UNDER ONE FLAG

The 1980 Northern Territory Election

Edited by
DEAN JAENSCH and PETER LOVEDAY

Under One Flag

The party leaders, 1980

*Paul Everingham,
Country Liberal Party*

*Jon Isaacs,
Australian Labor Party (NT)*

Edited by D. Jaensch and P. Loveday

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**THE 1980
NORTHERN TERRITORY
ELECTION**

**GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN • SYDNEY • LONDON • BOSTON
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Contents

Illustrations	vii
Abbreviations	viii
Contributors	ix
Acknowledgements	x
1 PERCEPTION AND MYTH	1
Perceptions of the North: <i>Bob Reece</i>	1
The Arcadian Myth in the Election: <i>Lenore Coltheart</i>	9
2 CONSTITUTIONAL, LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	
<i>Alistair Heatley</i>	16
3 POLITICS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
<i>John Warhurst</i>	28
4 PARTY DOCUMENTS	40
Northern Territory Country Liberal Party, Organisation and Policy: <i>Graeme Lewis</i>	40
Aborigines and Politics: <i>Roger Vale</i>	46
Australian Labor Party, Northern Territory Branch, Organisation and Policy Formulation: <i>Jon Isaacs</i>	51
Aborigines, Land Rights and Politics in the Northern Territory: <i>Neville Perkins</i>	53
5 THE PARTY SYSTEM IN THE LATE 1970s	
<i>Dean Jaensch</i>	65
6 GENERAL FEATURES OF THE CAMPAIGN	
<i>Peter Loveday</i>	75
7 ABORIGINES AND ELECTORAL POLITICS	
<i>Peter Loveday and John Summers</i>	86
8 DARWIN ELECTORATES	
<i>Frank Alcorta and Alistair Heatley</i>	100

9 THE TOP END ELECTORATES	
<i>Peter Loveday, Ron May, Gillian O'Loughlin, Deborah Wade-Marshall, John Warhurst</i>	114
10 CONTESTS IN THE CENTRE ELECTORATES	
<i>Dean Jaensch, Ron Snee and John Summers</i>	129
11 ELECTORAL EDUCATION	
<i>Peter Loveday and Ron May</i>	146
12 MOBILE POLLING	
<i>Peter Loveday and John Summers</i>	158
13 THE RESULTS: WHAT, WHERE, WHY	
<i>Dean Jaensch and Peter Loveday</i>	170
 APPENDICES	
1 Statistics	
Table 1 <i>Civilian Employees in Northern Territory and Australia, June 1979</i>	185
Table 2 <i>1980 Territory Election, Summary of Results</i>	185
Table 3 <i>Territory-wide comparisons, 1974, 1977, 1980</i>	185
Table 4 <i>Regional comparisons, 1977, 1980.</i>	
<i>Enrolment and Voting</i>	186
Table 5 <i>Regional comparisons, 1977, 1980. Results</i>	186
Table 6 <i>Enrolment and Turnout by Electorate</i>	187
Table 7 <i>Electorate comparisons, 1977, 1980.</i>	
<i>First preference shares, per cent.</i>	187
Table 8 <i>1980 Results by electorate.</i>	188
2 The Alice Springs Survey	193
Bibliography	195
Index	198

Illustrations

Major party leaders	<i>frontispiece</i>
Electoral maps	
Rural area	xii
Darwin area	xiii
Alice Springs area	xiii
CLP campaign sticker	12
CLP policy speech — cartoon	35
Minor parties	
Christian Democrat poster	67
Marijuana party poster	68
Campaign documents	
CLP advertisement	81
NLC circular	83
Darwin area — ALP, CLP how-to-vote cards	108-9
Top End	
Two independent candidates	117,119
ALP poster	124
Centre	
CLP, ALP posters	134
Electoral education	
Gumatj pamphlet on voting	151
How-to-vote cards, mock elections	152
Mobile polling	
Map of two mobile runs	160
Polling at Mt Allen; voting cubicle	165

Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
AD	Australian Democrats
ALP	Australian Labor party
AMP	Australian Marijuana party
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary
CAVE	Campaign for Aboriginal Voter Enrolment
CD	Christian Democrats
CLP	Country Liberal party
CPD(R)	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Representatives
CPD(S)	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Senate
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CSR	Colonial Sugar Refinery
CWA	Country Women's Association
Ind	Independent
Inf	Informal
Lib	Liberal
MIM	Mount Isa Mines
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NAC	National Aboriginal Conference
NCP	National Country party
NLC	Northern Land Council
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NTPR	Northern Territory Parliamentary Record
PP	Progress party
QPP	Queensland Parliamentary Papers
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
SAPP	South Australian Parliamentary Papers
WA	Western Australia
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby

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D.J. and P.L.

Northern Territory electorates, 1980 — rural areas.

Darwin Electorates

Alice Springs Electorates

Northern Territory electorates, 1980 — Darwin and Alice Springs areas.

/ Perception and Myth

BOB REECE and LENORE COLTHEART

The first election under self-government in the Northern Territory merits special attention. The party system has rapidly been taking shape in recent years, especially in the electoral context; a new electoral act was brought into operation making mobile polling possible on a large scale and an extensive program of electoral education and enrolment was carried out in Aboriginal communities. It also provides an occasion for looking not only to the future with the leading politicians of the Northern Territory but also to the past to see what themes have been permanent in its history. Some of these are best identified in connection with three well separated but major constitutional events, the annexation of the Territory to South Australia in 1863, its transfer to the Commonwealth in 1911 and its attainment of self-government but not full statehood in 1978. Bob Reece discusses these; Lenore Coltheart traces the political use made of the Arcadian strand in the theme of development.

Perceptions Of The North *Annexation 1863*

The annexation of the Northern Territory to South Australia in 1863 took place, as Donovan points out (1976,97), not because of the worth of South Australia's arguments, but because Queensland did not want the Territory. But the arguments used by both governments in their representations to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for Colonies, reveal similar attitudes.

It was agreed by Governors Bowen (Queensland) and Daly (South Australia), the main exponents of northern colonisation in the early 1860s, that the North was an area which ought to be brought under official control, thus completing the 'occupation of the whole continent of Australia', or at least of 'the belt of civilisation already encircling the larger portion of Australia' (Bowen to Newcastle 30 September 1860 *QPP* 1861). The authority of the Crown had to be secured. This was a response not to any concern about the designs of other European powers or about descending hordes of Asians but to a belief that unless government authority was quickly established the North would

become a headache for later administrators. Former Queensland colonist Sir Charles Nicholson told Newcastle in London that squatters were already moving in and that their occupancy of pastoral land would make any subsequent system of land regulation extremely difficult to impose. Although the entire area was within the legal boundaries of New South Wales, there was little likelihood of that government imposing its jurisdiction. Consequently, an important source of revenue would be lost and dangerous precedents established. At the same time, the impossibility of enforcing the law in such a remote area meant that it would become the refuge of 'many individuals who may have made themselves obnoxious to the laws...' (Nicholson to Newcastle July 1862 *SAPP* no.37,1863). This notion of a northern Alsatia, a haven for the burgeoning criminal classes, was certainly one which concerned colonial governments.

The economic potential of the North was taken for granted, an assumption which was to colour most subsequent thinking. However it was the Victoria River district, described in glowing terms by Mac-Douall Stuart and A.C. Gregory, supported by Captain Stokes of the 'Beagle', which was the focus of interest. Governor Bowen concluded from their reports that the surrounding country was well suited to horses and cattle and possibly sheep. Perhaps even more important, '... the usual agricultural productions of inter-tropical regions, such as cotton, sugar, coffee, indigo, tobacco etc., would grow luxuriantly' (Bowen to Newcastle 30 September 1860 *QPP* 1861). The river would provide an outlet for produce and a settlement at its mouth would be in a commanding position to trade with India, China and the European settlements in the East Indies as well as Europe itself. The export of horses to India, for example, was a potentially profitable industry which had been talked about since the 1840s. The development of steam shipping via the Cape was expected to bring northern Australia into the network of world commerce.

Apart from the question of who should have jurisdiction over the North, the only points of difference between Queensland and South Australia were the routing of the telegraph once it was brought ashore and the nature of the labour force to be employed in exploiting northern resources. Accepting the advice of the Rev. John Dunmore Lang that Europeans would not be adversely affected by the northern climate (1852,328), Bowen suggested that convict labour be used to erect public buildings and prepare for cultivation in anticipation of free immigrant settlement. This was in spite of the lessons of Fort Dundas, Melville island and Port Essington where malaria and other diseases had debilitated convicts and their marine guards, decades earlier, when settlement was first tried.

Daly and the South Australian squatters were equally optimistic about the economic potential of what they liked to call their colony's 'back country', but they were opposed to the introduction of convicts

as contrary to its ideology. Arnhem Land, they believed, was not only suitable to cotton, but 'its proximity to the immense labour markets of the East,... removes one of the greatest obstacles to the successful cultivation of that most valuable product' (Daly to Newcastle 23 December 1862 *SAPP* no. 127, 1862). Their assumption was that Asian coolie labour would be obtained by the colonists, '... the climate not being favourable to outdoor labour by the white man' (*SA Register* 14 October 1863). Both governments agreed, then, that the North could be developed only with some form of servile labour.

The only significant discussion of what South Australia should actually do with the Northern Territory took place late in 1863, some time after news of the annexation was received (Newcastle to Daly 26 May 1863 *SAPP* no.70, 1863). Even then the main concern was to frame land regulations as quickly as possible so that no squatter could gain advantage by getting to the Victoria River first. Revenue from land sales, to be conducted in London as well as Adelaide, was expected to exceed the cost of an administration which would be based on South Australia's own laws. However, there was no thought at this stage of representation for the Territory in the South Australian legislature, whose electors were not expected to answer the call of the North. Most of the new colonists were to be drawn from Britain so that even the English labourer could become an overseer of Asian coolie labour. Indeed it would be 'an unmitigated evil' for South Australia if the North were to be settled by its own small population (Donovan 1976, 90), but the North would provide an expanding market for its produce.

Transfer 1911

The formal transfer of the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth was preceded by a decade of often repetitious debate before parliament and government settled on their response to the offer made to Prime Minister Barton by the South Australian Premier (F.W. Holder). The federal conventions had discussed the possibility and section 111 of the Commonwealth constitution had been framed with possible transfer in mind.

Under the Commonwealth constitution, the Northern Territory was regarded as being part of South Australia. However, the impression remained in the first parliament that the South Australian government still possessed the power to return the Territory to the British Crown. This in turn raised the question of effective control over the whole of the Australian continent, something which members were naturally anxious to establish once and for all. Beyond the possibility of the Northern Territory reverting to Imperial control loomed the bogey of large foreign syndicates introducing coloured labour. The principle of national sovereignty seemed to be at stake,

just as governors in the 1860s had been concerned about the authority of the British Crown over the northern coasts.

This feeling was heightened in 1902 when the South Australian parliament passed resolutions which repudiated the offer made by Holder. The group backing a transcontinental railway based on the land grant system had marshalled their forces and the state government let it be known that it was now in the market for foreign offers. During the September 1902 session of Commonwealth parliament, the bogey of syndicates was raised by King O'Malley who saw them holding the nation to ransom (*CPD* (R) 10 September 1902, 15905), under threat of making it a Chinese or Japanese headquarters.

By 1901, the economic prospects of the Territory could no longer be painted in the rosy tones used earlier by Daly, Bowen and others. Cotton, sugar, pearling, the cattle industry, mining and the Pine Creek railway had all run into difficulties and had failed or were struggling. Even the Chinese who had built the railway did not remain in the area. Beyond Pine Creek there was a 63-inch rainfall but malaria made it difficult for white men to live there. 'Could any place', it was asked, 'be more useless to Australia from the local standpoint...?' The optimistic minority still talked about the cattle industry and the possibility of further discoveries of gold, but it was generally acknowledged by members that the Territory would be a liability for a long time to come and needed coloured labour if agriculture was to be viable. South Australia's Northern Territory account had been running at a deficit of about \$70 000 a year and the total debt in 1901 amounted to \$3 million. Reflecting unfavourable economic conditions, the white population had declined from 5000 in the late 1880s to 2000 in 1901.

One way of understanding the first parliament's perception of the Northern Territory is to look at the images used. The most popular was that of Australia's 'back door', the 'unguarded entrance' which could let in the Asian hordes already denied legal entry at the front door. The preservation of Australia for the white man and the consequent need to restrict non-European immigration were the major preoccupations of the first parliament and the Northern Territory was seen as threatening the effectiveness of restrictive legislation. By restricting entry to coloured labour, the South Australian government, it was pointed out, had for many years been paying the cost in the non-development of tropical agriculture. Now that the Commonwealth had assumed responsibility for erecting this into a national policy, it seemed only right that it should take over the bill. The Commonwealth would have to pay the piper.

Anxiety about the Asian hordes took on a new significance after Japan trounced the Russian naval forces in 1905. It was no longer a matter of keeping the door shut but of preventing it from being blown out of its frame. Australia could not rely permanently on the Royal

Navy and effective defence seemed to depend on a railway, which could transport supplies in case of attack, and on the peopling of the area with European immigrants who would rise to defend their adopted land. 'Teddy' Roosevelt advised an Australian visitor to the United States to 'Encourage the immigration of Southern Europeans. They will cultivate that rich country and become good Australians' (CPD (R) 7 June 1906, 27). Deakin himself supported Southern Italian immigration as a compromise solution to the labour problem.

Aborigines had not been mentioned in the discussions of the early 1860s; they were still no more than an afterthought in 1901. It was left to Alfred Deakin to suggest that the Commonwealth government could seize this last opportunity to secure decent treatment for the remnant - something which 'every civilized people must feel is part of the "white man's burden" cast upon us when we exploit the lands of native people' (CPD (R) 10 September 1902). He also felt that there was some possibility of administering them together with the Aborigines of Western Australia's north-west where conditions were similar. But the underlying philosophy was that of 'smoothing the pillow' for a dying race. Although their numbers were still in the vicinity of 23000, they were not officially regarded as part of the Northern Territory's population.

There was nothing in the official ceremony of transfer on 2 January 1911 which suggested an exciting new era in the Territory's history. Perhaps there was little that the adolescent Commonwealth could say by way of welcoming to her care this strange creature of 47 years. At any rate, there was no official message from Melbourne and it was left to Mr Justice Mitchell, South Australia's government Resident and now Acting Administrator for the Commonwealth, to find some words appropriate to the occasion. Mounted on a stool in the Residency garden, he read the official proclamation and the Commonwealth flag was then run up the flagstaff beneath the Union Jack while the Palmerston Orchestral Band played *God Save the King*. A new flag had been manufactured for the purpose by a firm of Chinese tailors but this so infuriated the handful of extreme advocates of White Australia that a tattered old one had to be used instead. As the *Northern Territory Times* pointed out, if this attitude had been carried to its logical conclusion, then 'most if not all of those present must have attended in that garb used by Adam before the fall' (6 January 1911).

From his perch Mr Justice Mitchell then delivered the address. The relationship with South Australia was now severed, but at the same time new links were forged which joined the Territory 'in a peculiar manner' to the states and the Commonwealth. In place of one guardian there were now no fewer than six, thus guaranteeing the Territory's more rapid progress. In return, he told the audience, they should manifest a patriotic spirit and 'feel and show a real love for the land in which we live'. After chiding the pessimists of the day, he

reminded his audience of the commercial opportunities and their freedom 'such as has never before been witnessed in this world'. They then gave three cheers for the Commonwealth and all present were invited to partake of refreshments.

This largest gathering in the history of Palmerston, now Darwin, was cosmopolitan in the extreme. Together with the white community in tropical kit, there were Chinese in national costume and a complement of Malays and Aborigines. It all suggested the development of a plural society with more affinity to colonial outposts in the Malayan archipelago than to White Australia even though the Commonwealth government had been dedicated from the outset to keeping out their kind.

Something of the spirit of the moment was distilled in doggerel verse penned by one of the *NT Times*'s freelance correspondents. It begins:

HAIL! THE FUTURE

On the threshold we stand of a destiny grand -
The pilots of power and the will to command -
To raise up a nation to justify our
Descendance from nations conceived in war's power,
And prove that of all we're the pick and the flower,
Who industriously use the fast fleeting hour.

We'll unite as a band in this glorious land,
With its beauty, its wealth and its sea-laven sand,
We'll bear in our mind instructions well timed,
But we'll throw off the tutor who was never acclaimed;...
(*'Nyngan'* *NT Times* 28 July 1911).

Although the transfer failed to produce any sense of excitement in Darwin, it aroused interest in Melbourne where the Commonwealth parliament had been debating the issue for so long. The local branch of the North Australia League, consisting largely of ex-Territorians, immediately began to lobby for the Territory's representation in Commonwealth parliament. But their demand for two seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives was out of tune with local opinion. The *NT Times* thought that it was 'a rather tall order', in view of the tiny number of voters. Instead it believed that all federal members would think of themselves as 'special guardians' of the 'orphan'. If direct representation were granted, the *Times* continued, this feeling would be nullified: it wondered if 'some form of local self-government' might not be preferable (*NT Times* 27 January 1911). But there was no expression of regret at the loss of representation until later events proved its value.

At the same time, the Commonwealth's acquisition of the Territory inspired the Melbourne-based Young Australia National party to new

heights of chauvinist fervour. They now wanted Alice Springs, to be renamed Centralia, as the national capital:

From ALICE SPRINGS, the heart of Australia, beating eternally century after century, will pulsate the force necessary to the persistent existence of our Australian Race. From Alice Springs will radiate, like nerves and muscles, the grand trunk railway lines, linking our continent and providing effective occupation and defence (*NT Times* 3 February 1911).

The party was an extreme exponent of White Australia.

It has been said that we are lazy, and exhibit the tired feeling. Compare our sons physically with the sons of other times. Note the Surf-bathers ... whose sun-kissed bodies, breathed upon by the eucalypt-laden air, are evolving a new race, strenuous and powerful... A powerful body presages the great mind - a powerful intellectual race. And these be the FATHERS and MOTHERS of the GREAT AUSTRALIAN RACE to come - the pure race (*NT Times* 3 February 1911).

But the ideal evoked here had already been seriously compromised by the white denizens of the Northern Territory to whom it was addressed. By 1911, half-castes outnumbered whites and in turn were outnumbered by Asians. 'The tired feeling', together with alcohol and the accessibility of 'black velvet', had long been diluting 'the pure race' in its northern domicile.

Self-government 1978

The debate in the Commonwealth parliament in 1978 on the bill establishing self-government was almost exclusively concerned with constitutional and fiscal questions. The philosophy behind the bill, as explained by the Minister for the Northern Territory, A.E. Adermann, was that the people of the Northern Territory possessed 'the right - indeed the duty - to control their own affairs through a democratically elected legislature' (*CPD* (R) 11 May 1978, 2259). He saw the bill as a continuation of the efforts of both sides of parliament to meet their 'legitimate constitutional aspirations...'. It was ironic, however, that wide ranging constitutional powers were being given to the people of the Northern Territory in almost as arbitrary a fashion as the cancellation of their political rights in 1911.

Only one speaker echoed the issues raised by the first Commonwealth parliament. K.L. Fry reminded the house that the Northern Territory was 'our frontier, the first point of contact that the people of many important South East Asian nations have with Australia'. Aboriginal land rights, uranium mining, the bluetongue problem and the illegal importation of drugs, plants and animals, he said, gave the Northern Territory 'a tremendous political importance which far overshadows the question of the number of people who live

there' (*CPD* (R) 2 June 1978, 3052). Nevertheless these issues did not receive further discussion in the debate. If there can be said to have been a major theme, it was the need for uniformity in administration throughout Australia: the securing of a national homogeneity in laws and opportunities. In one sense, of course, the debate reflected the government's feeling that in the future the Northern Territory would be someone else's headache: a feeling which the Duke of Newcastle and the South Australian government must have earlier enjoyed.

While the constitutional and fiscal issues were not unimportant, they were overshadowed by the question of Aboriginal land rights which had already been discussed at length in earlier debates. Labor members feared that self-government might mean the erosion of rights embodied in the 1976 legislation which they had prepared in 1975. In the wake of the Fraser government's recent capitulation to the Queensland government in the Aurukun-Mornington island dispute, it was suggested that a Northern Territory government of the same complexion might well aspire to the powers exercised by the Queensland Premier. The former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (G. Bryant) believed that the Northern Territory Assembly's record in Aboriginal affairs was almost as 'unhappy' as that of Queensland and that it should not be permitted to have any additional authority in the area. The only real security he saw for Aborigines was for the federal government to take over land by legislation or purchase and to deed it in perpetuity to Aboriginal groups (*CPD* (R) 6 June 1978, 3107). Authority with regard to Aborigines had been retained by the Commonwealth under the new arrangement, but it might still be delegated to the Territory at some future stage by a sympathetic government in Canberra.

The ceremony marking self-government on 1 July 1978, within a few weeks of the debate, was as informal as that of January 1911 and senior ministers of the Commonwealth government were conspicuous by their absence. On the Saturday afternoon a crowd of more than 6000 at the old Darwin Oval drank beer and ate chops and sausages to mark the occasion. As the newly-designed Territorian flag was raised, there were cheers and applause and cries of 'Happy Self-Government', while off-shore HMAS Derwent fired a 17-gun salute and RAAF tracking aircraft flew past. Everingham, who had been sworn in by the Administrator early that morning, then told the crowd that this was the most important constitutional change since federation: 'We have the ball at our feet now. If we make a mess of it we will be able to blame only ourselves' (*West Australian* 3 July 1978). Like Mr Justice Mitchell, 67 years earlier, he reserved his most passionate words for those 'merchants of despondency' who doubted that the change would be for the better. As in 1911, the mood was one of determined optimism, best exemplified in the McGonigal-like efforts of a Darwin versifier:

About twelve hundred miles north-south and six hundred east to west,

Is a chunk of oz-land in the northern part with the Sturt rose as its crest.

This country, wide and sparse with deserts, scrubs and grass
Has splendours and many adventures from its native past... (*NT News* 1 July 1978).

The Territory still needed pioneers but in the Chief Minister's words, they would be people who wanted to 'come here and do their own thing' (*Age* 1 July 1978).

Nevertheless, there were Southern sceptics who believed that self-government would cost rather more than Everingham's notional can of beer a week. This time it was the Territorians themselves who were having to pay the piper - to the tune of \$5.00 a week for every taxpayer. 'NT's hangover is the payoff', ran the *West Australian* headline (3 July 1978), reflecting the future problem of making up the revenue shortfall when the Commonwealth 'top-up' ceased. Self-government meant liberation from control by faceless Canberra bureaucrats, but its introduction was 'not without some signs of trepidation among its people' (*Advertiser* 3 July 1978). Only the *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial sounded a positive note. Self-government, it believed, was a major step towards statehood in perhaps fifteen or twenty years. Until then the Territory would 'never be properly developed and realise its potential...' (1 July 1978).

Apart from these comments, the event went largely unnoticed in the Southern press. Of greater interest to most newspaper sub-editors that weekend was a 'riot' at Nhulunbuy in Arnhem Land. A number of Aborigines, including Northern Lands Council chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu, had gathered at the Walkabout Hotel on the Friday afternoon to mark the advent of self-government. But when they refused to leave, Yunupingu and six others were arrested, precipitating an attack on the hotel and government buildings by enraged members of the Yirrkala Aboriginal community. As the fireworks went off over Darwin Oval on Saturday night, the seven were appearing before a specially convened magistrate's court. For Southern readers it seemed hardly a favourable omen for a new era in Northern Territory history.

The Arcadian Myth In The Election

Much of the talk in the election about the development and future progress of the Northern Territory has been drawn from and reinforces a political myth with a long history in Australia as well as in the Territory, a myth usefully labelled Arcadian. This links it with similar myths found in the early stages of development of other countries settled in the expansionary phases of European capitalism (see Powell 1978).

The assumptions that progress towards political autonomy is desirable and inevitable and that the process of land settlement and usage is concurrently desirable and inevitable are two central tenets of Australian liberalism. They shape not only the rhetoric of politicians but, when they also underlie an historian's study, they shape the writing of history to show the past as a gradual progress towards self-government and land settlement, with concomitant neglect of what does not belong to this story.

This tendency is an Australian variant of that genre distinguished by Butterfield as the Whig interpretation of history. While Whig historians portrayed the past as a progress to self-government, Arcadian historians have an additional element in the story of progress, that of extending settlement and land use. The pastoral occupation of Australia, being central to the Arcadian perspective on the past, dictates a classification of events, personalities and even environmental features as either friends or enemies of the process of settlement.

The Arcadian interpretation of Australian history draws on and sustains an Arcadian myth, the political myth which in the nineteenth century took the form of presenting the Australian continent in the role of a big backyard for Britain. In the popular literature of the time (Lansbury 1970), paintings of the Australian landscape (Smith 1960), explorers' accounts and nineteenth century handbooks for emigrants (Powell 1978, ch.3) the image of Australia as Arcady was powerfully promoted. Arcadian history is a reflection of the past which reinforces the old myth, now serving a new purpose; like other myths it is the story of a polity, explains the circumstances of its people, identifies the obstacles to be overcome and the continuities with the past (cf Tudor 1972, 13).

With the publication of *A History of Australian Land Settlement* in 1924, Roberts set the foundation stone of Northern Territory historiography. The book reinforced the tradition of writing Australian history established by Bonwick and continued by Collier (Abbott 1971, 2). That tradition served to ratify the European occupation of Australia, and Roberts presented what was essentially a romantic pastorate of progressive settlement.

But Northern Territory history has been hard for Arcadian historians to write, for it has not been possible to show 'a fascinating history of the making of fields and pastures by the patient toil of man and beast' (Hancock 1966, 23). The region has not lent itself to the progressive mastery of the land which Hancock saw as the central theme of Australian history. For one thing, the discords of European activities in the Northern Territory were not readily brought into harmony, and fewer friends were found than enemies. But the basic elements were there and one was the persuasive and enduring idea that distant government was a wrong which must be righted with time, and that the progress of land settlement and land usage has been delayed

by certain obstacles of which distant government was a major one, antithetical to the principles of liberalism and a hindrance to development (Jaensch 1979,42; Heatley 1977,7-9; Heatley and Powell 1978). It has even been lumped together with Darwin's major disasters: 'enemy bombers in World War II, cyclone Tracy in 1974 and 78 years of control from Canberra' (*Brisbane Telegraph* 23 October 1979, *Australian* 30 June 1979). This political myth exerts a strong influence in politics, economics and scholarship in the Northern Territory today and it is around the theme of Roberts's chapter on the Northern Territory that other overviews have been orchestrated. The most prominent of these have been Grenfell Price's 1930 Macrossan Lectures, and a CSIRO report on land settlement in the northern part of the Territory (Bauer 1964).

The history of the Northern Territory was presented as an obstacle course over one hundred years, with a succession of hurdles to the progressive settlement and usage of land and to the attainment of political autonomy. Later references compounded what was a misreading of Northern Territory history, an attempt to locate it in a context to which it did not belong, by relying on Roberts, Price and Bauer. The most recent account of this kind, a historical sketch in a study of present-day Northern Territory government (Heatley 1979, ch. 1), brought to the half-century this example of Froude's Disease, the cumulative borrowing of error (Cuthbertson 1975, xxi).

There have been dissidents who refused to envisage the Northern Territory cast in an Arcadian mould. Amongst these, Xavier Herbert (1937) and Bruce Davidson (1965) have been the most prominent. But while it is worth arguing with historians about the accuracy of the myth as a general account and interpretation of the past, it is pointless to dispute the myth when considering the practical political uses to which it is put. Whether it is true or false is largely irrelevant in that context; it will be maintained regardless of inaccuracy.

In the Territory it has flourished and the values of self-government and extension and intensification of land use and land settlement are largely unquestioned. They appear to be basic values for the electorate too, values on which a consensus has been built up which is just as important as class in shaping the vote. Kemp's view that identification with the value consensus and with a maximum of other popular values is the optimal position for a party to establish appears to have been demonstrated in this election (Kemp 1978).

The attainment of a fully elected legislature and the establishment of local administrative machinery in 1978 was presented as the turning-point for the Territory. Certainly this endowed the sitting CLP government with an electoral advantage derived solely from the changed arrangements, rather than from any display of legislative competence or administrative skill and electors were reminded of it in 1980 not least by the slogan 'Keep the Flag Flying'.

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A CLP campaign sticker.

Close correspondence between material distributed in celebration of the second anniversary of self-government soon after the election and CLP election material is worthy of note. It was another concrete expression of the CLP's identification with the achievement of self-government. The CLP labels which adorn many stubby-holders in the Territory are not readily distinguishable from the commemorative labels - both depict the flag, they are identical but for their wording. The link between the CLP and the Northern Territory flag is best described as proprietorial.

In general the CLP campaign depicted the government as the custodians of a long-awaited and hard-won legislative and administrative autonomy, whose course must be to fulfil the obligations their moment in history entailed. These obligations centred on development of land resources now that distant government was discarded. On election day voters read that

Since our Territory flag was first hoisted two years ago the strong leadership of Paul Everingham as Chief Minister has ensured development has leapt ahead (*NT News* 7 June 1980).

If government from the Colonial Office in London, then from North Terrace in Adelaide, from Melbourne and finally from Canberra is believed to be causally related to retarded development of land resources in the Northern Territory, it is not illogical to view self-government as ensuring development.

There are implications of this optimistic equation which surfaced before and during the election campaigns, and which may be clarified at the level of political analysis even if they are not examined by the electorate. In the context of electoral expectations in the Northern Territory, as long as the past is presented as a series of failures assigned predominantly to distant government, then elections are an amphitheatre for mythic revival, a parade of those aspirations accorded value by the deeply rooted myth. Among these aspirations the maximisation of land resource development is predominant, but a problem arises when a party in office identifies its success with the attain-

ment of goals which are not conveniently available. Government Residents in the nineteenth century engendered unrealisable expectations in distant Adelaide with reports which gave the impression that progress which ought to occur was occurring, a 'good news' dynamic which served to justify each administration until the day of nemesis. The same function is performed by present-day methods for formulating policies and publishing them in press releases and in other ways as a never-ending sequence of steps in a broad scheme of development and by self-congratulatory statements of achievement. There is now a distance of a different kind between governors and those to whom they are responsible and public relations is a means of bridging that distance - one way.

Whether discrepancies between the myth and reality - discrepancies which result in failures of policy - can be ignored indefinitely remains to be seen. But to ignore them is common. The inquiry of the House of Representatives Committee on Expenditure into the Northern Territory Forestry Programme in 1978 (APP 1978) received little publicity in the Northern Territory, despite the implications of its findings. Commercial forestry remains a goal of public policy, the Chief Minister allowing only that the program under self-government will 'hasten slowly' (NTPR 31 May 1979, 1609). The summary presented to the house by its Expenditure Committee in tabling the forestry report offers a succinct, but unheeded, warning of the problem of politicising agricultural goals:

a large forestry organisation was developed...It completely overshadowed the meagre forestry resource. The forest itself has always offered mute protest. Despite paper expectations and people's opinions, it remained as it was and will always be - a very poor and primitive resource (CPD (R) 2 June 1978, 3021).

In the Northern Territory land resources have not been used successfully as political tools, but the idea that they may remains current in electoral debate and in arguments evaluating policies. Rural development is promoted in optimistic terms (NT News 12 April 1980) and considered 'vital for the Territory's future' (NT News 27 February 1980). The goal of farming has been a generally unsuccessful pursuit of private and public enterprise for almost a century, an attempt to nudge the northern region into the Arcadian direction taken by the southern colonies. The rhetoric remains the same, and the prospects for commercial cropping have not been improved. The CLP promoted the idea that self-government would facilitate development and that enterprise in primary and mining industries would benefit from the change of institutional control. The ALP had a long statement in its platform of its view that the agricultural, horticultural and pastoral industries were essential to the Territory's development and its spokesman made statements to this effect in the campaign but even

so it seemed to be less assertive about development as defined by the CLP. Its stand on Aboriginal land rights, in particular, made it seem opposed to development. The CLP had a virtual monopoly of the myth during the election.

The idea of independence, of emerging from political bondage, has a unification function which gains additional force from the interpretation of Northern Territory history as a story of struggle for economic and political development.

Against this unity of purpose and of identity, differences are outweighed. The effect is to impose a putative consensus on very diverse electorates, for if it is assumed that all are engaged in a slow but irresistible march toward an undefined era of maximised economic and political progress - and Arcadianism depends on precisely that assumption - then differences and cleavages appear subject to that inevitable progress. Political parties align themselves as friends of that progress, their opponents as enemies; class lines are obscured, sex differences ignored, racial differences discounted, and a spurious homogeneity results.

To take 'free enterprise' and 'pioneering' as synonyms is an Arcadian device used freely by Price, and this is an intriguing development within the 'pioneer legend' (Hirst 1978). In the Northern Territory the pioneer qualities of individual enterprise and independence are treated as the essential characteristics of the 'Territorian', a stereotype which analysts as well as voters apparently find convincing. It has been argued, for example, that in the Territory the hard life, and an influx of 'non-conformists, casual workers, social misfits and "hippies"', have generated a high degree of self-reliance, individualism and independent-mindedness' (Rumley, D. 1979a, 12). Voting behaviour is then explained in terms of a cultural homogeneity - area norms - and the deduction made that 'an appeal to an independent rather than to a partisan spirit may be a potentially important factor in Northern Territory policies' (Rumley, D. 1979b, 108).

The problem of identifying a political culture is considerable (Heatley 1979, 169) and it is not confined to the study of Northern Territory politics. The use of the consensus construct is, however, clearly revealed in the CLP campaign. In Commonwealth politics the cultural consensus strategy is employed wherever the Liberals claim to be the party embracing or representing all classes, creeds, races and economic groupings with concessions to none (Loveday 1979, 240-1; also 1977, 478). The other side of the argument is that the Labor party is a sectional party (Connell and Goot 1979, 22) and in the Territory this has the added element of shading Labor as anti-Territorian as well because of its organisational links with the party and the trade union movement in the South. To recognise special needs or to concede priority to the claims of particular groups, such as Aboriginal land claims, is unacceptable from this point of view. The Chief Minister

himself has recently explained to the Women's Electoral Lobby that

Our approach, at least at this stage of development of the Territory, is to concentrate on total community needs rather than attempting to satisfy the needs of individual special interest groups (Everingham to Convenor, WEL, 12 October 1979).

Arcadianism in the Northern Territory is a myth shaped by historians and sustained in the service of politics. Arcadian aspirations, embodied in policies, touch an electoral pulse: in the 1980 election campaign the CLP quickened that pulse by promoting an identification of the party with Arcadian values, and by reinforcing those values in its capacity as the governing party. The pursuit of Arcadian goals for political purposes is an important aspect of Northern Territory politics, and the promotion of these goals tends to effect the political and social cohesion of a geographically vast and socially and economically disparate area (Peachment 1971, 140). It should be noted that mining - the depletion rather than the development of land resources - is frequently taken within the embrace of the Arcadian myth if it is treated as achieving increased population or economic growth. Properly it is not an Arcadian pursuit; like the first British bases in the Northern Territory in the nineteenth century it is essentially a temporary activity, under outside control.

In the context of Northern Territory electoral expectations, as long as the history of the region is understood as a series of failures, and the causes assigned to straw villains (among which the effigy of distant government towers), the Arcadian myth is maintained. That myth featured in this election, its propositions nourished by reiteration, its assumptions unquestioned and its aspirations affirmed. These aspirations are the currency of electoral exchange in the Territory: the evaluation of policies is in terms of this inflated currency.

2 Constitutional, Legislative And Political Developments

ALISTAIR HEATLEY

The performance of the incumbent government inevitably becomes a prominent issue in election campaigns and most of the debate about its record took place in the Assembly. Concentration on the Assembly is justified not only because of its transcendent importance as the Territory's prime political institution, but also because, in a political climate not dominated by formal electioneering, the Assembly is the main arena of party conflict, the forum where matters of electoral import emerge and develop, and a yardstick for public evaluation of the performance of both government and opposition. Political issues, of course, do not always originate in the Assembly but, at some time or other, they receive a full airing in the parliamentary setting, which ensures that they gain public note, at least temporarily.

Two qualifications are necessary. As in other Australian political systems, the level of overt community interest in legislative or any other form of politics in the Territory is seldom high between elections; and, in Darwin where the Assembly and the bulk of the administrative structure are located and where there is a more concentrated media presence, the level of interest in legislative politics is much higher than it is elsewhere.

Legislative Overview

The second Assembly sat for eighty-four days; in the first session (September 1977 to August 1978), there were thirty sitting days and in the second session (September 1978 to May 1980), fifty-four. In that time, its legislative output was large. Over 400 bills were introduced, 89 per cent of which passed through all parliamentary stages. By way of comparison, the first Assembly dealt with only half the number.

Sheer quantity in itself does not signify much and there were certainly many bills of minor importance. However, at the same time, a significant proportion of the legislation was qualitatively different. Given the particular constitutional and political context the frequent introduction of major pieces of legislation was to be expected. Not only did the legal framework have to be modified to fit the demands of self-government - a not inconsiderable task - but, with the oppor-

tunities afforded by constitutional change, a local government, for the first time, also had wide scope for implementing policies based either on its election commitments or on its experience in office. The consequence was a thorough-going revision of administrative structures and processes and a large number of government initiatives which have affected much of the economic and social fabric of the Territory. Like the early Whitlam government at the Commonwealth level, the Everingham ministry in the Territory was characterised by an almost frenzied legislative activity calculated to redress the alleged effects of the neglect and insensitivity of past administrations; both also attracted considerable criticism - not always from political opponents - on many aspects of the activity.

The scrutiny of this legislation was often inadequate, not only because much of it was rushed through, but also because of the small membership of the Assembly, the omnibus responsibilities of ministers and their opposition counterparts, the relative inexperience and lack of expertise by members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), the limited time for debate, the use of parliamentary devices (notably the suspension of standing orders to facilitate passage of urgent bills) to curtail consideration, and the inadequacy of research and support services. Consequently, the role of bureaucratic and ministerial advisers and legislative draftsmen in policy-making has been higher than elsewhere in Australia. It is no secret that some of the Darwin legal fraternity and several senior bureaucrats hold the legislative competence of the Assembly in small regard.

Constitutional Development

The background to constitutional development up to the 1977 election has been covered in some detail in other studies (Heatley and Powell 1978; Heatley 1978, 1979; Jaensch and Loveday 1979) and there is no attempt here to retrace those accounts. Suffice it to say that the constitutional question was the most significant issue in the August 1977 election both in the campaign and its effect on the outcome. In the period up to the legal establishment of self-government on 1 July 1978, the political debate along the broad lines taken by the Country-Liberal party (CLP) and the Australian Labor party (ALP) in the 1977 campaign continued in the Assembly, the media, and the community.

The CLP maintained that its victory at the polls was sufficient evidence that its stance on full self-government had been accepted by the electorate. Subject to a satisfactory financial relationship being concluded with the Commonwealth and on the assumptions that the timetable for the transfer of specific powers could be varied and that other state-type functions not included in the original agreement would be open to further negotiation, the CLP pressed ahead with its constitutional policy. After reportedly hard bargaining with Com-

monwealth officials, a financial settlement, acceptable to the CLP, was finalised in May/June 1978. Moreover, after pressure from the CLP, the transfer of some powers scheduled for mid-1979 was advanced. Urban and rural land, roads and transport, mining (excluding uranium) and petroleum, conservation, planning development and coordination were transferred on 1 July 1978 and health services on 1 January 1979. The CLP was also successful in its claim to take control of essential services on Aboriginal communities. The education function was transferred, despite attempts to advance it, on the original timetable of 1 July 1979. Since the inauguration of self-government, further devolution of powers has taken place - the Territory Supreme Court on 1 October 1979, aviation licensing (jointly with the Commonwealth) in early 1980, and control of in-shore coastal waters in 1980. Thus, the commitment of the CLP to the fullest possible attainment of self-government has been substantially achieved. There is, however, continuing conflict between the Territory and Commonwealth governments over the control of uranium mining, of national parks, of the Ashmore-Cartier islands group which had been excised from the Territory, and aspects of Aboriginal affairs.

For its part, the ALP denied that the 1977 election result gave the CLP a mandate on self-government, pointing to its gains in seats and votes as support. It called again for a referendum on self-government, as it had in the 1977 election, and organised a supporting petition with 3000 signatures. It also maintained its criticism of the cost and staffing implications of 'statehood', a term which the ALP, for political reasons, preferred to use. In its election strategy, the ALP had cleverly avoided a commitment to any clear-cut constitutional policy and, although Jon Isaacs, early in the Assembly sittings (NTPR 22 November 1977, 156-63), attempted to delineate a more positive approach, at no stage in the ensuing debates was a fully-defined Labor alternative argued. To be fair, as the opposition, the ALP was faced with a *fait accompli* and could do nothing to influence the course of events; its understandable reaction was to continue its critical attitude. Opportunities for debate in the Assembly on the constitutional question were largely confined to the periodic reports on the financial negotiations and the alleged inadequacies of the Commonwealth self-government legislation. Handicapped by its lack of detailed knowledge of the proposed arrangements, ALP criticism was generally aimed at the inappropriateness of the Territory being fixed into the traditional Commonwealth/state financial system, the unfavourable bargaining position of the Territory negotiators, the putative role of the Grants Commission, the uncertainties of the Territory's status regarding the raising of loans, and, above all, the likely costs for Territory residents. But at the constitutional level, the argument rapidly faded and, given the generous financial arrangements and the subsequent budgetary treatment of the Territory by the Commonwealth

and the general opinion that the additional costs to Territorians were not onerous, the ALP's criticism was weakened substantially. Acknowledging that the issue had lost much of its political impact, the ALP changed its position. Self-government had become an accepted and approved fact and the ALP quickly adapted its political stance to suit. By and large, since mid-1978, it acted as if self-government was an irrevocable decision and it supported the government in its actions on subsequent transfers of powers. Questions of increased taxes and charges were generally divorced from the constitutional issue and were judged as part of the overall government economic management.

Statehood, the subject of considerable past political debate, also receded as an issue. The CLP, in the period of the second Assembly, saw no need to advocate statehood; its spokesmen see it only as a long-term goal, the path to which is strewn with a number of constitutional and political hurdles. Some were the subject of continuing discussion in the Constitutional Conventions and in the Liberal/National Country party's Federal Affairs Committee. For its part, the ALP, with its oft-repeated claim that self-government is 'statehood in all but name', is logically, if not politically, unable to make much of it in future elections.

Electoral Legislation

Until 1977, Territory elections were conducted under provisions and regulations of the Northern Territory (Administration) Act which gave the appropriate Commonwealth minister (or Administrator) wide discretion. In the Administrator's speech opening the second Assembly, the need for a comprehensive electoral ordinance as 'the Territory moves towards fully responsible government' was noted. It was expected that the legislation would be introduced 'late in the life of the Assembly' (*NTPR* 21 September 1977, 5). Despite an occasional reference by opposition MLAs to desirable future reforms and some comment on the implications of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, the Assembly did not address itself to electoral legislation until the second session.

The Commonwealth's Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act (No. 58 of 1978) set the necessary framework for local legislation. It enabled the Territory government to enact its own electoral laws subject to certain overriding provisions, the most important of which were the 20 per cent tolerance in constituency size which was to operate in post-1980 elections and the extension of the term of the Assembly to four years. In the debates in the Commonwealth parliament, both were vehemently attacked by the ALP (*CPD* (R) 2 June 1978, 3037-57; (S) 7 June 1978, 2581-2619).

To forestall the government, to achieve some publicity for its aims, and to emphasise its sense of urgency, the ALP mounted its own cam-

paign for electoral reform early in the second session. Legislation introduced in November followed the outline Isaacs gave to the house in September (*NTPR* 14 September 1978, 126-9; 30 November 1978, 702-5). Several aspects warrant comment. Enrolment was to be compulsory for all eligible voters including Aborigines who hitherto had the option not to register. Optional preferential voting (used in the 1974 election) was to replace the full preferential system employed in 1977. Despite the different provision in the Commonwealth act, a 10 per cent tolerance was included in the bill. As it was argued that the Territory was already over-represented (58 MLAs and city/town councillors, three federal representatives), no increase should be made in the size of the Assembly until it was warranted by population growth. There were also provisions designed to simplify voting procedures: party affiliation and candidate photographs were to be included on the ballot paper, the order of names on which, moreover, was to be decided by ballot. Relying on its conviction that past Territory elections had involved harassment of Aboriginal voters and basing much of its argument on the recent incidents in the Kimberley (WA) election, the ALP included provisions, sanctioned by heavy penalties, to eliminate unfair practices. Although it did not form part of the original bill, the use of mobile polling booths, a technique aimed at controlling abuses in automatic postal voting and already proposed by the government, was to be introduced later by way of amendment. Other reforms, either in the bill or advocated in general argument, concerned accelerated electoral education (especially for Aborigines), better-regulated redistribution procedures and greater control over the financing of party campaigns. These proposals were similar to those put forward by Labor elsewhere in Australia in recent years. Needless to say, the opposition bill was terminated by a division without further debate after it had been overtaken by government legislation.

The CLP bill, introduced in May 1979 (*NTPR* 23 May 1979, 1380-5), contained few surprises. It was interpreted as preserving traditional non-Labor practices and, at the same time, maximising party advantage. Compulsory enrolment of Aborigines was rejected on the grounds that many Aborigines did not support the move and that it went against the spirit of self-determination. Full preferential voting was to be retained and the 20 per cent tolerance included. Several measures aimed at limiting electoral abuse and assisting non-literate voters (severe penalties for offences, mobile polling booths, candidate photographs in polling booths, among others) were also included.

Predictably, the bill attracted major criticism, particularly from other political parties and Aboriginal groups. Where the CLP proposals diverged from the Labor bill, the ALP attack was to be expected. But the Aboriginal response was not. Whether orchestrated or

not, Aboriginal opinion, notably in submissions to the government and evident at a large meeting at Galiwin'ku, advocated the introduction of compulsory enrolment and the removal of allegedly restrictive clauses (unfair questioning to establish eligibility of voters, the narrow definition of 'authorised witnesses' to validate postal votes, the full preferential system, and the still inadequate provisions to assist nonliterate voters) which disadvantaged Aboriginal electors. Consequent on the public reaction and a detailed review by legal draftsmen, the government decided to withdraw the original bill and submit another incorporating a number of minor and a few substantial amendments. The latter category included the acceptance of compulsory enrolment, the removal of the offending provisions on eligibility and a further simplification of voting procedures.

The government at first wanted the new bill passed quickly so that voter enrolment and education could be carried out but, after debate in September, it decided to delay passage until the November sittings. Although the opposition welcomed the amendments, it maintained its criticism of several items of the measure, indicating that it would move to add provisions from its own earlier bill. The government did accede to an amendment which accepted the use of how-to-vote cards for candidate preference by nonliterate voters. In addition, the ALP stressed the need for a fully impartial Distribution Committee by replacing the third member, a government appointee, with a Judge of the Supreme Court and setting down mandatory requirements for redistribution in the event of a predetermined imbalance.

In the discussions on electoral reform in 1979, the issue of redistribution was a recurrent theme. With population growth and demographic change, electorates differed markedly in enrolments. Given the imbalance, particularly in the Darwin seats (see Table 6), there was considerable discussion of the need for a redistribution. Although it admitted the need, the government argued in 1980 that no redistribution was possible because of the problems of compulsory Aboriginal enrolments and the general state of the rolls, and, above all, of time constraints, contentions which the ALP strongly contested. In the end, the early calling of the election resolved the dispute.

Party Rivalry

In the second Assembly, with a party-based opposition for the first time in the Territory, intense party conflict, well-known in other parliaments, was characteristic of proceedings. It also inevitably coloured the tone of political debate in the media and in the extraparlimentary political arena.

Constitutional development and electoral legislation were two of the subjects on which there was party dispute. Other major areas were the economic management of the Territory, Aboriginal affairs,

uranium mining and its associated themes, political patronage, abuses of executive power and allegations of political corruption and legislative incompetence. Some, given the ideological positions, the policies, and the representational associations of the parties, were expected to be continuing areas of rivalry; others emerged from government action in the post-election period. All found expression, either specifically or in a general sense, in the 1980 election campaign.

