

THE POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME*

Before both the 1964 and 1968 general elections in Papua New Guinea, the Australian colonial administration embarked on a programme of political education intended to acquaint voters with some of the broader aspects of the political system it was introducing and thus to increase their appreciation of what the election was all about (Bettison 1965:53-69, Parker and Wolfers 1971:41-45). There was widespread criticism of both programmes, both for what they sought to do and for what they failed to achieve. Reviewing the achievements of the education programme which preceded the 1968 election, in mid-1968 an inter-departmental committee recorded a general feeling that while it could not be said that the programme had failed, its impact had perhaps been slight; this was attributed to a lack of funds and resources to enable a more ambitious programme to be carried out. Subsequently, the report of the United Nations mission which had visited Papua New Guinea in 1968 recommended 'that there should be a more vigorous programme of political education through all available publicity media' (United Nations 1968:113). Even while the 1968 election was in progress there were proposals to set up a continuing programme of political education. These were generally accepted and in July a reconstituted interdepartmental

* This study was undertaken in 1972, as part of a broader study of the last pre-independence national election, and was published in D. Stone (ed.), *Prelude to Self-Government: Electoral Politics in Papua New Guinea 1972* (1976).

Political Education Committee (hereafter PEC) held its first meeting. The Committee was instructed to plan and recommend to the administrator a long-term programme of political education and to implement an approved programme.¹ It was to liaise with the administrator's Public Relations Advisory Committee (PRAC), through whom its report was eventually to be submitted. Subsequently, the Australian Minister for External Territories approved the re-establishment of the inter-departmental committee, but noted that it should not make statements concerning the meaning and implications of self-determination or about future financial and technical assistance from Australia.

A report from the PEC was passed on to the administrator, with comments by the PRAC, in October 1968; about two months later a statement was approved by the Administrator's Executive Council (AEC) and tabled in the House of Assembly (HAD, II (3):808-9). The statement outlined a programme designed

to cover the whole spectrum of political education from involvement in current events and the practical use of political institutions to the improvement and understanding of the principles of democracy.

The administration, it said, aimed to bring the programme to the people in the rural villages; to do this use would be made of radio, publications, films and the talks of administration officers and others who regularly visited the rural areas. This provided a broad framework for the administration's political education efforts during the next three years; within this framework, however, there were notable shifts in both the content and direction of political education. Formal political education ceased with the issue, in November 1971, of writs for the election, but

¹ The following account draws on the records of the PEC, kindly made available by the Government Liaison Branch of the Department of the Chief Minister and Development administration.

field officers were told that they could answer questions on politics and electoral matters.

Objectives of the programme

The objectives of the political education programme as set out in the November 1968 statement were somewhat vague. In introducing the statement the director of district administration said that the purpose of the programme was to help people understand the principles of democratic government and to know their rights and duties as individual citizens. There were two elements to the proposed programme: one, aimed at increasing the general level of political awareness, the other, 'a formal educational programme dealing more directly with the principles and structures of democratic government' designed both to increase people's understanding of concepts and to improve their ability to work the system.

With respect to the formal part of the programme, the director listed as topics to be included: 'Majority Rule; Local Government – how it works and how it is paid for; Central Government – how it works and how it is paid for; the Legislature – the responsibility of Members of the House and political parties and so on; the Executive; Ministerial Members; the Public Service; and the Judiciary'. To this extent, the programme outlined in 1968 was a continuation of that which preceded it, whose content was broadly indicated by publications prepared during 1966-68 (Parker and Wolfers 1971:43-44). Its essential aim was to instruct people in the theory of Westminster government and its practice as applied in Papua New Guinea. (It was a specific recommendation of the PRAC in 1968 that the political education programme should not 'at the present stage' embrace any political systems other than the Westminster system). Towards the end of 1969, however, with the House of Assembly's Select Committee on Constitutional Development planning to tour the country seeking popular views on that subject, the administra-

tor suggested that the time was now appropriate for a booklet to be written on other systems of government and asked the assistance of the Department of External Territories in preparing such a booklet; but nothing appears to have come of this. An effort was made also to extend the political education campaign in districts to provide some basis for discussion of issues to be raised by the Select Committee. In early 1970 administration field officers could occasionally be found conducting discussion groups in villages on such topics as the advantages and disadvantages of unitary and federal systems and of unicameral and bicameral parliaments.

