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Food distribution in the New Hebrides

T G McGee,
R G Ward and
D W Drakakis-Smith



Food Distribution in the New Hebrides

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With a contribution by J. Bonnemaison

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Summary

This monograph is based on fieldwork undertaken in the New Hebrides between 1976 and 1978. It covers the distribution of imported and locally produced food throughout the Condominium, concentrating specifically on the situation within the two main urban centres of Vila and Luganville. Within these towns the discussion covers activities related to both the fresh-food markets and the stores. The results show an extensive and increasing reliance on imported food, the control of which is largely in expatriate hands. Recommendations are thus made for expanding the production of food within the New Hebrides, reducing imports of certain items, and increasing the participation of New Hebrideans in the distributive process.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Many contemporary Pacific towns lack the well developed indigenously operated distribution systems for foodstuffs and other commodities which are characteristic of Asian, African and Latin American cities.¹ The term distribution system, in this context, refers to the flow of commodities from the point of production to final consumer. This involves a complex set of spatial, social and economic relationships, which form a major element in the economic structure in all societies. These systems generate employment and income, redistribute income between nations, within nations, and between towns and the countryside. The lack of involvement of local Pacific populations in this trade may be regarded as a serious constraint on the economic advancement of indigenous populations. It may also be an important factor reducing the effectiveness of the urban areas as a mechanism for redistributing income into rural areas.²

These assertions need to be supported with careful definition and description of the evolution of distribution systems in various countries. However the common lack of information on these aspects of the economy emphasizes the need for more information on the contemporary distribution systems. This is one of the main aims of the present study of the New Hebrides and its companion studies of Fiji (Baxter, 1980) and Tonga (Hau'ofa, 1979). Finally, considerable attention needs to be devoted to the policy implications of such information.

The distribution system includes all foodstuff and commodity movements, and although to some extent an artificial device, is best analyzed through five main components. The first is concerned with the type of

1. For an extensive bibliography of some of this literature see Bromley (1971) and Smith (ed.) (1978).

2. For an excellent discussion of rural-urban relations see Lipton (1977).

production system from which the goods to be distributed are produced. The New Hebrides has two distinct systems of production:

- (i) self-sufficient production in which goods produced are intended for use by the producer or as gifts; and
- (ii) exchange production in which goods are produced for sale in the monetary exchange system. Exchange production goods can be further subdivided between imported goods which are produced outside the national political unit and local goods which are produced within the nation.

The second component of the distribution system is the exchange system itself which is divided between the non-monetary and monetary system, the invisible and visible economies as they are also labelled later in the study. In this study we are principally concerned with analysing the distribution system as it relates to exchange of production goods within the monetary exchange system. It should be stressed, however, that these two production and exchange systems are far from separate. This is shown dramatically in Chapter 7. In fact the manner in which the interaction between the two systems is managed by New Hebrideans is a crucial factor in their ability to adapt to activities in the monetary exchange spheres.

The third component of the distribution system is the spatial movement of goods which is often divided into two main groups:

- (i) international commodity movements across national boundaries;
- (ii) national commodity movements within national boundaries. The latter include interregional commodity movements between regions and local commodity movements over short distances within subnational regions.

It is always difficult to distinguish between interregional and local commodity movements for the requisite statistical data are rarely collected. Nevertheless the distinction may reflect major differences in the exchange system, participants, infrastructure required and type of product concerned. Within the New Hebrides local commodity movement generally involves goods produced and consumed within the same region and a high

proportion of these are exchanged within the non-monetary system. Within the monetary system, petrol and oil are involved in both international and national commodity systems; shipment of foodstuffs produced in Tanna to consumers in Efate is an example of interregional commodity movement; and food produced in nearby villages for sale in urban markets represents local commodity movement. Particular commodities often follow different paths of distribution within these systems and these are referred to in the text as distribution networks.

The fourth component of the distribution system relates to the diverse elements of the marketing system, such as form of transport, transportation costs, types of commodities, pricing decisions and consumer preferences and purchasing patterns which are important determinants of the operation of the system.

Finally there are agents of the distribution system which are generally classified into five categories:

- (i) producers;
- (ii) transporters;
- (iii) wholesalers;
- (iv) retailers;
- (v) consumers, including hotels, restaurants and their customers.

As the following study shows these categories are often mixed in various combinations and in the New Hebrides the majority of wholesalers are also involved in transport and retailing. In this study we refer to the various linkages between these agents as marketing chains.

One type of local commodity movement which is of considerable importance to our study is that between rural and urban areas. This introduces the recurrent difficulty of defining these areas. For our purposes the task is considerably simplified as the New Hebrides has only two urban areas of any significance - the capital, Vila, on the island of Efate and the town of Luganville on the largest island of the group, Espiritu Santo. While several smaller 'non-rural' settlements scattered throughout the islands are growing, in general they consist of little more than one or two trading stores, a district administrative headquarters and establishments providing other basic services. They all have very small populations. We have therefore concentrated

our attention on the commodity linkages that exist between the two urban areas and the surrounding countryside.

As any examination of official or unofficial statistics shows, considerable problems arise in defining the commodities which flow through the distribution systems. In this study we have concentrated upon the group of commodities generally labelled as foodstuffs, since this category seems to us to offer the most potential for development of production within the New Hebrides and in particular increase of production by indigenes. On the face of it, foodstuffs would seem easy to define as all commodities eaten or drunk by the population of the country. In fact there are some problems in the interpretation of the various categories of foodstuffs, particularly with respect to imports. For instance, animal feed, particularly grains, makes up an important category of 'foodstuff' imports into many Pacific countries and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish in the import statistics between this category and grain imported for direct human consumption. An important distinction must also be made in the foodstuffs consumed by humans, between those purchased unprocessed, such as fresh vegetables, and those which are purchased after some form of preparation, such as bread or canned food. Other difficulties concern the very wide range of foodstuffs available, which makes it very complicated to collect complete data on all foodstuffs consumed. In this study we have concentrated our attention upon the basic foodstuffs which make up a large proportion of intake and have generally left aside luxury items such as sweets and spiritous drinks.

Finally, there is the important but no less contentious question of what is meant by the term indigenous. As in other parts of the Third World the Pacific experienced an influx of a variety of ethnic groups during the colonial period, in part to meet the problems of colonial administrations faced with the difficulty of enticing native Pacific peoples into cash labour. In the South Pacific, Indians, Chinese and Vietnamese have been the major groups, although in the French colonies the 'colon' populations assume sizeable proportions. In most Pacific countries intermarriage between these groups and local native populations has led to the creation of 'metis' or mixed blood communities which further add to the ethnic diversity of the islands. In addition there has been considerable movement of labour between island groups. For

instance, Fijians have come to play an important role in the hotel industry of several Pacific island countries. Thus the problem of defining the truly indigenous population of any country is not easy. In this study we have equated indigenous with the census category of New Hebridean which refers to most of the native inhabitants of the country. When we talk of increased indigenous participation in the distribution systems we refer to the increased involvement of this population group. The term Melanesian is sometimes used almost synonymously with New Hebridean, although some indigenous New Hebrideans are ethnically and linguistically Polynesians.

While it must be obvious that none of these definitions are exclusive they do provide a working framework for the remainder of the study. A major assertion of the first paragraph concerns the lack of involvement of the indigenous populations in the distribution systems. In the next section we discuss how this situation has evolved.

Evolution of the present situation of marginal indigenous involvement in the foodstuff distribution systems

The present situation of marginal indigenous involvement in the foodstuff distribution systems is a two-sided phenomenon. On the one hand there is only limited local production of foodstuffs for urban consumption. This necessitates on the other hand the importation of foodstuffs which is largely controlled by non-indigenous inhabitants or overseas owned companies.

Most Pacific island countries have become increasingly reliant upon imported foodstuffs and these formed 20 to 30 per cent of their expenditure on imports in the early 1970s. This is not a unique experience for many other Third World countries are in similar situations. So, for that matter, are many countries in the developed world. But in the Pacific it is much more serious since these imports have to be paid for by a pitifully small range of exports subject to marked fluctuations in prices. Increasing expenditures on imported food are occurring at a time when all the Pacific island governments are committed to the implementation of development programmes aimed at uplifting the standards of living of their populations. This involves the importation of materials and skills from the developed countries, and makes sizeable competing demands upon their overseas earnings.

The enumeration of the factors which have brought about this situation - where largely self-sufficient societies of the Pacific have become increasingly dependent upon food imports - is a difficult task complicated by emotion and ideological judgements. No one denies, however, that the situation has been brought about by the manner in which Western contact and control has integrated these Pacific island economies into the international economy. There are, however, considerable differences of opinion as to the main operative mechanisms in the creation of food dependency. One interpretation attributes the situation to the pattern of 'export-based' economies in which the major attention of the colonial governments was devoted to encouraging the production of cash crops for export. Fisk (1974a, 1974b) has reported that colonial agricultural departments paid little attention to the fostering of a traditional agriculture which they neither understood nor considered to be efficient or productive.³ To be most charitable this situation may be put down to ignorance on the part of expatriate officials trained in other systems of agriculture. It was easier for the colonial officials to concentrate on developing agricultural and marketing techniques for export crops such as copra. They were relatively easy to process and transport and, initially, their production fitted well into the indigenous social systems of the Pacific islanders. In addition, the improvement in the quality and quantity of cash crop production provided revenue for the administration, as well as for the European agency houses and controllers of much of this sector of the economy.

Another interpretation suggests that a main reason for the creation of this situation has been the inability of the Pacific island agriculturalists to react to the market mechanism and to turn from growing their traditional crops (particularly root crops such as taro and yam) for subsistence, to growing them for cash. This was not, of course, the case with either the harvesting of cash crops such as coconut, or the sale of other foodstuffs. The early European vessels in the region were constantly revictualling

3. It should be stressed that not all colonial governments followed policies which ignored traditional agriculture. For instance, during the colonial period in Malaya there was a major effort to reach self-sufficiency in rice production.

at various Pacific islands, although the transactions were generally carried out by exchange of commodities. In the early nineteenth century Tahiti was an important supplier of salted pork to the penal colonies on the east coast of Australia (Maude, 1959) and the New Zealand Maoris were particularly prominent in the export of food to Australia.

Within a generation of sizeable white intrusion, the Maori of the North Island had the hang of money as exchange and of farming for cash markets. Organised by their chiefs, numerous tribes raised huge quantities of potatoes, pork and wheat for sale to settlers and ships and to Australia. These large scale industrial farms were based not on private capital, but on communal holdings and cultivation, income dripping down in traditional fashion from supervising chief to obedient understrapper...In 1853 Maori enterprise supplied half of New Zealand's exports (Furnas, 1947:386).

Within twenty years this flourishing state of affairs no longer existed. Lack of disease control, use of varieties which produced poor quality flour, and the inclusion of chaff and impurities led to buyer resistance and falling prices. Seed degenerated and the quality of wheat and Maori-ground flour fell further until the Maori farmers became disillusioned (Hargreaves, 1959:76-7). Subsequently, the Maoris were removed from most of their lands by legislation and force of arms.

Why then did the Pacific agriculturalist not turn to the growing of traditional crops (particularly root crops) for cash sale? To some extent it was a failure to react to the market mechanisms. Fisk, for instance, has argued that traditional self-subsistence agriculture '...did not have the inbuilt mechanism of sensitivity and response necessary to relate to the availability of surpluses and to the demands of the market, a sensitivity that involves planning the production of a surplus to meet needs that would develop a season ahead' (Fisk, 1974b:2). But a whole range of factors intervened to block this trend. First, the traditional staples such as taro and yam were bulky and liable to damage in transport. Second, they had poor storage qualities compared with grain foods. Third, since these staples were the basic subsistence foods used both in internal consumption and exchange between villagers the

surplus for cash sale was, at least in the early stages of the marketing process, never clearly forecast.⁴ In a series of papers Fisk (1962; 1964; 1971) has also argued that, at least in the context of the Pacific Islands, where land for subsistence agriculture is relatively abundant, a situation of subsistence affluence '...in which people enjoy a kind of simple abundance, at moderate cost in terms of labour and other resources available to them, is still widely found in the Pacific. In the past, with lower populations, it was even more common than it is today' (Fisk, 1972:24). Such a condition was part of a complex system of social and economic interaction involved in the production of these traditional crops and was very resistant to the demands that the disturbance of increased production might bring about. Irregularities of supply thus meant that the expatriate and wage-earning populations were forced to rely upon imported grains and tinned food. Of course not all expatriates were 'forced' to consume mainly imported foods. For many it was a matter of choice. For instance, Gauguin, who was generally thought to have 'gone native' when he moved to his final isolated Pacific home and set up a menage with a Polynesian mistress, continued to eat predominantly European food. Danielsson (1965:245) comments: 'Although the natives used to offer him fish and vegetables, the food which Gauguin bought both at Varney's and from the German trading company at Tahauka indicates that he remained as firmly convinced of the superiority of French cuisine as he had always been'. Some Western style food was readily available close at hand. For example from the late 1860s Australia was producing tinned meat which could be exported to the islands (G.J.R. Linge, pers. comm.). A pattern was thus established whereby the food supplies for the Europeans, Asians and wage-earning Pacific islanders came to be dominated by imported foodstuffs. Only around a few of the larger urban centres did areas of local market gardening develop, often operated by immigrant communities such as the Chinese.

With the rapid growth of population, accelerating urbanization and the increased monetization of the rural sector, the period since the Second World War has seen this trend accelerate and many of the Pacific countries are becoming increasingly dependent upon imported food supplies from the developed world (particularly Australia and New

4. See Finney, 1973:96-100 for a description of these food exchanges in the Tahitian situation. Also Chapter 7.

Zealand) at a time of rapid inflation in these metropolitan countries. When this is linked to the rising freight rates that characterize the entire area it means that the Pacific island countries must use a large proportion of their scant overseas exchange to pay for this food.

The overall historical sequence leading to this situation can be summarized in three parts. The extension of political and economic control by the colonial powers led to considerable changes in the patterns of agricultural production. In the pre-colonial period regional self-sufficiency through largely subsistence production had been the norm although interregional exchanges in specialized commodities such as salt did occur. These changes essentially involved the introduction of cash-cropping of non-food products (e.g. rubber and cotton) or food products, such as coconuts, coffee, tea or sugar, for both export and domestic markets. As has already been indicated an intermediate phase, when local food was used by the expatriates, did not persist as the expatriate communities became more settled in the region. The production of cash crops was carried out both through large scale operations, such as plantations, and smallholder operations. In the case of the latter, processing was sometimes decentralized, but in other cases carried out in central processing facilities operated by large firms. The regional impact of this process was very uneven. Some regions retained essentially the pre-colonial pattern, others were almost completely incorporated.

Associated with this pattern of cash crop production and processing was a growth of towns and town populations acting as the intermediaries in the import and export process, as service centres for the agricultural areas, or as centres for extractive industries oriented towards export. These towns, particularly the larger multi-functional centres, had high proportions of non-indigenous population. These populations created a substantial demand both for imported foodstuffs suited to the dietary demands of the non-indigenous populations and for locally produced foodstuffs. Whereas in many countries of the Third World the demand for foodstuffs was satisfied largely by indigenous production, within the Pacific (with rare exceptions) imported foodstuffs came to provide an important segment of the food supply for the urban and wage-earning populations.

This pattern of reliance upon imported foodstuffs by expatriate and alien populations began to affect the dietary patterns of the indigenous urban dwellers. The 'labour camp' character of many of these settlements in the Pacific also contributed to this process. Indigenous workers were recruited from rural areas and lived in 'labour lines' where they were provided with lodging and imported food such as rice. Dietary change also began to permeate into the rural areas where the money earned from cash crops was used to buy imported foodstuffs such as sugar, biscuits, rice and tinned fish and meat. Liquor and tobacco were also important purchases. This process did not lead to the complete replacement of indigenous dietary patterns in the rural areas, as these imported foods were grafted on to the existing dietary patterns. Gradually the convenience and availability of these foods has led to a shift away from the consumption of traditional root crops to imported foodstuffs. Within the urban areas, it must be emphasized, the change in the dietary patterns of the indigenous dwellers was not simply brought about by the lack of supply of traditional root crops, although this was an important factor. The demonstration effect of the patterns of expatriate food consumption also operated. As indigenous Pacific people became more involved in the cash nexus, they saw the consumption of imported foods and liquor as part of the 'good life' and also appreciated the easy storage and easy preparation of many imported foods.

Brookfield (1971:206) labels the pattern of economic relations which developed during the colonial period as 'export-based development'. It was primarily designed for the benefit of the expatriate and to cover the costs of the colonial government. It continued into the independence era and is most magnified in its patterns in the micro territories of the Pacific. Its features are clear enough:

- (i) a considerable portion of the country's overseas exchange is earned from one or two exports to a restricted number of developed countries. In the case of the Pacific countries these vary considerably, but coconuts (copra), minerals, fruit, fish, sugar, and cocoa are major commodities;
- (ii) the amount earned from (i) is generally not sufficient pay for country expenditures or even for imports, so that this deficit must be made up by external funding and credit (Brookfield, 1971:216). This forces these countries into a continuing dependent situation;

- (iii) a sizeable proportion of the imports is made up of food imports which primarily go to the urban population, both expatriate and indigenous.

Consequently until recently little attention has been paid to the development of food production in the islands, and the marketing of food crops. Before the Second World War only the two largest towns of the region, Suva and Noumea, had moderately well developed indigenous marketing systems (Biggs, 1968 and Tonnelier, 1966). After the war, with the rapid growth of urban populations these marketing systems have begun to develop, with little encouragement from administrators. It has been easier to allow increased use of imported foodstuffs.

The macro picture of Pacific islands food distribution systems

The majority of Pacific countries are now marginal micro economies existing in a tenuous and dependent relationship with the metropolitan powers. The reliance upon a small range of exports of primary resources which are subject to sharp variations in price creates for most countries substantial deficits in their balance of trade and reliance on external loans and aid for their development finance. Social and economic trends within these societies do much to structure this pattern of trade.⁵ First and most important is the rapid rate of population increase. In the decade of the 1960s virtually all the Pacific island countries had increase rates of 2.5 per cent per annum or more, the majority in excess of 3.0 per cent (Table 1.1). While the numerical increments may appear small by world standards, they have meant increases in one decade of between one-quarter and one-third in the total population of these countries, with consequent increased pressure upon available indigenous resources.⁶

5. For good overviews of the Pacific island economies see Fairbairn (1971) and Fairbairn and Bollard (1978).

6. Some territories such as the Cook Islands, have avoided some of these population pressures by out-migration to New Zealand. The remittances of these migrants provide an important source of cash for the purchase of foodstuffs. In addition, the migrants bring new dietary patterns to the islands when they return.

Associated with this rapid population growth has been a growing increase in the number of urban dwellers. The largest cities in the Pacific region have increased at very fast rates. Some of this increase is made up of circulatory, target migrants, mostly males, who return to the countryside after a period of urban residence, although their places are taken by other migrants. There is, however, a growing tendency for more stable urban populations with more even sex ratios to emerge. The increasing food dependence attracted little attention until the mid-1950s when it was the subject of several reports published by the South Pacific Commission. Reviewing the food problems of the Pacific islands, McKee (1957) indicated that the process was already far advanced in some territories, so much so that a great deal of McKee's report was devoted to concrete suggestions on policies to alleviate the situation. The process has, however, continued unabated into the 1970s.

Table 1.2 shows the changes in the proportion of food imports to total imports for the years circa 1970 to circa 1975 in the majority of Pacific island countries that have comparable data. The table should be interpreted with much care for a variety of reasons. First, it should be noted that different systems of valuation of imports make strict comparison between countries difficult. The cost of freight and insurance in the Pacific is a significant factor and therefore for countries which use current domestic valuations in the exporting country, such as Papua New Guinea, the value of imports is understated relative to countries such as Fiji, New Caledonia and others which include the cost of transportation and insurance in their statistics. In fact, while the value of food imports has generally increased over the last ten years⁷, the table indicates that there are variations in the proportion of food imports in different years. Thus the relative importance of food imports increased in some countries such as Papua New Guinea and Western Samoa and fell in others. This is generally a reflection of fluctuations in local supply and the value of total imports. This latter factor is of particular importance when countries embark on

7. For instance, the value of imported food increased by 40 per cent in Papua New Guinea between 1969 and 1973. This preceded the period of rapid post 1973 inflation in Australia and New Zealand (the principal food suppliers of much of the Pacific region) which led to a marked increase in food prices.

development programmes which involve considerable imports of capital equipment. A third factor which must be taken into account when assessing the table is that in some of the countries which have a large number of tourists, such as Fiji and French Polynesia, these food imports are a necessary contribution to the revenue earning capacity of the industry and should not be regarded entirely as loss to the countries' revenues. Nevertheless the table does indicate that while marked variations exist between countries, food imports make up more than 16 per cent of the total value of imports in virtually all the Pacific countries. What is more, this tendency is unlikely to decline in view of the rapid price rises in the metropolitan countries (principally Australia and New Zealand) from which these foodstuffs are imported, together with increasing freight rates.

The major categories of food imports are shown in Table 1.3 which indicate that by cost value, cereals, meat and fish dominate. Liquor and tobacco are not shown in this table but make up important proportions of the imports in many of the countries. Some caution needs to be taken with respect to the fish and fish preparations category, for some countries, such as Fiji and the New Hebrides, have freezing and storage facilities used by overseas fishing companies so that fish caught in the region is, in effect, being imported and re-exported. However, tinned fish is still a valuable import in a region which once used to supply most of its own needs. This, of course, has been brought about by the fact that some regional reefs and lagoons have been overfished, off-shore fishing by indigenous operators is very limited, and tinned fish has keeping qualities which prevent fresh fish being used as a direct substitution item. Cereals are a major import and are increasingly coming to supplement traditional staples such as taro and sweet potatoes. It appears obvious that many Pacific island countries should be taking measures to break down this dependence on imported food.

Policy implications of the present situation

While it may be argued that the present situation with respect to food supply in many of the Pacific countries simply represents a rational development of international specialization in production, which may be acceptable in the case of many developed countries, we would suggest that,

because special factors operate in their region, Pacific governments should give urgent attention to the development of alternative strategies.

At least four main arguments support this contention. First, food imports from the developed countries are expensive and costs are increasing rapidly as a result of inflationary pressures. The excellent report of the Committee on Food Supplies set up by the High Commissioner of the Solomon Islands in 1974 reported that the price of principal imported food commodities such as rice, tinned fish, and sugar showed a marked rise, increasing at about 10 per cent per annum over the period 1970-73. Freight charges showed a similar increase (British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1974:44). These tendencies are probably little different in other Pacific countries. Given the fluctuating prices earned from the small range of export commodities in the Pacific and the increasing demand of growing urban populations for imported foodstuffs (unless food substitution is introduced), it seems that food imports will make up an increasing proportion of overseas exchange purchases at a time when many of these countries will be needing foreign exchange for infrastructural developments and welfare investment. It is true, of course, that this balance of payments problem has, to a large extent, been met by aid from the metropolitan powers, but it is questionable how long this aid process will continue at these levels, or indeed that these Pacific countries should be so dependent on such high levels of aid.

A second and more contentious argument surrounds the problem of nutrition. Some writers are of the opinion that the dietary change involved in the increased consumption of imported foods creates nutritional problems. For instance, deficiencies of trace minerals in milled rice may need to be supplemented (Jansen and Willmott, 1970:2-3) and the rapid increase in protein consumption among Papua New Guinea highlanders who had previously existed almost exclusively on diets of carbohydrates, may cause severe intestinal illnesses that can be fatal. Of more importance is the fact that as imported foods come to form the major part of the diets of the urban and peri-urban populations, a condition of dietary preference and dependence is built up which makes it difficult for the Pacific islanders to return to the eating of more traditional foods. This is further complicated when production of traditional foodstuffs is

insufficient. Harrison (1974) has reported that in Western Samoa shortages of both imported and locally produced foods may have been an important factor in what appeared to be a growth of malnutrition and a decline in the birthweight of babies. Some more general observations on the problems of malnutrition in Pacific urban communities have also been recorded by Parkinson (1973). Certainly it would seem that the process of increasing reliance on imported foodstuffs, at the very least, introduces some nutritional problems and needs to be carefully evaluated for this reason.

A third argument arises from the fact that this shift to dietary dependence will limit the possibilities for the growth of indigenous food production for cash sale. Most of the Pacific countries' populations are increasing at rates of above two per cent per annum as a direct consequence of the introduction of western medicine. The urban centres are growing rapidly, and the potential market for indigenous food supply is considerable. The development of indigenous production and marketing offers considerable possibilities for increased incomes and employment. Of course, the prospects are complicated by the fact that the migration to the town is often undertaken by the most active males who could be working in the development of indigenous food production and marketing. The problem then becomes one of demonstrating to villagers that they can earn a reasonable and reliable income as commercial food producers, otherwise the prospect of wage employment in the urban centres will be more attractive. But there does not seem very much alternative to such a policy, for the possibility of creating new employment opportunities in many of these Pacific island urban settlements is very limited.

A further reason for encouraging self reliance in food production is the likely effect that a decline in traditional food production may have on the loss of skills used in that productive process. It may also be that increasing consumption of imported foodstuffs by indigenous populations may lead to a dietary resistance to the reintroduction of traditional foodstuffs. Given the rather precarious nature of these Pacific economies it is imperative that the pool of skills associated with traditional production should not be lost. This is true of activities ranging from fishing to taro production.

These are the more practical reasons for stemming the trend of increasing reliance upon imported food and for encouraging local food production for the urban areas. There are, however, more theoretical reasons for exploring the food situation. It offers the opportunity to look at the broader process of 'modernization'⁸ which is said to be one of the benefits of incorporation into the international economy. Crocombe (1973:54) has argued that, 'Creating artificial demand for unnecessary goods and services irrespective of their use or value makes people worse off (see also Crocombe, 1971). On the other hand it may be argued that there has been little alternative to the way the food supply situation has evolved in many Pacific countries. Indeed Crocombe (pers. comm.) has argued that imported foods do have certain advantages for Pacific islanders. Certainly there is no need to spend much time in the growing or catching of food, or in the preparation and cooking of imported food, which gives people greater time to spend on earning cash income. This debate really boils down to the question of choice. One position is that the Pacific islanders should be free to exercise their choice in this matter. In response it may be argued that in terms of the evolution of the present situation what real choice do Pacific islanders have? If there is insufficient local food in urban markets and they have developed preferences for imported food they have scant alternative but to opt for imported food. In such a situation can Pacific governments develop strategies which offer some prospects of providing alternative choices?

Possible policy strategies

If the preceding arguments are convincing what measures can be suggested to improve the existing food distribution systems? At the macro level four possible strategies might be suggested. First, the situation in which expatriate and non-indigenous control of these distribution systems may be left as it is at present. This

8. Of course, there are many different interpretations given to the word 'modernization'. Often it is equated with 'westernization'. We do not use it in this sense but rather to refer to the process of incorporation of Pacific countries into the international economy. For a discussion of the sociological limitations of the term see Bernstein (1971).

would mean allowing the present pattern of food imports to continue and involve no encouragement of indigenous production and participation. In support of this strategy it may be argued that many of the micro economies of the Pacific have not yet reached the degree of monetization and market potential which would allow a widespread proliferation of indigenous retailers and distributors especially if they were to compete successfully with the existing distribution systems.

Second, governments could be more extensively involved in these distribution systems through encouraging production and marketing organizations or state-operated retail outlets. Third, co-operative organizations could be set up to act as outlets for retail commodities. Finally, indigenous participation could be increased by encouraging greater participation in the existing type of retailing and distribution outlets. In each of these approaches there is a place for import controls, but the last strategy could also encompass the whole range of retailing and distribution activity from street vending to the transport of goods from wholesale to retail outlets. We do not envisage that such economic activity would be necessarily organized on a firm system. It might well be that family-operated units or village units would be preferable socially.

Any combination of the strategies for increasing local participation, or even a continuation of the first, may yield concrete results, particularly if the results are measured solely in economic terms. But it is our view that a strategy designed to encourage indigenous participation would be more successful in satisfying a wider range of the pressing problems posed in the Pacific region. There is ample evidence of the growing problems of employment in this region which have occurred as a consequence of rapid population growth and the difficulties of diversifying economic activities in many of these mono-economies. When this is associated with accelerating urbanization, the need for greater indigenous participation in the retailing and distribution systems is only too obvious. In addition, the current political situation of the Pacific in which many newly independent governments are seeking to adopt development strategies which increase the welfare of, and provide employment for, their rapidly growing populations, is likely to see policies of increased indigenous participation adopted.

One of the most obvious ways of increasing indigenous participation in foodstuff distribution systems is to encourage the supply of locally produced foodstuffs by indigenes. While the types and volume of these foodstuffs will unquestionably be affected by the resource base of the various Pacific island countries,⁹ it is possible to suggest a broad outline of the manner in which their production could be increased.

The programme would involve a three pronged approach. First, it would be necessary to collect adequate information on the existing food distribution systems operating within these countries, the organization of the distribution systems and the degree of indigenous and non-indigenous participation in these systems. It would also be necessary to have adequate information on the food consumption patterns of populations and estimates of their reliance upon local and imported food.

Second, it would be necessary to estimate the production and mix of the various types of locally produced foodstuffs needed. This would require evaluation of the various systems of production of different types of food, the probable demands on labour and land, and those currently made by cash crop production for export. Increased local production of foodstuffs will mean reversing the tendency for a declining production of some of these crops, particularly root staples. Thus there is an urgent need for research and agricultural programmes to increase the production of these traditional crops, as well as that of 'western' vegetables.

There will also be a need to ensure that these locally produced foodstuffs can reach the population of the urban centres regularly and in good condition. This is not a simple matter. First, adequate marketing systems for these indigenous staples are required. Apart from the technical problems of storage and transport, the indigenous systems of subsistence production, although very efficient in terms of labour inputs, are not readily adapted to the calculation of monetary demand in the markets a year ahead. As Fisk

9. The obvious contrast is between the small atoll territories (e.g. Micronesia) which have a very limited resource base, and therefore the possibility of only a small range of crops, and the high island territories (e.g. Fiji) which have a much wider range of resource possibilities.

(1978:12-13) has pointed out, the allocation of resources, land and labour, and the decision of what and how much to produce, is undertaken within an institutional framework that is tuned to local subsistence and social requirements. Somehow these systems of production will have to be attuned to the market needs, and this will involve careful organization, planning and extension work. An important aspect of this programme may be the encouragement of investment in local processing facilities for indigenous staples, as for instance, in the processing of cassava flour, dried sweet potato and taro.

Third, it will be necessary to consider how this increased local food production can be related to the existing pattern of food importation and consumption. Obviously the immediate prohibition of certain food imports would serve no useful function unless locally produced foodstuffs of the right types are available in sufficient quantity and quality to replace them.

Fortunately Pacific governments, international agencies and policy oriented academics, have begun to focus on these questions in the last few years.¹⁰ This research distinguishes between the programmes which will be needed for four broad categories of locally produced foodstuffs: namely, (i) traditional root crops such as taro, yam and sweet potato; (ii) non-indigenous foods, for example leafy vegetables such as the Chinese cabbage or lettuce, and cereals such as rice (coffee and sugar also fall into this category); (iii) traditional protein products, particularly fish; and (iv) non-traditional protein producers such as cattle, goats or sheep. Each of these commodity groups will involve different programmes and the emphasis on the particular commodity group will vary considerably from country to country. However, the commodities in the first group offer the most obvious opportunities for programmes of development, if only because they are almost ubiquitous in traditional agriculture systems in the Pacific Islands. In Fisk's view these systems of agricultural production already

10. In the list of policy measures which follows we have used particularly McKee (1957), British Solomon Islands (1974), Fisk (1974a, 1974b) and Wilson and Bourke (1976). In addition, we have added other material, especially from government reports, but this is only a sampling of the material which is now beginning to emerge.

are highly efficient and productive (Fisk, 1974a; 1974b) and therefore the problems associated with their increased provision as cash crops are primarily concerned with improving their systems of distribution. The development of marketing boards charged with providing adequate systems of transport and storage for one or more of these crops, as well as guaranteed prices, might be the most obvious concrete steps in making these foodstuffs available. In addition, positive measures might be adopted to encourage government institutions, such as hospitals, teachers' training colleges, police and army barracks, to set up regular contracts for the purchase of traditional staples. Matheson (1973) has some excellent suggestions as to how such action might be taken. Another possible development might be the encouragement of peri-urban gardening which can be carried on in a part-time manner by urban dwellers where land is available (British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 1974). Another avenue would be the encouragement of increased production of these staples, utilizing improvements in the field of agricultural technology.

The problem of increased production of locally grown introduced food crops has received considerable attention. In the Solomon Islands, 25 per cent self-sufficiency in rice production has already been attained through one large scale, heavily capitalized scheme. However, this development has been plagued with problems, and similar developments in other Pacific island countries will take considerable time to implement. Efforts to encourage rice growing in Papua New Guinea have met with little success. There appear to be too many innovative strands in the new technology, which seems to suggest that the introduction of such crops should be carried out with much careful extension work. Other crops, such as coffee or tomatoes, have met with more success but these have been principally for export. The provision of more local processing facilities would allow increased local consumption rather than the importation of these commodities after they have been processed in metropolitan countries. Again, these developments will not necessarily proceed smoothly. Forbes (1975) has recorded the efforts to increase the supply of fresh foodstuffs to Port Moresby by air-freighting fruit and vegetables from the Highlands; this scheme has been criticized for several reasons, the main one being that it disrupts the local economy.

The major food category of traditional protein products is another group in which dramatic improvements could be introduced. No commodity offers more possibility for increased local food production than fish. Fish already make up sizeable proportions of the food imports in Pacific island countries such as Fiji, the New Hebrides and Papua New Guinea, all of which export fish. A large part of the imports are in the form of canned fish from countries, such as Japan, which play a major role in the fish export industry of the Pacific countries. Once again the problem of providing local fresh or processed fish appears to be primarily one of distribution, and the provision of adequate financial inputs into storage, processing and transportation of local fish to urban markets would certainly help in increased consumption of locally produced foodstuffs. The point is often made that the provision of such an infrastructure (particularly facilities for freezing and storage) is too expensive for many of these Pacific countries. Although canning facilities already exist in the New Hebrides, other methods of fish preservation such as salting and sun-drying, used extensively in Asia, are apparently little used, but could be introduced.¹¹

This sketchy review of the policies adopted by some Pacific island governments suggests that while they have begun to concentrate their attention on methods of increasing local production, the information necessary for the development of new policies for food distribution is often lacking. One purpose of this report is to help fill this gap by investigating the distribution systems of one Pacific island country - the Condominium of the New Hebrides.

In focusing on the food distribution systems of the New Hebrides we originally posed four basic questions.

- (i) What are the existing distribution systems operating within the towns and linking the towns to rural areas?
- (ii) What is the role of the indigenous population in these systems?
- (iii) What is current government policy towards indigenous involvement in the distribution systems, and do

11. This is perhaps surprising since the Pacific islanders seemed to have no difficulty in adopting the techniques of the smoking and processing of *bêche-de-mer* during the nineteenth century (Ward, 1972:91-123).

government attitudes and/or regulations restrict such involvement?

- (iv) How can indigenous involvement be increased, or other means found, to improve urban-rural and rural-urban distribution?

However, as our research proceeded logistical and financial problems limited the amount of field-work possible and prevented a comprehensive coverage of the distribution systems in rural areas. We were fortunate in being given access to data on the co-operatives' role in these systems and a chapter on rural distribution systems in Central Pentecost has been contributed by Joel Bonnemaïson. We therefore focused much of our attention on the urban areas in an effort to get some picture of the urban distribution system. These limitations have had a considerable impact on the structure of the final report as it is presented in the following pages.

With these limitations in mind, the structure of the report falls into three main parts. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 describe the New Hebrides and the system of food distribution at a national and international level. Chapter 4 focuses upon the important role of the co-operatives in the national system of distribution because the New Hebrides probably has the most developed co-operative movement in the Pacific. The second part of the study concentrates on the operation of the food distribution system in the two principal urban areas of Vila and Luganville and illustrates the operation of the rural distribution system in Central Pentecost. In the third part, Chapter 8 discusses the patterns of food consumption in the urban areas of the New Hebrides and its effect on health and nutrition, and in the final chapter the major conclusions of the study are enumerated and policy suggestions put forward.

The writing of this report took a considerable time and was interrupted by the illness of the various participants. Initially we intended to prepare a rather narrow report focusing only on our field data but in view of the rapid movement towards New Hebridean independence and a growing concern with the 'development problem' of this country we have attempted to broaden the study to include some discussion of these issues.

Table 1.1
Pacific region population data

Country	Population				Annual rate of increase %	
	Year	No.	Year	No.		
<u>Melanesia</u>						
Solomon Islands	Nov 1959	124 076	Feb 1970	160 998		2.6
Fiji	Sep 1956	345 737	Sep 1966	476 727		3.3
New Caledonia	May 1963	86 519	Apr 1974	131 665		3.9
New Hebrides	1956	55 000*	1967	77 988		3.2
Papua New Guinea	1956 1	740 450*	Jun 1966 2	184 986		2.3
<u>Micronesia</u>						
Gilbert and Ellice Islands**	Apr 1973	47 780	Dec 1973	57 813		1.6
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands	Jun 1958	70 724	Sep 1973	115 251		3.3
<u>Polynesia</u>						
American Samoa	Apr 1960	20 051	Sep 1974	29 191		2.6
Cook Islands	Sep 1961	18 378	Dec 1971	21 317		1.5
French Polynesia	Nov 1962	84 551	Feb 1971	119 168		4.2
Tonga	Sep 1956	56 838	Nov 1966	77 429		3.1
Western Samoa	Sep 1961	114 427	Nov 1971	146 626		2.5

* Official estimate.

** Now Kiribati and Tuvalu.

Source: South Pacific Commission, (1975).

Table 1.2
Percentage of value of food imports* to value
of total imports

Country	Year	%	Year	%
American Samoa	1969-70	24.0	1975-76	21.6
British Solomon Islands	1970	23.6	1975	16.0
Cook Islands	1970	25.9	1973	25.3
Fiji	1970	19.9	1976	18.8
Gilbert and Ellice Islands	1971	45.0	1975	36.5
Guam	1971-72	14.0		
New Hebrides	1970	24.7	1975	22.2
Niue Island	1970	31.1	1975	26.4
Norfolk Island	1969-70	14.2	1975-76	17.7
New Caledonia	1970	10.0	1976	19.0
Papua New Guinea	1969-70	18.6	1975-76	21.2
French Polynesia	1970	17.4	1975	19.3
Tonga	1970	30.8	1976	30.9
Western Samoa	1970	25.9	1975	31.5
Australia	1970-71	3.9	1975-76	3.6
New Zealand**	1970-71	6.1	1973-74	5.7
United Kingdom	1970	19.9	1976	14.4

* Includes SITC categories 001-007, 009, 111, excludes fats and oils.

** c.i.f. values.

Note: Different systems of valuation of imports makes strict comparison between all countries difficult. In general it may be stated that the imports of Papua New Guinea, British Solomon Islands, Cook Islands and Gilbert and Ellice Islands are understated in relation to those of Fiji, Tonga, New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

Sources: South Pacific Commission (1975b and 1977); Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, (1970-71) 1975-76, Part 2); New Zealand Department of Statistics, (1970-71, 1973-74); United Kingdom.

Table 1.3
Percentage of food imports made up by principal food
categories* for selected South Pacific countries, 1972

Country	Meat and meat prep.	Dairy products and eggs	Fish and fish prep.	Cereals and cereal prep.	Fruit and vege- tables	Sugar, honey etc.	Coffee, tea, cocoa, etc.	Miscel- laneous	Total
American Samoa	38.7	8.1	15.7	13.3	8.9	8.5	4.2	2.2	99.6
British Solomons	21.5	7.6	6.9	37.7	7.0	10.2	3.7	5.0	99.6
Cook Islands (1970)	36.9	10.6	9.2	17.9	4.9	9.3	4.6	5.8	99.2
Fiji	12.3	9.8	29.1	27.0	11.9	1.5	4.8	3.2	99.6
Gilbert and Ellice Islands	22.2	7.4	3.4	32.9	6.4	15.3	6.0	5.6	99.2
Guam	33.9	8.5	7.5	15.3	16.7	5.0	3.4	9.3	99.6
New Hebrides	14.7	8.6	22.3	27.4	11.1	8.7	2.3	4.6	99.7
Niue	32.1	13.1	12.4	17.1	8.7	7.2	2.1	6.2	98.9
Norfolk Island	19.5	9.0	-	7.9	8.4	7.9	3.6	43.3	99.6
New Caledonia	26.0	15.1	5.6	13.3	22.8	7.2	3.4	6.2	99.6
Papua New Guinea	29.9	6.5	11.7	25.8	9.3	8.6	2.9	4.9	99.6
French Polynesia	34.1	11.6	6.1	13.3	20.3	7.1	3.0	4.2	99.7
Tonga	34.7	9.4	4.7	22.8	2.3	12.4	1.6	11.6	99.5
Western Samoa	24.9	10.7	13.0	28.9	4.6	13.8	2.0	1.6	99.5

* Excludes live animals and feeding stuff for animals.

Source: South Pacific Commission (1974).

Chapter 2

THE NEW HEBRIDES SETTING¹

The selection of the New Hebrides as the focus of our study of food distribution systems was determined by several factors. First, the field area had to be fitted into the context of the overall comparative study of several Pacific countries which were selected on the basis of extent of indigenous involvement in the distribution system, size of population, degree of ethnic diversity and stage of political development. While detailed data are lacking on the first requirement, enough information was available about the Pacific countries for the selection of Tonga, which possessed a small population, a high degree of indigenous involvement in the distribution system, was ethnically homogeneous and had remained politically independent during the period of colonial domination in the Pacific (Hau'ofa, 1979). Fiji represented a contrasting type, with a large population, a high degree of non-indigenous involvement in the distribution systems, ethnically mixed population and comparatively recent independence (Baxter, 1980). In the light of the selection of these two countries, the New Hebrides represented a logical selection with its small population, small degree of involvement of indigenous population in the foodstuff distribution system, its continuing colonial status and relatively small proportion of other ethnic groups.

In the Pacific context the New Hebrides has several unique features. Its existence as something of a no-man's land within the French and British spheres of influence led to the creation of a jointly administered colony in the early 1900s, which until recently experienced few of the stirrings of nationalism which has characterized the majority of the other Pacific countries. Throughout much of the seventy years of joint administration the French and British practised a policy of benign neglect towards the

1. The field-work for this study was mainly undertaken in 1976 and 1977. The New Hebrides became independent in mid-1980. This study deals entirely with the pre-independence era.

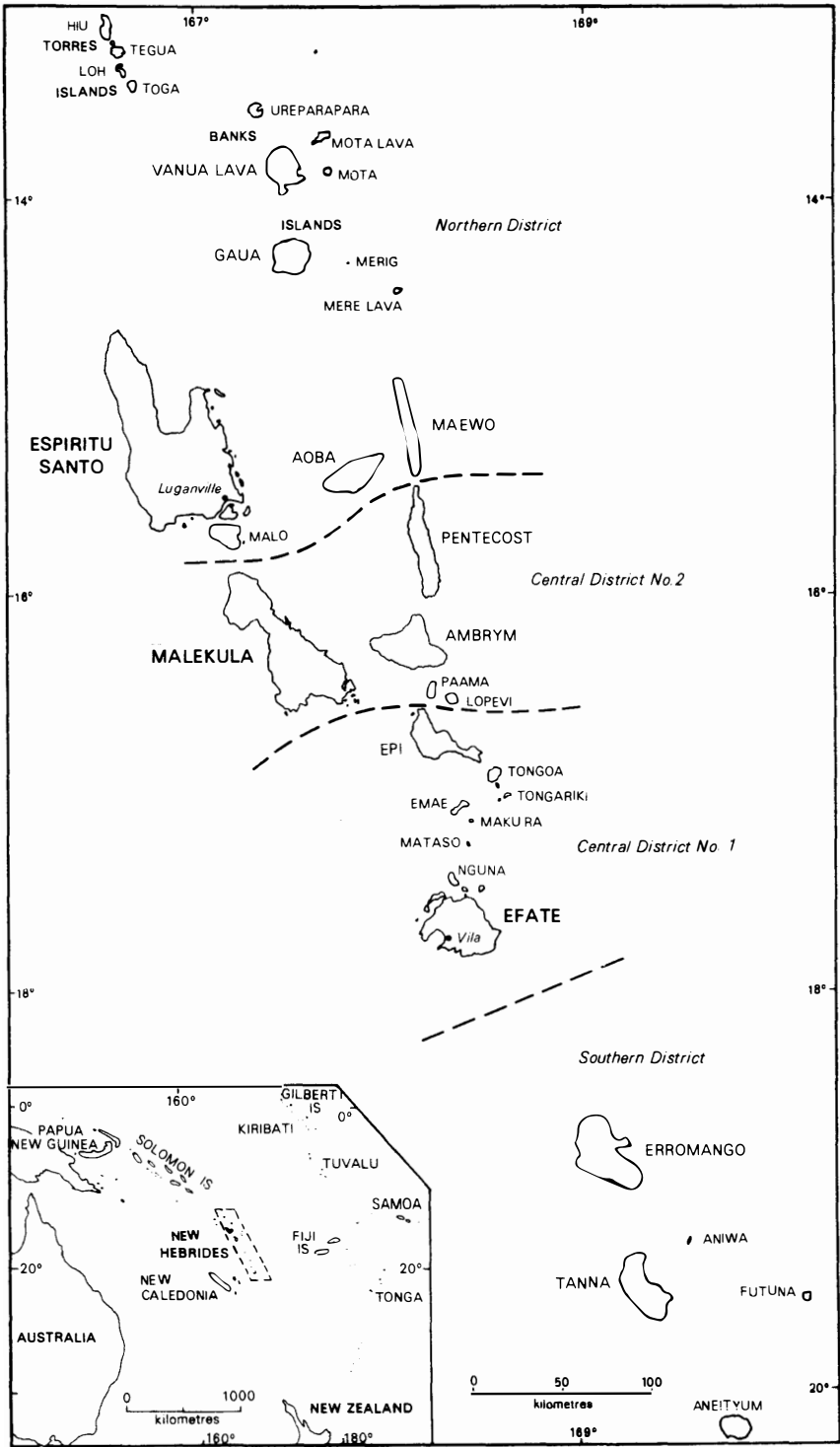


Fig. 2.1 Location and Administrative Districts

indigenous inhabitants, being more concerned with the administrative and diplomatic niceties of this uncommon experience in joint colonial direction. It is true that in the last ten years or so the French and the British greatly increased their investment in development and in particular education, and in fostering a co-operative movement that is one of the largest and strongest in the Pacific. These efforts have been far too late to give the New Hebrides much of a developmental base. This is particularly the case in education where the inadequate provision of higher education and technical training has left the New Hebrides short of local people trained in the functions of government. Throughout most of the colonial period much of the welfare and education of the indigenous inhabitants was left to the missionaries who took up this cause with vigour as part of their overall commitment to increasing the Christian members of the world congregation. The overall effect of this pattern has been to leave the New Hebrides with one of the least developed economies in the Pacific. It is a heritage with which the newly independent state of the New Hebrides will have to grapple in the 1980s.

It is the purpose of this chapter to outline the major features of this situation in order to provide the setting for the detailed study of the distribution systems in the New Hebrides which are described in later chapters.

The physical setting

The New Hebrides is an archipelago consisting of 72 islands strung out in a Y-shaped chain (Fig. 2.1) in a northwest to southeast direction over some 800 kilometres. These islands which have generally originated through submarine or subaerial volcanic activity, vary considerably in size, ranging from below 5 square kilometres to 4000 square kilometres. Many of the islands are partially covered with thick beds of coral limestone which are the main locations of the extensive areas of coconut planting.

The New Hebrides lies in a region dominated by the southeast tradewinds which accounts for some regional variations and seasonality. The general pattern, however, is for much heavier rainfall, sometimes associated with hurricanes, to occur in the period between November and April. In the period between May and November the islands south of Efate are much less tropical with lower temperatures and rainfall. There are also important

variations in micro climate which have important effects on the capacity for crop growing. Thus while the east coasts of many of the large islands tend to be wet and humid during the rainy season the west coasts can be very dry. While these variations have little impact on the overall distribution of vegetation and traditional crops, they do offer the opportunity for growing more temperate crops such as potatoes, tomatoes and onions, particularly on the island of Tanna.

History and administration until 1970

Despite the fact that the first European contact with the New Hebrides was made almost four centuries ago it was not until the nineteenth century that the islands were 'opened up' to European settlement with the arrival of British and French missionaries, traders and planters. During the nineteenth century sandalwood traders worked in the group and islanders were recruited for labour on the sugar plantations in Queensland and Fiji. For much of this period the islands remained a sort of no-man's land between the British and the French spheres of influence, but by the 1880s it became necessary to establish some control over the area. In response to this situation a Joint Naval Convention was established under the Anglo-French Convention of 1887 to protect the French and British nationals resident in the group. In 1902 Deputy Commissioners were appointed; in 1906 the Condominium was established declaring the group a region of joint influence and providing for a joint administration. This was superseded by the Anglo-French Protocol of 1914 which was ratified in 1922 and has, with some modification, been responsible for the governing of the territory until the political developments of the 1970s.

The Protocol in fact established one of the most complicated administrations formulated for any colony. Under the Protocol, each power retained sovereignty over its nationals and corporations legally constituted according to its laws; and nationals of other countries had to opt for either French or British jurisdiction. The Protocol left the natives of the New Hebrides with no clear legal status. In addition, an advisory council consisting of nominated members was formed after the Second World War.

The administration set up to deal with the Protocol was no less complicated and consisted of the joint administration which included departments such as Treasury, Public Works, Land Survey and Transport and two National Services which consisted of administrative, clerical accounting sections and included Works, Police, Marine and Co-operatives. There were also separate courts for British and French subjects as well as a joint court for Condominium law.

Population and society

The first comprehensive census of the New Hebrides was carried out in 1967 by McArthur and Yaxley (1968). The second was undertaken in 1979 as a preliminary to the elections later in that year (New Hebrides Government of National Unity, 1979). Between these censuses there were enumerations in the two principal urban centres, Vila and Luganville (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1973), whilst estimates of the total population and that of the two urban centres have also been made each year. In 1967, 77 582 persons were recorded as living in the colony. Of this number by far the largest proportion were New Hebrideans (92.4 per cent); the remainder comprised Europeans (2.3 per cent), part-Europeans (1.9 per cent), other Pacific Islanders (2.3 per cent), Asians (0.9 per cent) and others (0.2 per cent). By 1979 the total population had risen to 112 596, an increase of 45.1 per cent. At the time of writing, no ethnic disaggregation of figures was available but the domination of the New Hebrideans is likely to be of similar proportion to that of 1967.

Despite its small size the New Hebrides is characterized by considerable linguistic and cultural diversity. Linguistic surveys indicate that 105 languages are spoken (Tryon, 1977). In the past the New Hebrideans lived in small social groups (often of no more than 300 people) who carried out their activities in well defined areas often no more than a few square miles in size. While there is some evidence that larger political and territorial units existed in North Malekula and some islands of the southern group, Bedford (1973:10) reports that there '...is also a sharp division within the Group between the customary social structure and political organisation in matrilineal descent societies of the Banks and Torres Islands, Espiritu Santo (commonly called Santo), east Aoba, Maewo, North Pentecost and the patrilineal societies further south'.

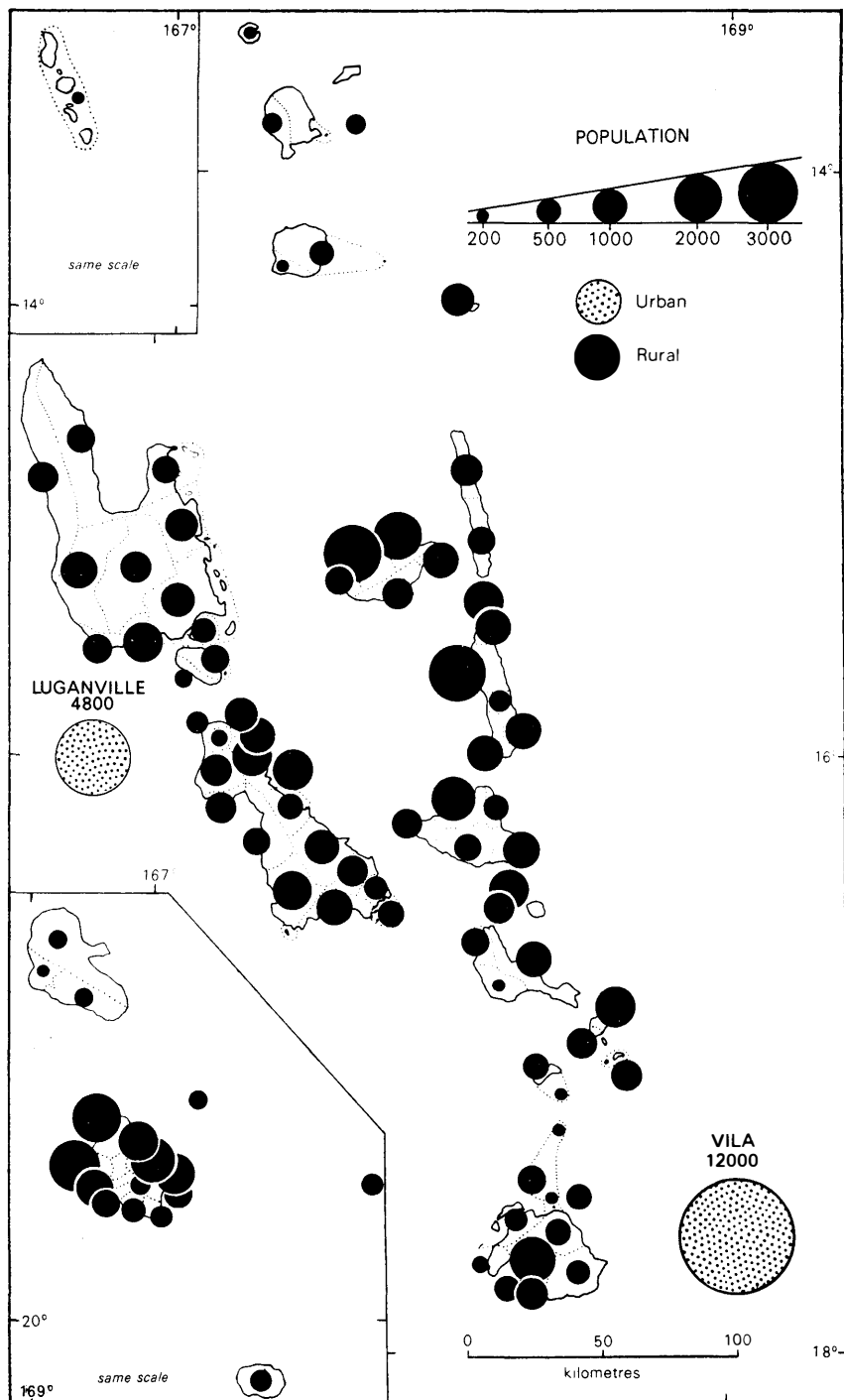


Fig. 2.2 Population - urban 1972 (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1973); rural estimates 1975 (Department of Agriculture, unpublished survey).

A further complication in the social structure is the grade system which operates throughout much of the northern New Hebrides. Bonnemaïson explains that this system is based on competition in exchanges, in which the killing of a certain number of pigs and the giving of these to other clans and family lines entitles an individual to enter the next grade. At the end of this system emerge the 'Big Men' - the most powerful men in the social group (Bonnemaïson, 1977c). This is not a system of accumulation but rather of redistribution from which the individual gains prestige. As Bonnemaïson points out it affects the attitudes of rural New Hebrideans to the growing of cash crops and adaptation to the monetary economy.

The growth of European influence in mixed societies in Santo, Aoba, Malekula and the Shepherd Islands through the establishment of plantations, trading and mission stations, together with the diffusion of *lingua franca*, began to break down this fragmentation in the post-Second World War period, leading to a slow movement of New Hebrideans to the urban centres. By 1967 some 5 per cent of the New Hebridean population was resident in the two main urban centres of Port Vila and Luganville. The majority of New Hebrideans were still rural dwellers living in small villages located primarily on the coastal littoral, partly as a consequence of movement from inland areas. Large inland populations were located in south Espiritu Santo, north Malekula, Tanna, Malo and central Pentecost and were the only exceptions although there were some settlements located some distance from the coast in a few of the other islands.

There was, however, a sharp distinction in population density between the smaller islands, many of less than 10 square kilometres often with high population densities of over 50 people per square kilometre, and the larger islands, none of which has more than 20 people per square kilometre. Bonnemaïson (1977a:123) explains this difference as follows:

In these conditions, the distribution of groups of people in this archipelago of often fertile lands seems on the whole to be the result of history and local politics, considerations of safety, alliances, or the search for pleasant and healthy sites. With this in view, it appears that small islands were systematically selected as privileged places of habitat.

Since 1967 the major element of change in the traditional population distribution pattern has been the growth of the two main urban centres. Between 1967 and 1979 the combined population of the two municipalities rose from 9938 to 15 102. If the suburbs of Vila are included this latter figure rises to 19 745 representing a doubling of the urban population in 13 years. This change has raised the level of urbanization from 12.8 to 17.5 per cent of the population.

The main contributor to this population growth of the urban centres was a considerable increase in rural-urban migration by New Hebrideans. The older pattern of circular migration described by Bedford (1973) in which the New Hebrideans oscillated backwards and forwards between the urban centre and their home villages, always regarding the latter settlement as their home, has been to a large extent replaced by what Bonnemaïson (1976:10) has labelled 'uncontrolled migration' in which migrants left their homes singly or in small groups with no evident intention of returning. The immediate reasons for this migration were complex. At the rural end the movement was precipitated by a disastrous fall in copra prices in 1971 which coincided with some devastating cyclones in the smaller, more densely populated islands (for example, Tongoa) of the central and northern part of the country. At the same time Vila, and to a lesser extent Luganville, experienced an economic boom with considerable construction activity which created a substantial demand for labour. Other broader processes, such as education and increased participation in the monetary sector, were also creating attitudes among rural people who saw the towns as the location which allowed them to increase their earning opportunities. The consequences have been that both towns moved from rather sleepy colonial entrepôts to increasingly Melanesianized cities. The most important result for the food distribution systems in the urban areas was that it created a larger volume of New Hebridean consumers than had existed before.

Economy

In discussing the economic structure of the New Hebrides the major fact to emphasize is that the majority of the inhabitants are engaged in subsistence and cash-crop cultivation in rural areas. While the 1967 census data are only of limited contemporary value in terms of occupational data because of the rapid growth of urban areas referred to

in the preceding section, the figure of 80 per cent of the working population engaged in agriculture has changed only slightly. For most rural New Hebrideans, subsistence growing of traditional root crops such as taro, yam and sweet potato, fishing, and keeping pigs, still provide the major sources of food. The major cash crop is copra although there has been some growth of cocoa over the last few years. Coffee has only slightly increased but has a large potential.

Despite its importance in the economy agriculture contributes a very small proportion of the total revenue of the New Hebrides (Table 2.1). The major part is contributed by the French and British administrations with some smaller income from other sources such as tourism. Agriculture and fisheries, however, contribute the major exports from the New Hebrides and Table 2.2 shows the major earners from the primary sector are copra and fish. It also shows the highly volatile nature of earnings from this sector which is subject to radical price fluctuations on the international market. Copra production is divided between two sectors: a European-owned plantation sector which in 1969 occupied 21 010 hectares (35 per cent) of the total coconut acreage, and a village sector in New Hebridean hands which made up the remainder (Bureau Conjoint de Planification du Developpement, 1977:10). The production of copra varies between 25 and 37 thousand tonnes a year with more than three-quarters of the production being produced by the village sector in 1976 (Cazals and Potten, 1977:8). The industry has many problems. Both sectors are characterized by poor yields both in terms of copra per hectare and in kilograms of copra per nut which is due to the preponderance of older trees and irregular replanting. Coffee and cocoa, while being produced at low levels, both offer prospects for increased production.

Within the agricultural sector the cattle industry has shown the greatest growth in the last few years with the total cattle herd reaching 112 000 head by 1975. Approximately 84 per cent of the cattle are owned by European planters in Santo. Some of the beef is produced for canning with the remainder being for local consumption mainly by hospitals or schools in the islands and for sale to the New Hebridean and New Caledonian urban markets. Other prospects for development are in poultry production which at present only meets one-quarter of the urban demand (Cazals and Potten, 1977:13-15).

Fisheries production makes up by far the largest proportion of the remainder of the primary sector. In 1976 the export of frozen fish made up some 32 per cent of the value of exports and this figure had increased to 41 per cent in 1977 (Condominium Bureau of Statistics). This industry is entirely in the hands of the Japanese South Pacific Fishing Company based on Santo and provides an important source of Condominium revenue. Forestry is only a small segment of primary production.

This study of food distribution systems is particularly concerned with the linkages between rural and urban areas and thus the growth of the non-agricultural sector, located almost entirely in the urban centres of Vila and Luganville, is of primary significance. The 1967 census recorded 5497 people over the age of 15 gainfully engaged in non-agricultural occupations, of whom 4017 (67 per cent) were New Hebrideans. This latter group was heavily concentrated in the lower status sectors of three main industry groups, namely transport and utilities, personal services, and government and related industries which accounted for 68 per cent of New Hebridean employment. Europeans were more highly concentrated in one sector, government and related industries with 50 per cent of their employed population in this sector. The Asian community also had some degree of occupational concentration in wholesaling and retailing (31 per cent). By 1973 the figure for non-agricultural occupations had grown to 8749 of whom 42 per cent worked for the three government administrations and the remainder in the private sector (Cazals and Potten, 1977:27). More detailed figures are available from the published results of the 1972 census which covered the two main urban centres of Vila and Luganville (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1973), but while they show substantial increases in New Hebridean employment there was little change in the patterns of occupational concentration. Thus non-agricultural sectors of the New Hebrides reveal the classic pattern of occupational concentration by ethnic groups that has characterized the plural societies of colonial countries in which much of the non-agricultural activity was controlled and administered by expatriates.

Apart from the government sector, which accounted for a major part of the employment in urban areas, most non-agricultural activities in the private sector of urban areas can be dealt with under three main headings: commerce and industry (excluding mining), tourism, and the role of

Vila as a financial centre. In the industrial sector the export processing industries, consisting mainly of processing meat and fish, have already been touched upon, but there is also some development of small industries serving the local market. These include furniture making in Vila, soft drink manufacturing plants and aluminium and glass products factories. The service industries include wholesaling and retailing, motor car repair firms and gas and water supply services. Cazals and Potten (1976) point out that these service industries are dominated by two large companies, Burns Philp (New Hebrides) Ltd, and Comptoirs Francais Nouvelles-Hebrides (CFNH) both of which are associated with foreign companies and have a wide range of interests in the wholesale and retail marketing of copra, shipping, garages, tourism, airline agencies and the import-export trade. In both urban centres ownership of the service enterprises is overwhelmingly dominated by non-Melanesians. Outside of Vila and Luganville the private service sector is dominated by the co-operatives which have grown rapidly in the 1970s, accounting for 260 of 270 enumerated enterprises outside the urban areas.

Tourism is generally regarded as offering one of the brightest prospects for development. Since 1971 it has been the fastest growing industry in the New Hebrides and in 1976 it was the third largest gross earner of exchange after copra and fish. Tourists generally arrive by air or else are short term visitors on cruise ships. Hotels have become an important source of employment for urban dwellers; indirectly employment and revenue are created by the tourists' other requirements such as taxis, restaurants and shops.

The role of the New Hebrides as a financial centre stems from the emergence of the New Hebrides as a 'tax haven'. A complex financial sector has emerged with the growth of trading banks and services such as accountants and lawyers. This provides considerable revenue from licence fees and was the major catalyst in the urban building boom of the early 1970s. Since 1975 these activities have tended to stabilize.

On the basis of this brief survey of the New Hebridean economy it is possible to highlight the following features which are crucial to an understanding of the development options open to the society as it moves towards independence in the 1980s. First, the economy is still characterized by

an underdeveloped peasant sector which is highly dependent for its monetary income upon the fluctuating prices of the monocrop cultivation of coconuts. Grafted onto this peasant sub-stratum is a largely urban superstructure, ownership and control of which are largely in the hands of non-New Hebrideans. Despite the increasing importance of co-operatives in the rural distribution systems much of the ultimate control of these systems is in foreign hands through their control of exports-imports and the banking and communication systems. Demographic trends in the last ten years, which have seen the rapid movement of New Hebrideans to the two urban centres, have begun to create a base for a restructuring of this non-New Hebridean domination. In order to understand these developments it is necessary to consider briefly the political developments in the New Hebrides group since 1969.

Political developments in the New Hebrides since 1970

In the period since 1970 the New Hebrides has rather belatedly begun to catch up with the movement for independence that has characterized all but a few of the world's remaining colonies since 1945. However this movement has occurred within the unparalleled situation of a colony jointly administered by two metropolitan powers, with three administrations, two currencies, three legal systems, two colonial languages and a local lingua franca together with countless other institutional complications. All this would be quite exciting if the New Hebrides were some imaginary textbook case study of all the most difficult problems that could be developed for hypothetical study of emergence into independence. But the unfortunate and sad fact is that this situation is reality.

There are three main groups of actors involved in this transfer of power. First, there are the French and British administrations who are variously committed to eventual independence. Until recently the French were less committed to a quick withdrawal. The British on the other hand seemed not unwilling to divest themselves of expensive microcolonies when faced with more pressing demands on financial commitments at home. It is too early yet to include Australia in this group but there seems to be an understanding that Australian aid to the New Hebrides will increase with independence. Certainly it is in Australia's

broader geopolitical interests to encourage the development and stability of a Pacific island nation which is virtually on its doorstep.

The second group of actors are represented by the 'colon' populations who play a major role in the dominant economic sectors of the urban areas and, to a much lesser extent, rural areas. Their main interest is to ensure that they do not lose their privileged position in the economy. They represent a fluctuating and highly fragmented group who have aligned themselves with, or formed various 'national fronts' with groups of New Hebrideans. It would be false to include the various missionary interests in this group but they too are interested in preserving their position in the islands and are therefore indirectly involved with some New Hebridean political parties. The Catholic/Protestant division in the churches tends to parallel the francophone/anglophone division.

The final group of actors are the New Hebrideans themselves. The New Hebrideans have not been united in their attitude towards independence. Indeed it would be surprising in a population that is so culturally and linguistically diverse, which has been subject to the often conflicting interests of western inhabitants and administrators, if they were able to form a united front. Of particular importance is the distinction between the outward looking, modernist politicians and customary leaders.

The first political party formed in the New Hebrides was strongly under the influence of the Presbyterian missions. This was the New Hebrides National Party which came into being in August 1971 with a public demonstration against land speculation. The party has continued to grow in strength in the ensuing years. Through its able leaders it argued the case for New Hebrides independence in such international forums as the United Nations. It took part in the first 1975 national elections gaining 17 of the 29 seats; 54 per cent of the 'Representation of the People Section' for the Assembly. The remainder of the Assembly was made up of six representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, three co-operative representatives and representatives of the chiefs. After that election the New Hebrides National Party (now renamed the Vanuaaku Pati) became increasingly disillusioned with the pace and terms of the movement towards independence. In November 1976 they

withdrew from the Assembly so that the New Hebrides continued to be administered by the British and French Residencies.

The other political parties that evolved tended to represent either regional or francophone interests. For a period the Nagriamel movement with rural support in the islands of northern New Hebrides (particularly Santo) was courted by the NHNP but after 1972 Nagriamel established a working relationship with the MANH, a French planters' group which offered concessions to Nagriamel's position over land matters. Other major parties have been the UCNH mainly French-supported with French-speaking New Hebridean members. In February 1974 a splinter party of this group was formed (called the UCNL) principally by non-New Hebrideans although it later attracted New Hebridean membership. This party won ten seats in the 1975 elections.

In the following years there were rapid developments among the political parties opposed to the Vanuaaku position, which can be seen largely as a reaction to the Vanuaaku Pati's demands that English should be the major language and that independence should be granted by 1980, and partly to the regrouping of Melanesian francophone opposition. Thus an alliance of UCNH, Kapiel, John Frum, Natatok, and Tabwemassana whose major policy demands were for slower independence and bilingualism, grew up in 1977. Another grouping also emerged with much the same aims to fight the November 1977 elections; this was the Federation of Independent Parties (FEDIP) which included the Nagriamel party, MANH, Friends of Melanesia Party and certain other independents.

The sequence of political events that led to this bewildering series of political alliances can be briefly recounted as follows. After the 1975 elections in which the Vanuaaku Pati gained the largest number of seats, the Assembly met only once before the walkout of the Vanuaaku Pati. This precipitated the dissolution of the Assembly and the continuing of the administration under the two Residents. Preparations for new elections continued during 1977 but just prior to the election in November, Vanuaaku presented a five point ultimatum to the administration which stated that unless the administration agreed to their requests for English language, 18 year old suffrage, and rapid independence, they would boycott the elections. The administration's response was to argue that it was too late

for these decisions to be considered and that the elections should proceed. The Vanuaaku Pati responded by boycotting the elections and declaring that they would establish a Popular People's Government. Candidates from the other parties (which had already reached an agreement not to contest electorates against each other) were then declared elected and an anglophone Chief Minister from the Natotok Pati was elected. The Vanuaaku party attempted to declare a People's Provisional Government on 29 November 1977 through the symbolic act of hoisting flags at the various centres. This caused much tension, particularly in Vila where the British police appear to have overreacted, but the administration ignored this act and the Assembly began operating.

Since the events of November 1977 there have been considerable efforts by all parties and the colonial administrations to prevent the polarization becoming more marked. In April 1978 an electoral reform committee consisting of representatives of the Vanuaaku Pati and other parties was established and a report suggesting general acceptance of many of the Vanuaaku demands was prepared. This was considered by the Assembly in mid-1980 and formed the basis for elections to be held before independence. A census took place in January 1979 and provided the data for new electoral rolls for the election later in 1979.

Despite all this political confusion, preparations for self government continued with a two-man mission in Vila preparing recommendations for a single administration, a revised legal system, a suitable currency and measures for increasing internal revenue. In late 1978 the fragile Assembly was replaced by a Government of National Unity (GNU) with Fr. Ferard Leymang, a Roman Catholic priest, as Chief Minister. The GNU comprised 5 Vanuaaku Pati ministers and 5 non Vanuaaku Pati ministers and, although this made it administratively incapable of firm decision, it successfully paved the way for constitutional agreement and Representative Assembly elections on 14 November 1979.

In these elections the Vanuaaku Pati won 26 of the 39 seats and on 29 November Fr. Walter Lini was elected Chief Minister, two years to the day after his declaration of a People's Provisional Government. Relations between the Vanuaaku Pati and the former government are good and constructive plans are being made for independence in mid-1980. However, the old regional problems of Tanna and

Santo are still present.

At the same time as the Representative Assembly elections, polling was also held for two Regional Assemblies for Tanna and Santo. Although this was clearly designed as safety valves for the local interests on these islands, the Vanuaaku Pati won both of the elections with an eight to seven majority. Since this reverse the leading customary organizations on each island, respectively the John Frum and Nagriamel groups, have engaged in a series of violent actions designed to remove the 'foreigners' i.e. non-Tanna and Santo people (see Salmon, 1980).

At the root of this trouble is not only the uneasy relationship between customary forces, with their highly localized interests, and the modernist attitudes of the central government, but also the way in which the customary interests have been manipulated by other individuals or groups opposed to the central government, whether colonial or republican (see Hours, 1980). Several years ago it was the Francophile political parties that used these customary movements, but since then a variety of commercial and political interests have allied themselves with such local groups when it seemed useful. As a result the principal customary leaders of both Nagriamel and John Frum have built up their local power to a potentially troublesome level. It remains to be seen whether the central government of the new republic can retain and strengthen the unity which the New Hebrides so desperately needs to promote balanced development.

Whatever the final shape of the New Hebrides polity it seems unlikely that independence will bring with it any guarantee that the present economic situation will be radically improved. Like many other small open economies of the Pacific the New Hebrides has a relatively limited range of developmental strategies open to it. It has certain advantages over some of the micro-economies of the Pacific in that ample unused land remains on the larger islands which could be developed for cattle and cash-crop growing, or for forestry. However, traditional systems of land ownership and the considerable proportion of land in foreign hands, particularly in Santo and Efate, still pose substantial difficulties. Such agricultural developments will also need a very substantial improvement in road and sea communications if they are to be successful.

Generally the New Hebrides is beset with many of the same problems as the other smaller Pacific economies. The population is growing rapidly and there is a marked drift to urban areas which, with the very youthful age structure of the population, creates the need to develop both urban and rural employment programmes. In addition, these growing urban populations create an increased demand for food which at present cannot be supplied internally. This puts an additional drain on foreign exchange for the purchase of food imports. The growing tourist infrastructure and its demands further exacerbate this pattern. These developments must also be set in the context of an economy which depends for a large part of its revenue on subventions by the metropolitan powers. Finally, the New Hebrides is very reliant upon the export earnings derived from two major primary products, copra and fish, both of which are subject to marked price fluctuations in the metropolitan markets. Thus the New Hebrides is a highly dependent economy in which seventy years of colonial rule has intermeshed the society with the international economy and placed much of the control of the national economy in foreign hands.

Chapter 3

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT OF FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of imported and locally produced foodstuffs within the New Hebrides cannot be considered entirely in isolation from the external and internal transport services available, the sale and movement of other goods, and the framework of social and economic linkages and governmental regulations within which commerce and exchange take place. These linkages and regulations act as channels and constraints on the distribution of locally produced food and on the import, distribution and sale of foodstuffs from abroad. The food distribution system is not solely an economic system in the strict sense. Underlying the whole complex of food distribution in the New Hebrides is the basic stratum of the village economy within which consumers produce most of their own food. Few New Hebrideans can now be called subsistence farmers in the strict sense as the sale of coconuts (or copra) or, in some areas, food crops provides the cash for purchase of imported food or essentials such as clothing or fuel. Furthermore traditional non-monetary food exchange between different resident groups served to balance local shortages or differences in access to resources, to demonstrate wealth, to achieve status, or as an instrument for establishing and maintaining social and political alliances (Bonnemaison, 1977c; cf. Lea, 1969).

Nevertheless the fact remains that except in or close to towns, or on plantations, the majority of New Hebridean families still produce the greater part of their own basic dietary needs. This means that most foodstuffs which enter the commercial distribution system are imported products or represent a usually small surplus over immediate subsistence needs. Only in the vicinity of Vila and Luganville or other small administrative centres, and in special situations such as Tanna, are there specialist market gardeners or villagers who deliberately and regularly plant additional areas of food crops to produce a marketable surplus. The fact that the volume of local produce entering the market may be influenced as much by variability in a grower's own subsistence demands, relative to production, as by market

demands has an important bearing on market prices and on the predictability of supply.

No national data exist for either the volume of food crops consumed by producers or the amount which enters the market. An unpublished agricultural survey conducted by the Department of Agriculture in 1976 reports a total of 15 654 farmers in the 1183 villages surveyed. Of these, 15 175 had subsistence gardens and 7355 were 'operating purely subsistence gardens'. During 1975, 7334 farmers are reported to have sold some 'local' vegetables and 2211 sold 'European-type' vegetables.

Inconsistencies in the statistics, incomplete coverage on some islands, and the absence of information on volume and value of produce sold, make it impossible to use this survey as a basis for estimating the relative importance of market and subsistence production. It would appear from indirect evidence that considerably less than 10 per cent of all food crops produced by New Hebridean villagers enters the commercial market system. The three areas where sale of vegetables contributes significantly to total village income are Efate, south and east Santo, and Tanna. Villages in the two former areas supply the urban centres of Vila and Luganville respectively while, largely through the efforts of Le Syndicat Francais des Cooperatives Autochtones (SCAF), Tanna ships 'European-type' vegetables to Vila (Chapters 5 and 6).

Food production (other than livestock) on non-indigenous holdings is very limited. On a few plantations labourers are allocated plots on which to grow vegetables for their own consumption and some boarding schools grow food for their pupils. There is also increasing commercial food production around the small administrative centres where boarding schools are located, as for example at Melisi (Chapter 7). A small number of specialist market gardeners operate on Efate, the majority being European, Vietnamese, or part-Melanesian. The food grown and consumed on plantations and at schools does not enter the distribution system and its volume and value are unknown. The surveys described below in Chapters 5 and 6 suggest that yearly sales of locally produced vegetables and fruit had a retail value of a little over FNH50 000 000 in the 1975-76 period. This estimate includes produce sold in the urban markets and stores of Vila and Luganville, including that shipped from Tanna, or supplied directly by

producers to institutions in the main towns. Produce sold by villagers to rural schools and hospitals, to residents of missions and small administration centres, and to other villagers, is not included. Population estimates suggest it is unlikely that inclusion of such sales would raise the figure given by more than 5 per cent. It must be stressed, however, that this figure is an estimate which does no more than indicate the general magnitude of produce sales. Furthermore it is based on data from the first quarter of the year when production of a number of vegetables, including yams, tomatoes, and potatoes, is lower than in the mid-year dry season. The figure is thus likely to be conservative and this tendency would be accentuated by the import controls which were placed on fresh fruit and vegetables during the dry season of 1976 and subsequent years in order to encourage local production. Table 3.2 shows that the c.i.f. value of food imports in 1975 was FNH595 105 600 and these imports must have had a retail value at urban prices of at least FNH750 000 000. It would appear that locally produced food, other than meat and fish, would account for less than 7 per cent of all food sold.

No comprehensive statistics are available for food retailing in the New Hebrides. The two main sources of national figures are the manpower and employment survey conducted in 1973 (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1975) and business licensing statistics compiled by the Condominium Treasury. Neither source distinguishes food retailing from other retail activities. Our surveys in Vila and Luganville show that 56 and 33 stores respectively were selling food in the two towns in 1976 (Chapters 5 and 6). These figures, when compared with the number of business licenses (Table 3.1) suggest that approximately 53 per cent of urban retail outlets sell some food, though in a high proportion of these food is only one, and often a minor, contributor to gross turnover. In rural areas where there are few specialized retail businesses almost all stores sell foodstuffs.

Business licenses are issued annually by the Condominium Treasurer and Table 3.1 shows the number of licenses issued for retail stores since 1974. It appears that the figures given in Table 3.1 understate the number of retail outlets actually operating. For example, in 1974 there were 226 co-operatives in the New Hebrides and at least 196 of these were operating retail stores. Virtually all of these were in rural areas (Fig. 4.3) yet in that year

only 102 retail licences were issued for businesses located in rural areas.

In September 1973, 1522 people were reported as being employed in wholesaling and retailing and these comprised 17 per cent of the total of 8749 persons engaged in non-agricultural employment (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1975:12, 27). This total of 8749 excludes those employed in domestic service in private houses. The figures include estimates of 100 unenumerated persons engaged in small retail stores and 100 unenumerated taxi drivers, but do not include people working in the non-monetary sector. Of those enumerated in retailing and wholesaling 72 per cent were New Hebridean and virtually all of the estimated 100 employees in small retail stores would have been New Hebrideans, suggesting a slightly higher overall proportion. Most of the 266 enterprises in the retail trade were small and 56 had no paid employees. The majority (198) of enterprises had only one establishment and only five had more than two (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1975:47-8). The small size of enterprises is also clear from the number of employees per enterprise. It is reported that 162 retail enterprises had only one employee in 1973, 49 had two, 24 had three and nine had four (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1975:40). The average number of paid employees per establishment appears to be only 2.25, and only 11 per cent of establishments had more than four employees. No establishment outside Efate and Santo had more than four employees (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1975:54-7).

The distribution system

Figure 3.1 gives a diagrammatic representation of the food distribution system. Its two major segments in the mainly monetary sector deal with imported foods and locally produced foods respectively. Both lead into the retail stores although the greater part of the locally produced food reaches the consumers through the produce markets or direct producer-consumer channels. There are no data on the volume or value of locally produced food which is consumed by the producers or by other consumers after non-monetary exchange.

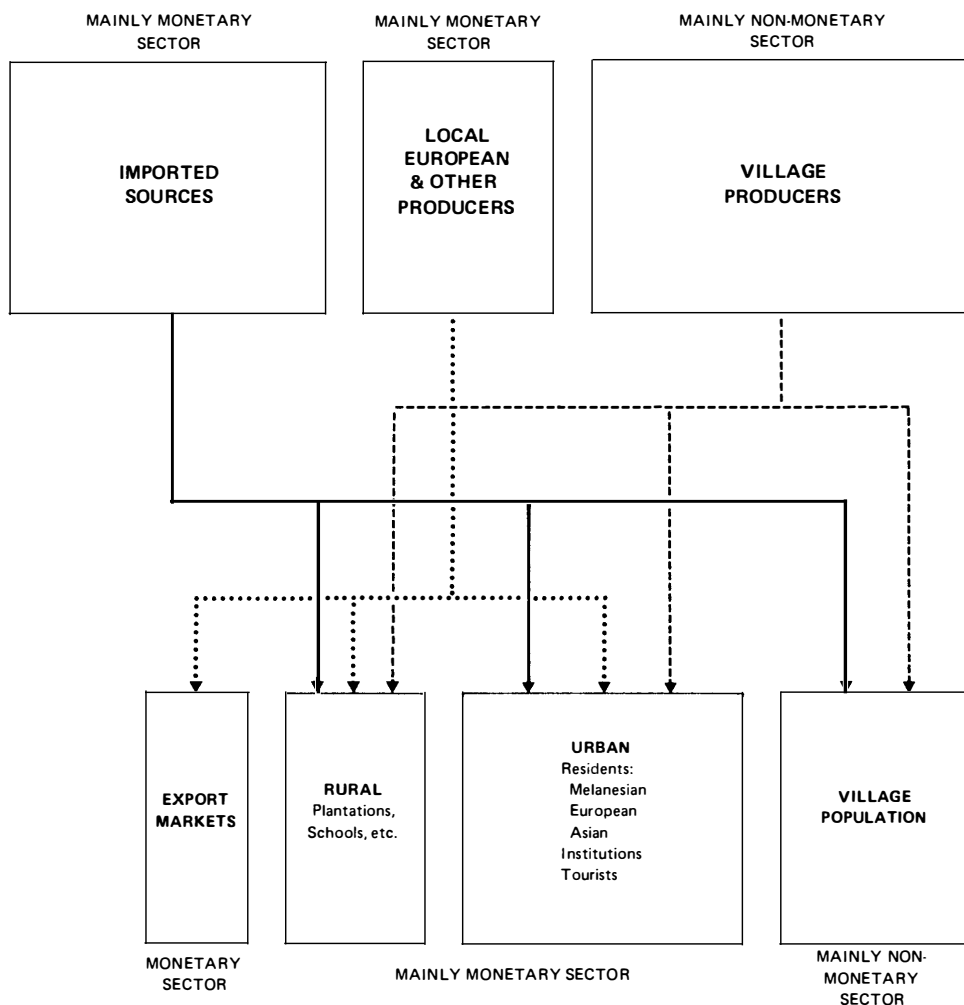


Fig. 3.1 The overall food distribution system in the New Hebrides

Distribution of locally produced foodstuffs

The system through which locally produced food moves to the market and the consumer is relatively simple. Food which is consumed by the producer, or is involved in non-monetary exchanges within the village is largely outside the scope of this report. In rural areas on the main islands a growing number of locations have small periodic markets. Most are located near government or mission establishments, trade stores or on the roadside. The produce offered in these informal markets is usually brought in by the growers themselves. Most rural markets are small but Bonnemaïson (pers. comm.) reports that 40 to 50 sellers may gather near Paul's store in Tanna. Distances from garden to market are short, and travel is often on foot though a group of sellers may hire a taxi or small truck. Volumes offered are small and the cash earned is not the primary income of the sellers. The majority of sellers are women, whose families will obtain most of their non-monetary income from subsistence gardens while most cash income will come from the sale of copra (Fig. 3.4). Many will sell garden produce only occasionally when they have a temporary surplus over subsistence needs or a particular need for cash. As yet no comprehensive survey of such rural markets has been made.

The produce markets of Vila and Luganville are described in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. As in the small rural markets, most of the sellers are themselves growers who bring in their own produce for sale. Transport is usually by taxi or, for longer distances, by village or group-owned trucks. Although in some cases there may be some bulking of produce with only one of a group of sellers making the journey to market and selling on behalf of her fellow villagers, this is rare and no middlemen, other than SCAF, operate on a regular basis. Although major markets occur on only three days per week in the two towns, a few sellers are to be found in Vila every day except Sunday and a number of these village-dwelling, grower-sellers might be classified as full-time market gardeners. Village producers sell small quantities of produce to some of the smaller urban retail stores and on occasion they may hawk unsold vegetables around residential parts of Vila.

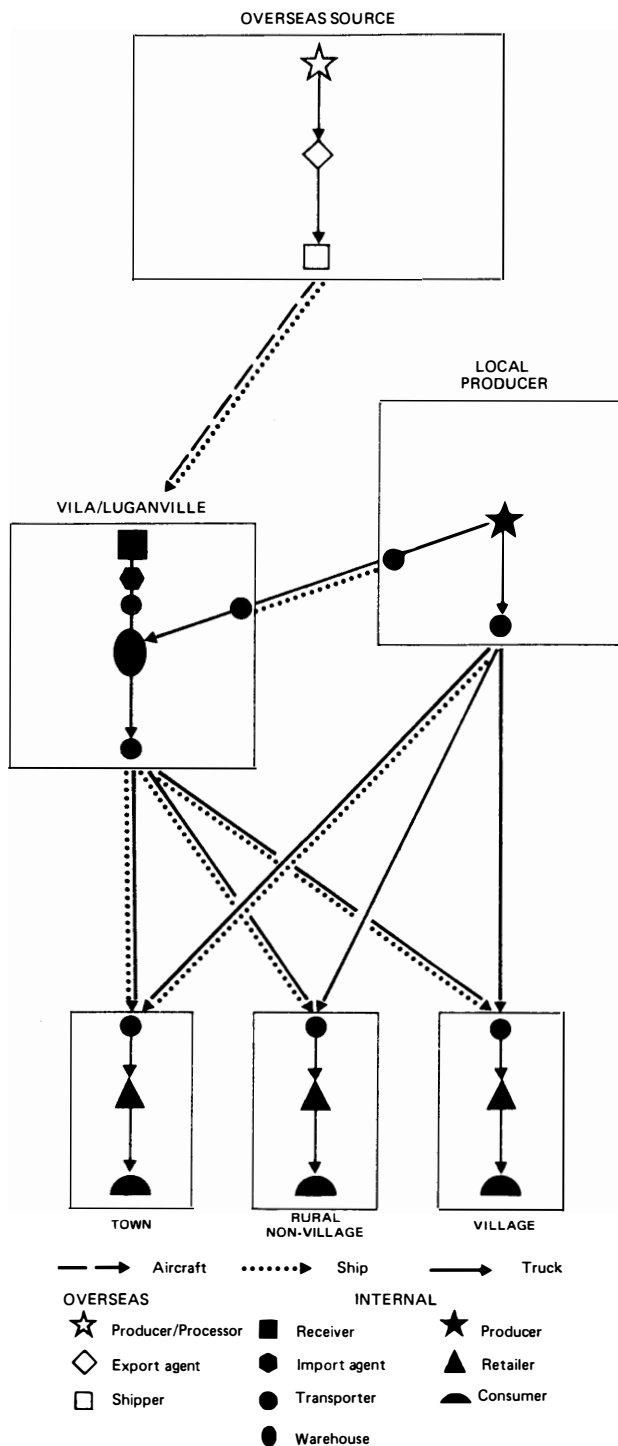


Fig. 3.2 Imported and local food distribution chains.

Whereas all the produce sold in the Luganville market is grown by villagers, a number of specialist smallholders grow for the Vila market. Like the village growers, they, or members of their family, transport their own produce to the market and sell there. No middlemen operate between these growers and the market. Several of the smallholders do not sell in the produce market at all but directly to institutions such as high schools, hospitals and prisons, to hotels and restaurants, and in some cases to individual consumers. In the absence of a wholesale market they also sell directly to retail stores.

The only wholesale-type organization handling locally produced vegetables is run by Le Syndicat Francaise des Cooperatives Autochtones. SCAF is primarily concerned with serving those co-operatives registered with the French Residency's Service des Cooperatives. However in its vegetable buying operations it serves both French and British registered co-operatives, as well as individual growers, in the marketing of vegetables. Purchase of produce in Tanna and shipment to Vila has been handled by SCAF for several years. Emphasis has been placed on 'European-type' crops such as potatoes, cabbages, or carrots for which Tanna's cooler climate give it some advantage, and will sell at higher prices per kilo than indigenous crops such as taro. Within Vila, SCAF acts as a wholesaler, selling to retail stores and institutions, but also retails some produce itself through its own artifact and produce shop. In recent years artifacts have become increasingly important and turnover is reported to have risen from \$A20 000 in 1972 to \$A50 000 in 1976. The main islands which provide artifacts are the Banks Islands and Ambrym (J. Bonnemaison, pers. comm., February 1978). SCAF also purchases vegetables from villagers on Efate, especially in the northern part of the island, for sale in Vila (see Chapter 5). It appears that SCAF's wholesaling operation provides some elements of subsidy to growers. Full shipping and storage costs may not be charged and the costs of wasted produce may be written off. It is uncertain whether this should be interpreted as a deliberate, though temporary, policy appropriate for a period of business establishment, as a deliberate policy of assisting locationally disadvantaged areas, or as a reflection of teething troubles in the establishment of a fully commercial wholesaling business.

Distribution of imported foodstuffs

The distribution chain for imported foodstuffs is much more complex than that for locally produced food. Not only does it have many more links (Fig. 3.2), but the capital investment involved is much higher, the operation of the system is more formal, and in several respects it is less flexible. Control of the system is largely in the hands of foreign-owned companies at key points. For our present purpose we need not consider in detail those points of the distribution chains which are located entirely in overseas countries, i.e. the steps from producer through processor to the export agent at the export port. The steps in the chain from export port wharf in the supplier country are the overseas shipping service to the port of entry at Vila or Luganville; wharf operations at the import port including unloading, agency work, the levying of duties or taxes; transport to the importer's warehouse, wholesaling; transport to retail store; retailing; and transport to the place of eventual consumption. In particular cases two or more of the steps may be controlled by the same operator, as when a retailer also engages in importing, wholesaling and inter-island shipping. Such vertical integration within the distribution system is clearly demonstrated in the operations of companies such as Burns Philp and Comptoirs Francais des Nouvelles-Hebrides or family firms such as Fung Kwan Chee. The co-operative movement offers an example of a different form of integration (Chapter 4).

Table 3.2 shows the main sources of food imported into the New Hebrides. Almost all imported food comes from developed countries with neighbouring Pacific island states and territories contributing very little. In this respect the New Hebrides does not differ significantly from other Pacific island countries. When individual foods are considered the dominance of Australia as a source of staples is most marked. Over 99 per cent of the country's imports of rice, 67 per cent of dairy products and eggs, 85 per cent of flour and 99 per cent of sugar were obtained from Australia in 1975. France supplied 80 per cent of wine imports (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1976, Table 25). Given known retail prices in relation to Condominium c.i.f. values (e.g. see Table 3.3) we estimate that these imports would have an urban retail value of at least FNH750 000 000.

Shipment to the New Hebridean entry ports of Vila and Luganville is by foreign-owned vessels and the volume of New Hebridean imports is not sufficient to give importers much leverage in negotiating freight rates. There is evidence that, for some years before mid-1975, freight rates on the carriage of New Hebridean copra (the country's main export) to Europe were over 50 per cent higher than those charged for copra exported to Europe from other Pacific island countries. It is not known whether this differential existed (or exists) in the case of imports.

At the wharves in Vila and Luganville unloading is primarily handled by the ships' gear. Wharf storage space is limited and most importers promptly move cargo by road to their own warehouses in the town. Distribution from wholesale warehouse to other warehouses and retail stores throughout Efate and in south and east Santo is by road, usually by vehicles owned either by the wholesaler or retailer. Goods destined for other islands are transhipped to smaller vessels, some of which are owned by the major importers and others by independent shipowners including Chinese, Melanesians and Europeans.

There are few wharves in the outer islands and most freight carried by larger vessels is discharged, using ships' gear, into open boats for beach landings. The smallest vessels may be unloaded by hand, directly onto the beach. In 1975-76, in four periods totalling 56 days, inter-island vessels visited at least 228 different anchorages (Cazals and Potten, 1976:4).

Given the dominantly coastal distribution of population on most islands, goods are rarely moved far by land after being unloaded from the inter-island vessels. Hand carriage and trucks are used, although the road mileage is low on islands other than Efate and Santo. Even where roads exist parallel to the coast, as in east Malekula, ships often call at several anchorages along the coast. For the importing store owner there are considerable advantages in having a ship coming virtually to his doorstep. Cargo rates do not give preference to centralized wharves or unloading points and the retailer is therefore able to minimize transport costs from ship to store without suffering higher freight rates. However, the trend to larger vessels has a tendency to reduce both the frequency of visits and the number of unloading points used. If this occurs, the system may become less flexible and some areas

would become increasingly disadvantaged.

Warehousing facilities outside Vila and Luganville are limited although co-operative-owned bulk stores exist on Tanna, Malekula and Mota Lava. The last of these was not in use in 1977. Some private retail stores in the outer islands also act as small scale wholesalers to other retailers (Chapter 7) but most wholesaling is done direct from the inter-island vessels themselves.

In theory each step in the distribution chain represents one or more increments in the price of the goods. Each transport link which must be completed adds to the eventual price to the consumer and in spatial terms one must expect to pay higher prices for imported foodstuffs in the outer islands than in Vila where prices will, in turn, be higher than in the foreign place of origin. The existence of price control regulations in the New Hebrides in 1975 makes it possible to demonstrate with relative ease the form of the cost profile for sample shipments of staple foods from Sydney to the point of consumption. The examples given in Figure 3.3 and Table 3.3 are based on representative shipments of rice and sugar from Sydney in early 1975. The costs shown from f.o.b. Sydney to the 'legal cost price in wholesale store' in Vila are actual costs to c.i.f. Vila, duty and service tax, actual transport and handling costs from wharf to store plus the legal allowances for bank, financing, agency and wastage charges. From that point, the indices are based on the legal allowable wholesale and retail mark-ups, estimates made by the Condominium Bureau of Statistics of rural road transport costs, and actual inter-island shipping rates. The calculations on which the legal prices are based were set out in the New Hebrides Condominium Joint Rules No. 11 of 1975.

As Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3 show, the c.i.f. value at Vila is 7 and 13 per cent higher than the f.o.b. value Sydney for sugar and rice respectively. On these sample shipments the reported freight rate (including fuel surcharge) was 51 per cent higher for rice than for sugar whereas insurance on the sugar (at 0.82 per cent of the f.o.b. value) was almost twice the 0.43 per cent quoted for rice. Rice is exempt from import duty but 10 per cent duty is imposed on sugar. Both carry a 1 per cent service tax.

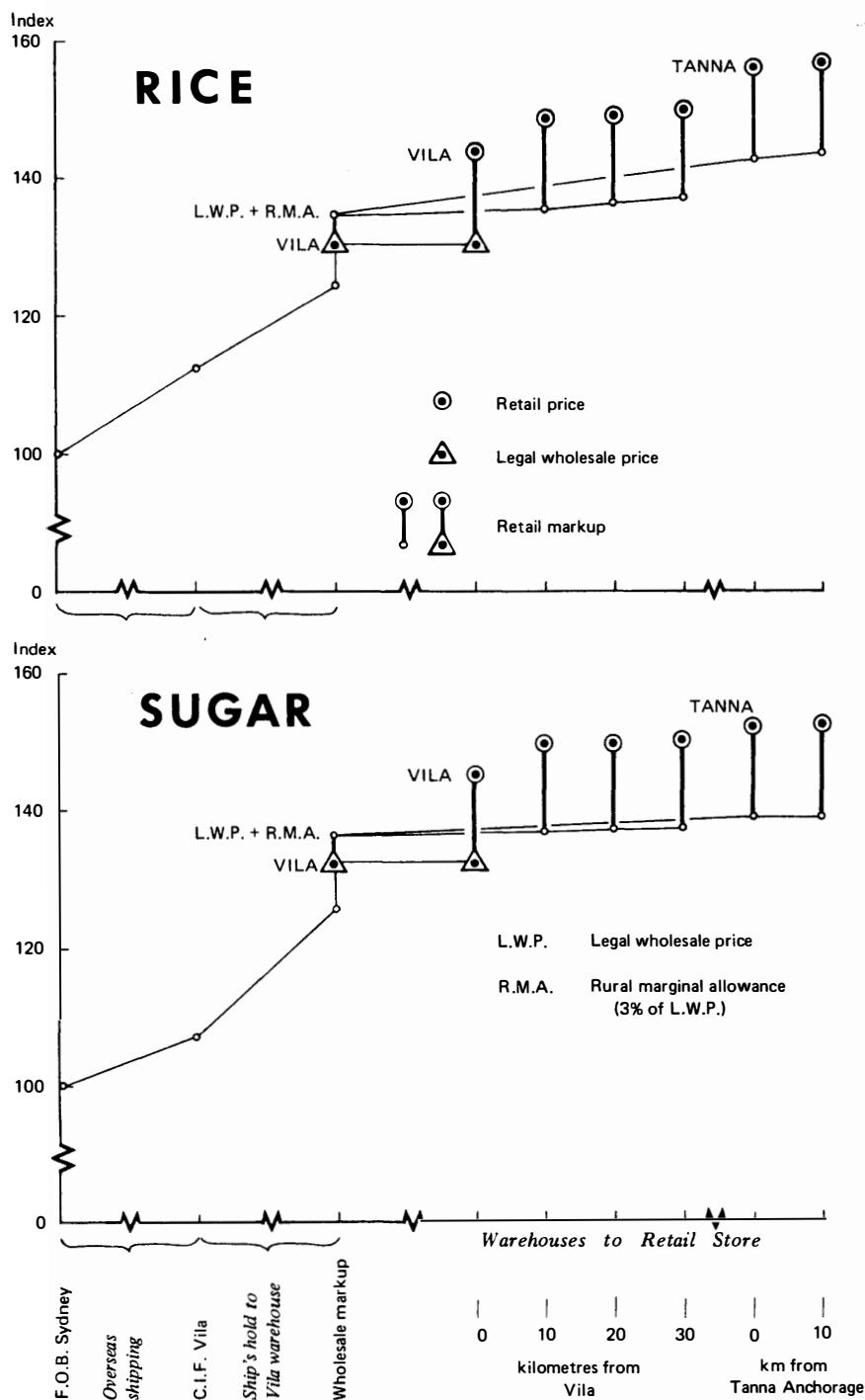


Fig. 3.3 Cost profiles for rice and sugar.

The process of getting the goods from ship to consumer in Vila (including the payment of duty and tax) results in the legal retail price in Vila being 26 per cent and 28 per cent above the c.i.f. values for sugar and rice respectively. The price gradient from Vila to rural areas on Efate or the outer islands then rises in accordance with freight rates and additional allowable charges to cover agents' costs. The proportional rise for rice is much higher because of the lower value per tonne of rice. In other words internal transport costs bear relatively more heavily on goods of lower value in relation to their volume or weight.

Inevitably the rural consumer is disadvantaged, relative to the Vila or Luganville consumer, by the higher retail prices he faces for his imported food. Because of the large subsistence sector, this disadvantage is not offset by the rural consumer paying lower prices for locally produced foodstuffs compared with his urban counterpart. Another possible consequence of the price differentials arises in those areas of Efate from which a high proportion of crop producers for the urban market travel to town to sell their produce direct. Market vendors may purchase most of their imported food requirements in the town, where prices are lower, particularly as they normally do not pay freight on goods they themselves carry back to the village by truck or taxi. The result may be that urban stores will benefit vis-a-vis rural stores. On the other hand, loyalty to their own co-operative society may lead some market vendors to make most of their purchases in their village co-operative store, recognizing that their annual dividend may compensate for any increase in retail prices due to internal transport costs.

Organization of distribution

The various steps in the distribution chains are controlled by individuals, companies, co-operatives or institutions, with government influencing some stages through regulations which give effect to its policies on import duties, price control or import replacement. Whether a particular step in the chain is controlled by a company, co-operative or individual may have an important influence on the manner in which goods flow through the system, and on how the benefits and costs of the operation are distributed.

As noted above, the carriage of goods to the New Hebrides is by ships owned by overseas companies. In late 1977 a four-weekly cargo service was operated between Sydney and Vila and Luganville by South Pacific United Lines, a subsidiary of Compagnie General Maritime (Messageries Maritimes), while a container service was offered by the Daiwa Line of Japan. The Hong Kong based China Navigation Company provides a regular link with Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong while the last two, together with Japanese and Korean ports are also linked to the New Hebrides by a monthly service of the Kyowa Shipping Company. Another monthly service to and from Japan is offered by the Daiwa Line. The French group, Sofrana-Unilines (based in Noumea), and the Warner Pacific Line (Australian-owned and based in Tonga) provide links to New Zealand. Compagnie General Maritime offers regular services to European ports and the British-owned Bank Line operates cargo services from ports in Britain and northwest Europe to Vila.¹

At first sight it might appear that the operators of the shipping links in the distribution chain for imported food are relatively independent of the operators of other links. This is not entirely true and although no detailed study of ownership exists some indication of connections can be given. Burns Philp (New Hebrides) Ltd act as the Vila and Santo agents for both the Banks and Daiwa Lines; in earlier years CFNH acted as agents for Messageries Maritimes; and through their joint ownership of the new Vanua Line, the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation is connected with Sofrana-Unilines. By serving as agents for the shipping companies the major importers gain an element of integration through the overseas links to ports where parent or subsidiary companies may serve as their prime wholesalers and export agents. Smaller wholesalers or retailers who import directly on their own behalf do not gain such benefits and do not receive what amounts to discounted freight rates achieved via reduction in agency charges for their own cargo or through special freight arrangements. Baker (1974:128-30) has described in some detail how the agency system operates to the advantage of some and disadvantage of others elsewhere in the Pacific.

1. The *Pacific Islands Monthly* publishes lists of shipping services throughout the region.

The list of shipping services given above tends to suggest that services from the major sources of imported food should be satisfactory in terms of frequency. This is not always true and shortages of particular foods in the urban retail stores are not uncommon. Occasionally these are due to disruption of shipping services caused by adverse weather. On other occasions they may arise from operating problems or the diversion of ships to other services.

The alliances of shipping lines, agencies and importers tend to group into French, English and Chinese language networks and these are reflected in the patterns of origin of imported foods appearing in the stores. Specialization by origin of imports is in no way complete but there is a tendency for Asian suppliers to be relatively more important for Chinese-owned stores, France to be the major supplier for French-owned stores and for Australian and New Zealand goods to dominate in the Australian-owned outlets. Language, ownership links, long standing personal and professional contacts, and the taste preferences of clientele tend to maintain these patterns of supply. The variations in sources of stock certainly cannot be explained in strictly economic terms.

The major importers fall into several groups. The first group consists of large or medium-sized companies which engage in wholesaling and retailing and import on their own account as well as acting as general import agents. This category includes the largest of the French, Australian and Chinese-owned firms and, despite some obvious differences, the two co-operative organizations - New Hebrides Co-operative Federation (NHCF) and SCAF. Wholesale firms which do not have their own retail outlets form the second group. A third group is made up of medium sized retailers who import goods directly from overseas on their own behalf but are not otherwise engaged in wholesaling. Figure 5.9, showing the distribution linkages in Vila, illustrates some of the importing networks which emerge from this three-fold grouping. The diagram is not complete (and its limitations are indicated in Chapter 5) but it does show the basic form of the system of import-wholesale distribution in the town. All the 'firms' and the larger 'town stores' import most of their own stock directly thus integrating importing, wholesaling and retailing. The co-operative retail stores also obtain most of their imported food stock from their own importing and wholesaling organizations, SCAF and New Hebrides Co-operative

Federation, although some co-operative stores also purchase some products from the major importers. This appears to be more common in the case of co-operatives registered with the French Service des Cooperatives, than for those registered with the British Co-operatives Department, probably because SCAF's importing activities are on a smaller scale than those of NHCF. Complete reliance on one importer is, in any case, impossible because of the sole agency rights to particular products or brands which are held by individual firms.

The desire to be at least partially independent of the major importers led a number of stores to establish their own joint importing organization, SIDIV. Subsequent to the collection of the data on which Figure 5.9 is based, SIDIV has begun retailing as a group, through the purchase of the store formerly operated by the Noumea-based firm, Maison Barrau. The new joint retail venture is in addition to the individual members' own stores, placing SIDIV in a position more like that of the other major integrated firms.

Some importers, such as Roy Gallimore and Associates (see Fig. 5.9) are not directly engaged in retailing. Such firms import a wide range of goods, with food a small proportion of their turnover. Operating at only one level in the distribution system, without their own retail outlets, such firms may find the food distribution business relatively unprofitable except for the handling of specialist lines.

