

THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Part II: Melanesia

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Melanesia, or the "black Islands," derives its name from the general skin color of the people. And, as the name might suggest, racism runs stronger here than elsewhere in the Pacific, as does the true, undisguised spirit of colonialism. This comes as no surprise if we recall that three out of the four island groups in Melanesia are still colonies of European countries: the Solomon Islands (United Kingdom), New Caledonia (France), and the incredible New Hebrides (United Kingdom and France). Only Papua New Guinea (PNG) has entered the postcolonial phase, having broken the long colonial ties with Australia in 1975 through termination of the UN Trusteeship Agreement.

The persistence of colonies in Melanesia, while all of Polynesia has crossed into the postcolonial period, makes perfectly good sense from a colonial point of view: the islands, to one degree or another, offer riches not obtainable in the mother country. These riches come in different forms, ranging from New Caledonia's nickel to the tax-haven profits in the New Hebrides.

And there is land, great tracts of it in comparison with Polynesia and Micronesia. Much of the land is in the hands of white foreigners, some of which was alienated as recently as 1970 through sham real estate sales made in Hawaii. Blessed with a considerable variety in the topography, the land of Melanesia has great potential for timber, beef, diversified agriculture, and, the most prized of nature's gifts, minerals, including gold and possibly oil.

One must still talk in terms of potential, for development has only recently begun in Melanesia, except for New Caledonia's nickel mines, which go back before the turn of the century. By and large,

the rest of Melanesia, until World War II, continued along relatively steady traditional lines, with most of its people living in the "bush," except for those few employed by the plantations and in colonial administrative centers.

The great Pacific War changed all that. Guadalcanal, Bougainville, New Georgia, the Coral Sea... all memorable names from the early 1940s, and all of them in that part of the South Pacific called Melanesia. Although World War II did not ravage the islands of Melanesia as it did those of Micronesia, it had a lasting impact throughout. Apart from giving rise to cargo cults of various types, the great war exposed Melanesia to a much larger world than the islanders had known before, a world which promised uncountable cargoes of treasures.

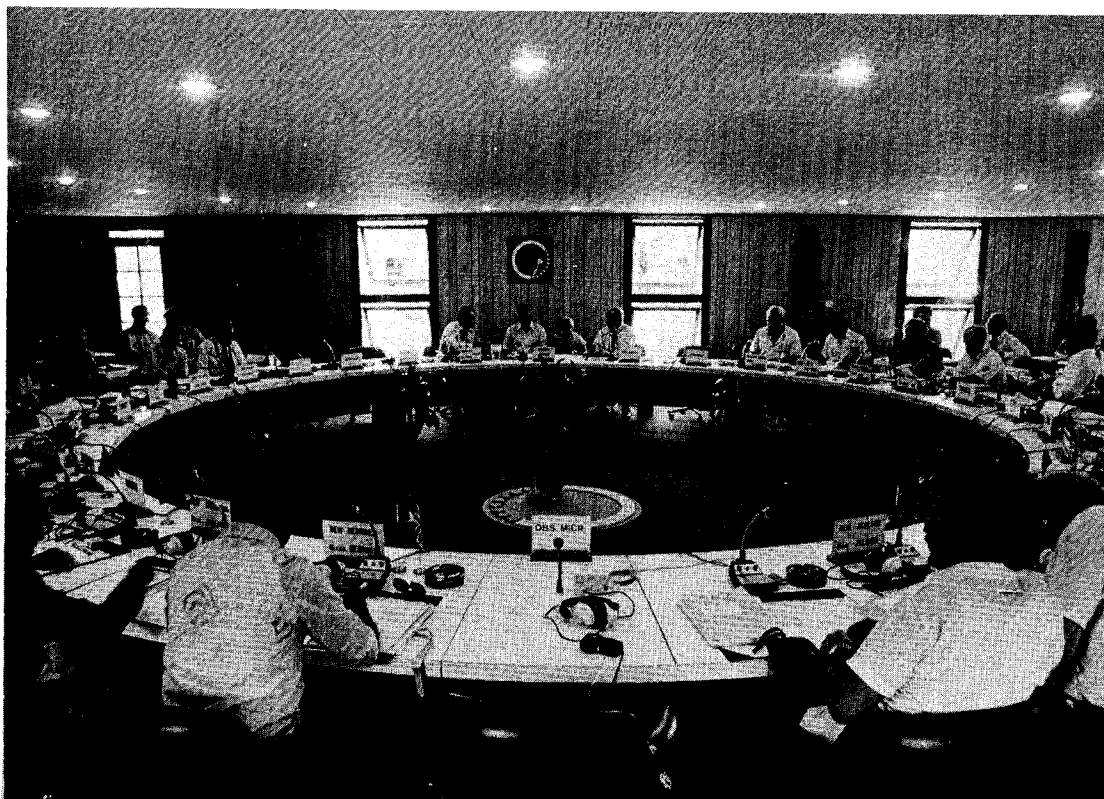
Compared with Polynesia, missionaries, the earliest form of development, came late to Melanesia, as did their colonial administrative colleagues. While Polynesians were learning to make Western clothes and build churches, Melanesians were still waging tribal warfare, often against the first white missionaries who tried to establish bases, but were driven out. When Christianity did begin to take root in Melanesia, the bearers of the gospel were the amiable Polynesians who had progressed from being mere converts to proselytizers. Thus, in the Pacific movement toward Westernization, the Polynesians were well ahead of their black-skinned brothers to the west, and the gap has never been closed.

No doubt another reason for the comparative lack of development is the land area involved. Whereas many of the Polynesian and Micronesian islands can be seen in their entirety from one look-out point, some of the Melanesian islands look more like continents, with high mountain ranges,

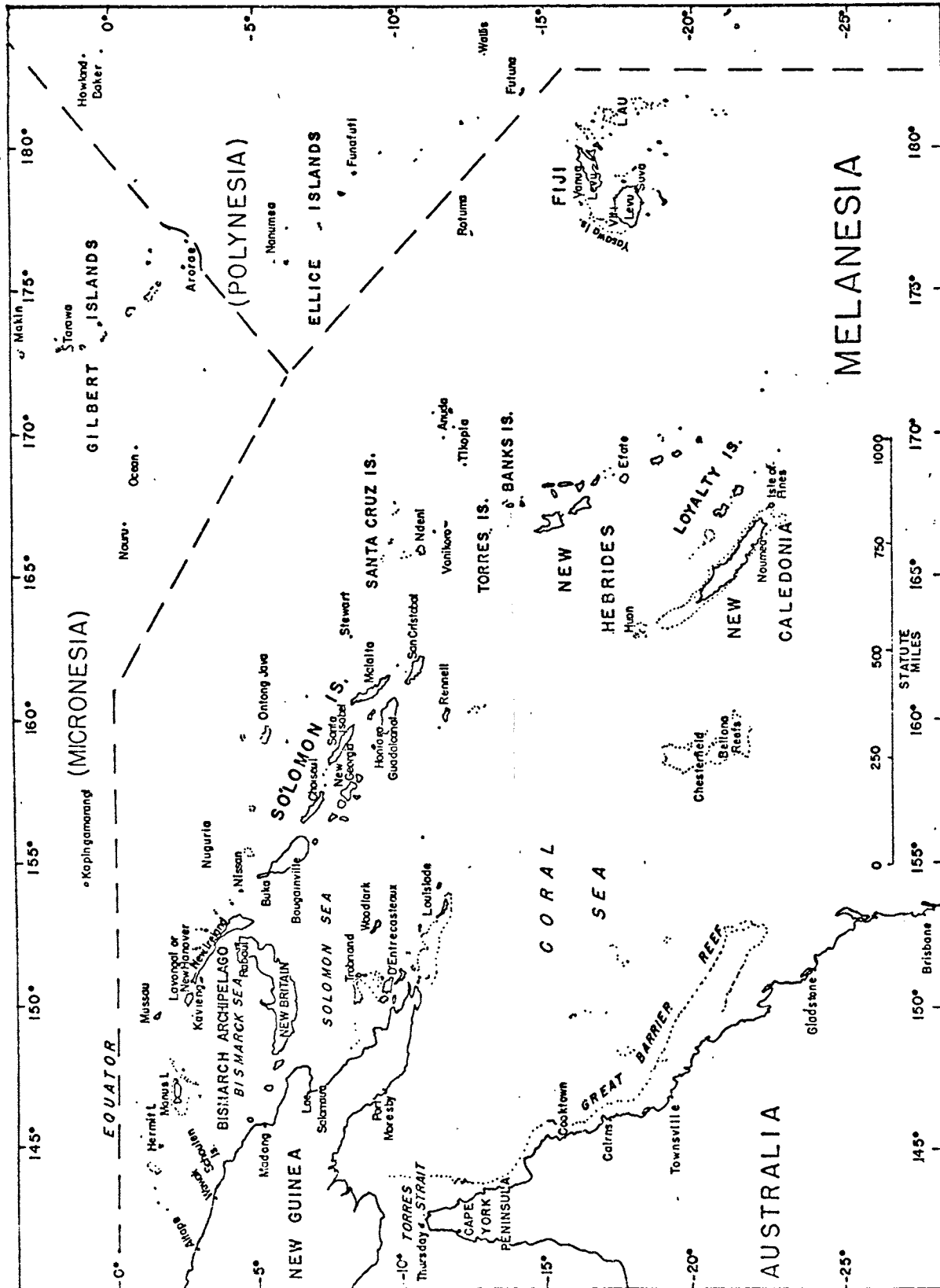
TABLE I

MELANESIA: Land Areas and Populations
 (Fiji and Samoa, the biggest of the Polynesian communities,
 are included for comparison)

	Sq. Km.	Population	Approximate No. of Languages
Papua New Guinea	461,691	2.75 mil.	750
Solomons	28,446	195,000	87
New Hebrides	14,763	98,000	70
New Caledonia	19,000	132,000	32
Fiji	18,272	569,000	3-6
W. Samoa	2,842	151,000	1



The Sixteenth South Pacific Conference, the United Nations of the South Seas.



Map courtesy Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Pacific Scientific Information Center.

vast jungles, almost steppe-like plains, and navigable rivers. There was simply not enough time to conduct even initial explorations in some parts of Papua New Guinea until the 1950s.

The inhabitants of Melanesia have some sense of kindred spirit, but not so strongly as in Polynesia. On the contrary, diversity is much more pronounced. The limited feeling of common identity that does exist is divided between the northern part of Melanesia (Papua New Guinea and the Solomons) and the southern part (the New Hebrides and New Caledonia). The kinship felt between the New Hebrides and New Caledonia is rather distant, and is restricted to the Francophone population (less than half) of the New Hebrideans. That which exists between Papua New Guinea and the Solomons is much closer, and has certain aspects of big brotherhood, with the Solomons in the role of the younger, imitative sibling.

The diversity of Melanesia is unparalleled in the Pacific, probably in the entire world. Vigorous Polynesian groups are found in the New Hebrides, Solomons, and Papua New Guinea. Ebony-skinned Bougainvilleans debate with the tan, wavy-haired Papuans in the Legislative Assembly hall at Port Moresby, and Solomon Islanders display a kaleidoscopic array of skin and hair colors, with any combination seemingly possible. The religions and social systems in Melanesia are as varied as the 900-plus languages that are spoken, more than 750 of them in Papua New Guinea alone. In many areas, tribes living no more than a few hundred yards distant must use Melanesian pidgin or French as a *lingua franca*.

Such diversity, of course, adds a complex dimension to the problems of decolonization and nationhood, which is no doubt another factor in Melanesia's developing later than Polynesia, first as colonies and now as countries. Papua New Guinea's first secessionist problem after independence (which started long before) can be attributed, at least in part, to the Bougainvillean's lack of cultural or ethnic identity with the rest of PNG. Their *wantoks* (soul brothers) are in the Solomon Islands. (Note that *wantok* means literally "same language"—one talk.) To say that such diversity hinders national identification and development is an understatement.



Highlanders from PNG on way to market. (Photo courtesy George Chaplin.

There are other hindrances to national development, not the least of which is the French resistance to it in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides, where there are considerable French (and other) investments in plantations, mining, and business.

