including the press and politicians, considered the compromise merely experimental, and subject to change in the near future. Cape politicians feared the loss of the legislature to the Transvaal: during debates considering amendments to the Draft Constitution in the Cape House of Assembly in April, W. P. Schreiner voiced this concern, "probably in the long run Pretoria would become the capital of South Africa, holding the cards against any other centres". Haldane Murray echoed this

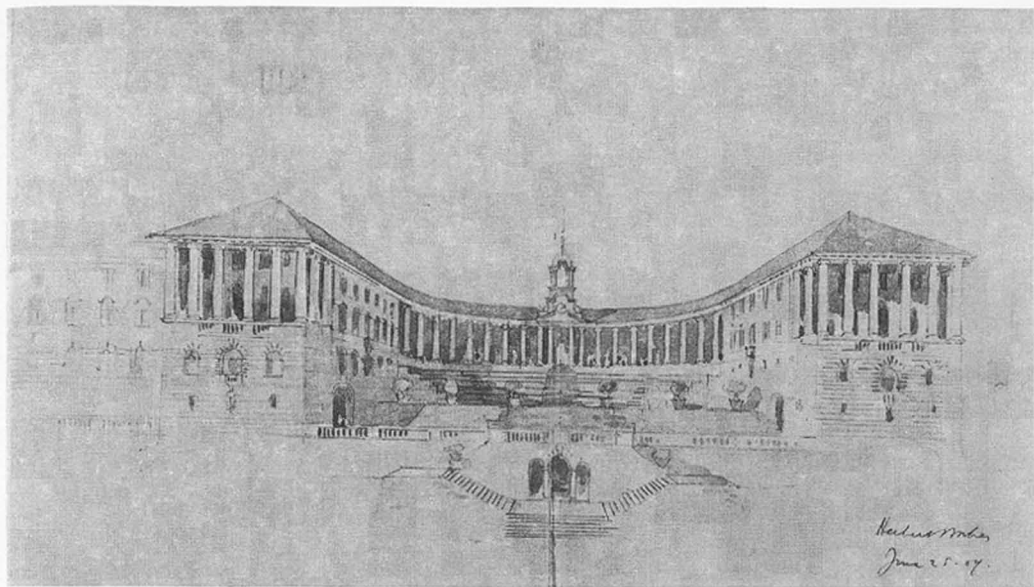


Figure 4:
H. Baker: *Preliminary water-colour sketch for the Union Buildings*, dated 25th June 1909. (State Archives, Central Archives Depot. file PWD 5269, vol. 1. Pretoria.)

concern: "If large amounts of money were spent on buildings at Pretoria it would very soon be used as a strong argument in favour of the capital being placed there altogether".³

Evidence that Botha and Smuts perceived the commission for the Union Buildings as linked to the possibility of Pretoria becoming the sole capital of the Union is present in all of Baker's earliest known drawings for the project. A perspective

water-colour sketch dated June 25, 1909 includes a parliament building on the *kopie* directly behind the central amphitheatre block (Figure 4). This building also appears in a more detailed drawing of the same date (Figure 5). These drawings suggest two possibilities: that Botha and Smuts suggested the inclusion of such a building in Baker's initial designs, or that the building was Baker's idea for the future development of the city as sole capital. In either case, the drawings indicate that Botha

and Smuts were aware of such a possibility for the city. Baker carefully referred to the problem in a letter to Luyens of October 21, 1909:

You understand the dome on the top is not even mentioned yet – as under the Union the Capital bifurcates – and the parliament is at Cape Town – but we must allow for it.⁴

Viewed within the context of the ongoing debate concerning the location of the Union capital, the Transvaal Colonial Government's move, in March 1909, to ask the

