

POLICY AND PRACTICE IN AN ATOLL TERRITORY:

BRITISH RULE IN THE GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS, 1892 - 1970

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This thesis is based on my own research
except where otherwise acknowledged.

PREFACE

The sixteen Gilbert and nine Ellice Islands form a chain of coral atolls and reef islands that lies between latitudes $3^{\circ}30'N$ and $2^{\circ}45'S$ and longitudes $172^{\circ}30'E$ and 180° in the central Pacific Ocean. Only Butaritari, Tarawa and Abemama in the Gilberts and Nukufetau and Funafuti in the Ellice Islands offer safe lagoon anchorages for ships with a draft in excess of fifteen feet. Landing at the reef islands, for example at Nikunau and Tamana in the Gilberts or at Nanumanga and Niutao in the Ellice, can be hazardous in calm weather and is virtually impossible during westerly storms. Poor soils, composed primarily of sand and vegetal deposits, sparse and irregular rainfall, and the shallow freshwater lens associated with low coral islands (maximum altitude of about fifteen feet) all combine to place severe limitations on the range of agricultural crops that can be grown. Pandanus, breadfruit and the ubiquitous coconut are the main tree crops and a coarse taro-like plant (known as babai in the Gilberts and pulaka in the Ellice) is laboriously cultivated in pits up to eight feet in depth on all islands. A wider range of exotic crops, bananas and papaw for example, can be grown with ease in the Ellice Islands but only with difficulty on most of the Gilbert Islands. Throughout both groups, traditional systems of land tenure which have led to extensive fragmentation make effective land utilisation difficult; the problem is complicated on those atolls which consist of a string of islets spread along a reef. It is clear that, before the days of imported foodstuffs, the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders were forced to live in a delicate balance with their environment.

Once the Colonial Office had reluctantly agreed to establish Protectorates over the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in the late 19th century it was then faced with the task of devising a means of administering two groups of small islands that were not only scattered over a distance of almost a thousand miles but were also cut off from the mainstream of world and even regional transport routes. The High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, the official responsible for finding a solution, was forced to consider the basic

conditions that existed in the islands themselves as well as a Treasury edict that any administration established for the groups was to be financially independent. The islands, with a total land area of less than 115 square miles, showed little potential for economic development save the limited cultivation of the coconut for the export of copra. There were fundamental ethnic differences between the Gilbertese (Micronesian) and the Ellice Islanders (Polynesian) and cultural variations within the groups which were reflected in the island governments that would have to form the basis of any local administrative structure. The heterogeneous nature of the island communities makes generalisation difficult for any period in the history of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands; but, with appropriate qualifications, patterns may be discerned and general conclusions drawn for specific groups of islands at specific times. In more than three-quarters of a century of colonial rule, there have been constant pressures towards conformity, but the identity of the individual islands has by no means been destroyed.

To some extent the structure of the administration designed to meet the demands of the situation can be seen as fitting into a traditional British pattern; but always the smallness of the territory, its geographical fragmentation and isolation, and its lack of economic resources have caused considerable modifications to be made. From the outset the groups were treated as a single administrative unit, an arrangement that was formalised in 1916 when, along with Ocean Island which had been annexed in 1900, the Protectorates were combined to form a Colony. In the interests of administrative convenience other groups of islands in the central Pacific were subsequently included within the Colony's boundaries, giving it a land area of 283 square miles spread over 2,000,000 square miles of ocean. Throughout the period of British rule the Administration of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands has been responsible, through the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, to the Colonial Office and, more recently, to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.

Prior to the Second World War the Government of the Colony was concerned with little more, in the Gilbert and Ellice groups, than the supervision of the island governments and the provision of a minimum of social services and, at Ocean Island, with acting as an

overseer for the phosphate industry. The war, with Japanese and American occupation of some islands, marked a turning point. The exposure of the islanders to large numbers of foreign troops of various nationalities, new ideas and technology, coincided with far-reaching reappraisals of British colonial policy. Post-war policies were particularly concerned with political development and the provision of social services and were designed to lead to eventual self-government. The scattered nature of the Colony led to centralisation of Government and services on Tarawa - a development that has had political repercussions. There has been criticism of the Government for what is, with some justice, seen as neglect of the outer islands; on Tarawa, racial tension between Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders has become more evident as the latter have travelled to Colony headquarters seeking education and employment. To date, both Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders have generally co-operated in constitutional development but indications have emerged, particularly in the past five years, that a split may occur in the future, with the Ellice Islanders, numbering some 7,500 of a total population of 55,000, seeking to protect minority interests. Many Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders see separation into two political units as the only solution: a view that the Colony Government is not prepared to accept at the present time. The Colony will also have to face serious economic problems in the near future. The phosphate deposits on Ocean Island, which currently provide more than half of the Colony's ordinary revenue, will be exhausted by 1978. Attempts are being made to promote agricultural and fisheries development and to discover new avenues for overseas employment, but it is doubtful whether economic self-sufficiency is possible if present living standards are to be maintained.

This thesis covers the period from 1893 when C.R. Swayne was first appointed as the British Government's sole representative in the groups, until the present, when the Colony's civil service numbers nearly a thousand, of whom 120 are expatriates. Early in 1971 the Colony progressed to a 'member' system of government, as a prelude to a ministerial system, with some legislative responsibility being handed to a council with an elected majority. The move represented a return to the orthodoxy of the 'Westminster model' of constitutional development, but it is doubtful whether the Colony will continue to progress along these lines. Some form

of federation or a devolution of power to regional councils seems likely if the Colony is to retain its present boundaries after internal self-government or independence.

The thesis is concerned primarily with the Gilbert and Ellice Islands as such; that is, the islands that were placed under British protection in 1892. Other islands which were later included in the Colony have been considered only in so far as they have affected the policies of the Government or events within the Gilbert and Ellice groups. The phosphate industry at Ocean Island, for example, has been of crucial importance both as a source of income and as a labour outlet and has been considered in that light. The Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders believe that because the deposits lie within the Colony, the industry can properly be taxed for their benefit; the Banabans, the original landowners, believe that Britain is subsidising a non-viable Colony at their expense. The legal and moral issues have not been made the subject of discussion; it has been accepted that the Colony is now financially dependent on a wasting asset.

There are certain deficiencies in the historical material relating to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands which should be noted. For the years prior to the Second World War the only internal official correspondence available is that which was forwarded to the High Commissioner in Suva and is now preserved in the Western Pacific Archives; all other records were destroyed during the period of hostilities. And while any study of a colonial administration must, of necessity, be based largely on official records, private accounts by participants or observers can present a different point of view. Apart from mission records which are only readily available for the years up to 1920, there are few unofficial accounts, published or in manuscript, relating to the Colony after that time.

The problem has been overcome to some extent by interviewing former officers of the Administration, both expatriate and local, and through discussions with community leaders on the outer islands. For the more modern period I learnt much during seven months' residence in the Colony in 1969, and on a short visit in 1970, from discussions with Members of the House of Representatives, members of Island Councils, civil servants, mission representatives and

others. I was also fortunate in being able to attend several of the meetings held on the outer islands by the Members of the Select Committee on the constitution during July and September 1969.

Because some of those people who made information available did so in confidence, and because the Government, while not placing any restrictions on my use of certain material, asked that sources might not be divulged, I must apologise to readers for a lack of documentation for some statements made in the later chapters. Further, it should not be assumed that any official manuscript records cited for the post-war period are necessarily available to all research workers.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank all those Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders and expatriate officers in the Colony's service without whose assistance this thesis could not have been written. Mr V.J. Andersen, Resident Commissioner from 1962 to 1969 allowed me to have access to many records not usually open to the public and, like his successor, Sir John Field, generously made time available to discuss government policies and his assessment of the Colony's past and future. I am especially grateful to Reuben Uatioa, formerly Chief Elected Member and now Leader of Government Business, who provided hospitality and, through discussion, contributed much to my understanding of politics in the Colony. I am similarly grateful to many of his colleagues in the House of Representatives, especially Babera Kirata, Naboua Ratieta, Iosia Taomia, Melitiana Kaisami, Sione Tui Kleiss, Ioteba Uriam, Kaitara Metai, Tito Teburoro and Nation Bwenawa. My thanks must go to many others for their hospitality or who, as civil servants, tolerated my endless requests for information and assistance; in particular I would like to mention Taomati Iuta, Kourataake Arioka, Henry Naisali, Penitala Teo, Isa Paeniu, Bwebwetake Arieta, Peter Kanere Koru and Bureua Kamaoto; Mr R.G. Roberts who willingly placed at my disposal knowledge gained during two decades' service in the Colony and also Messrs M. Allen, T. Ainsworth, D. Cudmore, C. Hart, I. Howard, A. Hughes, J. Hughson, G. Jones, J. Leaney, B. McCaig, J. McGrath, J. Shaw, R.E.N. Smith, H. Urquhart, J. Woods and Capt. M. Drew;

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In the course of research I worked in the National Library of Australia; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; the Turnbull Library, Wellington; and the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission, Suva; and wish to express my appreciation of all help given. In particular I would mention Mr A.I. Diamond of the Suva Archives who gave much valuable assistance.

I owe a great deal to my supervisor, Professor J.W. Davidson of the Department of Pacific History, The Australian National University, who first suggested the history of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands as a topic for study and who, throughout my tenure at the University, encouraged and guided my research. I am also indebted to Mr H.E. Maude who, both before and after his retirement from the Department of Pacific History, made his extensive library available and also his unrivalled knowledge of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands acquired as a District Officer, Lands Commissioner and Resident Commissioner in the Colony and many years of research. Like Professor Davidson, he has read most of the thesis in draft and made valuable comments. I have also benefited from the comments and criticisms of my colleagues on various aspects of my work; in particular I would like to thank Dr D.A. Scarr, Dr W.N. Gunson, Dr D.H. Lewis, Mr R.L. Langdon, Mr R.D. Bedford and Mr D.J. Stone (all of The Australian National University) and Dr I.A. Brady (formerly of the University of Oregon and now at the University of Cincinnati).

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.C.F.M.	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
A.R.C.	Assistant Resident Commissioner
B.P.C.	British Phosphate Commissioners
Cd, Cmd, Cmnd	Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Command Papers [progressive series]
C.O.	Colonial Office
CO 225	Colonial Office Original Correspondence, Western Pacific
D.C.	District Commissioner
D.O.	District Officer
E.I.D.	Ellice Islands District
F	File
F.O.	Foreign Office
F.O.C.P.	Foreign Office Confidential Print
G.B.P.D.	Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Fifth Series
G.I.D.	Gilbert Islands District
G.I.D.O.	Records of the Gilbert Islands District Office
G.E.I.C.	Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony Government
H.C.	High Commissioner
H. of R.	Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony House of Representatives
L.C.	Lands Commissioner
L.M.S.	London Missionary Society

P.P.C.	Pacific Phosphate Company
R.C.	Resident Commissioner
R.D.P.U.	Regional Development Planning Unit
S.H.M.	Sacred Heart Mission
S. of S.	Secretary of State for the Colonies
Sec. to Govt.	Secretary to Government (Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony)
W.P.H.C.	Western Pacific High Commission

Note: Where any of the above abbreviations appear in footnotes without stops, they refer to the records or publications of the relevant institution - for example: LMS, South Seas, Letters.

GLOSSARYGilbertese

<u>babai</u>	a coarse calladium, similar to giant taro
<u>boti</u>	area of the <u>maneaba</u> reserved for a particular clan. By extension <u>boti</u> can also be applied to the clan itself.
<u>bubuti</u>	solicitation of goods or services
<u>eiriki</u>	potential sex partners of a Gilbertese (the wives of his uterine or classificatory brothers; the uterine sisters of his wife)
<u>inaomata</u>	commoner or freeman
<u>I Matang</u>	European
<u>kainga</u>	clan hamlet
<u>katei</u>	customary code of political relationships
<u>kaubure</u>	councillor (corruption of <u>faipule</u> (Samoan))
Kaubure	local government councillor (in legislation 1894-1966)
<u>kaunga</u>	serf or slave
<u>maneaba</u>	thatched meeting house; traditionally the focus of all social activity, the local law court and the seat of village government
<u>tia motiki-taeka</u>	spokesman in the <u>maneaba</u> who announced decisions after community discussion
<u>tinaba</u>	strictly, a man's <u>tinaba</u> were his sons' wives, his brothers' wives, his wife's mother and his wife's mother's sisters but normally the only <u>tinaba</u> with whom a man would have sexual relations would be the wives of his brothers' sons
<u>toka</u>	social rank immediately below high chief

<u>uea</u>	high chief
<u>unimane</u>	old man/men (commonly applied to community leaders)

Ellice

<u>aumaga</u>	young men's club (adopted from Samoan)
<u>faipule</u>	councillor (adopted from Samoan)
<u>fakamolemole</u>	solicitation of goods or services
Kaupuli	local government councillor (corruption of <u>faipule</u>)
<u>kau taka</u>	unmarried men's 'club'
<u>pulaka</u>	a coarse calladium, similar to giant taro
<u>tupu</u>	high chief

Note: Where relevant, sources have been cited in the footnotes when the terms are first used. Foreign words in the text, apart from those appearing in the glossary, have not been italicised.

NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHYGilbertese

There are thirteen letters in the Gilbertese alphabet - a, e, i, o, u, m, n, ng, b, k, r, t and w.

ng	is pronounced as in singer
b	is sometimes pronounced as in English and sometimes as English 'p'
t	may be pronounced as in English; but
ti	is pronounced as 'si' (see) or as 'chi' (chee)
tu	is pronounced as 'soo' in the northern Gilberts and as 'too' in the south
w	is pronounced as English 'v' when followed by e.

Ellice

There are sixteen letters in the Ellice alphabet - a, e, i, o, u, f, h, k, l, m, n, ng, p, s, t and v. Each vowel has a short and a long duration; every word ends in a vowel.

k, m, n, p, s and t are all pronounced as harder sounds than in English

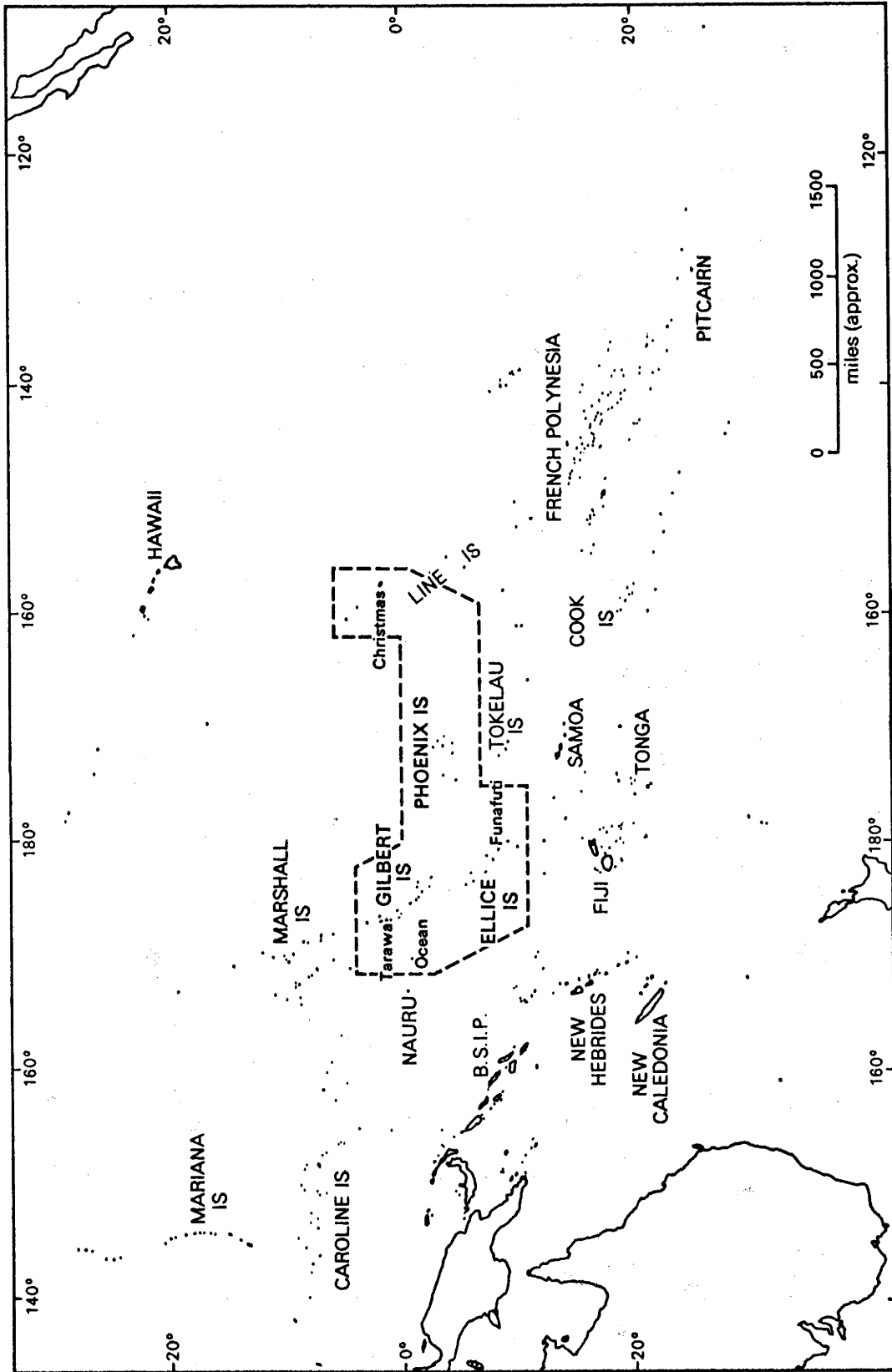
f and v are pronounced as softer sounds than in English

all vowels are sounded separately.

Note: Macrons are used in some mission publications but this is no longer common practice for either language.

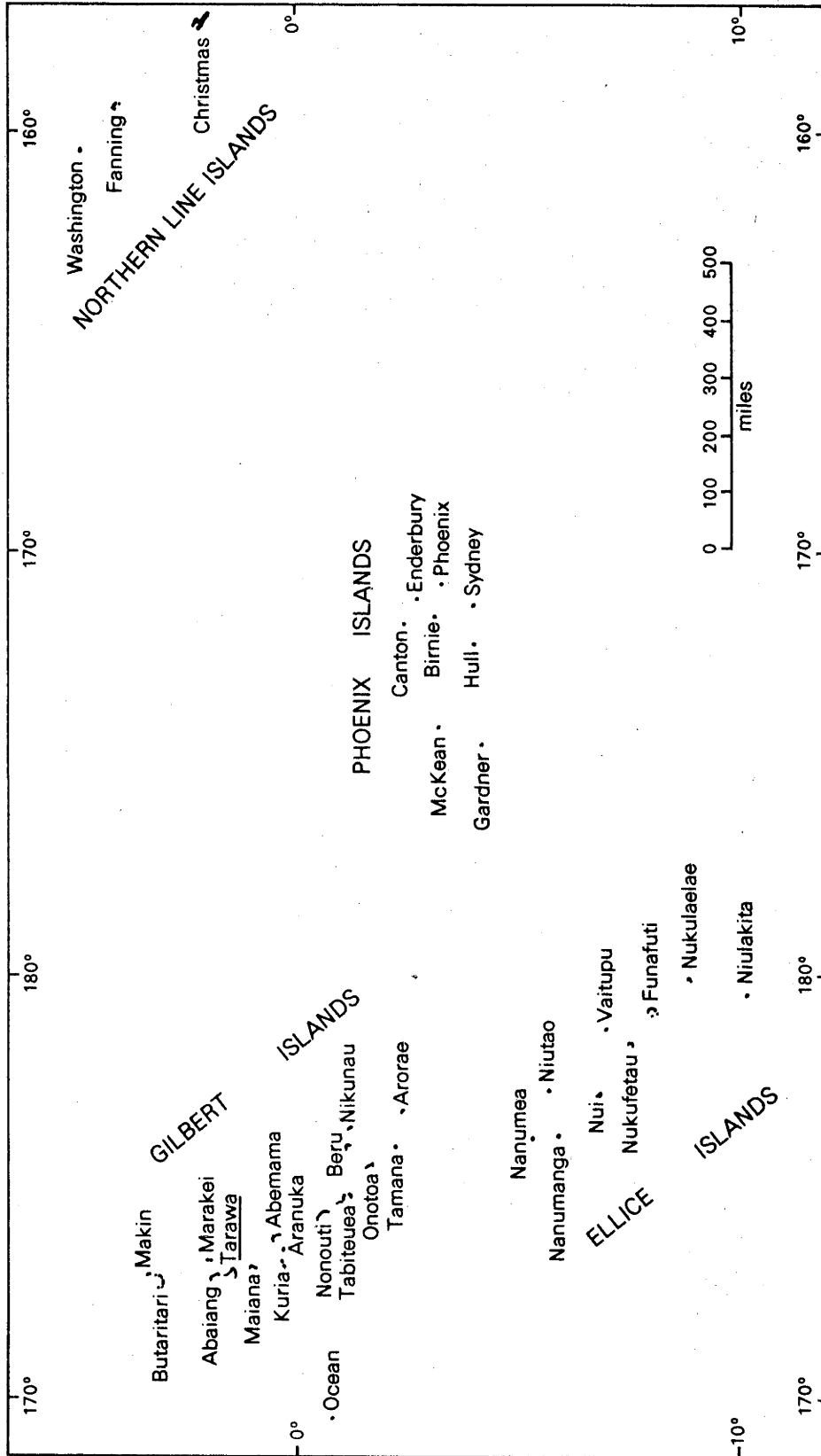
Local usage has been adopted in the spelling of names.

Source: GEIC, The Structure of Gilbertese (Cowell), 1951;
Te Ngangana a te Tuvalu: Handbook on the Language of the Ellice Islands (Kennedy), 1945.



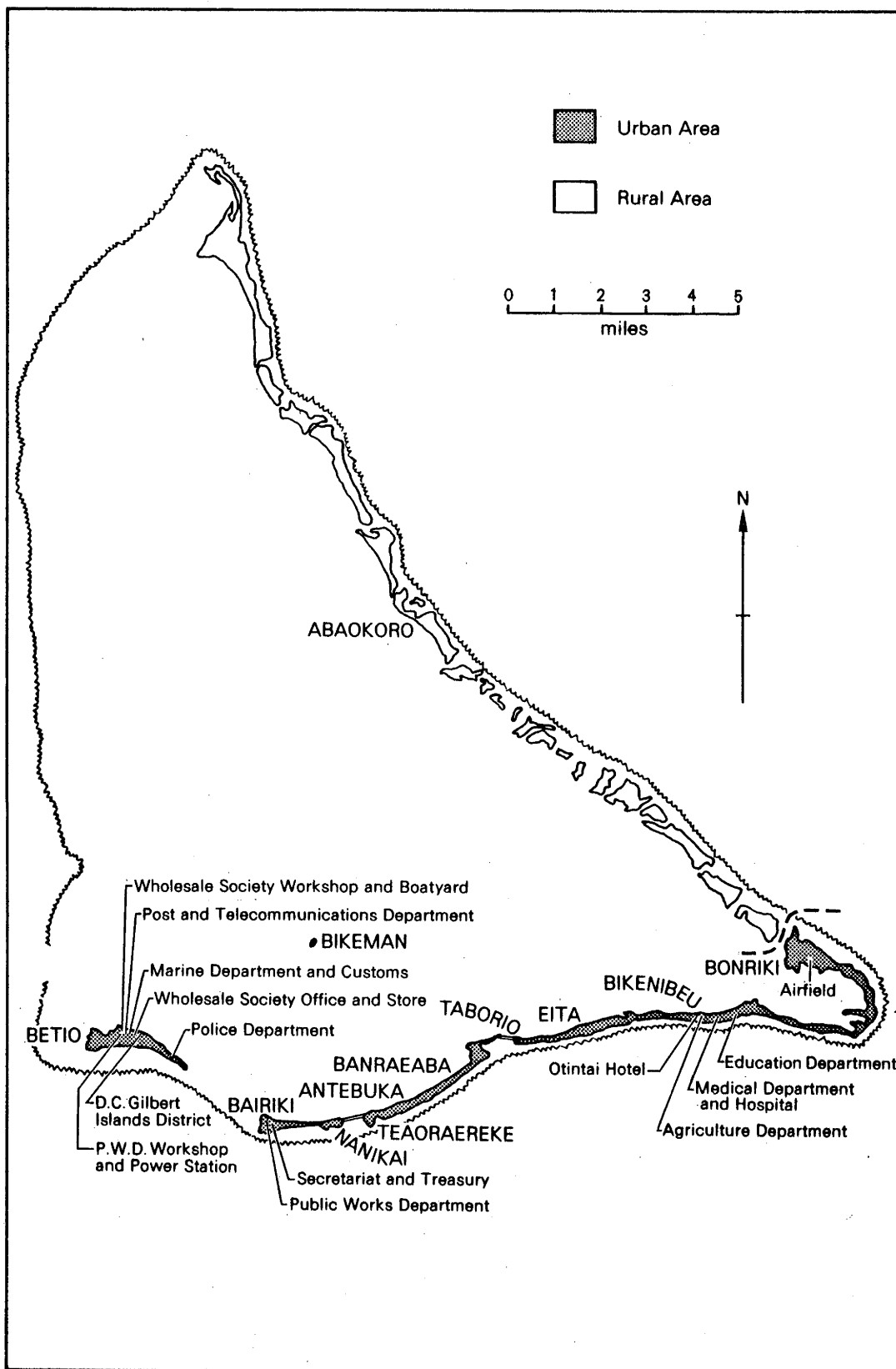
THE GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS IN THE PACIFIC

FIGURE I



THE GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS COLONY

FIGURE II



TARAWA ATOLL: LOCATION OF SERVICES ON SOUTH TARAWA

FIGURE III

PART I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1

BEFORE THE FLAG

The racial origins of the first inhabitants of the Gilbert Islands are shrouded in conjecture and folk-lore¹ but oral traditions suggest that the group was already inhabited when large parties of Samoan invaders arrived, following their defeat in civil war, approximately twenty-three to twenty-five generations ago. Allowing twenty-five years to a generation this would place the invasion some time late in the 14th or early in the 15th century. For about two centuries the structure of Gilbertese society remained uniform with four basic social grades of uea, toka, inaomata and kaunga - the approximate equivalents of chiefs, nobles, commoners and slaves. There were no fixed lines of descent for chiefship, and the powers of the uea were by no means absolute. Eight or nine generations after the invasion from Samoa, in the 17th century, armies from the southern island of Beru conquered all the islands as far north as Marakei in an attempt to introduce a new social order, of Samoan origin, that had been developed and established on Beru, Nikunau and Onotoa. At the centre of the new system was the maneaba, a large thatched meeting house set on coral pillars, which was the focus of the political and social life of its surrounding district. Some clans were regarded as more influential than others but chiefs were no longer recognised. Instead, political and social authority was placed firmly in the hands of the unimane, or old men, meeting in council. Ceremonial functions and speaking rights were allocated among the various boti, or maneaba sitting places, of the clan groups.²

All the islands from Arorae to Nonouti were divided into maneaba districts and the new order introduced with fair success.

- 1 For one account, based on oral traditions, see Grimble, 'Myths from the Gilbert Islands', Folklore, XXXIII (1922), 91-112.
- 2 Grimble, The Migrations of a Pandanus People, as traced from a preliminary study of food, food-traditions, and food rituals in the Gilbert Islands, 103; Maude, The Evolution of Local Government in the Gilbert Islands, An Historical Reconstruction (unpublished typescript, 1960), 1-5; Maude, The Evolution of the Gilbertese Boti, An Ethnohistorical Interpretation, passim.

The decisions of the unimane were accepted by the populace at large but, in the event of defiance, resort to arms was inevitable. In such cases, however, an individual's chance of success was limited unless he could rely on the support of the dominant Karongoa clan. Nonouti and Tabiteuea, much larger than the islands further south, and with greater populations which placed considerable pressure on land resources, were divided into several constantly-feuding districts.

On the islands from Abemama to Marakei, more remote from Beru, the uea remained, but as war-lords rather than dynastic chiefs, and with considerably reduced authority. Here, the maneaba councils had only acquired sufficient status to act as a check on undue personal ambition. The political situation on these islands encouraged political opportunism expressed in almost constant warfare as rival uea strove for pre-eminence.³

Butaritari and Makin in the far north remained free from Beruan influence. The traditional political system remained until the end of the 18th century when Teauoki succeeded in uniting both islands under his sole control. He ruled with the assistance of a council of his kinsmen and, although some authority was delegated to subsidiary chiefs, Teauoki and his successors assumed and retained the right to distribute all land.⁴

In pre-contact times the Gilbertese did not live in large consolidated villages but in small hamlets which reflected the clan organisation of society. To some extent these kainga were concentrated near the maneaba but, more often, were located on family lands scattered through the maneaba district.⁵ Land, because of its very scarcity, has always been of crucial importance to the Gilbertese. With the exception of Butaritari and Makin, land plots, which could vary in size from a few square yards to several acres, were inherited by both men and women, with the eldest receiving more than the youngest, and with males

3 Maude, The Gilbertese Boti, 45-8; Maude, Local Government, 5.

4 Maude, Local Government, 2.

5 Maude, The Gilbertese Boti, 28-32.

enjoying preference over females. Such a practice obviously resulted in fragmentation and, given that individuals could inherit from both parents, few enjoyed the advantages of a single consolidated holding. Land was seldom divided until the owner felt he was near death and hence the custom provided an in-built security against neglect in old age. Rules of inheritance were not rigid and preference could be shown towards a favourite child. In addition to the transference of lands by inheritance, plots could be transferred on the occasion of a birth, an adoption or a marriage, or in return for services rendered; for example, for medical treatment or assistance during drought.⁶ The importance of land is further illustrated by the fact that its confiscation was one of the most common punishments for crime.

Despite the variation in political organisation throughout the group the law showed a quite remarkable conformity. Murder, theft, adultery, incest and assault were considered the most serious crimes. The usual punishments were confiscation of one or more pieces of land, enslavement, death or banishment. Less serious crimes were usually punished by fines in coconuts.⁷

The use of the English terms 'incest' and 'adultery' requires some further explanation. Incest, in Gilbertese usage, was defined as sexual relations between persons who could trace a common ancestor up to and including three generations or who were members of the same clan. Again, an exception must be made for the families of high chiefs in the northern Gilberts who often married first cousins, and who were permitted to take more than one wife. Marital fidelity was generally enforced but was not as narrowly defined as in English law. For example, according to the tinaba custom, sexual relations were permitted between a man and the wives of his brothers' sons, provided all parties were agreeable and certain ritual and gift obligations were fulfilled. Further, on his marriage a man would acquire sexual rights over the uterine sisters of his wife under the eiriki custom. Should he subsequently

6 Lundsgaarde, Cultural Adaptation in the Southern Gilbert Islands, 115-41.

7 Maude, Local Government, 7-11.

allow one of them to marry as a virgin both husbands would share rights over a common group of women, thus giving rise to the practice of 'wife-exchange' so bitterly criticized by the early missionaries. Divorce was usually an uncomplicated process that could be initiated by either partner. Often, but not necessarily, divorce involved compensation in lands or the return of marriage gifts.⁸

It is extremely difficult to assess with any accuracy the population of any of the Gilbert Islands during the 19th century or before. Estimates based on brief visits by ships' captains and missionaries can generally be disregarded and even those of resident traders must be treated with caution. For example in 1861 Randell, a trader on Butaritari, put the population of the group at between 50,500 and 54,000.⁹ His estimates for the northern islands, of which his knowledge was greatest, were similar to those obtained by Captain Davis of the Royalist in 1892, but for the most part his estimates for the southern islands were more than double those of Davis. In the case of Nikunau, for example, Randell's estimate was 5,000 to 6,000 compared with Davis' figure of 1,779. Davis' estimate of the total population of the group was 25,430,¹⁰ approximately half the figure given by Randell. While the population of the central and southern islands had been reduced by warfare, disease and labour recruiting, it is unlikely that the overall population had been reduced by half in the course of thirty years. It would appear, therefore, that while Davis' figures are themselves open to question, those of Randell are probably excessive, perhaps by as much as ten to fifteen thousand. It

8 Lands Commissioner to Acting Sec. to Govt., 5 Dec. 1938, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 431, 13 Dec. 1938 - WPHC, F10/12; Grimble, 'From Birth to Death in the Gilbert Islands', Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, LI (1921), 27-8; GEIC, Instructions and Hints to District Officers and Sub-Accountants (Grimble and Clarke), 1929, 5-6; Maude, The Gilbertese Boti, App. 3, 59-61.

9 Published in The Friend, Sept. 1861.

10 'Papers respecting the Declaration of a British Protectorate over the Gilbert Islands by Captain Davis, of Her Majesty's ship "Royalist"; and General Reports upon the Gilbert, Ellice, and Marshall Islands' [Royalist Report] - F.O.C.P. no. 6269, 48-50.

also seems that the Gilbertese had a clear view of the optimum population that their islands could support. In addition to natural checks on population growth, and warfare, the Gilbertese resorted to infanticide and abortion (although the incidence of these practices cannot be accurately assessed) and, in the event of undue pressure induced by drought, to compulsory emigration.¹¹

Accounts of the origins and early history of the Ellice Islanders agree that a party of Samoans from Upolu, induced to leave by defeat or dissension, arrived at Vaitupu early in the 16th century, and that it was from this island that others in the group were settled. Smith, working on combined Samoan and Ellice material, suggested in 1897 that the first two canoes had arrived at Vaitupu in 1525.¹² In 1931 Kennedy, basing his calculations on Vaitupuan genealogies, stated that settlement had probably taken place some 400 years before, or around 1530.¹³ Occupation must certainly have taken place by this time if one accepts Maude's deduction that the 'Island of Jesus', where Mendaña was greeted by five or six canoes in 1586, was, in fact, Nui in the northern Ellice.¹⁴

Some of the traditions collected by Roberts at Nanumea and Nukufetau indicate Tonga as the land of origin, and Roberts himself tentatively suggests that beliefs in Samoa as the ancestral homeland of the Ellice Islanders may, in part, be derived from the teachings of Samoan pastors.¹⁵ Brady, arguing on linguistic grounds, has recently supported the view that there was strong

11 GEIC, Report ... on [the] colonization of the Phoenix Islands by the surplus population of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (Maude), 1937, 3.

12 Smith, 'The First Inhabitants of the Ellice Group', Journal of the Polynesian Society, VI (1897), 210-11.

13 Kennedy, The Culture of Vaitupu, Ellice Islands, 2.

14 Maude, 'Spanish Discoveries in the Central Pacific', in Of Islands and Men: Studies in Pacific History, 54-8.

15 Roberts, 'Te Atua Tuvalu, A Short History of the Ellice Islands', Journal of the Polynesian Society, LXVII (1958), 394-423.

Tongan influence in the northern Ellice Islands.¹⁶ It is probable, therefore, that, prior to the Tongan slave raids of the 17th and 18th centuries, occasional canoes from the Tongan archipelago did reach the group and that their occupants were assimilated into Ellice society.

The political organisation of the Ellice Islands conformed to a pattern common to much of Polynesia. On all islands the demands of defence, especially against the Tongans, led to the emergence of two or more chiefly families. Generally speaking, each island had a tupu, or high chief, and a subsidiary chief chosen from different families. On the death or deposition of the former, the other would assume the superior position, and another subsidiary chief would be chosen. The result of this practice was a rotation of high office among the leading families. In time the chief's role became essentially that of an arbiter and a decision-maker after a consensus had been obtained by community discussion. Any tendency towards autocracy resulted in a rapid shift of public opinion and the election of a new tupu.¹⁷

Shortly after its initial settlement the island of Nui suffered an invasion from the Gilbert Island of Tarawa and possibly there was a later influx of exiles from Tabiteuea. Since that time the Nui Islanders have been in an exceptional position in the Ellice group. Although the island retained a chiefly system of government, its social organisation has become a hybrid mixture of the two cultures. The people speak a dialect of Gilbertese.¹⁸

In contrast to the Gilbert Islands, land in the Ellice may be held communally as well as individually. Customs governing the ownership, exchange and inheritance of land are otherwise similar

16 Brady, Land Tenure, Kinship and Community Structure: Strategies for Living in the Ellice Islands of Western Polynesia (Ph.D. thesis, University of Oregon), 1970, 16.

17 D.O., E.I.D. to Sec. to Govt., no. 47, 12 April 1948 - GEIC, Secretariat, 1st Series, F6/8/2 (Central Archives).

18 *ibid.*, Grimble, 'Myths from the Gilbert Islands', 98-101; Roberts, 'Te Atua Tuvalu', 403-4.

to those of the Gilbert Islands. Like the Gilbertese, the Ellice Islanders have suffered from problems arising from excessive fragmentation of land plots.¹⁹ The total area of the Ellice Islands is less than ten square miles and the group has, as a consequence, suffered from a degree of population pressure for some generations. In 1892 Davis estimated the population of the group at 3,117 with populations per island ranging from 95 at Nukulaelae to 690 at Nanumea.²⁰ In the 19th century, several of the islands, particularly Nukulaelae and Funafuti, suffered from Peruvian slave raids and this factor,²¹ combined with introduced disease, probably caused a considerable decrease in population, perhaps from a figure of between four and five thousand. Artificial population controls in the form of infanticide and abortion were common; traditions indicate that only the first male and female child of any union were permitted to survive.²²

Although islands in both Gilbert and Ellice groups had been sighted by Mendaña and Quiros in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and Byron had visited Nikunau in 1765, it was not until after the settlement of Port Jackson in 1788 that most of the islands were discovered by Europeans. The discovery of the 'off-shore' whaling grounds of the central Pacific in 1818, and the consequent increase in shipping in the area in the following eight years, saw all the islands sighted and placed, at least approximately, on the map.²³

Until the 1840s contact between the crews of visiting ships and the islanders were extremely limited, being confined to the barter

19 Brady, Kinship, Land Tenure and Community Structure, 103-55; Kennedy, 'Land Tenure in the Ellice Islands', Journal of the Polynesian Society, LXII (1953), 348-58.

20 'Royalist Report', 52.

21 'Cruise of H.M.S. "Espiègle", April 24 - October 3, 1883. Report on certain Groups of Islands visited' [Espiègle Report], print, 1; Murray, Forty Years' Mission Work in Polynesia and New Guinea, from 1835 to 1875, 381, 385.

22 Roberts, 'Te Atu Tuvalu', passim.

23 Maude, 'Spanish Discoveries' and 'Post-Spanish Discoveries in the Central Pacific', in Of Islands and Men, 35-135 passim; Tower, A Short History of the American Whale Fishery, 58.

of trinkets, hoop-iron, simple implements and tobacco for handicrafts, coconuts and, in the Gilbert Islands, for women. Products usually associated with Pacific trade in the early 19th century were either not available, as in the case of sandalwood or, like tortoise shell and bêche-de-mer, available only in limited quantities. Trade in the latter had an extremely limited potential because of the laborious preparation involved.

The growth of the coconut oil trade, initially carried on by whaling captains, gave new impetus to the growth of commerce in the Gilbert Islands. Coconut oil was already used domestically and additional quantities were readily prepared in order to buy tobacco which was, at this stage, almost the sole currency acceptable to the Gilbertese. The range of goods available widened to include alcohol, firearms, knives and cotton goods with the advent of resident traders in the mid-1840s.²⁴

Earlier settlers, deserters who had chosen a beachcombing existence, or had had it chosen for them by a miserly or dissatisfied ship's captain, had depended for their survival on a ready acceptance of local customs and habits, and an absence of any material wealth; but their existence was always a precarious one. For example, in 1851, Tem Baiteke, the uea of Abemama had the thirty-four Europeans living within his demesne killed when he decided they were becoming too troublesome.²⁵ The early beachcombers, however, by their very presence, formed a valuable contact between the islanders and itinerant traders.

The Gilbert Islanders had early acquired an unfavourable reputation for their eagerness to pilfer from visitors and, if possible, to cut off and plunder their ships.²⁶ The introduction of arms and alcohol by the traders did much to exacerbate the

24 Maude and Leeson, 'The Coconut Oil Trade in the Gilbert Islands', in Of Islands and Men, 234-40.

25 Maude, 'Baiteke and Binoka of Abemama: arbiters of change in the Gilbert Islands', in Davidson and Scarr (ed.), Pacific Islands Portraits, 206.

26 Maude and Leeson, 'The Coconut Oil Trade', 236-9; Nautical Magazine, XXXI, no. 8, Aug. 1862.

problem. Local warfare became a more lethal business and the traders helped to make their own lives more perilous. Most traders, especially the representatives of the Sydney firm of Smith, Randell and Fairclough, sought political stability in order to foster trade and accordingly intervened in island politics to this end. Some, less scrupulous, encouraged dissension in order to promote the sale of firearms.²⁷ While the majority of commerce in the 1840s and 1850s was in the hands of Europeans, transactions at some northern islands were controlled by the high chiefs who thus enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the means of acquiring firearms.

Both itinerant and resident traders reached the Ellice Islands at a considerably later date than the Gilberts. There were only four traders resident in the group when the representatives of the London Missionary Society [L.M.S.] arrived in 1865.²⁸ By 1892 there were seven Europeans living in the group of whom five were trading.²⁹ Apart from an isolated incident at Niutao in the early 1860s, there was none of the disorder in the Ellice that accompanied the growth of commerce in the Gilberts, nor were arms and alcohol imported in significant quantities. Trade was generally confined to an exchange of coconut oil, and copra which replaced oil in the 1870s, for tobacco and later for calico and cotton goods in order to cater for the islanders' new-found 'modesty'.

A further hazard faced by traders in the Gilbert Islands from the 1860s was the possibility of reprisals taken by Gilbertese who had suffered insult, injury or loss at the hands of labour recruiters or buccaneers like 'Bully' Hayes. A minor recruiting venture conducted for Benjamin Boyd of Sydney at the islands of Tamana and Arorae in 1847 was followed by a lull of more than a decade until Peruvian raids again drew attention to the groups as a source of labour. In 1863, 161 Gilbertese were shipped for the Peruvian phosphate mines but permission to land them in Peru was

27 Maude, *Local Government*, 15-16.

28 Sollas, 'The Legendary History of Funafuti, Ellice Group', *Nature*, LV, no. 1424, 11 Feb. 1897, 354-5; 'Espiègle Report', 3; Murray, Forty Years' Mission Work, 404-5.

29 'Royalist Report', 85-9.

refused. Those who survived the trip were returned to the Cook Islands where a mere 110 were landed at Penrhyn.³⁰ In the same year an estimated 200 to 250 were taken at Nukulaelae out of a population of a little over 300; 180 were induced to board ship at Funafuti and a further three at Nukufetau, two of whom escaped at Rotuma.³¹ Recruiting for Tahiti and Fiji followed. In the 1870s labourers from the Gilbert Islands began arriving in Honolulu. By 1880 it was estimated that there were almost a thousand Gilbertese working in the Hawaiian islands.³² Ships from Fiji continued to visit the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in search of labourers in the 1870s and 1880s, along with ships recruiting for Samoa and Queensland, but met with little success. By 1885 the restrictions placed on plantation owners and recruiters by the Queensland and British Governments, combined with a reluctance to recruit on the part of the islanders, brought a virtual halt to the traffic in the groups.³³ There was a brief revival in the early 1890s when American recruiters sought labour for Mexican and central American plantations. In 1891 the Tahiti with 400 Gilbertese labourers on board overturned off California with a total loss of life when headed for Mexico.³⁴ In the following year, shortly after the declaration of the Protectorate, the Montserrat left the Gilberts, for Guatemala, with 388 labourers.³⁵

The disorder that accompanied recruiting was often continued with the repatriation of labourers. When thirty Abaiang Islanders were returned from Hawaii, with arms and ammunition, to Nonouti in 1883 spasmodic warfare soon broke out between the northern and southern parts of the island. The northerners approached Tem Binoka of Abemama for assistance with the result that his armies crossed to

30 Maude and Leeson, 'The Coconut Oil Trade', 268-9.

31 Murray, Forty Years' Mission Work, 381, 385-6; 'Espiègle Report', 1.

32 Bingham to Clark, 8 April 1880 - ABCFM Correspondence.

33 Scarr, Fragments of Empire, A History of the Western Pacific High Commission, 1877-1914, 176-92 passim.

34 The Examiner (San Francisco), 15,16 Oct. 1892.

35 ibid., The Friend, Nov. 1892.

Nonouti in a trading vessel and conquered the island which the uea thereafter regarded as a part of his dominions - a view which he publicised by the addition of a fourth star to his flag. He was disabused of the idea by Captain Moore of H.M.S. Dart in 1884 but not before he had permitted a French labour vessel to carry off 150 of the Nonouti people.³⁶ The Ellice Islands suffered recruiting and recruiters in the absence of the means to do otherwise. In this group and in the southern Gilberts, where recruiting had been concentrated until the 1880s, the trade made a considerable psychological impact on the islanders. On large jungle-covered islands the inhabitants could evade recruiters if they wished, but such defence was impossible on small low coral islands. The success of the early missionaries therefore must be seen in part, but only in part, as a reaction against the labour trade.

The L.M.S. extended its activities to the Ellice Islands in 1865 and five years later moved into the southern Gilberts.³⁷ Until 1900 the work was carried on by Samoan pastors supplemented by an occasional Ellice or Cook Islander under the supervision of European missionaries based in Samoa.³⁸ No single factor can adequately explain the overwhelming success of the mission in transforming the islands into 'Christian' communities in the short space of a decade. True, the majority of the pastors came from the Ellice Islanders' traditional home, and spoke a similar language, but this cannot account for the destruction of shrines in the southern Ellice Islands, apparently on the advice of an itinerant trader, several years before the arrival of the missionaries. Nor can it account for the enthusiastic reception given Elekana, a deacon of the L.M.S. at Manihiki who had been carried in a canoe to Nukulaelae in 1861. Elekana was permitted to leave for Samoa

36 'Report of Proceedings of H.M.S. "Dart" in the Fiji, Ellice, Gilbert, Marshall, New Britain, &c., Groups, from May to September, 1884' [Dart Report], print, 14.

37 Murray, Forty Years' Mission Work, 375-93; see also journals of A.W. Murray (1865) and S.J. Whitmee (1870) - LMS, South Seas, Journals.

38 For visitation reports see LMS, South Seas, Journals, 1865-1900.

only on condition that he would return with a teacher for the people of the island.³⁹ And the Peruvian raders did not reach Nukulaelae until 1863, after Elekana's departure for Samoa, and only the two southernmost islands were significantly depopulated.⁴⁰

In the Gilberts the position was slightly different. Labour vessels had, by 1870, visited all of the southern islands and took, for example, an estimated 1,000 from Nikunau between 1868 and 1872. It is clear that the pastors, together with the more responsible traders formed the focus of opposition to the recruiters.⁴¹ The mission's monopoly of education also served to consolidate its influence. Education in the Ellice Islands was in Samoan, oriented towards biblical studies, and available to adherents of all ages.⁴² By the time the first Ellice Islanders were admitted to church membership in 1870 a large proportion of the population was literate in spoken and written Samoan.⁴³

By the 1870s all the Ellice Islands as well as Tamana and Arorae, and, to a lesser extent, the other Gilbert Islands as far north as Beru, were nominal Christian communities, ruled by laws suggested by the pastors and accepted by the deacons on behalf of the people.⁴⁴ Authority thus tended to accumulate in the hands of the pastors to the point where they were able to usurp the power of the traditional chiefs in the Ellice and the unimane of the southern Gilberts.

The first mission station in the northern Gilbert Islands was established at Abaiang by the Rev. Hiram Bingham, Junior, for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions [A.B.C.F.M.]

39 Murray, Forty Years' Mission Work, 375-80, 383, 385.

40 *ibid.*, 381, 385; 'Espiègle Report', 1.

41 Journals of T. Powell (1871) and G. Pratt (1872) - LMS, South Seas, Journals.

42 Murray, Forty Years' Mission Work, 397-423 passim.

43 Journal of S.J. Whitmee (1870) - *loc. cit.*

44 'Espiègle Report', passim.

in November 1857.⁴⁵ Bingham's greatest achievements lay in the field of linguistics where he produced the first Gilbertese grammar, an English-Gilbertese dictionary and, by 1873, the New Testament in Gilbertese.⁴⁶ In his attempts to produce a Christian society on Abaiang and to mould Kaiea, the uea, into a new Kamehameha he was less successful.

The progress of the A.B.C.F.M. in the northern Gilberts was inhibited by several factors. Firstly, the islands were characterised by political instability. Apart from Abemama, where the missionaries were forbidden permission to land,⁴⁷ and Butaritari-Makin, there was no island with strong centralised political leadership but, rather, two or more uea constantly struggling for precedence. Abaiang was in a slightly different position. Between 1855 and 1858 Kaiea had succeeded in defeating his immediate rivals and having himself recognised as uea for the whole island. But it was a tenuous supremacy that could be maintained only at the cost of frequent campaigns on both Abaiang and the neighbouring island of Tarawa.⁴⁸

Most significantly, perhaps, the smoking of tobacco was forbidden for church members on both medical and spiritual grounds⁴⁹ - a condition hardly likely to appeal to the tobacco-addicted Gilbertese.⁵⁰ The work of the pastors was virtually

45 Nautical Magazine, XXXI, no. 8, Aug. 1862.

46 The Friend, May 1873.

47 Pierson, 'Journal of a Voyage from the Sandwich Islands through the Kingsmill and Mulgrave Islands to Strong's Island in the Caroline Group, 1855' - ABCFM Correspondence.

48 Gunson, Abaiang and its Dynasty under Missionary Influence (unpublished Typescript, n.d.); see also Bingham's letters - ABCFM Correspondence.

49 For example: '... Mr. Walkup has a Church Law, that no smoker shall be admitted into the fellowship of the Church He says that Tobacco is an idol, an uncleanness, and that no true and sincere christian can be a smoker'. Goward to Thompson, 12 Feb. 1908 - LMS, South Seas, Letters.

50 See, for example, Maude and Leeson, 'The Coconut Oil Trade', passim; Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, V, 62.

unsupervised except during the brief visits of the Mission's vessel, the Morning Star, when Bingham, until 1868, and his successors Walkup and Taylor, would tour the islands as far south as Tabiteuea. In 1881 the Mission's training school was removed to Kusaie in the Caroline Islands and from that date the stations in the Gilberts were even less regularly visited.⁵¹

The history of Abaiang during the decade of Bingham's residence was marked by a series of fluctuations between war and peace, between periods of drunkenness and periods of dancing, and between phases of chiefly virtue and chiefly excess. Under Kaiea II, in the 1870s and 1880s, the same pattern continued. In 1877 the uea was admitted to church membership but three years later he crossed to Tarawa to suppress a rebellion that posed a threat to his influence.⁵² On the other northern islands where pastors were stationed the A.B.C.F.M. had only limited success until the 1880s when the influence of mission groups was sufficient to see new codes of laws introduced.⁵³

On Nonouti and Tabiteuea, with their maneaba governments, the pastors found their task even more difficult. On the former island the Mission made only slow progress for ten years and was then obliged, from 1888, to meet the competition of two European Roman Catholic priests who permitted both dancing and smoking.⁵⁴ Two Hawaiian pastors were stationed at Tabiteuea from 1868.⁵⁵ Church membership rose rapidly in the 1870s when Kapu, one of the pastors, forsook the Bible for the sword and succeeded in converting the northern part of the island. In 1880 he rallied his forces with a mixture of preaching, threats of extermination and promises of the land to be captured, and embarked on a crusade against the people of the south who had rejected his teaching. In the principal battle an estimated 600 to 1,000 of the southerners were killed and their

51 Gunson, Abaiang and its Dynasty; The Friend, 1857-1917, passim.

52 ibid.

53 The Friend, March 1889, April 1890.

54 ibid., April 1889, May 1890.

55 ibid.; July 1869.

bodies burned. Kapu then proceeded to rule the island through village church committees until he was removed by the Mission two years later.⁵⁶ Within a few years his successors reported that they were unable to curb drinking, dancing and gambling on the island.⁵⁷

Prior to European contact, the maneaba system of government was firmly established in the southern Gilberts while in the north the influence of the unimane was increasing steadily at the expense of chiefly power.⁵⁸ A similar erosion of chiefly authority was taking place in the Ellice Islands. There, the absence of any external threat for more than a century, together with the presence of two or more chiefly families on each island, had prevented any individual or family from enjoying absolute or unchallenged power.

The arrival of Europeans in the northern Gilberts, however, led to a strengthening of the powers of the uea. Missionaries and traders tended to recognise a single uea as a paramount chief or 'king'. The increase in disorder and faction warfare that accompanied the introduction of firearms into the group also contributed towards a centralisation of power; power that was, on occasion, followed by or derived from the possession of a trading agency which enabled its owner to enjoy a monopoly of firearms.

In the Ellice and southern Gilbert Islands the pastors of the L.M.S. were undoubtedly responsible for the most significant changes in the island governments in this period. Fear of labour recruiters, educational opportunities and the strong personalities of the Samoan pastors were all factors which contributed towards strong mission control.

From the 1870s, labour recruiting, increased trading activity and the frequent disputes that arose among foreign residents and between foreign residents and the islanders drew the attention of

56 Interviews conducted at north and south Tabiteuea, September - October 1969; see also, 'Espiègle Report', 5; 'Royalist Report', 128; R.C. to H.C., not numbered, 1 July 1895 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 215/1894.

57 The Friend, April 1889.

58 Maude, Local Government, 32-3.

the metropolitan governments to the island groups of the Pacific. Under the Western Pacific Order in Council of 1877 the High Commissioner, with his offices in Suva, was given considerable judicial power over British subjects residing in such 'Western Pacific Islands' as were outside Her Majesty's Dominions and not 'within the jurisdiction of any civilized Power'. As a result four British naval vessels visited the Gilbert and Ellice groups between 1881 and 1886. Their commanders, who were empowered to act as Deputy Commissioners under the Order, were concerned primarily with offences by or against British subjects but on occasion a liberal interpretation of instructions allowed them to intervene or arbitrate as they saw fit. Traders often complained of laws which prevented their visiting ships on Sundays, and to trading tabus imposed by the islanders in an attempt to raise the price of copra or to lower the cost of goods, but commanders tended to take the view that residents on the islands were obliged to accept local laws. Fines in copra were sometimes inflicted as compensation to traders for theft or pilfering, but in disputes between islanders and traders judicial sympathy was almost invariably with the former.⁵⁹ Naval captains, with their guidance and advice, backed by coercive power if necessary, played a significant role in the development of the governments of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands prior to the declaration of the Protectorates by assisting the island leaders to settle their own affairs and by giving them support in their dealings with foreign residents and visitors.

By the 1890s, then, traders, recruiters, missionaries and naval commanders had combined to stimulate considerable changes in the island governments in more than fifty years of significant contact. The islands had, however, been subjected to varying degrees of influence and each had accepted, adapted or rejected new ideas depending on its particular circumstances and the inclinations of its leaders.

Butaritari, the island most visited by trans-Pacific shipping had developed into the main commercial centre with twenty-one

59 See, 'Report on the Ellice, Gilbert, Marshall and Caroline Islands' (H.M.S. *Emerald*, 1881) - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 128/1881; '*Espiègle* Report' (1883); '*Dart* Report' (1884); 'Report of Proceedings of H.M.S. *Miranda*' (1886), print.

foreign residents of whom twenty were, at least nominally, trading.⁶⁰ Competition among the various trading interests for the business of the 2,000 inhabitants of the island had led to the evolution of the 'clip' system - credit in return for future copra production - which had resulted in heavy indebtedness on the island.⁶¹

Tebureimoa, the uea, was influenced at times by certain traders, particularly the representatives of Crawford and Company of California who had arranged, at a price, the uea's trip to San Francisco in 1891.⁶² And although he ruled with the advice of a council of his own choosing, he still retained effective control over the island and its neighbour, Makin. Traders were levied \$100 a year for licences and the laws, made by uea and enforced by his police, carried heavy money fines - a practice that accelerated the descent into indebtedness of many of the island's inhabitants. Except for a few Roman Catholics the island was a Protestant enclave with a law for compulsory church attendance.⁶³

Although Kanoho, the Hawaiian pastor on Marakei, reported in 1888 that the people of the island had 'been setting their hands to the making of laws for their better government, and for the suppression of evil practices',⁶⁴ the authority of the uea, Ten Tatun, was by no means secure. Ten Tatun had seized power with the assistance of Kanoho in 1886⁶⁵ and, although he was able to charge \$50 for trading licences, and levy an annual head tax, traditional clan rivalries continued. By 1892 only 600 of the estimated

60 'Royalist Report', 50.

61 ibid., 66-8; R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 38, 13 March 1894 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 105/1894; Gilberts no. 44, 21 March 1894 - ibid., 106/1894.

62 The Examiner, 15,16 Oct. 1892.

63 'Royalist Report', 66-8; The Friend, May 1894. Various forms of currency, especially Chilean dollars, were introduced by traders prior to the declaration of the Protectorate - \$5 = £1.