Elsewhere in Melanesia, the Australians have turned over the political reins to Papua New Guinea. The British, beleaguered by economic problems at home, are making gentlemanly efforts to withdraw from the Solomons and the New Hebrides. As soon as the Solomon Islanders agree,

the British will depart but, for the time being, they are trapped in the New Hebrides by a Protocol Agreement with France made in 1906, the result of which, the New Hebrides Condominium, is the most bizarre political arrangement in history, east or west.

To meet the challenges of new nationhood, Melanesia is producing some able leaders, such as Michael Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, who achieved wide international attention when he was hosted by Premier Hua Kuo-feng in Peking in late 1976. Since Somare leads the largest, most complex, and the first of the independent Melanesian nations, his success, or failure, will probably influence political developments throughout Melanesia.

As the island groups in Melanesia move toward their new political status, one hears a lot of talk about complete independence, and particularly economic independence. Melanesians feel, perhaps rightly so, that they have the resources, both human and natural, to achieve it at a reasonably acceptable level. They claim that they will need help and guidance, and the emerging leaders feel they know how to be selective in choosing the kind of aid being offered from various quarters.

Because the island groups of Melanesia, long divided by three different colonial powers, are doing practically nothing collectively or on the regional level, they are discussed individually in the following sections.

New Caledonia

There is an air of uneasiness pervading New Caledonia, France's largest territory in the South Pacific's western quarter. The uneasiness reaches from the remote reserves, where the 30-odd Melanesian tribes (*tribus*) live in groups seldom numbering more than a few hundred, to the board rooms of the sweaty, sulfur-belching nickel plant, where workers, when work is available, earn salaries upward of \$20,000 a year. The Australian and French tourists, who keep New Caledonia's dozen or so hotels moderately busy, are unmindful of the uneasiness as they loll on the topless beaches of Anse Vata and the Isle of Pines. Still, the faint rumblings of an uneasy people are there, and are likely to become louder before they go away.

New Caledonia is but one of the several "new" countries in the South Pacific which ethnocentric eighteenth-century European explorers named and claimed: New Zealand, New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, New Hebrides, New Georgia, and New South Wales. If the intent in naming was to create South Sea replicas of European homelands, the French have succeeded in Nouméa, the capital and principal city of New Caledonia, with a mixed population of 70,000, the majority of whom are Caucasians. In the chic boutiques and stores of Nouméa one can buy (for incredibly high prices) the latest fashions flown in from Paris and the finest wines of Bordeaux. Stylishly coifed ladies in wedge shoes walk their poodles down the sidewalks of Rue Sebastopol and Avenue de Maréchal Foch, while pomaded *pieds noirs* from Algeria and Indochina wheel their Peugeot and Citroens through the town's congested one-way streets. The stamp of France is everywhere, even on the language used among the minority Pacific Island population, who form the labor force of the town and the nearby Société Le Nickel (S.L.N.)

The French administration of New Caledonia and the 51,000 Frenchmen (16,000 of whom were born in New Caledonia) do not deny that the French stamp is there. And, if the French have anything to say in the matter, it is there to stay. The permanency would be guaranteed through an act of the French Parliament making New Caledonia a Department of France, as has already been done in such other places as Martinique, La Réunion, the Camoro Islands, and very soon, in the Wallis and Futuna Islands (Polynesian outlying islands situated close to Western Samoa in the South Pacific).

The increasing talk of departmentalization for New Caledonia is one of the major sources of the growing uneasiness, the other being increasing unemployment as New Caledonia's nickel exports continue to fall. While the French and Wallisian (from the Wallis Islands) population of New Caledonia (combined 61,000) favor departmentalization, the 53,000 Melanesian *indigenes* and a minority of the 7,000 Tahitian residents hold strongly opposing views. With a nearly even split on such a crucial issue, the uneasiness should come as no surprise. Neither should the potential for violence, as some of the Melanesian militants are beginning to talk of, for New Caledonia is worth a fight. In addition to its vast nickel deposits (35 per-



Nouméa with nickel smelting plant in background. Photo courtesy George Chaplin.

cent of the world's known reserves), New Caledonia has abundant land, 19,000 square kilometers of it, only 10 per cent of which is in Melanesian hands (to a depth of 80 centimeters only). While nickel is still king—although a faltering one—the potential for forestry, beef, coffee, and various food products is there, and the plantation-experienced hands from Indochina know it. The tourist industry could no doubt be made to flourish if a way could be found to bring New Caledonia's cost of living more in line with that of the rest of the Pacific. In short, New Caledonia could be considered a prize, which is why a major conflict is beginning to develop over who is going to control it.

France has had almost undisputed control over New Caledonia proper (Le Grand Terre) and the neighboring islands (including the Loyalty group) since 1853 when she declared them a French possession. While there was continued minor resistance by the Melanesians, known locally as *Kanaks*, there has been international acceptance of the French-New Caledonian connection, especially after the islands-wide referendum of 1958 that placed New Caledonia in the same category as French Polynesia: a French Overseas Territory.

As a result of that referendum, New Caledonia took on a government structure similar to that of French Polynesia. There is an elected Territorial

Assembly (35 members) that elects members to the Government Council, which "performs collegial duties" and "takes care of territorial affairs." The Council is presided over by the High Commissioner who is appointed directly from France. As Head of the Territory, the High Commissioner—a Frenchman—calls all the important shots.

Still, the framework of democracy is there, with elections for membership to the Territorial Assembly held every five years, and the emergence of eight viable political parties, and another beginning to take form. While the majority of the parties are pro-French and prefer the status quo, they are far from united, or even constant. During recent years they have been marked by shifting coalitions, because of personal vested interests, especially among the white capitalists.

Within the European community itself, there exists mutual resentment between "Les Caldoches" (the 16,000 New Caledonian-born French), "Les Pieds Noirs" (renegades from Algeria and Indochina), and "Les Oreilles" (metropolitan French, most of whom have arrived during the past decade). The Caldoches feel the islands belong to them, regarding the relatively new immigrants as interlopers. The Pieds Noirs view New Caledonia as their last refuge, and the Oreilles (also known as "Les Osos") see New Caledonia as a legitimate

escape route from the dreary European winters to the South Seas, where there is land to be had, profits to be made, and no taxes to be paid.

There are also divisions among the non-Europeans. The Vietnamese, Wallisians, Antilleans, and a good number of the French Polynesians from Tahiti lean toward the French administration, which would insure continued employment for the immigrant islanders and permit the Vietnamese to continue their ways of entrepreneurship. Among the Melanesians themselves there is a minority who want to maintain their jobs within the French administration, a much larger group who would prefer some kind of self-government under a more relaxed French control, and an emerging group who want outright and immediate independence.

The issues that have given rise to the multiple political parties and factions are basically the land and the minerals it contains, especially the nickel.

Nickel has been mined in New Caledonia since 1864 when the first lodes were discovered at Dumbéa, not far from the present site of Nouméa. Since the close of World War II, nickel mining has nearly displaced agriculture to the point where most of New Caledonia's food supply is now imported from France, the New Hebrides, and Australia.

Since peaking in 1970, nickel production and export have fallen steadily due to competition from new mining operations in the Philippines and Australia. While businessmen in Nouméa talk about the current slump as though it is something that will pass, there is general agreement that the S.L.N. has a tough uphill battle to remain competitive on the world market.

Nickel mining in New Caledonia is ugly business. It is ugly in several ways, but most noticeably in the red gashes in New Caledonia's lush green mountains which glare in the tropical sun as one descends in an airplane into the international airport at Tontouta, 53 kilometers north of Nouméa. The dour mien of Nouméa's Melanesians adds another dimension, for there one finds none of the French Polynesian ambience of Papeete, in spite of the 7,000 French Polynesians in Nouméa, for their *joie de vivre* has also been dampened by



A bite of nickel from New Caledonia's lush countryside.

the 7-day, 56-hour work week required by "Le Nickel."

While the Melanesians resent the S.L.N., especially the way in which it despoils the land, they also recognize that it is their only viable source of income, since virtually nothing else has been developed aside from relatively small amounts of copra and coffee. What the Melanesians want, however, is greater participation, if not outright control of the mining operations. At the present time, their participation is restricted to the labor force, with all technical jobs handled by Europeans.

Since the French investment in New Caledonia nickel mining and processing is considerable, it is most unlikely that the company and the government will relinquish their interests, even though the nickel market is currently depressed. Their determination to stick it out is underscored by France's recent moves to departmentalize New Caledonia as soon as possible, before the Melanesian independence movements of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the New Hebrides make further inroads.

The land issue, while related to the minerals, is also tied in with growing Melanesian ethnic awareness and the role of land in traditional Melanesian custom. That 90 per cent of New Caledonia's land has been alienated, with little or no compensation, has become a major source of dissatisfaction among the Melanesians, as well as a rallying point for the anti-French movement.

Claiming that the lands of their ancestors were stolen, young Melanesian militants are demanding full restitution, even though in many areas tracing original ownership would prove difficult, if not impossible.

Return of ancestral lands has become a focal point for the Kanak movement during its brief but stormy history. Although Melanesian resistance to the French goes back to 1853, there was no significant organization until 1969 when Nidoshe Naisseline, the islands' first Sorbonne-trained sociologist (also a hereditary chief of Mare Island in the Loyalty Islands), began organizing meetings on the theme of Melanesian cultural identity. The youthful Naisseline, who had gone through the French educational system—the only one available in New Caledonia—had experienced a cultural awakening while studying abroad, and concluded that his Melanesian brothers of New Caledonia were not only being robbed of their cultural heritage, but were also untouched by the ethnic awakening that was already gaining considerable momentum in other parts of the Pacific. His arrest in September 1969 and imprisonment for organizing activities provoked a riot in Nouméa and the formation of the first militant political group, Les Foulards Rouges (the Red Scarves). A French language journal called *Reveil Canaque* was founded in hopes of spreading the new native politics.

The formation of Les Foulards Rouges led some of the elected Kanaks to leave the Union Calédonienne, which was headed by Europeans, and form a new party whose primary aim was Kanak autonomy. Although headed by Melanesians with a strong pro-Melanesian ideology, the new party adopted the name Union Multiraciale de la Nouvelle Calédonie, a name designed to gather support from other non-European residents as well as sympathetic French.

In that same year (1969), the Secretary General of the newly formed Union Multiraciale, Mr. Yann Céléné Uregei, formerly of the Union Calédonienne, clarified his party's goals: "Let them [pro-status quo factions] realize that death is part of our struggle and if we must die we will die, our heads held high for a kanaka New Caledonia." Mr. Uregei, also an elected member of the Territorial Assembly, is still carrying the Union Multiraciale banner, and subsequently declared his unequivocal

support for total independence in the face of France's surprise offer in 1975 of either departmentalization or independence, an offer made in response to the Kanak request for self-government (autonomism). Most analysts interpreted the French offer as a scare tactic to stifle the independence movement.

In 1972, the young sociologist Naisseline was again arrested and imprisoned. Such action, not coincidentally, prevented him from standing for election to the Territorial Assembly that year as a Union Multiraciale candidate. Demonstrations and disagreements followed until a breach developed in 1973 between the original Foulards Rouges and the party leadership, with each faction accusing the other of "selling out" and "extremism."

The following year (1974), two young Melanesian schoolteachers (who, along with Naisseline, form three-fifths of the university-trained Melanesian population of New Caledonia) rallied a significant group whose focus was on the return of native lands to the Kanaks. Calling itself "1878" after the year in which New Caledonian lands were appropriated by the French, the group organized teams to work among the tribes on the reserves to spread political and ethnic awareness. Both of the organizers (one a young woman) were arrested and imprisoned for four months in 1975 for demonstrating against the annual military parade commemorating New Caledonia's becoming a French possession.

In the face of the growing repression by the French authorities and the "soft" position taken by the Union Multiraciale leadership, the three young political jailbirds in January 1976 formed the nucleus of a new and growing movement known as PALIKA (Partie de Libération Kanak). The sudden formation of this new group was also sparked by the point-blank shooting of a Kanak named Kamouda by a French policeman, who shortly after the incident was secretly spirited away to France for reassignment.

Inexperienced in the ways of professional politics, and without any power base, the leaders of PALIKA are attempting through village-level, grassroots organization to rally the Kanaks around the ethnicity theme and the return of native lands. Plainly anti-French and anticapitalist, PALIKA is pushing a Black Power theme (with frequent references to the American Black Panther movement),

which includes strong injunctions against competitive sports and the use of alcohol, both of which are viewed as French designs to encourage degradation and divisiveness among the Melanesian population. (A study conducted in three villages by the Protestant Church revealed that 50 percent of income is spent on alcoholic beverages.)

