2. Postwar Development’s Uncertainties

Introduction

Once the war ended in 1945, and over the next two years as the administration of Papua and New Guinea passed from military to civilian hands, defining and applying ‘positive Australianism’ was especially difficult. It was one thing for colonial officials to propose that the ‘paramountcy of native interests’ should occur on the basis of development policy aiming to bring about a major expansion of household production. It was quite another matter to work out what the policy meant and how it could be achieved. The overarching theme of this chapter is that the difficulties faced during the late 1940s produced uncertainty, tensions and debates but also resulted in responses which began to shape development policy.

One source of difficulty was the Australian Government and the Department of External Territories. Previous accounts have emphasised how the Minister for External Territories, Eddie Ward and the priorities of the Department Secretary Halligan did not assist officials in PNG to define what ‘positive Australianism’ might mean in practice. The first section of the chapter briefly considers this explanation. The second section focuses on how uncertainty arose out of the distinct circumstances faced in PNG because of widespread and substantial destruction during the protracted military conflict. The third section of the chapter outlines some of the postwar challenges faced by the Administration, which heightened the uncertainty about how to bring development. The final section shows how in the late 1940s, increases in indigenous production began even while colonial development policy remained vague.

Political and Administrative Uncertainty

In 1949, the Ben Chifley-led Labor Government lost the second postwar election to a Liberal-Country Party coalition headed by RG (Bob) Menzies. For the previous six years, Eddie Ward had been Minister for External Territories. He was also the Minister for Transport, and heavily involved in internal Labor Party and trade union politics. Apart from making general proclamations which emphasised

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1 See Wright State Practice pp. 126–163
the changed direction of development thought and policy, Ward provided little guidance for either the Department in Canberra or the Administration in PNG. Ward’s principal preoccupation was domestic Australian politics, which included tussles over his own political survival.

The External Territories Department did not offer clear guidelines either. Headed by Secretary JR (Reg) Halligan, who favoured the re-establishment of the primacy of plantations and other large private enterprises, the department was small. Staff shortages meant it was unable to engage in detailed planning, even had the specifics of policy been settled. Consequently, when Colonel JK Murray assumed office in late 1945 as the first postwar Administrator at the head of the Provisional Administration, he did so with little more than general advice from Canberra and the lingering influence of the military administration which determined the availability of personnel and equipment.2

Insufficient personnel and the different backgrounds and expectations of staff exacerbated continuing tussles about how to bring about development. To make matters worse, the personnel shortages continued into the 1950s and affected attempts to make planning more precise and detailed. The shortages of skilled personnel were repeatedly emphasised in communications between the Administration and the Australian Government. Such shortages were felt worldwide, as the Administration soon realised when attempts were made to recruit staff in the UK.3 To increase the size and range of activities undertaken, critical local departments, including Public Health, needed personnel who were flexible about the tasks they could and would undertake.4

The staff shortages were particularly serious because one of the central tasks taken on by the postwar administration was to extend colonial rule over areas and people not yet subject to the Administration’s authority. Military victory over Japan entitled Australia to international recognition as the governing power over both territories. As Hank Nelson correctly pointed out, with the Territory of New Guinea under the International Trusteeship System, by Article 76, the Australian Government was committed to “promote [the inhabitants’] progressive development towards self-government or independence” in accord with “the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned”. Although Papua was an Australian colony, ‘under the joint administration it was generally

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2 Downs The Australian Trusteeship p. 19
3 ToPNG Report of the Economic Development Committee of the Provisional Administration (Port Moresby: TPNG, September 1948) pp. 14, 16–21; NAA: A518/1 AQ800/1/1 Part 1 Administration—Territory of Papua-New Guinea, Coordination Plans for Development. Inter-Departmental Committee. 1947 JK Murray to Chairman, Inter-Departmental Committee on the Planning and Development of New Guinea p. 3; and NAA: A518/1 AQ800/1/1 Part 2 Administration—Territory of Papua-New Guinea, Coordination Plans for Development. Inter-Departmental Committee. 1947 1/10/1947 Minutes of Sixth Meeting of Inter-Departmental Committee, p. 13
accepted that what applied to one Territory, applied to the other’. Over the entire late colonial period, from 1945 until 1975, what ambiguity existed in this commitment was mainly over the pace of moving towards and the timing of national independence.5

However internationally bestowed authority was in advance of internal rule, particularly in parts of the most populous Highlands region of mainland Papua and New Guinea. In the immediate postwar years, warfare between indigenes and attacks against the officials trying to assert authority still marked the colonial frontiers, particularly in the Highlands. A limited number of officials had to be spread more thinly, often over terrain that was difficult to traverse by frequent and sometimes lengthy foot patrols. Experienced as well as inexperienced officials, supported by indigenous carriers and police, had to move cautiously in case of attack.6

From 1945 the civilian administration supplanted military authority region by region. In 1947, the takeover extended to the Highlands which was gazetted as a separate area, the Central Highlands District, with its headquarters at Goroka where the Allies had built a substantial airstrip. While the District was divided into ten sub-districts, only five (Kainantu, Bena Bena-Goroka, Chimbu, Hagen and Wabag) were allocated assistant district officers. The other five sub-districts were ‘administered in a theoretical rather than real sense’.7

Securing colonial law and order requirements over a larger area and more people was an easily defined basis for administration efforts. It was more difficult to prescribe how smallholder production could be expanded. While some of the uncertainty arose from conditions within PNG, considered below, others involved relations between the colony and the metropolitan country. In particular, the general objective of increased agricultural production did not specify to what extent development in the colony should be subordinated to development in Australia where postwar reconstruction was also a government priority. One early area of tension, which highlighted the more general difficulty, arose over which markets should be the focus for PNG agricultural exports.8

Global postwar reconstruction rapidly increased international and domestic demand for labour and materials. Worldwide shortages of food and other

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8 See ToPNG ‘Introduction: Scope of Enquiry’ Report of the Economic Development Committee pp. 1–2
agricultural produce resulted in considerable pressure for the rebuilding of plantations, especially coconut producing large holdings where there were relatively easy output increases available from previously planted trees. Under trees, large piles of nuts lay awaiting collection and processing, providing cash-flows for further rehabilitation if sufficient unskilled labour was available. In the case of Burns, Philp’s plantations on Bougainville, the firm’s managers reported stacks of nuts 15 and 20 feet high under trees which would be accessible once elementary clearing up had been done.\(^9\) International shortages extended beyond copra to a wide range of crops which could be grown in PNG. However the shortages also affected Australian manufacturers and traders trying to rebuild production and meet the demand for agricultural goods in Australia.

While there was easy initial agreement that there should and could be substantial increases in agricultural production, particularly of crops in demand in Australia, there was uncertainty about the relationship between production in PNG and in Australia. The uncertainty arose especially clearly when an early premise of postwar reconstruction was that production of crops in PNG could be ‘integrated’ with supply of and demand for agricultural produce in Australia. However it was more difficult to determine the appropriate policy response if there were barriers to ‘integration’ of the two economies.\(^10\)

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, one of these barriers was international, including United States’ Government objections to preferential trading agreements. Another difficulty for policy formulation arose when there was a greater advantage for colonial revenues and grower incomes in PNG by fitting production in the country to the wider international, rather than Australian demand. This possibility arose over cocoa production, which was solely an export crop. Soon after the war ended when decisions were being made about the type of cocoa trees to be planted on small and large holdings, there was an immediate tension over priorities (see below for more detail). This tension was expressed as a clash between colonial and metropolitan nationalism, with Australian colonial officials likely to be found on the former side. Immediately after World War II anti-colonialism was expressed by some cargo cults (see below). However also from the 1940s, the most important advocates of future national sovereignty and national self-sufficiency for the colony, against an unquestioning primacy of Australian concerns, were expatriate settlers and colonial officials. Among the latter were some who resided in Australia. The terms of the United Nations Trusteeship, noted above, were important for these colonial nationalists. That is,

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\(^10\) See the minutes of the first meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee for the Coordination of Plans for the Development of Papua-New Guinea held on 29 April 1947 in the Office of the Secretary of the Department of External Territories, Canberra. NAA: A518/1 AQ800/1/1 Part 1 Administration
colonialism was not conceived as antithetical to nationalism, but as supportive of its development, even if the support was provided by people not indigenous to PNG.\footnote{For a history of colonial nationalism in Britain’s ‘white colonies’ relevant for the PNG case, see Norman Etherington and Deryck Schreuder (eds) \textit{The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa first assert their nationalities, 1880–1914} (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988) esp. ch. 2, Schreuder ‘The making of the idea of colonial nationalism’. See also Luke Trainor \textit{British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: manipulation, conflict and compromise in the late nineteenth century} (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994).}

Major shortages of food crops on international markets encouraged officials in PNG who were looking to expand agricultural production for export markets particularly, but not solely, by smallholders to look beyond the Australian market. In these circumstances, local officials could and did argue that their first priority was maximising colonial income and revenues. Producing and selling crops that yielded the greatest return, wherever the markets could be found was their priority. Restricting exports from PNG to the small Australian market was not in the colony’s best interests, according to some senior officials.

The choice of priorities was made more difficult by the fact that as far as PNG agricultural exports were concerned, Australia and its colony also belonged to the sterling currency area. Postwar reconstruction in both was fastened to British imperial needs for agricultural commodities and as a means of overcoming Britain’s indebtedness to the USA.\footnote{MacWilliam ‘Papua New Guinea in the 1940s’} Access to US dollars influenced official thinking on a wide range of matters, including how to obtain Caterpillar tractors for road construction and preparing flood-prone land for rice production in PNG (see below). Increasing copra exports could meet PNG and Australian requirements as well as the British requirement for sources of supply within the sterling area.\footnote{Jackman \textit{Copra marketing} ch. 5}

Although the tension between colonial and metropolitan priorities came to the fore more and more in the 1950s and 1960s, it was nevertheless also present immediately after the war. While cocoa production and marketing provided a more substantial long-term test of administrative commitment to maximising export income (see Chapters Four and Five), the appropriate priorities regarding exports of timber needed to be settled almost immediately after military hostilities ended. In this initial instance, officials in Australia including Minister Ward were decisive in establishing policy which prioritised needs in the colony.