The bulk of the general food wholesaling is now in the hands of the secondary co-operatives (see Chapter 4), Burns Philp, and the Chinese firm of Fung Kwan Chee. These organizations, together with a number of smaller firms, all maintain warehouse facilities in both Vila and Luganville to serve retail stores of the urban and adjacent rural areas. They also operate their own small ships or launches to provide a wholesaling service to the other islands. Such vessels act as mobile floating warehouses but their operations are closely tied to the copra trade and it is necessary to examine this trade in some detail in order to understand some aspects of internal shipping and the food distribution system.

Internal shipping and the copra trade

Based on a Department of Agriculture survey, Figure 3.4 shows the distribution of copra sales by Melanesian villagers during the six-month period September 1976 to February 1977. In 1977, New Hebridean villagers produced 68.2 per cent of the 44 304 tonnes of copra which was exported. The majority of expatriate-owned plantations are located on Santo, Malekula, Efate, and Epi and on these islands 75, 40, 58 and 50 per cent of the area under coconuts is on expatriate-owned plantations.

Cocoa is the second export crop although by value (1977, FNH168 708 100) it is much less significant than copra (1977, FNH1 107 254 900). The distribution of cocoa is more concentrated in the central islands of the group (Fig. 3.5).

Although copra produced in southeast Santo and on Efate can be carried to the export ports by road, the greater part of the country's copra must be carried to Luganville or Vila by boat. In 1977, 81 per cent of the copra was exported from Luganville, and 19 per cent from Vila. The carriage of copra to these ports is in a sense the mirror image of the outward distribution of imported foodstuffs from these ports, not only because the ships backload copra while distributing foodstuffs, but because the sale of copra is the principal source of the cash with which New Hebridean villagers purchase imported foods. The volume and value of imported food purchases is thus closely related to the fluctuations in the world market price of copra. In recent years there have been considerable fluctuations in the price of copra and in low price years sales of imported food are notably depressed in rural areas. This is less evident in Vila or Luganville where the relative security of salaries and wages cushions the workforce against such fluctuations.

The copra trade, and the associated internal shipping services of the late 1950s and early 1960s have been described in some detail by Wilson (1966) and the essentials of the situation are much the same today. The major change since then has been the growth of the co-operative movement and its role in copra buying, shipping, wholesaling and retailing. These changes, and the role of the co-operatives today, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

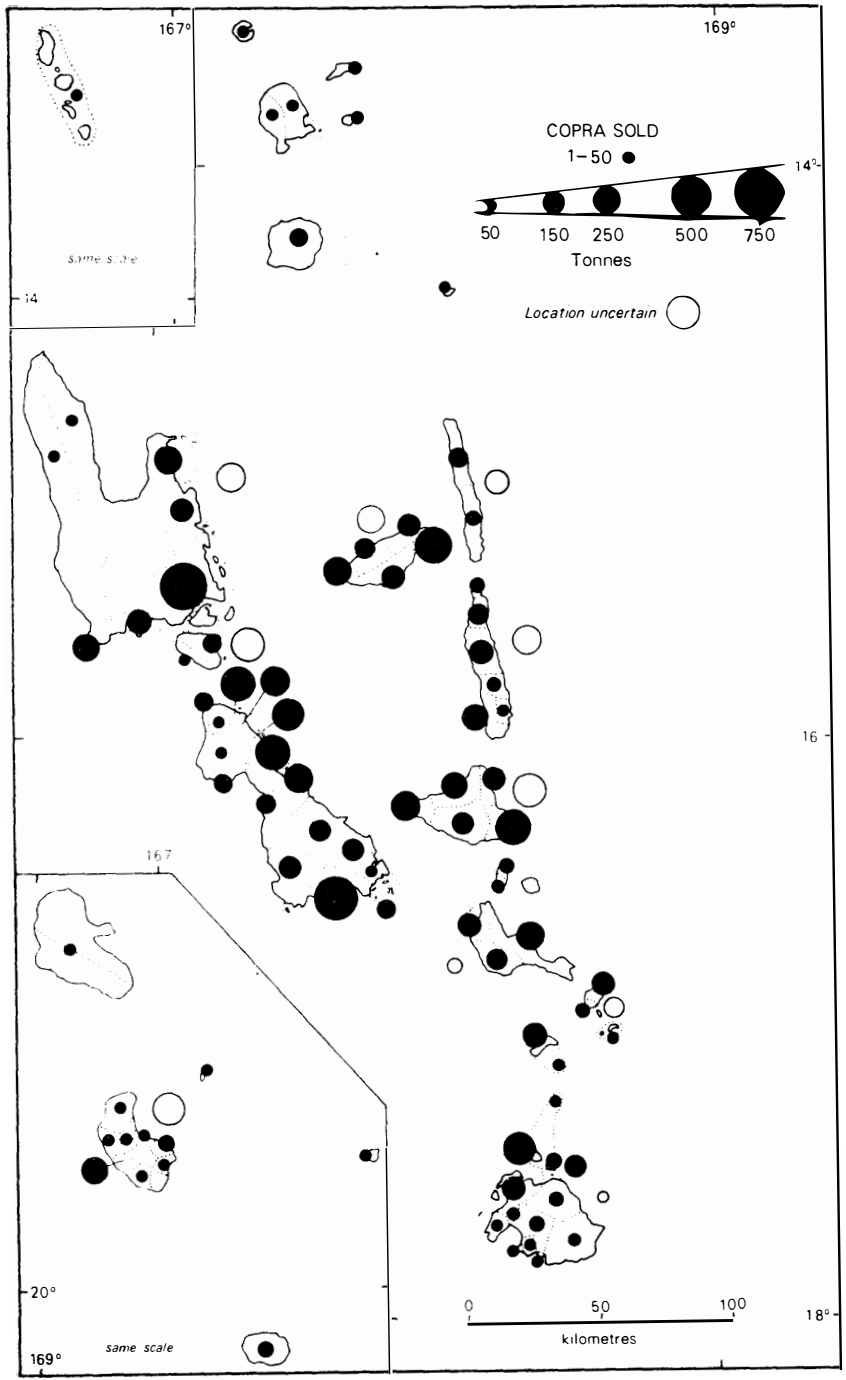


Fig. 3.4 Copra sales by villager producers,
September 1976 to February 1977.

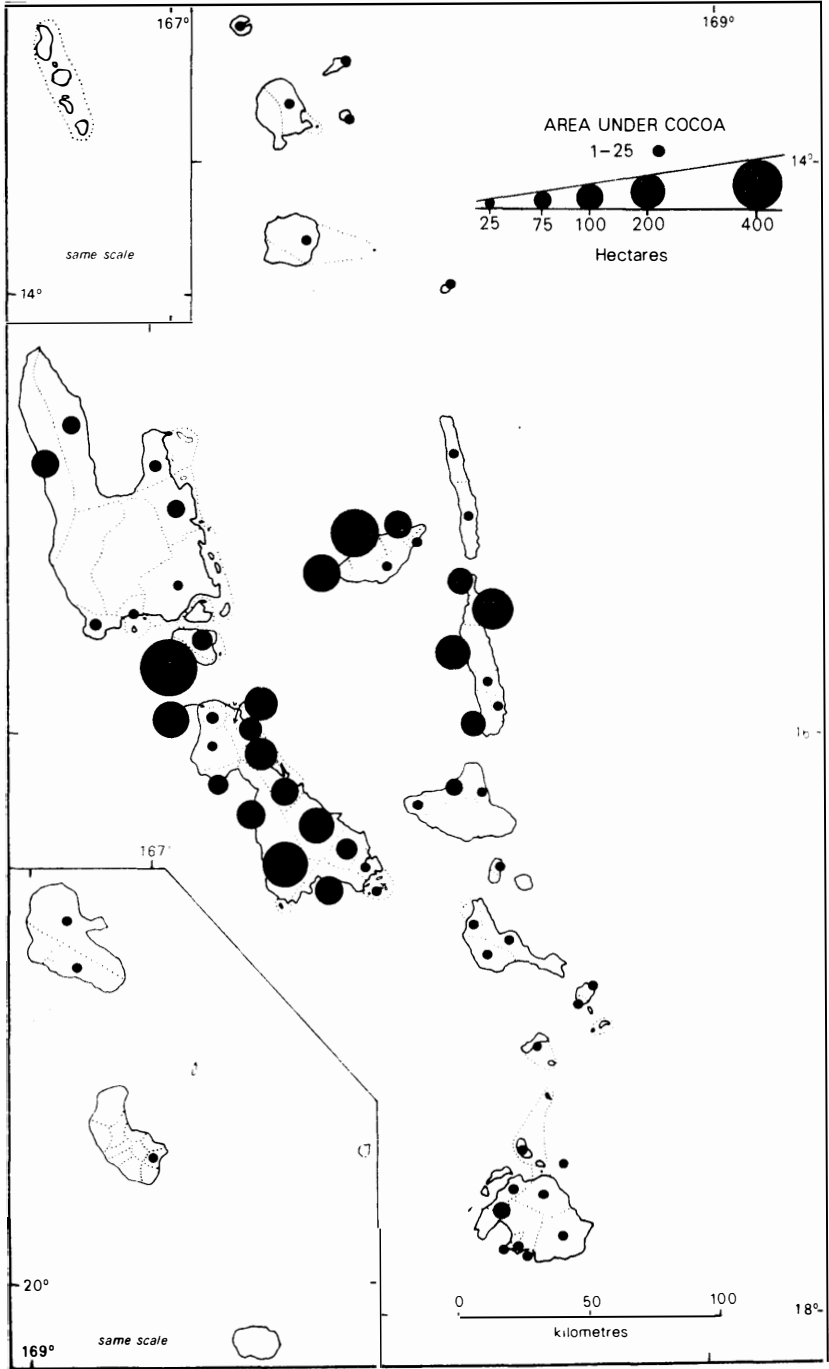


Fig. 3.5 Area under cocoa in villages, 1975.

Coconut growers, both villagers and plantation owners, are dependent upon inter-island vessels to carry their copra to Luganville or Vila for export. Three groups of shipping operators may be distinguished - the major import-export firms, co-operative organizations, and smaller companies (or individual trader/buyers). During the period when most of our data were collected the two major firms of Burns Philp (BP) and Comptoirs Francais des Nouvelles-Hebrides (CFNH) had relinquished much of the collection of copra to the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation. They had chartered their larger ships, *Konanda* (414 gross registered tons) and *Henri Bonneaud* (225 g.r.t.) to the Federation. Nevertheless BP with the *Kathleen* (124 g.r.t.) and CFNH with the *Saratoga* (92 g.r.t.) still traded out of Luganville around the islands of Northern Division and Central Division No. 2 (Fig. 3.6). Chinese and other owners of small vessels also bought copra and sold food and other goods, throughout Central Division No. 2 in particular.

The basic system is for trade-store operators, including co-operative stores, to buy copra from village producers and store it until a vessel calls to collect it. As copra shrinks during storage it is advantageous for the trader to dispose of it as soon as possible and hence a frequent shipping service is desirable. Plantation growers, whose individual production is much higher than that of the average village producer, normally sell on their own account, with BP or CFNH handling the export of the copra on an agency basis.

Each of the major groups of participants in inter-island shipping provides a distinctive type of service, determined by the particular clientele, the motivation or role of the operator and the size or other characteristics of the vessel or vessels used. From February 1976 to late 1977 the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation operated the two largest inter-island vessels in the country, on charter from BP and CFNH. These vessels were required to perform two related roles. In the first place they carried goods to supply the stores operated by British-registered co-operatives throughout the country. Voyages therefore had to be planned to include visits at reasonable intervals to all parts of the group. In visiting a particular anchorage the co-operative vessels would also, if required, supply wholesale goods to French-registered co-operative stores, or to plantations. But the primary factor determining routes and points of call was the

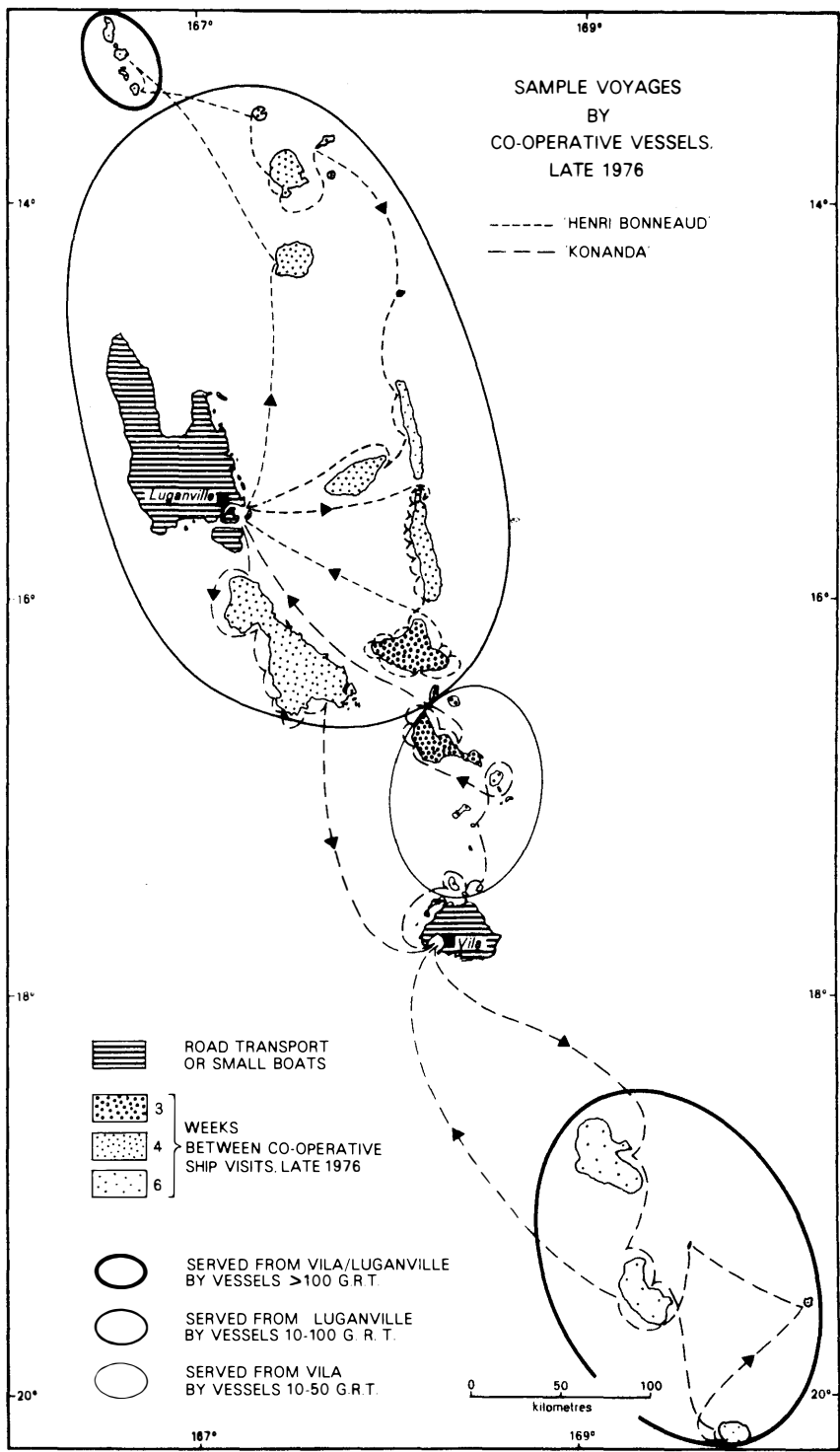


Fig. 3.6 Shipping services.

location of co-operatives (Fig. 4.3) and because of this it could be argued that there was a deliberate policy to visit more remote areas, such as the Torres or Banks groups, more often than a strict economic balance sheet might dictate.

The second role, related to the first, was to pick up copra purchased by the co-operatives from villagers (both members and non-members), for transport to Vila or Luganville. The ships (*Konanda* and *Henri Bonndaud*) would also collect copra from plantations for freighting to Vila or Luganville. As part of the charter agreement Burns Philp and CFNH still acted as agents for the actual sale on the overseas markets of copra purchased by the co-operative stores. In effect this meant that in times of falling copra prices these companies did not carry any of the risk of world market prices falling below the 'beach prices' paid to producers between the time the ship picked up and paid for the copra and when it was finally sold overseas. At the same time they were secure in the receipt of their agency fees.

The complementarity of copra, and to a lesser extent cocoa purchasing, and the sale of wholesale goods to retail stores is also the basis of business for most other shipping operators. Unlike the co-operative vessels, their ships are not necessarily required to cover the whole country, but are able to concentrate on the most profitable areas - those with highest production (Figs 3.4 and 3.5) and shortest hauls to Vila or Luganville (Fig. 3.6).

The New Hebrides can be divided into three main regions in terms of the type of shipping services operating. The islands of the Southern District (Fig. 3.6) are served from Vila by relatively large vessels, normally of over 100 g.r.t. The longer and more exposed sea passages to these islands limit the use of smaller vessels in this region. One consequence of the use of large vessels is that the intervals between visits tend to be longer, since the minimum cargo it is economic to uplift per voyage is larger (Fig. 3.6) than if smaller vessels were used.

The longer interval between shipping calls is a disadvantage both for the would-be producer of perishable vegetables, and for the copra trader. A trader who buys copra from a producer and then has to hold it for several weeks before shipment may suffer from excess shrinkage of that copra. Shrinkage varies considerably according to the

length of storage, the effectiveness of the original drying process, and weather conditions. Average shrinkage between purchase and shipment to Vila of 20 per cent over a 12-month period was reported by one trader on Tanna in the late 1950s, although 10 per cent might be a more usual figure (Wilson, 1966:70). Shrinkage will also occur during shipment and storage at the export ports and the prices paid to growers are likely to allow for this. Unless a deliberate policy of uniform beach prices is applied throughout the country, areas with infrequent shipping will suffer. Even if a uniform beach price is paid, producers in less well served areas will have to hold copra for longer periods and thus suffer more shrinkage before sale.

The second region, the Banks and Torres groups in the north of the country, is also relatively isolated and is normally served by larger vessels from Luganville. Smaller vessels are sometimes used but the relatively small population (Fig. 2.2) and production (Figs 3.4 and 3.5) in the region do not attract frequent services. A little bulking does occur within the region with copra being collected by small boats around the Banks Islands and held for shipment to Luganville.

The central part of the group, from Santo and Maewo in the north to Efate in the south, is much better served. Figure 3.6 shows that the large co-operative vessels visit most parts of the region at least once a month, and sometimes more frequently. In addition to services offered by the larger co-operatives and company ships, small privately-owned inter-island vessels also serve this region. Small boats bring most of the copra from the west coast of Santo to Luganville. Excluding government, mission, taxi and tourist vessels, approximately 40 trading vessels were operating in 1977 (D.H. Potten, pers. comm., October 1977). Luganville is the main port for these vessels but many of the smaller ones of under 10 g.r.t. are New Hebridean-owned and are based at villages or settlements in the smaller islands of the two Central Districts. Although individually many of these vessels are small, together they provide an intensive coverage within the relatively sheltered waters of the central New Hebrides. Most of the larger vessels are owned by the major Australian, French or Chinese trading companies and these, together with the co-operative vessels, handle the bulk of the imported food distribution and copra trade.

The freight rates for internal shipping are relatively uniform throughout most of the country though rates are higher to the southern islands. Table 3.4 shows the rates charged to (and from) Vila on Burns Philp vessels in February 1975.

The rates shown in Table 3.4 include unloading and lighterage to the beach, as well as the FNH300 per tonne wharfage at Burns Philp's wharf. As is normal, the rate is calculated per cubic metre or per tonne, whichever is the greater. Goods such as rice, sugar or flour are charged by weight while carton goods are normally rated by cubic measure.

In 1976 the general cargo rate for vessels operated by the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation was \$A20 per tonne (approximately FNH1900) throughout the country. Similar rates were offered by other operators for general cargo the southern islands or to the Banks and Torres Islands but within Central District No.2 and the Santo-Aoba area lower rates of between \$A14 and \$A19 per tonne (ca. FNH1330 to 1800) could be obtained in smaller vessels operating short hauls to and from Santo. The question of whether or not uniform rates should be applied throughout the country, thus reducing the costs of peripheral location for residents on the outer islands by a form of subsidy from the central islands, is a matter of considerable policy importance and is related to the type of developmental goals chosen by government, or the goals of the operator.

The small vessels, sometimes operating on less formal and more flexible management systems, have some advantages over larger ships for the type of service needed in the Central Districts. With shallower draught they can get closer to shore and serve landing points where larger vessels cannot, or do not, go. Their size may be more compatible with the volume of cargo to be loaded or unloaded at each stop, and the number of vessels operating within the central region gives villagers more frequent opportunities of selling copra or buying imported goods. It may be argued that greater efficiency would result from copra being collected by road or small boats at one or, on the larger islands, two centralized points so that larger inter-island vessels could uplift bigger volumes at each of fewer anchorages. At present the inter-island freight rates do not discriminate between large or small shipments, or between different points of call. If, as seems likely, the

producers (individuals, plantations, or co-operatives) had to bear the additional cost of transporting their copra to centralized loading points, for no compensatory benefit from either lower sea freight or equivalent higher prices, they could be expected to resist any attempt to establish such central loading points. Any policy of encouraging such a 'rationalization' of inter-island shipping services, as was suggested by Wilson (1966:222) for example, should be initiated only after very careful analysis of the likely distribution of benefits and costs. It may not promote 'efficiency', 'development', or increased production if what occurs is simply a shift in costs from where they are visible in the commercial and accountable sphere of the ship operator, to where they tend to be hidden and unaccounted for in the semi-subsistence sphere of the villager.

Government controls

Until recently food distribution has taken place in a regulatory environment remarkable for the relatively few controls imposed by government. Companies have operated in a relatively open economy, of which the New Hebrides' position as a tax haven is one element. Much of the country's local revenue is from customs duties and export levies but rates are not high. There has been little consumer legislation, and business licensing requirements have not been strict. It is probably true to say that the co-operatives, operating under the Joint Regulation No. 11 of 1962 as subsequently amended, have been more strictly controlled than other commercial enterprises. The regulations set out conditions of membership, capitalization and registration of the co-operative as well as the rules for commercial and financial management. The Joint Regulation also requires annual inspections and audits by, and reports from, government co-operative officers. There is no doubt that these requirements, together with the training provided by the co-operative departments of the British and French Residencies have been basic to the success of the primary co-operative movement in the New Hebrides.

In 1975 the Condominium Government issued Joint Rules No. 11 of 1975 under the provisions of the Joint Price Control Regulation No. 18 of 1974. These rules established the formulae on which legal prices were set for basic imported foodstuffs. Subsequent rules were issued to apply to other goods. The basic motive was to ensure that prices

of imported food did not rise unduly. As the greater proportion of those dependent on imported food were urban dwellers, it might be said that the policy had an urban bias. This is particularly so when one considers that if prices of imported foods are held low, incentive for replacing imports by locally produced foods may be reduced.

The regulations set out the method for calculating legal wholesale prices and legal retail prices by defining legal mark-ups and allowances for costs. The f.o.b. prices at the overseas exporting ports formed the base from which subsequent prices were calculated. Table 3.3 provides examples of cost profiles based on calculation of legal retail prices.

At the time of the field surveys legal retail prices appeared to be generally observed in the urban areas. However, store managers complained frequently that price control was having a detrimental effect. This was particularly true for the small storekeepers who were unable to benefit from vertical integration, could not attribute higher costs to transport where their own transport was used, and who did not import directly. The small storekeepers also suffered relative to the large firms as a higher proportion of their sales were price controlled staples so they were less able to balance the lower mark-ups on these by increasing mark-ups on uncontrolled items. By mid-1977 price control was much less strictly enforced, and indeed the post of Price Controller was unfilled.

A further policy intervention occurred in 1976 when controls were placed on imported vegetables. In June 1977 the Joint Import Control (Fresh Vegetables) Regulation No. 21 of 1977 was made to continue this policy. This regulation gave the Resident Commissioners power to 'prohibit the importation of any fresh vegetables for consumption in any part or parts of the New Hebrides'. The aim was to stimulate local producers to supply fresh vegetables to the urban markets in place of those hitherto imported by sea and air. The regulations were brought into force in mid-year after the end of the wet season and when local supplies of seasonal 'temperate' crops such as tomatoes, cabbages, lettuce, potatoes, were coming on to the market. Regular checks were made of the supply position of major growers and as supplies began to dwindle imports were once again allowed. In 1977 the policy seemed to be reasonably effective on broad terms. There had been some

switch by consumers from fresh to frozen or tinned produce but hotels, restaurants and major stores were purchasing directly from several local producers (see Chapter 5). It must be noted, however, that most of this direct sale came from European and Vietnamese-owned holdings. Produce of Melanesian growers, other than that sold in Vila market, was mostly channeled to stores or institutions through SCAF.

The above outline of the general context of food distribution indicates that at present the systems in the New Hebrides are relatively simple. Government intervention has been limited, and apart from the case of control of fresh vegetable imports, has had little impact. The balance between major firms and the co-operatives has been changing, with the latter growing in importance (see Chapter 4). In the rural and non-monetary sectors local and primarily subsistence production predominates but the importance of imported food in the monetary and urban sectors remains overwhelming.

Chapter 4

THE ROLE OF CO-OPERATIVES

Nowhere else in the Pacific Islands region have co-operatives attained as strong a position as in the New Hebrides. This is remarkable in view of the fact that formal co-operative societies have a history of less than 20 years in this country. In 1974 co-operatives purchased and sold 34 per cent of the country's copra exports and 36 per cent of the cocoa. Unpublished data suggest that in 1975 co-operatives were responsible for wholesaling something in the order of 15 per cent by c.i.f. value of the food imported into the New Hebrides and one-quarter of that which was distributed outside the urban centres of Vila and Luganville. Since the closure in 1976 and 1977 of the major New Hebrides Co-operative Federation's (NHCF) urban retail outlets in Vila and Luganville the movement has returned to the primarily rural role it had before 1972. With the establishment in late 1977 of the Vanua Navigation Company as a joint venture between the NHCF and the Sofrana Line, the Federation now controls an integrated internal distribution system.

Beginnings

The formal beginning of the co-operative movement in the New Hebrides came with the issuing in September 1962 of Joint Regulation No. 11 of 1962, 'To provide for the operation of Native Co-operative Societies'. In the following year a bilingual course for prospective co-operative society secretaries was held and in 1964 five societies were registered under the Co-operatives Joint Regulation and a further six probationary societies were founded.

In some respects the movement is older than this as a number of unregistered organizations of a co-operative type had been established in the previous decade (Guiart, 1956; Wilson, 1966:80-94). These owed something to the New Hebridean practice of forming 'companies' (*kompani*) to achieve some economic or social goal. A *kompani* was normally a group of fellow villagers who pooled labour, cash

and other resources to achieve a goal such as the establishment of a store, or purchase of a truck or boat. The association was not formal in any legal sense and there were wide variations in the form of association. Guiart described a number of such *kompanis* (1956) as a 'movement cooperatif' but as Wilson (1966:82) points out this stretches the definition of 'co-operative' too much. The existence of the *kompanis* in the 1950s demonstrated 'co-operative potential' rather than any true 'co-operative movement'. Most of the *kompanis* faded out of existence soon after (and sometimes before) their immediate goal was achieved. Wilson (1966:83-7) does describe in some detail, however, the formation and operation of the Iarkei Co-operative Society, established in Tanna in February 1958. This organization was more formally constituted along co-operative lines and operated, with some assistance from a mission, for several years. Apart from retailing, it purchased a small truck and began copra marketing. It therefore exhibited the typical range of activities which most formally registered co-operatives later espoused.

Growth and organization

The co-operative movement gained momentum rapidly after 1963. Table 4.1 shows the number of co-operative societies as reported in the Annual Reports of the co-operative departments of the British and French Residencies, the New Hebrides Co-operative Societies Department (NHCSO) and the Service des Cooperatives (SC) respectively. Unless otherwise stated, statistics quoted in this chapter are from the annual reports of the NHCSO or SC. During the decade 1965 to 1974 membership of co-operatives rose from 1456 to over 13 000 and consumer sales from approximately FNH15 000 to FNH412 934 000.

The reasons for the rapid growth of the movement and its subsequent strength have not been documented adequately. The success cannot be attributed solely to economic reasons. Neither can simplistic statements to the effect that the co-operative form of organization matches traditional communal forms be accepted. Such an imputed congruence has not resulted in similar successes elsewhere in the Pacific and such explanations appear to be based on an inadequate understanding of traditional forms of labour mobilization which often tended to be much less 'communal' than has commonly been asserted.

It appears that in the New Hebrides the co-operative movement was seen by Melanesians as something which they could control. This was important in a situation in which two colonial administrations and a third joint Condominium administration had left Melanesians with virtually no say, or status, in government; where missions were strongly paternal; and where the monetary sector was, hitherto, tightly controlled by expatriates. The co-operatives, which despite administrative guidance had a fair degree of local autonomy, were seen by Melanesians as Melanesian. Subsequently the close links, and indeed identity, between leaders in the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation and leaders in the National Party (subsequently the Vanuaaku Pati) meant that the anglophone co-operatives at least were the core of a political movement as much as an economic movement. It must be noted that although the terms 'British' and 'French' (or 'Anglophone'/'Francophone') co-operatives are commonly used, this seems inappropriate. They merely reflect the registration of each society with the co-operative department of one or other of the Residencies. In the absence of other more suitable terms, they are used in this study. There is little doubt that the strength of the co-operative movement, and especially that of the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation, rested on this role as a semi-political and partially anti-colonial force. Latent antagonism towards the major trading houses has no doubt bolstered the strength of the co-operatives.

At the same time the fact that almost all the primary co-operatives are producer as well as consumer groups has been of vital importance. The income from copra buying has underpinned the consumer operations. Village stores, both individually and co-operative-owned, are notoriously short-lived in the Pacific Islands. Uncontrolled credit and bad debts, inadequate accounting, and consequent decline of stocks frequently lead to bankruptcy. In the case of the New Hebrides the Co-operative Departments of the two Residencies have maintained educational and re-educational programmes for society secretaries, and quarterly (or more frequent) inspections of stores and accounts. These have helped maintain reasonable observance of the rules prohibiting credit to consumers but even where the consumer (or transport) side of a co-operative's business ran at a loss, or where illegal credit sapped profitability, profits from the purchase of copra or other produce were usually available to cover the losses and maintain dividends. It is remarkable that none of the co-operatives registered with

the British Residency went into liquidation before 1972 (we do not have similar data for co-operatives registered with the French Residency), a year when low copra prices combined with the effect of cyclone damage to reduce the value of produce marketed to \$A107 480 from \$A568 643 in 1971 for the British co-operatives and to FNH4 811 733 from FNH11 696 165 for the French co-operatives.

It is significant that the two major failures of primary co-operatives were those of the urban consumers' co-operatives in Vila and Luganville in 1976 and 1977 respectively. The greatest demand for credit at co-operative stores comes from those dependent solely on wages. Many of these in rural areas are government employees posted to administration posts where they have no access to garden land. In the urban areas where wage earners are in the majority, the need and demand for credit can be strong, especially towards the end of a pay period. When those seeking credit are members of the co-operative it may be hard for the store manager to resist. As a New Hebridean cannot be sued, collection of debts can be difficult. The change from monthly to fortnightly payments for daily rate workers within the British National Service in April 1976, and for Condominium daily rate employees in July 1976, eased this situation to some extent, but by then the largest urban consumer society had failed and the second was to fail within a year. The urban consumer co-operatives had no other source of income to cover their losses on consumer trading and the location of the main co-operative store in Vila, on the edge of the town, did not encourage casual trade. If the co-operative movement is to have successful stores in the urban areas they may need to be run directly by the secondary co-operative organizations such as NHCF which do not have individual members who can solicit for credit.

The common pattern for a village co-operative has been for a store to be the first venture, but buying copra from producers and selling it either to the major exporters or on a consignment basis usually followed quickly. The initial building was often constructed of local materials but after some time a more permanent structure was usually built. Launches or vehicles were often bought to provide local taxi services for passengers and goods; in 1971 one in six of the British-registered co-operatives owned boats or vehicles. Most co-operative members are the heads of families and thus membership of the rural primary

co-operatives tends to vary with size of community. In 1974 membership of British-registered co-operatives averaged 61 (range 19-147),¹ and that of French-registered co-operatives with stores, 52 (range 14-169). If we accept the 1967 census figure of 4.6 as the size of the average family unit, this level of membership suggests that approximately 70 per cent of the total rural Melanesian population is associated with the co-operative movement.

Until late 1973 the co-operatives did not engage in wholesaling. The co-operative stores obtained their wholesale supplies from the large trading firms which supplied stores from their own warehouses or ships. Most copra was picked up by the same vessels. As early as 1966 some co-operatives were urging that an association of primary co-operatives should be formed to undertake importing and wholesaling but the lack of necessary capital delayed the establishment of this secondary organisation, the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation, until September 1973. The year 1972 had been the first in which the co-operative movements, both British and French, had suffered serious financial setbacks, mainly caused by low copra prices. Nevertheless, in that year 'experimental' urban consumer societies were formed in Vila and Luganville. Consumer sales in the Vila and Luganville stores rose rapidly and in 1973 together they accounted for almost one-fifth of the total consumer sales of the British-registered co-operatives. This growth may well have been the crucial stimulus needed for moving into wholesaling.

By 1974 the co-operative movement had attained its present structure and the basic 1974 arrangement is shown in Figure 4.1. At the base of the pyramid are the primary societies, most of which combine consumer and marketing roles. A few are specialist societies for activities such as concrete block making.

Each primary co-operative operates under a set of standard by-laws in accordance with Joint Regulation No. 11 of 1962 and its subsequent amendments. The normal by-laws state the objects of a co-operative society to be the marketing of 'such produce of its members as the committee shall from time to time decide' and 'to operate a retail

1. Excludes two cement block making co-operatives on Tanna, and the two urban co-operatives.

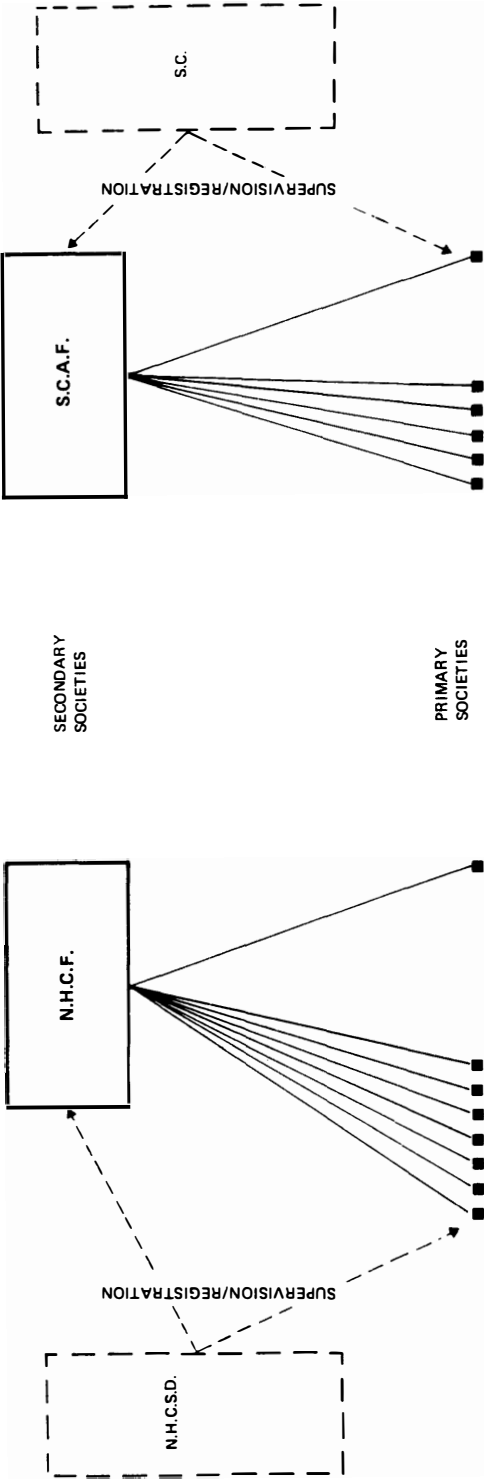


Fig. 4.1 Structure of co-operative system.

store for the benefit of its members'. The members of a society must be over 18 years of age and in fact are usually the heads of families in a village. Each must hold a certain number of paid-up shares in the society. The members elect a committee which meets monthly and is responsible for the general management of the affairs of the society, such as managing the store, fixing prices, and engaging employees. Much of the day-to-day work is in fact carried out by the secretary who is appointed by the committee.

The Joint Regulation sets out in detail the manner in which the financial affairs of societies will be managed. At the end of the financial year the committee determines how the society's profit, if any, is to be distributed. The first call on profits is for a Reserve Fund which receives at least 10 per cent of the profits until the fund equals the society's initial capital. The remainder of the profits may be distributed as interest on the share capital up to a rate of 6 per cent per annum; to members in proportion to the business each has done with the society; or to special purpose funds set up by the society. In the management of the society and its finances, the committee and secretary receive advice and supervision from officers of the Residencies' Co-operative Departments (SC or NHCS).

The British-registered primary societies are the members of the secondary society, the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation. The NHCF acts as the major importer and wholesaler for the primary co-operatives, using the bulk store facilities at Luganville, Lakatoro (Malekula), Vila and Lenakel (Tanna). Through the NHCF the British co-operatives organized shipping and a Co-operative Savings Bank and invested, through the New Hebrides Investment Fund, in an abattoir, and in furniture and wire products factories. Not all investments were successful.

The French-registered primary co-operatives have their secondary association in Le Syndicat Francais des Cooperatives Autochtones (SCAF). Like the NHCF, SCAF engages in importing and wholesaling, and in a range of other activities including purchase and retailing of village-produced artifacts, and the buying and wholesaling of vegetables (see below). General supervision of the co-operative movement is exercised by the co-operative departments of the two Residencies. No doubt as a unified administration is established in the near future these two

departments, NHCS and SC will be replaced by a single government department or agency.

The growth of rural co-operatives had some effect on the business of the older trading firms though it is impossible to provide any quantitative assessment. In 1965 there were 'signs that commercial opposition to established [co-operative] societies is stiffening and it is too early yet to be certain whether membership, loyalty and common sense will continue to overcome the temptation of immediate gains offered by competing traders' (NHCS, 1965:1). Prices in co-operative stores were, as a general policy, aligned with those of neighbouring competitors 'so as not to start a price war' and the benefits to members were then channelled through annual dividends. Small 'price wars' did develop in copra marketing. For example a single copra marketing co-operative was formed for the whole of the island of Tonga and in reaction to this the island's only other copra buyer, a branch of a large firm, raised prices above the expected consignment returns. The co-operative countered by ceasing buying and members took advantage of the higher prices. When the company buyer reduced prices a couple of months later the co-operative resumed buying.

It was reported in 1967 that 'Chinese and other copra traders are now paying substantially higher prices for copra bought in the islands than they were four or five years ago'. Whereas in 1963 itinerant traders normally paid the equivalent of \$A10 (ca. FNH1000) less than the ruling beach price, by 1967 they were offering up to \$A8 (ca. FNH800) above the beach price (NHCS, 1967:5). The co-operatives bought at the beach price and the members later benefitted from dividends on profits received by the co-operative from selling on consignment. In the following year it was reported that a 'large Chinese operator' had made a 'concerted drive...to capture the copra trade' by paying artificially high prices but the co-operatives advised members to take advantage of the high prices while they were offered and revert to selling through the co-operatives once the offer of higher prices was withdrawn (NHCS, 1968:1). This seems to have happened. The amount of copra purchased by the co-operatives continued to rise (Table 4.2).

The co-operative distribution system

Following the establishment of the New Hebrides Co-operative Federation and the beginning of wholesaling in 1973 two importing, wholesaling and retailing distribution systems have been developed with that of the NHCF serving the British-registered stores and SCAF the French. SCAF and NHCF both import a high proportion of their goods directly from overseas. Some brands must be obtained locally from other importers who hold sole franchises. Both organizations maintain their own warehouses.

As described in Chapter 3, distribution from the Vila and Luganville warehouses is by road to stores on Efate and south and east Santo. Some stores on east Malekula are supplied by road from the NHCF warehouse at Lakatoro and the nearby SCAF warehouse at Norsup. On Tanna, distribution is by road from the NHCF warehouse at Lenakel. A shipping service interval of approximately six weeks is maintained by both SCAF and NHCF.

The NHCF initially shipped goods on vessels owned by the major trading companies. The Federation chartered the CFNH ship *Henri Bonneaud* in October 1975 and in February 1976 the Burns Philp ship *Konanda*. These vessels operated under NHCF management until late 1977 and, as Figure 3.6 indicates, provided a service to co-operatives throughout the island group at intervals of six weeks or less. In late 1977 the Vanua Navigation Company was established with two ships under the joint ownership of NHCF and Sofrana Lines. SCAF initially shipped its goods on French Residency vessels but later took over the ownership and operation of the *Alize II*.

As indicated in Chapter 3 the distribution system from urban warehouse to co-operative store is quite direct. The inter-island vessels act as mobile warehouses with store managers making many of their purchases direct from the ship as it lies off-shore. At times store managers will also buy from the trading vessels of the major importing firms, or from larger stores. Small vessels are used to service the islands adjacent to Efate, and those such as Tongoa and Tongariki immediately to the north. Similarly small boats carry goods from Luganville to West Santo and Malo.

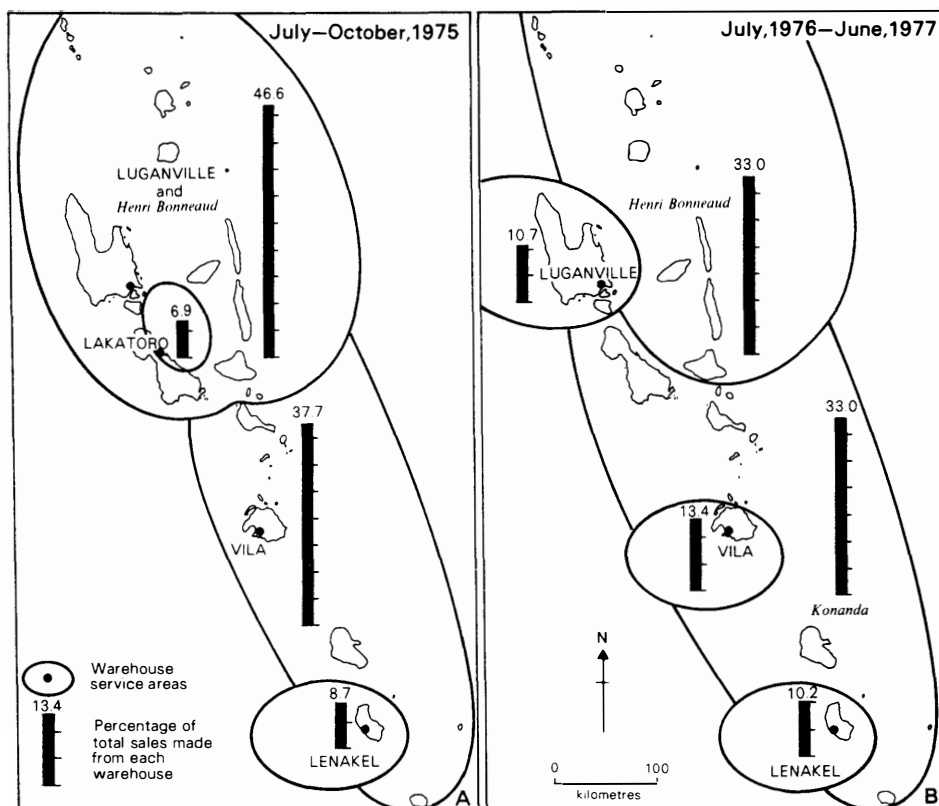


Fig. 4.2 Wholesale service areas for New Hebrides Co-operative Federation. Data from NHCF.

It is not possible to provide a complete quantitative picture of the distribution of foodstuffs out from the import ports but Figure 4.2 presents the basic pattern for the NHCF. To maintain confidentiality the key to size of symbols is given as a percentage of sales rather than actual values. It is based on total sales rather than foodstuffs alone but throughout the NHCF system imported foodstuffs made up approximately 58 per cent of total sales in July-October 1975 and about 54 per cent in the year July 1976 - June 1977 (NHCF, pers. comm.).

In 1975, 59.5 per cent of the country's imports of foodstuffs by sea were through Vila and 40.5 per cent through Luganville (Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1976, Table 25). No complete statistics are available to give the proportion imported through each port by NHCF or SCAF but the information on sales through warehouses suggests that imports by NHCF conform quite closely to the national division between the two ports. In the later part of 1975 the NHCF's wholesale system operated from warehouses at Vila, Luganville, Lakatoro (Malekula) and Lenakel (Tanna) with the latter two being secondary warehouses themselves supplied by ship from Luganville and Vila respectively. A warehouse on Mota Lava was not used. Figure 4.2a shows the areas supplied from each warehouse in the period June - October 1975 and the proportion of total wholesale sales made in each area. During the first three months of this period NHCF supplied co-operative stores from the four warehouses by shipping on vessels belonging to and operated by other trading firms. In October the chartered vessel *Henri Bonneaud*, operating out of Luganville, served the islands from Ambrym northwards. In Figure 4.2A sales from the *Henri Bonneaud* are included with those from the Luganville warehouses.

Figure 4.2B shows the wholesale service areas for July 1976 - June 1977. The NHCF was then operating two ships on regular schedules (see Fig. 3.6) and sales from the ships are depicted separately from those made directly from the warehouses. Neither the warehouse at Lakatoro nor that at Mota Lava was in use. From each warehouse or ship's unloading point, store managers arrange transport for their wholesale purchases to the store. This may be by small boat, truck or even by land. In general the distance from roadside or coast to store is short and the volume of goods relatively small.

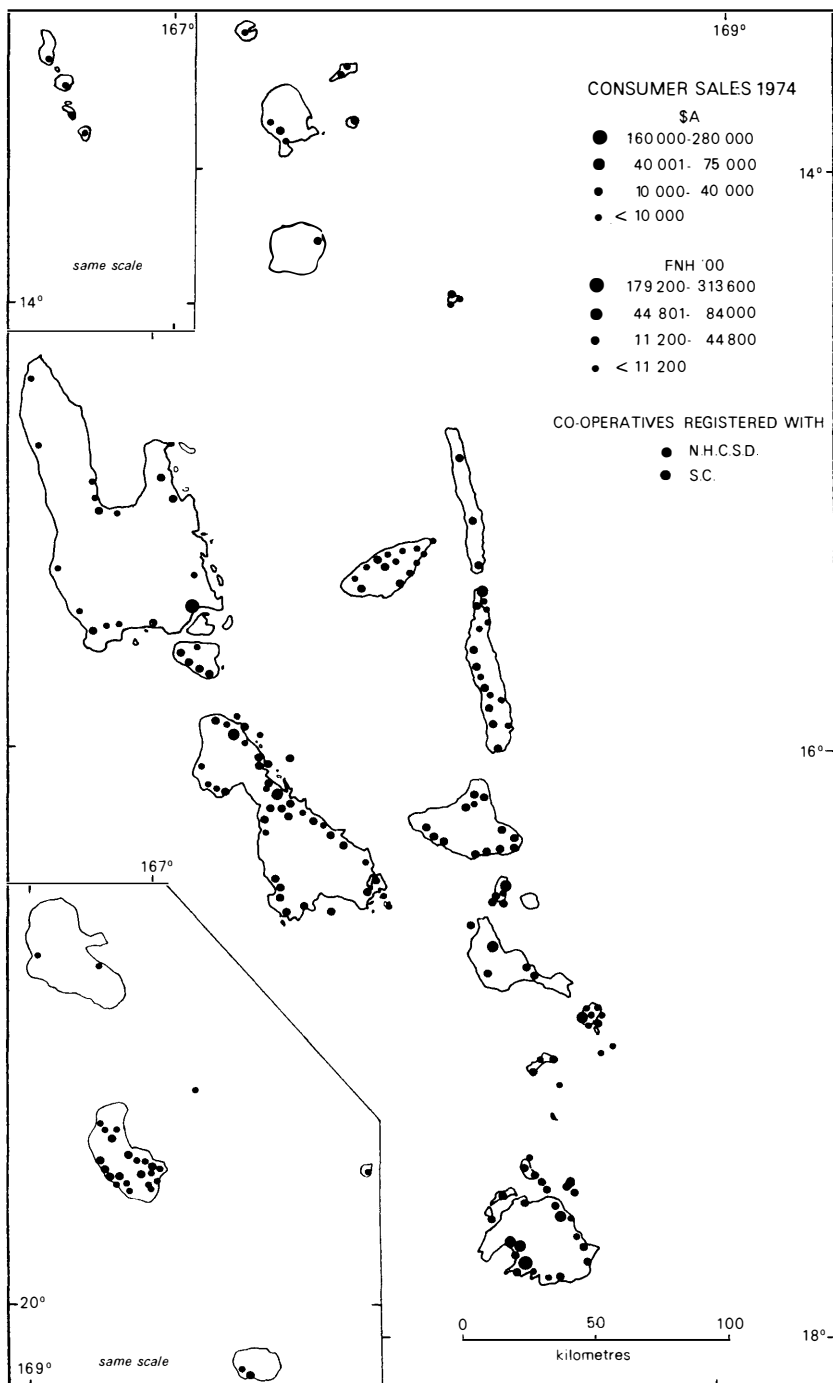


Fig. 4.3 Distribution and size by turnover of co-operative stores.

Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of co-operative stores registered with the British New Hebrides Co-operative Societies Department (NHCSO) and the French Service des Cooperatives (SC). Only two stores, those of the urban consumer co-operatives in Vila and Luganville had total sales of over FNH180 000 in 1974 (Table 4.3). The average retail turnover for French-registered co-operatives was FNH1 326 639 and for those registered with the British \$A20 695 (FNH2 316 739). The median figures were FNH1 020 065 and \$A16 266 (FNH1 821 792) respectively. The average sales per member were FNH19 583 in the French co-operatives and \$A319 (FNH35 706) in British co-operatives. In the case of the British co-operatives, if the two urban consumers' co-operatives are omitted, the average retail turnover per store, the median value, and the average sales per member were \$A17 690 (FNH1 981 246), \$A15 657 (FNH1 753 584), and \$A308 (FNH34 496) respectively.

The arrival of the two Vanua Navigation Company ships (*Nalkutan Federasen*, 220 g.r.t; *Semle Federasen*, 350 g.r.t) in late 1977 represented a further move in a changing system of internal distribution and copra purchasing. Prior to late 1973 British co-operative stores had obtained their wholesale goods from the major import firms, buying directly from the firms' warehouses or ships. At the same time copra was sold to the firms' agents on ship or shore. The NHCF began wholesaling in 1973 but still shipped in vessels owned by others. In 1975 dissatisfaction with the copra prices being offered led to investigation of freight rates and it was found that the rate from the New Hebrides to Marseilles, the principal market for New Hebridean copra, was much higher than those charged by other companies for shipment to Europe from other Pacific Island countries. An examination of the possibility of making alternative overseas shipping arrangements led the principal carriers, Messageries Maritimes, to drop the freight rate by approximately one-third in late 1975. At the copra prices then being paid, this gave a 50 per cent increase in the price paid for copra delivered in docks in Vila and Santo.

Late 1975 was also a time of low and falling copra prices. In this situation copra buyers and exporters face the risk of losses if the world market price falls too much between the time copra is bought from a producer, or co-operative, at a firm beach price and when it is sold in Europe by the exporter. The desire of the co-operative movement to control its own internal shipping coincided with

the low price, high-risk period and the major firms of Burns Philp and CFNH were willing to move out of the direct purchase of copra by chartering their larger ships to the NHCF.

The charter arrangement included a requirement that the overseas sale of copra collected by the ships be handled on an agency basis by Burns Philp and CFNH. This secured their agency commission while the risk of realised prices falling below the previously paid beach prices was shifted to the NHCF. Not unnaturally the NHCF sought alternative arrangements. The possibility of purchasing the Burns Philp ship *Konanda* did not eventuate, perhaps because of the reluctance of the NHCF to enter a partnership with Burns Philp. The alternative was the establishment of a partnership with the Sofrana Line in the Vanua Navigation Company. In late 1977 and early 1978 the *Konanda* and *Henri Bonneaud* were again operated by their owners and the NHCF services were transferred to the *Nalkutan Federasen* and *Semle Federasen*. The NHCF planned to buy copra at a firm price closely related to up-to-date information on world prices. It was hoped that accurate information would lessen the risks entailed.

The provision of a distribution system to serve all parts of the country on a relatively equitable basis provides the co-operative movement with problems which a trading company can avoid. As noted in Chapter 3 the major trading companies have tended to concentrate their activities in the central parts of the country where plantations and heavier copra production by Melanesians (see Fig. 3.4) provide the largest and most accessible markets and supply of copra. In seeking to improve services to the more distant northern and southern islands, the attainment of the Vanua Navigation Company's goal of a monthly shipping service to these areas would provide a significant improvement over the service offered in late 1975 (see Fig. 3.6). It was planned to operate the two ships on a routing system similar to that represented in Figure 3.6 and a service area pattern as shown in Figure 4.2B. Whether this can be done while meeting the competition of the major trading firms in the central islands remains to be seen. The fact that Burns Philp raised their beach price of copra by FNH2 000 per tonne in October 1977, just before the NHCF began trading with the *Nalkutan Federasen*, and without any significant rise in the world market price, suggests that a period of intense competition could ensue in copra buying and wholesaling.

The wholesaling system was also in a disturbed state in 1977 with a French firm (SCOA) taking over the business of an older company (Sullivans) and dropping wholesale prices, reportedly to below landed prices for imported goods. At least one of the major firms followed suit and meanwhile another importer, Gallimore (see Fig. 5.9), moved out of foodstuff importing to concentrate on other products. With the wholesale distribution system in such a fluid state it is difficult to be confident that the present co-operative distribution system is stable.

Fresh food marketing by SCAF

For several years Le Syndicat Francais des Cooperatives Autochtones has played an important role in purchasing vegetables from growers, arranging shipment to Vila and marketing the produce either wholesale or retail. Much of the produce is sold direct to institutions although SCAF is also an important supplier for the stores. A relatively small amount is sold retail from SCAF's artifact store in Vila. The import control imposed on fresh vegetables during the dry seasons of 1976 and 1977 further stimulated SCAF's vegetable marketing.

The two main production areas are Efate and Tanna. Table 4.4 gives the weight and value of vegetables and fruit purchased by SCAF in Tanna and Efate from June to October inclusive in 1975 and the quantity purchased in the whole of 1976. Production fluctuates markedly through the year and Figure 4.4 graphs the supply of a selection of vegetables from Tanna and Efate in 1975 (June - October) and 1976. A number of the 'temperate' crops, including tomatoes and beans, could be grown all year in the New Hebrides but at present attacks by fungus or insect pests are rarely controlled and shade, which would assist tomatoes and lettuces, is rarely provided.

The orderly marketing of vegetables produced in small quantities by a large number of villagers is not easy. Storage capacity in Vila is limited and on occasions supply has exceeded demand and left SCAF with the problem of disposing of considerable quantities of unmarketable produce. At present SCAF accepts virtually all vegetables offered by villagers on Tanna but this commitment carries the continuing risk of oversupply. If the fresh vegetable

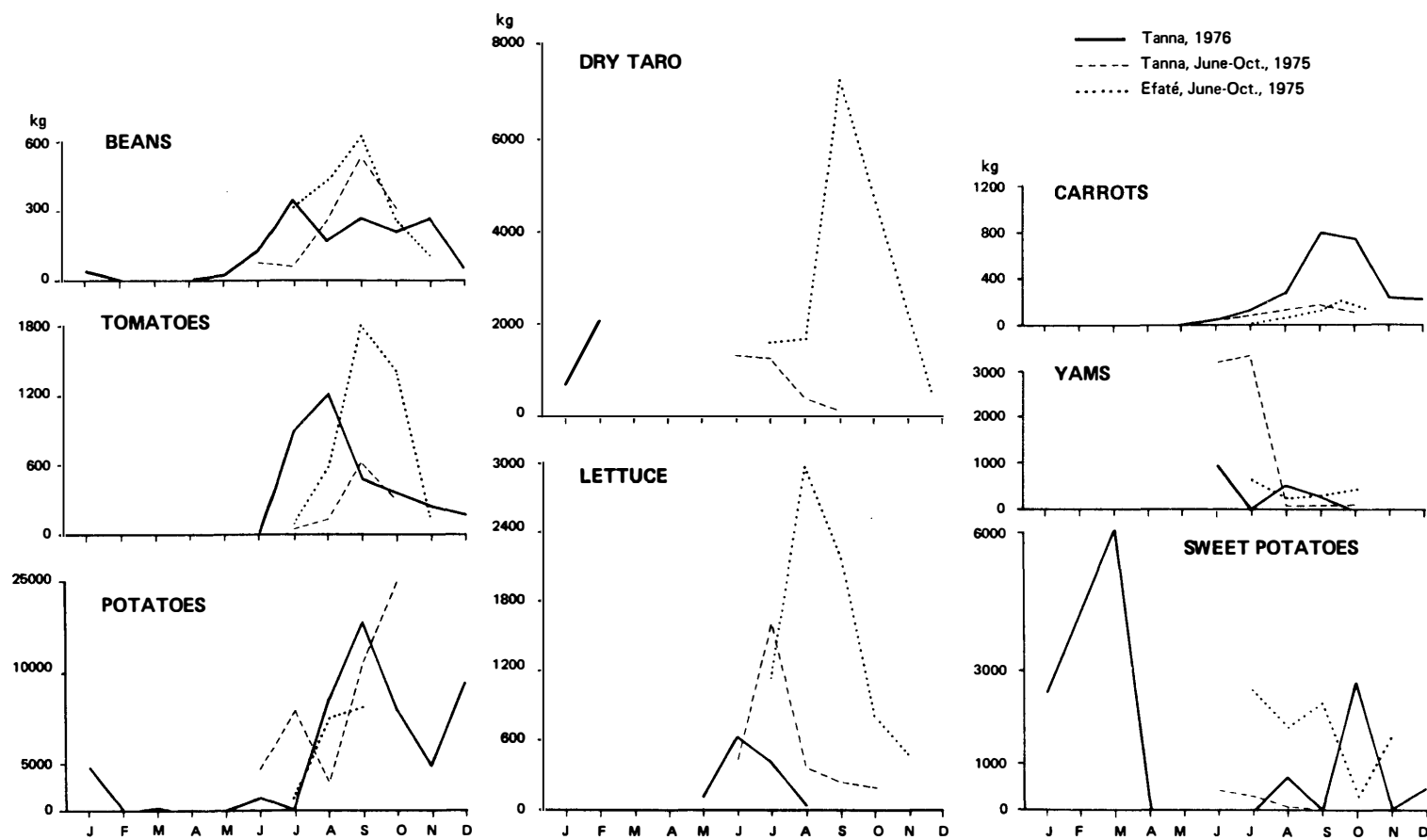


Fig. 4.4 Quantities of produce purchased by SCAF in Tanna and Efate. Data from SCAF.

trade, especially from Tanna is to continue and be successful it may be necessary for SCAF or some other agency to organize planting in different villages to a co-ordinated sequence. The co-operative organization might provide the institutional base for this.

As Table 4.4 indicates, the farm-gate prices paid for produce on Tanna are lower than those offered on Efate, but the real cost of shipment from Tanna to Vila is probably greater than the differential would suggest. The Efate villages could probably supply all of Vila's fresh vegetable requirements for much of the year. If production were expanded on Efate, the growers on Tanna who face higher internal transport costs might suffer severely despite their apparent climatic advantage. There are some signs that Efate producers are reacting to market opportunities by specializing in crops which give quicker and higher returns while some traditional crops may be supplied increasingly from outer islands. One possibility for market development would be export to Noumea where vegetable prices are often at least double those ruling in Vila.

The supply of fresh vegetables to the urban markets, in which SCAF is but one contributor, is discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. With the introduction of import controls to foster local production of fresh vegetables, village producers may be at a disadvantage compared with specialist market gardeners. Although the latter, mostly non-Melanesian, are few in number, they tend to have better access to capital and better knowledge of non-traditional crops than do the Melanesian villagers. They also tend to produce on a larger scale and at a more regular level of output. This gives them an advantage in seeking contracts with hotels, restaurants or institutions. If Melanesian growers are to compete effectively the marketing role played by SCAF and the co-operatives may need to be expanded to include extension work, in agronomy, planting scheduling and farm management. Otherwise there is a risk that government initiatives to stimulate local production will benefit a small number of larger scale producers at the expense of many small scale Melanesian growers.

The role of government

The co-operative movement in the New Hebrides owes much of its success to the close oversight exercised by the co-operative departments of the British and French Residencies. As indicated above, the establishment of formal co-operatives followed from government legislation which provided a structure within which prior experiments in various forms of co-operative enterprises could be formalized. Both the New Hebrides Co-operative Societies Department (NHCSO) and the Service des Cooperatives (SC) had similar roles involving registration of co-operatives (after an initial probationary period), training, inspection and auditing, and advising individual co-operatives.

At an early stage the prospective secretary of the co-operative normally received basic training in keeping accounts and general management. This training by the NHCSO and SC has been continued with secretaries taking refresher courses from time to time. For example, in 1974 when there were 167 British co-operatives, 129 secretaries attended NHCSO refresher courses and 45 potential secretaries passed the examinations at the Marshall Co-operative Training Centre at Lakatoro. A further 21 students from Onesua High School, Efate, also passed the examinations. In 1976 and 1977 a total of 323 people attended 14 courses organized by the NHCSO and apart from the basic training for secretaries, courses on job analysis, staff procedures and English language were included. During the same period approximately 200 people attended courses run by the Service des Cooperatives (Potten, 1978:2).

Quite apart from their importance in ensuring efficient management of the co-operatives, the training courses have had a wider significance. In a country where basic education has not been universal, and post-primary education has been relatively rare, co-operative courses have provided practical training which recipients have been able to use in a number of fields. Management of private stores is an obvious example but the general contribution to building up skills is important. This is extended by overseas training programmes for staff members of the SC and NHCSO. Even when officers leave the department for other employment, the training received can usually be put to good use elsewhere in government or in the private sector.

The inspectors of the SC and NHCS D try to visit each co-operative four or five times a year. On each visit the stock and cash are checked and the accounts inspected. The activities of the co-operatives committee are reviewed and on the basis of this investigation the inspector is able to give advice to the secretary and the committee. The last inspection of a financial year involves an audit of the society's accounts and the holding of the society's annual general meeting at which members are informed of the year's trading results and dividends are declared. Clearly the inspectors have a key role and the link they provide between societies was probably very important in the initial creation of a sense of a coherent Melanesian movement, the political implications of which have been mentioned. Later some of this national linkage was provided by the NHCF and SCAF.

Since their establishment and particularly since 1976, the NHCF and SCAF have taken over some of the roles formerly handled by the NHCS D and SC respectively. These secondary institutions act as the spokesmen for the primary societies in negotiations with government in relation to questions such as price control or customs. Some of the technical assistance and training role has also been taken over by SCAF and NHCF. In the case of the latter the United Kingdom Overseas Development Ministry has provided technical assistance direct to the Federation.

As the budgets of the NHCS D and SC are included in the overall budgets for the economic sections of the respective Residencies the full cost to government of the support and supervision of the co-operative movement cannot be determined. Potten (1978:4-5) reports that the 1975-76 budget for the NHCS D was FNH12 244 000 with the revised estimate for 1976-77 being FNH17 766 000. That for the Service des Cooperatives in 1977 was FNH11 797 000. These figures cover the major items of personnel emoluments, office equipment and travel but do not cover a number of other items such as office rental, postal and telephone charges. In particular the cost, maintenance and running expenses of inter-island vessels used by NHCS D and SC are not included. The NHCS D has the use of a 10 metre launch, the *Keo*, in the two Central Divisions and its officers travel on larger British National Service vessels for visits to the more remote islands. SCAF owns and operates the *Alize II* and the Service des Cooperatives officers are able to tour on board this, and French Residency vessels.

The Service des Cooperatives has a total staff of 13, of whom eight are New Hebridean, while the NHCSO is staffed by 30 New Hebrideans and five Europeans (Potten, 1978:2-3). The support which this body of government officers gives to the co-operative movement apparently reflects the Residencies' view that encouragement of Melanesian participation in commerce is highly desirable and that the co-operative form is appropriate. There is no doubt that co-operatives have been unusually successful in the New Hebrides and despite the lack of a full analysis of the reasons, the active government role must be acknowledged as one crucial factor.

Chapter 5

FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN VILA

The growth of Vila commenced in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, following the plantation boom on Efate. There were two harbours on the island suitable for exporting the coffee and bananas but the series of lower terraces in Vila made the construction of buildings much easier than at Havannah Harbour in the north. The opening of stores by the Compagnie Caledonienne des Nouvelles-Hebrides and the Australian New Hebrides Company soon confirmed Port Vila in its commercial pre-eminence.

Although the economic focus of the New Hebrides shifted northwards to Epi and Santo during the present century, Vila remained the principal entrepôt and administrative centre for the Condominium, at least until the American construction of wharves and jetties in Luganville during the Pacific war. By this time Vila had attracted a heterogeneous population which was clearly stratified by occupation. The British and French dominated administrative and managerial activity; Chinese held sway over the retail trade; whilst the Vietnamese, no longer repatriated at the end of their period of indenture, formed the bulk of the technicians and small entrepreneurs. The Melanesian component of the urban population was relatively limited, being mostly involved in unskilled and semi-skilled manual work.

It is difficult to say when the market came into being but this is likely to have occurred in the post-war period under the stimulation of the Vietnamese who were involved in commercial vegetable production in the Tagabe area. By the mid-1960s when the influx of New Hebrideans was in full spate (Table 5.1), a Melanesian dominated market was well established on a narrow strip of land between the main road and the harbour, strategically located between the two principal European stores of CFNH and Burns Philp.

The market

The fresh vegetable market in Vila is one of the major components of the food distribution system within the urban area. The market survey described in this report was undertaken on six market days in January and February 1976.¹ An earlier survey was conducted on four successive Fridays in July 1965 by Drs Harold Brookfield and Paula Brown Glick (Brookfield et al., 1969) whilst Dr Jean-Marc Philibert (1976) examined the marketing undertaken by the people of Erakor village during July-September 1972. Other sample surveys of market prices have been made by the Condominium Bureau of Statistics.

Prior to 1963, when the majority of the Vietnamese in the New Hebrides were repatriated, most produce sold in the Vila market came from gardens established by Vietnamese on the edge of the town. At the time of the 1965 survey 'a new pattern of supply was not yet firmly established' but the majority of sellers were New Hebrideans from seven Efate villages (Brookfield et al., 1969:120-2). Since then, people of virtually all the other villages of Efate have begun to sell surplus produce in the market, or plant crops especially for the market. Several other changes have occurred which indicate that the 'new pattern of supply' is now well established.

The market survey of 1976 was undertaken by seven field-workers. The technique adopted in the recording of information was as follows.

1. On arrival at the market each seller was given a numbered ticket and asked to bring it back on subsequent market days; new sellers after the first day were given tickets distinguished by a particular colour.
2. On a recording form the seller's name, number, village, and the date were noted.
3. The type of produce, number of selling units (whether in bundles, baskets or sticks) and asking price of each in New Hebrides francs (FNH)² were recorded as the seller laid out the produce.

1. Wednesday, Jan.28; Friday, Jan.30; Saturday Jan.31; Wednesday, Feb.4; Friday, Feb. and Saturday Feb.7.

2. In early 1976 the bank exchange rate averaged FNH100 to \$A1.10. Both FNH and \$A are legal currency but despite the

4. When the seller prepared to leave the market the unsold products were enumerated.
5. During the day sellers were interviewed for biographical details, as well as items such as cost of transport to the market, frequency of attendance, and number of years they had been selling in the market.
6. Samples of selling units of most products were weighed to provide information for calculating volume of produce and prices per unit of weight.

The records were coded and tabulations computed at The Australian National University. During the six survey days 365 different sellers were recorded as having attended on one or more days. These sellers spent a total of 747 vendor/days³ in the market during the six days of enumeration. Of the total, 29 represent vendors known to have been present but whose produce was, for one reason or another, not enumerated. In order to arrive at estimates of total produce offered and sold these 29 vendor/days have been assigned values equal to the mean values for the other 718 vendor/days. In cases where enumerators were not able to record the unsold produce of individual vendors because of the rush of departing sellers, the amount of each product unsold by individual vendors has been assumed to equal the mean proportion of that product unsold by all other vendors whose records were complete. Underenumeration of unsold produce was greater for the first two days because in the later part of the survey enumerators were more experienced and vendors, knowing our procedures, tended to call our attention to their impending departure. Overall, complete

2. (cont.) formal exchange rate, it was customary for coins to be accepted as equivalents (i.e. FNH20=20 cents) in the market, and most stores. Banks and wholesalers applied the official rates. In larger stores with predominantly non-Melanesian clientele, most transactions exceeded \$A1.00 or FNH100 and formal rates applied. In the market and small stores sales are often less than FNH100, and the loss entailed in accepting Australian coins as equivalent to FNH coins was serious.

3. Vendor/day - one market visit by one seller. A seller who attended the market on all six survey days would thus contribute six vendor/days.

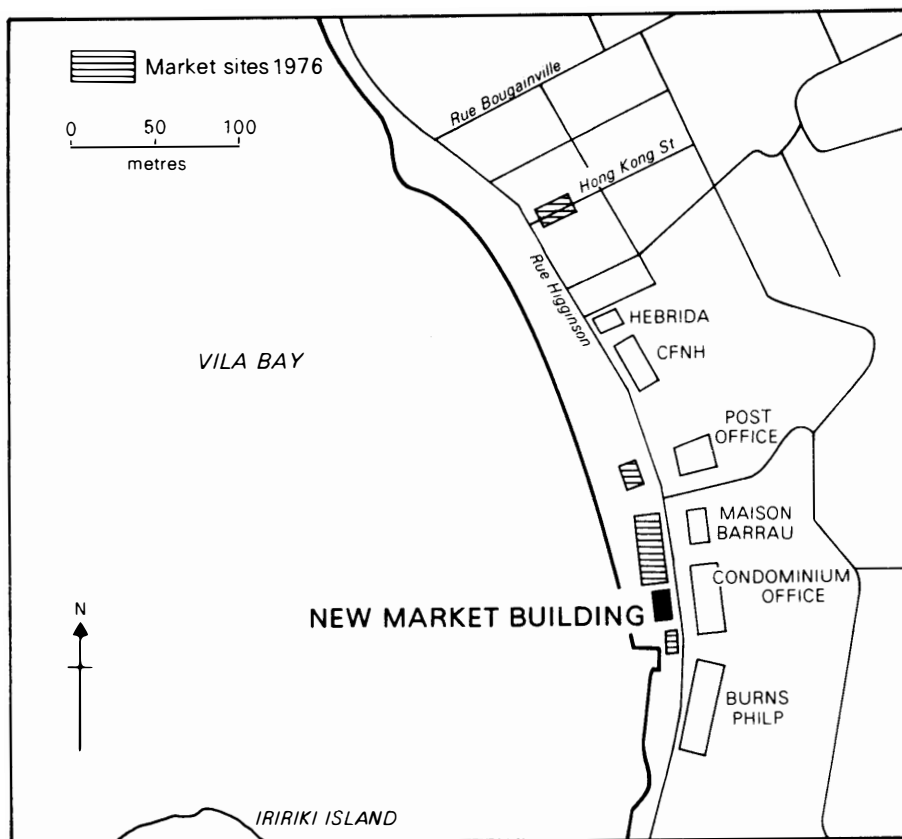


Fig. 5.1 The location of market sites in Vila 1976.

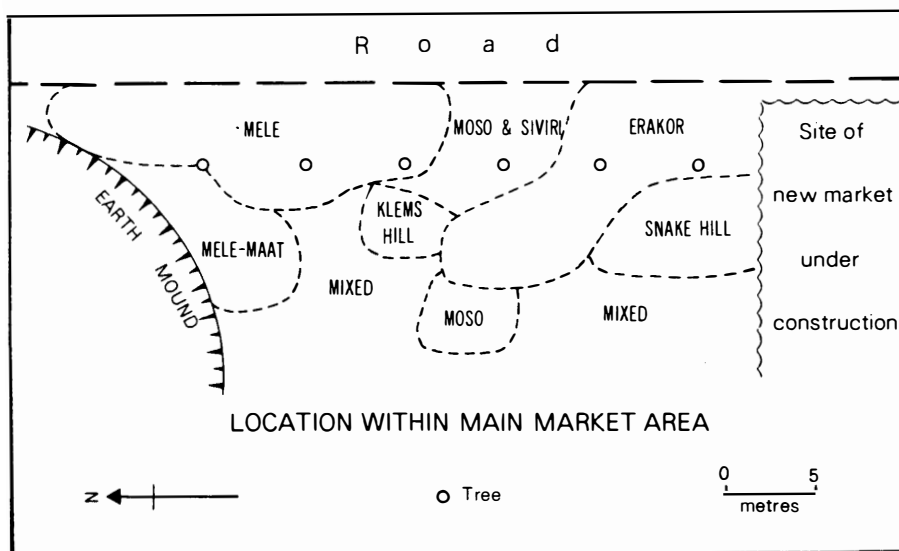


Fig.5.2 Location of sellers in market by village of origin.

records of goods offered and unsold were obtained for 80 per cent of vendor/days and largely complete records were obtained for 95 per cent of vendor/days. It is probable that a small number of vendors appeared in the market and were not enumerated at all. As a result of the system of issuing numbers to vendors, and checking with them whether or not they had been present on earlier days, we are confident that underenumeration from this source does not exceed 5 per cent and is probably much less. Unless otherwise noted the tabulations and statistics given in the remainder of this report are based on the figures adjusted as described above and assume no underenumeration.

At the time of the survey, the principal market area was located on reclaimed land on the seaward side of the main street, Rue Higginson, opposite the Maison Barrau store, with an extension opposite the Condominium Office building and the Burns Philp store (Fig. 5.1). This is basically the same site as in 1965 (Brookfield et al., 1969:119) although at that time the reclamation had not begun and sellers occupied the narrow strip between the road and the beach. In early 1976 part of the site was backed by a fence surrounding the construction area for a petrol station and the new market building. The latter was being financed by the oil company as one of the conditions for establishing a garage on this site. Two other sites were also used by vendors - one was an area of open ground opposite the Post Office and the other comprised the footpaths of Hong Kong Street outside the predominantly Chinese-owned stores. On occasions, some vendors at this site spread their produce in the adjacent street at the rear of Le Syndicat Francais des Cooperatives Autochtones (SCAF). In 1965 some vendors occupied the steps of CFNH's (Comptoirs Francais des Nouvelles-Hebrides) store often referred to as 'Ballande'; however, this site is no longer used.

Table 5.2 shows the total number of sellers at each site on the six market days of the survey and also indicates that a few sellers bring produce to town on some other days. When cruise ships are in port approximately 70 people may offer curios and fruit for sale at the wharf, while a number of traders sell clothing from temporary stalls.

Some stereotypes of Vila market

During the period of field-work, and on earlier visits to Vila, we heard many opinions and 'facts' about the

market. 'Friday is always the biggest market day'. 'Saturday is always the biggest market day'. 'The produce is usually poor quality'. 'The market is smaller (larger) than several years ago'. 'Prices have risen rapidly'. 'There is no bargaining in the market'. 'The prices are uniform throughout the market'. 'Sellers will not drop their price at the end of the day'. 'They [the sellers] often do not make enough to pay their fares'.

As might be expected few of these statements are completely accurate. Many seem to be based on the inevitably biased observations of people who regularly visit the market at only one time of the day; who rarely patronize the market at all; or who have not had cause to observe closely the selling and buying behaviour of others in the market. Although our survey was not long enough to be completely definitive, the fact that we were in the market each day, from its start at around 5.30 a.m. to about 1.30 or 2.00 p.m. when the last sellers left, did enable us to observe the marked daily cycle of activity. We were also able to test the veracity of the above statements, and as many are often put forward as characteristics of market and marketing behaviour elsewhere in Melanesia, some of the evidence does raise wider questions about possible changes in marketing by Melanesians, or alternatively, about the conclusions drawn in some earlier marketing studies.

Location within the market

The market day begins at first light, at about 5.30 a.m., as the first taxis and trucks arrive with sellers from Erakor and Mele villages. The sellers from these two villages quickly occupy the prime areas under the casuarina trees at the two ends of the main site, laying sacks, mats or leaves on which to spread their produce (Fig. 5.2). Later arrivals from Erakor or the eastern villages tend to spill over into the area opposite Burns Philp while sellers from the northern villages squeeze in between the Erakor and Mele groups. The people from Mele-Maat set up behind those from Mele and the specialist growers from the Klems Hill and Snake Hill areas are normally established at the back of the market where there is more space and easy access from the rear for their trucks.

Well before 8.00 a.m. the main site is normally fully occupied, except for space at the rear. The last arrivals at the main site are usually shell sellers from Fila Island⁴ who arrive by canoe about 8.30 a.m., just before the main European and tourist buyers appear, and occupy the extreme end of the area opposite Burns Philp. After 7.00 a.m. trucks arrive from the most distant villages of the north coast and the sellers take positions under the shade of the trees opposite the Post Office. Some sellers from the northern villages, or from the small islands such as Emau or Pele, may not arrive until 9.30 a.m. and usually also go to the area opposite the Post Office. The Hong Kong Street sellers, most of whom come from Eratap, arrive in two or three groups between 7.30 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. In general, location within the market is fairly consistent with sellers from each village or area having their own 'market territory', although individual traders vary their position from day to day.

The market day

There are distinct phases in market activity during the day. The earliest buyers are Chinese and Vietnamese ladies, often in traditional dress, who are in the market as the first sellers arrive about 5.30 a.m. Some were seen to rummage in the trucks for purchases before goods were set out. Specialist produce such as bean sprouts and leafy vegetables are quickly snapped up and these first buyers then shop in more leisurely fashion for a wider range of local staples whilst they wait for later sellers to arrive. Their purchases are stacked at the edge of the market where they are picked up by Asian-owned trucks and cars from 7.30 a.m. onwards. By this time the Asian women are gossiping in small groups at the back of the market and usually leave soon after 8.00 a.m.

About 80 per cent of the sales in the first hour or two must be to these Asian women who seldom bother to move away from the main market. The first Saturday of the survey was Chinese New Year and with only one or two Asians present sales on this day did not really start until about an hour later than normal.

4. As the Fila Island people were selling only shells and curios rather than fresh vegetables or food they were not enumerated in the market survey.

From 6.30 a.m. onwards Melanesian shoppers begin to appear and form the bulk of the buyers until the mid-morning slump. A great deal of talking is involved either way and it is difficult to distinguish between those just chatting with friends and those purchasing. At about 7.30 a.m. the French (both men and women) start to shop *en route* for work. British and Australian women appear about an hour later and the tourists just after this. It is little wonder that the British and Australians complain about the quality of market produce because by the time most of them appear in the market the best fruit and vegetables have been sold.

The peak in the number of buyers in the market occurs about 7.30-8.00 a.m. when Melanesians, Asians and Europeans are all represented. In the main market this might amount to 40-45 people. The last period of steady selling occurs between 9.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. but the first trucks and taxis do not appear to pick up sellers until 11.00 a.m. Between 9.00 and 11.00 a.m. several of the sellers take the opportunity to slip away to shop, take some refreshment at Burns Philp, visit government offices, or attend to other business. Purchases usually include household goods such as sugar, rice, tea, soap and soap powders and there is a marked preference for buying from European rather than Asian stores. By this time the sun is high and sellers try to rearrange their remaining produce in the shade of the trees. Similarly they themselves seek shade, often some distance from their produce.

The market begins to break up about 11.00 a.m. despite the fact that just after 11.30 a.m. a large number of office workers pass by, returning home for lunch. But the traffic rush is such that little market purchasing is generated. Most of the sellers have gone by 12.30 p.m. although in the main market odd stragglers persist until 1.00 or 2.00 p.m. A few of the sellers from distant villages leave the main market areas opposite Burns Philp and the Condominium Building and move to the Hong Kong Street or the Post Office site where sellers persist until about 4.00 p.m., although there is very little activity during the afternoon. The length of time these villagers stay seems to be more a function of transport availability than of marketing prospects. During the midday period some sellers at the Post Office site, if they have transport, will drive off to the lower income suburbs of Vila to try and sell on a door-to-door basis.

It is clear that one of the main changes in the market since 1965 is in the timing of activities. In 1965 few sellers arrived before 7.00 a.m. (Caroline Nalo and H.C. Brookfield, pers. comm.). Brookfield et al. noted that the 'Pango and Erakor women mostly arrive between 1.30 and 2.30 p.m., so that the number of vendors reach a peak about 2.30 p.m....The peak trading period...[is] between 4.00 p.m. and 4.45 p.m., after work in the town ceases for the day' (Brookfield et al., 1969:121). Clearly the whole cycle of market activity has moved into the morning since 1965. The reasons are not readily apparent. It may be because sellers from more distant villages wish to reach home before nightfall, or because, as competition between sellers has increased, some have tried to take advantage of the arrival of the first buyers by getting to the market earlier themselves. The increased availability of village-based vehicles in recent years may have also encouraged earlier departures.

Size of market

Attendance at the market varies considerably from day to day. Although Wednesday, Friday and Saturday are the recognized 'market days', a few sellers appear on most other days, except for Sunday (Table 5.2). Most sellers on 'non-market days' may be people who come to town for other purposes and bring some produce to sell in the hope of covering their fares, but during the period of our survey at least one of the regular sellers from Erakor appeared on 'non-market days'. In 1965 Friday was the only 'market day' (Brookfield et al., 1969), although there was some minor market activity on Wednesdays and Saturdays on the steps of the CFNH store and (on Saturdays) in the main market site (Caroline Nalo pers. comm.). Total activity has increased considerably since 1965, a reflection of the overall population growth in Vila. Over the last 10 years the population of Greater Vila has risen by 166 per cent to 17 300; most of the increase has been due to an influx of Melanesians who comprise two-thirds of the town's population. This has obviously stimulated market activity and further population growth may well see an extension of the number of active market days in each week.

During the survey 365 different sellers were recorded in the market. Of these 44 per cent came only on one day of the fortnight, but 28 (8 per cent) sold on five or six market days (Table 5.3). Using the Jolly stochastic

technique (Krebs, 1972:625-6) for estimation of the size of a 'market population', it is possible to estimate the total number of people from Efate (and adjacent islands) who sell in the market on a reasonably regular basis. We estimate this figure to be of the order of 450. The mean number of sellers on the six survey days was 124, an increase of 46 per cent over the mean of 85 per day during the 1965 survey (Brookfield et al., 1969:22). However, it must be noted that during the July 1965 survey rain affected market attendance on two of the four survey days. Attendance was about 20 per cent lower than on fine days (Brookfield et al., 1969:122). The six days of the 1976 survey were all fine, apart from short showers in mid-morning on two days and these did not affect the number of sellers.

Table 5.4 shows the estimated value in New Hebrides francs (FNH) of food produce offered and sold in the market on the six survey days. The total value offered for sale in the market was FNH1 202 700, giving a mean of FNH200 450 per market day. The fact that the market is now held on three days per week instead of weekly makes the increase in value of goods offered per day even more striking. Over the six survey days 64.7 per cent of the produce offered was sold, excluding any that may have been sold to stores or householders after the sellers left the market.

Few data are available on the seasonality of sales in the market though volume of produce offered is probably greatest in the middle of the year. If we crudely assume sales during the two weeks of the survey are representative of those in all fortnightly periods of the year, we may estimate total annual sales of foodstuffs in the Vila market to be approximately FNH2 000 000. This makes no allowance for sales by vendors on non-market days or outside the market sites and these might increase the total by between 5 and 10 per cent. To give some indication of the volume of goods transported to the market and offered for sale, Table 5.5 sets out estimates of the weight of a selection of products offered over the six days of the 1976 survey.

The sellers

In 1965, of the 178 sellers who attended the market during the four survey days, seven were non-New Hebridean, and included Vietnamese, Chinese, 'part-European' (Metis) and one European. These seven brought in 17.2 per cent of the produce offered for sale (Brookfield et al.,

1969:120-2). In the 1976 survey, only one of the 365 sellers was an Asian, an elderly lady who sold in the market on two days. There were no European vendors in 1976 although several of the larger and regular suppliers ('specialists' in the Brookfield et al. terminology) are of mixed ancestry.

Table 5.6 shows the number of sellers from each village or location, the number of vendor/days contributed by the sellers of each place, and the total value of produce sold by them. Since 1965, the area serving the market has extended from just seven villages to encompass virtually the whole island and the nearby offshore islands as well (Fig. 5.3). Improvements in the circuminsular road have no doubt been a major factor allowing this expansion. On the other hand this can scarcely explain the fact that Eratap which did not have any market sellers in 1965 now ranks third in the number of sellers and vendor/days contributed (Table 5.6). The other major change in suppliers is the disappearance of the Vietnamese, Chinese and European 'specialists' who in 1965 had gardens on the northern outskirts of Vila and in the north between Siviri⁵ and Saama (Brookfield et al., 1969:119). In 1976 the 'specialist' growers were those of the Klems Hill and Snake Hill area on the 'plateau' to the northwest of Mele-Maat where a number of smallholders grow produce as a full-time commercial activity on small freehold properties.

The overwhelming majority (94 per cent) of sellers are women. The only men who regularly appeared during the survey were some of the 'specialists' from Klems Hill and Snake Hill. Some of the sellers have been operating in the market for many years. Of those from whom biographical data were obtained, 24 per cent had sold in the market for more than 10 years. Obviously the age of sellers (which falls between 30 and 39 years for those for whom we have data) influences such a figure but it is clear that marketing has been a long-term occupation for many women. Twenty-six per cent of sellers were present for at least three of the six days of the survey. The average sales per seller per market day are over FNH1000 (Table 5.6) and this compares with a daily wage rate of between FNH400 and FNH500 for unskilled workers such as gardeners, messengers, or labourers in

5. Erakor, Pango, Fila Island, Mele in the southwest and Lelepa, Moso and Siviri in the west and north (Brookfield et al., 1969:118-9).

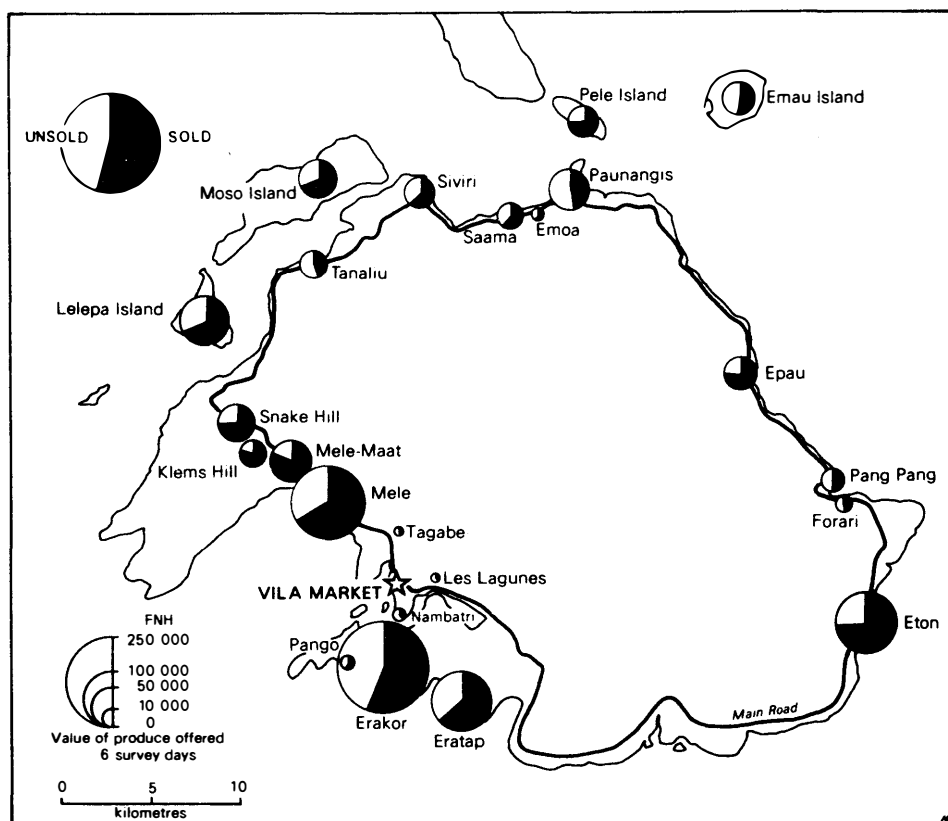


Fig. 5.3 Village produce offered and sold in Vila market.

employment with the British residency in early 1976. Clearly, for many sellers marketing must now be regarded as much more than the 'occasional activity' it was seen to be in 1965 (Brookfield et al., 1969:118).

Products

Over sixty different food products were recorded on sale in the market. Table 5.7 lists the main products and gives the total values of each sold during the survey. The summary categories (native staples, other native foods, etc.) coincide with those used by Brookfield et al. except for 'curios' which were not enumerated in 1976. The report on the 1965 survey does not record the values sold, only the value of goods offered for sale. Table 5.8 gives comparable figures for both surveys.

Specialization by product

Brookfield et al. (1969:124) reported some tendency for particular villages to specialize in different categories of crops. For example, in 1965, '61 per cent of the offerings from Erakor village comprised native staples', the women from Mele offered European vegetables as well as staples, while the Fila islanders offered cooked food. New Hebridean and non-New Hebridean 'specialists' offered 89 per cent of the total vegetables on sale, and north Efate tended to contribute a relatively high proportion (43 per cent) of the fruit on offer.

The 1976 survey showed that some distinct changes had occurred (Table 5.9). Non-New Hebridean specialists seem to have disappeared whilst the Fila islanders no longer offer produce or cooked food for sale in the market. The main specialists in 1976 were the vendors from Klems Hill and Snake Hill who are the principal suppliers of non-native vegetables; although with 36 and 15 per cent respectively of their produce (by value) being in this category they are not nearly as 'specialized' as some in the 1965 survey when vegetables made up 68 and 76 per cent of the produce offered by the two main specialist groups (Brookfield et al., 1969:125).

In this respect a more even distribution of 'specialization' seems to have occurred over the last 10 years. The relative importance of native staples has certainly fallen in significance for villages such as Erakor, Mele and Pango whilst fruit has now become a major item in their selling pattern. Several of the more distant northern and western villages still place relatively heavy emphasis on the sale of traditional staples and cooked foods, most of which are sold to Melanesians. There are a number of reasons which may be offered in explanation of this latter association, one of the most pragmatic being that travel time prevents the sellers from the more distant locations getting to the market early enough to catch the Chinese and Vietnamese buyers. Other explanations relate to the degree to which tradition affects attitudes and actions in these villages. Where custom is stronger the emphasis still tends to be on traditional root crops either for self-consumption or for customary exchange. What is sold is therefore the production surplus rather than specialized production for the market. The same rationale would apply to cooked foods.

This suggests that the whole process of assimilation into commercial activity may well be a function of time as reflected in the length of market experience. However, the data are inconclusive on this hypothesis and traditional goods tend to be marketed by individuals with a wide range of market experience from a variety of villages. Furthermore, as discussion below indicates, a substantial amount of commercial vegetable growing does occur in the more distant villages (the three largest producers being located in Paunangis village) but this produce does not reach the market, being bought wholesale by SCAF for subsequent resale.

However the typical 'specialist' grower involved in the market does tend to be someone with relatively wide experience of life outside the village, in both the monetary and urban sectors. One specialist producer, for example, has worked throughout the New Hebrides in a variety of responsible jobs and has also lived in New Caledonia and Australia. He currently owns two hectares on Snake Hill which he bought in 1962 for £700, several times less than its current value. On this land he grows a wide range of cash crops as well as rearing chickens, largely for their eggs. He attends the market regularly, at least three days each week, and takes special orders for unusual vegetable or animal products.

Prices and marketing behaviour

Pricing systems in the Vila market are, at first sight, very similar to those found in 'informal sector' markets in other parts of Melanesia. Goods are not sold by units of weight, but by units of price in multiples of FNH10 (or 10 cents). Thus limes or lemons may be sold at two (or three) for 10 cents. Green vegetables are offered in bundles at 20 to 30 cents, with bundles of the one price being of only approximately equal weight. Taro, yams or sweet potato are sold in baskets of varied size and usually priced at \$1.00, \$2.00 or \$3.00 levels. Bananas may be sold either in whole bunches or in 'hands', with the latter bringing considerably higher prices per kilo (Table 5.10). A superficial uniformity in prices appears to exist across the market but this is more apparent than real and a buyer can 'shop around' quite successfully for 'bargains' based on the variable size of baskets or bundles at any price level (Fig. 5.4).

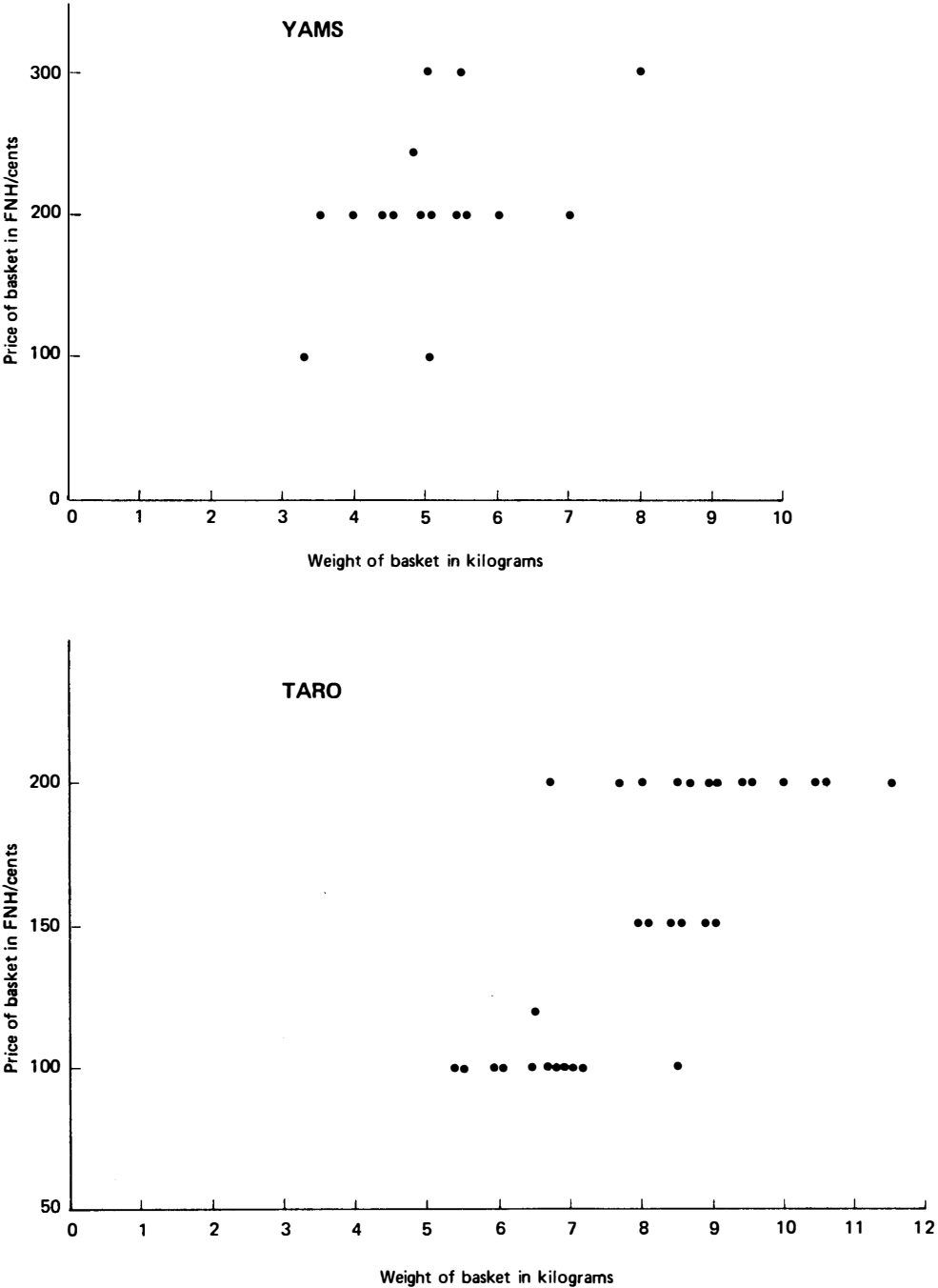


Fig. 5.4 Price variations in yams and taro.

There appears to be a general consensus among sellers that units (baskets, bundles or heaps) within a certain size range should sell at a specific price. In the early morning sellers may exhibit uncertainty about prices and then there is quiet consultation between adjacent sellers about the right asking price for particular items such as a bunch of bananas or a basket of yams. Some sellers however, have price tags (usually quoted in dollars and cents) on their produce when they set it out - a practice recently introduced apparently to comply with price control regulations.

In order to ascertain mean prices, a representative selection of baskets, bundles or other sale units of most products was weighed and prices recorded. Table 5.10 sets out the mean price per kilo of each item. As noted above and in Figure 5.4, the variation from these mean figures can be considerable. Nevertheless the figures do enable comparisons to be made with prices of a smaller range of products collected quarterly by the Condominium Bureau of Statistics since 1971. Table 5.11 gives data on prices since 1971.

In general very little 'active' selling, such as calling to buyers or shouting products and prices, occurs in the Vila market. The main attempts at bargaining are usually initiated by Asian buyers who may offer smaller sums than requested. They meet with limited success. There is a great deal of resentment against the Asian women for trying to bargain. One Erakor vendor complained vigorously about this, saying that as the village women had to pay fixed prices in a taxi or at Chinese stores, so the Asians should abide by market custom. There are examples, however, of more 'active' selling by some vendors. One regular seller from Erakor sometimes called the attention of prospective customers to her goods and was also willing to drop the price of a hand of bananas from 50 cents to 40 cents for a known European buyer. In addition, she once bought oranges from a young seller at 5 cents each and sold them at the normal price of 10 cents. She was not alone in this last instance.

Other examples of flexible, rather than active, selling were the friendly bargaining, or perhaps banter, by French buyers over the size of bunches of bananas, and the occasional dropping of prices at the end of the market day. In one instance, two women from Mele halved the price of a

bag of taro (usually \$3.00) for a sale to a Frenchman and his Polynesian wife who then went through it and reproachfully picked out a rotten one! In one (rare) instance a seller asked two Royal Navy sailors from a visiting ship for 30 cents for a grapefruit which normally would sell at 10 or 20 cents. The sailors paid, causing much amusement after they had left, and the seller was mock scolded. On the other hand fruit sellers at the wharf when tourist ships were in port seemed to offer their goods at prices comparable to those asked in the regular market.

Bathgate (1975), in his study of Honiara market, raises several interesting issues on selling practices, one of which relates to the different concepts held in relation to traditional and non-traditional crops. He suggests that in the exchange of traditional crops the price to the receiver/buyer is more or less fixed, whereas for non-traditional items it is the seller who determines the price. This rationale may also underlie selling attitudes, with traditional crops being marked by 'passive selling' in which it would be unethical for the vendor to push her produce. Certainly any aggressive selling in the Vila market was more noticeable in situations where the traditional elements, whether the commodity sold or the type of interpersonal relationships, were at a minimum.

Sellers' transport costs

Table 5.6 gives the basic return fare between each village and the market. In fact transport costs may vary according to the type and ownership of the vehicle used. In general, fares in normal sedan type taxis tend to be higher than those charged on taxi trucks. This is particularly true of so-called 'family transport', i.e. trucks owned by a family, or 'company transport' which is normally a truck owned by an informal group. In some cases a co-operative-owned taxi or taxi truck is used. In all these latter cases it seems that a somewhat lower fare is charged than if a normal car taxi were hired. Fares cover both the seller and the seller's produce but it is interesting to note that the fare to the market from Erakor which is a standard \$1.50 return, is sometimes made up of a \$1.00 fare to the market with produce and a 50 cent fare back. Virtually all the growers in the Klems Hill and Snake Hill areas use their own trucks and do not cost individual trips. The Klems Hill and Snake Hill fares shown in Table 5.6 are interpolated from those of Mele-Maat and Lelepa. Fares from Lelepa and the

other small islands include an additional boat component, of 40 cents in the case of Lelepa.

When 'company transport' is used by a group from a village, a total hire charge may be made for the truck, irrespective of the number of passengers. Thus from Moso Island there is a 40 cent boat fare for each individual plus the shared cost of a truck hired for \$12. Truck charges from Siviri and Saama are \$10 and \$12 respectively. In the Emoa area a fare of between \$2 and \$4 applies, apparently depending on the number sharing a vehicle. From Paunangis 'family transport' allows a fare of \$2 per head while 'company transport' for Pele Island gives a similar road fare of \$2 per head.

It is important to note that pricing policies probably vary from operator to operator in the case of family transport or company transport and that the provision of transport is not necessarily regarded as a commercial operation. For example, the fares may not include allowance for depreciation and there is apparently a significant social element in truck ownership and use.

Returns to sellers

One frequent assertion made about the Vila market, as well as similar markets elsewhere in Melanesia, is that many sellers do not make sufficient sales to cover their transport costs to the market. Calculations show that of 699 vendor/days for which there are data on both transport cost and amended value of sales, fares exceed returns on only 36 (5.2 per cent) of the individual vendor/days. There are no data on the other costs of production and marketing and therefore only information on gross returns can be given.

Table 5.6 shows mean sales per vendor/day for the vendors from each village or area. The highest daily incomes are recorded by the specialist growers of the Klems Hill and Snake Hill areas but sales per head by sellers of Eton village and Lelepa Island do not fall far behind. Although Erakor and Mele lead in terms of sales per village, daily sales per head by vendors from these two villages are below the mean of FNH1 050. The distribution of vendor/days by value of goods sold is given in Table 5.12.

Stores

The retail stores in Vila, together with the fresh comestible market described in the first half of this chapter, comprise the major components of the urban food distribution system. Unlike the market there has been no previous attempt to analyze retail store activity in Vila although geographical distributions have occasionally been mapped as part of a wider exercise (Bonnemaïson, 1974). From the limited literature it would appear that urban retail activity was largely in the hands of metis until the 1930s when Nanyang Chinese took over most of the stores. The Vietnamese, in contrast, seem to have participated in only a minor way as employees within the retail sector (Bennett, 1957).

The 1976 survey examined all stores selling food in the Vila urban area and in the peri-urban villages of Mele and Mele-Maat in the north and Pango, Fila and Erakor in the south. Using as a basis lists and maps of retail activity prepared in 1974 by the Condominium Bureau of Statistics, all stores selling food were identified in the field. These stores were subsequently investigated by a team of eight field-workers in the following way.

1. A basic questionnaire was used to obtain the characteristics of the stores and their operators.
2. A stock inventory of selected items was made which covered brands, prices and source of supply, as well as quantities.
3. A sales record sheet covering a two week period of selected items was left with the operators. Several check visits were made during this period. In some instances records were not kept; in others average monthly sale figures were available from store records.

In January 1976 there were 146 retail stores in Greater Vila, of which 69 sold some food; 56 were in Vila itself, 3 in Mele, 2 in Mele-Maat, 3 in Fila, 3 in Pango and 2 in Erakor.

Basic characteristics

(a) Stores. Two-thirds of the establishments covered in the survey were simple town stores, owned by individuals or families. The remaining third comprised, in descending order of frequency, village stores, co-operatives and large, firm-operated shops (Table 5.13). The physical appearance of the stores correlated more with location than with type. Most of the urban outlets were reasonably modern ferro-concrete structures, whereas village stores and village co-operatives tended to be built wholly or partially of wood (Table 5.14). One notable exception to this general spatial pattern was the CFNH store in Vila. This long established Pacific trading firm still operated in a corrugated metal building on Rue Higginson. In contrast, the nearby Burns Philp store which was formerly housed in similar fashion is now a modern ferro-concrete structure.

Most of the large firms and British co-operatives were organized along supermarket lines, i.e. with customers selecting their own purchases and paying at a restricted exit point (see Table 5.17). Traditional counter service existed in most of the other stores, both village and urban, except for a few of the newer shops such as Au Bon Marche. Irrespective of structure or organization almost all stores had refrigeration facilities.

With the exception of the large firms, most stores were relatively small with less than 100 m² of display and sales area; half were under 50 m². In contrast, the firm stores covered at least 250 m², with the majority exceeding 400 m² (Table 5.14). Similar disparities occurred with storage areas since most of the smaller stores had no storage space other than that available within the shop itself. The larger town stores and firms, however, sometimes had separate storage facilities in addition to those attached to the main retail outlet (Table 5.14). This is particularly true of stores which dealt in the direct import of franchised commodities and also acted as wholesalers.