. Attempts by PALIKA to enlist the support of the majority Protestant Church have not met with much success, and since the Catholic Church is staffed exclusively by French priests, the potential for Kanak support is not there. Unlike their colleagues in the New Hebrides, the Protestant Melanesian clergy of New Caledonia are trying to remain apolitical, although there are signs that they may join the fray. As one Kanak graduate of Suva's Pacific Theological College put it: "The church is not directly involved with politics. We are more concerned with social problems and the development of the concept of freedom and dignity of the individual. If this becomes political, so be it."

Recognizing the potential force of the Protestant clergy at the village level, both in the churches and in the mission schools, the Fifth Congress of the Union Multiraciale passed a formal motion requesting the support of the churches in the political movement. With some encouragement from their counterparts in the New Hebrides, whom they meet through conferences arranged by the Pacific Council of Churches, it is quite possible that the Melanesian clergy of New Caledonia may find themselves accepting a more active role in the political arena.

The French administration has reacted to the growing political unrest and desire for Kanak recognition with increased rigidity. In response to the Kanak requests for the inclusion of indigenous language and culture studies in the school curriculum, the administration countered with the Débré Law, the effects of which will bring all schools of New Caledonia, including the mission schools, under the official French system, thus proscribing the inclusion of anything not already in the Paris-ordained syllabus.

Political dissidents who express themselves through mimeographed tracts are promptly arrested, tried, and exiled to their native villages, or to "l'autre côté," the euphemism for the local

prison situated on a small island just off the coast near Nouméa. A known sympathizer, an Englishman who works for the New Hebrides National Party, was recently refused entry at the Tontouta Airport. Such measures are stern by any democratic standards, and especially for the Pacific Islands.

In spite of such stern measures—or perhaps even stimulated by them—the Kanak movement seems to be gaining support, both within New Caledonia and from visiting Pacific Island leaders who attended the sixteenth South Pacific Conference that was held in Nouméa in October 1976. There is some evidence, moreover, that the French government is beginning to take notice.

In an abrupt turnabout, the proposed visit to New Caledonia in August 1976 of Mr. Oliver Stirn, Secretary of State for Overseas Territories and Departments (DOM-TOM), was cancelled by the French authorities in the face of strong united opposition from PALIKA, the Union Multiraciale, and other signatories from the Melanesian factions of the Territorial Assembly. This might be interpreted as the government's desire to avoid a confrontation. On the other hand, the Union Multiraciale reported in October 1976 that the French government is moving swiftly toward imposing departmentalization on New Caledonia before the independence forces grow any stronger. If such a move is attempted, even the most moderate of the Melanesians are predicting widespread violence.

It would appear that the voices of independence are at least being heard, if not acknowledged.

One may well ask why the French are hanging on so determinedly in the face of the pan-Pacific movement of decolonization and the waning luster of nickel.

In the first place, New Caledonia, with its sunny skies, sandy beaches, and clear ocean waters (where they have not been polluted by run-offs and sewage) has become the home of 51,000 Frenchmen, including an indeterminate number of the rootless *piets noirs*, who are among the last of the colonialists in the world, a breed that does not easily die.

Another reason for the French reluctance to leave is the New Caledonian military establishment,

which includes 10,000 regular troops of the army, navy, and air force. Since there has been no conflict in the South Pacific since World War II, one suspects that such a large garrison is there either to quell internal disorder or for the purpose of maintaining the French presence in the western Pacific to counterbalance that in the eastern part (French Polynesia).

Another possible reason is that New Caledonia represents one of the last vestiges of a waning empire, one which has been contracting since World War II, often with major convulsions. While the remaining fragments are small and far-flung, they are still part of L'État, which many Frenchmen tend to view as did Louis XIV.

Then there is always the hope—and belief—that nickel will recover. Since one-third of the world's known resources lie in New Caledonia's soil, it seems likely that, sooner or later, Le Nickel can be revived through improved technology.

On the other hand, one may ask what would happen if independence came to New Caledonia, as has already happened in Papua New Guinea and is slated for the near future in the Solomons and probably the New Hebrides. With only five Melanesian university graduates, and no lawyers, doctors, administrators, or technicians, what would the Melanesians do?

Melanesian independence movement leaders have given some thought to the anticipated problems, although there is no detailed program. High on their list of changes would be nationalization of the nickel industry, a move which, in their view, would provide for a more equitable distribution of the profits, if any. Foreign technicians from France or any other industrialized country (China and the Soviet Union are usually mentioned) would be hired until Melanesians could be trained to replace them.

Another immediate change would involve the return of all lands to Melanesian hands. Since aboriginal land titles are virtually nonexistent, such a reversion would undoubtedly prove to be both a difficult and stormy business. Moreover, implementation would necessitate the expulsion of many, if not most of the non-Melanesians.

The Kanaks are mindful of the risk of total economic collapse in New Caledonia, but in the present state of heady idealism they proclaim their preference to be free and poor to being "slaves of the colonialist." But they are also mindful of their lack of experience and isolation from fellow Melanesians in the Solomons, Papua New Guinea, and the Anglophone New Hebrideans, with whom they share a common anticolonial ideology. The Melanesian pidgin which serves to link the rest of polyglot Melanesia never penetrated New Caledonia. With French as the only communication medium among New Caledonia's 30-odd tribes, even their antiadministration rallies are in French, as is all political literature.

What are the prospects for change in New Caledonia? Given that the Melanesians are outnumbered in New Caledonia by foreigners, and given their linguistic and economic isolation from all of their Pacific neighbors, except for Francophone New Hebrideans, it would appear that the odds are against it. Still, the waves of change and independence are sweeping the Pacific with a force that may reach to Quai d'Orsay through the channels of the United Nations. For the moment, however, the storm is confined to the islands of New Caledonia, where there is a definite uneasiness in the warm Pacific air.

The New Hebrides

The New Hebrides "pandemonium" is now a pretty tired joke in the Pacific. It has gone on too long. Badly conceived by the British and French governments in 1906, solidified by the Anglo-French Protocol in 1914, and modified slightly in 1922, the New Hebrides Condominium government has never worked, could never work, and has led to the most politically divided community in all of Melanesia, or the Pacific for that matter, as they take their early steps toward independence.

How soon independence should come is one of the major public issues dividing the principal two political parties and the governing metropolitan countries in the New Hebrides (NH). The other not so public but universally acknowledged issue is France's desire to remain in the New Hebrides and the British wish to withdraw.



The Dualistic New Hebrides where everything comes in pairs. Photo courtesy George Chaplin.

A brief overview of this condominium concept and the political bipolarization, and the way in which they interlock with other peripheral, but nevertheless substantial issues will give some idea of the complexity of this already complex part of Melanesia where seventy-plus languages exist among a population of about 100,000 people scattered over 80 islands.

Condominium government, which calls for joint British-French rule, and therefore duplication of virtually everything—including most public services, immigration, legal systems, postage, broadcasting, and even currency—was first agreed upon in 1906, superseded by the Protocol Agreement of 1914, and finally ratified in 1922. Ostensibly the concept was based on each government's desire to have control of its own citizens who were already buying land and operating plantations and businesses in the New Hebrides. Historian Deryck Scarr claims, "The Anglo-French New Hebrides Convention of 1906 emerged from the original object of which, on the British side at any rate, was to establish a tribunal to settle land disputes."¹ And the same could probably be said of the French side, since most of the Europeans in the New Hebrides at the time of the agreements were French and British buyers and developers, doing much of the early buying with such items of barter as "three pieces of turkey twill, one packet matches, ten sticks tobacco and six pipes"² in 1902.

In an effort to draw the two ruling governments together on some things that could reasonably be shared, a third arm was formed and christened the

Condominium, a term mutually readable and meaningless in both languages. Rather than functioning as a working arm of both governments, it has grown into a third bureaucracy equally divided between both metropolitan governments. The Condominium, coupled with the offices of the British and French Residencies, is in fact the third colonial bureaucratic force that the New Hebrideans still have to reckon with as they grope their way toward independence.

In the hope of eliminating two of the three bureaucratic heads, the National Party of the New Hebrides (NPNH)—one of half a dozen political parties—made its case in August 1976 before the UN Committee of 24 on Decolonization, that a referendum be held in the NH to select one of the two ruling governments to withdraw from the NH immediately, leaving but one with whom the New Hebrideans can negotiate full independence. It is no secret that the NPNH would prefer to see the French leave as soon as possible.

To talk at all about the New Hebrides, one must do so against the backdrop of the current political fight, easily the most complex in the Pacific, and already one with a full head of steam. The assorted participants in the anticipated battles ahead are in it for a pretty high stake: land. And some of the participants are seasoned fighters. They are the *colons*, or *pieds noirs*, who have already lost before in Indochina and Algeria, and they are well aware that Melanesia is their last colonial stand. They are likely to fight in earnest, using all the tactics they have learned along the way.

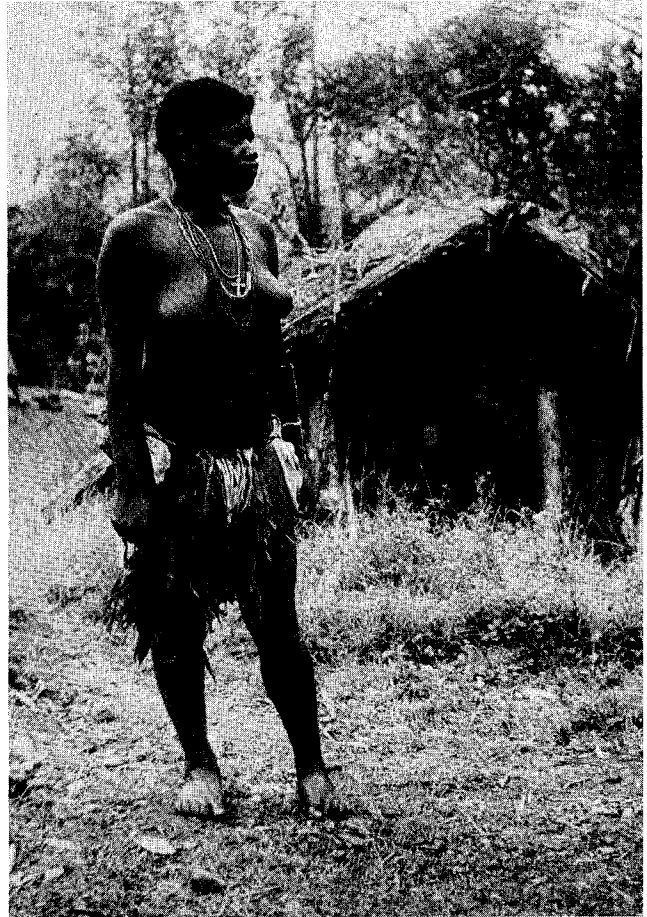
Lined up with this plantation group (ca. 7,000) are the French business firms, most of which are based in New Caledonia, and which began to proliferate after 1971 when the New Hebrides were declared a tax haven by the Anglo-French authorities.

The Roman Catholic Church, along with its Melanesian congregation and priests (there are three), forms a third Francophone member of the group who want to preserve the status quo. Most of the Melanesian congregation, who are scattered throughout the archipelago, form the base of the Union de Communautés des Nouvelles Hebrides (U.C.N.H.), the conservative Francophone political party which talks about independence "when ready."

With this French-oriented political bloc are found some bizarre bedfellows, including a powerful and colorful group combining Melanesians, French, Canadians, Americans, and probably some Australians who have drifted together in a common effort to preserve the right to development of New Hebridean land, particularly on the big island of Espiritu Santo, now known as Santo. A brief review of these political groups is helpful in understanding the complex and not easily resolved problems.

The NPNH began to take form around 1970 as the New Hebrides Cultural Association, which included Anglo and Francophone Melanesians, joined together by their desire to strengthen ethnic awareness and common interests among Melanesians throughout the archipelago. It formally became a political party in October 1971, although its aims remained broad and vague until 1973 when the headquarters was moved from Santo to Vila, and a Melanesian Anglican priest was named president. From that point on, the NPNH began to take on a distinctly Anglophone orientation, and to identify closely with the English-speaking half of the Condominium government, which provides advice, and, some say, financial assistance.