64 The Friend, April 1888.

65 Maude, Local Government, 28.

population of 2,000 were Protestant and many old customs, for example polygamy and infanticide, were still practised.⁶⁶

At Abaiang, Kaiea II, the uea, had been able to consolidate his position by the 1880s and ruled the island with his council of four and seventeen police.⁶⁷ Both he and his councillors were members of the A.B.C.F.M. and a new code of laws had been promulgated in 1889.⁶⁸ There was an annual levy of \$50 on traders and a fine of \$25 for drunkenness. Adultery and theft were punished by the confiscation of lands as compensation for the injured parties.⁶⁹

Tarawa had probably the least stable government in the northern Gilbert Islands. The island was torn by civil war between the northern and southern districts of the island, led by their respective uea. Firearms and liquor had both been imported in large quantities.⁷⁰ Walkup reported in 1891 that a new code of laws had been introduced but that its acceptance had been undermined by a party of Tem Binoka's envoys who advised dancing instead of church attendance.⁷¹ It is doubtful, therefore, given the state of war and the fact that only a small proportion of the population gave allegiance to the church, whether the laws were enforced to any significant degree.⁷² There is no evidence to suggest that there was a local government to compare with those of the islands further north with a uea's council and a police force.

Maiana was little visited in the 19th century because of its difficult lagoon entrance. By 1892, however, there were four traders

66 'Royalist Report', 68-9.

67 *ibid.*, 69-70.

68 The Friend, April 1889.

69 'Royalist Report', 69-70.

70 *ibid.*, 70-74; Maude, *Local Government*, 29.

71 The Friend, May 1891.

72 'Royalist Report', 49. Davis states that 600 of a population of 3,000 were Protestant.

resident on the island,⁷³ two of whom were to play significant roles in the British administration - Corrie as interpreter and Murdoch as government agent and District Magistrate. The populace was essentially Pagan, and polygamy had been abolished only in 1891. Customary punishments were enforced for adultery, theft and murder.⁷⁴

Tem Binoka, the uea of Abemama, Aranuka and Kuria, died in 1891 to be succeeded by his brother Timon and, a few months later, by the latter's son, Bauro, a boy of ten years who ruled through a council of regents.⁷⁵ Twenty-eight years earlier Tem Baiteke, Binoka's father, had led devastating raids on Aranuka and Kuria. As a result, many fled to Maiana, Tarawa and Abaiang; the few survivors became the slaves of Baiteke and Binoka.⁷⁶ Following upon Baiteke's campaigns Binoka had even further reduced the population of all three islands and took advantage of his monopoly of firearms to rule with absolute authority. In 1861 Randell's population estimates were 5,000 for Abemama, 1,000 for Aranuka and 1,500 for Kuria.⁷⁷ The figures given by Davis were 700, 100 and 30 respectively.⁷⁸ Binoka altered the traditional seating pattern in the maneaba to favour his own boti of Kaburara.⁷⁹ All trade was kept in the hands of the uea or his agents. Binoka's whim was law.

Although the majority of the inhabitants of Nonouti were nominally Christian by 1892, with the numbers of Catholics and Protestants about even, the maneaba system of government and

73 *ibid.*, 74.

74 *ibid.*

75 *ibid.*

76 Letter from Bingham in the Missionary Herald (Boston), Aug. 1864, 244; Maude, 'Baiteke and Binoka', 211; Sabatier, Sous l'Equateur du Pacifique, Les Iles Gilbert et la Mission Catholique, 113-18.

77 The Friend, Sept. 1861.

78 'Royalist Report', 48-9.

79 Maude, The Gilbertese Boti, 45.

customary law prevailed. The existence of eight more or less independent maneaba districts with their traditional rivalries, the size of the island, and the presence of two religious creeds precluded the establishment of a mission-dominated government.⁸⁰ A similar situation existed at Tabiteuea. The brief reign of Kapu and his mission committees, and the attempts of his successors to introduce new laws,⁸¹ represented but a passing phase in the history of the island. In 1892 the majority of the people were still Pagan and, following the civil war of 1880, governed by the unimane in the maneaba councils of the north. Traditional laws with traditional punishments were still enforced.⁸²

The five small islands of the southern Gilberts had traditionally been governed under maneaba councils. Within a decade of their arrival the representatives of the L.M.S. had succeeded in transferring power to the kaubure,⁸³ who were in practice the village deacons. The practice for district councils to meet together to discuss island affairs was retained. Often the deacons were chosen from among the unimane but the basis of the old men's power had changed. The maneaba remained, but as a shadow of its former self. The maneaba itself was still a centre for village social life but it had lost a great deal of the sanctity accorded it by custom, and the spiritual sanctions that had operated against those who offended its customs were no longer effective.⁸⁴ Christian laws were introduced. At Onotoa church attendance was

80 'Royalist Report', 75; Maude, Local Government, 30.

81 The Friend, Nov. 1889.

82 'Royalist Report', 78-9; Maude, Local Government, 31.

83 Samoan pastors first introduced the title of faipule to describe the officers of the mission governments. In time the title became kaupuli in both groups and, later kaubure in the Gilbert Islands. In order to avoid confusion the term faipule has been applied to the Ellice Islands and kaubure to the Gilberts for the period before 1892. For positions in the island governments established by the Native Laws of 1894, and subsequent legislation, Kaupuli and Kaubure, for the Ellice and Gilbert groups respectively have been used. In general discussion Kaubure has been used for both groups.

84 Maude, Local Government, 31; The Gilbertese Boti, 22.

compulsory three times a week with a fine of ten nuts for non-observance. A fine of 1,000 nuts was standard for fornication at Tamana and for adultery the punishment was a fine of \$50 and a flogging for both parties. Large numbers of police, paid by results, were common. At Nikunau there were 200 police for an estimated population of 1,779 and at Beru 138 for 2,277 people.⁸⁵ Fines were usually divided among the pastors and the kaubure.⁸⁶ The role of the pastors in the political organisation was significant. Not only did they rule through the church but the church, in practice, became the civil authority on the islands.⁸⁷ At the same time the pastors showed little interest in furthering the education of the islanders and the majority of church members were almost totally ignorant in matters of doctrine.⁸⁸

In the Ellice Islands the authority of the tupu had been rapidly eroded leaving them with little more than a ceremonial role. The deacons and leading church supporters were at the centre of the new political system when they met as the council of faipule. Some members of chiefly families held office in the new structure, but by grace rather than by right and, in the council, were regarded as a single voice among equals. The faipule were responsible for the administration of the islands, under the guidance of the pastor, and for the dispensing of justice in lieu of, or in conjunction with, a judge. The rôle of police was usually assumed by the faipule.⁸⁹

The laws introduced by the faipule were concerned primarily with 'morals' and with inculcating a due respect for missionaries, mission property and the sabbath. At Nukufetau, for example, fornication usually rated a fine of 300 coconuts but when committed on the sabbath the fine was 1,300 nuts. There were also fines for

85 'Royalist Report', 79-82.

86 Maude, Local Government, 32.

87 *ibid.*; 'Report of Work in the Tokelau, Ellice and Gilbert Groups, L.M.S., September 1900 to September 1902' - LMS, South Seas, Reports.

88 'Report ... L.M.S.', *ibid.*

89 Journals of S.H. Davies (1882) and J. Marriott (1883) - LMS, South Seas, Journals; 'Royalist Report', 85-9.

non-attendance at church, 10 nuts, and quarrelling with the mission teacher, 100 nuts. Vigilance in upholding the laws was encouraged by allowing for fixed sums to be paid to injured parties and cash gratuities for persons witnessing an offence or making an arrest, in addition to the fines which were divided among the pastors and faipule. Conviction for adultery at Vaitupu resulted in payments to the faipule of \$5, \$3 each to the 'injured' spouses, and 50 cents to the person(s) witnessing the offence.⁹⁰ Generally speaking, however, fines in the Ellice Islands were moderate compared with those in the Gilberts.⁹¹

Under an Anglo-German declaration of 1886 the western Pacific was divided into two recognised spheres of influence separated by a line drawn from New Guinea, north of the Solomon and Gilbert Islands and south of Nauru and the Marshall Islands.⁹² The Gilbert and Ellice Islands thus fell within the British sphere but for six years no British naval vessel visited the groups and the High Commissioner, hampered by a lack of funds and transport, was unable to exercise effectively his jurisdiction in the islands.⁹³

At the same time the northern Gilbert Islands in particular became the focus of rivalry between American and German trading interests in the central Pacific with the latter receiving support from the visits of four German naval vessels between 1888 and 1892.⁹⁴ Because of restrictions placed on the labour trade in the German zone the recruiters, too, began to look southwards.⁹⁵ American traders on Butaritari, and especially Adolph Rick who had sought and obtained the post of United States Commercial Agent, pressed for the visit of an American man-of-war, the establishment

90 'Native Laws of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands' - WPHC, Miscellaneous Papers, General.

91 'Royalist Report', 85-9.

92 S. of S. to H.C., Circular Despatch, 3 May 1886 - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

93 H.C. to S. of S., Confidential, 3 May 1889 - CO 225/30. See also Scarr, Fragments of Empire, 115-77 passim.

94 'Royalist Report', 66, 70.

95 H.C. to S. of S., Confidential, 3 May 1889 - loc. cit.

of a coaling station, or treaties with island authorities as an expression of U.S. Government interest in the group, but to no avail.⁹⁶ When recruiting for central American plantations, in which some American trading firms were involved, took place in 1891, however, the German Government approached the Foreign Office with a request that a protectorate be declared over the Gilbert Islands.⁹⁷

The request, made by the German Ambassador in London, was based primarily on the need to establish some form of law and order in the group. Subsequent representations emphasised irregularities in the labour trade, as conducted by some American interests, and expressed the hope that Britain would act in order to prevent the United States Government from making official treaties and thus precluding intervention by other powers. German interests, it was stated, were primarily concerned with keeping the area open as a source of labour for plantations in Samoa. All representations were made on the understanding that such recruiting would be allowed to continue in the event of a protectorate being established. The German Government also emphasised that the islands lay within the British sphere of influence and that, accordingly, Germany had declined to meet a petition signed by German traders in 1888 for annexation by Germany.⁹⁸ The advantages enjoyed by American traders in the Butaritari credit-war may have been an additional, although unstated, reason behind the request.

While there were certainly strong reasons in favour of establishing some form of effective jurisdiction in the group, to maintain law and order and to control labour recruiting, the other arguments put forward by the German Government carry less weight. Rick, as U.S. Commercial Agent, had certainly advocated treaties but his Government had shown little interest in assuming formal control over any Pacific islands. Following the Anglo-German declaration the United States Government, mindful of its own past,

96 See, for example, Rick to Assistant Secretary of State (U.S.A.), 14 Aug. 1888 - Despatches from U.S. Consul in Butaritari, 1888-1892.

97 S. of S. to H.C., Confidential, 5 April 1892 (with enclosures) - WPHC, Confidential Despatches from S. of S.

98 *ibid.*

pointed out that colonial acquisition was not a declared policy of the Government, even though it could claim rights over certain Pacific islands on the grounds that they were settled by American citizens, and expressed confidence that other, colonial oriented, powers would not discriminate against its citizens in trade or other matters.⁹⁹ When Captain Davis visited Butaritari at the conclusion of his flag-raising tour of the Gilbert Islands he sparked off a considerable round of diplomatic correspondence by refusing to recognise Rick as a representative of the United States Government. Davis argued that Rick had been accredited only to the uea of Butaritari, and not to Her Majesty's Government, and that he could not, therefore, be recognised.¹⁰⁰

With little regard for accuracy, and little knowledge, representatives of the United States in London argued that:

the germs of civilization were planted in the Gilbert group by the zealous endeavours of American citizens more than half-a-century ago. The result of this work, carried on by American citizens and money, has been, in fact, to change the naked barbarism of the island natives into enlightened communities, and to lay the foundation of the trade and commerce which have given those islands importance in the eyes of Europe today.¹⁰¹

It was again argued that the United States Government had 'slept upon its rights to reap the benefits of the development produced by the effort of its citizens'. The 'expediency, and indeed that necessity' of maintaining consular representation in the Gilbert Islands following Davis' 'strange conduct' was also pointed out.¹⁰² Henry White, the Chargé d'Affaires for the United States in London, was evidently unaware, when he wrote the above in November 1892, that his home Government's interest in the Gilbert Islands was minimal. In April of the same year the Under Secretary of State had written to instruct Rick to close the Commercial Agency

99 Washington Post, 8 Sept., 1892 - reprinted as enclosure to no. 33 in F.O.C.P., no. 6328.

100 Rick-Davis correspondence - no. 66 in F.O.C.P., no. 6328.

101 White (U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, London) to F.O., 21 Nov. 1892 - no. 77 in F.O.C.P., no. 6328.

102 *ibid.*

at Butaritari - a decision that had been made effective in September 1892.¹⁰³

In 1889 Thurston, as High Commissioner, had suggested the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner for the Solomon, Gilbert and Ellice Islands as a means of controlling German recruiting in the area and the expansion of German interests generally.¹⁰⁴ Two years later, with a foreign power more directly involved, the Colonial Office had to consider again its role in the western Pacific. It was reluctant to take action because of the costs involved and the absence of any strategic advantage to be gained.¹⁰⁵ In the final analysis it was the prospect of German annexation, and the consequent defeat of the intentions of the 1886 declaration, that stimulated action.¹⁰⁶ The Admiralty was instructed to make a vessel available from the Royal Australia Station for the purpose of raising the flag.¹⁰⁷ Captain Davis, commanding H.M.S. Royalist, sailed for the group and declared a Protectorate over the Gilbert Islands at Abemama on 27 May 1892.¹⁰⁸

The Ellice Islands had been virtually ignored in these discussions but Davis had been given instructions to visit the group during his return voyage to Suva. At all islands he received a clear mandate for a British Protectorate.¹⁰⁹ In June 1892

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- 103 Rick to Assistant Secretary of State, 24 Sept. 1892 (acknowledging instructions dated 28 April 1892) - Despatches from U.S. Consul in Butaritari, 1888-1892.
- 104 H.C. to S. of S., Confidential, 3 May 1889 - loc. cit.
- 105 S. of S. to H.C., Confidential, 5 April 1892 (with enclosures) - loc. cit.
- 106 C.O. to F.O., 21 Jan. 1892, enclosure - ibid.
- 107 Admiralty to Commander of Royal Australia Station, 5 Feb. 1892, enclosure - ibid.
- 108 'Royalist Report', 10.
- 109 ibid., 85-9.

Thurston put the case for the group being included in the Gilbert Islands Protectorate:

From an Admiralty point of view I do not suppose that the possession of these islands would be considered of any advantage to the Crown: but two of them, that is to say, Nukufetau and Funafuti, embrace large and extensive lagoons easily accessible to large ships, and as they are all possessed of commercial value, I venture to submit that it would be inexpedient if in the present circumstances they passed under the control of any foreign power.¹¹⁰

Thurston also pointed out, not quite accurately, that the trade of the group was entirely in British hands. He also assured the Colonial Office that their inclusion in the Gilbert Islands Protectorate would not involve any additional expenditure.¹¹¹

These arguments were accepted by the Colonial Office and a separate Protectorate was declared over the Ellice Islands at Vaitupu on 9 September 1892 by Captain Gibson of H.M.S. Curaçoa.¹¹²

110 H.C. to S. of S., Confidential, 23 June 1892 - WPHC, Confidential Despatches to S. of S.

111 *ibid.*

112 Gibson to Scott, 20 Sept. 1892 - enclosure in no. 100 in F.O.C.P., no. 6328.

PART II

PENURY, PATERNALISM AND PHOSPHATE:

DOMINANT THEMES BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

CHAPTER 2

THE INITIAL IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT, 1892-1908

Sir John Thurston, the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, saw the establishment of law and order as the main problem that would be faced by the new administration in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. The people, he wrote, needed protection from labour recruiters, avaricious traders, the effects of the introduction of liquor and firearms and from 'the criminal waifs and strays who drift or who are driven into the Pacific from civilized societies'.¹ But there were practical difficulties to be faced. Under existing Orders in Council the High Commissioner had jurisdiction only over British subjects living in the groups and none, save persuasion, over non-British residents and islanders.² Without official transport at his disposal, the difficulties faced by a Resident would be greatly increased. Above all, the Treasury had stipulated that an appointment could be made only if there was a guarantee that there would be no need to call upon imperial funds.³

It was essential, then, if a British Resident was to be appointed, that there should also be established some means of collecting the taxation required to support an administration. Thurston envisaged the development and expansion of existing institutions to accomplish this end. With respect to the island governments, however, the powers of the Resident would be strictly limited:

... the Resident would do no more, ... [Thurston wrote] than advise the Chiefs, aiding them as far as possible, with his moral support, but leaving to them the exercise and responsibility of police and magisterial functions. He would bring before and

1 H.C. to S. of S., Confidential, 31 Aug. 1892 - WPHC, Confidential Despatches to S. of S.

2 Scarr, Fragments of Empire, 252-6.

3 Treasury to C.O., 25 Feb. 1893, enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., no. 8, 13 March 1893 - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

and explain to them from time to time simple laws and regulations for the better conduct of their affairs, which when passed by the established and recognized authority would upon receiving the Resident's assent become law.⁴

Thurston believed that the best solution to the problems caused by the presence of about eighty foreigners (British and non-British) in the groups lay in complete annexation by Britain and the creation of a comprehensive administration. It was unsatisfactory, he argued, to appoint a Resident would would be dependent on a large number of petty governments for many of his powers.⁵

Ripon, as Secretary of State, was opposed to annexation. He was not prepared to go beyond the declaration of a protectorate over the islands and the provision of the minimum administrative staff.⁶ Cost was another factor. By Colonial Office standards the scheme was expensive with recurrent expenditure being estimated at £2,700 a year.⁷ Thurston's original proposal, for the islands to remain as Protectorates and for the appointment of a single officer, was approved. Expenditure was estimated at £875 a year.⁸ A Colonial Office suggestion that a representative body should be created, similar to the Council of Arikis recently established in the Cook Islands, was rejected by Thurston. The Gilbert Islands were too scattered, he replied, and 'the degree or civilization attained by the natives of the Cooks Group is far in advance of that of the Gilbert Islanders'.⁹

Problems concerning the High Commissioner's jurisdiction over non-British residents were solved by the Western Pacific Order in Council of 1893 which granted him wide powers over all non-native

4 H.C. to S. of S., Confidential, 31 Aug. 1892 - loc. cit.

5 *ibid.*

6 C.O. to Treasury, 20 Jan. 1893, enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., no. 8, 13 March 1893 - loc. cit.

7 H.C. to S. of S., Confidential, 31 Aug. 1892 - loc. cit.

8 *ibid.*

9 *ibid.*; S. of S. to H.C., Confidential, 5 April 1892 - WPHC, Confidential Despatches from S. of S.

persons residing in British-protected islands of the western Pacific. In the course of a tour through the Gilbert and Ellice groups in mid-1893 Thurston signed jurisdictional treaties with all the island governments and was thus empowered to act under the Order.¹⁰ Queen's Regulations No. 3 and No. 4 of 1893, made by the High Commissioner, prohibited the sale or supply of liquor and firearms to all native persons in the Protectorates.

After his tour of the groups Thurston realised that the Resident would, at least in the first instance, require legal training and judicial experience. With this in mind he recommended that C.R. Swayne, a Stipendiary Magistrate in the Fiji service since 1878, should be loaned to the High Commission for a period of six to twelve months.¹¹ His appointment was provisional, and his salary of £500 a year was to be paid temporarily from unspent funds allocated for a Deputy Commissioner in the Solomon Islands.¹²

Swayne's first task on taking up his appointment was to investigate trading debts, amounting to \$32,439, owed by the people of Butaritari and Makin. He found that most debts had been contracted under the 'clip' system - the mortgage of the produce of specified pieces of land in return for credit - which had been introduced by Hawaiian traders in the 1860s and thereafter adopted by all traders on Butaritari and Makin. In their attempts to pay fines of up to \$100 for breaches of the uea's laws, the islanders had exacerbated the problem by trading 'clips' among themselves. Following a visit of H.I.G.M.S. Sperber in 1891, the mortgage of land and crops had been forbidden by the uea, but, from that time until January 1894, no action had been taken to investigate claims. After hearing all submissions, in which debtors freely volunteered information to assist claimants, Swayne found that valid claims totalled \$18,953 at Butaritari and \$4,984 at Makin. In accordance with a custom which allowed the uea to collect the produce of any

10 H.C. to S. of S., no. 28, 2 Sept. 1893 - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.

11 *ibid.*

12 C.O. minute on H.C. to S. of S., no. 29, 2 Sept. 1893 - CO 225/42.

land on either island for either personal or public benefit, the Resident suggested that a tabu be declared on the sale of nuts and copra, and that the newly-formed island government should assume responsibility for the debts - a course immediately adopted by the uea and his council.¹³

In the course of his first tour through the groups Swayne made a close survey of the structure of the island governments and their laws as a first stage towards producing a consolidated code of laws for the groups.¹⁴ Bearing in mind the minimal supervision that would be possible, he was obliged to build on existing institutions to a considerable degree. Accordingly, the local government constitution drawn up provided for a different form of government for the southern Gilbert Islands from that designed for the chiefly societies of the northern Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

In the latter, the High Chief was made responsible for the good order of the island assisted by a council of Kaubure. The High Chief, Kaubure, and other government officials were to meet monthly. Island governments were permitted to pass regulations for 'the good order and cleanliness' of the islands with maximum punishments of a fine of ten shillings or one month's imprisonment. In the southern Gilbert Islands the Kaubure were made jointly responsible for good order and at each meeting were to elect one of their number as president. On all principal islands (that is, excluding Makin, Kuria and Aranuka, which were regarded as dependencies) one or two Magistrates were to be appointed to hear all offences under the Native Laws and island regulations. Magistrates could call up to six Kaubure as assessors and were obliged to call twelve for a murder trial. An island Scribe and village police completed the complement of island officials. All fines and a landowners' levy were to be paid into an Island Fund under the supervision of the Scribe. Magistrates, Scribes, and

13 Report of enquiry into debts on Butaritari, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 38, 13 March 1894 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 105/1894. Swayne's official title was British Resident and Deputy Commissioner for the Western Pacific. Within a few years the title had been shortened to Resident Commissioner.

14 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 6, 21 Dec. 1893 - *ibid.*, 22/1894.

police were to be paid salaries from the Funds at rates to be determined by the island governments.¹⁵

It would appear, however, that after he had collected the laws of the various islands, and they had been translated by Corrie, Swayne prepared the Native Laws and submitted them to the High Commissioner prior to their being approved by the island governments.¹⁶ The Laws were printed and then introduced and explained on the islands but this was the limit of consultation between the Resident and the governments.¹⁷

In the Native Laws simplicity, in concept and expression, was the keynote. As far as he considered possible Swayne based the laws on custom, as it had been modified by mission and other alien influences, and with due regard for indigenous views of the seriousness of any given offence.¹⁸

Theft, assault, adultery, rape, carrying naked fire, abuse, slander, drunkenness, fornication (defined as sexual intercourse with a woman betrothed to another man), and cutting down trees were all regarded as offences and carried fines ranging from 10s. to £5 or imprisonment from two weeks to two years. Flogging was also sanctioned for second and subsequent theft offences. Compensation, in cases of fornication (up to £10) and adultery (up to £20) and to the extent of loss by theft, could also be enforced. The death penalty, requiring the Resident's sanction, was retained

15 Native Laws of the Gilbert Islands (1894); Native Laws of the Ellice Islands (1894).

16 H.C. to S. of S., no. 22, 13 June 1894 - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.; R.C. to H.C., no. 6, 21 Dec. 1893 - loc. cit.; Gilberts no. 11, 29 Dec. 1893 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 27/1894.

17 *ibid.*; Swayne arrived at Butaritari on 7 December after travelling through the Ellice and Gilbert groups on his way from Fiji. The draft laws were sent to Thurston on 28 December (R.C. to H.C., no. 10, 28 Dec. 1893 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 22/1894). As Swayne did not leave Butaritari in the interim it follows that the code could not have been submitted to the island governments before it received Thurston's approval.

18 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 11, 29 Dec. 1893 - loc. cit.

for murder. Sabbath observance and school attendance for children were included in the code without stated penalties for non-observance. Although High Chiefs and Kaubure could appeal to the Resident for advice at any time the latter's only obligatory function was to confirm or commute death penalties.¹⁹

In drafting the laws Swayne drew heavily on such codes as were available, but in the matter of punishments important modifications were made. The death penalty, previously enforced on some islands for adultery with a chief's wife, incest or persistent anti-social behaviour, was abolished for all crimes save that of murder. Confiscation of land, as a punishment, had been replaced by fines in the Ellice and some southern Gilbert Islands as a result of mission influence, but was still enforced on most Gilbert Islands for a wide range of offences. To the Gilbertese, land was almost as important as life itself. The replacement of land confiscation by imprisonment, itself an alien concept, or fines, which after all only required a short-term effort to pay, therefore had grave consequences for the traditional leaders of society in that their most effective means of ensuring conformity to social norms was removed.

The Native Laws of 1894 introduced a further new concept to both groups of islands. As in most primitive societies, crimes had previously been regarded as against a person, or the community at large and not against an impersonal government. Prior to the introduction of the laws the victim of any offence had been compensated and, throughout the islands, such fines as were paid were for the personal benefit of the rulers. In the north the uea received fines and in the southern Gilbert and Ellice Islands any fines collected were divided among the kaubure and faipule.

Traditionally and, later, under their mission inspired governments neither Gilbertese nor Ellice Islanders had any notion of a division between legislative, executive and judicial functions of government. The appointment of Magistrates was therefore a significant innovation, even though there had been a traditional tia motiki-taeka (giver of the deciding word) under the maneaba

19 Gilbert Islands and Ellice Islands, Native Laws.

governments,²⁰ and one that was to have profound effects on the island governments and the nature of island society. The Magistrate, like the law, was soon seen as dependent on the central Government, and responsible to it, rather than to the uea or the people. From the time that Magistrates were first appointed their eventual domination over the uea and Kaubure was inevitable.

The recognition of a single high chief in the Ellice and northern Gilbert Islands was also significant. Only Butaritari, Abaiang and Abemama had strong and stable chiefly governments. The position of the uea on the other northern islands was tenuous to say the least and represented little more than temporary dominance in island politics. In the Ellice, too, chiefs could not hold office contrary to public opinion. An important element of flexibility traditionally designed to meet changing circumstances on the islands was thus removed.

Apart from trading licences and a levy of £1 on all non-native persons save ministers of religion, the administration of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate²¹ was dependent on the 'Queen's Tax', or the contributions of the island governments, for its revenue. Swayne's assessments ranged from £5 to £100 per island and were calculated on a basis of 2s. per man.²² On the islands themselves, individual taxes were usually assessed in copra at rates ranging upwards from 50 lb - worth about 4s. The deduction of local expenses, which were minimal, and the Queen's Tax thus allowed a fair accumulation in the various Island Funds.²³

Swayne spent the major part of his two years in the Protectorate touring the islands establishing, supervising and advising the new governments. Misunderstandings and abuses of authority were frequent

20 Maude, Local Government, 37.

21 Although the groups were, technically, separate Protectorates, they were always administered as a single unit and were usually (even in legislation) given the designation of 'The Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate'. This 'legal fiction', as it was later called by im Thurn, has been preserved for convenience of reference.

22 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 6, 21 Dec. 1893 - loc. cit.

23 *ibid.*

and, as his term of office proceeded, Swayne found it necessary to assume a more active role than had been envisaged by Thurston.

Where possible Swayne insisted on the election of all officials at full maneaba meetings but always assumed the right to confirm appointments. On occasion he dismissed officials but then allowed their successors to be elected.²⁴ Where he felt strong action was necessary Swayne was careful to seek legal justification. For example when the uea of Marakei and Tarawa were deported in 1894 and 1895 respectively, action was taken under the Order in Council of 1893. In neither case could the deposed uea be regarded as the most influential man on his island and both had sought to consolidate their positions by partial judgements and the use of their powers under the Native Laws to suppress rivals.²⁵

In the southern Gilberts administration had traditionally been vested in the unimane. With the introduction of the Native Laws all the unimane from the various maneaba districts met as the Kaubure and, as Swayne observed, spent most of their time quarrelling. In the interests of orderly government the Resident induced the people to reduce the number of Kaubure from 181 to 34 at Nonouti, for example, and from 120 to an unknown number at Beru.²⁶ According to the constitution a president was to be elected by the Kaubure at each monthly meeting. Swayne found it impossible to persuade the southern Gilbertese to accept a permanent appointment as Chief of Kaubure (envisaged as the equivalent of a High Chief) in view of their strong repugnance for any man who raised himself, or was raised, above his fellows. A compromise was reached whereby Chiefs of Kaubure were elected for a two-year term.²⁷

24 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 79, 7 Aug. 1894 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 198/1894; Gilberts no. 6, 25 Jan. 1895 - *ibid.*, 46/1895.

25 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 79, 7 Aug. 1894 - *loc. cit.*

26 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 13, 30 Dec. 1893, enclosed in H.C. to S. of S., no. 8, 21 Feb. 1894 - CO 225/45; Gilberts no. 79, 7 Aug. 1894 - *loc. cit.*; not numbered, 1 July 1895 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 215/1895.

27 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 79, 7 Aug. 1894 - *loc. cit.*; Gilberts no. 3, 19 Jan. 1895 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 41/1895.

Financial considerations had excluded the possibility of a vessel for the British Resident, and Swayne, therefore, was dependent on irregular commercial shipping for his tours of the southern islands. He made frequent use of the Archer, owned by Henderson and Macfarlane of Auckland, and appointed Clarke, the ship's supercargo, as his tax collector in the Ellice.²⁸ It was not until January 1895 that Swayne had an opportunity of distributing the Native Laws in the Ellice Islands and when he did so the position of the L.M.S. was strengthened by his insistence that all Magistrates should be able to read the Laws printed in Samoan.²⁹ Swayne accepted the domination of the Ellice Islands governments by mission interests and made no attempt to separate church and government affairs. Taxation for Protectorate funds was assessed at between £5 and £20 per island - considerably less than either pastors' salaries or contributions to the L.M.S. vessel, John Williams.³⁰ On occasions, however, the islanders asked Swayne to supervise the election of a new government to replace persons previously dismissed in 'palace revolutions', sometimes for excessive sloth and sometimes for excessive zeal.³¹

Partly by necessity, and partly by conviction, Swayne interfered in the affairs of the island governments as little as possible. He generally accepted rule by uea, unimane or the church, and was careful to emphasise that his role was one of arbiter. In the settlement of trading debts at Butaritari, Tarawa and Abemama, in hearing disputes between the representatives of rival missions, in supervising elections and in suggesting that the 'cat' be substituted for the brutal tail of the giant ray, he tried to act as an outsider concerned with assisting disputants to reach agreement among themselves.³²

28 R.C. to H.C., not numbered, 7 July 1895 - *ibid.*, 216/1895.

29 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 4, 17 Jan. 1895 - *ibid.*, 42/1895.

30 *ibid.*; R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 6, 25 Jan. 1895 - *ibid.*, 46/1895; Ellice no. 75, 1 Sept. 1895 - *ibid.*, 367/1895. For example, the tax at Vaitupu for 1895 was £20 (\$100). Contributions to the L.M.S. for 1894 had totalled \$168 in addition to \$141 paid to the mission teacher. In 1895 contributions to the L.M.S. totalled \$451.

31 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 75, 1 Sept. 1895 - *loc. cit.*

32 R.C. to H.C., Dec. 1893 to Sept. 1895, passim.

For the first two years of its existence the administration of the Protectorate rested on a shaky financial base. The drought in the southern Gilberts, which Thurston had reported after his trip, did not break until 1894 and it took several more months for the coconut trees to recover sufficiently to allow their exploitation for copra. As a result, only £100 of Swayne's salary for the year 1894-5 could be met from local revenue and the Treasury, despite its earlier edict, was obliged to provide the balance from imperial funds.³³

Partly because of the lack of finance and partly because of Colonial Office instructions there was no expansion of the establishment during Swayne's term. Others whom he employed, Corrie and Clarke in particular, were engaged only on a temporary and ad hoc basis.

There was no official headquarters. Swayne spent more time on Butaritari than on any other island but the arrangement was regarded as temporary. In 1895 Swayne was instructed to choose a suitable site for his successor's headquarters. Thurston favoured Abemama because of its lagoon harbour and central location. Swayne, however, selected Tarawa and purchased land at Betio, an islet on the southwest tip of the atoll.³⁴

Although Swayne had made little progress in establishing a comprehensive central administration before he returned to Fiji in November 1895 he had laid the foundations of a system of local administration that left a great deal of responsibility with the island governments. Wittingly or unwittingly, however, he had created a machinery that could be built upon and expanded, by those who followed him, in a manner that was to destroy its original purpose by placing greater powers in the hands of European officers.

William Telfer Campbell, a northern Irishman with a military background and administrative experience in New Guinea, was chosen as Swayne's successor. An irritable and abrupt man, Campbell rapidly

33 H.C. to S. of S., no. 28., 2 Sept. 1893 - loc. cit.; R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 6, 21 Dec. 1893 - loc. cit.; S. of S. to H.C., no. 14, 28 April 1894 (with enclosure Treasury to C.O., no. 88, 11 Jan. 1894) - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

34 H.C. to S. of S., no. 28, 2 Sept. 1893 - loc. cit.; R.C. to H.C., not numbered, 1 July 1895 - loc. cit.

became unpopular with most Europeans living in the groups. He attacked missionaries for interfering with the island governments, traders for their unscrupulous (as he saw them) dealings and the few remaining beachcombers whom he considered to have an undesirable influence on the islanders. Campbell, self-righteous, autocratic, intolerant and forceful, was to have a lasting impact on the government and people of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

As an administrator, Campbell believed in close supervision over the island governments and, where possible, direct control over their affairs. He has been seen as an anti-mission or, more specifically, as an anti-Catholic administrator,³⁵ but such an explanation is too simple. Campbell was not opposed to mission activity per se, but only in so far as missionaries, mission teaching or inter-mission rivalries inhibited the development of the islands in accordance with his plans. Inevitably, though, because of his personality and the nature of expatriate society in the islands, his official career in the Protectorate, which lasted from 1896 to 1908, was marked by a series of personal feuds - with beachcombers, with missionaries, and with his own staff.

Campbell saw the effective enforcement of law and order as the first stage towards efficient local government. To this end the island administrations were encouraged to pass regulations to supplement the Native Laws. For example, shortly after his arrival, Campbell recommended that flogging should be introduced as a deterrent punishment for drunkenness. When Thurston refused to sanction such action, Campbell had the island governments pass an appropriate regulation.³⁶ By the time that Campbell left the Protectorate, in 1908, a standard set of regulations had been accepted by all governments from Makin as far south as Tabiteuea and, with minor modifications, by all other islands.³⁷ It is of interest that of the fifty-nine

35 See, for example, Sabatier, Sous l'Equateur du Pacifique, 128-9, 227-8.

36 R.C. to H.C., no. 14, n.d., and ensuing correspondence - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 214/1896.

37 Assistant H.C. to H.C., Gilbert and Ellice no. 23, 23 March 1909 - *ibid.*, 393/1909.

regulations no less than one-third contravened the maximum punishments stipulated for island regulations in the Native Laws.

Campbell soon discovered that, throughout the islands, few Kaubure had a clear idea as to their duties and responsibilities. They were often dominated by the pastors, served as Magistrates and/or police and collected fines for personal benefit.³⁸ Campbell reported one extreme case, from Butaritari, where a Kaubure had fined his wife:

... a woman had been fined £12 for dreaming of a man who was not her husband, the latter inflicted the fine, without any authority whatever, with the hope evidently of deterring his wife from dreaming of other men. Another woman who had been informed of the dream and had repeated it was also fined a similar sum.³⁹

Campbell showed little hesitation in dismissing inefficient Kaubure or in inflicting fines upon them individually or as a group. In the southern Gilbert Islands the bodies of Kaubure were reduced to more workable size. At Onotoa, where the practice of dividing fines among the unimane, meeting as Kaubure, had continued, Campbell reduced the Kaubure from 130 to 13 and ordered all the previous Kaubure to be fined 4s. as a basis for the Island Fund.⁴⁰ A rival of the uea who had seized the office of Magistrate at Maiana, and ruled for the benefit of himself, his family, and a clique of his supporters among the Kaubure, was summarily removed from the government.⁴¹ One Kaubure at Abemama, on his second conviction for drunkenness, was removed to Tarawa by Campbell for an indefinite period and his fine of £1 returned. Campbell reported that 'an example of some sort was necessary in order to impress upon the natives something of the power and intentions of the Protectorate Government'.⁴² Again, during a tour of the Ellice group in December 1896, Campbell ordered the Nanumanga Magistrate dismissed, and fined

38 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 1, 9 Jan. 1896 - *ibid.*, 79/1896; Ellice no. 8, 15 Dec. 1896 - *ibid.*, 68/1897; Gilberts no. 42, 3 Sept. 1896 - *ibid.*, 388/1896.

39 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 7, 3 May 1897 - *ibid.*, 266/1897.

40 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 1, 2 Jan. 1897 - *ibid.*, 76/1897.

41 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 42, 3 Sept. 1896 - *loc. cit.*

42 *ibid.*

8s. for failing to attend a meeting called on his arrival, and then reduced the number of Kaupuli from twelve to four.⁴³ In the remedial measures that he took, Campbell appointed Magistrates, Kaubure and Kaupuli who were compliant to his views. After a series of dismissals made in his absence, especially in the Ellice Islands, he insisted that changes in the island governments could only be made with his approval.⁴⁴

The policy initially pursued by the Magistrates of inflicting fines for almost all offences, and the passing of the drought in the southern islands in 1894, helped the growth of the Island Funds. Further advances were made when Campbell ordered the registration of land plots and the introduction of a fixed tax on land or trees.⁴⁵ With few modifications, Campbell's basic taxation system remained in effect until the 1950s when size and productivity were also taken into account.

It was clear, however, that additional staff would be required if Campbell's plans were to be fulfilled. The appointment of T.C.T. Potts as Clerk and Chief of Police doubled the establishment in 1896. In the same year Thurston agreed to the temporary appointment of Arthur Mahaffy as a government agent to supervise the island governments of the central and southern Gilbert Islands.⁴⁶ In the first two years of his administration Campbell increased the 'Queen's Tax' on prosperous islands, but after the death of Thurston early in 1897 his proposals for increasing the revenue and staff of the Protectorate met with a less sympathetic response.⁴⁷ For almost two years, O'Brien, Thurston's successor, refused to sanction any increase in taxes to meet the salaries of Campbell's proposed government agents or any other expense. Finally, however, he did accept Campbell's argument that the appointment of agents who could

43 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 8, 15 Dec. 1896 - loc. cit.

44 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 2, 10 May 1897 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 416/1897; Gilberts no. 42, 3 Sept. 1896 - loc. cit.

45 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 38, 18 July 1896 - *ibid.*, 434/1896.

46 H.C. to S. of S., no. 33, 25 July 1896; no. 57, 28 Oct. 1896 - CO 225/50.

47 See, for example, minute by O'Brien on R.C. to H.C., no. 35, 9 Oct. 1897 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 463/1897.

supervise the collection and sale of tax copra, in addition to other duties, would increase Protectorate revenue.⁴⁸ O'Brien was careful to point out, however, that agents' salaries were to be drawn from the appropriate Island Funds and that no responsibility could be assumed for their payment.⁴⁹

The first agent appointed was George McGhee Murdoch, who had traded for some years on Abemama, Tarawa and Maiana and had travelled to Guatemala as an overseer with Gilbertese labourers recruited on the Monserrat.⁵⁰ Others, recruited locally for the most part, were subsequently appointed during the ten years that the office was retained, but none had greater influence than Murdoch on the formation of the island governments. He was at least as authoritarian in his approach to administration as Campbell and subjected the island governments under his control to rigorous supervision. He appointed younger men with some education, often returned labourers, as Kaubure and carefully supervised the work of the Magistrates.⁵¹ Massive coral limestone prisons still stand as eloquent monuments to the influence of Murdoch in the central Gilbert Islands.

In 1909 when Mahaffy, then Assistant High Commissioner, revisited the Protectorate for several months, as Acting Resident Commissioner, he commented at length on the transformation of the islands brought about by Campbell:

The greatest difference which I noted ... was the excellent housing accommodation on almost all the islands of the Gilbert Group. A system of extraordinary uniformity has been developed and the best types of native houses have been finally evolved after a series of experiments which may have been somewhat exasperating to the natives but which have undoubtedly resulted in their

48 H.C. to R.C., no. 60, 9 Dec. 1898 - WPHC, Despatches to R.C.

49 *ibid.*

50 'Royalist Report', 101; R.C. to H.C., no. 18, 9 June 1897 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 403/1897.

51 See, for example, Murdoch to Campbell, 18 Oct. 1900, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 5, 24 Jan. 1901 - *ibid.*, 50/1901.

general good. The villages are kept in admirable order and the roads are scrupulously clean. Hospitals are established on all islands⁵²

Mahaffy also stated that it 'would be difficult to praise too highly the work done by the ... Resident Commissioner, Mr. W. Telfer Campbell'.⁵³ At the same time he noted a great increase in dancing and card playing and a decline in educational standards. He also had reservations about the benefits of some of the changes made by Campbell, especially with reference to the island governments. In his drive for efficient control over the islanders' lives Campbell had abolished the position of High Chief in the northern Gilbert Islands and ruled, as in the south, through Kaubure chosen and approved by himself or his agents.⁵⁴ The Assistant High Commissioner commented:

The Kaubure are now recruited from among the younger men who may be supposed to be more progressive, less dilatory, and less wedded to ancient customs and methods, but who are certainly less interesting and have less authority among the people. It is, I fancy, a rare thing for any of the modern Kaubure to differ from the opinion of any European Government Officer, or if he differs, to have the courage of his opinions and the ability to explain and maintain them.⁵⁵

The High Chiefs of the Ellice Islands had met their fate even earlier. As an observer on Funafuti in 1897 Mrs Edgeworth David wrote:

I tried hard to see the advantage of being a king in Funafuti, but couldn't. The king's hut was not so good as the native pastor's, his clothes were no better than those of his subjects; and his food was the same - cocoa-nut, fish and taro. He had only one voice in the making of laws on the island, and seemed to look up to

52 'Report by Mr Arthur Mahaffy on a visit to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, 1909'[Mahaffy Report], enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., no. 141, 12 Nov. 1909'- WPHC, Despatches from S. of S. (A heavily edited version of the report was later published as a Command Paper - Cd 4992.)

53 *ibid.*

54 R.C. to H.C., no. 49, 11 Nov. 1907 (Report for the years 1901-1906) - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 28/1908.

55 Mahaffy Report.

the Samoan pastor as an authority in things temporal as well as spiritual. He certainly received a salary of five dollars per annum from his subjects (that is, one-tenth of what is considered necessary for the pastor), and he had a fair amount of cocoa-nut and taro land, but less than some of his subjects. Since the island has been under British protection the king is a nominal king only, an ornamental, but not very expensive, head to a nice little republic.⁵⁶

For nearly thirty years prior to Campbell's arrival the pastors of the L.M.S. had enjoyed almost complete control over the temporal and spiritual affairs of the southern Gilbert and Ellice Islands. Campbell found that not only did they exercise effective control over the island governments but that they continued to introduce and enforce church laws, and to collect and appropriate various fees as well as the produce of mission-leased land. From the Government's point of view the pastors' authority amounted to a challenge but, in the absence of staff and transport, remedial measures were difficult to implement. None the less, Campbell did his utmost to diminish their authority and to instill the principle that obligations to local and central governments took precedence over church affairs.

At Funafuti, Campbell's authority was openly challenged by a pastor - a clear indication of the relative status of church and government on the island. The island government had sought, and obtained, permission from Swayne to celebrate New Year's day with dancing. The decision was later overruled by the pastor. In a public meeting complaints were made to Campbell whereupon the pastor asked if the people were to be ruled by the Bible (as interpreted by him) or the law.⁵⁷ Campbell's reply, and the events of the ensuing decade left little room for doubt - if 'law' is interpreted to mean the word of the Resident Commissioner.

'Native dancing' though, was to remain a contentious issue between the church and the administration long after Campbell's departure from the Protectorate. It was condemned by European missionaries, pastors and, later, by their converts as an indecent and immoral pastime characteristic of heathenism. The missionaries

56 David, Funafuti, or three months on a coral island, 118-19.

57 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 6, 17 Oct. 1896 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 392/1896.

argued that the dances led to the promotion of personal rivalries, drunkenness and adultery - the latter especially in dances invoking the tinaba custom.⁵⁸ Campbell, like Swayne, insisted that 'indecent dances' (not defined) should be suppressed but that on public holidays the people were free to dance if they wished.⁵⁹

When faced with illegal or what he considered to be undesirable practices on the part of pastors, Campbell's reaction was usually swift and severe. On a visit to Nanumanga in 1899, for example, Campbell found that a mere 7s. worth of copra had been collected for the Queen's Tax while the pastor's yard had 'the appearance of a thriving trader's establishment' with more than 7,000 lbs of copra, worth about £36-10-0, ready for shipment. Without hesitation he insisted that the two lots of copra be exchanged, as a punishment, and 'in order to place the Island Fund on a more satisfactory footing'.⁶⁰ On discovering that the pastors were charging exorbitant amounts for the performance of marriages, Campbell authorised the island governments to perform civil marriages without charge.⁶¹ Pastors were also found to be trading on their own accounts, selling the produce of mission-leased land for personal benefit, charging for admission to church membership and committing a multitude of other sins which appalled William Goward, the first resident European L.M.S. missionary, at least as much as they did the Resident Commissioner.⁶²

The arrival of Goward in 1900, together with his dismissal of several pastors and closer supervision over those who remained, saw some improvement in the situation. Goward himself believed that

58 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 6, 29 Jan. 1896 - *ibid.*, 83/1896; Goward (L.M.S.) to Wakeman (District Magistrate), 28 Dec. 1910, enclosed in Goward to Thompson, 9 Jan. 1911 - LMS, South Seas, Letters.

59 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 6, 17 Oct. 1896 - *loc. cit.*

60 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 2, 10 Jan. 1900 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 185/1899.

61 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 8, 15 Dec. 1896 - *loc. cit.*

62 'Report on the Tokelau, Ellice and Gilbert Groups, L.M.S., 1900-1902' - LMS, South Seas, Reports; Goward to Thompson, 27 Feb. 1902 - LMS, South Seas, Letters.

Campbell had succeeded in reducing the power of the pastors,⁶³ but in practice Campbell achieved little more than a reduction of the pastors' direct interference in government affairs. Their influence over the islanders, through the church, remained untouched.

The A.B.C.F.M. had virtually withdrawn from the Gilbert Islands field by the time the Protectorate was declared. Walkup continued to visit the group, and a missionary was placed at Ocean Island after the establishment of the phosphate industry, but the mission was conducting little more than a holding operation in the absence of funds and staff. An earlier agreement, by which the A.B.C.F.M. and the L.M.S. agreed to limit their respective activities to north and south of the Equator was waived following discussions in the early 1900s. As an interim measure to a complete take-over, the L.M.S. agreed to assume responsibility for the printing of mission material and to admit students from the northern islands to its school at Rongorongo, Beru. For financial reasons the L.M.S. was unable for some years to post pastors to the northern Gilbert Islands to replace those withdrawn by the A.B.C.F.M.⁶⁴

Apart from occasional sarcastic references to the effete nature of the A.B.C.F.M., and to Walkup's unwillingness for him to attend church because he smoked, Campbell was little concerned with the mission.⁶⁵ Its few pastors, located on islands under his personal supervision, presented no problem.

A greater threat to the Resident Commissioner's scheme for the Gilbert Islands lay in the Sacred Heart Mission [S.H.M.] which had established its headquarters at Nonouti in 1888.⁶⁶ With a larger European staff than either of the other missions the S.H.M. quickly extended its activities to Tabiteuea, Beru, Tarawa and Butaritari, and thereafter to all other northern islands. By 1904 the Mission claimed

63 'Report ... L.M.S., 1900-1902' - loc. cit.

64 Goward to L.M.S.(London), 1900-1905 (includes correspondence with A.B.C.F.M.)- LMS, South Seas, Letters, passim.

65 Memorandum by Campbell, 19 Jan. 1899 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 192/1898.

66 Sabatier, Sous l'Equateur du Pacifique, 147.

a total of 12,000 adherents on eleven islands.⁶⁷ The expansion of the mission, especially in the L.M.S. strongholds south of Nonouti, immediately aroused opposition from Protestant adherents.

Attempts to land priests in the Ellice and southern Gilbert Islands in the 1890s were met initially with organised opposition from the island governments, pastors and their followers, resulting, on more than one occasion, in threatened violence. On Beru, Onotoa, Nikunau and Nonouti in particular, conflict between the rival missions, and their adherents in the island governments was frequent. Disputes over dancing and alleged interference with religious services often required intervention on the part of the Resident Commissioner.⁶⁸

As he had attempted to restrict the powers of the L.M.S. pastors, so Campbell conducted a constant campaign against priests and teachers of the S.H.M. who interfered with, or tried to influence, island governments. The Roman Catholics, on the other hand, saw Campbell's whole administrative policy as an Orangeman's attempt to harass and even persecute the members of their faith. Intransigence on both sides quickly transformed the Campbell-Catholic clash into something of a mutual crusade. Bitter and often biased criticism of Campbell was forwarded to the High Commissioner by Bishop Leray in particular while Campbell never ceased in his attempts to prevent the spread of the S.H.M. and to ensure but a single faith on any given island.⁶⁹

In the face of opposition from established Protestant interests supported by Campbell (as it seemed to the Roman Catholics), it is not surprising that the priests of the S.H.M. sought to protect their adherents while vigorously working for the propagation of the faith. Such protection was interpreted by Campbell as interference and, as in the case of the L.M.S. pastors, treated as such. After incidents at Butaritari, between 1896 and 1898, in which a priest tried to have

67 Merg (S.H.M.) to H.C., 16 March 1904 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 192/1898.

68 Sabatier, Sous l'Equateur du Pacifique, 189-208; R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 1, 2 Jan. 1897 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 76/1897; Gilberts no. 7, 3 May 1897 - *ibid.*, 266/1897.

69 See correspondence in WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 192/1898.

a court decision changed, the Native Laws were amended to include penalties of up to £10 or six months' imprisonment for persons who assumed, or attempted to assume, magisterial powers.⁷⁰ After a priest had tried to persuade the court at Nikunau to substitute a fine for a prison term for one of his followers, and another at Nonouti, again without success, had called upon his followers to flog the Magistrate, Campbell forbade all foreigners from attending meetings of the island governments and issued instructions to the police to eject all who did so.⁷¹ Representatives of the S.H.M. also aroused Campbell's ire by their willingness to perform child marriages for converts or potential converts contrary to island regulations.⁷²

Such clashes between Campbell and the representatives of the S.H.M. were minor, however, when compared with the conflict which occurred over land purchase, and the location of mission buildings in or near villages. In 1900, with O'Brien's approval, Campbell introduced a 'distance regulation' which stipulated that churches were to be built at least 400 yards from a village maneaba, or another church, and a lesser distance from any dwelling, thus effectively removing churches from village areas.⁷³ From 1893 the sale of lands to non-native persons had been prohibited in the Gilbert Islands and all leases restricted to a maximum of twenty-one years.⁷⁴

Subsequent developments in the dispute over land sales and the distance regulation illustrate clearly the relationships which existed between Campbell and successive High Commissioners and the degree of autonomy allowed the Protectorate administration. Thurston, for example, recognised that the Resident in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands was faced with severe financial and transport problems, and

70 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 12, 7 May 1896 - *ibid.*, 212/1896; Gilberts no. 41, 16 Oct. 1897 - *ibid.*, 495/1897; Gilberts no. 29, 16 Sept. 1905 - *ibid.*, 192/1898.

71 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 31, 8 Sept. 1899 - *ibid.*, 7/1900; Gilberts no. 13, 8 May 1901 - *ibid.*, 192/1898; Murdoch to Campbell, 18 Oct. 1900, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 4, 19 Jan. 1901 - *ibid.*, 192/1898.

72 R.C. to H.C., Gilberts no. 28, 30 Sept. 1898 - *ibid.*, 355/1898.

73 R.C. to H.C., no. 61, 28 Oct. 1904 - *ibid.*, 192/1898.

74 Queen's Regulation, No. 3 of 1893.

that a considerable degree of initiative and independent action was required for the development of central and local administration. While he occasionally declined to approve some of Campbell's more irregular actions, Thurston generally approved of Campbell's proposals as far as financial considerations would allow. As the author of the Queen's Regulation of 1893, and in accordance with the policy that he followed in Fiji, Thurston made it clear that he disapproved of land sales to foreigners and that he was prepared to support Campbell in this regard.

O'Brien, High Commissioner from 1897 to 1901, lacked his predecessor's knowledge of the groups and showed little interest in their affairs beyond scrutinising the annual estimates, in an effort to cut expenditure to the minimum, and passing, with some modifications, regulations proposed by Campbell as essential for administrative efficiency. When the S.H.M. applied to O'Brien for permission to purchase land in the Gilbert Islands in 1899 Swayne, who was consulted personally in Fiji, firmly stated, in accordance with the policy followed by Thurston, Campbell and himself, that:

any amendment of the Regulation would be a breach of faith with the natives and would be considered as such by them [and] any alteration of the law in the direction asked for by the Revd. E. Merg would be a very bad policy. In the Gilberts particularly land is life. A man without land was and to a less extent is still a slave.⁷⁵

O'Brien concurred, and the matter was left in abeyance for the duration of his term.

Sir Henry Jackson, High Commissioner from September 1902 to March 1904, took a different view. He frequently criticised Campbell's administration, insisted on a greater degree of consultation and, as a Roman Catholic, listened to complaints made by the representatives of the S.H.M. with a rather more sympathetic ear than had either Thurston or O'Brien. After discussions with Father Merg, Visitor Extraordinary to the Gilbert Islands, Jackson not only made significant amendments to draft regulations submitted by Campbell but also altered existing regulations to meet most of Merg's demands. Such decisions, taken without consulting Campbell, sparked off a round of heated correspondence between Jackson and Campbell

75 Swayne to King (Secretary, W.P.H.C.), 29 Jan. 1899 - *ibid.*, 22/1899.

with the latter ignoring the instructions of his superior where possible.⁷⁶

Although English coin had replaced various South American denominations in the 1890s, and was accepted as standard currency by 1900, Jackson, at Merg's request, legalised tobacco as currency 'in localities in which coin is not in current use' - an obvious concession to the S.H.M. which had already met with opposition from Campbell for its practice of generously distributing tobacco among adherents. The limit of leases for lands outside village areas was extended from twenty-one to ninety-nine years and, most importantly, the sale of lands could be approved by the High Commissioner after investigation by the Resident Commissioner. Sales were henceforth permitted for parcels of land with maximum areas of one acre within a village, five acres in the vicinity of a village, and fifty acres in other localities.⁷⁷

Merg's reaction to the revised regulation, as revealed in a letter to Jackson, was characteristic:

[Our discussion]... made me realize once again - what I have ever expected from the very name of British Rule - that sooner or later fair-play, justice and liberty would for a certainty, be the moving spirit of all its Laws, either at Home or in the lonely and distant islands of the Pacific. Confidence has been restored; peace and harmony will follow, provided that whoever holds the position of Resident Commissioner will loyally carry out, as we are certain they will, the definite and clear lines laid down by Your Excellency.