Commercial timber harvesting, mainly carried out by international and expatriate firms in a small number of areas, required the local administration and colonial government to rank possible markets for PNG produce. The Inter-Departmental Committee of the Australian Government, formed in April 1947
to ‘report to [External Territories Minister Ward] on plans for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the territories to accelerate their development’ spent much of its time debating how to ‘exploit [the] softwood timber stand at Bulolo for plywood manufacture’. The controversial matter had been referred to the Inter-Departmental Committee by the Commonwealth Cabinet Sub-Committee on Secondary Industries. The reference was a response to ‘Australia’s urgent need for plywood’. Queensland, as the principal source for plywood supplying 70 per cent of domestic requirements, was believed to have only enough timber for a further six to seven years.\textsuperscript{14}

There were international trade agreement barriers to giving PNG timber preference in the Australian market. Opposition from the USA to ‘discrimination’ was specifically cited by the representative of the Commonwealth Department of Trade and Customs as a reason why preference could not be given to PNG timber veneers imported into Australia.\textsuperscript{15} However the principle established in June 1946 for the forest policy approved by Minister Ward asserted an even more important limit upon giving the metropolitan market priority. While holders of pre-war harvesting permits were to be encouraged to re-establish their operations, they were required to first meet ‘immediate Territory requirements’, then meet Australian ‘shortages of sawn timber and logs’ and finally supply the larger ‘export market as shipping becomes available’. However where a specific timber produced in PNG was either not required in the colony or Australia, there was no objection to selling the surplus to the United States, particularly as this would earn US dollars.\textsuperscript{16} In short, not only was there no automatic subordination to Australian requirements, there was a deliberate strand of development thought about and in the colony which gave primacy to PNG’s immediate postwar rebuilding needs.

Because the war had been especially destructive for many Papua New Guineans and for the colonial economy, in one direction meeting rebuilding needs was especially clear-cut. The needs shaped the Administration’s first phase of giving priority to ‘native interests’ and also affected future development policy.

\textsuperscript{14} All quotes in this paragraph are from NAA: A518/1 AQ800/1/1 Part 1 Administration Minutes of Fourth Meeting, 25/6/1947.
\textsuperscript{15} NAA: A518/1 AQ800/1/1 Part 1 Administration Minutes of Second Meeting. Opposition from the United States of America to ‘discrimination’ was specifically cited by the representative of the Commonwealth Department of Trade and Customs as a reason why preference could not be given to PNG timber veneers imported into Australia.
\textsuperscript{16} NAA: A518/1 AU800/1/1 Administration general. Subjects to be dealt with by Inter-Departmental Committee on co-ordination of plans for development of the Territory of Papua-New Guinea 22/5/47 ‘Exports of timber in the log from Papua and New Guinea.’
Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

Prolonged modern warfare had disrupted indigenous existence in PNG on a scale far beyond that wrought pre-war by plantations and mines. The effect of the conflict had also been more severe in PNG than in other British colonies, specifically Nigeria and Fiji which made using the development plans formulated for these territories of less relevance. The military conflict had wrought havoc in some areas but done little damage in others. As Worsley indicates, where the war ‘did touch it destroyed utterly’ although about one-third of the country’s population was unaffected. At least 15,000 indigenes and an estimated 100,000 pigs had been killed. In rural areas, houses, food gardens, roads and bridges suffered extensive damage.

Bombing and other forms of fighting had been severe and especially destructive in their effects in the areas of the country where plantation agriculture had been substantial, including the Gazelle Peninsula, Bougainville, New Ireland and Madang. Some idea of the effect upon plantation agriculture can be gauged from the following figures. Prior to the outbreak of the military conflict there had been about 370 and 130 plantations operating in New Guinea and Papua respectively. Within two years, when the Australia New Guinea Production Control Board was formed and took over the operation of plantations in areas not controlled by the Japanese from the military-run ANGAU, this number had been reduced to 121 producing large holdings. At the end of the war, there were very few undamaged buildings in the main towns of north coastal and island New Guinea. Rebuilding ‘village life’ absorbed scarce resources, even as the Australian Government increased revenues provided for colonial administration.

In addition, thousands of people had left rural holdings to perform various war-related tasks, most prominently as soldiers and carriers. As Worsley concludes: ‘After the physical devastation of people and livestock, huts and gardens, the large-scale dragooning of native labour was the most shattering effect of the War upon the lives of the native people’. At its peak, the Allied forces probably employed about 55,000 indigenes, and many more worked without signing-on. Griffin, Nelson and Firth also note indigenous employment by the Japanese military, concluding: ‘The total number of Papua New Guineans employed by

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17 ToPNG Report pp. 13–14
19 Worsley The Trumpet Shall Sound p. 195
20 Jackman Copra marketing p. 96
21 Worsley The Trumpet Shall Sound p. 124
22 Griffin, Nelson & Firth Papua New Guinea p. 96
the Japanese is unknown.\textsuperscript{21} Initially, the health of many workers suffered, with sickness among the indigenous carriers on the Kokoda Trail up to 30 per cent. Of long-term consequence for postwar recovery, malaria and dysentery were introduced into the Highlands.\textsuperscript{22} However in the last years of the war, as rations increased, conditions of service improved for those employed by the Allies, although the ANGAU plantation overseers were criticised for their brutality toward indigenous workers.\textsuperscript{23}

The recruitment of males for military service and associated work reduced the labour available for cultivating household gardens, increasing the burden on women and children of producing food and other consumption goods. Forced removal of many villagers from their existing homes and gardens for safety as well as military purposes made the task of maintaining consumption levels even harder.\textsuperscript{24} Adding to the effect of war damage, immediately after the fighting ended thousands of indigenes, mainly males, employed as carriers and other military assistants were demobilised. The numbers of indigenes employed on wages plummeted dramatically. Responsibility for meeting the needs of large numbers of people returning to rural villages was transferred on to households, resulting in at least short-term deficiencies in many items of necessary consumption.

One of the first priorities of the postwar colonial administration, and especially the Department of Public Health under its newly appointed Director John Gunther,\textsuperscript{25} was to deal with the health concerns of the indigenous population. The welfare consequences of the military conflict and the withdrawal of the civilian administration from important if limited pre-war activities dealing with indigenous health and welfare, posed urgent problems. The concerns of public officials about the state of indigenous health, and their efforts to assess conditions, neatly illustrate not only how the postwar welfare of the native people was evaluated, but also how the assessment reinforced the importance of planning to make development happen.

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\item \textsuperscript{21} Griffin, Nelson & Firth \textit{Papua New Guinea} p. 97
\item \textsuperscript{22} Worsley \textit{The Trumpet Shall Sound} p. 125
\item \textsuperscript{24} Major L Austen ‘A Paper on Native Welfare’ in NAA: A9372 vol. 2 ANGAU
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The medical, non-nutritional characteristics of health attracted immediate attention. Malaria, hookworm, tuberculosis and leprosy as well as other primarily tropical illnesses seriously affected many Papua New Guineans. They also undercut long-term welfare, including the physical characteristics of stature and strength, key ingredients of the capacity to labour. Reducing the prevalence of these illnesses, which were of little significance to populations in industrial countries, had priority.

In 1946, Gunther decided that:

his first task was to provide basic health care as quickly and as widely as possible. Needs were greatest among those communities that had become dependent [pre-war] upon government or mission health services and then been cut off from all aid during the war. [The apparent] signs of ill-health were the numbers of people suffering from skin diseases, yaws, enlarged spleens resulting from malaria, and respiratory diseases.\(^{28}\)

However ill-health soon acquired a more comprehensive conception than particular infections and diseases, to include nutrition and other medical characteristics of the indigenous population. Systematic data collection began on these dimensions, initially through fact-finding visits by individual officials, including by Gunther to war-torn Bougainville.\(^{29}\)

In 1947, the Department of External Territories and the Provisional Administration responsible for the Territories of Papua and New Guinea commissioned a Nutrition Survey.\(^{30}\) This Survey, conducted with 13 field staff and seven staff of the Institute of Anatomy in Canberra, operated under the direction of a Planning Committee. The Committee included the directors of the three departments which were at the centre of postwar reconstruction for the colony, Health, Education and Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries. The Director of Agriculture, W Cottrell-Dormer, had previously outlined a policy and plan for indigenous agriculture which linked the Administration’s goal of a ‘stable social structure based on a family unit’ with the improvement of ‘the nutrition and the standard of living of the native peoples of the Territory’. Cottrell-Dormer advocated an ‘ideal form of production’ of mixed farming on individual smallholdings which combined production for immediate consumption with cash cropping.\(^{31}\) The Survey was part of a continuing drive to reduce or eliminate the most debilitating conditions faced by the indigenous population,

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28 Griffin, Nelson & Firth *Papua New Guinea* p. 106
31 Wright ‘Contesting community’ p. 87
envisaged as protein shortages and a range of diseases. The low level of protein consumption became an immediate target for colonial officials, who were aware of the war’s effects on indigenous herds and flocks.

For pigs in particular, the military conflict had been especially destructive.