In addition to wanting a single government with which to negotiate, the NPNH has taken a strong stand favoring independence in 1977, although the stand may have softened since October 1976 when their Solomon Island neighbors requested an indefinite deferral of independence, which some observers had thought might be granted before the



Catholic woman in the New Hebrides, where religion and politics get mixed.

end of 1976. With independence would come the nationalization of all 730,000 acres of alienated land, most of which is owned by individual Frenchmen and the Société Française des Nouvelles Hebrides. Private Australian, British, and American landholdings would also be considered for nationalization because, argue the NPNH, the land was ill-gotten in the first place.

The land repatriation platform has considerable appeal to the rural masses who constitute 90 percent of the Melanesian population. And this is precisely the design of the urban-based intellectual leaders of the party who were schooled in Britain, New Zealand, the University of the South Pacific (USP), and the University of Papua New Guinea, the latter two of which the French disdain and look upon as centers of irresponsible radicalism. "We must bridge the rural-urban gap as well as the educated-uneducated [one]," says Barak Sope, the



Native dwelling on Santo, New Hebrides, where land speculation has generated heated politics.

USP-educated author-spokesman for the NPNH. Even within the educated elite, Sope continues, "There is another gap that the party has to bridge, the gap between the British-educated and French-educated New Hebrideans."

To reach the rural population the NPNH has the strong support of the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches, whose membership includes the majority of Melanesians in the New Hebrides. Breaking from their traditional conservative and apolitical role in 1973, the Presbyterian Church of the New Hebrides issued a declaration which called for, among other things, South Pacific Commission and United Nations cooperation in helping the New Hebrides achieve self-government "without delay, without violence, and with due preparation of our people for the duties, functions, rights and responsibilities of independent government."

The local church-NPNH connection is reportedly (and not denied) strengthened by financial support from the World Council of Churches.

While church support may help the NPNH bridge the rural-uneducated, urban-educated gap, it is no force at all in closing the other gap of the British- versus French-educated, for that would be tantamount to bridging the one that exists between

Rome and Canterbury. Virtually all French-educated New Hebrideans are members of the Roman Catholic Church.

The other major political group is the Union de Communautés des Nouvelles Hébrides (U.C.N.H.) which, as its name suggests, is Francophone in orientation, and has the entire French business-plantation community, many of them based in New Caledonia, as a solid backing. It is also backed, it would appear, by the Roman Catholic Church (a Melanesian priest is the U.C.N.H. Secretary) and, some allege, by the French government, which is believed by most Pacific Islanders to want to hold to all three of her Pacific colonies at any cost. Australian and New Zealand businessmen in the islands are also known to be supportive of the U.C.N.H.

Aside from the different linguistic affinities, the U.C.N.H. disagrees with the NPNH, in which some of the U.C.N.H. leaders were once members, on several other critical issues, especially land. The U.C.N.H. would allow alien landholders to retain all "developed" lands. Only "bush" land—land that has been alienated but not developed—would be returned to Melanesians, a position that could not help attracting every alien landholder, all of whom would probably have time to get some kind

of development started in the bush if they hadn't already done so.

The U.C.N.H., although equally unhappy with the condominium arrangement, would also delay independence until "when ready." This indefinite delay is based upon fears, as expressed by one of the party leaders, that an Asian communist nation would move right in if immediate independence, as proposed by the NPNH, were granted. These fears are based at least in part on the conviction that the NPNH leaders have been influenced by "les idées gauches" drifting out of the University of the South Pacific and the University of Papua New Guinea. Also, the U.C.N.H. leaders feel that the New Hebrides are simply "not ready" for all of the problems of independence.

"What would happen to the French-speaking New Hebrideans [still the minority, but growing in numbers due to the intensified French education program] if the National Party gained power?" asks a U.C.N.H. party leader, pointing out that there is a significant number of Melanesians in the New Hebrides who go to New Caledonia for employment in the nickel industry. Provision for the maintenance of bilingual education in English and French, even after independence, is considered crucial by the U.C.N.H., which accuses the National Party of wanting to Anglicize everything.

This basic bipolarization in the New Hebrides is complicated by the existence of several other smaller parties which share some of the political ideas of both major parties, but which may be drifting into the camp of the U.C.N.H. over the land issue. One of these is the Mouvement d'Action des Nouvelles Hebrides (M.A.N.H.), formerly called the Mouvement Autonomiste, a French planters' party based on the island of Santo. Another is the Jon Frum movement, a cargo-cult group numbering about 5,000 people on the southern island of Tanna, whose origins go back to the early 1900s when they began to resist all European encroachment. The Jon Frum wants the right to develop (or not) in its own laissez-faire way, regardless of which political party prevails.

A third minority party, but the one with the most complex composition, is the Na-griamel of the island of Santo, the site of some of the most disputed land speculation of the twentieth century.

The Na-griamel came together in 1965 as the result of a Melanesian movement to regain lands that had been acquired by the Société Française des Nouvelles Hebrides (S.F.N.H.), and approved by the Joint (French-British) Court. After the S.F.N.H. had cleared vast acreages of bush for pasture land, the Melanesians countered by moving in and settling some of the land, a move which was sanctioned by the Na-griamel declaration of the Act of Dark Bush of 1966. By this time the leadership had begun to change from the hands of Chief Buluk to a half-caste Melanesian named Jimmy Moses Stevens, both of whom were imprisoned in 1967 for trespassing on alienated property. In spite of this temporary loss of leadership, the movement grew both in numbers and in areas.

Undaunted by his four-month prison experience, Jimmy Stevens emerged as the Na-griamel leader, and in 1971 presented a Na-griamel petition for New Hebridean independence to the UN Committee on Decolonization, which did not respond positively. Other Melanesians in the New Hebridean elected Advisory Council, many of whom were already favoring independence, criticized Stevens and his declaration. Nevertheless, the Na-griamel movement remained unbroken, and managed to gain two seats of 29 (with the M.A.N.H.) in the November 1975 elections for the first Representative Assembly, which will presumably lead the Condominium to some new form of political status.

On December 27, 1975, and again in August 1976, Jimmy Stevens proclaimed Santo and the other northern islands an independent Na-griamel Federation, and proceeded to get a Na-griamel flag, passport, and currency, the last through the services of the Letcher Mint of California, which had already done some Pacific Island minting for Solomon Mamaloni, the ex-Chief Minister of the Solomon Islands. The reason for this turn from New Hebridean independence to independence for Santo and the northern islands, the Na-griamel stronghold, is closely linked with American business interests.

Starting in 1967, a Honolulu land developer named Howard Eugene Peacock began to buy large tracts of land, mainly on Santo, subdivide, and sell, mostly to Hawaii residents and GIs in Vietnam. This highly profitable speculation venture continued unabated until August 1971 when the two

Resident Commissioners issued Joint Regulations Nos. 15 and 16 to control the subdivision of land in the New Hebrides through a new taxation scheme which was retroactive to January 1, 1967. Two years later the Resident Commissioners struck at Peacock and his group again by rejecting a subdivision scheme of 5,500 acres, much of which had already been bought by luckless (and landless) purchasers, mostly Americans. Peacock was so deeply involved in a multimillion dollar land development scheme that these setbacks encouraged him to seek another avenue to keep things working. An independent Santo of the kind Jimmy Stevens and the Na-griamel had been talking about must have looked attractive, for by the time of the 1975 general election, Stevens and Peacock, who envisioned a Hawaii-type development on Santo (with its own Waikiki) of 50,000 Americans, had obviously met in several ways.

Another major alien member of the group supporting the Na-griamel is an American libertarian from Carson City, Nevada, Michael Oliver, who by 1972 had already achieved considerable notoriety

in the Pacific through his attempts to establish the independent Republic of Minerva on a reef about 250 miles southwest of Tongatapu (Tonga), an attempt that was dramatically foiled by King George Tupou IV himself. Still looking for a place to establish a complete libertarian state, which Oliver and others of his persuasion could call home, he then tried a similar scheme in the Bahamas on Abaco Island, but lost again. This second defeat stimulated Oliver to consider a new potentially independent state on the New Hebridean island of Santo where, in 1971, he had bought 4,000 acres and met Jimmy Stevens. Peacock could hardly have remained a stranger.

Through the machinery of Oliver's Phoenix Foundation, the American land developers are providing generous support for the Na-griamel political party, including an illegal radio station at Vanafo (the Na-griamel headquarters on Santo) which the joint government authorities have not tried to close down. (The NPNH accuses the French of supporting it and the British of dragging their feet.)

Santo Golf Club, New Hebrides. The beginnings of a South Pacific Waikiki?



The strange amalgamation of Stevens-Peacock-Oliver has one thing in common: independence for Santo. Should they succeed, Peacock, Oliver, and numerous French planters might proceed with business as usual with King Jimmy Stevens as their Melanesian head of state. The other thing they have in common (along with the U.C.N.H., M.A.N.H., and Jon Frum) is fear of the NPNH and its goal of a unified New Hebrides in which most alienated lands would be returned, either to customary owners or to government. Whether this fear is strong enough to create an alliance against the NPNH is not known. Although land disposition is certainly one of the key issues of politics in the New Hebrides, the metropolitan language that one speaks is the other. And most of the Jon Frum and Na-griamel members, not to mention Peacock and Oliver, would not know enough French to recite "la plume de ma tante."

All the political parties in the New Hebrides met in the arena in November 1975 in their first contest for seats in the new Representative Assembly, which was designed to be the governing body after independence. With a 92 percent turnout at the polls, the NPNH came out with a slight majority in the Representative Assembly (RA), with the other seats going to the U.C.N.H., M.A.N.H., and the Na-griamel.

Scheduled to meet shortly after the election in November 1975, the Representative Assembly was not convened until June 29, 1976, after administrative delays by the two European Residencies. The principle reasons for the delay were the controversy over the seating of traditional chiefs, and Jimmy Stevens' protest over one of the elected chiefs who was also a Protestant minister, with Stevens claiming that he could not be both. In spite of the fact that the number of seats designated exclusively for customary chiefs had been set at four long before the election, the French Resident Commissioner and the U.C.N.H. wanted to increase the number to eight (four pro-British, four pro-French). This demand was made more than a month after the election, which caused the NPNH to label the move as a delaying tactic to prevent the RA from meeting and to weaken the NPNH majority.

When the Representative Assembly finally did meet in June, the session lasted only three days, resulting in one major decision which resolved the

argument of the number of chiefs in the Representative Assembly. The formation of an independent and advisory Council of Chiefs, patterned after the Fiji model, was adopted.

Before the Representative Assembly had time to reconvene, an Electoral Disputes Committee, formed by the Condominium in response to complaints from Jimmy Stevens and others, nullified the elections in Santo on the grounds of late voter registrations. Through admitted administrative errors, this nullification rekindled the political flames throughout the islands, with the Santo district becoming especially hot. Special police reinforcements were sent to Santo in preparation for the October 1976 by-election for the disputed Santo seats in the Representative Assembly, a contest that could have tipped the balance away from the NPNH. It did not. Although Jimmy Stevens stood for election (and won) the NPNH forces still maintained their lead in the by-election.

Since the NPNH still maintains a slight majority in the Representative Assembly, there will no doubt be strong moves toward immediate elimination of the French administration, followed by deliberate steps toward full independence and a program calling, for the first time, for economic and political development in the interest of Melanesians. While their program is admittedly vague, its basic organization calls for a decentralized government organized in progressively smaller groups down to the "cell" level within a village. Preservation of the present cultural diversity would somehow be encouraged.

On the other hand, should the U.C.N.H., Na-griamel, M.A.N.H., and Jon Frum form an alliance—incredible though it may seem—land in the New Hebrides would remain alienated, and business would go on as usual under the present (since 1971) tax haven status, except that there would be eventual moves toward independence, either as the New Hebrides or as several fragmented island states.

In February 1977, the Nationalist Party (NPNH) met in Malekula and issued some postelection proclamations, the first of which is the name switch from Nationalist Party to Vanuaaku ("my country") Party, which would reflect the proposed new

name for the country—Vanuaaku. Other proclamations include:

1. Independence in 1977;
2. All administrative and police functions to be handled by chiefs;
3. Exclusion of both British and French Residencies;
4. Closing of all French schools in March 1977;
5. Boycotting the Representative Assembly.