This happy conclusion of our negotiations adds another jewel to the wealth of signal services Your Excellency has already rendered the British Crown; for no one cannot but esteem and love its Rule, when it is animated by that liberal and fair minded spirit which characterizes Your Excellency's administration.⁷⁸

Campbell's reaction, on the other hand left little doubt that he considered that Jackson, through ignorance and lack of guidance, had subverted his administration. Campbell also resented Jackson's written

76 See correspondence and minutes in WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 192/1898.

77 King's Regulation, No. 3 of 1904.

78 Merg to Jackson, private, 19 March 1904 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 192/1898.

assurances to Merg and his promulgation of the Regulations prior to consultation with himself.⁷⁹ Despite his official comment, however, Campbell ignored the Regulation, and delayed its implementation for almost three years. When the S.H.M. learned of the publication of the Regulation, and submitted applications for the purchase of land, Campbell omitted to conduct the required surveys. The matter was then brought to the attention of im Thurn, Jackson's successor, who called upon Campbell to explain the delays. The Resident Commissioner denied having failed to publicise the change and pointed out that the lack of efficient transport had prevented his investigating the claims. To do so in a chartered trading vessel, Campbell pointed out, would cost the Protectorate some £800. Campbell asked if the High Commissioner was prepared to sanction such expenditure, whereupon the correspondence lapsed.⁸⁰

Campbell took similarly evasive action after Jackson's repeal of the 'distance regulation':

I have not suspended the Regulation, [he wrote] and I most respectfully ... decline to do so until I am relieved, in writing, of all responsibility for disturbances following the suspension or repeal of the Regulation I cannot be guilty in a criminal acquiescence in a decision arrived at through the misrepresentations, not to say deceit, of individuals opposed to my administration.⁸¹

Campbell received a strongly worded reply from im Thurn but avoided any serious confrontation by having the local authorities pass their own distance regulations.⁸²

Jackson also wrote at length, and with little accuracy, on the subject of the laws enforced in the Protectorate. He was unable, he reported to the Under Secretary of State, to find any trace in the High Commissioner's office of changes made to the Native Laws of 1894 and complained that Campbell had been a 'law unto himself' making

79 R.C. to H.C., no. 41, 3 Aug. 1904 - *ibid.*, 129/1902.

80 R.C. to H.C., no. 5, 4 March 1907; no. 18, 29 May 1907 - *ibid.*, 192/1898.

81 R.C. to H.C., no. 61, 28 Oct. 1904 - *ibid.*

82 Assistant H.C. to H.C., Gilbert and Ellice no. 23, 23 March 1909 - *loc. cit.*

such regulations as he saw fit.⁸³ In reply Campbell showed that all amendments to the Native Laws had been sanctioned by Jackson's predecessors and that all island regulations were, quite legally, passed by the island governments and did not require the sanction of any British official although they were, in practice, submitted to the Resident Commissioner.⁸⁴

Campbell found Jackson's interference intolerable. Accustomed to opposition within the Protectorate, he was now obliged to fight for his policies on two fronts - a situation that moved him to comment somewhat harshly, but with a degree of justice, on Jackson's administration, after the latter had departed for England:

... I feel sure [he wrote] that had not Sir Henry Jackson been grossly misinformed by certain prejudiced individuals or had His Excellency been acquainted with the Native Laws, or with the policy of his predecessors, a policy of continuity and impartiality, or had Sir Henry Jackson had any personal experience or knowledge of the Gilbert and Ellice Groups and their particular position, both administrative and social, then His Excellency would not have expressed disapproval of my endeavours to administer these Protectorates ... in the face of universal opposition from non-native persons possessed with selfish aims utterly opposed to a policy aiming at protecting and advancing the interests of a numerous native community.⁸⁵

In his condemnation of 'non-native persons' Campbell included not only missionaries but also traders, for their high profit margins, and those other Europeans who may or may not have been nominally trading but who, in fact, lived the lives of beachcombers more or less dependent on the islanders for their existence. Two members of the latter group, Lodge of Tarawa and Collins of Nukulaelae, were particular objects of Campbell's attention. In his first year of office Campbell deported Collins to Fiji, ostensibly for breaches of the liquor regulations. Thurston declined to approve the deportation

83 Jackson to Under S. of S., 29 June 1904 (from England), enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., no. 36, 3 Aug. 1904 - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

84 R.C. to H.C., no. 29, 16 Sept. 1905 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 192/1898.

85 *ibid.*

and returned Collins to Nukulaelae, but under a liquor prohibition order.⁸⁶ Addington, commanding H.M.S. Phoebe, visited Tarawa in 1901 to investigate a variety of charges made by Lodge and T.C.T. Potts whom Campbell had dismissed from his post as Clerk and Chief of Police in the previous year.⁸⁷

For the remainder of Campbell's administration Potts, for himself and Lodge, instigated questions in the House of Commons critical of the Protectorate administration and forwarded articles and letters, notable for their inaccuracy and extravagant prose-style, to English and Australian newspapers.⁸⁸ In 1901 Campbell first confined Lodge to Betio islet on Tarawa, as an 'undesirable alien', and later in the same year had him arrested and sent to Fiji. The Resident's initial action had been declared ultra vires by O'Brien, but Campbell ignored instructions to rescind the order. When this became known to Allardyce, the Acting High Commissioner, he wrote to Campbell: 'I can only assume that ... the High Commissioner's opinion unfortunately escaped your memory'.⁸⁹ Lodge, like Collins, was returned at government expense, and Campbell asked to explain his illegal action, but no further official sign of disapproval was forthcoming.

In 1905 Im Thurn visited the Gilbert and Ellice Islands to investigate charges made against Campbell by missionaries, other resident Europeans, and by both groups on behalf of the local populace. He reported that traders generally had no personal complaints against Campbell but wished to limit the number of traders by an increase in trading fees. Im Thurn considered that the Bishop of the S.H.M. was unable to control his subordinates, many of whom he felt acted exclusively for the benefit of their church with little regard for the interests of either the islanders or the administration.

I am satisfied in my own mind [Im Thurn commented] that the trouble between the Roman Catholics and the Resident

86 R.C. to H.C., Ellice no. 1, 10 May 1897 (with minutes) - *ibid.*, 415/1897.

87 H.C. to Potts, 3 Aug. 1900 (copy) - *ibid.*, 357/1898.

88 See, for example, 'The Rule of Rotters', Truth (Australia), 10 March 1901.

89 H.C. to R.C., no. 41, 2 Oct. 1901 - WPHC, Despatches to R.C.

Commissioner is due in the first place to the great, almost excessive, claims made by the Catholics to liberty of action, even though such action would involve infringing of the regulations and injury to the natural rights to the natives, [sic] and in the second place to Mr. Campbell's unnecessary irritability in dealing with such claims⁹⁰

Lodge's charges against the Resident Commissioner were all dismissed by im Thurn, but the High Commissioner noted, with regret, that 'Mr. Campbell's abruptness of manner and impatience ... [had] stirred to an unnecessary extent the almost imbecile assertiveness of Lodge's character'.⁹¹ Henceforth Lodge's letters were largely ignored in the Colonial Office and by the High Commissioner.

Im Thurn recommended a transfer for Campbell after more than ten years 'in as trying a climate and as lonely circumstances as are ... to be found in any Government station in the British Empire'.⁹² Although im Thurn believed Campbell's administration to be excessively paternalistic, and many of his regulations too severe, he none the less acknowledged that Campbell had been responsible for significant developments in the Protectorate especially in the light of opposition within the territory and frequent unsympathetic treatment from a succession of High Commissioners. Im Thurn freely admitted that some King's Regulations had 'been initiated without or even against his [Campbell's] advice by those in authority over him'.⁹³

Throughout the period of his administration Campbell had, either by special despatch, or by the inclusion of new items in the annual estimates, attempted to persuade his superiors that the staff of the Protectorate should be increased and the scope of its activities widened. He had, however, met with little success. When, in 1906, im Thurn pointed to the Resident Commissioner's failure to forward any report on his administration since 1900, a rather disgruntled

90 H.C. to S. of S., no. 45, 17 May 1906 - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.

91 *ibid.*

92 Minute by im Thurn, 23 Aug. 1907 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 203/1905.

93 H.C. to S. of S., no. 45, 17 May 1906 - *loc. cit.*

Campbell replied:

A report of any value for the years 1901 to 1905 could not be furnished by me without reference to certain proposals I have made from time to time for the better administration of these Protectorates. These proposals, made after considerable attention to, and knowledge of local requirements, have been either ignored, in some cases totally, or abandoned.⁹⁴

Four government agents were employed by 1900, although paid by, and theoretically responsible to, their respective island governments, and a medical officer had been appointed to the Protectorate staff in 1905.⁹⁵ Few of Campbell's other schemes for increased personnel were approved. The Colonial Office, in the absence of recommendations to the contrary from the High Commissioner, adhered to its original view that the staff of the Protectorate should be kept at a minimum. The Resident had no official transport in the islands and was forced to rely on occasional naval vessels and erratic and expensive commercial shipping.⁹⁶

By 1906 the Protectorate had accumulated a surplus in excess of £8,000 (with an annual expenditure of £3,000), which, together with £13,000 representing the balances of the various Island Funds, were invested with other Pacific administrations and in London stocks.⁹⁷ A large proportion of the Protectorate's surpluses had been derived from capitation taxes on non-native persons residing in the territory. The increase under this head was the direct result of the establishment of the phosphate industry at Ocean Island in 1900 and the inclusion of the island, for the purposes of administration, within the territorial limits of the Protectorate.

Im Thurn agreed with Campbell, in 1905, that a permanent official was required at Ocean Island. He also believed that if Campbell was to remain he should have his headquarters at Ocean Island

94 R.C. to H.C., no. 52, 16 Nov. 1906 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 102/1901.

95 H.C. to R.C., no. 58, 3 Sept. 1904 - WPHC, Despatches to R.C.

96 R.C. to H.C., no. 49, 11 July 1907 (Report for the years 1901-1906) - loc. cit.

97 *ibid.*; R.C. to H.C., no. 15, 25 May 1901 (Report for the years 1896-1900) - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 102/1901.

and expressed the hope that the company of other Europeans would have a salutary effect on the Resident Commissioner's temper.⁹⁸

It was two years before a revised plan of administration was approved. The key to the plan lay in a vessel for the Protectorate and the removal of headquarters to Ocean Island. An Assistant Resident Commissioner, resident in the Gilbert group, was to be appointed together with an establishment of four District Magistrates and a police officer and a clerk for Ocean Island.⁹⁹

The decision to remove the Resident Commissioner's headquarters from the Gilbert group to Ocean Island was to have far-reaching effects on the development of the territory. At Ocean Island successive Resident Commissioners became embroiled in land litigation over phosphate-bearing land and the problems of administering an island with a heterogeneous population composed of the indigenous Banabans, Europeans employed by the Pacific Phosphate Company (and its successor the British Phosphate Commissioners), as well as several hundred Gilbertese, Ellice and Asian labourers. The inevitable result of such preoccupations, when combined with inadequate transport, was a break in communication between the Resident Commissioner and his subordinate staff in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and a lack of awareness from the Resident Commissioner upwards of the particular problems of local administration in the territory. From 1908 until the Second World War the Gilbert and Ellice Islands became, even more than previously, a neglected backwater of the Empire.

98 Minute by im Thurn, 23 Aug. 1907 - loc. cit.

99 H.C. to S. of S., no. 15, 3 Feb. 1908 - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.; no. 112, 26 Aug. 1908 - *ibid.*

CHAPTER 3

OCEAN ISLAND: THE SINGLE MANDATE

In 1899 Albert Ellis, an employee of the Pacific Islands Company, deduced from a rock sample that extensive deposits of phosphate ores existed at both Ocean Island and its neighbour, Nauru.¹ Lord Stanmore, chairman of the Pacific Islands Company and formerly, as Sir Arthur Gordon, a Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, mobilised personal and official contacts in London in a successful attempt to secure a phosphate mining licence for his Company in respect of Ocean Island and to have the island declared a British possession.² Later, Nauru, which had been annexed by Germany in 1888, became the subject of special negotiations with the Jaluit Gesellschaft which ended with the Pacific Islands Company extending its activities to that island in 1906.³

Stanmore's initial demand, that Ocean Island should be annexed, and included within the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate met with opposition from almost all officials concerned. Both Campbell and O'Brien argued that the island was 240 miles from the Gilbert group, lacked harbour facilities and that, in the absence of any compensating revenue, would be a liability rather than an asset to the Protectorate. O'Brien added that, in his view, the only reason

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- 1 Ellis, Ocean Island and Nauru, 50ff. While Ellis' account of the phosphate industry from 1900 to 1934 offers many valuable insights into day to day operations, his material on negotiations with the Banabans and the Government is meagre and apt to be misleading. On occasions his version departs somewhat from that revealed in correspondence among the various parties. Significantly, Ellis does not mention the terms of the agreement which he signed with the Banabans in 1900.
 - 2 Correspondence in WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 26/1900. For more detailed accounts of the events leading to annexation see Langdon, 'The Ocean Islanders', New Guinea, I (1965-6), no. 4, 42-7; Scarr, Fragments of Empire, 270-1.
 - 3 Ellis, Ocean Island and Nauru, 127ff. For a copy of the agreement see Schedule 1 in Agreement, His Most Gracious Majesty King George V. and others and the Pacific Phosphate Company, Limited, print, 25 June 1920.

for annexation would be:

to facilitate the acquisition ... [by] the Pacific Islands Company of rights over the Guano which it is supposed to contain, and I fail to see why the Company should not be left to make such arrangements as may be satisfactory to both parties.⁴

Stanmore continued to express fears of intervention by rival interests and to bring pressure to bear on the Colonial Office. A licence was issued in 1900, for an annual fee of £50 payable to imperial funds, and the High Commissioner was given instructions to include Ocean Island within the Gilbert Islands Protectorate. O'Brien, however, decided on annexation. When his action was queried he pointed out that the Company's licence referred to 'a certain island belonging to Her Majesty' and that Cox, of the Colonial Office, had written to the Admiralty expressing the view that 'the issue of a licence is equivalent to annexation'.⁵

By King's Regulation No. 1 of 1902 the laws of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate were applied to Ocean Island but until 1908 the Company was left virtually to its own devices. From 1902 operations were conducted by the Pacific Phosphate Company [P.P.C.], a subsidiary of the Pacific Islands Company, under a transferred licence. The P.P.C. purchased land from the Banabans, introduced contract labour, and ruled its employees by means of its own regulations.

The attitude of the Company towards its mining operations on Ocean Island was clearly revealed in the agreement signed with the Banabans by Ellis in May 1900. In return for a mere £50 per year in cash or trade to be divided among the Banabans, the Company was granted the exclusive right to remove phosphate from the island for a period of 999 years.⁶ Later, it became evident that the Banabans had not understood the conditions of the agreement, or their

4 H.C. to S. of S., no. 9, 9 Feb. 1900 (with enclosures) - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.

5 H.C. to S. of S., no. 21, 24 April 1901 - *ibid.*

6 Agreement between the Pacific Islands Company and the Banabans, 3 May 1900, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 40, 12 Dec. 1903 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 26/1900.

implications. They had little idea of the value of their land and, obviously, were not enlightened by Ellis. In 1910 George Murdoch interviewed Temori, a Nui Islander, who had acted as Ellis' interpreter. He found that Temori was unable to read the agreement in English and had been told its terms by Ellis. Temori also stated that Ellis had not mentioned that the concession was for 999 years but had simply said that it would continue after his death.⁷

Within three years of the agreement being signed disputes between the Company and the Banabans led, for the first time, to the involvement of the Protectorate Government as mediator between the two. Under the agreement of 1900 the Company had undertaken 'not to remove any alluvial phosphate from where coconut or other trees or plants cultivated by the said natives are growing'.⁸ Land had been purchased by the Company before the Banabans had any concept of the mode of operations and before the introduction to the island of the Protectorate law which forbade land sales. Once land had been bought, however, it was stripped of all vegetation and mined in a manner designed to produce the maximum phosphate with the minimum effort and expense. As a result of the negotiations conducted by Cogswell, the Acting Resident Commissioner, the Company's land purchases were legalised by Ordinance No. 1 of 1903 and 'phosphate and trees' agreements - by which the Banabans received compensation for the destruction of food-bearing trees - were introduced. It was clear, however, even at this early stage, that Banaban and Company interests were, and would remain, incompatible.

From 1903 Campbell constantly agitated for the £50 rental to be paid to local rather than imperial funds and for a permanent official to be stationed at Ocean Island. The former proposal was resisted by both the Treasury and the Colonial Office. The latter proposal was opposed with some heat by Stanmore, on behalf of the P.P.C., especially as it had been suggested that the Company should meet the costs of such an appointment:

... the Board [he wrote] cannot consider that at the present time the civil government of a handful of white employes of the Company and less than a thousand

7 Murdoch to R.C., no. 29, 12 May 1910 - *ibid.*, 491/1909.

8 Agreement ... 3 May 1900 - *loc. cit.*

natives - the greater part of whom are also working for it - can afford constant employment to a resident officer of the Government nor can they overcome their apprehension that if not so constantly employed, the probability of over interference in the Company's affairs by such an official will be perilously increased.⁹

Under the terms of its revised licence the P.P.C. was obliged to pay £50 per annum to the British Government until 1905 and, from 1 January 1906, a royalty of 6d. per ton on all phosphate exported from Ocean Island. Campbell estimated the income from this source at £2,000 a year, and again asked that at least part of the sum be used to defray the expenses of a government official for the island.¹⁰ In fact, in 1906 the royalty amounted to some £3,500, but until im Thurn's plan for a completely revised administration was accepted in 1908 the royalties were paid to imperial funds.¹¹

By this time the high profits being made by the Company had made it the subject of comment in Britain. In 1908, for example, the P.P.C., with an ordinary capital of £125,000, made a profit of almost £300,000, paid a 50 per cent dividend and made a two for one bonus share issue.¹² Attacks on the Company were immediately made in the press by T.C.T. Potts, who argued that the Company's profits were being made by exploiting the Banabans and with the connivance of the Colonial Office.¹³

Even before press and parliamentary publicity instigated by Potts had brought the affairs of the Company to public notice, the Colonial Office had begun to take a less indulgent attitude towards the Company's activities.¹⁴ In 1907 Crewe, the Secretary of State, had emphasised the changed attitude when he overruled Company protests

9 P.P.C. to C.O., 29 Dec. 1904, enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., no. 2, 12 Jan. 1905 - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

10 R.C. to H.C., no. 27, 5 Sept. 1905 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 26/1900.

11 S. of S. to H.C., no. 62, 10 Aug. 1908 - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

12 P.P.C. Prospectus, July 1917 - J.T. Arundel Papers.

13 See, for example, John Bull, 15 Aug. 1908.

14 S. of S. to H.C., no. 62, 10 Aug. 1908 - loc. cit.

and insisted that the capitation tax of £5 per head should be paid by, or on behalf of, all non-native employees of the Company at Ocean Island.¹⁵ This decision may also have been designed to discourage the Company from pursuing its plans for introducing cheap Indian labour¹⁶ - a proposal that met with little favour in official circles.

Finally, after three years of discussion, and further criticism in the House of Commons, the Colonial Office accepted im Thurn's suggestion that Protectorate headquarters should be moved to Ocean Island so that the phosphate industry could be more closely supervised and to allow the Resident Commissioner more contact with other Europeans. Accordingly, Mahaffy, as Acting Resident Commissioner from January to March 1909, and John Quayle Dickson as substantive Resident Commissioner from that time were given the task of organising the transfer.

Initially, Quayle Dickson favoured the retention of the prevailing price of £20 per acre for phosphate land on the grounds that the Banabans showed little inclination to save against times of scarcity. Nevertheless he believed that the Company should be obliged to make a 'liberal contribution' towards a trust fund for the Banabans.¹⁷ After a few months at Ocean Island, however, his attitude changed to one of open hostility towards the Company. For three years, from the end of 1909, Quayle Dickson consistently opposed the Company's demands in his pursuit of better terms for the Banabans.

He also queried the legality of the 'phosphate and trees' agreements which had been in effect since 1903. Despite opposition from Company representatives, who argued that the removal of trees was covered by a clause in the 1900 agreement which permitted 'any other arrangements' necessary for the mining of phosphate, he refused to

15 S. of S. to H.C., no. 23, 18 April 1907 - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

16 H.C. to S. of S., no. 56, 16 May 1908 - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.

17 R.C. to H.C., Confidential, 14 Dec. 1909 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 491/1909.

sanction any further agreements.¹⁸ When the Company appealed, the Secretary of State ruled that the transfers amounted to land sales and were, therefore, invalid.¹⁹

With the appointment of Sir Henry May as High Commissioner in 1911 the Banabans acquired a further advocate. On receiving evidence of the Company's high profit margins, May strongly urged Harcourt, the Secretary of State, to set a minimum price of £100 per acre for land at Ocean Island. Basing his argument on figures supplied to Mahaffy, the Assistant High Commissioner, by Ellis, May showed that the Company was mining an average of 12,600 tons of phosphate per acre for a net profit of 22s. per ton - that is, a profit of nearly £14,000 from land that had cost £20.²⁰ In reply, Harcourt stated that, in accordance with Quayle Dickson's original recommendation, a basic price of £20 per acre had been agreed upon in discussion with the P.P.C. and that he was, therefore, in no position to recommend an increase.²¹

The situation was simplified by the Banabans who refused to sell any further land under the terms offered and stated that they now wished to preserve as much land as possible for their descendants.²² By this time the Banabans had not only realised the potential value of their land but they had also become dependent on the Resident Commissioner for advice. Quayle Dickson refused to recommend that they should accept the Company's offer and, as a consequence, the Banabans declined to sell.

Quayle Dickson was frequently criticised by both Harcourt and May for the delays in negotiations at Ocean Island. In reply to one

18 P.P.C. to C.O., 9 Nov. 1909, enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., Confidential, 25 Nov. 1911 - WPHC, Confidential Despatches from S. of S.

19 C.O. to P.P.C., 5 April 1911, enclosed in H.C. to R.C., Confidential, 5 June 1911 - WPHC, Despatches to R.C.

20 H.C. to S. of S., Telegram, 25 May 1911, enclosed in H.C. to R.C., Confidential, 5 June 1911 - copy in WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 491/1909.

21 S. of S. to H.C., Telegram, 25 May 1911, enclosed in H.C. to R.C., Confidential, 5 June 1911 - *ibid.*

22 R.C. to H.C., Confidential, 24 Nov. 1911 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 491/1909.

such letter of criticism from May, Quayle Dickson wrote:

I regret exceedingly that you should have thought it necessary to warn me that "if the settlement does not proceed to my satisfaction, I shall be constrained to place it in other hands". No one is more anxious to come to a settlement than I am, but I cannot with my two years experience here help seeing that the native case is a strong one.²³

Despite his sympathies, May was not so strongly partisan as his Resident Commissioner at Ocean Island and was himself under pressure from the Colonial Office to procure a settlement. Finally, in 1912, the delays at Ocean Island and the exposure of irregularities in Quayle Dickson's administration of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands led to his dismissal from the office of Resident Commissioner and his appointment, at a lower salary, to the position of Colonial Secretary in the Falkland Islands.²⁴

It was left to E.C. Eliot, Quayle Dickson's successor, to carry through the negotiations on behalf of the Banabans. Under an agreement signed in November 1913, land leases were fixed between £40 and £60 an acre, depending on location and quality, with supplementary payments in respect of food-bearing trees. In addition to the royalty payable to the Government, the Company was to contribute to a trust fund for the Banaban community, also at the rate of 6d. per ton - with an estimated annual payment of £5,000. The Banabans were to be permitted to cultivate all leased lands until they should be required for mining purposes. Despite the obvious financial implications the Company gave an undertaking - which it never honoured - to replant worked-out lands wherever possible. One hundred and forty-five acres were thus transferred in 1913 placing a total of 250 acres at the disposal of the Company.²⁵

Protests from the Company regarding contributions to the Banaban Fund were overruled by the Secretary of State, who told the P.P.C.

23 R.C. to H.C., no. 214/35A/1911, 15 Sept. 1911 - *ibid.*

24 Assistant H.C. to H.C., 11 Sept. 1911, and subsequent correspondence - *ibid.*, 1567/1911.

25 Copy of agreement signed on 12 Nov. 1913, enclosed in R.C. to D.C., O.I.D., 24 April 1963 - GEIC, Secretariat, 3rd series, F167/3/1; see also correspondence in WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1132/1916.

that the initial 6d. per ton royalty (payable, at that time, to imperial funds) had been assessed at five per cent of the value of Ocean Island phosphate as declared by the Company. The value of phosphates from Christmas Island (Indian Ocean), Harcourt said, had ranged from 28s. to 36s. per ton during the previous three years and stated that, in the absence of proof to the contrary, he had assessed the Ocean Island product at 20s. a ton. The combined royalty of 1s. per ton, therefore, remained at five per cent of the assessed value.²⁶

The Government intended that, when Ocean Island became uninhabitable for the Banabans, the Fund should be used to purchase an island for their resettlement. The proposal to remove the Banabans had first been put forward by Mahaffy, in 1909, when he suggested that Kuria in the Gilbert group might be suitable.²⁷ The Company reacted predictably. The P.P.C. admitted that mined lands were left virtually uninhabitable but maintained that any financial provision for the long-term future of the Banabans was premature. The Board expressed to the Secretary of State a common view concerning the future of Pacific peoples:

At the present rate of progress - and it is not likely to be materially accelerated in the near future - about twelve acres are annually worked out. It would therefore take more than a century to work out the whole 1292 acres. All over the Pacific the population of the islands is diminishing, and a hundred years hence the native inhabitants of Ocean Island - already few [about 450] - may not improbably have wholly disappeared.²⁸

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- 26 C.O. to P.P.C., 1 July 1912 - C.O. Confidential Print, Australian no. 206. It was also suggested in the House of Commons that the P.P.C. had obtained its licence under false pretences by understating the value of Ocean Island phosphate. See, for example, questions asked by Pointer, 24 and 31 July, 11 and 18 Dec., 1912 - G.B.P.D., XLI, 1147-8, 2025-7; XLV, 443-4, 1477.
- 27 Assistant to H.C. to H.C., Confidential, 14 April 1909 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 491/1909.
- 28 P.P.C. to C.O., 9 Nov. 1909, enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., Confidential, 25 Nov. 1909 - WPHC, Confidential Despatches from S. of S.

Nor was Harcourt prepared to consider the removal of the Banabans. Such a proposal could not be entertained, he cabled, and was not to be discussed with either the Banabans or the Company.²⁹ Within a year, however, Colonial Office thinking had changed, and the Banaban Fund had been established for the purpose.

The placing of 250 acres in the hands of the Company was designed to allow uninterrupted mining for a period of twenty years. As a consequence, therefore, apart from a few minor land disputes, and complaints over the Company's prices and profits at its store on Ocean Island, the Administration replaced the Banabans as the Company's chief combatant. Eliot, in particular, believed that the Company should be taxed, directly or indirectly, at a higher rate than the 6d. per ton royalty. The Company, on the other hand, fought a losing battle for the principle that it should contribute only to the cost of administration at Ocean Island.

In 1916 Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Chairman of the P.P.C., approached the Secretary of State for relief from taxation at Ocean Island. Balfour argued that in 1908, Crewe, as Secretary of State, had suggested that the Protectorate should aim at a total annual revenue of £9,000 but that between 1911 and 1915 revenue had averaged more than three times that amount, of which the P.P.C. had contributed in the region of £6,000 per year. Balfour further argued that the capitation tax, repealed in 1908 and re-imposed in 1913, combined with royalties payable to both Banabans and Government, and a tax on fuel oil of 6d. per gallon was 'unduly burdensome and unfair to the Company'. The Board also asked for 'representation of the Company in the Government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony' on the grounds that it contributed substantially to the revenue of the territory.³⁰ Neither officials of the Colonial Office nor Bonar Law, the Secretary of State, were sympathetic to the Company's case. Bonar Law informed the Company that he considered it 'essential that provision should be made for the

29 S. of S. to H.C., Telegram, 29 Nov. 1911 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 491/1909.

30 Balfour of Burleigh to Bonar Law, 14 Sept. 1916, enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., no. 228, 16 Nov. 1916 - *ibid.*, 15/1917.

necessary taxation to enable administration to be carried on efficiently under existing conditions'.³¹

From 1920 the exploitation of the phosphates was placed in the hands of the British Phosphate Commissioners [B.P.C.], a non-profit making organisation formed by the Governments of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Negotiations commenced at the Versailles Peace Conference over the future of Nauru resulted in agreement among the three Governments to purchase the rights and assets of the P.P.C. at both Ocean Island and Nauru. The agreed price was £3,500,000 (paid up capital of the Company amounted to less than £1,000,000) with the Governments contributing forty-two per cent, forty-two per cent and sixteen per cent respectively.³²

The declared policy of the B.P.C. was, and has remained, to supply phosphate to the partner countries at the lowest possible prices. Such a policy has inevitably brought the B.P.C. into conflict with both Banabans and the Government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony as each has sought greater shares in the financial benefits derived from the industry: the former in respect of land and phosphate, and the latter to subsidise an otherwise non-viable economy.

Where the P.P.C. had attempted to produce phosphate as cheaply as possible in order to maximise profits, the B.P.C. has done so in order to sell at the lowest possible price. At the production end, therefore, there was little difference between the policies of the P.P.C. and those of the B.P.C. although new supporting arguments were put forward. It is also significant that Albert Ellis became the first New Zealand Commissioner and A.R. Dickinson, Managing Director of the P.P.C., his colleague from the United Kingdom.³³

A year after the B.P.C. takeover, the Commissioners approached Sir Cecil Rodwell, the High Commissioner, in an attempt to have the

31 C.O. to P.P.C., 16 Nov. 1916, enclosed in S. of S. to H.C., no. 228, 16 Nov. 1916 - *ibid.*

32 Agreement ..., 25 June 1920 - *loc.cit.*

33 Ellis, Ocean Island and Nauru, 179.

B.P.C.'s contribution to the Colony's budget decreased. Ellis laid emphasis on the fact that all of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were productive and exported considerable quantities of copra, and that the B.P.C. already contributed £18,000 a year in wages to Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders.

Ellis again argued 'that the Gilbert and Ellice Islands should be self-supporting as regards expense of administration'. He went even further by pleading a case for the 'deserving' farmers of Australia and New Zealand:

... the Governments of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand purchased the Pacific Phosphate Company's interests in order to ensure the regular supply of high grade phosphate to the agricultural interests of those countries at bed rock prices. A very large proportion of the users of phosphate are struggling farmers, who can ill-afford the expense of purchasing fertilisers. The object of the Commissioners in seeking a reduction of taxation and other expenses in connection with producing the phosphate is therefore a most deserving one³⁴

It is significant that in the 1920s such arguments could not only be advanced but could be accepted as valid. In so far as they were prepared to exploit the wasting asset of a colonial territory for their own benefit, the metropolitan Governments of Britain, Australia and New Zealand were, and have remained, involved in one of the most extreme examples of economic imperialism in the Pacific.

When, a decade later, Sir Murchison Fletcher, the High Commissioner, had the temerity to suggest that the people of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (including the Banabans) were subsidising agricultural development in other countries he drew a predictably sharp response from the British Phosphate Commissioners in support of their Governments' policy:

His Excellency referred to the difference between the world's market price and that at which the phosphate was being supplied by the Commission, and asked where the large sums represented by that difference actually went - to Australia and New Zealand? - and stated that he considered it would be fair to divide equally between the Colony and the Australian and New Zealand

34 B.P.C. to Sec. to W.P.H.C., 21 Sept. 1921 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 2473/1921.

farmers, the bonus represented by the difference between the world's market price of phosphate and the price at which it was sold by the British Phosphate Commissioners. Mr. Lodge stated that the three Governments would never look at such a suggestion. He Excellency thought that probably they would not, and Mr. Lodge emphatically they would never consider it. [sic]³⁵

The plight of the Australasian farmers notwithstanding, when the B.P.C. sought a further 150 acres of land in the mid-1920s High Commissioner Hutson looked for a means of obtaining a better deal for the Banabans. He was less concerned with the Colony's finances at this stage. The surplus of assets over liabilities amounted to some £50,000, or a year's revenue, and the B.P.C., through royalties, capitation taxes and import duties, provided approximately half of the revenue.³⁶

Hutson regarded the Banaban position with some concern. He noted the statement of one Banaban, as reported by McClure, the Resident Commissioner, that no lands would be sold in future for less than £5,000 per acre. In the light of figures available, Hutson thought the demand to be fair:

If one takes into consideration the fact that the sale price of the land now held by the Commission was £60 per acre, and that an acre of phosphate land produces, on a conservative estimate from 25 to 30,000 tons of phosphate at a nett value of 30/- per ton, so I am informed, the proceeds being thus £37,500 to £48,000 per acre, the reply made by the Banaban, whether innocently or prompted, does not appear to me to be an unreasonable one.³⁷

Negotiations over the land continued until 1927 when it became clear that the Banabans were prepared to part with their lands only on terms that the B.P.C. found unacceptable and even the High Commissioner considered excessive. The result was the Mining Ordinance of 1928.³⁸ Under the Ordinance land could be purchased

35 'Notes of discussion at Interview granted by His Excellency the High Commissioner to the British Phosphate Commission representatives at Suva on 6th July, 1932' - *ibid.*, 1884/1932. Lodge was the Commissioner for the United Kingdom.

36 GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1924-6, 13-15.

37 Memorandum by Hutson, 15 July 1925 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1619/1925.

38 Ordinance No. 4 of 1928.

by the Crown and placed at the disposal of an authorised licence-holder provided that the Secretary of State considered the purchase of such land to be in the public interest and the Resident Commissioner was satisfied as to the payments offered. Previously, in the absence of legislation to the contrary, it had been acknowledged that the Banabans enjoyed both surface and mineral rights over their land - a view implicit in the agreement of 1913. The Ordinance, however, declared that land rights were surface rights only and that mineral rights were vested in the Crown. The purchase price of land was to be assessed on the basis of surface value plus improvements. Royalties could be paid into trust for the benefit of the dispossessed landowners. The Ordinance was invoked at the end of 1928 and the Banabans were effectively disarmed for their continuing struggle against the B.P.C.

It was decided that 150 acres should be purchased under the Ordinance, at £150 per acre but debates over the amount and distribution of other payments continued for almost two years. With regard to the Banabans it was finally decided that a sum of £35,000 should be transferred from the existing Banaban Fund to form the nucleus of a new Banaban Provident Fund to which would be added 2d. per ton royalty until the Fund compounded to £175,000. A further 8 1/2d. per ton was to be paid to the Banaban Fund (to be known in future as the Banaban Royalties Trust Fund) for the benefit of the Banaban community generally.³⁹ Annuities of £8 for adults and £4 for children were paid from the latter fund along with annuities for dispossessed landowners and the salary of a master for the Banaban school.⁴⁰

Arthur Grimble, as Resident Commissioner from 1926, had tried to hasten the settlement and to persuade the Banabans to accept the proffered terms. It would appear that his ambition was one of the major determining factors in this attitude and that he hoped that a rapid and satisfactory end to the negotiations (from the point of view of the United Kingdom Government) would benefit his career.

39 See correspondence and minutes in WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General 1387/1930.

40 Memorandum by Vaskess (Sec. to W.P.H.C.), 27 Sept. 1941 - GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F53/2/1 (Central Archives).

When the Banabans refused to accept the B.P.C.'s offer, and legislative action became necessary, Grimble applied at regular intervals for transfer (preferably with promotion), or leave, on the grounds that his presence was inhibiting a settlement. He reported to the High Commissioner that the 'general opinion of Banabans is that I am their enemy and have deliberately failed to represent their interests'.⁴¹ From the relevant correspondence it is clear that the Banabans did not criticise without good cause.

Throughout the negotiations the High Commissioners, Hutson and Fletcher, and Vaskess, the Secretary of the Western Pacific High Commission, remained the chief advocates of the Banaban cause. When, on the recommendation of the B.P.C., Grimble tentatively agreed to the re-allocation of 1d. of the royalty so as to allow an early arrival at the limit of £175,000 in the Banaban Provident Fund, it was Vaskess who pointed out that the change would, in the long term, benefit only the B.P.C. and would deprive the Banabans of both current and future revenue.⁴²

The question of direct and indirect contributions to Colony revenue remained perpetually in dispute. By 1932 Colony reserves had reached £110,000, or the equivalent of two years' revenue. Lodge, the Commissioner for the United Kingdom, argued that future accumulations were unnecessary; that the surplus was the result of the over-taxation of the phosphate industry; and that Ocean Island was not a part of the Gilbert group and should therefore be separate from the Colony. In reply, Fletcher, the High Commissioner, stated that Ocean Island was an integral part of the Colony and was 'properly taxable for the benefit of the Colony as a whole'.⁴³

A further two years' discussion resulted in a decision to accept a proposal from the B.P.C. for a commuted taxation agreement. The B.P.C. was to be exempt from all licence and customs duties (except for liquor and tobacco products) but was to continue to pay the basic

41 R.C. to H.C., Telegram, 8 April 1931 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 992/1931; see also, Telegram, 9 Oct. 1928 - *ibid.*, 2874/1928.

42 Minute, Vaskess to H.C., n.d. - *ibid.*, 1387/1930.

43 'Notes of discussion ... 6th July, 1932' - *loc. cit.*

6d. per ton royalty. In lieu, the phosphate industry was to meet the difference between the ordinary revenue of the Colony and its annual expenditure.⁴⁴ It was originally intended that the B.P.C. should be consulted on the draft estimates but that decisions on expenditure would rest, as before, with the Resident Commissioner acting with the approval of the Secretary of State. In practice, however, the Commissioners assumed a more active role. When the situation was reviewed in 1937, after the agreement had been in operation for three years, it was obvious that, from the Colony's point of view, a substantial revision was necessary. Richards, the High Commissioner, commented:

I may say ... that, so far as I can see, the agreement has not worked out as was apparently expected by the Administration, and I cannot avoid the conclusion that far too much deference has been accorded to the views of the Commissioners in the matter of Government expenditure

The Commissioners assumed a right to criticize every item of expenditure, and, no doubt encouraged by the conciliatory attitude of the Administration, took full advantage of the position, extended their criticism to all Government activities, and instituted a campaign of Government economy.⁴⁵

The agreement, Richards pointed out, had been calculated on the basis of a depression output of 200,000 tons a year. By 1937 production was in the vicinity of 400,000 tons.⁴⁶

The outcome was a revised agreement by which the Commissioners agreed to pay an annual sum of £20,000 to Colony revenue, in addition to a royalty of 6d. per ton for all production in excess of 300,000 tons for the year ending 30 June 1939, and in excess of 250,000 tons per year thereafter, with a minimum annual payment of £6,000; and a sum approximately equal to three-eighths of the difference between the Colony's ordinary revenue and ordinary expenditure, with a

44 Ordinance No. 3 of 1934.

45 H.C. to S. of S., Confidential, 19 March 1937 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 531/1935.

46 *ibid.*

minimum annual payment of £9,000.⁴⁷ In short, then, the B.P.C. was to contribute a minimum of £35,000 a year compared with an annual average of £24,000 to £25,000 for the preceding four years.⁴⁸ The latter figure, it should be noted, represented a declining percentage of Colony revenue.

Although the Banaban Provident Fund was steadily accumulating to meet the costs of the projected resettlement of the Banabans, any consideration of the issue was left in abeyance, along with the matter of financial relations between the Colony and the B.P.C., when Government and B.P.C. personnel were evacuated in February 1942, a few months prior to Japanese occupation.

47 Ordinance No. 7 of 1938.

48 GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1934-8, passim.

CHAPTER 4

THE GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS 1908-1941: A NEGLECTED
BACKWATER OF THE EMPIRE

With the removal of the Protectorate headquarters to Ocean Island in 1909 the Resident Commissioner was, simply by distance and a lack of regular communication, left without any close knowledge of the islands of the Gilbert and Ellice groups. The problem was exacerbated, between 1909 and 1926, by the appointment of Resident Commissioners without previous administrative experience in the groups. Further, concentration on the affairs of Ocean Island was both inevitable and necessary given the peculiar relationship which existed between the phosphate industry and the Administration. All Resident Commissioners were directly involved in negotiations over the industry's financial contribution to Protectorate (later Colony) funds, the control of a multi-racial labour force and, on behalf of the Banabans, with discussions on land alienation and royalty payments.

Subordinate staff in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, on the other hand, appeared to discourage closer links with Ocean Island, preferring to tackle their responsibilities without undue interference. In policy matters too, Resident Commissioners, with the possible exception of Grimble, were heavily dependent on their District staff. Recommendations for major changes in local government policy, for example, were sometimes forwarded to the High Commissioner in the form of memoranda prepared by District Officers.¹

By an Order in Council dated 10 November 1915 (effective from 12 January 1916) the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were annexed. By further Orders issued in January 1916 the new Colony's boundaries were extended to include Ocean, Fanning, Washington and the Tokelau (Union) Islands. The status of the territory was altered on the instructions of the Secretary of State and, despite the frequently recurring statement in Annual Reports that 'In the years

1 See, for example, correspondence in WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1852/1912; 1407/1936.

immediately following the creation of the Colony numerous Ordinances were enacted for the better administration of the islands,² there was no discernible change in either administrative policy or practice as a result of annexation.

The problem of communications, always chronic in the Protectorate, had been worsened when the Tokelau Islands were placed under the control of the Resident Commissioner in 1909. Located 600 miles to the east of Funafuti, the group's only link with the administrative headquarters was an irregular shipping service between Samoa and the Ellice Islands, via the Tokelaus, and thence by an even more irregular service through Tarawa to Ocean Island.³ The extension of the Colony's limits to include Fanning and Washington Islands (1916) and Christmas Island (1919) placed impossible burdens on an administration that was, prior to the Second World War, dependent on spasmodic and unreliable commercial shipping and, at best, a single Colony vessel.

Quayle Dickson, from 1909 to 1912, attempted to solve the communications problem with the aid of frequent consultations with his District Officers at Ocean Island - a practice that involved them in long absences from their Districts and drew severe criticism from the High Commissioner.⁴ Eliot, Quayle Dickson's successor, remained almost totally absorbed in the territory's finances and with Banaban affairs. On occasion, however, in the course of his infrequent tours of the group, Eliot took issue with the missions in regard to their influence over and interference with the island governments. McClure advocated the return of Colony headquarters to a central island of the Gilbert group in 1922 on the grounds that it was the only means by which the efficient administration of the groups could be assured. In the

2 GEIC, Colony Annual Reports, 1949-67, passim.

3 Because of the problem of communications the Tokelau Islands were placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor-General of New Zealand in 1926 and administered from Western Samoa.

4 Assistant H.C. to H.C., 11 Sept. 1911, and subsequent correspondence - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1567/1911.

light of past experience, he argued, shipping could not provide a satisfactory solution.⁵

Although successive Resident Commissioners considered that the removal of the headquarters to a central location was desirable for the more efficient administration of the Colony, none were prepared to recommend that such a step should be taken in the light of financial implications and the state of the phosphate industry. McClure, for example, despite his concern with efficiency, suggested that the purchase of further land by the B.P.C. would necessitate the demolition of the existing headquarters and that the ensuing compensation should be used to finance the transfer.⁶ When this situation arose in 1930, McClure's scheme was rejected by Grimble on the grounds that the Colony could not afford the additional expenditure of £2,000 and that the continued presence of the Resident Commissioner was required at Ocean Island.⁷ Throughout a decade of discussion the B.P.C. consistently opposed any suggestion that Colony headquarters should be moved. The Commissioners maintained that the commercial importance of the phosphate industry alone should ensure that the head of the Colony's administration resided on Ocean Island.⁸

Attitudes towards the transfer of Colony headquarters reflected basic assumptions underlying administrative policy before the Second World War. Parsimony in the Colonial Office ensured that financial considerations would remain paramount with little regard for administrative efficiency or the expansion of government services. Aid from outside the Colony was not considered to be even a remote possibility. The Secretary of State commented in 1923 that he considered an establishment of five District Officers for twenty-four islands to be excessive, and suggested the retrenchment of two or more officers in favour of 'travelling

5 Memorandum by McClure, 6 July 1925 - *ibid.*, 329/1924.

6 *ibid.*

7 R.C. to H.C., Confidential, 11 Dec. 1930 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1927/1930.

8 See correspondence and minutes - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 3717/1931.

officers' and added that 'it is doubtful whether a Colony with such restricted resources as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands can afford both an elaborate European administration and an expensive transport department'.⁹

Such statements, made when Colony revenue was consistently exceeding expenditure by some 25 per cent, and when annual government expenditure was a mere £40,000, for a total population of about 30,000,¹⁰ give a fair indication of the difficulties under which the Resident Commissioner and his staff were obliged to work. By 1924, moreover, the Colony had not only had its establishment reduced but had also been obliged to dispense with its vessel - the only regular means of contact between the headquarters and the islands of the Gilbert and Ellice groups.¹¹ It would appear that neither officials of the Colonial Office nor the responsible Ministers sought a significant reallocation of funds to social or other services. Rather, they simply attempted to cut expenditure to the minimum - a reflection, perhaps, of the difficult economic conditions prevailing in Britain.

Lack of transport also inhibited the growth of other government services. Although European missionaries usually dispensed a limited range of drugs, the missions concentrated their efforts in the education field and did not play any significant role in the provision of medical services for the islands. Government concern with the incidence of tuberculosis and yaws throughout the groups, and filariasis in the Ellice, led to the appointment of a medical officer in 1904.¹²

The Medical Department gradually expanded with government hospitals at Tarawa, Tabiteuea and Funafuti and small medical stations on all other islands by 1916. Islanders were trained at

9 S. of S. to H.C., no. 173, 7 Aug. 1923 - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

10 GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1924-6, 11-14.

11 *ibid.*, 1923-4, 9.

12 R.C. to H.C., no. 49, 11 Nov. 1907 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 28/1908.

Tarawa as 'dressers' for the island hospitals and a selected few were given more advanced training in Fiji.¹³ With skilled treatment available only at Tarawa and Funafuti from the 1920s, there was an obvious demand for shipping to conduct inspection tours, and to transport urgent cases to a Colony hospital. The need was recognised in 1938 with the purchase of a ketch for the use of departmental officers.¹⁴ Health services provided by the Government absorbed an average of 15 to 20 per cent of revenue throughout the period;¹⁵ other departments were less fortunate.

Education, for example, was generally regarded as the preserve of the missions. Both missions considered that education was an essential feature of the propagation of the faith. As a result, all villages throughout the Gilbert and Ellice Islands had at least one, and sometimes more, schools where a heavy emphasis was placed on teaching in religious subjects. By 1914 all missions had established institutions where potential pastors and teachers were instructed under the supervision of European missionaries.¹⁶

The Government did not become involved in education until 1913. From that year mission education programmes received financial assistance with grants rising from £225 in 1913 to £500 in 1917-18.¹⁷ In 1920 an Education Department was established and, two years later, the King George V School (so named from 1925) opened at Tarawa with sixty students.¹⁸ Government education was available only for boys and restricted to the primary level. From the point of view of the Government the sole purpose of its education programme was to train government clerks, as no mission school had succeeded, by 1916, in educating any student to the standard required for an official

13 GEIC, Medical Department Report, 1916-17, 1.

14 GEIC, Medical Department Report, 1938, 9.

15 GEIC, Colony Annual Reports, 1915-37, passim.

16 GEIC, Education Department Report, 1934, 4.

17 R.C. to H.C., no. 174, 29 Aug. 1916 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 2537/1916; S. of S. to H.C., no. 71, 21 March 1917 - ibid., 1342/1917.

18 GEIC, Education Department Report, 1934, 1.

interpreter.¹⁹ Assistance to mission training institutions continued, but no grants were made in respect of the 200 village schools in the groups. Under a scheme of co-operation for the Gilbert Islands, the Government agreed to train five teachers a year for both Protestant and Catholic missions from 1930, and to give financial assistance to the 'improved village schools' to which they were posted.²⁰ The S.H.M. withdrew its trainees in 1935, and the scheme was suspended in the following year after a total of thirty-five teachers had graduated.²¹

A similar school to that at Tarawa was opened at Vaitupu in 1924. The Ellice Islanders offered to provide land, buildings, some food, £850 a year for three years (to meet all costs) and a recurrent annual payment of £3 per pupil. In return, the Government agreed to assume responsibility for the school and gave an undertaking that a European headmaster would be retained in charge.²² In 1931, however, with the transfer of Kennedy, the headmaster, to the administrative service, the Government decided that the school would henceforth be staffed only by local teachers.²³

In 1923 Smith-Rewse, the Colony's senior District Officer, Holland, the head of the education scheme, Kennedy, and Lacey, the acting headmaster of the Banaban school, submitted proposals for a revised education policy to the Resident Commissioner. They argued that, despite the lack of resources and employment opportunities in the Colony, it was the duty of the Government to provide a progressive education programme. Education was considered to be the best means of ensuring the moral, intellectual and physical improvement of the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders. The officers also expressed a belief that English and other basic academic subjects should be taught in village schools sponsored by the

19 R.C. to H.C., no. 174, 29 Aug. 1916 - loc. cit.

20 R.C. to H.C., no. 352, 31 Dec. 1927 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 350/1928.

21 GEIC, Education Department Report, 1936, 2.

22 D.O., E.I.D. to R.C., no. 33, 18 Aug. 1921 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 3258/1921.

23 GEIC, Education Department Report, 1934, 2.

Government.²⁴ The opposition of McClure and his superiors to these proposals was based not only on their views of education but also on general attitudes towards colonial administration. McClure believed the proposals to be 'administratively unsound and contrary to all the accepted principles of good government of a native race'. He further stated that no material advancement could be expected in groups of coral islands, that the islanders were 'reasonably happy and content' in their present state and that, therefore, any education programme which would introduce outside ideas could not be justified and, indeed, would be harmful. As corollaries he added that all education, save that expressly designed to train clerks and interpreters for the Government, should remain with the missions, and that teaching should be conducted in the vernacular languages.²⁵

It was accepted as inevitable, by McClure and his successors, that the Colony was geographically isolated, and would remain so, and that, therefore, apart from financial considerations, preservation, rather than any concept of development, should be the major factor in policy decisions. Grimble, as Resident Commissioner, expressed the prevailing view:

The economic development of the islands will never be such as to render a knowledge of English necessary to the masses. The acquisition of such specialised knowledge by the general population would ... be dangerous inasmuch as it would tend to inspire the natives with ambitions which they could never fulfil, and thus become the potential cause of political unrest.²⁶

The achievements of the Ellice Islands School while it remained under the direct control of Kennedy, from 1924 to 1931, and under his influence for a further seven years, are clearly seen in the success of its graduates in the Colony's civil service in post-war years but, at the time, his ideas were regarded as both radical and dangerous. Financial stringency, the dangers of filarial infection,

24 Memorandum enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 131, 11 July 1923 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 2049/1923.

25 R.C. to H.C., no. 131, 11 July 1923 - *ibid*.

26 R.C. to H.C., no. 318, 15 Oct. 1930 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1950/1930.

and especially Kennedy's curriculum, which included English and other academic subjects, were the factors which led to the decision not to replace Kennedy with another European teacher. In 1931, Grimble commented:

The type of education given at Vaitupu is unsuitable for young boys whose destiny must remain circumscribed - for the most part - by the bounds of ordinary village life The system of Government education at present obtaining in the Ellice Group threatens to produce a class of youths both economically useless and socially dangerous The point is that all merely academic instruction should now be abandoned, and a revised syllabus, having in view every need and limitation of village life should be adopted.²⁷

In accordance with this policy, the intake of students to King George V School was strictly limited to the number of anticipated vacancies in the civil service. No consideration was given to the ambitions of the islanders themselves, many of whom sought a higher education than could be provided in mission schools. Such aspirations were dismissed by Government officials who believed that the desire for education was almost solely a reflection of village and island rivalries and was not based on any desire for education per se, and that such ambitions, where they existed, were undesirable and should be discouraged.²⁸

Government attitudes towards education in this period provide an excellent guide to administrative policies generally and to the future developments envisaged by officials serving in the Colony at the time. William Telfer Campbell, like his government agents, had been little concerned with theories of colonial administration. Rather, he had attempted to establish practical methods of administration that would ensure the predominance of his own will and enable close control over the islanders and their governments. Later, the ability of the islanders to rule themselves, under the guidance of European officials was stressed and the emergence of a unified self-governing polity within half a century was confidently

27 R.C. to H.C., no. 353, 17 Dec. 1931 - *ibid.*

28 See, for example, minutes of discussions between the High Commissioner and the Resident Commissioner, Suva, 28 Feb. 1935 - *ibid.*, 294/1935

predicted.²⁹ Although this target date, set in 1930, may be achieved it is doubtful whether the policies followed by the Government before the Second World War could have contributed towards such an end. Officials of that era generally envisaged the preservation of Gilbertese and Ellice society in its existing form within definite limits prescribed by geographical, environmental and financial factors.

Some officials went even further and made a conscious effort to reverse the process of social change. Of necessity, such a view involved an attack on mission influence and the changes it had wrought in the island communities. Because it had been longer in the field, and had made a greater impact on the islanders, the L.M.S. came in for the strongest criticism.

In the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, as in most parts of the Pacific, missionaries tended to take the view that conversion involved the acceptance not only of mission teaching in matters of faith and morals but also of certain social standards maintained by the missionaries themselves. Adherents generally had little understanding of doctrine, a fact often acknowledged by the missionaries.³⁰ Christianity became a matter of rules and regulations to be blindly followed, and church attendance. Traditional garments and partial nakedness were shunned in favour of shirts and lavalavas for the men and mother-hubbards for the women. For the missionaries, such outward changes were regarded as encouraging signs of the progress of the 'work':

The effect of Christian teaching [Goward wrote to his superiors in London] is to make the people desire to be decently clothed and to be cleanly, and to exchange the dirty cocoanut leaf "riri" for the print waistcoat and loose gown.³¹

Most administrators took a different view. Faced with a situation in which mission domination had preceded the arrival of the

29 GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1929-30, 6.

30 See, for example, 'Report on the ... L.M.S., 1900-1902' - loc. cit.

31 'Statement regarding operations in the Gilbert Group', enclosed in Goward to Thompson, 17 March 1915 - LMS, South Seas, Letters.

British administration, and had remained a more significant influence in the lives of the islanders, some officials regarded the missions with open hostility. Religious rivalries within the Native Governments, often instigated, or at least supported by, European missionaries, constantly drew the attention of District Officers. The attitudes of many officials towards these disputes were based on a belief that religious teaching had produced a class of people inferior and degraded when compared with their ancestors. Grimble, for example, believed that mission teaching had led to 'the birth of the native snob; a being ashamed of his history, ashamed of his legends, ashamed of everything that every happened to his race outside the chapel and the class-room',³² and that 'Protestant Christianity ... remains the synonym of mental and social emasculation for the native'.³³ Grimble's view, which was shared by many of his colleagues, may be seen as anti-mission, or based on a romanticised ideal of the islanders, but there is another factor, of even greater significance, to be considered. The influence over the minds and lives of the islanders by the missions was regarded as a hindrance to control by the Government; a Government which in practice sought to establish a brand of paternalism that was at least as authoritarian and restrictive as that of the missions.

The 1894 Native Laws remained virtually unaltered until 1917. The most important amendments made in the intervening period concerned the registration of births, deaths and marriages (1897); the illegal assumption of magisterial powers (1898); civil marriage (1912); and 'wife exchange' (1907).³⁴ The latter offence, like adultery, was made a criminal offence punishable by six to twelve months' imprisonment in addition to any sentence for adultery (also six to twelve months' imprisonment). Other laws considered

32 Grimble to R.C., no. 27, 20 Nov. 1918, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., Confidential, 1 Feb. 1919 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 531/1919.

33 Memorandum on mission affairs in the southern Gilbert Islands, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 104, 23 June 1920 - *ibid.*, 1448/1920.

34 'Additions to the Gilbert & Ellice Islands NATIVE LAWS since 1894', enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 206, 5 Sept. 1912 - *ibid.*, 1852/1912.

necessary had been embodied in the all-embracing island regulations passed by the island governments.

After correspondence with Murdoch and other District Officers Eliot had suggested in 1912 that the constitution should be changed, and several of the laws amended. Five years passed, however, before the comprehensive revision that he envisaged could be accomplished. Although the Revised Native Laws of 1917³⁵ represented a significant departure from the 1894 code it was, in fact, simply designed to bring the legislation into line with existing practice.³⁶

The revised laws and local government constitution were to be applied uniformly to all islands of both groups. The position of High Chief, following Campbell's suppression of the office, was abolished. The Native Magistrate was retained with his existing powers and the position of Chief of Kaubure, a reality for two decades, was officially recognised. It was the latter's role to preside over the monthly meetings of the Kaubure and he was, with the Magistrate, responsible for the enforcement of all laws and regulations. Native Magistrates, Chiefs of Kaubure and Scribes were to be appointed by the Resident Commissioner on the recommendation of a District Officer. Under the previous constitution the only formally recognised role of the Resident Commissioner was to confirm death sentences and to advise the island governments at their request. The 1917 amendment acknowledged the de facto control that government officials had exercised from the time that Swayne was first appointed in 1893. District Officers were also given power to review and amend all decisions of the Native Courts, including the settlement of land disputes for which the Courts were henceforth to be responsible. The selection of Kaubure remained a local responsibility but all appointments were subject to confirmation by a District Officer.

Amendment to the laws (as distinct from the local government constitution) showed a trend towards 'European' standards, partly because of administrative policy and partly as a result of pressure

35 Schedule to Ordinance No. 2 of 1917.

36 R.C. to H.C., no. 206, 5 Sept. 1912 - loc. cit.

from mission interests. Attempted suicide, abortion, tinaba, incest (although it was not made clear whether local or English definitions were to apply), gambling, sorcery, contempt of court and aiding and abetting were all included within the list of punishable offences. So, too, were procuration and permitting the use of a house for 'immoral purposes'.