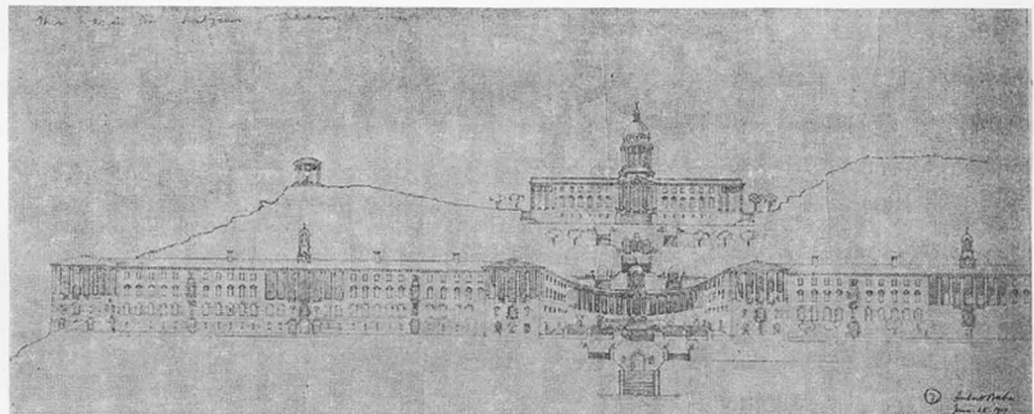


Figure 5:
H. Baker: *Perspective drawing of the Union Buildings*, dated 25th June 1909. (Lut 240. 12. British Architectural Library, RIBA.)



Figure 6:
Milner's Kindergarten. Patrick Duncan Papers. (The University of Cape Town Libraries, Manuscripts and Archives Department.)

Public Works Department to put forward preliminary sketches showing suggestions for a scheme of Union offices to be erected on government property on Market Street, now Paul Kruger Street, appears in a different light. This move should be viewed not merely as the first step towards providing necessary offices for the new administrative capital, but as the first step towards the possibility of developing Pretoria as the sole new capital city of a unified South Africa, a project that Botha and Smuts perceived as crucially linked to the continued prosperity and prestige of the Transvaal, and to their own power and authority as politicians both before and after unification.

Not only was the commission for the Union Buildings linked to Smuts' and Botha's political agenda in early 1909, it was also bound to that of the Milner Kindergarten, as Baker received the commission through his friendship with members of this group who worked closely with Smuts. As is well known, Baker was close to members of the Kindergarten, a group of young men, mainly Oxford graduates, who went to South Africa at the invitation of the British High Commissioner Lord Milner, to help with the task of reconstruction after the second Boer War (Baker 1944:49-50) (Figure 6). Baker, too, was invited by Milner to help in the

task of reconstruction; although he was not officially a member of the group, he appears to have participated frequently in Kindergarten activities, particularly in discussions, and built homes for various members, for example, Stonehouse in Johannesburg, originally constructed for Lionel Curtis.

The Kindergarten at this time was working closely with Smuts, who had as early as 1907 begun to harness their skill, energy, and youthful enthusiasm as expert advisers and propagandists in the drive to convince both the Dutch and the British of the desirability of South African unification (Nimcocks 1968:75-76, 102-105; Thompson 1960:157-159). Despite the fact that the Kindergarten was working closely with Smuts, it should be made clear that the Kindergarten held a view of South African political policy that was radically different, in fact, in many ways opposed to that of Botha and Smuts. The Kindergarten wholeheartedly supported unification, as they believed that, although at first union would bring Boer leaders to power throughout South Africa, union would eventually cause their political decline. According to this theory, union would bring prosperity, prosperity would bring more British immigrants, and eventually through greater numbers, power would be

transferred to the British, thus firmly securing South Africa as part of the Empire, fulfilling Milner's goal for the region. One wonders whether Baker subscribed to these views. Baker greatly admired the Kindergarten, and participated in many of its activities. It appears that his enthusiasm for the ideals of Cecil Rhodes, later expounded in his biography *Cecil Rhodes by his architect* – that is, Rhodes' dream of creating a united Africa under British imperial rule – found expression through Kindergarten activities. While it remains unclear whether Baker supported specific Kindergarten initiatives, Baker shared with this group of men a firm belief in the rightness of British imperialism (Baker 1944:20-46).