In common with other contemporary parliamentary debate in Australia, economic policy loomed large in the Assembly. The ALP continually criticised the government's performance, focussing primarily on its record on unemployment, the level of which was particularly high among younger and among Aboriginal Territorians. Nearly every financial measure, whether agreements with the Commonwealth, tax legislation, or expenditure summaries, was a vehicle for adverse ALP comment on priorities in allocation, levels and incidence of revenue, waste and inefficiency, and economic consequences. Although all oppositions are forced by their role to be 'negative' in their criticism, wherever possible (or expedient) the ALP, more notably in 1979-80, endeavoured to set out alternative policies. For example, it used the Hayden 'counter-budget' strategy, it suggested different methods of raising revenue from betting and payroll taxes and it opposed the full abolition of succession duties.

Another clear demarcation in party positions was evident in debate on Aboriginal issues. Three ALP MLAs (Perkins, Doolan, and Collins) who represented electorates with a high proportion of Aborigines were especially diligent in defending what they perceived as their constituents' interests. Although the general conduct of Aboriginal affairs remained in Commonwealth hands, several measures promoted by the Territory government provoked opposition from the ALP. Prominent among them were sections of the complementary land rights legislation, the status of public roads on Aboriginal land, the extension of local government planning boundaries into land under claim (or potentially claimable) by Aborigines, the opposition by the government to all or part of land claims, the activities of Aboriginal pressure groups, mining on Aboriginal land, and moves to facilitate the development, under Territory law, of local government and associations in Aboriginal communities. Moreover, there were frequent references to other problems peculiar to the Aboriginal population. In fact, for sheer bulk, debate on Aboriginal themes overshadowed all others.

Linked inextricably to Aboriginal problems was the conflict over uranium development in the proposed (and later gazetted) Kakadu National Park. The government wanted rapid development; Labor's policy on uranium, in conformity with federal Labor policy, meant delays in exploitation while a variety of special safeguard conditions were met. As ultimate direction of uranium mining was also retained

by the Commonwealth, the Assembly dealt mainly with the related environmental control issue and the establishment and regulation of the mining town of Jabiru, debates on which often, however, broached the wider issues. Collins, the MLA for Arnhem which included the vitally affected Aboriginal communities, was indefatigable in his opposition to uranium development.

Political patronage and alleged abuse of governmental authority were the subject of four opposition censure motions and sustained criticism in the second Assembly. The re-appointment of Grant Tambling, the ex-deputy leader of the CLP, to the Darwin Reconstruction Commission and several other government appointments - notably those of Barry Wyatt, Rex Jettner, Harry Giese and Goff Letts who were all prominent CLP supporters - were questioned by the ALP. Labor also alleged impropriety in the Willeroo-Scott Creek farm scheme, accusing Roger Steele, the responsible minister, and Jettner, chairman of the (then) Primary Producers Board, of financial and administrative bungling; it attacked the Chief Minister and others for their parts in the resignation of Terry Vine, the Director of Information, and launched a major assault on the government alleging irregularity in the letting of a contract to John Holland Constructions for a ship repair facility and, later on, that the Master Builders Association had laundered a kickback to CLP funds from the firm.

On several occasions, the ALP was critical of the conduct of Assembly business. It contended that the forms of the house were too often used to disadvantage the opposition, that standing orders were suspended too often, that validation bills were twice employed as an expedient to cover government blunders, and that there was a serious lack of consultation between the government and the opposition. Claims of legislative incompetence - hasty, ill-prepared bills, oversights and omissions, and consequent frequent amendments and withdrawals - were also common ALP complaints.

Finally, there were a number of specific legislative measures on which the ALP took issue with the government. Early in the Assembly, party rivalry surfaced strongly in debate on bills to control drugs and to make temporary provisions for town planning. There was also party dispute on industrial, consumer protection and compensation legislation, on certain parts of the establishment of major new organisations like the Electricity Commission, the Liquor Commission, and the Education Department, and on legislation dealing with mining, control of dogs, prisons, and land tenure and development. Later changes or acceptance of some opposition amendments served to meet some of the ALP criticism. Although the ALP did not oppose the establishment of casinos in the Territory in principle, its attitude was that such a move, fraught with social and economic ramifications, should be subject to approval by referendum, a view

which was strongly put in debate. Later, it supported an unsuccessful attempt to disallow a regulation which enabled the Darwin Casino to be built on prime recreational land.

There was only one independent in the Assembly for most of its life - Dawn Lawrie. In 1979 she was joined by Rod Oliver who resigned from the CLP in a dispute about his re-endorsement for Alice Springs. Although Lawrie occasionally pursued a separate course, she usually aligned herself with the ALP. Oliver styled himself an 'Independent Liberal' and concentrated largely on parochial matters. When he did contribute to general debate, except on the siting of a new parliament building, he supported the government.

Promise And Performance

Any evaluation of the performance of a government and an opposition is necessarily subjective; there is really no impartial or infallible test to measure success or failure until the next election which, in itself, is only a crude verdict on relative performance. Evaluation is more difficult in the Territory because there are two 'electorates', one in the urban areas where white voters predominate and the other in the rural outback where most of the Aborigines live. Each, moreover, has its own diversity.

One test, however, is to compare the CLP's election commitments with its performance in office. The difficulty is, of course, that platforms are not meant to be acted on to the letter. But the CLP government was reasonably successful in fulfilling much of that part of its election policy in which it had freedom of action. Its major achievement was undoubtedly the establishment of self-government buttressed by a generous financial agreement. That base was essential for the consummation of many of its other proposals. In its 1977 platform, the dominant theme was economic development and, to that end, the government devoted a major proportion of its effort. By providing increased financial assistance, upgraded service facilities, taxation concessions, new land tenure and housing arrangements, a reorganised administrative structure, improved marketing services, and other incentives, the government attempted to produce a favourable environment for economic expansion. Aided by fortuitous factors such as the improvement in the beef and minerals markets and the start of uranium development, all major sectors of the Territory economy, except perhaps fishing, had been buoyant between 1977 and 1980. What part government policy played in that process is difficult to measure but certainly the economic record was no electoral handicap, although there were some areas, like the state of small business, in which the government was more vulnerable.

In the administrative area, several proposals were not carried through. An earlier CLP cabinet had proposed statutory authorities

for health, education and transport but the new post-1977 government preferred departmental structures. On the other hand, the institution of the (new) Northern Territory Public Service, despite some difficult negotiations, the recognition of separate status for employees of the Electricity Commission and for the police force and perhaps the teaching service, the appointment of an Ombudsman and the expansion of local government authorities and their functions were all carried through successfully.

Both in the platform and in action the government gave less prominence to non-economic activities. But its record was at least adequate. It was reasonably active in promoting cultural, sporting and recreational programs, in assisting a wide variety of community groups, in providing avenues for youth participation (though reluctant to do anything special for women), in addressing itself to social problems and welfare needs and in helping low-income residents to cope with a high-cost environment.

Several measures were taken which clearly were not part of the CLP's original program - for example, the establishment of the Territory Insurance Office and the introduction of random breath-testing, decisions on housing policy, and the growth of the public service with the proliferation of statutory authorities, all of which drew criticism from sections of the CLP itself.

It is difficult to give the government even an approximate ideological label, given its eminently pragmatic approach. If a common strand emerges, then perhaps the central distinguishing feature was the 'Territorialism' of the government (and particularly its leader), characterised by an often overbearing and flamboyant commitment to Territory development. Its pragmatism was evident in its readiness to compromise on legislation, to respond to group or community pressure if it was judged expedient or justified, and to provide means, either formally or informally, for public participation in policy-making. Whether or not such practices were interpreted as 'window-dressing', the public image of the government in most circles was strengthened as a result. For electoral purposes, the CLP government's non-ideological position was advantageous even though it had disillusioned some of its party (and non-party) supporters who interpreted a part of its activity as 'quasi-socialist'.

The 'Territorialism' of the CLP emerged most clearly in its dealings with the Commonwealth not only on the self-government and financial negotiations but also in the fields of Aboriginal affairs, control of national parks, some aspects of uranium development (environmental laws and Jabiru township), fishing rights, transport and communication services, and the control of the Ashmore-Cartier islands. Criticism of Canberra is traditional for Territory politicians and Everingham and his government made frequent, forceful (and,

one suspects, telling) use of it in the new constitutional and political context.

If the performance of the government was well received in the urban white constituency, what of its reception in the rural and especially Aboriginal areas? Although the government made a considerable effort to allay the suspicion that the CLP was anti-Aboriginal by consultation, publicity, personal contact and promise, some of its actions gave grounds for that suspicion. Its attitude to land rights, to self-determination, to social and economic problems, and to Aboriginal pressure groups and leaders was interpreted and used by CLP detractors as evidence of racism and discrimination, a verdict which the CLP tried hard to reject. However, the major political and electoral problem of the government seemed to be the reconciliation of the expectations of the two constituencies without alienating either. Given the traditional support-base of the CLP, the emphasis of its general policy, and the Commonwealth interest in Aboriginal affairs, the task of securing increased Aboriginal support seemed beyond even the pragmatism of the Everingham government.

Finally, the performance of the ALP opposition should be assessed briefly. If it is accepted that oppositions do not win elections but that governments lose them then, based on the interpretation outlined above, the ALP's chances of winning office in 1980 looked bleak. This is not to deny that it still enjoyed significant support, particularly amongst Aboriginal voters. Nor was its role in opposition unproductive. Some of its proposals were accepted by the government and others, like the establishment of an Assembly Expenditure Committee and a Territory government stake in the regional airline and the Mereenie oilfields deserved consideration. Until late in 1979, however, the ALP was generally seen in the urban white electorate as primarily a negative 'knocking' force in Territory politics. Whether that public image changed appreciably in the run-up to the election in which time the ALP appeared to make a conscious effort to recast its approach was one subject of pre-election speculation. In fairness, it should be remembered that the ALP, as the first party-based opposition in the Assembly and with no previous parliamentary experience, inevitably needed time to define its proper role. Moreover, faced with an opponent like Everingham, no opposition would have had an easy task in producing acceptable alternative policies or maintaining a regime of constructive criticism; Isaacs and his team seemed to be in a similar position to the Liberal Country party opposition confronted by Premier Wran in New South Wales. The ALP was also handicapped in the Territory by its national policy on uranium development and its full-scale support for Aboriginal causes. Before the election, it appeared certain that, in contrast to 1974 and 1977, in 1980 the issues would be more locally-oriented. There was also considerable evidence to suggest that support for the ALP federally would not be translated

into support for the Territory ALP in a local election. To use but one difference, the issue of unemployment is likely to be significant in the national arena while, in the Territory, the peculiar pattern of unemployment will limit its impact.

If the relative performance of the CLP government and the ALP opposition was to become an important theme in the 1980 election then, according to this interpretation, the balance was weighted heavily in the former's favour.

3 Politics of Economic Development

JOHN WARHURST

Economic development has always been a concern of state governments because of the demonstrable links between economic growth and a number of other factors including the state's independent financial capacity, its status within the Commonwealth, and the security in office of the incumbent government. This has never been more true in Australia than in the last five or six years during which the general rate of growth of the Australian economy has been low. At the same time, responsibility for state development is diffuse. State governments are constrained by factors over which they have limited control: these include the financial and economic policies of the Commonwealth government (such as public expenditure, taxation, transportation and various means of regulation such as tariffs and foreign investment controls), and the independent decisions of large private firms as to the location and size of their activities. As responsibility for state development is diffuse (and can be made to appear even more diffuse than it really is), the extent to which state governments can be held responsible by opposition parties at elections is limited. So is the extent to which opposition parties can convincingly propose alternative policies. Recent state elections have shown that in apparently comparable circumstances one state government may be absolved of responsibility while another may be brought to account.

Adding to the diffuseness of the responsibility is the always present ideological dispute (within parties as well as between them) over the proper role of government in relation to the private sector in promoting economic development. Should the government stimulate the private sector or enter the market place itself, or should it make way for private enterprise by cutting back the public sector? Here the ideological lines are blurred and the actions of government often quite inconsistent with any position of principle. The line between 'state capitalists' and 'state socialists' is often a fine one. The former are likely to find themselves criticised by the 'free enterprise right' and the latter, likewise, by the 'socialist left'. For all these reasons predicting the shape of 'economic development' as an election issue is not an easy task.

This discussion has particular relevance to the politics of the Nor-

thern Territory, because, as Lenore Coltheart has shown above, 'northern development' has long been part of the mythology of the Territory. For this reason and for others, including a special sensitivity to questions both of the independence of the Northern Territory from the authority of the Commonwealth government and of the status of the Northern Territory among Australian states (stimulated by the granting of self-government in 1978) the Northern Territory government has a special concern for economic development.

The Economy

The economy of the Northern Territory is undeveloped, quite different from the economies of other Australian states, fragile and vulnerable. It is undeveloped because of its geographical isolation from the main centres of population in Australia, and because of neglect resulting from its semi-colonial status within the Australian federation. It is quite different from the economies of the other Australian states because of its climate, natural resources, and distance from major domestic markets. It is fragile because a narrow economic base means reliance on a very few industries. It is vulnerable for this reason, and also because of its dependence on industries such as beef and mining which sell to unpredictable international markets. As the NT branch of the Australian Labor party described it:

The Northern Territory presents development problems which are unique in the Australian experience. Due to a variety of geographical, demographic, climatological and political reasons, our economic structure is, and will continue to be, different from that of the States (ALP, NT branch 1979, 11).

The most common estimation of the future prospects of the NT economy (see Anderson 1977, 11; Heatley 1979, 197-8) against this background is one of guarded optimism. The optimism stems from the possible future development of the mining, tourist and fishing industries. The caution is the result of the unpredictable variables mentioned.

The unique qualities of the Territory economy are shown by the number of civilian employees in each sector of the economy as compared with employment in Australia as a whole. The differences between the two economies are quite striking (see Table 1). The figures reveal, in particular, the relative weakness of both manufacturing and wholesale and retail industry in the Territory. On the other hand both the mining industry and Public Administration and Defence and Community Services are relatively strong. The striking figure, in absolute terms, is the percentage of civilian employees (43.5) engaged in Public Administration and Defence and Community Services (over 17000 employees out of a total of 40 000). The mining industry, by

way of contrast, still only directly employs 2500 citizens or 6.2 per cent of the total. At the time of the 1980 election, civilian employment was growing at a rate of close to 10 per cent per annum, but the Northern Territory, even with Aboriginal unemployment disregarded, still possessed the highest unemployment rate in the nation. In the month of the election, June 1980, 10.3 per cent of the labour force were unemployed and 6.1 per cent were receiving unemployment benefits (according to Commonwealth Employment Service statistics). The figures for Australia in the same month were 6.4 per cent and 4.7 per cent respectively (Department of Employment and Youth Affairs 1980).

The main production income for the Northern Territory has always been the export of mineral products. Currently more than 90 per cent of export earnings comes from this source, with the other major exports being prawns and beef. The distribution of NT imports illustrates the importance of distance from other domestic markets. The major import is petroleum products followed by vehicles, chemicals and timber.

It is generally accepted that future growth in the NT economy does not lie in the development of secondary industry, though under certain circumstances growth could occur in the servicing of other industries or in response to the emergence of new markets in South East Asia. Those sectors where it is claimed the potential for growth does lie (Commonwealth Grants Commission 1979, 10) are the fishing, tourist, mining, agricultural and pastoral industries. The place of these industries in NT development is discussed below. Generally it could be said that, in 1980, growth was evident in each of these industries with the exception of agriculture (Anderson, 1980).

Mining, measured by gross production, dwarfs other NT industries. There are also numerous projects committed to begin in the near future, though to put it in perspective these new developments were of a total value (in May 1980) less than that occurring in every other Australian state except Tasmania (Dept of Industry and Commerce 1980, vi).

Since 1968 the estimated value of gross production in mining has increased from \$33 million to \$249 million (1978-79). The development has been described by Minister for Mines and Energy, Ian Tuxworth, as an 'economic bonanza' (Press Release, 30 November 1978). Present production is based largely on the mining of bauxite and the processing of alumina at Gove (Nhulunbuy) and manganese at Groote Eylandt, although future growth is related to the mining of uranium at the Ranger, Nabarlek and (possibly) Jabiluka and Koongara mines in the Alligator Rivers region, the so-called uranium province. Other major committed mining developments include expansion by the major copper producer, Peko-Wallsend, at Warrego and exploitation of the oil and gas fields of Mereenie and Palm Valley around Alice Springs

(Department of Industry and Commerce 1980, 56-9). The NT economy has not so far benefited from mining developments as much as it should have, because, according to the Chief Minister, with the exception of alumina, the development of processing facilities from NT mining has been located in Queensland rather than the Territory (*NTPR* 31 May 1979, 1644). For this reason, the prospects for indirect development arising out of uranium mining was treated cautiously in the 1979 NT submission to the Grants Commission. Nevertheless the 1980 election took place against a background of significant infrastructure development in the uranium province, including a start to the creation of the new town of Jabiru. Other decisions taken included the recommissioning of smelters at Tennant Creek and Warrego (Department of Mines and Energy n.d.[1980]).

The tourist industry is regarded, with mining, as one of the two major growth areas of the economy (Heatley 1979, 198). Chief Minister Paul Everingham has described it glowingly (*NTPR* 31 May 1979, 1647) as 'a bigger industry and certainly a more labour intensive industry than primary industry'. In addition to the development of the NT's traditional attractions in Central Australia such as Ayers Rock, casinos are planned for Darwin and Alice Springs, to be completed by December 1981 (*Northern Territory Newsletter* 1(5), 1978, 5-8), and a major new national park, the Kakadu National Park is being developed in the Alligator Rivers area. The number of tourists visiting the Territory is increasing at the rate of up to 12 per cent per year (*NT News Industry Guide*, October 1979, 17). In 1978-79 300 000 tourists visited the Northern Territory and spent \$85 million.

The NT pastoral industry once included sheep, goats and horses in large numbers, but now is almost totally reliant on beef cattle (mainly) and buffalo for both local consumption and export. It is the third largest industry in the Territory with a gross production value in 1978-79 of \$77 million. Between a quarter and a third of cattle marketed in the Territory are slaughtered in local abattoirs. This includes the slaughtering of free-range buffalo in abattoirs at Mudginberri and Jimmy Creek, Point Stuart Station.

The fishing industry is at present concentrated on two resources: prawns and barramundi, of which prawns are the more important. More important to the NT economy (30 per cent of the value of primary production) than to the economy of any other Australian state, fishing had an annual production value in 1978-79 of \$17 million, thus ranking in the NT's four most important industries (R. Steele *NTPR* 24 May 1979, 1451-5). Major developments in train included the building of a small ships facility in Darwin, and the development of new resources such as mackerel and reef fish. Fishing is an industry with prospects, but in the past has suffered from a lack of planning. Its development hinges to some extent on the Com-

monwealth government's handling of the 200 nautical mile Australian fishing zone.

Agriculture has been the sector which in the past has witnessed the most spectacular failures by European developers. These failures have included rice cultivation at Humpty Doo in the fifties, grain sorghum on Tipperary Station in the late sixties, and on Willeroo Station in the seventies, and forestry. These developments have not often failed for lack of finance, but from disregard of the very real climatic restraints of the NT, a failure to learn from experience, and the small size of the local market. There are some prospects for the future if they are attempted on a small scale and with caution. Such projects are likely to take time to develop and in the meantime the Top End relies heavily on imported food and vegetables, made expensive by the high cost of freight over long distances.

Constraints: Actual, Potential And Mythical

This brief introduction to the Northern Territory economy has only hinted at controversial issues of control of development and participation in development which arise in each of the sectors.

Development decisions are mostly made independently by large corporations, whose ownership rarely lies within the Northern Territory. Investment, therefore is 'foreign' based, whether defined as international or interstate. Besides the interstate Australian companies, BHP, MIM Holdings and CSR, there is also extensive involvement of multinational companies, especially in the uranium province. The NT government can only hope that its interests and those of its citizens coincide with those of the 'foreign' firms. There is little so far to suggest major conflicts of interest with the desires of the NT government, but it will not receive any support from the Commonwealth government if it wishes to influence the operation or ownership of the companies.

The role of the Commonwealth in Territory development is a second issue. Commonwealth government policies have important consequences for NT development but the Territory government has only limited influence over them. Some constraints are unique to the NT. The Commonwealth government has direct controls over uranium mining, Aboriginal affairs and national parks and wildlife. Clashes have occurred between the two levels of government, for example over the question of the control of the land around the site of the town of Jabiru which is inside the Kakadu National Park. There is evidence of frustration on the part of the Northern Territory government, as in its unilateral declaration that the area around the town is Northern Territory government land (*Australian* 3-4 November 1979). All states, including the NT, are, however, at the mercy of the Commonwealth in policy areas such as transportation (rail, road and air), trade and taxa-

tion. The NT sees itself as having special needs in each of these fields. For example, the isolation of the Territory from the rest of Australia hinders the development of the pastoral, tourist and mining industries and makes improved rail and road links necessary. The Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, with the support of the opposition strenuously lobbied the Commonwealth government, and state governments such as South Australia, in an effort, since successful, to ensure a commitment to an Alice Springs-Darwin rail link. Tourism is also constrained by the Commonwealth government's international air policy. Its trade policy of common external tariffs prevents the use of foreign timber in Darwin, and increases the cost of building materials.

Over and above the issues raised by an independent and largely 'foreign' private sector and by the Commonwealth government, NT economic development takes place amid the claims of the NT's Aboriginal population. The future development of each of the sectors of the economy raises questions about Aboriginal ownership and participation. Most publicity has been given to the clash between Aboriginal land rights and mineral development. However the issue is much broader than that. Sea rights and the willingness of Aboriginal communities to participate in activities such as handicraft production within the tourist industry and to allow access to their land are also involved alongside land rights. Other sectors as well are affected by land and sea claims, notably the fishing (Top End), pastoral and tourist industries (especially in the Centre and Katherine).

The NT government clearly believes Aboriginal ownership claims do constitute a constraint on economic development and sometimes wants to portray any such claims in this light. Although it resents the intrusions of the Premier of Queensland who argues that because of Aboriginal land rights claims 'it would take a "super salesman" to convince companies to develop resources in the Northern Territory' (*Canberra Times* 5 November 1979), the Country Liberal Party (NT) nonetheless reported to the National Country party Federal Council that

The question of Aboriginal land rights remains an emotive issue with the associated difficulties for the mining, pastoral, fishing, tourist and transport industries (*Canberra Times* 5 November 1979).

This attitude leads the NT government to be critical of Commonwealth land rights legislation and rather more impatient for quick solutions than its Commonwealth counterparts when negotiations with Aboriginal representatives are drawn out. An illustration of this was the NT government's attitude to the negotiations between Magellan Petroleum Australia Ltd, a US-controlled company, and the Central Land Council representing local Aboriginal communities over the development of the Mereenie oil and gas fields in Central

Australia. The government sided with the company, called for changes in the land rights act and was unsympathetic to any delay (NTPR 23 August 1979, 1739).

It is sometimes assumed that Aboriginal ownership of resources would be inimical to development of the kind desired by the NT government but this is unlikely to be so in all instances: some Aboriginal communities do wish to take part, at least on a small scale, and are already doing so. Moreover, there is no evidence that successful Aboriginal claims to ownership of already well-known attractions would interfere with established tourism. Nor should it be forgotten that royalty payments to Aboriginal communities and any income Aborigines might get from either ownership or employment in tourist, fishing, mining and other industries would flow back almost immediately into the Northern Territory economy.

The Northern Territory Government

In 1979 the Grants Commission noted that the

special qualities of the economic environment and the composition of the work force in the Territory were said to require special action to stimulate and expand the economy of the Territory. It was claimed that, while the private sector has a high potential for future growth (particularly in the fishing, tourist, mining, agriculture and pastoral industries), an extensive amount of assistance is required from the public sector in planning and development to set the stage for such growth (Commonwealth Grants Commission 1979,10).

In talking about an economy which would appear to have distinct, but still limited, possibilities for growth, the NT government has been unreservedly confident, particularly in predictions of the beneficial impact of uranium mining. A certain amount of rhetoric is always expected. Yet it is not easy for an observer to disentangle the quite natural political complexion of public statements from the NT government's real judgment of future prospects. For example, the Chief Minister has described the NT economy as 'burgeoning' and in speaking to the 1979 appropriation bill, the Treasurer, Marshall Perron, argued:

The Territory is in a period of economic growth. Measures contained within the budget will sustain that growth and provide for expansion of services to cater for our rising population. The mining industry, which is the Territory's most valuable, is expanding rapidly and its growth, along with the other vital economic sectors ... will be further stimulated by these proposals (NTPR 23 August 1979, 1722).

Its advisers have some reservations but contribute to this type of

'Never before have so few been offered so much' — Editorial on CLP policy speech, NT News 27 May 1980; cartoon, 28 May 1980. Cartoon reproduced courtesy the Northern Territory News.

assessment by the government. For example in advising on the potential for tourism the Northern Territory Development Corporation points to the dangers of an energy crisis for such development (Northern Territory Development Corporation 1979,9), but still concludes that 'the Northern Territory appears poised to usher in a period of dynamic growth in tourism' (Northern Territory Development Corporation 1980,20). The Director of Economic Research for the Corporation concluded: 'With sound management and a dose of good luck, the Territory will become the lucky part of the lucky country' (Anderson 1980,15).

The emphasis of Perron's speech, with its concentration on the role of government in 'reshaping and broadening the Territory's long and neglected economy' and in providing 'necessary infrastructure' points also to the activist role the NT government sees for itself. This is no 'small government' government, but one determined to lead in the development of the economy and to use the budget as one means of achieving it. In 1978 the NT government had a generous one-line vote of \$280 million from the Commonwealth and added another \$70 million of its own without significant increases in local taxes. In the following year the budget for 1979-80 jumped from \$350 million to

\$516 million of which the Commonwealth contributed \$442 million under the self-government agreement. From these funds, increased provision was made for most departments of government, expenditure which was not only 'good news' in the electorates but was also easily justified in the name of development. Additional expenditures totalling \$9 million were announced just before the election (*NT News* 2 June 1980).

The general philosophy has also been translated into action through the creation of new agencies to manage key sectors of the economy. The Northern Territory Development Corporation was set up under ministerial control to both lend and to guarantee loans to private enterprise and recent legislation created a Northern Territory Tourist Commission, replacing the old Tourist Board, together with a new Tourist Advisory Council (*NTPR*, 23 August 1979, 1755-6). A number of trade missions were undertaken in 1979 and 1980 to try to develop export markets for NT products, mainly but not only in Asia (*NT Newsletter* 1,1 and 1,5). The Chief Minister has argued (*Canberra Times* 10 October 1979) that the NT should be allowed to develop 'preferential trade' with Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. In general, the NT has set about following the path already trodden (not always successfully) by state governments in the assistance to industry field. There is a strong element of competition between state and Territory governments in industrial promotion, so these programs must compete with those of other states, which invariably possess greater financial and other resources than the Northern Territory.

Party Differences

The CLP government, not unexpectedly, has been critical of the opposition's approach to economic development, although the policy differences between the two parties are not always clear-cut. Nor is it always clear whether the criticism is aimed directly at the ALP (NT) or indirectly at the federal ALP. The clearest attack is on the ALP's attitude to uranium mining (see, for example, two press releases by the Chief Minister, 5 and 12 September 1978). In August 1979 Ian Tuxworth, the Minister for Mines and Energy, argued:

Both the exploration and the mining side of the industry and the people working in the industry are suffering from an erosion of confidence in their future plans because of the lack of policy by the Labor Party on the uranium issue in the Northern Territory...

...I would like to put it on to the Leader of the Opposition that he can help to develop the Northern Territory considerably by coming out with a good pro-Northern Territory, pro-development, pro-uranium policy that would enable people in the industry to have a little more confidence (*NTPR* 22 August 1979, 17145).

The opposition is criticised for making light of the likely benefits (e.g. employment) to be derived from uranium mining and for putting obstacles such as land rights and environmental considerations in the way of development. While there are differences of emphasis in other areas, policy towards the development of uranium would appear to be the major point of difference.

The local ALP has greater difficulty than the CLP, at least while in opposition, in distancing itself from the policies of the national party. The conventional wisdom about the Whitlam government's management of the Australian economy is used to attack the ALP (NT). So are Bob Hawke's recent Boyer Lecture comments in favour of the abolition of state governments, which strike at the heart of the Territory's desire for independence. However, most importantly, it is difficult for the ALP (NT) to escape the divisiveness of the uranium issue within the Labor party and the trade union movement (see Tuxworth, *Press Release*, 27 August 1979). The national policies of both bodies are used as ammunition by the NT government.

The ALP sees itself as much 'pro-development' as the CLP. However it is much less complacent about the economic growth which is taking place in the Territory, more concerned for issues of ownership and participation and more willing to urge direct government intervention in various sectors of the economy.

Speaking to the appropriation bill in May 1979, the leader of the opposition, Jon Isaacs argued:

The NT government, by its lack of intervention into the economy appears to believe that the private sector will pull itself out of the quandary, out of the dilemmas, out of the morass. The Minister for Mines and Energy appears to think that uranium mining will be the salvation of the Northern Territory economy (*NTPR* 31 May 1979, 1637).

The Labor party's stress on government intervention leads to a belief in the appropriateness of government ownership, whether it be in the provision of air services for the Territory, or in the development of the oil and gas fields around Alice Springs. The party's position on the balance between sectors within the economy is little different from that of the government. It does however place less reliance on uranium mining as a basis for stable growth and for support draws evidence from the NT Treasury's 1979 submission to the Grants Commission. It has also accused the government of neglecting primary industry and of failing to provide the necessary follow-up to trade missions. The Member for Arnhem, Bob Collins, has argued that

The most successful way for any economy to pull itself out in the long term is in the primary industry of the Territory. That is where people are employed, that is how money will stay in this community (*NTPR* 24 May 1979, 1640).

In regard to primary industry Labor party policy

recognises that instability in primary production, prices and incomes has far reaching effects which impose heavy costs on primary producers, country communities, and on consumers and the economy as a whole (ALP, NT branch 1979,51).

The Labor party is also concerned with questions of 'foreign' ownership of industries located in the Territory, interpreted to mean interstate rather than international ownership. They are pledged to

Establish a situation in which Territory-based enterprises can compete on more equal terms in the local, Australian and international market places (ALP, NT branch 1979, 10).

These differences are however largely questions of emphasis. The one issue on which it is clear that there is a major policy difference is in the attitude of the parties to the question of Aboriginal rights and economic development. Particularly through the member for Arnhem, Collins, the ALP has made clear its support for the right of Aboriginal communities to veto developments and to participate in ventures where they wish to. The ALP argues that this is not an anti-development position, and Collins when queried points to his support for mining operations on Groote Eylandt. However when Aboriginal owners wish to refuse entrepreneurs or tourists access to their land, or wish to make land or sea right claims which might cut across developments in mining or fishing then the ALP offers them its support.

Conclusion

The desirability, in the middle of 1980, of economic growth for the Northern Territory was not something which either of the major parties wished or could afford to dispute. Citizens of the urban centres of Darwin and Alice Springs at least believed they could see growth occurring around them. There were problems of housing, prices and unemployment but in general the white urban dwellers were a confident community. A party wishing to retain or win government needed to convince electors that such a state of affairs would continue under their management. The precise issues might differ between the Top End and the Centre but the broad picture was the same. Among the white urban communities the CLP as the party which had presided over self-government and recent economic growth was clearly in a favourable position. In opposition, the ALP would be seen as 'negative' if it was critical of development policies and if not, as merely supportive of CLP initiatives. And if instead the ALP chose to fight on issues of social rather than economic development, then it ran the

risk of the charge of being 'un-Territorian' or of neglecting the employment needs of the Territory.

The position among most Aboriginal communities was quite different, particularly in the Top End where a conflict between economic developments such as mining and Aboriginal land rights was more acutely felt. Here, the costs of development weighed heavily against the benefits and there were opportunities for the ALP to question aspects of development and insist both that Aboriginal rights be respected and that Aboriginal participation be secured in development projects.

The politics of economic development was clearly then a double-edged issue, in which both parties saw opportunities which could be exploited. The CLP was vulnerable in those Aboriginal communities which judge the costs of development to be greater than the benefits. The uranium province and Arnhem Land more generally was one area where this was the case. The ALP was vulnerable in white urban communities where its stance on Aboriginal rights and on uranium left it open to the charge of being anti-development. Both parties ran the risk that in appealing to one of these constituencies they would alienate support in the other. The risk was greatest for the ALP because the white constituency was much the larger.

4 Party Documents

Northern Territory Country Liberal Party- Organisation and Policy

G. LEWIS

It is almost certain that the Northern Territory Country Liberal party is the smallest political party to have ever governed in Australia. Totally independent of control or direction from any other major political party, the NTCLP is in a somewhat unique position in Australia insofar as the support given by the major conservative parties, the Liberal party of Australia and the National Country party has been without restriction, at a time when the national press is making considerable play out of coalition tension and so-called disagreement.

The Country Liberal party of the Northern Territory emerged in the late 1960s when the the Country party stronghold of Alice Springs successfully presented Mr S.E. Calder as a candidate in the 1966 election under that party's banner. The fledgling Liberal party group in the Darwin area gave their complete support to Mr Calder in 1966, 1969 and 1972 knowing full well that a non-Labor candidate would require total unity to be successful.

From this 'united' approach and the unqualified success of Sam Calder locally and in Canberra came ultimately, in 1974, with the approach of a fully-elected Legislative Assembly, the establishment of the Country Liberal party. This move recognised publicly the fact that the party must be seen as fully representative of every aspect of the community and although initially it seemed only to be a name change, it opened the way for many traditional Liberal support groups to aim their unqualified support back to the Territory organisation rather than to the federal party.

The unqualified success of this 'amalgamation' or unity manifested itself clearly in the now historical 1974 election. A young energetic team of candidates included several 'perceived-Liberal adherents', as Alistair Heatley has written, and there is no question that it was a balanced, electorally 'saleable' team. At a time when the Whitlam federal Labor stocks were just beginning to slide, the 'united' ticket of the Country Liberal party was almost totally accepted by the electorate with only two independent and no Labor candidates achieving success.

The success continued in the 1974 federal election and again in the 1975 federal election. However, the 1975 Fraser election saw for the

first time since 1966 a new and undisguised interest by the Liberal party of Australia in Territory politics. Though largely unspoken, it was becoming clear that sections of the Liberal party support base were less than totally happy with a party which bore its name, espoused its principles and policy but had no direct actual or constitutional input into Liberal party affairs.

It is important to remember that during the eight years of its existence the Territory CLP had enjoyed full affiliation with the National Country party and had taken full advantage of this affiliation at federal level. But Liberals in the Territory were becoming unsettled by the feeling that they had no direct voice with the Liberal majority in Canberra at a time when Ian Viner was considering, in their minds, quite controversial land rights legislation, at a time when Malcolm Fraser, in full flight, was moving quickly towards responsible self-government for the Northern Territory and yet a Country party minister, Evan Adermann, was so often at odds with both the NT majority party, and many of his federal colleagues also, in respect of Territory matters.

It is probable also that at this time Liberals at state and federal levels may have felt disadvantaged in that at organisation and political levels they had, or appeared to have had, little direct access to Territory government or to the CLP.

Such was the nature and extent of this build-up of concern and particularly with the approach of self-government on 1st July 1978 that throughout 1978, at an organisational level, considerable discussion and negotiation took place in the Territory and federally, negotiation which was primarily and specifically aimed at the protection or maintenance of the CLP as the one united conservative or free enterprise party in the Territory. The one over-riding feature of this entire discussion in the Territory was that there was absolutely no requirement for the fragmentation of the CLP in order to accommodate the minor differences of policy or organisation between the federal coalition partners.

Minor problems arose of course. In which party room would the federal members [for the NT] sit? How would the NTCLP achieve representation at the federal level when its members were constitutionally members of neither federal party? Out of such issues came a beautiful new word 'even-handedness'. Late in 1978, minor constitutional changes were made to accommodate this new organisational position and the following is a summary of what happened in late 1978 and early 1979.

1. The NT Country Liberal party relinquished its affiliation with the National Country party.
2. The NT Country Liberal party established 'an association' with

the Liberal party of Australia and the National Country party of Australia.

3. Members of federal parliament would sit in the party room of their choice.
4. Both coalition parties would receive CLP delegations at organisation level but with 'observer' status rather than full voting status.
5. An attitude of even-handedness would prevail at all times.

The results of this new position have now been manifest largely as is summarised below:-

1. A new and most fruitful relationship has been established with the Liberal party of Australia. Whilst there has been absolutely no reduction in the level of total support from the National Country party, the Liberal party organisation has made available all of its technical resources, to assist the CLP in improving its representation of all sectors of the NT community.
2. The NT member of the House of Representatives maintained his position of some 13 years in the party room of the NCP. The CLP Senator chose to join the Liberal party room for no other reason than to achieve the 'even-handedness' principle earlier agreed upon. National media reported considerable tension over this move by Senator Kilgariff and, insofar as some problems may have arisen in the Canberra 'numbers game', those tensions may have been real. However, they appear now to have totally abated.
3. The CLP has sent delegations to the federal council of both the Liberal party and the National Country party and to several other committees of both parties. The so-called 'observer status' has in no way restricted or impeded the involvement of NT delegates and indeed the impact of our delegations has frequently been greater by virtue of our unique status, particularly at a time when coalition friction is being so widely reported in the media.
4. The party organisation has been able to continue with the business at hand having removed any semblance or chance of disharmony caused by misunderstanding or non-communication.

CLP Organisation

Alistair Heatley once said that 'the CLP displays a quite unprofessional (and perhaps refreshing) lack of bureaucratic values'. Insofar as the organisation is basic, simple and functional, I would submit

that the lack of bureaucracy so displayed is indeed refreshing. If therefore it also appears unprofessional, that might be because professionalism costs money.

If the loss by the CLP of six seats in the 1977 election were to be put down to lack of professionalism on the part of the CLP as against a most professional campaign by the ALP, I further submit that the ALP's professional approach was of little assistance to John Waters in his 1977 federal campaign.

Party organisation in the vast spaces of the Northern Territory with its sparse and diverse population is, to say the least, difficult. For this reason since its inception the CLP has, with great determination, emphasised the value of a strong and effective branch system. The party's ten branches all operate on a system of regular meetings with strong committees functioning as required. Some branches regularly draw upwards of fifty people to meetings and a feature of such meetings is the involvement of a wide cross-section of the community and the ready access of the party membership to members of the Assembly and from Canberra. There is no doubt that the fact that rank and file party members can take a politician to task at party level at branch meetings gives great heart to the membership. More to the point however, this wide range of membership involvement ensures with relative safety that branch opinion can be taken by the party organisation to be suitably reflective of public opinion and thus requiring of consideration at appropriate levels.

The ultimate governing body of the CLP is its annual conference with the mechanism available with reasonable simplicity to call special conferences. At such conferences, the branches hold the voting power, and in the major area of policy determination and setting of organisational goals and initiatives, this power has been wielded with effect. Naturally conference by setting party policy can give strong messages to government but, as is essential to the principles of good government, the party neither constitutionally nor in practice would seek to influence, much less direct, its members in government. The media, particularly in Darwin, has frequently attempted, sometimes with almost mischievous intent, to excite the public into believing that the CLP chairman and organisation can and even have placed party pressure on politicians with a view to influencing government decision-making. Nothing could be further from the truth and the CLP very jealously guards its record of integrity in government.

The day-to-day management of the party's operation is vested by conference in the central council which comprises a combination of branch delegates, appointed delegates and a few politicians. Whilst central council does appoint a smaller management committee, council is the ultimate management body and as such, meets at least six times each year. It has limited powers to make or vary policy on an in-

terim basis, but has authority and responsibility in the following areas:

- 1 finance and fund-raising,
- 2 planning and operation of election campaigns,
- 3 candidate endorsement, and
- 4 general party administration.

Although council is basically an administrative body, it is fair, indeed realistic, to agree that its regular meetings, always attended by almost all of its 30-plus members, do provide a forum for the discussion of political issues which may be troubling a branch or branches.

Such a forum can usually, by virtue of the strength of the branch system, be taken to be representative of community thinking and accordingly it is not unusual for council, by resolution, to make representation to the various levels of government on particular issues of the moment.

If as has been suggested a 'climate of informality...prevail(s)' in intra-party relationships and processes, then I submit that this is healthy and in the interests of good government. The very nature of the Northern Territory is such that government for the people, rather than of the people, must be seen to apply and the population must not be allowed to feel separated or apart from those in the seats of government.

The CLP by the very nature of its constitutional independence from interstate political parties has extremely limited ability to raise finance for administration, research or election campaigning on a nationally or even a nationally - coordinated basis and therefore will continue to rely heavily upon its informality and the appeal of its realistic policies to the people of the Northern Territory to guarantee its electoral success on both the Territory scene and in Canberra. The real success of the party will remain in the hands of its branches and from those branches will continue to come candidates who will ensure the continued good government of the Northern Territory.

Policy

Alistair Heatley has written that 'the CLP sees its philosophy and policy as blending those of the two major anti-Labor national parties and adapting that blend to fit Territory conditions. Interestingly enough the 1977 policy statement is based largely upon that of the Victorian Liberal Party perhaps the most progressive of the state branches of that party'.

I would subscribe largely to that statement but hasten to point out that the 1977 policy was formulated by the NTCLP largely before the terms of the 'self-government' package were clear, and only after substantial change was made to aspects peculiar to the Northern Ter-

ritory. Matters such as transport, housing, land tenure and mining were heavily re-cast and in 1978 the education policy was substantially reviewed to encompass specific Territory situations. A further extensive review is now nearing completion, this review taking further account of the 1978 self-government package and recognising the vast responsibility of the NT government in relation to the vast potential of the Territory as it has now emerged under the constructive and progressive planning and initiatives of the Everingham CLP government.

If the 1977 policies could have been said in one or two areas to have displayed a defensive attitude - and it has been said both within and without the party - the NTCLP is now producing policies and policy initiatives which reflect the vast potential which now confronts the Territory in the areas of tourism, mining, agriculture, fishing and all of the secondary industries which must flow from our wealth in the various primary resources. The major deficiency in the Territory is people and our policies, already and in the future, must reflect emphasis upon personal well-being.

In recent times, as a by-product of the tensions which arose over Aboriginal land rights, the CLP has been criticised as being a party without concern for the Aboriginal community and therefore a party 'not for Aborigines'. Our policies do not reflect this attitude and indeed the style of the Everingham government does not reflect this attitude. In recent times it is becoming evident that CLP policy in this area and the administration of it, is being seen by all sections of the community to be soundly based.

The population of the Territory is basically very young - much younger on average than elsewhere in Australia. Similarly the membership of our party comprises a much larger number of young people than in other places. Since, up to a point, political policy evolves as well as develops, the CLP might be disadvantaged by its very 'youth', particularly since it is only in very recent years that the full potential of our new 'state' has become evident.

Our policies are evolving - very quickly in some areas - and they will be seen as being people-oriented. Youth and personal welfare will be emphasised in the total context of the soundly based development of industry, resource development and commerce. Our basic philosophy will continue to emphasise the importance of encouraging free enterprise to flourish and to accept the major responsibility for the economic development of the Territory.

The incentives which, without question, are placed before the individuals of the community by a healthy competitive free enterprise system provide the motivation which is making the Territory a great new state. This philosophy is paramount in the formulation of CLP policy and as the policy evolves it will become more and more evident that the CLP is the party for the people of the Territory.

In all its policies and in government the CLP will seek to unite the

unique aspirations of all Territorians to ensure the future orderly growth and development of the Territory thereby securing our national heritage for future generations.

Aborigines And Politics

ROGER VALE (CLP, Stuart)

The greatest mistake any political party can make in the Northern Territory is to decide that their party machine has the monopoly on politics as far as Aborigines are concerned. Australia's Aboriginal communities were practising politics long before the English speaking peoples knew what democracy was. While we were still back in England tipping our forelock to the local squire, Aborigines were making decisions by consensus and playing the numbers game to an extraordinary degree.

In fact Aborigines have for centuries had a detailed and a complex social, legal and political structure or organisation within each of their own clan groups. They did not require European survey pegs to determine who owned what land, these boundaries were and still are set by myth or song. They did not need European lawyers to tell them who had broken the law and what penalties were needed. They had and in fact still have their own set of rules and punishment for those who dare break them. Today this basis of law is not totally acceptable or workable in partnership with European law, and the breakdown of the Aboriginal society has seen a further erosion of their legal structure. At the political level, Aboriginal leadership is hereditary and while some people will argue that this is an autocratic system, it must be noted that democracy does not always reflect the aspirations of all members of the community, and the hereditary Aboriginal system had apparently worked well until the intrusion of European politics.

It can therefore be clearly shown by past history that the Aboriginal communities were as politically motivated as their European counterparts, but the entrance of European politics onto the Aboriginal scene required change and this change was in some sense a long while in coming.

In 1961 the federal government voted to establish a Select Committee to report on the voting rights of Aborigines. This committee chaired by Mr H.G. Pearce MP visited all states of the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory. The committee visited many Aboriginal communities and received submissions and comments from hundreds of people. It is interesting to note that no public hearing since then has received so much Aboriginal participation.

The terms of reference for the committee included the following:

- to inquire into and report on -

- (a) whether the entitlement to enrolment and the right to vote presently conferred by the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918-1953 on persons referred to in section 39 of that Act should be extended with or without qualifications, restrictions or conditions to -
 - (i) all Aboriginal natives of Australia, or
 - (ii) Aboriginal natives of Australia included in particular classes, and, if so, what classes;
- (b) the modifications, if any, that should be made to the provisions of that Act relating to enrolment or voting to provide for enrolment and voting by Aboriginal natives or any particular classes of Aboriginal natives.

At that time section 39 of Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918-1953 read -

- (5) No Aboriginal native of Australia, Asia, Africa, or the Islands of the Pacific (except New Zealand) shall be entitled to have his name placed on or retained on any roll or to vote at any Senate election or House of Representatives election unless -
 - (a) he is so entitled under section forty-one of the Constitution
 - (aa) He is an Aboriginal native of Australia and -
 - (i) is entitled under the law of the State in which he resides to be enrolled as an elector of that State and, upon enrolment, to vote at elections for the more numerous House of the Parliament of that State (or, if there is only one House of the Parliament of that State, for that House); or
 - (ii) is or has been a member of the Defence Force.

The select committee in presenting its report late in 1961 made the following recommendations.

- (1) That the right to vote at Commonwealth elections be accorded to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subjects of the Queen, of voting age, permanently residing within the limits of the Commonwealth.
- (2) That, for the time being, the enrolment of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders be voluntary, but when enrolled, compulsory voting be enforced.

In May 1962 the Commonwealth electoral act was amended to ex-

tend to Aborigines the right to enrol and vote at federal elections. A subsequent amendment to the Northern Territory electoral regulations aligned these with the federal act, and in December 1962 at the Northern Territory Legislative Council elections Territory Aborigines went to the polls for the first time.

Under these amendments Aborigines were not required to enrol but once enrolled they were required to vote. The recently passed Northern Territory electoral act now requires all Territorians of voting age to enrol and to vote.

The 1961 Select Committee report commenting on administrative procedures said, 'It is desirable that every facility should be given for those enrolled to vote in person'. This is probably bad English for any person voting either by post or at a polling booth votes in person. I believe the committee were in fact recommending polling booths wherever possible and this factor has again been covered in the 1979 Northern Territory electoral act which provides for portable or mobile polling booths to the smaller and remote communities.

The results of the 1962 Legislative Council elections showed quite clearly that Aborigines should not be regarded as a bloc vote. In recent years however this has altered in some of the larger communities. It was shown in 1962 and in recent Territory elections has been re-emphasised that candidates or political parties who ignore Aboriginal communities do so at their own peril. I, and I believe other politicians, have found that these people are well informed on political activities at both the Territory and federal level. To re-emphasise both their ability to vote and their interest in voting, I would like to quote from a 1963 report compiled by the then Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory.

The program undertaken in the Northern Territory was designed to tell the Aborigines of the right newly available to them, to explain the responsibility this right entails, and to familiarise them with the procedures of voting. Direct reference to politics was carefully avoided. Aborigines on settlements, missions, and the larger pastoral properties have access to radio and newspapers. In addition, several candidates recognised the new force in their electorates and visited as many Aboriginal centres in their areas as possible in order to speak to the Aborigines personally. Aborigines were encouraged to attend these campaign visits, although there was no compulsion to do so. In general these rallies attracted a good deal of attention, and the Aborigines listened carefully to what the candidates had to say.

