

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND DECENTRALISATION IN ARNHEM LAND:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.

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requirements for the Diploma in Community Development.

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	i
ABSTRACT	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I: <u>DECENTRALISATION - THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE</u>	6
a) FIRST CONTACT	7
b) THE SEGREGATED SETTLEMENT	11
c) THE ARNHEM LAND DEVELOPMENT	15
CHAPTER II: <u>AN ALTERNATIVE</u>	18
a) MOTIVATING FACTORS	20
b) THREE EXAMPLES	30
CHAPTER III: <u>NON-DIRECTIVE APPROACH</u>	37
a) REACTION AND RESPONSE	37
b) FELT NEEDS	39
c) COMMITMENT	43
d) RESPONSE	43
e) CONSULTATION AND DECISION MAKING	51
CHAPTER IV: <u>ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND DECENTRALISATION</u>	55
a) BACKGROUND	55
b) EXAMPLE I	64
c) EXAMPLE II	68
CHAPTER V: <u>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u>	70
a) INTERMEDIATE TECHNOLOGY	72
CONCLUSION	82
APPENDICES	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

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ABSTRACT

Aboriginal welfare programmes in Australia have been characterised by an authoritarian and directive administration in which the opinions of the Aboriginal people were given scant consideration.

The present Australian government has indicated its intention to provide the opportunity for Aboriginal groups to regain a large measure of independence through programmes developed upon the expressed needs of the Aboriginal people concerned. The current administrative approach is therefore non-directive and places increased emphasis on consultation.

This paper describes a specific social movement, "decentralisation", as it occurs in Arnhem Land, and in so doing considers the relevance of the community development process to current developments in the field of Aboriginal affairs in Australia. Three specific areas of interest are considered - Non-directive administration; Education for Aboriginal communities; Economic development - and conclusions are reached as to what changes are necessary, in respect of both administration and attitude, if community development is to assist in the promotion of self-determination for the Aboriginal people of Australia.

INTRODUCTION

"The colonial background of Australian society has profoundly affected the dominant attitudes and the assumptions of the policy makers, for the 'Australian dream' has been of a white Australia, possibly because a settler community looked out on a surrounding world to see repeated the inter-racial pattern within Australia - a world in which white men dominated others, and where the existing relationship between 'white' and 'coloured' appeared permanent." 1.

C.D. Rowley.

"The basic object of my Government's policy is to restore to the Aboriginal people of Australia their lost power of self-determination in economic, social and political affairs." 2.

The Prime Minister of Australia
(E.G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P.) 1973

1. Rowley C.D. The Remote Aborigines. Australian National University Press. Canberra. 1971. P.5.
2. Extract of speech made to the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council. 6th April, 1973. Aboriginal News. Vol.1. No.1. Aus. 1973. P.2.

On December 2nd, 1972, the Australian Labor Party was elected to govern Australia. The Party was elected to office primarily on a platform of promised social reform, including social reform for the Aboriginal people of Australia. Amongst the more important of these proposed reforms in respect of Aborigines were:

- 1) Recognition of Land Rights
- 2) Abolition of discriminatory legislation
- 3) Provision of legal aid for Aborigines
- 4) Ratification of I.L.O. conventions No.107 and No.111
- 5) Establishment of a separate Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs
- 6) Proposed legislation for the incorporation of Aboriginal communities and groups. 3.

The underlying principle of the Government's approach in the field of Aboriginal affairs has been described as 'self-determination', which has been defined as 'Aboriginal communities deciding the pace and nature of their future development within the legal, social and economic constraints of Australian society'. 4.

3. The policies of the Australian Labor Party in respect of Aborigines is set out in Appendix 'A'.
4. "Proposed New Policy Outline and Administrative Implications"
Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Darwin, 1973. P.2.

Emphasis is now being placed on Aboriginal participation in the making of policies, and in decisions about the programmes that affect them, and about their future.

As the statement by Rowley, quoted at the beginning of this introduction would imply, the present attitude of the Government differs quite radically from the more colonial styled governments of previous years. The methods of administration employed by past governments have been characterised by authoritarianism and directiveness based on an assumption that those who were administrators were blessed with an awareness of what those who were administered really needed, and how those needs could best be satisfied.

This assumption is no longer considered to be legitimate and, as already indicated, attention is being given to a non-directive approach to administration and an emphasis placed on participation and consultation.

As a direct result of these changes which have taken place during the past two years or so, the newly established Department of Aboriginal Affairs has given serious consideration to the concepts and principles of Community Development. A number of conferences, seminars and training courses have been sponsored by the Department in an effort to bring about a better understanding of community development and to consider its application in the field of Aboriginal affairs.

As this new approach to administration of Aboriginal affairs has only been attempted over a relatively short period in Australia, it is virtually impossible to determine at this stage any rate of success or failure. Therefore, I propose to consider some of the implications for those who administer and those who are administered when the principles of community development are applied by an administration steeped in the more authoritarian and colonial tradition.

As an example of the way in which the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is adapting to the new changes and applying these principles, I will describe a social movement, which the Australian Government is supporting, involving groups of Aboriginal people who are seeking to establish independent and autonomous communities within the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve. This movement is known locally as the "decentralisation movement" and is considered one of the more experimental and exciting developments involving tribalised Aboriginal people in Australia.

In respect of these decentralising communities, I wish to focus attention upon three areas of major concern to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and to the Australian Government as a whole:

- 1) The Non-Directive approach to Aboriginal development
- 2) Education for Aboriginal communities
- 3) Economic development of Aboriginal communities.

I believe that by considering the Government's approach to the decentralising communities in respect of the three areas of interest listed, it may be possible to identify certain issues, principles and methods which may well have a wider application within the framework of the present government's policy of self-determination for the Aboriginal people of Australia.

CHAPTER I

DECENTRALISATION - THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The term "decentralisation", used in the context of Aboriginal affairs, denotes the growing trend whereby groups of tribalised Aboriginal people have voluntarily chosen to move away from those established centres of population found mainly on Aboriginal reserves, and which are administered by either government or mission authorities. The decentralising groups have established themselves in country with which they have a traditional affiliation. In moving away from the government settlements and church missions, the groups resume an independent status free from non-Aboriginal supervision and control. Each group varies in size, ranging from only a dozen in the smaller groups to approximately 120 in the larger.

I have restricted my observations to the decentralising communities who are to be found within the bounds of the 37,200 sq. mile Arnhem Land Reserve, situated in that area known as the 'Top End' of the Northern Territory. It should be noted, however, that the same trend toward decentralisation may be observed in other parts of the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. 5.

5. Coombs, H.C. Decentralisation Trends among Aboriginal Communities ANZAAS 45th Congress, Perth, 1973. P.4.

In order to appreciate the significance of the decentralisation movement, it is necessary to consider the historical and the social context within which it has developed.

First Contact

The history of Aboriginal/European contact in Australia is not one which has been well documented or well publicised. As such, the white Australian in particular has only the most superficial appreciation of the disastrous effects European settlement had upon the Aboriginal tribes of Australia. It has been suggested that it is this lack of factual information which has led the majority of white Australians to accept the stereotype of the Aboriginal peoples as being one of an "incompetent group". 6.

On the 26th January 1788, Governor Arthur Phillip, together with a small number of military and civil officers and seven hundred and fifty British convicts sailed into Sydney Cove to establish the first permanent European settlement on the Australian continent. An Australian historian writes that their arrival was witnessed by a handful of Aborigines "who set up a horrid howl and indicated by angry gestures with sticks and stones that the white man was not wanted". 7.

6. Rowley, C.D. The Destruction of Aboriginal Society. Australian National University Press, Canberra 1970. P.9.
7. Manning Clark. A Short History of Australia. Mentor Books, New York. 1969. P.26.

At the time the First Fleet arrived in Sydney Cove, it has been estimated that there were between 250,000 and 300,000 Aborigines living on the Australian mainland, including the adjacent island of Tasmania. Their ancestors had migrated from somewhere in Asia, probably India, approximately 40,000 years before.

By 1901 it was estimated that the total population of Aborigines had been reduced to 66,950. The Aboriginal population of Tasmania had fallen from 2,500 in 1788 to a zero by 1901. ⁸

These figures would confirm the disastrous consequences of European settlement upon the Aboriginal communities. Death through starvation, disease and murder accounted for the rapid decline in numbers during the first century of alien contact. Settlement implied dispossession which, in turn, made attack and counter attack inevitable, a set of circumstances which led A.W. Howitt to observe in 1883 that "the frontier in Australia has been marked with a line of blood". ⁹.

Even though white Australian folklore would suggest that the Aborigines were the main antagonists in the contact situation, history shows that they were the recipients of much injustice. The Aborigine was a nomad who lived by hunting and collecting.

8. Jones, F.L. The Structure and Growth of Australia's Aboriginal Population. Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970. P.4. See also Appendix 'E'.
9. Maddock, K. The Australian Aborigines. Allen Lane. The Penguin Press London 1973. P.IX

He had no settled life, no gardens or agriculture and no domestic animals other than the dingo (wild dog). As such, unlike the villager he had, from the alien settlers point of view, no clearly recognisable claim to a particular area of land. His spiritual and subsequently more subtle relationship with the land was either ignored or, in most cases, not understood by the settler.

Moreover, the Aborigines lacked the type of social organisation with which they could have waged effective warfare in defence of their land. There were no tribal chieftons and there was no hierarchial organisation. This situation was in direct contrast to that of the Maoris of New Zealand or the American Indians who were groups with a visible hierarchial organisation with which an alien group could communicate. They also had the ability to wage effective warfare, a situation which resulted in the recognition of indigenous land claims through the signing of treaties.

This, however, was not the case in Australia, and as a consequence there were no treaties and the British common law assumption that all lands annexed to the Crown are Crown Lands prevailed and continues to do so even up to the present day. ¹⁰

10. The Australian Government has promised to introduce legislation which will in effect recognise Aboriginal Land Rights.

Settlement almost always developed into an unacknowledged conquest, in which early resistance was inevitably followed by total subjection. Rowley suggests that the historical timing of European settlement in Australia was an important factor in the rapid conquest of the Aboriginal groups. "It is one of the tragedies of the Aboriginal that Australia was colonised when Britain was becoming an industrialised nation; that the demand for fine wool should coincide with a combination of cheap land, comparative absence of resistance by indigenous man or by the local fauna, and suitable grasses, all cheaply obtained with small capital outlay; that religious restraints on profit making had given way to the Protestant ethic, which in turn was to be supplemented by the best of all sops to frontier consciences - the popular pseudo-Darwinism which could explain the 'passing of the Aboriginal' as a law of nature." 11.

As the frontier moved beyond a particular area, those Aborigines who survived no longer constituted a socially viable or coherent group, but rather, "dispirited remnants, lacking in the kind of leadership with which an administration might negotiate, lacking even a place of their own which, from the European point of view, was an axiomatic basis for any kind of civilised or ordered life". 12

Thus the 'Aboriginal problem' was established and a solution had to be found by the various colonial authorities. Their solution in nearly every case was the segregated settlement.

11. The Destruction of Aboriginal Society. P.25

12. Ibid. P.23

The Segregated Settlement

It was opined that in order that the Aborigines could be protected from the brutality of the colonial frontier and the deprivation and disease which inevitably accompanied contact, and at the same time protect the isolated rural settlers from attack by the Aborigines, it would be prudent to gather the Aborigines of an area together, within the confines of a controlled environment, until such time as they became more 'civilised'.