For the Kindergarten, unification meant fulfilment of Milner's imperial goals. For Botha and Smuts, unification meant something quite different: their ascendancy as leaders of the Union and the complete restoration of the Boer power in South Africa, with limited interference from Britain. As a means to this end, the central theme of Het Volk policy in the Transvaal under Botha and Smuts, from the beginning of the drive for closer Union in 1907, was conciliation. For Smuts and Botha, who worked as a team, this meant fostering attempts on the side of the British, and of the Dutch, to bury bitter memories of the Boer Wars, and work together for the common good of a new, unified nation. Thus, in 1909, Smuts, Botha and the Kindergarten had a common goal in unification.

It was a member of the Kindergarten, R. H. Brand, who was the critical link between Smuts and Baker. As Baker wrote to Lutyens in late June: "He (Brand) is one of Milner's young men, who have had such influence with the government, and it is through this influence that I have got these Railway Buildings to do and also the Union Buildings for the capital at Pretoria".⁵ In late 1908 and early 1909, Smuts was working particularly closely with Brand, who helped prepare alternative draft documents for the National Convention (Thompson 1960:157-59).

At Smuts' request, it was Brand who wrote a report advising on the probable requirements for the Union Buildings. By late March, Baker had already concluded negotiations with Brand, who was secretary to the Railway Board for the Pretoria Railway Station project, and had begun preliminary sketch designs.⁶ Although there is little evidence to suggest exactly when the government first approached



Figure 7:
Site of the Union Buildings, no date. (Cleland file, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.)

Baker concerning the Union Buildings, by June 2nd he was discussing the matter of contracts with E. P. Solomon, Minister of Public Works, and debating the question of whether he would be the sole architect, or consulting architect, as the government first proposed.⁷ Certainly, Baker was a logical choice for the job, considering his reputation for buildings such as Government House in Pretoria, but from the available evidence one must conclude that it was Baker's political connection to the Milner Kindergarten, and in turn to Jan Smuts, that ultimately secured him the commission.

Initial Designs

The second section of this article focuses on analysing Baker's initial designs for the project, exploring how Smuts, Botha and Baker perceived these designs as successfully embodying very different conceptions of South African political policy, and in turn how Botha and Smuts perceived the project as bolstering their political program during mid-1909.

In a letter of June 26, 1909, and in several drawings and sketches, Baker presented his ideas to Botha⁸ (Figures 4 and 5). He explains that the site is on a plateau, broken

by a small *kloof*, or ravine, with a natural amphitheatre behind, and that he intended to place one block of offices, those immediately required by the government – about 250 in all – on one side of the *kloof*, and that another block might be completed at a later date on the other side (Figure 7). He suggests that, in the future, the two blocks could be linked together by a semicircular colonnaded building, and the space between laid out with terraces, gardens and statues. Also in the future, an outdoor amphitheatre of seats could be constructed, which would lead by a flight of steps to a future dome atop a parliament building. On the point of another *kopje*, he would construct a Union Monument, or temple of peace. Future buildings and an open park would extend down to Church Street.

There are several striking things about this proposal. Baker stresses that the buildings as proposed could, if necessary, be built in stages, a persuasive argument for such an elaborate scheme being started even with a small amount of money. The complexity and relative sophistication of the project is astounding, considering that there was nothing comparable anywhere in South Africa. The inclusion of an amphitheatre suggests that Baker had studied the latest developments of American and European capital cities – for example, there is evidence that he studied closely the design of Washington, DC, and understood the importance of providing spaces for government ceremony and ritual – such as processions and speeches – reflecting the renewed importance of such ceremonies for the modern state.⁹

As mentioned earlier in this article, the inclusion of a parliament building on the *kopje* behind the main office blocks indicates that he was aware of the possibility that Pretoria might one day become the sole capital of the Union; this feature appears in all his sketches of 1909. While there is reference to reconciliation of Boer and Briton embodied in the idea of two office blocks connected by a semi-circular colonnaded building, there is no allusion of any kind to the non-white population of Southern Africa.