Despite the range of contrasts in store type, appearance and organization, a large number of stores had been established only recently. Almost half had been open for less than five years (Table 5.14). This characteristic may well reflect the recent rapid growth and 'westernization' of Vila and its surrounding peri-urban area

(Bonnemaïson, 1976), to which the store owners have responded by concentrating on the sale of imported and/or non-indigenous foodstuffs. In general, the older stores are *kompani* or Chinese-owned whilst the newer ones tend to be under Vietnamese or New Hebridean management, although this is not an exclusive relationship (Table 5.15).

In terms of daily operating times, most of the larger establishments were characterized by a more formal firm-type organization and operated for eight or nine hours per day. In contrast, almost all of the other stores operated for more than 12 hours per day (see Table 5.14). This was largely due to their very early opening hours, aimed at the sale of bread for breakfast. The bread trade thus featured prominently in the retail activity of such stores and its significance will be discussed more fully below.

There was less distinction in weekly operating times, almost all stores being open for six days per week and over half for seven days (Table 5.14). In general, the more formally structured firms and co-operatives tended to close on Sundays but this was by no means a uniform characteristic. Of all the stores surveyed, 43 per cent were open virtually all day and every day. Chinese New Year fell during the survey but very few stores closed even for half a day.

As might be expected the stores showed marked contrasts in their employment structure. All of the large firms employed eight or more full-time workers, whereas the others usually had only one full-time employee. However, half of the town stores employed more than one full-time worker and in addition tended to have one or two part-time staff or unpaid relatives 'helping out'. In general, this was more characteristic of the Asian-owned stores.

The discussion to this point has examined the stores primarily on the basis of formal characteristics. However, a number of the small stores, particularly those operated by New Hebrideans, cannot be assumed to be purely business ventures. The stock held in these establishments was very small, consisting primarily of staples plus a miscellany of other items. Some stores were even operated from a room within a house. Accounts were not usually kept and restocking was financed by whatever money was available at the time. When a family member required food it was simply taken from the shelves without payment being made.

Likewise, no records are kept of money taken from the cashbox to make purchases at another store. In short, such stores acted as extended larders for the family concerned.

One example of this type of store is located on the margins of the urban area. The establishment, attached to a house, is run by a man with nine years of schooling, including three in high school, who has been employed by the Condominium for the past 17 years. The store is registered in his wife's name and is operated on a very informal basis with children and various relatives acting as shop assistants. The stock in the store is small, but not excessively so, and with a restricted range of goods. These are replenished only when stocks are exhausted. No single supplier is used and the proprietor simply shops around for the best price. Occasionally local vegetables are bought from the market for sale. However, the main stock turnover and profit maker is bread, and the shop opens very early in the morning to catch the breakfast trade, often closing for a time in the late morning or afternoon. The loaves are bought for FNH12 apiece and sold at FNH15; this gives a margin of FNH9000 per month on the 100 loaves bought and sold each day.

Although there is not really sufficient information for detailed analysis, it is clear that the location of various stores greatly influences their sales (Figs 5.5 and 5.6). For example, store No. 3 lies between the larger stores at Tagabe and quite an extensive residential area lying just east of those stores. This means that it has quite large bread sales given its size. Indeed it sells as many loaves as do its much larger neighbours, stores No.2 and No.4. On the other hand, store No. 1, which is just around the corner, is on the margin of the residential area with only plantations beyond so that bread sales are only about one-third of those of store No. 3. Another case of poor location is store No. 200 which lies in a secluded valley north of store No. 16. There are only about a dozen houses in the vicinity and the store is located right on the edge of the residential area. Moreover, the road into the area is extremely poor so that there is little incentive for people to travel any distance in order to patronize it.

(b) Operators. The most notable feature of the store operators/managers in Vila is their ethnic variation (Table 5.15). Collectively Asians comprise the largest group, with Vietnamese slightly outnumbering Chinese. New Hebrideans

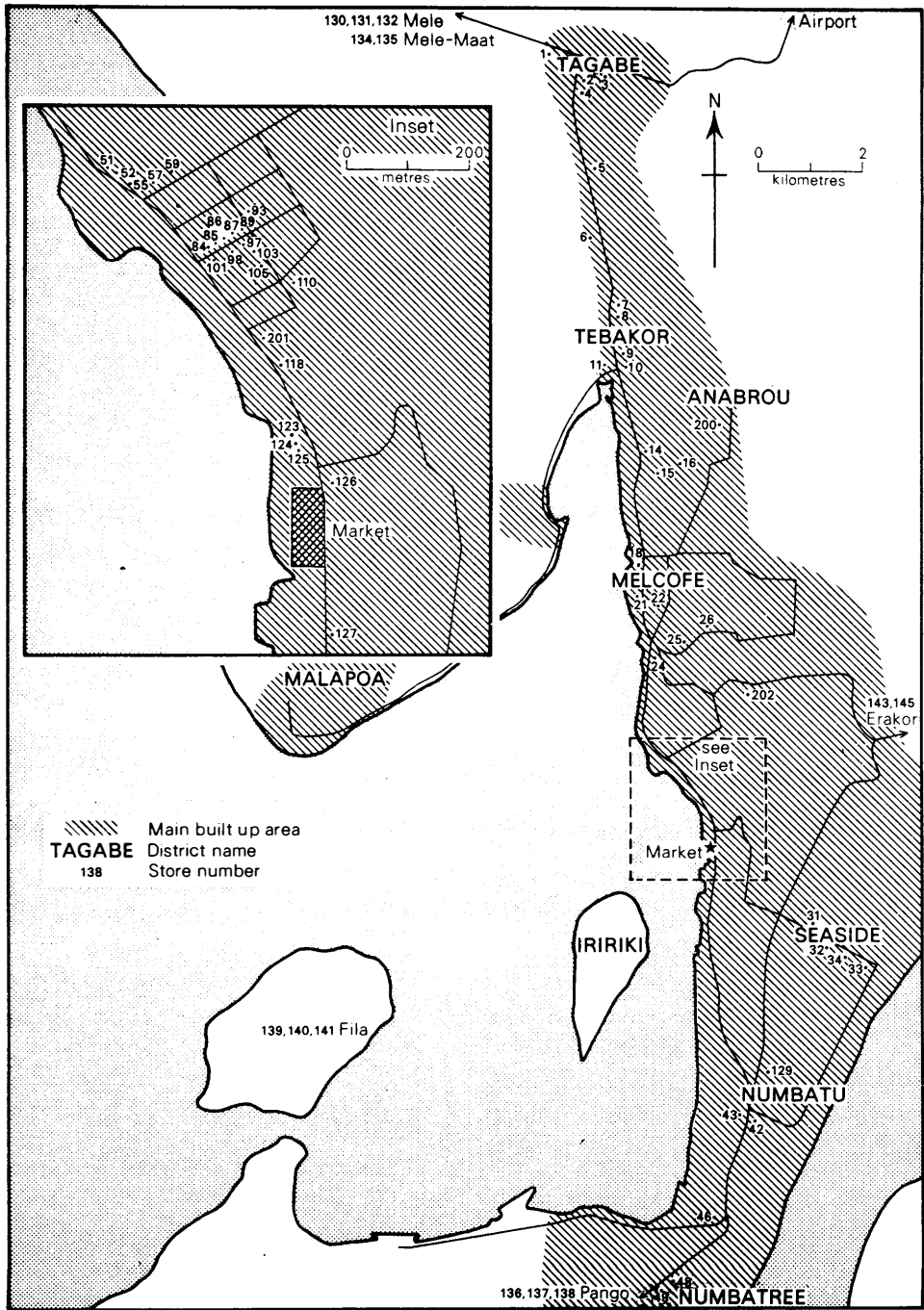


Fig. 5.5 Vila: location of stores, residential area, district names and store survey numbers.

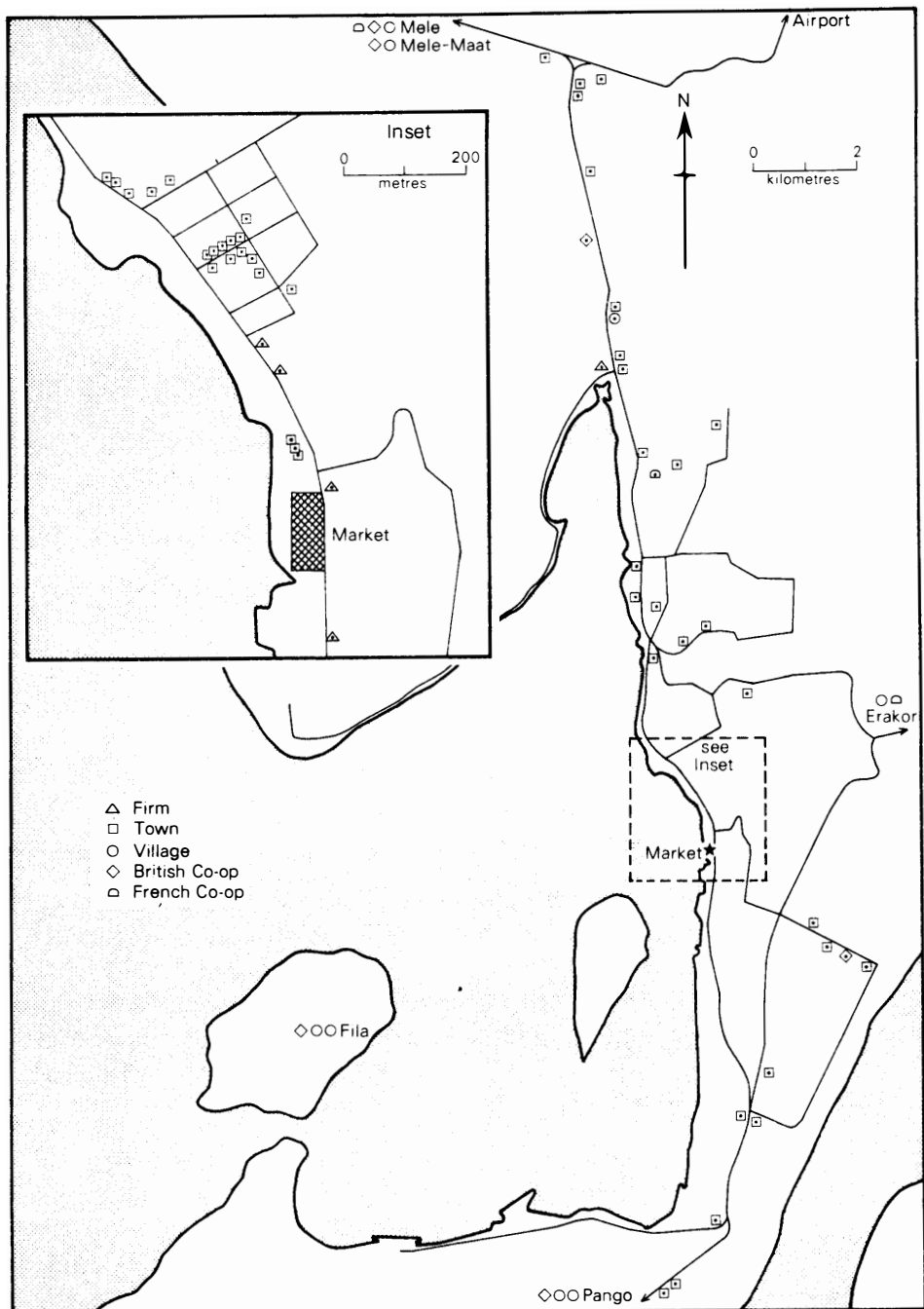


Fig. 5.6 Vila: distribution of store types.

are as numerous as Vietnamese but Europeans constitute a relatively small proportion of the overall total. In general the ethnic origin of the managers is closely related to the store type (Table 5.16). Asians and Europeans tend to manage the town stores and firms respectively, while New Hebrideans operate the village stores and co-operatives.

In addition to these general observations on ethnic variation, the distribution map reveals a very clear spatial patterning (Fig. 5.7). The centre of Vila has a mixture of European, Chinese and Vietnamese owners or managers but conspicuously lacks New Hebridean-owned stores. These are restricted to the villages and 'suburbs'. In contrast, the Chinese stores are confined almost exclusively to the old centre of Vila, with the exception of two outlets in the south. The Vietnamese on the other hand, constitute a minority in the central areas but dominate food retailing in the suburbs, particularly to the north where the former Vietnamese settlements were located (Bennett, 1957).

Apart from the ethnic factor there is little else to distinguish between store operators, other than educational attainment (Table 5.17). Whilst this is expectedly high among the managers of the large firms, the New Hebrideans in general seem to have a higher level of formal education than many of the Asian operatives in the town stores. It would appear that retailing activity, either in an independent village store or in co-operative management, offers the educated New Hebridean an important avenue of economic advancement. There is evidence that many New Hebridean storekeepers have other commercial or wage interests - several own taxis or taxi trucks, for example. A number of the Asian operators also have multiple sources of income.

Stock and sale characteristics

In terms of the number of food items traded, almost one-third of the stores had more than 1000 items in stock. There was an expected, but only general, correlation of stock holdings with the size and type of store; all of the large firms stocked more than 1 000 items, whilst the smallest stocks were usually recorded in the village stores. However, there was a great range of stock holdings in the town stores and in many the number of food items was quite limited. This was most typical of the traditional Asian dry goods store which sells almost everything. In general, although data on the proportional value of sales were

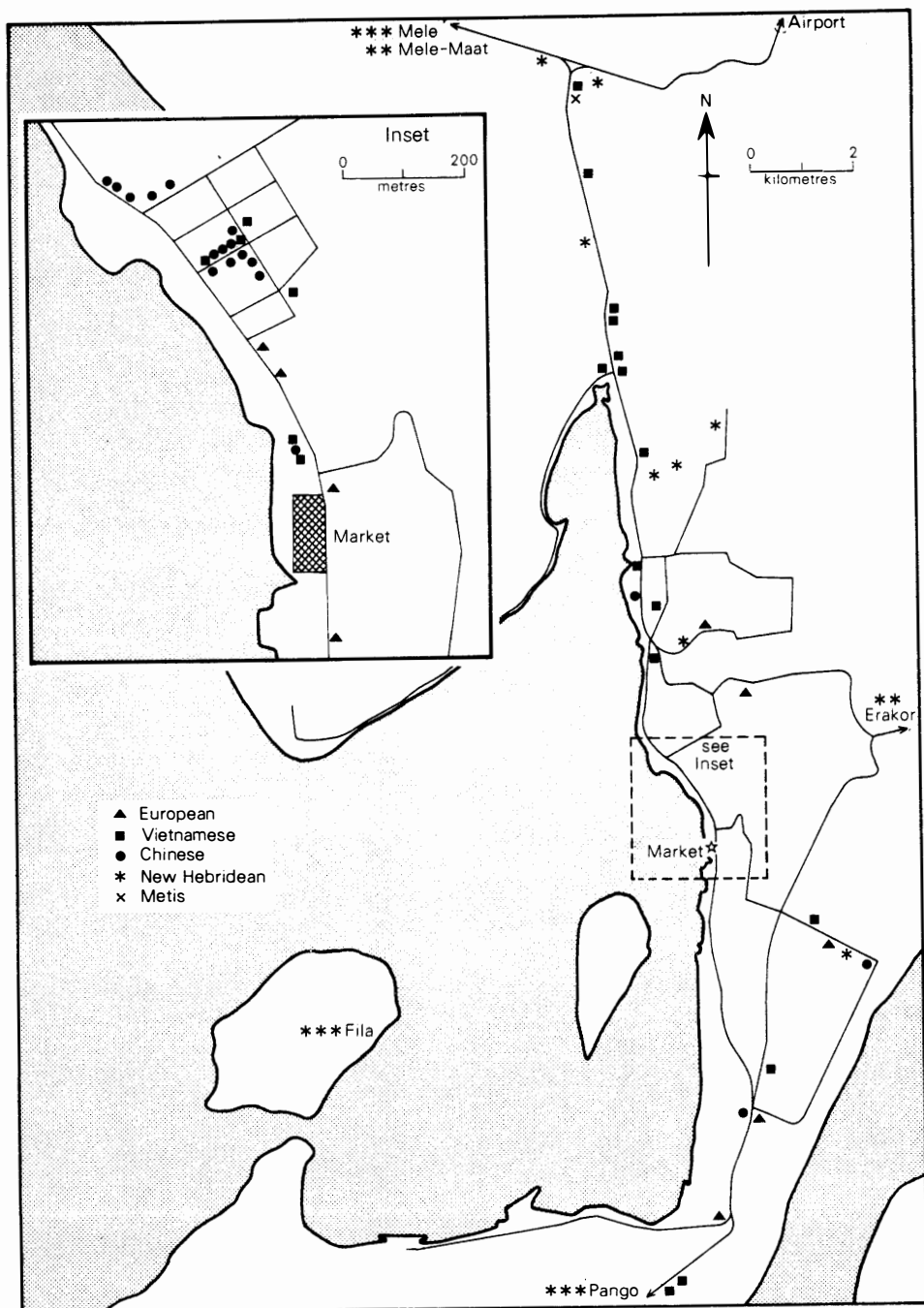


Fig. 5.7: Vila: distribution of stores by ethnic group of manager/operator.

limited, food seemed to bring in financial returns over and above its proportion of total stock, probably due to its relatively rapid turnover vis-a-vis larger and more expensive consumer goods.

The survey inventoried selected items from stock and their totals were multiplied by an average unit price to produce an approximate comparative figure for the value of food stocks held in each retail store. Several caveats must be noted before these figures are examined; first, the average price was calculated from retail prices observed in all stores and thus does not allow for differences in retail mark-up between stores; second, the figures relate only to stock held within the display area of the store and do not include stocks held in other storerooms, on or off the premises; third, spot inventories of this nature cannot allow for fluctuations affecting some stock items or for the speed of shelf turnover. For example, many goods normally imported by sea were in short supply at the time of the survey as a result of two cyclones which had prevented cargo ships from docking in Vila.

Within the recorded inventories there was a large range of values from over FNH1 million for one of the large firms down to less than FNH10 000 for some village and town stores. The distribution graph (Fig. 5.8) indicates several major groups of stock holdings by value. As Table 5.18 indicates these groups correlate reasonably well with store type. In general, the stores with the highest inventory totals were the large firms, although some of the newer suburban stores also had considerable stocks on hand. At the other end of the scale were the more general stores in the centre of Vila, together with the village stores and co-operatives. However, whilst total stock values may be similar among these various types of store, the proportional importance of food in total sales varied greatly because the general town stores stocked and sold a much wider range of consumer goods than did any of the village outlets.

In terms of the stock holdings for each selected item (Table 5.19), wine was surprisingly the most valuable. All of the main firms and one or two of the newer supermarkets carried considerable stocks of this relatively expensive commodity. Some of the smaller stores also carried stocks. The next most important stock commodities were the more expected staples of rice, tinned foods such as meat and fish, powdered milk and biscuits. More unexpected, to those

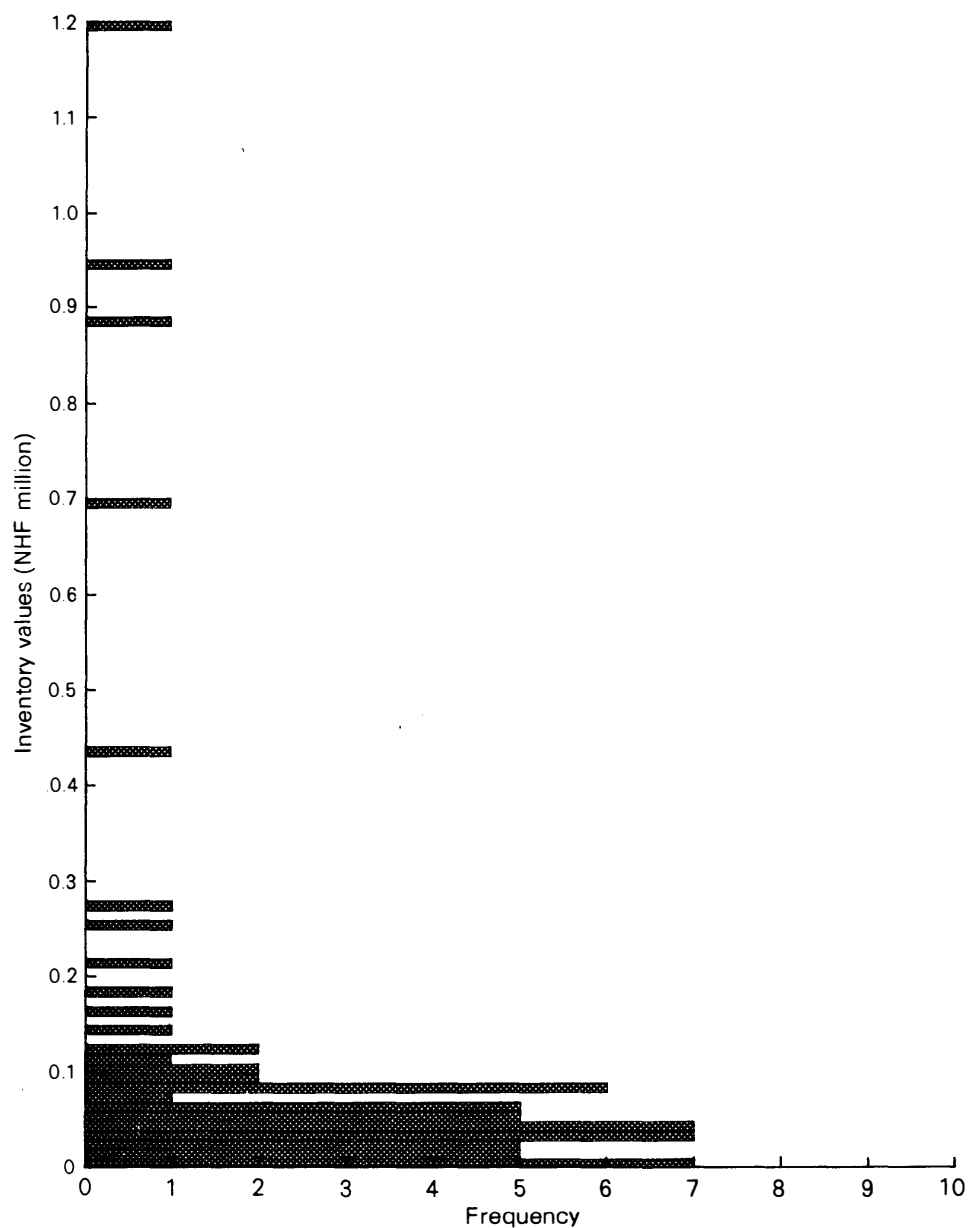


Fig. 5.8 Vila: distribution graph of recorded stock values for surveyed stores.

naive enough to consider that sub-tropical islands still supply their own fruit and fruit drinks, was the importance of tinned fruit, tinned juices and imported soft drinks. It was also noticeable that local vegetable produce did not feature prominently in the retail stores' inventories - a fairly clear indication of the functional separation between the market and the stores.

Several commodities were stocked by almost all stores (Table 5.20), usually the basic tinned or dry goods which both stored and sold well. However, there were definite associations between the variety of goods stocked and store type (Table 5.21). The firms were disproportionately over represented in the stocking of most of the tinned or bottled items, and also in those commodities which were distinctly European, such as frozen chicken, butter, jams and imported potatoes. The stock of town stores on the other hand was dominated by basic 'staples', (both imported and local), such as rice, bread and local soft drinks. Some items were obviously 'urban' in supply, such as frozen chicken, beer, bread, and fresh meat and fish. Village or co-operative store mainstays seemed to be the very basic tinned meat, sugar and salt. Interestingly, rice was not a significant item in the village stores. Presumably the availability of local garden produce reduced demand.

In addition to variations within store type, distinct patterns also emerged in the sources of food supply within Vila. Virtually all large firms imported most of their own stock directly from abroad, usually from Australia, although New Zealand seemed to be extending its influence because of a more reliable transport service. Many of the larger town stores also imported directly from overseas and in turn supplied a wide network of town, village and co-operative outlets (Fig. 5.9). Crucial in these networks were the franchise monopolies which some stores have obtained for certain commodity brands, particularly in the supply of cigarettes and beer.

The principal distributor was Burns Philp with its modern retail store and new Tebakor supermarket. In terms

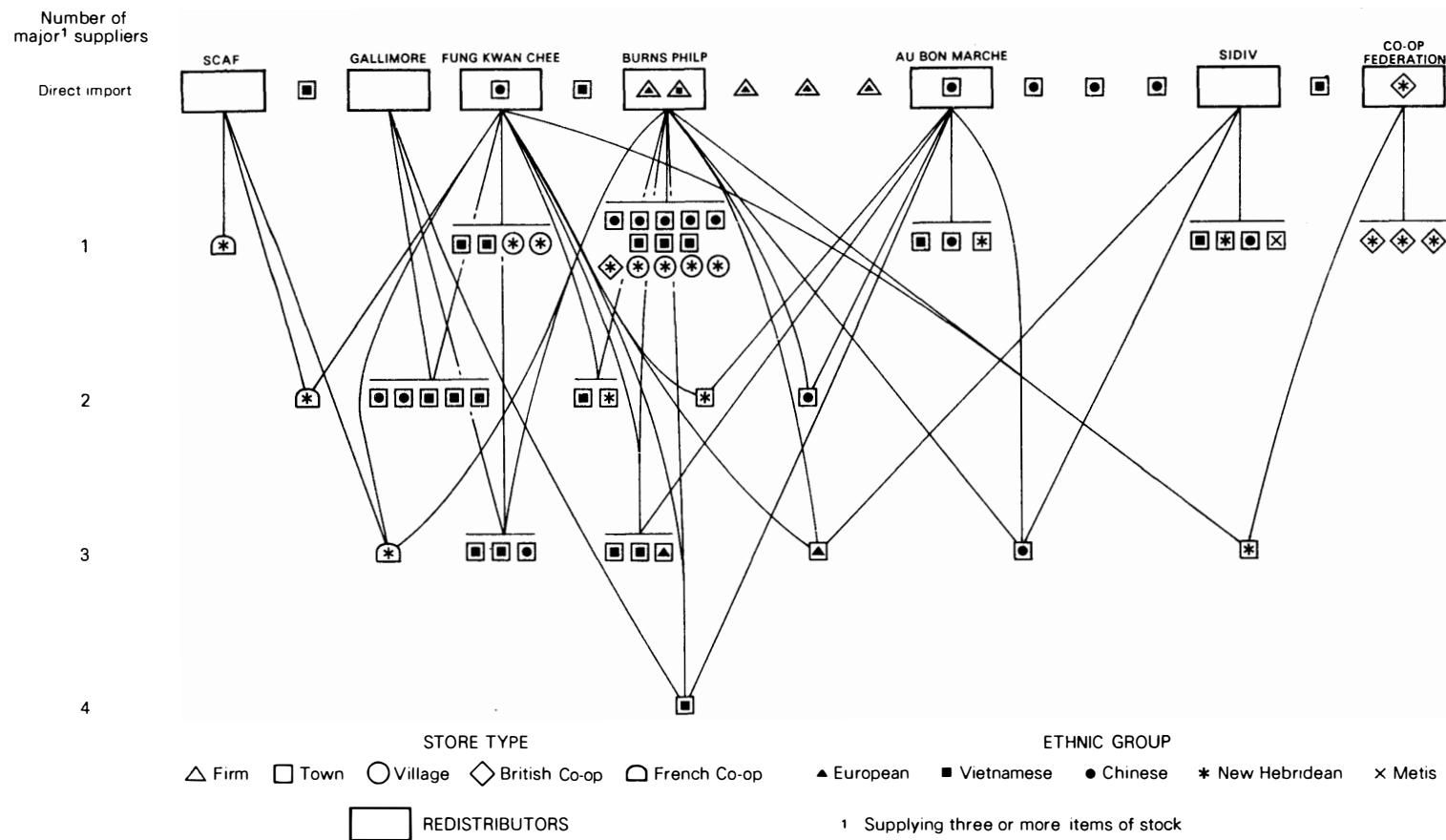


Fig. 5.9 Vila: stores by type, ethnic group of manager/operator and major commodity supplier.

of the frequency with which it was mentioned as a source of supply by the operators of the various Vila stores, Burns Philp was twice as important as its nearest rival Fung Kwan Chee, a traditional Chinese business house (Table 5.22).⁶ Other important distributors were the new supermarket of Au Bon Marche, the import agency of Roy Gallimore and the SIDIV group of stores. Within the distribution network most recipient stores tended to purchase from one major supplier, with Burns Philp again having the largest exclusive network.

Overall there seemed to be little relationship between distribution patterns and the major variables of store type and ethnic group of operation. It is likely that the networks are the product of complex interpersonal relationships of which the ethnic factor is only a small part. Vietnamese-owned stores did tend to be least committed to one supplier, although the recent emergence of the Vietnamese sponsored SIDIV group may change this. Within the major supply networks a similar range of products was supplied although the more traditional Fung Kwan Chee tended to concentrate less on the distribution of 'western' products, such as tinned fruit, butter, beer and imported soft drinks (Table 5.23), than Burns Philp or Au Bon Marche.

Direct import of food commodities was not associated exclusively with redistribution of goods. Several of the larger stores imported a number of their foodstuffs. Most notable in this category were the major French establishments of CFNH, Hebrida and Maison Barrau, none of which were reported as participating in the redistribution of goods, even to French co-operatives.

The evolution of the present distribution system seems to have been significantly affected by retail politics in the New Hebrides. Under the old system the expatriate colonial stores had monopolized commodity imports. The dominance of such stores in the Chamber of Commerce had maintained this system. In more recent years, other retail associations have emerged to challenge this hegemony, such as ASCOMARIN which is a small traders association and SIDIV which is a Vietnamese leaning co-operating organization of

6. Distribution networks were calculated from the frequency with which individual stores were mentioned as a supplier of each commodity. They are not based on detailed records or the value of supplies and must be considered indicative rather than representative.

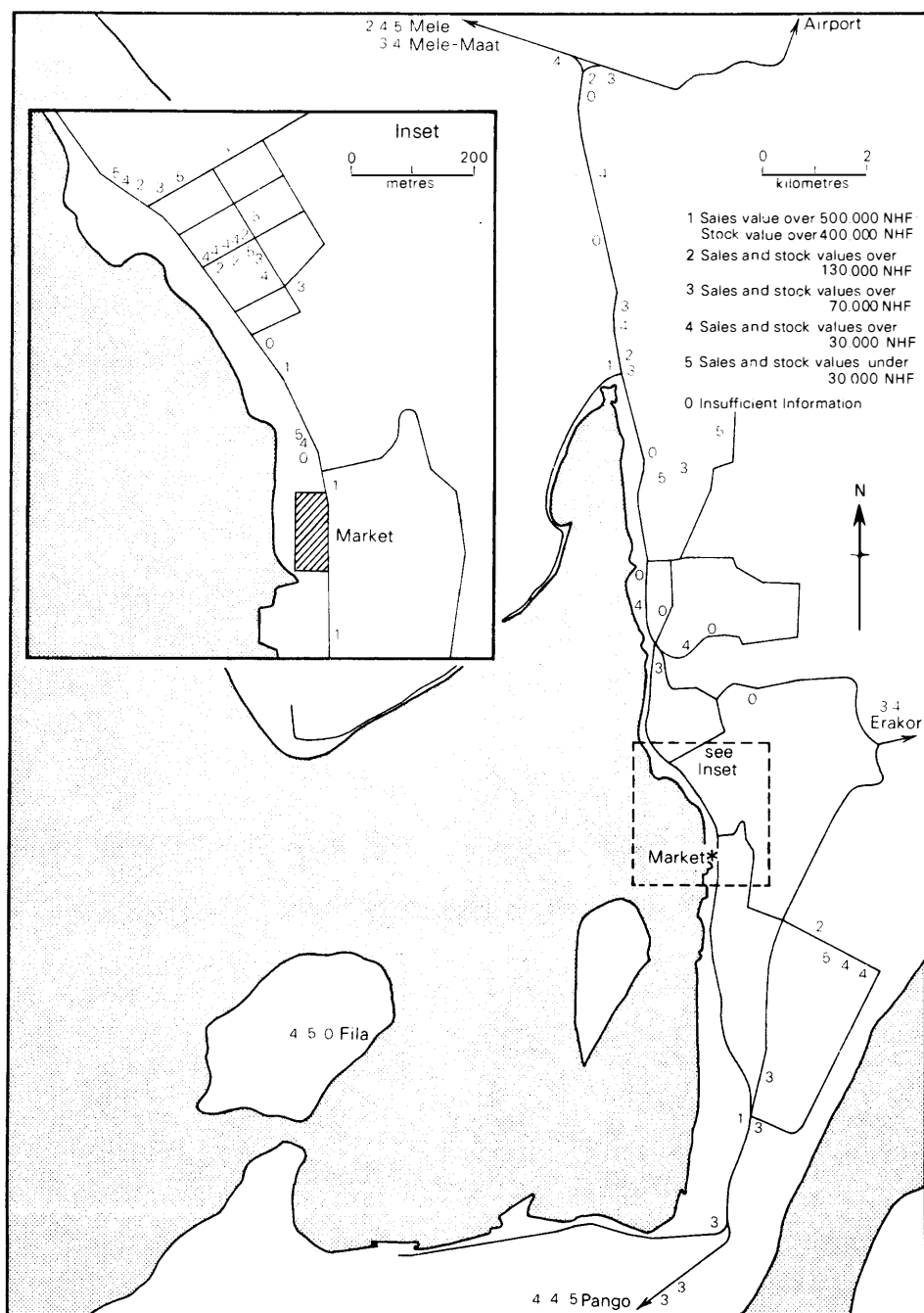


Fig. 5.10 Vila: inventoried stock and sales totals.

independent stores. However, these new systems are themselves dominated by a *nouveau élite* of large stores. Significantly, New Hebridean participation in all of these retail organizations is minimal.

Whilst data deficiencies for both stock and sales values reduced the significance of many conclusions drawn in this analysis, there was undoubtedly a clear correlation between the amount of inventoried stock and sales totals over the fortnightly recording period (Fig. 5.10). Rice was by far the most frequently purchased commodity, amounting to one-quarter of the value of all sales monitored (Table 5.24). Other major sales items were the basic staples of bread, tinned meat and fish, potatoes and sugar. In this context it is interesting to note the large turnover in two imported items, potatoes and soft drinks, for which local production sources could be developed.

The overall pattern of sales varied widely but over 90 per cent of total sales came from firm and town stores (Table 5.25). In general the latter were more important although one large firm alone accounted for more than one-fifth of total recorded sales. There were notable variations in sales patterns between the firm and town stores, with the former being prominent in the sale of imported items of European preference, such as potatoes. In contrast, the town stores specialized in tinned meat, bread, sugar, salt, local soft drinks, milk and frozen chicken.

The sales patterns of the village and co-operative outlets varied markedly from those of the firm and town stores. Significantly rice was less important in the villages, where local staples are still grown. But the most remarkable feature was the importance of bread sales, and to a lesser extent sugar, as a proportion of total sales figures.

These variations were also reflected in sales tabulated against the ethnic group of the store manager (Table 5.26). The importance of bread, rice and sugar in the New Hebridean stores was particularly noteworthy. Together these staples accounted for 61.2 per cent of monitored sales by value in such stores, and in several individual outlets bread alone accounted for well over half the value of total sales.

For the small stores the bread trade was extremely important in bringing customers into the store for early morning purchases, with bread and sugar seemingly the most important. The basic New Hebridean breakfast seemed to be bread with tea or coffee. A number of small Chinese stores were primarily clothing, hardware and miscellaneous stores but they did keep a small amount of foodstuffs and sold bread, again primarily to bring people into the shop. The stores in the centre of town, however, did not sell so much bread since much of the trade took place very early in the morning. Many suburban stores opened at 5.30 or 6.00 a.m. to catch the early demand for bread.

Local production and sales outside the market system

The food distribution system in Vila, as described above, falls into two distinct categories. On the one hand is the supply and sale of local produce through the market place, on the other, the retailing of imported foodstuffs through stores. The exceptions are those specialized local commodities, such as meat or bread, which are sold or distributed from specific stores.

There is, however, a third area of food distribution which by and large circumvents both of the previously described channels through the medium of direct sales to purchasers. These purchasers may or may not be the actual consumers. The activity could broadly be described as wholesaling although it is not as well organized as the term would suggest.

The main purchasers in this system are government institutions, such as the hospitals or prisons, hotels, restaurants and many of the stores themselves. It is difficult to assess the extent of this market since only limited data were available. Using the restricted statistics obtained from the institutions and hotels it would appear that the total potential market for fresh fruit and vegetables is in the region of FNH2.3 million per month,⁷ which is only a little short of the estimated monthly sales through the market of FNH2.4 million.

7. This is based on an estimated monthly expenditure of FNH2800 per capita for institutions only. Many hotels would probably spend more than this but like the institutions they may not always be fully occupied so that the actual total purchases are unlikely to reach the hypothesized figure.

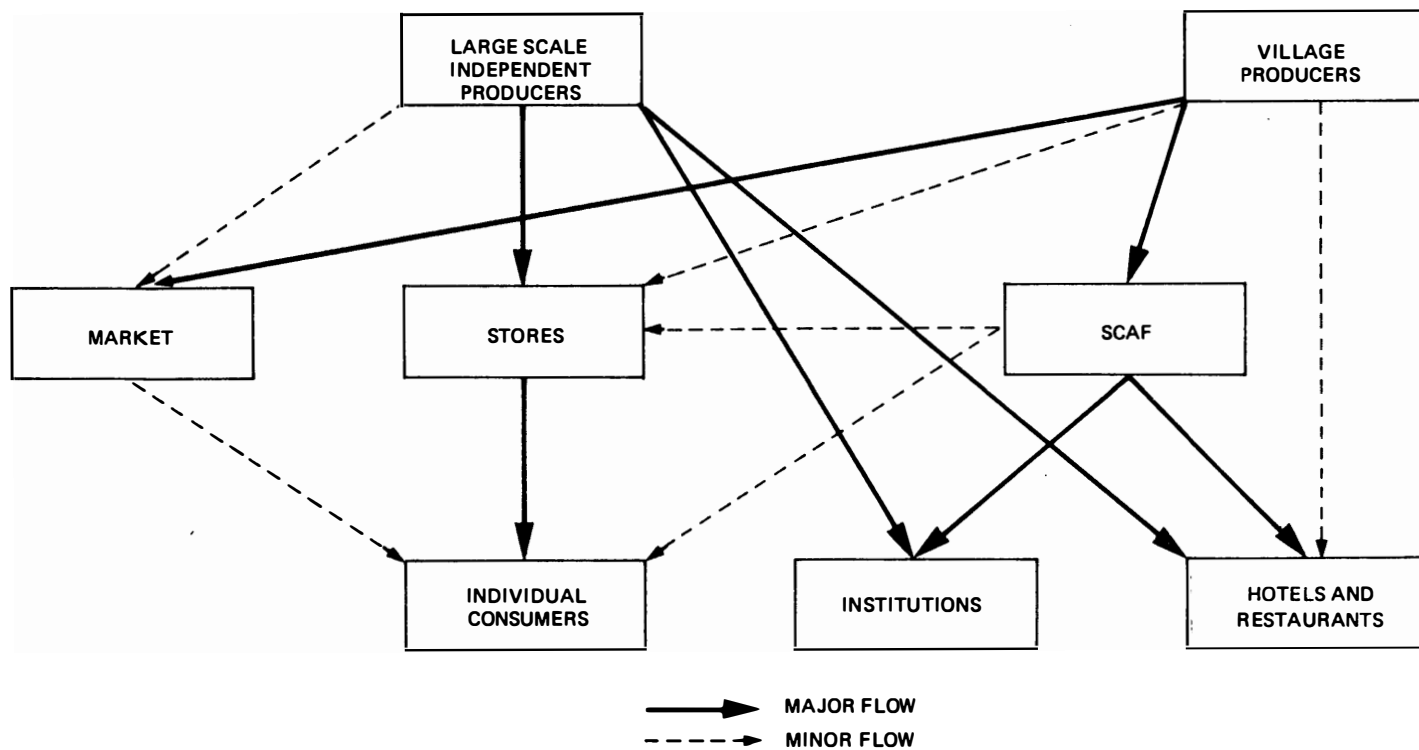


Fig. 5.11 Vila: distribution chain for commercial fruit and vegetable production.

Information on sales to stores is even more sparse although two of the largest stores appear to buy fresh fruit and vegetables worth about FNH350 000 per month. If all other stores were to buy such commodities in the same ratio to total sales, then the total monthly demand generated by direct sales to stores would be in the region of FNH1.2 million.

Estimates such as these are very tentative but even if the institutional/hotel projection is halved the total sales potential lies in the region of FNH2 million, exclusive of restaurant demand, and constitutes a sizeable market; one that has been made more attractive and attainable by the introduction of import controls for part of the year (see Chapter 3).

The projected market of FNH2 million, in fact, correlates reasonably well with the sales figures for the principal agents in wholesale distribution, i.e. SCAF and the commercial producers. SCAF holds about half of the present distribution trade, buying directly from village growers and selling to most of the government institutions, hotels and restaurants, the larger French-oriented stores, as well as selling directly to European homes via a mobile market truck (Fig. 5.11).

Some small local producers by-pass the SCAF system and during the season hawk their produce directly to the smaller hotels and restaurants, but most of the non-SCAF production and sales are undertaken by a limited number of relatively large-scale, fully commercial producers. At any one time there appear to be only two or three of these growers in operation, but the particular individuals involved and the amount they produce both vary enormously from year to year. The only constant feature is that the major commercial growers are always non-New Hebridean. The two largest producers on Efate grow a similar range of western vegetables and fruit, which is not surprising since their target market is the same; however, they contrast markedly with the rest of the local producers in terms of the size of their holdings, attitudes towards production and marketing, and general efficiency in meeting market requirements.

Overall the direct supply of local fruit and vegetables is less than satisfactory for the various purchasers, with variability in both quantity and quality being the chief complaint. Most hotels and restaurants,

which require a consistently high standard and regularity of supply, are forced to turn to frozen or tinned goods to meet their needs - a tendency that is also characteristic of European buyers from large stores. The situation might be different if local produce were significantly cheaper than imported items but this is not the case. Lettuce from New Zealand will often retail for about the same price as good quality local produce. Store operators thus claim that with a 20-30 per cent mark-up on fresh produce their profits are often very small due to wastage from unsold items.

Another major complaint is that the range of produce offered by local suppliers is often not synchronized with demand. Little attempt is made to predict or project specific product demand with the result that in any one season some items are oversupplied and others in short supply. Ironically the government-supported SCAF operations contribute significantly to this situation by guaranteeing to take the total output of certain commodities grown by village producers. This enables SCAF to dominate the supply of such items which, it is claimed, often receive a 100 per cent mark-up. However, the over-production hits private, non-SCAF growers very hard and also discourages planting of that crop for the next season, resulting in exactly the sort of alternating glut-shortage situation which local purchasers want to avoid.

There seems little doubt that the shortcomings of the wholesale system are the consequence not of small potential markets, but of deficiencies in production. The limited resources of the agricultural extension programme which are currently employed in trying to extend the length of the growing season would perhaps be better spent in instructing producers how to improve yields and quality. Several of the larger commercial growers are prepared to invest in improved techniques but need advice and assistance in this matter.

The second area where changes are needed, that of marketing, is more complex. Cost reductions, for example, involve many factors such as road improvements, a more co-ordinated collection system and the standardization of mark-ups on farm-gate prices. In addition, a more sophisticated and practical system must be devised to synchronize production with demand patterns. The measures needed to bring this about, for example the formation of a growers' association or the institution of a wholesale market, are wide ranging and have a significant political

component in that they may have a considerable effect on who is to benefit. Certainly the present influence of SCAF would seem to be ripe for reassessment.

Conclusions

As Table 5.27 shows the general pattern of food distribution is dominated by the sale of imported items through the Asian stores and European firms. Within the recorded figures the position was even more concentrated with just two firms, Burns Philp and Maison Barrau, and one store, Au Bon Marche, accounting for 47 per cent of the recorded sales by value. The overall share of market sales, currently the principal channel for New Hebridean participation in food sales, is quite small. In addition, neither the village stores nor the co-operatives, alternative areas of New Hebridean employment, have managed to acquire a very large share of the total turnover. On the other hand, the direct supply of fresh comestibles in a wholesale system, does seem to offer some opportunities for redress.

In general, all outlets have expanded their activity over the last two decades in response to the population growth of Greater Vila. The market now has participants from all over the island of Efate and 'specialist' production has also become more widespread. Much of this latter produce does not, in fact, reach the market but is sold via SCAF, the stores, or directly to consumers. The market itself still exhibits much traditional character, particularly in the type of produce offered and the way in which it is sold. Despite this strong element of traditionalism the market has changed considerably over the last 10 years. New products and selling techniques have been introduced, and for the average seller daily earnings, even after transport costs have been deducted, amount to between FNH700-800. However, it would be incorrect to assume that the market is in the throes of complete modernization. Already attempts to 'rationalize' market activities by constructing a market building have met with varied political problems, some of which originate in traditional land claims. It may well be that excessive formalization will have the effect of reducing the overall benefits of market participation now available to villagers from all over Efate.

Increasing New Hebridean involvement in the present food distribution system in Vila seems fraught with difficulties. In almost every instance the current indigenous contribution is small in scale and highly vulnerable to change. The recent financial distress of the Co-operative Federation is an illustration. The pursuit of rationalization or modernization *per se* will undoubtedly favour the larger Asian and European operators, unless a new organizational structure is established to incorporate the indigenous population into the changing system through mechanisms which provide small growers with the type of economies which large producers can internalize.

Chapter 6

FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN LUGANVILLE

The urban patterns of the Pacific are not greatly different from those of other parts of the Third World with the exception of the scale and size of settlements. In most Pacific countries one large urban settlement dominates the urban hierarchy: in Tonga it is Nuku'alofa; in Fiji, Suva; and in the New Hebrides, Vila. These towns are the centre of most of the economic, political and security activities of their countries. They contain a sizeable proportion of the indigenous urban population, they are growing rapidly, and they are the foci of increasing urban problems such as unemployment and inadequate housing (Spoehr, 1963 and Brookfield with Hart, 1971). Much less is known of the smaller, secondary settlements that string out from the urban centres. These secondary towns perform an important role in the network of trading and administrative relations between the countryside and the larger towns.

Luganville fits almost perfectly into this pattern. It is the second largest town in the New Hebrides, acting as the major regional focus for much of the northern part of the Condominium. It is the administrative centre for the Northern District of the New Hebrides which covers the main island of Santo, together with Aoba, Maewo, Malo and the Banks Islands. The District's population is largely one of semi-subsistence farmers with enclaves of European copra plantations. Luganville is also the trading centre for much of this region. In addition to handling direct imports, small trading boats also leave its port, Segond Canal, to collect copra and sell trading goods. Luganville is linked to Vila by both air and sea services and there is considerable contact between the two urban centres.

The history of Luganville is remarkably similar to that of other small Pacific towns. Established in 1899, it remained a small colonial service centre catering primarily for the needs of its European inhabitants prior to 1941. During the Second World War it was a major base for the Allied forces in the Pacific and many men from the surrounding villages were engaged in wage employment (Bennett, 1957; Bonnemaïson, 1977b).

After the Second World War it dropped back into its role as a service, trading and administrative centre for the region - a town designed and dominated by its expatriate inhabitants. During much of this period the town was divided culturally into four groups. There were small populations of French and English residents; a large population of Asians who were, and still are, a major element in the trading activity of the town; and finally, a population of indigenous people variously employed as servants and unskilled labourers who kept close contact with their rural villages.

This rather static picture was interrupted in the 1960s by a rapid increase in the town's population which grew from 1384 in 1955 to 3804 in 1972. It also experienced radical changes in its ethnic structure with the repatriation of its Vietnamese population and a very large increase in the number of New Hebrideans (Table 6.1). This rapid growth in the number of New Hebrideans was important because it created a consumer market, for the sale of native foodstuffs, which had not existed before. There was also a surge in commercial building associated with an accumulation of capital in the latter part of the 1960s when many new buildings were completed.

By 1975 new developments had begun to affect the town. The movement towards political independence had accelerated at a pace which left the majority of the French and British residents bewildered and the Asians apprehensive. The majority of the plantations which partly circle the town are French-owned and a history of Catholic and Protestant missionary influence has left a series of villages outside this semi-circle variously committed to the French and British administrations (Fig. 6.1). Thus, villages side by side are often strong political rivals. Another element in this political melting pot has been the growth of a group of dissidents calling themselves the Nagriamel who have attempted to set up an independent state complete with the symbols of the nation-state, such as a flag. The Nagriamel, variously reported to be funded by French commercial interests and a discontented American whose real estate investment in Santo had been invalidated by the Condominium government, operated a radio station and vigorously expressed their opposition to independence. There were occasional street clashes between the Nagriamel and supporters of the New Hebrides National Party, Vanuaaku

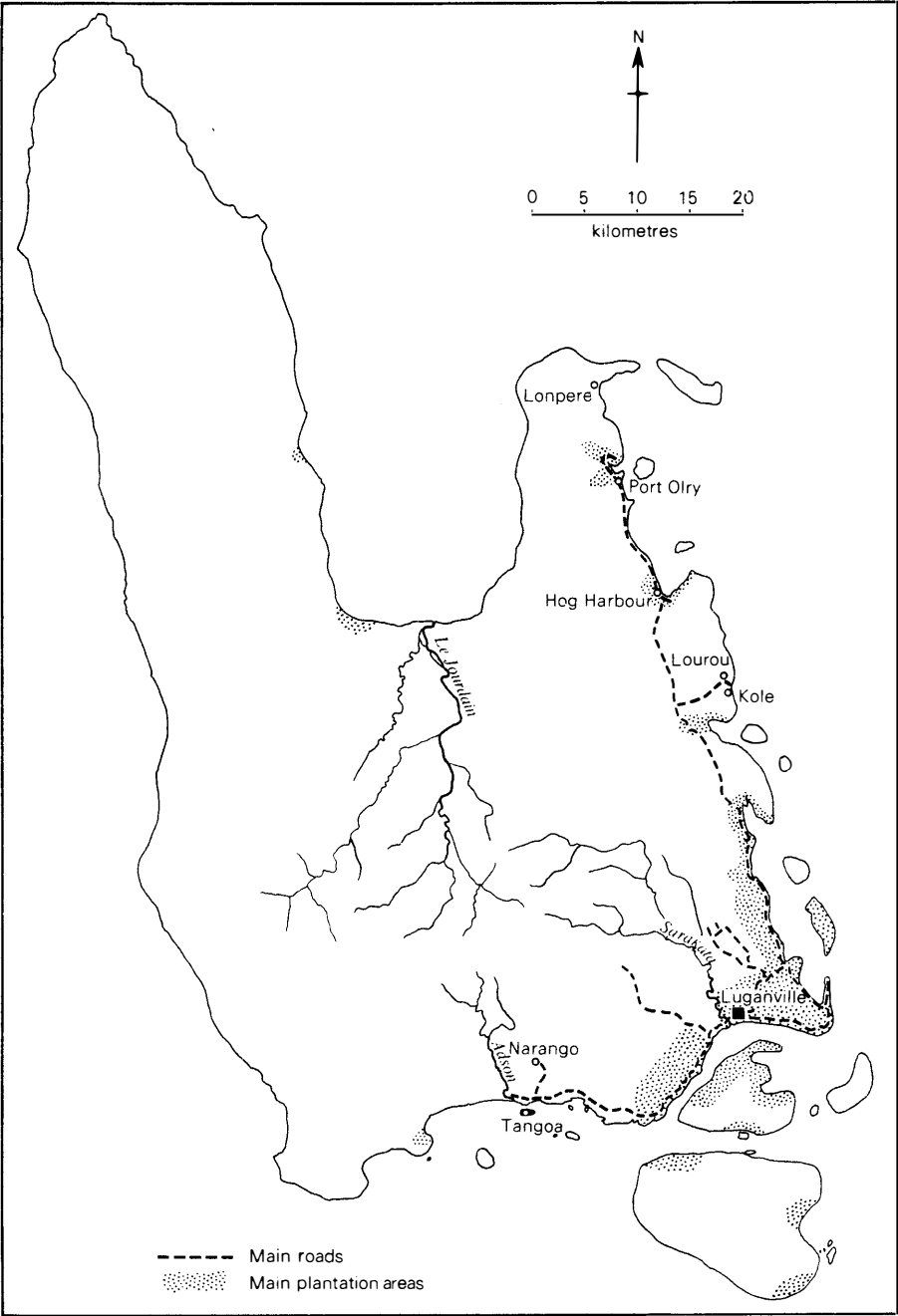


Fig. 6.1 Santo, Luganville and villages.

(Sope, n.d.). All this led to a highly volatile political atmosphere which accounted for some problems faced in field-work.

The retailing and commercial activities of Luganville are located along the main street, Rue Higginson, which stretches along the former waterfront for about half a mile (Fig. 6.2). Functionally there appears to be very little specialization with no marked concentration, but close scrutiny suggests that there is a small commercial core with agency houses Burns Philp and Comptoirs Francais des Nouvelles Hebrides in close proximity to the major French and English banks. However, the majority of the buildings are Chinese-owned stores, often quite large, which sell everything from clothes to canned food. A few of the older, wooden buildings remain but the majority are concrete, two-storey structures with residence above and shop below. The retailing structure of the town is divided into five main parts. First, there are the large foreign-owned stores, Burns Philp and CFNH; second, a large number of Chinese-owned stores; third, the co-operative stores operated by the French and British administrations; fourth, a small number of indigenously-operated stores and finally, a group of market-sellers who operate principally on three days of the week.

Most shopping and commercial activity occurred in two main periods; the first between 7.00 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.; a second between 4.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. In the lull between these two bursts the town settled into a dusty torpor.

The market

Unlike the Vila market which has attracted the attention of other researchers (see Chapter 5), that in Luganville has not been a subject of previous study. In part this can be explained by its recency. It appears to have grown up as a spontaneous development due to the decision of one individual in 1968 to bring produce from his village to sell. He was soon joined by some of his fellow villagers and since then many other villagers from surrounding areas have started sending produce to the market. Information on these market-sellers was collected during January-February 1969, on the same days and using the same procedures as in Vila.

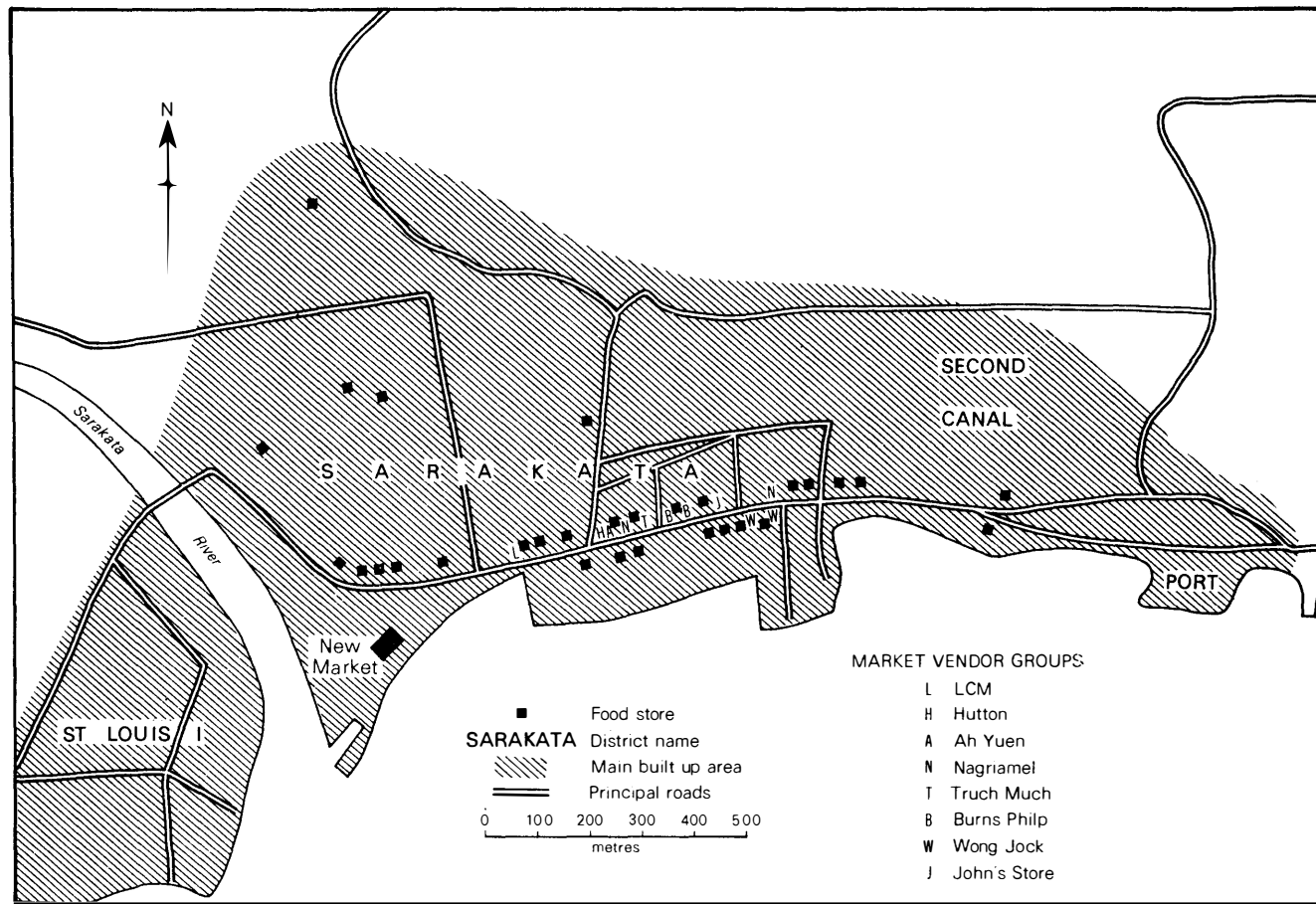


Fig. 6.2 Luganville: market and store locations.

During the survey a total of 166 different sellers were recorded as offering goods for sale. These sellers spent a total of 202 vendor/days in the market. The much smaller number of sellers in the Luganville market, compared with that of Vila, meant that there was no need to adopt estimating techniques as the field investigators were able to complete most records. However, the political situation in Santo did affect the coverage of the survey as the sellers from the Nagriamel movement refused to give information. An attempt has been made to estimate their sales for incorporation into Table 6.4.

The location of the market

In contrast to the Vila market where the majority of sellers were located on one site, the Luganville sellers were spread out in several locations (Table 6.2). As Figure 6.2 shows these locations are generally in front of certain stores and associated with a particular village group of market-sellers. The reasons are complex and appear to bear no relationship to laws of retail location formulated by Western theorists. Interviews with the market-sellers revealed that the relationship with the shop owner was a prime factor. Thus, for instance, the group of market-sellers who came from Tangoa invariably located themselves in close proximity to a local dentist who they claimed offered them some protection because he owned a plantation close to their village and knew some of the villagers. While the dentist confirmed this point it does not seem that the sellers approached him for permission to locate in front of his business. Rather they seem to have assumed tacit approval. In the case of the Nagriamel sellers who operate from the shell of the earthquake-destroyed CFNH store, the relationship with the French is clearly important. The sellers outside the Chinese stores seem to have a more careful arrangement, the Chinese owners being willing to have the sellers outside in the hope of tempting them to make purchases. In some cases they may be even willing to extend credit. The Burns Philp store attracted the first sellers in 1968 and the original seller reported that he located here simply because it was the biggest store in town. He also claimed that Burns Philp made him and his villagers pay rent, although the company claim this is incorrect.

It is popularly believed in Luganville that these separated selling clusters are a reflection of hostility among villagers, and while this may be true of the Nagriamel supporters it does not seem to be the case among the other groups. Within the village selling clusters there does not appear to be any prevailing pattern. Sellers unload their goods from trucks and lay them out on mats on the pavement. Unlike Asian sellers they do not always sit beside their produce. Rather they tend to retire a few paces back from their goods and identify themselves when a customer picks up an item of produce. Indeed, it is not always possible to identify the ownership of produce for the goods of owners are often mixed up when displayed. Again there are very good reasons for this. In many cases the villagers are selling as a group and pool the day's returns, although this did not always occur. Further research would be needed to establish the degree to which the individual, the family, or the village, retains the profits from sales.

Images of the market - the market day

The market appears to play a very insignificant role in the life of Santo. Most Santo residents, including the indigenous population, buy a large proportion of their foodstuffs from other retail outlets. For the majority of people the sellers seem to be small in number, offering very little variety in produce, and not of great importance. Most Europeans do not patronize the sellers. They see them in the late morning sitting passively under the shelter of shop awnings or trees. The market is primarily for the indigenous population, for a small but important group of Polynesians who frequent it regularly, and for the Chinese who are always looking for leafy, green vegetables and some root crops such as sweet potato. But the general image people have of the market is very much that of the Melanesian stereotype, characterized by lack of marketing sophistication and competitiveness.

In fact the market plays a crucial role in the network of rural-urban relations between Santo and some of the larger villages in the rural hinterland. On each of the market days, from early in the morning, small Japanese and French utilities bring in the sellers from villages up to 70 kilometres away. These sellers have often been up most of the night travelling over atrocious roads to reach the market. It is still dark and cool when the first of the trucks arrive, generally with the sellers from Hog Harbour

or Port Olry. They set up their goods (outside John's Store or Lo Chan Moon's) and immediately begin to sell to Melanesian buyers. From about 6.30 a.m. a steady stream of Chinese housewives begins to appear. At this time the sellers from the Tangoa area arrive, locating themselves near the dentist's shop. Other smaller groups filter into the town settling down in different locations. The final group to arrive comes from the village of Narango to the southwest. These villagers have been selling for the longest time in Luganville and claim that they cater for a fairly established clientele although this is not particularly obvious.

Between 7.00 and 9.00 a.m. is the maximum selling time. By 11.30 a.m. the sun is already very hot and the sellers have retired to the shelter of shop verandas or the few trees. They sit quietly, often dozing, or taking walks to purchase soft drinks, ice cream or candy. Some sellers go off to visit friends in the town, others to visit the hospital or government officials. By 3.00 p.m. many of the groups are preparing to leave. The goods they have not sold are taken back to the village.

The trip to the town is certainly more than a visit to sell goods. Marketing is used as a vehicle to cover the costs of using urban services which are not available in the villages. In this respect the market has a crucial part in improving the network of urban-rural relations.

The size of the market

As indicated in Table 6.2, attendance at the market varied quite markedly. The two principal market days are Wednesday and Saturday - a pattern similar to Vila. It is significant, however, that there were considerably smaller numbers of sellers on Friday. While field data were not collected for the non-survey market days there were occasional sellers who did offer goods for sale. When the first large village group of sellers began to operate in 1968 they came only on Saturday so that the market has shown a degree of expansion in terms of the number of days on which sellers offer goods.

The Luganville market is noticeably affected by bad weather conditions. The inadequate and bad network of roads from many of the villages to the town is frequently cut by flooding - a situation which had existed just prior to the

survey in January 1976. This is further accentuated by the considerable distances that villagers had to travel.

The survey recorded a total of 166 different sellers (Table 6.3); only 18 per cent returned to the market for more than one day during the survey period. This compared with 55 per cent in the case of the Vila sellers and is an important point of contrast for field observations and interviews suggested that if the survey had been conducted over a longer period, for example six weeks, the percentage of sellers who returned to the market would be much larger. What appears to have happened in the case of the Luganville sellers is that the villages have institutionalized a pattern whereby most adult females and a few males manage to get into town once a month to sell commodities and take advantage of the town's amenities. The mean number of sellers in the market was 33.6 which made it a much smaller market than that of Vila.

This fact is reflected in Table 6.4 which shows that the estimated total value of goods offered for sale in the market was FNH349 280 - a mean of FNH58 213 per day. This was only 29 per cent of the mean value of goods offered daily in the Vila market. The difference is hardly surprising for the market in Luganville is still very recent and serves a much smaller population.

The exclusion of the 44 Nagriamel vendors from the survey certainly deflates this figure. Therefore an estimate of sales for the Nagriamel vendors, in the market for 53 vendor-days during the survey, has been included. This estimate was calculated by allocating the average daily value of produce brought to the market and sold (per vendor) to each Nagriamel vendor enumerated on the six market days. This calculation considerably increases the value of produce brought to the market and sold. We have no reliable indications on the proportion of produce sold by the Nagriamel vendors, although observation suggested that their product mix was very similar to that of the other vendors. Studies of the economic activities of the Nagriamel movement suggest that they encouraged marketing of goods in Luganville as a means of raising revenue for the movement. However, interviews suggested that the New Hebridean population who largely sympathized with the Vanuaaku party were no longer patronizing the Nagriamel sellers.

The smaller scale and character of the market is also revealed in the data on the sales (Table 6.4). The Luganville market-sellers have a considerably lower value of sales per vendor than in Vila, with an average of FNH877 (FNH860 including Nagriamel) compared to the figure of FNH1042 for Vila sellers. This is partly a consequence of the fact that they sell only 49 per cent of their foodstuffs compared to almost two-thirds in Vila, and seems to suggest that the Luganville market is oversupplied. However, it also results from an inability on the part of the market-sellers to recognize that they must diversify their products for the market, and adjust their prices to meet conditions of oversupply.

While no figures exist for seasonality of sales, the vendors indicated that, as in Vila, they would offer a greater variety of goods and generally expected greater sales in the middle of the year. If the sales for the two weeks period are at all representative then the total sales for the year by these vendors would be approximately FNH4 526 349, excluding the Nagriamel sales.

The sellers

Table 6.5 shows the pattern of selling by village/locations¹ for the period of the survey. Since 1968 there has been a considerable expansion in the number of villages involved in selling, stretching in the north to Port Olry and in the west to Tangoa (Fig. 6.1). Luganville shows a markedly different pattern to Vila in that there has been no growth of production for marketing in areas adjacent to the town, although one or two squatter farmers have emerged in what Bonnemaïson (1977b:77) describes as the '*banlieue jardin*' of the marginal Melanesian settlements. This is largely a reflection of the fact that little land is available for such cultivation adjacent to the town. Most of the land belongs to either the government or plantation owners. Thus the marketing network has leap-frogged this European '*cordon sanitaire*' and villages located outside it have begun to bring in goods, a process which has been encouraged by the extension and 'improvement' of roads to the north and east which give trucks access to the villages.

1. Village/location refers to either a village or to a location in which there is more than one village.

Table 6.5 suggests that there are some significant differences between villages in terms of the number of vendor/days, value of goods and average sales. The 'other' category, which includes the two or three 'specialist' growers from close to Luganville, has sales which are in excess of the Vila market average sales. Other villages show considerable variation. Perhaps the most surprising are the Narango and Lourou sellers who are suffering from excessive competition, as is indicated by their low percentage of goods sold. Approximately 50 per cent of the value of sales comes from the two villages, Hog Harbour and Tangoa; another 11 per cent from 'other' locations.

The majority of sellers in the market were women (86 per cent). This figure is lower than that of Vila but still reflects the predominant role of women in marketing. According to the survey data 75 per cent of the sellers had been operating for less than four years but there were some 8 per cent who claimed to have sold for more than 10 years. This information appears to contradict the historical data on the origins of the market, but questioning of some of the informants who had claimed to have marketed goods for more than 10 years suggested that this meant perhaps one visit to Luganville per year at the time of 'life-rites' during which they had brought goods to be sold.

For most of the respondents, market selling was certainly a 'part-time' occupation; over 83 per cent reported that they also engaged in some form of agriculture which in this case generally meant tending gardens in their villages. Education levels, while not high, showed that 53 per cent of respondents had more than three years education, most of this in mission schools close to their villages.

The age structure of the vendors shows that approximately 40 per cent were below 30 years - a much higher percentage than that recorded for Vila (Table 6.6). However, age data on the vendors should be related to surveys of household production and participation at the village end, for it is clear that these women market vendors are simply part of the wider household or village production unit. Unlike Vila, the Luganville survey does not indicate a population primarily committed to marketing. Rather, with average net sales, after transport costs, of FNH659, they earn a useful supplement to their cash income from other sources, such as copra sales.

Products sold

A wide range of products is offered for sale in the market (Tables 6.7 and 6.8). The tables show some variations in products offered compared to the Vila market. Of most interest is the fact that almost 50 per cent by value of the products in the Luganville market are made up of native staples; this compares with only 34 per cent for Vila. Taro comprised 64 per cent compared with 44 per cent in Vila. However, the vendors managed to sell only 47 per cent of these native staples compared to almost two-thirds in Vila. Vegetables and cooked food, while they made up only a small proportion of the goods offered for sale, were the best selling commodities, as in Vila.

Thus, in terms of the range of products offered, the market is much less specialized than that of Vila. Surveys of the Vila market have noted a tendency for villages to specialize in certain products. While there is some indication of this tendency emerging in Santo it is nowhere as developed as on Efate. The majority of villages rely upon native staples, although the Tangoa, Lourou, and other groups tend to concentrate on other native food, animal produce and vegetables, since these are products that sell better in the market (Table 6.9).

Prices and marketing behaviour

Pricing systems in Luganville seem very similar to those reported in other markets in the Pacific (Brookfield, 1969). As in Vila goods are sold by units rather than weight and generally in multiples of FNH10. Prices in Luganville for a selected range of commodities are generally much lower than those of the Vila market except for nuts which are a small scale speciality food (Table 6.10). There is less sophistication in the grouping of units for sale. Thus, for instance, baskets of taro ranging from 8 to 18 kg. in weight would be offered for sale at FNH100. Unlike the Vila market, prices were never marked on goods for sale. These lower prices for the native staples appear to be due to market saturation for most of these commodities and the low percentage of commodities sold. However, the vendors did not react by offering to lower their prices as the day wore on; produce was simply packed up and taken back to the village.

Superficially the sellers exhibited the pattern of 'passive marketing' described by Brookfield, but during field-work several instances of bargaining, initiated by Chinese customers, were observed. The reaction on the part of the sellers was generally to remain firm on the offered price but if the haggling was persistent they might give way, generally with bad grace.

'Market talk' suggests that two or three Chinese shopowners have arrangements with sellers to buy 'leafy vegetables' for sale in their shops. In an observed instance, one of these shopowners certainly bought a large supply of watercress which he then resold to a Taiwanese fishing ship at an excellent profit. Another example was the case of one seller who sold a 60 kg. bag of peanuts to a Chinese trader for FNH2 000, far below its market price. But generally the sellers have a fairly rudimentary pricing and selling system. Even the small number of 'speciality' sellers from close to Vila adhere to this pattern.

Sellers' transport costs

Since the majority of sellers travel considerable distances to Luganville it might be expected that transport costs would lower their income appreciably. As Table 6.11 shows this is certainly the case. Transport costs range from 21 to almost 40 per cent of the average sales. Most vendors are brought to Luganville by the operators of small trucks. These are often run by individuals or groups of individuals (*kompani*) from the village of the seller. There appears to be no attempt to charge according to the distance travelled. Thus sellers from Narango, one of the closest villages, pay considerably more than those from Port Olry, the most distant. However, most sellers certainly make sufficient to cover their travel costs as is indicated by Tables 6.11 and 6.12.

Stores

Historically, retailing activity in Luganville has always been in the hands of expatriates. The first commercial activity in the town was a trade store established by the French (Compagnie Caledonienne des Nouvelles-Hebrides) in 1889 but until the Second World War and the post-war copra boom the number of trading stores remained very small. Much of the trade in the surrounding

region was carried by trading vessels working out of Vila. After 1946 however, Luganville began to grow rapidly, particularly in the area east of the Sarakata River away from the administrative centre of St Michel. This was further encouraged by the upgrading of a large wharf in the area.

Thus a sharp spatial division of the town was evident by the early 1950s. In the area west of the Sarakata was located the CFNH store, the French public school, some warehouses, a wharf, and the Burns Philp store. There was also a cinema, some Condominium offices, the Catholic Mission and a hospital. This was the principal European residential area. East of the river in the Sarakata district was the major Asian residential area with stores, bars and a hotel. The British District Office was located further to the east.

By the early 1970s, this situation had changed dramatically. Virtually all the activities of the town had become concentrated in the Sarakata and Canal districts where the major administrative, commercial, transportation and recreation facilities were focused. The stores of Burns Philp and CFNH had relocated to this area, as had the French District Office. In addition a considerable number of new large ferro-concrete shop-houses had been constructed on land adjacent to the Second Canal. The population structure of the town also changed dramatically with the departure of the Vietnamese, and the rapid growth in numbers of Pacific islanders (nearly 4000 by 1972) who comprised 76 per cent of the population. More New Hebrideans were located in settlements on the fringes of the town.

The occupational structure of the town also reflected this segregation, although this is not particularly evident from Table 6.13 which gives the occupational distribution by broad groupings. In fact, a more detailed breakdown of the categories reveals that each of the major ethnic groups was heavily concentrated in certain occupations: Europeans in teaching, administration and managerial jobs, Asians in sales jobs, and Pacific islanders in domestic service and general labouring.

This occupational structure was also reflected in sharp differences between income levels. Thus 78 per cent of the New Hebrideans employed earned less than FNH10 000 per month in 1972, compared with only 2 per cent of the

Europeans and Asians. While the income data almost certainly represent an underestimate, the highly disparate distribution of income has important consequences in the purchasing pattern prevailing in Luganville because it means that the majority of the town's population have only a rather limited income to spend on food. Moreover, this income is generally paid on a monthly basis, so that most purchases are concentrated in the week after pay day at the end of the month, and fall off sharply as the month progresses.

The survey of food retail outlets, which complemented the survey of the Luganville market, recorded data on a total of 33 outlets. Earlier surveys had suggested that there would be 46 stores which were involved in foodstuff sales, but the fieldwork showed that several of these stores had ceased to operate. Of the current 38, five store-owners refused to co-operate. Data were collected in the same way as in Vila (Chapter 5).

The survey was conducted during the last week of January and the first week of February in an attempt to minimize the problems arising from monthly wage payments and the resultant large purchases in the first week of the month. Nevertheless, the collected data are still subject to some limitations. First, five stores refused to co-operate. In the final analysis, some effort has been made to allow for this loss by estimating their likely sales on the basis of ownership type. Of the non-respondent stores, three were Asian family and two were European-owned. Second, there was undoubtedly considerable underestimation in recorded sales by the store operators, which would particularly affect the data pertaining to Asian family operations.

Types of stores

Stores selling foodstuffs in Luganville fall into three main categories (Table 6.14). The largest group is that of the town stores which vary greatly in size but are owned by either individuals or families - generally Chinese. The second group comprises the French and British registered co-operative stores. Finally, there are three large firm-operated stores owned by Burns Philp and CFNH (one being a smaller branch of Burns Philp).

The physical appearance of these stores does not vary markedly. The majority are concrete structures with tin roofs, but a few of the smaller shops are built mainly of wood. With the exception of the large firms and large family-operated stores, most were relatively small, with less than 50 square metres of display area. Almost all however, had additional storage areas for their commodities (Table 6.15). All but one of the stores had a refrigerator (the exception being the smallest British co-operative).

A surprising number of the stores (13 out of the 33) have been established for less than five years, which reflects both an expansion of Chinese business after the copra boom of the early seventies, and the establishment of co-operatives (Table 6.16).

In terms of the daily trading times, most of the larger establishments are characterized by formal firm-type operations, and opened regular hours. On the other hand, the remainder of family-operations worked for more than 10 hours a day; in many cases opening at about 7 a.m. and closing at 1 p.m., opening again at 3 p.m. and closing at 8 or 9 p.m. A similar weekly trading pattern existed, with smaller stores working a longer week (Table 6.17).

An important aspect of food retailing in Luganville relates to the fact that only a few stores are solely concerned with foodstuff sales (Table 6.18). Thus only one of the 33 stores surveyed sold nothing but food. Virtually all the other stores carried a substantial amount of non-foodstuff stock, in a quite diverse range from clothing to fish hooks.

The employment structure of the stores showed some interesting contrasts. The average number of full-time workers per store was 2.7 persons; however, the two large firms accounted for 17 per cent of all such employees. Approximately half the stores employed some part-time workers, to give an overall average of 1.2 persons. However, the major distinction was in terms of unpaid family and paid non-family workers. Two-thirds of the stores utilized unpaid family labour - these were principally Asian-owned and operated (Table 6.19).

Operators

Information was also collected on the personal features of the store managers/operators. In general, the ethnic origins of the store operators/managers are closely related to the type of store. The speciality food shops and firms are operated by Europeans, the family-operated stores by Asians, and the co-operatives by New Hebrideans. It should be noted that there were some cases where New Hebrideans acted as managers for European-owned small shops, and that most of the larger stores employed some New Hebridean assistants.

The majority of operators have spent a considerable period in Luganville - most more than 16 years. Only the New Hebrideans are comparatively recent migrants, having been transferred by the co-operative movement. With the exception of the Europeans, education levels of the store operators/managers are low (Table 6.20). However, unlike Vila, where New Hebridean operators are quite numerous, retailing activity in Luganville appears to open few avenues for New Hebrideans other than as shop assistants.

The distribution system

Luganville exhibits two major market systems, associated with type of product. One system moves fresh foodstuffs from surrounding villages to the consumer in the town, via the market. The other system primarily involves the downward distribution of foodstuffs which are imported via the stores.

Three levels of retail distribution can be delineated. First, there are the firms, the larger Chinese stores and the French-owned shops, which import directly through the port. Second, there are the British and French co-operatives which receive a major part of their goods through their headquarters in Vila. Third, there are the bulk of the smaller Asian stores which buy from the larger firms. Three Asian family enterprises and one firm are the principal suppliers and wholesalers. Complete reliance upon any one wholesaler is rare: if a small shop-keeper is short of produce he goes to the supplier who has adequate stocks of the required goods and who offers the most reasonable wholesale price.

Discussions with various shop owners indicated that the distribution pattern has changed quite radically. In the past, the major firms and Asian family wholesalers received goods from Vila, but with the upgrading of the local wharf it is now cheaper in most cases to import foodstuffs directly. Table 6.21 shows the source countries of various commodities by the type of store responsible for the direct importation. Not surprisingly, Australia and France predominate.

Stocks

The range of stock carried by stores varied. The larger firms and Asian stores carried a foodstuff range very similar to that of a small supermarket in most developed countries, with the majority of items packaged or displayed in refrigerated space. The smaller stores and co-operatives had a less extensive range and tended to concentrate upon basic foodstuffs such as rice, sugar and canned foods. Bread was a major component of sales in these stores, and, in some of the smaller stores, a very important source of income.

Data were collected on the value of stocks of 30 selected food items, since it was impracticable to survey and compare full ranges. The chosen items were selected as being the most important after discussion with store owners and observation. Table 6.22 gives results for the four main store groupings. Firms and Asian family stores are seen to be very dominant.

The most interesting finding relates to the product mix of inventories. Table 6.23 shows percentage of total stock recorded for major categories by each of the four groupings. A sharp distinction in inventories is revealed. Thus the co-operatives had larger percentage supplies of rice; the European and Asian family stores larger supplies of tinned food; beer and wine made up significant proportions of the firms and Asian family stores' stocks. The differential in rice is probably explained by the fact that many of the larger Asian family stores and firms stored rice in other locations which were not inventoried. In some cases new shipments of rice were awaited.

Sales

Data were collected on the sales of 13 major foodstuff items, a summary of which is presented in Table 6.24. Before discussing these results, some comments need to be made upon the validity of these data. Within the four major store groups there were some refusals to supply sales data, or else it was considered after field checking that the data were unreliable. This led to the exclusion of one of the four European family stores and four of the Asian family stores. While it may be assumed that the remaining data are reasonably accurate, it should be stressed that there may be some underestimation, particularly for such items as tinned fish and meat.

In terms of total sales of the 13 selected foodstuffs, rice makes up 20.3 per cent in the two week period surveyed. Sugar is the second largest sales item, with 12.6 per cent, while the other commodities are fairly equally distributed with the exception of some low turnover items such as tinned fruit, salt and soft drink.

There are however, significant differences in the pattern of foodstuff sales for the major store groups, which deserve comment. First, two-thirds of the rice is sold through the firms and co-operatives which make up only 22 per cent of the respondent stores. Second, the Asian family stores dominate the sale of tinned meat and fish. Third, almost 90 per cent of biscuits are sold by the Asian family stores, while bread is a disproportionately important item for the co-operatives and European speciality shops. None of the other commodities show any marked concentration of sales in any particular store group.

Although it is true that the two firms were responsible for almost 28 per cent of sales, with the exception of frozen chicken, imported tinned fruit, and potatoes, they did not control a large proportion of the market.

There was however, a marked concentration of total sales within the Asian family firms; 74.4 per cent of the sales were made by three firms, leaving average fortnightly sales of only FNH25 351 for the remaining 15 shops. This compares with average sales for the firms of FNH330 453, for the co-operatives of FNH83 028 and for the European small stores of FNH24 219. Thus, sales are quite heavily

concentrated, eight stores being responsible for over 81 per cent of the sales.

Conclusions

The provision and distribution of foodstuffs undoubtedly perform an important function for both the urban population of Luganville and the surrounding rural areas. Nor is this role confined to the satisfaction of natural or commercial appetites, for the market at least fulfils a very significant social function as well. Selling produce in Luganville thus provides many village women with the opportunity to come to town to see friends, make use of urban services, such as the hospital, or buy specialist commodities.

With respect to the overall pattern, Table 6.25 shows that the store outlets dominate foodstuff sales in the town, accounting for 97 per cent of yearly foodstuff sales.

Within the store outlets, there is a concentration of sales in firms and Asian family stores which make up over 85 per cent of the sales. Further, the two firms and three largest Asian family stores sold 63 per cent of the recorded foodstuff sales. The European-owned small outlets and the co-operatives are not important, so the overall structure of food retailing is characterized by an extreme concentration of sales. The same pattern is also true of wholesaling as the same five outlets are responsible for the majority of food imports.

With regard to food distribution in Luganville, several features emerge from the investigation. The most notable is that imported foods, distributed and sold by a small number of firms and stores, dominate overall sales. As yet the co-operatives have made only a small impact on this operation. A second feature is the minimal role of indigenous sellers in total sales; a third is the marginal nature of operations in the numerous smaller Asian-owned stores which account for only a tiny amount of total sales.

In many ways much of the expansion of selling activity over the last decade or so has been channelled to the respective ends of the retail spectrum. Thus whilst the large firms and stores have captured most of the shop trade, the market has also expanded in response to the growth in

the Melanesian population of Luganville. Even after the deduction of transport costs the majority of vendors earn in daily sales about the equivalent of an unskilled labourer's daily wage. This is a strategy which enables them to funnel money back into their rural villages. It is, of course, carried out with considerable time and labour input both in agricultural production, transport and selling time.

While the growth of the market shows a direct relationship to the rapid increase in population, particularly New Hebridean, it does appear that the market is becoming saturated. Low prices are, at least in part, a reflection of oversupply, particularly in the native staple foods. The Luganville sellers are only too aware of this situation but do not know how to remedy it. Many of them commented on the increase in the number of sellers in the town over the last two years.

Whilst the full implications of these conclusions for policy formulation will be discussed in the final chapter, it is worth noting that as in Vila any attempts to improve the present system in favour of New Hebridean producers or sellers must take into account the overwhelming dominance of imported foods and concentration of store ownership; these are the areas on which attention must be focused. The market in Luganville already seems at saturation point and, as in Vila, its 'rationalization' has been affected by political considerations. In mid-1977 a new market building, which cost FNH6 500 000 to construct, was opened in Luganville. Initially its use was severely curtailed as a result of political incidents, but after discussions between the Mayor and some of the village chiefs these problems appear to have been resolved and by the following year the new market was operating well. Unlike Vila there appears to be no large market for local fruit and vegetables in direct supply to institutions or hotels. Data were obtained for about one-third of the small (c. 450) population in such establishments and revealed that over 90 per cent of the food was bought from the same firms and large stores that dominate the rest of the system.

Chapter 7

THE RURAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND THE TWO TYPES OF ECONOMIC SPACE: A CASE STUDY OF CENTRAL PENTECOST

J. Bonnemaison

Moving food in the traditional world: the cultural background

The contemporary distribution system of imported food products is only a visible and superficial part of a wider underlying system of distribution and exchange which existed at the time Europeans arrived in the Pacific. Customary practice involved the exchange of goods between different social groups and, within these groups, between family and individuals. It was not just the surplus of this traditional production which was exchanged, but more particularly the better items of the production: giant soft-fleshed yams which could sometimes be more than two metres in length; pigs with circular tusks in the northern islands or fatty, glabrous pigs in the southern islands.

These 'luxury' items from garden cultivation or traditional husbandry were seldom consumed inside the groups but were systematically exchanged outside. In this type of 'prestation' and exchange, it was not primarily 'material benefit' in a capitalist sense which was the main aim, but the strengthening of personal ties and community unity between different members of the social group. In the exchange and distribution of food each man tried to be generous but it was understood that everyone was expected to return gifts of the same value as those which were given.

In this way, the traditional system of Melanesian production functions at two levels. Each household is a unit of production which produces enough food for its own daily consumption and operates as a 'domestic mode of production'. At the same time each household is enmeshed in a wider system of production which is dictated by cultural or political obligations in the exchange economy. Scarce and prestigious goods have to be given and shared in order to be consumed ritually in complex and sophisticated

ceremonies: the marriages and grade-taking ceremonies in the northern islands, and the *Nekovian*, the circumcision, the *Niel* and feasts for the first yams in the southern islands. This type of economy can be described as a 'communal mode of production' or '*kompani* production'. It is focused on each lineage or local group bound by a common residence, and it is essentially oriented not to production for consumption but to production for exchange and sharing out. The end-product is the forging of political alliances between groups and the strengthening of links between individuals.

Grade system or business relationships in the northern islands

The distribution and sharing of food products is based on 'the spirit of the gift', which requires generosity and presupposes a reciprocal gesture from one's partner. Above all, it is an exchange but sometimes the notion of 'commercial gain' also exists. Exchanges, loans and gifts are linked with each other in a complicated transaction which resembles skilful business.

It is probably in the northern islands of the New Hebrides where the social structure is based on the grade system, that the type of exchange network resembling a business is best developed. We know that each grade taken involves the killing of pigs, the accumulation and exchange of mats, the distribution and sharing out of food. By following this practice an individual is able to obtain a higher or lower grade, according to the importance of the ritual followed and the amount of prestation. Before taking a grade the candidate must perform several important tasks. Over a long period he must prepare for his own performance by making a number of 'gifts' to other people involved in the same kind of competition and so he accumulates 'capital' which will come back to him on the very day of his own graduation. For each of the gift loans which have been made, the moral code implies that a borrower will return goods of a slightly superior value, so that there is in effect an exchange of goods. But this superior value is not formally obligatory. Each man is master of the value of his return gift.

Within the framework of the 'business' of the grade system, each element of traditional production has a cash value in traditional terms which enables it to figure in the exchange network. In Central Pentecost the basic value of exchange is represented by ceremonial red mats with long fringes. These mats are called *sesse*. One *sesse* can be exchanged with a *lele* which is a small plot of about 100 m containing 50 to 100 taro delimited within a larger garden. In the coastal yam gardens the *sesse* can be exchanged for a small plot of 20 mounds of yams with the value varying according to the quality of the yam type and upkeep.

The value of a *sesse* is also equivalent to a small pig, known as a *botabibi*, whose teeth have not yet been cut. There are at least eight or ten names (sometimes 15) in the different New Hebridean languages which define pigs according to the size of their tusks. For instance, two *sesses* (or two *leles*) will purchase a pig, known as a *tessok*, whose teeth are beginning to grow. Three *sesses* are equivalent to a pig whose upper teeth have just been cut, etc. At the end of this ascending chain, pigs of high value are known as *lipsal*; after a few years their tusks have grown into a circle that joins the lower jaw. A *lipsal* is equivalent to 11 *sesses* and is now worth about \$A200. Beyond this the value of pigs rises still more according to the growth of its tusks towards a second circle.

This 'exchange-business system' gives birth to an intense circulation of pigs, tusks, mats and agricultural products between the members of each local group and with outside groups. People have numerous loans with each other and this kind of circulation of valuable items and agricultural products becomes very intensive in ritual periods. All these loans and counter-loans form a series of linkages that strengthen the internal unity of the social group and the external alliances. In this way, 'business blong pigs' (the pig business) can be considered as a peace mechanism. This idea that pigs and pig-sharing means peace between local groups is very clearly expressed on the islands of Aoba and Pentecost. In East Aoba the grade system and pig business are both working towards the same goal, defined as a 'road blong peace' (or the way of peace) as opposed to the way of war, 'the road blong fit' (see the myth of Malanki from East Aoba in Bonnemaïson, 1972).

Exchange between coastal groups and interior groups

Another aspect of traditional trade is represented by regular exchange between coastal people ('man saltwater') and hill people ('man bush'). In the past the ecological and political separation between these two groups was much more marked than today but nevertheless it still exists. 'Man saltwater' on the coast were cultivators and masters of the yam; 'man bush' in the wet hills are producers and masters of the taro. The coconuts in the coastal littoral were already numerous in the pre-contact time and were combined with the husbandry of pigs. The pigs were bred with a little more difficulty in the hills, where coconuts were not so common, and had to be fed mainly with roots and surplus taro. In the same manner kava grew much better on the often rich soils of the middle slopes of the hills. There is thus a complementarity of ecological resources which was pushed to its extreme limits by a system of agricultural specialization which is still relevant today. This system provides a basis for a more or less formalized system of exchange.

In the island of Tanna in the south of the archipelago this system of exchange is formalized in a special ritual called *Niel* (or *Nieli*). At an exact junction point and on a precise day, the different tribal groups exchange pigs and food products. Taro is most often exchanged but yams, kava and fish are included. During the night one group follows another in performing dances. In this way the groups seal their political alliance with the other groups; a necessary prerequisite is the sharing of food.

The sharing cycle of pigs and turtles

Even more important is the sharing and eating of rare and valuable goods. Pigs are one example, but, in the particular case of Tanna and other southern islands, the turtle is also very important.

If a man owns well bred pigs of high value (a tusked pig in the north, a hermaphrodite pig in northwest Luganville or north Malekula, or a glabrous fat pig in the south) and consumes it with his own family, he will not be acting according to the moral code of his society. When it has assumed a certain value, a pig must always be given to one of the network of social partners for the occasion of a marriage, a death or a grade-taking. The social partner

will have the honour of killing and sharing out the pig. The meat given to each man varies according to customary law and the status of the man with whom the food is being shared.

The same formalized customs exist for the sharing of turtles. In effect the groups who have the right and knowledge to capture turtles do not have the right to cook and eat the turtle. In Tanna where all the different social groups are linked with each other by special networks of routes of kinship and exchange known as *swatu*, the turtle is passed along a chain of intermediary groups before it is cooked and shared by the final receiving group (see Fig. 7.1). Each intermediary group is considered as a 'gate' and each 'gate' buys and sells the turtle to the next one before it reaches the terminal point. Repayment is made by a gift of turtle or pig.

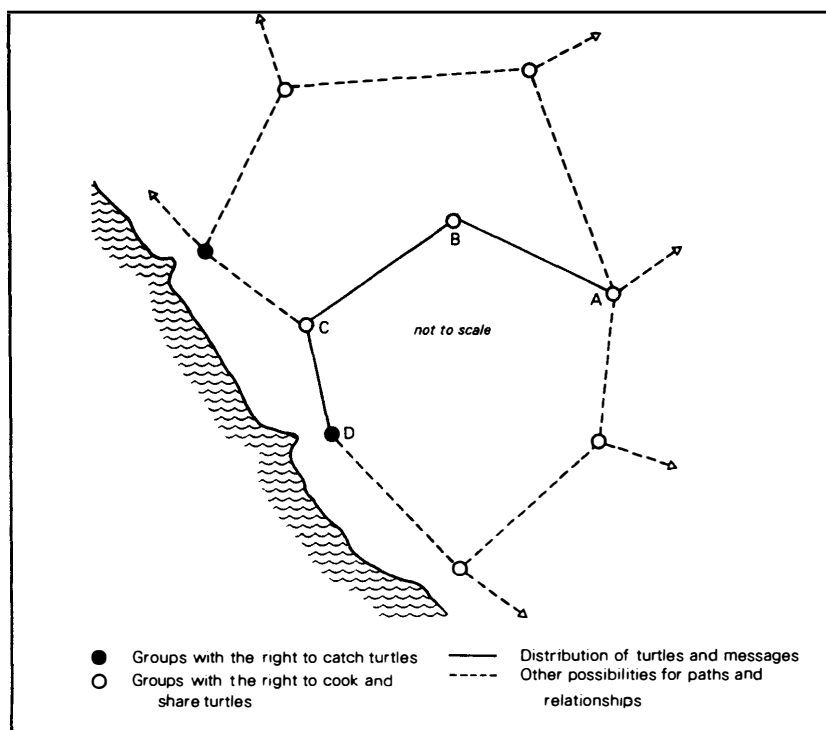


Fig. 7.1 Theoretical scheme of turtle sharing in the southern islands.

For example, if Group A requests a turtle it sends a messenger to the nearest partner (Group B). Group B then sends a message to Group C which, in turn passes the news to Group D which has the right to catch the turtle but does not possess the right to cook and eat it. Group D located on or near the coast catches the turtle and then sends it back to Group C. Group C then pays for the turtle with pigs and kava and passes it on to Group B which then passes the turtle on to Group A, following the same process. When the turtle arrives at the terminal point of this chain, Group A cooks the turtle and will share it with friends and send a little portion of the cooked turtle to Groups B and C along the same, but reverse, route (Fig. 7.1). Sometimes Group A may wait several months to receive a turtle from Group D. If D cannot catch one it will ask other groups who have the right to catch the turtle, sometimes on the other coast of the island; the message follows the same pattern as before through the same 'gate-system'.

Thus in the traditional world the turtle can be seen as a 'moving food' whose network of exchange radiates outward over the whole island. In the case of numerous captures of turtles, other networks can be opened up with the sharing of the turtle with new, more remote partners in the exchange network. These successive exchanges and sharing seal and strengthen the friendship and alliances between different local groups. In fact it is this community sharing and redistribution of food that creates and expresses the social hierarchy and networks of alliance. The decision on sharing is always taken by a man of high rank ('Yremera') and the form of sharing expresses the social relations within the tribe.

The spatial extent of this sharing of food network goes to the limit of the 'known world' of each group. What is known in French as *espace vécu*¹ coincides in this kind of society with the area in which food is circulated and is shared. Food and specially valuable food is at first considered as a gift for creating and improving the human and social relationships. Afterwards, the gift (or loan), must continue to circulate to other groups and other partners and thus to enlarge the spatial circle of social relationship. The 'life world' or *espace vécu* is basically structured by a sophisticated radiation of sharing out and

1. Probably best translated by Buttmer's term 'life world' (1976).

circulation of valuable food.

Traditional distribution and the modern economic world

When Europeans first arrived most of the social groups in the archipelago were linked with each other in a system of exchanging and sharing food and traditional goods. A Western system of commercial relationships oriented to profit and the use of money has been overlaid on and intermeshed with the underlying traditional system. Today each of the islands in the New Hebrides archipelago is characterized by the co-existence of the two systems in a relationship which varies greatly between areas. The monetary economy has penetrated the diverse insular societies of the New Hebrides very unevenly. The distribution system of imported goods and collection of local produce, especially copra and cocoa, is directed by an urban network which spreads awkwardly into a physically fragmented insular world where access, first by sea and now by air, is not easy. For the people of the islands the new cash economy is linked to the fairly regular arrival of boats which bring the 'cargo', which in Bichelamar means goods coming by boat from the external world. This cargo is then redistributed from stores and warehouses located on safe harbours.

The structure of retail outlets forms part of the visible economic space which is characterized by a small, irregular, scattered and long distance network. Beneath this irregular network the traditional economic world is still alive with its exchange relations deeply imbedded in the history of the group territory. This traditional world emerges on the occasion of ritual festivals but for most of the time it is underground and invisible. In the next section, the description of the regional example of Central Pentecost examines the co-existence and more or less harmonious intermeshing of these two economic systems. Particular attention is paid to the description and analysis of rural stores which are the primary object of the study.

Central Pentecost

The geographical and cultural setting

The island of Pentecost, located in the northeast of the New Hebridean archipelago, comprises a geologically uplifted horst running in a north-south direction delimited by a complex system of faults. The geomorphology of the central region is dominated by a plateau, approximately 400 metres in height, with a karst geomorphology characterized by fairly rugged topography. The plateau is being slowly uplifted towards the east forming a chain of mountains some 600 to 800 metres in height. The altitude of this horst falls towards the north. The population is concentrated in three main zones separated by sparsely settled areas (Fig. 7.2).

North Pentecost, or Raga, has a high density of population (45 per km² in 1967) whose language, exchange networks and culture are closely associated with the region of Longana on the neighbouring island of Aoba. North Pentecost has the same system of matrilineal lineage and division into an exogamous moiety system of grades quite similar to the Hungwe of Aoba. In the south and southeast of the island between Homo Bay and Barrier Bay there are again some places with high densities of population. The population of the south has a cultural and social structure which is similar to that of the people of North Ambrym; they have a close system of patrilineal lineage and speak a language known as 'Sa' which is understood by people of North Ambrym.

These two zones of high population density are located at opposite ends of the island and represent two cultural poles which are at the same time the terminal points of the cultural influences of adjacent islands. Between these two zones the heavily populated region of Central Pentecost which stretches from the Batnavi River to the zone of 'Waterfall' is an intermediate zone which has been influenced by both the cultures of the south and north. Several languages were known in Central Pentecost but they have several common features which are mutually understandable. Today the Melsisi language which is called 'Apma' is used and understood everywhere in the region.

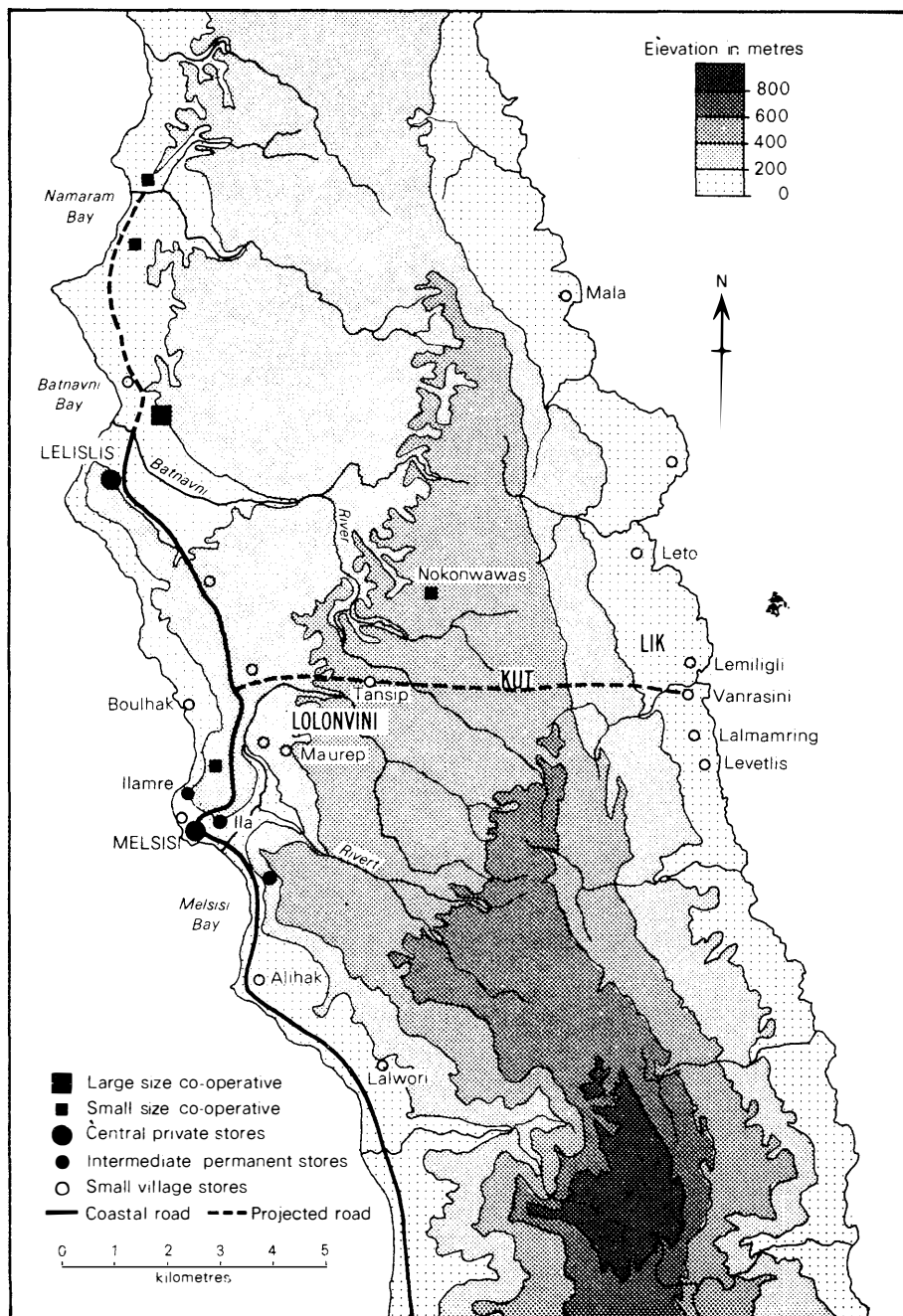


Fig. 7.2 Central Pentecost: location and store distribution.

The social organization of Central Pentecost is based on a system of grades called *Lelehutan*: eight titles make up the scale of the social hierarchy and every man is located at some level of this hierarchy (Tari, Mol, Gara, Liwuse, Tanmene, Vire, Tanmonok, Mariak). The most elevated title, *tanmonok* means the head of the world and a more recent title *mariak* which is even higher than *tanmonok* means 'that which is beyond'. To gain access to the titles, even the lowest, it is necessary to have the support of the people who have a higher grade and to have killed a certain number and value of pigs. The number and value of pigs varies according to the importance of the grade. In addition, a complex exchange of ceremonial mats (*sesses*) and food occurs with each grade taken. Today the *Lelehutan* has disappeared among the population of the coast but it still continues among hill groups. In the last few years the *Lelehutan* has been revitalized and has even begun to spread back into the zones where it had been lost. Today, four bigmen (*tanmonok* and *mariak*) share the customary authority over Central Pentecost and the control of the network of exchanges of ceremonial tusked pigs. This region of Central Pentecost has always contained a dense population. After a period of population decline which occurred as a result of diseases from the external world, the population began to increase during the Second World War, and in some places has grown to a size that is in excess of the pre-contact population. The traditional pre-contact population pattern which was located in stepped zones parallel to the west coast remains intact today.