The system of local taxation that had been in operation since 1914 was also given legal sanction. Initially, land taxes and fines had been placed in Island Funds from which local salaries and expenses had been deducted together with assessed contributions to Protectorate funds. The practice had allowed the Funds to accumulate, especially as successive High Commissioners had refused to sanction an increase in island taxes to finance Campbell's schemes for an expanded administration. When Quayle Dickson raised the overall assessment from £2,500 to £4,685 in 1912, without seeking prior approval, May, the High Commissioner, gave serious consideration to the return of the unauthorised balance but then decided that it should be allocated to a special public works fund.³⁷

Within fifteen years of their creation the sum of all Island Funds had risen to £21,590³⁸ - an obvious target for an impoverished central administration. When the proposal to purchase a Protectorate vessel had been approved by im Thurn, Quayle Dickson had suggested that a loan, amounting to half of the estimated cost of about £10,000, should be drawn from the Island Funds. Crewe, the Secretary of State, went even further. As the vessel would improve the administration of the groups, and therefore be of benefit to the islanders, he argued, a portion of the cost could fairly be charged against the Funds.³⁹ Accordingly, the island governments were asked to contribute £4,500 towards the cost of a Government vessel.

37 R.C. to H.C., no. 49, 24 Feb. 1912, enclosed in H.C. to S. of S., no. 101, 13 April 1912 - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.; R.C. to H.C., no. 205, 4 Sept. 1912, and ensuing correspondence - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1851/1912.

38 H.C. to S. of S., no. 191, 17 Oct. 1911 - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.

39 S. of S. to H.C., no. 131, 14 Oct. 1909 - WPHC, Despatches from S. of S.

Later, their approval was sought for the transfer of the balance of the Island Funds, amounting to some £17,500 to the Protectorate.⁴⁰ All islands in the Gilbert group were persuaded to agree unconditionally to the transfer but those of the Ellice group gave their approval only on condition that a 'special project' would be undertaken in the Ellice Islands each year.⁴¹ Their terms were accepted by the Resident Commissioner and the appropriate assurances made. There is no evidence, however, that Government expenditure in the group, always meagre, was increased as a result. From 1914 all island governments were permitted to retain only sufficient revenue to meet their approved annual expenditure; all other proceeds from fines and taxation were regarded as Protectorate revenue.

From 1917, all taxes were paid directly to the Colony Government which made allowance in the annual estimates for expenditure on island administration. All expenditure by the island governments was subject to approval by the Resident Commissioner. From 1914 the salaries of all local government officials were fixed by the Resident Commissioner on a scale dependent on the size of each island. Salaries of Native Magistrates, for example, ranged from £24 to £9, and overall expenditure by the island governments was estimated at £103 for islands with a population in excess of 3,000 and £46 for those with less than 500 people.⁴²

Excluding changes in the financial relationship between the central and island governments, there were no significant changes in local government policy between 1909 and 1930. The practice of concentrating the population into easily administered villages was continued; the power of the Native Magistrate vis à vis the Chief of Kaubure, continued to expand; the island governments tended to make large numbers of petty regulations and, when a District Officer was present on any given island, his word was law.

40 H.C. to S. of S., no. 103, 15 April 1912 - WPHC, Despatches to S. of S.

41 R.C. to H.C., no. 73, 10 April 1913 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 925/1913.

42 R.C. to H.C., no. 213, 17 Dec. 1913 - *ibid.*

The District Officers appointed to the Colony during the period may be divided into two groups - career colonial servants, and local recruits. The former often had university degrees, endeavoured to understand the people whom they administered, learnt their languages and a few published papers on the customs, social organisation and material culture of the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders.⁴³ Some lacked both interest and ability. Those recruited locally came from a variety of former occupations ranging from traders and ship's officers to labour overseers employed by the B.P.C. at Ocean Island. Although some of the officials in this category learnt the vernacular languages, they were usually men of little formal education, their understanding of the principles of administration was limited, they were less sympathetic and perceptive in their relationships with the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders and their approach was, on the whole, more rigid. There were exceptions. Murdoch, for example, despite his authoritarianism, was, perhaps, the most respected and effective of the early administrators.

Following the example set by their District Officers, officials of the Native Governments tended to be authoritarian in their approach towards administration. Although many served upwards of twenty years in office, and commanded the respect of their fellow islanders, their authority was ultimately drawn not from their status within the island communities but from the Government that they represented.

The zeal of the Native Governments in their enforcement of laws and regulations is adequately illustrated by the high proportion of the population convicted in the Native Courts. The District Reports for 1929-30 reveal that on one island the equivalent of 75 per cent of the adult population was convicted during the year and, at another, 80 per cent of the women were similarly convicted.⁴⁴ In

43 See the publications of Maude and Grimble listed in the Bibliography and also those of Kennedy who transferred from the Education Department to the Administrative Service in 1931.

44 District Annual Reports for 1929-30 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 86/1931.

explanation, it was pointed out that although there were large numbers of convictions in the Courts, serious crimes were comparatively rare. Rather, the high rate of convictions was directly due to the multiplicity of island regulations, especially those concerned with the cleanliness of houses and village land plots. Swinbourne, the Acting Resident Commissioner, reported to the Acting High Commissioner that in view of the scope of the regulations, breaches at some time by almost all individuals could be regarded as inevitable:

[As the island regulations] ... regulate almost every period of an individual's life and work, they are broken at some time by virtually every one in the community, and it is only on islands where the Native Governments are slack in the performance of their duties that any large proportion of the community can escape conviction in the course of any given year. Crime, however, as it is understood in a European sense is seldom committed by the Gilbertese and the community's strong social sense is an efficient safeguard against the occurrence of any offence which the native considers to be anti-social.⁴⁵

It should also be noted that prosecution for a minor offence before a Native Court usually resulted in a conviction but, when the offence was contrary to a 'European' rather than a customary law, such a conviction was not usually regarded as being socially censurable.

The Native Governments were, however, extremely selective in their enforcement of the laws and regulations. Following precedents that had been established by European officers, the Magistrates and Kaubure insisted on curfews, communal works (compulsory adult labour for community projects) and clean houses but, where the law came into conflict with customary modes of behaviour still held in respect, no action would be taken. Despite their illegality, the tinaba and eiriki customs were still practised. It is also doubtful whether the law significantly reduced the incidence of abortion. On the other hand, the occurrence of offences, incest for example, which were considered to be definitely anti-social and contrary to traditional codes of

45 R.C. to H.C., no. 76, 1 Feb. 1933 - *ibid.*, 783/1933.

social behaviour, generally resulted in family or community action outside the law.⁴⁶

As customary law survived in some contexts in the Gilbert Islands so, too, did traditional authority. On Makin and Butaritari, Abaiang, and Abemama, Kuria and Aranuka, high chiefs and their families remained as formidable forces in island politics. Such informal authority was often at variance with the dictates of the Government and, because such power was recognised by the populace, effectively curtailed the influence of the Native Governments. On Butaritari, for example, when charges against the Native Magistrate were investigated in 1920, they were found to be an expression of the constant rivalry which existed between the uea, who was accustomed to being de facto ruler of the island, and the Native Government. Anderson, the investigating officer, considered that the island's government would remain powerless unless constantly supported by a European officer.⁴⁷ At Abemama, too, the high chief retained considerable power despite attempts to overcome his influence by the appointment of senior members of the chiefly families to office in the Native Government.⁴⁸ On Marakei, Tarawa and Maiana no strong centralised chiefship had existed, and the influence of the former uea and their descendants posed little threat to the island governments after the turn of the century.

Although the unimane of the southern Gilbert Islands only seldom played a significant role in the Native Governments their influence in the social and political affairs of their islands remained considerable. Informal village and island councils continued to meet and to exercise some degree of indirect authority over both their fellow islanders and the Native Governments. Where dissension did occur it was generally the product of religious disputes. Protestant majorities on the islands from

46 L.C. to Sec. to Govt, 5 Dec. 1938, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 431, 13 Dec. 1938 - WPHC, F10/12/1.

47 District Annual Report, Northern Gilbert Islands, 1919, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 55, 24 March 1920 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1037/1920.

48 District Annual Report, Central and Southern Gilbert Islands, 1919, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 46, 6 March 1920 - *ibid.*, 714/1920.

Nonouti southwards, but excluding Tamana and Arorae which remained exclusively Protestant, continually tried to place obstacles in the way of the expansion of the Catholic faith. Pastors attempted to 'pack' the Kaubure with their own followers and religious issues frequently became a factor in decisions of the Native Courts.⁴⁹ In the light of such provocation, and not always because of it, it was hardly surprising that the priests and adherents of the S.H.M. also contributed their share to the dissension. At Nikunau, for example, after disputes between a priest and the Native Government in 1917 over exemptions from communal works, the former, with his adherents, retreated within his mission compound, and, with the aid of a loaded gun, prevented the entry of the local authorities. Strong protests were made by Bishop Leray, head of the S.H.M. in the Gilbert Islands, when Eliot removed the priest to Ocean Island, but were withdrawn after an investigation had been made.⁵⁰ The most spectacular, and probably most violent, expression of mission rivalries in the period 1909 to 1940 occurred at Onotoa in 1930. When the Native Magistrate, a Roman Catholic, warned the Protestant population that large collections for the L.M.S. would make it difficult for them to pay taxes, cries of religious persecution were raised. Quickly, the opposition assumed an hysterical air, developed in a Messianic movement and eventually exploded into violence resulting in two deaths. The timely arrival of the District Officer and the head of the L.M.S. in the Gilbert Islands brought peace, but not an end to inter-mission disputes.⁵¹

In the absence of regular shipping it was always difficult to maintain satisfactory supervision over local government in the Ellice Islands and, to make matters worse, the group was often without a District Officer. True, in the absence of the inter-village rivalries and religious intolerance that existed in the Gilberts, there was less need of supervision and the island

49 R.C. to H.C., no. 104, 3 July 1913 - *ibid.*, 1567/1913.

50 R.C. to H.C., no. 206, 9 Oct. 1917 - *ibid.*, 2953/1917.

51 Maude, 'The Swords of Gabriel', The Journal of Pacific History, II (1967), 113-36.

governments, although often operating outside the limits prescribed by the Colony Government, generally functioned in a manner that satisfied a majority of the people who were ruled by them.

It was Smith-Rewse, as District Officer for the Ellice Islands from 1909 to 1915, who first exercised close supervision over the island governments, developed, after experimentation, a standardised house design (an indication as to the degree and nature of governmental control), and completed the consolidation of the population into a single village for each island.⁵² When all Island Funds were absorbed into Colony revenue in 1914, Smith-Rewse suggested that each island should open a savings account as a safeguard for the future.⁵³ Those accounts have steadily increased to the present day; some islands still have several thousand dollars invested overseas and in the Colony.

Between 1915 and 1931 no less than fourteen District Officers served in the Ellice Islands.⁵⁴ In the light of such a rapid turnover of staff, and continued transport difficulties, it is not surprising that the island governments remained, for the most part, unsupervised. Samoan remained the language of the church and of government until it was replaced by Ellice with the appointment of Kennedy in 1931. Most members of the Native Governments also held offices in the church. Gradually the island governments emerged as a blend of indigenous and alien institutions. Where, formerly, the office of high chief and subsidiary chief had alternated between the heads of the two most important families, now the offices of Native Magistrate and Chief of Kaupuli were similarly rotated. The island governments were often placed in a dilemma, however, when custom came into conflict with the law. In former times, the high chiefs had periodically prohibited access to specific land plots or reef islets in order to ensure the preservation of certain

52 District Annual Report, Ellice Islands, 1912, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 65, 6 May 1914 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1442/1914.

53 District Annual Report, Ellice Islands, 1921-2, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 197, 17 Nov. 1922 - *ibid.*, 3510/1922.

54 District Annual Report, Ellice Islands, 1935, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 291, 12 Sept. 1936 - *ibid.*, 744/1936.

crops and to protect rare fish. This role was assumed by the Native Governments but without legal powers of enforcement. Again, with communal fishing expeditions, the breaking of a canoe-line, or disturbing fish, would have resulted in the destruction of an offender's canoe - a punishment that the Government would not sanction.⁵⁵

Two main causes lay behind the problems faced by the Native Governments in the Ellice Islands. Firstly, almost all legislation was drafted with the Gilbert Islands in mind. The peculiar problems of the small and remote Ellice Islands received no special legislative recognition in the period prior to the Second World War and, in the absence of adequate information, were seldom considered in the Resident Commissioner's office. Secondly, Colony legislation represented a constant pressure towards conformity and, consequently, traditional sources of power within the island communities suffered. Although the Government did not always seek to undermine or replace traditional laws or values, its policies had that effect when the island governments were denied the legal authority to enforce customary sanctions within their communities.

There were periodic attempts to curb the influence of the L.M.S. in the Ellice Islands and to limit financial contributions to the mission. The church in the group remained under the control of the Samoan committee throughout the period - a source of resentment among many Ellice Islanders.⁵⁶ Donations for L.M.S. work in the Samoan District of the mission were collected during visits of the John Williams, but the islanders received little in return compared with their financial contributions. In addition to the contributions which went to Samoa, the islanders were obliged to pay salaries ranging up to £500 to all pastors and teachers on their islands as well as providing food and housing. As in Samoa and like protestant missionaries and pastors throughout the Pacific the representatives of the L.M.S. showed few scruples in their

55 *ibid.*

56 See, for example, the report on representations made to the Resident Commissioner by the deacons of the L.M.S. church in the Ellice Islands, R.C. to H.C., no. 104, 1 April 1938 - *ibid.*, 3031/1937.

promotion and exploitation of personal, village and island rivalries in the collection of donations. All contributions were made publicly and the amount given, together with the donor's cumulative total for the year, were announced at weekly meetings.⁵⁷

When political troubles did arise in the Ellice Islands they were usually centred on the young men. Whether the cause lay in a reaction to mission control, the inevitable rebellion of youth, or new ideas introduced by repatriated labourers, it is difficult to say. Traditionally, the young men of each island had belonged to a club, known as the kau taka, which was divided into two rival groups, each of which had a special house and was led by an older man who acted as spokesman. The kau taka went into decline with the arrival of pastors who attempted to focus all social activities on the church. From about 1915, however, there was a re-emergence of young men's clubs, known as aumaga (a Samoan term) throughout the group. The aumaga were generally beyond the control of the island authorities and, on occasion, usurped the role of police and enjoyed sufficient power to determine which regulations should be obeyed and which not.⁵⁹

By 1928 the island regulations made by the various Native Governments under the 1917 Ordinance showed such diversity in both their scope and the range of penalties they carried, that Grimble, as Resident Commissioner, decided to issue a uniform set of regulations for all islands of both groups.⁶⁰ Again, the desire for administrative conformity was the determining factor. It is also of interest that where, in the past, the mission-inspired, petty and authoritarian regulations had been passed by the island governments

57 R.C. to H.C., Confidential, 4 March 1919 - *ibid.*, 1042/1919; no T/C/1, 17 Nov. 1922 - *ibid.*, 3260/1922.

58 R.C. to H.C., no. T/C/4, 20 Nov. 1922 - *ibid.*, 3263/1922.

59 District Annual Report, Ellice Islands, 1915-16, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 1, 1 Jan. 1917 - *ibid.*, 318/1917; Lenwood (L.M.S.) to R.C., 19 Nov. 1915, enclosed in R.C. to Foreign Secretary (L.M.S.) 22 Dec. 1915 - LMS, South Seas, Letters; D.O., E.I.D. to R.C., no. 90, 28 Sept. 1935, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 330, 9 Dec. 1935 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 68/1936.

60 R.C. to H.C., no. 40, 18 Feb. 1928 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 939/1928.

now they were to be included in a consolidated code issued from the Resident Commissioner's office at Ocean Island. There is no evidence to show that the Native Governments were consulted in any way, but, significantly, when the Regulations for the Good Order and Cleanliness of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were published in 1930 it was stated that they had been 'made by the Native Magistrates and Kaubure of the Colony and approved by District Officers on behalf of the Resident Commissioner'.⁶¹

Some of the regulations were concerned with traditional practices for which standards of behaviour were clearly defined and established in the minds of all concerned and which, if broken, would have provoked community action. Bubuti (Gilbertese) and fakamolemole (Ellice), or the soliciting of goods and services, were forbidden but it is doubtful, judging from their incidence at the present time, whether the practice was curbed or the regulation enforced. A request in these terms has always implied a definite reciprocal obligation; if appropriate returns are not made, future requests may be denied. The obligations involved in adoption, a common practice in both groups, were stated when, again, customary safeguards still applied. The upbringing of children and the care of aged parents, adoptive parents, dogs, pigs and fowls were also the subjects of regulations. Feasts to celebrate marriages, births, deaths, betrothals and puberty could only be held with the permission of a Kaubure. 'Competitive' feasts, and public feasts for strangers or visitors, were forbidden. Dancing was permitted only on Wednesdays, Saturdays and public holidays between the hours of 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. All males attending dances were to carry lamps; no child could attend. 'Shameful gestures and movements of the body' in dancing, magic rituals and 'unclean games' were all prohibited. Private dancing practice, with a maximum of four participants, was permitted only on Mondays and Thursdays between the hours of 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Most families in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands had a 'sleeping house', where social activities also took place, an 'eating house' and a cooking house. Eating in a sleeping house,

61 GEIC, Regulations for the Good Order and Cleanliness of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, 1930.

or sleeping in an eating house, earned a fine of 1s. to 10s. All houses were to be inspected weekly by the Kaubure. Passing the pipe and permitting children to smoke were also offences under the new code. Except when special permission had been obtained from a Kaubure, all persons were to be within their villages by sunset, and within their houses by 9 p.m. when a curfew conch was to be sounded. Sea-going canoes were to be inspected annually, and canoe-fishing or sailing, except within a lagoon was prohibited during the westerly season from November to March - an obvious hardship for the inhabitants of the reef islands.

From the time that the Protectorate was first established, compulsory adult labour for two to four days a week had been used for the maintenance of public roads and buildings. In the 1930 Regulations, labour obligations were standardised. All able-bodied persons aged between sixteen and sixty years could be required to work for a maximum of fifty-two days per year. Government and some mission personnel, and those in wage employment were exempt. In addition all landowners were obliged to work on their lands on Fridays, and for the months from October to March, for a further day each week to clear and replant unproductive lands.

Such law codes were by no means new or unusual in the Pacific. In the first half of the 19th century, for example, the Society Islands and the Cook Islands had been classic examples of paternalistic mission rule and later in the century Fiji, as well as the Gilbert and Ellice groups, had seen similar developments. In all cases the acceptance of Christianity by island or regional leaders had been followed by the introduction of detailed law codes drafted by mission personnel. In many territories colonial officials adopted or adapted 'existing law' - that is, traditional law as it had been modified or enlarged as a response to mission teaching - as a first step towards the creation of a new administrative and legal structure. And in Samoa mission-type laws had been codified and widely enforced during the Steinberger era, before the establishment of formal colonial rule.

Elsewhere in the Pacific such law codes were generally modified or replaced as the administration had developed, but this had not occurred in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands to any marked extent. In such small communities twenty years of mission domination

prior to the arrival of the British administration had engrained certain principles of behaviour in the minds of the community leaders. If the impoverished and understaffed administration was to exercise any significant control, therefore, it would be obliged, to a large degree, to work within a similar framework. In practice, and partly by choice, the paternalistic administration of Campbell and Murdoch was little different from that of the missions, and their successors, like Arthur Grimble, were, in some ways, forced to continue in a similar manner. It is also significant that by 1930 Grimble had been in the Colony's service for some sixteen years without the broadening experience of working in a different territory. His 1930 Regulations, therefore, may be seen to illustrate the degree to which the Government, by inclination or by necessity, had adopted the form of paternalistic control first introduced by the pastors of the L.M.S.

From the time of Grimble's departure from the Colony in 1933, a younger generation of administrative officers sought to relieve the islanders and their governments from such close and overbearing supervision. H.E. Maude, P.D. Macdonald and Kennedy, in particular, argued that it was undesirable to have regulations that were not enforced and were not enforceable.

In the matter of incest, for example, Grimble maintained that customary law in the Gilbert Islands had become decayed and forgotten. In 1929 he instructed District Officers to interpret incest in the Native Laws as it was defined in English law and to ensure that this strictly limited interpretation was adopted by the Native Courts.⁶² Maude took a different view. Only the insistence on clan exogamy had decayed, he argued. The old Gilbertese prohibitions regarding the marriage of persons who could 'trace a common ancestor, either by blood or adoption, up to and including the third generation' still applied; exceptions were always made for the chiefly families of the northern Gilbert Islands.⁶³ Similar confusion had arisen over the divorce laws. Both were amended by the Native Governments Ordinance of 1941.

62 GEIC, Instructions and Hints to District Officers, Deputy Commissioners, and Sub-Accountants (Grimble and Clarke), 1929, 5.

63 L.C. to Sec. to Govt., 5 Dec. 1938, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 431, 13 Dec. 1938. - WPHC, F10/12/1.

In practice, the more oppressive of Grimble's regulations were honoured in the breach rather than in the observance, especially in the absence of a District Officer. Despite constant representations made by the District Officers on behalf of the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders, no move was made to liberalise the regulations until 1936. Action was precipitated when Maude, giving expression to the frustration he shared with other junior officers, sent copies of the Regulations to Miss Camilla Wedgwood, an anthropologist who had worked in Nauru in the early 1930s. She, in turn, sent them to her father, Josiah Wedgwood, an opposition Member in the House of Commons.⁶⁴ That 'truculent upholder of the Individuals Right to Live', as he was later designated by the Resident Commissioner, took the Regulations to the Secretary of State and threatened to table them for debate in the House of Commons unless immediate and substantial revisions were made.⁶⁵

Ironically, it was Maude, as Lands Commissioner, who was given the task of touring the Gilbert Islands with a view to drawing up a new code. The resulting Islands Regulations (1939) for the Gilbert Islands contained a basic set of regulations for all islands of the group and special regulations requested by the governments of particular islands. Offensive regulations were removed; for example, those concerning canoes, feasts, games, uses of eating and sleeping houses and smoking. The bubuti regulation was withdrawn and it was simply stated that all adoptions were to be in accordance with custom and were to be registered before the Native Court. Most of the special regulations placed seasonal restrictions on particular types of fishing.⁶⁶

In 1937 Kennedy, as District Officer for the Ellice Islands, forwarded a memorandum to the Resident Commissioner with a list of suggested amended regulations for the group. In particular, Kennedy pointed to the differences in social and political structure between the Gilbert and Ellice groups and the inapplicability of many of the

64 H.E. Maude, personal communication.

65 Barley to Barton (Acting H.C.), demi-official, 7 June 1936 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1407/1936.

66 GEIC, Gilbert Islands, Island Regulations, 1939.

regulations to the smaller communities of the Ellice Islands. He emphasised that in his District all the inhabitants of an island lived, for the most part of the year, in a single village, were mostly related in some way, had shared the same schools and were all adherents of the Protestant faith. Restrictions on inter-island travelling had only served to reinforce this position. Regulations concerning canoes, fishing, feasts, games and dancing were not generally enforced, Kennedy reported, and if they had been, would have been regarded as intolerably oppressive.⁶⁷ No immediate action was taken, however, and it was not until 1947 that revised Island Regulations for the Ellice Islands were published.⁶⁸

Kennedy also noted that there was a degree of political instability on many of the Ellice Islands as the result of a survival of factionalism. He pointed out that because of a lack of intimate knowledge of the island communities, District Officers had been forced to rely on 'public opinion', in so far as it could be determined by an outsider, in making appointments. A shift in that opinion could easily leave the Magistrate with the support of only a minority of the population.⁶⁹

The solution, Kennedy argued, lay in a corps of magistrates, graduates of the Ellice Islands School, who could be coached in law and court procedure and appointed Native Magistrates after a further training period as Scribes to Native Governments.⁷⁰ In effect, Kennedy wished to place the judicial branch of local government under an independent magistrate and to leave political and social affairs to the Native Governments led by the Chief of Kaupuli. Although Barley, the Resident Commissioner, supported proposals to separate magisterial powers from the general business of the island

67 D.O., E.I.D. to R.C., no. 26, 3 April 1937, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 232, 13 Sept. 1937 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1407/1936.

68 GEIC, Ellice Islands, Island Regulations, 1947.

69 District Annual Report, Ellice Islands, 1931-2, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 171, 18 April 1933 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 855/1933.

70 'Memorandum on Native Magistrates in the Ellice Islands', enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 272, 8 June 1934 - *ibid.*, 1653/1933.

governments, he dismissed Kennedy's scheme as unrealistic and premature on the grounds that young magistrates would not be able to command the required respect on their islands.⁷¹ By 1935, however, two such men, trained by Kennedy, had been appointed as Scribes to Native Governments in the Ellice Islands.⁷²

The debate over the degree to which powers could or should be separated in the island governments continued until 1938. Barley, for example, considered it essential, before progress could be made, to break down the beliefs that the Magistrate was the agent of the Colony Government and that the Native Governments were not responsive or responsible to the people. He believed that the problem would best be solved by a separation of powers within the island governments - the position laid down in the 1917 Ordinance - and increased local participation in the selection of their members.⁷³

Barley had support from some of his District Officers, but eventually the views of Maude, chief drafter of the new ordinance, were accepted. Maude argued that the Native Magistrate was recognised by all as the head of the Native Government and that any attempt to separate executive and judicial functions would cause undue confusion. Maude, with his colleagues, was particularly concerned with reform to create island governments whose members were representative of those with whom power really lay - the old men. On the northern islands, the high chiefs would again be granted a place, albeit an essentially ceremonial one, in the island governments. The Native Magistrate would be recognised as head of the Island Council, Island Court and Lands Court, while the Kaubure would be elected by both men and women who had reached

71 R.C. to H.C., no. 272, 8 June 1934 - *ibid.*

72 District Annual Report, Ellice Islands, 1935, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 291 - *ibid.*, 744/1936.

73 Minutes of discussion between the High Commissioner and the Resident Commissioner, Suva, 6-7 June 1938, enclosed in H.C. to R.C., no. 220, 28 July 1938 - WPHC, F10/12/1.

thirty years of age.⁷⁴ A Native Government Ordinance which incorporated these recommendations was promulgated in 1941 but not introduced until seven years later.

The 1941 Ordinance also provided for the creation of Land Courts which, it was hoped, would enable the settlement of some 76,000 pending land disputes⁷⁵ - a source of concern to both islanders and administrators. When Protectorates were established in 1892, land was considered to be 'frozen', that is, title was regarded as being held by the person in possession at that time. Campbell, for taxation purposes, established a lands register on each island. Partly because of uncertainty of tenure and confusion arising from recent civil wars, and partly because of the extremely litigious nature of the Gilbertese where land is concerned, the number of disputed titles multiplied. The registers were altered by local and European officials alike and decisions made in the more pressing cases by Government officers who had little or no knowledge of customs concerning the ownership and transfer of land.⁷⁶ The 1917 Ordinance gave the Native Governments power to arbitrate in land disputes but few took more than informal action. A Lands Commission was established in 1918, with Grimble as Lands Commissioner, but a shortage of staff (the Colony seldom had a full establishment) and funds, saw only spasmodic activity until the 1930s when Maude and Kennedy, for the Gilbert and Ellice groups respectively, began to approach the problem systematically.⁷⁷

The first full Colony census, conducted in 1931, the recurrence of drought and the work of the Lands Commission produced an awareness

74 'Memorandum for a Conference of Administrative Officers', Tarawa, Nov. 1938, enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 424, 12 Dec. 1938 - *ibid.*

75 Maude, 'The Colonization of the Phoenix Islands', in Of Islands and Men, 320.

76 District Annual Report, Tarawa, Abaiang and Marakei, 1916 (Grimble), enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 57, 21 Feb. 1917 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1027/1917; Memorandum on 'The Settlement of Land Disputes by Administrative Officers' (Maude), enclosed in R.C. to H.C., Confidential, 16 Nov. 1937 - *ibid.*, 4005/1937.

77 *ibid.*, 'Report of the Ellice Islands Lands Commission, 1936', enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 147, 31 May 1937 - *ibid.*, 2150/1937.

of population pressure in the Colony. Maude, as Lands Commissioner, argued that the Government and the missions were largely responsible for the problem. Both expected significant financial contributions for their coffers from the islanders and thus the portion of coconut production that could be used for food was reduced. In the 1930s, moreover, copra prices were depressed and the net income of the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders decreased accordingly. At the same time, traditional checks on population control - abortion, infanticide and compulsory emigration - were frowned upon by the missions and later made illegal by the Government. It was therefore the responsibility of the Government, Maude argued, to provide a solution. The solution that Maude himself favoured was resettlement.⁷⁸ His view of overpopulation was to be disputed a decade later, but in 1938 proposals to resettle Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders on Sydney, Hull and Gardner Islands in the Phoenix group were approved and finance was provided under the Colonial Development Scheme. Before administrative staff were withdrawn from the Colony at the outbreak of the Pacific War, more than 700 persons had emigrated to the Phoenix Islands.⁷⁹

78 See the documents published in GEIC, Report ... on the Colonization of the Phoenix Islands by the surplus population of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (Maude), 1938.

79 Maude, 'The Colonization of the Phoenix Islands', 340.

PART III

NEW POLICIES IN THE POST-WAR WORLD

CHAPTER 5

POLICY REAPPRAISALS

Colonisation by metropolitan powers in the Pacific during the last two decades of the 19th century was both a part and the product of the policies that led to European expansion in Africa. Laissez-faire policies had proved inadequate to ensure the supply of tropical products or safe markets for manufactured goods. Moreover, the demand for raw materials, a necessary prerequisite for the industrialisation of Europe, had, during the 19th century, intensified international rivalries. Although the advantages to be gained from the acquisition of particular areas of the African continent were often unknown or ill-defined no European power with large overseas commercial interests was prepared to exclude itself from possible future benefits. Germany, in particular, from the early 1880s, sought the prestige that overseas possessions bestowed but usually extended control only to areas where German trading interests had been firmly established.¹

The settlement of British and German claims to parts of New Guinea in 1885 marked the beginning of a decade that was to see the rapid expansion of colonial rule in the Pacific. Germany consolidated its interests in the Solomons, Marshalls and Carolines. France, which had annexed Tahiti in 1880, extended her dominion to Wallis and Futuna in 1887 and, within a few years, to other islands in the Austral and Society groups. This expansion can partly be explained in terms of commercial motives, a desire to protect the trading interests of nationals and the acceptance by metropolitan powers of an obligation to minimise conflict within expatriate communities, or between those communities and indigenous populations. But a belief in the inherent value of empire was, for France and Germany, at least as important. Britain was less eager at this stage to extend her empire.

1 Admiralty, Pacific Islands, I, 318-22; Astor (ed.), The Colonial Problem, 17-21; Hailey, The Future of Colonial Peoples, 8-11; Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians: the official mind of Imperialism, *passim*.

Humanitarian interests in general, and mission societies in particular, were strong in their advocacy of formal British rule in the Pacific; but, in the absence of significant economic or strategic benefits, the British Government was unwilling to act. In the final analysis it was international pressure, disorder in the island communities and commercial rivalries that prompted the declaration of protectorates but not of sovereignty over the Tokelau, Cook, Solomon, Gilbert and Ellice groups between 1889 and 1899.² From the outset, then, Britain's conception of her role in the Pacific was extremely limited - the provision of law and order, preferably without the incurrence of costs.

A belief that colonies³ should be self-supporting was one of the most important principles underlying British colonial policy before the Second World War. It was further believed that private rather than public investment should stimulate economic development and that this, in turn, would generate demand, and finance, for the provision of social services. In practice, however, few profited from such investment apart from metropolitan companies and their shareholders. On occasions government investment was used to stimulate economic development for the benefit, direct or indirect, of the colonial power. Many of West Africa's major railway projects in the early 20th century, for example, served, at the expense of the people of the colonies, the interests of large mining companies.

While Joseph Chamberlain's belief in Britain's destiny as a great governing power may have had its appeal, there always remained strong economic arguments in support of colonial possessions. Despite the declarations of the sacred trust of empire and the paramountcy of 'native interests' which became common in the 1920s, the 'dual mandate' remained largely the language of politicians and philosophers. In practice, it was economics rather than the Crown that preserved the unity of the Empire. Territories which could not contribute economically tended to be neglected. Smaller colonies,

2 Admiralty, Pacific Islands, I, 322-9; Morrell, Britain in the Pacific Islands, 187-360.

3 In the discussion that follows the term colonies has been used in a general sense to describe overseas dependencies including protectorates and mandated territories.

therefore, usually rested on a shaky financial base. Their revenue was derived mainly from customs duties and simple forms of local taxation. Salaries and administrative costs, especially in the scattered island groups of the Pacific, dominated expenditure columns and thus little was left to finance social development.⁴

In 1892 Britain had assumed responsibility for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands only with extreme reluctance. Because of the parsimonious attitude taken by the Colonial Office, and for reasons of administrative convenience, the groups were treated as a single unit. When Ocean Island was annexed to safeguard the interests of the Pacific Islands Company that island was also placed under the Resident Commissioner's control. And the formation of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in 1915 represented little more than a tidying-up of British real estate holdings in the central Pacific.

Prior to 1900 the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate was an almost irrelevant appendage of Britain's colonial empire. It produced nothing of consequence, it was not of strategic importance, and most of the trade was in non-British hands. At first, the potential value of the phosphate on Ocean Island was not realised and no action was taken to provide for government representation on the island. Although the industry was expected to contribute to the revenue of the local administration for the twenty years that the phosphate was mined by a private company, the payments made were minimal in absolute terms. Whatever views local administrators may have had towards the disputes between the Company and the Banabans, pressure from the Colonial Office tended to favour the Company. In negotiations conducted in London the Secretary of State and Colonial Office officials seemed to seek the minimum for the landowners in terms of payments and standards of living that would free them from political criticism at home. There was no attempt, for example, to insist on either the Company or, later, the B.P.C., paying full commercial price for phosphate land. The reason is not difficult to find. In accordance with prevailing views on policy, colonies were expected to contribute in some way to the economic welfare of the metropolitan power.

4 See Dutt, The Crisis of Britain and the British Empire, 69-77; Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice, A comparative study of Burma and Netherlands India, 276-318.

The economic functions of empire, as they were present in the particular circumstances of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, became even clearer when the British Phosphate Commissioners commenced operations in 1920. The B.P.C. was formed with the explicit aim of exploiting the phosphates in the interests of the three partner governments. Because of high shipping costs the United Kingdom took only small tonnages for a few years, and then none at all, but continued to receive indirect benefits from the industry in the form of cheap and plentiful imports of agricultural products from Australia and New Zealand. In the years immediately prior to the Second World War the B.P.C. was exporting nearly 400,000 tons of phosphate annually from Ocean Island while contributing about £35,000 to Colony revenue.

At this time annual Colony expenditure averaged about £70,000 - or approximately £2 per head for the resident population - a clear indication of the limited scope of Government activity. 'Government' was essentially the supervision of local government, or 'Native Administration' as it was called. The role of government officers was to keep the peace and rectify injustice, ensure the collection of taxation and provide a few basic services. Because of the smallness of the Colony, and its peculiar geography, the civil service was large in proportion to the population.

Although the Colony Government operated within the general framework of policy laid down in London, that policy was, essentially, undefined. Administrators became aware of changes in British policy only through decisions given on particular issues supplemented by an occasional circular despatch. Often, too, those decisions depended not on the overall approach taken by any government in London but on the attitudes of the person(s) in the Colonial Office handling the Colony's affairs. Unless they directly affected the Colony, copies of Parliamentary Debates or Command Papers - even those like the 1923 White Paper on Kenya which have come to be regarded as milestones in the development of colonial policy⁵ - were not sent to administrative officers in the Colony.

5 'Indians in Kenya' - Cmd 1922 (1923).

The Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony was, and has remained, responsible to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. When matters were referred to the High Commissioner's office, however, problems tended to be approached on an ad hoc basis without any serious attempt being made to ensure that decisions were either consistent or co-ordinated. And those decisions were often made with little regard for conditions in the Colony of which the High Commissioner was, at best, ill-informed. In the half-century prior to the Second World War only Thurston (1893), im Thurn (1906) and Fletcher (1931) visited the Colony. Further, the position of the High Commissioner was, until 1952, a part-time job as the office was conjoint with those of Governor of Fiji and Consul-General for the Western Pacific. Thus there was little time for Western Pacific affairs, resulting in de facto decision-making power resting, for the most part, with the Secretary to the High Commissioner.

In the years immediately preceding the Second World War initiative shown by some officers led to attempts to modify and up-date government activity in the Colony. Co-operative societies were formed, people were resettled in the Phoenix Islands and local government policy was substantially revised. But it was the hiatus in administration caused by the war, the withdrawal of administrative staff for three years, and occupation by Japanese and, later, American troops, that enabled and, indeed, forced a comprehensive reappraisal of policy for the Colony. This reappraisal, made by Colony and High Commission staff (some of whom had served in the Colony), combined with a far-reaching revision of British colonial policy during the war years, produced radical changes in the Colony and led to the introduction of its people into the modern world.

Depressed prices for tropical products during the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s represented a severe blow to the economies of many colonies. Wages were reduced and there was a marked increase in unemployment amongst people who could no longer fall back on the relative security of rural life. Discontent in the West Indies, expressed in disturbances in urban slums and depressed rural areas, forced politicians and the public alike to reconsider the validity of existing policies especially so far as the relationship between Britain and its colonies was concerned.

The re-thinking process that took place in government circles between 1935 and 1945 was both stimulated and guided by increased discussion of colonial problems in the press and in academic journals and institutions, and by the publication of several books on the administration of dependencies from both the policy and practical points of view. There were seminars and conferences, especially at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, on colonial affairs attended by people of the influence and standing of Lord Olivier, a former Governor of Jamaica and chairman of the 1930 Royal Commission on the West Indies sugar industry, Lord Hailey and Margery Perham. Articles on topical issues, as well as on policy generally, appeared in the Times, the Manchester Guardian and the New Statesman. Most importantly, there was a close liaison between government officials and academics engaged in research into colonial affairs.

A study sponsored by the Royal Institute of International Affairs on The Colonial Problem,⁶ published in 1937, was followed a year later by the monumental African Survey written under the directorship of Lord Hailey. Hailey then wrote Britain and Her Dependencies (1943) and for a decade or more vigorously promoted the need for new policies. Even earlier, W.M. Macmillan, a prominent Fabian and former Professor of History at the University of the Witwatersrand, had written on the problems of South Africa⁷ and, in 1936, drew attention to the plight of the people of the West Indies. His work, appropriately entitled Warning from the West Indies was published just prior to the disturbances that led to the appointment of the Royal Commission on West Indian affairs under the chairmanship of Lord Moyne and, ultimately, to the Colonial Development and Welfare Act.

When the Moyne Commission reported to the Government in 1940 it was already accepted that drastic changes would need to be made to Britain's colonial policy. There was sufficient unrest in the more politically advanced areas of the Empire to suggest that economic

6 Astor (ed.), The Colonial Problem.

7 See Macmillan, The Cape Colour Question (1927), Bantu, Boer and Britain (1929); Complex South Africa (1930). See also Africa Emergent (1938).

development did not necessarily lead to widespread 'spin-off' benefits for the populace at large or social development. It was accepted that financial aid was essential if the welfare of colonial peoples was to be safeguarded and, as a corollary, that the United Kingdom would be required to take a positive approach to the problem and provide the bulk of the finance.

In its report the Commission strongly recommended that £1,000,000 be provided annually, for use in the British West Indies, for a period of twenty years 'to finance schemes for the general improvement of education, the health services, housing and slum clearance, the creation of labour departments, the promotion of social welfare facilities, and land settlement'.⁸ These proposals were broadened into the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme announced in a White Paper in February 1940.⁹

The resultant Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 marks, perhaps, the most important turning-point in British colonial policy in the 20th century. For the first time the United Kingdom Government abandoned the principle that colonies should be self-supporting and expressed, in practical terms, a willingness to provide aid to its colonies without expecting benefits in return. The 1929 Colonial Development Act, for example, had been intended 'to promote commerce with, or industry in, the United Kingdom'.¹⁰ Under this Act funds had usually been made available only for capital works with the colonies being expected to meet all recurrent costs. The range of projects which had been eligible for funding under the scheme had been extremely limited. Technical education, for example, could be financed but not broader educational programmes. There were exceptions to these general conditions but the Act was designed and administered as part of a wider attempt to overcome economic problems in Britain. Under the Act, a maximum of £1,000,000 per year had

8 'West Indies Royal Commission, 1938-9, Recommendations'
- Cmd 6174 (1940), 9.

9 'Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare'
- Cmd 6175 (1940).

10 *ibid.*, 6; see also 'The Colonial Empire (1939-1947)'
- Cmd 7167 (1947), 11-15.

been provided but by 1940 less than half of the allocated funds had been spent.¹¹

By contrast, £5,000,000 a year for ten years was provided under the 1940 Act with an additional £500,000 being made available for research. Development was henceforth to be considered 'in the widest sense' and funds were to be made available for education and health services which had been excluded under the earlier scheme. The Act made no distinction between funds for capital or recurrent expenditure; grants were no longer to be restricted to capital projects which the colonies could maintain from their own resources; the colonies were no longer expected to pay their own way.

It should be noted that when the 1940 proposals were announced, and during the ensuing decade, there were few differences that could be discerned between the policies of the two major parties in the United Kingdom. Arthur Creech Jones, speaking for the Labour Party, gave his 'whole-hearted support' to the Colonial Development and Welfare Bill.¹² When, a few years later, Creech Jones, who was appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1946, introduced Bills establishing the Colonial Development Corporation (1947) and the Overseas Resources Development Bill (1948) Stanley, the Conservative spokesman, gave his party's support to both measures.¹³ Later, Creech Jones was to argue that the 1940 Act did little more than mark a change of principle and that it was because of the Labour Government in the years 1945 to 1951 that such impetus was given to changes in policy and increased expenditure in the post-war years.¹⁴ Such a view was inconsistent with his earlier statements and is not in accordance with the abundant evidence of an 'above party' approach to colonial affairs in Parliament throughout the 1940s.

11 'Statement of Policy ...' - Cmd 6175, 5.

12 G.B.P.D., CCCLXI (1939-40), 54

13 *ibid.*, CCCXXXIX (1946-7), 440; CCCXLVI (1947-8), 138.

14 Creech Jones, 'The Labour Party and Colonial Policy 1945-51', in Creech Jones (ed.), New Fabian Colonial Essays, 19-37.

The 1940s also introduced a new phase in the political evolution of the Empire. Representative institutions had, from the early 19th century, been regarded as the prerogative of colonies with large settler communities but the first stages in this process of constitutional development were not introduced in most other colonies until the last two decades before the Second World War. The rapid political advance that has taken place in British territories since the war is the product of several factors: many Africans travelled overseas for the first time as members of the armed forces and were thus introduced to new ideas and acquired new ambitions; the signing of the Atlantic Charter and the formation of the United Nations received wide publicity and made a considerable impact; discontent in the colonies arising from depressed economic and social conditions provided fertile soil for aspiring political leaders - many of whom were drawn from the newly-educated elites who had, perhaps, the greatest sense of grievance against the colonial administrations. Nor was Britain entirely impervious to the demands of nationalist groups. The rapid and generous response of the people in the colonies to the war effort made a considerable impact on public opinion in Britain. The colonies, many felt, had earned their freedom. Britain, as a colonial power recognised, albeit reluctantly at first, the strength of nationalist movements in the more advanced colonies and thereafter sought to keep political development attuned to local aspirations. The process of decolonisation was hastened by raised educational levels and by pressure in the United Nations for the 'liberation' of colonial peoples.

But colonial policy, whether concerned simply with methods of administration, or with the broader issues of political, social or economic development - and whether it is formulated or stated in response to commercial or other pressures, or as a response to a particular crisis - remains a nebulous thing, and it may be defined at a variety of levels. As policy is handed from one level down to the next, general principles are often lost from sight, confused, or modified as particular circumstances and personalities come into play. In the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, for example, the pronouncements of the Secretary of State have passed through the Colonial Office and the High Commissioner's

office before they reach the Resident Commissioner who has the responsibility for seeing that principles and decisions are put into practice. At a lower level again come the departmental officials who are responsible for routine administration but who often lack interest in, and knowledge of, policy matters. And where any form of control is devolved upon local governments the people directly involved at this level have even less interest in policy or principle but only a concern with the day to day affairs of their particular island. In practice, then, policy as it was defined in London has often been at variance with practice in the island communities. And in such a small remote territory, especially before the days of sophisticated methods of communication, the impact of a single dominant personality could be maximised; the influence of William Telfer Campbell, for example, still lingers in many of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

Planning for post-war reconstruction in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony began in the High Commissioner's office in mid-1943. Although all proposals were put forward in the light of stated policies regarding the development of colonies for ultimate self-government, the full implications of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act were not understood. The possibility of funding under the scheme for some projects was not ignored but the High Commissioner and his subordinates saw the Act as a means of financing reconstruction rather than a force that would revolutionise administration in the Colony. It was believed that the pre-war establishment had been excessive and could not be justified. Planning was oriented towards the provision of a minimum of services, the rapid localisation of the civil service, the devolution of all possible responsibility to the island governments and the removal of official supervision at local and central levels as early as possible.

In 1943 a proposal was put forward from the High Commissioner's office for the abolition of the Colony as a separate entity and its incorporation as a 'Native Territory' in the Colony of Fiji. It was argued that the maintenance of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony with a separate self-contained colonial administration had been wasteful of funds and manpower, especially where officers had been dependent on the vagaries of a few small vessels for transport.

It was proposed that in future only the minimum number of personnel, on secondment from Fiji, would actually be based in the Colony. Where possible the functions of government would be performed in Fiji. As an additional benefit, officials employed in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands would not have to spend a disproportionate amount of time preparing the reports and returns expected of all dependencies. The scheme was only briefly considered and then abandoned when the pride of the Gilbert and Ellice Islanders in their separate identity as a Colony, and the fact that the Colony obtained a significant portion of its revenue from the sale of postage stamps, were considered to outweigh possible gains in terms of administrative convenience. When detailed planning commenced late in 1943 the general views underlying the earlier proposals were preserved. There was, however, some initial uncertainty as to whether war damage and the discovery of alternative sources of phosphate would lead to the cessation of mining operations at Ocean Island. Sir Philip Mitchell, the High Commissioner, argued that even if mining were to be recommenced the Colony's administration should not rest on a financial base that would disappear within twenty years. Therefore, personnel and government services were to be pruned to the minimum. The Resident Commissioner and his staff would form a 'sea-borne administration' to prevent the pre-war loss of time and efficiency caused by haphazard shipping and the consequent inability of officers to tour their Districts. The Colony was not to have a full governmental structure - treasury and audit functions, for example, were to be performed in Fiji.

Two major inter-related principles underlay Mitchell's proposals. Firstly, he maintained, the Colony was too small, and its islands too scattered, for it to support a normal self-contained administration. The pre-war establishment of forty, he said, was far larger than could be justified in the Colony's circumstances. Secondly, he believed that the Colony's recurrent expenditure should be kept within the estimated recurrent revenue, that is, exclusive of revenue contributed directly or indirectly by the phosphate industry. Recurrent revenue was estimated at £20,000 per year. It was admitted, however, that expenditure could increase to £100,000 a year in the short term while training and 'nativisation' programmes were implemented. Mitchell believed that his proposals

embodied the only solution to the problem of slow but inevitable increase of expatriate personnel - an increase that resulted in little growth but made the Colony a continuing burden on the United Kingdom Treasury.

In a memorandum published in October 1944 Mitchell put forward the four cardinal principles that were to form the basis of post-war administrative policy:

- (i) The Colony is to be regarded as a "native territory"; its inhabitants are now discharging a wide variety of administrative and technical functions and are assumed to be capable of being taught all the others which their society requires, given the necessary time, educational facilities and genuine determination to do so.
- (ii) No European or other officer is to be engaged for any post in the islands until it has been conclusively shown that it is impossible to obtain or train an islander for it.
- (iii) The main preoccupation of the administration must be to train the islanders to discharge all necessary functions for themselves.
- (iv) Such European staff (other than members of the Colonial Administrative and other Services posted to the Colony) as it is inevitable to employ in the meantime should be engaged on short term secondment conditions so that it may readily make way for trained islanders as they become available.¹⁵

In June 1945 these principles were embodied in a detailed memorandum written by H.E. Maude, then First Assistant Secretary to the Western Pacific High Commission.¹⁶ Maude, like Mitchell, wished to see the Colony progress politically, but within carefully defined limits. Plans were made with the intention of interfering as little as possible with traditional ways of life. The functions of local government were to be broadened to the point where each island government would be virtually autonomous. To achieve such ends it was essential that expatriate administrative staff should be kept to a minimum and in this Maude was in full agreement with

15 WPHC, Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Policy and Administration after the War, 4 Oct. 1944.

16 WPHC, Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Memorandum on Post-War Reorganization and Administrative Policy, 6 June 1945.

Mitchell:

To one who has watched a gradual increase in the European Colony staff from 17 in 1928 to 40 in 1941, and the steady multiplying of Government Departments without an apparent commensurate growth in the efficiency of the administration, the new proposals have come as a welcome indication of what can be achieved in future if we possess the necessary will and determination. It is urged that the policy, as finally approved by His Excellency, should be applied inflexibly if the Colony is not to revert slowly and insensibly to its pre-war state, in which the salaries of the European staff absorbed such a large proportion of the revenue that little was left for the progress and development of the indigenous population. Convincing pleas will very probably be made from time to time for the re-introduction of the old top-heavy organization and for the multiplying of European officials ad infinitum: in each instance a plausible case can be made out on the grounds of increased efficiency, but it is essential, in my opinion, that it should none the less be rejected and that the opposite policy should be pursued of training natives to take over the various positions at present held by Europeans.¹⁷

The means by which principles were to be put into practice were spelled out in detail. The island governments which had been designed to operate under the close supervision of a District Officer were to be re-structured to allow for greater independence of action. Financial responsibility was to be devolved as early as possible, even if subventions from Government were needed for a few years. The Island Councils were to be given power to establish and maintain schools, clinics, sanitation services and wireless stations. It was crucial, Maude argued, that the islanders and their Councils should be allowed to operate on the assumption that all revenue raised locally should be available for local expenditure.¹⁸

Maude agreed with Grantham, Mitchell's successor, that a central administration, land-based, and larger than that envisaged by Mitchell, would be required to provide certain services and to co-ordinate the activities of the island governments. He did,

17. *ibid.*, 2-3.

18 *ibid.*, 3-5.

nevertheless, strongly recommend that the expatriate establishment should be pruned from the pre-war total of forty to a permanent staff of twenty-two, plus five temporary officers to be engaged in local government and lands settlement work.¹⁹ There were to be reductions in all departments, especially in the Treasury and Customs, Administration and Wireless Departments. In particular, Maude pointed to the difficulty in justifying an establishment of six in the Treasury, Customs and Post Office Department - one officer for each £14,400 of Government expenditure.²⁰

A central government headquarters was to be established at Abemama which was favoured because of its central location and the availability of land on the island. The lagoon entrance at Abemama was not as navigable as that at Tarawa but it was believed that it would be of adequate depth for any vessels likely to visit the Colony.²¹ Although the Resident Commissioner was to have an office at Abemama it was expected that he would spend at least six months in the year on tour so that his knowledge of the islands would be maximised and the paper work between the District Offices and the central administration accordingly reduced.²²

Most significantly, Maude recommended that a Council of Representatives should be established in the Colony as early as possible in order to pave the way for self-government. Such a Council would, he argued, complement local governments and would provide a forum for discussion on problems common to all islands while allowing a feeling of Colony unity to develop. The Council would begin as an advisory body and, as it gained experience and confidence, would then be granted constantly expanding legislative power.²³

19 *ibid.*, 6-7.

20 *ibid.*, 12.

21 *ibid.*, 30-32; See also Maude and Doran, 'The Precedence of Tarawa Atoll', Annals of the Association of American Geographers, LVI (1966), 287.

22 WPHC, Memorandum on Post-War Reorganization ... , 9.

23 *ibid.*, 35-8.

The dominant feature of the Mitchell-Maude proposals for the post-war administration of the Colony was the circumscribed role that was planned for the Government. In the short term the Government was seen as doing essentially what it had done before the war but more efficiently, more cheaply, and with less staff. But the proposals were not simply designed to recreate the past. A period of reconstruction was seen as necessary but the proposals also looked forward to the emergence of a self-governing territory; one that could support itself, educate a select few for posts in the civil service and finance the overseas education of an even more select few for top positions. The Colony would remain poor - that was accepted as inevitable - but when the phosphates were exhausted, it was thought within two decades, a self-sufficient nation would emerge - or so it was believed. The pre-war administration, with its top-heavy expatriate establishment, had lacked the consultative element that the Council of Representatives was to provide. And in the island communities themselves, close supervision had stultified initiative. Maude, in particular, with his faith in the abilities of the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders, believed that by bringing local people more within the orbit of government decision-making at all levels the natural dynamism of the indigenous societies would reassert itself and thus ensure the economic, social and political progress of the Colony.

In a sense Mitchell and Maude were attempting to apply a pre-war solution to a post-war problem. In their defence it should be noted that Mitchell held little first-hand knowledge of conditions in the Pacific and that administrators in the Western Pacific in 1944 and 1945 had only a limited conception of the impact that the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, the war and the United Nations were to have on post-war colonial policies.

In a sense, too, they were attempting to by-pass the paradox that has faced the administrators of almost all developing territories in the past thirty-five years. 'Policy' has demanded that colonies should 'develop', that their people should be provided with social services, and that they should progress towards self-government or independence. The more services that are provided, the higher the aspirations of the people become; political discontent and public disorder can easily be the products

of unfulfilled aspirations. By keeping the aspirations of the people at the lowest possible level it was hoped that although they would be poor, in that educational and wage employment opportunities would be limited, the people of the Colony would remain content.

Not only were the High Commissioner and his staff working largely in ignorance of the forces from outside the region that were to have the effect of stimulating development but they were also unaware of the scope of the problems, caused by the war, that would have to be faced in the Colony itself. When the administration was re-established at Tarawa in December 1943 it was found that the island governments had ceased to function, that few government buildings had survived the bombings and that large numbers of Gilbertese had been removed from their home islands to work for the Japanese forces. And the presence of several thousand American troops did not ease the task of the British administrators, especially as the latter were almost entirely dependent on the former for food, equipment and transport.

Within a week of the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Japanese forces had established a sea-plane base at Butaritari. Intermittent bombing raids on Tarawa and Ocean Island over the succeeding two months led to the withdrawal of most Europeans from the islands in February 1942. Later in the year twenty-two Europeans in the Gilbert group (mostly New Zealand coastwatchers) were captured and executed (most missionaries went unharmed) and, until the American landings at Butaritari and Tarawa, on 21 November 1943, the Gilbert Islands remained under Japanese control.²⁴

Although the Butaritari campaign was waged at relatively low cost, the seizure of Tarawa, because of heavy fortification, inadequate and unreliable intelligence, insufficient covering fire and difficult landing conditions, cost the lives of more than a thousand American Marines and Army personnel and some 4700 Japanese; not to mention the complete devastation of Betio islet in Tarawa

24 Crowl and Love, The United States Army in World War II: Seizure of the Gilberts, 60-156; see also Gillespie, Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-45: The Pacific, 229-37.

lagoon. Because of its strategic significance as a stepping-off point for campaigns further north, American troops remained in the Colony until the end of the Pacific war.²⁵

On most of the Gilbert Islands the Japanese troops had little impact. After the early capture of the coastwatchers only infrequent visits were made when, apart from providing propaganda for use in schools, collecting food supplies and destroying island government records, there was little interference with the islanders or their property. On Butaritari, Tarawa and Abemama, however, where garrisons were established, local government officials were freely appointed or deposed, with those in office being given responsibility for the organisation of labour gangs.²⁶ At Ocean Island crucial machinery was immobilised by departing B.P.C. employees but the Japanese succeeded in servicing one generator. Some Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders, and almost all of the Banabans, were removed to Tarawa and to the Marshall and Caroline Islands to work as labourers during the course of hostilities; only one of more than a hundred islanders who remained at Ocean Island survived a mass execution on the day following the announcement of Japan's capitulation.

American forces occupied the Ellice Islands from 1942 and substantial garrisons were maintained on Funafuti, Nanumea and Nukufetau. Thus, islands in both groups were subjected to prolonged American influence and many from islands not actually occupied travelled throughout the Colony, employed in the Labour Corps which provided manpower for both military and civilian reconstructions projects. The Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders were impressed with the evidence of a technologically advanced culture that was placed before them for the first time. The impact of men and machines who could have aircraft landing on a newly-constructed strip within a few days of occupation, for example, was considerable. Except at Ocean Island, the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders had

25 Crowl and Love, *ibid.*, Morison, History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II, VII, Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshalls, 185.