Instruction in political matters was to be objective; at its first meeting the PEC agreed that political education should not become government propaganda and in a circular to district commissioners in March 1970 the head of the Division of District Administration said:

Our task is to give the facts and remain neutral. Questions of the merits or otherwise of political matters should be avoided and officers should advise the people to make their own minds up after due consideration of the facts.

Around the beginning of 1971 there was a shift in emphasis in the political education programme.

Tours of the country in 1970 and early 1971 by both the Select Committee on Constitutional Development and a United Nations visiting mission, as well as visits from the then leader of the Australian parliamentary opposition, Gough Whitlam, had stimulated political consciousness in the rural areas and both the Select Committee and the UN mission noted that there was some apprehension and confusion, especially in the highlands, about self-government and independence. An earlier UN mission had already called for greater effort to explain what was meant by the terms 'self-government' and 'independence' (UN 1968:113); though the 1971 mission did not repeat this specific demand, it did call for more intensive political education and said that it

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would be important to ensure that self-government, as it approached, was fully understood and accepted as a step in a steady process of political evolution (UN 1971:108). The Select Committee on Constitutional Development, for its part, in a report tabled in the House of Assembly in March 1971, recommended (p.2), 'that the development of the Territory be geared to preparing the country for internal self-government during the life of the next House of Assembly'. This was endorsed by the House of Assembly and accepted by the Australian government.

Also, early in 1971 the administration officer who had accompanied the UN mission (and who had been the first executive member of the PEC) recommended a change in content in the political education programme to take account of the apparent uncertainty in the minds of the people regarding self-government. His recommendation was accepted. In a circular dated March 1971 the secretary of the Department of the Administrator told district commissioners that steps must now be taken to prepare the people for self-government and, more particularly, to allay the fears and misconceptions which had arisen. District commissioners were asked to compile a list of fears and misconceptions as they affected each district, to plan a programme aimed at clarifying the issues involved, and to organise seminars aimed at 'thought and opinion leaders' and designed to '(a) Explain the concept of self-government and independence; (b) Assuage the fears and anxieties [termination of Australian aid and assistance and breakdown of law and order were quoted as examples]; (c) Counter rising and dangerous expectations that self-government or independence will result in a wholesale takeover of expatriate assets, and that impossibly high salaries and unrealistic living conditions will automatically be achieved . . . (d) If possible, point to the inevitability of self-government and of independence, and the implications thereof'. The following month a survey of the political education programme noted that the whole tenor of the programme was based on the resolution of the Select Committee to prepare the country for self-government.

At about the same time, the promotion of national unity seems to have been given greater importance as an objective of the political education programme. The PEC had been given such a mandate in 1968 when the House of Assembly declared that national unity was essential to the progress of the country and called on the administration 'through the use of field staff, administration radio, and lessons in schools to tell the people what they will gain by keeping together as a single country' (HAD, II (3):616, 654); and such a charge was laid upon the administration by the United Nations. But although it was claimed in 1970 to be first amongst the aims of the political education programme (Baker 1970:38), and was indeed emphasised during the first training course for political education officers in April 1970, the promotion of national unity does not appear to have been a major concern in district programmes at that time. The increased attention given to this objective from early 1971 seems to have been prompted in part by the House of Assembly's endorsement of a recommendation on national unity by the Select Committee on Constitutional Development (1971:7), in part by a further resolution on this subject by a UN visiting mission (UN 1971:109) and especially by a press statement by the administrator in May (*Post-Courier* 21 May 1971) which, following demands for Papuan separatism, reaffirmed the Australian government's commitment to the unity of Papua and New Guinea. There were suggestions, too, that the programme should now be placed on a national basis (see below) and in July 1971 a draft programme for a national political education campaign was drawn up which called for emphasis on (i) self-government and (ii) national unity, adding that 'The development of a positive nationalism, in contrast to oppositionalist or obstructionist nationalism, is aimed for'.