The people of the Apma language region distinguish three main land use zones which correspond with three different ecological milieux and systems of complementary agricultural production (Fig. 7.3). First, located between the coastal fault and the sea, is the coastal region which is divided into two zones: the *ila* ('man saltwater') region close to the coast and the *ilamre* (above the sea coast). Today this region is characterized by large areas of coconuts and the deepest penetration of the cash economy. The traditional agrarian system is based on yams and pigs fed on coconuts. At a higher altitude (200-400 metres) on the plateau which is separated from the coast by an escarpment there is an intermediate region called *Lolonvini*. The agrarian system is based both on yams which can be grown at a higher altitude and taro cultivated in the wet, humid depressions and swamps in which the circulation of water is controlled by a drainage system. Further to the east above

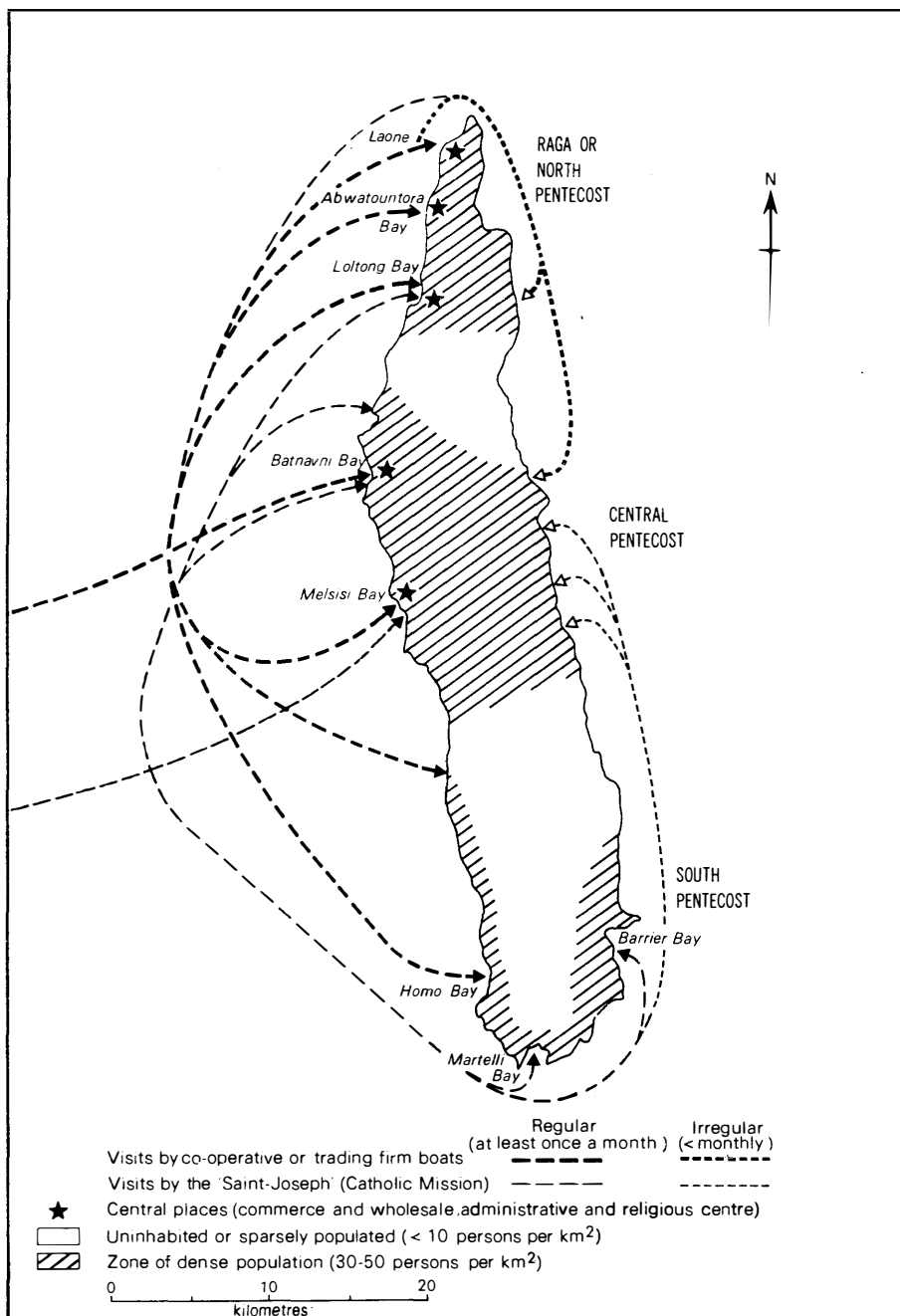


Fig. 7.3 Shipping services to Pentecost.

500 metres in the most mountainous area is the *Kut* region, in which the 'man bush' people cultivate taro exclusively. For the 'saltwater' people the 'man bush' have the reputation of being a fierce, warlike people.

Curiously the coastal plains of East Pentecost, called *Lik*, were considered taboo and remain a no-man's land. The people considered the east coast region to be dangerous, characterized by sickness and death. Today these swampy eastern coastal plains, which were for a long time unpopulated, are being settled by Kut people who have been descending from the mountains for the last 10 or 15 years. They have planted coconuts and gained some cash by selling copra to the infrequent boats visiting their remote area.

Traditional exchange links between these diverse groups located in different altitude steps and ecological milieux, have always been important. The region of Apma constitutes a *monde plein* (full world) which is culturally unified and linked by a network of multiple exchanges. In contrast to the northern region of Raga, which was opened up quickly to Christianity and external influences, Central Pentecost for a long time remained isolated. The absence of a large coastal plain and safe harbours discouraged settlement by traders and colonists.

At the end of the last century some people from the Apma region who had been employed on Fijian plantations were converted by a Catholic priest and when they returned they asked Marist missionaries to come to their area. The Marists settled in Namaram, where they made little impact, and afterwards moved to Melsisi where their reception was more cordial. Christianity spread slowly among the coastal groups and later through traditional links to the groups in the interior. But in this area Christianity faced much opposition from the custom world and from men of high grade. The Kut people of the interior only began to convert to Christianity after the Second World War. In the south and central area of Apma language there is a majority of Catholics, but Anglicans and Church of Christ are dominant on the fringes and along the Batnavni valley.

The coastal and interior groups have reacted differently to the impact of the exterior world. The coastal peoples were quickly converted to Christianity and adopted commercial coconut growing as early as the beginning of the century; the interior groups remained isolated from

these influences for a long time. At present there is no opposition at the religious level but there are still differences at the cultural and economic levels. In contrast to the Ila, the Kut still retain much of their customary traditions; since coconuts do not grow very well on the plateau their involvement in the cash economy is only slight.

Until recently Central Pentecost was only linked regularly to the outside world by visits two or three times per month of the Catholic mission boat, the *St Joseph*. Other links were by the irregular visits of boats operated by commercial firms. These ships carry copra, travellers and imported products. For a long time the sole links have been with Luganville but now the isolation has been decreased by the building of a road network that links Batnavni with the airfield in the south of Pentecost at Lonorore. Because of the maritime linkages established by the *St Joseph* and the harbour mission, Melsisi became the major economic distribution point of the region (Figs 7.2 and 7.3).

The distribution of 'cargo' (imported goods)

The early trading pattern was begun by the Catholic mission and by various private traders who disappeared quickly in the early twentieth century. The trading pattern has now grown considerably and extended over the whole area, although many features of the basic structure remain unchanged. First, there is a network of central and permanent stores that have regular links with the commercial firms of Luganville, and second, a much more scattered and unstable network of small village stores. All these stores provide only imported products such as tools, clothes, petrol, lamps, cooking utensils and batteries. There are also various basic foodstuffs such as rice, tinned fish and meat, powdered milk and oil which now have been adopted in the eating habits of the population. In addition, some stores sell bread made by a village baker. Some of the larger stores also collect copra for the commercial firms, which in return provide the imported items sold in the store.

This system is diffused from the outside world and linked to a monetary system. It neither mixes, nor interferes with the production of the traditional economic world which remains in the 'custom' or traditional pattern.

In a sense, the store can be seen as a means whereby the cash economy can penetrate into the rural areas; it is linked to cash-cropping and to the emergent needs of imported goods, but it has no obvious impact on gardening products or traditional husbandry (pigs and tusked pigs).

Co-operatives have had only a limited impact in Central Pentecost. They are mainly on the fringes of the region; in Batnavni, where a co-operative opened in 1971, and in Namaram, where two co-operatives opened in 1972. In late 1975 a survey revealed a total of 24 stores in Central Pentecost, 21 being operated by private people or companies and three by co-operatives. In early 1978, Central Pentecost had 28 stores (4 co-operatives, 24 private stores). There were just two stores in 1960 and 14 in 1970. Thus the number of stores has doubled in the last eight years with the greatest period of growth between 1970 and 1975.

However these stores show great variation in their size and scale of commercial activities. Eight of the stores, including four co-operatives, are permanent and can be considered as major centres for the distribution of imported foodstuffs. They form the core of a distribution network that spreads outwards to the interior or the marginal coastal zones where they service a secondary and irregular network of village stores that often depend partly on the central stores for their supplies.

These small village stores have a yearly turnover which is limited to between FNH100 000 and FNH200 000, and tend to sell a small range of articles. Such stores are often ephemeral, lasting only until a supply of goods is sold. Their number has recently tended to increase especially in the area known as Lik where the people are trying to compensate for their isolation by building up stocks. But if the failures are numerous and the closures frequent, other new village stores emerge periodically. Between 1970 and 1978 it would appear that 17 small village stores have opened in Central Pentecost; over the same period six others have closed their doors.

In late 1975, the eight central and permanent stores of Central Pentecost had a gross turnover that can be estimated at FNH8 000 000 (including sales of construction material, which represent one-third of this total). Sixteen other village stores kept no proper accounts, but the gross

turnover of their sales could be estimated at approximately two or three million FNH. With the population of Apma-speaking areas being about 3000 inhabitants, this means an average per capita sale of about FNH3600. This figure does not include sales made directly by trading ships along the coast, or the purchases made by migrants in urban areas for their friends or family who remain in the village. These goods are brought back directly to the village. If the sales of food products only are considered, the average sale is probably somewhat less than FNH2000 per inhabitant. We shall see later that food sales in central or permanent stores represents between 30 and 40 per cent of the total sales amount. This number reflects a rather superficial regional involvement in the cash economy, but it must be remembered that the coastal villages have a much higher level of imported food consumption than in the interior (probably two or three times more).

In the same way, if we consider just the central or permanent stores, we can obtain a ratio of one permanent store per 375 persons in 1975. This compares with one store to 105 inhabitants in Luganville and one store to 181 inhabitants in Vila, an indication of the average density of stores in the rural areas and their degree of monetization. There are some indications that the ratio of inhabitants per store in areas such as north Malekula and Aoba is higher and much closer to the ratio of urban areas. On the other hand, in more remote regions, for example Central Tanna and less monetized islands, the number of inhabitants per store is much higher. The lack of private stores may be balanced by co-operatives which play a major role as centres for distribution of imported food in many remote areas.

The emergence of entrepreneurs and 'businessmen':
the primary system of distribution

One of the main social features of Central Pentecost, as in all the islands of the New Hebrides, is the emergence of island entrepreneurs who rely for their business growth on the distribution of imported goods and the collection of cash crops. These 'neo-big men' are tending increasingly to become entrepreneurs in the full sense of the word, playing an important intermediate role between the rural petty producers and the big commercial firms located in the urban areas. These local entrepreneurs collect mainly copra and some cocoa for the commercial firms and in return sell food imported by them. For a long time this trade was focused on

the central store of Melsisi and in particular the regular arrival of the *St Joseph*, but today direct contact with the trade stores of Luganville is increasing.

In addition to the role of collectors and intermediaries in the distribution system, the entrepreneurs are at the same time producing significant quantities of cash crops. These entrepreneurs were the first people to create wire-enclosed paddocks for the cattle which are now widespread throughout the region and provide meat for people and the school of Melsisi. Entrepreneurs also grow coconuts, buy copra from other producers, and increasingly tend to rent or buy land to grow coconuts. The main profits of the entrepreneur arise from the direct production of copra and cocoa; the collection and re-selling of copra to the trading firms; the operation of cars/taxis (very often a 'businessman' starts by owning a car which allows the collection of copra and carrying it to the coast); cattle and the sale of meat to the school and to people at the time of custom rituals; and finally the revenues earned from the stores.

In fact the profits from store sales are less important than the other activities. However it does appear that the island entrepreneur feels it obligatory to own a store. He is already master of the circuit of production and money within his small region but in addition he must be master of the circuit of the distribution of imported food. He is the man who permits the arrival and spread of the goods from the outside world which now become a necessary part of daily life in rural areas. He does this even if this cargo earns only a small part of his total yearly earnings.

Undoubtedly the Melanesian entrepreneurs are more numerous on other islands which are more involved in cash-cropping, such as Malekula, West Aoba, East Santo and North Efate. There are very few men who could be called 'entrepreneurs' in Central Pentecost, but the number who try to set up in business is relatively more important. As far as we are aware, in 1975 there were only five or six men who had emerged socially in Central Pentecost by controlling a large part of the regional business. At a secondary level, about 20 middle-size or small entrepreneurs were trying to develop business, with variable success. In general these entrepreneurs do not possess a very high status in the traditional hierarchy of *Lelehutan*. They use the economic

system of the urban zone to earn a dominant place within their own society and for most of the time have to merge with the customary background.

The emergence of the 'businessman', big or small, is very seldom accomplished by himself. To succeed, the 'candidate entrepreneur' must use all the links of solidarity within the social group which are part of the traditional cultural world. He thus forms a *kompani* of his relatives using both matrilineal and patrilineal links. This group accumulates capital through subscription to a common fund. Money which has been earned externally during migration to Luganville, work on plantations, or in the nickel mines of New Caledonia, plays a very important role in this capital accumulation. This capital is managed by the boss of the *kompani*. Often he buys a car, makes paddocks for cattle, tries to develop business within the outside economic circuit, and opens a store.

The *kompani* of relatives who provided money to set up the businessman also provides manpower when it is needed: car drivers, cargo workers, sellers in the store, copra cutters, and the like. In exchange the 'boss' gives some wages. In addition he often has to support economically all the members of the *kompani* during the ritual and prestations of the underlying traditional world; for example, he will give help to his relatives to pass grades in the hierarchy of *Lelehutan*. He will also contribute to bride prices at the time of marriage. Sometimes at the time of feasts and rituals his store is partially taken over by his *kompani* and the officials of the ritual customs who take goods without payment, but with much rejoicing, for gifts. He has to distribute some rice, tinned foods, soft drinks, beer if it is stocked, and Johnson's Baby Powder which is used to decorate the night dancers. In the course of the festivals the resources of the store are used by the *kompani* of relatives to a greater or lesser extent. Afterwards, the big man has to find his own way to replace this loss.²

The act of freely distributing the goods (mainly foodstuffs) from the shelves of the store is a moral obligation because of help given by members of the *kompani*. Therefore it is possible to understand why the village store

2. The author has personally seen 'permitted raiding' of the store in Aoba and Pentecost during rituals. The 'businessman' allows his closest relatives to take goods from the store and himself distributes goods to others. He is uncertain if this practice exists in areas which are more involved in the cash economy and the Western mind.

so often fails. The Melanesian moral code does not allow a 'big man' to protest or prevent this free distribution which is considered normal customary behaviour between relatives and people of the same *kompani*. This attitude is certainly some distance from the rigorous and cold budgetary management of the Western world, although not all the 'businessmen' have the same degree of generosity. Some are not generous at all, at least in the customary meaning. Such individuals are more numerous in areas where cash-cropping and the modern economy are more developed.

One of the consequences of the management of these stores by a *kompani* is that they are very seldom profitable. The 'businessman' who succeeds supports his store by other commercial activities and not by the benefits of store sales. For some 'businessmen' the store is something which also offers the opportunity of 'helping' his *kompani* of relatives. In this manner he is able to fulfil his obligations according to customary law and respond in a favourable manner to the people's demands. Thus in this modern sense of the word the entrepreneur or businessman distributes a part of the imported foodstuffs coming from the towns and the outside world. If he were to adopt an attitude different from that described above he could be rejected by his 'group' and the end-product would be the failure of all his enterprises.

As a matter of fact the 'businessman' is caught in an ambivalent position between the traditional cultural world built on personal relations and generosity, and the cold, dry impersonal modern world of mechanistic commercialism. For example, the entrepreneurs who are most successful clearly understand that they have to manipulate the two systems: 'generosity' and 'commerce'. In the case of Store A (see below) the entrepreneur is, in the fullest sense of the word, a modern businessman; he is a producer and collector, taxi owner, speedboat owner and recently he has bought a tractor which can be rented and a large refrigerator in which he can store beef meat for sale. With a remarkable commercial sense, this 'businessman' has built a flourishing dynamic business, but he also is naturally involved in all the systems of customary exchange. He has attained a middle rank in the *Lelehutan*, has his own tusked pigs, and plays an essential role in the exchange circuits of pigs. He is both a partner of the trading firms of Luganville and a man in 'pig business'. This double role earns him a position of great authority and prestige in the

region where people consider him a 'wise man', the man that all people can come to for advice or help. He participates generously in a lot of rituals where his relatives play a role and in his way of life stays voluntarily at the 'grass-roots' level. To succeed a true 'businessman' has to pay his dues in each system. Not all the candidate businessmen have this ability to control the two languages of the traditional and modern world. Some are solely businessmen and refuse to participate in customary exchange. However, this attitude is not appreciated by many village people who consider that such men want to become 'masta'.

Case studies of 'businessmen' stores

The central and permanent stores have the following general features. They are most commonly built with a corrugated iron roof and walls, with a cement floor. There is often an adjacent room which acts as a storage area. Generally the central stores have a 'dock' (storage shed) located near the harbour. The store area is between 35 and 50 square metres. Behind a wooden counter, the goods are displayed on a series of shelves where they can be seen by the customer. All these stores, central or permanent, are located near the coast or on roads where they have easy access to the 'cargo' boats. They are in regular contact with the trading stores of Luganville and often provide these firms with copra and cocoa and in return buy their supplies from these stores. Among the more permanent stores, in which the sale and distribution of foodstuffs is one of the less profitable of many activities, the monthly sales of a selected sample have been recorded.

Store A in the Batnavni area. This store, which is located on the bank of the Batnavni river, plays a growing economic role in the entire area. It is owned by the entrepreneur-big man described in the preceding section. The annual turnover of the store is approximately FNH800 000 (1974). To this turnover must be added the sum of FNH300 000 for the sale of construction materials (corrugated iron, rolls of wire). The record of sales of imported food in October 1975 is given in Table 7.1.

This store has regular relations with the trading firm of Burns Philp in Luganville which provides regular supplies. Because of its size, the large volume of transactions and the dynamic personality of the owner, this store has ceased to be an intermediate store and is taking

on the functions of a central store which services the economic system of the Batnavni valley. Thus the store and the entrepreneur have become the economic focus of the north part of Central Pentecost. The entrepreneur's main goal at the present time is to buy a middle-sized boat and become a part of the network of cash-crop exports (copra and cocoa) between North-Central Pentecost and Luganville. The boat would play the same role for the Batnavni area as that played by the *St Joseph* in the Melsisi area to the south. If this is successful the network of dependency on the external commercial firm will be broken down and its operations taken over by Pentecost people themselves.

Store B in the Melsisi area. This store, located above the Melsisi mission, is in the first village of the plateau and is only a short distance by road from the harbour serviced by the *St Joseph*. The owner is a medium entrepreneur who also owns a large piece of land that he has bought in Namaram where he is planting coconuts and cocoa. He is also a copra collector and taxi operator. The store's annual sales turnover was FNH400 000 in 1974 (Table 7.2).

Store C: another permanent store in the Melsisi area. In the vicinity of the mission and the central store of Melsisi, local groups from the region construct houses and 'kamels' for travellers who are going from the plateau to the coast or the mission. A *kamel* or *nakamal* is a place where people drink kava and socialize. Each 'local group' has its own *nakamal*. Some Melanesian stores are now located in this travellers' area. They depend for their supplies on the *St Joseph*, a Chinese trader, Chung Wei, who supplies the central store, and the central store of Melsisi itself. The owner of this small store is the boss of a small 'business company'. The report of sales is given in Table 7.3.

Store D: example of the central store in Melsisi. The main centre for the distribution of imported products in Central Pentecost was opened in 1951 by the Catholic mission of Melsisi, and is today operated by a community organization that spreads throughout much of the Apma region. Through its links with trading stores in Luganville this store has played an important historical role in the distribution of imported products in the region and still occupies a predominant place in the system.

In a way, the Melsisi store functions as a big *kompani* for the whole of Central Pentecost; the profits from each sale are put into a community reserve fund and then used for loans to individuals or groups. Each local group of the area is represented by one or two 'big men' in the *kompani*; they may make suggestions and make decisions on the use of this fund. The store is situated on the road from the harbour to the mission centre. It is provided with goods from the 'St Joseph' which services it regularly from the Chinese trading stores of Luganville. The store functioning has been helped considerably with technical assistance in accounting from the mission. It acts as a centre of sales for all the region, but often redistributes imported goods to smaller village stores which have now emerged in the region.

In 1974 the annual turnover was FNH2 854 000 which gave a gross profit of FNH427 000. From the gross profit it is necessary to deduct the wages of the sellers. The sales vary from month to month (as much as 30 to 40 per cent), often reflecting variations in the price and sale of copra. In addition, Melsisi store in 1974 sold approximately FNH 1.3 million value of construction materials and FNH700 000 of barbed wire. The growth in the sales of barbed wire is explained by the increase of cattle husbandry in all the islands, particularly in the plateau of secondary bush where coconuts do not grow well. The sales in May 1975 are shown in Table 7.4.

The Melsisi store represents, through its links with the *St Joseph*, the main centre of sales in the region and probably of the entire island but is also the main node for the distribution of imported food. The annual turnover (FNH 4.8 million) makes up a little more than 53 per cent of total sales estimated in Central Pentecost, including sales of construction materials and barbed wire. In the past this mission was remote and isolated but today it is becoming one of the largest schools of the archipelago with more than 500 pupils, most of whom are boarders. The teaching staff buy most of their food in the store. In addition, a small hospital has recently been built. The mission also supervises a Post Office operating at Melsisi.

Thus this religious and educational centre of Melsisi has become a major economic centre of the region. The extension of new networks of roads further strengthens Melsisi's function as a 'central place': a major junction

with the airfield of Lonorore is completed, and recently a branch of the major cross-island road was extended to the central plateau, and hopefully, in the future will be continued to the east coast district of *Lik*. Thus the dynamic growth of the central Melsisi store is related to the increased involvement of the entire region with the outside economic system and the penetration of the distribution network. A new economic regional space is now emerging on the whole of Central Pentecost, with its central place and communication network. Stores and harbours regularly visited by boats from Luganville are the main nodes of this new economic space. It is a significant fact that the old mission store was recently destroyed and reconstructed on a much larger scale in 1977.

As noted above the annual sales turnover varies considerably. In general the central stores have a turnover greater than FNH 700 000 a year and can make a substantial profit. On the other hand, the annual sales of intermediate stores falls between FNH400 000 and FNH500 000, which means a profit of approximately FNH40 000 to FNH50 000 per year, a sum quickly expended on the costs of running the store. The total number of items offered for sale varies from 100 to 150 in permanent stores, approximately one-third being imported food. This latter category makes up a variable proportion of total sales, generally falling between 30 and 50 per cent. Most of the intermediate permanent stores are owned by small *kompanis* of relatives (focused around a 'boss') who are able to manage a wide variety of economic activities in addition to the store. The central stores and these intermediate stores constitute the main circuit of distribution of imported products in the rural areas.

The ephemeral life of small village stores

Beyond this primary circuit of distribution there exists a secondary network of distribution centres much more limited in their economic functions. These stores are located in villages of the interior and the more isolated parts of the coast which are not serviced by boats from Luganville.

Store villages are quite small in size (20-25 m²), and constructed of traditional building materials such as bamboo and leaves, often with a corrugated iron roof. Only a limited number of articles is offered for sale - rice, tinned fish and meat, soft drink, salt, sugar, petrol for

the lamps, and boxes of baby powder, tobacco and razor blades. A total of 20-30 articles is typical. In flourishing economic periods other goods, such as clothing from Hong Kong or cooking utensils, are also offered for sale. The sales in October 1975 for three of these stores are set out in Table 7.5. The annual sales turnover of such stores seldom exceeds FNH200 000 with the majority averaging approximately FNH150 000. The profits are very low, earning some FNH2000 to FNH3000 net profit per month on the basis of 10-15 per cent of annual turnover. The proportion of foodstuffs sold is in general larger than in the central or middle stores (more than 50 per cent).

Most of these stores have a transitory life (stores E and F were closed in 1977). Such unstable stores, with low annual turnovers, constitute the network of distribution to the more isolated and badly-serviced areas of the islands. The instability of the stores and their frequent failure is explained by the nature of the *kompani* of kinsmen and candidate businessmen who commence this type of venture. The village stores are very often started when a migrant, or small group of migrants, returns bringing capital back to the village. For them the first investment is generally in a store and, if they can, in a car which can carry the goods for the store and act as a taxi. The operation usually fails for two main reasons.

The first reason is because of the problems of providing goods; in fact stores are often strangled because of the lack of supply. Those stores not located on harbours and without easy access to the trading firms are unlikely to be profitable. The 'cargo' has to be carried by small trucks or by men from the harbour or from the coastal central store. The net profits are diminished and replacement of stock is often a difficult and complicated operation.

The second reason is because stores are usually badly managed, particularly in their accounting and, as noted above, serve as a food reserve for the *kompani* of kinsmen. The proprietor often takes goods for his own needs without making any deduction or record. During feasts and ritual the village store is the victim of a 'friendly invasion' by the *kompani* kinsmen who take goods. In some cases, when stock is depleted, the store owner himself goes to Luganville, orders more stock and brings goods and foodstuffs with him. On such occasions he may use up most

of the store profits. In fact, most village stores tend to be transitory, but closures are not always permanent. It is not difficult for the store to close and re-open on occasions when new capital or stock is available or when migrants return from town. This unstable and unequal secondary network of village stores shows the limits of the system. The stores with the most success are the ones which have easy access to the harbour and have regular links with the Luganville trading firms. This explains their concentration about the two main harbours of the region, Melsisi and Batnavni, which are visited regularly (see Fig. 7.3).

This last factor explains why the co-operatives have met with so much success in the rest of the archipelago, because they have regular maritime links with the urban warehouses and provide technical training for the *kompani* who form a co-operative. The co-operative is obliged to operate with a certain level of careful budgeting by, for instance, keeping a cashbook and stock sheet. It should be noted that in Central Pentecost where the impact of co-operatives is low, the central Melsisi store and other intermediate stores have been helped - at least in the beginning - with store management by the Catholic missionaries and the regular visits of the *St Joseph*.

The new regional economic space:
the visible economy and the invisible economy

The region of Central Pentecost is to a certain degree a special case so care must be taken in making general conclusions applicable to the rest of the New Hebrides. But is not each region of the New Hebrides a particular case?

The regional example, of which we have tried to describe the main features, is particularly distinguished by the limited extent of its involvement in the monetary and cash-cropping economy, especially the villages of the interior. In addition, the administrative presence has been very slight, limited to the infrequent visits of officials from Malekula. There has been only a slight impact from the co-operative service and public investment in roads has only just commenced. The system of distribution of imported foodstuffs is still embryonic and is undoubtedly much more complex in the islands where the monetary economy is more developed. However, the principal features of this area

have some general relevance to the rural areas of the archipelago.

The primary network of imported food distribution exists on the coast and in areas of commercial plantations which favour the growth of central stores. These stores deal regularly by sea with the urban commercial firms. The central stores are also points of redistribution for imported food and collection of cash crops in all the areas. In this manner new regional economic space is structured around the central store. In some islands the role of this central store is played by the co-operatives which have the help of the administration for maritime links and management. In other areas this role is played by a private trader (e.g. Bob Paul's store in Tanna or the Leroux at Ambore in Western Aoba) who acts as an agent for the commercial firms such as Burns Philp or CFNH. This role may also be played by a plantation store, such as PRNH at Norsup on Malekula. Finally, as in the case of Melsisi, this role was performed in the past by the missions and today has been taken over by a Melanesian organization. In the beginning many of these central stores were linked to the presence of European traders, but today they tend to be increasingly owned by Melanesians.

Historically, these central stores have spawned other stores which act as intermediaries in the distribution of imported products. As we have seen these permanent stores are linked to the social emergence of local businessmen who often rely upon *kompanis* of kinsmen in a system of formal obligation. They tend to be increasingly involved in the primary distribution system of imported products by dealing directly with commercial firms. In this manner they are increasingly taking over the role formerly played by the first European-owned trade stores. In some other islands the intermediate role is fully performed by the co-operatives (see Chapter 4). The number of these stores is directly related to the degree that a particular region is involved in the external economy.

However, it is important to point out that there are only modest benefits accruing from the distribution of imported products compared to the overhead costs, such as transport. This is probably one of the main reasons why the urban trading firms in the past have left much of this trade so readily to the missions or planters and today to the private or co-operative enterprises operated by the

Melanesians.

Beyond the primary networks of distribution located on the coast is a scattered unstable network of small village stores. Such stores can be located at isolated points of the coast but more often are located outside the main systems of island distribution. In fact, these small stores involve such a high risk that economic success is almost impossible. The length of survival therefore, is extremely variable. Often these small stores, born from the accumulations of small capital earned in the commercial system (wage migration, local wages and copra sales), disappear when the initial stocks are exhausted. In some cases they exist marginally with a very small stock of five or six basic products. This regular growth and decline of village stores is a reflection of the dynamism of this insular region and its erratic incorporation into the money economy. It must be stressed that this does not mean that the New Hebrideans are unwilling to use the money economy, but simply that the forces of both the traditional and modern world make this very difficult. One must also remember that the whole system of distribution places the Melanesian villagers at the end of a continuum which stretches from the metropolitan country to the trading firms of Vila and Luganville and to the smallest isolated village in the mountains of interior Pentecost. The villager at the extreme end of the continuum is a victim of economic forces which are a product of wider forces within the society, and indeed the world, over which they have no control. The limited profits they earn are quickly eroded by the cost of transport, the problems of goods provision and, in some cases, the temptation of 'free goods distribution' at the times of customary rituals. All these facts explain the failure of these village stores and the difficulty of maintaining their stocks. In fact, the small stores are much more local points where the accumulated capital gained outside the system disappears, than centres from which capital is accumulated and reinvested.

This network of distribution and retail outlets forms economic nodes and patches which articulate the visible economic system of the modern world. The whole system radiates outwards from the towns, structuring the regional economic insular space of the New Hebrides. This space is now organized functionally in a hierarchical manner and stretches from the sea and the harbour visited regularly by trading boats from Vila and Luganville. The new central

stores which are emerging act as nodes of services and commercial stock, and stand out in sharp contrast to the more isolated areas around them. The actual network of trading boats has changed as boats of larger tonnage, fewer in number, replace the many small trading vessels which used to operate. This makes the distribution system spatially much less flexible than it was before. The points served by these larger trading vessels assume greater importance, but at the cost of making other large areas more marginal (see Figs 7.2 and 7.3). Hopefully, this pattern will be modified by the extensions to the road network, but road construction is really just beginning outside Efate and Luganville. In 1976 there was considerable progress in some islands, especially Epi, Malekula, Pentecost and Tanna, which will permit the breakdown of isolation in these regions. However at present in these zones the high cost of transport is a major handicap and it would perhaps be more appropriate to develop a flexible transport network through small or middle-sized inter-island vessels owned by Melanesian companies or local entrepreneurs.

This new economic space which is being created now, and which approximates to the extent of cash-cropping and of the money economy, represents simply the tip of the iceberg. In the submerged portion of the iceberg there is an underlying economic world made up of a multitude of personal and cultural links which is dominated by the spirit and practice of customary exchanges. Persistent and still alive, invisible to the foreign eyes in most of the islands of the archipelago, this system is characterized by a large circulation of both local and imported foodstuffs. Loans and gifts are made in the form of mats and pigs; men group themselves in *kompanis* to buy a car, a little boat, or to cut copra. Money, in Central Pentecost, is less and less a rare commodity and is beginning to emerge in the traditional networks. This double aspect of the regional economic life constitutes an important reality in the daily life of the people of the islands. Even if the young people are not very interested in traditional customs they have to participate in the system because they have great solidarity with their lineages and relatives. A second aspect which has now emerged in the regional economy appears in addition to the collection of local produce and the distribution of imported products. This is the transformation of the production of garden foodstuffs, even though this still functions very close to traditional models. The diffusion of the monetary economy and the extension of plantations in

the coastal areas are considerably diminishing the area taken up by local garden production on the littoral space where most people tend to live now. On the other hand, the creation of administrative regional centres with schools and hospitals creates some nodes of wage-earning population. All these features create a local demand for garden produce. The hill villages which previously were outside the cash-cropping world have found a profitable source of income by specializing in garden produce which they sell in these centres and to the coast people who do not have enough land to make big gardens. This is especially the case at the ritual times (Bonnemaison 1974, 1978). The entire system of exchange between coastal and hill groups has been revised in this commercial perspective. But the personal base still remains extremely important in this kind of transaction.

In the region of Kut in Central Pentecost, formerly marginal and remote from the cash-cropping area, the situation is being changed with the introduction of cattle and the growing of more of local garden produce, such as taro 'fiji', manioc, or sweet potato, which is sold at the coastal centre. Very often the men of the hills keep their own personal gardens cultivated according to traditional norms but group themselves in *kompanis* in order to make more extensive gardens, from which the production will be sold on the coast. The amount of these transactions is difficult to calculate but it should be very important if one includes, for example, the quantity of vegetables, root crops and meat bought weekly by Melsisi school.

The small spontaneous markets, which have emerged in Tanna near the road or central store, have not yet emerged in the central region of Pentecost. However, the social and economic developments, particularly the extension of roads, suggest that the conditions are favourable for the development of this kind of market.

Central Pentecost, like most insular economic space, is structured by two different distribution systems. Under the influence of the urban areas the first system is linked with the sea, harbours and the distribution of cargo as well as the collection network for export crops. In the plantation areas it is organized about the central and intermediate stores located near the administrative and religious centres. A second space, structured by the 'invisible' network of personal exchange of the underlying cultural world and by the extent of local gardens and cattle

production, is located beyond the coastal zone. It creates a second network of circulation and monetary exchange that tends to give a new life in the interior of some islands, and to break the inequality of resources that for a long time separated 'man bush' from 'man saltwater'. In this manner the pre-contact equilibrium of insular space is to some extent being re-established. But can the progressive marginalization of some zones now being created by the centralized and inflexible system of distribution and collection controlled by the exterior, be broken?

Chapter 8

THE URBAN CONSUMERS: FOOD AND SUPPLY NUTRITION

One of the most contentious and difficult questions concerning urban food supply and consumption surrounds the issue of the mix of imported and local food and its effect upon the nutrition and health of the inhabitants. There is one school of thought that sees the increasing reliance of urban and, indeed, rural populations on the purchase of imported food as a cause of malnutrition and bad health. In particular, such critics are concerned with the differential impact of imported food consumption on different groups in the population. Thus they argue that it is the low income population, specifically the younger children and old adults, who suffer most from the need to consume imported foodstuffs for they do not have sufficient income to provide themselves with an adequate diet. Others argue that consumption of imported food in fact offers a more nutritious, balanced and interesting diet than local food. Another point is that local foods are often no less expensive than imported food and subject to inadequacies of supply. Finally it is argued that the conditions of life in urban areas with much higher demands upon the time of urban dwellers favour the use of imported foodstuffs which often do not involve so much time in preparation. Despite the fact that there is a great deal of scattered data which may be used in the Pacific context to support either of these positions, there is no really comprehensive study which allows the question to be resolved satisfactorily at this stage. Clearly, resolution rests upon some preliminary agreement about what constitutes an adequate diet in the Pacific context, as well as the role malnutrition plays in urban ill health.

The literature on dietary intake and nutrition makes two clear points: first, that there is no ideal dietary intake; and second, that dietary needs vary within any given population. Certain high risk groups such as infants, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women, and the elderly are most severely affected by inadequate diet. However it does seem that there are certain minimum levels of protein, energy foods, or other components which are necessary for adequate nutrition.

The urban situation and diet

Given the difficulties of defining dietary adequacy, it is perhaps excessively hopeful to attempt to distinguish what specific factors in the urban situation influence dietary consumption, particularly of the indigenous population. At least five factors can be listed. First, there is the factor of population mobility. Most of the urban populations of the Pacific are experiencing rapid growth of population both from natural increase and rural-urban migration. It is often suggested that many rural migrants experience a change in dietary habits when they become wage earners in the city. For example, Jabre et al. (1976:4) state that:

When the immigrants become wage earners in a market economy, their dietary patterns undergo a change reflecting the new products and stocks available, and their newly acquired purchasing power. They have neither the time nor sufficient room to form gardens in which they could grow their traditional tubers, greens, vegetables and fruit. Small-scale stock-raising is also very limited.

Generally speaking, this is followed by an adjustment crisis which may vary considerably in length. The food available is either imported (rice, flour, sweets, tea, coffee, tinned meat, fish, vegetables and fruit) or bought on the local market, but even then it is no less expensive. As a consequence, the immigrants' diet is badly balanced and often unsatisfactory. This applies especially to fundamental quality foods, such as those with a high protein, vitamin and mineral content.

While in a priori terms this argument may seem satisfactory, it can be questioned on a number of grounds. Diets are not badly balanced because imported food is eaten, but because the mix of imported foods used is unsatisfactory. Many rural migrants are already quite well adjusted to diets in which imported foods form a major component. Studies are also needed to assess the role of

urban gardening in providing local food. This seems to be quite important in other parts of the Pacific (see Thaman, 1976). It is very doubtful whether, in themselves, imported foods are the cause of malnourishment.

The second factor is that of disposable income. It seems clear that urban residence is accompanied by a marked reduction in the growing of food for home consumption, so that urban residents are forced to rely on bought foodstuffs. Therefore the level and form of dietary intake is closely related to the amount of income that a household is able to spend on such purchases. One of the most frequent and well supported generalizations in household expenditure is that the proportion of household income spent on food increases as incomes decline, and that low income households tend to spend more on starchy, cheaper foods than on protein-rich foods. This may lead to unbalanced diets but does not necessarily do so. Knowledge of appropriate food habits often lags behind dietary change and in the Pacific island towns the dangers are likely to lie in inadequate knowledge rather than in absolute deficiency of food intake. Urban residence offers the likelihood that lower income families will experience diets which are deficient in certain elements. Once again this has to be tested in a specific urban context before it can be determined whether the cause is due to resource (income) deficiency or lack of knowledge on dietary needs.

A third factor relates to the availability and costs of different foods. Seasonal fluctuations in prices, together with the rising price of imported foodstuffs, because of inflation and transport costs, clearly affects the capacity of populations to purchase enough food for adequate diets. A fourth point is that certain cultural preferences affect diets. These have been researched in great detail and will not be discussed here. Finally, there is the very important factor of the demographic features of the population. Considerations such as the size of households, in particular the presence of significant proportions of the high risk populations discussed earlier, must increase the likelihood of dietary problems occurring.

The problem of the evidence

Clearly any definitive attempt to measure the nutritional status of the urban population in the New Hebrides must rest upon clinical studies of the health of

the population as well as detailed studies of dietary patterns. Apart from one survey of a peri-urban area (Jabre et al., 1976) and a more detailed study of a rural area (Raoult et al., 1976) no detailed data are available. Since these surveys represent very small samples of the population they are of little value in generalizing for the entire population. However, there are some indicative data, available from an urban household expenditure survey conducted in January-March 1975 by the Condominium Bureau of Statistics, and we are very grateful to the then Condominium Statistician, Mr B.C. Hanslow for making the unpublished results of this survey available to us. Since we have used this data extensively in the ensuing sections it is necessary to examine its limitations carefully (Table 8.1). First, the household expenditure survey did not cover the entire urban population. It was a stratified sample of households whose principal income earner was a wage or salary employee with a net cash monthly income of between FNH100 and (in theory) FNH999 000. This excluded the important component of self-employed households, particularly in the Asian community. Second, the survey is drawn from a stratum of the towns' population which comprises only approximately 50 per cent of the total. While the sample size within this stratum appears acceptable, the quite high proportion of surveyed European households in both Vila and Luganville unquestionably distorts the overall household budget data for these towns. Finally, the sampling framework considerably underestimates the other ethnic communities, particularly the Asian communities. It can be argued, however, that the household expenditure survey does give reasonably good data on the urban New Hebridean population which is the principal focus of this study.

The pattern of household expenditure

Table 8.2 reveals that the pattern of overall weekly household expenditure is much the same in Vila and Luganville. The largest item of expenditure is food (37 per cent). If drink and tobacco are added to food the proportion increases to almost 46 per cent. Transport, education and health expenditures make up 28 per cent and together form the second largest group. Expenditure on clothing, rent and household durables amounts to approximately one-quarter of the total.

It is, however, the ethnic patterns of household expenditure which are of more significance since our primary interest lies in the expenditure patterns of the sizeable urban New Hebridean population. Table 8.3 indicates three important characteristics of ethnic household expenditure patterns. The major difference is that New Hebrideans spent a much higher proportion of their total expenditure on food and drink (over 50 per cent of their household expenditure in both Vila and Luganville) compared with the other ethnic groups. This is a reflection of two main factors. First, the New Hebrideans have much larger households to feed (Table 8.1), and second, the average household income of the New Hebrideans is considerably lower than that of the other ethnic communities so that food and drink form a relatively larger proportion of total expenditure (Table 8.4).

Table 8.3 clearly shows that the European and Other ethnic groups spend more on transport, recreation and education, (30 to 40 per cent) than New Hebrideans (approximately 20 per cent). The other categories of expenditure have more similarities, although New Hebrideans spend a higher proportion on clothing and less on rent and household durables than the other communities. These reflect the larger size of household and the poorer quality of the housing occupied by New Hebrideans. Thus the overall pattern of household expenditure indicates the different economic levels of the three main ethnic groups. The New Hebrideans generally form the lowest strata, predominating in relatively unskilled occupations, living in poor quality housing and having larger households. The Other ethnic group recorded in the household expenditure survey seems to have higher incomes from semi-skilled jobs and live in slightly better housing. Finally, the European community earns the highest incomes, is concentrated in professional jobs and occupies much better housing. These differential patterns have an important impact on the type and quantity of food bought by each of the communities.

Patterns of food expenditure

The household expenditure data on Vila and Luganville permit some analysis of the important topic of the mix of local and imported food, and its variation amongst the main ethnic groups. We have analyzed this data in two ways. First, from the point of view of total household expenditure and second, on the basis of per capita expenditure which

allows for the large variation in household size between the major communities. The food items have been grouped under six broad conventional headings: starch, sugar, protein, fruit, vegetables and other products (Tables 8.5 and 8.6).

Tables 8.5 and 8.6 show the marked difference between the New Hebridean and European patterns of food expenditures. Approximately 50 per cent of New Hebridean expenditure is on starch and sugar products compared to less than 15 per cent for the European and one-third for the Other ethnic community. A major part of these expenditures is made up of only two items, rice and bread, with only a small proportion on local products such as taro and yam. The New Hebridean expenditure on protein-rich foods, principally canned meat and fish, is much lower than the other two ethnic groups and this may have an important bearing on the quality of the diet. The other major category of expenditure - 'other foodstuffs', which includes tea, coffee, jams, sauces, butter and cooking oils - also shows a marked variation between the New Hebridean and the European ethnic groups.

The dominance of starchy foods and sugar in the food budget of urban New Hebrideans is evident. The dominance of protein within European expenditure patterns is even more marked. Europeans in Vila spent 44 per cent of the total weekly food expenditure on protein-rich foods whereas the New Hebrideans spent only 29 per cent. While dietary deficiencies cannot be inferred directly from this data the difference indicates the possibility of dietary problems amongst urban New Hebrideans.

This food expenditure data can be further disaggregated into imported and locally produced foodstuffs. Table 8.7 indicates the dominance of imported food in food purchases. Surprisingly, it also indicates that the New Hebridean population in both urban areas is the smallest consumer of local foodstuffs. This fact is largely explained by the purchases of local protein in the form of meat, milk and eggs by Europeans and Other ethnic groups. Only a small proportion of this local component of European expenditure is made up of fruit, vegetables and starchy products produced by Melanesians.

The marked reliance of the urban New Hebrideans on imported foodstuffs and the high proportion of starchy foods and sugar in their total expenditures is very clear. In contrast the European and Other communities spend more on local protein products. These differentials are a reflection of a large number of factors discussed earlier. The New Hebrideans' limited disposable income and dietary preferences would appear to be major factors in the dominance of imported starch, but it does mean that there may be greater health dangers for their high risk populations because of limited intake of any of a number of other nutrients.

Dietary costs and consequences: a Vila example

The previous section has shown the limited importance of locally grown non-protein foodstuff items in the household expenditure on food in the urban New Hebrides. It could be argued therefore, that there is a possibility for increased production of locally produced starchy products as well as vegetables and fruit. Such arguments are, however, frequently countered by the claim that local products are relatively expensive compared to imported foodstuffs. This argument tends to ignore the other economic advantages that arise from increasing local production for urban markets such as increased rural income, increased employment and decreased payments of foreign exchange for imported foods. Another set of factors which can be introduced into the debate, relates to the nutritional value per unit cost of imported and locally produced food. This is of major significance to the New Hebrideans who are generally earning the lowest incomes, for it is from this majority population group in the urban areas that one might expect the greatest demand for local food for which they presumably still have a strong cultural preference. However, if the quantity, quality and cost are all unacceptable then they are necessarily forced to buy alternative imported food products.

In the following section we have attempted to analyse the nutritional cost of some of the principal food products sold in urban areas (Table 8.8). There were numerous problems involved in this task. First, was the difficulty of estimating the composition of the various foods. At least four different tables were consulted; those of Jardin and Crosnier (1975) and WHO (1969) provide similar tables and the most useful information. We have used the tables

from Jardin and Crosnier. Second, it was necessary to compile price lists for the various products. Some of the information was taken from price surveys by the Condominium Bureau of Statistics (1975b) and supplemented by data collected during our surveys. The price of some products varies quite markedly throughout the year. The latest available data were used (for the third quarter of 1975) but it must be stressed that the data in Table 8.8 are only indicative.

There are various methods of interpreting Table 8.8 depending upon what is regarded as the principal nutritional problem stemming from dietary inadequacy. However most Pacific developing countries list protein energy malnutrition (PEM) as the major problem causing impaired function and inadequate response to stress among island populations (see, for instance, Department of Public Health, Papua New Guinea, 1974, Chapter 28). There is, however, considerable disagreement on how this should be measured. For instance, the Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Committee drew attention to the preliminary nature of measures of protein content. The mere existence of low quantities of protein in food items does not necessarily mean that an individual will be malnourished for other factors such as quantity of food consumed, the age and sex of the individual and their metabolic capacities are also influential (FAO/WHO, 1973:61-89). However there seems to be some agreement that the contribution of three main energy nutrients - protein, fat and carbohydrates - to the total consumed at the national level varies with national wealth. Figure 8.1 shows that the proportion of energy derived from fats rises sharply with income, while starchy carbohydrates decline, sugar and animal proteins increase. This change may well lead to higher levels of degenerative diseases. Nutritional problems often stem from the sudden changes in diet which are a frequent concomitant of a rural urban shift of residence.

The energy value of foods, which represents the energy available after losses in digestion and metabolism, is most commonly stated in kilo/calories (Kcal). While the daily input of Kcals ranges from approximately 1000 to 3000, depending on body size of individuals, an average of approximately 2000 Kcals per day would generally provide sufficient energy requirements for an average population. Table 8.8 shows how many Kcals were provided by selected foods for FNH100 in 1975-76 in Vila (the calculation for Luganville would vary little from the Vila estimates).

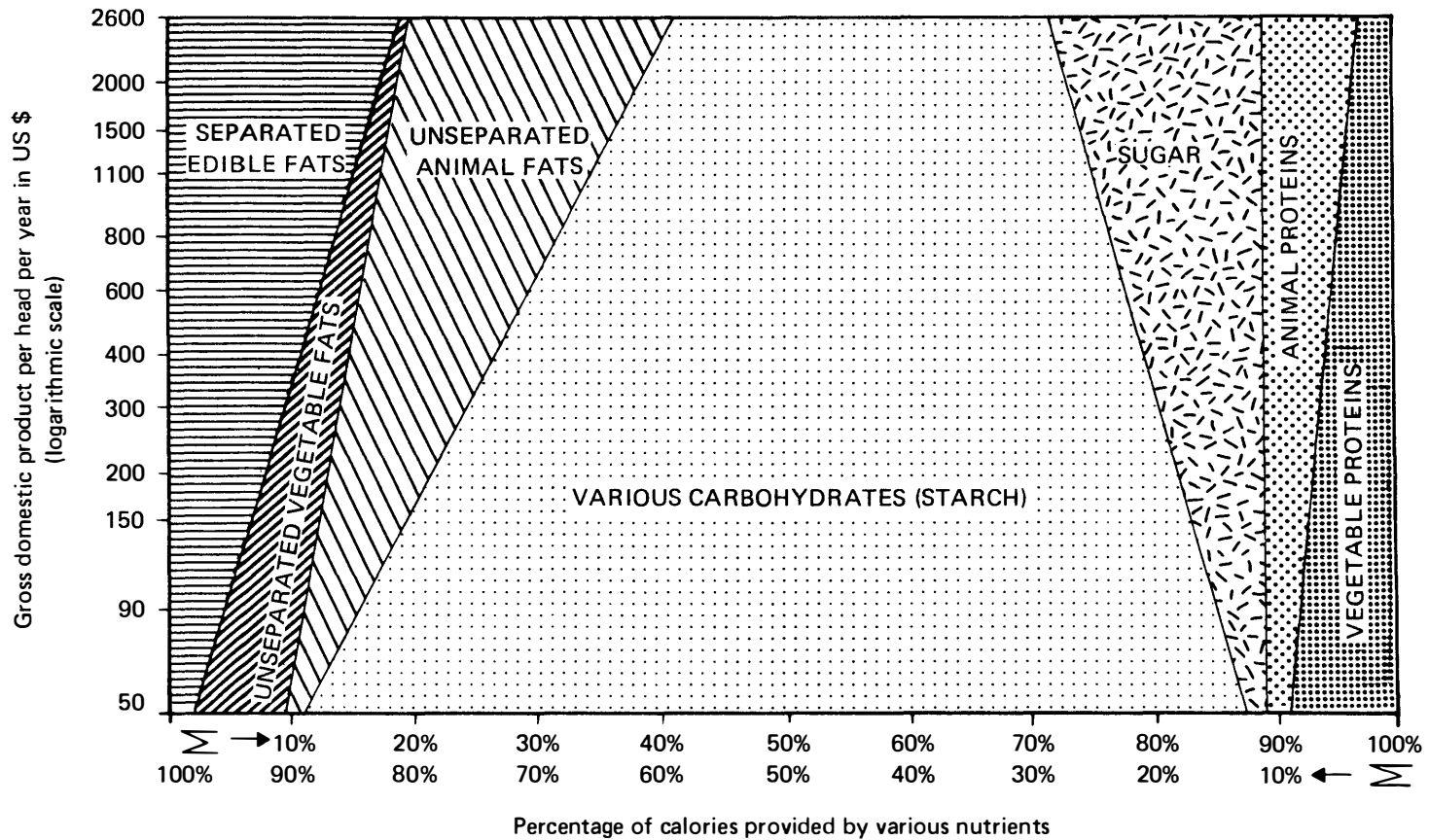


Fig. 8.1 Diet composition in relation to gross domestic product. Source: FAO/WHO 1973.

A number of points are highlighted in Table 8.8. First, rice and flour, both imported, provide more Kcals per 100 FNH than any of the locally produced foods except coconuts. They also provide more protein, fat and carbohydrate per 100 FNH than the local energy source foods. This is one obvious reason for preference of low income families for imported foods rather than local energy foods. Bread does not match taro, manioc, or sweet potato in value for money, but has a certain prestige value. Second, some 'protein sources', especially chicken, do not provide as much protein per 100 FNH as some of the local root crops or fruit. Eggs are relatively poor value for money. Third, the popularity of canned fish is understandable given its high value per 100 FNH in protein and fat provision. On the basis of this table it may be inferred that locally produced foodstuffs would provide an adequate urban diet at current market prices. Even so, it may still be argued that prices are too high for the lower income families, and that the prestige, storability, and easy preparation of certain imported foods lead to them being preferred to local foods which have equal or better dietary qualities.

Table 8.9 shows the average weekly expenditure per person for New Hebridean populations and indicates some differences between low income and high income New Hebrideans in Vila. Almost 62 per cent of the per capita expenditures are on imported starchy products (bread, biscuits, rice) and sugar, another 27 per cent on imported protein, leaving less than 10 per cent of per capita expenditures on local products. The higher income New Hebrideans show a similar pattern for the purchase of imported starchy foods and sugar but their purchase of local proteins is higher.

Conclusion

The general picture which emerges from this chapter illustrates the dominance of imported foods in the household expenditure patterns of all ethnic groups in the urban centres of the New Hebrides. There are, however, several encouraging developments for local production. First, local protein-rich foods appear to be of growing importance in the intakes of higher income New Hebrideans. Second, the prevailing controlled market costs do not seem to favour unduly imported starchy products in that taro and manioc do offer good nutritious alternatives to rice and flour. If price control on rice and flour were removed, the

differential might be even less. Third, controls on imports of 'European' vegetables during recent dry seasons have stimulated greater local production, though not primarily by New Hebrideans. Finally, there might be possibilities for increasing the production of local sugar and perhaps rice, although the prospects would need very careful evaluation.

A general policy issue which requires consideration is the conflict between the desire to keep urban food prices low for the benefit of the low-income urban dweller, and the need for prices to be high enough to encourage rural growers to produce for the urban market. It may be in the interest of the major firms (and their subsidiaries) as both importers and employers, if the government maintains a cheap food policy through cheap imports. For the government as an employer this may also be true. But the introduction of import duties on foods (such as rice) for which local substitutes might be produced might stimulate local production and greatly benefit the rural population. This leads directly into the debate about what sort of development the country seeks. As yet, this has not been resolved for the New Hebrides.

Chapter 9

MOVING FOOD

'Faced with the massive scale of their basic needs and poverty problem, the poor nations have no choice but to turn inwards, to the extent made possible by global interdependencies. Whilst vigorously pressing for new international structures and a more equitable world distribution of opportunities they must pursue genuinely self-reliant styles of development aimed at attacking poverty directly and developing the means to satisfy their own basic needs' (Tinbergen et al., 1976:71).

When this study was originally conceived the research proposals were couched in terms of a rather narrow set of questions relating to the food distribution systems in the New Hebrides. The intention was to collect information that might be used to increase indigenous participation in these systems. But in the three years since proposals were first developed the New Hebrides has experienced rapid movement towards independence. In the light of these changes it has proved difficult to separate the more specific questions relating to the food distribution systems from the wider issues of development. Thus this last chapter attempts to set discussion of the food distribution systems within a broader framework of likely development policies for the New Hebrides.

In considering the formulation of an overall development policy for the New Hebrides three basic questions seem to be of importance.

1. What assumptions do the New Hebrideans have about the form of society that they require in an independent state?
2. What foundations or basis does the New Hebrides possess on which to build this new state?
3. What form of development do the New Hebrideans wish to adopt to accomplish the form of society they envisage?

It may be argued that many of the assumptions that New Hebrideans have about the type of independent society they desire are essentially negative. They do not want a colonial situation in which large areas of land are alienated to foreigners. They do not want an education system in which only a tiny group of New Hebrideans have the opportunity for secondary or advanced education. The list could be continued indefinitely. It must be stressed that these assumptions are often articulated by the better educated leaders of the political parties and reach the mass of the rural population only in the form of vague nationalistic slogans. When it comes to more positive descriptions about the form of society that might emerge then the policies are more uncertain. The Vanuaaku Pati stresses rural development at the village level and certain elements of the Tanzanian experience figure prominently in their statements. Other parties are much more particularistic, urging various regional demands or vested interests which probably represent very little change in the existing situation.

There is little doubt that the New Hebrides has been inadequately prepared by the colonial powers for independence. While the New Hebrides is perhaps more fortunate than some of the other small Pacific economies that have become independent in the last few years in that it still has ample land on some of the larger islands for development, it still exhibits many other problems. Seventy years of colonial rule has left a poorly developed infrastructure of transportation, services and, perhaps most significantly, only a very small cadre of trained New Hebrideans capable of taking over the operation of the independent state. However, one positive area is the co-operative movement (both British and French) which has been responsible for training many New Hebrideans in the kind of skills which will enable them to take over tasks in the administration. While belated efforts are being made to remedy this situation as quickly as possible, it would be unduly optimistic to think that it can be accomplished before independence.

Generally the New Hebrides is beset with much the same problems as the other smaller Pacific economies. The population is growing rapidly with a marked drift to urban areas which, given the very youthful age structure of the population, creates the need to develop both urban and rural employment programmes. In addition, these growing urban

populations create an increased demand for food which at present cannot be supplied internally. This puts an additional drain on foreign exchange for the purchase of food imports. The growing tourist industry and its demands further exacerbate this pattern. These developments must also be set in the context of an economy which relies for a large part of its revenue on subventions by the metropolitan powers. Finally, the New Hebrides is very reliant upon the export earnings derived from two major primary products, copra and fish, both of which are subject to marked price fluctuations in the metropolitan markets. Thus the New Hebrides is a highly dependent economy which colonial rule has intermeshed into that of the international community and placed much of the control of that economy in foreign hands.

Some commentators would also add the factor of small size. The problems that small size creates in development have been the focus of at least three major conferences or collections of papers over the last twenty years (Robinson, 1960; Benedict, 1967; and Selwyn, 1975), but there appears to be no consensus on the significance of size as a factor in development. First, there is no general agreement upon a definition of small size, which can be taken to include small physical area, a small amount of resources, small population and a small market, either in terms of the purchasing power of the population or just a small population. In the case of the New Hebrides it can be argued with some justification that all three of these elements are present and that they do pose some constraints on development. On the other hand, it may be argued that there are certain advantages that smallness offers to the state in the development process. At least in a priori terms, it can be suggested that the task of creating national allegiance and identity is easier in smaller states where the spread of mass media and communications is not dissipated in space. In addition, the unquestionable vulnerability of small states in the international trading and political system enables them to gain greater support from great powers who are worried that they may slip out of their sphere of influence. In this respect it is interesting to note the recent flirtation of Tonga with the Soviet Union and Fiji's growing alliance with the EEC, notably through aid within the terms of the Lome Convention. This has certainly brought pressure on Australia and New Zealand to consider increased aid and may have further repercussions, such as on international airline route agreements.

Perhaps the most important effect of size is its role as a factor affecting the type of development. Brookfield has argued that the precarious position of the small and poor nations has created a double dependency. First, they are locked into an international economy in which their role as primary commodity producers is accentuated in a world of growing specialization. Second, the possibilities for independent action are limited by '...their dependent relationships with regional centres of dominance' (Brookfield, 1975:55). This situation is not totally constraining, for governments do have some room for manoeuvre and the smallness of their states means that they can be considerably supported by aid grants from metropolitan countries. This aid represents only a small proportion of the total given by metropolitan countries but is sizeable in terms of the needs of small states. However, the aid is sometimes tied to specific projects and is generally granted in line with the formulation of a development strategy which is acceptable to the donor. The principal fact is that as a condition of new independence, and inheriting such an inadequate basis for development, the New Hebridean government will be faced with the inevitable task of widening its revenue base in order to run the state and provide the basic needs which it has promised its citizens as part of the rewards of independence.

What development strategies are therefore open to the New Hebrides? On the face of it the creation of an independent state in which political power is in the hands of the New Hebrideans should allow for the creation of a development programme directed towards improving their levels of living and the degree of New Hebridean participation in their society. This type of development strategy would clearly emphasize programmes of rural development which would benefit the majority of New Hebrideans resident in these areas. This is what we would describe as an inwardly directed development strategy. At the same time the New Hebrides will be faced with the need to generate not only revenue to finance these programmes but also revenue to enable the New Hebrides to participate as an independent state in the international system. This would certainly seem to impose the necessity of attempting to improve the revenue earning capacity of the existing economy which we argue would enforce maintenance of the existing openness of the economy to foreign investment and the reliance on foreign markets. Essentially this would be an outwardly directed development strategy. It must be

stressed that these two development strategies are not mutually exclusive and indeed the majority of Pacific nations follow development programmes which have combinations of both strategies. But it should not be imagined that the strategies are complementary for the openly directed policy does tend to accentuate processes in the society, such as increased cash-cropping in rural areas and growth trends in urban areas, which emphasize trends of rural-urban drift and regional marginalization which have emerged in the colonial period (Lipton, 1977). The case study of Central Pentecost in Chapter 7 shows how this process is occurring at the regional level. Indeed we would argue that the demands on the new nation state to impose political allegiance, develop increasing revenue in order to carry the costs of the administration of running the new nation state, leave most newly independent governments little option but to give major emphasis to an openly directed policy even if their political goals emphasize internal self reliance. They are thus caught in a development trap in which there are relatively few development options open except to give priorities to an openly directed policy while placing internal political emphasis upon the inward directed rural development policies.

Of course, it may be argued that within the framework of the outwardly directed strategy there are distinct possibilities of diversification of income earning opportunities. In this respect the New Hebrides would appear to have more potential options than some of the newly independent smaller states of the Pacific, particularly with respect to the development of the nation as an off-shore financial centre, for which the infrastructure is already established, and the growth of tourism. Both these possibilities, however, rest upon continued good relations with the metropolitan powers, particularly Australia, which can bring considerable pressure to bear to affect the course of such developments. It must be stressed, however, that such diversification may be in conflict with the other goals that are part of an inward development strategy. In our consideration of the New Hebridean situation we see little alternative to a dominance of this outward strategy and this is certainly envisaged in the outline development plan of the Central Planning Office (Cazals and Potten, 1977).

There is not a great deal of room for manoeuvre in this development trap but one of the more promising areas is the development of New Hebridean production and sale of vegetables and fruit for the urban areas. This meets many of the goals of the internally oriented policy for it increases self sufficiency, strengthens the balance of payments, creates employment for New Hebrideans and gives opportunity for increased incomes. This is an example of a partial regional closure which attempts to overcome some of the problems inherent in the contradictions that emerge from the two broader development strategies. It has been the purpose of this study to provide some information which might enable this programme to be developed. In the next section we summarize the main findings of our research on the food distribution systems and suggest policies of partial 'regional closure' which could lead to increased New Hebridean participation in this sector.

Food distribution systems in the New Hebrides: the major findings

Our analysis of the New Hebrides food distribution system suggests that our original model of food production and distribution is to a large extent true. There are basically two distribution systems: one relating to imported foodstuffs and the other to locally produced foodstuffs which are intended both for consumption within the New Hebrides and export. Imported food is largely consumed in the two largest urban centres, smaller multi-functional settlements servicing the rural areas, and in the plantation enclaves. Proportionally only a relatively small part of these imported foodstuffs are distributed and sold in the rural villages of the New Hebrides where approximately 80 per cent of the population reside. Much of the rural population still relies upon subsistence production for a major part of its food intake. Although there are some specialist local food producers emerging in the peri-urban supply areas of Vila, much of the locally produced food sold tends to be a surplus of products grown originally for self or village consumption, or obligatory systems of exchange. Local farmers who have access to urban markets have considerable choice as to whether they release their products on to the market. This creates a flexible situation which has major implications for any attempt to develop local supply of foodstuffs for urban markets (Fisk, 1978).

Spatially these two distribution systems are very differently articulated. The imported food system is one in which the majority of goods are channelled through the two major urban ports and then either distributed nationally or interregionally. Thus imported goods tend to flow outwards from either Vila or Luganville to the northern and southern regions of the archipelago. At present local food tends to be distributed within local regions although efforts such as those of SCAF to bring food from Tanna to Efate indicate that there is considerable potential for an increase in interregional trade. In developed countries where food production has become highly specialized these spatial distribution systems tend to assume different commodity networks. Thus certain types of commodities come only from certain regions. In the New Hebrides the commodity networks are as yet very little specialized with the exception of the 'temperate crops' such as potatoes and tomatoes, grown in Tanna and Efate for the Vila market. Apart from the availability of urban markets the principal determinant of these networks is the availability of transport to the markets. The insular nature of the New Hebrides, and the underdeveloped road systems on most islands, impose high costs and limit the possibilities of the transport of goods. The movement of perishable goods interregionally involves the provision of costly cool storage facilities on boats and in the marketing areas. In the case of local producers these would have to be provided by the public sector, unless private enterprise can be convinced of its profitability.

Unquestionably the most important findings of the survey relate to the structure of ownership, control and share of the sale of foodstuffs within the New Hebrides. Three major conclusions are of relevance to the question of indigenous participation in the food distribution system. First, at a national level the distribution system of imported foodstuffs is heavily concentrated in the hands of a few European and Asian firms and the co-operative system. Non-New Hebridean ownership is most marked within the major urban areas of Vila and Luganville where the efforts of the co-operatives to expand their operations have largely failed. In the rural areas the co-operatives dominate the sales of imported foodstuffs, accounting for approximately three-quarters of the sales. The European and Asian stores have linkages to the supply sources, ownership of transport, access to capital and general level of marketing knowledge and experience which give them a distinct advantage over the co-operative system, or small scale retailers.

Second, despite this domination of the food distribution system by a relatively small number of firms and the co-operative system, the retailing component of the distribution system is characterized by a multiplicity of outlets. Table 9.1 shows that there are fewer individuals per food store in Vila and Luganville than the United States, although the proportions are very similar to the city of Manila. If the market vendors are added to the food stores the figure becomes very much lower, which certainly indicates that Vila and Luganville are characterized by an individual to food outlet ratio which is very much lower than that of the developed countries. While the ratio is much higher in the rural areas where the subsistence sector plays a major role in food provision, Chapter 7 shows that there is also a tendency for these small scale retailing outlets to proliferate. They are basically marginal operations yielding very low returns, and subject to a high rate of closure. Indeed we have been tempted to label them 'larder stores' for it would seem that in some cases they are simply no more than an extension of the store of family provisions. The reasons for the proliferation of these small outlets are complex, but would appear to be a response to limited opportunities for economic investment and expansion in the New Hebrides. In the rural areas their growth seems almost as much a consequence of social expectations as of economic opportunity. In the urban areas, where a high proportion of household income is spent on food (50 per cent plus in the case of New Hebrideans), the small stores fulfil an important function in the food supply system with its greater flexibility in the provision of credit. Moreover they provide an opportunity for employment in areas where employment opportunities are lacking.

Third, the evidence of the surveys does not indicate that local food supply plays a very important role in the total food sale of the urban areas. When it is realized that the enumeration of food sales from the store outlets excluded a number of higher priced goods, it seems unlikely that sales of indigenously produced foodstuffs exceed more than 5 per cent of the total of foodstuff sales per annum (Chapters 5 and 6). This is further supported by the evidence of the household budgets, discussed in Chapter 8 which indicate a dominance of imported foodstuffs in urban food consumption. However this relatively small proportion of the local foodstuffs sales represents a major source of monetary income and of part-time employment for many

peri-urban villagers around Vila and Luganville, and has grown in importance over the last ten years.

The food distribution system in the New Hebrides is in an extremely volatile state. Developments over the last ten years have seen a rapid increase of indigenous participation through the institution of the co-operatives and the growth of independent entrepreneurial enterprise by big men and their associated . This has been greatly assisted by the growth and diversification of cash-cropping and livestock farming in rural areas. At the same time there has been a surge in the urban population in the New Hebrides, the food supply of which has largely been provided by a small number of firms who dominate the distribution system of imported foodstuffs.

Towards a food policy for the New Hebrides

It is clear that any attempt to develop a food policy for the New Hebrides will have to take into account two major factors. First, the pattern of colonial development has emphasized a structure of food production which has led to the creation of a highly dualistic agricultural economy. Its main features are the concentration on the production of cash crops for export in rural areas which are still largely reliant upon self-subsistence for their major food supplies. Second, the urban areas are largely supplied by imported food, the distribution system of which is mostly in the hands of non-indigenous enterprises. In terms of increased indigenous participation in the system of food distribution, the strenuous efforts made by both the French and British administrations to develop an indigenously operated co-operative system have been most encouraging. While it has had only marginal success in entering the food distribution system in the urban areas, this movement is of major importance in the rural areas.

If, as seems inevitable, the independent New Hebrides embarks upon outwardly directed development policies there will be increased monetization and cash production in the rural areas whilst tourism and other developments will lead to the continued growth of urban areas. The result will be an increasing demand for food from outside the subsistence sector in both rural and urban areas. Unless this fact is realized, it seems highly likely that this demand will have to be met by increased food imports which will place

increasing demands upon overseas exchange, at a time of growing purchases of expensive capital equipment to build the infrastructure of the modern nation state. There is thus a major need to develop a comprehensive food policy to be incorporated in a development plan for the New Hebrides.

The major elements of this comprehensive food policy could be accomplished within an overall strategy stressing self reliance which would certainly not be in conflict with the stated aims of the major indigenous political parties. It should be stressed that any policy aimed at increasing self reliance in food production could only be introduced over a considerable period of time and would not be aimed at total self reliance. The New Hebrides will always rely on imported foodstuffs to provide some proportion of its total needs, but it does not seem unrealistic to suggest that this proportion of the value of total imports might be about 10 per cent. Such a policy of partial self reliance should emphasize aspects of production, distribution and consumption.

Production

Much of the relevant literature on food production in the Pacific (see particularly Fisk, 1978) has emphasized the delicate balance between the four main sectors of food in Pacific island groups; the subsistence sector, the cash crop production sector for internal consumption, the export food sector and the imported food sector. Bonnemaïson's perceptive analysis of one rural area of the New Hebrides shows food distribution is crucially affected by the relations between the visible and invisible economies of the rural areas. Efforts to increase indigenous food production are fraught with great difficulties if there is no clear understanding of the dominant role of the 'invisible' subsistence sector. Clearly no great reliance in cash-crop production can be placed upon indigenous producers if they remain committed to the demands of the invisible economy, and yet there is no rational reason why they should not wish to continue this commitment unless they can be convinced that the cash sector can give them the social and economic rewards already available from the invisible economy. Fluctuations in prices and supply certainly do not encourage them to take the risk of moving towards heavier commitment to the cash-cropping sector. On the other hand, in the peri-urban areas surrounding the growing urban settlements there is increasing evidence of the ability of New

Hebrideans to commit themselves to the production of food crops for local sale, although even here the demands of the invisible economy are not insignificant. At present their possibilities of expansion are limited by market demand, inadequate transport infrastructure and the availability of land, which is largely owned by non-New Hebrideans.

Other factors also enter into this delicate equation between the various food supply sectors. Relative returns between cash-cropping for export and internal consumption are obviously important, for unquestionably New Hebrideans will assess their relative returns from the two sectors and will adjust their production patterns accordingly. This relationship is also affected by the cost of food imports. The analysis in Chapter 8 certainly suggests that imported foods such as rice and flour offer cheaper nutritional value than do the majority of locally produced foods at current market prices.

Finally, the technical difficulties in developing local food production are still prominent. There are difficulties in diversifying local food production and in the storage and transport of goods to the local urban markets. These can only be solved with considerable financial investment, training and government intervention in the pricing mechanisms. The costly experiments by SCAF in attempting to develop the market for fresh vegetables from Tanna provides a valuable example of these sorts of problems.

In the light of these complex problems in the production sector we would make the following suggestions.

1. Every effort should be made to encourage self reliance in food production in rural sectors. This means the encouragement of self subsistence production, continuing research into its features and a careful assessment of its relationship with other food supply sectors.
2. Every effort should be made to encourage increased production of local food for urban areas. This might proceed on two fronts. Efforts should be made to assess the possibilities for import substitution through large scale schemes in basic imported staples such as rice and sugar. There appears to be the potential for the development of large scale rice development on the island of Santo, similar to that carried out in the Solomons. However, the general

costs of this investment will be high and not necessarily very generative of income or employment for the local population.

3. A major emphasis should be placed upon the improvement of production by local indigenous suppliers to the urban markets. There is an excellent base to operate on in this respect and the problems appear to be more associated with distribution and competition from imported food than production.

Distribution

The major focus of this study has been concerned with analyzing the food distribution systems and we would make the following suggestions.

1. The existing structure of co-operatives provides the principal base for an increased indigenous participation in the food distribution systems in the rural areas and there should be a continued emphasis on and government involvement in this movement. Increasing government support should be given to the co-operatives in the provision of capital and transport, and assistance in training. In strictly economic terms this may not always result in the creation of a profitable organization but the government should be prepared to subsidize some losses because of the returns that will accrue in terms of training and increased participation by New Hebrideans in the overall economic structures of the society. The adult education element should not be overlooked.

2. It is in the urban areas, however, that the major problems for the increased participation of New Hebrideans still exist. The entrenched position of non-New Hebrideans in the imported food system presents barriers for New Hebridean involvement. Despite the fact that co-operatives have failed to penetrate these markets we believe that with further government encouragement and assistance they could be successful in this area. Two obvious strategies could be followed. The first is that the government could encourage increased co-operative participation in the supply of fresh foodstuffs to the urban markets. The SCAF experiment could be followed in this respect. It would require continued government intervention in the supply of imported foodstuffs by limiting imports of certain products at certain times of the year, as well as the provision of infrastructure such as

cold storage facilities and improved transport. The government should continue with its policies of trying to encourage local producers to supply institutions such as hotels, hospitals and restaurants.

It may also be that government will have to intervene in the pricing mechanism of certain products so as to ensure that local products remain competitive with imported goods but we would rather see more positive efforts being made to develop the structure of local supply. We do not necessarily see that this government interference should lead to any great loss to the foreign-owned firms that control the imported food system as they should share in a greater volume of sales as the urban markets expand and their profits from non-foodstuff imported products will certainly increase with economic growth.

3. It is clear that the insular and underdeveloped nature of the New Hebridean economy poses considerable constraint and cost on the transport infrastructure and greater government participation may be necessary through the extension of credit, and development of transport facilities as a basis for increased activity by New Hebrideans in this field. This is one area in which substantial foreign aid could very rapidly lead to improvement for the New Hebrideans.

Consumption

It is clear from our analysis that the process of incorporation of the New Hebrides into the international economy has led to growing change in dietary patterns of indigenous New Hebrideans, most markedly in the urban areas. While there is only indicative evidence on the nutritional consequences of these developments there is certainly some evidence in the household budget data of nutritional problems. We believe that programmes should be developed to educate New Hebrideans in the virtues of their native foods. In the mood of nationalist euphoria which often characterizes independent nations this should not be an impossible task.

The New Hebrides, on the threshold of a precarious independence, is faced with much the same problems as the other small Pacific economies. In treading the delicate path between dependence and independence we believe that programmes which attempt to emphasize self reliance offer such nations the opportunity of the economic growth which uses national capacities. Since food is basic for life, what better place to begin.

Table 2.1
Agricultural products exports. Income earned 1973-76
(FNH000)

	1973	%	1974	%	1975	%	1976*
Copra	19 484	3.0	89 566	9.1	16 292	2.3	312
Trocas and other shells	192	0.0	852	0.1	456	0.1	295
Sandalwood	22	0.0	55	0.0	60	0.0	14
Fish	33 845	5.2	25 774	2.6	9 673	1.4	3 633
Cocoa	2 701	0.4	2 780	0.3	2 427	0.3	595
Coffee	26	0.0	60	0.0	78	0.0	15
Beef	1 685	0.3	1 352	0.1	1 293	0.2	809
Wood	575	0.1	61	0.0	2	0.0	2
Others	243	0.0	470	0.0	373	0.1	188
Total	58 773	9.1	120 990	12.3	30 653	4.4	5 863
Total income of Condominium	646 824	100.0	985 259	100.0	701 977	100.0	-

* Estimate for six months.

Source: Bureau Conjoint de Planification du Developpement
(1977:5).

Table 2.2
Principal exports - percentage of value

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Frozen beef	0.8	1.3	1.0	2.2	3.1	1.5	4.7	2.0
Canned meat	1.3	1.2	2.0	2.1	1.7	0.9	3.2	2.4
Copra	53.0	41.6	33.0	11.4	23.6	64.0	42.7	40.5
Coffee	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.3
Cocoa	3.8	3.4	1.0	1.1	3.3	2.1	5.2	5.1
Fish	31.0	40.2	51.0	74.5	59.3	26.9	32.7	40.0
Sawn timber	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.2
Manganese		2.8	3.9	3.3	2.2	2.7	8.5	6.4
Other	9.6	8.7	7.3	4.6	6.0	1.6	2.5	3.1
Total value (FNH million)	1002.2	1162.5	1284.9	1206.2	1498.1	2370.5	790.0	1287.2

Source: Bureau Conjoint de Planification du Developpement (1977:Annexe 1).

Table 3.1
Retail store licenses*

	Vila	Urban Luganville	Rural	Total
1974	100	55	102	257
1975	96	55	127	278
1976	117	51	83	251
1977	126	56	77	259

* This includes full licenses, where retailing is the main activity of the business, and half licenses where retailing is secondary to, say, wholesaling or manufacturing.

Source: Condominium Treasury.

Table 3.2
Major sources of imported food, 1975
'00 FNH (c.i.f. values)

	Tariff section*				
	I Animals and animal products	II Vegetable products	III Fats and oils	IV Prepared food- stuffs**	I-IV Total food- stuffs
Australia	509 361	1 434 887	9 794	1 879 598	3 833 640
%	56.3	89.1	8.1	56.7	64.4
France	147 609	82 673	72 790	621 712	924 784
%	16.3	5.1	60.4	18.8	15.5
Japan	118 900	877	606	75 780	196 163
%	13.1	0.1	0.5	2.3	3.3
New Zealand	60 577	58 569	5 405	58 210	182 761
%	6.7	3.6	1.8		3.1
Netherlands	33 583	-	17 373	116 662	167 618
%	3.7		14.1	3.5	2.8
Other Pacific Islands	7 266	6 071	8	99 698	113 043
%	0.8	0.4	-	3.0	1.9
Other	26 987	28 124	14 618	463 318	533 047
%	3.0	1.7	12.1	14.0	9.0
Total	904 283	1 611 201	120 594	3 314 978	5 951 056

* Brussels tariff nomenclature.

** Includes beverages, spirits, vinegar and tobacco.

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, (1976).

Table 3.3
Cost profiles early 1975

	<u>Sugar</u>		<u>Rice</u>	
	Item increment	INDEX Total	NUMBERS Item increment	Total
<u>F.o.b. Sydney</u>		100		100
Freight Sydney-Vila	6.2	106.2	12.2	112.2
Insurance	0.8	107.0	0.4	112.6
<u>C.i.f. Vila</u>		107.0		112.6
Duty (sugar 10%; rice nil)	10.7	117.0		
Service tax 1%	1.1	118.8	1.1	113.7
Unloading	1.1	119.9	3.4	117.1
Transport (wharf/store)	0.6	120.5	1.7	118.8
Handling cost	0.1	120.6	0.3	119.1
Bank and financing 1% c.i.f.	1.1	121.7	1.1	120.2
Customs agency commission 1% c.i.f.	1.1	122.8	1.1	121.3
3% c.i.f. for wastage	3.2	126.0	3.4	124.7
<u>Legal cost price in wholesale store</u>		126.0		124.7
Allowable wholesale mark-up 5%	6.3	132.3	6.2	130.9
Legal wholesale price		132.3		130.9
<u>Urban Vila legal wholesale price</u>		132.3		130.9
10% retail mark-up	13.2	145.5	13.1	144.0
<u>Legal retail price Vila</u>		145.5		144.0
RURAL AREAS				
<u>Efate</u>				
Legal wholesale price		132.3		130.9
Rural marginal allowance 3%	4.0	136.3	3.9	134.8
Retail mark-up 10%	13.6	149.9	13.5	148.3
Freight for 10 km from Vila	0.2	150.1	0.6	148.9
<u>Legal retail price 10 km from Vila</u>		150.1		148.9
<u>Tanna</u>				
Legal wholesale price		132.3		130.9
Rural marginal allowance 3%	4.0	136.3	3.9	134.8
Retail mark-up 10%	13.6	149.9	13.5	148.3
Sea freight to Tanna	2.8	152.7	8.3	156.6
Freight for 10 km from wharf	0.2	152.9	0.6	157.2
<u>Legal retail price 10 km from Tanna landing point</u>		152.9		157.2

Source: Field enquiries.

Table 3.4
Freight rates*, Burns Philp vessels, February 1975
FNH per tonne or cubic metre

	General cargo	Copra	Graded copra
To Vila from:			
Near Northern Islands**	1 900	1 650	1 900
North	2 100	1 850	2 100
South	2 450	2 100	2 450

* Includes FNH300 wharfage for cargo passing over Burns Philp wharf, Vila.

** Emau, Nguna, Pele, Lelepa, Moso.

Source: Data from Burns Philp.

Table 4.1
Number of registered and provisional primary co-operatives

	Anglophone	Francophone	Total
1964			11
1965			18
1966			40
1967			56
1968			69
1969	94	n.a.	n.a.
1970	103	27	130
1971	118	27	145
1972	123	37	160
1973	129	39	168
1974	167	59	226
1975	182	n.a.	n.a.
1976	180	71	251
1977	181	n.a.	n.a.

Source: NHCSD Annual Reports; SC Report Annuel.

Table 4.2
Copra marketed through co-operatives

	A	B	
	Marketed by	Total exports	% of Total
	co-operatives		production
	Tonnes		
1964	553	37 667	1.5
1965	1 090	28 725	3.8
1966	2 082	34 478	6.0
1967	3 270	42 407	7.7
1968	3 759	34 304	11.0
1969	n.a.	37 015	-
1970	4 952	31 197	15.9
1971	6 989	34 035	20.5
1972	2 760	18 282	15.1
1973	6 037	22 159	27.3
1974	12 108	35 667	34.0
1975			

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, NHCS, SC.

Table 4.3
Stores, by value of turnover

Turnover FNH	French Registered	British Registered	Total
17 920 000 - 31 360 000	0	2	2
4 480 100 - 8 400 000	2	8	10
1 120 000 - 4 480 000	13	94	107
Under 1 120 000	28	51	79
Total	43	155	198

Source: NHCS (1974); SC (1974).

Table 4.4
Vegetable purchases by SCAF

	1975				1976	
	Tanna		Efate		Tanna	Efate
	June-October kg	FNH	July-November kg	FNH	kg	FNH
Taro, dry	3 172	36 208	15 373	199 829	2 823	39 026
Taro, water	151	1 737	836	13 285	6 808	2 437
Sweet potato	787	9 046	9 140	118 820	13 191	12 221
Yams	6 845	125 555	1 641	27 935	1 815	7 274
Manioc						4 503
Kava		33 580			5 046	672
Breadfruit			490	14 700		
Bananas			290	2 900	36	8 646
Limes - lemons			121	1 420		2 312
Other citrus						2 317
Melons			1 200	66 010		1 054
Pineapple	36	1 360	73	2 550	412	2 092
Other fruit			253	2 530		2 837
Aubergine	19	440	1 831	108 369	93	240
Beans	1 241	37 020	1 723	130 733	1 548	1 375
Carrots	549	17 910	567	27 404	2 486	900
Chinese cabbage	14	200	6 178	91 500		6 590
English cabbage	5 758	147 764	2 361	90 789	2 662	
Other <i>brassica</i> sp.		233		5 350	1 499	1 913
Cucumber	12	150	3 577	105 085	92	5 681
Leeks	304	9 105	245	12 320	771	258
Lettuce	2 833	84 975	7 537	486 195	1 184	1 927
Onions	157	4 280	100	4 476	413	267
Parsley	44	13 650	230	66 000	164	52
Potato	59 804	1 107 718	23 891*	537 237	69 258	
Radishes	1 092	14 099	1 427	61 905	29	234
Sweet peppers	313	9 020	185	8 468	376	67
Tomatoes	1 160	31 945	4 041	338 051	3 465	3 455
Other vegetables	164	4 250	2 118	109 934	173	7 551
Total	84 455	1 690 245	85 428	2 633 795	114 344	115 901

* Includes 955 kg of new potatoes.

Source: Data from SCAF.

Table 5.1
Population change in Greater Vila by ethnic group

	1965			1967			1972	
	No.	%	Percentage change 1965-67	No.	%	Percentage change 1967-72	No.	%
Europeans	746	11	+ 27	945	12	+ 104	1 929	15
Asians	319	5	+ 8	346	5	+ 30	451	4
Pacific Islanders*	4 899	76	+ 18	5 800	75	+ 858	9 183	73
Others	514	8	+ 26	647	8	+ 51	978	8
Total	6 478		+ 19	7 738		+ 62	12 541	

* Includes New Hebrideans.

Source: McArthur and Yaxley (1968); Condominium Bureau of Statistics (1973).

Table 5.2
Number of sellers by site
(January 26 to February 8, 1976)

Date	Main site				Total
	Opposite Maison Barrau	Opposite Burns Philp	Opposite Post Office	Hong Kong Street	
January/February					
Monday 26	-	-	-	-	0
Tuesday 27	12	-	3	7	22
Wednesday 28*	103	7	20	9	139*
Thursday 29	4	-	1	-	5
Friday 30*	61	6	10	6	83*
Saturday 31*	96	19	14	16	145*
Sunday 1	-	-	-	-	0
Monday 2	4	-	-	6	10
Tuesday	12	-	-	4	16
Wednesday 4*	86	11	29	17	143*
Thursday 5	1	-	-	-	1
Friday 6*	84	15	10	5	114*
Saturday 7*	81	14	11	17	123*
Sunday 8	-	-	-	-	0

* Survey day.

Source: Field surveys.

Table 5.3
Number of sellers

Present on	Number
1 day	162
2 days	107
3 days	51
4 days	17
5 days	18
6 days	10
Total	365

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.4
Value of produce and sales

Day	Value of food offered FNH	Value sold FNH	Per cent of produce sold	Average value sold per seller FNH
1	217 980	137 130	62.9	987
2	132 500	78 170	59.0	942
3	252 510	171 020	67.7	1 179
4	223 770	139 170	62.2	973
5	183 210	111 360	60.8	977
6	192 730	141 860	73.6	1 153
Total	1 202 700	776 710	64.7	1 042

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.5
Volume of goods for sale

Product	Volume in kg (6 days)	Mean volume per day (kg)
Yams*	1 507	251
Taro	8 538	1 423
Manioc	1 039	173
Sweet potato	1 945	324
Bananas	14 975	2 496
Coconuts	6 534	1 089
Citrus fruits	1 569	261
Chinese cabbage	194	32

* This figure is relatively low as the yam season was just beginning at the time of the survey.

Source: Field surveys of the value of products offered for sale and mean prices per kilogram of weighed samples.

Table 5.6
Vendors, goods and sales by village of origin

Village/Location	Goods offered FNH	Goods sold FNH	Per cent sold	No. of vendors	No. of vendor/ days	Average sales /vendor day FNH	Basic daily transport costs FNH
<u>Southern Efate</u>							
Eratap	113 160	73 050	64.6	30	75	974	150
Erakor	254 920	146 310	57.4	53	175	836	150
Pango	5 390	2 790	51.8	5	6	465	190
Nambatri	3 110	1 130	36.3	1	2	565	-
Les Lagunes	2 330	1 050	45.1	1	2	525	200
Tagabe	2 410	1 170	48.5	3	5	234	200
Mele	171 780	113 330	66.0	58	131	865	70
Mele-maat	48 050	39 550	82.3	15	30	1 318	120
<u>Southwest 'Plateau'</u>							
Klems Hill	25 210	20 100	79.7	4	10	2 010	160*
Snake Hill	44 700	33 320	74.5	4	19	1 753	140*
<u>West and North</u>							
Lelepa Island	52 750	35 700	67.7	20	22	1 622	210
Moso Island	47 100	32 330	68.6	19	23	1 406	340
Siviri	31 830	19 980	62.8	10	17	1 175	200
Saama	21 510	13 370	62.2	10	17	786	200
Emoa	4 690	2 780	59.3	5	5	556	200
Paunangis	46 840	22 530	48.1	21	32	704	200
Pele Island	32 700	24 530	75.0	24	33	743	240
Emau Island	36 680	19 420	52.9	17	21	925	240
Tanaliu	26 840	13 110	48.8	6	12	1 092	300
<u>East</u>							
Epau	55 130	41 900	76.0	18	30	1 397	300
Forari	9 740	4 520	46.4	5	5	904	200
Pang Pang	17 840	9 100	51.0	4	8	1 137	300
Eton	124 830	92 780	74.3	24	55	1 687	300

*Estimate.

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.7
Products offered for sale in Vila Market

Product	Value offered FNH	Value sold FNH	Per cent sold	No. of vendor/days product offered
'Water' taro (<i>Colocasia</i>)	24,830	16,910	68.1	60
'Dry' taro (<i>Xanthosoma</i>)	151,670	87,400	57.6	351
Breadfruit	700	300	42.9	2
Coconuts	77,750	51,030	65.6	377
Manioc (cassava)	20,980	11,760	56.1	84
Sugarcane	12,270	6,790	55.3	110
Sweet potato - kumala	44,740	38,980	87.1	67
Yams	62,070	45,770	73.7	132
<i>Native staples - Total</i>	<i>395,010</i>	<i>258,940</i>	<i>65.6</i>	
Island cabbage	26,260	20,280	77.2	237
Palm heart	3,050	1,810	59.3	14
Nuts - assorted	6,400	5,490	85.8	31
Snake beans	1,300	1,130	86.9	11
Leaves - various	6,090	5,220	85.7	33
Kava root	5,700	5,200	91.2	3
Cooking leaves	7,980	6,960	87.2	59
Naviso (<i>Saccharum edule</i>)	2,730	2,470	90.5	7
Naus (<i>Spondias cytherea</i>)	25,690	19,310	75.2	113
<i>Other native foods - Total</i>	<i>85,200</i>	<i>67,870</i>	<i>79.7</i>	
Bats ('flying foxes')	3,130	2,510	80.2	10
Coconut crabs	60,400	34,360	56.9	61
Other crabs	64,570	49,820	77.2	127
Eggs	80	80	100.0	1
Fowls	10,900	8,700	79.8	18
Fish	9,430	7,830	83.0	31
Shellfish	23,960	15,870	66.2	64
Other animal produce	270	270	100.0	2
<i>Animal produce - Total</i>	<i>172,740</i>	<i>119,440</i>	<i>69.1</i>	
Cooked fish	3,220	2,250	69.9	10
Laplap	69,340	49,160	70.9	146
Other cooked food	3,740	3,690	98.7	8
<i>Cooked food - Total</i>	<i>76,300</i>	<i>55,100</i>	<i>72.2</i>	
Sweet bananas	25,580	12,520	48.9	148
Eating bananas	93,040	50,300	54.1	312
Cooking bananas	101,440	59,010	58.2	341
Other bananas	22,970	12,230	53.2	89
Grapefruit - Pamplemousse	18,080	11,080	61.3	79
Pineapples	8,080	6,770	84.2	74
Pawpaw	7,260	4,100	56.5	93
Oranges	13,630	11,880	87.2	44
Limes - lemons	30,520	8,340	27.3	142
Melons	3,580	1,010	28.2	11
Avocado - butterfruit	7,070	4,160	58.8	50
Other fruit	6,810	4,040	59.3	60
<i>Fruit - Total</i>	<i>338,020</i>	<i>185,440</i>	<i>54.9</i>	

Aubergines	710	500	70.4	14
Beans	30	30	100.0	1
Chinese cabbage (<i>Brassica chinensis</i>)	2,970	2,970	100.0	11
English cabbage	810	770	100.0	7
Sweet corn	3,300	2,220	95.1	12
Lettuce	2,370	2,210	67.3	8
Parsley	6,840	5,960	87.1	26
Green peppers	230	190	82.6	6
Pumpkins	5,190	3,300	63.6	42
Radishes	360	360	100.0	3
Onions	2,650	2,480	93.6	12
Watercress	22,850	18,160	79.5	44
Other vegetables	4,100	3,490	85.1	23
Cucumber	6,650	5,530	83.2	56
<i>Vegetables - Total</i>	<i>59,060</i>	<i>48,170</i>	<i>81.6</i>	
Non-food/other	36,640	20,260	55.3	136

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.8
Value of goods offered by produce categories, 1965 and 1976

	1965	1976
Native staple food	36.8%	34.0%
Other native food	1.0	7.3
Animal produce	8.7	14.9
Cooked food	14.9	6.6
Fruit	19.4	29.1
Vegetables	27.2	5.1
Curios	2.0	-
Non-food/other	-	3.2

Source: Brookfield et al. (1969:124); field survey.

Table 5.9
Proportion of total produce offered by categories

Village	Native staples	Other native foods	Animal produce	Cooked food	Fruit	Vege- tables	Other
<u>Southern Efate</u>							
Eratap	36.1	5.9	29.1	1.4	25.9	0.4	1.2
Erakor	34.0	9.5	13.5	0.3	36.4	3.9	2.4
Pango	10.9	0.4	3.9	31.7	51.4	1.7	0.0
Nambatri*	20.8	0.0	8.3	0.0	43.1	56.9	0.0
Les Lagunes*	24.9	0.0	0.0	12.5	36.5	24.9	1.2
Mele	46.9	4.7	0.2	1.6	32.9	8.4	5.3
Mele-Maat	78.2	2.3	1.4	0.2	14.8	2.4	0.6
<u>Southwest 'Plateau'</u>							
Klems Hill	19.0	21.4	4.2	4.0	8.0	36.0	7.4
Snake Hill	32.6	10.7	15.5	0.7	24.9	15.0	0.6
<u>West and North</u>							
Lelepa Is.	7.9	2.0	45.1	20.1	23.6	0.0	1.3
Moso Is.	23.8	9.9	17.6	9.6	35.6	1.1	2.3
Siviri	16.4	11.7	3.9	17.1	43.9	2.6	4.5
Saama	8.6	17.0	1.6	46.6	26.2	0.0	0.0
Emoa	33.8	15.9	0.0	40.0	10.3	0.0	0.0
Paunangis	37.0	8.5	18.2	15.4	19.6	0.1	1.1
Pele Is.	16.8	3.0	20.1	49.9	9.6	0.3	0.3
Emau Is.	15.6	8.2	9.2	8.9	32.5	0.5	25.1
Tanaliu	21.5	1.7	3.5	13.9	54.8	0.8	3.8
<u>East</u>							
Epau	36.1	12.1	20.4	1.7	24.5	4.1	0.1
Forari	63.9	4.9	0.0	0.0	31.2	0.0	0.0
Pang Pang	34.2	8.1	29.0	1.7	22.5	0.6	3.9
Eton	34.0	4.8	25.5	4.1	22.1	7.4	2.1

* Represent very small quantities.

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.10
Average prices per kilo (FNH)

Taro, water (taro ailan)	39	Other crabs	40
Taro, dry (Fijian taro)	19	Shellfish (in shell)	20
Coconuts	12	Sweet bananas (bunches)	11
Manioc	20	Sweet bananas (hands)	30
Sugar cane	14	Eating bananas (bunches)	14
Sweet potato	23	Eating bananas (hands)	20
Yams	41	Cooking bananas (bunches)	17
Island cabbage	15	Grapefruit (Pamplemousse)	25
Palm heart	22	Pawpaw	12
Nuts	17	Oranges	67
Kava root	200	Limes	48
Naviso	57	Avocado	25
Naus	23	Pumpkin	14
Coconut crabs	200	Watercress	39

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.11
Market prices 1971-1976
(FNH per kilo)

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
	3rd	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st
	qtr	qtr	qtr	qtr	qtr	qtr	qtr
Taro, dry	14	11	16	24	23	21	19
Yam	23	30	56	51	47	29	50
Manioc	13	12	15	14	17	19	19
Cooking bananas	11	13	28	16	24	22	21
Eating bananas	14	12	16	14	21	20	23
Island cabbage	11	13	15	15	14	12	19

Note: The samples taken by the Condominium Bureau of Statistics were often small and, given the great price variability illustrated by Figure 5.4, the above figures should be taken as approximations only. Some price fluctuations may be seasonal. For example, in 1975 the price of yams in FNH per kilo as recorded by the Bureau of Statistics varied as follows: March, 48; April, 47; May, 50; June, 40; July, 29; August, 41; September, 37. No prices were recorded for January, February, October, November, or December, months when few yams are available.

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data.

Table 5.12
Value of goods sold per vendor/day

Sales FNH	Vendor/days	Percentage of total
Under 10	11	1.5
10 - 100	13	1.8
110 - 200	23	3.2
210 - 300	41	5.7
310 - 400	47	6.5
410 - 500	52	7.2
510 - 600	53	7.4
610 - 800	98	13.6
810 - 1000	89	12.4
1010 - 1500	130	18.1
1510 - 2000	88	12.3
2010 - 2500	38	5.3
2510 - 3000	17	2.4
Over 3000	18	2.5

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.13
Frequency of store types

	Number	Per cent
Firm	5	7.2
Town	47	68.1
Village	8	11.6
Co-operative	9	13.0

Definitions: Firm - owned by registered company.
 Town - owned by individual or family groups
 and located in the urban area.
 Village - owned by individual or family groups
 and located outside the urban area.
 Co-operative - owned and operated by
 registered co-operative society.

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.14
Basic store characteristics: Vila

	Firm	Town	Village	Co-operative
Family or individual ownership	-	100.0	85.7	-
Wood used in construction	-	28.3	100.0	77.8
Supermarket organization	100.0	8.5	-	44.4
Display area under 50m	-	48.9	87.5	55.5
No special storage space	-	43.2	100.0	22.2
Open less than 5 years	25.0	45.7	75.0	33.3
Open 7 days	20.0	63.0	50.0	33.3
Open more than 12 hours per day	-	74.5	87.5	55.5

Figures represent the percentage of stores in each type with the characteristics noted.

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.15
Ethnic grouping of store managers/operators

	Number	Per cent
European	9	13.0
Vietnamese	21	30.4
Chinese	16	23.2
New Hebridean	22	31.9
Metis	1	1.4

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.16
Store type and ethnic group of manager/operator

Ethnic group	Firm	Town	Store type	
			Village	Co-operative
European	80.0(44.4)	10.6 (55.6)	-	-
Vietnamese	20.0 (4.6)	40.4 (90.5)	12.5 (4.8)	-
Chinese	-	34.0(100.0)	-	-
New Hebridean	-	12.8 (27.3)	87.5(31.8)	100.0(40.9)

Figures in parentheses are row percentages.

Figures without parentheses are column percentages.

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.17
Basic manager/operation characteristics

Ethnic group of manager/ operator	Store open less than 5 years	Resident in Vila for 35 years or all life	Less than 6 years schooling
European	42.9	57.1	-
Vietnamese	52.4	20.0	41.1
Chinese	25.0	53.4	53.4
New Hebridean	59.1	47.4	33.3

Figures represent the percentage of each ethnic group complying with the characteristics noted.

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.18
Percentage distribution of store type by recorded
value of food stock (FNH)

Store type	Under 29 999	30 000 to 69 999	70 000 to 129 000	130 000 to 399 999	400 000 plus
Firm	-	-	20.0	-	80.0
Town	22.2	37.8	26.7	11.1	2.2
Village	62.5	25.0	12.5	-	-
Co-operative	22.2	65.6	11.1	11.1	-

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.19
Commodity stock value as a proportion of total
recorded stock value

Commodity	Percentage of total stock value
Wine	17.6
Tinned meat	16.7
Rice	10.5
Biscuits	7.4
Tinned fish	7.1
Tinned fruit and juice	6.7
Powdered milk	6.7
Frozen chicken	4.5
Imported soft drink	4.0
Beer	3.8
Coffee	3.3
Imported jam	2.6
Others (less than 2% individually)	9.1

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.20
Percentage of stores stocking selected commodities

Commodity	
Tinned fish	98.6
Tinned meat	97.1
Sugar	97.1
Rice	92.8
Tea	92.8
Biscuits	91.3
Powdered milk	91.3
Salt	89.9
Imported soft drink	87.0
Fruit and fruit juice	79.7
Bread	79.7
Coffee	76.8
Butter	73.9
Local soft drink	66.7
Imported jam	50.7
Frozen chicken	46.4
Beer	40.6
Local meat	37.7
Wine	36.2
Local fish	30.4
Imported potatoes	26.1
Bananas	20.3
Coconuts	20.3
Taro	11.6
Yam	7.3
Cucumber	5.8
Island cabbage	5.8
Local potatoes	2.9

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.21
Percentage of total value of food items stocked
in each store type

Commodities	Firm	Town	Village	Co-operative
Percentage distribution of store types	7.2	68.1	11.6	13.0
Rice	3.4	85.3	2.7	8.6
Tinned meat	30.4	52.4	4.8	12.3
Tinned fish	40.8	44.1	4.9	10.2
Tinned fruit and juices	66.0	26.5	0.8	6.8
Bread	10.8	77.4	7.0	4.8
Biscuits	43.9	44.9	3.5	7.7
Imported potatoes	48.5	51.5	-	-
Sugar	14.1	60.1	4.4	21.4
Salt	19.5	55.4	10.2	14.8
Tea	31.7	38.2	5.5	6.9
Coffee	58.3	44.9	1.3	2.2
Butter	40.5	76.9	3.2	11.3
Meat	13.1	76.9	2.6	7.4
Fish	8.6	90.9	-	-
Jam	62.9	34.0	0.6	2.5
Beer	22.8	74.0	-	3.3
Local soft drinks	0.8	91.6	2.9	4.8
Imported soft drinks	32.0	57.3	5.8	4.9
Wine	3.8	14.0	-	2.2
Powdered milk	59.1	29.5	2.8	8.6
Frozen chicken	27.5	69.5	-	3.0

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.22
Proportional sources of stock supply within
each store type

Store type	Direct import	Au Bon Marche	Burns Philp	SIDIV	Fung Kwan Chee	Galli- more	Co-op Federation	Others
Firm	94.3	-	-	-	-			5.6
Town	12.9	10.3	30.3	5.7	16.2	6.7	1.9	16.0
Village	-	1.9	47.6	-	22.3	2.9	-	26.3
British	18.4	-	14.5	-	-	-	48.7	18.4
Co-op.								
French	-	-	24.4	-	28.9	-	-	46.7
Co-op.								
Total	17.6	7.8	28.4	4.3	15.0	5.3	4.4	17.2

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.23
Stock commodities by proportional source of supply

Commodity	Direct import	Au Bon Marche	Burns Philp	SIDIV	Fung Kwan Chee	Galli- more	Co-op. Federa- tion	Others
Rice	18.9	5.4	24.3	4.1	18.9	14.9	5.4	8.1
Tinned meat	17.8	7.8	31.1	4.4	20.0	7.8	4.4	6.7
Tinned fish	16.5	7.7	36.3	4.4	18.7	5.5	4.4	6.5
Tinned fruit and juice	20.6	11.1	30.2	3.2	14.3	6.3	6.3	8.0
Bread	-	3.9	7.8	2.0	5.9	2.0	2.0	76.4
Biscuits	19.2	9.0	28.2	3.8	19.2	10.3	5.1	5.2
Imported potatoes	35.7	7.1	21.4	7.1	14.3	-	-	14.4
Sugar	19.8	11.1	28.4	6.2	17.3	3.7	4.9	12.0
Salt	16.0	12.0	32.0	5.3	17.3	6.7	4.0	6.7
Tea	19.2	9.0	37.3	5.1	15.4	5.1	5.1	7.8
Coffee	19.7	6.1	37.9	4.5	15.2	3.0	4.5	9.1
Butter	19.7	6.6	42.9	4.9	11.5	4.9	6.6	3.2
Imported jam	29.3	9.8	22.0	4.9	17.1	-	4.9	12.0
Beer	18.4	7.9	42.1	10.5	13.2	-	-	7.9
Imported soft drink	19.7	9.1	36.4	4.5	15.2	1.5	6.1	7.5
Wine	27.6	6.9	27.6	-	10.3	-	-	27.6
Powdered milk	18.8	8.8	26.3	5.0	20.0	7.5	5.0	8.6
Frozen chicken	39.1	4.3	43.5	4.3	4.3	-	4.3	0.2

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.24
Fortnightly sales values of monitored items

	Value (FNH)	Percentage of total recorded sales
Rice	1 726 337	25.0
Bread	778 240	11.3
Tinned fish	731 801	10.6
Imported potatoes	652 210	9.5
Imported soft drink	620 261	9.0
Sugar	591 228	8.6
Tinned meat	523 921	7.6
Frozen chicken	327 679	4.8
Powdered milk	289 026	4.2
Tinned fruit and juice	221 141	3.2
Biscuits	218 462	3.2
Local soft drink	164 618	2.4
Salt	52 693	0.8
Total	6 897 617	

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.25
Sales by store type

Commodity	Firm		Town		Village		Co-operative		Total
	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	
Rice	27.3	41.7	23.1	49.4	16.0	1.7	32.4	7.2	25.0
Tinned meat	4.7	23.8	8.7	68.8	9.8	3.4	5.6	4.0	7.6
Tinned fish	15.8	56.7	7.6	38.4	9.3	2.3	4.9	2.5	10.6
Tinned fruit	3.5	41.4	2.6	43.9	2.5	2.1	7.3	12.7	3.2
Bread	3.2	10.9	15.1	71.6	22.2	5.2	24.8	12.3	11.3
Biscuit	3.2	36.0	2.8	48.0	6.5	5.3	4.9	8.6	3.2
Imported potatoes	19.0	76.7	4.1	23.3	-	-	-	-	9.5
Sugar	7.6	33.7	9.0	56.1	16.1	4.9	8.1	5.3	8.6
Salt	0.4	17.8	0.9	62.8	3.4	11.6	1.1	7.8	0.8
Local soft drink	0.2	2.7	4.2	94.7	0.8	0.9	0.7	1.6	2.4
Imported soft drink	10.0	42.7	9.3	55.2	6.4	1.9	0.4	0.3	9.0
Powdered milk	2.6	23.5	4.8	61.8	6.4	4.0	8.0	10.7	4.2
Frozen chicken	2.7	21.6	6.7	75.9	6.4	0.3	1.9	2.2	4.8
Total		38.2		53.6	0.6	2.6		5.5	100.0

a Percentage of total sales for that store type.

b Percentage of total sales in that commodity.

