

Chapter 11

Defining the State

A new State must define itself, especially if its inherited shape owes everything to the convenience of colonial powers and nothing to cultural or economic compatibilities. Papua New Guinea's borders were so arbitrary and its internal links so frail that national sentiment mingled with parochial passions — and with pan-Melanesian solidarities. The 800 spoken languages measured not only people's isolation but the parochialism of each language community. English was spoken by a tiny elite of school-leavers; Tok Pisin was spoken mainly by men (and fewer women) who had lived away from home; *hiri motu* served as a lingua franca along the Papuan coast; but a national language was not the only element missing from national sentiment. Warfare had been suppressed in many parts of the Highlands only within living memory and in some places it was making a comeback. After four years of independence, the Government would have to declare a State of Emergency in all Highland provinces, in a vain attempt to bring tribal conflicts under control.¹

Divisions between communities were real but porous. Every society engaged in trade and exchange, and people usually married partners from outside their close kin. That meant that suspicion of one's neighbours was mediated by cautious cooperation. Migrants to town sought out *wantoks* (who shared their language) and formed enclaves until jobs or other circumstances broadened their horizons. Parochialism did not rule out sympathy for others in similar troubles. Papua New Guinea therefore presented a shifting patchwork of loyalties and enmities, suspicions and empathies, mainly peaceful but sometimes erupting into violence.

Ebia Olewale's career suggests some of the complexities of ideas about affiliations.² Born in the Western District of Papua near the land border with Irian Jaya and the sea border with Australia, he went on from local schools to Sogeri High School near Port Moresby. That led to teacher training in Port Moresby. There he met Michael Somare and Albert Maori Kiki, who were at the Administrative College. As a trainee teacher, he revealed a flair for politics, organising protests against the dual wage decision (Chapter 3). After a spell of teaching in his home town, Daru, he was transferred back to Port Moresby, where he rejoined his friends and was one of the '13 angry young men' (Chapter 4) who addressed the Guise Committee so ungratefully in 1967. Shortly after that, he resigned his post, sailed to Daru and campaigned for election to the House as a Pangu candidate.

Defeating the sitting member (the docile ministerial member Robert Tabua), he joined the Pangu group in the House, although his ignorance of Tok Pisin (which was not then widely spoken in Papua) held him back: he told Ted Wolfers that he understood 'very little of what had passed'.³ Across the Papua/New Guinea and party divisions he befriended another ex-teacher, Mathias ToLiman, who was struggling with the role of Ministerial Member for Education. Roles were reversed in 1972 when Olewale became a minister and ToLiman led the Opposition, but they remained close. ToLiman spoke to Olewale for the last time as he entered the Chamber in September 1972: 'Remember my high school in Toma', he said, then sat down and suffered a fatal heart attack.

Although Olewale aligned with Pangu, he did uphold Papua's separate status and its special relationship with Australia, and he helped to create Papua Action (Chapter 8). In the debate on Papua's status (Chapter 4), he worried that 'the drift toward unification had gone with Papuans largely unaware of it and without choice'.⁴ Returned to the third House, he again aligned himself with Pangu — having resisted the siren song of Papua Besena and its charismatic leader, Josephine Abaijah. One influence on this delicate choice was the advice of his friend Paulus Arek, dying of cancer in 1973, that 'we must have a united country'. He was given the same advice by his older Papuan colleagues Oala Oala-Rarua, John Guise and Albert Maori Kiki. He was also anxious about what Australia would accept, and feared that separation might bring more problems than it solved.