Along with the shift in emphasis in the content of the political education programme came some shift in direction. In introducing the statement by the PEC in November 1968, the director of the Department of District Administration had expressed the aim of bringing the programme to the people in the rural villages and

of concentrating particularly on local government councils, women's clubs and similar groups, and school students. Early memoranda to field officers stressed the importance of face-to-face contact at the village level; in one memorandum they were advised that 'the method to be adopted is that of listener, engaging in discussion with village people at their leisure and attempting to bring home points indirectly'. But with the months going by and the difficulty of reaching large numbers of people becoming more apparent, in late 1969 it was recommended that increasing attention be focused on 'thought and opinion leaders' who would be depended upon to spread the message amongst villagers. This was described as a policy of 'educating the educators'. In the latter part of the period much of the political education effort was devoted to seminars for thought and opinion leaders, amongst whom were listed local government councillors, local public servants, school students, local entrepreneurs, local catechists and village leaders.

Organisation and implementation

Initially the Political Education Committee consisted of five people: two representatives (including the chairman) from the Department of District Administration² (DDA) and one each from the departments of Education, Information and Extension Services (DIES) and the Department of the Administrator; the Administrator's Department representative was to carry out executive duties for the committee (the initial appointee was also executive member of the PRAC). With the transfer of one of the DDA representatives to the Department of Social Development and Home Affairs, the Committee was widened to retain his membership. All the original members of the committee were

² In 1969 district administration ceased to be a separate department and became a Division within the Department of the Administrator. (The abbreviation DDA is used here for both.)

expatriate; in mid-1971 it was suggested that there should be a local member and in September that year a local officer, the then deputy chief electoral officer, was appointed. The chief electoral officer, however, objected to this appointment on the grounds that electoral education should be the only educational function of that office, and the appointment was withdrawn. Another local officer, from the Department of Labour, was appointed instead, but after attending few meetings, in July 1971 he resigned. Subsequently he was replaced by two Papua New Guinean officers, one a woman.

The PEC's role was largely one of coordinating and directing the efforts of the departments involved. As was made clear in a note by the administrator dated December 1970, it was a purely advisory body, advising the administrator on a subject the functional responsibility for which rested (after District Administration was transferred to the Department of the Administration) with the head of the Department of the Administrator.³

The Department of Education did not play a major role in the PEC. It ensured that the objectives of the political education programme were taken into account in a revised school social science syllabus, increased the political education content of school magazines and broadcasts, introduced practical exercises in politics in schools (democratic elections, debates on current issues, etc) and, at the instigation of the PEC, in 1969 carried out a survey designed to test the political knowledge and awareness of pupils in four high schools; but apart from this it seems to have contributed little to the programme. A proposal to have teachers organise discussion groups for villagers does not seem to have come to anything. DIES was largely responsible for the preparation of political education materials (see below) and for the dissemination of information through administration radio

³ Before district administration became a division with the Administrator's Department there appears to have been occasional tension between the department (and the PEC) and DDA. During the 1966-1968 campaign DDA provided both the chairman and the executive member of the PEC.

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stations in the districts. Appointment of an officer from the Department of the Administrator as executive member reflected the fact that the Committee's function was to advise the administrator; the first executive member was an important source of initiative in the political education programme, both in that position and subsequently as senior liaison officer in the same department. The bulk of the responsibility for carrying out the programme, however, rested with DDA.

As the director of DDA (and subsequently secretary of the Department of the Administrator) frequently pointed out, political education had been a longstanding function of DDA field staff and DDA field staff continued to be the main agents of the political education programme. At an early meeting of the PEC it was agreed that district commissioners should be the focal point in districts and that the PEC should work through them. Each district commissioner was to be responsible for organising the political education programme in his district and for coordinating the activities of administration officers and others in the field.