The rationale for the development of the segregated settlement was not based wholly on the concepts of control and protection. There was a strong desire expressed by early authorities to improve the moral and social conditions of the Aboriginal 'remnants'. A Select Committee of the Legislative Council of Victoria, for example, recommended in 1858 "the establishment of a number of reserves, distant from centres of white settlement, where missions supervised by local boards of trustees should teach the Aborigines ways of 'civilised life and industry'". 13

It was these three basic elements of protection, control and tuition which were to characterise the content of Aboriginal welfare programmes for the next century.

After the first of these settlements had been established, it was found that the Aborigines continued to die out rapidly and there was wide agreement amongst the white population of the time that the Aboriginal was incapable of 'improvement'.

13. Long, J.P.M. Aboriginal Settlements. Australian National Press. Canberra. 1970. P.11

It was further believed that their failure to learn accounted for their failure to survive, and it was therefore considered inevitable that wherever contact between black and white took place, extinction of the black race would result. 14.

There were, however, a number of church and government agencies in the latter part of the nineteenth century who were not prepared to accept that the Aborigines were doomed to extinction.

Governments established further reserves of land upon which settlements were established and introduced legislation to control and agencies to supervise relations between Aborigines and settlers. Legislation was enacted restricting Aboriginal movement, prohibiting the consumption of alcohol, prohibiting cohabitation and regulating employment. These measures mitigated the destructive effects of contact which had seen Aboriginal society in eastern and southern parts of Australia disrupted and almost wiped out by the close of the nineteenth century. They were, however, all negative measures and characterised a period in which efforts were directed at 'smoothing the dying pillow' of the Aboriginal race. This attitude toward Aboriginal welfare was to remain entrenched until the early 1930's.

14. Ibid. Pp. 15-16

In 1937 it was agreed that the policy of the Australian Government and the various State Governments in respect of Aborigines would be the 'ultimate absorption' of the 'natives of Aboriginal origin but not for the full blood'.¹⁵ In 1940 the word 'assimilation' was introduced into the vocabulary of Aboriginal welfare when an inquiry in New South Wales led to a recommendation on administrative changes aimed at "the gradual assimilation of Aborigines into the economic life and social life of the community".¹⁶ In 1951 the aim of the government policies towards all Aborigines was assimilation, but the bulk of restrictive and discriminatory legislation in respect of Aborigines remained in force.

Assimilation is firmly based on the idea of the superiority of the dominant culture, and aims at producing a homogeneous society by getting indigenous groups to discard their culture in favour of that of the dominant one. It could be seen, therefore, that the basic aim had not changed greatly from that expressed during the early colonial period when it was hoped that the Aboriginal would become 'civilized', which in the minds of the colonisers implied being 'Europeanized'.

15. Report of Activities for period 19.12.72 to 30.6.74. Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, 1974. P.4.

16. Ibid. P.4.

In 1971, a report entitled 'Special Study on Racial Discrimination in the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Spheres' by Herman Santa Cruz, published by the United Nations, stated that "assimilation would seem to be achieved most often when it is not made official policy. Official adoption seems invariably to arouse reaction and resistance".¹⁷ Australia was no exception in this regard and by the early 1960's the assimilation policy came under increasing attack, and by 1967 'integration' was generally accepted as being the practical policy of the Federal and State Governments.

Integration, as differentiated from assimilation, is a two-way process which does not entail the disappearance of indigenous institutions and traditions. It implies consciously refraining from bringing pressure upon indigenous groups to abandon their culture.

Accordingly, the past decade has seen a significant dismantling of the legal and administrative systems which had accorded most Aborigines a status "similar to that of children and subjected them to the kinds of controls imposed on the criminal and insane".¹⁸ Restricted entry into most Aboriginal reserves for non Aborigines persists, but this is due to the direct request of the Aboriginal communities within the reserves. So far as the Northern Territory is concerned Aborigines may come into and go out of Aboriginal reserves as they please.

17. Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on the Social Environment, Policies and programmes in Aboriginal Affairs. 1973. Appendix 'A'
18. Report of Activities for period 19.12.72 to 30.6.74. Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs. P.5

The Arnhem Land Development

It is against this background that the settlements and missions in Arnhem Land have been developed. There is perhaps one qualification which should be made and that is, that the tribalised groups of Arnhem Land were relatively unaffected in respect of their traditional culture, at the time the first missions were established. The Aborigines of coastal Arnhem Land had come into contact with Macassan trepang ¹⁹ fishermen from the Celebes during the 18th and 19th centuries, and even though the Macassan influence was quite extensive in certain aspects of Aboriginal life, it did not transform the fundamental basis of society. ²⁰ The European frontier had had not encroached upon the Aborigines land and the declaration of Arnhem Land as an Aboriginal reserve in 1931, and its inaccessibility, prevented any major or permanent contact taking place. As a result, those Aborigines living in Arnhem Land have retained much of their traditional culture and a direct association with their traditional country.

The missions and settlements were, however, established on the same assumptions used to rationalize earlier settlements in other parts of Australia, namely the need for control, protection and tuition, leading to a Europeanization of the Aboriginal. By 1929 there were six missions established in Arnhem Land: Roper River (1908), Goulburn Island (1916), Mililingimbi (1921), Emerald River (1921), Elcho Island (1922), and Cenpelli (1925).

19. A type of sea slug which when smoked and processed, is considered, by the Chinese, as a delicacy.

20. Macknight C.C. "Macassans and Aborigines". 'Oceania'. Vol. XLII. No.4. June 1972

These were followed by the establishment of Yirrkala (1934), Umbakumba (1938), and Maningrida (1957), a government settlement.

A number of the missions were on island off the coast; a practice, according to Rowley, established by Pacific missions in earlier years "allowing as it did for a safe base close to the larger populations and a place to train the indigenous mission workers who made most of the first contacts and provided most of the martyrs".²¹ In the Australian experience, however, the mission island became more a means of isolating Aborigines from non-mission and non-Christian contacts. These missions saw their social and educational function as preparing the Aboriginal people, by their efforts in tuition and conversion, to participate in European society.

Most of the Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land, as elsewhere in the North, are largely self-contained. They are characterized by physical isolation with relatively poor communications with the outside world.

During the past two decades the facilities and range of services provided on the various settlements have improved and multiplied. Hospitals, schools, recreation centres, power houses, sawmills, houses, airfields, garages, shops, motor vehicles and much more are provided by way of government expenditure.

The residents for the most part find their employment, their recreation and their education on the settlement, and are born and die there.

The settlement is in effect what Erving Goffman describes as a total institution, wherein the inmates sleep, play and work in the same place and under the same authority and where "there is a basic split between a larger managed group, conveniently called inmates, and a small supervisory staff". 22

As policies have become more positive and liberalised in respect of Aboriginals affairs, so the role and the very existence of the settlements and missions have been increasingly questioned. Two possibilities are usually proposed: "that the Aborigines now living on settlements should, when suitably prepared, leave them to obtain a fair share in the prosperity of the community at large and that these segregated communities should disappear; that the communities should remain and be developed as predominantly Aboriginal enclaves but with more autonomy and less direction by non Aborigines. 23

It is possible, in Arnhem Land at least, that decentralisation provides a third and more acceptable alternative to many Aboriginal residents of existing settlements and missions. It is this alternative which I now wish to describe.

22. Goffman, E. 'The Characteristics of Total Institutions'
A Sociological Reader on Complex Organisations. A. Etzioni (Ed),
2nd Edition. Holt. London 1969. P.312-13

23. Aboriginal Settlements. P.184

CHAPTER II

AN ALTERNATIVE

There are approximately 7,000 Aboriginal people living within the bounds of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve, including Groote Eylandt. (see Map appendix 'B'). Until recently almost all of these people lived on the missions and settlements located within the reserve. These groupings of people on the missions and settlements have, over the years, been considered by those responsible for their administration, as homogeneous communities who would ultimately develop along the same lines as that of a rural town to be found anywhere in Australia. The belief that such groupings constituted homogeneous communities and could be administered as such undervalued the continuing importance of the clan structure. 24

As Thompson indicates "For some purposes the community or local group will present a face to the world which implies or even emphasises a homogeneity of the cultural or the social system. For other purposes, however, this same community operates as a loose arrangement of parts, these parts being other social groupings into which it can be and is divided." 25

24. 'Clan' Group related to one another through a common descent line traced through father or mother but not both.

25. Thompson, G.F. The Professional Approach to community work. Sands & Co. London 1969. p.173

It has become more and more obvious, especially over the past two years, that given the option, a significant number of Aboriginal people would, and in fact are, moving away from the settlements to those areas which they describe as "their own country". At Yirrkala during the period October 1973 to March 1974, close to 25 percent of the total population of that mission had moved to various locations, some as far as 80 miles from Yirrkala. ²⁶ Again at Maningrida, a settlement in North Central Arnhem Land, approximately 35 percent of its total population had moved to form 'satellite' communities, by March 1974. The figure had increased to 50 percent by June of that same year. ²⁷

According to the latest figures available, there are some 29 groups who have voluntarily chosen to move from the settlements back to their own country. The total number of people now living in these small communities constitutes approximately 10 percent of the total Aboriginal population of Arnhem Land. ²⁸ Based on information contained in local reports and from personal communications with field officers in various regions, there is every indication that more groups will follow on the example set by those already mentioned.

26. Gray, W.J. "Decentralisation Trends in Arnhem Land". Unpublished paper delivered to Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, May 1974. P.4.

27. From report by J.C. Hunter, dated 24 June 1974. Darwin. P.1

28. 'Decentralisation Trends in Arnhem Land'. P.3

The obvious question to ask at this stage is why are an increasing number of people moving away from the established settlements, with all their facilities and services, and returning to areas that have relatively few facilities and, initially, no services? No doubt there are many motivating factors involved, but I believe that it is possible to identify major factors common to all groups and it is these factors which I now consider.

Motivating Factors.

The first of these factors has to do with land affiliation, a concept which finds expression in the Aboriginal phrase, 'my own country'. Of all the relationships traditional Aboriginal man has with anybody or anything, the most important is that which binds him to a particular tract of land in which his spirit home is to be found. The importance of this relationship cannot be over-emphasised and I therefore quote Professor Elkin at some length on this subject: "What really makes this local country 'home' is the fact that the spirits of all who belong to it pre-existed in spirit homes at known spots within it, and that, according to the usual belief, the spirit returns to these places after existence in the body has come to an end. In this way, a person is tied to 'his country' for it is the home of his spirit. And because the spirits of all the members of a local group come from spirit homes in their own part of the tribal territory, these folk are related by something deeper than genealogical descent. This in turn finds its explanation in the mythological past, for these spirit centres did not come into existence unrelated to a

personal cause. They are associated with the great ancestors and culture heroes who travelled through the tribal territory and horde country and by various ritual and spiritual means left human spirits at divers places along their routes. It is this fact which ultimately binds together the members of the local group and also of the tribe and makes their country 'home'". 29

I have already stated that the earlier settlers were ignorant of the complex and subtle relationship which existed between the indigenous peoples and their land. To a very large extent the same criticism might be applied to many of those responsible for the establishment and development of the missions and settlements in Arnhem Land. The strength of this relationship remains important even though many of the younger people may not feel the tie as strongly as their grandparents. It is nevertheless an important factor in the consideration of the decentralisation movement.

In establishing the missions of Arnhem Land, the criteria against which the suitability of a location was judged, related solely to geographical and administrative considerations, e.g. the need to be isolated from 'non Christian' contacts; the presence of a permanent water supply, etc.