Pig populations in many parts of the country were almost entirely annihilated during the Japanese occupation. As the pig is one of the chief sources of meat to most natives, a serious unbalancing of the native diet has been brought about in such areas.\footnote{CoA Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea-From 1st July, 1947 to 30th June, 1948 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1949) p. 23}

Consequently colonial officials paid particular attention to increasing meat production by importing and distributing chicken and pigs. Small studs of pure breed imported pigs were established at Lae, Aitape, Rabaul and Sohano, to make possible the distribution of better quality animals to indigenes. Cattle numbers too, which had been reduced from around 30,000 head pre-war to almost nil during the fighting, were slowly increased by a similar process of importation and distribution.\footnote{Robin Hide Pig Husbandry in New Guinea: A Literature Review and Bibliography Monograph no. 108 (Canberra: Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, 2003) pp. 8–9; PNGNA: AN12 3,893 F/N 1-1-84 Planning and Development Part 1 5/11/52 1949–1952 REP Dwyer, Director, DASF to Government Secretary, Port Moresby ‘Recommendations made by Senator A.M. Benn after a visit to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea’ p. 3} Similarly day old chicks and quality cockerels were flown into the colony for distribution.

Previously the Institute of Anatomy in Australia had been advising the Administration, through the Department of External Territories, regarding the appropriate ration scales for labourers employed on plantations, mines and other occupations. Preparing this advice had not required data about consumption patterns of villagers and particularly not of locally produced and immediately consumed produce. However the first objective of the postwar Survey indicated the shifting focus of official efforts, stating that:

As the Administration was anxious to use as much native grown food as possible it was considered desirable to collect information relative to the food patterns of native groups living exclusively on indigenous foods, and at the same time ascertain the nutritional status and health of these same groups.\footnote{CoA Report of the New Guinea Nutrition Survey p. 13}

The second objective involved locating areas where ‘conditions were known to be normal’, so that ‘abnormal conditions [that is, the localised areas where food shortages did occur: SM] would not give a distorted picture’. By collecting
‘quantitative data on food production and food consumption’ where conditions were normal, a base set of data could be established as a yardstick for future ‘investigation of food shortages’.

So far, the Survey’s terms might seem to suggest only the aim to maintain the status quo in household production. However the third objective pointed to a potential for change being considered, which was in line with Director of Agriculture Cottrell-Dormer’s ‘ideal form of production’ noted above. For the Survey had:

A third purpose, of perhaps lesser importance, [which] was to ascertain whether it would be possible and desirable to recommend a policy of native agriculture which could combine the production of “cash” and native food crops without detriment to the latter.\(^\text{35}\)

The phrase ‘without detriment to the latter’ is especially important. It stresses the primacy of ‘native food crops’ over household production of cash, mainly export crops, in the initial postwar phase of fleshing out the details of thinking about development for PNG. That is, while faced with the immediate problem of how to remedy the war affected state of indigenous existence and to overcome immediate welfare deficiencies, by 1947 the colonial administrative priority of information collection as a guide for health policy was also suggesting a direction which an expanded postwar scheme of smallholder agriculture could take.

The terms of the Survey implied a specific developmental objective for indigenous health. To understand why, it is important to recognise the Survey proposed that household living standards needed to be raised, and not simply returned to pre-war levels in order to match those prevailing in industrial countries, especially Australia. As a 1948 Report of the Provisional Administration emphasised:

"Australia offers a rich prize to the teeming Asiatic millions. Australia’s nearest friends are at a considerable distance in America and South Africa. Apart, then from the ethical obligations to develop her dependant peoples which Australia accepted when she accepted the trusteeship of the Territory of New Guinea, it is of extreme strategic importance to her that she has control of this buffer area. But, to ensure that this area does function as buffer state and not a festering wound in the Australian way of life, it is essential to extend that way of life to the peoples of this Territory as rapidly as they can absorb the changes.\(^\text{36}\)"

‘[N]ormal areas’ within PNG provided the base for domestic comparisons. But in order to define these areas, the Survey constructed the appropriate yardstick


\(^{36}\) ToPNG Report p. 10
of adequacy, in nutritional and other terms, by reference to standards found outside the colony. The idea of welfare took on a precise nutritional basis, and one which permitted easy international comparisons. Summarising the Survey findings, the Report stated:

When the intake of foods is expressed as nutrients it is seen that the calorie intake is slightly lower, and the protein intake much lower than amounts recommended as desirable to ensure adequate nutrition amongst people of Caucasian origin.  

In this instance, the specific Caucasians were from Sydney, while other comparisons were made using ‘National Research Council Recommended Dietary Allowances … based solely on North American data’. That is, data derived from mainly urban populations in leading industrial countries, formed the basis of major comparisons for the Survey. Most importantly, the comparisons made it possible to re-emphasise what was deemed necessary if development was to occur and indigenous living standards lifted. ‘[A]dequate nutrition’ at Australian and US levels was the necessary basis for raising the indigenous capacity to labour.

According to the Survey, there were important exceptions however, where the indigenous population was not always worse off than the overseas comparators. Due to the availability of regular sunshine and the wearing of fewer clothes, rickets frequencies were fewer than for children attending Sydney hospitals in the 1930s. The incidence of dental caries was also much lower than usually observed among ‘civilised’ peoples.

The Survey thus reinforced, through specific dietary and other health conditions, the demarcation between undeveloped and developed peoples and territories which was so important for colonial development planning. In so doing, it also set terms for the subsequent emphasis upon improving welfare by increasing production and raising productivity through reformed agricultural practices.

The postwar drive emphasised by the Survey did not immediately eliminate the most important components of the detrimental health conditions, including tropical diseases and malnutrition, which continued to exist into the 1950s at least. In 1958, Gunther, who had become Assistant Administrator, could still state:

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38 CoA Report of the New Guinea Nutrition Survey. In the case of calcium, the use of the North American data was accepted only as a temporary measure (p. 107) ‘realizing that these figures are probably well in advance of the actual calcium requirements of the natives’.
The population is not healthy: the expectation of life is half of what it
should be; the infant mortality rate twice to ten times what it should be
….. These indigenous people of the Territory are only 80 per cent well …. This [is] the physical condition of the people which has to be improved
so that their country may progress, for they are the only labour force
available to achieve development.\(^{40}\)

Hasluck subsequently made much of his continuing preoccupation, when
Territories Minister, with ‘the physical welfare and the physical needs of the
people’, as well as expressing his contempt for ‘parliamentary buffoons’ in
Australia who mocked when told of medical campaigns, including to overcome
yaws.\(^{41}\)

However, by 1948 some reconstruction and rehabilitation had been completed.
The official assessment was that:

> Despite the shortages in material and personnel, much has been achieved
in the two and a half years since the return of the Civil Administration
[in 1945]. Most of the villages disturbed by war have been rebuilt, the
natives settled and the gardens re-established on pre-war levels …. It is
only the European establishments and that part of the native economy
which is dependent on imports that has not reached prewar levels.\(^{42}\)

This ordering of restoration priorities, indigenes in occupation of smallholdings
over plantations and other expatriate-owned enterprises was in accord with official
objectives. Further, in their initial attention to reconstruction and rehabilitation,
officials understood that the process of rebuilding was not simply a technical
matter, fixing bridges and roads, and eliminating diseases by the application
of medicines. They recognised that dealing with the damaging and deleterious
effects of warfare upon the indigenous population also had consequences for the
future social relations of production. As much as the first response of officials
seemed to be determining and meeting the welfare needs of Papua New Guineans,
this occurred with an awareness of the future implications for ‘the paramountcy
of native interests’. As Administrator JK Murray explained in 1947:

> In the carrying out of its policy, the Administration has so far been
hampered by the requirements of rehabilitation in this country—the
major victim in the Australian theatre during the recent war. It has

\(^{40}\) See Sir John Gunther ‘The People’ in J Wilkes (ed.) *New Guinea and Australia* (Sydney: Angus and
Robertson, 1958) p. 49
\(^{41}\) Hasluck *A Time for Building* pp. 101–102. Chapter 11 on health services includes some of the most
intensely emotional as well as revealing passages in anything Hasluck wrote or spoke about while Minister for
Territories. See, on the same point, Robert Porter *Paul Hasluck: A Political Biography* (Nedlands: University
of Western Australia Press, 1993) pp. 112–113.
\(^{42}\) ToPNG *Report* pp. 11–12
been suggested that this task could be more readily accomplished if all new features of policy were postponed until it was completed. The Administration has not accepted this view. It does not believe it either possible or desirable to make such a separation between rehabilitation and future development; the Territory must be reconstructed and developed now on lines in keeping with our intentions for the future. What is done now determines in a large measure the future pattern.  

However beyond improving indigenous health, rebuilding roads and bridges, and re-establishing household gardens growing food crops for immediate consumption and local markets, little was settled on what development policy was to be and how policy could be implemented. As shown in section one of this chapter, the lack of detailed direction provided from the Minister and Department in Australia was one impediment to determining what development policy and practice might be. There was also a particular conjunction of international conditions and circumstances in the colony which affected the Administration’s capacity to bring development.

Postwar Challenges Affecting Development Policy

Despite the limitations of staff shortages and the difficulties of postwar conditions, Administrator Murray was certain about some aspects of the direction the Administration should take. He and other officials continually stressed the importance of their trusteeship role for securing ‘native interests’ against the potential for harm, including the breakdown of community. In late 1947, the Administrator argued that economic growth would inevitably mean the transformation of ‘the way of life of native people’, but ‘native tradition’ could be preserved as long as the attachment to land was maintained. The Administration acting as trustee could adjudicate on what was ‘still vital in native tradition and what [would] become obsolete …. Continued progress will, in the last analysis, be dependent on a simultaneous development and conservation of economic resources’.  