In a circular from the director of DDA, dated January 1969, district commissioners were reminded that political education was a prescribed function of the department, and a particularly important one, and officers in the field were asked to keep in mind that it was vital to spread a knowledge and understanding of the nature of government, how it works and its importance in the daily lives of the people. 'The material distributed before the last House of Assembly elections', they were told, 'contains all the information necessary to enable action to continue'. It was not for another nine months, however, that anything was done to appoint officers with a more or less fulltime responsibility for political education. In September 1969 there was still little evidence of political education activity in the field and the administrator called on the PEC to step up the programme without delay. The following month each district commissioner was requested to nominate two experienced officers to be specially briefed about the political education programme and afterwards

to spearhead activity in the district. Later that year, after attending two-day briefing sessions, a number of DDA officers appear to have taken up duty as political education officers, 'educating the educators', conducting special political education patrols, and arranging seminars for selected groups. But it was not until April 1970 that the first training course for political education officers was held and though a total of 33 officers attended this and a second four-week course in July, by August 1970 there were only 16 full-time political education officers in the field and three districts were without political education officers. Commenting on the situation at the end of the year a memorandum noted that

. . . wastage amongst political education officers had been considerable but not surprising considering that all had been appointed by their district commissioner with many having little real interest in political education and even less aptitude for this work.⁴

Political education officers were responsible to their district commissioners, whose task it was to direct the programme within the district and who in turn were responsible to the head of district administration, who provided a link with the PEC. After the two training courses in 1970 a newsletter was distributed amongst political education officers to provide a more direct means of communication amongst them and between them and headquarters staff.

At about the same time as it was decided to appoint full-time political education officers, the PEC also recommended the appointment of a fulltime officer to coordinate and expedite the overall programme. (Shortly before this, it seems, the executive member was employed full-time in this role.) A joint report on the political education programme in mid-1971 by the executive member and an overseas public relations and communications consultant also suggested that political education officers had been left too much to their own devices and recommended that

⁴ The 20 officers attending the April 1970 course were given gradings: three-quarters were rated competent for the task.

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'emphasis should now be on a national approach and that organisation and capacity at headquarters level be enlarged and strengthened. Subsequently, a formal submission was made to the Public Service Board to establish, as a matter of priority, a Political Education Section within DDA, with an assistant secretary, six headquarters staff and 18 political education officers in the field. The move for such a headquarters section was motivated in part by belief in the need for a more effective coordination of the enlarged programme, but it also reflected a growing feeling that something as important as political education should not be left to the initiative of 18 district commissioners, whose commitments to political education varied. However, when the 1972 elections began, this submission was still with the Board.

After 1969 district commissioners were required to report regularly on the political education programmes in their districts. Reports summarised political education activities within the district (seminars, political education patrols, radio programmes, visits to schools, essay competitions, quizzes, film showings, etc.), commented on publications, gave an account of cooperation with other administration departments and involvement of missions, private enterprise and others in the programme, and sometimes attempted to review attitudes and opinions within the district. Judging from reviews based on these reports in 1970 and 1971, the programme placed heavy reliance on the use of two-to five-day seminars for thought and opinion leaders (in the three months to February 1971, 200 courses for thought and opinion leaders were held at sub-district and patrol post level). Little recourse was had to special political education patrols and there was little training of DDA staff, and radio was used fairly extensively in most districts for talks by district commissioners and political education officers and for quiz programmes, but with varying assessments of its worth. Similarly, large numbers of publications were distributed though many doubted their effectiveness. These reports also gave an indication of the disparities in effort between districts (see below).