In Somare's first coalition, as Minister for Education, Olewale still heard Abaijah's seductive appeal. Just as his colleague Paul Lapun had to balance his loyalties to Bougainville and to Pangu, Olewale had to live with dual loyalties. Opening the Port Moresby Show in June 1974, he 'questioned whether unity and independence were the only options available to Papuans'.⁵ He empathised with Melanesians in Irian Jaya seeking to break away from Indonesia; and, briefly, he tried to annex the Torres Strait Islands to Papua New Guinea, also on the grounds of Melanesian solidarity.⁶ Yet he could combine these sentiments with animus against provincial government in general, and Bougainvilleans in particular (see below). When Chan led the PPP out of the coalition in 1978, Olewale became Deputy Prime Minister. But even then — and even now — he wondered if national unity was the proper course: might not separate independence or Australian statehood have served them better? If Olewale juggled with contending loyalties, that made him an appropriate choice to negotiate the country's borders as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

National Unity and Decentralisation

There was general agreement that Australian rule was over-centralised, such that orders were transmitted from Canberra to the districts and even to patrol officers with little (if any) mediation in Konedobu. Proposed solutions ranged from Narokobi's anarchist vision in which villages would sustain and defend themselves, and land would be inalienable,⁷ through plans to disperse decision-making to districts and subdistricts, to the division of Papua New Guinea into four regions.⁸ Before the CPC reported, most of

these options had been discarded and attention focused on the districts as counterweights to central government. The regional idea might play into the hands of Papua Besena; subdistricts were too numerous to be serious contenders; and insistent demands from Bougainville and Rabaul reinforced the CPC's interest in district-level affairs. The CPC therefore advised decentralisation for Bougainville particularly, and similar measures (in the name of provincial government) for the rest of the country.

For members of the CPC, provincial government was more than a governance proposal. Momis told the 1978 Waigani Seminar that provincial government was intended to

fill the serious gap between the central government and the people and to transform the system of administration under which the colonial state had ruled us. [I]f we were to release the energies of our people, and if we were to enable them and their government to achieve a just, egalitarian self-reliant development we had to loosen the grip of these alien institutions.⁹

Meanwhile, with the help of Hannett's Special Political Committee, Bougainvilleans had channelled their manifold desires into clear-cut demands for autonomy.¹⁰

The Australian position was always clear. Like his political masters, Critchley wanted to protect Papua New Guinea's unity from secession and from decentralisation on the CPC model. No one yet knew how difficult it would be to create a state in Melanesia, but he did know how difficult it was to bring the machinery together in Waigani. He had general criticisms of the CPC's protracted debates, New-Age rhetoric, long-winded documents and ventilation of divisive issues. In particular, he opposed their approach to decentralisation. He suggested instead that Papua New Guinea experiment with less powerful area authorities, that they create local institutions very cautiously, and that powers conceded to Bougainville would be hard to deny to others. He was dismayed but not surprised when provincial government gave Bougainville's secessionists a base for an international campaign: fortunately, neither Papuans nor Mataungans had such a resource, so they were more easily contained.

That was not the only argument that swayed Somare's Government as events threw suspicion onto Bougainvillean intentions. Sending the Land Titles Commission to East New Britain, and despatching Rabbie Namaliu as District Commissioner, had defused tension in the Gazelle. By contrast, the renegotiation of the Bougainville Mining Agreement (conferring more benefit on the Central Government) did nothing to reconcile Bougainvilleans to the nation. Sending Hannett to the Special Committee did nothing to resolve outstanding issues and his dismissal exacerbated them.¹¹ Other emissaries to Bougainville also failed. Barnett and Gabriel Gris, for example, thought they had reached agreement on an Area Authority with enhanced powers, but they were roused in the middle of the night to learn that the deal was off.¹² Olewale led a last-ditch delegation in June 1975, also in vain.

At the end of July 1975, in an atmosphere of increasing suspicion against Abaijah on one hand and Napidakoe Navitu on the other, Cabinet decided not to risk provincial

government at present and in its proposed form. According to Olewale,¹³ Abaijah and her mentor, Dr Eric Wright, went to Bereina (in Mekeo country, Central Papua). Someone filmed Wright telling the chiefs how to blow up houses and bridges, and destabilise government. Cabinet was summoned to view the film, and saw Wright ‘telling people how to destroy roads and bridges and houses’, so they agreed to deport him.

Peter Bayne was talking to Namaliu in the House of Assembly when provincial government was due to be adopted. Somare walked in and said of the enabling clauses, ‘They’re off. We’ve taken them out of the Constitution.’ Bayne learned that Cabinet had discovered attempts by some Bougainvilleans to win separate status from the UN. He also heard of people instructing a lawyer to draft a constitution for an independent Bougainville. True or false, stories like these might explain why Somare pulled out.