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.26
Sales by ethnic group of manager/operator

Commodity	European		Vietnamese		Chinese		New Hebridean		Total
	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	
Rice	26.4	43.6	20.8	20.2	25.3	22.0	28.4	14.1	25.0
Tinned meat	5.2	28.1	7.3	23.4	12.6	36.3	7.4	12.1	7.6
Tinned fish	14.8	57.8	8.3	19.1	7.7	15.8	6.2	7.3	10.6
Tinned fruit	3.3	42.3	4.4	33.5	1.2	8.4	4.1	15.8	3.2
Bread	4.9	17.9	15.4	33.2	13.1	25.3	21.3	23.5	11.3
Biscuit	3.2	41.6	3.6	27.7	1.9	13.4	4.4	17.3	3.2
Imported potatoes	17.9	78.2	1.7	4.5	7.5	17.3	-	-	9.2
Sugar	7.7	37.1	8.2	23.2	9.0	22.9	11.5	16.5	8.6
Salt	0.4	20.4	1.0	30.9	0.9	26.1	1.4	22.7	0.8
Local soft drink	0.3	5.1	6.0	61.6	2.4	22.0	2.2	11.3	2.4
Imported soft drink	10.3	47.5	12.7	34.4	5.9	14.3	2.7	3.8	9.0
Powdered milk	2.6	25.3	3.9	22.7	6.0	31.4	6.9	20.6	4.2
Frozen chicken	3.1	27.2	6.7	34.6	6.3	29.2	3.5	9.1	4.8
Total		41.4		24.4		21.8		12.5	100.0

a Percentage of total sales for that store type.

b Percentage of total sales in that commodity.

Source: Field survey.

Table 5.27
Estimated total yearly sales

	Value (FNH million)	Per cent of total
Firms	249.0	51.0
Town stores	170.9	35.0
Village stores	7.8	1.6
Co-operatives	15.6	3.2
Market	20.8	4.3
Direct supply	24.0	4.9
Total	488.1	

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.1
Changes in the population of Luganville 1955-1972
by ethnic group

	1955		Percentage	1967		Percentage	1972	
	No.	% of	change	No.	% of	change	No.	% of
	total	total	1955-67	total	total	1967-72	total	total
Europeans	448	32	-31	310	12	+15	358	9
Asians	746	54	-76	177	7	-	175	5
Pacific Islanders*	190	13	+791	1692	66	+70	2874	74
Others	-	-	-	385	15	+19	459	12
Total	1384		+85	2564		+51	3866	

* Includes New Hebrideans.

Source: Bennett (1957); McArthur and Yaxley (1968);
Condominium Bureau of Statistics (1973).

Table 6.2
Number of sellers by site on survey days

Date	Main Sites						Total
	L.C.M.	Hutton	B.P.	John's Store	Wong Jock	Others*	
January							
Wednesday 28	2	11	4	11	8	3	39
Friday 30	10	2	0	2	3	1	18
Saturday 31	12	16	12	4	8	0	52
February							
Wednesday 4	0	5	21	7	6	0	39
Friday 6	4	4	1	0	0	0	9
Saturday 7	3	8	13	9	12	0	45
Total	31	46	51	33	37	4	202

* Truch Much and Lo Po Stores.

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.3
Number of sellers

Present on	Number
1 day	136
2 days	26
3 days	2
4 days	2
Total	166

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.4
Value of produce and sales

Day	Value of food offered FNH	Value including Nagriamel estimate	Value sold FNH	Value including Nagriamel estimate	Per cent of produce sold	Average value sold by seller FNH
1	63 170	(69 649)	35 600	(39 251)	56.4	913
2	26 770	(32 719)	12 550	(15 339)	46.4	697
3	87 460	(119 417)	44 960	(61 388)	51.4	865
4	79 690	(116 470)	30 920	(45 191)	38.8	793
5	15 170	(21 912)	9 940	(14 358)	65.5	1 104
6	77 020	(83 866)	40 120	(43 686)	52.1	892
Total	394 280	(440 033)	174 090	(219 213)	49.8 (49.6)	877 (860)

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.5
Vendors, goods and sales by village of origin

Village/ location	Goods offered FNH	Goods sold FNH	Per cent sold	No. of vendors	No. of vendor /days	Average sales vendor/ day FNH	Basic return fare FNH
Hog Harbour	127 960	63 360	44.5	63	75	845	214
Tangoa	50 230	25 600	51.0	21	34	753	220
Kole	31 360	17 010	54.2	15	18	945	225
Narango	45 950	15 130	32.9	17	21	720	279
Nubulon- inbuk	24 120	11 650	48.3	11	12	971	206
Port Olry	13 470	6 150	45.7	10	10	615	200
Lonpere	7 010	5 480	78.2	7	7	783	200
Lourou	8 310	2 520	30.3	4	4	630	200
Other	28 970	19 430	67.1	10	13	1 495	
Nagriamel (est.)	(94 758)	(44 648)	(47.1)	(44)	(53)	(842)	

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.6
Age of market sellers

10 - 19 years	18.5 per cent
20 - 29	24.5
30 - 39	17.2
40-- 49	21.7
50 - 59	13.4
60 plus	4.5

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.7
Products offered for sale in Luganville Market

Product	Value offered FNH	Value sold FNH	Per cent sold	No. of vendor/days product offered
'Water' taro (<i>Colocasia</i>)	30,450	10,200	33.5	34
'Dry' taro (<i>Xanthosoma</i>)	77,350	35,980	46.5	160
Coconuts	18,500	8,550	46.2	121
Manioc (cassava)	2,500	900	36.0	12
Sugarcane	4,330	1,940	44.8	38
Sweet potato (kumala)	28,770	18,240	63.4	75
Yams	5,800	2,950	50.9	18
<i>Native staples - Total</i>	<i>187,700</i>	<i>78,760</i>	<i>47.0</i>	
Island cabbage (<i>Hibiscus manihot</i>)	16,530	7,810	47.2	138
Palm heart	100	100	100.0	1
Nuts - assorted	11,120	9,300	83.6	23
Snake 'beans' (<i>Trichosanthes anguina</i>)	720	560	77.8	1
Leaves - various	20	0	0.0	1
Kava root	1,200	0	0.0	2
Cooking leaves	1,090	710	65.1	27
Nauso (<i>Scoccharum edule</i>)	170	20	11.8	2
Naus (<i>Spondias cytherea</i>)	1,060	340	32.1	9
<i>Other native foods</i>	<i>32,010</i>	<i>18,840</i>	<i>58.9</i>	
Bats (flying foxes)	200	200	100.0	1
Coconut crabs	25,920	12,860	49.6	39
Other crabs	8,690	3,300	40.0	15
Fowls	2,500	2,220	88.8	7
Fish	70	70	100.0	1
Shellfish	4,280	1,680	39.3	33
<i>Animal produce - Total</i>	<i>41,660</i>	<i>20,330</i>	<i>48.8</i>	
Cake	300	160	53.3	1
Cooked fish	360	120	33.3	1
Cooked fowl	200	200	100.0	1
Laplap	390	160	41.0	2
Soup, drinks, etc.	140	70	50.0	1
Cooked vegetable	660	660	100.0	2
Other cooked food	1,750	1,310	74.9	8
<i>Cooked food - Total</i>	<i>3,800</i>	<i>2,680</i>	<i>70.5</i>	
Sweet bananas	4,540	1,690	37.2	35
Eating bananas	13,310	6,670	50.1	79
Cooking bananas	23,320	8,580	36.8	103
Other bananas	4,810	1,610	33.5	17
Grapefruit - Pamplemousse	3,120	1,620	51.9	17
Pineapples	14,080	7,970	56.6	67
Pawpaw	1,500	670	44.7	23
Oranges	13,270	8,940	67.4	37
Limes - lemons	5,940	2,870	48.3	38
Melons	2,020	1,080	53.5	11
Avocado - butterfruit	2,030	850	41.9	13
Other fruit	830	690	83.1	8
<i>Fruit - Total</i>	<i>88,770</i>	<i>43,240</i>	<i>48.7</i>	

Beans	220	220	100.0	4
Chinese cabbage (<i>Brassica chinensis</i>)	1,000	1,000	100.0	2
English cabbage	140	120	85.7	2
Chokos	50	50	100.0	1
Sweet corn	830	400	48.2	7
Lettuce	220	220	100.0	2
Green peppers	770	650	84.4	6
Pumpkins	1,060	510	48.1	20
Radishes	40	0	0.0	1
Tomatoes	100	0	0.0	1
Onions	70	70	100.0	2
Watercress	6,970	4,050	58.1	31
Cucumber	3,870	2,950	76.2	39
<i>Vegetables - Total</i>	<u>15,340</u>	<u>10,240</u>	<u>66.7</u>	<u> </u>
GRAND TOTAL	<u>349,280</u>	<u>174,090</u>	<u>49.8</u>	

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.8
Proportional value of goods offered by produce
category in Vila and Luganville

Product	Vila	Luganville
Native	34.0	48.2
Other native food	7.3	9.2
Animal produce	14.9	11.9
Cooked food	6.6	1.1
Fruit	29.1	25.4
Vegetables	5.1	4.4
Non-food/other	3.2	0.0

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.9
Percentage of total produce offered by categories

Village/ location	Native staples	Other native food	Animal produce	Cooked food	Fruit	Vege- tables
Hog Harbour	57.9	4.9	12.1	0.4	22.1	2.7
Tangoa	29.2	17.1	16.5	1.1	24.3	11.9
Kole	34.7	5.1	31.6	1.4	26.6	0.6
Narango	56.3	5.5	0.0	1.3	35.4	1.5
Nubuloninbuk	58.0	6.3	0.0	3.7	25.5	6.4
Port Olry	52.1	7.3	6.7	2.7	25.8	5.4
Lonpere	66.1	5.3	11.4	0.0	16.8	0.5
Lourou	18.1	6.5	49.9	0.0	13.2	12.3
Other	37.5	23.9	3.2	0.0	29.5	6.0

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.10
Average prices per kilo (FNH) in Vila and
Luganville for selected commodities

Product	Vila	Luganville
Taro, dry	19	7
Sweet potato	23	9
Nuts	17	23
Manioc	20	7
Yams	41	14
Coconuts	12	12
Pawpaw	12	11
Sugar cane	14	8
Grapefruit	25	6
Pumpkin	14	8
Coconut crabs	200	69

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.11
Village/location by average sales per vendor/day
(FNH), basic return fare and percentage of sales
represented by transport costs

	Average sale vendor/day(FNH)	Basic return fare(FNH)	Cost as a per- centage of average sales
Hog Harbour	845	214	25.3
Tangoa	753	220	29.2
Kole	945	225	23.8
Narango	720	279	38.7
Nubuloninbuk	971	206	21.2
Port Olry	615	200	32.5
Lonpere	783	200	25.0
Lourou	630	200	31.0

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.12
Value of goods sold per vendor/day

Sales (FNH)	Vendor/days	Percentage of vendor/days
Under 10	3	1.5
10 - 100	6	3.0
110 - 200	7	3.5
210 - 300	11	5.4
310 - 400	12	5.9
410 - 500	18	8.9
510 - 600	16	7.9
610 - 800	46	22.8
810 - 1000	24	11.9
1010 - 1500	37	18.3
1510 - 2000	13	6.5
2010 - 2500	5	2.5
2510 - 3000	2	1.0
Over 3000	2	1.0

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.13
Major occupations by main ethnic groups (1972)

Occupation	European	Asian	Pacific Islanders	Other	Total
Professional, technical, etc.	64	1	51	2	118
Administrative and managerial	13	2	2	2	19
Clerical and related workers	39	6	105	5	155
Sales workers	21	47	59	2	129
Service workers	17	2	231	3	253
Agriculture, etc.	5	4	118	3	130
Production and transport workers	33	13	561	22	629
Other (inadequately defined)	1	1	14	4	20
Total	193	76	1141	43	1453

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, 1973: 63.

Table 6.14
Ownership by store type

Store type	Ownership		
	Firm	Family/individual	Co-operative
Large firm	3	-	-
Town store	-	26	-
British co-operative	-	-	2
French co-operative	-	-	1
Other*	1	-	-

* Operated by a fishing company which caters principally for boats in the fleet. It is excluded from later discussion on stock and sales of food outlets.

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.15
Physical characteristics of the stores

	Co-operative	Ownership of store			Fishing company
		Firm	Asian family	European small	
Size of display area (m ²)					
1-50	3	1	18	2	1
51-100	-	-	3	1	-
100-200	-	-	-	1	-
200-299	-	-	-	-	-
600<	-	1	-	-	-
no information	-	-	1	-	1
Size of storage area (m ²)					
none	1	-	7	-	-
1-50	2	1	8	4	1
51-100	-	-	2	-	-
101-200	-	-	2	-	-
300-600	-	1	1	-	-
1560<	-	1	-	-	-
no information	-	-	2	-	-
Additional storage area					
yes	2	3	11	2	1
no	1	-	10	2	-
no information	-	-	1	-	-

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.16
Length of operation of the stores

Years since establishment	Co-operative	<u>Ownership of store</u>			Fishing company
		Firm	Asian family	European small	
0-5	3	0	10	3	-
6-10	-	-	5	1	-
11-15	-	-	3	-	-
16-20	-	1	1	-	1
more than 20	-	-	2	1	-
no information	-	-	2	-	-

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.17
Trading hours by type of store

	Co-operative	<u>Type of firm</u>			Fishing company
		Firm	Asian family	European small	
Hours per day					
7-9	-	-	2	2	1
10-12	-	-	6	-	-
11-12		1	13	-	-
more than 12	3	-	1	2	-
Days per week					
5 and a half	-	-	-	1	-
6 or 6 and a half	3	3	5	1	-
7	-	-	16	1	1
no information	-	-	1	1	-

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.18
Food as a percentage of overall stock by type of store

	<u>Type of store</u>				
	Co-operative	Firm	Asian family	European small	Fishing company
Food as a percentage of stock					
less than 25	1	1	13	1	1
25-50	2	2	2	1	-
50-99	-	1	4	1	-
all food	-	-	1	-	-
no information	-	-	2	1	-

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.19
Employee structure

	<u>Number of workers</u>					Total	Percentage of all workers
	0	1	2	3-6	8 or more		
Full time	2	5	14	10	2	90	70.3
Part time	17	7	3	6	-	38	29.7
Paid relatives	30	-	2	1	-	8	6.3
Unpaid relatives	13	4	8	8	-	51	39.8
Paid non-relatives	11	8	6	6	2	62	48.4
Unpaid non-relatives	30	1	1	1	-	7	5.5
Total						128	

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.20
Personal characteristics of store operator/manager

	European	Vietnamese	Chinese	New Japanese Hebri- dean	
Store type					
Firm	3	-	-	-	-
Asian family	-	2	20	-	-
European small	2	-	-	2	-
Co-operative	-	-	-	3	-
Fishing company	-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	5	2	20	5	1
Years resident in Santo					
0-5	-	-	2	4	-
11-15	1	-	-	1	-
16-30	3	-	13	-	-
more than 35	-	-	3	-	-
all life	-	2	1	-	-
no information	1	-	1	-	1
Years schooling					
none	-	2	7	-	-
3-6	-	-	4	3	-
7-12	1	-	1	1	-
13-15	1	-	3	-	-
more than 15	1	-	-	1	-
no information	2	-	5	-	1

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.21
Principal sources of direct imports by commodity
and store type

Commodity	<u>Ownership type of importer</u>			
	Firm	Asian family	European small*	Co-operative
Rice, sugar, salt, tea, potatoes, jam, soft drink	Australia	Australia	Australia	-
Tinned meat, tinned fruit, powdered milk	Australia France	Australia	France Australia	-
Tinned fish	Australia France	Australia Japan	France	-
Biscuits	Australia Fiji France	Australia Fiji France	Australia	-
Coffee	Australia France	Australia New Guinea France	New Caledonia	-
Butter	Australia	Australia France	France New Zealand	-
Wine	France	France	France	-
Beer	Australia France	Australia	France	-
Percentage of stores in each category with principal supply being direct importation	100.0	27.3	-	-

* Information only available on one store.

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.22
Value of surveyed stock for 30 selected items

Store type	Value-FNH	Percentage of total
Co-operatives	205 069	3.9
Firms	1 033 624	19.8
European family	325 200	6.2
Asian family	3 658 057	70.1
Total	5 221 950	

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.23
Inventory percentage of selected items by store type

	Rice	Tinned food	Biscuits	Beer and Wine	Other
Co-operatives	18.6	33.4	4.7	5.4	37.9
Firms	1.0	37.5	12.2	21.8	27.5
European family	6.3	51.3	3.3	10.2	28.8
Asian family	6.3	45.8	6.3	23.0	18.6

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.24
Fortnightly sales by store type

	Co-operatives		Firms		European small		Asian family		Total
	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	
Rice	40.2	20.3	19.6	26.6	10.9	1.6	17.7	51.6	20.3
Tinned meat	6.1	8.1	2.5	8.7	9.1	3.4	10.6	79.9	7.8
Tinned fish	6.6	7.2	3.5	10.3	4.8	1.5	12.8	81.0	9.3
Tinned fruit	1.6	5.1	4.9	40.7	1.3	1.1	2.9	53.0	3.3
Bread	14.4	22.0	0.9	3.7	22.3	9.6	7.3	64.6	6.7
Biscuits	2.7	5.7	0.6	3.3	2.6	1.5	7.4	89.5	4.9
Imported potatoes	0.0	0.0	28.6	92.7	0.4	0.1	1.0	7.2	8.5
Sugar	5.4	4.4	10.1	22.1	7.8	1.8	15.2	71.7	12.6
Salt	4.4	19.5	1.4	16.6	0.5	0.6	2.5	63.4	2.3
Local soft drink	1.8	16.1	0.2	5.4	5.1	12.8	1.3	65.7	1.2
Imported soft drink	2.3	2.7	7.8	25.0	16.4	5.5	9.8	66.8	8.7
Powdered milk	5.0	8.3	5.5	24.3	6.9	3.2	6.7	64.1	6.2
Frozen chicken	9.5	12.0	14.5	48.8	12.2	4.4	4.8	34.9	8.2
Total	100.0	10.3	100.0	27.6	100.0	2.9	100.0	59.3	100.0

a Percentage of sales for that store type.

b Percentage of total sales in that commodity.

Source: Field survey.

Table 6.25
Estimated total yearly sales

Type	Value (FNH million)	Per cent of total
Co-operatives	9.6	5.3
Firms	68.6	37.4
European small	5.4	3.0
Asian family	94.1	51.2
Market	5.7	3.1
Total	183.4	100.0

Source: Field survey.

Table 7.1
Sales of Store A, October 1973

	Value (FNH)	Per cent of total
Rice	24 860	36
Tinned fish	5 770	8
Tinned meat	3 850	5
Other food products	3 000	4
Total food	37 435	53
Total sales	68 700	100

Source: Field survey (the sales data were recorded by the storekeeper during October 1975. All the store sales cited below were collected in this way).

Table 7.2
Sales of Store B, October 1975

	Value (FNH)	Per cent of total
Rice	5 440	15
Tinned fish	830	2
Tinned meat	150	-
Other food products	4 590	12
Total food	11 010	29
Total sales	37 350	100

Source: Field survey.

Table 7.3
Sales of Store C, October 1975

	Value (FNH)	Per cent of total
Rice	7 074	18
Tinned fish	1 270	3
Other food products	5 950	10
Total food	18 249	45
Total sales	40 031	100

Source: Field survey.

Table 7.4
Sales of Melsisi store, May 1975

	Value (FNH)	Per cent of total
Rice	45 000	22
Tinned fish	6 000	3
Tinned meat	1 500	0.1
Other food products	30 000	14
Total food products	82 500	40
Total sales	208 295	100

Source: Field survey.

Table 7.5
Sales of small village stores

Example E - Village store in Lolonvini (middle country)		
	Value (FNH)	Per cent
Rice	6 840	32
Tinned fish	8 140	38
Tinned meat	140	-
Other food products	2 180	10
Total food sales	17 510	82
Total sales	21 230	100
Example F - Village store in Lolonvini (middle country)		
Rice	3 600	23
Tinned fish	4 200	27
Tinned meat	160	-
Other food products	2 030	9
Total food sales	9 890	63
Total sales	15 700	100
Example G - Village store in Lik (east coast)		
Rice	11 960	35
Tinned fish	1 290	4
Tinned meat	-	-
Other food products	2 080	4
Total food sales	15 330	43
Total sales	34 345	100

Source: Field survey.

Table 8.1
Ethnic composition of households in expenditure survey 1975

Ethnic group	Vila		Luganville	
	Number sampled	Average household size	Number sampled	Average household size
New Hebridean	85	6.3	37	5.6
European	33	3.6	25	2.8
Other	18	4.1	14	4.2
Total	136	5.2	76	4.3

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished survey.

Table 8.2
Average weekly household expenditure in Vila
and Luganville

	Vila		Luganville	
	FNH	Per cent	FNH	Per cent
Food	3 806	37.0	3 099	37.0
Drink and tobacco	897	9.0	861	10.0
Clothing and materials	1 094	11.0	840	10.0
Rent, water, fuel	463	4.0	368	4.0
Household goods(a)	1 154	11.0	892	11.0
Transport and and communication(b)	1 385	13.0	1 155	14.0
Recreation, health, education	1 610	15.0	1 136	14.0
Total	10 409	100.0	8 351	100.0

(a) Includes furniture, floor covering, etc.

(b) Includes parts, repairs, petrol, etc.

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data.

Table 8.3
Household expenditure 1975: per cent average weekly
expenditure

	Vila			Luganville		
	New Hebridean	European	Other	New Hebridean	European	Other
Food	43.7	24.6	33.6	40.1	29.2	33.1
Drink and tobacco	9.5	7.8	5.8	11.3	8.4	7.6
Clothing and materials	13.7	5.8	6.9	11.9	5.3	7.2
Rent, water, fuel	2.9	6.5	6.4	3.3	7.1	6.6
Household	8.8	14.3	13.1	9.3	12.4	16.1
Transport	10.1	17.0	19.1	12.3	18.1	15.3
Recreation,	10.9	23.6	14.6	11.8	19.5	14.1
Total	99.6	99.6	99.5	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data.

Table 8.4
Average household weekly expenditure by ethnic group:
Vila and Luganville (FNH)

	Vila	Luganville
New Hebridean	8 463.3	7 708.6
European	18 529.4	11 551.9
Other	9 510.3	8 452.6
Total	10 409.2	8 351.9

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data.

Table 8.5
Average household weekly expenditure on food by ethnic group. Vila 1975
(Figures in brackets represent per capita expenditure)

Product	New Hebridean		European		Other	
	Average weekly expenditure FNH	Per cent of average expenditure	Average weekly expenditure FNH	Per cent of average expenditure	Average weekly expenditure FNH	Per cent of average expenditure
Imported starch - bread, biscuits, rice, potatoes	1 393 (279)	37.6	411 (137)	9.0	657 (131)	20.5
Local starch - taro, etc.	48 (10)	1.3	45 (15)	1.0	24 (5)	0.7
<i>Total - starch</i>	1 441 (289)	38.9	456 (152)	10.0	681 (136)	21.2
<i>Total - sugar</i> (all imported)	492 (98)	13.3	91 (30)	2.0	396 (79)	12.3
Imported protein - meat, canned fish and meat, milk products	732 (146)	19.8	964 (321)	21.1	544 (109)	17.0
Local protein - fish and meat, milk, eggs	346 (69)	9.3	1 038 (346)	22.7	692 (138)	21.6
<i>Total - protein</i>	1 078 (216)	29.1	2 002 (667)	43.9	1 236 (247)	38.6
Imported fruit - fresh and canned	34 (7)	0.9	209 (70)	4.6	89 (18)	2.8
Local fruit	93 (19)	2.5	75 (25)	1.6	55 (11)	1.7
<i>Total - fruit</i>	127 (25)	3.4	284 (95)	6.2	144 (29)	4.5
Imported vegetables - fresh and canned	40 (8)	1.1	266 (89)	5.8	164 (33)	5.1
Local vegetables	18 (4)	0.5	47 (16)	1.0	49 (10)	1.5
<i>Total - vegetables</i>	58 (12)	1.6	313 (104)	6.9	213 (43)	6.6
<i>Total - other</i>	511 (102)	13.8	1 417 (472)	31.1	536 (107)	16.7
Total - imported	2 691 (538)	72.6	1 941 (647)	42.5	1 848 (370)	57.7
Total - imported plus other	3 202 (640)	86.4	3 358 (1119)	73.4	2 384 (477)	74.4
Total - local	505 (101)	13.6	1 205 (402)	26.4	820 (164)	25.6
TOTAL	3 706 (741)		4 563 (1521)		3 203 (641)	

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data.

Table 8.6
Average household weekly expenditure on food by ethnic group. Luganville 1975
 (Figures in brackets represent per capita expenditure)

Product	New Hebridean		European		Other	
	Average weekly expenditure FNH	Per cent of average expenditure	Average weekly expenditure FNH	Per cent of average expenditure	Average weekly expenditure FNH	Per cent of average expenditure
Imported starch - bread, biscuits, potatoes, rice	1 109 (241)	35.9	345 (115)	10.2	462 (98)	16.5
Local starch - taro, etc.	79 (17)	2.5	55 (18)	1.6	82 (17)	2.9
<i>Total - starch</i>	1 188 (258)	38.4	400 (133)	11.8	544 (116)	19.4
<i>Total - sugar</i> (all imported)	307 (68)	9.9	141 (47)	4.2	209 (44)	7.5
Imported protein - meat, canned fish and meat, milk, milk products	703 (153)	22.7	687 (229)	20.4	590 (126)	21.1
Local protein - meat and fish, milk, eggs	181 (39)	5.9	544 (218)	19.1	625 (133)	22.3
<i>Total - protein</i>	884 (192)	28.6	1 331 (444)	39.4	1 215 (259)	43.4
Imported fruit - fresh and canned, juices, nuts, etc.	37 (8)	1.2	179 (60)	5.3	123 (26)	4.4
Local fruit	101 (22)	3.3	51 (17)	1.5	141 (30)	5.0
<i>Total - fruit</i>	138 (30)	4.5	230 (77)	6.8	264 (56)	9.4
Imported vegetables - fresh and canned	34 (7)	1.1	194 (65)	5.7	145 (31)	5.2
Local vegetables	38 (8)	1.2	74 (25)	2.2	111 (24)	4.0
<i>Total - vegetables</i>	72 (15)	2.3	268 (89)	7.9	256 (55)	9.2
<i>Total - other</i>	502 (109)	16.2	1 005 (335)	29.8	309 (66)	11.0
<i>Total - imported</i>	2 190 (746)	70.9	1 546 (515)	45.8	1 529 (325)	54.7
<i>Total - imported plus other</i>	2 692 (585)	87.1	2 551 (850)	75.6	1 838 (391)	65.7
<i>Total - local</i>	399 (87)	12.9	824 (275)	24.4	959 (204)	34.3
TOTAL	3 091 (672)		3 374 (1125)		2 797 (382)	

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data.

Table 8.7
Average weekly expenditure on imported and local foods by ethnic group.
Vila and Luganville 1975

	New Hebridean		Vila European		Other		New Hebridean		Luganville European		Other	
	FNH	Per cent	FNH	Per cent	FNH	Per cent	FNH	Per cent	FNH	Per cent	FNH	Per cent
Imported food	3 202	(86.4)	3 358	(73.4)	2 384	(74.4)	2 692	(87.1)	2 551	(75.6)	1 838	(65.7)
Local food	505	(13.6)	1 205	(26.4)	820	(25.6)	399	(12.9)	824	(24.4)	959	(34.3)
TOTAL	3 707	(100.0)	4 563	(100.0)	3 203	(100.0)	3 091	(100.0)	3 375	(100.0)	2 797	(100.0)

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data.

* Includes other foodstuffs which are principally imported but a small proportion of local products which cannot be separated.

Table 8.8
Vila: Amounts of food components purchased
with 100 FNH, 1975-76

	Kcal	Protein*	Fat*	Carbo- hydrate*
<i>Imported energy sources</i>				
Flour	7 300	172	22	1 558
Rice (white milled)	9 000	167	16	1 973
Bread	3 527	93	18	736
Sugar (refined)	5 609	-	-	1 449
<i>Local energy sources</i>				
Yams	2 351	40	4	533
Taro, 'dry'	5 913	95	9	1 381
Manioc	5 913	49	12	1 418
Sweet potato	4 472	59	7	1 035
<i>Imported protein sources</i>				
Chicken	552	55	35	-
Corned beef (canned)	1 245	103	92	-
Fish (canned mackerel)	3 651	256	279	12
<i>Local protein sources</i>				
Beef, chuck	1 993	191	136	-
Eggs	641	49	46	4
<i>Local fruit</i>				
Bananas (eating)	5 392	63	13	1 173
Bananas (cooking)	4 919	52	22	1 271
Coconuts (mature)	13 455	161	1 303	498

* Grams of protein, fat or carbohydrate purchasable for 100 FNH.

Source: Food values from Jardin and Crosnier (1975).
 Vegetable and fruit prices for Feb.-Mar. 1976 from
 Table 5.10; others for Sept 1975 from Condominium
 Bureau of Statistics (1975b:7).

Table 8.9
Average weekly expenditure in FNH per person on food items
by high and low income New Hebrideans in Vila

	Low	High
Bread	39.0	77.5
Biscuits, non-sweet	6.7	7.4
sweet	4.9	12.6
Rice	117.6	142.6
Local beef, grilling	-	27.5
8 stewing	8.1	15.3
Canned beef	8.1	37.3
Poultry	57.5	37.2
Canned fish	32.6	28.3
Local fish	8.9	19.9
Powdered milk	7.4	17.7
Local eggs	-	10.2
Butter	2.3	8.8
Cooking oils	10.9	20.5
Local fruit	1.6	3.9
Imported fruit	0.2	0.6
Local vegetables	0.5	1.6
Local tubers	1.5	6.1
Imported tubers	-	0.1
Imported fresh vegetables	0.3	1.1
Imported canned vegetables	0.5	0.6
Sugar	57.8	45.8
Coffee, tea, etc.	2.5	1.0
Others	-	-

High - household income per month FNH2000-9999.

Low - household income per month < FNH2000.

Source: Condominium Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data.

Table 9.1
Individuals per establishment in food products

Excluding market vendors	Ratio	Date
Luganville	105	1976
Manila	118	1968
Vila	181	1976
USA	666	1966
Including market vendors		
Dagupan (Philippines)	81	1974
Santo	61	1976
Vila	67	1976

Source: Field surveys; Dannhaeuser (1977).

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Black out in Alice

Development Studies Centre
Monograph no. 26

Black out in Alice

A history of the establishment
and development of town
camps in Alice Springs

M Heppell and J J Wigley

Series editor Gavin W. Jones

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and in Miami, Florida, USA 1981

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Summary

This monograph examines the initial stage of the Alice Springs Aboriginal town camp development programs funded by the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. It sets the program in the context of the progressive marginalization and alienation of Aboriginal town campers in Alice Springs since the first white settlers arrived there in the late nineteenth century. The monograph, as far as is possible, describes the view of the Aboriginal camp problem formed by white administrators responsible for the camps. It also briefly discusses complex issues like race relations in Alice Springs to show the urban context in which the town campers dwell.

In 1975, the now defunct Aboriginal Housing Panel started to work in Alice Springs. The latter part of this monograph is devoted to describing its work and the way in which the Tangatjira Council, an Aboriginal town campers' association, was established and grew to play the major role in the affairs of the town campers. The final chapter examines the prospects of this council now that it has been deprived of assistance from independent professional bodies like the Housing Panel and is absolutely dependent on and accountable to government instrumentalities for the form and content of its continued existence.

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Acknowledgments

This monograph started as a report by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Panel on its development project in Mt Nancy camp, Alice Springs. Dr Myrna Tonkinson did much of the initial groundwork and the monograph owes much to her careful research and scholarly approach to the subject. So good was her work that the Panel recommended that the report extend its interest beyond a simple assessment of the Mt Nancy development to an examination of the history of town camps in Alice Springs. By this time, Dr Tonkinson had more pressing work and, for her own reasons, has declined to be named as one of the monograph's authors. Obviously, the present authors owe a great debt to her.

Many people, too numerous to mention by name, have provided information for this book without which the background material would have been very thin indeed. Geoff Shaw, Bob Durnan and Wally Dobkins, all of the Tangatjira Council, gave much of their time to answer interminable questions about the history of the Council. David Drakakis-Smith was most generous in giving the authors access to his copious field notes on his research in Alice Springs. Nic Peterson suggested some helpful additional reading. Peter Martin raised a number of critical points which required answering to improve the final few chapters. Finally Margaret Lanigan typed an early draft of the monograph with her usual enthusiasm and improving touch.

M. Heppell

Introduction

Alice Springs is one of Australia's most famous towns, celebrated in fiction and film, and now a major attraction of the Australian tourist industry. Resident in Alice Springs is a significant population of Aborigines, many of whom until recently were excluded from Alice Springs society and were the objects of scorn, derision and harassment on the part of officials and common citizens alike. Such actions still occur and Alice Springs, from time to time, receives unwelcome publicity as the racist clamours of some of its citizenry receive the full glare of attention from the nation's news media.

The Aborigines are Alice Spring's oldest citizens and, unlike the great majority of whites, remain in and around Alice for the whole of their lives. Until very recently, a large proportion of this population found its shelter and eked out an existence as illegal squatters on vacant crown land. They had no other homes. Most had no work. They were regarded by the white community as unwanted vagrants. They drank a lot and seemed locked in a vicious cycle of poverty, neglect and helplessness, the only release from which was the oblivion of intoxication. The town campers, or fringe dwellers as these people were called, were regarded as a problem for the township and much time was spent in devising schemes to rid Alice Springs of them. None were successful and the town campers still remain. Many, however, are now living in modern brick houses and there is a new spirit abroad in the camps which is hangover free and which has galvanized the town campers into transforming their environment and improving their economic and social prospects beyond measure.

One of the purposes of this monograph is to supply information about a successful Aboriginal development scheme and, in a modest way, to make a contribution to the hitherto neglected study of development programs in traditionally-oriented Aboriginal communities. In part, it is directed

at government and its administrative arm, the bureaucracy, to try to establish that the well springs of successful development programs are the people for whom they are designed and that, until the people can envisage a realization of these ends and consider them worth striving for, they are not likely to become motivated to take advantage of the opportunities and convert a program into a success. Only out of such a conversion are they likely to seek to acquire the requisite management skills to maintain such a program after the developmental support has been withdrawn.

In part, the monograph is aimed at architects and students of architecture to try to demonstrate that architecture, if it is to be a community tool, should be much more than simply the design of buildings. If architecture is to achieve substantial successes among communities with different values and social organizations from that of the architect, it must be based on an understanding of a particular community greatly in excess of that hitherto achieved by members of the profession.

This monograph should also be a contribution to the broader field of development studies, for it seeks to examine various aspects of the process of marginalization which has led to the town camp Aborigines occupying the place they do in the society of Alice Springs. As Gerry (1978) has argued, it is through an understanding of the mechanisms by which exploitation has taken place that successful means to initiate constructive change can take place.

For decades, Aborigines in Alice Springs were little more than creatures of the authorities, being pushed here and there to suit the whims of some particular administrator or petty official. Little has been written about the relationship between the bureaucracy and Aborigines in the Northern Territory (nor, for that matter, in the whole of Australia). Tatz wrote a useful thesis (1965) which examined the policies and practices of the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration (NTA) in the early 1960s and Collmann (1979a and b) has included some useful information in two articles recently published. Where possible, this monograph seeks to present information to indicate the attitudes of public servants about Aborigines and the Aboriginal 'problem' in Alice Springs and to give some idea of the quality of the relationship which has developed over the years between Aborigines and public servants.

One effect of Aborigines being deprived of their land and many of their cultural roots and of being pushed hither and thither with no say over what happened is that the great majority developed what appeared to be a passive dependency on government to meet all their wants. Many others, however, nourished a burning anger, only barely suppressed, at the many indignities heaped upon them by the newly arrived white visitors, an anger which occasionally erupted to the surface in drunken brawls and other acts of violence on person and property and usually committed on other Aborigines. The monograph examines, briefly, in a historical context, government policies and their repercussions in the treatment of Aborigines in Alice Springs, and sheds some light on the apparent unwillingness of Aborigines to do anything to help themselves.

In particular, the monograph considers the course of a development program to house all Aborigines living in town camps in Alice Springs. The program was begun by the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Panel. Its very success seemed to militate against the Panel which, in August 1978, was disbanded by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for reasons which have never been made public (at least those which were so laughable that one assumes that there must have been other more important ones). One possibility is that the Panel's concern with the broader issues of development went beyond its terms of reference, a factor which became a constant bone of contention between the Panel, the Minister and the head office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) in Canberra. The monograph describes the approach of the Panel to the development program and the reader can judge for himself the efficacy of this approach. It also describes the bases on which the house designs were prepared and how they were based on observations of the social organization of the Aborigines living in the town camps and in particular at Mt Nancy town camp. The final part of the design process initiated by the Panel, an independent evaluation of the project, was never completed owing to the governments's parsimony. It is hoped that this task will be undertaken by some scholar or official in order to establish whether or not the assumptions on which the Panel's work were based were well founded. A casual visitor, however, to Mt Nancy, the town camp in which the first houses were built, would not fail to be impressed at the appearance of the camp and the obvious way it was being enjoyed, with, in 1979, foals and bullocks grazing in yards, chickens roaming over the open spaces, well kept yards and houses little different

in appearance from the day they were handed over some two years before.

For the DAA in Canberra, the provision of housing for Aborigines is a design and delivery problem. The Panel, in the DAA's view, was supposed to evaluate and prepare house designs. Other building and endeavours were, for the DAA, beyond its purview. This monograph seeks to demonstrate how myopic is such a narrow definition of housing as a development tool. These comments should be seen in the context of the fact that, as I have argued elsewhere (Heppell 1979), housing became, after 1972, a focus of the Commonwealth government's development programs for remote Aborigines and usually accounted for between 30 and 40 per cent of the total annual budget of the DAA. Development, if it is to be successful (and the DAA's housing programs have, in the majority of cases, been far from successful), is more than simply placing a house on the ground and handing it over to its grateful (if somewhat bemused) new Aboriginal owners. As this monograph argues, it requires a keen interest on the part of the recipients which in turn leads to housing being incorporated into their value system. Once that has been accomplished the grounds for a successful housing program have been laid. It also requires an ability to manage the new demands created by this unfamiliar mode of living, and these management skills have to be acquired by learning and experience. For Aborigines, any housing development also has to provide an environment in which their social institutions can continue to operate.

In Alice Springs, housing developments also have to take into account the social organization of each Aboriginal group, which extends far beyond the group of kin residing in any camp to others living in remote settlements and cattle stations whose aspirations are often quite different from their urban cousins. Accommodation, if the camps are to fulfil all their functions, must be provided for remote kin if they, as visitors to Alice Springs, are not to be cut off from their normal hosts and important elements in any tribal network.

This monograph also examines in some detail the process of development which took place in the Alice Springs town camps. In 1975, when the Panel began its work in Alice Springs, the town was no jewel in the DAA firmament. The permanent head of the department had described Alice as one of the most difficult situations the Department had to deal

with.¹ This difficulty was partly attributable to the attitudes of the Aborigines. For a development program to be successful, the hitherto passive dependency of town campers on government had to change. Their lifestyle of degradation relieved by bouts of drunkenness was hardly the basis for a program which in 1977 was estimated to cost about \$8.5 million, nor for coping with the complex demands of living in houses with conventional facilities. Had the Panel simply designed houses, as other architects had done before them, the development program would have failed (if it ever got off the ground) and, with the way the bureaucracy works, it is probable that the town campers would have been blamed and been deprived for a number of years of a reasonable opportunity to enjoy some of the privileges and comforts which they had long desired.

To some extent fortune favoured the Panel, for it started its work in Alice Springs at the time when a burning issue - the acquisition through land rights of some kind of security of tenure to the land on which town campers dwelled - arose and consumed the attention of the town campers. It served to unite all the town campers with a common purpose. From the joint political action which they took to acquire town leaseholds, the town campers began to look critically at conditions in their camps and to devise means to alleviate them. It was this process of a growing and motivating interest in improving their conditions which, more than anything else, laid the groundwork for the successful program that the Alice Springs town camp developments have become.

Finally, I hope the monograph will be of some use to Aborigines in other parts of Australia. In essence, it is a tribute to the resilience of the town campers and to the perspicacity of their leaders in seizing their opportunity so well after years of oppression and in charting such a successful course.

¹Minutes of meeting between B.G. Dexter and Senator J.L. Cavanagh, 18 April 1974.

Chapter 1

The Alice

The town of Alice Springs (Fig.1) is located at the very centre of the Australian continent. With a population of 15,000 (according to 1976 census figures), it is the only town of any significant size in the vast area of central Australia. It is located in an arid region which is hot and dry for most of the year. At times it can be extremely windy with willy-willies (small tornadoes) a not uncommon feature. It can also be very cold, night temperatures often falling below zero during the winter. In the summer, heavy rains can leave the normally dry creeks and river beds flowing, sometimes to such an extent that they flood the surrounding countryside.

First established as a telegraph station in 1872, Alice Springs languished as a tiny European settlement for many years. In 1899, the population of the station and adjoining town (then called Stuart) totalled around thirty (Blackwell and Lockwood 1965). The town has from its earliest days served as a centre for miners and pastoralists in the surrounding areas, offering supplies and services. The extent of these services was markedly increased by the extension of the railway line to Alice Springs in 1929.

Besides easing the transportation of supplies from the south, the development of the railway radically altered the movement of cattle to southern markets. One result of these changes was a surge in the population and by 1932 there were around 200 whites in Alice Springs. Population growth then continued slowly until World War II, when the Allied Military Forces established a base at Alice Springs, which gave another boost to the population. In 1947 it had risen to 1,871.

The Pine Gap Space Research Facility, located 19km southwest of Alice Springs, was a major factor in the increase in population during the 1960s. According to Hanson and Todd (1974).

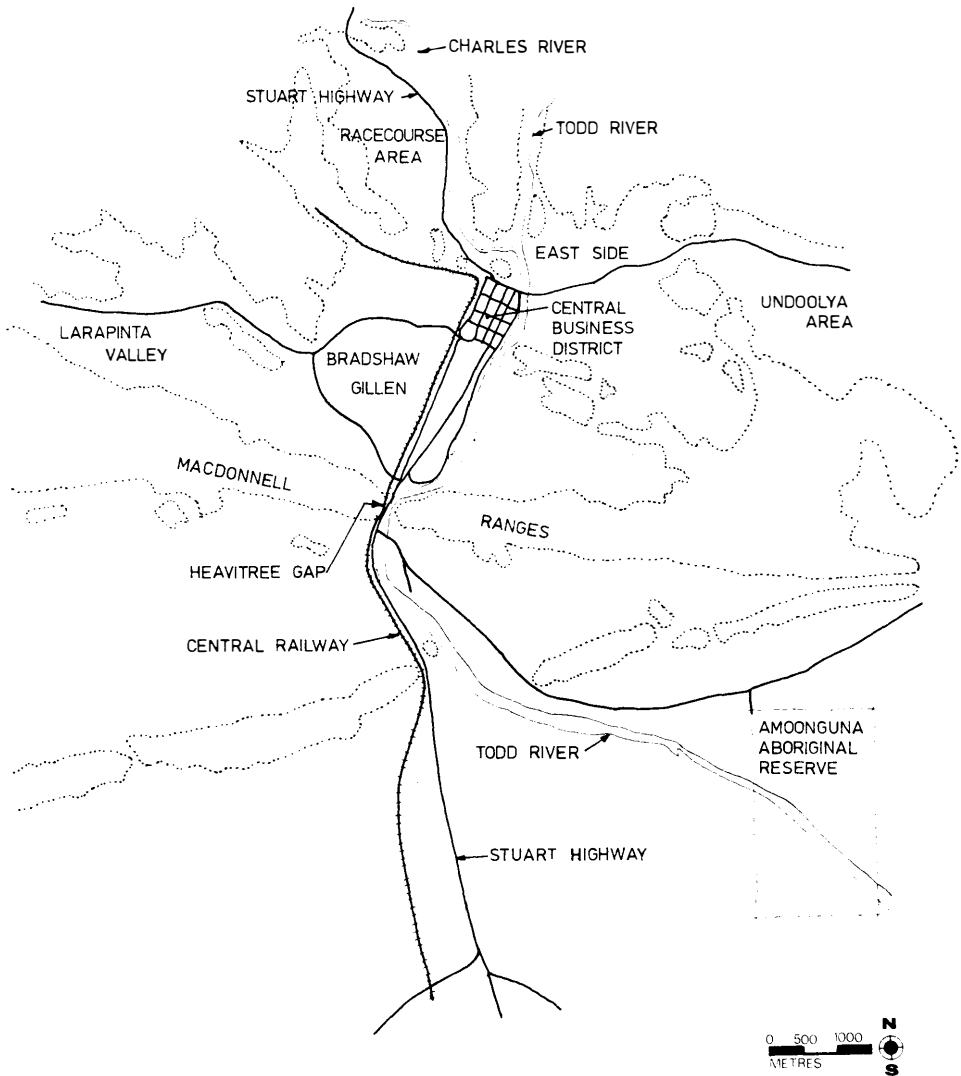


Fig.1 Alice Springs and its environs

the establishment of this facility gave the Alice Springs economy a considerable boost, with the town achieving a growth rate of 11% compound since 1966. Over 200 houses were built in the town for civilian personnel attached to the facility and, although the labour force levelled off to operational use, its continued operation will maintain demands for local goods and supporting services.

A further stimulus to population growth was the location of a number of federal government offices in Alice Springs to service the central desert area. The growth of Alice Springs as a government service centre was most marked after Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin in 1974.

The greatest stimulus to population growth in Alice Springs (see Table 1), however, has been tourism. Since the early 1960s, great emphasis has been placed upon the development of the town as a tourist centre. Each year, thousands of tourists from all over Australia and overseas come into Alice by air, road and rail. It is a base from which they make visits to the many spectacular scenic areas in the region such as Ayers Rock, the Olgas, Standley Chasm and numerous gorges, hills and other features. In 1977-78, 135,372 tourists visited the Centre, almost all of whom also visited Alice Springs, and this figure was projected to rise to 157,160 during 1979-80.

Table 1
Population of Alice Springs, 1961-79

Year	Official total	Europeans	Aborigines
1961	4,648	3,914	589
1966	6,037	4,815	875
1971	11,179	6,045	1,369
1976	14,149	9,660	1,575
1979	16,025		

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Northern Territory Statistical Summaries 1961-77; Census of Population, 4 July 1979.

Note: Figures do not add to total, as all respondents did not state race.

The experience of the Aboriginal residents of Alice Springs diverges so greatly from that of the Europeans that, to understand and assess their current circumstances and expectations, a separate account of their history and of their relations with white settlers is required.

Alice Springs and its environs have undoubtedly been inhabited by Aboriginal people for thousands of years. Certainly there were Aborigines in the region when the first Europeans arrived, but their hunting and gathering mode of adaptation precluded any permanent settlement in the desert. We can be certain, however, that any place with permanent water such as Alice Springs would have been an important camping area and would have been used regularly by nomadic bands in whose territory it lay. Not only would food and water have been available there, but regular visits would have been made to the many sacred sites in the area, such as Heavitree Gap, for ceremonial purposes (e.g. see Spencer and Gillen 1938).

European contact with Aborigines in the Centre came much later than in areas to the south. Various expeditions in the 1860s and 1870s came across groups of Aborigines, but these meetings were generally fleeting (Hartwig 1965). The first cattle reached Alice Springs in 1872. From that date, an increasing number of Europeans came into the region to establish pastoral stations. With most of the land in more desirable areas of Australia already alienated, the Central Desert was seen as a last source of land which would not also require a large capital outlay. Once permanent white settlers moved into the area, increased contact with the original inhabitants was inevitable. The consequences of that contact were monumental and devastating for the Aborigines, and the effects of it are still felt.

Although the Aboriginal reaction to whites was often one of fear, avoidance or restrained curiosity, sometimes their displeasure over the encroachment of whites on their territory, the takeover of water holes and, presumably, the desecration of sacred sites, was expressed by attacks on whites. In the Northern Territory in 1874, for example, the Barrow Creek Telegraph Station (the one nearest north of Alice Springs) was attacked by local Aborigines. Such Aboriginal resistance and the killing by them of stock were met with harsh punitive measures on the part of the whites, a pattern which continued well into this century. In the face of superior weapons and indiscriminate slaughter by whites, Aborigines were not only

pushed off the land desired by the settlers, but their attempts to retaliate diminished rapidly. The last slaughter of Centralian Aborigines occurred in 1928 and came to be known as the Coniston Massacre, when an estimated thirty-one Aborigines were gunned down by Constable Murray and a party of eight. In this context, it must be understood that the whites in Alice Springs were very much a minority in a hostile land and before the Coniston Massacre which followed the killing by Warlpiri of a European station owner, there were considerable fears that the whole white population might be massacred by local Aborigines. At the time there were rumours of Aborigines massing to attack.

The introduction of cattle into the arid Central Desert region meant the inevitable demise of the nomadic hunter gatherer adaptation of the Aborigines. All major water sources were quickly taken over by the pastoralists who located their homesteads by the best permanent ones. This meant the loss of water not only for humans but for the game animals on which they partly relied for food. For example, Finlayson (quoted in Frith 1977) established that, before the 1930s, the Central Australian region supported one monotreme, 29 species of marsupial and 8 species of rodent. By 1970 14 species including most of the bandicoots and small wallabies were extinct. Around Alice Springs, there were 10 surviving species of bandicoot, wallaby and kangaroo in 1932. By the 1960s only 4 remained (Newsome 1971).

The effect of cattle on native flora was probably even more serious. Chippendale (1963) has shown that, one year after cattle were introduced to a virgin range in Central Australia, the abundance and diversity of vegetation fell by two-thirds. Even then the vegetation was ten times that of country which had been grazed for many years. As vegetable foods probably accounted for well in excess of 50 per cent of the Central Australian Aboriginal diet, it is difficult to exaggerate the detrimental impact of cattle on Aboriginal food resources.

It was not long after the cattle industry was established in Central Australia that most of the Aborigines living there had to depend on the handout of rations by the Europeans in order to survive. Employers usually paid Aboriginal workers not in cash but in rations or clothing for them and their dependants. In addition, government subsidized rations were handed out on stations, missions and, later on, on settlements as they were established. The rations became for many

Aborigines their only dependable source of food and this must have had some appeal. But the rations were hardly nutritionally sound and must have been boring as well. They usually consisted of flour, tea, sugar and sometimes meat, jam and other items. In one year (1914) the supply of flour for Aborigines in Alice Springs was finished by the end of the month after the one in which it had been supplied (Commonwealth of Australia 1915). The Aborigines supplemented their rations with game and wild foods, when available, but their traditional subsistence had been essentially and irretrievably altered.¹

Devastating effects on Aborigines also ensued from the policies devised by government and white settlers over the years. The extremely complicated nature of those policies and their development and change over many years cannot be presented here. Rowley (1970, 1971) has considered them and explained them at length. Suffice it to say that these policies served to place and keep Aborigines in an abject position, made it easy to exploit them as cheap sources of labour and for sexual favours, and excluded them from many of the rights and privileges of Australian citizens.

Once white hegemony had been established, Aborigines legally became 'wards'.² They were placed under the control of official protectors and, among other things, could not vote, own land or other property, legally consume alcohol, were paid well below the rate for white workers (and the payment was often made in kind rather than in cash), had no freedom of movement and, in many respects, were unable to make decisions which affected their own lives. In short, most of the fundamental rights of Australian citizenship were denied the Aboriginal population.

It was not long after the arrival of whites that a sedentary Aboriginal population became settled in Alice Springs. It is difficult to ascertain the size of the population in the early years, as no records appear to have been kept. Doris Blackwell, in her book *Alice on the Line* (Blackwell and Lockwood 1965), states that when she arrived in the town with her parents in 1899 she saw about 150

¹It is impossible to document this history adequately here. For detailed accounts, see Hartwig (1965), Rowley (1970, 1971) and Stone (1974).

²The term 'wards' was not officially recognized in the Northern Territory until the 1953 Wards Employment Ordinance.

Aborigines camping along the Todd River. At that time, they greatly outnumbered the 30 white residents. And in 1914, the Northern Territory Administrator noted 'there are 120 to 140 Aborigines permanently camped at Alice Springs'.³ In the late 1920s, a number of Aranda camped permanently in and around Alice Springs. Plowman, for example, in his account of a journey through the centre of Australia, wrote:

There was no need to call Dick next morning. Less than a day's journey ahead was the very small, but hill-encircled township that to the dark-skinned lad spelt home. In those hills his ancestors had lived and roamed from time immemorial. There every blackboy spoke Dick's mother-tongue (the Arunta dialect), and there he would find plenty of mates (Plowman 1934).

There was employment for Aborigines. Some worked at the Telegraph Station and later more were employed on railroad and road building. Still later, during World War II, the Army employed many Aborigines as labourers.

Over the years the town of Alice Springs became an important centre for Aborigines from the outlying areas just as it was for whites. A long-standing pattern has developed of station employees and others coming into the town to visit relatives, seek recreation, purchase goods, obtain medical care and other services, or find employment and then often remain permanently. These visitors now swell the local core population of Aborigines resident in the town by many hundreds, especially during the off-season on pastoral properties. Most of the Aboriginal visitors stay in what are known as 'town camps' with relatives and friends.

The Aboriginal population of Alice Springs is by no means an undifferentiated or homogeneous one. Indeed, there are significant distinctions between various groupings which have developed out of the conditions and policies to which Aborigines have been subjected. Before proceeding further, these distinctions and their causes and consequences should be noted so that the Aboriginal groups which are the focus of this monograph can be identified clearly.

With the growth and expansion of pastoralism in the Centre, there was a rapid increase of whites into the area

³Commonwealth Archives: C.R.S. A3, NT 5471.

and, as in most pioneering communities, they were predominantly men. At the same time, Aborigines were perforce becoming more sedentary as they became more dependent on ration handouts for survival, many of which were related to work on a station. Despite official and popular opposition, illicit sexual liaisons between white men and Aboriginal women, both forced and unforced, were common and there was a concomitant growth of a part-Aboriginal population. The formulation of policies for the supervision of Aborigines was affected by this phenomenon. It was commonly assumed by whites that persons of mixed race would be more amenable to the adoption of European ways, and the more 'white blood' an individual had, the more successfully he or she could be educated (Rowley 1970:205-7). Thus, part-Aborigines were the first targets of government policies. Although there was official disapproval of the propagation of 'half-castes' and desultory attempts were made to limit it, it was realized that the process was inevitable. Official energies were, therefore, directed to separating the mixed blood population from the full bloods, discouraging marriage between mixed and full bloods and training the mixed bloods to work and eventually take their places in white society.

Separation of mixed blood child from full blood mother was usually achieved through force. A practice was developed of taking mixed blood children away from their Aboriginal mothers and placing them in institutions in Adelaide and elsewhere. Some of these children were adopted by or fostered out to white families. Many were never heard of or seen again by their parents. Many Aborigines in Alice Springs have vivid personal recollections of this kind of separation. Some children were slightly more fortunate and were not sent away from Alice Springs but were placed in institutions there, such as the Bungalow, which will be described later.

By the 1950s, the Welfare Branch of the NTA had become responsible for administering Aboriginal policy throughout the Territory. Collmann (1979a) has described the impossible situation in which many Aboriginal families were placed by Welfare Branch policy and the application of white economic and domestic values to the assimilation of Aborigines. According to Collmann, the principal economic virtue of a male was to obtain paid employment while that of the female was to display domestic virtues in bringing up a family properly. For Aborigines in Alice Springs, however, there was a dilemma. There was virtually no work for males there. The available work was on pastoral stations, usually a great

distance from the township. If a wife accompanied her husband to a station, the Welfare Branch deemed that the couple would not be able to care for their children properly and therefore confiscated the children and committed them to an institution.

Collmann (1979a:394) describes the situation of a Mt Nancy couple, Terry and Isabel Sharp. The husband was an excellent stockman and his wife always accompanied him when he was away. The result was, as Mrs Thatcher, the welfare officer in charge of the Sharps, told Collmann:

Terry and Isabel agreed to surrender their children only after the Welfare Branch threatened to take legal action against them. It warned them they had to place the children in institutions so they could attend school or face committal proceedings in the Alice Springs Children's Court. The Sharps decided to give up their children 'voluntarily'.

In such cases, it is hardly surprising that Aboriginal resentment of white interference in their lives grew.

Collmann also describes (1979a:390) how the Welfare Branch supported women who were prepared to maintain an approved household in which commitment was made to children rather than to a stable relationship with a man. Women, unlike men, could obtain domestic employment in Alice Springs and the Welfare Branch actually assisted them to find jobs and obtain babysitters. After 1961, single women became eligible for child endowment and supporting mothers' pensions which were paid in cash. The Branch and Housing Commission offered rebates to pensioners, which allowed single women to live in town even though their incomes were low. Indeed, according to Collmann, 'the welfare officers often encouraged women, depending on the men with whom they associated, to apply for pensions, live without men, and independently support their families'.

As a result of these and other historical facts, there is today a distinct mixed blood population in Alice Springs. The majority of these people are more or less integrated into the wider society but still proudly identify as Aborigines. They have been educated in European schools, share many European values, speak English as their principal tongue, hold a variety of jobs in Alice Springs and live in conventional European houses.

Many mixed bloods, however, have firmly rejected a suburban, European way of life, preferring Aboriginal values and modes of behaviour which they follow in discrete social groups to which they belong. These groups also include 'full bloods' who, with few exceptions, have maintained a cultural identity close to their traditional roots and separate from European/Australian culture. All the members of these groups understand an Aboriginal language, have varying proficiency in English, have had little or no schooling in the European educational system and hold largely to Aboriginal values (which is not to suggest that the Aborigines living in Alice Springs suburban houses do not). Therefore, there exists in Alice Springs a distinct socio-cultural group which is known as the 'town campers' or 'fringe dwellers' and these people are the subject of this monograph.

The term 'fringe dwellers' is commonly used to refer to certain groups of urban Aborigines and, although definitions of this term are imprecise, it implies both social and residential position.⁴ One official view of fringe dwellers appears in a submission made in April 1972 by E.E. Payne and H.M. Ford to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Environment:⁵

Fringe communities are those which live in crude self-made shelters on the outskirts of towns. They usually consist of itinerant Aborigines visiting town for a holiday or for medical attention, although some residents are relatively permanent. What employment they have is casual and poorly paid. Most of the camps are not officially sanctioned and have, therefore, no water or other services, with the result that unhygienic practices grow up and the camps present a generally depressing picture.

While much of this statement is factual, two points require comment. First, the notion that most people in the

⁴It should be noted that many of the Alice Springs camps are not literally on the fringes of the town. Some have been virtually surrounded by suburbs as the town has expanded.

⁵Commonwealth of Australia (1971-76:152). Payne and Ford were, respectively, First Assistant Secretary, N.T. Government Social Affairs Division, Department of the Interior, and Director, Administrative Services, Welfare Division, NTA.

fringe camps are itinerant is inaccurate, though commonly held. Because there are no reliable statistics available, it is difficult to state firmly how many residents there are in each camp and, anyway, the numbers vary with the number of visitors a camp accommodates at any time. It is certainly true, however, that, although many Aborigines from outlying areas visit Alice Springs and stay in the town camps, there is a core population of permanent residents numbering several hundreds (see Table 2). Many of these have lived in Alice Springs all their lives. Many of the older people in the camps have watched the town grow and found themselves inexorably pushed from camp site to camp site, each time further away from the centre. Moreover, there have been many occasions when camps have been dismantled by the authorities and their members forcibly evicted. These movements might have given the camps an air of impermanence, but it needs emphasizing that the core populations of town camps do not consist of itinerants; only, until very recently, of landless and dispossessed people.

The second point concerns the fact that, until the recent grant of leases to some of the camps, most were not officially sanctioned and therefore had no services. It is therefore hardly surprising that 'unhygienic practices' grew up. The NTA's submission is a telling statement in which official policy mirrors popular views. Despite the fact that some of the camps have been in existence for over thirty years, such essential services for urban living as reticulated water (or *any* water) and electricity have not been extended to them.⁶ Instead, the camps have been ignored or neglected on the assumption or hope that they will disappear. Payne and Ford well demonstrate the covert policy of official neglect. While acknowledging that in the camps 'some residents are relatively permanent', they conclude:

Permanent life in fringe camps is no basis for acceptance within the wider community and is a negative factor in the education of children, the employment of their parents, the general health of the total group and may represent a threat to the health of the wider community. The principles covering the provision of facilities at these camps, therefore, are that, while it is necessary

⁶This situation has changed since 1977 and the changes will be considered fully later in this monograph.

Table 2
Estimated core population of town camps

Aboriginal name	European name	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Ilibilili Tjatja	Dalgety's Paddock				60	56	20
Purarultna	Dick Palmer's	10	20	26	12	20	8
	Bazzo's Farm				40		
	Mt Nancy	70	50	69	50	75	100
Ntalka Ulpaya	Charles River	95	82	55	120	188	101
Ootnarungatcha	Trucking Yards	50	40	52	60	109	134
Knudnara	Morris Soak	30	30	21	20	84	168
Ilpea-Ilpea	Sadadeen			36	40	131	97 ¹
Yarintja	Heavitree Gap				130	55	12
Ntapa		80	80	99	60	69	50
Injlunga	Little Sisters	30	30	34	25	37	74
Parenja	Old Timers	40	45	27	15	62	24
Yirara					30		
	Artist's Camp	10	30	17			
	Others ^a	160	135	34			
Total		575	542	470	662	886	788

a The number of camps making up these populations were 9, 10 and 2 respectively.

Sources: 1974 - DAA (1974:30 Sept.). 1975 - DAA (1975:29 Apr.). In both DAA surveys, population ranges were sometimes given. In all such cases, the lower figure has been taken. 1976 - Cutter (1976). 1977 - Wigley (1977). 1978 - Tangatjira Council (1978). 1979 - N.T. Department of Health (1979).

to ensure adequate health and hygiene services and basic shelter, this should not represent an encouragement to permanent residence, since those using the camps have access to permanent accommodation at a settlement or mission where employment, health, education, accommodation and welfare services are available to assist them to improve the total range of their living conditions. If they wish to remain in contact with the town, similar services are available at the town settlements from which they may commute to employment etc.; alternatively, although few seem to want to do this, they may obtain housing commission accommodation within the general community (Commonwealth of Australia 1971-76:153).

The policy of official neglect is well exemplified by the apparent fear of the Commonwealth and the NTA that something done to improve the conditions in a town camp might become an encouragement to permanent residence. Payne and Ford's idea that alternative permanent accommodation existed at settlements or missions is risible. Included with the submission from which the above extract is taken was a survey which indicated that, at January 1971, there were 396 housing units available on settlements and 1571 families requiring permanent accommodation; and, on missions, 540 units available and 1687 families requiring accommodation. What kind of permanent accommodation Payne and Ford had in mind and how it would differ from the cleared pieces of bare earth available in town camps in Alice Springs is difficult to imagine. Quite apart from this, the implication that the Alice Springs fringe campers ought to live on settlements implies that they are unable to choose for themselves where they want to live - a view which harks back to their pre-1967 status. Not only that, those who wished to live in town apparently had no other alternative but to live in Housing Commission accommodation and be governed by a set of rules which paid scant attention to Aboriginal residential obligations. Alternatively they could move to one of the 'town settlements' and there 'remain in contact with the town'. Alice Springs had only one town settlement: Amoonguna, which is some 14 kilometres from the centre of Alice Springs and a long walk for the average Aboriginal family wishing to remain in contact with the town. There was no bus service between Amoonguna and Alice Springs, and those Aborigines without work could hardly afford a car. Those without a car could not get into Alice Springs to find work. Ford and Payne

neglected to say, however, how an Aboriginal town camper, even if he wanted to have the Housing Commission as a landlord, would overcome the prejudice and tenancy qualifications of the Commission and have his application granted. The principal tenancy qualification of the Housing Commission was that an Aboriginal applicant already display all the domestic virtues of a house-proud European housewife, a requirement which, when a family was living on a bare piece of earth in a dwelling built of materials salvaged from a local garbage dump, was difficult to meet.

The above discussion has brought us nearer to the official definition of a 'fringe dweller', at least as it was in 1971. The expression refers clearly to those Aborigines who have taken up residence in town but who, in the official view, have no right to be living there in the way they do. In fact, not only have they no right to be there, but, by remaining there, they represent a potential threat to the wider community (rationalized as a threat to the health of the community). Their presence, therefore, is met with hostility on the part of white residents, and rightly so, in the official view, because of the undefined evils they bring with them. In the white view, then, 'fringe dweller' is an ascribed social status describing those Aborigines who do not conform to European standards of behaviour, who should be resident in an appropriate establishment set up for them where proper behaviour can be learnt, but who have rejected this 'better way' and hang on, living in small groups where they can and eking out an existence on the fringes of society.

The expression 'fringe dweller' is a European one and one of opprobrium. For the Aborigines, the expression has little currency. The people who are the focus of this monograph are known as the 'town campers' and though this expression might be regarded as synonymous with 'fringe dwellers' by many Europeans, it refers to groups of people about which there are only positive aspects. Town campers are people who have largely rejected the European suburban way of life, desire to live in small closely knit homogeneous groups which exalt certain human values above those held and expected by white society (such as kinship obligations) and, above all, want to pursue their chosen lifestyle away from any possible interference by outsiders who little understand the values and aspirations of the town campers.

The Bungalow

It was not long after Europeans had established a settlement in Alice Springs that an institution known as the Bungalow was established for those Aboriginal people who wanted to live in the town.⁷ The Bungalow was established in 1915, when an Aboriginal woman, Topsy Smith, from the mining town of Arltunga, moved into Alice Springs (then called Stuart) with her seven mixed blood children. She was allowed to camp near the Police Station and soon arrangements were made to provide accommodation there for mixed bloods (mostly children). First, one corrugated iron shed was built and later a further two were added. The local school teacher, Mrs Standley, was appointed matron of the Bungalow. She continued to teach white children in the morning and Aboriginal children in the afternoons. She also supervised the running of the Bungalow. By 1923 there were sixty children there.

The Bungalow, almost from the outset, was not without its critics. Spencer (1923) considered it to be inadequate. He recommended that it be closed and that a more substantial training institution be set up expressly for part-Aboriginal children. In 1928, J.W. Bleakley (who was Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland), as part of his inquiry into the situation of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, deplored the conditions at the Bungalow and recommended that it be closed and that 'half-caste children of 50% or more Aboriginal blood' be sent to Hermannsburg Mission and the remainder to 'European institutions where they can be given a reasonable chance of absorption into the white community to which they rightly belong' (quoted in Stone 1974).

The Bungalow did not close. In 1932, the Stuart Telegraph Station (about 7 km from the centre of the township) did and the Post Office and staff were moved into town, which became known as Alice Springs. The Station buildings were taken over by the Welfare Department and the Bungalow name and population were transferred there. The move, though not apparently related to white demands that Aborigines not reside within the precincts of the township, resulted in the permanent Aboriginal population of Alice Springs being removed from the town.

⁷Notes on the Bungalow's early history were made by W.B. Spencer in a report to the Commonwealth (Spencer 1923).

The buildings at the station were more substantial than those in town and were used as a school, dormitory, clinic, offices and staff quarters. Not all, however, were or remained in good condition. In 1939, for example, a Member of Parliament deplored the conditions in which the 120 children and 14 adults at the Bungalow were living (Stone 1974:181).

In 1942, the Bungalow ceased to operate as an educational establishment. After the bombing of Darwin, all the residents were evacuated to Balaclava in South Australia and the Bungalow was closed. The army transformed the buildings into one of five labour camps for Aborigines which were located between Alice Springs and Darwin. It was reopened as a reserve in 1945, but for full-blood Aborigines, the part-Aboriginal children having been placed in St Mary's school in town. The purpose of the Bungalow Reserve was clear, as exemplified by an instruction from the Director of Native Affairs to his acting District Superintendent in Alice Springs:⁸

The practice of relatives who accompany patients to hospital residing on the block is to cease. The Bungalow Reserve has been created to provide for people visiting Alice Springs, and tribal objections notwithstanding, you must take firm steps to see that only those natives authorised to be within the prohibited area of Alice Springs reside there.

By 1960, the population of the Bungalow Reserve had grown to 386, and once again it became the butt of criticism by Europeans and European organizations in the town.

The case of the Bungalow illustrates some of the contradictions in the official approach to Aborigines in Alice Springs. Initially, the Bungalow was principally an educational establishment set up for children of Aboriginal and European unions. Not surprisingly, many Aboriginal parents did not want to be separated from their children resident in the Bungalow and, accordingly, camped nearby. The Bungalow, therefore, provided a compelling attraction to a number of Aborigines to set up a permanent camp close to the town of Stuart where they became accustomed to many of the facilities a town had to offer. No basic services, however, were provided for them.

⁸F.H.Moy, Director of Native Affairs to Acting District Superintendent, Native Affairs Branch, Alice Springs, 5 June 1952.

In many respects, the government's action over the Bungalow and inaction over the parents camped nearby mirrored parallel developments in the town. The government created a compelling reason for some Aborigines to take up residence near a facility or attraction they desired. Having provided the impetus to settlement, it did nothing to ameliorate or improve the conditions thereby created because, as far as the government was concerned, the Aborigines should not have been there in the first place. As more camps became established, so the government became more concerned about the undesirable features of these camps, the most persistent of which were that black faces and their associated living habits were not wanted around a white township.

Other Aboriginal camps

Not all Aborigines placed on the Bungalow Reserve wanted to be incarcerated there. According to Collmann (1979a), some preferred to live in the hills around Alice Springs, supporting themselves by traditional methods. As these 'desertions' were contrary to the provisions of the Welfare Ordinance of 1953 which made it illegal for these Aborigines to live outside the reserve without the Administration's permission, systematic searches were made for these deserters, and, when found, they were returned to the Bungalow.

While Aborigines fleeing the Bungalow Reserve were systematically sought and returned, others were being removed from the township of Alice Springs which, under section 11(2) of the Aboriginal Ordinance 1918-1947, was a prohibited area. They were sent back to their missions.

At the same time as the Bungalow was operating there was at least one Aboriginal camp in Alice Springs. Collmann (1979a) has described a camp situated by the Todd River adjacent to the old Telegraph Station. Apparently when the Telegraph Station was moved the people in this camp were taken to Hermannsburg. These people would have had strong associations with Alice Springs and many of them returned there from time to time. Others came in with relatives brought in to the hospital, the latter refusing to be admitted unless accompanied by kin.⁹ To reside there, however, they required the written permission of a Protector and supplementary permits were required for temporary visits.

⁹W. McCoy, Acting District Superintendent to Director of Native Affairs, 30 May 1952.

The experience of the Finke River Mission block exemplifies the authority's response to Aborigines living in Alice Springs. The Finke River Mission (which also administered the Hermannsburg Mission) purchased a block of land which initially was on the outskirts of Alice Springs, some distance from any town buildings. The block came to be used by Aborigines and caused the authorities considerable concern. Numbers of Aborigines could often be found there. For example, on an inspection by the Native Affairs Branch on 21 September 1949, there were 51 Aborigines there ranging from individuals doing work in Alice Springs to 17 members of the Namatjira family apparently preparing to move to Haasts Bluff,¹⁰ and, on 7 May 1952, there were 33 including a family, one of whose children later became the leader of the Ilparpa town camp.¹¹

The Administration's concern about Aborigines camping within the town boundaries seemed to increase as the township expanded. For example, the Acting District Superintendent of the Native Affairs Branch wrote to the Superintendent of the Finke River Mission suggesting improvements to the block:¹²

I am of the opinion the time has now come, owing to the rapid expansion and development of Alice Springs township, for a review of conditions applicable to natives resident within the prohibited area of the town and that such conditions and facilities must be brought up to date to obviate unfavourable criticism.

In this direction Administration will build a camp adjacent to the Sanitary Depot for sanitary workers only complete with ablutions, conveniences and communal wash-houses.

It has been the practice in the past for Officers of this Branch and the Police to remove natives other than your Staff from your Mission block periodically as occasion demanded. This action has proved unsatisfactory as the natives drift

¹⁰L.N. Penhall, Patrol Officer to Acting District Superintendent, Native Affairs Branch, Alice Springs, 22 September 1949.

¹¹B.D. Greenfield, Cadet Patrol Officer, Report - Finke River Mission Block, Alice Springs.

¹²W. McCoy, Acting District Superintendent, Native Affairs Branch to Superintendent, Finke River Mission, 19 September 1949.

back after a time and conditions remain unchanged. Complaints concerning the manner in which natives are camping within the town area at the Mission block have been made to the Alice Springs Progress Association to the effect unsanitary conditions etc., prevail in the area and in this regard, it must be realised this town is expanding and modernising rapidly and native administration must keep pace with it. Formerly your Mission block could be considered to be on the outskirts of the town whereas it now occupies a central position with which it must conform.

For Aborigines who should not be in Alice Springs, action could be swift:¹³

They [a list of 20 'boys'] were all warned to get a job and camp out at the Bungalow or get out of the town. As I had a list of their names, they would be removed by the Police if they were caught loafing around the town. Those who were camping outside the Gap, were told to shift out to the Bungalow, as if I caught them camping there I would give them a day to get out and then burn the wurlies.

The Finke River Mission echoed the concern of the authorities, perhaps more out of a fear that it might lose some of its flock at Hermannsburg if Aborigines from there were allowed to live in Alice Springs. For example, F.W. Albrecht wrote:¹⁴

after our people have kept away from town for some months past, they have tried again lately to establish themselves there by going in for a week or so. On a number of occasions it was said they wanted to see the Doctor. Then, after seeing the Doctor, they will continue there on their own and without a permit. All this is nothing but a new attempt to make the Mission Block their holiday resort.

¹³L.N.Penhall, Patrol Officer to Acting District Superintendent, Native Affairs Branch, Alice Springs, 23 February 1951.

¹⁴F.W. Albrecht to the District Superintendent, Native Affairs Branch, Alice Springs, 23 February 1951.

Since we cannot exercise any control of the place when absent here at Hermannsburg, and as we consider the whole contact detrimental and against their best interests, we thank you if again periodical inspections of the place would take place, and all those without a permit removed.

Certainly the Administration had the view that the Mission would not act because of a fear that their flock would reduce:¹⁵

Pastor Albrecht has been repeatedly advised to adopt a firm attitude to prevent persons camping on Mission property, but has in the past been loath to do so for fear of adversely affecting the attendance of his congregation.

The Little Flower Black Mission

When the Bungalow was transferred to the Old Telegraph Station buildings, a camp was started on what is now the Anzac Oval. Then some time after 1929 this camp shifted to a piece of land between the western boundary of the Bungalow Reserve and the eastern boundary of the Charles River (Collmann 1979a). According to Collmann, the shifts in this camp's location were a reflection of the restrictions on Aboriginal settlement in Alice Springs and the expansion of the town. Collmann wrote that this camp consisted predominantly of Aborigines from the vicinities of Alice Springs. It also became a meeting place for Aborigines from the north and south, serving as a kind of frontier post between the two groups. As an example of this frontier position, Aboriginal camel drovers on trains travelling north/south would change at the camp, southern drovers handing over to northern ones if the train was heading north, and vice versa.

According to Collmann, this camp came to be associated with the Roman Catholic church from the mid 1930s. O'Grady (1977:24) described how this started in 1935:

They drove to a camp four miles out of the town and found it deserted. Another two miles and they saw three adult blacks sitting in the dust and from them they learnt of a goat camp a little

¹⁵W. McCoy, Acting District Welfare Officer to Director of Welfare, 23 May 1957.

further on. Here they found six men, fifteen lubras and three boys ... Father Moloney went right to the point and told them that he and Frank [Brother Frank McGarry] were going to establish a mission for them. They thought the idea a good one, but Frank wondered if they understood.

This school was not without strong opposition from within the town. The Protector advised Father Moloney:

speaking officially I think you would be wise in considering the deep rooted feeling against the blacks. And though, as Protector, I gave you permission to start your black school, I think it would be wiser to go out to their camps and teach there (O'Grady 1977:25).

The school, known as the Little Flower Mission, started at the Presbytery in Alice Springs, but, by 1936, opposition to the presence of Aborigines in the town had become strong. For example, late in 1936, the Police Sergeant reported to the Administrator that the Catholic Mission wanted to turn Alice Springs into a semi-black town (O'Grady 1977:36). The school was therefore moved out of town, to a place along the Charles River, the first classes being held there in February 1937. Soon there were 113 Aborigines at the Mission (27 men, 26 women, 49 children of school age and 11 under). By August 1938, the numbers had risen to 140 (50 men, 40 women and 50 children) (O'Grady 1977:45, 59). By February 1941, numbers had risen to 221.

By 1940, official policy towards natives in and around Alice Springs was changing. According to O'Grady (1977:71), there were to be three permanent camps in the district: at Hermannsburg, Jay Creek and the Little Flower Mission. Jay Creek was set aside for non-working blacks, the aged and the infirm. Those who refused to live at Jay Creek would be sent bush, receiving a ration of flour, tea and sugar each Saturday, an issue of clothing twice a year and a blanket or two for the winter. In 1942, with Alice Springs becoming a major military centre, especially after the Japanese bombing of Darwin, word was received that the Mission must move out to the abandoned mining township of Arltunga (the township from which Topsy Smith and her family had moved to Alice Springs), some 90 km east of Alice Springs (O'Grady 1977:75). A mission reserve of 86 square miles (22,300 ha) was granted. This group was subsequently moved to Santa Teresa, about 90

km southeast of Alice Springs, when it was discovered that there was insufficient water at Arltunga for the population there.

Official responses to Aborigines visiting Alice Springs or attempting to reside there for any length of time were another factor likely to contribute to a growing resentment of white authority on the part of Aborigines. Many of the residents of Hermannsburg, Santa Teresa and Jay Creek were Aranda who had attempted to live at least semi-permanently in Alice Springs but had been removed. It is hardly surprising then, that many would try to return to the place in which they had tried to set up residence.

Amoonguna - a town settlement

The 'solution' to the problem of unwanted Aborigines littering the approaches to Alice Springs was for a settlement to be established a reasonable distance from the town. There, Aborigines could be settled and trained in the required European virtues before being permitted to take up an accepted place as full and respected citizens in the broader Australian polity. The place chosen was called Amoonguna; a reserve of two square miles (520 ha) was gazetted and the first Aborigines were moved there in June 1960.

Amoonguna was officially conceived as a self-contained village well away from the town where all Alice Springs Aborigines would live and where Aboriginal visitors from outlying areas would camp. This, it was thought, would solve the problem of unauthorized camps being set up in town. The plan was for the village to become self-contained, supporting itself by engaging in vegetable and fruit farming and keeping pigs. When Amoonguna was first occupied in June 1960, there were seven conventional houses (for European staff), quarters for unmarried staff, two dormitories, a school, hospital, kitchen and dining room, all of which were located in a discrete area of the settlement. Elsewhere, fifty-one unfurnished aluminium sheeted Kingstrand houses (costing £620 each) and three ablution blocks (one of which was for the school children and had hot water) were erected for Aborigines. Water and electricity were available in the settlement but were not reticulated to the Kingstrand houses.

The seeds of Amoonguna's failure were present from the outset. Physically, the amenities provided for Aborigines (and the basis for their first steps on the road to

assimilation) were not impressive. The Kingstrand houses have been described by Tatz (1965):

These units can best be described as mobile 'Meccano' sets, packed in crates, assembled on concrete slabs and held together by nuts and bolts ...

The writer's observation of them (after 18 months of usage) is that weathering, overcrowding (where they are used) and the mere leaning against walls give these units a lifetime of not more than four years. Kingstrand aluminium is meant to reflect heat. While the writer's experiments are not put forward as scientific evidence, his conclusion, on attempting to live in an unceilinged, uninsulated Kingstrand in Central Australia, is that they are uninhabitable. The concrete floor was hot at 11 p.m.; the measured temperature was 19°F higher than the outside temperature and 23°F higher than the interior of a spinifex-grass humpy at the same hour. 'Bloody fire box' was one of the printable verdicts of Aborigines who discussed the house.

The Kingstrand house belongs to the category 'transitional house'. The purpose of transitional houses was to provide Aborigines with appropriate, simple physical forms so that they could learn to live in a permanent dwelling. With experience, they would gradually progress from simple dwelling to one with some basic amenities like running water. Eventually, a family would progress to a conventional European house. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Heppell 1979), this approach is quite inappropriate as the 'transitional' house bears little resemblance to a typical European dwelling and therefore cannot provide the quality of experience desired by the designers of the program. Moreover, they are quite inadequate shelters in themselves, as Tatz has described. At Amoonguna, the inadequacy of the shelter was compounded by the insufficient number built. In 1960, the Aboriginal population at Amoonguna was 386. By building only 51 Kingstrand houses, the government was planning for an average occupancy rate of 7.6 people per house. With less than 100 square feet (9.3 sq.m) available in each house, it is hardly surprising that Tatz was able to record that overcrowding, after 18 months, had already taken its toll.

By 1965, the Amoonguna population had risen to 538, which correspondingly increased the strain on the 51 Kingstrand

houses available for Aborigines. This, then, was the 'town settlement' which, according to Payne and Ford, provided permanent accommodation for any Aboriginal who wanted to remain in contact with the town. In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the town camps they complained about continued to flourish.

A second disadvantage suffered by Amoonguna was its distance from Alice Springs. Located 14 km from the township, it was simply too far away for Aborigines to commute daily to 'employment etc.', as Payne and Ford envisaged. In 1960, very few, if any, Aborigines owned vehicles. There was no public transport, though a 'works bus' drove to Alice Springs in the morning and returned in the evening. To walk to town meant a 28 km round trip. For an Aboriginal, the settlement was barely in the locality of Alice Springs.

In reality, the settlement of Amoonguna, with its separate school and hospital, does not seem to have been planned as a satellite Aboriginal suburb of Alice Springs. It seems more to have been a manifestation of the government's ongoing policy of segregation as a preliminary stage in the assimilation process. That it has been unsuccessful cannot be denied. The Kingstrand houses built for the residents now lie abandoned. Although the lack of success has partly been due to the unsuitability of the buildings and the poor economic opportunities in the place, it is also partly due to the fact that, at Amoonguna, members of several linguistic groups (the Northern Territory Annual Report of 1963-64 listed Aranda, Anmatjira, Warlpiri, Luritja and Pitjantjatjara) were brought together and forced to live in an undifferentiated area in which it was impossible to maintain traditional boundaries. Tensions necessarily sprang from these living arrangements and the traditional enmities between and within these groups often spilled over into serious conflicts resulting in physical violence. Another reason for these tensions was that Amoonguna was in Aranda country. As the Assistant Director of the Welfare Branch in Alice Springs wrote:

There are Aborigines who are genuinely afraid to go to Amoonguna, partly because of the fighting and drinking, *but more because it is not their country, they are strangers there and they have relatives in Alice Springs with whom they prefer to camp and mix* (Lovegrove 1969).

The failure of Amoonguna has led to a decline in its population, which, since 1968, has been dramatic,¹⁶ at a time when the total Aboriginal population was growing quite dramatically. Many Amoonguna residents returned to camp in Alice Springs itself, and thus created renewed pressure on the town camps which had endured since 1960.

One thing that Amoonguna has demonstrated is that many Aborigines who want to live in Alice Springs, given the choice between poor but improving physical amenities some 14 km outside Alice Springs and no amenities whatsoever within the township itself, will choose the latter. Even now, this preference does not appear to have been recognized by many Europeans living in Alice Springs and some still will not admit that Aborigines have a right to live at all in Alice Springs. As recently as March 1977, for example, an alderman is reported to have stated that all the Aborigines in the town camps should be removed from the town and dumped at Amoonguna with a high fence keeping them in. And so official discrimination against Aborigines in Alice Springs is perpetuated, and resentments grow.

¹⁶In 1960 the population of Amoonguna was 386; in 1962, 489; in 1964, 484; in 1965, 538; in 1966, 486; in 1967, 431; in 1968, 349; in 1974, 220; and in 1977, 150.

Chapter 2

Race relations in Alice Springs

The subject of race relations is a complex one which cannot be explored fully here. Since, however, relations between white and black Australians in Alice Springs impinge so strongly on all aspects of Aboriginal life, and particularly on housing, and have affected and still do affect black attitudes to whites, it is necessary to consider this subject, albeit briefly. In Chapter 1 the attitudes of white authorities to their black wards has briefly been indicated and in later chapters there will be further examples of such attitudes, all of which are based on the idea that one race is superior to the other and that the blacks have many types of behaviour which, to the whites, are unacceptable.

It should also be noted here that all Aborigines in Alice Springs do not share the same position *vis-à-vis* whites in the town: the extent to which an Aboriginal conforms to European culture helps to determine his relationship with the dominant group. One, for example, is a Member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and deputy leader of the opposition. In his former capacity, he represents many Europeans in his electorate.

With few exceptions, white/black relations in Australia have been marked by negative features of every sort since the earliest contacts. In particular, they have been on an unequal footing, with the blacks in a subordinate position. As happened all over Australia, white settlement of Central Australia brought with it devastation of traditional Aboriginal practices. The whites entered the area, appropriated land and embarked upon economic pursuits which were inimical to the Aboriginal way of life. Few whites expressed qualms about their impact upon the indigenous population and, if anything, the Aborigines were perceived as sub-human obstacles to progress, as the following words written about white attitudes in the 1930s indicate:

Vince White was Deputy Chief Protector of Aborigines and was on his way back to Darwin from holidays.

He was employed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. He knew much of the natives who lived like animals on the outskirts of Alice Springs (O'Grady 1977:9).

Other whites had even more extreme attitudes:

with few exceptions, the whites in Alice Springs regarded the indigenous people as the scum of a very nasty earth and acceptable only for what they could do in the form of work for the lowest possible remuneration. As Father Moloney had said, Alice Springs was populated mainly by 'black haters' (ibid.:14).

As long as the whites could see the Aborigines as something other than equal human beings, they could formulate policies and take actions which would have been unthinkable in dealing with their fellows. Thus, for example, it was quite common for Aborigines suspected of killing cattle to be summarily shot by policemen without so much as an attempt to ascertain the facts of the matter (Rowley 1970).

There was little appreciation of Aboriginal culture and values. Even those who were interested in these things tended to view the Aborigines in a patronizing way and not as equals. Those who advocated a policy of protection for Aborigines fit into this category. Thus, for example, the noted anthropologist, W. Baldwin Spencer, in a report written in 1913 after a year of close study of Aborigines, while expressing appreciation of cultural differences and acknowledging the integrity of Aboriginal ways, was able to recommend, among other things, that:

all Aborigines and half-castes should be either in compound or in their employers' quarters after sunset. A regulation should be passed forbidding them, except by special permit, to camp or wander about within the prescribed limits of any township between the hours of sunset and sunrise. Any Aboriginal or half-caste infringing this regulation should be liable to be locked up by a police officer (quoted in Stone 1974:142).

Official policies have changed over the years, but many of the basic attitudes of the white population have changed very little. Ignorance of Aboriginal culture, hostility to

Aboriginal people and overall racist views are widespread. Thus, for example, the policy of assimilation which officially became the joint policy of Commonwealth and States in 1951 was defined in the 1961 Native Welfare Conference (Rowley 1971:398).

The policy of assimilation means that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs as other Australians.

It was based on the expectation that part-Aborigines (and eventually all Aborigines) would adopt the dominant European culture and thereby become part of a unified Australian culture. The inequity and lack of success of this policy was eventually recognized officially and after 1967 was gradually abandoned in favour of more tolerance of diversity. The McMahon government moved towards a policy of integration although within the government there was a wide range of opinions about the most appropriate policy approach towards Aborigines, especially with respect to recognizing traditional claims to land. The Ministers for the Interior, supported by their department, tended to take a conservative approach towards change in policy while the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, supported by the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, were the principal movers for change from within the government. What moves the McMahon government made towards integration subsequently gave way to the Labor policy which came to be identified as one of 'self-determination' for Aborigines. Although this policy was never adequately defined, the subsequent and current Liberal policy of 'self-management' has. By it, Aborigines will be required to play a 'significant role' in determining their long-term goals and objectives and in setting the priorities for expenditure. This policy appears to be predicated on the overall objective of Aboriginal groups moving towards economic 'self-sufficiency'. Therefore, to sum up, the period 1967 to 1972 saw an easing of the assimilation policy and after 1972 an official switch to permit Aborigines themselves to become the determinants of their future, or at least that was how the policy was presented to the public.¹

¹For a short discussion of these policies as they affect housing see Heppell (1979).

For the man in the street, successive Aboriginal policies and all they intend count for little. In Alice Springs at least he does not appear to be particularly tolerant of diversity. For him, the only good Aboriginal is an assimilated one. As long as Aborigines do not conform to white standards, they will continue to suffer the disdain and rejection of those who see them embodying all that is antithetical to white mores.

Any discussion of racism in Alice Springs tends to focus on white views and attitudes. Undoubtedly, Aborigines have feelings and attitudes regarding whites and, as stated earlier, there were hostilities on both sides in the days of early contact. But it is impossible not to emphasize the dominant side in such an unequal relationship. White attitudes very much determine the nature of white/black relations. White policies have had enormous impact on the lives of Aborigines. For example, as noted in Chapter 1, the granting of land to pastoralists had immediate effects on the subsistence of Aborigines, forcing them to come begging to whites for sustenance in order to survive. The policy of assimilation in The Northern Territory has led directly to the collecting of Aborigines on government settlements and missions (often transported there by government officials: Meggitt 1962) and to their becoming more sedentary in their life style, more dependent on European goods and finally more interested in urban delights such as Alice Springs has to offer. Aborigines had no say in these early policies even though they directly affected many details of their own lives. Even when actions were taken with the best intentions (and they were not always) their effect was usually to undermine and injure Aboriginal life.

The Aboriginal experience has been one of subjugation by white violence and oppression; of relegation to reserves on land not of their own choosing; of having to live with other groups with whom they had little in common and who often were traditional enemies; of having the simplest decisions over their own lives taken away from them (e.g. until very recently many settlement Aborigines had their meals prepared for them. Rowley (1971:47) has described how, at Amoonguna, people were fed in 'categories, not families, mothers taking their babies to one feeding point, the pre-school children, the school children, and the adults all being kept in groups'); and of being isolated from and not being permitted to participate in the society which had complete control over them. The assumptions by whites of

Aboriginal incompetence to manage their own affairs and make their own decisions became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Aborigines were not consulted, not taught the skills necessary to operate within the dominant system, not allowed to make discoveries by trial and error in a supportive atmosphere. Until 1964, they were not even allowed to consume alcohol and yet are now blamed for not being able to handle drinking.

As a result of policies and actions which systematically separated Aborigines from their land, broke down their own systems of law, order and social control and made them almost entirely dependent on white beneficence for their very survival, Aborigines are now in a position of unpreparedness for the new responsibilities they are expected to shoulder as citizens within the ambit of the official policy of self-management. They are largely uneducated in the way the political and economic systems work, are unskilled and therefore unqualified for most remunerated occupations and are seriously disadvantaged in regard to health, housing and many of the other basic requirements for normal Australian life. Somewhat paradoxically, in the early days of settlement of Central Australia, their labour was vital to the establishment of pastoral properties and often to the survival of the pastoralists themselves, and, therefore, was widely used, though poorly rewarded. With advances such as the extension of the railway and the granting of award wages in 1968, the need for Aboriginal labour diminished. They were discarded and no effort was made to fit them for other work. Now, very often, the popular view of Aborigines in Alice Springs is one of dole bludgers and economic misfits, and the blame for this condition is placed unequivocally at the Aborigines' door. It is well summed up by these comments by an early settler and pastoralist's wife:²

There is no reason for any Aborigines around this district to go hungry, unclothed or remain ill. With social services, free medicine and treatment, visiting nursing sisters, church groups, etc. no Aboriginal child here has any right to be under-nourished or neglected. If they are, it is their parents' fault entirely for spending money on drink instead of food.

Has anyone noticed the number of overweight Aborigines around here? I resent the insinuation made by Aboriginal Congress [the Central Australian

²Letter, *Centralian Advocate*, 30 September 1976.

Aboriginal Congress] in regard to the medical staff at the Alice Springs Hospital. It was inferred that Aborigines judged them incapable and preferred to go to doctors they set up in practice for the benefit of Aborigines alone who were all European. But what happens when an operation and hospital treatment is needed? Do Aborigines then sneer and scorn the excellent medical service there which is good enough for the rest of us? The Alice Springs hospital is always more than half filled with Aborigines who get exactly the same care and attention as the Europeans do. That there are so many Aborigines hospitalized is often the result of too much alcohol and drunken fights. We might also ask, where does the money come from for so much booze?

There are no Aboriginal aides and nurses to assist Aboriginal patients at the hospital, as far as I know, none want to do this work. None (fullbloods) volunteer to train as nursing sisters and the same goes for wardsmen and hospital orderlies. I speak of fullblood Aborigines and not a mixed race. One cannot call a mule a horse - neither is it a donkey. To me, mixed bloods must have the characteristics of both races in looks and skill. After 100 years of settlement in Central Australia, where are the Aboriginal professional men and women? Education in Australia is here for all to take advantage of. There are no racial or social barriers.

For this lady there can be little doubt which race possesses the characteristics of a horse and which those of a donkey. In the whole of this letter, one finds not one grain of humanity extended towards Aborigines. Instead, the Aborigines are held entirely responsible for their present malaise. The writer, no doubt, was an exemplar of the proper way to live and for her, and many other whites, it is mandatory on the Aborigines to make all the adjustments and changes. The opportunities are there. All they have to do is to cast off their culture of millennia, quickly acquire a new and strange one, including a totally strange language, absorb the free education and then scale the barriers of resistance and prejudice.

In Alice Springs today, race relations are characterized by tension, hostility and ignorance. Racism is the monopoly of no particular political group nor of any class of society. In Alice Springs, it is expressed by left and right and public service alike, as Labor Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh wrote to his Prime Minister Whitlam:³

I am afraid I have viewed racism at its worst in the N.T. One particular incident worthy of note was the racist attitudes which greeted me by members of the Australian Labor Party at a meeting I had with them at Alice Springs. My department is currently carrying out investigations into accusations of racism shown by members of the Alice Springs office of the DAA and I am awaiting the results of this enquiry with interest.

Unlike most other cities and towns in Australia, Alice Springs has a highly visible Aboriginal population. That visibility, while it could be a healthy sign of racial and cultural diversity, serves to highlight very strongly the disparity between the two groups, as the English *Sunday Telegraph* correspondent, Peregrine Worsthorpe wrote:

At first glance it looks as if the main street of Alice Springs is littered with untidily stacked black plastic bags, all lying higgledy-piggledy on the pavement, their contents spewing out - like London during the dustmen's strike. But a closer look at the objects shows them to be groups of Aborigines squatting outside the bars waiting for opening time. At 10am they come to life momentarily. But only for so long as it takes to move inside where they spend the rest of the day silently drinking, until it is time to stagger back for the night to the dried-up river bed, which is where I first saw them.

Such is the daily routine of the respectable, law-abiding Aborigines, which is now so normal that the local whites do not seem to notice it.

Unfortunately there is also a less well-behaved Aboriginal minority who, as well as drinking, commit crimes. About them the whites are less indulgent. Although the Abos comprise only 30 per

³Senator J.L.Cavanagh to Mr E.G.Whitlam, 11 February 1974.

cent of the Northern Territory population, they account for 90 per cent of the crimes. Only a few weeks ago a famous Central Australian grazier was shot dead, and five young Abos, aged between 12 and 26 have been charged with murder. Stories of armed hold-ups and rapes are disturbingly common, reviving all the old racial tensions. Very few Abos take jobs. So rare is it to see one gainfully employed that he or she becomes an object of some curiosity, like a freak. This is not because there are no jobs. It is because they do not need to work, all their wants being more than taken care of by the generous unemployment benefits which are the same for blacks as whites, in spite of the obvious differences in their respective outgoings. (It does not cost much to camp in a river bed.) In any case work in the Western sense is not part of their culture. Nor, presumably, is drink or crime. But some parts of Western culture seem more to their taste than others (*Sunday Telegraph* (London), 18 March 1979).

Worsthorne, a visitor to Alice, was undoubtedly reflecting some white views. They had been reported before. For example, shortly after Senator Cavanagh had described Alice Springs as 'a racial town faced with racial warfare', Cameron Forbes wrote in the *Age*:

And then there's Eddie the taxi driver. He knows a few things, too. That two sisters have been raped, one had her nipple bitten right off, and they're in a secret room in the hospital because it's all being hushed up to protect the coons. ... The Alice and the surrounding districts are full of people who 'know' things. There is a disturbing element of truth in some of the knowledge. But just as disturbing is the fact that the rumors become the reality for so many people. The fear is real and the hate is real, even if the basis for it is partly false. ... one Aboriginal man was painted white, a man who works with Aborigines was attacked ('Still helping those black bastards' was his only warning), and a public meeting of the newly formed Citizens' Association was told it was not safe for people to walk the streets alone for fear of being attacked, maimed, raped or even murdered (*Age* (Melbourne), 3 March 1975).

For many of the town's white people the Aborigines are objects of revulsion and fear because they so blatantly fail to conform to white norms of work, hygiene, housing and drinking behaviour. Rather than looking at the causes of this situation and then trying to seek remedies for it, the tendency is to 'blame the victim', a common practice in situations of inequality.

The action taken by the local Alice Springs shopkeepers, calling themselves the Todd Street traders (Todd Street being the main street in Alice Springs), illustrates the 'blame the victim' approach. On 22 February 1979 the Todd Street traders petitioned the Alice Springs Town Council to expedite the passing of by-laws to rid the town of groups which obstructed and fouled public thoroughfares. According to the petition:

Many shop frontages are becoming increasingly obstructed by bodies, litter, dogs, and the concomitant brawling, defecating, urinating, vomiting and obscenities which are indefensible in public places. Business is being disadvantaged in such an environment, external maintenance of premises is handicapped, and health risks are exacerbated as long as this pollution is rampant.

Aborigines were not mentioned by name in the petition. There could, however, be little doubt that Aborigines were the focus of the complaint, as Alderman K. McClelland inferred:⁴

It is not an attack on the entire Aboriginal race; it is a purposeful, well-presented petition by a group of people some of whom are closely attached to our pioneers and some of whom have worked with and among Aborigines years before. These traders have full respect for the well adjusted emancipated Aborigines who live and work in Alice Springs and obey the laws set down by our forefathers before us.

What distinguished the petition and made it difficult to defend in the sense that it did not have racial overtones was the way the behaviour complained about was generalized.

⁴Letter, *Centralian Advocate*, 23 March 1979,

A reasonable conclusion from the petition was that the behaviour occurred for much of the time, and the town itself was awash with vomit, urine and faeces. As Ross Howie of the Central Land Council remarked:⁵

There were more people on the streets, but there was not the kind of behaviour described in the petition. These were isolated incidents. References to them indicated an inflammatory, confrontational attitude. The speaker had walked down Todd Street many, many times and had never seen the acts described in the petition.

There seemed to be no increase in these sorts of offences, and if there was, then the police already had the powers to do something about it.

The official representative of the Judiciary, Mr Barritt, S.M., agreed that, through the courts, no change had been noticed indicating a deterioration in the behaviour of Aborigines or anyone else.

What had changed, however, was access to Colacag Park, which was where the central area public toilets were located and was a popular place for Aborigines to congregate. The park had been closed for safety reasons while the construction of a new civic centre was in progress, a fact surprisingly not mentioned in the petition. There was nowhere else for Aborigines to go in the centre of Alice Springs except the main street.

The traders also neglected to seek solutions to the 'problem' other than to request the provision of by-laws which presumably would have forced the 'problem' to go somewhere else. Providing satisfactory amenities, such as had existed at Colocag Park, might have been one approach, and this, according to the Aboriginal Tangatjira Council, had been proposed to the Town Council:⁶

The Corporation has refused the advice from Tangatjira, Congress, D.A.A., and other Aboriginal organisations about the need to provide more public ablution blocks in shopping areas and along the Todd River and at inner camps.

⁵Minutes of meeting called by Consultative Committee on Community Relations, 5 March 1979.

⁶Press release, 6 March 1979.

The Corporation gets over \$300,000 of Aboriginal money from D.A.A., each year but spends the money on less important work, in spite of our requests for toilets, showers and shelters at Taxi ranks and in parks.

In 1974, the DAA and the Northern Territory Housing Commission began discussions about a special housing program for Aborigines.⁷ Agreement was reached between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory about the manner of selection of tenants, the management of tenants including questions of evictions and the establishment of support systems such as the Homemakers' Service. In June 1978 the Town Council discussed the program which in its initial stage was to construct fifteen houses at a total cost of \$411,529 and renovate five others.

As soon as it was announced the program encountered difficulties. It was not helped by a Housing Commission spokesman who was reported as saying:⁸

so far there were 26 families on the waiting list. About 75 per cent of them were fringe camp dwellers at the moment and, as far as he knew, had not lived in a house before. The remainder had been Housing Commission tenants but had been asked to vacate - or had vacated voluntarily - because of 'rental and maintenance problems'.

The spokesman said the applicants were on a special list and 'have been assessed as being not capable of carrying out a normal HC tenancy'. As far as he knew 'very few' of the applicants had employment. ... The houses were specially designed to cope with large families or large numbers of visitors.

The mayor was reported as saying that the Town Council had not been consulted. An association calling itself the Citizens for Civilized Living suddenly materialized and complained that the program was a 'crash course in assimilation' and that people not used to European civilization should be offered half-way houses where they could learn the basics of western civilization.⁹ A petition was drawn up

⁷'Aboriginal housing program, some facts': internal DAA memo (probably written by the Alice Springs director R. Huey), 8 June 1979.

⁸*Centralian Advocate*, 31 May 1979.

⁹*Centralian Advocate*, 31 May 1979.

and circulated (see Appendix I) which prayed to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory that:

you cease forthwith the program on which you have embarked you cease to threaten the quality of life of your humble petitioners and that you arrange for the construction of a village to house your tenants away from the township of Alice Springs so that your petitioners will not be dammified as aforesaid.

A meeting was called of concerned citizens, by which time 128 signatures had been collected for the petition. The meeting was chaired by two prominent lawyers in Alice Springs, one of whom was shortly to become an executive member of the local branch of the Country Liberal Party. At the meeting, attention was paid to the fact that the houses concerned would be superior to the normal Housing Commission houses. Concern was expressed that property values in the vicinity of these houses would drop. Above all, great attention was paid to what it would be like to have such neighbours. The Country Liberal Party lawyer read from notes of an interview with one resident:¹⁰

it will be seen what occurs in Mill Street and what we foresee will be occurring in all these areas. About 1963 when we first arrived here in Mill Street, it was supposed to be occupied by an Aboriginal social worker. The problem was his family, you know, his relations, sometimes there would be up to 30 or 40 people in the yard and in the house and under the house sleeping. The fights and brawls that went on there were just unbelievable. We used to ring the police fairly regularly, but the people seem to realise the police were coming and everything just quietens down. As soon as the police have gone it starts up again and goes on all night and it goes on for weeks and weeks. Question, how do they dispose of their rubbish? It was just thrown out into holes and burnt for weeks and weeks. And we would have to put up with the smell. The direct neighbours would have to

¹⁰Cassette tape of meeting of Citizens for Civilized Living, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra. The election of the lawyer to the executive of the CLC Alice Springs branch was reported in the *Centralian Advocate*, 4 October 1979.

put a hose over the fence to put the fire out. There was no gardening done at all. The place just went to rack and ruin. All the trees which were in this particular block just died. They wrecked the clothes line ... Eventually one of the people there died in the front yard and they all left that house and the house was condemned by the health department and the house was pulled down. I think they had it occupied for about two years. I had a look inside the house after they had left it and there wasn't one wall which would have been intact. The tiles had been pulled up off the floor and the stove been pulled out from the wall. The toilet was just unbelievable. There wasn't a window in the place. Everything had been broken there ... They came into our yard, they came into our house during night time. I don't know how many times they tried to pinch my vehicle. We had a person come into our house about half past one into our bedroom. Fortunately he cleared out when we saw him but he was one of the same people arrested in a rape case of the girl and the RSL. It really frightened us. One particular neighbour straight over the road from this place left Alice Springs because of this. He had two or three young daughters and he couldn't put up with it. The abuse and so on. These people would stand on the balcony in the morning and urinate over the edge. If you said anything to them the language you would get back from them was terrible. I wouldn't have any hesitation about having an Aboriginal family next door to me if they behaved themselves in the way that society demands.

At the meeting, other people told their experiences, all of them derogatory of Aborigines. Fears of rape were often expressed. There was also a spirited defence of Aborigines by Frieda Thornton, an Aboriginal employed at the DAA. She pointed out that the Gap cottages were set up for the same purpose some thirty years before. The area was called Rainbow Town. Now the people who started out there 'are living nice civilised lives like me. The way you want us to live'. She continued that now people wanted to come in from Santa Teresa to live in Alice Springs and was asked why they could not stay at Santa Teresa. And so the meeting went on, well illustrating Cameron Forbes's contention that rumours became the reality for so many in Alice Springs. It also

demonstrates how racial prejudice is reinforced and proliferated in small towns like Alice Springs by emotional appeals to man's darker and basic fears like those of one's womenfolk being ravished, one's property being threatened (in the sense of value being diminished) and one's values being reduced to the level of the supposed animals who are to join one in the neighbourhood. Better than any assertions or description by visiting correspondents, this meeting of the Citizens for Civilized Living illustrates the fervour of racial prejudice in Alice Springs.