In order to understand how Baker envisioned this initial design as functioning politically, it is necessary to examine it in the light of an article Baker contributed to the Kindergarten's journal of unification propaganda, *The State*, in May 1909, entitled "The Architectural Needs of South Africa". In this article, Baker argues for

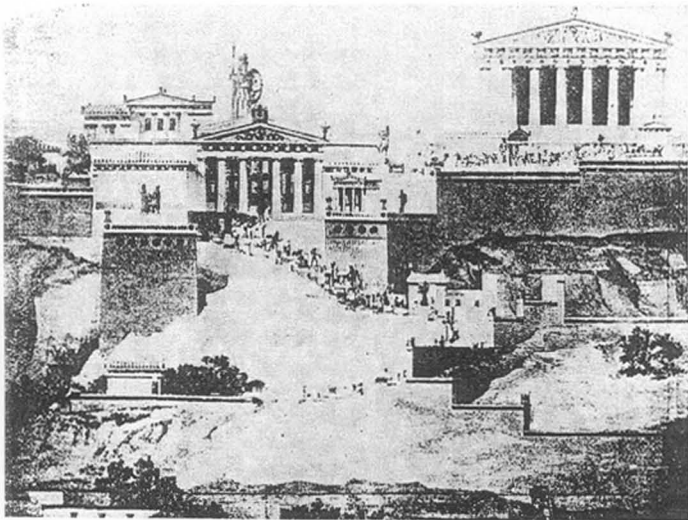


Figure 8:
Reconstruction of the Athenian Acropolis. (From H. Baker, "The Architectural Needs of South Africa," *The State*, May 1909. Baker file, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.)

the revival in the laying out and design of our cities and buildings of those principles of largeness of conception, restraint, and subordination of detail to a central idea which inspired what has sometimes been called the grand manner of architecture (Baker 1909:512).

Here, Baker analyses architecture and urbanism from a variety of cultures and periods, including Egyptian, Greek, Roman and modern classical work from France, England and America, in an attempt to isolate and describe the basic principles of the Grand Manner. For example, the basic components of ancient design that he finds laudable are: an acropolis site, monumentality, carefully studied scale of buildings, and the asymmetrical arrangement of buildings on different levels. All of these components are present in a restoration drawing of the Athenian Acropolis (Figure 8). What is striking is that all of these aspects also are present in the designs for the Union Buildings. What Baker identifies as the primary way that architecture and urbanism in the Grand Manner communicate their political content to the viewer is the way in which the structures and spaces are designed and arranged to impress the viewer from a distance. He suggests that it is primarily in this way that architecture expresses its political nature and value, embodying "The idea of civic and national dignity and power" (Baker 1909:513).

If this is the way that Baker perceived his initial designs for the Union Buildings as functioning politically, what then was Baker's perception of the design's specific political content? Considering Baker's adherence to Rhodes' ideals, the complex was, in his eyes, one step towards the realisation of Rhodes' dreams of a new South African nation constructed within the framework of British nationalism and British imperialism. How could such a conception have been acceptable to Smuts and Botha, considering their antipathy towards imperialism? We have only Baker's account of their reaction to his initial ideas; in his autobiography, Baker describes taking Smuts to the site:

He, with his quick insight and imagination, at once visualised the idea. . . . He and Botha thought, as Rhodes thought, in Christopher Wren's famous words . . . architecture has its political use: public buildings being the ornament of a country; it establishes a nation, draws people and commerce, makes the people love their native country, which Passion is the original of all great actions in the commonwealth (Baker 1944:58).