And it fell to the reformed separatist Olewale to manage this about-face. According to James Griffin, who deplored the decision, Olewale was the ‘hatchet man’, who gave the excuse that provincial government was unaffordable:

PNG did not have ‘this kind of money at this stage’ ... However ... Olewale attacked the CPC and ... [singled out] Father John Momis. He did not admire, he said, the way the CPC ‘took their document to be correct, without mistake in all its entirety’: ‘the man who conceived the idea of provincial government’ was now a secessionist.

Griffin recalled Olewale’s flirting with secession.¹⁴ Certainly, Olewale had not forgotten Papua’s interests. He weighed Papua’s options with care, and asked two Papuan graduates — Renagi Lohia and Moi Avei — to examine the draft constitution to see what could be done for Papua. When they did not offer ideas, he fell back on his basic position that provincial governments would fragment the country.¹⁵

Ditching provincial government poisoned relations with Bougainville. A democratic government could hardly employ the *kiap* network, but who else would communicate with Bougainvilleans and monitor crises? One institution was the new National Broadcasting Corporation, amalgamating the Australian Broadcasting Corporation network and local radio services run by the Department of Information and Extension Services (renamed the Office of Information). These and the Government’s Liaison Office were drawn into a Bougainville Task Force. The District Liaison Officer, for example, reported to the Director of the Office of Information on Bougainvilleans’ (mainly cool) response to the Papua New Guinea independence celebrations.¹⁶ A fuller account to the Bougainville Task Force noted ‘significant numbers of Bougainvilleans at PNG independence celebrations’ and reported that

broadcast material is being prepared for Bougainville; more field officers [are] to be appointed to Bougainville districts; financial statistics [will be] prepared for [the] information of Bougainvilleans of central government largesse; etc, etc.¹⁷

Somare was keen to enlist the NBC as a protagonist as well as a reporter. For obvious reasons, he wanted to publicise the words of the Trusteeship Council when it congratu-

lated his government for its 'successful endeavours in preparing for independence' and its statement that it trusted that 'the unity of the country will be successfully maintained'. The council conveyed to the Government and people of Papua New Guinea its 'best wishes for their national progress, unity and prosperity'.¹⁸

Somare told the chairman of the NBC of his anxieties about 'the current situation on Bougainville' and emphasised the Government's commitment to unity. Unity was 'a non-negotiable issue', and he sought the NBC's cooperation in helping the Government to communicate. 'I am cognizant of the danger of Radio Bougainville again being regarded as a propaganda radio station', but the Provincial Government seemed to him to be getting better coverage than the National Government. He particularly did *not* want a separate segment of government information (which he dismissed as *maus wara*, a Tok Pisin term for rubbish), but the integration of government information in routine broadcasting.¹⁹

In this first test of the NBC's independence, Chairman Sam Piniau proposed that the NBC would publicise the issue that 'finance is important to the people who favour secession'. He agreed that there should be 'a continuous flow' of information on Central Government spending in Bougainville and he thought that 'people generally are suspicious of the Bougainville leadership (unlike the Mataungan leadership)'. Then he suggested 'Fireside Chats' by Somare, Lapun and others proposed by the Task Force in order to

direct attention of the listeners away from the current situation, and hopefully to build up the image of the Central Government through the Chief Minister and other ministers.²⁰

But cooperation was difficult. A month later, Piniau withdrew the NBC from the Task Force as his suggestions were ignored, he valued the trust of his listeners and his relations with the Office of Information had soured.²¹ The Chief Minister's office was appalled, and (with the help of the Office of Information) it drafted this letter for Somare to send to the NBC:

Your attitude is quite unacceptable. You must be aware of the serious nature of events on Bougainville and the need for all of us to work together to improve the situation there. I demand the utmost cooperation between the NBC and the Office of Information ... I expect the NBC to give every assistance to the communications programme currently being undertaken in the Bougainville Province.²²

Although the NBC did rejoin the Task Force, NBC staff were reluctant to be pressed into service, whereas the Office of Information was happy in a partisan role.²³ Evidently, the Government inherited many attitudes — and tensions — that marked the Administration's relations with outlying districts.