At the December elections the Aborigines exercised their new right with care. Several settlements reported that many of the Aborigines were at the booths when they opened at 8 a.m. Perhaps the most striking evidence of their interest and of the success of the how-to-vote campaign was the small number of

Aborigines who required help in completing their ballot papers - for example, at Beswick Settlement only three of the 32 Aboriginal voters asked for assistance. This is probably a clear indication that the majority had grasped the fundamentals of the lectures and is all the more impressive in view of the high rate of illiteracy amongst the adults.

Again, of the 1338 Aborigines known to be enrolled, only 157, or approximately 12 per cent, failed to vote. This compared favourably with the 23.9 per cent of Territory electors who failed to vote at the 1958 House of Representatives elections. The Australia-wide figure for that election was 4.5 per cent.

The percentage of formal votes was also higher than is customary in many other parts of Australia. There were only four informal votes in the 412 cast on missions and settlements in the Arnhem District. This is an informality rate of just under 1 per cent, which compares well with the Northern Territory rates of 3.6 per cent at the 1961 Federal election.

There was no evidence of an Aboriginal bloc vote, or of indiscriminate Aboriginal voting. At one booth where 73 of the 78 voters were Aboriginal, the three candidates polled 39, 35 and 4 respectively; another booth with 99 Aborigines in a total of 103 voters returned figures of 64 and 39 for the two candidates.

In one electorate none of the three candidates would have been known to the majority of the Aboriginal voters. Two of them visited centres of Aboriginal population, the third did not. Of 518 votes cast in these centres, one of the visiting candidates obtained 224 and the other 237 whilst the candidate who sent out printed matter but did not visit obtained only 57 votes. The percentages of votes cast in favour of the three candidates were 43, 46 and 11.

Having covered the past history I would now like to turn to more recent events of politics in the Northern Territory.

In October 1974 the election for nineteen members of the Legislative Assembly resulted in seventeen seats being won by the CLP and two seats being won by independent candidates. The ALP were annihilated as the press of the day commented. While the election for a fully elected legislature was history for the Territory, Australian history was made with the election of Hyacinth Tungutalum, the CLP candidate for Tiwi and the first full blood Aboriginal elected to any Australian parliament. Tungutalum, as history records, followed Liberal Senator Neville Bonner and Eric Deeral, a National party member for Queensland, both men being of Aboriginal descent.

In August 1977 the ALP recovered much of the ground they lost in 1974, with wins in Arnhem, Victoria River and MacDonnell. It was here that the Aboriginal vote influenced the results. During the same year, the CLP Aboriginal vote was reduced considerably in these electorates and yet the Aboriginal vote for the CLP increased in the elec-

torates of Barkly and Stuart. Again, this confirms that the Aboriginal vote should not be regarded as a bloc vote in any one electorate but also must not be taken for granted within the whole of the Northern Territory.

On a national level eight of the 127 seats in the House of Representatives can be determined by the Aboriginal vote, and in the Northern Territory seven of the nineteen Assembly seats. Arnhem, Tiwi, Elsey, Victoria River, Barkly, Stuart and MacDonnell can be directly influenced by the Aboriginal vote.

During the analysis of the 1977 elections much play was made of landslide results in certain electorates. This I believe requires clarification, for within the Territory the electorates, by comparison with states, are much smaller, ranging from 2000 to 3000 voters and the movement of 200 votes from one party or candidate to another can represent a swing of 10 per cent. This is small in actual numbers, but as South Australians will recently recall 10 per cent is a large percentage and can unseat a government.

During the debate on the Northern Territory electoral act, the system of voting attracted much attention and discussion, with the ALP favouring optional preferential voting. The ALP in support for their case stated that the Aboriginal voter would be disadvantaged under the full preferential system by recording a high number of informal votes. This argument is not supported by facts.

Yuendumu, one of the largest Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, during the 1974 election and under optional preferential voting recorded a 3 per cent informal vote. In 1977 the same community and under full preferential voting recorded only a 2.8 per cent informal vote, while the Alice Springs urban electorate in 1977 recorded a 3.1 per cent informal vote.

These figures were generally recorded across all of the nineteen Territory Assembly electorates.

Those people arguing for optional preferential voting ignore the confusion which would be caused by using that system for Assembly electorates while federal elections and in particular the Senate ballot paper requires all squares to be numbered.

The nineteen electorate sizes in area within the Northern Territory range from 2 square kilometres (Jingili, Ludmilla and Nightcliff) up to 325420 square kilometres, the largest six being Stuart with 325420 square kilometres, MacDonnell with 261400 square kilometres, Victoria River with 245100 square kilometres, Barkly with 221660 square kilometres, Elsey with 156650 square kilometres and Arnhem with 95090 square kilometres.

In conclusion let me say the Northern Territory electoral act will do away with many of the voting problems of the past and that Aborigines in the Northern Territory have shown their clear desire to

participate in community activities and in particular elections, both as voters and as candidates.

Australian Labor Party Northern Territory Branch - Organisation And Policy Formulation

JON ISAACS

The purpose of this paper is to explain the current organisation in the Northern Territory of the Labor party and the manner in which it formulates policy. It does not attempt to be a historical document - indeed it simply gives the state of play of the party as at today's date [December 1979].

Organisation

(a) National affiliation. The Labor party in the Northern Territory is a 'State Branch' of the Australian Labor party. It is represented on the national executive of the party with one delegate and on the national conference of the party with two delegates. Its representation at national conference was increased from one to two in 1979 with the inclusion of the parliamentary leader of the Northern Territory being accorded full representation in his own right.

The branch participates on national executive platform policy committees and also on the national campaign committees.

(b) Local organisation. Because of the size of the Northern Territory electorates, and the fact that there is only one federal electorate the Northern Territory branch of the Australian Labor party is not divided (as other state branches) into state electoral councils or federal electoral councils (or their equivalents).

There are eleven branches within the Northern Territory branch [and they work in the electorates named: editors].

Darwin branch - Stuart Park, Port Darwin electorates

Parap Area branch - Fannie Bay, Ludmilla

Nightcliff branch - Nightcliff, Millner

Casuarina branch - Casuarina, Sanderson, Jingili

Darwin Rural branch - Tiwi and part of Victoria River

Katherine branch - Elsey

Tennant Creek branch - part of Barkly

Warrego branch - part of Barkly

Alice Springs branch - The four Centre electorates

Nhulunbuy branch - Nhulunbuy

Groote Eylandt branch - part of Arnhem.

The branches meet monthly and have a normal executive structure.

Branch meetings have different forms in order to maintain interest and attendance by the party membership.

The Northern Territory executive comprises thirteen people. Ten are elected by alternate annual conferences and the remaining members of the executive are the parliamentary leader in the Northern Territory, the deputy parliamentary leader and any members of the federal parliament. By a decision of the last conference, at least one member of the executive must be a woman (at the moment there are two). The current make-up of the executive in addition to the three members of parliament are four small businessmen (all lawyers), three trade unionists, two public servants and one housewife. All positions on the executive are honorary and like the Country Liberal party we currently have no full time officer. The executive meets monthly and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the party.

The annual conference of the Northern Territory branch is open to the public and meets alternately in the north and south of the Territory. The 1979 annual conference was in Gove and in 1978 the annual conference was in Alice Springs. Representation at the conference is on the basis of two delegates from each branch of the party; the parliamentary leader in the Northern Territory and deputy; any members of the federal parliament and affiliated unions based on their membership. Currently four unions are affiliated with the Australian Labor party in the Northern Territory - the Transport Workers Union, the Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union, the Electrical Trades Union and the Miscellaneous Workers Union. The Waterside Workers Federation although affiliated in 1978 was not affiliated in 1979. There is no set 60:40 ratio of union representation to branch membership at conference as in some other states. In fact at the Gove conference, of the 33 delegates who attended, fourteen were from the unions.

Policy Formulation

The object is to produce a platform document arising from debate at the annual conference covering all aspects of Northern Territory administration. Four months before the date of the annual conference the Northern Territory executive circulates branches of the date of that conference and invites agenda items to be in the hands of the executive within two months. The branches submit agenda items to the national executive which in turn advises all branches of all agenda items submitted a month prior to the conference. The Northern Territory executive appoints members of the party to convene policy formulation committees. The committees examine agenda proposals and compile a consolidated document for presentation to the annual conference. Committees vary in size and are permitted to use non-members where deemed appropriate by the committee. Each member

of the parliamentary Labor party in the Northern Territory with portfolio responsibilities is automatically co-opted to the relevant executive committee. The branches themselves convene policy formulation committees depending on their interest in particular subjects and liaise with the Northern Territory executive committees. Each policy paper is presented to the annual conference by the convenor of the relevant committee where it is debated. The normal process of amendment takes place after which it is carried as policy. The policy is then prepared as a document as the platform of the Northern Territory branch of the Labor party.

The platform as laid down then becomes the bible of the members of the party and in particular of the parliamentary members of the party who are bound to follow the decisions of the annual conference. There will, naturally, be times during the year when issues arise for the parliamentary members which are not covered by the platform in which case the caucus makes a decision in consultation with the Northern Territory executive or wider, if it so desires.

Aborigines, Land Rights And Politics In The Northern Territory NEVILLE PERKINS (ALP, MacDonnell).

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to address myself to what I believe is a most exciting and burning subject, namely, Aborigines, Land Rights and Politics in the Northern Territory.

At the outset, let me declare my special interest in this subject simply by pointing out that I am proud to be an Australian of Aboriginal descent, that I am a true Territorian by birth and long term residence, and that I represent the predominantly Aboriginal electorate of MacDonnell.

It would not be unrealistic in my view to suggest that the Aboriginal vote - as well as the traditional Labor vote - was considerably responsible for my election to the Legislative Assembly for the first time in August 1977 as the ALP Member for MacDonnell. Such a fact can neither be avoided nor denied by anyone.

Now to deal with the subject matter of my paper. Last month (November 1979) the Queensland Premier, Mr Joh Bjelke-Petersen, spoke at yet another of those 'Develop the North' type conferences, much beloved by our nation's conservatives.

In amongst the rhetoric regarding minerals and money were the long railway lines and glorious futures, providing the huge markets to the north with the commodities which we think they need. At the same time, these advocates wanted a properly armed defence force to be ever vigilant in case the passive consumers became active takers. There was the occasional, but token, mention of people.

Aboriginal people were mentioned occasionally; and the way they are gaining political power, or getting above their station, if you like.

The Queensland Premier, in typical anti-Aboriginal fashion, said that Aboriginal land rights should be stopped now. If not, and these are his words 'the land wouldn't belong to Australians, it would belong to someone else, and you'd have to be a super salesman to get the big Companies to be involved'.

Mr Bjelke-Petersen did say, however, that in his state and again these are his words 'natives do, of course, get special treatment, pensions and that sort of thing'.

Contrary to popular public opinion, Aboriginal land rights as such really exist in legislation only in the Northern Territory at this point in time.

Land rights legislation was first introduced in federal parliament by the Whitlam Government in 1975 and passed by the Fraser government in early 1977, in a modified form, before the NT government gained what is called self-government, which is a sort of puberty stage on the way to full state government, and with it, no doubt, state rights.

Fortunately, the federal government still controls Aboriginal Affairs in the NT. I say fortunately, because there is no doubt that recent federal governments, of whatever political colour, have been basically more humane, more progressive and more concerned about the terrible injustices that exist in the dealings of the dominant Australian society with Aboriginal people.

Naturally, part of the reason for this is the pressure of world opinion. Australia is often judged on the international scene by its treatment of minorities, such as Aboriginal Australians. Another reason is the distance between the rednecks or hillbillies in an outback town and the federal member in Canberra, a distance measured not only in kilometres, but also in terms of votes.

A member in an electorate of 50 000 voters spread over a large area is unlikely to suffer much pressure from small vocal groups. And if there is a danger in numbers, then it exists in NT electorates, where less than 2500 voters have the chance to put a person into parliament and in the process wield considerable influence over their member.

That may be a terrifying thought to some people. However, in my view it is real spinifex root politics when such a small number of people, albeit spread across vast tracts of country can determine the shape of a government.

When majorities are measured in hundreds or less, then any sensible politician interested in preserving his position responds usually with immediacy, when only a few people gather to protest or exclaim about some issue or problem.

And the colour of the issues which inflame is usually black...the topic - rights - and in particular black land rights.

Because the issue of Aboriginal land rights is pivotal to politics and communication in the NT, it might help if I gave you an idea of some

of the processes involved in putting land rights into effect. Indeed, land rights is also a burning issue among many Aborigines throughout Australia.

Under the federal Land Rights Act of 1977, Aborigines in the NT can apply for freehold title to unalienated Crown land. They have to prove traditional ownership before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner who, if he is satisfied with the claim, can make a recommendation to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs that the rights be granted and that the land in question be declared Aboriginal land.

It is not by any means an easy exercise. Gathering the information to prove traditional ownership can be extraordinarily complex and longwinded. Compounding the difficulties are the actions of the present NT government, which has a track record of consistently opposing Aboriginal land claims, although it sanctimoniously purports to support land rights.

In the latest move, in what is becoming, in my view, a war of attrition against Aboriginal land rights, the NT government, unhappy with the Land Commissioner's decision to reject its arguments against a claim for Utopia Cattle Station, has taken the Commissioner, Mr Justice Toohey, to the High Court of Australia on a writ of prerogative.

For the record, the NT government has attempted to argue that the Land Commissioner does not have jurisdiction to hear the Utopia Land Claim under the federal Aboriginal Land Rights Act, basically because the government believes Utopia is a pastoral lease held in trust for the Aborigines and not Crown land.

Incidentally, Mr Justice Toohey decided that he had jurisdiction to hear the Utopia Land Claim because, in his view, the land at Utopia is 'alienated Crown land in which all estates and interests not held by the Crown are held on behalf of Aborigines and that therefore the land may be claimed under the Act'. The case is continuing in the High Court.

The result has been the effective freezing of Aboriginal land claims to several other Territory pastoral stations, owned and managed by Aborigines under pastoral leases.

As part of its degrading, anti-Aboriginal tactics, the NT government is arguing that cattle on Aboriginal land will become, in the words of the Chief Minister, Mr Everingham, 'harbours of disease' and 'running sores'.

In my opinion, this is an extension of the suburban racist and generalised argument that Aborigines who move into the house next door will be drunk, disorderly, unhealthy and prone to crime, not because they as individuals necessarily have such a history, but because their skins are black.

The truth of the matter is that Aborigines have been running Utopia responsibly as a cattle station and making a profit. Along with

other Aboriginal pastoral properties, such as Willowra Station, they have been participating in and cooperating with stock disease eradication programs.

Aborigines have kept the cattle industry going ever since stock came to the Territory and are likely to continue to run stock responsibly and cooperate with the provisions of the Territory Stock Diseases Act, which apply on Aboriginal land despite any assertions to the contrary.

In addition to running cattle, Aborigines basically desire official recognition of their traditional ownership rights and consequently the opportunity for their cultural and spiritual security to be consolidated on Aboriginal land.

In my view, the Territory CLP government has broken faith with Territory Aborigines generally on the question of land rights and this has resulted in a strong feeling of resentment sweeping like a bushfire, especially among Aborigines in Central Australia.

This particular situation could inevitably engulf the government at the next Assembly election.

Perhaps the Queensland Premier can afford to make vicious and derogatory comments about Aborigines and land rights. After all land rights, and maybe many other rights, have just about ceased to exist in the Banana State. And with the current state of the Queensland voting system - well what positive and democratic changes could possibly occur?

In the Territory at least about one quarter, if not more, of the population is Aboriginal. About 14000 or more Aboriginal people should be able to vote in the next Territory Assembly election, determining maybe six seats in a nineteen seat Legislative Assembly. The significance of the Aboriginal vote cannot be ignored by any political party or political observers.

In fact, the battle for the votes and minds of Aboriginal Australians in the great Territory outback is being conducted on an emotional canvas as big as the landscape it is being played against.

It involves few of the weapons used in traditional campaigning, and requires much new learning and thinking, which can be adapted to Aboriginal circumstances. But the stakes are just as high as in any urban electorate, perhaps much higher.

For beneath it all run some powerful undercurrents expressed at times by the Queensland Premier and the Member for the Western Australian seat of the Kimberley, Mr Alan Ridge, who made the mistake of putting his real feelings on paper in the now famous letter, which I hope will haunt his career. This was the letter which made a racist observation that 'it was a degrading experience to have to campaign amongst the Aborigines', to use the words of Mr Ridge.

Put equally crudely is the often heard view in Alice Springs that the blacks are getting more aggressive and too outspoken about their

rights as they walk along the pavement. As a regular visitor to other states and towns, Aborigines in Alice Springs appear to me to behave in a similar way as other human beings when walking along the street, but I can recall the past where there was a cringeing and shying away when the master race strode the streets. Not any more.

For those whites who honestly believe that the Aborigines are simple folk best left alone, then the knowledge that they are gaining political power is indeed a frightening experience.

Alice Springs, as we who live there like to say, is the Capital of the Centre. About 16000 people live in a small and strikingly beautiful town surrounded by the magnificent MacDonnell Ranges. The colours of the natural landscape are sometimes startling and extreme. So are the social experiences of the human landscape.

The town is, in some respects, like an ancient walled city, and the attitude of some whites gives the strong impression of a town under siege, with the black hordes beyond the gap just waiting to move in and take over.

Outside the town live about another 15000 people who regard Alice Springs as their regional centre. Most of these people are Aboriginal and to them Alice Springs is not only a traditionally important area, it is also their meeting centre, shopping town, health care centre and holiday place.

Every year about 150 000 visitors and tourists pass through the Centre transported by TAA and Ansett and scores of other people-movers in the tourist industry. Practically all these people are white.

Alice Springs has two newspapers, both weekly. There is the *Centralian Advocate*, which has a circulation of about 5000 copies every week and there is the *Star* which has a circulation of about 3000 per week.

The *Star* usually takes about five minutes to read, including the advertisements. The *Advocate* takes about 25 minutes, excluding the advertisements. That assumes, of course, that you can read English, although this is not the first language for thousands of people who live in the Centre and have, instead, Arunta, Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara, and other ancient tongues at their command.

So if you are trying to communicate a political message to the Aboriginal electorate, a well constructed press statement prominently placed in the paper may have no impact whatsoever.

There are two radio stations and one television station in the Centre. The TV station is owned by the ABC. It has just boosted its power to 100 watts. As the Centre is topographically rugged, the VHF signal travels no distance beyond the townsite.

The two AM radio stations, one commercial, one ABC, both broadcast currently with a power of 2 kilowatts. The commercial station, which is mostly pop and sport, reaches communities within

about 80km of the town. The ABC, which is a curious mixture of Radio 1 and 2, can be heard no more than about 40 km from the town.

So many people in my electorate, down to the South Australian border, across to the Western Australian border in the west and the Queensland border in the east, and Alice Springs in the north, cannot enjoy the so-called national service or the Territory service, and consequently have little idea of what is being repeated as news at the national and local level. In this area of approximately 270 000 square kilometres, there is no media for many of my constituents.

I am discounting, of course, the Indonesian Service of Radio Australia which, I understand, can be heard quite well in some sections of my electorate of MacDonnell, named incidentally, not after any Aboriginal hero, myth, or place, or any rugged white explorer, but after an obscure Englishman who happened to be given a governorship as a sinecure.

But back to the media.

How do you communicate with people who have little or no access to the media, or if they do, don't want to use the sophisticated systems of mass communication established by the dominant white society?

In the Labor party we are now looking at this problem with fresh eyes. At a recent small meeting of party members in Alice Springs we were discussing among other things, the relative merits and problems of the media.

To the question 'How do you ensure that people accept your policy and vote for you?' someone gave the interesting answer... 'kinship ties and personal knowledge and credibility of the candidate'.

More academically, it is certainly true that many Aboriginal people will vote for the man or woman rather than the policy. At the same time, it is possible that if the Australian Labor party, and myself in particular, were against Aboriginal land rights, in the way that the CLP is, then I could lose the election next time round if my opponent, white or black, was campaigning on an issue of support for land rights.

It is often argued that Aborigines do not understand politics and that their voting behaviour supports the proposition. For example, there were cases in 1977 of Aboriginal communities voting ALP in the August Territory election, and CLP in the December federal election.

But in my mind, there is no doubt that Aborigines are as equally knowledgeable of politics generally as the average white suburbanite, if not more so, particularly in the Territory. And Aboriginal communities are certainly so much more aware of the personality and credibility of the candidate who presents himself or herself for election.

There is no escaping the searching examination of the shrewd Aboriginal scrutinising the nature of the man or woman who makes the promises, as well as analysing the promises themselves.

One of the more significant factors in the Territory Assembly election of August 1977, in my view, was the massive Aboriginal vote against the Country Liberal party, especially in rural electorates such as MacDonnell, Arnhem and Victoria River. The impact of the Aboriginal vote was naturally more evident in the rural electorates of the Territory where there exist predominantly Aboriginal populations.

Indeed, the significance of the Aboriginal vote was appreciated even by some members of the Territory CLP, when it was reported in the Darwin press in August 1977 that they conceded that their dramatic losses at the poll had been due, to a certain extent, to the increase of Aboriginal votes against them.

A comparison of the poll results in 1974 and 1977 in the electorate of MacDonnell provides us not only with an indication of the degree of the changes in the voting patterns, but also the significant impact of the Aboriginal vote.

	1974	1977 Change
Enrolment	1,658	2,486 + 828 (+ 50%)
Turnout	1,081	1,552 + 471 (+ 44%)
ALP %	39.4	60.8 + 21.4
CLP %	53.4	33.3 - 20.1
Ind %	7.2	5.9 - 1.3

MacDonnell is an electorate composed mainly of Aboriginal communities. In fact, Aboriginal people account for both the majority of the total population and the majority of persons on the electoral roll for MacDonnell.

Changes of a similar magnitude were evident also in the rural electorates of Arnhem and Victoria River where there is a high Aboriginal involvement. Arnhem and Victoria River were won convincingly in 1977 for the first time by the ALP. Again, the influence of the Aboriginal vote on the outcome in Arnhem and Victoria River was, as in the case of MacDonnell, quite considerable.

I submit that Aboriginal Territorians are emerging as a real political force to be reckoned with and that they are appreciating in increasing numbers the importance of using the ballot box as an effective political weapon. The Aboriginal vote, Territory-wide, is likely to continue to considerably influence the outcome of future Territory elections, and any political party which chooses to deny Aboriginal rights or to ignore the real needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people does so at its own electoral peril.

Indeed, no longer will the Territory parliament be able to discount Aboriginal aspirations lightly or to legislate against Aboriginal interests without Aboriginal reactions being felt, for the Aboriginal voice will be heard and its strength demonstrated at election time.

In June this year the new Northern Territory government, warmed by the balm of two years in executive office and one year of self-

government, apparently started to think a year ahead to the next election. The Chief Minister introduced a new electoral bill using, among other things, knowledge gained in the 1977 Bridge versus Ridge elections in the West Australian Kimberleys, and their aftermath.

This bill, when first introduced, caused great ructions throughout the Territory. Among other things, it maintained optional enrolment for Aborigines and included a section which imposed a \$10 000 fine, or five year gaol term, on anyone convicted of inducing an Aboriginal to enrol. Needless to say, it was okay to induce Eskimos, Mongolians, Hebreadians and others to enrol, provided of course that they had been naturalised. But, not native born Australians with black skins.

The basic argument espoused was that the electoral system was too difficult for Aborigines to understand and Aborigines were not quite ready for compulsory enrolment, carefully overlooking the fact that many Aborigines are capable of coping with the usual crazy bureaucratic hassles of a white society. I mean coping with things like driving a car, gun licences, social security forms, grant application papers and similar devices arranged to keep clerks busy.

Also conveniently overlooked was the fact that the average tertiary education student may not be able to tell the difference between unicameral and bicameral, while the Senate voting system is beyond the ken of most but graduates in mathematics, political animals and, I suppose, Senators.

The NT electoral bill, when first proposed, was clearly designed to disenfranchise Aborigines. That fact was clearly recognised by Aborigines, who promptly mounted their own protest campaign through their respective representative bodies, such as the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and the National Aboriginal Conference.

Some Aboriginal groups expressed the general view that it was time for governments to do away with the archaic colonial attitudes of Aboriginal welfare, paternalism and protectionism, which were largely responsible in the first place for Aboriginal Australians being treated differently to other Australians in relation to matters of enrolment and the electoral system generally. They were concerned that Aborigines generally should now be permitted the opportunity to participate as equals with other Australians in the electoral processes and to exercise their democratic rights.

They also pointed out that although the level of social and political consciousness generally among Aborigines was increasing at a rapid pace in recent years, there was a need for governments to ensure that suitable enrolment and voter education programs are implemented in the Territory and other states without delay.

Their voice was heard so loud in the land that the NT government made a 180 degree turn and came up with virtually brand new legisla-

tion which makes enrolment compulsory for all adult Australians in the NT. Inducement to enrol, therefore, automatically becomes legal.

It appears that there may have been also an element of federal push in the NT government's decision. I understand that the Council for Aboriginal Development - a national body of ten Aborigines who advise the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs - has told both the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the NT government that compulsory enrolment and voting should apply also to adult Aboriginal Australians, and that the electoral laws should be changed to facilitate this.

As you would know, enrolment is compulsory in the states of Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and, surprisingly, Queensland, but not in the federal sphere. If the NT had maintained optional enrolment for Aborigines, then it might well be out of step when the federal act is changed as indeed it must be as soon as practicable.

But with the change, must go a suitable voter education program for Aborigines generally throughout the nation. The first time this was seriously and officially suggested seemed to be in 1962. This year, for the first time, the Australian Electoral Office has sent two caravans each staffed by a married couple, to take the news about Australia's strange voting and electoral system to the uninitiated.

Two well-equipped Land Rovers, laden with generators and special audio-visual equipment, towing caravans specially built for tough out-back conditions, left the capitals and moved into the Kimberleys of WA and the top end of South Australia.

Last month (November 1979) one of the caravans staggered into Alice Springs, springs and bodywork shattered, and other equipment rattled to pieces and otherwise unusable. At the Top End of the Territory the wet season has commenced and could wash out the progress of what appears to be a good voter education program, but will probably take quite some time to complete in an effective way.

So how do we get the message across?

We do it by taking the time to have personal contact by going to communities and sitting down, talking, listening and taking notice of what is being said.

We have reintroduced into politics the street corner meeting, though the street is more likely to be replaced by a patch of dirt and the corner by a mulga bush when we are talking about operating in the electorates of the great Territory outback.

We have also reintroduced honesty and integrity to politics, because anything less in the bush will be as clear as daylight over Central Australia, and not acceptable, of course, to those astute judges of politicians - the electors.

In the messy, deceitful world of suburban politics the hope for the future could well rest with Aboriginal people, whose mercurial voting patterns will ensure that no politician can remain complacent.

Any rational person would appreciate that Aborigines and in particular land rights for Aborigines are not in conflict with the proper development of the Territory, provided of course, that you accept development as meaning human as well as economical development.

While the Queensland Premier and his ilk may fear and be hostile towards Aboriginal land rights and the new found political power of Aborigines, I welcome it as among the best hopes we have for democracy and the positive development of the North.

5 The Party System In The Late 1970s

DEAN JAENSCH

Parties have been late-comers in Territory politics although they, or at least candidates with party labels, have been involved in elections for the Territory's legislatures since 1947. A party system did not appear until the 1960s and even that seemed fragile when, in the election to the first Assembly in 1974, the newly amalgamated Country Liberal party won seventeen of the nineteen seats and Labor, winning none at all, seemed to have collapsed. In 1977, the Labor party recovered its place in the Assembly by winning six seats.

Like other non-Labor parties in Australia the Territory Country Liberal party is an alliance formed primarily for the work of winning elections and it is subject to internal strain and to challenge from outside from time to time. So far, with electoral successes to its credit in 1974, 1977 and 1980, the unity of the party has not been severely tested. In 1966 a Northern Territory branch of the Country party was first formed, to be followed almost immediately by the emergence of a Darwin branch of the Liberal party. The two competed against each other as well as against Labor in the 1968 Legislative Council elections, but the Liberal party 'disappeared' after it failed to win any seats. Following the 1972 national election efforts were made to revive the Territory Liberal party, with sufficient success to spur the Country party into negotiations for a merger. This was carried through by July 1974.

But some Liberals appear to have remained uneasy. The CLP was more Country party than Liberal in its early years. It was formally affiliated with the Australian or National Country party and its federal non-Labor representatives from the Territory were members of the National Country party caucus in the national parliament. The first rumour that the alliance was under some strain came in October 1977 in a report that the Liberal party federal executive was considering the formation of a separate party in the Territory (*NT News* 19 October 1977).

No formal action was taken, but the debate on national affiliation was revived when Senator Bernie Kilgariff, elected under the CLP banner in 1977, announced that he would join the Liberal parliamentary party rather than remain with his House of Representatives col-

league, Sam Calder, in the National Country party room. In May 1978 there was renewed speculation that formal affiliation with the Liberal rather than the National Country party was imminent, and that this would be followed by a change of name to the Liberal Country party (*NT News* 2 May 1978). Fears of an attempted Liberal takeover expressed at the time were set at rest by the decision to 'associate' with both parties in Canberra.

The Labor party in the Territory was also a 'late developer': for a long time more of a loose association of people than a party. In 1973, the Northern Territory Labor party was given official recognition and its own constitution by the federal ALP.

From its beginnings, however, the Labor party in the Territory suffered from inherent weaknesses, especially in comparison with its branches in the South. State Labor parties have a solid and stable base of support in the industrial suburbs of the urban areas and draw their financial strength from the affiliated trades unions and, to a much lesser extent, the network of branches. Their membership derives from both unions and branches, and communication in the cities is a simple matter.

The Territory Labor party, from the beginning, has been weak in all these respects. The small size of the urban centres and the almost total lack of any large-scale industrial development has meant that the Labor party has had no 'natural' base of membership and money. As well, organisation of an industrial wing and a branch structure was made difficult by the vast distances, the poor communications and the costs of transport. In the past some sections of the union movement have also competed electorally with the party by running their own candidates.

In early 1980, the Labor party had established eleven branches in the Territory, each with a particular area to service and organise (see ch. 4 for the list). Formally, they gave the party an organisational 'presence' in each of the nineteen electorates but their effectiveness in the more outback parts is limited. The urban and the more rural branches differ in style and organisation. The urban branches in the Darwin area, for example, and in one or two other places are smaller versions of branches in urban electorates in the South: they have a permanent organisation, more or less regular year-round activities, an official membership, formal meetings - all the paraphernalia of party at this level.

But branches in rural electorates have little existence outside the small white communities which sustain them and even there they appear to be less formal in their organisation and less regular in their activities, with little real life between elections. They have been built up by candidates and members in recent years and inevitably their fortunes and futures are intertwined with those of the candidates. Distance alone presents them with a massive obstacle in attempting to

establish electorate-wide organisation. But there are other difficulties too. Among the white inhabitants - except in Warrego and Nhulunbuy - there are few if any organisations of the kind Labor has traditionally relied on for help in building its branches, notably trade unions and, of course, among the Aboriginal inhabitants too there are virtually no organisations of this kind and no tendency to form their own or to join white party branches. The result is that in rural electorates party branches are confined in scope, both geographically and socially, and even in the Darwin area they appear to have little contact with the Aboriginal part of the electorate. Very few branches indeed can boast of even one or two Aboriginal members.

The same can be said, of course, for the CLP. It has fewer branches than Labor, but like Labor it has attempted to cover the Territory. Branches at Darwin, North Darwin, Jabiru East and Palmerston, Gove and Katherine cover the Top End, the Katherine branch having the responsibility for Elsey and Victoria River; the Alice Springs branch works in the four Centre electorates.

Because of the difficulties of organisation outside the urban centres and townships, candidates of both parties were forced, from their beginnings, to develop and to utilise networks of contacts with local influential people, black and white, for information, advice and assistance about local political affairs. The sitting members, of course, have special opportunities - even a duty as representatives - to build up these networks and in electorates like Arnhem and Victoria River where party organisation does not exist for most practical purposes these networks of contacts are of the utmost political importance - and they are not part of the organisations of the parties. In the outback electorates then, the advantages of an incumbent can be crucial and a contending candidate (and party) will need to work hard and long to establish a network of sympathetic people and groups to match the efforts of the sitting member.

Minor Parties In The Territory

As in national politics, various small political parties - sometimes pressure groups which, for one or two elections, nominate one or two candidates - have intervened in the Territory, with little success in winning electoral support and none in winning seats in any of the three elections since 1974.

Four minor parties emerged in the 1980 election. The Progress party which had contested all nineteen seats in 1977 but for a bare 9.8 per cent of the total formal vote nominated only one candidate. This surprised observers: a leader of the party was confident in 1979 that the party would again field candidates in all seats, that it would easily find more than the \$20 000 it spent in 1977, and would increase its proportion of the vote. The reasons given included the high cost of cam-

painging, the improbability of success, and - on their view of what happened to their preferences in 1977 - a reluctance to help the CLP again, given their disenchantment with its economic policy. In one respect, to have only one candidate, Andrews, and him in the isolated rural electorate of Barkly beyond the reach of electronic media was a waste of a potential resource. Under its system of allocation, the ABC was required to provide free time to the Progress party on the basis of its support in 1977. Such free time was of no advantage in Barkly.

The Australian Marijuana party had the largest minor party contingent in the 1980 election. Candidates were nominated for Stuart Park and Port Darwin in the urban area and for Tiwi and Arnhem. The publicity and literature of the candidates stressed that 'The Single policy of the Australian Marijuana Party is to Legalise Cannabis' and it also emphasised that 'In all other areas AMP Candidates are Free to Act Independently'. The AMP claimed to have groups in Alice Springs, Wave Hill, Tennant Creek, Darwin and Groote Eylandt, and its campaign was unusual - built around concerts and music 'events'. The party was realistic about its hopes - it did not expect to win seats but publicity for its cause. Given the essentially conservative nature of the Territory electorate, both major parties considered the AMP to be of little more than nuisance value, although Labor was privately concerned about the effect of its taking even a few votes in key marginal seats.

The Australian Democrats, discussed more fully below (ch. 8), fielded three candidates in the Darwin electorates of Jingili, Casuarina, and Port Darwin. It seemed to be short of members, money and organisation. The fourth minor party was a very recent entry into the Territory political arena. The Christian Home party had its genesis at a meeting of fifty people in Darwin early in September 1979. Convener Ron Mann told the meeting that the new party was not just a pressure group, but 'was setting out to win government' (*NT News* 10 September 1979). By January 1980, the party had renamed itself the Christian Democratic party, but it had retained its basic aim of 'winning' a popular mandate. The *NT News* made gentle fun of the party, noting that the Christian Democrats had not explained how they would govern, suggesting that 'perhaps this would be done by someone higher up' (*NT News* 29 January 1980 and 18 March 1980 for its policies).

Contests in both electorates were expected to be close, offering the Christian Democrats a chance of influencing the result. In Sanderson, Mann advised his voters to give their second preferences to the CLP but, in the event, they split almost equally.

VOTE		
MANN	1	
SANDERSON

C. CHRISTIAN	D. DEMOCRATIC	P. PARTY

Authorised by Ron Mann, 22, Richmond Green, London. Printed by Graham Systems, 21 Bland Street, Dorset.

Christian Democrat founder, Ron Mann, candidate for Sanderson, explained: 'Christians should become involved in politics. I chose that particular picture of Jesus because it is a nice picture and my favourite one of him'—NT News 28 May 1980.

VOTE

MARK McALEER**AUSTRALIAN MARIJUANA PARTY**

CANDIDATE FOR

ARNHEMAlso covered by J. Southern
for the Press Photo Howard Springs*Marjuana Party candidate, Mark (Beanz) McAleer*

Campaign Preparations

In any election in Australia there are two 'levels' in the campaign of a party. The public and most widely publicised level is that inaugurated and maintained by the party, its leader and main spokesmen. It is at this level that broad issues are canvassed, reactions from the public considered, and overall strategies revised, rewritten or re-emphasised.

At the other much more local level party is de-emphasised, especially in the outback areas, and this happened both in the early stages of the campaign in 1979 and in the main campaign in 1980. Local level campaigns were planned and run more as personal appeals than as party contests.

At the broad level, the CLP, as the government, had the decided advantage of being constantly in the public's eye - whether laying foundation stones or announcing new initiatives or economic developments. It had the advantage that it could go about government business in the election period in ways that were to the advantage of the party - a practice now so common in Australia that it seems to be a 'part of the game'. It also had the power to select its own time for calling an election and to capitalise on what were perceived to be favourable circumstances.

Like all oppositions, Labor was in a defensive position, forced to be reactive and unable to initiate actions and with less ready access to the media. For these reasons, an opposition needs to formulate early the policies which it considers will best attract support from the public and seek maximum publicity for them and, at the same time, to keep up a steady criticism of government policies and actions. This is difficult at any time. It was doubly so for a Labor opposition in the Northern Territory with only six members in the Assembly, and with few administrative and office resources in comparison with the government machine.

The Labor party made as much as it could out of processes in the Assembly, attempting to find weak points in the government, its policies and personnel. The opposition faced two major problems in this area of party competition, the first the danger that sawing away daily at the government would result in an image of negativism and unconstructive criticism. Its attack on the government over the John Holland small ships contract and alleged kickbacks was the turning point for Labor in this wrangling. Neither side came out of it with any obvious advantage and the dispute ended inconclusively. After this attempt to discredit the government failed, the Labor party set out deliberately to create a more positive image for itself.

The second problem for Labor was that the general record of the Everingham government was good, and the government had made every effort to ensure that it was seen to be satisfactory. The government had won a generous financial arrangement from the Com-

monwealth. Its budgets seemed to show that as economic manager it was competent and in recent months there had been many reminders of the good state of the local economy. In addition, in the last days of the campaign Commonwealth government ministers helped: one promised improved telecommunications, another got cabinet to consider a tax cut by increasing the zone allowance and Defence came out strongly in favour of the Alice Springs-Darwin railway (*NT News* 2, 4, 5 June 1980).

Outside the Assembly the parties had to bring their organisation to a state of readiness. Their main task, to select their candidates, was largely completed by the middle of 1979, about a year before the election was expected. The Country Liberal party finalised its list, with the notable exceptions of Alice Springs and Victoria River, at its conference in August 1979. Labor had endorsed its first three candidates at the central executive level in May 1979, and completed its list for most other electorates soon afterwards although it, too, had trouble in Alice Springs, and was forced to select a replacement candidate in Barkly when its first choice left the Territory.

Another task for the parties is to ensure that the branches are functioning, know an election is coming on and are aware of what they have to do. Presumably the mini-campaign, as it was called, when NSW ALP leader and Premier, Neville Wran, visited the NT in July 1979 was a matter of activating the organisation, as well as giving early publicity to the party's candidates and policies (*NT News* 7 June 1979). The NT Labor leader, Jon Isaacs, and other leading party figures subsequently accompanied candidates on frequent visits to the electorates (*Labor Forum* 2, 2 March 1980 for some details). The legwork of the campaign also has to be carried out through branches and late in 1979 Labor branches began doorknocking, letter-boxing and urging people to ensure that they were on the roll. In September 1979 the party sought a campaign manager, convinced that it had to be ready for an early election.

CLP officials believed they were not as well organised as Labor - meaning that they did not have branches in all electorates, although at different times eight branches were mentioned in the party paper, *Focus NT*. Everingham as party leader and Chief Minister travelled widely and presumably played a leading part, like Isaacs, in activating the branches for the election. *Focus NT* reported social and fund raising functions and visits by members of the Assembly in the pre-election period. Mark Tregonning was brought to Darwin from Adelaide as executive director at the end of July but after three months the party could no longer keep him in that position. A CLP central campaign committee was set up at the end of October to take charge of the arrangements and the finances for the election. From April 1980 special sessions were arranged for new candidates to help them prepare themselves. In May, Bob Baudino, from the Liberal head-

quarters in Canberra, was on hand to help with the campaign in the party's Knuckey Street offices. The parties apparently raised enough money for the contest; it is reported that the CLP spent \$85 000 and the ALP \$55 000 (Heatley 1980(a)).

Well before the date was announced the parties had begun campaigning at the 'general level'. Maintaining the party image and attempting to discredit the opposing party goes on all the time, of course, but it is intensified in the run-up to an election. Most of the inter-party conflict of this kind was staged in the Assembly, in session, with the usual breaks, throughout the whole period.

Labor had revised its policies at its annual conference, held in June 1979 at Nhulunbuy. The resulting 68-page document dealt with a wide range of issues. From this followed a stream of policy statements, reactions to government initiatives and counter-proposals.

The policy of the CLP was produced by a different process. As with non-Labor parties elsewhere, the CLP draws a clear line between its organisational wing and the parliamentary membership, between platform (the prerogative of the organisation or a special committee within it) and policy, which, assuming the party is in power, is the prerogative of the government. For a government, of course, policy making is a continuing activity.

But those who argue about and formulate policy, pass conference resolutions and issue press statements are, to some extent, working in the dark. Even with all their sources of information - from the press, from within the party, the electorates, the interest groups and so on - they are still unable to be sure of the opinions and perceptions of the prospective voters. They have to hope that voters will agree with them in their identification of the most important policy proposals and support them accordingly.

How Voters In Alice Springs Saw It

To discover what some voters thought about parties, leaders and policies in 1980 we carried out a survey in the Alice Springs urban area. It is impossible to generalise from a survey limited to one urban community in a society as diverse as the Territory's but the survey does give evidence of the opinions in that one place and helps us to some extent in speculation about opinions elsewhere in the Territory (see appendix 2 for a note about the survey).

From Alice Springs 530 people answered the question 'In your opinion what are the most important issues the Northern Territory government should do something about?' Fifty-eight different issues were specified at least once, most people mentioning three and a few as many as five. But out of all those mentioned, thirteen accounted for 70 per cent of the total number of 'mentions'. Freight costs, fuel reserves, unemployment, tourism, roads and mining development

each got 3 per cent; air fares 4 per cent; cost of living and education 5 per cent each; Darwin rail link 6 per cent; housing and the South road 9 per cent each and, at the top of the list, Aboriginal policy with 14 per cent (see ch. 10 for a more detailed discussion).

But when grouped, one set of policy questions - South road, Darwin rail link, freight costs, air fares and roads - was of even greater salience. As one Alice resident put it when asked about building the South road, 'Just do it; I'd be prepared to pay a toll'. Considering these as forming one group, transport and communications, and including other related issues mentioned, they constituted 31 per cent of the total responses. This is presumably the result of the isolation of Alice Springs and its unique problems, but there was no doubt it *was* the dominant issue. Time after time, the questionnaires and personal interviews gave the clear impression that the party which could *guarantee* to satisfy voters on these issues would be swept into office. Whether the Alice is the only place in the Territory where voters felt this way is another question.

The division of the voters on the question of uranium mining was closer to the party division: 62 per cent of CLP voters thought it should go ahead and another 25 per cent agreed only if it was safe; the equivalent figures for the Labor voters were 18 and 39 per cent. A third of Labor voters and only 9 per cent of CLP voters thought there should be no uranium mining at all.

The advantages of an incumbent government are well known, but the Everingham government had a hidden advantage which the survey revealed. Its standing, especially on policies of economic development, was as high among Labor voters as it was among those who voted CLP. By comparison with similar surveys in the South, where respondents have difficulty specifying things they like about the governing parties, a higher proportion of respondents in Alice Springs felt they could find a particular attribute of the CLP they liked and that proportion included a large number of Labor voters. Thirty per cent of ALP voters and 33 per cent of CLP voters said they particularly liked the CLP's development policy. Some Labor as well as CLP voters also approved its support for business and growth and its honesty, sincerity and its reputation for keeping its promises. Two quotations from Labor respondents to the questionnaires exemplify the emphasis given across party lines to the CLP's policy on development.

I am a Labor man, still they don't do a bad job.

Although I don't agree with a lot of their ideals, they seem to have a professional attitude to running the NT.

Labor in its turn was perceived favourably in a large number of comments. Twenty-four per cent of Labor voters and 11 per cent of CLP voters thought of it as a party for all groups and people although

48 per cent of Labor voters and 37 per cent of CLP voters saw it as a party for the worker or for the under privileged.

Given these opinions, the important difference between the parties was that the policies and campaign images put out by the CLP reinforced the broad approval of it as the 'development government, sincere, keeps its promises'.

The respondents were also asked to say what they most disliked about each party. Again there was evidence of attitudes and evaluations that crossed party lines. Of the CLP voters, 44 per cent could specify something they disliked about the CLP - its leader or ministers, its 'big business' image, its Aboriginal policy. Labor voters, in turn, specified things they disliked about their party: its Aboriginal policy, its negativity and its rash promises.

Given these opinions across party lines it was not surprising that many respondents, a higher proportion than in the South, thought that there was not much difference between the parties. Asked how much difference they thought there was, 37 per cent of ALP voters and 15 per cent of CLP voters said 'not much'. One typical comment, from a CLP voter, was: 'Only difference appears to be in their leaders. Policies are very similar in many respects. CLP has stronger leader'. Thirty per cent of the one group and 61 per cent of the other thought there was a 'great deal' and the remainder on each side said 'some'. The main items mentioned as points of difference were ideology and policy in general (42 per cent of Labor voters and 22 per cent of CLP voters saw major differences of this kind between the parties). And Labor, compared with the CLP, was thought to be 'immature' by 8 per cent of Labor voters and 15 per cent of CLP voters.

And finally, voters were also asked how they perceived the leaders of the two parties and in particular what they liked and disliked about them. Opinions crossed party lines markedly on these questions. Everingham's strong leadership, his emphasis on the Territory, his honesty and frankness and his 'positive' image appealed to large numbers of Alice voters: to 43 per cent, 13, 9 and 9 per cent of Labor voters in the order given and to 34, 20, 17 and 11 per cent of CLP voters. Seventy-seven per cent of Labor voters and 84 per cent of CLP voters specified his speech, or style of speaking, as the thing they disliked about him. Isaacs was liked as an orator and, like Everingham, was rated well for honesty and sincerity and for being 'positive': attributes approved in the order given by 29 per cent, 48 and 10 per cent of ALP voters and by 48, 30 and 10 per cent of CLP voters. By comparison, there were more things which voters disliked: his apparent lack of determination (by 32 per cent of ALP and 24 per cent of CLP voters); his lack of experience (26 and 18 per cent respectively); his 'negativism' (13 and 10 per cent) and his Aboriginal policy (13 and 7 per cent respectively). In summary, in terms of things central to the role of party leader Everingham rated well and noticeably better than Isaacs.

The survey, carried out immediately after the election, records voters' opinions at that time and does not show how these opinions were shaped by the campaign. Limited though it is, the survey has some important implications for our understanding of the party system in the Territory and the nature of the contest in June 1980. Contrary to a good deal of speculation, it was not a 'single issue' election in which the issue was 'Aboriginal policy' and especially land rights. That was a significant element in the perception voters had of the parties but it was not the only important one.

In addition, when so many voters held opinions on that question which were at variance with those of the party they voted for it is impossible to say that it was a clear-cut single-issue election for these voters. They had other reasons as well for deciding how to vote. The record of the CLP as a successful government was prominent among them for voters of both political parties.

6 General Features Of The Campaign

PETER LOVEDAY

Campaigns usually begin well before the date of polling is announced and in this instance the first stirrings could be detected late in 1979 when there was some talk of an early poll before the Wet set in and made campaigning in the Top End impossible for some months. But passage of the electoral bill was delayed, the Wet came and the early movement subsided. The election had to be held no later than 13 August and eventually on 8 May it was announced for 7 June, rather earlier than many people had come to expect.

Early closure of the rolls - 6 pm on 9 May, the day following the announcement of the date of polling - led to complaints, especially since it was the first time for compulsory enrolment for Aborigines. Concern was strongest in the more distant parts many of which reported a fruitless last minute rush to get completed claim cards to Darwin or Alice Springs before the rolls closed. Most of the anger in these parts did not reach the public media but did reach the study team. The Australian Democrats supported a legal challenge - which also proved fruitless - designed to give a vote to people who did not have their names on the roll but had submitted late claims for enrolment (*NT News* 28 May, 2 June 1980).