Or to cite Murray again from the same document:

In this economic advance, the way of life of the native people will inevitably be transformed. Regret will be felt for the passing of much

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43 JK Murray ‘Memorandum on the Policy of the Administration’ 8 September 1947, sent to the Chairman of the local Administration’s Economic and Development Committee on Planning and Development of Papua and New Guinea, subsequently forwarded to the Commonwealth Inter-Departmental Committee for the Coordination of Plans for the Development of Papua-New Guinea. NAA: A518/1 AQ800/1/1 Part 2
44 Wright ‘Contesting community’ p. 80, citing from NAA: A1838/283 F/N 301/1 8/9/1947 JK Murray Memorandum on the Policy of the Administration.
that is admirable and gracious in the traditional life of the people. But the very presence of existing institutions in the country has doomed much of the old order to attenuation and extinction; the choice now lies, in great part, between inaction or development—that development must be directed upon lines calculated to produce the greatest human happiness.\footnote{NAA: A1838/283 F/N 301/1 p. 3}

What was obsolete? Determining vitality, what should be preserved and extended in ‘native tradition’ was difficult for colonial officials, even if stopping local fighting and attacks against administration patrols were obvious ‘traditions’ which had to be made obsolete. Several postwar conditions threatened the Australian Government’s major policy guideline, that the pre-war dominance of plantations and mines would be supplanted by a concentration on raising smallholder output to improve ‘native welfare’, and secure the ‘paramountcy of native interests’. The responses of the colonial administration to each threat further defined what was to occur under this guideline, while also creating space for other obstacles to arise. Officials established key policy parameters, including for labour and land, which were to become central to ‘uniform’ or ‘even’ development in the 1950s. The present section details the most substantial challenges which were faced and how officials responded.

Some difficulties arose from the consequences of the war itself, including the worldwide food and other material shortages which encouraged immediate restoration and expansion of plantations. Other challenges resulted from the efforts of colonial officials to overcome the worst effects of the conflict on the indigenous population. With improved health and better food supplies, many indigenes—especially males—could leave smallholdings in home areas to work for commercial enterprises and the Administration. In the immediate postwar years, the out-migration of potential labour threatened the colonial objective of expanding household production. Extending colonial authority to new areas, particularly of the Central Highlands, and reducing the importance of warfare could either make possible the recruitment of increased numbers of labourers or provide the opportunity for more leisure activities. Neither possible outcome satisfied the principal objective of colonial policy and so had to be prevented or at least limited where possible.

Even with a drive to increase production and marketing of copra in the last years of the war, by 1946 only 13 per cent of all plantations had returned to production. A large number of the plantations, 160 of which were in the Territory of New Guinea, had been so badly damaged during the war that it was uneconomic to re-open them. However high prices and a nine year purchasing contract
for copra with the British Ministry of Food, led to the rapid resuscitation of many other large holdings. Between 1945–46 and 1948–49 production of copra increased from 11,000 to 46,000 tons.

After 1945, the wartime turn in government policy against the large firms and owner-occupiers who had operated plantations pre-war was also extended to international companies looking to set up similar operations in PNG. While the principal barrier was the refusal to allow the expropriation and consolidation of land for an expansion of large holdings, the focus upon the rehabilitation of household agriculture also limited the supply of labour for plantation agriculture. Australian Government policy was supported by important officials in the colony.

When political and commercial connections between Australia and Britain were being refashioned, the British Government and major UK firms were searching for areas within the sterling bloc to expand agricultural production under their direct control. The failed Tanganyika Groundnut Scheme remains probably the best known instance of this search. Conceived in 1946 by an official of the United Africa Company, subsidiary of Unilever, the project was taken over by the British government-owned Overseas Food Corporation until closed in 1951. PNG was a focus of attention too, with some colonial officials holding out limited hopes that either the Overseas Food Corporation, or a major international food company, would be able to successfully expand production. The hopes were never realised.

Even before the war, international supplies of cocoa had been threatened by a major outbreak of the swollen shoot virus in West Africa. The virus was especially widespread among the extensive plantings in the British colony of the Gold Coast, later Ghana, the largest exporter in the world. Soon after the war, representatives of cocoa and chocolate manufacturing firms in the UK and Australia began to press their governments for assistance in establishing new areas of supply. PNG’s production had been decimated by the war, with an estimated 80–90 per cent of sole planted bushes and approximately 60 per cent of bushes inter-planted with coconuts destroyed. (In the inter-war period PNG was distinct as one of the few places in the world where cocoa was inter-planted with another tree crop, in this case coconuts.) However with climatic and soil

46 Jackman Copra marketing p. 107
48 See the mid-1946 exchange of correspondence between the Director of DASF, W Cottrell-Dormer and Minister Ward, NAA: A518/1 A58/3/3 Commodities—Cocoa Papua and New Guinea Proposals for Development.
49 See also Michael Cowen ‘The Early Years of the Colonial Development Corporation: British State Enterprise Overseas during Late Colonialism’ African Affairs January 1984, vol. 83, no. 330, pp. 63–75
50 NAA: A518/1 A58/3/3 8/1/48 REP Dwyer Acting Director DASF to Government Secretary ’New Guinea Cocoa Industry’. In the inter-war period PNG was distinct as one of the few places in the world where cocoa was inter-planted with another tree crop, in this case coconuts.
conditions in many parts of PNG regarded as extremely favourable for growing cocoa, the colony was considered a potential major source to fill a substantial portion of international demand at a time of serious postwar shortages.

Private firms in Australia and the UK, as well as representative organisations of merchants and manufacturers exerted pressure on the colonial administration and Labor Government for rapid action to support expanded production. The pressure was exerted at a time when world demand exceeded supply and quotas limited the availability of cocoa for Australian manufacturers. Over 80 per cent of cocoa imports into Australia came from West Africa, where a combination of disease and political turmoil was making supply even more uncertain. One proposal, outlined when production in PNG was negligible, envisaged the planting of 175,000 to 200,000 acres, yielding around 25,000 tons to ‘produce, close at hand, sufficient Cocoa Beans for both Australia and New Zealand’. 51

The Australian Government and the British Overseas Food Corporation briefly flirted with a project to assess how increases in major agricultural crops, particularly cocoa, might be achieved. Concerns for the effects upon the indigenous population, including the need to move large numbers of people to provide sufficient labour featured prominently in the Australian scepticism regarding such a large project using mass-production methods. 52 More seriously, Cadbury Brothers, the UK parent company of Cadbury-Fry-Pascall Ltd, based in Claremont Tasmania, sought a large land grant to develop a cocoa plantation on a scale which would dwarf all the existing large holdings in the colony. Consideration of this venture was only finally terminated in 1956, when Cadbury gave up on establishing a plantation, settling instead for a role as major purchaser and exporter of PNG cocoa. 53 In addition to the Administration’s opposition to substantial increases in the land occupied and operated by plantation firms, there were also fears that more large holdings would further increase the demand for labour.

These fears were grounded in postwar changes. While an initial substantial reduction occurred in the numbers of Papua New Guineans in wage employment, within five years of the war ending the flow of labour away from smallholdings had been reversed. Between August 1945 and February 1946 the number of employed indigenous labourers fell from 34,000 to 4,100, with most returning to their villages. Subsequently, postwar reconstruction demands resulted

53 NAA: A518/1 A58/3/1 Cocoa—Papua and New Guinea, Research General
in increases of around 10,000 workers per year. By mid-1950, the number of indigenes in wage employment had become over 48,000.\textsuperscript{54} There was also more labour militancy over working conditions.\textsuperscript{55}

One immediate effect of the increase in commercial and government activities was raised concerns about the consequences for village life. These concerns were heightened by other indigenous responses to the war and the postwar re-establishment of civilian colonial authority.

‘Cargo Cults’, Political Stability and Development Thought

Cults had flourished in some areas prior to World War II.\textsuperscript{56} In other areas, including the Highlands, there were cargo—inspired movements during the war, particularly in recently pacified locations from which the Administration’s presence had been removed or reduced. The most prominent areas where cults flourished immediately after the war and even into the early 1960s were in the Sepik, Madang and Morobe Districts, although they were also active in Papua, Manus, New Ireland and Bougainville, particularly on Buka Island.\textsuperscript{57}

The international warfare, carried out by militaries using equipment of types and quantities never previously seen, unsettled indigenous existence beyond the effects of actual destruction and loss of life. Downs notes:

Uncertainty and suspicion [of the colonial authorities: SM] were not diminished by the extent of the allied armadas that ended the Japanese invasion. The massive use of men and material was in extra-ordinary contrast to the small penurious pre-war administrations …. When the people saw the extent of the allied war effort they could not help making comparisons.\textsuperscript{58}

Where wartime experience had included contact with Australian and US troops, including black Americans, the effect was often profound. The experience sometimes strengthened a distinction between ‘Australians’ who as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Worsley \textit{The Trumpet Shall Sound} p. 196
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Worsley \textit{The Trumpet Shall Sound} p. 197, citing Lucy Mair \textit{Australia in New Guinea} 1st edn (London: Christophers, 1948) p. 216.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} The complexities involved in describing what is meant by the expression ‘cargo cult’ are discussed at length in Worsley’s, \textit{The Trumpet Shall Sound}, including in the ‘Introduction to the Second Edition: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations’ pp. ix–lxix and ‘Introduction to the First Edition’ pp. 11–16.
  \item \textsuperscript{58} Downs \textit{The Australian Trusteeship} p. 61
\end{itemize}
military personnel were admired for their friendly egalitarianism, and officials plus employers who were classified as ‘English’ because they maintained discriminatory practices and attitudes towards indigenes.\footnote{Worsley The Trumpet Shall Sound p. 126}

Comparisons reinforced previous puzzlement about the basis for the wealth or cargo possessed by Europeans, which had been present almost from the start of colonial rule. Comparison and conjecture combined with unemployment and impoverishment fuelled the formation of organisations that speculated about and became committed to finding the source of the now so obvious wealth. For many cults and their leaders, the abundance of goods associated with the European presence—military and civilian alike—did not appear to be a consequence of labour. Cargo came into the colony with no labour and other means of production seemingly involved, except by the largely indigenous labour force which unloaded ship and aircraft cargoes. One official assessment provided in a February 1950 secret report, concluded that the cults in part represented a ‘definite misappreciation of the ramifications of production and supply’. Accordingly: ‘These manifestations [of cargo cultism] are dealt with tactfully and every effort made to acquaint the people with the lack of foundation for the cult and to instruct them in the processes of manufacture and supply, including incidental labour, by which the outside world acquires its “cargo”’.\footnote{NAA: A518/1 H927/1 Development of the Territories p. 9}

Not only was its production ‘hidden’ because the goods were manufactured elsewhere, but ownership within the colony passed into the hands of those who did not labour—the plantation owners, government officials and company managers whose wealth could not be associated with any productive labour they carried out.