Economic development in the New Hebrides has been steady since the end of World War II, and took a quantum leap beginning in 1971, the year of the tax haven status declaration, which brought a host of new investors and caused the number of banks in Vila (population 12,000) to jump from two to more than a dozen. However, very few of the economic benefits have gone to the Melanesians, of whom only 20 percent of the potential work force is gainfully employed. French, Australian, New Zealanders, British, American, Chinese, and Vietnamese have meanwhile prospered from copra, cattle, timber, and reasonably profitable (for the Pacific region) tourism. And the numerous expatriate civil servants in the three governments require considerable support services throughout the islands. Although rivers of money flow through the international assortment of banks in Vila, little of it goes to the Melanesians of the New Hebrides, which is the cause of a growing amount of resentment.

Still, the islands are not yet developed to their full potential, claims the first Government Economic Development planner for the New Hebrides, who came to the job in early 1976 along with his French counterpart. Pulp timber has much potential, as does an export beef industry which Melanesians could own and operate with little dependence on technological assistance. The timberlands are there, and beef cattle seem to thrive in the New Hebrides (even the local French claim that it is the best beef in the world!).

By taking advantage of the tax haven status and the several superb natural harbors, the New Hebrides could: (1) develop (with foreign aid)

maritime facilities for fishing or possibly other types of fleets; (2) provide, even now, a safe anchorage spot for idle supertankers; (3) develop a flagship base along the lines of Panama or Liberia; (4) develop a Free Trade Zone, possibly including an industrial park concept.

If managed properly, these potential economic schemes could in time bring a fair degree of prosperity to the *indigenes* of the New Hebrides. However, the present two systems of education in the New Hebrides are not in line with the economic potentials, both systems being basically European imports, but with a marked difference: the French are building theirs up after the French model, while the British are taking steps toward indigenization and moving out.

Having gotten a late start in education in the New Hebrides, the French government about ten years ago began developing a school system to supplement the Roman Catholic schools and to rival the ones already established by the Anglophone missions (mainly Anglican and Presbyterian) and the British government. In the process they have not been chintzy. While the Anglophone schools charge fees at all levels, French schools are free for all comers. Whereas Anglophone school buildings are, in general, modest and showing signs of aging under the tropical sun and rains, French schools shine from the efforts of regularly paid maintenance crews. This is not surprising since the French government is currently spending six times more than their condominium partners on education.

This lopsided expenditure balance shows up most conspicuously in the French Lycée and Collège Technique, which was started six years ago as the most sophisticated vocational school anywhere in the Pacific. Holding to the philosophy that education in the New Hebrides will be identical and equal to that of metropolitan France, the French government imported a complete staff (many of them ex-Algeria hands) and the latest in machinery for teaching metalwork, masonry, carpentry, automobile mechanics, and business machines—all of it oriented to machines made in France.

In the Lycée one finds French children of the expatriate residents of Vila and elsewhere in the New Hebrides along with the ablest Melanesian youths

who have survived the rigorous examination procedures. There they study the French curriculum set in Paris and taught exclusively by expatriate teachers. Neither curriculum nor standards are compromised.

In the Collège Technique, the expatriate child is a rare sight. Watching young island students learning automobile repair on Citroens and Peugeot's, the operation of metal lathes and drill presses, and building brick archways, it is difficult to avoid the question "Education for What?" There is little in the program that suggests education for self-reliance.

The British system, while still bearing the marks of the Colonial Office, is clearly moving toward complete localization in the future under the London mandate to educate Melanesians for the economic realities of an island nation. That is, leave a system that an independent New Hebrides could afford to maintain, and do not create an educated unemployable elite, as has already happened in Micronesia, the Cook Islands, and other parts of the Pacific. This underlying approach is in keeping with the generally acknowledged British desire to get out of the New Hebrides, it is hoped with some grace.

The ties that exist between the two major political parties and their respective British-French educational backgrounds exert some force in the competitiveness that has developed between the two school systems, mostly on the French side. In an effort to gain the majority of school population the French provide free education, even at boarding schools, while the British charge fees, even in the poorest of subsistence level villages. In addition, the general quality and attractiveness of the physical plants make the French schools look very attractive. It would be no surprise if the money-poor Melanesians would not send most of their children to Francophone schools, even if the families are loyal Presbyterians and Anglicans.

Melanesian desires for development are somewhat divided along political lines, which have already been described. The more independence minded of the Melanesians want foreign investment, not foreign aid. But, for the NPNH leaders the investments must be on terms favorable to Melanesians, who are learning from the mistakes of

some of their Pacific Island neighbors, especially in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, what favorable terms mean.

Still, the foreign aid is already beginning to come in from Australia and New Zealand this year. The government of New Zealand is giving the New Hebrides an LCT-type of barge, while Australia has A\$1.3 million ready for the construction of a rural water system, and heavy (Australian made) machinery for road and airport construction, neither of which makes much sense in terms of Melanesian economic development.

Since ANZ aid is in fact going to the governments of France and the United Kingdom, this is probably the only case in the bewildering international aid game where developed countries are giving aid to other developed countries. Perhaps it could only happen in the New Hebrides "pandemonium."

Solomon Islands

While the other Pacific Island countries anxiously await its next move, the government of the Solomon Islands is having trouble getting its act together. Originally scheduled for full independence by a willing Great Britain in November 1976, which would have brought an end to the 79-year-old protectorate status, the government which was elected in June 1976 requested and was granted indefinite postponement. The reasons for this backward step—backward in the sense of running counter to the pan-Pacific independence movements—are not entirely clear. But neither is anything else in the Solomon Islands.

The main reason for the anxious waiting lies in the oft-repeated refrain around the Pacific, "the Solomons is doing something different." Just what is meant by "different" is not entirely clear, but it connotes a strong desire to avoid falling under the control of Western capitalist interests. The message that filters through is that independence for the Solomons, when it comes, will bring complete independence, both political and economic. Although there are no grudges held against Great Britain, the Solomons do not want to be tied to her aid strings in the same way that other Pacific Island nations are tied to those of their colonial mother countries.

The Solomon finger is usually pointed to neighboring Papua New Guinea as an example of what Solomon Islanders want to avoid.

When Solomon Islanders are asked about the basics of their different approach to development, they reply with differently worded versions of the theme laid down by the 33-year-old Solomon Mamaloni, the first and former Chief Minister, in his foreword to the 1975-1979 National Development Plan:

We aim to build our nation, not by force or direction from the centre, but by the participation of our people who make up the nation. The three corner-stones to our Plan are therefore, decentralization, distribution, and decolonisation.

By decentralising power and distributing economic opportunities, we intend to break the vicious circle of centralisation, rural decay and elitism which results from the colonial system. By well-planned economic development we aim to free ourselves from over-dependence on others for our basic material needs, technology and financial aid. This political and economic liberation is the key to our search for a Solomon Islands national identity.

Such ideals for newly independent countries are not uncommon in the Third World, but are seldom realized. Solomon Islanders know this only too well, and know of the pitfalls involved. Yet, they exude a certain amount of self-confidence and optimism, tempered with a heavy dose of realism that has come from studying the patterns of other emerging nations around the world. It is their self-confidence that has been most convincing in the rest of the Pacific, plus the fact that the Solomons really do have something to develop, perhaps even in their own way.

The central government and the remains of the expatriate colonial administration (ca. 500) are seated in Honiara, the dusty, heat-seared town of 16,000 squeezed into a narrow strip of coral separating the seashore from the foothills of the 8,000-foot-high mountains to the southwest. The site of the fierce Guadalcanal invasion in 1942, Honiara was born after the fighting had stopped, and now stands as the commercial and political hub of the Solomon Islands. Speakers of the 70-odd languages (including five Polynesian types) roam barefoot along the road in front of the numerous Chinese shops scattered throughout the town, chattering in their heavily Anglicized version of Melanesian pidgin.

From Honiara, planes, boats, and messages (in O.H.M.S. envelopes) go out to the 11 major (and



Children of the Langalanga Islands, Malaita, Solomon Islands.



Woman of Langalanga Islands drilling holes in shell beads, the principal source of cash income for the community.

countless smaller) islands where 90 percent of the 197,000 population live in villages, many of which are still relatively unaffected by Westernization. Thatched housing (including the picturesque thatched roofs which are rapidly giving way to corrugated iron in most parts of the Pacific) is still predominant, and most local transportation is by foot or dugout paddle canoes. The population is young and growing (3.5 percent birthrate), but there is still ample room for the next generation, except on the relatively crowded island of Malaita.

Subsistence life is fairly easy to maintain in the Solomons. A little cash-cropping (copra, cocoa, spices) or a small cottage industry (shell beads, wood carving) is usually possible for those who want some cash income, which includes just about everybody. While the present level of rural life might appear satisfying to some, it is not. Solomon Islanders, like their brothers elsewhere in the Pacific, want more cash.

Where the Solomons has an edge over other island nations, especially those of Polynesia, is the

real potential for generating more money for its people. In addition to the old island standby, copra—the Solomons' biggest export item—there are good timberlands, underexploited fishing resources, and early signs of promise in minerals (especially bauxite on Rennell Island) and other agricultural products, such as rice, oil palm, cocoa, spices, and cattle.

To date, most of the successful development schemes have been undertaken with heavy infusions of capital, either from the government or from foreign investment and aid, which the Solomons government wants to avoid in the future. Also, the commercially successful schemes have certain negative aspects. Much of the productive timberland has been denuded with little or no effort put into reforestation. Beef cattle operations, which have had generous support from Australian aid and the South Pacific Commission, have displaced many subsistence crop lands, as government-backed cocoa schemes did during the 1960s. In short, some of the development schemes bear the marks of shortsighted planning.

The largest commercial agricultural operation is now being conducted by Lever Brothers, a multinational corporation whose name is synonymous with soap products. Holding long-term leases on vast tracts of agricultural land, Lever will probably remain in the Solomons for some time to come, providing employment for many agricultural workers and continuing to develop new agricultural products and schemes, such as palm oil and the raising of beef cattle on coconut plantations, most of which are foreign owned. The beef cattle scheme, known in the Pacific as "Cattle Under Coconuts," has also received strong backing from the South Pacific Commission.

Commercial rice production is being attempted (with some severe setbacks by ferocious leaf-eating insects) by the C. Brewer Company of Hawaii in the fertile Guadalcanal Plain, just east of Honiara. The project, like other new projects in the Solomons, is partly government controlled. Large-scale oil palm production, also new to the Solomons, is still being experimented with in the Guadalcanal Plain by the Commonwealth Development Corporation in cooperation with the government of the Solomon Islands. Both crops, according to experts, look promising, especially the oil palm, if the developers

can persuade the farmers to give the trees the regular attention they require, especially during harvesting.

The development of commercial fishing by the Taiyo Company of Japan (again in partnership with the Solomons government) has already surpassed expectations, and plans for a second cannery are under way. Fish, which was not even listed as a Solomons export commodity in 1970, is rapidly replacing timber as the number two export item, accounting for the Solomon Islanders' interest in the 200-mile territorial zones being proposed for the International Law of the Sea.

For the small individual and communal farms (which the government encourages through offering "special services" to groups whose communal lands equal 100 hectares or more), technical advice and assistance (including high-maintenance heavy equipment) are provided by various foreign governments, including the United States through its Peace Corps Volunteers—the only ones in Melanesia. Technical assistance is provided to individuals for fishing, oil palm, cocoa, spice, and beef production, but none of it has yet produced any spectacular results. The change in work patterns required for successful commercial fishing or farming comes slowly to any rural community, and the Solomon Islands are no exception.

Development of bauxite mining and tourism is off to a slow start. The entire bauxite deposit lies on Rennell and Vaghena Islands, both small by Melanesian standards, and one of which (Rennell) is Polynesian. Even before the first spadeful has been dug, trouble is brewing. There have been hints of a Bougainville-type Rennellese secession movement as well as rumors that the Rennellese are not interested in seeing their island subjected to the ravages of mining, as in Nauru, and Ocean Island (in the Gilbert Islands). Although a rich mining industry could provide the quickest means to self-reliance, the attendant problems may hold it in check for the time being.

Tourism is being eyed with great caution in the Solomons, which now offers less than 150 hotel rooms in the entire country. When more than a thousand passengers (from one of the four to six cruise ships per annum) hit Honiara, the town knows it. It is perhaps this experience, plus a

genuine concern for maintaining cultural integrity, that has prompted the government to reject offers for the building of major tourist hotels and developing the industry. The 90 percent rural population of the Solomons might not be able to handle it.