The new electoral act, still under amendment in February 1980, was brought into effect only a few weeks before the election was announced. It provided for full preferential voting except that if one square on a ballot paper was not marked and in others preferences were properly indicated the vote would be accepted. Enrolment was made compulsory for Aborigines for the first time in the Territory, but the penalty for failure to enrol would not be imposed for the coming election. A number of other provisions were designed to help Aborigines to vote: mobile polls would be provided in more distant parts; presiding officers, or persons appointed by them, might mark a ballot paper under instruction from a voter who was incapacitated or illiterate; the voter might have someone of his own choice to communicate his wishes to the presiding officer and to see that they were carried out; photographs of candidates would be displayed in the voting cubicle; how-to-vote cards could be used to indicate to the presiding officer how a voter wished to have his ballot marked.

Besides postal and absent voting in the usual way, the old automatic postal vote was retained for people in places so remote and small that neither static nor mobile booths would be provided for them. A 'section vote' was allowed (section 80(1)) for people whose names were not on the printed roll who had in fact enrolled before close of the rolls. The organisational changes necessary for a changeover from Commonwealth to Territory administration of the system were being planned while the bill was being amended in 1980. The scale of the changes was minimised by the arrangement that the Australian Electoral Office which had the staff and the experience would administer the act as agent for a small Territory Electoral Office. Even so the task was a large one given the short time available: the Territory office had to be set up; plans for mobile polling had to be made and staff and equipment for them found; and the normal 'housekeeping' of the electoral rolls had to be speeded up.

From a strictly administrative point of view it is the duty of citizens to have their names put on the electoral roll and to notify changes of address and electorate and it is a comment on them, rather than a criticism of the rolls or the Electoral Office, to point out that many were not on the rolls who should have been, or were on it who should not have been or were enrolled more than once under different names. Penalties are provided for failure to comply with the act, an indication that administrative staff are not expected to 'go after' people to get them to comply. The provision of penalties does, however, mean that it is prudent for the Office to facilitate enrolment by taking into account the difficulties that might face some people wishing to enrol. Other people, for example candidates and party workers, may properly encourage and help people to enrol if enrolment is compulsory. But where Aborigines are concerned the matter is complicated by the fact that they are not required to enrol for the Commonwealth and it is an offence to induce them to do so.

But since the electoral legislation of the Territory specifies the qualifications a person must have to be an enrolled voter and makes enrolment compulsory, it is possible to talk abstractly of 'the electorate' meaning all those people who have the qualifications to vote and to say how well the electoral roll measures up as a list of people in that 'electorate'. Since, as a matter of fact, large numbers of citizens fail to do what they are supposed to do, the Electoral Office keeps the roll up-to-date by its habitation review and this is of particular importance in the Northern Territory where population movements to and from the Territory and between electorates within it are far higher than elsewhere in Australia. According to calculations based on censuses from 1966 to 1971, the net interstate migration ratio per 1000 persons was -1 for New South Wales, -10 for Victoria and 204 for the Northern Territory. The internal net migration ratio per 1000 persons for the Territory is just as exceptional:

498 (or almost 50 per cent) as compared with -7 for New South Wales, -3 for Queensland and -22 for Western Australia. The aim of the review, carried out early in 1980, was to identify voters who had come into an electorate and had not enrolled so that they could be given electoral claim cards and to identify those who might have left an electorate and to remove them from the roll if they failed to respond to a procedure of challenge initiated by an 'objection' notice. In urban areas the review was carried out by people who walked around with a list of voters systematically knocking on doors. But this could not be done in rural areas and there the Electoral Office relied on local people, normally white it seems, who had been there a long time in administrative positions likely to give them special knowledge of the movement of people into and out of the areas. Once it was advised of these movements the Electoral Office could then send out claim cards and objection notices.

The procedure of 'cleansing' the rolls by issuing objection notices had to be carried out to a timetable prescribed in the legislation and it could not be completed for many electorates, including urban electorates, by the time rolls were closed on 9 May. As a result many names, some hundreds in some electorates, remained on the rolls and were discovered to be those of people no longer resident and entitled to vote by party workers before the polling day.

The electorate as a whole had grown from 43232 in 1977 to 53218 (NT Electoral Office, Press Release, 4 June 1980) a figure which was inflated by an uncertain amount, perhaps 10 per cent, by the inability of the Office to complete its review of the rolls. Most of the new names were added in the twelve months before the election: 2500 by the end of February 1980 and another 6000 in the next six months. Since a redistribution was not carried out and population movements had been high, six electorates - five in the Darwin area - were outside the limits of enrolment allowed in the act.

By May campaigning had revived - members who had paid little attention to their electorates were now seen in them promising good things and a number of independents had entered the field alongside the party candidates announced in 1979. The CLP's strategy was obvious enough: to hold on to all seats it had and to win more where possible, especially in Arnhem and Victoria River. Labor's early strategy was, apparently, to mount an intense campaign in Darwin especially, and in Alice Springs, to attempt to win the three extra seats needed to form a government - a total of ten of the nineteen seats, given the probable support of independent Dawn Lawrie. Reassessing its strategy late in 1979, Labor turned its attention to the outback seats. It had some hope of winning in three or perhaps four of the five outback seats but as a strategy it was based on some fairly large guesses about the strengths and weaknesses of sitting members and the

effects of the independent candidates. It also assumed that nothing would happen to put its Darwin seats at risk.

In its general campaign the CLP concentrated on its record, its successes, the economic deal which its leader obtained from the national government in 1978 and it played down, almost to the point of no emphasis at all, Aboriginal affairs and land rights.

The Labor leader, Jon Isaacs, gave his party's policy speech on 19 May, for the first time on television and the CLP leader and Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, gave his a week later at a party function at the Marrara Hotel. The policy review being carried out by the CLP had not issued in a new platform by then and the policy speech naturally drew heavily on the government's record and a variety of legislative and administrative initiatives which it had recently taken. The opening theme was 'lower taxes' other topics being housing, the disadvantaged, energy, land, education, youth assistance, health, communications, Aboriginal development, local government, small business, industrial development, agriculture, workmen's compensation, and the public service. All were headlined by the slogan 'Keep the Flag Flying' (an early slogan, 'the Mob for the Job', did not long survive) and were linked together by reference to both the record of the government and the need to develop the Territory.

Labor's platform dealt with an even greater number of topics. Several of these had been the focus of attention in recent press comment and political disputes - notably Aboriginal land claims and related matters, uranium mining, women's affairs, energy - but Isaacs chose to highlight the party's proposals to reduce the cost of living by subsidies and to stimulate the growth of private business in the Territory. The party identified itself with the development of the Territory just as the CLP did and it chose to attach importance to much the same topics as the CLP. Given some similarities, perhaps more apparent than real, on these topics, each party also claimed it was more competent to manage the economy than its competitors.

For those who expected Labor to be radical, if not socialist, its policies seemed very 'moderate' and, on the other hand, the CLP sounded rather like the ALP on health, welfare and education - if not on taxes (see comment by A. Heatley *NT News* 23 and 30 May 1980). People on the 'right' of the CLP criticised the government and especially Everingham for being too interventionist and too assured that they knew best what was good for the Territory (e.g. letter, *NT News* 29 May 1980).

In turn, CLP people disputed Labor's claim to be wholly concerned with the Territory and reminded voters that Labor had strong links with party and trade union bodies in the South, especially in Canberra, and could not make up its mind about uranium mining as a result.

The parties did not, however, have the final say over the items that

would be issues for the election. If an 'issue' is a topic on which some alteration of existing arrangements has been proposed and has become the subject of public debate and political activity, then Aboriginal land rights was at least as important as the 'issues' the parties chose to emphasise. As an issue, its history is too long and complex to be outlined here (see Barwick, Mace and Stannage, eds, 1979) but for Aborigines and for many whites the matter was of the first importance.

According to the census of 1976, seven electorates had an Aboriginal population of above the average of the Territory as a whole (27 per cent), namely Arnhem (79), Barkly (28), Elsey (39), MacDonnell (67), Stuart (51), Tiwi (32), and Victoria River (61). Several other electorates had more than 10 per cent Aborigines in their populations - Alice Springs (17), Ludmilla (11), Millner (10) and Nhulunbuy (19). Population figures are, of course, only a rough guide to the proportion of Aborigines eighteen years old or more in the population and an even rougher guide to the proportion of Aborigines among voters on the roll.

If the parties thought they could bury land rights and related issues, they were mistaken: too many disputes concerning land arose in the period before the elections and were well publicised in the press. The Northern Territory government's challenge in the High Court to the hearing of the Utopia land claim dragged on from 1979 into 1980; a meeting of Aboriginal council presidents and community advisers in Darwin, designed to provide government with information about the needs and grievances of Aboriginal communities, led to a well-publicised dispute between Paul Everingham and the chairman of the Northern Land Council, Galarrwuy Yunupingu. Summarising Aborigines' dissatisfaction, Yunupingu insisted that the government had made land rights an election issue by opposing land claims before the court, in spite of what it said about agreeing to land rights, by extending town boundaries to block land claims and by blocking the registration of Aboriginal land titles (*NT News* 28, 31 January 1980).

Recognising the importance of the Aborigines' votes - especially now enrolment was to be compulsory - Labor set out to win them much more determinedly late in 1979. Isaacs visited many communities promising each of them in writing to meet requests that were within Labor's platform and within the legal and administrative competence of a Territory government. Whites who seemed unaware of Labor's promises were angered when one of them was mentioned - and misrepresented - on ABC television on 5 May in a discussion of the Kenbi land claim of the Belyuen people on Cox's peninsula across the harbour from Darwin.

Land rights and claims, demands for closure of seas near Aboriginal communities and counter-demands for whites to have recreational and other access to them, complaints about non-

registration of land titles, about uranium mining, anxiety for protection of sacred sites and the long-drawn-out and unresolved argument about public access to roads on Aboriginal land - notably the cross-Arnhem road - and the government's hurried legislation on the subject were regular items in the press. Commentators, notably Joe Fisher (e.g. *NT News* 24 May 1980), highlighted them; candidates dealt with them at some length; Aborigines held meetings to discuss them (e.g. at Oenpelli and Galiwin'ku, *NT News* 24, 31 May 1980).

Whether an issue became 'general' or not depended to some extent on the media and the means of communication in the Territory. News was broadcast by ABC radio in Katherine, Gove, Tennant Creek, Jabiru and, along with commercial radio too, in Darwin and Alice Springs. Commercial television could be seen only in Darwin, and ABC television in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek. A local station in Gove (Nhulunbuy) took cassetted material with minimal political information put together by a commercial firm in Perth for mining towns. Newspapers reached a limited, largely white, readership. In Darwin the *NT News*, an afternoon daily, has about 15000 circulation and, although occasionally critical, it is generally supportive of the government and draws much of its news from the press releases of the parties; a more critical weekly, the *Darwin Star* has about 10 000 circulation; Alice Springs has the *Centralian Advocate* (about 5-6000 circulation) and the *Star*. A free *Weekly Advertiser* in Darwin carried a little political advertising. The *Gove Gazette* and *Katherine Advertiser* complete the list, both circulating only locally. The *Gazette* was devoid of political news and comment, except for the occasional candidate or party advertisement. After the election the Australian Press Council found that two headlines in the *NT News* were misleading, headlines relating to proposed tax cuts and to the Darwin-Alice railway (*Advertiser* 13 October 1980).

Outside the main centres, the media were of limited use in getting through to voters - especially Aborigines. TV reception is of limited range and so too in many parts is radio. Both parties relied heavily on press advertisements, the CLP taking more and apparently more expensive space than the ALP. Labor's advertisements were mostly about one-third of a page and each featured some policy topic, such as housing. The CLP's main advertisements were one page presentations, some of them comparing their own policies favourably with Labor's, for example on taxation, while others featured the NT flag, a fairly large block of the Chief Minister and party leader, the slogan - 'Keep the Flag Flying, Vote CLP' - and, under large headlines, a short statement on a single policy topic, such as energy. Of the two major parties, the CLP was far more active in presenting its message in the electronic media and the press.

Doorknocking and the display of posters and the distribution of stickers were particularly important, at least in the more urban parts

(Advertisement)

Energy. The realistic answers.

- A \$400 million coal fired power station for Darwin.
- Solar power for Ayers Rock.
- Gas pipelines and refinery for Alice Springs.
- Hydro-electric power dam at Katherine.
- An experimental wind power

generator for the Barkly Tablelands.

There is more than one way to solve the energy crisis. The CLP's realistic approach will use all the viable options to keep the Territory moving ahead.

**Keep the flag flying
Vote CLP.**

A CLP Newspaper advertisement.

of constituencies. Public meetings were discounted and rarely held. A virtually complete doorknock could be carried out in the urban constituencies without difficulty. TV was used primarily to get the party, the leader and party policies - not the individual candidate - across to voters. One ALP candidate, Cavanagh, bought himself time on local radio. In the more rural constituencies, especially the more remote ones where population was dispersed over vast distances, candidates were dependent on transport by road and air - costly, time consuming and somewhat unpredictable at times. The candidates had to personally go about to meet people, attend functions of one kind or another and rely upon their friends and supporters to spread the word. Party candidates had a difficult enough time in rural parts, but for independents it was worse. They did not have the funds or the organisation to compete very fully with party candidates in the campaign, especially sitting members. 'Localism' in elections is a concomitant of distance and isolation for small communities and in many of them what the parties proclaimed as general policies were of little or no interest. What mattered to them was some quite local grievance or the hope of some local improvement, examples of which are given below.

Interest groups were not very conspicuous in the campaign and only two of them, the Women's Electoral Lobby and the Northern Land Council played an independent part in trying to define 'issues' for the election. The two main public service unions, ACOA and APSA, numbered about 3500 members, most of them in Darwin electorates, but only minor disturbances occurred in the industrial relations of the public service before the election. The Teachers Federation asked education spokesmen for the Australian Democrats, Labor and CLP to answer half a dozen questions and printed the replies on a fairly large poster. It appears to have decided against public use of it, although perhaps school staff rooms had it. Trade unions supported Labor: *Federation News*, organ of the Miscellaneous Workers Union, was printed in a special edition for June, with a headline 'Elect a Labor Government on June 7'. Electrical Trades, Storemen and Packers and Transport Workers Union officials put out a leaflet urging a Labor vote on grounds of interest to union members.

The Unemployed Workers Union criticised the government and was noticed in the press (e.g. *NT News* 21 May 1980); a leader of the Uniting Church wrote about the election in a way which suggested that the CLP was to be preferred (*NT News* 5 June 1980); the NT Confederation of Commerce and Industry took a two-page centre spread to compare Labor and CLP policies of interest to industry and indicated its support for the CLP (*NT News* 5 June 1980); the Australian Fishing Industry Council expressed its concern about claims for sea closure (*NT News* 29 May 1980); the Council of Government Schools Organisation attacked the government's dollar for dollar subsidy scheme for favouring the richer private schools (*NT*

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE
AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (LABOR) AND
THE COUNTRY-LIBERAL PARTY (CLP)

COUNTRY-LIBERAL PARTY (CLP)	AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (LABOR)
<p><u>LAND CLAIMS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The CLP has opposed the following land claims either totally or in part - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walpiri land claim to Tanami Sanctuary - Uluru land claim - Montejiinni land claim - Utopia land claim - Kenbi land claim * The CLP has also said that it will oppose the Finnis River land claim * The CLP increased the size of the Darwin Town Boundary by twenty times what it had been and therefore stopped the Larrakia people from having a land claim to the Cox Peninsula (Kenbi land claim). The Larrakia people said this was a trick to stop the claim. 	<p><u>LAND CLAIMS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Jon Isaacs has said that a Labor Government would not oppose any land claims but would leave the cases to the Judge to decide. * The Labor Government in Canberra under Gough Whitlam was the first government in Australia to make a law for land rights, but when Mr Whitlam's government lost the election in 1975 they could not get their law through and the Fraser Government then passed a weaker law. * Labor Governments in the States of Australia have been strong on land rights. Don Dunstan in South Australia tried to pass a law to give the Pitjantjatjara people the right to say 'no' to mining. The Labor Government lost the election and the new Country-Liberal Government threw out the Labor law and said mining would be allowed on Aboriginal land. There is no land rights in Western Australia or Queensland which have Country-Liberal Party Governments. * The Labor Party has promised, in writing, to change the law that stopped the Kenbi land claim.

'it is not enough to just listen to the policies of each party — you have to look at the real actions of each party' — the Northern Land Council, May 1980.

News 28 May 1980). The Peninsula Progress Association - a Rights for Whites kind of organisation - attacked the Aborigines' land claim to Cox's peninsula and Labor's support for the claim (*NT News* 24 September 1979; 10 May 1980; *Adv't* 5 June 1980). If cattlemen's and master builders organisations were active in the CLP's behalf as in earlier elections, it was not in public.

WEL, which had for some time pressed the Everingham government for an Office of Women's Affairs and a Women's Adviser for the government - both in vain - sent out a questionnaire to all candidates soon after the election was announced. The CLP refused to reply to it; WEL issued a press release expressing satisfaction that the Australian Democrats and ALP each had a 'positive' policy on women's issues, although only eleven candidates had replied to the questionnaire. A public meeting was held a few days before polling day which six candidates attended. A WEL branch in Nhulunbuy also had the three local candidates attend a meeting to discuss local women's issues.

Aboriginal organisations played virtually no part in the campaign. Under their charter, the land councils are precluded from taking a part, on partisan lines, in elections but the Northern Land Council did put out an information paper which was sent to Aboriginal communities at their request. It included a brief explanation of parties, government and opposition in neutral terminology; an explanation, likewise neutral, of why one should vote and how to do so; two separate statements of CLP and ALP policy; a four-page side-by-side comparison of ALP and CLP promises and actions on land claims, roads, sea rights and mining. Graeme Lewis, for the CLP, objected that it was a biased statement of the CLP's policy and noted that the NLC had probably exceeded its functions (*NT News* 27, 29 and 30 May 1980). Aboriginal Legal Aid took no part in the campaign; the organisation CAVE (Campaign for Aboriginal Voter Enrolment) which had been in action in 1977 was apparently defunct in 1980, and the two land council newsletters appeared too infrequently to influence the campaign in detail, but in general terms they kept Aboriginal communities informed about latest governmental actions, legal cases and the like affecting Aborigines' interests in land, leases, mining, sacred sites, access roads and so on. Since the interest groups played only a small part in the campaigning, the election was mostly fought in terms defined by the parties. As Alistair Heatley pointed out at the time (*NT News* 21 May 1980) they identified much the same issues and 'means rather than the ends of political action' were the focus of their rivalry. In such a contest the advantage lay with the government and the ALP was tactically in the position of underdog. It could however hope to offset its 'comparative disadvantage at the general party level' by its campaign at the level of the individual constituency where 'local issues, candidate appeal, personal contact and

sheer hard work still are important fundamentals of electoral politics' especially in seats where media coverage is poor and many voters are Aborigines.

7 Aborigines And Electoral Politics

PETER LOVEDAY and JOHN SUMMERS

For many white people, it seems pointless at best and possibly even a mistake, to involve Aborigines in elections by giving them the vote and requiring them to enrol and use it; pointless because for them it is a more or less meaningless ritual, whitefella business. Official and party policies in the Territory, as the new electoral act bears witness, do not rest on this assumption but it does nonetheless survive to shape many people's guesses about how and why the Aborigines voted as they did in 1980.

The assumption that the Aborigines are incompetent to participate - and do not really need to do so - arises either directly from old paternalistic attitudes towards them or from observation of the state of dependency and helplessness generated by paternalistic white policies and institutions. A materially backward race, Aborigines are a simple people with simple needs, so the thinking runs, and the duty of white governments is to 'look after' them by providing minimal education and housing, minimal health and welfare services and maintaining law and order. Since they are conceived as a subject race to be 'administered' they could have no politics, no political interests or awareness, except when stirred up to make trouble by someone, usually white radicals.

An entirely opposite point of view is that white political institutions do not and cannot meet the needs of Aborigines. It is argued that race relations and the powerlessness of Aborigines in relation to whites are such that electoral politics and European political institutions cannot provide the means for Aborigines to achieve their true political aspirations or any real equality with whites. It is a view expressed succinctly by Tatz who insists that the party system has nothing to offer Aborigines.

Race relations in Australia, Tatz argues, can only get worse because of the insolubility of basic problems. One problem he says, is that 'it is highly unlikely that white Australia can swallow the proposition that black progress is, in part, contingent on their rejection of white society'. Tatz insists that Aborigines by 'voluntary separation' must first develop a group cohesion, an awareness of political and economic strength and a feeling of power arising out of knowing who they are,

followed then by free participation in society at large, *on their own terms*. He emphasises that there is also an Aboriginal demand and need for 'political economic' power and that the consciousness of separate identity must be developed first (Tatz 1980, 498-504).

These two positions lead to different criteria for 'assessing' the part played by Aborigines in the election. From Tatz's point of view, for example, one might say the Aborigines should have 'withdrawn' and that if they did not do so they must have participated formalistically, unwittingly strengthening a white institution now imposed on them. Those who believe that Aborigines are incompetent to participate - that they do not know their own interest - will disparage Aboriginal political action as the work of white manipulators. If Aborigines vote predominantly for one party, for example, this will be seen as evidence of how the Aboriginal vote can be 'orchestrated'.

A third position, which may be loosely termed the anthropological is that white methods of decision making and adversary politics are completely at odds with those of traditional Aboriginal society and can have little meaning for Aborigines. In Aboriginal society authority is ascribed and group decisions are consensual; notions of representation, of delegation of authority and acceptance of majority decisions are foreign to traditional society. Stated simply, the suggestion is that Aborigines are captives of their past and, at best, can adapt only very slowly to white institutions, especially if they attempt to maintain the traditional ways.

We do not discuss these three positions here in detail - for example, to ask whether Aborigines do in fact 'catch on' more quickly than many whites suppose - but set them out briefly as background to help us understand the evidence of Aboriginal political activity during the election and what was sometimes said about it.

There is no doubt that the legacy of earlier policies does survive; a legacy of more or less dependent Aboriginal communities, too inexperienced to play a discriminating part in the electoral process and too depressed to want to do so. It was not until 1962 that Aborigines in the Territory obtained the franchise for Commonwealth elections (if they chose to enrol) and, at a more general level, assimilationist policies from the 1940s to the 1960s made them the subjects - or wards - of a powerful white bureaucracy. Until 1964 the NT Welfare Ordinance of 1953 denied Aborigines most citizenship rights. Multi-purpose institutions to train Aborigines in preparation for employment and citizenship had the effect of excluding them from white social and political activities. Autonomous, self-directed activity by Aborigines on their own behalf was not tolerated. It is only since the policy changed in 1972 that these institutions and attitudes have been broken down and the process is not yet complete.

All communities in a wider society are, of course, dependent, but Aboriginal communities often seem to be dependent in ways which

deprive them of the capacity to engage in politics. Once law, order and authority - secular and sacred - have been imposed on them from outside by police, administrators, magistrates, church missions and the like, Aboriginal law and the capacity for conflict resolution within their own culture and for collective decision making is weakened - and sometimes destroyed. That capacity is central to effective Aboriginal participation in politics. But in addition, the dependent Aboriginal community suffers from a mixture of confused and disabling emotions; excessive cooperativeness alternating at times with aggression and passive resistance (Rowley 1979, 103-6; 1980, 10-13). Observing this, people have sometimes supposed - with reason - that for many Aborigines voting must have been a ritual performed without much understanding.

Set in a wider context, not particularly concerned with elections, this kind of observation has led to a different attitude towards Aborigines, one which may be labelled the mediator or white helper attitude for want of a better term. Those who have seen that Aboriginal communities have not totally disintegrated even though they have been disabled and disadvantaged for handling whitefella business have given Aborigines help and have taken their part in encounters with white society. White advisers, Rowley comments, are essential in any program to increase the autonomy of Aborigines and to break down the institutionalisation they have suffered from for so long (Rowley 1980, 23). In recent times advisers have helped Aborigines establish their land claims and preserve their sacred sites; they have worked for the modification of government policy and administration in favour of Aborigines and in business and politics they have helped Aborigines set up and maintain their own organisations for handling white activities. Most of the people who have done this are professionals such as lawyers and anthropologists, some independent of government and some in its pay but critical of it and not always tolerated as a result. In elections, there is not much room for professional help of this kind - apart from that given by the politicians themselves and the newly instituted electoral education program.

It must be emphasised first that although voting appears to white people to be a simple enough operation in the polling booth, it is far from simple conceptually. Many white citizens have only a hazy notion of the complexities behind the act of marking a ballot paper and Aborigines whose notions are hazy are not in a unique position; they are not the only ones who vote ritualistically. But Aborigines have some knowledge and understanding of voting and what lies behind it, most of it only recently gained. Some of them have enrolled for and have voted in Commonwealth and Territory elections - estimates of the numbers are highly debatable, but they indicate that several thousand Territory Aborigines voted in 1974 or 1977 (Heatley 1978, 79; Rumley, H., 1979, 130; Jaensch 1979, 155). Knowledge gained by ex-

perience is passed on by talk, and in addition a few communities have had local newsletters in which voting and elections have been explained.

Experience was also gained in the NAC election in 1977, although some aspects of it were misleading if translated to elections for the Territory and Commonwealth. In this election, there were single-member constituencies, several candidates stood in each one, and each voter had only one vote. But there was no roll - enrolment was carried out at the same time as the voting and some voters in the 1980 Territory election evidently thought it would be the same.

And finally, some knowledge was imparted by electoral education programs to be separately discussed below. But knowledge about and understanding of voting and the politics of an election is gained from a wider range of activities in Aboriginal communities.

And the first question is whether communities are so apathetic that they are quite uninterested in elections. There is some evidence of it in a report from a well-informed local white resident in an Aboriginal community who said of the election, as seen by Aborigines, that

I gained the distinct impression it is a non-event. One goes through the ritual of voting but it is meaningless apart from that. ... The individual's threshold of political impotence is considerably low in these places [isolated small communities].

The correspondent gave evidence, consistent with these comments, that the people interviewed 'seemed to know nothing of CLP and ALP people they were voting for' and that 'Darwin also seems to assume a very distant stance down here'.

But the report then went on to stress that people thought of the 'Darwin business as meaning the person you pick does his best to represent your interests up there'. This was then qualified with the further comment that 'a politician, a DAA representative, any *transient* [our italics] makes sense only so far as he can provide transport into town or bring out a case of second-hand clothes and not by *promising* to do things which you [Aborigines] perceive to be of no tangible benefit'.

Apathy, in short, is evident and politics is seen and understood through the eyes of people who have become the dependents, if not the mendicants, of white society. But the apathy may not be total, or the dependency complete. Another community in a different electorate was described as partly dependent in the following terms:

to a certain extent X is closely connected with Y [a station] since all mail, telecommunications and health services are based there [at Y]. Also Y has a small store where extra supplies are obtained. Historically many of X's inhabitants were employed there but since ... many refuse to work at Y. As a result of the past, relations between here and Y can be strained, but since we are

very reliant on Y, as a matter of survival, relations are of a low key.

All but two of the people at X were Aborigines and almost all of those over eighteen years of age voted. Very few enrolments were made. The community held meetings, formally and informally, to discuss the candidates before the election, even though only four brief candidate-visits were made, one on polling day. Perhaps dependency is not an irrevocable state of damnation. This report is one of several from our field workers. We asked them one direct question about apathy and the election - does the community react passively, with antagonism or with active interest to election talk and doings? It invited a variety of interpretations and responses. Ten replies came in from the 29 places which answered one or more of the three sets of questions sent out. One reply amounted to 'don't know'; two said 'passive', four 'active interest' and three said some were passive and some showed interest. One place reported that there was active interest but 'only' about a quarter of the population attended public meetings arranged to discuss the election! The mixed reaction may be illustrated by reference to one place which said some people were passive but land and sea rights, access to roads and sacred sites were of 'real interest'. These responses were all from Top End electorates: Arnhem, Elsey, Victoria River, Nhulunbuy, Tiwi.

In the same set of reports, seventeen communities answered the question, asked in the last week of the campaign,

Have the people in the community held meetings to discuss the candidates?

Four said there had been no meetings, thirteen that there had been, many of them including informal discussion of voting procedures.

Since all of these communities were wholly and many still are partially dependent usually on several white institutions - a station, a mission, a church or a mine and assorted governmental agencies - the evidence suggests that dependence was never total and that its political consequences are reversible and are being replaced by more 'positive' or active forms of involvement.

This is apparently being achieved to some extent by letting Aborigines manage their own affairs - a difficult matter for bureaucratically organised administration which has to account for public money it disburses. It is also difficult because self-management can be developed only with help from whites and that easily and insensibly drifts back into the routines of white influence, manipulation and control (see also Howard 1978, 6).

Many but not all communities have had experience of electing bodies for handling their own local affairs, mostly local councils. Reports on this point came in from 21 Top End communities: thirteen said they had election to councils or some other body, three more were

outstations and said they sent representatives to the outstation council though the representatives were not elected; five said that they did not have elected councils. The councils of two of these had been elected originally but had now become appointive - apparently as a result of some merging of traditional methods of leadership selection with the council - and one community did not need elections because 'a consensus is arrived at and both old men and young participate in meetings'.

How whitefella elections become changed is suggested by one report: 'supposedly, yes', we do have council elections but, 'factually, no'.

The people who wish to be on the Town Council seem to put themselves on, although there are supposed to be clan nominations to the positions. DAA apparently support this process in the name of self-management but many people here would like to see properly conducted elections for the Town Council, as they recognise that the Town concept is one of European origin and cannot be dealt with in a traditional way. They point out that there is no traditional mechanism to deal with the problems of Multi-Clan aggregation, as well as the more specifically Western problems of Services ...

which, at this particular place, are a source of considerable dissatisfaction. Several other places reported that clans made nominations for the council elections, the idea being that each clan in a community should be represented. At Milingimbi, according to the local newsletter, a community meeting was held in 1978 to discuss nominations for the council election. Representatives of most clans attended and

Manydjarri had prepared a blackboard with diagrams of a suggested clan representation and selection method ... it was generally agreed that all clans however few in numbers should nominate representatives since it was difficult to decide who would join together [to share a representative], and who would take responsibility should there be trouble to handle. Manydjarri emphasised ... the need for Milingimbi to have one true representative voice to Government and other outside organisations (*Dilakkungu Dhawu* 23 June 1978).

In other places, elections were reported for housing association committees and church councils. The outstations understood representation on their resource centre council - 'representation is seen more regionally i.e. as rep. for the G----- people'; 'usually, it is the senior man of the outstation who attends. He is not elected as such, but represents the people because he is the oldest member of the community' and, at a third place, the local representative was chosen by consensual decision for his expertise in 'handling balandas' [white men]. This, or something like it, appears to be how most communities choose their representatives for the land councils too. Although seldom elected, these people are clearly recognised as representatives

and are expected to consult their people and report to them concerning land council business.

Two or three things of importance emerge from this evidence, incomplete though it is. The notion of representation, even if foreign to traditional culture, is understood by many people. Communities recognise that representatives may be chosen not only by election but by other methods and, as in the process of ensuring all clans are represented, that the outcome of an election can be managed by managing the nomination process. And, in view of wide white misunderstanding on the point, it should be emphasised that much local decision making is by group discussion until a consensus is reached and all agree on the decision. Several leaders of Aboriginal communities said they would discuss the candidates in the election in this way and come to a group decision about who was best but that the individual voter could still vote as he or she thought fit.

The reports of field workers in November 1979 and in March 1980 before campaigning had begun in earnest and before the electoral education program was far advanced, included answers to questions about the extent of the communities' political knowledge. These questions were of two kinds: those relating to parties and candidates, to be discussed below, and others concerned with the electoral system itself.

Less was known about the electoral system than about candidates and leaders. Late in 1979, only nine out of 25 communities were said to have had any talk of the coming election; five months later, eleven out of thirteen did but two still seemed unaware of the impending contest. On the first occasion eight out of 24 said there had been some local talk about how to enrol or how to vote; on the second only five out of thirteen said there had been new talk - a point of ambiguity - about these matters, but several reporters added that it was locally believed most people had been enrolled last time, a belief which was apparently mistaken in some cases.

Twelve out of thirteen places knew which electorate they were in by March (which was more than at least two candidates knew of two places which they visited in their campaigning) and in eleven out of twelve some people at least - most in a few - knew what a how-to-vote card was. This is not, however, to say that they knew much about preferential voting and independent candidates - only six places out of sixteen reported that some people knew anything about the former and seven out of fourteen had some understanding of the latter.

Local talk about candidates and issues is, of course, a very important part of the election process and one thing which ensures that voting is not just a formal ritual. Our field reports from 21 Top End communities showed that there was a good deal of talk on both local and general issues of interest to Aborigines, and that the talk increased in most places as the campaign went on. Not all of the questions were

answered, but the broad picture does emerge from a simple tabulation of those answers that were received.

Is there talk evaluating the government and its performance? 8 yes, 2 no.

Is the evaluation approving or disapproving? approve - nil, disapprove - 4.

Is there talk evaluating the opposition and its performance? 5 yes, 3 no.

Is the evaluation approving or disapproving? approve - 3, disapprove - nil.

Does the community discuss land rights? 18 yes, 1 no.

Are any of the local people involved in a land claim? 7 yes, 4 no, 1 don't know.

Does the community discuss uranium mining? 9 yes, 6 no (1 approves, 1 disapproves).

Do the people regard it as different from other kinds of mining? 3 yes, 1 no.

Is the community concerned about access to the area under its control? 17 yes, 1 no (several add 'very' and specify sea, road).

Are community support services a source of dissatisfaction? 6 yes, 6 no.

Is alcohol a problem for the community? 12 yes, 4 no.

Is it likely to be a local election issue? 1 maybe, 2 no.

Is the community trying to maintain or revive its traditional ways? 15 yes, 1 no.

In answer to an open ended question, a number of other topics of concern were mentioned including local support services (school, police, health, roads, airstrip), sea rights, protection of sacred sites, registration of land titles and a possible threat to continuation of a pastoral lease.

It is much more difficult to decide, from the available evidence, what connections people made between the issues, on the one hand, and the candidates and their parties on the other. In most instances, the views of candidates on the issues were made known during the campaign - few places reported no visits at all. But party is another matter.

Although there is some understanding of government and, to a lesser extent, of opposition, it is not in party terms as a rule. Everingham was said to be well known in many places and Isaacs less so, but not as party leaders. There seems to be great variation in the mat-

ter from one community to another and within communities between leaders and other people. Some leaders will talk accurately and perceptively about candidates in party terms; others will not. Some are familiar with party labels and know that Everingham's party is in control; others do not. Some even make links of some kind between Territory parties and 'Fraser's mob' or 'Whitlam's mob', terms which seem to be rather more than synonyms for the party labels.

But if party labels have some connotations of approval or disapproval it is for only a small minority when so few know anything about parties. When field reports did give reasons for the approval of candidates, especially sitting members, it was because of past help the member had given to a community, usually in getting something fixed up with government or a department in Darwin and because of visits the candidate made to the community, particularly visits where he or she took time to sit down and talk. One or two members were said to be well regarded for speaking on behalf of Aborigines in the Assembly and for bringing back news of business there.

But elections are not the whole of politics and from a number of other sources Aborigines have gained wide experience, much of which was very important in the campaign.

There is, first of all, recognisable political activity in local community affairs. It is evident in group discussion and resolution of disagreements about such things as permits for white people or whether a community is to become 'dry' or not. There is also group management of common affairs - the housing association, garbage service, the employment of white people as mechanics and so forth; the maintenance of the store, the arts and craft centre, managing a cattle lease. The list could be extended.

In addition there are tensions between clans and between elected councils and traditional leadership groups but it is not easy to say how differences of these kinds are resolved. In all these matters - settling disputes, managing common affairs, reaching group decisions - it seems that Aborigines are building new 'authority structures', as Rowley calls them, to replace those destroyed in earlier years by white institutions of power and authority (Rowley 1979, 104). These local structures are essential as a foundation for the political activities of Aboriginal leaders and representatives on a larger stage.

Leaders and representatives have taken part in a number of big meetings on subjects of concern to them in recent years, meetings sometimes organised by government, sometimes by Aboriginal leaders themselves. These meetings have been important for several reasons. They transcend clan, community, locality and language group. The leaders' knowledge of each others' interests in particular subjects and views on them are disseminated widely from these meetings, strengthening the perceptions people have of themselves as belonging to much larger groups than the local community or clan but, at the

other extreme, more specific than the Aboriginal people in general. For example, Aboriginal leaders have no difficulty talking about access to roads on their land in terms of the different interests of inland and coastal peoples. Moreover the business of these groups is with government, whitefella business. And, finally, at these meetings Aboriginal leaders have learned to argue face-to-face with white men, to see themselves as equals not inferiors, to uphold their own views and interests.

Two meetings organised by government may be noted first: those designed to elicit the views of Aboriginal leaders on legislation and their grievances. Leaders and community advisers met with officials in Darwin in March 1979 and in January 1980 and at the request of government the second conference drew up a list of its grievances in order of priority - land rights, sacred sites, sea closure, roads, adult education and legal services - along with detailed questions which the Chief Minister undertook to answer concerning the government's intentions and abilities to meet them. The conference ended with some declaratory resolutions, not anticipated by its organisers, criticising the government for opposing land claims and, in turn, they led to sharp public exchanges between the Chief Minister and Galarrwuy Yunupingu, chairman of the Northern Land Council (*NT News* 19 March 1979, 28 and 31 January 1980, *NTPR* 12 February 1980, 2593).

In recent years several conferences have been arranged by Top End Aboriginal leaders. Held at Galiwin'ku on Elcho island, these meetings have discussed and sought government action on a wide range of topics - restricting white fishing in coastal and estuarine waters, the Ranger negotiations and the Northern Land Council's role in them, the electoral bill in August 1979, access to roads on Aboriginal land, the permit system for whites entering Aboriginal communities, sacred sites and so on. The Chief Minister attended in 1979 and said that changes Aborigines wanted were being made in the electoral bill and promised that Aboriginal poll clerks would be used in the coming election where possible and that the permit system would be more strictly administered (*NT News* 10 and 18 August 1979; and undated roneoed notes of the conference). A couple of sentences reported from Aboriginal speakers suggest the tone of the meeting

what about reports sent to Darwin last year? We find that nobody seems to take any action about what Aboriginal people think. We get all sorts of promise, both parties We have to understand and talk with government. We have to work close if we are to survive. We don't care what party gets in, as long as they do what Aboriginal people want. We have been giving our thoughts for a long time and no government takes any action. We are the people that put you in power, we are the people who vote. We want straight talk and not talk with two tongues like a goanna.

There are four points of importance in this which come up again and again: disappointment and anger that Aboriginal views and requests have been ignored by government; a belief that government is deceitful and speaks with a forked tongue; recognition that Aborigines must 'work close' or cooperate with government and the view that they should not commit themselves to either party politically, but be prepared to work with and give support to either depending on what they offer to Aboriginal people.

Thoughts like these were expressed at some of the meetings held in the election campaign in 1980, for example at meetings at Galiwin'ku and at a meeting at Oenpelli called to discuss and protest against legislation rushed through the Assembly to ensure public access to roads on Aboriginal land in certain circumstances despite the owners' refusal to permit it. To Aborigines it seemed to be yet another instance, like the Ranger agreement, of government doing what it wanted, giving them 'sweet talk' and paying no attention to their wishes. Representatives took the news 'back to the bush' and the result was that even the remotest communities seemed to know something about the Oenpelli meeting.

Meetings arising from the activities of the land councils were important before those connected with the Ranger negotiations. The Northern and Central Land Councils were set up on an interim basis in 1973 when Justice Woodward, appointed Aboriginal Land Rights Commissioner by the Commonwealth Labor government, decided that representative and wholly Aboriginal bodies were needed to put the Aboriginal point of view about land rights and to tell the communities they represented about the work of the Commission. They became statutory bodies in January 1977 under the land rights act of that year, financed by part of the royalties from mining on Aboriginal land. Under the legislation land councils' functions are to research and present land claims to the Aboriginal land claims commission, to negotiate on behalf of traditional owners with people wanting to use Aboriginal land - including mining companies, and to safeguard Aboriginal land from desecration and exploitation. Each publishes its own newsletter, in English. The Bathurst and Melville islands people set up their own Tiwi Land Council in August 1978.

With the change of government in November 1975, the councils suddenly faced a more hostile environment as opposition to Aboriginal land claims increased and pressure mounted for mining on Aboriginal land. Not yet on a statutory basis, their powers and duties in relation to land claims and mining were also under threat and they had to defend themselves as well as carry out the duties Woodward had assigned to them. As Heatley describes it,

In their attempts to influence policy-makers in 1976-77, the land councils became much more vocal and active. Indeed, the chang-

ed political climate virtually dictated a more militant approach [in federal politics] ... In the Territory, the councils were more visible; in addition to the wider publicity given to the ... activities of the councils, other meetings were convened around the Territory to coordinate protest and lobbying and to spread the councils' attitudes (Heatley 1980, 58).

The Central Land Council was the more unified, independent and determined on behalf of Aborigines from the outset. The Northern Land Council took a different path almost from the beginning. More divided internally, it was also much more aloof from its constituent communities, less aggressive on their behalf and more closely linked with government in Darwin and with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Canberra (Rowley 1979, 114; 1980, 7, 23, 33-4; *NTPR* 22 November 1978, 433-4). Its procedures made it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for its members to consult the constituent communities they represented and it was often thought that it, or its executive officers - remote from the Aborigines themselves - were too heavily influenced by white advisers, as much in a government or conservative as in a radical direction. Critics of the councils, those inclined to the view that Aborigines are fairly submissive and are aroused only by 'white stirrers', have thought that much of their militancy comes from white advisers and employees, especially legal advisers hired to help with land claims.

The councils have been found unsatisfactory by white men as well as by black. They do not conform closely to the white man's view, especially the bureaucratic white man's view, of what a pressure group is, especially one which has a statutory basis. Similar difficulties were encountered in earlier years by the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee at the Commonwealth level (Hiatt Report 1976, 18-46).

Interest groups given that status are generally expected to be cooperative with government and administration. They may be difficult at times, but they will not be intransigent. Above all they will facilitate administration and will provide mutually beneficial suggestions for new legislation. They will find, gather and refine the opinions and problems of their constituency to make them administratively and legislatively manageable; they will ensure that the results of negotiation and compromise are acceptable to the constituency. The land councils do not work like that and the tendency of the NLC to do so in the Ranger negotiations led it into trouble with those who expected it to work for them rather than yield to pressure (cf Rowley 1979, 105).

Whites, notably government white people, have failed to see that Aborigines are deeply antagonised (whether rightly or wrongly is not in question) by some of the policies put forward about lands, roads

and mining; that they have not been given much, if any, say in the formulation of these policies; and that the Aborigines do not see their only role as that of arguing about and adjusting to the details of 'implementation'.

While Aborigines do seem to recognise that it is important for the land councils to do the things whites expect them to do, they also think the land councils should focus - and if necessary stir up - dissatisfaction with the policies being adopted and make dissatisfaction effective.

Much of what the land councils have had to deal with is politics carried out by legal or administrative, not electoral or legislative, processes. Aborigines are aware of politics of this kind even if they do not always understand it and often cannot influence it. In the administrative and legal context they face far more complex and more politically charged arrangements than most white Australians. The Commonwealth and the Territory governments both provide services and administer regulations for Aboriginal communities, sometimes on an agency basis for one another, sometimes in shared or complementary forms. Some arrangements are more complicated because they are 'temporary' pending settlement of outstanding intergovernmental disagreements. Many of the strictly political disagreements of the two governments therefore arise in connection with and are prosecuted within the administrative system and this is notoriously labyrinthine and secretive for outsiders who wish to come to grips with, understand and influence it. They are confronted with uncertainty, muddle, denials of authority to act, hitherto unannounced decisions and the like. Much administrative and legal muddle does not, of course, arise from political struggles but some does and, as far as Aborigines are concerned, examples are not difficult to find.

The registration of Aboriginal land titles, an administrative matter, has been delayed - and caused much Aboriginal anger - because the Commonwealth and NT governments and the Aborigines have all disagreed about the status of certain roads, which the NT claims should be accepted as public roads, on Aboriginal-owned land. The NT government has objected to Aboriginal land claims on the Coburg peninsula on the ground that sites on the land have been gazetted by the Heritage Commission and are therefore 'public' and not open to claim. The Commonwealth and Territory governments have quarrelled - again in the period leading up to the election - about control and management of Jabiru, the townsite for the Ranger mine.

For any group to be confronted with matters as institutionally and administratively complex as these would be a test of political skill, resources and sophistication and it would be surprising if Aborigines did not feel at a disadvantage in this context: disadvantaged by want of long experience, information and other political resources and by their own difficulties of acting unitedly over long periods of time.

Aboriginal leaders understand that like other groups in a democracy they must compromise in politics; what seems to arouse their anger and intransigence is the recognition that when the chips are down they are forced to compromise from a position of weakness.

8 Darwin Electorates

FRANK ALCORTA and ALISTAIR HEATLEY

About 48 per cent of the total voting population and nine of the nineteen seats of the Territory are in the Darwin urban area. Any party which aspires to government in the Territory must poll reasonably well in Darwin; to rely on either the extra-Darwin seats or the Aboriginal rural vote alone, judged on past electoral experience and patterns of party support, is unrealistic. Furthermore, since the major parties must seek support from all sections they must mount a number of sub-campaigns in an electorate as regionally and racially diverse as the Territory, campaigns tailored to the problems and aspirations of particular constituencies. Darwin, with its large bloc of seats and its relative homogeneity, is the most important of these distinct groups of constituencies.

In the Legislative Council period (1948-74), seats in Darwin were won by ALP (and Labor supporters) and independent candidates. Despite attempts by the North Australia party in 1965, the Country party from 1968, and the Liberal party between 1968 and 1970, no non-ALP party candidate was successful. That was reversed in 1974 when the newly-established Country-Liberal party gained seven of its seats in the first Assembly and won 41 per cent of the vote in Darwin electorates. Although it won no seats Labor got 31 per cent of the votes. Seventeen independents, two of whom were elected, took 28 per cent of the vote. The 1977 Assembly election returned five CLP and three ALP members and one independent in Darwin with the corresponding proportions of the vote being 35.7 per cent, 36.6 per cent (for eight seats), and 27.7 per cent for independent and minor party candidates. In Commonwealth elections during the 1970s, Labor performed better in Darwin than non-Labor but national factors and candidate residence must be taken into account when assessing their significance for local elections. Only in the 1974 Assembly elections and the 1975 federal elections did the ALP poll relatively poorly and those results reflected the disenchantment of Territory voters with the Whitlam Commonwealth government. Overall, if election outcomes in the 1970s are used as an index, then Darwin should be classed as pro-ALP although there was a finer balance between the two parties in the post-1975 period.

There is a dearth of solid information on the political behaviour of Darwin voters but a review of election outcomes does allow of some generalisations. Federal results do exhibit a consistency in party allegiance over time which, adjusted for numbers, quality, place of residence of candidates and the force of local issues, shows no great deviation from national trends. Thus, it can be assumed that, in Darwin, the factors of party allegiance and electoral choice operate in much the same parameters as elsewhere in Australia at the federal level. Even with the infancy of the local system, the demographic uncertainties arising from the high mobility of residents, and the impact - rapidly declining - of independent candidates, the results of three Assembly elections in Darwin indicate a hardening of the two-party system and consequently of party identification. On the latter, the findings of a Morgan survey in September 1979 were instructive. Using the conventional test of party identification ('Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as...'), the Darwin response was similar to Australia-wide results - 40 per cent identified as Lib/NCP/CLP supporters, 39 per cent as ALP, 2 per cent as Australian Democrats, 6 per cent as 'others', and 13 per cent as 'none'. In common with electoral experience in other Australian geo-political divisions, party preference in the local elections was not the same as in federal election politics. In Darwin, according to the same survey, a higher proportion of voters intended to vote for the CLP - 50 per cent as compared with 45 per cent for the Liberal-National coalition in federal politics. In the Territory election 36 per cent intended to vote Labor, compared with 43 per cent at the federal level. 'Others' attracted more attention at the Territory level (12 per cent, as against 7 per cent) while the Australian Democrats seemed stronger at the federal level (5 per cent as compared with 2 per cent).

When taken as a whole, the Territory, with its racial and regional diversity, produces a distinctive brand of electoral politics. If the electorate is broken down into its component parts, however, patterns and modes of electoral behaviour common to similar groups or regions elsewhere in Australia are apparent. So it was in Darwin in 1980.