In some cases, the increased supplies of goods not obviously connected to labour produced leaders who garnered support by promising to find their source, ‘capture it’ and bring wealth to an organisation’s members. Unsurprisingly, and especially potent in the areas where postwar impoverishment was most severe, cult activities were often directed at finding and identifying the seemingly mysterious source of wealth which arose without labour.

Wartime experiences and postwar hopes fuelled by the cessation of military conflict provided suitable conditions for revitalised and reshaped cultist activities.\footnote{Worsley’s The Trumpet Shall Sound remains the most comprehensive account of these activities. For an assessment of the significance of cults during and after World War II, from the position of a former senior Administration official, see Downs The Australian Trusteeship pp. 61–65, 201–206. See also Peter Lawrence Road Belong Cargo: A Study of the Cargo Movement in the Southern Madang District, New Guinea (Manchester: Manchester University Press and Humanities Press, 1964).}

Unemployed or underemployed villagers and increased commercialisation of consumption opened further space for the rise of cargo cults. For Australian officials countering cults played an important part in shaping development
thinking along colony-wide lines. In countering the claims of cult leaders that increased consumption could occur without a concomitant increase in labour, colonial officials were also forced to re-emphasise how increased production by households was central to their development plans.

The initial Administration efforts to co-opt cult leaders showed concern over a different kind of threat. Postwar cults and their leaders sometimes developed as centres of opposition to continued colonial rule, challenging the legitimacy of administrative authority, including its Christian basis. Between 1946 and 1950 the Paliau Movement ’established control over most of southern Manus … organized a boycott of the Administration, and [its leader Paliau] is said to have urged the expulsion of the Europeans and the Asians’.  

When cult leaders became anti-mission and/or opposed to the colonial government in word and deed, they were either turned or jailed. The case of Yali, the most significant Cargo leader on the Rai (Madang) Coast in the late 1940s and early 1950s, is exemplary in this respect. At first the Administration sought to temper his anti-mission views, persuading him to encourage followers to form cooperatives and other acceptable development projects. However as the Letub Cargo movement grew in importance, its activities were associated with threats against missionaries and cult non-believers. Illegal taxes were levied. In 1950, the Administration arrested Yali, charged him with incitement to rape and extortion. He was tried and sentenced to six and a half years in gaol.

A favoured Administration response was to attempt to co-opt cult leaders in postwar reconstruction efforts as well as to try to explain the ways goods were produced. To cite Downs, a senior official:

Administration efforts to stop objectionable cult practices included moral persuasion, economic aid, better education, social reconstruction, better communication and, as a last resort, police action. Most cult situations were resolved by a judicious combination of all these methods. Some cult leaders were taken on conducted tours of Australia to see the source and manufacture of goods. The tours proved popular, but the tourists were not easily convinced. For example, the Mint in Canberra was beyond explanation and had to be dropped from the itinerary.

Of greater long-term importance, cult activities:

compelled the attention of the Government and resulted in closer and more intensive Administration support. The evidence is clear

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62 Worsley *The Trumpet Shall Sound* ch. ix, pp. 170–194, ‘From Millenium to Politics’ captures the post-war shift in Solomon Islands and PNG. The quote comes from pp. 186–188.

63 Worsley *The Trumpet Shall Sound* pp. 216–218

64 Downs *The Australian Trusteeship* p. 62
that all the major cult movements and disturbances were followed by more favourable Administration treatment of the areas in which they occurred.\textsuperscript{65}

In calling attention to the more impoverished areas, the cults were important in forcing officials to emphasise that development should be ‘even’ across the colony. During the 1950s, tackling cults contributed to the construction of a more precise official direction for late colonial development, uniform or even development (see Chapter Three).

### The Threats of Leisure and Wage Employment

Improving indigenous welfare required lifting household output, which under conditions of a relatively simple division of labour mainly involved increasing the numbers of workers and lengthening working hours on smallholdings. However the provision of compensation for damage to housing, livestock and gardens made increased leisure an enticing and realistic possibility which particularly arose in lowlands and islands areas. By the end of 1949, almost one million pounds Australian had been paid to indigenes in war damage compensation, with more than one million yet-to-be paid. A Committee of Enquiry formed in July 1945 by the Administration to recommend an appropriate basis for compensating indigenes was concerned about how money would be spent, stating that:

The leisure thus made available is largely spent in gambling, and it seems inevitable, unless the flow to the Islands of goods of a type which are necessary to native subsistence—garden tools, fishing tackle, etc.—is considerably increased, that the money which was intended to enable natives to replace these losses will have been frittered away before it is possible for them to do so.\textsuperscript{66}

Changes in consumer preferences, toward purchased rather than domestically produced goods, affected some Papua New Guineans’ propensity to labour in household gardens. This was particularly the case among younger indigenes living close to urban centres with shops and markets, with Hanuabada village adjacent to Port Moresby one focus for official attention because residents were

\textsuperscript{65} Downs The Australian Trusteeship p. 65; see also Huntley Wright ‘Economic or Political Development: The Evolution of “Native” Local Government Policy in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, 1945–1963’ Australian Journal of Politics and History 2002, vol. 48, no. 2, p. 198, fn. 34, who cites an August 1953 letter from anthropologist Margaret Mead to Hasluck regarding the establishment of a Local Government Council on Baluan Island, Manus District that rescued ‘the constructive elements in the Paliau movement [ie. ‘cargo cult’: HW] and arrested what might—under other policies—be a focus of trouble and destructive activity’.

\textsuperscript{66} NAA: A518/1 H927/1 Development of the Territories pp. 8–9; Mair Australia in New Guinea pp. 219–224. Mair notes too that compensation also furthered commercialisation, as well as early attempts by indigenes to enter commerce, transportation and related activities.
‘aping’ European consumption habits and not growing their own food. Early signs that postwar conditions had opened up the possibility of more leisure rather than labour were the substantial numbers of young men seen in rural villages and some urban centres, playing cards or simply visiting friends. Some indication of the liquidity of indigenous households is given by the amount of money in Commonwealth Savings Bank accounts. In 1950, there were 33,415 accounts with AU£466,050 deposited. The popularity of as well as official antipathy toward gambling, sometimes for large amounts of money continued into the mid-1950s.

The prospect of more leisure rather than productive labour was especially strong in the Highlands, but for different reasons. The Highlands had provided few plantation and mine workers before World War II so the basis of concern was not that workers returning from war-service or the recently abolished indentured employment would select leisure rather than re-entering wage labour. Instead in the region where ‘first contact’ had only occurred within the last 20 years, the establishment of the colonial peace reduced the uncertainty arising from warfare as well as the amount of labour time needed to prosecute combat. Downs, a kiap or colonial official, who subsequently became District Commissioner, Eastern Highlands, notes how in the immediate postwar years his predecessor George Greathead had reported that: ‘Something had to be done to provide opportunities for a huge population in desperate need of some outlet to fill the vacuum which pacification had created’. The increasing availability of steel tools especially axes and shovels also lessened the time required for many domestic tasks, particularly clearing trees and bush from land prior to cultivation and planting of crops. Again potential working age males were most affected as these activities tended to be performed by males.

An immediate if limited solution to the problem of unemployment and underemployment was labouring in public works, directed by administration officials. This fitted with the increased provision of public revenues for expenditure on roads and other facilities. In 1939–40, the Australian Government

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67 PNGNA: AN12 3,875 F/N 1–1-4 Plans for Native Welfare, Social Development and Economic Development, 1947–1951 8/8/51, Minutes of Meeting of Inter-Departmental Committee on Native Development and Welfare held in Conference Room of Department of District Services and Native Affairs. However the minutes also noted the view that there was little land available to till in Hanuabada.

68 NAA: A518/1 H927/1 Development of the Territories pp. 8–9; MacWilliam ‘Post-War Reconstruction in Bougainville’ pp. 229–230


70 Ian Downs ‘Kiap, Planter and Politician: a Self-portrait’ p. 243

71 Richard F Salisbury From Stone to Steel: Economic Consequences of a Technological Change in New Guinea (Melbourne University Press, 1962)
provided a mere AUD90,000 to administer Papua. In the first year after the war ended, this had increased to AUD1.1 million for the two territories. Five years later the allocation was almost AUD18 million. However from 1945 to 1950, administration expenditure on all activities in PNG increased much less, from AUD1.2 to over AUD11 million. The gap between allocation and expenditure is striking and suggests much about Administration capacity.\textsuperscript{72}

Hawksley notes that:

\begin{quote}
Peace therefore created a relatively large population of surplus male labour. The administration’s fear was that boredom would set in and … it attempted to soak up some labour for public and private works to prevent highlanders from reverting to warfare.\textsuperscript{73}
\end{quote}

However, as Hawksley also emphasises, the numbers employed by the Administration were relatively small by comparison with the large populations in the Highlands. The imbalance between the number of waged jobs and the number of idle potential workers wage employed and potential labour force became ever greater as colonial authority was extended into more and more areas.\textsuperscript{74} During 1947/48, in the Bena, Chimbu and Kainantu sub-districts, with an estimated population of 250,000 people, only 2,017 were employed on a permanent and casual basis.\textsuperscript{75} Not until the 1950s, as the road and bridge building program gathered pace in the Highlands through the use of unpaid gangs of workers from nearby villages, did the public works program draw more upon the available labour force (see Chapter Three).