Once the mission personnel were settled the Aboriginal inhabitants were encouraged directly or indirectly, to leave their 'home' country in adjacent areas and to settle in the new establishment to create a 'new community'.

29. Elkin, A.P. The Australian Aborigines. Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1948. Pp. 42-43

As a result, the physical contact with 'home country' was broken and this caused and continues to cause considerable emotional stress for many of the Aboriginal groups. By returning to their own country these groups eliminate this particular stress.

Secondly, an important feature of those groups who gravitated to the missions was that they had each been 'independent and autonomous units, managing their own affairs and acting as a unit in their relations with other hordes'.³⁰ As the newly created institution was inevitably established on land over which a particular group claimed 'ownership', (here used in the sense described above), the autonomy of those groups not having affiliation to the land upon which the institution was established was seriously threatened. For example, the local descent group had certain hunting and fishing rights over a specified tract of country and could exercise controls over access to certain areas within their clan territory.³¹ The placement of the mission within the bounds of a certain group's territory had the effect of placing that group in a position of authority to which all other Aboriginal groups on the mission were subject. Over the years this authority has become reflected in certain areas, in the membership and office holders of village councils and other non-Aboriginal institutions

30. Hiatt, L. Australian and Pacific Anthropology. Melbourne University Press. London. 1966. P.2

31. Ibid. P.15

which have been introduced as a part of the modernisation programme. ³² It is this constant subjection to the authority of the land owning unit, coupled with the tensions arising out of contact with the non-Aboriginal authority, that has made many of the groups return to their 'own country'. It is only from within the bounds of their own territorial 'range' ³³ that a group can maintain legitimate authority upon which decisions can be based and development initiated. I would suggest that the decentralisation movement is, in part, a reflection of this fact.

Thirdly, the decision taken in 1964 to allow mineral exploration by large mining companies within the Arnhem Land Reserve brought an awareness to the Aboriginal people of that area that their country and their sacred sites could and would be intruded upon. This intrusion was not welcomed by the Aborigines who expressed fear that their land and sacred sites would be desecrated, a fear which was to be proved substantiated in the years to follow despite measures (which proved inadequate) taken by the Government to ensure protection of sacred sites. Mining operations subsequently commenced at Groote Eylandt and Gove, both being ventures which have resulted in further dispossession of land and depressing social repercussions for many of the Aboriginal people in the area.

32. Two examples are (a) Yirrkala, where the Village Council President is a member of the clan upon whose land the mission is situated and (b) Maningrida, where a similar situation applies.

33. 'Range' - "The tract or orbit over which the group, including its nucleus and adherents, ordinarily hunted and foraged to maintain life". Stanner W.E.H. 'Aboriginal Territorial Organisation'. Oceania. Vol. XXXVI. No.1. Sept. 1965. P.2.

More recently, extremely valuable deposits of uranium have been located in Western Arnhem Land. There is great pressure upon the present government to allow large European companies to exploit these deposits as quickly as possible. Given this set of circumstances, many Aboriginal groups have come to the conclusion that the most effective way to control the unwelcome intrusion is to take up residence in their 'home country' in the belief that a presence will, in some way, deter intruders and ensure the preservation of sacred sites. It must be stated that certain groups have prevented sites being desecrated and earned a degree of respect from some mining companies through a process of direct contact and consultation.

Fourthly, and still in the context of land ownership, I would place a great deal of importance on the decision of the Australian Government to recognise Aboriginal land rights. The Government announced in 1973 "that ownership of land in Aboriginal reserves in the Northern Territory will be vested in the Aboriginals" 34. and appointed a Commission to investigate and report on ways and means of implementing this and other aspects of the Government's Aboriginal Land policies. Mr Justice A.E. Woodward was appointed in 1973 as sole Commissioner to inquire into and make recommendations to the Government on means for giving effect to the Government's decisions to recognise Aboriginal land rights.

34. Submission to the Senate S.C. on Aboriginal Affairs. P.3

Justice Woodward undertook a series of visits to some twenty major Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in April/June 1973 and in July 1973 he submitted an interim report to the Government. The Australian Government accepted the major recommendations of this first report and adopted the Commissioners recommendations that two Regional Land Councils, a Northern and Central, should be set up. The Land Councils would examine matters raised in the interim report, consider land tenure and make submissions to the Commission. The two Councils, whose membership would be totally Aboriginal, were financed by the Attorney-General to retain senior and junior council and firms of solicitors to provide independent legal advice.

Subsequently, a second and final report was presented by the Commission on 3rd May, 1974. Mr Justice Woodward made a number of recommendations in respect of: land suitable for immediate ownership; land to be 'frozen' until 1976 to give Aborigines a chance to prepare claims; roles of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other Australian Government Departments; oil and mineral leases; other valid interests in Aboriginal land, including conservation and tourism; the establishment of Aboriginal Land Trusts; the retention of the two Land Councils; and the appointment of an Aboriginal Lands Commission. 35

The Australian Government has now accepted the final recommendations

35. Report of Activities 19.12.72 to 30.6.74. Dept. Aboriginal Affairs
 Pp. 9-10. A Summary of Recommendations is attached at Appendix 'C'.

'in principle' and undertaken to introduce legislation, in further consultation with Aboriginal groups, to the Australian Parliament.

This intense activity on the part of the Commission, plus the specific recommendation that 'the landholding corporations should be called Land Trusts and they should hold the land for the benefit of all those having traditional interests in it or over it', ³⁶ has resulted in renewed and active interest in clarifying those tracts of land to which the local descent groups are affiliated. There would seem to be no quicker or more certain way to establish clarification of 'ownership' than to occupy the land to which a group is attached.

Finally, a very considerable factor in terms of motivation has been the increasing support given by the Australian Government since 1972, to those groups who have undertaken to decentralize. It must be stated here, in recognition of certain individual missionaries and administrators, that there had been for many years a few isolated groups of Aborigines who had maintained a distance from European contacts and had continued to follow a more traditional pattern of life than their peers living on missions and settlements. They were assisted in their efforts to retain their chosen life style, by the individual efforts of sympathetic figures, often in the face of opposition and criticism from their superiors. ³⁷

36. Aboriginal Land Rights Commission, 2nd Report P.21

37. Eg. Reverend Shephardson (Elcho Is.); J.C. Hunter (Maningrida) and A. Wilson (Oenpelli).

However, the members of such groups were small in comparison with the numbers now moving away from the established centres. For a considerable period of time the often expressed desire to return to the traditional 'home country' was not realised. "Bureaucratic resistance to withdrawal, while usually passive, was real, and the fear of effective isolation from services to which the Aborigines had become accustomed was usually enough to ensure that efforts to withdraw were abortive or, if made, were readily abandoned. This inability to act upon long considered hopes often intensified previously-evident passivity and inertia among the Aborigines concerned". 38.

The services being provided now include finance, by way of grants with which building materials, transport, radio transceivers and other essential items are purchased. Medical supplies are made available, and courses conducted for para-medics and visits, on request, are made by officers of the Department of Health. The Department of Education have responded to the decentralisation movement by providing within their establishment for a number of 'visiting' teachers, more of which will be said later.

In nearly every case the smaller communities have expressed a desire to have only those facilities which can be operated and maintained by their own people within their own locality and that the need for more sophisticated facilities should be met by using those established in the settlements and missions.

"Underlying this attitude is the desire to minimise the need for non-Aboriginals to live in the small communities. It is expected that the non-Aboriginal people who are required, by virtue of their special skills, will live in the larger resource centres and act in the capacity of visiting specialists when the need arises. The need will be determined by the people living in the satellite communities". 39.

Paradoxically, there has been a vast improvement in the network of roads as a result of the mining exploration work during the past twelve years. Consequently, many areas have become accessible to four-wheel drive vehicles and this now provides for a greater degree of communication between the satellite communities and the established centres. Furthermore, two mission authorities, the United Church in North Australia and The Church Missionary Society, operate a regular light aircraft service into those communities equipped with airstrips. Many of these airstrips, none less than 1800 feet long and 150 feet wide, have been carved from the bush and scrub by the Aborigines using hand tools, such as axes, mattocks, picks and cross-cut saws. All labour involved in these projects has been voluntary and unsupervised by non-Aboriginals.

With the support of the Australian Government and the improved services now available, the Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land are able to realistically review their priorities as to where they will live, what life style they wish to adopt and to seriously count the special cost of living in the larger institutionalised centres.

In other words, the establishment of decentralised communities presents a viable alternative to the larger institutionalised settlements which, for so many years, has been the only choice.

THREE EXAMPLES.

As I have already indicated there were, in June 1974, some 29 decentralised communities established in the Arnhem Land Reserve. It would, therefore, not be practical within the space of this paper to describe each of these groups in any detail. Instead, I propose to describe the activities of three groups who represent three different forms of decentralisation. They are named after the locality of their camps.

NGARRAITJ.

Due to the accidental deaths of certain members of this group during their contacts with the larger established settlements of Maningrida and Oenpelli, the members, now numbering about 30, have "almost completely withdrawn from contact with all but a few trusted persons".⁴⁰ Ngarraitj is the name given to the place to which the people have gone and is located some 50 miles south of Maningrida.

Their way of life is essentially traditional, the group constituting what is, in anthropological terms, defined as a 'horde'.⁴¹

40. Decentralisation Trends Among Aboriginal Communities. P.15.

41. 'Horde'. A local group comprising all males born into the group together with their wives and unmarried daughters, and at any moment consisting of a body of people living together in a group of families.

This particular group ranges widely, and traditional hunting and gathering provides much of their food supply.

Since their contact with the larger settlements the group has established a need for certain western commodities such as tobacco, sugar, tea, flour, knives, axes, calico, ammunition, etc. In order to purchase these goods, they produce very high quality bark paintings and other traditional artifacts, which are collected and bought by the local arts and craft store at Maningrida. The goods they desire are then purchased at the Maningrida Progress Association store and transported by vehicle back to Ngarraitj. The communication link in this case is by way of road and 4 x 4 vehicle. The link is broken during the wet season for anything up to 6 months.

There is a very strong adherence to traditional values and patterns of social behaviour within this community, and as such they have not encouraged the intrusion of any European people into the area. As a consequence there has been no request for services or facilities which would involve the continued presence of white people nor is it likely that any such presence would be willingly accepted. There are no school or resident medical personnel at Ngarraitj. The only services required by the community is provided by either an officer from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs or, at times, by the Maningrida Progress Association. The service consists of delivering and cashing Social Service cheques (child Endowment, Pensions, etc.), sale and delivery of food items and other goods similar

to those described above, and the collection of artifacts for sale at the settlement store.

There is, therefore, a very high degree of reliance upon the resources of the bush and a minimum of contact with and reliance upon, external agencies.

KOPANGA.

There are approximately 80 people living at this camp and they may be described as essentially a sea going people who hunt turtle and dugong, fish and collect shellfish. Along the coastal swamp plains there are wallabies, geese, freshwater turtles, a variety of fruits, berries and roots which are caught and gathered on a seasonal basis.

The Blythe River area has been occupied by relatively large groups, despite early migration to Darwin in the 1940's. Since the inception of Maningrida in 1957, there has been a care group in residence at the Blythe, who drew their essential supplementary supplies from Maningrida. The number of people increased considerably in 1972 when people moved out to the area to participate in ceremonial activities. Many remained as they preferred to occupy their own country and communications with Maningrida had improved for purposes of securing supplies, medical treatment and other requirements.

Again, as with the group at Ngarraitj, economic activity is largely

directed at internal needs except for the export of craft products produced by members of the group.