Involvement of people at the district level was an important element in the political education programme. The PEC was empowered in 1968 to seek comment, advice and assistance from outside the administration and to co-opt the assistance of specialist administration officers as the need arose. From the outset the Committee made it clear that it intended to do this and listed as possible participants in the programme patrol officers, agricultural extension officers, aid post orderlies, council advisers and councillors, welfare officers and women's clubs, officers running community education courses and officers in contact with urban associations of all kinds, teachers, missionaries, and senior school students and their parents. The lack, for some time, of full-time political education officers and the delay in producing a field manual limited the effectiveness of this strategy, but by about mid-1970 most district administrations had secured some local involvement in the programme. One district commissioner, reporting in 1971, said practically everybody who is physically capable of moving about amongst the public is invited to participate. Late in 1970 arrangements were made to employ 24 first and second year students from the University of Papua and New Guinea as political education assistants during the long vacation. They were given a training course on political education and communication techniques and were directed to keep diaries in which they were to record people's attitudes, fears and misconceptions and their own comments on, and criticisms of, the programme. District commissioners were asked to ensure that the students were given interesting and creative work. Reviewing the scheme in August 1971 the PEC agreed that it had been an overall success and would probably be repeated in future years.

Materials

One of the prime concerns of the Political Education Committee was the planning and organising of production of political edu-

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cation materials. This included material for radio, films and film strips, and printed publications.

The content of radio programmes was left largely to the administration radio stations in each district. For the most part the political education effort consisted of increases in the number of news items dealing with the activities of the House of Assembly and its members but some stations broadcast political education talks by DDA officers and ran question and answer or quiz programmes.

A film of the 1964 elections, which had become available in 1967, was shown during the campaign and in late 1969 this was supplemented by a film dealing with local government *A Community Develops* with soundtracks in English, Tokpisin and Motu. However, a film on the House of Assembly, planned in 1968, was not distributed until late 1971 and probably was seen by very few voters in the 1972 election. Two strip films appear to have been produced, one dealing with council taxes and one entitled *Pesman bilong Yumi* ('Our Representative') but a projected series on the people of the 18 districts, with a national unity theme, had not been completed when the campaign closed.

In the period before the 1968 elections eight booklets (including a series of six school-level booklets) and 20 one-page leaflets had been produced for political education purposes (Parker and Wolfers 1971:43-44). In the early months of the new campaign additional copies of these were distributed, but in due course they were replaced or supplemented by six publications: *Towards a United Country* (a 106-page basic text in English, which explained how government worked in Papua New Guinea and was intended to serve as a field handbook), and five narrative style booklets with political themes (*Matthias Talks About Government*, *Minga and Magete Start a New Life* – a story about highlanders who became oil palm scheme settlers in West New Britain, *A Mountain Villager Grows Pyrethrum*, *A Highlander Grows Tea*, and *Loa Becomes a Teacher*). A booklet setting out political party platforms (projected as early as May 1971 as a pamphlet explaining political parties) was produced early in 1972, too late for adequate

distribution before the election. From February 1969 *Our News*, a fortnightly newspaper produced by the administration, in English and Tokpisin, carried stories, news items and quizzes geared to the political education programme. (A DIES survey of *Our News* readers in September 1969 showed that 55 per cent had read the serialised narrative (Matthias) stories, while 72 per cent had read straight articles on government and the House of Assembly.) In addition the PEC obtained some copies of a pamphlet explaining the Administrator's Executive Council, which was produced for the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. It also bought a large number of copies of Brian Jinks' *New Guinea Government: An Introduction*⁵ for distribution amongst field officers and made use of several booklets published by the Reserve Bank as part of its financial education programme for Papua New Guinea. Political education officers were also supplied with a collection of papers on 'recent constitutional development', a 'National Unity' wall-chart, and with occasional press statements and journal articles.

Highest priority in the PEC's publication programme was given to *Towards a United Country*. Notwithstanding this, although the publication was commissioned from DIES at one of the first meetings of the PEC it was not distributed until May 1970 (when 10000 copies became available). Since *Towards a United Country* was intended as a basic text and handbook for patrol officers and others spreading the word in the field, the delay in producing it was a significant set-back for the programme. (The circular to district commissioners in October 1968 which called for greater effort in the field noted, 'This has not hitherto been pressed, as some written guide to field staff officers was considered an essential pre-requisite'; and the first training course for political education officers seems to have been delayed pending publication of the booklet.) Moreover when it did appear, despite the

⁵ Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1971. This book, written by a former DDA officer, was intended as a text for junior secondary school students in Papua New Guinea.