Before this program could take effect and an expansion of smallholder coffee growing occurred, however, there was a rapid exodus of Highlanders, primarily males, from the region. Other changes occurring within the Highlands increased the attractiveness of waged employment. Due to the extended commercialisation of Highlanders’ existence, which had begun before the war and further accelerated during the conflict, previously valuable goods lost their appeal. The gradual introduction of a colonial currency as the principal medium of exchange increased buying and selling of recently introduced products, whose uses spread rapidly across the region.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{72} Griffin, Nelson & Firth \textit{Papua New Guinea} p. 102; Downs \textit{The Australasian Trusteeship} pp. 37, 122, Table 6.2. See also JK Murray ‘In Retrospect’ p. 206. I have converted pounds into dollars at the rate of 2:1 for convenience, even though Australia did not switch from the former measure into dollars until 1966.

\textsuperscript{73} Hawksley \textit{Administrative Colonialism} p. 339

\textsuperscript{74} For a detailed consideration of the process of extending colonial authority, see Hawksley \textit{Administrative Colonialism} pp. 317–319, and below.

\textsuperscript{75} Hawksley \textit{Administrative Colonialism} p. 340

Under the Highlands Labour Scheme, which formalised the movement of workers out of the region, plantations and mines in particular came to depend upon these workers. Commencing in January 1950, by June over 4,000 workers had left Goroka, the collection point from which labourers departed. A further 5,000 were assembled, waiting to leave. By June 1951, of the 8,400 workers who had left the District, less than 1,000 sought employment with the colonial administration while the remainder went to work on plantations, primarily in Madang and New Britain.  

Recruitment continued during the 1950s and 1960s. As smallholder production of crops expanded, recruiters had to move further into more remote Highland areas, where no coffee or other commercial crops were grown, to sign up workers. Going away to work on plantations for a contracted period, usually two years at-a-time, became a rite of passage for many young Highlanders, and a means of acquiring consumption goods, including bride price payments.  

The attraction of leisure and ceremonial activities added to the challenge that wage employment posed for a colonial administration attempting to bring development. Neither leisure nor migration as wage workers suited official plans for increasing smallholder production. In the 1950s, a more desirable solution was found through the rapid expansion of smallholder coffee growing and processing.  

Turning the Highlands into the next major labour frontier threatened household existence and the dissolution of community, especially if males left the region for employment in coastal and islands areas. Highlanders leaving for coastal and island areas of the colony where illnesses were found which were not common at higher altitudes also caused official concern. The threat increased the already substantial attention being paid by the postwar colonial administration to indigenous health. In early 1950, the Department of Public Health noted that: ‘The greatest advance [in prophylactic health measures: SM] was to establish an active anti-tuberculosis team who are using the BCG vaccine on a mass scale in the Central Highlands, thus allowing the recruitment of labour and so increasing the economic potential and doing as little harm to these completely non-immune people’.  

However not all the uncertainty about the most desirable direction of development policy arose because of the indecisiveness of the colonial government, the extent of the war damage and the pressure for a further

77 The figures are from Hawksley *Administrative Colonialism* pp. 341–342.  
79 Francis J West ‘Colonial Development in Central New Guinea’ *South Pacific* September-October 1956, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 308; Worsley *The Trumpet Shall Sound* p. 196 makes the same point.  
expansion in plantation production. The war and some postwar conditions also stimulated shifts in indigenous agriculture, including by ambitious indigenes who wanted to expand their activities further using wage and other forms of employed labour. During the initial postwar years, sorting out which ‘native interests’ would be ‘paramount’ and which form of indigenous production should receive administration backing was not settled quickly or easily.

Changes in Indigenous Agriculture

Pre-war indigenous growers had produced copra for international markets, as well as sold coconuts and other produce into village and nearby urban markets.\(^{81}\) The European administrative, mission and commercial presence had begun to encourage major changes in production and exchange, not least by increasing supplies of shells used as a medium of exchange and store of value.\(^{82}\) One effect of this pre-war increase in commerce was to enlarge the space occupied by indigenous capitalists, who traded locally produced crops for sale to the colonial administration, missions and expatriate plantations.

For areas of the country outside the immediate war zones, the military conflict accelerated commercialisation of indigenous agriculture. Military bases and administration centres populated by Allied and ANGAU personnel required large amounts of food, not all of which could be imported. With substantial numbers of indigenes removed from villages for employment as carriers, soldiers and other essential personnel, the demand for purchased food supplies expanded. Where the occupying Japanese military engaged in growing rice and other produce, a demonstration effect in agricultural practices developed and new crops were adopted by village producers.

Indigenous growers responded in two intersecting ways to postwar shortages and increased demand for their produce locally and abroad. Firstly, there was a spontaneous surge, which was especially prominent in but not confined to vegetable production for missions, administration centres and remaining military bases. In late 1952, an Australian Senator who toured PNG and subsequently made recommendations to Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries officials in PNG pointed out that:

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82 Hawksley Administrative Colonialism p. 263 notes how from the end of the nineteenth century Tolai growers supplied German plantations with local produce, including vegetables. On the inter-war years, see Hughes New Guinea Stone Age Trade, and Hughes ‘Good Money and Bad’; AJ Strathern ‘Political development and problems of social control in Mt Hagen’ in RJ May (ed.) Priorities in Melanesian Development (Canberra and Port Moresby: RSPAS, ANU and UPNG, 1973) pp. 73–82, esp. pp. 73–74.
The vegetable production on the Highlands for such areas as Port Moresby, Lae and Madang, has already reached their peak and many thousands of pounds come out weekly. The Armed Forces personnel in Manus are also supplied from the Central Highlands and the local islands there.  

While initially distinctions among indigenous growers were not critical for colonial policy, this soon changed even as the activities of wealthy indigenes were vital for the postwar increases. Many accumulated capital from their return on growing and processing crops for domestic and international markets. The early efforts by administration officials to encourage and supervise indigenous growers were also important in propelling indigenous accumulation. These efforts in turn accelerated recognition of the fact that there were two principal forms of indigenous production and the Administration would have to restrain one while advancing the other. As part of the general drive against extending plantations and increasing wage employment, indigenous large holdings would subsequently have to be restrained. The early postwar growing, processing and marketing of rice and cocoa illustrate how indigenous ambitions and initial colonial efforts to encourage ‘native interests’ intersected.

Rice

Prior to World War I, plantations and missions in New Guinea were already heavily dependent upon rice to feed labourers and others. While there had been minor attempts to grow the grain in Papua, commencing in 1891 and in New Guinea as early as 1903, most rice consumed was imported from Asia. In 1918, the Native Plantations Ordinance came into effect in Papua with the intention, in part, of ‘mak[ing] the Territory self-supporting as regards rice’. In reporting another, largely unsuccessful, drive during the 1920s, Lieutenant Governor of Papua, Sir Hubert Murray, also stated that the aim had been to make the ‘Territory self-supporting in rice’.  

Between the wars, ‘rice cultivation [in the Mekeo area] was encouraged by the Papuan administration and the Roman Catholic Mission of the Sacred Heart’. Initially production increased under considerable administration supervision
and enforcement of Native Regulations requiring agricultural production. Although official supervision was withdrawn in the 1934–35 production year, the Catholic Mission stepped in to purchase rice that was surplus to domestic consumption and paid spot cash. Production peaked at between 300 to 400 tons in 1936–37, and slumped thereafter.  

During World War II, the military controlled ANGAU attempted to produce much needed supplies in the Mekeo floodplain, north of Port Moresby. The Japanese also tried to increase local supplies of rice, with substantial compulsory schemes in New Britain and New Ireland, and small plots on Bougainville.

In February 1944, Major WHH Thompson, District Officer Lakekamu who was responsible for increasing rice growing in the ANGAU-controlled territory, noted how labour intensive was the method currently being employed on village holdings in the Mekeo. Thompson also indicated the extent to which mechanisation was employed, how this increased output and how the ANGAU had made limited use of compulsion. In 1944, mechanisation was extended from planting to harvesting, and rice growing provided not only food for household consumption but also for trade. Thompson concluded optimistically:

[I] cannot see why in the future perhaps a district, or the whole Territory, should not be self-supporting as far as rice is concerned.

However with the end of hostilities, a ‘sharp decline both in interest [regarding rice growing in the Mekeo] and acreages occurred in the 1945–46 and 1946–47 seasons’. Revitalisation of rice growing in the Mekeo flood plain did not occur until 1948 when Administration concerns and indigenous efforts were at least temporarily united in a brief period of high prices and global shortages. However the union brought to the fore tensions over how substantial the administration’s role should be and whether there should be a simple household or a complex division of labour, increased by mechanisation. Also in dispute was whether yields could ever be substantial enough on a flood plain with unpredictable rainfall using dry land cultivation methods, distinct from the wet land, flooded irrigation methods employed for growing most of the world’s rice.

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89 Jeffreys Mekeo Rice p. 22
90 Hale Rice Agriculture p. 7; TS Epstein Capitalism, Primitive and Modern: Some Aspects of Tolai Economic Growth (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1968) p. 60
91 John Connell Taim bilong mani: The evolution of agriculture in a Solomon Island society Development Studies Centre Monograph no. 12 (Canberra: Australia National University, 1978) pp. 67–68
92 Hale Rice Agriculture p. 13 concludes that as a result of the war-time experience: ‘The Mekeos have never looked back to manual production’.
93 Major WHH Thompson ‘A Paper on Rice Cultivation’ in NAA: A9372 vol. 3 ANGAU; also noted in Jeffreys Mekeo Rice p. 134.
94 Jeffreys Mekeo Rice p. 27
While these tensions became more apparent from the early 1950s, the initial postwar revitalisation of rice growing took place in a manner which contained all the elements of the later turmoil.