In respect of food consumption it is becoming apparent that this group has, in common with most other decentralising groups, adopted a pattern whereby meat protein foods are obtained from traditional sources, whilst the carbohydrate foods such as flour, bread and potatoes are purchased from the settlement store. As it was the traditional role of women to engage in the gathering of the carbohydrate foods, such as yams and lilyroots, they have transferred their activity to producing the artifacts upon whose sale the purchasing and supply of carbohydrate goods will depend. This adaptation to a new and alien economic environment illustrates the ability of the group to innovate within the framework of their traditional society.

Unlike the Ngarraitj community the people at Kopanga have expressed a desire for certain services including a school and a medical centre, but with the qualification that these services are operated by Aborigines. As a result some interesting experiments are being conducted. With regard to the school a young man - educated to approximately 7th grade standard - is attempting bilingual teaching after a few weeks training, aided by a 'visiting teacher' from Maningrida. This development is in response to requests from the community "that their children should be enabled to continue

their education but that it should be within their own community and more consistent with their own Aboriginal way". 42.

Similarly, a young woman who was employed at the settlement hospital, now dispenses simple first aid with guidance from a nurse and occasionally a doctor who make periodical visits from Maningrida.

Communications between the Kopanga community and the settlement are by way of road during the 'dry' season and by boat during the 'wet'. Again the supply lines are maintained through the services of the Maningrida Progress Association. The Association is subsidised by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to employ a person to attend to the receiving of orders and delivery of supplies to the decentralising communities around Maningrida.

A recent breakdown in the supply of communication lines with the Kopanga group resulted in a number of their members returning to Maningrida. This would indicate, I think, an established need for a higher quality of services than can be provided by way of local resources alone. The importance of maintaining the communication lines with regular supplies of desired goods must therefore be recognised as axiomatic to the success of the decentralising groups.

GERRDNALALA

This community is a local descent group or horde numbering approximately 80 members in June 1974. Although there has always been a small permanent group (approximately 12) residing at this site the numbers have increased rapidly and the facilities and services improved dramatically since 1973.

With the aid of an initial government grant totally 15,000 dollars, the support of a community adviser and other employers of the United Church in North Australia, plus contributions of finance and labour from the members of the group, the community now have an airstrip and regular air service; 12 timber frame-corrugated iron houses built to their own design and by their own tradesmen; a 4 x 4 landrover; 3 aluminium dinghys with outboard motors; a radio transceiver; improved road communications; and a permanent supply of water reticulated to the village. Again, the community itself decided the need for and priority to be set upon, the facilities mentioned above.

In common with the two groups already mentioned, the Gerrdnalala group rely upon the sale of artifacts and Social Service payments for cash to purchase food, goods and materials to supplement those provided by way of local traditional resources. They have considered the need to develop further economic activities to ensure sufficient cash inflow to provide for the many improvements they are presently contemplating. Interest is expressed

in rehabilitating the trepang industry which may of the older members of the group remember with some affection. 43. The installation of a small freezer for the storing of fish which could then be flown to markets in other communities and towns on the Gove Peninsula is currently being considered. These are propositions put forward by the people themselves and will I believe be acted upon when the need for more cash and improved facilities becomes sufficiently intense.

The community have held consultations with various government departments and members of the United Church in North Australia stationed at Yirrkala regarding the kinds of services and facilities they require. Moreover the Departments of Health and of Education have responded positively by tailoring their services to suit the needs of the community as expressed by them during consultation. These services, like those provided at Kopanga, include the concept of visiting specialists lending support to indigenous workers who are themselves members of the local group.

I have, in this chapter attempted to describe the decentralisation movement as it currently manifests itself in Arnhem Land. In the next chapter I wish to describe the response to the movement as shown by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and to consider some of the issues which a large government department faces when it attempts to adhere to the non directive principles of administration.

CHAPTER 111

A NON-DIRECTIVE APPROACH.

It should be stated that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs considers the decentralisation movement as an experimental or 'pilot' situation. As a result, the procedures in respect of liaison, consultation and response, have not been, as yet, generally applied outside the context of decentralisation. In my examination of the procedures which are being adopted, I propose to show that Community Development principles underly the Government's response to the decentralisation movement and that certain difficulties may arise when these principles are applied on a wider scale, by a complex bureaucratic organisation.

Reaction and Response.

Basic to the approach being adopted by the Department in respect of the decentralising groups, is the acceptance of four basic assumptions which are summarised as follows :

1) That all people have a strong desire to better themselves no matter how 'unambitious' they may appear to outsiders. All people have personal and community needs and they suffer when these needs are not met

and wish that something could be done to meet them.

2) That the personal and community needs are not met because under present conditions the difficulties of their fulfilment are too great for the human and technical resources they now have. Given help in seeing the opportunity and the means of meeting their needs such people will become active and will progress.

3) All groups can do something to help themselves when given the opportunity to do so on their own terms. The local people must be given the responsibility of determining the direction of their own efforts and must get their own priorities for action

4) That where the need for change is urgent, it is important that government services seek to co-ordinate their programmes in order to influence each area of local activity according to the readiness and wishes of the local people. 44.

In accepting these basic assumptions the Department of Aboriginal Affairs concerns itself with the development of procedures which recognise the principles of 'felt needs' as indicated in 1) above; 'participation' as indicated in 3) above and 'self help' also indicated in 3) above. The Department also recognises the need for an integrated approach to development as indicated in 4) above. How are these principles applied in the field?

44. Decentralisation Trends in Arnhem Land. Pp 8-9 (my own emphasis underlined).

In the initial contact period the Departmental officers, designated 'Project Officers' concentrate their efforts on three specific areas of interest: Felt needs; Commitment; Response.

i) Felt Needs: Within the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, there has been a constant emphasis placed upon the necessity to ensure that any form of assistance given by Government or voluntary agencies to decentralised communities, reflects the expressed felt needs of the community concerned. "The question of felt needs is of major importance in determining the success or failure of this kind of community project". 45.

The Department's Project Officers are reminded and in turn, advise others who may come in contact with the groups, that they must be conscious of the need to restrain themselves from trying to impose their own perception of needs upon the community with whom they are working. The needs in which the Department are interested and to which they will respond, are those which are identified and put forward by the group themselves. 46. The role of the officer therefore is to encourage the groups to consider their situation and for the group to evaluate their needs to which they can seek solutions 'on their own terms'. The assumption underlying this approach is the

45. Ibid. P.10

46. N/A

belief that unless the groups are given the responsibility for the identification of their own needs and the satisfaction of those needs on which they place priority, alienation, paternalism and dependency will remain a characteristic of Aboriginal communities. This 'purist' approach to the principle of felt need is currently being questioned by several influential bodies including the U.N. and it is a matter which the Department of Aboriginal Affairs must consider. It is suggested for example that "felt needs are by no means the best guide for determining the priorities of village development; and that "attention should be given to establishing priority for local development that takes into account the felt needs of the people but which can contribute more fully to the development process". 47.

This has led those who promote the above view to state that the role of the Community Development worker is therefore to "educate the community in discovering 'real' needs, that is those which are strategic for development". 48. Julia Henderson speaks of an "educated and persuaded need" 49. which will lead to a real connection with the national plan. In making this kind of judgement it would appear to me that there is a real danger of destroying the very essence of Community Development in that it becomes little more than a means of implementing action decided upon from above. The decisions as to what needs are "strategic for development" will be made by those who consider themselves the experts on the 'national need'.

47. Popular Participation in Development Emerging Trends in C.D. United Nations New York 1971. P.38.

48. Ibid P.12.

49. Major Issues and Future Direction of C.D. C.D. Journal. Vol.9. No. 2. April. 1974.

those experts will not reside within the local communities.

I would suggest that this new trend leads us to the point where we pay only lip service to the 'felt needs' principle which emphasises the process in which people, thinking, discussing and deciding on what they really want and then planning organising and acting together to implement the decisions they have reached, develop more fully their potentialities as people and at the same time promote changes for the better in the environment in which they live.

What is being advocated by those promoting the 'induced felt need' is, I think, very similar to what has been attempted by successive governments in Australia and which was called 'social engineering' wherein a great deal of time and money was spent in trying to get people to accept and act on what other people had already decided for them. It is this approach that has shown itself to be unsuccessful for two basic reasons;

- i) "That wherever a development authority or agency has no effective means of forcing people to accept an innovation the power to decide whether to adopt it or not (i.e. the effective authority) rests with the people.
- ii) That no suggested innovation is effectively 'good' however important it may seem to the agency which sponsors it, unless ways can be found of getting people to implement it and go on implementing it". 50.

There is no escaping the fact that in practice, the moment the Community Development worker is involved in a process of inducement or persuasion, he is committed to a directive role. Given that the present policy in Australia toward Aboriginal affairs is based on a non directive approach we must now ask what is the role of the Community Development worker in respect of 'felt needs', if development is to take place?

The workers' purpose throughout is to help people come to an informed and therefore realistic decision. He does not want them to accept an idea, however well intentioned, unless and until they are sure it has "a favourable balance of advantage" for them. As Foster points out "Most culture change involves a social cost and regardless of however logical and desirable an innovation may appear to the scientifically trained specialist some of its secondary and tertiary consequences may be highly undesirable from the point of view of the people affected. 51. It is this fact which requires the worker to get people to look critically at any suggestion, they may be considering, both in order to get them to assess the full extent of all its potential advantages for them and at the same time, to identify any disadvantages they think might also be involved. If there are disadvantages, then the worker can promote realistic discussion in the light of all the available facts in order to get the people

51. Foster G.M. Traditional Cultures: The Impact of Technological Change Harper and Row. New York 1962. P.80

to think out whether, and if so just how, any such disadvantages can be avoided or reduced. 52. I would suggest that it is this approach to the principle of 'felt needs' which will, when widely applied, lead to a situation in which the ultimate goal of Aboriginal development through self determination will eventually be achieved.

11) Commitment: Before the Department of Aboriginal Affairs acts upon the request of a decentralising group for assistance, it requires "tangible evidence that sufficient people within the group concerned are committed to the project". 53. In some cases, money, saved in a community account may be indicative of commitment and of an ability to organise as a group. In other cases the use and organisation of voluntary labour, on a construction project for example, may provide sufficient evidence of commitment. Regardless of how it is demonstrated, it is considered essential to have tangible evidence that can be seen both by the group and by those working with them that there is sufficient commitment and organisation upon which the community project can be established.

Response: Once a group has identified its needs and set its priorities and demonstrated a commitment and ability to organise, the Department indicates its readiness to assist according to the terms set out by the community. Such assistance may take the form of a grant of money, the supply of materials,

52. These thoughts are drawn from T.R. Battens argument against the "induced needs" theorists as given in C.D.Journal Vol.9. April 1974. Pp96-101.

53. Decentralisation Trends in Arnhem Land. P.9.

specialist advice or the mobilisation of another technical agency.

It would also include liaising and communicating with outside agencies on behalf of the community, the training of personnel or the provision of legal advice. Whatever the assistance requested the Department is conscious of the need to demonstrate its ability to react positively and quickly so that the community can retain its confidence in the Department as a resource agent and upon which the community can rely for meaningful support and advice.

So that the Department can achieve the positive and quick response it desires, certain changes in organisational structure and procedures have been made and, I suggest, further changes will need to be considered if the current Community Development approach is to be developed.

One modification which has been made is that the Project Officers, who are the community link between the decentralising groups and the Department, are at a senior level within the hierarchy of the organisation; i.e. they are in close proximity, within the bureaucratic structure, to those who have the authority to approve or refuse requests for assistance.