While it is not clear that Smuts and Botha actually held these views, it is clear that they gave preliminary approval to Baker's ideas before leaving for London as part of the

delegation to see the South African Bill through the British Parliament. In their absence, Baker negotiated the terms of his contract with the Public Works Department.¹⁰

In order to understand why Botha and Smuts accepted such an elaborate scheme, it is essential to recall that, during 1909, Botha was in the precarious situation of beginning to position himself as candidate to head the first Union Government. He and Smuts were

It might be objected here that as the project was, at this stage, merely a design, how could it have been perceived by the patron as capable of influencing opinion, and thus bolstering support for Botha's leadership. Botha, in October 1909, informed the heads of the other colonial governments of the existence and nature of the project, and by January 1910 the press had begun to discuss the scheme at some length, at precisely the moment when politicians began new government.¹¹



Figure 9:
Convicts working on the site of the Union Buildings, no date. (Cleland file, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.)

attempting, by every conceivable means, to consolidate support for Botha over other political candidates such as the Cape politician John X. Merriman. The Union Buildings appear to be one of these means. Baker, as evidenced by his article in *The State*, was convinced of the role of architecture and urbanism in focusing attention on the power of government, and as a medium which would draw people together through the strength of a common bond – that of nationalism. Possibly Baker persuaded Smuts and Botha of the plausibility of these views; certainly his designs for the Union Buildings provided for a highly visible indication of the economic power and prestige of the unification, and could be perceived in multiple ways as a symbol of reconciliation, of British imperialism, and of a new South African nationalism.

Development of the Designs

The third section of this article examines the way that the client conditioned the development of Baker's designs for the building. Two points are striking about the development of the commission from August 1909 onwards. The first is the immense speed with which Baker produced his sketch designs and contract drawings, a pace which Botha and Smuts imposed on the architect. This process began in early August; Baker could not develop his sketches in earnest before this, as J. F. B. Rissik, the Minister of Land, had not concluded the purchase of the site until August 9th. Consequently, before this date Baker and the Surveyor General could not inspect, survey, or take levels on the site for fear of raising the price of the land.¹² Baker's imposed goal was to have the contract drawings complete in February 1910, tenders accepted and

contract signed, and the site prepared and handed over to the contractor before unification on 31 May 1910.

The second noteworthy point is that Baker's initial design sketches, which he had developed further between early August and the end of November 1909, were defended against the specific sweeping criticisms of an advisory committee formed at the Transvaal Government's request, which consisted of Piercy Eagle, the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department, De Zwaan, a well known Dutch architect in Pretoria, as well as against basic criticism of the necessity of the project voiced by the other three colonial governments. Despite opposition, most of Baker's ideas received cabinet approval by November 24, 1909; the

exception was the amphitheatre block, which received approval in February 1910. Although plans were in preliminary stages during this period, the levelling, filling in and excavation of the site were underway by November 1909¹³ (Figure 9). What were the reasons behind these extraordinary procedures?

The initial object of the rush appears to have been to keep Transvaal money, appropriated during the Spring of 1909 for public buildings in Pretoria, for the purpose of erecting the Union Buildings, further evidence that the project was connected closely to Botha and Smuts' political agenda during mid-1909. The story of the money began when the Cape politicians, John Merriman, Botha's main rival for the

premiership of the Union, and Sir W. Hely-Hutchinson, as early as March 1909, suspected that Botha was devising ways to spend as much Transvaal money as possible for the benefit of that colony before Union. Hely-Hutchinson was puzzled by Botha's reluctance to support the British High Commissioner Lord Selborne's advice that the British government consider the South Africa Bill at the end of July or beginning of August. Botha continued to insist on a later, special Autumn session, rejecting Merriman's claim that such a delay might be devastating to the bill's chance of being passed. Hely-Hutchinson, looking for a reason for Botha's view, wrote to Merriman:

It has occurred to me that Botha's motive in wishing to see the constitution through without amendment (here he is referring to the Colonial Parliaments), and yet wishing to delay its passage through the British Parliament may be that he wants time to spend most of the five million loan before unification materialises. I can propose no other solution.¹⁴