The Voters

Between 1976 and 1980, the population of Darwin grew by about 4.5 per cent per year; at the time of the election, it was well in excess of 50 000. That increase was reflected in the size of the Darwin electorate: in 1977, 20468 were enrolled and, in 1980, 25708 - a rise of 26 per cent. Average enrolment per seat in 1980 was 2856, 582 more than in 1977, but, owing to differential demographic trends and the lack of a redistribution of electoral boundaries, constituency sizes varied far more widely than in 1977 (see Table 6).

As in the preceding fifteen years, Darwin's population growth since

1977 was in the northern residential suburbs. In Casuarina, Jingili, Nightcliff, Millner and Ludmilla (the fastest growing part of which lies in the north) the increase was wholly within existing (1977) suburbs and it reflected the rebuilding and subsequent development of those areas after cyclone Tracy. Sanderson's huge rise was partly due to similar factors but it also included the new Malak sub-division. At the same time, the inner city electorates of Fannie Bay and Port Darwin which both lost voters and Stuart Park, most of which lay in the inner city, were affected by the closure of several multi-residential units and migration from the city to the northern suburbs.

But numbers on the rolls were greater than the number eligible to vote. From the accounts of candidates and party workers, it is probable that 10 to 15 per cent of enrolled voters were no longer resident in their electorates. In addition, many eligible residents (perhaps 15-20 per cent) must have failed to enrol if the age structure of the population, adjusted for non-naturalised and other ineligible people, is any guide.

Furthermore, significant numbers of people in the Darwin electorate are transients, moving between local electorates or interstate or overseas. A comparison of the rolls shows that in two electorates, Fannie Bay and Millner, 42 per cent of those enrolled in 1980 were on the roll in 1977; that in Jingili and Nightcliff 36 and 38 per cent respectively were on the roll in 1977 and that turnover was even higher in Casuarina, Ludmilla, Port Darwin, Sanderson and Stuart Park where the proportion who were on the rolls in 1977 fell to 30 to 35 per cent. The figures indicate that over half the electorate were new voters, although some allowance should be made for intra-Territory migration into different electorates. A long-standing phenomenon in the Territory, transience continues at an extraordinarily high level and complicates the work of the analyst of Territory elections. If an electorate is in such a state of flux some of the more conventional psephological concepts, notably that of swing, are less applicable and dependable.

An additional difficulty is created by the political geography of Darwin which renders the concept of 'safe' seats meaningless. There are pockets of voters which, in socio-economic or functional terms, are politically more predictable than others but within the range given by Darwin's economic structure each electorate contains in varying degrees a mixture of socio-economic and occupational groups. Housing policy is the most important reason for the diversity; most areas, particularly in the northern suburbs, have a combination of privately owned (or rented) dwellings, Housing Commission units, government housing, and multi-residential establishments. A broadly similar pattern of diversity is evident in the distribution of ethnic communities throughout Darwin. If the fundamental dichotomy in the composition of Darwin's work-force - that between public and private employment

- is used as an index, there is some residential specialisation; in the older-established electorates of Port Darwin, Stuart Park, Fannie Bay, Ludmilla, and Nightcliff, the private sector is better represented. In the other electorates, particularly Sanderson, the public service is more dominant. However, no easy assumptions should be made about the political behaviour of the two groups although it seems broadly correct that, from past electoral experience, the party allegiance of the private sector is more predictable than that of the public service.

Similarly, the preference of the military bases (the RAAF compound in Ludmilla, the Larrakeyah Barracks in Port Darwin, and HMAS Coonawarra in Stuart Park) is reasonably certain as is that of the Bagot Aboriginal community. Overall, although there are some elements of predictability in the Darwin electorate, there are too many imponderables to allow candidates or parties excessive confidence of victory.

The Candidates

Twenty-seven candidates faced the electors in Darwin, a considerable drop in numbers from 1977 when there were 36. The absence of the Progress party and a smaller contingent of independents, although offset partly by the appearance of two new political parties (the Christian Democratic party and the Australian Marijuana party) and the standing of Australian Democrat candidates for the first time in a local election, accounted for the decline.

As in 1977, the ALP was the first party to nominate (July 1979) and announce candidates. Eight were chosen, and in only one branch did a challenge necessitate a preselection contest. In Nightcliff, since Dawn Lawrie, the sitting independent, was seen as sympathetic to Labor, the party, anxious not to split the vote and give the seat to the CLP, did not nominate a candidate.

As in 1977, the ALP team was relatively young (average age, 35) the only exception being Jack Haritos, an established Darwin businessman standing in Port Darwin. Five of the candidates were professionals: Dennis Bree (28), a civil engineer, standing for Casuarina; Pamela O'Neil (34), MLA and biochemist (Fannie Bay); Peter Hansen (30), research officer (Jingili); Jon Isaacs (30), MLA and trade union official (Millner); June D'Rozario (31), MLA and town planner (Sanderson). Besides Haritos, Kay Spurr (36), research officer (Ludmilla) and Peter Cavanagh (38), accountant (Stuart Park) had experience in small business. None could be said to be of traditional working-class background. Two (Cavanagh and Haritos) were Territory-born and the others had an average length of residence in the Territory of about ten years. Apart from the three sitting MLAs, only Bree had contested an Assembly seat before. Despite its youth and relative inexperience, the ALP team was seen as presenting a for-

midable challenge to the CLP. Ideologically, all shades of Labor opinion - from the socialist left to the non-doctrinal right - were represented although, generally, the balance was tipped towards the former. On the public front, however, the moderate viewpoint was constantly emphasised and, only occasionally at party and personal levels, did ideological dispute occur.

The CLP executive endorsed its Darwin candidates on August 11, later than the ALP, partly because of preselection difficulties in Port Darwin and Fannie Bay. Eventually, the five sitting MLAs were re-endorsed although Tom Harris (39, businessman, MLA for Port Darwin) had to survive a determined challenge from Grant Tambling, the ex-deputy leader. In Fannie Bay, Ella Stack (medical practitioner), the popular Lord Mayor, was chosen in preference to Tambling in the belief that she would prove a tougher candidate against the ALP's O'Neil. The other three selections, all for seats considered difficult to win, were made without opposition. The selection of Anne Amos (38, school teacher), Darryl Manzie (34, police sergeant), 'Shorty' Robinson (46, businessman) and Ella Stack, all with strong religious convictions, was interpreted in some quarters as a distinct shift to the ideological 'right' in the CLP. The other candidates were all sitting members: Nick Dondas (40, businessman, MLA and Minister for Community Development); Paul Everingham (37, legal practitioner, MLA and Chief Minister); Roger Steele (41, insurance consultant, MLA and Minister for Transport and Works); Marshall Perron (38, tally clerk, MLA and Treasurer and Minister for Lands and Housing).

The CLP team was, on average, older (about 41 years) than their ALP counterparts and their average residence in the Territory was considerably longer - over twenty years. Only three (Everingham, Stack and Amos) possessed tertiary qualifications and the team's occupational background was less professionally-oriented. Of the new candidates, only Stack (in 1968 and 1969) had stood for election in the Territory legislature previously.

The other ten contenders were independents or from minor parties. Fewer independents stood than in 1977, as a result of several factors: the higher nomination deposit, the early calling of the election, pressure from the CLP and especially from a realisation that the traditional appeal of independents had waned. Dawn Lawrie, the Nightcliff incumbent, not unnaturally stood again. Seen by many as an able, articulate and accomplished grass-roots politician and fortified by the decision of the ALP not to run a candidate against her, she appeared supremely confident of her re-election prospects. Roy Barden (62), a well-known pharmacist (and sometime candidate for the Legislative Council), stood primarily on the issue of opposition to Aboriginal land and sea rights. Moreover, like Forscutt in Elsey, he was disenchanted with the 'socialist' proclivities of the Everingham government. As Ludmilla included the only sizeable concentration of

Aborigines in Darwin, Barden chose to contest that electorate. The third independent, Terry Wilson (28, public servant), a leader in local anti-uranium and environmentalist politics and rumoured to have been promoted in some quarters of the ALP against the official candidate, Cavanagh (who was identified with the 'right'), stood in Stuart Park. Wilson did not deny his allegiance to the ALP 'left' and he saw himself as offering a more radical alternative to Cavanagh and to pragmatic ALP policies generally. His campaign manager was Diana Rickard, an unsuccessful 1977 ALP candidate, who was also closely aligned with the ALP 'left'.

Although the Australian Democrats (and their predecessor, the Australia Party) had contested federal elections, they entered candidates locally for the first time in 1980. Their publicity was based on the national party publication, *New Directions*, a long policy paper on Aboriginal affairs and a series called 'Basic Concepts of the Australian Democrats'. In announcing their intention to contest, the Democrats stated that they would oppose those MLAs who, according to their criteria, had not performed well in the Assembly or as constituency representatives. Of the three AD endorsements, only Len Myles (56, public servant and accountant) in Port Darwin appeared to have that motivation. On the other hand, Klaus Roth (32, school teacher, Casuarina) concentrated at least in public on criticism of the lack of a re-distribution and the 'disenfranchisement' of many voters by the early closing of the rolls. The concern of the AD on the latter was also highlighted by their sponsoring a legal challenge which, however, was unsuccessful. After electorate-level discussions, the party announced that both Myles and Roth allocated their preferences to the ALP, but the third candidate, Phil Read, the AD president (32, architect) standing against the Chief Minister in Jingili, left his open. His reason, curious in the light of the original intention, was the effectiveness of Everingham's performance.

As its title indicates, the Australian Marijuana party entered the electoral lists on the single issue of cannabis law reform. They contested Port Darwin (Peter Taylor, 23, electronics technician) and Stuart Park (John Duffy, 30, musician) in Darwin where a higher proportion of young and single electors appeared likely to give them the largest reservoir of potential support.

The other minor party candidates were from the newly-formed Christian Democratic party founded by Ron Mann (38, public servant and clerk, Sanderson). It advocated a return to what it understood to be essential Christian values and their reflection in political life and it highlighted moral issues such as support of the family and opposition to abortion, divorce and the hedonism and materialism of modern society generally (*NT News* 18 March 1980). The fact that its two candidates (Charles Coombs, 35, Red Cross official, in Nightcliff rather

belatedly associated himself with the CDP) stood against women MLAs was merely a coincidence.

The Style Of The Darwin Campaign

The importance of campaigning at the general level in Territory elections has increased with the growing influence of party politics. However, even with party candidates, the traditional importance of local campaigning remains high (see also Heatley, *NT News* 21 May 1980). Given the small size of electorates both in numbers of electors and in geographic extent in Darwin, it is possible for candidates to canvass them thoroughly; most feel that intimacy with the constituency, sensitivity to local issues, aspirations and problems, and a strong electorate identification are still key considerations and essential ingredients for success at the poll. In interviews conducted with Darwin candidates, that was firmly spelt out by all although the party contenders also considered that general policies had grown in significance and warranted special campaign treatment. There was, however, no clear or consistent pattern in the activities of the major-party candidates who conducted their local campaigns as they personally assessed their scale of priorities. Although the CLP candidates maintained a more uniform line than the ALP, there were common elements in approaches. Those candidates who were not incumbents and those MLAs who considered their electorates under dire threat (Harris in Port Darwin and O'Neil in Fannie Bay) tended to emphasise local considerations more than did the four CLP cabinet ministers and Isaacs and D'Rozario for the ALP who, because of their party positions and responsibilities and their closer association with policy and administration, couched their campaigns more generally. Minor parties also operated at both levels but they addressed themselves basically to those wider concerns which were central to their particular philosophies or platform. Of the independents, two (Lawrie and Wilson) kept almost exclusively to local activities although some of their views - in Lawrie's case, the inadequacy of the two-party system for the needs of the Territory and, in Wilson's case, the disillusionment with ALP policies and candidates - were aimed at a wider audience. On the other hand, the third independent, Barden, who must have been the only candidate not to doorknock, deliberately confined himself to general issues, particularly the question of land rights and its effect on Territory development.

Barden aside, the candidates employed similar tactics in their campaigns although the scale of their activities depended on the length of time which they had been announced as candidates, their non-election commitments, the extent of their personal or party resources and their physical capacity. Direct personal communication with their constituents, especially through doorknocking, was seen as the prime re-

quirement. Although circumstances like ill-health, party and ministerial commitments elsewhere, or deliberate strategy sometimes interfered, most candidates defined themselves as dedicated if, in some cases, not over-enthusiastic canvassers. Territory elections, despite the small electorates, demand as much, if not more, effort than elsewhere, a factor which is compounded by the absence of safe seats and the high proportion of new voters. Supplementing the personal contact were the inevitable deluge of party and personal literature and the disfigurement of shopfronts and residences in the electorates by the erection of election posters which, as in all elections it seems, suffered frequent indignities from opponents.

All candidates, even those associated with parties, claimed that they had wide, if not absolute, discretion to conduct their campaigns as they considered fit. In the case of the CLP, some general control was exerted by the central campaign office, especially in relation to literature, by Everingham, and by frequent candidate meetings which sought to coordinate tactics in Darwin. Within those constraints, the CLP candidates still had considerable liberty to decide the style of their activities. Indeed, as Anne Amos did in Nightcliff, they could ignore some of the suggestions of central office. Even so, they acted far more as a team than did the ALP in Darwin which seemed to close observers to exhibit clear signs of internal tension and factionalism particularly on the questions of the treatment of issues and the role of leadership in the party campaign as it developed.

There was broad agreement between the two major parties and most candidates on the important general issues in the Darwin area. Some, like the cost of living, the problems of transport, energy and small business, economic development, the inadequacies of housing and education, and the performance of the Everingham government, were widely aired in the general campaign and on the local hustings. Others, especially the important questions of Aboriginal land and sea rights, of uranium development, and the electorate's perception of the quality of party leadership were less clearly articulated but, at the same time, because they were points of more obvious contrast between the CLP and ALP, they were of greater electoral impact. Certainly in the Darwin area, this 'hidden agenda' of the election was crucial; any explanation of the outcome in Darwin must take that factor fully into account. But, by its nature, it is difficult to quantify and it is therefore open to different interpretations.

To differentiate general from local issues in the Darwin campaign is somewhat artificial as, in a small community, most issues transcended electoral boundaries in such a way that the general category was seen by most voters and candidates as also local to Darwin. Notwithstanding that, in candidate interviews, most respondents were able to define questions which they considered of particular relevance to their electorate. A wide variety of local issues was aired - the quality of

Dennis BREE Casuarina
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center; margin-right: 20px;"> <p>START HERE</p> </div> <div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;">1</div> BREE, Dennis <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;">2</div> Dondas, N. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">3</div> Roth, K.D. </div> </div> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">YOU MUST NUMBER EVERY SQUARE</p>		

AUTHORISED BY JON ISAACS. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. DARWIN. PRINTED BY IMPERIAL PRINTERS, DARWIN.

June D'ROZARIO Sanderson
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center; margin-right: 20px;"> <p>START HERE</p> </div> <div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;">1</div> D'ROZARIO, June <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;">2</div> Mann, R.V.C. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">3</div> Manzie, D.W. </div> </div> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">YOU MUST NUMBER EVERY SQUARE</p>		

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Labor how-to-vote cards, Darwin electorates.

The ALP also used the land rights flag on its cards in rural electorates.

education in neighbourhood schools, bus timetables and routes, street crossings, lack of amenities, siting of institutional facilities, dog control, roads, and many more. Two were particularly prominent - the establishment of a new airport terminal in the Jingili electorate and the location and effects of the casino in the inner-city seats. As in the

KEEP THE FLAG FLYING

**N.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ELECTION - 1980**

**ELECTORATE OF
FANNIE BAY**

START
HERE

2 O'NEIL, P.F.

1 **STACK, E.M.**

For your voice in the
Everingham team

VOTE CLP

Place a number in every square
If you spoil your ballot paper, ask for another.

Authorised by G.J. Lewis, 12 Barkham Street, Fannie Bay. Printed by J.R. Coleman Pty. Ltd., Cockburn Street, Darwin.

KEEP THE FLAG FLYING

**N.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ELECTION - 1980**

**ELECTORATE OF
STUART PARK**

START
HERE

4 CAVANAGH, P.W.

3 DUFFY, J.

1 **PERRON, M.B.**

2 WILSON, T.P.

For your voice in the
Everingham team

VOTE CLP

Place a number in every square
If you spoil your ballot paper, ask for another.

Authorised by G.J. Lewis, 12 Barkham Street, Fannie Bay. Printed by J.R. Coleman Pty. Ltd., Cockburn Street, Darwin.

CLP how-to-vote cards, Darwin electorates.

past, the use of local problems as an electoral device often ignored, deliberately or otherwise, the locus of responsibility for the area under attack: many were essentially municipal government concerns.

Throughout the Darwin campaign, the two major parties, on the surface at least, remained confident of their prospects. Indeed, towards the end, the ALP was probably more sanguine than the CLP which, despite reports from its candidates and its polling information, seemed distinctly unsure of the outcome. Of course, as the outcome indicated, it was the ALP who had more misread the mood of the electorate. Only Bree in Casuarina, Haritos in Port Darwin, and O'Neil in Fannie Bay seemed to develop a realistic view during the campaign. On the other hand, the CLP, or its candidates at least, proved, for whatever reasons, much more astute judges and the results, by and large, vindicated their pre-election assessments.

Overall, the Darwin campaign was a low-key, rather dreary affair with little overt enthusiasm shown by the electorate. To most Darwinites, the brevity of the formal campaign was a blessing. There was no confrontation between the party leaders at public forums as there was in 1977. The lack of community interest was perhaps proof that

the mind of the electorate had been made up long before the formal campaign started. Even though the 1977 campaign was not spectacularly turbulent, it was much more vigorous than its counterpart in Darwin in 1980.

Media coverage of the Darwin campaign, despite the journalists' strike in the last week, was better than in 1977. The major newspaper, the *NT News*, gave strong editorial support to the CLP government and the issues which it featured were of some value to the government's campaign. For example, there was a heavy emphasis on the rail link and on zone tax allowances. Not unhappy with the press in 1977, the ALP was disgruntled in 1980 by the *News's* coverage of the election which it saw as a major contribution to the poor ALP showing in Darwin. On the other hand, the weeklies, particularly the *Darwin Star*, were pro-ALP and so too, but less openly, was the ABC, both locally and through *Nationwide*. Perhaps the most entertaining political debate occurred in the talkback sessions on commercial radio. Judged on their content and on letters to the papers, the land and sea rights issue stirred most residents, even if the element of party orchestration was removed. Despite the ALP's conviction, however, on the whole the media influence on the election outcome cannot be said to have been significant.

The Outcome

No seats in Darwin changed hands in the election leaving five to the CLP, three to the ALP and one to the independent. Yet, in terms of party support, that result obscured significant shifts (see table 5). The CLP polled 17 per cent better than it had in 1977 while the ALP (with eight candidates in both elections) only marginally (0.7 per cent) increased its share. The simplest explanation would be that the CLP gain was made wholly at the expense of the minor party and the independent vote (27.7 per cent in 1977 as against 9.5 per cent in 1980). However, preferences were given in different proportions from one electorate to another in the Darwin area and the ALP gained a significant minority in five seats, in two of which it gained one-third of the Progress party's preferences and in three of which it gained less than one-fifth (Jaensch and Loveday 1979, 211). Obviously, such an interpretation provides part of the answer but it is insufficient and misleading as a total explanation.

Although the use of the concept of the two-party-preferred vote and the consequential calculation of 'swing' is faced with problems of applicability in an electorate which has not only increased significantly but which also is highly mobile, they can, however imprecisely, be employed to give another index of the shift in major party support. If the share of the valid Darwin vote in 1977 was 51.3 per cent to the CLP and 49.7 per cent to the ALP (Heatley 1978, 75) and the

equivalent figures in 1980 were 57.5 and 42.5, then the 'swing' was 6.2 per cent to the CLP. That figure is calculated after preferences of non-major party candidates are allocated, largely from information supplied by the reports of scrutineers, and an estimation made of the party support in the seat of Nightcliff which the ALP did not contest.

There can be little doubt that the ALP suffered a setback in Darwin. Only 124 votes preserved the Labor presence while the CLP-held seats were retained with substantial majorities. As the successful ALP candidates were placed first on their respective ballots, it is interesting to speculate what effect any 'donkey vote' may have had on the outcome. Similarly, given the precarious ALP margins of victory, the possible consequences of a redistribution of electorate boundaries, if it had been undertaken, are worth noting: two seats, Fannie Bay and Millner, would probably have been lost by the ALP, an ironical outcome given the political debate on the subject before the election. There was a shift, then, in Darwin in votes at the electoral level, though not in seats. What caused that shift?

It should be remembered, firstly, that the 1977 election in Darwin was dominated by the self-government issue which, to many electors, transcended party loyalty. Labor's stance, amounting almost to opposition, won for it strong support from public servants fearful of the occupational and personal consequences of self-government. By 1980, the electoral impact of that issue had receded because of the satisfaction with the new administrative arrangements and the turnover of public service personnel. Part of the ALP's pre-election confidence was based upon its conviction that the 1977 result in Darwin gave a valid indication of the level of Labor support which could only be built upon in 1980. In doing so, it failed to discount the effects of the self-government issue and to recognise the fact that most of Darwin's voters were newcomers whose experience was limited to the post-self-government era.

Old voters and newcomers alike were invited to judge the general performance of the Everingham government and the results suggest they thought it satisfactory enough to warrant a further period in office. The record of the party, discussed above in chapter 2, was emphasised repeatedly in its campaign and captured in images of achievement, action, 'Territorianism', pragmatism and positive leadership. As in other recent Australian elections, the leadership contest was a conspicuous feature of the Darwin campaign of both major parties; it was, however, an unequal match in 1980.

For its part, the ALP campaigned vigorously but never quite in tune with the mood of the electorate. It relied on tactics which had served it well in 1977 but, without the self-government prop, they fell flat in 1980. Although it endeavoured to stress specific policies and issues, it never succeeded in blunting the CLP emphasis on general performance. Indeed, by the end of the campaign, its central policy on

the cost of living issue - the subsidies on fruit and vegetables - the advocacy of which was a highlight of the Labor strategy, collapsed under economic scrutiny. Labor also suffered from the widely-held view that its opposition in the Assembly had often been negative and destructive and, in Darwin at least, from its policies on land and sea rights and uranium mining. In choosing to fight its campaign on pragmatic moderate policies and on issues which both parties acknowledged as important, the ALP was trying to wrest from the CLP the middle ground of Territory politics. Such an attempt could only succeed if there was a public perception of failure by the incumbent government; in 1980 no such mood in Darwin existed.

For the minor parties, the election was disappointing; each polled badly. In 1980 the polarisation of the vote between the two major parties was significantly greater than in previous Assembly elections.

The performance of the three independents was equally disappointing although Barden and Wilson siphoned off a proportion of major party voters, the former largely from the CLP and the latter from the ALP. In Nightcliff, Lawrie retained her seat with a dramatically smaller majority than in 1977. Judged on federal election returns, Nightcliff should be, with Port Darwin, the safest CLP seat in Darwin but, since 1969, it has returned an independent. Lawrie, the member since 1971, had built her local reputation on her personal and parliamentary qualities and her independence from the major parties. In 1980, that independence was questioned strongly with allegations of her basic allegiance to Labor being aired widely, although she certainly did not share the ALP policy on Aboriginal sea-closures. Her hold on the seat may have been preserved by her views on sea-closure and by the belatedness of the CLP's attack on her connection with the ALP. Without a Labor candidate it is difficult to gauge the extent of the 'independent' component of the Nightcliff vote in 1980 but it could be about 10 per cent at most. In fact, the non-major party vote in Darwin, discounting the 'ALP' share of the Nightcliff total, amounted to only about 5 per cent, a figure which indicates a high degree of two-party polarisation.

Little needs to be said about the individual seats except to illustrate general trends. Local issues were shown to be of little account; in the seats of Jingili and the inner city which had the most widely-publicised questions of that sort, they appeared to have no impact. Candidate appeal was of some significance; the performance of Everingham in Jingili, Manzie in Sanderson, Lawrie in Nightcliff, and O'Neil in Fannie Bay could be explained in part with reference to personal factors as could the more disappointing results of others. But that factor should not be overstated. To use the Fannie Bay example where two candidates of acknowledged public stature, Stack (who resigned from the Lord Mayoralty early in the campaign) and O'Neil were in contention, the result was decided on the superior organisation and dedica-

tion of the Labor team and their ability to maximise the ALP vote. Labor analysts after the election pointed to O'Neil's narrow victory as testifying to her personal popularity and indefatigable energy but the nature of the electorate provides a sounder reason. Although Fannie Bay includes some of the most prestigious residences in Darwin, it has over 300 Housing Commission flats and many hostel and guest-house dwellers who, with the not insignificant Labor 'aristocracy', were sufficient to give victory to the ALP. Rather than O'Neil's, it may have been Stack's appeal which made the ultimate result so close.

The other general point arises in speculation about population movement and its effect in the Darwin area. One contention is that a high proportion of voters likely to support the CLP ends up in the northern suburbs and accounts for its strong showing there (O'Neil, ABC News 13 June 1980). The implication is that those left behind in the older suburbs are disproportionately Labor voters - a likely hypothesis given that the long-term residents, including the large number of part-Aborigines, fit into the lower socio-economic groupings - but there are two other important possibilities which need to be noted, even though, for want of empirical survey evidence, they cannot be tested. One is that the Territory attracts the type of people who are predominantly of anti-ALP inclination or that the Territory exerts a particular form of political socialisation which favours the non-Labor party. The relative significance of each explanation must remain a topic for speculation - the correct answer probably is a blend of the two or perhaps all three - but experience in the world of Darwin politics does suggest, to this writer at least, that the socialisation process is an extremely potent instrument.

At a more superficial level, however, the general perception of Darwin voters, many of whom had no experience of Territory politics other than in the period of the Everingham government, was that the CLP and its leader had performed well. It was that judgment which provided the CLP with its strong support in the Darwin electorate as a whole.

9 The Top End Electorates

PETER LOVEDAY, RON MAY, GILLIAN O'LOGHLIN,
DEBORAH WADE-MARSHALL and JOHN WARHURST

The Top End, outside Darwin, is divided into five electorates - Tiwi, Arnhem, Nhulunbuy, Victoria River and Elsey. The electorates differ greatly from one another even though all are rural and the Aboriginal population of the Top End is concentrated in them. All have coastal and estuarine waters (Elsey, although largely 'inland', having some coastline at the mouth of the Roper River) and support coastal communities, including some on islands which are virtually devoid of animals that could be used for food. Those on the coast are all dependent - much more dependent than is recognised by many whites - on the sea and all of them have sacred places in or near the sea.

Mineral deposits, either being exploited (bauxite at Gove in Nhulunbuy, uranium at Nabarlek and manganese at Alyangula in Arnhem), or being prepared for exploitation (uranium at Jabiru in Tiwi) are of great importance economically to the Territory government and of considerable interest to the Commonwealth government. The arrangements made for the exploitation of minerals are also of great importance to the Aborigines. Sacred sites have to be protected if possible; roads open up areas in Aboriginal owned lands to the intrusion of white people, the disturbance of Aboriginal patterns of living, and the exploitation or destruction of resources they depend on; royalties have to be negotiated and shared out; environmental damage has to be minimised if it cannot be altogether avoided, and so on.

Even without mining complications, land is fundamental to the economic activity of large numbers of black and white citizens, for surface communications, for subsistence, for commercial gain by tourism, farming or livestock and for recreation. For Aborigines questions of rights to places to live, of privacy, of sacred sites and of preservation of their culture are also inextricably bound up with land. Roads are important to economic development and those in many areas are quite primitive and inadequate to the demands that are likely to be made on them by whites. From Aborigines, of course, the demands are quite minimal and, in addition, many see poor roads over which they have control through the permit system as a means of preserving their culture and minimising environmental damage.

Electorates And Candidates

Tiwi, to the north and east of the Darwin electorates, includes the predominantly black communities on Melville and Bathurst islands at its northern end and the predominantly white settlements at its southern end. These consist mostly of people who have left Darwin for out-of-town residences or small farms around Howard Springs and Humpty Doo and a growing mining population at the Ranger township, Jabiru. The candidates were Noel Padgham-Purich (CLP), the sitting member; Harry Maschke (ALP), operator of a light metal fabrication plant in Darwin, a rural resident and president of the Darwin rural branch of the ALP; Jenny Smither (Australian Marijuana party), gardener and, like Padgham-Purich, a resident of the rural township of Howard Springs; and an 'independent labour' candidate, Len McAlear, a Darwin resident who offered himself as a long-time Territorian with experience of many different kinds of work and experience of campaigning for many different politicians.

Arnhem, to the east of Tiwi, stretches across to the Gulf of Carpentaria, taking in Groote Eylandt, the site of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company's manganese mine. Besides the mining site, Alyangula, which is predominantly white, Groote Eylandt has two other centres, Umbakumba and Angurugu, both predominantly black. A prawn processing plant on the island was closed down a few months before the election with the loss of about 100 jobs. Arnhem is all Aboriginal reserve land. On its western side, it includes part of what is called the uranium province, specifically the Queensland Mines Nabarlek site and the township of Oenpelli, focus for much of the Aboriginal dissatisfaction about the nearby Ranger uranium mine and the entry point for a talked-of cross-Arnhem highway. On its northern side, the electorate encompasses a number of Aboriginal island communities, Croker, Goulburn, Milingimbi and Galiwin'ku, and others at communities at coastal places, Maningrida, Ramingining and Gapuwiyak. The more populous places - Maningrida, Oenpelli, Milingimbi and Galiwin'ku - are each centres for a complex of island and coastal outstations, small Aboriginal communities maintaining a more traditional pattern of life than is possible in the townships from which they draw basic services and some supplies and to which they return from time to time, notably during the wet season. To the south, Arnhem rises up over a rocky escarpment to rougher drier ground and, although it is only thinly populated, mostly by highly mobile bands of Aborigines, there is a large community at the Aboriginal cattle station at Bulman on the southern boundary. The population of Arnhem is overwhelmingly Aboriginal.

The candidates for Arnhem were Bob Collins (ALP), one-time farmer, fourteen years resident in the Territory (part of it at Maningrida); Gatjil Djerrkura (CLP), superintendent of Aboriginal Ad-

vancement and Development Services for the Uniting Church and member of an Aboriginal group at Yirrkala in the Nhulunbuy electorate and Mark McAleer (Australian Marijuana party), an electrician, resident on Groote Eylandt.

The mining town of Nhulunbuy, on the north-eastern tip of Arnhem Land, is the centre of the population of the electorate of the same name. Nabalco mines bauxite on the Gove peninsula, processes it to alumina and then ships it out for smelting elsewhere. About 2000 whites are on the roll and about 300 Aborigines, most of them located some miles away at the settlement of Yirrkala. Several outstations lie to the west and south of the main settlement; none easy of access at any time and like many other outstations in the Top End virtually inaccessible in the wet season. One outstation - Gan Gan - is a short distance inside Arnhem electorate.

Nhulunbuy had three candidates: Milton Ballantyne (CLP), sitting member since 1974 and one-time technical officer on plant instrumentation for Nabalco; Danny Leo (ALP), driver for Nabalco and site representative for the Transport Workers Union and Mike O'Reilly (independent), local motel owner until a few weeks before the election, and also one-time employee of Nabalco. All three had been resident in the town for some years. Unlike the other candidates, Ballantyne was well-known in many of the town's welfare, social and sporting organisations - said to total over 70. It was very widely believed in Nhulunbuy that the member's job was made much harder by what were seen as limits placed on him by the company. It was thought the company does things for the town which would otherwise be done through the intercession of the member. It was also thought that the company is not as open to the kind of representations members are accustomed to make to institutions in other communities and that if the member does create a fuss, pressure is brought to bear in mysterious ways via Darwin to induce him to desist. Such problems are common to all isolated one-industry company towns.

Residentially, town and settlement are quite separate, although a few whites do live at the settlement, as in other Aboriginal communities, and a few blacks live at camps near the town. Aborigines move freely in and out of the town shopping centre and the bar of the hotel but racial segregation is more obvious than in any other white centre in the Territory. The work at the bauxite refinery is said to be technically too complex to provide employment for Aborigines, but some do have employment with contractors in town and around the plant, and others with the Aboriginal-run Yirrkala Business Enterprises, a contracting firm.

The other two electorates lie to the south of Darwin, Tiwi and Arnhem. Almost landlocked in between Victoria River to the west and Barkly on the east, Elsey straddles the north-south Stuart highway. Its main town, Katherine, has a mixed population of about 3000 and is

HOW TO VOTE

Advertisement

YOU MUST NUMBER
EVERY SQUARE

5	Aboutaleb M
4	Davies, P.M.
3	Forscutt, J.B.
1	HUGHES L.J. (Laurie)
2	MacFarlane, J.L.S.
6	Reilly, R.T.

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the centre for communications not only along the highway but to Victoria River electorate in the west, to surrounding cattle stations and to Aboriginal communities along the Roper River and on the Gulf - notably Ngukurr and Numbulwar. Hearings on an Aboriginal land claim in Limmen Bight area, south of the mouth of the Roper River, were beginning during the election campaign and attracted much attention in Katherine, arousing the antagonism of many whites. The One Nation One Law committee was set up in Katherine to oppose the claim. Besides being the commercial centre of the electorate, Katherine has a significant tourist industry and a meatworks. The importance of the town electorally may be indicated by the fact that two of the candidates believed the election would be won or lost there and they made only perfunctory efforts in other places.

The electorate had six candidates: Les MacFarlane (CLP), sitting member, Speaker of the Assembly and owner of a cattle station; Mag-ed Aboutaleb (ALP), an agronomist trained in Egypt and employed in trade missions and in Sydney before he took up employment with the Territory Department of Primary Production; Laurie Hughes (independent), a policeman with many years in the Top End; Pat Davies (independent), ex-school teacher and community development officer and, since 1978, the mayor of the town; Jimmy Forscutt (independent), a local businessman, currently running a mixed farm a little way out of town; and Charlie Reilly (independent), another local businessman - building contractor and caravan park operator. All are residents of Katherine and all said they had been active in local organisations of one kind or another, ranging from the Cattlemen's Union to the Lions Club, Red Cross, APEX and various sporting clubs. There was some talk of Pat Davies standing as an Australian Democrat but she decided against it; Forscutt - if not still a member of the CLP branch - had been chairman of the branch for five years from

the early seventies and had built it up; Reilly was a CLP member and claimed to have had some help from the party in his campaign. He stood, he said, in order to channel his second preferences to MacFarlane.

To the west, Victoria River electorate stretches from Darwin down along the Western Australian border - the well-known Kimberley electorate lying on the other side of it - to the Tanami desert. A segment of the electorate at the top crosses the Stuart highway, taking in the townships of Batchelor - centre of an Aboriginal teacher training college - Adelaide River and Pine Creek. In this area there are some small mixed farms, of uncertain future given the difficulties of marketing produce, and further south, cattle stations. From the Stuart highway, roads pass to Western Australia and the main centres are not townships but Aboriginal communities, many of them on reserves, and stations, places like Wave Hill, Killarney, Victoria River Downs, Auvergne. Aboriginal land claims are being advanced in different parts of the electorate but the one which aroused most passion was the Kenbi claim of the Belyuen community at Delissaville to the Cox's peninsula across the harbour from Darwin.

Aborigines in the top end of the electorate have been antagonised not only by the frustration of this land claim but also by the refusal of the RAAF to consider using another site as a bombing range in place of Quail Island, a sacred burial site, and, in common with Aboriginal communities near Darwin in Tiwi electorate, by the disturbances they suffer from local tourism and weekend, holiday and sporting traffic. Not surprisingly, whites in Darwin electorates resent what they believe to be Aborigines' claims to exclusive ownership or use of sea and land. Four candidates contested the Victoria River electorate: Jack Doolan (ALP), the sitting member and long-time resident of the Territory; John Millhouse (CLP), local employee of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs at Lajamanu and Wave Hill in the south of the electorate; and, from the north end, two independents: Bronte Douglass, a doctor and local station owner near Adelaide River and Jack McCarthy, author and former journalist, resident of Pine Creek.

Of all the minor party and independent candidates only two, O'Reilly and perhaps Davies, appeared before June 7 to have a sporting chance of denying both major party candidates in their electorates a majority of first preferences and of winning on the second or later count. Both were closely identified with and well known in their communities and in both places there were reasons for thinking that the sitting member was weaker than he seemed to be publicly and that the party challenger was not so strong that the result was certain. In Nhulunbuy both parties asked O'Reilly to direct his preferences to their candidate but he refused and left that up to the voters. Davies - whether she was asked about preferences is not known - gave the voters two suggestions: to give second preferences to either Labor's

Victoria River Electorate

Independent Group Candidate

VOTE [1] JACK MCCARTHY

- ★ BETTER REPRESENTATION
- ★ RURAL DEVELOPMENT
- ★ MINING REFORM IS URGENT
- ★ ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY
- ★ A MORE AUTHORITATIVE
CONSUMER AFFAIRS BUREAU

Authorised by : Jack McCarthy, INDEPENDENT GROUP
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Independent candidates did not form a group despite early talk of it.

Aboutaleb or to the independent, Forscutt. MacFarlane, the CLP candidate, was placed fourth in one list and fifth in the other. Preferences decided the outcome in Nhulunbuy. O'Reilly who had fewest first preference votes was excluded and his second preferences were given to the two party candidates. In Elsey too, the seat was decided on preferences, as Davies expected, but she underestimated MacFarlane's first preference vote and overestimated her own and Aboutaleb's. When the preferences of the candidates were distributed MacFarlane picked up enough to get a majority (see table 8). Preferences were not counted in the other contests.

The votes of Aborigines (*not* the Aboriginal vote since it is not clear there is such a thing) were important in all electorates and in some circumstances it was reasonable for candidates to assume they might be decisive. Aboriginal communities appear to have a relatively high level of political knowledge, higher than many whites are prepared to acknowledge, according to reports from field workers in 29 communities in the Top End electorates. The reports were in response to three questionnaires sent out in October-November 1979, March 1980, and May-June 1980. The field workers were nearly all white residents of long standing and experience in the communities and in many instances the reports were written in consultation with Aboriginal assistants. They remain impressionistic and the figures to be given are *not* of the kind obtained in a survey; nonetheless they give some rough clues to the state of political knowledge among some Aboriginal groups. Members of the study team spent some time in several of the communities getting their own first-hand impressions and adding to the detail in the reports.

The reports gave information on three topics: local knowledge of candidates, leaders and parties; local discussion of issues; local knowledge of the electoral system. Of these, the second and third are discussed above. The importance of incumbency is suggested by the replies. The name of the sitting member was known by some people in the community in 21 out of 25 places which reported on that point, but it was thought that people knew the party of the member in only fourteen of them. In this, as in most other respects, the level of political knowledge appeared to be highest in Arnhem electorate.

Very nearly the same response was given to the question whether people in the community knew correctly which party formed the government - fifteen out of 25 said at least some did. But again, people were better known: twenty out of 25 said the names of Everingham or Isaacs were locally known, Everingham far better than Isaacs. Fewer communities responded in March 1980 to our second letter which included a question about knowledge of the name and party of the candidates. Although campaigning was still only at a preliminary stage, twelve out of thirteen places reported knowledge of the names of the party candidates - many of the independents had not been an-

nounced then - and several emphasised that the local people knew party as well as name.

Issues And Campaigns

Given the social and economic character of the electorates and their isolation and poor communications, it is to be expected that subjects of public political dispute will be predominantly of local rather than Territory-wide importance and that they will be 'issues' as defined by whites - not 'local issues' as blacks might define or understand them. If Aboriginal communities do disagree about local things, it is inconceivable that they could become electorate-wide issues, given the small size and dispersion of their communities, their administered status, and the overriding concern of white candidates in most places with the business on *their* agendas. It follows that, with some exceptions, Aboriginal voters are unlikely to be much moved by 'issues' as whites perceive and define them, that the 'personalities' of candidates will count, for both blacks and whites, and that there may be some issues, defined by disagreement between blacks and whites which, though expressed with intensity in local politics, transcend the particular campaign in a given electorate. For Elsey, the proposal for a dam at Katherine was an issue arising from debate among whites and one of no great interest elsewhere in the electorate, to say nothing of other electorates. In the same electorate land rights for Aborigines was not only a 'local' issue, focussed for the moment by the pronouncements of Jimmy Forscutt and the activities of the One Nation One Law committee in opposing the Limmen Bight land claim, but also a general issue between blacks and whites in all of the Top End electorates.

Aborigines do not see eye-to-eye of course, but their access to the media of public debate is negligible and so too is their political organisation for publicly formulating and debating disagreements amongst themselves. Therefore there were no wholly 'black local issues' in the election; and in any case, for all Top End Aborigines, land, roads, mining and sea rights are of such primacy and their opposition to whites so strong on these subjects that disagreement among them was bound to be subordinated in a white man's political context.

The candidates were well aware of the importance of local issues and their own local connections and reputations, and shaped their campaigns accordingly. The government, with a long-standing policy of expenditure on local development projects, was able to supplement their efforts by using a budget surplus to make timely announcements of grants for local works, one or two of which may be noticed - \$1.6 million for a rural education centre announced in May (*Katherine Advertiser* 22 May 1980), and \$0.25 million for the next stage of a

water filtration plant at Ngukurr, announced on 5 June, both in Elsey; an upgrading of a road in Victoria River, to cost over \$0.3 million, the contract going to a Katherine firm, announced on 9 May and on 30 May funds for the preservation of an historical relic, the steamship depot on Victoria River.

Local issues were particularly important in Nhulunbuy, the only seat apart from Alice Springs to change hands in the election. Nhulunbuy is exceptional not only in being cut off geographically and socially from the rest of the Territory but in seeing itself as a Southern electorate transplanted to the tropics, a theme touched on in one CLP appeal to Liberal, Country or National voters from other states to vote CLP (*Gove Gazette* 16 May 1980). Besides party branches, it also has branches of WEL and of the CWA, a complex union structure, several clubs and churches and a complicated method of town government in which the town board, only partly elected, has only an advisory role to the nominated governing body (*Gove Gazette* 30 March 1980).

The CLP candidate, Milton Ballantyne, emphasised the work he had done 'tirelessly' representing the local needs of white inhabitants of Nhulunbuy and black inhabitants of Yirrkala, ten miles or so distant. He also highlighted the help the Everingham government had given to the town (*Gove Gazette* 16 May 1980). Danny Leo, the successful Labor challenger, multiplied the grievances and shortcomings of the town and promised to do something about all of them. He supplemented press releases, a single sheet policy paper and the assorted posters and stickers which all candidates had with an abrasive four-issue roneoed sheet called 'Info ALP' in which the CLP candidate was aggressively attacked. The polemical focus of local consumerist attention was a dispute over the Woolworths store's stocking and pricing policies. The ex-motel owner, Mike O'Reilly, decided an independent had a good chance of winning the seat if he was well known, as he and his wife were, but he made no attempt to compete with Leo and Ballantyne in defining local issues. He put himself forward as better able to represent the town - 'effective representation which is wholly based on Nhulunbuy electorate and its needs' and not, he implied, subordinated to the needs of the company, the government or the political parties. None of the candidates found it easy to campaign for Aboriginal votes at Yirrkala and all relied on contacts with the local council and its leaders and on posters, cassetted messages and personal letters in Gumatj, the local language, to make themselves known. Ballantyne's recorded message closed, quite incongruously, with a bed-time jingle in English which began 'Goodnight little children, time to go to bed, hush my little babies...'. /

In Arnhem, Gatjil Djerrkura promised a wide variety of local benefits - for instance, for Groote Eylandt more sealed roads, pressure on the ABC to upgrade the radio transmitter, pressure on the federal government for improved telephone services, and elsewhere he made

promises about improving health and tourist facilities and schools and reducing inflation. To whites at Alyangula he promised to do something about 'the divisions that have been created on Groote because of restrictions placed on the movement of the European community by the Northern Land Council'.

As with other CLP Top End candidates, Djerrkura had different literature for blacks and whites, the former rather simpler in its language, although both seem to have been distributed indiscriminately in many places and so available to anyone who wanted them. A few paragraphs should be quoted, first from the brown printed leaflet:

I joined Paul Everingham's political party, the CLP, because their policies to help true self-management by Yolngu are not too fast...it will help Yolngu without giving us a headache.

The ALP gives us what they think we should have. They mean well, but they don't listen to Yolngu like the CLP does...the ALP just talks about Yolngu in the Balanda Newspapers all the time.

It also included a list of five things the government had done for Aborigines and mentioned one or two personal details of the candidate. The other leaflet, in black print, emphasised the necessity for harmony between the black and white inhabitants of Arnhem Land and for overcoming problems of isolation. It then went on:

Aboriginal people, like others, are not always opposed to development. Through consultation and negotiation, they may agree to a project... In mining, they have the right to approve or reject a mining activity meaning that the companies must talk with them. Tourism is the same... As an Aboriginal person, land is like a mother to me. It is my responsibility to take care of my mother land so that the richness of her resources is meeting the needs of all Territorians on equal terms and conditions. The CLP government supports land rights. Sometimes, acting in a wider Territory interest, it will oppose a land claim. It takes a long-term view of the issue...

Collins emphasised his views on general issues of interest to Aborigines: his literature and his campaign were built around the questions of land and sea rights, self-management for local communities and Aboriginal control of roads and access by sea to their lands and fishing waters. His pamphlet emphasised his record of helping the people in the electorate and stressed the contrast between the Labor and Country Liberal parties. One of his most widely distributed posters - Doolan, Maschke and Aboutaleb had similar posters - began with two-inch high lettering 'For land rights, sea rights and control of roads' and finished with 'LAND RIGHTS NOT SWEET TALK'. Djerrkura also had big posters - like Collins, of the largest permitted size - in most of which he and Everingham appeared side by side, a

**'FOR TRUE LAND RIGHTS,
SEA RIGHTS AND
CONTROL OF ROADS'...**

Vote for a Real Worker for you.

Vote 1 Bob Collins
Australian Labor Party
(ALP)

Bob Collins, Labor Party Member for Arnhem.

Authorised by the Hon. J.B. Whitlam A.C. DL
 1980 Whitlam Labor Party Poster No. 10
 an exhibit of the Land Rights Transport Economics
 Program by Imperial Products, Melbourne Street, Darwin

LAND RIGHTS

Not Sweet talk!!

Whitlam (lower right) authorised this and similar Labor posters.

conjunction which many people in the electorate thought was to Djerrkura's disadvantage, if only because it symbolised his government - not party - connection. Aborigines we interviewed looked beyond race - indeed they sometimes said Gatjil was a 'black balanda' - and said they thought he was being 'used' by the government, that he did not understand balanda law - essential for a good representative in their view - and concluded with regret that they would not vote for him. His contention, at the Oenpelli meeting, that the traditional ways would have to be given up was remembered and held against him. That meeting was only one of several at which Aboriginal leaders showed their hostility to the government, the basis for the judgment that Gatjil suffered by the connection.

The press called attention to the land rights posters and the one Maschke had in Tiwi was used against him in the southern end of the electorate by opponents who gave it publicity designed to alienate whites. Maschke believed he also suffered from the circulation on Bathurst and Melville islands, of a press report of his views on the desirability of drawing different electoral boundaries to separate the different parts of the constituency.

The supposition that 'stirrers' of some kind, misrepresentation, gossip and rumour to the discredit of the candidate are responsible for the results will not stand much examination. Both candidates in Arnhem had to put up with gossip and innuendo, the more malicious directed at Collins. The sources of two were discovered: an over-zealous partisan in one instance; a misunderstood conversation in the other. The same happened in Elsey - and it is not obvious what the effects were. Rumour, it may be added, seems to thrive in small isolated communities unable to get hard news, although the same kinds of rumours also circulated on both sides in Darwin, notably in Nightcliff and Fannie Bay.

Although CLP headquarters in Darwin gave strong backing to all rural candidates and party leader Everingham appeared frequently in their electorates, a special effort was evidently made in Arnhem. Djerrkura's campaign was strongly supported by finance for plane travel. The Chief Minister devoted considerable attention to Arnhem and Senator Neville Bonner spent several days visiting centres in the electorate with Djerrkura. Senator Chaney, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, also turned up in a Lear jet to help. The intensity of the CLP campaign stemmed from two factors. First, Arnhem had symbolic importance as the focus of the issues of uranium mining, land and sea rights to a government concerned to demonstrate that its policies were accepted by the local people. Second, the CLP realised that Djerrkura needed all the support it could possibly give him.