Of perhaps greater concern, at the political level, the campaign initiated by the Citizens for Civilized Living was partly successful. The Northern Territory government decided to reduce the number of houses constructed in the program to ten (and the probability that this pilot scheme is stillborn must be great). The official reason given revealed the government's concern to protect Aborigines from any discomfort that whites might promise, even if, by that protection, Aboriginal advancement would be held back. The member for Gillen and Northern Territory Minister for Education explained:¹¹

In order for an assimilation program - for those Aboriginal people who quite rightly want to join an urban community - to occur, 2 things must happen: the Aboriginal people themselves must be satisfied that they are able to do it and there must be harmony.

... The important thing is that they [whites] believed that, by arbitrary government action, their life investment would be affected ... their belief [that it is happening] will reflect on their new neighbours ... There is no way in the wide world that this program had one snowball's chance in hell with that sort of ill-feeling developing between neighbours.

or as he was reported as saying:¹²

I was not pulled up once in the street by normal sensible, stable citizens on the casino issue.

¹¹*Parliamentary Record. Northern Territory of Australia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 22 August 1979, pp.1710-11.

¹²*Northern Territory News*, 20 October 1979.

I was stopped every four or five feet in the height of this issue, not by people saying, what are you doing bringing Aborigines into Alice Springs? but by people saying, Do you know what you are doing? Do you know the consequences of bringing the Aboriginal people in to a position where there is going to be resentment?

And so Aborigines were to be prevented from participating in the advantages that living in a town had to offer, and reasonable prospects of obtaining gainful employment (for there was none outside Alice Springs), to protect them from possible resentments on the part of whites. Part of the funds set aside by the Commonwealth government were returned to Consolidated Revenue, permanently lost to Aborigines. What the Alice Springs citizenry and the Northern Territory government appear to find difficult to comprehend is that it is not white resentments which they have to fear, but the ever-smouldering black ones. One day, with rejection after rejection, they may explode into the kind of racial violence (like the kind reported by Worsthorne when an innocent grazier was shot) which will give the white protectors of the status quo genuine cause for alarm.

If one can sum up the prevailing white view of the town camp residents and their situation, it is expressed in these terms: 'they' are dirty, lazy, live in squalor, receive generous government handouts (which are withheld from needy whites) which they spend irresponsibly, drink too much but cannot hold their drink and therefore brawl too frequently. 'They' also secretly lust after white women and, like animals, barely keep these desires below the surface. The most disturbing thing about the racial attitudes which prevail in Alice Springs is the lack of interest in and sympathy for the causes of the present conditions suffered by so many Aborigines and, in particular, the town campers. Instead, as well illustrated in this chapter, the enduring official and unofficial attitude has long been that Alice Springs should be purged of Aborigines.

Of course, not all whites in Alice Springs hold racist views or are ignorant about Aborigines, their history and culture. Many individuals and some organizations in the town are very sympathetic to Aboriginal interests and towards the goal of racial tolerance and amity. And many who are not involved are at least willing to deal with Aborigines in a civil manner as individuals rather than objects to be

labelled and dealt with according to the stereotype categories.

Before concluding this chapter, it might be valuable briefly to draw the reader's attention to a problem which affects government funded organizations and, indeed, the government itself, and its instrument of policy, the DAA. This is that many of the town's white residents are poised to criticize the expenditure of funds for Aboriginal benefit. The government is often described as too generous to Aborigines and many people gleefully point out costly failures as proof that the money is being squandered. It is again a curious paradox that Aborigines are under pressure to change and improve their circumstances, but many of their detractors would deny them the wherewithal to effect such changes and, more importantly, with a policy of 'self-management', the time and ability to explore means to meet their own priorities and requirements and the valuable experience of testing alternatives and learning from mistakes. In this respect, the government's will is being tested by Aboriginal detractors, and in the case of the Northern Territory government and the special housing scheme for Aborigines, the will has been found to be lacking. In the case of the Commonwealth government, with its increasing emphasis on accountability, it appears that it too is becoming less prepared to grant the Aborigines time and give them the patient support to make the changes which the government itself, by the very existence of its funded programs, is asking them to make.

Chapter 3

The contribution of Aborigines to the Centralian economy

Aborigines have made a significant contribution to the Alice Springs economy, a fact which is seldom acknowledged, especially by their detractors. This contribution takes a number of direct and indirect forms. Unfortunately, no firm figures are available of the extent of this contribution, though it is likely to be substantial, and so, perforce, this chapter must be short.

To gain an accurate perspective of the current situation of Aborigines, we must look at the past.¹ With the loss of their land, Aborigines were placed in a position of no longer owning property themselves, and therefore largely having to rely on employment or welfare for survival. From the earliest settlement by whites in the area, Aboriginal labour was vital: both men and women worked with livestock, as labourers, household servants, etc. Not only their labour but the low remuneration they received for it² helped to ensure the financial success of their employers. Some Aborigines worked in the mining of gold, wolfram and mica; others worked on camel teams and other jobs. But with technological changes such as the extension of the railway line to Alice Springs and the introduction of vehicular transportation, the need for Aboriginal workers fell off greatly and they were simply dropped. Unlike some of their white counterparts, they did not have the skills, education or even knowledge of alternatives to go to other areas and seek work. Many, however, were not prepared to leave an area and their traditional lands and kin for the remote possibility that they would obtain remunerative work at some distant location. As Rowley rightly pointed out (1971:218):

¹Cf. Penny and Moriarty (1977:19-24) for a useful summary of the changing economic situation of Aborigines.

²Until 1968, Aborigines were legally paid at a lower wage rate than whites to do the same work.

in a cash economy, movement requires money, and assurance on arrival at the next point of employment the person has as much chance of getting employment as the next man. Those who must depend on the kind of wage which has hitherto been paid to Aborigines in 'colonial Australia' cannot afford to move at will, nor can they be sure of equality in employment when they arrive. In fact, they must take into account, if they compete with non-Aborigines, the probability of being 'last on and first off'.

Aborigines in Alice Springs are still reliant upon employment or welfare for survival. Large numbers of camp residents are unemployed and there are few jobs available to them. Despite this fact, in 1979, according to Braddock (1979), there were only eighty-two Aborigines in the town claiming unemployment benefits. Amoonguna, which was set up to train Aborigines for employment, hardly offers an alternative, as Rowley (1971:46) notes:

As the whole area of the Amoonguna reserve occupies only two square miles, the 'settlement work force' which the Report [Welfare Branch, NTA, Annual Report, 1965-66] estimates at 115 men would hardly be employed on the farm and garden and in the making of cement bricks.

Dependency on some form of welfare payment is heavy. For the town campers at least, until 1976 when the Commonwealth government announced a 7-year program to house all town campers at a cost of \$8.5 million, there was little prospect of change because of the self-perpetuating nature of the conditions in which the campers were living. The previous chapter described the resistance put up by white groups to Aborigines coming to live in their neighbourhoods. The same attitudes are displayed in the employment field and it must be remembered that most employment in Alice Springs is at the discretion of whites. As Drakakis-Smith (1980a) notes, Aborigines are excluded from most of the major employment sources both by employer attitudes and by the complexities of the bureaucratic system.

Whatever their source of income, the Aborigines of Alice Springs spend virtually all their money in the town. These sums are swelled by the fact that the 7000 or so Aborigines³

³DAA Statistical Section Newsletter, Number 8.

living on pastoral stations and settlements in the Centralian region, which stretches from the northwest reserve of South Australia to Tenant Creek, directly or indirectly spend most of their money in Alice Springs. The indirect purchases are those made at local settlement stores which are supplied from Alice Springs. Drakakis-Smith (1980b) has estimated (conservatively) that direct expenditure by Aborigines in the town was approximately \$3.3 million in 1978, a figure based on surveys he undertook there. He noted that this income was derived from welfare benefits, earned income and money brought in by visitors.

Drakakis-Smith describes how poor storage in the town camps results in residents having to purchase prepared and semi-prepared foods from which they get less nutritional value for their money. According to him, certain supermarkets near town camps derive a considerable proportion of their turnovers from Aboriginal shoppers.

Another industry which benefits from Aboriginal money is the transport industry and especially second-hand car dealers and taxi operators. For all Aborigines, and especially those who live at remote settlements, mobility is an important factor of life. They represent the final purchasers of second-hand cars - before the cars are turned over to the scrap heap. They receive no money for trade-ins, for their previous car usually lies, largely dismantled, beside some remote track or on their local settlement car dump. For the second-hand car dealers, Aborigines represent an important market for trade-ins which have little life left and which would be scorned by a more discriminating European purchaser.

The other form of motor transport used by Aborigines is taxis. For example, according to Geoff Shaw, the director of the Tangatjira Council (interview 30 Nov. 1979), the principal use of the telephone installed at Mt Nancy was to summon taxis to take people into town. For town campers there is no other form of transport, other than walking distances up to 10 km. According to Drakakis-Smith (1980a: 440), the largest taxi company operating in Alice Springs admits that over 67 per cent of its daily business is Aboriginal. He calculated that at a conservative average fare of \$5 a journey, this would generate about \$120,000 worth of business per annum. The average fare is conservative, for many of the journeys are long distance, returning settlement Aborigines to their homes.

A significant contribution to the Alice Springs economy is made by government departments and statutory bodies acting on behalf of Aborigines. The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs provides the most significant contribution, channelling funds to town camp organizations, to other Aboriginal organizations like Aboriginal Hostels, Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Central Land Council all of which, in turn, employ Aborigines and some European professionals and tradesmen who spend their earnings in the town. Drakakis-Smith (1980b) writes that the Department spent almost \$4 million in Alice Springs itself. It also provides funds for the remote settlement councils and Aboriginal pastoral stations as well as providing funds for enterprises on these settlements. In 1979-80 these funds amounted to over \$19 million for the Central Australian region as a whole. Much of this money results in sizable purchases of materials, equipment and labour for commercial organizations operating in Alice Springs.

One of the major beneficiaries of this flow of money has been the Alice Springs building industry. Drakakis-Smith (1980b) writes that between 1977 and 1979, more than \$2.5 million was spent on Aboriginal housing in Alice Springs and its hinterland and most of these funds were channelled back to Alice Springs building companies. Further sums would have resulted from the Town Management and Public Utilities vote which for the whole of the Northern Territory in 1978-79 was \$12.197 million (DAA 1979). As Drakakis-Smith notes, the construction industry during the period 1977-79, when capital funding generally by the Commonwealth was reduced, looked increasingly to Aboriginal organizations for contracts which would keep the firms liquid during the economic downturn.

There is a paradoxical situation in the tourism industry which brought an estimated \$32 million to the Centre in 1977-78.⁴ The image of Aborigines and their culture is used freely in advertising aimed at attracting tourists to the

⁴Northern Territory Tourist Board, Visitor Statistics (mimeo). The \$32 million figure is calculated as the proportion of visitors to the Centre in 1978-79 of the total visitors to the N.T. to the estimated revenue of \$53.5 million. The figure is largely confirmed by Drakakis-Smith (1980b) who wrote that, according to the Tourist Board, tourists spent over \$30 million in 1978 in the Central Australian region.

Centre. Yet the local Aborigines are often described by tourist authorities as an undesirable element which could mar the image of Alice Springs and dissuade tourists from visiting the Centre. The activities of the Todd Street traders described in the previous chapter supported this view. As well, the 1974 Camping sub-committee of the Alice Springs Town Management Board reported that complaints about the town camps included the impairment of the town's image among tourists.⁵ Aborigines are confronted with the situation of finding themselves unwelcome in establishments which use Aboriginal symbols in their decorations and advertising. Certainly, apart from marketing artifacts, Aborigines themselves receive little financial benefit from tourism, none of the tourist operators employing any Aborigines.

Aborigines even contribute to the beautification of the township of Alice Springs. For example, in 1977, the DAA appropriated \$200,000 to the Alice Springs Town Council to employ Aboriginal workers on town improvement projects which would otherwise not have been carried out and which resulted in the repaving of footpaths and other improvements to the appearance of the town.

Drakakis-Smith (1980b) has attempted to calculate the extent of the Aboriginal contribution to the Alice Springs economy. He found it impossible to calculate the proportion of the \$46.3 million turnover in goods and services in the town which could be attributed to Aborigines. He did, however, try to calculate the proportion of the Alice Springs labour force which is dependent on the presence of Aborigines for their employment. Using 1979 Commonwealth Employment Service data, he calculated that 32 per cent of the workforce in the town owed their jobs to the presence of Aborigines. According to him, this is a conservative estimate, for it did not include any factor for those firms engaged in the local tourist industry which heavily emphasized Aboriginal culture and presence in their tourist publicity. If anything, popular opinion would lead one to believe that Aborigines are a negative force in the local economy. From the above discussion, however, Aborigines and the instrumentalities which serve their needs are a very important though generally unacknowledged asset to the economy of Alice Springs.

⁵ Alice Springs Town Management Board Camping Sub-committee Report and Recommendations (mimeo), 1970.

In conclusion, we might consider what the Aborigines get in return for this contribution. This chapter has already noted that the tourist industry employs few Aborigines (a few domestics in motels) and the tourist operators none at all. According to Drakakis-Smith, less than 2 per cent of the workforce is Aboriginal despite the fact that the Aboriginal population is 14 per cent of the total Alice Springs population. Most of the Aborigines in employment are employed by Aboriginal organizations, which fact accentuates this basic inequality of opportunity. In 1978, Aborigines comprised 75 per cent of the total unemployed in the Centralian region. In a 1978 survey, Drakakis-Smith (1980b) found that in the town camps only 32 per cent of the adults were in full time employment while a further 10 per cent had part time employment. Only 28 per cent classified themselves as unemployed, and despite their reputation for being dole bludgers, only 50 per cent of these claimed unemployment benefits.

Drakakis-Smith argues that welfare capitalism is particularly important to the Alice Springs economy, with the consequent implication that any increase in Aboriginal self-sufficiency would result in the present system being threatened. With many jobs being dependent on the continued dependency of Aborigines on the welfare system, it can readily be understood why Aborigines are excluded from so many components of the Alice Springs economy. Whatever substance there is to this argument, it must be seen that the Alice Springs economy is heavily dependent on the increased Commonwealth government funding to Centralian Aborigines and probably far more than most whites would care to admit.

Chapter 4

The Alice Springs town camps

Despite the establishment of Amoonguna, increasing numbers of Aborigines have shown their preference for living in town by remaining on or taking up residence in a number of town camps (see Fig.2). Many of the town camps have long histories. Information about them, however, is sparse but what is available suggests that, until 1976, little had changed in the thirty years preceding 1977. For example, the *Melbourne Herald* of 15 June 1949 reported on the 'slum life' of sixty full-blood Aborigines living in a camp at Heavitree Gap (possibly the present Ilparpa camp). This camp was apparently established in 1945, after responsibilities for sanitary and garbage disposal were handed back to civilian authorities. The civilian contractor then hired the Aborigines and housed them in 'tin and bark humpies located 1/4 mile from the town's garbage destructor'.

On 29 December 1959, the *Herald* reported on the Morris Soak camp, where a group of forty-one Aborigines camped, according to the article, with the sanction of the administration. There was no garbage disposal and the only water available was in open 44-gallon drums which were replenished twice weekly by the municipal water cart. By 6 April 1960, the *Herald* was able to report that Morris Soak had been cleaned out and was once more a 'clean meadow'. The campers were removed to houses which had been condemned. According to the report, tenders had recently been called to demolish them. The tenders, however, were too low and none was accepted, leaving the houses for Aborigines to occupy.

In 1976, the future of the town camps was changed drastically with the promise of leasehold title being granted to some of them. By the end of 1977, twelve leasehold applications (see Fig.3) had been made for areas of land to be set aside for development by particular Aboriginal town camp groups. Each of these groups was characterized by a resident, stable core population plus a changing number of

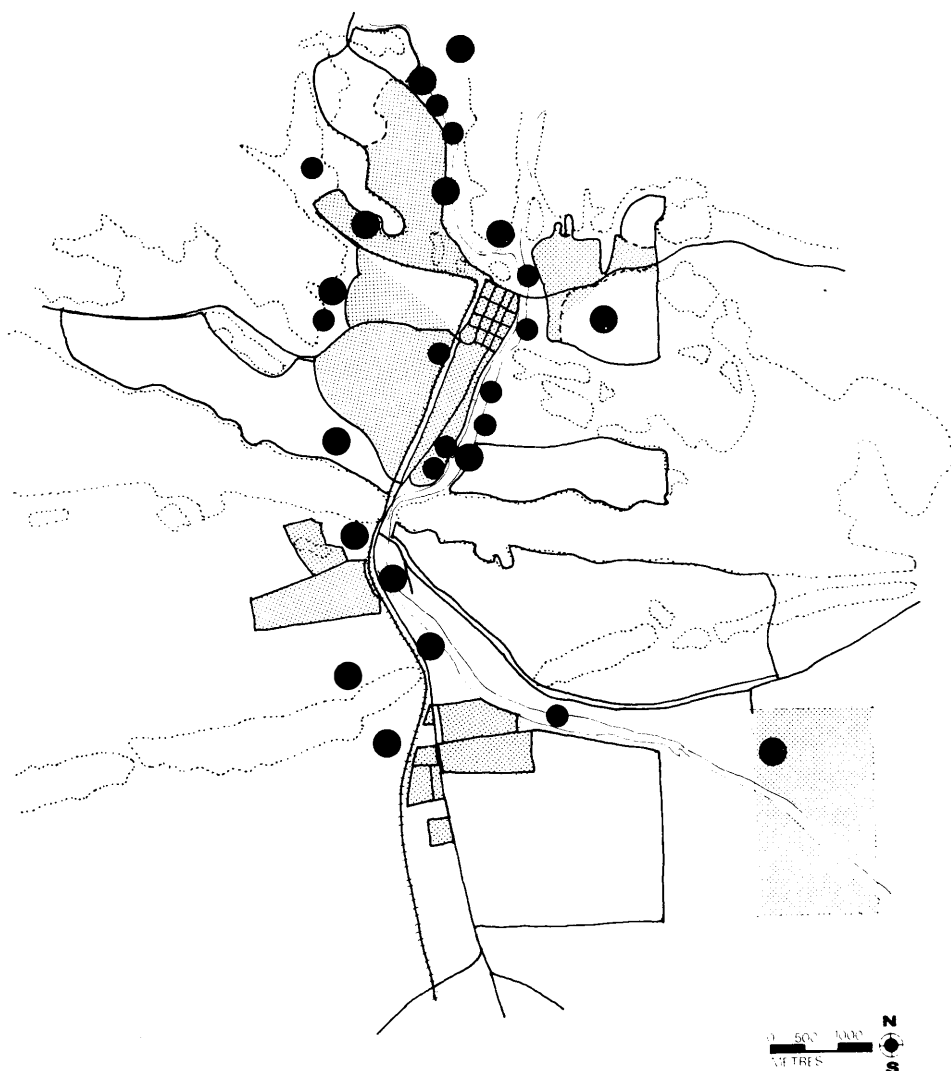


Fig.2 Alice Springs and environs showing the location of twenty-seven town camps

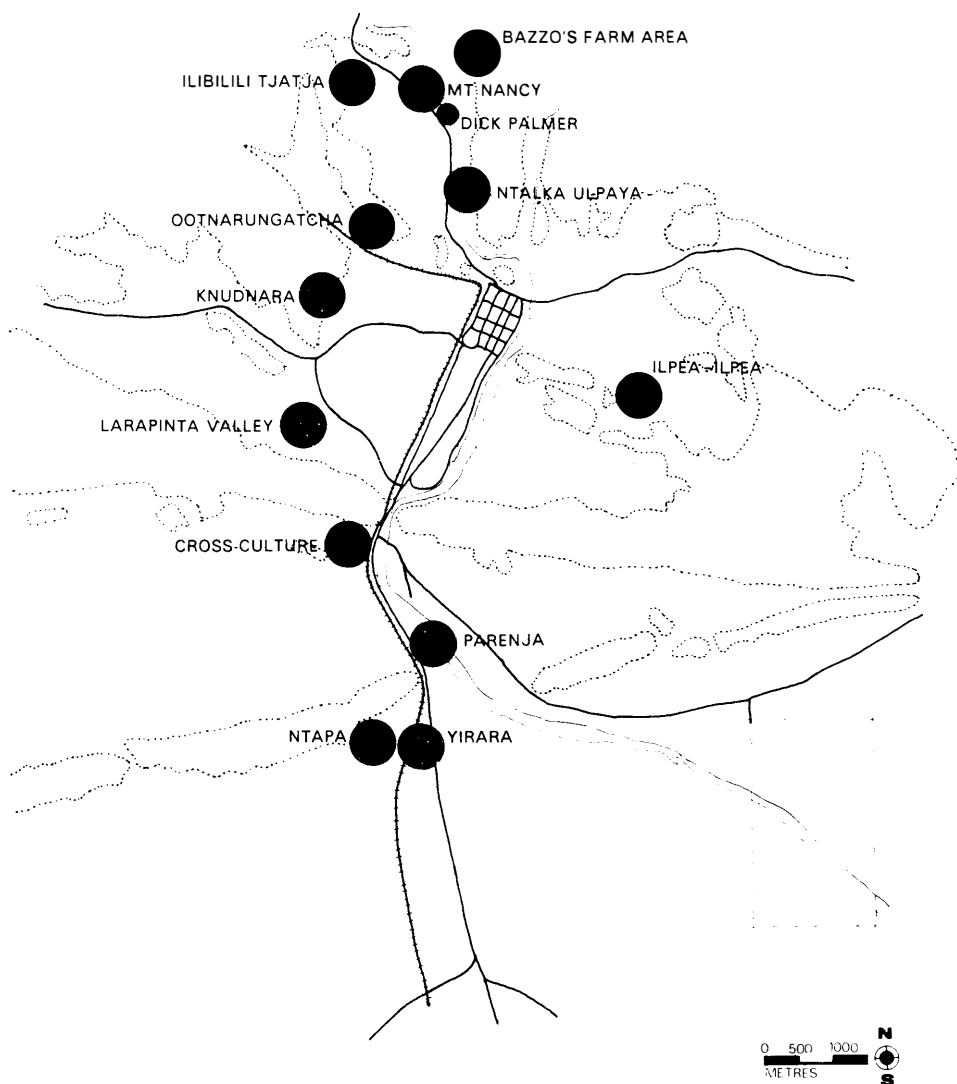


Fig.3 Location of twelve town camps in Alice Springs which had made leasehold applications by the end of 1977

visitors who come in from outlying areas and camp with relatives and friends. There have been a number of censuses of the camps, the adequacy of which have improved so that the most recent ones represent a reasonably accurate figure of the core population of each camp, though, as Table 2 indicates, the core populations can vary quite dramatically over time. The problem, however, with censuses, is that they usually count the number of Aborigines present on the day of the census, and ignore other members who might be away for a period visiting, attending to traditional business or working elsewhere. The wide variations in population even of individual camps and the differences in designation of permanent camps make the figures, and especially the earlier ones, highly suspect. What can, however, be inferred from these figures is that there is a stable core of permanent town campers which increased from something in excess of 450 in 1974 to a figure just under 900 in 1978-79. Visitors can increase this population, especially in the summer, to between 1000 and 1500. It should be noted that while there are permanent groups who camp together and while there are areas which are perennial camp sites, not all sites are permanent. Owing to such factors as insecurity of tenure, harassment, the lack of services, changing weather conditions, deaths and disputes, there is a certain amount of turnover among permanent camp residents which can result in occasional shifts of entire groups from one location to another. For example, when the leader of the Charles River camp was killed in 1977, the residents fled to all parts of Alice Springs. Guinness (1979) has recorded similar phenomena at Ootnarungatcha where all tents were dismantled and the camp abandoned in April 1979 after one of its members had been killed in a fight.

Thornton (1979) has rightly pointed out that town campers cannot be 'lumped together' in an undifferentiated whole. There are many different groups both within and between different camps with different world views, aspirations and needs. There are, however, certain features which characterize all the town camps. Therefore, a general description only of the camps is presented here and this description refers to the period before the recent building program began in the camps. Later in the monograph, certain camps will be described in greater detail to highlight particular features, experiences and responses (see also Appendix II).

Each camp is a small community based on ties of kinship and friendship. The residents are generally from the same community in the sense that there is a defined territorial

base which is shared by people who identify as members of the group residing there, and who have mutual interests, are relatively homogeneous and interdependent. There are psychological, social and territorial aspects to this residence pattern. The residents of the camps maintain traditional ties with kinsmen in traditional country and, outwardly, the daily activities of many town camps differ little from corresponding camps in Aboriginal settlements and missions outside Alice Springs. For example, Bell and Ditton (1979) describe how the lingua franca at Ilibilili Tjatja is Warlpiri. Traditional ties and laws appear strong. People are still expected to marry the right skin groups. Ritual life is still important, the women travelling to Yuendumu to perform important ceremonies (Warlpiri could hardly perform these ceremonies in Alice Springs, in Aranda country). All these factors distinguish a town camp from neighbourhoods of the European suburban sort characteristic of Alice Springs generally. The neighbourhood is a territorial entity in which residents may share social features such as income level, but which does not rely upon close interdependence of the residents. It is common in a suburb, for example, for people not to know even the names of some of their neighbours. In the camps people are intimately aware of each other's biographies and are very likely to be linked to each other by more than propinquity. Thus, the idea held by some that Aborigines should be placed in Housing Commission homes scattered throughout the town would undoubtedly seriously undermine the existing community orientation and consequently be rejected by most camp dwellers.

Geoff Shaw, the present director of the Tangatjira Council and one of the Mt Nancy leaders, has graphically described the conditions at Mt Nancy camp, the importance of the community and the battle that has been sustained to preserve and improve the amenities there. It is worth quoting at length, for it describes how an articulate town camper sees his situation:

I get good money for doing my job, but that money gets distributed through the camp. It might be a dollar here, a packet of tea there, or hand over some meat. That's how it is. That's how we keep going, all 60 of us. One wage and a couple of pensions, but the whole community spends it. We have to survive.

We are a community ourselves, but we want to fit into the overall town because we are here as part

of the town community. That is, we want the same type of facilities.

We can't afford to pay for a lot of the basic things. Even though some people get a wage, it can't be looked at in white man's economics because that pay gets shared.

Some people write letters to the editor calling us campers a health hazard, bludgers and so on. They do this because they don't want to see us living in this town. Another thing is they want us right out of town.

We've been fighting for years and years for a place to live, and we're going to keep fighting. White people want to get it through their thick heads.

Take the example of basic amenities. Right where the community is now, 150 yards to the west, is a new housing subdivision. Streets have been put there, sewerage has been put in and the houses haven't been built yet.

Here we are, east 150 yards and have no sewerage but we are now building three houses after fighting hard for many years. But *we* have to use septic tanks.

This is because there's an agreement between the Department of the Northern Territory and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to look after the interests of Aboriginals living in fringe camps but these two are locking horns, arguing over which one is going to pay for it. Why can't we have the sewerage facilities as supplied to the rest of the town without argument?

This is like a lot of things. We had to cart our water in buckets or roll 44 gallon drums to our camps for 200 to 300 yards getting the water out of a neighbour's tap. You cart water for cooking purposes, washing clothes and what's left for washing yourself? So you get a bucket full and go behind the scrub.

We had no shit houses so we used the scrub. In summer, the whirlies would pick up the remains, the paper and that, and blow it across into our neighbour's house. He complained to the Council. It took nine months of wrangling between the Health Department and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to build some deep pit latrines. One of the reasons was you are not allowed to build permanent

structures on land you don't own. But we've got an ablution block now. It has taken a lot of time to get that far, since right back in the 1930s and 40s when our people decided to be part of this town. We see ourselves as part of this community although we've got tribal relations and are still tribally orientated ourselves, all of us who live in fringe camps.

It is somewhere for people to stay when they come into town. We are part of this town and want to live our lives without white people putting attitudes on to us.

... The tourists used to drive right into the camp filming us hanging up washing, eating, how we live. Tourist buses stopped so people could take pictures. The police came in all the time mostly for no reason at all.

We now have a lease over our land and have put a fence up. This makes it a bit better with the tourist thing. But the police keep driving in and we keep telling them that it is private property now. They have to have a good reason, not just 'we're the police'.

This is our 11 acres now, and important to us. It makes a big difference. Like the Housing Commission, four families over the years have moved into old N.T. houses over east side. They usually get evicted after a while for different reasons, mainly overcrowding.

They would have stayed in the fringe camps if houses were built because they are community orientated and stick with their own mob. We're not like Europeans who have one family visit them now and then. We can have up to three families visit at one time. This is our way.

So, seeing that we got this land we can put them up there without any hassles. Not like that trouble with the Housing Commission that is always happening.

During any wet an Inspector may call on your house when there are a lot of visitors staying, and tell you to kick them out. One fellow I know asked the Inspector would he throw his relations out when they were sick with cold, out into the wet. He probably got a warning that time. But somewhere along the way he'll get thrown out too, like people always do. I've got a grandmother. I want my

grandmother to stay with me. She is not a dependant. She is a pensioner. She can look after herself. That's what the Housing Commission thinks, because if I was in their house she could not come because she is not dependent on me. But in a fringe camp she can get support. I don't class old people as independent because they get an income of sorts. They feel strong back in the camp.

Look at the white community, say down at 'Old Timers', where their old people are shunted away and forgotten about. No one wants to know them. I'm waiting till I get these houses then my grandmother will shift in with me and the family.

... People who live in fringe camps keep their huts clean. They clean around the humpy alright. It's like this blind lady living under a tree down by the creek. She's got big mobs of kids. The area around that tree, a good 40 feet, is swept clean all the time. She can't get a house. How does she keep the rain off her head, what chance do her kids have?

But we all survive and keep trying to get people to realise and get it into their thick heads that we are here to stay, to have our communities and be part of the whole community (Shaw 1977:12-13).

Not only do the campers generally share linguistic or geographical origins: the camps themselves tend to be set up in areas which correspond to the direction closest to the residents' own traditional country. Permission to use a particular piece of land for a permanent camp has been granted by the Aranda traditional land owners of the country on which Alice Springs lies. For example, a Tangatjira meeting was told on 8 April 1974:

that the people in Little Sisters Camp had asked Aranda people if it was alright for them to apply for their lease. They gave permission to do so, and also to use the Aranda name for the area, *mpalytji* (Minutes of meeting).

Thus, as Guinness (1979) has noted, camps are not scattered randomly through the town. The western Aranda camps are close to their own sacred sites at Ilparpa and Ntapa as well as to the west of the town at Ootnarungatcha and Morris Soak, eastern Aranda camps are at Sadadeen and other locations to the east of the township, the Warlpiri are to the north

at Ilibilili Tjatja and to the east of the Stuart Highway, the Alyawara and Anmatjira are also to the north but west of the Stuart Highway at Charles River and Mt Nancy and Pitjat-jantjara are to the south at Little Sisters and Old Timers.

Before the recent development, most camp residents lived in owner-constructed humpies and windbreaks. A few had tents and fewer still lived in caravans. Some had no shelter at all (and still do not) and simply camped under trees or in the open air, as Dick Jungala, of Hoppy's camp, describes:¹

I'd like to move out to other side of Mt Nancy because where I'm living now, belongs to all the Aranda tribe. I'd like to get a house because we need shelter and water. We been going with buckets about a mile a day to get water from the taps on the parks. When there's rain, we just sleep under the trees and sometimes, we use sheets of iron for roofing. Lots of Aboriginal people come in from everywhere to where I live, sometimes they find it real hard for sheltering from rain. I've lived here for forty years without house, waiting for something like this to happen.

A variety of materials, some of which have been discarded by whites as rubbish, are utilized in the construction of shelters. Humpies or shelters take a number of forms and sizes, but usually comprise a wooden frame of salvaged timber to which are tied galvanized iron or some other sheeting, and sometimes over which (especially when the galvanized iron is rusty) is laid tarpaulin or plastic. Some humpies are simply two posts and a ridge pole over which is slung canvas or tarpaulin. Humpies can vary in size from very small (1m x 1m x 1m) to reasonably large (3m x 2m x 1.5m high). The roof is usually important, and needs to be firm for it is the only place on which to store things out of the reach of dogs and young children.

A further important aspect of town camps is that they recognize traditional requirements of single people. Thus in many camps can be found single women's and single men's camps which cater not only for widows and widowers, divorced and unmarried adults, but also for spouses temporarily separated for a number of reasons, but often because of some

¹Town Campers Newsletter 1977:1.

domestic squabble. In this latter respect, the camps serve an important function, allowing the parties to separate and find a group of same sex persons likely to give them support and advice and, when tempers have cooled, to help seek some accommodation between the parties enabling them to patch up their differences and continue their domestic relationship. The single men's camps are often quite noisy places, but they allow single men to give vent to their exuberance without disturbing nuclear families.

It must be stressed that, despite the inevitable constraints, Aboriginal builders of shelters are well aware of what they require and a number of factors are taken into account in the building process. Important factors are wind direction, the sun, location and storage facilities. One of the most important factors is that the structures are built in such a way that they can be quickly modified to suit the prevailing conditions.

Furnishings are at a minimum in the camps. Most shelters have an earth floor, though occasionally an owner may put down boards, bits of old carpet or rags collected from a refuse dump. A number of people have acquired old iron bedsteads, but rarely, if ever, is there one bed for each family member. Mattresses are seldom possessed; instead, blankets, old clothing and other items are used for padding. Chairs and tables can sometimes be found, but more often than not people improvise such items from boxes, tins and other materials as available. There are a few wood-burning stoves and one household at Mt Nancy, before the recent developments, had a hot plate and a refrigerator. Basic cooking utensils and dishes are owned by each household, but the variety and number are usually minimal. There is some borrowing and lending of items such as pots and pans between households. Again, there is improvisation, for example tea is usually brewed in 'billy cans' made from used tins to which wire handles are attached. Cupboards are a rarity. For storage, boxes, tins, trunks and suitcases are used. As material possessions of Aborigines increase, so has the importance of secure storage. This is especially true because Aborigines like to travel and want to be able to lock away their belongings and be sure that they are still there when they return.

Many of the materials used to build shelters and to furnish them are salvaged from the Alice Springs garbage tip. Many camp residents go to the tip to forage for items which

are useful and which they often cannot afford to buy. Town officials aware of this practice have attempted to thwart it by closing off the dump, but this approach simply ignores the reality, however unpleasant, that the tip is an important source of usable materials and objects for the town campers.

Physical conditions

Even those who have witnessed camp life at close range and all the hardships it involves are unable to appreciate fully and convey to others the entire experience because they have not actually experienced living in a town camp. Camping means living in the dirt. Most of the camps are on sites virtually denuded of vegetation (although a few are in lush and beautiful settings), and therefore lack shade and the softening effects of trees, grass, etc. In these conditions the camps are vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather which, in Alice Springs, covers an enormous range.

For much of the year it is hot and dry and, with little or no shade available, intense heat and glare are experienced. It is hot inside the shelters and out. Some residents seek relief by setting up daytime camps in river beds or by building bough shades: both measures are time consuming and the shades require trees which are often difficult to find except by making long trips, requiring vehicular transport. On windy days - which are quite common - dust is blown into everything (food, clothes, bedding, etc.). People and their belongings get covered in dust. This is unavoidable since the shelters are inadequate to keep dust out and, as there is no ground cover like grass, there is nothing to inhibit the effects of the wind. Further, when dust gets into clothes, it is difficult to remove in the absence of decent washing facilities.

Discomfort from cold in the winter can be acute. The shelters, for those who are fortunate enough to have them, whether they be humpies, tents, or simply windbreaks, are not insulated and not draught proof. They therefore offer only minimal protection from cold winds. It is not generally recognized that in Alice Springs night time temperatures in the winter can fall as low as -8°C . It can therefore readily be understood that sleeping on the ground with little warm clothing and minimal bedding and only a piece of holey galvanized iron between you and the outside can be extremely unpleasant. For much needed warmth, fires are built inside

the shelter. Though absolutely necessary, they require wood, which now has to be collected from far afield. Fires also introduce a fire hazard to the shelter. Aborigines still die in Alice Springs, incinerated in their humpies or tents as they seek a modicum of warmth.

Although the cold of the winter is extremely unpleasant for town campers, it is worse still when there is heavy rain. Although Alice Springs' rainfall average is about 254mm per annum, there are periods when this average is greatly exceeded. What is not generally appreciated is that rain often comes to Alice Springs in deluges and leads to flooding. At times of severe flooding, camp residents have had to be evacuated to other buildings in the township (e.g. March 1976 to the showground). While these buildings offer somewhat drier conditions, they hardly represent a satisfactory alternative.

Regardless of their location, however, no camps can escape the consequences of rain. In a short time everyone and virtually everything gets soaking wet. The ground is awash and mud is churned everywhere. There is no escape from the wet; food, clothing, bedding, all quickly become sodden. It is difficult, if not impossible, to cook, since wood, even if available, is wet and the ground is oozing mud. Sleeping under these conditions is near impossible, thus compounding the misery of the situation. Because of the lack of sanitary services to town camps, garbage and the excrement of humans and dogs may wash through the camps. This, added to the general wet conditions, greatly increases the risk of illness.

Services

The problems of weather serve to exacerbate the discomfort and inconvenience which characterize the camps even at the best of times. Until very recently, when the effects of the present government's program developed by the Housing Panel were beginning to be felt in some of the camps, maintaining even a low standard of hygiene required great effort. In no camps was water reticulated to each household camp site; so people had to carry water, often over long distances, for drinking, cooking, bathing and laundering. For example, in 1973 the Ootnarungatcha community had to walk over a quarter of a mile to the Trucking Yards to obtain their water. The DAA approached the Department of Works to try to improve this situation but was advised that it was highly unlikely that it would be practicable to tap the mains

and reticulate water to the camp area as:

- 1) A request for a mains tap would not be actioned for approximately 6 months.
- 2) Such a tap would very possibly interfere with the water supply to regular users such as Humes, Abattoirs, Trucking Yards, etc.
- 3) Costs of running approximately 1/4 mile of copper piping from the mains to the camp area would be prohibitive.²

Many camps had water delivered twice a week by welfare authorities and stores in open 44-gallon drums which created an obvious health hazard. (As recently as 1978, a number of camps still relied on this service for their sole water source, e.g. Ilpea Ilpea and Malbunka's.) The only privacy a person could obtain when bathing was inside his humpy, an onerous activity given the cramped space. One has only to glance at Appendix II to see how few camps had ablution blocks. In these circumstances, it can readily be understood how difficult it was (and still is for many) to keep young children clean. It is hardly surprising that the kinds of pressure generated by strictures of critics such as the one on p.30 have had a great impact on young town camp children and have led to absenteeism and even complete withdrawal from school because of the shame children felt over their physical appearance and state of cleanliness.

Although several camps now have electricity, for most it is a recent introduction. Even in those camps which do have electricity, it is not connected to each dwelling. This means that it only provides general area lighting (which is important because town campers perceive themselves as living in a hostile environment which is particularly dangerous at night when intruders, snakes, malevolent spirits and the police are potential threats to their well-being) and lighting to ablution blocks.

After dark, the insides of humpies are without light except for candles, lamps and torches. This has a number of important consequences. In particular, children's activities are seriously curtailed. No homework can be done after dark

²A.S.Barker, Senior Clerk to Regional Officer (S), 9 November 1973. Note for file.

(there is usually nowhere to do it anyway). Reading, by anyone, is out of the question.

Such items as irons, electric frying pans, space heaters and refrigerators would be used by many people if power was available and the resources possessed to acquire them. Refrigerators, for example, are of vital importance in a place as hot as Alice Springs is for much of the year, and in town camp locations, the great majority of which are far from the nearest shops. For example, Ntapa and Little Sisters are about 8km from the shops, and since so few people have motor vehicles, transport is not readily available.³ Without refrigerators perishable food cannot be stored for more than a day or two and in the summer not even that long. This means that fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and dairy products, must be purchased daily and consumed immediately. People therefore eat a high proportion of canned foods, flour and other non-perishable foods.

Not only is food storage a serious problem but food preparation also presents difficulties. A few people own wood stoves. Most, however, cook over wood fires, usually in some adaptation of grills, plates and drums. During wet weather, cooking in the open is next to impossible, for there is no dry storage of wood, and this is the very time when people are cold and wet and something as simple as a hot cup of tea would do much to revive flagging spirits and shivering bodies.

Insufficient storage is a perpetual problem in the camps. There is very little room inside a humpy for cupboards or other furniture, so even the few people who own such items have difficulty fitting them in. Clothing and personal belongings are usually stored in suitcases, boxes, bags and tin trunks. These containers are placed on the floor and may double as seats or tables. There are no shelves and nowhere to put things up high, out of the reach of small children and dogs, except on top of the humpy where they are exposed to heat, rain, dust, wind and flies. Valuables may be locked in tin boxes or kept in bags, under blankets, etc., but there is nowhere to store any sizable item safely and privately.

³The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress provides a bus service to enable some camp residents to shop. But this is an irregular and unreliable service since there is greater demand than there are vehicles to provide seats.

Health

One of the very serious consequences of camp life under the conditions described above is poor health among the residents. The incidence of infectious and contagious diseases is higher in the camps than in the town at large. Gastro-enteritis, respiratory diseases and parasite infestation occur with alarming frequency.

The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) has commented on the health risks attendant on living in a town camp:

The majority of these people [living in town camps] live in grossly overcrowded and sub-standard housing and few have even the barest facilities such as toilets. There is a large number of unemployed men not receiving any benefits and obviously the only method of survival is by sharing the limited income from pensions and the few relatives (*sic*). The diet of these people is poor with concentrated or canned and prepared food. Most of the conditions are similar to fringe areas in Africa and Asia. Most health workers recognize that the major difference in health between Aboriginal people and the white population is related to the vast difference in physical and social environment. ... There can be no major improvement in health until people live in good houses, have adequate hygiene facilities and sufficient income to provide good food (Cutter 1976:6).

Social factors

The social penalties for living in the camp situation are many and varied and are difficult to pin down though unquestionably existent. Camp residents are frequent victims of what might be seen as varying degrees of harassment by uninvited intruders into the camps. In Department of Native Welfare days (before 1972), these included not infrequent visits by a group of government officers including the Native Welfare Town Patrol Officer, a truancy officer, an officer from the Welfare Department, and a member of the police force with the specific and acknowledged objective of harassing 'transients' to go and live at Amoonguna. In 1978, the worst offenders were the police, who might enter

camps at any time looking for people, young men on trail bikes who invaded camps from time to time to 'do them over', and health inspectors who could be extremely officious over the inadequate amenities at town camps.

The camp residents also have to live with other indignities. They are lumped together as the target of scorn and rejection by many whites, for example letters to local newspapers often speak of them in general terms which implicate all camp residents for infractions of which few are guilty. More subtle, but also perhaps more devastating, are the many unwritten rules which relegate the campers to an inferior position in the town, obliging them to wait in shops to be served last and when there is no one else to serve, to be excluded from certain establishments, to be avoided by people in the streets of the town and to experience the tensions which go with rejection of them and their entire way of life.

Finally life in the town camps has meant being caught in a vicious cycle of deprivation out of which it has been impossible to escape. Children grow up in the camps and know nothing but their physical and social limitations; and their parents have not the wherewithal to alter these circumstances. They reach maturity with little hope of doing other than their parents have, and they are blamed by the dominant society for their abject state. When change does come they are expected to accept it and adapt immediately, although they may lack any experience to equip themselves for this. Thus, for example, people who have never had toilets are provided with two (as happened at Mt Nancy camp) to serve eighty users and then are condemned for misusing them. These cynical standards are repeated in virtually every aspect of life for the camp residents. It is therefore vital that agents such as government departments be mindful of these limitations and therefore of the necessity to take measures which will ease adaptation to changed conditions at the same time as they seek to achieve those changes. This is particularly important at the moment, when the physical amenities in the camps are to be transformed in the next few years. Yet, at the time of writing, the Homemakers' Service of the NT Department of Community Development appears to have been run down (Thornton 1979) and despite a number of requests for such a service by the Tangatjira Council, no funds have been granted the Council to set one up.

Chapter 5

Alternative accommodation

Only about 30 per cent of Aboriginal residents of Alice Springs live in the town camps, but most campers, given the choice between living in suitably designed housing in the town camp of their choice and in a conventional three-bedroom Housing Commission house, would choose the former.

The town camp provides a recognized order and ready community to which visitors can attach themselves. They can be sure of obtaining shelter among kin with whom they have an established set of reciprocal obligations, and can be reasonably certain that everyone else living in the camp, if not immediate kin, are members of the same tribal group and, therefore, linked by historical ties of amity. For many visitors, then, institutional hostels, however well they might cater for their residents, are, for the foreseeable future, likely to be less attractive than the less comfortable amenities obtainable in the town camp of their choice. In this respect, the government should take cognizance of the important role that town camps play in catering for Aboriginal visitors to Alice Springs and should consider carefully the kinds of development in the town camps which would enhance this service. Neglect of this important aspect of town camp life will increase the burdens of the permanent residents to the detriment of the whole community and attempts to force visitors or 'transients' to live in institutional hostels are likely to be as successful as previous attempts to force these very same people to stay at Amoonguna.

However, as not all permanent residents of Alice Springs and not all visitors choose town camp life, it is necessary to examine the alternative sources of accommodation available to the Aboriginal.

The Northern Territory Housing Commission

In keeping with the earlier policy of assimilation, it has been and still is suggested by many people (e.g.

Commonwealth of Australia 1971-76) that the Northern Territory Housing Commission should be the source of housing for all Aboriginal residents of Alice Springs. As the Housing Commission is reluctant to place Aboriginal families without previous experience of living in a house, some sort of preparatory stage is envisaged in which Aborigines would be exposed to the 'demands' of living in a house. To this end, a number of transitional houses were built at Amoonguna and, in 1960, the NTA built houses provided under the part coloured housing scheme. They were located in the Gap area and the east end of Alice Springs, an area which came to be known as Rainbow Town. The idea was that once the occupants of these houses had passed all the domestic tests, they would then be able to convert to Commission houses and flats dispersed throughout the predominantly white suburbs of the township.

It was, however, often difficult for an Aboriginal family to be accepted for the NTA accommodation in Alice Springs. For example, Father K. Summerhayes, the Superintendent of the Santa Teresa Mission, many of whose residents were old Alice Springs residents and had moved to Santa Teresa via Arltunga when the Little Flower Black Mission was removed from Alice Springs, put forward the names of five families whom he judged 'most suitable' for transfer to live in Alice Springs.¹ The Welfare Branch reply was not promising.² It pointed out that as two-bedroom houses were usually available, a couple of the families would have to be eliminated because they each required a 'hostel'.³ There was also 'no reason' why two of the other families would be considered for a house because one of the conditions for getting one was that the applicant must be in employment on full award wages. (It was not until 1968 that Aborigines were paid award wages in the pastoral industry. In 1966, when this request was made, Aboriginal wages, at least for full bloods and those living on missions and government settlements, were governed by the Wards' Employment Ordinance, by which wages were fixed administratively by notice in the Northern Territory Gazette (Rowley 1978:149). The rates were considerably less than award rates.)

¹Father K. Summerhayes to the Assistant Director, Southern Division, Special Welfare Branch, 19 February 1966.

²Assistant Director, Southern Division to Rev. Father Summerhayes, 31 March 1966.

³The families had nine and seven children respectively. Under the former's details was handwritten: 'This bloke needs a hostel not a house'.

Perhaps the positive features of town camp life are the chief reason that so many Aborigines reject the Housing Commission accommodation. There are, however, other less important reasons which reflect, rightly or wrongly, on the general impression gained by town campers of the Housing Commission as landlord. First of all are the formalities which have to be undergone by a prospective applicant and the probability that that application will end in rejection.

When camp residents apply for Housing Commission accommodation, their suitability is checked by a Housing Commission representative, who then recommends their eligibility for a Commission house. The representative of the Commission seeks evidence that an applicant can meet the tenancy requirements of a Commission house, which include a number of domestic virtues and, hardly surprisingly, in the conditions of the town camps, finds none. Smith (1972) found that of sixty-three current Aboriginal tenants, only two had been living in camp conditions before the tenancy. One Aboriginal applicant recently received the following refusal, which can be regarded as typical:⁴

Further inspections have been carried out of your camp and unfortunately the domestic standard displayed is not to that expected of Commission tenants. It is expected in the future that the Commission with funds provided by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, will be able to supply transitional housing to assist applicants such as yourself. At this stage you are advised that your application is cancelled.

Chapter 2 has already described the attempt by the Housing Commission to build 'transitional housing' in various suburbs of Alice Springs and it remains to be seen whether or not this attenuated pilot scheme will be extended after the first ten houses are completed and occupied by 'transitional' Aboriginal tenants. One must also note unfortunately the short-sightedness of the Hay Inquiry which recommended that 'in rural and urban areas, resources for housing go primarily to Housing Commissions' (Hay 1976:62).

No statistics of the number of Aboriginal tenants evicted from Housing Commission houses are available. According to

⁴Housing Commission Northern Territory to Mr A.E.....a, 22 February 1977.

Braddock (1979), there has only been one eviction of an Aboriginal tenant since 1969, an assertion which is in stark contrast to the verbal opinion of Aborigines in Alice Springs. She does, however, note that rent reminders might often be interpreted as eviction notices so that people move out prematurely. In the only available report on Aboriginal Housing Commission tenants in Alice Springs, Smith (1972), although attempting to ascertain the kinds of difficulties experienced by Aboriginal tenants in Housing Commission houses, unfortunately did not or could not examine the files of those evicted.

In a report prepared for the Department of Native Welfare, NTA, Smith compared the histories of five full-blood and seventy-four mixed-blood Aborigines with a control sample of twenty Europeans. Difficulties, as defined by the Commission, were experienced by Aboriginal tenants in three main areas:

- a. Rental arrears. 40.5 per cent of the Aboriginal tenants had had arrears notices served at an average of 3.4 per tenant compared with 20 per cent of the Europeans, averaging 1.7 per tenant;
- b. History of repairs and maintenance. This was broken down to five categories based on cost of repairs and maintenance incurred by a tenant as per Table 3.

Table 3
Costs of repairs and maintenance

	Aborigines	Europeans
	%	%
Nil	30.37	40.00
Under \$50	31.65	50.00
\$50 - \$100	12.66	10.00
\$100 - \$200	10.13	Nil
Over \$200	15.19	Nil
	100.00	100.00

- c. Illegal occupants. Section 2(h) of the Tenancy Agreement forbids anybody other than the wife and unmarried children of the tenant to reside on the premises unless express permission is granted by the

Commission; 24 per cent of the Aboriginal families had received official letters from the Commission advising that this rule was in breach compared with 10 per cent of the control sample. Smith concluded that:

The problem of illegal occupants appears, however, not to create great difficulties and the pattern observed was for these people to move to other accommodation once the Commission took official action in the form of a letter to the tenant and in many cases serving a Notice to Vacate on the illegal occupant.

One cannot but express surprise at this conclusion, for talking to former Aboriginal tenants of the Housing Commission, one quickly gains the impression that exclusion of relatives was the principal difficulty they experienced (see for example Geoff Shaw's comments about his grandmother quoted in Chapter 4). The repairs and maintenance statistics which show 26 per cent of Aborigines experiencing repairs costing over \$100 compared with none on the part of Europeans also suggest that overcrowding might have been a factor among Aboriginal tenants. In this respect, one wonders whether or not a different conclusion would have been reached had Smith examined the files of evicted tenants.

One thing Smith's report does conclusively demonstrate is that the Mills Street phenomenon, described so vividly by a speaker at the Citizens for Civilized Living meeting, hardly seems to accord with the facts of the Housing Commission. Certainly the wholesale destruction of houses by Aborigines as a group seems not to have taken place.

It is difficult to be precise about the number of Aboriginal tenants of the Housing Commission in Alice Springs as the Commission does not admit to keeping separate statistics for Aborigines. In 1972, the Alice Springs office of the Housing Commission was able to identify five full-blood tenants, eighty mixed-blood (one of whom Smith did not consider an Aboriginal) and twenty-two Europeans with Aboriginal spouses. The average length of tenancy was 4 years 7 months, ranging from 11 years 2 months to 2 months. We can conclude from this that the Housing Commission did not start to accept Aboriginal tenants until about 1961. By 1967, there were apparently four Aboriginal families in Housing Commission houses, six who had applied for a house

and none who were being considered for a house.⁵ By 1969, the number of housed had almost tripled, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Aboriginal tenants and applicants for Housing Commission
houses, 1 December 1967 to 13 August 1969

	Tenants	Applicants
1 December 1967 ^a	6	4
8 February 1968 ^b	7	5
19 April 1968 ^c	7	5
4 July 1968 ^d	7	4
13 August 1969 ^e	11	7

Notes: a Memo Acting Assistant Director (S) to Director of NTA Welfare Branch, 1 December 1967.

b Memo Acting Assistant Director (S) to Director of NTA Welfare Branch, 8 February 1968.

c Memo Acting Assistant Director (S) to Director of NTA Welfare Branch, 23 April 1968.

d Memo Senior Social Worker to Director of NTA Welfare Branch, 4 July 1968.

e Memo Assistant Director (S) to Director of NTA Welfare Branch, 13 August 1969.

The figures tell only part of the story of tenancies. For example, between February and April, one of the families housed had left while another had been housed. By July, that family was no longer housed.

In the 1970s, the Housing Commission must have made a greater proportion of its stock of housing available for Aborigines (or, of course, a number of part-Aborigines who

⁵The Assistant Director (S) (letter dated 8 September 1969) pointed out to the Director of the NTA Welfare Branch that distinctions between Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal were poorly defined, and that some Aborigines lodge applications without the help of his office. Therefore the only way to ascertain the full figure would be to conduct a full survey.

formerly would not admit to being Aboriginal are now proud to do so), for by the end of 1977 the Commission estimated that 20 per cent of its 850 dwellings (i.e. 170) were occupied by Aborigines, and this figure had risen to an estimated 200 in 1979 (Braddock 1979) with fifty-five more families on the waiting list.

The Housing Commission, as Braddock notes (1979:10) caters for a 'fairly discrete group' of Aborigines, 65 per cent of the tenants being employed and a majority of the remainder receiving social security or unemployment benefits. In this respect, the Commission plays a major part in providing housing for the significant number of non-tribal Aboriginal people who are more or less culturally integrated into the wider community.

In 1978, the Housing Commission became involved in a program to provide special housing for Aboriginal families who would be rejected for normal tenancies. The housing was to be a normal Commission house with high fences 'for privacy' (Braddock 1979:13), an outdoor cooking area, an additional toilet for the use of visitors and tougher internal fittings. These were the houses which became the focus of attention of the Citizens for Civilized Living (see Chapter 2).

Inasmuch as camp residents appear to have special difficulties in obtaining Housing Commission houses and in meeting the tenancy requirements, it is unfortunate that separate figures on their occupancy are not kept. It would be useful to have such figures in order to assess the actual and potential role of the Commission in providing housing. The question of who would be the most suitable landlord for camp residents is an important one. A large bureaucracy would appear to have almost insuperable difficulties in respect of catering for the very particular housing needs of tribally oriented Aborigines taking up an urban residence and the many problems that a family in transition might face in a new environment. The advantage of making town camp associations responsible for their own housing schemes is that each family in the camp is well known to everyone else, their own personal problems and difficulties are also well known and are likely to get the immediate and sympathetic treatment from other members which will assist them to overcome these problems. For the Housing Commission, any

particular social or emotional problems being experienced by a tenant are rarely of great import. What matters is whether or not the tenancy agreement is observed. If it is not, and the warnings are not heeded, eviction is the remedy. With eviction, what might have started out as a containable social problem could well become a catastrophe for the victims of such treatment.

Other accommodation

Aborigines, as a group, are disadvantaged in terms of access to other accommodation in Alice Springs. Braddock (1979) has presented some useful information about access to housing in Alice Springs for Aborigines and the following is taken from her report.

Both Territory and Commonwealth governments own a substantial number of houses and flats for rental on favourable terms to permanent employees of the services. Disproportionately few Aborigines are employed in the public service largely due to their poor educational opportunities and attainments. In July 1979, there were only five Aboriginal tenants of government housing, taking up only 0.85 per cent of the total available.

In the private rental market, Aborigines fare little better. According to Braddock, of the 750 houses and flats for rent, only 10 (1.3 per cent) have Aboriginal tenants. Braddock explains this small percentage by the fact that Aborigines are excluded from the market by the high cost of rental accommodation. The explanation seems only partial, for it would be surprising if none of the Alice Springs landlords hold the kinds of attitudes which find their expression in gatherings like that of the Citizens for Civilized Living.

Given their low incomes and poor work prospects, the opportunities for Aborigines to purchase private houses in Alice Springs are poor. The Aboriginal Loans Commission does advance funds on favourable terms to Aboriginal applicants but it was unable to help Aborigines in Alice Springs for a number of years because of its policy of advancing funds through terminating building societies. In 1974, when the Commission began its operations, there were no terminating building societies in Alice Springs. Since that date the Commission has only provided four home loans to Aborigines in Alice Springs. The Northern Territory Housing Commission

runs a sales scheme for tenants of two or more years' standing. In 1979, there were ten Aboriginal families taking advantage of this scheme. In 1979, therefore, of the 1037 owner-occupied houses in Alice Springs, it is doubtful that more than ten (0.96 per cent) would be owned by Aborigines.

Table 5 shows the proportion of houses available in Alice Springs that are occupied by Aborigines. Taking an

Table 5
Alice Springs housing stock

	Total	Aboriginal occupied	Aboriginal occupied as % of total
Housing Commission	925	193	20.87
Australian National Railways	80	11	13.75
Government ^a	592	5	0.85
Private rental	750	10	1.33
Private	1,037	10	0.96
Housing Commission in course of purchase	165	10	6.06
	3,549	239	6.73
Population 1979	16,025	2,500	15.60

Note: a The number of Commonwealth Government houses (326) occupied by Aborigines was not available. The figure, however, is likely to be extremely low.

average family size of five, Table 5 suggests that approximately 1200 Aborigines or 48 per cent of the Aboriginal population are housed in Alice Springs if we assume single tenancies. The problem of the relationship of houses to unhoused, given Aboriginal values, is further exacerbated by the numerous Aboriginal visitors to Alice Springs who tend to stay with relatives. In their relationship with the unhoused and visitors, the housed are placed in a dilemma. They can offer hospitality to these people, overcrowd their houses and risk having their landlords evict them for breach of the tenancy agreement. Alternatively, they can refuse to accommodate them and risk being cut off by the Aboriginal community and thus, from their very roots and, in adversity,

the one group in the town which would help them. Certainly, one can argue that so long as a majority of Aborigines remain unhoused in Alice Springs, the problems confronting many of the housed are no less great, though different, than those confronting the unhoused.

Temporary accommodation

The majority of visitors to Alice Springs from outlying areas find shelter with relatives and friends resident at one of the town camps. Layton *et al.* (1979) have summarized the main reasons for Aborigines visiting Alice Springs:

- a. For medical treatment either in hospital or at the CAAC clinic and to visit sick relatives. The numbers of Aborigines seeking hospital treatment are substantial. For example, Alice Springs hospital treated 2583 Aboriginal outpatients in 1977-78.
- b. To attend official meetings and courses.
- c. To shop.
- d. For a holiday.
- e. To play in some sports competition.
- f. To visit children at Yirara College, a secondary boarding school for Aborigines.

For people not intending to stay too long, there are a number of hostels and mission houses which cater especially for Aborigines. These institutions offer shelter at nominal fees and most of them will waive the fee if the person is unable to pay. Even though these facilities are available, they are quite insufficient to fill the need for temporary accommodation, especially at busy periods when the influx of visitors is high.

Two missions provide temporary accommodation for visiting Aborigines, namely the Institute for Aboriginal Development (a hostel set up for the Pitjatjantjara and which can accommodate approximately thirty) and the Finke River Mission (which runs a 15-room block for the Aranda).⁶ There

⁶The Santa Teresa Mission also provided accommodation (for approximately 21 people), but according to Braddock (1979: 23) it was closed down in 1978 (possibly as a result of the extension of an STD telephone link to the mission, which no longer required a service centre in Alice Springs.)

is little in the way of temporary accommodation for Aborigines from the north like the Warlpiri, Luritja, Pintubi, Anmatjira and others.

These hostels provide very basic accommodation with communal ablutions and cooking facilities. They are patronized as they do offer shelter from the elements in surroundings which are familiar. Visitors generally prefer to stay where they have relatives or friends, but even if they do not have connections at the hostels, they may choose one because it is affiliated with their home country (mission) or linguistic group.

A more recent entry into the Aboriginal hostel market is the Commonwealth funded Aboriginal Hostels Ltd. In Alice Springs, Aboriginal Hostels operate the former Hole-in-One hostel, which houses 50-65 in one-room units with communal cooking facilities. Residents may spend up to 3 months in the hostel, but although indefinite stays are not feasible, there is flexibility in the application of the time limit. Charges are assessed on the ability of the client to pay.

Sometimes persons who are awaiting Housing Commission houses are accommodated at the Hole-in-One as a preparatory phase to their applying for a Commission house. The Hostel's management works closely with the Commission in this respect and uses some of its accommodation to enable Commission personnel to check up on the home management skills of prospective tenants.

Aboriginal Hostels also own some houses in which they offer shelter on a longer term basis to geriatrics and working men. In 1978, there were four houses in which a total of nineteen aged men and women (three of the houses were for women and one for men) could be housed. Each house is maintained by a housekeeper who also cooks for the residents.

By 1979, Aboriginal Hostels had increased its capacity by about 64 beds (Braddock 1979:21), a new hostel (the Sid Ross) having been built for Pitjatjantjara and the capacity of the aged persons' hostel having been increased to 35 beds. A further 48-bed hostel for aged persons was also under construction.

Theoretically, other hostels, hotels and motels in Alice Springs will also accommodate Aborigines who 'meet

their standards' but, because of a number of factors, few Aborigines stay there. Among these factors are higher charges than most Aborigines can afford and implicit inhibitions which deter most Aborigines (except the highly acculturated) from approaching certain kinds of premises in Alice Springs. One can be reasonably certain that, at least for the foreseeable future, there is little likelihood of Aborigines using the kind of accommodation which caters to tourist and predominantly European clientele.

Chapter 6

Improved shelter for town campers, 1960-74

Prior to the Land Rights legislation which recognized the needs of urban Aborigines for land, the Alice Springs town camp residents were illegal squatters on crown land with little prospect for improved living conditions. During a long period of expansion in Alice Springs, the conditions of the town camps did not change perceptibly. Town campers were in no position to initiate changes in their housing circumstances over the years, except, perhaps, to make minor improvements by using new materials as they became available on the garbage dumps in the construction of their humpies. Building conventional houses was unthinkable, as people neither had title to the land, money, materials nor skills. Nor, indeed, was it permitted because of the Ordinance forbidding the erection of any permanent utility on vacant crown land. Buying or even renting on the open market was equally impossible for the town campers as the costs were beyond their meagre means. As mentioned in the previous chapter, when camp residents occasionally attempted to obtain Housing Commission accommodation, they usually met with failure. In such circumstances, the only hope for change lay in the intervention of government agencies. There were no moves of this sort until the 1960s, and even these were miniscule compared to the extent of the problems. It is instructive to examine these moves, for they not only indicate the consuming lack of interest of government authorities for the plight of town campers, but they also suggest some lessons which should not pass unremarked.

The first attempt by an Aboriginal group to secure land in Alice Springs on which they could legitimately live was made in 1963. Seventeen Aboriginal artists (including six Namatjiras) approached local member of the Legislative Council, D.D. Smith, to assist them to secure the allotment of a piece of crown land in the Morris Soak area for their exclusive use. Smith wrote to the Administrator¹ in support

¹D.D. Smith to Administrator, 26 June 1963.

of the application, pointing out that the group had been banned from camping at the Finke River Mission Block and that they did not want to stay at Amoonguna because they had nothing in common with the inmates there. As a result, they had to camp in the creek hard by Morris Soak. Smith concluded by referring to Section 122 of the Crown Lands Ordinance:

The Governor-General may grant to any aboriginal native, or the descendant of any aboriginal native, a lease of any Crown lands, not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres in area, for any term of years upon such terms and conditions as he thinks fit.

The group of artists also said that they would be prepared to contribute the greater proportion of finance required to build 'houses' on the land.

The Welfare Branch was not enthusiastic about the idea. The Branch was concerned that the seventeen artists were all married and had forty-eight children of school age.² The wives and children lived at Hermannsburg and the application made no mention of what the artists proposed to do with them. The Branch was also concerned that:

we should do everything in our power to prevent the re-establishment of a squalid camp site in the Morris Soak area; and that we control the numbers who settle there in the event of a lease being granted.

The Welfare Branch established that the artists and their families would comprise 88 people.³ Interestingly, the combined earnings of the group from paintings processed through the Welfare Branch, for the two years 1961-63, were £19,935.17.0 with one artist earning £4,697.12.0. These earnings were probably augmented by further 'illegal' sales made directly to customers.

The fact that such earning capacity would be enough to finance dwellings did not impress the Welfare Branch.

²Memo, Director to Assistant Director (Southern Division, 1 August 1963.

³Memo, G.Holden, Patrol Officer, to Assistant Director (S), 13 September 1963.

According to it, Morris Soak, before 1960, 'had an unsavoury reputation as a resort of no hopers and a place for drinking orgies'.⁴ In 1959, the Centralian Pastoralist Association had complained that its cattle on the stock route were molested by dogs from the Morris Soak camp and, consequently, the Administrator directed that the inhabitants be removed to Ilparpa (the camp set up for sanitation department workers). The famous Aboriginal artist, Albert Namatjira, had camped some 3km to the west of Morris Soak and that camp also had a reputation for drinking parties at one of which in 1958 a 'lubra' had met a violent end.

Patrol Officer Holden concluded:⁵

Whilst I am sympathetic to the need of some of the artists for a permanent residence in Alice Springs I can see little advantage resulting from the granting of a lease at Morris Soak whilst disadvantages (from a community point of view) would be many. I consider that objections would come from various sources, particularly when the area was occupied. It is unlikely that the Animal Industry Board would support the application whilst objection could be expected from pastoralists who require the use of the stock route or Reserve as it could be expected that dogs would also be resident at the camp. Occupants of the Caravan Park would be likely to offer objection also, particularly if drinking parties occurred at the proposed camps.

In my opinion the granting of a lease to a group of aborigines should be discouraged. Facilities for overnight or short term accommodation are available at Amoonguma and alternatively for those artists who desire to remain permanently in Alice Springs their individual applications for houses already existing in the town area proper would receive sympathetic consideration.

An interesting insight into the bureaucratic mind is given by the response of the Assistant Director (Southern Division) to the surprising news of the earnings of the

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

artists. He wrote:⁶

One obvious point that appears to have escaped notice all along the line is that none of them is paying taxation.

I feel that we should bring this to the notice of the Taxation Department before one of their inspectors discovers this.

The Assistant Director also supported his patrol officer's opposition to the camp:⁷

It is my opinion that this group is purely and simply trying to establish a camp in an out of the way neck of the woods where they can get on the grog and remain out of sight. It is high time that these people were made to accept some of their responsibilities, especially as regards their wives and children. The group is a source of annoyance to Hermannsburg Mission, as they come and go in taxis and broken down vehicles and make no contribution to the Mission whatsoever ...

The hygiene of these people also leaves a lot to be desired and the establishment of a camp in this area would immediately create hygiene problems. This is the reason, of course, that they are not allowed to camp at the Mission block any more. I feel we should oppose this application to the utmost of our ability as it will not be a help to the artists, nor will it help the township of Alice Springs.

The application was refused. The Administrator⁸ cited the problems of the pastoralists with camp dogs in 1959 and the fact that no Aboriginal is ever prepared to accept full responsibility for the maintenance and general control of a camp and that the group made no provision for their wives and children in the application as reasons for declining the application. According to the Administrator, 'the task of introducing a programme of social change amongst such groups is virtually insuperable'. He therefore suggested that if

⁶Memo, Assistant Director Southern Division to Director, Welfare Branch, 18 September 1963.

⁷Memo, Assistant Director Southern Division to Director, Welfare Branch, 17 September 1963.

⁸Administrator to D.D. Smith, 18 October 1963.

members of the group did want to live in Alice Springs, those who could meet the financial and other requirements of the Housing Commission should apply to that authority for a home, while those who could not might be considered for accommodation in the transitional Gap cottage area. Somewhat inconsistently, the Administrator did not explain how this latter suggestion overcame his objection to the fact that members of the group would neglect their wives and children by living in Alice Springs. Nor did he explain what chances members of the group had in obtaining Housing Commission housing when social change was such an insuperable problem.

There was also opposition to the presence of town camps from the citizens of Alice Springs. Beginning in the early 1960s, there was growing public discussion of the appalling conditions in the town camps and calls were made for something to be done about them. The something that should be done was invariably negative, in the sense of seeking ways to remove them from the scene. There were letters to the editor of the *Centralian Advocate* and numerous complaints to the Town Management Board (now the Alice Springs Corporation). Not surprisingly, the complaints were made by white residents of the town. Although a few did express genuine concern for the plight of the town campers, most saw the camps and their occupants as unwanted problems, preferably to be removed somewhere else.

It is interesting that the outcry over the camps came when it did. Aborigines had been living in the vicinity of the town for decades (and, as noted earlier, they were in the majority when the town was first established and for some years after that). The concern appears to coincide with two significant changes in the life of the town in the 1960s:

- a. There was increasing visibility of Aborigines as restrictions on their movement were relaxed and their rights as Australians began to be recognized. This was especially after the adoption of a new Social Welfare Ordinance in 1964, which, among other things, made drinking legal for Aborigines.
- b. Tourism was beginning to be recognized as a major economic activity in Alice Springs. Many residents were concerned that the squalid conditions in the town camps would be detrimental to the image of the town presented to visitors.

In 1961, a Town Management Board (TMB) was established and, at its inaugural meeting, the question was raised of setting aside an area of land where itinerants might camp.⁹ The concern of the TMB was to prevent indiscriminate camping along the Todd River and its central position to the town. By providing such a site, the TMB considered it would be able to prohibit illegal camping in the Todd. The Lands Branch was approached to recommend a location, but the area it suggested was not satisfactory because, in the opinion of the TMB, it was too close to the town and the land was subject to flooding.¹⁰ In early 1962, a site was approved behind the Lutheran Mission facing the Todd River.¹¹ No action appears to have been taken over this site.

By 1963, the TMB had turned its attention to the question of how to evict 'campers and congregations of persons in the town area'.¹² It discovered that legislation did exist under the Crown Land Ordinance to deal with persons found camping on crown land¹³ but it was cumbersome. The TMB therefore recommended that new legislation be introduced to prohibit persons camping on crown land within a three-mile radius of the township.¹⁴

The TMB sought other means to rid itself of the nuisance. It approached the medical authorities to see if they had any powers. The Health Department reported that with the Police it was doing its best to eliminate the problem, but the Department's action was restricted to persuasion rather than force.¹⁵ Again, the TMB recommended that legislation be introduced to give the Health Department more powers and in 1964 received the news that the Department of Health had arranged for the Crown Law Officer to 'make' regulations under the Public Health Ordinance.¹⁶

In 1967, after receipt of a letter from Miss O.M. Pink, the focus of the TMB's attention changed yet again. In her

⁹ Minute No.5, Inaugural meeting, 12 May 1961.

¹⁰ Minute No.6, 4th meeting, 5 September 1961.

¹¹ Minute No.3, 7th meeting, 6 February 1962.

¹² Minute No.16, 17th meeting, 22 April 1963.

¹³ Minute No.18, 18th meeting, 28 June 1963.

¹⁴ Minute No.24, 27th meeting, 24 August 1964.

¹⁵ Minute No.17, 26th meeting, 6 July 1964, and Minute No.14, 27th meeting, 28 August 1964.

¹⁶ 28th meeting, 24 November 1964 - Report on outstanding matters 1961/64.

letter, Miss Pink complained that the natives were gradually killing the eucalypts in the Todd River by cutting roots to use for making artifacts. She also complained that the cooking of kangaroo meat (which she called a 'health hazard in itself') was a nuisance because 'soil-binding sticks and leaves were used on the fires'. On the strength of this letter, the TMB resolved that legislation should be prepared to prevent the lighting of fires in the river beds of the Todd and Charles rivers between the Telegraph Station National Park and Heavitree Gap up to 200 yards of the bank.¹⁷ The legislation, though drafting was begun, was not forthcoming¹⁸ and the TMB was advised that all that was necessary was for the Timber and Forestry Bureau to erect signs stating that fires were banned in this area.¹⁹ No one, however, explained to the TMB how non-literate Aborigines were expected to read and comprehend these notices.

In May 1967, the TMB found a new hope. It was informed that a special sub-committee had been formed in Darwin to investigate the problems of camping Aborigines in various centres of the Northern Territory.²⁰ It promptly invited the sub-committee to visit Alice Springs. The sub-committee neither visited Alice Springs nor produced a report and the next the TMB heard was that it was defunct and that a Select Committee of the NT Legislative Council had been established to report on Aboriginal integration.

The TMB's response was to appoint its own sub-committee, which reported in September 1970.²¹ The sub-committee summarized the main objections of the community to campers:

- a. Noise, associated with bad behaviour;
- b. the fear of health hazards arising out of the scattering of rubbish and the absence of sanitary conveniences for the campers;
- c. child welfare and education;
- d. the possibility of danger to people arising out of drunkenness and offensive behaviour;

¹⁷Minute No.18, 33rd meeting, 6 September 1965.

¹⁸Minute No.7, 36th meeting, 21 March 1966, and Minute No.6 37th meeting, 23 May 1966.

¹⁹Minute No.6, 37th meeting, 23 May 1966.

²⁰Minute No.13, 45th meeting, 11 May 1967.

²¹Alice Springs Town Management Board Camping sub-committee report and recommendations, 1970 (mimeo).

- e. the untidiness of the immediate environs of the main town area;
- f. the impairment of the tourist image of the town.

Surprisingly, the committee found few permanent campers, estimating this population at 60 to 100 with a transient population of between 30 and 350. The committee did, however, acknowledge that the figure could be higher.

The report took a reasonably constructive view of the situation of the town camps. It recommended that five camping sites be set aside and that the sites be equipped with 'reasonable facilities'. Responsible Aboriginal groups, however, had to make their wishes known to the TMB and it seemed to be assumed that these representations would be made through members of the white community in whom the Aborigines placed some trust.

The committee, however, did appear to try to hedge its bets. It suggested that no permanent improvements be made in the first instance, and where facilities were required they should be portable ones. In the event of failure, such facilities could be moved elsewhere. It also recommended that, should the necessary sites be set up, camping should be banned from the town area after six months, which seemed to suggest that the committee might have been concerned that its cautious proposals might be found wanting by Aborigines, despite the fact that the five sites were in recognition of the tribal differences of Aborigines living or visiting Alice Springs and that the main tribal groups represented in the town were the Aranda, Pitjatjantjara, Warlpiri, Anmatjira and Pintubi.

So after nine years and without once consulting any Aborigines, the TMB came to recognize that the problem of Aborigines using Alice Springs and wanting to remain there either permanently or for short stays would not simply go away and could not be banished without considerable difficulty. The recommendations of the sub-committee seemed to be a genuine attempt to provide the Aborigines with some facilities, though it was quite clear that the TMB never meant the Aborigines to have control over these camps. For example, in 1970, Mr Martin of the TMB indicated to a meeting that the 'Administration would have to retain the ultimate

right to close an area!'.²² For him, a lease direct to the people might not be the answer.

There was a number of people concerned about developments in Alice Springs and not all of them lived in the township. The authoritative Commonwealth Council for Aboriginal Affairs, for example, considered that the Alice Springs community was 'one of the most explosive' in Australia. Pressure therefore mounted on the authorities to do something about the situation of the town campers in the township.

The TMB's report was submitted to the Social Welfare Department in Darwin in October 1970. Despite several appeals from interested persons, no action was taken until November 1971, when the Director of the Department called a meeting in Alice Springs. (Some town campers attended this meeting.) At this meeting, the Director announced that the Welfare Department would provide funds for a site chosen by the TMB (a site on the west side of the Charles River) and that other groups had three weeks in which to submit plans and budgets for other sites if they wished to be funded for the following financial year. This precipitate announcement caught the town campers and their supporters unprepared. Only one such plan was submitted, by the Cross-culture group, which had been actively considering means of developing a camp for almost two years and was therefore sufficiently prepared with enough facts and figures to meet the deadline.

Interestingly the Welfare Department's action was taken shortly after the Council for Aboriginal Affairs had expressed to Cabinet its disappointment with the Aboriginal programs implemented through the Department of the Interior and the NTA. One of the Council's specific recommendations²⁴ was the provision of adequate camping facilities for Aboriginal visitors to Alice Springs.

Thus two sites were approved for funding - Charles River and the Little Sisters (Cross-culture) camp. According to the *Centralian Advocate* (12 April 1973), \$76,660 was

²² Descriptive minutes of a specially convened meeting held on 14 June 1970 in Griffiths House.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ B.G. Dexter to Minister for consideration - Budget Cabinet: NT Programme, July 1971.

granted to the Charles River project; \$47,000 was granted the Cross-culture group.²⁵ The first point to note is that both these development projects were initiated and undertaken by whites, the former at an official level and the latter by a group of interested private individuals. Neither appears to have been successful but, in each case, the reasons were different. In short, the Charles River project did not involve Aborigines either in the planning or development stage and sought to fill a need perceived by whites, which, it is likely, was not of the utmost priority to camp residents. The Cross-culture project had goodwill and sought to involve the Aborigines in the planning and development stages. The group, however, lacked the necessary resources to implement its plans and see them to completion.

The Charles River village

At the recommendation of the TMB, the Social Welfare Department of the NTA (whose jurisdiction over Aborigines was assumed by the DAA in 1973) obtained a lease for a site on the edge of the Charles River on vacant crown land. The choice of this site is a curious one, since it is on the side of the river away from the town. It is out of sight of the road. In times of flood, it is completely cut off. The original purpose of the camp was to provide short-term accommodation for traditionally-oriented Aborigines. A local firm of architects was engaged to design structures for the site. Sewerage, water and electricity were connected. Five small concrete block houses were built. Four of them had one room with a large wood burning stove located in the centre, a shower room, windows with shutter but no glass and no verandahs. The fifth was substantially the same but had two rooms. An ablution block with toilet, showers and laundry was also built. In addition pipe frames fixed on concrete slabs, over which tarpaulins or other material could be slung to make a kind of tent, and taps and barbecue fireplaces were situated at several points on the site. Building was completed in 1973. At that time, according to Patrol Officer B.Horne, the Aboriginal group living there (12 males, 12 females and 24 children) had never been through the dwellings, had not been consulted about the planning or functioning of the project nor about how it was to be managed. For Horne, the design of the project had been based on three false premises:

²⁵ Minutes of meeting (n.d.) at Institute for Aboriginal Development re accommodation and planning, Alice Springs.

that the community was transient, it was not; that its housing needs were simple and unsophisticated, they were not; that the group was a Walbiri one, it was Anmatjira.²⁶

It is instructive to examine the course of events at Charles River subsequent to the establishment of the camp. As soon as the site was ready, a group of Aborigines (two extended families) who had been camping at a spot further along the Charles River promptly moved into the houses. Both families were permanent Alice Springs residents - one had been living at Amoonguna for about three years before moving to Charles River.

Management of the village was left vague and it is still difficult to ascertain who, if anyone, was responsible for maintenance, rubbish collection and other management tasks. Certainly the DAA was concerned that unless someone became responsible for the management of the camp, it would become a 'shambles'. An officer was assigned to see to the setting up of a management committee.²⁷ On 18 December 1973, the community appointed a long-time resident, Lindsay Turner, as manager. It also agreed to a committee consisting of four residents, 'several representatives' of the Catholic Church, one town councillor and one DAA representative to provide 'oversight' and guidance to the operation of the area.²⁸ It appeared to be a somewhat bureaucratic solution to management problems.

The duties of the manager were never clearly defined and it is not certain that the proposed management committee ever met. The manager achieved some official status with the DAA and was paid to keep the camp area clean. A vehicle was purchased for his use in carrying out these duties. When he failed to do so and the vehicle fell into disrepair, conflict arose between the two families. Eventually, in 1975, one family moved out and returned to camp along the river bank. Four other families, all newcomers to Alice

²⁶Patrol Officer B.Horne to Director, DAA, Northern Territory Division, 7 September 1973. For confirmation that the camp was regarded as Warlpiri, see press statement of the Minister for the Interior, 28 March 1972.

²⁷Assistant Director (Operations) to Director DAA, NT Division, 13 September 1973.

²⁸Acting Regional Adviser (Alice Springs) to Director DAA, NT Division, 19 December 1973.

Springs from places as far afield as Darwin, promptly moved into the four small houses, leaving twenty-five people camping around the house of the original family.

One thing can be established with certainty. The village has never housed the category of people for whom it was intended - that is to say, temporary visitors to Alice Springs.

It was perhaps unfortunate that the development stage of the project was completed just as the DAA was becoming established in Alice Springs. It is, however, curious to know how it was intended that five concrete block houses would cater for the transient Warlpiri visitors to Alice Springs without there being any formal management of the place. Such an approach does not even work for whites: all motels and camping sites having to employ people to manage, maintain and clean the facilities. Although two men were eventually employed on the site (and they were Anmatjira), their responsibilities were never clearly defined, nor, indeed, was it clearly indicated that the facilities were not being provided for the people who, for many years, had been camping in the area, but for temporary visitors to Alice Springs. With such lack of clarity and in the absence of any planning for the kinds of social support which appear to be critical to the success of such a venture, it is not surprising that total confusion reigned at Charles River, a situation which, within two years, led to disunity in a formerly united group and eventually to the destruction of the group itself.

It must also be stated that from the outset there was considerable objection to the shelters offered at the Charles River camp. Criticism came from Aborigines and whites. Many Aborigines refused to consider living at Charles River; some objected to its location as being too far from the town centre and questioned whether the aim was to keep them hidden. Some referred to the houses as 'dog boxes'. Certainly, they were not only unsuited to the Alice Springs climate but also totally unsuited to the traditionally oriented Aboriginal way of life, for which they were ostensibly designed.

The experiences associated with the Charles River camp serve to demonstrate some of the consequences of inadequate planning and groundwork in so delicate an area as the provision of housing for a traditionally oriented Aboriginal group. The project was a totally official and white inspired one. No Aboriginal people were consulted in the choice of

a site or the location and design of the dwellings. Once the camping facilities were completed, there was no careful development of some kind of Aboriginal committee or agency to supervise the occupancy of the buildings and to ensure proper management of the site. Even after there was official realization that some kind of management would be required, there was no concerted action by the DAA which had inherited responsibility for town camps.²⁹ Instead, the residents were left to the tender mercies of a number of government departments, each acting independently of the other, and some voluntary organizations, all of which simply added to the confusion in the minds of the inhabitants. The only decisive actions which were taken concerned the Toyota truck owned by the community. The first was the decision to buy one for the community. The second was that, as the people of Charles River no longer functioned as a community (December 1975), the truck would be of nuisance value and likely to cause ill-feeling between individual families. Tenders were therefore sought by the DAA from other communities to purchase the truck.³⁰

The Little Sisters (Cross-culture) camp

The Little Sisters camp was funded largely because an Alice Springs Cross-culture group had been established in October 1969 to begin to plan the development of a site for the Pitjatjantjara living there. The group was formed by members of the United Church with the goal of fostering understanding and good relations between white and black residents of the town. Almost immediately the group opened its membership to include interested individuals from other churches and throughout the community. Various informal social events were organized at which Aborigines and whites could get together. Monthly meetings of the group were also held.

²⁹In defence of the DAA it must be admitted that its swift acquisition of responsibilities for Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory brought with it a grossly understaffed Alice Springs office, most of the officers in which had been members of the discredited Welfare Branch of the NTA. It was not until the local office received an injection of new staff in 1974-75 that it began to perform satisfactorily.

³⁰DAA internal memo, 23 December 1975.

Soon after its formation, the Cross-culture group began to discuss the poor conditions under which Aboriginal residents in and visitors to Alice Springs had to camp. A survey of the facilities available to Aborigines in the town and of the town camps themselves was carried out and an assessment of needs made. From this survey, the group determined that there was an urgent need for ablution and toilet facilities for Aborigines not living in conventional housing. These views were presented to the TMB, the local member of the Legislative Council and others. The pleas for urgent action, however, failed.

The Cross-culture group took a particular interest in the TMB sub-committee's investigation of town camps in 1970 and supported its recommendations. At about the same time, through the Reverend Jim Downing and the United Church who already had a close association with the Pitjatjantjara, the group decided to work with some Pitjatjantjara from Hermannsburg and Maryvale who were camping on vacant crown land next to the novitiate house of the Little Sisters. The group began consultation with the affected fringe campers and communities from which visitors came to try to determine what kind of camping facilities they might require. Thus, when the Director of Social Welfare did call for plans in November 1971, the Cross-culture group was able to move quickly.

The plan submitted by the Cross-culture group proposed to establish ablution blocks and houses for permanent residents and for visitors, camping areas with water and power points and an additional ablution block serving these areas. Because the Little Sisters' camp had a reputation as the scene of much drinking, some of the prospective temporary campers asked that the visitors' area be separated from the permanent area by a high fence and that a caretaker be provided. This provision was included in the plans. Since the camp was situated on Aranda land, the Pitjatjantjara felt they should secure Aranda permission before any building took place on the site. This was done at a meeting of representatives of the two groups and of the Cross-culture group. A lease for 20 acres of land was agreed to in principle in May 1972³¹ and a grant of \$47,000 was obtained from the government to erect toilet, ablution and other facilities and a caretaker's residence. In October 1972,

³¹*Darwin News*, 13 March 1973.

when the group submitted its building plans, it found that the land was zoned as parkland and therefore had to be rezoned. By March 1973, the rezoning plans were being displayed for the statutory 3-month period.

In retrospect the Cross-culture plans seem sensible, but for what was planned, however, the government grant was paltry. It was quite insufficient to start and continue a development program in accordance with the local residents' wishes. A compromise had to be effected and what resulted was unsatisfactory for everyone. It was decided initially to build two ablution blocks and reticulate water and electricity to them. The building of these exhausted the initial grant. No further funds were made available, the project ground to a halt and the residents, after the promise of permanent houses, believed that they had been duped by the government. An attempt and opportunity to provide satisfactory accommodation and facilities at a town camp under sympathetic management had been lost, a close and apparently harmonious working relationship between Europeans and Aborigines was allowed to disintegrate and the residents of Little Sisters gained very little from the exercise.

Chapter 7

Land rights for town campers

The current activity in the area of securing land rights for Aborigines in the Northern Territory may obscure the fact that until 1973 there was no recognition that Aborigines had any formal rights to land based on traditional ownership. Until then traditionally oriented Aborigines had been in the position of living on reserves owned by the government, or on stations leased to white pastoralists or on missions like Hermannsburg which had obtained special purpose leases to an area of land, or in towns as squatters, renters and rarely, if ever, as home owners.

There was a fundamental difference between the Aborigines' view and use of land and that of the whites. The Europeans had a utilitarian approach which had become a kind of religio-economic dogma permitting them to deny that Aborigines had any rights to the land because they did not put it to economic use like grazing or agriculture. The whites felt no compunction about taking over vast areas of land from the original inhabitants. Gradually, all over the continent, whites took the best land and used it for farming and grazing. These enterprises were given priority with little attention to Aboriginal needs and wishes. Not only was the land taken but the Aborigines were summarily confined to small reserves which were usually on land which had little commercial value (that is, unsuitable for farming; some of that land has since been found to have valuable mineral deposits and again there is much talk of reducing what rights have been granted to Aborigines in the Northern Territory). Even these reserves remained government owned in most places until 1966 when the South Australian government transferred ownership of some of the reserves to an Aboriginal Lands Trust. The State government, however, did not transfer the north-west reserve, where Pitjatjantjara live, into Aboriginal ownership.

In 1973 (in an effort to fulfil campaign promises to Aborigines) the newly elected Commonwealth Labor Government

took steps in the direction of redressing the historical injustices which had deprived Aborigines of any rights to land. Commonwealth jurisdiction over the Northern Territory made it possible for measures to be taken towards legal recognition of land rights there. The government appointed Justice A.E. Woodward as Commissioner to make an inquiry and submit recommendations as to how the goal of restoration could be achieved. The Commissioner made extensive investigations in the Territory regarding traditional Aboriginal links with the land, white claims upon vast areas of land, etc. He published his findings and recommendations in two reports (Woodward 1973, 1974). In these, he set guidelines for the process by which traditional Aboriginal owners should go about securing legal title over their land.

The Land Rights Commission report (and the resulting Land Rights Bill which was introduced into parliament in 1975, lapsed with the fall of the Whitlam government, and was reintroduced with amendments in 1976) were of enormous significance to the Aborigines of the Territory, as they represented a radical change in official attitudes to Aborigines as citizens and to their traditional links with the land. It is important to note, however, that the changes were made within a fairly limited range in that the land over which Aborigines were to be permitted to establish claims based on traditional ownership had to be unalienated crown land or land which had been purchased by or on behalf of traditional Aboriginal groups. The Commissioner was at pains to exclude all land which was already leased by pastoralists and others. This effectively meant that much of the land which could be claimed by Aborigines, although large in area, is of marginal economic value, except where valuable minerals might exist.

The Commissioner also made provision for Aborigines resident in urban areas. In his first report, Judge Woodward recommended the establishment of Land Councils to represent and act in the interests of Northern Territory Aborigines in matters related to land. This resulted in two such bodies being set up: the Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council. In his second report the Commissioner recommended that urban Aborigines who were unable to seek land on the basis of traditional ownership should be able to seek land on the basis of need. This would be done by applying for leases in perpetuity of vacant crown land. The Land Council's functions would thus include:

Investigating and reporting on the land requirements of Aborigines in towns, [and] coordinating and making claims to vacant Crown lands (Woodward 1974).

This recommendation was of crucial importance to the Alice Springs town campers. If accepted, it assured them of access to land even though they might not be living in a place with which they had traditional links. On the other hand, it precluded traditional owners such as some of the Aranda in Alice Springs from making claims on the basis of traditional ownership as the land lay within the boundaries of a township.

The government prepared a Land Rights Bill based on Commissioner Woodward's recommendations and submitted it to Parliament in October 1975. An interim Land Commissioner, Mr Justice Ward, was appointed while the preparation and processing of the Bill was in progress. In the same month, Justice Ward began to hear submissions from Aborigines in the Territory attempting to establish claims. These claims included 'town claims' in Alice Springs. Before the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Bill was passed by Parliament, the Labor government was replaced by a caretaker Liberal/Country Party government under the leadership of Malcolm Fraser. Pending new elections, the Bill lapsed, the interim Land Commissioner was withdrawn and land hearings were terminated. At that point, the Alice Springs town claims had appeared to be well on the way to being granted.

In 1976, the new Liberal-Country Party government introduced an amended Bill, which was proclaimed in January 1977. For the town campers, the most significant changes were that they could no longer be represented by Land Councils and that their applications for land had to be submitted to the Northern Territory Lands Board rather than the Land Commissioner. The government thus separated claims based on need from those based on traditional ownership and placed the former in the same category as applications for land by members of the general public.

The process to acquire a grant of land could be protracted. In accordance with the Act, lease applications for Alice Springs town campers, until the granting of limited state rights to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in 1978, were prepared by the DAA in consultation with the Department of the Northern Territory (DONT). The application was then submitted to the DONT Lands Board (now the Town Planning Board) along with development plans and drawings

to comply with covenant requirements. Then the application was advertised and anyone wishing to contest it had three months in which to do so. If there were no objections, the application was submitted to the Northern Territory Town Planning Board. If approved by the Board, it then went to the NT Administrator for his ratification and finally to the Minister for the Northern Territory to be signed.¹

This procedure raises the vexed question of the advisability of having government departments working with each other on behalf of a disadvantaged group. The role of DONT in matters related to leasehold applications by Alice Springs Aborigines (as will be described later in this chapter) strongly suggests that there may be a conflict, if not outright obstruction, on the Department's part and yet it is partly responsible for processing an application on behalf of an Aboriginal group. Where there might be a conflict of interest between government department and Aboriginal client but where the Aboriginal client is totally dependent on the government for funding, it would seem preferable for Aboriginal interests to be represented by their appointed representatives or, where necessary, by statutory bodies working on their behalf. Public servants, whether in DAA or other departments, are answerable to their superiors and ultimately to their ministers and the elected government, rather than to those who are most affected by their policies and actions. With government departments working with each other, there is little recourse for the Aboriginal people if they are poorly served, especially if their interest impinges on some political field, as most aspects of Aboriginal affairs do.

These comments raise an important issue which can only be briefly discussed in this monograph. The issue concerns the ability of a department radically to change the entrenched attitudes of officers to reflect changes in public opinion or abrupt changes in the policies of government. By its very nature, the public service tends to produce officers of a conservative disposition. Often, despite policy changes of government, attitudes towards certain major issues change only slowly. In the Northern Territory, Aborigines are one such issue. Both the DAA and DONT offices in the Northern

¹Presently the Town Planning Board makes recommendations to the Executive Council. The applicants have a right to appeal to a tribunal chaired by a Queens Council about legal questions about the ordinance and the interpretation by the Board of it.

Territory, upon their establishment in early 1973, were staffed predominantly by officers of the Northern Territory Administration, in fact the very officers whose approach to the town camp problem in Alice Springs has already been depicted in previous chapters of this monograph. To reinforce my point that the attitudes of the public servants concerned were often bordering on the racist, it might well be useful to quote at length the opinion of a Welfare Branch district welfare officer, contained in a letter he wrote to his director which, presumably, he confidently expected would be well received:²

...4. I am not at all happy about the attitudes I see developing among Aborigines on settlements in the Giles District. Many Aborigines are becoming independent and demanding and seem to be losing any respect for authority. It is certainly dangerous to reproach an Aborigine in a firm manner and for this reason many settlement staff adopt a permissive and casual attitude towards this behaviour and the supervision of work habits.

5. It is a fact that we have large groups of Aborigines on settlements who are generally ignorant and at the most half educated. Many have gained a false sense of importance, mostly evident from teenage to the mid 30s, because of outside influences. These influences are also exerted occasionally by members of staff who have some unusual ideas about Aboriginal advancement.

6. I also believe that there is far too much emphasis given to the importance of Aborigines attending meetings and conferences. It is certainly good to get them involved, but they should be qualified for this involvement. There are too many instances of people who do not understand or misunderstand attending conferences and returning to their home situations and talking a lot of unbelievable rot. Of course, a serious situation could result when such delegates come into contact with well known 'stirrers' [this appeared to be a reference to Dr H.C. Coombs, the chairman of the Commonwealth Council for Aboriginal Affairs and former Governor

²District Welfare Officer to Assistant Director, Welfare Branch, 18 November 1969 - Independence movement - Haasts Bluff reserve.

of the Federal Reserve Bank] when they attend such conferences. Unfortunately, it is a Welfare Branch officer who does all the hard work, who must contend with unsatisfactory behaviour and poor attitudes.

7. In the field of Aboriginal advancement, there are many little things that we need to concentrate on before any real advancement can be acknowledged and these are very insignificant and ordinary such as working for 8 hours a day, adequately looking after one's children, not spending all of one's money on wine and unessentials, developing good personal hygiene, living in houses, and many thousands of other features of life normally expected in a sound community of people. Unfortunately, there are too many idle people incurring Aboriginal problems, both black and white, and not wishing to do any work. I only hope we are not 'creating a monster'.

The letter was well received. So well in fact that it was passed from the NTA to the Commonwealth Department of the Interior in Canberra where it found its way up to the desk of the Deputy Secretary who passed it approvingly to the Council for Aboriginal Affairs as an example of what Aborigines were like in the Northern Territory.

These attitudes are confirmed by Tatz (1965:42):

The predominant attitude - more evident perhaps in Canberra than in the Branch itself - is the approach to Aborigines as a mass, a race, 'so many wards'. For many Branch officers Aborigines have formed a stereotype, people with a common set of characteristics, many of them negative: 'they' cannot handle liquor, 'they' lack responsibility, are apathetic, are incapable of learning elementary personal hygiene and so on.

... Their [welfare officers] administration is characterised by a tendency to paternalism and to domination in the absence of articulate resistance to instructions, ideas and methods of change. It is common to see officers adopt their 'Aboriginal' attitudes when dealing with others, and this does cause a real resentment in the non-Aboriginal clientele. (It also causes resentment in Aborigines, usually expressed in overt physical resistance, but this is very often rationalised in terms of a facet

of the stereotype.) It is a curious fact that while there is substance to this criticism of the Welfare Branch, nowhere has there been any suggestion that the Branch should insist on a higher standard of treatment and service for Aborigines, except perhaps the recent instruction from the Director to his officers to avoid using the words 'boy', 'lubra' and 'pic'.

The changes wrought by the Whitlam administration on the DAA and DONT (or at least the officers each inherited) were noticeably different. Admittedly, the first Labor Minister for the Northern Territory, Dr Rex Patterson, was a man who appeared to possess attitudes not greatly dissimilar to those of his predecessors, the Country Party Ministers for the Interior, Peter Nixon and Ralph Hunt. Certainly, his public comments about Aborigines seemed more concerned to emphasize white interests than corresponding Aboriginal ones. For example, his statement on black/white violence in the Northern Territory did not reveal a man well disposed to Aborigines:³

Central to the overall problem ... was the availability of relatively large sums of money which just could not be handled by many outback Aborigines. The major beneficiaries were the sellers of hard liquor. Aborigines were being told by stirrers that they need never work again for whites and that all the land in the north would eventually belong to them.

Given the attitudes of its first Minister, it is hardly surprising that the attitudes of public servants within DONT remained, at best, indifferent to Aboriginal interests.

In contrast, the DAA, at least for the first few years of its existence, was infused with the reforming zeal of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs and its research arm, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs. The attitudes towards Aborigines of senior officers in the Department led by the permanent secretary B.G. Dexter, were significantly different from those possessed by the officers the department inherited who staffed the regional office in Darwin and the area office in Alice Springs.

³*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 January 1974.

Between 1973 and 1975 the Alice Springs office gave the head office of the department considerable cause for concern. It had a low public service rating and consequently was staffed by junior officers, most of whom were men of modest abilities. Most of them found it difficult to shake off the attitudes they had formed while working for the Welfare Branch. Chapter 2 has already noted that the Department conducted an internal investigation into allegations of racism being practised by officers within the office.

For the Department, the problem of the Alice Springs office was serious because of its opinion of the town's importance as a centre for all Centralian Aborigines as well as the 1000 or so Aborigines resident there.⁴ It is perhaps worth reiterating Dexter's opinion (noted in the introduction) that the Aboriginal situation in Alice Springs was one of the most difficult the Department had to deal with.

In 1975, this problem was partly resolved by the Alice Springs office being upgraded to be headed by a Class 10 officer. Dexter was able to appoint an officer of his choice, R. Huey, who had been with the Office of Aboriginal Affairs from its early days. For the town campers of Alice Springs, this appointment was appropriate, for Huey brought with him a determination to resolve the issues facing the town campers, a conviction of the rightness of their cause⁵ as well as a willingness to take action both within the bureaucracy and in the public arena to advance their cause. Huey, from the outset, recognized the existence of separate viable communities living in the town camps and the importance of obtaining some security of tenure to the land on which they camped before any development could be contemplated. He also recognized the central importance of housing for the town campers without having any fixed ideas about how it should be delivered. The lack of rigidity in his thinking was perhaps Huey's greatest attribute for it allowed him to give

⁴Undated report by I.S.Mitchell - Alice Springs (probably at beginning of November 1974).

⁵For example, in March 1975, after Cabinet had agreed to the development of residential land on the east side of Alice Springs and before his appointment to the area office, Huey wrote (Huey to Mr McKenzie, 14 March 1975 - Land for fringe camps): 'To proceed to implement a new town plan for Alice Springs in the face of long standing, unmet land requirements for at least 15 separate Aboriginal groups is to me unthinkable in 1975.'

the town campers time to develop their own solutions to their problems out of which grew the Tangatjira Council, the town campers' answer to their own management and organizational problems, which will be discussed in Chapter 11. Huey's approach was probably a reflection of Dexter's, which in part can be illustrated by a note he wrote for the Minister en route to Alice Springs (2 March 1975):

DAA cannot solve the problems of Alice Springs. The citizens, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal, must do this. But we can come in with the material resources needed to implement agreed programs.

When discussing the activities of public service departments in the social field, it is important to consider the activities of individual officers like Huey, for they have enormous power to influence situations both positively and negatively. This influence can be of a different order from the impact of a government's policies or the programs it develops. Alice Springs is an excellent case in point. Huey was undoubtedly successful and played a very important role in the transformation of the situation of the town campers and in helping to defuse a potentially explosive situation to change it to one of the few conspicuously successful programs of the DAA (a role which does not appear to have been recognized by the Department). In 1979, Huey returned to take up a position in Canberra. The choice of his successor among other things revealed the changes which had occurred in the Department after D.O. Hay succeeded Dexter as permanent head. In short, good administration became the principal objective of the Department rather than good development. Hay demonstrated his poor grasp of the fragile stage of Aboriginal development in Central Australia by appointing a person to succeed Huey who had had no experience of social development nor any experience of traditionally oriented Aborigines except as they were administered from Canberra, and whose strengths appeared to lie strictly in the field of administration.

These comments in no way imply that government departments cannot act as advocates for some cause such as Aboriginal betterment, nor do they presume that the government departments always act in harness. In the case of the latter, there is the example of the running battle between the Department of the Interior and the Council and Office of Aboriginal Affairs between 1968 and 1972, especially over the granting of some recognition that Aborigines had

traditional rights to land and over the acquisition of pastoral properties for Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territory. In Alice Springs, this opposition continued over the granting of leases to town camps with the DAA playing an important role to expedite the process.

The point I want to make is not that government departments are poor or unlikely advocates of causes, but that, in a changing political environment and with officers of differing abilities and attitudes holding key and influential posts, departments cannot always be expected to practise the kinds of advocacy necessarily required by their clients. In some cases such advocacy can put an officer's job and promotion prospects on the line. That is why, in the first instance, it is better for Aborigines to employ people or organizations which are answerable to them. The services of government departments can still be utilized to support the claims whenever the political climate and the officers concerned are sympathetic. This is precisely the arrangement which eventually led to the granting of leases to town camps in Alice Springs during the period 1975-78. Initially the Central Land Council and then the Aboriginal Housing Panel assisted each town camp to prepare, present and expedite its leasehold application and, in these endeavours, the town camps were greatly assisted by the DAA which practised its own brand of advocacy at interdepartmental and ministerial level.

The ensuing situation whereby the DAA and DONT became solely responsible for processing a leasehold application was a radical change potentially to the disadvantage of Aborigines. In the former situation, if the DAA proved unhelpful, the organization employed by the Aborigines could assist them to explore different channels. If the organizations themselves proved unsatisfactory, they could be changed. The current situation (the DAA now works with the NT Town Planning Board) gives the Aborigines no alternative but a government department. If it proves unsatisfactory, Aborigines do not possess the funds to turn to any other organization with the skills and expertise to assist them to pursue their claim.

The experience of some town camps in the obtaining of a lease to land exemplifies the potential problems Aborigines can have with less than helpful departments. The processing of a leasehold application can be lengthy and complicated and requires professional assistance and support of the utmost integrity. It is inconceivable that town campers would, without assistance, have been able successfully to

make and pursue an application. The Ntapa application is a case in point. Application for a lease was first made to the Secretary of DONT in November 1973 and acknowledged the following month. After one reminder, DONT advised that the current lease for the land did not expire until June 1975, that the Urban Development and Town Planning Branch was investigating the future use of the land and that, until the lease expired, no final decision in relation to the future use could be considered.

In March 1974, application was therefore made for a lease of the land then occupied by the community hard by the Alice Springs sewage ponds at Ilparpa. In April, in reply to a request from DONT, preliminary requirements for the lease were forwarded to the Department. In May and June 1974, reminders were sent to DONT that a reply would be appreciated. In July, DONT requested further information in relation to the lease.

In April 1975, the community reopened its application for the first lease because it was realized how unsatisfactory was the location beside the sewage ponds and because DONT did not seem to be able to process the second application any more expeditiously than the first. Preliminary development plans and other information were sent to DONT in furtherance of this application. In May 1975, the Urban Development and Town Planning Branch of DONT sought justification for the amount of land applied for in relation to the size of the proposed development, a reply being sent immediately by Ntapa. In October 1975, DONT advised that part of the original lease had been set aside for the community, but that the matter had to go on public exhibition.

At about the same time, in order to reinforce the existing application, a supporting parallel application for a leasehold grant was made to the Interim Land Commissioner. The fact that this application was intended to reinforce the existing application was acknowledged by DONT at the Land Commission hearing:⁶

Your Honour, I do not see there is any problem with your making a recommendation to Government on recognising the claim area, it would only supplement and re-enforce the processes which the

⁶ Transcript of a hearing before Commissioner Ward in November 1975 (Central Land Council, Alice Springs).

Department is proceeding with. And I feel that the sooner the processes have gone through, the better for the applicant and claimant for the land.