Evidence of money spent on the Union Buildings in 1909-1910 suggests not only that the Transvaal government wished to spend Transvaal money for its own benefit, but also by 31 October 1910, when the first Union Parliament met, Smuts and Botha had committed the Union to a considerable expenditure on the buildings. The story of the money continued when Botha addressed a circular letter, in October 1909, to the Prime Minister of the Cape, John Merriman; of Natal, F. R. Moor; and of the Orange River Colony, Abraham Fischer. In this letter, Botha explained that the Transvaal wished to re-allocate 150,000 pounds voted for public buildings in Pretoria for the purpose of constructing buildings to house the Central Union Administration, stressing the Union character of the project.¹⁵

The other colonial governments appear to have been well aware of the motives behind the scheme, as evidenced by their critical replies to Botha's letter. Fischer wanted the project stopped until after Union, when all the colonies could advise on the subject. Fischer wrote to Merriman in December, explaining his reply to Botha:

In regard to these office buildings in Pretoria: as I told Malan, since the Transvaal was determined to spend the money in bricks and mortar, I thought it better that 'Union' should have the benefit of it rather than the Province.

Merriman, in his reply to Botha, suggested that rather than stop the work, each colony send a representative as soon as possible to Pretoria to advise on the matter. Moor was concerned that the 150,000 pounds not be debited to the Union Government. Despite these objections, Botha continued with the project.¹⁶

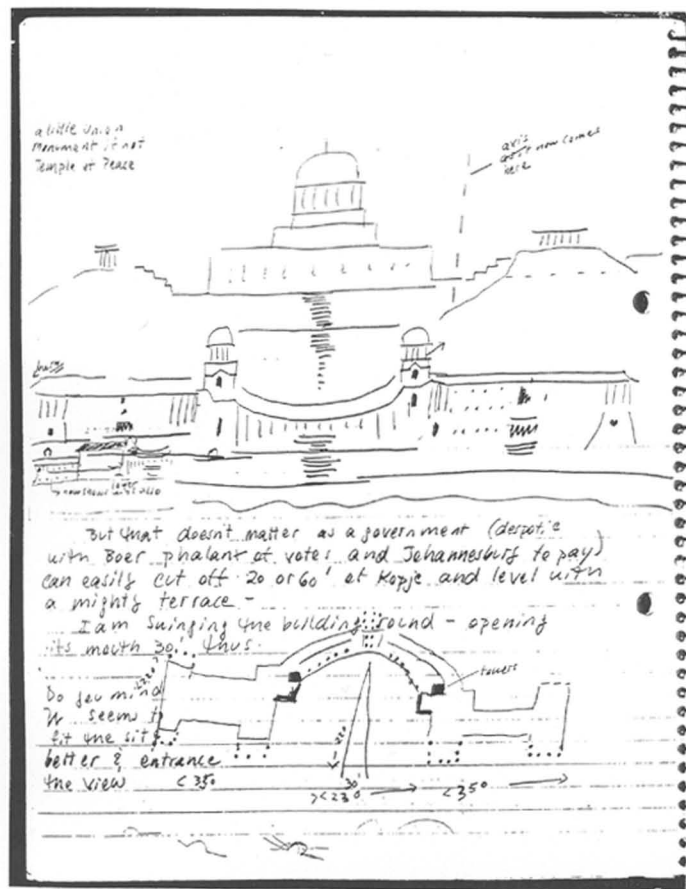


Figure 10: H. Baker: Preliminary sketches for the Union Buildings. (Lutyens correspondence, October 21, 1909. British Architectural Library, RIBA.)



Figure 11:
H. Baker: *Perspective drawing of the Union Buildings*, no date. (Lut 240. 13. British Architectural Library, RIBA.)