Borders with Australia and Indonesia

Almost all Papua New Guinea's borders were problematic. Only to the north, towards remote Palau, did the open ocean form a natural limit. In the east, a rather arbitrary line split the Solomon Island chain, separating Bougainville from the British Protectorate. Bougainville was an obvious hot spot but the line itself was not likely to provoke trouble. To the west, however, the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya was separated by an unmarked and indefensible border. To the south, the border with Australia was so anomalous as to demand renegotiation.

Responsibility for foreign relations was shifting from Canberra to Waigani. There was limited experience to draw on, but the Director of Agriculture, Bill Conroy, a Somare family friend, had represented the Territory at marketing conferences. Somare agreed to combine Foreign Affairs and Trade with Albert Maori Kiki as minister and Conroy as its public service head. Conroy was assisted by Geoffrey Dabb. The leading Papua New Guinean was Anthony Siaguru, son of another Conroy friend in the Sepik and one of the first graduates. He enjoyed a swift induction as a trainee in Australia and attachment to the Australian Mission in Geneva. In 1975, he succeeded Conroy as Secretary.²⁴

The Territory's western boundary was already under review as one sector of Australia's long border with Indonesia. Australian relations with Indonesia had been fraught through the years of *konfrontasi*, but they warmed with the inauguration of General Suharto's New Order. During 1972, the two governments were resolving residual border issues. Both were keen to involve Papua New Guinea in their confidence-building.

Until 1895, the British and Dutch had accepted the 141st meridian east, sight unseen, as the margin of their New Guinea territories.²⁵ When they realised that the Fly River was ignoring the meridian as it wound its tortuous way south to the Gulf of Papua, a new convention was agreed. The Fly was accepted as a Papuan river, but it did veer briefly into Dutch New Guinea so the convention gave Papua the land in the Fly River bulge. South of the bulge, a new meridian was pinned to the mouth of the Bensbach River. These were mere lines on maps until the 1960s when Australia and Indonesia surveyed this border. The surveyors endorsed the 141st meridian from the north to the Fly River, then followed the Fly meander and continued south along 141 01 10 to the sea.

In 1971, as the governments began to define seabed boundaries, Australia's position was vetted in Konedobu by the Administrator's Executive Council. When the negotiators turned to Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea, the new constitutional formation meant that the AEC had to debate the issue (and it did so at length) before approving the negotiating position: and negotiations were handled by Philip Bouraga and Leo Morgan, beside two Australians (Webb and Dabb). Their Jakarta encounter resolved all issues except the Fly River bulge and the southern seabed.²⁶ That is where matters stood when there was a change of government in Australia. In the first days of his government, Whitlam acted as Minister for Foreign Affairs, keen to resolve all issues with Indonesia. In that context, he would 'follow up PNG-Indon[esia] sea & land boundary question[s]

... fully and promptly, involving Somare wherever practicable'.²⁷ Morrison ensured that Papua New Guinea was fully informed and Somare signed the agreement (on behalf of Australia) in February 1973.

An impediment to harmony was Indonesia's suspicion that the mouth of the Bensbach River had moved, taking the boundary with it. Until technical evidence disproved this idea, Indonesia felt that it had lost territory and sought territorial compensation in the Fly River bulge.²⁸ The real spur to this obscure dispute was the fact that 500 Irianese had fled east and enjoyed permissive residence in Papua New Guinea, where they had sympathisers. Indonesians suspected that some were aligned to the *Oposisi Papua Merdeka* (OPM), the umbrella group linking opponents of incorporation. The prospect of a copper mine on the border at Ok Tedi raised the spectre of population movements.²⁹ The Australians reckoned that Indonesia wanted

acceptance of Indonesian sovereignty in West Irian ... especially that of Papua New Guinea. In particular, they are anxious to avoid PNG support for West Irianese separatist movements in the border area.