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fact that the draft manuscript had been examined by district commissioners, several administration departments, the Department of External Territories, and academics in Papua New Guinea, *Towards a United Country* was widely criticised by both field officers and outside critics of the political education programme, as being poorly organised, containing errors of fact, and being generally unsuitable for use in the field; after it had been only a couple of months in circulation political education officers generally ceased using it.

Assessment

In the absence of fairly precise data about the state of political awareness before and after the 1968-71 political education programme, it is impossible to measure the impact of the programme in anything but the most impressionistic terms. And such an assessment is further made difficult by the apparent shift in objectives during the life of the programme – indeed the fact that there were perceived fears and misconceptions which needed remedying is perhaps a measure of the effectiveness of the early political education effort in creating an awareness that political change was under way and fostering discussion of it. The PEC itself claimed as a measure of its success the observation of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, that during its second tour of the country in January-February 1971 it had encountered a greater degree of political awareness and willingness to discuss self-government than had been the case during its first tour in April-May 1970. On the other hand, several attempts at measuring the political knowledge and attitudes of select (elite) groups purported to see, in the dismal results obtained, the failure of political education, and there was no shortage of general critics of the campaign.

But while it is difficult to comment on the overall impact of the programme, there are some obvious comments to be made about aspects of it.

In the first place there was a good deal of criticism of the general concept of 'political education' and objection that a political education programme – especially one in the hands of *kia*p – amounted to administration brainwashing of the people. The administration was not insensitive to these criticisms. In a paper presented to the annual Waigani Seminar in Port Moresby in May 1970 the principal training officer of DDA made the following statements:

... I should clear up any misconception that the administration is or regards itself as the sole or even the major vehicle for political education.

... the role is that of political education not, and I repeat NOT, political indoctrination. There is no intention in this programme to push any one structure or form of government.

The possible role conflict inherent in the DDA field officer-political educator role was recognised and an attempt was made to obviate this by ensuring that, short of major emergency, officers engaged full time in political education would not exercise their police and magisterial functions. [Baker 1970:37, 39, 42]

In March 1970 the title of the programme was changed to 'community education', in the hope of diverting critics, but following representations from political/community education officers attending the first training course, the title was changed back to its original form two months later. (Soon after the election in 1972 of the Somare government the title was changed to 'government liaison'.) There was also a suggestion, which was supported by the speaker of the House, that the political education function should be shifted from the administration to the House of Assembly, but apart from notice of a motion which was subsequently withdrawn before debate, nothing came of this. For the most part, however, criticism on these grounds was simplistic. Even the fiercer critics of political education seem to have been prepared to admit that given a choice between introducing new, more broadly-based political institutions with

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or without an attempt at explanation of their operation and the principles behind them some educative effort is preferable to none. In such a situation, 'education' inevitably becomes supportive of the system being introduced. Despite his disclaimers, speaking of the use of films Baker said (1970:41), 'The aim, of course, as with so much of political education is towards increasing the commitment of people to the institutions of government'. The argument then becomes whether the administration should have fostered more discussion of alternative systems rather than concentrating on the explanation of a particular system – and this then becomes largely a question about the effectiveness of the work of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development – and whether the content of the political education programme was appropriate (which is discussed below). In any case, political education was urged by the United Nations Trusteeship Council and seems to have been given a clear mandate by the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, as well as being requested by several local government councils and some politicians.

The argument against 'political education' is much stronger, however, when applied to the objectives emphasised later in the programme: assuaging fears and anxieties about self-government and independence and promoting national unity. On the first of these, the district commissioner of one of the poorer districts pointed to one of the difficulties which could arise, when, commenting on the new emphasis in the programme, he said:

This fear (of self-government and independence), centred on the lack of economic development, is real to the people (of his district) . . . there is a danger in attempting to nullify this particular fear insofar as such an attempt could be interpreted as an attempt to deceive the people.