Djerrkura's unpopularity was shown by his reception during the campaign in some centres. One such incident occurred early in the last week of the campaign in his travels with Bonner. He and Bonner were

completely snubbed by the Oenpelli community. They arrived by plane and found that no one was available to drive them from the airstrip to the town. So they took off and buzzed the town to alert people to their arrival. On landing again they still found no welcoming party and had to hitch a lift into the council office, only to find it deserted. They left without accomplishing anything.

Collins, on the other hand, was regarded very favourably. Firstly, it was generally agreed, even by those who did not necessarily support him, that he was a good local member in a traditional sense. He spent a lot of time in the communities in his electorate even though he was based in Darwin. Secondly, his views on land rights, sea rights and roads accorded with those of the Aboriginal people in his electorate. Not only was it perceived that he always discussed issues with his electorate but also that he spoke up for the Aboriginal view in Darwin. The Oenpelli council chairman said that Collins talked 'straight' to the people. Thirdly, Collins benefited from his association with Gough Whitlam, highly regarded as the father of land rights. As part of his wider trip to the Territory for Labor, Whitlam campaigned in Arnhem not long before the election.

Even though most of the electorate was dry enough for surface transport, the communities were spread out over large distances and across water and both candidates had to do much of their campaigning by air. Many of Collins's trips were designed to make sure that the work of supporters was going ahead, to deliver how-to-vote cards and other literature and to confer with community leaders. There was no doorknocking in the traditional sense but, as one field worker put it, he did spend a lot of time gladhanding mothers and babies and hangers-on. Two dozen copies of an election cassette were made, incorporating music from Maningrida, and distributed by hand as Collins moved around. Public meetings were usually called not by the candidate but by the local council or some local leader and at least one at which Collins spoke was held in most of the larger communities. Posters were put up as appropriate - in one or two places few were used, in others where his support was strong, such as Oenpelli, the town was blanketed with them.

The campaign was of necessity expensive: in the final week he travelled with his wife and son and a couple of Aboriginal assistants in a single-engined plane from Maningrida to nine different communities, some of them twice. The cost was estimated at \$2000. Plane travel was also risky as Collins and one or two other candidates can testify. Although the main campaign was carried out in the four weeks after the date was announced, Collins and Djerrkura both began a low-key campaign late in 1979, at least that is how their visits then were seen. In Elsey also, Aboutaleb started campaigning early and steadily, and there was early stirring in parts of Victoria River, but in most other electorates nothing much happened in Aboriginal com-

munities until March and even then it was desultory. Sitting members were seen campaigning earliest and most often, according to all reports, and independents late, infrequently or not at all.

The CLP apparently had more literature to distribute in the Top End than Labor, and made greater efforts to secure uniformity in the general 'message' while allowing candidates to make their own individual views clear on local issues. With some minor variations, the printed material emphasised the record of the government, drew attention to the things it had done and would go on doing for Aboriginal communities; walked around the questions of land and sea rights and roads, and boosted the particular candidate. Labor relied - with justified confidence - on its candidates' adherence to the platform to achieve general uniformity in the field. Labor's leader, Isaacs, visited a number of communities and underlined the candidates' efforts on land rights and related questions by making a number of written promises to them. To the Tiwi people, for example, he promised to close the sea for 2km around Bathurst and Melville islands, and to the Belyuen people, to lift the gazettal of Darwin's boundaries that prevented them advancing their land claim.

None of this prevented candidates putting their own idiosyncratic ideas forward. In Tiwi, for example, Maschke suggested that whites should recognise Aboriginal 'spiritual holidays' and Padgham-Purich thought that live kangaroos should be shipped from pastoral areas of plenty in Queensland and New South Wales to Bathurst and Melville islands so her black constituents could hunt them (*NT News* 24 April 1980). In Katherine, Forscutt emphasised that he would work 'for EQUALITY of all Territorians' and, in the *Katherine Advertiser* (29 May 1980), contended that party politics had made guinea pigs of Territorians for too long:

There's the Aboriginal Land Rights. What a nasty piece of apartheid legislation this is! APARTEID means racial segregation...And the Permit System...In 1963 this legislation was introduced to prevent social diseases spreading to certain areas. Now it is being used by the bureaucrats to divide the peoples of the Northern Territory.

The social page of the *Katherine Advertiser* reported - with pictures - the visit of the Governor General and the Chief Minister to the town (9 May 1980) and in the same issue the Australian Democrats took a full page general advertisement as if to prepare for an announcement about a candidate - but one did not emerge. The CLP took a page a little later on to reprint Alistair Heatley's piece, 'The futility of independents', from the *NT News* (*Katherine Advertiser* 29 May 1980). And, as in other places, the CLP government sought - for the second year - 'public submissions for it to consider in the framing of the Territory Budget for 1980-81' (*Katherine Advertiser* 15 May 1980). In

Victoria River the rather late independent entrant, Bronte Douglass, produced a circular letter which began:

Dear Captain Charcoal,

May I please represent you in the Legislative Assembly?... My name is Bronte Douglass, I am 38 years old, married, and have two little girls... I am a doctor and have further qualifications in Public Health and Industrial Health. I operate two adjoining properties in the Victoria River district - Ban Ban Springs and Mount Ringwood near Adelaide River... I am independent of the parties so I do not have their support - I NEED YOUR SUPPORT....

For the same electorate, McCarthy, the Pine Creek independent, produced an unusual series of seventeen 'policy position papers' as they were called, each dealing with a single topic such as representation, rural development, electoral reform, central government, consumer affairs and the like.

After the election it was widely believed that the results indicated a polarisation of black and white voters on ALP-CLP lines, with land and sea rights, roads and sacred sites as the 'issues' which divided the voters. But they were not the only issues or even the dominant ones for most of the candidates, to judge by both their campaigns and their accounts of what they thought important. Neither a centrally defined policy and a centrally managed campaign nor a single dominant issue could be imposed on electorates as diverse and communities as isolated as those of Tiwi, Nhulunbuy, Arnhem, Elsey and Victoria River.

10 Contests In The Centre Electorates

DEAN JAENSCH, RON SLEE and JOHN SUMMERS

The township of Alice Springs is the most isolated large town in Australia, isolated not only from the Southern states but equally isolated from Darwin and the Top End. Apart from air services, Alice Springs has depended on a far from reliable railway service from Adelaide in South Australia, on an unsealed bush road for transport to and from the South, and a sealed road of over 1500 km north to Darwin. Alice Springs has developed into a 'central place': a market town, a meeting, service and communications centre - the focus of most of the activities in the region.

As a commercial centre, Alice Springs provides many of the services for the local cattle industry in surrounding districts, but otherwise it is not supported by any indigenous industry of note. Tourism and government services provide the main basis for the town's existence. It is estimated that over \$30 million was spent on tourism in Central Australia in 1978 (Drakakis-Smith 1980,439). Government employees comprise over 40 per cent of the male workforce of the township. The 1976 census indicates that only 80 per cent of the permanent residents of Alice Springs had been living there the year before, and only 44 per cent in 1971 (Drakakis-Smith 1980,431).

Governmental expenditure on Aboriginal welfare provides a large amount of income and employment in Alice Springs. In 1979-80 over \$15 million including \$4 million for housing and \$5 million for town management and public utilities was paid out through the Alice Springs office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Much if not most of it makes its way back to Alice Springs.

Aborigines comprise at least 13 per cent of the population of the township. Some Aborigines live in conventional housing within the town but many more live in humpies and wurlies in about 30 or so fringe camps. In 1979 the estimated permanent camp population was about 1000 and about as many again were short term visitors from more remote Aboriginal communities (Drakakis-Smith 1980, 433). In recent years a number of the camps have obtained leases to the land they occupy and through housing associations have erected more permanent accommodation and improved the facilities, though many remain with no tenure to land, no housing, no facilities and no services.

Central Land Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Legal Aid play an important role in fringe communities. As well, a number of self-help organisations have been formed - notably the Tangatjira Council in regard to services and employment, and the Yipirenya School Council which coordinated education programs.

The urban area of Alice Springs is subdivided into two electorates, Alice Springs and Gillen, and part of a third, Stuart.

The Gillen electorate is the compleat suburban area. In Territory terms it is fully developed with acceptable services, and contains a mix of private and government housing, and the highest proportion of Housing Commission flats and houses of the nineteen electorates. It is essentially a white suburb, with only seven per cent of its population of Aboriginal racial origin in the 1976 census. Population growth had stabilised by 1980, but a rapid turnover of residents continued. The populations in the Alice Springs electorate and the urban component of Stuart are, however, still growing, and are more heterogeneous than in Gillen.

These three urban areas are, in one sense, relatively easy for sitting members. Contact with residents is regular, canvassing a small compact population is easy and the small populations in the electorates offer many opportunities for a representative to become involved and to be seen to be active in local affairs. However, as two incumbents pointed out, the level of physical development of the urban area does create a problem. According to CLP's Jim Robertson, Gillen is the classic dormitory suburb that has everything, and it is very difficult for the local member to be the 'classic' local member in such a suburb. 'There is nothing this place wants'. And Rod Oliver, the independent (formerly CLP) member for Alice Springs, agreed:

That's one of the problems I do have in the electorate - it's well developed, well stabilised, and as far as the people are concerned it's going along quite well.... The hospital is right. The schools in my electorate are first-class, the jail is OK, the fire station is OK, the government buildings are OK, we are getting a new civic centre, we have the bridge over the river - what else is there?

Stuart, one of the two outback electorates in the Centre, is far from homogeneous. The urban Alice Springs part, which is overwhelmingly white, provides only about half the voters. The population in the rural part is overwhelmingly Aboriginal and is concentrated in a dozen or so communities which range from Yuendumu, a former Aboriginal reserve, which has a population of over 1200, to small groups of Aborigines living on cattle stations.

MacDonnell is the exemplar of an outback electorate. The population is overwhelmingly Aboriginal and, as in rural Stuart, it is concentrated in a dozen or so communities of varying sizes. Barkly, described

below, straddles the Stuart highway and provides a link between the Centre and Top End.

The nature of Aboriginal communities also created distinctive problems for electoral campaigners, especially newcomers. Any visit by a candidate will be noticed by the whole community. Some communities are very closely knit and it is not easy for an outsider to make contacts in them. In such communities, a campaigner who is unable to establish him or herself with key people, will in effect be locked out and will have very little access to the voters in that group. On the other hand a candidate who has the opportunities of an incumbent - to establish a network of contacts - can use them to reach a large number of voters and be very visible in the community, with relatively short visits.

Parties, Preselection And Candidates

Given the advantages of long-term personal contacts in both urban and rural areas, the challengers would have benefited from early preselection. For both Labor and CLP, the Alice Springs branches conducted the preselection process, subject to subsequent endorsement from the Territory executives in Darwin. Both parties faced problems with both stages of the process in the electorate of Alice Springs.

One notable feature of the contests in the Centre was the number of past candidates and past members who again entered the field. John Thomas had contested Gillen for Labor in 1977 and he was selected for Stuart in 1980. Rosalie Macdonald, Labor's candidate for Alice Springs in 1977, was nominated for Gillen in 1980. And two previous CLP members in the Assembly stood as independents in Alice Springs.

The turmoil in the Labor party included personality clashes and organisational disagreements, but the underlying (and often unstated) question was to decide what sort of Labor party is most suitable for the Territory, and especially for the Centre. This had been 'on the agenda' of informal party discussion since the first Assembly election of 1974, but the questions of philosophy, direction and approach came to a head in mid-1979, following an infusion into the local branch in the mid-1970s. Relatively new arrivals in Alice Springs such as lawyer John Reeves, John Thomas and, in 1979, Duncan Graham, appointed as ministerial adviser for Jon Isaacs in the Centre, brought together a group of people who were determined to revitalise what was a relatively moribund local Labor party. One result was an upsurge in membership of the local branch. From six members in 1974, the party had grown to over 100 members in late 1975, and it had developed an efficient organisation by the 1977 elections.

At the same time, however, tensions emerged within the party, expressed in differences about ideology and about approaches to the

politics of Alice Springs. As one of the more traditional members of the party put it in an interview

I joined the Alice Springs Labor party in 1972 which was then led by, and composed of, people of the style of Jock Nelson. These were long-term residents of the Northern Territory, whose outlook was essentially concerned with the progress of the Territory and not with the dominating party style of Labor nationally and in the states.

Tension arose following an influx into the Alice Springs branch of a younger, professional group whose outlook more mirrored the attitudes and approaches of 'Port Adelaide and Port Melbourne' Labor rather than Alice Springs. They were cause-type activists whose attitudes and activities were not to the benefit of the NT, nor to the electoral chances of the party in an essentially conservative town.

The tension erupted early in 1979 when the local Labor party publicly accused the Alice Springs Town Council, as a body, of alleged conflict of interest over a contract. Two senior members of the Council who were also senior members of the Labor party took issue over the blanket nature of the accusations and eventually resigned from the party. In June 1979, the two formally applied to rejoin the party, but their applications were rejected.

The issue became more public when the *Centralian Advocate* (4 October 1979) ran a lead story suggesting that endorsement for the Alice Springs seat had been offered by Jon Isaacs to Dr Kendall McClelland, but that he could not accept as the local party had rejected his application to be re-admitted as a member. Reports of a 'firm offer' were denied by Isaacs (*Centralian Advocate* 11 October 1979) who pointed out that he did not even have the authority to make such an offer. The debate came to a formal close when the party announced the endorsement of Ted Hampton in late October. A part-Aboriginal, Hampton was a public servant who had spent his life in the Centre.

Turmoil was not confined to the Labor party. The CLP was also having great difficulty in Alice Springs. One of the leading personalities in Alice Springs, Bernie Kilgariff, had won the seat for the CLP with massive support in 1974 and 1977. When he resigned to contest and win a Senate seat in 1977, the CLP selected Rod Oliver who fought and won. In August 1979, without warning, the CLP told Oliver that he would not be endorsed for the 1980 election. The reason given to Oliver was that his 'nursing' of the electorate had been inadequate and that he would lose the seat for the CLP. Oliver resigned from the party and announced that he should be considered as an independent in the Assembly and that he intended to contest the 1980 election as an Independent Liberal.

It was not until the first week of October 1979 that the CLP finally announced an endorsed candidate for Alice Springs - Dennis Collins,

a senior teacher at the Alice Springs High School. This announcement brought further internal problems for the local party. The president of the Alice Springs CLP, David Pollock, who had been the CLP member for MacDonnell 1974-75, had unsuccessfully sought preselection for Alice Springs in 1977, and sought endorsement again in 1980. Immediately following the announcement of Collins as the endorsed candidate Pollock resigned as president, although not from the party, and announced that he was 'considering standing as an independent in the light of certain approaches' (*Centralian Advocate* 4 October 1979).

When nominations closed for the 1980 election, Alice Springs promised an interesting contest. Hampton and Collins as official party candidates were opposed by ex-CLP and incumbent independent Oliver and CLP ex-member Pollock - and all of them had close contacts with the electorate.

Preselection was a relatively simple task for both political parties in the other four Centre electorates. The CLP endorsed its incumbents in Gillen (Jim Robertson) and Stuart (Roger Vale) in August 1979, and selected Rosie Kunoth-Monks as its candidate for MacDonnell. The selection of Kunoth-Monks was evidence of a serious attempt to win back the seat of MacDonnell. Labor's incumbent, Neville Perkins, had won the seat in 1977, and had campaigned continuously throughout the essentially Aboriginal electorate. The CLP attempted to match each of his advantages. Both candidates were part-Aboriginal with close links with the Centre, Alice Springs and MacDonnell, in both family and professional aspects. The incumbent had the advantage of three years of continuous contact with the Aboriginal communities.

Campaigns And Issues - Alice Springs Township

The campaigns, whether Labor, CLP or independent, were much the same in style in the urban area of Alice Springs. Candidates tramped the streets, distributed literature, talked and listened, and made every possible attempt to become known as party members, representatives and personalities.

The campaigns were essentially local and personal, with few issues emerging to capture media headlines. Three generated some public debate. The closure of the Alice Springs Women's Centre prior to the campaigns received much attention in the newspapers but its impact on the election was apparently negligible.

The second issue took more media space, aroused more passions and could have affected the votes of a number of people. The protests of the Citizens for Civilized Living against a small number of houses being built for Aborigines in a white area of town brought guarded reactions from Alice Springs candidates but brought to the surface

**VOTE ☐ 1 KUNOTH-MONKS R.L.
CLP for MACDONNELL**

Authorised by G.J. Lewis, 13 Renshaw Street, Fannie Bay. Printed by J.R. Coleman Pty. Ltd., Crowsnest Street, Darwin.

**YOU CAN ASK
FOR HELP**

**HOW TO VOTE
LABOR PARTY
JOHN
THOMAS**

☐ 1 THOMAS, John.

☐ VALE, Roger William Standley

Just write a number 1 in the box next to the name THOMAS, John

IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE, ASK FOR ANOTHER BALLOT PAPER.

Authorised by Jon Isaacs, Legislative Assembly, Darwin, N.T.

Printed by Asprint, George Cross, Allen Springs.

CLP posters teamed their candidates with the party leader, Paul Everingham; ALP's Thomas had a photograph on the reverse side of Whitlam addressing a meeting in front of wurlies.

once again the latent racial tensions in the town and confusion about shared Territory and Commonwealth responsibilities for the scheme.

The third issue was 'general' in that it occupied numerous columns of the *Centralian Advocate*, but 'local' in that it was a campaign directed by a pressure group against a specific candidate. A group of Alice Springs teachers met in April 1980, expressed concern at the delay with the passage of the NT Teaching Service bill, and called for the resignation of the Minister for Education, Jim Robertson, the member for Gillen. Such 'calls' are part of the process of pressure group politics, but this one had some potential in the Centre because many of the teachers of the Centre lived in Gillen and it gained intensity in a small electorate.

By the end of April 1980, the issue had been taken up by the Teachers Federation, and tension on both 'sides' increased. The campaign by teachers reached a peak in the last week of the campaign with media letters and advertisements asking Chief Minister Everingham to give assurances that 'if a CLP government is re-elected the Education Portfolio will be handled with greater competence and sensitivity and reallocated to another member of Cabinet' (Alice Springs *Star* 4 June 1980; *Centralian Advocate* 5 June 1980). The CLP, and Robertson, were concerned about the electoral impact of the intense anti-Robertson campaign, but if the results in Gillen are any guide, the campaign was notably ineffective.

Leaving these questions aside, the campaigns were essentially local. The party candidates were, naturally, working within the framework of the policies of their parties, but each individual in each electorate had a style, a collection of policies and emphases which were unique. There was no uniform Centre campaign by any party or any group of candidates.

The results in Gillen are the most straightforward to analyse and explain. This is because the population in the electorate is relatively homogeneous, settled and suburban and because Gillen is one of the few Territory electorates which can be described as a safe seat with few local issues with any potential to disrupt a relatively stable voting pattern. Yet, even in Gillen, the description 'safe seat for the CLP' needs to be qualified. As with any of the Territory electorates, the relatively small population meant that personality might play a big part in voter choice.

As we noted in an earlier chapter, party and party identification are less salient and decisive in the Alice Springs area than in national or state elections. In the small electorates of the Territory, candidates recognised a need to combine party and non-party approaches, and the value of personal contacts and careful 'nursing' of the electorates. As Jim Robertson, the member for Gillen put it,

I have a very strong core of 'Jim Robertson followers' rather than CLP followers. Personal support comes in part from com-

munity involvement which, to a politician or an aspiring politician has got to be seen by the community as not using community activity for the purpose of stepping stones. Only a fool thinks he can do without the party, but I think the candidate who relies on the party in an electorate of this size would be a fool.

Issues In Urban Alice Springs

To distinguish between the local electorate issues and the general questions as voters saw them we asked the respondents to the survey of the total Alice Springs urban area two questions: 'were any local issues important in your electorate?' and, at a more general level, 'Why did you vote (the way you did)?'

Of the 546 respondents, only 126 named one or more issues which they considered to have specific local importance. Of the total of 165 mentions 137 were also of Centre or of Territory-wide importance as well: Aboriginal affairs (22 per cent of the 165 mentions), education (19 per cent), South road and housing (18 per cent each). This is not to suggest that these issues were not of local importance, but that relatively few purely local 'roads and bridges' issues were specifically mentioned. Identifiable *local* issues included a local abattoir, access to playing fields, local roads and the proposal for an Alice Springs artificial lake, all of which accounted for only 28 mentions from 546 respondents. Such responses confirm the comments by Rod Oliver noted above.

A total of 472 of the 546 respondents gave a reason for their choice of party, and three main reasons stand out equally: record of the government (22 per cent of responses), my philosophy or my party (22 per cent) and candidate (21 per cent). Four other party-oriented answers, if grouped together, account for another 20 per cent of responses (generally better, best of a poor choice, against CLP or ALP, CLP is best for the NT), leaving Aboriginal policy as the specific reason given in only 5 per cent of the answers. The breakdown by party is of some interest. Those who voted CLP because of the record of the government were one-third of all CLP voters; 19 per cent gave my philosophy or my party as their reason, 11 per cent the candidate, 6 per cent Aboriginal policy and 21 per cent the collection of items, generally better and so on. None of those who voted Labor gave record of the government as their reason, though they might have done so had they thought it poor; instead 40 per cent gave my philosophy, my party as the reason, 23 per cent the candidate, 4 per cent Aboriginal policy and 22 per cent the four grouped reasons. Of the total of 472 responses, 102 voted Labor and 322 voted CLP. Of the 48 respondents who voted for independents, 41 gave the candidate as their reason.

Several observations should be made about the responses of those who voted Labor or CLP. First, in comparison with voters in elections

in the South, party was given as the reason for the vote by a low proportion of the voters. Even if the distinct 'party reason' - my philosophy and my party - is combined with the more negative responses - generally better and so on - which have a party element the enlarged group of reasons accounts for less than half the total number of responses. Second, the proportion of those who gave the candidate as their reason for voting as they did (21 per cent) is relatively high. Such a large personal vote - assuming that is what it is - would be most unusual in a Southern electorate but it might be expected in contests where electorates are small or where party identification is relatively weak. A third observation is that Aboriginal policy was evidently not as important among reasons given by voters as might have been expected. Despite the controversy surrounding it the Aboriginal housing proposal was not mentioned by a single voter as a significant local issue, and at the more general level Aboriginal policy was not identified as being, *by itself*, a major issue. It could well have been significant in the voters' choices between candidates and parties, particularly since Aboriginal land rights was seen, according to other answers discussed below, by such a large number of voters as the point of greatest difference between the parties and was so often presented as an obstacle to development. Thirty-two per cent of voters (30 per cent of ALP voters and 33 per cent of CLP voters) said that what they particularly liked about the CLP was its NT development policies. Although (as noted above) neither major party sought to emphasise issues of Aboriginal land rights in its general campaign, there is evidence from the survey that this issue - or complex of issues - was part of the unofficial agenda of the election.

Although a relatively low proportion of the sample *volunteered* Aboriginal land rights as the prime issue on the electoral agenda, respondents were much more emphatic when asked specifically about that topic. The parties' policies on land rights were clearly different but these differences were not given prime space in the general party campaigns. At the same time, individual candidates emphasised (or de-emphasised) the issue in their local campaigns to varying degrees. The issue was rarely mentioned in the urban electorates, although at least one CLP candidate believed that publicising the issue would be to his advantage in the urban area.

The member for Gillen, Jim Robertson, put the following letter, dated 5 June 1980, in letter-boxes.

To the Electors of Gillen from JIM ROBERTSON: There is one very important electoral issue which the ALP has not raised in urban areas during this campaign. It is Aboriginal Land Rights. I will raise it now. The CLP has been constantly criticised by Labor for 'opposing' Aboriginal Land Claims. In fact it is Labor which is opposing the CLP's insistence that the interests and good of all Territorians be paramount. In December 1978

the CLP Government extended the planning boundary of Darwin to include Cox Peninsular (Kenbi) in order to secure this magnificent area for future development and tourism for all Territory people. I will let ALP Leader, Jon Isaacs', letter of the 22nd February, 1980, to the Cox Peninsular Aboriginals speak for itself:

'When the Labor Party becomes the Government in the Northern Territory, we will disallow the legislation which the CLP Government introduced in December 1978, which extended the boundary of Darwin.

This will mean that the land over which the Kenbi Land Claim was made becomes vacant crown land, and you will be able to proceed with your land claim before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner.

In addition, the Labor Party will close the seas for 2 km around land which was previously an Aboriginal Reserve like Wagait.

The Government has been able to do this for over a year now, but has refused to do so.'

Translate this type of thinking to Alice Springs. Rather disturbing isn't it?

The survey indicates that Robertson's assessment of the white urban electorate's anxiety about Aboriginal land rights was substantially correct. First, in response to a question about which groups have too much influence on Northern Territory politics, 72 per cent of respondents (48 per cent of ALP voters, 79 per cent of CLP voters) said that Aboriginal Land Councils had too much power, and 66 per cent of respondents (42 per cent of ALP voters, 73 per cent of CLP voters) said that Aborigines had too much power. Others normally thought of as 'overmighty' subjects were believed to be too powerful by fewer voters: Canberra government by 50 per cent, public service by 34 per cent, big business by 33 per cent, mining companies by 31 per cent, trade unions by 26 per cent, pastoralists by 18 per cent.

Second, from a total of 452 of the respondents who answered the question 'what should be the policy of the NT government towards Aboriginal land rights?' a total of 45 per cent indicated strong opposition: either total opposition to any such rights (19 per cent), or a demand that any Aboriginal land rights should be on the basis of absolute equality with those of non-Aboriginals - generally understood to be little better than no rights at all (16 per cent), or were emphatic that no further claims should be granted (10 per cent). These responses came from 31 per cent of Labor voters and 48 per cent of CLP voters.

A further 29 per cent of the 452 respondents expressed qualified acceptance of land rights, expressing a view that either more limits should be applied than at present (for example 'on strictly limited

sacred sites', 'only on Crown land', 'only with specific "sunset clause" regulations') and the party split on these views was 20 per cent of Labor and 32 per cent of CLP voters.

Of the sample who replied, only 27 per cent gave answers which could be categorised as generally or strongly in favour of the present system of land claims and land rights, and here the party polarisation was most marked: almost 50 per cent of Labor voters but only 19 per cent of CLP voters.

The responses to the open-ended 'why' section of this question provided a few respondents with an opportunity to express opinions confidentially which were pure political vitriol on the issue, and which revealed some of the worst aspects of race relations. The majority of the questionnaires suggested a positive concern about the issue, although those who were opposed to land rights could be vehement. Two mild examples, one CLP and the other ALP, are:

There should *NOT* be such a thing. Aboriginals should seek land like anyone else: assisted YES, given NO.

I'm afraid I have not studied the matter, but I don't feel that they should be given land when they don't know how to look after it.

Such data do provide evidence of strong opinions among the sample of urban Alice Springs voters, but also of strong opinions *which crossed party lines*. More Labor than CLP voters were generally in favour of land rights, but it should be noted that half of the Labor sample (and 80 per cent of the CLP voters) expressed a clear view that the present system of land rights should be either abolished (some proposing retrospectivity) or more restricted.

At first sight, such strong opinions seem at variance with other patterns of responses concerning Aboriginal affairs. For example, only five per cent of 472 respondents gave 'Aboriginal policy' as the prime reason for their vote. But the questionnaires gave the clear impression that while many respondents considered 'Aboriginal policy' to be important, and held strong views on land rights, other issues were electorally more salient for the urban Alice Springs residents. Responses categorised under 'Aboriginal policy' comprised the largest set of answers to the question 'What are the most important issues the Northern Territory government should do something about?' but these accounted for only 14 per cent of the total of 2276 responses. Nearly two-thirds of respondents named 'Aboriginal policy' as one of the (up to five) issues which could be named in answer to this question, but only a handful named it as a sole issue, and less than one-fifth named it as the first issue of importance.

To further complicate any analysis of the response patterns in this broad area, 32 per cent of all respondents and similar proportions of Labor and CLP voters identified 'Aboriginal policy' as the main dif-

ference between the parties, but almost 20 per cent of Labor voters stated that the government's Aboriginal policy was the factor they particularly liked about the CLP.

Overall, the survey suggested two broad conclusions. First, that there are complicated, even confused and confusing patterns of responses concerning Aboriginal issues, policies and land rights among the urban residents of Alice Springs. Second, both major parties may well have been electorally perceptive in being relatively subdued - even cautious - about these issues *in their general campaigns*. A strident campaign on either side may well have alienated as many (urban) voters as it convinced.

The Campaign And Issues - MacDonnell And Rural Stuart

The campaign in the rural section of Stuart was of necessity quite different from that in the urban part of Alice Springs. The separation between the two sections of the electorate - the compact and almost exclusively white suburban part, and the predominantly Aboriginal and geographically vast outback section - was reflected in all aspects of the campaign. In the urban section, canvassers reported the major issues to be inflation and housing. In the rural areas the major issues were reported to be land rights and unemployment. In the urban area, Labor's John Thomas could canvass the population with no great difficulty. In the outback, CLP incumbent Roger Vale had the advantages of constant contact over six years since his original campaign in 1974 and close personal association with Aboriginal communities at every level - for example, as a player in the Pioneers Football Club.

Before the election Labor assumed that any advantage CLP sitting members in rural electorates had would be more than offset by the land rights issue. The ALP was confident that in the predominantly Aboriginal areas Vale would be significantly handicapped by recent actions taken by the Everingham government in relation to land rights, and especially over the controversial Utopia claim (see also *NT News* 9, 23 October 1979, 20 November 1979, 7 February 1980).

In October 1979 the Territory government obtained an order in the High Court which delayed the hearing of the Utopia land claim. Utopia pastoral lease, about 270 km north-east of Alice Springs had been purchased by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission in 1976. At the beginning of 1977 the Aboriginal owners dismissed white consultants and took over the management of the cattle operation themselves. Then in 1979 the occupants moved to obtain greater control over the land and the Central Land Council took a claim to the Aboriginal Land Commissioner for the traditional owners to obtain freehold title to the land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. This made it a test case of the Commissioner's powers where the big question was whether leasehold which might

have been obtained from areas which were not Crown land but more desirable cattle leasehold country which had passed to Aboriginal leasehold could be converted to freehold, normally not possible in the Territory, and Aboriginal-owned freehold at that. Another question was whether Aborigines could control and 'tie up' vast areas of pastoral land in the vicinity of Alice Springs as Darwinites thought they would do on Cox's peninsula.

The hearing began in September and Aboriginal evidence had been taken when the Territory government obtained an order prohibiting the hearing of the claim. The government argued that the jurisdiction of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner was confined to claims for unalienated Crown land. The Land Council then attempted to prove a similar claim for Willowra - an Aboriginal-leased cattle station north of Yuendumu - but the Territory government successfully sought to have the Willowra claim held over until the Utopia case had been decided. The threat to this claim had great impact on the very large settlement at Yuendumu where many of the people have close connections with the Willowra people.

The Territory government's intervention caused delay and, had it been successful, six land claims for Aboriginal-owned pastoral leases would have been jeopardised, the leases - Utopia, Willowra, Chilla Well, Ti Tree, Mt Allen and Wave Hill - all being in the Stuart electorate except Wave Hill Station. The effect of the intervention was to politicise Aborigines in these areas and to focus their attention on the land rights policies of the political parties. The CLP government's actions were presented and were seen as an attempt to deny Aborigines control over their land. At a meeting at Utopia the leader of the opposition, Jon Isaacs, signed an undertaking pledging that an ALP government would not stand in the way of the Land Commission hearing claims by traditional owners to obtain freehold title to their land. It was not surprising, then, that Thomas's campaign in outback Stuart and his publicity material incorporated the land rights symbol and colours, and his printed material constantly referred to it.

The land rights issue was also highlighted during a private tour by Gough Whitlam in April, which included Yuendumu, Willowra and Utopia in the Stuart electorate. Whitlam and the policies of the Whitlam government on Aboriginal affairs are well known in Aboriginal communities and are held in very high regard. At Yuendumu Whitlam was given an enthusiastic reception and it was clear that the people were aware of the record of the Commonwealth Labor government on Aboriginal affairs. In his campaign in rural Stuart, John Thomas attempted to take full advantage of Whitlam's popularity and his brochure included a photograph of himself with Whitlam at a community meeting.

Ironically perhaps, the failure of the CLP government's petition in the High Court saved them many votes in rural Stuart while their at-

tempt may have gained them many in urban Alice Springs. In February 1980 the High Court rejected the Territory government's challenge and the hearings of the Utopia and Willowra land claims went ahead before the Land Commission. At the time of the election both had been fully heard and were awaiting judgment, and the land rights issue became a much less potent weapon for the ALP. Even so, it could have been expected that the recent events would have made it very difficult for the CLP candidate to capture anything but a fraction of the Aboriginal vote.

Roger Vale's response was specifically designed to defuse the issue, and to maximise his personal vote. Vale identified himself with the actions of Commonwealth Liberal-National government in Aboriginal affairs and was supported in the closing stages of the campaign by two Commonwealth Liberals popular in the Centre - Senator Chaney, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Senator Neville Bonner. In the outback part of his electorate Vale campaigned on the grounds that it was the Liberal-National government in Canberra which had passed the land rights act and that it was under a Liberal-National government that the cattle stations - Utopia, Mt Allen and Ti Tree - had been purchased for Aboriginal communities.

At the time of the Territory government's challenge to the Utopia claim Vale had argued that the government had simply wanted the title to the land to remain as pastoral lease and that no attempt was being made to take the cattle station away from Aborigines. In the lead-up to the election he was able to point to some of the ALP's earlier statements and discredit them: the land had not been taken away and the claim had been heard by the Land Commissioner.

Against most predictions John Thomas obtained only 61.6 per cent of the vote in outback Stuart and Vale obtained a higher vote in Aboriginal areas than he had in 1977. Most surprisingly the CLP vote increased at Yuendumu (up to 31 per cent from 15 per cent in 1977) and at Utopia (up from 0 to 22 per cent). In the Ti Tree and Aileron booths where the vast majority of the voters were Aboriginal, Vale obtained a convincing majority (69.5 per cent), perhaps a consequence of the fact that Thomas was unable to gain any effective access to one group of people even though he had held enthusiastic meetings at the other place only a few miles away.

It is clear that even in this electorate, where land claims had been a current and controversial issue and had been a major campaign topic, the 'polarisation' of Aborigines on party lines against the CLP was not evident. Although Thomas won a clear majority in the rural part of the electorate the results do not provide evidence of any bloc vote by Aborigines.

In the MacDonnell electorate land rights was not an issue to the same extent as in rural Stuart or in some Top End electorates. The largest Aboriginal communities in MacDonnell live on lands which

were previously Aboriginal reserves and so claims of traditional owners to obtain freehold title to it were largely a formality. Here as elsewhere though, the refusal of the NT government to register the titles to the land could have made it a minor issue. The land rights issue also surfaced in April 1979 when the Pitjantjatjara people submitted a claim for Uluru (Ayers Rock, Mt Olga) National Park and surrounding unalienated Crown land. The traditional territory of the Pitjantjatjara extends from Uluru, south into South Australia and west into Western Australia. The Pitjantjatjara are now dispersed to settlements and communities in both states and the Territory. The Territory government opposed that part of the claim which related to the Uluru National Park and the Land Commissioner held that he had no jurisdiction in relation to the park. This perhaps did not have the impact that it might otherwise have had in the Territory as the people claiming closest association with Ayers Rock have for many years past been living mostly in South Australia.

Admittedly, in the course of their struggle for an acceptable land bill in that state, the Pitjantjatjara had clearly identified Labor as the party more favourable to their claims. But this does not seem to have done much to help Neville Perkins in MacDonnell. Although he polled well at both Areyonga and Docker River it appears that this was more a personal vote for him than a reflection of any identification with the ALP, or even a vote on the basis of the single issue of the ALP's land rights policy. Perkins's share of the vote fell from 61 per cent in 1977 to 58 per cent. At Papunya Aboriginal settlement he won impressively with 95 per cent, but at Hermannsburg his vote dropped from 68 per cent in 1977 to 52 per cent.

The failure of Perkins to do as well in some Aboriginal areas as previously is largely due to the personal qualities of his opponent. The CLP candidate, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, a part-Aboriginal who has local family connections and who speaks Arunta, had the potential to attract a strong personal vote. The decline of the ALP vote at Hermannsburg is probably due more to this than to any matter of party policy.

The Contest In Barkly

The electorate of Barkly stretched from the Gulf of Carpentaria south along the Queensland border towards the Centre and west around the south of Elsey, to join the Victoria River electorate in the desert area where it too adjoins the Centre electorate of Stuart. The Stuart highway runs through Barkly on its western side through the main centre of the electorate, Tennant Creek. Other centres include Warrego, a copper mining town with a white population, Elliott, Warrabri and, to the north, Borroloola. Mount Isa Mines has an as yet undeveloped and very large deposit of lead, copper, zinc and other

ores near Borroloola which it proposed to ship from a site in the Edward Pellew group of islands in the Gulf - a sacred Aboriginal burial site and subject of a partly unsuccessful Aboriginal land claim. *Centralian Australian Land Rights News* commented angrily on this and other cases in 1978 (June 1978).

Three candidates stood in Barkly: Ian Tuxworth (CLP), sitting member and Minister for Mines; Bill Thomson (ALP), senior organiser for the Miscellaneous Workers Union and N.J. Andrews (Progress party - its sole candidate). Tuxworth maintained good relations with the Aboriginal community at Warrabri and was understood to have an 'even' policy on land rights. On this point, in common with other CLP candidates in the Top End who had a special leaflet for Aboriginal communities, he said he was for 'better understanding with Government about the importance of land rights' and for 'more opportunities to develop homeland centres', that is, outstations. In other campaign literature, he stressed the importance of local development - and improved communications as an essential ingredient for it - and the good record of the government in working for the Territory and for its many local interests. On 5 June - two days before the election - a press release announced that \$0.3 million would be spent to improve the road between Warrabri Aboriginal settlement and Stuart highway.

Tuxworth was returned with an increased majority and an increased first preference vote. Labor's overall vote fell from 40 to 34 per cent. Although Thomson was the Union organiser for the miners at Warrego and had been involved in successful negotiations on their behalf, he won only 75 of the 218 formal votes at Warrego. The Progress party's share of the vote was down from 17.2 per cent in 1977 to 11.3 per cent in 1980.

In this isolated electorate we have one example of the social heterogeneity of the Centre and of the Territory as a whole, and of the dissimilar and often contradictory patterns which emerged from the election across the Territory. Barkly contains a town (Tennant Creek), a 'working-class' centre in the mining community at Warrego and an 'outback' where Aborigines were the majority. The election results from these sub-electorate areas emphasise yet again the dangers of assuming uniformities of any kind in movements of votes in the Territory.

The town of Tennant Creek produced an expected vote of 57 per cent for local resident and sitting CLP member Tuxworth. At Warrabri, with about 90 per cent Aboriginal population, Thomson for the Labor party secured 60 per cent of the votes. At the Warrego polling place, where miners comprised a majority of the voters, Tuxworth received 55 per cent of the votes, and Labor received only 34 per cent.

There is little evidence of a black-white electoral cleavage in these results. As in MacDonnell and, to a lesser extent, rural Stuart, long-term personal contact with local communities, black and white, seems to be of the first importance.

11 Electoral Education

PETER LOVEDAY and RON MAY

In 1980, under the new electoral act for the Territory, enrolment was made compulsory for Aboriginal citizens of eighteen years or more and as a result it was expected that large numbers of Aborigines, many with no relevant experience of parliamentary elections, would enrol and vote for the first time. For some years now it has been widely recognised that in circumstances like these it is necessary to provide instruction for Aborigines in enrolment and voting procedures and related matters and well before the new act was passed the Territory government asked the Australian Electoral Office, which had experience in work of this kind, for help in carrying out an education program, urgently and over a wide area, before the election and to help in the enrolment of large numbers of eligible Aborigines (*Katherine Advertiser* 30 August 1979).

Earlier Programs

The Australian Electoral Office was able to draw on experience going back to the early 1960s when the Commonwealth electoral act was amended and some emphasis was given to the need to provide instruction for Aborigines 'in order to enable them to exercise voting rights properly' (*CPD (R)* 1 May 1962, 1772 and Tatz, 1964, 199-203 for discussion).

From about 1977 the Commonwealth's efforts at Aboriginal electoral education were intensified. In that year the Australian Electoral Office conducted a special program to inform people about voting in the Northern Territory Assembly elections.

In 1977 the Australian Electoral Office also participated in an intensive 'voting procedures course' in the Western Australian state division of Kimberley to prepare Aboriginal voters for a state by-election and the course became the model for a continuing program of Aboriginal electoral education which was carried out by two caravan teams in South Australia and Western Australia in mid-1979 and subsequently in the Northern Territory.

Preparations

The basic arrangement was that the long-term Commonwealth program would be supplemented by a Northern Territory program carried out by Territory educational staff using materials developed by the Australian Electoral Office. Officials of the Electoral Office, the Adult Education Division of the Northern Territory Department of Education and the Chief Minister's Office met in December 1979 and agreed on the broad outlines of the program. Subsequent meetings agreed on the modifications necessary to adapt the instructional material to the particular needs of the Territory and on the general format of the campaign.

It was decided that the program could be mounted immediately through the Territory Department of Education by people resident in Aboriginal communities - adult educators and their Aboriginal assistants, and part-time instructors, school teachers and Aboriginal teacher aides, perhaps with help from community advisers and the like. A kit of instructional material was assembled for the electoral educators, which included an instructor's guide to the film, *You Can Have Your Say*, featuring Jimmy Little and an assortment of illustrative posters, realistic but fictitious how-to-vote cards and ballot papers for holding mock elections and information leaflets - all in English.

At the end of February those selected to implement the program were brought from their communities into Darwin and Alice Springs where two-day seminars were held for electoral office people and educators from the caravan teams to explain the material and coach them in its use. Out of about 100 who were invited, some 70 people (nearly half of them Aborigines) attended from 40 or so Aboriginal communities and other centres. Aboriginal organisations, political parties and church missions were invited to send representatives or observers.

In opening the seminars the Director of Technical and Further Education in the Northern Territory (G.W. Chard) emphasised that the purpose of the program was to help Aborigines exercise their voting rights in a responsible manner and in accordance with their individual consciences. It was particularly important because Aborigines were rapidly 'becoming more politically-aware' and were a 'significant proportion of the potential voters in at least five electorates'. These facts gave added point to the difficulties facing the educators. They would be open to criticism and 'malicious rumour'; to avoid it, they had to 'remain non-political in the delivery of electoral materials ...' (Chard 1980). Some educators, sharing the general assumption that it was impossible to say much about parties without being 'political', doubted whether the program could or should be 'non-political', but on the other side, an Aboriginal speaker emphasised that

Aboriginal people are aware of the parties - how those parties think - we are concerned with showing people how to cast the valid vote - it is the mechanics of the vote that is not understood - it is up to the communities to decide which party suits them ...

Only the briefest references were made to parties, barely enough to explain the grouping of candidates on the Senate ballot paper and, to avoid the risk of formalistic and misleading explanations of voting, more could be said about them without loss of political neutrality.

Since it was expected that educators would also enrol Aborigines in the course of the program and would inevitably be asked to help when people wanted postal votes, educators who were unsure about the system felt they were vulnerable after such a stern warning. One reason for this was the fact that the program was intended to explain enrolment and voting for the Commonwealth as well as the Territory, and under Commonwealth legislation it was, and is, an offence to solicit the enrolment of Aborigines. Another reason was the action of the Western Australian government which, following the state election on 23 February, laid charges against people who had assisted Aborigines who had applied for postal votes (*Canberra Times* 26 March 1980). Back in their communities, educators apparently had less difficulty drawing the line between electoral and political education than they expected.

Publicity for the election was another item in the program. Advertisements were placed in the press and on radio and television after the polling date had been announced and in addition the Territory Electoral Office distributed a multi-coloured poster which announced that elections would be held on 7 June and explained in English that people on the roll had to vote, described how it should be done and mentioned the help that could be given in writing the numbers (see back cover).

This poster was widely displayed in Aboriginal communities and other rural centres. Posters listing locations of mobile and static polling places were distributed at the same time and cassettes containing the same basic information on electoral procedures in English and several vernacular languages, and interspersed with Aboriginal and country music, were also made available.

Back In The Communities

No one expected that it would be easy to carry out the electoral education program or that it could be taken to all Aboriginal communities. Only one of the two caravans became available in time, operating out of Alice Springs, and most of the work was done by resident educators, although the other caravan team was available to help with the program at base in Darwin, for example, in preparing material in

Aboriginal languages. But many smaller or more remote communities saw nothing of the program.

Educators faced a number of problems. Since there is constant movement as people come and go to hunt, attend ceremonies and so on, 'classes' cannot be held for any length of time in many places. English is seldom used in bush communities and few local whites have a command of Aboriginal languages. In any case, Aboriginal languages do not always lend themselves easily to explanation of concepts behind preferential voting by secret ballot. Educators had other work to do which could not always be put aside. Some found their access to scattered Aboriginal communities impeded by impassable rivers or impossible roads. The death of a helper set the program back in one place; a funeral which went on for some weeks delayed it at another. Several complained that without up-to-date copies of the electoral rolls it was difficult to check names and carry out enrolment efficiently. The different rules for enrolment for Territory and Commonwealth caused confusion - and so did different enrolment cards and the late arrival of 'Territory only' cards.

From about mid-March, packages of the electoral education material began to arrive in Aboriginal communities. Notwithstanding the scepticism of some adult educators who were well aware of the difficulties of delivering such a program in the bush, the program had strong 'drive' behind it and strong personal commitment by those who had to take it back to the communities. But much of this drive was dissipated in overcoming the difficulties and some people who did not see the program in action concluded afterwards that very little had been achieved. Measurement of achievement in a program like this is extremely difficult and it is bound to be impressionistic but from first-hand observation and a number of reports it is possible to say that in many places the program was more successful than was recognised by those who did not see it at first hand. Reports were sent in by adult educators and by people resident in communities and well-informed about local events. Seven places where no local election education had been planned had little except explanations given by local people and once or twice by visiting candidates. The only outside help and stimulus they had was that given by the posters and the cassettes. Apart from the brief notes given by the NLC in its pamphlet (see ch. 6), there was no systematic educational activity by political parties or other organisations.

One of these places where about 120 Aborigines live wrote as follows in October 1979:

A couple of months ago someone sent the camp a stack of enrolment forms and they asked me what they were for. So I explained and assisted them to enrol, but I'm not sure many understood e.g. the oldies ... this action got the camp on the roll for the first time.

Another similar remote community reported that the people had held their own electoral education meeting, perhaps sparked off by the receipt of four cassettes and two posters.

For the other places it is possible to make a rough impressionistic distinction between those with a 'low' level of electoral education activity and those where it was 'high'. There were seven of the former and ten of the latter, leaving two from which the reports were too vague to permit a decision. The places where reported activity was judged 'high' made frequent use of the film, held more than one group training session, sometimes including a mock election, and got several local Aboriginal people to help in the work. One educator, for example, reported that she had carried out a program for several groups with the help of the local Aboriginal health worker, that with the help of other Aboriginal health workers and teachers she had conducted a mock poll using the materials in the kit and that the Jimmy Little film, which was thought 'excellent, helpful and very popular', had been shown twice a week for about a month. Most places found that the program was most easily carried out in small groups, usually specialised and often informal: of men, elders, women and so on.

At Oenpelli, a 'vexed, agitated and reasonably informed community', the Gunbalanya Council Literacy Centre had already begun its own electoral education program in October 1979 and, as in a handful of other like places, the Electoral Office program was easily added to reinforce local initiatives. There and at Milngimbi and Yirrkala the local people made up their own teaching materials, some of them in the vernacular to supplement those supplied in the kits. The Little film was shown to both small groups and 'mass' audiences in the evening before the main film came on. Well over 200 people saw it at Galiwin'ku on one 'mass' occasion and a few English-speaking Aborigines randomly questioned next day said there had been a lot of talk about it, that it did not go too fast and that it was easily understood. An educator in a community in the Centre reported as follows:

The day after I showed the Jimmy Little film, I was in the [community] hall. 1. so people could check if they were on the roll, 2. [so people could] ask questions about enrolment and/or how to fill in a ballot paper I made a display of the large picture cards and the mock election material [from the kit]. A few women arrived and, at their request, I showed the film again. People checked if they were enrolled and discussed voting - a constant trail of a few people over four hours. Some confusion because people who had voted in NAC election expected to be enrolled [i.e. on the roll].