They would really like an agreement like the one with Malaysia for their shared border, to secure the 'eradication of dissidents'. Papua New Guinean sentiment made such intimate cooperation unlikely, and divided the Australia-Papua New Guinea delegation that flew to Jakarta in October 1972. The Australians reported a 'marked divergence of view between the PNG Administration and Indonesia, particularly in relation to the significance of rebels and the action which should be taken'.³⁰ Realpolitik and sentiment had collided.

The critical point for the Indonesians was identified in an Australian Defence paper:³¹ the nature of the regime that would control the border. Joint patrolling was one option, involving very close cooperation. Coordinated patrolling implied rather less intimacy. Instead of either approach, Defence proposed that Papua New Guinea merely agree to formal cooperation, and respond ad hoc to Indonesian complaints. Even in this scenario, however, Papua New Guinea would have to define 'procedures for handling fugitives'. Indonesia saw border-crossers as potential rebels and most Papua New Guineans saw them as refugees, so agreement was unlikely. The analysis concluded that Indonesia was unhappy with current arrangements

and believed that Australia is not doing enough to prevent the use of PNG territory as a safe haven for dissidents from West Irian ... [T]here is a very good case for Australia — and after independence PNG — to co-operate with Indonesia. Failure to do so could detract from the good relations we presently enjoy with Indonesia and which it is in our interests to foster between Indonesia and an independent PNG ...

Australia saw the border as a security issue, while Melanesian solidarity was the lens through which Papua New Guineans saw it.

Whereas the Australian border would surely be easy to amend: both governments agreed that it needed to be changed. Torres Strait's shallow waters are full of islets and

reefs. Queensland had annexed most of these before Federation,³² and this was how Federal Australia came to acquire this border. So the uninhabited island of Kussa, less than a kilometre from the Papuan coast even at high tide, was Australian. The most northerly island inhabited by Australians — Boigu — was five kilometres from Papua. Torres Strait might look like a bridge, but little traffic crossed, and most of that flowed south. By the 1970s, 5,000 people lived in the islands, including 700 on the northernmost (Boigu, Saibai and Dauan), but more Torres Strait Islanders had moved to mainland Australia. Almost all migration flowed south from Papua into the islands, or from the islands to Queensland, and thousands of Papuans had kin or trade links to the Islanders.

In the event, it took years to hammer out a treaty. One hurdle was the Australian Constitution, which stated that a surrender of territory needed either the consent of Queensland's Government or a national referendum. While Queensland was governed by Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, an intransigent opponent of the Federal Government, especially when Labor ruled, Queensland's agreement was unlikely; and a referendum was unattractive because most referenda fail. An immovable obstacle was the Islanders. From Daru, Olewale saw them as fellow Melanesians who should be reunited with Papua New Guinea. The Islanders were less sentimental; they were fully aware of the advantages of Australian citizenship, and without their consent it was inconceivable that they could be transferred or evicted.³³

Undeterred, in March 1974, Foreign Minister Maori Kiki proposed a single boundary. At the very least, the Australians should transfer uninhabited islands (conceding that Boigu, Saibai and Dauan would be Australian enclaves). Progress was slow while Canberra wondered how to deal with Queensland. Soon after independence, the Queensland position was set out in the Premier's statement to Parliament on October 7, 1975, and the Commonwealth position by Whitlam two days later. Peacock, as shadow Foreign Minister, feared that this 'festering problem' might develop into 'the greatest dispute between ourselves and our closest neighbour'. This was hyperbole, but the issue was important. As soon as the Liberals returned to power at the end of 1975, with Malcolm Fraser as Prime Minister and Peacock as Foreign Minister, they agreed to negotiate 'some revision'. They could accept a seabed boundary to the south of Boigu, Saibai and Dauan, but 'no Australian islands would be transferred to Papua New Guinea'. Ministerial talks agreed that Australia retain the inhabited islands, so long as their territorial sea was limited to three miles, and if other parts of the package were agreed. The uninhabited islands were another matter. That issue was resolved when Australian research concluded that these muddy islets had been Papuan all along.³⁴ When the seabed line was negotiated, therefore, to general relief, only nine uninhabited islets were identified as lying to the north of it (see Map 3).