With regard to the other, the promotion of national unity posed some obvious difficulties for those involved in political educa-

tion in areas (such as Bougainville, the Gazelle Peninsula and parts of Papua) where separatist or 'micronationalist' movements were seen to be incompatible with Papua New Guinea nationalism.

But even if the general principle of political education is accepted, the content of the programme can be questioned. Three aspects of it were notable. First, the initial efforts to be factual and objective seem to have resulted in an excessive emphasis on instruction in the formal elements of the Westminster system rather than on demonstrating the universality of political activity and fostering a sense of participation in the new institutions. (An extreme example of this was the early neglect of the subject of political parties.) Second, the training courses which were arranged for political education officers dealt more with techniques of communication than with the substance of the message. Third, most of the political education material approved by the PEC was poor both as political science and as teaching aids; *Towards a United Country* was only the most obvious example of this. In some cases field officers realised this and prepared their own material, but with commitment to a policy of widespread involvement in the programme and with largely untrained political education officers, the inadequacy of the material imposed a serious limitation on the effectiveness of the programme.

This raises another aspect of the programme. The fact that so much responsibility for the organisation of political education, initially at least, rested with the district officers resulted in unevenness in the political education effort from district to district. In some districts the political education programme was carefully planned and conscientiously and intelligently executed; in others it appears not to have been taken very seriously – indeed in their joint report in mid-1971 the executive member and overseas consultant told the PEC that in discussion with one district commissioner, they were 'made aware from the start that political education was something of a joke'. On the basis of the reports submitted by district commissioners in 1970 and 1971 it

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seems that political education activity was consistently at a fairly satisfactory level in six districts (Bougainville, Central, East Sepik, Eastern Highlands, Southern Highlands, Western Highlands); practically non-existent in four districts (East New Britain, Gulf, Manus, West New Britain) and at an intermediate – and probably variable – level in the other eight (Chimbu, Madang, Milne Bay, Morobe, New Ireland, Northern, West Sepik and Western).

Differences in performance may have been due to a number of factors, but this breakdown suggests that population density, terrain, language, and differential levels of development were not major determinants; differences of attitudes between district commissioners undoubtedly provide a large part of an explanation and differential abilities and enthusiasm on the part of patrol officers and local radio stations probably account for another significant part. And, of course, the paucity of well-designed political education material and, at least until the last months of the period, the lack of systematic coordination at the national level exacerbated the situation. Given all this, it is difficult from what little data is available to discern what effects the unevenness in the district political education programmes had on the level and nature of political activity in the districts. There is some correlation between the extent of political education activity (as classified above) and the number of candidates nominated per seat but it is doubtful whether the two were causally related.

As in 1968, it seems that what worthwhile political education efforts were made came only shortly before the elections themselves. Although the programme got off to an early start, it was slow to get moving: it was over a year before the first new publications appeared, and the text, intended to be a basic element of the programme, was not distributed until mid-1970. The record with regard to radio and films was not much better. In the field, little was achieved until after the appointment of political education officers in late 1969, and training courses for them were not arranged until some months later. In March 1970 it was reported that efforts were generally under way but in

December that year a DDA circular was issued with the aim of revitalising district programmes and reemphasising the priority to be given to political education. One factor relevant to this delay was the early lack of a clear statement by the Australian government of its policy towards self-government and independence (this came after the report of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development). Other important factors were a shortage of DIES personnel, despite application in 1968 for an additional staff establishment for political education work, and the failure, despite repeated recommendations, to establish an adequate headquarters political education section within the Department of the Administrator. Finally, it is clear that in a number of districts district commissioners felt no real commitment towards political education and, in the absence of firm direction at the national level, did little to promote it.

On the positive side, there can be little doubt that the political education programme contributed to a significant increase in the level of political awareness, especially amongst so-called thought and opinion leaders, sharpened interest in political issues, and provided a useful demonstration of the possibilities of cooperation between departments and others at the district and sub-district levels.