With all of these potentials, how does the Solomon Islands government plan to develop "differently"? What are some of the more specific plans which were codified by the old (first) government and pretty much adopted by the new (since June 1976).

The key word, which is stressed in Mr. Mamaloni's foreword to the National Development Plan, and reiterated by Mr. Peter Kenilorea (33), the current Chief Minister, and all of his staff, is *decentralization*, accompanied by *devolution* of power and authority. Implementation of this basic policy will, it is hoped, prevent the concentration of power and people in Honiara.

Crucial to this plan is the concept and practice of the Local Government Councils (LGC), patterned after the model of Papua New Guinea, which is now in the process of abandoning them. The 174 elected members of the LGCs form Area Committees that represent different local communities in the Solomons. These LGCs are designed to work closely with the 38 elected members (by popular vote) of the Legislative Assembly, from whose ranks the Chief Minister is chosen. He in turn selects his eight cabinet members from among the members.

The central government is trying to encourage the election of customary chiefs to the LGCs, presumably in the hope of giving these bodies some traditional sanction, and making them even more representative of grassroots social organization than is found in the Legislative Assembly.

Theoretically the LGCs make their community's needs known to the central government, which, in theory, responds to each in an egalitarian way. At present, it is a pragmatic approach, for only the central government has access to revenues, including all foreign aid.

Although government leaders are aware of the danger of the concentration of money and power in Honiara, they still feel optimistic that the LDCs can assume a more responsible role in the development

of local enterprise and government. The concept of local revenues, which would increase the autonomy of the LGCs, has been considered. But the dangers of inequity under that sort of scheme are blatantly inherent: bauxite-rich Rennell could keep all of her anticipated millions, while overcrowded Malaita would continue to grow poorer. This problem is far from being resolved.

Following the decentralization policy of avoiding population concentrations, the public works division is emphasizing the development of water transportation rather than roads, of which there are surprisingly few in comparison with other Pacific islands. One reason for this emphasis stems from the belief that road systems tend to create new concentrations of population, which the Solomons want to avoid. Other arguments are: (1) Solomon Islanders have traditionally used water transport, and in most cases already own a means of conveyance; (2) Water transport systems do not require high maintenance budgets; (3) Road transport would tend to encourage individual island change and development, while water transport, following established patterns, would help to develop inter-island commerce as well as consciousness; (4) Any Solomon Islander, be he ever so poor, can still make his own canoe, which is still the principal means of transportation for many thousands of Solomon Islanders.

(Air traffic within the Solomons—all of it by the profit-making, privately owned Solair—follows a route pattern based on World War II American-built landing strips, most of which are still in excellent condition.)

Commercial ventures such as sawmills, boat-building, and fishing operations (canneries, service facilities) are being strategically located in semi-rural areas as part of the decentralization policy, but many people feel that too much is already concentrated in Honiara.

Decentralization can be seen most clearly in education, where some rather bold steps have already been taken. Using as their blueprint a 1973 study called "Education for What?" (conducted by Solomon Islanders), the Department of Education has adopted clear guidelines for an education system that is economically and ideologically suited for a self-reliant Solomon Islands. Basically, it calls

for establishing and maintaining village primary schools (65 percent of school-age children now attend), establishing four vocationally oriented Area High Schools, and maintaining the present number (six) of the academically oriented secondary schools for selected students, some of whom would go abroad for tertiary schooling.

Since education in the Solomons was conducted exclusively by mission schools until the early 1960s, and predominantly until 1974, the government has only lately come to the task of trying to provide universal free primary education at the village level. One of the first steps was to dismantle the large centralized mission boarding schools, some of which are being utilized as Area High Schools. Although the mission schools were efficient in providing primary education, they contributed toward the alienation of youth from their families and villages, which they often left at the age of seven. The new policy stresses the importance of young children identifying with their own villages and families as a means of maintaining a strong, custom-oriented society.

The decentralization policy necessitates the building of schools in the many communities where none previously existed. Since the government is emphasizing the concept of community schools, the initiative for the school must come from the community, which then may get some assistance from the central government, depending, ostensibly, on need. The least the government will provide is a teacher, probably from the community, and probably, at least for the next decade, uncertified, or only partly certified.

The Area High Schools are an extension of the community education concept in that the curriculum is designed to prepare the students to meet the needs of community development. Basic skills in literacy and math are taught along with more practical subjects such as carpentry, home economics, agriculture, and outboard motor repair, depending on community needs. Ecology and environment are stressed, combining the knowledge of traditional practices and the teachings of the world's environment watchers.

Although the goal of the Area High Schools is to produce useful, productive young adults, as opposed to unemployable elites, they are having

some difficulty in gaining acceptance. Parents who see their children go off to secondary school still expect the usual reward, as do the students themselves: a salaried white-collar job. Such jobs are no more available in the Solomons than in other parts of the Pacific, a fact which the Solomon Islands government is well aware of, and is trying to cope with through the Area High School plan.

The Department of Education is trying desperately to avoid the problem that plagues every other Pacific Island country: hordes of alienated unemployed "school-leavers" who aimlessly roam the streets of the main towns looking for nonexistent jobs and usually finding trouble of one form or another. So far the problem in the Solomons is not acute, and may not become so if decentralized, community-based education works.

As part of the effort to maintain population dispersal and the acceptability of blue-collar employment, the government is attempting to close the wage gap between the top and bottom salaried employees (now approximately seven to one). The approach has been to put the lid on top salaries, which an independent Solomon Islands could barely afford to maintain, while slowly raising the lower salaries. Competition from the private sector, especially the expatriate-run companies, may cause some difficulties with this plan.

Cooperative societies at the village level throughout the country might also be viewed as part of the "something different," although the British-inspired models found elsewhere in the Pacific—the New Hebrides and Fiji—have turned out to be less than successful. Introduced by the British administration and supported by Peace Corps "advisers," the Cooperatives are considered unworkable by most Solomon Islanders, mainly because they are based upon foreign concepts which are completely out of step with Melanesian customs. The two-story Coop headquarters building in Honiara (built with British aid funds) stands in testimony to the kind of bureaucracy that Solomon Island leaders do not want.

Other offers of foreign aid are beginning to trickle in to Honiara now, and are treated with some caution. "Aid is easy to get," says one veteran Melanesian government official. "But we want it without the usual strings and for things that we

think are needed." Above all, the Solomons' leaders claim to want to avoid becoming dependent on aid.

Such a goal, however desirable, may be difficult for a country that received more than A\$13 million in 1975, A\$7 million of it in cash to pay recurrent expenses. While the stated policy is to eliminate foreign aid for recurrent expenditures by 1980-81, there are few who are convinced that it can be done.

The veteran civil servants are especially fearful of the attraction that foreign aid holds for politicians, and are mindful of the elitism that foreign aid has encouraged in other Pacific countries.

While the Solomons' attempt to do something different in the areas mentioned above holds some promise, the Islanders are going to find it difficult unless they can resolve the apparent conflict between Western parliamentary government and Melanesian "big man-ism," a conflict that has become even more apparent since the second election for the Legislative Assembly held in June 1976.

In most parts of Melanesia, the big man, or chief, is made, not born. Unlike his hereditary fellow chiefs in Polynesia, who have been criticized for their indolence, the big man of Melanesian society must perform deeds of some kind to merit the title. Coming from the proper lineage (i.e., a chiefly one) makes the task somewhat easier. Because of the great variety of tribes (more than 750 different languages in Papua New Guinea alone), the number of people under any one chieftainship is relatively small and homogeneous. To insure his tenure, the chief could look for things to do on behalf of his people—including conquest over neighboring tribes—who in turn would continue to support him as their chief.

When that traditional system is overlaid by a parliamentary system, one is likely to find 38 elected representatives, each trying to outdo the other according to "big man" values. The politicians are so passionately loyal to their home constituencies that they have unusual difficulty reaching a consensus. Differences are so great that attempts at forming national parties have all failed.

The result may be that a strong centralized government is not even possible in the Solomons. Ironical though it may sound, the failure of a strong central government to develop would certainly fit into the present government's plan.

Some polarization has begun to surface in the new Legislative Assembly which the 1976 election brought together. They are now divided into two camps: the government (Chief Minister Kenilorea and his eight selected cabinet ministers) and the opposition, or "backbenchers," a subgroup of which is now calling itself the Coalition Opposition Group (COG). The main issue is the revision of the draft constitution, which was rejected at the first meeting of the new Legislative Assembly.

Heading the COG (with Solomon Mamaloni, the ex-Chief Minister, as No. 2 man) is a 26-year-old economics graduate of the University of Papua New Guinea. Damned and called a communist by an expatriate businessman, Bartholomea Ulufa'alu began to discover political talent while leading demonstrations of the student organization, of which he was president. Shortly after his return home to his manmade Langalanga Islands of Malaita—which are known to produce more than their share of scrappy, aggressive men—Ulufa'alu found himself reforming and developing a general trades union of 20,000 members (by his count), of which he was president until his election to office in the 1976 election.



Bartholomea Ulufa'alu—will the Solomon Islands do something different?

What the COG says it wants is fundamentally that which the government wants: indigenization (meaning Solomonization, to the exclusion of the resident Fijian, Gilbertese, and Chinese populations), decentralization, equal distribution, decolonization, environmental preservation, and independence. The COG is not agitating for immediate independence (even though the Mamaloni government had it scheduled for 1976) because they feel that the country is simply not prepared for the shock of sudden severance, particularly economic severance from Britain.

Indigenization, in Ulufa'alu's mind, also means development of the Solomon Islands along indigenous as opposed to imported models.

What Ulufa'alu's critics disparage, and in some cases fear, is not what is contained in the COG platform, but rather his own not so secret demands for the return of native lands and the possible nationalization of the foreign commercial interests, most of them held by Britains and Australians. Many of the 577 Chinese (1970 census), who hold a virtual monopoly on the retail business community, have recently left the Solomons in the face of imminent independence. While there has not been a comparable exit of Europeans as yet, some say that it could happen if things get "bad."

Whether the COG will rally the Legislative Assembly to the ideals of nationalization and return of native lands remains to be seen. It depends somewhat on Ulufa'alu's leadership abilities, already in some question over his management of the trades union during his tenure. It also depends in large measure on the rules of big-manism in the Legislative Assembly.

In addition to the internal political divisions, which are beginning to grow stronger, the Solomon Islands face the standard pan-Pacific problems of population, urbanization, unemployment, and the school-leavers problem (alienated youth), but to a lesser degree than most of her South Pacific neighbors. Efforts to limit the rate of population growth are already under way through the Planned Parenthood Association, headed by a Melanesian. Honiara is the only "urban" center (population 16,000), and its growth, thanks to fairly strong government policies, is under control. Since salaried employment in the 90 percent rural Solomons has

never been higher, there is no real unemployment, unless one looks only at Honiara or insists on counting unsalaried able-bodied males. And since only a fraction of the Solomon Islands youth ever finished senior secondary school (and only 30 have continued through university degrees), one does not find the swarms of idle high school graduates and dropouts roaming the streets, as, for example, in Suva or Truk (in Micronesia).

The Solomon Islanders feel that these inherent problems can be controlled through good management that gets its authority directly from the grass-roots through direct participation. Hence, the strong emphasis on decentralization which, it is hoped, will get the government and its development operations out to the village level. A lot of faith is being placed in the successful functioning of the Local Government Councils once they get into full swing. Perhaps there is too much faith.

The goals that the Solomon Islanders have set for themselves are modest. They plan to remain a largely rural, agricultural country with gradual development of their resources on all fronts, with a slightly improved standard of living enjoyed by all on a generally equitable basis.

The leaders realize, however, that even these modest goals are fraught with peril. A sudden bauxite mining boom on Rennell could create imbalance. Large infusions of foreign investment and aid would almost guarantee more concentration of bureaucratic and commercial structures in Honiara, not to mention the inevitable increase of an expatriate population. Awareness of these threats is keen. But whether it will translate into caution and then to a gradual, ordered progress remains to be seen. Civil servants express the fear that the politicians may get "sucked into" the aid stream in their desire to maintain the big man status.