These negotiations took place during global negotiations on the law of the sea. Australia and Papua New Guinea took part in the Third UN Law of the Sea Conference (UNCLOS) which extended the legal limits of states with coasts. The new Law of the Sea allowed a 12-mile territorial sea zone, and 200 miles of 'exclusive economic zone' for fisheries. It also encouraged countries to negotiate agreements on overlapping zones.

Negotiations resumed in July 1976, by which time Australia had conceded a seabed line south of Boigu, Saibai and Dauan. Negotiators readily agreed and Foreign Ministers Peacock and Maori Kiki endorsed this line in August — for seabed purposes, and so long as there was agreement on the rest of the Torres Strait settlement. Now the two outstanding issues were the status of uninhabited islands north of the line and whether that line or some variation of it would be the boundary for sea (not seabed) purposes.

The first election in independent Papua New Guinea was held in 1977. In a quixotic gesture, Maori Kiki quit his safe seat and ran against Abaijah. When he lost, Olewale succeeded him as Minister for Foreign Affairs, bringing cumbersome baggage.³⁵ In 1969, in connection with Irian Jaya, he had criticised ‘Afro-Asian colonialism’, and as minister he still sympathised with Irianese ambitions. (To mend the Indonesian fence, he was the first Foreign Minister to visit the newly annexed Indonesian province of East Timor.) He also reckoned that Torres Strait Islanders were Melanesian, so they should be added to the biggest Melanesian country. That could be accomplished, he thought, by shifting the border south to 10 degrees. Happily, his officials did not allow this dramatic idea to disrupt negotiations and the treaty was ready for signature in December 1978. Australia did not want a solid black line south of Boigu, Saibai and Dauan to imply a relocated ‘border’. The solution was that a ‘sea’ (fisheries) line diverged north from the seabed line to form a ‘hat’ around those three islands. In exchange for the loss of these waters, Peacock proposed to share commercial fisheries in a ‘protected zone’. The protected zone guaranteed ‘traditional freedom of movement’ and other traditional rights. Australia wanted this arrangement to win the support of the Torres Strait Islanders, but it would also benefit coastal Papuans. National authorities could exclude or regulate non-traditional use of resources. All this made for a complicated treaty, which was signed in 1978, but which did not come into force until 1985.

In retrospect, Olewale is relieved that his proposal for annexation failed. He concedes that the Islanders are better off as Australians — and, as Papua New Guineans, they would now be knocking at his door as kinsmen, demanding benefits.

Projecting Independence

An independent state must project an image, and the Government intended to revise old notions of relations between the various parts of the country, and between a united country and the rest of the world. Not before time: Papua New Guinea’s global image was the artefact of missionaries and anthropologists. When Ulli Beier searched the well-stocked Ibadan University Library, all he found was J. H. Holmes’s *In Primitive New Guinea*. In London, Anthony Forge gave him an ethnographer’s view. It was only when they read Ted Wolfers’s UN newsletters that they found political comment. Makerere University Library in 1972 had nothing at all.³⁶

The Department of Territories had tackled the problem with evident ambivalence. Making no attempt to obliterate images of cannibals and Christians, Warwick Smith chose to contrast pre-colonial tradition with modernisation in the Australian present. An opportunity came in 1969, when the department organised a display for Expo ’70 in

Osaka. Warwick Smith wanted ‘to portray the Territory’s main export commodities by contrasting them with subsistence farming photographs’. The display — *New Guinea: Progress in One Lifetime* — comprised 16 pairs of photographs, each contrasting a static past with a promising present:

<i>haus tambaran</i>	ANG House [the first skyscraper in Port Moresby]
subsistence	tea
subsistence	cocoa
subsistence	coffee
subsistence	copra
fishing, traditional	modern fishing
primitive children	schoolchildren
young tribesmen	university students
warriors	a <i>kiap</i> patrol
wood carving	Japan Lines ship
string bridge	road construction
village	airport
alluvial miners	CRA [at Panguna mine]
pigs [Melanesian]	cattle [European]
village elders	House of Assembly and councillors
witchdoctor	nurse and operating theatre ³⁷