26 'Gilbert Islands District Report 1943-4', enclosed in D.O., G.I.D. to Sec. to Govt., no. 343, 20 Dec. 1945 - GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F3/1/3 (Central Archives).

previously had contact only with a small number of Europeans at any one time. The presence of several hundred Americans on some islands, with their apparently unlimited wealth, their generosity with army and personal property, and their willingness to mix more freely with the islanders than administrators or missionaries had been wont to do, made a profound impression. That impression was rendered even more favourable by the Americans' disparagement of things British and frequent references to Britain's 'poverty' (with the lack of facilities in the Colony as 'evidence').²⁷ Some islanders still state that the British deserted them when the Colony was about to be invaded, that the New Zealand coastwatchers remained and then surrendered to the Japanese to avoid reprisals upon the 'people', and that it was the Americans who, with their wealth and power, saved the Colony.

The war, and the American presence in particular, illustrated the superficiality with which many values and ideas had been accepted by the islanders. The much-vaunted loyalty to the Flag, for example, was seriously called into question on Butaritari and Tarawa when petitions calling for American rule were presented in the early months of 1944.²⁸ The rapidity with which the island governments slipped in status within their communities, resulting in a failure to enforce regulations and keep records, only served to emphasise the degree to which the system of local government depended not on the support of the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders but on the presence and authority of the District Officers.

In the first instance, difficulties of reconstruction undermined the principles of administration that had been laid down by Mitchell

27 *ibid.*

28 *ibid.* It is interesting to note that a petition was not presented at Abemama, the other Gilbert Island occupied by American troops. According to one informant the reason can be found in an incident that took place in mid-1944. In their usual manner the troops on the island had been generous with army equipment - beds, mattresses, mosquito nets, lamps, etc. When it was found that a visit was to be made by a senior officer the troops drove the length of the island collecting all goods of army origin from the houses of the Gilbertese. The equipment was then dumped on the reef-flat and burned after which the residue was bull-dozed into deep water.

in 1944. By 1946 the Colony's expatriate establishment had risen to fifty-four - an increase of fourteen on the 1940 level and double the number recommended by Maude in his Memorandum. With its administrative and revenue-collecting institutions in a disorganised state the Colony was even less viable than it had been in the pre-war period. The Colony became grant-aided. Estimates of revenue and expenditure were, as a consequence, subject to Treasury control resulting in a cheese-paring approach from London. The request from the recently elected Labour Government for 'Ten Year Plans of Development and Welfare', in 1946, did not in itself lead to any significant change in the Colony's planning priorities; rather, it suggested the means by which existing plans might be fulfilled.²⁹ The need for resettlement and for a new lands commission received top priority from Maude, then Resident Commissioner, and still the dominant figure in the formation of its policies.

A central feature of the Maude proposals of 1945 had been the creation of virtually autonomous local government units which, combined with the re-established co-operative societies, would give self-sufficiency at the island level. Maude had argued that the 1941 Native Governments Ordinance - not then in force - would have to be substantially re-written if these revised aims were to be achieved, and the close supervision hitherto exercised by District Officers accordingly reduced. In practice, it was found that strong central control was still required because of the post-war state of the Native Governments. The Ordinance was, therefore, introduced in its original form in 1948, but without adequate preparation and, consequently, with little chance of success.

Education continued to lag. In anticipation of the establishment of Colony headquarters at Abemama, a secondary school was started on the island late in 1945. Little progress was made, however, because the school had but a single qualified expatriate teacher, insufficient funds were available, and intake standards were low because of the war-time hiatus in education. In 1953

29 GEIC, Ten Year Plan of Reconstruction and Development and Welfare, 1946.

the school was transferred to Tarawa, the site of the new Colony headquarters.³⁰

The decision to establish the central government at Tarawa rather than at Abemama was made largely on the grounds of convenience. From 1943, because of the presence of the American military commander, the Resident Commissioner had resided at Tarawa. Doubts were also raised regarding the navigability of the lagoon entrance at Abemama. Despite the obvious advantages that the latter island had to offer, especially in terms of land availability, a passage-blasting exercise was not considered and the decision to establish headquarters at Tarawa was confirmed late in 1947.³¹

But the years from 1945 to 1951 were not entirely without their achievements. The Banabans, demoralised by their war-time experiences, were persuaded to move to Rabi Island (Fiji), which had been purchased from their reserves.³² The phosphate industry was re-established at Ocean Island and again provided revenue for the Colony, although an extended strike in 1948 resulted in the replacement of islanders in the labour force by Chinese and thus the Colony temporarily lost one of its major labour outlets.³³

No major commercial firm had re-entered the Colony after the war and, to fill the vacuum, a Government Trade Scheme was established to handle the export of copra (at a guaranteed price to the British Ministry of Food) and the import of consumer goods for the co-operative societies. The two-price system, for Europeans and islanders, that had operated before the war was thus finally eliminated.

30 GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1952 and 1953, 27.

31 Maude and Doran, 'The Precedence of Tarawa Atoll', 287-8; GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1948, 5.

32 WPHC, Memorandum on the Future of the Banaban Population of Ocean Island; with Special Reference to their Lands and Funds (Maude), 1946; Bedford, Resettlement: Solution to Economic and Social Problems in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (unpublished M.A. thesis, Auckland), 1967, Appendix Vb, xxxvi-xl.

33 GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1948, 4; 1949, 6.

With the appointment of Michael Bernacchi as Resident Commissioner in 1952 the nature of the Colony's administration, and the direction of its policies, underwent a significant change. Although his appointment approximately coincided with the separation of the positions of Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner, and the establishment of a separate Western Pacific High Commission office at Honiara in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, there was a re-assertion of the Colony's right to determine its own policies within the broad framework laid down by the Colonial Office in London. Within three years the Colony's budget had been conditionally released from Treasury control, and many hindrances to development, especially delays in the High Commissioner's office, had been removed. Within five years of Bernacchi's arrival a high school and a central hospital had been established on Tarawa, a start had been made on port development at Betio, the Native Governments Ordinance had been revised, some financial powers had been devolved upon the new Island Councils, conferences of Native Magistrates had been called, Island Regulations had been revised and the work of the Lands Commission, begun in 1946, had culminated in a definitive Lands Ordinance.³⁴

Bernacchi was an advocate of strong centralised control. During his administration new departments were established, and some existing departments expanded, but there was little room for initiative on the part of individual officers. A policy of centralisation was pursued with almost all decision-making power resting in the Resident Commissioner's office. At the local level the island governments operated under an ordinance that gave wide discretionary powers to District Officers. And the revised financial relationship between the central and local governments, under which few Island Councils could balance their budgets, involved subventions and, therefore, left effective power with the Government. Characteristically, there was strong emphasis on discipline within the civil service and within the community. Colony headquarters was carefully planned and maintained;

34 Subjects discussed in detail in later chapters have not been documented at this stage.

Bernacchi's insistence on tidiness on the government station, and his naval background, earned Bairiki, the Tarawa islet on which it was established, the sobriquet of 'The Flagship'.³⁵

Despite his personalised control, and the criticism that was later to be levelled at many of his policies and decisions, Bernacchi brought new vigour to a Colony that had been administered by eleven Resident Commissioners or Acting Resident Commissioners in the seven years since reoccupation. Bernacchi was well aware of the Colony's future economic problems and, like his predecessors, wished to keep Government expenditure within expected future revenue. To this end, surplus phosphate income was, from 1956, placed in the Revenue Equalisation Fund. It was intended to transfer as much as possible to the Fund during the life of the phosphates and thereafter to replace the lost revenue with interest from accumulated investments. The creation of the Fund coincided with a reduction in the number of new development projects and a consolidation of existing programmes.

The last three years of Bernacchi's administration, from 1958 to 1961, were later to be described as a period of stagnation but such a retrospective judgement does not make full allowance for the circumstances and policies of the time, many of which were beyond Bernacchi's control. Nor could he have anticipated the rapid increase in aid grants from the United Kingdom in the 1960s. It was not that Bernacchi was in any way opposed to economic and social development; he simply believed that, by 1958, the Colony had been provided with the maximum services which it could afford to support in the future. He hoped that after a decade or more spent in consolidation and training it would be possible to ensure a major withdrawal of expatriate staff coincident with the exhaustion of the phosphates. In accordance with this policy, the expatriate establishment was kept at a minimum, localisation policies were vigorously pursued, and the Colony Conference, the first representative body for both Gilbert and Ellice groups, met for the first time in 1956.

35 Less reverently, it was also referred to as 'God's Little Acre'.

The size and composition of the expatriate sector of the Colony's civil service is an excellent guide to the fluctuating priorities and varying policies of the Colony Government throughout the post-war period and also serves as a comment upon the methods as well as the scope of Government activity. Between 1946 and 1964 the overall expatriate establishment remained relatively stable at about fifty but there was a significant re-distribution of staff among departments. The number of personnel engaged in District Administration was halved, reflecting partly a declining need following reconstruction and partly the localisation of three senior positions. Positions in the Education Department rose from one to seven and from four to six in the Medical Department, while the numbers for other departments remained stable or were reduced.³⁶

Substantial revisions of policy followed the appointment of V.J. Andersen to succeed Bernacchi in 1962. There was a rapid expansion of social services, especially on Tarawa, and a consequent increase in the Public Works Department. In so far as it had a development policy, the Government's aim was to improve services as rapidly as possible using phosphate revenue and overseas aid. There was little attempt to investigate and exploit alternative sources of revenue; officials took the view that while the Colony remained dependent on an extractive industry, supplemented by copra production, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands would appear as a worthy recipient of aid. It was believed that alternative sources of revenue should be explored only when the phosphates were close to exhaustion. The 'piggy bank policy' (as it was unofficially called) of payments to the Revenue Equalisation Fund was abandoned on the grounds that maximum capital development should take place while finance was available and that, in any case, the interest from Fund investments would be insignificant compared with the Colony's overall budget.

Since 1968, however, there has been a marked change in policy largely as a result of the formation of the United Kingdom Ministry of Overseas Development. Where, previously, development and welfare programmes had meant little more than the provision of

36 See Table I.

TABLE I
NUMBERS OF EXPATRIATE OFFICERS IN DEPARTMENTS AND TOTAL EXPATRIATES
IN THE CIVIL SERVICE (selected years)

Department	1946	1952	1958	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
Agriculture	-	-	-	1	-	1	3	6	9	8
Audit	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Co-operatives	-	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	3
District Administration	13	12	9	5	6	4	4	6	5	6
Education	1	1	5	7	8	8	14	19	24	23
Information & Broadcasting	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Labour	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Lands Commission	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Legal & Judicial	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Marine	15	4	10	5	5	4	5	5	9	7
Medical	4	3	6	6	7	7	4	7	7	6
Police & Prisons	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	2
Posts & Telecomm.	3	4	3	5	6	5	4	6	6	7
Public Works & Stores	2	5	3	5	6	8	7	10	13	18
Res. Comm. & Secretariat	4	2	5	5	5	6	8	7	11	11
Treasury & Customs	6	8	6	4	3	3	3	4	4	4
Total Expatriates	54	45	50	48	52	52	58	78	99	103
Total Establishment*	203	298	590	634	672	700	801	830	883	931
Percentage of Expatriate Staff to Total Establishment	26.6	15.1	8.5	7.8	7.7	7.4	7.2	9.4	11.2	11.1

* Excluding officials of island governments.

Source: GEIC, Civil Lists.

social services, much stronger emphasis was now placed on the economic viability of the dependencies and the funding of schemes that would provide an economic return. The Colony's Agriculture and Co-operative Departments were accordingly expanded, new coconut subsidy schemes introduced, and greater emphasis placed on vocational and technical education.

The local government structure has been substantially revised and greater responsibilities given to the Island Councils in the past decade. The Island Courts Ordinance (1965) and the Local Government Ordinance (1966) introduced far-reaching changes into local government without, it should be noted, adequate preparation, education and planning at the local level. The introduction of fully elected island councils performing a wide range of functions was intended to complement constitutional developments at the centre. An Advisory Council succeeded the Colony Conference in 1962 to be replaced in 1966 by a House of Representatives and a Governing Council. In 1971 the Colony progressed to a 'Member' system of government with Legislative and Executive Councils as a prelude to ministerial government.

In almost all fields of development the Colony has lagged behind other British dependencies in post-war years. The reasons are complex (and will be discussed in detail below) but several important factors may be discerned. The geographical fragmentation of the Colony has always made co-ordination of government activity difficult and, in the absence of an efficient system for the dissemination of information, little progress has been made with overcoming parochialism or fostering a strong sense of Colony unity. Some degree of racial unity has emerged on Tarawa as a result of the growth of the civil service and political development but the loyalties of the majority of the populace seldom extend beyond family, village and island. Pre-war policies of limiting education, and constant policy revisions since that time, have precluded the growth of a significant educated middle class or urban elite. Because Government activity is centralised on Tarawa, that island has out-stripped all others (excluding Ocean Island) in all fields of development. And because of the Colony's paucity of resources there has been little incentive for local or expatriate entrepreneurs to establish private business concerns.

Most educated islanders have been, and are, therefore, employed by the Government; thus widespread political involvement has been effectively discouraged.

Nor has the structure of the Colony's civil service been modified to meet the changing demands made on it. During the Bernacchi era, the Secretariat (or Resident Commissioner's Office) was kept small and there were so few key personnel in the service that co-ordination was not difficult. But in the 1960s the Secretariat has retained effective decision-making power, even on minor issues, despite the growth of full departmental structures staffed by professionally qualified officers. The result has been delay, duplication, copious correspondence and little action. To overcome problems caused by the shortage of specialised knowledge in the Colony, experts have been brought in from overseas to advise on a wide range of subjects - education, agriculture, land reclamation, public health, for example. Their recommendations, usually based on a fleeting visit have frequently reflected an almost total lack of knowledge of local conditions. All too often their reports have not been carefully analysed with a view to adaptation and modification by Colony officers but the latter have on many occasions either ignored recommendations completely, or blindly implemented them - both courses of action that have done little to solve the Colony's problems.

CHAPTER 6FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

For more than fifty years the economy of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony has rested on a wasting asset. The amount that the phosphate industry could be made to contribute to Colony revenue, the use to which the funds so acquired could be put, and the means by which the phosphate revenue might be replaced in the future have been the determining factors in the Colony's financial and economic policies since the Second World War. The dramatic expansion of government services in the post-war years has been financed primarily by increased phosphate revenue and, to a lesser extent, by aid. Between 1939-40 and 1970 total government ordinary and extraordinary expenditure rose from \$4.50 to \$105 per capita, an increase of 2330 per cent.¹

In the period from 1949² to 1970 the Colony's total revenue rose from \$470,000 to \$5,268,000.³ The most significant contributing factor in this growth has been the increased export of phosphate together with a higher return per ton for the

1 GEIC, Estimates, 1941-2, 1971. All values in Part III have been converted to \$ Australian, the currency now in use in the Colony.

2 Because of the confusion caused by American occupation and post-war reconstruction the period from 1943 to 1949 has, for the most part, been excluded from this discussion.

3 See Table II.

TABLE II

MAIN SOURCES OF REVENUE AND TOTAL REVENUE, 1949-1970

(\$A'000)

Year	Import Duties	Export Duties	Phosphate Tax and Royalties	Colonial Development and Welfare	Other	Total
1949	28	225	95	25	97	470
1950	145*	190	98	24	156	613
1951	51	136	110	19	195	511
1952	52	233	276	42	121	724
1953	54	312	279	47	164	856
1954	85	405	294	27	229	1,040
1955	94	458	308	135	234	1,229
1956	55	231	397	84	145	912
1957	50	86	424	153	181	894
1958	102	227	521	385	159	1,394
1959	109	442	431	112	234	1,328
1960	120	464	698	76	206	1,564
1961	149	188	654	119	332	1,444
1962	138	272	637	180	483	1,710
1963	159	210	731	264	419	1,783
1964	228	196	733	185	472	1,814
1965	183	396	803	208	607	2,197
1966	348	271	1,036	212	842	2,709
1967	479	291	1,949	921	1,090	4,730
1968	571	260	1,917	753	951	4,452
1969	459	204	2,767	288	1,031	4,749
1970 ^o	620	208	2,400	983	1,057	5,268

Notes: * Increase due to the creation of The Wholesale Society and the consequent importation of consumer goods.

^o Revised Estimate.

Source: GEIC, Colony Annual Reports; Estimates.

Colony.⁴ Phosphates have provided an average in excess of 50 per cent of locally raised revenue and about 40 per cent of total revenue since the early 1950s. Of the peak years of percentage revenue from this source 1952, 1957 and 1961 represent the first full year in which a revised agreement was in force while from 1968 both production and revenue per ton were significantly increased.⁵

The relatively low return that the Colony has received from the phosphate industry serves to emphasise the difficulty of the position in which its administrators and politicians have been placed at the negotiations among the partner governments over the amount that the

4 See Table III. The main points of the post-war 'phosphate agreements' are as follows:

From November 1945 - Exemption from most custom duties, taxes and licence fees in return for: an annual sum of \$48,000; normal royalty of 6c. per ton plus a supplementary royalty of 13c. per ton.

From April 1951 - Exemptions as above in return for: an annual payment of \$80,000; a tax of 60c. per ton on all exports and a supplementary royalty of 39c. per ton on exports in excess of 212,500 tons per year.

From October 1954 - Exemptions as above in return for: an annual payment of \$80,000; a royalty of 60c. per ton on all exports and a supplementary royalty of 40c. per ton on exports in excess of 200,000 tons per year.

From May 1956 - Exemptions as above in return for a payment of \$1.40 per ton with exports not to exceed 310,000 tons per year.

From February 1960 - Exemptions as above in return for a payment of \$2.10 per ton with exports not to exceed 310,000 tons per year.

From February 1963 - Exemptions as above in return for a payment of \$2.30 per ton with exports not to exceed 310,000 tons per year.

From July 1966 - All taxes, duties and fees became payable and payments of \$3.51 per ton to be paid. Extraction was increased to 450,000 tons per year.

From July 1967 - Costs to be deducted from a notional f.o.b. price of \$11.00 per ton and the total proceeds to be divided between the Colony Government and the Banabans in a proportion to be fixed by Her Majesty's Government (in fact, 85:15). Extraction was increased to the 'maximum economic rate' (estimated at about 600,000 tons a year).

From July 1970 - As above, f.o.b. value raised to \$12.30.
Source: GEIC, Colony Annual Reports.

5 See Table II; Table IV; Figure IV.

TABLE III

QUANTITY AND VALUE OF EXPORTS, AND TOTAL VALUE OF IMPORTS, 1949-1969

Year	Copra		Phosphate		Other	Total Value of Exports (\$A)	Total Value of Imports (\$A)
	Quantity (tons)	Value (\$A)	Quantity (tons)	Value (\$A)			
1949	7,474	1,016,880	260,900	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1950	8,430	1,132,800	275,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1951	4,349	598,470	252,400	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1952	3,906	600,358	281,762	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1953	10,535	1,663,662	285,109	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,196,404
1954	6,737	1,264,436	294,207	1,029,724	n.a.	n.a.	1,564,026
1955	10,986	1,835,210	308,850	1,080,972	n.a.	n.a.	1,677,630
1956	6,177	936,300	297,150	1,059,042	n.a.	n.a.	2,428,816
1957	2,350	333,280	292,650	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,377,560
1958	7,590	1,055,674	323,550	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,144,398
1959	8,118	1,468,456	314,150	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,153,926
1960	10,455	1,657,896	320,100	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,044,192
1961	6,115	741,966	337,533	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,768,960
1962	8,940	1,090,232	256,409	1,201,294	n.a.	n.a.	3,060,568
1963	6,039	921,024	356,370	1,831,220	10,752	2,302,278	2,832,200
1964	5,442	775,332	325,350	1,610,948	19,536	2,771,780	3,247,756
1965	9,027	1,720,856	360,800	1,659,680	16,312	2,402,592	3,651,048
1966	8,973	1,227,063	375,400	3,078,280	17,614	3,398,150	2,694,568
1967	10,814	1,584,749	444,700	4,447,000	16,235	4,321,578	3,942,689
1968	5,090	972,152	523,450	5,575,050	167,599	6,199,348	4,133,369
1969	7,825	1,199,243	555,100	6,106,100	279,308	6,826,510	2,769,632
					690	7,306,033	

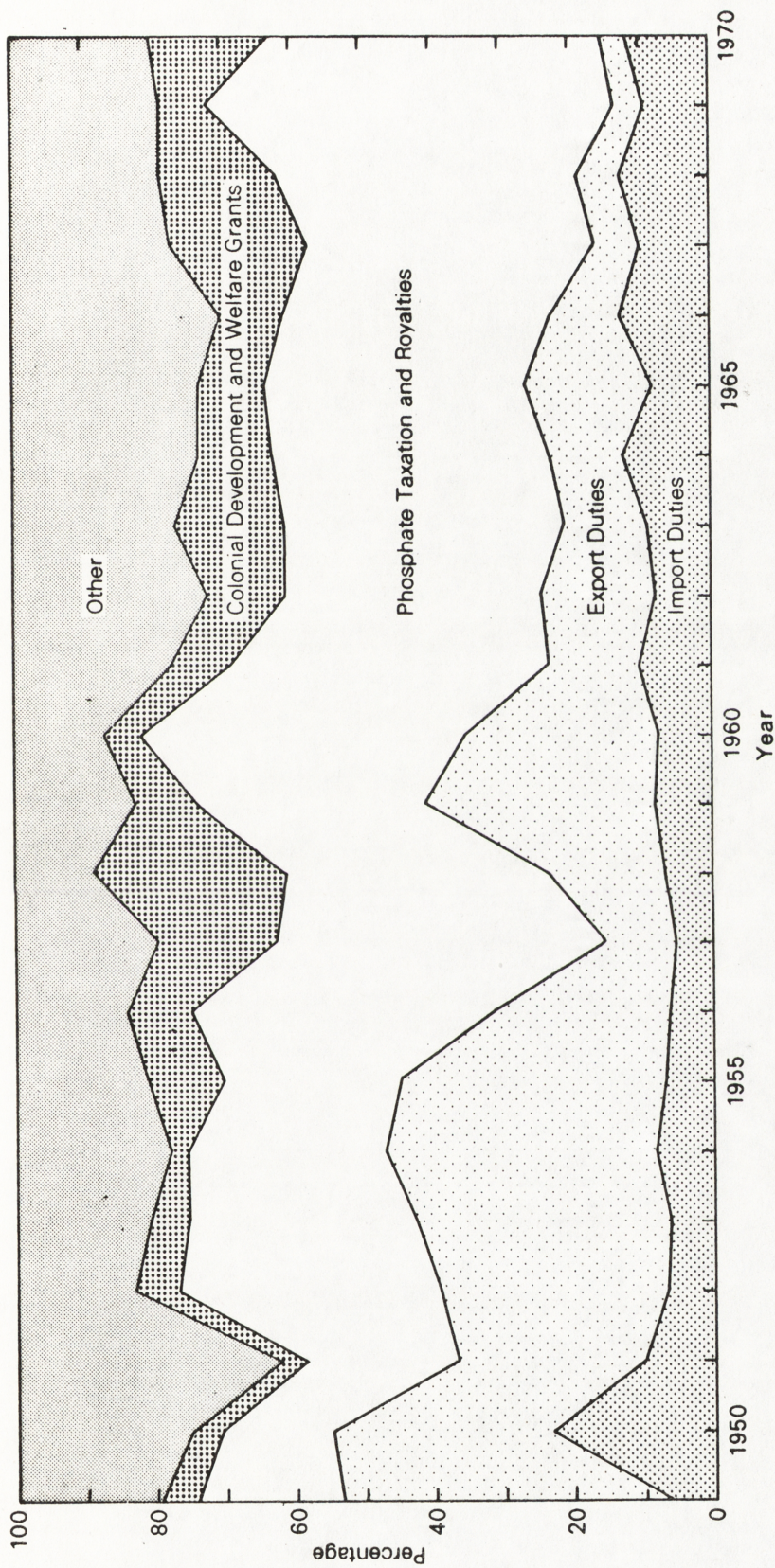
Note: The non-availability of many statistics for this table is explained by the failure of the British Phosphate Commissioners to provide the Government with the relevant information.

Source: GEIC, Colony Annual Reports.

TABLE IV
COLONY REVENUE PER TON OF PHOSPHATE EXPORTED, 1949-1969

Year	Tons Exported (000)	Total Revenue (\$A'000)	Revenue per Ton (\$)
1949	270	95	.35
1950	275	98	.32
1951	252	110	.44
1952	282	276	.98
1953	285	279	.98
1954	294	294	1.00
1955	309	308	1.00
1956	297	397	1.37
1957	293	424	1.45
1958	324	521	1.61
1959	314	431	1.37
1960	320	698	2.18
1961	338	654	1.64
1962	256	637	2.49
1963	356	731	2.06
1964	325	733	2.19
1965	361	803	2.22
1966	375	1,036	2.76
1967	445	1,949	4.38
1968	523	1,917	3.67
1969	555	2,767	4.99

Source: Table II; Table III.



Source: Table II

SOURCES OF REVENUE EXPRESSED AS PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL REVENUE, 1949-1970

FIGURE IV

B.P.C. should contribute to the Colony and to the original Ocean Island landowners, the Banabans. Colony representatives attend discussions only as advisers to the delegation from the United Kingdom and, whatever the views of that country's government may be, its representative can always be out-voted by those from Australia and New Zealand whose interests are best served if overall costs are kept to a minimum.

Research into the 'world price' of phosphate and the 'true value' of Nauruan phosphate by Dr Helen Hughes in 1964,⁶ the findings of the Technical Advisory Group on the Ocean Island phosphate industry (1966)⁷ and the Regional Development Planning Unit (1969),⁸ together with the prices paid for Nauruan phosphates by Japanese buyers in 1968 and 1969⁹ all suggest that, until the 1960s, Ocean Island phosphate was valued at about half and, more recently, at about 70 to 80 per cent of the 'world price' for phosphate ores.

From July 1967 the difference between the 'cost of production' (as declared by the B.P.C.) and an 'agreed price' (decided by the partner governments) has been divided between the Colony and the Banabans at an approximate ratio of 85:15. Even this system is not above criticism from the Colony's point of view, because the cost of production is not subject to any external control or investigation; nor has the Colony any opportunity of checking whether B.P.C. costs are reasonable. As well as actual mining expenses the cost of production also includes sums expended on customs duties at Ocean

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- 6 Hughes, 'The Political Economy of Nauru', Economic Record, XL (1964), 508-34. Dr Hughes argued that, since the war, Nauruan phosphate had been sold by the B.P.C. at a third to a half of world price.
- 7 The Ocean Island Phosphate Industry: Report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by Technical Advisory Group, March 1966 (Secretariat, Tarawa). The Group quoted 1965-66 prices for phosphates from Morocco, Senegal, Togoland and Florida which suggested that the 'world price' for ores of the quality of those at Ocean Island was \$11.60 at a time when the Ocean Island product was valued at \$7.90.
- 8 GEIC, Draft Development Plan, 1970-1972, Chapter 3. The Unit suggested that the assessed f.o.b. value in 1969 was \$3 to \$4 below world price.
- 9 Pacific Islands Monthly, Oct. 1968, 24; July 1969, 119. Sales were made at \$14 and \$15 per ton.

Island, subsidised housing for B.P.C. employees, refunds of Colony income tax paid by employees and the costs of providing extensive recreational facilities on the island. Had the Colony been in a position to maximise its income from resources within its boundaries, there is little doubt that receipts from the industry would have been considerably boosted and an in-built subsidy for Australasian farmers removed.

British aid to the Colony, primarily under Colonial Development and Welfare Schemes, has, despite occasional fluctuations, also increased steadily throughout the period. Over the past two decades aid has provided approximately 10 per cent of total revenue and in 1970 reached \$983,000 - an approximate per capita allocation of \$18. Because of the currently strong state of its economy, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony has received less aid, per capita, than either of the other Western Pacific High Commission territories - the New Hebrides Condominium and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate - which are both grant-aided. Apart from aid for development the United Kingdom has, since 1961, contributed towards fares and gratuities for expatriate officers under the Overseas Service Aid Scheme to the extent of \$70,000 in 1961 rising to approximately \$250,000 in 1970. The Colony has also received small amounts of aid under various assistance schemes; the most significant sources being the Australian and New Zealand Governments, the South Pacific Commission and agencies of the United Nations.

Import duties have provided a small but consistent contribution to revenue, amounting to some 10 per cent, throughout the post-war years.¹⁰ The increase in revenue, in absolute terms, reflects in part the importation of greater quantities of more diversified consumer goods to meet increased demand especially among wage-earners. In part, too, the revenue has been derived from the increased consumption of alcoholic beverages following the gradual relaxation of the Colony's liquor laws. Tobacco, as in pre-war days, has remained a constant source of government revenue.¹¹

¹⁰ See Table II; Figure IV.

¹¹ GEIC, Colony Annual Reports, various years.

Perhaps the most surprising feature of the Colony's revenue structure over the past twenty years has been the consistency of the sum derived from export duties. From 1946 to 1966 the copra export duty which, with occasional and minor exceptions, has provided the whole of the revenue from export duties, was levied at the rate of 25 per cent on the f.o.b. value of copra. Since then the duty has been fixed at 20 per cent. The maximum raised from this source was \$464,000 in 1960; the minimum, \$86,000 in 1957, followed a severe drought. The average income from copra duty over the period 1949-66 was \$275,000; \$34,000 above that for the subsequent period 1966-70.¹² More importantly, revenue from copra export duty has represented a declining percentage of the Colony's total revenue; from an average of 35.7 per cent for the period 1949-55, to 24.8 per cent for 1956-60, 13.9 per cent for 1961-65 and 6 per cent for 1966-70.¹³

This decline has serious implications for the future economy of the Colony. Whereas, in the 1950s, economic projections could be made assuming a safe and consistent source for a third of the required revenue, such assumptions are no longer valid. With over 60 per cent of total revenue in 1969 being derived from phosphates and aid, the Colony would appear to be only seven years away from a severe financial crisis. Nor does it seem that revenue from copra can significantly increase unless production, which has been relatively stable since the war, is boosted through agricultural improvement schemes.¹⁴ Already strong political pressure is mounting against the taxation of a primary industry and the undue burden of taxation placed on the copra cutters who are the largest and least wealthy section of the population.

Nor has the position of the copra cutters on the outer islands been greatly improved, except indirectly, by the regional distribution of government expenditure since the war. The centralist policies pursued once the initial period of reconstruction

12 See Table II.

13 See Figure IV.

14 See Table III.

had passed have resulted in a rapid expansion of government activity and social services on Tarawa. The outer islands have seen some development, notably in the fields of communications, medical services and education; but much of the latter has been financed by missions and local authorities.

Total recurrent expenditure in the Colony has increased from about half a million dollars in 1950 to over three million dollars in 1970. Throughout the period the Public Works Department accounted for 20 to 30 per cent of this figure and the Medical Department for between 10 and 15 per cent. The most notable proportionate increase occurred in the field of education which accounted for an average of 4.2 per cent in the period 1950-55, 5.6 per cent in 1956-60, 7.5 per cent in 1961-65, and 13.2 per cent in 1966-70. Expenditure on education reached a peak in the estimates for 1970 at 23.7 per cent of the total. Agriculture, neglected until the mid-1960s, now accounts for about 3 per cent of expenditure.¹⁵

Capital expenditure incurred by the expansion of services has been financed principally from Colonial Development and Welfare funds. Expenditure on projects under the scheme has more than doubled in the past decade. In particular, aid funds have been put towards the expansion of harbour facilities and the Colony's shipping fleet and the provision of infrastructure items on urban Tarawa - communications, administrative buildings and staff housing.¹⁶ Some salaries, especially for expatriate teachers at the high school and lecturers at the teachers' college have also been met from aid funds.

Between 1963 and 1968 per capita income rose from \$92 to \$140; of the latter, \$31 represents subsistence income. The increase in total national income can be accounted for largely by a 240 per cent increase in phosphate revenue over the five year period. Other sources of income, especially copra, have declined on a per capita basis because production has failed to keep pace with

15 See Table V; Figure V.

16 See Table VI; Figure VI.

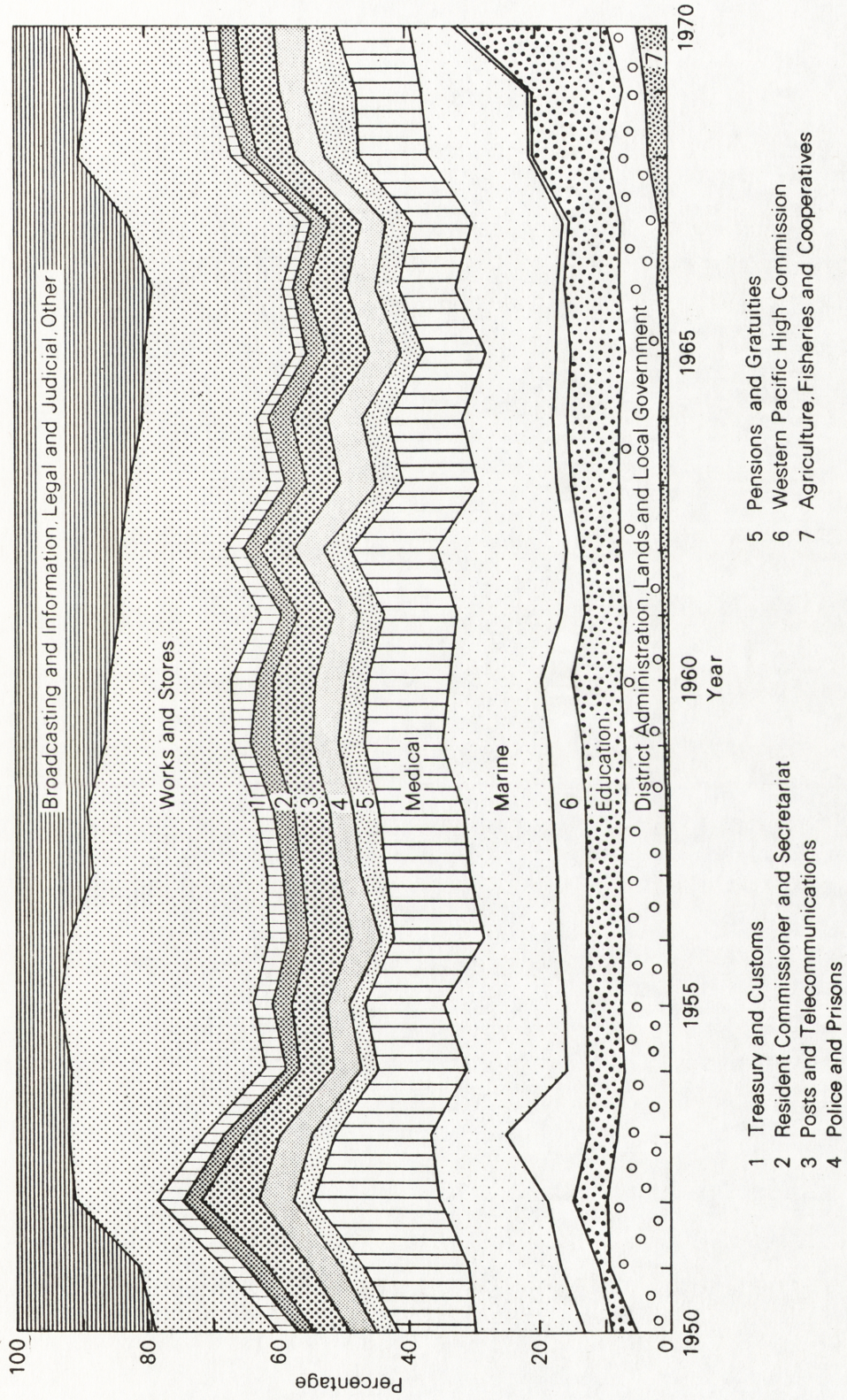
TABLE V
ORDINARY DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE AND TOTAL ORDINARY EXPENDITURE, 1950-1970

Year	Agriculture & Fisheries	Co-operatives	District Admn., Lands & Local Government	Education	W.H.P.C.	Broadcasting & Information	Legal & Judicial	Marine Medical	Pensions & Gratuities	Police & Prisons	Posts & Tele-comm.	Res. Comm. & Secretariat	Treasury & Customs Stores	Works & Stores	Other	Total
1950	3	-	32	15	23	1	2	91	64	23	30	14	16	103	111	544
1951	0.6	-	44	15	28	2	2	71	77	23	32	15	18	62	75	487
1952	0.1	-	47	28	21	2	2	94	107	31	47	14	21	71	45	556
1953	0.1	-	56	27	80	2	1	75	98	22	30	17	21	340	48	650
1954	0.1	-	57	37	23	3	-	110	98	31	39	14	21	219	55	726
1955	0.1	4	50	45	30	3	1	163	112	19	53	22	28	269	53	900
1956	0.4	5	66	45	42	4	2	107	132	19	42	27	26	293	65	938
1957	-	5	66	42	42	4	0.1	122	122	36	52	23	26	242	103	916
1958	0.2	5	63	49	43	4	2	122	116	37	52	24	26	231	107	903
1959	-	6	62	60	46	4	0.6	154	114	36	56	32	24	188	122	948
1960	0.1	6	64	64	46	4	0.4	127	113	29	45	28	26	179	123	914
1961	0.4	8	66	75	38	4	3	188	130	40	58	30	30	255	177	1,157
1962	6	9	77	85	26	6	10	278	148	53	65	39	31	209	194	1,295
1963	6	9	90	99	30	6	10	171	154	47	78	39	30	297	215	1,361
1964	12	9	88	132	37	7	13	216	170	69	87	47	31	272	269	1,547
1965	7	9	88	134	41	8	11	175	156	50	106	46	27	373	293	1,610
1966	20	11	126	169	10	10	11	327	186	64	125	50	31	417	407	2,061
1967	18	12	132	189	14	13	10	262	205	96	103	52	40	617	438	2,300
1968	4	16	137	280	10	16	19	351	263	110	129	55	42	556	223	2,321
1969	63	18	90	348	10	24	18	426	259	184	128	79	44	493	248	2,551
1970*	104	33	134	781 ^o	10	53	22	230	363	158	177	102	57	712	216	3,329

Notes: * Revised Estimates.

o Includes Marine Training Scheme and Vocational Training.

Source: GEIC, Estimates.



Source: Table IV

DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ORDINARY EXPENDITURE, 1950-1970

FIGURE V

TABLE VI
DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE UNDER
COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE SCHEMES, 1958-1969

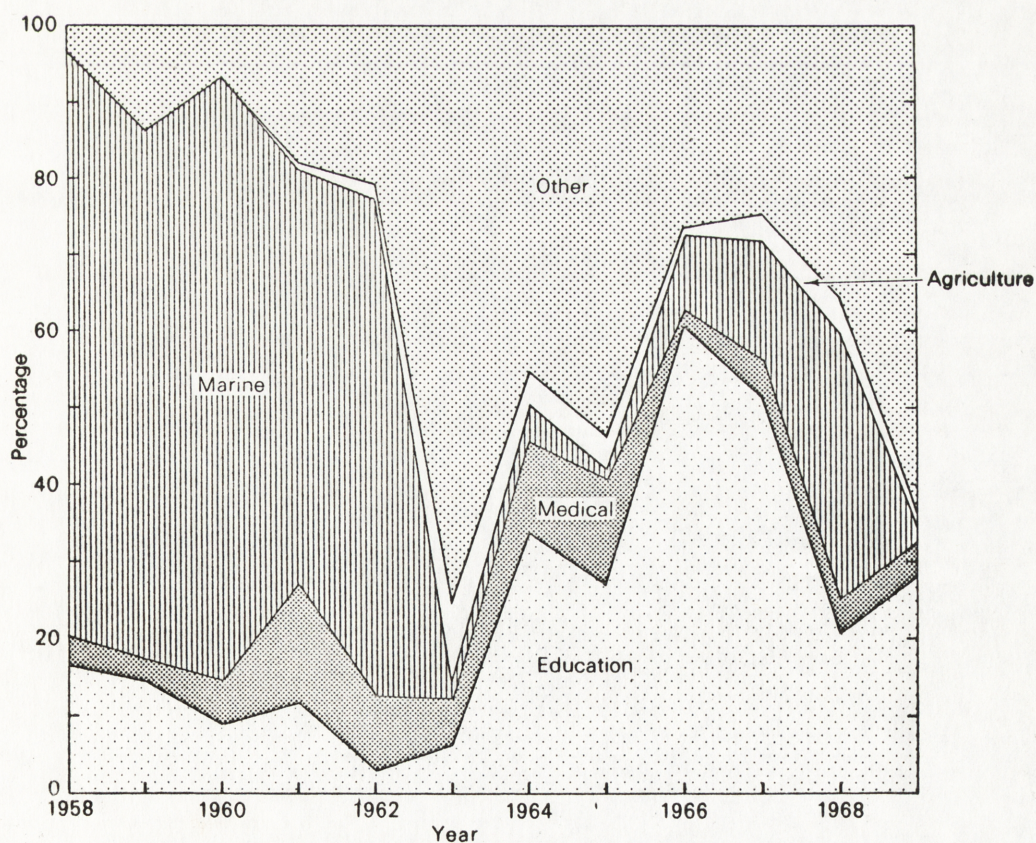
(\$A'000)

Year	Education	Medical	Marine	Agriculture	Other	Total
1958	55	13	257	-	12	337
1959	26	5	125	-	24	180
1960	8	5	71	-	6	90
1961	14	19	65	1	22	121
1962	6	17	118	3	38	183
1963	16	16	6	22	202*	263
1964	65	23	9	9	86	192
1965	58	30	3	9	117	217
1966	283	10	47	5	123	467
1967	345	32	105	25	164	671
1968 ^o	186	36	318	37	333 ^φ	910
1969 ^o	131	19	12	3	302 [†]	467

Notes: * Increase due to capital works on Tarawa.
 o Revised Estimates.
 φ Includes \$97,000, Broadcasting Equipment;
 \$52,000, Staff Housing.
 † Includes \$144,000, Staff Housing.

Source: GEIC, Colony Annual Reports; Estimates.

FIGURE VI
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT
AND WELFARE EXPENDITURE, 1958 - 1969



Source: Table VI.

population growth. It is estimated that at least 44 per cent of national income will be lost in 1977 or 1978 when the phosphates are exhausted. This loss, combined with population increase, will have the effect of halving per capita income in 1978 unless revenue from non-phosphate sources can be doubled in the intervening period.¹⁷

But the expected loss of phosphate revenue in about 1978 is not the only problem faced by the Colony. It is, perhaps, more significant that there is an almost total lack of other resources which might be developed to take its place. There are no other known minerals. Poor soils, periodic drought and land scarcity preclude the emergence of a diversified agricultural economy while, at the same time, a rapidly increasing population places an even heavier burden on existing resources. The coconut is both a staple food item and the source of the Colony's second largest export. As the population increases, so the proportion of coconuts available for copra production declines. And, because a full governmental structure has to be supported in a territory scattered over a vast area of ocean, an unusually large proportion of expenditure is absorbed by administration rather than by other services. Personal emoluments for established staff have absorbed an average of 35 to 40 per cent of recurrent expenditure throughout the post-war period.¹⁸ A further 4 per cent of expenditure each year has been required to meet pension and gratuity payments to retired employees.¹⁹

Although these major problems have faced the Colony throughout the post-war period, and to some extent were recognised in earlier years, they have been treated with varying degrees of seriousness by successive administrators within the Colony, in the High Commissioner's office, and in London. As the priority ratings of the problems have varied, so has the funding that successive 'solutions' have received.

17 GEIC, Development Plan, 1970-1972, 3-5.

18 GEIC, Estimates, various years.

19 See Table V.

Despite the problems and expense caused by reconstruction until the early 1950s, Maude's views on the administrative future of the Colony prevailed. At the island level strong emphasis was placed on the development of the co-operative movement. Co-operative societies, to purchase copra from producers and to supply imported goods, had been established in many Ellice and Gilbert Islands before the war by Kennedy and Maude respectively. The Government Trade Scheme was established in 1945 to act as a central agency for the island units.²⁰ Throughout the post-war period the co-operatives have met with many problems, especially in the fields of finance and management, but they remain the most important commercial organisations on the outer islands.

In the central administration costs were pruned to the minimum and education facilities, for example, kept at the lowest possible level to meet the demands of the civil service. The Colony's first development plan, produced in 1946, was oriented towards the new Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme; it was concerned primarily with United Kingdom funding for essential works and for the establishment of administrative headquarters on Tarawa. Little provision was made for the development of the Colony's sparse economic resources. It was proposed that the Colony should establish a research farm managed by an Agricultural Assistant for a period of seven years, and contribute towards a proposed Fiji and Western Pacific High Commission agricultural unit, to be located in Fiji. Fisheries research was to be conducted from Fiji under a similar arrangement.²¹ It was then decided that poor soils precluded any significant agricultural development and that assistance, when required, would be sought from the newly-established South Pacific Commission.²²

20 Maude, The Co-operative Movement in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, South Pacific Commission, Technical Paper No. 1, 1949, 3-4.

21 GEIC, Ten Year Plan of Reconstruction and Development and Welfare, 1946, 11-12.

22 H.C. to S. of S., no. 302, 3 June 1952 - GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F10/8/1.

A reappraisal of the plan, carried out in 1952, led senior officials to believe that the original proposals were no longer suited to the Colony's changed circumstances. Both Bernacchi, the Resident Commissioner, and Sir Robert Stanley, the High Commissioner, argued that the completion of the plan would place an unduly heavy burden on the Colony's prospective financial resources. It was agreed that a two-pronged solution was required; there should be an intensive, and selective, educational programme to accelerate the rate of localisation (a broader education programme was seen as politically unwise and an unnecessary commitment of future funds) and reserves should be accumulated to provide revenue once the phosphates had been exhausted:

Eventually the Colony, as far as can be foreseen, would become a native community of a comparatively low level of economy and modest social services. The primary 'development' problem is therefore so to order its affairs as to be able to pay its way and as far as may be able to provide reasonable social and educational standards by the time revenue from phosphates becomes no longer available. The financial aspect of this problem must be approached in two ways - namely, by the building up of a reserve fund while revenues remain relatively high and an intensive training campaign to permit the substitution of local for expatriate officials.²³

The Reserve Equalisation Fund was accordingly established in 1956 with \$155,580 from war assets and \$400,000 from the Colony's general balance. Part of the urgency evident in Bernacchi's approach to the Colony's financial problems was derived from the fact that the arrangement under which the Colony sold all its copra to the United Kingdom Ministry of Food was due to expire in 1957. At the same time the world copra price was declining, with grave implications for the Colony's revenue from exports.²⁴ For this reason building programmes (especially education and medical facilities) were pushed more rapidly than before and, once they were completed, Bernacchi

23 'Memorandum on G.E.I.C. Development Programme, 1954-60', enclosed in H.C. to S. of S., no. 85, 2 March 1954 - Copy in GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F32/1.

24 See Bernacchi's address to the 1956 Colony Conference - GEIC, Colony Conference, Proceedings, First Meeting.

proceeded to tone down expansion so as to allow the accumulation of reserves. His intention was to keep recurrent expenditure to the minimum so as to counterbalance the effect of the loss of phosphate revenue. By 1962 reserves stood at \$1,545,608²⁵ when all payments to the Fund were suspended as the result of new departures in the Colony's economic policy.

The key figure behind the policy revision was Mr V.J. Andersen, Bernacchi's successor as Resident Commissioner. Andersen argued that the Revenue Equalisation Fund could never reach such proportions that the interest on investments would make a significant contribution to the Colony's revenue. This view, combined with a belief that inadequate services were being provided in the Colony, led to the conclusion that a rapid development programme should be undertaken during the Colony's period of affluence. The maximum possible development, both economic and social, should be achieved within a fifteen year period, Andersen argued, and the Colony's human resources so developed that the people would be equipped to staff the services established during the planning period as well as to take full advantage of employment opportunities both within the Colony and overseas. Then, when the phosphates were exhausted, the major period of capital expenditure required to provide the Colony with essential services would have passed leaving only recurrent expenditure to be met. This, Andersen believed, the Colony should be able to do from its own resources. And should the Colony fail to remain economically self-sufficient then, at least, its resources would be developed to the maximum possible level. It was recognised that such a major expansion of government activity would require an increase in the number of expatriate officers in the civil service.

The new development strategy fell down in two major areas. Firstly, 'development' was, as before, taken to mean the expansion of social and non-productive services. Secondly, large numbers of skilled expatriates were appointed but little serious attempt was made to train replacement staff. Salaries thus continued to absorb a large proportion of the available funds. With much of the

25 See Table VII.

TABLE VII

APPROPRIATIONS TO REVENUE EQUALISATION FUND
AND TOTAL ACCUMULATED RESERVES, 1956-1970

(\$A)

Year	Appropriation	Total Value of Fund as at 31 December
1956	555,580	555,580
1957	50,000	601,590
1958	50,000	720,371
1959	50,000	812,412
1960	150,000	948,469
1961	150,000	1,147,503
1962	214,000	1,545,608
1963	-	1,615,460
1964	-	1,583,132
1965	-	1,669,350
1966	-	1,756,786
1967	-	1,574,103*
1968	700,000	2,167,992
1969	1,500,000	4,330,942
1970	1,256,900	5,700,000

Note: * Reduction of approximately \$A260,000 as a result of devaluation of sterling.

Source: GEIC, Treasury Deposit Ledger, 'Revenue Equalisation Fund'; Estimates, 1971.

expansion being financed from aid grants, an analysis of expenditure under Colonial Development and Welfare Schemes clearly reveals the emphasis given to social service projects, which could only bring indirect economic benefits, and the low priority given agricultural development.²⁶ Although the Colony appointed its first full-time agricultural officer in 1963 little progress was made until 1967 when a further reappraisal of development policy redirected attention towards the expansion of existing resources.

In the absence of natural resources at home, the Colony has been forced to look overseas for supplementary sources of income for its people. The major labour outlet has always been the phosphate industry at Ocean Island and at Nauru which has, for the most part, employed between one and two thousand Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders in both skilled and unskilled positions.

Other important labour outlets have been copra plantations in the Line Islands, and in the New Hebrides, and the recently established Merchant Marine Training Scheme. The latter scheme, instituted in 1967 with financial assistance received from the United Nations, the United Kingdom, and sponsoring shipping lines, aims at training young men for employment on overseas vessels. All trainees receive basic training in seamanship and English and thereafter specialise in one of three fields - catering, deck work or engineering. Between 1967 and 1970 nearly 350 men were placed in employment with a total of ten shipping lines, of which no fewer than eight were German. The Columbus Line took the majority of the recruits.

For the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders, the significance of overseas employment extends beyond those fortunate enough, as they are considered, to actually hold jobs. As an extension of customary kinship obligations it is accepted that those working away from the main island groups should remit a fair proportion of their wages to their families living on the outer islands. The Government has taken all possible steps to facilitate remittances and has recognised that, for many families in the Gilbert and Ellice groups, such funds form the major portion of family income.

26 See Table VI; Figure VI.

Monthly remittances are estimated to amount to some \$40,000 from Ocean Island and Nauru, \$7,000 from those in plantation employment and \$14,000 from merchant seamen, giving an annual total in excess of \$700,000. Remittances then, form nearly 10 per cent of the estimated per capita national income; for some islands, especially in the Ellice, the percentage would be considerably higher.

The implications of 'outside' sources of revenue for those resident on outer islands cannot be overestimated. In 1962-63 cash income from copra sales amounted to \$2,200 at Tamana and \$2,882 at Onotoa while purchases made through the co-operative stores totalled \$12,000 and \$18,360 for the respective islands.²⁷ Accepting that copra production is not as high as it might be and, indeed, that remittances could well be a disincentive to more effective production, it is clear that the people on the outer islands cannot support themselves at present living standards from their own resources.

The 1968 census revealed that the Colony's population (including those only temporarily absent) was increasing at the rate of 2.3 per cent per year which implies that the total population, already 53,517 in 1968, would reach some 70,000 by 1978.²⁸ As early as 1931 Maude maintained that some of the dry islands in the southern Gilberts and in the Ellice were over-populated and, in the light of the lack of potential for economic development, recommended that the Phoenix Islands should be annexed and used for the purpose of resettling the surplus population from these islands. For almost thirty years resettlement was seen as the answer to the Colony's population problem. The Phoenix Islands Settlement Scheme was followed by an unsuccessful attempt to settle people from Aranuka on Christmas Island and then by the resettlement of Gilbertese in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. Further, the people of Vaitupu in the Ellice purchased Kioa Island in Fiji as an outlet for their surplus population. Under rather different circumstances, the Banabans were resettled at Rabi in Fiji.

27 Couper, 'The Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Implications of Regional Trading Anomalies', Pacific Viewpoint, VIII (no. 1, 1967), 76.

28 GEIC, A Report on the Results of the Census of the Population, 1968, (Zwart and Groenewegen), 11-15, 113. See below, Appendix II.

For various reasons, resettlement has not provided an altogether satisfactory solution to the Colony's overpopulation problem. Cartland, as Lands Commissioner, questioned the success of the Phoenix Islands scheme shortly after his arrival in the Colony in 1948 and argued through the early 1950s that few islands were in fact overpopulated and that internal redistribution would be an adequate solution for some years. In particular, the viability of the Phoenix Islands themselves was questioned; heavy emphasis was placed on the administrative and communications difficulties involved in sustaining settlements located more than 1,000 miles from Tarawa. From 1954 the British Solomon Islands Protectorate had been accepting Gilbertese migrants and, at the time that the Phoenix Islands Scheme was finally abandoned in 1963 it appeared that here lay the future for the resettlement of the Colony's surplus population. Earlier, Gilbertese from Sydney Island in the Phoenix group had been removed to Gizo in the Solomons. Wagina Island was selected as the site for resettling the remainder of the Phoenix Islanders. Droughts in the early 1960s played some part in the decision but the administrative inconvenience caused by the Phoenix settlements was by no means insignificant. The settlers from Gardner and Hull themselves queried the move to the Solomons on the grounds that the droughts were no worse than those they had known in the southern Gilberts.²⁹ It would seem, then, that drought was an excuse as well as a reason and that the final decision was coloured by the fact that land in the Solomons was available for the purposes of resettlement.

From the mid-1960s, however, both the British Solomon Islands Protectorate and Fiji have shown a marked reluctance to accept Gilbertese settlers. To some extent this is because the territories of the Pacific generally have become more aware of their own population problems but the administrative problems caused the Fiji Government by the relatively disorganised migrations to Rabi and Kioa have also been significant. With other Pacific territories closed to resettlement, and the absence of any indication that Australia and New Zealand will relax their

29 Bedford, Resettlement, 62-108.

immigration policies, the Colony has belatedly turned to birth control as a partial solution to its problems.

The formation by the British Labour Government of the Ministry of Overseas Development in 1964 followed the realisation that aid funds were not being utilised in the most effective way, partly because the control of Colonial Development and Welfare Funds was divided between the Treasury and the Colonial Office with neither Department producing effective economic policies for the dependencies. With the creation of the new Ministry there was a discernible shift in the emphasis of aid policy from the financing of social services and infrastructure towards projects that would produce a direct economic return. There has been an attempt to reduce items demanding high recurrent expenditure at a time when many of the remaining dependencies are undergoing rapid constitutional change with a view to ensuring that, if possible, economic independence will be achieved before the territories become self-governing or independent.

It is this latter aspect of British policy that has had the most important implications for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. It was realised that economic independence could not be achieved under existing policies. The result has been an increased display of interest in the Colony's affairs from London. The Resident Commissioner, with the approval of the Secretary of State, told the Advisory Council in 1964 that:

... the people of the Colony can rest assured that the British Government's concern for their wellbeing, and its willingness to provide such financial assistance as may be agreed to be necessary in the future, would not be affected by constitutional change in the Colony....³⁰

But it was clear by 1967 that the United Kingdom Government would not, in future, commit itself to the granting of aid until all possible avenues for new revenue had been fully explored. The relatively high level of interest shown in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands by the Ministry of Overseas Development has been reflected in the sending of two groups of economic advisers to the Colony in recent years;

30 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes, Third Meeting (Nov. 1964), 2.

the Mooring mission of 1967 and the Regional Development Planning Unit [R.D.P.U.]³¹ from 1969.

The report produced by the Mooring mission³² represented little more than a preliminary survey of the socio-economic structure of the Colony. Because it was essentially an impressionistic document, based on interviews rather than comprehensive research and analysis (no member of the mission spent more than two months in the Colony and most stayed only six weeks), the Report put forward few detailed proposals for policy revisions that would lead to economic independence for the Colony.

Regarding agriculture, for example, the Report confined itself to a summary of existing conditions and reports that had been submitted on the copra industry. Recommendations were confined to an endorsement of steps then being taken to improve production and to suggestions that improved footpaths and increased numbers of bicycle trailers would facilitate copra collection. The copra rebate scheme, which had been introduced in 1967, received the mission's endorsement. (Under the scheme all islands were given a target figure for copra production. When this was exceeded, half of the copra export duty on the excess was rebated to the Island Councils as a subsidy.) In May 1970 the scheme was abandoned as unsatisfactory from the point of view of both the Island Councils and copra production. The Report did recognise, however, that the Colony would need to diversify its sources of revenue and place greater reliance on agriculture in the future.