In due course, the change of zoning was gazetted and the public display period expired in February 1976. The further application, however, did not appear to 'supplement and re-enforce the processes which the Department was proceeding with'. Instead, the Town Planning Board did not consider the granting of the lease because of an apparent 'misapprehension' on the part of the Board that the Administrator's Counsel would not consider any Town Planning Board recommendation in respect of an application for a lease where there was a concurrent land claim. At a subsequent meeting between DONT and Ntapa, DONT confirmed the 'misapprehension'.

At this meeting, DONT was also advised that part of the lease might have to be used for road access purposes and the leased area might be slightly different from that applied for. DONT advised that the question of access did not present a great problem and that the proposal would certainly not have to go back on public display if an area slightly different from that originally applied for was to be granted.

By March 1976, the 'misapprehension' over the twin lease applications seemed to have been cleared up. In April 1976, contact was made with DONT about granting the lease, but the community was advised that until the question of access was resolved, no lease could be granted. It was also advised that, if there were any changes to the original lease, the application would have to go on public display again for a further period of three months. Representations then were made to local politicians and eventually in March 1977 a lease was granted to the Ntapa community.

Had the Ntapa community only been assisted by officers of the DAA and DONT, there must remain a residual doubt that the lease application would have proceeded to a satisfactory conclusion. In this case, Ntapa had the services of a private firm of solicitors, the Central Land Council and the Aboriginal Housing Panel, to assist it with its application. It was largely through the perseverance of these bodies on behalf of the community that, after three years, 149 items of correspondence and numerous meetings, telephone calls and telexes, approval was finally granted.

The Ntapa lease application has been the most time-consuming to date. Other applications have also not been without a number of difficulties (for example, the Heavitree (Larapinta) application was the subject of serious objections from the Town Planning and Urban Development Branch, as the area was considered by planners to be suitable for a future subdivision).

One matter which should be argued strongly and should be manifest from the discussion about town camps in previous chapters, is the likelihood that more 'permanent' town camps will form in the future as more Aborigines move to Alice Springs in search of employment and the kinds of other amenities which have always attracted them to the town. These camps will form for the same social reasons that town camps have formed in the past, and in particular because they provide the kind of social ambience that most tribally oriented Aborigines are accustomed to and therefore seek. Undoubtedly, the 'transient' camps will also continue for the foreseeable future, but it is those which take on permanent characteristics which will be seeking grants of land on which to undertake their own developments. It would therefore be unwise, and socially most regressive, for the Northern Territory government to presume that, once the present set of leasehold applications has been processed, it can close its books on leasehold grants for town camps in Alice Springs.

A second equally important matter is the ability of town camps physically to expand as vacant areas of land on their leases are exhausted (see Appendix II for details of potential extent of expansion of town camps already granted leases). Mt Nancy might be used as a hypothetical case in point. At the moment, Mt Nancy has been granted a 4.25 hectare lot, on which have been built eight houses and a toilet block. Given the topography of the lot (a rocky hill on the lot, for example, could not be built upon), once the present planned development has been completed, there will be little to no room for any additional houses. Table 2 shows a significant expansion in the population of Mt Nancy from a low of 50 in 1977 to 100 in August 1979. Much of this immigration is a direct response to the development which has occurred there and to the fact that, with strong and confident leadership, Mt Nancy is regarded as a quiet and pleasant place in which to live. The probability is that Mt Nancy and other camps, either through natural increase or through immigration, will, in the future, require additional land and this fact should not be ignored by the Alice Springs town planners. It is

therefore important that, when future subdivisions are planned, future expansion of town camps should be taken into account and provision made for their expansion. Such a provision would also provide a buffer zone between town camps and the gathering Alice Springs conurbation, a zone which should assist town campers to preserve their own integrity and the way of life they cherish, especially during the period in which they are settling into a new lifestyle based on conventional housing.

A final matter which should also be considered is the setting aside of permanent camping grounds for Aboriginal visitors to Alice Springs and the provision of services to these areas. These areas should preferably be linked to the town camps which traditionally play hosts to particular Aboriginal visitors. Their location should be made after careful consultation with the traditional Aranda owners of Alice Springs and with representatives of the groups likely to want to camp there. If such areas are recognized and services are provided, Aborigines from outlying areas could be accommodated more satisfactorily without their being the butt of abuse from local residents who see them as unwelcome and unlawful squatters. They could also be accommodated more economically than by building a number of additional hostels which appears to be the present policy of Aboriginal Hostels. It should be a matter of some concern to Aboriginal Hostels that not all Aborigines want to live in the kind of accommodation that they prescribe and they could well consider the provision and management of camping areas which, in terms of amenities offered, could be little different from those offered in camping areas for tourists anywhere in Australia.

In 1975, fifteen camping areas were proposed (which included four areas for which leasehold applications have subsequently been made). There were to be water and toilet facilities. The proposal, however, was met by the Alice Springs town council with its habitual objections. The mayor and town council expressed their concern to the DAA that the provision of tents and, possibly, water to campers made it quite likely that they would become permanent camping areas. It was the council's viewpoint that such developments were undesirable and would have an adverse effect on whites in the town.

What is particularly difficult to understand, in view of the long history of objections by Alice Springs authorities and the white citizens living there to Aborigines having

somewhere to put their belongings when they visit the town is that the authorities still find it difficult to acknowledge that Aborigines do find the township an attractive place to visit and that increasing numbers of them also find it an attractive place in which to live and find employment. As Aboriginal education improves and the prospects for employment increase, so this latter group is enlarged. The irony is that if the town council was prepared to provide appropriate amenities in the right places it would to a large extent be able to control the 'problem' which by and large is its own creation, that of Aborigines camping here and there around the town, often in places in full view of tourists and citizens, to the detriment of the 'image' of the township. Aborigines too are likely to find such an approach preferable, for they would be provided with the amenities which would allow them to take care of their persons as they think fit and be sure that they were remaining in a place where they would not be harassed by vigilant citizens more concerned with the superficial appearance of the town than with the rottenness which lurks just below its surface.

Chapter 8

Development at Mt Nancy, 1976-78

By the end of 1975, all that had been provided for the many permanent homeless Aboriginal people living in and around Alice Springs were a few ablution blocks and five small units built at Charles River. Paradoxically, the five units had been built not for the permanent residents, but to house occasional Aboriginal visitors to Alice Springs. In fact the typical government and local response to the town campers during this lengthy period during which Alice Springs itself had greatly expanded was to neglect the camps in the hope that the town campers would simply disappear and, from time to time, try to force campers to move to Amoonguna. By the end of 1975 then, the overriding experience of town campers during their long association with the town was one of rejection by white authorities and individual whites. Rejection took many forms, the most strident of which was the chorus of abuse directed from time to time at the town campers by many sections of the Alice Springs public. The wounds inflicted on the town campers were great and the degree of resentment of the white man and all he represented and the cynicism about his intentions ran very deep.

The next three chapters of this monograph examine the work of the Aboriginal Housing Panel at Mt Nancy. The Panel had been set up by the McMahon government to advise the Commonwealth on suitable low cost housing for remote Aborigines.¹ In 1975, the Panel realized that the mere delivery of a house was not sufficient to ensure that it would be utilized to the full. The Panel therefore decided to concentrate more on establishing methods of determining appropriate housing for Aboriginal groups than on the identification of appropriate designs which might suit the requirements of such groups.

Mt Nancy was the first Aboriginal group with which the Panel worked. It was therefore the first opportunity that

¹For a brief discussion of the Panel see Heppell (1979: Epilogue).

the Panel had to develop its own approach to providing suitable housing for Aboriginal groups. At the time, the Panel was concerned that housing should reflect the social organization of the people for which it was designed and therefore introduce as little forced social change as possible to the society. The Panel had articulated an approach to formulating designs for Aboriginal groups which was based on an architect participating in a design process with the Aboriginal group concerned (Heppell 1976). Briefly, it was envisaged that the architect would familiarize himself with the living patterns of a group before proceeding to detailed design discussions. Preferably, the underlying designs should emanate from the members of the group, and these features should be converted into an architectural form by the architect. The community would, in effect, use the architect as a resource, drawing on his own knowledge and expertise as to what was practical and possible. The process was to be interactive. The architect would discuss how each design feature reflected some element in the culture of the group and either did or did not contribute to it. The architect would also present a range of options to the group, explaining what he understood to be the consequences of each option. The group would then determine which options it preferred. The approach was to ensure that the group made the final choices and the resulting design would reflect the group's requirements.

Experience soon demonstrated how naive was this view of the design process. It focused entirely on the design of buildings rather than on a coherent development plan (economic, social and physical) for a depressed community of which one aspect would be the improvement of physical amenities. The need for a coherent development plan soon became apparent in Alice Springs where, to ensure that any development program had a reasonable probability of success, it was necessary to help the town campers to revitalize themselves and to approach any developments in a purposeful way.

One crucial aspect of the Panel's approach was that it did require its architects to spend time with the people they were advising. It therefore gave an architect the opportunity to refine the approach to fit the particular situation in which he found himself.

The formulation of an outline of a design process was one thing. A crucial ingredient in the success of such an enterprise was the architect concerned, the relationship he

developed with the Aboriginal group and his ability to develop the Panel's imprecise formulations into a coherent framework within which the successful development of the town camps could take place. The philosophy of the architect concerned was clearly an important aspect of the role he was likely to play.

The architect concerned was Julian Wigley. His architectural education took place during the social upheavals of the 1960s, when a number of fundamental questions were posed about the role of architects and, in France at least, the questions led to architectural students taking direct political action in the streets in 1968. In particular, questions were asked about the relationship between architect and client when the latter tended to be large institutions, both government and business, which required plans and designs according to specifications which often took little or no account of the people who were going to live or work in the buildings or of the people who would be displaced by the new development. Good examples of such institutionalized planning regardless of the social consequences are the redevelopment projects in inner city suburbs where intricate networks of social relationships often exist which are simply destroyed by the developers while the inhabitants are usually resettled randomly elsewhere (Jacobs 1962). Such wholesale redevelopments have, in fact, very similar consequences for the former citizens as the Alice Springs authorities' approach to housing Aborigines have for Aborigines. In the former, communities are destroyed as the people are 'pepper potted' into different neighbourhoods in much the same way as the Housing Commission would 'pepper pot' members of Aboriginal communities throughout the suburbs of Alice Springs. In the view of some, professional architects had many parallels with the bureaucrat. They were

nothing but personnel of organisations. They execute programmes handed down to them, no matter what. They do not criticize and reject programmes in terms of their own best judgement and their ethical responsibilities (Goodman 1973).

The questioning, then, was of a professional architectural tradition which accepted commissions to design buildings as if that action was divorced from any responsibility for the social consequences flowing from that building or development.

From this reappraisal of the values and ethics of the

profession, there emerged a number of architects determined to take architecture back to its well springs as a profession serving the interests of the individual in society. These architects would recognize that built forms, in their simple states, were reflections of and often statements about social forms. The approach came to be known as the 'activist tradition' (Jencks 1973). Implicit in the approach was a set of value judgments possessed by the architect on the merits of the society in which he worked and of the clients he was likely to serve. Many of these value judgments were adverse, but in the situation of Aborigines the value judgments and the client were in harmony. For an architect like Wigley, commitment to the clients was likely to be deep, enduring and would come to affect most areas of his life.

The Housing Panel was by no means the first architectural organization with which the Mt Nancy community had been associated. In the eighteen months to January 1976, no fewer than three organizations had served the community as architectural consultants. During this time, little was achieved. In June 1974, when the first firm of architects was appointed, the fifty or so people living in Mt Nancy had one tap, an old broken-down shower which nobody used, and some lavatories constructed by themselves. By 1976, they had a few more lavatories and one more shower, largely funded and erected through the efforts of the local St Vincent de Paul Society.

At the instigation of the local office of the DAA, tenders were called in June 1974 from two firms of Alice Springs architects to prepare a land use plan for Mt Nancy as a preliminary to obtaining a lease over the site occupied by the community. The plan was to incorporate 10 houses, 6 visitors' flats, 6 pensioners' flats, 8 single quarters of one-room flats, a camping area with all necessary ablutions, a communal laundry and the location of all car parking. It is not clear on what demographic data these requirements were based for they were considerably in excess of the requirements of the Mt Nancy community and bore little relationship to what the community considered most appropriate to its needs.

Both architectural firms tendered for this commission. One tender was for \$240 and the other for \$20. The tenders were referred to the Darwin office of the DAA. Without apparently discussing the tenders with either firm, the Department rather surprisingly accepted the higher one and that firm was commissioned to prepare a land use plan on 12

August 1974.

In March 1975, the firm submitted a development plan for Mt Nancy estimated to be carried out at a cost of \$406,016. By this time, this firm had submitted bills for fees for professional services rendered amounting to \$1640. In April 1975, the Mt Nancy Housing Association terminated its services. In May the Housing Association received a further communication from the firm: a bill for the \$240 initially tendered.

The Mt Nancy Housing Association then appointed a building company to succeed the architects as technical consultants. This company, however, was not acceptable to the Darwin office of the DAA. At that time, the department in the Northern Territory was guided by the terms of a document known as Circular 130, which stipulated that no person or organization other than a member of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects or Institution of Engineers (Australia) could act as technical consultants to an Aboriginal housing association. No member of the building company was a member of either institute and it was on these grounds that the appointment was not permitted.

The Mt Nancy Housing Association then turned to the original lower tenderer. and invited this practice to act as its architectural consultant. For a number of reasons, the firm never did any work for the housing association, and shortly after its appointment its services were terminated.

In 1976, when the Housing Panel was appointed architectural consultants to the Mt Nancy Housing Association, the community was most sceptical about the value of the services an architect could provide. The community had initially been led to believe that housing would quickly follow the appointment of an architect, but, after eighteen months and three different firms of consultants had witnessed not one single change to the unsatisfactory physical environment it inhabited that could be attributed to architectural endeavour. At the beginning of 1976, a time of tumultuous political change in Australia, most members of the Mt Nancy community were also extremely sceptical about the new Liberal National Country Party government's good intentions, not to mention being angry over what the community regarded as the previous government's broken promises to provide housing. The morale of the community was not good: nor was it helped by a large number of deaths (about 12 per cent of the community) in the short period between the end of 1975 and mid-1976. The

climate then for the Housing Panel was far from auspicious. From the Panel's point of view, if a housing scheme was to be successful, clearly more was required than the design of a set of appropriate houses.

Leasehold application

Part of the problem of the lack of any development at Mt Nancy between June 1974 and the end of 1975 was the fact that the community did not have secure title to the land it occupied. Formal application for a lease had been made by the community on 27 February 1974. In June 1974, the DAA was informed by the Department of Housing and Construction that a diversion drain was to be constructed taking 40 metres off the southeastern boundary of the lease (the drain had been approved for 12 months unbeknown to the Mt Nancy community and the DAA).² Apart from this information, progress of the application was slow. It was not until 17 July 1975 that the Department of the Northern Territory was able to place the leasehold application on public exhibition. During the three months of public exhibition, there were no objections to the lease. Despite this fact, it took DONT a further eight months from the end of the period of public exhibition to grant the community a lease.

At the beginning of 1976, when the Housing Panel inquired about the status of the leasehold application, DONT replied that the Administrator's Council had refused to process it until after advice was received from the Land Commissioner about possible land claims over the area. This leasehold application, then, had become entangled in the same kind of 'misapprehension' that had plagued the Ntapa application described in the previous chapter. The uncertain feature of this leasehold application meant that the Panel's first job with Mt Nancy was to assist the community to secure a satisfactory residential lease, for without one no buildings whatsoever could be erected and it was pointless to discuss housing.

Contact was established by the Panel with the Land Commissioner, and on 4 March 1976, DONT was officially informed that the Land Commissioner had not conducted specific inquiries into the Mt Nancy application as this application was regarded as being dealt with under normal land application

²Community adviser, Alice Springs, 2 July 1974: Note for file.

procedures.³ According to DONT, this information was received too late for the department to be able to process it before the following meeting of the Administrator's Council almost a fortnight later on 16 March. With further reminders of the urgency of the application, DONT submitted it to the meeting of the Administrator's Council of the 15 April 1976, when it was approved, just over two years after the initial submission was made.

The problems of obtaining a lease to the Mt Nancy site were, however, far from over. On 31 March 1976, DONT submitted a draft of the proposed leasehold covenants and conditions to the Mt Nancy Housing Association for approval. A development program costing between \$30,000 and \$100,000 over a five-year period was envisaged (compare these figures with the March 1975 estimate of \$406,016). In the leasehold conditions, no reference was made to housing being built at Mt Nancy (the specific purpose for which the Mt Nancy Housing Association had been incorporated). Instead, DONT assumed that a number of small unserviced 'cabins' would be constructed for the permanent residents. The Department therefore stipulated that certain basic amenities should be provided for each group of six cabins. In addition, none of these buildings, nor any other structure, nor any vehicle or trailer should be situated closer than 15 metres from the perimeter of the site, and this 15-metre border area should be densely planted with trees.

The implications were clear. An unsightly town camp of substandard cabins and humpies was to be permitted but must be concealed from the view of the general Alice Springs public and, perhaps, more importantly, from anyone passing along the road to or from Darwin. The covenants said much more about DONT's underlying attitudes about town campers and their potential attainments than it did about the possible course that developments at Mt Nancy might take.

The Mt Nancy Housing Association considered the covenants proposed and decided that they were unacceptable. It decided to approach the DAA to see if it would be able to effect some change on the part of DONT at an interdepartmental level. Huey wrote to the First Assistant Secretary of the Lands and Community Development division pointing out that the 'tone of the conditions proposed indicates that your Department foresees a possibly unsightly Aboriginal camp which must be

³DAA to DONT 4 March 1976.

screened from the community as much as possible.⁴ He pointed out that the permanent secretary of the department had supported the proposal that the development of Mt Nancy should be integrated with the township by building houses of an approved design in evidence before the Interim Land Commissioner. He also pointed out that a 15-metre buffer zone would severely restrict development of a 4.4 hectare site, part of which could not be used for building purposes as it comprised a rocky outcrop, and that such a setback was surprising in light of the fact that the normal Alice Springs setback was only 7.8 metres, a distance which could be further reduced by compliance with certain building requirements. He enclosed architectural drawings prepared by the Panel showing a development plan estimated to cost a total of \$535,000 and hoped that they would enable the Department to reconsider the covenants.

Huey's letter had the desired effect. The permanent secretary of DONT telexed Huey that:

the concern you express is understandable and arises from misinterpretations given to early plans submitted on the development by the Regional Coordinator and the planner in our division who has and was then working in isolation.⁵

He then went on to set out a set of covenants which were perfectly acceptable to Mt Nancy and envisaged a development program costing \$500,000 within four years.

On 15 June 1976, the Mt Nancy Housing Association was formally advised that the Minister of the Northern Territory had approved the grant of a lease for the purpose of establishing, developing and maintaining a communal settlement for the use of the Mt Nancy Housing Association. The Mt Nancy community was then able to turn its attention to what it had for long desired, the kind of development which would give it the amenities and comforts which had been so long denied.

Initial development of the lease

Housing was not the Mt Nancy community's most pressing

⁴R.Huey to the Secretary, DONT, n.d. - Mt Nancy Housing Association - Lot 5135, Alice Springs.

⁵V.T.O'Brien to R.Huey, 11 May 1976 - Mt Nancy Housing Association.

priority. More than most of the other town camps in Alice Springs, too often Mt Nancy played unwilling host to inquisitive tourists in search of a free freak show, trail bike riders demonstrating white dominance over blacks by tearing around the camp and terrifying everyone there and especially mothers with small children, drunks and especially white nocturnal ones in search of a cheap Aboriginal lay, and the police whose activities, to the Mt Nancy community, often seemed to parallel those of the trail bike louts. In light of these kinds of harassment, camp security was placed at the top of Mt Nancy's list of priorities. What the community most desired was to be able effectively to control access into the camp. The community required a quiet area in which it felt secure to explore its own development without fear of interference from the outside. It knew that without adequate security of the site, it could not contemplate an expensive building program because of fears that it would not be able to obtain adequate control over the amenities for which it would become responsible.

Symbolically, too, the community wanted a clearly demarcated area which it knew was its own and in which it would not only be free from harassment by whites, but from which it could not be expelled at the whim of some officious white instrumentality. For decades this community had felt at the mercy of whites, and it needed a visual reminder that now an area of land could be called its own. Finally, the community realized that, without a secure place, it could not meet one of the conditions of the lease, namely to landscape the boundary with trees and shrubs. Fig.4 graphically depicts the extent of the Mt Nancy community's control before the granting of the lease over access into the camp. Ten separate tracks led into the camp. In addition, there was one large turning circle used by vehicles paying cursory visits to the camp.

Fencing and area lighting were identified by the community as the principal means of providing the kind of security it wanted. By fencing the block, the community could restrict access to the site and would present an obvious boundary beyond which most strangers would be loath to venture. Fencing also provided the community with the first visible proof that it had a secure place to call its own and therefore had a future which it could explore itself. During May and June 1976, with funds supplied by the DAA, the block was fenced leaving one point of entry for vehicles (see Fig.5).

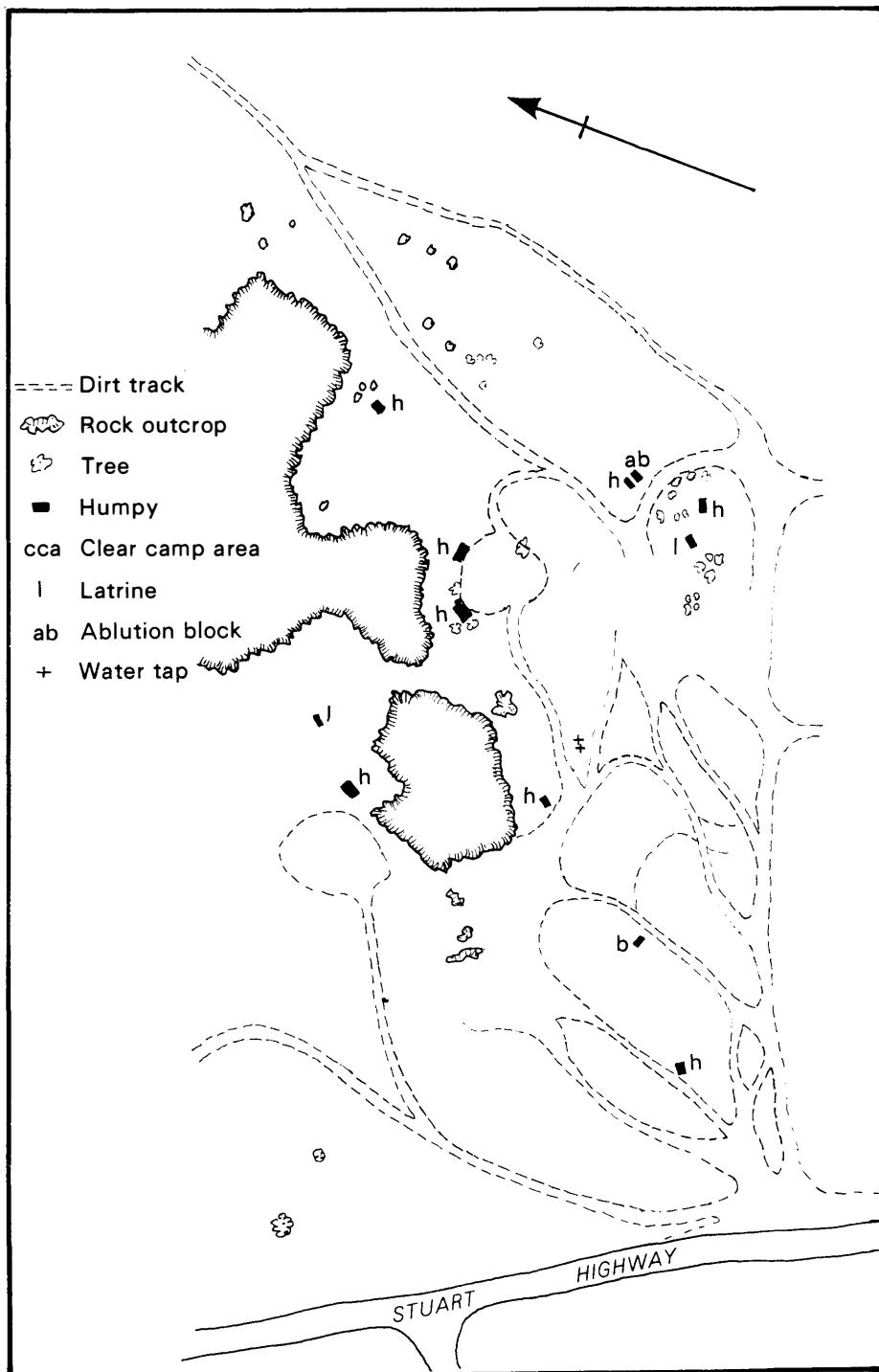


Fig. 4 Mt Nancy before the granting of the lease over the camp

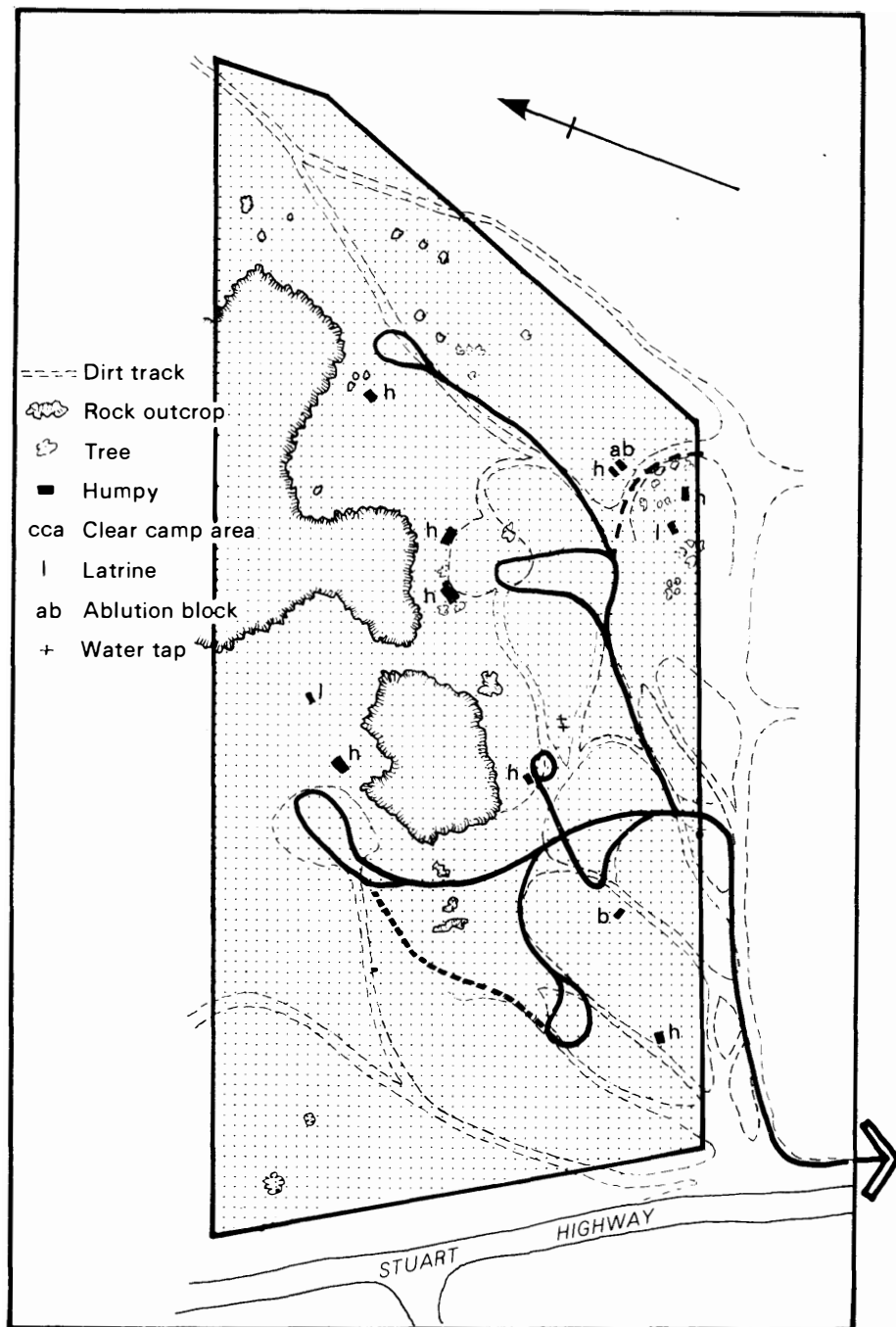


Fig.5 The Mt Nancy area after fencing

Area lighting contributed to the security of the camp after dark. It allowed the community to see who came into the camp and thus discouraged nocturnal prowlers from trying to sneak into the camp unnoticed. Area lighting also discouraged snakes, an ever present worry of town campers in Alice Springs. Area lighting had other advantages too. Located near the humpies, it enabled people to do more things at night because they could see. They could also move round the camp more easily and consequently the social activities of the camp were significantly extended. Sleeping was not inhibited, because separate switches were provided at each light so that the people living nearby could switch one off if they wanted.

With a secure fenced area, the Mt Nancy community's self-confidence increased markedly. The Panel was made aware of it when the area lighting was being installed. Two households asked that electricity lines be extended to their humpies and so allow them to instal refrigerators and lighting there. At the time, the community had insufficient funds to accomplish such an extension. The community was advised accordingly and decided to accept this advice. It was not long, however (a few weeks after the area lighting had been installed), before the community recognized that it had lost an opportunity and the Panel was chided for not having tried harder to obtain the small amount of money required to make these extensions. (Later, as money became available, extempore lines were extended to these humpies and were immediately put to use.)

Ablution block

Symbolically, the fencing rather than the formal granting of the lease was the factor which released Mt Nancy from its anxious dependency on white instrumentalities and its fears that it could be evicted from its chosen site almost at any time. According to Geoff Shaw, the community first began to consider that it could begin to focus on the kind of physical environment it would like to create for itself only after it had experienced a period when it was quite free of unwanted visitors and began to realize that it could start to control the activities within the community. The community was not, however, entirely rid of the profound doubts and fears about the good intentions of whites and the government. Often in the past the community believed it had received promises (for example, in 1974 - housing before the end of the year) only to have its expectations disappointed. Each

such situation served to reinforce the community's deep sense of rejection. Consequently, even after the initial developments had occurred, the community was loath to make extensive plans for its future because it did not want to leave itself vulnerable to further rejections and the impact such rejections might have on the gathering self-assurance of some of its members.

In early 1976, the political climate in Aboriginal affairs was also uncertain. The Fraser government had just been elected and, despite assurances about its commitment to Aboriginal land rights, it had given no indication that it regarded the situation of Alice Springs town campers as being of great importance. Further, despite assurance given by its shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Ellicott, in telegrams sent to every Aboriginal community in Australia just before the election that, if elected, a Liberal government would not reduce funding for Aborigines, one of the first actions the Fraser government took was to reduce the Aboriginal Affairs appropriation by about \$7 million.⁶ The Mt Nancy people did take an interest in politics and its previous experience of Liberal/NCP governments had not led it to have any heightened expectations of the new one. The community therefore decided to plan for a cautious advance which, in one sense, was intended to test the will of the new government. Rather than embark on the first phase of a housing program, the community decided to apply the funds it had to the construction of an ablution block (see Fig.6) so that it would have access to lavatory, washing, shower and laundry facilities. When completed, the ablution block provided the community with much more than these simple amenities.

The ablution block gave the Mt Nancy community its first permanent and substantial building. The block quickly became the focal point of the community. It was extensively used for ablutions. For the first time in their lives, members of the community could experience the pleasures of having a warm shower whenever they wanted. For parents, this improvement was particularly significant. They could send their children to school in as clean and well groomed a state as the children of the Europeans on the other side of the Stuart Highway, and the children consequently no longer needed to fear that they would suffer the taunts of other children for their unkempt and unclean appearance.

⁶*Canberra Times*, 12 July 1976.

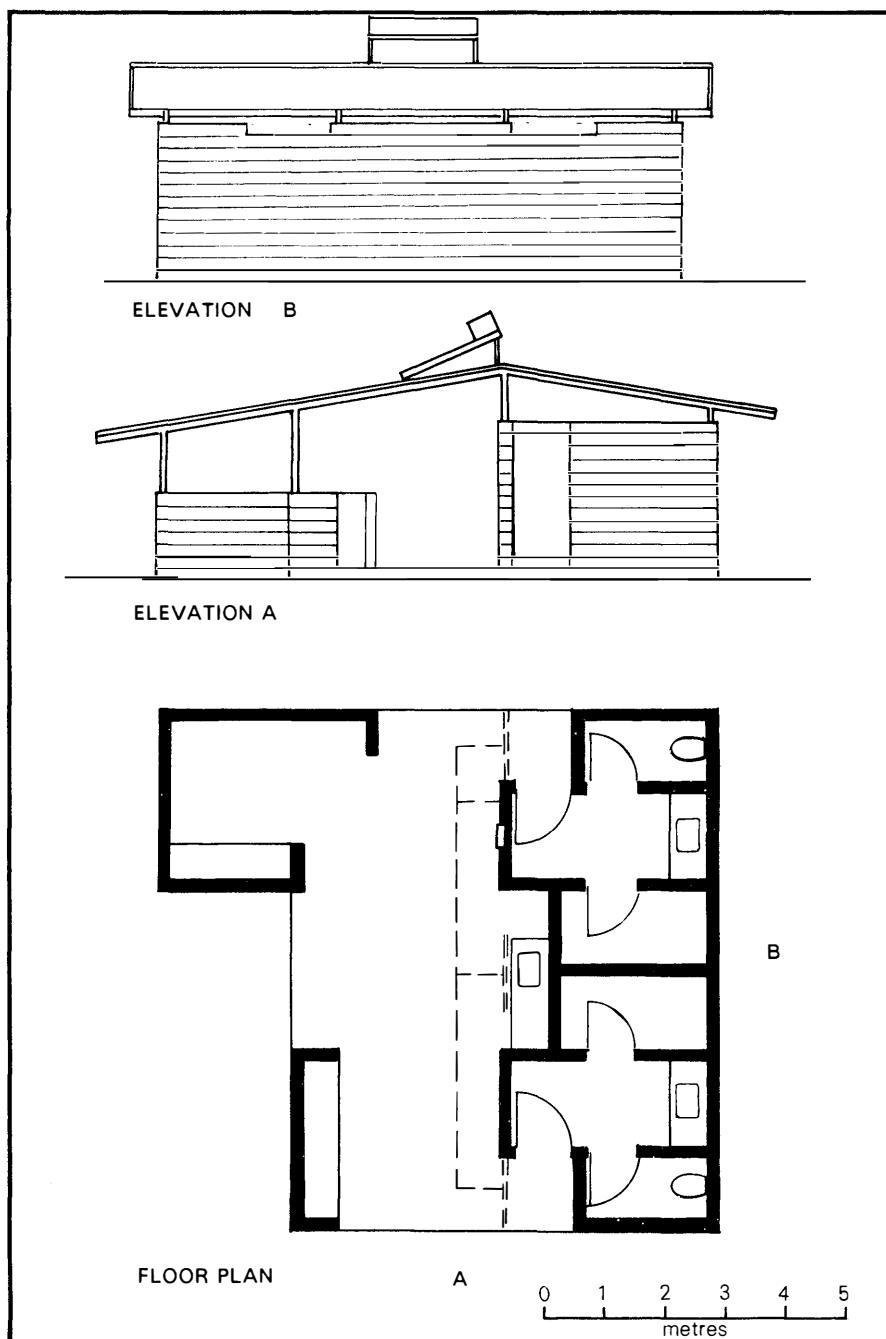


Fig.6 Design for Mt Nancy ablution block

Two washing machines were installed in the ablution block. With their arrival, the block became a focal point for the women in the community. They would gather there to do their daily wash, bathe their infants and gossip.

The community decided to purchase a television set, which was placed in the ablution block, the only place in the camp with a power point. Television provided entertainment for the community in the evening and matters to discuss during the day. It also gave people something to look forward to in the evening and it was noticeable that, after its acquisition, less heavy drinking was done by members of the community. (The boredom of life in town camps must not be underestimated. There is little for people to do during the day, for most are without employment.)

Taking on responsibility for an ablution block and area lighting brought the Mt Nancy community suddenly face to face with a problem it had never before experienced and therefore had barely considered. Hitherto, there had been little requirement for any management of the camp. There were few amenities. Those that there were were only infrequently used. So long as the state of the camp was tolerable, that was good enough. Occasionally a local health inspector made an adverse report on the camp and, in particular, on the state of the pit latrines and the extent of rubbish around the camp. These reports, however, rarely elicited any concerted action on the part of the community. Garbage was an occasional problem, but so long as it was put in the 44-gallon drums dotted round the camp, it was removed by a local refuse collector. Very occasionally, when a part of the camp became too unsightly, people would clean it up.

With the completion of the ablution block and the provision of area lighting, a requirement for day-to-day management of these facilities became apparent. Electricity had to be paid for. The lavatory and shower areas had to be kept clean or they became unseemly. Lavatory paper had to be replenished or, if not, people would use whatever paper was available (sometimes rags or stones were used) and the drains would become blocked. Electric light bulbs had to be replaced from time to time. Maintenance was also required, especially while people were still unaccustomed to the use of a new facility or new machine.

In Alice Springs (and for that matter, throughout Australia) there is no agency or instrumentality which assists

small Aboriginal communities over the initial hurdle of establishing satisfactory management procedures to service new community facilities. The remarkably high rate of failure of Aboriginal communities to cope adequately with new facilities can partly be attributed to the neglect of this important factor. The experiences of Mt Nancy before adequate management procedures were implemented are of great importance in understanding how to solve problems within such a group.

Upon the completion of the ablution block, the Mt Nancy community realized that the block would not simply take care of itself. They did not, however, immediately appreciate the extent of the problem of management. It was assumed that people would clear up any mess they made and would provide their own lavatory paper. No detergents, mops or lavatory paper were therefore supplied. It was not long before drains became blocked and the women started to complain. The community then decided to ask Wigley to arrange for the bulk purchase of lavatory paper. This request was refused because Wigley considered that it was important for the community to become accustomed to doing such things so that it did not develop a dependency on the Panel's staff and also in order to oblige it to come to terms with the responsibilities it was assuming by seeking to provide certain facilities within the community.

A representative of the community was then designated to go into town and arrange for the bulk purchase. He tried a number of stores, none of which would open an account for the community and all of which demanded cash. The representative did not have sufficient cash with him and so the attempt proved abortive. The representative then approached Wigley and asked him to arrange for purchases by the community to be charged at a store. Wigley did this and the representative was able to return to the shop and complete the purchase. The box of lavatory paper, however, was far too bulky for him to carry the 5km back to Mt Nancy. As no member of the community owned a vehicle, Wigley was again approached and asked to help, which he did, and the first bulk purchase of lavatory paper was taken to the community. The next time the community needed lavatory paper, the representative simply telephoned an order to the supplier and asked him to deliver it. This procedure is now followed for all large orders by the community.

Leaking taps and faulty area lighting presented similar kinds of problem. No member of the community had ever repaired a leaking tap. No wrenches or spanners were owned. Similarly, the community had never been confronted with the problem of replacing a light bulb located 3.5 metres high. No ladders were owned for they had never before been needed. As a problem arose, if the community could not find a satisfactory solution, the Panel architect helped it to find one. In the case of the leaking tap, for example, the community purchased a set of spanners and members were shown how to replace washers. In the case of replacing light bulbs 3.5m high, a Toyota truck was borrowed, was backed up to the light, someone climbed on the cab and changed the bulb. It was not long before the community was dealing with all such problems itself.

The cleaning of the ablution block followed a similar course. The requirement to clean out the block regularly was recognized by the community, especially when it was realized that people did not always clear up their own messes. A number of women volunteered to keep the block clean. The block, however, was not only used by members of Mt Nancy. Across the road was another town camp without any facilities whatsoever. Members of this camp often used the block, as did a number of drunks visiting both camps. These people did not take the same care of the amenity as the people at Mt Nancy and often left the block in a disgusting state. After a number of such occasions, the women felt that their voluntary services were being abused and refused to do the work any more. Faced with this ultimatum, the community decided to employ one of its number on a part-time basis to look after the ablution block and to provide for and maintain the landscaping of the site.

Soon after this person took up his duties, the circuit breaker in the ablution block started to malfunction. The specialized services of a maintenance engineer were required. Again, no member of the community had ever had to seek out the services of any kind of maintenance engineer. No one knew the kinds of skills required to mend a circuit breaker and where they might be found. The Panel architect was asked to mend the circuit breaker. Instead of arranging for this to be done, he introduced the part-time employee to a number of firms in Alice Springs providing maintenance services, and explained the kind of service each provided. With the contacts thus established, and with very occasional help from the Panel architect, the employee sought out the

requisite services whenever they were required and very soon found that he could happily do without the assistance of the Panel.

To a marked extent, the Mt Nancy 'maintenance man' has encouraged and assisted other people to use properly the facilities provided by the ablution block. For he soon realized that misuse or abuse involved him in additional work, often of an extremely unpleasant kind. When misuse occurred through ignorance, a person was shown the correct use. When the misuse occurred through carelessness, a person was roundly taken to task. In both cases, lessons were learnt.

Managing a community facility like an ablution block now causes no problems at Mt Nancy. The whole exercise was salutary for it rehearsed every adult member in coping with the management of a house. The experience was also made available to other town camps as they were confronted with the same problems, and was taken to Tangatjira when the town camps' council was established.

The first three prototype houses were completed in December 1977 and the families moved in. Several months later the Department of Construction started to service the site. The houses therefore had kitchens, bathrooms and lavatories, all of which were unconnected to services. With the availability of the ablution block, there was no pressure on the new householders to use the unconnected amenities as so often happens with Aboriginal housing.

The ablution block also played a major role in the discussions by the community about house plans and the location of houses. Being sited centrally, it provided the community with a visual reckoner of the scale of any future development. After its completion, individuals found it much easier to decide on the distances they preferred between houses and revised their intended locations. A number of people began seriously to reconsider the size of the house they thought suitable, with a tendency to ask for smaller houses with fewer rooms. This process continued into the house building program. After the completion of the first three houses, one pensioner decided that he did not require a house after all, but preferred to live in a caravan.

The building of the ablution block, however, was not without its difficulties. As Geoff Shaw stated (quoted in

Chapter 4) the main Alice Springs trunk sewerage pipe passed within 100m of the boundary of the Mt Nancy camp. The community applied to have its buildings hooked up to the main drainage. This application was refused. The Department of Construction considered that the fall of the Mt Nancy site meant that pumping equipment would have to be installed if it was to be linked to the main drainage system, and that this alternative was too costly. The community felt powerless, for, in such matters, when a Commonwealth Department has made a decision, especially when it was the DAA's expert adviser on all aspects of construction in Aboriginal settlements and communities, there are no realistic channels of appeal. Mt Nancy had to make do with a septic system which it did not want and which further reduced the area of land which the community could use for its own purposes. The community doubted that a white suburban subdivision with similar falls would have been so restricted and considered that the fact that Mt Nancy was an Aboriginal camp was a factor in the Department's decision to give the community second best. A septic system was also less convenient. It created certain management problems for the community like arranging for tanks to be pumped out from time to time which would not be required if the sewerage was removed by way of the main drains.

By the time the Mt Nancy ablution block was completed, Wigley had been working in Alice Springs for approximately ten months. During that time he had developed a close working relationship with the Mt Nancy community such that, when problems did arise, people went immediately to him to provide an answer. The close working relationship was enhanced by Wigley's personality and attitudes, his (for an architect) unconventional dress (he did not wear rich man's clothes) and by the fact that he chose to live at Amoonguna while he was working at Alice Springs. Living at Amoonguna enabled Wigley to extend his contacts to members of other tribes and to observe Aboriginal practices while he was 'relaxing' at home. Wigley's ability to help the Mt Nancy community was also enhanced by the fact that he knew each person in the camp personally and the quality of assistance each might require. He was always immediately available and did not work in a conventional office block with other whites but on a verandah which was not being used by the Central Land Council. The community understood the relationship and when a problem did arise they knew that they would get suggestions from Wigley (and other assistance if necessary) about how to go about solving it. They also knew that, in the final analysis, it

would be they who would have to take the decisive action.

It might be interesting to compare this approach with the more orthodox approach of the Department of Construction (and consultant architects) because the Commonwealth government has decided that the Panel's approach was inappropriate, and now the Department of Construction is responsible for the development programs in the Alice Springs town camps. The Department of Construction appears to regard its responsibilities as providing an architect to design buildings based on a small number of formal meetings with representatives of an Aboriginal housing association. He discusses what the representatives require in the way of number of bedrooms and the materials with which a house is to be built. Often the architect has no prior knowledge of the community and no understanding whatsoever of its practices and social organization. Nor does the architect consider what kind of overall development plan is most suitable for the community. His responsibility is to prepare a design of a building and nothing else. Later he will be responsible for superintending its construction. After the architect has designed a building, he discusses the plan with members of the community with the help of architectural drawings and sometimes a scale model of the building. He asks if any modifications are required and usually finds that none are. In fact, to a non-literate people totally unfamiliar with the detail drawings of an architect, this part of the process is of little value. Having obtained the community's approval of the design, the architect arranges for the construction of the building and when that is completed he hands it over to the community. It is then that his responsibilities for that design are over (except for the superintending of the rectification of any faults in construction). I have heard of no example of an architect in the Department of Construction returning to evaluate the uses to which the building is put and to obtain some feedback of the community's opinion of the building. Sometimes, if the architect is retained by the community, he might arrange to have things like blocked lavatories rectified, usually by getting a maintenance engineer to visit the community.

In this process, there is no guarantee for the community that the same architect who takes the community's brief will still be there to proceed to the sketch and detail design stages, nor that it will be he who will superintend the construction. Such lack of continuity of staff does not assist the development of a close and personal working relationship

with an Aboriginal group. Nor does it lead to the development of a reasonable level of understanding of the organization and practices of a group such that the resulting architecture is broadly in sympathy with them. The termination of an architect's responsibilities when a building is handed over also means that a community is suddenly and without preparation thrust into the field of grappling with management problems elicited by a new building and a process which they have barely begun to understand and in which they have had little involvement. In the absence of any other agency in the field, the community has nowhere to turn for support. It is at this stage that, very often, buildings constructed for Aborigines begin to suffer, for with maintenance not being done and the building put to uses for which it was not designed, it begins to deteriorate. If the deterioration is not arrested, it often accelerates. The result is an expensive house built with an economic use of an architect's time but with a rapid depreciation of that investment far in excess of any money savings which might have been made in the design process.

The Panel viewed development as a coherent whole not only to provide buildings of the kind required but also to ensure that the physical environment in which the buildings were located fostered the appropriate use of the buildings (thus by placing the ablution block in an already fenced and lit area, the block manifestly became the responsibility of the Mt Nancy community). The Panel also considered that, in the absence of any other agency, its responsibilities also included assisting the community to come to terms with the organizational problems arising from the development. This part of the process could only be successfully undertaken with an understanding of the people and society concerned, and an expectation on the part of the people that the requisite support would be forthcoming in an acceptable way. Part of that support could only be given with an understanding of the functions a building and its various component parts were designed to fulfil. Consequently, the architect who designed the building was in a position second to none to provide the requisite support.

The form that development took in the town camps was greatly to the advantage of the Panel. The need to get leasehold titles to land and the time that this took gave Wigley time and the opportunity to demonstrate unequivocally his commitment to the interests of the town campers. The campers were also made aware that the Panel backed Wigley's commitment. During this period, apart from developing

personal relationships with the town campers, Wigley was also able to develop an understanding of the principles by which a town camp operated, the relationships between households and an understanding of the social organization of each town camp. In this way, the design process was allowed to develop its own pace. The development took an orderly form, and the members of a camp did not become impatient for action and buildings on the ground. The leaseholds and the fencing were the symbols which were required and therefore the campers were more interested in appropriate functional buildings than in using these forms to make a statement to the rest of Alice Springs.

In the context of the development which was subsequently to take place in the other town camps, the process described above was important, for it came to serve as a model for the others. The members of Mt Nancy became the ambassadors and talked about their program and the problems that they had experienced with other camps. The experience gained was put freely to the use of other campers. Without exception, they responded by specifying a development program in the same order as that implemented at Mt Nancy, although each wanted details particular to its own requirements.

Chapter 9

Consultation and the design process

At Mt Nancy there was no question that housing was wanted. The community had been pressing for it for a number of years. The benefits of housing were recognized by most members of the community, some of whom had already had experience of living in houses as tenants of the Housing Commission. Among other things housing was regarded as an important element in having the town camp integrated into the township of Alice Springs and its members becoming recognized as permanent and responsible citizens. Housing would also satisfactorily draw to a close the process which had started with the acquisition of the lease and which would give the community the residential security it had so long desired.

The Mt Nancy community had already made up its mind about a number of details of the housing it required and these were given to Wigley at the first formal meeting he had with the inhabitants. The houses had to be of conventional appearance so that they would conform with housing erected elsewhere in Alice Springs. They were to be built in brick. Prefabricated panellized systems were specifically rejected because, to the Mt Nancy community, they looked like W.C. blocks or 'pig pens'. The community also requested that each design be related to the individual requirements of the members of the community. It was particularly critical of the previous architectural consultant who had shown two previously prepared designs, neither of which had arisen out of discussions with anyone in Mt Nancy. According to members of the community, what particularly irritated them was that neither design paid due regard to the differing requirements of individual families within the community.

For the Panel, Mt Nancy's requirement that recognition be given to the individual requirements of each household was particularly pleasing. Alice Springs had been chosen as a suitable location for work because, its being an urban environment, the likelihood that housing was a high priority

among the Aboriginal citizens would be great. In settlements, in contrast, where many Aborigines were resident almost by default, there was no such certainty that housing was a high priority nor, indeed, that it was even required. The Panel also believed that a greater diversity of living arrangements would occur in an urban situation because recent arrivals from remote settlements would be rubbing shoulders with residents who had lived there all their lives. Consequently, the range of requirements was likely to be greater in such a situation than it would be in a remote settlement, and the resulting designs, if found suitable, would be applicable far beyond the boundaries of the urban environment. Further, Alice Springs being a centre for a vast area and town camps being the preferred place for most visitors to stay whilst they were visiting Alice Springs, any houses built there would, in a sense, become show houses open to the critical eye of the many visitors passing through.

After an initial census which revealed eleven households and not the fifteen he had been led to believe were resident at Mt Nancy, Wigley held detailed discussions with each household about the kind of house it wanted, the amenities to be provided and the general form the house should take. With assistance from Wigley, each household drew up a floor plan which it considered matched its requirements (see Appendix III for examples).

The common elements in a house such as W.C., bathroom, bedrooms, internal living area and (apart from one old pensioner) kitchenette leading off from the internal living area, were specified in all. There were, however, important areas of difference:

- a) Aspect. Although all but one of the household groups wanted a verandah, there were preferences as to orientation and extent:
 - i. 6 households wanted the main verandah to face east and have aspects facing both north and south;
 - ii. 1 household wanted the verandah to face east with an aspect to the south;
 - iii. 2 households wanted the verandah to face north with an aspect to the east;
 - iv. 2 households wanted the verandah to face south with aspects to east and west. One of these groups also wanted the verandah to surround the house.
-

- b) Flywire enclosed area. Despite the fact that (as everybody admitted) in a camp situation any flywire enclosed area including flywire doors was likely to be damaged in no time at all, six households specifically requested a flywire enclosed area. All these households had had extensive experience of doing stockwork on Centralian stations. To an outsider, an obvious feature of many Centralian homesteads is a flywire enclosed verandah where the owner and his family often retire to relax after dark. This domestic area would probably be the only part of a station open to the view of an Aboriginal stockman.
- c) Relationship of kitchen with W.C. and bathroom. Eight households wanted a physical separation between kitchen and W.C. According to all of them, drains frequently became blocked in Aboriginal houses and with continued use, filthy, faeces-ridden water would flow back into the kitchen. All were concerned that this would not occur in their house. On the other hand, three households wanted the kitchen to be located close to the W.C., laundry and bathroom for convenience.
- d) Laundry. There were a number of views about the most suitable location for a laundry:
- i. 6 households wanted a separate laundry;
 - ii. 2 households wanted the laundry incorporated into the bathroom;
 - iii. 1 household wanted the laundry incorporated into the W.C.;
 - iv. 2 households consisting of elderly people did not want a laundry at all, preferring to use the communal facilities.
- e) External doors. The placement of external doors also showed great variation. In four of the floor plans, a person sitting on the verandah could observe all the external doors and therefore anyone entering or leaving the house. In all the other floor plans this level of control was not possible. In four of the floor plans, the external doors were located at front and rear of the house; in three, they were located at the front and one side of the house and in four, they were all located along one wall of the house. The number of external doors also varied from two to four.

At this point, conventional architectural wisdom, at least in the case of providing housing for Aborigines, would have had the architect proceed to prepare sketch designs to meet the stated requirements of the Mt Nancy households. At this stage in the development of Mt Nancy such a step would have been premature, because Wigley felt uncertain that the given floor plans would meet the requirements of each household group. By starting with a given end, that is the idea of a house and the requirement of a floor plan, the design process had neither beginning nor content. Rather than build up an idea of the appropriate relationship of housing to overall development and rooms within a house to the overall function of the house and then relate that to an understanding of the living patterns of the household and the group, Wigley had floor plans which begged the important questions of how they would be used and whether or not each household understood their implications. Wigley simply could not demonstrate how suitable each floor plan was and how it would accommodate the living patterns of a particular household.

It was necessary to go back to a proper beginning and collect information about the ways in which each household used the spaces it created for itself, the relationship that each household had with each other, the kinds of interaction that occurred between them and how these interactions contributed to the overall social organization of the camp.

In 1976 there was no information about these aspects of camp life. An anthropologist, Jeff Collmann, had worked at Mt Nancy, but in 1976 had just returned to Adelaide to write up his data. Collmann himself was very helpful, briefing Wigley about a number of aspects of social life at Mt Nancy which gave the latter some understanding of the workings of the camp and of the local problems experienced there. More information, however, was necessary to test the appropriateness of the floor plans directed by each household. Wigley therefore set about observing the way the households used their own individual camps and, when he did not understand the function of a particular behaviour, he usually asked the people concerned why they did the particular thing not understood. This period of observation could not be an intensive one as Wigley was assisting a number of other Aboriginal communities at the same time, especially other town camps, in the time-consuming work of processing lease applications.

Initially movements between households were mapped to produce a network of the relationships within the camp and to determine the frequency and extent of interactions between the households. At the same time, descriptions were prepared of the way that interactions were initiated and of their content.

Movement within the camp indicated that there were two social groups, the core of each of which were two brothers. Interaction between households within each group was frequent, usually at one particular camp where most social gatherings occurred. Thus, at most times of the day, numbers of people could be found at the camp of an old paraplegic woman, who, as a pensioner, usually had supplies at least sufficient to keep a billy of tea brewing. The locations of social gatherings did change from day to day, often following the household or households which had money to spend and had recently bought supplies. Important to the formation of these gatherings was the ability of people to see where they were occurring and to know who had entered the camp with supplies of groceries or other commodities.

Visitors to Mt Nancy also provided occasions for social gatherings. People were always wanting to catch up with the news of a place and about kinsmen and their affairs. In this respect, the ability to observe all the entrances in Mt Nancy was important so that the identity of any visitor was immediately known (it was also important in respect of unwanted visitors like whites and drunks so that people could make themselves scarce if that was considered necessary).

In 1976 there were ten separate tracks leading into the camp, some of which could not be seen from every household camp (see Fig.7). Without fencing, however, the tracks in no way limited the points of entry of visitors into Mt Nancy. People on foot, in particular, would enter at any convenient point. With the fencing of the site and the reduction of entry points to one, visual surveillance of movements into Mt Nancy was enhanced. (Later an additional entry point was made in recognition of the fact that the two groups, focused on the two sets of brothers, wanted to remain separate.) It was important that the plan should provide each house with a reasonable view of the entrance into the camp.

Although it had little to do with movement within the camp, individuals and especially those who worked as stockmen took a great interest in the traffic passing along the Stuart

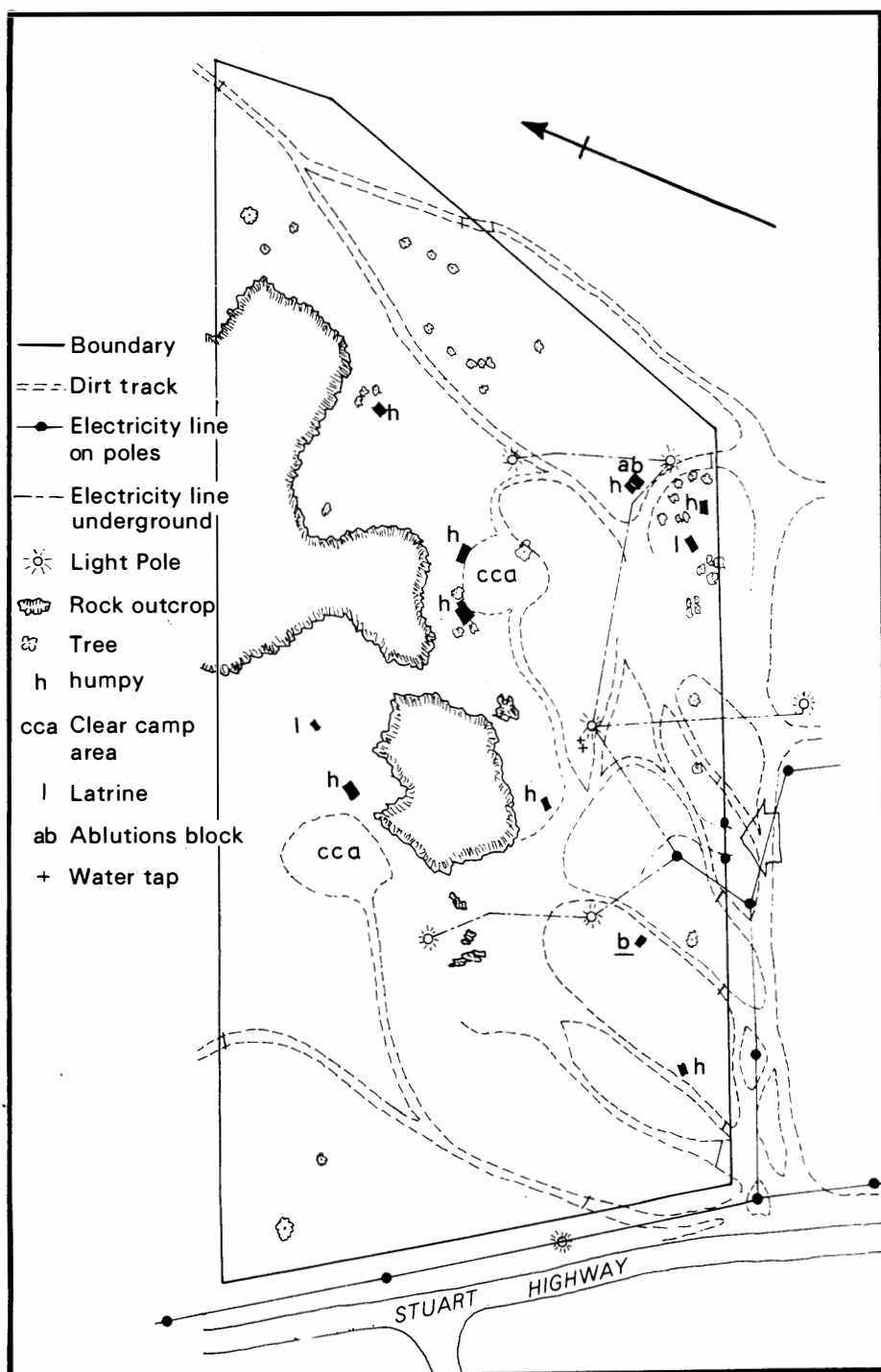


Fig.7 Plan of Mt Nancy camp before any development took place

Highway. In this way they knew the northern visitors into Alice Springs and especially which station owners were in town. The stockmen often used this knowledge to approach station owners to ascertain whether or not any work was available.

Movement between households was often initiated by visual cues. Interest in an activity was expressed or an invitation was made by signals. Centralian Aborigines have a highly developed sign language (especially the women) and town campers use this medium extensively both to seek and issue invitations and to pass messages between households without either having to leave his own camp.

This mode of communication had implications for houses in a town plan, for it suggested that areas in which activities were likely to occur should be visible from other houses of members of a particular social group.

Another factor which initiated movement from a household camp was noise, and in particular sounds of an argument or an abusive drunk and cries for help. Internal squabbles and domestic quarrels were of great concern to other members of the community, for, if they were not contained, they could lead to outbreaks of violence and indeed to divisions which threatened the social fabric of the community and sometimes resulted in families leaving for some other location. When a quarrel did erupt, non-participants would take an active interest if it showed signs of getting out of hand and try to calm and separate the warring parties.

It was also important to be able to hear cries for help, especially from pensioners living alone. If someone was ill, they would cry out and other members would run to their assistance. Crying children would also alert other adults for it could mean a young child had returned from school to find his or her parents away and, in these cases, another family would act as caretaker of the child until the parents returned.

It was difficult to cater for this kind of communication in a housing program. The form of a house and in particular the fact that it was enclosed behind walls would prevent sounds from passing out and into other houses. The community was made aware of this prospective problem, but decided that it was not particularly important as other ways could be found of alerting people if necessary.

A more detailed level of observation was directed at individual households to ascertain how they used the buildings they had made for themselves and the spaces around them. Many of the self-erected dwellings at Mt Nancy were substantial and the uses to which they were put were complex. A short history of one household camp and the changes which occurred within it during a 12-month period illustrates how a dwelling and its surrounding activity area are used. Figure 8 gives the elevation of one camp and Fig.9 shows the change that occurred in the camp when the composition of the households occupying it changed.

In March 1976, the camp site was situated at the western end of Mt Nancy close to the Stuart Highway (see b in Fig.7). It was occupied by one old man who was partly blind. The camp consisted of shelter, windbreak and a tent for visitors. (See B in Fig.9). The dotted lines delineate the area which was kept clean and is referred to in the text as an 'activity area'.) At this time, the old man slept in various locations in the vicinity of his shelter, usually in the southern or eastern lea of it. The shelter itself was constructed of 'four by two' posts, sheeted with galvanized iron and was about 1.6m high. It was principally used for storage and as a place into which to retire when it rained or when it was particularly cold. Cooking was done to the east, the side which looked across to the main Mt Nancy camp. This location obtained the full benefit of the early morning sun and was in the shade by late afternoon. Much of the old man's time was spent visiting other households, so that he spent more of his waking hours away from his camp than in it.

In late March the man's niece and her husband attached themselves to this camp. They erected a windbreak and tent on the north side of the shelter. After this, the old man stopped sitting and sleeping in close proximity to this shelter, preferring to do these things some 5m to the south. As the visitors continued to stay, the old man removed his iron bed from inside the shelter, first locating it some 3m to the southeast of the shelter and then, by degrees, dragging it to the middle of the area which he had set aside for sleeping (see bottom of Fig.9).

The location of the tent was carefully planned. Its situation allowed it to be an integral part of the old man's general camp while allowing the married couple to conduct its affairs quite apart from the old man. The tent was located hard by the northern wall of the shelter and was

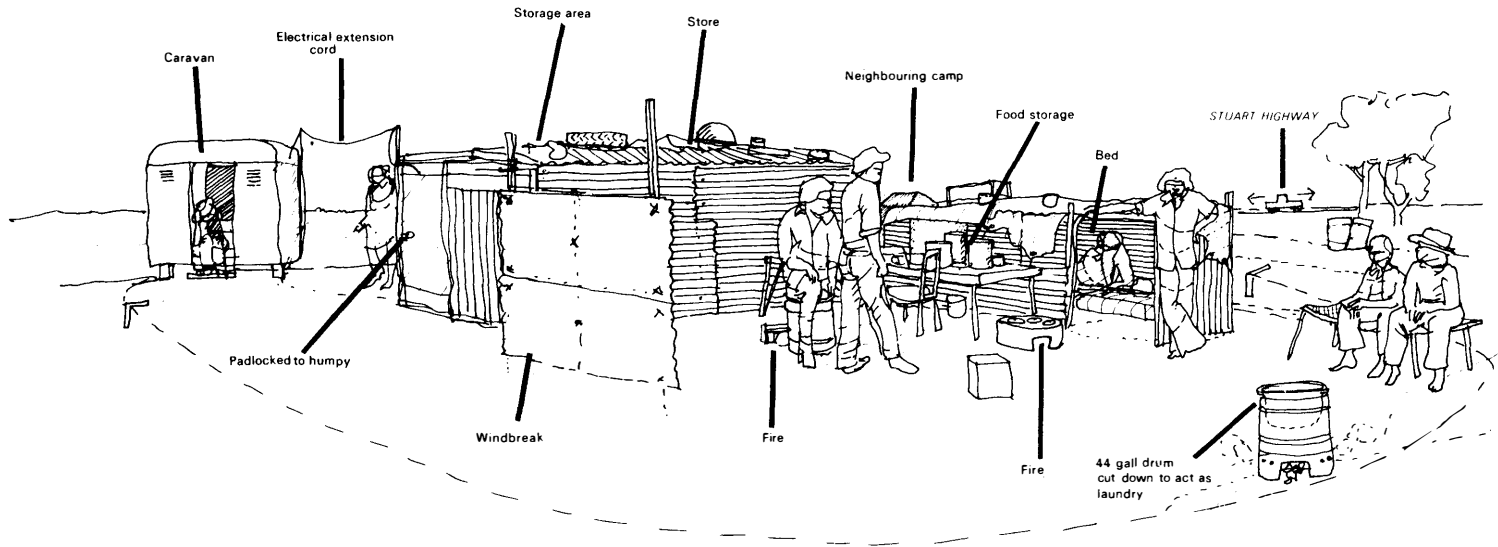


Fig.8 Elevation of camp at Mt Nancy

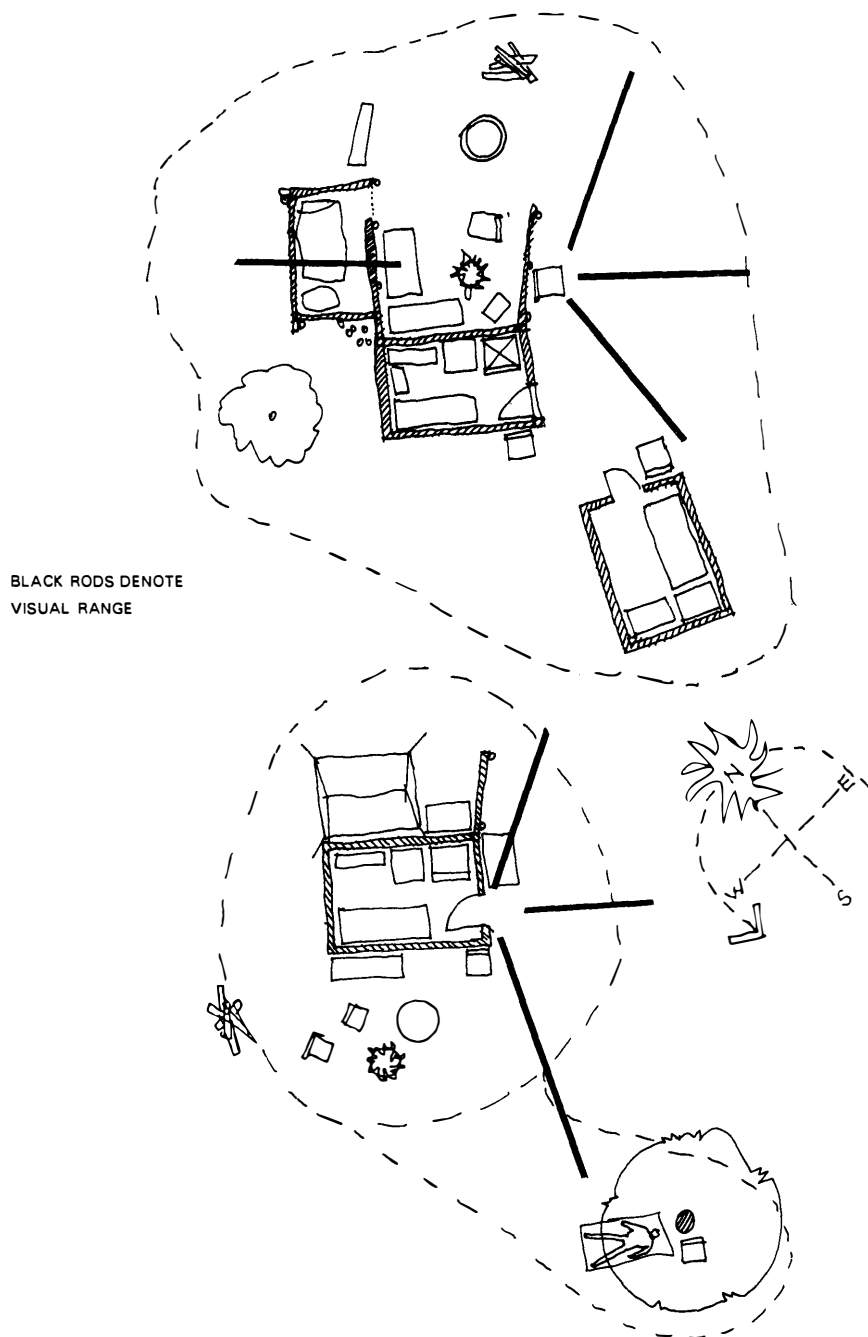


Fig.9 Camp layout after composition of households
had changed

screened from the main Mt Nancy camp by a one-metre high galvanized iron windbreak. The windbreak allowed the couple to conduct their affairs out of sight of any inquiring eyes in the main Mt Nancy camp and was also screened from the places where the old man usually sat. To join the couple, the old man had first to pass along the windbreak, so they would get sufficient warning of any intended visit. The tent was even more private.

What seemed to have been established in this situation was two household camps operating within the ambit of one overall household camp. The result was a significant departure from traditional Aboriginal practices which appeared to have important implications for any house design. In the traditional setting, when a visitor remained at a camp, he would be allocated somewhere to camp by the leader of the group in residence (Stoll *et al.* 1979) and would remain there as an entirely separate household camp. Applying these practices to a housing development scheme, one could assume that visitors would not be accommodated in a person's house (out of preference) but in some separate location where he would set up his own living arrangements. In contrast, if visitors to a town camp expected to be put up by residents, then it was reasonable to assume that they would be accommodated in a host's house. As the town camps in Alice Springs provided a major service to visitors to Alice Springs in the sense of giving them somewhere to stay, the implications of this convention on the kind of housing which might be required, were great.

In the traditional setting, visitors were expected to maintain their own hearths and eat and sleep in the camp they had established. In contrast, the couple, when they first arrived, ate and generally remained around the fire of the old man. As the duration of their stay was extended, so the two households tended to perform more and more of their activities quite independently. The old man was the first to take the initiative by locating his hearth outside the door to the main shelter. It was not long after this that the metal framed bed was removed from the shelter. Hearth and bed were then gradually moved southwards.

The couple left Mt Nancy in April. Shortly after they left, another married couple, this time with one child, attached itself to the camp of the old man. When it became clear that they were going to stay for some time, the old man built a galvanized iron shelter for them which was an

extension to his shelter (for elevation, see Fig.8).

The advent of the second couple had little impact on the living arrangements of the old man. He continued to live and sleep in the open to the south of his camp. In early May, however, as the nights began to get colder, he acquired an old caravan and located it in the activity area which had served as his personal camp. He moved his hearth to the southwest of the main shelter so that it screened the hearth from the activity area of the couple.

Two household camps were thus consolidated into the one overall area. Both households maintained separate activity areas and, from all appearances, maintained separate households. The number of interactions between these two households was, however, much more frequent than between either of these households and other households living at Mt Nancy. Often the old man could be found sitting with the couple enjoying their company. He regularly had food cooked by them although he would usually take it back and eat it in his own activity area. He also always slept in his activity area, or, when the nights got cold, inside the caravan.

The physical features of this camp are represented in Fig.8. Of particular interest are the following:

- a) The caravan provides a marginal improvement, if any, over the original shelter constructed by the old man. With the caravan, however, the original shelter becomes a buffer between caravan and activity of the old man, and shelter and activity area of the married couple. Aural privacy was secure because conversations would not normally carry to the other camp. Had the original shelter been occupied, however, aural privacy would have been difficult for sound would have carried to the ears of anyone sitting on the other side of the wall.

The original shelter also maintained visual privacy between the two households. Neither could look directly into the activity area of the other without standing up and moving to some vantage point. The windbreak also enhanced this privacy by physically separating the two activity areas.

The caravan was located in such a way that the door to the original shelter could be observed from the doorway of the caravan. Similarly, a person sitting

in the doorway of the caravan could look across to the other household camps in the centre of Mt Nancy while they could not look directly into the caravan.

- b) Shortly after the installation of area lighting, an electrical extension cord was run to the shelter. With electricity, the householder bought a second-hand refrigerator and set up an electric light within the shelter and then in the caravan when that was acquired.
- c) The roof of the main shelter was used to store objects in general use such as cooking utensils and food either recently cooked or being prepared. There, they were kept out of reach of the camp dogs which are voracious and aggressive scavengers. On the roof of a building, food and utensils get more protection from dust than they would if kept on the ground and, in the case of utensils, have the benefit of a certain amount of sterilization from the sun.

The roof was gabled and each householder used the side sloping towards his camp for storage.

- d) The roof of the shelter of a neighbouring camp, visible to anyone standing up in the activity area.
- e) A table set up in the activity area which was predominantly used to prepare food and store utensils about to be used for cooking.
- f) The inside of the humpy. Greater privacy can be obtained by retiring deeper inside the humpy.
- g) A car on the main Stuart Highway between Alice Springs and Darwin.
- h) Three fires close together are all used for different purposes. Two are cut from 44-gallon drums. One is used to boil water for washing clothes and individual ablutions. The second serves as a hot plate for cooking. The third is lit for its warmth and is a focus for social activities, especially after dusk.
- i) A windbreak of two horizontal galvanized iron sheets laid one above the other. It serves to screen the activity area from the main camp. It also extends the distance between the two household camps by requiring a person coming from the direction of the caravan to pass along it before being able to enter the other activity area.

- j) The padlocked door to the original shelter. The door is kept locked for security, the most important possession in the shelter being a refrigerator in which food and soft drinks are stored.

This small but integrated complex provided two quite distinct living areas. For privacy, both shelters were screened from the other's view and hearing by the intervening shelter which had come to be used for storage. All the residents, however, had an uninterrupted view of the main camp and the main road. They could see across to these places either by standing up in the activity area or, in the case of the caravan, simply by sitting in the doorway. Thus gossip, cooking, sleeping, playing and other social activities all occurred in a small area but without intruding one on the other.

The way this complex space was designed and utilized has few parallels in a conventional European house. In the latter, activities are expected to occur in separate rooms, each designed for a particular purpose. The scale of each room is largely defined for the purpose for which it is designed. Once the scale has been determined, it cannot be modified. A person then cannot perform a number of different tasks without moving from room to room. For example, cooking (for which a kitchen is provided) cannot be performed close to a group gossiping in the open, nor can the cook also supervise the laundry and bathe an infant. Even contemporary open plan designs require furniture to act as screens and create intimate spaces. Such spaces would be created within the confines of an enclosed room which, in the case of the two households under discussion, would represent a major difference in form and amenity. A conventional European house imposes a radically different set of living patterns from those of a traditional household camp. Its external walls further contribute to the different set of living patterns by insulating all households from each other and thus inhibiting their integration into one close visual and aural community.

The shelters at Mt Nancy were generally small. Figure 10 gives the plan of a cluster of three household camps living in close proximity to each other. They were located at the western end of Mt Nancy (Fig.11) and were set up after there had been substantial relocations of shelters with the introduction of electricity into the camp and when the building of the ablution block was begun.

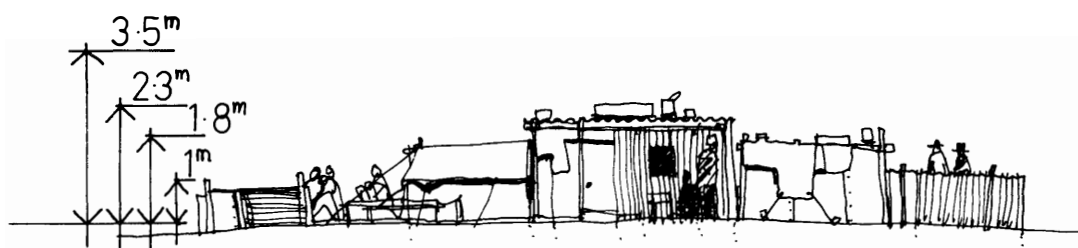
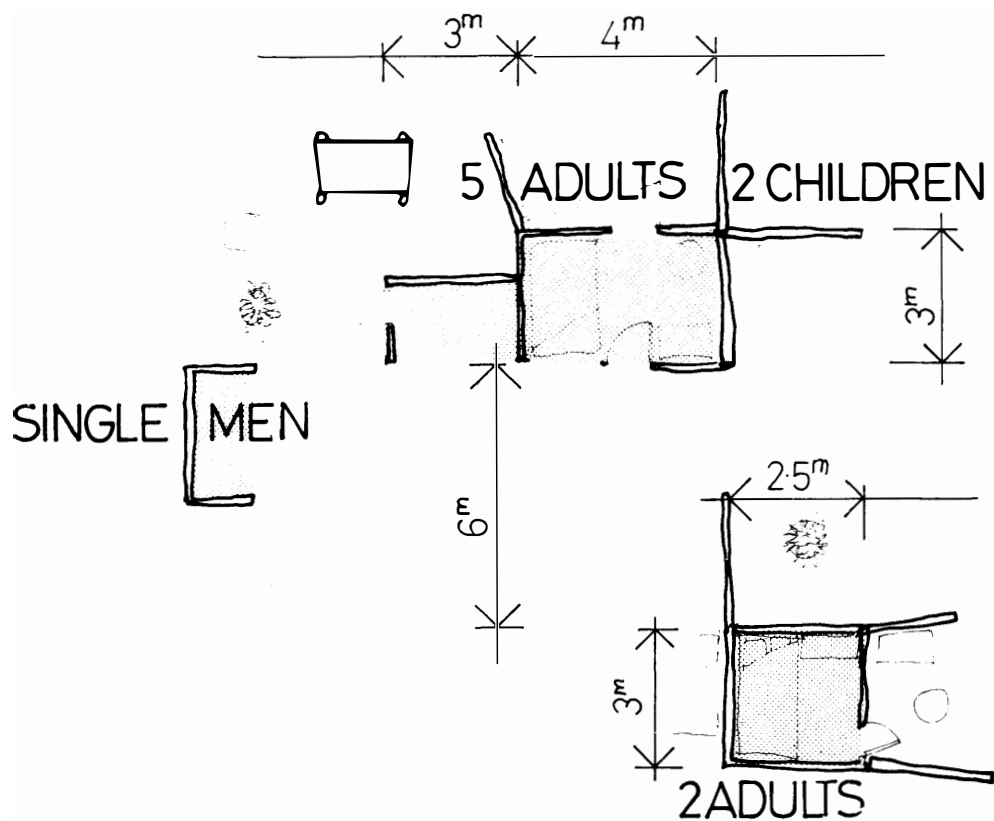


Fig.10 Plan of cluster of three household camps at Mt Nancy

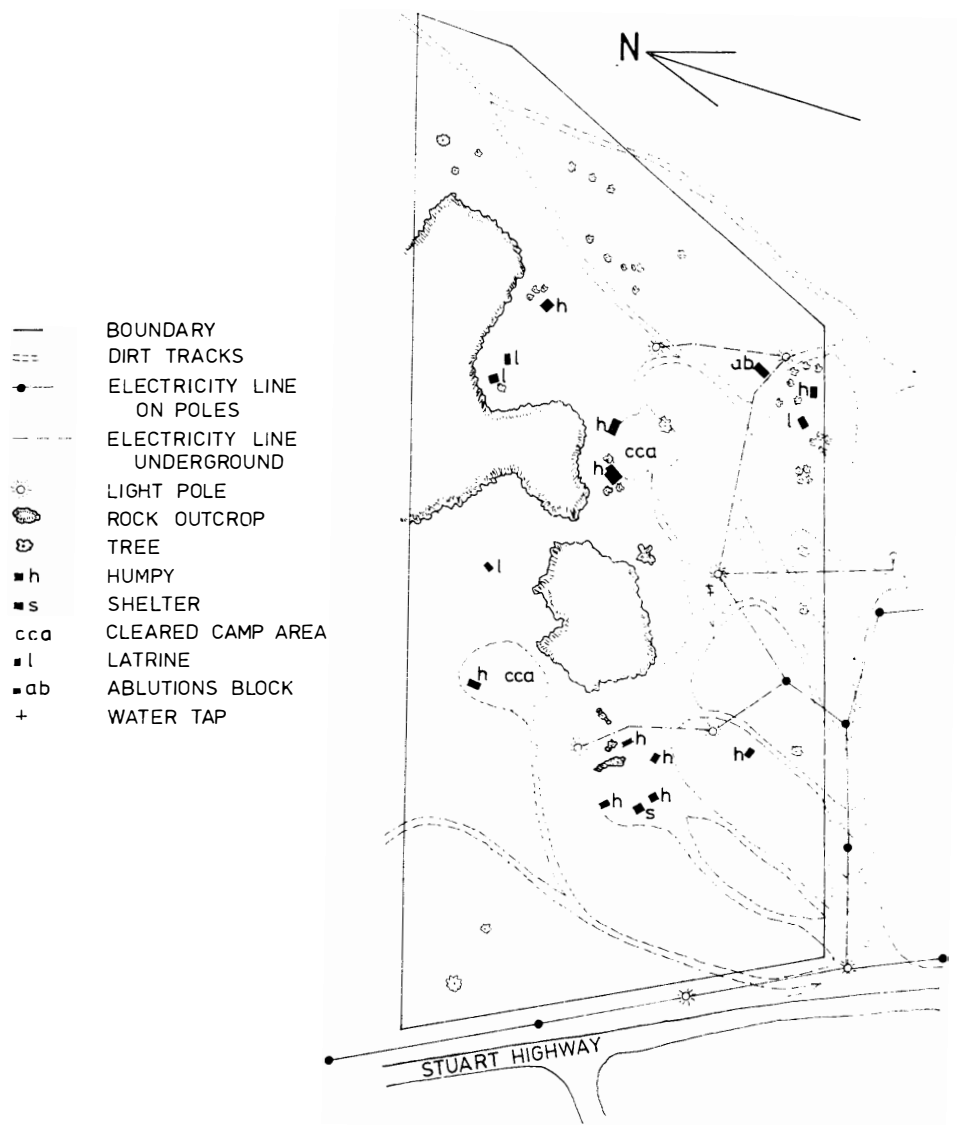


Fig.11 Relocation of camps after provision of area lighting and the beginning of the construction program

The shelter of a family of five adults was a small 4m x 3m with living and activity areas a mere 77 sq.m. This shelter was about 6m away from an even smaller shelter of 3m x 2.5m which was occupied by a married couple. The arrangement of shelter and windbreaks in both these household camps allowed the members to orient their activities either towards or away from the other household. Even when oriented to each other, neither could look directly into the other's shelter.

Three visiting single men had also attached themselves to this cluster of household camps. They slept in a small area demarcated on three sides by galvanized iron windbreaks. They faced towards the other two households but were more closely identified both physically and socially with the larger household.

The scale of these camps is considerably smaller than even the smallest conventional house. Not only are the areas occupied much smaller; so also are the heights of the buildings and associated structures (see Fig.12 for comparisons). The height of the average windbreak is less than a metre and allows a sitting man to see over the top of it and beyond. The height of a shelter is usually up to about 1.8m, which allows things to be stored on the roof in easy reach of a standing person but safely out of the reach of scavenging dogs. This height means that most people stoop when inside a shelter. Aboriginal shelters are not built for people to stand inside. People use shelters to sleep in, to shelter in from rain and cold and to store belongings in. The major factors therefore in determining the height of a shelter are the size of the materials available, the construction of an area which can easily be kept warm and snug in winter with a small fire in the doorway and a roof height which permits the storage of food in reasonable safety from the camp dogs. Just as the way in which the area a household camp occupies has little correspondence with the internal arrangement of rooms within a conventional house, so the dimensions of a camp and the structures arranged within it bear little relationship to the minimum dimensions of a conventional house.

The descriptions of the physical arrangements of the two clusters of household camps at Mt Nancy should serve to illustrate how Aborigines (often unconsciously) relate their dwelling to the dwellings of others in their group. For a traditional Aboriginal, a dwelling only becomes meaningful

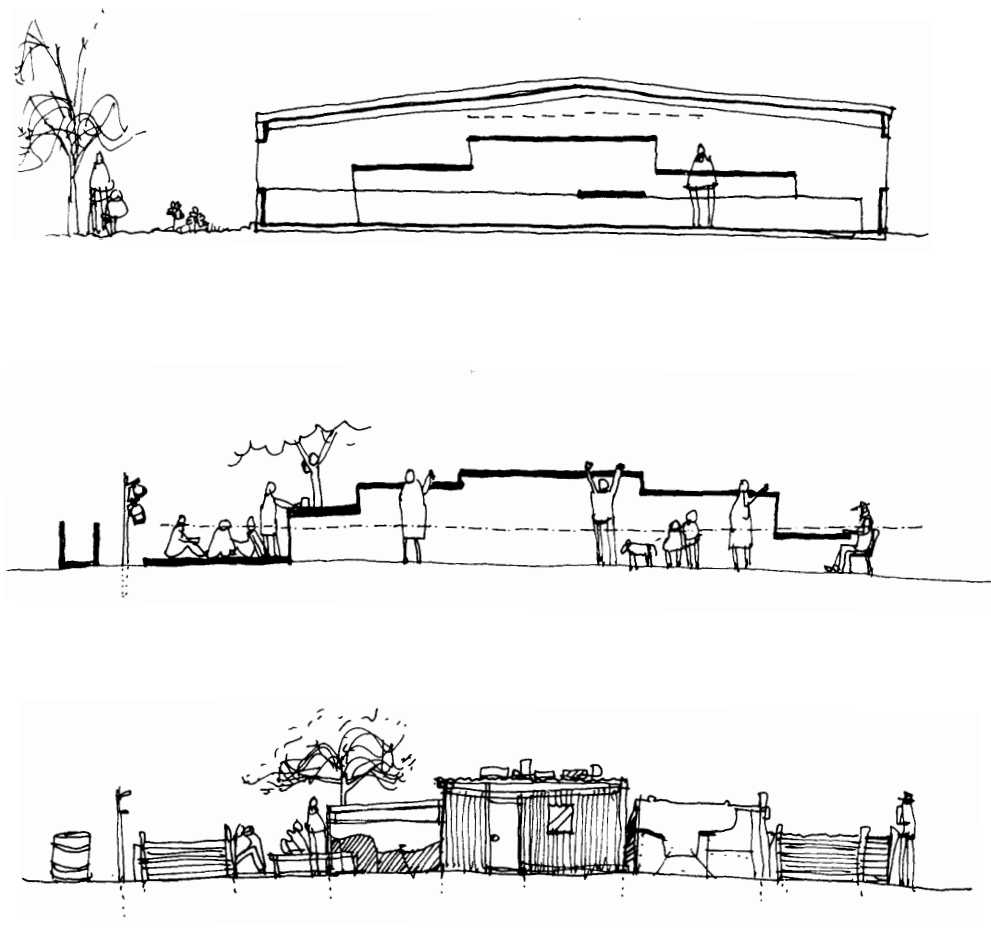


Fig.12 Comparison of size of a humpy and a conventional house

when it is related to other dwellings in a camp. The form that the dwelling and surrounding activity area takes is defined by this relationship. In this context, conceptually a house is something totally different. It takes its form from the internal organization of rooms within its walls and not from any relationship it might have to other houses in a neighbourhood or the surroundings. In these differences, we get to the roots of the problem of consulting with Aborigines about suitable housing for them. Aborigines see their living arrangements as a statement of their relationships with other members of the group. Without first developing an understanding of the way in which an Aboriginal orders this part of his physical environment, an architect cannot critically evaluate the kinds of changes which must occur when an Aboriginal is removed from his familiar ordered environment and confined in a house. The process, in the simple sense of asking Aborigines what they want, is unfair on the latter for they are asked to do something which they do not have the conceptual equipment to do. They are in fact asked to order rooms in an internal arrangement for one household which presumes a set of functions and divisions about which they have no experience and which is foreign to their society. What in fact results is that two faces of ignorance meet to discuss not what each person knows (a person with knowledge of his own living patterns and requirements and a person with design ability) but to prepare something based on what each person does not know (ignorance of the form and function of a house with ignorance of the form and function of the patterns of behaviour). Not surprisingly, the results generally have been unsatisfactory.

Figure 13 illustrates the kinds of difficulties and disharmonies which can occur in such a simple process. The floor plan given at the bottom of the figure is the one worked out by the members of the two households occupying the caravan and adjacent areas described above. It has a number of weaknesses.

The first and most obvious differences between the living arrangements of the camp and the floor plan is that in the latter the two households sleep in adjacent rooms rather than on opposite sides of a complex. A number of consequences necessarily follow. The privacy of each household would suffer dramatically. In the camp, with the storage humpy acting as a buffer between the two households, there could be no covert eavesdropping. With only a wall separating two bedrooms, no matter how good the insulation might be,

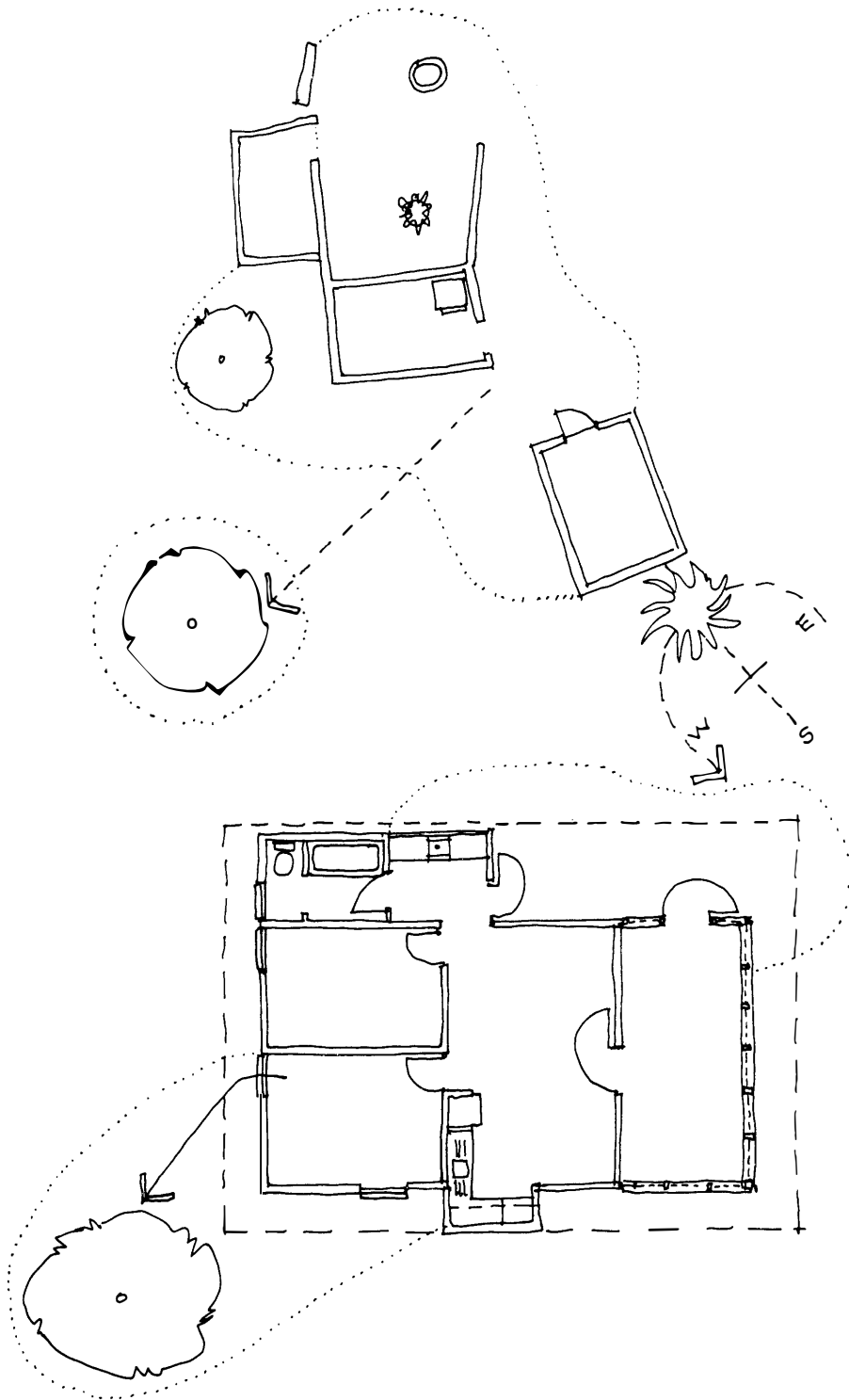


Fig.13 Traditional camp and proposed floor plan of house

traditional Aborigines fear that private conversations could be overheard. Such fears are inhibiting. Stoll *et al.* (1979:136, 140), for example, quoting informants, have reported how an Aboriginal feels in such a situation:

Well, my wife and I used to just stay there [in his house in Hermannsburg] without saying anything. Sometimes during the day when all the other people had gone to the shop or somewhere, that's the time we used to talk private business. When nobody else was around. If people didn't go away, we just used to sit without saying anything. There used to be a lot of arguments.

When people stay there [at the Lutheran Mission Block in Alice Springs] they feel embarrassed. They feel embarrassed to talk about their own stories (for example between husband and wife) because the people in the next room can hear.

Each bedroom opens to an internal living area in which the kitchen is located and beyond which is a flyscreened living area. Many social activities are bound to occur in these rooms, especially those concerned with the cooking and preparation of food. In wet weather and during winter most social activities would occur in these rooms. The one living area would present the two households with the problem of managing it so that it could be used without the separate activities of each household interfering with the other. In the old camp, each household occupied a completely distinct area. Exit from each of the living areas could be made into neutral space. A person could sit anywhere in his domain without becoming party to the social activities of the other household. Intrusion into an activity of the other household could only be made openly.

In the floor plan, in contrast, there are many potentially ambiguous spaces. The inner living area in certain circumstances could act as a barrier to access to bedrooms and egress from them. Where a social activity of one group is in progress, a member of the other household group might find it difficult and embarrassing to pass through the room to get into his bedroom or to leave it. Activities in the kitchen could also occasion similar feelings of embarrassment (not to mention the problems of responsibility for keeping it clean). For a group, knowledge that someone whom it did not want to join in the activity wants to pass through or

fears that he could be listening through the bedroom door could act as a serious inhibitor to easy conversation. The route to the bathroom, W.C. and kitchen confronts the residents with similar problems.

One of the most likely effects of these living arrangements would be to create tensions between the two households. To resolve them, they would have to devise radically new conventions relating to privacy (and this would have to be done immediately on moving in while the households would also be grappling with manifold other problems associated with coping with a completely strange environment).

A similar problem to the one confronting someone wanting to leave a bedroom would confront a visitor hoping to join a group in the living room. In the traditional setting, visitors would wait at a distance to be invited to join a group. Desire to join and invitation were both usually signalled visually. No such prior warnings are possible in the design of this house. Consequently, a visitor might suddenly arrive amongst a group or shout his desires and risk a public rebuttal or an unwilling acceptance. The latter procedure is markedly different from the giving of visual cues, for a call demands a vocal reply. Until conventions are accepted which enable replies to be given without at the same time giving offence such procedures run a serious risk of contributing to misunderstandings and unnecessary tensions between people.

The relationship between the inner and outer living areas was also not satisfactory. They are too close together for two unrelated activities to occur concurrently. The activities in one would almost certainly be bound to intrude into the other. What would probably happen in practice would be for the inner living area to become a sort of passageway mediating the space between the bedrooms and the outer living area and small verandah.

Another important difference between the floor plan and the camp is in the restrictions which the house imposed on anyone seeing out. The inner living area has no windows at all and the bedrooms only have small windows. Aural deprivation of activities occurring in Mt Nancy would also be enhanced by the absence of windows or big windows.

The orientation of the house also contributes to the visual deprivation. The main road between Alice Springs and Darwin (which would pass on a west/east axis behind the house) cannot be seen from inside the house except perhaps from the bedroom windows while the rest of Mt Nancy could only be seen by people sitting on the verandah. Anyone in the kitchen would be unable to monitor activities in the main camp. For a woman with young children, for example, such visual deprivation could elicit great anxiety.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance to an Aboriginal of being able to see, hear and generally 'feel' the happenings in his camp. Much of the monitoring is done at an unconscious level. So long as there is normality, a person is not aroused. As soon as there is an untoward or unfamiliar cue, however, a person's senses are alerted and he will seek an explanation.¹ In any Aboriginal camp people frequently survey the scene as a matter of course. In Mt Nancy, for example, the road is an important focus of attention so that people can learn who is in town. The entrance to the camp is similarly of interest as people like to know who is entering the camp. This interest was particularly important when the camp was visited by drunks, tourists and individuals and gangs intent on harassment. Internally, knowledge of domestic situations and inter and intra familial relationships and alliances is most important if a resident is to observe the social decorums and not give gratuitous or unwitting offence. In emergencies, such as illness or disputes, quick and appropriate responses are most important and can lead to the saving of lives. Even when everything appears outwardly normal, Aborigines quickly spot when things are not as they should be. If parents are absent, for example, when young children return from school, arrangements are quickly made for someone else to look after them. In times of adversity, when a family has no money to purchase provisions, an unlit cooking fire and children crying out of hunger, the situation would quickly be noticed. Kinsmen would come to their aid. If the family were in a house, however, many of these happenings might pass unnoticed for some considerable time.

In order to obtain more precise data about the importance to an Aboriginal of being privy to various kinds of visual

¹For a discussion of the importance of information flow to an Aboriginal, see Reser (1979).

and aural information, one would have to study the changes which occurred after he had been deprived of the flows. In terms of the design process at Mt Nancy, such a course of action was clearly impossible (as well as being undesirable). An important design assumption, therefore, was to enable occupants of houses to minimize the inhibition of information flow.

Each of the other floor plans designed by Mt Nancy households was subject to the same comparative analysis between observed living patterns and constraints imposed by the floor plan. The constraints were then discussed with each household. This process of feedback and increased understanding on the part of many of the households of the kinds of limitations imposed by a house resulted in a number of refinements and in some cases extensive modifications to their floor plans. In the case of the household group discussed in this chapter, it resulted in a decision by the old man that he would prefer to live in his caravan and have that related to the house in which the young couple would live.

The process also contributed to the community's assurance that their development scheme was being tailored to their own requirements and that knowledge of these requirements was being demonstrated by the architect. They therefore set the scene for a detailed interest in the form that the housing took being displayed by almost all the households in the camp.

Chapter 10

Design synthesis

For Mt Nancy, good housing would make an important statement to the rest of Alice Springs. It would assert that members of the community, despite their different circumstances, were the equals of other citizens in Alice Springs and that they conformed to the expectations of the wider Alice Springs community, while pursuing their own particular interests. The conformity in part would be expressed by houses of conventional appearance. The statement was an accommodating one and can be understood in the context of the years of criticism and abuse that the community had suffered as town campers about their living standards, appearance and behaviour not measuring up to the standards demanded by the township and the basic feeling of insecurity felt by every town camper about his ability to remain. The statement, in fact, was a reflection of the town campers' own opinion about where lay the locus of power to determine good taste in the township.

A second important consideration for the members of Mt Nancy was that the houses provide comfortable living conditions throughout the year. Spaces should be easily heated during cold spells and there should be areas in which people could escape from the wet. It might seem somewhat commonplace to stress the importance of a house being weatherproof, but for Aborigines in Centralia in 1975, many houses built for them did not measure up to these expected standards. Roofs, through design faults, leaked, water flowed into the body of a house under doors and even, sometimes (e.g. in the Charles River houses), under walls, and rain blew in through window areas which in conventional houses would be glassed. As Aborigines usually had little furniture, most of their belongings were stored on the floor and in wet weather became saturated even when well inside a house.

Shaded, sheltered areas were also required so that people could comfortably sit outside during hot spells and could shelter from or take advantage of cool breezes.

For Wigley, on the basis of his understanding of the living patterns of the group, it was important to balance internal and external living areas in the design so that households could continue to live around a house and within the community rather than inside it excluded from the community. At this early stage in the design process, both the community and Wigley considered that extensive covered areas around the outside walls of the house would enable the occupants to orient their activities with reference to the remainder of the community whilst, at the same time, taking advantage of the various kinds of shelter the roof and walls provided.

From his observations of the changes in composition of household groups at Mt Nancy, as well as his expectation that as households became more accustomed to living in a house, so their living patterns would change, Wigley decided that it was important to design a structure which could readily be extended or modified as the perceived requirements of the occupants changed.

There were other reasons for an 'open ended' design approach. The Panel recognized that it was neither politically nor economically feasible to tailor houses to the individual requirements of every household in a community. For one thing, the Panel considered that one of its principal objectives was to develop prototype design approaches which would be found suitable for Aborigines living in a general area (for example, the Central Desert).

Wigley recognized that a basic design had to accommodate a range of different requirements, from those of traditional pensioners who could not be expected to make many changes to their living patterns, to those of households which had already experienced living in Housing Commission housing, and eventually to those of the children who had been brought up within the township, had been educated by Europeans at European schools and who could be expected to seek conventional employment within the township.

Wigley also expected that, through time, living patterns would change as people developed a lifestyle focused more on their own house than on the camp as a whole. The form that these changes might take was difficult to predict. Similarly, changes in family composition for people intent on living in a small camp would have different implications for the residents than they would for residents of a European suburb.

For example, the normal response of a European family to an expanding family is to seek a bigger house or to have expensive additions to one's own house. Neither of these alternatives was practicable at Mt Nancy. There was little likelihood that, in a community of eleven households, as one family expanded another would reduce correspondingly. Secondly the ability of Mt Nancy households to seek extensions to their houses, given the poor economic prospects of Aborigines, seemed slender.

A further consideration was that, in time, the houses of the pensioners (the people with the simplest requirements for shelter) would be taken over by young families which had grown up entirely in Alice Springs and whose values were more heavily influenced by Europeans than were those of the pensioners. Indeed, the possibility could not be ignored that all the houses would eventually be occupied by families whose living patterns were heavily influenced by white Australian values.

There was a danger in the above considerations. They were based on an assumption that, with a house, Mt Nancy residents would generally tend to live more like white Australians. The trends or developments were all in this one direction, a direction with which the township fathers would have heartily approved. A house, therefore, could be an important factor in accelerating and contributing to these trends. There were other possibilities which had to be recognized and allowed for in a design. The most important one was that, with the increasing self-confidence of the Mt Nancy community, a particularly Aboriginal settlement and house utilization would be developed. The designs therefore should not inhibit the possibility of modifications of a specifically Aboriginal kind. The problem for the architect was, with a total absence of any information about the direction such developments might take, to make allowances for them.

Before proceeding to a design, certain constraints were determined. The houses were to be low cost but in line with the Hay Inquiry's recommendations (Hay 1976) that Aborigines be given access to housing on terms no less favourable than Housing Commission terms in rural areas. In Alice Springs the Housing Commission in 1976 had let a contract for thirty-six three-bedroom houses for an approximate \$27,000 per

house.² Given the difference in scale and the inflation of building costs which had occurred since that date, a target of \$30,000 a house was set for Mt Nancy. It was also decided that the houses were to be low maintenance. As the Mt Nancy community wanted a brick clad house, one solution to the requirement for low maintenance was to have internally unlined brick walls, a solution which the Mt Nancy community heartily approved.

The Mt Nancy community had categorically stated that it did not want to build its own houses. For one thing, its most reliable workers were fully employed or were expecting to get work on cattle stations, work which they enjoyed and which gave them status amongst other Aborigines. Secondly, the community wanted the houses to be built as quickly as possible with a minimum of disruption to relationships within the camp. For the community, use of contractors was most likely to meet these requirements.

A decision was also made about the extent of internal fittings to be provided in the houses. Evidence from housing programs in Aboriginal settlements in central Australia all pointed to the need to provide ample storage space out of reach of young children and dogs. Elsewhere, Aborigines would simply transfer their suitcases, cooking utensils and flour bins from humpy floor to house floor where they would be open to the same unhygienic hazards as before. It was therefore decided to provide as much storage as possible as built-in fittings and free the floors for living rather than storage purposes.