Women as well as men had access to the program in the 'mass' showings of the film, and in some places special efforts were made to ensure that women also had their own special access in small groups.

Do not miss any numbers, or ~~don't~~
~~put the same numbers~~ ; don't write
 the same number twice.

An Aboriginal assistant at Yirrkala prepared a twelve page pamphlet in Gumatj to explain voting. The page shown gives her translation of what not to do.

At one place women who were very timid thought nonetheless that they should 'do what everyone else does' if they were to 'live in a community', as our report put it, and with the help of 'traditional' women the adult educator ran a special program for them; at Katherine, where younger Aboriginal women thought they should vote and have a voice in who went to parliament, the educator ran a mock election for about nineteen women, all nonliterate, their main task being to learn how to number from 1 to 10 in the squares. The older women, our report continues,

are aware they play a role of leadership ... they see themselves as having a special status because they are selected to go into new homes and the housing of other Aboriginal families may depend on how they handle life in their new homes.

Aborigines were involved in teaching in all of the centres where electoral education activity was 'high' and at some other places as well. What is more, the adult educators - invited to try innovations and to use their experience to get the program across - tried to get their Aboriginal assistants to take much of the responsibility for organising and doing the work and tried to efface themselves into the role of 'resource persons' as much as they could.

In communities where education activity had been 'high', most

Kangaroo
will support you

VOTE
KANGAROO

1

KANGAROO	
SNAKE	1
POSSUM	3
EMU	2
GOANNA	4

SNAKE
is your Team

VOTE
SNAKE

KANGAROO	4
SNAKE	1
POSSUM	5
EMU	2
GOANNA	3

A 10 BLACKMORE Steven Wutred	C 6 PRICE Mector John	D 13 McADAM Harold John	18 BRENNAN Lydia Alice
A 11 OTWAY Lawrence Alan	C 7 COURTIS Maurea	D 14 BRIGHT Charles	19 THOMSON Robert Angus
A 12 KIRKWOOD Edward Brian	C 8 BOWMAN Peter Lysa	D 15 STEWART Linda Jane	20 YOUNG William John
	C 9 LINDQUIST Barbara	D 16 RICARDO Terrence	
		D 17 WILLIAMS Kevin	

YOUR SENATE TEAM
Education sample
VOTE FOR

How-to-vote cards used in mock elections in the electoral education program. Unlike true how-to-vote cards they do not mention political parties. Note the complexity of the Senate card.

reports were that the material, especially the film, was generally well received (there were several suggestions that the mock ballots using animals were not appropriate for adults) and that there was a good deal of interest within the community. Only one or two educators felt they lost credibility when they tried to explain that they could not answer 'political' questions: who were the candidates, what did the parties stand for, who should we vote for?

Visits from candidates in the latter half of May and early June also stirred up some interest among voters and facilitated the electoral education effort. However data from our reports in this period suggest that while the names of the leading candidates were fairly well known, many electors had difficulty understanding the significance of the party affiliations of candidates, many were unable to understand preferential voting even after it had been explained and many were uncertain what to do to get an absentee vote if they were away from their community on polling day.

Assessing The Program

The program had two objectives: to explain enrolment and voting to Aborigines unfamiliar with elections and with the new Territory electoral act, and to encourage Aborigines to enrol for Territory elections and, if they wished to enrol for the Commonwealth too, to give them whatever help they might need to do so. It is not easy to measure the success of the program in attaining either objective.

What seemed likely to be useful indicators - turnout on polling day, increases in enrolment and decreases in levels of informal voting - all proved to be unsatisfactory. Given the unexpectedly short time for enrolment after the announcement of the day of the election and the inability of the Electoral Office to complete its review of the rolls evidence from the enrolment figures is unreliable. There is nonetheless some evidence about enrolments from communities which reported on the program. Seven said that Aborigines had been enrolled, sometimes in large numbers, during the program. A few said that enrolments had been made but not as a result of the program and in addition, to judge by enrolments made on polling day, there were still many people not reached by the enrolment side of the program. That was not surprising given the dispersal and mobility of Aborigines and the number of places beyond reach of the program. Turnout figures were of little use both because the rolls were not up-to-date and because Aborigines, being highly mobile, often voted at addresses different from those given on the roll. And finally, given the help provided under section 79 of the Act, nothing could be concluded by comparing informal voting in places where electoral education had been provided with informal voting in other places.

The educational side of the program was also difficult to assess, especially since there could be two different ways of evaluating it. The basic question was whether it increased Aborigines' understanding of the electoral system and their ability not only to cast a formal vote but to cast a vote correctly recording their own preferences between the candidates. Surveys of Aboriginal knowledge are unusually difficult both for technical reasons and because demographic information is too inexact. The study team had neither the time nor the resources needed to overcome these difficulties. We also found that surveys of some kind have been carried out so often that people are becoming fed up with them, especially in the more accessible communities, when they get no reports back from those conducting the surveys. Another point is that in the absence of any reliable baseline data on political knowledge it was not practicable to attempt even small 'before and after' studies of the impact of the program, especially when it and the study would have to be carried out in the context of an election and other political activities independently increasing the level of awareness and knowledge. In any case, studies of this type have not

proved particularly useful in assessing the effects of political education efforts elsewhere (May 1973; see also May 1976). And finally, given the secrecy of the ballot, we cannot say whether Aborigines correctly recorded their choices between candidates. The most that may be possible is to discover whether Aborigines understand the technicalities well enough to cast formal votes.

The other aspect of the program which may be evaluated is the process of delivery itself - the way in which it was carried out. This is somewhat easier to do given our own first-hand observations and reports sent in to us and to the Education Department.

The way in which the program was carried out may be dealt with first. Most of the suggestions made for improving the program dealt with this side of it. Many reports, even those from educators who began work on enrolment in March and April, were critical - some scathingly so - of the closure of the rolls within 36 hours of the announcement of the date of the election. They were disheartened because they felt their efforts had been cut short prematurely and the most usual suggestion was to allow two weeks for closure of the rolls. More effort, some said, should be made to reach outstations, even though it was recognised that permission to visit would be needed and not always easy to get and that many of these places are physically difficult of access even in the dry season. One educator servicing a large centre as well as a considerable number of outstations spoke for several similar places in urging that more trucks, staff and audio-visual gear were needed to do the job thoroughly over the whole area. Places which had not had the full program were anxious to have it once they knew of its existence. Two or three people emphasised that Aborigines should be educated in the conduct of polling and involved as presiding officers or assistants. Another emphasised that 'the best thing to come from our program is the fact that I now have 8 to 10 local people I can call on and, with minimal revision, they could do a similar educational program without me in English and/or vernacular.' He also added, in reply to our question whether he had suggestions to improve the program: 'Not really. With these people it just takes time and needs practice. I am certain between 70 and 75 per cent [of] local people voted; they were more aware than I thought.'

Assessment of the program necessarily entails both criticism and evaluation. Some points have already been made, at least incidentally: the program was slow to start in many places - often for good reasons; in some places it was not carried out with much vigour at all. The lack of up-to-date copies of the electoral roll in most communities (in some even old rolls could not be found) and confusion about the enrolment cards all helped reduce the effectiveness of the enrolment side of the program. Poor communications with Darwin made it difficult to get replacements for things lost; travel warrants needed in a hurry; clarification of points locally in dispute; confirmation of a rumour

that Electoral Office people would make last minute stops at airstrips; names of people who would preside at or help with the polling. Some things could not, of course, be avoided or remedied: a funeral, ceremonies, poor roads.

Criticism, it should be emphasised, was counterbalanced by much approval. The film (although it was criticised in some details) and the language cassettes were greatly appreciated, many educators reporting not only on their effectiveness in getting the message across when using the film but also on the importance of the film in getting and holding an audience together - not always an easy matter in Aboriginal communities. The materials provided for the conduct of mock elections were generally well received: 'all find it helpful (most successful way of learning)', according to one place which thought they and the film the most useful items in the teaching kit. The cassettes almost certainly helped reinforce the efforts of a number of educators who, relying on Aboriginal assistants, conducted teaching sessions in the vernacular.

As far as Aboriginal reactions are concerned, some educators thought that their communities were indifferent to the program. It was sometimes difficult to get a group together for formal instruction and it was much easier to fit the program in with some other activity going on - even if it was only to show the film to a group gathered to gossip in the shade of a tree. But more educators reported active interest and eagerness to learn.

To turn from delivery to the effectiveness of the program - it is hard to say how much Aborigines learned from it and evidence is necessarily impressionistic. The most difficult topic in the program was preferential voting and educators from fifteen communities answered our questions whether it had been much discussed locally and whether the people understood it. In many places, the subject was discussed. The second question could be answered in several ways. Most said no, they thought the Aborigines did not *really* understand it, which referred to the different levels of understanding possible. At the most elementary level preferential voting can be understood as a system of ordering preferences and indicating the order by numbers. As one educator put it: at his community they clearly knew how to mark '1' for the good bloke and '3' for the bad bloke. Knowledge of this kind was apparently fairly widely diffused, even though many people marking numbers for the first time, seem to have made mistakes. At two other places where there has been a long history of electoral activity, the educators were of the opinion that some people with European educational experience, for example Aboriginal nurses and teachers, understood it up to a point, the implication being that they knew how it 'worked', at least in principle, when the votes came to be counted. Another drew attention to the third 'conceptual' level, as he put it, saying he doubted if any Aborigines in the area understood 'why' we

had it - and another added that Aborigines treated it as 'just one of those things' about white society. There is no doubt that at this level many whites do too. There is also no question that many Aborigines (it is impossible to say how many) have little or no conception of government and opposition, of parliament and parties or even of more immediate matters such as how to cast an absent or a postal vote. The Aboriginal assistant at one place explained to one of us how he had managed to explain government and opposition as 'big party' and 'small party' using local language, but we do not know whether this was done effectively at other places too.

It does not, however, follow that Aborigines are unsophisticated about voting and unable to comprehend it. Many have voted in earlier Territory, Commonwealth and National Aboriginal Conference elections and, as we have noted earlier, elections for local councils have also added to their experience of electoral systems, even if they are not exactly analogous. Several Aboriginal community leaders, in discussing the election, made it clear that they and their people understood the rudiments of the system well enough to know how to cast a valid vote for the person of their first choice and that in group meetings they not only discussed the candidates to decide who was 'number 1 bloke' but also explained to their people how that choice should be recorded on polling day. They were also quite well aware that given the secret ballot, individuals who dissented from group decisions were free to vote as they wished.

Several things follow from this and two or three are of importance here. Though many Aborigines are neither numerate nor literate in English and the concepts of voting are foreign to their culture, it cannot be assumed that Aboriginal communities are without knowledge of the electoral system. The individual may be, but the communities generally have a body of accessible and more or less accurate and sophisticated knowledge which may be drawn on as the need arises. The second point is that where improvement in understanding and knowledge is observed it cannot be credited wholly to the education program and that the program, if it is done with the help of Aboriginal assistants, adds to the local body of knowledgeable people. Another, which is recognised in the Electoral Office's description of the assumptions underlying the program, is that 'traditional learning patterns and cognitive styles' will be taken into account and care taken 'to acknowledge kinship and family ties, and to work within local authority structures' in order to ensure that the program will 'be accepted by the communities visited and not be imposed as a government "scheme"'. These criteria were most easily met by those who worked closely with Aboriginal assistants.

Another aspect of the program, already touched on, may be emphasised here. In view of the initial anxieties expressed by Director Chard, the program generated remarkably little controversy. There is

no evidence that any educators went outside the program provided for them and as far as we know no candidate or party made any complaint about the program - except that it was too short. Considering the animus which the election generated in some circles this is a not inconsiderable achievement. The conclusion seems warranted that although we have not been able to say how much the Aborigines gained as a result of the program, if it is judged by the response given to it by Aboriginal communities and by the accounts we have of the way in which it was carried out it was on the whole a successful program, especially when the obstacles to be overcome in the time available are taken into account.

12 Mobile Polling

PETER LOVEDAY and JOHN SUMMERS

Mobile polling, although not new in Australia, had not been tried on such a large scale for an ordinary election before 1980. In the Territory mobile polling teams were used in six electorates. All teams completed polling in three days in the week before election day by a combination of surface vehicles and planes. A helicopter too was used in the most difficult electorate - Arnhem. The other electorates in which mobiles were used were Barkly, Elsey, MacDonnell, Stuart and Victoria River.

Planning And Preparing

The mobile method of gathering votes was intended to overcome several problems of polling in the Territory. Given that there are many small groups of people dispersed over wide distances in difficult country it does not make sense to have fixed or static booths for them for ten hours. In the past, people in small remote communities were given the automatic postal vote but this system, it was widely believed by people on all sides in politics, was abused by white people who had the handling of the mail and filled in the ballot papers.

It was also believed that in isolated communities partisan presiding officers administered the act laxly, secure against effective challenge. But the basic difficulty is the dispersal and the isolation of small groups of people and it is enhanced now by compulsory enrolment of Aborigines. Another point is that automatic postals assume an effective postal system and an adequate knowledge of English and of the electoral system by the recipient of mail and neither assumption is justified.

Finally, once enrolment and voting were both made compulsory, as they now are for NT elections, there was bound to be an administrative effort to minimise the difficulties voters might face in performing their duty to vote, especially in a situation where failure to make this effort might be regarded by critics as creating an administrative situation that discriminates against the Aborigines.

A complex system of polling resulted from these considerations. Normally, where more than 50 voters were expected static or fixed

booths would be provided. If there were likely to be more than ten but less than 50 voters, mobiles would be arranged. There would still be automatic postal votes for people who were on rolls for places more than 20 km by the shortest practicable route from a fixed polling place and in addition, postal and absentee votes were available in the usual way to people who made the necessary declarations.

The administration of this system depended on the state of the electoral rolls. Where to put the mobiles, how to link them in integrated routes and to whom automatic postals should be given (it was expected that about 3500 would be necessary) could best be determined if knowledge about numbers of voters, including Aborigines, was up-to-date. Decisions about the placing and timing of mobile runs were therefore left as late as possible. It was also recognised that the arrangements should not favour either party. The electorates in which the mobiles would collect votes were among those which registered the largest increases in enrolment: Arnhem (18 per cent); Barkly (25); Elsey (19); MacDonnell (16); Nhulunbuy (16); Stuart (26) and Tiwi (23). Of the rural electorates where the mobile runs were to be made only Victoria River (5) did not register a rise above the average for the NT as a whole.

The way in which the mobile polling would be carried out had been under discussion for some time in the Electoral Office and the Aboriginal Liaison Unit of the Chief Minister's Department and on 21 May the details were officially announced.

This announcement specified that the mobile teams would be at particular places at definite times to take votes. For example, a plane would visit Bulman Station airstrip on 2 June from 9.00 am until 10.30 and then go to two other places and be back in Darwin in the evening; meanwhile a truck would be in the bush at Benamanarka Gunora from 8.30 am until 9.15 and would then go on to three other outstations before returning to its base at Maningrida after nightfall. In all cases, the plan was to complete polling on Wednesday 4 June so that the ballot boxes - kept locally secure in police lockups each day where possible or chained and locked to vehicles otherwise - could be transferred to Darwin on Thursday 5 June and the polling teams relocated on Friday to the places where they would conduct the static polling booths on Saturday, 7 June. The act provided that if a mobile team was unable to be at the specified place on the date or during the hours specified, the team leader could specify another place and/or date and time for polling, such public notice as he considered 'necessary and sufficient' to be given.

A number of other things had to be done besides deciding where to put the mobiles. Once that had been decided, the times and places of polling had to be made known to the communities concerned. The press, and for that matter the radio, is a very uncertain means of communication in the Territory, especially for getting administrative

Two of the six mobile polling runs out of Maningrida, Arnhem Electorate
(Selection only of outstations are marked)

Polling teams went over bush tracks by land cruiser to outstations near Maningrida and by helicopter to more remote places.

messages to Aborigines. Three posters were printed, one showing the times and places of mobile polling, one for the statics, and a multicoloured one showing an Aboriginal family about to vote and giving basic information about how to vote, saying it is compulsory and giving the date.

Another step, supplementing the electoral education program, was to provide cassettes in English and local languages explaining what was to be done on or before 7 June. According to those observing mobile polling, these tapes were widely heard and greatly appreciated except at one place where the tape sent was in the wrong language. Like the posters, they were delivered by plane and road, and some arrived only just in time.

Besides that, the presiding officers and teams for the mobile runs had to be found and briefed and the equipment arranged - trucks, planes and the helicopter, camping and cooking equipment, ballot boxes and papers, rolls, pencils, tables, chairs, ropes, petrol and so forth. At one polling place, the old-fashioned backed razor blade provided for sharpening pencils proved very useful for someone who wanted to trim his toenails. And, as if to leave nothing to chance, the Electoral Office even provided a list of items of food that teams might buy with the money provided for the purpose. Team leaders were experienced divisional returning officers from the Australian Electoral Office in all states - New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia provided three each, Queensland two and Victoria and Tasmania one each - but not all were experienced in the bush.

Another step in administrative preparation was to write the instructions for presiding officers. Quite a large wad of paper was produced - 46 pages of instructions and shorter special sets. The flavour of one of these may be gained by quoting a sentence or two - 'On arrival - don't just bowl up - stop about 100 metres away and wait for someone to come: tell them that you want the number one man, that you are there to run the election and that you would like somewhere to set up'. 'Patience, politeness and courteous requests are the order of the day'. 'Be careful of invading the "personal space" of electors, especially the frightened or the shy'.

The emphasis was to provide sympathetic and relaxed administration of the rules in an attempt to ensure that voters all had a chance to vote, did so without hurry, fright or fuss and knew, as best they could, what they were doing. The new act, it should be added, made most of this possible: it provided not only that voters might use how-to-vote cards to indicate their preferences and that candidates' photos would be displayed in the booth and cubicle, but, in section 79, provided that presiding officers or persons nominated by them might assist nonliterate or incapacitated voters by marking the ballot paper for them under their instruction and that, if they needed it, they could have someone of their own choice to help them communicate with the

presiding officer and observe that the presiding officer did what he was called on to do in this situation. There had also been a promise, made as a result of talk at the August 1979 conference at Galiwin'ku, that Aboriginal assistants to presiding officers would be employed where possible and where they were chosen they greatly helped with the application of section 79.

Out In The Bush

Mobile polling was, in general, carried out according to the act and instructions, with sympathy and understanding and without racial discrimination, although there were a few minor lapses that could not have influenced the results.

The number of votes gathered by the mobiles was small: in Arnhem 176; Barkly 128; Elsey 159; Macdonnell 88; Stuart 183 and Victoria River 127. Informals, 52 in all for the six electorates, were lower than many people expected because a large proportion of Aboriginal voters were assisted by presiding officers or their assistants.

The number of votes at mobiles would undoubtedly have been much higher had all eligible Aborigines been enrolled, especially women and older people. It is impossible to give any accurate figures on the point but possibly as many as half of the Aborigines on hand at the mobile stations were not on the rolls by 9 May. This was also observed for Aborigines at static polling places.

It should also be added here, in contradiction of speculation which circulated before the election, that Aborigines did not try to avoid voting. On the contrary, the evidence is that they made every effort to take advantage of the opportunity to vote and many were disappointed when they could not do so because their names were not on the roll. One place put off its contract mustering for the day; other groups delayed their hunting expeditions or interrupted them to be at the poll. Many regarded the poll as an important occasion and were dressed in their best clothes to vote; others questioned on the spot said they regarded voting as a very good thing and were pleased to be able to do so. Some - without white encouragement or help - made big efforts to get from remote parts to the advertised place of polling and one group, camped some way off, which discovered it had missed the poll at the set time, sought the return of the polling team on the outstation radio so that their votes could be taken.

Some votes were probably lost for a variety of reasons - not all avoidable and not exclusive to the mobiles. Some people were said to be too ill to come long distances to vote. Some were said to be away on outstations beyond reach of news and mobile teams. Some may have been unaware of or too late at pick-up points to get on trucks organised to bring people from remote camps to the advertised places of polling, or not invited (as e.g. one mustering team) to get on the vehicle

going to the polling place. Some were probably lost because of difficulty establishing the names and enrolment of would-be voters at the polling place. Others were probably lost because in a rush of polling insufficient trouble was taken to check the rolls for variant spellings of names and because polling officials too easily overlooked the possibility of misunderstanding and confusion when an Aboriginal man or woman who believed they were entitled to vote answered 'no' to the question whether they had filled in an enrolment claim card at some time.

Failure to understand the questions asked by the presiding officers was common according to observers, and must be attributed not only to unfamiliarity with the system but to the form of the questions, the Aborigines' unfamiliarity with this form, the pronunciation of those putting the questions and their reluctance to depart from a form specified in the act. Delays may have resulted in some loss of votes too. One observer reported that although 'all Aborigines seemed very enthusiastic to vote', their enthusiasm 'dropped when the polling officers frequently spent five or more minutes finding out their names'. The time could be much longer if all the voters arrived together and a queue formed.

Some were undoubtedly lost because they were not within reach of a mobile or static booth on polling day and either did not apply for a postal vote or were not known to the Electoral Office to be entitled to an automatic postal vote - a situation which could arise if a person was enrolled at an address such as Yirrkala but had for some time been resident at one of its more distant outstations, a common situation in many parts. In addition, as with enrolment, so with postal voting: communications with Aboriginal groups in remote parts are haphazard and, even if they are adequate, Aborigines may well not understand what is required of them in a postal vote. At one place, where the station owner let it be known what he thought of 'boongs', no Aborigines turned up to vote although the polling team waited at the airstrip expecting them. At another place a number of people were unable to vote because of a death in their group just before the poll which meant they had to go into 'sorry camp' ceremonial on the day of polling.

One of the main difficulties in polling was to establish whether people wanting to vote were listed in the electoral roll. Whites, especially those unfamiliar with Aborigines as many of the out-of-state presiding officers were, had difficulty hearing Aboriginal names correctly and in settling on a spelling for them that might correspond to one of several possibilities under which a name might have been put on the roll. This difficulty was, of course, anticipated and it was hoped that presiding officers would overcome it, or at least reduce it, if they each appointed an assistant officer familiar with local Aboriginal languages to help not only in establishing names and enrolment but also in other

aspects of polling. The instructions did not say that these assistants were to be Aborigines, but each presiding officer was encouraged to 'engage on the spot a bright young knowledgeable person' - female if possible if the polling team was all male - as an assistant from among the local people: that is, an Aboriginal helper.

Practice varied: some presiding officers took the encouragement to hire Aboriginal helpers seriously, but they were not always able to find the kind of person needed; others relied on an Aboriginal assistant who was travelling with them and was believed to be familiar with local languages and people. Some gave their assistants a good deal of responsibility; others tried to manage without them as much as possible until they got into difficulties. The latter was observably the less likely way of calling forth the spontaneous help of the assistants. Those given the more responsible roles, even with quite slight instruction in their duties, proved equal to the task to the extent that non-participant observers were able to judge the point. In many places more than one Aboriginal assistant was needed, particularly where enrolment claims were being filled in while voting was going on.

The expected double enrolment of Aborigines under different names was frequently encountered and with help from various local sources the confusion was sorted out and the redundant names were marked for correction later on in the Electoral Office. Names that were taboo were not quite as serious a difficulty as had been anticipated; they were managed by people whispering them, writing them or having other people say them quietly for the officers.

Presiding officers and assistants were greatly helped in determining names and enrolments by other people. This was done in various ways: - the oldest man or head man in a community often lined his people up and called them forward and identified them to the polling officials and helped them find the names on the roll. In many instances men voted first, then women, or perhaps small groups of men and of women came forward separately. This seemed to ensure that there was no social embarrassment or breaking of rules about who could see or speak with whom, especially the mother-in-law taboo which it was widely thought might cause difficulties. It also minimised the evident shyness of people, especially of women in remoter places. In only a few instances did men and women vote together in no discernible order as whites do. Some people came to the polling place with how-to-vote cards which had their names written on the back. Some scrutineers, party canvassers, station managers, store people and teachers were able from local knowledge to identify people, suggest variant spellings of names, recall bush names or names that had become taboo. Some polling officials were given lists, taken from the rolls, of people who were known to be in the area and likely to vote. Since these lists gave a spelling they greatly assisted checking names on rolls. This kind of help appears to have been easier to give in the

A voter is assisted under section 79 at Mt Allen while a candidate's representative watches. The voter is not referring to the HTV card.

The cardboard voting cubicle (weighted with stones) showing the sheet of candidates' photographs.

slightly more informal atmosphere of the open air mobile polling booth, especially when only small numbers of people were to vote.

Three other aspects of the business in the polling place call for some comment: assistance given to the voters; the behaviour of candidates' representatives (commonly known as scrutineers) and the physical layout and equipment of the mobile polling places.

Under section 79(1) of the act the presiding officer is required to mark a ballot paper, or instruct an officer to do so, under direction from the voter, if he is satisfied that the voter is illiterate or so incapacitated physically that he could not mark the ballot paper himself. Leprosy, for example, might result in such damage to the hands as to make it impossible to write or eyesight might be - and in several instances was - so poor that voters needed help. Above all, many people, though knowing who they wanted to vote for did not know 'how to go about it'. And another part of the section allowed that a voter might choose a helper to give instructions to a presiding officer and to observe that they were carried out.

Given the inevitable mixing up in real life of the different functions possible under section 79 of the act, candidates' representatives who wished to 'throw the book' at presiding officers could have made polling more protracted and exasperating to all concerned; as it was, with some exceptions, they were tolerant and protested only when assistants got into the habit of offering to fill in the ballot for every black voter or when they offered information to the voter as to the party affiliation of the candidates. The main point of reference for voters and assistants alike was the sheet of photos of candidates provided in each cubicle, with the names of candidates in the same order as on the ballot paper. They were very widely used and greatly assisted proceedings. How-to-vote cards, permitted under 79(3) of the act, were used by voters to indicate to presiding officers who they wanted as no. 1 man, no. 2 man and so on, but their use was by no means as universal as some of the people connected with the election expected them to be. Observers frequently reported voters having but not using how-to-vote cards in instructing the presiding officer.

Given the difficulties and informality of the real life situation, the procedure of questioning voters was bound to work somewhat differently from that envisaged in the act. There, in order to ensure that voters are not harassed, browbeaten or denied the vote for technical reasons, it is specifically provided that the presiding officer must ask the person claiming a vote to 'state his full name and such other particulars as may be necessary to identify the person as a person whose name appears on a roll' - if necessary address and occupation (which for bush Aborigines is commonly 'hunter' or 'huntress') - and two other questions:

'is this the first time you have voted either here or elsewhere in this election' and

'was your real place of living at any time within the last three months within the Division of X' in which a vote is claimed.

These other two questions often seemed ridiculous to people living in the bush. Naturally the questions were soon asked perfunctorily, and, even when they did not seem ridiculous, the exact wording was often not heard correctly or not understood with resultant confusion - and 'yes' answers when 'no' was meant and vice versa. Some people were confused in any case and thought that 'first time you have voted', which is possibly all they heard of the English sentence, meant - 'in any election' - and strongly insisted they had voted in NAC or Territory or Commonwealth elections on some earlier date. Inevitably, presiding officers and assistants - and sometimes bystanders - had to ask supplementary questions to sort out confusion arising from the questions prescribed, and that in turn sometimes invited the objection of scrutineers. It must be added, however, that no instance was observed of anybody harassing or intimidating a voter with questions or trying to deprive him or her of a vote on a technicality.

With one exception - and that in a static booth - presiding officers not only knew what they had to do but did it with sensitivity, helpfully and with a proper sense of when the rules had to be relaxed and when they had to be observed to ensure the secrecy of the vote and similar principles. In only one or two places was there the slightest hint of racial discrimination - for example in taking white voters ahead of black - and of the intimidation or patronising that could be conveyed by manner and tone of voice. In one or two places there were minor instances of intimidation but not by people conducting the poll. At one, proceedings were disrupted 'when an impatient, loud-voiced and overtly intimidating white man (one of the local motel managers) stormed in and suggested that those people who knew their names, who knew how to vote and who had work to do and who therefore couldn't afford to waste time hanging around lining up should go ahead and vote first. All the Aborigines immediately left the room and the Presiding Officer had to rush out and encourage them not to go away if they had not yet voted'. Candidates' representatives, with one or two minor exceptions, worked with tolerance and sympathy. The two main parties, naturally enough, took most trouble and expense in trying to provide scrutineers for each run (although they omitted the surface and helicopter runs in Arnhem); the independent candidates could not attempt comprehensive scrutineering and had only a few representatives in the polling places. Each party provided detailed printed advice for its scrutineers designed to ensure that they did whatever seemed necessary to maximise the party vote within the rules. But in addition, most scrutineers were experienced enough to

know that they should observe the rules themselves and not be 'bush lawyers' out to challenge anything that seemed slightly outside the rules. Most observed the rules relating to their own behavior too, although one, for example, confused the roles of canvasser and scrutineer and so irked the presiding officer that he decided to put up ropes at 10 metres at the next polling place - except that the ground proved too hard and he had no hammer! Lapses by scrutineers were not confined to those of one party, although allegations have been made to that effect. The one thing which appears to have caused more trouble from candidates' representatives than any other, was the 'crowding' of shy and apprehensive people who, in voting for the first time, asked for help and attracted the attention of scrutineers. This appears to have been more noticeable in the static booths than in the mobiles, and especially in the Katherine polling place in Elsey where there were six candidates and a correspondingly large group of scrutineers to pay attention to special questions arising under sections 79 and 80 of the act.

Finally, in the polling, there is the physical equipment itself. The rule that ballot boxes should be exhibited empty at each polling place and then locked was scrupulously observed at mobiles. In several polling places there were not enough copies of the electoral roll - a complaint which also arose before the polling day in many communities which wanted to make last minute preparations to check names, to alert voters or to make arrangements to bring outstation people in to base settlement to vote. Cubicles - cardboard shields cunningly folded to lie flat and yet to be self supporting when open on a table - proved a little too small, especially when a voter wanted help to mark the paper.

Fixed times and places for polling were laid down in the notices circulated to communities beforehand and it was not always possible to conform to them. In some communities the place of polling was changed: the community felt its sick and infirm could not be taken to the designated place at the airstrip and sent a truck to take the team to the settlement; a static polling place had become a private residence since Darwin last heard of it; the council thought its building more suitable than the school house for another static.

But far more important, for the mobiles, was the fact that though the teams were mobile, the places and times were prescribed. At first teams attempted to adhere to these scrupulously. One surface team with eight polling places in its first two days, spent several hours at four of them with no voters in sight. Though the Electoral Office had been told by local informants that the outstations had long been deserted, the rolls still had people listed as voters at those addresses and the truck had to be sent there nonetheless. Given more up-to-date rolls and a higher Aboriginal enrolment it is to be expected that mobiles would in future be much less likely to be stationed where there are no voters.

The importance of the help given by non-official people must be emphasised. It was given by many people, black and white, some party workers and some not, some community employees and some private citizens. There was help in informal ways in the polling places themselves and in preparing such things as lists of names of local voters and in making vehicles available to get voters to appointed polling places. Others performed the essential service of getting information to remote communities about the date and place of polling and helped explain what a voter should do there on the day. Much of this aid was provided outside the official line of duty, some of it at the personal expense of the people helping. Mobile polling would have been much less effective without it.

Police in uniform were not on hand at mobile stations and at none were they needed. Local police officers are, of course, well recognised in remote places whether they are in uniform or not. In a few instances they or their wives acted as scrutineers or in handing out cards. At some places observers could see that, when Aborigines were assisted to vote under Section 79, scrutineers kept a record of how individuals voted but it is impossible to say whether anyone was intimidated, even unintentionally.

The general conclusion is that mobiles were an unqualified success, despite their critics. The critics, mostly in casual talk about the election, have suggested that the mobile polling was a waste of large amounts of money on a very few votes which clearly would not have made much difference to the result in any electorate. The point is not the cost or the likelihood of making a difference to the result - what a field day for gerrymandering were that an instruction to the drawers of divisional boundaries and electoral acts! What matters is that people entitled to the vote and obliged to do so by the act should be given reasonable administrative opportunity to do so, regardless of race or colour; that the system should not be open to manipulation and that it should be as secure as possible from accidental administrative vagaries of the kind that are all too common in the communication system of the Territory. Mobile polling, though it has defects which are probably not all removable, is vastly superior on each test to the automatic postal vote system which, in part, it was designed to replace.

In addition, it has two very important advantages that arise from the introduction of a new and superior system. It enables the government - of whatever party - to argue that the Aboriginal vote has been as well counted in the politics of the Territory as it may be - allowing that the system has yet to be improved - and it has demonstrably had a large educative effect for the Aborigines themselves.

13 The Results: What, Where, Why

DEAN JAENSCH and PETER LOVEDAY

To 'make sense' of an election it is essential to combine all the disparate elements of individual contests and this may best be done by discussing three questions: What happened? Where did it happen? Why did it happen?

Answers to the first two questions are relatively simple in state and national elections in Australia. Electorate boundaries, electoral populations and patterns of party support do not change much or often and ready access to electoral data at the most detailed level - the polling place - enables us to give relatively uncontroversial answers to the questions what and where. The range of surveys which normally accompany elections helps with interpretations - the question why.

It is by no means as easy to answer these questions for the Northern Territory. Major changes have recently been made in the electoral system and the population has grown rapidly. Factors which are relatively unimportant elsewhere - levels of enrolment, turnout and informal voting, for example - have considerable importance in the Territory and this was increased under the new electoral act which made enrolment as well as voting compulsory for Aborigines over eighteen years of age along with whites even though a moratorium on penalties for failure to enrol was granted until after the election.

Another complication is that, in order to ensure the secrecy of the ballot any polling place at which less than 100 votes were cast is aggregated with one or more other polling places until the total number of votes is more than 100. Since so many places in the Territory have only small numbers of voters, votes from widely differing areas are combined and cannot be disaggregated or even compared with past results when different combinations may have been made.

And attempts to explain 'why' must be surrounded by a number of qualifications for several reasons. Personalities and local issues are likely to have significant effects, the intensity of which is difficult to assess in electorates of small populations. It is true to say that local issues may affect results in national or state electorates, but the very small electorate populations in the Northern Territory, and the unique nature of some of the outback electorates, provide a situation where

the effects are more important. In short, general tendencies are likely to be weaker and therefore more difficult to identify.

The usual published data-bank of survey results is also not available. A post-election sample survey was conducted in the Alice Springs urban area specifically for this study, and the results provide valuable data for discussing why the town voted as it did. But to extrapolate from Alice Springs to Darwin, let alone from an urban centre to the outback, begs many questions. General explanations of the results cannot, therefore, be conclusive; they remain to some extent impressionistic, tentative and open to further argument.

What Happened And Where

In the Assembly itself, the election resulted in only a small change. The CLP won eleven seats, where before it had twelve up until the time, late in the house, when one of its members, Rod Oliver, declared himself an independent. It regained Oliver's seat, but lost one seat, Nhulunbuy, which increased Labor's membership from six in the old house to seven in the new. The sole independent, Dawn Lawrie, was returned. Moreover, the sitting members, with the exception of Oliver and, in Nhulunbuy, Milton Ballantyne, retained their seats.

At the electoral level, the broad picture is of a gain by the CLP. In 1974 it had 49 per cent of the votes which fell to 40.1 per cent in 1977; in 1980 it won 50 per cent. Labor, on the other hand, retained the increase it had won in 1977 when its share of the total vote rose from 30.5 per cent in 1974 to 38.2 per cent. In 1980 it improved its share slightly to 39.4 per cent. But both descriptions - of the shares of seats and shares of votes - are generalisations which mask a kaleidoscopic variety of results and divergent shifts in electoral behaviour at the regional, electorate and polling place levels in the Territory. But before discussing these matters, it is necessary to consider some points about the working of the electoral act.

Enrolment, Turnout And Informal Voting

Since the first election for the new Assembly in 1974, enrolments increased by over 14 000 or, in six years, by 36 per cent, notwithstanding the chaos and loss of population caused by cyclone Tracy in 1975. In the three years before the 1980 election, enrolments increased by almost 10 000, or 23 per cent, making the Territory one of the fastest growing electorates in Australia. But the total enrolment in 1980 was still only 53 218.

This growth was evident in both urban and rural regions: enrolments in Darwin and Alice Springs together increased by 22 per cent in the three years to 1980; in the rural areas they increased by 24 per cent. But there were important local variations within this apparently evenly distributed growth.

Changes in enrolments at electorate level ranged from the massive increase of 95 per cent in three years in the Darwin suburban seat of Sanderson to decreases in enrolment in MacDonnell and in the Darwin seats of Stuart Park, Fannie Bay and Port Darwin, the last showing a decrease of 12 per cent. In the rural areas, excluding MacDonnell, the average increase was 30 per cent over 1977, a figure which would have been even higher had the normal enrolment period been allowed following the announcement of the election date. For some time before this announcement, the parties, the candidates and other people had been making efforts - admittedly sometimes belated and desultory efforts - to ensure that people entitled to vote were on the roll, especially Aborigines. The early closure of the rolls meant that many people, a high proportion of them Aborigines, were simply not enrolled. Two questions therefore must be asked about the enrolment: what proportion of eligible voters was enrolled and how accurate were the rolls?

Around the time of the election there were many comments, mostly from party canvassers, that the rolls were far from accurate because some names were on them which should have been deleted (the people having died or left the electorates in question) and because many Aborigines appeared on the rolls more than once under different names. It was not, however, widely realised that the Electoral Office had taken steps to correct these defects and that its procedures had been cut short, unfinished, by the closure of rolls on May 9.

For example, the Electoral Office had posted 1456 objections-to-enrolment forms in three Darwin electorates - 395 on 22 April in Jingili (12 per cent of those enrolled), 533 on the same day in Casuarina (14 per cent) and 528 on 24 April in Sanderson (11 per cent). Since the rolls were closed before the statutory time for reply had elapsed, inaccuracies which were in process of being removed were 'frozen' into them. Obviously, then, the rolls for these three electorates and, we can assume, for others were inflated at the time of the election, but we do not know by how much. Nor do we know how many people were not on the rolls who were qualified and had not lodged claims by 9 May, but we do know that there were some and that they included many Aborigines.

Since the potential electorate was not fully or accurately recorded in the rolls, it is difficult to speak with confidence about turnout. It is normally a relatively peripheral or unimportant question in discussion of elections elsewhere in Australia since enrolment and voting have long been compulsory for the vast majority of citizens. But in the Territory it is of more importance because Aborigines have not before been required to enrol. There was also some party political interest in the matter because Labor expected strong support from Aborigines and would therefore gain if turnout among Aborigines was high.

The figures, for what they are worth, indicate that turnout varied

markedly between regions and between electorates. As compared with 1977, turnout in 1980 was slightly higher - up 2 per cent in urban areas and up 3 per cent in rural electorates. On average, turnout was 82 per cent in the former and 72 per cent in the latter. In the urban electorates it ranged from 78 per cent in Stuart Park to 88 per cent in Fannie Bay and in the rural electorates it ranged from 61 per cent in MacDonnell to 83 per cent in Tiwi. Although the contests in Fannie Bay and Tiwi were hard-fought, there were other keen contests for which turnout was lower.

The turnout of 82 per cent in the urban areas is, apparently, low; in state and national elections elsewhere in Australia, it is usual to have a turnout of over 95 per cent. But appearances may well be deceptive because of the inability of the Electoral Office to complete its review of the rolls. Apparent levels of turnout in Casuarina, Jingili and Sanderson were 82 per cent, 82 per cent and 85 per cent respectively. If the numbers of objection claims posted out in each electorate are subtracted from the enrolment, and the turnout calculated on the basis of such estimated enrolments, then levels of turnout become 95 per cent, 94 per cent and 95 per cent respectively, levels which are equivalent to those in national and state elections. Assuming that similar corrections could be made to the rolls in other electorates, then it is possible to suggest that real levels of turnout in 1980 may well have been of the order of 90 to 95 per cent in urban areas and in the range of 80 to 85 per cent in rural areas.

Appearances are also deceptive when figures for informal voting are considered. On average, informal voting was the same, 3.2 per cent, in 1980 as it had been in 1977 and nearly half of what it had been in 1974. But these averages conceal wide variations. In urban electorates, first of all, informal votes averaged 2.3 per cent of the total votes and in rural electorates they were twice that at 4.7 per cent. But there is no general evidence that the more candidates in a contest the higher the informal voting: in Elsey where there were six candidates and relatively complicated how-to-vote cards, informal voting (3.6 per cent) was less than in the simple two-candidate contest in MacDonnell (4.2 per cent) or the four-candidate contest in Tiwi (6.3 per cent). Informals ranged between 2.1 per cent and 4.2 per cent in two-way contests; between 1.6 and 7.0 per cent in three-way contests and between 2.1 and 6.3 per cent in the six four-candidate contests.

The difference between informals in urban and rural electorates might well be explained by saying that Aborigines found the preference system too difficult. Observers reported that some Aborigines did have difficulties with the preference system but the difficulties were overcome for many of them by the help they were given under section 79 of the act, when the presiding officer marked the ballot paper. Others were determined to vote without help and, if the

results of mock polls are any guide, they would have made mistakes in indicating their preferences.

The returns from individual polling places in rural electorates give the most conclusive evidence on the subject. Votes at the predominantly white polling places may be considered first. Three mining places registered the highest levels of informals in this list - Alyangula (7.4 per cent), Jabiru East (4.5), and Warrego (4.8). In most other places informals ranged between 2 and 3 per cent, although in Heavitree Gap and Tennant Creek they were noticeably higher (3.7 and 3.9 per cent) while at Katherine, where many Aborigines cast their votes, they were lower (1.8 per cent).

In polling places where most voters were Aborigines the figures were much higher - with some exceptions. The highest levels of informals were in Borroloola (23.1 per cent), Warrabri (18.6), Nguiv (17.4), Milikapiti and Garden Pt (14.8), Yirrkala (14.6), Angurugu (14.0) and Pt Keats (13.8). In fifteen other places the informals ranged between 3.3 per cent and 11 per cent. At all of these places where the informals were high, voters had to choose between three or more candidates and to mark their preferences accordingly. In nine more places, all but two of them in electorates where there were only two candidates, MacDonnell and Stuart, the informals ranged between zero and 2.5 per cent. These places were Hermannsburg, Papunya and Santa Teresa plus Maryvale in MacDonnell; Napperby plus Willowra, Ti Tree plus Aileron, Utopia and Yuendumu in Stuart and in Arnhem Galiwin'ku and Maningrida, these two recording 0.5 and 2.5 per cent informals. In the two-candidate contests a ballot paper would be formal if a '1' was put in one of the two squares and the other left unmarked; in Arnhem the minimum needed for a formal ballot was a '1' and a '2' in two of the three squares. The simplicity of the task, facilitated by how-to-vote cards and candidate photographs, and the help given before polling day by cassetted explanations and community discussions and at the polling by presiding officers goes a long way towards explaining these low figures. Presumably the intensity of the campaign and the frequency of the visits by the candidates to these places completes the explanation.

Why It Happened

Description of the result of an election usually begins with an analysis of changes, not only in the legislature, but in the support which parties and independents won from the electorate, changes measured by comparison with some earlier election, usually the preceding one, and described as 'swings'. To show why these occurred is to explain the result.

This is by no means easy because so many things can help shape the result. For example, levels of enrolment, turnout and informal voting,

discussed above, may have been important in determining the outcome in some of the close contests in this election but we have no way of discovering whether they were. But things of this kind are seldom regarded as decisive and it is usual to pay much more attention to socio-economic characteristics of the electorates, to the strength of the voters' commitment to or identification with the parties - a subject to be discussed below - and to changes in voters' opinions about issues of the campaign and the policies, leaders and candidates of the parties. And finally, in the analysis of results in the Northern Territory, special attention must be given to the votes of Aborigines and to the votes of whites reacting to the claims of Aborigines.

At one stage during the campaign, chiefly in the wake of the ABC television program on the Kenbi land claim of the Aborigines on Cox's peninsula, there was talk of a 'white backlash' and the polarisation of black and white voters on party lines, the urban white areas swinging to the CLP and the outback or rural electorates, where the Aborigines were most numerous, swinging to Labor. The argument was never clearly formulated but it was based on the assumption that many whites who might normally vote Labor would be antagonised by Aboriginal land claims and by Labor's support for them as shown not only by the Kenbi television incident but by the party's policies and promises on Aboriginal affairs. Some journalists thought land rights and associated matters were the only or the dominant issues of the election and it followed for them that changes in the voting, as compared with 1977, would have to be explained by reference to that cluster of issues. But this seemed scarcely plausible given the way in which the CLP stood on its record, played down the land rights question as much as it could and emphasised its determination to be fair to all Territorians.

It is not in dispute that land rights and associated matters were important issues in the campaign or that, in rural constituencies, Labor emphasised its policy on these matters and made precise promises to Aboriginal communities. It was not 'hidden' either there or, if media coverage is any guide, in Darwin electorates either, even though it was not 'officially' on the agenda of interparty debate in the urban areas. As Alistair Heately commented, speaking of

the question of Aboriginal land rights and its associated themes of sea-closures, the ownership of roads across Aboriginal land, entry permits and effect of economic development...the major parties, albeit for different reasons, chose not to air it extensively. The ALP, confident that its policy...would reward it substantially among Aboriginal electors, was sensitive to its negative impact in the white urban areas.... Realising that the issue was assisting the party considerably among white voters, the CLP saw little point in exploiting it, especially as such a tactic would alienate Aborigines in outback electorates there

[were]...two campaigns...one in the white electorate where the issue was played down and the other in the black where it was supremely important (Heatley 1980a).

The use of the term polarisation does however suggest that something unusual happened, that the normal cross-cutting and counteracting influences from other issues were either absent or of no account whenever the land rights question was raised - and for many Aborigines and some whites that was doubtless true - and that the movements of votes, in party terms, were in opposite directions in black and white areas. Furthermore, if nothing else was of any significance in shaping the movement, it would necessarily be of even magnitude in each direction.

When the results became available, some sets of figures seemed to show that there had been polarisation. The CLP's vote increased by 15 per cent in the Alice Springs and Darwin urban electorates and the ALP's vote increased by over 5 per cent in the rural electorates. These and similar figures are obtained by comparing the results in 1980 with those in 1977. But this is a questionable procedure for at least two reasons. Although electoral boundaries were the same as in 1977, the turnover of population has been so high that the electorates were not the same, except geographically, in the two elections. Secondly, Labor and CLP candidates were battling not only one another for first preference votes but other candidates as well and the pattern of intervention of these other candidates was quite different in the two elections.

The second point alone makes it impossible to say whether the CLP's gain in urban areas was at the expense of the ALP, as the polarisation interpretation requires, or whether the ALP's gain in the rural areas was at the expense of the CLP. To complicate matters Labor gained slightly in Darwin urban electorates and the CLP did likewise in rural electorates - each by just under 1 per cent.

These regional figures conceal marked variations in party fortunes between electorates within regions. Assuming that comparisons can be made with 1977, that there was 'single issue' polarisation and that the parties were so much alike otherwise that the 'public agenda' and local issues were unimportant, it should follow that the change in first preference shares was much the same from one electorate to the next within a particular region. But this is not so: the CLP's gains in the Darwin electorates ranged between 10.2 per cent in Casuarina and 25.6 per cent in Jingili, the electorate of the Chief Minister and party leader. Labor had some losses and some gains in these seats, the highest loss being 8 per cent in Casuarina and the highest gain 8.8 per cent in Fannie Bay. In short no clear pattern of polarisation emerges from the comparisons between 1977 and 1980 at the level of the individual electorates; as Heatley has put it, the view that the polarisa-

tion of the black and white electorates continued in 1980 ignores 'the substantial amount of cross voting that occurred in both communities' (1980a).

Two alternative lines of argument are open at this point. One is to concede that, for the reasons given above, comparisons between 1977 and 1980 are invalid and inconclusive and leave the polarisation interpretation without supporting evidence. The other is to say that the polarisation was, 'uneven', that it was not as far advanced in some electorates as in others. If this is so, it can only be because 'other factors' operated to modify or retard the polarisation which is as much as to say that the land rights issue had no special status as a basic issue but was simply one amongst a number of factors determining the outcomes in the different contests and of varying salience from one to another.