John Connell has described how in 1948, in Siwai in southern Bougainville, there was the ‘first government effort at agricultural extension’ in the area. The actions involved supervising rice plantings at two villages in order to produce seed for further plantings. The 1949–50 estimates for the colony’s Department of Agriculture Stock and Fisheries (DASF) indicate the scope and nature of the Administration’s postwar ambitions regarding research and extension activities designed to increase rice production. Eight district agricultural stations and two sub-district agricultural stations had either commenced and were intended to continue activities, or were initiating work. At Madang, Sohano, Popondetta, Beipa and Aitape work had begun, while at Lae, Bainyik via Maprik, Manus and Buin the estimates projected that ‘rice experiments [were] to be initiated’ or ‘rice [was] to be introduced’. Emphasising the importance given to dry land rice growing, Michael Bourke has noted that official trials on rice (234) constituted between one-fifth and one-sixth of all trials (1228) conducted on food crops between 1928 and 1978, and exceeded the trials on any other crop. These figures do not include the extensive experiments conducted in the first five years after the war on rice, which would substantially increase the proportion of all trials devoted to this one food crop.

In each case where substantial efforts were made to produce rice, it was the local class of capitalists and would-be bourgeois that initially led moves to expand indigenous production. While these moves fitted within the general rhubric of ‘the paramountcy of native interests’, colonial officials were cautious about encouraging any advance of such a class. Shifting indigenous rice growers from Rural Progress Societies to cooperatives with close official supervision of financial contributions from members, other income and expenditure, became one means of limiting the siphoning off of funds for individual accumulation. But it was harder to supervise the uses to which administration-provided machinery, tractors, harvesters and mills were put.

Initially rice played a significant role in the commercial advance of local businessmen, including in southern Bougainville, where linking trade and

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95 Cf. Connell *Taim bilong mani* pp. 92, 100
96 See NAA: A518/1 G927/A Economic Development of the Territories—Commodities—Rice 11/5/50 FGG Ross to First Assistant Secretary, Department of External Territories ‘Rice Production: Papua New Guinea’
production was integral to their postwar activities. However by the mid-1950s, rice growing declined as a cash crop in southern Bougainville. The decline occurred in the face of crop disease, the rise of a superior source of income and revenue, cocoa growing, and ultimately the long-term decline in world prices for the grain. However even as it ceased to provide income or revenue returns commensurate with those available from other produce or wage labour, rice entered into necessary consumption to such an extent that households continued to grow it for immediate non-marketed purposes.

Straddling, between higher wage and salaried employment, and accumulation through rice production was also a feature of indigenous efforts in other regions of the colony. A well known instance occurred in the Sepik, according to Hale ‘a result of self-help agricultural extension’. Bryant Allen explains the origins of postwar rice growing in East Sepik as a consequence of men from the region serving in carrier lines, plantation and vegetable garden labour gangs, as well as police and military units which for the first time meant mixing with other indigenes from Papua and New Britain. Allen explains one consequence thus:

Men from the Sepik who served in these units heard talk about “Kampani”, a new form of organisation which was thought to resemble the social and political organisation of Europeans who “worked together” to achieve wealth and did not fight among themselves as did Papua New Guineans. “Kampani” also seems to have been closely associated with rice.

A similar impetus behind postwar Sepik rice growing came from Pita Simogun of Dagua village, west of Wewak. Having trained during the war in Australia for guerrilla fighting in New Britain, Simogun encouraged police in Port Moresby to ‘return to their villages after the war to initiate “bisnis” enterprises, using whatever cash crops would grow best in their respective areas’. With funds contributed from war damage compensation, in 1947 he established the Dagua Rural Progress Society. Concludes Allen: ‘Simogun planted rice, peanuts and coffee at Dagua, but rice grew better than peanuts and became the major annual crop of the cooperative in 1948 and 1949’.

This venture had considerable influence in nearby and distant areas. By using the ex-policemen network, Simogun was able to affect activities beyond the

99 NSPGA: Buin Patrol Reports Report No. 4, 1952/53 Patrol to Kono Paramountcy p. 2; also cited in MacWilliam ‘Post-war Reconstruction in Bougainville’; see also Connell Taim bilong mani pp. 199–200
100 NSPGA: Buin Patrol Reports Report No. 10, 1959/60 Patrol to Eastern Paramountcy of Buin Sub-District p. 9
101 Hale Rice Agriculture p. 9
102 Allen ‘The North Coast Region’ p. 115
103 Allen ‘The North Coast Region’ p. 116
Securing Village Life

Sepik District, including the Erap Mechanical Farming Project in the Markham Valley, where the main crops grown and marketed became—after a failed attempt to grow and sell rice—sweet potato and peanuts.\textsuperscript{104}

In 1948, the same year as government extension activities began in southern Bougainville, officials in Port Moresby received a request from a prominent indigene in the Mekeo. An official of Inauaia village asked for government assistance to obtain a rice mill, in order to ‘start their industry’. The request was made to the first postwar Director of the DASF, Cottrell-Dormer, who was on an inspection tour of the area.

Rice production at Inauaia, and at least another six adjoining villages, was tied to the first flowering of Rural Progress Societies in the area. Extension centres were created at Anabunga and Beipa to facilitate hiring out of machinery to the Rural Progress Societies ‘to enable them to cultivate commercial holdings of rice’. For the 1950 season about 80 acres of indigenous plantings were harvested, with about half of this area planted using machinery.

The native people were enthusiastic at first, but were disappointed when the monetary return from the first season’s crop was small …. By 1951 rice mills had been set up in six villages and an agricultural research station had been established to investigate mechanisation, variety selection and to carry out research into pests and diseases.

Although there was further expansion over the next two seasons, by 1953 ‘it was apparent … that the project was rapidly declining’, and needed reform.\textsuperscript{105}

The official departmental analysis used by the Territories Minister Hasluck understates the extent to which mechanisation requirements increased for the postwar Mekeo Rice Project. A more accurate assessment was made by Cottrell-Dormer, who resigned in 1950 as Director of Agriculture to become Regional Agricultural Officer in charge of the project. In a bitter critique of an article about the Mekeo Project being prepared by Professor OHK Spate of ANU,\textsuperscript{106} Cottrell-Dormer succinctly explained why the project had taken the direction of greater mechanisation. He said:

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\textsuperscript{104} RG Crocombe and GR Hogbin \textit{The Erap Mechanical Farming Project} New Guinea Research Bulletin no. 1 (Port Moresby and Canberra: New Guinea Research Unit, ANU, 1963) reprinted July 1968

\textsuperscript{105} Quotations are from NAA: A452/1 1958/628 Mekeo Rice Project P & NG 11/61 Paul Hasluck to Master Roger Barker, which was a letter the Minister wrote to a schoolboy who had asked for information about rice production in PNG.

Full mechanisation in rice production is the objective because only in this way can the great potentiality of the fertile flood plain be exploited with the existing population density and available labour.\textsuperscript{107}

Attempting to utilise a fertile flood plain, subject to extensive flooding as well as long periods of hot weather without rain, brought its own special problems if mechanisation was to be extended to soil preparation, planting, and harvesting as well as milling. The Mekeo people were disinclined to work in collaborative endeavours, for either Rural Progress Societies or later for cooperatives, because of the availability of preferable alternatives. These included paid employment in Port Moresby, growing other better yielding and higher priced crops, or simply extending leisure activities. Hiring of equipment became necessary for nearly every aspect of rice growing on even the smallest holdings. In 1954, the Agronomist-in-Charge of the Epo Experiment Station pronounced that as far as rice production in the Mekeo was concerned ‘the impetus has … shifted from peasant to mechanised production’.\textsuperscript{108}

As is shown later in this study, even this shift and the associated substantial administration resources involved did not bring a major continuing increase in the production of rice. Rice growing elsewhere in PNG did not raise the same problems for the colonial administration, or receive as much attention and resources as in the Mekeo, but in these areas output also remained low. Instead imports increased substantially to meet a rapidly growing demand, and the objective of colonial, then national self-sufficiency was never achieved.

Spate claimed that:

the Mekeo has to some extent primed the pump for other schemes. Indeed, the Mekeo and the Gazelle Peninsula rank as the Territory’s experimental forcing houses for native agriculture.\textsuperscript{109}

The rider ‘to some extent’ is critical. As will now be shown for cocoa, the parallels between the crops, the populations and areas of the country are very limited. Most importantly, compared to its promotion of rice production the Administration’s subsequent role in extending smallholder production and fitting the growing, processing and marketing of cocoa and also coffee into the agrarian doctrine of development was much more effective.

\textsuperscript{107} PNGNA: AN12 3,901 F/N 1-2-6(D) Mekeo Rice Project 4/7/52 W Cottrell-Dormer to Professor OHK Spate
\textsuperscript{108} NAA: A518/1 AR927/4 Development. Papua & New Guinea. Rice—Research, 7/9/54 T Sorensen, ‘Rice Improvement in Papua and New Guinea’
\textsuperscript{109} Spate ‘The Rice Problem in New Guinea’ p. 735
Cocoa

Since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, cocoa has been grown as a plantation crop in PNG. During the inter-war years, some plantation owners began to inter-plant the crop with coconuts. The leaves of the tall palm trees reduce the amount of sunlight that reaches the ground, which in turn checks the growth of weeds around the cocoa bushes and cuts maintenance costs. Inter-planting spread among plantations, although the availability of unplanted land on many large holdings before the war meant that some of the largest firms engaged in sole planting of bushes as well. While there was little planting of cocoa by indigenes before World War II, the ability to inter-plant bushes subsequently made the crop especially suitable to indigenous growers with limited land who retained coconut palms for immediate consumption needs as well as cash incomes from marketed nuts and copra.