Turning to more detailed aspects of the design, one important criterion was to try to create some fluidity between outside and internal spaces so that households would still be able to orient their activities in relation to other households in the camp. Ample verandahs were the medium by which this was to be accomplished. They would provide ample shaded space beyond the walls of a house in which various activities could take place. They would allow occupants to experiment with additional enclosed spaces simply by closing off parts of the verandah. Later, as ideas crystallized, a house could be extended under verandah roof in ways which the occupants already knew would be suitable. Verandahs would also provide spaces in which the many visitors to Mt

²DAA 1976 Review of Housing Association Scheme, internal report. The two contracts for eight houses at Mt Nancy came to \$240,000.

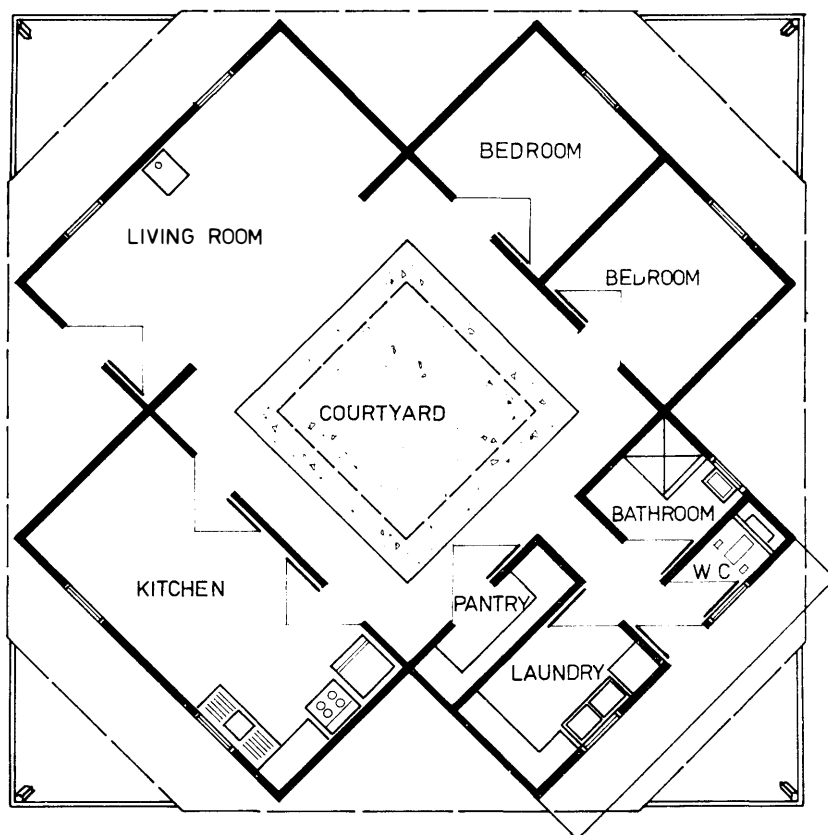
Nancy could be accommodated. According to the Mt Nancy community, deep verandahs would relieve a host from being obliged to put up visitors in his house and the attendant risks and dislocation that that might cause. For example, a widower living in a Housing Commission house in Alice Springs copes with visitors as follows:

Sometimes, when a husband and wife come with a lot of children to stay with him, he shifts out of his bedroom to the big room (kitchen/lounge). That's where he sleeps with all the boys. If more women come, then he shifts into another room. Then he has only a few of the big boys to sleep with him in that room. He can't put them in with the women. When they go, he goes back to his room with the boys ... That really pushes him around all the time (Stoll *et al.* 1979:141).

In his initial thinking Wigley considered the blurring of boundaries between inside and outside to be the most important design criterion. Accordingly, he decided to incorporate verandahs of different shapes and sizes around each house and have them leading directly into rooms. This approach did not meet with the general approval of the community. People stressed the need for privacy in certain parts of a house. Wigley therefore amended his design approach so that it would provide deeper levels of privacy within a house. For example, an inner living room would be accessible to visitors and other members of the community but would not be visible to the camp in general. Bedrooms located deeper inside a house would be havens into which a household could retire out of reach of other members of the community.

Cooking, for Aborigines, is usually not divorced from other social activities. Many architects, in their designs for Aborigines, have demonstrated a lack of understanding of the social component of cooking. In many house designs, kitchens are placed deep inside houses where gossip groups are not likely to congregate (see, for example, Fig.14). At Mt Nancy, much of the cooking could be expected to be performed outside on fires lit on or beyond a verandah. For these activities, ease of access to the kitchen would be required both for utensils and for food stored there.

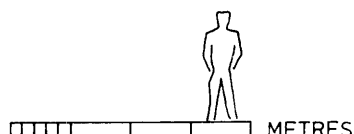
Much casual eating is done by Aborigines. A person feels hungry; so he gets himself something to eat. In such



HOUSE TYPE 'A'

WILLOWRA

MARCH 1974



AREA

TOTAL AREA : DWELLING + COURTYARD :	107.0 m ²
COURTYARD :	34.8 m ²
DWELLING :	72.2 m ²

CONSTRUCTION

ROOF : METAL SHEETING

WALLS : TIMBER FRAME

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL LINING : 'HARDIFLEX' SHEETING

FLOOR : CONCRETE SLAB ON GROUND

DESIGNED BY ANDREW MCPHEE AND ASSOCIATES PTY LTD ARCHITECTS

Fig.14 Example of a house design with kitchen deep inside the house

circumstances the proximity of kitchen to where most activities were likely to occur would be important, so that the person in search of food would not have to disengage himself totally from an activity. There was, however, a rub. People did not want the kitchen, or at least food storage areas such as refrigerator and pantry, to be too accessible because of fears that visitors and non-residents would take advantage of them and help themselves to whatever they wanted.

The ablutions area places an important constraint on the development of a house design, for bedrooms tend to be related to them. One important criterion for the location of the ablutions area was that it should not impede any future extensions. It was decided to locate the ablutions away from the kitchen, largely because of the strongly expressed concern of a number of Mt Nancy residents that dirty water from blocked drains would not flow back into the kitchen area.

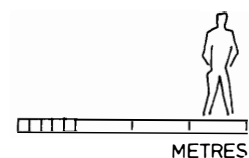
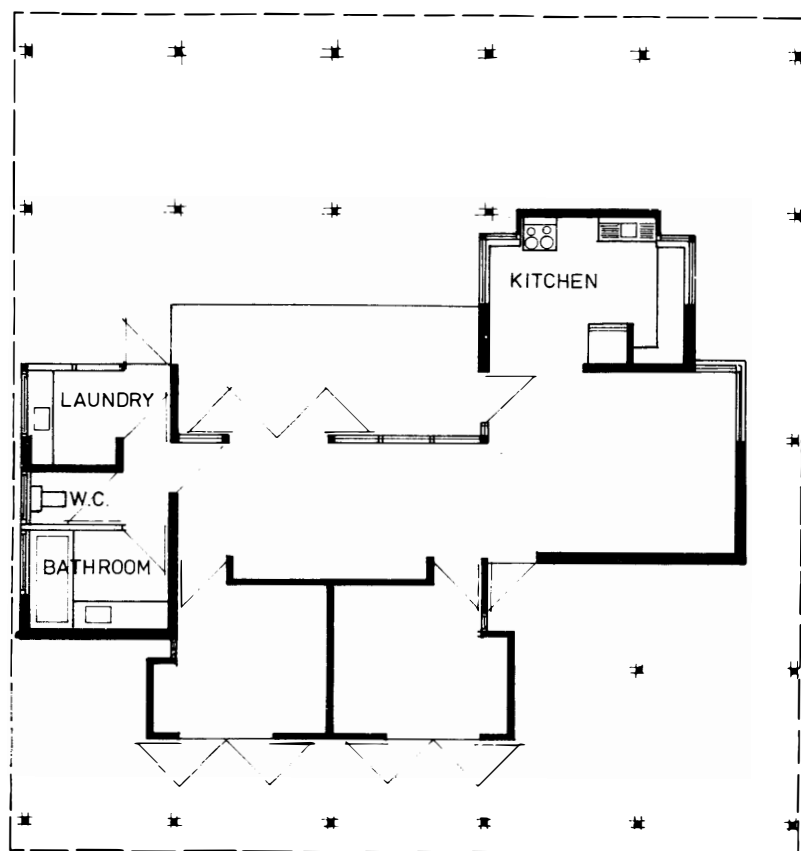
Room sizes are important elements in any house design. Houses designed for Aborigines have generally had rooms of conventional size. Bedrooms for example are generally of the order of 3.6m x 3.6m to 3.6m x 4.5m. Scant regard has been paid by architects to the dimensions that Aborigines might find comfortable. Aboriginal perceptions of comfortable internal spaces have undoubtedly been influenced by experience, which, in turn, has been constrained by the materials available. With the materials available in the desert it would have been difficult to construct a large dwelling. Scrap materials used by town campers have similar limitations. At Mt Nancy, most shelters were of the order of 2m x 2m although one of 4m x 3m had been constructed. Aborigines, therefore, could be expected to find small enclosed spaces comfortable for sleeping or sheltering from inclement weather which, in part, might explain why, when conventional sized rooms have been constructed where there are acute housing shortages, pressures build up on Aboriginal households to convert rooms to multiple occupancy. Aborigines simply perceive a conventional sized room to be in excess of the requirements of one household. In light of these considerations, Wigley decided to design rooms the size of which appeared familiar to the occupants. If their perception of what constituted a comfortable sized room were enlarged, the rooms could be extended. The alternative of designing conventional sized rooms was regarded as forcing families to adapt to the bigger dimensions and run the risk of pressures developing of putting the rooms to uses other than what were planned. Accordingly, bedrooms were planned to have roughly the same floor areas

as the humpies at Mt Nancy (about 2.1m x 2.7m).

Because of the way Aborigines regard private and public business, good acoustics were considered to be an important design feature. This was particularly so because, from an economic point of view, the location of bedrooms to adjoin one another was unavoidable. It was therefore desirable to make the occupants of the rooms feel confident that conversations could not be overheard in a neighbouring room. Surfaces which tended to mute noises were therefore considered preferable to those which did not.

The point had been reached to proceed to detailed designs. There could be no doubt of the keenness of the Mt Nancy community for the housing program to begin. Given their aspirations, almost any conventional house would probably have done. Wigley was concerned to temper these demands because one of the Panel's purposes was to establish certain principles about designing housing for remote Aborigines. The Panel wanted a small number of prototype houses to be built initially to test out its architects' ideas, to make sure that any bugs in a design were eliminated and to give the initial occupants an opportunity to experiment with the house and by a process of feedback and refinement to modify a design so that when a large-scale housing program got under way, there could be confidence that the designs were as satisfactory as they could be. The period of experimentation, discussion and refinement was also important because Wigley was only too aware of the number of untested assumptions inherent in his design approach.

It was decided initially to build three prototypes. With that decision agreed by the community, intensive discussions were held with the three households for whom the prototypes were to be built (see Appendix III for the floor plans they had designed). A basic 'core house' was developed in which the two elements, bathroom/laundry/W.C. and kitchen could be located in various configurations under a general roof area. Initially, only two combinations were used, one of which located the two core areas on opposite sides of the house (Fig.15) and the other in a central area. These core areas were located under an extensive roof area supported by columns. The columns were designed to serve as posts to which extempore screens could be attached to sub-divide rooms and, in large areas, as a device visually to break up the expanse into a more comfortable area.



AREA

TOTAL AREA UNDER ROOF 182.25 m²

CONSTRUCTION

STRUCTURE	TIMBER COLUMNS, TIMBER AND STEEL ROOF FRAME
ROOF	METAL SHEETING
WALLS	CONCRETE BLOCKWORK, TIMBER STUD FRAME
FLOOR	CONCRETE SLAB ON GROUND

DESIGNED BY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
HOUSING PANEL INC.

Fig.15 Core house, Mt Nancy

The laundry, W.C. and bathroom were located (Fig.15) at the outer edge of the house to provide a warm sheltered area in the morning. These rooms were located on the east of the house as Mt Nancy people preferred to take a shower first thing in the morning. With the sun's rays falling on the room, it was felt that, perceptually, even in winter, the rooms would give an appearance of warmth. The laundry leads out northwards where clothes lines would obtain a maximum benefit from the sun.

The kitchen is located on the other side of the house following the requirement that kitchen and ablutions area be separated. Being a source of heat, it is also separated from the bedrooms and its three external walls serve as a bank to radiate heat outside.

This core house was then developed in close consultation with the household which had traced out floor plan 1 in Appendix III. In its initial floor plan, the household had designated three bedrooms. On reflection, with two infants, the household decided that two bedrooms would be preferable as a third might encourage visitors to demand to stay in a room which was not being occupied by the household.

In the house under discussion, the deep verandah facing south towards the main gate into Mt Nancy (see Fig.16 for location of the core house) and towards the centre of the camp was expected to fulfil the same functions as an activity area in a traditional camp. There was easy access from the verandah into the kitchen. The verandah led into a more secluded area which was designed to mediate between outside and inside. In particular, extensive shelving was provided in the room so that items of general use could be stored securely there. Beyond this area were the two bedrooms and a living room which led directly on to the verandah facing northwest.

An important design principle at Mt Nancy was to provide different levels of seclusion for its occupants. As Chapter 9 has described, in a traditional camp almost all activities occur in the open in public view of the rest of the camp. According to traditional values, any person or family which conducted most of its affairs in private had something to hide and therefore was regarded as being up to no good. There were occasions when privacy was sought. Sacred business is one example, but that usually took place away from a general camp and therefore had no implications for housing

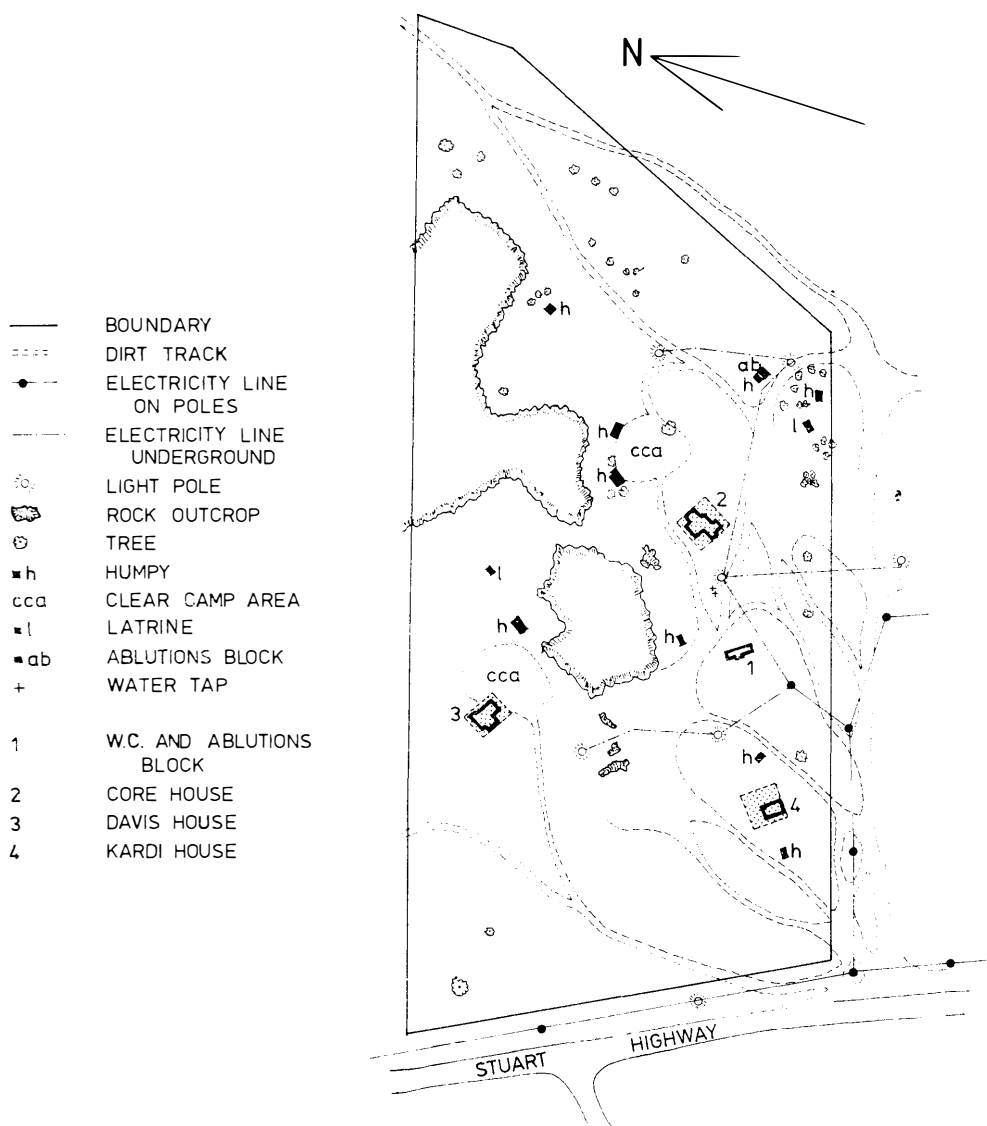


Fig.16 Mt Nancy after the addition of the ablation block and three prototype houses

designs nor for camp (town) plans. Another example is when a man and wife had personal business to discuss or some other transaction to perform which they did not want to be done publicly. In such cases they would simply withdraw into their dwelling, an action which indicated to the rest of the camp that they did not want to be interrupted. There were other occasions of a personal kind when individuals simply wanted to be alone and out of public view, and again the dwelling provided such a haven.

A house greatly expands the covered area in which social activities can occur. This facility is particularly noticeable in inclement weather. On such occasions, in a traditional camp, all social activities cease while shelter is sought, for most Aboriginal shelters only provide enough room for a household group to huddle together. A house, on the other hand, provides the kind of space which permits social activities to continue without dislocation even during a heavy rainstorm. Unfortunately, architects generally have not taken advantage of the opportunities offered by housing to allow social activities to continue 'outside' (i.e. on verandahs) during rainstorms. Many houses designed for Aborigines only have shallow verandahs (see Fig.14) or no verandahs at all. Apart from providing inadequate shade at certain times of the day, such houses provide inadequate protection from rain.

The requirement for easy access between inside and outside created some problems. One is worth considering in detail here. There are six external doors. Three of these are double doors. Security, clearly, could become a serious problem. The problem was partly resolved by having one key to fit all the locks.

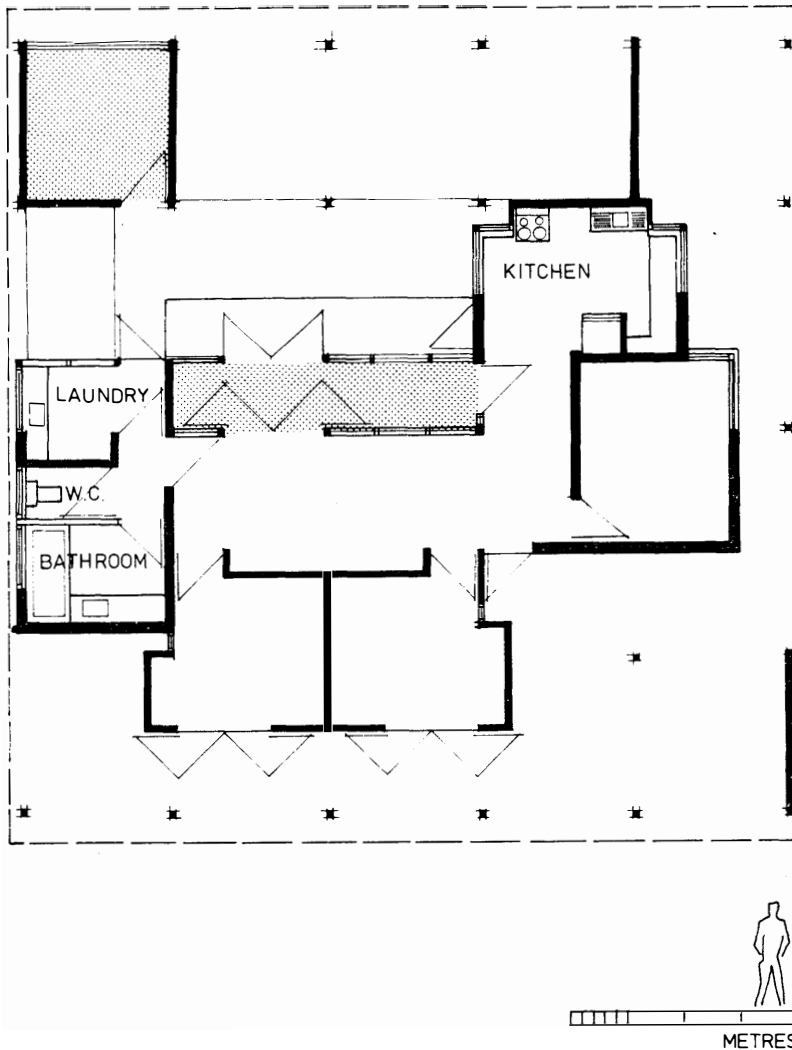
Bedrooms, however, still created unease. The two bedrooms were situated at the rear of the house and looked out to a rocky knoll on which no building was feasible. Double doors led from the bedrooms to a shallow verandah and the idea was that occupants would be able to drag their beds and bedding out on to the verandah whenever they wanted to sleep outside and stow them away in the bedroom during the day. After people had moved into the house, there were tales of door handles being rattled in the night. There were also fears that the doors might be used by malevolent spirits to gain access. As these doors were provided only for access out of the bedrooms, it was decided that the external door handles were redundant and they were removed.

A second problem with doors is that they create draughts. In below freezing conditions, draughts are unwelcome. In all central Australian Aboriginal housing schemes examined by the Panel, houses were handed over to their Aboriginal occupants with bare concrete floors. And so they remained. And without furniture, that was where the occupants slept. Even in the rare houses with heating appliances, Aborigines frequently complained of the difficulties of keeping warm, especially as the vast majority slept on the floor. There have been a number of reported instances of Aborigines temporarily abandoning their houses on cold winter nights for the relative warmth of sleeping by a camp fire in the open because of their inability to keep warm inside (Heppell 1977). As none of the members of Mt Nancy would have been able to afford carpeting, to reduce draughts and noise and to give the inside of the houses a more comfortable appearance it was decided to specify durable industrial carpeting as a standard fitting in the houses.

The kitchens were also fitted according to Aboriginal requirements. For example, no low level cupboards were provided in recognition of the fact that any object which was not locked in a suitcase or secured in a flour bin was stored for safety out of the reach of dogs and young children. The spaces under the work benches were left unshelved as storage areas for flour bins, locked suitcases, boxes and any other receptacles the householders might use to store things in. Cupboards were provided above the work benches from which were suspended wire baskets for cutlery. The latter were provided as drawers in Aboriginal housing tended to become infested with cockroaches. Wire baskets would not, and consequently would provide a better level of hygiene in the kitchen.

Wood burning stoves, as originally requested, were not installed in the kitchens. On reflection, the Mt Nancy community decided they would initially continue to cook most food on open fires outside. Electric stoves installed in the kitchen would give them a quick, clean alternative for cooking food and especially for boiling a billy.

Given the deep verandahs, the problem that the central rooms would be rather gloomy was overcome by having a skylight above the general living area of the house. A skylight had the advantage of also acting as a vent, and thus increasing the flow of air through the house and drawing out hot air in the summer. The skylight was also designed in such a way



AREA

TOTAL AREA UNDER ROOF 182.25 m²

STRUCTURE	TIMBER COLUMNS, TIMBER AND STEEL ROOF FRAME
ROOF	METAL SHEETING
WALLS	CONCRETE BLOCKWORK, TIMBER STUD FRAME
FLOOR	CONCRETE SLAB ON GROUND

DESIGNED BY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
HOUSING PANEL INC.

Fig.17 Core house, Mt Nancy, with modifications

that a solar heat bank could be incorporated into it once the relevant technology had been developed into a commercial proposition.

With the basic configuration of rooms of the prototypes agreed and detailed fittings specified, there only remained the problem of obtaining finance to build three prototypes to be used as experimental test beds. Funding of this program was a head office responsibility of the DAA. While the Panel had received thoughtful encouragement and support from Huey and the Alice Springs office of the DAA, the head office in late 1976 was no longer an organization interested in exploring new approaches to community development. The liberalizing era of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs was over. The DAA since its inception had been accident prone and had often received strident and wholly unsympathetic attention from the news media. Adverse reports by the Auditor-General, the Public Accounts Committee and Hay had resulted in a department more concerned about protecting itself and taking no risks than with grappling with the exciting but risky demands of small-scale development programs. Administrators with very little sympathy for and understanding of Aborigines and development planning were beginning to wield power within the department. For the Panel, this change in emphasis had major implications. Hay in his (for the Department, authoritative) report had taken the Panel to task for, according to him, dissipating its energies by becoming involved in 'planning renovations, public utilities, town design and housing, not all of which directly apply to other communities' (Hay 1976:72). The thrust of Hay's recommendations about the Panel was that it should be striving to determine a set of standardized designs which could be adopted for Aboriginal communities and which would result in potential savings. For the administrators within the DAA (not to mention the new Minister, Ian Viner), Hay's narrow charter for the Panel became directive and unmodifiable. Therefore, it was most likely that the head office of the DAA would not view sympathetically the idea of the Panel constructing prototypes for Aborigines to use as a development tool.

Application for funds was made in December 1976. On 1 April 1977, the DAA informed the Panel that a sum of \$109,000 was to be made available, but included in that amount was a figure of \$50,000 already allocated to Mt Nancy for the 1976-77 financial year. The Panel pointed out that much of the \$50,000 had already been spent by the community on a

toilet block, fencing, area lighting and on the provision of other amenities for the community. It also pointed out that construction had already begun on the houses (on the strength of the verbal advice that the money would be forthcoming).³ The DAA replied reiterating its position and pointing out that some of the items on which money had been spent should have been drawn against the allocation for town management and public utilities⁴ (which was very instructive, but as it was the DAA which made the drawings and should have drawn the money against the proper head, it did not help the Panel). Finally the Panel turned to the Alice Springs office, which made the money available and the program was able to go ahead.

Under the sympathetic eye of the DAA Alice Springs office, the construction period was used further to modify the design. Figure 17 shows the core house as it was finally developed for the household. The modifications were made after construction was reasonably well advanced, by which time a good appreciation of the dimensions of the house and the amenities it offered had been obtained. They demonstrated the importance of treating the first prototype as a developmental tool.

Two of the modifications were small. A small internal wall was added to divide the two living areas and give the occupants stricter security over what was to become a private living room. The security was required so that a refrigerator could be located there and the household's provisions could be kept out of sight of visitors.

Closing off this area changed the use of the general room. It came to be used for the storage of things in general use and enabled visitors and occupants alike to use it relatively freely. It was also used as an overflow area for overnight visitors.

The different light levels in these two rooms contributed to the occupants' perception of their different uses. According to the occupants, the inner room was darker, which added to its feeling of seclusion. The lightness and airiness of the other contributed to its more public uses.

³M.Heppell to G.Stern, 17 May 1977: correspondence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Housing Panel, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

⁴G.Stern to M.Heppell, 1 June 1977: as note 3.

A second modification was the construction of a half screen slatted wall to act as a windbreak on the south verandah. This windbreak blocked the view from the centre of Mt Nancy into the verandah while permitting people there to look across to the centre of the camp by peering through the slats. The windbreak did seem to add to the perceptual privacy of this area, for, after its completion, articles such as tape recorders and food and drink were left there unattended.

The third modification was the addition of a detached room on the verandah to provide a spare room for visitors completely separate from the house proper. Two potential dwellings were thus created under the same roof line which, in concept, were similar to the 'twin' household camp described in the previous chapter.

One of the principal requirements of the occupants of this house was privacy. Even with the additions to the deep southern verandah, the house remained a central point for the Mt Nancy community, especially after a telephone had been installed in it. For most of the day, the verandah was used as a meeting place for men and women. This was not welcomed by the occupants and, to reduce the desirability of the house for everyone else, they filled in this verandah.

Both bedrooms, as requested, had full-length clear glass windows. For the occupants, these windows exposed them too much to the view of people outside. Rather than purchase curtains, they glued a coloured translucent paper across the middle third of each window which increased the feeling of privacy within. At night the area lighting provided sufficient light for people to move around and get belongings without having to turn on a light. Breaking up the darkness was also important for the young children who slept in the room. Hitherto, young children always slept with their parents either outside by a camp fire (giving a similar kind of light as that penetrating into the room from the area lighting) or inside a humpy. If they woke up alarmed, the parents were beside them and immediately available to reassure them. In the house, the children were expected to sleep in a separate bedroom. The parents feared that children awakening in a pitch black room might become terrified while, if they were able to make out familiar forms, their disquiet would be less intense.

A second prototype was designed as a two-bedroom house for the household which had designed floor plan 2 in Appendix III. The principal requirement of this household was that it face the Kardi house (see Fig.16). The house consisted of a front verandah facing the Kardi house, a private rear verandah, an enlarged kitchen, an open fly-screened living area and two bedrooms.

The kitchen/living area had an 'island' set of kitchen work benches which were intended to serve as an occasional table and in part to test how the household would adapt to a small inner living area. The 'island' furniture was not a success, being regarded as an obstacle to free movement around the room and unnecessarily restricting the floor space provided to a number of passageways.

The size of this house was restricted because of uncertainties about the amount of funding which the DAA would make available for the project. The restrictions proved fortuitous, because, of the three prototypes, this design proved most popular largely because of its compactness. The women in particular preferred it to the larger prototypes, indicating a preference for smaller houses on the basis that they were easier to clean. This floor plan was adopted by other households in Mt Nancy and later by the neighbouring Warlpiri group at Ilibilili Tjatja.

The use of the third prototype proved most interesting. When construction began, a single women's camp had formed around the household which had designed floor plan 3 in Appendix III. With such a radical change to the composition of this household, and as membership was expected to change frequently, the ability to reorganize the enclosed spaces in relation to the service core was regarded as important. It was therefore decided initially to leave the area between the kitchen and enclosed rooms as unencumbered as possible. It was hoped that as the single women became more accustomed to the location of the core area in relation to the covered verandah space and worked out their own solutions to the management problems of adapting a single women's camp within the confines of a house, they would become more certain about the most appropriate location for any rooms required.

Shortly after the roof of this house had been erected, Alice Springs experienced a number of downpours. During the first, a group of four single women moved under the roof accompanied by one unwelcome male visitor to Mt Nancy. The

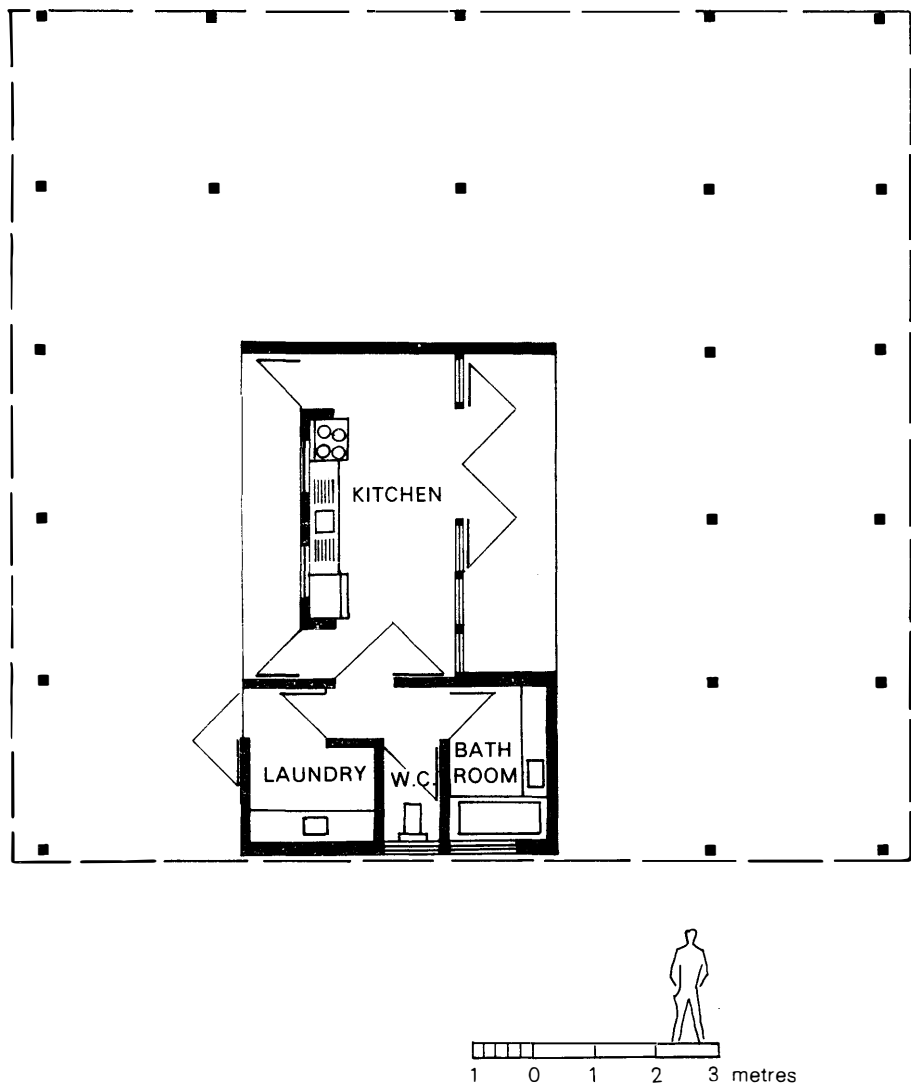


Fig.19 The Kardi house, Mt Nancy

visitor located his camp against the bathroom wall on the opposite side from the kitchen where most of the women's social activities occurred.

Each woman set up a 'camp' (which was a discrete area under the roof where her belongings were kept) where she slept and spent most of her time. One of the women located her camp in the narrow area beyond the kitchen which was in the natural pathway to the kitchen for the visitor. The other three women located their camps in the rooms to the side of and behind the kitchen.

In terms of the future development of town camps in Alice Springs and elsewhere, the move under the roof with the onset of rain was interesting. It suggested that such an area provided more suitable living space than a humpy. In those camps in which opinion is not yet set on the precise kind of housing required, the building of a few roofed areas with minimum amenities might provide vastly improved living conditions for a camp. It would also give the members time to become accustomed to the radically different spatial dimensions involved in substituting housing for humpies, to experiment with different configurations of rooms under a roof before deciding which is most suitable and to work out solutions to the management problems presented by keeping a house. For the town fathers, they would seem appropriate as an initial response where new town camps form. A result of this experience was that a simple multi-purpose building was designed for these purposes by the Panel, and this is briefly described in the next chapter.

How successful the Panel's designs are must be left for some other critic to evaluate, as, unfortunately, before the Panel could embark on an evaluation program, it was dismissed by the Commonwealth Government.

Chapter 11

A town campers' council

The comments of Dexter, when permanent head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (quoted in Chapter 7), that the DAA could not solve the problems of Alice Springs - it was up to the people there - were well made. He continued by stating that the DAA could assist by providing material resources, and there was the rub. The DAA is yet another arm of government which dispenses welfare to the Aborigines with conditions. Since 1976, the conditions have become more stringent as Aboriginal organizations have been subjected to the demands of public service accountability, budgeting, forward planning, performance and other abstruse responsibilities. To receive the government largesse, Aborigines have to organize themselves into associations, as the first Liberal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Viner, pointed out:

Aboriginal communities and organisations receiving grants from the Commonwealth are normally required to be incorporated so that they may be legally accountable and responsible for their actions.¹

The law, then, was still to be involved and Aborigines had had a long experience of the methods of law enforcement officers (the Coniston Massacre, for example, was perpetrated by a law enforcement officer) and the kind of justice they could expect to receive from the Australian court system. Viner's emphasis was one that promised the Aborigines continued dependency on whites as they had to account for their actions (and the entrepreneurial risks they took - risks which were absolutely foreign to a bureaucracy) in order to resubmit their corporate begging bowl for funds for another year.

¹Introducing the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Bill (1976) in the House of Representatives; see *Hansard* 1976 (12):2946.

The idea of Aboriginal organizations forging a future for themselves is important to an understanding of the way in which Aboriginal affairs are administered. It owes much initially to Charles Rowley and the influence some of his ideas had on the Council for Aboriginal Affairs. The idea of an incorporated council representing the interests of Aborigines in one particular area was first put forward officially by the Council for Aboriginal Affairs in response to the Department of the Interior's Cabinet Submission No. 370 in which the latter department sought to expand its establishment to provide additional services on Aboriginal settlements. Challenging the approach whereby Aborigines were the passive institutionalized recipients of services, the Council wrote:²

It is our provisional view that both missions and settlements should be developed as incorporated communities under the control of the residents (most but not all of whom would be Aborigines) being assisted by professionally trained managers, community development workers etc. The function of the incorporated community would be to develop community, group and individual enterprises which will earn income from external sources and from the replacement of goods previously 'imported'. The communities could also be developed as a source of labour for economic activities in the surrounding area and as the provider of services to other communities.

The purpose of these organizations was to transfer control of their economic futures to Aborigines and free them from their dependency on the arms of government. The idea was good, but the Council neglected to investigate the process necessary whereby Aborigines would shake off their bureaucratic chains and emerge as independent arbiters of their future. Providing instant organizations simply was not a sufficient condition for such a change as the Charles River community (described in Chapter 6) illustrated when it collapsed partly because of the strains elicited by the establishment by the DAA of a management committee and the unequal responsibilities which were thrust on one member of the community.

² H.C.Coombs to Minister, 6 December 1971: Northern Territory resource allocation on Aboriginal settlements.

How the Tangatjira Council came to represent town camp Aborigines in Alice Springs is a useful example of the way in which Aborigines will set up and support an organization to pursue common interests and provide a necessary service, but only when they are motivated to do so. Motivation is not likely to occur until there is also a perception that some tangible advantages will flow within the short term from the operations of such an organization. Therefore, before there are grounds for setting up such an organization, there must exist a common set of desirable and attainable goals and a conviction among the Aborigines concerned that the environment is conducive to the achieving of the goals. The development of the Alice Springs town camps provided just such an environment.

The Tangatjira Council, at least in its original form, was not established by Aborigines. It grew out of the meetings of townspeople discussed in Chapter 6, which considered the plight of the 'itinerant' Aborigines and the problems of the town camps. With the completion of the report of the sub-committee of the Town Management Board and the decision by the NTA to develop two camp sites, political interest in these meetings subsided and they lapsed.

Because the DAA office was unable to take decisive initiatives to relieve any of the serious problems confronting unhoused Aborigines in Alice Springs, the situation of the town campers once again received adverse publicity in the town. In an attempt to forestall this criticism, in 1974 the DAA regional adviser called a meeting attended by 'people working with the different groups' to discuss the problems of the town campers.³ The DAA regional adviser informed the meeting that the DAA had 'very considerable finance' to assist town campers and groups should work out their needs and ask for the finance.

Surprisingly, no representative of any town camp was invited to attend this meeting. The meeting considered the need to 'spend a lot of time interpreting developments and possibilities to them [town campers], as well as bringing people along from these groups'. These concerns were strangely out of spirit with the Labor government's policy of Aboriginal self-determination and were reminiscent of the historical paternalistic attitudes of whites. They also paid scant

³Minutes - Meeting on Aboriginal camping areas around Alice Springs, 5 February 1974.

regard to the possibility that the town campers themselves might have ideas about development quite different from the 'possibilities' which members of the group might draw to their attention. Rather surprisingly, also, in the absence of any town camp representation, the group decided to incorporate by 8 votes to 6.

By the following meeting, one town camper, Lindsay Turner, the manager of the Charles River camp, had been co-opted to a committee of nine.⁴ At this meeting it was suggested that the committee form itself into an incorporated housing association and call itself Tangatjira, meaning 'working together to help each other'. The association would perform the function of acting as the financial administration of a number of autonomous town camp housing associations.

At the next meeting on 8 April 1974, the broad objects of the association were agreed:⁵

1. to do all that is necessary to obtain housing and other facilities for Aboriginal people in and around Alice Springs;
2. to do all that is necessary to investigate and meet social needs for Aboriginal people in and around Alice Springs.

Despite these commendable objectives, Tangatjira did very little to advance the development of town camps. It met in a desultory way during the remainder of 1974, discussing a number of self-identified problems, but never took any action over the issues discussed. It had two besetting weaknesses. It was reliant on honorary members to do the work, most of whom were already engaged in time-consuming activities in other fields in Alice Springs. Consequently, little concerted action was ever possible when the requirement was for painstaking and detailed planning as evidenced by the work involved in acquiring the Ntapa lease.

The second weakness was that the organization never appeared relevant to the town campers. Its members talked a lot but did little. Without positive achievements or an ability to indicate that initiatives were likely to yield positive results in the near future, Tangatjira never received more than token support from town campers. As Lindsay

⁴Minutes - General meeting on Aboriginal housing, 21 Feb. 1974.

⁵Minutes - Meeting of Tangatjira Council, 8 April 1974.

Turner said:⁶

I'm Anmatjarra and my country is up at Ti Tree. I'm in charge of that Charles River camp.

The Arandas over that way aren't jealous. They said that's alright. I keep asking them to come to Tangatjira meetings, but they aren't interested.

By the end of 1974, Tangatjira had apparently faded into oblivion.

When the Panel started its work in Alice Springs at the end of 1975, morale in the town camps was low. There was a lot of drunkenness, many fights, much illness and a general apathy. Two camps, Ntapa and Mt Nancy, had established housing associations and had made leasehold applications but neither had anything to show for these actions. For the Panel, these two communities were the natural ones to start to work with as they had made most progress. Neither, however, was particularly enthusiastic about the Panel working for them.

At that time, the Interim Land Commissioner was hearing town land claims, but with the change of government at the end of 1975 these hearings ceased (see Chapter 7). The DAA then became responsible for negotiating leases with the Administrator of the Northern Territory. The town campers needed an interface between themselves and the DAA and the latter needed assistance with the preparation of schematic development plans to support the leasehold applications. With these requirements, there was a need for architectural assistance and contact was established between Wigley and Mt Nancy and Ntapa.

The leaders of these two town camps came to play important parts in the formation of a town campers' organization. Geoff Shaw of Mt Nancy and Eli Rabuntja of Ntapa were political opposites with different allegiances among the town campers. Both, however, early recognized the need to include all the town campers in discussions affecting the future of town camps in Alice Springs, especially as development was unlikely to advance in parallel in each town camp. Wigley recognized the advantages of such a general interest and sought to encourage the involvement as he realized the dangers of becoming too closely identified with one or two town camps if he was going to assist every town camp. From about June

⁶Ibid.

1976, Wigley used to hold informal meetings of town campers in his house to discuss developments.

With an interest in land rights developing among the town campers and with the frustrations experienced by Ilparpa and Mt Nancy at the long delays over securing leasehold titles to their land, a meeting of town campers was called which to some extent reflected the measure of political frustration being experienced. At the meeting were representatives from thirteen town camps, the Central Australian Legal Aid, the Central Land Council and the Central Australian Aborigines Congress (CAAC). The meeting decided⁷ that something 'like Tangatjira' was needed to spell out their priorities which were:

- a) to establish and push town land claims;
- b) to have a body that can talk with and push politicians;
- c) to ask for courses on processes to help them to meet their needs and to deal with the department.

This organization was activist in conception, and in its objects contrasted markedly with its forerunner. Subsequently, meetings continued to be held in the Panel's office and the town campers were kept informed of developments in the town camps and in the political field.

Attendance at these meetings was assisted by the Central Land Council making a vehicle available to pick up representatives and return them to their camps after the meeting. Interest in these meetings was also assisted by the Panel beginning to discuss developments with each permanent town camp and doing the necessary groundwork for leasehold applications.

By the middle of 1977, with the granting of leases to Ilparpa and Mt Nancy and the beginning of developments in these two camps (Ilparpa had moved to Ntapa), it was clear to all town campers that something was beginning to happen. In April 1977, the Panel issued a report on the proposed urban development of thirteen town camps at an estimated cost of \$8.65 million (Wigley 1977), a figure which was subsequently adopted by the government as a financial commitment to a 7-year program to provide serviced housing to the Alice Springs town camp population. In August 1977, there appeared the first issue of a town campers' newsletter which came to be

⁷Minutes of meeting regarding fringe camps, 13 July 1976.

called the *Black Star*. There was a mood of expectancy in the town camps.

Despite all these developments, it could be argued that there was not a great need for a town campers' organization, because the CAAC (an Aboriginal organization whose Dr Cutter had prepared a health report on town camps, and which ran a health clinic) could provide the services which the town camps required. Indeed, it did already provide some of the services, being responsible for the garbage collection from the town camps.

Relationships between the town camp leadership and the CAAC were not good. The town campers believed that they had insufficient representation on the CAAC. They also were concerned by what appeared to be Congress policy of employing young men who treated the old leaders in the camps with scant respect. The town camp leaders did not like the leadership of CAAC, a dislike which merged into mistrust of one eminent Aboriginal. They were also very embarrassed (as Aborigines) by the public controversy which surrounded Neville Perkins's election to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and the allegations of use of CAAC funds in his campaign. Further, a well-meaning, hard-working and extremely able Aboriginal secretary simply could not relate to the tribal people in the camps. There were a number of occasions when she inadvertently affronted their dignity. For all these reasons, the town campers never considered the possibility of the CAAC taking their interests under its wing.

Another factor in the decision to set up an organization to represent town campers was a fear of the growing influence of the Department of Construction in its role as expert technical adviser to the DAA and a belief that it would supplant the Panel. Some of the more influential leaders were openly sceptical of the prospects of the Panel, believing that the better the job it did from an Aboriginal point of view, the more likely it would incur opposition in the corridors of power in Canberra. Not the least of their concerns was the knowledge that an influential Aboriginal in the head office of the DAA saw little merit in the Panel and could not be expected to sing its praises to the Minister. For these leaders, the fear was that without the Panel, the Department of Construction would take over responsibility for their developments with the result that once again they would become the pawns of the bureaucracy and would have no one to turn to for independent advice.

Wigley played an important role in the political gestation of the town campers' organization. If he and the Panel were to be a catalyst for development in the town camps, it was important that he did not act as a kind of broker for the distribution of government grants to each town camp. In mid-1976, there were already some envious glances made in the direction of Mt Nancy and suggestions that the Panel was only interested in that camp. It was therefore in the Panel's interests that some local representative group free it from being placed in a position where it might be regarded as influencing political decisions which could affect each town camp unequally.

In a wider context, the frustrations over the securing of the Ilparpa lease had convinced Wigley of the relative impotence of individual town camps to influence the political process in their favour. He was also concerned that divisions within the town camps could be used by unsympathetic parties to sow dissent and frustrate developments. He considered that an organization with a reasonably broad power base was required which could provide the political muscle, the unity and the will to resist any attacks on the development programs which might come from the many opponents of Aborigines in Alice Springs or from the often threatened white backlash.

By 1977, however, both Ilparpa and Mt Nancy had been granted their leases and Alice Springs was outwardly calm. There were no burning issues for the town campers. In the context of the establishment of a town campers' organization, the absence of issues was not auspicious. An organization set up to take political action when little political action was necessary and to make decisions about funding only once a year was likely to wither quickly. At that time, however, the management problems experienced by Mt Nancy had surfaced. While Wigley had been happy to assist Mt Nancy to work out ways to overcome these problems, he realized the demands would be multiplied as each town camp started its own building program. By 1977, the Panel, largely influenced by Wigley's work in Alice Springs, had come to realize the critical nature of local management to a successful development program and the difficulties of transmitting the necessary skills to persons and organizations wholly lacking in experience. By the end of 1977, however, there was some experience in the town camps, for Mt Nancy had resolved many of its management problems over the ablutions block and its infrastructure. There were, therefore, people who could pass this experience on.

In June 1977 Wigley invited two camp leaders, Wenton Rabuntja and Geoff Shaw, to attend a Panel meeting in Tennant Creek. At that meeting, the Panel was asked what help it could provide to assist the town campers to set up an appropriate organization to manage their affairs. The Panel suggested that it was up to the town campers to set up their own organization, but that the Panel would be only too happy to collaborate with it once it had been established.

On 5 October 1977 there was a meeting of twenty-five town campers to discuss the future course of development programs in Alice Springs. Eli Rabuntja, Wenton Rabuntja and Geoff Shaw were elected interim spokesmen. The meeting also decided to form an overall committee with the express purpose of lobbying for the provision of funds for adequate backup facilities in the camps such as the provision of maintenance services, the employment of tradesmen such as carpenters and the collection of garbage. The committee was to meet once a month.

A few days later, a meeting was held with Huey about the establishment of a town campers' council. He expressed support for the idea. The committee was then advised to see whether or not it could revivify the moribund Tangatjira Council so that it would not have to go to the expense of establishing a separate incorporated body. The committee of the original Tangatjira proved most accommodating and by early 1978 a renewed Tangatjira was operational.

By November 1977 regular weekly meetings of the committee were held. An adult educator, Bob Durnan, was employed to work as an unpaid facilitator (Tangatjira did not receive any funding until May 1978). There was a mood of determination in the organization and a desire to demonstrate to the rest of Alice Springs that the town campers could manage their own affairs and contribute to the township. A symbolic statement to its desired audience seemed the most appropriate way to do this.

By 1978 the Panel was concerned at the direction that the development of the town camps might take. It was one thing to provide housing for all the residents. It was quite another to ensure that they were able to maintain their traditional links with their tribal kin from distant settlements and cattle stations. If visitors were not considered in the development plans, two particular consequences could follow. Visitors might insist on staying in the houses, and,

with possible different lifestyles and experiences, impose intolerable strains on both the residents and the very fabric of the houses. Alternatively, the visitors might feel alienated from the town camps, being uncomfortable in the new, carefully maintained environment, and forsake the campers for the more familiar conditions of the extempore camp. In this way, they would begin a new cycle of the illegal town camp 'problem', the eradication of which was one of the principal objectives of the development program (that is for the government). For the town campers, the pressures would be great. They would see themselves becoming isolated from their kin and their roots. They would understand that part of the disorientation of their kin was elicited by the built environment, one in which well maintained houses predominated in stark contrast to the humpies of their kinsmen living in settlements and cattle stations. The Panel was concerned that one response of some town campers might be to change the language of their built environment to one of familiarity to the visitors. That could simply be done by vandalizing the buildings in the town camps. Consequently, it was considered that a building should be designed which could be used by visitors and which would also serve to bridge the discrepancy between their familiar environment and that of the developed town camp.

Wigley had also taken due note of the way in which the third prototype house had been used at Mt Nancy as a women's camp. He was concerned that a reasonably conventional house would prove quite inadequate to the shifting demands of single women's and single men's camps. Likewise, he had noted how the ablution block had been used as a community centre at Mt Nancy while the camp was awaiting its housing. Ablution blocks were rather inadequate (and somewhat embarrassing) community centres. There seemed a strong case, for those camps which would have to wait some time for their building programs to begin, for some kind of community/visitors' centre to be built.

Two other factors helped towards a decision to design a multi-purpose building as a training project for the town campers. One of the three spokesmen, Eli Rabuntja, had persistently requested a multi-functional shed for Ilparpa which could be used as a garage, a workshop, a meeting place and a place in which to put up visitors. In February 1978, Tangatjira had made a census of each town camp to establish what skills were possessed by the residents which could be put to use in the development programs. There were few. A

number had experience of ringing and could be put to work fencing the camps. A few had had experience of laying concrete slabs.

Wally Dobkins (a second Panel architect who had by then joined Wigley in Alice Springs) suggested to Tangatjira that he could design a simple building which could be erected by an unskilled workforce and could serve as a training project to become a focus for Tangatjira's energies and a symbol of its accomplishments. Accordingly a simple portal frame building on a concrete slab was designed with a lockup room, sink, power point for refrigerator and laundry and one-metre high screen walls to break up the large area underneath the roof and provide shelter from cold winds and driving rain. In those cases where these buildings were to be located away from toilet blocks, male and female toilets and showers were also included.

In May 1978 the first slab of a community or multi-purpose building was laid by a Tangatjira workforce and 6 months later, in November, the seventh building was completed. The project gave much needed work to the town campers. Above all, however, it gave both Tangatjira and its workforce confidence in their ability to achieve things of substance for themselves. The community buildings are now used as camp schools, for meetings, as visitors' shelters, as accommodation for families waiting for housing, as workshops and security areas and as places in which public telephones can be located with reasonable safety.

In 1978 Tangatjira was also providing other services to the town camps. In March 1978 at a meeting between Tangatjira, the Panel and Huey, the latter accepted the suggestion that the performance of management tasks was a critical aspect in any social development program. He agreed that Tangatjira should play more than a mere co-ordinating role in the physical development of the camps if it was to achieve any lasting impact on the camps. Huey agreed that Tangatjira should provide garbage collection services to the camps and as its skills developed, it should extend its activities into other areas. On 12 April 1978, Tangatjira was granted a budget by the DAA to provide garbage collection services to the camps. Since then, Tangatjira has expanded its activities and now has a fencing/welding gang, a hygiene gang which maintains the plumbing in the camps and is also responsible for landscaping, carpenters who assemble simple beds and a set of specialists who discuss the future developments in camps with the relevant town campers.

Tangatjira also wants to set up its own homemaker's service, believing that it has the kind of knowledge of the camps and of individual families within the camps which would be of inestimable value to the homemakers and in the design of an appropriate homemaker's program. Homemaker services, however, are the responsibility of the Northern Territory Department of Community Welfare which is unwilling to permit private organizations to share these responsibilities. In 1979 there were serious doubts in Alice Springs about the support the homemakers were receiving from the Department and concern that their effectiveness was being eroded (Thornton 1979), especially as, allegedly, only one car was available to the four officers.⁸ It seems that there is a danger that Tangatjira and the town camps are being deprived of an essential service to any social development program more by departmental territorial defence than by any rational assessment of the situation and the content of the requirements.

By mid-1979 a number of independent observers were commenting on Tangatjira's success. Drakakis-Smith (1980a: 447), for example, noted that its success in improving the situation in the town camps had earned it the respect of the white community. Thornton, a DAA officer, wrote:

The Tangatjira Council, since its setting up as a funded body two years ago, has been highly effective in the local community. Its effectiveness comes from its strong community base and its council method of operating, through which it has immediate access to knowledge of the community's needs, and is able to meet these needs in an appropriate way because of its understanding of the family groupings, tribal law and ways of working. In addition it has made a very important contribution to providing employment and training for local Aboriginal people, building up a pool of reliable workers as described above. This aspect of Tangatjira's work has been extremely cost effective, generating a lot of employment for a relatively small investment (Thornton 1979).

Tangatjira is a rare example of an Aboriginal directed and managed organization successful in a commercial field (i.e. the tertiary sector), and the grounds for Tangatjira's

⁸Minutes, Tangatjira meeting, 18 May 1979.

success lie partly in the reasons why its forerunner failed. The original council was set up to perform much the same tasks as its successor, but never received more than token support from town camp groups. For one thing the council was white inspired and white dominated which, given the history of unequal relationships between white and black in Alice Springs, meant that town campers assumed that they would have an inferior position in the organization and no influence. What little development that had occurred in the town camps had always been done by outside agencies and, in most cases, by various arms of the Commonwealth government. In the recent developments at Little Sisters and Charles River, Aborigines had been given little opportunity to influence the course that the developments took. In 1974 little else appeared to have changed to the town campers. Admittedly, there had been a change of government but, despite its different name, the same old faces were still in Aboriginal Affairs. Tangatjira appeared yet another committee just like the ones which had preceded it which would voice pious concern and do the kinds of things the town fathers wanted rather than the things which the Aborigines desperately required. It is therefore not surprising that the town campers, still, in their thinking, a number of impotent groups dependent on government, were not motivated to take action while they appeared to remain totally dependent on government agencies for most of the decisions which affected their daily lives.

The factor which changed these attitudes was land rights. The opportunity to acquire leaseholds to the land on which they camped gave the town campers a common purpose. While it might be argued that the leasehold grants were made by the bureaucracy and, therefore, there was no change in the dependency relationship, they were only made after considerable effort had been expended in pursuit of them by the town camps and, given the apparent obstruction by DONT, appeared to be made in spite of the bureaucracy. In 1974, when Tangatjira was meeting, leasehold applications had been made by Ilparpa and Mt Nancy, but these applications had been done for them and neither group was particularly active in their pursuit. The passive attitudes of Aborigines to these applications changed in 1976 with the groundswell of a land rights ideology hitting them and all other Centralian Aborigines, and this was centred in Alice Springs where the Central Land Council was located. For the town campers, they changed largely because of the campers' involvement in the persistent efforts by the Panel and the DAA to secure leasehold grants in the face of the obstruction of DONT. This process, ending

in the granting of the Ilparpa and Mt Nancy leases, had the effect of politicizing the town camps. Security of tenure had always been central to them. With the securing of two leases, other camps realized that it was in their power to take action to secure leases for themselves. In this endeavour, they were led to seek the services of the Panel to prepare the necessary development plans. With the relationship established, the Panel came to be a focal point at which town campers could meet among themselves. Out of these meetings came a realization of the advantages of taking concerted political action. DONT's obstruction, in fact, had the effect of focusing the town campers' attention on a government instrumentality which they perceived to be hindering the attainment of important goals. From the process of politicization and subsequent success of some of the leasehold applications, the town campers came to realize that they were no longer impotent and that, through political action, they could obtain other desirable goals. So long as leasehold applications were delayed or refused, as they were, there remained a cause which kept the political fires well stoked.

The recognition of the advantages of concerted political action brought town campers together. In due course, they began to talk about other problems which confronted them. From these meetings, there emerged a consensus of the appropriate action which needed to be taken to develop the town camps and improve their social and economic prospects within the town. The recognition of common aims, both political and developmental, enabled the Panel to tap the interest and prepare a comprehensive development plan for the town camps (Wigley 1977), a process which consolidated the appreciation of common aims among the town campers. The acceptance by the DAA of the plan as a framework for funding the development further reinforced the town campers' belief in their ability to take effective political action in pursuit of their own ends.

A developmental, management organization is an animal of a different kind from one designed to take political action to achieve limited objectives. The town campers also needed such an organization. While it was necessary to maintain a political stance so long as some leaseholds were still outstanding and additional funds were required from the government, a change in focus, in tone and also in skills was also needed if the town campers were to turn themselves into an effective organization responsible for managing their development programs and providing continuing services

necessary to their success. The necessary adjustment was effected with the acquisition of Bob Durnan to the staff of the town campers' organization. He immediately set about investigating and planning the delivery of services which the town campers identified as being required.

The period between November 1977 and April 1978, when Tangatjira received its first funds, was a difficult one. For Tangatjira, it was imperative to maintain its momentum and benefit from the enthusiasm of the town campers before their energies became dissipated by delay and inaction. During this period, Tangatjira received assistance from the Panel and the Central Land Council with the use of their offices, telephones and vehicles. At that time, with ideas about what Tangatjira might do flowing freely, the Panel's concern was that Tangatjira might promise to take on too many responsibilities and be overwhelmed by them. The Panel preached the value of a certain amount of caution during this period, urging Tangatjira to take on a few things at first and do them well.

An important impetus to Tangatjira's burgeoning self-confidence was the successful completion of the seven multi-purpose community buildings. One feature of this project was the importance to Tangatjira of having a flexible organization like the Panel working for it. The Panel by then understood the social organization and the living patterns of the town camps and with this knowledge was able to proceed quickly to design an appropriate building based on the skills possessed by the probable workforce. Timing was critical to the success of this project. Had the design of an appropriate building not been forthcoming, the enthusiasm of the town campers might have waned and an opportunity been lost. In such a situation, there was a great danger that the enthusiasm might never have been reignited. A second important aspect of the project was that the building was not just any old building thrown up to give Tangatjira something to do. It had an important function in the overall pattern of town camp development.

No organization is likely to be successful without good leadership. Tangatjira was particularly fortunate in this respect, having four talented and articulate leaders. Henry Ross, Wenton Rabuntja and Eli Rabuntja usually acted as spokesmen for Tangatjira in meetings with government instrumentalities. None of them were young men, and therefore they were able to develop a close rapport with the whole

town camp leadership. The fourth, Geoff Shaw from Mt Nancy, became the first executive director of Tangatjira and brought to the job his experience of the development of a management expertise at Mt Nancy.

Tangatjira, then, as a town campers' organization, grew initially out of the politicization of town campers over leasehold acquisitions and the securing of a commitment by government to provide funds to develop the town camps. From this basis of common interests, Tangatjira was able to extend its energies into the camp services field, activities at which it has, from all accounts, been successful. Its next major challenge will be to sustain its drive and momentum while consolidating and maintaining its activities, and not extending its interests into new and exciting fields. In this adjustment, for the first time, Tangatjira will be deprived of the services of the Panel, which was closed down by the Liberal government in September 1978 on the grounds that it was better to spend the Panel's operational grant (of \$173,000) on building houses and to rely on the Department of Construction's services as expert adviser on all matters relating to Aboriginal housing (Heppell 1979). By this action, the Commonwealth government was returning Aboriginal organizations to a pre-1973 situation in which they were utterly dependent on the bureaucracy for advice and assistance about housing and its relationship to an overall development program (though this was slightly mitigated in Tangatjira's case since it was permitted to employ one of the Panel's architects).

As the Department of Construction has assumed much of the role of the Panel in Alice Springs, it would be useful to examine whether or not it does provide the kind of expertise and service which the government believes it has. Tangatjira, certainly, was not happy with the government's alternative to the Panel, stating that the Department of Construction:

would take ... years to attain the Housing Panel's skills in the area. They would start off with a backlog of mistrust and bureaucratic inertia to be overcome. They have none of the personal experience or anthropological training possessed by the Housing Panel staff. Nor do they have the proven loyalty, dedication and responsibility to the Aboriginal community which has been demonstrated

by the Panel and which has led to its downfall.⁹

The Department of Construction, in the public debate surrounding the Panel's dismissal, was served with ample warning of the kinds of weaknesses it was thought to possess and was given a good indication of the kind of qualities Tangatjira sought.

Certainly, the Department of Construction has a problem in attracting staff to Alice Springs with a dedication to the Aboriginal community. In the two-year period between August 1977 and August 1979, the Department employed six different architects with responsibilities for town camp development, one of whom was replaced and then succeeded his replacement. Not one of these people ever had time to develop any relationship with the town campers, nor with their leadership in Tangatjira, let alone to begin to understand the functions of the development programs. Certainly continuity in approach was not enhanced by such frequent turnover in staff.

The Department's first responsibility, as Tangatjira feared, did not appear to be to its Aboriginal clients (as the Panel certainly considered its was), but to the DAA. For example, when vandals damaged houses being constructed at Ootnarungatcha, the Department reported the incident directly to the DAA and did not bother to inform Tangatjira. When Tangatjira asked the Department to report incidents to the Council, the Department replied that if it did only that, Tangatjira would try to sweep the incident under the carpet. Similarly with construction programs, the Department refused to allow variations to designs once construction had begun and, if a program fell behind schedule, it would report the fact to the DAA. Tangatjira was made to feel that they had no flexibility any more and were performing all the time, as Geoff Shaw described it, 'under the harsh glare of the Department of Construction always reporting about you to DAA'.

When the reverse happened, and through 'bureaucratic inertia' the Department failed to adhere to its own schedules, Tangatjira had no recourse to other advice and the DAA appeared unable to influence the Department of Construction (if it was still prepared to try). The case of the Mt Nancy roadworks (a diary of events which is given in Appendix IV)

⁹Tangatjira Council to Ian Viner, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, 12 September 1978.

serves to illustrate the kind of lack of interest that a government department can have in an Aboriginal development program. Had something like this, for example, happened to the multi-purpose building, Tangatjira might never have become the successful organization it is today. It is interesting that 15 months after having been commissioned to design an internal road network for Mt Nancy and let contracts for its construction, the Department of Construction wrote, not to Tangatjira, but to the DAA to advise that it was withdrawing as consultant to the project and suggesting that implementation be handed over to yet another government department, the Northern Territory Department of Transport and Works.

More disturbing, however, than occasional inefficiencies and lack of interest is a noticeable trend towards, at least in the Alice Springs office of the Department, an attitude of the Department knowing what is best for Aborigines, a trend which has its antecedents in attitudes commonly held by bureaucrats towards Aborigines and which is assisted by the Department's primary responsibility being to the DAA. An example of the Department assuming that its responsibilities for definition of developments in Alice Springs are absolute was its preparation of a town camp housing program for 1979-80 which it submitted to the DAA without consulting with Tangatjira and before Tangatjira had prepared one of its own.

The Department has its own view of the future development of town camps. It differs greatly from Tangatjira's perhaps because it was developed without any discussion either with Tangatjira or any town campers. The idea is contained in a report prepared in 1979 and submitted to the Alice Springs office of the DAA (Department of Housing and Construction 1979). It is worth considering in some detail.

The report seemed to be partly motivated by a fear that, if the town campers were to maintain the traditional values which the Department thought they had, they would either become a constant drain on the taxpayer or the camps would become urban ghettos:

Under present planning arrangements of multiple tenancy, it is not possible to properly identify and allocate proper responsibility for maintenance of houses and payment for costs of essential services. Present planning places the town camps forever at the doorsteps of DAA seeking welfare

funds for support of maintenance and servicing costs.... in the long term, the Town Camps unless they are continuously supported, are destined to become ghettos in their own right.

According to the Department:

So long as traditional aboriginal groups place inter and intra family relationships, communications, responsibilities etc. above European style pride in possessions, there will be little motivation towards construction and maintenance of houses.

The Department was under a considerable misapprehension about both the purpose of the town camps and the government's policies for Aborigines:

The final important point was the intention to use Town Camps as 'transition' establishments or 'training camps' i.e. to provide residents with the facilities to assist in the implementation of self management or assimilation programmes [self-management had always been presented, at least officially, as rather different in concept from assimilation].

A fundamental assumption of the report was that:

the transition in lifestyle from traditional aboriginal to conventional urban Australian will also bring about an increase in the levels of responsibility for the maintenance of accommodation, and an eventual demand for home ownership in a conventional Australian urban scene ... The time span associated with this transition process is obviously unknown.

However, it is asserted that the time span for consideration of the problem is not generations or years, but immediate.

The Department's solution was muddled. Apparently, there should be an 'admixture of lifestyles in both the short and long term, incorporating traditional shelter type facilities and more conventional European stylised housing' and each camp would 'vary in its development form and complementary to the transition in lifestyle of residents'. Precisely how this transition was to be accomplished was not

examined. Certainly, the town camps seemed to be a step on the way to being accepted in the township (note the down-grading in status of the town campers), but the 'multi family houses' being erected in town camps in Alice Springs (it might be noted that all the houses except the women's camp designed by the Panel for Mt Nancy were for single households) restricted a family's development:

For an individual to progress beyond the stage of rental control and welfare support, he or she must leave the camp and seek accommodation via other avenues, e.g. Housing Commission, or DAA sponsored private home purchase arrangements.

The Department's solution, which seemed to bear little relationship to the text, was to provide suburban type blocks as illustrated in Fig.19. The figures (a) and (b) represent the town plan for Mt Nancy as it is and as it should be according to the Department. The houses constructed in the town camps should be designed for 'single family unit occupancy and not multiple family, as is the present situation'. It should perhaps be noted that the reason Mt Nancy had two entrances was because there were two rival family groups living there, and it was feared that one entrance might lead to disputes. Not noted by the Department was the fact that houses there have been fenced by the residents, but in a way amenable to their needs. The way this has been done leaves room for visitors and for residents who prefer to live in caravans and use the community ablution block.

While the report contained many weaknesses which are not worth labouring here, it did reveal a sloppy argument which should be of concern. Its principal weakness was that it did not advance any evidence whatsoever to support any of its conclusions. Nowhere in the report was it stated how and what information had been gathered to support the arguments. Assertion followed assertion (many of which were inaccurate) and part of the solution, single family residences, was precisely the kind of housing Tangatjira was generally building which, one can only assume, the DAA's expert adviser was completely unaware of. What is particularly disturbing is that DAA's funding of Aboriginal organizations in the housing field is undoubtedly influenced by the Department of Construction. The DAA also has staff turnover, and many of its officers in Alice Springs have as little understanding of the town camps as the officers in the Department of Construction. Funding often comes with conditions, and if

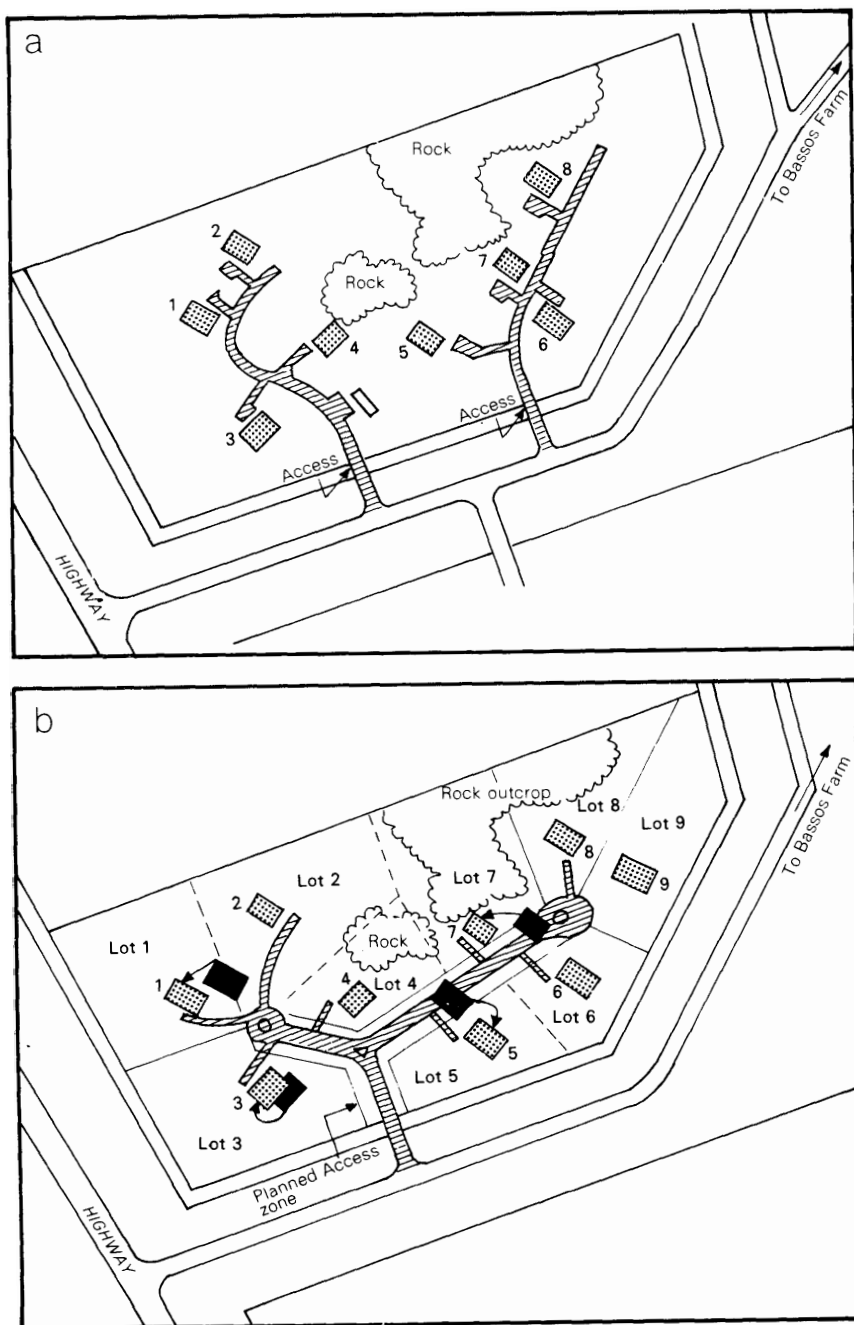


Fig.19 Mt Nancy town plan (a) as it is and (b) as it should be according to the Department of Construction.

some time in the future one of the conditions is to follow the recommendations of reports like the one being examined, it could have a serious impact on Tangatjira and town camp development in Alice Springs. The reverberations would reach far beyond the simple response of people to housing which they do not particularly want. Perhaps equally disturbing is the fact that reports such as these are made on an inter-departmental basis and usually do not come under public scrutiny. When they are acted upon, the grounds for policy shifts are never known.

What appears to have been a digression has been made to suggest that the wheel has turned full circle and Aborigines in Alice Springs are once again the hapless victims of whatever intents a bureaucracy might have for them. In Alice Springs, despite its success, the Panel has been removed, and the Tangatjira Council operates under the watchful and, apparently, far from sympathetic eye of the DAA and the Department of Construction. Tangatjira wants to provide homemaker services to the town camps but cannot because that is a responsibility of the Department of Community Welfare and it matters not that its service is found wanting. Tangatjira is on its own in a daunting field, with no independent and sympathetic organization to which to turn when it requires advice.

For the Liberal government, failure beckons in Alice Springs. One of the main considerations of the present government's practice in Aboriginal affairs is to try to keep Aborigines out of the news on the (largely correct) assumption that most Aboriginal publicity reflects badly on a government. Independent organizations like the Panel advising Aboriginal groups and not fearing to recommend political action to them when that is deemed necessary, not surprisingly make a government uneasy. There are times, however, when political action is necessary to achieve ends (as any politician will readily admit) and Tangatjira is an excellent example of an organization born out of such action. For the government, it is interesting to note that, with the successful completion of the action, there were no further grievances and Tangatjira was able to redirect the energies it had drawn on for the political action into other fields. Out of this process, the government has a rare successful Aboriginal organization which is recognized as such by white and black alike in Alice Springs. In the town, through its quiet competence, it provides excellent publicity about the government's programs in Aboriginal affairs. And, for the

government, what is important is that such are Tangatjira's achievements that they provide no ammunition for the so-called 'white backlash' to feed upon.

The lesson of the rise of Tangatjira does not appear to have been learnt by the government, nor does it appear to have been applied in other areas. Rather than encourage small committed organizations like the Panel, the present government prefers to bring the delivery of services to Aborigines under the direct control of the Minister. The Aboriginal Land Fund Commission is another example of a separate organization which has recently been dismissed and its responsibilities transferred to an Aboriginal Development Commission whose board is appointed by and is directly responsible to the Minister, whose chairman is a senior public servant in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and whose administrative arm is to be recruited from the public service. The Minister now relies for his advice on Aboriginal affairs on public servants who, given the way they must approach their duties, cannot develop the intimate knowledge of Aboriginal groups which is required before organizations like Tangatjira can be spawned and guided to success. For example, in the present political climate, it is inconceivable that a government department would have spawned an organization like Tangatjira to take political action over leasehold claims. It is doubtful that a government organization would have been successful in helping Tangatjira to make the transition from activist group to management and services group, because that transition could only be made with the help of people who understood the political reality of the town camps at that time in Alice Springs.

The problem for the government is that its departmental advisers often do not attain the kind of knowledge on which good advice must be based. The Department of Construction's report on town camps, for example, revealed an almost total ignorance about virtually every aspect of town camp life, not to mention about the government's often declared official policy for Aborigines. Its recommendations, if implemented, were most likely to give rise to the kinds of pressures which would lead to town camps reverting to urban 'ghettos' rather than rescuing them from becoming so. Such prevention (if that is a purpose of the government's development programs) will be achieved by good management, and that was one aspect which the Department's report quite failed to consider. Preventing ghettos is not likely to be achieved simply by building single family units on suburban type blocks and

making sure that the residents pay their rent.

Perhaps the Panel's great contribution to Alice Springs was being the catalyst for the emergence of a strong and creative town campers' organization and being able to provide it with the right kind of assistance when it was required. A token of that contribution has been the way Tangatjira was able to shrug off the demise of the Panel and move from strength to strength. Similarly, the DAA's greatest achievement was the recognition of Tangatjira's importance and the support it gave to the early leasehold claims and the establishment and funding of Tangatjira. The contribution of DAA, Panel and Tangatjira was joint, for it was mutually reinforcing based on a close and profitable working relationship. The success, however, was entirely Tangatjira's.

The future for Tangatjira, however, is uncertain, especially as now there are serious doubts that it will remain the sole arbiter of its future. So long as government departments can bring the organization to heel over questions of levels of responsibility, strict accountability and other bureaucratic requirements, there must remain a residue of doubt that Tangatjira will be able to make the kinds of management changes which will be required when the main development programs are completed in the town camps. The town campers face the certainty that there are many envious white eyes waiting for an opportunity to cry 'failure' and hasten a downward slide by some town camps back to positions of degradation and wretchedness. Tangatjira is blessed with strong and intelligent leadership. That leadership can only be effective if it receives the appropriate kinds of advice from its advisers. One of Tangatjira's principal problems for the future is that its advice is now limited to public service departments, some of which have already shown a profound ignorance of and disregard for town camp life.

Appendix I

A petition to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, 1979

To: The Honourable The Chief Minister
Mr Paul Anthony Edward Everingham Esq.

Dear Sir,

WHEREAS it is proposed by your Government through the medium of the Housing Commission and funded by the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to convert and erect certain special houses for the accommodation of tenants of a substandard nature who do not comply with the minimum standards of acceptability as tenants by the Housing Commission

AND WHEREAS the undersigned will suffer loss, injury, noise nuisance and injury to health as a result and will otherwise be dammified as set out hereunder

AND WHEREAS there are viable alternatives for the housing of the said sub-standard tenants which your Government has not explored

THEREFORE your petitioners will suffer loss if this plan proceeds because your proposed tenants are -

- (a) Unemployed and unacquainted with the work ethic.
- (b) Unused to suburban living and incapable of the performance of simple household duties which are the minimum requirements for suburban living e.g. the collection and removal of their own domestic garbage and litter.
- (c) Ignorant of the importance of hygiene.
- (d) Tribal or quasi-tribal so that the single family unit is not their customary family group but rather an extended family numbering scores of humans and canines.
- (e) Unacquainted with by-laws and reasonable standards of Australian urban behaviour.
- (f) Subject to addiction to alcohol.

YOUR PETITIONERS WILL BE INJURED AS FOLLOWS -

- (1) Householders who follow the Australian work ethic cannot maintain surveillance of their property during working hours.
- (2) Petitioners who are shift workers without whose assistance such essential services as power, ambulance, fire and Police would not operate will suffer acutely from noise and pollution emanating from your special houses.

- (3) Ordinary working families will suffer noise and disturbance during ordinary sleeping hours from the noise created by these unacceptably large domestic units.
- (4) Your petitioners anticipate suffering health problems arising from the accumulation of large deposits of unsanitary domestic rubbish.
- (5) Your petitioners will suffer stench problems and the putrefaction of the air they breath arising from the tenants inability to remove rubbish.
- (6) Your petitioners will suffer a little problem in the streets of Alice Springs and damage to the aesthetic beauty of the town.
- (7) Your petitioners foresee that you intend to construct numerous special houses as aforesaid and to undermine the quality of life, general health, happiness and quiet enjoyment of life thereby depriving your petitioners of the minimum expectations of any Australian following the working ethic and contributing taxes to her Majestys Government.
- (8) Your petitioners in the immediate neighbourhood will suffer financial loss in the lowering of the value of their homes in which they have invested their savings gleaned by years of careful effort in adherence to the aforesaid working ethic and notwithstanding the ravages of Her Majestys tax collection.
- (9) Your petitioners will suffer financial loss in the inability to sell their homes or let their homes at reasonable prices and rates.
- (10) Your petitioners in the Gap area are distressed by fears that the continued peaceful integrated existence of the races will be disrupted by your crash assimilation program and friction between the races will be thus fostered and fanned.
- (11) Your petitioners are concerned that your proposed tenants do not desire to cope with the responsibilities and stresses of suburban living and your tenants will thereby suffer unhappiness.

NOW YOUR PETITIONERS

pray that you cease forthwith the program on which you have embarked
 you cease to threaten the quality of life of your humble petitioners
 and that you arrange for the construction of a village to house your tenants
 away from the township of Alice Springs so that your petitioners will not be
 dammified as aforesaid.

Appendix II

Developments in town camps

Town camp	Lease area ha	Date of lease	Houses proposed	Houses built	Houses proposed 1980-81	Maximum capacity of lease	Toilet blocks	Community buildings
Ilibilili Tjatja	8.72	30.1.79	15	6	1	21	1	1
Purarultna	0.92	25.7.79	4	2	1	5	-	-
Bazzo's Farm			-	-	-	-	-	-
Mt Nancy	4.25	16.7.76	14	8	-	12	1	-
Ntalka Ulpaya	?	12.8.77	32	14	8	30	4	4
Ootnarungatcha	6.9	28.12.78	15	7	8	19	3	1
Knudnara	2.76	22.12.77	9	5	3	11	1	1
Ilpea-Ilpea	(27.00)		14	-	10	75	-	-
Yarintja	(90.00)		28	-	8	25	-	-
Ntapa	14.41	8.11.76	15	6	1	25	2	1
Injlunga	?	11.6.73	14	5	3	19	2	-
Parenja	(3.00)		4	-	5	10	-	-
Ilparpa	(2.30)		-	-	5	7	-	-
Mbutjara	(1.50)		-	-	4	9	-	-

Source: Tangatjira Council, 24 December 1979.

Note: Lease areas in brackets are leases not yet granted.

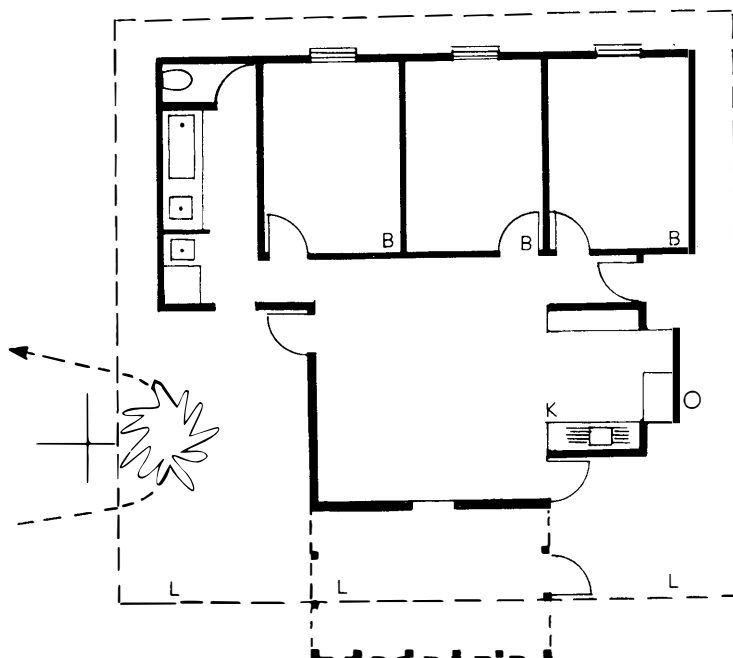
Appendix III

Floor plans of houses designed by Mt Nancy households

1. Family unit: Married couple with two female infants. The head of the household had a wealth of experience of housing in different parts of the world, having served with the Australian forces overseas and in particular in Eastern Malaysia (Sarawak) and Vietnam. An exceptional relationship was developed by Wigley with this person and much of the development of the final designs were made with him.

Requirements:

- (i) Separation of ablutions area from kitchen;
- (ii) kitchenette leading on to enclosed living area;
- (iii) three bedrooms, the third for visitors;
- (iv) verandahs facing south, north and east;
- (v) a separate (i.e. not integrated with house) flyscreened area facing east.

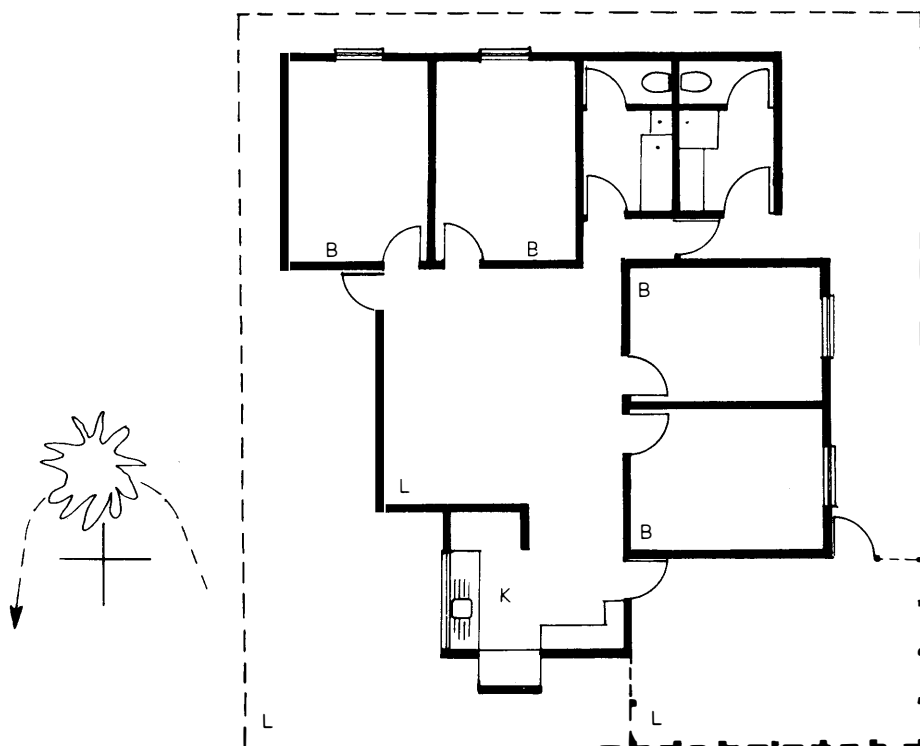
Floor plan:

2. Family unit: Two elderly adults, one single man and two male and two female school-age children.

Requirements:

- (i) four bedrooms so that children of different sexes could be separated;
- (ii) flywire enclosed living/sleeping area facing south for young men to sleep in;
- (iii) internal living area which could also be used to separate sexes at night (the inner area being regarded as a potential place for single women to sleep);
- (iv) verandahs facing east and west.

Floor plan:

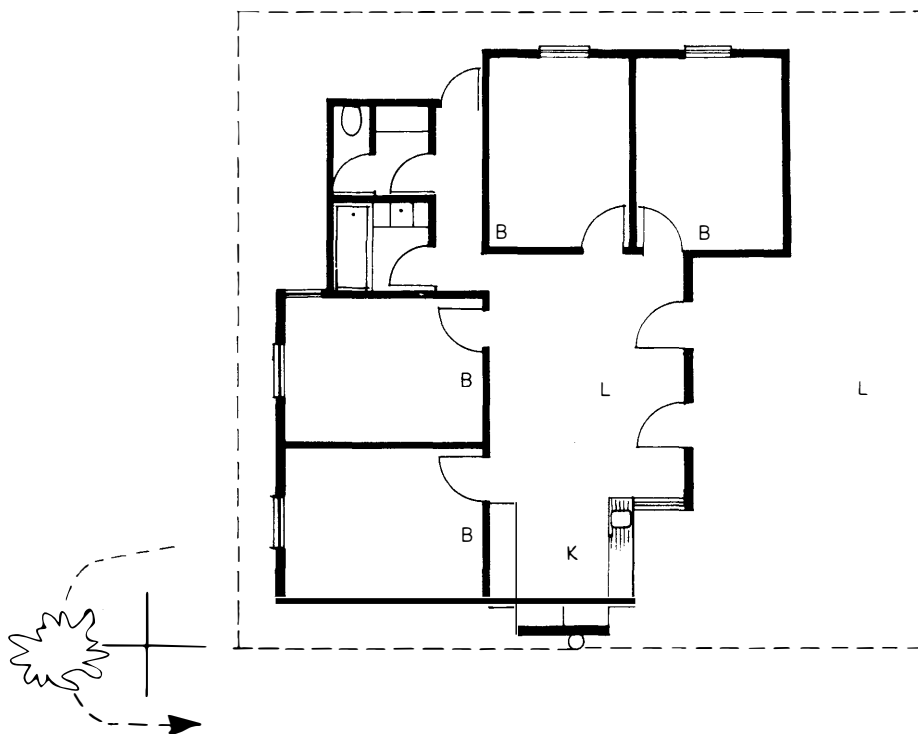


3. Family unit: Married couple with one male and one female adolescent child and the husband's single brother staying with the family. This family was particularly concerned with its status in the camp and the man's reputation as a stockman. It had, for a short time, been tenants of the Northern Territory Housing Commission in Alice Springs.

Requirements:

- (i) Four bedrooms. The family was not certain about this requirement as it acknowledged that the two children, because of their insecurity, tended to sleep with the parents, and the younger brother was often away as a migrant labourer;
- (ii) large verandah facing south (towards the household in 2 above and towards other camps where brothers of the householder lived);
- (iii) large food storage area;
- (iv) smooth floor which could be mopped up;
- (v) bathroom with bath. A separate laundry was also requested;
- (vi) wood stove inside the house.

Floor plan:



Appendix IV

Diary of Mt Nancy roadworks development

- 7 April 1978 Department of Construction commissioned to design internal roads with surface water control and landscaping considerations.
- 16 June 1978 Department of Construction provides preliminary estimates and specification with construction program. Advises that tenders will be let on 21 September 1978.
- 9 July 1978 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Panel instructs Department of Construction to proceed to tender on basis of submission dated 16 June 1978.
- 16 August 1978 Department advise a revised program. Tenders to be let on 22 December 1978.
- 20 February 1979 Department of Construction write recommending Kenna Nominees be accepted as lowest tenderer.
- 23 February 1979 Tangatjira Council confirm that contract to be awarded to Kenna Nominees.
- 28 March 1979, 9 April 1979 Tangatjira Council request Department of Construction to advise when contractors will be on site.
- 12 April 1979 Department of Construction advise withdrawal of Kenna Nominees and confirm that PMT will undertake contract.
- 18 April 1979 Tangatjira Council instruct Department of Construction to proceed with PMT.
- 19 April 1979 Department of Construction confirm PMT will start end of May with completion in 4 weeks.
- 5 June 1979 Tangatjira Council write to Department of Construction requesting advice on progress of roadworks.
- 8 June 1979 Department of Construction advise of problems letting contract.
- 11 June 1979 Department of Construction verbally advise that they doubt if PMT will be willing to undertake the work.
- 15 June 1979 Tangatjira Council write to Department of Construction asking for confirmation of position on the contract.
- 5 July 1978 Department of Construction write to Department of Aboriginal Affairs advising its withdrawal as consultant on the roadworks and suggest that implementation should be handed over to the Northern Territory Department of Transport and Works and contract to be retendered or undertaken by direct labour through the Department of Transport and Works.

Source: Tangatjira Council, 9 July 1979.

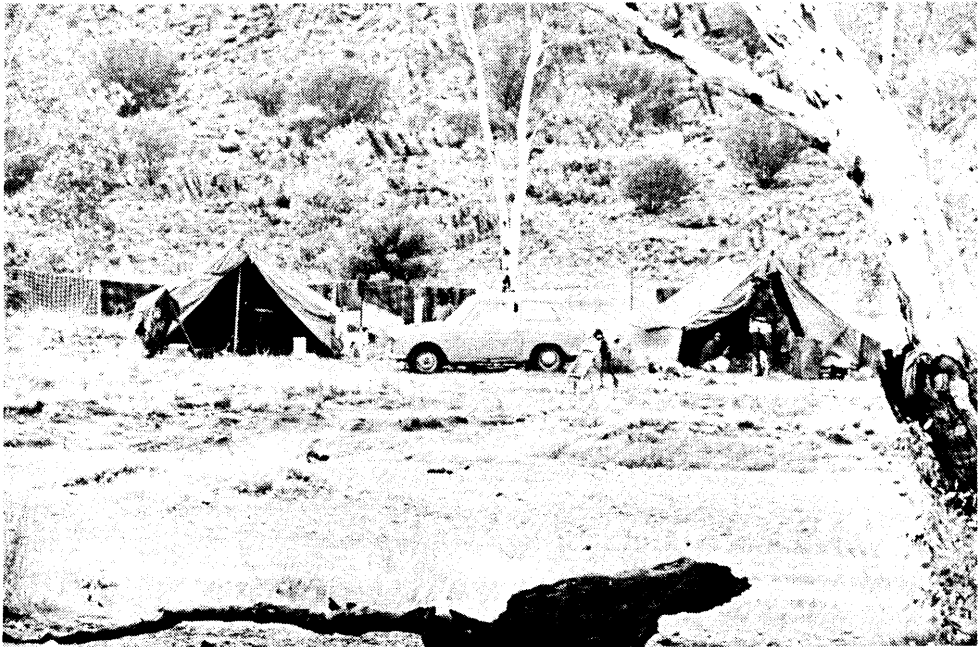


Plate 1 Typical camp in creek bed in 1976. Inhabitants are temporary visitors to Alice Springs.



Plate 2 Temporary camp to north of Alice Springs, 1976. Note size of dwelling and swept area during very wet period in Alice Springs.

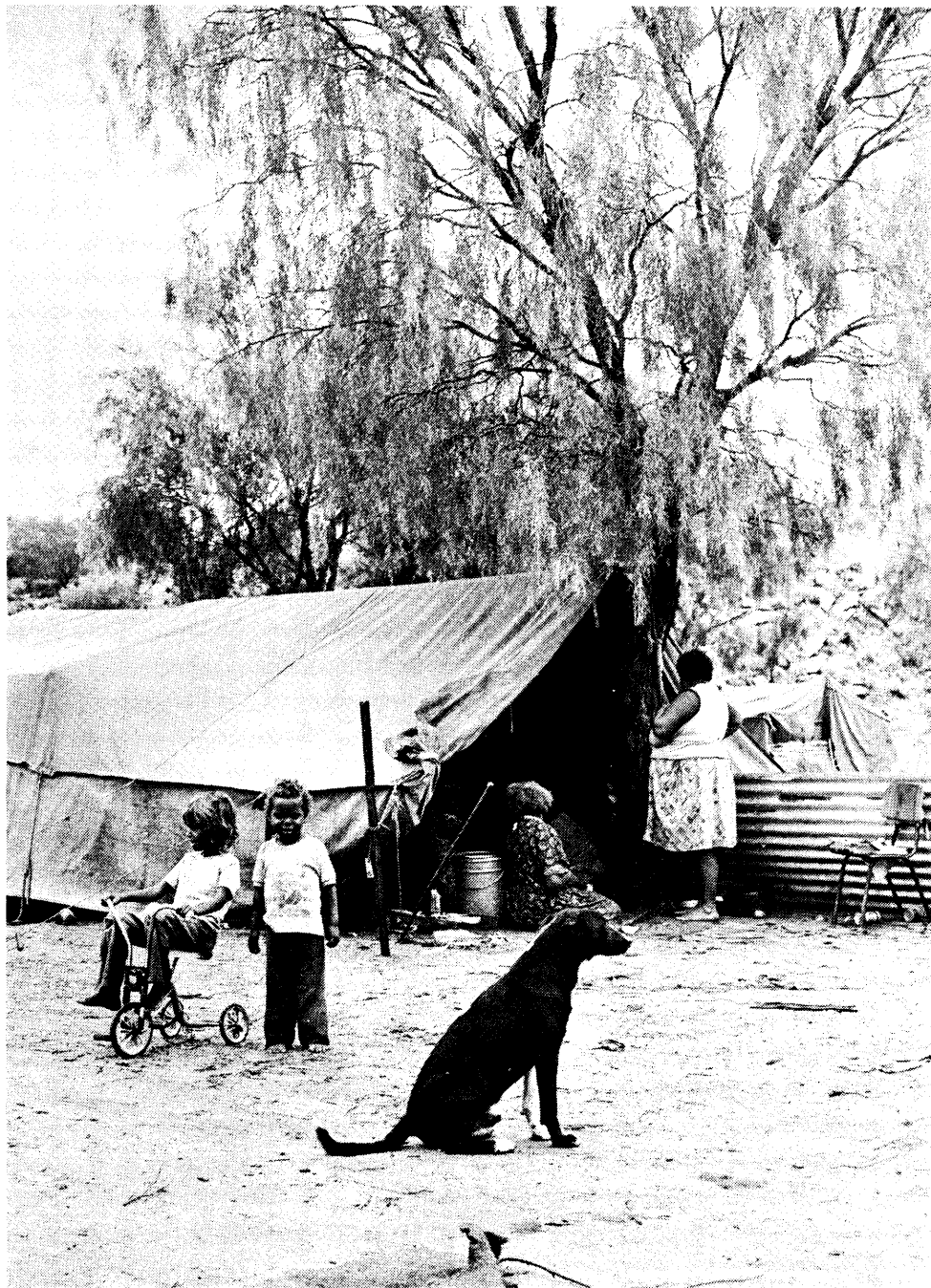


Plate 3 Typical camp with windbreak, 1976. The tents were provided from Federal Government grants.



Plate 4 Camp of a permanent dweller in Alice Springs, 1976. The person had resided in such circumstances for many years.

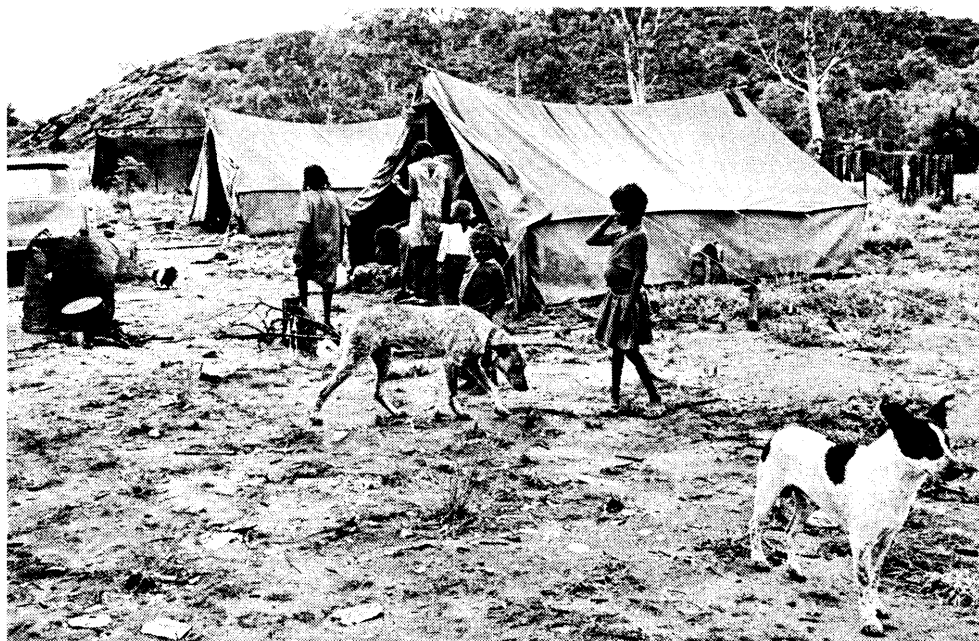


Plate 5 Same as Plate 1 showing army tents provided out of Federal Government grants.

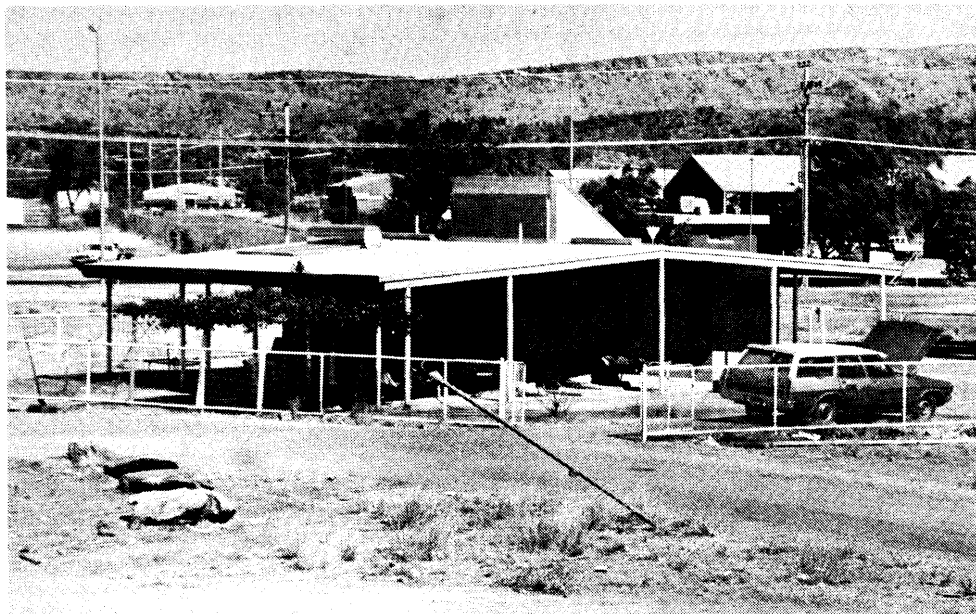


Plate 6 Looking down on house at Mt Nancy originally designed for an elderly man. Note the white painted fencing and supports to assist person with very poor eyesight.



Plate 7 General view of houses erected, since the preparation of this book, at Ilibilili Tjatja, looking east.

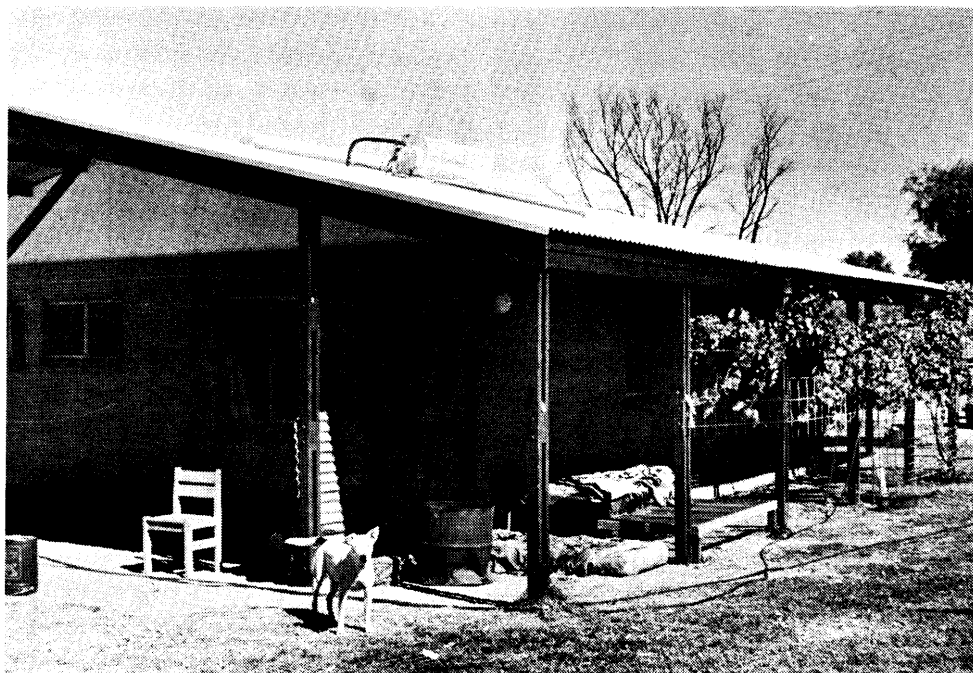


Plate 8 View (north face) of a 1-bedroom house at Nyewente camp showing development of planting and use of verandah.

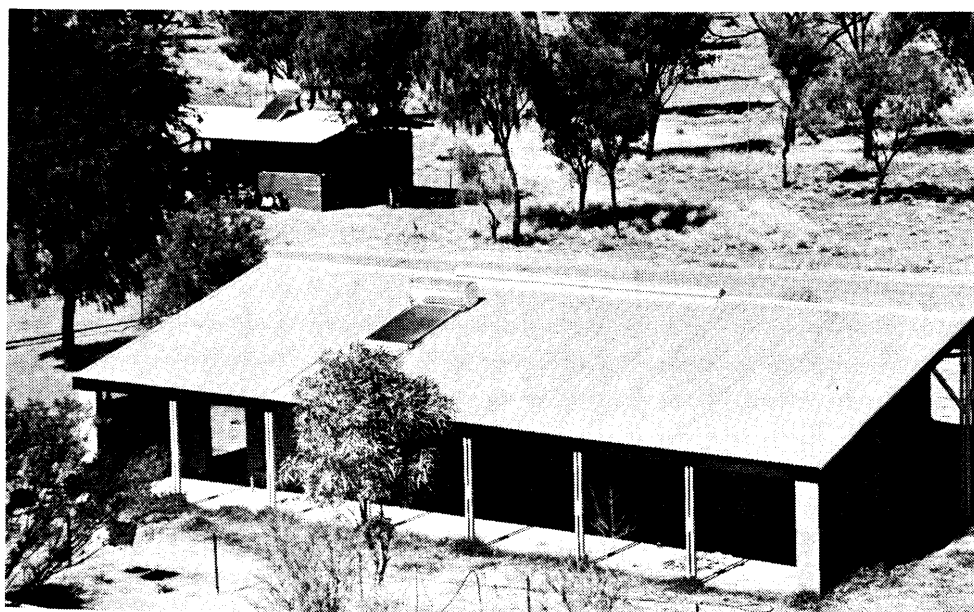


Plate 9 View of a 2-bedroom house at Nyewente. In the background is the shelter/toilet block later developed by the Tangatjira.

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