Thus the number of persons and levels within the organisation through which an application for assistance must now pass, has been considerably reduced. This modification reflects one of the major difficulties faced by any organisation involving itself in community development work, and that is the need to reduce

the distance between the community and those who make the decisions within the organisation. In most bureaucratic structures it is normal practice for the more complex problems to be pushed higher up the hierarchy until a solution is found. Efficiency, on the other hand will be maximised "when the problems presented are ones capable of solution at the base level".⁵⁴ This would imply that those who constitute the base level of the organisation must have sufficient skills to deal with the problems rather than moving them further up the hierarchy for solution.

Du Sauntay suggests that it is necessary for a department operating in the Community Development field to "invent its own systems which cater for its need for flexibility in following the desires of people and which will permit initiative at village level".⁵⁵ This being the case one can perceive the need to have an organisation which is more flexible and responsive than one which is formally and rationally structured and in which all activities are clearly defined, and performed in a rigid and impersonal manner.

In respect of professional training, Bell hypothesises that "the higher the professional training, the higher the discretion" the worker should and will expect to use. Such a situation will result in producing an

54. The Professional Approach to Community Work. P.165.

55. Du Sauntay P. "The Organisation of a C.D. Programme".
Oxford University Press. London. 1962.

"expectation of freedom from supervisory control in the work setting". 56.

This leads me to the conclusion that the field worker, if given training to increase his professional skills, must be brought closer to the point of decision making within the Departmental organisation. This implies a 'broader' and 'shorter' hierarchical organisational pyramid. Such a revised structure would provide for a closer communication between the community and the decision makers within the organisation.

Although the Department is a long way from concentrating the locus of authority at the base level, it must, I believe, increase the ability of those who constitute the 'leading edge' of the organisation, to handle the increasingly complex problems which they face at the local level. The complexity of the problems leads to a need for broad based professional training, and in turn to a need for a professional organisation in which authority is spread widely. This need for closer contact is reflected in a proposal made at a seminar of Departmental Officers in which it was stated "The new structure should be flexible and responsive allowing for direct access by communities to the points in the hierarchy where decisions are made". 57.

The Project Officers who are currently involved with the decentralising communities, have sufficient experience and authority to deal with the majority of problems arising at local level and this ability has resulted in a more efficient service being provided for the decentralising groups. This

56. Bell C.D. 'Organisations and Human Behaviour'. Prentice Hall New Jersey. 1967.

57. Report of Seminar by Administrators in Aboriginal Affairs - New Policy Outline and Administrative Implications. Darwin 1973. P.3.

development must be duplicated if other communities are to have access to the same kind of services leading to the same positive results. In speaking of the need for an increased professionalism, both at the field level and at the higher levels of organisation, I am reminded of the comment made by Broom and Jones in which they make the point that "A good indicator of commitment would be the degree to which persons providing services for Aborigines were professionally qualified in their respective fields. An additional criterion of competence in knowledge about Aborigines and, where appropriate, their languages, would suggest whether personnel were being mobilised for a clearly understood task which was taken seriously". 58

Another major need for change to which the decentralisation programme has pointed is the need to establish an integrated approach in support of these groups. A United Nations paper states that "the integral solution of local problems is a principle concern in community development It is considered vital, in community development, that the different technical services and departments of government operate on the basis of a common approach to development". 59 By adopting a common approach it is suggested that a high degree of consistency and continuity will be achieved and this will help minimise the negative aspects such as "broken promises, conflicting or competitive demands, slackness in technical or material aid, and

58. Broom L. and Jones F.L. 'A Blanket a Year', Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973, P.74

59. Local Participation in Development Planning, United Nations Sales, No.E68, IV2, 1967, P.8

insufficient commitment to the basic principles of community development on the part of participating technical and administrative services" ⁶⁰. all of which can endanger the whole process of local development.

Representatives at the seminar previously mentioned, indicated that there was a need "for a common understanding in approach , particularly now that other departments are being involved in Aboriginal Affairs matters". ⁶¹.

From the very outset, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs has, in so far as the decentralising communities are concerned, been conscious of the need to co-ordinate the services offered by various federal departments such as Health, Education, Housing and Construction, Social Services and Labour. There have been for example, interdepartmental committees established at an executive level at which the Department of Health, Education and Aboriginal Affairs attempt to co-ordinate their activities within the field. These committees provide an opportunity to communicate 'horizontally' and to avoid duplication of effort.

Perhaps the most important outcome of the committee activities, however, is the awareness and development of a common approach which is important if conflict and confusion in the field situation is to be avoided. Because the principles of Community Development are now being

60. Ibid. P.9.

61. New Policy Outline and Administrative Implications. P.1.

discussed by officers at a high level within the various departments, an awareness of the principles and the methods they imply, is permeating throughout all levels of the organisation and not being restricted to those who undergo a specific training programme. Thus the situation is developing wherein field officers are gaining confidence through the support and understanding shown by officers of the higher echelons.

Members of the community also benefit from this integrated approach in that they are not confronted with a confusing or conflicting presentation of services and advice. In fact, the number of government officers with whom the community actually communicate on a face to face basis is often restricted to two or three persons. These persons are invited to act as communicators to advisers by the group themselves. The advisers maintain a close liaison with each other on methods of approach and the means by which a particular service can or should be delivered to comply with the needs of the group.

It is towards this development and strengthening of a co-ordinating mechanism for purposes of concerted action at the local, regional and national levels, to which those agencies involved in the field of Aboriginal Affairs must give their attention. It should be stressed, however, that this co-ordination is not merely related to the administrative mechanisms but more importantly to a co-ordination of attitude whereby all agencies and their employees have an understanding of and a commitment to the Community Development approach.

I would not wish to imply, however, that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs be given the role of overall co-ordinator of the Government's efforts in the field of Aboriginal Affairs. Past overseas experience has shown "that a Community Development Department should not be saddled with the task of co-ordinating the services of other probably equally competent departments which will certainly resent the assumption of superior status implied in an assignment of co-ordination to a new entrant in government". 62.

The Department can more profitably play an active role in promoting the principles and methods associated with Community Development amongst those who have contact with the Aboriginal communities. It has already moved in this direction by sponsoring a number of interdepartmental and inter agency conferences on Community Development. It has also engaged the services of the Department of Continuing Education of the Australian National University in developing training seminars for field staff. These moves when fully developed will play an important role in bringing about a common approach by all agencies operating in the field of Aboriginal Affairs.

62. "The Outlook for Community Development. International Conference on Social Work. International Society for Community Development. 1967. P.185.

Consultation and Decision Making.

The non-directive approach to administration would imply that there is consultation with those relying upon the administrative services offered. A recent report on the Department's activities states that "relevant departmental" and mission officers in the Northern Territory have sought to withdraw from directing positions in Aboriginal communities and to act as community advisers, this involving a continuous consultation process the consultation process is most complex the Department does not claim yet to be fully effective in this field" 63.

The core problem of this issue is the identification of the decision making authority within the local community. Unless one can have a direct and reliable communication with the local and legitimate 'decision makers' when planning administrative responses and actions, then the integrity of such responses and activities must be suspect.

As mentioned previously, Aboriginal society is characterised by an absence of any highly visible form of hierarchical organisation and as a consequence the decision making authority or 'government' within a specific group is often obscure. The traditional response to this situation by successive alien administrations has been to induce the local communities to develop democratically elected bodies such as village councils or town councils.

63. Report of Activities 19.12.72 to 30.6.74 D.A.A. P.14

in the hope that those institutions would provide a legitimate communication point and an acceptable decision making authority with whom the outside administration could liaise and communicate. This approach has, in the majority of cases, been very unsuccessful. In her survey of Hermannsburg, Elizabeth Sommerlad states that "the hierarchical model adopted by whites has influenced the Aborigines but their kinship systems mitigate against it".⁶⁴

The elected council, although given status by the alien authorities such as the Government, is not considered a legitimate source of authority within the traditional context of Aboriginal society and, as such, few Aborigines consider decisions, taken by elected councils, as being binding upon them.

There is considerable controversy and difference of opinion amongst anthropologists as to the sources of authority within Aboriginal society. Among earlier writers there was a marked inclination to assume that in every Australian tribe, government, both in sacred and secular affairs, ultimately rested in the hands of the old men.⁶⁵ Current thinking suggests that when large scale activities involving the whole of the local community needed to be organised "the task fell to every man of mature age in the group"⁶⁶

- 64. Sommerlad E. 'Community Development at Hermannsburg' Australian National University Centre for Continuing Education, Canberra. 1973. P.67
- 65. See A.P. Elkin. Aboriginal Men of High Degree. Sydney 1945
- 66. Meggitt M.J. Indigenous Forms of Government Among the Australian Aborigines. Readings in Australian and Pacific Anthropology Melbourne University Press. London 1966. P.72

Because the non-directive approach to administration relies so heavily on two-way communication between 'agency and client', the need for greater ability and competence in the skills of communication on the part of the field contact personnel is of prime importance. It is also important that those at the higher levels of the organisation are aware of and have empathy with the cultural environment of any particular group upon whom they may be passing some administrative judgement or planning some response as a result of consultations.

Summarising this chapter, I have attempted to show that the response by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, to the decentralising communities is based on the principles which underly the Community Development process. I have suggested that if this approach is to be extended to the wider field of Aboriginal Affairs, changes to the departmental structure will need to be considered and a greater degree of 'horizontal' communication with other agencies will need to be achieved. Furthermore I have indicated that the non directive approach is dependent upon meaningful two-way communication and consultation and that the capacity of the Department to achieve the necessary consultation and communication will initially depend upon the recognition of traditional sources of authority and understanding the local decision making processes.

CHAPTER IV

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND DECENTRALISATION.

Background.

The first detailed statement setting out the educational requirements for Aborigines in Australia, as determined by non-Aborigines, was made in the form of resolutions carried at a conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Welfare Authorities held in Canberra, in 1948. The resolutions on education were set out in the following terms :

"This conference -

a) considers that increased provision for the education of natives should be made by the Governments concerned.

b) re-affirms the following recommendations made by the meeting of Directors of Native Affairs of Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory held at Melbourne on the 3rd and 4th February, 1947:

"In addition to education provided in Government institutions and missions, it is recommended that provision be made at suitable centres for the education of children of working natives and that teachers should be fully qualified teachers of the Education Department with preference given to those having a knowledge of anthropology and native education.

The aim of educational policy should be to give natives, full and mixed

blood, a training to fit them for ordinary avocations of life, e.g. artisans, mechanics, farm or station workers etc, with a view to their absorption into the general social and economic structure and to qualify them to hold positions of responsibility in Government institutions.

As a practical encouragement the Commonwealth Government should provide a number of bursaries for post-primary education.

c) is of the opinion that standard regional curricula should be prepared conjointly by Commonwealth and State authorities directed along lines to fit the Aboriginal into the State economy; and

d) considers that where education is imparted by missions, teachers, should be trained in methods of native education and that the mission schools curricula should conform to the standard regional curricula referred to in (c) " 69.

The guiding principle accepted by the conference was that the Aborigines were to be assimilated into the wider Australian community and that this could be most efficiently achieved through effective education programmes.