The mission argued that financial policy should be determined by three factors:

The need to maintain a level of services in the G.E.I.C. which will be reasonable by comparison with other countries in the region which will have a similar level of income per head, and which will allow the territory to provide a sufficient number of educated persons to run its administration and economy with a minimum of outside assistance, and bring about the further

31 For the three W.P.H.C. territories.

32 GEIC, A Socio-Economic Survey of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands [Mooring Report], May 1968.

development of the economy; the amount of funds available, both from local taxation and from phosphate revenues; and the need for making some provision for future current revenue to make good, at least in part, the ending of receipts from phosphates.³³

In particular the mission recommended a return to a reserves policy with 25 per cent of future phosphate earnings being placed in the Revenue Equalisation Fund. The Report also supported the view being taken by some officials that the policy of investing the reserve funds in gilt-edged fixed-interest securities should be abandoned in favour of an entry into the equity market. Policy was, in fact, revised in this direction in 1967 but the change was quickly called into question when the investments made by the Crown Agents on the Colony's behalf resulted in a paper loss of about \$250,000 in the first year of operations.³⁴ The policy has been persisted with, however, and the position has since improved.

Most significantly, perhaps, the mission recommended that the Wholesale Society should be reorganised along with certain government departments to form 'The Gilbert and Ellice Islands Development Corporation'. The Wholesale Society, successor to the Government Trade Scheme, had been formed in 1949 in accordance with government policy which envisaged the eventual assumption of control by the co-operative societies.³⁵ Over the next twenty years the functions of the Society, which has remained under government control but run on commercial lines, have expanded beyond those of a simple export and import concern to include shipping, stevedoring, boatbuilding, engineering, construction and various other activities also performed by government departments.

The Mooring Report recommended that the proposed Development Corporation should absorb the present Society and should also assume responsibility for certain government activities - shipping and workshop facilities in particular - which were duplicated under existing arrangements. The Corporation would remain a statutory

33 *ibid.*, 17.

34 GEIC, Treasury Deposit Ledger, 'Revenue Equalisation Fund'.

35 GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1949, 20.

body with the responsibility of establishing subsidiary companies to maintain services as directed by Government.³⁶

In 1969, following the publication of the Mooring Report, the three members of the Regional Development Planning Unit, employed by the Ministry of Overseas Development, began the task of drawing up a development plan for the Colony which encompassed both long-term proposals and specific projects to be undertaken in the 1970-72 period. Previously, Colony 'plans' had amounted to little more than lists of desirable projects, with minimal emphasis on economic development or co-ordination, because capital expenditure was closely tied to the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme. The Draft Development Plan produced by the R.D.P.U., on the other hand, was intended to generate some \$4,000,000 of new income for the Colony by 1977 to ensure the maintenance of 1968 levels of per capita cash income.

In general the Draft Plan followed the recommendations of the Mooring Report especially on the new Development Corporation but differed significantly on its policy recommendations on agriculture, finance and education.³⁷ In particular the Draft Plan recommended large subsidies for the copra industry aimed at boosting production to 20,000 tons by 1986 and eventually to an estimated maximum of 30,000 tons a year. Increased emphasis was placed on greater diversification of effort into such import-replacement industries as timber and fisheries (although neither were envisaged as large-scale export industries). Agriculture was to absorb 30 per cent of capital expenditure within the initial plan period. The Draft Plan supported the reserves policy suggested by the Mooring Report but urged stronger fiscal control and a revision of the taxation structure to increase revenue, restrain purchasing power and remove anomalies. It also advocated a new approach to government services and especially public utilities arguing that sub-economic rates should be revised and full consumer payment introduced whenever possible.

36 GEIC, Mooring Report, 39-44.

37 Reappraisals of education policy as a result of the R.D.P.U. recommendations are discussed below, 165-6.

The Draft Plan was severe on the Government for past neglect and what were seen as misguided policies - especially regarding agriculture and education for localisation. Duplication and inefficiencies in administration were also criticised along with the centralisation of decision-making by non-professionals in the Secretariat and the consequent decline in departmental initiative. The Draft Plan was revised by the Government, in terminology rather than in substance, and submitted to the House of Representatives for approval in March 1970.

The Development Plan, 1970-1972, as it was submitted to the House of Representatives, recommended certain staff increases, especially in the Agriculture Department so that essential research might be conducted and rapid development made possible. Impediments in the way of increasing peasant production - land fragmentation, the absence of rodent control, high taxation, little immediate income, neglect of adjoining lands - were acknowledged and a subsidy scheme for grove improvement, new planting and maintenance offered as a partial solution. The Plan also argued that the land tenure system should be revised with a view to the consolidation of holdings. Producer co-operatives, already operating with some success on Nonouti, were to be expanded. In particular, emphasis was placed on the need to expand rodent control measures, and to improve collection procedures. The prospects of establishing timber and fisheries import-replacement industries were to be investigated.³⁸

Although the acceptance of the Plan marked the first occasion on which the Government publicly recognised that massive expenditure (\$640,500 in the 1970-1972 period) would be required for agricultural development there were still grave defects in its recommendations. The planners underestimated the difficulties that would be involved in transforming the economic and social structure of the outer islands while overestimating the value of incentive payments. Little recognition was given to the fact that, for the most part, it is the older people who still control the land. These people often cannot, or will not, see the point in

38 GEIC, Development Plan, 1970-1972, 13-24.

thinning groves, for example, when all trees on a plot are producing nuts. Nor can they see the need to replant when sufficient nuts will always germinate to meet their needs. On some islands, like Nonouti, producer co-operatives may be a success, but already on Abemama a similar scheme is close to failure largely, one suspects, because of the island's unique socio-economic structure and land tenure system.

The major general defect, then, was not that the Plan placed too much emphasis on agriculture but that it was unduly optimistic regarding the short-term returns that could be expected. Cultural difficulties in the way of development were given insufficient consideration. The plan argued too much in statistical terms and tended to ignore the attitudes and aspirations of the people, especially those living on outer islands. Too much faith was placed on the ability of the copra industry to contribute to the economy gap by 1978. A fishing industry was not considered to have potential beyond production for the local market, a view that could well prove to be a serious miscalculation.³⁹

Regarding public utilities the Plan argued against the full expenditure advised by consultants to the Colony Government. Recommended expenditure in excess of \$1,000,000 for water supplies and sewerage was trimmed to \$180,000 in the Plan period; the full amount being considered beyond the Colony's resources. Expansion of electricity services on Tarawa will absorb a further \$49,000 (after heavy expenditure in the past four years) with consideration being given to the recovery of full costs from consumers. The Plan advocated more extensive use of local materials in house construction in order to reduce imports although the Public Works Department has found that the purchase of thatch from outer islands has been almost as costly as imported aluminium, without the advantages of water catchment. The limited availability of private housing on Tarawa was recognised along with a need for the Government to provide quarters but it was recommended that house rents should be increased at least to cover maintenance costs.

39 See below, p. 235-8.

The doctrinaire approach taken by the planners in these matters did not fully recognise the position of the local civil servants. Few of this group can claim Tarawa as their home island and, therefore, have little chance of acquiring local foodstuffs to supplement incomes which are low considering that most are obliged to live on imported foods. Ironically, too, the compounds of senior officers generally contain large numbers of coconut and other food-bearing trees which are seldom utilised. The wisdom of a policy which would increase living costs for expatriates must also be questioned. While most could certainly afford to pay more for housing and electricity, it is the prospect of saving money that draws many contract officers to the Colony. If this aspect of the Plan is implemented, therefore, it could have the effect of worsening an already difficult recruiting situation.

Throughout the post-war period the Colony Government's approach to economic development has been vague and ill-defined. The situation has been worsened by inadequate co-ordination among government departments, the employment of expatriates on short-term contracts, misguided advice, and controls exercised from outside the Colony. Although the latest development plan, with its provisions for annual revision, does represent a more systematic approach to the subject, practical difficulties have been underestimated or overlooked in some of the solutions offered for the Colony's problems; in the light of past experience, many of the targets set in the Plan would appear to be unduly optimistic.

CHAPTER 7SOCIAL SERVICES AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Without doubt, governmental and mission innovations have been the major forces for social change in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands throughout the 20th century. Through the introduction of local councils the Government has provided an alternative to the traditional authorities on the islands while the missions have sought to inculcate adherence to their respective codes of faith and morals. The provision of improved education and medical facilities and the formation of women's and youth organisations have all called into question and modified traditional values and patterns of behaviour. Wider participation in a cash economy, and increased income derived from remittances, have instigated change in the island communities and have provided a means for the purchase of a more extensive range of imported goods. Contact with and knowledge of the world beyond the village or the island has been broadened by opportunities to travel for employment, the posting of increased numbers of educated government officers to the outer islands and the improvement of radio services. The major agents of change, then, have been eurocentric in so far as they have attempted to introduce beliefs, values, behaviour and services evolved in western Europe rather than within the Colony itself.¹

In the Gilbert Islands there has been considerable resistance to change (with some exceptions, discussed below, to be made for urban Tarawa). There is, throughout the group, an over-riding pride in the Gilbertese way of life, as it is understood by community leaders, and any Gilbertese or, indeed, any visitor who fails to conform to accepted standards, quickly becomes the object of censure. The man who builds a house of imported materials, for example, may be envied by some, but generally he will be looked down on by his peers because of his open acceptance of I Matang, or European, ways. And,

1 The general comments in this chapter are based on the accumulated impressions of eight months' residence in the Colony. For studies of social change in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands see Lundsgaarde, Social Change in the Southern Gilbert Islands, 1938-1964; GEIC, Some Impressions of Social Change in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (McCreary and Boardman), 1968.

they consider, the materials could only have been purchased at the expense of kin obligations concerning the sharing of wealth.

Any stranger visiting an island is judged by the Gilbertese against an ideal set of values. Diminutive stature or physical deformity draws ridicule. Meanness, noisiness and disregard of custom, especially in the maneaba, is regarded with disapproval where an interest in, and some knowledge of, an island's past will lead to more rapid acceptance by community leaders. In all aspects of island life there is strong pressure on both young and old to conform to community norms; any person who is obviously inferior to his fellows, either physically or financially, or who attempts to enhance his own status, quickly becomes a social outcast.

Although the Gilbertese elders have constantly sought to have better educational facilities provided on their islands, it has been with mixed motives. For many, education represents an opportunity for their children to enter the wage economy, and thus fulfil family obligations by remitting wages, rather than by working on the land. But the elders are not prepared to allow the educated youth to play a more significant role in the community than his age-status would normally allow. With only a few exceptions, traditional leaders in the Gilbert Islands have tried to entrench their position, especially through their control over land and its inheritance, in the face of aspiring younger and better educated leaders. In most cases, too, the church, rather than the Government, has provided the most effective challenge to their authority.

By comparison with the Gilbertese, the Ellice Islanders have generally shown a greater willingness to accept social change within their communities. New ideas are investigated and then adapted so as to bring the maximum possible advantage. Such a characteristic is common to much of Polynesia and was probably strengthened by the rapid change in social values that followed the arrival of the Samoan pastors in the 19th century.

A higher percentage of Ellice than Gilbertese have worked away from the group, especially at Ocean Island and Nauru. The Ellice Islanders are well aware of their affiliation with the rest of Polynesia; traditional links with Samoa, reinforced by religious

ties, remain strong. At home, the Ellice have, for more than a century, emphasised the advantages of education. There is a much stronger community spirit in the group than in the Gilberts and this, with the absence of sectarian disputes, has enabled the children of the group to enjoy relatively high standards of education.

Both Gilbertese and Ellice social systems are breaking down rapidly in the artificial environment now firmly established in urban Tarawa. The southern part of Tarawa atoll, with an approximate land area of 3.5 square miles, had a population of 10,616 at the time of the 1968 census. And of this figure, no fewer than 8,164 were resident in the three main centres - Betio, Bairiki and Bikenibeu - and in the Public Works Department labourers' settlement at Nanikai.² The combined area of these four centres is less than one square mile.³ With its population increasing at a rate of 10 per cent a year, urban Tarawa is facing more serious social problems than any other part of the Colony.

Rapid population growth, combined with a housing shortage, has resulted in severe overcrowding which has inevitably led to a decline in health and sanitation standards. For the past decade, the Government has allowed unrestricted movement within the Colony where, previously, immigration to Tarawa was strictly controlled. Repatriation to home islands of unemployed persons could be enforced under health regulations but it would appear that the possible political repercussions have been considered to be a greater problem.

The situation has now reached the point where the environment itself can no longer meet the demands placed upon it. As early as 1961, for example, the Government sought advice on the Tarawa water supply but then virtually ignored the recommendations made. A further survey, conducted in 1967, again urged the establishment of a water authority to control ground water supplies, and their distribution, and the demarcation of water reserves for emergency

2 GEIC, Report on the Results of the Census, 1968, 115.

3 GEIC, Urban Tarawa 1968: Some Problems and Prospects (Bedford), 6.

supply.⁴ No authority has yet been established although the Public Works Department has assumed responsibility for water supplies, and an engineer was appointed in 1969 to take charge of this and related matters. It was not until 1970 that recommendations to construct open reservoirs near Antebuka village were implemented. Through 1970 and early 1971, Tarawa suffered a severe drought; water rationing was introduced and supplies shipped from overseas to meet the shortage.

Local food is also in short supply. With so much of the available land covered by buildings, little is left for agriculture. Most of the people living in the main centres are obliged to live off imported food; on Tarawa, bully-beef, tinned fish and rice has become the staple diet of many families.

The problems faced by the fortunate few in employment are complicated by their customary kin obligations. They are expected to welcome and feed a never-ending stream of relatives who arrive to seek education or employment, to see the 'bright lights', indulge in the luxuries of beer and thrice-weekly cinema shows, or simply to take an extended vacation that may last for years. Bubuti and fakamolemole for cash - often to buy beer and spirits which are more readily available on Tarawa than on the outer islands, to attend cinemas or dance-halls or to play bingo - further reduce the resources of wage-earners.

Population increase and a rapid expansion of services on south Tarawa has left the island in something of a social limbo. Kin ties are still sufficiently strong to ensure that new arrivals and old residents alike have somewhere to stay, and something to eat; although occasional cases of malnutrition, caused by ignorance or neglect, come to light, there is no starvation. But, on Tarawa, family authority is starting to break down. Younger people, with money in their pockets and a taste for the diversions of Tarawa, are no longer willing to accept the authority of a parent or elder relative. Drunkenness, juvenile delinquency and more serious crime is on the increase.

4 *ibid.*, 14-15.

In one important regard the usual social groupings have been widened to meet new circumstances on Tarawa. Representatives of various kin groups from any given island who would normally have only minimal social contact, have combined to form 'island associations' which, in many ways, fulfil the role of the extended family on the outer islands. Not only do they provide coherent groups for new immigrants to join but they also form important political pressure groups on Tarawa and on their home islands. An average island association on Tarawa would meet monthly to discuss developments at home and on Tarawa, exchange news and practice dancing against the time when the association would next be required to perform in public for the entertainment of a distinguished guest.

With these island associations playing such an important social role on Tarawa it is surprising that the Government has not made a greater attempt to use and direct them in its campaign to improve living standards on Tarawa and on Betio in particular. Some associations try to exercise some degree of control over their young people and occasionally an island association will insist on the repatriation of people who, through their misconduct, bring shame on the island community.

The expansion of health and educational facilities throughout the Colony has been part of a conscious policy to initiate change in the island communities in accordance with modern beliefs on the requirements for social and economic development. There has been some reluctance to accept change, particularly among the Gilbertese, but because Government policies in the field of social services have often been the cheapest, rather than the best possible, their impact on the lives of the people on the outer islands has been less than might have been expected. But with improved educational standards among the younger generation, a move towards responsible government at island and Colony levels, and attempts to rationalise agriculture, it is inevitable that, in time, the structure of society will be significantly changed.

Education

Despite the rapid growth of expenditure on education since the Second World War, standards have not risen as rapidly as might

have been expected because, perhaps, policy has often been based on advice from persons lacking experience and knowledge of the Colony's circumstances. And, on occasions, educational development has been effectively controlled from the High Commissioner's office and from London, with little consideration being given to the needs of the Colony. Such control has been exercised through powers of appointment and the control of aid. Within the Colony, too, policy decisions have, often by default and because of inadequacies in the Education Department, been left to non-professionals in the Secretariat resulting, overall, in frequent revisions and even reversals of policy. As a consequence, the maximum returns possible from the limited funds available have not been achieved; time, effort and funds have been dissipated on projects which have been abandoned or modified in a haphazard manner to conform to a revised policy.

In 1945 Maude argued that, in the future, people of the Colony might well judge the Administration by its willingness to adopt 'bold and progressive educational measures'. Although rapid development in the educational field has been rendered necessary by the expansion of the civil service and the need, determined by financial, social and political factors, to localise the service, there has been a constantly increasing demand for education as an end in itself.

Education has thus become an important political issue. Pressure for the expansion of educational facilities has been brought to bear by the Colony's politicians in recent years while, at the same time, decisions which have increased the direct cost of education to the people, or have resulted in the failure to fulfil plans for the expansion of services, particularly on the outer islands, have led to widespread criticism of, and disillusionment with, the Government. The situation has been complicated by the participation of the missions in education (and further complicated by the almost total withdrawal of the protestant mission from this field in the Gilbert Islands in the past decade), the fact that the Education Department must work with two races, and uncertainty in government circles as to the role that local authorities should play in education.

Together with all other services, education was severely disrupted by the occupation of the Gilbert Islands during the war. The sole government school in the Gilbert Islands was abandoned with the withdrawal of government staff and, although some mission schools continued to operate, little progress was made in the absence of constant supervision. The Ellice Islands School remained open under local teachers throughout the period of hostilities. While American occupation caused some disruption at Funafuti, Nukufetau and Nanumea, village schools, under the supervision of their L.M.S. pastors and teachers, continued to operate close to pre-war standards despite obvious shortages of equipment.⁵

But the Colony has suffered lasting effects from the failure, during the decade following re-occupation, to establish and develop post-primary education. Policy, as it was agreed at all levels, demanded a rapid expansion of education so that the localisation of the central civil service and the development of responsible local governments might be achieved as quickly as possible. It was agreed that a co-operative teacher-training venture with the missions would be commenced as soon as possible; that the Government should enter the field of primary education; that post-primary education should be expanded; and that, until the Colony was able to provide its own facilities for post-primary and more advanced secondary education, selected pupils should be sent to Fiji and New Zealand for further education. Two further expatriate education officers were to be recruited to fulfil these aims. It was accepted that pre-war levels of education would be, and would have to remain, adequate for the majority of the children in the Colony.⁶

Initial efforts were concentrated on the government school, located at Tarawa in the pre-war years, which had provided the majority of clerks and interpreters in the civil service. The sole government education officer in the Gilbert and Ellice groups was given the task of re-establishing the King George V School at

5 GEIC, Education Department Reports, 1938-1945.

6 GEIC, Report on Education in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, 1945.

Abemama, under extremely difficult conditions, in abandoned American quarters. Under the circumstances, G.E. Hard, the headmaster, made considerable progress, as shown by the later success of his graduates. Although more than a hundred pupils were sent overseas between 1945 and 1952,⁷ few other features of the proposals got off the ground for about seven years.

To some extent the problems of education in the immediate post-war period can be explained by the attitude taken by the High Commissioner and his Education Adviser (an office held conjointly with that of Director of Education for Fiji). Although the Secretary of State gave his approval for the appointment of two additional education officers in 1946, the positions remained unadvertised for some years as the Adviser argued in favour of sending post-primary pupils to Fiji. Successive Directors of Education in the Colony maintained that not only was it a waste of time and funds to send boys to Fiji until standards of primary education had been raised in the Colony but also that the scheme of co-operation, under which the Government subsidised mission teacher-training institutions, was doing little for education while providing cheap training for pastors and catechists. When sections of the 1950 Education Department Report dealing with the high rejection rate (63 per cent) of Colony students sent to Fiji were omitted from the printed version a complaint from the Director drew the response that the printed document was the High Commissioner's report to the Secretary of State. Therefore, the High Commissioner argued, he had the right to amend the submitted reports on such advice as he saw fit to seek.⁸ That 'advice' came from the High Commissioner's Adviser who at no stage visited the Colony and, until the office was abolished with the removal of the High Commission to Honiara, took a most unsympathetic attitude towards the Colony's education problems.

Although King George V School was removed to Tarawa shortly after Bernacchi's arrival in the Colony, educational progress was

7 GEIC, Education Department Report, 1953, Annexure H.

8 R.C. to H.C., no. 127, 26 May 1952; H.C. to R.C., no. 261, 26 June 1952 - GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F3/1/9A.

again hindered in 1954 when the High Commissioner ruled that plans to establish government primary schools on the outer islands and a girls' secondary school were unduly ambitious, given the Colony's financial position, and that substantial cuts should be made in projected expenditure on education.⁹ In fact, a girls' school, to complement the King George V School, was not opened until 1959, fourteen years after its establishment had been declared as a major policy objective.

More recently, staff shortages and an apparent willingness to modify policy in the light of any advice received (often without full consideration being given to its implications), and the assumption by the Secretariat of many of the functions of policy formation have caused further problems. Whether the current situation is the result of monolithic Secretariat control or failings within the Education Department itself is irrelevant; the result has been a constant fluctuation of priorities and a failure to utilise effectively financial and staff resources. With other branches of government, the Department has suffered from the appointment of large numbers of short-term contract officers who seldom remain long enough to obtain a good grasp of the Colony's educational problems or to make any significant contribution toward solutions. The problems caused by lack of continuity in staffing have been further increased by the concentration of effort on Tarawa. Until 1970 in-service training away from headquarters was minimal.

As the missions have long been active in primary education in the Colony, so policy in this area has been largely determined by the contribution that the missions have been prepared to make. In 1946 there were no less than 232 mission schools (catering for more than 8,000 students) of which twenty-two received some assistance from public funds.¹⁰ Under the scheme of co-operation introduced after the war, it was intended that the missions would train teachers to standards acceptable to the Government and that

9 H.C. to S. of S., no. 85, 2 March 1954 - GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F32/1.

10 GEIC, Education Department Report, 1946, Table I.

subsidies would be paid in respect of the 'improved village schools' to which they were posted.¹¹ The unsatisfactory nature of the scheme and difficulties of inspection, led to a revision of policy in 1951 towards the establishment of 'island schools' (administered by the local authorities) to which government trained teachers were posted.¹² The new scheme was also intended to meet problems caused by the projected withdrawal of the L.M.S. from the field of primary education. The withdrawal did not occur until the 1960s, partly, perhaps, because a vigorous education expansion programme by the S.H.M., designed to bring its schools to the new standards required for government subsidy, had the effect of drawing adherents to the Roman Catholic Church. By 1956 the Government had established five island schools in each of the Gilbert and Ellice groups, and one in the Phoenix Islands. These schools, catering for ten to sixteen year olds, together with the already established government primary schools on Tarawa, Ocean and Christmas Islands, which provided education for six to sixteen year olds, were the major source of intake for the King George V School at Bikenibeu on Tarawa.¹³

From 1957 to 1960, education policy was in a state of flux. At the beginning of the period, when the withdrawal of the L.M.S. seemed imminent, it was proposed that a dual teaching service should be established with the fully trained government teachers being supplemented by 'island teachers' who would undertake a shorter training course and then return to their home islands. They would be paid, by the Island Councils, at a rate lower than that for government teachers. The scheme was intended to raise the standard of primary education in the light of the poor results being achieved by the mission village schools. A reappraisal in 1960, which took account of the expansion programme conducted by the S.H.M., led to these proposals, not fully implemented, being

11 *ibid.*, 1-3.

12 *ibid.*, 1953, 4-5.

13 GEIC, Colony Annual Report, 1956-7, 34.

dropped in favour of increased subsidies towards mission teachers' salaries.¹⁴

In 1962 there was a further reassessment. In accordance with his aim of expanding services as rapidly as possible, Andersen, supported by the Education Department, argued that existing facilities were inadequate and that Government should assume greater responsibility for education. More emphasis was to be placed on the teaching of English in an attempt to establish a lingua franca for the Colony. Sir David Trench, the High Commissioner, questioned the financial implications of the new policy and suggested that a second look should be taken at the long-standing principle of compulsory education for all children between the ages of six and sixteen years. After further discussions, and initial opposition from the High Commissioner, it was decided that no further action should be taken until advice had been sought from a Colonial Office adviser on education.

Accordingly, a visit by Miss Freda Gwilliam led to the publication of a comprehensive statement on educational needs and policy in May 1965.¹⁵ The memorandum revealed grave defects in the Colony's educational system. It was found, for example, that in 255 schools there were only 95 qualified teachers for a total of 12,000 pupils.¹⁶ Nor was it difficult to find reasons for such a state of affairs. A parsimonious attitude towards education, derived from the anticipated loss of phosphate revenue, had led to understaffing and a failure to provide adequate facilities. Duplication of effort by government and voluntary agencies had, by dispersing resources, only worsened the situation. Centralisation on Tarawa, together with staff shortages, had meant inadequate supervision and in-service training for teachers posted to outer islands.¹⁷

14 GEIC, Education Department Reports, 1957-1960.

15 GEIC, Memorandum on Education Policy, May 1965.

16 *ibid.*, 1.

17 *ibid.*, 2.

To remedy this situation a new policy of primary education was introduced. Apart from schools on urban Tarawa, it was proposed that existing village and mission schools should be consolidated into larger primary schools, under the supervision of local authorities, which would offer a six year course of instruction. A lower grade of teachers was to be created to supplement the numbers of graduates from the Tarawa Teachers' College. In so far as they revived the idea of a dual service, and laid greater emphasis on participation by Island Councils, the recommendations represented a re-statement of policies introduced a decade earlier but virtually abandoned in the late 1950s. The most significant recommendation, however, provided that English should be the medium of instruction in the new consolidated schools.¹⁸ It was argued that, with resettlement being promoted wherever possible, higher standards of English education were essential to give settlers the best possible chances of assimilation.

Until it was expanded into a full secondary school offering a five year course leading to the Cambridge overseas examinations in 1956, the King George V School provided only post-primary education.¹⁹ While the missions have not offered full secondary education they have, throughout the period, combined religious and teacher training with post-primary education. The S.H.M. maintains a teachers' college at Abemama in addition to post-primary schools at Abaiang and Tarawa for boys and girls respectively. Since the L.M.S. closed its post-primary school at Abaiang in 1965, the Gilbert Islands Protestant Church has operated a co-educational school at Beru. The Ellice Islands Church (successor to the L.M.S. in that group) has recently expanded its boys' school at Vaitupu into a co-educational post-primary school offering instruction up to Form IV.

18 *ibid.*, 3.

19 'Post-primary' schools in the Colony offer a two or three year course to bring students from the standards of village education up to those required for entry to the government secondary school. Now, pupils from government primary schools usually proceed directly to the secondary school.

Education policy, as it has affected the Ellice Islands, has been one of the principal causes of the Ellice Islanders' disillusionment with the Government in recent years. The failure to replace Kennedy with another expatriate teacher in 1931 was seen, with some justice, as a breach of faith. The final closure of the Ellice Islands School in 1953 worsened the situation. And when approval was first given for a government girls' secondary school in the early 1950s it was agreed that the school should be located at Funafuti - a decision that was reversed in favour of Tarawa in 1957.²⁰ From time to time consideration has been given to the establishment of a government post-primary school in the Ellice but no firm decision has yet been made. The result has been not only disillusionment, and the emergence of a belief that the Ellice Islands are being neglected by the Government, but also an increased flow of Ellice Islanders to Tarawa.

Since 1969 two major policy statements on education have been issued. The first, presented to the House of Representatives by the Director of Education in May 1969, was severely criticised by the Acting Financial Secretary because of the financial commitment involved, in particular for the creation of government 'senior primary schools'. The 1965 policy had already been considerably modified in the light of the Skinner Report on localisation²¹ and the Mooring Report. The output from King George V School had been increased, fees had been introduced at government primary schools and increased for secondary education. Cheaper buildings, incorporating a higher percentage of local materials had been constructed for island schools. It was hoped that the senior primary schools would raise the intake standards for secondary education while removing a period of idleness from the lives of those teenagers who would not go on to more advanced education.²² The attitude taken by the Secretariat

20 GEIC, Education Department Report, 1957, 5.

21 GEIC, Report on Localisation of the Civil Service (Skinner), 1968.

22 GEIC, Draft Education Policy, Jan. 1969.

to these proposals may be summed up in an extract from a statement made during the House of Representatives' debate by T.H. Layng, Acting Financial Secretary:

In a territory with limited resources the unpalatable fact will have to be faced that in future it will probably not be possible to educate every single child. And as the population increases, more and more children will be born who have no chance either of schooling or a wage earning job. Unless an economic miracle takes place, the aim of universal education will have to be abandoned.²³

As a result of the Secretariat's rejection of the Department's proposals, a revised statement was prepared and approved by the House in May 1970. Island council and voluntary agency (in fact, the S.H.M. is the only such agency) schools were to be expanded to offer a nine-year course of instruction from the age of six years. Aid was to be continued for approved schools but at a reduced level. Subsidies for approved teachers were to be reduced from 80 per cent to 30 per cent of salary.²⁴ In particular, this change affected the twenty-seven local government schools and twenty mission primary schools to which trained teachers were appointed.²⁵

Secondary education and teacher training facilities have continued to expand over the past decade. Enrolment at the King George V and Elaine Bernacchi School (co-educational since amalgamation in 1965) is now in the vicinity of three hundred with an output of fifty students a year.²⁶ Few successes have been achieved in the Cambridge overseas examinations to which the school curriculum is now geared. Although a large number of subject passes have been recorded, no more than six students have been awarded full certificates in any of the past three years. The low pass rate is inevitable, to some extent, given the poor intake standards and staffing problems. In addition, neither the contracts nor leave of expatriate personnel coincide with the school year, although some

23 GEIC, H. of R., Minutes, Second Session, Second Meeting, 35.

24 GEIC, Education Policy, May 1970, passim.

25 GEIC, Education Department, Triennial Survey, 1967-1969, 5.

26 GEIC, Education Policy, May 1970, 8-9.

moves are being made to achieve this end, and there are frequent gaps between appointments. Few expatriates of high calibre have been attracted to the service.

At present the Tarawa Teachers' College produces some thirty graduates a year - fifteen after a two year course and fifteen after a one year course. The S.H.M. also trains some teachers for Catholic primary schools at its Abemama teachers' college. The Tarawa college has had similar staffing problems to the secondary school but these were partly offset by vigorous and sound leadership during the late 1960s.

Technical and vocational education has generally been neglected in the Colony. Some departments have conducted in-service training in a sporadic and haphazard fashion but there has been little attempt to establish classes in the specialised subjects required for government service. The problem has been alleviated, at some expense, through overseas training. A vocational training centre has been planned to fill this serious gap in the Colony's education structure but, like many other projects undertaken throughout the period, there is considerable delay while policy is put into practice.

Medical Services

The post-war expansion of medical services has resulted in a high degree of control being established over diseases previously endemic in the Colony. Tuberculosis, a major killer in the first part of the century, is now well in check. Leprosy and filariasis, endemic in the Gilbert and Ellice groups respectively, have been all but eliminated. Although more frequent shipping and the introduction of air services have made the Colony more vulnerable to the spread of communicable disease, this has been largely offset by increased numbers of trained staff, the use of more sophisticated drugs and equipment, and medical surveys and programmes undertaken with the assistance of overseas aid organisations.

The Central Hospital, re-established under somewhat primitive conditions at Abaokoro, north Tarawa, after the war, was finally transferred to a new site at Bikenibeu, south Tarawa, in 1958. There is a smaller general hospital at Funafuti run by local staff.

All inhabited islands have a small hospital staffed by a local medical officer or dresser and, on larger islands, a nurse. The island hospitals usually comprise a clinic-dispensary, constructed from permanent materials, surrounded by a 'village' of houses of local construction, occupied by the patients. It is customary for at least some members of a patient's family to move into the hospital compound with him to assist with nursing and to provide and prepare food.

Throughout the period the standards of treatment offered at the various hospitals have improved considerably, largely as the result of increased numbers of graduates being available from the Fiji School of Medicine. Training programmes for medical assistants (dressers) and nurses have been inaugurated at the Central Hospital. Both nurses and medical officers have been sent overseas for courses in general medical work and, more particularly in family planning and public health. By 1970 the Department had a professional establishment of four doctors (expatriate), twenty-two medical officers, forty medical assistants, and a total of forty-five nurses (including two expatriates).²⁷

While the improvement of medical services has not been impaired by the policy fluctuations that have been evident in the educational field, the Department has not been without its defects and problems. As with all government activity, centralisation has led to an uneven distribution of resources and varying standards of service and achievement. Until recent years touring of the outer islands, hindered in part by the irregularity of shipping, was negligible. Medical staff, particularly in the Gilbert Islands have had to contend with the conservatism of the populace, many of whom prefer to place their trust in traditional remedies or fail to notify illness to a doctor until it is too late for effective treatment. Thus communicable disease is often difficult to isolate and control; a control that is made even more difficult to achieve in the light of communal living patterns and the sharing of food and utensils.

27 GEIC, Civil List, 1970.

The treatment of mental health has always been seriously neglected largely because of the expenditure that would be required to improve present facilities. There is a ward for mental patients at the Central Hospital but it is only able to house and provide rather limited treatment for serious and potentially dangerous patients. On the outer islands it is not unusual to find a mentally unstable person locked in the local prison, handcuffed to one of the poles supporting his house or, if considered less violent, handcuffed but allowed to roam free where he provides amusement for children of the village. The Government has been planning to extend the mental ward for some time but definite progress was not made until a special committee was set up in March 1971 as the result of a debate in the House of Representatives in December 1970.²⁸

From the early 1960s family planning campaigns were promoted in various parts of the Pacific but little attention was given to birth control before that time. In some territories, Fiji for example, publicity has been focussed on the need to increase per capita income so that living standards might be improved.²⁹ In the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony future land shortages have been most strongly emphasised. Throughout the Pacific area there have been cultural barriers to the acceptance of birth control. Children are regarded as gifts from God and it is believed that a large family ensures security in old age; at the same time strong traditions of adoption ensure that all children are cared for.

Despite the recognition given the Colony's population problem since the 1930s, birth control was not given serious consideration as a solution until 1963. With nearly half of the population owing allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church any such programme would be faced with obvious difficulties but these were intensified at the outset by poor planning, a failure to recognise customary attitudes and a lack of instruction in the use of the chosen method - the spermicidal foaming tablet. The first campaign was short-lived. Many women, ill-instructed in the use of the tablet,

28 Colony Information Notes, 4 March 1971.

29 See Fairbairn, 'Family Planning in the Pacific Islands: The Fijian Example', Journal of Pacific History, V (1970), 145-50.

swallowed it; some attributed it with the qualities of aspirin. In the southern Gilbert Islands in particular, where heated stones were often inserted into the vagina prior to intercourse as a drying agent (in response, it is reported, to a male dislike of moisture being present in the vagina during intercourse)³⁰ there were obvious and strong objections to such a method of birth control.³¹

Attention was again given to family planning in 1965, but the campaign made little progress until 1968 when a female doctor was appointed to take charge. Her appointment made some impact in the outer islands where men have strong objections to their wives consulting a male doctor unless there is some visible injury or illness. Early results were discouraging but, by March 1971, 2,500 women (26.9 per cent of those in the sixteen to forty age group) were reported to be using some reliable method of contraception; some 75 per cent of the group have been fitted with intra-uterine devices.³²

Social Stability and Social Change

The effects of social services, whether provided by the Government or the missions, are evident on all islands to some degree. Obviously Tarawa is the island most affected; Funafuti, a port of entry, the administrative headquarters of the Ellice Islands, and served by a weekly air service has also been subjected to more intensive pressures for change than most of the other islands. The introduction of English education in the outer islands over the past few years has raised the aspirations of the younger generation. They have also benefited from improved medical facilities more than their parents, not because of any restrictions on treatment but because many older people, especially in the Gilbert Islands, are unwilling to trust younger doctors. But the

30 'Report on the population problems of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony' (Grimble), enclosed in R.C. to H.C., no. 253, 30 Aug. 1930 - WPHC, Inwards Correspondence, General, 1160/1930.

31 Bedford, Resettlement, 134-6.

32 Colony Information Notes, 19 Feb. 1971.

older people are prepared to accept new ways of doing some of the old tasks. Agricultural implements, kitchen utensils, imported food, kerosene lamps and irons, and bicycles, for example, are widely used on all islands; motor-cycles, transistor radios and sewing machines are still regarded as luxury items. Except on Tarawa and Funafuti, four-wheeled vehicles, mainly lorries and buses, are all owned either by Island Councils or co-operative organisations. Canoes, built by traditional methods but with imported materials, are still the standard form of water transport for the people of the outer islands. But the adoption of some of the trappings of European civilisation represents change only at a superficial level. It is the attitude shown by the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders towards the educated man that best illustrates the islanders' views on social change.

On the outer Gilbert Islands the traditional authority structure, whether based on gerontocratic or chiefly principles, still survives to a large degree. The well-educated 'young man', who may be up to forty or fifty years of age, therefore finds himself in a very difficult position when the unimane of his village are unwilling to listen to his advice or even, on some occasions, allow him to speak on matters on which he may be well-informed. Persistence on his part will lead to ridicule, criticism and, in extreme cases, to ostracism. The position of the civil servant posted to a 'strange' island then, is made doubly difficult; education does not give a teacher or medical officer any higher status than his age would normally allow.

The maneaba remains at the centre of social life in the Gilbert Islands but with rather more restricted functions than in former times. While most adults could still identify their family boti, the formal seating pattern is only occasionally used. The unimane still gather in the maneaba to hear and settle complaints, especially those arising out of land disputes, brought before them by the people of the village, and to consider island affairs, but the days when they would spend long periods discussing traditions and genealogies are rapidly passing; many younger people cannot trace their ancestry beyond two or three generations.

On Butaritari, Makin and Abemama, where chiefly authority is still considerable, the uea, although not officially recognised,

can still wield great influence through their control of large land-holdings and because the lower orders of society still acknowledge their rights and privileges as uea. The uneven land distribution leads to occasional protests but few, especially on Abemama, are prepared to challenge publicly the authority of the uea.

The survival of traditional authority in the Gilbert Islands is best seen in the power that the unimane or uea still wield over land and its inheritance. Children who have cared for their parents, whether by working the family lands or by remitting wages, will inherit; others will not. The jealousy with which the Gilbertese regards his land is one of the major obstacles in the way of agricultural development. Such importance is placed on each individual plot that many landowners are not prepared to merge their lands with those of their neighbours so that a large area might be worked collectively.

The educated Ellice Islander, by comparison with his Gilbertese counterpart, is granted rather higher status within his community. Whether he is a teacher, a pastor, a medical officer or a former employee in the phosphate industry, he is greeted as the harbinger of new ways by the Ellice Islanders as they seek to emulate European standards. A European husband is still regarded as a prime 'catch' in the Ellice, and the lighter-skinned part-European baby, whether born in or out of wedlock, is always welcomed and eagerly sought for adoption.

Whereas in the Gilbert Islands women have a decidedly inferior status to men, and such women's clubs as have been formed have largely been the products of government initiative, women's organisations have long been a feature of life in the Ellice Islands. There, where stronger emphasis is placed on community participation, the clubs have, from pre-war times, accepted responsibility for village hygiene and have banded together in fund-raising schemes for church and village projects. In 1970, for example, the combined women's organisations in the Ellice agreed that \$24,000 which had been raised, but not needed, for the new church at Funafuti, should be used to extend Motafua school at Vaitupu. A

classroom-dormitory block for girls, costing \$14,000 was built and the remainder placed in the school's investment fund which now stands at \$48,000.³³

Such co-operative ventures, when considered together with the overseas investment accounts held by all the Ellice Islands, reveal a far stronger community spirit than is usually discernible in the Gilberts. To some extent it may be explained as a reaction to long periods of government neglect in the group and the dominant position held by the church and its pastors. But there has also been a growing feeling in the Ellice for some years that, with constitutional progress, the Ellice Islanders may decide or be forced to 'go it alone' when self-government or independence is granted to the Colony. Some Ellice Islanders argue that in the event of political separation the Motafua school could easily be expanded to provide secondary education for the children in the group and become the centre of an independent education system.

The people of the Colony are now divided not only racially but also between those resident in the relatively urbanised and developed centre of south Tarawa and those living on the outer islands. If present trends continue, these divisions will become entrenched resulting in conflicts between the centre and the perimeter, and between Gilbertese and Ellice. The unevenness of social and economic progress is already becoming an important political issue. It is this problem, and the racial issue, that is, at present, the major barrier to the constitutional development of the Colony.

33 Personal communication from the Rev. Iosia Taomia (Secretary to the Ellice Islands Church) November 1970.

CHAPTER 8LOCAL GOVERNMENT, 1948 - 1970¹

There have been three major revisions of local government policy in the Colony in the post-war period, but none has been conspicuously successful. The most significant reason for failure has been inadequate understanding, in official circles, of local conditions and attitudes. The majority of those concerned with the formation of policy have been expatriates who have not only lacked knowledge of the vernacular languages but were also resident, for the most part, on Tarawa. Since the early 1950s all District Officers for the Gilbert Islands have lived at Colony headquarters and, except during the past two years, spent less than half of their time living in and touring their Districts. Although some District Officers have played a minor part in the formation of policy over the past two decades, decisions have generally been taken in the Colony Secretariat or in the High Commissioner's office by persons with little or no experience of the outer islands. In addition, the Government has consistently failed to explain adequately to the people new legislation being introduced and the reasons for change.

The 1941 Native Governments Ordinance² was designed as a first stage towards local self-government and ultimate Colony self-government. When the re-formed Councils were working satisfactorily it was intended that they should be given financial responsibility. Before such an aim, however laudable, could be achieved it was essential to break down the belief that the Native

1 This chapter is confined to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands per se. Other islands which were subsequently included in the Colony - Ocean Island, the northern Line Islands, the Phoenix Islands and the Tokelaus - are all special cases and would have to be discussed separately. Niulakita, the southernmost Ellice Island, which was virtually uninhabited until after the Second World War, is disregarded. It is now run as a plantation by the people of Niutao, and administered from that island. South Tarawa, Colony headquarters since 1946, has been directly administered since 1958 and has therefore been excluded for that period.

2 Ordinance No. 4 of 1941.

Magistrate was the agent of the Government and to return the responsibility for local government to those with whom power in the community really lay - the old men. It was hoped that by making some places on the Island Councils subject to election, the unimane of the Gilbert Islands could be persuaded to support and participate in the new local governments. The franchise was granted to all males and females over thirty years of age.

But the elected Councillors were not given sufficient powers to achieve the desired ends, as the Native Magistrate was again firmly placed at the head of his Council. He was to preside over all three local government agencies; the Island Council, the Native Court and the Lands Court. The Chief of Kaubure was placed second in the hierarchy. He was to act in the absence of the Magistrate, and to be responsible for supervising the work of the Kaubure and ensuring the enforcement of the laws and regulations. All secretarial and records work remained the responsibility of the Scribe. The Chief of Police, apart from his obvious duties, was to act as prosecutor in the Native Court. All principal officers were to be appointed by the District Officer subject, in the case of the Magistrate, to confirmation by the Resident Commissioner. No attempt was made to revive the powers of the high chiefs of the northern and central Gilberts who were given only a ceremonial position under the Ordinance.

An Island Council was established, to be composed of the Native Magistrate, the Chief of Kaubure, the Chief of Police, the island's medical officer, the Kaubure and elected members not exceeding half the number of Kaubure. The Council was to 'consider reports made to it by members of the Council relating to the peace, order and good government of the people in the island', to 'hear complaints of misconduct or neglect of duty on the part of all officers other than the Magistrate', and to enact island regulations. The Kaubure were to advise the Chief of Police on all cases from their respective village districts, and to act as a jury in other cases. It was hoped that the introduction of the jury principle, especially in the Gilbert Islands, would ease the difficulties often arising from religious sympathy or antagonism on the part of the Magistrates.

A Lands Court for each island was also established under the Ordinance. Members were to be the Magistrate, Chief of Kaubure, and one-third of the Kaubure appointed in rotation by the Magistrate. Native members of the Lands Commission, holding office under a separate ordinance, were also included. The Lands Court was to hear and settle disputes brought before it concerning land boundaries and ownership, garden pits and fish traps. The functions of the Native Court remained virtually unchanged. It continued to hear cases brought under the code of criminal and civil law included in the Ordinance, and the island regulations, subject to an appeal to a District Officer.

By 1948 co-operative societies, which had been started in the 1930s, had been re-established to facilitate the distribution of supplies, and copra collection. The post-war boom resulted in a rapid increase in copra production in response to rising prices among people desirous of purchasing consumer goods which had been unavailable for some years. Further wage employment and an opportunity to travel through the groups, was offered in the Labour Corps. Together, copra production and the Labour Corps lessened the interest of many men in the new Island Councils. Others who had worked away from their home islands, under Japanese control, or on reconstruction projects, formed a disruptive element in many island communities.

One of the prime intentions of the Ordinance had been to bring the old men of the Gilbert Islands back within the orbit of local government. The newly-created Lands Courts provided them with an alternative source of power. It has long been accepted that by virtue of their intimate knowledge of genealogies, customs governing ownership and inheritance, and details of transactions dating back several generations, the unimane are the only real authorities on land matters in the Gilbert Islands. Land, because of its very scarcity, is, and always has been, of crucial importance to the Gilbertese. Many of the unimane preferred to serve on Lands Courts or co-operative committees rather than on the Island Councils which remained under the control of the District Officers and their nominee Magistrates.³

3 D.O., G.I.D. to Sec. to Govt., 16 Dec. 1949 - GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F10/1/1 (Central Archives).

Lands Courts and co-operative societies caused fewer problems in the smaller Ellice Islands. Island leaders had always played a prominent role in local government and absorbed positions of responsibility in the new agencies with little difficulty. Mission influence over island governments was undiminished. Cases were recorded where Council meetings were adjourned while a member, who was also a deacon, withdrew to seek the pastor's advice.⁴

In neither group was the Ordinance fully explained or understood. Limited numbers of staff, many of whom were concerned primarily with reconstruction, and irregular shipping were but two of the factors involved. In the immediate post-war years there were few officers fluent in the vernacular languages and some were forced to rely on interpreters whose English was sometimes inadequate when faced with the technicalities of legislation. There had been no education programme designed to show the role that the reconstructed Councils could play in island politics. As in many other colonial territories, the ideal behind it all - a decentralisation of power to local authorities in preparation for eventual self-government - slowly disappeared and the functions and powers of the island governments reverted to those of the pre-war years.

The decision to call a Gilbert Islands Magistrates' Conference in 1951 marked a new phase of policy for both central and local government. Maude's memorandum on post-war policy had recommended the early creation of a Council of Representatives for the Colony. Administrative officers were not prepared to implement the proposals fully but hoped that the Magistrates' Conference, by beginning as a course for training in local government work and familiarisation with Government procedures, could eventually be expanded to form such a council. It was intended to give the Magistrates' Conference responsibility for the allocation of funds to the Island Councils as soon as possible and then gradually to increase their responsibility to cover other spheres of government activity. In fact, the Magistrates' Conference, apart from being a sounding board on some policy matters, remained

4 D.O., E.I.D. to Sec. to Govt., no. 81, 10 July 1952 - *ibid.*

a training school, meeting three times between 1951 and 1954. Two Gilbertese-speaking Magistrates from the Ellice Islands attended the 1952 Conference, as observers, as part of an unfulfilled plan to organise a similar conference for the Ellice.⁵ In 1956 all Colony Magistrates, five regional delegates, and representatives from commerce and the missions combined to meet as a Colony Conference; the first representative body to meet in the Colony.

At the 1952 Magistrates' Conference the delegates were told that the Government was considering reorganising the Island Councils, and were asked for their comments. The Magistrates agreed that the Councils as established four years earlier were largely ineffective, and attributed their failure to two main causes. They considered that the Councils had been set up by the Government to perform certain functions on the islands, but their role and potential was not understood by many people. The result was to leave the katei (Gilbertese customary code of social and governmental relationships) in the hands of traditional authorities on many islands. Secondly, the Magistrates, who always tended towards the authoritarian, considered that elected members did not have the same status in their communities as the old Kaubure. With elections being introduced young men offered themselves in order to avoid communal works, and people preferred to elect men who would not be rigorous in their enforcement of the island regulations. When asked to suggest remedies, however, the Magistrates could produce few ideas, and thereafter relied on the guidance of the District Officer in charge of the Conference.⁶

At this stage the Administration believed that the only solution to the problem lay in a separation of judicial and executive functions and the restoration of the Chief of Kaubure to his original position as head of the island government. There was to be a separate corps of magistrates, especially trained, and liable to transfer away from their home islands. A wider representation of views was considered desirable for the Councils

5 See correspondence and conference reports in GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F37/7/1.

6 'Report of the 1952 Magistrates' Conference' - *ibid.*

and it was proposed that mission and co-operative interests should be given a voice, and the Council's membership be supplemented by certain Government officials stationed on the islands - in particular teachers and wireless operators, in addition to the senior medical officer for the island who had been a member since 1948. (Problems arising from Ellice Islanders in these positions based in the Gilberts, and vice versa, were briefly considered and dismissed.) The officers concerned were unanimously agreed that the Councils should be given greater responsibilities especially over the collection and expenditure of local revenues, and the appointment of their subordinate officials. The 1941 Ordinance was to be repealed in sections and replaced by an Island Councils Ordinance, a Native Courts Ordinance, and a Native Lands Ordinance.⁷

The Magistrates' reaction to these proposals was one of extreme caution. They agreed that members of the Island Councils should be the real community leaders, but had grave doubts as to whether such men could be chosen successfully by an elective process. They acknowledged that their own administrative and judicial duties were becoming excessive but were reluctant to accept the elevation of the Chief of Kaubure as the best solution.

Mid-way through the drafting process there was a further revision of policy. Proposals for completely new ordinances were shelved, under pressure from the High Commissioner, and a partial modification of the 1941 Ordinance agreed to. At discussions attended by the High Commissioner, the Resident Commissioner and senior Colony staff, in May 1954, it was agreed that:

The Magistrate should be retained in both his judicial and executive capacities as Head of the Island Government and chairman of the Council, and that he should also be regarded as the agent for the Central Government.⁸

Proposals to allow the Councils a limited degree of financial responsibility were approved, but it was firmly laid down by the High Commissioner that the intention was not to create fully

7 See GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F10/1/1.

8 Minutes of discussions held at Tarawa, 13 May 1954 - GEIC, G.I.D.O., 2nd Series, F29/3/8.

autonomous local authorities - island governments were to be regarded as agencies of the Government.⁹

The Native Governments (Amendment) Ordinance, 1955, and the Native Governments (Financial Powers) Ordinance of the same year¹⁰ introduced such changes as Sir Robert Stanley, the High Commissioner, and Bernacchi were prepared to allow. Colony officials considered that the changed role of the Councils would not be understood, especially among the more conservative Gilbertese, as long as the title of 'Kaubure' were retained for some councillors. The Chief of Kaubure remained as before, but the executive functions of the Kaubure were taken over by the 'district police' who had been, in practice, the Kaubure's assistants. The jury role of the Kaubure was taken over by a panel of assessors to be appointed by the Resident Commissioner. 'Native Members' of Island Councils were to be elected in such numbers and from such areas as the District Officer for the island should determine, with provision for the appointment of additional members by the Resident Commissioner if considered necessary to ensure the service of those considered to be the 'true community leaders'. All officers were to be elected for a three-year term.

The scope of Island Council activities was considerably expanded by the new Ordinances. The Councils were to provide such services as they considered necessary, or the District Officer should direct, for the 'general health, security or well-being' of the inhabitants of the islands. Each Council was to hold an Island Fund to be composed of Court fines and fees, licence fees and local taxation levied with the approval of a District Officer. A further clause was inserted to allow the payment of subventions by Government. Estimates were to be prepared annually for the approval of the Resident Commissioner through a District Officer.

The 1955 Ordinances, introduced to various islands through 1956 and 1957, failed to remedy the problems existing in local government. The doubts expressed by the Magistrates in 1952 concerning the calibre of members elected to Island Councils were

9 *ibid.*

10 See Ordinances No. 1 and No. 9 of 1955.

quickly confirmed. Weak men, who generally failed to enforce island regulations, and others, who sought exemption from communal works, were elected. Because authority derived from the Government was less highly regarded than status bestowed by the community, many island leaders, aware that a choice between the two was involved, remained aloof. In addition, local government employment, because of the low salaries offered, had little to commend it to the more educated men. The Resident Commissioner's power to appoint additional members proved an inadequate safeguard with the result that most Island Councils lacked the understanding and education demanded by the new constitution.¹¹ Magistrates and Chiefs of Kaubure, both Government appointees, tended to dominate the island governments.

While the Native Governments (Amendment) Ordinance had considerably increased the powers and responsibilities of the Island Councils it had, as a matter of policy, created opportunities for a greater degree of control from the District Office. Partly because of inadequate shipping and partly, too, as an expression of a belief in a more centralised concept of administration, District Officers for the Gilbert Islands had been based on Tarawa for increasing periods rather than on the headquarters islands of the sub-districts. 'Whistle-stop' touring became more frequent. District Officers, unless engaged in lands work, could no longer spend long periods of residence on outer islands supervising and training local officials. Contact tended to be brief and, of necessity, confined to the principal officers of the Island Councils. The outcome of this situation was a failure to establish the principle that the Island Councils were, in fact, local authorities, as well as agencies of the Government, worthy of interest and support and a rapid break-down in communication between central and local administrations.

Other problems arose. The replacement of the Kaubure by assessors in the Native Courts served to hinder the course of 'British' justice. With long-serving Kaubure it had been possible, through training, to move towards a concept of impartial justice.

11 GEIC, Memorandum on Local Government Policy in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, 1963.

Abbreviated touring no longer permitted such luxuries in the case of large panels of assessors who were drawn from the entire adult population. Assessors tended to judge a case in the light of their knowledge of the plaintiff, the defendant, their respective families and the current state of local politics.¹² True, such decisions often meant more harmonious village life but they could also intensify personal and religious rivalries.

The Native Governments (Financial Powers) Ordinance was designed to increase the financial responsibilities of the Island Councils. In practice it had the opposite effect. In addition to paying the salaries of local government officials, and for local services, the Island Councils were obliged to pay all Colony teachers and medical staff based on their islands. In 1958 only four of the islands in the Gilbert and Ellice groups were able to balance their budgets unaided. The remaining twenty all received subventions. In the case of one of the Ellice Islands the subsidy amounted to 70 per cent of revenue. There was little incentive for wealthier islands to achieve financial independence since 50 per cent of all surplus funds were collected by the Government as a contribution towards subsidies for other islands. According to figures prepared in 1962, the assumption by the Government of responsibility for the salaries of Colony staff employed on outer islands would have allowed fourteen islands to balance their budgets, and six of the remaining ten to come within easy distance of doing so. The cost of such a change would have been \$7,500 in excess of the \$17,072 being paid in subventions but would have provided incentives for development for a majority of islands. The figures show that in the four years that the system had been in operation the island governments had taken over part of the cost of their administration from the Government without a reciprocal growth of responsibility.

Heavy reliance on subventions, and attempts to reduce these to a minimum, automatically resulted in closer supervision by District Officers. The frustrations inherent in the system are made clear in a District Officer's report of an 'Estimates'

12 Travelling Diary, Beru, May 1959 - GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F10/11/12.

meeting with an Island Council:

After discussing the Revenue and Expenditure it was apparent that in fact the meeting was nothing more than a "facade" as the council members have virtually no say in how their money should be spent. Having started the meeting with a talk stressing that it was their own money that they were spending and that they should remember their responsibility to the taxpayer we went on to discuss the salaries of the Local Government Officials, Teachers Dressers etc. When they wanted to change these salaries I had to explain, to everyone's confusion, that although it was their money, in fact they could not spend it how they liked but according to "governments" wishes.¹³

By 1962 the Island Councils were in a sorry state. The Magistrate was firmly established in his paramount position and tended to become even more the master rather than the servant of his Council. The calibre of Councillors was low, and the public attitude towards local government was apathetic in the absence of any incentive to make it otherwise. With the Colony Government prepared to balance the budget there was little interest on the part of the Councils in producing a surplus, and even less in promoting the development of island services. The burden of salaries of Colony staff was a further source of resentment and disillusionment. The Island Councils had become ineffective and moribund branches of the Government. Except at Butaritari and Makin, where the high chief and his family held offices in local government, traditional authorities on the islands, and especially the unimane of the southern Gilberts, continued to remain outside the formal structure of local government, being content to pull strings and control the social life of their islands. Although the Councils in the Ellice Islands suffered from severe financial difficulties, there was little division of interest within the communities. Island Councillors and deacons tended to be synonymous, and in practice there was little distinction between temporal and spiritual affairs.