This emphasis continued in a trade display in Vancouver that generated a gratifying number (40) of inquiries for rural products.³⁸ With self-government, image became the responsibility of Papua New Guinea’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Office of Information. The transfer made little difference. Another trade display in New Zealand followed the same tradition: it was ‘poorly thought out and inadequately equipped’. And the economic focus survived: at a Melbourne Trade Show in 1976, Somare proclaimed:

Beneath the earth lie massive quantities of copper, the sea is rich in fish, and the timbe stands are some of the biggest in the world. This is Papua New Guinea today.³⁹

The economic emphasis avoided the pitfalls of selecting social images. It was one thing to criticise exhibition visitors who asked about cannibals; it was quite another to define better imagery. At self-government, a Consulate-General opened in Sydney, with an information section. The role of that office was mainly to field Australian media requests and school children’s needs for school projects. Some businesspeople were briefed, but Austin Sapias (the officer in charge) was frustrated to find that the information and display material were seriously dated. Before that problem was addressed, the office closed during an austerity drive.⁴⁰

The problem was more than organisational. A year after independence, Caltex proposed to offer prizes for the best essays on ‘national identity, national unity and self-

reliance'.⁴¹ The offer prompted discussion but no action. A few months later, the Minister for Information requested 'discussions and action' on a National Identity Campaign. Officers scratched their heads, suggested that they consult someone from the Education Department and someone else from the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, and lapsed into silence. If discussions were held, they left no trace.⁴² Later that year, a production clerk complained that she had 'no idea' of production targets, nor could she find 'the aims of the Office of Information [for] the next few years'. She proposed to develop an office display, a domestic travelling display and overseas displays, but eight months later she had received no guidance, and plaintively tried to relaunch the topic.⁴³ Another year passed, and Siaguru reminded the office that it was obliged to prepare publicity, and asked what had been done. There is no response on file.⁴⁴

If the office was negligent abroad, it was busy at home, where a domestic audience could perhaps be brought to a clearer perspective on national identity. From 1967, its officers were committed to propaganda in Bougainville, in favour of unity and the benefits of the Panguna mine. DIES agreed to translate BCL's educational booklet into Tok Pisin, and advised the company on its local publications and its ventures in film-making. DIES also publicised the company's scholarship program and — as the Bougainville situation deteriorated in 1969 — proposed an inquiry to develop a program to improve 'relations between the local people on the one hand and the Administration and BCL on the other' (explicitly tying the Government to BCL). Soon afterwards, the department agreed to publicise BCL's issue of shares to the public, and advised on publishing a newspaper.⁴⁵

In fact, they were so busy defeating secession that little attention could be paid to the general idea of national unity and identity. Much energy was invested in displays at local shows, and publicising the kina and toea.⁴⁶ In 1977, it was politic to concentrate on shows in Goroka, Port Moresby, Morobe and Kokopo. Goroka was worth a particular effort:

- a) for political reasons we are seen to be showing the flag of PNG in the Highlands, a densely populated region ... and always a thorn in the side of the Government.
- b) We want to be seen to be recruiting from the Highlands areas and by participating in the Show ... we will be one step ahead of any criticism ...⁴⁷

The Office of Information was not the only agency mandated to articulate national identity, and its failure mirrored the indifference of the whole government. Distracted by economic and constitutional crises and the fissiparous political system, the Government had little time or energy for such abstractions as identity and image. Many colonial assumptions, values and institutions therefore survived unexamined. They would eventually blow up into civil war.