A further conference was convened in September, of 1949 at which the organisation and administration of Aboriginal education in the Northern

69. Dunn S. and Tatz C. (edt) Aborigines and Education. Sun Books. Melbourne 1969. P.84.

Territory was discussed. Amongst other things, this conference produced a draft curriculum the aims of which were stated as:

- " (i) to provide a course of instruction appropriate to the particular needs of the Australian native;
- (ii) to assist the native to develop his abilities to the full;
- (iii) to help the native to adjust himself to living in a culture controlled predominantly by white people so that he may eventually be able to accept the full responsibilities of citizenship; and
- (iv) to make the school an integral part of each native settlement so that the adult as well as the child can participate in its activities." 70

Syllabuses based on these aims and reflecting the goal of assimilation were used in Aboriginal schools within the Northern Territory until approximately 1964. In common with most other colonial administrations the type of educational system provided for the indigenous population was of the kind which duplicated the westernised formal school system with emphasis being given to primary school education.

In March 1964, the Watts/Gallacher Report made certain recommendations regarding the curriculum and teaching methods being used in Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory. 71 The report set out what was considered to be the fundamental principles which were to underlie future

70. Ibid. P.86

71. B.H. Watts and J.D. Gallacher, An Investigation into the curriculum and teaching methods used in Aboriginal Schools in the N.T. (1964)

Aboriginal education and these were:

- " 1. Aboriginal children should have full equality of educational opportunity with all other Australian children.
2. The education of Aboriginal children must take cognisance of the European and Aboriginal cultures and must be developed in such a way as to help the Aborigines to achieve their own integration of Aboriginal and European beliefs and ways.
3. The Aboriginal culture must be recognised and respected by all teachers and instructors.
4. Curriculum content and methods of instruction should be so planned and organised as to ensure to the fullest extent the transfer of school learnings to village living.
5. Education as an instrument of social progress must be conceived as a continuing process and emphasis should be placed on the development to appropriate programmes for all age groups. Every effort should be made to lessen the dichotomy that exists between young and old.
6. Education must be a basic concern of all settlement and mission staff members, whatever their specific field, their primary function must be seen as educational if planning and action are to be fully effective." 72

In addition, the major recommendations contained in the report referred to school organisation, the extension of education to the

post-primary level and the need to provide pre-school education to as many Aboriginal children of pre-school age as possible, all of which was accepted by the Government and has since been duly implemented.

It has been suggested that the major contribution of the report to Aboriginal education was "the emphasis which it placed on the cultural differences between Aboriginal and other children and the strong consideration which the committee suggested would need to be given to these differences in establishing the curricula and developing teaching methods in the special schools". 73

In 1971, Dr Watts (co-author of the Watts/Gallacher Report) organised a workshop on Aboriginal education with a view to determining priorities for action and research in this field. Matters relating to the social and cultural factors of Aboriginal education, early primary and secondary school programmes and teacher development, were considered and recommendations made as to future priorities. These recommendations continued to reflect the principles which had been stated in the 1964 Watts/Gallacher Report and continue to form a basis for the on-going programme being developed in the Northern Territory.

Some recent developments have included a greater emphasis being placed on the role and training of Aboriginal teaching assistants who have in the past been engaged in a range of para-professional and social roles within the schools and assisted in an attempt to bridge the culture gap between school and home.

In 1974, nineteen Aboriginal teaching assistants in the Northern Territory progressed through levels of service and courses of training to be accepted by the Commonwealth Teaching Service as qualified teachers.

Colleges of Advanced Education are now showing interest in providing not only short semester courses in Aboriginal culture, race relations and introductions to Aboriginal languages but also graduate diploma courses for teachers on the above subjects, in the hope that the teacher will be equipped to provide a more sensitive and appropriate form of education for Aboriginal children. Being aware of the moves towards improving the educational services for Aboriginal communities, I would nevertheless contend that it continues to be an unfortunate fact that, in the main, the principles and recommendations outlined as a result of the various committees, conferences and workshops are only occasionally reflected in the actual practice of education programmes at the field level.

I would seriously question, for example, the extent to which curriculum and teaching methods are organised and planned "to ensure the transfer of school learnings to village living". In common with many developing countries, the adolescent is not given a training relevant to his own social and economic environment, with the consequence that we have the classic syndrome, wherein there are too many students aspiring to occupations beyond their own capacity

and beyond the economic capacity of their local environment. This leads to unemployment and accumulating frustration in the youthful generations, which then becomes a source of continuing social unrest.

The principle stating that education "must be conceived as a continuing process wherein emphasis should be placed on the development of appropriate programmes for all age groups" is not reflected in the ad hoc approach to adult education for Aborigines in the Northern Territory. The responsibility for Adult Education programmes rests primarily with volunteers at the field level who may or may not have had any teaching experience and almost all of whom have had no training in the methods, skills, techniques, or philosophy of Adult Education. The initiative for starting an Adult Education programme would appear to be with the local volunteer and he/she cannot depend on any real support in the form of guidance or supervision from government organisations. Certainly there are vocational training courses provided but these cater mainly for the adolescent and require the student to leave his/her home environment.

As previously stated, it is suggested in the Watts/Gallacher report that mission and settlement staff members, regardless of their specific field of specialisation, "should consider their primary function as being educational if planning and action are to be fully effective". It has been my experience to observe that a large percentage of staff on settlements and missions are often short on time and inclination to accept the role of educator.

I have often been told by tradesmen and clerical staff that as they are not paid as teachers they will not consider themselves to be teachers. Often the reluctance of the staff member to consider himself as an educator reflects the paucity or total lack of training the staff member has been given and his ignorance of the place he/she holds in the overall programme of Aboriginal development.

To my mind, our present planning for educational development rests primarily upon the "expansion" model which is described by P.H. Coombs in the following terms: "The main thrust of the simple expansionist strategy has been to enlarge the existing educational establishment as rapidly as possible with relatively little change in the structure, logistics, content and methods. The cardinal aim has been to boost the number and percentage of young people attending educational institutions at every level. Consistent with this aim, the principal measuring rods of progress have been the statistics of enrolments and 'participation rates' and of overall educational expenditures".⁷⁴ Such an approach is not sufficient for the present needs of the Aboriginal communities.

74. Castle, E.B. 'Education for Self-help'. Oxford University Press, London, 1972, P.102

A recent statement made by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs reflects these concerns: "In programmes for Aboriginal education and training the aim should always be to provide opportunities for children and for adults, not to coerce and direct them through a kind of 'force feeding' education process. Successful educational strategies cannot be based on the view that a future for Aboriginals can only be assured by educating children in such a way that they will reject the values of their parents and accept those of 'Australian society'. Educational and vocational training programmes should rather be designed to provide what Aboriginal parents see as needed for their children and what Aboriginal youth and adults want for themselves programmes can be flexible enough to be responsive to that demand rather than being designed rigidly to meet the needs as conceived by educational administrators." 75

I believe that there is now some evidence of a new preparedness on the part of some educationalists to consider and experiment with new strategies and methods in respect of Aboriginal education. Two examples of such a preparedness are to be found in the approach being adopted by the Department of Education in support of decentralising communities.

75. DAA Submission to Senate Standing Committee and Social Environment, etc. on Aboriginal Affairs, P.10

Example I

A recent development within the Department of Education has been the appointment of a Senior Education Adviser (Anthropology) whose duties include advising the Department on the aspirations and requirements of Aboriginal communities in respect of education. The officer, who is a qualified teacher and has a Ph.D., in Anthropology, provides a direct link through which a community can communicate with the departmental hierarchy. This approach has shown itself to be very effective in those situations involving decentralising communities.

An extract from a report of a meeting between the Senior Education Adviser (Anthropology) and members of a decentralising group will illustrate the type of information gained through open consultation, information which in the past has not been given serious consideration but which I would suggest is of immediate importance.

"Q. Why do you want a school?

A. It is very important for our children to learn.

Q. What sort of teacher do you want?

A. First of all, Aboriginal teachers to start.

Q. How many teachers do you want?

A. One for a start.

Q. What do you want them to teach?

A. Counting, mathematics, reading, writing in English,
Aboriginal culture.

Q. Is the school for children?

A. The school will include education for adults to learn a little English.

Q. Do adult people need a school?

A. Adult education will include Aboriginal culture and ideas. There is very little education now like this here (mission). Caledon Bay will be a good place for teaching painting.

Q. What language or languages do you want used in the school?

A. Both languages, Djapu and English. We want to communicate in both, but Djapu first.

Q. Do you want a school building?

A. We are thinking about an open-air one, a hut with bark and bush materials. Later on we may build a better school."

After further discussion, one Aboriginal participant asked what would happen if the single Caledon Bay teacher became ill.

A. 'We will look to the people locally and train a group of people gradually as teachers.'

Another question concerned the degree of assistance required from Europeans.

A. 'Everything concerning schools will be run only by the local people, but we will appreciate the ideas and help of Europeans when we ask them. All responsibility will be with parents.'

Finally, a question was asked by Aborigines as to where post-primary and vocational education would take place.

- A. 'If and when anybody has a good plan, he will come to Yirrkala (mission) to train.' 76

In analysing the answers given to the questions, one is struck by the very real concern the parents have for regaining control over the educational processes to which their children are exposed in their endeavour to reduce the dichotomy which exists between the older and younger people within their community.

Moreover, the answers would imply an awareness on the part of the Aboriginal people that there is a need to concentrate initially on the content of educational programmes rather than the acquisition of the material symbols of the formal westernised school system such as modern school buildings and the latest technological teaching aids.

Again, I think the last answer in particular would suggest that the people require that whatever learning takes place, it should be relevant to the local social and economic environment, i.e. that what is taught and learnt must be seen by the group as being useful to the group ('a good plan').

76. Brandl, M. Visits to Outstations in Yirrkala Area 4th-22nd June 1974.
Department of Education, Darwin, Pp. 3-4

Finally, the answers given reflect an awareness and recognition of the very principles which have been advocated in reports, such as the Watts/Gallacher Report, but which have consistently been avoided or ignored at the field and administrative levels. It would appear that the Aboriginal people themselves would, if given the opportunity, show no such reluctance in applying those principles to which teachers and administrators have only paid lip service in the past.

Example II

In an attempt to meet the needs and requirements of the decentralising groups, the Department of Education has now introduced the novel concept of the 'visiting teacher'. The visiting teacher is based at the 'parent' school (i.e. the school which the children previously attended at the mission or settlement) and is required to visit each of the groups who request his assistance. A visit may be only for a few days or as long as three weeks. The duties of the teacher include:

- (a) assisting the Aboriginal teacher in the development of a school programme to suit the needs of the particular community;
- (b) assisting with programming, preparation of work and development of teaching strategies;
- (c) carrying out a form of in-service education with the Aboriginal teacher;
- (d) conducting classes in English and other subject areas in consultation with the Aboriginal teacher; and
- (e) liaising with the parent school for supplies and equipment for the school. 77

The visiting teachers must be prepared to:

- (i) camp out for periods of two or three weeks at a time regularly throughout the year, in areas with minimum facilities;
- (ii) attempt to learn the language of the Aboriginal community with which they would be working;
- (iii) experiment with a form of education to suit the expressed needs of the Aboriginal community; and
- (iv) recognise the Aboriginal teacher as the person in charge of school and work in a co-operative manner with him. 78

As this experiment was only initiated in August 1974, it would be premature to pass any judgment upon it, but it is an indication that there is now a willingness to move towards a situation where the educator can be seen to 'be practising what he preaches'. It is a move which must be developed and expanded if the necessary strategies are to be developed in order to provide a meaningful and relevant form of education for Aboriginal communities.

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

One of the major concerns expressed by non-Aboriginal observers of the decentralisation movement is related to the potential for the communities to become economically viable. As Coombs point out "It would serve little purpose if we free Aborigines from the bonds of bureaucratic paternalism and at the same time make them wholly dependent upon financial subvention from the community". 79

To what extent then can these communities develop industries which will ensure sufficient income to enable their members to participate within a cash economy and satisfy their various needs?