Proposals for revising the local government structure were discussed at the 1962 Colony Conference, and with the Acting High Commissioner the following year. As before, expatriate administrators favoured the creation of island councils, with elected majorities,

13 Tour Report, Nonouti, July-August 1962 - GEIC, G.I.D.O., F3/16/23.

and separate island courts which would form the bottom tier in a reorganised judicial system. The establishment of a unified central and local government service was an essential part of the scheme. Officials, to be known as Island Executive Officers, were to be selected, trained and appointed by the Colony Government and would serve as seconded officers to local governments fulfilling the duties of clerks to councils, courts and lands courts. They would also perform limited duties as agents for the Government. Salaries of teachers, telecommunications officers, police and some medical officers were to be the responsibility of the Government leaving local authorities to provide houses and offices, and to pay land rents.¹⁴

By the Island Courts Ordinance of 1965,¹⁵ the separation of judicial and executive functions in local government, advocated by many officials since the 1930s, was finally achieved. The Island Courts were to be composed of three members - President, Vice-President and an ordinary member - appointed by the Resident Commissioner. The new Island Courts were to have limited jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases and were to be subordinate to Colony Magistrates' Courts. Maximum sentences authorised under the Ordinance were six months' imprisonment and/or a fine of \$100. The Island Courts were authorised to decide cases under both Colony law and the by-laws passed by Island Councils. Magistrates, usually touring District Officers, were empowered to review all decisions of Island Courts.

By the time that the Local Government Ordinance was enacted in 1966¹⁶ many of the 1962 proposals had been modified or abandoned in the face of objections from the High Commissioner and the Colonial Office. Most of the criticisms raised against the recommendations prepared by officials in the Colony revealed little appreciation of the peculiar problems that had to be faced. Despite arguments that the Colony's local government structure and service should not necessarily be based on those of other territories, the High

14 Memorandum on Local Government Policy ..., 1963.

15 Ordinance No. 9 of 1965.

16 Ordinance No. 5 of 1966.

Commissioner insisted that the Ordinance should be a close model of that introduced in the British Solomon Islands in 1963 and drafted by officials of the Protectorate administration to meet conditions in that territory.

The functions of the Councils established under the Ordinance were much wider than those granted to any predecessor. In addition to the usual duties of preserving order, providing good government, maintaining birth, death and marriage registers, and passing health and cleanliness regulations, the Councils were expected to play a far greater role in providing social and other services for the islands. All members of the new Councils were to be elected for a three year term, with one-third retiring annually by rotation. Presidents and Vice-Presidents were to be elected, as hitherto suggested. Membership of Councils, and the franchise, was open to all British subjects and protected persons who were over twenty-one years of age and living in a council area.

The main sources of revenue for the Island Councils were to be a basic per capita rate and a land tax. For development projects and buildings the Government indicated a willingness to make grants or loans depending on the nature of the venture and the availability of funds. Estimates were to be prepared annually for the approval of the Resident Commissioner.

The proposal to establish a single civil service for the Colony was dropped at the insistence of the High Commissioner who also stipulated that Island Executive Officers' salaries should not be equated with those for comparative positions in the Colony service. Island Executive Officers were to be under the control of a statutory body, the Local Government Service Board, and officers would not be permitted to transfer between the two services. Large numbers of applications were received, however, for the first local government training course which was held in 1966. Graduates from the course were posted to the reconstructed Councils from December 1966.

The new legislation, effective from 1967, marked a new departure in the concept of local government for the Colony. Previously, the Native Governments had been largely concerned with petty administrative tasks, their activities being centred on the

'Government Stations' on their respective islands. The old governments were relatively inexpensive, made few demands on the people and were unproductive in terms of economic development and social services. The 1966 Ordinance attempted to introduce a democratic system of control as an incentive for community development. It was hoped that the expansion of democratic procedures at the island level would complement Colony constitutional development. While the Island Councils have made considerable progress in some directions, since the Ordinance was introduced, their overall achievements have fallen considerably below expectation largely because the Government has, in recent years, concentrated its efforts on Tarawa rather than on the outer islands.

From the outset the chances of success were limited as the new system was never satisfactorily explained outside of Tarawa. Broadcasting and written propaganda were relied upon to a large extent but neither media has ever proved successful in the Colony. Shipping and staffing problems limited the time that District Officers could spend explaining the legislation on the islands and most officials were handicapped by an inability to speak the vernacular languages. Further, the need for change was not appreciated by those who were to serve on, and be ruled by, the new Councils. To most people on the outer islands the changes were being made at the whim of the Government or, more specifically, its European administrators. Many community leaders regretted the passing of the authoritarian powers of the Magistrate, which were regarded as necessary to ensure village and island harmony. Councils and Presidents were elected but were given virtually no training. In the absence of extensive touring to compensate for these problems, the Island Executive Officers were left, by default on many islands, as the only men with any understanding of the situation and the training to meet its demands.

Despite the large number of applications for the local government training course the calibre of candidates, especially in written and spoken English, was not particularly high. Perhaps the explanation can be found in the difficulty and variety of work involved compared with the low salaries offered. The duties of an Island Executive Officer include the collection and control of island funds and some Colony funds, the ordering of materials for,

and the supervision of, building projects, the purchase of stores, supervision of labour and extra-mural prisoners, supervision and control of subordinate staff, responsibility for keeping lands registers, the payment of salaries and administration of the Provident Fund (for local government employees), correspondence between Councils and the Government, the annual organisation of local elections and the preparation and execution of by-laws. In addition he is required to serve as clerk to a Lands Court, an Island Council and an Island Court.¹⁷

Of the twenty-seven Island Executive Officers at post in July 1969, fourteen were on Scale I salaries (\$396-612), seven were on Scale II (\$516-756) and six were on Scale III (\$636-906). None were on Scale IV (\$846-1080) which is a personal promotion grade. At that time, Executive Officers in the central civil service, with similar duties but working under constant supervision, received commencing salaries of \$912.¹⁸ The initial argument in favour of lower salaries for the Island Executive Officers - that living costs were lower on the outer islands than on Tarawa - has little validity as no such salary distinction is made in the salaries of teachers and medical officers in the Colony civil service. In September 1969, following a civil service review, recommendations for an average increase of 25 per cent in Island Executive Officers' salaries were put forward by the District Commissioner, Gilbert Islands District.¹⁹ When, after twelve months, no action had been taken and a petition of grievances had been submitted to the Government by the Island Executive Officers, a full salary review was promised. Six months later it had not been instituted but a cost of living allowance, amounting to 9 per cent of salary, had been granted as an interim measure.²⁰

17 'Memorandum on Local Government Policy', July 1969 - GEIC, Secretariat, 3rd Series, F113/12/9.

18 *ibid.*; GEIC, Civil List, 1969; Local Government Service Board, Staff Instructions, 1969, App. A and B.

19 'A Review of the Salaries and Structure of the Local Government Service', September 1969 - GEIC, G.I.D.O.

20 See Correspondence in GEIC, G.I.D.O., 2nd Series, F50/1.

In the absence of a comprehensive education programme, conflict between Island Executive Officers and Council Presidents was inevitable. Relative powers and responsibilities were not clearly defined. Told that they were now the heads of the island administrations many Presidents attempted to assume the powers of their predecessors, the Native Magistrates. The Island Executive Officers, on the other hand, were placed in the key position by virtue of their duties, were specially trained, and were often impatient with dilatory Councillors. Further, many Island Executive Officers emerged from their training with the firm impression that they held the most important and powerful office in local government. Such attitudes were common among those who had previously held office in the Native Governments. It is interesting that it is the latter who, with guidance and experience, have become the most efficient, if not the most popular, Executive Officers.

For the most part the election machinery established by the Ordinance has worked satisfactorily. Often, especially in the Ellice and southern Gilbert Islands, informal village meetings have been held prior to the elections at which the old men have indicated who should serve on the Council. Such pre-selection procedures have proved efficient, caused little friction, and frequently rendered an election unnecessary.

With one-third of the Councillors, as well as the President, retiring each year, many Island Councils suffer from a lack of continuity, thus further reducing the value of any formal or informal training. Few Councillors appreciate the full potential of their role in local government and many are less concerned with Council affairs than with assuming the functions of the defunct island police.²¹ On some Gilbert Islands religious rivalry is carried into local politics, being most frequently expressed in disputes over the erection and maintenance of school buildings. Only a limited number of Councillors have a working knowledge of English and the majority are therefore handicapped in their attempts to understand Colony legislation. Five years after its enactment the Local Government

21 Tour Report, Beru, April 1969 - GEIC, G.I.D.O., 2nd Series, F34/4/13.

Ordinance is still not available in the Gilbertese or Ellice languages and a local government handbook in the vernacular languages, planned since 1968, has not been produced.²² Councillors have had difficulty in understanding policies which affect more than their individual islands and, in common with the population at large, have generally failed to appreciate the financial problems which will follow the exhaustion of the Ocean Island phosphates.

A land tax was one of the options allowed the Island Councils in the 1966 Ordinance and has been retained on all islands. It was intended that the tax would be graduated according to the formulae drawn up by the Cartland Lands Commission between 1947 and 1956, with assessments based on both area and fertility. In practice some Councils have tended to levy a flat rate 'per land' with gradations dependent on the number of lands owned by an individual. Others have retained the total assessment for any given piece of land for each part of it when the land has been subdivided. Despite occasional protests of injustice the land tax, however assessed, is accepted and understood by the majority of landowners.

Perhaps the most unpopular demand made on the islanders throughout the history of British administration has been for 'communal works', which has usually involved the maintenance of roads and local administration buildings. Some projects, for example the repair of a village maneaba, were seldom opposed as their maintenance was a traditional obligation. Under the Island Regulations of 1953 and 1954 men and women between the ages of sixteen and sixty, with some exceptions dependent on employment, were obliged to work for a maximum of twenty-four days a year on social services.²³ While the system provided cheap labour and building materials it was most unpopular on the islands, the element of compulsion was considered undesirable and it was decided to abolish the obligation in favour of paid labour and increased local taxation. As expected, the proposal for a new tax was greeted

22 'Minutes of discussions on Local Government Development', 11 April 1968 - GEIC, Secretariat, 3rd Series, F113/1/1.

23 GEIC, Gilbert Islands, Island Regulations, 1953; Ellice Islands, Island Regulations, 1954.

with extreme caution, especially in communities with limited cash means, but accepted as preferable to communal works. It was intended to use local revenue to purchase materials and, depending on the nature of the project, to use either paid or voluntary labour.

The attempted use of voluntary labour was one of the chief barriers to acceptance of the new local government system in the first two years of its operation. While there were few objections to fulfilling customary obligations, projects like the building of causeways across tidal passages were regarded as being 'for the Government'. Many accepted the opportunity to opt out, thus causing friction with those who were prepared to offer their services. Dissension was further exacerbated by attempts at coercion by some of the Councils. In an effort to rectify the situation, a draft by-law was prepared enabling compulsion for 'minor communal services' as defined and permitted by the International Labour Organisation;²⁴ most Island Councils were 'persuaded' by their District Officers to adopt the by-law in 1968-69. The position has improved somewhat since then but protests have been voiced to the effect that the by-law represents a breach of faith as the basic rate was intended to render community service unnecessary. The argument that the by-law was passed by the Island Councils, composed of the elected representatives of the people, has had little effect and has severely strained relations between the Councils and their electors on many islands.

Initially the Island Councils experienced some difficulty in understanding the new system of grants and loans which, along with a rebate on copra production, replaced subventions from the Colony Government. With assistance from District Officers in drawing up annual estimates the position has improved considerably and the list of development and building projects completed or in progress is an impressive one. Large numbers of classrooms, clinics, staff houses and local government buildings have been constructed with aid received under Colonial Development and Welfare schemes and Government grants as well as local contributions. Roads and causeways have been enlarged or constructed

24 Article 2 of Convention 29.

to cater for trucks, and for buses on the three islands where a transport service has been introduced. Local financial contributions have varied depending on the nature of the projects and the Government's willingness or ability to subsidise Council efforts. A significant factor in the capital development evident in the outer islands has been the posting of staff from the public works department and volunteers from United Kingdom or New Zealand agencies to outer islands as works supervisors. Inevitably, less popular projects, especially causeways, have fallen behind schedule, or occasionally been abandoned, but this does not detract from the overall achievement. On some islands plans have been drawn up with the aid of Colony staff with the aim of co-ordinating development.

With the growing appreciation of the local government structure has come a desire on the part of most Councils to perform greater deeds and accept increased responsibilities. For political reasons the Councils have been reluctant to increase the basic rates, which average about \$2.50 in the Gilberts and \$2 in the Ellice for men, and slightly less for women and, therefore, other sources of revenue have been sought. In particular, contributions have been solicited from those engaged in wage employment away from their home islands. Usually remittances are sent to relatives on home islands but community leaders have often sought to channel some of them into funds for church or island projects. At Makin, for example, in 1969 the Island Council attempted to levy a tax of \$1 per month on all persons from the island employed at Ocean Island. When it was realised that the tax would not have legal sanction the Council considered raising the funds by a special rate.²⁵

More common, perhaps, are collections on the islands themselves for special projects. Such 'donations' are usually on a per capita basis and collected at public meetings where non-payers can be noticed. At Onotoa, in 1968, when Council revenue was over-estimated an approach was made to the old men who

25 Correspondence between D.C., O.I.D. and D.C., G.I.D. - GEIC, Secretariat, 3rd Series, F113/9/1.

agreed that the sum of \$1,100 that had been collected for educational purposes should be handed to the Council and that the remaining deficit should be met by a levy of \$2.41 per tax-payer.²⁶

An incident which took place at Maiana shows clearly the hazards of such financial procedures on islands where strong religious rivalries remain close to the surface. In 1967, when the Island Council ran short of funds, the unimane of the island decided that all tax-payers would contribute \$10 to the Council and that there would be no 'voluntary services' on the island in 1968. All but three met the demand. When a deficit still remained, all were instructed to make a further payment of \$1. The original three defaulters and sixteen members of the Roman Catholic Church, acting on the advice of a mission teacher, refused to pay, whereupon all people of the island were forbidden to have any contact with the non-payers. Four men who did so were arrested. Tempers ran high, public meetings were held and, briefly, the island exploded into violence with attacks being made on the property of those who had opposed the decisions of the unimane. Babai pits were slashed, trees were destroyed, houses and canoes were burnt. More than two hundred people were charged by the police as a result of the incident. All pleaded guilty before a Colony Magistrate and were ordered to pay fines of \$1 and to make restitution.

These few examples make clear the powerful position still held by the unimane on most Gilbert Islands. On Nonouti their position has been formalised in an association which dominated the Island Council for two years from its inception in April 1967 and remains as the most important single force in island politics.

When the seventy-fifth anniversary of the arrival of the Sacred Heart Mission in the Gilberts was held at Nonouti in September 1964, Catholics and Protestants joined to provide hospitality and entertainment for visitors from all over the group. Such co-operation was unusual in the Gilberts and it was decided that an annual celebration should be held. The Reitaki n Nonouti (Union

26 Tour Report, Onotoa, 8-14 Dec. 1968 - GEIC, G.I.D.O., 2nd Series, F34/4/14.

of Nonouti People) thus came into being in September 1965 at an island gathering attended by leaders of both churches and their followers. Membership of the Reitaki was confined to heads of families, but attendance of all persons at annual meetings was regarded as obligatory. At this first meeting a contribution of \$1 per member was collected with donations for the island totalling \$363.²⁷

Organisations for the collection of funds for community projects have always been common in the Ellice and southern Gilberts and are usually dominated by the old men, who preferred this type of informal influence to service on Government bodies. The Reitaki, however, differed from the usual pattern in many ways. For the first two years of its existence the Reitaki confined its activities to fund raising on Nonouti and to serving as a forum for the discussion of island affairs. Even at this early stage authoritarian elements were evident, especially in the Reitaki 'laws' which stipulated compulsory attendance at the annual meeting with a \$6 fine for non-attendance. Within two years the powers of the Reitaki committee had expanded considerably with the unimane deciding, for example, which men were to be recruited for employment in the phosphate industry.

With the advent of the Island Council in 1967 the Reitaki took on a more political complexion. Contributions had previously only been collected on the island itself but a desire to develop the island led to requests for donations from men working away from Nonouti. In 1967 and 1968 more than \$3,500 was received from Nauru and over \$500 from Ocean Island. During the same period the Reitaki gave the Island Council \$3,400 towards the cost of a bus for the island. The balance of Reitaki funds, amounting to some \$3,000 was earmarked for the construction of an island hospital in 1968-69. The Island Council was persuaded by the District Officer that a local government building should have priority. The Reitaki declined to make a donation for this purpose and the Council has since experienced difficulty in raising the necessary funds, resulting in a delay before the hospital can be built.

27 Information on the Reitaki was collected in the course of a visit to the island in September 1969.

From late 1967 until mid-1969 the Reitaki, and in particular its committee of village representatives, was the effective government of the island, with the Island Council and Co-operative Society Committee generally accepting its decisions. Apparently the Government did not appreciate the full significance of the Reitaki at this stage regarding it, with its subsidiary committees on Tarawa, Ocean Island and Nauru, simply as a fund raising organisation and an excellent example of ecumenical co-operation.

It was not until religious rivalries finally came to a head in May 1969, with a dispute over Island Council assistance to denominational schools, that the extent of the association's power became obvious. The Reitaki was damned as a 'protestant device' by the priest resident on the island and more than a hundred Roman Catholic members withdrew. In an attempt to enforce its decisions the Reitaki ordered the dismissal of all non-members from Council, Lands Court and Co-operative Society positions and the committee also considered 'legislating' to prevent the recalcitrant minority from using the bus and causeways that had been built under Reitaki supervision. 'Firm action' was taken by the administration. Those dismissed were reinstated and compensated but the power of the Reitaki, although slightly dented, has remained virtually intact. In September 1969 all Island Councillors were members of the Reitaki and the unimane, convinced that their work was for the benefit of all Nonouti people, were seeking other methods of reaffirming their authority.

Throughout 1970 the power of the Reitaki, although slightly diminished in the face of continued opposition from the S.H.M. priest and his supporters, remained considerable. Towards the end of the year religious rivalries were again intensified with the Reitaki committee called upon all Nonouti people, including those employed away from the island, to contribute \$4 towards the cost of a new maneaba, to be built of permanent materials. Radio requests for donations were followed by messages from opponents of the Reitaki urging their families not to contribute.

The Reitaki n Nonouti is the best example of the survival of traditional authority in the southern Gilbert Islands. Activities not directly controlled by the central administration through the Native Governments, and not the prerogative of the church, have

latterly been their preserve on most islands. That an old men's association could gain such dominance on the island not only indicates the degree to which traditional authority has survived through more than three-quarters of a century of expatriate administration but also reveals certain attitudes towards the new Island Councils. Although the Councils are acknowledged to have certain responsibilities, and are regarded as the agencies through which development should take place (even if only because this is required by Government), a more basic responsibility for the collection of funds is believed to rest with 'the people', acting as an informal social entity.

In addition to the obvious influence exercised by the old men in the southern Gilberts there have been interesting survivals of traditional authority on some of the northern and central islands previously governed under a chiefly system. At Butaritari and Makin, for example, members of the old 'royal family' hold prominent offices in local government bodies and exercise considerable influence in non-Council affairs. That influence is exercised partly by virtue of traditional deference but primarily through the control of land. In the 1920s Grimble, as Lands Commissioner, decided that the uea should no longer enjoy rights to all land and that his entitlement would henceforth be restricted to one-quarter of all holdings. The uea's 'quarters' are now in dispute, especially on Makin, with support growing for the group who wish to see a more equitable distribution of the islands' resources.

In Abemama the functions of the uea are now exercised by the son of the titular holder of the office, since the latter has settled in the Solomon Islands. As well as the personal lands owned by the members of the 'royal family' there are about 150 lands still regarded as being the property of the holder of the office of uea.²⁸ The inequitable distribution of lands between the members of the chiefly family and the former slaves has persisted to the present day. The result is a large number of families dependent on the uea for land and, therefore, livelihood. The present uea exercises an informal suzerainty over his 'tenants', charging no fixed rents but expecting periodic gifts, usually solicited, in lieu. With

28 Lands Register, Abemama Lands Court.

increasing dependence on cash, and therefore copra, the uea's position has been reinforced in recent years. He is the elected President of the Island Council, combines this position with that of high chief and, despite occasional rifts in the royal family or murmurings from tenants who consider his demands to be excessive, he is undoubtedly the most powerful man on the island. In March 1971 his position was further consolidated when he was elected as the island's representative in the new Legislative Council.

While the Ellice Islands have experienced difficulties in the executive branch, some of the more serious problems evident in the Gilberts have not been present. On most islands educational development has been the result of co-operation between Island Councils and the missions with schools being merged into single units. Although the original Island Funds were absorbed into Protectorate revenue in 1914 the principle of an island account has been retained; some of the islands have several thousand dollars invested in the Colony and overseas, thus providing a potential source of funds for future development. The Councils act almost as an executive body implementing decisions made by the community at large. No Council in the group would be prepared to make a major decision until full discussion had taken place at an island meeting. Taxation is not always sufficient to meet council commitments, in which case informal levies are collected by the community leaders and paid to an island account.

The separation of the judicial and executive branches of the island administration was the primary object of the 1966 revision. It was intended to relieve the Magistrates' burden as well as rectify an anomalous situation in which the head of a Council could levy fines for breaches of its by-laws. The Island Courts were to become part of the Colony's judicial structure and for this reason it was decided that all fines from the Courts would be paid to Colony funds - the source of all Court expenses. The new Courts met with many of the difficulties experienced by the Island Councils, most being derived from inadequate explanation and training. From the outset the Courts were expected to administer Colony laws written only in English; the

Island Courts Ordinance itself is still not available in the vernacular languages. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that the Courts would be forced to rely heavily on their appointed clerks, who were in practice, but not necessarily, the Island Executive Officers. There have been cases of clerks exceeding their authority and more common instances of the Courts acting outside their jurisdiction or imposing excessive fines and terms of imprisonment for first or trivial offences. Perhaps the main problems have been derived from the fact that the Colony's laws, by-laws and legal procedures have become increasingly sophisticated, making the often rough and ready justice of earlier days less acceptable.

Island Council by-laws also fall within the jurisdiction of the Island Court. There is no objection to this practice on the outer islands; but constant requests have been made to the Government, supported by the staff of the District Offices, for the fines from infringements against the by-laws to be paid to the Councils. The arguments that Court members are paid from the centre, and that the Courts are part of the Colony's judicial structure, are not accepted by the Councils. They argue that fines from the old island regulations were always paid to local revenue and that the practice should continue. The situation as at December 1968 was summed up by the District Commissioner for the Gilbert Islands:

The [Nonouti] Council brought up, as do nearly all councils, the sore and controversial question regarding the destination of court fines. It does not matter how good our reasons or how logical and valid our arguments, every council remains firmly convinced that it is just an unfair and petty meanness on our part to retain these fines.²⁹

Government resistance was made more difficult in February 1970 when the House of Representatives, despite official opposition, passed a motion on the subject of Court fines.³⁰ In spite of the motion

29 Tour Report, Nonouti, 9 Dec. 1968 - GEIC, G.I.D.O., 2nd Series, F34/4/10.

30 Colony Information Notes, 6 March 1970. (Official Minutes not yet published).

the Government continued to insist that fines should be paid to Colony funds and no action had been taken when an elected Member again raised the issue in December 1970. When the Government was criticised for failing to act on this and other motions passed, the Assistant Resident Commissioner indicated that a policy revision was in the offing.³¹

By early 1968 it was clear that serious problems as discussed above, existed in local government and discussions were held among senior civil servants in April of that year. The generally accepted view was that the prime cause was to be found in the lack of understanding of the new system on the outer islands rather than in the legislation itself.³² The Government declared that:

Nothing has emerged in the course of experience or discussion to suggest that the system of local government introduced by Ordinance No. 5 of 1966 is unsound or generally unsuited to local conditions.... There is much evidence from all quarters to suggest that, despite preliminary public debate and discussion, understanding of the principles of local government has not been achieved either within the structure of the system or at public level.³³

Although the Government acknowledged that it had failed to educate the people of the Colony to the point where they could successfully understand and operate the Local Government Ordinance, more fundamental problems were virtually ignored. In spite of ample evidence that the system was placing almost impossible burdens on the financial and human resources of the islands, senior expatriate officers adhered to the rather paternalistic view that, although there were minor problems to be overcome, the Ordinance, as enacted, could be made to work in the Colony. Because this view has persisted, especially in the Secretariat, remedial measures suggested by the District

31 Personal notes taken on 2 December 1970.

32 'Minutes of discussions on Local Government Development', 11 April 1968 - loc. cit.

33 Discussion Paper for Governing Council, Meeting 4/68 - GEIC, Secretariat, 3rd Series, F113/1/1.

Commissioners, especially in the field of local government training, have rated low on the list of Government priorities.

Steps were taken in the course of 1968, however, to find a solution to the problems arising from the abolition of communal works and, later in the year, to the problems caused by the abolition of the old island police forces. Detachments of Colony police on outer islands were inevitably small, and inadequate to meet the demands of the situation. Police officers had little time or inclination to deal with petty infringements and were particularly hampered by their being 'strangers' on the islands to which they were posted. A satisfactory solution has been found in the appointment by the Island Councils of village wardens, the old island police under a new name, to share the burden of law enforcement with the Colony police.³⁴

A more comprehensive reappraisal of local government was made in mid-1969, initiated in part by a survey of Colony administration and development policy. Staff of the District Offices, who are responsible for the supervision of local government, placed the blame for most problems firmly on failures in the executive branch. They considered that most Island Executive Officers lacked the ability, education and training to carry out their allotted duties and attributed this to the fact that the position carried a low salary and involved service away from Tarawa. They also noted an absence of trained subordinate clerks and a failure to train replacement staff.³⁵

The first priority on the list of suggested remedial measures was the establishment of a local government training school, under the aegis of the Gilbert Islands District Office, to train Island Executive Officers and subordinate staff, provide refresher courses for serving officers and short courses for Council Presidents and Vice-Presidents.³⁶ By the end of 1970 no local

34 D.C., G.I.D. to A.R.C., 28 Dec. 1968 - GEIC, G.I.D.O., 2nd Series, F29/3/22.

35 D.C., G.I.D. to A.R.C., 19 May 1969 - GEIC, G.I.D.O., 2nd Series, F29/3/21; 'Memorandum on Local Government Policy', July 1969 - loc. cit.

36 *ibid.*

government training courses had been instituted but the Government had stated an intention to establish a vocational training centre which would include suitable courses for clerks to Island Councils and Courts. No further progress has been made, however, resulting in a need to use clerks from the central service to fill positions left vacant by retirements and the granting of leave (already overdue) to members of the local government service. Courses organised on Tarawa during 1970 for clerks and presidents of Island Courts went some way towards alleviating the gravest problems in this area.

It has been accepted as axiomatic by colonial administrations in post-war years, at least in British territories, that constitutional developments designed to produce an ultimately self-governing state should be accompanied by a reciprocal growth of local government institutions. In theory the local government legislation in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony provides for such growth with the introduction of representative councils, with elected presidents and independent executive officers. But a continuation of centralised controls has considerably hindered the Councils' freedom of action. One of the major problems faced by the Councils is the need to seek approval or confirmation for almost all decisions of any importance. In most cases District Officers, those directly involved, are not empowered to make such decisions but must pass proposals on to higher authorities. By-laws passed by the Island Councils still require the sanction of the Resident Commissioner. Estimates, prepared annually by the Councils with the assistance of District Officers, must also meet with his approval. Because Councillors and Executive Officers generally have little appreciation of the techniques of drafting, long and frustrating delays have resulted while District Officers have been obliged to perform these tasks to the Council's satisfaction before official action can be taken. By-laws must be processed in the Attorney-General's office and, with the estimates, must pass through the relevant section of the Colony Secretariat before final approval is given by the Assistant Resident Commissioner acting under delegated powers. In an attempt to obtain uniformity among the islands, model by-laws have been prepared in Tarawa and submitted to the

Councils for approval. Councils wishing to make amendments or to introduce additional laws have been faced with delays of up to twelve months before enactment has been possible. In practice, therefore, significant advantages which could be gained from decentralisation - essential in the Colony's peculiar circumstances - are lost by a combination of communications difficulties and centralised controls.

The experience of the past five years has shown that the responsibilities of the local governments were considerably increased without adequate investigation of their ability to cope with such rapid change. Insistence on local contributions towards island development projects (especially buildings and equipment) has emphasised the relationship between local taxation and local development, and has boosted the status of the Island Councils. But there appears to be little point in asking the Councils to subsidise the salaries of Colony staff on their islands in return for nominal benefits. Education and medical services would be more efficient if the Colony Government were to acknowledge them as its full responsibility and meet all the implied obligations regarding personnel and finance, and administer them from the centre. Some progress is being made towards this end. From 1971 the salaries of Colony staff posted to the outer island will be paid, in the first instance, from Government funds with the Island Councils making an annual contribution to the departments concerned. It is clear that, at this stage, the Government is not prepared to relinquish the subsidies that it currently receives from the local authorities and, after the precedent established in the educational field, where Government contributions to salary have been reduced from 80 to 30 per cent, it seems likely that they might well be increased.

For the past thirteen years urban Tarawa has been directly administered. The complications caused by an urban centre with a large migrant population and the presence of almost all central government services and personnel were considered to be too great to be handled by any council elected under existing legislation. Since 1958 the Betio Town Council, a nominated body meeting under the chairmanship of the District Commissioner, Gilbert Islands District, has assumed some responsibility for

that islet but no similar provisions have been made for Bairiki and Bikenibeu, the other two 'urban' centres. A Select Committee of the House of Representatives was set up in May 1969 to investigate the possibility of establishing an urban council but its report, received in December of the same year, stated that the services of a local government expert would be required for an extended period before meaningful recommendations could be made. The Committee did express the view that there was a need for such a council, even if only to act in an advisory capacity, and that there should be a rationalisation of taxes and rates within the urban area.³⁷ Since the report was tabled, however, no expert has been appointed and no council, advisory or otherwise, has been established. The problem, having been tentatively investigated, appears to have lost its urgency.

37 GEIC, H. of R., Report and Minutes of Proceedings of the Select Committee appointed to consider the establishment of a Local Government Authority over Urban Tarawa, 3 Dec. 1969.

CHAPTER 9PROGRESS TOWARDS SELF-GOVERNMENT

Those British dependencies that have been granted independence in the post-war period have passed through set stages of constitutional development. Advisory councils with appointed official and unofficial members often, but not always, marked the first stage of the evolutionary process. Next, a legislative council, again under official control, but sometimes with a minority of elected members, was established. Although both of these stages represented some degree of constitutional advance by allowing local interests to participate in government, it was not until elected members of legislative council were admitted to the executive council that a genuine transfer of responsibility began. In subsequent stages, elected members were allocated responsibility for some government departments; official membership was reduced to leave an elected majority in the legislative council; and a cabinet system of government introduced at which stage, if not before, the governor, or his equivalent, would withdraw and a speaker would be chosen from among the elected members. Although a large number of territories have shared a similar governmental structure, there have been many variations. Timing has varied; some governors have taken an active part in legislative council debates, others have simply fulfilled a speaker's role.¹ Significant deviations have been made by some dependencies in the final stages before full responsibility. For example, an executive committee system of government with a co-ordinating 'state' council was introduced in Ceylon in 1931 and later in the Seychelles (1967). It was subsequently discarded in both countries but a similar structure has recently been adopted in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate.

1 See Davidson, The Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council, especially 33-66; Wiseman, The Cabinet in the Commonwealth: Post-War Developments in Africa, the West Indies and South-East Asia, passim.

By establishing an Executive Council at the same time as the Advisory Council and by progressing in 1967 to a predominantly elected but advisory House of Representatives and a small Governing Council with both legislative and executive functions, the Colony deviated somewhat from the usual pattern. Almost entirely the brain-child of Andersen, this deviation was designed to provide experience and training in the House of Representatives while allowing local participation in the legislative process. With the signing of the 1970 Order in Council, the Colony reverted to more traditional lines of constitutional development. The Legislative Council replaced the House of Representatives, and an Executive Council with an official majority, assumed the non-legislative functions of the Governing Council. As a forerunner of cabinet government, in conformity with the 'Westminster model', unofficials serving on Executive Council were given responsibility for the affairs of one or more government departments.

Because of their isolation, their smallness and their limited economic and strategic importance, the British territories in the Pacific are achieving nationhood considerably later than former dependencies in Asia, Africa and the West Indies. Changes in world opinion towards formal colonialism, especially as it has been expressed in the United Nations, and Britain's own financial difficulties have further accelerated the process of change in the Pacific territories and have, as a result, shortened the period of political tutelage which has preceded, or will precede, self-government.

The isolation of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, even within the Pacific region, and its geographical fragmentation, have complicated and inhibited the process of political development. Only in recent years with increasing numbers of islanders travelling outside the Colony, and improved communications within, has there been any significant dissemination of information and new ideas among the people of the Colony. A growing awareness of developments in other parts of the Pacific area, largely because of improved radio facilities, has helped mould opinion in favour of political advance within the Colony, but only among a small proportion of the population.

Strong paternal rule for half a century, and the policy of limiting advanced education to a selected few for most of that period, has meant that there is, as yet, only a small educated class which has any real interest in, or understanding of, the political process. Because most of them are employed by the Government on south Tarawa political awareness is, at present, almost entirely confined to that island. The situation is by no means unusual in developing territories. An educated urban class, composed for the most part of civil servants, provides the stimulus and guidance for indigenous political demands supported, albeit reluctantly at times, by lesser-educated rural dwellers who accept seemingly informed leadership on matters of which they know little. The prevailing view among many community leaders in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands is that central constitutional development is a 'Government' matter and is therefore of little importance when compared with the day to day affairs of their respective islands. Many old men throughout the Colony argue that they do not understand such things; their young men on Tarawa, because they are employed by Government, do understand and, therefore, should represent the island in the House of Representatives or (from 1971) in the Legislative Council. Others take the view that the position of island representative, with its fringe benefits of free trips to Tarawa, should, like others on the island, be shared around amongst the old men. In the House of Representatives the latter group followed the lead of the few Members who were fluent in English and able to understand the business of the House.

Low levels of awareness and understanding have been reflected in the slow development of political parties in the Colony. Of the two parties formed in 1965 the Gilbertese National Party unofficially sponsors the nomination of some candidates but does not bind them to any particular course of action in the event of election, and the other, the Christian Democratic Party, is now inactive. The Government has consistently discouraged the formation of political parties. In 1966 senior civil servants were forbidden to hold office in a political party yet were permitted to sit in the House of Representatives. Although not stated publicly, the policy and the reasons for it are obvious. The encouragement of party development could well lead to increased

interest and participation in political affairs, but at this stage the only issues which could effectively divide the population are race and religion. Although both have been recognised as potentially divisive forces, local feeling is such that the future separation of the Colony on racial grounds has been accepted as possible, if not probable, by both politicians and officials. There is some prospect of party development in the future over the timing of self-government in which case Ellice Islanders and the more conservative Gilbertese could well combine forces to delay the handing over of responsibility by Britain.

The Colony Conference

The Colony Conference, which met biennially from 1956 to 1962, developed out of the Magistrates' Conferences which had been held over the previous five years. All Native Magistrates, eight regional delegates - three from the northern and central Gilberts, three from the Phoenix and southern Gilbert Islands, and two from the Ellice - elected by the Island Councils, three mission representatives and three local civil servants made up the membership of the Conference which met with the Resident Commissioner as chairman and the District Commissioner, Gilbert and Ellice Islands District, as deputy chairman. The Conference was called with the approval of the High Commissioner but had no statutory foundation.

While the Colony Conference did act as a sounding board for local opinion, and a forum where island problems and grievances might be discussed, it served a far more useful purpose in disseminating information to the outer islands. In the absence of a radio service and touring by officers of all departments the Government had few means or, rather, provided few means of informing the islanders of revised laws and policies. In theory, this task fell upon the District Officers who, however, had little time to spare in their brief visits to their Districts.

The Conference was so organised as to allow the maximum discussion on a wide range of subjects. Heads of departments addressed the Conference on developments within the respective fields and the members could also put forward subjects for

discussion. The Conference would then divide into discussion groups chaired by the local civil servants. The English and Gilbertese languages were used during full sessions; both vernaculars during 'committee' sessions. There was little attempt to follow rules of procedure in the Conference with resolutions being discussed as they arose. Committee sessions were completely informal.²

The informality of the Conference, the use of the three languages and, in particular, the encouragement given to full participation by members from all islands meant that the Conference, despite its lack of political sophistication, has probably been the most successful consultative body that has existed in the Colony and has achieved results in this regard that neither the English-speaking Advisory Council nor the procedure-bound House of Representatives have been able to match.

The Advisory Council and the Executive Council

In August 1960 Bernacchi sounded out the Colony Conference on future constitutional development. A suggestion that elected representatives might replace the Magistrates aroused little enthusiasm as the latter considered that it would lead to a reduction in their status. The need for more regular consultation was acknowledged; and, after discussion, it was unanimously resolved that an Advisory Council should be established forthwith. Because the Council would have to meet at least twice a year the delegates accepted that membership would probably have to be restricted to those living on or near Tarawa and that a majority of the members might have to be local civil servants. The delegates were also agreed that the Colony Conference was fulfilling a useful function and should continue to meet every two years.³

The Conference next met in October 1962 when Andersen, the new Resident Commissioner, put forward concrete proposals for the establishment of an Advisory Council. There were to be five official

2 See GEIC, Colony Conference, Proceedings, passim.

3 ibid., Third Meeting (Aug. 1960), 14-21. In fact no Conference was called once the Advisory Council had been established.

and twelve unofficial members, all appointed by the Resident Commissioner. Two representatives would be chosen from each of the northern Gilberts, central Gilberts and southern Gilberts (including the Phoenix Islands) and from the Ellice. In addition there would be representatives from the two major missions, local private enterprise, and the British Phosphate Commissioners. All representatives would need to be fluent in English. The Council would meet at least once a year and the Resident Commissioner would be obliged to consult it on all matters concerning policy and legislation.⁴

The two-year delay in implementing the 1960 resolution was explained, in part, by new appointments to the positions of High Commissioner and Resident Commissioner. But more important was Andersen's desire to ensure that the first recognisable stage in constitutional development should be best suited to the peculiar circumstances of the Colony as well as its present and future requirements. He believed that, in the light of doubts as to the Colony's financial future, some deviation from the accepted pattern of constitutional development might be desirable. If orthodox lines were followed, the people of the Colony might come to think in terms of a series of clearly defined steps leading inevitably to independence, he considered, whereas a flexible approach in the early stages would make it possible to work out a more satisfactory constitutional progression culminating, perhaps, in internal self-government and a special relationship with Britain.

At first, consideration was given to the establishment, by ordinance, of two councils - an advisory council and a Resident Commissioner's council. Eligibility for the latter would not necessarily depend on membership of the former and both councils would possess only advisory functions. The advisory council would be consulted on the estimates, and on broad policy issues while the Resident Commissioner's council, meeting four times a year, would be more involved in general administration. At discussions held in Tarawa in July 1962, Sir David Trench, the High Commissioner, and Andersen agreed that the creation of two advisory bodies might

4 *ibid.*, Fourth Meeting (Oct. 1962), 22-5.

give the impression, both within and outside the Colony, that the changes did not reflect genuine constitutional progress and that a formal executive council should therefore be established to allow some local participation in policy formation.

The Executive Council, established by Order in Council, met for the first time in January 1964. Its membership was made up of the Assistant Resident Commissioner, ex officio, three official and four unofficial Members, all appointed by the Resident Commissioner. As had been the case in other British territories the Resident Commissioner was obliged to consult the Council in the exercise of almost all of his powers. He could act alone in cases of urgency and could disregard advice given by the Council when he saw fit; in the latter case he was obliged to report, giving reasons, to the High Commissioner. With the establishment of the Executive Council the Resident Commissioner, as well as the High Commissioner, was given the right to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Colony.⁵

The creation of the Executive Council while the Colony was still at the 'advisory council' stage of constitutional development marked a significant departure from the usual pattern followed by British dependencies and, following the introduction of the traditional Legislative and Executive Councils in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1960, indicated a new flexibility in British policy for the Western Pacific High Commission territories.

When the Advisory Council Ordinance was enacted in January 1963⁶ the provisions for membership were less strictly defined than those outlined by Andersen in 1962. The Assistant Resident Commissioner was to be a Member, ex officio. There were to be four other official Members and twelve unofficial Members. All Members were to have sufficient fluency in English to enable them to take a full part in the proceedings of the Council. Unofficial Members were to hold office for a maximum of two years. The Resident Commissioner was to consult the Council on such matters as he saw fit or as the High Commissioner should direct.

5 The Gilbert and Ellice Islands Order of 1963.

6 Ordinance No. 1 of 1963.

In practice, Andersen adhered approximately to the general outlines for membership that he had put before the Colony Conference, with one significant exception. For reasons that are not clear, no representative of the British Phosphate Commissioners sat on the Council during the four years of its existence. The number of unofficial Members fluctuated between nine and twelve; a total of twenty-two persons served as unofficial Members in either a permanent or a temporary capacity.

Sectarian views occasionally came to the surface in the Council, as over the introduction of a new liquor ordinance in 1963,⁷ but generally the Council confined itself to constructive discussion of legislative and policy issues without reverting to the parochial matters which characterised the debates of its successor, the House of Representatives. During the early stages the unofficial Members benefited considerably from the leadership of Mr Eric Blacklock, a layman attached to the L.M.S., who, by example, helped instruct many of the local Members in parliamentary procedure and, because of his wider reading, was able to bring to the Council's attention events in other developing countries and decisions of the United Nations General Assembly and committees. Shortly after serving his two-year term, Blacklock returned to England; no other European served as an unofficial Member during the life of the Council. Liaison between official and unofficial Members was assisted, from 1962 to 1965, by the appointment of a Gilbertese and an Ellice Islander to serve on the official bench.

Because of the English requirement and the inclusion within the Council's membership of local civil servants, former civil servants and employees of the Island Councils, the level of political awareness in the Council was considerably higher than it was in the community at large. The unofficial Members of the Council, especially when on Tarawa, were in close contact with civil servants at a time when racial tension between Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders within the service was becoming increasingly evident. At the time, the Government was pursuing educational policies under which places for secondary education and overseas scholarships were granted on

7 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes, First Meeting (Sept. - Oct. 1963), 48-58.

ability and achievement; a policy that led to more than a third of the awards being given to Ellice Islanders. Some Gilbertese felt that favouritism was being shown towards the Ellice and that their own people were being hindered in their efforts to overcome the effects of the war-time closure of their schools.

Racial tension became more pronounced during 1964. At the third meeting of the Advisory Council, Tebau Tiba, a Wholesale Society employee, first questioned the Government's policy on entry into the secondary schools and then asked how many key posts in the civil service were held by Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders respectively. Interpreting 'key posts' as those carrying a salary of £742 [\$1,484] or above, the Government replied that fifteen were held by Gilbertese and thirteen by Ellice Islanders. In reply to another question on the numbers of children being educated overseas the Assistant Resident Commissioner stated that there were ten Gilbertese and seven Ellice Islanders overseas at the time.⁸ No debate followed the questions. The issue was again raised at a meeting of senior local civil servants called to have discussions with Trafford-Smith, the British Assistant Under-Secretary of State, early in 1965.⁹ The accusations and counter-accusations made at the meeting served to intensify the tension and led Government to reconsider its policies affecting the civil service and education with particular reference to the distribution of places between the two races. From that time, a small group of Gilbertese, mainly comprised of senior civil servants, began meeting in private with a view to forming a political party to promote Gilbertese interests.

At the next meeting of the Advisory Council in June 1965 one of the group, Tebau Tiba, initiated a debate on racial differences in the Colony. He alleged that the Ellice Islanders had created ill-feeling in the Gilberts by acting as if 'they owned the whole Colony' and because they took a superior attitude towards the Gilbertese. Instances were also given of alleged favouritism

8 *ibid.*, Third Meeting (Nov. 1964), 25.

9 *ibid.*, Fourth Meeting (May - June 1965), 83.

shown by Ellice Islanders towards their relatives in the civil service with particular reference being made to the employment of labourers in the Public Works Department and in enrolments in Government primary schools on Tarawa.¹⁰ The Ellice Members in the Council did not reply. The Assistant Resident Commissioner admitted that there was evidence of tension and then pointed out that such divisive forces could have harmful effects on the Colony's future.¹¹

The reaction of some Gilbertese to the problem led to the formation of the Colony's first political party. The Gilbertese National Party was formed at a public meeting, attended by over 200 people, held at Bairiki, Tarawa, on 16 October 1965. The working committee, as it described itself, presented the meeting with a draft constitution and platform.¹² The Party's aims were: to speed up constitutional development, to improve educational standards and abolish school fees, to promote unity among the Gilbertese, to raise Gilbertese standards of living and, where possible, to preserve Gilbertese customs, culture and tradition.¹³

When the Advisory Council met in November, the two major issues raised were the role that civil servants could play in politics and the use that political parties could make of radio broadcasting to further their aims. Because knowledge of the party-in-embryo had been limited to a trusted few, both issues caught the Government somewhat unprepared. Political broadcasts had been forbidden immediately after the formation of the Gilbertese National Party in view of allegations that the Broadcasting Officer, Reuben Uatiao, an official Member of the Advisory Council and one of the founders of the Party, was using his civil service position for political ends. During the course of the meeting the Government announced that a policy would be published as soon as possible but stated that 'Government would not be able to allow

10 *ibid.*, 92-3.

11 *ibid.*, 100-101.

12 Colony Information Notes, 21 Oct. 1965.

13 Gilbertese National Party, Constitution, 1965.

use of its facilities if it were found that the aims of an organisation were likely to result in racial disharmony'.¹⁴

Regarding the participation of civil servants in politics, the Government admitted that the peculiar circumstances of the Colony might make some relaxation of the usual prohibition desirable; a full statement was promised.¹⁵

The formation of the Gilbertese National Party, followed by the election of an executive with seven of its ten members holding civil service positions,¹⁶ accompanied by attacks on the Ellice Islanders in the Advisory Council and at public meetings, provoked a quick reaction on Tarawa. The Party was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church because of its racial exclusiveness and a second party, drawing support from Gilbertese Catholics, part-Europeans and Ellice Islanders living on Tarawa, was formed less than a week after the meeting of the Advisory Council.¹⁷ The constitution and platform of the Christian Democratic Party emphasised a non-racial and non-sectarian approach to politics and emphasised the need for Colony unity.¹⁸ Again, there was a majority of civil servants on the committee of the Party.

In February 1966 many members of both Parties' committees were forced to resign when the Government prohibited all civil servants earning more than £500 [\$1,000] a year, exercising statutory or judicial powers, or employed in district administration from holding office in, or canvassing for, a political party. Further, before the next full business meeting of the Advisory Council was held in August 1966 both Reuben Uatioa and Henry Naisali (an Ellice Islander) had been removed from official membership of the Council. From that time no local civil servant appeared on the official bench of the Advisory Council or of the House of Representatives.

14 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes, Fifth Meeting (Nov. 1965), 67.

15 *ibid.*, 41.

16 Colony Information Notes, 25 Nov. 1965.

17 *ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1965.

18 Christian Democratic Party, Constitution, 1965.

Constitutional Revision, 1966

Despite declarations in the platforms of both parties that their aims were to promote the constitutional advancement of the Colony, the Gilbertese National Party owed its origins to grievances in the civil service and it was as a reaction to this development that the Christian Democratic Party came into being. But attention was quickly transferred to the constitutional issue when in June 1966, the Government brought forward proposals to establish a House of Representatives and a Governing Council. The constitutional issue had been briefly discussed in earlier meetings of the Council but with few signs of dissension. When the United Nations Committee of Twenty-four reported that insufficient progress towards self-government was being made, the predominant reaction among unofficial Members had been that it was a matter for Britain and the Colony to decide without outside interference.¹⁹

The Government's constitutional proposals provided for a House of Representatives to replace the Advisory Council. The House was to consist of the Resident Commissioner as president, the Assistant Resident Commissioner, ex officio, not more than six other official Members, appointed by the Resident Commissioner, and twenty-three Members elected by adult suffrage. The elected Members were to choose from among themselves a Chief Elected Member and, in addition, the representatives from the northern, central and southern Gilbert Islands and the Ellice Islands would separately choose one from among their number to serve collectively, with the Chief Elected Member, as unofficial Members of the Governing Council. This Council, consisting of the Resident Commissioner (as president), five official and five unofficial Members, was to have both legislative and executive powers. The Resident Commissioner, in addition to his casting vote, was to have the power to withhold assent to any bill passed by the Governing Council. The House of Representatives was to advise the Governing Council on legislation and to act as a forum for the discussion of public affairs. English was to be the only language

19 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes, Fourth Meeting, 3, 25-33.

used in both the House of Representatives and in the Governing Council. Civil servants were to be permitted to remain in their posts while being Members of the House of Representatives but if elected to the Governing Council they would be obliged to take unpaid leave but with their pension rights fully protected.²⁰

In drafting the proposals, Andersen again took into account the difficulties of communication in the Colony and its scattered population, the size of the civil service, the Colony's financial position and the scarcity of educated Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders. A more orthodox type of legislative council was considered unsuitable because, at that stage, the Government did not wish to grant legislative power to any body with an elected majority. Given the strength of island loyalties, it was thought desirable to allow all except the smallest islands to elect their own representatives; but any attempt to match the numbers of elected Members with civil servants would have resulted in an unwieldy council with a majority composed largely of junior officials who could make no useful contribution to debate, and would have unduly interfered with the working of the Administration. The interests of individual islands would be protected in the House of Representatives and, though regional representation, in the Governing Council. Above all, Andersen argued, the proposed constitution, although unique for a British dependency, was flexible enough to allow development in a number of directions in the future.²¹

In the Advisory Council, Tebau Tiba, who was president of the Gilbertese National Party, stated that the proposals were 'not realistic, comprehensive or representative and were therefore, totally unacceptable to the Unofficial Members of the Advisory Council'.²² In particular, Tebau and his supporters were suspicious of the attempts to deviate from the 'Westminster model' of constitutional development, criticised the absence of a

20 GEIC, Public Notice No. 28/66 - published in Colony Information Notes, 23 June 1966.

21 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes, Seventh Meeting (Aug. 1966), 2.

22 *ibid.*, 60.

timetable and the insistence on the use of English in the House of Representatives and argued that strain between official and unofficial Members of the Governing Council would be inevitable as the latter would be in a minority but would be obliged to defend the decisions of the Governing Council in the House. Reference was also made to a written submission that the Gilbertese National Party had already made to the Government. In its submission on the House of Representatives the Party urged the formation of standing committees, an increase to twenty-nine elected Members, a minimum of three meetings a year, the extension of the life of the House from two to four years, the granting of the franchise to all eighteen year-olds and asked for an assurance that full legislative responsibility would be transferred to the House after the completion of the first term.²³

The two main spokesmen for the Christian Democratic Party in the Council, Temete Tebetaio, a retired civil servant who was the Party's president, and Simon Edwards, a local businessman of part-European extraction, expressed support for the proposals but with reservations because of the inadequate protection of minority interests; a reference not only to the Ellice Islanders but also to the part-European community on Betio which was one of the Party's main areas of support.²⁴

At this stage the political parties were almost unknown outside of Tarawa, but Gilbertese Members quickly allied themselves with one or other of the groups in the Council. The Ellice representatives, Iosia Taomia and Founuku Tipelu, both pastors, remained uncommitted and took a conservative stand on the issue in arguing that constitutional change was premature. Thus they joined the supporters of the Gilbertese National Party, their political rivals, in opposition to the Government which was left, as a consequence, only with the support of the Christian Democratic Party. The motion endorsing the Government's proposals was not, therefore, put to the meeting and a salvage operation commenced.

23 Gilbertese National Party, 'Proposals & Amendments on the Constitution', c. July 1966 - copy in GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F10/5/17.

24 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes, Seventh Meeting, 62-7.

A number of unofficial Members from all groups in the Council maintained that many of the people away from Tarawa had not heard of the proposals and therefore asked that more time should be allowed for discussion and explanation, and that a Select Committee of the Council should be set up to consider the proposals in detail with, if desired, the assistance of a constitutional adviser. Officials argued against these suggestions at first, but a Select Committee was appointed when it became clear that unless the wishes of the unofficial Members were met, at least in part, the Government's proposals would be rejected. Shortly after the meeting the British Government asked Sir Gawain Bell, who had just completed an assignment as constitutional adviser to the Federal Government of South Arabia, to advise the Committee.²⁵

Two representatives of the Committee toured all of the Gilbert Islands and five of the Ellice Islands in August and September before the Select Committee met with its adviser. By October, when the discussions took place, the Committee was in a position to put forward a compromise list of points on which advice was sought. The points raised were closest to the criticisms made by the Gilbertese National Party but had the support of the Christian Democratic Party, and even Iosia Taomia, the Ellice representative on the Committee, had accepted that constitutional advance would and should take place. The reasons for the compromise are of interest. Firstly, in accordance with traditional emphasis on decision by consensus, the Committee attempted to form proposals which, even if not considered the best possible by any, were acceptable to all of its members. And secondly, because a majority of Members favoured some form of advance, it was considered that more progress would be made if the Committee presented a united front to the adviser.

All unofficial Members on the Committee were agreed on seven criticisms of the June proposals - the absence of any indication as to the constitution and political status that was ultimately being aimed at, the absence of a timetable, the lack of legislative

25 Later in 1966 Bell was appointed Secretary-General to the South Pacific Commission.

responsibility for the House of Representatives, the proposal that the elected Members in the Governing Council would be in a minority but would have to defend its decisions in the House of Representatives, granting of legislative powers to such a small body as the Governing Council, the requirement that Members would have to speak English and the reservation of powers over external affairs and internal security to the High Commissioner rather than to the Resident Commissioner - to which Iosia Taomia added a request that Ellice representation should be increased.

By the time that Bell arrived, the Government had already accepted that certain concessions would have to be made - the vernaculars were to be permitted in the House of Representatives, a time limit would be set, and Members of Governing Council would, subject to security and public interest, be permitted to justify their actions to the House of Representatives - but they were not, at this stage, conveyed to the Select Committee. Bell agreed with the amended proposals and it is clear from the minutes of his subsequent discussions with the Committee that, within this framework, his role was one of persuader rather than adviser. His assurances that there was no need to decide at that point on a future constitution; that, although it was necessary for the Resident Commissioner to have reserve powers, it was unlikely that they would be invoked; and that the suggested constitution seemed, to him, to be suited to the Colony's circumstances and level of development, were accepted by the Committee. It was agreed that there would be four Members from the Ellice Islands and that, excepting Tarawa, none of the Gilbert Islands should have more than two representatives. The Resident Commissioner's reserved powers were considered to be an adequate safeguard for minority interests.²⁶ When the Select Committee reported to the Advisory Council, the June proposals, as amended, were accepted after brief discussion and forwarded to London for implementation.²⁷

26 GEIC, Advisory Council, Report of Select Committee ... on the Constitution, 1966; Minutes of meetings between Bell and the Select Committee - GEIC, Secretariat, 2nd Series, F107/1/21.

27 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes, Eighth Meeting (Oct. 1966), 47-50.

The House of Representatives and the Governing Council²⁸

The 1967 constitution made two important concessions to the realities of the Colony situation; legislative power was vested in the small Governing Council so as to allow wide geographical representation in the House of Representatives and, secondly, civil servants were permitted to serve in the House without taking leave of absence (except while the House was actually in session) or resigning. The constitution had been described by the Government as making a significant step forward in the constitutional evolution of the Colony and as one that would allow the elected Members to play a significant role in the formation of policy. Initially the elected Members supported this view. They attended the early meetings of the House full of optimism but, faced with a wide range of problems, their frustration became increasingly evident and, by the time that the constitution was amended in 1970, there was widespread disillusionment with the political process among the Members and their constituents. Some of the problems which emerged have been common to other dependencies but others related to the Colony's particular circumstances; especially the Government's approach to political development, the calibre of the membership, both official and unofficial, of the House of Representatives, and difficulties over language and procedure. The constitution was an experiment and, as with most experiments, some aspects were successful; others were less so. An analysis of the problems of political development in the years from 1967 to 1970 would seem to indicate that although some problems were inevitable others could have been overcome by increased Government initiative.

From the outset there were difficulties because few Members, either official or unofficial, had previous experience in parliamentary bodies. Although ten persons who had been unofficial Members of the Advisory Council stood for election, only three

28 Much of the discussion in the final two sections of this chapter is based on my own observation of two meetings of the House of Representatives (May 1969; November-December 1970) together with formal interviews and informal discussions with elected Members of the House, officials of the Colony Government, both local and expatriate, and community leaders on the outer islands.

were returned²⁹ together with Reuben Uatioa who had served as an official.³⁰ Ex officio and appointed Members of the House were similarly inexperienced and, because of constantly changing official membership throughout the life of the House, this was a continuing problem. The situation was worsened by the rules of procedure which were based on a standard British model and made few concessions to indigenous methods of decision-making centred on free discussion designed to produce a consensus.