It may be that the Solomon Island leadership can really do something different. They are among the youngest in the Pacific (average age of Legislative Assembly members is 36), and the majority have their roots still firmly planted in the bush. The four young university graduate representatives in the Legislative Assembly imbibed their political philosophies at the University of Papua New Guinea (3) and the University of the South Pacific (1), neither

of which is known for its conservatism. In sum, the raw material is there. The people are strong, independent, and industrious, and their expectations, at the moment, are modest. The leadership, though few in number, is able, if it does not succumb to factionalism.

It must be remembered, though, that the Solomons was a late starter in development, during both pre- and post-war periods. It may be that they are destined to try to catch up with the rest of the Pacific. If they don't try to catch up, that will indeed be something different.

Papua New Guinea

Of all the island communities in the South Pacific, the stamp of frontier colonialism is most apparent in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the newest (September 1975) of the independent nations in the region. This colonial image, which the country is consciously trying to change, is manifested in a number of ways: ubiquitous Coca-Cola, Burns Philp outlets in every town, sprawling central government buildings and surrounding expressways at Waigani in Port Moresby, the American-designed copper town of Arawa in Bougainville, and the distant, apathetic looks of the Blacks and Red-skins (name used for lighter skinned Papuans and other coastal dwellers) who roam barefoot through the streets of the growing urban areas of the country. Overshadowing all of these symptoms of a colony are the hordes of lingering *mastas* (more than 55,000 of them, mostly from Queensland, Australia) who still maintain control over the major economic lines of the country, and who show no signs of looking for a one-way ticket out.

Indeed, there is no pressing reason why the expatriate population of PNG should be planning an exodus, in spite of all the talk and genuine efforts regarding "localization" of jobs, both in government and the private sector. The fact is that among PNG's 2.75 million nationals, only a small number have been prepared by training or experience to run the largest, richest, and most complex country of the entire South Pacific, a country which most observers feel is just beginning to shift into second gear.

The lingering colonial air that pervades PNG is an oppressive one when compared with that of



Miniskirts and Afros in Rabaul, PNG.

other former colonies in the Pacific. The fever of paranoia runs high, and is endlessly fed by tales of theft, assault, and voyeurism directed against Caucasians. Stark iron bars adorn windows and doors of every "European" dwelling and business in Port Moresby, and watchdogs nearly outnumber the children. Even government-sponsored advertisements for security devices and services are not uncommon. Whether paranoia should be related to colonialism is speculative; but when the suspicion and fear is so markedly unidirectional, one looks for a connection. More likely it is related to the economic gulf between the haves (mostly whites) and the have-nots of the country.

The oppressive nature of the colonial period in PNG has been well documented and castigated by Australian writers, one of whom characterized it as "neurotically paternalistic colonialism" (Edward P. Wolfers, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea*). Sanctions against the natives were even more restrictive than those against the Australian aboriginals, and were enforced by Australian *kiaps* and judges with draconian thoroughness. Perhaps it is this fairly recent experience under the colonial regime of the Territories of Papua and New Guinea that served to create the uneasy postcolonial atmosphere that persists today. Or perhaps it is inherent in the nature of this largest and most complex of the emerging Pacific Island nations.

When compared with the other Pacific Island communities, PNG is a giant. The land area (178,260 square miles) is nearly 20 times larger than the Solomon Islands, which ranks second in size among the Pacific Island groups, and its population was estimated at 2.75 million in 1976. Indeed, if one is looking at the country from somewhere in the vast Markham Valley or the lofty Western Highlands, it becomes difficult to think of PNG as another Pacific island. The scale of nearly everything, except on the numerous offshore islands, is continental.

Combined with the relatively enormous size of the country is the incredible diversity of topography, people, and cultures. Speakers of more than 750 distinctly different languages (belonging to two separate language families) inhabit the offshore islands, coastal plains, alluvial valleys, and precipitous mountain areas, some of which reach heights of nearly 15,000 feet. For many of the citizens of this new country the concept of a sociopolitical unit does not extend beyond the immediate clan, some of which still indulge in lethal warfare with traditional weapons against neighboring clans. For these people the concept of the nation Papua New Guinea is about as meaningful as that of the International Monetary Fund.

Lying within this vast area and the energy of the people is, according to most experts, the potential



Farmers sell betel nuts, root crops, and bananas at town market in PNG. White knee-length stockings are the badge of the 55,000 Australian expatriates still living in the country. Photo courtesy George Chaplin.

to become the richest of all the South Pacific communities, perhaps even one of the richest in the Third World. The mineral resources—copper, gold, silver—are believed to be vast, and there are some indications that reserves of oil may lie beneath the sea floor of the Gulf of Papua. (The oil potential is one of the unspoken reasons for the current disagreement with Australia over the international boundary line in the Torres Straits separating PNG from northern Queensland.) Timber, fish, and various agricultural products are already producing profit, and await expansion. Who will carry out the expansion and be the beneficiaries of the natural resources is most crucial to the development of PNG, and is decidedly a political matter with many facets. And quite possibly because of these potential riches, the colonial past of PNG continues to linger on longer than in the other Pacific Islands.

Another widely acknowledged reason for the lingering colonial atmosphere is Australia's failure to foster developments for self-government and independence until quite recently. Most critics feel that PNG was granted independence too early, or Australia waited too late before starting preparations for independence, depending on the critic's

particular bias. Either way, it adds up to the same thing: PNG needs and is getting lots of help as it explores its second year of independence.

The help is coming primarily in the form of a pledge of A\$200 million a year for five years, starting with independence, and the usual foreign aid infrastructure to help spend it. All of the strings are there, tied snugly in place. Such an amount of money from Australia is considerable, and requires the approval of thousands of conservative Queenslanders, large numbers of whom can be found in almost any part of PNG. Perhaps the amount also serves to compensate the Melanesians for past things not done, in the minds of some contrite Queenslanders.

One of the most conspicuous areas of neglect by the respective colonial governments in PNG is education. During the German rule of New Guinea (northern half of the main island, plus New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, and smaller islands off the coast of New Guinea) from 1884 to 1914, and during the Australian period in both Papua and New Guinea (Papua since 1884 and New Guinea since 1920), education was completely in the hands

of the missions, which received most of their support from local merchants, plantation owners, and other entrepreneurs. In these mission schools, most of which were primary,

Pupils learnt a few Bible stories, the symbolic significance of which they failed to understand, picked up a little Pidgin, and were perhaps taught how to write their names in Roman letters.³

When the Australian government got into the education business seriously in the 1960s, there were but a handful of Papua New Guineans with as much as a secondary school education. The first Papuan university graduate took his degree from an Australian university in 1965, the same year that the University of Papua New Guinea Ordinance was passed, which established the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), an institution which now has over 1,500 students, schools of law and medicine, a New Guinean as Vice Chancellor with a Papuan as his deputy, and a preponderantly Australian teaching staff. In addition to the UPNG at Port Moresby, there is the Technical University at Lae which offers degrees in such fields as engineering and architecture, and is also staffed largely by Australians, and an Administrative College to train the local Public Service cadre. Forty-seven percent of the primary school population still have no access to schools of any kind.

This late start in education on the part of the Australian government resulted in a severe shortage of qualified nationals to carry out the "localization" process, as specified in the agreement relating to both independence and foreign aid. Hence, all positions requiring sophisticated levels of training or experience are still filled by expatriates, mostly Australian, but with significant numbers of skilled tradesmen from the Philippines. Localization as a conscious policy is now under way in PNG, but its effects are barely noticeable in some government sectors and in the business community.

Political education fared no better in PNG, and again it was a problem of almost being too late. After Papua and New Guinea were placed under the International Trusteeship system in 1949, a Legislative Council was established in 1951 as part of the system of local government. Apparently it

was not the best atmosphere for political apprenticeship, for, according to Hank Nelson, "Neither their [council members] action nor their criticism had any effect on government policy."⁴

After expansion of the Legislative Council in 1961, it was replaced in 1964 by the House of Assembly, a body of 54 members who were elected in the classic Western democratic fashion, which was hopelessly inappropriate for the widely heterogeneous PNG setting, where a single voting district might include 50 or more different language groups. Also, the rules of the election guaranteed at least 10 nonindigenous (i.e., Australian) residents in the House of Assembly, a number which the administration was "confident that it would retain control."⁵

Although 19 of the members of the first House of Assembly had no formal education, and only 5 of the indigenes had any education beyond Grade VI, some political leaders began to emerge, most notably Sir John Guise, the current Deputy Chief Minister, and later Michael Somare, Chief Minister since 1972 when he was selected by a government coalition headed by Somare's Pangu (Papua and New Guinea Union) Pati.

Political parties, although introduced through the Australian model, have been slow in developing in PNG, due in part to the alien nature of the concept, but mostly to the extreme isolation and independence of each electorate. The Melanesian "big man" principle, as opposed to party affiliation, also determines to a great extent who is elected as representative of a particular district. Nevertheless, party politics is emerging as prominent individuals in government become identified with political parties, and are beginning to exert some force. Chief Minister Somare is the Pangu Pati, while Sir Tei Abal, leader of the opposition, is with the United Party. Falling somewhere between these extremes are the People's Progress Party, the New Guinea National Party, the Mataungan Association, and the Country Party. It was an adroitly formed coalition of the Pangu, National, and People's Progress Parties, plus a number of independents, that brought the 41-year-old Somare, also in line for a traditional title in his native East Sepik district, to the position of Chief Minister in 1972, a position that he still manages with considerable, though not universal, support.

The major difference between Mr. Somare's Pangu Pati and the opposition is that Mr. Somare is in power, while his detractors—Sir Tei Abal, Josephine Abaijan (the only woman, a Papuan, in the House), and John Kaputin (from Rabaul)—are not. There is also a general feeling among his critics that Mr. Somare is playing the development game too closely to the Australian rules which aim for big development to the neglect of the less well-endowed areas, such as the Highlands and the more desolate parts of Papua. Mr. Somare is also criticized by those in the Provincial Government Movement for his tendency to follow the Australian model of a strong centralized government in a country where the concept of unity has seldom extended beyond the limits of the clan.

Nevertheless, the Chief Minister is praised by virtually everyone for his intelligence and political adroitness. He is an acknowledged master of compromise through consensus following traditional Melanesian lines, his first major test being the successful—thus far—agreement worked out with the angry, secessionist-minded leaders of the Bougainville District (now the Province of North Solomons). In a situation which erupted once in violence, and threatened to become worse, Somare was able to effect a compromise which granted separate provincial status to Bougainville, creating the prototype for other provincial governments, and for the present preserving the unity of his incredibly fragmented country.

But despite his successes during his first four years, Mr. Somare failed in early December 1976 to bring off his bid for an early election which, if successful, could have strengthened his leadership by stifling the mounting criticism from the opposition. While his continued leadership after the regularly scheduled elections in June 1977 is very probable, it is apparent that he will continue to work under fire from a vocal and very able opposition.

The challenges that Somare faces are real ones, some of them posed by powerful economic forces whose very presence are likely to create suspicion about the integrity of his leadership. The amount of Australian aid alone—A\$200 million annually guaranteed until 1980, some of which goes to pay 43 percent of the government's operating expenses—is a major force to reckon with in

attempting to establish an independent country. The large expatriate government work force, which received A\$50 million in salaries alone in 1974, is another problem which surfaces in one form or another almost daily. Expatriate enterprises in PNG, some of it on the multinational, multimillion dollar scale, with large (1,000 plus) expatriate work forces, represents still another.

Although government policy aims to reduce and, ultimately, to eliminate the foreign hegemony in the economic area, most people wonder how and if it can be done. The amount of money from bilateral aid and foreign investment, which is currently supporting a highly affluent alien population and a small but growing national elite, will no doubt play some role in Mr. Somare's politics and the direction that the country is going to follow. While the government talks strongly of self-reliance, localization of all salaried positions, and repatriation of lands (9 percent of arable lands are still held in Texas-size plantations by expatriates), it has yet to take any meaningful steps in that direction, except in the massive ranks of the Public (Civil) Service, where salaries consumed A\$140 million (of a total government expenditure of A\$400 million) in 1975. Even in the Public Service, key positions (e.g., Director of Overseas Recruitment), and some secretarial ones, are held by Australians, who are served by PNG assistants and clerks.