The prospects in the Arnhem Land Reserve are, in my view, very encouraging. There is already considerable evidence to suggest that the various communities are able to utilise traditional skills and resources to provide sufficient cash income to satisfy the current needs of their individual members. I would anticipate that as the 'level of expectations' rises, as it no doubt will through the process of aculturation, the need to improve the output of existing industries or the development of new industries will become apparent.

79. Decentralisation Trends Among Aboriginal Communities. P.22

It is important to recognise the need to "make the economic conditions of Aborigines reflect their own aspirations, efforts and capacities".^{82.} If this aim is to be achieved, those responsible for the planning of economic enterprises in support of Aboriginal communities will need to consider new and more flexible approaches to economic development than those presently employed. One such approach referred to as Intermediate Technology has, in my opinion, a direct relevance to the decentralising communities and indeed to all Aboriginal communities in Australia. I therefore propose to discuss the concept of Intermediate technology in some detail within the remaining space of this chapter.

Intermediate Technology

Until recent years it had been assumed that the growth of industry in underdeveloped communities could and would follow the same pattern as that which accelerated the production of wealth in the western industrialised nations. Such a pattern has, however, proved to be inappropriate for developing countries as modern industrialisation was, and continues to be, based on the needs of communities rich in capital and short of labour. The poorer nations are short of capital and rich in labour, with the result that the technology which was introduced by the richer nations to aid the poorer nations has resulted in methods of production, standards of consumption, criteria of success or failure, systems of values and behaviour patterns which, being appropriate only to conditions of affluence already achieved, fix the poor countries in an ever growing dependence on the rich.

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To illustrate the degree of dependence created when an underdeveloped country attempts to emulate the production and consumption patterns of the developed western nations, Schumacher gives the example of a textile factory in Africa, where the manager of the mill indicated with obvious pride that his factory was at the highest technological level to be found anywhere in the world. Asked why the process was so highly automated, he said "African labour, unused to industrial work, would make mistakes, whereas automated machinery does not make mistakes. The quality standards demanded today are such that my product must be perfect to be able to find a market. My task is to eliminate the human factor".⁸³ In addition, because of inappropriate quality standards, all his equipment had to be imported from the most advanced countries, and of course the sophisticated equipment demanded that all higher management and maintenance personnel had to be imported. Even the raw materials had to be imported because the locally-grown cotton was too short for top quality yarn and the postulated standards demanded the use of a high percentage of man-made fibres.⁸⁴ Obviously, this type of situation quickly destroys the possibility for the indigenous peoples to become self-reliant or independent of outside aid. "The results are unintentional neo-colonialism and hopelessness for the poor."⁸⁵

83. Small is Beautiful, P.163

84. Ibid. Pp. 163-164

85. Ibid. P.163

The problem, therefore, is how to create a healthy economic life in the rural villages of the underdeveloped world without increasing the dependency of those villages upon the developed world. As seen by those economists who promote the concepts of intermediate technology, the primary need is for a drastic increase in 'work places', not necessarily to increase global output per man, but to maximise work opportunities for the unemployed and under-employed. It is considered more important that everybody should produce something than that a few should produce much, for in work the poor man sees a future whilst without it he can see none.

"What the poor need most of all", writes Schumacher, "is simple things - building materials, clothing, household goods, agricultural implements - and a better return for their agricultural products. In many places, they also most urgently need trees, water and crop storage facilities. Most agricultural populations would be helped immensely if they could themselves do the first stages of processing their products. All these fields are ideal for "middle way technology".⁸⁶ What is being questioned, therefore, is the premise that major technologies are appropriate for all development situations, a premise which is no longer considered to be valid.

There is a growing recognition both within aid-giving and aid-receiving countries that a new approach to technical innovation is needed. The essence of this approach is ...

86. Education for Self-help, P.57

"that whereas the conventional approach to industrialisation takes technology as a given factor in development, as if it were an unchangeable force to which all other factors must adapt themselves, those who advocate the new approach start by considering technology as an important variable element which can and should be adapted so as to work in harmony with the economic, social and cultural environments of developing countries". 87.

The aims of technical innovation, therefore, are seen to be fourfold:

- 1) The stimulation of economic progress through the better use of available natural resources and labour power.
- 2) The promotion of social progress by enabling the mass of population to share in the benefits and participate in new activities.
- 3) The mobilisation of widespread technical improvement compared with what now exists in the country concerned.
- 4) Adaptation to the Society's changing ability to pay for them and use them effectively. 88

Schumacher formulates the tasks of rural development in four propositions:

- 1) That work-places should be created where people are living now, not in urban areas to which workless people migrate.
- 2) That work-places should be created by a minimum capital outlay in tools and imports
- 3) That production methods should be relatively simple, demands for high skills at a minimum, not only in the process of production but in the management of finance and marketing
- 4) That production should be mainly derived from local materials and for local use. 89.

87. Schumacher, E.F. and McRobie, G. Intermediate Technology and its Administration Implications. Journal of Administration Overseas, P.91

88. Ibid, P.92

Two conditions are considered necessary if these aims are to be achieved:

- a) Development must be organised on a regional basis.
- b) An 'appropriate' or 'intermediate' technology should be employed.

Intermediate technology is defined by Schumacher in the following terms: "If we define the level of technology in terms of equipment cost per workplace, we can call the indigenous technology of a typical developing country - symbolically speaking - a £1 technology, while that of the developed countries could be called a £1,000 technology. The gap between these two technologies is so enormous that a transition from the one to the other is simply impossible. In fact, the current attempt of the developing countries to infiltrate the £1,000 technology into their economies kills off the £1 technology at an alarming rate, destroying traditional workplaces much faster than modern workplaces can be created and thus leaves the poor in a more desperate and helpless position than ever before. If effective help is to be brought to those who need it most, a technology is required which would range in some intermediate position between the £1 technology and the £1,000 technology - a £100 technology." 90.

It is assumed that the simpler tools and operations of intermediate technology would bring development expertise within the capacity of enterprising local men over wide areas.

89. Education for Self-Help, P.57

90. Small is Beautiful, P.150

I believe that this kind of approach has a direct relevance for the decentralising communities. In fact, there is evidence that such an 'intermediate technology' is being used in some cases already, e.g. windmills rather than diesel engines and pumping equipment for drawing water. The members of the various groups have, as previously stated, indicated their desire to use equipment which can be operated and maintained at the local level by indigenous labour, and which does not require the permanent presence of a non-Aboriginal.

This situation arises, in part, from the fact that most technical innovation which has been introduced at the various settlements and missions has been of the kind that requires a high level of operating or managerial skill. These skills have not been available within the local indigenous work-force and so non-Aboriginal labour has been introduced to maintain and operate the new technology. Maningrida Settlement is a good example of how the introduction of a modern, sophisticated technology for timber milling and fishing has led to the dramatic growth of non-Aboriginals within that community and upon

whom the Aboriginal population became more and more dependent for their employment and survival.

It does not require a great deal of imagination to recognise the similarity between the situations in which the developing countries and the Aboriginal communities find themselves vis-a-vis 'foreign aid'. Both are dependent upon the rich; both are short of capital but 'rich' in labour; both have traditional cultural and value systems as opposed to modern value systems; both have a need to create more workplaces to provide employment; both are seeking economic independence.

Much of our current attitudes towards the economic development of Aboriginal communities reflects the old assimilation ideals wherein the Aboriginal was to be absorbed into the dominant European community of Australia. As such, the Aborigines would need to have the same standards of living and have the same modern value systems and the same range of skills which would enable him to be employed in a modern industrialised economy. These attitudes have led to the introduction of sophisticated technology within Aboriginal communities in the well-intentioned belief that there should be no difference of standards between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. But, as with the developing countries, this has led to the creation of workplaces, not for Aborigines, but for an increasing number of 'alien experts'.

Intermediate technology is not just a theory upon which academics are able to intellectualise for their own satisfaction. It is being applied in the field in many developing countries throughout the world

and is supported by both government and voluntary agencies in both developing and developed countries.

The Intermediate Technology Development Group Limited, for example, is a private non-profit making organisation based in London concerned with the identification and application of small, low-cost technologies in the rural areas of developing countries. They have in recent years developed a programme of work with the object of systematically assembling and presenting, in simple form, existing information about low-cost water development techniques. This is essentially a practical task of documentation, or identifying all sources of such information, sifting through it and presenting it in simple terms that lead to action. 91 This is but one of their many programmes.

Once the information is gathered, there remains the more important task of implementation and this requires not so much co-ordination as what Schumacher describes as an 'infrastructure'. This infrastructure must facilitate the following:

1. Communications - to enable each field worker or group of field workers to know what other work is going on in the geographical or 'functional' territory in which they are working so as to facilitate the direct exchange of information.

2. Information brokerage - to assemble on a systematic basis and to disseminate relevant information on appropriate technologies for developing countries, particularly on low-cost methods relating to building, water and power, crop storage, processing, small scale manufacturing, health services and so forth.
3. Feedback - The transmission of research problems from the field workers in developing countries to research establishments (including university departments, specialised institutions, business firms etc.) in the advanced countries, wherever the facilities exist for these problems to be effectively dealt with.
4. Creating and co-ordinating 'sub-structures' or 'action groups' in the developing countries themselves. They would aim to be in touch with all field workers operating in the country, to facilitate communications and the exchange of information. They would also act as 'verification centres' to test and prove new methods, materials and equipment which, having been provided by advanced countries, appear suitable for application but may need modification to fit specific local conditions. 92

With such an infrastructure established, the implementation of an intermediate technology can and is becoming a reality.

In accepting the principles underlying intermediate technology, it will be necessary to achieve a change of attitude amongst many people operating in the field of Aboriginal affairs, especially those whose jobs depend upon the sophisticated technology. It is an attitude that will not accept that intermediate technology is just a means by which the rich are withholding the best and making the poor put up with something inferior and outdated. It is an attitude which sees Intermediate technology as a means by which the Aboriginal communities can be given assistance which is relevant to their specific situations and which avoids creating a dependence upon the donor. It is viewed as a means by which local materials and local labour are utilised to their full capacity and which has as its final aim a true state of independence for the indigenous population. Intermediate technology requires an attitude that will oppose policies which promote large capital - intensive projects employing sophisticated technological innovations, even though they may be administratively convenient to handle, or more photogenic, or more prestigious. Perhaps such attitudes will not be easily accepted within a national community whose members are so totally committed to the process of industrialisation and modernisation and whose patterns of production and consumption are considered to be amongst the most modern in the world. And yet, changes of attitude are achieved, as evidenced by the Government's acceptance of the principle of land rights, bi-lingual education, legal aid, decentralisation, etc. Perhaps intermediate technology will soon find its way onto this list of new innovations accepted by the Australian community.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted, within the space of this paper, to draw the reader's attention to certain significant developments which are taking place within the field of Aboriginal affairs in Australia. In so doing, I have indicated what I believe to be some of the more important implications of those developments from the point of view of both the Aboriginal groups concerned and the Australian Government. In pointing to the possible implications, I have suggested that certain action must be taken if the Government's policy of self-determination is to be given any chance of success and is to become a reality.

Many of the innovations which have been suggested are already evident in the development of the decentralising communities. I have shown that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs has adopted an approach in respect of these communities which is based upon the principles most closely associated with Community Development. There is, however, a need to consider the restructuring of the departmental organisation in order to facilitate the more efficient and fruitful development of the non-directive approach now adopted by the Department.