For the elected Members, the emphasis placed on English caused the most frustrations. It had been agreed during the constitutional discussions that although English would continue to be used for legislation and for recording the business of the House, Members could use the Gilbertese and Ellice languages if they wished and that equipment would be purchased to allow simultaneous translation.³¹ Because there was a shortage of good interpreters and the equipment was considered too costly, it was decided, by the Government, that interpreters would be seated near non-English speaking Members to provide a summary translation. The decision was an unusual one. Elsewhere in the Pacific it has been customary to provide either simultaneous translations to members through the use of headphones or to have an interpreter in the house to translate sentence by sentence in the course of debate. By its decision the Government effectively eliminated more than half of the elected Members from meaningful participation in the deliberations of the House of Representatives. While only seven or eight of the elected Members used interpreters constantly, there were less than that number with sufficient education to understand fully the draft legislation, reports and policy papers placed before them. The Government did provide occasional information papers, but only in English. Not even summaries of legislation and such crucial documents as the Development Plan were provided in the vernaculars.

29 Kaitara Metai (Nonouti), Founuku Tipelu (Northern Ellice) and Iosia Taomia (Southern Ellice).

30 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes; Colony Information Notes, 22 November 1967.

31 GEIC, Advisory Council, Report of a Select Committee ... on the Constitution, 4.

The language problem was raised during the second meeting of the House. Tetebano Aram (Arorae), criticised the interpreting facilities and the standard of interpretation being provided. With the support of other Members he complained that because many Members could not understand the proceedings, they felt that they were of no use in the House. It was thus impossible for them to explain policies and decisions to their constituents.³² The Government's response typified its approach to the various problems faced by the elected Members. The Assistant Resident Commissioner sympathised with the Members, and suggested that more interpreters might be needed, but neither he nor his colleagues made any realistic attempt to ease difficulties of this nature. The subject was again raised in November 1969 but, as before, no action was taken to remedy the situation.³³

During the first four meetings of the House, from December 1967 to May 1969, formal sessions were held in the mornings and in the afternoons some official Members and Secretariat officers led informal discussions on various matters which were to come before the House. After Andersen's departure from the Colony, in June 1969, no such meetings were organised. The decision to discontinue was made on the grounds that few Members had shown interest in their deliberations.³⁴ Although the elected Members did not object to the decision, the validity of the argument put forward, in retrospect, by the Government is questionable in the light of the high attendance at the meetings and subsequent developments in December 1970.

When several questions on the progress of the Development Plan were submitted in the course of the final meeting of the House, two Secretariat officers concerned with finance and development

32 GEIC, H. of R., Minutes, First Session, Second Meeting (July-Aug. 1968), 71-72.

33 *ibid.*, Second Session, Third Meeting (Nov.-Dec. 1969), 30-32, 40-41.

34 Statement made by D.G. Cudmore, A.R.C., in the House of Representatives, Third Session, Third Meeting, 1 Dec. 1970 (personal notes; official minutes for the three meetings held in 1970 are not yet available).

organised an informal meeting, with the Chief Elected Member in the chair, to discuss progress and problems. The elected Members showed up in force, asked many questions, followed points through until they were satisfied and, on more than one occasion, suggested a revision of priorities with regard to projected expenditure. The officials pointed out that their suggestions came too late and should have been made the day before when the Committee of the Whole House had discussed the Estimates for 1971 and had approved \$1,250,000 worth of capital expenditure, with only a solitary query, in less than two minutes. The lesson was not lost on the Members, many of whom later expressed their regret that such meetings had not been called earlier and noted in particular the understanding that they had gained when rules of procedure had been forgotten and informal discussion had taken place with only minimum interference from the chairman.

The elected Members did not realise, or were not taught, that the budget debate and address in reply to the Resident Commissioner's speech offered an opportunity to discuss any aspect of Government policy or to bring to official notice any grievances or problems that their constituents might have. Instead, they concentrated on questions to make these points and thus were restricted, at most, to a few sentences and effectively denied themselves the chance to elaborate or explain the nature of a problem in detail. Questions were mostly confined to parochial issues like the posting of teachers to island schools, the construction of school buildings, the despatch of medicinal supplies to island hospitals, or conditions for deck passengers on government ships. The low price for copra paid to producers was a constant source of complaint but it was not until December 1970 that a Member actually moved that the Government should consider ways of abolishing the 20 per cent export duty.

Because most official business in the House was handled by the Assistant Resident Commissioner, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney-General, the appointed Members, usually heads of departments, took little part in proceedings save answering questions relating to their interests. With so many questions implying inefficiency in various branches of Government, the officials generally took a defensive attitude towards questioners, gave the

minimum possible information (often in an unduly complex fashion) and made little attempt to seek and remedy the basic causes of grievance.³⁵ Potentially controversial issues were similarly treated.

The favoured treatment given to Tarawa in the distribution of Colonial Development and Welfare funds, for example, has been one of the strongest grievances held against the Government by the people on the outer islands. It is an issue on which the Government has been extremely sensitive as was clearly shown in December 1968 when Sione Tui Kleiss (Northern Ellice) raised the issue indirectly when he asked the amounts of aid that the four islands of his constituency had received from Colonial Development and Welfare funds, and the amounts they had received since the islands were incorporated into the Colony. He was told by the Financial Secretary that detailed accounting records dating back seventy years were not available and 'even if it were, officers could not be spared to undertake the necessary research'.³⁶ But the information required to answer the first part of the question was readily available to the Government in the Annual Audited Statements of schemes held in the Accountant General's office. The records show that between 1948 and 1968 the only funds specifically allocated for the northern Ellice Islands was \$800 for a sea-wall at Nanumea.³⁷ The project was found to be impracticable, and abandoned. Some reports suggest that, in fact, the Government had searched the records on receiving the question but had decided not to release the information for political reasons.

The elected Members generally showed little interest in legislation; the only occasion on which draft legislation already submitted to the House was amended to meet with their approval was after the first meeting when a majority strongly criticised a section of a draft Marriage Ordinance which would have permitted

35 GEIC, H. of R., Minutes, passim.

36 *ibid.*, Second Session, First Meeting (Nov.-Dec. 1968), 23.

37 GEIC, Treasury File, 'Colonial Development and Welfare, Annual Audited Statements'.

second cousins to marry contrary to customary definitions of incest.³⁸ Generally, however, legislation was not criticised until it had been enacted and its effects became evident. The Liquor Ordinance of 1969, for example, abolished the licence system for spirits (beer had not been subject to licence since 1962) but re-introduced it for sour toddy. Legislation had followed the recommendations of a Select Committee and was approved by the House in 1969 with only slight opposition.³⁹ But when it became clear that 'sour toddy' included coconut sap fermented to the point where it could be used as yeast in bread-making, and the wowsyish Island Councils of the southern Gilbert Islands decided that they would issue no licences (in part a political decision aimed at Roman Catholic minorities), demands for repeal were made in the House, and a motion was carried to that effect in March 1970, but had not been implemented twelve months later.

The delays in implementing recommendations of the House, compared with the speed with which official business was processed, intensified the dissatisfaction felt by the elected Members and the disillusionment of the electors with their representatives. In December 1970 the issue was publicised in a heated adjournment debate in which Babera Kirata (Onotoa), one of the more prominent Members, stated that the Government appeared to grant only a low priority to elected Members' motions and suggestions. He cited the delays over amending the Liquor Ordinance compared with the speed with which the Government had repealed the Stamp Duty (Cheques) Ordinance 1970. This Ordinance had been enacted in May 1970 when the establishment of a trading bank branch was imminent. The Ordinance, on which the bank had not been consulted, was found to be inoperable, and was repealed in December.

Framed within a general consideration of communication problems between the Government and elected Members, Babera's attack on the

38 GEIC, H. of R., Minutes, First Session, First Meeting (Dec. 1967), 41-2.

39 *ibid.*, Second Session, Second Meeting (May 1969), 12-15.

Government drew strong support from his elected colleagues. He argued that:

We have advised Government what the people wanted us to do for them; because they cannot see any correction, nor any explanation to their problems, they naturally lost confidence in us and feel that we cannot do our job and are useless in this House. They regard us [as] nothing more than Government rubber-stamps.⁴⁰

In addition to legislation, the House was expected to 'rubber-stamp' reports and policy proposals. The Mooring Report, for example, was put forward in November 1968 as the basis of development policy and, lacking expertise and knowledge that would have enabled them to criticise, the Members duly gave it their approval.⁴¹ Their role as ciphers was emphasised in March 1970 when they were told that some of its recommendations were no longer considered suitable and were asked to approve the Development Plan which made many recommendations different from those in the original report.⁴²

The elected Members of the Governing Council faced several difficulties, perhaps the most significant being the lack of expertise and information available to them as a basis for criticising and analysing Government policies. Generally speaking, opposition from the elected Members was rendered largely ineffective by their inability to produce alternative policies. Confrontations were rare in the Council and when the elected Members seemed united in their opposition, especially on land matters, the Government preferred to withdraw or modify proposals rather than force them to a vote. Although, so far as could be ascertained, neither Resident Commissioner (nor the Acting Resident Commissioner in 1969) used his casting vote in the Council, this should not be taken to imply unanimity. The elected Members were always aware that they could be defeated and therefore saw little point in opposing the Government. This was in distinct contrast to events in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate Executive Council

40 Recording of broadcast proceedings on Radio Tarawa, 1 Dec. 1970.

41 GEIC, H. of R., Minutes, Second Session, First Meeting, 53-83.

42 Colony Information Notes, 27 Feb., 6 March 1970.

between 1967 and 1970 where the local Members saw themselves in the role of a parliamentary opposition and voted against the Government on many issues.⁴³

A Return to Orthodoxy: The 1970 Constitution

A few months after the introduction of the 1967 constitution the elected Members of the House were again asking when the next stage of constitutional development could be expected and the form that it would take.⁴⁴ But there was no evidence of widespread interest in constitutional development at this stage and, apart from an assumption that, sooner or later, the Colony would be granted internal self-government, there was no clear indication from local interests as to the type of constitution envisaged for the Colony in either the short or long term.

Andersen, apparently anxious to initiate moves towards constitutional advance prior to his retirement from the Colonial Service, distributed a discussion paper on the subject to the elected Members when they assembled at Tarawa for a meeting of the House in May 1969. In the paper, the Government did not place comprehensive proposals before the Members but simply suggested a framework within which discussions might take place. The main points made during the discussions, held on 20 and 21 May, were that the elected Members had insufficient influence over Government policy; that they had been given insufficient training or access to persons, within or outside the civil service, with specialised knowledge on the subjects that were discussed; that the rules of procedure were unnecessarily restrictive; and that many Members' lack of fluency in English had led to misunderstandings as to the exact import of questions asked of the Government.

43 Russell, 'The 1970 Constitution for the British Solomon Islands', in Ward (ed.), The Politics of Melanesia, 227-30.

44 See, for example, questions from Reuben Uatiao, Chief Elected Member - GEIC, H. or R., Minutes, First Session, Second Meeting, 45; Second Session, First Meeting (Nov.-Dec. 1968), 120.

The Members were agreed that the transference of legislative power to the House was essential if more than a minority of Members were to play a significant part in governing the Colony. A suggestion that the life of the House should be prolonged by a year so that a Select Committee might make recommendations on constitutional change, to be implemented before the next elections, was accepted. It was also agreed that the Committee should consider the possibility of a new name for the Colony (the present one does not include the Phoenix or Line Islands, or Ocean Island), and the Committee might ask for an adviser from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office if it wished.

Accordingly, Reuben Uatiao brought two motions, drafted by officials, before the House of Representatives on 28 May. The first called for an address to be forwarded to London asking that the Order in Council be amended to provide for the prolongation of the life of the House by one year. Both Gilbertese and Ellice Members supported the motion which was passed unanimously.⁴⁵ The second motion provided for the appointment of a Select Committee:

- (1) to consider and examine a new Constitution for the Colony which -
 - (a) shall adopt as its main feature the transformation of the House of Representatives as at present composed into the legislature, and
 - (b) shall purport to extend the influence of Elected Members over, and their participation in the executive body, particular consideration being given to
 - (i) the composition of the executive body,
 - (ii) the degree of control (if any) which the legislature should have over the executive,
 - (iii) the degree of responsibility (if any) which should devolve upon the Elected Members and the manner of its devolution (whether to individuals or to committee),

and thereupon to prepare, with the assistance of such expert advice as the Committee may wish to obtain, a draft revised constitution for consideration by the House;

45 *ibid.*, Second Session, Second Meeting, 69.

- (2) to consider whether there would be advantage in changing the name of the Colony, and if so, to examine various alternatives and submit proposals to the House.⁴⁶

No Member opposed the motion but, during the debate a wide range of views was expressed; from those of Babera Kirata who urged an immediate granting of full internal self-government to those of Iosia Taomia who expressed his opposition to immediate self-government but did not oppose the motion as such.⁴⁷

The Assistant Resident Commissioner was appointed as chairman of the Committee and the Attorney-General, Reuben Uatinoa, Iosia Taomia, Naboua Ratieta (Marakei), Tito Teburoro (Tabiteuea) and Ioteba Uriam (Tamana) as Members.⁴⁸ Save on the technicalities involved there was little attempt on the part of the officials to place concrete proposals before the Committee at its meetings between July and September 1969. Rather, they let ideas for a new constitution evolve in the course of discussion and in the light of the reactions gained by its unofficial Members at meetings held throughout the Colony from July to early September.

The Committee decided against the type of governing council and committee system then being planned for the British Solomon Islands on the grounds that it would prove costly and there would be difficulties in the way of having all representatives resident on Tarawa to serve on the various committees. Communication problems would make it difficult for Members to visit their constituencies regularly and thus contact with the electorate would be lost. Instead, the Committee oriented its discussions towards proposals that would eventually lead to a ministerial form of government.⁴⁹

46 *ibid.*, 70.

47 *ibid.*, 71-3.

48 *ibid.*, 94.

49 GEIC, H. of R., Report of a Select Committee Appointed to Consider and Make Recommendations on Constitutional Development [Select Committee Report], Feb. 1970, 8.

In a preliminary report, drafted in September 1969, the Select Committee recommended that a Legislative Council should supersede the House of Representatives. The number of elected Members would remain at twenty-three; a request from the Ellice Islanders that all the inhabited islands should be given one representative was rejected by the Committee on the grounds that a change could not be justified on a population basis and that any increase in membership would result in an unwieldy Council. Elections were to be held triennially. Language requirements would remain as before but the rules of procedure were to be translated as an interim step before full revision.⁵⁰

There was to be an Executive Council with an unofficial majority. The elected Members of the Legislative Council were to choose from among themselves six Members; a Chief Elected Member; three regional representatives - one from each of the northern and central Gilberts, the southern Gilberts, and the Ellice - and two 'representatives at large', to serve on Executive Council. A vote of no confidence passed in the Legislative Council would result in the resignation of all elected Members in the Executive Council and the selection of a further six Members.⁵¹ This was not to mean that those dismissed could not be re-elected; the intention was to prevent public shaming of even one Member who had lost the confidence of his colleagues by making him the subject of a personal no confidence motion. If he was simply not re-elected to the Executive Council, his honour would be preserved.

The Committee believed that any suggestion of a full ministerial system would not meet with the approval of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and therefore decided to recommend that a 'member' system be adopted. Responsibility for one or more aspects of Government activity would be given all Members of the Executive Council by the Resident Commissioner in consultation with the Chief Elected Member.⁵²

50 *ibid.*, App.A (Minutes of meetings of the Select Committee), 12-29.

51 *ibid.*, 16-17, 20.

52 *ibid.*, 16.

The Assistant Resident Commissioner, the Attorney-General and the Financial Secretary were to be ex officio Members of both Councils. In addition there were to be two persons, not necessarily from the public service, appointed by the Resident Commissioner in consultation with the Chief Elected Member.⁵³ The Resident Commissioner was to preside over both Councils but it was suggested that an elected Member should serve as his deputy, especially during committee sessions.⁵⁴

The suggestion that the name of the Colony should be changed met with little enthusiasm. Both Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders seemed to regard any change as a commitment for a future that was by no means clear. Some thought that a change could hinder the separation of the Colony if either racial group wished to secede. On more than one occasion, however, the name Tungavalu was suggested - it was derived from Tungaru and Tuvalu, traditional names for the Gilbert and Ellice groups respectively.⁵⁵

The Committee decided to seek advice, inter alia, on three issues: whether the 'member' system should be written into the constitution or established by convention; whether reserve powers should be vested with the Resident Commissioner or a locally domiciled Governor, or with the Secretary of State (a question that implied separation from the Western Pacific High Commission); and whether civil servants could take leave of absence or would have to resign in the event of their election to the Legislative Council.⁵⁶ The unofficial Members emphasised that they wished to employ an independent adviser who would in no way be connected with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.⁵⁷

After informal discussions in November with Miss E.J. Emery, Head of the Pacific and Indian Ocean Department of the Foreign and

53 *ibid.*, 17.

54 *ibid.*, 21.

55 *ibid.*, 15, 27.

56 *ibid.*, 21, 23-4, 26.

57 *ibid.*, 22.

Commonwealth Office, and with the new Resident Commissioner, Sir John Field, a former Governor of St Helena, in January 1970, the Committee made several modifications to its recommendations. Field in particular seemed intent on returning the Colony to the orthodoxy of the Westminster model. It is clear that the Committee accepted almost without question Field's 'suggestions as to ways by which the Committee's provisional proposals ... might fit into a more conventional style of constitution which had been found workable elsewhere in countries at a similar stage of political advancement'.⁵⁸

There was now to be an official majority on the Executive Council to which unofficial Members would be appointed by the Resident Commissioner after consultation with the Leader of Government Business. The latter, successor to the Chief Elected Member, was to be chosen by the elected Members of the Legislative Council. The Resident Commissioner was to preside over both Councils. After the first elections held under the new constitution any civil servant entering the Legislative Council would be obliged to resign but with pension entitlements earned to that time; at subsequent elections pension rights would be forfeited. In addition to the usual reserve powers there would be additional provisions which would enable the British Government, through the Resident Commissioner, to ensure adherence to any conditions attached to aid grants.⁵⁹ The Committee also decided that it no longer required the services of an adviser.⁶⁰

The Select Committee was thus persuaded to give away the unofficial majority on Executive Council which had been one of its earliest and strongest recommendations. With it went the right of the elected Members to determine who from among their number would serve on Executive Council. The reserved powers over aid funds were unusual, given the fact that all aid funds were allocated for specific projects and the usual provisions that any measure

58 *ibid.*, 31.

59 Text of the Select Committee Report, 8-11.

60 Select Committee Report, App.A, 32.

involving appropriation could only be introduced by Government - a Government that was already protected by an official majority in the Executive Council.

The Report of the Select Committee was tabled at the March meeting of the House of Representatives. As Chief Elected Member, Reuben Uatiao moved that the House should endorse the Report and that its recommendations should be given publicity in the Colony before being fully debated. There was little discussion at this point; but one Ellice Member, Sione Tui Kleiss, argued that the fate of his people under the constitution would be suppression at the hands of the Gilbertese.⁶¹

After a trip to the Ellice in September and October 1969 Sione had been quoted as saying that the people in the Ellice, at all islands from Nanumea to Funafuti, had decided against constitutional change except at Vaitupu where a new constitution would be accepted provided the Ellice were given an equal number of seats to the Gilbertese.⁶² This information was in direct opposition to that given the Chief Elected Member (who had toured the group for the Select Committee because the Ellice representative, Iosia Taomia, was overseas) just a few weeks before.⁶³ The outcome of this announcement was a heated round of correspondence in the Colony Information Notes, with Sione, Reuben Uatiao, and Naboua Ratieta all taking part.⁶⁴

After the March meeting of the House of Representatives, Sione, Founuku Tipelu (Northern Ellice) and Melitiana Kaisami (Southern Ellice) toured the Ellice Islands explaining the terms of the Select Committee Report. In May, when the Report was discussed by the House, sharp divisions were revealed among the Ellice Members. On the one hand Melitiana and Founuku accused Sione of urging the people to reject the constitutional proposals which had

61 Colony Information Notes, 6 March 1970.

62 *ibid.*, 10 Oct. 1969.

63 Select Committee Report, App.A, 15.

64 See Colony Information Notes, 14, 21, 28 Nov., 12 Dec. 1969.

been agreed upon by the elected Members. Sione, on the other hand, accused his colleagues of saying to the Ellice Islanders 'I beg you, the Resident Commissioner wants you to accept this' and added that 'Any remark by the Resident Commissioner is a directive to the Ellice people, and therefore they accepted it'.⁶⁵ It appears that the allegations from both sides were close to the truth. Sione had made his opposition to the proposed constitution clear in March and, according to some accounts, the Resident Commissioner had asked two of the other Ellice Members to do all they could to gain acceptance of the constitution. The way in which his views were reported in the Ellice is not clear but certainly they would have been a major factor in persuading the Ellice Islanders to accept the constitution, although they still reserved the right to separate in the future.

Further amendments were made to the recommendations of the Select Committee later in 1970 and approved by the Governing Council. In response to requests made to the Select Committee, and during the May meeting of the House, the Ellice Islands were each granted a representative in the new Legislative Council. Likewise, Kuria and Aranuka, which had been jointly represented in the past, were each given a Member.⁶⁶ Following a precedent established for the Solomon Islands' constitution it was also agreed that civil servants entering politics could take leave of absence and collect pension entitlements at retiring age. The Gilbert and Ellice Islands Order of 1970 was signed on 11 November; elections for the Legislative Council were held on 19 March 1971.

65 *ibid.*, 22 May 1970.

66 Statement made in the House of Representatives by the Resident Commissioner, 4 Dec. 1970 (personal notes).

PART IV

ENVOI

CHAPTER 101970 AND BEYOND: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony shares many of its problems with other Pacific territories: there is a land shortage, the population is increasing rapidly, there are insufficient local people qualified to take over senior positions in the civil service, there are disparities in development and in levels of political understanding between the main centre and the rural areas, there are few natural resources which might be exploited, and its people are located on small islands scattered over a vast area of ocean. Less common is its heavy dependence on an extractive industry with a maximum life-expectancy of eight years.

Family planning and a rationalisation of the agricultural sector, as envisaged in the Development Plan, could provide a partial solution but even the most optimistic advocates of the Plan do not see it as a complete solution to the Colony's economic problems. Without a changed attitude on the part of the Roman Catholic Church, the family planning campaign can only have limited success. The strength of customary attitudes on land tenure, especially in the Gilbert Islands, will continue to stand in the way of widespread acceptance of co-operative agricultural ventures. An increasing number of twenty-acre units are being established; but absentee ownership, a product of land fragmentation and overseas employment, remains a practical difficulty. There is greater potential for this type of development in the Ellice Islands where joint proprietorship is more common but with so many young men employed at Nauru, Ocean Island, Tarawa and in the merchant marine, there is now a labour shortage on many islands. With increased opportunities for wage employment offering in the post-war period, the Ellice Islanders have shown little interest in agricultural development - a trait that leads some Gilbertese to allege that the Ellice Islands are a financial burden on the Colony.

Under the Neglected Lands Ordinance¹ the Government may obtain unworked lands but any widespread compulsory purchase of such lands

1 Ordinance No. 1 of 1959.

would be seen as an attack on the rights of landowners and would probably lead to opposition of an intensity that the Legislative Council could not ignore. In the past, payments in respect of agricultural improvements have not been seen as an adequate incentive for change on many islands but if, in accordance with a recommendation of the House of Representatives, the Government moves towards the abolition of the copra export duty, the situation might well change. On present indications, however, it seems unlikely that copra production could be boosted sufficiently to compensate fully for the exhaustion of the phosphates, which will result in the loss of approximately half of Government revenue and a quarter of the employment opportunities currently available to the people of the Colony.

It is against this somewhat depressing background that the Colony Government has recently given serious consideration to the establishment of a commercial fishing industry. This prospect was investigated in 1959;² but was rejected then, and through the early 1960s, because the most economical freezing methods available depended on a plentiful supply of fresh water. And because of the premium prices offered for the Albacore tuna - a large, white-fleshed, deep-swimming fish - consideration was not given to establishing an industry based on less popular varieties, especially the smaller Skipjack and Yellow Fin, which are plentiful in Colony waters. In 1966 Ronald Powell, the South Pacific Commission Fisheries Officer, again investigated the possibilities of establishing a fishing industry in the Colony. He argued that both long-line, and pole and live-bait operations, for Albacore and Skipjack and Yellow Fin respectively could be feasible but pointed to several problems that would have to be overcome: in particular, a market would need to be ensured, bulk carriers for transporting the catch to a cannery would have to be arranged and skilled personnel and finance would be essential.³

2 GEIC, Fisheries in the Gilbert Islands (Devambe, Assistant Fisheries Officer of the South Pacific Commission), 1959, 15-17.

3 GEIC, Possibilities of Developing a Tuna Fishing Industry in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, (Powell), 1967, 12.

Following upon this investigation, a further study by D.N.F. Hall, Fisheries Adviser to the Ministry of Overseas Development, in 1969, and research conducted by the Colony's Fisheries Officer in 1970, a tentative plan for a large-scale industry has now been prepared. If completely successful, the industry would produce \$3 - 4,000,000 a year for the Colony from a catch of 60,000 tons - enough to replace the lost phosphate revenues.

The plan involves the division of the Colony into four fisheries regions comprising the Gilbert, Ellice, Phoenix and Line Islands. In 1971 research will be undertaken in the Gilbert Islands and, if the results indicate that large-scale investment is practicable, a fifteen-boat operation will be established in 1972. At the same time, research will be undertaken in the Ellice Islands and so the pattern will continue. Each vessel would have a crew of twenty, giving a total employment potential, including shore-based staff, of about two thousand men. Salt-water freezing facilities and cold storage installations, possibly on large concrete barges moored in deep water to facilitate loading and to overcome the problems of building on uncertain lagoon floors, would be established in each of the regions to be serviced by reefer-ships from a Pago Pago cannery.

Where Japanese, Chinese and Korean fishing fleets have sought the Albacore variety of tuna, using long-line methods, the Colony Government has decided in favour of a live-bait and pole type of operation. Because bait-fish in the central Pacific area have a life expectancy, in tanks, of only two or three days this type of fishing, by necessity, must operate close to land where sardines, anchovies and similar types of small fish are readily available. By adopting these methods, therefore, the Colony will have an in-built advantage over other operators. The key to the success of the venture lies in the supply of large quantities of bait-fish and it is on this aspect that research is presently being concentrated.⁴

Although canning is the most labour-intensive aspect of a fishing industry, the type of operation planned for the Colony

4 Interview with J. Hughson, G.E.I.C. Fisheries Officer, December 1970.

would offer greater employment opportunities than the more common type of long-line fishing. The Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders are willing and even eager to serve at sea in any capacity and the comparatively large crews required for pole and live-bait fishing would readily be available. Further, bait supplies would be obtained primarily from lagoon operations which would almost entirely be shore-based.

To overcome some of the technical and financial problems, to ensure a safe market and, above all, to provide for rapid and reliable research, the Colony Government has entered into a one-year agreement with the Van Camp Sea Food Company of California. Under the agreement the Company will provide two fishing vessels together with a tender-freezer, basic crews of Okinawans, half of the operating costs of the vessels and management assistance. The Colony, for its part, will pay half of the operating costs, provide the balance of crews and has guaranteed Van Camp exclusive fishing rights for the duration of the agreement. Returns from the sale of fish will be divided equally.⁵

The cost of establishing a fishing industry will be considerable; capital investment could be as high as \$2,500,000. The annual return on a catch estimated at 335 tons per boat per year, or 5,000 tons for each region, would, on current prices, total \$1,200,000. This figure is a conservative one, however, as similar vessels working under comparable conditions from Palau in the Carolines are recording catches as high as 1,200 tons a year. If this achievement could be matched, the returns would be trebled.

Except by drawing on the Revenue Equalisation Fund, the Colony would be unable to finance its share of a joint fisheries venture but there are indications that the bulk of the capital required will be made available as development aid from the United Kingdom. Having financed other similar schemes which have failed, the United Kingdom Government could well be chary of yet another fisheries project. There are, however, two factors which should serve to qualify such an attitude; firstly, the largest tuna

5 Colony Information Notes, 7 April 1971.

processing company in the world would not participate in any scheme which did not promise satisfactory returns on a profit-sharing basis and, secondly, the United Kingdom Government is likely to support any scheme which might allow it to reduce future aid commitments. In 1970 development aid was given to cover the cost of a small vessel and preliminary research and, in 1971, a further \$200,000 will be made available to finance the Colony's commitments under the Van Camp agreement.⁶

The fisheries scheme may offer the Colony a chance to establish itself as an economically viable unit within a few years; but a large number of unknowns remain. The success of the chosen type of operation planned depends not only on a supply of bait-fish but also on an ability to locate shoals of tuna; an ability that will depend to some extent on local knowledge of fish movements and years of experience in interpreting the habits and actions of sea-birds. Crews will have to be trained.

If a decision to proceed with a large-scale fishing industry is made, the present Merchant Marine Training School could well be re-oriented towards basic seamanship with specialisation in various aspects of fisheries work. But with 3,000 potential jobs available on German ships alone, and the prospect of a lost labour outlet should the fishing industry prove a failure, there will undoubtedly be strong pressure from within the Colony for the retention of merchant marine training. The existence of two virtually parallel schemes does not seem feasible. A fisheries oriented training school could draw from a larger recruiting pool as a knowledge of English, essential for Colony cadets entering the marine service, would not be necessary. Because of the total contribution that it could make to the Colony's economy, the fisheries scheme would be most likely to receive priority.

But if the Colony cannot replace the phosphate revenue from its own resources, and as there are few prospects of developing a tourist industry in the foreseeable future, then either increased aid will be required or the Colony Government would be forced to introduce severe retrenchment measures in order to balance its

6 Colony Information Notes, 25 March 1971.

budget. Continued British aid at the present level does not seem in doubt, at least in the immediate future, but there are fears in the Colony that the required \$4,000,000 of new revenue cannot be generated and that the United Kingdom may not be prepared to meet the full deficit. It is this fear, above all other considerations, that has brought many of the Colony's politicians to the view that, constitutionally, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands should not progress beyond the point of internal self-government. Despite the assurances given the Advisory Council in 1964⁷ apprehension over the financial future has not been dispelled and, indeed, during 1970 there were two events which gave further cause for concern.

When the Members of the Fijian Legislative Council were in London in April 1970 they were told, in the first instance, that all aid-grants would cease on Independence Day (10 October 1970) and that, henceforth, Fiji could only expect loans. It was only after negotiation that the United Kingdom Government agreed to finance projects already approved; the future was left in doubt.⁸ And in his opening address to the British Solomon Islands Protectorate Governing Council in July the High Commissioner pointed out that aid from the United Kingdom accounted for 50 per cent of per capita income. He went on:

There can be no true political self-government without financial independence and I would hope that by the time that the country comes of age politically it will be meeting the full costs of the recurrent budget from its own revenue, even if this should require a retrenchment in some services.⁹

The outcome in the Colony of these developments which suggested that Britain would be less willing to give aid in the future was a motion passed by the House of Representatives on 2 December 1970:

that ... this House expresses its concern for the economic future of the Colony and its people, and

7 GEIC, Advisory Council, Minutes, Third Meeting (Nov. 1964), 2.

8 Fiji Times, 24 April; 7, 19 May 1970.

9 B.S.I.P. News, 15 July 1970. In 1970 approximately 35 per cent of recurrent expenditure was financed from aid.

respectfully calls upon Her Majesty's Government to make a clear statement of policy for future aid to the Colony, and for an assurance that the expected loss of revenue from phosphate will not be allowed to result in a lowering of the people's standard of living or a cut-back in social services.¹⁰

The motion, moved by Reuben Uatinoa, was passed unanimously although, as in 1964, officials pointed out that no Government could indefinitely bind its successors to give the Colony a fixed level of aid. The elected Members concentrated on the moral obligation that they believed rested with the United Kingdom Government. Having accepted responsibility for the administration of the Colony, they argued, Britain could not 'take her hands away' when the Colony was in difficulties nor, they argued, could Britain desert the Colony after it had been a party to the exploitation of the Ocean Island phosphates.¹¹

Should aid be required in the future, as it undoubtedly will be, and should the United Kingdom fail to finance social services in particular at a level which the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders consider desirable or essential, then the people of the Colony, together with those of the other small territories of the Pacific, will be looking to Australia and New Zealand. The Colony will be looking to these nations not only because of their relative proximity but because local leaders believe, or have been conditioned to believe, that the Ocean Island phosphates belong to the Colony rather than to the Banabans. Therefore, they argue, because the Australian and New Zealand farmers have benefited from cheap phosphates for more than half a century, the Colony now has a right to expect aid in return.

It is probable that the Colony will seek three types of assistance from metropolitan countries: grants of aid and cheap loans to finance development projects and general services, the secondment of technical advisers to the Colony and the granting of scholarships for secondary, tertiary and technical education tenable in the metropolitan country, and opportunities to immigrate

10 GEIC, H. of R., Third Session, Third Meeting, Order Paper No. 1.

11 Personal notes.

or for men to enter the metropolitan country on short-term labour contracts. Except for territories for which they have a definite responsibility - Australia in respect of Papua and New Guinea, and New Zealand in respect of Western Samoa and the Cook Islands - both countries have concentrated their aid in the second category - scholarships and minor technical assistance - together with financial contributions to regional organisations, especially the South Pacific Commission, and institutions like the University of the South Pacific in Suva. Because they hold New Zealand citizenship, Cook Islanders have been allowed unrestricted entry to New Zealand which has also admitted Samoans on a relatively generous quota basis. In addition, several hundred Fijians and Tongans have been admitted on six-month labour contracts. The future of the latter scheme is uncertain but similar conditions of entry will, no doubt, be sought by other territories. Australia, by contrast, has continued with its restrictive immigration policies, applying them even to the people of Papua and New Guinea. Even if the immigration opportunities so eagerly sought by large numbers of Pacific Islanders do not materialise, political and strategic considerations may induce the Australian and New Zealand Governments to increase their aid to the Pacific nations.

But the success and nature of proposals for economic development in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony must, to a large degree, be determined by the internal political situation. The future of the Colony in this regard is, in many ways, even less clear than the economic future. Elections were held on 19 March 1971 for the Legislative Council which met for the first time on 14 April. But no timetable for constitutional development has yet been established; the nature of the next constitution is uncertain. The disillusionment that was evident among the elected Members of the House of Representatives seems to have spread to the electors; full figures are not yet available but it would appear that the percentage poll was lower than that in the 1967 elections when approximately 50 per cent and 70 per cent voted in the Gilbert and Ellice groups respectively.¹²

12 Colony Information Notes, 22 Nov. 1967.

Of the thirteen Members of the House of Representatives who sought election to the Legislative Council, only five were successful; of the two who had sat on the Governing Council, only Reuben Uatioa - who has subsequently been elected as Leader of Government Business - was returned. Sione Tui Kleiss was the sole Ellice Islander to be re-elected. Most of the former Members who were unsuccessful were heavily defeated at the polls; some received as few as 10 per cent of the votes cast. The results of the election do show, however, that fewer Members of the Legislative Council than of the House of Representatives will be seriously hampered by language problems. Among the new Members there are at least four who are Presidents of Island Councils; three of them - those from Butaritari, Abemama and Aranuka - are members of chiefly families. Mrs Tekerei Russell, the first woman to be successful in a Colony election, was returned as the second Member for the Urban electorate. Her success reflects support gained through her work with women's clubs on Tarawa. The election of a strong English speaking delegation from the Ellice Islands is a clear indication of the anxiety felt for the future by the people of the group and their desire to be well represented in the Legislative Council.¹³

Two of the new Ellice Members, Tomu Sione (Niutao) and Isakala Paeniu (Nukulaelae) together with Bwebwetake Arieta (Maiana) were, until the elections, employed in the Broadcasting and Information Office. Two sitting Members, Reuben Uatioa and Sione Tui Kleiss are also former broadcasting officers. Although civil servants resident on Tarawa generally have an advantage in seeking election in that they may not be involved in factional island politics, they are often handicapped by their not being well known on their home islands because of absences for education and employment. Those involved in radio broadcasting or in the production of the Colony's news-sheets obviously do not share this disadvantage.

With greater participation in policy making by elected Members in the Executive Council and, through them, improved liaison with

13 *ibid.*, 25 March 1971.

the legislature, both Councils are unlikely to suffer from all the disabilities suffered by their predecessors - but formal rules of procedure may continue to inhibit debate. And there is no indication that, following the constitutional revision, standing committees which would, in less formal surroundings, allow all Members of Legislative Council to participate in the formation of policy, will be established.

Neither the United Kingdom Government, nor local political groups have yet put forward any timetable for constitutional development. It is probable, however, that discussions could begin as early as 1972 or 1973 on a constitutional revision to be introduced when the present Councils have completed their first three-year term. As a further step would bring the Colony close to internal self-government, the separation issue will obviously be crucial and will probably have to be settled with some finality at that stage.

A combination of Ellice and conservative Gilbertese interests could delay the introduction of internal self-government. At present the Gilbertese, especially those living on the outer islands, are prepared to accept the leadership of a few of their educated fellows but many express reservations about the ability of their people to run an administration without assistance from expatriates. Several assumptions underlie this view: that constitutional development means a rapid reduction of expatriate staff and that internal self-government (often equated with independence) would automatically result in a reduction of aid. Seldom mentioned in public, but none the less important, is a belief that if local people are placed in control of the civil service nepotism and favouritism will follow. Should the pace of constitutional development become an election issue in 1973, as it could well do, with candidates forced to declare an allegiance to one of two opinion groups, then the election of a significant number of conservative Gilbertese, especially from the southern islands would follow almost as a matter of course. In the Legislative Council, or its successor, these Members, with the Ellice Islanders, could effectively postpone constitutional change; the emergence of parties in the Council and the Colony, divided

over the issue of the speed of constitutional development, could follow.

But constitutional development, at whatever speed, is inevitable; and the future political relationship among the islands now included within the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony will have to be decided. The Ellice Islanders have already declared that, when internal self-government is granted, they will secede and seek a special relationship which will involve political and, they hope, economic dependence on Britain. Their reasons are obvious: they are a minority group and fear future subjection to the Gilbertese; there is fear that quotas, proportionate to the racial composition of the population, may be introduced in the civil service and in schools, thus limiting the future employment prospects for their children and an abandonment of the principle that the best qualified should be employed; and, above all, the Ellice Islanders are convinced that the group, already neglected to a large degree by the colonial administration would be worse treated with the advent of internal self-government. The impetus for separation of the Colony is definitely coming from the Ellice at the moment, but it would appear that there are few Gilbertese who would stand in their way - some are actively promoting separation; the majority believe that the decision is one for the Ellice alone.

In the absence of new labour outlets, and in the light of the uncertainties surrounding the establishment of a fishing industry, the emergence of two non-viable political entities must be envisaged. The Ellice would, relatively speaking, be better off financially. Copra production could be boosted considerably simply by harvesting the nuts available and introducing effective rodent control. With consolidation of land holdings, and some grove improvement, production could be more than trebled. Proportionately, there are more Ellice Islanders in overseas employment than Gilbertese; between one-third and one-half of those graduating from the Merchant Marine Training School are Ellice Islanders. The Ellice could, without difficulty, staff a civil service adequate for their needs; the Gilbertese, unless the present top-heavy bureaucratic structure can be completely overhauled would be worse off. The Ocean Island phosphate industry,

and Colony assets generally, would be a complicating factor. It is difficult to see any local legislature being given any significant power over the industry but the division of profits would be in dispute as would, for example, the future of Colony ships.

The phosphate industry aside, there are many similarities between the situation emerging in the Colony and that which provoked the Anguilla crisis in 1969. Many more islands are involved but there are strong parallels between the grievances of the Anguillans and those now being aired in the Ellice: both groups are minorities within the polity and have a strong sense of grievance over neglect by a central government; both units are economically non-viable; and there is a wish to secede. The Wooding Commission on Anguilla considered no less than ten possible solutions to the problem, ranging from the status quo to full independence.¹⁴ Some of them may well be applicable to the Colony situation.

Adapting these possible solutions to a Pacific context, many may be rejected as quickly as they were for the Caribbean. The maintenance of the status quo, with the implication that the Colony will continue to progress towards internal self-government without special provisions for minorities would obviously be unacceptable

14 'Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the Governments of the United Kingdom and St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla to examine the Anguilla Problem' - Cmnd 4510 (1970), 51. The ten possibilities considered for Anguilla were:

- (1) Maintaining the status quo.
- (2) Administration (singly or jointly) by one or more of the independent Commonwealth Caribbean countries.
- (3) Associated status with some Commonwealth country other than Britain.
- (4) Becoming a unit of another Associated State.
- (5) Association with a foreign country.
- (6) Administration under the United Nations.
- (7) Becoming part of a federation or confederation in the Caribbean.
- (8) Revised relationship with Britain.
- (9) Independence for Anguilla.
- (10) Revised relationship with St Kitts.

to the Ellice Islanders. Administration under the United Nations seems out of the question. It is also unlikely that any Pacific nation would be prepared to accept non-viable islands as dependencies or as integrated or associated states. There are two commonwealth countries in the area with responsibility for Pacific territories but it is doubtful whether either Australia or New Zealand would be prepared to accept further formal responsibility. France and the United States may similarly be disregarded. Although there is evidence of increased co-operation among the territories of the Pacific there is no indication, after nearly a century of spasmodic discussion, that a federation of Pacific Islands will emerge.¹⁵ And because of the problems of viability and fears of vulnerability it does not appear that full independence will be sought in the foreseeable future by either the Gilbertese or the Ellice Islanders.

Two possibilities remain: the separation of the Colony into two political units with each sharing a special relationship with Britain, or a special relationship between two units within a single associated state. For Anguilla the Wooding Commission argued against the first of these proposals on much the same grounds as it rejected full independence. It considered that this type of separation would not automatically ensure an improvement of conditions on the island and that it would probably weaken the security of the region.¹⁶ In the Colony context the effects would be similar but without, perhaps, the same strategic implications. Further, as a solution it would be opposed by Britain probably with the support of the United Nations, which appears to be against the division of existing states.

The conclusions drawn by the Wooding Commission may well be prophetic for the future of the Colony:

Our analysis of the situation and other pertinent considerations have led us to believe that it is

15 The Colony has recently moved away from the territories with which, perhaps, it was most likely to form a federation; steps are currently being taken to separate the Colony from the other Western Pacific High Commission territories.

16 'Report of the Commission of Inquiry ... ', 58-9.

feasible and in the best interest of all concerned to work out an arrangement which gives the Anguillans a large measure of control over their own affairs, but which at the same time preserves the integrity of the State of St. Christopher, Nevis and Anguilla.¹⁷

Rather than a federal relationship the Commission favoured the devolution of authority within a unitary structure, and emphasised three major guidelines: that Anguilla should have an elected council with wide ranging legislative, executive and fiscal authority; that a co-ordinating council on which each unit would be equally represented should be established; and that Anguillan representation in the House of Assembly should be increased, irrespective of the distribution of population.¹⁸

It is not unlikely that the Colony will move towards a similar governmental structure. An elected regional council, together with certain other constitutional guarantees which could be safeguarded by the United Kingdom, could give sufficient autonomy to the Ellice to remove most grievances while avoiding the problems that complete separation would involve. Already some concessions along the lines recommended for Anguilla have been made. Under the 1967 constitution there was an average of one Member of the House to 2,500 people; in the Ellice the ratio was 1:1400. By doubling the number of Ellice representatives from 1970, and by giving an extra Member to the Gilberts the overall ratio was increased to 1:2000; for the Ellice it is now 1:725. As Britain will undoubtedly discourage separation for financial if for no other reasons, further concessions granting a degree of regional autonomy - perhaps to three regions; northern Gilberts, southern Gilberts and Ellice Islands - may eventuate prior to internal self-government with a strong possibility of free association with Britain.

Secessionist movements are by no means unusual in dependencies and former colonial territories where a single administration has been imposed on culturally diverse peoples. Examples can be found ranging in scale from St Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, with a population

17 *ibid.*, 59.

18 *ibid.*, 62.

of 56,000 and a land area of 136 square miles, to Nigeria which has a population in excess of 62,000,000 spread over 357,000 square miles. And in the Pacific there are two other dependencies where separatist movements have emerged. The people of Bougainville wish to separate from Papua and New Guinea, while in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands there are demands in the Marianas for separation from the Carolines and the Marshalls.

In the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the situation has been complicated by policies which have led to a centralisation of government activity on Tarawa. Ellice Islanders, generally with higher levels of education than the Gilbertese, and a greater willingness to make the cultural adjustments required for employment in the civil service, have been drawn to Tarawa. Thus the two major races have been brought together in a situation characterised by competition and, as a consequence, by conflict. The success of the Ellice Islanders in the civil service, together with their recruitment in large numbers for overseas employment, has produced a strong feeling of resentment among many Gilbertese who argue that the Ellice Islanders not only win the best positions but carry with them an air of racial superiority. It is of interest that these same criticisms, in almost identical terms, have been made by Solomon Islanders of Gilbertese who have settled in the Protectorate. On Tarawa in particular the situation has been worsened by the attitudes of expatriate administrators, many of whom believe that the Ellice Islander is more intelligent and a better worker than his Gilbertese counterpart; it is a belief that has served to consolidate the position of the Ellice Islanders in the civil service and to preserve their high proportion of appointments.

The factors which will determine the future of the Colony may be summarised as the strength of Gilbertese resentment (whether or not it is expressed in nationalistic terms) and of the apprehension felt by the Ellice Islanders; and the limits to which the British Government is prepared to go in order to preserve the territorial integrity of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. In the final analysis, the future will hinge on the nature of guarantees for the Ellice on which the British Government is prepared to insist,

and the Gilbertese will allow, and on the extent of the concessions sought by the Ellice Islanders. Unless further guarantees and concessions, beyond those already made in the 1970 constitution, are forthcoming, future separation seems inevitable.

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 - Treasury
- (d) United States Government

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- (a) Great Britain
 - Orders in Council
 - Parliamentary Debates
 - Command Papers
 - Foreign Office
 - Colonial Office
 - Admiralty
 - Miscellaneous
- (b) Western Pacific High Commission
- (c) Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony
 - Legislation
 - Native Laws and Island Regulations
 - Colony Conference
 - Advisory Council (i - ii)
 - House of Representatives (i - ii)
 - Reports and Papers (i - v)
 - Reports to Government by specialists from overseas, and Government Handbooks
 - Colony Information Notes

II

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A MANUSCRIPT

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- (b) London Missionary Society
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B NEWSPAPERSC PUBLISHED ARTICLESD SECONDARY WORKSE THESESF UNPUBLISHED PAPERSG MISCELLANEOUS

Note: This Bibliography is confined to documents, series and works directly relevant to the present study and makes no claim to be a comprehensive listing of published and unpublished material relating to the history of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

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6/8/2 Traditions and Customs

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 3/1/9A Annual Reports, Education Department
 10/1/1 Constitutional Reorganisation [Local Government]
 10/5/17 Constitutional Development: Consideration of
 Proposals outside Advisory Council
 10/8/1 Ten Year Plan: Revision, 1948 - 1952
 10/11/12 Travelling Diary, Beru
 32/1 Colonial Development and Welfare
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 53/2/1 Banaban Affairs
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 29/3/8 Constitutional Reorganisation [Local Government]
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APPENDIX I(a) HIGH COMMISSIONERS AND ACTING HIGH COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC, 1888-1970

February	1888	-	Sir John Thurston
March	1895	-	Sir Henry Berkeley (Acting)
June	1896	-	Sir John Thurston
January	1897	-	Sir Henry Berkeley (Acting)
March	1897	-	Sir George O'Brien
July	1901	-	W.L. Allardyce (Acting)
September	1902	-	Sir Henry Jackson
March	1904	-	C. Major (Acting)
June	1904	-	Sir Everard im Thurn
October	1908	-	C. Major (Acting)
August	1909	-	Sir Everard im Thurn
August	1910	-	Sir Charles Major (Acting)
February	1911	-	Sir Francis May
June	1912	-	Sir Charles Major (Acting)
July	1912	-	Sir Ernest Sweet-Escott
August	1915	-	E. Hutson (Acting)
May	1916	-	Sir Ernest Sweet-Escott
October	1918	-	C.H. Rodwell
May	1920	-	T.E. Fell (Acting)
June	1920	-	Sir Cecil Rodwell
May	1921	-	T.E. Fell (Acting)
March	1922	-	Sir Cecil Rodwell
January	1924	-	T.E. Fell (Acting)
April	1925	-	Sir Eyre Hutson
November	1927	-	A.W. Seymour (Acting)
April	1928	-	Sir Eyre Hutson
April	1929	-	A.W. Seymour (Acting)
November	1929	-	Sir Murchison Fletcher
June	1930	-	I. McOwan (Acting)
August	1930	-	Sir Murchison Fletcher
November	1932	-	A.W. Seymour (Acting)
August	1933	-	Sir Murchison Fletcher
January	1934	-	A.W. Seymour (Acting)
March	1935	-	A.A. Wright (Acting)
August	1935	-	Sir Murchison Fletcher

May	1936	-	C.J.J.T. Barton (Acting)
November	1936	-	Sir Arthur Richards
July	1938	-	C.J.J.T. Barton (Acting)
September	1938	-	Sir Harry Luke
March	1939	-	C.J.J.T. Barton (Acting)
April	1939	-	J. Craig (Acting)
May	1939	-	Sir Harry Luke
July	1942	-	Sir Philip Mitchell
February	1943	-	A.T. Newbould (Acting)
April	1944	-	Sir Philip Mitchell
October	1944	-	J.F. Nicoll (Acting)
January	1945	-	A.W.G.H. Grantham
March	1947	-	J.F. Nicoll (Acting)
January	1948	-	Sir Leslie Freeston
January	1950	-	G.D. Chamberlain (Acting)
July	1950	-	H.C.A. Bryant (Acting)
August	1950	-	Sir Leslie Freeston
September	1951	-	G.D. Chamberlain (Acting)
July	1952	-	Sir Robert Stanley
July	1955	-	R.J. Minnit (Acting)
September	1955	-	Sir John Gutch
July	1957	-	R.J. Minnit (Acting)
October	1957	-	Sir John Gutch
June	1959	-	M.D.I. Gass (Acting)
October	1959	-	Sir John Gutch
March	1961	-	D.C.C. Trench
March	1963	-	M.D.I. Gass (Acting)
September	1963	-	Sir David Trench
March	1964	-	M.D.I. Gass (Acting)
June	1964	-	Sir Robert Foster
May	1966	-	L.M. Davies (Acting)
October	1966	-	Sir Robert Foster
December	1968	-	L.M. Davies (Acting)
March	1969	-	Sir Michael Gass
November	1970	-	T. Russell (Acting)

(b) RESIDENT COMMISSIONERS AND ACTING RESIDENT COMMISSIONERSFOR THE GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS, 1893-1970

October	1893	-	C.R. Swayne
November	1895	-	W.T. Campbell
June	1903	-	R.H. Cogswell (Acting)
April	1904	-	W.T. Campbell
January	1907	-	R.H. Cogswell (Acting)
April	1907	-	W.T. Campbell
January	1909	-	A.W. Mahaffy (Acting)
June	1909	-	R.H. Cogswell (Acting)
September	1909	-	J. Quayle Dickson
February	1913	-	G.M. Murdoch (Acting)
October	1913	-	E.C. Eliot
September	1915	-	C. Workman (Acting)
December	1915	-	E.C. Eliot
May	1916	-	C. Workman (Acting)
January	1917	-	E.C. Eliot
May	1918	-	S.F. Anderson (Acting)
September	1918	-	E.C. Eliot
May	1919	-	C.R. Keyte (Acting)
November	1919	-	E.C. Eliot
April	1920	-	A.F. Grimble (Acting)
July	1920	-	T.D.H. Bruce (Acting)
May	1921	-	S.F. Anderson (Acting)
September	1921	-	W.T.L. Bentley (Acting)
January	1922	-	A.F. Grimble (Acting)
February	1922	-	H.R. McClure
February	1924	-	A.F. Grimble (Acting)
September	1924	-	H.R. McClure
September	1925	-	H.A.W. Moulder (Acting)
October	1925	-	A.F. Grimble (Acting)
January	1926	-	A.F. Grimble (Substantive)
November	1928	-	C.A. Swinbourne (Acting)
January	1930	-	A.F. Grimble
August	1932	-	C.A. Swinbourne (Acting)
December	1933	-	J.C. Barley
April	1935	-	S.G. Clarke (Acting)
October	1935	-	J.C. Barley

February	1937	-	C.A. Swinbourne (Acting)
April	1937	-	J.C. Barley
May	1938	-	R.H. Garvey (Acting)
April	1939	-	J.C. Barley
September	1940	-	F.G.L. Holland (Acting)
January	1941	-	J.C. Barley
September	1941	-	R.H. Garvey (Acting)
March	1942	-	S.G. Clarke (Acting)
August	1942	-	V. Fox-Strangways
November	1945	-	H.E. Maude (Acting)
January	1946	-	D.C.I. Wernham (Acting)
October	1946	-	H.E. Maude (Acting)
December	1946	-	H.E. Maude (Substantive)
May	1947	-	H.C.A. Bryant (Acting)
June	1948	-	H.E. Maude
December	1948	-	R.J. Keegan (Acting)
February	1949	-	W.J. Peel
February	1952	-	B.C. Cartland (Acting)
August	1952	-	M.L. Bernacchi
November	1953	-	B.C. Cartland (Acting)
March	1954	-	M.L. Bernacchi
August	1955	-	F.N.M. Pusinelli (Acting)
May	1956	-	M.L. Bernacchi
November	1956	-	F.N.M. Pusinelli (Acting)
July	1957	-	M.L. Bernacchi
April	1959	-	R. Davies (Acting)
September	1959	-	M.L. Bernacchi
October	1961	-	R. Davies (Acting)
April	1962	-	V.J. Andersen
June	1964	-	R. Angeloni (Acting)
October	1964	-	V.J. Andersen
November	1966	-	M.M. Townsend (Acting)
March	1967	-	V.J. Andersen
June	1969	-	D.G. Cudmore (Acting)
January	1970	-	Sir John Field

APPENDIX II

SUMMARY OF POPULATION STATISTICS, 1968

ISLAND	C O M P O N E N T P O P U L A T I O N			TOTAL POPULATION	APPROXIMATE AREA OF ISLAND IN ACRES	NUMBER OF PERSONS PER ACRE
	MICRONESIAN	POLYNESIAN	ALL OTHERS			
Ocean Island	1406	600	186	2192	1545	1.419
Makin	1379	6	2	1387	1794	0.773
Bucaritari	2677	3	34	2714	2882	0.942
Marakei	2164	9	7	2180	2752	0.792
Abaiang	3243	16	12	3271	6001	0.545
Tarawa	11081	1054	507	12642	4916	2.556
Milana	1702	5	3	1710	4491	0.381
Abemama	2062	44	20	2126	4205	0.506
Kuria	936	16	6	958	3030	0.316
Aranuka	738	0	0	738	3822	0.193
Nonouti	2397	1	10	2408	7201	0.334
Tabiteuea	4289	22	108	4419	9385	0.471
Reru	2378	18	16	2412	3632	0.664
Nikunau	2002	18	9	2029	4480	0.453
Onotoa	1929	9	22	1960	3337	0.587
Tamana	1388	9	23	1420	1187	1.198
Arorae	1822	6	2	1830	2342	0.781
Gilbert Islands	42187	1236	783	44206	65487	0.675
Nanumea	14	1059	3	1076	956	1.126
Nanumanga	5	570	10	585	687	0.852
Niutao	16	780	0	796	625	1.274
Nui	25	544	0	569	699	0.814
Vaitupu	12	863	1	876	1385	0.632
Nukufetau	0	645	1	646	738	0.875
Funafuti	13	677	136	826	689	1.199
Nukulaelae	8	346	0	354	449	0.788
Niulakifa	0	48	6	54	104	0.519
Ellice Islands	93	5532	157	5782	6332	0.913
Canton	0	0	0	0	2262	0.0
Hull	0	0	0	0	966	0.0
Gardner	0	0	0	0	1023	0.0
Phoenix Islands	0	0	0	0	7082	0.0
Fanning	366	2	8	376	8529	0.044
Washington	421	13	3	437	3434	0.125
Christmas	334	29	4	367	88960	0.004
Line Islands	1121	44	15	1180	100983	0.012
Ships	90	53	14	157		
Colony Total	44897	7465	1155	53517	181429	0.295

Source: GFC, A Report on the Results of the Census of the Population, 1968, 113