Aside from the general problems posed by massive foreign aid and investment, the Somare government also faces the very real threat of internal fragmentation among PNGs "thousand tribes," to use Osmar Whites' term. To many of the rural tribesmen, who form over 90 percent of the population, the concept of independence means freedom from the feared and often hated Australian patrol officers, and a license to return to traditional ways, some of which were never challenged until the 1950s when the first European contacts were made. Only the very sophisticated minority share the concept of strength through the unity of nationhood. Maintaining even the loosest form of unity in the face of such incomparable diversity of cultures and languages would be a tall order for any government.

In addition to this basic cultural diversity there is also conspicuous inequality in the distribution of

natural resources and population, a factor that is causing large labor migrations and consequent social problems. The well-endowed small farmers of the Gazelle Peninsula in New Britain resent Highlanders who have immigrated from their poor and overpopulated lands in search of a better life. Similarly, the Papuans of Port Moresby are wary of the more aggressive Chimbus who continue to drift into the sprawling town of nearly 100,000, and the tensions between the Chimbus and Highlanders are released from time to time in urban brawls and outright tribal warfare. The traditional suspicions and enmity are now compounded by the cold facts of a cash-oriented economy, which is enough to put an enormous strain on national unity unless some meaningful method for more equal distribution can be devised. At the moment nothing looks very promising.

The most prominent example of inequitable distribution of resources, and the one which has already led to the most serious challenge to the Somare government's attempt at nationhood, is the mineral deposits, especially those of Bougainville, the first to be mined in PNG in any significant quantity by the multinational Bougainville Copper Ltd. (BCL).

Bougainville Copper Ltd., which also produces substantial amounts of gold and silver, is big by any standards, one of the largest copper mines in the world. Employing more than 4,000, a quarter of whom are expatriates from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the Philippines, the BCL has been a highly profitable operation, having amortized its investment during its first three years of tax-free production, 1972-1975, before the copper market took a drastic nosedive. The 210-ton trucks, manufactured and maintained by American firms (Euclid for manufacture, Morgan Equipment for supply and maintenance), haul away the remains of the once-majestic mountains of Panguna (45 miles from Kieta) at a rapid pace, and there are no signs whatsoever of running out of paydirt in the foreseeable future.

To say that BCL has created problems is an understatement. Problems of land alienation, social disruption, mass migrations, and sudden wealth appeared early and have intensified. Hundreds of Chimbus, Highlanders, and other hopeful

migrants fill the sidewalks of Arawa, the American-designed "complete community" nine miles from Kieta, which has now become the seat of government and commercial activities for Bougainville. Feeding on deep-fried flour balls and Coca-Cola, these jobless migrants present an immediate and serious problem for the new Provincial Government which is making noises about restricting travel to Bougainville from other parts of the country as the only means of coping with the growing population. Such a move would hardly serve the interests of a united PNG which the Somare government (with strong encouragement from Canberra) has set as its goal.

The question of distribution of the revenues from the mine presents an even larger problem. Under the terms of the renegotiated agreement in 1975, the central government continues to hold a 20 percent interest, and has begun to impose a super tax of 70 percent on all profits "above a certain rate," as claimed by Peter Hastings.⁶ No provisions have yet been worked out concerning what revenues would go directly to the Province of North Solomons, the new official name of Bougainville, where the citizens tend to have a proprietary attitude toward *their* minerals.

Bougainville's resentment of the central government in Port Moresby began even before the effects of the BCL began to surface. Starting as far back as 1969, a group calling themselves Napidakoe Navitu began agitating for autonomy, and later secession. There was general feeling among this group that Bougainvilleans had a much closer ethnic and cultural relationship with their black-skinned brothers in the Solomon Islands than with the Papuans and New Guineans. Also, since Bougainville Island was richer by far in agricultural potential (not to mention minerals), being politically bound to a less affluent and relatively overpopulated PNG could only be a drain on Bougainville's resources. Also, there was resentment over the years of having been shortchanged by central government allocations which seemingly corresponded to Bougainville's being the most remote province at the end of the line.

All of these feelings plus, no doubt, the development of BCL led to serious secessionist movements under the leadership of Fr. John Momis, who became widely known (and in some circles feared)

as the spokesman for the Bougainvillean rights, and an outspoken critic of the mine, its effects, and of the foreign-owned mining company. The movement for secession culminated in a dramatic declaration of Bougainville as the independent North Solomons Republic just before PNG independence day (September 16, 1975) and Fr. Momis' appeal to the UN Committee of 24 on Decolonization. These actions were soon followed by the suspension of provincial government, a Public Order by the central government forbidding political assembly in all the towns of Bougainville, and the posting of 10 of the country's 14 riot squads in Bougainville, which proved helpful in quelling numerous confrontations.

This desperate situation, plus the real danger of losing up to A\$90 million annually in revenues from BCL, placed heavy demands on the mediating skills of Chief Minister Somare. If Bougainville's secession was successful, what would stop New Britain, Manus, the Gulf, and other provinces from following suit? Any fragmentation through secession was to be avoided at all costs, and was strongly disapproved by the Australian government.

What could have resulted in more violence and bloodshed (many predicted a Pacific Biafra) has been resolved, for the time being at least, by a compromise which will probably set a pattern for decentralizing government control throughout the country. The compromise was for the central government to allow and plan for the orderly establishment of provincial governments, the first of which is the newly established (November 26, 1976) Province of North Solomons.

Some rather important details of the new arrangement remain vague. The Province may impose a retail sales tax, land tax (except in special cases, i.e., mining lands), head tax, and additional taxes on entertainment, gambling, and liquor licenses—all subject to overrule by the National Parliament. However, the main source of revenue for the provincial governments will be "unconditional grants" from the national government. These grants will be allocated according to a formula that has yet to be worked out by the fiscal commission. So, despite the fact that the Province of North Solomons has its own Premier—Dr. Alexi Sarei, an ex-priest with a degree in canon law—flag, and letterhead, the transition from Bougain-

ville District to that of province is far from complete.

Whether the shift to provincial governments will help bring unity to this very diverse country remains to be seen. Fr. John Momis, a key figure in the early moves toward Bougainvillean secession, showed his displeasure by not attending the Provincial Premier's inauguration, an act which was sufficiently important to be reported twice in the country's leading newspaper. Fr. Momis, along with some of the other nationalists (e.g., Josephine Abaijan and John Kaputin), feels that the shift to provincial government does not address the real problem: foreign-engineered development which is having disastrous effects on the indigenous people and cultures. Fr. Momis favors a type of development which follows indigenous patterns, promoted by indigenous people, and which would require the nationalization of such obtrusive industries as the BCL. Such talk strikes fear in the hearts of Mr. Somare and the foreign investors, which may help explain the rapidity with which the Bougainville compromise was arranged.

With an annual growth rate of more than 3 percent, PNG will soon be suffering from overpopulation; Chimbu District now has a density in excess of 600 inhabitants per square mile. Redistribution of people from heavily populated to less populated areas will not be easy; the more affluent from the less populated areas would certainly resent intruders, as they already do quite strongly in the North Solomons and the Gazelle Peninsula.

Urban drift has reached crisis proportions, particularly in Port Moresby where there is talk of enacting vagrancy laws to counter the problem of the jobless migrants who gravitate to the growing squatters' slums, and who help give Port Moresby the reputation as the most crime-ridden city in the entire South Pacific.

Alcoholism and malnutrition are common, with PNG having the highest rate of Kwashiorkor in the Pacific, a condition that cannot be attributed to the lack of ability to produce a nutritious diet, but is probably more directly related to the emphasis in the rural areas on cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, and copra, the proceeds of which are then used to buy alcohol (mostly beer), Coca-Cola, and imported foods.

Government efforts to discourage alcohol consumption are ludicrous and paternalistic. For example, single bottles of beer cannot be sold in Lae bottle stores between 12:30 and 3:00 P.M., although one can purchase as many cases of beer as he can afford. The logic, as explained by the proprietress, was to prevent the locals from spending their lunch money on beer, assuming they could not afford a case of it. Government advertising campaigns read "Be smart. Don't drink too much," whatever that may be. Antidrinkng commercials are shown in movie theaters followed immediately by a slick ad for San Miguel beer.

The apparent contradiction seen in the approach to the alcohol and nutrition problems is reflected in various other discrepancies between what the government proclaims and what it does. A government booklet issued in October 1976 titled *National Development Strategy*, a government white paper, reviews most of the basic problems which the new nation faces, then describes government strategy for coping with them. It talks, for example, about the importance of "promoting the use of labor intensive techniques" to encourage more salaried employment. Yet, the partly government-owned BCL is as highly mechanized as the mines of Montana or Western Australia. Similarly, it talks about decentralizing government operations, while still expanding the sprawling complex of government buildings in Port Moresby, all of them linked by mercury-lighted expressways. The city plan for Port Moresby itself was obviously conceived with extensive expansion in mind, along with increased automobile traffic.

In a similar vein the government talks about preventing drift from the rural villages by providing incentives to make rural life more attractive. But the incentives are never quite specified. Teachers in government schools, who are posted to all parts of the country, talk in their training college and university classes about educating villagers to remain content with rural life, which would appear to be self-contradictory.

In short, it appears that even though the government is aware of the many problems the society faces, it is not doing everything it could to counteract them. This is not to deny the limited successes of some of the stated objectives. Localization—the hiring of Papua New Guineans—is well under way



Farmers of PNG find new riches in coffee, often planted in place of family gardens. Photo courtesy George Chaplin.

in both government and private enterprise, often to the expressed disgust of the expatriates. Any new business, large or small, must include a concrete plan for localization before a license is issued, but there is no guarantee that the plan will be carried out.

More cash-producing activities in the rural sector have been established, particularly in currently lucrative coffee production, which is 77 percent in the hands of the small, individual landholders, as opposed to 30 percent of the copra and 37 percent of the cocoa, the remainder being produced on the expatriate-owned plantations. The recent coffee boom, however, may prove to be a mixed blessing. Because of two successive frost-induced crop failures in Brazil and Argentina, PNG coffee prices have soared, thus pumping a lot of new money into the villages and promoting the expansion of coffee cultivation in place of food crops, which is probably contributing to the rising rate of malnutrition. Some experts are expressing fears about overplanting a single cash crop whose prices are highly erratic on the world market, even though coffee did bring in A\$112 million in 1976, topping copper in export earnings for PNG for the

first time. The new Highlands Highway has also encouraged coffee production by providing better access to markets.

Despite government plans as presented in the white paper, and the limited accomplishments with respect to decentralization, localization, and rural development, the real pattern of development appears to be following Western lines. As more roads are built, more cars and trucks are being imported to make use of them. Development schemes in fisheries, timber, and the very promising copper reserve at Ok Tedi, deep in the remote Star Mountain area, all require massive amounts of foreign investment and aid, which assures that a goodly portion of the profits from these exploitative enterprises will be going into foreign coffers.

It would appear that PNG is entering into a new partnership with Australia, a partnership which is only a small step removed from colonial status. Not wishing to bite the hand that is going to feed her for some years to come, PNG seems to be adopting the Australian concept of development, and its attendant centralized bureaucratic structures, protests from the opposition notwithstanding. Such an approach will find no critics among the thousands of Queenslanders throughout PNG, or from Mr. Fraser and his Liberal Party in Canberra.

Whether the type of Western-styled development that is under way in PNG will serve to prevent the



Housewife and children in Papua New Guinea. The transition from colony to nation will have little effect on her life. Photo courtesy George Chaplin.

threatened fragmentation or fulfill the aspirations of the members of the thousand tribes remains to be seen. It is a very tricky line for the South Pacific country with the greatest resources to follow as they try to move into the postcolonial period.



NOTES

1. Scarr, Deryck A., 1967. *Fragments of Empire: a History of the West Pacific High Commission 1877-1914*. ANU Press, Canberra Press, p. 218.
2. Facsimile of recorded land sale in *Land and Politics in the New Hebrides*, by Barak Sope. South Pacific Social Sciences Association, Suva, Fiji. N.D. (published in 1976).
3. Osmar White, *Parliament of a Thousand Tribes*, Melbourne, Wren Publishing Company, 1972), p. 104.

4. Hank Nelson, *Papua New Guinea: Black Unity or Black Chaos*, Victoria, Penguin Books Ltd., 1974.
5. Nelson, *Papua New Guinea*, 1974, p. 128.
6. Peter Hastings, "Bougainville and the Solomons." *New Guinea*, Vol. 10 (1976), pp. 33-41.