Footnotes

1. Stephen Pokawin, 'January–December 1979', in Moore with Kooyman, *A Papua New Guinea Political Chronicle 1967–1991*, pp. 334–5
2. Interview, Olewale.
3. Ted Wolfers, 'May–August 1968', in Moore with Kooyman, *A Papua New Guinea Political Chronicle 1967–1991*.
4. Hegarty, 'May–August 1971', in *ibid.*
5. Hegarty, 'May–August 1974', in *ibid.*, quoting the *Post-Courier* of June 17.
6. Interview, Olewale.
7. Bernard Narokobi, in G. Zorn and P. Bayne (eds), 7th Waigani Seminar, *Foreign investment, international law and national development*, 1973.
8. Hal Colebatch, in 'Hindsight'.
9. John Momis, opening address, Waigani Seminar, 1978.
10. John Ley, 'The Role of the CPC in Nation-Building', unpublished typescript.
11. Hegarty, 'September–December 1973', in *A Papua New Guinea Political Chronicle 1967–1991*.
12. Interview, Barnett.
13. Olewale, in 'Hindsight'.
14. James Griffin, 'July–December 1975', in *A Papua New Guinea Political Chronicle 1967–1991*.
15. Interview, Olewale.
16. DIES Archives, Port Moresby, C13/2, part 2, P. J. Somers, Ag. Government District Liaison Officer in Arawa, reports to Director, OI, September 18, 1975.
17. *Ibid.*, Bougainville Task Force meeting, October 8, 1975.
18. DIES Archives, C13/2 Part 2, Bougainville Task Force, Department of Chief Minister, Circular 716, undated, 'Discussion — United Nations Trusteeship Council'.
19. *Ibid.*, Somare to NBC, August 22, 1975.
20. *Ibid.*, Chairman NBC to Director of Information, September 10, 1975, concerning his letter of September 9, about the Bougainville Task Force proposals.
21. *Ibid.*, Chairman NBC to Director Office of Information, October 10, 1975.
22. *Ibid.*, Philip Bouraga (Secretary to Prime Minister's Department) to Brian Amini, November 17, 1975, and draft letter dated November 25.
23. *Ibid.*, Godfrey Wippon, Information Officer, Arawa, to Director, November 24; December 18, 1976, minutes of Task Force show that NBC has rejoined; Wippon's report of January 14, 1976. The Task Force continues to meet until June 1976 at least.
24. Anthony Siaguru, *The Great Game: Politics of Democracy in Papua New Guinea*, Address to Centre for Democratic Institutions, ANU, June 18, 2001.
25. A 452 T29, 1972/3835, Baird's brief for Morrison, January 3, 1973
26. A 452 T29, 1972/3835, Greenwell's memo, January 19, 1973.
27. A 452 T29, 1972/3835, Ellicott to Whitlam, December 8, 1972
28. A 452 T29, 1972/3835, Greenwell's memo, January 17, 1973.
29. A 452 T29, 1972/3835, Greenwell's minute, November 20, 1972.
30. A 452 T29, 1972/3835, Greenwell to Hay, December 1, 1972.
31. A 452 T29, 1972/3835, undated, unsigned paper handed to Greenwell on March 30, 1973.
32. Geoffrey Dabb, 'A Short History of the Torres Strait Border', in 'Hindsight', and Paul van der Veur, *Search for New Guinea's Boundaries*.
33. Interview, Olewale.
34. 'Status of the Islands of Kawa, Mata Kawa, and Kussa', 1978, Parliamentary Papers.
35. Interview, Olewale.

36. See Preface.
37. DIES 4/6/3, Part 2, Warwick Smith to Administrator, June 6 and 13, 1969.
38. Ibid., Department to Administrator, June 18, 1968.
39. DIES 4/6/3, Part 3.
40. DIES 4/5/7, Part 1, Consulate-General in Sydney, Austin Sapias, 1st Secretary (Information) reports for the quarter July 21 to October 22, 1975, on October 24.
41. DIES 4/2/20, Caltex to Brian Amini, October 15, 1976.
42. DIES, A5, National Identity Campaign, Assistant Director, Government Liaison to Assistant Director Production Division, both in the Office of Information, March 2, 1977.
43. DIES 4/6/1, Part 2, Acting Production Clerk to Director, March 28, 1977.
44. Ibid., Siaguru, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to Office of Information, October 12, 1978.
45. DIES 5/6/23, Relations with BCL; Colin Bishop to Newby, May 29, 1967; G. A. Rudge to Director, September 9 and 11, 1969; Newby to Administrator, June 23, 1970; Newby to Chief of Division (Broadcasts), November 25, 1970; and October 1970.
46. DIES 4/6/2, Part 1.
47. Ibid., Assistant Director Sela to Director OI, May 17, 1976.