But the question of money did not stop here. The 1909 estimates for the building were between 400,000 and 500,000 pounds.¹⁷ In April 1910, the Transvaal Minister of Finance informed E. P. Solomon, Minister of Public Works, that the Transvaal Parliament had set aside 377,000 pounds as that colony's contribution to the cost of constructing the Union Buildings, implying that the remainder would be debited to the Union Government. However, the Transvaal Parliament did not actually vote on this amount. Moreover, on April 13th the first contract for the East and West blocks was signed for 622,500 pounds, and the second contract, for the amphitheatre work, was signed on May 21st, a contract worth 250,000 pounds. By the time that the first Union Parliament met in October 1910, the Transvaal had committed the union to a considerable sum – the total at this time was over one million pounds, and was committed to illegally, without the consent of any parliament, either colonial or union.

Ultimately, the responsibility for such undertakings was Botha's, further evidence that Botha and Smuts sought to make use of the buildings to suit their own political purposes. Baker appears to have been well aware not only of the need to rush the preliminary steps for the project through before Union, but also of the reasons behind it – in December 1909 he wrote Lutyens:

I am here absurdly rushed over this building – though this is all to my advantage. The Transvaal Government is autocratic and rich – nice combination, if on your side – but after Union next May, when the other jealous governments representing other colonies come in and will have their say in the building, all will be different. So we cannot wait, get the contract signed first.¹⁸

During this period, Baker developed his sketches further, which the government rapidly approved. By September, Baker began showing sketch plans to ministers,

whom he met with frequently thereafter.¹⁹ He met mainly with small groups of ministers, usually including Smuts and E. P. Solomon; other ministers would attend if the nature of the problem to be considered required their expertise. The main changes to the design aimed at improving the way that the work would impress the viewer from a distance; the primary way that Baker believed architecture in the Grand Manner performed its political function.

By September, Baker had added two domes to the design, one on either block, which would, according to him, lead the eye up to a greater dome, which would be "emblematical of union".²⁰

By October, the two domes had become twin towers (Figures 10 and 11), as evidenced by a sketch dated October 21st, and as seen in later drawings. It is not clear how Baker arrived at this solution; the government did not suggest it.

Two other major refinements to the design were suggested to Baker in his meetings with various ministers. The first refinement consisted of shifting the axis of the building on to the line of the natural axis of the *kloof*, in conformity, as far as possible, with the natural contour of the ground.

The second refinement was an adjustment of the preparation and relation of the side wings and the centre opening. As seen in Baker's sketch, he was considering swinging the western block around slightly, in order to open the mouth of the amphitheatre (Figure 10). By December, the ministers had approved widening the amphitheatre by twenty feet.²¹

During this period, Baker's designs were also open to criticism from a special

committee, consisting of Eagle and De Zwaan. The Government appears to have appointed this special committee in order to diffuse opposition to the scheme within the Public Works Department, and the architectural profession as a whole; such opposition centred on the fact that the Government chose Baker as architect without a competition. Eagle and De Zwaan's November report on the scheme was highly critical of every aspect of Baker's work, and ended with a plea to the government to consider alternate designs. However, when the cabinet reviewed this report at a meeting on 24 November 1909, it was decided that no time was available to consider alternate schemes. Consequently, Baker's designs received approval, with the exception of the amphitheatre, and he was instructed to begin contract drawings.²²

Conclusion

What emerges from a consideration of the early history of the Union buildings from the standpoint of patronage is evidence that Smuts and Botha perceived the project as a highly visible indication of the Transvaal's economic power and prestige, a project which, in the eyes of the architect and patron, was intended as a richly evocative symbol of a new South African nationalism in a new capital city. As such, Smuts and Botha perceived the building as one way, however small, to help consolidate support for Botha during a period of profound political upheaval; consolidation that was perceived as crucial in order for Botha to successfully gain, and maintain control of the First Union Government.