The polarisation interpretation may be tested in a different way which does not depend on comparisons between 1977 and 1980 and is therefore not affected by population movements and the different nature of the various contests. It is to compare the voting, not in electorates, but from particular polling places in electorates where the land rights issue was particularly important and where it is known that voters at the individual polling places were either mostly white or mostly black. Information about this is inexact but it is sufficient to permit of broad comparisons that are better based than those between the electorates themselves.

Even with information of this kind uniformities are difficult to identify and differences are striking. Although the votes of Aborigines were strongly pro-Labor, many were cast for the CLP - the cross-voting noted by Heatley - and the proportions varied, sometimes dramatically, not only from one electorate to the next but also within electorates. In Tiwi, 67 per cent of the first preference votes for major party candidates at Nguiu were for the Labor candidate, but at Milikapiti and Garden Pt the figure was 49 per cent. In Stuart, the Labor candidate's vote ranged from 30.4 per cent at Ti Tree and Aileron to 72.5 per cent at Utopia; in MacDonnell from 52.0 per cent at Hermannsburg to 94.6 per cent at Papunya; and in Arnhem from 71.0 per cent at Angurugu to 91.8 per cent at Maningrida and 95.0 per cent on the mobiles.

The votes of whites are not so easily singled out because at most polling places where they were predominant there were always some Aboriginal voters, the proportions being unknown and variable. The postal votes, which probably include fewest votes from Aborigines, fell into three groups: those that yielded less than 20 per cent for Labor (Elsey, 10.4; Stuart, 15.5; MacDonnell, 17.5; Barkly, 18.5); two which yielded about 33 per cent for Labor (Tiwi and Victoria River) and two which yielded 55 per cent (Arnhem and Nhulunbuy). In short, many white voters must have supported Labor regardless of

its land rights policies, just as many Aborigines appear to have voted CLP and, in addition, the proportion which did so varies markedly from place to place, strong testimony to the importance of 'other factors' alongside the polarising land rights cluster of issues.

Finally, since the concept of polarisation is of reciprocal and reactive movement to the extremes, it might be possible to identify a tendency of this kind, modified by 'other factors' to different degrees, by asking whether an increase in the proportion of votes going to Labor in the predominantly Aboriginal polling places is accompanied by an equivalent decrease in the proportion of votes going to Labor in the white polling places. This is not what we find but since polling place figures do not separate black and white voters with sufficient precision, this test, though methodologically of interest, is inconclusive. The preceding evidence does, however, point not to a polarisation on black-ALP versus white-CLP lines or to an incomplete and developing polarisation, but to kaleidoscopic variety in the support drawn by each party from different sections of the electorates, some based on land rights, some on local issues and the candidates' work in the constituencies, some on the record of the government and some on long-standing party loyalty.

As far as Aborigines are concerned this means that there was no uniform 'Aboriginal vote'. Nor, given that so few seem to know much about parties, is it at all likely there was a 'party vote' among Aborigines. Although the Labor party won more votes than the CLP from Aborigines this appears to have been done not by calling on established party loyalties but by the party's stand on issues of concern to Aborigines and by the reputation and electoral work of the party's candidates. This brings us to the subject of party identification among white voters.

Party Identification And The Party System

In an established party system the movement of votes in elections is generally in one direction and, at least until recently, fairly uniform in magnitude as well. But in the Territory the movements of votes are neither uniform nor mostly in the one direction. If the results in 1980 are compared with those in 1977, electorate by electorate, the change in the Labor party's share of the first preference vote ranged from a loss of 13.3 per cent in Alice Springs to a gain of 15.0 per cent in Arnhem. Within this range its share was reduced in eight electorates and increased in ten. The CLP's share went down in four electorates, its greatest loss being 23.4 per cent in Nhulunbuy, and up in fifteen, the greatest gain being 25.6 per cent in Jingili. Even in the Darwin area, where the CLP gained in all electorates, its gains varied between 10.2 per cent and 25.6 per cent.

To explain this variation it is necessary to take account of three

things, the magnitudes of which are not all known precisely: demographic changes as filtered through the electoral rolls; the changing patterns of intervention by independent and minor party candidates and changes in the voters' assessments of party candidates, leaders and policies. The effects of the first two factors, although not negligible, are normally small enough in Southern electorates to play little part in general explanations, even though they may be of considerable significance in talking about particular local contests. Most attention must therefore be given to changes in voters' assessments of the parties and at this point the strength of the voters' loyalty to parties is a critical variable. If most of the voters identify with and are loyal to one or other of the major parties, there will be a stable vote and most changes will be within a more or less narrow range. Furthermore, this assumes, those voters who do make up their minds from one election to the next mostly do so by judging, not individual candidates and local issues, but the parties' overall performance, leadership, policies and so forth. Swings, properly so called, will be within a range of options defined by parties and by public debate about them and, in stable party systems, they are usually not only small in extent but more or less uniform and in the one direction. If, however, large numbers of voters have no commitment to party or only weak party loyalty, a high turnover of first preference votes is much more likely and, assuming that parties have not been able to 'set the agenda' for an election wholly in their own terms, changes may well not all be in the one direction.

In the Territory the importance of demographic changes and independent and minor party candidates is greater than elsewhere and, in addition, there is ground for argument about levels of voter identification with party - or, to put it the other way round, about the extent to which the parties can rely on the voters to give them a solid party vote.

The demographic changes reflected in the electoral rolls are very high: Sanderson gained over 2000 voters, a change of 95 per cent, while Port Darwin lost 249, or 12 per cent. Eight electorates gained over 20 per cent and six more gained between 10 and 20 per cent. Although there is no clear correlation between the change in the numbers of voters in each electorate and the changes in share of first preference votes for each party, demographic change must be taken into account. There are two possibilities: that migrants from one electorate to another are disproportionately of one party, with consequences for both electorates, and that migrants into the Territory tend to be of a type which is more likely to vote for one party than the other. But without precise knowledge of the party predispositions of those who have remained on, moved off or come on to the electoral rolls (by death or coming of age as well as migration) it is impossible

to estimate the effect of demographic change on the vote for the two main parties, although it is popularly believed to favour the CLP.

The same has to be said about the effect of independent and minor party candidates. The two main parties did 'gain' at their expense in 1980 as compared with 1977 - they increased their share of the first preference vote from 78 per cent to 89 per cent and in the later election there were five electorates in which they alone had candidates, whereas there were none in 1977. But in four electorates the outcome was decided by preferences and no clear pattern emerges from them; that is, those who rejected the major parties for their first preferences, were not all swinging in the same direction with their second preferences. In nine of the other ten electorates (omitting Nightcliff which Labor did not contest) preferences were not counted but even if a satisfactory basis could be found - which is unlikely - for notionally allocating preferences to arrive at a two-party vote, the preferences to be distributed, which ranged between 4.2 per cent in Arnhem to 11.3 per cent in Barkly, are not large enough, even if all were allocated to the party with the lowest vote in a given electorate, to give a uniform and unidirectional 'swing' in all of them.

The first thing to be noted in discussing party identification is the point already touched on: that there is very little evidence of party identification among Aboriginal voters who form perhaps 15 per cent of the electorate. Allowing this, it is possible to say that changes in the two parties' shares of the first preference votes may well be almost wholly accounted for by demographic changes and by changes in the numbers and kinds of candidates in the various contests. It need not follow, although it is a reasonable supposition, that most of the people who are in an electorate at any given time are like most other Australian voters: fixed in their party allegiances and likely to vote accordingly in two-candidate contests. It might also be that the Territory tends to attract a slightly higher proportion of people, as migrants, with a predisposition from earlier party allegiances to move permanently into allegiance to the CLP. If that is so then the CLP is likely to be a long-term if not a permanent majority party.

The other possibility is that life in the Territory unsettles many voters, loosens them from earlier party allegiances and leaves them adrift or shifts them into new allegiances which, on balance, may favour the CLP over the long term. It is not uncommon to meet Territorians who will say they used to vote Labor 'down South' but see things differently 'up here'. The practical implications are considerable. Demographic change is something parties can do little or nothing about and minor parties and independents, despite their evident futility, are unlikely to give up as long as they win votes and give voice to things neglected by the major parties. But if large numbers of voters are actually adrift, that is something parties can do something

about, both in winning their votes in a particular election and in winning their long term allegiance as party identifiers, Territory-style.

The survey carried out in Alice Springs provides evidence that the voters' commitment to an identification with parties is not as strong as it is in the South. A higher proportion than in the South claim not to have a strong commitment to party and this was underlined and confirmed in the answers to questions regarding issues, reasons for the vote cast and perceptions of parties, policies and party leaders. Alice Springs is 'different' from other parts of the Territory but there is little doubt that some of the influences operating to unsettle voters in the Centre operate elsewhere in the Territory too.

Over a quarter of the respondents in the sample explicitly rejected an identification with either Labor or CLP. Further, there was strong evidence from the survey that urban Territorians distinguish clearly between Southern politics and those of the Territory. As one respondent, a public servant, put it, 'I like Labor federally, but I feel Labor in the NT would cause too much social strife and rifts'. In response to the question 'Do you identify with the same party in national politics?', a total of 28 per cent answered that they did not. A total of 15 per cent of Territory Labor identifiers and no less than 29 per cent of CLP identifiers claimed that their party allegiances change for national elections.

The reasons given by Territory CLP identifiers suggest one important component of residence in the Territory: comments from the open-ended questions and answers suggested a vague but pervasive socialisation process which resulted in a strong sense of 'Territory nationalism', even chauvinism, among respondents who stated they identified with Labor nationally but with CLP in the Territory. Thirty per cent were critical of the national government leaders and especially critical of Malcolm Fraser, but over half gave as their reason that the 'NT is different' and that 'the CLP is better for the Territory'. Views expressed in the questionnaires included the following:

Canberra sees things on paper and not as things really are. Canberra ministers come here for 2 days or 24 hours and they claim they know everything. We live here and know more as we see it every day.

Canberra expertise cannot effectively evaluate the problems. What applies in one area is not necessarily right for the NT. Even in the various districts of NT the problems and solutions differ.

At the same time, in many comments, the 'anti-Canberra' flavour was tinged with some realism:

We have not the resources at this stage to divorce ourselves entirely from Canberra. At present we have the best of both worlds - funds from Canberra with a fairly free hand in expenditure.

And one further, minor, component of Northern Territory 'localism' emerged from the survey. There was a strong minority opinion that there was a danger of 'Canberra-control' being replaced by 'Darwin-control', as shown in the following:

The government should have a more in-depth look at Alice Springs. We are totally forgotten. I feel we are more isolated here than Darwin;

Stop 'Darwin democracy' or let Alice and Tennant Creek have their own government as the Top End is a totally different environment.

This distinction between national and Territory politics and parties was also evident in responses to the question 'which political party do you think is best to manage the affairs of [five issues then named]?' Normally it would be expected that responses would be on party lines and this was so for four of the five issues specified - Aboriginal affairs, mining, national parks and education - but the question which party was best to manage the economy of the Territory divided those who voted Labor, 38 per cent of whom said the CLP was best compared with between 14 and 23 per cent who thought the CLP was best on the other issues. This suggests that the party label is a factor in the Territory, but that there is a significant minority of Labor voters especially which perceives the CLP as better than their own party. Such data reinforce the suggestion that the CLP has a 'natural advantage' in Territory elections because it is perceived as the 'natural' party for the Territory, expectedly so among those who identify with it, but unexpectedly so among a significant number of Labor voters.

Two open-ended questions give important clues to the reasons for the results of the election. In response to the question 'which issues or factors do you think were the deciding ones at the election?' a clear majority of respondents plumped for explanations which can be subsumed under the general headings of 'Record of government; the performance of the government; a conservative population in the Territory'. No less than 66 per cent of total responses, 68 per cent of Labor voters and 67 per cent of CLP voters answered in this style. This was one aspect of the theme evoked by the CLP's slogan, Keep the Flag Flying. Less than a quarter of the respondents mentioned Aboriginal affairs or policies, let alone gave it as a prime reason for the result.

The second clue emerged from answers to the question 'why did you vote [this way]?' The responses indicating a general party preference as the reason accounted for only 29 per cent of the total sample who gave a reason. A total of 21 per cent of all responses (23 per cent of Labor voters, 11 per cent of CLP voters and over 80 per cent of those who voted for an independent) gave 'the candidate' as their prime reason. Over three-quarters of these responses provided no

other reason at all. As compared with surveys of Southern voters in national and state elections, this emphasis on 'candidate' is unusual. As one respondent put it,

Issues did not influence me. I vote for my member more than anything else.

And, to another,

When I turned up to vote, I was handed a ballot paper with only two candidates' names on it CLP or ALP. As I was going to vote independent, I couldn't so I didn't vote at all.

The suggestion that party identification is not as strong in the Territory as elsewhere is also emphasised in responses concerning voting in 1977 and 1980. Of the total sample of 534 who answered the question 'Did you vote for the same party in the 1977 Northern Territory elections?' 20 per cent were either too young to vote in 1977 or were not resident in the Territory. Of those who did vote in both elections, no less than 22 per cent changed their vote in 1980 and of these one-third gave 'candidate' as their only reason, while over half gave 'record of the CLP government' as their reason. Such evidence is not that of a tight system of party identification.

Another revealing feature of the responses to this question was that only 5 per cent of the responses (4 per cent of Labor, 6 per cent of CLP) made any mention of Aborigines, Aboriginal policy or Aboriginal affairs in their reasons for voting as they did. This confirms evidence from other questions, discussed above, to the effect that there was little evidence of polarisation on black-white lines.

In discussion of the elections of 1974 and 1977 we observed that 'there seems little doubt that the Labor and Country Liberal parties will soon be the established parties of the Territory's politics' and then commented that 'the electorate is not yet as fixed in its loyalties to parties as it is elsewhere in Australia' (Jaensch and Loveday 1979, 225, 227). The implication was, and is, that until the loyalties of the electorate are fixed, the party system, although strong, is not yet established and dominant. To win elections parties have still to contend not only with a higher proportion of changeable voters than they do elsewhere, but they also have to face rapid growth and movement of population and the challenge, somewhat reduced but still significant, of independent and minor party candidates whom they can defeat but not totally discourage. Above all, they have to work within a society which is unique in Australia, containing a numerically important Aboriginal population which is the focus not only of party propaganda, but also of the most intense, and most public, attempt in the history of Australia to carry out a sophisticated and developed program of electoral education. The success of this program will depend not only on the attitudes and approach of the non-Aboriginal com-

munity but on being supplemented, on the political side, by the parties, the interest group organisations and especially by the members and candidates.

Appendix 1 Statistics

TABLE 1 Civilian employees in Northern Territory and Australia, June 1979*

	000s		% of total	
	NT	AUST	NT	AUST
Mining	2.5	76.6	6.2	1.6
Manufacturing	2.0	1,139.2	5.0	23.8
Construction	4.3	343.6	10.8	7.2
Wholesale & Retail Trade	5.1	976.6	12.8	20.4
Transport & Storage	2.1	249.8	5.3	5.2
Public Administration & Defence**	7.2	255.0	18.1	5.3
Community Services	10.1	841.3	25.4	17.6
Other***	6.4	895.8	16.1	18.7
Total	39.7	4,777.9	100.00	100.00

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, Civilian Employees June 1979, Catalogue 6213.0.

*Excludes agriculture and private domestic service; **Excludes permanent defence forces; ***Includes forestry, fishing, and hunting; electricity, gas and water; communication; finance, insurance, real estate; and entertainment, recreation, restaurants.

TABLE 2 1980 Territory election, summary of results

Party	CLP	ALP	AMP	AD	PP	CD	Ind	Total
Candidates	19	18	4	3	1	2	13	60
Seats won	11	7					1	19

TABLE 3 Territory wide comparisons, 1974, 1977, 1980

	1974	1977	1980
Enrolment	38995	43233	53218
Voted (%)	29427 (75.5)	32861 (76.0)	41484 (78.0)
Formal (%)	27935 (94.9)	31817 (96.8)	40156 (96.8)
CLP (%)	13690 (49.0)	12769 (40.1)	20065 (50.0)
ALP	8508 (30.5)	12165 (38.2)	15818 (39.4)
PP		3104 (9.8)	210 (0.5)
Other		61 (0.2)	812 (2.1)
Ind	5737 (20.5)	3718 (11.7)	3251 (8.1)

TABLE 4 Regional comparisons 1977, 1980, enrolment and voting

	1977		1980		Change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
DARWIN URBAN					
Enrolled	20468		25544		
Voted	16681	81.5	21097	82.6	+ 1.1
Informal	350	2.1	440	2.1	0.0
Formal	16331	97.9	20657	97.9	0.0
TOTAL URBAN (Darwin plus Alice Springs)					
Enrolled	25697		31407		
Voted	20682	80.5	25767	82.0	+ 1.5
Informal	459	2.2	588	2.3	+ 0.1
Formal	20223	97.8	25179	97.7	- 0.1
RURAL (Includes Stuart, Nhulunbuy)					
Enrolled	17556		21811		
Voted	12179	69.4	15717	72.1	+ 2.7
Informal	585	4.8	740	4.7	- 0.1
Formal	11594	95.2	14977	95.3	+ 0.1

TABLE 5 Regional comparisons 1977, 1980 results

	1977			1980			Change
	Cands	Votes	%	Cands	Votes	%	%
DARWIN URBAN							
ALP	8	5974	36.6	8	7697	37.3	+ 0.7
CLP	9	5832	35.7	9	10974	53.1	+ 17.4
Other	10	1800	11.0	7	668	3.2	- 7.8
Ind	8	2725	16.7	3	1318	6.3	- 10.4
Total	35	16331	100	27	20657	100	
TOTAL URBAN							
ALP	10	7426	36.7	10	8903	35.4	- 1.3
CLP	11	7796	38.6	11	13512	53.7	+ 15.1
Other	12	2276	11.3	7	668	2.7	- 8.6
Ind	8	2725	13.5	5	2096	8.3	- 5.2
Total	41	20223	100	33	25179	100	
RURAL							
ALP	8	4739	40.9	8	6915	46.2	+ 5.3
CLP	9	4973	42.9	8	6553	43.8	+ 0.9
Other	8	889	7.7	3	354	2.4	- 5.3
Ind		993	8.6	8	1155	7.7	- 1.1
Total	31	11594	100	27	14977	100	

TABLE 6 Enrolment and turnout by electorate (R = rural)

Electorate	1977-80%		Deviation % from Average	Voted Turnout	
	Enrolled	Increase		1980	1980 %
Alice Springs	3001	+ 17	+ 7	2342	78
Arnhem (R)	2774	+ 35	- 1	1845	67
Barkly (R)	2810	+ 34	nil	1999	71
Casuarina	3748	+ 54	+ 34	3067	82
Elsey (R)	2716	+ 32	- 3	2025	75
Fannie Bay	2031	- 8	- 28	1794	88
Gillen	2862	+ 8	+ 2	2328	81
Jingili	3176	+ 42	+ 13	2611	82
Ludmilla	2727	+ 11	- 3	2246	82
MacDonnell (R)	2427	- 2	- 13	1480	61
Millner	2393	+ 16	- 15	2029	85
Nhulunbuy (R)	2489	+ 17	- 11	1939	78
Nightcliff	2685	+ 18	- 4	2129	79
Pt Darwin	1958	- 12	- 30	1577	81
Sanderson	4629	+ 95	+ 65	3912	85
Stuart (R)	3745	+ 28	+ 34	2665	71
Stuart Park	2197	- 1	- 22	1732	79
Tiwi (R)	2442	+ 45	- 13	2015	83
Victoria River (R)	2408	+ 13	- 14	1749	73
TOTAL	53218	+ 23		41484	78
AVERAGE	2801				

TABLE 7 Electorate comparisons 1977 and 1980, first preference shares (per cent)

	1977	1980	Change		1977	1980	Change
ALICE SPRINGS				ELSEY			
ALP	35.4	22.1	- 13.3	ALP		29.7	+ 29.7
CLP	51.1	43.8	- 7.3	CLP	44.2	45.0	+ 0.8
Ind		34.2(2)	+ 34.2	Ind	49.8(2)	25.2(4)	- 24.6
PP	13.5		- 13.5	PP	6.0		- 6.0
ARNHEM				FANNIE BAY			
ALP	63.4	78.4	+ 15.0	ALP	42.2	51.0	+ 8.8
CLP	28.9	17.4	- 11.5	CLP	34.9	49.0	+ 14.1
PP	7.7		- 7.7	Ind	17.8		- 17.8
AMP		4.2	+ 4.2	PP	5.2		- 5.2
BARKLY				GILLEN			
ALP	26.9	33.9	+ 7.0	ALP	39.0	31.3	- 7.7
CLP	44.5	54.8	+ 10.3	CLP	49.9	68.7	+ 18.8
Ind	11.4(2)		- 11.4	PP	11.1		- 11.1
PP	17.2	11.3	- 5.9	JINGILI			
CASUARINA				ALP	36.4	33.5	- 2.9
ALP	46.7	38.7	- 8.0	CLP	35.1	60.7	+ 25.6
CLP	46.0	56.2	+ 10.2	Ind	10.0(2)		- 10.0
PP	7.4		- 7.4	PP	18.6		- 18.6
AD		5.2	+ 5.2	AD		5.9	+ 5.9

	1977	1980	Change		1977	1980	Change
LUDMILLA				SANDERSON			
ALP	39.3	33.7	- 5.6	ALP	45.6	48.6	+ 3.0
CLP	46.9	58.5	+ 11.6	CLP	26.1	48.2	+ 22.1
Ind		7.9	+ 7.9	Ind	19.8(2)		- 19.8
PP	13.8		- 13.8	PP	8.4		- 8.4
MACDONNELL				CD		3.3	+ 3.3
ALP	60.8	57.6	- 3.2	STUART			
CLP	33.3	42.4	+ 9.1	ALP	42.4	40.1	- 2.3
PP	5.9		- 5.9	CLP	52.1	59.9	+ 7.8
MILLNER				PP	5.5		- 5.5
ALP	57.6	51.8	- 5.8	STUART PARK			
CLP	33.2	48.2	+ 15.0	ALP	30.7	36.0	+ 5.3
PP	9.2		- 9.2	CLP	40.7	56.1	+ 15.4
NHULUNBUY				Ind	16.7	4.7	- 12.0
ALP	41.2	43.2	+ 2.0	PP	11.9		- 11.9
CLP	56.1	32.7	- 23.4	AMP		3.2	+ 3.2
Ind		24.1	+ 24.1	TIWI			
PP	2.8		- 2.8	ALP	42.5(2)	43.1	+ 0.6
NIGHTCLIFF				CLP	33.7(2)	51.5	+ 17.8
ALP				Ind	12.3(2)	1.6	- 10.7
CLP	25.4	45.5	+ 20.1	PP	11.5		- 11.5
Ind	61.9	51.2	- 10.4	AMP		3.8	+ 3.8
PP	12.7		- 12.7	VICTORIA RIVER			
CD		3.0	+ 3.0	ALP	50.0	52.6	+ 2.6
PT DARWIN				CLP	42.7	36.6	- 6.1
ALP	27.8	35.0	+ 7.2	Ind		10.9(2)	+ 10.9
CLP	33.2	57.3	+ 24.1	PP	7.3		- 7.3
Ind	26.1		- 26.1				
PP	9.1		- 9.1				
COMM	3.8		- 3.8				
AMP		4.7	+ 4.7				
AD		2.9	+ 2.9				

TABLE 8 1980 Results by electorate (*Sitting Member)

Enrolment Votes (% enrolment) Informal (% votes) Formal (% votes) Preference Distribution (as appropriate) Polling Places (rural electorates only)	Candidate	Party	Primary No	Votes %
ALICE SPRINGS				
3001	COLLINS	CLP	999	43.8
2342 78.0	Oliver*	Ind	620	27.1
60 2.6	Hampton	ALP	505	22.1
2282 97.4	Pollock	Ind	158	7.1
Preferences				
COLLINS	999 + 59 =	1058 + 112 =	1170	51.3
Oliver	620 + 80 =	700 + 412 =	1112	48.7
Hampton	505 + 19 =	524		
Pollock	158			

ARNHEM

2774		COLLINS*	ALP	1346	78.4
1845	66.5	Djerrkura	CLP	299	17.4
128	6.9	McAlear	AMP	72	4.2
1717	93.1				

<i>Polling Places</i>	Coll	Djer	McA	Formal	Inf	Total
Mobiles	157	8	2	167	9	176
Alyangula	154	96	39	289	23	312
Angurugu	91	37	7	135	22	157
Goulburn & Umbakumba	105	23	2	130	12	142
Maningrida	212	19	3	234	6	240
Milingimbi	154	35	4	193	23	216
Oenpelli	130	12	2	144	11	155
Galiwin'ku	177	23	5	205	11	216
Minjilang	92	12	0	104	6	110
Absent S80(3)	48	19	7	74	4	78
Postal	17	14	1	32	1	33
Regulation S80(1)(2)	9	1	0	10	0	10

BARKLY

2810		TUXWORTH*	CLP	1018	54.8
1999	71.1	Thomson	ALP	631	33.9
140	7.0	Andrews	PP	210	11.3
1859	93.0				

<i>Polling Places</i>	Thom	Tux	And	Formal	Inf	Total
Mobiles	20	87	8	115	13	128
Borrooloola	63	45	5	113	34	147
Elliot	62	52	6	120	5	125
Tennant Ck	277	539	133	949	39	988
Warrabri	90	41	18	149	34	183
Warrego	75	120	23	218	11	229
Absent	17	46	5	68	0	68
Postal	19	84	12	115	4	119
Regulation	8	4	0	12	0	12

CASUARINA

3748		DONDAS*	CLP	1696	56.2
3067	81.8	Bree	ALP	1167	38.7
48	1.6	Roth	AD	156	5.2
3019	98.4				

ELSEY

2716		MacFARLANE*	CLP	879	45.0
2025	74.6	Aboutaleb	ALP	580	29.7
73	3.6	Forscutt	Ind	188	9.6
1952	96.4	Davies	Ind	174	8.9
		Hughes	Ind	93	4.8
		Reilly	Ind	38	1.9

Preferences

MacFARLANE	879 + 18 = 897	+ 52 = 949	+ 65 = 1014	51.9
Aboutaleb	580 + 5 = 585	+ 13 = 598	+ 57 = 655	33.6
Forscutt	188 + 4 = 192	+ 16 = 208	+ 75 = 283	14.5

Davies 174 + 4 = 178 + 19 = 197
 Hughes 93 + 7 = 100
 Reilly 38

Polling Places		Abou MacF	Dav	Fors	Hug	Reill	Formal	Inf	Total
	Mobiles	93	35	8	2	8	1	147	12 159
	Bamyili	87	27	9	1	5	0	129	7 136
	Katherine	225	649	120	147	63	30	1234	22 1256
(67)	Beswick plus	138	43	16	12	7	2	218	25 243
(85)	Numbulwar plus								
(91)	Ngukurr								
	Absent	18	29	9	5	7	2	70	4 74
	Postal	10	86	11	18	2	3	130	3 133
	Regulation	9	10	1	3	1	0	24	0 24

FANNIE BAY

2031									
1794	88.3	O'NEIL*			ALP	896		51.0	
37	2.1	Stack			CLP	861		49.0	
1757	97.9								

GILLEN

2862									
2328	81.3	ROBERTSON*			CLP	1539		68.7	
88	3.8	McDonald			ALP	701		31.3	
2240	96.2								

JINGILI

3176		EVERINGHAM*			CLP	1555		60.7	
2611	82.2	Hansen			ALP	858		33.5	
47	1.8	Read			AD	151		5.9	
2564	98.2								

LUDMILLA

2727		STEELE*			CLP	1284		58.5	
2246	82.4	Spurr			ALP	739		33.7	
50	2.2	Barden			I	173		7.9	
2196	97.8								

MacDONNELL

2427									
1480	61.0	PERKINS*			ALP	817		57.6	
62	4.2	Kunoth-Monks			CLP	601		42.4	
1418	95.8								

Polling Places		Perk	Monks	Formal	Inf	Total
	Mobiles	41	44	85	3	88
(47)	Amoonguna plus	67	14	81	10	91
(44)	Iwupataka					
(182)	Santa Teresa plus	135	83	218	2	220
(38)	Maryvale					
(21)	Docker R, plus	85	21	106	13	119
(26)	Haasts B, plus					
(72)	Areyonga					
	Heavitree Gap	94	166	260	10	270
	Hermannsburg	116	107	223	5	228
	Papunya	178	10	188	4	192
	Absent	61	43	104	6	110

Postal Regulation	24 16	113 0	137 16	8 1	145 17
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MILLNER

2393					
2029	84.8	ISAACS*	ALP	1020	51.8
60	3.0	Robinson	CLP	949	48.2
1969	97.0				

NHULUNBUY

2489					
1939	77.9	LEO	ALP	809	43.2
65	3.4	Ballantyne*	CLP	613	32.7
1874	96.6	O'Reilly	I	452	24.1

Preferences

LEO	809	+	211	=	
Ballantyne	613	+	241	=	
O'Reilly	452				
				1020	54.4
				854	45.6

Polling Places

	Leo	Ball	O'Rei	Formal	Inf	Total
Nhulunbuy	626	548	414	1588	33	1621
Yirrkala	136	32	14	182	51	213
Absent	16	8	3	27	0	27
Postal	28	23	21	72	0	72
Regulation	3	2	0	5	1	6

NIGHTCLIFF

2685					
2129	79.3	LAWRIE*	I	1066	51.5
59	2.8	Amos	CLP	941	45.5
2070	97.2	Coombs	CD	63	3.0

PORT DARWIN

1958		HARRIS*	CLP	885	57.3
1577	80.5	Haritos	ALP	541	35.0
33	2.1	Taylor	AMP	73	4.7
1544	97.9	Myles	AD	45	2.9

SANDERSON

4629		D'ROZARIO*	ALP	1866	48.6
3912	84.5	Manzie	CLP	1851	48.2
70	1.8	Mann	CD	125	3.3
3842	98.2				

Preferences

D'ROZARIO	1866	+	64	=	
Manzie	1851	+	61	=	
Mann	125				
				1930	50.2
				1912	49.8

STUART

3745		VALE*	CLP	1564	59.9
2665	71.2	Thomas	ALP	1047	40.1
54	2.0				
2611	98.0				

Polling Places

	Thom	Vale	Formal	Inf	Total
Mobiles	105	72	177	6	183
Bratling	308	912	1220	30	1250
Utopia	144	42	186	0	186
Yuendumu	267	120	387	3	390

(65)	Napperby plus	83	74	157	1	158		
(93)	Willowra							
(116)	Ti Tree plus	39	89	128	0	128		
(12)	Aileron							
	Absent	69	101	170	8	178		
	Postal	27	147	174	4	178		
	Regulation	5	7	12	2	14		
STUART PARK								
2197	PERRON*		CLP		952	56.1		
1732	78.8 Cavanagh		ALP		610	36.0		
36	2.1 Wilson		I		79	4.7		
1696	97.9 Duffy		AMP		55	3.2		
TIWI								
2442	PADGHAM-PURICH*		CLP		973	51.5		
2015	82.5 Maschke		ALP		813	43.1		
127	6.3 Smither		AMP		72	3.8		
1888	93.7 McAlear		I		30	1.6		
Polling Places		Masc	P-P	McA	Smit	Formal	Inf	Total
	Howard Sp.	365	522	6	32	925	7	932
	Nguiu	264	130	5	5	404	85	489
(45)	Milikapiti plus	52	54	5	4	115	20	135
(90)	Garden Pt.							
	Jabiru E.	18	83	2	3	106	5	111
	Absent	58	66	3	10	137	6	143
	Postal	53	106	7	18	184	4	188
	Regulation	3	12	2	0	17	0	17
VICTORIA RIVER								
2408	DOOLAN*			ALP		872	52.6	
1749	72.6 Millhouse			CLP		606	36.6	
91	5.2 Douglass			I		98	5.9	
1658	94.8 McCarthy			I		82	5.0	
Polling Places		Doo	Mill Doug	McC	Formal		Inf	Total
	Mobiles	53	50	7	8	118	9	127
(49)	Adelaide R. plus	45	73	14	4	136	3	139
(90)	Daly R.							
(97)	Batchelor plus	37	72	20	23	152	2	154
(57)	Pine Ck.							
(69)	Belyuen plus	108	17	5	0	130	12	142
(53)	Peppi'ti							
(86)	Wattie Ck plus	124	23	2	2	151	7	158
(72)	Kalkaringi							
	Lajamanu	123	23	6	9	161	7	168
	Pt. Keats	201	37	2	3	243	39	282
	Absent	65	73	14	7	159	2	161
	Postal	114	232	27	21	394	9	403
	Regulation	2	6	1	5	14	1	15

Appendix 2 The Alice Springs Survey

Mail response surveys usually provide a very low return rate. Yet budgetary constraints did not allow a face-to-face interview method. The survey of urban Alice Springs, by means of a very high sample, attempted to achieve a satisfactory sample for analysis.

A total of 4,123 names were extracted from the electoral rolls of the Alice Springs town area, comprising a 50 per cent sample. Questionnaires, individually addressed, were hand-delivered into home letter boxes on Saturday, Sunday and Monday 7-9 July, enclosing a reply paid envelope. Of these, a total of 546 completed questionnaires were returned. This constituted a return rate of 13.2 per cent from the whole sample. Given the degree of inaccuracy of the rolls (discussed in the text) the actual response rate, allowing for people on the roll but no longer residents, would approximate 15 per cent return rate. The 546 completed questionnaires establish a sample of 6.6 per cent of the nominal enrolment of the Alice Springs urban area, a sample level which is more than adequate.

We were, however, concerned to establish that the low overall response rate had not caused any significant change to the original, random sample of the enrolled population as a whole. That is, we were concerned to establish that the aggregate of completed questionnaires were from a similar population as that which had attended the 1980 election. The final samples were acceptably representative of voters, although CLP voters were over-represented, and Labor and Independent voters under-represented in the sample.

TABLE 1 Percentage of formal votes Alice Springs urban area.

	Actual 1980*	Sample 1980
CLP	60.1	69.3
ALP	26.4	23.3
Ind.	13.6	7.4

*Using Braitling as urban Stuart

A probable explanation is that success produces a willingness to spend the time filling in a questionnaire, while defeat of a person's party or candidate would not always encourage such a willingness.

The samples also reflected, to an acceptable degree, various socio-economic characteristics from the 1976 census. Some of the differences between census and sample are due to the omission of the Stuart component in the former, and may well be due to population changes in the four years since the census.

TABLE 2 Alice Springs urban area

		Actual 1976*	Sample 1980
Sex	Male	54%	59%
	Female	46	41
Religion	Catholic	26	17
	Anglican	25	28
	None	17	19
Age	18-29	39	25
	30-49	42	59
	50 +	18	17

*Sum of Alice Springs and Gillen electorates only.

NOTE A detailed statistical report of the survey is available on request from:

Dean Jaensch
 School of Social Sciences
 Flinders University
 Bedford Park 5042
 Australia

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Index

- ABC, 57, 58, 79, 80, 110, 122, 175
 ACOA, 82
 ALP: Aboriginal vote for, 59;
 advertising, 80; branches, 51-52, 64,
 70, 131; campaign strategy, 77-78, 79;
 conference, 52; constitutional policy,
 18-19; economic policy, 37-39;
 effectiveness as opposition, 26, 69,
 111-12; electoral bill, 19-20; executive,
 52; platform, 52, 78; policy speech,
 78; as seen by Alice Springs voters,
 72-73
 APSA, 82
 Aboriginal Legal Aid, 84, 130
 Aborigines: bloc voting, 49, 50, 92, 177;
 criticise electoral bill, 21, 60;
 dependency, 87, 89-90; early attitudes
 to, 5, 7, 9; and electoral participation,
 86-94, 162; enrolment, 146, 149-50,
 153-54, 162, 170, 172; informal
 voting, 50, 174; local councils, 90-91;
 and party branches, 65; political
 knowledge, 46, 48-49, 58, 88-89,
 92-94, 120, 156; political meetings, 21,
 60, 79, 79-80, 90, 94-96, 126; right to
 vote, 46-49, 87; and white advisers,
 88, 90, 97. *See also* Election issues;
 Land claims; Land Councils; Land
 rights
 Aboutaleb, Maged, 117
 Administration: control by, 1-2, 3, 8;
 organisational changes, 24-25, 36; and
 politics, 98
 Agriculture, 32, 38
 Amalgamated Metal Workers and
 Shipwrights Union, 52
 Amos, Anne, 104, 107
 Andrews, N.J., 66, 144
 Ashmore-Cartier islands, 18
 Asian influx: early fear of, 1, 4, 5
 Assembly: legislative procedures, 17, 23;
 legislative record, 16; political conflict
 in, 16, 17-23, 26
 Australian Democrats, 66, 75, 84, 103,
 105, 127
 Australian Fishing Industry Council, 82
 Australian Press Council, 80
 Ballantyne, M., 116, 122, 171
 Barden, Roy, 104, 106, 112
 Baudino, Bob, 70
 Bonner, Senator Neville, 49, 125, 142
 Bree, Dennis, 103, 109
 CLP: Aboriginal policy, 26, 45, 46-50;
 and Liberals, 40-42, 63; advertising,
 80-81; branches, 43, 65, 70, 117;
 conference, 43; constitutional policy,
 17-18; council, 43-44; economic
 policy, 36-37, 39; electoral bill, 20;
 independence, 40; policy, 44-46, 71;
 policy speech, 78; representativeness,
 40; strength in Darwin area, 100
 CLP government: 'Territorialism', 25,
 111; development policy, 34-36;
 performance, 18, 24, 69, 111;
 pragmatism, 25; as seen by Alice
 Springs voters, 72-73, 182
 Calder, S.E., 40, 64
 Campaign: methods, 69-71, 81-82,
 106-7, 109, 122-23, 125-27, 130-31,
 133, 140, 142; rumours, 125; timing,
 75, 77, 126
 Campaign for Aboriginal voter
 Enrolment, 84
 Candidates: Arnhem, 115-16; Centre
 electorates, 131-33, 142-43, 144;
 Darwin area, 103-6; Elsey, 117-18;
 Nhulunbuy, 116; Tiwi, 115; Victoria
 River, 118
 Candidate selection: ALP, 70, 103,
 131-32; CLP, 70, 104, 132-33
 Cavanagh, Peter, 82, 103, 105
 Central Australian Aboriginal Congress,
 60, 130
 Central Land Council. *See* Land
 Councils
 Chard, G.W., 147
 Christian Democrats, 66, 67, 103, 105-6
 Citizens for Civilized Living, 133
 Collins, Bob, 23, 37, 38, 115, 123-24,
 126
 Collins, Dennis, 132-33
 Commonwealth-NT relations:
 Aboriginal affairs, 8, 33-34;

- administrative functions, 18, 32-33; development, 32; finance, 18, 35-36, 70; foreign investment, 32-33
- Coombs, Charles, 105
- Council for Aboriginal Development, 61
- Council of Government Schools Organisation, 82
- Country Women's Association, 122
- Country party, 100
- Cyclone Tracy, 11, 102

- D'Rozario, June, 103, 106
- Davidson, B., 11
- Davies, Pat, 117, 118-19
- Deakin, Alfred, 5
- Development: early views, 1-4; through land settlement, 10-12
- Djerrkura, Gatjil, 115, 122-23, 125
- Dondas, Nick, 104
- Donkey vote, 111
- Doolan, Jack, 118
- Douglass, Bronte, 118, 128
- Duffy, John, 105

- Economic development: political significance, 29
- Economy: early optimism about, 2, 4, 6; main features, 29-34
- Election administration: polling, 163-64
- Election administration: Aboriginal assistants, 162, 163-64; closure of rolls, 75, 153, 154, 172; police, 169; polling, 166-69; polling problems in NT, 158; rolls, 154, 164, 168, 172. *See also* Mobile polling
- Election issues: 'hidden agenda', 107, 175; Aboriginal policy, 22, 78, 107, 136-37, 139-40, 182-83; Alice Springs area, 133, 135-40; constitutional, 17-19; economic policy, 22, 28, 34-39, 78, 182; financial agreement, 18, 69-70; patronage and party funds, 23; as presented in Darwin area, 107; redistribution, 21; as seen by Aborigines, 93, 95; as seen by voters in Alice Springs, 71-72; self-government, 18; statehood, 19; taxes, 70, 78; Top End, 121-23, 127-28; uranium policy, 22-23, 78
- Election results: Barkly, 144; Darwin area, 110-11, 112-13; MacDonnell, 143; Stuart, 142; enrolment, 171-72; general, 171; local variation, 171, 176, 178
- Electoral administration: office, 75; rolls, 76-77, 102
- Electoral education, 20, 60-61, 89, 174, 183-84; Aboriginal assistants, 156; assessment of program, 149, 153-56; film, 147, 150, 152, 155; genesis of program, 146-47; how carried out, 148-52; mention of parties, 147-48, 152; preferential voting, 152, 155; training program, 147-48
- Electoral legislation, 19-21; assistance to voters, 161-62, 166; automatic postal voting, 76; ballot paper, 20; compulsory enrolment, 20, 61, 75, 76; harassment of voters, 20; how-to-vote cards, 21, 75, 166; mobile polling, 20, 75; preferential voting, 20, 50, 75
- Electorate: size, 77
- Electorates: Aboriginal population of, 79, 129-30; Arnhem, 115; Barkly, 143-44; Centre, 129-31, 143-44; Darwin area, 100-103; Elsey, 116-17; Gillen, 130; MacDonnell, 130-31, 142-43; Nhulunbuy, 116, 122; Stuart, 130; Tiwi, 115; Top End, 114-18; Victoria River, 118; population movements, 76-77, 102, 113, 176, 179; size, 50, 54
- Electorates, Stuart, 140
- Electrical Trades Union, 52, 82
- Employment, 29-30, 129
- Everingham, P.A.E., 8, 15, 31, 70, 73, 78, 79, 104, 125

- Fisher, Joe, 80
- Fishing industry, 31-32
- Flag, 8, 11-12, 78, 80
- Forestry, 13, 32
- Forscutt, Jimmy, 104, 117, 121, 127

- Giese, Harry, 23
- Graham, Duncan, 131

- Hampton, Ted, 132
- Hancock, W.K., 10
- Hansen, Peter, 103
- Haritos, Jack, 103, 109
- Harris, Tom, 104, 106
- Herbert, Xavier, 11
- Holder, F.W., 3, 4
- How-to-vote cards, 152, 161
- Hughes, Laurie, 117

- Incumbency, 120, 171
- Independents, 101, 104, 106, 112, 118-19, 127, 127-28, 167, 179, 180; in Assembly, 24
- Informal voting, 173-74
- Interest groups, 82-83, 96-98
- Isaacs, Jon, 70, 73, 78, 103, 106, 127, 141

- Jabiru, 23, 31
- Jettner, R., 23
- John Holland Constructions, 23

- Kakadu National Park, 22, 31
- Kenbi land claim, 79, 118, 141, 175
- Kilgariff, Bernie, 63, 132
- Kunoth-Monks, R., 133, 134, 143

- Land claims, 117, 117-18; Centre, 140-41; difficulty of, 55; as election issue, 175
- Land Councils: Central, 96-97, 130; Northern, 79, 82, 82-84, 84, 95, 96-97, 149; Tiwi, 96; as interest groups, 96-98
- Land rights, 8, 54-56, 96, 127; and development, 33-34, 38; as election issue, 79-80, 121, 137-39, 141-43, 144
- Land rights flag, 108
- Lawrie, Dawn, 24, 77, 103, 104, 112, 171
- Leaders: Alice voters' assessment of, 73
- Leadership: Aborigines' knowledge of, 120; prominence in context, 111
- Leo, Danny, 116, 122
- Letts, Goff, 23
- Lewis, G., 84
- Liberal party, 63, 100
- Localism, 106-9, 112, 121-23, 133, 135, 136, 144
- MacFarlane, Les, 117
- Macdonald, R., 131
- Magellan Petroleum, 33. *See also* Merenie
- Mann, Ron, 66, 67, 105
- Manzie, Darryl, 104
- Marijuana party, 66, 68, 103, 105, 115
- Maschke, H., 115, 125, 127
- Master Builders Association, 23
- McAlear, Len, 115
- McAleer, Mark, 68, 116
- McCarthy, Jack, 118, 128
- Media: press, 57, 80, 110; radio and TV, 57-58, 66, 79, 80, 110
- Merenie, 30
- Migration and labour supply, 3-5
- Millhouse, John, 118
- Mining, 15, 30-31, 114, 116, 143-44; uranium, 18, 22, 30-31, 32, 37, 72, 115
- Minor parties, 65-66, 105-6, 112, 180
- Miscellaneous Workers union, 52, 82
- Mitchell, Mr Justice, 5, 8
- Mobile polling, 20; getting ready, 159, 161; planning, 159; presiding officers, 161, 164; votes cast, 162
- Multinationals, 32, 33
- Myles, Len, 105
- NAC, 60, 89, 167
- NAC election: 1977, 89
- NT Confederation of Commerce and Industry, 82
- National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, 97
- National Country party, 63
- North Australia League, 6
- North Australia party, 100
- Northern Land Council. *See* Land Councils
- Northern Territory Development Corporation, 35, 36
- Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 36
- O'Neil, Pam, 103, 106, 109, 112
- O'Reilly, M., 116, 118-19, 122
- Oliver, Rod, 24, 130, 132, 171
- One Nation One Law Committee, 117, 121
- Outstations, 115, 116, 154, 159, 160, 162, 163, 168
- Padgham-Purich, N., 115, 127
- Party: salience of, 120, 135-37, 180
- Party finances, 23, 71
- Party identification. *See* Voters, party allegiance
- Pastoral industry, 2, 31
- Perkins, Neville, 133, 143
- Perron, Marshall, 34, 104
- Pollock, David, 133
- Preference allocation, 110, 118-19; Australian Democrats, 105
- Pressure groups. *See* Interest groups
- Price A.G., 11, 14
- Progress party, 65, 144
- Quail Island, 118
- Race relations, 5, 56-57, 86, 116, 139, 163, 167
- Railway, 4, 33, 70, 72, 110, 129
- Read, Phil, 105
- Reilly, Charlie, 117
- Rickard, Diana, 105
- Roberts, S.H., 10, 11
- Robertson, Jim, 130, 133, 135, 137
- Robinson, 'Shorty', 104
- Roth, Klaus, 105
- Rowley, Charles, 88, 94
- Safe seats, 102, 135
- Self-government, 6, 7-9, 11, 18-19, 54
- Servile labour, 2, 3
- Smither, Jenny, 115
- Social issues. *See* Localism
- Spurr, Kay, 103
- Stack, Ella, 104, 112
- Steele, Roger, 23, 104
- Survey: Morgan, 101
- Survey in Alice Springs, 71-74, 136-40, 171, 181
- Swing, 102, 110-11, 174-75, 179
- Tambling, Grant, 23, 104
- Tatz, C., 86-87
- Taylor, Peter, 105
- Teachers Federation, 82, 135
- 'Territorialism', 14, 25, 181-82
- Thomas, John, 131, 134, 140, 142
- Thomson, Bill, 144
- Tourism, 31, 33, 35, 118, 129
- Trade unions, 52, 64, 82

Transport Workers Union, 52, 116

Tregonning, Mark, 70

Tungutalum, H., 49

Tuxworth, Ian, 30, 144

Unemployed Workers Union, 82

Uniting Church, 82, 116

Utopia land claim, 55, 79, 140-41, 142

Vale, Roger, 133, 140, 142

Voters: harassment, 166-67;

intimidation, 167; party allegiance,

101, 178-83; polarisation, 128, 142,

145, 175, 176-78, 183; turnout, 153,

162, 172-73

Votes: party allegiance, 101

Waterside Workers Federation, 52

White Australia, 5, 7

White backlash. *See* Voters, polarisation

Whitlam, Gough, 126, 141

Willeroo-Scott Creek farm scheme, 23

Wilson, Terry, 105, 106, 112

Women's Centre: Alice Springs, 133

Women's Electoral Lobby, 15, 82, 84, 122

Wran, Neville, 26, 70

Wyatt, B., 23

Young Australia National party, 6

Yunupingu, G., 9, 79, 95

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