Encouraging signs of innovation are to be seen in the field of education in respect of the decentralising communities.

These changes promote the real participation of the people in the development of school programmes and in so doing makes the education system that much more relevant to them and their children. Such innovations must, in my opinion, be developed on a wider scale so that they may be applied to all schools in all Aboriginal communities.

As with education, there needs to be developed a new attitude towards economic development in respect of Aboriginal communities whereby we can learn to think in terms of many small-scale units rather than large expensive and technologically sophisticated units. Modern industrialised economics with their emphasis on such abstractions as G.N.P., rate of growth; capital/output ratio; input/output analysis, etc. etc., with their related value systems and techniques are not the solution to the problems faced by the developing societies, and this includes the Aboriginal communities in Australia. I have suggested that the concept of Intermediate Technology is an approach with direct relevance to the Aboriginal communities and, as such, have indicated the need for both government and non-government agencies to give serious consideration to its application in the field.

During the course of this paper I have attempted to demonstrate that community development has an important role to play in the overall development of Aboriginal communities; that there is a need on the part

of all those concerned to perceive themselves as being a part of a total and integrated programme based upon those principles which are referred to collectively as Community Development, and whose aim is attainment to 'self-determination' for the Aboriginal people in their economic, social and political affairs.

APPENDIX 'A'

Australian Labour Party Policies in Aboriginal Affairs. 1973.

The Federal Conference of the Australian Labour Party restated policy on Aboriginal Affairs at its July 1973 biennial meeting in the following terms :

- a) The Australian Government to assume responsibility for all Aboriginals and Islanders by establishing the principle of elective consultative procedures.
 - b) The Australian Parliament to legislate against all forms of discrimination, as part of a programme to provide equal rights and opportunities for all persons.
 - c) Aboriginals to receive the standard rate of pay for the job and to receive the same industrial protection as other Australians. The Australian Government, within its own area of responsibility, to provide career opportunities to the maximum extent. Special provision for employment to be provided in regions where Aboriginals reside.
 - d) Educational opportunities to be provided in no way inferior to those of the general community, with special programmes at all levels where necessary to overcome cultural deprivation and meet special needs.
- Pre-school education to be provided for every Aboriginal child, including

teaching in indigenous languages where desirable. Adult education to be provided as broadly as possible. A programme of technical and managerial training to be developed and the co-operation of the trade union movement to be sought in recognising Aboriginal skills.

- e) All Aboriginal families to be properly housed within a period of 10 years. In compensation for the loss of traditional lands, funds to be made available to assist Aborigines who wish to purchase their own homes, taking into account personal wishes as to design and location. Trained social workers to be provided in areas where such housing has been undertaken under the jurisdiction of local communities.
- f) Aborigines to have the right to receive social services in the same way as other Australians.
- g) All Aboriginal lands to be vested in a public trust or trusts composed of Aborigines or Islanders as appropriate. Exclusive corporate land rights to be granted to Aboriginal communities which retain a strong tribal structure or demonstrate a potential for corporate action in regard to land at present reserved for the use of Aborigines, or where traditional occupancy according to tribal custom can be established from anthropological or other evidence. No Aboriginal land to be alienated or assigned for any use including mineral development except with the approval of both the Trust and Parliament. Such trusts or groups shall be entitled to use capital fund investments to establish

community or co-operative ventures for the benefit of local inhabitants. All Aborigines jointly to share the benefits from the development of natural resources including minerals, on Aboriginal Lands. The sacred sites of Aborigines to be mapped and protected.

- h) A Parliamentary Committee to continue to study all aspects of Aboriginal policy and to report regularly and constantly.
- i) Every Australian child to be taught the history and culture of Aboriginal and Island Australians as an integral part of the history of Australia.
- j) Labour will maintain a health offensive to eliminate leprosy, yaws hookworm, tuberculosis and contagious diseases and to reduce infant mortality. Efficient mortality statistics to be maintained to measure the effectiveness of these policies among Aborigines.

administered by the Regional Land Councils with provision for permits to be issued locally in some cases.

- 5) The Department of the Northern Territory within the next two years should do all it can to clarify the ownership of unbranded cattle and wild horses on Aboriginal Reserves, and hand over to Aboriginal ownership or sell all those belonging to the Crown. After that all unbranded cattle and wild horses would become the property of Aboriginal landholders.
- 6) Prospecting and exploitation of mineral resources on reserves, should only be undertaken with the consent of the local Aboriginal community, unless Parliament resolved that mining was necessary in the national interest. Any exploration licence or development lease should be negotiated by the appropriate Land Council rather than the local community.

Other Lands.

- 1) A number of other areas, including Willowra, Kildurk, Delissaville, Tanami Desert Wildlife Sanctuary and Santa Teresa, should be treated in the same way as Aboriginal Reserves, and a number of areas of vacant Crown Land should not be alienated to non Aboriginals before 1976, thus giving Aboriginals time to formulate claims.
- 2) All possible steps should be taken to arrest and reverse the trend of Aboriginals drifting away from pastoral lease land and into towns and larger Aboriginal communities. The proposed Aboriginal Lands

Commission should, inter alia, enquire into traditional Aboriginal claims to pastoral lease lands, register these claims and make recommendations upon them.

(Note: The Government has undertaken to provide up to 5 million dollars per year for 10 years to acquire suitable pastoral properties for Aboriginal groups to develop their own cattle projects. Four properties have been purchased so far: Mimili Station (South Australia); Kildurk Station (Northern Territory); Willowra Station (Northern Territory); Panter Downs (Western Australia).

APPENDIX 'D'

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. Box 4821,
DARWIN, N.T. 5794 73/860

12 July 1974

GENERAL CIRCULAR: NO. 74/99

HEADS OF ALL SCHOOLS
HEAD OFFICE AND REGIONAL OFFICE PERSONNEL

APPLICATIONS FOR POSITIONS AS "VISITING TEACHERS"
TO OUTSTATION ABORIGINAL SCHOOLS.

Applications are invited from interested teachers to act as "Visiting teachers" to "outstation" Aboriginal schools established by Aboriginal groups which have recently moved away from settlements and missions.

2. Numbers of these groups have erected bough shelters or tents to serve as schools and have appointed their own teachers. Most of these teachers are untrained and have had little or no experience in schools. In one or two schools non-Aboriginal teachers have been requested on a full-time basis. However, the general feeling among people of these communities is that they do not want a non-Aboriginal teacher living permanently with them, but that they would be quite happy for a visiting teacher to camp for two or three weeks at the school. In the schools so far established, there is a demand to learn in both English and the local Aboriginal language.

3. It is envisaged that "Visiting teachers" would be based in the parent school, i.e. the school which the children previously attended, and pay regular visits to the outstation school(s) for which he has a responsibility. The "Visiting teacher" would be responsible to the Head of the parent school.

4. Duties would include:

- (a) Assisting the Aboriginal teacher in the development of a school programme to suit the needs of the particular community.
- (b) Assisting with programming, preparation of work and development of teaching strategies.
- (c) Carrying out a form of in-service education with the Aboriginal teacher.
- (d) Conducting classes in English and other subject areas in consultation with the Aboriginal teacher.
- (e) Liaising with the parent school for supplies and equipment for the school.

5. Aboriginal people have generally requested that the visiting teacher be married and from 30 to 50 years of age. It is desirable that appointees have some background in Australian Aboriginal anthropology and linguistics.

6. Appointees should be prepared to:

- (a) camp out for periods of two or three weeks at a time regularly throughout the year, in areas with a minimum of facilities;
- (b) attempt to learn the language of the Aboriginal community with which they would be working;
- (c) experiment with a form of education to suit the expressed needs of the Aboriginal community;
- (d) recognise the Aboriginal teacher as the person in charge of school and work in a co-operative manner with him.

7. While the Department will be attempting to obtain transport for the appointees, this cannot be guaranteed at this stage. Arrangements can be made with appointees who own their own vehicles for a mileage allowance to be paid for the regular trips to and from the outstation school. In some cases transport to outstations may be arranged with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs personnel.

8. Appointees will be required to take up their appointments from the beginning of the third term 1974 or 1975 school year.

9. Positions will be available based in

- (a) Maningrida
- (b) Yirrkala
- (c) Yuendumu

10. In due course it is hoped to create special positions for "Visiting teachers", but at this stage, teachers will be seconded from their present positions with no loss of salary. An allowance is payable to teachers during the period spent camping.

11. Applications should be forwarded to reach Darwin by 14 August. An indication must be given to the Centre preferred and also whether willing to attend courses in Anthropology and Linguistics if necessary.

12. Applications should be directed to the Director of Education for the attention of the Senior Education Adviser, (Anthropology)/

(J.D. Gallacher)
for Director of N.T. Education

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APPENDIX 'E'

POPULATION STATISTICS

Census 1971 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

			<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Total</u>
New South Wales	-	Aboriginals	11,682	11,419	23,101
	-	T.S.I's	409	363	772
Victoria	-	Aboriginals	2,855	2,801	5,656
	-	T.S.I's	355	360	715
Queensland	-	Aboriginals	12,306	12,108	24,414
	-	T.S.I's	3,607	3,901	7,508
South Australia	-	Aboriginals	3,697	3,443	7,140
	-	T.S.I's	87	72	159
Western Australia	-	Aboriginals	11,250	10,653	21,903
	-	T.S.I's	210	68	278
Tasmania	-	Aboriginals	305	268	573
	-	T.S.I's	58	38	96
A.C.T.	-	Aboriginals	136	112	248
	-	T.S.I's	1	6	7
Northern Territory	-	Aboriginals	11,686	11,567	23,253
	-	T.S.I's	88	40	128
Australia		Aboriginals	53,917	52,371	106,288
		T.S.I's	4,815	4,848	9,663
			58,732	57,219	115,951

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		Major Urban	Other Urban	Rural	Total (includes migratory)
Aboriginals	New South Wales	5,955	9,280	7,852	23,101
	Victoria	2,899	1,835	916	5,656
	Queensland	2,605	7,181	14,621	24,414
	South Australia	1,721	1,512	3,907	7,140
	Western Australia	2,231	6,514	13,144	21,903
	Tasmania	173	256	144	573
	Northern Territory		4,004	19,242	23,253
	A.C.T.	82		166	248
Totals		15,666	30,582	59,998	106,288
(1966)		(19,508)	(20,947)	(65,308)	(96,632)
Percentage		14.7%	28.8%	56.4%	100%
Torres Strait Islanders		1,665	3,482	4,496	9,663
Total		17,331	34,064	64,494	115,951

APPENDIX 'C'

Aboriginal Land Rights Commission

Second (Final) Report

Some of the major recommendations:

Aboriginal Reserves:

- 1) Title to land on Aboriginal Reserves should be communal and inalienable and in fee simple - 'any form of leasehold title (is) inadequate to satisfy either the announced intentions of the Government or the expectations of the Aboriginals' - and vested in some form of Aboriginal corporations to be called Land Trusts. The land should not be able to be sold or mortgaged, but there must be provision for it to be transferred from one Aboriginal body to another.
- 2) Regional Land Councils should also be incorporated to direct the Land Trusts in the performance of their duties.
- 3) The grant of title to Aboriginal Land Trusts must be subject to the preservation of existing rights in the land. So far as possible, those rights should be re-negotiated so that they are held directly from the Aboriginal landowners on terms acceptable to both parties.
- 4) Entry to Aboriginal land should be regulated by a permit system to be