An early indication of the extensiveness of the Administration’s aims for cocoa growing in PNG was given in a 1947 report which assessed suitable growing areas. Drawing upon plantation experience growing cocoa as well as research conducted in the inter-war years, an agricultural official concluded that cocoa grew best up to 1,400 feet above sea level, in areas protected from strong winds. Geologically newer soils found on New Britain, Bougainville, Witu Islands, and Kar Kar Island were especially well suited. But cocoa could be expected to thrive also on areas of mainland New Guinea, including the Markham Valley and in Papua at Dobodura. Even soils derived from raised coral, where some existing plantations grew cocoa were suitable.

During World War II, most of the cocoa bushes were destroyed and there was widespread damage to coconut trees. Some stock survived and soon after the military conflict ended, administration officials began to distribute planting material collected from the Lowlands Agricultural Experiment Station at Keravat, from Rabaul Botanic Garden and Asalinga Plantation to plantations and some indigenous growers. The stock was of the Trinitario type, higher yielding and more vigorous by comparison to the Forastero type then growing in West Africa. By using local stock, officials were aware that the postwar expansion would not be affected by the swollen shoot disease which had already substantially reduced cocoa output in Ghana and other nearby countries.

112 REP Dwyer Cocoa Production Territory of Papua-New Guinea Part 1 The Economics of Cocoa Production (Port Moresby: DASF, 3 July 1948) p. 1
Furthermore Trinitario formed the basis for fine and flavour cocoa, for many years regarded as superior to the bulk Forastero cocoa, which was used for milk and drinking chocolate.

The decision to use Trinitario stock for the postwar expansion was not solely due to availability and its swollen shoot free status. It has already been noted above that colonial officials in Australia were in regular contact with cocoa traders and manufacturers. The Australian manufacturers sourced most of their cocoa from West Africa. With the swollen shoot disease and anti-colonial eruptions in Ghana adding to postwar shortages, they were concerned to secure other sources of cocoa. In 1946, it was predicted that shortages in international supplies would reach about 200,000 tons and a price increase for 1947 of 150 per cent. The prediction prompted Australian manufacturers to raise the possibility that employment in the local confectionery industry would decline. It was in these circumstances that proposals were advanced for the major expansion of large holding production in PNG, as previously outlined. Neither the recommendation to extend plantations, nor the attempts by Australian manufacturers to influence what type of cocoa would be grown in the postwar expansion, were welcomed or acted upon by the Australian Government which was strongly supported by Administration officials in PNG. One particular official, Cottrell-Dormer, the Director of Agriculture was strongly opposed to indigenes becoming ‘a race of wage-earners dependent upon European industry for their livelihood and losing the greater part of their native-self-reliance’.¹¹⁴

The manufacturers, who had imported very little PNG plantation cocoa pre-war, wanted the postwar administration to push the production of bulk cocoa for their requirements.¹¹⁵ In an early instance of a clash between Australian manufacturing and colonial administration objectives, agricultural officials in PNG rejected this proposal. Not only did Trinitario ‘trees come into bearing 6–12 months earlier than is usually experienced in any other country’ but on the light pumice soils around Rabaul, yields were considerably higher than for Forastero, the basis of ‘Accra cocoa’.¹¹⁶

Strengthening the local officials’ position even further, there was a price advantage to be gained by selling into continental Europe rather than to Australian markets. In European markets fine and flavour cocoa formed the base for bitter chocolate which was preferred to the sweeter milk chocolate. Although only forming a small proportion of the world market, fine and flavour

¹¹⁴ NAA: A518/1 A58/3/3 Undated W Cottrell-Dormer, Director, DASF to Secretary, Department of External Territories p. 1
¹¹⁵ NAA: A1422, 12/2/11 Part 1 New Guinea and Papua—Cocoa 1938–52 19/3/51 Fred B Richardson, for Cadbury-Fry-Pascall ‘Type of Cocoa Which Should be Grown’
¹¹⁶ Dwyer Cocoa Production p. 3
cocoa—then produced from Trinitario—was in high demand. Selling to this important potential market would also reduce PNG producers’ reliance upon and subjection to the Australian manufacturers.

The position taken by local officials, to target the fine and flavour market with the use of Trinitario stock was strengthened by support received from Colyer Watson, one of the principal exporters of PNG cocoa. At a time when only a small number of indigenes had bearing bushes, the firm was characterised as mainly a purchaser of plantation cocoa. However the firm was already looking to a future of substantially increased production and exports. In October 1950, five months before the letter from Richardson, just cited, the exporting firm’s principal RA Colyer wrote to the Secretary, Department of Territories about a recent successful trip to the UK. Drawing attention to previous unsatisfactory treatment of PNG cocoa by ‘Australian users’, Colyer stressed the importance of making:

our beans better known to the world … where New Guinea beans … had a considerably higher value [than that placed on them previously by the Australian Confectioners’ Association]. We must keep on shipping these beans so that the world’s markets will get to know them as a “special bean” so that when production increases the planter will derive the benefit of their full value.\textsuperscript{117}

As an especially astute commodity trader, Colyer is likely to have known not only that plantation owners were beginning to include cocoa in their postwar rehabilitation plans, but also that the Administration was giving priority to increasing indigenous production of the crop. With the company’s main buying office located in Rabaul where this increase was especially strong, Colyer could hardly have missed the attraction of the crop for wealthy Tolai on the Gazelle Peninsula, East New Britain, who were adding another dimension to their already substantial commercial activities.

Important accounts of the early postwar move into cocoa by Tolai growers, provided by Salisbury and T Scarlett Epstein, provide very similar descriptions for Vunamami, near Rabaul, and Rapitok, also on the Peninsula but at the frontier of Tolai settlement.\textsuperscript{118} With the encouragement of DASF officials, wealthy and influential Tolai were the first to embrace cocoa. These individuals often had unplanted land and the capacity to mobilise labour from ‘clan dependants’.\textsuperscript{119} While there were important differences in the sources of the wealth for these Tolai in Vunamami and Rapitok, their similarities are what matters for this account.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{117} NAA: A518/1 A58/3/1 22/10/1950 RA Colyer to Secretary Halligan
\item \textsuperscript{119} Salisbury \textit{Vunamami} p. 136
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
In the case of densely populated and relatively affluent Vunamami, with a long history of contact with European owned plantation and administration personnel, the first planter was a senior political figure who grew cocoa on his own and his wife’s clan lands in the neighbouring Balanatam and Vunamami villages. Apart from the first planter, Salisbury notes that:

The early growers were for the most part landed and progressive older men; others were drawn in only after 1953–1954 when the early planters began reaping large returns from cash sales.\textsuperscript{120}

In Rapitok, the critical initial source of wealth utilised for cocoa cultivation had been previous migration to work on plantations. Once again, there was a flow-on effect from the activities of the first planters to other returned migrants and then more widely to other indigenes. As TS Epstein states:

One of Rapitok’s migrants, who is the most enterprising and also the wealthiest man in the parish, was the first prepared to experiment with planting cocoa [in 1948] … before the first trees began to bear, a number of migrants had followed the example and also planted cocoa. The Rapitoks were selling copra in the meantime and encouraged by these earnings they were prepared to extend their investment in perennial cash crops.\textsuperscript{121}

The rapid adoption of cocoa by Tolai who planted substantial acreages and others who grew a few trees meant that Director of Agriculture Cottrell-Dormer’s preferred position for the best form of indigenous production became irrelevant for official policy toward cocoa growing on the Gazelle. His preference was for ‘the development of Government plantations on behalf of the natives, i.e. on the natives’ land and for the purpose of handing over to native ownership in the shape of co-operative societies in the future’ utilising European management. Even though Minister Ward agreed with the rejection of proposals for more large holdings, Cottrell-Dormer’s favoured direction was never applied, for cocoa or any other crop.\textsuperscript{122} Instead the spontaneous process of development, with Tolai bourgeois and would-be bourgeois to the fore, initially out-ran official planning and capacities. Only in the 1950s, under a new Minister and strengthened state machinery was cocoa production placed at the centre of the scheme of smallholder production.

\textsuperscript{120} Salisbury \textit{Vunamami} pp. 135–136
\textsuperscript{121} Epstein \textit{Capitalism, Primitive and Modern} pp. 60–62
\textsuperscript{122} NAA: A518/1 A58/3/3 Undated W Cottrell-Dormer, Director, DASF to Secretary, Department of External Territories p. 1
Conclusion

The immediate postwar period in PNG was marked by a particular form of uncertainty. While by 1945 the Australian Government and influential colonial officials were agreed on a general direction for postwar development, ‘positive Australianism’ was little more than a vague statement indicating a preferred direction. Subsequently, between 1945 and 1950–51, in the circumstances of postwar reconstruction and rehabilitation, it continued to be hard to shape development in ways which would flesh out what was intended. Instead securing barriers against the return of what had been seen as destructive in the circumstances of pre-war PNG, and surmounting some of the most deleterious effects of the military conflict dominated official activities. Despite the best of intentions to bring development, only tentative moves along the intended route had been made, including in areas of the country and among populations previously only loosely included in the colonial territory.

All this was to change from the early 1950s, to the extent that just over a decade later the dominance of smallholder agriculture was firmly established. The colonial administration’s part in securing this ascendancy, which improved living standards for most of the population, was central. Of particular importance for the change was the political dominance of the Australian Minister for Territories, Hasluck, and the Department in Canberra. Unlike Ward, ideologically certain but little involved in giving effect to his beliefs, Hasluck focused his energies on gaining control of, and revitalising the colonial administration. With power centralised, and detailed consideration given to how the main premises of development thought could become policy, the Minister drove major reforms. The change from uncertain development to the central policy direction of even or uniform development was pronounced, as the next chapter shows.