NOTES

- This article is adapted from a lecture, "Herbert Baker and the Politics of the Union buildings," delivered in May 1991 in the Department of Architecture, the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to acknowledge support for my research on Baker from the Human Sciences Research Council, and the Northwestern University Grants Committee. My work on the Union Buildings is part of a longer socio-political study of British imperial architecture, "Government Architecture and British Imperialism: Patronage and Imperial Policy in London, Pretoria and New Delhi (1900-1931)".
- No systematic study of the history of the Union Buildings exists. For a general history, see Greig 1970:173-196; for a short study of Edwin Lutyens' involvement with the project, see Radford 1988:62-69.
- Speculation on the capital question abounds in the contemporary press; for example see "The Compromise," *The Star* (Johannesburg, 5 February 1909). For the exchange between Botha and Merriman, see Thompson 1960: 294-305. For Schreiner and Murray's remarks, see *The Minutes of the Senate House of Assembly 1909* (Cape of Good Hope, 30 March-17 April 1909), pp86-87.
- Letter Herbert Baker to Edwin Lutyens (21 October 1909), British Architectural Library, RIBA.
- Letter Herbert Baker to Edwin Lutyens (26 June 1909), British Architectural Library, RIBA.
- See the series of letters between Baker and Brand during March 1909. Baker letterbook 15 (2 March-16 June 1909), Strange Africana Library, Johannesburg Public Library.
- See letter Herbert Baker to E. P. Solomon, Minister of Public Works (3 June 1909), State archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498A, part 1. I have been unable to locate a copy of Brand's report to Smuts; references to this report appear throughout Baker's correspondence with the Public Works Department. State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498A.
- Letter Herbert Baker to Louis Botha (26 June 1909) State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498. Baker states that he submitted a block plan and two perspective drawings to Smuts and Botha; two sketches and one perspective drawing are extant each dated 25 June 1909.
- On Washington, DC, see Herbert Baker, "The Architectural Needs of South Africa", *The State* (May 1909), pp512-524.
- See correspondence between Baker and E. P. Solomon, State archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498.

- Letter Botha to Fischer, Merriman and Moor (21 October 1909), State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498. The Union Buildings scheme was discussed widely in the press beginning in January 1910; for example see *De Volkstem* (4 January 1910)
- See minute from Charles Murray, Secretary of Public Works, concerning the acquisition of land (10 August 1909), State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498A, part 1.
- See letter Charles Murray to W. J. de Zwaan (13 October 1909), State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498A, part 3, and letter Charles Murray to the Director of Prisons (28 October 1909), PWD file 5269 vol. 1498A, part 3 to arrange for 200 convicts to begin work on the site on November 3. On Baker's meeting with the ministry in November, see memo from Eagle and De Zwaan (24 November 1909), PWD file 5269 vol. 1498A, part 3.
- Letter Sir W. Hely-Hutchinson to John X. Merriman (20 March 1909), John X. Merriman Papers, South African Library, Cape Town.
- Letter Botha to Fischer, Merriman and Moor (21 October 1909), State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498.
- Letter Fischer to Botha (25 October 1909); letter Merriman to Botha (22 October 1909); memo Moor to Botha (2 November 1909), State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498. Letter Fischer to Merriman (6 December 1909), John X. Merriman Papers, South African Library, Cape Town.
- See minute from Louis Botha (25 November 1909) indicating approval of 10,000 pounds to meet the cost of levelling the site, and building roads to the site. State Archives, Pretoria Treasury file 3281. Details of the economics of the building are discussed in *Union of South Africa House of Assembly Debates. First Session First Parliament 1910-1911*, particularly pp847-855; 923-931; 1326-1330. For initial estimates, see also letters between Baker and Murray (October-December 1909), State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498.
- Letter Herbert Baker to Edwin Lutyens (6 December 1909), British Architectural Library, RIBA.
- Murray detailing the proceedings of these meetings. State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498.
- Letter Herbert Baker to Charles Murray. State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498.
- See series of letters between Herbert Baker and Charles Murray. State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498.
- P. Eagle and W. J. de Zwaan, "Report on Designs for Union Buildings" (November 1909), State Archives, Pretoria PWD file

5269 vol. 1498; and letter Baker to Murray (25 November 1909), State Archives, Pretoria PWD file 5269 vol. 1498.

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